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JORDAN 2022

The authorities continued to restrict freedom of assembly, expression and association for journalists, political activists and workers through arbitrary detention and the use of repressive laws. Human rights defenders and journalists were targeted with surveillance. Women and girls continued to face discrimination in law and practice. Refugees faced challenges in accessing essential services due to cuts in international aid.

Background

The state of emergency declared at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 remained in force despite a statement by King Abdullah in May that it would be lifted in the next few months.

The king restricted freedom of movement and contact with the outside world for former crown prince Hamzah bin Hussein, who was placed under house arrest in 2021 for allegedly planning a coup, an accusation he denied.

In September, parliament adopted the Children's Rights Law.

Arbitrary detention

Local governors continued to use the Law of Crime Prevention to administratively detain anyone considered “a danger to the people”, without charge or the ability to challenge their detention before a competent judicial authority. In March, the authorities used this law to arrest at least 150 activists, journalists, teachers and others in an apparent effort to stop them from organizing multiple protests, including one to commemorate youth-led anti-government protests that took place in March 2011. The authorities released all of them shortly after their arrest.

Freedom of expression

The authorities continued to use the Cybercrime Prevention Law and criminal defamation provisions under the Penal Code to suppress free speech.

In February, the authorities arrested 11 political activists without a warrant and interrogated them in connection with “spreading false information” and “inciting sectarian and racial strife” under the Cybercrime Prevention Law and the Penal Code.

Journalists Taghreed Rishq and Daoud Kuttab were detained on their entry to Jordan and interrogated at Amman's international airport on 6 and 8 March, respectively, under the Cybercrime Prevention Law about their writing. Taghreed Rishq was released on bail the same day while Daoud Kuttab was released but ordered to appear before a court in Amman, the capital, where the judge ordered a temporary suspension of his arrest order. The same month, according to Reporters Without Borders, the authorities arrested and charged three journalists for “spreading fake news” in relation to their coverage of the Pandora Papers, which included leaked documents exposing the names of offshore companies, secret bank accounts and luxurious items belonging to business people, politicians and others, including King Abdullah.

On 15 August, the authorities arrested Adnan al-Rousan, a writer and political activist, and charged him with “slandering an official body” and “spreading false and exaggerated news that undermines the prestige of the state”.

Right to privacy

In January, a Front Line Defenders investigation found that the phone of Hala Ahed Deeb, a Jordanian lawyer and a women's human rights defender, had been infected with the Pegasus spyware. In June, Front Line Defenders and the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab revealed that the phones of four other human rights defenders and journalists in Jordan had been hacked with Pegasus spyware between August 2019 and December 2021. According to their investigation, agencies of the Jordanian government were likely to be responsible.

Freedom of association

The authorities reversed a decision to amend the Law on Associations, which arbitrarily restricts the activities of NGOs and allows the government to interfere in their work. NGOs continued to struggle to obtain government approval to access grants from foreign donors. In early 2022, the government opted to continue using a mechanism established in 2019 under the prime minister's office to ease the processing of requests for foreign funding by NGOs. In September, the Community Media Network submitted a complaint to the National Centre for Human Rights over the authorities' rejection of a USD 35,200 grant from the German development agency GIZ to produce a campaign on recycling.

Torture and other ill-treatment

The authorities failed to conduct prompt, impartial and independent investigations into allegations of torture.

On 6 September, the family of Zaid Sudqi Ali Dabash received a call from prison authorities in Marka, in the suburbs of Amman, informing them of his death. According to the family's lawyer, the body of Zaid Sudqi Ali Dabash showed signs of torture, including bruises on his arms, legs, back, stomach and ears. The lawyer added that the coroner's office failed to provide the family with a forensic report. The case was transferred to the military justice system for investigation, rather than the civilian justice system, in violation of human rights standards.

Workers' rights

Jordan continued to struggle with a high unemployment rate, especially among women and youth, according to the World Bank.

On 27 March, members of the Unemployed Movement were arrested after they staged a 43-day sit-in in front of a government building in al-Tafilah, a town 300km

south of Amman, protesting against the lack of employment opportunities. They were all released the following day.

On 29 March, 163 teachers from the Jordanian Teachers' Syndicate (JTS) were arrested while protesting in front of the education ministry in Amman against the dissolution of the syndicate in 2020. All were released.

On 26 June, the court of first instance in Amman upheld an appeal to end the prosecution of JTS members arrested in 2020 for "illegal assembly and inciting hatred" but also upheld the decision to dissolve the syndicate.

Women's and girls' rights

In February, the senate amended Article 6 of the constitution to state that Jordanian men and women shall be equal before the law and banned "discrimination between them as regards to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion". However, no steps were taken to amend legislation or regulations to reflect the constitutional amendment. For example, women continued to require the permission of a male guardian to marry or travel abroad with their children and risked arrest if they fled their homes.

Women and girls continued to be subjected to gender-based violence, and authorities failed to adequately investigate such crimes or strengthen protection against them. A local organization reported the murder of 11 women and girls, including five killed by family members. The Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of 2008 fails to include a definition of gender-based violence or criminalize marital rape and other forms of violence such as economic and psychological abuse, and it excludes former spouses and unmarried partners from the definition of "family members".

Refugees' and migrants' rights

As of 30 September, according to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, Jordan was hosting 676,606 Syrian, 65,818 Iraqi, 12,957 Yemeni, 5,522 Sudanese and 650 Somali refugees. It was also hosting 2 million Palestinian refugees registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency.

All refugees in Jordan had limited access to essential services such as water and sanitation, education and healthcare due to insufficient funding for the UN and its implementing partners and international organizations, as well as limited national resources. Organizations trying to obtain approval for aid projects targeting Yemeni, Iraqi, Sudanese or Somali refugees faced even greater obstacles.

In January, UNHCR announced that the authorities had granted 62,000 work permits to Syrian refugees, the highest number issued since 2016 when work permits for Syrian refugees were introduced.

Failure to tackle climate crisis

The government did not announce a new NDC; in 2021, it had raised its macroeconomic greenhouse gas emission reduction target from 14% to 31% by 2030.