



**United Arab Emirates**

**FEDERAL LAW No. 15 OF 1980 GOVERNING PUBLICATIONS AND PUBLISHING, 1980**

( Federal Law No. 15 of 1980)

(extracts)

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(Unofficial translation)

**Convention (No. 105)**

**Chapter One  
Definitions**

**Section 1**

**Chapter Two  
On publishing houses and publications**

**Section 2**

The owner of a publishing house and the person responsible for its management shall be required to fulfill the following requirements:

1. Be citizens of the country;
2. Be legally competent;
3. Have a good reputation & character;
4. Should not have been sentenced in a crime that is morally disparaging, or involving dishonest acts unless they have been cleared, or an amnesty has been issued in their regard from the competent authorities.

**Section 3**

No person who sets up a publishing house shall be allowed to do so unless he/she obtains a permit in accordance with the provisions of the law.

The request for the permit shall be submitted to the managerial board of the Department of Information, Publications and Publishing at the Ministry which shall include the following:

1. The name of the owner of the publishing house, title, nationality, and place of residence.
2. The name of the director responsible for the management of the publishing house, title, nationality, and place of residence.
3. The name of the publishing house, headquarters, type and number of equipment used therein.

**Section 5**

In the case of a rejection of a permit request regarding the setting up of a publishing house, the person who had his request rejected may appeal against the decision to the Minister within 15 days as of the date on which he was notified of the rejection.

The Minister shall examine the appeal within 15 days starting on the day on which it was received. His decision thereon shall be final.

**Section 6**

The owner of a publishing house or the person responsible for its management shall notify the competent authorities at the Ministry of any change in the data which was mentioned in the permit requesting the setting up of a publishing house within 14 days as of the day on which the change occurred.

**Section 7**

The owner of a publishing house shall not be allowed to cede ownership unless it is ceded to one of the citizens who fulfill the conditions specified in section 2 of this law, and after having obtained the prior written approval of the competent authority at the Ministry. The person ceding the publishing house shall submit to the competent authority a request which includes the data, and supporting documents as set out in section 2 of the law to the assignee.

**Section 8**

If the owner dies, his heirs shall notify in writing the Ministry of the owner's death within two months as of the day on which he/she dies. The exercise of activity permit shall be transferred to the heirs unless it is indicated otherwise, in accordance with section 2 of this law.

**Section 11**

On publishing any publication, the publisher shall be under the obligation to submit two copies thereof to the Censorship Department at the Ministry, and will obtain a receipt thereof.

**Section 12**

Before publishing any periodic publication, a publisher shall obtain a permit authorizing publication from the competent authority at the Ministry. The competent authority shall issue its decision on the submitted request for a permit within fourteen days as of the day on which the request was submitted.

**Section 14**

Before publishing a publication for a physical or moral person, a publisher who does not have citizenship shall be under the obligation to obtain a permit requesting publication from the competent authority at the Ministry. The competent authority shall issue its decision on the request submitted within fourteen days as of the day on which the request was submitted.

#### **Section 15**

A publisher may not republish a publication which was prohibited from entry into the country or whose circulation was stopped by the competent authority. A publisher may not publish a publication contrary to sections 12 and 14 of this law.

### **Chapter Three Circulation of publications**

#### **Section 17**

No person may be allowed to sell or circulate publications in a public place, or in a public shop even if this were temporary, or casual unless a permit to do so is obtained from the competent authority at the Ministry.

#### **Section 20**

The Minister may halt the entry into the country of a periodic or non periodic publication or its circulation if the publication contains censored material in accordance with the provisions of this law or any other law.

The Official Gazette shall publish the decisions issued by the Minister in accordance with the preceding paragraph.

#### **Section 21**

No physical or moral person shall be allowed to circulate any publication which is imported or which was sent to him/her unless after a permit has been obtained from the censorship department at the Ministry.

#### **Section 23**

Foreign clubs, societies or centres may not publish or circulate any publication without obtaining a permit from the competent authority at the Ministry. The request for a permit shall be submitted, together with the annexed manuscript stamped by the President's stamp. If the President authorizes publication or circulation, five copies of such a publication shall be deposited with the competent authority at the Ministry, before its distribution.

The preceding paragraph shall not apply to publications of a special or commercial character.

### **Chapter Four On newspapers, periodic publications, and new agencies**

#### **Section 24**

A daily paper may not be published without having obtained a permit in accordance with this law.

#### **Section 29**

Owners of dailies and presidents of the boards of newspaper establishments and news agencies shall not be hired in a temporary or permanent capacity as journalists or writers before their registration with the department of information at the Ministry.

The preceding paragraph shall not apply to foreign correspondents who are appointed abroad, if deemed necessary.

The persons and agencies referred to in the first paragraph shall submit the names of such correspondents, their nationalities and places of residence to the competent authority at the Ministry.

#### **Section 30**

Correspondents of dailies or foreign news agencies may not exercise their work in the country before having obtained a permit to do so from the competent authority. The permit shall be valid for a year, and can be renewed.

The Ministry shall assume the cost of correspondents who free themselves for such an activity.

#### **Section 36**

A publisher may not publish a daily whose permit's validity has expired by the force of law or by the competent authority which decided to obstruct it, halt its production, annul its permit, prohibit its entry into the country or halt its distribution.

#### **Section 37**

A daily shall not be circulated unless it bears the name of its owner, the name of its chief editor, or responsible editors, name of publishing house, date and place of publication, cost of one copy, subscription rate, provided they are all indicated in a visible place on each copy, on its first or last page. If the daily has no chief editor, but several editors responsible for each section, their names should be indicated in the same manner while indicating the section supervised by each one of them.

#### **Section 39**

The editor in chief or writer in charge of the newspaper shall publish free of charge material of public interest sent by the ministries, as well as statements relating to already published material in the paper's first issue, and in the place set aside for important news.

#### **Section 40**

The editor in chief or writer in charge of the newspaper shall publish upon the request of interested parties, the correction of the material that was previously published in the newspaper.

The correction shall be published in the first issue of the paper after having received the correction in the same place, and font in which it was previously published.

The correction shall be published at no cost if it is not double the space allocated to the previous material. The cost of additional space shall be estimated on the basis of the tariff of advertisements.

#### **Section 41**

Publishing corrections may not be stopped unless in the following cases:

- a. If the correction reaches the newspaper after two months as of the date on which the article or declaration was published.
- b. If the paper has previously corrected the information that needs correction.
- c. If the correction is drafted in a language other than that in which the original article or declaration was published.
- d. If the publication of the correction is a punishable crime.

#### **Section 42**

If the editor in chief or writer in charge refrains from publishing the correction in violation of the previous sections, he shall be punishable by imprisonment for at least six months, and by paying a minimum fine of 1,000 dirhams, and a maximum fine of 10,000 dirhams or either of these two penalties.

#### **Section 44**

The owner of a newspaper may not cede its property to any of the citizens who fulfil the conditions set out in section 35 of this law, after having obtained the prior written agreement of the competent authority at the Ministry. The assigner should submit to the authority a request which includes all the data and documents which underscore the fulfilment of conditions specified in section 35 of this law to the assignee.

**Section 46**

Newspapers, periodic publications, novels, stories or any other literary work may not be copied unless approved by its author though a summary, quotation or statement thereof may be published without the author's prior permission.

Articles dealing with political, economic, literary or other issues of interest to public opinion at a specific time may be published unless the publication, or newspaper that are being quoted from having strictly prohibited this.

In cases of copying, publishing, quoting, giving a summary, or a statement, the source should be clearly indicated, as well as the author's name.

**Chapter Five**  
**Importing, and exporting publications, newspapers and newsletters**

**Section 49**

Non nationals who are not registered in the register prepared for this purpose at the Ministry may not import or export publications or newspapers.

**Section 53**

Importing, or circulating texts of the Koran, parts thereof, or religious books in the form of publications, audio tapes shall not be allowed before having obtained a permit to that effect from the competent authority at the Ministry, and subsequent to the approval of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Awkaf.

In all cases, imported copies or copies ready for circulation should be certified by one of the competent religious bodies in Arab or Islamic countries.

**Chapter Six**  
**Films, exposing other technical work**

**Section 54**

Persons other than physical or moral persons who have citizenship, and who are recorded in the register prepared for this purpose at the Ministry may not import or export films.

**Section 57**

No film, reference to a film or commercial advertisement may be exposed in a film form at one of the cinemas in the country before having obtained a permit to do so from the Censorship Film Committee. Documents which should be annexed to the permit request are set by a Ministerial decision.

**Section 58**

Diplomatic missions, and consular bodies may not expose films or any work to persons other than its members, or at a place other than its official headquarters before having obtained a permit to that effect from the Censorship Film Committee.

**Section 61**

The Censorship Film Committee may not authorize the showing of foreign films without an Arabic translation.

The request for a permit must give a summary of the film, names of its heroes, and its producer.

In all cases, the Arabic translated text must be in conformity with the language of dialogue.

**Section 63**

Persons who are less than 16 years of age may not be allowed to enter cinemas and other places for which a decision of appointment has been taken by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs. This occurs when the Censorship Film Committee has prohibited them to do so.

**Section 66**

In shows other than film shows, no work shall be exposed to the public in a general show before having obtained a permit from the Department of Information at the Ministry. The request for a permit shall include the data, and documents for which a ministerial decision is issued.

The preceding paragraph shall apply to the publication or circulation of any work to the public whether it is in audio, print, or visual form.

**Section 67**

No person may be allowed to work in theatre or film production work or any similar production without having obtained a permit to do so from the competent authority at the Ministry.

The permit shall be for a year, and can be renewed.

A decision by the Minister shall determine the conditions for granting a permit, its renewal as well as the data and documents which should be included or annexed with the request for the permit, after consulting with the Minister of the Interior.

**Chapter Seven**  
**Material which is prohibited from publication**

**Section 70**

The person of the President of the Republic or the rulers of the Emirates may not be criticized.

**Section 71**

Any material which includes an incitement to, and is harmful to Islam, or the system of Government in the country, or harms the country's interests or the basic systems on which the society is founded shall be prohibited.

**Section 72**

Views which are in breach of public morality, harm young persons or invite persons to espouse or promote destructive principles may not be published.

**Section 73**

Any material which incites persons to commit a crime, raise hatred or cause dissent among the society's citizens shall be prohibited from publication.

**Section 74**

Official confidential contacts, military matters or the texts of conventions or treaties concluded by the Government may not be published before their being issued in the Official Gazette without the special authorization of the competent authority at the Ministry.

**Section 75**

Distorted proceedings of sessions, deliberations, and public sessions of the tribunals or regulatory bodies of the State, which was done on purpose, may not be published.

**Section 76**

Material containing shameful information on the person of the President of an Arab, Muslim country or a country with friendly ties may not be published. Material which may threaten the ties of our country with Arab, Muslim or friendly countries shall also be prohibited.

**Section 77**

Material which causes an injustice to Arabs or constitutes a misrepresentation of Arab civilization or heritage may not be published.

**Section 78**

Information on a criminal investigation which has not been completed may not be published if the investigation judge has ordered the investigation to be confidential or if Public Prosecution has prohibited publishing any information in its respect.

**Section 79**

News, photographs, comments relating to the secrets of the private or family life of individuals may not be published even if they were correct, and even if they intended to harm them. No secret that may harm the reputation of a person, his/her wealth, commercial name or the publication of material intended to threaten the person, force him to pay money, offer a service to others or deprive that person from freedom to work should be divulged.

**Section 80**

Forging, fabricating documents or presenting incorrect news with an evil intent, or documents which are falsely attributed to others may not be published.

**Section 81**

Material which harms the national currency or causes a confusion over the economic situation in a country may not be published.

**Section 82**

Newsletters, or advertisements may not include expressions, photographs, or drawings that are in violation of public morals or which may confuse the public.

**Section 83**

Advertisements on medicines, or on pharmaceutical products may be published after having obtained a special permit from the competent authority at the Ministry.

**Section 84**

Slandering the work of a public official, a person having a public prosecution function, or a person who is in charge of a public service shall not be allowed. A writer shall be exempted from responsibility if he/she proves he/she is well intentioned, and believes in the truth of the events attributed to the public official, the person having a public prosecution function, or the person in charge of a public service, and that his/her belief is based on reasonable grounds.

**Chapter Eight  
Penalties**

**Section 86**

Any violation of any of the provisions of sections 24, 26, 27, 29, 33, 57, 58 or sections 71 to 85 of this law shall be punishable by imprisonment for a minimum period of one month, and a maximum period of six months, a minimum fine of 100 dirhams, and a maximum fine of 5,000 dirhams or either of these two penalties.

The tribunal shall have the right to suspend a newspaper, or close down an entertainment hall as the case may be for a maximum period of one month.

**Section 87**

Any violation of any of the provisions of sections 19, 20 and 21 of this law shall be punishable by the penalty specified in the first paragraph of the previous section.

**Section 88**

The owner of a paper, its editor in chief, and writers responsible for its sections as well as the printer, publisher if available, are punishable by imprisonment for a minimum period of two months, and a maximum period of six months, and by a minimum fine of 1,000 dirhams and a maximum of 10,000 dirhams or either of these two penalties, if they publish the paper whose suspension has been decided on, and even if this publication is under another name.

Besides imposing the penalty prescribed in the preceding paragraph, the tribunal may halt the newspaper for a maximum period of two months. The new period of suspension shall be added to the previous period of suspension, and will be subsequent to it.

**Section 89**

Any violation of section 70 of this law shall be punishable by imprisonment of a minimum period of six months, and a maximum period of two years, and by a fine of a minimum 5,000 dirhams and a maximum of 20,000 dirhams or by either of these two penalties. The editor in chief shall be punishable by the penalty specified in the preceding paragraph. Besides the penalty specified in the two preceding paragraphs, the tribunal shall decide on suspending the paper for a maximum period of six months.

**Section 90**

Administrative custody of a publication or a newspaper may be made if publication, production, or circulation have been made contrary to the provisions of sections 12, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 36, 37, 44 of this law. The matter is then referred to the tribunal so as to decide on whether to confiscate the objects that were kept in custody.

**Section 91**

Any person violating any provision of sections 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15 and 16 of this law shall be punishable by imprisonment for a period of at least a month and a maximum of three months and a fine of at least 1 000 Dirhams and a maximum of 5 000 Dirhams or by either of these two penalties.

The tribunal shall decide on closing down a publishing house if its owner has opened it before having obtained the permit specified in section 3.

**Section 92**

Any person violating any provision specified in sections 25 and 35 of this law shall be punishable by a fine of at least 1 000 Dirhams and a maximum of 5 000 Dirhams.

**Section 93**

Any person committing another violation of this law shall be punishable by a fine of at least 1 000 Dirhams and a maximum of 2 000 Dirhams and by imprisonment for a period of at least a month and a maximum of six months or by either of these two penalties.

**Section 94**

If any violation of any provision of sections 18, 19, 20, 21, 61, 63, 64, and 66 of this law occurs, the tribunal may decide on confiscating objects that were identified.

**Section 95**

If a writer, the person who undertook the design or any other person responsible for any means of expression committed a crime specified in the law, the editor-in-chief of the daily or editor responsible for the section under which the piece was published, if there was no editor-in-chief, shall be considered as an original perpetrator of this crime, and shall be punishable together with the perpetrator by the specified penalty. However, the editor-in-chief of the daily or editor responsible for the part under which the piece was published shall be exempt from criminal liability if the publication in question occurred without his knowledge, and that since the beginning of the investigation, the editor-in-chief gave all the information, and documents so as to help identify the person responsible for publication.

**Section 96**

If the writing, design, photographs, symbols, or any other means of expression which has been used in committing any of the crimes specified in this law has been published abroad, the importer of the publication or daily in which the piece was published as well as the distributor shall be considered as an original perpetrator of this crime unless the action indicates that the importer or distributor were not aware of the contents of the above-mentioned publication or daily.

**Section 97**

The owner of the daily or publication shall be jointly responsible with the editor-in-chief or responsible editor, as the case may be, for the payment of financial compensation which has been decided on for the benefit of the aggrieved party.

**Section 98**

Journalism is free if it is within the limits of law. Threatening, suspending, or cancelling newspapers through administrative means shall be prohibited unless their distribution shall tarnish the Islamic confession, stir trouble against the State, damage the ultimate interests of the State, or disseminate material which is contrary to its constitutional foundations especially the concept of unity, and federation. Threatening public order or serving foreign interests which conflict with the national interest or if there is an indication that the daily had obtained from any foreign state any help, assistance, or benefit in any manner or if it had obtained it for any reason whatsoever and under any excuse or nomenclature, disseminated the ideas of an opposing country, divulged military secrets in a general fashion or published some material that impacts negatively on the main foundations of the society, and published news, or information material causing confusion in the public opinion, and conflict with the requirements of the national interest shall also be prohibited.

The Council of Ministers may, upon the explanation given by the Minister of Information and Culture, issue a decree in advanced cases by suspending the newspaper for a period not exceeding a year or annul the permit given to the daily. The Council of Ministers may also suspend the daily for a period not exceeding a year if it publishes any material that conflicts with the prohibition specified in sections 70, 71, 72, 75, and 80, and does not conflict with the decision of suspension or the annulment of the permit granting the right to institute criminal proceedings against persons responsible for any violations, and charging them with the payment of civil compensation.

In cases of extreme necessity, and in the cases mentioned in the previous paragraph, the publication of the daily may be halted for a period not exceeding two weeks by virtue of a ministerial decree while informing the Council of Ministers of this decree.

**Section 99**

A civil action shall no longer be valid with respect to crimes which are in violation of this law by the elapse of three months as of the day on which the crime was committed.

**Section 100**

No civil action may be initiated in crimes of insult and defamation which occur through newspapers or other means of publication unless this is upon a complaint made by the aggrieved party to the public prosecutor or one of the legal officers.

If the aggrieved party is more than one, the complaint should be made by one of them, and if the accused is more than one, and the complaint was made against one of them, it should be considered as having been made against all the accused.

**Section 101**

A civil action may not be in a shameful crime which occurs through newspapers or another means of publication against the person of the President of an Arab, or Muslim country or any other friendly country or the person of an authorized representative of one of these countries, unless this is upon the Minister's request.

**Section 102**

A civil action may not be initiated for crimes which occur through newspapers or another means of publication and which include an abuse of, or insult to the National Unionist Council, army, courts or any other regulatory bodies in the country unless this is upon the request of the body, or chief of the body who is the aggrieved party.

**Section 103**

The person who made the complaint may rescind it at any time until the civil action is decided upon finally, and the latter shall no longer be valid with the withdrawal of the complaint. If the aggrieved party is more than one, the complaint shall not be considered withdrawn unless it has been withdrawn by all who submitted it.

Withdrawing a complaint by one of the accused, shall be considered as having been withdrawn by all.

**Chapter nine  
Final provisions of a general character**

**Section 104**

Any person who has a stake may appeal before the specialized tribunals in the final administrative decisions which were issued in application of the provisions of this law.

An appeal should be made within sixty days as of the day on which the decision to be appealed against shall be known with certainty.

**Section 105**

The provisions of this law shall not apply to publications issued by the ministries, Government departments, public enterprises, or public bodies in relation to their activities, nor to books, publications, newsletters published or imported by the University of the Emirates or the Ministry of Education and Youth for their use at colleges, schools, or institutes which are attached thereto.

**Section 106**

The above-mentioned Federal Law No. 5 of 1973 shall be annulled in addition to any provision which is in violation of the provisions of this law.

**Section 107**

The Minister shall issue the necessary decisions and regulations for the implementation of the provisions of this law.

**Section 108**

This law shall be published in the Official Gazette, and shall be in force as of the day on which it is published.

Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan  
President of the United Arab Emirates

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