



FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025

# Jordan

**34**  
/100

PARTLY FREE

|                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| <u>Political Rights</u> | <b>12</b> /40 |
| <u>Civil Liberties</u>  | <b>22</b> /60 |

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

**33** /100    **Not Free**

A country or territory's Freedom in the World status depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0–40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0–60. See the methodology.



## Status Change

Jordan’s status improved from Not Free to Partly Free because a recently reformed electoral system led to more competitive legislative elections and greater representation for political parties.

# Overview

Jordan is a monarchy in which the king plays a dominant role in politics and governance. The parliament’s lower house is elected, but the electoral system and limits on civil liberties put the opposition at a disadvantage; the chamber wields little power in practice. The media and civil society groups are hampered by restrictive laws and government pressure. The judicial system lacks independence and often fails to ensure due process.

## Key Developments in 2024

- Parliamentary elections were held in September. Despite low turnout, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political arm of Jordan’s Muslim Brotherhood, gained the most seats. Its power will likely be checked by proregime parties and independents.
- In July, the cost to renew annual work permits for Syrian refugees increased from 10 dinars (\$14) to over 500 dinars (\$705). Syrian refugees continued to face discrimination and increasing pressure to return to Syria.
- The 2023 Cybercrime Prevention Law was used to crack down on speech and assembly throughout the year, especially during ongoing pro-Palestinian demonstrations. The law has also been used to target LGBT+ activists and organizations.

## Political Rights

### A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

|                                                                                                               |       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? | O / 4 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|

Jordan's hereditary monarch, King Abdullah II, holds broad executive powers. He appoints and dismisses the prime minister and cabinet, as well as the crown prince and regent, and may dissolve the bicameral National Assembly at his discretion.

Abdullah II dissolved the parliament in 2024, and subsequently appointed Jafar Hassan, a veteran diplomat and former Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, as prime minister.

**A2** 0-4 pts

**Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?**

**1 / 4**

The king appoints the 65 members of the upper house of the parliament, the Senate. The lower house, the 138-seat House of Representatives, is elected through a proportional representation system. Candidates compete across 18 multimember local districts as well as a national district.

Parliamentary elections were held in September 2024. Independent election observers described both the candidate registration and election processes as smooth and inclusive, but noted concerns that the Cybercrime Prevention Law and the penal code may have limited independent media coverage around the elections. Low voter knowledge about the more complex mixed-voting system was also cited as potentially affecting election quality. Voter turnout was approximately 32 percent.

The main opposition group, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), won 31 seats, becoming the largest party in the parliament. Their power will likely be checked by other proregime parties.

**A3** 0-4 pts

**Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?**

**2 / 4**

Elections are administered by the Independent Election Commission (IEC), which generally receives positive reviews from international monitors in terms of

technical management, though irregularities continue to be reported. IEC members are appointed by royal decree.

The 2016 electoral-law reform introduced multiple-vote proportional representation for parliamentary elections, replacing a single nontransferable vote system that favored progovernment businesspeople and tribal elites over opposition-oriented political parties. The 2022 electoral law reform introduced a mixed system in which voters cast two votes: one for 97 seats contested across 18 local electoral districts and another for 41 seats contested within a single, nationwide electoral district. This law did not eliminate long-standing concerns that malapportionment disadvantages urban voters. The electoral reforms led to an increase in the number of parliamentary seats won through party lists, from 12 to 104.

The legal framework for elections is unstable. Major changes are often introduced weeks before polling day, hindering campaign efforts. Candidate registration is reportedly easier in some progovernment areas.

*Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because reforms introducing a mixed electoral system, intended to increase the representation of political parties in the parliament, were successfully implemented ahead of the September parliamentary election, leading to a more competitive electoral environment than in past years.*

## B. Political Pluralism and Participation

**B1** 0-4 pts

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?</b> | <b>2 / 4</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|

Political parties based on ethnicity, race, gender, or religion are banned in Jordan. Parties must receive approval from the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs and the IEC. Authorities have reportedly intimidated individuals attempting

to form political parties. There is a long-standing fear of creating or joining political parties due to the regime’s historically harsh repression of them.

The 2022 electoral law transferred oversight of candidates’ partisan affiliations to the IEC, but vague language continues to allow for arbitrary restrictions on parties’ participation in elections. Some party leaders and members reported being summoned by security officials and threatened with the loss of their or their family members’ employment or other harsh treatment.

While the IAF has been tolerated, its parent organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, was forcibly shuttered in 2016. The government licensed an offshoot group, the Muslim Brotherhood Society (MBS), exacerbating preexisting divisions and weakening the original Muslim Brotherhood. In 2020, the organization lost an appeal against the transfer of its offices to the MBS, with the Court of Cassation ordering its complete dissolution. The IAF participated in the 2020 and 2024 polls despite this ruling. In 2024, it submitted a complaint to the then-prime minister accusing security services of “electoral harassment” against its potential candidates and supporters.

The electoral system and patronage-based political culture have historically favored tribally affiliated independents over political parties with specific ideologies and platforms.

**B2** 0-4 pts

|                                                                                                              |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? | 1 / 4 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|

The IAF won 22.4 percent of lower-house seats in the 2024 election, while it and its allies in the Islah Alliance only won a combined 8.7 percent in 2020. However, the overrepresentation of rural voters by the electoral system limits the ability of the opposition to make significant gains. The constitutional authority of the monarchy means that no opposition force can win control of the executive branch by democratic means alone.

**B3** 0-4 pts

**Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?**

**1 / 4**

While voters and candidates are generally free from overt threats or violence, they remain heavily influenced by tribal affiliations and the state-sponsored patronage networks that accompany them. The Jordanian intelligence service is widely believed to influence the electoral process. Citizens' political participation is also constrained by the fact that many important positions are appointed rather than elected. In the 2024 elections, international observers noted that the Cybercrime Prevention Law and Penal Code imposed legal restrictions on freedom of expression.

**B4** 0-4 pts

**Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?**

**2 / 4**

Women have equal political rights, but cultural prejudices continue to hinder their full political participation in practice. There are 18 parliamentary seats reserved for women candidates, one per local electoral district. National party lists must include a woman as one of their top three candidates, another woman among the following three candidates, and at least one candidate under the age of 35 within the first five candidates.

Nine women won seats that were not part of the quota in the 2024 elections, an increase from zero in 2020. Women now hold 27 seats, including gender quota seats, representing approximately 20 percent of all elected parliamentarians.

Nine lower-house seats are reserved for Christians, and three are reserved for ethnic Circassians and Chechens together. Citizens of Palestinian origin, who tend to live in urban areas, make up most of the overall population but remain politically underrepresented.

## **C. Functioning of Government**

**C1** 0-4 pts

**Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?**

**0** / 4

The king and his inner circle dominate policymaking and the legislative process. Though the appointed government or groups of 10 or more lawmakers can propose legislation to the House of Representatives—which may approve, reject, or amend bills—every law requires approval from the appointed Senate and the king to become law. Among other royal prerogatives, the king unilaterally appoints the heads of the armed forces, the intelligence service, and the gendarmerie.

The 2022 constitution endowed a National Security Council, headed by the king and his appointees, with significant authority over security, defense, and foreign policy.

**C2** 0-4 pts

**Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?**

**2** / 4

The government has undertaken some efforts to combat widespread corruption, and the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission (IACC) is tasked with investigating allegations. However, successful prosecutions—particularly of high-ranking officials—are historically rare. Anticorruption efforts are undermined by a lack of genuinely independent enforcement institutions and restrictions on investigative journalism and civil society activism.

In 2023, the IACC announced the launch of a media campaign encouraging citizens to report acts of corruption and reasserted its commitment to protecting whistleblowers and witnesses in corruption cases. The IACC has reportedly collaborated with specialized security agencies to provide legal protection to 95 individuals who reported corruption cases over the past seven years.

**C3** 0-4 pts

**Does the government operate with openness and transparency?**

**1** / 4

Access-to-information laws are vague, lack procedural detail, and contain sweeping exceptions. Officials are not required to make public declarations of their income and assets. The National Assembly does not exercise effective or independent oversight of the government's budget proposals. Activists and journalists who attempt to investigate state or royal finances are subject to arrest on defamation and other charges.

## Civil Liberties

### D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

**D1** 0-4 pts

|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Are there free and independent media? | 1/4 |
|---------------------------------------|-----|

Jordanian media laws are restrictive, vague, and arbitrarily enforced. Various statutes penalize defamation, criticism of the king or state institutions, harming Jordan's relations with foreign states, blasphemy, and any content considered to lack objectivity. Authorities appoint the editors and control the finances of several media outlets. Government gag orders and informal instructions to editors regarding news coverage are common, and journalists are routinely arrested for violating such orders. News websites face onerous registration requirements that, if not met, can serve as a justification for blocking. In 2023, Jordanian authorities banned the satirical news site Al-Hudood.

Family members and friends of critical reporters have reportedly been threatened with loss of employment and faced difficulties renewing official documents. Journalists rarely face serious violence or significant jail time for their work, but they often practice self-censorship. Authorities have also targeted journalists with Pegasus spyware.

In 2024, journalists faced harassment and arrest for covering pro-Palestinian demonstrations. In 2023, amid protests from local intellectuals, the Jordanian

Media Commission banned a novel about Palestinian and Arab fighters.

In May 2024, security forces raided the Al-Yarmouk offices in Amman, confiscating equipment and barring staff from returning without official approval. The channel had ties to Jordan's Islamist movement and the Hamas-affiliated Al-Aqsa television channel.

**D2** 0-4 pts

**Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?**

**2** / 4

Islam is the state religion. The government monitors sermons at mosques for political, sectarian, or extremist content and issues prescribed texts and themes. Muslim clerics require government authorization to preach or dispense religious guidance. Many Christian groups are recognized as religious denominations or associations and can worship freely, though they cannot proselytize among Muslims. While converts from Islam are not prosecuted for apostasy, they face bureaucratic obstacles and harassment in practice. Unrecognized religious groups are allowed to practice their faiths but face disadvantages stemming from their lack of legal status. Atheists and agnostics are required to list a religious affiliation on government documents. The king appoints the country's Grand Mufti.

**D3** 0-4 pts

**Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?**

**2** / 4

Intelligence services reportedly monitor academic events and campus life, and administrators work with state officials to scrutinize scholarly material for politically sensitive content. Students face possible detention if they attempt to document or engage in political activism.

**D4** 0-4 pts

**Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?**

**1** / 4

Open discussion of politics, the monarchy, religious affairs, and security issues is inhibited by the threat of punishment under various laws governing expression. The telecommunications law requires companies to enable the tracking of private communications upon the issuance of a court order, and authorities may order surveillance of people suspected of terrorism. Restrictions on social media apps, such as TikTok, Clubhouse, and Grindr, are common. Many Jordanians believe that government agents routinely listen to their phone calls and monitor their online activities. Pegasus spyware was reportedly used to hack the phones of at least 35 human rights activists, lawyers, and journalists between 2019 through 2023; Jordanian government agencies are suspected of being behind these attacks. Social media users, including activists, have been arrested for their activity in recent years.

The Cybercrime Law, the Crime Prevention Law, and the penal code allow officials to detain citizens at will. Under this legislation, internet users can face fines or prison terms if they are convicted of defamation for online comments. The 2023 Cybercrime Prevention Law provides authorities broad discretion to prosecute citizens by criminalizing use of the internet for publishing news deemed false or damaging national unity, among other things. Hundreds of people have been charged under this law for criticizing the government, calling for political mobilization, or expressing pro-Palestinian sentiments.

## E. Associational and Organizational Rights

**E1** 0-4 pts

|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Is there freedom of assembly? | 1/4 |
|-------------------------------|-----|

Jordanian law limits free assembly. Authorities require prior notification for any demonstration or event and have broad discretion to disperse public gatherings. The Ministry of the Interior has canceled planned public events without advance notice or explanation. Violations of the law on assembly can draw fines and jail time.

Security forces are deployed regularly to shut down protests, at times violently. In 2024 authorities continued to crackdown on pro-Palestinian protests, in which over 1,500 protesters have been arrested. Authorities have throttled communication networks during protests and searched demonstrators' phones. Some Syrian refugees who participated in the protests were interrogated without legal representation and issued deportation orders without being criminally charged or tried.

Authorities in Jordan consistently target LGBT+ rights activists and limit organizing on issues related to gender and sexuality.

**E2** 0-4 pts

**Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?**

**1** / 4

While many local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can operate in the country, there are significant restrictions on civil society. The Ministry of Social Development has broad supervisory powers over NGO operations, the authority to deny registration and requests for foreign funding, and can disband organizations it finds objectionable. Board members of NGOs must be vetted by state security officials. In practice, these regulations are applied in an opaque and arbitrary manner.

The General Intelligence Department (GID) and the Preventive Security Department have interrogated and threatened LGBT+ activists, some of whom have closed their organizations, halted their activities, or left the country. Authorities have also blocked websites that publish information about sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex policies.

**E3** 0-4 pts

**Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?**

**0** / 4

Workers have the right to form unions, but only in 17 designated industries; no new union has formed since 1976. Groups must obtain government approval and join the country's semiofficial union federation, the General Federation of

Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU). The right to strike is limited by requirements for advance notice and mediation, and participants in an illegal strike are subject to dismissal.

In 2013, a dozen unofficial trade unions formed the Jordanian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (JFITU). Lacking official status, they are not allowed to establish headquarters, collect fees from their members, or engage in collective bargaining. They also face heavy pressure from the GFJTU and government bodies to cease their activities and shut down.

The Teachers’ Syndicate began the longest public-sector strike in Jordanian history in 2019. In 2020, after the union claimed the government reneged on the deal they had struck, the government ordered a two-year closure of the syndicate and arrested its governing board. As of 2024, authorities have not initiated syndicate board elections or the reopening of the organization.

## F. Rule of Law

**F1** 0-4 pts

|                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Is there an independent judiciary? | 2/4 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

The judiciary’s independence is limited. The king unilaterally appoints the entire Constitutional Court and the chair of the Judicial Council, which nominates civil court judges and is mostly comprised of senior judiciary members. Judges of both the civil and the Sharia (Islamic law) courts—which handle personal status matters for Muslims—are formally appointed by royal decree. Constitutional amendments in 2022 gave the king sole authority over appointing the chief judge of the religious courts and the president of the council that administers them. The Ministry of Justice monitors judges, promotes them, and determines their salaries, further weakening the branch’s autonomy. However, de facto instances of judicial independence and citizens successfully pushing back against state actors in court cases are not uncommon.

**F2** 0-4 pts

|                                                                |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?</b> | <b>1/4</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

Police can hold suspects for up to six months without filing formal charges, and governors are empowered to impose administrative detention for up to one year. In practice, authorities often ignore procedural safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, holding individuals incommunicado or beyond legal time limits. Criminal defendants generally lack access to counsel before trial, impairing their ability to mount a defense. Despite a constitutional prohibition, courts allegedly accept confessions extracted under torture.

**F3** 0-4 pts

|                                                                                                               |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?</b> | <b>2/4</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

Torture and other mistreatment in custody are common and rarely draw serious penalties. Prison conditions are generally poor, and inmates reportedly suffer from beatings and other abuse by guards. Terrorist attacks remain a threat to physical security. Prisons are overcrowded. As of 2024, Jordanian prisons reportedly held 23,000 prisoners, far surpassing the official capacity of 13,350 prisoners.

**F4** 0-4 pts

|                                                                                                          |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?</b> | <b>2/4</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

Discrimination against LGBT+ people is prevalent and includes the threat of violence. Authorities have denied registration to NGOs that support equal rights for LGBT+ people, and these organizations have faced increased persecution since 2023. Article 14 of the Cybercrime Prevention Law criminalizes the use of information networks to “promote debauchery” or undermine public morals. Harassment, extortion, and arbitrary detention of LGBT+ people through digital targeting by Jordanian authorities has increased. In recent years, Human Rights Watch reported that security forces used social media and dating applications to

engage in “online entrapment” of LGBT+ people. The unlawful seizure and search of smartphones for photos, chats, or other evidence to prosecute detainees was also reported. Government officials have engaged in online smear campaigns against LGBT+ activists, while social media users have doxed and incited violence against these activists.

Refugees and asylum seekers do not usually receive permanent settlement in Jordan, though they are usually allowed to remain in the country while UN agencies seek resettlement for them. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) counted over 710,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Jordan in 2024, representing the fifth-highest number of refugees per capita in the world. Syrians make up approximately 643,000 of these refugees. In 2018, refugees were prohibited from accessing subsidized health care. Many refugee and asylum-seeker children are prevented from enrolling in school. Syrian refugees have at times been forcibly transferred to areas where they are at risk of refoulement.

Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin risk the arbitrary revocation of citizenship or documentation and are often excluded from jobs in the public sector and security forces, which are dominated by East Bank tribes. Women also face discrimination in law and practice.

# G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

**G1** 0-4 pts

|                                                                                                                                      |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?</b> | <b>2 / 4</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|

Jordanians generally enjoy freedom of domestic movement and international travel. Refugees and migrant workers face impediments to travel and are often unable to change employers. Employers reportedly confiscate migrant workers’ passports. Children of Jordanian mothers and non-Jordanian fathers, who lack citizenship themselves, have difficulty accessing jobs, education, and health care. Women can be prevented from traveling abroad with their children without the

approval of the child's father, a male guardian, or a judge. The male guardians of unmarried women may interrupt their travel with approval of the authorities.

**G2** 0-4 pts

**Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?**

**2** / 4

The legal framework generally supports property rights for citizens, but women do not have equal access to property under Sharia-based inheritance rules. Private business activity is hampered by obstacles such as corruption and the abuse of political or other connections.

**G3** 0-4 pts

**Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?**

**2** / 4

Personal social freedoms are limited by the country's laws and conservative culture. The government does not recognize marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men. Matters such as marriage and divorce are handled by religious courts, which place women and converts from Islam at a disadvantage and restrict some interfaith marriages. Jordan's personal status law requires a woman to obey her husband in "permissible matters" and stipulates that she may lose her right to spousal maintenance for noncompliance.

In recent years, the parliament has adopted laws that better regulate the processing of domestic violence complaints and abolish a penal code provision allowing rapists to avoid punishment by marrying their victims. However, reduced sentences are still possible for those who murder a spouse caught committing adultery, and spousal rape is not a crime. Women marrying for the first time must obtain approval of a male guardian. Under current legislation, girls between the ages of 15 and 18 are allowed to marry in exceptional cases with judicial approval, which risks forced marriage.

**G4** 0-4 pts

Rules governing minimum wage, working hours, and safety standards are not well enforced. Migrant workers, who are the majority of the Jordanian garment industry's workforce, are especially vulnerable to exploitative labor practices. Labor rights organizations have raised concerns about poor working conditions, forced labor, and sexual abuse in Qualifying Industrial Zones, where mostly women and foreign factory workers process goods for export. Ethiopian workers have been subjected to forced labor upon arrival in Jordan.

Syrian refugees are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and, as many are without work permits, often work in the informal sector for low wages. In July 2024, the cost to renew annual work permits for Syrian refugees increased from 10 dinars (\$14) to over 500 dinars (\$705). Required monthly social insurance contributions also increased. These increases, which have caused some Syrian refugees to sink into debt, signal the end of the Jordan Compact, which was launched in 2016 to ease Syrians' access the formal labor market.



#### On Jordan

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#### *Country Facts*

##### Population

**11,290,000**

##### Region

**Middle East**

##### Global Freedom Score

**34/100**    **Partly Free**

Internet Freedom Score

**47/100**    **Partly Free**

*Other Years*

2024

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