

Kulluna Irada Urges Implementation of the Access to Information Law

September 3, 2019

Beirut, LB- The Law of Access to Information passed by the Parliament is not restricted only to giving information to citizens who request it, but also includes other reforms awaiting implementation such as publishing administrative expenditures and annual reports of concerned administration. In this context, [Kulluna Irada](#) organized in partnership with [The Legal Agenda](#) a press conference around “Blocking Access to Information is a Green Light to Corruption”, in Hotel Monroe, Beirut.

The conference, held on September 3, gathered former MP [Ghassan Moukeiber](#), who worked during his time in Parliament on the establishment of this law, and the [Gherbal Initiative](#) who worked closely with state administrations to assure the implementation of the law and issued a report in 2018 about it. It came as a step following the issuance of a decision by the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers on 26 June 2019, rejecting a request for information presented by Kulluna Irada and The Legal Agenda in relation to power production plants.

“Such a breach of the Access to Information Law is certainly not the first of its kind as there are almost more administrations that breach the law than ones who implement it as they should, as revealed by reports of legal rights organizations”, affirmed the Managing Director of Kulluna Irada, Ms. Hala Bejjani in her speech read on behalf of Kulluna Irada and The Legal Agenda.

In addition, this breach comes at a time of a serious economic and financial crisis where the Government is making big efforts to convince donors and lenders of its credibility in fighting corruption and putting a halt to it, in order to preserve the chances of the Lebanese society to overcome this crisis.

“This shows a retraction in past positions of the Government which had used this law to prove its commitment to fighting corruption in many international fora and even announced the creation of a website to accompany its implementation, which later turned out to be nonfunctional,” she noted.

The organizations then called upon the Government to reaffirm its moral and constitutional commitment to respect the right to access information and implement the law protecting it, and to issue a circular to all public administrations instructing them to apply.

“We call upon Parliament to launch an investigation around the refusal of the public administration to execute its anti-corruption laws, and to issue the law establishing the anti-corruption committee without delay,” Bejjani concluded

For his past, the Gherbal initiative's founder and director, Mr. Assaad Thebian, highlighted the work done by the organization to explain the Access to Information Law to more than 100 administrations, however, despite their effort, only 18 out of 33 administrations were willing to implement it.

“We worked for a year to monitor the Lebanese state budget and expenditures in the first year that saw a budget issued by the Parliament, and although 65 out of 140 administrations responded to our requests, only 32 provided us with their financial statements and accounts” he added.

The conference concluded with the intervention of former MP Ghassan Moukheiber who pointed out that some administrations don't feel concerned in the implementation of the Access to Information Law, such as the judiciary and public service institutions, highlighting the need to expand the framework of those obliged to abide by the law.

“There is no need to show interest or quality or the reason of the request for information as access to information is not linked to its use in courts and media but to the transparency of public administration. This is important for Lebanon who is in the process of accessing the Open Government Partnership,” he stressed.

In attendance were also MPs. Nehmat Freim and George Okais, who expressed their support to Kulluna Irada and The Legal Agenda's initiatives and called for the implementation of the Access to Information Law.

Following the conference, Kulluna Irada and The Legal Agenda launched a [petition](#) to urge the implementation of the Access to Information Law and reaffirm the necessity of implementing this law which is a main pillar of transparency and accountability.

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For more information

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Kulluna Irada is a civic organization for political reform, engaged in setting the foundations for a modern, secure, efficient, sustainable and just state. It is funded exclusively by Lebanese citizens in Lebanon and abroad. Kulluna Irada believes transparency, accountability and citizen participation as major constituents of good governance. The organization's goal is to raise awareness on public issues and engage constituencies of the Lebanese society: citizens, NGOs, experts, municipalities, and members of Parliament and Government in order to find and implement sustainable solutions.