



THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION

# Impact of U.S. Government Funding Suspension on Independent Media in Lebanon

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# 1. Introduction

## Context

The January 23, 2025 decision by the U.S. administration to freeze foreign aid has jeopardized the survival of numerous independent media outlets worldwide. In Lebanon, these outlets play a crucial role in promoting press freedom, investigative journalism, and unbiased reporting—often covering stories that mainstream, politically affiliated, or corporate-funded media may overlook.

When the initial threat of budget cuts surfaced, concerns arose about possible staff layoffs, reduced coverage, and even closures. Although several organizations currently have funding to sustain them for about a year, once these projects end, the pool of available funding sources will shrink. This contraction will heighten competition for resources and reduce opportunities for media outlets to secure financial support.

These circumstances highlight the broader challenges journalism faces, particularly in an era when financial sustainability is increasingly influenced by political and economic factors. This report explores the consequences of the U.S. government’s funding suspension on independent media in Lebanon. It assesses the impact on financial stability, operational capacities, and the future needs of these media organizations.

## Methodology

The findings are based on a [survey](#) distributed to **18** independent media outlets in Lebanon to assess the impact of the U.S. government’s funding suspension. The survey gathered both quantitative and qualitative data on organizational size, primary sources of funding, financial impact, operational changes, and future sustainability needs. Respondents explained how the funding freeze affected their ability to maintain operations, pay staff, and continue producing content. The survey also explored emergency measures, alternative funding approaches, and the broader implications of these financial constraints for press freedom and independent journalism in Lebanon.

It is important to note that some outlets unaffected by the suspension chose not to complete the survey. Consequently, the results reflect only those organizations that experienced varying degrees of impact from the U.S. funding suspension.

## 2. Findings

### General Impact

Survey results indicate that the U.S. government’s funding suspension has had a mixed effect on Lebanon’s independent media outlets (see Figure 1). Of the 18 organizations contacted, **6** reported no adverse impact on their operations, **8** indicated direct financial and operational challenges, and **4** did not respond.

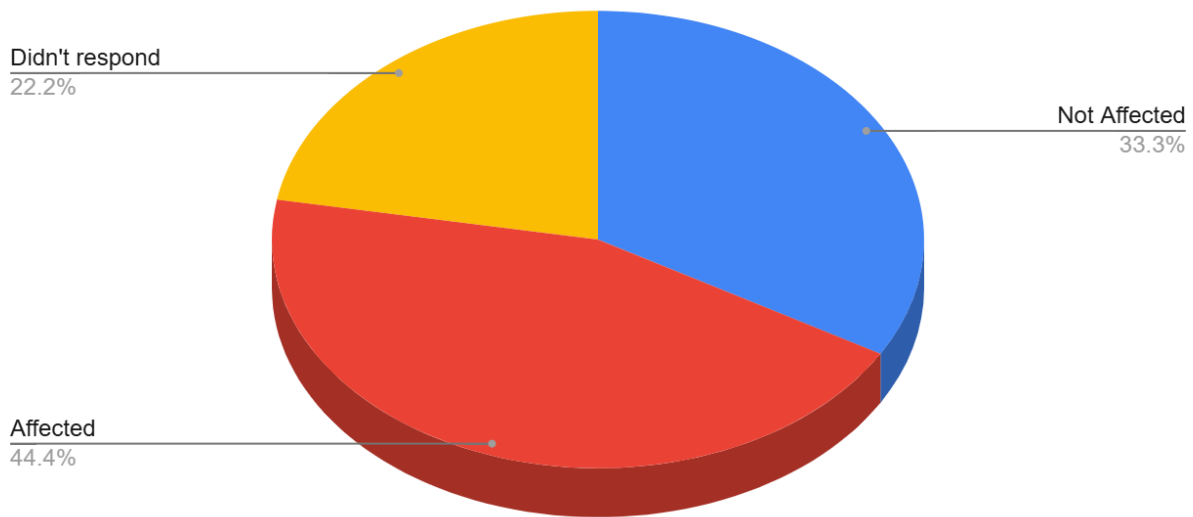


Fig. 1

### Primary Sources of Funding

The survey highlights various primary funding sources (see Figure 2), with government grants being the most frequently mentioned. Some outlets supplement these grants with additional revenue streams, including advertising or subscription fees. Several respondents also reported relying on alternative or “other” sources without providing specific details. Overall, government grants remain central to many of the surveyed organizations, but the decline in available support has led outlets to seek multiple funding avenues.

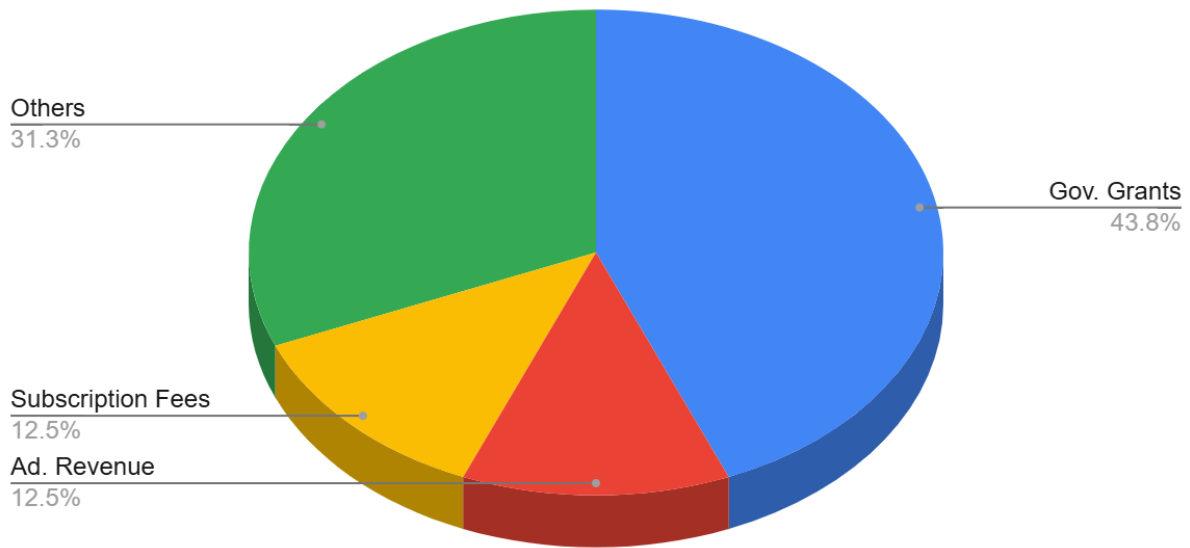


Fig.2

## Impact of Funding Suspension

Of the organizations that felt an impact, some reported slight effects that did not require major adjustments to daily plans, while others needed to reorganize work routines. At least one outlet noted a significant effect requiring substantial changes to its operations and structure (see Figure 3).

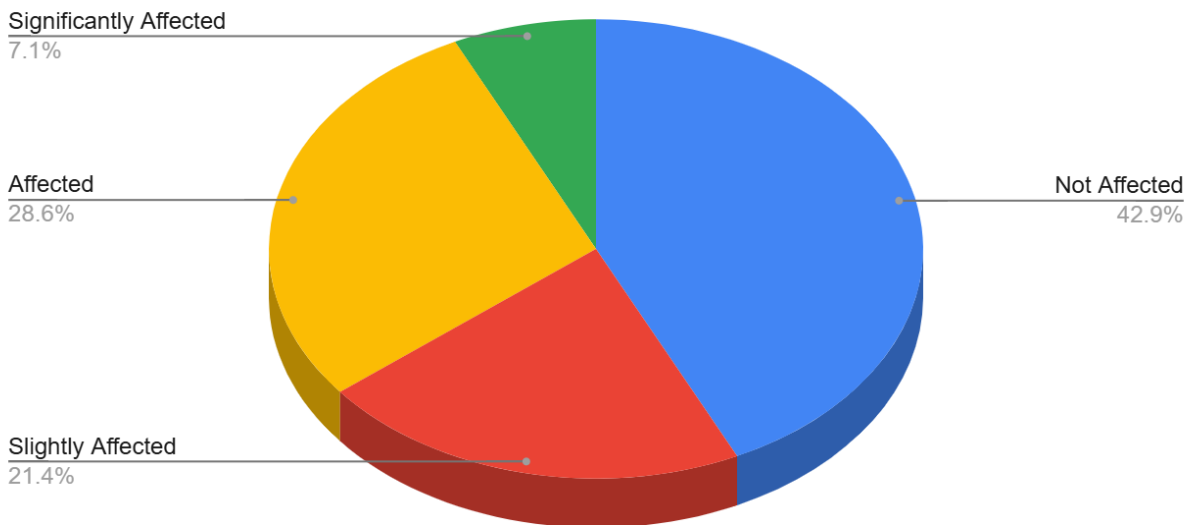


Fig.3

### A- Operational Consequences

A number of outlets stated that many of their activities would be significantly changed or suspended due to the funding suspension. Meanwhile, some indicated that only portions of their activities would be affected, and at least one confirmed that there would be no disruption to its operations (see Figure 4).

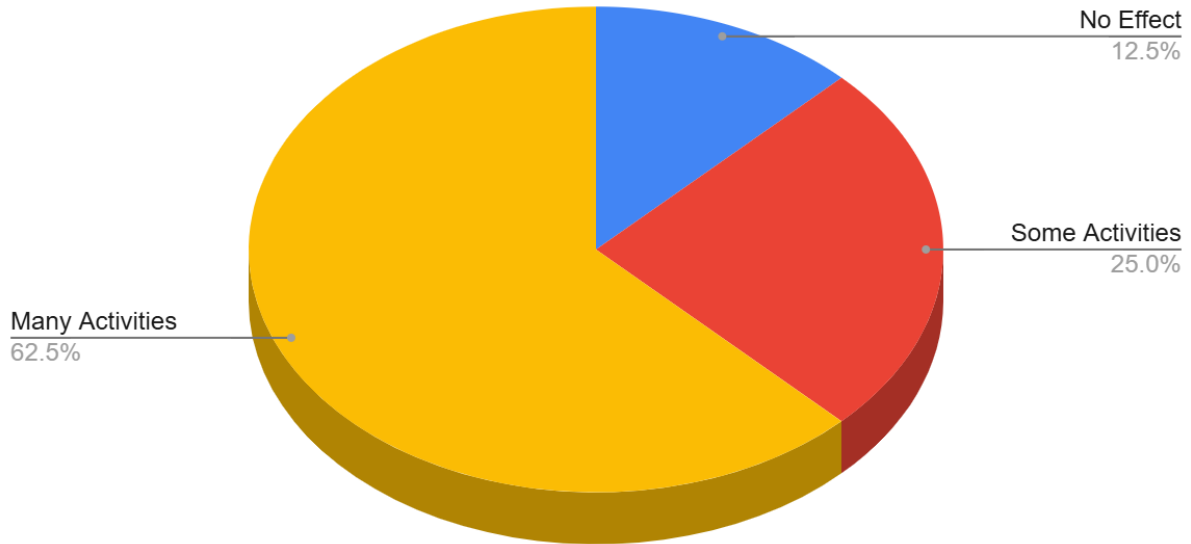


Fig.4

### B- Percentage of Funding Lost

Respondents estimated the share of funding they lost as a result of the suspension. Some reported losses of under 25%, while several indicated losses of between 25% and 50%. A smaller number reported losing more than half of their funding (see Figure 5).

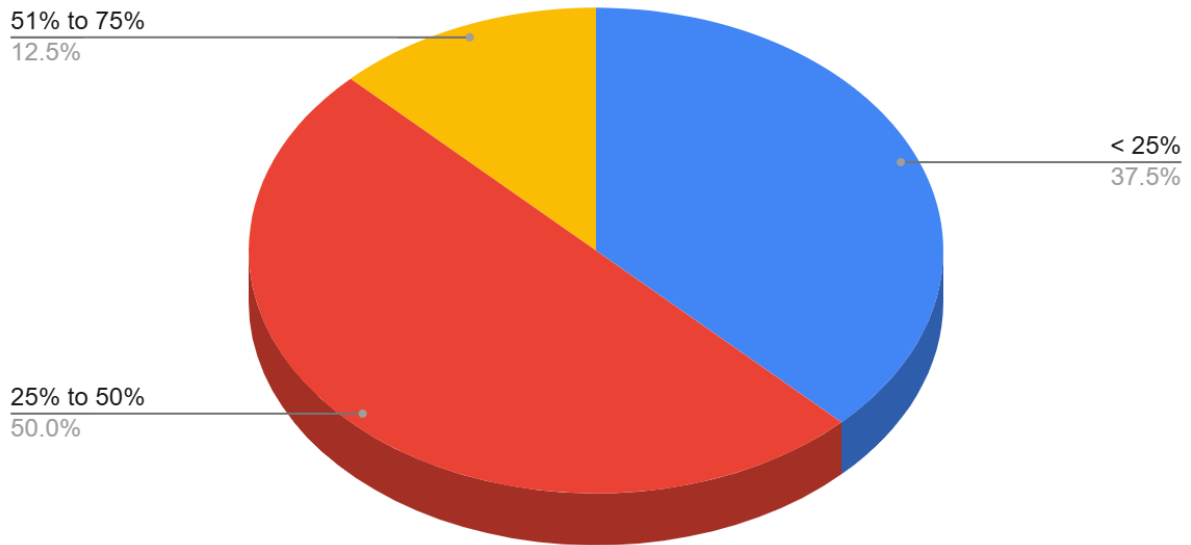


Fig.5

### C. Organizational Challenges and Adjustments

Survey data show that the level of operational difficulty varies widely (see Figure 6). Certain outlets reported little or no noticeable effect, while others experienced substantial challenges—ranging from reduced operational capacity and cutbacks in salaries or benefits to lower content production. Some also highlighted difficulties meeting financial obligations because of the reduced funding.

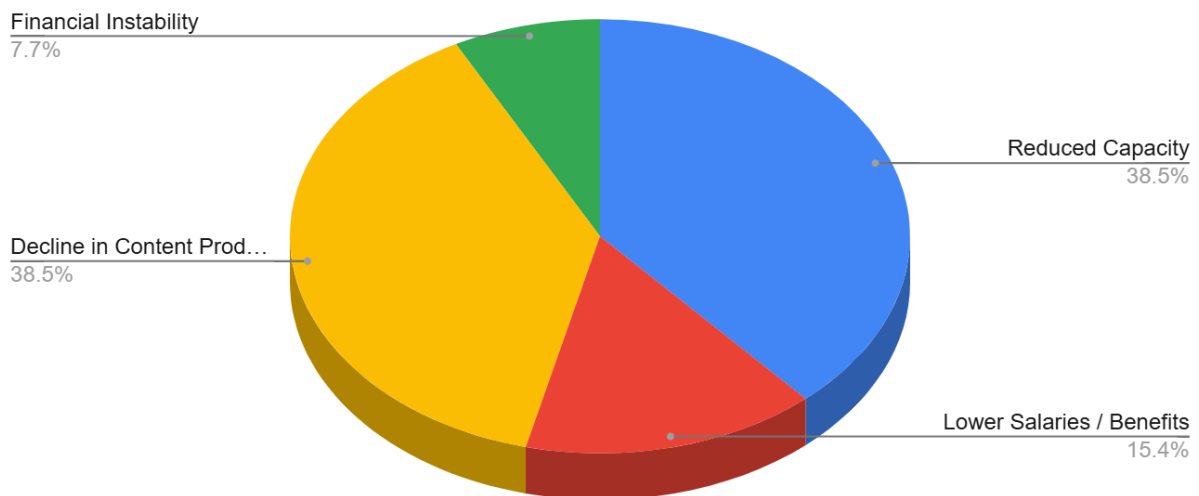


Fig 6

## D. Layoff Projections

Responses regarding potential layoffs were evenly divided (see Figure 7). Half of the outlets anticipating an impact project they will have to reduce staff, but at a relatively small scale – fewer than five employees in each case – while the other half do not foresee any layoffs.

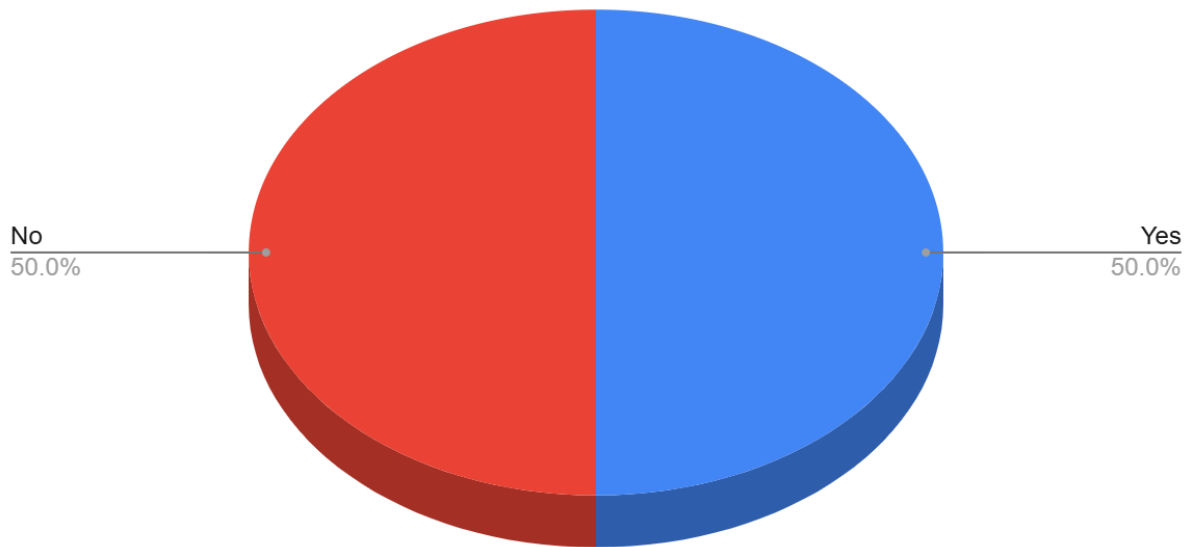


Fig. 7

## Future Needs and Emergency Measures

### A. Primary Short-Term Needs

Survey participants indicated that, over the next three months, covering employee salaries and basic operating costs (e.g., rent, administrative fees) remains a top priority (see Figure 8). Many stressed the importance of developing new funding mechanisms and revenue-generating activities, such as grant writing, partnerships, fee-based services, or technology-driven solutions. Some outlets also cited staff training and capacity building to expand existing roles or adopt new responsibilities. Additional concerns included maintaining core programmatic activities, ensuring legal and regulatory compliance, and providing psychosocial support and heightened security measures for employees.

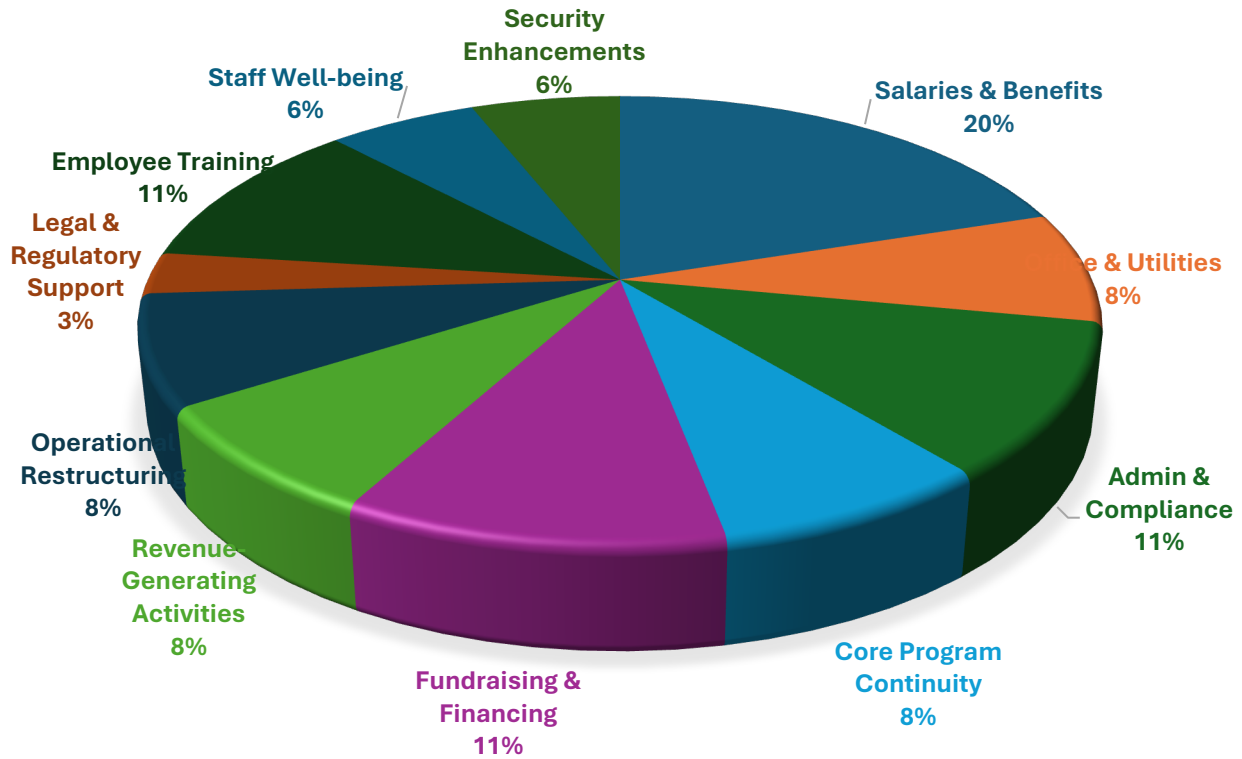


Fig. 8

## B. Emergency Measures and New Funding Sources

In responding to current financial challenges, outlets are actively seeking new donors, increasing grant applications, and exploring opportunities with international funders. Several have turned to cost-reduction strategies, including remote work, while diversifying their revenue streams through crowdfunding or self-financing. One participant reported developing a proprietary tool intended for commercialization. Others are looking into subscription-based models, training programs, and broader digital expansion to ensure long-term sustainability.



### 3. Conclusion and General Summary

The suspension of U.S. government funding for independent media outlets has proven especially significant, given Lebanon's ongoing economic and political challenges. Although a few organizations currently have funding to sustain them for about a year, once those projects conclude, the total pool of available resources will dwindle, making it even harder to secure support.

Independent platforms relying heavily on external funding must now scale back production and face growing concerns about viability. The loss of U.S. funding, combined with declining support from other sources, presents an acute challenge for smaller outlets struggling to diversify revenue streams. As a result, alternative voices may wane, media freedom could face increasing pressures, and official or politically affiliated outlets may gain more influence. Without replacement funding, Lebanon's independent media will face mounting hurdles, potentially compromising their role in offering diverse and critical perspectives.

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