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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. A regent, whose authority is outlined in the Constitution, assumes many responsibilities in the King's absence. The King appoints the Prime Minister and other members of the cabinet who manage the daily affairs of the Government. The Parliament consists of the 55-member Senate, appointed by the King, and a 110-member elected lower house, the Chamber of Deputies. June 2003 multi-party parliamentary elections were generally free and fair; however, the election law significantly under-represented urban areas. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, in practice, it remained susceptible to political pressure and interference by the executive.

The Public Security Directorate (PSD) controlled general police functions. The PSD, the General Intelligence Directorate (GID), and the military shared responsibility for maintaining internal security, and had authority to monitor security threats. The PSD reports to the Interior Minister and the independent GID reports directly to the King. The civilian authorities maintained effective control of the security forces. Members of the security forces committed a number of serious human rights abuses.

The Government made substantial progress in implementing market-based reforms in a mixed economy. The Department of Statistics estimated the population at the end of the year at 5.32 million. During the year, the economy grew by more than 7 percent in real gross domestic product terms, with an increase of approximately 3.4 percent in the cost of living index. In general, wages and benefits kept pace with inflation, although the Government has not increased the minimum wage since January 2003. High unemployment and persistent poverty, especially in rural areas, coupled with political uncertainty in the region and limited water and energy resources, negatively affected the economy.

Although the Government respected human rights in some areas, its overall record continued to reflect many problems. Reported continuing abuses included police abuse and mistreatment of detainees, allegations of torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, lack of transparent investigations and of accountability within the security services resulting in a climate of impunity, denial of due process of law stemming from the expanded authority of the State Security Court and interference in the judicial process, infringements on citizens' privacy rights, harassment of members of opposition political parties, and significant restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association. Citizens did not have the right to change their government. Citizens may participate in the political system through their elected representatives to Parliament; however, the King has discretionary authority to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister, members of the cabinet and upper house of Parliament, to dissolve Parliament, and to establish public policy. The Government imposed some limits on freedom of religion, and there was official and societal discrimination against adherents of unrecognized religions. There were some restrictions on freedom of movement. Violence against women, restrictions on women's rights, and societal discrimination against women persisted. "Honor" crimes continued. Child abuse remained a problem, and discrimination against Palestinians persisted. Abuse of foreign domestics was a problem.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:****a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life**

Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports of arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life by the Government or its agents.

There were no new developments in the January 2003 police killing of a man in Ruseifa or the 2002 killing of a youth from Ma'an.



The security services promoted a climate of impunity by their continued reluctance to conduct transparent investigations into allegations of wrongful deaths that occurred during police detention in previous years. In recent years, authorities have been more willing to conduct transparent investigations and have, from time to time, disclosed results.

In 2002, USAID official Lawrence Foley was shot and killed in front of his home. In December 2002, the Government arrested suspects who confessed to the act. In October 2003, five men accused in the killing of Foley proclaimed their innocence, and claimed that security officials had tortured them to elicit their confessions (see Section 1.c.). In April, all of the accused were convicted, some in absentia. The Government announced that one suspect convicted in absentia for his role in the killing was in custody as of July and would be retried in accordance with the law, which provides for a new trial in such circumstances.

In 2002, a challenge to government authority by an armed group in Ma'an led to the deaths of five persons, including two police officers and three militants. In September 2003, the man accused of fomenting riots in Ma'an, Mohammed Shalabi, was arrested and put on trial by the State Security Court. Shalabi (known as Abu Sayyaf) claimed he had been tortured and initially denied a lawyer during his investigation (see Section 1.c.). Shalabi and 12 other defendants were charged with conspiracy to carry out terrorist acts and possession of explosives. In December, the State Security Court acquitted Shalabi and his co-defendants on the charge of conspiring to commit terror attacks. The court found 11 of the defendants, including Shalabi, guilty for the lesser charge of possessing explosives and sentenced them to prison terms ranging from 6 to 15 years. Two of the defendants were cleared of all charges.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

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

The law prohibits such practices; however, the police and security forces sometimes abused detainees during detention and interrogation, and allegedly also used torture. Allegations of torture were difficult to verify because the police and security officials frequently denied detainees timely access to lawyers. The most frequently reported methods of torture included beating, sleep deprivation, extended solitary confinement, and physical suspension. Defendants in high-profile cases before the State Security Court claimed to have been subjected to physical and psychological abuse while in detention. Government officials denied allegations of torture and abuse. Defendants in at least six cases before the Security Court during the year alleged that they were tortured while in custody. For example, affiliates of fugitive Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, convicted in April of killing USAID official Laurence Foley in 2002, claimed their confessions were derived under duress. Zarqawi's nephew Omar al-Khalayleh, who was sentenced in May with two others for plotting against U.S. and Israeli tourists, also claimed torture. Other Zarqawi accomplices in custody for activities made similar accusations in their trials during the year, including Ansar al-Islam member Ahmad al-Riyati (sentenced in June), fundraiser Bilal al-Hiyari (sentenced in October), and Miqdad al-Dabbas, whose trial was ongoing at years end.

In June 2003, the Court of Cassation overturned the death sentence of convicted terrorist Raed Hijazi. In December 2003, the State Security Court convicted Hijazi and sentenced him to death for the third time. At year's end, he continued to proclaim his innocence and vowed to appeal the verdict again. In October, the Court of Cassation upheld the guilty verdict and commuted Hijazi's sentence to 20 years with no possibility of further appeal.

In October 2003, Mohammad al-Shalabi (see Section 1.a.) claimed during his first court appearance that his interrogators tortured him and denied him access to an attorney. In a December 2003 court appearance, after being appointed a lawyer, al-Shalabi repeated his claim and proclaimed his innocence. Several other co-defendants retracted their previous confessions stating that they were extracted under duress. Al-Shalabi's lawyers brought four prison inmates to testify before the court that they noticed marks on al-Shalabi's legs suggesting he had been tortured. Based on his attorneys' request, the court referred al-Shalabi to the National Institute of Forensic Medicine (NIFM) for medical evaluation. The NIFM physicians' report indicated that al-Shalabi had not been tortured and noted no torture marks on his body.

In October 2003, five men who later were convicted for the killing of USAID official Lawrence Foley, claimed innocence in court and asserted that security forces had tortured them to elicit their confessions (see Section 1.a.). Bin Suwayyid, one of the defendants, told reporters that interrogators made him sign a confession that he was not allowed "to read or check." Another defendant, Yasser Freihart, reported that interrogators told him that if he did not sign the confession, he "would go back to the cell for more torture and beating."

There were no new developments in the 2002 case of a local newspaper reporter covering anti-Israeli demonstrations in Sweileh who claimed that he was detained, threatened, and "manhandled" by

government security forces. Human rights activists believed that similar incidents occurred during the year that were not documented.

Police on several occasions used force to disperse demonstrations during the year, including violent demonstrations held in refugee camps following the death of HAMAS leaders. (see Section 2.b.).

Human rights activists reported a number of cases of beatings and other abuses of individuals in police custody during the year. These included accusations surrounding a disturbance at the Juweideh Correctional and Rehabilitation Center and allegations by security detainees. Human rights activists also claimed that detainees are often held incommunicado for up to 2 months after arrest.

Prison conditions generally met international standards, and the Government permitted visits by independent human rights observers. Prisons and local police detention facilities were spartan, and on the whole were severely overcrowded and understaffed. Human rights groups and prisoners complained of poor food and water quality, inadequate medical facilities, and poor sanitation in certain facilities.

On September 5, according to press reports and human rights activists, one inmate died and several were injured during a disturbance at the Juweideh Correctional and Rehabilitation Center. Press reports indicated that some inmates became violent after ingesting smuggled hallucinogenic drugs. Prison authorities then used force to regain control. The Government formed a committee to investigate the incident and to review overall prison conditions. At year's end, the trial of 11 officers accused of unnecessary use of force during the disturbance was ongoing.

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

Local human rights monitors were allowed to visit prisons; however, they complained that the authorities required them to undertake a lengthy and difficult procedure to obtain permission for such visits. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was permitted access to prisoners and detainees, as well as to all prison facilities.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, the Government did not always observe these prohibitions. The Constitution provides that citizens are subject to arrest, trial, and punishment for the defamation of heads of state or public officials and dissemination of "false or exaggerated information outside the country that attacks state dignity." Criminal laws generally required warrants; however, in most cases suspects may be detained for up to 48 hours in the absence of a warrant. Police obtained many warrants after making arrests.

Police forces fall under the leadership of the Director of the PSD, who in turn answers to the Minister of Interior. The Director has access to the King when the seriousness or urgency of a matter demands it. A total of 13 different offices form the basic structure of the PSD. Two of these offices include Preventative Security and the Office of Complaints and Human Rights. Each of the 12 provinces has a police department that also falls under the authority of the PSD Director. Security and Policing activities were effective.

The Preventative Security Office enforces strict rules regarding officer performance. Incidents of poor officer performance ultimately are reported to the PSD Director's Office (see Section 1.c.). Corruption within the PSD has not been an issue of significant debate, and there are mechanisms in place to investigate police abuses. Preventative Security actively investigates security issues, including police corruption. Following the initial investigation, Preventative Security forwards the findings to the Legal Affairs Office for further investigation and possible prosecution in Police Court. Citizens may file a complaint about police abuse or corruption to the Office of Complaints and Human Rights (see Section 4). The head of this office reports directly to the PSD Director. New officers in training receive special instruction on how to avoid corruption.

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

In cases involving state security, the security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained citizens. The authorities frequently held defendants in lengthy pretrial detention, did not provide defendants with the written charges against them, and did not allow defendants to meet with their lawyers until shortly before

trial. Defendants before the State Security Court usually met with their attorneys only 1 or 2 days before their trial. The Criminal Code prohibits pretrial detentions for certain categories of misdemeanors.

In the past, human rights activists reported that the Government detained hundreds of persons, including journalists (see Section 2.a.) and Islamists, for varying amounts of time for what appeared to be political reasons. In the past, human rights groups also reported that there were a smaller number of long-term political detainees.

Local governors had the authority to invoke the Preventing Crimes Law, which allowed them to place citizens under house arrest for up to 1 year without formally charging them (see Section 2.d.). House arrest may involve requiring persons to report daily to a local police station and the imposition of a curfew. Persons who violate the terms of their house arrest may be imprisoned for up to 14 days.

The Government used the threat of detention to intimidate journalists into practicing self-censorship (see Section 2.2).

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary was not independent in practice and remained subject to pressure and outside interference. The King appoints the Higher Judiciary Council, a committee that determines judicial appointments, advancement, and dismissal. There were numerous allegations in previous years, and some this year, that judges were "reassigned" temporarily to another court or judicial district to remove them from a particular proceeding. Despite constitutional prohibitions against such actions, judges complained of government monitoring of their telephones (see Section 1.f.).

The judicial system consists of civil, criminal, commercial, security, and religious courts. Most criminal cases are tried in civilian courts, which include the appeals courts, the Court of Cassation, and the Supreme Court. Cases involving sedition, armed insurrection, financial crimes, drug trafficking, and offenses against the Royal Family are tried in the State Security Court.

Shari'a (Islamic law) courts have jurisdiction over marriage and divorce among Muslims. Christian courts have jurisdiction over marriage and divorce cases among Christians, but apply Shari'a law in inheritance cases (see Section 5).

The law provides that all civilian court trials are open to the public unless the court determines otherwise. Defendants are entitled to legal counsel, may challenge witnesses, and have the right to appeal. Defendants facing the death penalty or life imprisonment must be represented by legal counsel. Public defenders are provided if the defendant is unable to hire legal counsel. Civil, criminal, and commercial courts accord equal weight to the testimony of men and women; however, in Shari'a court, the testimony of two women is equal to that of a man's in most circumstances (see Section 5).

The State Security Court consists of a panel of three judges, two military officers and one civilian. More than a dozen cases were tried or are ongoing in the State Security Court during the year. Most sessions are open to the public, though some are limited to the press. Defendants tried in the State Security Court often were held in pretrial detention without access to lawyers, although they were permitted regular visits by representatives of the ICRC. State Security Court judges inquired into allegations that defendants were tortured and allowed the testimony of physicians regarding such allegations (see Section 1.c.). The Court of Cassation ruled that the State Security Court may not issue a death sentence on the basis of a confession obtained as a result of torture. Defendants in the State Security Court have the right to appeal their sentences to the Court of Cassation, which is authorized to review issues of both fact and law, although defendants convicted of misdemeanors in the State Security Court have no right of appeal. Appeals are automatic for cases involving the death penalty.

The Press and Publications Law permits journalists to cover State Security Court proceedings unless the court rules otherwise. The press routinely reported on cases before the Court, including all cases heard during the year. Such reporting routinely covered defense arguments and any allegations of torture.

In the past, defense attorneys challenged the appointment of military judges to the State Security Court to try civilian cases as contrary to the concept of an independent judiciary. According to human rights activists, military judges appeared to have received adequate training in civil law and procedure.

There were no reports of political prisoners. A "prisoner" is a person deprived of liberty "pursuant to conviction for a crime." However, the Government detained, deprived of liberty from the time of arrest to conviction or release, persons for varying periods of time for political reasons (see Section 1.d.).

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

The Constitution prohibits such actions, and the Government generally respected these prohibitions in practice. The law requires that security forces obtain a warrant from the Prosecutor General or a judge before conducting searches or otherwise interfering with these rights; however, in security cases, at times in violation of the law, the authorities obtained warrants retroactively or obtained pre-approved warrants. Security officers officially monitored telephone conversations and Internet communication, read private correspondence, and engaged in surveillance of persons considered to pose a threat to the Government or national security. The law permits these practices if the Government obtains a court order. In the past, judges complained that their telephones were surveilled unlawfully (see Section 1.e.).

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

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

The Press and Publications Law and the Press Association Law imposed stringent restrictions on the operation of newspapers. The Government also intimidated journalists to encourage self-censorship. Citizens may be prosecuted for slandering the Royal Family, the Government, or foreign leaders, and for "sowing sedition." Citizens generally did not hesitate to criticize the Government openly, but exercised caution with regard to the King, the Royal Family, and the GID. The Press and Publications Law and the law governing the Jordan Press Association (JPA) require membership in the JPA for persons to be considered "legal" journalists or editors, thus potentially excluding dozens of practicing journalists from the profession. During the year, the Government selectively enforced this provision.

In May, the Government summoned Fahd Al-Rimawi for questioning, allegedly for writing an article critical of Saudi Arabia in his weekly newspaper, Al-Majd. Al-Rimawi was released and continued to write opinion pieces as the editor of Al-Majd.

In September, the Government detained and released 11 unlicensed preachers. The Government claimed that it acted to enforce a long-standing law requiring preachers, of all religions, to be licensed. Some human rights activists accused the Government of selectively enforcing this law in a way that restricts free speech.

In December, the Government detained overnight Ali Hattar, a member of the Jordan Engineers Association, and charged him with slandering the government in a public lecture. The case was moved from the penal court to the magistrate's court in Salt and was scheduled to reconvene in early 2005.

There were no developments in the alleged censorship of a political cartoon in November 2003 in the weekly newspaper Al-Wahda.

The Press and Publications Law provides the Government with limited ability to issue fines, transfers the power to withdraw licenses to the judiciary, limits significantly the Government's power to order shutdowns, allows journalists to cover court proceedings unless the court ruled otherwise, and requires publications to be licensed. The Law imposes strict limits on publications, which gave the Government broad leeway to impose sanctions. Journalists alleged that the Government uses informants and censors at printing presses to inform the Government if particularly objectionable material is slated for print in the news media.

The Penal Code restricts free speech and allows the prosecution of any person found to have written, published, or aired any statements that could be construed to harm or incite to harm or insult individuals or "the state's reputation and dignity." Imprisonment of 3 years is punishment for defamation of the King or Royal Family.

Journalists also may be prosecuted before the State Security Court for criminal and security violations. Although a substantial number of cases were dismissed before trial, some cases lingered in the courts for years. The Government routinely used detention and prosecution or the threat of prosecution to intimidate journalists into self-censorship (see Section 1.d.).

No incidents occurred during the year, but in February 2003, three journalists were charged with blasphemy and slandering the government. They received prison terms ranging from 2 to 6 months and returned to work after their release.

In 2001, the Government arrested seven members of the Anti-Normalization Committee, a group that opposes the country's relations with Israel, on charges of belonging to an illegal group (see Section 2.b.). The State Security Court also charged two of the seven with possession of explosives and with terrorist activities. All seven detainees were released on bail while awaiting trial. At year's end the trials had not yet begun.

The Press and Publications Department continued to enforce bans on the publication of a number of books within the country. Books were banned based on religious, moral, and political objections.

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

The law provides foreign media operations freedom of expression and the Government did not block the entry of foreign publications during the year.

Radio and television news broadcasts, more restricted than the print media, were liberalized slightly during the year. The Government created a new Audio Visual Licensing Authority, which regulated and licensed private radio and television broadcasts for the first time. The Government also licensed one new radio station and a satellite television broadcaster that had not begun transmission by year's end. Under commercial agreements with each entity, the Government re-broadcasts the regional programs of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the London-based Middle East Broadcasting Center, Radio Monte Carlo, and Radio Sawa. Jordan Television (JTV) reported only the Government's position on controversial matters. International satellite television and Israeli and Syrian television broadcasts were available and unrestricted.

The Government opened investigations attempting to determine who was responsible for Internet sites that allegedly libeled the King; however, no one was known to be prosecuted in such cases during the year. In the past, there were reports of government interference with Internet access, including several websites that appear to have been blocked. The Government allowed Internet news sites to operate in the country, including those presenting news critical of the Government.

The Government limited academic freedom. Some academics claimed that they received frequent threats of dismissal. During the year, sources in the academic community claimed that there was an ongoing intelligence presence in academic institutions.

During the year, Jordan University continued its policy of granting the president of the university the authority to appoint half of its 80-member student council, including the chair. The amendment was viewed widely as an effort to curb the influence of campus Islamists. Many students, including non-Islamists, continued to object to the university's decision.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly; however, the Government restricted this right. Citizens must obtain permits for public gatherings. The Government generally granted permits for protests it finds objectionable only after extensive negotiations with the organizers. The law requires the organizers of rallies and demonstrations request permission from provincial governors at least 3 days prior to any event. Under the law, no protest may be held without the governor's consent, and violators face imprisonment from 1 to 6 months and a fine not to exceed \$4,230 (3,000 dinars).

In some cases, the Government granted approval at the last moment, making it difficult for organizers to plan effective demonstrations.

On March 26, the Government detained protestors at the Al Wihdat refugee camp in the southern suburbs of Amman, claiming that the demonstration was not licensed. According to media reports, more than 60 persons were detained for burning the national flag and destroying property. Human rights activists claimed more than 200 demonstrators were detained. The demonstration began after Friday prayers in reaction to the death of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. The Government claimed it filed formal charges against some of the detainees while releasing those under 18. Member of Parliament Tayseer Al-Fitiani alleged that riot police beat him with clubs upon his arrival at the Al Wihdat police station after demonstrators had dispersed.

The Constitution provides for the right of association; however, the Government limited freedom of association by law. Several university students, mostly Islamists, were taken before academic disciplinary councils during the year for political activities unrelated to their studies and punished with dismissal or the inability to sit for exams. The Government required and routinely granted approval for nonpolitical conferences, workshops, and seminars.

The Government prohibits membership in an unlicensed political party and routinely licensed political parties and other associations. There were 30 licensed political parties. The Government may deny licenses to parties that it decides do not meet a list of political and other criteria contained in the Political Parties Law. The High Court of Justice may dissolve a party if it violates the Constitution or the Political Parties Law.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, provided that religious practices are consistent with "public order and morality"; however, the Government continued to impose some restrictions on freedom of religion. According to the Constitution, Islam is the state religion.

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

Persons enjoy freedom of belief, and there were no reports that the practice of any faith was prohibited. The Government does not officially recognize all religious groups. Some religious groups, while allowed to meet and practice their faith, complained of societal and/or official discrimination. In addition, not all Christian denominations have been accorded legal recognition as religions. The Prime Minister unofficially conferred with an interfaith council of bishops representing local churches on all matters relating to the Christian community, including the registration of new churches in the country. The Government used the following criteria when considering recognition of Christian churches as separate official religions: The faith does not contradict the nature of the Constitution, public ethics, customs, or traditions; the faith is recognized by the Middle East Council of Churches; the faith does not oppose the national religion; and the group includes some citizen followers.

The Government did not recognize the Druze or Baha'i faiths as religions but did not prohibit the practice of the faiths. Druze faced official discrimination but did not complain of social discrimination. Baha'is faced both official and social discrimination. The Government did not record the bearer's religion on national identity cards issued to Druze or Baha'is.

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

The Government did not interfere with public worship by the country's Christian minority.

The Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary (JETS), a Christian training school for pastors and missionaries, had not been accredited by year's end. As a result, students and faculty from the U.S. and elsewhere wishing to attend JETS still were unable to obtain student visas. JETS continued its operations with students studying on tourist visas and broke ground for a new building in August 2003.

Shari'a prohibits non-Muslims from proselytizing Muslims. Conversion to the Muslim faith by Christians was allowed; however, a Muslim may not convert to another religion. Muslims who convert to other faiths complained of social and government discrimination. Under Shari'a, converts are regarded as apostates and legally may be denied their property and other rights. However, in practice, this principle was not applied. According to the Government, it neither encouraged nor prohibited apostasy. Converts from and to Islam are considered Muslims under Shari'a law on matters of personal status. Shari'a prescribes the death penalty for Muslims who convert to another religion; however, there is no corresponding statute under national law, and such punishment never has been applied.

The Constitution provides that religious community trusts and matters of personal status fall within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Shari'a courts for Muslims, and separate non-Muslim tribunals for each religious community recognized by the Government. There is no civil marriage. The head of the department that manages Shari'a court affairs (a cabinet-level position) appoints Shari'a judges, while each recognized non-Muslim religious community selects the structure and members of its own tribunal. All judicial nominations are approved by the Prime Minister and commissioned officially by royal decree. The Protestant denominations registered as "societies" come under the jurisdiction of one of the recognized Protestant church tribunals. There are no tribunals assigned for atheists or adherents of unrecognized religions. These persons must request one of the recognized courts to hear their personal status cases.

On September 13, a convert from Islam to Christianity was arrested and held overnight for charges of apostasy. A Shari'a court issued a guilty verdict on November 23. At year's end, no written verdict had been issued or punitive action taken, and the accused reportedly had left Jordan with his family.

In 2002, the Shari'a and civil court systems adjudicated a child custody case and transferred legal custody of two minors who were raised as Christians from their Christian mother to her Muslim brother. At year's end, the children remained in her physical custody pending the result of a counter suit filed against the Muslim brother claiming disinterest in the children and misuse of the children's trust funds.

Men may divorce their spouses more easily than women; however, since 2001, Shari'a courts have granted over 500 divorces brought by women (see Section 5). The new lower house of parliament rejected the law

permitting this initiation by women in August 2003, but the upper house approved it. At year's end, Parliament has not taken final action and the law remained in effect.

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

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

In May 2003, a court sentenced poet Musa Hawamdeh to 3 months in prison on apostasy charges stemming from one of his controversial poems. In August 2003, the Court of Appeal reaffirmed the verdict. Hawamdeh maintained that he would make a final appeal to the Court of Cassation.

Government policy requires that foreign missionary groups refrain from public proselytizing "for the sake of their own personal safety from members of society that oppose such practices." The Government has taken action against some Christian proselytizers in response to the complaints of recognized Christian groups who charge that the activities of these missionaries "disrupt the cohesiveness and peace between religious groups in society."

Anti-Semitic editorial cartoons, articles and opinion pieces, usually the rhetoric of political columnists, were published in the newspapers "Al-Rai" and "Al-Dustur". They were not common, but they did occur without government response.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2004 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

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

The law provides for these rights; however, there are some restrictions. The law requires that all women obtain written permission from a male guardian to apply for a passport; however, women do not need a male relative's permission to renew their passports. In the past, there were several cases in which mothers reportedly were prevented from departing with their children because authorities enforced requests from fathers to prevent their children from leaving the country (see Section 5). The GID sometimes withheld passports from citizens on security grounds.

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

Persons with full citizenship receive passports that are valid for 5 years. Most Palestinians living in the country were citizens and received passports; however, the Government estimated that there are 150,000 Palestinian refugees who do not qualify for citizenship. They receive 3-year passports valid for travel but which do not connote citizenship. West Bank residents without other travel documentation are eligible to receive 5-year passports for travel only and do not connote citizenship.

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

Human rights activists reported that approximately 1,200 citizens of Palestinian origin remained outside the country, due to the Government's refusal to renew their passports at embassies overseas. The Government asserted that only non-resident Palestinians who seek to renew travel documents, which require proof of residence in the country, have been refused.

The Constitution prohibits forced exile and the Government did not use forced exile.

The Government has not established a system for providing protection to refugees; however it does not force the return of persons to a country where they fear persecution. The Government generally

cooperated with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in assisting refugees and asylum seekers. The Government respected the UNHCR's eligibility determinations regarding asylum seekers, including those who entered the country clandestinely and recognized the legal definition of a refugee as set forth in the U.N. Convention. In March 2003, the Government also signed a letter of understanding with UNHCR agreeing to provide protection against the forcible return of persons displaced by hostilities in Iraq requiring humanitarian assistance. UNHCR continued to train law enforcement officials and judges in international refugee law, including training for instructors from the National Center for Human Rights who conduct a course for entry-level government officials.

The Government generally provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the 1951 Convention/1967 Protocol. The Government generally recognized UNHCR's request that states continue to grant some temporary protection for all Iraqi asylum seekers, including new arrivals, rejected cases, and recognized refugees whose cases had been suspended by resettlement countries. However, UNHCR reported that a significant number of Iraqis were refused entry into the country during this period. It also reported that it had to intervene to prevent the deportation of persons issued UNHCR asylum seeker cards during the reporting period in several instances during the year.

The U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and the Government continued to provide assistance to 1.768 million Palestinian refugees during the year. Approximately 700,000 displaced persons from former Jordanian territories during the 1967 war have been granted nationality. An additional 120,000 displaced persons during the 1967 war hold temporary residency permits. There was public debate over the Government's extension of assistance to those refugees who do not hold Jordanian nationality during the year.

Prior to the war, the Government estimated that over 300,000 Iraqis resided in the country. Since 1991, thousands of Iraqis have applied for refugee status and received legal and material assistance from the UNHCR. In April 2003, the Government agreed to admit persons displaced by the hostilities in Iraq.

UNHCR received applications for refugee status determination from 6,004 Iraqis during the year. In addition to applications from Iraqis, UNHCR also received applications from 75 Sudanese, 31 Egyptians, 33 Syrians and 43 stateless persons. According to UNHCR figures, during the year, 12,616 persons were seeking asylum, another 1098 persons recognized as refugees were awaiting resettlement, and 78 Chechens were allowed to remain indefinitely pending repatriation. The Government provided protection at the UNHCR camp at Ruweished to approximately 323 Palestinian refugees who fled in Iraq in April 2003. The Government also continued to provide temporary protection to approximately 700 recognized refugees, mostly Iranian Kurds formerly resident in UNHCR's Al Tash camp in Iraq, in the UNHCR camp in the no-man's land between Iraqi and Jordanian border checkpoints at the Karamah-Trebil crossing. UNHCR assisted several hundred Ruweished and no-man's land residents to voluntarily repatriate to Iraq during the reporting period. It also continued to provide financial assistance to 387 Palestinians from Iraq who had been permitted to leave the Ruweished camp and enter the country proper per royal decree in August 2003.

The Government continued its policy of denying children of Iraqi asylum seekers admittance to school unless their families presented evidence that they had established legal residency in the country.

According to IOM statistics, between January 1 and December 1, the Government also granted protection to 170 third country nationals fleeing Iraq en route to Sudan, Bangladesh, Morocco, Somalia, Egypt, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, and Nigeria. An additional 64 Sudanese remained in the country awaiting third-country repatriation at year's end. The Government also facilitated the transit of approximately 1,200 Iraqis voluntarily returning to Iraq from third-countries, primarily from Europe. IOM verified that all repatriations to Iraq and to third-countries were voluntary.

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

Citizens do not have the right to change their government. Citizens may participate in the political system through their elected representatives in Parliament; however, the King has discretionary authority to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister, cabinet, and upper house of Parliament, to dissolve Parliament, and to establish public policy.

After being appointed by the King, a prime minister is required to submit his cabinet to a parliamentary vote of confidence, if there is a seated parliament. In practice, Parliament routinely granted its confidence, although not without substantive debate. In the most recent vote of confidence in December 2003, 85 of 110 deputies voted in support of the Government. Executive power is vested in the King (or, in his absence, in the Regent), who exercises his power through his ministers in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. June 2003 parliamentary elections generally were regarded as free and fair.

The Parliament is composed of a 55-member Senate appointed by the King, and a popularly elected 110-member Chamber of Deputies. The Constitution provides authority to the Parliament to initiate legislation

and to approve, reject, or amend legislation proposed by the cabinet. A group of 10 senators or deputies may submit draft bills for consideration; however, in practice legislation is initiated and drafted by the Cabinet of Ministers and submitted by the Government to Parliament for consideration.

In November 2003, the King appointed a new Senate, and reappointed Zeid Rifai as Senate President. Fourteen senators were carried over from the previous 40-member Senate. In line with tradition, the Senate contains a large number of former government officials, including 24 former ministers and 4 former prime ministers. The number of female members increased from three to seven, while the number of senators of Palestinian origin decreased from nine to seven (see Section 5).

The law allows voters to choose one candidate in multiple-seat districts. In the largely tribal society, citizens tended to cast their vote for family members. Observers believed that the law continues to give greater proportional representation to electorates in the rural and southern part of the country, as well as in regions with populations known for their traditional, pro-Hashemite views, resulting in significant underrepresentation of urban areas. In practice, the chances of non-tribal candidates, to be elected were limited.

The 2001 election law increased the number of electoral districts by redrawing district boundaries and redistributing seats among districts, required verification of polling results by members of the judiciary, and lowered the voting age to 18 years. A February 2003 amendment included a six-seat quota for women in the House of Deputies. Citizens may freely nominate themselves and register as candidates as long as they do not have a criminal history.

The King proposes and dismisses extraordinary sessions of Parliament, and may postpone regular sessions for up to 60 days. If the Government amends or enacts a law when Parliament is not in session, it must submit the law to Parliament for consideration during the next session; however, such "provisional" laws do not expire and, while technically subject to action by Parliament when it returns to session, may in practice remain in force without legislative approval.

The country is divided into 99 municipalities for purposes of local governance. A 2002 provisional law gives the King the power to appoint all mayors and half the municipal councils. Opponents of these measures claimed that the consolidations were an attempt to undermine the strength of Islamist parties in local Government, and that they would weaken the democratic process at the municipal level by reducing the number of locally elected officials. The Islamic Action Front (IAF) sought to enjoin the Government from making the consolidations, but the courts held that the IAF had no standing to initiate action against the consolidation.

The June 2003 municipal elections were regarded as generally free and fair; however, some losing candidates claimed that voter fraud was a problem. The IAF boycotted the elections in all districts outside of greater Amman to protest the provisional law on appointing municipal officials.

Women have the right to vote, and women's groups encouraged women to vote and to be active in the political process. There were four female ministers. In the Parliament there were seven female senators, up from three in the previous Senate, and six female members of the Chamber of Deputies, up from one in the previous Chamber.

Of the 110 seats in the lower house, 9 are reserved for Christians, 9 for Bedouins, and 3 for either the Circassian or Chechen ethnic minorities.

The Palestinian community, estimated at more than half of the total citizen population, contributed 7 of 21 ministers. In the Parliament, 7 of 55 senators and 17 of 110 lower house deputies were of Palestinian origin. There were no Palestinians in any of the 12 governorships throughout the country. The electoral system gives greater representation to areas that have a majority of inhabitants of non-Palestinian origin.

Allegations of corruption were leveled against the executive and legislative branches. Parliamentary debate focused on corruption when the Government proposed transparency laws requiring financial disclosure for Government officials. At years end, the proposed transparency laws still were being debated in Parliament.

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

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

The local chapter of the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR) and the Jordanian Human Rights Organization (JHRO) continued to operate with the permission of the Government. In 2002, the Ministry of Interior dissolved the Jordanian Society for Citizens' Rights (JSCR), one of the few human rights groups not affiliated with any political movements or the Government. The Government reported that it closed the JSCR because of legal infractions and internal disputes related to finances. However, the JCSR claimed the closure was for political reasons, including the JCSR's reporting of Palestinian citizens losing their passports as a result of the 1988 disengagement laws. On July 25 the Society applied for registration with the Ministry of Interior under the new name of the Jordan Organization for Citizen Rights (JOCR). The Ministry of Interior officially denied the application on October 11.

The National Center for Human Rights, a quasi-governmental body with educational, protective, and reporting responsibilities, began operations in June 2003. Its activities included training government and international organization personnel on human rights standards and conditions in the country and collection and analysis of citizens' complaints. The Government cooperated with and funded the center; some human rights activists complained that it was too influenced by the Government.

In March 2003, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs created a Human Rights Directorate, focused on ensuring government compliance with international agreements and cooperation with international organizations.

In May 2003, the PSD opened human rights complaints offices at each of its regional directorates. Persons charging police misconduct may submit complaints to the relevant office, and the Government reported that cases backed by sufficient evidence can result in police officers being tried under the Public Security Law. Plaintiffs may file compensation claims for damages, and convicted officers reportedly also are subject to disciplinary action. Citizens filed 285 complaints in 2003, of which 80 were found to be valid and resulted in either court trials or disciplinary measures for the officers involved.

The Government directed the Parliamentary Public Freedoms Committee and the Human Rights Office at the Prime Ministry.

The Government generally cooperated with international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but human rights observers claimed that some security detainees were held incommunicado. The ICRC was permitted full access to detainees and prisoners, including those held by the GID and the military intelligence directorate (see Section 1.c.).

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law does not distinguish between citizens on the basis of race; however, women and some minorities were treated differently under the law and faced discrimination in employment, housing, and other areas. Some private political groups such as the Anti-Normalization Committee, which is opposed to ties with Israel, acted through various professional organizations to restrict the freedoms of individuals who have had dealings with Israel. The Government opposed the activities of the Committee.

Women

Violence against women was common; however, reported incidents of violence against women did not reflect the full extent of the problem. Medical experts acknowledged that spousal abuse occurred frequently. However, cultural norms discouraged victims from seeking medical or legal help, thus making it difficult to assess the extent of such abuse.

Abused women have the right to file a complaint in court against their spouses for physical abuse; however, in practice, familial and societal pressures discouraged them from seeking legal remedies. Marital rape is not illegal. NGOs such as the Jordanian Women's Union, which had a telephone hotline for victims of domestic violence, provided assistance in such matters. Wife-battering technically was grounds for divorce, but a husband may seek to demonstrate that he has authority from the Koran to correct a perceived irreligious or disobedient wife by striking her.

The Criminal Code provides for leniency for a person found guilty of committing an "honor crime," a violent assault with intent to kill against a female by a relative for her perceived immodest behavior or alleged sexual misconduct. Law enforcement treatment of men accused of honor crimes reflected widespread unwillingness to recognize the abuse involved or to take action against the problem. During the year, 18 honor crimes committed against women were reported. In 2003, 15 cases were reported. The actual number of honor crimes was most likely higher. Human rights observers believed that more killings occurred but were not documented as honor crimes. According to women's rights activists, there was some evidence of a societal trend toward condemnation of honor crimes. The police regularly imprisoned women who were potential victims of honor crimes for their own protection. Activists estimated that more than 25 women were detained in such "protective" custody.

The penal code provides that a "crime of honor" defense may be invoked by a defendant accused of a killing who "surprises his wife or any close female relative" in an act of adultery or fornication, and the perpetrator of the honor crime is judged not guilty of a killing. Although few defendants are able to meet the stringent requirements for a crime of honor defense (the defendant personally must have witnessed the female victim engaging in sexual relations), most avoided trial for the crime of a killing, and were tried instead on the charge of manslaughter. Even those convicted of murder rarely spent more than 2 years in prison. In contrast to honor crimes, the maximum penalty for first-degree murder is death, and the maximum penalty for second-degree murder is 15 years. Such defenses also commonly relied on the male relative having acted in the "heat of passion" upon hearing of a female relative's alleged transgression, usually without any investigation on the part of the assailant to determine the veracity of the allegation before committing the assault. Defenses in such cases fall under Article 98 of the Penal Code. A provisional law amended Article 340 to apply equally to men and women; however, this legal change did not affect substantially the sentencing of perpetrators of honor crimes, as no defendant in an honor crime invoked Article 340 during the year. Most activists believed that even if Article 340 were repealed, honor crimes likely would persist, with sentences continuing to be reduced under Article 98. In July, the Ministry of Justice submitted draft legislation to the cabinet increasing the minimum punishment for all killings, regardless of motivation, to 5 years. No further action has been taken by year's end.

Some instances of honor killings included a 36-year-old man who killed his 25-year-old cousin as she was recovering in a hospital after a Caesarean delivery on June 2. The victim became pregnant with the child of a married man. Two other male cousins of the victim accompanied the man as he shot her six times. A nurse and the newly born baby were both in the room during the shooting. All three cousins turned themselves in the same day and remained in custody pending their trial.

In another case, on July 1, a younger brother stabbed his 26-year-old sister to death. The brother turned himself in to the authorities shortly after the killing claiming family honor motivated his actions. The victim had been released from protective custody the day before after her family signed a guarantee that they would not harm their daughter. The victim had become pregnant out of wedlock almost a year earlier. The brother remained in custody pending his trial.

In July 2003, police arrested an 18-year-old boy for shooting his 16-year-old sister after her father secured her release by guaranteeing her safety. The case had not gone to trial at year's end.

In September 2003, three brothers were arrested for hacking their two sisters to death with an axe. The older sister married without her family's consent, and the younger victim was living with her sister at the time. According to press reports, in their confession the brothers stated that they acted to "cleanse the family's honor." In November, the courts sentenced two of the brothers to death and then reduced the sentence to 10 years imprisonment. The third brother was cleared of all charges.

In contrast with 2003, there were no reports during the year that female genital mutilation (FGM) was practiced.

According to the law, sexual harassment is strictly prohibited and subject to criminal penalties including fines and imprisonment. Sexual harassment, assault, and unwelcome advances of a sexual nature against women did not appear to be widespread problems.

Women experienced legal discrimination in matters of pension and social security benefits, inheritance, divorce, ability to travel, child custody, citizenship, and the value of their Shari'a court testimony in certain limited circumstances (see Section 1.e.). The Government provided men with more generous social security benefits than women. The Government continued pension payments of deceased male civil servants but discontinued payments of deceased female civil servants to their heirs. Laws and regulations governing health insurance for civil servants do not permit women to extend their health insurance coverage to dependents or spouses. However, divorced and widowed women may extend coverage to their children.

Under Shari'a as applied in the country, female heirs receive half the amount that male heirs receive, and non-Muslim widows of Muslim spouses have no inheritance rights. A sole female heir receives half of her parents' estate; the balance goes to designated male relatives. A sole male heir inherits both of his parents' property. Male Muslim heirs have the duty to provide for all family members who need assistance. Men are able to divorce their spouses more easily than women, although a provisional law introduced in 2002, which was under debate in Parliament, adds to the circumstances under which a woman may file for divorce (see Section 2.c.). At year's end, the issue remained under consideration with the Upper House after the Lower House rejected the law for a second time in June, but the provisional law remained in effect. Special courts for each denomination adjudicated marriage and divorce matters for Christians (see Section 2.c.). There were 19 female judges in the country, up from 11 in 2002.

The law requires a married woman to obtain her husband's permission to obtain, but not to renew, a passport (see Section 2.d.). Married women do not have the legal right to transmit citizenship to their children. Furthermore, women may not petition for citizenship for their non-citizen husbands. The husbands

themselves must apply for citizenship after fulfilling a requirement of 15 years of continuous residence. Once the husbands have obtained citizenship, they may apply to transmit the citizenship to their children. However, in practice, such an application may take years and, in many cases, citizenship still may be denied to the husband and children. Such children become stateless and, if they do not hold legal residency, lack the rights of citizen children, such as the right to attend school or seek other government services.

Civil law grants women equal pay for equal work; however, in practice, this law sometimes was ignored. During the year, press and union leaders reported that a small number of employers in the private sector paid their female employees less than the legal minimum wage, despite the fact that the women were under contract, and that wage disparity increased with salary.

Social pressures discouraged many women from pursuing professional careers. Nonetheless, women had employment opportunities in many professions, including government, engineering, medicine, education, the military, and law. Women's groups stressed that the problem of discrimination was not only one of law, but also of women's lack of awareness of their rights or unwillingness to assert those rights. The Business and Professional Women's Club held seminars on women's rights and assisted women in establishing small businesses. The chapter was also one of the organizations providing programs for potential female voters and candidates leading up to the parliamentary elections. Members of the Royal Family worked actively to improve the status of women. The Jordanian National Commission for Women organized a series of conferences to develop a strategy to increase women's role in the country's political development.

Children

The Government is committed to children's rights and welfare in the areas of education and health; however, government efforts in these areas were constrained by limited financial resources. Education is compulsory until the age of 16; however, no legislation exists to enforce the law or punish guardians for violating it, and absence of children from school is without penalty. The overall school attendance and total secondary school attendance rates remained at 92 percent. Several domestic and foreign religious groups operated private schools throughout the country. Since the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year, the Government denied Iraqi children admittance to public school unless they were legal residents of the country or recognized as refugees by the UNHCR (see Section 2.d.).

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

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

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

The National Team for Family Protection (NTFP) coordinated all issues concerning family safety. The Government-funded "Dar al Amman," the nation's first child protection center, provided temporary shelter, medical care, and rehabilitation for children age 6 to 12 who have suffered abuse.

Although the problem was difficult to quantify, social and health workers believed that there was a significant incidence of child abuse in families, and that the incidence of child sexual abuse was significantly higher than reported. The law specifies punishment for abuses against children. Rape or sodomy of a child under 15 years of age carries the death penalty.

The Family Protection Unit of the PSD worked with victims and perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence. The Unit dealt primarily with child and spousal abuse, providing multiple in-house services, including medical treatment for patients. The Unit cooperated with police to apprehend perpetrators of domestic violence, facilitated participation in education and rehabilitation programs, and referred patients to other facilities.

Illegitimate children are entitled to the same rights under the law as legitimate children; however, in practice, they suffered severe discrimination in a society that does not tolerate adultery or premarital sex. Most illegitimate children become wards of the State or lived a meager existence on the fringes of society. In either case, their prospects for marriage and gainful employment were limited. Furthermore, illegitimate children who were not acknowledged legally by their fathers were considered stateless and were not given passports or identity numbers.

The Government attempted to safeguard some other children's rights, especially regarding child labor (see Section 6.d.). Although the law prohibits most children under the age of 16 from working, child vendors worked on the streets of Amman. The Ministry of Social Development has a committee to address the problem and, in some cases, removed the children from the streets, returned them to their families or to juvenile centers, and provided the families with a monthly stipend; however, the children often returned to the streets. Economic conditions and social disruption have caused the number of these children to increase over the last 10 years. Child vendors sold newspapers, tissues, small food items, or gum, and other children who picked through trash dumpsters to find recyclable cans to sell, sometimes were the sole source of income for their families.

Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits trafficking in children; however, it does not specifically prohibit trafficking in other persons. Other criminal statutes prohibit slavery and indentured servitude. There were no confirmed reports that persons were trafficked to, from, or within the country. To reduce the potential for abuse of foreign domestic workers (FDWs), the Government adopted new and stricter procedures that regulate the importation of such labor (see Section 6.e.). While these changes improved the legal framework to protect FDWs, lack of awareness among employers and employees remained a problem. The Government has undertaken a cooperative program with UNIFEM to raise the awareness of FDWs on the new protections afforded them.

The Government did not formally assign anti-trafficking duties to a specific body, nor did it have a national action plan, and it was limited financially in its ability to carry out trafficking related programs. However, a number of programs helped combat trafficking in women and children, such as a Ministry of Social Development program to rehabilitate street children and Ministry of Labor vocational training programs for young rural women.

The interagency Family Protection Department (FPD) offered assistance to all victims of abuse, as well as FDWs, including medical exams, consular notification, and access to counseling. The Government did not provide training on how to assist victims of trafficking; however, the FPD raised the profile of abuse within the country and its personnel became increasingly adept at handling this crime.

Persons with Disabilities

There was no discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or in the provision of other state services. The law mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities, and the Government generally enforced these provisions in practice. High unemployment restricts job opportunities for persons with disabilities, who numbered 220,000. Thirteen percent of citizens with disabilities received monetary assistance from the Government. The Government passed legislation in 1993, reinforced in 2000, requiring future public buildings to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities and to retrofit existing public buildings; however, implementation has been slow.

The law requires that 2 percent of available public sector jobs be reserved for persons with physical disabilities. Private organizations and members of the Royal Family actively promoted programs to protect and advance the interests of persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Palestinians residing in the country suffered discrimination in appointments to positions in the Government and the military, in admittance to public universities, and in the granting of university scholarships. The Government granted citizenship to all Palestinians who fled to the country in the period after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, and to a large number of refugees and displaced persons who arrived as a result of the 1967 war. However, most refugees who fled Gaza after 1967 were not entitled to citizenship and were issued 3-year passports valid for travel only. In 1995, then-King Hussein announced that West Bank residents without other travel documentation would be eligible to receive 5-year passports. However, the Government emphasized that these passports are for travel only and do not connote citizenship (see Section 2.d.).

Indigenous People

The country's indigenous people, nomadic Bedouin and East Bank town-dwellers, traditionally have been the backbone of popular support for the Hashemite monarchy and dominated in senior military, security, civil service positions, and in the Parliament. Nevertheless, many Bedouin in rural areas were disadvantaged economically.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

Workers in the private sector, in some state-owned companies, and in certain professions in the public sector have the right to form and join unions without excessive requirements and did so in practice. Unions must be registered to be legal. Union by-laws limit membership to citizens, effectively excluding the country's more than 125,000 registered foreign workers. However, some unions represented the interests of foreign workers informally. More than 30 percent of the work force was organized into 17 unions. Unions are required by the Government to be members of the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU), the sole trade union federation. The Government subsidizes and audits the GFJTU's salaries and activities. Union officials are elected by secret ballot to 4-year terms. The Government cosponsors and approves the timing of these elections and monitors them to ensure compliance with the law. Union leaders complained about the requirement for government oversight of their elections.

The Constitution prohibits anti-union discrimination, but the ICFTU claimed that the Government did not protect adequately employees from anti-union discrimination. Workers may lodge complaints of anti-union discrimination with the Ministry of Labor, which is authorized to order the reinstatement of employees discharged for union activities. There were no complaints of anti-union discrimination lodged with the Ministry of Labor during the year.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Unions have and exercise the right to bargain collectively. Labor laws mandate that workers must obtain Government permission to strike. Unions generally did not seek approval for a strike, but workers used the threat of a strike as a negotiating tactic. Strikes are prohibited if a labor dispute is under mediation or arbitration. If a settlement is not reached through mediation, the Ministry of Labor may refer the dispute to an industrial tribunal with agreement of both parties.

The tribunal is an independent arbitration panel of judges appointed by the Ministry of Labor. The decisions of the panel are legally binding. If only one party agrees, the Ministry of Labor refers the dispute to the Council of Ministers and then to Parliament. Labor law prohibits employers from dismissing a worker during a labor dispute. There are no special laws or exemptions from regular labor laws in export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The Constitution prohibits forced or compulsory labor, except in a state of emergency such as war or natural disaster. It generally was not practiced. Some foreign domestic servants, almost exclusively female, were subject to coercion and abuse and, in some cases, worked under conditions that amounted to forced labor (see Section 6.e.). The law does not prohibit specifically forced or compulsory labor by children; however, such practices were not known to occur.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

Child labor is not a major problem, and the worst forms of child labor are virtually nonexistent. Labor law forbids children under the age of 16 from being employed, except as apprentices; however, there were reports of child labor. Children under the age of 18 may not work for more than 6 hours continuously between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m., or during weekends, religious celebrations, or national holidays. Provisions in the labor laws do not extend to children in the informal sector, which consists of agriculture, domestic labor, and small family businesses.

The law provides that employers who hire a child under the age of 16 must pay a fine ranging from \$140 to \$710 (100 to 500 dinars). The fine is doubled if the offense is repeated. The Government, however, provided little training on child labor to the 72 Ministry of Labor inspectors responsible for enforcing the relevant laws. When investigating child labor, inspectors generally acted to ameliorate the situation of the involved families when appropriate, including directing some adult family members toward job training programs. In the past, some government officials claimed that if children were barred from working, they would lose important income on which their families depend, and might turn to more serious activities, such as drug trafficking and prostitution, for income.

The Ministry of Labor's Child Labor Unit receives, investigates, and addresses child labor complaints (although it has no formal mechanism for doing so) and coordinates government action regarding child labor. Anecdotal evidence suggested that child labor, especially of street vendors, was more prevalent during the year than it was 10 years ago.

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

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

In January 2003, the Government increased the national minimum wage by 6.25 percent from \$113 (80 dinars) to \$121 (85 dinars) per month. The minimum wage applies to all workers except domestic servants, those working in small family businesses, and those in the agricultural sector. Inspectors from the Ministry of Labor enforced the minimum wage, but due to limited resources were unable to ensure 100 percent compliance. Although the increase exceeded the 2002 1.8 percent cost of living increase, the national minimum wage did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The Government estimated that the poverty level was at a monthly wage of approximately \$47 (33 dinars) per month per capita.

The law requires overtime pay for hours worked in excess of the standard workweek, which generally is 48 hours. Workers may not work more than 10 hours in any continuous period or more than 60 hours of overtime per month. Employees are entitled to 1 day off per week. Labor law does not apply to small family businesses, domestic servants, and non-professional and non-technical workers in the agriculture sector. However, it does apply to citizens and noncitizen workers in other sectors. There is a separate civil service law. The law specifies a number of health and safety requirements for workers, which the Ministry of Labor is authorized to enforce. The law requires employers to report industrial accidents to the Ministry of Labor within 48 hours. Although employers are not required to report occupational diseases to the Ministry of Labor, the law stipulates that if the medical authority determines that a worker suffers an occupational disease as a result of his work, the employer is liable for compensation. The Ministry of Labor mediates disputed amounts of compensation in cases of occupational disease. Workers do not have a statutory right to remove themselves from hazardous conditions without risking the loss of their jobs.

According to the Ministry of Labor, there were approximately 143,000 registered non-citizen workers in the country. The majority of these were engaged in low-wage, low-skill activities in the agriculture, construction, and industrial sectors. According to the Government, 13,000 of these workers were employed in the Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs). Foreign workers in the QIZs were recruited through a vetted process involving registered recruitment agencies. The embassies for a number of the major source countries of this labor sent officers to the QIZ factories to track labor conditions.

Domestic servants have no legal redress for labor grievances and cannot sue in court for nonpayment of wages. Abuse of domestic servants, most of whom were foreign and many of whom were working without legal status in the country, was widespread. Imprisonment of maids occurred, and illegal confiscation of travel documents by employers was common. Victims, who feared losing their employment and being returned to their home country, generally did not report complaints to government officials. In 2003, the Ministry of Labor instituted a number of new requirements for employment agencies that provide Ministry oversight of FDWs' recruitment and employment. The Ministry actively closed down unlicensed recruiting agencies, but the lack of awareness among FDWs of their legal protections remained an impediment that the Ministry worked to address. In cooperation with the U.N. Development Fund for Women and several source country embassies, the Government also introduced a new standard work contract with greater protections that applied to all newly arriving FDWs since July 2003.