

IWPR Helps Libyan Media Students Aim High

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Budding journalists learn vital skills during placements in Tunisia.

Five Libyan media studies students have completed the first round of internships sponsored by the University of Tripoli's Media Lab, a facility established in early 2014 in partnership with IWPR to provide practical journalism training.

The internships were the culmination of the first semester of instruction at the Tripoli Media Lab, during which 76 students learnt basic media production techniques for broadcast and print or online journalism.

The students were hosted at IWPR partner media outlets in Tunisia, including Radio 6, Telvsa TV, Mosaïque FM, and Le Maghreb and Akbar El Joumhouriya newspapers. They worked alongside Tunisian journalists to report and produce stories.

"[The interns] really raised our morale with their performance and commitment to the internships, and they gained enormous benefit from this training with Tunisian outlets," said Media Lab coordinator Khaled Gulam. "We're very proud of our students."

For most of the interns, this was their first time in a working newsroom, and they found the experience invaluable.

"I learned multiple journalism skills and how to be engaged on several levels, unlike internships in media outlets in Libya where an intern stagnates at the same place for the entire time," said Aya Jaafari, who interned at Mosaïque FM.

The Tripoli Media Lab is one of two established under a grant from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The second lab, at Zawiya university, is expected to start work in December.

The labs provide facilities previously unavailable in Libya, teaching students and university faculty staff in fully functional TV and radio training studios. At least one more round of internships will take place before the end of the year.

"This practical skills training is crucial for these future journalists, most of whom would have otherwise graduated having never touched a camera or audio recorder, or produced a single story," said IWPR Libya country director Seth Meixner. "Media lab students are gaining experience that is crucial to their future employment, and for the development of the media sector as a whole."

Several of IWPR's Tunisian media partners said they would continue commissioning stories from the interns once they returned to Libya, noting that it was difficult to get objective reporting from a divided country where rival governments are engaged in an increasingly violent power-struggle.

The Tripoli lab opened its second semester in October with a total of 143 students attending both basic journalism skills courses and more specialised print and broadcast media training, as well as a course in popular debate-style programmes.

During November, the students produced a series of short television programmes for this debate component. They took turns in editorial roles and in completing the reports used as the basis for each episode.

"In addition to learning how to present basic arguments and produce reports, students are also learning in-studio interview skills and technical skills," Gulam said.

The Tripoli Media Lab has also begun exploring partnerships with Libyan media outlets and other universities for future training, internship and employment opportunities. Local broadcaster Tobacks TV held two rounds of interviews for prospective student employees at the Tripoli Media Lab studio. The universities of Tripoli and Zaituna have begun talks on opening up the lab to students from outside the Tripoli campus later in the semester.

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