



**Bureau of Experts at the Council of Ministers
Official Translation Department**

Law of Printed Materials and Publication

Royal Decree No. M/32
November 29, 2000

Translation of Saudi Laws



NOTE:

The translation of Saudi laws takes the following into consideration:

- Words used in the singular form include the plural and vice versa.
- Words used in the masculine form include the feminine.
- Words used in the present tense include the present as well as the future.
- The word “person” or “persons” and their related pronouns (he, his, him, they, their, them) refer to a natural and legal person.



Law of Printed Materials and Publication

Article 1

Definitions: In this Law, the following terms shall have the meanings assigned thereto, unless the context requires otherwise:

1. **Circulation:** Putting printed material at the disposal of a number of people through free distribution or by displaying it for sale, fixing it to walls, or displaying it on store facades, billboards, road signs, and so forth.
2. **Press:** The profession of editing or publishing journalistic printed materials.
3. **Journalist:** Anyone practicing journalistic editing as a profession, either on full-time or part-time basis.
4. **Newspaper:** Any printed material with a consistent title, published periodically or on regular or irregular occasions, such as newspapers, magazines, and brochures.
5. **Printer:** Anyone in charge of the printing press, whether the owner or his representative.
6. **Printing Press:** Any establishment designed to print words, sounds, drawings, or pictures for the purpose of circulation.
7. **Printed Material:** Any means of expression printed for circulation, whether a word, drawing, picture, or sound.
8. **Bookstore:** A place where books, newspapers, or the like are displayed for the purpose of sale or rent.
9. **Distributor:** A mediator, whether an individual or a company, between the author or publisher and the distribution points and the beneficiary.
10. **Author:** Anyone who prepares academic, cultural, or artistic material for the purpose of circulation.
11. **Publisher:** Anyone in charge of issuing any academic, cultural, or artistic production for the purpose of circulation.
12. **Ministry:** The Ministry of Information.
13. **Minister:** The Minister of Information.

Article 2

The following activities shall be subject to the provisions of this Law:

1. Printed materials.
2. Pre-printing services.
3. Printing presses.
4. Bookstores.
5. Drawing and calligraphy.



6. Photography.
7. Import, sale, or rent of films and video tapes.
8. Sound recordings and records.
9. Radio, television, movie, or theatrical artistic production.
10. Television and radio studios.
11. Foreign media offices and their correspondents.
12. Publicity and advertising.
13. Public relations.
14. Publishing.
15. Distribution.
16. Press services.
17. Production, sale, or rent of computer programs.
18. Information studies and consultations.
19. Copying and duplication.
20. Any other activity suggested by the Ministry and approved by the Prime Minister.

Article 3

The objectives of printed materials shall include the call to Islam, good moral standards, guidance to all that is good and right, and the dissemination of culture and knowledge.

Article 4

1. It shall be prohibited to exercise any activity mentioned in Article 2, unless licensed by the Ministry, and this shall not exempt from obtaining any other licenses required by other laws.
2. The Implementing Regulations shall determine the duration of the license for each activity and shall specify the appropriate grace period for its renewal prior to its expiry after ensuring the licensee's practice of the profession.

Article 5

1. With due consideration to the requirements of laws and agreements, the licensee shall satisfy the following:
 - a) Be a Saudi national.
 - b) Not be less than 25 years old. The Minister, at his discretion, may waive the age requirement.
 - c) Be well-known for good conduct and behavior with regard to undertaking this activity.



- d) Have an appropriate qualification as specified by the Implementing Regulations.
2. In case of companies, the previous conditions shall apply to their representatives.
3. The Implementing Regulations shall determine the conditions necessary for the work procedures of foreign media offices and their correspondents.

Article 6

Government bodies, educational and research institutions, academic associations, literary and cultural clubs, and private press establishments may, under their responsibility, publish non-periodical printed materials in their relevant fields of specialization.

Article 7

License issuance or renewal fees for headquarters or branches shall be determined according to the following:

1. 2,000 riyals for any of the following activities:
 - a) Printing presses.
 - b) Pre-printing services.
 - c) Publishing.
 - d) Distribution.
 - e) Radio, television, or movie artistic production.
 - f) Television and radio studios.
 - g) Information studies and consultations.
 - h) Press services.
 - i) Publicity and advertising.
 - j) Public relations.
 - k) Import, sale, or rent of films and video tapes.
 - l) Production, sale, or rent of computer programs.
2. 1,000 riyals for any of the following activities:
 - a) Bookstores.
 - b) Sound recordings and records.
 - c) Drawing and calligraphy.
 - d) Photography.
 - e) Copying and duplication.



Article 8

Freedom of expression is guaranteed through all means of publication within the provisions of Sharia and law.

Article 9

Any person in charge of printed material shall observe objective and constructive criticism that serves public interest, employing facts and true information. Any of the following may not be published by any means:

1. Any material in violation of the provisions of Sharia and applicable laws.
2. Any material undermining the country's security or public order, or serving foreign interests in conflict with national interest.
3. Any material impinging on the integrity or undermining the reputation or dignity of the Grand Mufti of the Kingdom, members of the Senior Ulama Council, State officials or employees, or any natural or corporate person.
4. Any material inciting feuds and spreading dissension among citizens.
5. Any material encouraging or inciting crime.
6. Any material detrimental to State policy.
7. Any material disclosing facts of investigations or trials, unless permitted by the competent authority.

Article 10

All printed materials published in the Kingdom shall have the necessary bibliographical data, as specified by the Implementing Regulations.

Article 11

A license may be assigned, rented, or shared with others after obtaining the Ministry's approval, pursuant to the provisions of this Law.

Article 12

If the licensee dies, the heirs shall notify the Ministry within two months of the date of death. They have the right to continue the activity after obtaining the Ministry's approval, pursuant to the provisions of this Law.

Domestic Printed Materials

Article 13

Any author, publisher, printer, or distributor who wants to print or distribute any printed material shall provide the Ministry with two copies for approval before printing or circulation. The Ministry shall approve the printed material or reject



it, giving the reasons for rejection, within 30 days. The concerned party may file a grievance with the Minister against the rejection decision.

Article 14

Every printing press shall keep a record of all materials printed therein. The record shall be made available to authorized personnel upon request, and the Ministry may, in the Implementing Regulations, exempt any printed material from this requirement.

Article 15

The author, publisher, and printer shall be responsible for any violation in the printed material if printed or set for circulation without approval, and if it is not possible to identify either of them, the distributor shall be held responsible. Otherwise, the responsibility shall fall upon the seller.

Article 16

The Ministry shall require the author or publisher, according to the deposit system, to submit the copies required for deposit of whatever is printed in the Kingdom.

Article 17

Advertising and publicity materials shall not be added to films, tapes, or the like on which artistic or sports materials are recorded and for which contracts are concluded for their use in the Kingdom, except through local advertising and publicity establishments or companies and after obtaining the Ministry's approval. The Implementing Regulations shall determine the duration of advertisements in every work.

Foreign Printed Materials

Article 18

Foreign printed materials shall be approved if they are free of any content offensive to Islam or the government system, detrimental to the State's vital interests, or in violation of public decency and morals.

Article 19

Approval or rejection of foreign printed materials shall be approved or rejected, stating the reasons thereof, within 30 days from the date of receiving the application. However, the approval or rejection of newspapers shall be made in accordance with the Implementing Regulations.



Article 20

Every Saudi who publishes a non-periodical printed material outside the Kingdom and submits an application to the Ministry for its approval shall attach to his application proof of deposit of the required copies, in accordance with the deposit system.

Article 21

The Ministry's censorship shall not apply to printed materials imported by government bodies, educational and research institutions, academic associations, cultural and literary clubs, and private press establishments for their own use.

Article 22

The Implementing Regulations shall, within the provisions of this Law, regulate the import and distribution of foreign printed materials.

It shall also specify the procedures necessary to facilitate bringing in and subscribing to books and other printed materials by researchers and scholars for their academic purposes and for their personal possession.

Article 23

Upon the approval of the Prime Minister, foreign newspapers may be printed in the Kingdom as specified by the Implementing Regulations and in accordance with the provisions of this Law.

Local Press

Article 24

Local newspapers shall not be subject to censorship, except under extraordinary circumstances determined by the Prime Minister.

Article 25

1. Outside the domain of private press establishments, private bodies or individuals may publish newspapers after obtaining a license from the Ministry and upon the approval of the Prime Minister.
2. The Ministry's approval shall be sufficient for publishing the following:
 - a) Brochures of limited circulation published by private bodies and not intended for sale, provided that they are limited to serving the activities of the publishing body.
 - b) Specialized academic and professional journals, published by private bodies or individuals.



3. Publishing newspapers and academic journals by public educational institutions and government bodies, after informing the Ministry.
4. The supervisor of any printed material mentioned in this Article and the director of the agency publishing it shall be responsible for what is published therein, in accordance with the provisions of this Law.

Article 26

The names of the licensee and editor-in-chief, issue number, place of publication, date of publication, price, and the name of the printing press shall be placed in a visible position in the newspaper.

Article 27

1. The name of any newspaper which was published and then discontinued may not be used except after the lapse of 10 years from the date of its discontinuation, unless the concerned persons relinquish the name before the expiry of that period.
2. It shall be prohibited to give a name to a newspaper that may cause confusion with the name of another newspaper.

Article 28

The Implementing Regulations shall specify the rules regulating newspaper annual subscription fees, the price of a single copy, as well as issues related to advertisements.

Article 29

The Ministry may revoke a license or cancel the approval to publish a newspaper in any of the following two cases:

1. If no issues are published within a maximum period of two years from the date of notification of issuance of the license.
2. If publication is discontinued for a continuous period that exceeds one year.

Article 30

It shall be prohibited for newspapers and their staff to accept any benefit such as donations, subsidies, or the like from local or foreign parties, except after obtaining the Ministry's approval.

Article 31

A newspaper shall not be banned from publishing except under extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of the Prime Minister.

Article 32

A. Editorial advertisements for establishments and individuals may be



published, provided that it is indicated that they are advertising material.

- B. Editorial advertisements for countries may be published after obtaining the Ministry's approval, provided that it is indicated that they are advertising material.

Article 33

1. The editor-in-chief of the newspaper or whoever acts on his behalf in his absence, shall be responsible for whatever is published therein.
2. Without prejudice to the responsibility of the editor-in-chief or whoever acts on his behalf, the writer of a text shall be responsible for its content.

Article 34

Umm al-Qura Newspaper is the official gazette of the state.

Penalties

Article 35

Any newspaper that attributes to someone an incorrect statement or publishes incorrect news, shall rectify the same by publishing the correction free of charge, upon the request of the concerned party, in the first issue published after the correction request, and it shall be in the same place where the news or statement was published or in a prominent position in the newspaper. Persons harmed by such publication shall have the right to claim compensation.

Article 36

The Ministry may, when necessary, withdraw any printed material without compensation, if it includes any of the prohibited materials stipulated in Article 9 of this Law.

Article 37

1. A preliminary committee, or more, chaired by a person with judicial experience, and with the membership of a legal advisor and a media specialist, shall be formed to consider violations of the provisions of this Law and imposition of penalties stated therein.
2. The committee shall only consider complaints filed by a person having direct capacity and interest, or complaints referred thereto by the Minister.
3. The decisions of the preliminary committee shall be issued unanimously or by majority after summoning and hearing the statement of the violator or his representative; it may summon any other person to hear his statement.

Article 38

Without prejudice to any harsher penalty provided for in any other law, any



person who violates any of the provisions of this Law shall be punished by one or more of the following penalties:

1. A fine not exceeding 500,000 riyals, and the fine shall be doubled if the violation is repeated.
2. Suspension of the violator from writing in all newspapers and printed materials, or media branding through satellite channels, or from both.
3. Permanent or temporary closure or blocking the printed material subject of the violation. If the printed material subject of the violation is a newspaper, the implementation of the closure decision shall be subject to the approval of the Prime Minister. If it is an electronic newspaper, website, or the like, the closure or blocking decision shall be vested with the Minister.
4. Publication of the violator's apology shall be in the printed material if his violation involves the publication of false information or accusations against persons mentioned in paragraph (3) of Article 9 of this Law, in accordance with the form approved by the committee. The publication of such apology shall be at the expense of the violator and at the same place where the violation was published.

If the violation involves contempt of Islam, undermines State interests, or involves criticism of sentences imposed by the court, the committee shall refer such violation, pursuant to a reasoned decision, to the Minister to bring the same before the King to consider taking statutory procedures for the initiation of a suit before the competent court, or take any other action that serves public interest.

Article 39

The Ministry may withdraw domestic or foreign printed materials displayed for circulation in the following two cases:

1. If they are banned from circulation.
2. If they are not licensed and contain some of the banned materials specified in Article 9 or Article 18.

The entity authorized to review these matters is the committee provided for in Article 37. The committee shall decide what it deems appropriate either by destroying the printed materials without compensation or requiring the concerned person to send them back out of the Kingdom at his own expense, if they are foreign materials.

Article 40

1. An appellate committee shall be formed and shall be chaired by a person with judicial experience with the membership of a legal advisor and a media specialist; the professional experience of any one of them shall not be less than 25 years. Such committee shall review appeals submitted by interested parties against the decisions of the preliminary committee referred to in Article 37 of this Law. Decisions of the appellate committee shall be issued unanimously or by majority and shall be final and non-appealable before any other entity.



2. The Minister shall issue the rules regulating work procedures of the preliminary and appellate committees, and determine their jurisdiction in accordance with this Law.
3. The formation of the preliminary and appellate committees as well as the naming of their chairmen and members and their remunerations shall be pursuant to a royal order. The term of membership of both committees shall be three renewable years.

Article 41

If the Ministry licenses a printed material and something unexpectedly occurs requiring its withdrawal, it shall compensate the concerned party for the cost of withdrawn copies.

General Provisions

Article 42

For the approval of academic and intellectual works, the Ministry shall assign those who are qualified, competent, specialized, and acquainted with the laws and publication instructions. It may, as it deems appropriate, seek help from part-timers outside the Ministry.

Article 43

In coordination with concerned bodies, the Ministry shall establish the regulations for holding book fairs by private publishing and distribution houses, and shall supervise the same.

Article 44

Pursuant to a decision by the Minister, associations for the activities provided for in Article 2 may be established in order to address their issues and coordinate their tasks. Every association shall set regulations, to be approved by the Minister, clarifying its objectives and regulating its work procedures.

Article 45

The Ministry shall be the body authorized to follow up on the implementation of this Law and to hold accountable those violating it, pursuant to its provisions.

Article 46

The Minister shall issue the Implementing Regulations of this Law within a maximum period of 18 months from the date of its publication, and they shall be published in the Official Gazette.



Article 47

Any party engaged in any of the activities governed by this Law shall adjust his status pursuant to the provisions provided in the Law within a period of two years from the date of its entry into force.

Article 48

This Law shall supersede the Law of Printed Materials and Publication issued by Royal Decree No. (M/17) dated 13/04/1402H and shall repeal any provisions conflicting therewith.

Article 49

This Law shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall enter into force 90 days following the date of its publication.