



General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 July 2013
English
Original: Arabic

Human Rights Council

Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review

Seventeenth session

Geneva, 21 October–1 November 2013

National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21*

Jordan

* The present document has been reproduced as received. Its content does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1–4	4
II. Review follow-up methodology and report preparation process	5–8	4
A. Review follow-up methodology	5–7	4
B. Report preparation and consultation process	8	4
III. Normative and institutional developments relating to the promotion and protection of human rights	9–12	5
A. Normative framework	9–11	5
1. The Constitution	9	5
2. National regulations and laws	10	5
3. National regulations and draft legislation		6
4. National strategies and policies	11	6
B. Institutional framework	12	7
IV. Recommendations from the previous session that were accepted	13–97	7
A. Rights and empowerment of women (recommendations 1, 15, 16, 21–23, 25 and 28)	13–32	7
B. Elimination of torture (recommendations 2, 18 and 19)	33–41	10
C. Alignment of national legislation with international standards (recommendations 3 and 4)	42–43	11
D. Children’s rights (recommendations 5, 9, 16, 17 and 24)	44–57	12
E. Support for the National Centre for Human Rights and civil society organizations (recommendations 7 and 8)	58–59	14
F. Human rights education and training for judicial officials (recommendations 10 and 12)	60–64	14
G. Right to education (recommendations 11 and 36)	65–66	15
H. Rights of persons with disabilities (recommendations 13, 32 and 33)	67–71	15
I. Late submission of periodic reports and cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (recommendation 14)	72–73	16
J. Cooperation between the Complaints and Human Rights Office and the National Centre for Human Rights (recommendation 20)	74	17
K. Response to requests from special rapporteurs (recommendation 23)	75	17
L. Promotion of freedom of opinion and of expression (recommendation 26)	76–80	17
M. Right to work (recommendations 27, 29 and 37)	81–86	18
N. Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (recommendation 30)	87–90	18
O. Right to health (recommendations 31 and 34)	91–93	19
P. Enhancement of access to water (recommendation 35)	94–95	19

Q.	State's role in peacekeeping operations, including the provision of medical services (recommendation 38).....	96–97	20
V.	Developments since the previous review	98–121	20
A.	Political reform	98–106	20
B.	Development of the judicial system.....	107–112	22
C.	Right to peaceful protest and to peaceful assembly.....	113–116	23
D.	The 2013 parliamentary elections.....	117–121	23
VI.	Best practices.....		24
VII.	Challenges	122–127	24
VIII.	Conclusion.....	128	25

I. Introduction

1. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan attaches the utmost importance to the protection and promotion of human rights, whose advancement it consistently seeks to ensure. In this endeavour, it draws on a significant cultural heritage, the well-established principles applied by national institutions and the forward-looking and open-minded guidance provided by His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein. Democratization and comprehensive reform with a human rights focus have been embraced as firm objectives that will be pursued without pause, notwithstanding the significant obstacles and challenges created by the regional situation and by the changes taking place in the Middle East region.

2. As His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein has stated on many occasions, the “Arab Spring” has provided Jordan with a timely opportunity to move forward with the reforms that were launched when His Majesty took up his constitutional powers. In close to two years, in an important phase of historical transformation in Jordan, unprecedented changes have been effected through the implementation of a set of key human rights reforms.

3. Jordan has amended nearly one third of the 42 articles of the Constitution in order to consolidate principles relating to the separation of powers, checks and balances, the independence of the judiciary, respect for human rights, and justice and equality. Various constitutional oversight institutions have furthermore been established.

4. A package of political laws have been updated — laws on political parties, elections and public assemblies — and the Independent Election Commission was set up to oversee and run elections and to strengthen the transparency and integrity of the process.

II. Review follow-up methodology and report preparation process

A. Review follow-up methodology

5. Jordan reviewed the first national report which was submitted to the Human Rights Council in February 2009 and adopted on 11 June 2009.

6. In the interim between the submission of the first national report, its adoption by the Council and the preparation of the present report, Jordan made every effort to follow up on the Council’s recommendations and to accomplish further goals in relation to the protection and promotion of human rights. This report sums up the results that have been achieved in this endeavour.

7. Following the adoption of the first national report, the Council’s recommendations were circulated to ministries and national institutions, which were asked to provide the Standing Committee on Human Rights — set up by the Prime Minister, chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and including representatives of various ministries — with information on the follow-up given to the recommendations.

B. Report preparation and consultation process

8. The Standing Committee on Human Rights reviewed the Council’s recommendations and the follow-up given to them and discussed a mechanism for preparing the report. A meeting was held with various civil society coalitions and another

large meeting was held to which the National Center for Human Rights, representatives of a group of civil society organizations and national institutions and members of the Standing Committee on Human Rights were invited. At the meeting, an exchange of views and ideas was held on the preparation of the report. Representatives of civil society institutions were asked to provide the Standing Committee with written comments. The Committee studied the information that had been provided by all the parties and then set up a committee to draft the report. The report was then circulated to all relevant governmental and civil society entities and to the National Centre for Human Rights in preparation for its adoption by the Standing Committee.

III. Normative and institutional developments relating to the promotion and protection of human rights

A. Normative framework

1. The Constitution

9. The Jordanian Constitution guarantees the rights and general and fundamental freedoms of persons in all areas of civil, political, economic, social and cultural life. Its provisions are consistent with universal human rights standards and with the fundamental freedoms set forth in established international instruments, notably, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In April 2011, His Majesty the King issued instructions calling for the establishment of a committee of experts on law-making and constitutional and political affairs to study the Constitution and make recommendations on amendments that needed to be made to it. Following consultations with civil society representatives, 42 articles that deal with the separation of powers and the promotion of political and civil rights were amended.

2. National regulations and laws

10. Since the submission of the first national report, various laws that have a bearing on human rights have been enacted, notably the following:

- The Associations Act (No. 22 of 2009) (amended);
- The Code of Criminal Procedures (Act No. 19 of 2009) (amended);
- The Reform and Rehabilitation Centres Act (No. 12 of 2009) (amended);
- Act No. 31 of 2009 on the suppression of money-laundering and terrorism funding (amended);
- The Labour Act (No. 26 of 2010) (amended);
- The Judicial Independence Act (No. 21 of 2010);
- The Social Security Act (No. 26 of 2010);
- The Personal Status Act (No. 36 of 2010);
- The Criminal Code (Act No. 8 of 2011) (amended);
- The Public Assemblies Act (No. 5 of 2011) (amended);
- The Municipalities Act (No. 13 of 2011);
- The Jordanian Teachers' Union Act (No. 14 of 2011);

- The Print and Publications Act (No. 32 of 2012) (amended);
- The House of Representatives Election Act (No. 25 of 2012) (amended);
- The Independent Election Commission Act (No. 11 of 2012);
- The Constitutional Court Act (No. 15 of 2012);
- The Political Parties Act (No. 16 of 2012);
- The Commission to Combat Corruption Act (No. 10 of 2012) (amended);
- The Owners and Tenants Act (No. 22 of 2012) (amended);
- The Sharia Enforcement Act of 2013;
- The Act amending Act No. 19 of 1972 on the composition of sharia courts;
- The Statute of the National Centre for Women’s Health Care (No. 4 of 2011);
- The Statute of the Social Solidarity Fund for Sharia Judges and Assistant Sharia Judges (2012);
- The regulation on licensing of older persons homes and clubs (No. 81 of 2012);
- The Family Reconciliation and Mediation Offices Regulation (No. 17 of 2013);
- The Persons with Disabilities Exemptions Regulation (No. 14 of 2013);
- The Maintenance Credit Fund Regulation.

3. National regulations and draft legislation

- The Juveniles Bill;
- The Judicial Independence Bill;
- The Children’s Rights Bill (amended);
- The Assets Declaration Act/The Illicit Gains Act;
- The Bill on the composition of sharia courts and sharia prosecution offices;
- The Sharia Proceedings Bill;
- The Protection from Domestic Violence Bill;
- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill (amended).

4. National strategies and policies

11. To support civil, economic, social and cultural rights, a number of national strategies and policies were launched, including: the National Employment Strategy, 2011–2020; the National Political Development Strategy, 2013–2017; the National Healthcare Strategy, 2008–2012; the National Plan for the Promotion of Women’s Political and Economic Participation (“Equal Future”), 2012–2013; the National Strategy for Women, 2013–2017; the National Strategy on Human Trafficking, 2010–2012; the National Strategy for Older Persons, 2009–2012; the National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities, 2007–2015; the National Framework for Combating Child Labour; the Child-Friendly Budgeting Project; the National Family Counselling Strategy; the Media Strategy, 2011–2015; the National Orphans’ Welfare Strategy, 2012–2015; the Judicial Development Strategy, 2010–2012; and the Judicial Authority Strategy, 2012–2015.

B. Institutional framework

12. The Government of Jordan continues to build the human rights institutional framework; in addition to institutions that were in place before the first report was reviewed — the National Centre for Human Rights, the Commission to Combat Corruption, the Complaints [and Human Rights] Office, the Economic and Social Council, various ministerial human rights departments, the National Commission for Women, and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities — other institutions and entities have been established to promote and protect human rights. These entities include:

- The Constitutional Court;
- The Independent Election Commission;
- The Teachers' Union;
- The Maintenance Credit Fund.

IV. Recommendations from the previous session that were accepted

A. Rights and empowerment of women (recommendations 1, 15, 16, 21–23, 25 and 28)

Legislation relating to women

13. With regard to the reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the reservation that had been entered to paragraph 4 of article 15 was withdrawn on 31 March 2009.

14. In order to promote women's rights and to further strengthen equality, certain customary practices were eradicated and swift action was taken to develop legislation offering an appropriate legal framework in which equity, equality of opportunity and legal protection for women's rights can be assured. Amendments were made to several laws, including the Social Security Act, the Labour Code and the Criminal Code, and new laws were enacted such as the Protection from Domestic Violence Act and the Act on the prohibition of human trafficking.

15. The Personal Status Act (No. 36 of 2010) contains many articles relating to women and children, beginning with those that establish the right of women to marry, to freely choose their spouse and to be protected from forced marriage and from deception. The Act lists a full set of women's rights, both material and moral rights. It establishes that women have precedence over men when it comes to the right to custody and care of children (*hadanah*). The Act precisely defines women's financial rights, including their right to maintenance and to the bride price. According to the Act, women may have conditions written into their marriage contract stating that the marriage must be in their interests. However, the conditions must not undermine the purposes of the contract. A new set of grounds that women can invoke for seeking a divorce are included in the Act, which establishes the requirement for prospective spouses to undergo premarital medical examinations. The Act also provides for the establishment of a credit fund to pay maintenance that is awarded to women and children by the courts. The Family Reconciliation and Mediation Directorate was set up to provide an established mechanism through which women can assert their rights without needing to turn to the courts.

16. To put an end to customary practices — such as “honour crimes” — that impede the effective realization of human rights, amendments were made to article 340 of the Criminal Code pursuant to Act No. 8 of 2011, as amended. The article describing a situation where a man [committed a crime after he had] caught a close blood relative engaging in illicit sexual relations as an exculpatory circumstance was repealed and replaced with one in which such a situation is defined as an attenuating circumstance. The amended article provides that the same consideration will be extended to a wife who catches her spouse in the act of having illicit sexual relations or in a bed in the marital home of a person that is not that of the husband’s lawful wife.

17. In practice, the courts did not issue any judgements between 2010 and 2011 in which that attenuating circumstance was taken into account. In 2012, in one case, the charge was changed from intentional homicide to intentional homicide with attenuating circumstances. That case is still being heard at appeal.

18. A special judicial body was set up in the Major Felonies Court to hear such crimes, to expedite processing and to render justice. According to article 345 bis of the Criminal Code, a person who commits homicide can no longer benefit from consideration of attenuating circumstances, if the victim of the crime was below the age of 15 years.

19. To combat discrimination against women, amendments were made to article 6 of the Constitution in 2011, which now reads as follows: “The law shall protect mothers, children and older persons, provide for the care of young persons and persons with disabilities and protect them from abuse and exploitation.” The Personal Status Act effectively reflects well-established principles on the protection of the material and moral rights of mothers, children and older persons and the mechanisms for asserting those rights.

20. With a view to boosting the status of women, eliminating all forms of violence against women and enacting legislation to make violence against women a criminal offence, the authorities took steps to increase the penalties prescribed in the Jordanian Criminal Code (Act No. 8 of 2011) for physical assault and acts of sexual violence such as rape (art. 292), indecent assault (arts. 296–298), abduction (arts. 302 and 303) and sexual harassment (arts. 304–307). The penalties are higher if the perpetrator meets any of the criteria listed in articles 295 and 300 of the Act. The penalty for pimping, indecency and causing grievous harm has also been raised. The penalty is also increased based on the victim’s age. In addition, the Personal Status Act provides that the commission of violence or of acts leading to violence may be considered grounds for seeking dissolution of a marriage, if this is what the woman wants. There is no need for complete evidence to be produced if the case is brought by a woman. It is enough for the courts to consider whatever elements they deem necessary in order to make a judgement on the case.

21. In 2011, the National Commission for Women set up a subcommittee made up of members of the National Working Group on Protection from Domestic Violence to conduct a thorough review of the Protection from Domestic Violence Act and to make modifications in the light of the needs of Jordanian families, the national framework for family protection and the goals of maintaining family cohesion and deterring wrongdoing.

Women’s political participation

22. In order to increase the number of women in decision-making posts and to raise the level of women’s representation in society, amendments were made to article 8 (b) of the House of Representatives Election Act (No. 25 of 2012) and the number of seats allocated for women was increased to 15. The number of Jordanian women with seats in the House of Representatives rose to 18 in 2013. Three women won through competition, with the result that the percentage of women in the House rose from 10.8 per cent to 12 per cent. Women hold 11.8 per cent of seats in the Senate and 10 per cent of top posts. One woman currently

holds a ministerial position — at the Ministry of Social Development — and there are 142 women judges in Jordan (15 per cent of all judges).

23. Under the amended Municipalities Act (No. 13 of 2011), the women's quota for councils was increased to 25 per cent (art. 9 (b)). It is hoped that the figure will reach 30 per cent in the municipal elections that are scheduled to take place on 27 August 2013.

24. The 2012 Political Parties Act states that the minimum number of founding members for a political party is 500 across the seven governorates. Women must make up at least 10 per cent of the overall membership and 5 per cent of members in the governorates. These provisions help to increase women's representation in political parties and their chances of being included on candidate lists in parliamentary elections.

25. Regulation No. 3 of 2013, on appointments to senior posts, contains a set of criteria on specialized technical knowledge, job descriptions, administrative and leadership competencies and how to capture general impressions of candidates for senior posts, without engaging in discrimination.

26. The Cabinet endorsed the National Strategy for Jordanian Women, 2012–2015, which was drawn up by the National Commission for Women. In the objectives specified in the section on women's political empowerment and participation in public life, empowered Jordanian women are envisaged as playing an active role in the three powers of State.

27. The Independent Election Commission was set up to oversee the electoral process. Its handling of the 2013 parliamentary elections built confidence in the integrity of the process and helped to bring about an increase in the female participation rate; 210 women were included on national and local ward lists.

28. Following the 2013 elections for the sixteenth parliament, a decision was taken to set up a coordinating bureau, made up of women representatives of the National Assembly and the National Commission for Women, to foster and develop cooperation, exchange experiences and coordinate efforts to empower women through legislative, oversight and accountability processes.

29. A national coalition was formed to support women's political participation. The coalition is led by the Jordanian National Commission for Women and its members include representatives of ministries such as the Ministry of Political Development and Parliamentary Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior and of independent institutions like the Independent Election Commission, the National Centre for Human Rights and civil society organizations. The coalition established a strategy for the period 2012–2017.

Women's economic empowerment

30. In order to foster women's advancement and empowerment and to expand economic opportunities and equality in the workplace, the Government revised and amended a series of economic laws that affect women. The most recent amendment to the Social Security Act (No. 7 of 2010) made a qualitative difference to the kind of socioeconomic protection that is offered to women. The main features are as follows:

- Women who work in the home are given the option of participating in a social security scheme and widows have the right to combine their pensions, survivor's benefit or salary with their share of the pension or benefit accruing to them from their deceased husband;
- Maternity and sick leave insurance schemes were established in all the enterprises covered by the Act and the enterprises were granted exemptions from paying interest, fines and additional costs in relation to the Act for the first six months following the date on which the new arrangements came into effect.

31. The Ministry of Labour enforces article 72 of the Jordanian Labour Code, which states that employers of more than 10 women must provide a suitable space and a qualified childminder to look after children up to the age of 4 of their women employees. The National Committee on Pay Equity was set up with assistance from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and recommendations were made on projects to improve women's role in the labour market. There were several such projects, notably a project on female employment in remote areas and a project on production. Some production units were transferred to major factories in areas with large numbers of female inhabitants so as to make it easier for women to get to work and a maternity support fund was set up to provide social security benefits to cover part of women's salaries during maternity leave.

32. Jordan joined the States of the world in celebrating the launch, on 24 September 2012 in New York, of the "Equal Futures Partnership" initiative, of which it is a founding member. Jordan was the first Arab State to be invited to join the initiative. The voluntary pledges that it gave attest to the commitment of the national leadership to promoting and protecting women's rights and to empowering women to play an active part in public life. At the behest of the Cabinet, the Jordanian National Commission for Women invited ministries, government institutions and various organizations to establish a joint national plan and procedures to roll out the initiative nationwide, the first element focusing on women's political empowerment and the second on their economic empowerment.

B. Elimination of torture (recommendations 2, 18 and 19)

National efforts to combat torture

33. Combating torture is an important goal for Jordan, which consistently strives to make advances in this area. Constitutional amendments that were introduced in 2011 include provisions on the prohibition of torture. Article 8, paragraph 2, of the Constitution states: "Any person who is arrested, placed in custody, detained or subjected to any restriction on his or her liberty shall be treated with dignity, safeguarded from any form of torture or bodily or mental harm and held in no place other than a legally designated holding facility. Any statement obtained from any person by means of torture or the use of grievous harm or threats shall be deemed null and void."

34. Article 208 of the Criminal Code of Jordan states that torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment are prohibited. Ever since Jordan ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the authorities have monitored, followed up on and produced reports about violations in general.

35. A guide to the investigation of torture crimes was produced for public prosecutors. All public prosecutors and justices of the peace who carry out prosecutorial functions across the country were given training at special workshops on how to use the guide.

36. One way to help curb torture would be to place tighter restrictions on the use of pretrial detention. A guide for public prosecutors and judges was written on the subject of detention. It explains the regulations, justifications, conditions and rules relating to the use of detention.

37. The Court Case Management Programme is being modified to make it easier for prosecutors to check how long people are being held and to ensure that the legal time limits are not overrun. These objectives will be achieved through: 1. The addition of a special provision to the regulations stating that public prosecutors must be notified when the time limit on a person's detention is about to expire so that they can make sure that sentence limits are not exceeded; 2. The addition of a special provision on submission of mandatory pretrial detention reports for verification and analysis.

38. Public prosecutors' offices were given logbooks to record torture and ill-treatment cases so that the Director of Public Prosecutions — the Attorney General — can keep track of and deal with torture cases.

National mechanisms for eliminating torture

39. Immunity from prosecution is not granted to public security officers or officers who are convicted of an offence by the police court, which is independent of the public security directorate and hears cases that have been brought against public security officers. The Public Security Act was amended in 2010. It states that ordinary court judges may sit in the police court. It also provides fair trial guarantees.

The following table shows the number of cases of ill-treatment that were referred to the police court between 2010 and 2012.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Cases tried</i>	<i>Cases dropped</i>	<i>Cases being heard</i>	<i>Total</i>
2010	17	-	2	19
2011	3	-	7	10
2012	5	1	8	14
Total	25	1	17	43

40. Designated officials conduct ongoing inspections and oversee the work of reform and rehabilitation centres. The Public Security Directorate has carried out scores of human rights training programmes in conjunction with the National Centre for Human Rights, civil society organizations and international organizations.

41. Anyone can file a complaint and numerous complaints mechanisms are available to everyone. At police stations, complaints about ill-treatment may be filed with a police chief or with a police prosecutor whose job is essentially to investigate complaints. People also have the option of submitting complaints to the Ombudsman's and Human Rights Office. If they cannot go there in person, a relative may submit the complaint on their behalf. The complaint will be investigated and a decision will be taken on the matter. Visits (announced and unannounced) are made to detention facilities on a continuous basis by representatives of the National Centre for Human Rights, public prosecutors, unit chiefs and officials. As soon as people are placed in detention, they are allowed to contact family members and to inform them of their whereabouts. Various complaints hotlines and websites have been established.

C. Alignment of national legislation with international standards (recommendations 3 and 4)

42. Treaties that have been ratified by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan are an integral part of the country's legal order. According to the Constitution, these instruments will take precedence over national laws in the case of a conflict between the two. This is made clear in article 24 of the Jordanian Civil Code, which states: "The preceding provisions shall not apply if they conflict with a provision of a special law or of an international treaty that is in force in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan." International instruments become part of national law once they have been ratified and published in the official gazette.

43. A number of recent laws and legal amendments have been adopted that meet international standards. To take just one example, amendments were made to the Jordanian Constitution of 2011 to bring it into line with international norms. Provisions on additional

protection and support for human rights and fundamental freedoms were included in articles 6–8, 15, 16, 18, 20 and 101 of the amended Constitution. The provisions specify that: it is an offence to infringe rights and freedoms in any way; citizens and their dignity must be respected; no citizen may be subjected to any kind of physical or mental harm; Jordanians have the right to establish trade unions and political parties and the right to a free and compulsory education; and all Jordanians have the right to work. Through these articles, additional legal protection is afforded to mothers, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, who all need to be protected from abuse and exploitation. The amendments are intended to guarantee freedom of opinion, freedom of the press and of printing and publishing, media freedoms, the freedom to produce creative works of art and the freedom to participate in technical, cultural and sports activities. The freedom to correspond by letter or telegram and to communicate by telephone and other means is also recognized. Communications are confidential and may not be subject to censorship, surveillance, interception or seizure without a court warrant. No civilian may be tried in a criminal case that is not being heard by a civilian judge.

D. Children’s rights (recommendations 5, 9, 16, 17 and 24)

Reservations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

44. Jordan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was published in the official gazette pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child Ratification Act (No. 50 of 2006). The Act was published in issue 4787 of the official gazette on 16 October 2011.

45. Although Jordan maintains its reservation to articles 14, 20 and 21 of the Convention, the reservations do not impinge on the rights of Jordanian children. The country’s laws, notably the Constitution, offer protection in respect of the matters covered in these articles.

46. The Jordanian Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of opinion, conscience and worship and provides for the protection of children’s rights, including the right to live in an alternative family setting under the *kafala* and fostering system that is provided for in the sharia. The relevant reservation provides genuine protection for children by making it possible for them to maintain their ties with their families, particularly their mothers, and by safeguarding their financial and other rights in relation to protection of filial status. In addition there are provisions on marriage and how it is regulated.

Legislation on children

47. The Children’s Rights Bill was drawn up with input from government agencies, the private and voluntary sectors and children’s organizations. It defines children’s rights according to international standards and provides for the protection of children. It was transmitted to the Prime Minister at the end of 2012.

48. In order to improve the effectiveness of legislation and the judicial sector in Jordan, particularly in the areas of gender mainstreaming, sexual harassment and economic exploitation of children, the authorities undertook the following measures:

- Penalties for offences against children were raised and articles 287–291 of the Criminal Code (Act No. 8 of 2011) were amended. Article 308 bis was also amended. It excludes the possibility of attenuating circumstances being taken into account in cases where an indecent offence is committed against a minor below the age of 18 by a person over the age of 18;

- Directives on fostering were issued in 2013 in order to improve the situation of children who are living with families that are not their own;
- Article 6, paragraph 4, of the Constitution, which affirms that the State must provide care and protection for children, was amended;
- The Personal Status Code (Act No. 36 of 2010) contains provisions on the promotion and protection of children's rights;
- Regulation No. 49 of 2009 was issued on the licensing and management of children's homes;
- Directives on the licensing of children's homes were issued in 2011;
- Provisions on alternative sentences were added to the final draft of the Juveniles Bill, under which the age of criminal responsibility has been raised to 12 years. Language on conflict resolution in criminal cases and provisions on the establishment of an independent judiciary, an independent prosecution service and a juvenile police force were also added to the text.

49. A bill on the composition of courts was drafted. It provides for the creation of a sharia prosecution office. The text was sent to the Prime Minister in preparation for implementation of the constitutional procedures required for adoption. The bill opens the way for the establishment of a sharia prosecution service whose key functions would include protecting the rights of minors and young persons.

Protection of children from economic exploitation

The following measures were taken to protect children from economic exploitation.

50. A national framework for the elimination of child labour was devised. It is a flexibly worded national reference document that marks out an unambiguous approach for dealing with child labour. It defines the procedures to be followed by the governmental and non-governmental organizations involved, based on their respective roles and responsibilities. It also provides guidelines on inter-organizational networking, coordination to help eliminate child labour and the creation of partnership networks to support child workers and their families.

51. Study of child labour and its impact in Jordan: In 2011, the National Council for Family Affairs conducted a study of child labour and its impact (physical, social and psychological) in Jordan as part of a project designed to eliminate child labour through education. The goal of the study was to identify the physical, psychological and social impact of working on child workers. The study found that child workers who were either still at school or who had dropped out of education suffered from psychological, social and physical problems and disorders.

52. Study of child workers in agriculture: In 2011, the Council conducted a study of child workers in agriculture under a project on the elimination of child labour. The goal was to define what kind of work children did in the agricultural sector and the unidentified occupational hazards. A further goal was to gather data that organizations which deal with child labour issues can use to design interventions and targeted programmes and to formulate policies that are effective in eliminating this phenomenon.

53. Articles on protecting children from exploitation in work that could endanger their lives and health were included in the Labour Code. They state that children may not work more than six hours [per day] and that it is prohibited to employ children below the age of 16 in any kind of work. Children are not allowed to work at night or in hazardous occupations.

Protection of children from violence

54. Efforts to protect children from all forms of violence are being pursued and a number of successes have been scored. For example, a regulation was introduced on controlling the quality of services that are provided to protect families from domestic violence. This was introduced to help national institutions to deliver high-quality services in this area. Standards were set for such services (health, social, educational, legal and police assistance), and a project was carried out that culminated in the development of procedures for dealing with domestic violence through an electronic system to which all service providers are connected.

55. Directive No. 1 of 2008, on the licensing of kindergartens, was amended in 2012. Standards for protecting children in kindergartens were written into the text.

56. The Civil Service Regulation was amended with a view to the prevention of child abuse. Disciplinary sanctions were increased for causing bodily harm to children in educational, rehabilitation and training establishments, welfare homes, refuges and other institutions. The relevant provisions are found in article 68 of the Civil Service Regulation (No. 134 of 2009), as amended. These provisions apply to all persons subject to the regulation who commit abuses or acts of violence.

57. Electronic surveillance systems were installed in children's reformatories and social welfare homes to allow for swift action to be taken to protect children living in these facilities. An independent oversight and inspection group was set up by the Ministry of Social Development and the criminal justice branch. The group is made up of individuals from civil society organizations and it oversees and inspects public and private social welfare homes. Its goal is to support the rights of beneficiaries who are vulnerable.

E. Support for the National Centre for Human Rights and civil society organizations (recommendations 7 and 8)

58. Various ministries and national human rights institutions continue to cooperate with the National Centre for Human Rights and other human rights entities. An open-door policy has been adopted and a constructive and open approach is taken to dealing with requests and feedback on ways of eradicating negative practices and human rights abuses.

59. Ministries and national governmental institutions continue to work in partnership with civil society in the design and development of human rights strategies, initiatives and laws. The Government is convinced that civil society has an important role to play in the development of the human rights system, as evidenced in [its contribution to] the recent amendments that were made to the Constitution and the Personal Status Act following consultations.

F. Human rights education and training for judicial officials (recommendations 10 and 12)

60. Jordan continues to improve human rights education in society through awareness programmes in general and the inclusion of human rights concepts in school and university curricula in particular. It also does this through the introduction of new legislation or of amendments designed to bring existing legislation into line with international human rights instruments. National human rights institutions have become more active in the past four years and have organized large numbers of seminars and workshops on international human rights standards. The National Centre for Human Rights plays an important role in this area of activity.

61. In order to enhance human rights education, the National Centre for Human Rights, in partnership with the government sector and civil society organizations, drew up the National Plan for Human Rights Education and Promotion, 2013–2016.

62. Judges have been provided with human rights training and human rights is a mandatory subject on the diploma course for students at the Jordanian Judicial Institute. The Ministry of Justice has run training workshops for judges and public prosecutors on various aspects of the promotion of human rights.

63. The Public Security Directorate has adopted a new approach that is based on raising awareness of human rights among police officers and providing them with instruction in human rights concepts.

64. A police code of conduct was drawn up and 35 courses on respect for human rights and combating torture were held for security officers in 2011. Thirty courses were held in 2012.

G. Right to education (recommendations 11 and 36)

65. In order to disseminate human rights education and include it in educational curricula, a review of the general framework for the design and evaluation curricula was undertaken under a programme to develop education for a knowledge-based economy. Human rights principles and values were included as reference parameters in the document, together with a human rights matrix endorsed by the Ministry of Education. The focus is on educational equity and equality of opportunity for students. In 2012, the general framework documents and the general and specific outputs for all subjects were revised. Human rights principles and values were included in the curricula for social studies and Islamic education, among others.

66. The State has an outstanding record among nations for delivering educational opportunities to all. These opportunities provide a solid basis for the gradual channelling of human resources in the direction of a knowledge-based economy. The overall enrolment ratio in primary education was 99 per cent in 2011/12. The level of education spending in Jordan is relatively high, considering the size of the economy. The way that the resources are spent is also relatively efficient. Expenditure on school education has increased, accounting for around 10 per cent of the Government's budget in 2011/12 and 4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). More or less all of it goes to primary and secondary education. School textbooks and teacher's manuals are being reviewed and developed based on modified parameters and with due regard being had to other activities in the Educational Plan of Action.

H. Rights of persons with disabilities (recommendations 13, 32 and 33)

National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities

67. Action has been taken to follow up on the implementation of the National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities (2007–2015). The strategy reflects the vision of His Majesty the King of creating a society in Jordan where persons with disabilities can enjoy a decent and sustainable life that affords them the opportunity to participate actively, on the basis of equity and respect, in the community.

68. The first phase of the strategy was completed at the end of 2009. In order to meet the first phase evaluation requirement set out in the strategy document and to complete a thorough review in preparation for the design of programmes and plans of action for the second phase (2010 to 2015), the Supreme Council for Persons with Disabilities undertook

a comprehensive review of the achievements scored and presented its findings at the first National Conference on the National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities (2007–2015), which was held in November 2009. The Council for Persons with Disabilities organized a second national conference, which was held on 30 and 31 May 2011, to devise a system for monitoring and evaluating the second phase of the National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities.

Efforts to raise the living standards of persons with disabilities

69. Various steps have been taken to raise the living standards of persons with disabilities and to support their right to an independent livelihood, to social inclusion and to self-reliance. Model complexes were built for those who wish to live independently and they were staffed by supervisors whose job it is to ensure the general safety of the residents who live on their own.

70. Support services are provided in homes that allow persons with disabilities to live in their own community. Services that enable persons with mental disabilities to exercise their right to education and rehabilitation are provided by Ministry of Social Development centres, private centres and associations. The number of cases handled each year is between 2,000 and 2,500.

71. Early diagnosis services for disabilities have been improved, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Health, and information rights have been assured to support the realization of the right to health. An information plan has been drawn up to provide news on disability issues and steps have been taken to promote the enjoyment of rights relating to education, inclusion, work, vocational training and accessibility.

I. Late submission of periodic reports and cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (recommendation 14)

72. Jordan has pursued its cooperation and constructive dialogue with the treaty bodies and the special procedures. The Government submitted the State's third periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in March 2012, its fifth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in early 2010 (the report was considered in February 2012) and its fourth periodic report to the Human Rights Committee, which monitors the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in October 2010. It submitted the combined second, third and fourth periodic reports to the Committee against Torture in April 2010 and two initial reports in connection with the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2011. It also submitted the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, together with the State's initial report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in October 2012.

73. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan strongly supported the idea of establishing the Human Rights Council. It contributed actively to the negotiations on its establishment and, as a member for two successive sessions, it participated fully in the Council's discussions and decisions on the promotion of human rights across the world. Jordan has pursued its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, an arrangement that was crowned by the visit that the High Commissioner, Ms. Navi Pillay, paid to Jordan in October 2011.

J. Cooperation between the Complaints and Human Rights Office and the National Centre for Human Rights (recommendation 20)

74. In the framework of their constructive and ongoing cooperation, the Public Security Directorate and the National Centre for Human Rights signed a memorandum of understanding that allows for the Centre to send officials to reform and rehabilitation centres and detention facilities in order to conduct joint inspections and thus help to prevent human rights abuses. The total number of visits that officials from the National Centre for Human Rights paid to reform and rehabilitation centres over the period 2009–2011 was as follows: 2009: approximately 48 visits; 2010: approximately 41 visits; and 2011: approximately 99 visits.

K. Response to requests from special rapporteurs (recommendation 23)

75. The State is committed to improving its cooperation with the special procedures and to ensuring transparency in its dealings with them. In 2006, it issued not just the special procedures but also international non-governmental organizations and specialized agencies with a standing invitation to visit Jordan. Ms. Rashida Manjoo, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, visited Jordan from 11 to 24 November 2011. The Government of Jordan announced that it would be receiving a visit from Mr. Heiner Bielefeldt, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, in September 2013 and provided facilities for several visits undertaken by United Nations committees investigating human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Syrian Arab Republic.

L. Promotion of freedom of opinion and of expression (recommendation 26)

76. The Jordanian Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of the press through a system of laws that safeguard these freedoms but recognize the need to balance the freedoms of different individuals. Individuals cannot be allowed to exercise freedom of expression to the detriment of others or in breach of national security. Article 15 was amended and a provision was added stating that: “The State shall guarantee the freedom of scientific research and freedom of literary, artistic and cultural creativity.”

77. One positive step that has been taken to support the right to freedom of opinion and expression was the inclusion of provisions on printing and publishing in the General Amnesty Act (No. 15 of 2011). Furthermore, the Senate refused to endorse article 23 of the bill on amendment of the Anti-Corruption Act of 2011, which prescribes a penalty of imprisonment or of a fine for defamation, denigration and character assassination, because of the restrictions that the article imposes on the exercise of freedom of expression, specifically via electronic media.

78. The media strategy for 2011–2015 was designed to create a legal, political and administrative environment conducive to the development of the media sector, to protect and strengthen the independence of government and private media and to create a legal, political, social and professional environment that favours media pluralism and the exercise of the right to information.

79. Pursuant to the law by which the Print and Publications Act (No. 16 of 2011) was amended, a special criminal division was established in first instance and appeal courts to hear cases relating to printing and publishing activities. The division of the first instance

court in Amman was granted exclusive jurisdiction to hear offences under the Act that involve breaches of internal and external State security.

80. Under the law amending the Cultural Patronage Act (No. 29 of 2000), the 5 per cent tax on newspapers was abolished.

M. Right to work (recommendations 27, 29 and 37)

Combating ill-treatment of foreign workers

81. The Ministry of Labour Inspectorate stepped up visits to enterprises throughout the country in order to check that they were operating in compliance with the law and providing working conditions that were conducive to the protection of labour rights. A total of 49,463 visits were paid in 2012, 250 of them after working hours.

Protection of foreign workers' rights

82. The minimum wage was raised to 190 Jordanian dinars on 1 February 2012.

83. The number of working hours for domestic workers was reduced to just eight per day. Domestic workers who take time off need only inform their employers of where they will spend their leave; they do not need permission to leave the home.

84. Employers are required to open bank accounts for domestic workers and must provide proof that they have done so when they renew a work permit or complete the legal procedures for reassigning a domestic worker to another employer. They must produce a special form showing that the domestic worker has received all her benefits. There is ongoing coordination and cooperation with embassies and work inspectors are assigned to each embassy.

85. In 2012, five recruitment and employment offices were shut down for breaching the Labour Code and related regulations.

86. A unit to combat human trafficking was set up and its main tasks were defined in relation to three key aspects of anti-trafficking activities: prevention, protection and prosecution.

N. Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (recommendation 30)

87. Over the past 10 years, Jordan has adopted social, economic, educational and environmental policies and strategies which are comprehensive, mutually supportive and consistent with the general framework relating to the Millennium Development Goals. These policies and strategies have been turned into programmes of action for the attainment of specific development targets, namely, the eradication of poverty, providing access to education for all, eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, improving children's and women's health, achieving sustainable environmental development and building effective development partnerships.

88. Indicators are used to measure progress at the national level, based on available data, in achieving the basic purposes of the Millennium Development Goals. Since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, major achievements have been scored at the national level and in terms of meeting the basic overall targets of eradicating poverty and hunger, universalizing basic education, promoting gender equality and improving mothers' and children's health.

89. Recently, Jordan was chosen from among nine countries to participate in the development of a framework, to be elaborated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for accelerating progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

90. In the light of the successes that Jordan has had in meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the country was selected from among 65 States to prepare a post-2015 millennium agenda. The Secretary-General of the United Nations chose 26 world figures, including Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, to identify new sustainable development goals.

O. Right to health (recommendations 31 and 34)

91. A pioneering policy was established on the delivery of health services at 677 health centres, 435 mother-and-child centres, 377 dental clinics and 31 hospitals. In 2012, these figures look set to increase, with the establishment of a further 10 health centres and 2 hospitals. Improvements have been made to health services to allow for primary, secondary and tertiary health care to be made accessible to all citizens during their lives and for a healthy environment to be created for a healthy society. The health system in Jordan is of the first rank in the region, as measured against international standards and norms. In the light of the challenges facing the health sector, the Ministry of Health implements a succession of five-year strategic health plans to provide equitable access to efficient and high-quality health services that are considered to break new ground in the region.

92. The Ministry of Health supports the World Health Organization and the entities involved in the introduction of a community health development programme that was set up to support local communities in deprived parts of Jordan and to improve the quality of life there at all levels. A “healthy villages” department has been set up and the programmes that it runs address basic development needs in relation to health care, education, self health care, community schooling, village information centres, healthy lifestyles, child-friendly societies and homes, women’s development, environmental support and protection, safe motherhood, identification of skills and creative capacities, and microcredit for income-generating projects by poor rural families. These programmes have gained the trust of local communities.

93. The Ministry of Health included the Millennium Development Goals in its strategic plan (2008–2012), in addition to a strategic plan for family planning and control of infectious diseases. It is implementing an operational development programme for the national agenda, 2013–2020 (social welfare; “the healthy villages” programme). As for control of infectious diseases (Goal 6 of the Millennium Development Goals), Jordan has eradicated endemic malaria and reduced the incidence of tuberculosis to a figure of 5 cases per 100,000 in 2012.

P. Enhancement of access to water (recommendation 35)

94. The Government has a strategy for providing water and sanitation services to the public and thus appropriate infrastructure for the protection of human rights in Jordan. The strategy covers a range of areas: water resources development and management; legislation and institutional organization; shared water resources; public awareness; health standards; and private sector projects.

95. Work has been done to meet a number of strategic goals: developing and finding new water sources; improving the efficiency of water-supply and water-distribution systems; expanding sanitation services; moving forward with decentralization and fostering

wider participation by the private sector; improving the financial efficiency and effectiveness of water energy use; and dealing with climate change.

Q. State's role in peacekeeping operations, including the provision of medical services (recommendation 38)

96. The Jordanian Armed Forces have made a positive contribution to international peacekeeping efforts, consistent with the national and humanitarian values espoused by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and with the State's commitment to human rights. The focus of most of these humanitarian operations is on promoting human rights, helping Governments to conduct democratic elections and to establish representative assemblies and supporting the rule of law and the freedom of nations. Since 2009, Jordan has participated in various United Nations operations, including peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding operations. Jordan now has peacekeepers in Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and it has field hospitals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Gaza, Ramallah and Jenin.

97. Jordanian forces contribute to peacekeeping and peacemaking operations and protect children and women in conflict zones. They also help to: build and open up roads in the event of natural disasters; repair schools; build democracy by ensuring that good governance principles are applied in elections; provide health care, particularly for children and women, at hospitals run by the Armed Forces; train civilian police to deal humanely with individuals in the States concerned; and provide international organizations and governmental and non-governmental organizations in areas under the responsibility of the Armed Forces with aid such as food and medicines.

V. Developments since the previous review

A. Political reform

98. As His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein has stated on many occasions, the "Arab Spring" has provided Jordan with an opportunity to speed up the overall reform process under way, in particular the political reforms initiated based on the leadership's absolute faith in the importance of developing a Jordanian model that fosters equality of opportunity for all, protects civil freedoms and political rights, supports the separation of powers and encourages political participation.

99. A national dialogue committee was formed in 2011 with 52 distinguished Jordanian nationals participating as members. The members are recognized experts in law-making, public service work and State administration and the committee designs general frameworks for conducting a political dialogue that supports results-based approaches, stabilization and human rights. The goal is to develop by consensus a law on democratic elections, an electoral law that will bring about a qualitative shift in parliamentary work, and a law on political parties that will enrich the forms of political and party pluralism that already exist.

100. In April 2011, a committee of experts in law-making and in constitutional and political affairs was set up to make amendments to the Constitution that would support the democratic process. Article 42 of the Constitution was amended as part of that effort. The amendments include the following:

- The Government may ask the House of Representatives for a vote of confidence and the House of Representatives may withdraw its confidence from the Government or

from any Government minister. Under the amendments, the same rules apply in both cases; a House majority (half the number of votes plus one) must be secured to carry the vote;

- With the amendments, elections for the House of Representatives must now be held within four months of the date of dissolution of parliament and ordinary sessions now last six months;
- Challenges to a representative's membership must be heard by the regular courts; in the past, they were heard by the House of Representatives. If the House of Representatives is dissolved for a particular reason, the same reason may not be used to dissolve the new House;
- Under the constitutional amendments, the Government may only enact temporary laws in specific circumstances such as disasters, war, the declaration of a state of emergency and situations that call for urgent expenditure.

101. Following national debates, a number of laws on political activities were adopted that help to boost the democratic process. The main laws concerned are the Election Act, the Political Parties Act, the Public Assemblies Act, the Constitutional Court Act and the Independent Election Commission Act.

Election Act

- Pursuant to the Election Act of 2012, responsibility for overseeing elections was assigned to the Independent Election Commission, as opposed to the Ministry of the Interior. This measure responds to demands from the country's political forces and from the Jordanian public;
- Article 8 (b) of the Act states that 15 seats are to be assigned for women;
- For the first time, a system of proportional representation lists was introduced pursuant to the Act, article 8 (c) of which provides for an allocation of 27 seats. The Act also includes provisions on meeting international standards (art. 38).

Political Parties Act

102. The Political Parties Act of 2012 contains several articles that were amended at the request of political movements and civil society organizations. The main articles of the Act that make a positive addition to the text encourage women to participate in political parties (art. 6 (a)).

103. The Act states that five persons may engage in advocacy work and in the dissemination of ideas on behalf of a political party in the six months prior to completion of the licensing process. Article 8 of the Act states that elections for party leaders must be held regularly and that all party groups must hold regular conferences in order to strengthen internal democracy. Article 19 states that citizens may not be harassed or interrogated on account of their party affiliation.

Public Assemblies Act

104. In 2011, a crucial amendment was made to the 2004 Public Assemblies Act. The clause stating that prior written authorization from an administrative governor must be obtained for the holding of any public meeting was repealed. Previously, authorization had to be obtained at least 24 hours before the public meeting or demonstration was scheduled to take place. Instead of written authorization from a governor, the new condition calls for advance notice to be given to the governor at least 24 hours ahead of time. The names, addresses and details of the organizers must be provided with the notification, together with

information about the purpose, place and time of the meeting or demonstration. This will allow the authorities to provide security and other facilities for the event.

Constitutional Court Act

105. Further to the amendments made to the Constitution and pursuant to article 58, the Constitutional Court was established as an independent body with responsibility for verifying the constitutionality of laws and regulations. The Court safeguards the legal order and upholds the rule of law through the judgements that it delivers on constitutional matters and through its enforcement of the Constitution. It makes the Constitution a living document and its work informs the way that political forces carry out their activities.

Independent Election Commission

106. The Independent Election Commission in Jordan was founded pursuant to Act No. 11 of 2012. It is an independent body corporate that enjoys financial and administrative independence. Its role is to oversee and manage all stages of parliamentary elections and any other elections designated by the Cabinet.

B. Development of the judicial system

107. The Jordanian Constitution states that the judiciary is independent and that its decisions are made subject to no other authority than the law (art. 97).

108. Constitutional amendments have been introduced to strengthen judicial independence: article 98 of the Constitution was amended to read as follows: 1. Ordinary and sharia court judges shall be appointed and dismissed by royal decree and in accordance with the law; 2. A judicial council shall be lawfully established to deal with all matters that pertain to the ordinary law courts; 3. Having due regard to paragraph 1 of the present article, the judicial council shall have the sole right to appoint ordinary court judges in accordance with the law.

109. The constitutional amendments state that administrative courts must be established at two levels and a system introduced to allow for administrative court decisions to be appealed before an administrative court of appeal (Constitution, art. 100).

110. Article 101 of the Constitution provides: 1. The courts are open to all and there shall be no interference in their affairs; 2. Civilians may only be tried in a criminal case if all the judges hearing the case are civilians, except where the offence is linked to high treason, espionage, terrorism, drugs or money-laundering.

111. Recent constitutional amendments provided for the establishment of the Constitutional Court, whose role is to interpret the Constitution and to verify the constitutionality of the laws and regulations in force. Provision was made for the establishment of the Judicial Council to deal with all matters pertaining to judges in the ordinary law courts and to make sure that appointments of these judges are decided by the Judicial Council alone. These judges have competence for hearing challenges to membership of the House of Representatives; in the past, these matters were dealt with by the House of Representatives. Further to the amendments, ministers may be tried by the ordinary courts for committing offences in connection with their functions. In the past, they would have been tried by the High Council for Interpretation of the Law.

112. The Cabinet approved the bill by which amendments were made to the Judicial Independence Act of 2013, which was sent before the House of Representatives for the completion of the constitutional stages required for enactment. The bill addresses matters concerning the Judicial Inspectorate and the Judicial Institute of the Judicial Council. It

states that the Council is responsible for dealing with all matters relating to the judiciary, judicial inspections and the Judicial Institute. The relevant regulations will be amended once the bill has passed into law.

C. Right to peaceful protest and to peaceful assembly

113. The Jordanian Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful protest and peaceful assembly. The changes that accompanied the “Arab Spring” created a new set of circumstances that were unprecedented in the country’s political history. Political space expanded to include new forces that were unlike political parties or traditional elites in terms of their continuity and their presence outside the capital. These forces are peaceful and eschew violence.

114. The demands of the movement were heeded from the outset: a national dialogue committee was formed and asked to make recommendations on the House of Representatives Election Act and the Political Parties Act. By royal decree, a committee was set up to amend the Constitution. A number of public office holders who had been charged with corruption were prosecuted.

115. International institutional governance principles are applied. Evidence of good governance is found in the establishment of the Higher National Integrity Committee in 2012. The Committee is made up of a group of specialists and experts and is chaired by the head of the executive. Its job is to review the work of public institutions and to modify policymaking mechanisms with a view to the adoption of broad and detailed plans and the elaboration of concepts, regulations and recommendations on legislation that, once applied, discloses various substantive deficiencies and weaknesses.

116. Thousands of peaceful demonstrations have been held in Jordan, with participants expressing their views honestly, freely and democratically. The security forces demonstrate the utmost professionalism in providing security at these events and the participants make every effort to keep things peaceful and civilized, except in some isolated cases that are dealt with by the legal and judicial systems. This approach is consistent with the country’s commitment to meeting the international standards that it has endorsed, to giving citizens the chance to express their views freely and safely in a democratic framework in which all sides accept the views of the others and equity and equality are assured.

D. The 2013 parliamentary elections

117. The new Elections Act was issued in 2012 and elections for the seventeenth House of Representatives to be elected in parliamentary history were held in November 2013. Of the 150 seats in the House, 15 were allocated to women. The main feature of the Act is that it provides for the conduct of polling based on electoral wards and national lists.

118. The voter registration rate tops 70 per cent and the voting rate is close to 57 per cent. These are among the highest rates in the country’s history. These rates should be taken as a good sign, if compared with the date on recent elections held in the Arab world. Another striking feature is the increase in participation rates in major urban centres. The participation rate in the Amman and Al-Zarqa’ governorates has risen by nearly one third.

119. The importance of the parliamentary elections is also clear from the unprecedented number of people standing as candidates: 80 per cent of political parties took part and 61 per cent of the winners are taking up seats in the House of Representatives for the very first time. This proves that the State is capable of renewing its political elite.

120. These elections resulted in the composition of the House becoming more representative of Jordanian society and its various components. The blocks in the House represent all existing political currents, namely, nationalist, Islamic, ethnic-based and left-wing parties, as well as mass movements, and groups of political activists. That 18 women were elected to the House is a source of pride. Three of the women won their seats, one was the head of a national list and two succeeded in competitions held at the ward level. The other 15 gained their seats through the quota system.

121. Reinforcement of parliamentary government begins with the creation of a mechanism for holding prior consultations with the House of Representatives to agree on a mandate for the Prime Minister, who in turn will consult with the House on the composition of his team and on the ministerial statement that lays out the Government's programme. The process ends with the emergence of a parliamentary coalition that is formed along party lines, has a majority of votes and will form the Government. The opposing parliamentary coalition will function as a shadow government in the House.

VI. Best practices

- Promotion of the partnership approach: The dialogue between the Government and its partners on legislation to strengthen human rights and on initiatives to encourage greater participation in political life has been pursued. For example, the Ministry of Political Development has held discussions on the role of women in municipal elections and it has organized dialogues with civil society organizations to raise awareness of the Election Act and of participation in public life;
- Democratic empowerment programmes: In 2012, a democratic empowerment initiative was launched to create a space for enlightened social action, i.e. for the development and implementation of initiatives and programmes to support democratic education and political participation, to draw attention to the ethics of constructive dialogue and to foster a culture of volunteerism and social responsibility;
- International conference entitled "Combating torture and curbing pretrial detention": In June 2013, the Ministry of Justice, with support from the Danish Institute against Torture, which is based in Copenhagen, held an international conference calling for more robust international, regional and national policies to be developed to combat torture and curb the use of pretrial detention;
- Family Reconciliation Home, which protects and offer shelter to women who are victims of domestic violence: In 2013, the Family Reconciliation Home received a United Nations award for its public service work and for its activities to improve the status of women. The Home plays an active role in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

VII. Challenges

122. Influxes of refugees in general and of Syrian refugees in particular pose a major challenge for Jordan, because of the considerable pressure that is placed on the State's already limited resources and on infrastructure. The impact of these influxes is evident at all levels, particularly in the areas of health, education, water, housing services, and employment for Jordanian nationals. It is with this in mind that Jordan calls on the international community to bear its legal and moral responsibilities for helping it to meet its obligations as a host country and to find a solution that will allow the refugees to return home under conditions in which their safety and human rights are assured.

123. Greater efforts must be made and financial resources allocated to disseminate human rights education and to provide professionals in the institutions concerned with training to help improve the way that they deal with the public, as required by law. The role of national human rights institutions also need to be strengthened.

124. Work must continue with all governmental, private and civil society organizations to overcome certain impediments linked to social customs that have begun to wane, meaning customs such as vendettas and so-called “honour crimes”.

125. Notwithstanding multiple initiatives and continuous efforts by the Government, the elimination of poverty and unemployment remains one of the biggest challenges that the country faces, particularly given the challenges posed by the global financial and economic crisis, rising energy prices and the spiralling costs of hosting refugees on Jordanian soil.

126. More needs to be done to: empower women politically; increase women’s participation in political life, both in terms of numbers and of the quality of their participation; empower women economically; and close the gender gap in economic participation.

127. Work to reach as broad a consensus as possible on national human rights laws is still being done.

VIII. Conclusion

128. The sincere efforts being made to consolidate the human rights system in Jordan reflects the content of the discussion papers that were presented by His Majesty the King. These papers provide the basis for the national political reform project, which has support at the highest level of decision-making in the State and which focuses on political and civil rights. In this way, Jordan joins the ranks of international actors that lend their support to these rights, whether by consolidating gains or developing rights still further. This all adds to the prestige of the State and its citizens among nations and peoples.
