

Legally Yours



By Ahmad J. Tahboub

Unwarranted Phone Calls

In a world filled with hi-tech tools, privacy invasion catches up with us at homes, offices and even on vacations. Strange people contact us on cellular phones or even land lines. Ambiguity resolved through caller identification embraced in telephone systems and hand sets. Now you know which number is calling you and decide whether to answer or not. So often, you receive calls from privately held numbers, with an instant choice to answer or ... ignore. The classic case of receiving harassment phone calls, and repeatedly switching off or ignoring usually cause embarrassment to the receiver. As tough as a person may think he or she is ... in time we give in to despair. For all those concerned, please read the following:

Unknown numbers may be tracked by your GSM operator (if within the same network). This capability does not exist as a service for customers to request from operators. Unless you have a judicial order related to a registered case, neither your operator nor other GSM network providers will cooperate in identifying a name related to a phone number for you!! The Jordanian security system developed a specialized unit to track and identify harassing callers. The problem of harassment may be resolved when you have a real customer, but things become weird when we talk about *Dummy numbers* (prepaid SIM cards with false or missing data about the subscriber). In those cases, operators, government and even security service (police) do not have the ability to track and identify. In James Bond themes, people talk about the ability of security systems to pin point callers through band width parameters and geographical allocations. I doubt the local intelligence would waste resources to allocate "John for pestering Gina". Nevertheless, you may file a claim at the police station near you residence, with an 85% success rate in such cases! As the case maybe, the violator faces penalties ranging from fines to administrative detention ... to actual imprisonment following judicial procedures. Unless you forgive in writing, perpetrators face the full penalties.

A recent example on privacy invasion was the huge amount of missed calls made through internationally held numbers. The frequent calls from unknown numbers (mostly Far and Middle Eastern numbers) caused many citizens to call back and inquire about the caller. The caller is either porno held services or people claiming supernatural abilities and magical medicines. In Jordan, the whole concept of telecommunication is governed by the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC). This public entity plays the ombudsman role in Jordanian telecom and oversees application of the Jordanian Telecommunication Law. Although TRC has the proper jurisdiction, the Commission does not have the ability to forbid callers from terminating missed calls to Jordan. **THERE IS NO LEGAL PROTECTION** against international fraud. Therefore, if you receive calls from unknown sources, do not answer or call back ... **OR AT LEAST BEWARE WHILE CALLING!!**

In an attempt to resolve *Dummy numbers* problems, TRC *announced* that all GSM prepaid subscribers should complete their subscription data, including full names, addresses and such ... before June 2008. Failing to comply shall result in disconnection of their GSM service. Hoping this will come through soon. In chorus, I have not read material about violations for commercial purposes. GSM operators now enable entities to promote services and vendors to promote for a certain fee over their GSM networks and through 0900 numbers. While this is not in violation of Telecommunication Law, it is not ethical!! Telecommunication operators have a social responsibility to protect citizens (plus foreign residents and visitors) from bad experiences due to privacy invasions and forced telecom campaigns. The issue of social protection still lacks community back up. In the absence of social intervention, one may only look for regulatory protection. If a subscriber does not permit commercial campaigns and thereby requests receiving promotion calls ... **HE SHOULD NOT RECEIVE ANY CALLS FROM PROMOTORS!!** Unless you get a discount or part of the promotion fee from telecom operators, this issue should be regulated and people should go back to enjoy their privacy.

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