The State Ministry of Information
Between Disclosure of Information and Struggle for Media Control
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Methodology

This paper is based on the analysis of the statements made by the Minister of State for Information during interviews with the media, the ministry’s statements on Facebook, as well as media reactions to the ministry’s positions. The paper also relies on a number of official and unofficial studies and research, as well as some statistics on viewership and the use of smart phones in accessing the internet, reading and sharing news and information.

The paper reviews the cabinet’s decision outlining the role of the Minister of State for Information as published in the media, in addition to Law No. 180 of 2018 on Regulating the Press, Media, and the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR).

Introduction

The media scene in Egypt during the January 2011 revolution was characterized by extreme fluidity, which at times reached chaos. The state media suffered confusion after late President Hosni Mubarak quit, especially after the key role they played in supporting the political regime - at the time - at the expense of the standards of professionalism and impartiality that the public media organizations should enjoy.

Many called for the restructuring and development of the state media in a manner that enables them to behave professionally and independently. As a result of the instability and political conflict that followed the January 2011 revolution, and the lack of any strategic and systematic vision for restructuring and developing the state media, the media landscape continued to be managed in the same old centralized way, and successive regimes after the revolution were quick to exploit and direct the media to serve their interests.

As for the privately-owned media, they enjoyed a great margin of freedom after the January 2011 revolution. This state of liquidity resulted in positive media models, but it also led to the spread of hate speech and incitement of violence, where citizens’ privacy was severely violated. The lack of a media charter and the delay in amending the laws regulating the media had played a major role in creating that state which overwhelmed the media scene in Egypt at the time.

The 50-member panel tasked with amending the constitution (2013-2014) responded to calls by press, media and human rights groups for the restructuring of the institutions responsible for managing the media affairs in Egypt in a way that ensures their independence from the political and executive authorities. So, the panel decided to abolish the Ministry of Information, the Supreme Council of the Press, and the Radio and Television Union (Maspero).

The abolition of the Ministry of Information resulted in a new vacuum, which the 50-member panel tried to avoid in advance by creating three new bodies to run the media affairs. But the state lacked representatives who would convey information to citizens and encourage state institutions to cooperate with the media. So, a presidential decree was issued in December 2019 to create the State Ministry of Information, and former information minister and chairman of the parliament’s media, antiquities and culture committee Osama Heikal returned as Minister of State for Information. Among the goals put forward by writers close to the president was that the presence of a state minister for information would reduce pressure on the president, who had to speak to the public in many occasions.

Although a whole year has passed since the re-introduction of the State Ministry of Information, debate has continued about the significance of reinstating the information minister’s post to help control the chaotic and poor media scene. The constitutional debate was settled by stating that the constitution did not prevent the establishment of a state ministry of information as long as it does not reinstate the Ministry of Information with its role in regulating the media.

While observers of the media scene in Egypt are preoccupied with the debate over the significance of the ministry’s existence, and the powers of the minister and the independent councils and bodies, no one has considered the media governance policies and the need for state institutions to disclose information as a major factor in the media work.

As he assumed his post, Minister of State for Information Osama Heikal just presented broad strategic lines regarding the policies of his ministry. This paper tries to extract the ministry’s policies from the available sources, which are the minister’s statements and remarks over the past year.

The paper reviews the key pillars of the media policies in three axes, as follows:

1. A more open and free media market
2. Paying attention to the role of the state and its various institutions in providing and making information available instead of disclosure and blackout
3. Paying attention to the future of journalism and media, especially in light of the successive developments in the global telecommunications technology market

In general, it can be said that the main features of the media policies adopted by Heikal reflect praiseworthy trends, although these policies were the cause of a fierce campaign that targeted him to the extent of calling for his resignation. Heikal’s policies deserve to be supported by all parties defending media freedom.
First section: Features of the media scene after the abolition of the Ministry of Information

The 50-member panel tasked with amending the constitution (2013-2014) responded to calls by press, media and human rights groups for the restructuring of the institutions responsible for managing the media affairs in Egypt in a way that ensures their independence from the political and executive authorities. So, the panel decided to abolish the Ministry of Information, the Supreme Council of the Press, and the Radio and Television Union (Maspero).

The panel created three new bodies to run the media affairs. However, these bodies were busy organizing their affairs and struggling over competencies on the one hand, and exercising the roles of watchdogs over the media on the other hand. Meanwhile, security services gripped their control over the media, perhaps in collusion with these new bodies which turned a blind eye to this monopolistic act.

In this section, the paper tries to shed light on the roles of the three new bodies, the conflicted and random laws regulating their work, and the emergence of new monopolists after the abolition of the Ministry of Information.

- Media Regulation: Three New Bodies Created

Three new bodies were created in an attempt to fill the vacuum that resulted from the abolition of the Ministry of Information, in accordance with constitutional amendments on 18 January 2014. These bodies are financially, administratively and technically independent, and each has an independent budget and a separate legal personality. They are the Supreme Council for Media Regulation, the National Press Authority, and the National Media Authority.

The National Press Authority is responsible for managing and regulating the affairs of the national press. This includes setting policies for developing and structuring national press institutions, as well as supervising and overseeing the process of selecting the chairpersons and board members of these institutions as well as the editors-in-chief of various publications. The Authority is also responsible for developing effective mechanisms to manage crises of the national press, such as the decline in circulation, distribution, excess employment, debts and accumulated losses.

The National Media Authority assumes similar roles, but with regard to state-owned audio and visual media (the state television and radio).

The SCMR is responsible for managing and regulating the affairs of both private and state-owned press and media (print, visual, audio, and digital). It issues licenses for private newspapers and media outlets, sets regulations for the press and media, and supervises their implementation. These regulations include penalties for press and media institutions that violate the rules related to licensing, the media code of conduct, etc. The Council also coordinates the relationship between both the national press and media authorities and oversees their work.

After a two-year delay since the approval of the new constitution in 2014, the first version of the law regulating the press and media came out in 2016. The media bodies stipulated in the constitution were created, but they suffered considerable confusion in the beginning, especially with regard to the laws regulating their work. Three new laws regulating the press and media were approved in 2018, thus changing all regulations that had been approved after the issuance of the first law. Media bodies were also formed again according to the new laws. This means that two laws and five regulations were implemented in three years, in addition to the appointment of two different boards of these bodies.
The state of confusion and instability that marred the founding stage of the new media bodies caused their performance to be greatly confused, making them unable to perform their legally entrusted duties. This led to the return of controversy over the significance of restoring the post of the Minister of State for Information, with some arguing that the move was meant to restore the old way of controlling the media in a centralized manner. Others, meanwhile, called for the return of the Ministry of Information as an important tool for explaining the state’s policies and representing it in the media, in order to relieve pressure on the president who had to talk about the details of the state institutions’ work.

During the tenure of his previous post as chairman of the parliament’s media, antiquities and culture committee for four years, Heikal contributed to the issuance of laws regulating the media.

• **Media market: Overlooked Monopoly**

Large transfers of ownership have taken place in the media market in recent years, which resulted in a limited number of entities controlling all TV stations in Egypt. These entities are directly or indirectly owned by security and intelligence agencies. This resulted in a poor and directed media scene that lacked influence, which prompted many viewers to refrain from following the Egyptian private media and to follow foreign channels as a source of information, to get acquainted with the other opinion and to seek the truth.

Since its inception, the SCMR has played the role of “behaviour and ethics police” in the media community. Its role was limited to oversight and punishment. It was busy gripping its control, through its former head Makram Mohamed Ahmed, over the two national press and media authorities. The Council neglected its regulatory and political roles related to managing the media scene.

For example, the Council did not react to the widespread monopoly and transfer of ownership that took place in the media market in recent years, despite the fact that the law regulating the press and media stipulates that the Council should protect competition, oversee capital transfers, prevent monopoly, and protect and support diversity and pluralism. Also, many pro-government journalists and media figures believe that the bodies and councils responsible for managing and regulating the media affairs have not been able to face the spread and influence of the so-called “anti-state media or the Muslim Brotherhood media”.

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3 For more details on ownership in the Egyptian media market, please see the Media Ownership Monitor project affiliated to Reporters Without Borders, [https://bit.ly/3rcVZKi](https://bit.ly/3rcVZKi)


Second section: Roles of the State Ministry of Information

In this section, the report reviews the roles of the State Ministry of Information and their impacts on the media, seven years after the Ministry of Information was abolished. With the reinstatement of the ministry in light of the existence of the three media bodies, the roles of the ministry on the one hand and the three media bodies on the other hand overlapped increasingly. This triggered a conflict between state institutions over controlling the media.

- **Who is Controlling The Media? Conflict between State Institutions**

Despite the constitutional amendment that abolished the Ministry of Information and replaced it with a number of independent media bodies, the name “State Ministry” came as a safe exit through which the constitutional amendment could be circumvented. This allowed for the appointment of a minister without portfolio to represent the state, explain its policies, and implement a political agenda related to setting a media policy and coordinating the relationship between media bodies.

It seems that the appointment of Heikal as Minister of State for Information had warned the SCMR head at the time Makram Mohamed Ahmed that the step might mean the failure of latter’s mission. Therefore, the war of words between Ahmed and Heikal did not stop until the president issued a decision to appoint chiefs of the new media bodies, as Ahmed was excluded and replaced with Karam Gabr.

Many observers argued that the presidential decision would pave the way for the new minister to formulate his media policies and restore the state’s control over the media. As for the terms of reference and the conflict of roles, as we will explain later, the cabinet issued a decision outlining the roles of the Minister of State for Information, but the decision did not stop the debate as it was broad, generalized, and unclear.

- **The State Ministry of Information: Unclear Roles**

Perhaps the real crisis that Heikal has faced since his appointment is neither the media groups nor the battles and campaigns they launched against him, but rather the “safe exit” that facilitated his access to the new post. This “safe exit” was represented in the name “the State Ministry”, which most likely came to circumvent the constitutional amendment that abolished the Ministry of Information. The re-introduction of the ministry was not adequately studied and prepared, so the minister’s roles were loose, unclear, and generalized. The minister did not even have enough powers to implement his media policy. The new minister had political and executive roles. The political roles included coordination with other ministries to present and highlight the government efforts and national projects. The minister represented the state in international conferences and events and prepared media plans for dealing with different political positions, locally and internationally, in cooperation with other ministries and agencies. The minister also organized conferences of the President of the Republic locally and internationally, and reviewed the statements issued by the government and the Presidency before being released.

The executive roles had to do with proposing the state’s media policy in coordination with the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister, implementing it in coordination with the reg-

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6 Ministry of State is a ministry without a portfolio, that is, without an administrative and institutional apparatus. It is headed by a minister who mainly undertakes political tasks, and a decision by the cabinet shall determine his powers. The minister chooses a team to assist him in carrying out his tasks. For more details on the creation of the State Ministry of Information and the minister’s powers and roles, please see source in footnote No. 2

ulatory bodies, supervising plans for developing the performance of public and private media in cooperation with the competent bodies, working jointly with the competent bodies to support the state media and make them competitive, supporting the freedom of private media, working in cooperation with the competent bodies to support electronic media in line with the global development in the field of media, and overseeing the Training and Media Studies Center and transferring its affiliation to the State Ministry of Information.

As for his media policy, the new minister outlined five axes for his work strategy, which were very general and did not reflect any fundamental changes in the state’s media policy. These axes came as follows: preserving the Egyptian values and the cohesion of the home front, developing the Egyptian personality on logical and objective bases, preserving the moderation of the state in a way that guarantees distance from extremism and exaggeration, highlighting the state’s efforts exerted in national projects and their impact on the future of citizens, boosting the Egyptian media locally, regionally and internationally and increasing its ability to deal with various crises, and raising public awareness, especially about the constitution and the law.

These vague roles and policies constituted a major obstacle to the minister’s work. Most of the powers remained in the hands of the SCMR, which in turn failed to carry out its political and regulatory tasks. These vague roles led the minister to get involved in many media and verbal fights, lacking implementation mechanisms and failing to use significant political tools such as holding social dialogues with target groups and trying to create consensus on public policies.

- **Minister of State for Information: Criticisms Angering Regime Supporters**

“[People of] ages less than 35 years, representing around 60 or 65 percent of the society, do not read newspapers or watch the TV. Therefore, it is important to think about the lifestyle of these groups.”

This statement by Heikal has drawn extensive criticisms from media figures and editors-in-chief of national and private newspapers who called for his resignation, accusing him of belonging to the “terrorist” Muslim Brotherhood group, theorizing, and failing to perform his duties. The attack on Heikal escalated to the point that the state television broadcast a recorded phone conversation between him and former head of Al-Wafd Party Al-Sayed Al-Badawi, in which they coordinated work with the Brotherhood group in parliamentary elections. It seems that the leaked conversation dates back to 2011, but broadcasting it on the state television reflected the extent of anger against the minister from various parties.

The minister reacted to the fierce media campaign against him by posting a video message on the ministry’s Facebook page, in which he invited a number of media figures who led the campaign against him for an open meeting at the ministry’s headquarters to discuss the ministry’s media policy and its roles during the coming period. He stressed that the leaked phone conversation was taken out of context, and that there was an orchestrated campaign against him. The meeting was held at the ministry’s headquarters and was attended by a large number of invited and uninvited media figures and editors-in-chief of newspapers.

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8 Ahmed Omar: Egyptian Minister of State for Information Osama Heikal faces campaign of criticism and accusations of treachery calling for his resignation, BBC, 20 October 2020, last visited on 20 December 2020, https://bbc.in/37CXIRi

9 Ibid


Heikal’s statement, however, almost reflected a reality recognized by many media figures and observers. His argument was recently backed by several statistics and studies. Although television is still the primary source of news and information in Egypt\(^\text{12}\), its viewership has been decreasing significantly. Television came on top from among other media with 84% in 2013, but it retreated to 74% in 2017.

If we take into account the reluctance of young people, who the minister referred to in his statement, from following the Egyptian media - whether private or state-owned - for lacking credibility, diversity, and pluralism, then the minister’s statement was just taken as an excuse to launch a campaign against him. It seems that the roots of disagreement are deeper than that, as pro-government media figures and journalists expected the new minister to adopt a certain policy but he surprised them with a different one. Those people had pressured for the return of the minister’s post and defended this approach strongly after the parliament approved a cabinet reshuffle, hoping that the new minister would assume three main and urgent tasks, namely improving the media performance of the government and the presidency, confronting the increasing influence of the anti-state media that is broadcast from abroad, and coordinating the relationship between the three media bodies (the SCMR, the National Press Authority, and the National Media Authority).

The minister’s agenda, however, was relatively different, as he criticized the bad reality of journalism and media and the retreat of their role, influence and spread. He gave priority to setting a media policy and improving the relationship with foreign media. Accordingly, the minister’s priorities collided with the status and entitlements that the elite media figures and journalists enjoyed.

**Future of Media: Dynamic and Open Market or Redistribution of Interests**

Heikal said in a TV interview\(^\text{13}\) that he sees the media as “an industry and a business”. The remark appears to be intuitive and very traditional at first glance, but it has a different connotation in the Egyptian media scene, especially after the monopoly and control practices that have taken place since 2016 in favour of security and intelligence services. In his interview with France 24 channel, the minister did not deny or denounce the ownership by security services of a number of media outlets, saying that this is not something new, as the same thing happens in many other countries. The minister, however, stressed the need for the media market to be open, otherwise viewers will turn their back on the Egyptian channels in an open world in which prevention has become impossible.

Consequently, the market has become largely unattractive to investors, something which affected its performance and made it needier for pluralism. The minister stated repeatedly that the media market in Egypt had suffered badly at several levels.

The minister’s statements did not reveal a new fact, as the research conducted by “Ipsos” market research company showed a marked decline in the viewership of Egyptian satellite channels\(^\text{14}\) compared with the spread of the Saudi-funded MBC Masr channel. The company’s reports from 2014 to 2017 observed the increasing viewership of MBC channels and the Turkey-based Al-Sharq channel, owned by opposition businessman Ayman Nour. It was also observed that the Al-Sharq’s talk show presented by journalist Moataz Matar, who received several sentences in absentia on terrorism charges, had viewership rates higher than Egyptian channels, such as

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\(^\text{12}\) Statistics by Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics on watching hours

\(^\text{13}\) DMC evening - Osama Heikal: I am not satisfied with the current level of Egyptian media, DMC channel on YouTube, 23 March 2019, last viewed on 22 December 2020, [https://bit.ly/38yt4rU](https://bit.ly/38yt4rU)

\(^\text{14}\) Because of MBC Masr, Ipsos, and satellite channels ... an endless conflict, Al Mal website, 11 June 2017, last visited on 22 December 2020, [https://bit.ly/3nGDrtQw](https://bit.ly/3nGDrtQw)
On TV, CBC, and DMC, despite all the investments injected to own them.

The research also showed that the viewership of news channels and those with political content decreased in comparison to social and entertainment channels. The UAE-funded Sky News Arabia was the most watched channel in the 2017 report, significantly outranking Egyptian news channels, such as CBC Extra and others. The rating of the viewership of Qatari Al-Jazeera also increased15.

The owners of private and official media organizations at the time could only attack Ipsos, as several TV stations submitted official complaints against the company, and the Chamber of Media Industry’s Constituent Assembly 16 unanimously decided to terminate its contract with Ipsos17. Also, the SCMR issued a decision 18 on 21 June 2017 to stop the surveys conducted by private companies to estimate viewership. The SCMR called on these companies not to reveal the results of any surveys they conduct without getting the SCMR’s approval in advance. Ipsos 19 has since stopped working in Egypt.

Just as the media community attacked Ipsos, they also attacked Heikal and accused him of seeking to help some businessmen and stakeholders to return to the media market after they had disappeared from the scene under the monopoly and control pressures exerted by a number of security and sovereign agencies since 2016. The Egyptian Media Services Ltd (EMSL) 20 has acquired the lion’s share of the visual media market after it acquired – through the Egyptian Media Group (EMG) – the ON TV network owned by businessman Naguib Sawiris. It also acquired most shares of the CBC network owned by businessman Mohamed Al-Amin and others, in addition to Al-Hayat Channels network, which was owned by businessman and former head of the Al-Wafd Party Al-Sayed Al-Badawy, and other media and press organizations. The exit of all these investors from the media market has largely affected the diversity and plurality of the media market.

In a TV interview in March 2019 21, Heikal voiced his dissatisfaction with the performance of the Egyptian media and its retreating viewership rates in recent years. In another interview in late May 2020 22, he stressed the need to open the media market to everyone, revitalize it, and correct its image. Commenting on the absence of research and surveys to verify viewership rates since Ipsos left Egypt in 2017, Heikal said “what cannot be measured cannot be managed”.

16 The Assembly includes ten private TV channels, namely Al-Hayat, CBC, Al-Tahrir, Al-Mehwar, Dream, Sada Al-Balad, Al-Qahira wal Nas, On TV, Al-Nahar, and Al-Faraeen, with the participation of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union
18 Hagar Hosni: Head of Ipsos: We welcome the SCMR’s review of viewership surveys before publication, Masrawy website, 22 June 2017, last visited on 22 December 2020, https://bit.ly/3hcSvmp
19 Ipsos is a global market research company based in France and has been operating in Egypt since 2006. It used primitive tools to conduct its surveys in Egypt, as Egyptian laws prohibited the import of certain technical devices, such as PEOPLE METER, which can significantly improve the accuracy of the results of viewership research. These small devices are installed with the samples of TV screens to monitor the viewership rates, estimate the time that viewers spend in front of the screen, and classify the content they watch. But these devices are legally prohibited for national security reasons.
21 See source in footnote No. 15
22 Egyptian Minister of State for Information Osama Heikal: “We follow the policy of diversity ... and placing Egypt’s media in the 166th rank is injustice.” France 24 Arabic account on YouTube, 8 September 2020, last viewed on 24 December 2020, https://bit.ly/2M8AMkT
The Press and Media Regulation Law granted the SCMR the authority to license market research companies and to establish a national company for that purpose. The SCMR announced its intention more than once to establish a national company to conduct such research, and the Chamber of Media Industry announced its desire to cooperate with the SCMR in this regard. However, no steps have been taken on the ground so far, and no official justification has been made as well.

• Digital Transformation: No Future for Print Journalism

Heikal strongly believes that there is no future for print journalism, not only in Egypt but also in whole the world, in light of the widespread growth in the use of the internet and social media as free alternative platforms for citizens to access, publish and share news and information in real time and from the heart of the event and often without an intermediary or censor, as a form of citizen journalism. Also, the increase in the prices of paper, printing supplies and the cost of distribution has led to a sharp decline in the rates of circulation of Egyptian newspapers in recent years 23, which in turn led the advertisers to move either to television or to the internet to reach out to the target audience.

According to Heikal, all Egyptian newspapers now distribute an average of 300,000 copies a day, while in 1980 Al-Ahram newspaper alone used to distribute nearly a million copies per day 24, when Egypt’s population was only 40 million. This was confirmed by the head of the Journalists Syndicate and Chairman of the State Information Service, Diaa Rashwan, who said that “the distribution of Egyptian newspapers has decreased by 90% since 2010”. He explained that Egyptian newspapers used to distribute 1,100,000 copies per day in 2010, but now they distribute 300,000 copies only 25.

A report 26 issued by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day stated that “Egyptian newspapers were not heavily affected by digital journalism, as the circulation rate reached 1.4 million copies per day in 2018”. The report added that “the number of copies of public newspapers distributed locally and abroad amounted to 547.2 million in 2018, compared to 510.2 million copies in 2017, an increase of 7.2%”. “The number of newspapers issued in 2018 reached 70, including three party newspapers, compared to 76 newspapers in 2017, a decrease of 7.9%,” the report said.

These figures do not reflect any contradiction, as the graph of the daily newspaper distribution rate in Egypt has suffered a sharp and noticeable decline since 2013. The following two tables show the number of newspapers issued annually in Egypt during the last ten years, and the daily average of newspaper distribution for the same period, respectively.

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24 DMC Evening - Special interview with former Minister of Information Osama Heikal, DMC channel account on YouTube, 24 March 2019, last viewed on 24 December 2020, https://bit.ly/3mOsCQb


It should be noted that Heikal had the same view on the future of print journalism even before he assumed his post as Minister of State for Information. He used to reiterate his opinion that "people of ages less than 35 years do not read newspapers" in many occasions. The future of print journalism has been a major talking point for nearly a decade, with some arguing that it has no future amid the growing use of the internet and television as alternative sources of news and information. Others, meanwhile, see that print journalism will not disappear, but its shape will change.
The issue has also received due attention from the National Press Authority and the National Media Authority when the State Ministry for Information launched a “comprehensive digital transformation project” 27, aiming to digitize the Egyptian media. The project aims to gradually transform the largest possible number of national newspapers into electronic versions as part of a giant platform for news and in-depth journalism. It also aims to digitize the huge archive of Egyptian press and media and make it available to the public.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper shows the confusion surrounding the management and regulation of media in Egypt. The basis established by the constitution and the demands of journalists and human rights organizations is to have an independent supreme council and two national bodies to run the media affairs in Egypt. However, the laws regulating these bodies granted the President of the Republic broad powers in controlling the formation of their boards of the three bodies. The laws stipulate that the bodies shall send nominations for their board members to the President of the Republic to choose from, instead of naming the candidates directly, while the rest of board members belong to the executive authority.

On the other hand, the role of the intelligence service in owning media outlets and managing media companies, distribution networks, and production companies has expanded to the extent that one of these companies has become responsible for developing the media content of the state television. The creation of a state ministry of information is tantamount to creating an additional body within the executive authority that seeks to control the regulation of media.

This domination established by the executive authority and the intelligence apparatus makes the governance of the media scene in Egypt an almost impossible mission. It causes the minister of state for information to get involved in media and verbal battles with various parties in the media scene. It also hindered his efforts to push the state institutions towards disclosure of information and more cooperation with local and international media organizations.

The minister’s approach should be supported, as it aims at the openness of the media market, making information available instead of prevention, prohibition and blocking, and giving attention to the future of media in light of the information and communication technology challenges.

AFTE presents the following recommendations to the concerned authorities:

- The State Ministry of for Information should continue working on disclosure of information in coordination with the government and the Presidency of the Republic, and allow local and international media to obtain information.
- The newly-elected parliament should review Law No. 180 of 2018 that regulates the media affairs, in order to annul the powers granted to the President of the Republic and the executive authority to choose the boards of the three media regulatory bodies.
- The SCMR should ensure competitiveness in the media market and preserve the plurality of the media, which requires review of the deals related to acquisition of media companies, especially the deals clinched by the EMG and EMSL.
- The State Ministry of Information should ask the Presidency and the Public Prosecution to support efforts to release imprisoned journalists, whose number has reached at least 15, according to AFTE.

• The State Ministry of Information and the SCMR should work on approving the freedom of information bill, which the SCMR submitted to the cabinet in 2017, but the cabinet did not submit to the outgoing parliament.

• The National Press Authority and the National Media Authority should hold a social dialogue on the development of state-owned press and media institutions as well as related restructuring and digital transformation plans.