

World Report 2025



Jordan

Events of 2024

People attend a protest in support of Palestinians in Gaza, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, in Amman, Jordan, December 6, 2024.

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Jordan held parliamentary elections in September 2024, with 41 out of 138 seats in the lower house of parliament elected under a new law that aims to boost political parties. Following the elections, King Abdullah II appointed a new government headed by Prime Minister Jafar Hassan, who previously served as the king’s chief of staff.

Jordanian authorities continued to limit civic space in 2024, arresting and harassing peaceful dissidents and journalists and using vague and abusive laws to limit free speech and peaceful activism. In February, [Access Now reported](#) that 35 Jordanian and Jordan-based journalists, activists, and politicians had been repeatedly targeted with the Israeli NSO Group's Pegasus spyware between 2019 and 2023, [including two Human Rights Watch staff members](#).

Freedom of Expression

Jordanian law criminalizes speech deemed critical of the king, foreign countries, government officials and institutions, Islam, Christianity, and “defamatory” speech.

In August 2023, Jordan’s parliament hastily [amended](#) the cybercrimes law, bypassing public debate or input. The changes increased penalties for online defamation or “character assassination” to at least three months in jail and/or fines between 5,000 and 20,000 Jordanian dinars

(US\$7,000-\$28,000). Following public criticism and [recommendations](#) from the UN Human Rights Council, Jordan agreed in 2024 to review the amendments.

In 2023, [cases](#) relating to online defamation under the older 2015 cybercrimes law reached 3,330, according to an annual report by the National Center for Human Rights (NCHR).

In June, a Jordanian court [sentenced](#) Hiba Abu Taha to one year in prison for an article in which she criticized alleged shipping of goods to Israel via Jordan. In July, authorities [jailed](#) journalist and commentator Ahmed Hassan al-Zoubi to serve a one-year prison term for a December 2022 Facebook post in which he criticized authorities' response to protests over fuel prices.

In late 2023 and early 2024, Jordanian authorities arrested and harassed scores of Jordanians who participated in pro-Palestine protests across the country or engaged in online advocacy. Human Rights Watch [documented](#) cases in which authorities brought charges against four activists under the new cybercrimes law, including Anas al-Jamal, a prominent activist, and Ayman Sandouka, secretary of a now-dissolved political party.

Freedoms of Assembly and Association

While Jordan's 2011 Public Gatherings Law does not require government permission for public meetings or demonstrations, authorities still required organizations and venues to seek approval from the Interior Ministry or General Intelligence Department.

Laws like the 1996 Labor Law and the 2008 Associations Law restrict the formation of trade unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Authorities also impose onerous requirements for NGOs to receive foreign funding. In December 2023, [a new process](#) centralized foreign funding requests under the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, removing the automatic approval after 30 days of no response.

Refugees and Migrants

In May, after facing public pressure, Jordanian authorities [cancelled](#) the administrative [deportation orders](#) for two Syrian refugees who were at high risk of persecution if returned to Syria and released them from detention.

By late 2024, [over 624,000](#) people from Syria had sought refuge in Jordan, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Over 80 percent of Syrians lived outside refugee camps, mostly in rented accommodation.

In 2024, UNHCR [reported](#) that Jordan also hosted asylum seekers and refugees from other countries, [including](#) Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, and Somalia. Authorities upheld a 2019 ban preventing UNHCR from registering non-Syrians who entered for medical treatment, study, tourism, or work, as asylum seekers, leaving many without UNHCR documentation or access to services.

By June 2024, UNHCR [reported](#) that labor authorities had issued 27,653 work permits for Syrians in 2024, with 458,135 in total since 2016, though [many were renewals](#). Most professions remained closed to non-Jordanians, forcing many Syrians into the informal sector without labor protections.

Jordan hosted an estimated [49,000 documented migrant domestic workers](#) in 2024, mostly women from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. NGOs repeatedly referred domestic workers to Labor Ministry investigators to report abuses, including wage theft, unsafe working conditions, excessive hours, passport confiscation, and physical, verbal, and sexual abuse.

Women's Rights

Jordan's 2019 personal status code discriminates against women. Women up to 30 years old need male guardian permission to marry for the first time, and marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men are not recognized. Further, a woman who disobeys her husband [loses](#) her entitlement to spousal maintenance (*nafaqa*), for example, if she leaves the marital home "without a legitimate reason." And women cannot travel abroad with their children without male guardian approval.

Authorities have arrested and administratively detained women because their male guardian complained they sought to leave the family home without permission. Human Rights Watch documented cases where women remained confined in detention for more than 10 years.

Jordanian women married to non-Jordanians cannot legally pass on their nationality to their children.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

While Jordan does not explicitly criminalize same-sex relations, vague "immorality" provisions in the penal code are used to target sexual and gender minorities, and there are no protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

In December 2023, Human Rights Watch [reported](#) that Jordanian authorities systematically targeted lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights activists, subjecting them to interrogations, threats, and intimidation, leading many to shut down their organizations, stop their work, or flee the country. Government officials also smeared LGBT rights activists online, and social media users posted photos of them with messages inciting violence against them.

Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights

Jordan continued to grapple with high unemployment, particularly for young adults and women, coupled with rising poverty after the Covid-19 pandemic and an increase in the cost of living. A decade of International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan programs failed to reduce government debt and led to price hikes, including for fuel and electricity, without adequate compensatory measures. Human Rights Watch [reported](#) in 2023 that Jordan's automated cash transfer program for workers on low incomes, funded by the World Bank, was undermined by errors, discriminatory policies, and stereotypes about poverty, leaving many without social security as they struggled to afford food, rent, and debt.

Jordan remains one of the few countries in the world that still allows imprisoning people for unpaid household debt, despite international law prohibiting it. In 2023, authorities lifted the pandemic-related moratorium on imprisoning debtors owing over 5,000 Jordanian dinars (about US\$7,000). Human Rights Watch [documented](#) how, in the absence of an adequate social security system, tens of thousands of Jordanians took out loans to pay for everyday expenses, only to face imprisonment when unable to repay.

Criminal Justice System

Local governors continued to use provisions of the Crime Prevention Law of 1954 to place individuals in administrative detention for up to one year, in circumvention of the Criminal Procedure Law. Jordan's NCHR [reported](#) in 2024 that only 37,395 people were administratively detained in 2023, marking an increase from the 34,411 administrative detentions in 2022.

Cross-Border Operations

In January, Jordan launched airstrikes in southeast Syria that killed 10 people, including women, men, and children, raising concerns of extrajudicial executions. Human Rights Watch [urged](#) authorities to ensure accountability and compensation for the civilian harm caused.