

JORDAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy ruled by King Abdullah II bin Hussein. The constitution concentrates executive and legislative authority in the king. The multiparty parliament consists of the 60-member House of Notables (Majlis al-Ayan) appointed by the king and a 120-member elected lower house, the Chamber of Deputies (Majlis al-Nuwwab). Parliamentary elections, which international observers deemed credible, took place in November 2010. Security forces reported to civilian authorities.

Throughout the year citizens staged weekly demonstrations calling for various political and economic reforms. The demonstrations were mostly peaceful; however, there were incidents of violence by counterprotesters and security forces against protesters. The government did not investigate or prosecute individuals and security officials accused of inciting violence during the demonstrations.

The three most significant continuing human rights problems were citizens' inability to peacefully change their government, abuses committed with impunity by security services, and violence against women.

Other human rights problems were arbitrary deprivation of life, torture or mistreatment, poor prison conditions, arbitrary arrest and denial of due process through administrative detention, prolonged detention, and external interference in judicial decisions. Citizens continued to report infringements on their privacy rights, and legal and societal discrimination against persons of Palestinian origin remained widespread. Restrictive legislation and regulations limited freedoms of speech and press, while government interference in the media and threats of fines and detention further encouraged self-censorship. The government amended the law restricting freedom of assembly and more frequently allowed protesters to gather without interference, although counterdemonstrators and at times security forces used violence against them. The government continued to restrict freedom of association. Local human rights organizations reported widespread violence against women and children. Legal and societal discrimination and harassment remained a problem for women, religious minorities, converts from Islam, and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. The government restricted labor rights, and local and international human rights organizations reported high levels of abuse of foreign domestic workers.

Impunity remained problematic. The government did not take steps to investigate, prosecute, or punish officials who committed abuses.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There was one report that government agents committed an arbitrary or unlawful killing during the year. On March 25, Khairy Jamil Said died as police were dispersing protesters near Gamal Abdul Nasser Square in Amman. While the government coroner reported Saad died of heart failure, protesters accused the police of beating Saad to death.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports during the year of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices; however, international NGOs continued to report incidents of torture and widespread mistreatment in police and security detention centers. The law prohibits torture, including psychological harm, by public officials and provides penalties of as long as three years' imprisonment for the use of torture, with an increased penalty of up to 15 years if serious injury occurs. Human rights lawyers found the law ambiguous and supported amendments to better define "torture" and strengthen sentencing guidelines. The judicial system has never charged an individual with torture.

International and domestic organizations stated that security forces continued to practice torture, particularly in police stations. According to a May 11 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report chronicling the April 15 demonstrations in Zarka, officers from "Teams 62 and 71" reportedly detained more than 100 Islamist protesters in a security station in the nearby town of Rusaifa and beat some on the head, back, and other body areas while their hands and feet were shackled. According to HRW, the detainee who reported the torture was among a large group released on May 5 after an initial investigation.

Some individuals reported that government agents sexually abused them during arrest or detention by making them remove their clothing and perform sexual acts.

Human rights activists reported that some persons with disabilities were subjected to cruel and inhumane treatment at institutions and rehabilitation centers. In September the Family Protection Department (FPD) investigated a case in which a management official abused a 12-year-old child with cerebral palsy at a private rehabilitation center accredited by the Ministry of Social Development.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Significant problems remained in prisons, including inadequate food and health care, poor sanitation standards, poor ventilation, extreme temperatures, inadequate access to potable water, and insufficient basic and emergency medical care. Some detainees reported abuse and mistreatment by guards during the year. The National Center for Human Rights (NCHR) reported 85 complaints from juvenile detention centers from March 2010 to August 2011, including those related to lack of personal safety, lack of education, and allegations of torture and mistreatment.

According to government statistics, there were approximately 16,444 inmates, 3 percent of whom were female, in 15 correctional and rehabilitation center (CRC) facilities, up from 14 in 2010. According to the Ministry of Social Development, there were 170 juveniles in custody. Conditions for women were generally better than those for men. Pretrial detainees were often held in the same detention facilities as convicted prisoners. The General Intelligence Directorate (GID) held some persons detained on national security charges in separate detention facilities. According to the NCHR, GID detainees are generally held in solitary confinement and are prevented from meeting unsupervised with visitors, including their lawyers. Islamist prisoners in Jweidah were held in a separate wing and kept in small-group semi-isolation. International and domestic NGOs reported that in some instances Islamist prisoners faced harsher prison conditions than other inmates.

Prisoners and detainees had restricted access to visitors and were permitted religious observance. Authorities permitted prisoners and detainees to submit complaints to judicial authorities without censorship; however, authorities did not investigate allegations of inhumane conditions. The Ombudsman's Bureau within the Public Security Directorate (PSD) investigates allegations of police abuse; however, due to impunity complaints rarely resulted in any disciplinary measures. During the year no steps were taken to improve recordkeeping or use alternatives to sentencing for nonviolent offenders or juveniles.

The government permitted local and international human rights observers to visit prisons and conduct private interviews. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited prisoners and detainees in all prisons, including those controlled by the GID, according to standard ICRC modalities.

During the year the government inaugurated two new CRCs with cells that meet international standards and shut down an older prison.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention. According to local and international human rights groups, the government did not always observe these prohibitions in practice. In particular, the governors of the country's 12 governorates continued to use the law to detain individuals administratively without due process or detain individuals found not guilty in legal proceedings.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The PSD controls general police functions. The PSD, GID, gendarmerie, Civil Defense Directorate, and military share responsibility for maintaining internal security. The PSD, Civil Defense Directorate, and gendarmerie report to the minister of interior with direct access to the king when necessary, and the GID in practice reports directly to the king. Civilian authorities maintained control over security forces.

According to local and international NGOs, the government rarely investigated allegations of abuse or corruption, and there were widespread allegations of impunity. Citizens may file complaints of police abuse or corruption with the PSD's human rights office or one of 50 police prosecutors stationed throughout the country. Complaints of abuse and corruption by the gendarmerie may be filed directly with the gendarmerie. A GID liaison officer receives complaints against the GID and refers them to GID personnel for investigation. Complaints against the PSD, gendarmerie, and GID may also be filed with the NCHR or several other NGOs, such as the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR). The PSD's preventive security office is tasked with investigating allegations of police corruption. The PSD and gendarmerie try their personnel internally with their own courts, judges, and prosecutors; reports about the proceedings are not published.

During the year there were several reported instances of security forces using excessive force with impunity or failing to protect demonstrators from societal

violence. On July 15, during a proreform demonstration in Al-Nakeel Square in Amman, several members of the riot police wielding wooden bats and other instruments, such as a barbecue rack, attacked protesters and journalists covering the demonstrations. On July 19, the minister of interior announced that the committee tasked with investigating the incident found the PSD responsible for the attacks; however, by year's end no security official had been prosecuted.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention

The law allows suspects to be detained for up to 24 hours without a warrant in all cases. The criminal code requires that police notify authorities within 24 hours of an arrest and that authorities file formal charges within 15 days of an arrest. The period to file formal charges can be extended for as long as six months for a felony and two months for a misdemeanor. According to local NGOs, prosecutors routinely requested extensions and judges granted them. Human rights observers claimed that police made arrests before obtaining warrants and that prosecutors did not file charges or seek extensions in a timely manner. They alleged that authorities transferred suspects to the security court in order to extend the legal time from 24 hours to 10 days for investigation. Bail is allowed under the penal code and was used in some cases. Some detainees reported not being allowed timely access to a lawyer, but authorities generally permitted family member visits. Authorities appointed lawyers to represent indigent defendants charged with felonies, although legal aid services remained minimal.

The UN Committee Against Torture's May 2010 report expressed serious concern about the government's failure in practice to afford all detainees, including detainees held in GID and PSD facilities, with "all fundamental legal safeguards from the very outset of their detention," including the right to notify a relative and to be informed of their rights and charges against them at the time of detention.

Arbitrary Arrest: The State Security Court gives judicial police the authority to arrest and keep persons in custody for 10 days while conducting criminal investigations. This authority includes arrests for alleged misdemeanors. In cases purportedly involving state security, the security forces at times arrested and detained citizens without warrants or judicial review, held defendants in pretrial detention without informing them of the charges against them, and either did not allow defendants to meet with their lawyers or did not permit meetings until shortly before trial. Several inmates were in detention without charge at year's end.

Under the Crime Prevention Law, provincial governors may detain individuals suspected of planning to commit a crime or those who allegedly shelter thieves, habitually steal, or constitute a danger to the public, and in practice they used this provision widely. Those accused are subject to imprisonment or house arrest for as long as one year under “administrative detention” without formal charges, and governors can prolong detentions. During the year governors administratively detained 11,345 individuals. Several international and national NGOs noted that governors routinely abused the law, imprisoning individuals when there was not enough evidence to convict them and prolonging detentions of prisoners whose sentences had expired. The law was also used to incarcerate women, allegedly to protect them, as they are at risk of being honor crime victims.

Pretrial Detention: The common practice of judges granting extensions to prosecutors prior to filing formal charges unnecessarily lengthened pretrial detention. During the year there were 23,118 pretrial detainees. Lengthy legal procedures, a large number of detainees, judicial inefficiency, and the judicial backlog added to the problem of pretrial detention. The length of the detention at times equaled or exceeded the sentence for the alleged crime.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary. Allegations of nepotism and the influence of special interests raised concerns about the judiciary’s independence in practice. Authorities did not always respect court orders.

Trial Procedures

The law presumes that defendants are innocent. All civilian court trials, including state security court trials, are open to the public unless the court determines otherwise. Juries are not used. Defendants are entitled to legal counsel, provided at public expense for the indigent in cases involving the death penalty or life imprisonment. In many cases not involving the death penalty, those whose punishment would be hard or temporary labor have no legal representation. Defendants can present witnesses and evidence and can question witnesses presented against them. Authorities generally granted defendants access to government-held evidence relevant to a case. Defendants can appeal verdicts; appeals are automatic for cases involving the death penalty.

Defendants before the State Security Court frequently met with their attorneys at the start of a trial or only one or two days before. A case may be postponed for

more than 48 hours only under exceptional circumstances determined by the court. In practice, cases routinely involved postponements of more than 10 days between sessions with proceedings lasting for several months. In many cases the accused remained in detention without bail during the proceedings. In the State Security Court, defendants convicted of felonies or misdemeanors have the right to appeal their sentences to the Court of Cassation, which is authorized to review issues of both fact and law.

All citizens are accorded these rights. Civil, criminal, and commercial courts accord equal weight to the testimony of men and women; however, in sharia courts, which have jurisdiction over Muslim marriage, divorce, and inheritance cases, the testimony of two women was equal to that of a man in most circumstances.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

Citizens and NGOs alleged that the government continued to detain individuals, including political opposition members, for political reasons during the year and that governors continued to use administrative detentions for what appeared to be political reasons.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals may bring civil lawsuits related to human rights violations and did so during the year.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law prohibits arbitrary interference in private matters, but the government did not respect this prohibition in practice. Citizens widely believed that security officers monitored telephone conversations and Internet communication, read private correspondence, and engaged in surveillance without court orders.

Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports that police forcibly entered the homes of foreign migrant workers without warrants.

Some religious activists reported that the GID withheld their certificates of good behavior, which confirm that the applicant does not have a criminal record and are required for job applications or to open a business. The GID usually withholds a certificate of good behavior if there is a criminal record; however, there is no

public information outlining the GID's policies for issuing the certificates. Some activists also said GID officials threatened to bar their children from entering or graduating from university.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

Status of Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press; however, the government did not respect these rights in practice.

Freedom of Speech: The law permits punishment of up to three years' imprisonment for insulting the king, slandering the government or foreign leaders, offending religious beliefs, or stirring sectarian strife and sedition. In practice citizens were generally able to criticize the government, although they reportedly exercised caution in regard to the king, royal family, GID, and other sensitive topics such as religion.

On May 22, the Amman Criminal Court found journalist Muwaffaq Mahadin and environmentalist Sufian al-Tal not guilty of slander and other charges based on separate public interviews the two men gave criticizing the army's security role in Afghanistan. State security forces detained the men in February 2010 for two weeks.

Freedom of Press: Independent print media existed, including several major daily newspapers; however, such publications must obtain licenses from the state to operate. The independent print and broadcast media largely operated without restriction, but media observers reported governmental pressure to refrain from criticizing the royal family, discussing the GID, or using language deemed offensive to religion, including the threat of large fines and prison sentences for slander of government officials and other topics listed above. Media organizations and journalists reported that the government influenced the appointment of editors in chief at some major publications, whether by virtue of officials' positions on the boards of directors of government-affiliated publications or through undisclosed contacts. The government has a majority of seats on the board for the leading semiofficial daily newspaper, *Al-Rai*, and a share of board seats in another daily newspaper.

On March 7, approximately 200 journalists staged a demonstration to demand that *Al-Rai* editor in chief Abdul Wahab Zgheilat resign due to his censorship of their articles, and on July 12 he resigned.

The law states that the Prime Ministry has the authority to reject a broadcast license without a stated reason based on the recommendation of the director of the governmental Audiovisual Commission. Media observers noted that when covering controversial subjects, government-owned Jordan Television, Jordan News Agency, and Radio Jordan reported only the government's position.

By law any book can be published and or distributed freely; however, if the Press and Publications Directorate deems that passages are religiously offensive or "insult" the king, it can request a court order to prohibit the distribution of the book. During the year an estimated 20 books were banned due to language that was deemed religiously offensive.

Violence and Harassment: During the year journalists were subjected to harassment and intimidation due to their reporting. For example, after a June 13 Agence France-Presse (AFP) story reporting that residents of Tafileh had stoned the king's motorcade, member of parliament Yahy'a Sa'ud led protests demanding that AFP Amman bureau chief Randa Habib be referred to the State Security Court and that the AFP offices be closed. On June 15, a group of men attacked the AFP offices as police reportedly looked on. During a June 16 press conference, Habib stated she had also received death threats. The government provided her security in response.

Censorship and Content Restrictions: The government directly and indirectly censored the media. Unlike in previous years, authorities did not censor printing presses or edit articles deemed offensive before they could be printed. However, journalists claimed that the government used informants in newsrooms and exercised influence over reporting and that GID officials censored reporting. Editors reportedly received telephone calls from security officials instructing them how to cover events or to refrain from covering certain topics or events. Government officials also reportedly bribed journalists to influence their reporting. Journalists reported that the threat of detention and imprisonment under the penal code for a variety of offenses, along with stringent fines of as much as 20,000 dinars (\$28,250) for defamation under the press and publications law, led to self-censorship. The government's use of "soft containment" of journalists, including the withholding of financial support, scholarships for relatives, and special invitations, led to significant control of media content.

On May 19, the government reportedly prevented Roya TV from hosting opposition figure Laith Shbeilat on its weekly program, *Pulse of the City*. The channel's management cancelled the interview after they received a telephone call from a government security agency.

The government continued to enforce bans on the publication of selected books for religious, moral, and political reasons.

Libel Laws/National Security: The government threatened to use libel and slander laws to suppress criticism. On September 17, Amer Fayeze, chief of protocol for the Royal Court, sued Abdel Hadi Raji Majali for libel and defamation for an article criticizing Royal Court employees for "putting barriers between the king and the people." Fayeze later dropped the case.

Internet Freedom

There were government restrictions on access to the Internet. The government monitored electronic correspondence and Internet chat sites. Individuals and groups were unable to express their views freely via the Internet, including by e-mail. After implementation of the Information System Crime Law in 2010, making Web site owners responsible for all content on their sites, groups began shifting to social media to express their views and opinions and to organize demonstrations. During the year the Ministry of Interior continued to monitor Internet cafes via video cameras. The ministry also required cafe owners to register users' personal data, submit records of visited Web sites, and prevent access to "targeted" Web sites, as determined by the ministry.

On June 1, the State Security Court issued an arrest warrant for Ala' Al Fazza', publisher of online news site KhabarJo, in response to a complaint filed by Mohammed Taleb Obediat, minister of state media affairs, and Nabil Sharif, former minister of media affairs and communications, over an article that listed them as members of the Facebook page demanding the crown prince be replaced. He was charged with "working to unlawfully change the constitution." On June 2, the king ordered his release, and he was released on June 5.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

The government placed some limits on academic freedom. Some members of the academic community claimed there was an continuing intelligence presence in academic institutions, including monitoring of academic conferences and lectures.

On September 27, the National Campaign for Students Rights (Dhabahtuna) criticized the government for forcing scholarship students from underprivileged areas to sign pledges not to engage in political activities.

Some foreign films were edited prior to release due to sexual content or religiously offensive language.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, but in practice the government limited this right. On May 3, the government amended the Public Gatherings Law to remove the requirement that groups request permission from the governor to gather. According to the amended law, organizers must notify the government of a proposed meeting or demonstration at least 48 hours in advance so that the government may provide security for the event. The notification must include the names and addresses of the organizers and the reason for the meeting or demonstration. Prior to the amendment, governors could deny organizers permission to hold an event and were not required to provide a legal reason for denial, which occurred regularly. If an organization failed to apply for permission for an event, its members faced imprisonment from one to six months and a fine of as much as 3,000 dinars (\$4,200). Despite the amendment human rights activists reported that the government did not always respect freedom of assembly and sometimes used tactics such as the renovation of public spaces to prevent planned sit-ins.

During the year an international NGO reported that GID agents urged it to cancel a regional training program about social and political activism for young Arab activists. The NGO stated that several regional participants were denied entry into the country upon arrival and the chosen hotel was forbidden to host the conference. The NGO had previously held several regional conferences in the country without incident.

During the year there were several reported instances of security forces using excessive force with impunity or failing to protect demonstrators from societal

violence. For example, on March 24 and 25, at Jamal Abdel Nasser Square in Amman, clashes erupted between demonstrators and counterdemonstrators at a sit-in calling for political reforms. The gendarmerie dispersed the protesters, leading to tens of injuries and reportedly one death (see section 1.a.). During its investigation the NCHR found that security forces failed to protect demonstrators from violence; however, the government did not open an official investigation into the events.

Freedom of Association

The constitution provides for the right of association, but the government limited this freedom in practice. The law gives the Ministry of Social Development the right to reject applications to register an organization or receive foreign funding for any reason, and it prohibits the use of associations for the benefit of any political organization. The law also gives the ministry significant control over the internal management of associations, including the ability to dissolve associations, appoint new boards of directors, send government representatives to any board meeting, prevent associations from merging their operations, and appoint an auditor to examine an association's finances for any reason. The law requires associations to inform the ministry of board meetings, submit all board decisions for approval, disclose members' names, and obtain Interior Ministry security clearances for board members. The law includes severe penalties, including fines up to 10,000 dinars (\$14,100).

Local and international NGOs claimed that the law severely restricted the work of independent organizations. During the year the government did not deny any organizations permission to register or receive foreign funding; however, NGOs reported that while the government did not formally reject foreign funding requests or proposals, it at times refused to accept such requests.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The law provides for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation; however, there were some restrictions. The UN

reported that the government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Foreign Travel: The law stipulates that women need a custodian to renew a passport. The GID sometimes withheld passports from citizens for alleged security reasons.

Citizenship: There were cases of government officials arbitrarily and without court order withdrawing citizenship from Jordanians of Palestinian descent.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The country's laws do not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government lacks a formal system of providing protection to refugees. The government respected the UNHCR's eligibility determinations regarding asylum seekers, including those who entered the country clandestinely. A 1998 memorandum of understanding between the government and the UNHCR contains the definition of a refugee, confirms adherence to the principle of nonrefoulement, and allows recognized refugees a maximum stay of six months, during which period the UNHCR must find a durable solution. However, refugees often stayed beyond the time limit.

Access to Basic Services: Palestinian refugees from Gaza who entered the country following the 1967 war are excluded from services otherwise available to Palestinian refugees, such as access to public assistance, public higher education, or public medical services. However, they were eligible to receive UNRWA services.

Temporary Protection: The government generally recognized the UNHCR's requests to grant temporary protection for all Iraqi asylum seekers, including new arrivals, and recognized refugees whose cases had been suspended by resettlement countries. The UNHCR rejected asylum or resettlement cases. By year's end approximately 34,000 Iraqi refugees in the country had registered with the UNHCR. The government provided education and health care to Iraqis and tolerated the prolonged stay of many Iraqis beyond the expiration of the visit permits under which they entered the country. Few Iraqi refugees received work

permits due to bureaucratic hurdles and a desire to avoid significant overstay fines they would have to pay when applying for such permits.

Stateless Persons: Citizenship is derived only through the father. Children of female citizens married to noncitizen husbands receive the nationality of the father and lose the right to attend public school or seek other government services if they do not hold legal residency, which must be applied for every year and is not guaranteed. Married women do not have the legal right to transmit citizenship to their children. In practice this affects thousands of families in which the father is of Palestinian origin. According to the law, the cabinet may approve citizenship for such children; however, this rarely occurred. The public was not widely aware of this mechanism. Women may not petition for citizenship for noncitizen husbands, who may apply for citizenship only after fulfilling a requirement of 15 years' continuous residency. Once a husband has obtained citizenship, he may apply to transmit citizenship to his children. However, in practice such an application may take years, and the government may deny the application.

Section 3. Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The law does not provide citizens the right to change their monarch or government. The king appoints and dismisses the prime minister, cabinet, and the House of Notables, dissolves parliament, and directs major public policy initiatives. Citizens may participate in the political system through their elected representatives in the Chamber of Deputies. The cabinet, based on the prime minister's recommendation, appoints the mayors of Amman, Wadi Musa (Petra), and Aqaba, a special economic zone. The mayors of the other 93 municipalities are elected.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: In November 2010 the country held parliamentary elections, which international observers considered "a clear improvement over the nation's 2007 polls." However, observers recommended future reforms such as establishing an independent electoral management body, preprinting ballots to mitigate concerns over voting procedures for the illiterate, strengthening representation for all citizens, and introducing regulations to allow for systematic appeals of the election results. Gerrymandering districts to minimize the impact of votes by citizens of Palestinian origin in favor of tribal interests was a significant problem. The law allows voters to choose one candidate in their district, which in

the largely tribal society meant citizens tended to cast their vote for members of their own tribe.

On September 30, the government amended the constitution to establish an independent electoral commission.

Political Parties: The government licensed political parties and other associations but prohibited membership in unlicensed political parties. The High Court of Justice may dissolve a party if it concludes that the party violated the constitution or the law. Political parties, NGOs, and independent candidates found the registration process both onerous and costly and criticized the GID's annual screening process of founding party members.

Participation of Women and Minorities: Many human rights activists cited cultural bias against women as an impediment to women participating in political life on the same scale as men. On September 14, the government increased the quota for women in municipal council seats to 25 percent. The law provides a 10 percent quota for women in the lower house of parliament. In the November 2010 elections, voters elected 13 women to parliament, exceeding the quota by one. Unlike in the previous year, there were no female governors; however, two women served in the appointed 27-member cabinet.

Citizens of Palestinian origin were underrepresented at all levels of government and the military. The law reserves nine seats in the lower house of parliament for Christians and three seats for the Circassian and Chechen ethnic minorities combined, constituting an overrepresentation for these minorities. No seats were reserved for the relatively small Druze population, but they were permitted to hold office under their government classification as Muslims. The law also stipulates that Muslims must hold all seats not reserved for specified minority religions. Christians served as cabinet ministers and ambassadors. The government traditionally reserves some positions in the upper levels of the military for Christians (4 percent); however, Muslims held all senior command positions.

Section 4. Official Corruption and Government Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption; however, the government did not implement the law effectively. Officials often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. During the year the government investigated allegations of corruption; however, there were very few convictions. The use of family, business, and other personal connections to advance personal business

interests was widespread. There were allegations of lack of transparency in government procurement, government appointments, and dispute settlement.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is the main body responsible for combating corruption. Despite increased investigations some local observers questioned the commission's effectiveness due to insufficient staff and the small number of investigations involving senior officials or large government projects. There were credible allegations that the ACC failed to investigate high-profile cases involving high-level government officials.

There were no high-profile convictions for corruption during the year.

On February 25, officials permitted business tycoon Khalid Shahin to leave prison to receive medical treatment abroad because of an obesity-related health condition that his physician claimed could not be treated in Amman. The State Security Court had sentenced Shahin and two other former officials to three years in prison for bribery related to the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company in July 2010. The release triggered public anger after pictures were published of Shahin eating at a restaurant with his family in London. On August 18, Shahin was brought back to the country to complete his sentence.

The law requires certain government officials to declare their assets privately. In the event of a complaint, the chief justice may review the disclosures. Under the law failure to disclose assets could result in a prison sentence of one week to three years or a fine of five to 200 dinars (\$7 to \$280). As of year's end, no officials had been punished for failing to submit a disclosure.

The law provides for public access to government information that is a matter of legal record but allows requests to be denied for reasons of "national security, public health, and personal freedoms." Journalists criticized the law, claiming it permits the government to deny requests without justification.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups operated in the country with some restrictions. The law gives the government the ability to control NGOs' internal affairs, including acceptance of foreign funding. NGOs were generally able to investigate and report publicly on human rights abuses throughout the year, although government officials were not always cooperative.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The government-funded NCHR's reporting was regarded as fairly objective and critical, albeit noncontroversial. The government seldom complied with its recommendations.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution states that all citizens are equal under the law and prohibits discrimination based on race, language, and religion; however, discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, and social status is not specifically prohibited. The penal code does not address discrimination, thereby severely limiting judicial remedies.

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law stipulates a sentence of at least 10 years' imprisonment with hard labor for rape of a girl or woman age 15 years or older. Spousal rape is not illegal. The law does not explicitly ban domestic violence. The government did not enforce these laws effectively, and violence and abuse against women was widespread. Violence against women was reported more frequently in rural areas than in major cities, but women's rights activists speculated that many incidents in cities went unreported as violence against women remained a taboo issue, due to societal and familial pressures. There were no statistics available regarding the number of abusers prosecuted, convicted, or punished. Human rights activists stated that girls and women with disabilities were particularly at risk from gender-based violence.

Women may file complaints of rape or physical abuse with certain NGOs or directly with judicial authorities. During the year the PSD Family Protection Department (FPD) treated and investigated 1,026 cases of rape or sexual assault against women. The FPD actively investigated cases; however, there were some reports of pressure on families to settle disputes via mediation instead of the courts. Spousal abuse is technically grounds for divorce, but husbands can claim religious authority to strike their wives. Observers noted that judges generally supported a woman's claim of abuse in court; however, due to societal and familial pressure, few women sought legal remedies.

The FPD continued to operate a domestic violence hotline during the year and received inquiries and complaints via the Internet and e-mail. The government-run shelter, Dar al-Wafaq, assisted approximately 505 female victims of domestic

violence during the year. It provided reconciliation services to victims and their families and worked with NGOs to provide services, such as legal and medical assistance. However, observers noted the lack of a comprehensive approach for victims, as well as a need to increase the number of psychosocial counselors.

Harmful Traditional Practices: It was estimated that more than 10 honor crimes were reported during the year. However, activists reported that many such crimes went unreported. The Supreme Criminal Court's panel of judges dedicated to cases involving honor crimes routinely issued sentences of up to 15 years to honor crime perpetrators. However, the Cassation Court, which reviews the Supreme Criminal Court rulings, generally decreased the sentences by half. There were several cases during the year in which family members dropped the charges against perpetrators of honor crimes, which also resulted in sentences being cut in half for the perpetrator, who was often a relative of the victim. Instances of forced marriage as an alternative to a potential honor killing were reported in rural areas during the year. Observers noted that if a woman marries her rapist, according to customary belief, her family members would not need to kill her to "preserve the family's honor."

Numerous "honor" crime cases were reported during the year. For example, on February 7, a 26-year-old man stabbed his 30-year-old widowed sister to death in Amman after discovering that she was eight months' pregnant. The brother, who turned himself in to the police, said that he stabbed his sister to cleanse the family's honor. On April 10, the prosecutor general pressed charges of premeditated murder. At year's end the case was pending.

Through their administrative detention authority, governors continued to place potential victims of honor crimes in involuntary protective custody in the Women's Correctional and Rehabilitation Center in Jweideh detention facility, where some women had remained for more than one year. The government estimated that approximately 82 women were placed in protective custody during the year. A number of women detained for more than one year were released during the year. A woman detained in protective custody can be released only after her family signs a statement guaranteeing her safety and both the local governor and the woman agree to the release. During the year there was at least one case of a woman being killed after release from protective custody. On June 28, a 17-year-old shot his unmarried sister in Tafileh after she had a miscarriage and was released by the governor from protective custody to her family, who pledged not to harm her. The case never went to court, and the boy was not prosecuted. One NGO continued to work for the release of these women through mediation with their families. The

NGO also provided a temporary but unofficial shelter for such women as an alternative to protective custody.

Sexual Harassment: According to the law, sexual harassment is strictly prohibited. The law does not make a distinction between sexual assault and sexual harassment; both carry a minimum prison sentence of four years with hard labor. Women's groups stated that harassment was common, but many victims were hesitant to file a complaint and rarely did so because they feared blame for inciting the harassment or consequences such as losing their job or because they faced other pressure to keep silent. One NGO report stated that foreign migrant workers in the garment sector may be especially vulnerable to sexual harassment in the workplace (see section 7).

Reproductive Rights: Couples have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children, and individuals were able to make such decisions free from discrimination and coercion. Contraceptives were generally accessible to all men and women, both married and single, and provided free of charge in public clinics. Comprehensive essential obstetric, prenatal, and postnatal care is provided throughout the country in the public and private sectors. The Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities and civil society activists reported that forced sterilization of women and girls with intellectual disabilities was a common practice. The Higher Council reported that annually approximately 64 hysterectomies were performed on women with intellectual disabilities. A hospital official confirmed that three to four such operations were conducted annually, often at the behest of the victims' families.

Discrimination: Women experienced discrimination in inheritance, divorce, ability to travel (see also section 2.d.), child custody, citizenship (see section 2.d., Stateless Persons), pension and social security benefits, in certain circumstances in the value of their sharia court testimony (see section 1.e., Trial Procedures), and in the workplace.

Under sharia (Islamic law) as applied in the country, female heirs receive half the amount that male heirs receive. Even a sole female heir receives only half of her parents' estate, with the balance going to designated male relatives, whereas a sole male heir inherits all of his parents' property. Women may seek divorce only in return for waiving alimony or other financial rights. The law allows retention of financial rights under specific circumstances, such as spousal abuse. Special courts for each Christian denomination adjudicate marriage and divorce.

The law allows fathers to prevent their children from leaving the country through a court order; however, this same court order is not available to mothers. Some mothers claimed that they were prevented from departing the country with their children because authorities enforced requests from fathers to prevent their children from leaving. However, authorities did not stop fathers from exiting the country with their children when the mother objected.

The government provided men with more generous social security benefits than it gave women. The government continued pension payments of deceased male civil servants to their heirs, but it discontinued payments to heirs of deceased female civil servants. Laws and regulations governing health insurance for civil servants do not permit married women to extend their health insurance coverage to dependents or spouses. However, divorced and widowed women may extend coverage to their children.

Women's rights activists complained that the law granting women equal pay for equal work was not enforced. Many women said traditional social pressures discouraged them from pursuing professional careers, especially after marriage.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived only through the father. The government did not issue birth certificates to all children born in the country during the year. The government deemed some children--including children of unmarried women or of certain interfaith marriages, and converts from Islam to another religion--illegitimate and denied them proper registration, making it difficult or impossible for them to attend school, access health services, or receive other documentation.

Education: Education is compulsory from ages six through 16 and free until age 18. However, no legislation exists to enforce the law or to punish guardians for violating it. Children without legal residency do not have the right to attend public school. Children of female citizens and noncitizen fathers, for example, must apply for and pay 30 dinars (\$42) for residency permits every year, and permission is not guaranteed. Children with disabilities experienced extreme difficulty in accessing constitutionally guaranteed early and primary education (see section 6; Persons with Disabilities).

Child Abuse: The law specifies punishment for abuse of children. For example, conviction for rape of a child younger than 15 years potentially carries the death

penalty. However, local organizations working with abused children pointed to gaps in the legal system that regularly resulted in lenient sentencing, particularly for family members convicted of abuse. For example, the penal code gives judges the ability to reduce a sentence when the victim's family does not press charges. In child abuse cases, judges routinely accorded leniency per the wishes of the family. From January to August 31, authorities investigated 329 cases of child sexual abuse and 87 cases of child physical abuse; these cases were all referred to the courts. A 2009 UNICEF report stated that 71 percent of children were subjected to verbal abuse and 57 percent had experienced some form of physical abuse in school.

According to the NCHR report, some juveniles in detention alleged torture and mistreatment (see section 1.c., Prison and Detention Center Conditions).

The government continued to fund a child protection center that provided temporary shelter and medical care for abused children between the ages of six and 12. During the year the shelter housed 73 abused children. Observers noted that the shelter lacked qualified staff, psychosocial counselors, and a comprehensive approach to deal with victims of abuse.

Child Marriage: The minimum age for marriage is 18. However, with the consent of both a judge and a guardian, a child as young as 15, in most cases a girl, may be married. Judicial statistics indicated that in 2010 judges granted consent in 8,042 cases in which at least one person was between 15 and 18 years old.

International Child Abduction: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information see the Department of State's report on compliance at http://travel.state.gov/abduction/country/country_3781.html.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism was present in the media. Editorial cartoons, articles, and opinion pieces sometimes negatively depicted Jews without government response. Aside from expatriates, there was no resident Jewish community in the country. The national school curriculum, including materials on tolerance education, did not include mention of the Holocaust.

In November the daily newspaper *Al-Arab Al-Yawm* published a column in which the writer blamed the Jews for causing all the conflicts in the world.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip.

Persons with Disabilities

The law generally provides equal rights to persons with disabilities, but such legal protections were not upheld in practice. Activists noted that the 2007 law on the rights of persons with disabilities still lacked implementing regulations. The Higher Council for the Affairs of People with Disabilities (HCAPD), a government body, works with ministries, the private sector, and NGOs to formulate and implement strategies to assist persons with disabilities. During the parliamentary elections in 2010, the Ministry of Interior issued procedures for elections to include provisions to guarantee the accessibility of certain polling stations and allow people with visual impairment to bring a personal assistant with them when they vote. Citizens and NGOs universally reported that persons with disabilities faced problems accessing education, transportation, and other services, particularly in rural areas.

The HCAPD reported that educational accommodations were more readily available at the university level than in elementary and secondary schools. At all levels of education, children with certain types of disabilities were excluded from studying certain subjects and often could not access critical educational support services, such as sign language interpretation. General education teachers were not trained to work with students with various disabilities; families of children with disabilities reported that teachers and principals often refused to include children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The Ministry of Education provided accessible transportation to specialized centers for children with disabilities but not to mainstream schools. Students with intellectual disabilities fell under the authority of the Ministry of Social Development rather than the Ministry of Education.

The Special Buildings Code Department is tasked with enforcing accessibility provisions and oversees retrofitting of existing buildings to comply with building codes. The vast majority of private and public office buildings continued to have limited or no access for persons with disabilities; municipal infrastructure such as streets, sidewalks, and intersections were not accessible.

The law mandates that public and private sector establishments with between 25 and 50 workers employ at least one person with disabilities, and establishments with more than 50 workers must reserve 4 percent of their positions for persons with disabilities. However, the law lacked implementing regulations and was rarely enforced; in addition, employers who state that the nature of the work is not suitable for people with disabilities are exempt from the quota. A variety of activities, including opening and using bank accounts and applying for a job, require a medical letter certifying that the bearer is competent to perform the task in question. Human rights activists considered the letter a large barrier to participation in public life; some medical professionals were not aware of the full range of accommodations available and thus certified individuals as not able to perform certain tasks. During the year several individuals with visual impairment reported that they sought employment as teachers but were rejected on the basis of their disability and were directed instead to teaching assistant and other supporting positions for which they were overqualified.

The forced sterilization of women and girls with intellectual disabilities was a common practice during the year (see Women).

Human rights activists and the media reported that children and adults with disabilities were vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse while in institutions, rehabilitation centers, or other care settings, including their family homes (see section 1.c.).

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

There were three groups of Palestinians residing in the country, many of whom faced some discrimination. Those who migrated to the country and the Jordan-controlled West Bank after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war received full citizenship, as did those who migrated to the country after the 1967 war and hold no residency entitlement in the West Bank. Palestinians still residing in the West Bank after 1967 were no longer eligible to claim full citizenship but were allowed to obtain temporary travel documents without national identification numbers provided they did not also carry a Palestinian Authority travel document. These individuals had access to some government services but paid noncitizen rates at hospitals, educational institutions, and training centers. Refugees who fled Gaza after 1967 were not entitled to citizenship and were issued temporary travel documents without national numbers. These persons had no access to government services and were almost completely dependent on UNRWA services.

Several human rights organizations stated that the Ministry of Interior revoked national numbers of some longtime citizens of Palestinian origin during the year, despite codified passport issuance procedures (see section 2.d.).

Palestinians were underrepresented in parliament and senior positions in the government and the military, as well as in admissions to public universities. They had limited access to university scholarships.

Societal Abuses, Discrimination, and Acts of Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Homosexuality is not illegal in Jordan; however, societal discrimination against LGBT persons existed. A number of citizens reported sporadic police mistreatment of suspected LGBT persons. Some members of the LGBT community reported a reluctance to engage the legal system for fear that their sexuality would become an issue. There were reports of individuals who left the country due to fear their families would punish them for their sexual orientation.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

HIV/AIDS was a largely taboo subject. Lack of public awareness remained a problem; many citizens believed the disease exclusively affected foreigners and members of the LGBT community. HIV-positive individuals were socially stigmatized. The government continued its efforts to inform the public about the disease and eliminate negative attitudes about persons with HIV/AIDS; however, it also continued to test all foreigners annually for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, syphilis, malaria, and tuberculosis, and it deported those who tested HIV-positive.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides citizens working in the private sector, in some government-owned companies, and in certain public sector professions the right to form and join unions. The law defines 17 industries and professions in which unions may be established, and establishment of new unions requires approval from the Ministry of Labor. The law requires all unions to belong to the government-subsidized General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU), the country's sole trade union federation. Although foreign workers have been allowed to join unions since 2010, they are not permitted to create unions, head a union, or hold union

office. There is no right to collective bargaining. The labor code provides for collective agreements, but observers stated that the relevant legal procedures are cumbersome. There are limits on the right to strike, including a minimum 14 days' notice to the employer. Strikes are prohibited if a labor dispute is under mediation or arbitration. The constitution prohibits antiunion discrimination.

On September 6, after decades of campaigns by public school teachers, the government announced a new law to establish a teachers' professional association; however, the law makes membership in the new association mandatory. The law reversed a 1994 decision by the Higher Council for the Interpretation of the Constitution that restricted civil servants from organizing.

Government influence in union policies and activities continued. The government subsidized and audited the GFJTU's salaries and activities and monitored union elections. The minister of labor may seek judicial dissolution of a labor union that fails to conform to the law.

On August 13, a group of labor activists announced the formation of a new union federation outside of the GFJTU structure, in contravention of the labor law. On November 25, the minister of labor asserted that any union that organizes in a workplace already falling under the jurisdiction of one of the 17 trade unions would be illegal; however, no further action was taken against the nascent independent union federation or its members by the end of the year.

In practice strikes generally occurred without advance notice, and the union or workers requested penalty waivers for the illegal strike as part of subsequent labor negotiations.

Foreign workers in the garment sector, whose residency permits are tied to work contracts, were vulnerable to retaliation for participating in strikes and sit-ins. The Ministry of Labor sometimes prevented management from arbitrarily dismissing foreign workers engaged in labor or other activism, but its engagement was inconsistent. Observers reported it was common practice for management to refuse to renew foreign workers' contracts on the basis of "troublemaking" or attempting to organize in the workplace. Labor organizations reported management officials in the garment sector halted the provision of meals and utilities to worker dormitories during the year to break up several strikes deemed illegal due to lack of prior notice. Labor organizations reported that management representatives used threats and physical violence to intimidate striking workers; labor organizations and industry representatives reported that workers also

sometimes used threats and physical violence to retaliate against management officials or to coerce colleagues into participating in labor actions. The law allows employers to consider employment contracts for foreign workers void if a worker is absent more than 10 consecutive days, as long as the employer provides written notice; during the year dozens of workers were reportedly deported under this provision in the wake of strikes. Governors have broad authority to deport foreign nationals accused of posing a security threat; one strike leader was deported under charges including theft and illegally trading in alcohol, by an order of the governor, signed by the minister of interior.

The Ministry of Labor received no complaints of antiunion discrimination during the year; however, some nonunionized workers alleged retaliation from employers. This was particularly the case for foreign workers in all sectors as well as citizens working in the public sector on short-term contracts (day laborers). The Ministry of Labor did not have a policy of investigating the nonrenewal of short-term contracts on the basis of antiunion animus.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The constitution prohibits forced or compulsory labor, except in a state of emergency such as war or natural disaster. However, there were reports of forced labor, particularly among domestic workers. The labor code does not effectively protect domestic workers, and labor inspectors did not regularly investigate reports of labor or other abuses of domestic workers in private homes. The labor inspectorate reported that the domestic worker unit entered and inspected seven private residences during the year.

Some migrants working as domestic servants in the country were subjected to conditions of forced labor, including withholding of passports, restrictions on movement, nonpayment of wages, threats, excessively long work hours, and physical or sexual abuse.

Workers encountered conditions indicative of forced labor in some garment sector factories, including late or nonpayment of wages, restrictions on freedom of movement, and excessive overtime. The government actively inspected factories and investigated allegations of forced labor in garment factories, and reports of withholding of passports continued to decline during the year. The Ministry of Labor recommended to the labor courts the imposition of fines on violators when appropriate. The labor inspectorate stated that inspectors visited 51,661 workplaces during the year, including 161 night visits to factories in the Qualified

Industrial Zones (QIZs). Inspectors issued 2,708 warnings and 14,523 citations for violations.

The government did not regularly and systematically screen third-country migrant workers sheltering at their embassies or third country nationals arrested by the police to see if they were victims of trafficking in persons.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law forbids employment of children younger than 16 years of age, except as apprentices in nonhazardous positions. The law provides that employers who hire a child younger than 16 must pay a fine of as much as 500 dinars (\$710), which is doubled for repeat offenses. The law bans those between the ages of 16 and 18 from working in potentially hazardous jobs, limits working hours for such children to six hours per day, mandates one-hour breaks for every four consecutive working hours, and prohibits these children from working after 8 p.m. on national or religious holidays and on weekends. On July 23, the Ministry of Labor expanded the list of potentially hazardous jobs to include work involving explosive or flammable materials; mining; work that requires special protective gear; work involving sharp machines, screws, or electric belts; and work involving exposure to traffic or other moving vehicles, carpentry, mechanical work, welding, and blacksmithing. Also included are service jobs involving work with the elderly, addicts, or people with mental illnesses.

In practice children worked in mechanical repair, agriculture, construction, and the hotel and restaurant industry; in the informal sector as street vendors, carpenters, blacksmiths, domestic workers, and painters; and in small family businesses. Child labor appeared concentrated in larger cities, such as Amman, Zarqa, and Irbid. A 2008 Department of Statistics study estimated that more than 32,000 children between the ages of five and 17 were working in the country. Activists estimated the number to be significantly higher, as many businesses and families tended to hide the practice. The government lacked recent statistics on the problem.

During the year the Ministry of Labor issued 682 corrective notices, 292 warnings, and 67 citations for violations that involved child laborers. The Ministry of Labor's Child Labor Unit coordinates government action regarding child labor and

receives, investigates, and addresses child labor complaints. The unit, with three employees, coordinated child labor inspections for the 130 labor inspectors. Labor inspectors issued fines for child labor violations but reportedly attempted alternative approaches first, such as ensuring safe work conditions and cooperating with employers to permit working children to attend school concurrently.

In 2009 the government reinstated the National Committee to Combat Child Labor and initiated development of a new national strategy; during the year the government took steps to implement portions of this strategy in cooperation with several NGOs. Overall, the government's capacity to implement and enforce child labor laws was not sufficient to deter the practice.

d. Acceptable Conditions of Work

During the year the national minimum wage was 150 dinars (\$212) per month, and the poverty level was set at 323 dinars (\$455) per month for a family of six. Ministry of Labor inspectors enforced the minimum wage but were unable to ensure full compliance due to limited resources. The garment sector and workers in domestic jobs did not receive the 2008 minimum wage increase; these workers had a minimum wage of 110 dinars (\$155) per month. This exemption was granted in part because of an understanding that employers often provide room and board for workers in these sectors. However, some garment factories continued to deduct room and board from workers' already below-minimum-wage salaries. Many domestic workers reported to local NGOs and their embassies that they received insufficient food, no private accommodations, and long delays in payment.

The law requires overtime pay for hours worked in excess of the 48-hour standard workweek. The law permits compulsory overtime under certain circumstances such as conducting an annual inventory, closing accounts, preparing to sell goods at discounted prices, avoiding loss to goods that would otherwise be exposed to damage, and receiving special deliveries. In such cases actual working hours may not exceed 10 hours per day, the employee must be paid overtime, and the period may not last more than 30 days. There is no cap on the amount of consensual overtime. Thus the Ministry of Labor permitted employees in some industries, such as the garment sector, to work excessive workweeks, reportedly as much as 80-100 hours per week. Employees can lodge a complaint directly with the Ministry of Labor or through organizations such as their union or the NCHR. Employees are entitled to one day off per week. Provisions for domestic workers were similar.

The law specifies a number of health and safety requirements that the Ministry of Labor is authorized to enforce; however, workers do not have a statutory right to remove themselves from hazardous conditions without risking the loss of their jobs and may be fired if they attempt to do so. Foreign workers, who make up the vast majority of workers in the QIZ garment factories and Export Processing Zones, were more susceptible to dangerous or unfair conditions, including mandatory overtime, delayed payment of wages, deductions for room and board, and unacceptable dormitory conditions.

The government continued to work with Better Work Jordan to improve labor standards in the garment sector. In June the government issued a public list of garment factories required to join the International Labor Organization project Better Work Jordan. Listed factories that did not join by the end of the year were to face fines. At the end of the year, Better Work Jordan included 50 of the 54 factories required by law to join the program.

Some workers in the agricultural sector, the vast majority of whom were Egyptian, were subject to exploitative conditions. According to a domestic NGO, it was common for agricultural workers to be paid less than the minimum wage, work excessive hours without adequate compensation, and live in substandard housing. Some employers in the agricultural sector also reportedly confiscated passports.

Domestic workers can file in-person complaints with the Ministry of Labor's Domestic Workers Directorate or the PSD; however, many domestic workers complained there was no follow-up on their cases either from the Ministry of Labor or the PSD. Domestic workers can also file complaints via a Ministry of Labor hotline; users of the hotline reported that live operators are available only during government business hours, or seven hours a day during the workweek. After-hours calls require the user to leave a message and a callback number, which poses particular difficulties for domestic workers without access to any phones but their employers'. Advocates for migrant domestic workers reported domestic workers who sought government assistance or made allegations against their employers frequently faced counterclaims of criminal behavior from their employers. Employers could file criminal complaints or flight notifications with police stations; even when domestic workers benefited from initiatives such as the general amnesty that waived immigration overstay fines, they could be prevented from leaving the country due to such outstanding alerts with the police.

During the year hundreds of domestic workers from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka were sheltered at their respective embassies in Amman. Most had reportedly fled some form of forced labor or abuse, including unpaid wages and, to a lesser extent, sexual or physical abuse. By law employers are responsible for renewing residency permits but often failed to do this for domestic employees. As a result most of the embassy-sheltered domestic workers were considered illegal residents, and many were stranded because they were unable to pay the daily overstay fees of 1.5 dinars (\$2) to depart the country. Due to the large number of domestic workers sheltered at these embassies, the government convened an ad hoc committee to review the workers' cases; this resulted in overstay fines being waived on a case-by-case basis. Out-of-status foreign workers were included in the General Amnesty Law, and workers who took advantage of the law had their overstay fines waived; however, although some of these workers either rectified their situations or departed the country, new cases of out-of-status workers increased at a steady pace. Although the General Amnesty Law waived overstay fines, observers reported that fees for working without a work permit were not included in the waiver and prevented some workers from returning to their home countries.

The Philippines, Indonesia, and for part of the year Sri Lanka prohibited the emigration of migrant workers for domestic work because of these problems. However, the prohibition did not reduce the flow of migrant workers. Some human rights organizations argued the bans heightened the vulnerability of foreign domestic workers by shutting scrupulous recruitment agencies out of the market. During the year the government and recruitment agencies took the position that the bans did not have relevance under the law; recruitment and the issuance of visas and work permits for Filipina, Indonesian, and Sri Lankan workers continued.