

JORDANIAN PARLIAMENT MONITOR

Third Parliamentary Monitoring Report

15th House of Representatives, Second Extraordinary Session

June 8, 2009-August 10, 2009

No	Name	Absence with excuse	Absence without excuse	No	Name	Absence with excuse	Absence without excuse
1	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	14	56	Abulwaf Al-Sayidh	2	0
2	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	8	57	Abulwaf Al-Sayidh	0	4
3	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	0	58	Abulwaf Al-Sayidh	0	3
4	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	2	59	Abulwaf Al-Sayidh	1	3
5	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	11	60	Abulwaf Al-Sayidh	1	3
6	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	2	7				
7	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	1	0				
8	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	1	16				
9	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	14				
10	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	4				
11	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	1	1				
12	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	1	1				
13	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	4				
14	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	14				
15	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	0				
16	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	11				
17	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	1				
18	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	3	1				
19	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	2	1				
20	Abusaf Al-Sayidh	0	4				



Third Parliamentary Monitoring Report

The Fifteenth House of Representatives

The Second Extraordinary Session, June 8 to August 10, 2009

Executive Summary

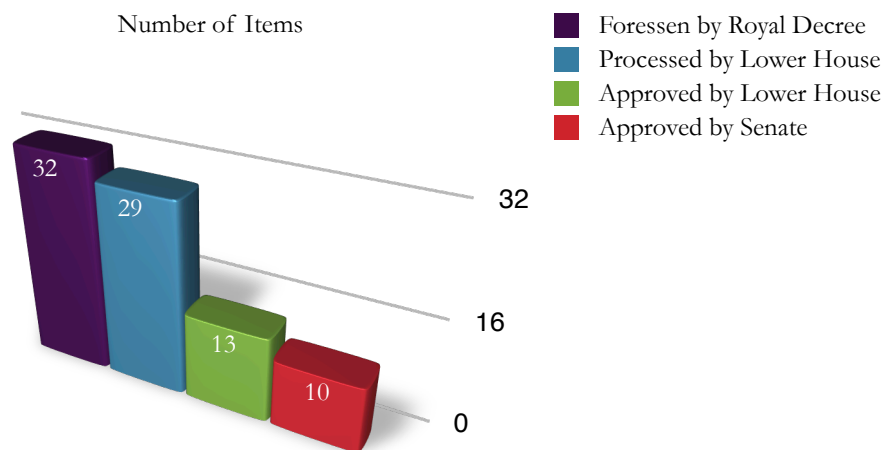
The Jordanian Parliament Monitor (the Monitor) is an independent, non-partisan project launched by Al-Quds Center for Political Studies in 2008 with the support of the National Democracy Institute for International Affairs (NDI). It is aimed at developing partnership between Parliament and civil society organizations by enhancing parliamentary practices both at the legislative and oversight levels through the provision of best international practices and expertise. There is a strong emphasis on accuracy, scientific approach and objectivity with regard to the Monitor's data gathering, classification and analysis processes.

This report briefly presents the legislative and oversight deliverables of the 15th House of Representatives (Lower House of the Parliament) in its second extraordinary session. It is the third report issued by the Monitor in a series of monitoring reports that analyze the Lower House's performance vis-à-vis priority issues for Jordanian citizens.

The report is composed of four sections that capture the legislative and oversight aspects, in addition to the frequency of the sessions and attendance. The report also provides for additional concrete recommendations for enhancing the legislative process in Jordan and strengthening the performance of members of Parliament (MPs).

First: The Legislative Role

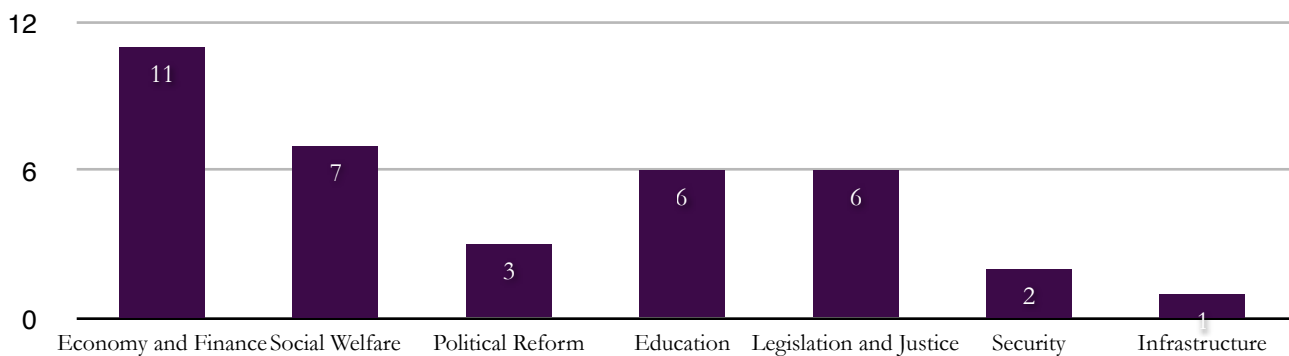
- ✓ The Royal Decree that convened the second extraordinary session listed 32 items on the agenda, including draft laws, provisional laws, and amended laws, in addition to the Audit Bureau reports for the years 2000 to 2007 and the proposed amendments to the Lower House bylaws.



- ✓ From the laws included in the Royal Decree, the Government referred 29 draft laws to the Lower House and previous draft laws that became part of the “active file” for the second extraordinary session.

- ✓ The 29 draft laws referred by the government are as follows: 9 new draft laws for 2009, 8 temporary laws, 12 amended drafts for laws already in effect. Only 13 laws were passed by the Lower House.
- ✓ Out of the 13 laws passed by the Lower House, only ten were passed by the Senate, while three draft laws were returned to the Lower House
- ✓ Draft laws referred to the Lower House were assigned to seven of its permanent committees. Two draft laws were referred to two joint committees-the Financial and the Economic Committee; and the Labor and Social Development Committee. The Administrative Committee's share was four draft laws; the Labor and Social Development Committee got two draft laws; the Financial and Economic Committee received seven draft laws; the Health and Environment Committee received two draft laws; and the Energy Committee received only one draft law¹.

■ Laws assigned to Parliament by national policy



- ✓ As per policies included therein, the draft laws were assigned as follows: 11 draft laws on Economic, Finance and Business policies; 7 draft laws on Development and Social welfare, 3 draft laws on Democracy and Political Reform; 6 draft laws on Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, Culture and Religious Affairs; 6 draft laws on Legislation and Justice; 2 draft laws on Security and Defense; and only 1 draft law on Infrastructure.
- ✓ **Proposals of Laws:** MPs submitted two proposals of laws: first, a draft law to cancel Wadi Araba Agreement signed between Jordan and Israel in 1994. This draft law was referred to the Committee of Arab and International Affairs which did not discuss it and did not consider it during the extraordinary session. The second proposal of law calls on the Lower House to issue a draft law to emphasize the Arabic Identity of Palestinian cities and towns in the 1948 territory. The Lower House referred the draft law to its administrative committee which also did not consider or discuss the law not it put it on its agenda during the session.

Second: The Oversight Role²

✓ **The Parliamentary Questions:**

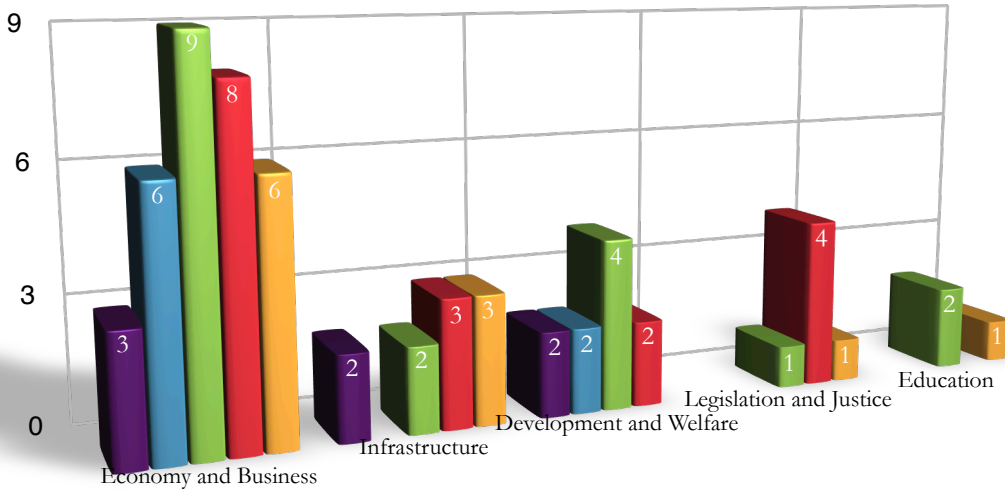
¹ Several laws were relevant to more than one policy. For the purpose of this analysis, the table below presents the distribution of laws per national policies, hence the discrepancy with the actual number of laws.

² Please refer to Annex 2 at the end of the report for definition of oversight tools as regulated by Jordan's Constitution and bylaws.

- Official Lower House statistics show that a total of 49 questions were addressed by the Lower House to the government, with the latter answering only 29 of these. However, the Monitor's data reveal that MPs asked 51 questions and that the government answered 35 of these, often after the period of time allotted to respond, per the Lower House's bylaws.

■ National Trend
 ■ National Democratic
 ■ IAF
 ■ Al Ikha
 ■ Independents

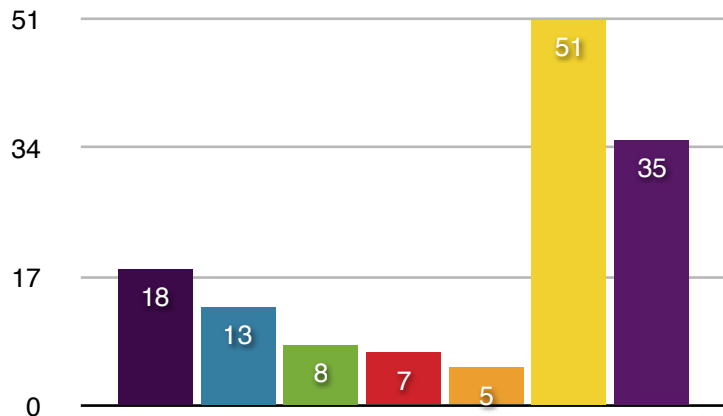
Number of questions to Government by national policy by bloc



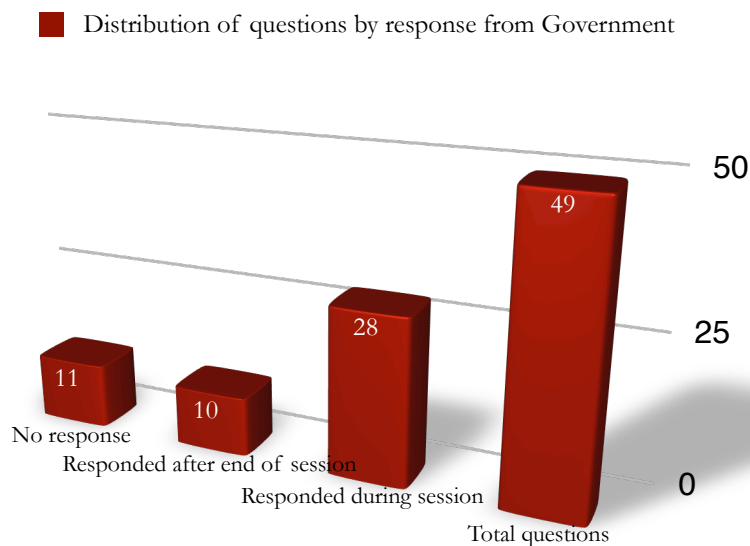
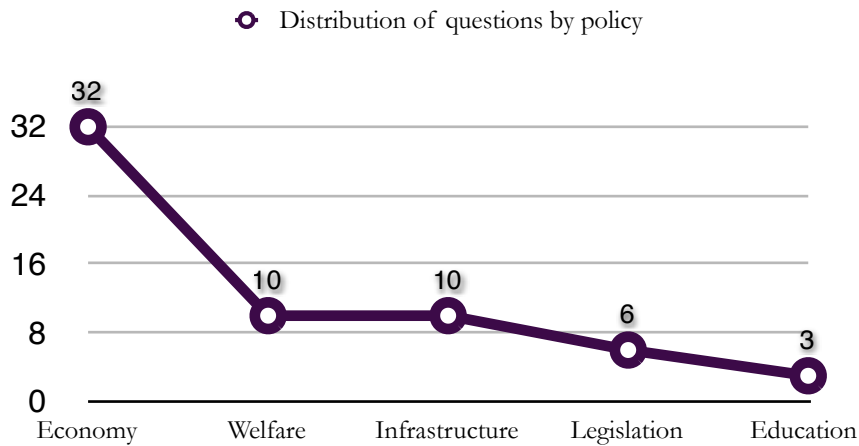
- Only 13 MPs addressed questions to the government. On average, each MP asked between one to seven questions.
- According to the Monitor's data, in terms of parliamentary blocs, Islamic Action Front Bloc members addressed 18 questions, while 13 questions came from Al-Ikha' Bloc, eight questions came from independent MPs, seven questions came from the National Democratic Bloc and five questions came from the National Trend Bloc.

■ IAF
 ■ Al-Ikha
 ■ Independent MPs
 ■ National Democratic
 ■ National Trend
 ■ Total questions
 ■ Government answered

Number of MPs' questions to Government by bloc



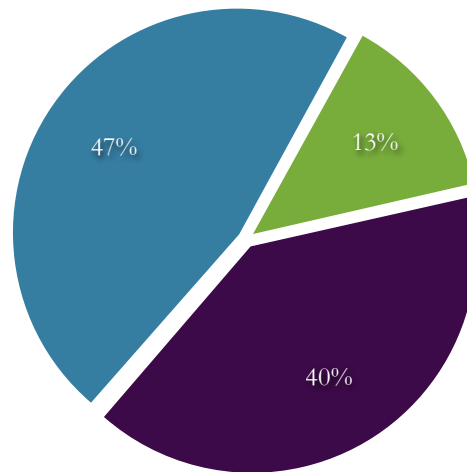
- Noticeably, MPs were mainly interested in questions related to **economic and financial issues**. These issues proved to be priority issues for both independent MPs and MPs that are members of blocs.



- One distinctive feature of the second extraordinary session was the issuance of a resolution by the Bureau on Law Interpretation on July 29, 2009 known as “Resolution No. 2” for 2009, based on a request by the Prime Minister. The Resolution interprets Paragraph “c” of Article “115” of the Lower House bylaws. It stipulates that “the question to be addressed by the Representative (MP) to the Prime Minister or one of the ministries should not, in any means, include any demand or disclosure of people’s names; and the question must not violate their private affairs.”

- Committees
- Groups
- Individuals

Distribution of questions by source



✔ Interpellations

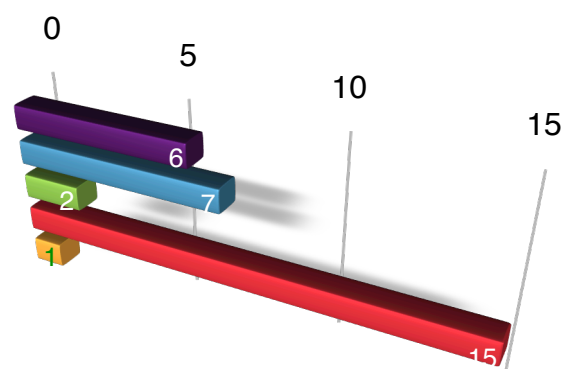
- The second extraordinary session witnessed two official interpellations to the Lower House Speaker. The first was with regard to the social security (safety) net and the second concerned the names of administrative governors, dates of their appointment and the scope of work for each. These two interpellations were not raised, however, since the extraordinary session's agenda did not include any stipulation in this respect.

✔ Memoranda (Memos)

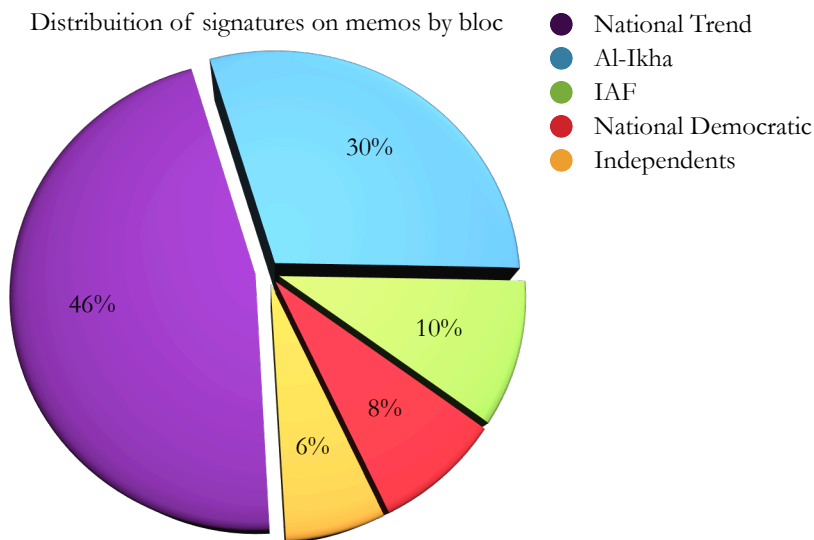
- Memoranda submitted during the second extraordinary session totaled 15 in number, six of which were submitted by Lower House committees, seven signed by a group of MPs, and two submitted by individual MPs. The government responded to one memorandum only.

- Memos from Committes
- Memos from Group of MPs
- Memos from Individual MPs
- Total Memoranda
- Memos Asnswered by Government

Memoranda



- Four memos were addressed to the Prime Minister and one to each of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Minister of Public Works and Housing, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Water and Irrigation, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of Labor, the Minister of Interior, and the Minister of Social Development.



● It is worth mentioning that a number of memos submitted by MPs were not entered into the official records of the Lower House. These include a memo on the sit-in by the Port Authority workers, and another on the death of Dr. Marwa Shirbini, who was killed by a German extremist. A third memo was addressed the release of the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Aziz Dweik, and called for inviting him to visit Jordan and to hold an honoring celebration for him at the Lower House. A fourth memo called on terminating the Lower House’s crisis with the Press, and a fifth memo requested that MPs be allowed to visit the Gaza Strip.

● Memos submitted by MPs cover issues that relate to policies on labor, universities, combating corruption, outbound tourism, agriculture, family and children, and transportation.

☑ Communiqués Issued by the Lower House

During its second extraordinary session, the Lower House issued four communiqués:

- First: A condemnation of the speech given by the Israeli Prime Minister on the “Jewish” identity of the State of Israel.
- Second: A condemnation of events taking place at sports playgrounds and stadiums including slogans and swear words that do not correspond to Jordan and Jordanians and that instigate prejudice to their national integrity and unity.
- Third: A condemnation of the assassination of Dr. Marwa Shirbini in front of one of the German courts by a German extremist.
- Fourth: Appreciation of the national vision expressed by His Majesty the King during his meeting with the General Command Staff of the Armed Forces.

Third: General Meetings

☑ The Complementary Meetings³ and Quorum “Manipulation” Phenomenon:

- In its second extraordinary session, the Lower House held 21 meetings; it failed to hold one meeting due to lack of quorum and two other meetings lost quorum at a certain point of the meeting.

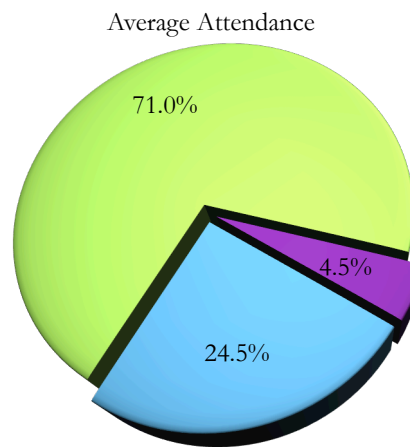
³ Lower House practice of extending the same meeting to the other day without asking for quota.

- Based on the preferences of the Lower House Speaker and General Secretariat, public opinion continued to be uninformed about MPs' official attendance and absence at sessions. The Lower House simply does not publish the names of those MPs that are "absent without excuse."
- Noticeably, the Lower House held only four ordinary meetings that requested quorum. The Lower House held mostly complementary meetings to avoid the problem of ensuring quorum for its following sessions.

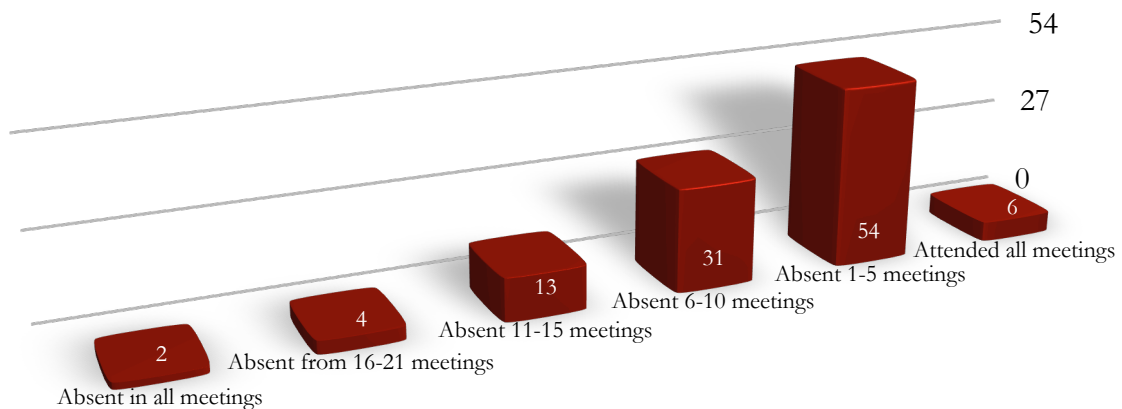
Attendance and Absence:

- According to the Monitor's sources, only six representatives attended all meetings of the extraordinary session. Representatives absent from one to five meetings amounted to 54. Those absent from six to ten meetings amounted to 31, while those absent from 11 to 15 meetings amounted to 13. Four MPs were absent from 16 to 21 meetings and two representatives did not attend any meetings during the session.

- Absence with excuse
- Absence without excuse
- Attendance



■ Attendance



FOURTH: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Parliamentary Committees: Increase the number of standing parliamentary committees and form new committees, as follows:

- Split the Economic and Financial Committee into two committees, with relevant mandates assigned to each.
- Establish the “Discipline and Conduct Committee” to be responsible for monitoring MPs’ conduct and their regular attendance of meetings. The Committee would also follow up on complaints related to MPs’ performance.
- Establish the “Women and Family Committee,” which would be responsible for considering all laws, agreements, and proposals related to women, family and children’s issues. The Committee would also monitor and follow up on policies, plans and programs required for the cultural, economic, and political development of women.
- Increase the number of members of the permanent committees to 15 instead of 11 members so that all members of the Lower House have the opportunity to participate in the committees.

Parliamentary Blocs: Recognize formally the role of Parliamentary Blocs in the Lower House, especially since the current bylaws do not recognize such blocs in the Lower House of Representatives. In fact, a chapter must be designated in the bylaws in terms of formation and membership as well as the requirements to move from one bloc to another. Moreover, relative representation of blocs and independent representatives must be considered when it comes to committees so that no bloc or coalition would dominate the House.

Presidency of the Lower House:

- Some of the powers of the Speaker of the Lower House must be transferred to the Permanent Bureau so that the Speaker will be the Spokesperson of the Lower House. This also means that the Speaker must resign from his bloc for ethical reasons, in the sense that he represents the Lower House and all members of the Lower House, and not one single grouping.
- The Constitution must be amended in order to provide for electing the Lower House Speaker for four years instead of one year. This would help avoid the procedural burden resulting from the annual election of the Speaker.

The Oversight Role:

- *Parliamentary Interpellations:* Provide a longer timeline to answer the Parliamentary questions and set mandatory mechanisms to answer questions, in the amended bylaws of the Lower House.
- *Oversight Action during the Extraordinary Session:* Enforce the oversight role of the Lower House during the extraordinary session by inserting the “Other Business” item into the session’s agenda.

Regularity of Meetings, Attendance and Absence

- *The Ordinary Session:* Extend the ordinary session period even if this requires an amendment to the Constitution; or enforcement of Paragraph Three of Article 78 of the Constitution that allows for extending the session for three more months.
- *The Extraordinary Session:* Elaborate the constitutional text related to the extraordinary session so that it will be mandatory rather than being a reaction to the wish of a parliamentary majority (Article 82). Moreover, identification of the extraordinary session’s topics beforehand does not strengthen the Parliament’s role and does not respect its status as a sovereign entity.
- *Attendance and Absence:* The General Secretariat of the Lower House must announce names of absent representatives upon a disclosed excuse at the beginning of each meeting including the complementary ones. Names of absent representatives without any excuse must also be announced at the beginning of the following meeting. Lower House bylaws must adopt a clear policy on attendance and absence, even if it entails disciplinary procedures against MPs that are absent without excuse, especially those with recurrent absences.

CHAPTER ONE: THE LEGISLATIVE ROLE

When the second ordinary session of the Parliament came to an end on February 5, 2009, the drawers of its committees and their cabinets were full with 68 draft laws most of which are provisional laws; some date back to long years ago and not submitted to the Lower House, which is in clear violation of Lower House's bylaws.

According to an official statistical report issued by the Lower House, the main committees with draft laws to consider are the Legal, the Economic and Financial, the Administrative and the Health Committees. On the other hand, other four committees do not have any draft laws; namely, the Committees of Rural Areas and Badia, Public Freedoms, Labor and Palestine.

Till the beginning of the second extraordinary session, the Legal Committee had 16 draft laws⁴. The Legal Committee shares three draft provisional laws with the Financial and Economic Committee.⁵

There are 24 laws before the Financial and Economic Committee⁶ which also has the aforementioned shared laws. The Administrative Committee has ten draft laws⁷ in addition to one provisional law; namely, Al Al-Bait Foundation for Islamic Thought submitted to a joint committee including the Administrative Committee and the National Guidance Committee in the drawers of which the Law of Audio-visual Law is still waiting.⁸

The Committee of Health and Environment has 8 draft laws,⁹ the Committee of Energy is considering three draft laws two of which the Lower House decided in March last year to return to the Committee for consideration in light of the Lower House resolution to refuse the establishment of a Commission

⁴ This include the Draft Laws of Elections of the Lower House of MPs, the Amended Law of the Law of Elections for the Lower House of MPs, the National Committee for the International Human Law, the Public Statistics, the amended Law of the Elections of the Lower House of MPs for 2003, Regulation of Chartered Auditor Profession and Penalties for 2004, the amended law of the Law of Penalties for 2007, Regulation of International Stock Exchange Dealings which was returned from the Senates, ratification of the Arab Convention to Combat Terrorism for 2008, the Higher Council for Traffic Safety, and Landlord-Tenant Law for 2009.

⁵ It is the amended law of Patents, the E-dealing Law, the Credit Information Law which was submitted to the Lower House and it decided to cease its discussion till the Government serves a new draft law.

⁶ These are the provisional laws No. (4) of the Law of Companies for 2002, the Provisional Law No. (40) for 2002, the Provisional Law No. (74) for 2002, the Law No. 17 for 2002, the Amended Provisional Law to Ratify the Concession Agreement concluded between the Kingdom and the National Petroleum Company, the Provisional Law No. (55) for 2003, the Amended Law of the Law to Ratify the Concession Granted to the Arab Potash Company, the three provisional draft laws of the Securities Commission- Law No. 55 for 2002, Law No. 76 for 2002, and Law No. 23 for 1997. There are other five amended laws of the Law of Investment- Laws No. 67 and 68 for 2003, Draft Law of Investment for 2006, Amended Draft Law of Investment for 2008, an amended law of the Investment Promotion Law for 2008, the amended laws of Insurance Supervision Laws, Patents, the National Bank for Microfinance, Lower Houses of Commerce, Development of Investment Environment and Economic Activities, Value Added Tax (Sales Tax), Money Exchange, Patents, Standards and Specificaitons, and the Jordanian Agency for Accreditation.

⁷ These are the Provisional Law No. 79 for 1966 for City and Village Zoning and its amendments for the years 1967, 1973, 1975, 1978, and 1979, Law of the National Commission for Manufacturing, Operation of IT Resources in Governmental Agencies, Radio and Television, and Industrial Zones.

⁸ In addition, the National Guidance Committee is still considering a law proposal to amend Paragraph "f" of Article (42) of the Law of Publication and Press which was submitted by 19 MPs.

⁹ These include the Provisional Law No. 79 for 2001 for Supervision of Food and its amendments No. (32) and (79) for 2003, the Provisional Law No. 80 for 2001, the Law of Drug and Pharmacy and its amendments No. 30 for 2003, the amended draft Law of Drug and Pharmacy for 2004, an amended law of the Law of Al-Amal Jordanian Institution for Cancer, and the Provisional Law of Studies on Drugs which was returned by the Senates.

for Electricity as per Article Six of the Law.¹⁰ However, the Committee went on with deliberations of the Law of Energy¹¹ for 2008.

The Public Service is considering one provisional law;¹² the Committee of Agriculture is considering two laws;¹³ the Committee of Education is considering one law.¹⁴ In addition, there is a proposal of a law to amend Paragraph (a) of Article (3) of the Law of the Commission to Accredite Higher Education Institutions. However, the Committee of Arab and International Affairs is still considering one law.¹⁵ The second ordinary session came to an end whilst the Financial and Economic Committee is still considering reports of the Audit Bureau¹⁶ for the years 2000 to 2007, and the regular reports of the Bureau for the years 2006 and 2007. In addition, there is a summary of breaches that are still existing and those duly recovered in the Bureau's reports for the years 2000 to 2006; a summary of the main breaches that are still outstanding in the Bureau's report for the years 2004 to 2006, and the other reports related to the years 2007 and 2008.

This large number of draft laws used to be a real concern for several MPs who, once the second ordinary session came to an end, volunteered to set a table of proposals of laws they want to submit on the agenda of their second extraordinary session. The first among these MPs who early called for convening an extraordinary session with an agenda produced by the MPs themselves was Al-Ikha' bloc. In fewer than two weeks of the end of the second ordinary session, it called for a meeting on February 18, 2009 to discuss a proposal of an invitation to hold an extraordinary session including several draft laws that used to be before the Lower House's committees; in specific, the Landlord-Tenant Law.

On the following day- February 19, 2009, all the members of Al-Ikha' bloc (21 MPs) announced that it approves a memorandum calling for an extraordinary session as soon as possible. It suggested several laws to be submitted to the session including 22 draft laws being considered before the Legal Committee in addition to several other draft laws being considered before the Financial and Economic Committee.

About 56 MPs of several parliamentary blocs signed the memo; i.e. it achieved the quorum. However, some MPs withdrew their signatures; which made the memo to loose its constitutionality.

Among the main proposals in that early memo calling for an extraordinary session, the MPs setting its agenda included the oversight item "Other Business" on the agenda, in addition to inviting to discuss public policies of the State as well as discussing reports of the Audit Bureau.

That memo called for incorporating three provisional draft amendments for the Parliamentary Election Law holding the numbers 34, 27, and 11 in addition to amendments to the bylaws of the Lower House of MPs. This memo was completely neglected.

¹⁰ These are the provisional laws No. (64) for 2002- the General Law of Electricity, and the Amended Law No. 52 for 2003 of the General Law of Electricity.

¹¹ Although the Committee of Energy continued deliberations of the draft law submitted on the extraordinary session agenda; however, the draft law was not deliberated at the Lower House and it was postponed till the third ordinary session.

¹² It is the Provisional Law No. 51 for 2007- the Law to Regulate Public Transport of Passengers within Greater Amman Municipality borders.

¹³ These are the Provisional Law No. (44) for 2002- The Law of Agriculture, and the Draft Law of Jordan Lower House of Agriculture for 2008.

¹⁴ It is the amended Law of Public Universities for 2008.

¹⁵ It is the Provisional Law No. (43) for 2002- the Law of the Jordanian Institute of Diplomacy; it was not submitted on the second extraordinary session agenda.

¹⁶ Submitted on the second extraordinary session and were all passed.

The memo also proposed a summary of violations that are still outstanding and those duly recovered and included in the Audit Bureau reports for the years 2000 till 2006 to be incorporated on the agenda. It also called for incorporating a summary of main breaches that are still outstanding and included in the Audit Bureau reports for the years 2004 till 2006; and the Audit Bureau reports for the years 2000 till 2007.

The memo called for three proposals of laws; Law No. (4) to amend Paragraph (2) of Article (26) of the Law of the Lower House of Industry, proposal of Law No. (3) to amend Paragraph (f) of Article (42) of the Law of Press and Publication submitted by 19 MPs; and a proposal of Law No. (2) in relation with the amendment of Article (19) of the Provisional Law No. (26) for 1977 of the Law of the Socio-Economic and Veteran Institution.

The memo called on submitting the draft law to amend the Landlord-Tenant Law for 2009, and the Provisional Law No. (53) for 2003- the Law of National Bank for Micro-finance; and the Provisional Law No. (55) for 2003- amended law of the Ratification of the Concession of the Arab Potash Limited Company; and the amended Law of Developing Economic Projects for 2008; the amended Law of Investment for 2008; the amended Law of Public Jordanian Universities for 2008; Draft Law of Energy and Minerals for 2008; Passport Law for 2003; and the amended Law of Drugs and Pharmacy for 2004.

Other five provisional laws were incorporated into the extraordinary session agenda; these are: the Provisional Law No. "44" for 2004- Law of Agriculture; the Provisional Law No. "17" for 2001; the amended Law of Patents; the Provisional Law No. "85" for 2001- the Law of E-dealings, the Provisional Law No. "82"- Law of Credit Information; and the Provisional Law No. "67" for 2001- Law of Studies on Drugs (Pharmaceuticals).

Despite the fact that the memo was neglected and that those submitting the memo wanted the Lower House to take the lead and have the MPs themselves set the extraordinary session's agenda, still some of the laws proposed in that memo, were actually submitted on the agenda of the extraordinary session. This is not a result of parliamentary lobbying. It was rather in response of the Government desire to submit and pass those laws.

The main developments during preparations to hold the extraordinary session include the first ministerial reshuffle implemented by the Prime Minister- Nader Thahabi who paid a visit to the Lower House's Speaker, Eng. Abdul Hadi Majali¹⁷ for consultation with regard to the draft laws proposed for the second extraordinary session agenda.

The second extraordinary session of the Lower House of MPs was held in the midst of stressed and controversial interaction between the Lower House and the media representatives to the extent of having the Permanent Office approve new strict instructions aimed at restricting the journalists' freedoms inside the Lower House and their access to information. Thus, some of the dailies boycotted the events and news of the Lower House before an understanding could be reached between the Lower House and the Journalists Association/Chief editors of newspapers in relation with a mechanism of action that revokes the Permanent Office decisions. These decisions were received with a condemnation and criticism on a wide scale not by the journalists only, but also by a large number of MPs who called on overcoming this crisis and searching for solutions that secure freedom of action for journalists as well as their right of access to information.

¹⁷ Al-Thahabi held an individual meeting with Al-Majali Saturday evening- February 22, 2009 (an official holiday) at Al-Majali's office for forty minutes. Then, Al-Majali showed up with press releases after the meeting telling that the Premier informed him only of the bases he set to select new ministers who will be accounted for in the reshuffle. Al-Majali mentioned that it is expected for the Lower House to participate in the consultations. However, it is hard to join the governmental reshuffle. In his statement to the Press and without indulging into details, Al-Majali mentioned that the meeting also touched upon the relation of the Government with the Lower House of MPs and the Extraordinary Session.

Accordingly, the Parliament “MPs and Senates” started their second extraordinary session¹⁸ on June 8, 2009. The session ended on August 10, 2009 marking the longest extraordinary session held by the current Lower House.¹⁹

The Royal Decree included 32 draft, provisional, and amended laws in addition to the reports of the Audit Bureau²⁰ for the years 2000 to 2007 and the amendments proposed to the Bylaws of the Lower House of MPs.

The Government referred 29 draft laws. In the meantime, the Lower House got out of its drawers the other draft laws included in the Royal Decree Text. The main distinct features of the extraordinary session of the Parliament include its observance of the Constitutional text, which does not provide for discussing any issues not included in the Royal Decree; of course, in line with the provisions of Article (82) of the Constitution and its Paragraph (1) which reads, “The King may whenever necessary summon the National Assembly to meet in an extraordinary session for an unspecified period for the purpose of deciding matters to be specified in the Royal Decree when the summons are issued. An extraordinary session shall be prorogued by a Royal Decree.” Paragraph (2) of the same Article reads, “The King may summon the National Assembly to meet in an extraordinary session at the request of an absolute majority of the MPs. Such a request shall be contained in a petition specifying the matters which it is desired to discuss.”

However, Paragraph (3) of the same Article permits only discussion of issues in the Royal Decree. It reads, “The National Assembly shall not discuss in any extraordinary session except such matters as are specified in the Royal Decree convening the session.”

Laws on the Agenda of the Extraordinary Session

The Royal Decree to summon the Parliament to convene in its extraordinary session was issued in line with Article (82) of the Jordanian Constitution; it included 29 draft laws in addition to other three items as follows:

- 1- Amendments proposed to the Bylaws of the Lower House referred to the Legal Committee.
 - 2- Report of the Financial and Economic Committee of the Lower House of MPs in relation with the Audit Bureau reports for the years 2000 to 2007.
 - 3- The fifty seventh annual report of the Audit Bureau for the year 2008.
- Draft laws in the Royal Decree were as follows:
- 1- Draft Law of Petra Region Tourism Authority for 2009.
 - 2- Draft Law of Social Security for 2009.
 - 3- Draft Amended Law of Associations for 2009.
 - 4- Draft Amended Landlord-Tenant Law for 2009.
 - 5- Provisional Law No. (42) for 2001- Law of Public Jordanian Universities.
 - 6- Draft Law of Jordanian Universities for 2009.
 - 7- Draft Law of Higher Education and Scientific Research for 2009.
 - 8- Draft Amended Law of the Commission of Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions for 2009.
 - 9- Provisional Law No. (86) for 2001- Amended Law of Penalties.
 - 10- Draft Amended Law of Penalties for 2004.
 - 11- Draft Amended Law of Penalties for 2009.
 - 12- Draft Amended Law of the Public Institution for Housing and Urban Development for 2009.

¹⁸ The Lower House of MPs held their first meeting in the extraordinary session Thursday morning- June 11, 2009.

¹⁹ The first extraordinary session of the current Lower House started on June 1, 2008 and ended on July 12, 2008.

²⁰ The Government referred to the Lower House only the annual report No. 57 for 2008 by the Audit Bureau; and the Lower House approved of the Financial Committee recommendations to endorse the report.

- 13- Provisional Law No. (42) for 2002- Law of the National Commission of Manufacturing.
- 14- Provisional Law No. (53) for 2001- Law of Al Al-Bait Foundation for Islamic Thought.
- 15- Provisional Law No. (67) for 2001- Law of Studies on Drugs.
- 16- Provisional Law No. (44) for 2003- Amended Law of Studies on Drugs.
- 17- Draft Law of Sponsorship of Culture for 2009.
- 18- Draft Amended Law of Penal Trial Code for 2009.
- 19- Draft Amended Law of Management of the State Cases for 2009.
- 20- Draft Amended Law of the Amended Law of Provisions of Immovable Property for 2009.
- 21- Draft Amended Law of Reform and Habilitation Centers for 2009.
- 22- Draft Law of Income Tax for 2009.
- 23- Provisional Law No. (67) for 2003- Investment Promotion Law.
- 24- Provisional Law No. (68) for 2003- Law of Investment.
- 25- Draft Law of Investment Promotion for 2009.
- 26- Draft Amended Law of General Sales Tax for 2009.
- 27- Draft Amended Law of Development Zones for 2009.
- 28- Draft Law to Ratify the Oil Shell Concession Agreement between the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan represented by the Natural Resources Authority and Jordan Company for Oil Shell (B.V.).
- 29- Draft Law to Ratify the Agreement to Establish the Free Trade Zone between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Canada for 2009.

The 29 draft laws referred from the Government comprised of 9 new laws for 2009, 8 provisional laws, and 12 draft amended laws of laws already in force.

The new draft laws referred by the Government to the Lower House to be submitted on the agenda of its extraordinary session include:

- 1- Draft Law of the Authority of the Tourist Region of Petra for 2009.
- 2- Draft Law of Social Security for 2009.
- 3- Draft Law of Jordanian Universities for 2009.
- 4- Draft Law of Higher Education and Scientific Research for 2009.
- 5- Draft Law of Managing Cases of the State for 2009.
- 6- Draft Law of Income Tax for 2009.
- 7- Draft Law of Investment Promotion for 2009.
- 8- Draft Law of Ratifying the Agreement of Concession of Oil Shell between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan represented by the Natural Resources Authority and Jordan Company for Oil Shell (B.V.)
- 9- Draft Law Ratifying the Agreement to Establish a Free Trade Zone between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Canada for 2009.

Following are the provisional draft laws:

- 1- Provisional Law No. (67) for 2003- Investment Promotion Law.
- 2- Provisional Law No. (68) for 2003 – Investment Law.
- 3- Provisional Law No. (86) for 2001- Amended Law of Penalties.
- 4- Provisional Law No. (42) for 2002- Law of the National Commission for Manufacturing.
- 5- Provisional Law No. (53) for 2001- Law of Al Al-Bait Foundation for Islamic Thought.
- 6- Provisional Law No. (67) for 2001- Law of Studies on Drugs.
- 7- Provisional Law No. (44) for 2003- Amended Law of Studies on Drugs.
- 8- Provisional Law No. (42) for 2001- Law of Public Jordanian Universities.

Draft laws amending valid laws include:

- 1- Draft amended Law of the Commission of Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions for 2009.
- 2- Draft amended Law of Associations for 2009.
- 3- Draft amended Landlord-Tenant Law for 2009.
- 4- Draft amended Law of Penalties for 2009.
- 5- Draft amended Law of Penalties for 2004.
- 6- Draft amended Law of the Public Institution of Housing and Urban Development for 2009.
- 7- Draft amended Law of Culture Sponsorship for 2009.
- 8- Draft amended Law of Penal Trial Code for 2009.

- 9- Draft amended Law of Provisions Related to Immovable Properties for 2009.
- 10- Draft amended Law of Reform and Habilitation Centers for 2009.
- 11- Draft amended Law of General Sales Tax for 2009.
- 12- Draft amended Law of Developmental Zones Law for 2009.

Complementary Meetings Exceed Regular Sessions

Despite the long period that lapsed while the extraordinary session of the Parliament was convened, only 13 of the 32 draft laws on the agenda of were approved during the session; the remaining 19 draft laws were kept in committee drawers to be brought forward at the third ordinary session of the Parliament.

During its extraordinary session, the Lower House of MPs held 22 meetings to discuss laws referred thereto. The Lower House started its first meeting officially on June 11, 2009.²¹ However, the Lower House held only four ordinary meetings and opted for complementary meetings to avoid the problem of achieving quorum of its sessions.²² The Lower House held only its first opening meeting with complementary meetings. In the other three meetings, it held complementary meetings and held two complementary meetings in the second session; and 7 complementary meetings with one losing quorum.²³

In the fourth meeting, the Lower House held 9 complementary meetings with 6 meetings held in two days – morning and evening. It failed to convene one due to lack of quorum.²⁴ The last evening meeting held by the Lower House lost quorum²⁵ as the MPs stopped at discussing Article (11) of the Law of Income Tax.

Laws Passed by the Lower House of MPs

In its extraordinary session, the Lower House of MPs produced a moderate rate of legislative deliverables. It only passed 13 draft laws²⁶ that included only two draft laws among the provisional laws; namely, the Provisional Law No. (42) for 2002- Law of the National Commission of Manufacturing, and the Provisional Law No. (42) for 2001- the Law of Jordanian Universities. Noticeably, the laws amending valid laws yielded the largest rate of legislative deliverables of the Lower House of MPs as it passed eight draft laws as follows:

- 1- Draft amended Law of Voluntary Societies for 2009.
- 2- Draft amended Landlord-Tenant Law for 2009.
- 3- Draft amended Law of the Commission of Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions for 2009.

²¹ The Lower House held its last meeting on August 5, 2009.

²² Article (70) of the Bylaws stipulates...”The Speaker shall open the meeting on scheduled time; if two thirds of the members do not show, it will be postponed for half an hour. If the period lapses and the quorum has not been achieved, the next meeting date will be set.” The Article text connotes that the quorum to hold the meeting is 73 MPs representing two thirds of the Lower House members. A complementary meeting, however, requires a majority; i.e. the half + one which means the presence of 56 MPs only.

²³ The second complementary meeting held on 6.7.2009.

²⁴ The Speaker of the Lower House resorted to this method in order to accelerate endorsement of the Law of Income Tax; however, the MPs exerted their efforts to impede it. The meeting that was not held due to lack of quorum was the evening meeting scheduled on 3.8.2009.

²⁵ It is the last meeting held by the Lower House on 5.8.2009.

²⁶ The present Lower House of MPs passed in its first extraordinary session 24 laws; and rejected 7 draft laws with two of them incorporated in other laws.

- 4- Drafts amended Law of the Public Corporation for Housing and Urban Development for 2009.
- 5- Draft amended Law of Culture Sponsorship for 2009.
- 6- Draft amended Law of Penal Trial Code for 2009.
- 7- Draft amended Law of Provisions related to Immovable Property for 2009.
- 8- Draft amended Law of Reform and Habilitation Centers for 2009. >

The Lower House passed four new laws:

- 1- Draft Law of the Authority of the Tourist Region of Petra for 2009.
- 2- Draft Law of Jordanian Universities for 2009.
- 3- Draft law of Higher Education and Scientific Research for 2009.
- 4- Draft Law of the National Commission of Manufacturing.²⁷

Only one draft law was passed, namely the Draft Law to Ratify the Oil Shell Concession Agreement between the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan represented by the Natural Resources' Authority and Jordan Company for Oil Shell (B.V.) Report of the Financial Committee in relation with the set of reports by the Audit Bureau for the years 2000 to 2007 was passed in addition to the Bureau's report of 2008. Some other laws were submitted to the extraordinary session; the Lower House could not discuss or approve of these draft laws; or it could not put it on its agenda. The Social Security Law for 2009 was submitted on the agenda but was not delivered by the Lower House. A "behind the scenes" agreement between the Lower House and the Government was reached to postpone consideration of this law till the third ordinary session. Noticeably, the other laws still pending from the second extraordinary session in addition to the Law of Social Security and moved to the third ordinary session include:

- 1- Draft amended Law of Penalties for 2009.
- 2- The Provisional Law No. (53) for 2001- the Law of Al Al-Bait Foundation for Islamic Thought.
- 3- The Provisional Law No. (67) for 2001- the Law of Studies on Drugs
- 4- The Provisional Law No. (44) for 2003- Amended Law of Drug Studies
- 5- The Draft Law of Managing Cases of the State for 2009.
- 6- The Law of Income Tax²⁸ for 2009.
- 7- Provisional Law No. (68) for 2003- Law of Investment.
- 8- Draft amended Law of the General Sales Tax Law for 2009.
- 9- Draft amended Law of the Developmental Zones for 2009.
- 10- Amendments proposed to the Bylaws of the Lower House of MPs and referred to the Legal Committee.
- 11- Provisional Law No. (42) for 2001- the Law of Public Jordanian Universities.
- 12- Provisional Law No. (86) for 2001- Amended Law of Penalties.
- 13- Draft amended Law of Penalties for 2009.
- 14- Provisional Law to Ratify the Agreement to Establish the Free Trade Zone between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Canada for 2009.
- 15- Provisional Law No. (67) for 2003- Investment Promotion Law.

Although the Lower House of MPs passed in its second extraordinary 13 laws, only ten of these laws were passed by the Senates once submitted to them. The Senates returned to the Lower House of MPs three draft laws as follows:

- 1- Draft Law of Culture Sponsorship for 2009.
- 2- Draft amended law of Provisions Related to Immovable Property for 2009.
- 3- Draft amended Law of Associations for 2009.

²⁷ The Lower House voted to cancellation of this law as it has not been enforced when it was issued as a provisional law.

²⁸ The Lower House could not discuss and pass it in its extraordinary session although it held about six consecutive sessions in order to complete its discussion; which made the Government recommend prorogation of the Session before delivering it for reasons announced in that time and are thought to be related to amendments introduced by the Lower House of MPs to the Law Articles and the Government was not satisfied with.

Shares of the Permanent Committees of the Lower House of the Extraordinary Session Draft Laws

The Lower House of MPs referred some of the draft laws submitted thereto in its second extraordinary session to seven of its permanent committees only; two draft laws were referred to two joint committees- the Financial and Economic Committee and the Labor and Social Development Committee to which the Law of Social Security was referred. The draft amended Law of Developmental Zones was referred to another joint committee including both the Financial and Economic Committee and the Administrative Committee.

Following are the shares of each of the seven permanent committees:

First: the Administrative Committee: Four draft laws were referred to it out of which three laws were passed:

- 1- Draft Law of the Tourist Region of Petra for 2009.
- 2- Draft amended Law of the Public Corporation for Housing and Urban Development for 2009.
- 3- The provisional draft law for 2002- the National Commission for Manufacturing.

The Lower House did not pass the draft law of Al Al-Bait Foundation for Islamic Thought. The following table illustrates sets of laws referred to the Administrative Committee and their classification according to policies.

Law	Type	Policy	How Dealt with	Status
The Tourist Region of Petra for 2009	Law	Tourism and Antiquities	Approved with amendments	Passed
Public Corporation of Housing and Urban Development	Amended	Housing	Passed with amendments	Passed
National Commission for Manufacturing	Provisional Law	Industry	Passed with amendments	Passed
Al Al-Bait Foundation for Islamic Thought	Law	Awqaf and Religious Affairs	Not discussed	

Second: Committee of Labor and Social Development: The Lower House referred two draft laws to the Committee. The first that was approved is the draft amended Law of Voluntary Societies. However, the Lower House did not pass the second draft law- the Law of Social Security which was referred to by Financial and Economic Committee and the Labor and Social Development Committee. The following table illustrates laws referred to the Committee of Labor and Social Development and their classification according to policies.

Law	Type	Policy	How Dealt with	Status
Voluntary Societies	Amended	Civil Society Organizations	Passed with amendments	Passed
Social Security	Law	Social Security	Not discussed	Joint committee

Third: The Financial and Economic Committee: The Lower House referred seven draft laws to this Committee. Only the reports of the Audit Bureau for the years 2000 to 2007 and the fifty seventh annual report of the Bureau for 2008 were passed. Six draft laws were not passed:

- 1- Draft Law of Income Tax for 2009.
- 2- Provisional Law No. (67) for 2003- Investment Promotion Law.
- 3- Provisional Law No. (68) for 2003- Investment Law.
- 4- Draft Law of Investment Promotion for 2009.
- 5- Draft amended Law of the General Sales Tax for 2009.

6- Draft amended Law of Developmental Zones²⁹ for 2009.

The following table illustrates the status of draft laws referred to the Financial Committee and their classification according to general policies:

Law	Type	Policy	How Dealt with	Status
Income Tax	Law	Reform of tax and financial sector	Not discussed	
Investment Promotion	Provisional Law	Investment Attraction	Not discussed	
Investment	Law	Investment Attraction	Not discussed	
Investment Promotion	Law	Investment Attraction	Not discussed	
General Sales Tax	Amended	Reform of the tax and financial sector	Passed by the Committee	Not submitted
Developmental Zones	Amended	Local governance and municipalities	Not discussed	
Report No. 57 of the Audit Report	Report	Accountability and Corruption Combat		
Reports of the Audit Bureau for 2007	Report	Accountability and Corruption Combat	Passed	

Fourth: The Legal Committee: Compared to other committees, this Committee had the largest share of draft laws as the Lower House referred 10 draft laws to it and three were passed:

- 1-The draft amended Law of the Landlord-Tenant Law for 2009.
- 2-The draft amended Law of Provisions Related with Immovable Property for 2009.
- 3-The draft amended Law of Reform and Habilitation Centers for 2009.

The Lower House did not pass seven draft laws as follows:

- 1-Draft Law to Ratify the Agreement to Establish the Free Trade Zone Area between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Canada³⁰ for 2009.
- 2-Provisional Law No. (86) for 2001- Amended Law of Penalties.
- 3-Draft amended Law of Penalties for 2004.
- 4-Draft amended Law of Penalties for 2009.
- 5-Draft amended Law of Penal Trial Code for 2009.
- 6-Draft Law of Managing Cases of the State for 2009.
- 7-The Lower House could not discuss the proposed amendments to its Bylaws that were referred to its Legal Committee.

The following table illustrates the number of laws referred to the Legal Committee and the procedures made by the Lower House in this respect in addition to their classification according to the general policies:

Law	Type	Policy	How Dealt with	Status
Landlord-Tenant	Amended	Housing	Passed with amendments	Passed
Law of Penalties	Provisional Law	Prisons, Habilitation Centers and Crime	Not discussed	
Law of Penalties for 2004	Amended	Prisons, Habilitation Centers and Crime	Not discussed	

²⁹ A joint law with the Administrative Committee.

³⁰ The draft agreement was recited at the Parliament and it triggered a wide scale controversy; which made the MPs return it to the Legal Committee for further study and evaluation.

Law of Penalties for 2009	Amended	Prisons, Habilitation Centers and Crime	Not discussed	
Penal Trials Code	Amended	Prisons, Habilitation Centers and Crime	Not discussed	
Management of Cases of the State	Law	Support of security departments, judicial reform	Not discussed	
Provisions related to Immovable Property	Amended	Reform of Tax and Financial Sector	Passed with amendments	Passed
Reform and Habilitation Centers	Amended	Prisons and Habilitation Centers	Passed as in the text referred by the Government	Passed
Proposed Amendments to the Bylaws	Amended	Electoral reform and development of the Parliament performance	Not discussed	
Free Trade Zone between Jordan and Canada	Law	Investment Attraction	Submitted to the Lower House and returned again to the Committee for further consideration	Not passed

Fifth: Committee of Education, Culture and Youth: This Committee share comprised of five laws that the Lower House passed all:

- 1-Draft Law of the Jordanian Universities for 2009.
- 2-Draft Law of Higher Education and Scientific Research for 2009.
- 3-Draft amended Law of the Commission of Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions for 2009.
- 4-Draft amended Law of Culture Sponsorship for 2009.
- 5-The Provisional Law No. (42) for 2001- Law of Public Jordanian Universities.³¹

The following table illustrates the laws referred to the Education, Culture and Youth committee and their classification according to general policies.

Law	Type	Policy	How Dealt with	Status
Law of Public Universities	Provisional Law	Universities	The Lower House canceled the draft law as it is already incorporated in the Law of Public Universities for 2009	Cancelled
Jordanian Universities for 2009	Law	Universities	Passed with amendments	Passed
Higher Education and Scientific Research	Law	Scientific Research and Invention (Patents)	Passed with amendments	Passed
Commission of Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions	Amended	Reform of the Education System	Passed with amendments	Passed
Law of Culture Sponsorship	Amended	Culture and Creativity	Passed with amendments	Passed

Sixth: Committee of Health and Environment: The Lower House referred to the Committee of Health and Environment two draft laws that were not passed and not submitted to the Lower House:

- 1-Provisional Law No. (67) for 2001- Law of Studies on Drugs.
- 2-Provisional Law No. (44) for 2003- Amended Law of Studies on Drugs.

³¹ The Lower House considered this Law as void because it is already incorporated in the Law of Jordanian Universities for 2009.

The following table illustrates the laws referred to the Committee of Health and Environment and their classification according to general policies.

Law	Type	Policy	How Dealt with	Status
Studies on Drugs	Provisional Law	Health	Not discussed	
Studies on Drugs	Provisional Law	Health	Not discussed	

Seventh: The Committee of Energy: It had one law only which was passed by the Lower House; namely, the Draft Law of Ratifying the Agreement of Concession of Oil Shell between the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan represented by the Natural Resource Authority and Jordan Company for Oil Shell (B.V.).

The following table illustrates the status of law and its classification according to the general policies:

Law	Type	Policy	How Dealt with	Status
Agreement of Oil Shell Concession	Law	Energy and Mineral Wealth	Passed with Amendments	Passed

Distribution of Law according to General Policies:

- 1-The Economy, Finance and Business component: 11 laws.
- 2-The Development and Social Welfare component: 7 laws.
- 3-The Democracy and Political Reform component: 3 laws.
- 4-Education and Higher Education, Scientific Research, Culture and Religious Affairs: 6 laws.
- 5-Legislation and Justice component: 6 laws
- 6-Security and Defense component: 2 laws
- 7-Infrastructure component: 1 law
- 8-Tourism and Antiquities: 1 law
- 9-Social Security: 1 law
- 10- Civil Society Organizations and Associations: 1 law
- 11- Housing: 2 laws
- 12- Universities: 2 laws
- 13- Scientific Research and Invention: 1 law
- 14- Reform of the Education System: 1 law
- 15- Prisons and Habilitation Centers and Crime: 4 laws
- 16- Industry: 1 law
- 17- Awqaf and Religious Affairs: 1 law
- 18- Health: two laws
- 19- Culture and Creativity: 1 law
- 20- Crime and Judicial Reform, Support of Security Departments: 2 laws
- 21- Reform of Tax and Finance Sector: 3 laws
- 22- Attraction of Investment: 1 law
- 23- Local Governance and Municipalities: 1 law
- 24- Energy and Mineral Wealth: 1 law
- 25- Electoral Reform and Development of Parliamentary Performance: 1 law
- 26- Accountability and Combat of Corruption: 2 laws

Proposals of Laws

The Jordanian Constitution provides for the right of the members of the Lower House and Senate to propose laws with the condition according to Paragraph “1” of Article (95) to have ten MPs or more submit the proposal of law. Paragraph “2” of the same Article sets a condition of the same Article not to submit any proposal of law that one of the two Parliament’s Houses have already rejected in the

same Parliamentary session.³² The bylaws of the Lower House is based on Article 95 of the Constitution. According to the Article 66 of the bylaws of the Lower House, “ten or more of the Lower House members can propose laws. Each proposal will be referred with justifying reasons and basic principles to the competent committee in the Lower House for opinion. If the Lower House, after listening to the Committee’s opinion, accepts the proposal, it will refer it to the Government to be produced as a draft law and submit it to the Lower House in the same session or the following session,³³ and “it shall not be permitted to submit again in the same session any proposal of law submitted by the members of the Lower House if it was rejected by the Lower House”.³⁴

This Constitutional right of the Lower House of MPs to propose legislation and not just accept draft laws from the Government gives the Lower House further flexibility and independence to set laws and legislation it deems as necessary. This vision can be in contradiction with the Government vision due to the importance of those legislation and their necessity. In the second extraordinary session³⁵ of the Lower House, the MPs submitted two proposals of two laws only:³⁶ a law to revoke Wadi Araba Agreement signed between Jordan and Israel in 1994. The Lower House referred this draft law to the Committee of Arab and International Affairs which did not discuss and did not consider till the end of the extraordinary session.³⁷

However, the second proposal of law called on the Lower House to issue a draft law to stress the Arabic Identity of the Palestinian cities and towns in the 1948 territories. The Lower House referred it to its Administrative Committee which did not consider, discuss, or list it on its agenda till the end of the session.³⁸ It is worth mentioning here that the committees to which the draft proposal laws did not consider them as they were not submitted upon a Royal Decree calling for convening the extraordinary session as the Constitution and the Bylaws of the Lower House do not provide for this and do not explicitly stipulate it.

³² Paragraph (1) of Article (95) of the Jordanian Constitution stipulates, “Any ten or more Senators of MPs may propose any law. Such proposal shall be referred to the committee concerned in the House for its views. If the House if of the opinion that the proposal be accepted it shall refer it to the Government for drafting it in the form of draft law, and to submit it to the House either during the same session or at the following session. Paragraph (2), however, of the same Article stipulates, “Any law proposed by Senators or MPs in accordance with the preceding paragraph and rejected by either House shall not be presented for a second time during the same session.”

³³ Paragraph “a” of Article (66) of the Bylaws of the Lower House of MPs.

³⁴ Paragraph “b” of same Article.

³⁵ The period between prorogation of the second ordinary session and opening the second extraordinary session witnessed submittal of a law by MP Moh’d Qudah on 3.5.2009 requesting amendment of the Law of Insurance and was signed by ten MPs.

³⁶ Noticeably, the MPs did not submit any proposal of a law in the first extraordinary session of the Lower House which started on 1.6.2008 and ended on 12.7.2008.

³⁷ MP Khalil Atiyah and other MPs submitted this draft law to the Lower House Presidency on 31.5.2009.

³⁸ Two MPs from the Bloc of the Islamic Action Front MPs- Hamza Mansour, and Azzam Hneidi gathered signatures of MPs to this proposal.

CHAPTER TWO: THE OVERSIGHT ROLE

Parliamentary Questions

Parliamentary questions do not have the needed impact during the extraordinary session as the usual practice is to cease Parliamentary oversight role. Thus, the value of the Parliamentary questions addressed to the Government during the extraordinary session is as much as the value of questions addressed to the Legislative Branch during the Lower House recession. However, the advantage of such questions and those addressing them is that they have only four months maximum to raise them at the Parliament during meetings known as oversight meetings. Thus, the Parliamentary questions do not contribute at a large scale to developing a clear Parliamentary stand towards public policies being the theme of questions. The bylaws of Lower House of MPs provides for the right of the MPs to address the questions, or to transform his/her question to an interpellation. Moreover, the large number of questions, their type and implications have become a heavy burden for the MPs and the Government. Most of the events during the second extraordinary session taking place at the fifteenth Lower House of MPs related directly to the questions are focused on the Government depending on a resolution issued on July 29, 2009 known as Resolution No. “2” for 2009 issued by the Bureau of Law Interpretation. This Resolution is about interpreting Paragraph “C” of Article “115” of the bylaws of the Lower House of MPs.³⁹

The text of the Bureau of Law Interpretation with regard to the provision of Paragraph “C” of Article “115” came as a surprise for the Lower House⁴⁰ and observers. This Resolution is related to the provision of the Paragraph reading as “*The question that the MP addresses to the Prime Minister or one of the ministers must not include at all any request or disclosure of people’s names. It must not relate to their private affairs.*” The Resolution considers this Paragraph as supporting the Legislature opinion in Article (96) of the Jordanian Constitution as it sets as a condition that the question be related to one of the public affairs. This should be in line with the bylaws which sets the framework of a question in Article (114).⁴¹ The Government opted for returning several questions to those raising them after the issuance of this Resolution as they were seen as violating the conditions of a Parliamentary question;⁴² which caused a critical status for the MPs to the extent that they criticized the resolution.

Although the public statistics issued by the Lower House confirms that the number of questions that the MPs raised during the second extraordinary session counted for 49 questions and the Government answered only 29 out of them, statistics of the public registers also reveal that the total number of

³⁹ Paragraph “C” of Article “115” of the bylaws of the Lower House stipulates that the Parliamentary question “cannot be in violation of the Constitution provisions or causing harm to the public interest. It cannot include bad or not courteous; it cannot disclose names of people or cause prejudice to their private affairs.”

⁴⁰ In some press statements, some MPs said that the resolution is seen as a reduction of monitoring powers of the MP and a direct prejudice to the monitoring authority of the Lower House of MPs. Most importantly is that the Permanent Office of the Lower House discussed this Resolution in its meeting held on August 26, 2009. Quoting one of the Permanent Office members, newspapers mentioned that the Permanent Office members voiced serious resentment of the Bureau Resolution that the MP does not have the right to get some names he requests. They added that the Permanent Office discussed the extent of the negative impact of this Resolution on the constitutional monitoring role of the Lower House of MPs and its future repercussions on the MP performance as well.

⁴¹ Article 114 defines the question as “inquiry by the member to the Prime Minister or the ministers with regard to a matter he is ignorant of and falls within their competencies or a desire to investigate an event he has learnt of; or his inquiry about the Government intention with regard to a certain matter.”

⁴² The first case to apply the resolution of the Bureau of Law Interpretation was when the Prime Minister returned the questions of MP Ali Dala’een in a governmental letter addressed by the Prime Minister to the Speaker of the Lower House of MPs stating, “in light of the issuance of the resolution by the Bureau of Law Interpretation No. (2) for 2009 and published in the Official Gazette No. 4974 of 2.8.2009, I return to you your letter No. 3/15/22/2030 of 27.7.2009 with the question enclosed herewith No. 260 of 26.7.2009 submitted by MP Ali Dala’een.

questions that the MPs addressed to the Government during the session counted for 51 questions and the Government answered only 35 questions of them.⁴³

MPs Addressing Questions During the Extraordinary Session

Official registers reveal that the number of MPs addressing questions to the Government during the extraordinary session counted for only 13 out of 110 MPs addressing one to seven questions. “Monitor” data reveal a total of 51 questions.

MP	Questions	MP	Questions
Abdul Hamid Thneibat	7	Abdul Karim Dughmi	3
Saleh Jbour	6	Ali Dala'een	2
Moh'd Qudah	5	Fakhri Daoud	2
Mahmoud Kharabsheh	5	Wasfi Rawashdeh	1
Hamzeh Mansour	4	Tharwat Al-Amro	1
Salah Zu'bi	4	Tareq Khoury	1
Awwad Zawaideh	4	Marzouq D'ajah	1
Hazem AnNaser	3		

MP Abdul Hamid Thneibat⁴⁴ from the Bloc of the Islamic Action Front comes first among MPs addressing questions to the Government during the second extraordinary session; he addressed 7 questions; MPs Saleh Jbour and Moh'd Qudah ranked second as they addressed 6 questions to be followed with MPs Mahmoud Kharabsheh and Hamza Mansour with 5 questions per each. Two MPs- Awwad Zawaideh and Salah Zu'bi addressed four questions per each whilst two other MPs only- Abdul Karim Dughmi and Hazem AnNaser addressed 3 questions per each. Two MPs- Fakhri Daoud and Ali Dala'een addressed two questions per each. Other four MPs asked one question each; these are: Wasfi Rawashdeh, Tharwat Al-Amro, Tareq Khouri, and Marzouq D'ajah.

According to Parliamentary blocs, the Islamic Action Front MPs asked 18 questions; Al-Ikha' members asked 13 questions; independent MPs asked 8 questions; the Democratic National Bloc members asked 7 questions, and the National Trend Bloc asked 5 questions.

Interests of MPs by Policy

It is noticeable that general interests of MPs reflected in their questions were focused in the first place on the economic and financial issues. We have to state that the discrepancy between the number of questions and the number of questions by policy comes from the fact that there were a number of questions that related to more than one policy. According to official statistics, the total number of questions by bloc can be classified as follows:

⁴³ The difference in numbers can be attributed to the fact that the MPs addressed questions and then withdrew them; this happened in previous sessions and several MPs address the question and then withdraw it.

⁴⁴ We will depend on the numbers made available for the report resources from officially documented registers with numbers that are different from those stated in the report of deliverables of the Lower House. Parliament monitors reported 51 questions addressed to the Government.

Number of Questions to Government by Bloc					
Islamic Action Front	Al-Ikha	Independent MPs	National Democratic	National Trend	Total
16	13	8	7	5	49

The above findings revealed that 32 questions of the Parliamentary questions addressed during the extraordinary session were related to the economic policies followed immediately by questions on the policies of development and social welfare and infrastructure with 10 related questions per each.

In the third place of interest were questions that related to the policies of legislation and justice with 6 questions. The policies on education, higher education and scientific research yielded the lowest level of interest of the MPs with 3 related questions only.

National Trend Bloc

The policies on economy and business, development and social welfare and infrastructure obtained the priority interest among MPs of the National Trend bloc. Out of the total of five questions, three were related to the policies on economy, and two each on policies of infrastructure and social welfare.

Al-Ikha' Bloc

MPs from Al-Ikha' Bloc showed an advanced interest in policies on economy, finance and business with 8 related questions out of the total of 13 questions. Four of these questions were related to policies on legislation and justice and three questions were related to the policies of infrastructure.

The National Democratic Bloc

The National Democratic bloc did not go further from the interest of MPs on the policies on economy, finance, and business. The MPs from this bloc addressed all their six questions on these policies. Two of these questions were related to the policies of development and social welfare.

Bloc of the MPs from the Islamic Action Front

Interest of the MPs from the bloc yielded nine related questions on the policies of economy, finance and business policies and one question on legislation and justice. They addressed two related questions on the policies of the education, higher education and scientific research policies; four questions on policies of development and social welfare policies, and two questions on infrastructure.

The Independent MPs

The policies on economy, finance and business yielded the utmost interest of the independent MPs with six related questions, followed with three questions that were related to the policies of infrastructure, one question on the policies of legislation and justice and one question on the policies of education, higher education and scientific research.

Tables below summarize total number of questions by policy and a break down of questions by policy by bloc⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ In several instances, MPs' questions related to more than one policy. For the purpose of this analysis, these two tables include cases when one question was refereed to more than one policy hence the discrepancy in numbers with the table above on the number of question per bloc.

Distribution of questions by national policy	
Education	3
Legislation	6
Infrastructure	10
Welfare	10
Economy	32

Distribution of questions by national policy by bloc					
Bloc	Economy and Business	Infrastructure	Development and Welfare	Legislation and Justice	Education and Higher Education
National Trend	3	2	2	0	0
National Democratic	6	0	2	0	0
IAF	9	2	4	1	2
Al Ikha	8	3	2	4	0
Independent MPs	6	3	0	1	1

The Crisis of Answers to the Questions of MPs

Although the MPs addressed a large number of questions to the Government compared with the number of such questions during the first extraordinary session,⁴⁶ however, the Government did not observe the bylaws text in the real sense of the word with regard to answering the questions of the MPs during a period of time as stipulated in the bylaws itself.⁴⁷

Questions Answered by the Government

The number of questions answered by the Government counted for 35 questions out of which one question as addressed by the MP Wasfi Rawashdeh; 3 questions addressed by Moh'd Qudah; 3 questions addressed by MP Salah Zu'bi; 6 questions by MP Abdul Hamid Thneibat; 2 questions by MPs Fakhri Iskandar and Abdul Karim Dughmi; 4 questions by MP Mahmoud Kharabsheh; and one question by each of the MPs: Tharwat Al-Amro, Tareq Khouri, Marzouq Da'ajah; 4 questions by Hamzeh Mansour and Saleh Jbour; and 3 questions by MP Hazem AnNaser.

Questions not answered by the Government

The Government did not answer 16 questions including 4 questions addressed by MP Awwad Zawaideh to the Prime Minister, and two questions addressed by MP Ali Dala'een to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Water and Irrigation; two questions by MP Saleh Jbour to the Prime Minister; 3 questions by MP Moh'd Qudah addressed to the Prime Minister; one question by MP

⁴⁶ The questions addressed during the first extraordinary session counted for 30 questions out of which the Government answered 28 questions.

⁴⁷ According to Paragraph "a" of Article 117 of the Bylaws of the Lower House of MPs, "the Speaker" must serve two questions to the competent minister if the question fulfills the conditions. Paragraph "b" of the same Article, however, commits the competent minister to answer the question in written during a period of eight days maximum.

Hamzeh Mansour to the Minister of Agriculture; one question to MP Abdul Hamid Thneibat to the Minister of Agriculture; one question by each of MPs Adbul Karim Dughmi, Mahmoud Khrabsheh, and Salah Zu’bi all addressed to the Prime Minister. As a result, 13 questions were addressed to the Prime Minister and not answered; two questions to the Minister of Agriculture who did not received a response; and one question to the Minister of Water who did not answer.

Parliamentary questions that were answered	
Number of questions	49
Questions answered during the Session	28
Questions answered after the Session	10
Questions not answered so far	11

Interpellations

Article (96) of the Constitution reads, “Any Senator or MP may address questions or interpellations to the Ministers concerning any public matters, in accordance with the provisions of the Internal Regulations of the Senate or the House (as the case may be). No interpellation may be debated before the lapse of eight days from the date of its receipt by the Minister, unless the case is of an urgent nature and the Minister agrees to shorten this period.” Furthermore, the Jordanian Constitution stipulates in Article (56), “The Lower House of MPs is entitled to impeach Ministers, but a bill of impeachment shall not be passed except by a majority of two-thirds of the members of the Lower House. The Lower House of MPs shall appoint, from among its members, MPs who shall present the impeachment to, and proceed before, the High Tribunal”.

In compliance with Article (96) of the Jordanian Constitution, a separate Chapter in the bylaws of the Lower House of MPs is designated for “Interpellations” as Article 122 defines the interpellation as “holding the ministers or one of them accountable for an action they took in relation with one of the public affairs.” Article 123 of the bylaws of the Lower House identifies the mechanism of interpellations by the MPs as Paragraph “a” stipulates, “the member wishing to address and interpellation to a minister or more must submit his interpellation in written to the Speaker stating in it the topics and proceedings of the interpellation. The Speaker must inform the competent minister of the interpellation.” However, Paragraph “b” of the same article sets as a condition to have the requirements of the interpellation the same as those to be fulfilled in a question.⁴⁸ Article (124) sets a mechanism to discuss the interpellation starting with referring it to the competent minister requiring an answer during a period of two weeks maximum unless the Speaker considers the case as “urgent and the minister has agreed to shorten the period.”⁴⁹ Paragraph “b” of the same Article stipulates, “if the answer requires an investigation or information gathering that cannot be done during said period, the Minister shall have the right to ask the Speaker to extend the period; and the Lower House Office shall have the right to extend it to the period deemed as relevant; the Speaker shall inform this who addresses the interpellation and the minister of the same.” Paragraph “c” of the Article requires the Lower House to “insert the interpellation and the answer into the agenda of the first meeting set for this purpose. The interpellation must also be put on that agenda if the Minister’s answer has not been received during the scheduled period.

However, Paragraph “d” of the same Article regulates the procedures to discuss the interpellation at the Parliament, “after reciting the interpellation and its answer; or be satisfied with the precedent of distributing them to the members, the floor will be given to this who addressed the interpellation and to the Minister who the interpellation is addressed to. Both shall have the right to answer for once; then the floor will be given to any one of the MPs wishing to speak.” Article “e” stipulates, “if the person

⁴⁸ Paragraph “b” of Article 123 stipulates, “an interpellation must fulfill certain requirements as in a question.”

⁴⁹ Paragraph “a” of Article 124.

addressing the interpellation announces his satisfaction, the Speaker will declare the discussion as finished unless one of the MPs adopts the interpellation theme; then, the practices set above shall be followed in the discussion.” Paragraph “f” of the same Article requires the person addressing the interpellation in case “not satisfied with the Minister’s answer” to specify the reasons for not being satisfied; s/he and other MPs shall have the right to impeach the Cabinet or the Minister while observing provisions of Article 54 of the Constitution.⁵⁰

Article 125 provides for the right of each member to “request the Government to inform him of papers or data related to the interpellation submitted to the Lower House and the application shall be submitted in writing to the Speaker.” However, Article 126 of the Bylaws of the Lower House requires not to “put interpellations submitted in a previous session on the agenda of a following session unless those submitting it declare their commitment to it upon a written letter submitted to the Lower House Speaker.”

Interpellations are considered an important oversight roles provided for in the Constitution and the bylaws of the Lower House and give the MPs further oversight authority over the executive branch, ministers and officials by giving MPs’ tools to hold them accountable. The second extraordinary session witnessed the submittal of two official interpellations to the Presidency of the Lower House; the first was the interpellation submitted by MP (Ms) Reem Al-Qassem to the Minister of Social Development with regard to the Social Safety Net.⁵¹ The second interpellation was submitted by MP Salah Zu’bi to the Prime Minister with regard to names of administrative governors; dates of their appointment; and the location of work of each of them.⁵² These interpellations were not submitted to the Lower House as they are not included in the agenda of the extraordinary session by the Royal Decree.⁵³

Memoranda (Memos)

Memos signed by the MPs either collectively or individually or those submitted by the permanent committees of the Lower House to the Speaker of the Lower House are important tool to enhance MPs’ oversight and legislative roles. Although the Lower House’s bylaws does not explicitly or implicitly stipulates this type of Parliamentary operation, having memos as one type of the Parliamentary operation has become a norm as it was used during the past parliamentary Lower Houses. This prompted several MPs to call for amending the bylaws of the Lower House and recognize formally memos, instead of keeping the memos only as part of Parliamentary practice that is not binding for the Government.

⁵⁰ Article 54 of the Constitution stipulates, (i) “A session to consider a vote of no confidence in the Council of Ministers or in any individual Minister shall be held either at the request of the Prime Minister or at a request signed by not less than ten MPs. (ii) A vote of no confidence in the Council of Ministers or in any individual Minister may be postponed only for one period, which shall not exceed ten days, either upon the request of the Ministers concerned or of the Council of ministers. The Lower House shall not be dissolved during this period. (iii) Every newly formed Council of Ministers shall within one month of its formation, in cases where the Lower House of MPs is in session, place before the Lower House of MPs a statement of its policy and request a vote of confidence on the basis of the said statement. If the Lower House of MPs is not in session at the time, or stands dissolved, the Speech from the Throne shall be considered to be a statement of its policy for the purposes of this Article.

⁵¹ MP Reem Al-Qassem is affiliated to the National Trend Bloc; she submitted her interpellation officially to the Lower House Presidency on 11.6.2009.

⁵² MP Salah Zu’bi is affiliated with Al-Ikha’ Bloc. He submitted his interpellation officially to the Lower House Presidency on 20.7.2009; in its origin, the interpellation was a question addressed to the Prime Minister who referred it to the Bureau of Law Interpretation which gave the opinion that it is not permissible to address such a question; it is the question which triggered a Parliamentary controversy that has been already mentioned in the Chapter related to the legislative function of the Lower House.

⁵³ MP Marzouq Da’jah submitted an interpellation during the interval between the second ordinary session and the second extraordinary session to the Minister of Social Development on 21.5.2009.

Noticeably, memos that the MPs draft and gather signatures of are not bound to a Lower House's session.⁵⁴ Also, the number of memos submitted during the second extraordinary session of the Lower House counted for 15 memos, a clear drop compared to the memos submitted by the MPs during the first extraordinary session which counted for 24 memos at that time. The Lower House committees submitted 13 memos; the MPs submitted collectively 11 memos; and the Government responded to 9 memos out of the total number of memos.

In the second ordinary session, the MPs submitted 56 memos out of which 24 were submitted by committees; 29 shared by MPs; and 3 MPs submitted individual memos. The Government, however, responded to 11 memos only out of the total number of memos submitted. Memos submitted in the first ordinary session of the fifteenth Lower House of MPs counted for 44 memos out of which 31 were submitted by the Committees; and the MPs shared 13 memos. However, the Government responded to 6 memos only.

Distribution of memos by policy during second extraordinary session	#
Economy and Business	2
Infrastructures	1
Education and Higher Education	2
Foreign Policy	2
Social Welfare	2
Complaints by Citizens	6
TOTAL	15

The second extraordinary session of the Parliament witnessed the submittal of 15 memos ranging from individual to collective memos, or those submitted by committees to the Lower House Presidency. The official registers and logs of the Lower House reveal that the fifteen memos ranged from 6 memos submitted by parliamentary committees; 7 memos signed by groups of MPs; and two memos were submitted by individual MPs.⁵⁵

Memos by source	#
Individual	2
Collective	7
Committees	6
TOTAL	15

Official registers reveal that the Government responded to one memo only from all the memos referred thereto from the Lower House Presidency and were submitted by MP Abdul Hamid Thneibat requesting to provide him with all the audit outputs of the Higher Council of Youth.

The number of shared parliamentary memos submitted during the session counted for 7 memos out of which 4 were addressed to the Prime Minister; one memo to the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Minister of Public Works, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Government did not respond to any of these memos, though.

⁵⁴ The interval between prorogation of the second ordinary session and the beginning of the second extraordinary session witnessed the submittal of 9 parliamentary memos; 4 of them submitted to the Premier, two to the Minister of Health and only one to each of the Minister of Social Development and Chairman of the Higher Council of Youth. MP Rasmi Mallah addressed both memos; MPs Ali Dala'een, Fakhri Iskandar and Salah Zu'bi submitted a memo each; MP Moh'd Qudah submitted 4 memos. Themes of those memos covered infrastructures, foreign policy, political and democratic reform, legislation and justice.

⁵⁵ MPs Abdul Hamid Thneibat and Hamza Mansour submitted two individual memos; the Government responded to the memo by Thneibat and did not respond to the memo by Mansour in which he stressed the importance of sending a copy of the reports of the committees formed to audit the accounts of Balqa' Applied University.

The Committee of Agriculture and Water addressed one memo to the Minister of Agriculture and Water including its recommendations related to livestock keepers and subsidy of grains and fodder. The Minister did not respond to this memo. The Committee of Public Freedoms and Rights of Citizens submitted 5 memos to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of Labor, the Minister of Interior, and the Minister of Social Development. None of those memos received a response.

Bloc	Number of signatures on memos
National Trend	99
Al-Ikha'	64
Islamic Action	21
Democratic National	17
Independents	13

In this respect, it is worth mentioning that there are other memos submitted by the MPs and were not entered into the official logs of the Lower House. These include two memos; the first submitted by MP Hamza Mansour and signed by 31 MPs with regard to the sit in of the Port workers; the second was submitted by MP Moh'd Aqel and signed by 31 MPs requesting the Lower House to issue a statement to condemn the killing of Dr. Marwa Sharbini by an extremist from Germany.⁵⁶ There is also the memo submitted by the MPs on June 24, 2009 to the Speaker of the Lower House requesting issuance of a statement on the occasion of releasing the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council- Aziz Dweik and inviting him to visit Jordan to be given an honoring celebration at the Lower House of MPs.⁵⁷

In the same context, one can point to the memo signed by 48 MPs in the third meeting of the second extraordinary session held on Wednesday- July 1, 2009 calling for overcoming the crisis of the Lower House with the Press. Moreover, the official registers of the Lower House continue to be void from the memo signed by 31 MPs in the meeting of July 5, 2009 calling for permitting the MPs to visit Gaza Strip.⁵⁸

According to data, the parliamentary memos varied from policies of labor and universities to combat of corruption, foreign policy, agriculture, family and childhood, transport, and transportation.

The table below illustrates classification of Memos between this second session and first session of the current Parliament, both ordinary and extraordinary sessions.

#	Parliamentary Session	Total Submitted Memos	By Committees	By MPs (Individual and Collective)	Memos Answered by Government
1	First ordinary	44	31	13	6
2	First extraordinary	24	13	11	9
3	Second ordinary	56	24	32	11
4	Second extraordinary	15	6	9	1

⁵⁶ Among the discrepancies that need to be clarified is the Lower House responded to this memo and issued the statement to condemn the assassination of Dr. Shirbini; however, the memo itself was not entered into the official registers of the Lower House.

⁵⁷ The Lower House did not interact with this memo and it was not officially entered into its registers. Nobody knows what happened to it.

⁵⁸ The memo held an old date- 15.6.2009

Statements Issued by the Lower House

The statement issued by the Lower House of MPs must be voicing the will and stand of its members. It is usual for Lower House and in case it is convened to authorize Speaker being its Spokesperson to issue the statement covering a certain event, either political, economic or social. If the Lower House is not convened, the Speaker and maybe in consultation, sometimes, with the members of the Permanent Office, can issue a statement in name of the Lower House with regard to an event of concern for the MPs and the citizens. Noticeably, most of the statements issued by the Lower House are of a political nature in the first place. During its second extraordinary session,⁵⁹ the Lower House issued four statements. Upon a request by the MPs, the first statement included condemnation of the speech by the Israeli Prime Minister in which he stressed the Jewish ID of the Israeli State and his views on the peace process.

The Lower House issued its second statement in which it denies practices taking place in the Jordanian stadiums by some “astray” groups that voice certain slogans, and swear words which reflect a pattern of ethics far from belongingness and loyalty.⁶⁰

The Lower House interacted with a Parliamentary memo signed by 31 MPs calling the Lower House to issue a statement to condemn the assassination of Dr. Marwa Shirbini in front of a German court by a German extremist. Surprisingly, the memo was not documented in the official registers of the Lower House.

The fourth statement was about appreciation of the national sound vision that His Majesty the King expressed during a meeting at the Headquarters of the Armed Forces. In its statement, the Lower House stressed its strict stand under the leadership of His Majesty the King to face rumor causing prejudice to the country and dealing with those in doubt and calling for destruction and jeopardizing the deeply rooted national integrity must be serious and strict.

⁵⁹ The Lower House issued during the second ordinary session two statements only. In the first statement, it condemn the attack by the American Forces on one of the Syrian villages. The second statement condemned the Israeli armed attack at Gaza Strip.

⁶⁰ The MPs pressurized the Lower House to issue this statement after they raised the issue of riots during a football match. In that meeting, MP Tareq Khouri read a statement in name of the Club presidents to condemn what happened. MP Khalil A'tiyeh submitted another proposal to have the Lower House issue a statement expressing the will of the MPs to condemn and reject those patterns of behavior in the stadiums; and the Lower House interacted with this proposal.

CHAPTER THREE: PLENARY MEETINGS

Attendance and Absence

One of the main problems that challenges the Lower House of MPs is that of securing a quorum to convene its meetings or to continue as convened. This problem will remain to be in existence unless amendments are introduced to the Bylaws of the Lower House to ensure discipline of MPs and their commitment to attending these meetings. In the second extraordinary session, the Speaker of the Lower House-Engineer Abdul Hadi Majali repeatedly declared that the session is almost losing quorum requesting the MPs to stay seated in order to maintain quorum.

Although the Lower House during the extraordinary session held 22 meetings, it could not continue with one of those meetings due to lack of quorum. That was the evening meeting⁶¹ scheduled to complete deliberations on the Income Tax Draft Law and due to the lack of quorum, the meeting was adjourned by the Speaker.

The first event of losing quorum during the extraordinary session was during the meeting of Monday evening of July 6, 2009. The meeting lost quorum 80 minutes only after it began. The second event of losing quorum during meetings was in the last closing meeting of the extraordinary session; specifically while the evening meeting was convened on Wednesday 5.8.2009. The extraordinary session was prorogued the following day.

Although this continues to be one of the main problems facing the Lower House of MPs, it is still related to another problem, that is of having the MPs coming on scheduled time to start the meeting or during the grace period provided for in the bylaws of the Lower House to wait to achieve the quorum required for starting the meeting; i.e. half an hour.

This is incorporated in the bylaws of the Lower House of MPs. Article (70) stipulates, “the Speaker shall open the meeting on scheduled date. If two thirds of the Lower House members do not attend, opening will be delayed for half an hour. If this period lapses and the quorum has not been achieved, the following meeting date will be assigned”.

The bylaws of the Lower House of MPs attempts some controls on the issue of attendance and absence; it designates a separate chapter for it.⁶² It does not permit any of its members to absent from any of the session without a prior excuse,⁶³ Article 148 regulates the administrative part of the MPs excuse. It stipulates, “the MP submits the leave application to the Speaker before proceeding further with it.”⁶⁴ “The Speaker shall have the right to approve of the leave if it is for two weeks or fewer.”⁶⁵ “If the leave exceeds two weeks or more, the Speaker shall submit the issue to the Lower House for approval.”⁶⁶ “In all cases, the Lower House should be informed of the names of MPs on leave.”⁶⁷ Noticeably, the Lower House does not inform MPs of the names of those absent unless during

⁶¹ The Lower House succeeded in holding its morning meeting on Wednesday 3.8.2009; however, it could not hold its evening meeting on that day due to the absence of MPs from the meeting; which made it lack quorum.

⁶² It is Chapter Seventeenth- Leaves and Absence which incorporates Articles 148 to 150.

⁶³ As per Article 149, “the Member cannot be absent from a meeting of the Lower House or its committees unless informing the Speaker of that while providing an excuse.”

⁶⁴ Paragraph “a” of Article “148”

⁶⁵ Paragraph “b” of Article “148”

⁶⁶ Paragraph “c” of same Article. This Clause was not applied or enforced at all although several MPs got continuous leaves “sick leaves” along the whole period of the session such as MP Mijhem Khreisha and Adel Al Khattab due to their illness.

⁶⁷ Paragraph “d” of the above article.

a meeting convened with a full quorum. As the Lower House usually resorts to the complementary meetings practice, regulations of Paragraph “d” of Article “148” will become void of meaning.⁶⁸

The main point to be captured here is the content of Article “150” of the bylaws which stipulates, “If a meeting is not convened due to a lack of the quorum, the Secretary General of the Lower House will put a list of names of absent MPs without an excuse. This will be included in the minutes of the following meeting.”⁶⁹

Noticeably, either the Presidency nor the General Secretariat of the Lower House prefer to inform the journalists of the official list of attendance of the MPs. The Lower House did not publish names of those absent without an excuse except in seldom cases.⁷⁰ Publishing these names was for reasons not related to achievement of the principle of openness and transparency; but rather for entirely personal reasons.

Methodology of Attendance and Absence

This report sets a methodology and a clear scientific approach to monitor attendance and absence of MPs in order to establish the extent to which each MP observes and binds to the schedules of meetings as well as the extent of observing the Bylaws of the Lower House which requires the MP to submit a leave application to the Speaker in order to absent him/herself from any meeting.

For this purpose, the team of the report adopted the following methodology to define “who the absent MP is, and who the present MP is.” This can be summarized as follows:

1- The team identified its task of monitoring the presence of MPs at meeting or their absence by considering each MP coming to the Parliament building and staying there until the Speaker goes into the Hall and announces the full quorum and start of the meetings.

2- The Team did not account for any MP entering into the Parliament after the Speaker announcing the meeting as convened as present. These were not put on the list of present MPs in order to avoid mistakes and errors related to presence of MPs in the last meeting or during its convention. In order to control presence and absence clearly and strictly especially that the meeting cannot be convened unless upon a quorum. In most sessions, the presence of MPs further exceeded the quorum.

3- The purpose of monitoring presence and absence of MPs from meeting in this report is to highlight the extent to which MPs are committed to the scheduled timing of sessions. It is aimed at discovering the number of MPs who are present on the scheduled timing, the number of those who are late, the number of those who do not attend, the number of those who provide an excuse and those who do not provide excuse for not attending.

This is the methodology of the report to monitor and capture their presence or absence. It is a clear methodology depending originally on measuring the commitment of MPs to attend meetings right from the start. This is the point that was highlighted before in this report.

Exacerbated Phenomenon of Complementary Meetings

⁶⁸ The Bylaws of the Lower House must be amended in order to commit the Secretariat of the Lower House to announce names of absent MPs from the meeting with or without an excuse. This applies whether the meeting is an ordinary one with all its quorum or a complementary meeting.

⁶⁹ It is preferable to announce names of absent MPs from the meeting not convened due to lack of quorum during the following meeting in order to achieve further transparency and openness between the Lower House and the Press on one hand and the voters on the other hand.

⁷⁰ The current fifteenth Lower House of MPs witnessed only one case when the Lower House published names of those absent from one of its meetings. The MP Speaker of the Lower House- Dr. Abdullah Al-Jazi published names of MPs absent from attending the first meeting chaired by Al-Jazi during the second ordinary session. Newspapers published names of absent MPs without an excuse.

The Lower House of MPs held 21 meetings in its second extraordinary session. It failed to convene one meeting due to the lack of quorum,⁷¹ two meetings lost quorum.

According to findings, only six MPs attended all meetings of the extraordinary session without any absence. MPs absent from one meeting counted for 5 meetings counted for 54 MPs.

Those absent from 6 to 10 meetings counted for 31 MPs; those absent from 11 to 15 meetings counted for 13 MPs; those absent from 16 to 21 meetings counted for 4 MPs; and those who did not attend any meeting counted for two MPs. Table below summarizes the MPs' attendance and absence.

Category	Number of MPs
MPs not absent from any meeting	6
MPs absent from 1-5 meetings	54
MPs absent from 6-10 meetings	31
MPs absent from 11-15 meetings	13
MPs absent from 16-21 meetings	4
MPs absent from all meetings	2

The total number of frequent absence from meetings counted for 695 cases of absence including 587 cases of absence without an excuse out of 2420 present MPs.

The dilemma of “absence without excuse” is difficult to observe for any researcher or observer of the Lower House for several reasons: First: it is five times more than absence upon excuse. Second: the General Secretariat of the Lower House does not announce at the beginning of each meeting names of MPs absent upon prior excuses as requested by the Lower House's bylaws. This is especially true in case of complementary meetings held always by the Lower House.

Rates of Presence and Absence from Extraordinary Session Meetings of the Fifteenth Lower House	
Absence with excuse	4.5%
Absence without excuse	24.5%
Attendance	71%

⁷¹ The Report is based on counting names of MPs present and waiting for half an hour at the Parliament in line with Article (79) of the Bylaws. That meeting was the twenty second; names of MPs present at the Parliament and names of those absent were approved.

CHAPTER FOUR: RECOMMENDATIONS

Parliamentary Committees: To establishing new permanent Parliamentary committees and increasing committee's membership. In more details:

- Establishing a committee on “Economic and Investment Affairs”
- Establishing a committee on “Discipline and Conduct”
- Establishing a committee on “Women and Family”
- Establish a committee on “General Budget”
- Increasing the number of members of the permanent committee to 15 from 11 to ensure that all members of the Lower House can participate in committee's structure and proceedings.

The committee on “Economic and Investment Affairs” would be responsible for studying laws of finance, trade, companies, banks, insurance, currency, exchange and investment in addition to other items in this category. It is also responsible for studying the funding status and economic agreements to which Jordan is a signatory.

The issue of presence and absence of the MPs from the Lower Houses' meetings is an issue of special importance. The experience in this respect has clearly revealed the importance of setting a mechanism that binds the MP to attend meetings. This must provide for the esteem of the MP and the right of the voter who helped him/her accede to the Parliament. In fact, many of the Lower House's meetings are not being held due to the lack of quorum or its loss during the meeting. Sometimes, the Lower House's Speaker exerts the effort to maintain a quorum. Thus, it is important to form this committee and to be assigned with the task of considering complaints and grievances submitted by the MPs against any other party and in relation with any of the issues of influence on their lives.

In case of submitting a complaint by the MPs against any party, the Committee must address the relevant agencies to communicate the theme of the complaint and take procedures required to prevent prejudice to the esteem of the Lower House and the MP. The Committee is responsible for investigating any violation of the Bylaws as well as complaints of citizens or any other party against members of Lower House of MPs in their Parliamentary capacity. The Committee shall have the right to recommend to the Lower House to impose penalties in case a violation by the member is proved.” These include depriving the MP from some of his/her financial allowances; depriving from participating on parliamentary delegations that represent the Lower House abroad as well as depriving from attending a number of the meetings of the Lower House for a certain period of time. Such penalties are put into practice in some Arab and foreign parliaments such as: Egypt, Morocco, United States of America and France.

The committee on “Women and Family” would be responsible for considering all laws, agreements, and proposals related to the affairs of women, family and children as well as following up policies, plans and programs required to provide cultural, economic and political development of women. It urges women to participate in the public life, make use of opportunities available for them. However, this type of committees is seen in several Arab parliaments such as Qatar, and Iraq.

The committee on “General Budget” would discuss the budget of the State, the Lower House of MPs and Governmental Institutions.

Parliamentary Blocs

Parliament's bylaws need to be amended to formally recognize the role of Parliamentary blocs at the Lower House. The current bylaws does not recognize any role of Parliamentary blocs at the Lower House of MPs. Side by side the Parliamentary experience, these blocs have been developing until they became institutional although some criticism is addressed against the method of forming such committees. However, and within the Parliamentary norms, these have become a must. The blocs would contribute to enhancing the legislative process and MPs' performance.

Moreover, recognizing the role of blocs helps give further momentum. It helps develop performance of the Lower House in addition to reducing time so that a consensus can be reached in relation with the draft laws (laws) submitted to the Lower House via the permanent committee blocs so that they can be submitted to the Lower House at the Parliament for endorsement. Thus, individual or the “one man show” at the Lower House will come to an end in favor of institutional bloc (group) performance.

Therefore, action of blocs must be legislated by designating a chapter in the bylaws for their formation, number of members, and procedures to move from one bloc to another. The relative representation of blocs and independent MPs must prevent any bloc or coalition possessing (half+1) from dominating the Lower House. In order to enforce the role of blocs at the Lower House, representation at committees must be prorated among blocs. The Bloc will nominate their representatives on each committee and the member of the bloc will be denied membership in case of withdrawing from the bloc which shall have the right to select another member to replace him. Independent MPs will be represented on committees upon prorates on condition that election be conducted among them with a number equal to the number of members designated for them.

Presidency of the Lower House

Transfer a large deal of the Speaker’s powers to the Permanent Office so that “the Speaker will be the spokesperson of the Lower House”. Thus the Speaker has to resign from his bloc for work ethics reasons so that he can represent the Lower House and not just a certain bloc.

Constitution needs to be amended so that the Lower House can move beyond having to elect the Speaker on annual basis. The current process keeps the MPs under the pressure of electoral and other coalitions. If the amendment provides for a biannual or four year assignment of the Speaker, this will be much better as it gives further autonomy for the Lower House and helps achieve the aspired institutionalism of action.

The Oversight Role

MPs’ Questions

The period for the ministers to answer MPs’ questions needs to be prolonged from eight to 16 days. Paragraph “c” of Article (117) must be redrafted. It stipulates, “The Speaker will inform this who raised the question of the answer and will put the question and answer on the agenda of the first meeting set for questions, interpellations, and proposals of an intention.” When redrafted, it becomes “the Speaker serves the answer to this who asked the question and only puts on the agenda of the meeting for questions, interpellations, and proposed intentions the answers to the questions raised by those who were not satisfied with the answers.”

The Oversight Action during the Extraordinary Session

The oversight role of the Lower House must be enforced during the extraordinary session by putting the item “Other Business” on its agenda. So far, the proceedings undermine the oversight role of the MPs during the extraordinary session. The argument that the period of an extraordinary session is so short should not dismiss the oversight role of the Lower House.

Parliament’s Sessions

The Ordinary Session

Extend the ordinary session period “de jure” upon the constitution to 7 months at least. This must be enforced when a political, parliamentary, and governmental will is available. It has become essential after two years of the period of the current Lower House of MPs and more than 13 years from setting the current bylaws of The Lower House to amend the bylaws. Such an amendment should help develop performance of the Lower House of MPs in terms of legislation and oversight especially that

there are reasons calling for that. On top of such reasons is the increase of the number of the Lower House members to 110 from 80, which was the number when the current bylaws first came in force. Performance can be developed by enforcing texts in the Constitution as well as providing a full political will among the MPs to assume their role to the fullest in this respect. Such a will must be available for the Government as well in order to enhance the role of the Parliament.

A political will should enable the Parliament to operate along the year without a recession. This can be achieved by means of enforcing the current stipulations of the Constitution that the ordinary session period of the Lower House is four months (Article 78 and its paragraphs especially Paragraph 3); the Article provides for the King to extend for three extra months maximum; this helps the Lower House to work in a continuum of seven months; thus, assuming its duty of oversight and accountability of the Government for a longer period and at a better level.

Paragraph “3” of Article “78” stipulates, *“The ordinary session of the National Assembly shall begin on the date upon which It was summoned to meet in accordance with the two preceding paragraphs, and shall last for four months unless the Lower House of MPs is dissolved by the King before the expiration of that period. The session may be prolonged by the King for a further period not exceeding three months to allow for the dispatch of pending matters. At the expiration of the four months or any such prolongation thereof, the King shall prorogue the Assembly.”*

The Constitution does not specify a period of time for the extraordinary session. It does not state a number in this respect; which means the possibility of holding more than one parliamentary extraordinary session or a long term extraordinary session even if two extraordinary session are held during the Lower House’s recession, it will be possible for the Lower House of MPs to operate throughout the year.

An extraordinary session must be mandatory rather than just resulting from a majority desire (Article 82). Setting themes of the extraordinary session before hand will not serve the democratic achievement. The manner in which the laws to be discussed in the extraordinary session comes as a “wish” and the Prime Minister shall have the right to exclude some laws before recommending upon the MPs’ memo, which weakens the role of the Lower House of MPs and the Parliament.

Paragraph “1” of Article 82 of the Constitution stipulates, “The King may whenever necessary summon the National Assembly to meet in an extraordinary session for an unspecified period for the purpose of deciding matters to be specified in the Royal Decree when the summons are issued. An extraordinary session shall be prorogued by a Royal Decree.”

Paragraph “2” of the same Article stipulates, “The King may summon the National Assembly to meet in an extraordinary session at the request of an absolute majority of the MPs. Such request shall be contained in a petition specifying the matters which it is desired to discuss.” Paragraph “3” of the same Article prohibits the Parliament from discussing any issues during an extraordinary session unless included in the Royal Decree upon which it was convened.

Constitutional amendments must be introduced to grant the Lower House of MPs a further oversight and legislative power in case the political will is not available to develop the performance of the Lower House of MPs by stipulating an extension of the ordinary session and mandatory nature of the extraordinary session.

Attendance and Absence

It is essential to commit the General Secretariat of the Lower House to announce at the beginning of each Parliamentary meeting, even at the session’s complementary meeting, the names of MPs present and absent.

To the extent possible, complementary meetings should be reduced and MPs must be enforced to attend meetings by adopting a clear policy in this respect even if this policy requires penal procedures

against the MPs especially those with recurrent absence from the meetings. For instance, their names can be published in the newspapers in an official statement issued by the Lower House.

ANNEX 1. ABSENCE SHEET

No	Name	Absence with excuse	Absence without excuse	No	Name	Absence with excuse	Absence without excuse
1	Ansaf Al-Khawaldeh	0	14	56	Abdullah Gharaibeh	0	3
2	Amneh Algharagheer	0	8	57	Adnan Ajarmeh	2	0
3	Ahmad Albashabsheh	0	0	58	Azzam Hunaidi	0	4
4	Ahmad Alsafadi	0	2	59	Asr Alsharaman	0	3
5	Ahmad Alo'toum	0	11	60	Ali Aldala'ain	1	3
6	Ahmad Alo'dwan	2	7	61	Awwad Alzawaydeh	0	7
7	Ayman shouiet	1	0	62	Fakhri Aldaoud	1	5
8	Ibrahim Alae'taiwi	1	16	63	Farhan Alghwairi	1	15
9	Ibrahim Alo'moosh	0	14	64	Falak Aljama'ani	1	3
10	Bassam Almanaseir	0	8	65	Fawaz Hamdallah	1	0
11	Bassam Haddadin	1	7	66	Qassim Bani Hani	0	5
12	Tawfiq Kraishan	1	3	67	Lotfi Alderbani	1	1
13	Tayseir Shdaifat	0	8	68	Mubarak Al Abbadi	1	8
14	Tharwat Ala'mro	0	14	69	Mujhim Alkhreishah	22	0
15	Jafar Ala'bdallat	0	16	70	Mohammad Abu Hudeib	0	8
16	Jameil Alhashoush	0	0	71	Mohammad Abu Alhiah	0	9
17	Habis Alshibeib	0	11	72	Mohammad al-Badri	1	4
18	Hazem Alnnaser	3	9	73	Mohammad al-Haj	1	4
19	Hasan Safi	2	3	74	Mohammad Al-Zanaty	1	4
20	Hosni Alshayab	0	8	75	Mohammad Alsaudi	0	3
21	Hamad Abu-Zeid	0	7	76	Mohammad Alshra'h	0	3
22	Hamdiya Alhamaydeh	1	7	77	Mohammad Alqdah	0	3
23	Hamza Mansour	1	0	78	Mohammad Alkouz(Abu Alraed)	0	4
24	Khaled AlBakkar	1	0	79	Mohammad Alkouz(Abu Ammar)	0	4
25	Khalid Alsatari	0	12	80	Mohammed Zuraiqat	1	8
26	Khalaf Alraqad	1	2	81	Mohammad Aql	1	5
27	Khalil Attieh	0	4	82	Mohammed A'wwad	1	6
28	Raji Haddad	0	15	83	Mahmoud Alkharabsheh	0	4
29	Rasmi Almallah	0	4	84	Mahmoud Alo'dwan	0	7
30	Reza Haddad	0	10	85	Mahmoud Mouhaidat	0	9
31	Riyad Al-Ya'qaoub	0	8	86	Marzouq Dea'jah	0	12
32	Reem Al-Qasim	0	1	87	Muflih Alkhaza'leh	0	3
33	Ziad Al Shuwaikh	0	10	88	Muflih Alrahimi	0	2
34	Saad Hayel Alsroor	0	8	89	Mamdouh Ala'bbadi	2	0
35	Sulaiman Alsa'ad	0	0	90	Munir Super	1	0
36	Sulaiman Ghnaimat	0	5	91	Musa Alkhalayleh	0	8
37	Samih Bino	0	2	92	Musa Alzawahreh	0	11
38	Sanad Alna'imat	0	7	93	Mirza Bulad	0	7
39	Sharaf Alhayajneh	0	8	94	Michelle Hijazin	2	1

40	Saleh AlJobour	0	14	95	Najeh Almomani	0	9
41	Salah Al-Zoubi	1	3	96	Nariman Alrousan	0	15
42	Sewan Alshurofat	0	11	97	Nassar al-Qaisi	0	0
43	Daifallah Alo'moush	0	3	98	Nasr Alhamaydeh	2	1
44	Tareq Khoury	0	6	99	Nedal Alhadeid	10	0
45	Adel Al Khattab	22	0	100	Nawaf Alzyoud	0	5
46	Atef Altarawneh	0	8	101	Hashem Alshboul	0	5
47	Abdulhamid Thunaibat	0	3	102	Hani Alnawafleh	1	2
48	Abdulraouf Alrawabdeh	7	0	103	Wasfy Alrawashdeh	0	0
49	Abdulrahman Alhnaqtah	0	3	104	Yasin Al Zoubi	0	5
50	Abdulraheim Albeqa'e	1	0	105	Yassin Bani Yassin	0	5
51	Abdulfattah Alma'ayteh	1	0	106	Yahya E'baidat	1	4
52	Abdulkarim Aldaghmi	2	0	107	Yusuf Bustangi	1	4
53	Abdullah Aljazi	1	4	108	Yusuf Sarayreh	0	0
54	Abdullah Alzeraiqat	0	16	109	Yusuf Alqurna	0	1
55	Abdulhadi Almajali	1	0	110	Yusuf Abu Slaih	0	5

ANNEX 2: OVERSIGHT TOOLS

Questions: A parliamentary question is one of the oversight tools provided for the MPs in the Lower House bylaws. Each representative shall have the right to address a question to the Executive Branch at any time and along his Parliamentary assignment apart from the fact if the Lower House is convened or in a recess.⁷²

Interpellations (interrogations): Interpellations comprise a main role among the roles assigned to the Lower House. They provide for oversight role in accordance with bylaws⁷³. The Constitution of Jordan assigns the responsibility of holding the minister accountable to the Lower House.⁷⁴ It also provides for the right of the Lower House to “impeach” ministers, but a bill of impeachment shall not be passed except by a majority of the two-thirds of the members of the Lower House. The Lower House shall appoint, from among its members, MPs who shall present the impeachment to, and proceed before, the High Tribunal.⁷⁵

The Constitution of Jordan takes things further when it entitles the MPs to hold the Ministers accountable. It even entitles, “any Senator or MP may address questions or interpellations to the Ministers concerning any public matters, in accordance with the provisions of the internal regulations of the Senate or the House. No interpellation may be debated before eight days from the date of its receipt by the Minister, unless the case is of an urgent nature and the Minister agrees to shorten this period.”⁷⁶

⁷² “Article “114” of the Bylaws of the Lower House defines the question as “the representative inquiring the Prime Minister or the ministers about a matter that he is ignorant of in relation with some affair within their mandate; or a wish to investigate a certain incidence that he came to learn of; or to inquire about the Government intention in relation with a certain matter.”

⁷³ Article “122” of the Lower House Bylaws defines the interpellation as “holding the ministers or any of them for an action they take in relation with public affairs.”

⁷⁴ According to Article “51” of the Constitution which reads as, “The Prime Minister and Ministers shall be collectively responsible before the Chamber of MPs in respect of the public policy of the State. In addition, each Minister shall be responsible before the Chamber of MPs in respect of the affairs of his Ministry.”

⁷⁵ According to Article 96 of the Constitution of Jordan.

⁷⁶ According to Article 96 of the Constitution of Jordan.

Proposal with an Intention: The bylaws of the Lower House defines a proposal with an intention as, “inviting the government to do any action of importance within its mandate.”⁷⁷ It requires the Lower House member to submit the proposal with an intention in writing to the Lower House Speaker who must refer it to the competent committee.⁷⁸

Petition or Complaint: Article (144) of the Bylaws sets requirements for a sound petition or complaint to be accepted by the Lower House, it must show name of applicant, his job and full address. It must be free from any prejudice to the Crown, the Parliament, or the judiciary. It must be free from any bad or indecent expressions. It provides for the right of the Speaker to keep petitions and complaints that do not fulfill requirements in files without a motion in relation therewith.

Memoranda: Neither the Constitution of Jordan nor the Lower House bylaws provide for the Parliamentary memos. Yet, the Parliamentary practice created this mechanism which has become one of the important oversight tools that the Lower House. The main reason to apply this important monitoring method might be its easiness and promptness. It is not required to go through the legislative channels as is the case with other oversight tools. The Representative or a group/bloc of Representatives prepare a memo on a certain topic and the memo is served to the Lower House Speaker to address complaints submitted thereto. In fact, Parliamentary memos can be seen as one tool to evaluate Parliamentary performance and mechanism for change and Parliamentary oversight on government.⁷⁹

Meetings of General Debates: The Lower House Bylaws defines a general debate as, “exchange of opinion and advice between the House and the Government”,⁸⁰ it permits “ten members or more to submit an application to discuss any issue or a public matter,” and it allows the Government to request a “general debate.”⁸¹

The Bylaws sets mechanisms to submit an application for a general debate and serving the application on the meeting agenda as well as fixing a date for debate.⁸² It also permits those applying for a general debate and other representatives to “disqualify the Cabinet or the Ministers after completing a general debate while observing the provisions of Article 54 of the Constitution.”⁸³

Statements (Communiqué): This type of the House business is not of an oversight tool, and yet, it is usual for the House to issue statements to voice its stand towards political issues emerging in the region.

⁷⁷ Article (131) of the Lower House Bylaws

⁷⁸ Article (132) of the Lower House Bylaws.

⁷⁹ Refer to the Parliamentary Monitoring Book at the Jordanian Lower House 1989/2001, compiled by Fa'ek Fantoul AzZeidan, supervised by Dr. Moh'd Masalha- documentary publications of the Secretariat General of the Lower House- Edition One- Amman-2002, page 70.

⁸⁰ According to Article (127) of the Lower House Bylaws.

⁸¹ According to Paragraphs “a” and “b” of Article 128 of the Bylaws.

⁸² Paragraph "a" of Article 129 reads, “ the general debate application must be submitted in written to the Lower House Speaker who will serve it on the agenda of the first following meeting. Paragraph “b” of the same Article reads, “the Lower House will fix the date of the general debate on condition that it be within fourteen days unless the House deems the topic as not relevant for debate and decides to exclude it.”

⁸³ According to Article 130 of the Bylaws.