

Jordan - Human Rights Scorecard ¹

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a Middle Eastern Arab country flanked by the Jordan River to the west and the Arabian Desert to the east. Jordan gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1946. The nation hosts millions of Palestinian and Syrian refugees. Jordan has remained relatively untouched by the sweeping violence and protests of the Arab Spring, and the monarchy has instituted political and constitutional reforms in past years to prevent such revolts from occurring.

Official language: Arabic

Ethnic groups: 98% Arab

Capital: Amman

Government: Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy

- King: Abdullah II
- Crown Prince: Hussein
- Prime Minister: Hani al-Mulki

Population: 10.01 million

Life expectancy: 74.8 years

Under-5 mortality: 19 per 1000

Adult literacy: 95.9%

Death penalty: Retentionist



Section 1: Overall Development

The overall development of a country – considering education, health, income, and other factors – is a strong indicator of whether average citizens have a reasonable chance to enjoy social and economic well-being and mobility.

Human Development (UNDP Human Development Index (HDI)) ²



0.741 – High Human Development ³

According to the UNDP, Jordanians enjoyed a gross national income per capita of \$10,111 and could expect to have on average 10.1 years of schooling. Compared to other countries with similar gross national incomes per capita, this is a high HDI.

Section 2: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



Partially respected ⁴

There has been at least one confirmed and three investigated instances of death from torture by Public Security Directorate personnel in 2017.

Freedom from disappearance



Respected ⁵

There was only one case of alleged disappearance in 2017, though authorities maintain this missing person was not detained by or on behalf of the government.

Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



Partially respected ⁶

While the Jordanian constitution bans physical and psychological torture, its use is still commonly used by police officers and investigators. However, when tried, perpetrators of this crime are sentenced up to three years in prison with hard labour.

Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



Largely disrespected ⁷

Jordanian law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, although these measures are not always observed by the government. Local NGOs report that violations of these laws are routine.

Freedom from denial of fair public trial



Partially respected⁸

The law provides for the right to a fair and public trial, and independent juries are generally enforced. However, information regarding the trial is often withheld from defendants and instances of nepotism and external influence in trials have been reported.

Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



Largely disrespected⁹

While the law protects citizens from such actions, there are widespread reports of government surveillance and monitoring of communication as well as interference with the education and employment prospects of former prisoners, activists, and their children.

Section 3: Respect for Civil Liberties

Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.

Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)¹⁰



Abuse Score: 41.71, Rank: 132 / 180 – Highly controlled, limited or intimidated¹¹

Journalists are closely monitored by the Jordanian government and must be party to the state-controlled Jordanian Press Association. The government has also increased internet censorship since the beginning of the Arab Spring.

Freedom from academic censorship



Partially respected¹²

The government has placed some limits on academic freedom. There is allegedly a continuing intelligence presence in academic institutions and conferences. University administrations must have all coursework approved through the state's General Intelligence Directorate.

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



Partially respected¹³

The Jordanian constitution provides for freedom of assembly, but the government has historically limited this right. However, security forces generally permit and provide security for demonstrations.

Freedom of religion



Respected¹⁴

While Islam is the official religion of the state, "the free exercise of all forms of worship and religious rites" are allowed in Jordan. The King urges citizens to respect what he said was the country's long history of religious tolerance and coexistence.

Freedom of movement



Partially respected¹⁵

Travel for citizens is generally accommodated, though some restrictions have been placed on the admittance of Syrian refugees and also on the internal movement of refugees, particularly Palestinian refugees from Syria, within Jordan.

Protection of refugees and stateless persons



Partially respected¹⁶

Because of its enormous influx of refugees, Jordan has trouble providing services and opportunities to all of them. After an attack at the border in 2016, they enacted the repatriation and temporarily halted the admittance of some refugees. However, job programs have been created in 2017.

Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)^{17 18}



5 / 7 – Partly free¹⁹

Jordanians experience some suppression and censorship of expression, media, and security.

Section 4: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc.

Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)²⁰



5 / 7 – Partly free²¹

Elections in Jordan are generally free and fair and technically well administered. However, political parties are generally weak, and the government can accept or reject the establishment of new parties.

Section 5: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)²²



Score: 48%, Rank: 59 / 180 – Some corruption²³

Jordan is one of the Middle Eastern countries making the greatest headway in combatting corruption and increasing transparency. However, there is a widespread use of personal connections to make gains in the political and business spheres.

Section 6: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



Respected²⁴

The government controls the affairs and funds of NGOs, but NGOs are generally allowed to operate within Jordan and the government attempts to comply with their recommendations. The National Centre for Human Rights compiles annual reports that sometimes criticize the government.

Section 7: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

Endangered Minorities (*Peoples Under Threat – Minority Rights Group International*)²⁵



No threat listed – Limited dangers to minorities²⁶

According to Minorities Rights Group International, Jordan does not have any minorities which face an immediate threat of violence.

Rights of women (*World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index*)²⁷



Score: 60.4%, Rank: 135 / 144 – Very unequal rights²⁸

Women enjoy less legal protection in Jordan than men, particularly in the realms of family, marriage, and inheritance. Spousal rape is not criminalized in Jordan, and women experience much sexual harassment and little political participation.

Rights of Children (*KidsRights Index Overall Score*)²⁹



Score: 80.6%, Rank: 36 / 165 – Protected³⁰

Some children deemed “illegitimate” are not given standard birth registrations. Strict laws protect children from abuse, though child marriage is not unheard of.

Rights of persons with disabilities



Partially respected³¹

Jordanian law explicitly protects people with disabilities from discrimination in employment. The government has taken steps to strengthen these protections. However, these laws often lack implementation, and discrimination is still common.

Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



Partially respected³²

Palestinian citizens and residents of Jordan often face institutional discrimination and find it more difficult to travel and gain admission to public universities, governmental jobs, and the military.

Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



Largely disrespected^{33 34}

Although same sex sexual activity is not criminalized in Jordan, there is pertinent societal discrimination and shame surrounding sexual orientation.

Section 7: Workers' Rights

Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.

Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



Partially respected³⁵

Trade unions and strikes are legal but restricted in Jordan, and while the labour code provides for collective agreements, there is no right to collective bargaining. Government involvement in union politics persists.

Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



Partially respected³⁶

The government actively combats forced labour practices in Jordan. However, it is still present in certain sectors, particularly the domestic sector and textile industry, in which many foreign-born migrants work.

Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



Partially respected³⁷

The legal minimum age of employment is 16 for non-hazardous positions and 18 for potentially hazardous jobs, although child labour is reportedly on the rise in Jordan, particularly among the Syrian refugee community.

Right to acceptable conditions of work



Partially respected³⁸

There Jordanian Ministry of Labour is active in setting codes and enforcing rights for Jordanian workers, however several violations of overtime, safety, and wage assurances were not upheld particularly for foreign workers and in the agricultural, garment, and construction industries.

Right to employment



12.6% - High Unemployment³⁹

The unemployment rate in Jordan has been slowly decreasing, but this may be even further slowed by the high influxes of refugees.

¹ A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

² The UN Development Program HDI was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone. The HDI can also be used to question national policy choices, asking how two countries with the same level of GNI per capita can end up with different human development outcomes. These contrasts can stimulate debate about government policy priorities. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>

³ "Table 1: Human Development Index and its components, Jordan" UNDP, based on 2014 or the most recent year available. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>.

⁴ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Jordan." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 23, 2014.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

⁵ Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

⁶ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁹ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

¹⁰ The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (16 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (37 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (31 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (39 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (57 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

¹¹ "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 23, 2014.

<http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>.

¹² "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Jordan." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 23, 2014.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

¹³ "Jordan." World Report 2014: Jordan. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/Jordan>.

¹⁴ "Jordan." International Religious Freedom Report for 2013. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 25, 2014.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

¹⁵ "Jordan." World Report 2014: Jordan. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/Jordan>.

¹⁶ "Jordan." World Report 2014: Jordan. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/Jordan>.

¹⁷ Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

¹⁸ Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed Dec. 9, 2014

<https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

¹⁹ "Jordan." Freedom in the World 2014: Jordan. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/Jordan-0#.VIIHLzGG9e8>.

²⁰ See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed Dec. 9, 2014 <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

²¹ "Jordan." Freedom in the World 2014: Jordan. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/Jordan-0#.VIIHLzGG9e8>.

²² Transparency International (TI) publishes a "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

²³ "Jordan." Corruption by Country. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.transparency.org/country#BHR>.

²⁴ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Jordan." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 23, 2014.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

²⁵ The Peoples under Threat assessment by Minority Rights Group International highlights countries most at risk of genocide and mass killing. The ranking is created by compiling data on the known antecedents to genocide or mass political killing. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017 <http://peoplesunderthreat.org/>.

²⁶ "Jordan." Peoples under Threat, Minority Rights Group International. 2015, or most recent data. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017. <http://peoplesunderthreat.org/>.

²⁷ This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights

²⁸ "Jordan." World Economic Forum. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=BHR>.

²⁹ This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

³⁰ "The KidsRights Index: Overall Ranking." The KidsRights Index. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>

³¹ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Jordan." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 23, 2014.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

³² Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³³ "ILGA World Map." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. January 1, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://ilga.org/>. See also Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁴ ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

³⁵ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Jordan." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2013. Accessed November 23, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

³⁶ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country

³⁹ "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. January 1, 2013. Accessed December 7, 2014. http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang--en/index.htm.