

About the U.S. Department of State

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: torture or cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment by government authorities; arbitrary arrest and detention; political prisoners or detainees; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including harassment and intimidation of journalists, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, censorship, and enforcement of and threat to enforce criminal libel laws; serious restrictions on internet freedom; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on the organization, funding, or operation of nongovernmental organizations and civil society organizations; inability of citizens to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections; extensive gender-based violence, including but not limited to domestic or intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and other harmful practices; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex persons; and significant restrictions on workers' freedom of association, including threats against labor activists.

The government took some steps to investigate, prosecute, and punish officials who committed human rights abuses; however, government impunity for such abuses remained widespread.

Section 1.

Respect for the Integrity of the Person ✓

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings, during the year. There were developments regarding a custodial death case from 2022.

Authorities continued to pursue accountability for the September 2022 death in custody of Zaid Dabash, whom family members and many commentators alleged Public Security Directorate (PSD) officers tortured to death in Marka Prison. The quasi-governmental watchdog National Center for Human Rights (NCHR) stated it conducted its assessment of the case unhindered and had access to medical and forensic reports. At year's end, a case against eight PSD officers charged with crimes related to torture and physical abuse that resulted in Dabash's death remained before the police courts.

Police officers were often tried in separate police courts when facing either criminal penalties or administrative punishment. NCHR and NGOs called for police officers accused of violations of human rights to be tried in independent civil courts instead of police courts, which fell under the Ministry of Interior and which many NGOs considered less independent. NGOs frequently complained they could not access information on the results of police disciplinary cases.

b. Disappearance

There were no known reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

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

The constitution prohibited torture, including psychological harm amounting to torture, by public officials, and the penal code provided penalties up to three years' imprisonment for its use, with a penalty of up to 15 years if serious injury occurs. There were credible reports by international and local NGOs that government officials employed torture and other mistreatment in police and security service detention centers. Human rights lawyers found the penal code ambiguous and supported legal reforms to define "torture" more clearly and strengthen sentencing guidelines. In a June statement, NCHR called for more substantial penalties for torture and recommended special investigators be designated to probe allegations of torture. The government asserted that all reported allegations of abuse in custody were thoroughly investigated, but human rights NGOs questioned the impartiality and comprehensive nature of these investigations because they took place in the police court system. Officials tried for torture and mistreatment were most often convicted of excessive use of force rather than torture.

The PSD Human Rights and Transparency Office reported receiving 160 complaints with "allegations of harm" (a lesser charge than torture that did not require proof of intent) against officers for the 12-month period ending in September; 11 of these complaints remained ongoing in courts until year's end. As of September, 33 resulted in a conviction, and 116 were dismissed due to insufficient evidence. Most alleged abuses occurred in pretrial detention. For the same period, the Human Rights and Transparency Office reported receiving 28 allegations of mistreatment in prisons and rehabilitation centers. As of September, six of those cases resulted in a conviction, and 22 were dismissed due to insufficient evidence.

According to an NGO, male guardians occasionally requested virginity testing for female relatives detained by authorities for being "absent from the home." The Jordanian Medical Association prohibited its members from performing virginity testing on a woman without her consent, but women and girls reportedly often felt pressured to undergo the test to avoid attracting suspicion from family members. NGOs urged authorities to ban the use of virginity testing requests, arguing these tests violated women's rights and were a form of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Conditions in the country's 17 prisons varied. Some facilities had poor conditions like overcrowding and limited healthcare while newer prisons met international standards. Authorities held foreigners without legal employment or residency permits in the same facilities as citizens.

Abusive Physical Conditions: International NGOs and legal aid organizations identified problems including overcrowding, limited health care, inadequate legal assistance for inmates, and limited social care for inmates and their families.

The PSD had responsibility for managing detention facilities and the mandate to promote compliance with detention policies and used electronic records to log every case and detainee in all detention centers.

Officials reported overcrowding at some prisons, especially those in and around Amman. According to the Ministry of Interior, 10,768 inmates were released in the year ending September 30 to ease overcrowding. Across the country, prisons remained at approximately 170 percent capacity as of September.

According to the PSD, authorities designated some facilities to hold only pretrial detainees. The General Intelligence Directorate (GID) held some persons detained on national security charges in a separate detention facility. Detainees in several detention facilities complained of solitary confinement, isolation, and prolonged pretrial detentions. Local NGOs received reports of torture and other mistreatment and abuse in government detention facilities.

Although basic medical care was available in all correctional facilities, medical staff complained of a lack of adequate medical equipment, supplies, and staff throughout the correctional system.

Conditions in women's prisons were generally better than conditions in most men's prisons, but women's prisons still faced problems such as overcrowding. The Juweideh detention center was at 145 percent capacity as of September, according to the PSD. Women detainees had appropriate access to food, potable water, sanitation, heating, ventilation, lighting, and medical care. Prison authorities maintained and generally enforced set hours for indoor and outdoor breaks, chores, library visits, and vocational training.

Some police stations had separate holding areas for juvenile detainees, and authorities generally detained juveniles in specialized juvenile facilities supervised by the Ministry of Social Development.

Administration: The Ministry of Justice exercised oversight regarding the condition of detainees and was authorized to conduct investigations into allegations of human rights abuses. The ministry did not report receiving any complaints regarding mistreatment. As of September 30, the PSD Human Rights and Transparency Office made 747 visits to detention centers accompanied by observers from both local and international organizations. In some cases, authorities severely restricted detainees' access to visitors.

Authorities sometimes did not inform families regarding the whereabouts of detainees or delayed that notification between 24 hours and several days. Although the PSD had a system of electronic recordkeeping to address this problem, NGOs reported families did not always know the whereabouts of their detained family members. NGOs reported some instances of authorities denying or restricting contact with and visitations by family members.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted some local and international human rights observers and lawyers to visit prisons and conduct private interviews. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had wide access to visit prisoners and detainees in all prisons, including the facility operated by the GID. Karamah (a team of government officials and NGOs) and the NCHR also monitored prison conditions. The NCHR conducted approximately 99 prison visits during the year, including unscheduled visits to the GID facility. The ICRC made 57 scheduled visits to correctional facilities, and members of parliament conducted six scheduled visits. Authorities approved some requests by local human rights observers to conduct announced monitoring visits independently of Karamah and the NCHR.

Improvements: The PSD reported creating new courtrooms and performing renovations in several prison facilities to improve sanitary facilities, medical clinics, access to water, ventilation, and heating systems, and equipped facilities with fire safety equipment, outdoor lighting systems, and small-scale supermarkets for detainees. The PSD also established new accommodations for persons with disabilities, including upgraded healthcare facilities and units separated from the general population.

The PSD opened new pharmacies in Aqaba and Mowaqqar correctional facilities. The PSD also established medical labs in men's and women's facilities in Sowaqa, and authorities transitioned medical files to the electronic "*Hakim*" medical platform for ease of tracking.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court; however, the government did not always observe these prohibitions.

Citizens and NGOs alleged the government used administrative detention for what appeared to be political reasons.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law provided a person in custody the right to appear promptly before a judge or other judicial officer for a determination of the legality of the detention. The law allowed authorities to detain suspects for up to 24 hours without a warrant in all cases. It required that police notify judicial authorities within 24 hours of an arrest and that authorities file formal charges within 15 days of an arrest. Authorities could extend the period to file formal charges for a maximum of six months for a felony and two months for a misdemeanor. According to local NGOs, prosecutors routinely requested extensions, which judges granted. The State Security Court (SSC), which handled sensitive national security cases and consisted of military and civilian judges appointed by the prime minister, could authorize the Judicial Police (part of the PSD) to arrest and keep persons in custody for seven days prior to notification of detention while conducting criminal investigations. This authority included arrests for alleged misdemeanors. NGOs alleged that authorities arbitrarily transferred suspects to the SSC to extend to seven days the legal detention time prior to notification. NGOs also alleged that authorities transferred suspects from one police station to another to extend the investigation period. The Ministry of Justice operated an electronic notification system for judicial action to help lawyers remain up to date on their cases and reduce the length of pretrial detention.

The penal code allowed bail, and authorities used it in some cases. In many instances the accused remained in detention without bail during legal proceedings. Judicial regulations exempted persons from pretrial detention if they had no criminal record and the crime was not a felony. The government generally respected these exemptions. Authorities, however, often replaced pretrial detentions with administrative detentions. Many detainees reported not having timely access to a lawyer of their choice, despite the law's provision for access to legal counsel upon referral to public prosecutors. Courts appointed lawyers to represent indigent defendants charged with felonies carrying possible life sentences (often interpreted by the judiciary as 20 years) or the death penalty, although for lesser crimes legal aid services remained minimal.

At times authorities held suspects incommunicado for up to one week or placed them under house arrest. Several human rights activists alleged that authorities held arrestees incommunicado to hide evidence of physical abuse by security forces. Courts did not always offer adequate interpreter services for defendants who did not speak Arabic.

Arbitrary Arrest: The law required that authorities inform individuals of the charges against them upon arrest. In cases purportedly involving state security, however, security forces at times arrested and detained individuals without informing them of the charges and either did not allow defendants to meet with their lawyers or did not permit meetings until shortly before trial.

Security services detained political activists for shouting slogans critical of authorities during protests. According to the NGO Democracy for the Arab World Now, authorities allegedly arrested some activists arbitrarily and held them without charge, and charged others with insulting the king, undermining the political regime, or slander. Most detentions lasted for days, but some lasted months. Several detainees held hunger strikes during the year to protest their arrest and arbitrary detention.

Security services reportedly arbitrarily arrested, intimidated, and harassed lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) individuals.

NGOs also reported cases of arbitrary administrative detention during the year and alleged that officials used administrative detention to hold subjects who had previously been released on judicial bail. The law empowered provincial governors to detain individuals administratively at their own discretion without charge or trial for investigation purposes or to protect the individual. Governors also could set bail amounts. Provincial authorities reportedly held some individuals in administrative detention or under house arrest without due process and often despite a finding of not guilty in legal proceedings. According to NGOs, some governors abused their detention power to bypass the criminal justice system, intimidate political activists and individuals, imprison individuals without sufficient evidence, prolong the detentions of prisoners whose sentences had been completed, or set excessive bail.

According to the Ministry of Interior, during the year approximately 37,000 persons served in administrative detention without charge or trial.

According to local and international NGOs, authorities routinely engaged in involuntary “protective” detention of women (a type of informal detention without trial) to deal with cases including sex outside of marriage, “absence from home,” or being the target of sexual violence, all of which could put women at risk of so-called honor crimes. NGOs reported that a few women were detained administratively at Juweideh Prison for absence from home without permission of a male guardian, or for having sex outside of marriage. During the year ending in September, 2,687 women were detained administratively. Some detained women told a local NGO that self-defense from domestic violence or economic exploitation led to their detention. Most detained women were held for several weeks due to the requirement that a family member provide a guarantee to protect them from attack prior to their release.

Government authorities referred women at risk of gender-based violence and so-called honor crimes to the Ministry of Social Development shelter. The women at risk could choose to stay at or leave the shelter after being briefed on the risks of gender-based violence and “honor crimes” and offered comprehensive services by the shelter’s management. For most women who chose to leave the shelter, local NGOs offered alternative solutions to avoid further risks of harm or detention.

According to the Ministry of Social Development, approximately 129 women had voluntarily transferred to its shelter during the year ending September 30, with an average stay of five to six months.

Local NGOs stated officials detained some foreign laborers, and those whose employers did not secure their release were held for working without authorization, being absent from their authorized workplace, or lacking proper residency permits. Most foreign workers were exempted from paying fines for overstaying their visas and subsequently repatriated if they chose to return to their home country, while others who chose to stay in the country found sponsors who paid part of the nonexempted fines. According to the Ministry of Interior, as of October, 6,617 foreigners were administratively detained, an increase of almost five times over the previous year.

Pretrial Detention: The law criminalized detaining any person for more than 24 hours without a prosecutor’s authorization, although rights activists said authorities routinely ignored this limit and that impunity was very common. Governors issued thousands of administrative detention orders for up to a year without charges, trial, or any means of legal remedy. The Ministry of Interior reported pretrial detentions extended up to one year in some cases. In March, local press reported 10 percent of prisoners in the country were held under administrative detention.

Authorities continued to subject individuals to prolonged pretrial detention (in some cases without charges), solitary confinement, and mistreatment, according to the NCHR and other organizations. Legal analysts noted administrative detentions and limited access to defense counsel for misdemeanor and minor felonies contributed to prolonged pretrial detentions. In some cases, the length of pretrial detention equaled or exceeded the maximum sentence for the alleged crime. When police had doubts about the innocence of a suspect, governors reportedly used administrative detentions to rearrest individuals who had been released by prosecutors from custody. This was

especially common with crimes involving drugs or in cases involving LGBTQI+ individuals. According to NGOs, pretrial detainees were occasionally placed with convicted prisoners.

The law did not have an explicit provision that entitled victims of arbitrary or unlawful detention to restitution. The law did not provide for routine judicial review of administrative detentions ordered by governors. Detainees could bring civil lawsuits for restitution for arbitrary or unlawful detention or bring criminal lawsuits for illegal incarceration, but the legal community reported such lawsuits seldom occurred. To file such a suit, detainees had to hire a lawyer with at least five years' experience, pay their own fees, and present the court with a copy of the detention order.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provided for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality. Criminal prosecutors reported to the Judicial Council, while the Ministry of Justice provided courts with administrative support.

Trial Procedures

The law provided for the right to a fair and public trial, and the judiciary generally enforced this right. Officials sometimes did not respect the right of defendants to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them, to communicate with an attorney of their choice, or to a fair and public trial without undue delay. According to the law, all civilian court trials and SSC trials were open to the public, except in rare cases when the court determined that the trial should be closed to protect the public interest.

Authorities occasionally tried defendants in absentia. The law allowed this practice but required a retrial when the accused returned to the country. The country's public defender system provided for support only to those facing felonies with potential lifetime sentences or the death penalty. The SSC, however, provided a public defender for felonies with potential sentences of over 10 years or the death penalty. In general, if charges amounted to less than 10 years of imprisonment, a defendant could request a public defender, but there was no guarantee that one would be provided, and many detainees reported not having timely access to legal counsel. Access to legal aid remained limited, especially for women in rural areas. Most criminal defendants lacked legal representation prior to and at trial. A legal aid nonprofit said 70 percent of individuals appeared in court without legal representation. Frequently, defendants before the SSC met with their attorneys only one or two days before their trial began.

Although criminal defendants generally received access to interpretation free of charge, the justice system did not provide foreign residents, especially foreign workers, uniform access to free interpretation and a defense attorney.

Defendants did not have the right to refuse to testify. Although the constitution prohibited the use of confessions extracted by torture, human rights activists noted that courts routinely accepted confessions allegedly extracted under torture or mistreatment. The SSC occasionally declined to hear testimony from witnesses they considered added no value to cases, and the law granted judges the discretion to do the same.

NGOs and activists argued the government should not try civilians before the SSC given its quasi-military character, contending that such a step would strengthen the independence of the judicial system.

The Judicial Council and Ministry of Justice continued to implement the 2022-2026 Justice Sector Strategy to improve services and access to justice by focusing on rule of law, specialization of courts and judges, automation, judicial independence, gender mainstreaming, and human rights protections.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

By year's end, at least 200 individuals were detained and imprisoned by the government for political reasons, including criticizing the government, its foreign policy, government officials and official bodies, or foreign countries, and chanting slogans or writing online posts against the king. Other charges commonly brought against persons critical of the government included insulting the king, undermining the political regime, harming relations with a foreign country, or violating the cybercrimes law, antiterrorism law, crime prevention law, or initiating incitement, libel, or slander. Some individuals reported facing legal difficulties for any kind of online political commentary.

Political prisoners were generally given the same protections as other detainees and were not subject to significantly different prison conditions than the general population. Authorities, however, often denied *hirak* (reform movement) activists bail several times before eventual approval. The government generally permitted access to such prisoners by human rights organizations, the ICRC, and the NCHR. In February, *Democracy for the Arab World Now* reported six of the *hirak*'s 16 executive officers were in prison and five others had been released on bail. The charges against the group included "undermining the regime" and "insulting friendly countries." In February, security services pre-emptively arrested four activists from the Bani Hassan tribe in Zarqa, who were preparing to protest tightened security imposed by authorities and the arrest of other political activists.

On August 8, journalist Hiba Abu Taha was arrested in response to a judicial decision to imprison her for three months on charges of causing "damage to an official body" because of an April social media post criticizing the government's relations with Israel. She was released the following day after lodging an appeal against the verdict. By court order, the post was removed from social media. NGOs including the Coalition for Women in Journalism criticized the arrest and called on the authorities to drop all charges against Abu Taha.

f. Transnational Repression

Threats, Harassment, Surveillance, and Coercion: Some exiled activists and political commentators alleged that the security services harassed and intimidated their Jordan-based family members to pressure them to end their activism abroad. In June, *Democracy for the Arab World Now* alleged the GID and PSD harassed and threatened Jordanian activists abroad and their families and associates in Jordan. The report alleged that from March to June the GID harassed and intimidated Azem Hammad, a Jordanian asylum seeker in the United States, to force him to quit his activism and affiliation with an organization that works to expose abuses by the government.

g. Property Seizure and Restitution

Not applicable.

h. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution protected individuals' postal and digital communications from censorship, "viewing," or confiscation but allowed for surveillance "by a judicial order in accordance with the provisions of the law." The law permitted the prosecutor general to order surveillance upon receiving "reliable information" that "a person or group of persons is connected to any terrorist activity." Many believed that security officers monitored telephone conversations and internet communication, read private correspondence, and engaged in surveillance including cataloguing online comments by date, internet protocol address, and location without court orders, although the law prohibited these practices. Virtual private networks (VPN) sometimes were inaccessible due to government interference. The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission issued a statement in

August refuting social media claims of widespread communications surveillance by the government as “misleading.” Human Rights Watch reported the new cybercrimes law enacted in September threatened anonymity by appearing to prohibit use of VPNs, proxies, and Tor networks, an encrypted software that enabled anonymous communication.

According to a local NGO, the mobile phones of dozens of Jordanian activists were targeted by Pegasus spyware during the year.

Some tribes continued to employ the custom of *jalwa*, where the relatives of a person accused of homicide were displaced to a different geographic area pending resolution between the involved families to prevent further bloodshed and revenge killings. Even though *jalwa* and tribal laws were abolished from the legal system in 1976, security officials continued sporadically to facilitate banishment and other tribal dispute resolution customs.

Section 2.

Respect for Civil Liberties ✓

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and Other Media

The constitution provided, “the State shall guarantee freedom of opinion; and every Jordanian shall freely express his opinion by speech, writing, photography, and the other means of expression, provided that he does not go beyond the limits of the law.” Authorities limited freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, and frequently used the antiterrorism law and cybercrimes law, to arrest and harass local journalists, activists, perceived dissidents, and others expressing political views. On September 12, the government adopted a new cybercrimes law, replacing the Cybercrimes Law of 2015, which journalists, human rights organizations, legal analysts, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) warned could be used to further limit freedom of expression and shrink civic space due to its vague language. Among other charges, the new law carried fines and imprisonment for online or print activities deemed to be “fake news,” “hateful,” or “promoting defamation.” On September 12, the quasi-governmental NCHR launched a hotline to receive complaints regarding enforcement of the new cybercrimes law.

Freedom of Expression: The law permitted punishment of up to three years’ imprisonment for insulting the king, slandering the government or foreign leaders, offending religious beliefs, or fomenting sectarian strife and sedition. The government restricted the ability of individuals to criticize the government, including by arresting several activists for political expression. Authorities used laws against slander of public officials, blackmail, and libel to restrict public discussion and employ official gag orders.

On August 9, an appellate court sentenced satirical journalist Ahmed Hassan al-Zoubi to one year’s imprisonment for provoking “sectarian strife” for his December 2022 Facebook post criticizing the government’s response to widespread protests over rising fuel prices. OHCHR highlighted al-Zoubi’s case in an August 15 statement and the International Federation of Journalists issued a statement August 12 condemning the decision and urged authorities to “drop all charges.” As of December, al-Zoubi’s prison sentence had not gone into effect.

On December 17, the Amman Public Prosecutor alleged the Secretary of the Partnership and Salvation Political Party, Ayman Sandouqa, violated the cybercrimes law by calling for a strike in solidarity with Gaza on social media, alleging it harmed the country’s “economic security,” and ordered his detention for one week. The public prosecutor rejected the bail request submitted by the party’s lawyer. At year’s end, Sandouqa remained under arrest.

The law required all publications to obtain licenses from the government to operate. There were many daily newspapers, and observers considered several to be independent of the government, including *al-Sabeel*, regarded as close to the Islamic Action Front (the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood's legally registered political party). Observers also judged several daily newspapers to be close to the government.

Violence and Harassment: The government subjected journalists to harassment and intimidation. Media professionals were less likely to cover sensitive topics due to fear of arrest, which significantly reduced the quality of journalism. A local NGO reported a decline in media freedom attributed primarily to the application of censorship and self-censorship as well as concerns about punishments in the new cybercrimes law.

A local NGO characterized abuses against journalists as generally minor, but reported that more serious abuses, including physical attacks by government authorities, occurred when journalists tried to cover protests. Some political commentators attributed this to the lack of clear rules of engagement for law enforcement during crises. A local NGO attributed a decline in abuses against journalists to the government's interest in preserving its image, increased denial of journalists' access to protests and other public events, more frequent use of gag orders, and increased self-censorship by journalists.

Authorities arrested or temporarily detained some journalists, and government officials or private individuals threatened some journalists.

On July 26, authorities arrested journalist Khaled al-Majali, who had been sentenced by an appellate court to three months' imprisonment for "defaming an official body," overturning a lower court's acquittal earlier in the year. Al-Majali was convicted under the Penal Code for having aired a live broadcast in which he used a derogatory word meaning the "government is not serious." He was released in October.

Local and foreign journalists operating in the country experienced increasing restrictions on their reporting in the form of gag orders, harassment by security forces, and withholding of permits to report.

Censorship or Content Restrictions for Members of the Press and Other Media, Including Online Media: The independent print and broadcast media operated with severe restrictions. Media observers and NGOs reported consistent government pressure on members of the press and other media, including the threat of large fines and prison sentences, to refrain from criticizing the royal family, discussing the GID, covering ongoing security operations, or "slandering" 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 used bribes, threats, and political pressure to force editors to place articles favorable to the government in online and print newspapers. The Jordan Press Association was legally independent from the government, but some members alleged the government interfered in its activities.

The law granted authority to the head of the Media Commission to close any unlicensed theater, satellite channel, or radio channel. The commission granted broadcasting licenses to companies owned by citizens and foreigners. By law those with licenses could not broadcast anything that would harm public order, social security, national security, or the country's relations with a foreign country; incite hatred, terrorism, or violent sedition, or mislead or deceive the public. The commission had to justify the reasons for rejecting a license and allow the applicant to appeal the decision to the judiciary. There was a fine for broadcasting without a license. An amendment to the Licensing Bylaw reduced fees by 50 percent for publishing and advertising institutions.

The government had a majority of seats on the board of the leading semi-official daily newspaper, *al-Rai*, and a share of board seats for the *ad-Dustour* daily newspaper. According to press freedom advocates, the GID's Media Department exercised approval over the selection of editors in chief of progovernment newspapers.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry licensed all public opinion polls and survey research centers; sensitive polling required additional government approvals.

The government directly and indirectly censored the media and online activists, reducing the variety of information available on the internet. After the new cybercrimes law entered into force, some media organizations in the country disabled the “comment” function on their platforms to avoid potential liability.

The government required news websites to register and pay a fee. News websites were required to employ editors in chief with at least four years’ membership in the Jordan Press Association. The owner and editor in chief of a news website could face fines and criminal penalties for publishing content that “includes humiliation, defamation, or disparagement of individuals in a manner that violates their personal freedoms or spreads false rumors about them.”

According to journalists, security forces demanded websites remove some posted articles. The government threatened websites and journalists that criticized the government, while it actively supported those that reported favorably on the government.

According to an NGO, self-censorship increased in media organizations and among activists on social media platforms due to fear of arrest and prosecution by government authorities. The NGO found that no media in the country was independent of the government, with increased instances of self-censorship, media gag orders, lack of government transparency, and hacking attempts against journalists and civil society. Journalists avoided reporting on certain topics, including political opposition based abroad and the LGBTQI+ community. The Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) said in its 2022 Media Freedom Index issued in May that the country’s media environment was “restricted”. CDFJ reported 92 percent of Jordanian journalists surveyed believed their colleagues in the country practiced self-censorship because they were moderately or extremely afraid of retaliation in their personal or professional lives.

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. At times editors in chief censored articles to prevent lawsuits. Bribery of journalists took place regularly and undermined independent reporting. Journalists cited the weak financial condition of media outlets, the threat of detention and imprisonment for defamation, and hefty court-ordered fines as factors influencing media content.

During the year the Media Commission circulated at least one official gag order restricting discussion in all media, including social media. The government used targeted gag orders in politically or socially sensitive cases that caught public attention. Public prosecutors could issue these orders under pretexts such as preventing a story from “affecting the course of justice” or disclosing investigative information.

In May, Amman prosecutors issued a gag order on the case of Member of Parliament Imad al-Adwan, who had been returned to Jordanian authorities following his arrest in April by Israeli authorities for smuggling small arms and contraband into the West Bank.

For grand felony cases or cases of domestic violence, the public prosecutor was empowered to issue a gag order to protect the victims or witnesses involved. The Media Commission could ban publication of any reports concerning the armed forces other than statements made by the armed forces’ spokesperson.

By law any book could be published and distributed freely. Nonetheless, if the Media Commission deemed that passages violated public norms and values, were religiously offensive, or were “insulting” to the king, it could request a court order to prohibit distribution of the book. As of September, the commission requested bans on 52 books: seven for religious reasons; four for intellectual property violations; and 41 for moral reasons, including sexual content or promotion of violence and extremism.

The government censored films and television series based on perceived “violations” of social norms and values. This included banning films containing LGBTQI+ content. As of September, the Media Commission had reviewed 202 films, one of which it banned for moral reasons.

In June, the government banned the satire website *alhudood.net*, which operated from the United Kingdom and had a staff presence in Jordan. According to media reports, the government gave no notification or explanation for the decision to block access to the site, but observers opined the website’s satirical coverage of the crown prince’s June wedding was a factor. On May 3, Reporters Without Borders noted “Jordan is known for its political stability, which distinguishes it from its neighboring countries. But media professionals censor themselves and respect the implicit red lines around certain subjects.”

Libel/Slander Laws: The law criminalized libel, slander, and defamation, and specifically any insult of the royal family, state institutions, national symbols, or foreign states, as well as “any writing or speech that aims at or results in causing sectarian or racial strife.” According to the International Center for Not-For-Profit Law, the definitions of defamation and libel in the country’s Penal Code included treating a person disrespectfully through speech, writing, and other forms of communication. Penalties were harsher for libel and defamation against public officials and could carry sentences of imprisonment ranging from two weeks to three years. Separately under the cybercrimes law, those found guilty of defamation on social or online media could face at least three months in jail, a significant fine, or a combination of imprisonment and fines at the judge’s discretion. Government prosecutors also relied on private civil libel, slander, and defamation lawsuits to suppress criticism of public figures and policies. Dozens of journalists, as well as members of parliament, faced libel and slander accusations filed by private citizens. The law placed the burden of proof for defamation on the complainant.

National Security: The government frequently cited national security laws and counterterrorism laws to arrest or punish critics of the government and to restrict and deter criticism of government policies and officials. According to Human Rights Watch, activists were often charged with terrorism-related crimes that had definitions so vague they could be applied to nearly any political speech or behavior the government disliked.

Internet Freedom

The government restricted or disrupted access to the internet and censored online content, including some social media platforms. The law required the licensing and registration of online news websites, held editors responsible for readers’ comments on their websites, required that website owners provide the government with the personal data of their users, and mandated that editors in chief be members of the Jordan Press Association. The law gave authorities explicit power to block and censor websites, including empowering the Media Commissioner to ban websites without a court order.

In September, the government enacted a new cybercrimes law, replacing a 2015 version that human rights organizations alleged officials used to suppress freedom of expression online. The new cybercrimes law prohibited the use of information technology, websites, or social media platforms to publish false news, seditious content, material undermining national unity, or information intended to insult or offend a second party. The new law also required social media companies with more than 100,000 subscribers in Jordan to have offices in the country to respond to requests and notices by the government. The penalty for noncompliance included banning advertisements on the platform and gradually restricting bandwidth via internet throttling to make the platform slow or unusable, according to Human Rights Watch. Prior to the law’s ratification, 14 human rights NGOs published an open letter urging officials to reconsider the law, asserting it would “strongly undermine digital rights.”

The telecommunications law required telecommunications providers take appropriate measures to enable the tracking of user communications upon a judicial or administrative order. The

government monitored electronic correspondence and internet chat sites. Many individuals believed they were unable to express their views fully or freely via the internet, including by personal email.

The government required internet service providers to block access to messaging apps on days when secondary school students took their national examination, to prevent cheating.

Some internet service providers at the government's direction restricted Voice over Internet Protocol services such as WhatsApp and Viber, while Facebook Messenger, Telegram, and Skype remained accessible.

Freedom House's 2023 *Freedom on the Net* report rated Jordan as "partly free," noting internet freedoms remained "restricted." Among other concerns, Freedom House reported localized interruptions to communications platforms by government regulators. It also reported that during protests the government routinely blocked or restricted VPNs, internet service, connectivity, or bandwidth of communication platforms. The report asserted journalists faced pressure to remove content they had published online, and that self-censorship was widespread.

The Committee to Protect Journalists indicated authorities blocked websites they claimed lacked proper registration. Authorities continued to block the website of an online lifestyle magazine with an LGBTQI+ target audience on the grounds it was an unlicensed publication.

The government maintained a ban on the social media platform TikTok throughout most of the year, after alleging the platform was responsible for spreading false news and videos during public transportation strikes in December 2022, and the subsequent country-wide protests. In January, local media reported TikTok deleted over 300,000 videos from accounts in the country that could have violated government policy. In September, the government partially restored local access to TikTok according to local media, but subsequently reimposed the ban and reported a "technical glitch."

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The government limited the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

The constitution provided for freedom of assembly, but the government limited this freedom, including by pre-emptively detaining supporters in advance of demonstrations, often citing vague and broad criminal provisions. Security forces provided security at demonstrations granted permits by government or local authorities.

The law required a 48-hour notification to the local governor for any meeting or event hosted by any local or international group. Several local and international NGOs reported that hotels, allegedly at the request of security officials, required them to present letters of approval from the government prior to holding training courses, private meetings, or public conferences. There were some reported cases of the government denying approval requests without explanation, according to local and international human rights NGOs. Without letters of approval from the government, hotels canceled the events. In some cases, NGOs relocated the events to private offices or residences or conducted them through videoconferencing software, and the activities were held without interruption.

During the year, government security services required hotels to provide the names and identification card numbers of those who attended hotel-based events or conferences. As a booking prerequisite, hotels requested the list of invitees from the organizations hosting the events, which in turn were reportedly delivered to security officials. Security services also required AirBnB hosts to submit identification data on their guests to authorities.

The Ministry of Interior required notification for demonstrations or any public gathering. The government generally treated this notification as a request for permission and often did not respond in a timely manner or at all. According to a Human Rights Watch report, prior to Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel, the number of demonstrations decreased during the year due to the government's tighter restrictions on freedom of peaceful assembly. Those protests occurred across the country regarding economic policies, new legislation, and Israeli actions in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. After October 7, protests across the country proliferated and focused on the war in Gaza. Authorities shut down several of these demonstrations citing defense orders and preemptively arrested those seeking to protest.

On October 12, the Ministry of Interior banned demonstrations in the Jordan Valley and along the borders with the West Bank citing safety and security concerns following calls for protest by Jordanian civil society and political parties against the Israeli government's military response in Gaza, following the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas. On October 13, *Reuters* reported that riot police at a checkpoint in Amman fired tear gas and forcibly dispersed 500 protesters seeking to reach the border zone. In the weeks after Hamas's October 7 attack, protests drawing thousands of demonstrators took place in downtown Amman and in other cities across the country, including in Irbid and Zarqa. Authorities permitted demonstrations to proceed but detained a couple dozen protesters on vandalism or cybercrimes charges.

In November, *Middle East Eye* reported security forces arrested 25 individuals who had planned to participate in a sit-in at a mosque near the border with the West Bank in protest of Israel's military operations in Gaza. A government spokesman stated sit-ins and demonstrations were not allowed near the border. A member of the Islamic Action Front (the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood's legally registered political party) alleged the government punished activists who planned to protest peacefully.

Freedom of Association

The constitution provided for the freedom of association, but the government limited this freedom. The law authorized the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, and Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Supply to approve or reject applications to register relevant civil society organizations and to prohibit organizations from receiving foreign funding for any reason. It prohibited the use of associations, including civil society organizations, for the benefit of any political organization. The law also gave these ministries significant control over the internal management of associations, including the ability to dissolve associations, approve 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 required associations to inform the Ministry of Social Development of board meetings, submit all board decisions for approval, disclose members' names, and obtain security clearances from the Ministry of Interior for board members. The law specified penalties, including fines, for violating the regulations. The Ministry of Social Development was legally empowered to intervene in NGO activities and issue warnings for violation of the law. NGOs receiving a warning were given a two-month probationary period to address violations.

The law required local NGOs receiving foreign funds to submit information on the use of these funds to the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation for review. According to an NGO, the frequency of government rejections of foreign funding applications appeared to increase during the year. Some local NGOs reported applications were processed in under 30 days as required by law, while other NGOs continued to claim officials reviewing the foreign fund transfers applied arbitrary criteria to delay or reject their fund transfer applications, effectively shutting down several NGOs. Some NGOs reported unexplained, months-long delays, the lack of an appeal process and an absence of meaningful procedural guidance. During the year, an NGO reported being forced to lay off staff due to continued foreign funding application rejections and nontransparent delays. Human Rights Watch characterized the approval restrictions as "onerous," and NGOs reported the drawn-out approval process for even uncontentious projects and foreign funding was stifling civil society.

To avoid the registration and foreign funding processes, civil society organizations sought alternative solutions, including registering as for-profit companies or international NGOs.

Citizens widely suspected the government infiltrated civil society organizations, political parties, and human rights organizations, and that security services monitored political and civil society conferences and meetings.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

d. Freedom of Movement and the Right to Leave the Country

The law provided for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation; however, the government imposed some restrictions.

In-country Movement: The government placed some restrictions on the internal movement of registered Syrian refugees and asylum seekers. Residents of refugee camps were required to apply for government permission if they wished to relocate from their camp or temporarily depart for family visits or work.

There were reports some Syrian refugees were forcibly relocated to Azraq refugee camp, including to Azraq's restricted Village 5, for committing offenses including "irregular status" (expired registration documents or working without a work permit), criminal activities, and potential security risks, which were not clearly defined.

As of August, Azraq camp hosted 40,919 individuals, including 8,192 adults and children in the fenced-off Village 5 area. From January to September, the government relocated 669 refugees to Azraq refugee camp from other areas of the country, including 100 newly relocated into Village 5 for security reasons. Between January and August, 1,079 refugees in Village 5 were permitted to move out, either to the unrestricted sections of Azraq camp, urban areas, or third countries for resettlement. Authorities did not inform refugees forcibly relocated to Village 5 of the reasons or give them the opportunity to access legal remedies or assistance prior to their relocation. Residents of Village 5 had access to basic humanitarian assistance, to a clinic providing comprehensive health services inside the village, and to the hospital within Azraq camp if escorted by police. To access the broader camp facilities, Village 5 residents were required to submit requests to security officials, which were generally approved.

Authorities maintained custody of the personal documents of Village 5 residents, such as passports, marriage certificates, and birth certificates. Authorities also held the documents of Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) residing in Garden camp, previously known as al-Hadiqa camp or King Abdullah Park, a fenced space in Irbid Governorate repurposed to house PRS and mixed Syrian-PRS families.

Security services customarily allowed parents to request informal "warrants" to restrict the movement inside the country of their children, including adult children, who identified as LGBTQI+.

Foreign Travel: Government authorities arbitrarily restricted the ability of some individuals, including activists and journalists, from leaving the country, including through travel bans. The government also imposed travel bans on individuals awaiting court hearings throughout the year. Security services customarily allowed parents to request informal "warrants" to prevent foreign travel of their children, including adult children, who identified as LGBTQI+.

In June, local media reported security officials placed a travel ban on political activist Anas al-Jamal after he was prevented from entering Türkiye and was returned to Queen Alia Airport in Amman, where security officials interrogated him regarding his political activity and party affiliation.

Citizenship: The law stipulated the conditions under which the cabinet could, with the king's approval, revoke citizenship, but the Ministry of Interior sometimes performed revocations without cabinet or royal approval, without notifying an individual in advance, and without giving them the opportunity to correct the issue.

For some PRS with Jordanian citizenship, potential revocation of that citizenship remained a concern. In most cases, authorities did not provide information concerning the reasons for revocation.

e. Protection of Refugees

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees in most cases. Some government officials publicly urged the swift return of Syrian refugees during the year.

Access to Asylum: The law did not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government lacked a formal system for providing protection to refugees. The country was not a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. A memorandum of understanding, however, between the government and UNHCR contained the definition of a refugee, confirmed the country's adherence to the principle of nonrefoulement, and allowed recognized refugees a maximum stay of one year, during which period UNHCR was required to find them a durable solution. The time limit was extendable, and the government generally did not force refugees to return to their country of origin, including honoring UNHCR's advisory against forced returns to Sudan. Authorities required all Syrians in the country to register with the Ministry of Interior and obtain a ministry-issued identification card.

The country's border crossings with Syria remained closed to new refugee arrivals. Syrians could not legally enter Jordan without prior approval from the Ministry of Interior or a valid residency permit in a third country. Syrians staying in Jordan as refugees could visit Syria for a short period without losing their status in Jordan if they obtained reentry permission in advance from the Ministry of Interior.

The Rukban border crossing with Syria remained closed, and the government continued to restrict humanitarian access to the area, which it considered a "closed military zone." A cabinet decision limiting any foreign national arriving in Jordan on a medical, tourism, study, or work visa from registering for international protection remained in force. The Ministry of Interior asked UNHCR to suspend registration of asylum seekers who entered the country in this way, effectively halting the process for more than 5,500 non-Syrian nationals (primarily from Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Egypt, and Yemen) in the country who had already approached UNHCR to begin the registration process. UNHCR confirmed the ongoing presence in Jordan of 3,957 such individuals with registrations pending. The Ministry of Interior interpreted the cabinet decision as intended to also cover Syrian nationals, including new arrivals and those who arrived before 2019 but had not previously registered with UNHCR. Through September, a total of 280 Syrian families approached UNHCR but were unable to register due to the suspension.

As of August, 560 of the refugees registered in Garden Camp were PRS and 163 were Syrian. In addition, 18 Jordanian citizens belonging to mixed families resided in the camp. Camp residents were exposed to a wide range of vulnerabilities, including but not limited to overcrowding and lack of space. The camp did not meet international standards, lacked several essential facilities, and had only one small shop to obtain daily necessities. PRS residents were unable to pay residency fees to the Ministry of Interior to obtain legal status, and thus lacked access to formal livelihood

opportunities. During the year, 10 PRS and five Syrians were authorized to leave Garden Camp to live in urban areas or to leave Jordan through resettlement.

In total, more than 19,000 PRS resided in Jordan during the year. Those who lacked documentation and legal status in the country tended to limit their movements to avoid encountering authorities. In addition, some PRS with legal documentation reported delays in renewing their documentation or informal requirements to switch to types of documentation that offered less protection.

According to UNHCR, 3,121 Syrian refugees left Jordan and returned to Syria from January through August.

Government officials made public statements prioritizing the creation of safe conditions for the voluntary return of Syrian refugees, although UN officials noted that appropriate conditions in Syria did not exist to allow for such returns. A UNHCR survey found that only 0.8 percent of Syrian refugees in the country intended to return to Syria in the next year. On May 31, Syrian media and Syrian human rights organizations reported that authorities had deported seven Syrian refugees from al-Azraq camp to the Rukban camp in Syria without informing them of the reason.

Freedom of Movement: The government placed some restrictions on the free internal movement of registered Syrian refugees and asylum seekers. Residents of refugee camps were required to apply for permission to relocate from or temporarily depart the camp for family visits or work, limiting their freedom of movement.

Employment: The government issued work permits in a limited number of sectors to some Syrian refugees and excluded Syrians from foreign worker quota calculations in some industries. The Ministries of Interior and Labor, through agreement with the United Nations, permitted Syrian refugees living in the camps to apply for work permits. Authorities issued 56,528 work permits to Syrian refugees in the year through August, approximately 15 percent of them to women. The agreement allowed camp-based refugees to use their work permits as a 30-day pass to work outside the camp. UNHCR and local NGOs reported unemployment for refugees, particularly women and youth, remained at worryingly high levels.

The government did not permit formal work for UNHCR-registered non-Syrian refugees. Non-Syrian refugees seeking work permits were required to renounce their registration with UNHCR to qualify for a permit. Through August, 87 individuals, mostly Iraqi and Yemeni nationals, withdrew their international protection applications with UNHCR to pursue work permits. Although some individuals, primarily Yemenis, were placed in detention, there were no known reports of deportation for labor law infractions during the year. Authorities cancelled deportation orders triggered by labor law infractions for more than 700 non-Syrian refugees and asylum seekers during the year.

Access to Basic Services: An estimated 50,650 Syrian and 21,540 non-Syrian school-age children remained out of school due to financial or administrative challenges, transportation costs, child labor, child marriage, or bullying by fellow students and teachers. Although the Prime Minister's Office issued an annual circular allowing free enrollment of refugee children irrespective of documentation, with the requirement that documentation be provided by the end of the first semester, for some nationalities these requirements were barriers to school enrollment. Unregistered asylum seekers could not register in public schools.

The government provided access to the public healthcare system for Syrian and non-Syrian refugees, who were required to pay the same fees as uninsured citizens. Unregistered asylum seekers paid the higher foreigner rate at public health facilities, which was unaffordable to most of them. Unregistered HIV+ asylum seekers were required to register with the Ministry of Health to access antiretroviral medications, putting them at risk of deportation under government public health regulations.

Access to basic civil services, including renewal of identity documents and the registration of marriages, deaths, and births, remained highly complex for PRS. This put undocumented refugees

at additional risk of abuse by third parties such as employers and landlords.

Approximately 175,000 residents of Palestinian descent, such as those referred to as “ex-Gazans,” did not hold Jordanian citizenship. To accommodate this population, authorities issued registration cards that provided permanent residency and served as personal identity documents, and temporary Jordanian passports without national identity numbers. Without a national identity number, however, Palestinian refugees from Gaza were unable to access national support programs and were excluded from key aspects of health and social service support, although they were able to access UNRWA services.

Temporary Protection: The government did not actively target individuals without official refugee status for deportation and tolerated informally the prolonged stay of many Iraqis and other refugees beyond the expiration of the visit permits under which they had entered the country. Iraqi and other non-Syrian refugees accrued fines for overstaying their visit permits and were required to pay or settle the fines and penalties prior to receiving an exit visa unless they were departing for third country resettlement or opted to spontaneously return to their country of origin. They then faced a five-year ban from reentry into Jordan.

f. Status and Treatment of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Not applicable.

g. Stateless Persons

The country contributed to statelessness, including through discrimination against women in nationality laws and challenges obtaining birth registration.

Only fathers could transmit citizenship. Women did not have the legal right to transmit citizenship to their children, which could lead to statelessness if the child did not receive the nationality of a non-Jordanian father. Women could not petition for citizenship for noncitizen husbands, who could apply for citizenship only after maintaining continuous Jordanian residency for 15 years. Once a father obtained citizenship, he could apply to transmit citizenship to his children. Although the nationality law stipulated the possibility of applying for citizenship after 15 years of legal residency, the government did not implement this provision in practice. By law, children of citizen mothers and noncitizen fathers who applied for social services had to reside in the country and prove the maternal relationship. The cabinet could then approve citizenship for these children under certain conditions, but this mechanism was not widely known, and approval rarely occurred.

The government no longer prevented Syrian refugees from obtaining vital records and regularizing their legal status if they lacked documents upon entering or while residing in the country. Nevertheless, some refugees still faced challenges in obtaining civil status documentation, mainly when applying for birth registrations in cases of informal marriages or marriages without any documentation, or when registering marriages that took place out of court. In such instances, and in the cases of households headed by women where the father’s absence was a challenge, there was a risk of statelessness.

Section 3.

Freedom to Participate in the Political Process ✓

The constitution did not provide citizens the ability to choose their executive branch of government or upper house of parliament. The king was constitutionally empowered to appoint and dismiss the prime minister and the cabinet, as well as the members of the Senate and its speaker.

Citizens could elect members of the lower house of parliament in generally credible periodic elections based on universal and equal suffrage conducted by secret ballot. With the exception of Amman, Wadi Musa (Petra), and Aqaba, citizens could elect 97 of the 100 mayors; they could elect some members of governorate councils while the cabinet could appoint 40 percent of them. Citizens could elect all members of municipal councils. While elections were generally well run, official obstacles to political party activity and campaigning limited participation.

Elections and Political Participation

Abuses or Irregularities in Recent Elections: While local monitors reported local and regional elections in March 2022 were technically well administered, some watchers observed significant violations in the elections process and some reported accounts of vote-buying. Amman's Al Hayat Center for Civil Society Development assessed voting secrecy was compromised in many polling booths due to heavy security presence throughout the country on election day. Violence reportedly broke out at 10 municipalities after the polling centers closed. Organized parties were largely absent from these elections, including the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Islamic Action Front, which boycotted the election.

Political Parties and Political Participation: The law prohibited parties based on religion, sect, race, gender, or origin, as well as membership in unlicensed parties. The law also prohibited members of foreign political organizations, judges, and security service personnel from joining parties. In the beginning of the year, there were approximately 58 different parties with cumulatively less than 40,000 members, and except for the Islamic Action Front, negligible party representation in parliament. The political parties law passed in 2022 required all existing parties to reregister by May 15. In May, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced 27 parties had successfully met current registration requirements under the 2022 Political Parties Law. The IEC ruled that 19 parties that applied did not meet registration requirements and were subsequently dissolved.

Even though the law afforded the rights of individuals to form parties, authorities reportedly intimidated individuals attempting to form political parties, and a long-standing fear of creating or joining political parties continued. According to media reports, many persons experienced or witnessed political activity being punished by authorities, resulting in blacklisting for jobs and economic opportunities. According to Freedom House, while voters and candidates were generally free from overt threats or violence, they remained heavily influenced by tribal affiliations and the state-sponsored patronage networks that accompanied them. Freedom House also reported the GID was widely believed to influence the electoral process.

Participation of Women and Members of Minority Groups: No laws limited participation of women in the political process, but there was a wide gender gap in political participation. The law provided women and members of some minority groups representation in the political process through quotas, stipulating a minimum of 18 quota seats for women and 12 seats for certain ethnic or religious minorities. National party lists had to have at least one woman for every three candidates. In addition, two seats were reserved on the party lists for Christians and one each for Chechens and Circassians in the national district. Human rights activists cited cultural bias against women as an impediment to women participating in political life on the same scale as men. Women elected competitively or appointed through quota systems held a small minority of positions in national and local legislative bodies and executive branch leadership roles. Women won 27 percent of all municipal, governorate, and Amman municipality council seats in the 2022 local elections. The 29-member cabinet included five women ministers as of September; 17 women served as members of parliament, 15 selected by quota and two through open competition.

Persons with disabilities rarely participated in elections either as candidates or voters, due to prevailing cultural stigmatization, the absence of accessible polling stations, and a lack of awareness of their rights to participate in the electoral process or how to vote, according to NGO reporting. A memorandum of understanding between the IEC and the Higher Council for the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities (HCD) stipulated municipalities had to have at least one fully accessible polling station and partially accessible stations at other voting sites.

All Palestinian refugees of Jordanian nationality could vote irrespective of their location (e.g., residents of the 10 official UNRWA camps, three nonofficial camps, or residents not in camps) by virtue of their citizenship rights. Palestinian refugees without nationality could not vote in national or municipal elections or join political parties; however, they were allowed to vote for other committees under the jurisdiction of the Department of Palestinian Affairs. Citizens of Palestinian origin were underrepresented at all levels of government and the military. The law reserved nine seats in the lower house of parliament for Christians and three seats for the Circassian and Chechen ethnic minorities combined, an overrepresentation of these minorities compared to their percentage of the population. The law stipulated Muslims were required to hold all parliamentary seats not specifically reserved for Christians. There were no reserved seats for the relatively small Druze population, but its members could hold office under their government classification as Muslims. Christians served as cabinet ministers, senators, and ambassadors. There was one Druze cabinet member.

Section 4.

Corruption in Government ✓

The law provided criminal penalties for corruption by officials, although the government did not implement the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year. Authorities began showing an increased willingness to open public corruption investigations in recent years. The use of family, business, and other personal connections to advance personal economic interests was widespread.

Activists and journalists found it difficult to access government reporting and statistics. They attributed the lack of access to ineffective record keeping and the government's withholding of information from the public.

In January, *Transparency International* released its 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index, which issued recommendations including strengthening anti-corruption bodies such as the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Committee (JIACC), aligning legislation to international anti-corruption standards, and increasing public access to government information.

A parliamentary memorandum signed July 16 called on the government to reopen and review its Attarat shale oil power project due to "suspicions of corruption and negligence in the project." The memorandum called for review of the government's initial agreement due to its unusually high energy sale prices by the plant to the government as well as an investigation into the "bids" file for the project for suspected bribery. The Attarat project was the subject of international arbitration, which continued through the end of the year and was expected to continue at least through mid-2024.

In August, the Parliamentary Finance Committee conducted a review of alleged corruption cases detailed in reports from the Audit Bureau, an independent government watchdog, from 2018 onwards. Local state-associated media reported the committee resolved many of the cases and referred several others to JIACC for investigation.

Through September, JIACC granted protective orders to 252 whistleblowers, informants, and witnesses. This protection included concealing the names and personal data of informants and providing physical protection when necessary; six individuals were granted job protections under whistleblower regulations. By law, disclosing information about the identity of a protected whistleblower was punishable by up to six months' imprisonment.

For additional information concerning corruption in the country, please see the Department of State's *Investment Climate Statement* for the country, and the Department of State's *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, which includes information on financial crimes.

Section 5.

Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Monitoring and Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights ✓

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

Retribution against Human Rights Defenders: Throughout the year, human rights defenders (HRDs) discovered Pegasus spyware on their mobile phones. Media outlets and NGOs reported during the year that LGBTQI+ HRDs were abducted, harassed, and monitored, as well as outed to their families.

In April, NGO Front Line Defenders published a report alleging authorities continued to repress *hirak* members, many of whom were HRDs, through surveillance, judicial harassment, and travel bans.

In June, *The New Arab* reported on the "organized and systematic" online harassment faced by human rights defender and lawyer Hala al-Ahed after announcing she would teach a course on feminism. The Gulf Centre for Human Rights called on authorities to provide al-Ahed with protection so she could continue her work.

In December, Human Rights Watch reported it interviewed 13 LGBTQI+ rights activists who experienced official intimidation because of their advocacy. Most of these activists subsequently ended the initiatives that had drawn attention to their activism. The retaliatory measures included interrogation, intimidation with threats of violence, blocking access to bank accounts, and in at least one instance, compelling an activist to sign a pledge to report his venue's future programming to the governor.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The National Center for Human Rights (NCHR), a quasi-independent institution established by law, received both government and international funding. The prime minister nominated its board of trustees, and the king ratified their appointment by royal decree. The board of trustees appointed NCHR's commissioner general. The NCHR submitted an annual report to both houses of parliament and the cabinet assessing the government's compliance with human rights obligations, in which it sometimes criticized government practices. NCHR recommendations were not legally binding, but the Government Coordinator for Human Rights (GCHR) and the Human Rights Unit in the Prime Minister's Office were required to respond to the report's recommendations and to measure progress towards respecting international human rights. The GCHR generally adhered to these requirements.

Ministries' working groups continued to meet and implement their responsibilities under the national human rights action plan to reform laws in accordance with international standards and best practices, including improving accessibility for persons with disabilities. Through the end of the year, progress did not change from 2022; 21 percent of the plan's activities remained completed, 43 percent remained ongoing, and 36 percent remained pending.

The office of the GCHR and the Human Rights Unit coordinated government-wide implementation of the national plan, including drafting and responding to human rights reports. The GCHR position remained vacant since May. The Human Rights Unit conducted activities under the 2016-2025

national human rights plan, including discussions of the Universal Periodic Review recommendations, and workshops to improve access for persons with disabilities and strengthen awareness of human rights, gender equality, and trafficking in persons.

Section 6.

Discrimination and Societal Abuses ✓

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law stipulated a sentence of at least 10 years' imprisonment with hard labor for the nonspousal rape of any individual regardless of gender age 15 or older. Spousal rape was not illegal. Rape of a child younger than age 15 potentially carried the death penalty. The law made prosecution mandatory for felony offenses, including rape. Nonfelony offenses, such as certain cases of domestic violence, were first subjected to mediation by the Juvenile and Family Protection Department (JFPD) of the PSD. The law provided options for alternative sentencing in domestic violence cases, with consent of the survivor. The government did not effectively enforce the law against rape.

Gender-based violence was prevalent. While the reported number of so-called honor crimes decreased, various activists and officials reported an increase in domestic violence in the first quarter of the year. As of September, a local NGO reported 12 women died from domestic violence, and the intensity of the violence was higher than previous years. Experts believed the number of domestic violence-related deaths was higher than reported, and some were categorized as suicides.

The NGO Sisterhood Is Global Institute reported 27 family-based killings during the year and noted an overall increase in family-based violence compared to 2022.

Women could file complaints of rape or physical abuse directly with judicial authorities, at police stations, or with certain NGOs. Due to social taboos, lack of legal aid, and degrading treatment at police stations, however, gender-based crimes often went unreported. NGOs also highlighted that there were no official figures on the prevalence of violence against unmarried girls and women age 50 and over.

Many domestic violence cases were settled, dismissed, or found to be outside JFPD jurisdiction. Some legal experts assessed settlements did little to stop domestic and gender-based violence from reoccurring. Some NGOs and lawyers reported being pressured against taking physical abuse cases to court and asserted that courts routinely dropped two-thirds of assault cases that resulted in little or no physical injury. Spousal abuse remained grounds for divorce, but husbands sometimes claimed cultural authority to strike their wives. Observers noted while judges generally supported a woman's claim of abuse in court, due to societal and familial pressure and fear of violence such as so-called honor killings, few women sought legal remedies. Broad legal authorities allowed judges to base some sentencing decisions on their personal convictions rather than strict sentencing guidelines. Some legal experts reported cases of women who went to police stations to report gender-based violence and were turned away and told to instead report the crime to the JFPD, which operated fewer stations in fewer locations.

According to international human rights organizations operating in the country, gender-based violence and particularly domestic violence increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Emotional and physical abuse, often perpetrated by an intimate partner or member of the family, were the most common forms of abuse.

Governors used the crime prevention law to detain women administratively, ostensibly for their protection. The Ministry of Social Development operated a shelter for women at risk of violence and so-called honor crimes. As of September, the Amman-based shelter for women at risk of so-

called honor crimes had hosted 129 women, including administrative detainees from the Juweideh women's correctional and rehabilitation center, women referred to the shelter by the JFPD, and women directly referred to the shelter by governors. The Ministry of Social Development allowed children younger than age 10 to accompany their mothers, including mothers who had previously been detained under protective custody.

The JFPD operated a domestic violence hotline and received inquiries and complaints via email and in person. The Ministry of Social Development maintained a second shelter for women survivors of domestic violence in Irbid. As of September, the ministry's new shelter in Aqaba hosted 113 individuals at risk and 15 dependents.

NGOs reported that health-care providers and teachers were hesitant to report abuse due to the absence of witness protection guarantees. Specialized judges expedited domestic violence cases; misdemeanor cases took approximately three days to resolve, according to the JFPD. The National Council for Family Affairs assisted the government in developing mediation guidelines. NGOs reported improvements in domestic violence-related procedures and policies in law enforcement and the judiciary, but severe shortfalls remained. Members of law enforcement outside of the JFPD lacked awareness of appropriate domestic violence-related procedures, and there were general shortcomings with legal settlement processes.

Other Forms of Gender-based Violence or Harassment: Civil society organizations stated that many so-called honor crimes went unreported, especially in nonurban areas, due to social taboos, fear of additional violence, and perception of inadequate outcomes in the formal justice system. Experts said the penal code provided an arguable legal basis for assaults and killings, especially by men, of family members caught in the act of adultery or perceived to be involved in so-called illegitimate sexual relations. The law also limited the right of self-defense for survivors of these attacks.

On May 13, *Roya News* reported on three separate so-called honor killings in one week's time. The outlet highlighted the stories of a father setting his daughter, age 19, on fire, a man slitting the throat of his sister, also age 19, and a man stabbing his sister, who was in her 20s. The male perpetrators all reportedly committed the killings due to suspicion of their female relative's behavior with men. The public prosecutor charged all three defendants with premeditated murder; investigations continued under the supervision of the public prosecutor for the Grand Criminal Court through year's end.

Although the law no longer absolved rapists who married the survivors of their assaults, observers noted the customary belief persisted that if a woman married her rapist her family members would not need to kill her to "preserve the family's honor." Nevertheless, NGOs noted that this law helped reduce such instances and encouraged more women to report rape, especially since the establishment of the shelter. There were no reported instances of forced marriage as an alternative to a potential "honor" killing during the year. NGOs, however, believed cases of forced marriage still occurred shortly after an accusation of rape, due to family and societal pressure, before any formal trial began.

Governors sometimes referred potential targets of "honor crimes" to the Ministry of Social Development shelter instead of involuntary protective custody in a detention facility. Local NGOs reported that women could still be placed in protective detention at the discretion of governors in cases deemed to be of high risk.

The law authorized DNA tests and other scientific means to identify paternity of a newborn infant associated with "rape, deception, and deceit."

The law strictly prohibited sexual harassment and did not distinguish between sexual assault and sexual harassment. Both carried a minimum prison sentence of four years' hard labor. The law also set penalties for indecent touching and verbal harassment but did not define protections against sexual harassment. The government did not effectively enforce the law; sexual harassment of women and girls in public was widely reported. NGOs reported refugees from Syria and foreign

workers, particularly garment workers and domestic workers, were especially vulnerable to gender-based violence in the workplace, including sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Discrimination: The constitution afforded equal rights to men and women, but the government enforced discriminatory laws against women. The law did not necessarily provide women the same legal status, rights, and inheritance provisions as for men. Women experienced discrimination in several areas, including divorce, child custody, citizenship, the workplace, and, in certain circumstances, the value of their testimony in a sharia court handling civil law matters. The Jordanian National Commission for Women, a quasi-governmental organization, operated a hotline to receive discrimination complaints.

NGOs reported a disproportionate number of individuals charged with nonrepayment of debt were women unable to repay loans they had taken out on behalf of their male family members. The law limited to 120 days per year the imprisonment of debtors for amounts less than 5,000 Jordanian dinars (\$7,000) to help facilitate debt repayment through employment opportunities after detention.

Women faced legal and cultural discrimination in employment and occupation opportunities. The law did not explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sex. There were some limited legal protections for maternity leave, as well as a prohibition on the termination of a pregnant working woman after the sixth month of her pregnancy or during her maternity leave.

Working women were largely concentrated in the “socially acceptable” health and education sectors. By law, the Ministry of Labor specified the industries and economic activities prohibited for women, as well as the hours during which they were allowed to work. Women were generally barred from working between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. with some exceptions like for workers in the medical and hospitality industries. Evening work for women was limited to 30 days per year and a maximum of 10 hours per day. These restrictions limited job competition in favor of men. The Civil Service Ordinance allocated benefits such as the family allowance and cost of living allowance at a higher level for men than for women.

The law prohibited discrimination in wages based solely on gender. Union officials reported that sectors predominantly employing women, such as secretarial work and teaching, offered wages below the official minimum wage. The garment sector, which employed predominantly migrant and Jordanian women, had a lower minimum wage than other sectors. Many women reported traditional social pressures discouraged them from pursuing professional careers, especially after marriage.

According to the Department of Statistics, as of the first quarter of the year, unemployment among women holding a bachelor’s degree was 79.5 percent, compared to 26.7 percent for men. The overall unemployment rate for women was 30.7 percent, compared to 19.6 percent for men. Although the law included a prohibition on wage inequities, World Bank research found the pay gap between Jordanian men and women was 40 percent in the private sector and 28 percent in the public sector.

The Ministry of Labor designated an office for handling discrimination claims in the workplace for both women and men and maintained an online platform for receiving such complaints. Local NGOs advocated for better representation of women in leadership positions in both the public and private sectors, and amendments to the Companies Law included provisions for ensuring the appointment of women to boards of trustees. Some NGOs criticized the absence of provisions on maternity leave, childcare, and access to equal health insurance for women workers.

Under the law applied in sharia courts, daughters inherited half the amount that sons received, with some exceptions. A sole female heir received only half of her parents’ estate, with the balance going to uncles, whereas a sole male heir inherited all of his parents’ property. In sharia courts, which had civil jurisdiction over Muslim marriage, divorce, and inheritance cases, the testimony of one man equaled that of two women, with certain exceptions.

The law did not allow civil marriages, and all marriages had to be performed according to a recognized religious tradition. While Muslim men could marry non-Muslim women, Muslim

women were forbidden from marrying non-Muslim men. Women did not have the legal right to transmit citizenship to their children, as only fathers were entitled to transmit citizenship. This could lead to statelessness if the child did not receive the nationality of a noncitizen father.

The law gave legal authority over the child to fathers and responsibility for the physical care of the child to mothers. Custody could easily be taken from the mother if she remarried or was found to be “unfit.” The law gave the father decision-making power over the child’s education, country of residence, and religious upbringing, and permitted only the father to obtain passports for the child. The Ministry of Justice defined “guardian” as the father or the next male relative of the child.

Women could seek divorce without the consent of their husbands only in limited circumstances, such as abandonment, spousal abuse, or in return for waiving financial rights, but in most other cases divorce required the husband’s consent. The law allowed women to retain financial rights under specific circumstances, such as spousal abuse. Special religious courts for recognized Christian denominations under the Council of Churches adjudicated marriage and divorce for Christians, but sharia applied to all persons for inheritance, irrespective of religion.

Due to suspension of work and salaries in some cases, the court resorted to the Alimony Credit Fund to pay women and children’s alimony and improved their access to it. During the year the fund expanded its coverage to include educational alimony.

The government provided men with more generous social security benefits than women. Family members who inherited the pension payments of deceased civil servants received differing amounts according to the heir’s gender. Laws and regulations governing health insurance for civil servants permitted women to extend their health insurance coverage to dependents or spouses.

Reproductive Rights: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

The law permitted couples the basic right to decide the number, spacing, and timing of their children. Contraceptives were widely accessible and provided free of charge in public clinics for married couples, while unmarried persons had to purchase it in private clinics. Hormonal and emergency contraceptives and medical abortion drugs were not included on the government’s over-the-counter list, according to United Kingdom-based scientific journal *Bio Med Central*. According to the UN Population Fund’s *State of World Population 2022* report, 58 percent of women in Jordan ages 15 to 49 years made their own decisions regarding health care, contraception, and sex with their husbands. The report estimated 22 percent of women ages 15-49 used a modern method of contraception. *Bio Med Central* reported sexual and reproductive services were underused by youth.

Advocates raised concerns regarding legal, social, and cultural barriers to services for unmarried women and access problems for women and girls with disabilities, including reports of lack of consent for hysterectomies. Human rights groups raised concerns regarding the treatment and penalties faced by unmarried women who gave birth at hospitals, including hospital staff’s reporting them to authorities. An NGO reported that unmarried women risked forced separation and institutionalization of their children by the government.

The government provided access to sexual and reproductive health services, including rape kits and forensic examinations, for survivors of sexual violence, but emergency contraception and postexposure prophylaxis were generally not available, except in the kit, limiting clinical management of rape. According to an NGO, health professionals did not consistently use trauma-informed practices when interacting with survivors and the quality of care varied throughout the country.

Another NGO reported unmarried survivors of rape who became pregnant faced difficulties gaining access to safe delivery and establishing legal status for their children due to legal and social barriers.

Adolescent girls and unmarried women who became pregnant were routinely transferred to government-funded shelters where they could receive educational services, although the quality varied. Access to sexual and reproductive health services was generally more difficult for women and adolescent girls in rural settings. Social norms prevented underaged girls who became pregnant from attending school.

Access to emergency health care, including services for the management of complications arising from abortion, was legally permitted and available.

Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination

The constitution protected Jordanians on the grounds of race, language, and religion. The law did not, however, specifically address protections of ethnic minority groups against violence and discrimination. While there were no reports of systemic violence against members of ethnic minority groups, there were some reports of discrimination.

Four distinct groups of Palestinians resided in the country, not including the PRS. Many of these individuals reportedly faced some discrimination. Palestinians and their children who migrated or sought refuge in Jordan due to the escalation of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and resided in Jordan between December 20, 1949 and February 6, 1954 received full citizenship. The same applied to Palestinians who were displaced or migrated during and after the 1967 war and before June 1, 1983, and held no residency entitlement in the West Bank. Palestinians and their children still holding residency in the West Bank after the 1967 war were not entitled to 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; they paid 80 percent of the rate of uninsured foreigners at hospitals and noncitizen rates at educational institutions and training centers. Refugees and their children who fled Gaza after the 1967 war, commonly referred to as ex-Gazans, were not entitled to citizenship, and authorities issued them temporary travel documents without national numbers. These refugees had restricted access to government services and were almost completely dependent on UNRWA for basic services.

Jordanian citizens of Palestinian heritage were underrepresented in parliament and senior positions in the government and the military, as well as in admissions to public universities due to social barriers. They had limited access to university scholarships, compared to citizens of Jordanian heritage, but were well represented in the private sector.

Other minority populations in Jordan include Circassians, Chechens, Armenians, Assyrians, and Bani Murra (Jordanian/Syrian “Roma” regionally known as “Dom”), in addition to the Syrian, Iraqi, Yemeni, Sudanese, and Somali refugee populations. Minority Rights Group International reported the Bani Murra faced widespread prejudice and hostility across the region, suffered from high rates of poverty, and had limited access to education, employment, and government services.

Labor regulations did not explicitly prohibit employment and occupation discrimination based on race, national origin, color, ethnicity, refugee or stateless status. The Ministry of Labor restricted certain professions to Jordanian nationals only, including office workers, sales professionals, electricians, security guards, hair stylists, and car mechanics.

According to the employment ministry, most foreign workers in the country were Egyptian and, due to the requirements of the work visa sponsorship system, were required to obtain an employer’s permission to leave the country. NGOs reported foreign workers, including garment workers, agricultural workers, and domestic workers, were especially vulnerable to gender-based violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and verbal and physical assault in the workplace. Many migrant workers of Southeast Asian and African origin described pervasive mistreatment based on ethnic grounds. According to an NGO, authorities often stopped individuals of Southeast Asian and African origin, particularly migrant workers, in public spaces and asked to see their immigration documents.

Some foreign migrant workers faced discrimination in wages, housing, and working conditions. In addition, NGOs reported that some migrant workers could not officially register their children due to seizure of their documents, which led to the accumulation of fines. As a result of inability to repay those fines, parents were unable to return to their home countries with their children.

Children

Birth Registration: The government did not issue birth certificates to all children born in the country. The government deemed some children illegitimate and denied them standard registration, including children of unmarried women or interfaith marriages involving a Muslim woman and converts from Islam to another religion. Instead, the government issued these children, as well as orphans, special national identification numbers that differed from the standard national identification numbers given to most citizens. This made it difficult for these children to attend school, access health services, or receive other documentation. If children of citizen mothers and noncitizen fathers applied and resided in the country for at least five years, they could gain access to certain services enjoyed by citizens, including basic education; subsidized health care; the ability to own property, invest, and obtain a driver's license; and employment priority over other foreigners. To access these services, children had to obtain a special identification card through the Civil Status Bureau. Some children of citizen mothers and noncitizen fathers were required to apply for residency permits every year, but authorities did not always grant renewals.

Authorities separated children born out of wedlock from their mothers and placed them in orphanages, regardless of the mother's desire for custody.

Education: Education was compulsory from ages six through 16 and free until age 18. Children without legal residency faced obstacles enrolling in public school.

Child Abuse: The law provided for the basic rights of a child, including against abuse. The law covered health and education protections, and obliged teachers and doctors, among others, to report cases of child abuse to authorities.

The law also specified punishment for child abuse. For example, rape of a child younger than age 15 potentially carried the death penalty. There were no convictions for rape of a child younger than 15 during the year. Local organizations working with abused children pointed to gaps in the legal system that regularly resulted in lenient sentencing, particularly for family members. In some cases, authorities failed to intervene when confronted with reports of abuse, resulting in escalating violence and death.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: The minimum age for marriage was 18, but with the consent of both a judge and a guardian, a child as young as age 16 could be married. The policy was enforced inconsistently. Judges had the authority to decide if marriage of girls between ages 16 to 18 would be "in their best interest" and to adjudicate the marriage contract. In October, local authorities reported there were 5,824 child marriages during 2022; UNICEF reported almost a quarter of these children were Syrian, and early and forced marriage among refugee populations remained high. According to local and international organizations, some Syrian refugee families initiated early marriages for their daughters to help mitigate the stresses of poverty. The National Council for Family Affairs, a civil society organization chaired by the queen, indicated cases of early marriage (involving individuals under the age of 15) decreased during the year.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law stipulated a penalty of six months' to three years' imprisonment for the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The law prohibited the distribution of pornography involving persons younger than age 18. The law did not specifically prohibit the possession of child pornography without an intention to sell or distribute. The law penalized those who use the internet to post or distribute child pornography. The minimum age of consensual sex was 18, although sexual relations within court-approved marriages between minors or between an adult and a minor spouse were legal. Authorities generally enforced the law related to sexual exploitation of children.

Antisemitism

Aside from foreigners, there was no resident Jewish community in the country. Antisemitism was present in media throughout the year and increased precipitously during the war in Gaza following Hamas' October 7 attacks on Israel. Editorial cartoons, articles, and opinion pieces often negatively depicted Jews, without government response. The national school curriculum, including materials on tolerance education, did not mention the Holocaust and used antisemitic tropes. Some private school curricula included information on the Holocaust. Following the October 7 Hamas attack in Israel and subsequent Israeli military response in Gaza, antisemitic hate speech proliferated in the country on social media, in public and private schools, and among protesters at demonstrations across the country. Government officials publicly condemned acts of Islamophobia and antisemitism. Throughout the year, several Jewish travelers reported discriminatory practices such as the confiscation of religious items by border authorities at ports of entry. Some local media, including government-affiliated outlets, continued to publish antisemitic content during the year.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Forced Organ Harvesting

Organ harvesting was considered a cross-border trafficking-in-persons crime and was the third-most committed trafficking offense after forced labor and sexual exploitation, according to the PSD. The PSD's Counter Trafficking Unit started tracking social media activity to locate potential perpetrators. There were reports of 17 organ harvesting cases throughout the year.

Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, or Sex Characteristics

Criminalization: Consensual same-sex sexual conduct among adults was not criminalized. Authorities, however, sometimes arrested LGBTQI+ individuals arbitrarily or on the pretext of violating public order, morality laws, or public decency ordinances. In an August report, Human Rights Watch characterized the new cybercrimes law as a "disaster" for members of the LGBTQI+ community because provisions regarding "pornographic activities" (as opposed to "pornography") and "inciting immorality" could be used to target perceived LGBTQI+ individuals and allies online. LGBTQI+ individuals faced regular administrative or often arbitrary detentions, digital targeting, harassment, and intimidation, including formal and informal interrogation, economic and legal threats, asset freezing, and online and offline monitoring from state actors. Media reported several LGBTQI+ persons were arbitrarily arrested or detained.

In August, *the Guardian* reported that the director of an unnamed LGBTQI+ organization was forced into a car by GID officers who then interrogated and detained him over night. The GID officers reportedly informed the individual's parents that he was a member of the LGBTQI+ community.

Violence and Harassment: LGBTQI+ persons were frequently targets of violence and abuse, including rape, with little legal recourse against perpetrators. Some LGBTQI+ persons reported they sought police help but instead were harassed, intimidated, ignored, detained, or even returned by police to dangerous family situations of abuse and death threats. LGBTQI+ persons frequently suffered under tribal "honor" codes, effectively allowing families wide discretion outside of legal protections to enforce perceived offenses against family honor, including abuse and death threats against LGBTQI+ persons. Transgender individuals were especially vulnerable to acts of violence

and sexual assault, and authorities provided them with no legal protection, or kept them in jail citing it was “for their own protection.”

In July, a group of queer individuals and initiatives issued a report stating that since the beginning of the year, there had been an “alarming increase” in attacks on LGBTQI+ spaces, initiatives, social media pages, applications, and individuals in the country. The report detailed that the attacks occurred online and offline and stated they seemed to be a coordinated effort by governmental entities, media organizations, and conservative politicians, leaders, and individuals.

Many LGBTQI+ persons feared for their lives or feared other abuse at the hands of family members or authorities. Parents were customarily allowed to request informal “warrants” from security services for children, including adult children, to suspend their movement inside the country, prevent travel abroad, or require authorities to forcibly return them to family custody, even if family members had previously threatened that person’s life. There was little to no official action to investigate, prosecute, and punish those complicit in violence and abuses against LGBTQI+ persons by state or nonstate actors.

Discrimination: The law did not prohibit discrimination by state and nonstate actors based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics and did not recognize LGBTQI+ individuals, couples, and their families. There was no known mechanism to address complaints about abuse or wrongful imprisonment because of one’s LGBTQI+ identity, and the government took no known action in this regard. LGBTQI+ community leaders reported most LGBTQI+ individuals kept their sexual orientation or gender identity secret due to fear of societal or government discrimination. Human Rights Watch reported in February that authorities “outed” and threatened to “out” members of the LGBTQI+ community to their families. According to the former director of a prominent LGBTQI+ organization, a number of persons in the country had faced violence from their families after authorities revealed their sexual orientation. LGBTQI+ individuals reported their reluctance to engage the legal system due to fear their sexual orientation or gender identity would provoke hostile reactions from police, disadvantage them in court, or be used to shame them or their families publicly. Some openly LGBTQI+ persons reported instances of death threats, intimidation, and family pressures to “return to the closet.”

LGBTQI+ persons reported discrimination in housing, employment, education, and access to public services. Labor regulations did not explicitly prohibit employment and occupation discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Individuals reported being fired from jobs or denied professional opportunities because of their LGBTQI+ identity. Some experienced extortion and threats of being fired, disinherited, disowned, arrested, or prosecuted.

Several LGBTQI+ individuals found it impossible to live in the country due to the harassment, intimidation, and threats they faced for their LGBTQI+ identity and therefore left the country to seek asylum or were in the process of doing so. In cosmopolitan circles, a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy loosely allowed LGBTQI+ individuals to socialize discreetly. LGBTQI+ members of the working class or refugee community were more vulnerable to police harassment and assault with impunity than individuals who belonged to politically connected families or to tribes authorities were hesitant to harass. Relatively few shelters accepted LGBTQI+ victims, and the facilities and NGOs that served the community lacked sufficient funding and services. According to a legal aid NGO, lawyers in the country were reluctant to represent the LGBTQI+ community because they were harassed and stigmatized for doing so.

In July, a member of parliament posted a video on social media in which he posed next to a sign at an Amman grocery store declaring “gay people” were prohibited from patronizing the establishment. The video remained accessible on his social media page through the end of the year.

In August, a mainstream Jordanian media outlet aired a talk show segment in which a guest and former member of parliament appeared to endorse burning LGBTQI+ individuals at the stake.

Availability of Legal Gender Recognition: There was no legal gender recognition process by which the government allowed individuals to change their gender identity marker on legal and

identifying documents to bring them into alignment with their self-identified gender identity.

Involuntary or Coercive Medical or Psychological Practices: “Conversion therapy” or other efforts to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity or expression were not criminalized. There were reports “conversion therapy” was practiced in the country. LGBTQI+ individuals reported being subjected to aggressive hormone, religious, and psychological regimes by their families to “convert” them to be straight. There were no reports of the government condemning such practices. The law allowed gender “corrective” medical surgery, such as in cases for intersex individuals. The legal availability of this surgery, contingent upon a medical review panel, reflected parents’ decision to “correct” a seeming birth defect and was not available in most cases later in life for transgender individuals. There was insufficient reporting on whether surgeries were performed on children or nonconsenting adult intersex persons.

Restrictions of Freedom of Expression, Association, or Peaceful Assembly: Open and public discussion of LGBTQI+ individuals and related topics was controversial due to social and cultural norms. Human Rights Watch reported that individuals felt unable to safely express their sexual orientation or gender identity online, and LGBTQI+ rights activism suffered as a result. The organization also reported that authorities engaged in digital targeting of LGBTQI+ individuals to entrap them on dating and social media websites and censor content related to gender identity and sexual orientation. Private individuals reportedly extorted LGBTQI+ persons on same-sex dating applications and social media.

In a February report, Human Rights Watch documented cases in which LGBTQI+ activists faced online hate speech due to their activism, prompting authorities to summon them for interrogation. In July, *Open Observatory of Network Interference* reported the government blocked access to a social networking platform widely used by members of the LGBTQI+ community and called the action a nonexplicit barrier to freedom of expression and freedom of association. The Media Commission banned books and blocked websites and dating applications containing LGBTQI+ content.

Government regulations on NGO registration and foreign funding largely prevented activists from organizing themselves within the LGBTQI+ community to defend their human rights or to provide services within their community. At least two LGBTQI+ NGOs were forced to shut down due to increased official pressure; authorities reportedly denied the allegations, saying no such groups ever existed. Members of the LGBTQI+ community confirmed they generally lacked safe spaces and reported being targeted by police upon leaving any of the few places openly associated with the community. Business owners reported being interrogated by police over links to the LGBTQI+ community.

Persons with Disabilities

The law generally provided equal rights to persons with disabilities, but authorities did not fully uphold such legal protections. Disabilities covered under the law included physical, sensory, psychological, and mental disabilities. The Higher Council for Affairs of Persons with Disabilities (HCD), a government body, worked with ministries, the private sector, and NGOs to implement strategies to assist persons with disabilities. Citizens and NGOs reported that persons with disabilities faced problems accessing education, health care, information, communications, buildings, transportation, the judicial system, and other services, particularly in rural areas, on an equal basis with others. Government information and communication on disability concerns was generally provided in accessible formats.

NGOs and local observers reported persons with disabilities faced discrimination in obtaining employment and access to the workplace. The Ministry of Labor exempted noncitizens with severe disabilities from work permit fees and published videos of the operating guide for persons with disabilities, supported by sign language, on its website. The law required private companies to hire workers with disabilities, forbade employers from firing employees solely because of a disability, and directed employers to make their workplaces accessible to persons with disabilities, but these

requirements were implemented at varying degrees. Workplaces with more than 50 employees were required to have 4 percent or more of their workforce be persons with disabilities and to make their workplaces accessible to persons with disabilities. Disability rights activists noted this requirement was not implemented at universities or educational organizations in the country.

The law criminalized attempts to commit suicide or express intent to commit suicide, with punishments including imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months and a fine. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) criticized the provision for imperiling mental health and said this was particularly difficult for persons with mental health disabilities.

Most private and public office buildings had limited or no access for persons with disabilities. The law tasked the Ministry of Public Works' Special Buildings Code Department with enforcing accessibility provisions and overseeing retrofitting of existing buildings to comply with building codes. The HCD also worked to make existing buildings and public facilities accessible. The HCD reported it funded the renovation of 86 buildings, including 58 government buildings, to improve accessibility. Municipal infrastructure, such as public transport, streets, sidewalks, and intersections, was largely not accessible. Revisions to the law entered into force in September requiring greater availability of accessible parking spaces and establishing penalties for unauthorized usage. From August 2022 through September, the HCD provided 5,103 persons with disabilities identification cards that allowed digital verification of their disability status. The cards allowed holders to access services and entitlements without physical copies of medical records. Applicants for the cards did not incur costs for the prerequisite medical evaluation but were obligated to pay the government a nominal fee for the card or replacements.

The PSD's national 911 emergency call center provided emergency services for persons with hearing and speech disabilities by using sign language over a video call with specially trained officers on duty. These PSD interpreters were also available for persons to use when interacting with government offices without a representative who could communicate via sign language.

Children with disabilities experienced extreme difficulty in accessing constitutionally protected early and primary education. School classrooms were not fully accessible and there was a limited number of qualified teachers for children with disabilities. Children with physical disabilities attended school with peers without disabilities. According to NCHR, there were 150-200 inclusive government-run public schools out of 4,002 schools under the Ministry of Education across the country. According to the HCD it resolved 17 reports of students with disabilities being denied access to education from August 2022 through September.

In May, the Ministry of Education appointed approximately 600 individuals to build capacity for inclusive education services in each of the country's 42 directorates of education. This initiative operated primarily within government primary co-ed schools or girls' schools. During the year, the Ministry of Education reported it provided partial financial support so that families in regions lacking accessible schools could enroll their children with disabilities at better-equipped private schools. In June, the ministry issued a directive to the Special Education Department to start accepting applications for this assistance.

Human rights activists and media reported cases of physical and sexual abuse of children and adults with disabilities in institutions, rehabilitation centers, and other care settings. Authorities automatically referred cases involving violence against persons with disabilities or institutionalized persons to the JFPD. The Ministry of Social Development monitoring 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. The PSD reported 40 cases of abuses against persons with disabilities in institutional settings, some of them operated by the government. In October, HCD reported it had carried out 72 inspections of centers providing services to persons with disabilities in 2022 as well as five home visits and six visits to mental health centers.

The HCD reported that it suspended 11 centers providing services to persons with disabilities for violating license requirements related to sanitation and infrastructure until they returned to compliance.

As of October, HCD had referred four individuals to the judiciary for verbally harassing persons with disabilities.

Most complaints made to the HCD Complaints Division were related to procedural barriers and most requests were for exemptions on customs and duties, or services and support for employment and education.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

HIV and AIDS were largely taboo subjects. Lack of public awareness remained a problem because many citizens believed the disease exclusively affected foreigners and members of the LGBTQI+ community. Society stigmatized individuals with HIV, and those individuals largely concealed their medical status. Individuals with HIV were not eligible for disability pensions. The government continued its efforts to inform the public about the disease and eliminate negative attitudes toward persons with HIV or AIDS, but also continued to test all foreigners annually for HIV, as well as for hepatitis B, syphilis, malaria, and tuberculosis. According to NGOs, detention centers placed detainees with HIV in solitary confinement to separate them from other detainees. The government deported migrant workers diagnosed with HIV. The Ministry of Health denied access to antiretroviral drugs for those awaiting deportation. UNHCR did not have recorded cases of deported refugees or asylum seekers due to their HIV status. Labor regulations did not explicitly prohibit employment and occupation discrimination based on HIV or AIDS status.

Section 7.

Worker Rights ✓

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provided for the right of workers to form and join trade unions and conduct legal strikes, but with significant restrictions. While the law did not expressly provide an affirmative right to collective bargaining, the law did enumerate procedural requirements for collective agreements when both labor and management voluntarily agreed. Any legally recognized unions wishing to conclude a collective bargaining agreement with an employer were allowed to do so. The law identified specific groups of public- and private-sector workers who could organize. It also defined 17 industries and professions in which trade unions could be established and excluded agricultural and domestic workers. Civil servants were not permitted to join unions. The law required that unions for these 17 statutorily-defined trades belonged to the government-linked General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU), the country's sole trade union federation. The establishment of new unions required at least 50 founding members and approval from the Ministry of Labor. The law authorized additional professions to form professional associations on a case-by-case basis.

The government subsidized and audited salaries and activities of the GFJTU and monitored union elections. The government denied recognition to independent unions organized outside the structure of the government-approved federation. The government did not meet with these unions, and the lack of legal recognition hampered their ability to collect dues, obtain meeting space, and otherwise address members' workplace concerns. Labor organizations also reported difficulty obtaining government recognition for trade unions in new sectors beyond the 17 sectors established in law, in

part because new unions would require approval by a tripartite committee in which the existing 17 union heads were represented.

The law allowed foreign workers to join unions but did not permit them to form unions or hold union office, effectively limiting union formation in enterprises primarily comprised of foreign workers. No new trade union had been established since 1976.

The Labor Code prohibited antiunion discrimination and protected workers from employer retaliation for union affiliation or activities. The law, however, did not explicitly provide a right to reinstatement for workers fired due to antiunion views, and observers noted that the labor code did not explicitly protect unionized and nonunionized workers from retaliation. This was particularly the case for foreign workers in all sectors, as well as citizens working as day laborers in the public sector on short-term contracts.

In July, the Zarqa Steel Company terminated 23 workers, citing the need to hire younger workers and recruit new skill sets. Observers believed the company fired the 23 workers due to their participation in a strike.

When conflicts arose during labor negotiations, the law required that union representatives and employers first attempt to resolve the matter through informal mediation. If a matter remained unresolved, the union was required to request Ministry of Labor-appointed mediation. Ministry-appointed mediators were assigned to cases for up to 21 days. If initial mediation failed, the case was referred to a higher mediation council composed of an employer representative, a labor representative, and a chair appointed by the minister of labor. If the council's adjudication was unsuccessful, the dispute went to a labor court with a panel of ministry-appointed judges for 21 days.

There were limits on the ability to strike, including a requirement to provide a minimum of 14 days' notice to the employer. The law prohibited strikes if a labor dispute was under mediation or arbitration. The law prohibited management from arbitrarily dismissing workers engaged in labor activism or arbitration, but enforcement was inconsistent. Labor organizations reported some management representatives used threats to intimidate striking workers. The Ministry of Labor reported 17 workers' strikes through August, all of which were unauthorized strikes that took place without support of union leadership. Strikes generally occurred without advance notice or registration.

Some foreign workers whose residency permits were tied to work contracts were vulnerable to retaliation by employers for participating in strikes and sit-ins. Participation in a legally unrecognized strike was counted as an unexcused absence under the law. The law allowed employers to consider employment contracts void if a worker was absent more than 10 consecutive days, as long as the employer submitted a written notice to the Ministry of Labor. Labor rights organizations reported instances of refusing to renew foreign workers' contracts due to attempts to organize in the workplace. Migrant workers in the garment sector were allowed to join trade unions but were unable to vote for the union chairpersons, and migrant workers could not hold leadership positions in unions.

The government did not fully enforce applicable laws related to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Penalties were commensurate with those for similar civil rights violations and were regularly applied against violators if they were charged.

There were no known reports of threats of violence against union heads, although security services arrested labor activists and reportedly pressured union leaders under an implicit threat of arrest and prosecution to refrain from activism that challenged government interests. The government had the power to dissolve unions perceived as violating the labor law.

Labor NGOs working to promote the rights of workers generally focused on promoting the rights of migrant workers. Labor NGOs did not face government restrictions in addition to those discussed in section 2.b.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

See the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings>.

d. Discrimination (see section 6)

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Wage and Hour Laws: The law provided for a national monthly minimum wage, which was above the official individual poverty line. In January, the government postponed until 2025 the planned implementation of automatic increases in the minimum wage based on official inflation rates.

The law set a workweek of 48 hours and required overtime pay for hours worked in excess of that level. Because there was no limit on mutually agreed overtime, the Ministry of Labor reportedly permitted employees in some industries, such as the garment sector, to work as many as 70 to 75 hours per week, and observers reported many foreign workers requested overtime work. The law permitted compulsory overtime under certain circumstances, such as conducting an annual inventory, closing accounts, preparing to sell goods at discounted prices, avoiding loss of goods that would otherwise be exposed to damage, and receiving special deliveries. In such cases actual working hours could not exceed 10 hours per day, the employee had to receive overtime pay, and the period could not last more than 30 days. NGOs reported some instances of forced overtime, but it was unclear whether it was illegal or compulsory overtime.

Employees were entitled to one day off per week. The law provided for 14 days of paid sick leave and 14 days of paid annual leave per year, which increased to 21 days of paid annual leave after five years of service with the same firm. Workers also received additional national and religious holidays designated by the government.

Occupational Safety and Health: Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were appropriate for the main industries in the country, and employers were required to abide by all OSH standards set by the government. The law required 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 needed, and protect employees from explosions or fires by storing flammable materials appropriately. Responsibility for identifying unsafe situations remained with the Ministry of Labor's occupational safety and health experts. The law provided workers the right to remove themselves from a hazardous workplace without jeopardizing their employment. Expanded OSH regulations were adopted to set standards for medical care to be provided at the worksite and establish OSH committees at the workplace, but the Ministry of Labor had not yet issued implementation instructions at year's end.

Wage, overtime, safety, and other standards often were not upheld. Some foreign workers faced hazardous and exploitative working conditions in a variety of sectors. Authorities did not effectively protect all employees who attempted to remove themselves from situations that endangered their health and safety. Labor advocates reported that employers sometimes failed to provide or actively denied adequate medical care and encouraged workers to continue working. Labor organizations reported that women workers were more likely than men to encounter labor abuses, including wages below the minimum wage and harassment in the workplace.

The government required garment-exporting manufacturers to participate in the Better Work Jordan program, a global initiative by the International Labour Organization and the International Finance Corporation to improve labor standards. All factories required by the government to join Better Work Jordan were active members of the program.

In the garment sector, foreign workers were more susceptible than citizens to dangerous or unfair conditions. A substantial portion of the standard monthly minimum wage for foreign workers in the garment industry was used to pay employment placement agencies for food, accommodation, and travel for workers from their home countries, according to an international NGO.

Through August, the government's online platform to assist foreign and citizen workers with their pandemic-related difficulties had received 9,124 complaints about various violations of the labor code.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement: The Ministry of Labor was responsible for enforcement of labor laws, including wage, hour, and OSH standards. Penalties for violations were not commensurate with those for crimes like negligence and were frequently but unevenly applied against violators. The number of labor inspections was insufficient. Inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections and they could initiate the process by which sanctions were levied, but they could not themselves levy sanctions.

The Ministry of Labor did not effectively enforce minimum wage, overtime, and OSH laws. Garment sector workers reported working in excess of 10 hours per day. Some foreign workers faced hazardous and exploitative working conditions in a variety of sectors.

Employers reportedly subjected some workers in the agricultural sector, most of whom were Egyptians, to exploitative conditions. According to a domestic NGO, agricultural workers usually received less than the minimum wage. Some employers in the agricultural sector confiscated passports. The use of labor brokers, failure to register many farms, and lack of written contracts, combined with migrant worker status, limited agricultural workers' ability to understand their rights and seek legal remedy with the government. Egyptian migrant workers were also vulnerable to exploitation in the construction industry, where employers usually paid migrant workers less than the minimum wage and failed to uphold occupational health and safety standards. Through August, the Ministry of Labor conducted 1,173 inspections in the agricultural sector and issued 95 violations.

In the country's visa sponsorship system, employers sponsored migrant workers' visas. Under the visa sponsorship system, migrant workers could not change employers or leave the country without permission from their employer, leaving them vulnerable to being victims of human trafficking, including forced labor conditions. Migrant workers who left their workplace without their employer's permission forfeited their legal status and risked arrest and deportation. The visa sponsorship system enabled employers to circumvent established labor laws which ensured a minimum wage, limits on working hours, a weekly rest day, overtime pay, and freedom of association.

Domestic workers often faced unacceptable working conditions, working long hours without holidays or days off during the week and not being paid on time. Women domestic workers were at particular risk of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. NGOs reported that employers regularly confiscated domestic workers' passports and other documents to restrict freedom of movement and the ability to change employers. While domestic workers could file complaints in person with the Ministry of Labor's Domestic Workers Directorate or the PSD, many domestic workers complained there was no follow-up on their cases. The Counter Trafficking Unit operated a 24-hour hotline, with limited translation capabilities. From January through August, the unit handled five cases of forced labor. Labor inspectors did not regularly investigate reports of labor abuses or other abuses of domestic workers in private homes, and inspectors could not enter a private residence without the owner's permission except with a court order. Advocates reported that migrant domestic workers who sought government assistance or made allegations against their

employers frequently faced counterclaims of absconding or other criminal behavior by the employers.

Employees could lodge complaints regarding violations of the law directly with the Ministry of Labor or through organizations such as their union or the NCHR. The NCHR reported this year that the Ministry of Labor received 50 complaints related to labor disputes in 2022, its most recent year of data. The ministry opened an investigation for each complaint and resolved 40 of the disputes, according to the NCHR.

Employers could file criminal complaints with police stations against domestic workers for absconding. Most fleeing domestic workers reportedly sought to escape conditions indicative of forced labor or abuse, including unpaid wages and, to a lesser extent, sexual or physical abuse. By law, employers were responsible for renewing foreign employees' residency and work permits, but often failed to do so for domestic employees. NGOs reported authorities administratively detained foreign domestic workers and other migrant workers and did not inform them of their rights or the reasons for their detention. Legal processes for migrant workers took years and translation services were minimal.

The Ministry of Labor did not consistently inspect and monitor all workplaces or apply all the protections of the labor code in the informal sector, which the World Bank estimated could account for as much as 59 percent of citizen workers.