

## **RASED for Parliamentary Monitoring Program**

### **5<sup>th</sup> Weekly Report on the Performance of the 17<sup>th</sup> Jordanian Parliament during its 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session**

#### **December 6, 2014**

#### Key Summary Points:

- RASED calls upon Parliament to come to swift decisions about issues regarding its code of conduct and internal bylaws.
- A dispute on the floor of the House of Representatives during the week led to the infringement of MP's rights to express themselves and an MP speaking out against the women's quota in parliament.
- A number of MPs went against the internal bylaws of the house by attempting to register in more than one bloc.
- 6 MPs resigned from the committee on national direction.
- The Committee on Foreign Affairs closed the doors of its meetings to monitors and the media.
- RASED calls upon the House of Representatives to protect its reputation and prestige by working to end verbal violence in its chambers.
- Absences from committee meetings hinder their performance and delay a number of their meetings.

#### RASED

During the 5th Week of the 2nd Ordinary Session, events occurring on the floor of the House of Representatives raised a need for the House to adopt a code of conduct for MPs to deal with issues not sufficiently covered by the Internal Bylaws of the Parliament. In particular, the issues of absenteeism and verbal violence must be addressed quickly.

During the 5th week of the session, the House of Representatives took a decision to ban MPs from raising banners under the parliament dome during sittings.

During Tuesday's regulatory session, a dispute between MPs led to MPs attempting to keep each other from speaking freely, which violates Constitutional Article 87, which states that "Every member of the Senate and the House of Representatives has the freedom to speak and express opinions within the limits of the internal bylaws for the Parliament, which should specify that members may not be held accountable for voting or opinions presented during Parliamentary business." An MP also spoke out against the women's quota in Parliament.

RASSED believes that it is possible for MPs to engage in productive dialogue without insulting one another. At the same time, RASSED believes that freedom of expression must be protected if the parliament is to be a bastion of democracy. The resort to verbal violence or any of its forms creates chaos, wastes energy, wastes time, and fosters a spirit of vengeance among MPs. The immunity of speech granted by MPs is given to them to present their opinions on issues related to parliamentary business, and should not be abused to for other purposes.

RASSED recommends that the parliament decide on a code of conduct in order to protect its reputation and prestige. Taking steps to end verbal and physical violence between members of the parliament will prevent MPs from sowing chaos and will enhance their abilities to act as role models for their constituents. RASSED notes the importance of investigating the causes of the prevalence of parliamentary violence in a serious way and considering possible responses. RASSED believes that it is not enough to simply address last week's case, but that comprehensive efforts should be taken to address the overall problem and ensure that those violating the internal bylaws are punished firmly and decisively.

One of the most significant events of the 5th week was Tuesday's oversight sitting, during which MPs were meant to ask 23 questions to the government. The session was not completed, however, because of a dispute between MPs that involved verbal violence and led to chaos among the MPs and premature adjournment of the session.

During the 5th week of the session, different committees sat for meetings and discussions on various issues. The Finance Committee discussed the draft law for the general state budget, and the draft law for the budgets of independent agencies. The Finance Committee opened its meetings to the press RASED, whereas the Foreign Affairs committee held sessions closed to the media and monitoring teams.

The rest of the committees held legislative meetings to discuss issues on the legislative agenda, and the Legal Committee immediately held meetings and approved a draft law on Fatwas [Islamic Legal Rulings]. The Legal Committee also held a joint meeting with the Economic and Investment committee, where they discussed 3 agreements for cooperation in oil exploration signed by the Natural Resources Authority that the government had canceled. During the meeting, a series of questions were directed from the members of the Committee to the Minister of Energy to obtain technical information indicating the reasons for the cancellation of these agreements.

The committee of Public Services and Transportation held a meeting and discussed the formation of its agenda for the session. The laws put on the agenda included Temporary Law No. 51 (2007) on Public Transportation for Passengers within Greater Amman; Temporary Law No 33 (2010) on Public Transportation for Passengers; Temporary Law No. 40 (2010) on the Jordanian Railway Agency; the draft amendments to the Roadways Law (2009); the Draft Law for Regulation of the Construction Sector (2009); and the Draft Law for International Transportation through Various Means.

The Committee on Health and Environment held a meeting and decided to start early next week to discuss and decide on provisions of the temporary Law No. 79 (2001) of the Food Control Law. The Administrative Committee for the parliament met and discussed its agenda for the 2nd Ordinary Session. The Administrative Committee also announced that it was still receiving complaints on various issues from private and public sector employees, and it resolved to investigate them and find solutions to them.

In addition, the Committee on Labor and Social Development held an oversight meeting in which it discussed the problem of the workers' strikes in the Aqaba container port. The discussion was inconclusive.

The Transparency and Integrity Committee held a meeting and elected leadership positions. MP Mustafa al Rawashdeh unanimously won the chairmanship, while MP Hind al Fayyiz, won vice chair and MP Mohammed al Zaboun won rapporteur.

The Committee on Rural Areas and Badia met and elected its leadership positions. MP Habas al Shabeeb won the chair, MP Sa'id al Zuweida won vice chair, and MP Dayfullah al Khaledi won rapporteur.

The Committee on National Direction faced a crisis as 6 of its members resigned, forcing the it to postpone its meetings until next week and to plan to address the problem of resignations.

Most of the parliamentary committees saw absences from a large number of their meetings. The Transparency and Integrity Committee and the Energy Committee were both left without their quorums and had to postpone meetings.

During the week, the period for forming parliamentary blocs ended, according to Article 26 in the Internal Bylaws of the parliament which stipulates that blocs or coalitions representing 10% or more of House members can register their formation within 30 days of the start of the

session. At the end of the deadline, the parliament decided to extend the period by two days, because many MPs waited until the last day to register. The decision of MPs to register on the last day of the deadline created confusion in the parliament. Some MPs registered in more than one bloc and some attempted to resign from their blocs, going against the Internal Bylaws which state that an MP shall not join two blocs at the same time or resign from his or her bloc until the end of the session.

RASED calls for the House to reconsider its Internal Bylaws and amend a number of articles that have been proven difficult to implement. Parliamentary blocs should be formed before the start of the parliamentary session, so that the Executive Office (whose composition depends in part on the distribution of parliamentary blocs) can be formed quickly. RASED calls upon the Parliament to keep in mind the words of Speaker of the House Eng. Atef al Tarawneh, who called for the parliament to amend its bylaws to hasten the reform process and open up the door to future progress.