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Balancing fundamental human rights such as Freedom of Expression and Access to Information with responsibility and sensitivity in reporting on security issues presents a challenge for reporters in any society, let alone in a post-authoritarian, post-revolutionary, transitional Tunisia. This was one of the main points made at a roundtable entitled “Media Coverage of Security Issues during the Election Period”, organised in Tunis on 25 June. The participants at the event included media and security experts, media and security service professionals, journalism educators, civil society representatives, as well as international experts.

The purpose of the discussion organised by the Media Diversity Institute (MDI) was to create a confidential space for open and constructive dialogue between the key actors, so they have the opportunity to understand the perspectives and needs of the other parties, in particular ahead of the autumn elections in Tunisia.

The event was the first in a series of dialogue events that will be organised by MDI as part of its project “Responsible and Free Reporting on Security Issues in Tunisia”. The objective of the project is to identify and develop initiatives that will encourage responsible and free

reporting on security issues such as extremism, terrorism, cross-border issues, and political violence.

A draft study analysing the key challenges was disseminated prior to the event. This study will be developed in tandem with the dialogue events, by leading Tunisian media experts, Professor Laarbi Chouikha from The Institute of Press and Information Science (IPSI) and Mr Jamel Bourigua, Chief Editor of a daily newspaper Assabah, with a help of specialist researchers.

Greeting the participants, the British Ambassador in Tunisia, Mr Hamish Cowell emphasised the importance of responsible reporting on security issues in transitional societies, pointing out that without free and independent but also responsible media it is difficult to imagine any democratic process working correctly.



“MDI is pleased to be given an opportunity to facilitate such an important debate. The role of journalists in transitional societies is not only to provide a public debate on all issues relevant to all citizens, and security is definitely such an issue - but also to inform citizens on the role of relevant ministries, and in particular, the security services in a democratic society”, said Milica Pestic, MDI Executive Director when opening the event.

“Through the series of dialogues and the study, we hope to get commitments to concrete actions by all actors involved. The next step will be actions such as practical training for

journalists on the techniques of reporting on security issues, supporting journalism educators in setting up an MA in Media and Security, or designing a Code of Ethics to guide media in reporting on this sensitive issue”, said Milica Pestic.

The second dialogue event is scheduled for September 2014.

For more information please contact:

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