



Sources of Information in the Audiovisual Sector in Algeria Through Media Legislation: An Analytical Study

Samir Boutra

Doctoral Student, Faculty of Media and Communication, University of Algiers 3, Algeria

Email: boutra.samir@univ-alger3.dz

Jamila Kadem

Faculty of Media and Communication, University of Algiers 3, Algeria

Email: dkadem72@gmail.com

Received: 23/11/2025 ; Accepted: 25/05/2026 ; Published: 26/06/2026

Abstract:

This research paper examines the sources of information relied upon by Algerian television channels, both public and private. It assesses the extent to which these sources conform to the legislative texts governing the sector, which has undergone liberalisation since 2012. This study falls within the field of media legal studies. It aims to analyse the nature and diversity of the information sources utilised by television channels and to examine their relationships with the legal framework governing the right to access information. This study reviews the evolution of legislation related to this right, beginning with the first law regulating the sector in 1982 and culminating in the Organic Media Law issued in 2023. The findings of this study reveal that the legal provisions governing the right to access and circulate information remain ambiguous and unclear. Moreover, the existing legal framework has not yet achieved effective guarantees, as it merely stipulates these rights in principle without providing efficient mechanisms for their implementation. Despite the significant steps taken by the Algerian legislature to recognise the right to information and protect journalistic sources, a comprehensive legal framework governing this matter in the audiovisual sector has not yet been established. Consequently, journalistic practice remains subject more to institutional considerations than to professional standards, which restricts the diversity of information sources and affects the credibility of news disseminated by Algerian television channels. In conclusion, the study emphasises the need to advance media practices in Algeria by adopting specific legal provisions on the right to access information and establishing an independent authority to regulate the relationship between the media and administrative institutions. It also highlights the importance of strengthening journalists' legal training to ensure greater diversity of sources and enhance the credibility of television news production.

Keywords: Information sources; credibility; audiovisual sector; media legislation.



Introduction

Sources of information are the backbone of any journalistic work, as they are closely linked to media institutions' ability to convey facts accurately and objectively. With the enormous technological developments in communication, television channels can now transmit news and information at the moment of their occurrence to different parts of the world, making them central actors in shaping and directing public opinion. In the Algerian context, the audiovisual sector has undergone profound transformations over the past four decades, both in the legislative framework governing it and in media practice. Since the establishment of the first law regulating media activity in 1982, through the various legal texts accompanying the evolution of the media landscape and culminating in the Organic Media Law of 2023, the Algerian legal system has undertaken continuous efforts to regulate the relationship between the freedom of the media on the one hand and citizens' right to obtain information on the other.

The liberalisation of the audiovisual sector in 2012 marked a pivotal stage in this field, as the media landscape witnessed the emergence of several private television channels alongside public channels, opening the way for accelerated professional competition. This development created a more diverse media environment. However, this plurality was not necessarily accompanied by qualitative development in news practice, which has become a complex media industry in which political, economic, and cultural dimensions intersect. Despite noticeable developments in Algerian media legislation, new issues have emerged regarding the sources of information these channels rely on and the extent to which their professional practices comply with applicable legal provisions. Questions remain regarding the effectiveness of these texts in regulating and guaranteeing the right to access information within the audiovisual sector. For this reason, the present study addresses this issue, as the diversification of sources and the guarantee of the right to access information remain among the most significant challenges facing both the written press and the audiovisual media sector, whether in terms of professional practice within newsrooms or the legal framework regulating this right. On the basis of the above considerations, this study highlights the current Algerian legislative framework in ensuring the transparency and plurality of sources by raising the following research question:

How has Algerian media legislation addressed the issue of information sources in the audiovisual sector?

Research Questions

The central research problem gives rise to several subsidiary questions that this study seeks to address as follows.

1. What is meant by sources of information in the audiovisual sector?
2. What is the legislative framework regulating sources of information in Algeria?
3. How has the Algerian legislature addressed the regulation and protection of information sources?



4. What legal guarantees are included in this legislation to protect the confidentiality of sources of information in the audiovisual sector?
5. What are the exceptions contained in Algerian media legislation regarding the right to protect the confidentiality of sources of information?

Objectives of the Study

By examining relevant legislative and regulatory texts, this study aims to analyse the provisions enacted by the Algerian legislature on the sources of information and the right to access them in the audiovisual sector.

This general objective is divided into the following subsidiary objectives:

1. To monitor the legislative and legal development of the right to access information within the Algerian media system.
2. To analyse the legal and regulatory mechanisms adopted by the Algerian legislature to regulate the work of journalists and to guarantee the freedom to obtain information.
3. To highlight the legal guarantees related to the protection of the confidentiality of media sources and to clarify their conditions and limits within Algerian legislation.
4. To examine the legal exceptions to the principle of the protection of sources and their impact on media practice.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study, which falls within the framework of legislative media studies, lies in its examination of the sources of information that underpin the construction of news content and the formulation of the media message. The greater the diversity and reliability of sources, the higher the credibility of television channels and the greater the level of public trust in them. The significance of this research also lies in highlighting the importance of using sources in the audiovisual sector and in revealing professional and regulatory shortcomings that may affect the quality and accuracy of news. The importance of this study also emerges in the context of the transformations of the Algerian audiovisual landscape since its liberalisation in 2012, reinforced by a law on audiovisual activity in December 2023, as well as the challenges associated with competitiveness, credibility, and transparency in the circulation of news.

Method of the Study

To address this research problem, a descriptive-analytical method was adopted, which involves identifying the characteristics of a particular problem and examining the circumstances surrounding it. It reveals the existing facts related to a phenomenon, a situation, or a group of individuals while recording their indicators and characteristics, classifying them, identifying their relationships with other variables, and highlighting their different dimensions (Shafiq, 1998, p. 108).

Madeleine Grawitz also argues that every science possesses a descriptive dimension, meaning that it involves the study of specific facts (Grawitz, 1993, p. 15). This renders the descriptive



approach one of the most capable scientific methods for addressing complex communication and media phenomena.

On this basis, this method enables the study and analysis of legal and legislative texts related to sources of information and the right to access them within Algerian media legislation.

To address the research problem and associated questions, this topic, which is grounded in a theoretical-analytical approach to media laws, is organised around the following axes.

- ✓ First Sources of media information, their classifications and forms
- ✓ Second, the historical development of the audiovisual sector in Algeria
- ✓ Third, the right to access sources of information through Algerian legislative texts

Definition of the Terms and Concepts of the Study

This study is based on a set of fundamental concepts that constitute the research's general theoretical framework, the most prominent of which are as follows:

1. Source

The source represents the first component of the communication process, which consists of the source, the message, and the receiver (Jargis, n.d., p. 9). The source of news may be a responsible official or a well-known person. It may also be an authority, an organisation, or a media institution, including press institutions, news agencies, radio broadcasting organisations, or audiovisual media institutions. It may also include public relations departments or media offices within various public and private bodies and institutions.

Operationally, in the present research, the source of information refers to any person or entity from which information or news is obtained or provided upon which television news content is constructed. This may occur either directly through interviews, statements, press conferences, or field coverage or indirectly through the transmission of information from a news agency, a website, an official statement, or a publication disseminated through social media, among other forms.

The concept may also include the degree of diversity and reliability of sources, which constitute fundamental variables in evaluating the quality of content in both public and private television channels.

In the present research, information is understood as the raw material for news and reports presented daily through news bulletins on public and private television channels obtained from various sources.

2. Audiovisual

The Dictionary of Media Terminology defines the audiovisual sector as everything that uses both image and sound simultaneously, such as cinema, television, and all forms of communication related to both (Karam Shalabi, 1989, p. 45).



The audiovisual field is also embodied in all media and communication, which relies on both auditory and visual images (Bousif, 2014, p. 148), that is, materials that present information in both audible and visual forms (Danesi, 2009, p. 32).

Audiovisual also refers to any communication directed to the public that includes radio or television broadcasting services, whether free to air or encrypted, transmitted through terrestrial waves, via cables or satellites and/or the internet (Official Gazette, 2023, p. 12).

In this research, “audiovisual” refers to television channels that combine sound and image and are framed and regulated by the Organic Media Law of 2023 and the Law on Audiovisual Activity No. 23-20, dated 2 December 2023.

3. Credibility

The origin of the word credibility in French derives from the verb croire, meaning to believe, and from the Latin credere, which signifies trust and belief. From a semiotic perspective, other terms related to credibility include truthfulness, sincerity, and truth (Versel, 1996).

Credibility is classified among the most complex concepts, as it extends beyond mere truth or accuracy to encompass highly complex variables that are themselves linked to the different subsystems of the social system, represented by the media, public opinion, and the prevailing political, economic, social, and cultural climate within a given society (Hassan, 2006, p. 128). Definitions of credibility emphasise that it refers to trust in the medium, reliance on it, and respect, appreciation, and preference accorded to it as a source of information and opinions compared with other media outlets. It also refers to sound judgement (Hijab, 2003, p. 2228).

In this research, “credibility” refers to that associated with journalistic media, as defined by Algerian media laws and professional practice.

4. Media Legislation

Media legislation refers to the set of legal rules established by the legislative authority in written form, which is distinct from other rules arising from other legal sources (Habib Ibrahim, 2008, p. 19).

In the legal dictionary of Algerian legislation, the term legislation refers to the set of legal rules adopted by parliament, the body of laws of a state or region, or the set of laws related to a particular branch of law (Ibtissem Garram, 1998, p. 172).

Media legislation may also be defined as the set of legal rules regulating the media process, its means, and all its activities, including the written press, periodical publications, radio, television, cinema, documentary films, and news agencies. These rules define the limits of media activity and the responsibilities arising from their violation (Belkacem, 2017, 2018, p. 31).

It also refers to the set of general and abstract rules issued by the legislative authority, and the term “legislation” is used to designate the same rules established by this authority (Hassan, 2003, p. 35).



Media law constitutes the set of rules regulating media practices in its various dimensions, whether related to the sender, the receiver, the message, or the institution, within any society and during any specific period.

Operationally, media laws refer to the set of legal rules and regulations issued by the country's legislative authority to regulate the media sector across all its branches, including audio, visual, print, and electronic media.

First Sources of Media Information: Their Classifications and Forms

Information in the contemporary era, often described as the age of information explosion, is a fundamental pillar of any media outlet. The process of editing and verifying information enhances the trust of its reader, listener, or viewer. The quantities of information produced, transmitted, processed, stored, and used are increasing at an unprecedented rate, making information an essential element in shaping contemporary societies.

Through media and mass communication technologies and their modern techniques, it has become possible to follow events moment by moment in any part of the world to obtain an enormous volume of information and news from various sources and to transmit it to the public. This process is often carried out by journalists, who serve as a central link in the communicative process.

Sources of information are the means by which journalists obtain news. These sources vary according to the entity from which they originate. They may include individuals, institutions, agencies, radio stations, newspapers, advertisements, bulletins, ministries, and other entities (Al Shamsi, 1999, p. 79).

Others argue that the journalist's source of information is the person, the media, or a nonmedia institution from which the newspaper obtains news and on which it relies entirely. These sources may be internal, such as correspondents and reporters, or external, such as agencies of various types, newspapers, magazines, Arab and international radio stations, bulletins, documents, and press conferences (Muawad & Imam, 2012, p. 154).

Sources of information also refer to the entities and tools through which media institutions and journalists obtain news and events. These may include officials or individuals directly involved in the event or news as eyewitnesses, as well as documents and data issued by specific institutions, correspondents, news agencies, newspapers, radio stations, and websites.

Sources of information may be classified according to several criteria, most notably identity, importance, and development.

1. According to identify

Media information sources are divided into two categories. The first consists of official sources, which are generally clearly identifiable and issued by an official authority or institution. Such sources are often characterised by high public credibility (Othman, 2008, p. 29).



The second category consists of unofficial sources, which are often shrouded in ambiguity because of the sensitivity of the public opinion information they provide. The source of such information may be a government employee who leaks news to journalists on the basis of affiliations such as interests, ethnicity, language, or religious orientation. These sources are often careful not to disclose their identities and prefer to be cited as informed, knowledgeable, or reliable sources.

2. According to importance

Sources may also be classified into primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are the first documents published by governmental institutions or official figures. They may take the form of statements, reports, or studies intended to interpret or reveal an earlier event that requires clarification for public opinion. These sources are often characterised by unorganised information, yet they remain fundamental in the formulation of news materials and contribute to the further production of information.

The second category consists of secondary sources, which include information that is not fully confirmed. These are often referred to as reserve sources that media institutions rely on when they are unable to obtain new information and when they are published according to a specific editorial plan (Zekar, n.d., p. 122).

3. According to development

Media information sources can also be classified into two main types. The first consists of traditional sources from which journalists obtain news directly, such as officials in authority; prominent figures in social life; statements; bulletins; press conferences; and associations, organisations, emergency services, and news agency dispatches.

This type may also be internal or external to the institution. It may consist of individuals, organisations, or documents issued by these entities, as well as news agency dispatches, which make them a principal reference for various media institutions (Cavalry et al., 2004, p. 171).

The second type concerns modern sources, which are produced through new communication technologies, particularly the internet, mobile telephones, and media capable of storing and facilitating the exchange of information.

With respect to the forms of sources of information, although they vary and are numerous, they are directed toward a single objective, which is the identification of these sources. These sources also relate to the criterion of journalists' effectiveness and movement within society and reflect journalists' personal efforts to establish relationships with news sources.

The news process is described as the art, skill, and practice of collecting information for immediate use (Mohamed Nasr, 2003, p. 92).

The forms of information sources may be summarised as follows:



- *- Printed information sources include documents issued by governmental bodies and institutions containing information related to the sector or institution responsible for the information. These include documents, dispatches, and statements (Abdel Jabbar, 2009, p. 59).
- *- Nonprinted sources depend primarily on hearing and sight and include information sources obtained through the media and devices used to communicate information. They are divided into four categories
- *- Auditory sources include audio recordings, tapes, interviews, press meetings, and recordings of important figures.
- *- Visual sources include photographs, drawings, and maps, such as natural, military, or historical maps.
- *- Audiovisual sources include films and scientific documentaries.
- *- Microforms include microfilms and microfiches and contain historical documents and articles dating back to specific historical periods (Al Nawaiseh, 2009, p. 23).
- *- Electronic sources have emerged with the development of the internet, which has become a means of communication and a principal support for media outlets, as well as a medium in itself and a means of entertainment and obtaining information (Iris, 2001, p. 72).

As a source of information, the internet has become the primary carrier because of the freedom and ease with which it enables the transmission of information. It has imposed a new reality as a distribution medium that transcends time and geography in the dissemination of news while bypassing laws and restrictions imposed by certain systems to limit information and access to it.

Second: The Historical Development of the Audiovisual Sector in Algeria

Television was introduced in Algeria during the colonial period. It remained under the authority of the colonial administration, serving its interests because of its awareness of the powerful influence of images. Moreover, Algerians sought to employ this medium because of its power to present the Algerian cause and expose the crimes committed by the colonial authorities against the Algerian people.

With respect to the importance of images during that period, the historian Dalila Ait Djoudi described the use of audiovisual media at that time as a complementary activity to the armed struggle, alongside radio and the written press, to resist the intense propaganda carried out by the colonial media (Dridi, 2017, 2018, p. 83).

Television broadcasting in Algeria began during the colonial period, specifically on 24 December, 1956, from the transmission station at Ras Temenfoust, east of Algiers, equipped with a 500-watt transmitter. The transmission was limited to the city of Algiers and its surrounding areas (Dridi, 2017, 2018, p. 87).

After Algeria gained independence, the audiovisual media sector underwent several stages shaped by political, ideological, and cultural contexts, as follows.



First Stage

This stage may be confined to the period between 1962 and 1982. It was characterised by the continued influence of the colonial structure over radio and television, which had originally been established to serve colonial interests. The colonial authorities sought to maintain this control during the negotiations of the Evian Agreement, and the institution therefore continued to operate under the name French Broadcasting and Television Organisation. However, this situation contradicted the principle of restoring national sovereignty, which led the Algerian state to nationalise the radio and television institutions on 28 October 1962.

In 1967, four regional television stations were established in Oran, Constantine, Ouargla, and Bechar. Several years later, a new orientation emerged in January 1979 during the Fourth Congress of the National Liberation Front, which emphasised the strategic importance of the media sector (Dridi, 2017–2018, pp. 88–90).

Second Stage

Researchers generally situate this stage between 1982 and 1989. It witnessed the promulgation of the first media law in the history of independent Algeria, known as Law 82–01. This law consolidated the single party's authority over the media sector in line with the socialist orientation adopted during that period. The law was issued following the resolutions adopted at the 1979 Congress.

Within the provisions of this law, the legislature focused primarily on the written press and printed publications at the expense of audiovisual media, which were mentioned only incidentally. In 1986, Ministerial Decree No. 86–47 dated 1 July 1986 reorganised the Radio and Television Institution into the following public institutions:

- The National Television Institution
- The National Radio Institution
- The National Audiovisual Production Institution
- The National Agency for Filmed News
- The National Broadcasting Institution for Radio and Television

Third Stage

This stage spans 1989 to 1992 and marked a highly sensitive period for the media sector. It occurred in the context of a difficult security situation following the events of October 1988 and external developments. These circumstances led the government to promulgate the Constitution of February 23, 1989, which guaranteed freedom of opinion and expression. Article 39 represented an initial step toward media pluralism and freedom of the press. It stipulated that freedom of expression, association, and assembly is guaranteed to citizens.

During the same period, Media Law 90–07, dated 3 April 1990, was issued. This law affirmed the freedom of the media and citizens' right to objective information. It opened the field of the written press to the private sector while maintaining state control over other media.



During this period, the second television channel, ALGERIAN TV (later renamed Canal Algérie), was launched and aimed at the Algerian community in Europe. A third channel was subsequently created, focusing on the Arab Mashreq.

These developments represented unprecedented achievements in the history of Algerian media, particularly following the directive issued in 1990 by the then-prime minister Mouloud Hamrouche, which allowed the emergence of numerous private newspapers. Nevertheless, the audiovisual sector remained under state monopoly until the interruption of the electoral process in 1991, following the electoral victory of the dissolved Islamic Salvation Front, which had won a majority of seats in the Algerian parliament.

The researcher Ibrahim Brahimi describes this period as the golden era because of the degree of media liberalisation and freedom of expression that brought Algerian media practices closer to those of established international media institutions such as the BBC. However, this period was short-lived, as Algeria entered another phase following the declaration of a state of emergency in February 1992 because of deteriorating security conditions (Tuwati, 2024, p. 665).

Fourth Stage

This stage extended from 1992 to 2012 and was characterised by the imposition of the state of emergency in 1992 following the deterioration of the security situation, which significantly affected media practices in Algeria. Journalists became targets of terrorism, and seventy journalists were killed during this crisis. The period also witnessed arrests and abductions. The families of those forcibly disappeared have accused Algerian security authorities of abducting the journalists Jamal Eddine Fahassi and Aziz Bouabdallah because of their writings criticising the suspension of the democratic process and those responsible for it (Boujemaa, 2016, p. 169). During the same period, the authorities monopolised security-related information and prohibited the publication of any news not originating from official channels. Recommendations were also issued regarding the handling of security-related news by national media outlets, as well as techniques to shape public opinion.

This stage also witnessed the suspension of the 1998 draft media law and the continued application of Law 90–07. The sector remained subject to these conditions until 2011, when popular protests erupted, widely referred to in the media as the oil and sugar protests, which coincided with the Arab Spring. This situation compelled the authorities to lift the state of emergency in February 2011 and to adopt a series of political reforms affecting the media sector, including the promulgation of the Organic Media Law on 12 January 2012. However, this law represented a significant regression concerning the right to information previously recognised by the 1990 law, limiting the process of establishing newspapers to a declaration rather than a licensing system.



Fifth Stage

This stage began with the opening of the audiovisual sector in Algeria to private operators for the first time in May 2012. Articles 58 and 60 of the law defined audiovisual activity and audiovisual communication services. Among the most prominent actors who entered this field during that period were newspaper owners, including those associated with Echourouk, Ennahar, Elkhobar, Elbilad, and Elheddaf, in addition to business figures and entities with no direct connection to the media sector, which has been considered a point of criticism regarding the development of the sector.

Despite opening the audiovisual sector to private actors, the content of Organic Media Law No. 12–05 failed to meet expectations and did not reach the level established by the 1990 law. However, one of the most significant positive aspects of this law was the abolition of imprisonment as a penalty for journalists, alongside the expansion of the right to reply and correction in electronic media (Bekadouri, 2017, p. 285).

Following the period of media closure and exposure that accompanied the popular movement beginning on 22 February 2019, the media sector found itself confronted with a historical responsibility to reconsider its position toward the political system whose removal had been demanded by the public. After a series of reforms following the presidential elections of 12 December 2019, organic legal text concerning the written press, electronic press, and audiovisual activity was issued to implement the Constitution of 2020. The law defined the authority's functions for the Regulation of the Written and Electronic Press and established its composition of nine members, including the president. The President of the Republic appoints these members upon the Prime Minister's proposal for a term of five years, renewable only once, provided that they possess the required academic and professional qualifications (Law on the Written and Electronic Press, 2023).

Subsequently, Law No. 14–04 on audiovisual activity, dated 24 February 2024, was issued. This law granted national private operators opportunities to invest in the sector and defined the functions of the Audiovisual Regulatory Authority in terms of regulation, oversight, consultation, and dispute resolution. It also clarified the licence for operating audiovisual services and the regulatory specifications in Articles 52 to 88.

Field observations indicate that the provisions of the audiovisual law reflect the authorities' concerns about opening the sector, as the law incorporated numerous conditions that maintain forms of control in response to violations recorded across several channels, which ultimately led to their closure. Examples include Atlas TV, KBC TV, Hogar TV, and Al Magharibia TV, among others. Additional institutions experienced a similar fate because of financial constraints, as the audiovisual sector constitutes a heavy industry that requires substantial investment.



Third: The Right to Access to Sources of Information in Algerian Legislative Texts

This section of the study represents the applied aspect, in which Algerian media legislation regarding sources of information and the right of access to them will be analysed through a critical reading of their content to highlight the strengths and shortcomings of this legislation and clarify its impact on media practice.

1. Sources of Information in the Media Law of 1982

This law is considered the first in the history of independent Algeria, following a series of decrees and charters that governed the sector during that period. From this perspective, it may be regarded as one of the achievements of journalism in Algeria. It was issued during the period of single-party rule and reflected the dominant ideological orientation that characterised both political and media systems at that time.

The text of the 1982 law precisely defined the profession of the journalist. Article 33 stipulates that a professional journalist is any employee working for a daily or periodical publication affiliated with the party or the state or within a national news organisation providing written, spoken, or visual information and who devotes themselves permanently to the search for, collection, transmission, organisation, utilisation, and presentation of news, adopting this activity as their sole and regular profession for which they receive remuneration.

This definition is further explained in Articles 34 and 35, which concern journalists operating within the country or abroad, according to Article 34. Article 35 explicitly states that the journalist is both an employee and a militant within the framework of the National Liberation Front's choices.

The 1982 law emphasised the circulation and dissemination of information, meaning that the media serves to transfer information from the private sphere to the public sphere for circulation and exchange. This is confirmed in Article 45, which states that the professional journalist has the right and complete freedom to access sources of news within the limits of the powers granted to them by law (Official Gazette, 1982, p. 247). However, the ambiguity surrounding this article is evident: the legislature grants the professional journalist full access to sources while simultaneously subjecting it to unspecified conditions described only as those granted by law. Article 42, which precedes this provision, introduces restrictions on journalists by preventing them from benefiting from professional privileges even indirectly. The article stipulates that professional journalists, as defined by this law, must practice their profession within the framework of an organised activity serving the choices contained in the fundamental texts of the country, avoid introducing or publishing false or unverified information, refrain from using the privileges associated with their profession for personal purposes, and avoid presenting any work that promotes the advantages of an institution or product whose sale or success may provide them with direct or indirect financial benefit (Official Gazette, 1982, p. 247).



Article 42 indicates the authorities' reliance on a warning-and-punishment approach rather than one focused on professional standards that might enhance the profession and increase it to meet the expectations of the professional community.

Within the general structure of this law, which contains 128 articles, the legislator's focus on penal provisions is evident. Forty-four articles are devoted to penal measures, representing the largest section of the legal text and reflecting the imperative nature of its rules. In this regard, the researcher Saleh Ben Bouza argued that the governing system appeared to regard the press as a minor lacking maturity. Similarly, the researcher Reda Mezoui states that the Media Law of 1982 appears as an instrument whose principal objective was to impose control over the media. Its provisions indicate that it runs counter to the direction of historical developments, as the single-party system continued to dominate the media and treated journalists merely as employees and militants within the party ranks (Ben Bouza, 1996, p. 30).

Therefore, this law falls within an authoritarian system constrained by the ruling party and designed to serve its interests, reflecting the governing system's experience during that period, particularly in its content, which echoed the speeches and declarations of officials.

2. Sources of Information in the Media Law of 1990

The events of October 1988 opened the way for political and media pluralism. In this context, the Media Law of 1990, published on 3 April 1990, differed significantly from the 1982 law. It recognised pluralism in the printed press while maintaining state control over the audiovisual sector, as stipulated in Article 12.

The law affirmed the citizen's right to information, as stated in Articles 2 and 3 (Official Gazette, 1990). It may be argued that the legislature emphasised this right to ensure that the legislative text was consistent with international human rights declarations and charters.

Among the most significant provisions of this law were the abolition of administrative censorship of newspapers and their publication, the establishment of a Media Council to regulate media activity, and the promotion of media plurality. The law also included provisions related to professional ethics in media practice.

The law recognised the right to access information sources and considered it a fundamental right. Article 35 states that professional journalists have the right to access news sources. This right authorises professional journalists, in particular, to consult documents issued by public administration that relate to the objectives of their mission, provided that these documents are not classified by law and protected by legal provisions (Official Gazette, 1990, p. 463).

This article represents an important step in recognising the profession of the professional journalist as one based on the search for and collection of information, implicitly acknowledging the journalist's role in accessing sources.

It also affirms the journalist's essential role as an actor responsible for transmitting information to the public. However, the text did not specify mechanisms enabling journalists to access



information, nor did it refer to a legal right to request or obtain such information from official institutions. Consequently, this right remains dependent upon practical circumstances rather than being explicitly guaranteed by law.

In Article 36, the legislature established limitations on the publication of information. The article stipulates that the right of access to sources of news does not authorise the journalist to publish or disclose information that may threaten national security, national unity, or the security of the state; reveal secrets related to national defence or economic or strategic matters; and infringe upon the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens or affect the integrity of judicial investigations (Official Gazette, 1990, p. 463).

From its formulation, the article appears realistic and justified, as it takes into account the limits of the state's higher interests as defined by the legislature. However, its wording is broad and imprecise, allowing interpretations that may restrict the journalist's right to access information. With respect to professional secrecy, the legislature sought to guarantee it within the legal text through Article 37. Nevertheless, additional restrictions were introduced by stipulating that professional secrecy may not be invoked before the competent judicial authority in the following cases: matters relating to national defense secrecy as defined in the applicable legislation, matters relating to strategic economic secrecy, information that clearly affects state security, information concerning children or adolescents, and information related to judicial investigation and inquiry.

This article, therefore, indicates a set of exceptions or limitations established by the legislature concerning the protection of professional secrecy. Concepts such as national security, economic secrets, and judicial reputation are not precisely defined in legal terms, opening the possibility for the executive authorities to expand the scope of restriction. Consequently, the right to information may shift from a general principle to a permanent exception in practical application. During this period, the media sector did not develop without difficulty. In February 1992, a state of emergency was declared due to the violence that followed the cancellation of the results of the pluralistic legislative elections won by the dissolved Islamic Salvation Front. Professor Ibrahim Brahim described the impact of this political transformation on press freedom as a return to self-censorship within public media institutions, accompanied by financial pressures and more serious measures against journalists, including arbitrary arrests, judicial prosecutions, the confiscation of newspapers, and the preventive control of security-related news (Boujemaa, 2007, p. 103).

This period was characterised by a significant increase in legal prosecutions against journalists, sometimes leading to imprisonment on charges such as defamation, as well as efforts to silence voices that deviated from official expectations while amplifying those supporting the authorities' positions. The state of emergency also remained in force despite demands for its removal and



calls to open public spaces to citizens and various political and human rights actors (Boujemaa, 2007, p. 108).

Sources of Information in the Organic Media Law of 2012

This law was enacted following a series of reforms prompted by disturbances that began in early 2011, when citizens in several regions of northern Algeria protested price increases for basic food products such as sugar and oil, as well as other widely consumed goods. Such temporary crises were linked to the broader structural crisis of the Algerian political system and to concerns about developments known as the Arab Spring, which affected several countries, including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria.

The first reforms adopted by the authorities during that period included lifting the state of emergency that had been in force since 1992, announcing a profound constitutional amendment, and adopting new laws regulating elections, political parties, and associations. Within the media sector, the Organic Media Law was issued in January of the same year. It constituted the first organic law governing the sector since independence. It was presented as a legal text aligned with developments in the field and with the processes of globalisation and modernisation.

The legislative text was more detailed than the 1990 law, containing 133 articles compared with 106 in the previous Media Law. Nevertheless, it maintained the same pattern of ambiguous drafting in many of its terms, imposing limitations on the right to access information sources and on their circulation. This is reflected in Articles 83 and 84, respectively. Article 83 states that all bodies, administrations, and institutions must provide journalists with the news and information they request in a manner that guarantees the citizen's right to information and within the framework of this organic law and the applicable legislation (Official Gazette, 2012).

Article 83 of the legislative text indicates the importance of explicitly recognising the obligation of administrations and public institutions to provide journalists with information. This provision therefore establishes, for the first time, a positive legal relationship between the press and official sources of information. However, the principal issue lies in the final formulation of the article, which states that it is within the framework of this organic law and the applicable legislation. This expression is broad and flexible, effectively restricting the right by subjecting it to other laws such as criminal legislation and national defence laws. Consequently, the article recognises the right on the one hand while restricting it on the other.

The legislature went further by limiting the journalists through a series of exceptions included in Article 84, which states that professional journalists are recognised as having the right to access sources of news except in the following cases:

- When the news concerns national defence secrets as defined in the applicable legislation
- When the news clearly affects the security of the state or national sovereignty
- When the news concerns the secrecy of judicial investigation and inquiry
- When the news concerns strategic economic secrecy



-When the news may affect foreign policy or the economic interests of the country (Official Gazette, 2012)

Through these restrictions, the legislature did not effectively grant journalists the right to access information. In contrast, this is inconsistent with the principles of transparency and the right to information as a constitutional right of the citizen. This observation aligns with the analysis by the academic and researcher Kadem Jamila, who argued that the legislature failed to address several shortcomings in drafting the 2012 law and did not sufficiently take into account the limitations of the previous Media Law of 1990. Among the issues she identifies are the failure to clearly define key concepts, the incomplete decriminalisation of journalistic activity, and the persistence of various forms of state control over the media, including licensing, conditional financial support, and oversight (Kadem, 2021, p. 523).

Among the positive aspects, the Organic Media Law is significant in the field of freedoms, particularly for abolishing the penalty of imprisonment for journalists while maintaining financial fines and reducing the penal provisions to 11 articles. It also recognised the liberalisation of the audiovisual sector and the journalist's right to participate in the capital of media institutions and in their management. In addition, it introduced provisions for the protection of journalists during wars and disasters; recognised the right to conscience; and guaranteed training and professional development for journalists, as well as the issuance of professional press cards, insurance coverage, and contractual guarantees.

Sources of Information in the Law Related to Audiovisual Activity of 2014

Laws 14–23, relating to audiovisual media, were issued following several legislative initiatives concerning the sector. The first was the 1998 preliminary draft of the Media Law, which was considered an important development in the legislative regulation of the audiovisual media sector. However, it was not implemented. It was followed by the preliminary draft Media Law of 2002, which introduced the principle of media freedom within the framework of respect for the constitutional foundations, the laws of the Republic, and the dignity and honour of individuals. In the audiovisual field, the draft proposed establishing an audio-visual council as a regulatory authority responsible for ensuring respect for pluralism and constitutional values. Nevertheless, this project encountered the same fate and was also suspended.

As a result of this legislative vacuum, the audiovisual media sector was marginalised during particularly sensitive circumstances in Algeria. It was not until 2012 that a breakthrough occurred with the liberalisation of the sector and the emergence of new television channels operating alongside the public broadcaster.

Two years later, a specialised law regulating the audio-visual sector was issued. The law consisted of seven chapters and included 113 legal articles addressing general provisions, the scope of application, definitions, audiovisual communication services, legal deposits and audiovisual archiving for each product, administrative sanctions, and penal provisions.



The legislative provisions addressed audiovisual activity in several fundamental aspects as follows.

Article 1 states that the objective of the law is to determine the rules governing the practice and organisation of audiovisual activity. Article 2 continues by explaining the conditions for exercising this activity, stating that audiovisual activity should be practised freely, provided that it respects the principles set out in Article 2 of Organic Law No. 05–12 (Official Gazette, 2014).

Article 4 emphasises the right to establish thematic channels within the public sector. It stipulates that public audiovisual communication services provided by the public sector are organised into general and thematic channels. This provision therefore reserves the establishment of general channels exclusively for institutions within the public sector rather than the private sector.

One of the most significant provisions introduced by the Audiovisual Law of 2014 is Article 5, which states that authorised audiovisual services consist of thematic channels established by institutions, organisations, and bodies of the public sector or by legal persons subject to Algerian law whose capital is owned by natural or legal persons holding Algerian nationality.

This article does not address the content of authorised audiovisual communication services related to general channels but rather limits its reference to thematic channels. It also restricts investment in the audiovisual sector to public-sector institutions or to capital holders possessing Algerian nationality. Article 7 provides definitions of general and thematic channels or thematic services. A general channel is defined as one that includes a program schedule containing television or audio programs directed toward a broad audience and comprising a variety of programs in the fields of information, culture, education, and entertainment. In contrast, a thematic channel provides television or audio programs centered on a specific subject or several related subjects (Official Gazette, 2014).

Since the law is primarily technical and concerns activity rather than journalistic practice, it presents a clear issue in Article 18, which addresses the content and duration of news bulletins broadcast by television channels. This provision imposes restrictions on the field by setting strict limits on the news disseminated by thematic channels. This orientation may be interpreted as a continuation of state control over the audiovisual landscape to prevent the excesses recorded in the sector following the 2012 liberalisation.

The legislative text also established a licensing system for legal persons to create audiovisual communication services, linking it to a vague provision. Article 20 states that the licence granted by the licensing authority constitutes the contractual instrument through which a thematic audiovisual communication service is established in accordance with the provisions of Organic Law No. 12–05 of 18 Safar 1433 corresponding to 12 January 2012. However, the text does not specify the licensing authority responsible for granting this authorisation, whether it is the relevant ministry, the prime minister, or a higher regulatory authority. This raises questions



about the regulatory authority's powers regarding the licensing process, in line with the spirit of the legislation.

The legislative text also confirmed the establishment of the Audiovisual Regulatory Authority previously referred to in the 2012 law. The 2014 law provided further detail regarding its composition, which consists of nine members appointed by a presidential decree. The President of the Republic appoints six members of the authority, including its president, while the two chambers of parliament may propose the remaining members. The legal composition of this authority has been subject to significant criticism because of its lack of independence because of its appointment-based system.

On the basis of the foregoing, the law does not address or focus on sources of information. Instead, the legislature concentrated on the technical, organisational, and administrative aspects of audiovisual activity, such as licensing procedures, the establishment of channels, regulatory authorities, broadcasting conditions, and systems of sanctions, while neglecting the editorial and informational dimension, which should ensure the freedom to obtain information and transmit it to the public.

The legal text resembles regulatory administrative law more than media law aimed at protecting freedom of expression and the diversity of information sources.

Despite these shortcomings, the Audiovisual Law of 2014 may nevertheless be considered a significant development within the Algerian sector, as it defined the principal parameters governing the operation of audiovisual media in both the public and private sectors (Ibrahim & Belkassi, 2020, p. 85). However, Dr Redouane Boujemaa argues that the authorities, in preparing to open the audiovisual sector to investment, will most likely reproduce the same experience observed in the written press. According to this view, the central objective remains the management of media in its various forms as an instrument for maintaining the existing political order. The political system, therefore, reproduces itself and seeks to prevent the media from becoming an independent authority capable of exercising oversight and mediation. The strategic objective of the authorities is thus to avoid any transition toward a genuine democratic process that would impose popular sovereignty and legitimacy (Boujemaa, 2016, pp. 189–190).

5. Sources of Information in the Organic Media Law of 2023

Media Law Nos. 23–14 was issued in response to specific social, economic, and political circumstances, particularly following the adoption of the Constitution of 2020, which defined the general framework of society and state institutions. Subsequent organic laws and regulatory texts provided the details, foundations, and mechanisms governing practical implementation. The legislative text also introduced amendments to the Organic Media Law of 2012 and the Law relating to Audiovisual Activity of 2014, particularly to strengthen guarantees of freedom of opinion and expression and to respond to citizens' expectations in light of rapid technological developments in media and communication.



The legal text is composed of seven chapters containing fifty-five articles. With respect to the provisions introduced by the legislature concerning sources of information and the right to access and circulation of information, which constitutes the central focus of this study, Article 32 of Organic Law 23–14 stipulates that public bodies, administrations, and institutions must guarantee journalists the right to access information within the framework of the Constitution, the provisions of this organic law, and the applicable legislation (Official Gazette, 2023). However, the article does not clearly specify the mechanisms that guarantee citizens' right to know news and information, particularly given the following article's establishment of conditions under which access to and circulation of information may be restricted. Article 33 states that journalists have the right to access sources of information except when the news concerns the following matters:

- National defence secrecy as defined in the applicable legislation
- The security of the state, national sovereignty, national unity, or territorial integrity
- The confidentiality of preliminary and judicial investigations
- The legitimate interests of institutions in cases where their stability may be threatened
- The private life and rights of others

Through these provisions, the legislature reproduces the same conditions previously contained in earlier laws, which place journalists before numerous challenges and obstacles in seeking and disseminating information. This raises questions regarding the actual guarantee of access to information, particularly since these terms remain broad and insufficiently defined.

The Algerian legislature has also expanded the scope of secrecy applied to numerous categories of information and documents under the justification of national security and the supreme interests of the state. Consequently, there is an urgent need in Algerian law to strike a balance between the public's right to know and the authorities' right to impose confidentiality on certain types of information.

An examination of the legislative text indicates that it does not introduce a complete transformation of the Organic Media Law of 2012 but rather limited amendments. This is evident in Article 55, which states that all provisions contrary to this organic law are repealed, particularly Organic Law No. 12–05 dated 12 January 2012, which is related to the media, while its implementing texts remain in force until the establishment of the regulatory provisions stipulated by this law.

The law also contains certain terms characterised by ambiguity and flexible wording that may be subject to varying interpretations. Moreover, other provisions anticipate the issuance of future regulatory texts and decrees governing the sector, which is a positive development for professionals within the field.

Following the adoption of the Organic Media Law of 2023, two additional laws concerning the written press, electronic press, and audiovisual activity as complementary legal instruments



supporting its provisions were issued. The first law focused on the declaration system regulating the written and electronic press and established the Authority for the Regulation of the Written and Electronic Press.

The legislature also emphasised in the legislative text issued on 2 December 2023 the obligation of legal deposit while regulating the responsibility of the publication director, the rights of journalists and media institutions, and judicial guarantees in cases of publication and defamation.

The law on audiovisual activity issued on the same date prohibits media ownership concentration. It also amended the status of the Audiovisual Regulatory Authority by granting it a specific institutional character and assigning it additional responsibilities, including the regulation and monitoring of audiovisual communication services transmitted via the internet in addition to traditional audiovisual broadcasting services.

Despite the provisions in the legislative text, its content requires periodic review to accommodate technological developments and new media, particularly the emergence of artificial intelligence and its rapid integration into the sector.

Following the examination of the legal provisions and the extensive analysis of the sources of information and the right to access them, the development of legislative texts in Algeria between 1990 and 2023 reflects a formal evolution in the recognition of the right to access information. However, an effective regulatory and legal framework capable of guaranteeing the exercise of this right in a free and responsible manner has not yet been established. The Algerian legislature continues to adopt secrecy as the rule and transparency as the exception. In contrast, the contemporary audiovisual media environment requires deeper legislative updating to ensure balance, particularly with the emergence of digital audiovisual media and artificial intelligence.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the issue of information sources and their access constitutes one of the most significant challenges facing the audiovisual media sector in Algeria, despite technological transformations and the openness of the media landscape since the sector's liberalisation in 2012. Analysis of legal texts reveals that the legislative framework regulating the right to access information remains insufficiently implemented, as the legislature has merely acknowledged the right without establishing clear mechanisms for its enforcement. Moreover, the legal provisions addressing the protection of sources or defining legal exceptions are formulated in broad and ambiguous terms, allowing multiple interpretations and placing journalists under legal and administrative constraints that limit their ability to access or protect information. This situation confirms the necessity for a thorough revision of these legal texts. Hence, strengthening the professionalism of audiovisual media in Algeria requires comprehensive legal, regulatory, and professional reforms that restore citizens' right to



information and guarantee journalists the freedom to access it within a framework of responsibility and transparency.

On the basis of these findings, the study recommends the following:

- *-The enactment of a specific law guaranteeing the right of access to information in line with international experiences, clearly defining the obligations of public institutions, the rights of journalists, and mechanisms for appeal in cases of refusal or nondisclosure.
- *-The revision of ambiguous and unclear legal provisions, particularly those related to professional secrecy and the restrictions or exceptions that undermine its protection, ensuring that they are precisely defined and not used to restrict journalists.
- *-Strengthening the independence of the Audiovisual Regulatory Authority and expanding its powers to monitor respect for the right to access information by media institutions and public bodies.
- *-Providing journalists with legal and professional training concerning the management and protection of information sources in accordance with international standards.
- *-Ensuring the independence of newsrooms within television channels from political or economic influence to enhance the credibility of information and the quality of media services.
- *- Promotion of institutional transparency through the regular and open publication of official information on public platforms, enabling journalists to access and circulate information with greater flexibility and efficiency.

References

- Algerian Democratic and Popular Republic. (1982). *Law No. 82-01 relating to information*. Official Gazette of the Algerian Republic, No. 06.
- Algerian Democratic and Popular Republic. (1990). *Law No. 90-07 relating to information*. Official Gazette of the Algerian Republic, No. 14.
- Algerian Democratic and Popular Republic. (2012). *Organic Law No. 12-05 relating to information*. Official Gazette of the Algerian Republic, No. 02.
- Algerian Democratic and Popular Republic. (2014). *Law No. 14-04 relating to audiovisual activity*. Official Gazette of the Algerian Republic, No. 12.
- Algerian Democratic and Popular Republic. (2023). *Organic Law No. 23-14 relating to information*. Official Gazette of the Algerian Republic, No. 56.
- Algerian Democratic and Popular Republic. (2023). *Law on the written press and electronic press*. Official Gazette of the Algerian Republic, No. 77.
- Algerian Democratic and Popular Republic. (2023). *Law relating to audiovisual activity*. Official Gazette of the Algerian Republic, No. 77.
- Al Shamsi, I. A. (1999). *The making of news reporting*. Al Maaref Printing Press.
- Aires, A. (2001). *Media networks* (F. Shahin, Trans.). Oweidat Publishing.



- Othman, B. (2008). *The Algerian journalist's right to access and protect sources of news: An applied descriptive study on a sample of media journalists* (Master's thesis, University of Algiers Benyoucef Benkhedda).
- Kadem, J. (2021). Legislative treatment of the Organic Media Law 2012: A critical and analytical study of the law. *Al Naqid Journal for Political Studies*, 5(2), 499–527.
- Jargis, H. M., & Qasim, B. (n.d.). *Sources of information in the field of media and mass communication*—Alexandria Centre for Cultural Media and Libraries.
- Nasr, H. M. (2003). *The internet, media, and electronic journalism*. Al Falah Library for Publishing and Distribution.
- Abdel Jabbar, H. (2009). *Trends in modern and contemporary media*. Osama Publishing House.
- Ibrahimi, H., & Belkassi, K. (2020). Audiovisual regulation in Algeria: An analytical study of the audiovisual law of 2014. *Journal of Communication and Journalism*.
- Hassan, K. S. (2006). Levels of credibility of Egyptian media among the public. *Egyptian Journal of Media Research*, 26.
- Ibrahim, H. I. (2008). *Introduction to legal sciences: The general theory of law*. University Publications Office.
- Boujemaa, R. (2006). Media in Algeria: Tensions between profession and legislation. *Riwaq Arabi Journal*, 44.
- Boujemaa, R. (2016). *The media system in Algeria from 1962 to 2016: A study of the triad of the political system, legislative framework, and economic model*. Rawafed Publishing and Distribution.
- Zekar, Z. (n.d.). *Introduction to communication and media studies*. Intellectual Radiation Centre for Studies and Research.
- Ben Bouza, S. (1996). Algerian media policy: Theoretical foundations and practice. *Algerian Journal of Communication*, 13.
- Dridi, A. (2017–2018). *Mechanisms of regulation and ethics of audiovisual media practice: A critical study of the content of Algerian laws*—Department of Media and Communication.
- Bekadouri, A. (2017). Ethics of the written press profession through Algerian legislation and media laws. *Cultural Dialogue Journal*.
- Al Nawaiseh, G. A. (2009). *Sources of information in libraries and information centres with special reference to reference books*. Safaa Publishing and Distribution.
- Tuwati, F. Z. (2024). *Public service in Algerian television channels: A comparative study between public and private media* (University of Algiers 3).
- Shalabi, K. (1989). *Dictionary of media terminology*. Dar Al Shorouk.
- Bousif, L. (2014). Challenges of the audiovisual sector under media pluralism: A study of Algerian media legislation. *Journal of Communication and Journalism*, 1(1).



- Grawitz, M. (1993). *Methods of social sciences: Book two, The logic of research in the social sciences* (S. Ammar, Trans.). Arab Organisation for Education, Culture and Science, Arab Centre for Arabisation, Translation, Authorship and Publication.
- Muawad, M., & Imam, A. S. (2012). *Journalistic editing techniques*. Modern Book House.
- Hijab, M. M. (2003). *Media encyclopedia* (Vol. 6). Dar Al Fajr for Publishing and Distribution.
- Almaany Dictionary. (n.d.). *Comprehensive Arabic dictionary*.
<https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar>
- France 24. (2025). Algeria moves towards adopting a new law strengthening media oversight.
<https://shorturl.at/oudgZ>
- Garram, I. (1998). *Terminologie juridique dans la législation algérienne*. Palais du Livre.
- Danesi, M. (2009). *Dictionary of media and communication*. M. E. Sharpe.
- Versel, M. (1996). Journalistic credibility: A semiotic issue. *Communication et Organisation*.