

# Law of Printed Materials and Publication

(2003)

Royal Decree No. M/32

3/9/1421

(November 29, 2000)

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*The English version of this document is for guidance only.*

*The Arabic version is the governing text.*

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## **Article One: Definitions**

The following terms whenever used in this law shall have the meanings assigned to them as follows:

Circulation: To put the printed material within the reach of a number of persons by distributing them freely or by offering them for sale or by sticking them to walls or by displaying them on the fronts of show rooms or in light boards or streets sign boards or by other means.

Journalism: The Profession of editing or issuance of journals.

Journalist: Any person who practice editing of journals as a profession whether full or part-time.

The Journal: Any printed matter under a constant title issued periodically or occasionally on a regular or irregular date such as newspaper, magazines and bulletins.

Printer: The person responsible for the press whether the owner or the person acting for him.

Printing Press: Any establishment prepared for printing words, sounds, drawings or pictures for the purpose of circulation.

Printed Materials: Any means of expression suitable for circulation whether a word, drawing, picture or sound.

Bookshop: The place prepared for offering books, newspapers or the like for sale or renting.

Distributor: The intermediary – whether an individual or a company – between the author or the publisher and the distribution points and the beneficiary.

The Author: The person who prepares a scientific, cultural or artistic material for the purpose of circulation.

The Publisher: The person who issues a scientific, cultural or artistic work for the purpose of circulation.

The Ministry: The Ministry of Information.

The Minister: The Minister of Information.

## **Article Two**

The following activities shall be governed by the provisions of this Law:

- Printed Matters.
- Pre-printing Preparatory Services.
- Printeries.
- Bookshops.
- Drawing and Writing.
- Photography.
- Importation of Films and Videotapes, sale or rent thereof.
- Tape Recording and Discs.
- Radio, Television, Cinematographic or Theatrical Artistic works.
- Televisions and Broadcasting studios.
- The Offices of Foreign Information Media and their Reporters.
- Publicity and Advertisement.
- Public Relations.
- Publication.
- Distribution.
- Journalistic Services.
- Production, Sale or Renting of Computer Programs.
- Information Studies and Consultations.
- Copying and Reprography.
- Any activity suggested to be added by the Ministry and approved by the Prime Minister.

## **Article Three**

Call to Islam, noble manners, leading to all that is good and proper and spreading of culture and knowledge shall be among the purposes of printed matters and publication.

## **Article Four**

None of the activities mentioned in Article Two shall be carried out except with a license from the Ministry and this shall not be an excuse to justify failure to obtain any license required by other laws.

The Implementing Regulations shall determine the period of the license for each activity in addition to the grace period for renewal of the license before its expiration after making sure that the activity was being carried out.

#### **Article Five**

Subject to the provisions of the Laws and Treaties the person to whom the license is issued shall satisfy the following conditions:

- He shall be a Saudi national.
- He shall not be less than 25 years of age but the Minister may give exemption from this age for justifications he thinks proper.
- He shall be known to be of good conduct and reputation to carry out such activity.
- He shall have a suitable qualification in accordance with the provisions of the Implementing Regulations.

In case of Companies the above conditions shall apply to their representatives.

The Implementing Regulations shall provide for the necessary conditions that must be observed by the offices and reporters of foreign information media.

#### **Article Six**

Government authorities, educational and research institutes, scientific societies, art and culture clubs and the national journalistic establishment may issue non-periodical printed matters in their field of specialization and under their responsibility.

#### **Article Seven**

The License or renewal fees of the head office or the branch shall be determined in accordance with the following:

(A) Two Thousand Saudi Riyals (SR 2,000) for each of the following activities :

- Printeries.
- Preprinting preparatory services.
- Publication.
- Distribution.
- Artistic works for broadcasting, television and cinema.

- Broadcasting and television studios.
- Information studies and consultations.
- Journalistic services.
- Publicity and advertisement.
- Public relations.
- Importation, sale or renting of films and video tapes.
- Production, sale or renting of computer programs.

(B) One Thousand Saudi Riyals (SR 1,000) for each of the following :

- Bookshops.
- Sound Recording and Discs.
- Drawing and Writing.
- Photography.
- Copying and Reprography.

#### **Article Eight**

Freedom of expression is guaranteed in the different media of publication within the limits of Sharia Rules and Law.

#### **Article Nine**

When permission is given to a printed matter the following shall be taken into consideration:

- It shall not be conflicting with Sharia Rules.
- It shall not lead to breach of public security, public policy or serving foreign interest that conflict with national interest.
- It shall not be exciting to fanatical instincts or stir up discord among citizens.
- It shall not prejudice the dignity and liberty of persons or lead to their blackmail or injure their reputation or commercial names.
- It shall not lead to approval and incitation of criminal conduct.
- It shall not injure the economic or health situation in the country.
- It shall not disclose the secrets of investigations or trails except with the permission of the competent authority.
- It shall observe objective and constructive criticism that aims at public interest and which is based on facts and evidence.

#### **Article Ten**

The necessary paper information provided for in the Implementing Regulations shall be recorded on each printed matter printed inside the Kingdom.

#### **Article Eleven**

The license may be surrendered or rented to third parties or make them partners in it with the consent of the Ministry and in accordance with the provisions of this law.

#### **Article Twelve**

If the owner of the license dies, his heirs shall notify the Ministry within two months from the date of death and they are entitled to continue with the activity with the consent of the Ministry in accordance with the provisions of this law.

### **Internal Printed Matters**

#### **Article Thirteen**

Each author, publisher, printer or distributor who desires to print or distribute any printed matter shall provide the Ministry with two copies for approval before printing or offering it for circulation and the Ministry shall approve or reject it stating the reasons for that within thirty days and the person concerned may object to the rejection resolution before the Minister.

#### **Article Fourteen**

Each printing office shall keep a registration for printed matters printed in it to be shown to the competent persons on demand but the Ministry may exempt in the Implementing Regulations from requirement of registration any printed matter it thinks fit.

#### **Article Fifteen**

The author, the publisher and the printer are responsible for any violations in the printed matter if printed or put into circulation before approval is given but if it is not possible to identify the person responsible then the distributor becomes responsible, otherwise the responsibility lies on the seller.

#### **Article Sixteen**

The Ministry shall make the author or publisher responsible to deposit in accordance to the relevant law the copies required to be deposited of materials printed inside the Kingdom.

#### **Article Seventeen**

The publicity and advertisement materials shall not be added to films or tapes or the like on which artistic or sports matters or others are recorded provided that they are contracted for to be used inside the Kingdom except through local publicity and advertisement companies and after the said materials are approved by the Ministry and the Implementing Regulations shall determine the time period for advertisements in each work.

### **External Printed Matters**

#### **Article Eighteen**

External printed matters shall be approved if free from anything insulting to Islam or the system of Government or injurious to high interests of the state or scarify public morality and conflict with ethical standards.

#### **Article Nineteen**

The external printed matters shall be approved or rejected for reasons to be expressly stated within 30 days from the date of filing the application but newspapers shall be treated in accordance with the provisions of the Implementing Regulations.

#### **Article Twenty**

Any Saudi who issues a non-periodical printed matter outside the Kingdom and applies to the Ministry for its approval shall attach with his application something to prove that he has deposited the required copies in accordance with the relevant law.

#### **Article Twenty One**

The Ministry shall have no authority to censor the printed matters imported by Government authorities, educational and research institution, scientific societies, art and cultural clubs and private journalistic institution for their own purposes.

#### **Article Twenty Two**

The Implementing Regulations shall – within the limits of this law – regulate the importation and distribution of external printed matters in addition to the necessary procedures to facilitate accompanying books and other printed matters and subscription therein by researchers and thinkers for their scientific purposes and within the limits of their personal possession.

### **Article Twenty Three**

Foreign journals may be printed in the Kingdom with the consent of the Prime Minister in accordance with the provisions of the Implementing Regulations and the provisions of this law.

## **Local Journalism**

### **Article Twenty Four**

The local journals shall not be subjected to censorship unless in exceptional circumstances approved by the Prime Minister.

### **Article Twenty Five**

Journals may be issued – outside the scope of private journalistic establishments – by private authorities or individuals in accordance with a license from the Ministry with the consent of the Prime Minister.

The consent of the Ministry alone is sufficient to issue the following :

- Bulletins of limited circulation and for a purpose other than sale such as those issued by private authorities provided these bulletins are confined to the promotion of the activities of the authority issuing them.
- Specialized scientific and professional magazines issued by private authorities or individuals.
- Issuance of journals and scientific magazines by the public educational authorities and Government authorities after the Ministry is notified.

The supervisor of any of the printed matters mentioned in this Article and the director of the issuing authority are responsible for what is published in them in accordance with the provision of this law.

### **Article Twenty Six**

There shall be put in a prominent place of the journal, the name of the owner of the license, the name of the chief editor, the number of the issue, date, price and the name of the printing press.

### **Article Twenty Seven**

- The name of a journal which was previously issued and ceased shall not be used except after the expiration of ten years from the date of withdrawal unless the persons concerned have given up the name before the expiration of this period.
- A journal shall not be given a name that may be confused with the name of another.

### **Article Twenty Eight**

The Implementing Regulations shall provide for the rules that regulate the annual subscription fees of the journals, the price of one issue and the advertisements affairs.

### **Article Twenty Nine**

The Ministry may withdraw the license or cancel the consent to issue the journal in any one of the following two cases :

- If it is not issued within a maximum period of two years from the date of notice of the license.
- If the issuance is suspended for a continuous period of more than one year.

### **Article Thirty**

The journals and those working in them shall not accept any benefit such as gift, financial assistant or other from local or foreign authorities except with the consent of the Ministry.

### **Article Thirty One**

The issue of the journal shall not be prohibited except in exceptional circumstances and after the consent of the Prime Minister is obtained.

### **Article Thirty Two**

- The written advertisements of establishments and individuals may be published provided that it is referred to as an advertisement material.
- The written advertisement of the states may be published after the consent of the Ministry is obtained provided that it is referred to as an advertisement material.

### **Article Thirty Three**



- The chief editor of the journal or his representative when he is absent is responsible for what is published in it.
- Without prejudice to the responsibility of the chief editor or his representative the author of the statement is responsible of what is stated in it.

#### **Article Thirty Four**

Um Al-Qurah newspaper is the official Gazette of the State.

### **Penalties**

#### **Article Thirty Five**

Any journal that imputed to another an incorrect statement or published an erroneous news shall correct that by publishing it free of charge at the request of the person concerned in the first issue after the correction request and in the same place where the news or the statement was first published or in a prominent and any one injured is entitled to claim compensation.

#### **Article Thirty Six**

In case of necessity the Ministry may withdraw any issue of the issues of the journal without compensation if it contains anything conflicting with the rules of the Sharia Law on the basis of a resolution issued by the committee provided for in Article Thirty Seven.

#### **Article Thirty Seven**

Violations of the provision of this law shall be decided by a committee to be constituted in accordance with a resolution issued by the Minister under the chairmanship of the competent undersecretary of the Ministry and its members shall not be less than three provided that one of them is a legal advisor and shall take its resolution by majority vote after calling the violator or his representative and hearing his statements and may call anyone it deems fit to hear his statements and seek the assistance of anyone it deems fit but the resolution of the Committee shall not be valid until approved by the Minister.

#### **Article Thirty Eight**

Without prejudice to any other more serious penalties provided for in another law anyone who violates any provision of this law shall be punished with a financial fine of not more than (SR 50,000) Fifty Thousand Saudi Riyals or by closing his place of business or establishment for a period of not more than two months or by closing his place of business

or establishment finally – the penalty shall be issued in accordance with a resolution by the Minister on the recommendation of the committee provided for in Article Thirty Seven of this law.

#### **Article Thirty Nine**

The Ministry may withdraw the printed matters offered for circulation whether internal or external in the following two cases :

- When its circulation is prohibited.
- When it is not approved and contain some of the prohibitions provided for in Article Nine or Article Eighteen. The authority who has jurisdiction in this case is the committee provided for in Article Thirty Seven which decides what it thinks fit either to destroy them without compensation or to order the person concerned to return them outside the Kingdom at his expense if they were external.

#### **Article Forty**

The person who is subjected to a penalty in accordance with the provisions of this law may put a complaint before the Board of Grievance with 60 days from the date in which he was notified of the resolution issued in this respect.

#### **Article Forty One**

If the Ministry approved the printed matter but a reason for its withdrawal subsequently arises, the Ministry shall compensate the person concerned for the cost of the copies withdrawn.

### **General Provisions**

#### **Article Forty Two**

The Ministry shall entrust qualified competent and specialized persons who have knowledge of the Regulations and publication instructions and may seek the assistance of the part timers it thinks fit from outside the Ministry to approve scientific and intellectual works.

#### **Article Forty Three**

The Ministry shall, in coordination with the authorities concerned, work out rules that regulate the setting up of books exhibition by private publication and distribution establishments and supervise them.

#### **Article Forty Four**

Societies may be formed in accordance with a resolution issued by the Minister to exercise the activities provided for in Article Two to solve their problems and coordinate their functions and each society shall lay down regulations to be approved by the Minister to indicate its purposes and regulate its work.

#### **Article Forty Five**

The Ministry is the authority entrusted to follow up the implementation of this law and to interrogate any person who violates it in accordance with its provisions.

#### **Article Forty Six**

The Minister shall issue the Implementing Regulations of this law within a period of not more than eighteen months from the date of its publication and shall be published in the Official Gazette.

#### **Article Forty Seven**

Any person carrying out any of activities governed by this law shall adjust his situations in accordance with its provisions within two years from the date in which it becomes effective.

#### **Article Forty Eight**

This law shall replace the Printed Matter and Publication Law issued by Royal Decree No. (M/17) dated 13/4/1402 H. and shall cancel any provisions inconsistent with it.

#### **Article Forty Nine**

This law shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall come into force after ninety days from the date of Publication.