

# JORDAN

## HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

**Head of state:** King 'Abdallah bin Hussein

**Head of government:** 'Ali Abu Ragheb (replaced 'Abd al-Ra'uf Rawabdeh in June)

**Capital:** Amman

**Population:** 4.7 million

**Official language:** Arabic

**Death penalty:** retentionist

**2000 treaty ratifications/signatures:** Optional Protocol to the UN Children's Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict

Hundreds of people, including prisoners of conscience, were arrested for political reasons. Trials of most of those charged with political offences continued to be heard before a State Security Court where procedures did not meet international fair trial standards. Reports continued of torture or ill-treatment of detainees by members of the security services. There were reports of the *refoulement* (forcible return) of asylum-seekers at risk of serious human rights violations. At least 10 people were executed and at least 12 people were sentenced to death. Four people were unlawfully killed by public security police. There were at least 21 cases of family killings (also known as "honour" killings).

## Background

In March a Royal Human Rights Commission headed by Queen Rania was established. In June 'Ali Abu Ragheb became Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. AI wrote to the new government and the Human Rights Commission about its concerns.

A bill to allow the opening of private radio and television stations, ending the state's media monopoly, was endorsed by the House of Representatives and Parliament in September.

## Arrests and incommunicado detention

More than 1,700 people were arrested during 2000 for political reasons. Many were held in prolonged incommunicado detention by the General Intelligence Department (GID). Some were later released without charge and others brought to trial.

☞ At the end of 1999 and beginning of 2000, 15 members of the outlawed Islamist *Hizb al-Tahrir fi'l-Urdun*, Liberation Party in Jordan, were arrested. They were charged with membership of an illegal party and distribution of seditious leaflets, and sentenced to up to 18 months' imprisonment. They were prisoners of conscience.

☞ Sixteen people from Irbid who were arrested at the end of 1999 by the GID, apparently suspected of links with Islamist groups, were held for between 35 and 50 days with no access to lawyers or family before being released without charge.

☞ Around 700 people were arrested between October and December after demonstrations in support of the Palestinian *intifada*. Most were released after a few days or weeks of incommunicado detention. Others were brought before the State Security Court and charged with offences such as inciting riots.

## Torture/ill-treatment

Reports of torture and ill-treatment at the hands of security and prison services continued to be received. Most of the victims were held incommunicado in the GID's Wadi Sir detention centre.

☞ Sixteen people arrested in connection with the group *al-Qa'eda* (the base) were held in prolonged incommunicado detention of up to three months at the GID detention centre and reportedly beaten. At least three were moved into solitary confinement for up to two months, apparently as a punishment. Relatives and lawyers reported that they saw marks of torture on the prisoners' bodies when they were finally allowed to visit them. During their trials, the defendants stated they had been subjected to torture, including *shabeh* (suspending the victim by the feet with arms tied behind the back) and beatings which included *falaqa* (beatings on the soles of the feet). They alleged that confessions were extracted from them under duress. No investigation of their allegations was apparently carried out.

## Death in custody

☞ Amjad Salem Ahmad Smadi died in police custody in July in circumstances that suggested that torture or ill-treatment may have caused or hastened his death. Although a Commission of Inquiry was set up to investigate the circumstances surrounding his death, the findings had not been made public by the end of the year.

## Unfair trials

Trials of political detainees continued before the State Security Court, a court which almost invariably used panels of military judges and failed to provide adequate safeguards for fair trials.

☞ In September, 16 people were convicted for alleged involvement with *al-Qa'eda*. They were found guilty of, among other things, plotting to carry out bomb attacks in Jordan, manufacturing explosives and recruiting people to carry out attacks on Jewish and American targets. Death sentences were passed on Khader Abu Hoshier and Usama Husni Kamel Sammar. They claimed that their confessions had been extracted under duress. Throughout the trial period serious restrictions were imposed on communication between the defendants and their lawyers, allowing them to meet only in the presence of the security forces.

## Refugees

AI received reports of the *refoulement* (forcible return) of Libyan and Iraqi asylum-seekers to countries where they were at risk of human rights violations.

☞ In March up to eight Libyans resident in Jordan were removed from Jordan to Libya where there were grave

concerns about their safety. In May, AI received reports that 'Abd al-Nasir Ahmad Tlaimon, a Libyan asylum-seeker, had been forcibly returned to Libya. He had been detained in Jordan in April, possibly in connection with the eight Libyans, after his application for asylum had been refused. AI has been unable to confirm his fate.

### Death penalty

Ten executions were carried out during 2000 and at least 12 death sentences were passed.

☞ In December Bilal Musa was hanged in Swaqa prison. He had been sentenced to death in April for 11 murders. In July the Court of Cassation upheld the conviction and death sentence. Bilal Musa had admitted to one of the murders and claimed to have been tortured to confess to the others.

### Unlawful killings

During the year police carried out at least four unlawful killings.

☞ In March Public Security police killed three members of the *Bedul* tribe in Umm Sayhun (and wounded four others) during clashes between the *Bedul* and the police over the bulldozing of a house built some years ago, allegedly on state land. AI received reports that all but one of the demonstrators killed and wounded were children under the age of 16.

The Ministry of the Interior issued statements of concern at the killings and immediately set up a Commission of Inquiry into the deaths. However, AI remained concerned that the Inquiry was to consist of government officials and would be headed by a member of the Public Security police. By the end of 2000 no findings had been made public.

### Family or 'honour' killings

There were at least 21 family or "honour" killings during the year. The Upper House voted to repeal Article 340 of the Penal Code (which exempts from penalty males who murder wives or female relatives on grounds of adultery or reduces the penalty if the victim is found in an "adulterous situation"). However, the repeal was later rejected by the Lower House.

☞ In February, 34-year-old Samir Ayed was sentenced to one year in prison by the Amman Court for killing his 32-year-old sister, Hanan, in 1999. The court ruled that he should benefit from Article 98 of the Penal Code which diminishes the sentence for crimes committed in a "fit of rage" caused by an unlawful or dangerous act on the part of the victim. The prison term was immediately reduced to half because the victim's family dropped charges against their son.

### Forcible exile

Four leaders of *Hamas* who were forcibly exiled by Jordan to Qatar during 1999 remained in exile.