

Cultural Policy program
in the Arab Region

Fourth period report
July 1st
December 30th, 2013



Current developments of cultural policy in the Arab Region

General Summary Report

Current developments in cultural policy

Algeria | Morocco | Tunisia | Mauritania

Yemen | Egypt

Palestine | Syria | Lebanon | Jordan

February 2014

The fourth periodic report on cultural policy in the Arab region monitors current developments in 10 Arab states in the period between July 1st and December 30th 2013. As in the previous reports, it focuses on two main aspects: monitoring key developments in the cultural policy on the national level in the Arab countries covered, and developments of work carried out by the National Groups in each of the countries.

The report includes information on East Arab countries (Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan), West Arab countries excluding Libya (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania), in addition to Egypt and Yemen. This report monitors the key positive developments, such as the



endorsement of a new cultural policy by the Yemeni Council of Ministers, the Mauritanian government's approval of the UNESCO agreement for the protection and promotion of various forms of cultural expression, the creation of the core national group for cultural statistics in Morocco, the appointment of Constantine Capital of Arab Culture for 2015 in Algeria, in addition to documenting the more prominent challenges and obstacles in other countries in relation to severe violations against cultural activists' civil rights in most countries as well as restrictions on working artists as in Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon and Algeria; whereas the scene in Syria retains the height of complexity. The report also monitors the relation between political change and cultural policy in Egypt, in addition to the continuing divisions over legislation in Palestine. Finally, this report also observes the creation of the National Group in Jordan and the first meeting of the initiative for 'Priorities of Cultural Work in Syria.'

The methodology used in this report as in the previous report was direct contact with organizations and activists in each of the covered countries. Researchers at *Ettijahat* had developed 'worksheets' pertaining to each country, which were closely examined and revised by the National Group and ultimately used to guide researchers at *Ettijahat* regarding the main priorities and most important changes to be addressed in this report. Given that some groups have been operating for more than a year and the project's continuity for several years, importance has been placed on funding, administrative hierarchy, and time in order to preserve the continuing work and independence of Groups. The researchers also made reviews of yearly strategic plans of National Groups that have been developed based on each Group's specific strategies.

We apologize for the delay in publishing this report -for a number of reasons, the latest of which was the restructuring of the Arab Group for Cultural Policy at the Group's conference in Gammarth, Tunisia, from December 21st to the 23rd 2013. At the end of the conference the Tunisian National Group was formed, as well as the talks held between Cultural Resource (al Mawrad al Thaqafi) and *Ettijahat* about the vision for developing the programme.

We would like to thank the members of the National Groups mentioned in this report, and the Program in general, who have shared their knowledge, expertise and experiences as well as for their belief in the urgent need to improve the ecology of cultural labour in their countries.

Jordan:

Legislative amendments made to ban online sites and delays in passing freedom of expression law are met with a wave of protests demanding freedom of press and expression

The second half of 2013 saw protests and sit-ins carried out by Jordanian journalists and intellectuals against legislative amendments in relation to culture made by the Jordanian government. The Press and Publications Law blocked 213 online news sites in June 2013. The result was a number of public and union protests under the banner of 'Media Coalition against site blocking and publications law', the most prominent of which were a sit-in in front of the prime minister's headquarters as well as the internet provider company's headquarters.

There were further escalations and further site blocking in the following months. In September unemployed journalists began an open sit-in at the National Centre for Human Rights demanding job creation.

The Ministry of Culture suspended the freedom of expression law adopted in 2007. In November the Jordanian Writers Association and the Plastic Artists Association called for sit-ins that took place in front of the Ministry, carried out by cultural workers against what they called the alienation of all active cultural organizations and marginalization of the national cultural program.

The Prime Minister's response was that the law had not been revoked but only suspended until 2015 due to the Ministry's deficit of an estimated four hundred thousand Jordanian dinars.

Following the protests that took place a conference titled 'After the Ministry of Culture Sit-in' was organized by the Committee for General Freedoms and Writers' Rights at the Writers Association. The conference concluded with a number of proposals to support the positions of artists emphasizing the importance of unity and demanding their rights.

The staff at Al Hussein Cultural Center assaulted members of a musical group who were performing at the Center, the 'Coalition to Defend Cultural and Creative Freedoms in Jordan' was launched to address numerous civil and governmental organizations to protect artists' rights.

In an initiative to restructure and reorganize the Ministry of Culture, the Higher Advisory Committee was formed its mission to offer consultations concerning the Ministry's vision. The Committee's is made up members from both the Ministry and the Writers Association.

The Ministry also signed a cultural cooperation agreement between Jordan and Palestine. The administrative program for 2013 until 2015 consists of three main clauses that cover libraries, archives and manuscripts, conferences, lectures and cultural seminars in addition to

theatre, cinema, music, crafts and fine art, and intangible cultural heritage. The two countries will also share expertise in capacity building and technical personnel training in the fields of art, music and design, as well as management of cultural centers and organizations.

Tafila was announced Jordanian City of Culture for 2014, a call for submission of support for cultural and artistic projects has been posted.

The National group for Cultural Policy:

The National Group for Cultural Policy was finally established after a series of meetings and discussions held in November, attended by a group of artists, activists and supporters of the cultural scene. The main issues discussed were concerned with independent artists' work, funding, research, and issues at the heart of cultural policy and the current conditions of Jordanian culture.

The areas the group has worked on are:

- Compiling and reading studies and reports on cultural policy in Jordan; sharing these documents with artists and individuals interested in the project
- Holding meetings with individuals as well as dialogues (with independents and persons representing independent organizations) in which corridors and possibilities for work were discussed.
- Continuing work on publishing abridged summaries of reports, studies observing development and change, strengths weaknesses as well as challenges and laws, in addition to trends of cultural production in particular times (taking into consideration shifts in the political scene, boom in film production, street music, relevance of caricature illustration...) and other influences and indicators through which the realities and developments in cultural policy may be framed.
- A draft set of principles and concerns has been developed to promote dialogue on developing the ecologies of cultural work.
- Some of these questions were raised with the participation of attendees to the subsequent meetings, a varied group whose number of interested attendees fluctuates. Currently the group is compiling written responses for further study.
- Updating research and its methodologies in the field of cultural policy in Jordan.

The group aims at forming a diverse and lively board. Its six new members come from different backgrounds and age groups.

The group's next phase is to develop its structure, network with the Ministry of Culture and Greater Amman Municipality, hold regular meetings with civil society active individuals and organizations to identify the work of the National Group for Cultural Policy and expand its relations.

Lebanon:

Lebanese judicial system issues a first-time order to dismantle an archaeological site. The General Directorate's censorship department bans a play and several films.

Cultural policy in Lebanon in the second half of 2013 focused on two main decisions concerning archaeological sites and censorship. The Ministry of Culture made further decisions to dismantle archaeological sites in Beirut, as in the previous cases of the Beirut

Theatre and the Phoenician ruins in Minet al Hosn. Minister Gaby Layoun passed a decision to dismantle and reconstruct ruins found in plots 834 and 1410. The archaeological site is a Roman hippodrome that extends across a few plots of land, some of it has been removed and the rest remains to be dismantled. An activist group known as the Association to Protect Lebanese Heritage sent a petition to the Lebanese State Council, one of many previously sent. A legal order was issued in December 2013 to stop developers from building over the site, revoking the Ministry of Culture's decision no849 which had given developers authorization to annex the southern part of the archaeological site to the construction of a building project by the company 'Beirut Trade' on plot no1370 in Minet el Hosn. The site had been officially listed in the general inventory of historic buildings. The legal order approved the dismantling and reconstruction of the middle and north sections of the hippodrome. It was a first order of its kind issued by the Lebanese judicial system.

In a similar context the Ministry of Culture has issued a statement concerning the 'exacerbation of operations and attempts to demolish heritage buildings in the evenings and during nighttime without obtaining required permits from the appropriate authorities.' The Ministry also warned those who commit such offenses will face legal prosecution without any prior warning regardless of the parties involved. It must be noted that the Ministry's stand is not concerned with the threat of demolishing heritage buildings as much as the transgression on its authority to issue permits to demolish these buildings.

The administration of the Beirut International Film Festival announced the ban on screening a Lebanese short film 'Wahabtouka al Moutaa' (I Gave You Pleasure) on short term 'pleasure marriage' and the French feature film L'Inconnu du Lac (Stranger by the Lake) that deals with homosexuality. Both films were initially included in the Festival's 13th edition that took place in October 2013.

In the preceding month of August the General Directorate's Censorship Department banned the performance of the play 'Would it Pass or Not?' produced by the anti-censorship group March. The play humorously tackles issues of censorship and specifically the Lebanese general security's censorship department.

Lebanon's General Security maintains censorship within its territory. Its Censorship Department usually bans films that might tackle sectarian strife, promote blasphemy, violate public morality or promote normalization with Israel. The decisions of the Censorship Department to ban works in art and culture are often met with sharp criticism from cultural and legal circles in Lebanon.

The National Group for Cultural Policy

After the preliminary core for the National Group for Cultural Policy was formed by a group of cultural and legislative activists who laid out an initial vision for the Group's activities and aims until it is officially formed and launched, the core members as well as the commissioned al Mawred al Thaqafi (Cultural Resource) organization proposed to research the legislations around cultural work in Lebanon which was carried out by lawyer Nayla Geagea.¹

¹The main recommendations can be found in the appendix to this report

During the 3rd meeting of the Arab Group for Cultural Policy, which took place from the 21st to the 23rd of December 2013, an initial strategy was laid out based on the three main recommendations that were formulated at the conclusion of the 'Independent Culture for Democracy' conference that took place in Cairo from 15th to 17th December 2012. The core of the Lebanese National Group plans to implement them through further discussions and a wider network of cultural workers. The strategy includes:

- Following through work in relation to legislation and laws related to culture (following up on the recommendations from the first study, proposing amendments and procedural regulations etc...)

- Mapping Lebanese cultural workers as well as public and private cultural fields in Lebanon

- Managing governmental and non-governmental funding by working on publishing recommendations on organizing as well as launching the 'Fund for Culture Activities and Industries' in the new proposed structure of the Ministry of Culture, in addition to encouraging the creation of an independent fund based on a model similar to Egypt's Madad fund.

- Supporting freedom of expression through organizing a yearly festival that tackles issues concerning censorship and raises the question of freedom of expression

The core group envisages achieving its strategy through active research, field surveys, consultations, campaigns to raise awareness, and direct political pressure.

The group also collaborated with researcher Kawthar Sleymani to update a mapping of cultural policy in Lebanon.

Palestine:

Many agreements of collaboration and cooperation despite Palestinian divisions over legislation

Lack of a law to protect heritage and violations on media freedoms

Legislative problems concerning protection of cultural heritage in Palestine continued until the end of 2013. A Ministry of Culture exists in Ramallah and another one in Gaza, each of which makes decisions without coordinating with the other. Instead each Ministry tries to discredit the legitimacy of the other, which has given the network of NGO's an urgency to act in order to preserve the unity of Palestinian society and face the effects brought by this division. A petition signed by more than 120 NGO's from Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza strip was published demanding an end to the division that furthers the continued deterioration of legal and legislative situation in the Palestinian territories.

In Gaza, the Ministry of Culture has discussed with civil society organizations a national strategy for Palestinian culture for 2014. The discussions lead to developing a unified national strategy to advance the current cultural realities, cultivating the role of the media, the establishment and development of libraries and archives, in addition to raising the profile of art and artists and the allocation of a governmental budget and the provision of adequate logistical support.

The Gaza Ministry of Culture also passed the 'accession number' law introduced to protect authors from false claims, forgery and plagiarism throughout their life and 50 years after

death. The Ministry kept its role as so-called 'arbitrator' in order to reserve its authority to evaluate literature to ensure it does not violate the numerous standards such as shari'a law and religious belief.

In the West Bank, the Ministry of Culture signed an agreement of cultural cooperation between Jordan and Palestine for the period of 2013 until 2015 made up of three main clauses that cover libraries, archives, manuscripts, conferences, lectures, cultural seminars, folk crafts and fine art as well as intangible cultural heritage. The two countries also agreed to share expertise when it comes to capacity building, trainings in art, music and design, as well as management of cultural organizations and centers.

The Ministry in Gaza also renewed the agreement with Norway to support the Palestinian Cultural Fund of an amount of US Dollars 2 million. The signing of the agreement marks the beginning of Phase III of the Palestinian Cultural Fund which was established in 2004. A cultural exchange agreement was also signed with France, it includes various fields specifically cooperation in cinema.

An agreement between the Ministry of Culture and the Palestinian National Committee for Education and Science to protect and preserve folk tales was signed with the support of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) within its first phase of projects approved at the General Conference for 2013 – 2014.

Despite the numerous decisions and agreements made by the Ministry, some Palestinian groups are demanding it passes the law to protect cultural heritage in light of the continuous systematic theft of Palestinian heritage carried out by Israel, especially after Palestine became a member of UNESCO. The delay in passing the law by the Palestinian Cabinet is due to a disagreement between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism around the nature of the law.

In relation to freedom of expression and speech, a few violations by the Israeli authorities against journalists in the past few months were reported. These include the use of physical violence and tear gas against media workers participating in the 'Freedom of Movement' campaign organized by the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate. Palestinian authorities in both the West Bank and Gaza were also responsible for similar violations. Several cases of arrest and physical violence specifically aimed at suspected sympathizers with the Egyptian Tamarod movement in Gaza were reported.

National Group for Cultural Policy

After the establishment of the National Group for Cultural Policy in Palestine licensed as the 'Cultural Policy Organization', preliminary aims of implementation were drawn, these include:

- Holding the first meeting of founding members on 05/08/2013
- Holding several meetings in September with the Ministry of Culture and the Higher Council for Culture and Art for the final review of the national strategy for culture.
- Organizing a workshop on cultural management in September
- Updating the strategic and implementation plan of the Group for 2014 in November
- Updating database of Organizations and Individuals (new database software built) in November

- Updating database of Organizations and Individuals (interactive blog launched) in December
- Updating survey of cultural policy in Palestine was published in December

We are still waiting National Group in Palestine to publish its report for the second half in 2013

Syria:

Extreme disparities in the forms and kinds of cultural work carried out in areas controlled by the regime and the opposition. The state of heritage sites and cultural infrastructure continues to deteriorate

There were no major changes on the cultural and legislative levels in Syria in the second half of 2013. The same minimal governmental cultural work in the areas controlled by the Syrian regime continued since the past two years, as for the areas controlled by the opposition civic, relief and cultural work.

The cultural movement in areas controlled by the regime aims at preserving the regular work of institutions in an attempt to feign that life goes on as usual. This movement does not aim to develop cultural work or is concerned with its development as much as keeping business-as-usual regardless of its form or regularity.

Performances of theatre plays and music concerts continue, as well as the regular program of the Damascus Opera House. Grants to produce short films have been awarded to young filmmakers, and the National Cinema Organization has produced several films. The Syrian National Symphony Orchestra continues to give concerts.

The overlaying message these ongoing activities send out is that despite the crisis unfolding in Syria it will be able to overcome it, and the cultural events taking place even have a certain cheer to them or a preoccupation with projecting this image remains unaltered. However difficult it is to uphold cultural workers' political position in all this, participants in cultural events affirmed during press appearances their stance on security as that of the Syrian regime – for this reason a large number of artists have profited from the crisis in Syria and have gained grants or occupied high positions within the cultural field after many had fled or refused to work with the regime.

Within the same context there are many artists who work in this field and hold a different view without siding or conforming to the Syrian regime but believe in carrying on with cultural and artistic work no matter what the circumstances or pressures persisting in the country, in addition to the necessity of work to make a living especially that many professional actors have lost their jobs due to the suspension of a market for dubbed Turkish soap operas that provided an income to a great many.

On a different note many cultural institutions have laid off a large number of employees who do not hold the same views as the regime, as the National Cinema Organization had previously done, as well as arrested and prosecuted many others such as actress Leila

Awad, ZakiKordello, MehiaKordello, writer Adnan Zirai as well as plastic artist Youssef Abdelke to name a few.

As for the areas controlled by the opposition there have recently been prominent developments. Extremist and militant Islamic organizations have taken hold of areas in the north of Syria, most notably Dulat al-Islam fi al-Iraq wal-Sham (Daash) which have imposed laws that violate freedoms, women's rights and the most basic civil rights in addition to persecuting and assassinating a number of activists and journalists as well as branding several other organisations and citizens as traitors and infidels under the imposed shari'a law. Fighting broke out with armed Syrian opposition organisations in several areas pushing Daash outwards.

In other areas controlled by the opposition, as for the past two years, the emergence of many civic groups and organizations (journalistic, artistic, relief, awareness), working in difficult conditions and with limited resources especially in besieged areas, continues. These organizations often do not have consistent funding, neither structured management nor written strategies. Their main concerns are:

1. Promoting civic values and rule of law
2. Non-violence and social change
3. Contributing to building a civil society in Syria
4. Undertaking field and academic studies and research necessary for cultural planning as well as building cultural and intellectual projects in line with a new society
5. Developing essential cultural policy and attitudes on the national level in order to assimilate cultural awareness into the development process
6. Encouraging independent artistic movements
7. Defending media freedom using different media tools

The challenge that faces these initiatives is the necessity to systematize their operations in order to move from a reactionary stage to one of action in order to meet the needs that arise within the escalating disaster.

Continuing violent battles across Syria have put cultural heritage under extensive threat. Unesco placed six Syrian world heritage sites on its List of World Heritage in Danger on June 31st 2013. These listed sites are the Ancient City of Aleppo, Ancient city of Damascus, Ancient city of Bosra, Qala'at Salah El-Din, Site of Palmyra, and Ancient Villages of Northern Syria. A large number of other cultural infrastructures has been converted into military headquarters, warehouses or shelters.

National Group for Cultural Policy

The Syrian National Group for Cultural Policy continued its work according to its initial work plan whose structure and operations are quite different from those pertaining to other Arab countries. This difference is due to the radical changes Syria is going through.

The Group has launched its 'Cultural Priorities in Syria' program which aims at creating mutual support among independent cultural workers in relation to their work and the potentialities of effecting positive change within the social and cultural developments and challenges in Syria.

The project's first roundtable was held by a small group of cultural workers to discuss:

-Agreement around the key conceptions related to work

- Agreement on the vision of culture deemed necessary to create by participants
- Who are the cultural workers involved on the national level?
- Reporting the current state of cultural policy in Syria
- Envisaging the nature of future cultural change
- What are the goals of proposed cultural policy to be instituted?
- What are the major roles played by the independent cultural sector currently and in the future?

The roundtable concluded with a few recommendations and specifications for working on constructing the program and preparing for the second roundtable which will include a wider reach of artists and activists in the cultural field.

The Group also conducted a 'poll on the priorities of cultural work in Syria' and widely distributed it. The poll has three main parts: firstly, a survey of cultural changes since the beginning of the movement in 2011; secondly, the priorities of cultural work and the role of the independent sector in the current situation; and thirdly, the assumed role of the governmental sector.

This poll largely contributed to forming a base for the work of the Group and a grounded knowledge for the program's next steps.

The Group also completed a comparative study of the ways arts and culture can contribute to peace building/supporting civil peace and conflict resolution in countries that have passed through stages similar to what Syria has been going through. Working on the final steps is currently underway.

The group is currently working on another study on the different forms of art affected by similar events and circumstances as in Lebanon, Iraq and naturally Syria.

Egypt:

Political changes substantially affecting cultural policy.

Violations on freedom of expression

Continuing political and legislative changes in Egypt have clearly had an impact on cultural policy. The previous Minister of Culture Alaa Abd el Aziz, appointed by president Mohamad Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, has taken decisions to restructure the ministry and sacked senior ministry officials who belonged to the old regime (from previous minister Farouk Hosni's time), a move that is relatively for the ministry's advantage, replacing them with employees who are unqualified and have a lower profile. He was accused of attempting to change Egyptian cultural identity. The current minister of culture Saber Arab promoted and called for the



approval of the new constitution proposed by the Military Council. The Ministry will certainly influence the benchmark of cultural policy legislation.

The Supreme Military Council's coming to power coincided with violations of freedom of expression which began as breaking up sit-ins, shutting down religious television channels, as well as attacks on journalists and banning Bassem Youssef's television program, and finally with the introduction of the anti-protest law which was opposed by a large number of Egyptian population.

AlaaAbdelaziz'sMinistry was not the driving force behind the cultural groups movements and initiatives that resulted in sit-ins in front of the Ministry headquarters. Currently mobilization is limited to the initiative started by filmmakers. Dozens of Egyptian filmmakers signed a petition denouncing the representative of Artists' Union director Khaled Youssef's support for the Egyptian Constituent Assembly's decision to amend an article that would allow military trials for civilians. They deemed his approval as 'non representative'. The group of artists who published the statement urged their colleagues to sign it. The statement read: 'we are a group of Egyptian filmmakers who constitute a part of the Egyptian people who are struggling to achieve the dream of freedom and justice. Millions have come out to the streets since 2011 for this dream and we are dismayed that the film director Khaled Youssef is representing filmmakers in the 50-member-committee which will amend Egypt's new constitution to allow military trials of civilians.' In December the second campaign under the banner 'No to the military state' was carried out, with several other 'No' banners carried denouncing the anti-protest law and military trials.

In another context a group of intellectuals called for conference titled 'Egyptian Culture at the Forefront', dubbed as the 'intellectual conference' by the press, to be held and sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and the Supreme Council of Culture. The conference gave a number of recommendations and demands to the Supreme Council of Culture in relation to raising the budget for culture, representation of diverse cultures in Egypt, supporting freedom of expression, and amending the censorship law among others.

As for civil society organizations, former minister of culture AlaaAbdelaziz announced the opening of the 'Rabaa culture wheel' at the site of the Muslim Brotherhood's sit-in in Rabaa Square. The 'culture wheel' will be a multi-purpose centre for various cultural activities. El Sawy Culture Wheel neither confirmed nor denied any ties to the new culture wheel, it has stopped promoting about its activities and kept a low profile in the period of the sit-in in Rabaa up until its dispersion. It seems that the culture wheel's relationship between its founder and Islamists has fallen out. The writer KhaledKhamissilaunched the Doum Cultural Foundation whichaims to be active in the cultural field.

The Ministry of Culture focused its work in the second half of 2013 on infrastructure such as the opening of the Greater Cairo Library and cultural centres in Luxor,Qana and several other places. Other areas the Ministry has focused on are the cooperation laws between unions and institutions such as the protocol for cooperation between the Writers' Union and the Cairo Film Festival. The library of Alexandria signed an agreement with the Royal Tropical Institute in the Netherlands; some 400 thousand books were reallocated.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) elected Egypt as a member state to the Executive Board for four years. Earlier in August 2013 Egypt had also become a member of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). Mohamad Salmawi, president of the Writers' Union of Egypt had sent a letter to UNESCO's director general Irina Bokova criticising the organization for its silence over the attacks and fires that targeted Egyptian museums, places of worship, libraries and historic buildings.

The Ministry of State for Antiquities in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign affairs was able to retrieve from France 5 stolen antiquities smuggled out of Egypt in the wake of the 25 January revolution. They were handed over to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a week's time.

National Group for Cultural Policy

The circumstances and changes in the political scene in Egypt have affected the work of the National Group and its initiatives; it had planned to launch a website dedicated to cultural policy and write up a complete draft for discussion.

The group continued its work under the campaign 'Cultural Policy for All Egyptians' which includes a range of different print material (postal cards – stickers – posters) distributed in most Egyptian governorates.

The printed matter contained slogans such as: 'culture is not in the ministry, it's in the alleys and in the street', 'it's my right to listen to music', 'it's my right to perform'...

Lately advertisements have been placed on public transport buses made up of images and slogans. One of them read: 'culture is not only for cultured people, it's for all Egyptians. A 13 minute short film about the right to education and culture was produced in addition to placements of televised TV spots.



This campaign calls on every Egyptian to defend their right for culture believing in the necessity for a cultural policy which would guarantee this right.

Morocco:

Creation of the core for the National Organization for Cultural Statistics. The Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture publishes two calls for support to writers and written press in the Amazigh language

A heated debate took place across the Moroccan cultural scene due to a call out by a businessman active in advertising and civil society for the use of colloquial Moroccan as the taught language in schools. The statement contained the main points of recommendation that came out of a seminar study, conducted by said businessman, through a cultural and social

organisation supervised by him. The debate sparked a group of Moroccan intellectuals who issued the statement under the headline: 'in defence of the Arabic language and in support of its locality in the public space'. The statement cautioned from what they called 'linguistic provocations and aggressive linguistic attack under the pretext of multilingualism and openness which do not take into consideration national unity and the stability of its main components.' The statement/petition was signed by many Moroccan writers and intellectuals as well as professionals in the fields of education, teaching, communication, and culture.

In an unprecedented move faqih Al Raysouni, who is one of the most prominent symbols of the Moroccan Islamic movement, called for the proponents of this movement to engage with arts and culture, including dance, singing, theatre and cinema. The cleric urged Islamic movements in Morocco to contribute to the cultural field considering cultural work to have become a necessary educational and reform tool. The unprecedented statement was met with apprehension by some while some others saw it as positive so long it does not promote other faiths, without any reference made to permissible and impermissible works of art. Art after all is a democratic practice and fosters a space diversity and difference.



-Acore for the National Organization for Cultural Statistics was laid out in cooperation between the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Communications and the Higher Commission for Planning. The project aims at strengthening the government/governance and establishing and evaluating policy relevant to cultural affairs and policy from a systematic and scientific approach to determine cultural dynamics, as well as coming up with an informed vision of the data and indicators within the cultural sector. The Ministry will launch the program through the publication of its first book on cultural statistics for the year 2012.

-The Ministry plans to organize an educational day dedicated to culture and arts festivals. The aim of this assembly is to gain a comprehensive view of festivals and get acquainted with their organization process and evaluating the work of officials and supervisors involved. It also aims to maximize the benefits from the experience and contemporary methods of managing some of the cultural festivals that have left a distinct impression within the cultural scene, as well as getting support from the private sector and public institutions.

The Ministry of Culture aims to develop through the survey recommendations that would contribute to developing a model for the new vision which would be implemented by the managers of festivals with regard to the following topics: preparing, managing and evaluating cultural festivals; partnerships and funding; communicating with media and general public; setting the festival calendar and programmes.

-Presentation of 'The White Book' of Morocco's cinema, which would lay new ground for the seventh art in the Kingdom. This book was prepared by a committee made up of various professionals within the field of cinema. It emphasizes the importance of investing in the field, restructuring cinematic professions, advancing the levels of training as well as emphasizing the importance of protecting intellectual property rights. In this occasion the minister of communications announced the launch of an important legal project to reform the regulations around cinematography as well as the regulations of the Moroccan Cinema Centre.

In 2013, around 20 feature films were produced while the number of working cinema theatres continued to decline (from 36 theatres and 61 screens in 2012, to 33 theatres and 58 screens in 2013). As for publications 13 books on cinema in Arabic and in French as well as 3 magazines were published. The number of protests related to cinema has risen to more than 70 protests, 53 of which were supported by the committees of film festivals, the most prominent of which is the Marrakech Film Festival that took place from November 29th to December 7th. Martin Scorsese, president of the jury, expressed his enthusiasm for Morocco and its place in North African cinema and culture.

On November 30th 2013, a first in Moroccan history, the national day for archives with the participation of a group of Moroccan and foreign professionals. A seminar was organized at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Rabat under the headline 'The Archive: Heritage and Democratic Modernity', which aimed at bringing to light the importance of heritage and archives – specifically the links between preserving and managing the archive, responsible governance and transparency as well as the underlying importance of the role of archives in developing modern societies. On this occasion an awareness raising national campaign promoting a culture of archive integral to modernity and democracy was launched.

Morocco has had a significant delay in managing its archive – in 2011 the Moroccan Archive Organization was formed according to law no. 99/69 dated November 30th 2007.

-The Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture made two statements offering a wider reach from Amazigh writers and written press in order for a wider access to writers, creatives and authors, as well as for the benefit of national and regional newspapers and magazines partially or fully written in Amazigh. The publications involved would benefit from funding.

-Introduction of amending a bill on copyright and related rights – that is law no. 79.12 with accompanying law no. 02.00 pertaining to copyrights. The project aims to encourage purchasing original copies and cutback the damages to authors and copyright owners due to unlawful copying of work whether for private use or unlawful distribution. The amendment would increase revenues taken that large amounts of CDs are imported, a yearly estimate of 70 million. Authors, performers, record and video producers would also increase their revenues if more lawful copies were sold in addition to the encouragement of literary and artistic initiatives.

-Morocco was elected to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Executive Board on behalf of the Arab League, for a four year term at the 37th General Assembly which took place from November 5th to 20th 2013 in Paris.

National Group for Cultural Policy:

-In the second half of 2013, the National Group for Cultural Policy worked on several items in its annual plan. The Group was registered in the European Union's database, and conducted research in English on cultural policy in cooperation with the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Dar-al-Bayda under the headlines: Culture in Moroccan parties' programmes, culture in ministerial sectors (tourism, youth and sports, and interior ministries), and culture in the Moroccan parliament. The group is working on translating research summaries into Arabic.

The Group also plans to publish the first issue of its news bulletin by the end of January 2014, in addition to holding a general meeting for Moroccan cultural workers on January 25th 2014 at Dar-al-Bayda to introduce the Group and its programmes and to set up committees for drafting a bill on cultural policy in Morocco.

Algeria:

Preparations underway for Constantine Arab Culture Capital 2015

New laws impose licencing within the fields of cinema and publishing, and a crackdown on freedom of expression

In the second half of 2013 preparations for Constantine Arab Culture Capital 2015 continued, and further legislations restrict workers in the cultural field and limit freedom of expression.

The Algerian Ministry announced an international book salon in the governorate of Constantine as part of Constantine Arab Culture Capital 2015 events, in addition to many

other events being organized including 75 projects related to material and intangible culture as well as projects aimed to revive religious monuments in the capital of the Algerian east. A programme to support Algerian cultural heritage funded by the European Union will be launched in 2014, and work is underway on a project to establish a database of archaeological ruins which aims at creating a map of Algerian archaeological sites and an archaeological atlas of the Arab Maghreb.

The Ministry of Culture is also finalizing its implementation plans to establish two new festivals dedicated to Andalusian music in the governorates of Bejaia and Mostaganemas an addition to the numerous other festivals in Algeria.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) elected Algeria to the Executive Board for four years.



أَنَّ الْفَنَّ هُوَ الْأَثَرُ الْخَالِدُ،
وَالثَّقَافَةُ هِيَ النَّهْرُ الرَّاقِدُ

L'art est ce qui compte,
la culture est ce qui importe

Art is what counts,
culture is what matters

www.gtpca.org

On another note Algerian local newspaper Al Watan announced in a statement published on its website in November that 'political authorities banned 'national talks' scheduled to be held to discuss the authoritarian status quo and its toll on Algeria'.

The newspaper's administration stated that 'it has been holding discussion meetings since 2005 without having to ask for permission from the authorities' and that 'these meetings were a great success with its readers and the general public.'

And according to the same statement 'the ban coincides with the censorship imposed on social movements and newspapers, such as the arrest and jailing of a blogger, and the Ministry of National Defence threatening a journalist who works for the Khabar newspaper. The Algerian judiciary also prosecuted a caricature artist under the charges of treason and offending the president – the cartoon was never published by the newspaper he works for but was found in his personal archive, the drawing bore no signature and did not refer to president AbdelazizBouteflika by name.'

A number of laws were passed to regulate cinema and publishing which were met with negative reactions from professionals in both fields. One of the new laws requires filmmakers to apply for a special permit from the Ministries of Culture and of Moujahidine which both have nothing to do with screenwriting. This law is part of the accompanying decrees to the cinema law in Algeria, viewed by filmmakers as another step to gain monopolize and control the seventh art and described them as rulings hostile to art. The National Union of Algerian Publishers issued a statement criticizing the plans for a new law that would not allow books to be printed, imported or published without a permit from the Ministry of Culture. The statement considered this plan to be in contradiction with larger government projects aimed at encouraging investments.

National Group for Cultural Policy



The National Group for Cultural Policy held four consultation meetings and published a proposal for cultural policy made up of fourteen chapters. The general aim is to restructure cultural policy in Algeria and each chapter focused on a specific topic (audience, artist, support and funding, cultural tourism, among others.)

The group held its fifth meeting in June 2013, titled 'Democratizing Culture in Algeria: Obstacles and Prospects' in the city of Oran, with an outlook to expand beyond the centralism of the capital and reach out to other provinces.

The group also launched its website www.gtpca.org which contains research and funding opportunities, information on legislation and other material related to cultural policy in Algeria.

The sixth meeting is scheduled to be held toward the end of 2013.

Mauritania:

The government approves UNESCO agreement to protect and improve forms of cultural expression, launches survey project on Mauritanian intangible heritage. Active steps to set up a new National Group for Cultural Policy



The Mauritanian government has approved an agreement with UNESCO to protect and improve forms of cultural expression. The Mauritanian Senate had also given its approval but the charged political atmosphere has prevented the Ministry from proposing the agreement to the National Group as well as the Presidency for final approval.

The Ministry of Culture has also signed a contract with researcher Mohammed MokhtarWaladSidnato oversee writing a long-term cultural strategy.

It is worth mentioning that many independent intellectuals are also demanding a higher council for culture in Mauritania.

The Ministry has also launched a project to survey intangible cultural heritage in Mauritania, implemented by the department of heritage with funding from UNESCO.

Many festivals took place in Mauritania in the second half of 2013. The Mauritanian Filmmakers Association organized the eighth edition of the Nouakchott International Short Film Festival, which screens films and hosts filmmakers from all around the world. Workshops for hundreds of young people from Mauritania were held alongside the Festival.

The Mauritanian Literary and Writers Union also organized its ninth festival, in addition to having published 20 books of various genres in poetry, literature and literary criticism. Zaza Productions held the fourth edition of AssalamAlekoum international hip-hop festival.

In addition, an event titled Crossroads of Culture was organized, an annual cultural and touristic event with the participation of over 70 countries that holds musical and artistic performances, as well as presents food and folklore from the participating countries.

The European Union programme for civil Society and culture in Mauritania was launched, which would benefit civil society and cultural organizations by providing funding for projects and workshops for experiential development of workers in the cultural field.

The music video 'It Started from Nouakchott' caused great controversy; many groups demanded artists Leila and Hamzo, as well as the director of the music video and the production company, be tried and jailed on charges of indecency and violating public morality. The two young artists were subject to persecution, police questioning and a campaign of slurs against everyone behind the music video.

National Group for Cultural Policy

An initial team for the National Group for Cultural Policy was formed in June 2013 and is comprised of 5 members:

- Abdelrahman Ahmad Salem, director of the Mauritanian Filmmakers Association which would sponsor the Group
- Mohammed Ibn Edom, the Group's coordinator
- Ahmed Maouloud Eida, researcher
- Maimouna Bint Al-salek, researcher
- Amhani Sar, student/researcher

The Group started off with research carried out by both researchers with the aim to compile any legal texts related to culture written since Mauritania's independence in 1960, whether laws, decrees, decisions, or even paragraphs in presidential speeches or candidates' electoral programs, as well as in the written regulations of municipalities or council meetings. Research work has already begun and is currently still being conducted.

Following this, individual meetings were organized with some cultural workers and media professionals. The group has also organized a workshop on cultural management and cultural policy attended by heads of national cultural organizations.

In November a meeting was held with the director of the Arts and Culture department at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports as well as the pundit supervising the preparation of the Ministry's cultural strategy. An agreement was made to coordinate and exchange information, cooperate with the department of culture to facilitate Group's work, and subsequently to legally register the Group.

The Group plans to continue meetings with cultural workers before organizing an open forum that would bring together all cultural workers whether in Nouakchott or across the country for the official launch of the National Group, as well as to draw up its working methods and programs. The launch is planned to take place during the first national gathering of the National Group for Cultural Policy, which aims at bringing together cultural workers, politicians and funders, as well as representatives of the authorities and provinces.

The Group also intends to organize a national campaign for the right to culture early next year.

Yemen:

**Council of Ministers adopts new cultural policy;
urgent need to find a solution to the dossier on
antiquities and heritage.**

More assaults and assassinations targeting artists

The main developments in cultural policy in Yemen came after the conference on cultural policy and developments that took place from may 6th to 8th 2013. A new cultural policy was devised

at the conference in line with the major political shifts in Yemen during the period of national dialogue. Following the conference the Council of Ministers decided to implement its conclusions as a national cultural policy. This initiative was the result of a joint effort between the Ministry of Culture and the Yemeni National Group for Cultural Policy, with the participation of a wide spectrum of workers in various governmental and independent cultural fields, with the aim of developing a national cultural strategy that is up to date with the major changes Yemeni society is undergoing as well as sustainable for the future culture of modern Yemen.

المجموعة
اليمنية
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الثقافية



Similarly the Organization for Eastern Culture in cooperation with Cultural Resource ran a workshop on cultural policy. The workshop aims to mobilize and gain support for the National Group in the field of cultural policy.

Scrolls and antique swords were stolen from the National Museum in Sanaa, which prompted fears that the Museum would be completely looted if the perpetrators were not to be found during its 11 day holiday in October. Previously there had been three cases of theft, all the stolen items were eventually found and returned to the museum.

The security division at the Directorate of Alguenaos uncovered and stopped an attempt at smuggling ancient manuscripts out of Yemen. Museums in Yemen lack a lot of facilities, primarily the need for technological and human security & guarding.

In order to preserve heritage and cities placed on the World Heritage in Danger list, the government passed law no (16) in 2013 in order to preserve the architectural heritage of cities, regions and historical monuments. The law contained 148 articles in 10 chapters.

The Minister of Culture had asked that the World Heritage Centre help Yemen maintain the ancient city. The minister stated that preservation work in the ancient cities of Yemen requires an amount of ten billion Yemeni riyals from next year's budget.

A draft agreement between Yemen and Italy was drawn, it includes Italy's contribution to establishing a regional institute for trainings on restoration and maintenance of heritage in the ancient city of Sanaa.

As for freedom of expression, the freedoms committee at the Yemen Journalists' Syndicate voiced its concern about the increasingly violent and hostile abuses against journalists. The syndicate also denounced the violent assault on Yahya Arhab, a photographer with the

European Pressphoto Agency, during which his camera was confiscated by members of the Special Forces while he was covering a protest organized by motorcycle owners.

In a blatant attack on cultural and intellectual life, actor Sam al-Moualimi was attacked and killed by gunmen in mysterious circumstances in Sanaa. In Ta'izz artist and painter Mohamad al-Silfadorr, who had tried to denounce the spread of weapons through his cartoons, was assassinated.

National Group for Cultural Policy

The National Group for Cultural Policy in Yemen worked its efforts in the second half of 2013. It published its first publication in the form of a booklet titled 'General Framework for National Cultural Policy' which contains the main outcomes from the Cultural Policy and Cultural Development conference that took place in June 2013. The Group has also organized workshops on gaining audience and support within the community for the cultural policy project, in addition to an on-going dialogue with members of Cultural Development Committee at the National Dialogue Conference. The Council of Ministers has approved on a new national cultural policy in Yemen.

General Remarks on the Work of National Groups:

-The difficulty of the setting-up phase for certain Groups renders the establishment process itself an aim and a preoccupation. In many cases the process is where all the work is happening prior to the main aims of the Group such as policy change or garnering support for alternative policy proposals.

-Some Groups' reliance on a single individual to manage the Group could lead it to lose its momentum and build-up thus the essence of what defines it

-Thinking in a framework of exchange of experience among Groups. Some groups such as in Algeria and Yemen have had significant experience and growth that Groups being formed now could benefit from while taking into account the differences in circumstances and cultural policy infrastructure in each country.

-Differences in political and social conditions as well as visions of Group members in each country exist, creating significantly varied aims among Groups, between radical change in policies and research or documentation.

-In the previous report the main note was concerning some Groups deviating from their annual strategies agreed upon a few months earlier... Now after a full year has passed the stark digressions from initial plans are noticeable. Obviously as a result of changing conditions within societies, which pushes us to think of making short-term strategies or creating different work dynamics of implementing them.

-More than a year has passed since the establishment of some Groups, and a few years since the conception of the project. The main points to think about are funding, management structure and time-frames in order to preserve the Groups' momentum and their future independence.

Appendix 1

Recommendations resulting from the research on laws on cultural work in Lebanon:

Recommendations regarding the structure of the Ministry of Culture:

- Issuing necessary decrees to activate various organs and departments of the Directorate General for Cultural Affairs based on tables no 1 and 2, above;
- Allocating from the budget of the Ministry of Culture adequate finances toward appropriate apparatuses and human resources based on those decrees;
- Issuing decrees necessary to structure and launch the 'Fund for Cultural Activities and Production' based on a rigorous study to determine instrumental financial resources for the Fund;

Recommendations regarding legislative conditions of working for artists:

- Reviewing fiscal policies and taxation of artists on the basis of a complete separation between workers in the cultural sector and workers in entertainment, with the aim to transform the taxation system into an incentive system;
- Compilation of a list within clear criteria to include non-profit groups and organizations that are active in the cultural sector and cooperate with departments related to the General Directorate for Cultural Affairs according to specialization, as well as gathering an all-encompassing data list on frameworks and mechanisms that facilitate and conduct their work in coordination with other official bodies;
- Abolishing the licensing system for setting up unions, and abolishing the limit on freedom to join a union;
- Replace appointment systems with elections in the managerial positions of the retirement fund;
- Reviewing how finances are allocated to the fund towards the adoption of a more equitable plan based on a merit system and cumulative fees;
- Re-evaluation of legislative policy related to working artists on Lebanese territories toward the abolition of the legal understanding of artist as a person working in night clubs (sex work), in addition to creating the distinction between an artist working for commercial and profit purposes and an artist participating in festivals and not-for-profit activities;

Recommendations regarding cultural spaces:

- Issuing the necessary decrees for developing classification criteria for cultural property and completing the drawing up of regulations;
- Creating clear legal frameworks toward activating short-term procedures and measures for the protection of any cultural property in danger;
- Making the distinction between investments related to theatres and cinemas, and investment systems for clubs and hotels;
- Re-examining the fiscal and tax policy related to those in charge of cultural spaces and distinguishing them from entertainment spaces with the aim of changing the tax system to an incentive system;
- Imposing some restrictions on special leases for cultural spaces toward ensuring a minimum term agreement for the contractual relationship between landlord and tenant in accordance with standards that determine maximum limit.