



SMEX
Social Media Exchange
تبادل الإعلام الإجتماعي



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Regional Beirut Workshop Agrees to Cooperate on Right to Information

A regional workshop on the right to information held in Beirut from 8-9 June 2017, bringing together participants from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen, and hosted by Social Media Exchange, the Centre for Law and Democracy and International Media Support, has agreed to create a regional network of right to information activists. This commitment was contained in a Workshop Statement adopted by participants.

“The workshop provided an excellent opportunity for activists to discuss challenges with moving forward on the right to information in the region”, said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *“It is very encouraging that it managed to agree a framework for ongoing regional discussions and consultations on this important issue.”*

The Statement highlighted the human rights status of the right to information, as well as the fact that only five Arab countries have so far adopted right to information laws and that even in these countries implementation has generally faced headwinds. It called on States to ensure that a strong legal framework for the right to information was in place and then to engage in robust implementation of that framework.

“The commitment that we witnessed in Beirut to promote the right to information and to make it a reality by engaging in collaborative work demonstrates the high value of regional exchanges,” said Virginie Jouan, IMS Sub-Regional Head for Maghreb. *“IMS will remain a partner in this participatory process led by rights defenders from the MENA region.”*

Importantly, the Statement also included a general commitment by civil society participants to continue to work together to promote the right to information. As part of that, participants specifically committed to, “creating a regional network of civil society and other advocates for the right to information to share ideas and experiences and to promote intra-regional cooperation.”

“The workshop couldn't have come at a better time for Lebanon, as we have a new access to information law”, said Mohamad Najem, Co-director, SMEX. *“The Statement gives us ready-to-tailor messages about the benefits of the right to information and a kind of model framework that we can use to both test the law and monitor implementation.”*

The Statement is available in Arabic and English at: www.law-democracy.org/live/regional-beirut-workshop-agrees-to-cooperate-on-right-to-information/.

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