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Jordanian Parliament Monitor

Fourth Report of Parliamentary Monitoring

**Second Year
Fifteenth Lower House**

5/10/2008 - 5/2/2009

8/6/2009 - 10/8/2009

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Introduction

This report covers the second year of the fifteenth Lower House, including the second ordinary session (5/10/2008-5/2/2009), the first extraordinary session of the second session (8/6/2009-10/8/2009), and the intervals in between and aftermath period.

As there are certain important issues that are not limited to the second year but common with the first year and previous houses of representatives, the report will consider them from the perspective of overall parliamentary performance.

1- General Appraisal

In order to appraise the legislative performance of the Lower House, the key available indicator is the number of laws passed by the House. Although important, such an indicator is of limited use because the number of laws passed does not necessarily reflect the volume and quality of the legislative effort put in to this exercise. In fact, there are tens of laws or provisional laws that involve only an amendment of a limited number of articles.

In its second ordinary session, the Lower House passed 21 laws, including one that was returned from the Senate. In the second extraordinary session, 15 laws were passed including three returned from the Senate. The Lower House completed debates on the Audit Bureau reports for the years 2000-2007 as well as the report for 2008.

Thus, the Lower House passed 38 laws in its second year compared to 64 laws passed in its first year; i.e. a small yield that does not go far beyond half what the House achieved in its first year.

Appraising legislative performance entails the examination of the level of the legislative decisions—their nature, role in democratizing political life, and the contributions of the representatives to help issue them. Most often, the legislative process needs certain periods of time to show effect- negative or positive. In addition, legislation must be examined to assure its harmony with international criteria.

Nevertheless, approaching this type of appraisal is usually faced with several challenges resulting, in the first place, from the individuality of the Lower House and the absence of partisan blocs (with the exception of the Islamic Action Front).

Moreover, the inactivated e-voting mechanism at the House renders the analytical process incapable of measuring the rate of the representatives' participation in passing the legislative piece. Voting by raising hands is only meant to verify whether there is a majority of votes or not.

The fact that the e-voting mechanism is still inactive makes it impossible to identify the pros; it does not provide for monitoring legislative attitudes of representatives; nor does it help to identify the socio-political background of representatives supporting each of the laws or resolutions issued by the Lower House.

There are several examples of the minor role that the Lower House assumes in: improving the level of laws submitted, enhancing the laws democratic attributes, and ensuring their harmony with international criteria. Some examples are the amendments introduced to the laws of associations, public meetings and labor.

Less than one year after publishing the Law of Associations No. 51 for 2008 in the Official Gazette, the Government decided to partially amend it, in response to criticism voiced by local civil society organizations and international human right organizations. On the first day of the second extraordinary session, this same issue instigated significant parliamentary debate voiced by Mamdouh Abbadi who addressed his colleagues saying, “we need not accelerate enactment of laws; the process must be given the time it requires in order to enact laws that can stand for four years without the need to be amended.”

The Relationship with Civil Society:

On the other side, it is notable that the standing committees of the Lower House have shown further openness to and acceptance of inviting representatives of civil society organizations to provide feedback with respect to laws of direct relevance to them. As a result, however, the

relationship of the standing committees to civil society organizations is still a matter of formalities only. For instance, a coalition of civil society organizations prepared an integrated draft law of the civil society organizations in cooperation with the Ministry of Political Development and representatives of other relevant ministries. This draft law is aimed to replace the old Law of Associations No. 33 for 1966. However, the Lower House supported the Government, which produced its own draft law of associations—the same law that had to be amended less than one year after its enactment.

With respect to the Public Meeting Law No. 7 for 2004, King Abdullah II ordered on Independence Day 2008 to “Facilitate

Approve the “Code of Conduct” for the parliamentary operation;

Public Meetings.” Thus, the Government introduced some formal amendments to the Law and submitted them to the Parliament in the first extraordinary session (of the first year). For

their part, the civil society organizations suggested a compromise that would entail notifying the administrative governor of a public meeting and requiring prior approval for organizing marches and demonstrations. A good number of representatives supported such amendments. However, the parliamentary majority, as was the case with the government, opted not to respond to the Royal Order to “facilitate meetings.”

Regarding the amendments to the Law of Labor No. (8) for 1996 which, in part, called for providing further protection to expatriates, the Lower House refused the demand to allow expatriate workers to join Jordanian trade unions. In fact, this demand is in line with international instruments and aims to help Jordan avoid international criticism for the treatment of expatriates. Again, the Lower House did not solicit the opinion of trade unions, which were the

authority reference in this area. In fact, these unions requested that the House support the amendment that was introduced by the Government in the first extraordinary session (of the first year) because it would have further empowered them to defend the rights of expatriate workers.

2- The Legislative Role

Role of Standing Committees:

The level of legislative achievement by the Lower House depends, in the first place, on its standing committees and their proactive attitudes. They are the channel through which all legislation goes for consideration and they suggest relevant amendments to be submitted for public debate at public meetings under the Parliament Dome in preparation for voting and submittal to the Senate.

In the first ordinary session, the Lower House Speaker decided not to convene one of the weekly meetings as scheduled (24.2.2008) because no pieces of legislation were ready for parliamentary debates.

A review of the yield of the standing committees’ deliverables in the second year of the Lower House reveals that the 69 laws accumulating from the previous session remained almost the same—dropping to 67 laws. This means that the effort exerted in the second year could barely cover the new draft laws referred by the Government to the standing committees.

These standing committees, in fact, face some problems, including the lack of quorum to convene meetings and failure to deliver. Beyond that, the most obvious confusion for the House is the repeated debate of decisions made by the committees with respect to pieces of legislation. Such debate takes place in public and is a waste of time. A solution could be to form committees on a representative basis to include all opinions and trends in order to focus plenary meetings on the committees’ decisions rather than opening the floor for a full debate on the legislation. There could be limited exceptions provided for in the House Bylaw.

As per table No. (1), which monitors the legislative achievement of the Lower House in its second year through the standing committees, some committees face the problem of increasing the number of pieces of legislation put on their agendas, namely, the Legal, Administrative, Health and Environment, and Financial and Economic Committees. On the other hand, some committees do not have any issues to be involved in. These include the Committees of Public Freedoms and Citizen Rights, Palestine, and Rural and Desert Areas.

This status reveals a routine handling of the accumulative legislative file that the Lower House has to look after. They do not think, for instance, of creating ad hoc committees under the already overloaded core committees or seeking the assistance of members of other committees. The Lower House has not taken the initiative to revisit the functions of some committees since the issuance of the House Bylaw in 1996. The Committee of Rural and Desert Areas would have shouldered some part of the Financial and Economic Committee load if it had been assigned with the Economic Development task. In fact, the Financial and Economic Committee itself should be split into two committees: a Financial Committee and an Economic Committee.

It has become urgent to have standing committees as the main platform to discuss and process legislation and issues put on their agendas. Thus, plenary sessions will become a venue in which representatives vote on proposals submitted by committees

Table No. (1)
Deliverables of Parliamentary Committees in the Second Session

No	Committee	Number of Pieces of Legislation at the Beginning of Session	Referred to in the Second Ordinary Session	Completed	Remaining	Added	Completed during the Extraordinary Session	Brought Forward to Third Session
1	Legal	16	6	5	17	1	3	15
2	Financial & Economic	24	7	3	28	2	4	26
3	Arab & International Affairs	1	-	-	1	-	-	1
4	Administrative	10	5	3	12	1	3	10
5	Education, Culture and Youth	1	3	3	1	4	5	-
6	National Guidance	2	2	2	2	-	-	2
7	Health & Environment	10	-	2	8	-	-	8
8	Agriculture & Water	2	2	2	2	-	-	2
9	Labor and Social Development	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
10	Energy and Mineral Wealth	2	-	-	2	1	1	1
11	Public Services, Tourism and Antiquities	1	1	1	1	-	-	1
12	Public Freedoms & Citizen Rights	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	Palestine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	Rural and Desert Areas	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL		69	26	21	74	10	17	67

Proposing Laws:

The House of Representatives usually acts as a partner of the Government in the legislative process as the latter submits the draft laws to it. It does not act as the legislative authority along with the other Parliamentary wing; i.e. the Senate. Accordingly, several issues can be noticed in the way that the House manages its role in proposing laws and dealing with provisional laws, etc.

The legislative role of the House in terms of proposing draft laws is so poor as illustrated in Table (2). During the second ordinary session, proposals were submitted to amend four laws only; each covers only one article.

During the session, the relevant standing committees did not give their opinions in regards to such proposals to be submitted to the House for a decision. No unusual effort was required to justify such a delay, though.

Table No. (2)

Proposals of Laws Submitted to the Relevant Committees during the Second Ordinary Session and the Extraordinary Session

No.	Law	Date Submitted	Proposing Agents	Theme
1	Proposal to amend Article (3) Paragraph (b) of the Law of the Agency of Accrediting Education Institutions	27.10.2008	12 reps	Have the Agency report to the Prime Minister instead of the Higher Education Minister
2	Proposal to amend Article (42) of the Law of Press and Publication	7.11.2008	27 reps	Impermissible arrest of journalists on the grounds of giving opinion in line with any law
3	Proposal to amend Article (19) of the Provisional Law of the Veteran Foundation No. 26 for 1977	9.11.2008	16 reps	It is permissible to collect JD 500 maximum from pension to the other salary they receive
4	Proposal to amend an article of the Law No. (26) of Chambers of Industry	1.12.2008	18 reps	In order to have the branches of establishments pay the required fees in the areas where they are found
5	Propose a draft law to revoke the Peace Treaty	31.5.2009	10 reps	Revoke the treaty in response to Israeli violation thereof
6	A draft law that assures the Arabic identity of the Palestinian cities and villages occupied in 1948	5.8.2009	10 reps	Emphasizing the Arabic identity of the cities and villages occupied in 1948

In the second extraordinary session, two proposals of a political nature were submitted. They required political will rather than a legislative exercise. Both were accepted for some political considerations although the Extraordinary Session did not provide a room for them as it is only engaged in discussing items on its agenda as stipulated in the Royal Decree (Article 82 of the Constitution).

Thus, the total contribution of the fifteenth Lower House in proposing laws during its first and second sessions is limited to two draft laws submitted in the first session: the Draft Law of the Fund of Livestock for 2008 and the Law of Culture Sponsorship. The former was returned from the Senate in the second ordinary session as there was no need for imposing the fees proposed after the prices of feed decreased; and the latter was amended in the second extraordinary session to reduce the rate of fees collected from ads and announcements published in the press, radio, television and public spots from 5 percent to 1 percent. These two draft laws share one thing in common: the imposition of tax on certain economic sectors in favor of other sectors. Seemingly,

The Representative must be restricted to one membership in at least one of the standing committees or the House organs and attend its meetings and participate in its events

this inclination to impose taxes should not be supported as it distorts the taxation regulation of the State. If a sector pays a lower tax than required, the rate of tax imposed thereon can be increased. If the Lower House deems it necessary to support a certain sector, it (the House) can issue a resolution to require the Government to provide resources for this sector promptly or in the following year's budget submission, with no need to enact a law for each case per se.

Provisional Laws:

In relation with provisional laws, the Constitution requires them to be submitted to the Lower House in its first meeting. According to Article (94), the Constitution provides for three choices: the House can approve these laws, amend them, or refuse them. However, in practice, the House introduces a new option not provided for in the Constitution; namely "passing" the provisional laws until the Executive Branch decides their final status. Otherwise, what is the purpose of having provisional laws that date back to 1966? This causes prejudice to the legislative capacity of the Lower House at two levels: first, when the provisional law is kept at the specialized (functional) committee rather than submitting it to the House; second, when the Lower House seizes

the right of the Senate to consider the provisional law. Even if the delayed resolution in relation with some provisional laws does not necessarily entail negative reflections, this does not apply to the Provisional Law of Elections No. 34 for 2001 whereby the fourteenth and fifteenth Houses of Representatives were elected.

Obviously, not discussing the provisional election law is attributed to the fact that there is no "green light" given by the Government in this respect. This cannot justify the elected wing of the Legislative Branch not assuming their role in sponsoring national dialogue to even the playing field to issue a consensual election law taking into consideration the issuance of this law to help advance the partisan and parliamentary life in the Kingdom. The fifteenth Lower House inherited 79 provisional laws from previous houses. Most of these date back to the era of Prime Minister Ali Abu Ragheb when the thirteenth Lower House was dissolved in July 2001 till June 17, 2003 as illustrated in Table No. (3). During the fifteenth House term, the Government of Nader Dahabi issued three provisional laws (the Supplementary Budget, Foreign Stock Exchanges, and Social Security Laws) in the intervals between convening the House. Out of the 82 provisional laws, 52 laws will be brought forward to the sixteenth Lower House as the fifteenth House had already delivered 23 laws during the first year and 7 laws during the second year.

Meetings of the committees must be held as open meetings. Results of their operations, discussions, and voting must be disclosed to the public. Some exceptional cases may be excluded as stipulated in the House Bylaw.

Table No. (3)

Provisional Laws Delivered in the First and Second Years according to the Years of Issuance

No	Year	Beginning of House Term	Laws issued in 2008-2009	Delivered in Session I	Delivered in Session II	Brought Forward to Session III
1	1966-1979*	6	-	-	-	6
2	1989	1	-	-	1	0
3	1993	1	-	-	-	1
4	1997	1	-	-	-	1
5	2001	15	-	4	2	9
6	2002	24	-	8	1	15
7	2003	25	-	6	1	18
8	2005	1	-	1	-	-
9	2007	5	-	4	-	1
10	2008	-	2	-	2	-
11	2009	-	1	-	-	1
TOTAL		79	3	23	7	52

(*) Laws issued during this period are basically the Provisional Law No. 79 for 1966- the Law of Zoning Cities and Villages and Buildings. Amendments were introduced to it through five provisional laws in the years 1967, 1973, 1975, 1978, 1979. The original law and the laws amending it are still valid as provisional laws

Performance Problems

In its second session, the Lower House showed some defective performance, namely, problematic dealing with the press in response to the media's comments on the findings and results of opinion polls implemented by several research centers revealing the dissatisfaction of Jordanians with respect to the performance of the Lower House. A parliamentary majority voted to return the law submitted by the Government to cancel the 5 percent tax imposed on ads and announcements in the media.

In its second session, the House also missed the opportunity to decide on major laws such as the Law of Social Security, the Law of Tax, and the Bylaw of the Lower House. Some representatives opted not to discuss the new Social Security Law during the session for reasons that are unclear. In fact, the law was not debated despite the substantial need to discuss it in order to protect the resources of the Social Security Fund from depletion. Thus, the Government was "involved" in issuing a provisional law amending the Social Security Law to handle urgent issues in the Law.

The House discussed only 11 articles in the Income Tax Law before the Government recommended termination of the Session; a sign of not trusting the House to end the discussion of the draft law and submitting it to the Senates within an acceptable time interval even though the House held six addition sessions to the weekly scheduled ones.

This extraordinary session is the second to lapse during the House term without succeeding in discussing the amendments to the House Bylaw. Taking into consideration that the Fourteenth House (2003-2007) missed the opportunities to amend its Bylaw, one can infer that the representatives did not give the required attention to this issue. Actually the problem here is that the amendment of the Bylaw is an extreme necessity to implement the role of the House in line with a new vision and method of operation, which makes it impossible to understand the reason for postponing such a vital issue.

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Create a Legislative Bureau (a legal support unit) in the House with the task of providing assistance to MPs to draft proposed laws. Members of this Bureau must have experience in Law and specialization in relevant fields.

3- General Budget

Usually debates of the general budget take at least three days⁽¹⁾ and come second to the confidence in the cabinet sessions in terms of attention it yields from the public opinion and the press. According to the Jordanian Parliamentary tradition, this is a platform to discuss the general policy of the Government as well as the State in general. Although the Speaker of the Lower House shall have the right to close debates when deeming the topic as exhaustively discussed, he cannot close the debates of the general budget unless all those requesting to speak have done so as is the case in the debates of the Constitution, confidence, and public debates.

Looking at the trends and directions of the debates of the general budget for 2009, the main remarks to tell include wasting time and jeopardizing duties of the parliamentary function due to the long lists of demands of a certain area or group that are recited under the dome. Should this be seen as a token of the representative care for the demands of his/her constituency or even province.

Although the Government discarded such demands in its response, the general budget yielded a high confidence with 77 out of 89 representatives present voting in support thereof; 9 objecting to it; and 3 abstaining from voting.

The essential reason that the representatives' ability to affect the general budget trends is limited is that the constitutional restrictions of the General Budget Law and the fact that the plenary discussion of the budget takes place only after the budget has been completed. Representatives can only intervene in reducing expenditures.⁽²⁾

Article 112- Paragraph 3 of the Constitution prohibits the transfer of any amount under the

expenditure section in the general budget from one chapter to another unless provided by law. Paragraph (4) of the same Article stipulates that when debating the general budget law, the Parliament shall have the right to reduce the expenditures in chapters as deemed in favor of the public interest and that it shall not have the right to increase these expenditures through an amendment or a separately submitted proposal.

In this context, the Constitution turns the representatives into "junior" players when it comes to the budget issues. Even when they made a decision to reduce 10% of expenditures in the 2009 budget (one of the rare occasions of enforcing a reduction) this expansive budget did not provide for any precautions in light of the international financial crisis. The representatives excluded, in the first place, the item of wages and salaries and voted on items with no specific numbers. The issue of distributing the rate was left to Government discretion, with the House approving of excluding the Ministries of Defense and Interior and the social safety net expenditures from the reduction. In addition, the Lower House discussed the general budget as estimated figures leaving the final statement of account which provides the actualized figures.

The Lower House must be a real partner in determining the general budget trends until the Constitution is amended to this effect. Amendments must be introduced to the House Bylaw in order to help enhance the role of the House in the budget debates and approval. Accordingly, the Financial and Economic Committee must be split into a financial committee and an economic committee. Some parliamentary proposals call for creating an ad hoc committee for the general budget. The Financial Committee and representatives of the Parliamentary blocs must be permitted to review the draft budget submission before officially referring it to the Parliament in the form of a draft law. This will make it possible to negotiate early with the government regarding the amendments deemed urgent and necessary

(1) The general budget debates started by reading the report of the Financial and Economic Committee on the General Budget Draft Law for 2009 on 23.11.2008 and continued for three other days- 25,26 and 27.11.2008 in morning and evening sessions when 89 interventions were made with 6 representatives submitting their interventions in written to the General Secretariat of the House.

(2) Upon completing public debates of the budget, the Lower House can propose laws to create new items of expenditure in compliance with Paragraph (4) of Article (112) of the Constitution. However, this right is being exercised in practice.

by the Financial Committee and representatives of parliamentary blocs, particularly allowing the transfer of expenditure items between budget lines, specifically capital spending, to serve the more urgent national priorities.

The closer this directive is approached, the more effective will be the Lower House in discussing and approving the budget. Most importantly, the House must intervene in a timely manner. This would hopefully put an end to the unfortunate traditional role of representatives as seekers of governmental services and benefits rather than partners in decision-making.

In order to deliver the parliamentary service demands, a huge budget is required. Nonetheless, it has become a matter of norm and tradition. This was stressed by Representative Amneh Gharaghir when she said in her intervention that if she had included all the demands of her constituency, she would be in need of a separate budget per se. Still, this awareness did not prevent her from submitting a 16-item list of demands.

Demands of the Representatives in relation to their electoral constituencies and areas are diversified and include all health, education, infrastructure and development services. These include constructing agricultural roads, asphalted roads, establishing or upgrading health centers and opening schools. Representatives want a share of the senior government positions, they want to establish hospitals and open universities/colleges in their districts, but national standards need to be used in these cases.

Other than the above mentioned, and although the service demands of the Representatives cannot be realized on the ground, they still put lists together and recite them before the House. For instance, Yasin Zu'bi, when submitting the list of services required for his constituency, declared that he was sure that no addition can be made unless upon a law as the budget has been already issued. Awwad Zawaydeh mentioned that the list of demands of his constituency is a long one and just reciting it needs "hours." Then, he assured that if he did recite it, no slight change can be seen on the ground. He declared, "the Government has already set its

budget and resolved the priorities of expenditure."

However, the head of the Islamic Action Front Bloc- Sheikh Hamzeh Mansour was the most direct when he stressed in his personal intervention that he would contact the concerned ministers to implement the demands of his constituency that were approved in the plans and to include the unlisted items in the future budget.

Nevertheless, some Representatives tend to complain that the Government ignores demands that have been made repeatedly without taking into consideration that they have submitted demands in appropriate timing and condition. For instance, Najeh Momani complaint from the demands required for Ajloun Governorate are the same he discussed a year ago without achieving any of them. Similarly, Representative Moh'd Al-Haj complaint that "Rusaifa has demands that were not achieved although repetitively expressed."

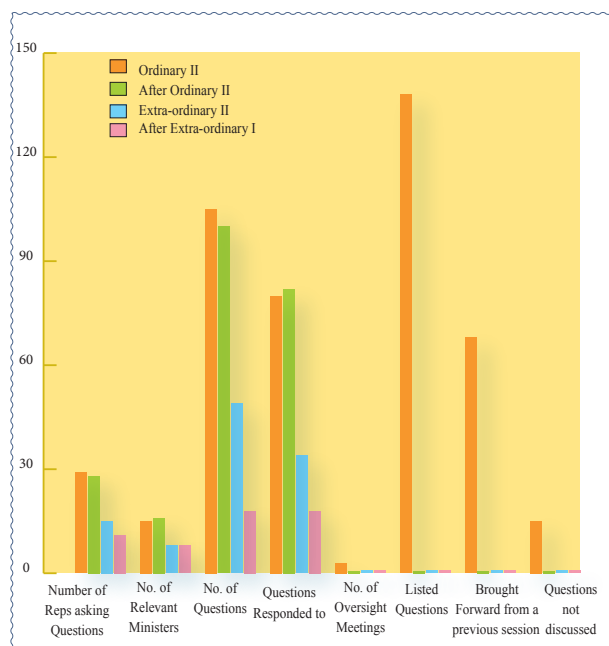
The major demands to which the Government responded were not demands in favor of a certain area; but rather national general demands. The main demands were included in the recommendations of the Financial and Economic Committee with a vast parliamentary majority emphasis.

The alternative for mobilizing service demands for electoral constituencies and areas is to discuss public policies of the Government as long as the Representatives recognize that the budget of the State for the following fiscal year is a socio-economic policy paper. In this context, there are national demands that are supported by a large number of representatives that the Government must respond to in one way or another.

1- Questions

Representatives addressing questions to the Government during the second year of the House term counted for 46 raising 272 questions to the Government, which responded to 214 questions. A total of 138 questions were processed in three sessions designated for questions, interpellations, and proposals of desire including 68 questions from the first year as illustrated in Table No. (4).

The House designated three oversight sessions only for questions and interpellations in its second ordinary session in October 2008, January 2009 and February 2009. A session was scheduled on 12.11.2008 but was not convened due to lack of quorum. Therefore, the questions on its agenda were brought forward to another session. The questions were addressed to the Prime Minister and 20 other ministries. The largest share was that of the Prime Minister with 62.6 percent of questions, as several governmental institutions and departments report directly to the Prime Minister. Ministers receiving more than ten questions included: the Minister of Water (14 questions), Minister of Labor (12 questions), Higher Education (11 questions). Those receiving



5-9 questions were the Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Industry and Trade (9 questions); Minister of Communications (7 questions); Health (6 questions); Minister of Energy and Mineral Wealth and Minister of Awqaf (5 questions);. Another 11 ministers received four (-) questions.

Table No. (4)

Number of Parliamentary Questions Addressed to the Government in the Second Year

Session	Number of Reqs asking Questions	Number of Relevant Ministers	Number of Questions	Questions Responded to	Number of Oversight Meetings	Listed Questions	Brought Forward from a previous session	Questions not discussed
Ordinary II	29	15	105	80	3	138	68	15
After Ordinary II	28	16	100	82	----	----	----	----
Extra-ordinary II	15	8	49	34	----	----	----	----
After Extra-ordinary I	11	8	18	18	----	----	----	----
Total	83 *	47 *	272	214	3	138	68	15

These numbers include repetition as the same Representative can address questions in more than one session. The Minister him/herself can receive questions in more than one meeting. Without repetition, 83 drops to 40 questions and 47 drops to 21 questions.

Lists of Parliamentary Questions reveal that only a few representatives raise questions, while the majority abstain from using this right. Those representatives raising questions along one whole year count for 46; i.e. 64 representatives (58.2%) did not raise any question to the Government. This shows the “idle” parliamentary power taking into consideration that representatives raise questions in their personal

capacity rather than their bloc affiliation.

As illustrated in Table No. (5), parliamentary questions unveil large differences in the degree to which members of parliamentary blocs exercise oversight on the Government through questions. The main irony in this context is that the smallest parliamentary bloc (the Islamic Action Front) comprised of six members only is the bloc which assumes the oversight role the most. Its questions comprise 34.6% of total questions thereby exceeding the National Trend Bloc (49.1% of the House membership); and the national Democratic (13.6% of the House membership). These both marked a share of 21.7% only of total parliamentary questions. However, Al-Ikha' Bloc and Independent MPs raised 26.1% and 17.6% of questions, respectively- a rate that exceeds in several points their membership in the House.

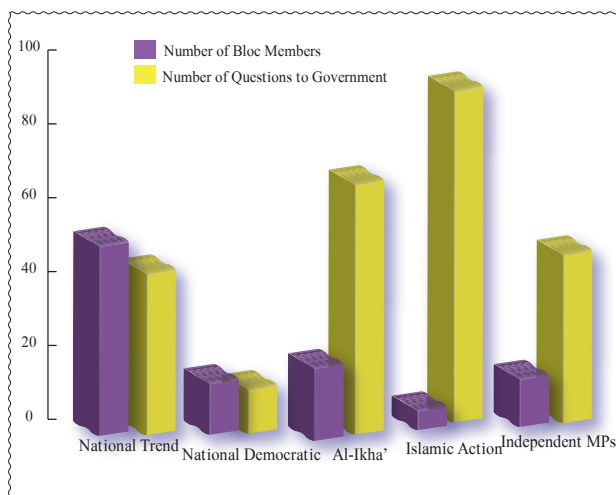
Table No. (5)

Distribution of Questions per Parliamentary Blocs during the Second Year

No	Bloc	Number of Bloc Members	Number of Questions to Government	Bloc's Share of Questions (%)
1	National Trend	54	46	%16.9
2	National Democratic	15	13	%4.8
3	Al-Ikha'	21	71	%26.1
4	Islamic Action	06	94	%34.6
5	Independent MPs	14	48	%17.6
TOTAL		110 Reps	272 Questions	%100

Although questions are the most effective control tool and the most used at the Jordanian Lower House in addition to being an introduction to interpellations, they are not so much important due to the following reasons:

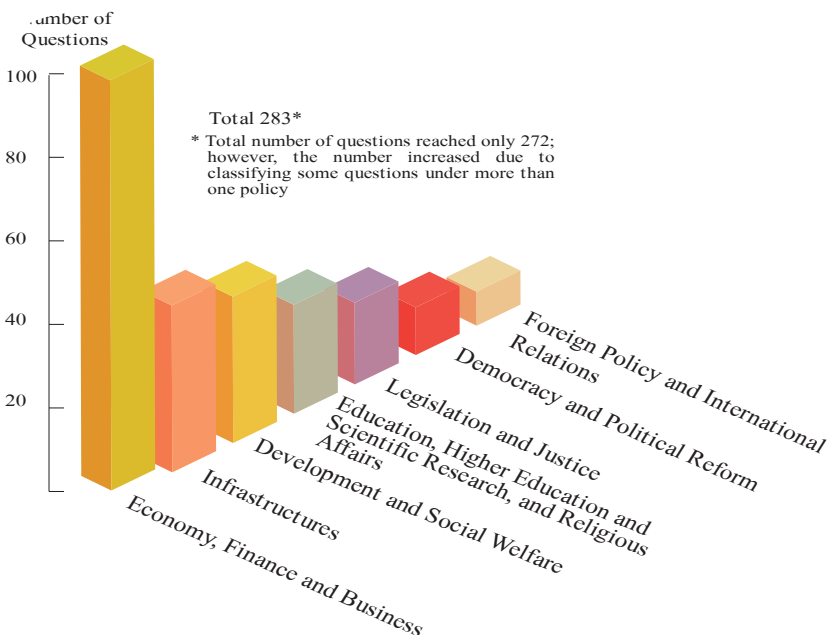
- The Government discards large numbers of parliamentary questions and does not respond to them. These counted for 58 questions (21.3 percent of total questions)b. However, this governmental attitude did not provoke any reaction by the Lower House or even reactions of representatives as individuals. In fact, the House Bylaw provides in its Article 121-b for, "turning the question into an interpellation if the Government does not respond during one month as from the date of receiving the question." Only four representatives exercised this right.
- Only few representatives addressed the largest number of questions to the Government. Only 7 representatives addressed more than 50 percent of questions (55.5 percent).
- The main imbalance in this respect is that the Government takes a long time exceeding the legal interval stipulated in the Bylaw to answer parliamentary questions. This same Bylaw does not identify the frequency of meetings set for this oversight clause; which should not be fewer than one meeting per month.



Moreover, many representatives address non-substantial questions, which renders this oversight void of meaning. Exaggerated requests for personal information, apart from its function and relevance to the general policies of the State, do not give special importance for this oversight role. In fact, such requests yielded different results; which made the House Speaker, Abdul Hadi Majali seek the opinion of the Bureau of Law Interpretation in order to interpret Article 115-c of the Bylaw. The Bureau issued a resolution⁽¹⁾ to prevent the parliamentary question

addressed to the Government from having a request or mentioning the names of people. It is likely that this resolution would be used by future governments to avoid providing information about certain people that might be needed to understand a particular issue.

On the other hand, the distribution of parliamentary questions per general policies as illustrated in Table No. (6) revealed that the component “Economy, Finance and Business” ranks first with 111 questions addressed in this respect. It was followed by the infrastructure component and the development and social welfare components with 49 and 43 questions, respectively. Noticeably, the issue of “Democracy and Political Reform” ranked before the last item with 14 questions only.



**Table No. (6)
Parliamentary Questions per Policies**

No.	Policies	Number of Questions
1	Economy, Finance and Business	111
2	Infrastructures	49
3	Development and Social Welfare	43
4	Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, and Religious Affairs	32
5	Legislation and Justice	24
6	Democracy and Political Reform	14
7	Foreign Policy and International Relations	10
TOTAL		283*

** Total number of questions reached only 272; however, the number increased due to classifying some questions under more than one policy.*

(1) Resolution No. (2) for 2009 issued on 29.7.2009

2- Interpellations

An interpellation is one of the main parliamentary oversight tools. It tests both the representative and the minister as it may result in removing confidence in the relevant minister or in the government as a whole. This explains the limited number of parliamentary questions addressed to the Government and turned into interpellations as illustrated in Table No. (7).

Notwithstanding all the above, few interpellations are really discussed at the Parliament. In fact, none of these interpellations resulted in a confidence vote during the fifteenth house; nor did it do so in the previous houses.

Table No. (7)

Interpellations in the Second Year (5.10.08-5.2.09)

Interpellation by	Minister Involved	Date Submitted	Date of Response	Theme	Session	Result
Nariman Rousan	Energy	12.1.2009	19.1.2009	Minister is still working after having early pension	Ordinary II	Discussed
Bassam Haddadin	Labor	30.10.2008	16.12.2008	Conference of Workers' Federation	Ordinary II	Postponed
Awwad Zawaideh	Finance	28.12.2208	19.1.2009	Concession of the Phosphate Company	Ordinary II	Discussed
Awwad Zawaideh	Energy	28.12.2008	19.1.2009	Violations of Phosphate Co	Ordinary II	Postponed
Awwad Zawaideh	Environment	28.12.2008	19.1.2009	Violations of Phosphate Co	Ordinary II	Postponed
Awwad Zawaideh	Industry and Trade	28.12.2008	19.1.2009	Violations of Phosphate Co	Ordinary II	Postponed
Mahmoud Kharabsheh	Higher Education	26.1.2009	-	Violations at Balqa' University	Ordinary II	Not discussed
Marzouk Da'jah	Social Development	21.5.2009	-	Incidents at Osama bin Zeid Center	After the Ordinary II	Not discussed
Reem Al-Qassem	Social Development	11.6.2009	-	Social Safety Net	Extraordinary II	Not discussed
Salah Zu'ubi	Prime Minister	20.7.2009	-	Administrative Governors	Extraordinary II	Not discussed

The main gap in the issue of interpellation is that the Constitution prohibits discussion of an interpellation for a waiting period of eight days unless the Minister shall deem it necessary to schedule an earlier date. The Constitution does not set a timeline for putting the interpellation for debate at the Parliament. Thus, it is left to the discretion of the House presidency. Most often, delaying debates of the interpellation turns it, as whole or in part, void due to certain developments that can emerge such as referring the issue to the judiciary or a cabinet reshuffle, etc.

The other gap relates to the requirement in the House Bylaw to have the Representative submitting the interpellation inform the House Presidency in writing whether to hold his/her interpellation if not discussed in the session when it was submitted. However, it is better to keep the interpellation listed on the House agenda unless the Representative decides to withdraw it.

Considering the interpellations submitted in the second year, an interpellation must touch upon a substantive issue related to public policies and be clear in terms of purpose and responsibility assignment. Thus, an interpellation would be functional and meaningful.

Noticeably, all interpellations submitted are individual; none of them represent the opinion of a parliamentary group or bloc. Accordingly, a representative must mobilize the largest number of colleagues to support him/her in debating the interpellation. Then, voting support must be provided if necessary. Except for the representative who submitted the interpellation, representatives are not expected to vote to withdraw confidence from a minister if the issue raised does not deserve such a procedure.

It is worth mentioning here that the interpellation by Awwad Zawaideh to the Minister of Finance in relation with the Phosphate concession is an advanced model of interpellations as it relates to a public national case; which made it yield a high level of support from colleagues. The interpellation was based on the fact that the Phosphate Company was exporting “the raw phosphate in general and the uranium one in particular” although no law has been issued to ratify the concession rights. Thus, the Prime Minister- Engineer Nader Dahabi denied the existence of a concession agreement signed with the company. He explained that upon privatization of the company, the cabinet authorized the Minister of Finance to send a letter to provide for some advantages. The Prime Minister promised to review the letter with the Company and inform it that the letter cannot be seen as a concession agreement and that the Government will give the mining right to any company fulfilling terms, criteria and specifications that are transparent and clear to all and that it will refer such a decision to the

House. Thus, Zawaideh postponed his other interpellations to the Ministers of Energy, Environment, and Industry and Trade to be raised during a future oversight meeting.

3- Public Debate

Article (127) of the House Bylaw describes a public debate as “opinion exchange and consultation between the House and the Government.” However, Article (130) of the Bylaw provides for the right of Representatives to “withdraw confidence in the government or the ministers at the end of a public debate.” Therefore, the substantial function of a public debate is to be a tool of oversight on the Government.

As illustrated in Table (8), the public debate requests counted for six during the Ordinary Session II; five were discussed and the sixth was not put on the House agenda.

Table No. (8)
Public Debate Meetings during the Ordinary Session II
(5/10/08 - 5/2/09)

	Theme	Dare of Debate	Number of those requesting discussion	Interventions
1	International financial crisis and its impact on the national economy	3.11.08	22	41
2	Collapse of Stock Exchanges	5.11.08	17	58
		8.11.08		
3	Status of University Education and its Future	24.12.08	21	59
4	Spread of substance abuse and its impact on the Jordanian society	22.12.08	11	35
5	Status of water in the Kingdom	11.1.09	15	38
6	Privatization of the Jordan Post Company	-----	29	-----

Although the general benefits of a plenary discussion cannot be underrated, it becomes meaningless if not held under the framework of parliament's oversight function. In this case, the aspired purpose can be achieved through other methods such as a seminar, a lecture, or even a parliamentary question.

Those requesting a public debate have only to identify the general title of the discussion theme. Then the Government or the concerned minister submits relevant information at the beginning of meeting rather than provide information that must answer the questions on the minds of those requesting the public debate.

It might be a good idea for those requesting a public debate to enclose an explanation of the purposes they seek to achieve from the debate. The difference can be noticed when those requesting a public debate of the so-called collapse of stock exchange issue opted to incorporate a list of explanatory items in the application due to the pressure exercised on them by their voters. The application requested "discussion of the existing economic conditions of citizens especially in relation to the collapse of Stock Exchanges and the loss of rights of thousands of citizens; and the company owners are still free whilst others are imprisoned. The debate must cover the impacts of this crisis on the social life of the Jordanian people and the resulting imbalance in the Jordanian economy as a whole. The Government must be asked to present its plan and opinion to protect Jordanians."

Noticeably, the contributions of those requesting a debate are not always exceptionally good; some of the representatives requesting debate can even be absent from the meetings. The surprising issue, in fact, is that the public debate meetings end with no result in practice. The only thing they achieve is being informed of the governmental policy in relation to the subject matter and giving opinion in this respect as well as voicing their desire to ensure some commitments from the Government.⁽¹⁾

(1) Representative Bassam Haddadin mentioned that since the fourteenth House (2003-2007), an implied consensus emerged between the opposition and the supporters to have the "public debate" end after the Government submits its "statement" on the subject matter without the House expressing its opinion in relation to certain recommendations. He added, "the previous Houses were making specific recommendations to form follow-up committees." Source: *AsSijjel Weekly*, No. 56.

The Lebanese Researcher Raghid Sulh, who is a consultant on Arab Parliamentary Affairs, considers that whenever the Parliamentary blocs and parties have few members and lack coordination, debates go in a direction that does not deal with the control function, which requires the Representative to be highly focused and educated on the debate subject matter.⁽²⁾

Taking into consideration the public debate session on the issue of drugs (substance abuse), the issues that should have attracted the discussions were the "rule of law" and the "esteem of the State," which some of the representatives mentioned in their interventions. For instance, Najeh Al-Momani said, "We hear of spots where drug, and weapon dealers are found; these spots are inaccessible by the public security and customs staff. These dealers face officials with their weapons and no one can seize them." He stressed, "Some influential people defend these people and protect them."

Representative Abdul Fattah Ma'aita who is a retired brigade stressed the need to, "Fiercely fight those who support protect the drugs dealers wherever they should be found." Similarly, Representative Abdullah Gharaibeh, a retired general from the Public Security said, "The real players in the drugs field in the country have become influential people."

Respect for the state ("*Haybat al-Dawlah*") was the topic of the intervention by Representative Hashem Shboul, who stressed that public security staff are being resisted on streets when they go to accompany a defendant. He reiterated the need to restore the public's regard for the state.

Quoting these interventions is meant to remind of the fact that if the House takes specific procedures to face such phenomena that are

(2) Sulh adds, "In advanced democracies, the parliaments of which have large parties, each party can appoint a spokesman in its name to voice its opinion in relation to the several issues of government; and thus discuss things with the Government based on his specialty and experience. As for the Arab Parliaments, which do not have such parties and blocs, the Representative often discusses issues outside his specialty with the Government, turning the discussions into general conversations." Sulh considers that the House spends a long time in lengthy speeches that are, most often, not necessary. Source: *Towards Developing the Arab Parliamentary Operation*, the Lebanese Lower House and the UNDP, Beirut, 2000, page 244.

being diagnosed, it would be possible to avoid the social violence that has become recently noticeable in several areas in the country.

Similarly, the Representatives did not make use of their power in relation with the international financial crisis to push the Government towards responding to demands that yield a large consensus as is the case with the issue of price monitoring as many of those submitting interventions complained that prices of grocery stuff did not decrease although the prices of fuel dropped and international food stuff prices dropped. Specific proposals were submitted in this respect including creating a higher institution to monitor markets (Moh'd Al-Badri and Yousef Al-Qurneh); issue the Law of Consumer Protection (Yousef Al-Qurneh); restore the Ministry of Supply (Abdul Karim Dughmi and Moh'd Abu Hdeib).

After 11 months, the Government had to take some procedure to provide a state of balance for the market by creating the national company for food security. This company will have its staff from the military with a 35% share for the Government in its capital. Such a company will be responsible for importing food stuff and market them for reasonable prices.

4- Reports of the Audit Bureau

The fifteenth Lower House achieved an unprecedented accomplishment when the Financial and Economic Committee discussed in two years the Audit Bureau reports for the years 2000-2007; which enabled the House to discuss the report in its meeting on 5.7.2009 with 37 parliamentary interventions submitted. In the first year, the Committee was chaired by Khalil Attiyeh and in the second year it was chaired by Mifleh Rheimi.

In fact the postponed debates of the Audit Bureau Report year after year by the previous Houses is a substantial imbalance not only because those houses did not exercise their constitutional powers, but also because such an imbalance would result in a status of chaos and carelessness towards one of the main oversight tools; i.e. the annual reports of the Audit Bureau. The Committee noticed that the ministries, and governmental departments and units show a poor response to all the control outputs produced by the Bureau. The Committee explained that as the reports include the control outputs for eight past years has "restricted some procedures to identify responsibility during the previous years."

The Committee also explained that in case there are financial violations or a waste in the public finance, the

Bureau addresses "clarifications". The Committee concluded that their response to such clarifications is poor knowing that these counted for 3387 clarifications along the past eight years.

Importance of following up the Audit Bureau reports and not delaying them can be further understood when referring the report issued by the Financial and Economic Committee stating that it could rectify 75% of total violations or control outputs. This success could be made by virtue of the discussions that the Committee held with the relevant units in coordination with the Audit Bureau. In addition, the Committee supported the intention to create joint committees between the Audit Bureau and other relevant governmental agencies in order to recover the largest number possible of violations.

In response to the other violations, the Committee recommended three categories of procedures: First, urge the involved governmental unit to respond to the control output; second, to invite the Government to create an investigation committee to identify the responsibility for financial or financial related violations; and third, to create five parliamentary investigation committees to consider certain violations.

The Lower House discussed the report of its Financial and Economic Committee in relation with the fifty seventh annual report of the Audit Bureau for 2008. During the meeting held on 19.7.2009, the committee made 43 interventions. Then, the House decided to refer the Committee report and all the administrative and financial violations included therein and the comments of the representatives to the Government for investigation on the condition they inform the House of the investigation findings during three months maximum.

5- Investigation Committees

Committees contesting representation truth of any member of the House of Representative are the only investigation committees that the Constitution of Jordan provides for. Otherwise, the House can create investigation committees to investigate a certain issue within its control capacity on the governmental performance or in cases when the House is convinced that there is a corruption incidence.

Just before the second ordinary session, the Standing Office formed an investigation committee to investigate Aqaba tender on 31.8.2008; the formation of this committee was criticized by several representatives focused on the decision to form the committee while the parliamentary session is not convened.

Although the Committee submitted its report, judging Husni Abu Ghaida as not guilty on the ground of the charge of “job abuse”, to the House presidency before the end of the second ordinary session, the report was not put on the House agenda for discussion. Thus, a question is raised to identify the feasibility of creating such a committee and the nature of oversight that the House exercises on cases with a financial or administrative corruption suspicion. Should there be a direct oversight exercised by the House through creating committees and implementing investigations by itself? Or, should there be a political oversight exercised by the House through the Government?

Although the Constitution does not prohibit creation of such committees, on the ground and due to the poor infrastructure of the Lower House, it is still not equipped to exercise a direct oversight on corruption. Intentions have no room in this respect; it is rather an issue of specialty, potentials and powers. Moreover, there is an official institution to combat corruption- Anti Corruption Institution and priority should be given to enforcing its role.

This topic was strongly introduced on the occasion of discussing the report of the Financial and Administrative Committee in relation with the Audit Bureau reports for the years 2000-2007. The Report proposed the creation of five investigation committees to discuss violations identified in the Committee’s Report.

The Lower House delegated the power to create such committees to its standing office on the ground that they (committees) complete their tasks before the third ordinary session began- originally scheduled early October 2009. There were other discretionary views, though. For instance, Fakhri Iskandar requested these cases to be referred to the Anti Corruption Agency instead of to investigation committees. Also Abdul Karim Dughmi asked for the same thing while stressing the need to ask this Agency to take responsibility.

He wondered when the term of investigation committees will come to an end? He drew the attention that in such a case, the conclusions reached by such committees must be submitted to the Government which can make the decision whether or not to refer these cases to the judiciary.

Mahmoud Kharabsheh took the same direction with the view that creating investigation committees will not provide a quality addition to the content of the Audit Bureau report. He suggested to request the Government to form investigation committees and inform the House of the results so that it can decide later on either to refer these cases to the Anti Corruption Agency or to ask the Government to refer the same to the Judiciary.

Hamza Mansour suggested to refer the cases in the report to the Anti-Corruption Agency explaining that by saying, “Our experience with such committees and the investigation process is not much satisfying.”

In all cases, for certain circumstances the Ordinary Session III of the Lower House was postponed for two months. This postponement supports the point of view defended by Iskandar, Al-Dughmi, Kharabsheh, and Mansour. It means that in the interest of its operation, the Lower House should not be involved in creating the investigation committees; it should rather be busy with the political monitoring of the Government and its organs operation.

There are major imbalances in the internal performance of the Lower House that cannot be handled without introducing substantial amendments to the House Bylaw. Such imbalances include:

- Absence of the parliamentary pluralism atmosphere to secure an integrated relation between pros and cons; or the majority with the minority taking into consideration all items required for this end including involving the opposition or the minority in all the organs of the Lower House. Such an involvement must be away from aims of dominance and monopoly that the majority of the House exercise especially when it relates to the House Office, standing committees and Parliamentary delegates.
- Frequent absence of the representatives or leaving meetings while in convention without any excuse or accountability. Thus, some working sessions could not be completed due to lack of quorum. This made the House opt for the so-called complementary sessions with a legal quorum of 56 members (half+1) being a complement to the previous meeting. Should such a session be viewed as a new meeting, its quorum ought to be 74 members (two thirds of the House members).
- Time waste for the representatives in public meetings due to the repeated discussions of the standing committees and persisting on the traditional method of voting by raising hands. This is meant just to ensure the majority or no-majority for the decision. Instead, the electronic system must be used in voting in order to know the attitude of each representative towards the legislative piece or the decision submitted thereto.
- Non-partisan parliamentary blocs work on a formality basis; there are no resources put for their use to help institutionalize their work and have the House reflect pluralism in its operation as well as enforcing this role. Such an enforcement can be achieved through consultation frameworks that include for instance members of the House Office and heads of Blocs; or perhaps heads of standing committees as the case should be.
- The lack of a parliamentary code of conduct to help monitor representatives' performance in compliance with the professional ethics

that the representatives of the nation should and must observe. In fact, there are some performance aspects that cannot be accepted and one cannot stand still in front of. These include absence from the works of the House without an acceptable excuse; the representative possessing several plates of cars that exceeds the accepted limit; taking advantage of the parliamentary capacity to achieve personal gains for the representative; attacking others from the parliamentary immunity perspective; and this applies to the fights and verbal/physical violence on the House campus.

Internal Transparency and Control of Parliamentary Performance:

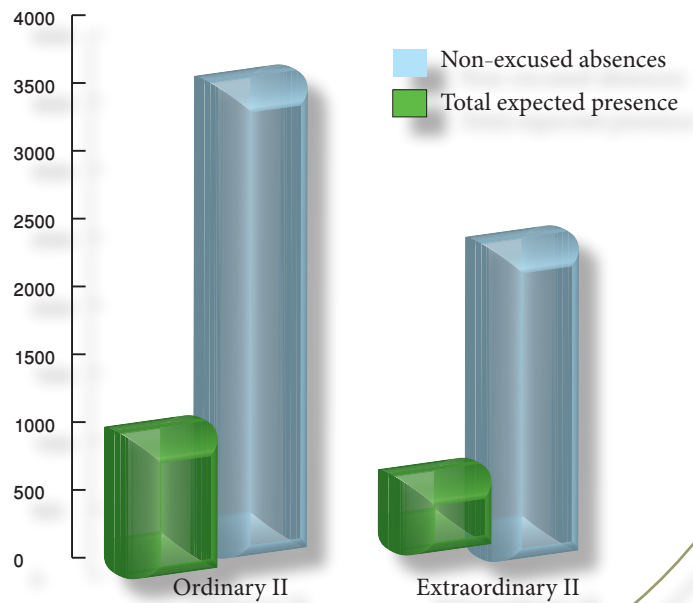
The Lower House still lacks transparency of performance especially in relation with the absence of representatives from the public debates, not implementing the e-voting system and not discussing its budget submission and the final statements of account.

a- Representatives' Absence from Meetings:

The Lower House Bylaw warns against absence of the Representative from a meeting of the House or its committees unless the Speaker is informed of such an absence supported with an excuse (Article 149). This Bylaw goes further when it requires recital of the names of absentees with an excuse after announcing opening of the meeting. It also requires declaration of names of absentees without an excuse (Article 81/a). It even asks the Secretary General of the House to provide a table of names of absent representatives in case a meeting could not be held due to lack of quorum and to capture this incidence in the minutes of the following meeting (Article 150). Nonetheless, there is a parliamentary consensus not to officially announce name of representatives absent without an excuse after each meeting; which completely violates transparency requirements and practices as well as the community right to monitor their representatives.

The "Jordan Parliament Monitor" has approved

a direct control mechanism to monitor attendance of the House members by counting the number of those present and recording their names when calculating the quorum at the beginning of each public meeting. Results yielded from this mechanism showed that the percentage of non-excused absence in the second session of the House reached 27.8% of total public meetings as illustrated in Table No. (9). This rate increases from 24.3% in the second extraordinary session to 30.2% in the second ordinary session.



It is worth mentioning that the oversight methodology applied by the Jordan Parliament Monitor is different from the methodology that the Lower House applies in monitoring attendance. For, the latter does not only record names of representatives seen when calculating the quorum at the beginning of the meeting, but also those who come late. Yet, it does not count for those representatives that leave after the meeting has begun. These count for a large number to the extent that they cause some meetings to lose their quorum. Thus, the Speaker has to stop the meeting and on several occasions the meeting will go on although without a quorum. Form a constitutional perspective such a meeting must be stopped.

Table No. (9)
Non-excused absences of Members of the Lower House in Session II

Session	Non-excused absences	Total expected presence	Percentage of expected presence
Ordinary II	1096	3630 (33 meetings)	30.2%
Extraordinary II	587	2420 (22 meetings)	24.3%
TOTAL	1683	6050 (55 meetings)	27.8%

Jordan Parliament Monitor monitored an additional sample of meetings and calculated the number of those present twice. Once at the beginning of the meeting and the other time half an hour before the end of the meeting. The Sample included three meetings that are held sometimes in two intervals- morning and evening but are considered as one meeting. The results pointed out several aspects of imbalance such as the decreasing number of representatives under the dome after the meeting has started. Table No. (10) provides five cases in the point out of the seven cases already mentioned. It also shows that some meetings lost quorum and still resumed its agenda as in the cases numbered: 2,4,5,and 6. In all of these examples, the number of those present dropped at a certain point of time to under the quorum which is 56 MPs.

Table No. (10)
**Attendance at the Beginning of a Lower House' Meeting and Half an hour
before its end on Selected Dates**

No.	Date	Number of those Present at Beginning of Meeting	No. of those present half an hour before end of meeting*	Remarks
1	5.10.2008 (Opening of Meeting)	107	107	Two reps entered after beginning the meeting and two others left
2	3.11.2008	76	29	3 reps entered after starting the meeting and 50 others left
3	23.11.2008	78	66	10 reps entered after starting the meeting and 22 others left
4	25.11.2008	29 (when resuming the meeting in the evening)	47	25 reps entered after starting the meeting and 7 others left
5	26.11.2008	39 (when resuming the meeting in the evening)	37	25 reps entered after starting the meeting and 27 others left
6	27.11.2008	88 (when resuming the meeting in the evening)	51	37 reps left after the meeting started
7	24.12.2008	60	63	18 reps entered after starting the meeting and 15 others left

() Numbers in this cell represent the number half an hour before the meeting ends; they are not fixed- they can increase or decrease once the meeting is close to ending.*

A look at the non-excused absences based on the number of absences of the Representative will reveal that the largest number in this respect was marked in the second ordinary session- 23 absences out of 33 meetings; 69.7%. In the second extraordinary session, these counted for 16 absences out of 22 meetings- 72.7%. As for the excused absences, the largest number marked was 14 in the second ordinary session; and 22 absences in the second extraordinary session. This last result was achieved by two representatives ; i.e. they did not attend any meeting during the extraordinary session.

To further illustrate this case of non-excused absences, they are classified into groups of 5 as per the following table:

**Table No. (11)
Non-excused Absences in Session II According to Groups**

No.	Group	Ordinary II	Extraordinary II	Total	Percentage
1	Zero	2	21	23	10.4%
2	1-5	24	45	69	31.4%
3	6-10	36	28	64	29.1%
4	11-15	29	13	42	19.1%
5	16-20	17	3	20	9.1%
6	21-25	2	0	2	0.9%

Non-excused absences from the committees' meetings and the operation of the House in general has a negative impact on the House performance. When it reaches a certain number, it indicates a high degree of degrading the role of the House itself. It becomes an impediment to work because it causes failure to convene meetings and sometimes they are stopped. The following table (No. 12) provides examples to that from the two sessions of the House:

Table No. (12)
Meetings not convened or not completed during the House Term

No.	Issue	Session	Date	Reason
1	Meeting not convened	Ordinary I	24.2.2008	No legislation is set for discussion
2	Meeting canceled	Ordinary I	9.3.2008	Lack of Quorum
3	Meeting not completed	Ordinary I	12.3.2008	Loss of Quorum
4	Meeting not completed	Ordinary II	5.11.2008	Loss of Quorum
5	Meeting canceled	Ordinary II	12/11/2008	Lack of Quorum
6	Meeting not completed	Ordinary II	28.1.2009	Loss of Quorum
7	Meeting canceled	Extraordinary II	3.8.2009	Lack of Quorum

b- Electronic Voting

The Lower House is equipped with a sophisticated electronic voting system that is used in a very limited manner. It helps record and show on two e-screens the names of representatives once they arrive under the dome. Thus, the quorum can be monitored. In addition, it helps record names of those requesting to speak at debates. This system was used only once during the second year of the House term when voting by raising hands and then standing up different results more than once. It was an efficient and effective system.

More and above, it is hay time to implement the e-voting system as the Lower House amended Paragraph (b) of Article (77) of its Bylaws for the year 2006⁽¹⁾. According to the amendment, it is permissible for the House to vote either by raising hands as stipulated in this Paragraph or by “using modern technologies as per the decision of the Speaker.” However, confidence vote shall be excluded from this amendment whether it should be in relation with the Government or the ministers.

Notwithstanding all the above, the more important issue here is to document the results of voting by each representative to any decision whether it is related to one paragraph or article in a law or even a law as a whole. It can also be related to a oversight or administrative issue. Thus, the Secretariat General of the House can calculate the results of a certain representative voting on all the decisions made under the Dome. These can be documented in an electronic log that the media specialists, academicians, researchers and even the MPs themselves can refer to any time. This can also apply to representatives voting on articles and paragraphs of a law or even the law as a whole. Should not this be the basic requirement for transparency and community monitory of its representatives performance.

c- Budget of the House:

In terms of the House budget, involvement of the Representatives is limited to debating the total numbers in the Draft Budget. The House does not discuss the expenditure line items and it does not debate the final account of the Budget. Thus, the role of the House itself is not being assumed in terms of expenditure monitoring.

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(1) According to the amendment published in the Official Gazette, No. 4759, of 16.5.2006.

The fifteenth Lower house comprised a number of parliamentary partisan and non-partisan blocs. On top of these was the “Islamic Action Front Bloc” headed by Sheikh Hamza Mansour. It had six members starting with the early beginnings of the House operation. The Bloc maintained its stability.

The second bloc was the “National Trend Party Bloc” headed by Engineer Abdul Hadi Majali- Speaker of the Lower House. It acquired the partisan capacity after announcing the emergence of the National Trend Party in August 2009 with two thousand associate members. Before announcing the establishment of the Party, this Bloc was known as “the National Trend Bloc”. In its early days, it had 59 members; which reveals an exceptional status of its formation which was based on some arrangements during elections. Then, the number increased to 62 representatives members in it to end up with 54 at the end of the second parliamentary session.

The main bloc among non-partisan blocs; most of its members are young people. It has a successive leadership; it started with 15 members to end up at the closing of the second parliamentary session with 21 members. There is also the “National Democratic Bloc” which in the second year of the House operation counted for a certain number that increased towards the end of the second session to become 15 members. It is some type of re-creating the “National Bloc” which had eight members when the House started operation and it could not sustain after some of its members withdrew from it.

There was also the “National Consensus Bloc” which emerged in the first year of the House term with 12 members chaired by Tawfiq Kreishan. It is not different in its formation from the National Trend Bloc and it disappeared before one year has lapsed as from the commencement of the House term.

Representatives who are not members in Parliamentary Blocs and who are known as Independent MPs count for 15-20 with four of them are among the first to be

representatives under the dome. They won the elections five times in a row. These are Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh, Sa’d Hayel Srour, Abdul Karim Dughmi, and Bassam Haddadin.

In order to identify the conduct and performance of parliamentary blocs and independent MPs, we apply a number of indicators that are available for this purpose. These help identify the degree of commitment shown by the members of these groups to attend public meetings; their contribution through questions, interpellations and memos they submitted; and the level of their presence in the media especially the dailies.

**Implement mechanisms to follow-up memos and petitions submitted to the Lower House; plenary meetings must issue recommendations or specific recommendations in order to increase the level of oversight exercised by the House and enhance citizen confidence in its role.**

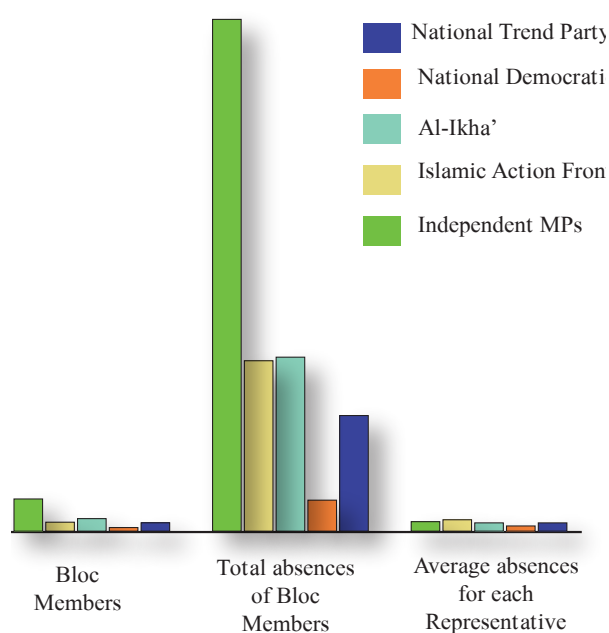
### **Commitment of Blocs to Attend Public Meetings:**

The general median of the number of non-excused absences of each representative marked 15 absences out of 55 public debates in the second year as illustrated in Table No. (13). At this level, it is noticeable that two blocs exceeded this median; these are the National Democratic Bloc with 19 absences as an average for each member; and the National Trend Party Bloc with an average of 16 absences for each member. The other blocs marked rates lower than the median. Al-Ikha’ Bloc and the group of Independent MPs marked the same average- about 14 absences per member; and the Islamic Partisan Bloc marked the lowest rate among blocs- 9 absences per member.

Table No. (13)

**Non-excused Absences of Members of the Lower House during the Second Year**

| No.   | Bloc                 | Bloc Members | Total absences of Bloc Members | Average absences for each Representative |
|-------|----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1     | National Trend Party | 54           | 859                            | 15.9                                     |
| 2     | National Democratic  | 15           | 286                            | 19.1                                     |
| 3     | Al-Ikha'             | 21           | 292                            | 13.9                                     |
| 4     | Islamic Action Front | 06           | 52                             | 8.7                                      |
| 5     | Independent MPs      | 14           | 194                            | 13.9                                     |
| TOTAL |                      | 110 reps     | 1683                           | 15.3                                     |



**Participation of Parliamentary Blocs in Addressing Questions:**

Taking this issue during the second year to be a model for the parliamentary performance at the oversight level, one finds out that the Blocs that exceeded the general median for each member; which is 2.5 questions as illustrated in Table (14) include the Islamic Action Front which ranked first with about 16 questions as

an average for each member- a large difference compared to other blocs which exceeded the general median. On top of these, comes Al-Ikha' Bloc, the group of Independent MPs which marked the same median- 3.4 questions per member. However, the National Trend Bloc and the National Democratic Bloc marked the same median (about one question per member); i.e. below the general media. Thus, they came at the bottom list.

Table No. (14)

**Distribution of Questions per Parliamentary Blocs in the Second Year**

| No.   | Bloc                 | Bloc Members | Questions to the Government | Average Questions per Representative |
|-------|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1     | National Trend       | 54           | 46                          | 0.9                                  |
| 2     | National Democratic  | 15           | 13                          | 0.9                                  |
| 3     | Al-Ikha'             | 21           | 71                          | 3.4                                  |
| 4     | Islamic Action Front | 06           | 94                          | 15.7                                 |
| 5     | Independent MPs      | 14           | 48                          | 3.4                                  |
| TOTAL |                      | 110 reps     | 272 questions               | 2.5                                  |

**Other Indicators to Oversight Performance of Blocs:**

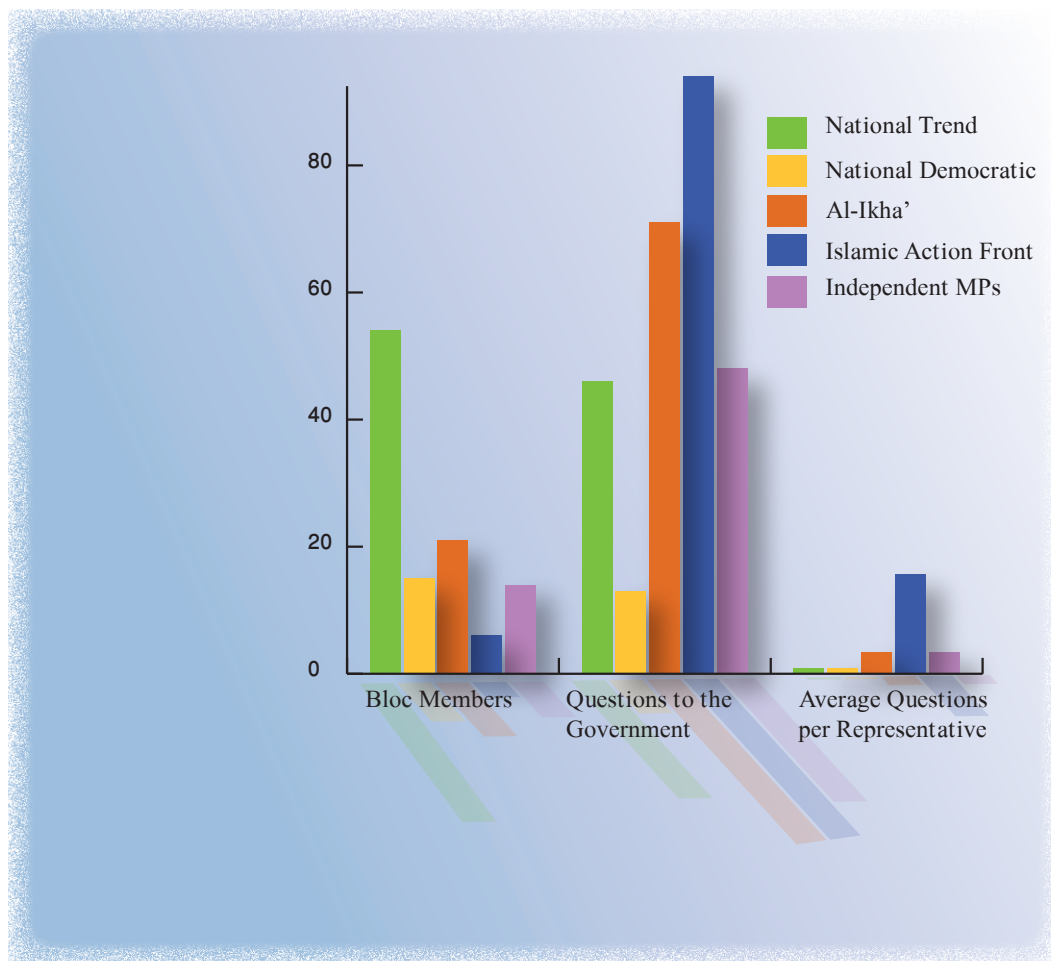
The oversight indicators that table No. (15) illustrates most often mixes the oversight performance of Blocs due to the participation of representatives from several blocs in their direction or preparation. Thus, whenever the bloc is larger, its participation would be larger; which made the National Trend Party Bloc ranks first on indicators related to: law proposal (8 contributions out of 8);

Intention Proposal (two contributions out of 2); public debate (6 contributions out of 6); and memos and petitions (23 contributions out of 23). However, things are different in relation with the interpellation theme. In this sense, the Independent MPs rank first (3 contributions out of 10); Al-Ikha' Bloc ranks first in terms of the number of interpellations although the five interpellations submitted were made by one representative only.

Table No. (15)  
**Selected Oversight Indicators to Performance of Parliamentary Blocs in the Second Year**

| No.   | Bloc                | Bloc Members | Law Proposal (repeated) | Interpellation | Intention Proposal | Public Debate * (Repeated) | Memos and Petitions |
|-------|---------------------|--------------|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1     | National Trend      | 54           | 8                       | 1              | 2                  | 6                          | 23                  |
| 2     | National Democratic | 15           | 2                       | 1              | -                  | 3                          | 8                   |
| 3     | Al-Ikha'            | 21           | 5                       | 5              | 1                  | 6                          | 14                  |
| 4     | Islamic Action      | 06           | 1                       | -              | -                  | 5                          | 7                   |
| 5     | Independent MPs     | 14           | 5                       | 3              | -                  | 3                          | 5                   |
| TOTAL |                     | 110 reps     | 8                       | 10             | 3                  | 6                          | 23                  |

(\*) This indicator includes the first and second years of the House and not only the second year.



The most important recommendations to advance the function of parliament can be grouped into three areas:

- Approve the “Code of Conduct” for the parliamentary operation;
- Amend the house bylaws to reform and develop the mechanisms of the House operation, particularly with respect to committees and blocs; and
- Reform the constitutional provisions that regulate parliamentary operation:

These can be achieved as follows:

### *Approve the Code of Conduct*

The need has become urgent to approve a parliamentary code of conduct, both for individual representatives as well as for the Lower House as a legislative body. Thus, the House would be able to exercise its legislative and oversight role to the best level possible. Such a code would also restore the parliamentary ethos of public service and representation and would protect the citizens from the executive branch, which possesses the tools and instruments to dominate other branches of the State. This, of course, requires establishing rules to empower representatives to act on an equal footing with the executive branch. The code of conduct should include the following criteria:

- Representatives should deal with substantive national legislation and not use their legislative responsibilities for personal gain. For example, the decision of representatives to approve a pension salary for representatives regardless of the years of service contradicted the previous opinion that the Representative receive a pension salary only when the number of years of service as a representative equals the minimum requirement for public servants to receive a pension.
- The Representative must commit to attend all plenary meetings as well as meetings of standing or ad hoc committees of which they are members. Each non-excused absence will be considered a violation

that invokes a penalty stipulated in the Bylaw of the Lower House.

- The Representative must be restricted to one membership in at least one of the standing committees or the House organs and attend its meetings and participate in its events.
- The Representative must not lobby the Government to achieve personal gain, such as getting special exemptions from customs duties on cars and securing the right to “sell” such exemptions.
- The Representative should not lobby the Government for personal gain on behalf of family members, acquaintances, or voters. Interference by Representatives in favor of some individuals must be only for the purpose of lifting injustice imposed on them rather than achieving personal gains for them, which goes in line with the principle of equal opportunities. The Representative should not accept or claim any benefits for voters, such as cash money assistance to needy students or a quota of pilgrimage delegates...etc.
- The Representative should not abuse his/her corporate capacity or immunity under the dome during the House sessions in a manner that can unjustifiably cause harm or defame individuals or institutions in the public, private, or civil sectors.

### *Amend the Lower House Bylaws*

The basic way to deal with the imbalances and lack of transparency in the parliament is to amend the House Bylaw of 1996. There is a parliamentary consensus on introducing a set of amendments to the Bylaw to better enforce the parliamentary role and develop its operational mechanisms. However, such amendments are not expected to include the main issues of transparency and the provision of tools to guide the parliamentary performance.

The most important problem in terms of amending the bylaws, however, is that it has been seen as something other than an effort to help improve and enhance the role of the Lower House. In fact, this same Bylaw requires the legal committee to consider proposals of amendments duly submitted after being signed by at least ten representatives. The Committee must consider these proposals within one month of being submitted. To avoid delay, the Bylaw permits the House to consider these proposals directly (Article 163). This proposal of amendment was put on the agenda of the first extraordinary session and that of the second extraordinary session in addition to that of the second ordinary session. Still, the Legal Committee could not complete its consideration of both proposals of amendment (submitted by two groups of representatives, of 16 and 13 members, respectively.) Even the Lower House did not take the initiative to consider the proposals of amendments directly.

One of the most important proposals submitted by the representatives is that of institutionalizing the operation of parliamentary blocs and establishing standing committees as the primary venue for discussing legislation and leaving voting to the plenary sessions. In this context, the standing committees are created based on relative representation of Parliamentary blocs. In addition, new active committees are proposed in line with the demand to enforce internal monitoring.

The amendments proposed by both parliamentary groups are positive amendments, however, it is possible to compare some items that handle the same subject matter to select the more democratic and more useful in achieving the House mandate. Due to the importance of such proposals, a detailed list of such amendments is provided herewith (See Annex No. 1).

Following are the prioritized amendments that we consider as positive agents to advance the parliamentary performance:

At the Standing Committees' Level:

1- It has become urgent to have standing committees as the main platform to discuss and process legislation and issues put on their agendas. Thus, plenary sessions will become a venue in which representatives vote on proposals submitted by committees. Of course, this assignment of roles between standing committees and plenary

meetings must be flexible to accommodate any proposals that an MP may have suggested to amend any draft law. When the Committee denies the representative's opinion, the representative shall have the right to voice and clarify his proposal in the plenary meeting. Only the specialized committee shall have the right to clarify the reason for not admitting this proposal.

2- Increase the number of standing parliamentary committees to create new committees as follows:

a- Split the Financial and Economic Committee into two separate committees: Finance and Economics. Sufficient effort must be made to discuss the financial issues of the State, particularly the General Budget, Audit Bureau reports, and the financial performance of the Government. By the same token, an economic committee would be responsible for policies and legislation with economic implications.

b- Discipline and Conduct Committee:

This Committee would consider complaints and grievances submitted by the representatives against third parties as well as any other issues related to their interests with the aim of maintaining the rights of representatives and the image of the House. The Committee would also be responsible for considering any violations of the House Bylaw and investigating complaints submitted by citizens against representatives in their parliamentary capacity.

c- The Committee on Woman, Family and Child:

This Committee would consider laws, agreements and proposals regarding women, family and children's affairs. It would also follow-up on policies, plans, and programs required to help advance women culturally, economically, and politically.

- 3- Increase the number of members of standing committees from 11 to 15. This would help the largest number possible of members join the committees' operation and secure the representation of blocs in the various committees in line with the "relative representation" rule.
- 4- With the exception of the Speaker and his two deputies, an MP must join one committee at least as a member and must regularly attend its meetings.
- 5- Meetings of the committees must be held as open meetings. Results of their operations, discussions, and voting must be disclosed to the public. Some exceptional cases may be excluded as stipulated in the House Bylaw.

**Amend Article (71) of the Constitution which stipulates that "the Lower House shall have the right to decide on truth of parliamentary capacity of one of its members. This membership shall be revoked only upon a decision issued by a two-third majority of the House". In order to ensure integrity, the Judiciary can be requested to investigate and issue the resolution**

management of the financial and administrative staff and setting the House's agenda. . In addition, the Lower House must be empowered to exercise its right to approve its autonomous budget and its final statements of account rather than just recommending the final figures.

At the Legislative Level:

Create a Legislative Bureau (a legal support unit) in the House with the task of providing assistance to MPs to draft proposed laws. Members of this Bureau must have experience in Law and specialization in relevant fields.

At the Parliamentary Blocs' Level:

Operation of the parliamentary blocs must be legislated through a special chapter for them in the Bylaw. This Chapter would: set the regulations to create such blocs and identify their administrative and financial resources; outline the conditions for moving from one bloc to another; and approve the relative representation principle for the representation of blocs and independent representatives on the House Committees and in the Permanent Office.

At the House Office Level:

The Speaker of the House must be seen as the Spokesperson of the House as is the case in the parliaments of Democracies. That is, he will be speaking of the decisions and agreements of the House. The Speaker must quit his bloc in order to exercise his role as a Speaker of the whole House rather than a bloc per se. The House office must be seen as the collective leader of the House, which entails moving the powers that the Speaker currently has to the Bureau, including the

- The principle of "Mandatory Consultations" with civil society organizations, experts, and other agencies involved in the pieces of legislation must be approved. This principle will help strengthen the rules of partnership between the House and civil society or other relevant sectors.

At the Oversight Role Level:

b- Parliamentary Questions:

- The Government is committed to intervals set for answering questions raised by representatives.
- The House is committed to discuss the answered questions, interpellations, and proposals of intention during the session when they occur. These should not be brought forward to the following session. Article (87) of the House Bylaw must be amended to read, "A meeting will be designated for questions, interpellations, and proposals of intention after four meetings maximum have been conducted." This is meant to avoid considering the complementary meeting as a part of an ordinary meeting. Thus, one oversight meeting will be set once a month at least. Questions on the agenda of such a meeting would be limited to those questions the governmental answers to which did not convince the MPs who raised them in the first place.

c- The Oversight Function in the Extraordinary Session

- An extraordinary session must be viewed as an ordinary one from the oversight perspective whether in terms of “Other Business” item on its agenda; or setting special meetings for question, interpellations, and proposals of intention.
- d- Implement mechanisms to follow-up memos and petitions submitted to the Lower House; plenary meetings must issue recommendations or specific recommendations in order to increase the level of oversight exercised by the House and enhance citizen confidence in its role.

At the Level of the Session and Meetings Terms (Periods):

a- The Parliamentary Session:

Increase the period of official parliamentary operation from four to seven months by making use of the Constitutional provision that permits an extension of the ordinary session for a maximum of three months (Article 78/3), and convene extraordinary sessions with no term identification (Article 82: Paragraphs 1 and 2) during the period of time remaining from the annual parliamentary session term.

b- Attendance

Combat the phenomenon of non-excused absences of representatives by:

- Enforcing Article 81/a of the Lower House Bylaw and “read the names of excused absentees and the non-excused absentees...”.) after announcing the opening of each new or complementary parliamentary meeting.
- The Lower House Office must issue a weekly press release listing names of non-excused absentees from meetings held during the week and the procedures taken against each of them.
- Create a penalty mechanism to help handle the phenomenon absence or leave without an excuse from the public meetings and committee meetings. This mechanism will entail an initial written notice, followed by discounting specific amounts for each absence and denying the MP the opportunity to join delegations overseas to end up with termination of membership in the Lower House (two thirds majority).
- Implement the e-voting system during public meetings of the Lower House and prepare an e-

log for the voting results to be easily made available for all representatives, media figures and researchers interested therein.

*Reform the Constitutional Provisions that Regulate Parliamentary Operation:*

- 1- Extend the Parliamentary session to eight months, per the recommendations of the National Agenda (2006-2015), several representatives, and civil society organizations.
- 2- Amend Article (71) of the Constitution which stipulates that “the Lower House shall have the right to decide on truth of parliamentary capacity of one of its members. This membership shall be revoked only upon a decision issued by a two-third majority of the House”. In order to ensure integrity, the Judiciary can be requested to investigate and issue the resolution. Until this has become possible, the Lower House itself will refer an investigation in the truth of an MP membership to a judicial agency that will submit the conclusions reached to the Lower House to make the decision it shall deem as relevant.
- 3- Extend the term of the Speaker of the Lower House which Article 69/1 sets as one year to become four years with the aim of freeing him from electoral pressures. However, it should be permissible to replace him upon the majority of two thirds of the Lower House after the lapse of two years from his election.

## Annex No. (1)

### A List to Highlight Amendments to the Bylaw submitted by two Groups in the Lower House

| Article | Project of Group 16                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Project of Group 13                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7       | -----                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Add representatives to the Parliamentary Blocs and the Independent MPs according to a relative representation basis to the House Office which includes the Speaker, his deputies and the assistants. However, the House Office must select from its members assistants to the Speaker instead of electing these by the Lower House.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 8       | -----                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Transfer the power of the Speaker to set the agenda of the House meetings to the House Office. Also, replace the authorization of the Speaker to head the administrative staff to become oversight of the financial and administrative staff assigned to the House Office. .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 12/c    | To suffice with the stipulation of the House Office authorization to “create delegations to represent the House and select their heads” and cancel the rest of paragraph which reads, “...unless the Speaker or one of his deputies is one of its members; then, he shall headthe delegation.”. | Amend the paragraph to become, “Create delegations to represent the House upon nomination by the Parliamentary Blocs with a just and balanced representation and selection of the delegations heads.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 12/د    | -----                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Amend the paragraph which stipulates, “The Office of the House shall have the right to “prepare the annual budget of the House and supervise its implementation.” The amendment will be by adding, “and submit it to the Lower House for Approval”. It is to be inserted before, “... And supervise its implementation.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 12/هـ   | -----                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Amend Paragraph (e): Replace the text “Approve the organizational structure of the General Secretariat of the House and its functional staff to read, “... oversee the administrative and financial staff of the General Secretariat of the House and its functional staff including the Secretary General of the House.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 26/4    | A wording amendment (delete the word “existence”).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 35      | Split the Financial and Economic Committee to become a financial committee, and another one-economic committee as well as adding a committee for discipline and another one for woman.                                                                                                          | Add, “on the basis of relative representation of Parliamentary Blocs” to the text of the Article which reads, “at the beginning of each ordinary session, members of the following committees are to be elected.” The following committees are to be added: Internal Audit Committee to audit administrative and financial decisions issued by the House Office, the Discipline and Conduct Committee, the Woman Committee, and the Budget Committee to be concerned with the general budget of the State in all its phases- preparation, supervision and auditing. |
| 36      | Add a new paragraph to the tasks assigned to the Legal Committee to read, “follow up procedures of corruption issues to the mandate of agencies involved in combating corruption.”                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| Article | Project of Group 16                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Project of Group 13 |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 37      | Amend name of the Financial and Economic Committee to become the Financial Committee and cancel the task of “considering the laws of supply and trade, companies, banks, insurance, currency, exchange and investment in addition to those laws covering such issues.” Also, cancel the task of “considering the supply status” from the mandate of the Financial Committee.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                     |
| (38)    | Add a new article- number (38): the Economic Committee will be assigned the following tasks: (i) consider laws of supply and trade, companies, banks, insurance, currency, exchange and other such issues; (ii) consider the supply status; (iii) economic agreements to which Jordan is a signatory.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                     |
| 39/c    | Delete the paragraph, “Study reports of Administrative Supervision and Inspection”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                     |
| (50)    | Add a new article with the number (50): “The Discipline Committee will be assigned the following tasks: a- (i) consider complaints submitted by MPs against any third party no matter what it is topic should be; (ii) consider any violation to the Bylaw provisions; (iii) investigate any complaint submitted by any third party against the MPs in their parliamentary capacity; and (iv) consider any action that may cause prejudice to the House and its members reputation.<br>b- Based on a report by the Committee, the Speaker shall have the right to take any of the following procedures: (i) denial of the opportunity to join parliamentary delegations to overseas missions; (ii) prohibition of attending some of the House sessions for a period of time. |                     |
| (51)    | Add a new article with the number (51): the Woman Committee will be assigned the following tasks: (i) consider issues and proposals related to the Woman and Chile issues; follow up policies, plans and programs required to empower women socially, culturally, economically and politically; (ii) propose means and procedures to enable women to be involved in the public life with all its domains.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                     |
| 50/1    | Increase the number of the standing committee members from 11 members to 21. Also add Paragraph (b): Representation of committees on a relative basis among blocs. The Bloc will nominate its representatives on each committee. The Bloc member will lose membership in committees in case he withdraws from the Bloc which will have the right to select a substitute members. Independent MPs will be represented on committees on a relative representation basis on condition they elect from among themselves the number of representatives given to them.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                     |

| Article | Project of Group 16                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Project of Group 13                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 55      | Add a new paragraph (b): Meetings of committees will be held at the House Premises. Also, amend Paragraph (b) which stipulates, "A committee meetings will be deemed as legal if the majority of its members are present on condition that the Speaker or the rapporteur be one of them." The majority must be replaced with "one third".                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 64      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Add the phrase, "The General Secretariat of the House must inform the Blocs and members of the dates scheduled for the committees' meetings and their agendas before their convention." This should be added to the article which speaks of the rights of the MP in the meetings of committees he is not a member of. |
| 71/b    | Reword the Article to read, "voting the project as submitted by the Committee. Voting should cover each article and the discussion will not be open to the member submitting the proposal of amendment to the Committee and the proposal was not accepted. Only the Committee shall have the right to defend the reason for not admitting the proposal. In case the House decides to vote the project without referring it to the committees, it must be discussed article by article and the present MPs can join the discussion. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 72      | Reword the Article to read, "Each member proposing an amendment to the original text, introducing an amendment or adding new articles must submit his proposal to the relevant committee while considering the draft law.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 92      | Cancel this article as the proposals and discussions take place beforehand when the Committee meets while considering the Law in compliance with the provisions of Article (72) proposed to be amended with an eye on numbering.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 115     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Add a new paragraph to this article to read, "at the beginning of each meeting, half an hour will be given to oral questions raised by Parliamentary Blocs and answers of the Government thereto. The time interval of questions will be prorated with the number of the Bloc members.                                |
| 117/ب   | Reword the paragraph which reads, "The Minister shall answer the question in written during a period of eight days maximum." Eight days must be replaced to become 16 days unless the Speaker has decided upon a written application by the Minister to extend the period to thirty days. The House shall have the right to take relevant procedures against the Minister who does not provide a response."                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 117/c   | After amendment, it will read, "the Speaker will serve the response to this who submitted the question; and only questions that those raising request so will be put on the agenda of the meeting set for questions and answers and intention proposals."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

| Article | Project of Group 16                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Project of Group 13                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 121/b   | Replace the possibility to transform the question into an interpellation if the Government does not answer during one month as from the date it receives the question in order to link the Government non-response to the period set in Article 117, Paragraph (b)- amended.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| (162)   | Add the following article: “precedence rules on internal official occasions and external activities will be according to the following order: (i) Lower House Speaker; (ii) Former Premiers; (iii) Former Lower House Speakers; (iv) The two Deputies of the Speaker; and (v) MPs according to their Parliamentary seniority.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| (163)   | <p>Add the following article in relation with Parliamentary Blocs: The MPS shall have the right to form the parliamentary blocs they deem as relevant in order to enhance the principle of political participation and parliamentary development.</p> <p>(b) The Bloc shall inform the Speaker of its emergence, membership and charter in addition to any amendment introduced thereto.</p> <p>(c) The Bloc shall elect from its members a Chairperson, Rapporteur and Media Spokesperson and shall inform the Speaker of the same.</p> <p>(d) the Bloc Chairperson shall have the right to coordinate with the Speaker in relation with political and parliamentary issues in addition to any other issues that the Bloc decide and will help advance the parliamentary operation.</p> | <p>Add the following article in relation with parliamentary blocs: The MPs shall have the right to form the parliamentary blocs they deem as relevant on condition that their members be ten at least.</p> <p>(b) the Bloc shall inform the Speaker of its emergence, membership, charter and any other amendment introduced to its membership or charter.</p> <p>(c) The bloc shall elect from its members a Chairperson, rapporteur and a media spokesperson in its name.</p> <p>(d) The House will provide the Parliamentary Blocs with separate offices, secretarial staff, functional staff and assistants from the staff of the General Secretariat or from outside.</p> <p>(e) The Parliamentary blocs will be given a budget distributed on a prorating basis in order to finance their activities and operations logistics.</p> |



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