



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Jordan

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2006](#)

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The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy ruled by King Abdullah II bin Hussein, with a population of approximately 5.9 million. The constitution concentrates executive and legislative authority in the king. The parliament consists of the 55-member House of Notables (*Majlis al-Ayan*), appointed by the king, and a 110-member elected lower house, the Chamber of Deputies (*Majlis al-Nuwwab*). The 2003 multiparty parliamentary elections were generally considered to be free and fair; however, the election law significantly underrepresented urban areas. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control over the security forces, although there were some instances in which members of the police and security forces were accused of committing human rights abuses.

While the government respected human rights in some areas, its overall record continued to reflect problems. The following human rights problems were reported: Restrictions on the right of citizens to change their government; torture, arbitrary arrest, and prolonged detention; impunity; denial of due process of law; limited judicial independence; infringement on citizen's privacy rights; harassment of members of opposition political parties; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, movement, and on some religious practices; legal and societal discrimination against women, discrimination against persons of Palestinian origin; restrictions on labor rights; and abuse of foreign workers.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

During the year, there were no reports that the government or its agents committed any politically motivated killings; however, on April 13, one prisoner died in a prison riot at Gafgafa (see section 1.c.).

In 2004 five men accused in the 2002 killing of an American diplomat were convicted, some in absentia. One suspect, Muammar al-Jaghbir, convicted and sentenced to death in absentia, was in custody as of year's end and was retried in accordance with the law, which provides for a new trial in such circumstances. At his retrial, he was also charged with the 2003 bombing of Jordan's embassy in Baghdad.

In November 2005 a group of Iraqis carried out suicide bombings at three hotels in Amman, killing 60 and injuring over one hundred. On September 20, one attacker in custody was sentenced to be hanged, along with six others who were tried in absentia and convicted of plotting terrorist acts and possessing explosives with illicit intent. Her sentence was under review by the Court of Cassation; at year's end she has refused to appeal.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices. Following his July visit Manfred Nowak, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, described police and security forces practices using torture as "widespread." He stated there were many "consistent and credible" allegations of torture, which Nowak claimed were substantiated by forensic medical evidence. He noted that a number were difficult to verify because of incommunicado detention (see section 1.d.) by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Public Security Directorate (PSD) and the General Intelligence Directorate (GID).

Additionally, the Special Rapporteur reported that detainees at the Al Jafr Correctional and Rehabilitation Center were routinely subjected to corporal punishment. The Special Rapporteur also received many allegations of torture at various local police stations.

In a July 24 report, Amnesty International (AI), an international nongovernmental organization (NGO), alleged the systematic torture of political suspects. The most frequently alleged methods of torture included severe and prolonged beating with sticks, plastic pipes, ropes or whips, on the soles of the feet and elsewhere, sleep deprivation, extended solitary confinement, forced standing in painful positions for prolonged periods, threats of extreme violence or sexual or physical abuse of family members, and physical suspension. In the AI

publication, *Your Confessions are Ready for You to Sign*, defendants charged with security-related offenses before the State Security Court claimed that they were tortured to obtain confessions and subjected to physical and psychological abuse while in detention.

According to AI, suspected Islamists and Palestinian-origin citizens were more likely to be tortured.

Government officials denied many allegations of detainee abuse, pointing out that many defendants claimed abuse in order to shift the focus away from their crimes.

During the year defendants in nearly every case before the State Security Court claimed that they were tortured while in custody. At times the courts requested that prison administrators treat inmates in accordance with the law. A May 21 report issued by government-funded National Center for Human Rights (NCHR) covering 2005 reported 70 mistreatment or torture complaints at prisons and detention centers administered by the PSD; there were 250 reported in 2004. The NCHR report did not specifically provide information on complaints regarding GID facilities.

NCHR's May report covering 2005, *The State of Human Rights in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, stated that the court system does not provide sufficient guarantees to prevent torture and other forms of abuse at the hands of authorities. In December 2005 NCHR sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Bakhit calling for the adoption of a series of legislative and procedural arrangements to combat torture. In response, the government formed a committee to study the report and consider its recommendations.

During a June 29 press conference, UN Special Rapporteur Manfred Nowak, visiting at the government's invitation, stated he had observed indications that torture had taken place, and urged the government to criminalize torture, dissolve private police and intelligence courts, investigate torture allegations and create mechanisms to prevent torture. The government responded publicly by highlighting its invitation to Nowak as evidence of its commitment to addressing human rights issues. During the year human rights activists alleged a number of cases of beatings and other abuses of individuals in police custody.

On January 10, three men were arrested entering a mosque during the 'Eid al-Adha holiday, according to AI. Their families learned that they were being detained by the GID in the Gafgafa prison and were permitted to visit them eight days after their arrest. The three men alleged they had been beaten and forced to sign confession statements. The men were charged with "belonging to an illegal organization", namely the Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami, which openly calls for the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy. On December 6, the State Security Court sentenced two of the men to one year in prison and the third to six months.

On March 23, the State Security Court sentenced nine men to death in connection with an uprising that took place in Ma'an in 2002. They were charged with possessing weapons and making explosives for illegal use. The defendants alleged that they were beaten, kept naked in cold cells, and forced to sign pre-written testimonies.

On September 19, Human Rights Watch (HRW), an international NGO, published *Suspicious Sweeps: The General Intelligence Directorate and Jordan's Rule of Law Problem*. The report states that the GID arrests "radical Islamists who support use of violence and who consider others to be infidels and therefore legitimate targets of violent attacks," and documents cases of 16 detainees. Some of the detainees alleged that the GID abused and tortured them.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prisons were overcrowded and understaffed with poor sanitary conditions and inadequate food and health care, according to the NCHR. The government permitted visits, with private interviews by independent local and international human rights observers, except to some GID detainees. There were instances of torture and harsh and inhumane treatment, according to the UN special rapporteur and human rights organizations.

On November 1 NCHR, a quasi-governmental body with educational, protective, and reporting responsibilities, issued its fourth report on the condition of the country's prisons. The report noted that although the government has improved some facilities, more needed to be done, particularly with regard to health and safety conditions at the prisons. NCHR recommended that the government close Al Jafer prison, located in the desert 155 miles south of Amman. Since the prison is geographically isolated, NCHR contended that the inmates have limited access to lawyers. The report also mentioned high illiteracy rates among inmates overall in the country, which contributed to their ignorance of their rights to seek legal assistance. On December 17, the King announced the immediate closing of the facility and its conversion to a vocational training school.

The government generally held men, women, and juveniles in separate prison and detention facilities. The GID held some persons, detained on national security grounds, in separate detention facilities, and the government held other security detainees and prisoners in regular prisons. While security prisoners often were separated from common criminals, conditions for such prisoners did not differ significantly.

The police regularly placed potential victims of honor crimes in protective custody (see section 5).

Local human rights monitors were allowed to visit prisons. NCHR made 19 visits to prisons in the 12 month period beginning in October 2005. During the year the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was permitted access to prisoners and detainees in all prisons.

In March and April disturbances erupted at prisons in Jweideh, Swaqa, and Gafgafa. On April 13, riots occurred in Gafgafa prison, which resulted in the death of one prisoner and 35 injured inmates as well as some prison guards (see section 1.a.).

In August and September inmates in Swaqa and Jweida prisons staged hunger strikes. These strikes attracted a great deal of media attention but ended peacefully.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

Criminal laws generally require warrants; however, in most cases, suspects may be detained for up to 48 hours in the absence of a warrant. Police made several arrests during the year prior to obtaining warrants. The penal code allows for a functional bail system of conditional release. Detainees were not always allowed prompt access to a lawyer of their choice. There were allegations of incommunicado detention (see section 1.c).

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, the government did not always observe these prohibitions. The law provides that citizens are subject to arrest, trial, and punishment for the defamation of heads of state or public officials and dissemination of "false or exaggerated information outside the country that attacks state dignity."

After approval by parliament on August 27, the Prevention of Terrorism Act was published in the official gazette. Some Jordanian commentators and human rights groups complained that its definition of terrorism might lead nonviolent critics of the government to be arrested or detained indefinitely under the provisions of the act. At year's end, the government had not made use of the new act.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The Public Security Directorate (PSD) controlled general police functions. The PSD, GID, and the military shared responsibility for maintaining internal security and maintained authority to monitor security threats. The PSD reports to the interior minister with direct access to the king when necessary, and the GID in practice reports directly to the king. Security and policing activities were effective.

Corruption within the PSD was not a significant issue, and there were mechanisms in place to investigate police abuses. There were allegations of police impunity for both the PSD and GID. In 2005 28 police officers were tried in courts on torture charges. Of them, 14 were convicted and 14 were acquitted. During the year, eight police officers were tried, three were convicted, two acquitted, and two were awaiting verdict at year's end. The PSD's preventative security office investigated officers' performance. Incidents of poor officer performance ultimately were reported to the PSD director's office (see section 1.c.). Citizens may file a complaint about police abuse or corruption to the office of complaints and human rights. During the year citizens filed 425 complaints (see section 4). The head of this office reported directly to the PSD director. New officers in training received special instruction on preventing corruption.

Arrest and Detention

The criminal code requires that police notify legal authorities within 48 hours of an arrest and that legal authorities file formal charges within 10 days of an arrest; however, the courts routinely granted requests from prosecutors for 15-day extensions as provided by law. This practice generally extended pretrial detention for protracted periods.

The State Security Court gives the judicial police authority to arrest and keep persons in custody for a period of seven days, when necessary, in any crimes under the jurisdiction of the court, which includes many misdemeanors. In cases involving state security, the security forces arrested and detained citizens without warrants or judicial review. The authorities frequently held defendants in lengthy pretrial detention, did not provide defendants with the written charges against them, and did not allow defendants to meet with their lawyers, at times until shortly before trial. Defendants before the State Security Court usually met with their attorneys only one or two days before their trial. The criminal code prohibits pretrial detentions for certain categories of misdemeanors. At year's end, according to the NCHR, 590 inmates were in detention without charge.

In June 2005 extremist Issam al-Barqawi, also known as Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, was released after having been held for six months following his acquittal on charges of plotting subversive acts and possessing explosives as part of an alleged terrorism plot. In July 2005, he was rearrested and charged for allegedly contacting terrorist groups and charged with plotting subversive acts. At year's end he was awaiting trial by the State Security Court. On December 12, a jihadist website posted a letter claiming that Maqdisi was "physically abused" by an officer and six prison guards in Jordan (see section 1.c).

In the past human rights activists reported that the government detained journalists (see section 2.a.) and Islamists for varying amounts of time for what appeared to be political reasons. Detainees were kept in solitary confinement and were denied access to lawyers.

Local governors have the authority to invoke the Crime Prevention Law, which allows them to place citizens under house arrest for up to one year without formally charging them (see section 2.d.). House arrest may require persons to report daily to a local police station and impose a curfew. Persons who violate the terms of their house arrest may be imprisoned for up to 14 days.

The government used the threat of detention to intimidate journalists into practicing self-censorship, according to the Center for Protecting the Freedom of Journalists (see section 2.a.).

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary. In practice there was an independent decision-making body; however, the judiciary was subject to family and tribal influence. The higher judiciary council, a committee led by the president of the Court of Cassation, and comprised of other high-ranking officials from the various courts and the Ministry of Justice, determines judicial appointments, assignments, and

evaluations. The higher judiciary council remains under the administration of the Ministry of Justice.

Unlike in previous years, there were no allegations that judges were "reassigned" in order to remove them from particular proceedings.

The judicial system consists of civil, criminal, commercial, security, and religious courts. Most criminal cases are tried in civilian courts, which include the Court of Appeal, the High Court of Justice, and the Court of Cassation. The State Security Court, composed of both military and civilian judges, has jurisdiction over offenses against the state and drug-related crimes. Penal laws grant the same rights to defendants arrested by the security agencies as others who are arrested. The religious courts are subdivided into Shari'a (Islamic law) courts and tribunals for non-Muslim religious communities. Shari'a courts have jurisdiction over all matters relating to the personal status of Muslims, including marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Christian courts have jurisdiction over marriage and divorce cases among Christians, but Shari'a law is applied in inheritance cases (see section 5).

Trial Procedures

The law provides that all civilian court trials are open to the public unless the court determines otherwise. Defendants were entitled to legal counsel, may challenge witnesses, and had the right to appeal. Defendants who faced the death penalty or life imprisonment were represented by legal counsel. Public defenders were provided if the defendant was unable to hire legal counsel. All citizens were accorded these rights. Civil, criminal, and commercial courts accord equal weight to the testimony of men and women; however, in Shari'a courts the testimony of two women was equal to that of a man in most circumstances (see section 5). Defense attorneys were guaranteed access to government-held evidence relevant to their clients' cases.

The State Security Court consisted of a panel of three judges, two military officers and one civilian. Approximately two dozen cases were tried or were ongoing in the State Security Court during the year. Like the civilian courts, proceedings of the court were open to the public. Defendants tried in this court were often held in lengthy pretrial detention and refused access to legal council until just before the trial. State security court judges inquired into allegations that defendants were tortured and allowed the testimony of physicians regarding such allegations (see section 1.c.). The Court of Cassation ruled that the State Security Court may not issue a death sentence on the basis of a confession obtained as a result of torture. Defendants in this court have the right to appeal their sentences to the Court of Cassation, which is authorized to review issues of both fact and law, although defendants convicted of misdemeanors in the State Security Court had no right of appeal. Appeals were automatic for cases involving the death penalty.

The press and publications law permits journalists to cover state security court proceedings unless the court rules otherwise. The press routinely reported on cases before the court, including all cases heard during the year. Such reporting routinely covered defense arguments and allegations of torture.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

During the year, there were reports of political detainees (see section 1.d.). On June 11, four Islamic Action Front (IAF) members of Parliament were arrested and charged with violating Article 150 of Jordan's Penal Code, which prohibits writing or speech that is "intended to, or results in, stirring up sectarian or racial tension or strife among different elements of the nation," after visiting the condolence tent of the family of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (see section 2.a.).

In August four men were arrested while distributing leaflets condemning the July to August conflict between Israel and Lebanon. The leaflets were prepared by the outlawed Hizb al-Tahrir, a political party dedicated to restoring the Islamic Caliphate and ending the Hashemite monarchy. Charged with membership in an illegal group and distributing illegal material, on December 6, two of the four men were sentenced to one year prison terms. One man was sentenced to 6 months for distributing illegal material only and the fourth man was acquitted on both charges.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent judiciary in civil matters. The Supreme Court of Justice hears administrative complaints. The courts are open to all residents. Courts also have jurisdiction over any person in a civil or criminal matter, including in lawsuits where the government is a plaintiff or a defendant.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law prohibits arbitrary interference; however, in practice the government restricted the rights to be free of arbitrary interference. The law requires that security forces obtain a warrant from the prosecutor general or a judge before conducting searches or otherwise interfering with these rights; however, in security cases, authorities obtained pre-approved warrants. Security officers monitored telephone conversations and Internet communication, read private correspondence, and engaged in surveillance of persons considered to pose a threat to the government or national security. The law permits these practices if the government obtains a court order.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press; however, the government imposed significant restrictions on these rights in practice.

The 1998 Press and Publications Law is foremost among the laws that impose restrictions on the operation of newspapers. Government intimidation also led to self-censorship of journalists. The Penal Code provides that "insulting the king and stirring sectarian strife and sedition," could be invoked to punish journalists. According to the Penal Code the punishment for defamation of the king or royal family is three years in prison and a fine not exceeding \$700 (500 dinars). Additionally, citizens may be prosecuted for slandering the government, or foreign leaders, and for offending religious beliefs. Citizens generally did not hesitate to criticize the government openly. Allegedly government officials delayed publications at the printer. However, journalists exercised caution with regard to the king, the royal family, and the GID. Membership in the Jordan Press Association (JPA) is required for persons to be considered journalists or editors; the JPA can exercise control over content or threaten disciplinary measures. The law gives the association the authority to hold disciplinary councils against any journalists that violate the rules or ethics of the profession.

The Press and Publications Law provides the government with limited ability to issue fines, transfers the power to withdraw licenses to the judiciary, limits significantly the government's power to order shutdowns of printing presses, allows journalists to cover court proceedings unless the court ruled otherwise, and requires publications to be licensed. Article 35 of the Press and Publications Law gives the Prime Ministry the right to withhold publishing any printed material. The law imposes strict limits on publications, which gave the government broad leeway to impose sanctions. During the year the government used informants and censors at printing presses to inform it if particularly objectionable material was slated for print.

Journalists also may be prosecuted before the State Security Court for criminal and security violations. There were no cases during the year. Although historically some past cases were dismissed before trial, in the past some cases lingered in the courts for years. According to the National Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists, the government used detention and prosecution or the threat of prosecution to generate journalistic self-censorship (see section 1.d.).

The Prevention of Terrorism Act enacted on November 1 was criticized as limiting free speech. Some human rights groups alleged that the broad definition of terrorist speech and opinion under the Act could lead to arrest and detention of government critics. However, the government has not to date used the Act.

During the year there were several reported instances of arrest and government harassment of journalists. On May 30, Amman's conciliation court sentenced two editors, Jihad Momani and Hashem al-Khalidi, to two months imprisonment for "attacking religious sentiment" over their publication of the controversial Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. The court immediately released the editors on bail pending their appeals. Following the death in Iraq of terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, on June 8, the government interrupted a live interview with Zarqawi's brother-in-law, broadcast on Al-Jazeera satellite television. Police briefly detained the station's Amman bureau chief, Yasir Abu Hilalah.

On June 11, four members of parliament were arrested after visiting the condolence tent of the family of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The four men were Muhammad Abu Faris, Ali Abu Sukkar, Ja`far al-Hurani, and Ibrahim al-Mashukhi, all members of the IAF. They were charged with violating Article 150 of the penal code, which prohibits writing or speech that is "intended to, or results in, stirring up sectarian or racial tension or strife among different elements of the nation." Abu Faris praised al-Zarqawi as a martyr in a television interview and disparaged the victims of the November 2005 Amman suicide bombings, in which 60 died and over 100 were injured. In August Abu Faris and Abu Sukkar were sentenced to 13 months in prison and fines of 100 JD. The others arrested were released in July and August. King Abdullah pardoned Abu Faris and Abu Sukkar on September 30 and all fines were dropped.

During the year, several journalists interviewed by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an international NGO, reported that authorities pressured printers to delay publication of several newspapers until editors agreed to remove critical articles. Editors reportedly received telephone calls from security officials instructing them how to cover certain events. In April Tammer Smadi, a reporter for the Islamist weekly *As-Sabeel*, and a photojournalist from the same publication were detained for several hours for covering a street protest organized by an Islamist organization. They were interrogated, and the reporter alleged he was beaten. The photojournalist's camera was taken from him and later returned. Later in the month the GID allegedly arrested another journalist from *As-Sabeel* and detained him for three days after he returned for an interview with Mousa Abu Marzouk, a Hamas leader living in Damascus.

On April 4, Ahmad Ali Abdullah al-Yamani, a bookshop owner in Aqaba, claimed he was harassed by the GID, who confiscated newspapers and books from his shop. They allegedly detained his son for several hours for questioning and instructed him not to keep newspapers in the glass window of his shop before releasing him.

In May Fahd Rimawi, editor of the weekly *Al-Majd*, was held by GID for over eight hours the day after he printed a story quoting Prime Minister Bakhit as saying accusations that Hamas was smuggling weapons through Jordan lacked credibility. He was also allegedly called by the Prime Minister's office and asked to issue a retraction.

On November 1, former royal advisor Adnan Abu Odeh was sued by a group of private citizens for saying in an October 28 interview with Al Jazeera that Palestinians are underrepresented in Jordan. The complaint included allegations Abu Odeh had "stirred unrest" and "insulted the king". On November 5, the State Security court dismissed the suit.

The Press and Publications Department continued to enforce bans on the publication of selected books. Books were banned for religious, moral, and political reasons.

In January authorities banned the distribution of A. S. Bishtawi's book, *History of Injustice in the Arab World*.

During the year, the government passed a law that requires sermons and classes in mosques to be under government control. Muslim imams and teachers required written approval from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (See section 2.c.).

In September the Press and Publications Department, a government censorship office, withdrew a number of books from Amman's 11th annual International Book Fair. Among these was *The English in Faisal's Life*, a book about King Faisal of Iraq, *Exposed Secrets* dealing with Israel and nuclear weapons, and *A Feast for Seaweeds*, a novel banned for containing themes contrary to Islamic laws.

High taxes on media and tariffs on paper caused journalists to reduce the size of their publications. Journalists also criticized the government for advertising predominantly in newspapers in which the government owned shares.

The law provides foreign media operations freedom of expression. Radio and television news broadcasts, more restricted than the print media, underwent limited liberalization during the year. Jordan Television reported only the government's position on controversial matters. International satellite television and Israeli and Syrian television broadcasts were available and unrestricted.

In July King Hussein Bin Talal University signed an agreement to begin broadcasting on an FM frequency. Its license excludes news and political content.

On October 1, Yarmouk University began broadcasting Yarmouk FM, with support from Internews, an international NGO. The licensed format is that of a community-radio station; while social issues are discussed, news and political content are not allowed.

Internet Freedom

During the year, the government allowed Internet news sites to operate in the country, including those that presented news critical of the government.

In the past the government opened investigations attempting to determine who was responsible for Internet sites that allegedly libeled the king; however, no one was known to have been prosecuted in such cases during the year. In the past there were reports of government interference with Internet access, including several Web sites that appear to have been blocked.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

The government limited academic freedom. Some academics claimed that they received frequent threats of dismissal. During the year members of the academic community claimed that there was an ongoing intelligence presence in academic institutions. During the year the University of Jordan continued to grant its president authority to appoint half of its 80-member student council, including the chair. This measure was viewed widely as an effort to curb the influence of campus Islamists. Many students, including non-Islamists, continued to object to the university's policy.

On May 16, 700 students at the University of Jordan demonstrated to oppose the university administration's appointment of the head of the Student Union. A counter-demonstration supporting the administration took place on the same day.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly; however, the government restricted this right. Citizens must obtain permits for public gatherings. The government generally granted permits for protests it finds objectionable only after extensive negotiations with the organizers. The law requires that the organizers of rallies and demonstrations request permission from provincial governors at least three days prior to any event. Under the law no protest may be held without the governor's consent, and violators face imprisonment from one to six months and a fine not to exceed \$4,230 (3000 dinars). In some cases the government granted approval at the last moment, making it difficult for organizers to plan the demonstrations. Other requests were denied outright.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), Law No 5520, provides for punishment of those involved in peaceful demonstrations which could be interpreted as "disrupting of public order," or "endangering public safety", both of which fall under the definition of "terrorist acts" in the newly promulgated law.

On March 7, the government banned a planned demonstration of professional unions against a draft law barring professional associations from engaging in politics and deployed security forces to prevent the protest.

On April 9, the security services briefly detained several dozen IAF activists for promoting an unsanctioned general strike opposing cuts in fuel subsidies. Although reports differ on the number of activists detained and the length of their detentions, authorities released all of the activists within days.

On August 19, approximately 1000 citizens marched to protest alleged threats to the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The governor of Amman initially refused the event organizers a permit on technical grounds, but a second request was approved the day before the march was scheduled to occur.

On September 19, the IAF requested the Governor of Amman's permission to organize a demonstration to protest statements by Pope Benedict XVI. Permission was denied.

On November 14, the acting Governor of Irbid Walid Abda rejected a request by the National Opposition Parties Coordination Committee to organize a demonstration in Irbid to express solidarity with the Palestinian people.

In 2004 the government detained protestors at the al-Wihdat refugee camp in the southern suburbs of Amman, claiming that the demonstration was not licensed. According to media reports, more than 60 persons were detained for burning the national flag and destroying property. Human rights activists claimed more than 200 demonstrators were detained in the demonstration following the killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. The government claimed it filed formal charges against some of the detainees while releasing those under 18.

Freedom of Association

The constitution provides for the right of association; however, the government limited freedom of association by law. The law prohibits the use of associations for the benefit of any partisan organization. The government required and routinely granted approval for nonpolitical conferences, workshops, and seminars.

The government prohibits membership in unlicensed political parties but routinely licensed political parties and other associations. During the year there were 33 licensed political parties. The government may deny licenses to parties that it decides do not meet the political and other criteria contained in the Political Parties Law (see section 3). In practice, the government sometimes rejected applications by political parties to organize rallies and demonstrations. The High Court of Justice may dissolve a party if it violates the constitution or the law.

The Labor Law prohibits some groups from joining labor unions, such as noncitizens and agricultural and domestic workers. (see section 6)

c. Freedom of Religion

The constitution provides for freedom to practice the rites of one's religion, provided that religious practices are consistent with "public order and morality"; however, the government continued to impose some restrictions on freedom of religion. The state religion is Islam. The government does not officially recognize all religious groups. Groups obtain recognition with the approval of the prime minister. In order to be recognized, the group must have citizens among its constituency, and the Ministry of the Interior must also conduct a background investigation. Recognition allows a religious group to purchase land with a tax exemption.

During the year the parliament approved a law that required preachers and teachers in mosques to have licenses issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (see section 2.a.).

Members of unrecognized religious groups and converts from Islam faced legal discrimination and bureaucratic difficulties in personal status cases. The government prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing Muslims.

Persons enjoy freedom of belief, and there were no reports that the practice of any faith was prohibited. Some religious groups, while allowed to meet and practice their faith, complained of societal and official discrimination. In addition not all Christian denominations have been accorded legal status.

Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are the religions formally recognized by the government. The government did not accord the Druze or Baha'i faiths the status of officially recognized religions but did not prohibit the practice of these faiths. The government did not record the bearer's religion on national identity cards issued to Druze or Baha'is.

The government did not recognize Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Christ, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but each of these denominations conducted religious services and activities without interference.

The Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary (JETS), a training school for pastors and missionaries, had not been accredited as an educational institution by year's end, although the government granted it "registration," allowing it to operate as a cultural center. During the reporting year, the government confiscated a shipment of approximately one hundred books ordered by JETS. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs intervened and secured the release of the books to JETS.

Conversion to Islam by Christians was allowed; however, a Muslim may not convert to another religion. Muslims who convert to other faiths complained of social and government discrimination. Under Shari'a converts are regarded as apostates and legally may be denied their property and other rights.

Converts from Islam to Christianity faced possible loss of civil rights, loss of child custody, and economic hardship. However, courts have shown a willingness to decide mixed religion child custody cases in the best interests of the child.

On January 20, a Shari'a court received a complaint against Mahmoud Abdel Rahman Mohammad Eleker for apostasy, following his conversion from Islam to Christianity. On April 14, the complainant, the convert's brother-in-law, dropped the case after the convert's wife renounced in the presence of a lawyer any claims she might have to an inheritance from her own parents.

Converts from Islam are still considered Muslims under Shari'a in matters of personal status. The constitution provides that religious community trusts, or *awqaf*, and matters of personal status fall within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Shari'a courts for Muslims, and separate non-Muslim tribunals exist for each religious community recognized by the government. Civil marriage is not recognized by the government. The head of the department that manages Shari'a court affairs (a cabinet-level position) appoints Shari'a judges, while each recognized non-Muslim religious community selects the structure and members for its own tribunal. All judicial nominations are approved by the prime

minister and commissioned officially by royal decree. The Protestant denominations registered as "societies" come under the jurisdiction of one of the recognized Protestant church tribunals. There are no tribunals assigned for atheists or adherents of unrecognized religions. These persons must request one of the recognized courts to hear their personal status cases.

Men may divorce their spouses more easily than women; however, since 2004 Shari'a courts have granted over 239 divorces sought by women (see section 5). Some Christians are unable to divorce under the legal system because they are subject to their denomination's religious court system, which does not allow divorce. Such individuals sometimes convert to another Christian denomination or to Islam to divorce legally.

The legal system regards minor children of a male Muslim who converts to another religion to be Muslims. Adult children of a male Christian who has converted to Islam become ineligible to inherit from their father if they do not themselves convert to Islam. Muslim converts to Christianity and minor children of male converts to Christianity are not recognized legally as Christians and continue to be treated as Muslims in matters of family and property law.

The government noted individuals' religions (except for Druze, Baha'is, and other unrecognized religious groups) on the national identity card and "family book" (a national registration record issued to the head of every family that serves as proof of citizenship) of all citizens. Atheists must associate themselves with a recognized religion for official identification purposes.

Government policy requires that foreign missionary groups refrain from public proselytizing. The government has taken action against some Christian proselytizers in response to the complaints of recognized Christian groups, who charge that the activities of these missionaries are disruptive to society.

Societal Abuses, Discrimination, and Anti-Semitism

Relations between Muslims and Christians generally were amicable.

Anti-Semitism in the media was present and editorial cartoons, articles, and opinion pieces critical of Israel sometimes depicted negative images of Jews throughout the year in the newspapers *Al-Rai*, *Al-Dustur*, and *Al-Ghad*. There was no government response to these pieces.

Aside from expatriates and diplomats, there was no resident Jewish community in the country.

Muslims who convert to other religions often faced social ostracism, threats, and abuse from their families and Muslim religious leaders. Families usually strongly discouraged interfaith romantic relationships. Such relationships may lead to ostracism and, in some cases, violence against the couple or feuds between members of the couple's families. Baha'is faced some societal discrimination.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2006 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights; however, there were some restrictions. The law requires that all minors obtain written permission from a guardian to apply for a passport. Unlike in previous years, there were no cases of mothers reporting they were prevented from departing with their children because authorities enforced requests from fathers to prevent their children from leaving the country (see section 5). The GID sometimes withheld passports from citizens on security grounds.

Local governors may use the Preventing Crimes Law to place citizens under house arrest for up to one year without formally charging them (see section 1.d.). House arrest may involve requiring persons to report daily to a local police station while under curfew. Persons who violate the terms of house arrest may be imprisoned for up to 14 days.

Citizens receive passports that are valid for five years. Most persons of Palestinian origin living in the country were citizens and received passports; however, the government estimated that there were 150,000 Palestinian refugees, mostly of Gazan origin, who do not qualify for citizenship. They received two-year passports valid for travel but which do not connote citizenship. West Bank residents without other travel documentation are eligible to receive five-year passports which do not connote citizenship.

Human rights activists continued to charge that the government did not consistently apply citizenship laws, especially in cases in which passports were taken from citizens of Palestinian origin. The government maintained this policy was in line with its efforts to implement the government's disengagement from its former claims to the West Bank. However, activists complained that the process is not transparent and the appeal process virtually nonexistent. Claimants or families filed appeals with the Ministry of Interior, which were not resolved to their satisfaction. The government asserted that all cases it closed involved persons without valid claims to citizenship or travel documents.

Human rights activists claimed that approximately 10,000 to 12,000 former residents of Palestinian origin remained outside the country, and that the government refused to renew their passports at embassies overseas. The government asserted that only nonresident Palestinians who sought to renew travel documents, which required proof of residence in the country, have been refused.

The law prohibits internal and external forced exile, and the government did not use forced exile in practice.

Protection of Refugees

The government is not a party to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol and does not have any national legislation pertaining to the status and treatment of refugees. It generally cooperated with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in assisting refugees and asylum seekers. The government respected the UNHCR's eligibility determinations regarding asylum seekers, including those who entered the country clandestinely. An April 1998 Memorandum of Understanding between the government and the UNHCR contains the definition of a refugee, confirms the principle of *non-refoulement*, and allows recognized refugees a maximum stay of six months during which period a durable solution must be found. In practice the government provided protection against *refoulement*, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution. However, during the year some Iraqis detained for alleged criminal offenses were returned to Iraq before UNHCR could determine their refugee status.

The UNHCR continued to train law enforcement officials and judges in international refugee law, including instructors from the NCHR, which conducted a course for entry-level government officials during the year. However, in March the UNHCR reported that approximately 200 Palestinians formerly residents of Baghdad were refused entry. In July the UNHCR reported that approximately 200 Iranian refugees formerly resident in a UNHCR camp in Ramadi, Iraq, who had been refused entry in 2005 were again refused entry. It also reported in several instances that it intervened to prevent the deportation of persons issued UNHCR asylum seeker cards.

As of December 31, approximately 1.86 million Palestinian refugees were registered with the UNRWA. The UNRWA and the government continued to provide assistance to these Palestinian refugees during the year. Approximately 700,000 persons displaced from former Jordanian territories during the 1967 war have been granted nationality. An additional 120,000 persons displaced during the 1967 war hold temporary residency permits. A further 200,000 Palestinian refugees were also estimated to be living in the country without any direct assistance.

Since 1991 many Iraqis have applied for refugee status and received legal and material assistance from the UNHCR. An estimated 500,000 to 700,000 Iraqis were living in the country. Most had not requested refugee status. The government has tolerated the prolonged stay of many Iraqis beyond the expiration of the visit permits, under which they entered the country. The government generally recognized UNHCR's requests that states continue to grant temporary protection for all Iraqi asylum seekers, including new arrivals, rejected cases, and recognized refugees whose cases had been suspended by resettlement countries. In April 2005, however, the Ministry of Interior formally declined UNHCR's request to renew an expired informal Temporary Protection Regime (TPR), which had committed the government to continue tolerating Iraqis in the country illegally. The lapsed TPR had no basis in the law and conferred no rights on recognized refugees. Despite expiration of the TPR, with few exceptions the government has continued to tolerate the large number of illegal Iraqis residing in the country. Thousands continued to enter the country each month; however, UNHCR reported that some Iraqis were refused entry into the country. UNHCR also reported that it intervened to prevent the deportation of persons issued UNHCR asylum seeker cards in several instances. Access of Iraqi children to Jordanian public schools varied from cases to case; many schools ran second shifts in order to accommodate Iraqis, while some school administrators declined to admit the children of Iraqis residing in the country illegally.

According to UNHCR figures, during the year, 822 persons, primarily from Iraq, Russia, and Syria, recognized as refugees awaited resettlement. An additional 90 Chechens were allowed to remain indefinitely pending repatriation. By year's end approximately 20,850 persons, primarily Iraqis, were seeking asylum.

The government also continued to provide temporary protection to recognized refugees formerly resident in a UNHCR camp in Ramadi, Iraq, who fled Iraq in 2003. By mid-December 97 Palestinians, 16 Iraqis and 4 Iranians remained in a UNHCR-managed camp in Ruweished, having relocated there following the government's closure in May 2005 of a UNHCR reception camp in the "no man's land" between Jordanian and Iraqi frontier posts at the Trebil/Karama crossing. Most Palestinians at the Ruweished camp were expected to depart for resettlement countries by year's end.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) statistics, between January 1 and December 7, the government granted temporary protection to 340 third country nationals fleeing Iraq en route to Sudan and Nigeria. The government also facilitated the transit of 692 Iraqis voluntarily returning to Iraq from third-countries, primarily from Europe. IOM verified that all repatriations to Iraq and to third countries were voluntary.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The law does not provide citizens the right to change their government peacefully. Citizens may participate in the political system through their elected representatives in parliament; however, the king may use his discretion to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, cabinet, and upper house of parliament; dissolve or extend parliament; establish public policy; and approve the appointment of all mayors.

Elections and Political Participation

After being appointed by the king, a prime minister is required to submit his cabinet to a parliamentary vote of confidence, if there is a seated parliament. Executive power is vested in the king (or, in his absence, in the regent), who exercised his power through his ministers in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. The June 2003 multiparty parliamentary elections were generally considered to be free and fair; however, the election law significantly underrepresented urban areas and some observers considered electoral districting unfair, claiming that it was intended to reduce the representation of areas heavily populated by citizens of Palestinian origin. There were some speculations of fraud. Many observers considered electoral districting unfair because of a lack of balance between the population and the number of seats per district, and claimed that it was intended to reduce the representation of areas heavily populated by Jordanians of Palestinian origin. The law allows voters to choose one candidate in multiple-seat districts. In the largely tribal society, citizens tended to cast their vote for family members. In practice, candidates who lacked tribal credentials generally received fewer votes in tribal districts. The Islamic Action Front boycotted the 2003 municipal elections in all districts outside greater Amman to protest the provisional law on appointing

municipal officials.

The election law requires judiciary verification of polling results, and establishes the number of lower house seats at 110 with six reserved for women. The voting age is set at 18 years for all citizens.

Citizens may freely nominate themselves and register as candidates if they have a "certificate of good conduct" issued by the GID. Persons who have been sentenced to over one year in prison are ineligible for election. The king proposes and dismisses extraordinary sessions of parliament and may postpone regular sessions for up to 60 days. If the government amends or enacts a law when parliament is not in session, it must submit the law to parliament for consideration during the next session; however, such "provisional" laws do not expire and, while technically subject to action by parliament when it returns to session, in practice remain in force without legislative approval.

Women have the right to vote and were encouraged to vote and be active in the political process. Seven women serve in the senate, six in the Chamber of Deputies, and one in the cabinet. Of the 110 seats in the lower house, the quota provisions reserve nine for Christians and three for either the Circassian or Chechen ethnic minorities.

Citizens of Palestinian origin, estimated to be more than half of the total population, comprised four of the 26 ministers. In parliament, 9 of 55 senators and 18 of 110 lower house deputies were of Palestinian origin. There were no Palestinians in any of the country's 12 governorships. The electoral system gives greater representation to areas that have a majority of inhabitants of non-Palestinian origin.

Four women have been elected to the councils of the country's 11 professional associations. Of these women, three sit on the Nurses and Registered Midwives Syndicate and one on the Jordan Press Association Council. An estimated 31,000 women are registered as members of these associations, representing approximately 23 percent of the membership.

Government Corruption and Transparency

Corruption is a crime. There was a public perception of corruption in the executive and legislative branches. Influence peddling and a lack of transparency have been alleged in government procurement and dispute settlement. The use of family, business, and other personal connections to advance personal business interests was widespread. The GID has an anticorruption department.

On November 1, the Financial Disclosure law was published in the official gazette. Under this law, specified government officials must declare their assets in a sealed envelope to the newly formed Financial Disclosure Department of the Ministry of Justice. This envelope will be opened by the Chief Justice in the event of a complaint.

In November the parliament brought charges against former Minister of Municipalities Abdul Razzaq Thbeshat for corruption. The case involves a 2002 purchase of waste-management vehicles from Germany, which an Audit Bureau later found to be faulty. On December 3, a special committee in Parliament was formed to investigate the allegations. As Thbeshat was an acting minister when the alleged felony took place, he cannot be tried in a regular court. However, four other men implicated in the case were being tried in the Court of First Instance at year's end.

In January 2005 Haider Mahmoud, a respected poet, wrote a thinly-veiled poem to the king warning him of the corruption surrounding him. Mahmoud was vilified in the press as a traitor, and then-prime minister Faisal al-Fayez called for the mayor of Amman to fire Mahmoud from his position as head of the Al Hussein cultural center; Mahmoud resigned. Mahmoud's son also resigned from his job with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In May 2005 MP Ghazi Zaben opened an investigation into *awqaf* (religious endowments) funding, and into allegations that a former minister of *awqaf* and Islamic affairs, Ahmad Hilayel, was illegally profiting from travel packages to Mecca for the annual Muslim pilgrimage.

Under a December 4 law an official committee will be established entrusted with combating corruption. The committee will have a free mandate to pursue current and former officials who are suspected of being involved in corrupt activities. The law also states that this body will be autonomous and its officials immune from prosecution.

The law provides for public access to government information once it becomes a matter of legal record, and the government enforced this law in practice.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Several domestic and international human rights groups generally operated with restricted permission from the government, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases alleging torture and other abuses committed by the security forces. Within these limits government officials were cooperative and responsive to their views. The Press and Publications Law removed restrictions on the publication of information about the military and security forces, which had prevented the publication by domestic groups of reports alleging torture and other abuses committed by the security forces; however, similar restrictions still exist in the penal code and other laws (see section 2.a.).

The NCHR's activities, which began in 2003, included training government and international organization personnel on human rights standards and conditions in the country and collection and analysis of citizens' complaints. The government cooperated with and funded the center; some human rights activists complained that it was too influenced by the government. On May 21, the NCHR issued its second annual report on the state of human rights in the country, covering 2005. According to the NCHR, it continued to face legal hindrances which impinge on the Center's "moral and financial privileges" necessary for its work. The 2005 report also stated that the government's response

to the 2004 discussion of legislation on the right to associate and the freedom of expression was negative. In the 200557-page report, the NCHR ranked the country "good" at the planning and policy level; "acceptable" in economic, social, and cultural rights; and "poor" in civil and political rights. A ministerial committee was formed after the report's release to study the report and formulate a response. At year's end the committee had met but had not yet produced a response.

There were eight PSD human rights complaints offices in each of its eight regional directorates. Persons charging police misconduct may submit complaints to the relevant office. Plaintiffs may file compensation claims for damages, and convicted officers reportedly also were subject to disciplinary action. During the year citizens filed 425 complaints against PSD personnel.

The government generally cooperated with international NGOs, but human rights observers claimed that they were unable to meet with some security detainees because they were held incommunicado. The ICRC was permitted full access to all detainees and prisoners, including those held by the GID and the military intelligence directorate (see section 1.c.). The government did not respond to HRW requests to allow its researcher to investigate torture. Some high level officials did meet with HRW after the release of their report, *Suspicious Sweeps*.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution does not distinguish between citizens on the basis of race, disability, language, or social status; however, the law treats women unequally and some minorities faced discrimination in employment, housing, and other areas.

Women

Women experienced legal discrimination in pension and social security benefits, inheritance, divorce, ability to travel, child custody, citizenship, and in certain limited circumstances, the value of their Shari'a court testimony (see section 1.e.). Violence and abuse against women continued, although the full extent of the problem was difficult to determine. In rural areas violence against women was reported more frequently than in major cities; however, women's rights activists speculated that many incidents in cities went unreported. Although in recent years the government has taken steps to increase the resources available to help abused women including opening a safe house for women, cultural norms continued to discourage victims from seeking medical or legal assistance.

Abused women have the right to file a complaint in court against their spouses for physical abuse; however, in practice familial and societal pressures discouraged them from seeking legal remedies. Marital rape is not illegal. NGOs such as the Jordanian Women's Union, which had a telephone hotline for victims of domestic violence, provided assistance in such matters. The Family Protection Unit of the Public Security Directorate also offered a comprehensive support program for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. During the year the PSD reported 644 cases of sexual assault and 141 cases of domestic violence. Spousal abuse is technically grounds for divorce, but a husband may seek to demonstrate that he has religious authority to strike his wife.

On May 30, the Communication Partnership for Family Health (CPFH), in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Tulane University, published results of a survey of 1,847 households regarding attitudes towards domestic violence. The study revealed that 40 percent of men and 53 percent of women believed that wife beating was acceptable under certain circumstances.

Authorities prosecuted all 18 reported instances of honor crimes that resulted in death of the victim. These killings derive from customary notions of family honor among some communities, both Muslim and Christian. According to women's rights activists, there was evidence of a societal trend toward condemnation of honor crimes. The police regularly placed potential victims of honor crimes in protective custody. Activists estimated that at year's end more than 25 women were in protective custody. At least one NGO was working in conjunction with the government to establish a shelter where the women could live in relative anonymity as an alternate to protective custody.

In ordinary cases the maximum penalty for first-degree murder is death, and the maximum penalty for second-degree murder is 15 years in prison. Article 340 of the penal code provides for lenient treatment in cases where the accused personally witnessed the victim of an honor crime engaging in sexual relations or in bed with a nonspouse. Article 98 of the penal code specifically states that "an extenuating justification can be invoked by anyone who commits a crime in a fit of rage as a result of an unrightful and dangerous act carried out by [the] victim," and, as a result, may significantly reduce penalties for murder. Although the defendants are almost universally found guilty, a successful article 98 defense results in the defendants receiving token sentences.

For example, on January 4, a woman was allegedly shot by her brother after her family threatened her life for reasons of family honor. The woman survived and her brother was taken into custody and charged with attempted murder.

In June a brother allegedly shot his sister to death after an argument over her alleged "immoral behavior". He was charged with premeditated murder and detained for 14 days before being released on bail. His case is still pending.

On October 24 in Madaba, a man allegedly shot and stabbed his 31 year old sister because of her "bad conduct". He turned himself into the police, who arrested and detained him.

In a widely reported case, two brothers were convicted of murdering their pregnant sister. The woman had become pregnant out of wedlock with an Egyptian man. She confronted her family with the pregnancy and received her father's blessing to marry in Egypt. Upon her return to the country to give birth, her brothers killed her and her unborn child.

By invoking Article 98, the charges for honor crimes are often reduced from premeditated murder to manslaughter. Most men convicted of an 'honor crimes' were given no more than 6 month prison sentences. The most common perpetrator is often a father or brother of a woman who acquires a gun and shoots the women to death to restore the family honor. Pregnant women have been killed, along with unborn children. The perpetrators may receive minimal punishments.

According to the law, sexual harassment is strictly prohibited and subject to criminal penalties including fines and imprisonment. Prostitution is illegal. The government provided men with more generous social security benefits than women. The government continued pension payments of deceased male civil servants but discontinued payments of deceased female civil servants to their heirs. Laws and regulations governing health insurance for civil servants do not permit women to extend their health insurance coverage to dependents or spouses. However, divorced and widowed women may extend coverage to their children.

Under Shari'a as applied in the country, female heirs receive half the amount that male heirs receive, and non-Muslim widows of Muslim spouses have no inheritance rights. A sole female heir receives half of her parents' estate; the balance goes to designated male relatives. A sole male heir inherits both of his parents' property. Male Muslim heirs have the duty to provide for all family members who need assistance. Men were able to divorce their spouses more easily than women, although a provisional law introduced in 2002, which was in effect at year's end, permitted women to initiate divorce on any grounds, provided they give up the financial settlement normally granted in divorce cases. The existing permanent divorce law allows women to seek divorces and retain their financial rights only under specific circumstances, such as spousal abuse. In these cases there is a burden of proof that the women must overcome (see section 2.c.). Special courts for each denomination adjudicate marriage and divorce matters for Christians (see section 2.c.). During the year, there were 25 female judges, an increase of six from 2004.

The 2003 Passport Law states that women and their minor children have the right to obtain passports without the written permission of their husbands (see section 2.d.). Married women do not have the legal right to transmit citizenship to their children; however, female citizens married to noncitizen men can pass citizenship to their children upon the permission of the council of ministers. In practice this permission was usually granted, except in cases where the father was Palestinian origin. Furthermore women may not petition for citizenship for their noncitizen husbands. The husbands themselves must apply for citizenship after fulfilling a requirement of 15 years of continuous residency. Once the husbands have obtained citizenship, they may apply to transmit the citizenship to their children. However, in practice such an application may take years, and in many cases citizenship still may be denied to the husband and children. Such children become stateless and, if they do not hold legal residency, lose the right to attend public school or seek other government services.

Civil law grants women equal pay for equal work; however, in practice this was not consistently enforced.

Traditional social pressures discouraged many women from pursuing professional careers, especially after marriage. Nonetheless, women had employment opportunities in many professions, including government, engineering, medicine, education, the military, and law. Women's groups stressed that the problem of discrimination was not only one of law but also of women's lack of awareness of their rights or unwillingness to assert them. A professional women's association, the royal family, and the government promoted improvements for women's civil and economic life. Official figures at year's end show that 48 percent of students enrolled in higher education institutions were female, and in some disciplines, women comprised 80 percent of the student body.

At year's end, while unemployment for the population as a whole reached 15.4 percent, for women the number was 31.4 percent.

Children

The government was committed to children's rights and welfare in the areas of education and health; however, government efforts in these areas were constrained by limited financial resources. Education is compulsory from ages six through 16; however, no legislation exists to enforce the law or punish guardians for violating it, and absence from school goes without penalty. A student may be absent from school for up to two years and the Ministry of Education will still allow the student to return to school. Public education was free from age six through completion of high school (age 18). The overall school attendance and total secondary school attendance rates remained at 92 percent. Several domestic and foreign religious groups operated private schools throughout the country. Since 1999 the government denied Iraqi children admittance to public schools unless they were legal residents of the country or recognized as refugees by the UNHCR. In September the MOI decided to bar enrollment of Iraqi children at private schools in the country unless their parents have residency permits; however, in practice most are allowed to attend. (see section 2.d.).

The government attempted to address the issues of educational development and quality and the relevance of education to job-market demand. The government did not charge tuition for public education, and it granted food and transportation supplements to families with many children and to very poor families.

Students must obtain a good behavior certificate from the GID to be admitted under the university quota system. Activists reported that the GID sometimes withheld these certificates from deserving students due to a family member's allegedly problematic record.

The government provided free inoculation programs typically administered through the school system for children. In addition children had access to government-subsidized public clinics, which offer reduced fees for most services.

The National Council for Family Affairs coordinated all issues concerning family safety. Since 2005 the government-funded "Dar al Amman," the country's first child protection center, provided temporary shelter, medical care, and rehabilitation for abused children age six to 12. At year's end, approximately 25 children were residing temporarily in the shelter.

During the year authorities received complaints of 59 cases of physical abuse and 475 cases of sexual abuse of children (a decrease from

2005). The law specifies punishment for abuses against children. Conviction for rape or sodomy of a child under 15 years of age potentially carries the death penalty.

The current minimum age for marriage is 18 years. However, with the consent of a judge and a guardian, children as young as 15 may be married. In most cases the guardian made the decision that the child should be married, and it was not the child's choice. One partner, almost exclusively the male, is most times significantly older than the 15-year-old. The government attempted to safeguard some other children's rights, especially regarding child labor (see section 6.d.). Although the law prohibits most children under the age of 16 from working, child vendors worked on the streets of Amman. Economic conditions and social disruption have caused the number of these children to increase over the last 10 years.

Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits trafficking in children; however, it does not specifically prohibit trafficking in other persons and there were reports that persons were trafficked to Jordan primarily from Bangladesh, China, India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan to work in the Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs), according to a report released by the National Labor Committee, an American NGO (see section 6.e.) Other criminal statutes prohibit slavery and indentured servitude.

Since August the government has undertaken a cooperative program with the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to raise foreign domestic workers'(FDW) awareness of protections and rights under the law.

On May 14 the Ministry of Labor (MOL) opened a new directorate specifically to address the needs of the approximately 70,000 FDWs. In addition to sponsoring stricter legislation regulating the recruitment and hiring measures used by the recruitment agencies, the MOL also established a 24-hour telephone hotline that FDWs could call to report abuses. Further, the Ministry produced booklets on the FDWs' rights, published in their own languages and distributed them to the workers when they arrived in Jordan. Regular announcements in local newspapers advise employers of their responsibilities towards their domestic help.

In the past, reports have alleged that workers suffered abuses that amounted to human trafficking, including nonpayment of wages, excessive hours, and withholding of passports. In 2005 the Human Rights Directorate of the Foreign Ministry created the position of Deputy Director of Trafficking issues.

Persons with Disabilities

The law provides persons with disabilities equal rights and there were no reports of discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or in the provision of other state services.

The law mandates that companies reserve 2 percent of their positions for people with disabilities. According to education officials, there are 4,000 blind teachers currently employed. The law further focuses on accessibility measures and individual support. This includes infrastructure modifications on new buildings and roads. The government generally enforced these provisions, although many private and public office buildings still have limited or no access for persons with disabilities. High unemployment restricts job opportunities for persons with disabilities, who officially numbered 220,000 although UN estimates placed the number closer to 500,000. Thirteen percent of citizens with disabilities received monetary assistance from the government. A Special Building Code Department was established in 1997, to oversee the retrofitting of existing buildings to make them accessible to disabled persons.

There were three groups of Palestinians residing in the country. Those that migrated to the country and the Jordan-controlled West Bank after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war were given full citizenship. Those still residing in the West Bank after 1967 were no longer eligible to claim citizenship, but were allowed to obtain temporary passports without national numbers, provided they did not also carry a Palestinian Authority travel document. In 1995 then-King Hussein announced that West Bank residents without other travel documentation would be eligible to receive full-validity passports, although still without national numbers. Refugees who fled Gaza after 1967 were not entitled to citizenship and were issued temporary passports without national numbers.

Human rights activists maintained that despite the codified passport issuance procedures, many citizens of Palestinian origin have had their Jordanian national numbers revoked at the whim of the interior ministry employees. Others claimed that their temporary passports have been confiscated after spending time in the West Bank. Human rights activists claim glass ceilings inhibit Palestinians from receiving appointments to many senior positions in the government and the military, as does a quota system for admittance to public universities and the granting of university scholarships. Citizens of Palestinian origin complain of under-representation in parliament (see section 2.d.).

During the year there were reports of societal discrimination against Iraqis living in the country. According to a December 7 UN Integrated Regional Information Networks report, the number of reports of discrimination against Iraqis living in the country rose following the Amman hotel suicide bomb attacks in November 2005 (see section 1.d.). The Iraqi Association for Nationals Living in Jordan received hundreds of complaints from Iraqis living in Amman of discrimination in the streets, in shops, and in public places. Several beatings of Iraqis were reported in the days immediately following the bombings.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Societal discrimination against homosexuals existed. There are no laws that addressed discrimination against homosexuals.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law provides workers in the private sector, in some state-owned companies, and in certain professions in the public sector the right to form and join unions without excessive requirements; in practice the government allowed unions in these sectors. Unions must be registered to be legal. The labor law limits membership to citizens, effectively excluding the country's more than 218,000 registered foreign workers. However, some unions represented the interests of foreign workers informally.

According to official figures, more than 30 percent of the workforce was organized into 17 unions. Although the Solidarity Center, a global NGO, put the actual number closer to 10 to 15 percent, the number approaches 30 percent when the professional associations are included. Unions are required by the government to be members of the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU), the sole trade union federation. The government subsidized and audited the GFJTU's salaries and activities. Union officials are elected by secret ballot to five-year terms, when elections actually take place. More often than not, the number of candidates equals the number of seats. Members have three days to file a nomination application, which is reviewed by the union. Elections are only held if there are more candidates than seats. In recent election cycles, when the number of candidates exceeded the number of seats, some candidates were persuaded to withdraw. The government monitors the elections in the event of a complaint to ensure compliance with the law.

The constitution prohibits anti-union discrimination, but the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) claimed in late 2005 that the government did not protect adequately employees from anti-union discrimination. Workers may lodge complaints of anti-union discrimination with the MOL, which is authorized to order the reinstatement of employees discharged for union activities. There were no complaints of anti-union discrimination lodged with the MOL during the year.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Unions have and exercise the right to bargain collectively. Labor laws mandate that workers must obtain government permission to strike. Unions generally did not seek approval for a strike, but workers used the threat of a strike as a negotiating tactic. Strikes are prohibited if a labor dispute is under mediation or arbitration. If a settlement is not reached through mediation, the MOL may refer the dispute to an industrial tribunal with agreement of both parties. The tribunal is an independent arbitration panel of judges appointed by the MOL. The decisions of the panel are legally binding. If only one party agrees, the MOL refers the dispute to the council of ministers and then to parliament. Labor law prohibits employers from dismissing a worker during a labor dispute. There are no special laws or exemptions from regular labor laws in export processing zones.

Many of the workers in the QIZs are non-Jordanians. As a result, under the current labor law, they are not permitted to form or participate in unions.

On February 16, 230 employees from Magnesia Jordan held a sit-in before the MOL to protest the fact that they were not transferred to the Arab Potash Company after Magnesia Jordan halted production. On March 9, the employees held another sit-in before the Prime Ministry to protest nonreceipt of wages for over three months.

On March 10, over 3,500 workers at the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company went on strike demanding the resignation of the JPRC Board of Directors. They also demanded improved working conditions. Their salaries were raised but the Board of Directors remained in place.

On September 28, 1,000 Bengali workers in a textile factory in ad-Dulayl staged a strike over the imposition of long and unpaid overtime hours by the factory manager. On October 1, 1,400 workers at two other factories also went on strike over unpaid wages.

On October 1, workers at the Rainbow Textile Factory in ad-Dulayl went on strike to protest an MOL decision to deport six workers who were thought to be "troublemakers". On October 5, the MOL reversed its decision and let the workers stay in the country.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The constitution prohibits forced or compulsory labor, except in a state of emergency such as war or natural disaster; however, there were reports throughout the year that such practices occurred. Foreign domestic servants, almost exclusively female, were subject to coercion and abuse and, in some cases, worked under conditions that amounted to forced labor (see section 6.e.). Also, some workers in the QIZs were allegedly forced to work without wages, amounting to indentured servitude. The law does not prohibit specifically forced or compulsory labor by children; however, such practices were not known to occur.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

Labor law forbids children under the age of 16 from being employed, except as apprentices; however, there were reports of child labor throughout the country, mostly in urbanized areas. Children under the age of 18 may not work for more than six hours continuously between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m., or during weekends, religious celebrations, or national holidays. Children under 18 may not work in hazardous occupations. Provisions in the labor laws do not extend to children in the informal sector, which consists of agriculture, domestic labor, and small family businesses.

The law provides that employers who hire a child under the age of 16 must pay a fine ranging from \$140 to \$710 (100 to 500 dinars). The fine is doubled if the offense is repeated. The government, however, provided little training on child labor to the 72 MOL inspectors responsible for enforcing the relevant laws. When investigating child labor, inspectors generally acted to ameliorate the situation of the involved families, including directing some adult family members toward job training programs. In the past some government officials claimed

that if children were barred from working, they would lose important income, on which their families depended, and might turn to more serious activities, such as drug trafficking and prostitution, for income.

The MOL's Child Labor Unit (CLU) received, investigated, and addressed child labor complaints (although it has no formal mechanism for doing so) and coordinated government action regarding child labor. The CLU received less than 40 complaints this year. Anecdotal evidence suggested that child labor, especially of street vendors, was more prevalent during the year than it was 10 years ago. Despite the difficulty in accurately measuring the extent of child labor, child labor was particularly noticeable in big cities, where children work in mechanical workshops or as peddlers at traffic lights. A 2002 official study estimated that 32 thousand children were working.

The law does not specifically prohibit forced or bonded labor by children; however, such practices were not known to occur (see section 6.c.).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

On June 1, the government increased the national minimum wage by 5.7 percent, from \$127 to \$154 (95 to 110 dinars) per month, to become effective July, 2007. The minimum wage applies to all workers except domestic servants, those working in small family businesses, those in the agricultural sector, and those in the QIZs. Inspectors from the MOL enforced the minimum wage, but due to limited resources were unable to ensure 100 percent compliance. The national minimum wage did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The government estimated that the poverty level was at a monthly wage of approximately \$47 (33 dinars) per month per capita.

The law requires overtime pay for hours worked in excess of the standard work week, which generally is 48 hours. Workers may not work more than 10 hours in any continuous period or more than 60 hours of overtime per month. Employees are entitled to one day off per week. Labor law does not apply to small family businesses, domestic servants, and nonprofessional and non-technical workers in the agriculture sector. However, it does apply to citizens and noncitizen workers in other sectors. There is a separate civil service law. The law specifies a number of health and safety requirements for workers, which the MOL is authorized to enforce. The law requires employers to report industrial accidents to the ministry within 48 hours. Although employers are not required to report occupational diseases to the ministry, the law stipulates that if the medical authority determines that a worker suffers an occupational accident or disease as a result of his work, the employer is liable for compensation. The ministry mediates disputed amounts of compensation in cases of occupational disease. Workers do not have a statutory right to remove themselves from hazardous conditions without risking the loss of their jobs.

According to the MOL, there were approximately 200,000 registered noncitizen workers in the country, the majority of whom were engaged in low-wage, low-skill activities in the textile, agriculture, construction, and industrial sectors. According to the government and independent surveys, approximately 30,000 of these workers were employed in the QIZs. Foreign workers in the QIZs were recruited through a vetted process involving registered recruitment agencies.

The May report by the American NGO, the National Labor Committee (NLC), brought the QIZs under international scrutiny, as the NLC claimed that foreign workers were subject to conditions that amounted to human trafficking (see section 5). In response the government conducted immediate inspections and closed some factories that were found to be in violation of internationally recognized labor standards. Workers from these factories were moved to factories with standards that met the guidelines set forth by the ILO. At year's end 10 factories had been closed, of which 2 were subsequently re-opened after complying with updated government standards. Many workers were moved from non-compliant factories to factories that the government had recently identified as complying with updated standards. However, at year's end a number of factories continued to violate international standards. Additionally, on September 17, the Cabinet exempted 2,300 QIZ workers who had been moved from one factory to another from the fines associated with that move, as well as the fines that accumulated for remaining in the country after their work permits have expired. The total estimated value of these fines is 1.2 million Jordanian Dinars.

Abuse of domestic servants, most of whom were foreign, was widespread, although not thoroughly documented. Employers routinely limited their domestic employees' freedom of movement, and often illegally confiscated travel documents. Victims, who feared losing their employment and being returned to their home country, generally did not report complaints to government officials. In May in cooperation with UNIFEM and several source country embassies, the government also introduced a new standard work contract with greater protections that applied to all FDWs arriving since July 2003.