

## **RASED for Parliamentary Monitoring Program First Weekly Report on the Performance of the Parliament During the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session November 22, 2015**

- RASED calls for the House of Representatives to use disciplinary action to ensure compliance with its rules regarding attendance of sessions.
- RASED calls for the House to revise the provisions of its internal bylaws dealing with election of the House's Permanent Committee.
- RASED calls for the Permanent Committee to be formed according to high standards in keeping with the importance of its work.

During the first week of the Parliament's Third Ordinary Session, the House of Representatives began election of the House's Permanent Office in response to His Majesty's Speech from the Throne. Elections for the Permanent Office, which is composed of a chair, two vice chairs, and several members, began during the first sittings of the House that took place last Sunday. RASED believes it is necessary for the Parliament to follow best practices in electing this office, and that it adheres to the provisions of the internal bylaws that deal with this issue including Article 13, Paragraph D, and Section 6 entitled "Procedures for Elections in the House".

RASED also calls upon the House of Representatives to abide by best practices and implement disciplinary measures to deter violations of secrecy in its internal elections. The Legal Committee of the House, specifically, should help the House revise its internal bylaws and procedures to create clear disciplinary provisions to help prevent any violations of electoral secrecy.

During the first week of the House's work, members of parliament engaged in a great number of discussions about formation of the Permanent Office and the 20 permanent parliamentary committees. Unfortunately, MPs attempted to reach consensus about the distribution of members in committees in informal agreements between blocs and members rather than through the formal elections system as prescribed by Article 61 of the internal bylaws. The first paragraph of Article 61 states that "Permanent committees should be comprised of 511- members, and its formation should be according to the decision of the Executive Office on the basis of proportional representation of the blocs." This provision requires that the Executive Office be formed and should determine the representation of the blocs, but until now, the Executive Office-which is supposed to be comprised of "members of the Permanent Office and the heads of every bloc and representatives of independent MPs"-has not yet been formed.

There's no doubt that the Parliament's experience so far forming the committees is not adequate or commensurate with the high level of importance that committees play in the parliamentary process, given that they are the primary places where legislation is formed.

With respect to the problem of MP absences from sessions, RASED calls for the House to publish the names of MPs who are absent from sessions without excuse or prior permission. RASED also calls on the House to resolve any issues that would negatively affect attendance at sessions and adherence to the Parliament's legal quota. The House should enforce penalties and disciplinary action to make sure that MPs who break the rules-including those who are absent from sittings-face consequences.

RASED also calls for the House to attend to its oversight work and to give it due priority. To do this, the House will need to specify mechanisms for fulfilling its oversight role in a broader way than simply addressing the oversight points that have been addressed in the Parliament's agenda. For example, RASED calls for there to be a specific system of specifying how many MPs will be able to speak on any given oversight issue to ensure that MPs from different groups can be fairly represented.

It's worth noting that there are a number of strategic challenges that face the House during this session. One of the most important is supporting parliamentary transparency and openness to the media and to Jordanian society by adhering to policies of openness and transparency in the flow of information from Parliament to the public.