



To Whom It May Concern:

Please find the Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism's (ARIJ) application for the 2017 Global Investigative Journalism Conference.

We propose that the conference be held in Amman, Jordan in 2017. This application consists of a proposal answering the questions outlined on the website, in addition to a proposed budget.

I welcome any comments or questions that you may have.

We look forward to welcoming you in Amman!

Sincerely,

Rana Sabbagh  
Executive Director  
ARIJ



# “Arab Media Under Siege”

## Call for Proposals for GIJC 17

Presented by ARIJ: Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism

Amman - Jordan

July 2015

### Host organization Experience

Since its creation in 2006, Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) has shown a steady track record in promoting and sustaining a culture of investigative reporting among journalists and editors in the Arab world.

ARIJ is a regional pioneering organization that aims to contribute to a more accountable society in the Arab Region through improving the standards of investigative journalism to serve as a platform for transparency, accountability and a diversity of opinion in the Arab world.

For a decade, ARIJ has been the leading media support network in the region and has become the focal point for developing training in investigative reporting, particularly in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and the Palestinian Territories. ARIJ is working with individual journalists, freelancers and university professors.

To achieve the overall aims, ARIJ has to fulfill the following objectives:

1. **Improving the professional capacity** of investigative journalism to boost media freedom in the Arab World. The anticipated outcome is to have journalists in the Arab world capable of holding wrongdoers accountable for the benefit of the public through well-researched investigations.
2. **Institutionalizing investigative journalism** through cooperation with relevant stakeholders. The expected outcome is to introduce a culture of excellence in investigative journalism that is sustained in radio, TV, print and online media across the Arab World.
3. **Introducing new platforms** for researching and distributing novel investigative journalism models across the Arab world. The final outcome will be journalists who are able to access and manage data at faster pace and communicate via a wider range of media tools.

**Fundraising strategy, including the host organization’s ability to find funding and sponsorships. (The average cost of a GIJC is about US\$500,000.)**

ARIJ has secured full funding for 8 annual regional conferences. ARIJ's approach is to fund the 2017 GIJC through a consortium of (regional and international) donors in order to support the conference. Additionally, private sector sponsorships, from Jordan and across the region, as well as in kind contributions will be sought. ARIJ will market the global conference to Gulf-based media as a chance to develop the professional capacity of journalists/editors who will benefit from networking and training workshops. ARIJ will also approach telecommunication companies to ask them to sponsor certain segments of the program, especially the gala dinner for the prize, a night of entertainment and a welcome reception.

ARIJ, together with SKUP and GIJN secretariat, will approach international funders to cover the cost of bringing in at least 100 investigative journalists from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America. ARIJ's traditional donors are: DANIDA, SIDA, OSF and the Norwegian Foreign Ministry.

### **Ability of the host organization to obtain local support**

Local partners support

The Organization obtains support on 3 different levels:

1. Local institutional support: ARIJ has strong partnerships with independent media organizations, platforms and the private sector. It has also access to state run media outlets. Partners include: the Official Jordan TV, Jordan Media Institute (JMI), Al Balad Radio, the state owned Al Rai Newspaper and Jordan Times, the Jordan Diplomatic Institute, Al Ghad Newspaper, 7iber.com and the National News Agency Petra. In addition to private sector sponsors such as private banks, transport and telecommunication companies.
2. Funding support: Through bi- lateral donors, embassies and multilateral and international cooperation agencies donors in Jordan and the MENA region.
3. Regional support: a wide outreach of partner media outlets, journalists and reporters provide contacts, advice and technical support for ARIJ.

### **Host organization's experience at organizing conferences**

ARIJ has a excellent track record in organizing conferences and events

As of 2008, ARIJ has been organizing an annual regional conference in the Jordanian capital, Amman - hosting at least 250 journalists from the Arab region and 40 media trainers from around the globe. The conference aims at facilitating knowledge sharing in the media sector - through a platform where international and regional journalists and editors can share their knowledge and experience to improve the standards of Investigative Journalism on the country level.

More than 1400 participants have attended the conference over the last 5 years, with an average attendance of 250-300 per conference. Moreover, ARIJ has managed, in 2012 to organize the conference in one of the partners' countries i.e. Egypt. Every annual conference invites panelists, speakers and reporters from the region and the world. As well as, organizing thematic and technical training sessions for journalists and reporters.

Through our experience and geographic position, ARIJ is proposing to host the 2017 GIJC for the first time in the MENA region in Amman, Jordan.

ARIJ's annual forum provides journalists with a major opportunity to learn from their colleagues, gain new skills from experienced practitioners and to renew their commitment to this challenging profession. As investigative reporting is still fairly new in the region, it needs more support to enable best practices to take root and develop. A reporter from one of ARIJ's partner investigative reporting units in Egypt wrote: *"Since I started working with ARIJ we have learnt a lot. Now I am producing one or two investigations every year. This meeting gives me a chance to share my experience with others."*

The Forum also builds a community of IJ practitioners, as noted by former Reuters newsman and Al Jazeera programs commissioner Paul Eedle, attending an IJ Forum for the first time in 2014: *"At a time when all the windows are closing around the region, the existence of ARIJ as a family that people can feel they belong to, that gives them moral support in their isolation and a way to get their stories out, is already more important than a year ago. It will be more important in the year to come. It is not formal, and the family feeling is what keeps people going."*

"People like Arij. The groups like Arij. The people that put these (conferences) together are invaluable. Rana Sabbagh is invaluable because she's so good at organizing. You need a collection. You need to be together. You have to be solid together. Because you are alone. Particularly in the Middle East, the only friends you have." - Seymour Hersh, during ARIJ's 2014 annual conference

In participant evaluations of the 2014 IJ Forum ("Arab Media: The Battle for Independence") average ratings on aspects of the conference were recorded (out of maximum/best 5.0 points):

- Were you inspired or re-motivated to continue your work in IJ? 4.45
- Will you change your work habits or take new actions as a result? 4.30
- Did speakers make presentations meaningful to your work? 4.05
- Did you gain new skills or information to improve your work? 4.28
- Would you recommend others to attend in future? 4.56

## **Host experience in management**

During the past years, ARIJ has internally managed its annual conference. It has the capacity to oversee the operational aspect of organizing a regional/ international conference and the technical editorial team to manage its content. A management task force plans all the tasks related to the organization and logistics of the annual conference. It identifies what aspects need to be outsourced. Meanwhile, the editorial team works on the content, themes and agenda of the event in collaboration with ARIJ network. Having both expertises is an asset for ARIJ.

ARIJ is registered as a Jordanian LLC with a non-binding founding MoU laying out the fundamental guidance on its nonprofit goals and governance. As confirmed in the recent external review of ARIJ, at its inception, this was the most desirable option since it enabled ARIJ to operate with minimum susceptibility to interference or control.

A new Board of Directors should be in place by December 2015. In any case, three members will be rotating off the board during the program period and will be replaced. Four members have an option to extend for another three years. We strive to induct new board members with managerial, financial and fund raising skills as well as media savvy and to clarify board policies, roles and responsibilities as a whole during 2015. See Annex 1 for a list of current ARIJ board members and their terms.

## **Advantages of holding the GIJC in the suggested city, including environment, transportation, logistics, security, visas, and cost.**

Amman is an excellent city to host the GIJC forum for the first time in the Arab world. Investigative Journalism is thriving in the Arab world but faces numerous challenges. Hosting an international conference would provide support to journalists working on the ground and open up new opportunities for collaboration during an especially difficult time for media in the Arab world. It will be a source of inspiration for many Arab journalists to form their own network as happened in the Ukraine and several East European countries when Kiev hosted the 2011 GIJC.

The Forum will provide regional and international networking opportunities to allow journalists and media practitioners to expand their contacts and explore opportunities for collaboration. There is currently little cross-border collaboration on investigative reports and expanding contacts is vital to promote the expansion of IJ—and to evade national-level censorship. Arab governments, all with a record of fighting independent media and free speech, will realise that Arab investigative journalists are now part of a global movement and that they are not left alone to fight for “accountability journalism”.

As of 2011, the MENA region has been witnessing an ongoing political transition. As the youngest population in the world, a new generation of youth is demanding social justice and freedom. The media has been state controlled for decades. So as not to tackle issues of controversy or human rights. The emergence of the protest movement has brought to the forefront the need for credible journalism and reinstating the role of media as a watchdog.

In Jordan, Egypt, Yemen and other countries in the Arab world self- and government censorship is increasing. Many examples of journalists being pushed out of their media organizations, being arrested for Facebook posts and being taken to court for expressing their opinions. New terror laws in Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain and Tunisia have empowered governments to take action against journalists with vague definitions of a terrorist. These new legal measures present a grave danger to free speech in the Arab world generally, and to the personal safety of journalists specifically.

Despite the serious need for investigative journalism, there is constant challenge for journalists who choose to investigate issues related to the corruption, human rights and rule of law. Syria has been reported as the deadliest country in the region, while journalists and media platforms have been harassed and subject to legal sanctions in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia. Having the GIJC in the region provides high visibility for issues that confront investigative journalists and links them to their international counterparts.

### **Security and Safety in Jordan**

Security is something we take very seriously. We work in many countries where, unfortunately, violence against journalists is a common place.

Amman, Jordan is one of just a few places in the Arab world that you are able to safely walk in the street free of threats of violence. The police and security services work very closely to ensure the stability of Jordan and to protect geo-political interests. Jordan is a political and military ally of the USA and Israel. It is the “darling” of the west as an oasis of stability and moderation in a volatile region. With a track record of hosting international events in Jordan, obtaining visas for international and regional guests is relatively easy in terms of procedures. We have good relationships with the required authorities to coordinate visa and security arrangements. The location we’ve selected is in the heart of Amman and has the highest level of security. Due to worsening conditions in Yemen, Libya, Egypt and Syria, many of the international organisations are moving their staff to temporary offices in Jordan to oversee their base operations and are relocating conferences to Jordan.

Amman is also home to a brand new airport, Queen Alia International Airport, with daily flights to Europe, Asia, the United States and beyond. The national carrier, Royal Jordanian and numerous other companies including Turkish Airways, Air France, British Airways, EgyptAir, KLM and others fly in and out of Queen Alia International Airport every day.

Beyond Amman, there are many places for visitors to experience Jordan outside of its capital. The world famous Nabatean-build Petra in the south, large Roman ruin Jerash to the North and a dip in the salty waters of the Dead Sea will help make this conference memorable. While some areas of the world will be receiving cooler weather and rain, the weather in Amman will be moderate in October with average daily temperatures from mid to upper 20's C with full sunshine.

#### **Estimated budget for the conference.**

Please find the attachment.

#### **A description of the potential venue (hotel, conference center, university) for the conference.**

The Kempinski hotel is centrally located in the commercial/residential Shmeisani area in Amman, Jordan. A leafy neighborhood, the area offers restaurants, bars, cafes, shopping and all the services one could need within walking distance. The Kempinski's new convention center will open in early 2016 and will feature over 13,000 sq. meters of space including a ballroom that can seat up to 1600 guests. Multiple floors provide spaces for meetings and trainings and all the facilities required to handle a large event. The Kempinski hotel also has a smaller ballroom (500 persons) and at least 10 training rooms, each with a capacity for 50 guests.

The latest technology and audio-visual equipment is built in to ensure a successful event. The complex includes a restaurant, bar, lounge and reception areas.

Jordan has high-speed internet connections, and 4G mobile phone service in all areas of Amman and in many urban areas as well. A reliable telecommunications network ensures that connections are rarely disrupted. Finally, Jordan also has excellent electricity supply with regular and continuous service.

#### **Suggested focus and structure of conference panels, workshops, and other events.**

ARIJ will time its 10th annual conference with the GIJN as happened in Rio de Janeiro in 2013, when the Brazilian Association for Investigative Reporters and the

Latin American Network for Investigative Journalists organised their separate conferences under GIJN, to benefit from international trainers and journalists. ARIJ will finalise the agenda for the 10th annual forum, and will work with GIJN on the final agenda for the global conference.