

**FREE**

**THE MANUAL**



**MARCH**

**CENSORSHIP IN LEBANON**

An Uncensored Look



**INSIGHTS, FACTS, STATISTICS  
ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CENSORSHIP IN  
LEBANON**

# THE LAWS ON CENSORSHIP

## CINEMA



- Decision number 234 L. R. of July 1934 made by the High Commissioner related to the prohibition of filming without the authorization of the General Security.
- Law of November 27, 1947, submitting films to prior censorship by the General Security.

### LOCAL MOVIES:

According to Law n.234, producers must obtain a filming permit from General Security before shooting local movies; the aforementioned filming permit is required to obtain any form of financial assistance from the Ministry of Culture for producing films as well as to obtain a screening permit for the film upon completion.

General Security may censor scenes or sentences by crossing them out on the said film's script and by getting the director to sign on the changes as proof of approval. Moreover, a statement made by the film director is added to the filming permit in which he claims that the film production does not constitute any damage to Lebanon nor does it upset political or military interests.

Scenes related to or that feature members of the army must be authorized by the army Chief Commander.

After getting authorization from General Security and the army, the producer must receive an approval from the municipality. The municipality's approval is needed following the army and General Security's approval. It must be noted that the process of obtaining prior censorship has been granted to the Publications Department of the General Security with no legal basis. As a matter of fact, the only legal text regulating this form of prior-censorship can be found in a 1934 decree in which the High Com-

missioner vests power to this specific post and would become void with the cancellation of the post itself. No other legal text or provision was subsequently enacted to relegate the power from the former authority to any other existing authority today.

### SCREENING STAGE:

Once filming is completed and has undergone prior censorship, the film goes through another censorship process should it be seen as breaching the initial agreement at the script reading stage.

The law of 27 November 1947 states that movies cannot be distributed nor shown to the public without authorization from the Directorate of General Security. This rule applies to the showing of foreign and local movies in cinemas.

Should General Security find that the film or part of the film's screening be prevented, the film will be shown to the Censorship Commission - made up of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Finance and Social Affairs, the General Security, the Ministry of Culture - who will file a report. However, the final decision for any film's screening is officially issued by the Ministry of Interior.

### The article 4 of the law stipulates that the censors follow the following criteria:

- The respect of public order, morals and good ethics
- The respect of the public sensitivities, avoiding sectarianism and racism issues
- The protection of public authority
- To fight all issues not aligned with Lebanon's interests

**Article 2:** the General Security controls movies imported from abroad. Nonetheless, there



is no written terms depicting the reasons for which certain movies are not to be authorized. .

Films imported from abroad are initially sent to the General Security in a sealed package; once custom duties are remitted, the films obtain an import permit. Any films that are rejected by General Security are returned to the Customs Department in a sealed envelope along with a release form.

Finally, the Article 11 from the law stipulates that this law cancels the Decree No 165 published on July 1934 and the Decree No 145 published on June 1941.

## THEATER



- Under the Decree No2 published on January 1st, 1977 any theatrical presentation should be authorized by the General Security

The mentioned Decree was decided in times of war under exceptional circumstances.

Prior censorship on theatrical works is controlled by the General Security who can reject or approve a theatrical performance, the entire play or parts of it. There are no criteria, standards or guidelines for censoring theatrical works or performances, thus allowing the General Security more freedom to exercise censorship.

Therefore, prior to staging a theatrical per-



formance one must first submit an application along with three copies of the intended play's script to General Security's Department of Publications, who also exercises prior censorship control over film screenplays and issues filming permits.

If improvised scenes added to the approved screenplay are deemed by General Security a violation to the initial terms of the prior permits, removing or and/or re-editing scenes may be required for final clearance.

## PRESS



- Law of September 2, 1948
- Decree Law of April 13, 1953
- Law of May 30, 1962 concerning a ban infringing a foreign Head of State
- Law of September 14, 1962
- Decree Law number 55 of August 5, 1967 relating to the prohibition of printing and publishing publications prior to the authorization of the General Security
- Decree Law number 104/77 of June 30, 1977 relating to press offenses and amended by Law number 300 of March 17, 1994

The law in Lebanon states that publishing cases require prior licensing or permission. This prior licensing has somewhat turned into a sort of privileged or special license to publish, referred to as an "imtiyaz" (franchise) license.

The 1962 Law subjects all periodical press and publications to a publishing license from the Ministry of Information following a consultation with the Lebanese Press Union; publications fall into two categories: political pub-



lications that are subject to the “imtiyaz” system and non-political publications that have no restrictions published publication. In fact, licensing for a non-political publication remains unrestricted whereas a permit for any political periodical publication may not be issued when licenses have been previously supplied for 25 political daily publications or 20 periodical publications of which 15 are Arabic daily publications or 12 periodical Arabic publications. As a consequence to enforcing these legal provisions, the regulations for issuing and obtaining a political publishing license have turned into a special concession, or imtiyaz status, enjoyed by those who obtained a license before 1952 or by those who had a license transferred due to some specific absence or special waiver.

In conclusion, restricting new licensing by these forms of concessions represent the most basic infringement on press freedoms and has become a fundamental factor in restricting journalism in Lebanon to newspapers that have or are able to acquire a certain amount of capital.

### NON-PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS:

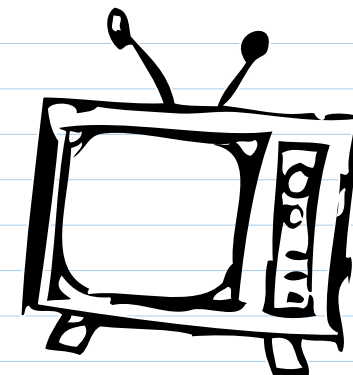
- Decree Law Number 55 of August 5, 1967

Even though the 1962 Law did not place any restrictions on the freedom to publish with regard to non-periodical publications (including books), a legislative decree issued on August 5, 1967, requires that flyers, printed declarations, printed communications material, and the like, to obtain a (prior) publishing permit from General Security.<sup>33</sup> What is important to note with regard to the 1967 provisions – which were issued in the context of the 1967 War and defeat – is that these provisions granted General Security extensive discretionary powers in accepting or rejecting a prior publishing permit application independent of any specific criteria, legal guidelines or regulations. These provisions also stipulated that if a decision for a publishing permit is not issued within one week from the date the application was submitted, the publishing permit was to be considered rejected.

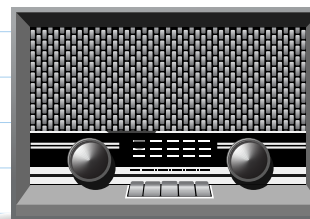
## RADIO AND TELEVISION



- Law number 382 of November 4, 1994
- Decree Law number 7997 of February 29, 1996
- Law number 7276 of August 6, 1961



**Freedom of the audiovisual media is subject to different forms of censorship controls and is under the law number 382 published on 04/11/1994:**



- Prior censorship is exercised by General Security with regards to certain broadcast media material.
- Prior censorship is applied only to documentary films, series or feature films.
- Programs that are based on live broadcast such as news broadcasts and

the reports and interviews included in such broadcasts are exempt from prior censorship, as are political talk shows, entertainment programs or programs of social nature that are filmed live in the studio.

- Administrative post-censorship is exercised by the Ministry of Information and the National Council for Audiovisual Media: these controls include the right not to renew a license and the right to halt a broadcast corporation’s broadcast,
- Post-censorship is exercised by the courts in cases where broadcasts have been charged with certain violations.

## MUSIC AND IMPORTED DVDS




The General Security does not take the time to listen to each song and music work individually to decide whether or not to completely or partially ban the albums, songs or censor the album cover but focuses on the song titles, the band name and/or the album cover.

It is important to note that imported CDs and DVDs are either confiscated by the General Security or have some tracks crossed off with a black marker. Sometimes part of the CDs or DVDs from a box-set can also be confiscated, and the box-set sold incomplete.

Worst of all, what is being banned cannot be traced back as no record gets filed for each material being rejected.



# [[ CENSORSHIP IN LEBANON ]]

TOO MANY CENSORSHIP BODIES	TOO MANY VAGUE CENSORSHIP LAWS	UNFAIR CENSORSHIP PRACTICES
<p><b>LEGAL CENSORSHIP AUTHORITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Movie Censorship Commission</li><li>Council of Ministers </li><li>Ministry of Information</li><li>Minister of Interior</li><li>General Security</li></ul> <p><b>NON-LEGAL CENSORSHIP AUTHORITIES</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Political Parties</li><li>The National Audiovisual Media Council</li><li>Foreign Embassies</li><li>The Catholic Information Center</li><li>Dar El Fatwa</li></ul>	<p>Different censorship laws that governs the theater, the movies, the books, the press and the music</p> <p><b>VAGUE OR NO CRITERIAS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Disrespecting public order, morals, and good ethics</li><li>Showing contempt to any religion recognized by the state</li><li>Insulting the dignity of the Head of State</li><li>Exposing the state to Danger</li><li>Disturbing public peace</li><li>Inciting Sectarianism</li><li>Offending the sensitives of the public</li><li>Spreading propaganda against Lebanon's interest</li></ul>	<p><b>THE SAME MATERIAL COULD BE ALLOWED ON ONE MEDIUM AND CENSORED ON ANOTHER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>"No record" policy</li><li>Raids and Pressure</li><li>Interference from any authority in the country</li><li>Arbitrary, subjective decisions</li></ul> 

Lined writing area for notes.

## PROPOSED LAW AMENDMENTS

- Consolidate all laws related to censorship under one single law (publications, movies, theater).
- Abolish the prior censorship practice on movies, publications and theater.
- Adopt the rating system by setting up a specific Commission formed of lawyers, artists, academics who will classify the art works and/or publications.
- Unify both Publications and Audio-visual laws so that crimes related to media would be united and therefore, there would be a unique Law of media.
- Seek to identify the same legal frameworks for political and non-political publications.
- Replace the prior authorization principle by a pre-notification one.
- Abolish of prior censorship on imported publications made by the General Security and the Ministry of Information.
- Abolish of penalty of imprisonment related to publication crimes.
- Abolish of pre-trial detention of audio-visual journalists.
- Provide three degrees to trial instead of two.
- Interpret accurately crime related terminology in order to limit the expansion in the application.
- Establish a special body or entity responsible for the categorization of television shows according to age.

## أهم الإقتراحات الواجب تطبيقها

- توحيد جميع القوانين المتعلقة بالرقابة (منشورات ، سينما، مسرحيات، كتب)
- إلغاء الرقابة المسبقة على الأفلام والمنشورات والمسرحيات
- إنشاء هيئة خاصة تتولى تصنيف الأعمال الفنية والمنشورات على أساس معيار السن. وتكون مؤلفة من خبراء قانونيين وفنيين واكاديميين
- توحيد قانون المطبوعات وقانون المرئي والمسموع بحيث توحد الجرائم المتعلقة بالإعلام، ويصبح هناك قانون إعلام جامع.
- السعي الى تحديد نفس الأطر القانونية للمطبوعات السياسية وغير السياسية.
- تبديل الإذن المسبق بمبدأ التبليغ.
- إلغاء الرقابة المسبقة على المطبوعات المستوردة التي تمارسها الأمن العام ووزارة الإعلام.
- إلغاء عقوبة الحبس بجرائم المطبوعات.
- إلغاء التوقيف الإحتياطي لصحافيي المرئي والمسموع.
- تأمين ثلاث درجات للمحاكمة بدل إثنين.
- تفسير بشكل دقيق المصطلحات المتعلقة بالجرائم للحد من التوسع في التطبيق.
- إنشاء هيئة خاصة تتولى تصنيف الأعمال التلفزيونية بحسب العمر.



**BANNED**



**BTO'TA3 AW MA BTO'TA3 / 2011**

**Reason for censorship:** Does not portray reality

Bad artistic quality

**Censorship Entity:**

General Security



**إنت بتعرف؟**

**الرقابة على المسرح... دون معايير واضحة**

يتولّى الأمن العام الرقابة المسبقة على الأعمال المسرحية بموجب مرسوم اشتراعي صادر عام ١٩٧٧، المرسوم منح الأمن العام حق رفض العرض أو الموافقة كلياً أو جزئياً عليه، دون أن يتضمّن أيّ معايير أو مبادئ توجيهية مُفسّرة، مانحاً بذلك هامشاً واسعاً للأمن العامّ في هذا الرقابة المسبقة.

تجدر الإشارة إلى عدم وجود أي مهلة زمنية للبتّ في طلب عرض العمل المسرحي. ويرى عاملون في المسرح أن الرقيب يستفيد من هذا الواقع، (أي غياب أي مهلة ملزمة)، لتجنّب عرض بعض الأعمال المسرحية دون الحاجة إلى إصدار قرار صريح بالمنع.



ALI FERZAT

ما هي حرية التعبير؟ من دون حق  
الإساءة، فهي تختفي من الوجود  
سلمان رشدي

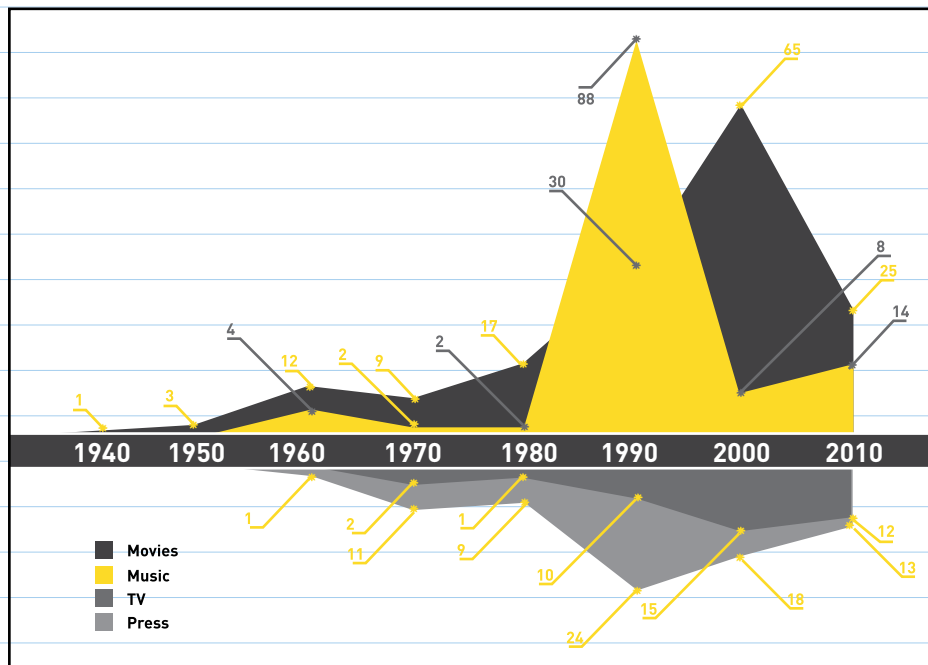


PIERRE SADEK

In the end, you can't censor the truth,  
specially when it comes packaged in  
hot music.  
Jay-Z

# A HISTORY OF CENSORSHIP

## CENSORED MATERIAL PER DECADE SINCE THE 1940'S



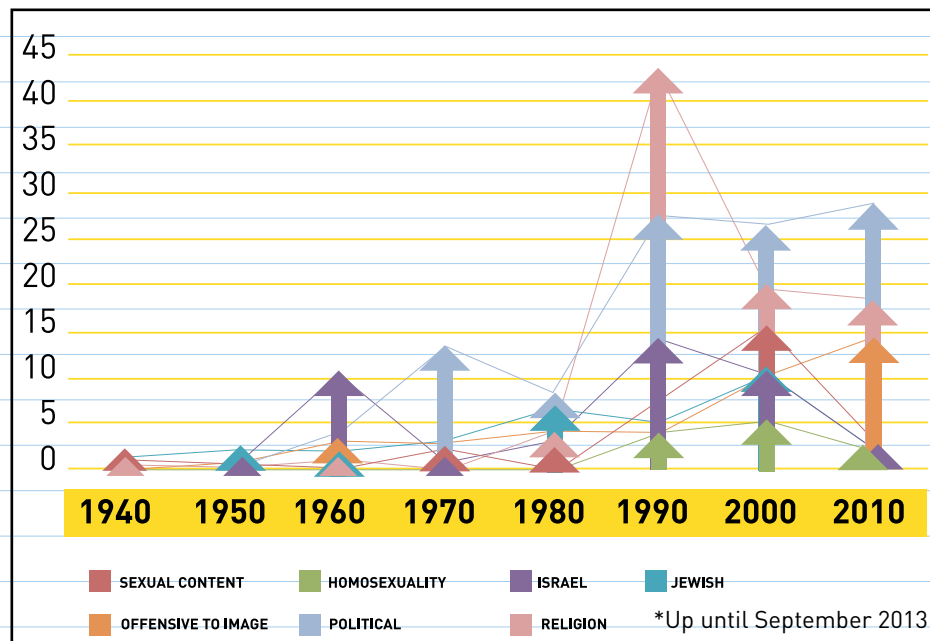
The graph above illustrates the evolution of censored movies, music, TV and press-related material from the 1940s until our present decade.

Movies were the most censored material of the 1950's, the 1960's, the 1980's and the 2000 with respectively 3, 12, 17 and 65 reported movies censored; Music was the most censored material of the 90's with a total of 88 reported music-related materials censored; Press was the most censored material of the 70s where 11 incidents related to censorship were reported.

The highest amount of reported censored movies was 65 incidents (reached in the 2000), of censored music was 88 (reached in the 90's), of censored material related to TV was 15 (reached in the 2000) and of censored press was 24 (reached in the 90's).

# REASONS FOR CENSORING IN LEBANON PER DECADE

Following a thorough research led by the MARCH team, censorship reasons can be grouped into seven categories:



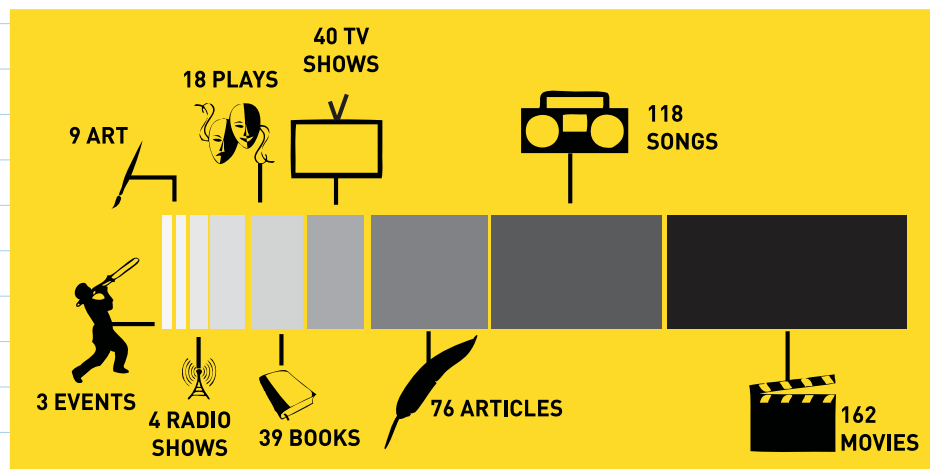
Censorship has evolved throughout the years in no specific manner: political reasons were behind censoring material in the 1940's and 1950's whereas "Israel" was the main reason for halting freedom of expression in the 1960's. The 1970's, 1980's, 2000's and 2010's saw "political reasons" restrict freedom of expression while the 1990s was an era where "religion" was the main reason behind the fate of works of art and literature. Censorship for sexual content is on the low nowadays, whereas censorship for political or image offensive reasons know a record high.

There is no particular tendency in which material is being censored throughout the years, mostly due to the fact that even though most works are banned for the mentioned above reasons, their censorship is completely arbitrary and random whereby a work that was banned one month can be authorized the following month, depending on the employee viewing it, most of the time without leaving a written trace of the ban.

There is more than one way to burn a book, and the world is full of people running about with lit matches.  
Ray Bradbury

# CENSORSHIP LIST

## FROM THE 1940'S



The censorship list represents various materials that were affected by censorship from 1943 until 2013 ranked in ascending order.

3 events, 4 radio shows and 9 works of art that we currently know of were affected by censorship since 1943.

Moreover, 18 plays, 39 books and 40 TV shows have been victims of censorship bodies whereas 76 press articles, 118 songs and 162 movies were struck by a form of censorship.

### NUMEROUS UNREPORTED CASES OF CENSORSHIP

It must be noted that both charts are based on data gathered from available information regarding censorship incidents. For instance, one may argue that the first three decades shown in the graph "Censored material per decade since the 1950s (ou 40s)" were not exposed to a significant amount of censorship incidents. This is due to undisclosed censorship incidents and lack of access to information back then; the latter can be applied to the rest of the decades, including our present time, where many censorship incidents remain unreported and reasons for censoring material unjustified. Censorship bodies find no obligation in exposing any censorship incident, let alone explaining the reasons behind censoring certain materials.

Nevertheless, both charts remain a sufficient tool to better understand the evolution of censorship in Lebanon and how it can keep society in the dark.

**BANNED**



**FAYROUZ / 1969**

**Reason for censorship:** Political

**Censorship Entity:** The Lebanese Government

**BANNED**



**BEIRUT HOTEL / 2011**  
**Reason for censorship:** Political  
**Censorship Entity:** General Security

*I may not agree with what you are saying but I will defend to death your right to say it.*  
Voltaire



**BANNED**



**L'INCONNU DU LAC / 2013**

**Reason for censorship:** Homosexuality

**Censorship Entity:** General Security

**BANNED**



**I OFFERED YOU PLEASURE**  
**WAHABTOUKA EL MOUTAA / 2013**  
**Reason for censorship:** Eroticism / Religion  
**Censorship Entity:** General Security

**BANNED**

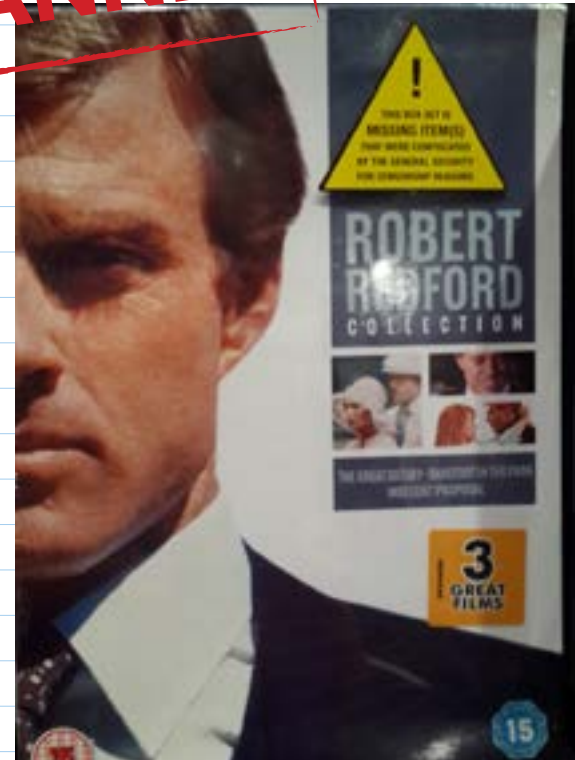


**OH MY FATHER, I AM YUSIF / 1999**

**Reason for censorship:** Religion

**Censorship Entity:** Dar Al Fatwa

**BANNED**



**ROBERT REDFORD COLLECTION / 2013**

**Reason for censorship:** Jewish

**Censorship Entity:** General Security

**BANNED**



**VSD MAGAZINE / March 2013**

**Reason for censorship:** Religion

**Censorship Entity:** General Security



Freedom of press, if it means anything at all, means the freedom to criticize and oppose.

George Orwell



**BANNED**



**GRAFFITI / 2011**

**Semaan Khawwam**

**Reason for censorship:** Political /  
Depicting a military figure

**Censorship Entity:** Interior Security

**CENSORED**



### PURE...FRANCE / 2013

Reason for censorship: : Israel  
Censorship Entity:General Security

الرقابة هي للفن كما المشنقة الشعبية هي للعدالة.  
هنري لوييس جتس







# THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF THE LIBERAL OUTLOOK:  
(From "The Best answer to Fanaticism: Liberalism"  
by Philosopher Bertrand Russel)

- 1- Do not feel absolutely certain of anything
- 2- Do not think it worth -while to produce belief by concealing evidence, for the evidence is sure to come to light
- 3- Never try to discourage thinking, for you are sure to succeed.
- 4- When you meet with opposition ... endeavor to overcome it by argument and not by authority, for a victory dependent upon authority is unreal and illusory .
- 5- Have no respect for the authority of others, for there are always contrary authorities to be found
- 6- Do not use power to suppress opinions you think pernicious, for if you do the opinions will suppress you.
- 7- Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.
- 8- Find more pleasure in intelligent dissent than in passive agreement, for, if you value intelligence as you should, the former implies a deeper agreement than the latter.
- 9- Be scrupulously truthful, even when truth is inconvenient, for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.
- 10- Do not feel envious of the happiness of those who live in a fool's paradise, for only a fool will think that it is happiness.

To limit the press is to insult a nation; to prohibit reading of certain books is to declare the inhabitants to be either fools or slaves.  
 Claude Adrien Helvetus

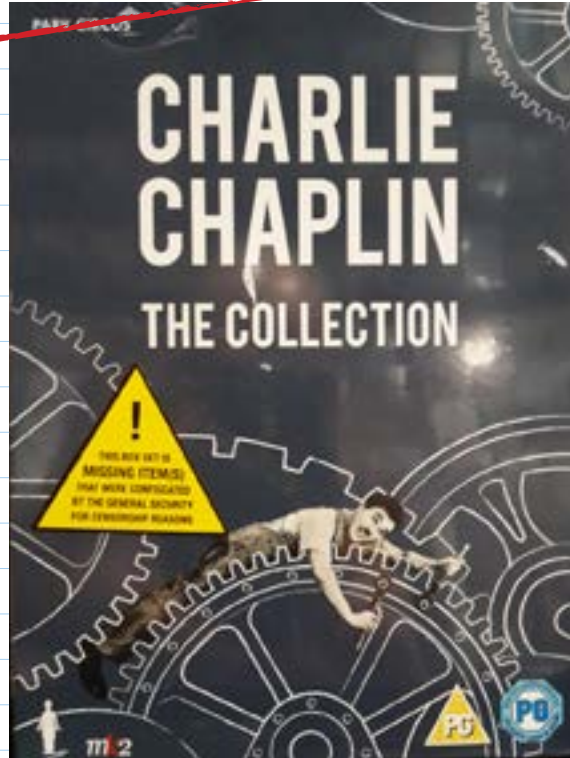
## إنت بتعرف؟

### الرقابة: ممارسة غامضة

الرقابة المسبقة على الأعمال السينمائية والمسرحية باتت ممارسة غامضة يبقى النجاح في توثيقها مبني على تعاون العاملين في هذا المجال. الأمن العام اللبناني لا يعلن عنها ولا يقدم أي وثيقة مكتوبة عن حالة المنع. هو يصدر قراراته فقط في إطار معاملات شخصية نادراً ما تُنشر الا في الحالات التي تُثار إعلامياً بناءً على احتجاج أصحاب العمل ومتابعاتهم لموضوع الرقابة الممارسة على عملهم.



**CENSORED**



**CHARLIE CHAPLIN,  
THE COLLECTION / 2013**

**Reason for censorship:** : Jewish  
**Censorship Entity:** General Security

Our liberty depends on the freedom of press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.

Thomas Jefferson

**إنت بتعرف؟**

دائرة المطبوعات في المديرية العامة للأمن العام تمارس الرقابة الشاملة المسبقة على تصوير مشاهد الأفلام، وفقاً لتعليمات داخلية، ومن دون أيّ سند قانوني. فالنص الوحيد الناظم لهذه الرقابة هو القرار الصادر عن المفوض السامي الفرنسي بتاريخ ١٨-١٠-١٩٣٤ والذي أنط بنفسه هذه الصلاحية، وهو نصّ بات بحكم الملغى منذ إلغاء هذا المنصب، ولكن لم يصدر أيّ قرار ينقل الصلاحية المناطة بالمفوض السامي إلى أيّ هيئة أخرى



نعم  
لحرية التعبير! (\*)

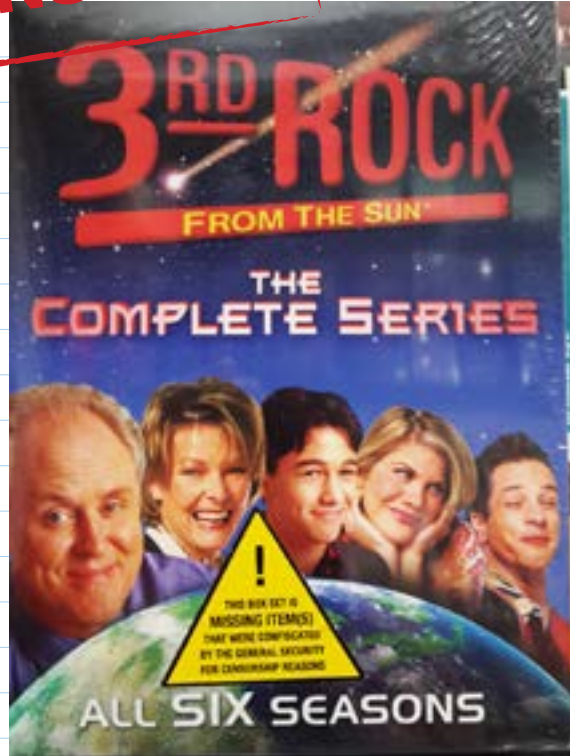


(\*) إنَّ عذراً لتفرض الدولة، ولاة، وائس، ولسيم، ورتس اليهودية، والأدق السنة، والكسبة، والأربيد، ولمان الكريه  
والتشوا، والبالية، والبش، وخالود، وانا، ومام الحرين العربين، والزسب، وخدمة البالية، وارس الألبية، وخالق، وخالق العودية وخالق الأشجار  
وخالق اليهودية، وخالق العودية، وخالق البس، وخالق القاس، وخالق الحسنية، وخالق القاس الحية

The great thing about improvisation is that it allows us to establish an uncensored form of theater. Freedom of speech is absolutely inherent to artistic expression.

Lucien Bourjeily

CENSORED



**3<sup>rd</sup> ROCK FROM THE SUN / 2013**

**Reason for censorship:** Jewish

**Censorship Entity:** General Security



## إنت بتعرف؟

**الرقابة على المسرح وتناقضها مع الدستور اللبناني**  
 وُضع المرسوم الاشتراعي (رقم ٢ الصادر في ١-١-١٩٧٧) خلال فترة الحرب حيث كانت ظروف استثنائية. يتولى الأمن العام بموجب هذا المرسوم الرقابة على المسرح.

في الواقع، يخالف هذا المرسوم الدستور اللبناني الذي يكفل للبنانيين حرّية إبداء الرأي قولاً وكتابة ضمن الحدود القانونية، لأنّ المرسوم المذكور لا يعتمد على أي نص قانوني.

**CENSORED**



**Marilyn Monroe,  
The Premiere Collection / 2013**

**Reason for censorship:** Homosexuality  
**Censorship Entity:** General Security

تعبيراً لمساندتهم لجريدة النهار،  
حجز الإعلاميون «مساحات بيضاء» في  
الصحيفة في العام ١٩٧٤، نتيجة حملة  
الحكومة على حرية الصحافة التي بدأت  
عام ١٩٧٣  
سلمان رشدي

# WHO ARE WE?

MARCH's mission is to «Educate, motivate, and empower the Lebanese society and especially the youth to recognize its right to freedom of expression, instill a genuine respect and acceptance of differences, and expose the negative effect of censorship on society».

## WE AIM TO:

### Educate, motivate and empower the youth to recognize their right to freedom of expression

- Raise awareness among the Lebanese society, focusing on the youth, about the importance of the right of free expression
- Militate to translate this right to free expression into laws that will respect it.

### Instill a genuine respect and acceptance of differences

- Raise a tolerant open society and work on a genuine reconciliation among the various communities in Lebanon through creative campaigning, awareness-raising initiatives and focused projects involving dialogue sessions, debate sessions, workshops, and mediation sessions in tense environments.
- Raise a liberal society that respects the law through civic education and civic awareness.

### Expose the negative effect of censorship on society

- Inform the public about any censorship case related to art and culture in order to hold the government accountable for its actions and decisions.
- Fight censorship in all its form on all kind of artistic and cultural works, including lobbying for a new law

We focus our efforts on the youth, who are our best hope for positive change in leadership and who will drive Lebanon's future.

# من نحن؟

تقضي مهمة مارش بتثقيف المجتمع اللبناني و خاصة المجتمع الشبابي وتحفيزه وتمكينه ليعرف حقه بحرية التعبير عن الرأي واحترام نقاط الاختلاف وتقبّلها وعرض آثار الرقابة السلبية على المجتمع.

## فنحن نهدف إلى:

### تثقيف وتحفيز وتمكين الشباب للاعتراف بحقهم في حرية التعبير

- توعية المجتمع اللبناني عامة و الشباب خاصة على أهمية حق حرية التعبير
- المناضلة من أجل ترجمة حق حرية التعبير هذا بقوانين تحترمه

### غرس احترام صادق و حقيقي و قبول الأختلاف

- العمل على انفتاح المجتمع و الوصول الى مصالحة حقيقية بين مختلف الطوائف في لبنان من خلال الحملات و المبادرات التي تنطوي على جلسات حوار و نقاش, ورش عمل و جلسات وساطة في البيئات الحساسة خاصة

- الأستناد الى مجتمع ليبرالي يحترم القانون من خلال التثقيف المدني و التوعية المدنية

### عرض التأثير السلبي للرقابة على المجتمع

- اطلاع الجمهور على حالات الرقابة المتعلقة بالفن و الثقافة للقدرة على محاسبة الدولة على أفعالها و قراراتها

- مكافحة الرقابة على الأعمال الفنية والثقافية بشتى أشكالها، و الضغط لوضع قانون جديد

نركّز عملنا على الشباب الذين يكونون الأمل لإحداث تغيير إيجابي في سدّة القيادة والذين سيوجهون مستقبل لبنان.

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