The History of Iranian Press Laws in the Qajar Era: A Critical Analytical Study

Dr.Ahmed Shaker Alalaq
Iraq - University of Kufa
Ahmed.alallaq@uokufa.edu.iq
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8033-9172

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Summary:

Iranian journalism played a significant role in shaping the foundations of the Iranian national movement from the early 19th century, specifically since 1819, when the first official newspaper was published in Iran through the efforts of educated elites who had completed their studies in European universities. Following this, Iran kept pace with the cultural and intellectual developments of the outside world, particularly in the field of journalism and the establishment of printing presses. Numerous newspapers and magazines emerged, representing the various segments of Iranian society at the time. Thus, these newspapers became a vital and important element for studying historical events in Iran.

Journalism and its practitioners in Iran enjoyed a degree of relative freedom during the initial phase of its existence, from the 19th century until the outbreak of the Constitutional Revolution in 1905. During this period, the country witnessed the publication of the first newspaper by the Iranian government with direct support from the Shah. The articles in this newspaper were often free from criticism of state policies and its handling of foreign presence in Iran. This allowed the educated elite, who found themselves capable, to publish newspapers and magazines that reflected their inclinations and, in one way or another, expressed the desires of the Iranian public for liberation and emancipation.

Keywords: Iran, law, journalism, opposition, parties, political conflict.

Introduction

The study of press laws during the Qajar era (late 18th to early 20th century) holds exceptional significance in understanding the development of Iran's media and political landscape. This period marked a critical turning point in Iranian history, as journalism emerged as a pivotal force in shaping public awareness and driving political and social movements. Therefore, studying the laws governing the press is essential for comprehending the dynamics of power and society at the time.

The importance of this study manifests on several levels:

- Documenting the most prominent laws issued during this crucial phase of Iran's history.
- Analyzing the evolution of media legislation and its impact on freedom of expression.
- Examining the influence of press laws on shaping societal awareness and national identity.

The primary issue lies in the restrictive nature of press laws during this period, which reflected a profound conflict between a monarchy striving to maintain absolute authority and an emerging journalistic movement demanding freedom and reform. This escalating tension between governmental censorship and aspirations for modernization resulted in a complex media landscape with deep repercussions for the development of Iranian national identity and political awareness.

This study aims to analyze the legal framework governing the press during the Qajar era and its impact on the development of the public sphere in Iran. By understanding the mechanisms of censorship and the restrictions imposed on freedom of expression, we can evaluate how these laws shaped Iran's modern media landscape and understand the roots of contemporary challenges facing press freedom in Iran.

Understanding this historical period and its press laws goes beyond mere historical documentation; it extends to a deeper comprehension of the relationship between authority and media in developing societies and how legal frameworks influence the development of press freedoms and democracy.

Research Methodology: We have adopted a critical analytical approach to examine the most significant laws enacted during the Qajar rule, highlighting the key articles and chapters they contained, providing an analytical perspective on the historical event.

Sources of the Study: We relied on the original Persian versions of the laws to present an accurate depiction of the press laws that regulated journalism in Iran during the Qajar dynasty.

1- Press Law and Freedom of Publication

On October 7, 1907, the fundamental law and its annex, which included the "Press Law and Freedom of Publication," were enacted, lifting censorship on newspapers (according to Articles 20, 77, and 79). Article 20 of the law stipulated freedom of expression in Iranian newspapers and publications, except for those aiming to distort the image of Islam and its teachings. It also held accountable anyone who violated the applications of the fundamental law, stating, "Employees of the Ministry of Education are responsible for any violations by newspaper managers and those granted privileges, and security forces, including the police, have the right to stop violating newspapers in several cases…"(1) .The cases were specified as follows:

1. If the newspaper harms the foundations of Islam (Article 20).

)[1] (**Khaniqi, H. (1999).** *The Structure of the Constitutional System and Its Relation to the Structure of the Press. Contemporary History of Iran* (Journal), Tehran, Summer 1999, **3**(10), p. 201.

2. If the newspaper contains content that violates the sanctity of the king (Article 79).

3. If it publishes obscene images contrary to decency (Article 77).

Article 21 stipulated the freedom to form local councils and press committees and to discuss modern topics and terms such as freedom, democracy, freedom of expression, human rights, and freedom of the pen and statement without government censorship (Hashemi, 1377). Article 23 referred to holding accountable journalists who do not adhere to the above law, stating, "… anyone who violates or attempts to breach the provisions of the law and its amendments from journalists… is brought to a hearing regarding the nature of the charge against him without the right to defense… All newspapers issued by judicial order have the right to promote somewhat moderate ideas as they find compatible with the noble Sharia without practicing any psychological pressures such as defamation and slander…"[(2)]. This was a serious attempt by the court authorities to absorb the anger of several national newspapers and then work to stop them completely after accusing many of them of offending the royal self.

Historical Context:

At the beginning of the 20th century, Iran was experiencing a turbulent phase of political and social transformations. This law coincided with the period of the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911), which aimed to establish constitutional rule and limit the absolute powers of the king. The revolution was a reaction to corruption and despotism, and national and popular forces sought to introduce political reforms, including the formation of the Iranian National Consultative Assembly and the enactment of laws guaranteeing fundamental freedoms such as freedom of the press.

)[2] (**Hussain, A. R. Z. (n.d.).** *Political Press of Iran During the Constitutional Era.* Tehran: Amir Kabir Institute, p. 98.

Motivations for Issuing the Law:

- **Absorbing Public Anger:** The text indicates that the law was issued as part of the authorities' strategy to contain the anger of the national press. This reflects the growing influence of the press and its role at the time as a tool for political opposition and a source for conveying liberation ideas.

- **Controlled and Regulated Freedom:** Although the law indicated granting freedom of expression, the authorities imposed strict controls on when, where, and how this freedom could be exercised. For example, freedom of expression was conditioned on not offending Islam, not criticizing the royal self, and avoiding publishing materials considered indecent. This restriction shows the authorities' intention to maintain control and prevent any opposition that might threaten the status quo.

Analysis of the Law's Provisions:

- **Article 20:** Focuses on protecting Islam from any harm or distortion. This reflects the importance of religion as a social and political cornerstone in Iran and how it was used as a legitimate means to justify imposing restrictions on freedom of expression.

- **Article 77:** Prohibits publishing images or content contrary to decency, indicating strict censorship on public morals in Iranian society at the time.

- **Article 79:** Punishes newspapers that offend the king or "violate the sanctity of the king." This provision reflects the political sensitivity towards any criticism of the royal authority, showing that the law aimed to avert any threat to the legitimacy of the rule.

- **Article 21:** Granted some freedoms to form local councils and press committees and to address modern topics such as

democracy and human rights, but without government censorship. This can be interpreted as an attempt to present an image of political openness. However, these freedoms were superficial, as censorship remained indirectly present, with certain conditions.

- **Article 23:** Stipulated punishing journalists who do not comply with the law, even depriving them of the right to defense. This reflects the authoritarian nature of the law despite its reformist appearance.

These laws can be seen as a dual attempt: on one hand, showing a desire for reform and making concessions to revolutionaries and constitutionalists, and on the other hand, imposing strict controls to ensure the royal authority remained in control. This approach reflects the "carrot and stick" policy adopted by the Iranian authorities at the time, where tensions led to a conflict between reformists and conservatives, paving the way for major subsequent political events.

2- Press Law:

The law was passed within the National Consultative Assembly on February 8, 1908, consisting of 52 articles distributed as follows[3] :

Press Law - Approved according to Article 20 of the General Press Constitution, which granted freedom and publication to Iranian newspapers, except for those that violate the press law, customs, traditions, and religion. The law also stipulated the free publication and distribution of newspapers, and anyone wishing to open a printing press or print books, newspapers, and advertisements or sell the printing press

)[3] (**National Consultative Assembly. (1907–1909).** *Collection of Laws from the First Legislative Period (October 5, 1906 – June 23, 1909).*

must first commit to the Ministry of Education not to violate the provisions of this law.

Chapter One – Printing House and Book Sales

- **Article 1:** The printing house is not allowed to print anything without knowing the author's name and style and without including the author's name and style at the end of the print.

- **Article 2:** The bookseller is not allowed to sell from the printing house unless the author and the printing house clearly display it, except for the book printed before this date and not prohibited by law otherwise.

- **Article 3:** The bookseller does not have the right to sell a book that is religiously prohibited.

Chapter Two – Nature of Books

- **Article 4:** Printing popular books is free, except for prohibited books and new books, and non-religious books. New religious books must be approved by the Opinion and Review Committee formed in the Ministry of Education, called the Academy of Religious Sciences, before printing.

- **Article 5:** For each printed copy, the printing house sends two copies to be registered in the National Library and completes the total printing. In the capital, these two copies are officially sent to the Ministry of Sciences, and in other provinces to the branches of the Academy of Sciences in those provinces. The Ministry of Sciences and the Department of Education in all cases receive a receipt, and the invoice must mention the book's title and the number of copies printed. According to this chapter, the printing house is legally obligated, and in case of violation, it is fined three tomans according to the case's ruling.

Chapter Three - Designated Newspapers

- **Article 6:** Each newspaper and magazine must have a responsible manager with the following qualifications:

1. Must be Iranian.

2. Must be thirty years old.

3. Must not have lost honor, i.e., not guilty of misdemeanors and crimes and known for debauchery and corruption of belief.

- **Article 7:** Each print edition must include the name and workplace of the newspaper's editor-in-chief and the name of the printing house where the newspaper is printed. According to this chapter, both the newspaper editors and the printing house are legally obligated, and in case of failure to fulfill their duty, they must pay from one toman to three tomans. If the violation is repeated in the same year, an additional fine of one toman is paid for each repetition.

- **Article 8:** Before printing and publishing each newspaper, the editor-in-chief must send the following data to the Printing Control Committee:

1. The name and title of the newspaper's editor-in-chief and his office location.

2. The name and style of the printing house where the newspaper will be printed.

3. The title of the newspaper and magazine and its format, whether daily, weekly, or monthly.

4. The number of prints each time.

5. The newspaper's profession and content context – in case of any change in any of the above-mentioned attributes, the necessary information must be provided to monitor impressions. All this data must be written on a specific paper signed by the responsible manager and the state seal paper. According to this chapter, the responsible editor-in-chief of the newspaper is obligated to pay an amount from five to fifty tomans in case of violation.

- **Article 9:** Upon publishing each issue of the newspaper, two signed copies by the manager are sent to the Department of Education in the city where it is printed, and two copies are sent to the National Library.

- **Article 10:** If a newspaper writes about a government employee or office affecting his job, the clarification and response must be sent to that person or office to the newspaper's manager without delay or distortion of reasons. Otherwise, the article's author must pay a fine, and in case of violation of this chapter, the newspaper's editor-in-chief is obligated to pay from ten to one hundred tomans.

- **Article 11:** If the newspaper's manager refuses to include an article attacking any person, he must pay a mandatory amount ranging from five to fifty tomans, and this type of article must be written in the same place and with the same letters as the original article.

- **Article 12:** Regardless of the number of times such articles are published, the newspaper is obligated to accept it as explained in Chapters Ten and Eleven.

- **Article 13:** The newspaper's editor-in-chief is responsible for the articles contained in the newspaper, as well as for the advertisements appearing in the newspaper.

- **Article 14:** The newspaper's editor-in-chief has the freedom to accept articles sent to him unless they contain legal prohibitions and include them in the newspaper.

- **Article 15:** In newspapers where advertisements are regularly published, the manager does not have the right to avoid or delay publication.

- **Article 16:** The entry of newspapers and journals published abroad in any language and their publication may be prohibited according to the interests of the nation and the people. Under this article, anyone who imports or publishes prohibited newspapers and journals is punished with imprisonment from one month to one year.

- **Chapter 4 – Advertisements**

- **Article 17:** Printing and publishing advertisements is free, but if the content of the advertisement contains obscenities, defamation, or calls for corruption, freedom of belief, and social customs and traditions, the responsibility falls on the publisher and the editor-in-chief. The regulatory authority has the right to delete these advertisements, and the offender and the responsible person are brought to court.

- **Article 18:** The advertisement, invoice, and everything printed must include the place of printing. Violating this article subjects the responsible person and the author to a fine of one to three tomans, or according to the court's opinion. In this case, imprisonment ranges from one to three days.

- **Article 19:** Official notices issued by government departments are printed on white paper, while other notices from

any person and any place are printed on colored paper to distinguish official notices from personal notices. Violating this article will result in a fine of five thousand to fifteen thousand tomans for the responsible person, and if the violation is repeated within a year, imprisonment from one to five days is imposed.

- **Article 20:** In the case of invalidating or tearing down advertisements or official government notices published during the campaign to announce the candidacy of National Consultative Assembly members, the perpetrator is imprisoned from one to three days. If the offenders are government employees, they are imprisoned from six days to one month.
- **Article 21:** Property owners have the right to prevent the posting of advertisements on the doors and walls of their buildings. If someone posts notices on private property without permission, the owner has the right to tear them down.
- **Article 22:** Except for official and electoral advertisements, each advertisement must have a government stamp. The price of this stamp varies according to the number of advertisements and the size of the paper, according to the law that will be established regarding stamps or seals.
- **Article 23:** Anyone who wants to carry and sell newspapers and books in the city's streets must introduce themselves to the area official and obtain a card with the name of the house, place of birth, father's name, and duration of residence in that neighborhood written on the card, which is granted free of charge.
- **Article 24:** Mistakes in obtaining the permit stipulated in Article 23 or giving false information and changing names expose the perpetrator to legal accountability. In case of repeated mistakes, the perpetrator is sentenced to imprisonment from one to three days.

- **Article 25:** Street vendors and others who sell prohibited newspapers, advertisements, and papers, whether they contain prohibited phrases or obscene images and forms, bear legal responsibility. The Public Rights Protection Order has the right to pursue them and refer them to court.

- **Chapter Five: Limits of Accountability for Violators**

- **Article 26:** Speeches and reading of bills, newspapers, and other publications in public offices or posting those publications or messages on doors and walls and displaying them to people by any means, as long as they encourage people and incite them to commit misdemeanors and crimes. Whether the original is effective or not, the matter will depend on the policy of the perpetrator, and he will be imprisoned from two months to two years according to the courts' discretion.

- **Article 27:** Encouraging and inciting theft, murder, looting, or undermining state authority, regardless of whether it is effective or not, will result in imprisonment for a period ranging from one to five years.

- **Article 28:** The policy towards individuals who cause the publication of newspapers and other materials that disrupt security and public order, as well as those who praise and commend perpetrators of murder, theft, and sources of sedition and chaos, is as mentioned in Articles 26-27.

- **Article 29:** Persuading, encouraging, and inciting military personnel to execute or disobey military orders is subject to the provisions of Article 27.

- **Article 30:** Perpetrators of the prohibitions mentioned in Articles 26 to 29 are punished with a legal penalty ranging from ten to one thousand tomans.

- **Article 31:** The law prohibits insulting the monarchy. If the offenders are newspaper editors, they are punished with imprisonment from three months to one year, or a fine ranging

from ten to three hundred tomans. If they are not newspaper editors, according to customary law, the offender is punished with imprisonment from three months to one year, and the newspaper in which the crime was committed or the material it contains is confiscated, which may be permanent.

- **Article 32:** Forging news and articles that incite sedition and publishing them and attributing them to someone is prohibited. The editor-in-chief of the newspaper and his assistants who violate this article are punished with a fine ranging from five to one hundred tomans or imprisonment from one month to one year.
- **Article 33:** Anyone who publishes articles harmful to religion and Islamic belief in any newspaper or other publications is fined from ten tomans to three hundred tomans. If the mentioned newspaper continues, it is closed from one month to two years, and its responsible person is punished with imprisonment from one month to two years. This ruling also applies to the publication and sale of obscene and indecent materials.
- **Article 34:** Insulting the honor of individuals and infringing on personal freedoms, as long as the perpetrator is unable to prove it, and by any kind of derogatory and insulting means, deserves threat and policy with inappropriate words.
- **Article 35:** Under this article, anyone who attributes any of the attributes mentioned in Article 34 to the means mentioned in Article 26 can submit a bill to include the articles in daily newspapers to one of the judicial or military courts, units, associations, or government departments and is fined from ten tomans to three hundred tomans, or imprisoned from eight days to one year. If the means of publishing those matters is a newspaper, it is confiscated for a specified period. Various types

of penalties and policies can be considered appropriate at the same time, according to the case's judge.

- **Article 36:** The relations mentioned in Article 34 also apply when those relations are with a minister or envoy, whether members of the National Consultative Assembly, members of the Senate, government employees, or Islamic religious leaders, if those relations and slander fall on them.
- **Article 37:** Regarding the matters mentioned in Article 34, if the perpetrator is known to the people, he is obligated under this article to a fine ranging from three tomans to two hundred tomans. If the means of committing the crime is a newspaper, it is confiscated for a period ranging from one week to six months.
- **Article 38:** Writing obscene words and phrases is strictly prohibited. Under this commitment, the perpetrator is punished with a fine ranging from four tomans to fifty tomans. If the violation is against the persons mentioned in Articles 10 and 26, if it is against the persons mentioned in Article 37, the perpetrator is obligated to pay a fine ranging from three tomans to thirty tomans. In case of repeated mistakes, the newspaper is closed from seven days to three months, depending on the category of rights violations.
- **Article 39:** Defaming the reputation of the deceased remains a cause for holding the perpetrator accountable before his heirs, which will become a political issue, as is the case with insulting and punishing foreign kings and political officials.
- **Article 40:** Insulting the kings of friendly countries is strictly prohibited, and the perpetrator is obligated to pay a fine ranging from ten tomans to three hundred tomans or imprisonment from one month to one year. Both types of policies are possible if necessary.

- **Article 41:** Insulting foreign officials and foreign politicians holding representative positions in the country is prohibited, and the perpetrator is punished with a fine ranging from five to two hundred tomans, and the perpetrator is punished with imprisonment ranging from one week to three months.
- **Article 42:** Foreign affairs complaints can be submitted directly to the police department or through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Justice or the Court of Justice.
- **Article 43:** Publishing appeals that the court has ordered to be prohibited to preserve honor is prohibited unless they are publicly recited in court. In all cases, the newspaper has the right to publish the plaintiff and the judgment in the case.
- **Article 44**: Newspapers are not allowed to publish secret court proceedings. In case of a violation, a fine ranging from ten to two hundred tomans must be paid.
- **Article 45**: It is strictly forbidden to publish secret military instructions, secret military news, and fortress maps, especially during wartime. The offender must pay a fine ranging from ten to one thousand tomans and face imprisonment for one to five years. If the fault lies with the journalist, their newspaper must be permanently shut down.
- **Chapter Six – Trial**
- **Article 46**: Legal violations caused by the policies of newspaper managers, printing houses, and other media will be pursued by the Impressions Department and prosecuted in court.
- **Article 47**: When press violations are against individuals' boundaries, the intervention of law enforcement or the judiciary is with the Impressions Department. When these violations are against the public or the Impressions Department, the police will act directly.
- **Article 48**: In cases of violating these laws, offenders will be held accountable before the law. The policies stipulated in the

binding order apply to offenders: (1) working as editors of high-quality newspapers and other newspapers. (2) Editors-in-chief of newspapers and other newspapers, in case of responsibility, when there is no violation of appearance boundaries, and certainly in case of aiding illegal acts, preventing harm, when there is no violation of appearance rules. The newspaper or printing house manager must prevent the editor-in-chief and accept responsibility, and responsibility is not lifted from them, but the secretary is also responsible. (3) The head of the printing house. (4) The seller and publisher. (5) The informant. The responsibility of these persons mentioned in 3, 4, and 5 is when they participate in the harmful ideas of the manager and editor-in-chief of the newspaper and the press and are complicit in incitement and revealing sedition and corruption while abroad, and the article contains certain things, and if published, the publisher and editor of the newspaper are responsible, and if it needs proof, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper has the right to include it with personal responsibility, and so on.

- **Article 49**: Employees of the Ministry of Education assigned to the newspaper and the police have the right to confiscate the newspaper and other newspapers in the following cases: (1) If the newspaper or magazine is harmful to Islam. (2) If there is defamation of the monarchy in a newspaper or magazine or a bill. (3) If a plan and military movement plan or other military secrets are revealed. (4) If the content of the newspaper causes public excitement and disturbance to public comfort. (5) If the spread of obscene pictures is contrary to innocence and chastity.
- **Article 50**: The continuation or non-continuation of the closure must be reported to the Sharia court (local court) within twenty-four hours, and the closure order or the reason for the

seizure or release of the newspaper and so on must be announced in an official order.

- **Article 51**: During the closure of the newspaper or magazine and others, it is strictly forbidden to publish its contents, and the policy will be according to the chapters of this law, according to the chapter it refers to.
- **Article 52**: The laws contained in this Press Law shall apply in Tehran ten days after the signing of these laws by the royal hand and in the provinces after one month.

Historical Analysis:

1. **Historical Context:**
    - This law was enacted after the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911), which sought to introduce significant political reforms in the country, including the establishment of a parliament (Majlis) and the adoption of a constitution. This law was part of attempts to regulate press freedom in Iran, which saw a growth in its role as a tool for political criticism and social pressure.
    - During that period, the Iranian press was a means of conveying new ideas such as democracy, freedom, and human rights, which posed a threat to the traditional monarchy.
2. **Content of the Law:**
    - **Restricted Freedom:** Although the law acknowledges press freedom, it imposes strict restrictions on what can be published. For example, Article 52 imposes controls on content that may be considered contrary to Islamic religion or moral values.

- **Censorship of Publications:** The law prohibits the printing of any books or newspapers without prior permission from the Ministry of Education, reflecting strict control over the dissemination of information. Additionally, Article 5 requires the printing house to send two copies of each publication to the national library, ensuring state oversight of all published materials.

- **Prohibited Content:** The law includes provisions that restrict the publication of any content that affects the Islamic religion, violates the sanctity of the king, or displays obscene images (Articles 2, 3, and 4).

3. **Restrictions and Penalties:**

   - Strict penalties were imposed on journalists and managers responsible for newspapers if they violated these rules. Penalties ranged from fines to imprisonment, and could even include the permanent closure of newspapers as stated in Article 50.

   - Publishing any content that offends the king, is considered immoral, or affects religious values is prohibited (Articles 31 and 32).

4. **Balance Between Reform and Repression:**

   - The law attempts to strike a balance between granting limited press freedom and imposing strict restrictions to ensure that this freedom does not become a tool for destabilizing the monarchy or violating religious values. This contradiction reflects the complex nature of the constitutional phase in Iran, where the royal authority sought to maintain control amid internal and external pressures for reforms.

The 1908 Press Law in Iran was a step towards regulating the press, but in reality, it imposed significant restrictions on freedom of expression and publication. The primary goal of the law was to control political criticism and protect the monarchy from any potential threat posed by the emerging press, which was conveying reformist and democratic ideas.

3- Press Censorship Law:

The law was passed in the National Consultative Assembly on November 2, 1922, and consists of two articles as outlined[4]

Article (1): According to Article 20 of the amendment to the General Press Law, except for books and misleading materials harmful to Islam, censorship is only prohibited in the case of books and misleading materials harmful to Islam. Newspapers wishing to write about issues related to religion and belief must review the material to be published with the religious supervisor and the Ministry of Education in Tehran and in each center. Provinces and governorates must refer to them and publish the journalistic material after ensuring in writing that it does not harm Islam and belief.

Article (2): If any newspaper, magazine, printing press, or other entity violates the provisions of the previous article, the public prosecutor or private prosecutor must refer the case to the religious supervisor or a just mujtahid after verifying it in writing. Once the published papers are collected and confiscated, the director, writer, and printing press are punished according to the press law as decided by the religious supervisor or a just Muslim mujtahid.

The text addresses the 1922 Press Censorship Law passed in the Iranian National Consultative Assembly, consisting of two articles. The

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)[4] (**National Consultative Assembly. (1921–1923).** *Laws of the Fourth Legislative Period (June 22, 1921 – June 20, 1923).*

text reflects the evolving relationship between the press and authority in the post-Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) period, clearly showing the trend towards enhancing censorship of press freedom, especially regarding religious issues.

Historical Analysis:

1. **Historical Context:**

   - This law came more than a decade after the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, which aimed to achieve political reforms and introduce a constitutional system of governance. During this period, the Iranian press began to play a larger role in shaping public opinion and influencing political movements.

   - However, traditional and religious forces sought to maintain their influence and prevent any violation of religious values or undermining of the existing social order, leading to the imposition of strict censorship laws, as evidenced by this law.

2. **Content of the Law:**

   - The first article focuses primarily on monitoring any journalistic content related to Islam or religious issues. The law requires newspapers to review their religious content with the "religious supervisor" and the Ministry of Education. This reflects the direct control of religious authority over the press, granting it the power to determine whether the content is acceptable.

   - The second article establishes legal mechanisms for holding violating newspapers accountable. If journalists or publications exceed the law's limits, the case is referred to the "religious supervisor" or a "just

mujtahid" for judgment. The article also stipulates penalties for violating directors, writers, and printing presses, indicating a strict enforcement of compliance.

3. **Religious Censorship:**

   - The law stipulates that any material related to religion must be reviewed by religious authorities before publication. This censorship ensures that no ideas considered "misleading" or "harmful" to Islam are published, demonstrating how authorities sought to maintain the dominance of Islam in public and political life, preventing any questioning or interpretations that might threaten the faith or social order.

   - This censorship strengthens the relationship between religious and political authority in Iran at the time, with the religious institution being an integral part of the political and social structure.

4. **Impact on Press Freedom:**

   - The law imposes strict restrictions on freedom of expression, as newspapers could not publish any religious material without the approval of religious authorities. This reflects a retreat in the freedom space that had begun to expand after the Constitutional Revolution.

   - These restrictions indicate the increasing influence of conservative religious forces, which opposed any attempts to modernize or spread liberal ideas that might threaten traditional values.

5. **Balance Between Reform and Conservatism:**

- The law represents a struggle between the desire for political and social openness witnessed in Iran after the Constitutional Revolution and the attempts of conservative and religious forces to keep society under Islamic traditional control. While the press was a means of conveying modern ideas such as democracy and human rights, religious forces sought to suppress any discussion that might be seen as diminishing Islamic law.

The 1922 Press Censorship Law reflects the Iranian authorities' attempts to restrict press freedom through strict religious censorship. In the post-Constitutional Revolution period, while there were some political changes, traditional forces maintained their influence through laws that tightly controlled the press, especially on religious issues.

Conclusion

After the events of the Constitutional Revolution in 1905, the Iranian government's policy towards press freedoms changed. A series of laws were issued to regulate the work of newspapers, and it was no longer possible for everyone to publish newspapers as they wished. Strict censorship was imposed on the work of these newspapers, especially during critical times that Iran experienced at that time. Not only that, but the state also faced criticism by arresting and imprisoning critics and closing the offices of opposition newspapers. However, despite this, the efforts of intellectuals did not cease; on the contrary, they continued. The early period of Ahmad Shah Qajar's rule (1909-1925) witnessed the publication of numerous newspapers and magazines with various orientations, numbering in the hundreds.

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