

RASED for Parliamentary Monitoring Program

First weekly report on the performance of the Parliament

during the 2nd Ordinary Session

Saturday, November 8, 2014

During the first week of the 2nd Ordinary Session of the 17th Jordanian Parliament, the most notable activity was the successful election of the Parliament's Permanent Office, consisting of a chairman, first and second vice chairs, and assistants. The formation of the permanent office was done in direct response to the Throne Speech.

During its first week there was discussion among MPs regarding composition of the standing committees (of which there are 20) and their members, chairs, and rapporteurs. A number of MPs and blocs were observed attempting to make deals and agreements to form parliamentary committees outside of the election procedures mended by the parliamentary bylaws. Article 61 of these bylaws stipulates that "the permanent committee should consist of at least 5 members and at most 11, with its composition decided on by the executive office based on proportional representation of the blocs."

RASED recognizes that informal deal making in the parliament is a violation of this provision. The provision mandates that the executive office of the assembly use a proportional representation system to allocate committee membership among blocs and independent candidates, but so far this has not been done.

During the coming session, the House of Representatives must discuss a package of legislation related to various concerns of Jordan's citizens, including energy, investment, the salary law, the parties law, the general budget, budgets for government bodies, and other issues.

The launch of the 2nd Ordinary Session of the 17th Parliament saw a

number of MPs pose questions to the government. RASSED believes that the House of Representatives ought to assign the utmost importance to the oversight aspect of its work. RASSED suggests that the House of Representatives' permanent office hold three meetings per week with an aim to support the House's oversight work and afford MPs more opportunities to participate in it.

It is RASSED's view that the council must give the utmost importance to its role in overseeing executive bodies. The council should also specify procedures for working with emergency issues that may be added to the council's agenda. These procedures may include specifying the number of MPs who may speak on an emergency issue and creating conditions so that issues are not left unresolved. This is in keeping with parliamentary norms and traditions developed in previous councils that specified how many representatives of blocs and independent MPs could speak about urgent items. The procedures could also specify whether emergency issues should be included repeatedly on future agendas, and could create conditions for officials to respond to the parliament in cases when ministers are reluctant to respond to MPs.

At the beginning of the 2nd Ordinary Session, RASSED calls for the parliament to commit to publishing the names of the MPs who have either excused or unexcused absences throughout the session. RASSED calls on the parliament to prevent any attendance issues that might hinder the operations of the House of Representatives by affecting the body's legal quorum, and for the parliament to take disciplinary measures against MPs violating parliamentary bylaws regarding attendance.