

## **RASED for Parliamentary Monitoring Program 8<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 27, 2014**

- There is a lack of transparency in most of the committee meetings in the House of Representatives
- MPs and parliamentary blocs released statements on behalf of the captured Jordanian pilot Moath Kasasbeh
- There was a lack of parliamentary oversight work during the 8th week
- Discussions on the Draft Audiovisual Media Law were held outside of official parliament sittings, limiting the freedom for all MPs to take part in the discussions

During the 8th week of the 2nd Ordinary Session, the Parliament succeeded in passing the Income Tax Law for 2014. The discussions on the draft law took place over the course of 14 sittings, 6 of which took place during the previous extra-ordinary session.

During the week, the House did not complete its oversight sitting that had been convened. Although there had been 34 MP questions on the agenda, 3 interpellations, and other business, these were not completed. The House was able to discuss only 16 questions, and two of them (from MPs Mohammed al Riyati and Mufleh al Rahimi) were converted to interpellations.

It became clear in the 8th week that committees are still having issues reaching quorums of members for their meetings, in part because of the fact that committee meetings are still scheduled at the same time and that a lack of sufficient meeting spaces makes it confusing to find committee meetings, which reduce attendance and have a great

negative effect on the work of the committees. RASED noted that the activities and meetings of most of the permanent committees are on Sundays and Wednesdays in conjunction with the sittings of the House and are often scheduled simultaneously with one another. As a result, MPs are members of more than one committee are forced to attend part of one meeting to make it possible to attend the other meeting going on simultaneously. This leads to a lack of quorums for committees and weakens that ability of the committees to work on the laws on their agendas. It also prevents MPs from outside the committees from participating in the discussions, which distracts from the overall quality of discussions about the issues in the House. RASED calls on the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Permanent Office to put mechanisms in place to enable committees to overcome the present problems with attendance.

In the past week different committees of the House held meetings. One of the most significant events was the Finance Committee's decision to bar the press and RASED from entering its meetings held to discuss and listen to the government's response to its notes regarding the General State Budget for Fiscal Year 2015. The Finance Committee had earlier decided to halt discussions on the budget pending the government's response. The commission only suspended journalists from attending sessions only this week, and it opened its meeting with the Finance Minister to the press. A joint subcommittee of the Legal Committee and the Committee on Public Freedoms began to study the Draft Amended Political Parties law with the attendance of the Chairman of the Committee on National Dialogue Taher Masri, the Minister on Political and Parliamentary Affairs Khalid al Khalaldeh, the Commissioner of the National Center for Human Rights Musa Burayzatm, a member of the Independent Electoral Commission Hani Musaliha and representatives of political parties, trade unions and activists. The Islamic Action Front received an invitation to attend the meeting but did not attend. Nationalist and Leftist parties submitted notes on the draft laws.

During the week, the Administrative Committee held two separate meetings specifically for discussions on the Amended Law for Military Pensions and the Law on Administration of Cities, Villages, and Buildings. The committee approved the law on Military Pensions and deferred the discussion on the Administration of Cities, Villages, and Buildings in order to ensure that it would be compatible with the Municipalities Law and the Decentralization Law when received from the government at a later time.

The legal committee approved draft amendments to the Law on Public Security for 2014, and draft amendments to the Law on the Hashemite Commission for Injured Soldiers for 2014 and the draft amendments to the Law on the National Commission for Demining and Rehabilitation.

During the week the Committee on National Direction and Media discussed draft amendments for the Law on Press and Publications in the presence of the Minister for Media Affairs Mohammed al Momani and Head of the Audio and Visual Communications Commission Amjad al Qadi . They undertook a discussion of temporary law No. 71 on Audio Visual Communications for the year 2002. It is notable that there was a complete lack of representatives of the media sector at these meetings.

The Committee on Organization and Behavior began to conduct a discussion on a code of conduct and order for the House of Representatives, and the committee looked at proposals made by members of the House to the committee referring to amendments of the code of conduct.

The Economics and Investment Commission undertook a discussion about draft amendments to the Law for Standards and Measures for 2008.

The Committee on Health and Environment held a meeting for a brainstorming discussion about the Temporary Law No. 79 (2001) for Food Controls before taking a decision on it.

For oversight functions, the Committee on Agriculture and Water met with the Minister of Agriculture to discuss issues related to agriculture issues and animal resources. The Committee on Education and Development and the Committee on Culture, Youth, and Sport held a joint meeting with economic expert Dr. Khaled al Wazani to review an evaluation of the budget for 2015. The Committee on Energy and Mineral Resources discussed a draft partnership agreement between the Ministry of Energy and the Transeuro Energy Corporation to develop petroleum production in the Hamza Field area. This meeting was held with the attendance of the General Director of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Ghaleb M'uabira, representatives of the Transeuro Energy Corp. (Canada), and a number of experts and appointees in the field of energy. The committee also held another session in the presence of the Transport Minister, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Energy, and a number of specialists in order to discuss the falling price of petroleum derivatives and its effects on various public services and goods.

The Committee on Public Services and Transportation held a meeting to discuss issues related to public transportation in the kingdom and to study current state of tourism in Jordan. The Committee on Women and Family Affairs met with the rapporteur of the Committee on the Jordanian National Commission for Women's Issues, where they examined a number of women's issues.

The 8th week saw movement among MPs regarding the issue of the Jordanian fighter pilot Moath Kasasbeh, who was captured last week by the Daesh [ISIS] organization. A number of Parliamentary Blocs released statements regarding Moath's capture.