

RASED for Parliamentary Monitoring Program 10th & 11th Weekly Report on the Performance of the 17th Jordanian Parliament during its 2nd Ordinary Session January 17, 2015

RASED: The Economic and Investment Committee meeting was held in the presence of the Head of the Committee only.

RASED: Deliberate silence on the discussions of the Parliament and the Government on the increase of electricity prices.

RASED: Lethargy of the Permanent Office in forming a Committee of Inquiry on power management.

RASED: The Executive Office discussed the approval of imposing a monetary penalty for MP absence during meetings.

RASED: The lack of a transferring the Municipal and Decentralization Law to the Parliament are not in line with the position expressed by the King in his Throne Speech.

RASED: Recommends not to close the Joint Parliamentary Committee with the Prime Minister during the discussion on electricity price spikes.

During the 10th and 11th weeks of the Second Ordinary Session, the Executive Office discussed the recurring lack of the legal quorum being reached during the sessions of the House of Representatives and Committee meetings, and how to reduce this phenomenon.

While the Government failed to fulfill its promise to refer the Municipal and Decentralization Laws to the House of Representatives before the end of the last year, 2014, the Administrative Committee preempted the legal transfer of these laws and requested that Prime Minister Dr. Abdullah Nsour chair the legislative meetings of this committee.

After an entire year, the government still has not transferred the Draft Municipal and Decentralization Laws to the Parliament, despite having expressed its intention to do so before the end of the year on numerous occasions. This will place the House in a condition of stalemate upon approval of the laws, more so due to these laws having great importance and requiring long discussions.

The Executive Office discussed the phenomenon of lacking the legal quorum in meetings, and found that the majority of MPs are deeply convinced that it is necessary to take punitive measures against those who are responsible therefore. In this regard it has been decided to impose a monetary penalty to be deducted from the MPs' transportation allowance. There is no doubt this phenomenon problems in the meetings of the House and the Permanent Committee. Thus this measure represents an important and positive step, especially because it has been included in the Internal Regulations.

The bad weather conditions the Kingdom faced deeply affected meetings and the lack of the legal quorum therein. RASED observed that many Committees transformed their meetings into consultative meetings due to this lack of quorum.

It was in this context that the meeting of the Economic and Investment Committee with the Amman Stock Exchange, the Securities Committee and the Security Depository Center took place, as only the Chairman of the Committee was present. The total absence of committee members reflects the lack of seriousness to institutionalize the work of the Committee itself. During its meeting the Temporary Securities Law No. 76 of 2002 was discussed.

The Parliamentary Agriculture Committee held a meeting during the 10th week during which it analyzed some of the issues related to the sector and it stated that it is necessary that the Government elaborates a new Farmers Association Law or provides a memorandum.

The Legal Committee and the Health and Environment Committee formed a Joint Committee to study the amended version of the Jordan Pharmacists Association Law of 2014.

During the 11th week, the Legal Committee started to discuss the amended version of the Shari'ah Courts Law in the presence of numerous specialists.

Also during this week, some committee meetings were closed to the media and the RASED team in a clear and disturbing manner. An example of this is the Joint Committee meeting on electricity price spikes where both media and RASED were prevented access. However, a number of MPs leaked details of the meeting, indicating the absence of secrecy and confidentiality of content discussed in these meetings.

Meetings of some Committees failed to take place due to various reasons, amongst which the lack of reaching the legal quorum.

RASED recommends that the government work to increase its transparency, underlining the need of convening future Joint Committee meetings in the presence of the Prime Minister, such as the one scheduled for next Monday January 19th, and allow the media and RASED access.

The National Steering Committee also held its meeting in which the Law of Audiovisual Media was discussed behind closed doors, before calling for a last consultative meeting in the Akef Al-Fayez Chamber to listen to representatives of the audiovisual sector about obstacles they face and their opinions on the Law.

The behavior of the committees as described above does not enhance transparency, as is enshrined in the principles of the current Parliament; from the importance of the right of citizen access to information and the performance of their representatives in the Parliament. In this regard, RASED stresses the necessity to hold open parliamentary meetings to promote transparency, as reflected in the improvement of the legislative and regulatory performances of the House of Representatives.

Despite more than a week having passed since the recommendation of the House to form a Committee of Inquiry on energy management having been formulated and delegating the Permanent Office with its appointment, no decision has been announced in this regard during the meeting of the Permanent Office held last week.

The choice of the United States Women's Initiative in Public Life to rate MP Wafa' Bani Mustafa amongst the top 50 of international women's personalities and leaders of change in their communities to become leading societies in 2050, represents an extremely positive step for the 17th Parliament in general, and in particular for female MPs and Jordanian women. Moreover, it is an outstanding example that should be emulated at national, regional and international level to boost efforts supporting Jordanian women.

It is noteworthy that this initiative has been realized by a civil body comprised of a number of senior US university professors, activists of the voluntary sector, which focuses on developing and supporting the role of the women in different countries of the world who play a key role in promoting effective changes in their societies in various fields.