

imprisonment but the Tokyo High Court sentenced him to death after the prosecution appealed. The Supreme Court upheld his death sentence in February 2008.

## Asylum-seekers and refugees

Asylum applications increased to over 2000, up from 1,867 last year, but the numbers granted refugee status remained low. The majority of applicants were from Myanmar. Japan's 2010 pilot project to resettle 30 refugees from Myanmar who were processed in Thailand was extended in March for a further two years. No one was accepted under the system this year after three families withdrew their application.

# JORDAN

## HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

Head of state: **King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein**  
Head of government: **Abdullah Ensour (replaced Fayez Tarawneh in October, who replaced Awn al-Khasawneh in May)**

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**The security forces used excessive force and arrested hundreds of peaceful and other demonstrators calling for reform. The authorities maintained tight restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and assembly, and imposed new restrictions on electronic media. There were reports of torture and other ill-treatment of detainees. Unfair trials continued before the State Security Court (SSC). Hundreds, possibly thousands, of criminal suspects were detained indefinitely without charge or trial. Women faced discrimination and violence; at least ten were reported to be victims of "honour" killings. Migrant domestic workers were exploited and abused. There were reports that some refugees were forcibly returned to Syria. At least 16 people were sentenced to death; there were no executions.**

## Background

Demonstrations continued throughout the year against the slow pace of political reform and economic conditions, including cuts in government fuel subsidies. Protests in November became violent; one man was killed in Irbid in November in disputed

circumstances and two police officers died of gunshot wounds sustained during disturbances in Karak and Amman. The King sought to assuage dissent by appointing new prime ministers in May and again in October when he dissolved parliament. Elections were set for January 2013 under an Elections Law approved by royal decree in July; opposition members argued that pro-government candidates retained an unfair advantage.

Thousands of refugees entered Jordan to escape the conflict in Syria, adding to the pressure on resources.

In November, a UK court prevented the UK government from deporting Abu Qatada to Jordan, ruling that he could not be guaranteed a fair trial there (see United Kingdom entry).

## Freedoms of expression, association and assembly

The security forces detained hundreds of peaceful and other protesters calling for political and other reform; many were beaten on arrest or in detention. In September, the government amended the Press and Publications Law to tighten restrictions on electronic media, creating powers to close or block websites.

■ Six members of the pro-reform Free Tafileh Movement were arrested in March and held for over a month accused of "insulting the King" and other offences relating to a violent protest in Tafileh in which they were apparently uninvolved. One, Majdi Qableen, was reported to have been blindfolded, chained by his feet and beaten during interrogation by General Intelligence Department (GID) officers. At least two others were also beaten in custody. They were released without charge in April.

■ Ola Saif, was arrested in November at a peaceful protest in Amman against economic policy. She says she was beaten in the Central Amman Public Security Directorate and denied access to a lawyer or relatives. She was charged with trying to overthrow the political system and released on 5 December.

## Torture and other ill-treatment

There were reports of torture and other ill-treatment of security suspects and people detained, some incommunicado for prolonged periods, following pro-reform protests.

■ Eleven men arrested on 21 October for allegedly planning violent attacks in Amman were held by the

GID in Amman in almost continuous incommunicado detention without access to lawyers or family for more than two months. Most of them claimed to have “confessed” under torture.

■ Rami al-Sehwal was reportedly stripped naked, tied and beaten over two days by police and GID officers who sought to “teach” him and 12 other men “a lesson” after they were detained at a peaceful protest in Amman on 30 March. All 13 were released without charge.

## Unfair trials

The SSC continued to prosecute civilians for security offences in trials that fell short of international standards of fairness. Hundreds of people including nine children faced charges under Penal Code articles criminalizing peaceful dissent and were referred to the SSC for trial.

■ ‘Uday Abu ‘Isa was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment by the SSC in January for burning a picture of the King at a demonstration. A prisoner of conscience, he was held for seven weeks before being released under a royal pardon. He said police had beaten him after his arrest.

## Detention without trial

Hundreds, possibly thousands, of people continued to be detained without charge or trial for long periods under the 1954 Law on Crime Prevention, which empowers provincial governors to order the indefinite detention without charge of anyone they suspect of having committed a crime or deem a “danger to society”.

## Discrimination and violence against women

Women were discriminated against in law and practice, and were inadequately protected against gender-based violence. At least ten women were reported to have been killed by male relatives, victims of so-called “honour” crimes.

The UN CEDAW Committee and the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women urged the government to amend the Citizenship and Nationality Law to enable Jordanian women to pass on their nationality to their children and spouses on an equal basis with Jordanian men, and to lift reservations to Articles 9 and 16 of CEDAW relating to nationality and to discrimination in family relations. In November, the

Prime Minister said the government would address these reservations.

## Migrants’ rights – domestic workers

There were reports of migrant domestic workers, mostly women, being confined to their employers’ homes, denied pay, having their passports seized or being physically, psychologically or sexually abused by their employers.

In March, the UN CERD Committee urged the government to ensure full labour rights for all employees including migrant domestic workers, regardless of nationality or ethnicity.

## Refugees and asylum-seekers

Thousands of people fleeing the conflict in Syria sought refuge in Jordan. UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, said in December that 163,088 refugees from Syria had registered or were waiting to register with them; the total number of refugees was believed to be higher. There were reports that some Syrian and Palestinian refugees were forcibly returned to Syria. On 31 August, Jordan’s Foreign Minister said some 200 Syrians had been removed from al-Za’atari refugee camp and returned to the border area between Jordan and Syria after “rioting” and inciting violence.

## Death penalty

At least 16 people were sentenced to death; at least five death sentences were commuted. There were no executions; the last execution was in 2006.

## Amnesty International visits/reports

🚗 Amnesty International visited Jordan in February and July to carry out human rights research relating to Syria.

📄 Jordan: Decision to release two government critics welcomed as a positive first step (MDE 16/001/2012)

📄 Jordan: Six pro-reform activists under investigation for “insulting” the King must be released (MDE 16/002/2012)

📄 Jordan: Arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment and lack of adequate medical care of detained protesters (MDE 16/003/2012)

📄 Jordan: Arrest of 20 pro-reform activists heralds crackdown on freedom of expression (PRE01/489/2012)