



Bureau of Experts at the Council of Ministers
Official Translation Department

Law of Audiovisual Media

Royal Decree No. M/33
December 13, 2017

Translation of Saudi Laws

NOTES:

1. This translation is provided for guidance. The governing text is the Arabic text.
2. The translation of Saudi laws takes the following into consideration:
 - Words used in the singular form include the plural and vice versa.
 - Words used in the masculine form include the feminine.
 - Words used in the present tense include the present as well as the future.
 - The word “person” or “persons” and their related pronouns (he, his, him, they, their, them, and who) refer to a natural and legal person.
3. Amendments to this Law are provided in the Appendix.



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Law of Audiovisual Media

Article 1: Definitions

In this Law, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings assigned thereto, unless the context requires otherwise:

1. **Law:** Law of Audiovisual Media.
2. **Regulations:** Implementing Regulations of the Law.
3. **Ministry:** Ministry of Culture and Information.
4. **Minister:** Minister of Culture and Information.
5. **Commission:** General Commission for Audiovisual Media.
6. **President:** President of the Commission.
7. **Board:** Board of Directors of the Commission.
8. **Media Content:** Audio and/or visual material.
9. **Broadcasting:** Transmitting receivable media content via wired or wireless signals.
10. **Rebroadcasting:** Rebroadcasting media content without changes.
11. **Audiovisual Media:** The process of broadcasting, rebroadcasting, producing for broadcasting, distributing, or selling media content to reach the public, excluding what is deemed private communication.
12. **Licensee:** The holder of a license from the Commission to engage in an audio or visual media activity, in accordance with the provisions of the Law and the Regulations.
13. **Broadcasting License:** Building and operating a broadcasting station pursuant to a contract or an agreement that governs the relationship between the Commission and the licensee.
14. **Broadcasting Network:** The infrastructure of radio or television broadcasting which consists of an integrated system of towers, transmitters, rebroadcasting stations, connectors, antennas, and their accessories.
15. **Preliminary Committee:** The Preliminary Committee formed under the Law of Printed Materials and Publication.
16. **Appeal Committee:** The Appeal Committee formed under the Law of Printed Materials and Publication.

Article 2

This Law aims at regulating and developing the audiovisual media activity in the Kingdom, fostering an appropriate investment environment therefor, and ensuring that its content is aligned with the Kingdom's Media Policy.

Article 3

Before engaging in any audiovisual media activity, a license must be obtained in accordance with this Law and as specified in the Regulations.



Article 4

Individuals working in the field of audiovisual media shall be subject to this Law and the Regulations, and to the professional standards set by the Commission for workers in this field.

Article 5

Any person who engages in an activity or profession in the field of audiovisual media must abide by the controls of media content, especially the following:

1. Complying with the Kingdom's Media Policy.
2. Refraining from slandering, insulting, or blasphemy against Allah, the angels, the Holy Qur'an, the prophets, or the wives or companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and from any act that undermines the fundamentals of Sharia.
3. Refraining from offending the King or the Crown Prince.
4. Refraining from any act that would incite strife, division, and hatred among citizens, promote violence, or threaten societal peace.
5. Protecting intellectual property rights.
6. Respecting individuals as human beings.
7. Refraining from any act that would undermine the Kingdom's relations with Arab, Islamic, or friendly countries.
8. Refraining from any act that would incite terrorism or threaten national or international peace.
9. Refraining from broadcasting or promoting advertising materials relating to medicines, nutritional supplements, or investment materials that are not licensed by the competent agencies.
10. Refraining from broadcasting any media content that contains false information not based on facts and reliable information, or that violates the privacy of individuals.
11. Respecting freedom of expression and opinion in a manner that does not conflict with relevant laws and controls as well as the provisions of this Law.
12. Refraining from undermining public order, national security, and the dictates of public interest.
13. Refraining from displaying media content that violates public decency, includes nudity and indecent clothing, arouses sexual desires, or uses profane language.
14. All female anchors working in television stations licensed in the Kingdom shall wear modest attire and maintain a modest appearance. The Regulations shall determine the specifications of the attire and the degree of such modesty in accordance with Sharia and prevailing customs relating to women's attire in the Kingdom.
15. Refraining from promoting or normalizing the use of drugs, psychotropic substances, alcohol, tobacco, or any products thereof.
16. Maintaining a balance between advertising time and media content in a manner that does not negatively affect the quality of the viewing and listening experience.
17. Any other control approved by the Board.



Article 6

The licensee shall, in accordance with the license type, undertake the following:

1. Comply with the terms of the license and the type of media content specified for him.
2. Adhere to the frequencies designated for broadcasting and reception and to the geographical coverage range specified for him, in accordance with the technical procedures and standards for the use of frequencies.
3. Maintain a complete record of all materials broadcast during the last 90 days, and provide the Commission upon request with any of such materials for review within the time period specified in its request.
4. Provide the competent agencies with the assistance necessary to carry out their duties.
5. Pay the license fee when due.
6. Comply with the approved technical specifications for broadcasting and rebroadcasting devices and for receivers.
7. Provide the Commission with any statement or information requested thereby relating to broadcasting, rebroadcasting, production, or distribution.
8. Adhere to the measures approved by the Commission in emergency cases and disasters.
9. Prioritize national human and material resources when available, in accordance with relevant laws and the regulations approved by the Commission in this regard.
10. Participate in developing the national industries relating to audiovisual media production, in accordance with the Regulations.
11. Comply with the decisions issued by the Commission.

Article 7

Media broadcasting licenses shall be issued, renewed, amended, suspended, and revoked upon the approval of the Council of Ministers based on a recommendation from the Commission. The Regulations shall specify relevant conditions and controls.

Article 8

Subject to Article 7 of this Law, the Commission shall have the power to grant, amend, suspend, revoke, or renew the licenses of audiovisual media activities. The Regulations shall specify the types of licenses and the criteria, conditions, and procedures for each type.

Article 9

It shall be prohibited to sell the license or assign it, in whole or in part or to merge with third parties inside or outside the Kingdom without the approval of the issuing agency, subject to the controls and procedures specified in the Regulations.

Article 10

The Board shall set the rules for determining the fees for the issuance of licenses and for the services rendered by the Commission under this Law and the Regulations as well as the mechanism for collecting such fees.



Article 11

1. Before granting a broadcasting license in which frequencies are used, in accordance with the provisions of this Law and the Regulations, the requirements of the Communications and Information Technology Commission relating to the allocation and licensing of frequencies must be satisfied, in accordance with the Telecommunications Law.
2. The Commission shall, in coordination with the Communications and Information Technology Commission in accordance with its statutory functions, update the technical specifications for audiovisual media broadcasting devices, and issue approvals for importing and releasing such devices accordingly.

Article 12

1. The Commission shall protect the rights of beneficiaries and licensees, in accordance with controls set by the Regulations.
2. The Commission shall settle disputes between licensees or between licensees and beneficiaries. The Regulations shall specify the procedures for settling such disputes, unless one of the parties to the dispute is a telecommunications service provider; in such case, the dispute shall be settled by the Communications and Information Technology Commission in accordance with the Telecommunications Law.

Article 13

A licensee in the field of broadcasting or rebroadcasting shall provide the Commission, upon request, with any media content that has not yet been released in order to obtain the Commission's approval before such content is broadcast or rebroadcast. The Regulations shall specify the relevant procedures and conditions.

Article 14

1. Subject to the provisions of the Competition Law, a licensee may not take any action that would negatively affect the market of broadcasting, rebroadcasting, or audiovisual media production, or any other related matter. The Regulations shall specify the relevant controls.
2. The broadcasting of media content related to events of a national nature as determined by the Commission may not be restricted, subject to the rules and procedures set forth in the Regulations.

Article 15

The Commission shall take the necessary legal procedures regarding media content in violation of relevant controls that is broadcast by foreign channels not licensed by the Commission and received inside the Kingdom, in accordance with the Regulations.

Article 16

Employees appointed by a decision of the President shall be in charge of detecting and recording violations of the provisions of this Law and the Regulations; such employees shall have the capacity of preliminary investigation officers.



Article 17

1. Without prejudice to any harsher penalty provided for in any other law, any person who violates the provisions of this Law or the Regulations shall be subject to one or more of the following penalties:
 - a) A fine not exceeding ten million riyals.
 - b) Suspension from engaging in the profession for a period not exceeding six months.
 - c) Revocation of the license.
2. The collection of the fine shall be subject to expedited enforcement, and the Commission may retrieve any proceeds obtained by the violator as a result of the violation.
3. The fine imposed pursuant to a judgment or decision shall be doubled if the violation is repeated, continues, or is not rectified within the time period determined by the Commission.

Article 18

Subject to the powers of the Preliminary Committee referred to in Article 19 of this Law, the Commission shall have the following powers:

1. Imposing the fine provided for in Article 17(1)(a) of this Law for violations of the provisions of this Law and the Regulations, provided that the amount of such fine does not exceed one million riyals. The Regulations shall specify the violations warranting such fine and relevant procedures and controls. An appeal against the decision issued by the Commission may be filed with the Preliminary Committee referred to in Article 19 of this Law within 60 days from the date the violator is notified of the decision.
2. Discontinuing the broadcast or suspending the license as a precautionary measure, as dictated by public interest, for a period not exceeding 60 days in the event of any violation of this Law or the Regulations. The affected party may file an appeal with the Appeal Committee within 15 days of receiving the notification. The Committee shall decide on the appeal within a period not exceeding 15 days from the filing date.
3. Seizing the devices, equipment, and tools subject of the violation during detection pending the issuance of a decision thereon, in accordance with applicable statutory procedures.

Article 19

1. Except for matters falling within the jurisdiction of the Commission, the Preliminary Committee shall consider violations of the provisions of this Law and impose the penalties provided herein.
2. The Preliminary Committee shall undertake the following:
 - a) Consider cases of Saudi citizens who violate the provisions of this Law abroad, and impose the appropriate penalty from among the penalties provided for in Article 17 of this Law.
 - b) Review appeals submitted by the concerned parties against the Commission's decisions referred to in Article 18(1) of this Law.
3. The Preliminary Committee may include in its final penalty decision a provision requiring the publication of the decision at the expense of the violator in three local newspapers, at least one of which is published in the area of his residence. If no newspaper is published in the area of his residence, then in a newspaper published in the nearest area.



Article 20

The Appeal Committee shall consider the following:

1. Appeals submitted by the concerned parties against the decisions of the Preliminary Committee referred to in Article 19 of this Law.
2. Decisions made by the Commission to discontinue broadcasting or suspend a license as a precautionary measure, in accordance with Article 18(2) of this Law.

Decisions of the Committee shall be passed by the majority of its members, and shall be final and non-appealable before any other entity.

Article 21

In the event of the revocation, suspension, or non-renewal of a broadcasting or rebroadcasting license, the Commission shall take the measures necessary to protect the interests and rights of employees in accordance with the rules and procedures specified in the Regulations.

Article 22

All radio and television channels affiliated with the Saudi Broadcasting Authority, at the time this Law enters into force, shall be deemed licensed. Such channels shall be subject to the provisions of this Law and the Regulations.

Article 23

The Minister shall, upon a proposal by the Board, issue the Regulations within 90 days from the date this Law enters into force. The Regulations shall be published in the Official Gazette. The Minister shall also issue the decisions necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this Law.

Article 24

This Law shall enter into force 90 days following the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

Article 25

This Law shall repeal any provisions conflicting therewith.



Appendix

Amendments

March 5, 2019 (Jumada II 28, 1440H)

Council of Ministers Resolution No. 374 provides for the following:

- Replacing the phrase "Minister of Culture and Information" with the phrase "Minister of Media" and replacing the phrase "Ministry of Culture and Information" with the phrase "Ministry of Media" wherever mentioned in this Law.