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Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Head of state: **King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein**

Head of government: **Abdullah Ensour**

The authorities restricted freedoms of expression, association and assembly, and prosecuted and imprisoned government critics. Torture and other ill-treatment continued in detention centres and prisons, and the State Security Court continued to conduct unfair trials. Women were discriminated against in law and in practice and inadequately protected against sexual and other violence. Courts passed death sentences and executions were carried out. Jordan hosted more than 641,800 refugees from Syria.

BACKGROUND

Jordan continued to be affected by the armed conflict in neighbouring Syria, hosting refugees and suffering civilian casualties in cross-border firing from Syria. In February, Jordanian warplanes launched further attacks on areas in Syria controlled by the armed group Islamic State (IS), after IS issued a video showing its fighters burning to death the captured Jordanian fighter pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh.

Around 12 people reportedly died during violent clashes with security forces who raided several homes in Ma'an in southwest Jordan in May and June. In May, following the events in Ma'an and the death in custody of Abdullah Zu'bi (see below), the Interior Minister resigned and the heads of the Public Security Directorate (PSD), which runs the police and prisons, and the gendarmerie, were prematurely retired. The Prime Minister announced that this was due to a "lack of co-ordination between security organizations".

COUNTER-TERROR AND SECURITY

Alleged supporters of IS and other armed groups were prosecuted under anti-terrorism laws and other legislation by the State Security Court (SSC), a quasi-military court whose procedures failed to meet international fair trial standards.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In August, the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) said it had received 87 complaints of torture and other ill-treatment during 2014. In response, Prime Minister Ensour announced the appointment of a ministerial committee including officials from the General Intelligence Department (GID) and Public Security Directorate (PSD), and chaired by the government's co-ordinator on human rights, to examine the NCHR's findings. In December, the UN Committee against Torture expressed concern at "consistent reports of widespread use of torture and ill-treatment of suspects by security and law enforcement officials" highlighting GID and Criminal Investigation Department (CID) detention facilities.

Amer Jubran, a Palestinian-Jordanian activist, said he was tortured and otherwise ill-treated during two months in GID detention and forced to sign a "confession", which the SSC panel of military judges accepted as evidence against him when they sentenced him in July to 10 years' imprisonment on charges that included possessing arms and explosives and belonging to Hizbullah. In November, the Court of Cassation confirmed his conviction. His co-defendants, some of whom also alleged that they were tortured by the GID, received sentences of two to three years' imprisonment.

DEATHS IN CUSTODY

In May, Abdullah Zu'bi died in custody in Irbid following his arrest for alleged drugs offences. Three police officers were charged with forcing a "confession" and beating Abdullah Zu'bi to death; two others faced charges of negligence and disobeying orders. An official autopsy, conducted after a video of Abdullah Zu'bi's bruised body was shared on the internet, attributed his death to a beating inflicted in custody. At the end of the year it remained unclear whether the accused police officers had been tried. In another case, an official autopsy concluded that Omar al-Naser died due to being beaten in CID custody in September; the case was referred to the police Public Prosecutor. Police officers accused of such crimes in Jordan are prosecuted before a special police court that is neither independent nor transparent.

ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION

During the year, thousands of people were detained under the 1954 Crime Prevention Law, which empowers regional governors to authorize the detention of criminal suspects for up to one year without charge, trial or any means of legal remedy.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

The authorities restricted the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly using laws that criminalize peaceful protest and other peaceful expression. Tens of journalists and activists were arrested and detained, including under provisions of the Penal Code, which bans criticism of the King and government institutions, and the anti-terrorism law as amended in 2014, which criminalizes criticism of foreign leaders or states that is deemed to harm Jordan's relations with those states. Those prosecuted included journalists, pro-reformists and members of the Muslim Brotherhood, some of whom were tried before the SSC.

The Ministry of Justice proposed comprehensive amendments to the Penal Code, which were pending at the end of the year, including a proposal to prohibit and criminalize strikes by workers in "vital sectors".

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Women suffered discrimination in law and practice, and were inadequately protected against violence, including so-called "honour" crimes. The Citizenship Law continued to bar almost 89,000 Jordanian women with foreign spouses from passing their nationality to their children or spouses, denying them access to state services. In January, however, the government enabled the children of women with foreign spouses to apply for identity cards if they have resided in Jordan for at least five years, thus increasing their access to medical care, education, work permits, property ownership and a driving licence.

Tadamun, the Jordanian Women's Solidarity Association, reported in September that it had documented 10 possible "honour" killings of women and girls between January and August, based on media reports. In May, the cabinet approved amendments cancelling provisions of the Penal Code under which rapists could escape prosecution by marrying their victim. This did not apply to cases where the rape victim was between 15 and 18 years old, on the grounds that marriage to the perpetrator could protect her from being killed by family members in the name of "honour".

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Jordan hosted more than 641,800 refugees from Syria, including some 13,800 Palestinians, as well as a growing number of refugees from Iraq. The authorities maintained strict controls at official and informal border crossings and denied entry to Palestinians, single unaccompanied men unable to prove family ties in Jordan, and people without identity documents. In March, Prime Minister Ensour told the Third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference that refugee numbers already exceeded Jordan's capacity. Yet international humanitarian funding and resettlement allocations for Syria's refugees in Jordan remained inadequate.

Jordan forcibly returned scores of refugees to Syria. In violation of international law it denied entry to over 12,000 refugees from Syria who remained in dire conditions in the desert area on the Jordanian side of the border with Syria; and, in December, deported more than 500 Sudanese refugees and asylum-seekers to Sudan, where they were at risk of human rights violations.

DEATH PENALTY

Courts continued to impose death sentences and executions were carried out. In February, Sajida al-Rishawi and Ziad al-Karbouli, two Iraqi nationals linked to al-Qa'ida, were hanged. It appeared from the timing of the executions that they were a response to the killing by IS of a Jordanian pilot. In 2006, Sajida al-Rishawi had told the UN Special Rapporteur on torture that she had been tortured in pre-trial detention.

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