

2014 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Jordan

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The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy ruled by King Abdullah II bin Hussein. The constitution concentrates executive and legislative authority in the king. The multi-party parliament consists of the 75-member House of Notables (Majlis al-Ayan) appointed by the king and a 150-member elected lower house, the Chamber of Deputies (Majlis al-Nuwwab). Chamber of Deputies elections took place in January 2013, and municipal elections took place in August 2013. International observers deemed both elections credible. Authorities generally maintained effective control over the security forces.

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

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

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

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

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports of arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life.

b. Disappearance

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

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

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

On May 21, lawyer Musa al-Abdallat claimed that prison guards beat Isam al-Aqabi, alias Abu Dajanah, an Islamist prisoner, in Muwaqqar prison. He added that al-Aqabi requested admittance to the hospital and a medical report, but the prison administration denied this request. The prison administration denied prison officials beat al-Aqabi and said that he did not file a formal complaint.

According to a report by the quasi-governmental National Council for Human Rights (NCHR), the Public Security Force (PSD) conducted 77 formal investigations into allegations of torture and beatings in police stations in 2013: 13 were dropped by the complainants, 15 were closed due to lack of evidence, 48 remained pending, and one was referred to police court.

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

The NCHR reported instances of police kicking, burning, and beating detainees with sticks and whips, sometimes while the detainees' hands and feet were bound. Throughout the year various individuals and local NGOs reported that in an effort to humiliate detainees, government agents at times sexually abused them during arrest or detention by making them remove their clothing and perform sexual acts or threatening them with rape. The NCHR reported in 2013 the numbers showed a noticeable increase in complaints of torture and mistreatment as the center received 19 cases of beating and torture at prisons and rehabilitation centers.

The 2013 NCHR report indicated that authorities extracted confessions in some death penalty cases under torture, although the constitution stipulates that any confession extracted under torture is void. The report documented that neither the legislative nor the executive powers took effective steps to address the issue of torture.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

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

Physical Conditions: Significant problems remained in prisons, particularly in the older facilities, including inadequate health care, poor sanitation and ventilation, extreme temperatures, and insufficient basic and emergency medical care. In its 2013 report, the NCHR identified the following problems: limited health care, limited judicial supervision and legal assistance provided to inmates, and limited social care provided to the inmates and their families. Additionally, there were limited post-release programs, overcrowding and poor classification of inmates, and delays in adopting policies of alternative penalties. Detainees reported abuse and mistreatment by guards. According to NCHR's 2013 report, one case of death resulted from suicide while in detention.

In 2013 the NCHR received 77 cases of allegations of torture and mistreatment at the hands of law enforcement personnel. Of these, authorities closed 13 cases based on the request of the complainant, closed 15 for lack of evidence, referred one case to police court; 48 cases were still pending. The NCHR also received 19 complaints of torture and mistreatment at prisons and rehabilitation centers, compared to five cases in 2012 and two cases in 2011.

According to government statistics, there were 10,089 inmates in 14 correctional and rehabilitation center facilities in September, including about 460 women in the Women's Correctional and Rehabilitation Center in the Jweideh detention facility and in the women's section at Umm al-Lulu prison. Prison administration officials reported these figures represented an increase of approximately 2,000 prisoners over the average number of persons incarcerated in 2013.

Officials reported overcrowding at most of the prisons, especially the prisons in and around Amman. Jweideh, one of the older facilities, was especially overcrowded. In early September there were 1,366 detainees at Jweideh, which has a capacity of 1,080. More than 100 of the inmates slept on mattresses on the floor for lack of sufficient beds. The NCHR has recommended the closure of Jweideh Prison, citing inmates' complaints of a lack of legal assistance, poor social and medical care, missing court dates due to lack of timely notification and transportation, unavailability of potable water, small food portions, a shortage of blankets, and no hot water in winter. Prison conditions for women were generally better than those for men, although prison officials reported the women's prison was also overcrowded.

The Ministry of Social Development reported there were 1,319 juveniles in custody. Juveniles convicted of crimes are detained separately from adult prisoners. Parliament passed a new Juvenile Law in August stipulating that juveniles be held separately from adult detainees during the pretrial phases as well.

International and domestic NGOs reported that in some instances Islamist prisoners faced harsher prison conditions than other inmates. Pretrial detainees often were held in the same detention facilities as convicted prisoners. The General Intelligence Directorate (GID) held some persons detained on national security charges in separate detention facilities. In 2013 the NCHR made one announced visit to GID prisons, where the detainees complained of prolonged pretrial detention. The center received the following complaints about the GID: withholding passports, putting travel bans against citizens, banning citizens from getting security clearances, not informing the families about the whereabouts of detainees and banning the families from visiting the detainees. According to human rights activists, the GID held detainees in solitary confinement and prevented from meeting unsupervised with visitors, including their lawyers.

Although basic care was available in all correctional facilities, medical staff complained that prisons throughout the country lacked adequate facilities, supplies, and staff and were unable to address deficiencies in care available to inmates.

Most facilities were unable to conduct blood tests and had limited x-ray capabilities, forcing doctors to rely largely on patient self-reporting for certain conditions. If an inmate's condition was severe and could not be treated at the clinic, jail doctors recommended transfer to a local hospital.

Administration: During the year no steps were taken to improve recordkeeping or systematically use alternatives to sentencing for nonviolent offenders; however, in August parliament passed a new Juvenile Law recommending that judges use alternative sentencing, including community service and vocational training, for juveniles. There were no prison ombudsmen. In some cases authorities severely restricted prisoner and detainee access to visitors. Prisoners could observe their religious practices. Authorities permitted prisoners and detainees to submit complaints to judicial authorities without censorship, but authorities rarely investigated allegations of inhuman conditions.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted local and international human rights observers to visit prisons and conduct private interviews. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited prisoners and detainees in all prisons, including those controlled by the GID, according to standard ICRC modalities. Other local human rights groups that monitored prison conditions included Karamah, a team of government officials and NGOs, and the NCHR, a quasi-governmental organization.

Improvements: While the older prison facilities remained substandard, new prisons generally were less crowded and better managed. The new Juvenile Law improved judges' ability to use alternative sentencing for juveniles. Juveniles were already detained separately after conviction, but the new law also required that they be detained separately from adults during the investigation and trial phases.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, the government did not always observe these prohibitions. In particular the governors of the country's 12 governorates continued to use the Criminal Procedures Law to detain individuals administratively without due process or detain individuals found not guilty in legal proceedings. According to the NCHR report, authorities held 12,766 individuals in administrative detention in 2013.

In February news sources reported that authorities detained Mohammad al-Tillawi, accused of lese majeste, for 66 days without charges. Authorities released him on bail in March, and his case remained pending. Authorities also arrested Al-Tillawi in October 2013 for participating in the 2012 price-hike protests.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The PSD controls general police functions. The PSD, GID, gendarmerie, Civil Defense Directorate, and military share responsibility for maintaining internal security. The PSD, Civil Defense Directorate, and gendarmerie report to the minister of interior with direct access to the king when

necessary, and the GID reports directly to the king. Civilian authorities maintained control over security forces.

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

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

During the year there were several reported instances of security forces using excessive force with impunity and failing to protect demonstrators from violence. In 2013 the NCHR received 22 complaints concerning security personnel using excessive force, including tear gas, water hoses, and batons, during arrests and searches.

Security forces occasionally failed to prevent societal violence. On April 21, Salafi extremist Qusai Suleiman Al-Imami died of gunshot wounds during an attempt by gendarmerie forces to arrest a criminal suspect in Ma'an. After Imami's death residents of Ma'an rioted and clashed with law enforcement for five days. Demonstrators blocked streets, burned tires, and shot at and attempted to burn government buildings. Security forces arrested 158 persons during the unrest. A Ministry of Health autopsy subsequently concluded that al-Imami died of gunshot wounds from AK-47 variant weapons, which Jordanian security forces do not use, suggesting that he died from wounds inflicted by one of his associates.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law allows suspects to be detained for up to 24 hours without a warrant in all cases. The law requires that police notify authorities within 24 hours of an arrest and that authorities file formal charges within 15 days of an arrest. The period to file formal charges can be extended for as long as six months for a felony and two months for a misdemeanor. According to local NGOs, prosecutors routinely requested extensions, which judges granted. In early September 44.4 percent of the detainee population was in pretrial detention, according to the prison administration. NGOs alleged that authorities transferred suspects to the security court to extend the legal time from 24 hours to seven days for investigation prior to notification. Bail is allowed under the penal code and was used in some cases. Some detainees reported not being allowed timely access to a lawyer or to contact their relatives at the time of arrest, but authorities generally permitted family member visits, albeit sometimes up to a week after the arrest. Authorities appointed lawyers to represent indigent

defendants charged with felonies carrying possible life sentences or the death penalty, although legal aid services remained minimal. The law provides the right to appear promptly before a judge or other judicial officer for a judicial determination of the legality of the detention. At times suspects were detained incommunicado for up to one week or placed under house arrest. A number of human rights activists alleged that arrestees were held incommunicado to hide evidence of physical abuse by security forces.

In its 2013 report, the NCHR stated that police subjected detainees in police stations to beatings and torture during preliminary investigations, especially in the Criminal Investigation Department and the Antinarcotics Department in the PSD. The report also noted poor hygienic standards in police stations.

Arbitrary Arrest: The State Security Court gives judicial police the authority to arrest and keep persons in custody for seven days prior to notification while conducting criminal investigations. This authority includes arrests for alleged misdemeanors. In cases purportedly involving state security, security forces at times arrested and detained citizens without warrants or judicial review, held defendants in pretrial detention without informing them of the charges against them, and either did not allow defendants to meet with their lawyers or did not permit meetings until shortly before trial.

The law allows provincial governors to detain individuals suspected of planning to commit a crime or those who allegedly shelter thieves, habitually steal, or constitute a danger to the public. Governors used this provision widely. Those accused were subjected to imprisonment or house arrest under administrative detention without formal charges, and governors may prolong detentions. In early September the Prisons Administration reported that 708 persons were in administrative detention: 212 women and 496 men. In 2013 the NCHR reported 12,766 administrative detainees, some held as long as three years.

In November the Amman Magistrate Court awarded an Egyptian worker, Hamadino al-Najdi, compensation of 2,000 Jordanian dinars (\$2,800) for unlawful detention. Al-Najdi was held in administrative detention for 13 months after authorities arrested him for carrying an invalid work permit. The court ruling noted that the renewal of work permits is the responsibility of the employer and not the worker.

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

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

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary, but allegations by legal experts and human rights lawyers of nepotism and the influence of special interests raised concerns about the judiciary's independence. Additionally, judicial inefficiency and a large case backlog delayed the provision of justice. Authorities did not always respect court orders.

Trial Procedures

The law presumes that defendants are innocent. According to the law, all civilian court trials, including State Security Court trials, are open to the public unless the court determines that the trial should be closed to protect the public interest. State Security Court trials are generally open to the journalists and NGOs, but the court can decide to make them private if it deems it in the public interest. Juries are not used. Defendants are entitled to legal counsel, provided at public expense for the indigent in cases involving the death penalty or life imprisonment, but only at the trial stage. The Justice Center for Legal Aid reported that in 2012, 83 percent of criminal defendants lacked legal representation prior to trial, and 68 percent lacked legal representation at trial. The report noted access to legal counsel was almost nonexistent in police stations. Officials did not respect the right of defendants to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them or to a fair and public trial without undue delay. Foreign residents were not uniformly provided with translations and defense, especially for foreign workers who often did not speak Arabic. Defendants may present witnesses and evidence and may question witnesses presented against them. Authorities generally granted defendants access to government-held evidence relevant to a case. Defendants can appeal verdicts; appeals are automatic for cases involving the death penalty. Defendants do not have the right to refuse to testify. The constitution prohibits the use of confessions extracted by torture. Human rights activists noted, however, that this provision had not been implemented and that courts routinely accepted confessions extracted under torture or mistreatment.

On June 26, the State Security Court acquitted Palestinian-born cleric Abu Qatada on one of the two terrorism charges against him. The court ruled that authorities had not obtained the testimony of his codefendant, the key witness in the case, under torture. The court ruled, however, that the codefendant's testimony was inadmissible because it was not corroborated by other evidence. On September 28, the State Security Court acquitted Abu Qatada of the second terrorism charge against him. In this case the court ruled that authorities had not obtained the testimony of his codefendant by torture and was, therefore, admissible; however, the verdict stated that there was insufficient evidence linking Abu Qatada to the planned attack. Abu Qatada had been convicted in Jordanian legal proceedings in his absence with conspiracy to carry out terrorist attacks in 1999 and 2000, and faced a new trial on the same charges after his 2013 deportation from the United Kingdom. He had been out of the country for 20 years and was deported, at Britain's request, after Jordan and the United Kingdom signed a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, which required that Abu Qatada not be tortured or mistreated and that any testimony resulting from torture (of other witnesses) not be used in his trial.

Defendants before the State Security Court frequently met with their attorneys only one or two days before their trial began. Authorities did not accord defendants adequate time and facilities to prepare their defense. In many cases the accused remained in detention without bail during the proceedings. In the State Security Court, defendants have the right to appeal their sentences to the Court of Cassation, which is authorized to review issues of both fact and law.

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

Political Prisoners and Detainees

During the year the government detained and imprisoned activists for political reasons including criticizing the government, publicly advocating for banned political parties, criticizing the government's foreign policy, the publication of criticism of government officials, and chanting slogans against the king. Citizens and NGOs alleged that the government continued to detain other individuals for political reasons during the year and that governors continued to use administrative detention for what appeared to be political reasons.

On March 31, security officials arrested Islamic Liberation Party members Nayef Lafi and Ibrahim al-Kharabsh outside parliament for distributing leaflets supporting their party. On June 30, security officials arrested two other members of the Islamic Liberation Party for distributing leaflets.

During the year authorities arrested and charged proreform activists with undermining the political system following peaceful protests.

On June 18, news sources reported that security forces arrested Irbid popular movements activist Wasfi al-Sarhan on charges of undermining the regime and lese majeste related to his participation in protests.

By August lawyers reported that none of the 200 protesters arrested in 2012 for various charges against them, including undermining the political system, unlawful gathering, rioting, or insulting the king, remained in detention. The State Security Court had sentenced most of them to three months' imprisonment, a penalty which could be replaced by a fine.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals may bring civil lawsuits related to human rights violations and did so during the year. On April 16, the Cassation Court ordered the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) to pay compensation of 6,382 Jordanian dinars (\$9,600) to an Egyptian foreign worker after two JAF soldiers beat him at a border crossing.

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

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

In recent years some activists reported that GID officials threatened to bar children of activists' from entering or graduating from university.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press; however, the government did not respect these rights.

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

On August 28, news sources reported that authorities charged two juveniles, ages 16 and 17, with lese majeste for statements they made during celebrations of the ceasefire in Gaza. Authorities released them after several days of detention and dropped charges against them.

In September 2013 authorities arrested Amjad Ma'ala and Nidal Fara'neh, the publisher and chief editor of *Jafra News*, respectively, on charges of exposing the kingdom to the risk of hostile acts and undermining relations with a foreign country for publishing a video titled *Son*, about the son of a former Qatari emir in a sex scandal with an Israeli woman. Authorities released the two journalists on bail, but the charges against them remained pending.

All public-opinion polls and survey research require authorization from the Bureau of Statistics, although the law is not enforced. NGOs stated that the measure could be enforced, even retroactively and called for the government to rescind it.

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

In 2013 the NCHR documented physical and verbal assaults against journalists. Authorities arrested or temporarily detained some journalists, and some received threats from government officials or private individuals. The 2013 NCHR report noted that security agencies and individuals exposed journalists to physical assaults and confiscation of cameras and that authorities arrested and temporarily detained some journalists.

The government has a majority of seats on the board for the leading semiofficial daily newspaper, *Al-Rai*, and a share of board seats for *Ad-Dustour* daily newspaper. According to press freedom

advocates, the GID's Media Department must approve editors in chief of progovernment newspapers.

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

On June 4, security forces entered the headquarters of Al-Abbasiya, an Iraqi television station based in the country, and arrested the owner and 12 staff members. Authorities detained the owner and staff members for 15 days while investigating them for threatening Jordanian security and inciting sectarian violence. Government officials claimed that security forces found weapons in the station's offices. The government released the journalists without charges.

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

By law any book can be published and or distributed freely; however, if the Press and Publications Directorate deemed passages religiously offensive or "insulting" to the king, it can request a court order to prohibit the distribution of the book.

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

On June 22, two members of parliament (MPs) beat, insulted, and threatened to kill an online journalist, Abdallah al-Athim, after he reported that an extraordinary session of parliament had turned into a joke and an exchange of insults. Members of parliament enjoy immunity from prosecution while parliament is in session, and the two MPs did not face charges stemming from the incident.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: The government directly and indirectly censored the media. Journalists claimed the government used informants in newsrooms and exercised influence over reporting; they claimed GID officials censored reporting. Editors reportedly received telephone calls from security officials instructing them how to cover events or to refrain from covering certain topics or events, especially criticism of political reform. Bribery of journalists took place and undermined independent reporting. On occasion government officials provided texts for journalists to publish under their bylines. Journalists reported the threat of detention and imprisonment under the law for a variety of offenses, along with stringent fines of as much as 20,000 dinars (\$28,000) for defamation under the law, which led to self-censorship. At times editors in chief censored articles to prevent lawsuits. The government's use of "soft containment" of journalists, including the withholding of financial support, scholarships for relatives, and special invitations, led to significant control of media content.

In August, Al-Madina news website published an article claiming that Syrian aircraft had violated Jordanian airspace and fired missiles at a number of border sites within the country. News sources reported that the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces stated the reports were false and that the Armed Forces would refer all who published false news reports to the State Security Court. Al-Madina removed the story from their website shortly thereafter.

In August, Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism Director Rana Sabbagh posted on Facebook that the semi-independent daily newspaper *Al-Ghad* refused to publish an article critical of constitutional amendments that gave the king the power to appoint the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the director of the GID. She later published the article in a London-based newspaper.

The government continued to enforce bans on the distribution of selected books for religious, moral, and political reasons. A news website reported the government banned at least 18 books between June 2013 and June, most often for insulting the royal family.

On May 19, the Print and Publication Department banned the distribution of a novel by Ahmed Zaatar titled *Bending Over the Body of Amman* for containing sexual insinuations and insulting the royal family.

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

On August 17, the prosecutor general arrested al-Rai newspaper columnist, Abd-al-Hadi Raji al-Majali, after he posted an article on his Facebook page that criticized Interior Minister Hussein al-Majali and discussed the government's response to political and economic protests in 2011. The prosecutor general charged the columnist with divulging state secrets and slandering public figures.

Internet Freedom

There were government restrictions on access to the internet. The law requires the licensing and registration of online news websites, holds editors responsible for readers' comments on their websites, requires that website owners provide the government with the personal data of its users, and mandates that editors in chief be members of the Jordan Press Association. The law gives authorities explicit power to block and censor websites. In June 2013 the government began acting on that authority, shutting 292 news websites for failure to register with the government. According to the Press and Publications Department, 139 remained blocked in April. On June 29, the Press and Publications Department shut 10 news websites, including a widely read blog, for operating without a license. The blog resumed publication shortly thereafter under a new URL, which the Press and Publications Department shut again on August 21. It resumed publishing once more, under yet another URL and was shut two days later. The registration fee for a news website is 1,400 dinars (\$1,960). The owner and editor in chief can be fined between 3,000 dinars (\$4,200) and 5,000 dinars (\$7,000), in addition to criminal penalties, for website content that "includes humiliation, defamation, or disparaging individuals in a manner that violates their personal freedoms or spreads false rumors about them."

According to journalists, security forces reportedly 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. The government monitored electronic correspondence and internet chat sites. Individuals were unable to express their views fully or freely via the internet, including by personal e-mail. The Ministry of Interior continued to monitor internet cafes via video cameras. The ministry also required cafe owners to register users' personal data, submit records of websites visited, and prevent access to "targeted" websites, as determined by the ministry.

According to the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, internet penetration was 73 percent.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

The government placed some limits on academic freedom. Some members of the academic community claimed there was a continuing intelligence presence in academic institutions, including monitoring academic conferences and lectures. Academics reported the GID must clear all university professors before their appointment and that all research papers, forums, or seminars must be approved by university administration, which in turn cleared potentially controversial material through the GID.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

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

On March 19, NGOs and news sources reported that gendarmes used force to disperse a demonstration calling on the government to expel the Israeli ambassador after the killing of Jordanian judge Raed Zuaier by Israeli soldiers on the Israeli side of the border crossing between Israel and Jordan. NGOs charged that gendarmes kicked protesters and beat them with truncheons, sending several to the hospital with head injuries and broken bones, after several protesters attempted to block the road and threw garbage and rocks at police.

b. Freedom of Association

The constitution provides for the right of association, but the government limited this freedom. The law authorizes the Ministry of Social Development to reject applications to register an organization, or permit any organization to receive foreign funding for any reason, and it prohibits the use of associations for the benefit of any political organization. The law also gives the ministry significant control over the internal management of associations, including the ability to dissolve associations, appoint new boards of directors, send government representatives to any board meeting, prevent associations from merging their operations, and appoint an auditor to examine an association's finances for any reason. The law requires associations to inform the ministry of board meetings, submit all board decisions for approval, disclose members' names, and obtain interior ministry security clearances for board members. The law includes severe penalties, including fines up to 10,000 dinars (\$14,000) for violations of the regulations.

Local and international NGOs claimed the law restricted the work of independent human rights organizations. During the year NGOs reported that the government sometimes rejected requests for foreign funding, whereas such rejections were previously extremely rare.

In June the government approved the registration of Human Rights Watch (HRW) as an NGO.

In October the Ministry of Social Development dissolved 35 NGOs for failing to receive approval before accepting foreign funds.

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

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's [*International Religious Freedom Report*](#).

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

The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation; however, there were some restrictions. The United Nations reported that the government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Citizenship: HRW reported denaturalizations of 10 Jordanians of Palestinian descent from three families, who had until recently lived in Syria. According to HRW these individuals held expired Jordanian passports or national identification cards and learned that their Jordanian citizenship had been revoked when they attempted to renew their expired documents at the Civil Status Department.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: Since the outbreak of the crisis in Syria in 2011, Jordan has admitted more than 600,000 registered refugees, and the government claimed that there were 1.4 million Syrians, registered and unregistered, in the country. The government continued to provide free primary and secondary education to Syrian refugee children. Iraqi refugees must pay to attend government schools. The government provided free medical care for registered Syrian refugees until December; since December Syrian refugees have been charged the same rates as uninsured Jordanians, who paid a nominal fee for most basic health services. As of December, Iraqi refugees must pay the foreigner rate for health care, an increase from the previous rate equal to uninsured Jordanians.

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

government closely managed its borders with Syria and Iraq and required Iraqis to have visas before entering the country.

Refoulement: Early in the Syrian crisis, the government allowed some Palestinian refugees from Syria to enter and remain in the country. In January 2013, however, the government publicly closed the border to Palestinian refugees from Syria, and UNRWA reported the government restricted Palestinian refugees from Syria from entering the country. During the year the government turned away at the border Palestinian refugees from Syria, although some gained entry. As of October, UNRWA was aware of 111 cases of refoulement of Palestinian refugees from Syria, including 26 women and 45 children. This included the deportation of some Palestinian refugees from the government's Cyber City camp, including children and other vulnerable individuals. The vulnerability of Palestinian refugees from Syria to deportation increased their risk of other abuses. For example, UNRWA reported the government deported two Palestinian refugee women from Syria, a mother and daughter, when the single mother would not allow her 16-year old daughter to marry an older man, and the go-between reported their irregular residence situation to the authorities.

UNHCR reported that the government also prevented some Syrians seeking refuge from entering the country, and forcibly returned Syrian refugees, including women, children, war-wounded, and disabled persons to Syria. UNHCR reported that, since early October the government forcibly returned to Syria more than half of Syrian refugees arriving at the Raba'a Sarhan processing center.

Employment: Syrian and Iraqi refugees have limited access to the formal labor market, although many work or run businesses illegally. A limited number of Iraqi and Syrian refugees received approval for work permits from the Ministry of Labor; however, the government requires foreign residents, including refugees, to obtain residency permits from the Ministry of Interior before obtaining a work permit, effectively restricting issuance of work permits issued to refugees.

Few refugees applied for or received work permits due to bureaucratic hurdles and, for Iraqis who entered on visas, a desire to avoid paying significant overstay fines when applying for such permits. The government agreed to waive overstay fines for a small number of Iraqi refugees who qualified for residency. Very few employers of Syrian refugees applied for a work permit due to bureaucratic hurdles. The government expressed strong resistance to permitting Syrians to work in the country. The Ministry of Labor reported issuing only 5,637 work permits to Syrians, including Syrians who were not living in the country as refugees. Because of the difficulties and expenses involved in seeking work authorization, many Iraqi and Syrian refugees worked in the unofficial labor market. As of October the Ministry of Labor reported apprehending some 24,000 foreign workers, many of them Syrians. There were reports of deportations of Syrian refugees for working without authorization, as well as reports of Syrian refugees being forcibly moved from their areas of employment into one of the refugee camps for working without authorization. In December, NGOs reported the government deported nine Syrian medical workers, at least one of whom was a registered refugee, who were treating patients in the country, for practicing medicine without a license.

Access to Basic Services: Syrian refugees who arrived at informal border crossings and were admitted to the country were transported to Raba'a Sarhan reception center. Some were registered with the government; received food, water, and medical attention from UNHCR; and were transported by the International Organization for Migration to a refugee camp. Some new arrivals

were refouled to Syria from Raba'a Sarhan. Since June authorities compelled some Syrian refugees, at times numbering as many as 5,000, to remain at the border beyond an earthen berm in harsh desert conditions. These refugees had inadequate access to food, water, and medical aid, and were not permitted to register as refugees. Authorities did not permit international organizations to visit or assess the situation of these refugees. Many of the stranded refugees gave up and returned to Syria.

The government admitted several thousand of them in late fall but deported more than half of them to Syria shortly afterwards. Since October the government has confiscated the identification documents of some Syrians arriving at formal border crossings, such as airports, and issued them short-term visas: these Syrians were subjected to arrest or deportation if they registered as refugees at UNHCR or otherwise violated the terms of their visas.

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

As of October 31, 14,690 Palestinian refugees from Syria had recorded their presence in country with UNRWA.

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

Temporary Protection: As of December 30, there were 622,865 Syrian refugees, all registered by UNHCR. As of December 27, there were 44,216 Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR. The government tolerated the prolonged stay of many Iraqis beyond the expiration of the visit permits under which they had entered the country.

Stateless Persons

Citizenship is derived only through the father. Children of female citizens married to noncitizen husbands receive the nationality of the father and lose the right to attend public school or seek other government services if they do not hold legal residency, which must be applied for every year and is not assured. Married women do not have the legal right to transmit citizenship to their children. The minister of interior said in November that this ruling affected 88,983 families, including 355,932 children, in which the father lacked Jordanian citizenship. An estimated 55,000 of these fathers were of Palestinian origin. By law the cabinet may approve citizenship for such children; however, such approval rarely occurred, and the public was not widely aware of this mechanism. In November the government announced that children of Jordanian mothers and noncitizen fathers would have access to free primary and secondary education and health care, and that they would have the right to own property and invest in the country.

Women may not petition for citizenship for noncitizen husbands, who may apply for citizenship only after fulfilling a requirement of 15 years' continuous residency. Once a husband has obtained citizenship, he may apply to transmit citizenship to his children. Such an application could take years, and the government could deny the application. During the year five men applied for

citizenship after the required 15 years in the country. Activists did not complain about any obstacles standing in the way of naturalization for men who have fulfilled this residency requirement.

Syrian refugees were sometimes unable to obtain birth certificates for children born in the country if they could not present an official marriage certificate or other nationality documents. Authorities have established civil registry departments and shariah courts in Za'atri and Azraq camps to help refugees register births.

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

The law does not provide citizens the ability to change their government. The king appoints and dismisses the prime minister, cabinet, and the senate or upper house of parliament; dissolves parliament; and directs major public policy initiatives. Citizens elect representatives in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of parliament. The cabinet, based on the prime minister's recommendations, appoints the mayors of Amman, Wadi Musa (Petra), and Aqaba, a special economic zone. Citizens elect the mayors of the other 93 municipalities. Cabinet-appointed municipal councils have been installed since 2011.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: In January 2013 the government held parliamentary elections administered by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The IEC is an autonomous legal entity that is financially and administratively independent. The IEC is tasked with the supervision and administration of all phases of parliamentary elections and municipal elections, as well as other elections called for by the Council of Ministers. Local and international monitors noted the elections were credible and technically well administered, despite some irregularities in the voter registration and election preparation phases. It was the first time the IEC administered elections in the country. The IEC instituted several changes to the election process: it used preprinted and standardized ballots, assigned voters to specific stations, created a hotline for problems, and developed mechanisms for complaint.

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

The government held municipal elections in August 2013. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs administered the elections, while the IEC, which did not at the time have the authority to run municipal elections, played an advisory and monitoring role. During the municipal elections, civil society election monitors reported several irregularities and incidents of violence. An investigation into election fraud was undertaken in Karak Governorate. In August parliament passed a constitutional amendment to broaden the mandate of the IEC to oversee municipal elections. The

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

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

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

Political Parties and Political Participation: Political parties must have 500 founding members, 10 percent of whom must be women. The Committee on Political Party Affairs oversees the activities of political parties. The minister of the interior chairs the committee, and it includes a representative from the NCHR and from civil society. The law grants the High Court of Justice sole authority to reject applications to establish or dissolve parties, requires that parties convene annual general conferences, and reduces from 60 to 30 days the period during which party founders can appeal a decision to dissolve a party. The law replaces the Ministry of Interior with a joint governmental committee as the sole point of reference for political parties and streamlines the party registration process. It registered one new party during the year. The government continued to license political parties and other associations; membership in unlicensed political parties is prohibited. There were more than 26 registered political parties; however, they were weak, generally had vague platforms, and were personality centered. The strongest and most organized political party was the Islamic Action Front, which boycotted the election in January.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Human rights activists cited cultural and religious bias against women as an impediment to women participating in political life on the same scale as men. There is a 10 percent (15 seats) quota for women in the lower house of parliament and a 25 percent (243 seats) quota for women in municipal councils. In the 2013 parliamentary elections, voters elected 18 women to the lower house, three of whom won by outright competition outside the quota. In the king-appointed upper house, there were nine female senators. The 27-member cabinet in November included three female ministers: the ministers of social development, culture, and transportation. In the municipal elections, women were allocated 297 out of 970 municipal council seats (30 percent).

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

Christians remained in the military long enough to reach senior command positions, leaving for more lucrative private sector jobs, according to Christian former military officers.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption; however, the government did not implement the law effectively. Officials often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. During the year there were some investigations into allegations of corruption, but there were very few convictions. In June the Anticorruption Commission (ACC) opened an investigation into possible mismanagement of the Education Ministry's pension fund. The use of family, business, and other personal connections to advance personal business interests was widespread. There were allegations of lack of transparency in government procurement, government appointments, and dispute settlement.

Corruption: The ACC is the main body responsible for combating corruption, although the Antimoney-laundering Unit in the Central Bank is responsible for combating money laundering. Despite increased investigations, some local observers questioned the ACC's effectiveness due to its limited jurisdiction, insufficient staff, legal obstacles, and the small number of investigations involving senior officials or large government projects. There were credible allegations that the ACC failed to investigate cases involving high-level government officials.

The Ombudsman Bureau receives and investigates public complaints about corruption and misconduct by public officials.

There were no high-profile corruption convictions during the year. According to a report released in September, the ACC received 1,808 complaints about corruption in 2013 and opened 230 investigations, which resulted in nine convictions.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires certain government officials (along with their spouses and dependent children) to declare their assets privately within three months of their assuming a government position. Officials rarely declared their assets. In the event of a complaint, the chief justice may review the disclosures. Under the law failure to disclose assets could result in a prison sentence of one week to three years or a fine of five to 200 dinars (\$7 to \$280). As of September no officials were punished for failing to submit a disclosure.

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

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

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

Government Human Rights Bodies: The NCHR received both government and international funding. Its board of trustees is appointed by royal decree, and its commissioner general is appointed by the government. The NCHR produces an annual report on domestic human rights practices that is sometimes critical of government practices, but the NCHR lacked a legal mandate, and the government often ignored its recommendations. This year the government formed a committee headed by the Ministry of Justice to review NCHR recommendations. Additionally, the government appointed a Human Rights Coordinator to work with government ministries, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, media, and the international community on human rights issues.

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

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

Protection of Refugees

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law stipulates a sentence of at least 10 years of imprisonment with hard labor for the rape of a girl or woman 15 years of age or older. Spousal rape is not illegal. The Family Protection Law prescribes penalties of up to six months in prison for domestic abuse; however, NGOs reported that judges rarely prosecuted cases under the Family Protection Law because they considered its procedures were unclear. Instead, they prosecuted domestic abuses cases under the penal code, as injury or sexual assault cases. The government did not enforce the law against rape effectively, and violence and abuse against women was widespread. Women's rights activists speculated that many incidents went unreported because violence against women remained a taboo subject due to societal and familial pressures. The PSD's Family Protection Department (FPD) reported 1,556 cases of domestic abuse. Human rights activists stated that girls and women with disabilities were particularly at risk of gender-based violence.

Women may file complaints of rape or physical abuse with certain NGOs or directly with judicial authorities. As of July the FPD treated and investigated 401 cases of rape or sexual assault against women. The FPD actively investigated cases; however, there were some reports of pressure on families to settle disputes via mediation instead of the courts. NGOs reported that families often

settled domestic abuse cases outside of the courts by requiring the abuser to sign before the governor or FPD a statement promising not to reoffend. Spousal abuse is technically grounds for divorce, but husbands claimed religious authority to strike their wives. Observers noted that judges generally supported a woman's claim of abuse in court; however, due to societal and familial pressure, few women sought legal remedies.

In 2013 a total of 144 girls left their homes and stayed in government-run shelters to avoid domestic violence and/or sexual abuse.

The FPD continued to operate a domestic violence hotline and received inquiries and complaints via the internet and e-mail. The FPD provided public information and training for government employees, including police, on domestic violence and rape. As of July the government-run shelter Dar al-Wafaq assisted 376 female victims of domestic violence. It provided reconciliation services to victims and their families and worked with NGOs to provide services, such as legal and medical assistance. Observers noted the lack of a comprehensive approach for victims, such as psychosocial assistance.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law does not specifically forbid FGM/C. NGOs and the FPD reported that the practice was very rare in the country and said they received no reports of FGM/C during the year.

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

On July 16, the prosecutor general of the Supreme Criminal Court charged a man with premeditated murder of his sister in an apparent honor crime. The suspect strangled his sister at Azmi al-Mufti Palestinian refugee camp after learning that she gave birth out of wedlock.

On August 17, the prosecutor general charged a man with premeditated murder of his daughter in an apparent honor crime. The suspect shot his daughter in the head and turned himself in several days later, claiming he had learned that his daughter gave birth out of wedlock and he had killed her to cleanse the family honor. Both cases were pending at year's end.

Through their administrative detention authority, governors continued to place potential victims of honor crimes in involuntary protective custody in the Women's Correctional and Rehabilitation Center in Jweideh detention facility, the country's only women's prison, where some women had remained for more than one year. Conditions in the women's prison were generally better than

conditions in most of the men's prison, but overcrowding was a problem. Authorities held underage potential victims in the Al-Khansa Juvenile Center under unclear legal status. The government estimated that 50 minor girls were placed in protective custody at Al-Khansa Center during the year. A woman detained in protective custody can be released only after her family signs a statement assuring her safety, and both the local governor and the woman agree to the release. One NGO continued to work for the release of these women through mediation with their families. The NGO also provided a temporary but unofficial shelter for such women as an alternative to protective custody.

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

Reproductive Rights: Couples have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children, and individuals were able to make such decisions free from discrimination and coercion. Contraceptives were generally accessible to all men and women, both married and single, and provided free of charge in public clinics. Comprehensive essential obstetric, prenatal, and postnatal care was provided throughout the country in the public and private sectors. The forced sterilization of women and girls with intellectual disabilities was until recently a common practice. The Sisterhood Is Global Institute estimated that 65 such hysterectomies were performed annually as recently as 2013. In April the General Fatwa Department issued a fatwa banning the practice, and Sisterhood Is Global Institute and the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities said they heard no reports of hysterectomies performed on intellectually disabled women during the year.

Discrimination: Women do not have the same legal status and rights as men and experienced discrimination in a number of areas, including inheritance, divorce, child custody, citizenship, pension and social security benefits, the workplace, and, in certain circumstances, the value of their testimony in a sharia court. Nearly 10 percent of women were illiterate. Women owned only 18 percent of property.

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

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

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

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

Union officials reported that sectors employing predominantly women, such as secretarial work, offered wages below the official minimum wage of 190 dinars (\$266) per month. Many women said traditional social pressures discouraged them from pursuing professional careers, especially after marriage. According to the Jordanian National Commission for Women, 49 percent of the country's university graduates were women, but women comprised only 14 percent of the labor force.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived only through the father. The government did not issue birth certificates to all children born in the country during the year. The government deemed some children – including children of unmarried women or of certain interfaith marriages involving a Muslim woman and converts from Islam to another religion – illegitimate and denied them proper registration, making it difficult or impossible for them to attend school, access health services, or receive other documentation. In 2012 the Ministries of Social Development and the Interior began issuing new, nondiscriminatory national identity numbers, although the 2013 report cited ongoing difficulties for orphans attempting to change their national numbers. Illegitimate and abandoned children already holding national identity numbers have identity cards that clearly marked them as different; such numbers impeded these children as adults from obtaining employment, housing, and government benefits.

Education: Education is compulsory from ages six through 16 and free until age 18. No legislation exists to enforce the law or to punish guardians for violating it. Children without legal residency do not have the right to attend public school. The Ministry of Education allows Syrians to enroll at local public schools, with the exception of students who have been out of school for three or more years who were not permitted to register. UNICEF helped cover the cost and provided a supplement to Jordanian teachers who worked in Za'atri and Azraq camps and in the host communities. According to UNICEF there were 222,000 Syrian students registered in public schools; however, the education ministry estimated only 130,000 Syrian students actually attended. UNICEF and Save the Children reported many who were registered did not attend due to distance to schools, child labor, and harassment. Additionally, UNRWA operated 173 primary schools for Palestinian refugee children in the country, serving fewer than 117,000 Palestinian refugee children, and also opened enrollment to Palestinian refugee children from Syria. Some children of female citizens and noncitizen fathers must apply for residency permits every year, and permission was not assured.

Children with disabilities experienced extreme difficulty in accessing constitutionally protected early and primary education.

Child Abuse: The law specifies punishment for abuse of children. For example, conviction for rape of a child younger than age 15 potentially carries the death penalty. Local organizations working with abused children pointed to gaps in the legal system that regularly resulted in lenient sentencing, particularly for family members convicted of abuse. For example, the penal code gives judges the ability to reduce a sentence when the victim's family does not press charges. In child abuse cases, judges routinely accorded leniency in accordance with the wishes of the family. As of August authorities investigated 158 cases of child sexual abuse.

According to the NCHR, some juveniles in detention alleged mistreatment. Parliament passed a new Juvenile Law in August raising the age of criminal responsibility from seven years to 12 years. The new law stipulated that juveniles charged with committing a crime along with an adult will be tried in a juvenile court. The new law stipulated alternative penalties for juvenile offenders, including vocational training and community service. Police stations have no designated holding areas for juveniles.

The PSD reported that through September, they handled 134 juvenile cases, of which 12 were referred to the judiciary.

The government continued to fund a child protection center that provided temporary shelter and medical care for abused children between the ages of six and 12. During the year the shelter housed 36 abused children.

Early and Forced Marriage: The minimum age for marriage is 18. With the consent of both a judge and a guardian, a child as young as 15 years old, in most cases a girl, may be married. The UN Fund for Population reported that in 2012-13, 13 percent of marriages involved at least one person between 15 and 18 years of age, a slight increase from previous years. According to a UNICEF report, early marriages comprised 25 percent of all new Syrian refugee marriages registered in sharia courts in 2013, compared with an overall early marriage rate of 13.2 percent of all marriages registered in sharia courts. The early marriage rate among registered Syrian refugee marriages rose sharply in the first quarter of the year to 31.4 percent. There was no data available on the number of unregistered marriages, but, due to the differences between the Jordanian and Syrian legal and social framework, it was likely that many Syrian refugee marriages were not registered.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law does not specifically prohibit FGM/C. NGOs and the FDP reported that the practice was very rare in the country and said they received no reports of FGM/C this year.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law stipulates a penalty for the commercial exploitation of children of six months' to three years' imprisonment. The law also penalizes individuals who traffic persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation with a maximum of 10 years of hard labor and a fine of 2,000 to 50,000 dinars (\$2,800 to \$70,000). The law prohibits the distribution of pornography involving persons under the age of 18 and provides for a fine of 300 to 5,000 dinars (\$420 to \$7,000) or at least three months' imprisonment. The law does not prohibit the possession of child pornography. The law penalizes those who use the internet to post or distribute child pornography with a fine of 500 to 5,000 dinars (\$700 to \$7,000) or at least six months' imprisonment. The

minimum age of consensual sex is 18, though sexual relations between minors whose marriages are approved by the courts are legal.

Institutionalized Children: A 2013 government report found no physical or sexual abuse in state institutions; however, NGOs reported such abuses occurred. Cases involving violence against persons with disabilities or institutionalized persons are automatically referred to the FDP. During the year the Ministry of Social Development closed two day-care centers for violations related to the building code, inadequate space, or lack of supervisors. The committee highlighted the pervasive use of physical discipline, physical and verbal abuse, unacceptable living conditions, and a lack of educational, rehabilitative, or psychosocial services for wards and inmates. Activists for orphans' rights alleged that adult orphans and former wards of the state were especially vulnerable to forced and early marriage, labor trafficking, and sexual exploitation.

International Child Abduction: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For country-specific information see the Department of State's website at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/english/country/jordan.html.

Anti-Semitism

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

On September 17, *Al Rai*, a government-associated newspaper, ran an editorial cartoon showing an anti-Semitic stereotype and implying that Jews exerted control over world politics.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's [Trafficking in Persons Report](#).

Persons with Disabilities

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

Human rights activists reported that institutions and rehabilitation centers subjected some persons with disabilities to cruel and inhuman treatment. In April the Ministry of Social Development launched an investigation into allegations that staff at the government-run Karak Rehabilitation Center physically and sexually assaulted a resident. After news sources published photographs of the abuse, the Ministry of Social Development suspended six employees, who faced charges of

negligence and failure to report a crime. The ministry said the resident's injuries resulted from a fight with another resident rather than from abuse by center staff.

The electoral law directs the government to verify that voting facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities and allows such persons to bring a personal assistant to the polling station; the Independent Electoral Commission has responsibility for implementing this law. Following the January 2013 parliamentary elections, the NCHR noted that accessibility for persons with disabilities needed improvement. Following the August 2013 municipal elections, the NCHR reported that most of the polling centers were not accessible to persons with disabilities.

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

The 2013 NCHR report noted that school classrooms were not fully accessible and that there were no qualified teachers for children with disabilities, problems that remained an issue throughout the year. The HCAPD reported that educational accommodations were more readily available at the university level than in elementary and secondary schools. At all levels of education, children with certain types of disabilities were excluded from studying certain subjects and often could not access critical educational support services, such as sign-language interpretation. Authorities did not train general education teachers to work with students with various disabilities. Families of children with disabilities reported that teachers and principals often refused to include children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The education ministry provided accessible transportation to specialized centers for children with disabilities, but not to mainstream schools.

There remained insufficient capacity in specialized centers for all students who required accommodations. Students with significant intellectual disabilities fell under the authority of the Ministry of Social Development rather than the Ministry of Education.

The Special Buildings Code Department is tasked with enforcing accessibility provisions and oversees retrofitting of existing buildings to comply with building codes. The vast majority of private and public office buildings continued to have limited or no access for persons with disabilities. Municipal infrastructure such as public transport, streets, sidewalks, and intersections was not accessible. In 2012 the NCHR also reported that 82 percent of individuals with disabilities were economically inactive.

The law mandates that public- and private-sector establishments with between 25 and 50 workers employ at least one person with disabilities and that establishments with more than 50 workers must reserve 4 percent of their positions for persons with disabilities. The law lacked implementing regulations, and authorities rarely enforced it. Additionally, employers who state the nature of the work is not suitable for persons with disabilities are exempt from the quota. Employers, including the government's Civil Service Bureau, frequently required potential employees with disabilities to present a medical letter certifying the bearer was competent to perform the job in question. Human rights activists considered the letter a significant barrier to participation in public life because some medical professionals were not aware of the full range of accommodations available and thus certified individuals as not able to perform certain tasks. Girls and women with disabilities were particularly at risk for gender-based violence.

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

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

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

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

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

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual conduct is not illegal; however, societal discrimination against LGBT persons was prevalent and LGBT persons were targets of abuse. Activists reported discrimination in housing, employment, education, and access to public services. Some LGBT individuals reported reluctance to engage the legal system due to fear their sexual orientation or gender identity would either provoke hostile reactions from police or disadvantage them in court. Activists report that most LGBT individuals were closeted and fearful of their sexual identity being disclosed.

On February 26, news sources reported that police arrested 14 persons at a wedding hall in Marka after complaints of "suspicious activity." News accounts varied on whether the persons arrested were gay men, men dressed in women's clothing, or lesbians. Police said that they arrested the 14 persons for probation violations, but many saw the arrests as repression of the gay community. During the year there were reports of individuals who left the country due to fear that their families would punish them because of their sexual orientation.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

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

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law, including related regulations and statutes, provides for the right to form and join independent unions and conduct legal strikes, but with significant restrictions. There is no right to collective bargaining, although the labor code provides for collective agreements. The law identifies specific groups of public- and private-sector workers who may organize and defines 17 industries and professions in which trade unions may be established. The establishment of new unions requires approval from the Ministry of Labor. The law requires that these 17 trade unions belong to the government-subsidized General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions, the country's sole trade union federation. The law authorizes additional professions on a case-by-case basis to form professional associations. The constitution prohibits antiunion discrimination, and the law protects workers from employer retaliation due to union affiliation or activities. The law does not explicitly provide a worker fired due to antiunion views with the right to reinstatement.

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

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

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

The Ministry of Labor reported 80 strikes and labor protests as of August. There were no reports of threats of violence against union heads, although labor activists alleged that the security services pressured union leaders to refrain from activism that challenged government interests. Strikes generally occurred without advance notice or registration. There were no documented cases of excessive force used against striking workers.

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

The Ministry of Labor received 56 labor complaints, 37 of which were settled through direct negotiations. It referred four of the cases to a labor court.

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

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

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

Police investigated seven cases of forced labor involving 30 potential victims and 15 perpetrators as of August. Police referred all 30 potential victims of forced labor to shelter services: two to a government-run shelter, two to embassy-run shelters, and 26 to a shelter run by an NGO. The Ministry of Labor referred 40 human trafficking cases to the judiciary for further investigation.

The government actively inspected garment factories and investigated allegations of forced labor. According to NGOs reports of withholding of passports continued to decline during the year, particularly those of workers in the garment sector. Forced labor or conditions indicative of forced labor occurred, particularly among migrant workers in the domestic work and agricultural sectors. Activists highlighted the vulnerability of agricultural workers due to minimal government oversight. Activists also identified domestic workers as particularly vulnerable to exploitation due to inadequate government oversight, social norms that excused forced labor, and workers' isolation within individual homes. Labor inspectors did not regularly investigate reports of labor or other

abuses of domestic workers in private homes and were not permitted to enter a private residence without the owner's permission except with a court order.

In March the government announced a two-month amnesty for foreign workers, temporarily lifting fines and other legal barriers that had prevented migrant domestic workers sheltering at their embassies and in detention centers from returning to their countries of origin. Authorities repatriated approximately 503 domestic workers as of mid-June, many of whom were judged by local and international human rights organizations to have been working under conditions indicative of forced labor.

In June the Ministry of Labor announced a new requirement that all employers of domestic workers deposit their salaries in worker-controlled bank accounts. The Ministry of Labor also imposed a new requirement that recruitment agencies provide employers with runaway insurance that reimburses the recruitment fees to employers when a worker leaves before fulfilling her contract. If the employer fails to pay the worker's salary or return the worker's passport, then the employer would not be entitled to the insurance payment.

Also see the Department of State's [*Trafficking in Persons Report*](#).

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

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

There were instances of child labor. Children worked in mechanical repair, agriculture, construction, quarrying rocks, tour guiding, and the hotel and restaurant industry. They also worked as street vendors, carpenters, blacksmiths, domestic workers, painters, and in small family businesses. The Ministry of Labor reported that children faced occupational-specific hazards in employment that involved mechanical work and welding, where they often lacked the training and protective equipment to perform their work safely. The government lacked recent statistics on the problem. A 2008 Department of Statistics study estimated that more than 32,000 children between the ages of five and 17 were working in the country. Activists estimated the number to be significantly higher, as many businesses and families tended to hide the practice.

The government's capacity to implement and enforce child labor laws was not sufficient to deter the practice. Staffing in the Ministry of Labor's Inspection Department was insufficient to address child labor effectively. The ministry's three-person Child Labor Unit was responsible for coordinating government action regarding child labor; it oversaw the work of 20 child-labor focal points within the Inspection Department. As of August the Child Labor Unit reported that labor inspectors found 630 child laborers and issued 199 warnings and 362 violations. Authorities referred violators to an administrative labor court; the Ministry of Justice had no information on any child-labor cases referred to criminal courts. The law provides that employers who hire a child younger than age 16 pay a fine of as much as 500 dinars (\$700), which is doubled for repeat offenses. Observers did not believe the penalties sufficed to deter child labor.

Children working in the informal sector do not benefit from the minimum age requirements that protect children working in the formal sector. The government lacked capacity to monitor child working in the informal work sector such as children working in family businesses and informal work in the agricultural sector.

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

The Ministries of Labor, Education, and Social Development collaborated with NGOs aiming to withdraw children from the worst forms of labor.

An increasing number of Syrian refugee children worked illegally in the country. Some Syrian refugee children in the country served as the sole breadwinners of their family. Syrian refugee children worked selling goods in the streets near Za'atari refugee camp and increasing numbers of Syrian refugee children begged in urban areas. More than half of Syrian refugee children in the Jordan Valley worked.

Also see the Department of Labor's [*Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor*](#).

d. Discrimination with respect to Employment or Occupation

Labor laws do not prohibit discrimination regarding race, sex, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, or social status.

Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to sex, gender, disability, and sexual orientation (see section 6). Discrimination against migrant workers occurred (see section 7.e.).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

In 2012 the government raised the national minimum wage to 190 dinars (\$266) per month, and the poverty level was set at 366 dinars (\$512) per month for a family of five. The minimum wage increase excluded noncitizens and all workers in the garment industry. Citizen workers in the garment industry received a minimum wage of 170 dinars (\$238) per month; noncitizen workers in the garment industry received a minimum wage of 110 dinars (\$154) per month, although many had base wages slightly above the minimum wage. This exemption was granted in part because employers often provided room and board for noncitizen workers in this sector. Some garment factories continued to deduct room and board from workers' already lower salaries.

The law sets a standard workweek of 48 hours and requires overtime pay for hours worked in excess of that standard. The law provides for 14 days of paid annual leave per year, which increases to 21 days after five years of service. Workers were also provided additional national and religious holidays designated by the government. Employees were entitled to one day off per week. The law permits compulsory overtime under certain circumstances such as conducting an annual inventory, closing accounts, preparing to sell goods at discounted prices, avoiding loss to goods that would otherwise be exposed to damage, and receiving special deliveries. In such cases actual working

hours may not exceed 10 hours per day, the employee must be paid overtime, and the period may not last more than 30 days. There is no cap on the amount of consensual overtime.

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

The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcement of labor laws and acceptable conditions of work. Ministry inspectors enforced the labor code but were unable to ensure full compliance; there were 156 inspectors for the entire country, an increase of 50 from 2013 but still an insufficient number to enforce the labor code effectively. Employees may lodge complaints regarding violations of the labor code directly with the Ministry of Labor or through organizations such as their union or the NCHR. The Ministry of Labor opened an investigation for each complaint. As of August labor inspectors conducted 45,064 inspections and issued 6,897 warnings and 11,857 violations nationwide.

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

The government took action to prevent violations and improve working conditions during the year. The Ministry of Labor placed a special focus on enforcing compliance in the Qualifying Industrial Zones, which were populated largely by migrant garment workers. The ratio of labor inspectors to workers or places of employment was significantly higher in these zones than for the general population. The government required export garment manufacturers to take part in Better Work Jordan to improve labor standards. As of December 63 of the 65 factories required by the government to join Better Work Jordan were active members of the program.

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

In the garment sector, foreign workers were more susceptible than their Jordanian counterparts to dangerous or unfair conditions, including mandatory overtime, delayed payment of wages, deductions for room and board, and unacceptable dormitory conditions. Forced labor or conditions indicative of forced labor occurred in the garment industry, although Better Work Jordan reported that no factories were found noncompliant concerning bonded labor. Better Work Jordan also found

that compliance regarding coercion improved. Indebtedness of migrant garment workers to third parties and involuntary or excessive overtime persisted.

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

Domestic workers, overwhelmingly migrants, often faced unacceptable working conditions. Many domestic workers reported to local NGOs and their embassies that they received insufficient food, no private accommodations, no health care, no days off, and long delays in or nonpayment of wages. Domestic workers could file complaints in person with the Ministry of Labor Domestic Workers Directorate or the PSD; however, many domestic workers complained there was no follow-up on their cases either from the ministry or from the PSD. Users of a Ministry of Labor domestic-worker hotline reported that live operators were available only during government business hours, or seven hours a day during the workweek. After-hours calls required the user to leave a message and a callback number, which posed particular difficulties for domestic workers who had access only to their employers' telephones.

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

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

As a result of poor working conditions experienced by some of their citizens, Indonesia prohibited their citizens from traveling to the country as domestic workers. Some human rights organizations argued that these bans heightened the vulnerability of foreign domestic workers, who turned to unscrupulous recruitment agencies to migrate illegally to the country. In 2012 the government began to prevent the immigration of Indonesian workers until it negotiated a new memorandum of understanding with the Indonesian government. As a result the Ministry of Labor halted the issuance of work permits for Indonesian domestic workers, although the Ministry of Interior reportedly continued to issue residency permits.

As of October 22, the Social Security Corporation reported that approximately 10,145 work injuries occurred during the year and some 60 persons died because of work injuries.

