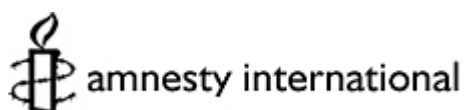


Title	Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Jordan
Publisher	Amnesty International
Country	Jordan
Publication Date	24 May 2012
Cite as	Amnesty International, <i>Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Jordan</i> , 24 May 2012, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4fbe392f62.html [accessed 1 August 2012]
Disclaimer	This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.



Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Jordan

Head of state: King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein

Head of government: Awn al-Khasawneh (who replaced Marouf al-Bakhit in October, who replaced Samir Rifai in February)

Death penalty: retentionist

Population: 6.3 million

Life expectancy: 73.4 years

Under-5 mortality: 25.3 per 1,000

Adult literacy: 92.2 per cent

Peaceful protesters calling for reform were forcibly dispersed and reportedly beaten by the security forces and pro-government supporters, causing injuries and possibly the death of one man. Freedom of expression and association remained restricted. The Constitution was amended to specifically prohibit torture. Trials continued before the State Security Court (SSC), whose procedures did not satisfy international standards for fair trial. Among those tried were around 100 alleged Islamists, many of whom said they were tortured or otherwise ill-treated while held incommunicado in April. Thousands of people were held without charge or prospect of trial on the authority of provincial governors. Women faced legal and other discrimination and at least 10 people were reported to have been victims of so-called honour killings. Migrant domestic workers continued to be exploited and abused. According to media reports, at least 15 people were sentenced to death. No executions were carried out.

Background

Demonstrations were held at various points throughout the year by people calling for political, economic and social reform, prompting the King to promise change. In February, he appointed a new Prime Minister tasked with expediting reforms and later suggested that these would see a transfer of power from the monarchy to parliament and that future governments would be democratically elected and based on representative political parties. In September, amendments to the Constitution were ratified which, if implemented, would improve protection of civil and political rights. However, public criticism continued over the slow pace of reform.

In October, the King appointed a new government by decree and another new Prime Minister. The same month, the head of the feared General Intelligence Department, a military security agency, resigned and was replaced by royal decree.

Excessive use of force

Peaceful protesters and journalists were injured apparently as a result of the use of excessive force by the security forces; some members of the security forces were also reported to have been injured when demonstrations became violent. Most protests were peaceful, but some became violent after government supporters attacked peaceful demonstrators. In at least one case, the security forces refused to intervene and may have facilitated and been involved in such attacks.

- Khayri Sa'id Jamil died on 25 March after apparently peaceful pro-reform demonstrators were attacked and stoned by government supporters and security forces on 24 and 25 March in Amman. The first attack occurred in the presence of the security forces who failed to intervene. The next day, members of the gendarmerie and other security forces reportedly joined with government supporters in attacking pro-reform demonstrators, using stones and beating them with sticks and batons, after blocking escape routes. An official autopsy was said to have found no evidence that Khayri Sa'id Jamil was beaten prior to his death, which it attributed to heart failure; unofficial sources alleged that his teeth had been broken, his body was bruised and he had wounds to his head, ears, legs and genitals. The authorities said a full official investigation would be held into the events on 24 and 25 March, but provided no further details and any outcome was not made public.

Freedom of expression, association and assembly

Freedom of expression and association remained restricted under several laws. Journalists and others who criticized the government, monarchy or state institutions were liable to arrest and prosecution, or attack by government supporters.

A draft Anti-Corruption Commission law would further restrict media freedom if enacted, imposing substantial fines against individuals for the dissemination or publication of information about any person accused of corruption that "leads to defamation, impacts on his dignity or targets his personality". The proposed law was still being considered at the end of 2011.

A new amendment to the Public Gatherings Law required that the authorities be notified in advance of planned "public gatherings", replacing the requirement that prior official authorization be obtained. However, the amendment failed to define the term "public gathering".

Torture and other ill-treatment

The government amended Article 8 of the Constitution to explicitly provide that detainees are not to be "tortured ... or harmed physically or emotionally" and are only to be held in places "sanctioned by law", and to invalidate "confessions" or other statements obtained under duress. Despite these important new safeguards, reports of torture and other ill-treatment persisted.

Unfair trials

Over 100 people, most of them alleged Islamists, faced unfair trials before the SSC in 2011 for alleged offences against state security. Constitutional amendments included the stipulation that civilians should not be tried before a panel comprising only military judges except in cases involving treason, espionage, terrorism, drugs offences and counterfeiting. Local and international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, have called for the SSC to be abolished.

- In August, some 150 people went on trial before the SSC, around 50 of them in their absence, in connection with their alleged participation in a demonstration at Zarqa in April to demand the release of hundreds of Islamist prisoners; the demonstration had been followed by violence between demonstrators, pro-government supporters and security forces. The demonstrators faced charges of "plotting terrorist acts" and "inciting riots and sectarianism". Detained in mass arrests on 15 and 16 April, many were reported to have been held incommunicado and tortured and otherwise ill-treated to the extent that some still had visible injuries when their families first gained access to them up to five days later. In May, the Director of the Public Security Directorate denied that they had been tortured or abused but it was unclear whether any independent investigation was carried out.

Detention without trial

According to the official Jordan National Centre for Human Rights, around 11,300 people were held under the 1954 Law on Crime Prevention. This gives provincial governors the power to detain people indefinitely without charge if they are suspected of committing a crime or deemed a "danger to society".

Violence and discrimination against women

Women continued to face discrimination in law and in practice, and gender-based violence. According to media reports, at least nine women were killed by male relatives and one man was killed in cases where the perpetrator claimed to have acted in the name of family "honour".

Women's rights activists called for reform of the Citizenship and Nationality Law to enable Jordanian women married to a foreign spouse to pass on their nationality to their children and husband, as Jordanian men married to a foreign spouse can do. The law had not been amended by the end of 2011. In June, the King spoke in favour of abolishing all forms of legal discrimination against women, but when the Constitution was ratified its Article 6(i), which prohibits discrimination on grounds of "race, language or religion", was not amended to prohibit discrimination on grounds of gender.

At the end of her 14-day visit to Jordan in November, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women pointed out that constitutional prohibition of gender discrimination was necessary to ensure that women can properly challenge inequality. She also said that any steps towards eradicating violence against women must be preceded by improved equality for women.

Migrants' rights – domestic workers

Thousands of migrant domestic workers continued to be inadequately protected against exploitation and abuse, including sexual violence, by their employers despite legislation and official regulations introduced since 2008. During her visit in November, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women encouraged the government to strengthen measures to prevent abuses against women migrant domestic workers. Tens of women who fled employers for reasons ranging from non-payment of wages to physical abuse were unable to return to their countries of origin because they could not pay fines imposed for over-staying their residence visas.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

People fleeing violence in Syria continued to arrive in Jordan. By December, at least 2,300 Syrians had registered with UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, in Amman. Jordan continued to host hundreds of thousands of refugees from other countries.

Death penalty

According to media reports, at least 15 people were sentenced to death although at least five of those sentences were commuted. The last execution took place in 2006.

Copyright notice: © Copyright Amnesty International
