

REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA

TUNISIAN RADIO



ELECTORAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE TUNISIAN RADIO 2014



For programs, electronic portal and magazine

2014

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Electoral Code of Conduct for the Tunisian Radio

2014

I. Preface:

During the electoral period, citizens need effective and reliable media in order to understand the issues at stake and the key actors in the society and comprehensively examine the electoral process and the constitutional institutions associated with it, as well as presenting a clear picture of the candidates for the elections. This would allow them to determine their attitudes and, both carefully and insightfully, adjust their choices.

The public's trust in the media is a key issue, and their aspirations and expectations from it in the electoral periods are numerous and varied. This holds the media responsible for providing trustworthy and detailed information that is also complete and balanced. These principles stimulate and regulate the Tunisian radio in an effort to reach the highest degree of integrity and excellence.

The Tunisian radio has been a forerunner in the issuance of an electoral code of conduct on the occasion of the 2011 national constituent assembly elections. It is now basing itself on that code of conduct and adding to it in order to ensure the highest degree of fairness and transparency on the occasion of legislative and presidential elections for 2014.

This code of conduct is a self-regulation method that encompasses a set of binding standards set automatically by the Tunisian radio. It includes a moral reference of four basic principles, which are independence, impartiality, Fairness and transparency. It also includes a number of operational mechanisms to perpetuate these principles, evoke them in the daily radio practice, and deal with the important electoral event experienced by citizens in Tunisia and abroad.

II. Basic principles

1. Independence

The Tunisian radio is a public institution independent of any private interest. Management, editors, producers, presenters, and other workers implicated in the content of the central and provincial radio stations as well as the website and magazine, take decisions without falling under the influence of political and economic pressure, and other external influences. Administrative and editorial decisions relevant to electoral affairs are taken with disregard to personal interests and tendencies, and all attempts to influence or buy disclosure of any party and in any form should be categorically rejected.

The employees concerned with the content of the Tunisian radio have a special status during the elections. Therefore, they are invited, under the editorial line of their institution, to be dedicated to independent radio work, and to interact freely with the developments. Consequently, topics should be presented and dealt with in the best professional way they see fit, for news, analyses, dialogues and critiques; according to the professional standards agreed upon and to the principles stated in this code of conduct, and in the framework of full respect for the decisions and recommendations of the legal bodies relevant to the electoral and media affairs.

On this basis, and when it comes to invite electoral candidates for interviews or Debates, the editorial board has to choose their guests after consulting with the concerned parties and lists. In case of conflict, the editorial board is the one to decide in a way that enlightens the public opinion. The media mediator of the Tunisian radio is in charge, during the electoral period, of the follow-up of such cases, and should present the necessary data to the various parties.

2. Neutrality

The Tunisian journalists, radio producers and hosts are committed to search for the truth. Therefore, they only broadcast verified information from trustworthy sources, taking into consideration all the necessary data to understand a certain issue, and, when in need, using the help of knowledgeable experts of electoral affairs who have the required proficiency and acclaimed integrity.

The Tunisian radio is to provide all electoral updates and to examine all electoral breaches, abuses and, if existent, crimes, thanks to the minute knowledge of the electoral legislations and texts. It is also invited to evoke the overall attitudes and opinions related to the electoral race, without favoring any party or ideology or interest group. Radio programs concerning the elections are formulated in a fair and neutral language. The impact of the subjective opinions of reporters, producers, hosts and other workers on the method of formulating questions or texts must be avoided. They should instead ask searching and relevant questions, without being aggressive. They should also show a balanced behavior with their guests so as not to overly criticize or flatter them. The respect of these principles and measures is verified in the various stages of the electoral period.

The employees, who are implicated in the content as well as the other employees, whether permanent or cooperative, are prohibited from taking any public stand on controversial political topics. This means that, during the election period, they have to refrain from declaring their opinions or positions for or against a party or a list or Candidate, and avoid what is contrary to the neutrality of the institution in the public meetings and personal blogs, as well as social networking sites, and other public and virtual areas of expression.

In order to avoid what could be perceived as bias or directing of the public opinion, the Tunisian radio refrains from broadcasting music or songs of political or religious nature include an invitation to vote for or against a party or a person or a list.

3. Equity

During its coverage of the elections, the Tunisian radio takes into consideration the electoral magnitude of the different parties and lists and takes action in order to make the timing of this coverage suitable for the electoral presence of the candidates.

The Tunisian radio bases its attempts to achieve equity, in things such presentation rates in the constituencies, on the objective data issued by Independent Electoral Commission. It also commits to the procedural controls and recommendations that this commission decides on during the elections in partnership with the High Independent Authority for Audiovisual Communication.

Taking into consideration the electoral weight of the candidates should not lead to discrimination between electoral lists or to marginalization of those with limited presence in the electoral race. The latter have the right to use the radio public broadcasting service to voice out their presence in the electoral scene, And in order to achieve electoral plurality of attitudes and opinions and programs.

The Tunisian radio, thanks to its various channels, tries to achieve equality between the candidates in terms of forms of media coverage as well as in the means and timing of broadcasting. It also deliberately carries out the necessary draws when needed to make the arrangements for the participation in the dialogue areas or to broadcast recorded segments; all of it in the presence of a representative of the Candidates and organizations concerned.

According to the requirements dictated by the electoral coverage in its national and regional angle, the Tunisian radio has the right to conduct itself as a multi-channel radio network with a variety of bearings. Through all of this, It is keen on informing its listeners and all those concerned with the electoral plans about its media plans in terms of production, programming and broadcasting.

4. Transparency

The Tunisian radio is committed to displaying the utmost transparency about its professional practices. Consequently, this code of conduct is placed at the disposal of the large public and of the political parties so that all those concerned with the electoral affairs can be knowledgeable of its rules, and to be able to monitor how well they are respected.

The Tunisian radio also commits to announce the various components of its media plan for the elections, and to promote them in different ways through different means, which paves the way to access, follow-up and observation.

The development of an organization of electoral self-monitoring, and the appointing of a media mediator for the elections, is evidence of the Tunisian radio's quest to provide practical mechanisms verify the extent of its commitment to the principles of independence, impartiality, fairness and transparency stated in this Code.

III. Self-regulation mechanisms

1. Self-monitoring and self-measuring systems

For the occasion of the legislative and presidential elections of 2014, the Tunisian radio has put in place systems of self-monitoring and self-measuring. It was also able, in early July, which coincides with the period before the official

launch of the electoral campaign, to test these systems and to get the proper training on how to use them and perfect certain elements.

Under this system, the various radio stations are in charge of monitoring the interventions of the electoral candidates in its news and daily entertainment programs. They are also in charge of measuring the interventions and adjusting their broadcast timing, and to incorporate all of it in schedules. These schedules are later collected on the central level in order to turn the content data into graphs.

In the light of the observations collected, the radio stations with defective performance are asked to adjust what is necessary to achieve balance and equity.

The electoral campaign period can be considered as the official launch of the self-monitoring system and the effective tool to scrutinize the level of success of the Tunisian radio in respecting the regulators of transparent and equitable media coverage and to control the election timing.

In the same context comes also the effective establishment of the media mediator plan for the elections.

2. Appointment of media mediator for the elections

In the beginning of August 2014, the Tunisian radio launched a media mediator plan to the election period for the ensemble of its central and regional radio channel, as well as for its electronic portal and magazine. It assigned it to one of its men who have the experience and proficiency in radio-related work. This position has been advertised to the ISIE and HAICA, as well as to the rest of the parties and organizations concerned with the elections, making sure to identify the ways to communicate with this mediator.

The attributions of the mediator are as follows:

- Coordination with those in charge of the election affairs and audio-visual affairs throughout the entire election period to secure media coverage requirements in accordance with the legal and moral controls in a way that achieves equal opportunities and maintains the dignity of the candidates and to not compromise the sanctity of their private lives and personal data , and to reject any invitation to hatred, violence, intolerance, and discrimination, which ensures full respect to the Tunisian radio and its employees.
- Receiving remarks from electoral parties and following up on the objections and complaints that could be aired on radio channels concerning the elections' coverage.
- Ensuring the appropriate and equitable adjustments in terms of straightening, auditing and securing the right to comment, and programming specific live or recorded interventions if there is proof of negligence or breach of certain rules of equality and balance.

The Tunisian radio media mediator works independently using his professional conscience, and aims to achieve the utmost speed and transparency in proposing the proper procedures to fit the occurring breaches.

The Tunisian radio will, in accordance with the principle of transparency, publish a report detailing the undertakings of this mediator.

3. Special status of the employees presenting themselves in the elections

In principle, participation in the elections conflicts with being part of the Tunisian radio, due to its identity as a public service broadcaster, and as part of the electoral process, protecting it and demanding reservation and professional secrecy, and achieving the highest degree of neutrality.

If one of the employees, reporter or presenter, permanent or cooperative, involved in the content presents themselves in the elections , then the administrative procedures related to this situation are immediately put into effect, which would result in the suspension of this employee from their duties.

The same applies to the employees who are not involved in the content of the radio, ranging from technicians to administrators, in order to achieve neutrality of the administration in the manner prescribed in the Basic Law of the elections and the referendum.

As part of the commitment to the ethical meanings set forth in this Code, those who work on content should not interview or introduce any candidate to whom they are related in order to avoid a conflict of interest. In order to avoid suspicions of bias, those in such situations should abandon doing such activities entrusted to them, and inform their direct superiors.

These ethical dimensions, which are meant to protect the Tunisian radio and concretize its neutrality comprehensively during the elections, apply to its employees and managers in different stations and professional units, both centrally and in the regions.

Even though political affiliation is a protected right for everyone, just as exercising electoral right is one of the facets of citizenship, belonging to a public radio service requires committing to certain behaviors which take into account

its particular status and safeguard its sanctity and avoid suspicions of bias and abuse and of tarnishing the electoral process and democratic construction.

IV. Special rules for the legislative and presidential election

The presidential elections in 2014 are considered to be a special national event in the history of the country because they are part of a new constitutional and legislative context. One of its most prominent features is the ratification of the January 27th 2014 constitution, the enactment of the Basic Law of the elections and the referendum on 26th May 2014 and the Constitutionalisation of the ISIE and the HAICA, as well as inviting Tunisian voters inside the country and abroad to elect new governing institutions with permissions and rules that are different, in many aspects, from the 2011 elections.

As a reaction to all of these updates and developments, the Tunisian radio has decided to include in its electoral code and media plan to cover the legislative and presidential elections new values and rules relating to voter and civic education. It has also decided to incorporate political debates in order to enlighten the listeners and commit to legal restraints in dealing with the polls.

1. Voter and Civic Education

Being a public service broadcaster, Tunisian Radio engages in producing and broadcasting sensitizing and simplified programs that will explain the electoral process to the public. These programs will focus on the importance of elections, and its mechanisms. It also paves the way for the citizen to participate voluntarily in it knowing the nature of the new constitutional institutions, their prerogatives and relationships with the political system.

In that context, the Tunisian Radio is allowed to broadcast external programs and promos produced by ISIE (the elections regulatory body) or civil society after the checking and the approval of the editor in chief as far the content is concerned.

Towards a better-educated voter and an informed civic sense, the Tunisian Radio doesn't hesitate to publish, recommend or upload related material on its website. This will grant the audience the chance to go back and benefit from getting informed about their rights and duties as voters focusing on women, young people and those with special needs.

Just the way it launched a planning of a pluralistic space of dialogue and debate that welcomes all the lists running for the legislative elections, Tunisian Radio will provide candidates the presidential with the same privilege.

2. Political debates

Tunisian Radio is taking the initiative of broadening the circle of political interaction on its waves through adopting a new and sensitive genre, which is political debates. This procedure comes within a policy that aims at introducing the new system of presidential to Tunisians, being one that may require a second round. It is also to introduce the prerogatives of the president according to the new constitution, to give equal opportunities to the candidates to employ the audio platform to convey their messages, and to allow voters to get to know the candidates and compare their manifestoes and stand points concerning regional and international matters.

The debates are based on the equality in terms of: the space in which the debate takes place, the equipment used, the speaking time. The debates are also based on transparency concerning the rules that govern the sessions including the date, the time, the number of participants, speaking time, and the themes. As far as Face-to-Face debates are concerned (in case of a second round), new rules

would be introduced concerning the style of argumentation, the moderation of the debate, the possibility of getting citizens to participate, and the number of moderators. All these aspects are to be shaped in a detailed document agreed on by the Tunisian Radio and the two candidates involved at the presence of officials of the HAICA and the ISIE.

If one of the two candidates in question refused the face to face, it is possible to have recourse, with the consent of everyone involved, to separate sessions governed by the same rules and criteria. The dates of the two separate sessions are to be drawn.

3. Opinion Polls

According to the articles 70 and 172 of the electoral law, Tunisian Radio abstains from publishing opinion polls that have direct and indirect relation to the legislative and presidential election of 2014. This goes back to the absence of a legal text that regulates this issue.

Tunisian Radio abstains from basing its content on opinion polls that are carried out abroad and doesn't carry out any polls or voting activities on the internet, or via telephone or other as a sign of respect to the legal framework.

Generally speaking, Tunisian Radio delivers its mission during the electoral period in harmony with its nature as a public service broadcaster open to all Tunisians being candidates or voters. In this sense, it couldn't allow the presence of any form of political advertising (free or paid) for any candidate or political party. The aim of this policy is to contribute to bring up a nation based on democratic pluralism and effective citizenship.



Tunisian Radio



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Tunisian Radio



Monitoring and measuring system

