

## **Printing and Publishing Law**

**Royal Decree No. 49/84 on the promulgation of the Publications and Publishing Law, issued on May 26, 1984:**

“We, Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman, After having reviewed Royal Decree No. 26/75 promulgating the law regulating the State’s Administrative Apparatus and its amendments, the Commercial Companies Law No. 4/74 and its amendments, and Royal Decree No. 4/74 promulgating Foreign Vocations and Foreign Capital Investment and its amendments, and As deemed necessary in the public interest, Have hereby decreed the following:

**ARTICLE (1):** The provisions of the Publications and Publishing Law attached herewith shall be enforced.

**ARTICLE (2):** The Minister of Information shall issue the regulations and the decisions necessary for the implementation of the provisions of the attached law.

**ARTICLE (3):** The Publications Law No. 3/75 and any other regulations in contradiction or contravention of the provisions of the attached law are deemed null and void.

**ARTICLE (4):** This decree shall be published in the official gazette and shall come into force on its date of publishing.

Issued on Shaba'an 25th, 1404 AH, corresponding to May 26, 1984

Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman.”

## **Puplications and publishing law**

### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **Article 1:**

The profession of journalism, printing and publishing shall be organized under the terms and conditions stated in this law.

**Article 2:**

Press publications issued by ministries, public institutions or public bodies in relation with the activities of these departments shall be subject to the supervision of the Ministry of Information.

**Article 3:**

In implementation of the provisions of this law, the following words/phrases/terms shall have the meanings associated with each one herein, unless the context requires otherwise:

- 1- Publications: This refers to any script writings, drawings, pictures, photographs or any other means of copying or photocopying whenever the material is copied, photocopied or transcribed by any means and becomes ready for circulation, with the exception of personal publications or publications related to commercial activity provided their content does not constitute any breach of the provisions of this law or any other law.
- 2- Circulation: Sale of publications, displaying them for sale, distributing them or sticking them on walls or exhibiting them on facades of outlets with the purpose of sale, advertising, marketing or decoration, as well as any other action that might render them by any means within reach of a number of people.
- 3- Journal: Any newspaper, magazine or publication published in one name at a periodic rate on a regular or irregular timing.
- 4- Journalist: Anyone who has taken up journalism as a profession or source of living and whose work includes writing for print media and other types of media or providing the press with news, reports, features, analyses and other forms of press coverage like pictures, illustrations (etc) and is listed under the designation of reporters, editors, correspondents and freelancers, irrespective of one's nationality or the nationality of the institution(s) for which he/she works.
- 5- Journalism: The profession of reporting, editing and publishing press publications.

6- News agency: The press institution in charge of dissemination of news and photographed or non-photographed reportage or wired or wireless press coverage routed through means of telecommunication or through newscasts or any other forms or means of publishing.

7- Printing press: Any machine or group of machines or systems designed for printing words, (drawings) illustrations or pictures with the purpose of publishing or circulating them. This definition does not include machines or systems designed for photocopying, typewriters and systems used for photocopying copies of documents and papers.

8- Printer: The owner of a printing press. If such owner leases the printing press to any other party to operate it, then the designation "printer" shall be accorded to the latter party.

9- Publisher: The natural or corporate person in charge of issuing any publication.

10- Bookshop: Any institution dealing with the sale and distribution of publications and books in any specific place

11- Distribution House: Any establishment dealing with the distribution or sale of publications through bookshops or sellers.

12- Publishing house: Any establishment dealing with preparing and producing publications with the purpose of circulation.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

Provisions related to printing houses and publications in general

**Article 4:** Anyone wishing to set up a printing press must apply for a license from the Ministry of Information, enclosing the required data as specified in the executive regulation of this law. This license shall by no means be waived by obtaining any licenses stated in other laws.

**Article 5:** The department concerned at the Ministry of Information shall decide whether or not to grant such license “within three months” from the date of application. Non-reply within this period shall be considered as rejection of the application.

Article 6: The applicant whose application (to set up a printing press) is rejected may appeal to the Press and Publications Committee cited in this law “within 15 days” from the date of notification of refusal or from the expiry date of the reply period mentioned in Article 5. The Committee shall reach a decision on the petition “within 15 days” from the date of submission of its submission, and the Committee’s decision shall be final after being ratified by the Minister of Information.

**Article 7:** The holder of license to set up a printing press or the one responsible for its management shall notify the Ministry of Information, in writing, of any change made to the data mentioned in the application for license (to set up a printing press) “within 15 days” from the date on which this change occurs.

Article 8: The Printer or the printing house Manager shall keep a special register indicating, in serial order, the titles of publications already published or in queue, as well as applications being prepared for publishing, the names of their owners, the number of copies published and their date of publishing. The competent authorities may at any time review such registers when deemed necessary to do so.

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**Article 9:** The names and addresses of the Printer and Publisher shall be mentioned in the first or last page of any publication, and so shall the date of publishing.

**Article 10:** Before publishing any publication, the Printer shall deposit five copies of the same to the Ministry of Information and he/she shall be given a receipt to this effect.

Article 11: Any Printer, before undertaking the publishing of any journal, shall submit an application for license to do so. The application shall be submitted to the Ministry of Information, which shall issue a decision in this regard within two weeks from the date of application.

**Article 12:** Before publishing any publication, the Printer shall obtain permission in advance from the Ministry of Information approving the publication.

**Article 13:** The Printer shall by no means publish any publication whose circulation is prohibited, neither shall the Printer publish any unlicensed periodic publication or a publication whose license is cancelled or amended or whose release is suspended.

**Article 14:** The provisions of this chapter of the law shall be applicable to publishing houses.

**Article 15:** In case of any breach of the provisions of the articles mentioned above, the offender shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding one year or by a fine not exceeding RO 500 or by both penalties, with a chance that the printing press might be temporarily or permanently shut down.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### The circulation of Publications

**Article 16:** No one is allowed to take up the profession of importing, selling, distribution or publishing of publications or setting up of a publishing or distribution house or a bookshop before having obtained the relevant license to do so from the competent authority at the Ministry of Information. The application for this license shall comprise all necessary data stated in the executive regulation of this law.

**Article 17:** Any change(s) that might occur to the data of application for license shall be reported to the Ministry of Information within 15 days of their occurrence.

**Article 18:** With the exception of publications exempted as per Article (3), Clause (1), the Ministry of Information shall be the sole licensing authority for distribution, circulation and publishing of publications.

**Article 19:** Street vendors/peddlers are prohibited from promoting the sale of press publications by hawking false news or news that does not exist in the newspaper or act in a manner deemed as morally offending or in contradiction of public norms or in breach of the public order.

**Article 20:** Any distribution and circulation house shall provide the Ministry of Information, free of charge, with five copies of the publications that they import. The one who delivers such copies shall be given a receipt to this effect.

**Article 21:** The import of any publications that are in breach of the public order or in contravention of the public norms shall be banned, and so shall their circulation in the Sultanate. This ban shall be by virtue of a decision to be issued by the Minister of Information or the person he authorizes to do so.

**Article 22:** The Minister of Information must prohibit circulation in the Sultanate of Oman any publications that are in contradiction with morals and public norms or publications that breach the principles of Islam or the traditions and the rules in force.

**Article 23:** The competent authority at the Ministry of Information may administratively seize and confiscate the publications whose circulation is prohibited by the Ministry or by virtue of the provisions stated in the above-mentioned articles of this law.

**Article 24:** In case of any breach of the provisions of the above-mentioned articles, the offender shall be punished by imprisonment for period not exceeding two years or by a fine not exceeding RO 2,000 or by both penalties.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **On publication bans**

**Article 25:** It is prohibited to publish anything that explicitly or implicitly defames the person of his Majesty the Sultan or members of the Royal Family, by speech or images. It is also prohibited to incite (rebellion) against the system of government in the Sultanate or abuse it or disrupt the public order or call people to embrace or promote anything deemed in contravention of the principles of the Islamic religion.

**Article 26:** It is prohibited to publish anything that might compromise the State's safety or its internal or external security, as well as anything related to military or security corps, their systems or internal regulations or any documents, information or news or any official

confidential communications, irrespective of whether dissemination occurs through visual, audio or written media or through the internet or by means of information technology, unless otherwise authorized by the competent authority. It is equally prohibited to publish the script of any agreements or treaties that the government signed prior to their publishing in the gazette.

**Article 27:** It is prohibited to publish anything that might prejudice the national currency or anything that could lead to confusion about the stock market in the Sultanate or the economic position of the country.

**Article 28:** It is prohibited to publish anything that might prejudice the public code of conduct, moral norms or divine religions.

**Article 29:** It is prohibited to publish details of investigations or court proceedings related to personal status or other personal matters whose publishing is banned by standing court instructions or hearings on which the court might impose a publication ban. It is likewise not permitted to deliberately misrepresent court proceedings or deliberations.

**Article 30:** It is not allowed to publish news, pictures or comments related to private life or family life of individuals, except when publishing of such reports comes within the context of execution of a court verdict or an administrative decision deemed necessary in serving the public interest, in which case a license for publishing such information has to be obtained by virtue of a decision to be issued by the Minister of Information.

**Article 31:** It is prohibited to publish anything that might incite crimes or hatred or spread adultery/prostitution or sow discord among members of society.

**Article 32:** It is prohibited to publish any news, articles, pictures or documents whose publishing is banned by virtue of a decision issued by the Minister of Information, unless otherwise the authorization for publishing such information is granted by the same source.

**Article 33:** Newspapers are not allowed to deal, in any way, with matters that are not within the scope of the decision granting them license of issuance.

**Article 34:** It is not allowed to publish newspaper advertisements or any other print advertisements comprising materials whose publishing is banned as per the provisions of this

Chapter of the law. It is also not allowed to publish advertisements that might mislead the public or publish any advertisements related to medicines or pharmaceutical products without the specific authorization of the Ministry of Health. As for advertisements on technical categories, the advertisers should approach the Ministry of Heritage and Culture.

**Article 35:** Without prejudice to any severer penalty stipulated in any other law, anyone who acts in violation of Article (25) of this law shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not exceeding “three” years or a fine not exceeding “two thousand Omani Riyals” or by both penalties.

**Article 36:** Any contravention of the provisions of Articles (26) to (34), its perpetrator shall be punished by imprisonment of for a period not exceeding two years or by a fine of not more than “two thousand Omani Riyals” or by both penalties.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Provisions related to newspapers : Journals**

**Article 37:** Newspapers in Sultanate of Oman shall be issued through press establishments duly authorized by the competent authority at the Ministry of Information according to procedures determined by the executive regulations of this law. Each establishment shall have a board of directors tasked with the responsibility of management of the newspapers the establishment issues.

**Article 38:** Press establishments that intend to issue a daily or weekly newspaper shall take the form of a limited liability company. A press establishment that intends to issue a half-monthly, monthly and periodic/seasonal newspaper shall take the form of a limited liability company or partnership company or sleeping partner or individual trader. The setting up of such establishments and their operation system shall be governed by the Commercial Companies Law No 4/74 and the amendments thereto, without prejudice to the provisions of this law.

It is a condition that the capital of a press establishment shall be not less than RO 500,000 (Five Hundred Thousand Omani Riyals) if the journal is a daily newspaper, or RO 250,000 (Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Omani Riyals) if the publication is a weekly, or RO 150,000 (One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Omani Riyals) if it is a monthly or fortnightly journal, or RO 100,000 (One Hundred Thousand) if it is a seasonal newspaper.

**Article 39:** The capital of press establishments shall be entirely owned by Omani citizens. It shall by no means be sold or transferred or disposed of in any way, except (through transfer) to Omani citizens.

**Article 40:** Without prejudice to the provisions of the Commercial Companies Law, the Publications and Publishing Committee shall prepare a model contract of foundation for a press establishment that takes the form a joint stock company and its Articles of Association provided that the foundation contract defines the objectives of the journal and election procedures of its board of directors in accordance with the system specified in the foundation contract.

**Article 41:** Each press establishment shall have a legal entity and may undertake any legal procedures to realize its objectives. It shall be represented before other parties by its chairman. The establishment may, within the scope of its activity, exercise import and export business and it may undertake activities that are permissible to commercial companies.

**Article 42:** Each journal shall have an accountable editor-in-chief effectively supervising its contents and assuming responsibility before the Sultanate and other parties for any published item.

**Article 43:** The editor-in-chief must have the following qualifications:

- 1- To be an Omani citizen.
- 2- Aged not less than 25 years.
- 3- " To be holder of appropriate study qualifications or to have regularly practised the profession of journalism for at least five years.
- 4- To be fully competent and of good reputation.
- 5- Not to have been convicted or awarded any penalty for felonies relating to breach of honor, trust or honesty unless rehabilitated or granted pardon by the competent authority.

**Article 44:** Any press establishment wishing to publish a journal shall apply for license at the Publication and Press Department, Ministry of Information. The application shall be signed by the legal representative of the press establishment, and a receipt shall be given to the depositor upon reception of the application. The application shall be written down (entered) on the prescribed form designed by the Publication and Press Department for this purpose. The same procedures shall be followed if the same establishment wishes to publish a new journal.

**Article 45:** The executive regulation of this law shall determine the information that the application for license should contain and the procedures to be followed in case any change occurs to such data.

**Article 46:** The authorization shall be reported to the legal representative of the Press Establishment which owns the journal through an official notification processed within “three months” of the date of application.

**Article 47:** In case a decision is made to turn down an applicant’s request to establish a journal, the party concerned (prejudiced party) may submit a petition to the Publications and Publishing Committee. The decision of the Committee shall be final after being approved by the Minister of Information.

**Article 48:** If the journal is not issued after 6 months from the date of license or if it fails to appear for a period of 6 consecutive months without a reasonable excuse, then the Publications and Publishing Committee may decide to cancel the license. The prejudiced party may submit a petition against this decision to the Minister of Information within 30 days from the date of being notified of the decision on license cancellation.

**Article 49:** Approval to issue license for a journal shall be deemed an exclusive authorization for the particular press establishment for which the license has been issued. Ownership of this license shall by no means be transferred, unless such transfer is approved by the Ministry of Information.

**Article 50:** Once any issue of the journal or the supplement of the journal in question is circulated, five copies of the same shall be delivered to the competent authority at the Ministry of Information against a receipt of acknowledgement. If the journal is published in different editions, then the same number of required 5 copies shall be delivered at the Ministry per number of separate editions.

**Article 51:** The journal may not be offered for circulation unless it contains the name of the chairman of the board of directors of the press establishment, the name of the editor-in-chief, the name of the printing press where the journal is printed, the unit price of each copy and the subscription price in an explicit way in the first or last page of each copy.

**Article 52:** News agencies which provide press establishments with news, pictures, drawings and all press materials shall be considered as journals and subject to the provisions of the

present chapter, and so shall any agencies that transfer and distribute cuttings of press publications to applicants/subscribers/clients who ask for them.

**Article 53:** For license to be granted to publishing houses and advertising agencies for working in Sultanate of Oman, it is a condition that these press houses and agencies shall be in the form of limited liability companies, partnerships, sleeping partners or individual traders. These press establishments shall by no means be sold, transferred or disposed of in any manner except after the approval of the Ministry of Information. The setting up of such establishments/companies and their systems of functioning shall be subject to the provisions of the Commercial Companies Law No 4/74 (and its amendments) where this law is applicable, but without prejudice to the provisions of this law.

It is also a condition that the capital of a publishing house or advertising agency shall be not less than RO 100,000. In cases not stated in this Article (53), the provisions of Chapter (2) and Chapter (5) of this law shall apply.

**Article 54:** By virtue of a decision to be issued by the Minister of Information, it is permissible to exempt newspapers and publications issued by clubs and cooperative societies from all or part of the conditions stipulated in the present chapter upon the request of the Government authorities in charge of such clubs and associations.

**Article 55:** Anyone who breaches the provisions of the present chapter shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years or by a fine of not exceeding RO 2,000 (Two Thousand Omani Riyals) or by both penalties.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Reply and Correction**

**Article 56:** Upon the request of the parties concerned, the editor-in-chief in charge has to publish a corrigendum in the next immediate issue of the paper and in the same space where a mistake occurs in a previously published statement/report or part of the story demanded to be corrected. The correction shall be made free of charge provided the republished story does not exceed double the size of the original story or news. If it does, then the paper has a right to demand—prior to republishing—payment against the additional section at the same rate as the prescribed advertising tariff.

**Article 57:** It is possible to refrain from publishing a corrigendum in the following cases:

- 1- If such correction claim reaches the journal after 14 days in case the legal claimant resides in the Sultanate or after 60 days if he/she resides abroad. This condition applies in the case of daily newspapers. In the case of magazines and non-daily newspapers, the correction claim period becomes one month in if the claimant resides in the Sultanate or 60 days if he/she resides abroad.
- 2- If the journal has already corrected the facts in the same meaning for the same reports, instances or statements covered in the article to be corrected.
- 3- If the correction is written in a language other than the language of the original article or the news needed for correction.

**Article 58:** The journal must refrain from publishing a correction if the contents thereof are in contradiction of the provisions of this law or any of its articles.

**Article 59:** Anyone who breaches the provisions of the above-mentioned articles shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years and by a fine not exceeding RO 1,000 (One Thousand Omani Riyals) or by any one of these two penalties. The journal shall undertake to publish the corrigendum in the format presented by the party concerned.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **The journalist**

Article 60: No editor or writer may work for any journal unless he obtains a license to practise the profession from the Publications and Publishing Committee. The owners of newspapers and the chairmen of boards of directors of press establishments and news agencies shall refrain from permanently or temporarily appointing editors or writers before such editors/writers obtain this license.

**Article 61:** For an Omani journalist to obtain license to work for any journal, he/she shall meet the following conditions:

- 1- To be aged 21 years.

- 2- To be holder of an appropriate study qualifications or to have regularly practised the profession for at least two years.
- 3- Not to have been convicted in any crime of misdemeanor or dishonesty unless rehabilitated or granted pardon by the competent authorities.
- 4- To have a record of good conduct and good reputation.
- 5- Not to be recruited by any foreign country or occupant of a public post.

**Article 62:** In addition to the provisions of article (61), for a non-Omani journalist to obtain the license for practising journalism in the Sultanate of Oman, he/she should meet the following conditions:

- 1- To be holder of a journalism card issued by his country of origin or by the country to which the journal which he represents belongs.
- 2- To be holder of a legal work permit from the competent authorities.
- 3- To be holder of an appropriate study qualification and to have practised the profession of journalism for at least five years.

**Article 63:** Correspondents/reporters of foreign newspapers and news agencies may not assume their profession in the Sultanate until they have obtained the relevant license from the Publications and Publishing Department. Once these foreign journalists obtain the license, the authorities concerned have to facilitate their access to relevant information to enable them to carry out their tasks. While carrying out their tasks in Oman, the foreign journalists have to respect the sovereignty of the country, the professional ethics and the laws and the regulations in force. Such correspondents/reporters are not allowed to send or publish any false or prejudiced news about the Sultanate in foreign newspapers and publications.

**Article 64:** Omani journalists shall not work for any non-Omani newspapers, agencies or media inside the Sultanate abroad until they have obtained a license to this effect from the Publication and Press Department.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

Publications and Publishing Committee

**Article 65:** A committee named the Publications and Publishing Committee shall be in charge of press and publication affairs in Sultanate of Oman. This panel shall be composed of the following

Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information

**As Chairman**

Director General of Information at the Ministry of Information

**As Member**

Head of Media Affairs and Studies at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**As Member**

Director General of Culture at the Ministry of Heritage and Culture

**As Member**

Director General of Islamic Affairs at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs

**As Member**

A representative of the Royal Office

**As Member**

The Director of the Publications and Publishing Department at the Ministry of Information shall act as Secretary of Committee.

**Article 66:** In addition to the specializations stated in this law, the Committee shall be in charge of the following tasks:

1- Any matters related to the journalists or to the protection of journalism practice or to securing journalist rights, ensuring that journalists perform their duties and taking action against them when they breach the obligations stipulated in this law or the ethics of journalism. In this respect, the Committee shall have the authority to take decisions and impose suitable penalties on offenders in line with the provisions of this law after summoning them and hearing their

statements. The decisions taken by the committee shall not be enforced until such a time that they are ratified by the Minister of Information.

2- Devising a method for coordination among different press establishments and between these establishments and the other specialized institutions in the field of journalism with a view to achieving integration among the state's media institutions.

3- Undertaking all measures to overcome any obstacles facing press establishments with the purpose of promoting their standards of technical and professional performance so that they might achieve their *raison d'être* or the purpose of their foundation.

**Article 67:** The executive regulations of this law shall organize any procedures related to the Publications and Publishing Committee's meetings, the formation of its specialized committees and any other organizational matters to ensure good performance of its missions.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **Transitional and Concluding Rules**

**Article 68:** Publications that are currently not published by existing press establishments are considered validly existing. The owners of these publications or those who are responsible for their management have to submit applications to the Publications and Publishing Department to reaffirm their status in accordance with the provisions of this law.

Article 69: Printing houses, press houses, libra

ries, news agencies and advertising agencies set up before the date of this law are considered validly existing. Their owners may present applications, supported by relevant documents and statements, to the Publications and Publishing Department for confirming their status in accordance with this law.

**Article 70:** Journalists and correspondents working in the Sultanate for newspapers and news agencies must submit to the Publications and Publishing Department applications for license to practice the profession within 90 days from the date of enforcement of this law. The applications should be substantiated by documents and information to reaffirm the journalists' status. The decision of the Department in this regard shall be final after being ratified by the Minister of Information.

**Article 71:** Employees of the competent department at the Ministry of Information who are duly authorized by virtue of a decision issued by the Minister shall have the capacity of legal inspection (officers) in all that relates to the implementation of provisions of this law and the documentation of any breach of its regulations or its executive decisions.