

# JORDAN 2013 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy ruled by King Abdullah II bin Hussein. The constitution concentrates executive and legislative authority in the king. The multi-party parliament consists of the 75-member House of Notables (Majlis al-Ayan) appointed by the king and a 150-member elected lower house, the Chamber of Deputies (Majlis al-Nuwwab). Chamber of Deputies and municipal elections, which international observers deemed credible, took place on January 23. Authorities generally maintained effective control over the security forces. Security forces committed human rights abuses.

The most significant human rights problems were: citizens' inability to change their government peacefully, reflected throughout the year in demonstrations calling for various political and economic reforms; mistreatment and allegations of torture by security and government officials with impunity; restrictions on freedom of expression that limited the ability of citizens and media to criticize government policies and officials; and restrictions on freedom of assembly and association, leading to the repeated arrest of protesters charged with unlawful gathering.

Other human rights problems included poor prison conditions, arbitrary arrest and denial of due process through administrative detention, prolonged detention, and allegations of nepotism and the influence of special interests on the judiciary. The government continued to infringe on citizens' privacy rights. The government shut down 292 news websites in June, and government interference in the media and threats of fines and detention encouraged self-censorship. Violence against women was widespread, and abuse of children persisted. Legal and societal discrimination and harassment remained a problem for women, religious minorities, religious converts, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons. Trafficking in persons remained a problem. Discrimination against persons with disabilities was a problem. Legal and societal discrimination against persons of Palestinian origin remained widespread. The government restricted labor rights, and local and international human rights organizations reported high levels of abuse of foreign domestic workers.

Impunity remained widespread, and the government did not take sufficiently strong steps to investigate, prosecute, or punish officials who committed abuses.

### **Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:**

**a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life**

There were no reports of arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life. The Ombudsman's Bureau within the Public Security Directorate (PSD) investigates allegations of police abuse.

**b. Disappearance**

There were no reports during the year of politically motivated disappearances.

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

The law prohibits such practices; however, international and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) continued to report incidents of torture and widespread mistreatment in police and security detention centers. The constitution bans torture, including psychological harm, by public officials and provides penalties of as long as three years' imprisonment for the use of torture, with an increased penalty of up to 15 years if serious injury occurs. Human rights lawyers found the law ambiguous and supported amendments to better define "torture" and strengthen sentencing guidelines.

On March 10, Sultan Al-Khatatbeh died while in custody at Jweideh Prison. While the inmate's family claimed he had died of torture, the PSD said he died of a brain hemorrhage after falling from a fence during an attempted escape (PSD released a security video showing Al-Khatatbeh falling from the fence). On April 8, the Supreme Criminal Court prosecutor general formally charged four members of the PSD's anti-narcotics unit with torture in the case. The court also charged two forensic doctors with failing to carry out their duties. This was the first time in Jordan's history that PSD officers have been charged with torture. As of December, the case was still pending.

According to a report by the quasi-governmental National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) last year, the PSD conducted 60 formal investigations into torture allegations, however, no prosecutions followed. The NCHR also reported that in 2012 it received 73 complaints of torture and beatings in police stations and five complaints of torture and beatings in prisons and rehabilitation centers.

International and domestic organizations stated that security forces continued to practice torture and mistreatment, particularly in police stations.

On September 1, police arrested Anas Bani-Irshayd, the son of the deputy chief of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, on charges of resisting arrest, failing to obey the orders of a law enforcement official, and damaging public property (hitting a police car while driving away from it). During his custody in the General Intelligence Department (GID) detention center in Amman, masked security officials allegedly beat Bani-Irshayd on the chest and shoulders. Media and source reports conflicted whether the arrest and alleged beating were politically motivated.

Throughout the year, various individuals and local NGOs reported that in an effort to humiliate detainees, government agents at times sexually abused them during arrest or detention by making them remove their clothing and perform sexual acts.

On March 24, according to news reports, police tortured and assaulted five detainees, one of them a woman, in Northern Irbid Police Center. The police sexually assaulted the four men and physically abused the female detainee, who suffered a fractured leg but was not sexually assaulted. The female detainee filed a complaint against the director of the police station for assault. As of December, her complaint was pending. The other four prisoners dropped their complaints upon being released on bail.

### **Prison and Detention Center Conditions**

Overall conditions in the country's prisons generally were poor in six older prisons, while the eight new prisons met international standards.

Physical Conditions: Significant problems remained in prisons, including inadequate food and health care, poor sanitation and ventilation, extreme temperatures, inadequate access to potable water, and insufficient basic and emergency medical care. The NCHR and other NGOs noted improved conditions in the new prisons and fewer complaints of abuse and mistreatment in prisons. Nonetheless, detainees reported abuse and mistreatment by guards. According to NCHR's 2012 report, 12 prisoners died in prison, 11 due to natural causes and one from suicide, and 85 other prison inmates attempted suicide.

In 2012 the NCHR paid 84 visits to police stations and observed signs of torture on 13 detainees and registered nine cases of torture. In some police stations hygiene,

lighting, heat, ventilation and access to potable water were poor; detainees reported overcrowded conditions and shortages of food and blankets.

According to government statistics, there were approximately 23,889 inmates in 14 correctional and rehabilitation center facilities and 1,222 women in the Women's Correctional and Rehabilitation Center in the Jweideh detention facility. The Ministry of Social Development reported there were 1,684 juveniles in custody. Jweideh, one of the older facilities, was overcrowded and prisoners complained that there were not enough beds. According to the Jweideh prison director, detainees remained in the center an average of 14 days before being charged. The 2012 NCHR report, which recommended the closure of Jweideh Prison, said inmates complained of a lack of legal assistance, poor social and medical care, missing court dates due to lack of timely notification and/or transportation, unavailability of potable water, small food portions, a shortage of blankets, and no hot water in winter. Prison conditions for women were generally better than those for men.

According to the NCHR, one of the detainees from the November 2012 protests lost an eye during a fight with police and was taken to a police station instead of a hospital.

Pretrial detainees often were held in the same detention facilities as convicted prisoners. The GID held some persons detained on national security charges in separate detention facilities. In 2012 the NCHR paid 12 announced visits to GID prisons, where the detainees complained of prolonged pretrial detention. According to human rights activists, authorities generally held GID detainees in solitary confinement and prevented them from meeting unsupervised with visitors, including their lawyers. In Jweideh officials held Islamist prisoners in a separate wing and kept them in small group semi-isolation. International and domestic NGOs reported that in some instances Islamist prisoners faced harsher prison conditions than other inmates.

Although basic care is available in all correctional facilities, medical staff complained that prisons throughout the country lacked adequate facilities, supplies, and staff and were unable to address deficiencies in care available to inmates. Most facilities were unable to conduct blood tests and had limited x-ray capabilities, forcing doctors to rely largely on patient self-reporting for certain conditions. If an inmate's condition was severe and could not be treated at the clinic, jail doctors recommended transfer to a local hospital.

Administration: During the year no steps were taken to improve recordkeeping or systematically use alternatives to sentencing for nonviolent offenders; however, judges at times used alternative sentencing for juveniles. There were no prison ombudsmen. In some cases authorities severely restricted prisoner and detainee access to visitors. Prisoners could observe their religious practices. Authorities permitted prisoners and detainees to submit complaints to judicial authorities without censorship, but authorities did not investigate allegations of inhuman conditions.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted local and international human rights observers to visit prisons and conduct private interviews. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited prisoners and detainees in all prisons, including those controlled by the GID, according to standard ICRC modalities.

Improvements: While the older prison facilities remained substandard, new prisons generally were less crowded and better run. Reports of torture and mistreatment in prisons decreased from the previous year, according to the NCHR, human rights activists, and NGOs.

#### **d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention**

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, the government did not always observe these prohibitions. In particular the governors of the country's 12 governorates continued to use the Criminal Procedures Law to detain individuals administratively without due process or detain individuals found not guilty in legal proceedings.

On October 30, security officers arrested Muhammad al-Tillawi at his home in North Shunah for participating in the price-hike protests of November 2012.

#### **Role of the Police and Security Apparatus**

The PSD controls general police functions. The PSD, GID, gendarmerie, Civil Defense Directorate, and military share responsibility for maintaining internal security. The PSD, Civil Defense Directorate, and gendarmerie report to the minister of interior with direct access to the king when necessary, and the GID reports directly to the king. Civilian authorities maintained control over security forces.

According to local and international NGOs, the government rarely investigated allegations of abuse or corruption, or, when such allegations were investigated, there were few convictions. Local and international NGOs and activists reported widespread allegations of impunity. Citizens may file complaints of police abuse or corruption with the PSD's Ombudsman Bureau or one of 16 police prosecutors stationed throughout the country. Complaints of abuse and corruption by the gendarmerie may be filed directly with the PSD's Ombudsman Bureau. A GID liaison officer receives complaints against the GID and refers them to GID personnel for investigation. Complaints against the PSD, gendarmerie, and GID may also be filed with the NCHR or several human rights NGOs. The PSD's Special Branch Unit is tasked with investigating allegations of police corruption. The PSD and GID try their personnel internally with their own courts, judges, and prosecutors; reports about the proceedings are not published. Trials rarely yielded substantive punishments for human rights violations.

The Police Court found 25 of its personnel guilty of mistreatment between 2010 and 2012, with penalties ranging from written warnings to suspensions.

The Ombudsman's Bureau within the PSD investigates allegations of police abuse; however, complaints rarely resulted in any disciplinary measures, thus continuing the culture of impunity. Human rights activists cited fear of official retribution as a reason for the overall lack of official complaints of human rights violations.

During the year there were several reported instances of security forces using excessive force with impunity or failing to protect demonstrators from violence. Failure to protect demonstrators is not a criminal offense. In 2012 the NCHR received 12 complaints about security personnel using excessive force, including tear gas, water hoses and batons, during arrests and searches. NGOs reported that security forces often coordinated counterprotests, in which regime loyalists attempted to intimidate protesters with the acquiescence and sometimes support of security forces. Also, demonstrators and observers reported that in clashes between opposition protesters and pro-regime counterprotesters, security forces attacked the opposition protesters, fighting alongside counterprotesters.

On April 12, members of the Islamic Movement and local youth groups in Irbid organized a protest march from Al-Hashimi Mosque to Wasfi Al-Tal Square, where a progovernment group planned a counterdemonstration. Security forces violently dispersed the opposition march, using sticks and tear gas, to prevent protesters from reaching the counterdemonstration. Five protesters suffered minor injuries in the violence, but no protesters were arrested.

## **Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees**

The law allows suspects to be detained for up to 24 hours without a warrant in all cases. The law requires that police notify authorities within 24 hours of an arrest and that authorities file formal charges within 15 days of an arrest. The period to file formal charges can be extended for as long as six months for a felony and two months for a misdemeanor. According to local NGOs, prosecutors routinely requested extensions, which judges granted. NGOs alleged that authorities transferred suspects to the security court to extend the legal time from 24 hours to seven days for investigation prior to notification. Bail is allowed under the penal code and was used in some cases. Some detainees reported not being allowed to have timely access to a lawyer or to contact their relatives at the time of arrest, but authorities generally permitted family member visits, albeit sometimes up to a week after the arrest. Authorities appointed lawyers to represent indigent defendants charged with felonies carrying possible life sentences or the death penalty, although legal aid services remained minimal. The law provides the right to appear promptly before a judge or other judicial officer for a judicial determination of the legality of the detention. Suspects are not afforded the right to obtain compensation for unlawful detention. At times suspects were detained incommunicado for up to one week or placed under house arrest. A number of human rights activists alleged that arrestees were held incommunicado to hide evidence of physical abuse by security forces.

In its 2012 report, the NCHR stated that police subjected detainees in police stations to beatings and torture during preliminary investigations, especially in the Criminal Investigation Department and the Anti-Narcotics Department in the PSD. The report also noted poor hygienic standards in police stations.

The GID arrested 11 suspects in October 2012 on charges of planning to attack a foreign embassy. The suspects claimed they were held in isolation for 72 days and tortured while in custody. The suspects reportedly confessed to the GID prosecutor general but then denied the confessions when they appeared before the State Security Court, claiming the confessions had been obtained under torture. The lawyer for Abdallah Abu-Hindam, one of the suspects, claimed a prison guard beat his client in Muwaqqar 2 Prison.

Arbitrary Arrest: The State Security Court gives judicial police the authority to arrest and keep persons in custody for seven days prior to notification while conducting criminal investigations. This authority includes arrests for alleged

misdemeanors. In cases purportedly involving state security, security forces at times arrested and detained citizens without warrants or judicial review, held defendants in pretrial detention without informing them of the charges against them, and either did not allow defendants to meet with their lawyers or did not permit meetings until shortly before trial.

The law allows provincial governors to detain individuals suspected of planning to commit a crime or those who allegedly shelter thieves, habitually steal, or constitute a danger to the public. Governors used this provision widely. Those accused are subject to imprisonment or house arrest under administrative detention without formal charges, and governors may prolong detentions. As of November, governors administratively detained 8,808 individuals, according to the PSD's Ombudsman Bureau. In 2012 the NCHR reported 12,410 administrative detainees, some held as long as three years.

Several international and national NGOs noted governors routinely abused the law, imprisoning individuals when there was not enough evidence to convict them and prolonging the detention of prisoners whose sentences had expired. Authorities also used the law to incarcerate women, allegedly to protect them from becoming potential victims of honor crimes.

Pretrial Detention: The common practice of judges granting extensions to prosecutors prior to filing formal charges unnecessarily lengthened pretrial detention. Lengthy legal procedures, a large number of detainees, judicial inefficiency, and judicial backlog added to the problem of pretrial detention. The length of the detention at times equaled or exceeded the sentence for the alleged crime. A 2012 study by the Justice Center for Legal Aid found that 20 percent of criminal defendants were detained at pretrial stages for periods exceeding their final adjudicated sentences and that more than 35 percent of defendants administratively detained were later acquitted. The law criminalizes the act of arresting any person without a prosecutor's order for more than 24 hours. According to human rights organizations, impunity was very common for such violations. NGOs and human rights activists estimated that 1,200 suspects were being held in pretrial detention.

#### **e. Denial of Fair Public Trial**

The law provides for an independent judiciary, but allegations by legal experts and human rights lawyers of nepotism and the influence of special interests raised concerns about the judiciary's independence. In addition, judicial inefficiency and

a large case backlog delayed the provision of justice. Authorities did not always respect court orders.

### **Trial Procedures**

The law presumes that defendants are innocent. According to the law, all civilian court trials, including State Security Court trials, are open to the public unless the court determines that the trial should be closed to protect the public interest. According to lawyers, state security court trials were closed to the public and at times even to families of the defendants. Juries are not used. Defendants are entitled to legal counsel, provided at public expense for the indigent in cases involving the death penalty or life imprisonment but only at the trial stage. The Justice Center for Legal Aid reported that in 2012, 83 percent of criminal defendants lacked legal representation prior to trial and 68 percent lacked legal representation at trial. They noted that access to legal counsel is almost nonexistent in police stations. Officials do not respect the right of defendants to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them or to a fair and public trial without undue delay. In many cases not involving the death penalty, those whose punishment would be hard or temporary labor had no legal representation. Foreign residents were not uniformly aided with translations and defense, especially for foreign workers who often did not speak Arabic. Defendants may present witnesses and evidence and may question witnesses presented against them. Authorities generally granted defendants access to government-held evidence relevant to a case. Defendants can appeal verdicts; appeals are automatic for cases involving the death penalty. Defendants do not have the right to refuse to testify. The constitution prohibits the use of confessions extracted by torture. Human rights activists noted, however, that this provision had not been implemented and that courts routinely accepted confessions extracted under torture or mistreatment. The 2012 NCHR report indicated that confessions in some death penalty cases were extracted under torture.

On July 7, authorities charged Palestinian-born cleric Abu Qatada with terrorism hours after he arrived in Amman after being deported from the United Kingdom.. Abu Qatada had been convicted in Jordanian legal proceedings in absentia with conspiracy to carry out terrorist attacks in 1999 and 2000. He had been out of the country for 20 years and was extradited, at British request, after Jordan and Great Britain signed a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, which required that Abu Qatada not be tortured or mistreated and that any testimony resulting from torture (of other witnesses) not be used in his trial.

Defendants before the State Security Court frequently met with their attorneys only one or two days before their trial began. Defendants were not afforded adequate time and facilities to prepare their defense. A case may be postponed for more than 48 hours only under exceptional circumstances determined by the court. Cases routinely involved postponements of more than 10 days between sessions, with proceedings lasting for several months. In many cases the accused remained in detention without bail during the proceedings. In the State Security Court, defendants have the right to appeal their sentences to the Court of Cassation, which is authorized to review issues of both fact and law.

Civil, criminal, and commercial courts accord equal weight to the testimony of men and women; however, in sharia courts, which have jurisdiction over Muslim marriage, divorce, and inheritance cases, the testimony of two women is equal to that of one man in most circumstances.

### **Political Prisoners and Detainees**

During the year the government detained activists for political reasons including criticism of the government, religious political activism, criticism of the government's foreign policy, the publication of critical articles, and the chant of slogans against the king. Citizens and NGOs alleged that the government continued to detain other individuals for political reasons during the year and that governors continued to use administrative detention for what appeared to be political reasons.

On September 10, security forces in Irbid arrested Nidal al-Gharayibah, an activist in the Salafist movement, for having participated in a sit-in at the State Security Court the day before. The demonstration had demanded the release of Salafist prisoners. Al-Gharayibah remained in detention as of December.

On September 1, the prosecutor general in Irbid detained Mahmud al-Abbadi, a 20-year-old Yarmouk University student, for having participated in protests in March, during which slogans were chanted against the king.

During the year authorities arrested and charged pro-reform activists with undermining the political system following peaceful protests. According to the law, the punishments for some of the charges include life imprisonment and death; however, there were no trials during the year for these activists. Of the 200 activists arrested during the fuel-price protests in 2012, 168 had been released on bail, 32 remained in detention, and charges against them remained pending.

On September 22, the State Security Court referred the case of Mu'ath al-Azzah, arrested by security forces in November 2012 for carrying banners protesting the lifting of fuel subsidies, to the Criminal Court. The State Security Court noted it did not have legal jurisdiction in this case, the first time the State Security Court has relinquished a case for such a reason to the Criminal Court.

### **Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies**

Individuals may bring civil lawsuits related to human rights violations and did so during the year. As of December, no lawsuits had resulted in financial compensation.

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

The law prohibits arbitrary interference in private matters, but the government did not respect this prohibition. Citizens widely believed that security officers monitored telephone conversations and internet communication, read private correspondence, and engaged in surveillance without court orders. Citizens widely believed the government employed an informer system within political movements and human rights organizations.

Some activists reported that GID officials threatened to bar children of activists' from entering or graduating from university.

### **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 did not respect these rights.

Freedom of Speech: The law permits punishment of up to three years' imprisonment for insulting the king, slandering the government or foreign leaders, offending religious beliefs, or stirring sectarian strife and sedition. During the year the government restricted the ability of individuals to criticize the government by arresting a number of activists for political expression. The government monitored political meetings, speech on university campuses, and sermons in mosques and churches. Laws against slander of public officials were used to restrict public discussion.

On September 18, the prosecutor general arrested Amjad Ma'ala and Nidal Fara'neh, the publisher and chief editor of *Jafra News*, respectively, on charges of exposing the kingdom to the risk of hostile acts for publishing a video titled "Son," about a former Qatari emir in a sex scandal with an Israeli woman. On September 22, the State Security Court claimed it did not have jurisdiction, but the two journalists remained in custody as of December.

On March 12, security forces arrested five Al Bayt University students for religious desecration, following a rumor that the students had destroyed a Koran while performing "devil worship" in a campus bathroom. The students said they were targeted because they dressed in black and were fans of rock music. The State Security Court dismissed the charges, but as of December the students still faced charges in civil court.

All public-opinion polls and survey research require authorization from the Bureau of Statistics, although the law is never enforced. NGOs stated that the measure could be enforced, even retroactively and called for it to be rescinded.

Press Freedoms: Independent print media existed, including several major daily newspapers; however, such publications must obtain licenses from the state to operate. The independent print and broadcast media largely operated with limited restriction, and media observers reported government pressure to refrain from criticizing the royal family, discussing the GID, or using language deemed offensive to religion, including the threat of large fines and prison sentences for slander of government officials. The government influenced news reporting and commentary through political pressure on editors and control over important editorial positions in government-affiliated media. Journalists of government-affiliated and independent media reported that security officials attempted to influence reporting and place articles favorable to the government through bribes, threats, and political pressure.

In 2012 the NCHR documented physical and verbal assaults against journalists. Some journalists were arrested or temporarily detained, and some received threats from government officials or private individuals.

The government has a majority of seats on the board for the leading semiofficial daily newspaper, *Al-Rai*, and a share of board seats for *Ad-Dustour* daily newspaper. According to press freedom advocates, the GID's Media Department must approve editors in chief of progovernment newspapers.

In April 2012 the State Security Court charged Jamal al-Muhtasab, editor of Gerasanews website, with “undermining the political system,” for writing an article alleging the king intervened in a corruption investigation. Al-Muhtasab spent several weeks in detention before being released on bail. As of December, the case remained pending at Civil Court.

The law states that the Prime Ministry has the authority to reject a broadcast license without a stated reason, based on the recommendation of the director of the governmental Audiovisual Commission.

In February Sarayanews accused the prime minister of deliberately stalling Saraya satellite channel’s approval permit, although the new organization had presented all required documentation. The government said the permit had not been approved because Sarayanews had not fulfilled all the registration requirements.

Media observers noted that when covering controversial subjects, government-owned Jordan Television, Jordan News Agency, and Radio Jordan reported only the government’s position.

By law, any book can be published and or distributed freely; however, if the Press and Publications Directorate deems that passages are religiously offensive or “insult” the king, it can request a court order to prohibit the distribution of the book.

Violence and Harassment: During the year, journalists were subjected to harassment and intimidation.

On July 18, 10 armed individuals attacked Hassan Khreisat, editor of the independent *Al Hayat* weekly, at the newspaper’s headquarters in Amman. The perpetrators hit him, ransacked his office, and fled. Khreisat suffered several injuries and was transferred to Al Isra’ hospital for treatment. Activists claimed the attack was in retaliation for a published report alleging tax evasion by the Jordan Tobacco and Cigarettes Company and that the attackers were affiliated with the GID.

Censorship and Content Restrictions: The government directly and indirectly censored the media. Journalists claimed the government used informants in newsrooms and exercised influence over reporting and that GID officials censored reporting. Editors reportedly received telephone calls from security officials

instructing them how to cover events or to refrain from covering certain topics or events, especially criticism of political reform. Bribery of journalists took place and undermined independent reporting. Dozens of media professionals were accused of accepting payments from the former director of the GID in 2012. On occasion government officials provided texts for journalists to publish under their bylines. Journalists reported the threat of detention and imprisonment under the law for a variety of offenses, along with stringent fines of as much as 20,000 dinars (\$28,250) for defamation under the law, which led to self-censorship. At times, editors in chief censored articles to prevent lawsuits. The government's use of "soft containment" of journalists, including the withholding of financial support, scholarships for relatives, and special invitations, led to significant control of media content.

On July 5, the broadcast of Yarmouk Satellite TV, a station affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, was scrambled and therefore unable to broadcast live events it was covering from Egypt.

The government continued to enforce bans on the distribution of selected books for religious, moral, and political reasons.

On July 28, the National Library rejected the manuscript of writer/journalist Waleed Husni Zahra entitled *The Puzzled Witness: Jordanian Media under the Arab Spring and Popular Mobility*, refusing to give it a national ISBN number and referring it to a special committee to determine whether it was fit for publication.

Libel Laws/National Security: The government threatened to use libel and slander laws to suppress criticism.

On June 7, authorities charged the chief editor and a reporter of the progovernment *Al-Dustour* newspaper for publishing "incorrect information" about former GID director Mohammad Dhahabi.

## **Internet Freedom**

There were government restrictions on access to the internet. The law requires the licensing and registration of online news websites, holds editors responsible for readers' comments on their websites, requires that website owners provide the government with the personal data of its users, and mandates that editors in chief be members of the Jordan Press Association. Amendments to the law give authorities explicit power to block and censor websites. On June 2, the

government began implementing that authority, shutting down some 292 news websites for failure to register with the government. By November, 53 of those sites had registered and gone back online, while 50 others changed their status from “news site” to “general site.” As of November, 239 sites remained shut down, while 143 websites were licensed. When sites changed their URLs, the government shut them down. The registration fee for a news website is 1,400 dinars (\$1,000). The owner and editor in chief can be fined between 3,000 dinars (\$4,235) and 5,000 dinars (\$7,058), in addition to criminal penalties, for website content that “includes humiliation, defamation, or disparaging of individuals and/or violates their personal freedoms or spreads false rumors about them.”

According to journalists, security forces reportedly telephoned websites demanding the removal of some posted articles. The government threatened websites and journalists that have been critical to the government, while it actively supported those that report favorably on the government. The government monitored electronic correspondence and internet chat sites. Individuals were unable to fully or freely express their views via the internet, including by e-mail. The Ministry of Interior continued to monitor internet cafes via video cameras. The ministry also required cafe owners to register users’ personal data, submit records of websites visited, and prevent access to “targeted” websites, as determined by the ministry.

According to the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, internet penetration was 63 percent.

### **Academic Freedom and Cultural Events**

The government placed some limits on academic freedom. Some members of the academic community claimed there was a continuing intelligence presence in academic institutions, including monitoring academic conferences and lectures. Some foreign films were edited prior to release due to sexual content or language deemed religiously offensive. On June 6, staff at the Al-Hussein Cultural Center edited out explicit scenes from a Jordanian-Swedish film prior to an invitation only screening to celebrate Swedish National Day. On June 11, when the Royal Cultural Center staff said they would censor a French film already scheduled to open the Franco-Arab film festival, the festival organizers decided to show the film in another theater.

### **b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association**

#### **Freedom of Assembly**

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, but the government limited this right. During the year there were several reported instances in which security forces used excessive force with impunity. Security forces generally permitted demonstrations and provided security at announced demonstrations. At times security officials blocked roads leading to planned demonstrations if the site of the demonstration would impede traffic.

In October security officials arrested Humam Qfeisheh, Ayman al-Bahrawi, and Diya al-Din al-Shalabi at their house in Amman for distributing leaflets and possessing posters with the logo of Rab'ah al-Adwiyah Square, expressing support for Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. The State Security Court charged the three activists with harming Jordan's relations with an Arab country and also charged al-Bahrawi with undermining the political system and insulting Arab presidents. The detainees' lawyer claimed that his clients were beaten and insulted in Irmimin police station following their arrest.

In November 2012 both violent and peaceful protests erupted throughout the country in response to fuel price hikes. Security forces arrested more than 300 protesters, and the State Security Court charged 130 protesters with undermining the political system, unlawful gathering, rioting, or insulting the king. In December 2012 the king ordered the detainees released on bail, and several subsequently were rearrested on similar or related charges. By December, authorities had released 168 detainees and kept 32 in custody. The 2012 NCHR report noted that the detainees were not allowed to contact a lawyer or their families, and the NCHR recorded nine cases of torture among those detainees.

On August 10, opposition activists Thabet Assaf, Tareq Khader, Basem al-Rawabdeh, and Hisham al-Hissah, detained since November 2012, began a hunger strike to protest their treatment. They called off their hunger strike on September 13. On November 11, officials released them on bail, but charges remained pending.

### **Freedom of Association**

The constitution provides for the right of association, but the government limited this freedom. The law gives the Ministry of Social Development the right to reject applications to register an organization or receive foreign funding for any reason, and it prohibits the use of associations for the benefit of any political organization. The law also gives the ministry significant control over the internal management of

associations, including the ability to dissolve associations, appoint new boards of directors, send government representatives to any board meeting, prevent associations from merging their operations, and appoint an auditor to examine an association's finances for any reason. The law requires associations to inform the ministry of board meetings, submit all board decisions for approval, disclose members' names, and obtain Ministry of Interior security clearances for board members. The law includes severe penalties, including fines up to 10,000 dinars (\$14,120).

Local and international NGOs claimed the law severely restricted the work of independent human rights organizations. NGOs reported that while the government did not formally reject foreign funding requests or proposals, it at times refused to accept such requests or demanded unreasonable types and quantities of information.

On June 11, the Ministry of Interior dissolved the local branch of the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR), claiming that the organization had not complied with the new registration requirements in amendments to the NGO Law. According to the AOHR, the decision was punishment for its 2012 human rights report critical of the government's lackluster efforts on behalf of Jordanian prisoners in Israel. Other human rights activists and NGOs noted that the AOHR had internal conflicts as well as compliance issues.

Citizens widely suspected that the government infiltrated civil society organizations, political parties, and human rights organizations and attended organizations' internal meetings.

### **c. Freedom of Religion**

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at [www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt).

### **d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons**

The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation; however, there were some restrictions. The UN reported that the government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and other humanitarian organizations in providing

protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Foreign Travel: There were cases when the GID withheld passports from citizens for alleged security reasons. On August 29, the government amended the passport law to remove the requirement that a woman must first obtain her husband's consent before she can obtain a passport.

Citizenship: Unlike in previous years, there were no reported withdrawals of national numbers of Jordanians of Palestinian descent.

### **Protection of Refugees**

Access to Asylum: The country's laws do not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government lacks a formal system of providing protection to refugees. The government respected the UNHCR's eligibility determinations regarding asylum seekers, including those who entered the country illegally, although it is not a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention related to the status of refugees or its 1967 Protocol. A 1998 memorandum of understanding between the government and the UNHCR contains the definition of a refugee, confirms adherence to the principle of nonrefoulement, and allows recognized refugees a maximum stay of six months, during which period the UNHCR must find a durable solution. The time limit is renewable, and the Jordanians did not force Syrian or Iraqi refugees to return to their country of origin.

Refoulement: Since the Syrian crisis, the government has been much more lenient in allowing Syrians of Palestinian origin to remain in the country. During the year the government turned away at the border crossing Syrians of Palestinian origin, although some were still able to gain entry to Jordan.

On September 16, according to media reports, authorities denied entry to more than 150 Syrian refugees, mostly women and children, arriving from Egypt. One of the refugees said the group had been stranded in the airport for more than a week.

Employment: Prior to the Syrian conflict, Syrians had full access to the Jordanian labor market because the number of Syrian workers in Jordan was limited. Since the conflict, Syrian refugees have no access to the formal labor market, although many work or run businesses illegally. Iraqi refugees had limited access to the formal labor market. A limited number of Iraqi refugees, and no Syrian refugees,

received approval for work permits from the Ministry of Labor. The government also requires foreign residents, including refugees, to obtain residency permits from the Ministry of Interior to issue a work permit, thereby limiting the number of work permits issued to refugees. Few Iraqi refugees applied for or received work permits due to bureaucratic hurdles and a desire to avoid significant overstay fines they would have had to pay when applying for such permits. The government agreed to waive overstay fines for a small number of Iraqi refugees who qualified for residency. Virtually no Syrian refugees applied for or received work permits due to bureaucratic hurdles and a desire to avoid significant overstay fines they would have had to pay when applying for such permits. Because of the difficulties and expenses involved, many Iraqi and Syrian refugees worked in the unofficial labor market. The Ministry of Labor reported rounding up some 15,000 foreign workers during the year, many of them Syrians, but the government has not forced illegal Syrian workers to return to Syria.

When Syrian refugees arrive across border crossings that are not controlled by the Ministry of Interior, they are transported by the military to reception centers, where they are provided food, water, and medical attention. Since many of these refugees do not have passports, their identity documents (birth certificates, family books, etc.) are taken from them at the reception centers, and they are given a receipt. The military then transports them to Za'atri refugee camp. A verification process due to start in December will register the refugees' biometrics, and their documents will be returned to them. The same process is planned for other Syrian refugees in host communities throughout the country.

Access to Basic Services: Palestinian refugees from Gaza who entered the country following the 1967 war were excluded from services otherwise available to Palestinian refugees, such as access to public assistance, or public medical services. They were eligible to receive UNRWA services.

As of September 30, 9,105 Palestinian refugees from Syria had recorded their presence in country with UNRWA. Palestinian refugees from Syria were eligible for UNRWA services only.

The government provided health and educational services to registered Iraqi and Syrian refugees. Syrian and Iraqi refugees had equal access to justice regardless of their legal status; nevertheless, there was fear of retaliation from Jordanians. Iraqis and Syrians had equal access to housing, although they tended to pay higher rents than Jordanians.

Temporary Protection: The government generally recognized the UNHCR's requests to grant temporary protection for all Iraqi and Syrian asylum seekers, including new arrivals, and recognized refugees whose cases had been suspended by resettlement countries. As of October 30, there were 552,048 Syrian persons of concern to UNHCR, all of them registered. The government tolerated the prolonged stay of many Syrians and Iraqis beyond the expiration of the visit permits under which they had entered the country.

### **Stateless Persons**

Citizenship is derived only through the father. Children of female citizens married to noncitizen husbands receive the nationality of the father and lose the right to attend public school or seek other government services if they do not hold legal residency, which must be applied for every year and is not assured. Married women do not have the legal right to transmit citizenship to their children. This affected thousands of families in which the father was of Palestinian origin. By law the cabinet may approve citizenship for such children; however, this rarely occurred. The public was not widely aware of this mechanism. Women may not petition for citizenship for noncitizen husbands, who may apply for citizenship only after fulfilling a requirement of 15 years' continuous residency. Once a husband has obtained citizenship, he may apply to transmit citizenship to his children. Such an application could take years, and the government could deny the application. In 2012 the NCHR received 12 complaints from Jordanians of Palestinian descent concerning withdrawal of their national numbers. NGOs reported that the government did not withdraw national numbers in 2013.

### **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 monarch or government. The king appoints and dismisses the prime minister, cabinet, and the senate or upper house of parliament; dissolves parliament; and directs major public policy initiatives. Citizens may participate in the political system through their elected representatives in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of parliament. The cabinet, based on the prime minister's recommendations, appoints the mayors of Amman, Wadi Musa (Petra), and Aqaba, a special economic zone. The mayors of the other 93 municipalities are elected. Cabinet-appointed municipal councils have been installed since March 2011.

### **Elections and Political Participation**

Recent Elections: In November 2010 the country held parliamentary elections, which international observers considered “a clear improvement over the nation’s 2007 polls.” But observers recommended future reforms, such as establishing an independent electoral management body, preprinting ballots to mitigate concerns over voting procedures for the illiterate, strengthening representation for all citizens, and introducing regulations to allow for systematic appeals of the election results. In September 2011 Parliament approved a constitutional amendment to establish the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which was charged with organizing and supervising the 2013 and future elections. In January the government held parliamentary elections administered by the IEC. Local and international monitors noted the elections were generally free and fair and technically well administered, despite some irregularities in the voter registration and election preparation phases. International election observers assessed the voting process had improved over past elections and that the elections were conducted in a transparent and credible manner. It was the first time the IEC administered elections in the country. The IEC instituted several changes to the election process: it used preprinted and standardized ballots, assigned voters to specific stations, created a hotline for problems, and developed mechanisms for complaint.

The election exhibited important technical advances in administration, but allegations of vote buying, proxy registration, and other concerns undermined the electoral process. International and domestic observers of the election process expressed serious reservations about inadequacies in the electoral legal framework and stressed the need to delimit constituency boundaries to ensure equality and proportional representation. Gerrymandering districts was a significant problem and had the effect of minimizing the impact of votes by citizens of Palestinian origin in favor of tribal interests. In July 2012 parliament amended the electoral law to grant voters two votes, one vote for a candidate for 123 district level seats and a second vote on the national level for 27 seats, thereby increasing the number of parliamentary seats from 120 to 150.

The government held municipal elections on August 27. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs administered the elections, while the IEC, which according to the Municipalities Law does not have the authority to run municipal elections, played an advisory and monitoring role. During the municipal elections, civil society election monitors reported several irregularities and incidents of violence. An investigation into election fraud was undertaken in Karak Governorate. The

NCHR reported that during the municipal elections, some polling stations were not fully accessible to disabled persons.

Islamist and some other opposition parties boycotted both parliamentary and municipal elections, due to what they saw as inadequacies of the electoral law. While Islamist and some opposition parties called for their supporters to boycott the elections, domestic election observers stated that many Islamist voters ignored the boycott, and some Islamist candidates won seats in Parliament.

During the parliamentary elections, Jordan Television aired live debates and gave free time to all candidates to inform the public about their position.

Political Parties: The Political Parties Law, amended in 2012, eliminated the requirement for security clearances for founding members of political parties. Other amendments included: raising the number of founding members from 250 to 500, 10 percent of whom must be women; including the commissioner general of the NCHR as a member of the minister of interior-headed Political Party Affairs committee; and adding a prime minister appointed member from the civil society sector. The law grants the High Court of Justice sole authority to reject applications to establish or dissolve parties, requires that parties convene annual general conferences, and reduces from 60 to 30 days the period during which party founders can appeal a decision to dissolve a party. The law replaces the Ministry of Interior with a joint governmental committee as the sole point of reference for political parties, and streamlines the party registration process. Three new parties were registered during the year. The government continued to license political parties and other associations; membership in unlicensed political parties is prohibited. There were more than 26 registered political parties; however, they were weak, generally had vague platforms, and were personality centered. The strongest and most organized political party was the Islamic Action Front, which boycotted the election in January.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Human rights activists cited cultural and religious bias against women as an impediment to women participating in political life on the same scale as men. There is a 10 percent (15 seats) quota for women in the lower house of parliament and a 25 percent (243 seats) quota for women in municipal councils. In the 2013 parliamentary elections, voters elected 18 women to the lower house, three of whom won by outright competition outside the quota. In the king-appointed upper house, there were nine female senators. The 19-member cabinet in November included one woman. In the municipal elections, women were allocated 297 out of 970 municipal council seats (30 percent).

Citizens of Palestinian origin were underrepresented at all levels of government and the military. The law reserves nine seats in the lower house of parliament for Christians and three seats for the Circassian and Chechen ethnic minorities combined, constituting an overrepresentation of these minorities. During parliamentary elections, 10 Christians won seats, one of them on the national list that is not restricted to a particular religion. There were eight Christians serving in the upper house of parliament. No seats are reserved for the relatively small Druze population, but its members may hold office under their government classification as Muslims. The law also stipulates that Muslims must hold all seats not reserved for specified minority religions. Christians served as cabinet ministers and ambassadors. There was one Christian minister in the cabinet. The government traditionally reserves some positions in senior command positions for Christians (4 percent); however, Muslims held all senior command positions as of October. In recent years, fewer Christians remained in the military long enough to reach senior command positions, leaving for more lucrative private sector jobs, according to Christian former military officers.

#### **Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government**

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption; however, the government did not implement the law effectively. Officials often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. During the year the government investigated allegations of corruption, but there were very few convictions. The use of family, business, and other personal connections to advance personal business interests was widespread. There were allegations of lack of transparency in government procurement, government appointments, and dispute settlement.

Corruption: The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is the main body responsible for combating corruption, although the Anti-Money Laundering Unit in the Central Bank is responsible for combating money laundering. Despite increased investigations, some local observers questioned the ACC's effectiveness due to its limited jurisdiction, insufficient staff, legal obstacles, and the small number of investigations involving senior officials or large government projects. There were credible allegations that the ACC failed to investigate cases involving high-level government officials, who were not afforded immunity in the constitution.

There was one high-profile corruption conviction during the year. On June 5, the Amman Criminal Court sentenced Walid Kurdi, the former CEO of the Jordan

Phosphate Mines Company and uncle of King Abdullah, to 37.5 years' imprisonment and a fine of 143 million dinars (\$200 million) on charges of misuse of office. Kurdi was sentenced in absentia because he resides in the United Kingdom.

Whistleblower Protection: The law provides protection to public and private employees for making internal disclosures or lawful public disclosures of evidence of corruption. In October the government enacted a bylaw intended to protect informants and whistleblowers in corruption cases. NGOs cited enormous political and social pressure not to report corruption.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires certain government officials (along with their spouses and dependent children) to declare their assets privately within three months of their assuming a government position. Officials rarely declared their assets. In the event of a complaint, the chief justice may review the disclosures. Under the law, failure to disclose assets could result in a prison sentence of one week to three years or a fine of five to 200 dinars (\$7 to \$282). As of November, no officials had been punished for failing to submit a disclosure.

Public Access to Information: The law provides for public access to government information that is a matter of legal record but allows denial of requests for reasons of national security, public health, and personal freedoms. The government has 30 days to respond to requests for information. If a government official refuses to respond to a request, the requestor can appeal to the governmental Information Council; however, its decisions are nonbinding. The fees are not prohibitive and usually are associated with photocopy costs, if necessary. Journalists criticized the law, claiming that it permits the government to deny requests without justification.

## **Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights**

A number of domestic and international human rights groups operated in the country with some restrictions. The law gives the government the ability to control NGOs' internal affairs, including acceptance of foreign funding. NGOs generally were able to investigate and report publicly on human rights abuses throughout the year, although government officials were not always cooperative.

On July 24, the Ministry of Trade and Industry referred civil society NGO Mizan to the attorney general, claiming that the organization committed financial violations. The government warned Mizan that it was using a banner that

advertised itself as a human rights organization when it was registered as a company, not an NGO. The government also threatened Mizan with legal action for including their lawyers in Social Security payroll withholding. Mizan and other NGOs viewed these warnings as harassment rather than serious legal charges.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The NCHR received both government and international funding. Its board of trustees is appointed by royal decree, and its commissioner general is appointed by the government. The NCHR produces an annual report on domestic human rights practices that is sometimes critical of government practices, but the NCHR lacked a legal mandate and the government often ignored its recommendations.

## **Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons**

The constitution states that all citizens are equal under the law and prohibits discrimination based on race, language, and religion; however, discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, and social status is not specifically prohibited. The government did not effectively enforce these provisions, and the penal code does not address discrimination, thereby severely limiting judicial remedies. Women faced significant and widespread discrimination across society, especially in the economy, politics, and the legal system.

### **Women**

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law stipulates a sentence of at least 10 years of imprisonment with hard labor for the rape of a girl or woman 15 years of age or older. Spousal rape is not illegal. The law does not explicitly ban domestic violence. The government did not enforce the law against rape effectively, and violence and abuse against women was widespread. Violence against women was reported more frequently in rural areas than in major cities, but women's rights activists speculated that many incidents in cities went unreported because violence against women remained a taboo subject due to societal and familial pressures. The PSD's Family Protection Department (FPD) reported 899 cases of domestic violence as of August. Human rights activists stated that girls and women with disabilities were particularly at risk of gender-based violence.

Women may file complaints of rape or physical abuse with certain NGOs or directly with judicial authorities. As of August, the FPD treated and investigated 580 cases of rape or sexual assault against women. The FPD actively investigated

cases; however, there were some reports of pressure on families to settle disputes via mediation instead of the courts. The FPD also conducted awareness campaigns about domestic violence. Spousal abuse is technically grounds for divorce, but husbands claimed religious authority to strike their wives. Observers noted that judges generally supported a woman's claim of abuse in court; however, due to societal and familial pressure, few women sought legal remedies.

As of November, a reported 144 girls left their homes and stayed in government-run shelters to avoid domestic violence and/or sexual abuse.

The FPD continued to operate a domestic violence hotline and received inquiries and complaints via the internet and e-mail. The FPD provided public information and training for government employees on domestic violence and rape. As of August, the government-run shelter Dar al-Wafaq assisted 487 female victims of domestic violence. As of September, the FPD dealt with 2,650 domestic violence cases. It provided reconciliation services to victims and their families and worked with NGOs to provide services, such as legal and medical assistance. Observers noted the lack of a comprehensive approach for victims, such as psychosocial assistance.

Harmful Traditional Practices: Judicial statistics indicated that 12 honor crimes were referred to the judicial system during the year. Activists reported that many such crimes went unreported. The Supreme Criminal Court's panel of judges dedicated to cases involving honor crimes routinely issued sentences of up to 15 years to perpetrators of such crimes. The Cassation Court, which reviews the Supreme Criminal Court rulings, generally decreased the sentences by half. During the year the courts issued one guilty verdict, with a sentence of 10 years' imprisonment and hard labor, against a man who killed his wife in an honor crime. There were several cases during the year in which family members dropped the charges against perpetrators of honor crimes, and the 2011 General Amnesty Law resulted in the government dropping charges in cases where the family also dropped the charges against the perpetrator. There were no reported instances of forced marriage as an alternative to a potential honor killing during the year. Observers noted that if a woman marries her rapist, according to customary belief, her family members do not need to kill her to "preserve the family's honor."

Numerous honor-crime cases were reported during the year.

On April 15, the body of a 20-year-old girl was found near a dumpster in Al-Rusayfah. The girl had been killed, her four-month fetus removed, and she had

been burned to hide her identity. Security agencies began investigations into the case, but no arrests had been announced as of December.

On November 13, the criminal court prosecutor general charged a 28-year-old man with premeditated murder of his 20-year-old sister in an apparent honor crime. The suspect had signed a guarantee that he would not harm his sister upon release from Jweideh Correctional Center, but as soon as she arrived home, he stabbed her repeatedly and crushed her skull.

In December, two men, aged 23 and 20, were sentenced to death for strangling their divorced sister, also in her twenties, in June. The men confessed to killing their sister in order to cleanse the family's honor.

Through their administrative detention authority, governors continued to place potential victims of honor crimes in involuntary protective custody in the Women's Correctional and Rehabilitation Center in Jweideh detention facility, where some women had remained for more than one year. Underage potential victims were held in the Al-Khansa Juvenile Center under unclear legal status. The government estimated that 39 women were placed in protective custody during the year, 33 women were released during the year, and six remained in custody. A woman detained in protective custody can be released only after her family signs a statement guaranteeing her safety and both the local governor and the woman agree to the release. According to the Ministry of Social Development, 14 minor girls were placed in shelters following sexual assaults. One NGO continued to work for the release of these women through mediation with their families. The NGO also provided a temporary but unofficial shelter for such women as an alternative to protective custody.

Sexual Harassment: The law strictly prohibits sexual harassment and does not make a distinction between sexual assault and sexual harassment. Both carry a minimum prison sentence of four years with hard labor. The government did not enforce this law. Women's groups stated that harassment was common, but many victims were hesitant to file a complaint and rarely did so because they feared blame for inciting the harassment or consequences such as losing their job, or because they faced social and cultural pressure to keep silent. NGOs reported that foreign migrant workers, including garment workers and domestic workers, were especially vulnerable to sexual harassment, including sexual assault, in the workplace.

Reproductive Rights: Couples have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children, and individuals were able to make such decisions free from discrimination and coercion. Contraceptives were generally accessible to all men and women, both married and single, and provided free of charge in public clinics. Comprehensive essential obstetric, prenatal, and postnatal care was provided throughout the country in the public and private sectors. The Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities and civil society activists reported that forced sterilization of women and girls with intellectual disabilities was a common practice. The Sisterhood Is Global Institute estimated that 65 such hysterectomies were performed annually.

Discrimination: Women do not have the same legal status and rights as men and experienced discrimination in a number of areas, including inheritance, divorce, ability to travel, child custody, citizenship, pension and social security benefits, the workplace, and, in certain circumstances, the value of their testimony in a sharia court. Nearly 10 percent of women were illiterate. Women owned only 17 percent of property.

There is no specialized government office or designated official to handle discrimination claims. The Jordanian National Commission for Women, a government-supported NGO, operated a hotline to receive discrimination complaints.

Under sharia, as applied in the country, female heirs receive half the amount that male heirs receive. A sole female heir receives only half of her parents' estate, with the balance going to designated male relatives, whereas a sole male heir inherits all of his parents' property. Women may seek divorce without the consent of their husbands in limited circumstances such as abandonment, spousal abuse, or in return for waiving financial rights. The law allows retention of financial rights under specific circumstances, such as spousal abuse. Special courts for each Christian denomination adjudicate marriage and divorce.

The law allows fathers to prevent their children from leaving the country through a court order; however, this same court order is not available to mothers. Some mothers claimed they were prevented from departing the country with their children because authorities enforced requests from fathers to prevent their children from leaving. Authorities did not stop fathers from exiting the country with their children when the mother objected.

The government provided men with more generous social security benefits than women. The government continued pension payments of deceased male civil servants to their heirs, but it discontinued payments to heirs of deceased female civil servants unless they were the sole income earner in the family. Laws and regulations governing health insurance for civil servants under the Civil Service Bureau do not permit married women to extend their health insurance coverage to dependents or spouses unless they are the sole income earner in the family. Divorced and widowed women may extend coverage to their children.

Union officials reported that sectors employing predominantly women, such as secretarial work, offered wages below the official minimum wage of 190 dinars (\$268) per month. Many women said traditional social pressures discouraged them from pursuing professional careers, especially after marriage.

## **Children**

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived only through the father. The government did not issue birth certificates to all children born in the country during the year. The government deemed some children – including children of unmarried women or of certain interfaith marriages involving a Muslim woman, and converts from Islam to another religion – illegitimate and denied them proper registration, making it difficult or impossible for them to attend school, access health services, or receive other documentation. In 2012 the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Interior began issuing new, nondiscriminatory national identity numbers, and 11 eligible orphans successfully changed their national numbers, according to the 2012 NCHR report. Illegitimate and abandoned children already holding national identity numbers have identity cards that clearly marked them as different; such numbers impeded these children as adults from obtaining employment, housing, and government benefits.

Education: Education is compulsory from ages six through 16 and free until age 18. No legislation exists to enforce the law or to punish guardians for violating it. Children without legal residency do not have the right to attend public school. Although Syrian refugees were allowed to attend public schools, approximately one-third of them were unable to attend local schools because of overcrowding according to NGOs and other sources. Children of female citizens and noncitizen fathers must apply for and pay 30 dinars (\$42) for residency permits every year, and permission is not guaranteed. Children with disabilities experienced extreme difficulty in accessing constitutionally protected early and primary education.

Child Abuse: The law specifies punishment for abuse of children. For example, conviction for rape of a child younger than age 15 potentially carries the death penalty. Local organizations working with abused children pointed to gaps in the legal system that regularly resulted in lenient sentencing, particularly for family members convicted of abuse. For example, the penal code gives judges the ability to reduce a sentence when the victim's family does not press charges. In child abuse cases, judges routinely accorded leniency in accordance with the wishes of the family. During the year authorities investigated 78 cases of child sexual abuse.

According to the NCHR, some juveniles in detention alleged torture and mistreatment. The minimum age of criminal responsibility for all crimes is seven years. Juveniles charged with committing a crime along with an adult are tried in the adult court. There are juvenile courts, but no alternative penalties for juvenile offenders. Police stations have no designated holding areas for juveniles.

The State Security Court tried and convicted 12 juveniles, following their involvement in November 2012 protests against fuel price hikes, according to NGOs and human rights activists.

The PSD reported that through September, they handled 225 juvenile cases, of which 127 cases were settled out of court.

The government continued to fund a child protection center that provided temporary shelter and medical care for abused children between the ages of six and 12. During the year the shelter housed 15 abused children. Observers noted that the shelter lacked qualified staff, psychosocial counselors, and a comprehensive approach to deal with victims of abuse.

Forced and Early Marriage: The minimum age for marriage is 18. With the consent of both a judge and a guardian, a child as young as 15, in most cases a girl, may be married. The UN Fund for Population reported that in 2012-13, 13 percent of marriages involved at least one person between 15 and 18 years of age, a slight increase from previous years. While international media reported that young Syrian girls were submitted to arranged marriages in Jordan, NGOs and the UN were unable to confirm these reports.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law stipulates that the penalty for the commercial exploitation of children is six months to three years of imprisonment. The law also penalizes individuals who traffic persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation with a maximum of 10 years of hard labor and a fine of 2,000-50,000

dinars (\$2,800-70,000). The law prohibits the distribution of pornography involving persons under the age of 18 and provides for a fine of 300-5,000 dinars (\$420-7,000) or at least three months' imprisonment. The law does not prohibit the possession of child pornography. The law penalizes those who use the internet to post or distribute child pornography with a fine of 500-5,000 dinars (\$700-7,000) or at least six months' imprisonment. The minimum age of consensual sex is 18.

Institutionalized Children: A 2013 government report found no physical or sexual abuse in state institutions; however, NGOs reported that such abuses did occur. Cases involving violence against persons with disabilities or institutionalized persons are automatically referred to the Family Protection Department. During the year the Ministry of Social Development closed some 30 day-care centers for violations related to the building code, inadequate space, or not enough supervisors. The committee highlighted the pervasive use of physical discipline, physical and verbal abuse, unacceptable living conditions, and a lack of educational, rehabilitative, or psychosocial services for wards and inmates. Activists for orphans' rights alleged that adult orphans and former wards of the state were especially vulnerable to forced and early marriage, labor trafficking, and sexual exploitation.

International Child Abduction: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information see the Department of State's report on compliance at [http://travel.state.gov/abduction/country/country\\_3781.html](http://travel.state.gov/abduction/country/country_3781.html).

### **Anti-Semitism**

Anti-Semitism was present in the media. Editorial cartoons, articles, and opinion pieces sometimes negatively depicted Jews without government response. Aside from expatriates, there was no resident Jewish community in the country. The national school curriculum, including materials on tolerance education, did not include mention of the Holocaust.

On July 24, Al Rai, a government associated newspaper, ran an editorial cartoon showing an anti-Semitic stereotype representing the Israeli government.

### **Trafficking in Persons**

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at [www.state.gov/j/tip](http://www.state.gov/j/tip).

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law generally provides equal rights to persons with disabilities, but such legal protections were not upheld. Activists noted the law on the rights of persons with disabilities lacked implementing regulations. The Higher Council for the Affairs of People with Disabilities (HCAPD), a government body, works with ministries, the private sector, and NGOs to formulate and implement strategies to assist persons with disabilities. Citizens and NGOs universally reported that persons with disabilities faced problems in obtaining employment and accessing education, health care, transportation, and other services, particularly in rural areas.

On October 26, the king appointed Dr. Muhannad al-Azzah, who is blind, to the Senate; he is the first visually impaired person to serve as a senator.

Human rights activists reported that some persons with disabilities were subjected to cruel and inhumane treatment at institutions and rehabilitation centers. According to media reports, a criminal court was ready to convict a 12-year-old deaf child of attempted murder based on his confession despite the fact that no professional sign-language interpreter had been available during his testimony and the judge relied on the defendant's mother's interpretation. When the victim's family sought monetary damages, the defendant's family decided to get legal representation. Their lawyer provided the defendant with a professional sign-language interpreter, and the case was pending as of December.

In June 2012 the public prosecutor filed assault charges against a caretaker at the government-run Karak Rehabilitation Center for cutting both ears of a resident with a hearing impairment and intellectual disability. The caretaker was suspended from his job, but during the year a court acquitted him of criminal charges.

The electoral law directs the government to verify that voting facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities and allows such persons to bring a personal assistant to the polling station; the Independent Electoral Commission has responsibility for implementing this law. Following the January parliamentary elections, the NCHR noted that accessibility for persons with disabilities needed improvement. Following the August municipal elections, the NCHR reported that most of the polling centers were not accessible to persons with disabilities.

Banks commonly refused to allow visually impaired persons to open a bank account independently and required blind applicants to bring two male witnesses to certify each transaction. Banks commonly refused to issue visually impaired customers automated teller machine cards.

The 2012 NCHR report noted that school classrooms were not fully accessible and that there were no qualified teachers for children with disabilities. This remained an issue in 2013. The HCAPD reported that educational accommodations were more readily available at the university level than in elementary and secondary schools. At all levels of education, children with particular types of disabilities were excluded from studying certain subjects and often could not access critical educational support services, such as sign-language interpretation. General education teachers were not trained to work with students with various disabilities. Families of children with disabilities reported that teachers and principals often refused to include children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The Ministry of Education provided accessible transportation to specialized centers for children with disabilities, but not to mainstream schools. There remained insufficient capacity in specialized centers for all students who required accommodations. Students with significant intellectual disabilities fell under the authority of the Ministry of Social Development rather than the Ministry of Education.

The Special Buildings Code Department is tasked with enforcing accessibility provisions and oversees retrofitting of existing buildings to comply with building codes. The vast majority of private and public office buildings continued to have limited or no access for persons with disabilities. Municipal infrastructure such as public transport, streets, sidewalks, and intersections were not accessible. The NCHR also reported that 82 percent of individuals with disabilities were economically inactive.

The law mandates that public- and private-sector establishments with between 25 and 50 workers employ at least one person with disabilities and that establishments with more than 50 workers must reserve 4 percent of their positions for persons with disabilities. The law lacked implementing regulations and was rarely enforced. In addition, employers who state the nature of the work is not suitable for persons with disabilities are exempt from the quota. Employers, including the government's Civil Service Bureau, frequently required potential employees with disabilities to present a medical letter certifying the bearer was competent to perform the job in question. Human rights activists considered the letter a large barrier to participation in public life because some medical professionals were not

aware of the full range of accommodations available and thus certified individuals as not able to perform certain tasks. During the year the HCAPD documented no cases in which persons with disabilities were denied or suspended from work they were qualified to perform solely because of their disabilities.

The forced sterilization of women and girls with intellectual disabilities was a common practice during the year. The Sisterhood Is Global Institute estimated that 65 such hysterectomies were performed annually. Girls and women with disabilities were particularly at risk for gender-based violence.

Human rights activists and the media reported that children and adults with disabilities were vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse while in institutions, rehabilitation centers, or other care settings, including their family homes. Some of these institutions were government-operated, and some of the abusers were government employees.

The government endorsed instructions giving tariff exemptions for the vehicles of persons with disabilities and reduced the costs of hiring domestic help for persons with disabilities. Approximately 10,000 persons with disabilities (some 17 percent of the total estimated population with disabilities) benefited from these measures.

### **National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities**

There were four groups of Palestinians residing in the country, many of whom faced some discrimination. Those who migrated to the country and the Jordan-controlled West Bank after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war received full citizenship, as did those who migrated to the country after the 1967 war and hold no residency entitlement in the West Bank. Those still holding residency in the West Bank after 1967 were no longer eligible to claim full citizenship, but they could obtain temporary travel documents without national identification numbers, provided they did not also carry a Palestinian Authority travel document. These individuals had access to some government services but paid noncitizen rates at hospitals, educational institutions, and training centers. Refugees who fled Gaza after 1967 were not entitled to citizenship and were issued temporary travel documents without national numbers. These persons had no access to government services and were almost completely dependent on UNRWA services. Finally, Syrians of Palestinian origin who were able to enter Jordan, despite many being turned away at the border, have access to UNRWA and government services, and do not face official discrimination, although they were considered refugees.

Palestinians were underrepresented in parliament and senior positions in the government and the military, as well as in admissions to public universities. They had limited access to university scholarships.

### **Societal Abuses, Discrimination, and Acts of Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

Consensual same-sex sexual conduct is not illegal; however, societal discrimination against LGBT persons was prevalent. Activists reported that the government prevented LGBT persons from establishing an LGBT NGO. One citizen reported being beaten by his high school principal because of his sexual identity. Others reported discrimination in housing, employment, education, and access to public services. Some LGBT individuals reported reluctance to engage the legal system due to fear that their sexual orientation would become an issue and either provoke hostile reactions from the police or be a disadvantage to them in court. Activists report that most LGBT individuals were closeted and fearful of their sexual identity being disclosed. During the year there were reports of individuals who left the country due to fear that their families would punish them because of their sexual orientation.

### **Other Societal Violence or Discrimination**

HIV/AIDS was a largely taboo subject. Lack of public awareness remained a problem; many citizens believed the disease exclusively affected foreigners and members of the LGBT community. HIV-positive individuals were socially stigmatized. The government continued its efforts to inform the public about the disease and eliminate negative attitudes about persons with HIV/AIDS; however, it also continued to test all foreigners annually for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, syphilis, malaria, and tuberculosis, and it deported those who tested HIV-positive.

## **Section 7. Worker Rights**

### **a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining**

The law, including related regulations and statutes, provides for the right to form and join independent unions and conduct legal strikes, but with significant restrictions. There is no right to collective bargaining, although the labor code provides for collective agreements. The law identifies specific groups of public and private sector workers who may organize and defines 17 industries and professions in which trade unions may be established. The establishment of new

unions requires approval from the Ministry of Labor. The law requires that these 17 trade unions belong to the government-subsidized General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions, the country's sole trade union federation. The law authorizes additional professions on a case-by-case basis to form professional associations. On July 30, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling allowing government employees to unionize. The constitution prohibits anti-union discrimination, and the law protects workers from employer retaliation due to union affiliation or activities. The law does not explicitly provide a worker fired due to anti-union views with the right to reinstatement.

Conflicts during negotiations are referred first to a mediator appointed by the labor ministry. If the case is unresolved, it moves to the minister of labor, and then to a mediation council composed of an employee representative, a labor representative, and a chair appointed by the minister of labor. The minister of labor refers conflicts not settled by the council to a labor court. There are limits on the right to strike, including a requirement to provide a minimum of 14 days notice to the employer. Strikes are prohibited if a labor dispute is under mediation or arbitration.

Foreign workers are allowed to join unions, but they are not permitted to create unions, head a union, or hold union office. It remained unclear whether domestic and agricultural workers were permitted to create or join unions or whether they were granted other protections in the labor code. Labor court judges were divided over whether the entire labor code applied to domestic workers or only Regulation 90 of 2009 for Domestic Workers, Cooks, Gardeners, and Similar Workers. The government did not fully enforce applicable laws with effective remedies and penalties.

Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining were not fully respected. Many worker organizations were not independent of the government, and government influence on union policies and activities continued. The government subsidized and audited General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions salaries and activities and monitored union elections. The government denied recognition to independent unions organized outside the structure of the government-approved federation.

The Ministry of Labor reported 708 strikes and labor protests as of August, 60 percent of which were by public sector workers. There were no reports of threats of violence against union heads, although labor activists alleged that the security services pressured union leaders to refrain from activism that challenged

government interests. Strikes generally occurred without advance notice or registration, and the union or workers requested penalty waivers for the illegal strike as part of subsequent labor negotiations. There were no documented cases of excessive force used against striking workers.

Foreign workers in the garment sector, whose residency permits are tied to work contracts, were vulnerable to retaliation by employers for participating in strikes and sit-ins. Foreigners in the construction, services, and agricultural sectors were also subject to similar vulnerabilities. The law allows employers to consider employment contracts void if a worker is absent more than 10 consecutive days, as long as the employer provides written notice; participation in a non-recognized strike counts as an unexcused absence for the purpose of this law. The Ministry of Labor sometimes prevented management from arbitrarily dismissing foreign workers engaged in labor or other activism, but its engagement was inconsistent. Observers reported it was common practice for management to refuse to renew foreign workers' contracts on the basis of "troublemaking" or attempting to organize in the workplace. Labor organizations reported that management representatives used threats to intimidate striking workers. Labor organizations and industry representatives reported that workers also sometimes used threats and physical violence to retaliate against management officials or to coerce colleagues into participating in labor actions.

The labor ministry received 83 labor complaints, 43 of which were settled through direct negotiations. None of the cases was referred to a labor court.

The labor ministry received no complaints of anti-union discrimination during the year; however, observers noted that nonunionized workers were not explicitly protected in the labor code from retaliation. This was particularly the case for foreign workers in all sectors as well as citizens working in the public sector on short-term contracts (day laborers).

## **b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor**

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor except in a state of emergency, such as war or natural disaster. The government made some efforts to enforce the law through inspections and other means. Labor activists noted that law enforcement and judicial officials did not consistently identify victims and open criminal investigations.

Police investigated 14 cases of forced labor involving 30 potential victims. The police referred 17 potential victims of forced labor to shelter services. Ministry of Labor inspectors carried out 7,600 field inspections through August and issued warnings to 1,834 institutions for violating the law. The ministry referred three human trafficking cases to the judiciary for further investigation.

On April 29, the Supreme Criminal Court prosecutor general began investigating allegations that Egyptian and Indian workers engaged by a contracting company to build the new headquarters of the Public Security Directorate, were subject to working conditions that were indicative of forced labor and that lacked appropriate health or safety measures. The owner of the company allegedly withheld the workers' passports, did not pay workers for months, and threatened them with arrest if they left the workplace.

The government actively inspected garment factories and investigated allegations of forced labor. Reports of withholding of passports continued to decline during the year, particularly those of workers in the garment sector. Forced labor or conditions indicative of forced labor occurred, particularly among migrant workers in the domestic work and agricultural sectors. Activists identified domestic workers as particularly vulnerable to exploitation due to inadequate government oversight, social norms that excused forced labor, and workers' isolation within individual homes. Activists also highlighted the vulnerability of agricultural workers due to minimal government oversight. Labor inspectors did not regularly investigate reports of labor or other abuses of domestic workers in private homes and were not permitted to enter a private residence without the owner's permission except with a court order.

In 2012 the prime minister authorized the government to temporarily lift fines and other legal barriers that had prevented migrant domestic workers sheltering at their embassies and in detention centers from returning to their countries of origin. On July 11, the Ministry of Interior issued instructions to facilitate the repatriation of domestic workers. Authorities repatriated approximately 1,500 domestic workers, many of whom were judged by local and international human rights organizations to have been working under conditions indicative of forced labor.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons* Report at [www.state.gov/j/tip](http://www.state.gov/j/tip).

### **c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment**

The law forbids employment of children younger than 16 years of age, except as apprentices in nonhazardous positions. The law bans those between the ages of 16 and 18 from working in potentially hazardous jobs, limits working hours for such children to six hours per day, mandates one-hour breaks for every four consecutive working hours, and prohibits these children from working after 8:00 p.m. on national or religious holidays and on weekends.

The government's capacity to implement and enforce child labor laws was not sufficient to deter the practice. Staffing in the Ministry of Labor's Inspection Department was insufficient to address child labor effectively. The ministry's three person Child Labor Unit was responsible for coordinating government action regarding child labor; it oversaw the work of 20 child-labor focal points within the Inspection Department. The Child Labor Unit reported that labor inspectors found 753 child laborers at 600 institutions and issued 265 warnings and 200 violations. Violators were referred to an administrative labor court; the Ministry of Justice had no information on any child-labor cases referred to criminal courts. The law provides that employers who hire a child younger than age 16 pay a fine of as much as 500 dinars (\$700), which is doubled for repeat offenses. Observers did not believe the penalties were sufficient to deter child labor.

Labor inspectors reportedly attempted alternative approaches before issuing official warnings and violations, such as issuing advice and guidance, ensuring safe work conditions, and cooperating with employers to permit working children to attend school concurrently.

The government's National Steering Committee worked with NGOs to develop a database of child laborers; however, by year's end the project remained incomplete. The Ministries of Labor, Education, and Social Development collaborated with NGOs aiming to withdraw children from the worst forms of labor.

Child labor occurred. Children worked in mechanical repair, agriculture, construction, and the hotel and restaurant industry; in the informal sector as street vendors, carpenters, blacksmiths, domestic workers, and painters; and in small family businesses. Child labor appeared concentrated in larger cities, such as Amman, Zarqa, and Irbid; however, the incidence of child labor was reportedly higher in some semirural communities, including Mafraq and Ma'an. The government lacked recent statistics on the problem. A 2008 Department of Statistics study estimated that more than 32,000 children between the ages of five and 17 were working in the country. Activists estimated the number to be

significantly higher, as many businesses and families tended to hide the practice. Child protection advocates believed that Syrian refugee children increasingly entered the workforce and engaged in hazardous work, but lacked data on the extent of the phenomenon.

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at [www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/ocft/tda.htm](http://www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/ocft/tda.htm).

#### **d. Acceptable Conditions of Work**

In 2012 the government raised the national minimum wage to 190 dinars (\$268) per month, and the poverty level was set at 366 dinars (\$517) per month for a family of five. The minimum wage increase excluded noncitizens and all workers in the garment industry. Citizen workers in the garment industry received a minimum wage of 170 dinars (\$240) per month; noncitizen workers in the garment industry received a minimum wage of 110 dinars (\$155) per month, although many had base wages slightly above the minimum wage. This exemption was granted in part because employers often provided room and board for noncitizen workers in this sector. Some garment factories continued to deduct room and board from workers' already lower salaries.

The law sets a standard workweek of 48 hours and requires overtime pay for hours worked in excess of that standard. The law provides for 14 days of paid annual leave per year, which increases to 21 days after five years of service. Workers are also provided additional national and religious holidays designated by the government. Employees are entitled to one day off per week. The law permits compulsory overtime under certain circumstances such as conducting an annual inventory, closing accounts, preparing to sell goods at discounted prices, avoiding loss to goods that would otherwise be exposed to damage, and receiving special deliveries. In such cases actual working hours may not exceed 10 hours per day, the employee must be paid overtime, and the period may not last more than 30 days. There is no cap on the amount of consensual overtime.

The government set occupational health and safety standards. Employers are required to abide by all such standards set by the labor ministry. The law requires employers to protect workers from hazards caused by the nature of the job or its tools, provide any necessary protective equipment, train workers on hazards and prevention measures, provide first aid as necessitated by the job, and protect employees from explosions or fires by storing flammable materials appropriately.

The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcement of labor laws and acceptable conditions of work. Ministry inspectors enforced the labor code but were unable to ensure full compliance; there were 106 inspectors for the entire country, an insufficient number to enforce the labor code effectively. Employees may lodge complaints regarding violations of the labor code directly with the Ministry of Labor or through organizations such as their union or the NCHR. The labor ministry opens an investigation for each complaint. Labor inspectors conducted 53,550 inspections and issued 9,863 warnings and 14,409 violations nationwide.

Labor standards apply to the informal sector, but the labor ministry lacked the capacity to detect and monitor informal work. Authorities did not consistently apply all the protections of the labor code to domestic and agricultural workers, as its applicability was not clear. Labor contacts stated that agricultural and domestic workers, cooks, and gardeners were not entitled to social benefits from the Social Security Corporation.

The government took action to prevent violations and improve working conditions during the year. The Ministry of Labor placed a special focus on enforcing compliance in the Qualifying Industrial Zones, which were populated largely by migrant garment workers. The ratio of labor inspectors to workers or places of employment was significantly higher in these zones than for the general population. The government required export garment manufacturers to take part in Better Work Jordan in order to improve labor standards. As of December, 60 of the 65 factories required by the government to join Better Work Jordan were active members of the program.

Wage, overtime, safety, and other standards often were not upheld in several sectors, including construction, mechanic shops, day labor, and the garment industry. Foreign workers faced hazardous and exploitative working conditions in a variety of sectors. Union leaders reported that female Jordanian workers were more likely to encounter labor violations; including wages below the minimum wage and harassment in the workplace. As there was no limit on consensual overtime, the labor ministry permitted employees in some industries, such as the garment sector, to work excessive workweeks, reportedly as much as 80-100 hours per week. As of September 1, the labor ministry closed 385 workplaces and gave warnings to 2,341 workplaces for recruiting foreign workers without work permits.

In the garment sector, foreign workers were more susceptible than their Jordanian counterparts to dangerous or unfair conditions, including mandatory overtime, delayed payment of wages, deductions for room and board, and unacceptable

dormitory conditions. Forced labor or conditions indicative of forced labor occurred in the garment industry, although Better Work Jordan reported that no factories were found noncompliant concerning bonded labor. Better Work Jordan also found that compliance regarding coercion improved, with seven factories found to be noncompliant, five of which denied their workers access to their personal documents and three findings related to employers requiring workers to work beyond the term of their contracts, restricting workers' mobility and using threats such as deportation, cancellation of visas, or reporting to the authorities in order to force workers to stay on the job. Indebtedness of migrant garment workers to third parties and involuntary or excessive overtime persisted.

On May 29, the country's first collective bargaining agreement to regulate the relationship between workers and their employers in the apparel sector was created by the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing Industries, the Jordanian Garment Accessories and Textile Exporters' Association, and the Association of Owners of Factories, Workshops and Garments. The agreement included provisions on union recognition, access to workers, dues check-off, dormitory standards, dispute settlement, employer rights, and annual seniority bonuses for apparel-sector workers.

On October 29, the first Workers' Center, in the Al-Hassan industrial zone, officially opened. Recreational training and other services for workers are provided at the center.

Some workers in the agricultural sector, the vast majority of whom were Egyptian, were subject to exploitative conditions. According to a domestic NGO, agricultural workers usually were paid less than the minimum wage, worked excessive hours without adequate compensation, and lived in substandard housing. Some employers in the agricultural sector also reportedly confiscated passports. Egyptian migrant workers were also vulnerable to exploitation in the construction industry; they usually were paid less than the minimum wage and lacked basic training and equipment necessary to uphold occupational health and safety standards.

Domestic workers, overwhelmingly migrants, often faced unacceptable working conditions. Many domestic workers reported to local NGOs and their embassies that they received insufficient food, no private accommodations, no health care, no days off, and long delays in or nonpayment of wages. Domestic workers could file complaints in person with the labor ministry's Domestic Workers Directorate or the PSD; however, many domestic workers complained there was no follow-up on

their cases either from the ministry or from the PSD. Users of a labor ministry domestic-worker hotline reported that live operators were available only during government business hours, or seven hours a day during the work week. Afterhours calls required the user to leave a message and a callback number, which posed particular difficulties for domestic workers who had access only to their employers' telephones.

Advocates for migrant domestic workers reported that domestic workers who sought government assistance or made allegations against their employers frequently faced counterclaims of criminal behavior from their employers. Employers could file criminal complaints or flight notifications against domestic workers with police stations. Even when domestic workers benefited from initiatives such as the general amnesty that waived immigration overstay fines, they could be prevented from leaving the country due to such alerts on file with the police.

During the year hundreds of domestic workers from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka sought shelter at their countries' embassies in Amman. Most of the domestic workers reportedly fled conditions indicative of forced labor or abuse, including unpaid wages and, to a lesser extent, sexual or physical abuse. By law employers are responsible for renewing foreign employees' residency permits but often failed to do this for domestic employees. As a result most of the domestic workers sheltered by embassies were considered illegal residents, and many were stranded because they were unable to pay the daily overstay fees of 1.5 dinars (two dollars) to depart the country.

As a result of poor working conditions experienced by some of their citizens, the Philippines and Indonesia prohibited their citizens from traveling to the country as domestic workers. Some human rights organizations argued that these bans heightened the vulnerability of foreign domestic workers, who turned to unscrupulous recruitment agencies to migrate illegally to the country. Reversing a long-standing policy, in 2012 the government began to prevent the immigration of Indonesian workers until it negotiated a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Indonesian government. As a result, the Ministry of Labor halted the issuance of work permits for Indonesian domestic workers, although the Ministry of Interior reportedly continued to issue residency permits. In December the governments of Indonesia and Jordan signed a new MOU to allow the legal immigration of Indonesians workers to Jordan.

As of October 22, the Social Security Corporation reported that approximately 425,000 work injuries occurred during the year and some 2,250 people died because of work injuries.