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# 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Jordan

## JORDAN (Tier 2)

The Government of Jordan does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period; therefore, Jordan remained on Tier 2. These efforts included identifying and officially recognizing more trafficking victims, approving new regulations to allow some migrant domestic workers increased flexibility to change employers, and approving a new 2024-2027 national anti-trafficking strategy.

However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Courts convicted the fewest number of traffickers since 2013 and prosecuted significantly fewer labor trafficking cases, despite the prevalence of labor trafficking in Jordan. Jordan's employer-based visa system, which placed a significant amount of power in the hands of employers of foreign workers, continued to create vulnerabilities for the exploitation and abuse of migrant workers and remained a significant impediment to authorities identifying and protecting trafficking victims. Due to inadequate screening among vulnerable populations, the government did not take effective measures to prevent the inappropriate penalization of potential victims solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.

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## PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Continue efforts to reform the employer-based visa system by enforcing labor law protections for all workers in Jordan, including domestic workers, and establish labor standards to allow workers to freely change employers within their sector.

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Ensure labor trafficking crimes are not charged as lesser offenses such as administrative violations.

Significantly increase efforts to proactively screen for and identify trafficking victims in immigration detention centers and refugee camps.

Increase efforts to proactively screen for and identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, such as detained foreign migrants, domestic workers, workers in the agricultural sector, refugees, children who experienced homelessness or used the streets as a source of livelihood, and persons in commercial sex.

Prevent trafficking among migrant workers including standardizing electronic tripartite labor contracts in a language the worker understands, establishing arrival orientation trainings for all migrant workers, and ensuring all bilateral labor MOUs comprehensively include internationally recognized labor standards and include pre-departure trainings.

Ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, such as immigration or commercial sex violations, or for leaving an abusive employer.

Continue to allocate adequate funding for operation of the government's central trafficking shelter, train shelter staff to identify and provide specialized care to victims, expand vocational training opportunities for victims and survivors, and partner with NGOs providing shelter and services to victims.

Increase the availability of specialized shelters and services, including long-term shelter and specialized services for child victims.

Continue to train law enforcement officers, judges, prison officials, liaison officers, and labor inspectors throughout the country to screen for, identify, and refer to protection services trafficking victims, including among vulnerable populations such as migrant workers and refugees.

Regulate and investigate fraudulent labor and recruitment practices and permanently blacklist employers and recruitment agencies violating workers' rights.

Investigate and hold accountable individuals for withholding workers' passports under Jordan's passport law.

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The government decreased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts.

The 2009 Law on the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking. As amended, the law prescribed penalties of imprisonment and a fine between 3,000 and 10,000 Jordanian dinars (\$4,240-\$14,120) for adult labor trafficking. The amended law did not provide a range for the sentence of imprisonment, but in such cases the penal code provided a default sentence of between three and 15 years' imprisonment. The amended law prescribed penalties of at least seven years' imprisonment and a fine between 5,000 and 20,000 Jordanian dinars (\$7,060-\$28,250) for adult and child sex trafficking and child labor trafficking. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with penalties prescribed for other grave crimes, such as kidnapping.

The Public Security Directorate (PSD) and Ministry of Labor (MOL) joint counter-trafficking unit (CTU) remained the national lead on anti-trafficking investigations and continued to investigate potential trafficking crimes. In 2024, CTU investigated 238 reports of potential trafficking cases, compared with 212 reports of potential trafficking crimes in 2023. Of the 238 potential cases, CTU determined 22 cases involving at least 40 suspects met the criteria to be classified as trafficking cases for further investigation. Of these 22 cases, 10 were sex trafficking, 11 were labor trafficking, and one case involved an unspecified form of trafficking. In 2023, CTU determined 14 cases — involving 34 suspects — of the 212 potential trafficking investigations were trafficking cases. In 2024, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) initiated the prosecution of 22 defendants, including nine for labor trafficking and 13 for sex trafficking, a slight decrease compared with the prosecution of 37 defendants (33 labor trafficking and four sex trafficking) in 2023. The government also continued 80 prosecutions (nine sex trafficking, eight forced labor, and 63 unspecified forms of trafficking) initiated in previous years. The government convicted seven traffickers (all for sex trafficking) under the anti-trafficking law, a significant decrease from 20 convicted traffickers in 2023 and the fewest convictions since 2013. Five convicted traffickers received a sentence of at least one year imprisonment. The government coordinated with a foreign government on a trafficking investigation and with another foreign government to extradite a suspected trafficker to Jordan; the extradition case was pending at the end of the reporting period. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in trafficking crimes.

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judges to ensure each governorate had at least one specialized judge and prosecutor, resulting in 24 specialized prosecutors and 63 specialized judges in the country at the end of 2024. The Judicial Council's special Supreme Judicial Committee continued to monitor and improve the judiciary's handling of trafficking cases. Although CTU was headquartered in Amman, it used specialized liaison officers in police stations across the country to identify victims outside of the capital and relied on additional liaison officers in Syrian refugee camps; however, international organizations reported some liaison officers did not either proactively investigate trafficking cases or screen for trafficking indicators. CTU also assigned liaison officers with the Civil Aviation Regulatory Commission. Legal experts continued to report some judges remained hesitant to convict perpetrators for human trafficking, preferring to pursue other charges, such as labor violations that carried lesser penalties, due to the complexity of cases, lack of judicial experience and expertise, and the cultural acceptance of some forms of the crime, such as domestic servitude. In addition, civil society organizations reported domestic servitude victims were pressured or encouraged to drop complaints against their employers. The government — at times in cooperation with international organizations and NGOs — trained law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, labor inspectors, social workers, healthcare providers, provincial and district governors, and other front-line officials on trafficking indicators, victim identification, investigation procedures, and related topics.

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## PROTECTION

The government modestly increased victim protection efforts.

In 2024, CTU identified and officially recognized as victims 93 individuals, a significant increase compared with 36 identified victims in 2023. Of the 93 victims, traffickers exploited 11 in sex trafficking, 13 in labor trafficking, and 69 in unspecified forms of trafficking; the unspecified forms of trafficking likely included non-trafficking crimes, such as organ removal, migrant smuggling, and illegal adoption. The 93 trafficking victims included 84 adults and nine children. Of the adults, 60 were men and 24 women; and 16 were foreign citizens and 77 Jordanian. In addition, the government identified 125 potential trafficking victims, a decrease compared to identifying 157 potential trafficking victims in 2023. Officials referred 160 government-identified victims and potential victims, to either a government specialized shelter or a shelter managed by a partner NGO. The government continued implementing an NRM and accompanying victim identification SOPs for victim identification and referral to

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The government continued to refer identified victims to multiple shelters, including shelters run by an NGO and the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD), and referred cases to CTU for investigation. MOSD continued to operate and fund the Dar Karama shelter, which provided psycho-social care, medical treatment, legal assistance, and vocational training; however, vocational training options were limited. It also continued to offer computer classes, a book club, and religious services for both Muslim and Christian shelter residents. The shelter's staff included lawyers and specialists in psychology, social work, nursing, and education. The gendarmerie provided shelter security outside of the shelter, and plainclothes police officers escorted residents needing to leave the shelter. Provision of shelter services was not conditional upon a victim's cooperation with law enforcement or judicial authorities, and victims could freely and willingly leave the shelter. Victims were allowed to stay at the shelter for as long as two months, but victims' stay in the shelter could be extended with MOSD approval. The 2023 shelter bylaws allowed victims to stay the length of an investigation and prosecution without additional approvals. The bylaws also codified the shelter's acceptance of potential victims not officially recognized by CTU and self-referral cases. The shelter had the capacity to serve a total of 35 victims, both Jordanian citizens and foreign nationals, with space for 20 women, five children, and 10 men. Dar Karama was the only shelter in the country available to men and had a separate wing and entrance for male victims; the shelter assisted 38 male victims and potential victims. In 2024, the shelter served a total of 133 victims and potential victims, an increase compared with 117 victims served in 2023. An NGO assessed victims who were migrant workers often preferred shelters provided by the embassies of their countries of origin, if such services were available, due to mistrust of authorities. The government referred 40 identified victims to an NGO shelter; however, the government did not report providing financial or in-kind support to the NGO shelter. An NGO reported a lack of specialized shelter and services for child victims continued to limit the availability and quality of care for children. In addition, an NGO reported the government placed some child trafficking victims with foster families due to lack of appropriate services where the children were allegedly further exploited. Victims services remained limited and inconsistent in quality outside of Amman. For victims identified outside the capital, the government reported it had two shelters in Irbid and Aqaba for victims of violence against women and girls that could provide temporary assistance to female trafficking victims before transferring them to the Dar Karama shelter. Shelter staff frequently cooperated with foreign victims' home embassies to assist their nationals. The government frequently lacked funds to purchase return flights for foreign trafficking victims who wished to voluntarily return to their home country and did not

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interpretation assistance. The government assisted in the voluntary repatriation of 70 victims and potential victims, using the government's victim assistance fund to fund three of the victims' returns, compared with assistance in 16 voluntary repatriations in the previous reporting period.

The government encouraged victim assistance in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases; PSD accompanied victims to court, and officials assigned all victims a lawyer throughout judicial proceedings to ensure protection of their rights. The 2009 anti-trafficking law, as amended, extended witness protections to trafficking victims, and trafficking victims were able to provide court statements electronically to prevent re-traumatization. Foreign victims also had the option to provide a deposition prior to being repatriated. The amended anti-trafficking law required authorities to provide victims legitimate means to obtain compensation for damages through restitution or civil suits; the MOJ maintained an MOU with the Jordanian Bar Association to provide free legal aid to victims seeking compensation from traffickers, and 12 victims received legal assistance through the MOU. Although no victims were awarded restitution or compensation during the report period, a civil case was ongoing at the end of the reporting period. The government did not report if it provided foreign victims with legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they faced retaliation or hardship. The NRM required the government to waive fees and assist foreign victims who wished to remain in Jordan with obtaining residency and finding employment; however, NGOs reported the government required some victims wishing to stay in Jordan to pay backdated work permit fees and fines. The government did not report granting any residency or work permits to foreign trafficking victims.

Due to inadequate screening among vulnerable populations, the government did not take effective measures to prevent the inappropriate penalization of potential victims solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked. NGOs continued to report migrant workers, including unidentified trafficking victims, were regularly administratively detained for immigration violations including for overstaying visas and fleeing abusive employers. Although CTU had some access to immigration detention centers to screen for trafficking indicators, it was unclear how consistently they did so. NGOs reported foreign labor trafficking victims often did not report abuses to authorities due to fear of deportation or detention.



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The government increased prevention efforts.

The National Committee for Countering Human Trafficking, chaired by the Minister of Justice and comprising relevant ministries, met regularly. The government launched its 2024-2027 national anti-trafficking strategy, developed in partnership with NGOs, in November 2024; the government did not allocate a separate budget to fund the strategy's activities aside from individual ministries' budgets. The government continued to raise awareness about trafficking crimes throughout the country through workshops, the distribution of informational materials, and other means. The government included trafficking indicators within both its computerized labor inspection system and labor inspectors' checklists. The MOL and CTU continued to operate a hotline to receive complaints of labor violations and potential trafficking crimes; the hotline offered interpretation services in some source-country languages. However, due to overall budget shortfalls, the government did not consistently maintain interpreters of some Asian languages at the hotline, which led to challenges in identifying potential trafficking victims and referring them to protection services. The hotline received 43 reports of potential trafficking crimes during the reporting period. The MOL also operated an online complaint mechanism for reporting labor complaints and potential trafficking cases.

Jordan's employer-based visa system continued to prevent foreign workers from leaving or changing their employers prior to the end of the term stipulated in their contract without a letter of release from their visa sponsor or employer or receiving adequate access to legal recourse in response to abuse; the government reported granting ad hoc permission to allow domestic workers to change employers. In July 2024, the government issued new regulations to establish a mechanism for domestic workers to change employers and allowed male domestic workers to transfer to other employment sectors, among other changes. During the reporting period, the government approved four domestic workers to change employers without their previous employers' consent. In addition, the government issued regulations in September 2024 to waive requirements of a certificate of good conduct and employer's release for workers whose permits and contracts had been expired for more than three months; however, NGOs reported officials sometimes still enforced these requirements. Authorities considered migrant workers, including unidentified trafficking victims, who left their place of employment prior to fulfilling their work contract to be illegal residents and subjected them to fines, detention, or deportation for their undocumented status in the

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employer. Jordan maintained several bilateral labor MOUs with labor-sending countries detailing recruitment procedures, working conditions, and wages; however, these MOUs were inconsistent and, at times, exacerbated vulnerabilities to trafficking. While the MOU with the Philippines ensured a base wage and tripartite labor contracts and fully prohibited worker-paid recruitment fees, MOUs with most other countries did not. The government reported it was reviewing MOUs to determine whether certain MOUs needed to be amended. NGOs reported government statements claiming migrant workers posed “health risks,” and immigration actions by security services targeting sub-Saharan African and South Asian migrants in Jordan further increased the vulnerability of these communities. The government worked with countries with diplomatic representation in Jordan to verify migrant workers’ ages, approve work permits, and translate work contracts into workers’ native languages.

The government continued implementing regulations requiring recruitment agencies to provide migrant domestic workers with insurance covering medical care and workplace accidents. The regulations also authorized the MOL to publicly rate recruitment agencies based on compliance with the labor law — including provisions prohibiting fraudulent recruitment practices, worker-paid recruitment fees, and contract switching — and to close and withdraw licenses from poorly ranked agencies; the MOL inspected 63 recruitment offices, issued warnings to 10 agencies, suspended nine, and did not close or revoke the license of any. Jordanian law prohibited recruitment agencies and employers of foreign workers from charging workers recruitment fees or deducting recruitment costs from wages; however, some foreign workers, particularly Egyptian workers, reported being pressured to pay their own recruitment fees or employers charging them for paid recruitment fees. MOL’s digital reporting platform received 6,938 labor complaints in 2024, of which 11 related to confiscation of travel documents, 216 to overtime, 3,171 to non-payment of wages, and 47 to forced labor; MOL resolved most of the complaints as labor law violations and referred the remaining 16 for investigation. The MOL continued applying the criteria for businesses joining the “golden list” of garment sector companies to include forced labor indicators to incentivize compliance with international and Jordanian labor standards. Companies on the “golden list” qualified for financial incentives and lower recruiting costs but faced financial penalties if found violating the criteria; nine companies complied with the “golden list” standards during the reporting period while the government revoked membership for two companies for failing to meet the criteria. Jordan’s passport law criminalized the withholding of passports by an employer, carrying penalties of six months to three years’ imprisonment and fines; CTU referred five cases to the MOJ for prosecution for passport withholding. The government did



## TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

Trafficking affects all communities. This section summarizes government and civil society reporting on the nature and scope of trafficking over the past five years. Human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Jordan, and traffickers exploit victims from Jordan abroad. Trafficking victims in Jordan are primarily from South and Southeast Asia, East Africa, Egypt, and Syria. Jordan relies on foreign migrant workers — many of whom are undocumented — in several sectors, including construction, agriculture, textiles, domestic work, and food service; according to an NGO, workers in these sectors are the most vulnerable to trafficking because of informal work agreements. International organizations and officials estimate the total number of foreign workers in Jordan could be as high as 1.5 million, while the MOL estimates the number of undocumented foreign workers in Jordan to be as high as 500,000. Jordan's employer-based visa system increases foreign workers' vulnerability to trafficking by preventing them from changing employers without the initial employer's consent. Because work permits are linked to a specific employer, when a worker quits one job before securing another, the worker loses legal status thereby increasing vulnerability to trafficking. Unscrupulous employers exploit the limited transferability of work visas to control or manipulate workers. Some recruitment agencies fraudulently recruit victims from labor-source countries to Jordan, using false promises of salary or other benefits. Forced labor victims in Jordan experience withheld or non-payment of wages, confiscation of identity documents, restricted freedom of movement, unsafe living conditions, long hours without rest, isolation, and verbal and physical abuse. For example, adults from South and Southeast Asia migrate to work in factories in Jordan's garment industry, some of whom experience withholding of passports, restricted movement, and unsafe living conditions. Workers recruited from countries without diplomatic representation in Jordan, such as Ghana, Kenya, Nepal, and Uganda, are further vulnerable to trafficking. In 2023, an NGO reported an increase in Ethiopian women from Tigray seeking employment as domestic workers in Jordan. Upon arrival in Jordan, they were exploited in forced labor and unable to leave the homes of their employers; they later reported being transported to the West Bank and Gaza where they experienced further exploitation before seeking assistance in Israel.

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January 2023, Jordan is host to approximately 657,657 UNHCR-registered refugees from more than 55 countries, including 589,159 Syrians. Non-Syrian refugees, including refugees from Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen, do not have access to the formal labor market without renouncing their UNHCR registration, making them vulnerable to labor trafficking. NGOs continue to observe an increase in child labor and potential forced child labor among Syrian refugee children working alongside their families in the agricultural and service industries, as well as peddling goods and begging. NGOs report drought and worsening water scarcity exacerbated Jordan's refugee population's vulnerability to trafficking. There have been reported cases of Syrian refugee women and girls sold into forced marriages, which may involve trafficking, in Jordan. Refugee boys and young men, in particular, often work illegally and informally in the Jordanian economy, which puts them at risk of trafficking.

Family members sometimes force Jordanian and Syrian girls to drop out of compulsory school to perform domestic service in their families' homes; some of these girls are vulnerable to trafficking. In 2022, the government investigated a case in which a mother allegedly exploited her two Jordanian daughters in sex trafficking involving foreign tourists. Jordanian boys employed in the service industry, agricultural sector, and as mechanics, street vendors, and beggars may be forced labor victims. NGOs report children begging in the streets in Jordan, some of whom are highly vulnerable to trafficking. Traffickers exploit Lebanese, North African, and Eastern European women, who migrated to Jordan to work in restaurants and nightclubs, in sex trafficking; traffickers may exploit Jordanian women working in nightclubs in sex trafficking. Individuals from the Dom community, an Indo-Aryan people also known as the Bani Murra, are also vulnerable to forced labor and forced begging in Jordan due to a lack of access to social and education services and employment opportunities in Jordan.

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