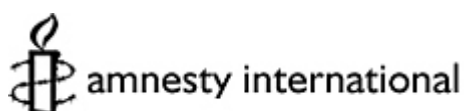


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Amnesty International Annual Report 2011 - Jordan

Head of state: King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein

Head of government: Samir Rifai

Death penalty: retentionist

Population: 6.5 million

Life expectancy: 72.4 years

Under-5 mortality (m/f): 24/19 per 1,000

Adult literacy: 91.1 per cent

Reports of torture and other ill-treatment persisted and members of the security forces continued to enjoy impunity. Trials before the State Security Court (SSC) continued to breach international fair trial standards. Dozens of people were arrested for security offences and thousands of others were held without charge or prospect of trial. Freedoms of expression, association and assembly continued to be restricted. The authorities arbitrarily withdrew Jordanian nationality from some citizens of Palestinian origin. Migrant domestic workers continued to be exploited and abused. Women faced legal and other discrimination and, despite a legal change to protect them from violence, at least 15 women were reported to have been victims of so-called honour killings. Nine people were sentenced to death; no executions were carried out.

Background

The government passed temporary laws in the absence of parliament which remained suspended by order of the King until new elections were held on 9 November. These were boycotted by several political parties, including the main opposition Islamic Action Front, who complained that the electoral system was insufficiently representative and was weighted in favour of rural areas compared to the cities where citizens of Palestinian origin predominate. Most of the seats in the parliament inaugurated on 29 November were held by members of tribes loyal to the King.

Torture and other ill-treatment

Reports of torture and other ill-treatment of security detainees and criminal suspects continued. The authorities failed to institute adequate legal and other safeguards against such abuses.

In May, the UN Committee against Torture reiterated long-standing concerns at Jordan's

failure to investigate and prosecute allegations of torture, to provide adequate protection against torture, and to prosecute perpetrators in accordance with the seriousness of the crime. It noted the "numerous, consistent and credible allegations of a widespread and routine practice of torture and ill-treatment" including in General Intelligence Department (GID) and Criminal Investigations Department detention. The government did not respond to the Committee's recommendations.

- Charges against a police officer relating to an apparently unlawful killing were dropped when the victim's family agreed not to pursue the case. Fakhri Anani Kreishan, who died in November 2009 after being attacked by police officers in Ma'an, was found at autopsy to have sustained a lethal head injury caused by a hard object. The police officer alleged to have delivered the blow remained on active duty.

Unfair trials – State Security Court

Dozens of people accused of state security offences faced unfair trials before the SSC. In October the UN Human Rights Committee reiterated its recommendation that the authorities consider abolishing the SSC.

- In March, the SSC disregarded a 2009 Court of Cassation finding which led it to overturn life sentences against eight men convicted by the SSC of planning a "terrorist attack" in 2004. The Cassation Court's decision was based on grounds including that the "confessions" were "extracted under coercion" and so were "invalid". The SSC referred the case to the Public Prosecutor for a fresh investigation and the men remained in prison. It appeared that no official investigation was conducted into allegations that the "confessions" were obtained under duress.

Detention without trial

According to the Jordanian National Centre for Human Rights, during the first six months of 2010, 6,965 people were held under the 1954 Law on Crime Prevention, which provides provincial governors with powers to detain indefinitely without charge anyone suspected of committing a crime or considered a "danger to society".

- 'Isam al-'Utaibi, also known as Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, was held without charge for over two months by the GID in Amman before being referred for trial to the SSC and transferred to prison on charges including recruiting members to "terrorist organizations". Two years earlier he had spent three years in GID detention without charge.

Freedom of expression, association and assembly

Journalists and others who criticized the government or participated in peaceful protests were arrested and, in some case, prosecuted. Arrests increased in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in November when tens of people were briefly detained for objecting to the electoral system.

- Workers' rights activist Muhammad al-Sneid was arrested on 10 May and held for around 10 days after he participated in a peaceful protest in Ma'daba town against a Ministry of Agriculture decision to dismiss him and other public service workers. In July, the SSC sentenced him to three months' imprisonment for holding an "unlawful gathering".

Discrimination – Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin

The authorities continued arbitrarily to withdraw Jordanian nationality from citizens of Palestinian descent. Hundreds of thousands of people of Palestinian origin are recognized as Jordanian citizens. Those whose nationality was withdrawn had few means

to challenge the decision and were effectively made stateless and denied access to health care and education facilities.

Migrants' rights – domestic workers

Regulations introduced in 2009 to protect migrant domestic workers from exploitation and physical and psychological abuse in the workplace were, in the main, not implemented. TAMKEEN, an organization offering legal assistance to domestic migrant workers, reported in May that it had received 290 complaints of unpaid salaries, passport confiscation and poor working conditions from "guest workers" in the previous 12 months.

Violence and discrimination against women and girls

Women continued to be victims of "honour" killings, with at least 15 such cases reported. The government introduced temporary amendments to the Penal Code to prevent leniency in sentencing men convicted of killing female relatives in the name of family "honour", including to Article 98 which allows reduced sentences for those who kill in a "fit of rage caused by an unlawful or dangerous act on the part of the victim". However, the Court of Cassation sent two such cases back to the Criminal Court for it to consider reducing the sentences in accordance with Article 98.

Temporary amendments to the Personal Status Law failed to address adequately discrimination against women, including by failing to ensure sex-equality in joint financial or property settlements following divorce. The amendments raised the minimum marriage age for girls to 18, but allow exceptions so that in some cases girls as young as 15 can marry.

Death penalty

Nine people were sentenced to death in 2010, according to Amnesty International's sources; the Justice Minister said the total was six. Amendments to the Penal Code reduced the number of capital offences. In March, the Justice Minister announced that the crime of rape may cease to be a capital offence. No executions were carried out.

In December, Jordan abstained on a UN General Assembly resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium on executions.

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