

ACHRS

Quarterly Newsletter: April to June 2008



Amman Center
for Human Rights
Studies

Quarterly
Newsletter

Issue 9



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Introduction to the work of ACHRS in the second quarter of 2008

The Amman Center has again had a busy quarter of 2008.

Between April and June 2008, ACHRS conducted twenty-two (22) training courses. (please see pages 4-8). Including a training course on election monitoring in Iraq, with UNAMI and UNOPS (pg. 4), nine capacity-building courses (pg. 4), drugs awareness courses (pg. 8), social insurance courses (pg. 5) and a small arms workshop (pg. 6).

In addition, we have participated in a number of external events, including the Universal Periodic Review of the *Human Rights Council* in Geneva (pg. 8) and a meeting on regional cooperation and planning on the action plan of Istanbul, organised by the *Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network* (pg. 7).

We have established a cooperation agreement with an Iraqi prisoner's rights organisation (pg. 8).

In addition, we have also published the twentieth and twenty-first editions of the election observer, our annual report on press freedom in Jordan, our first report to monitor the Jordanian Parliament (pg. 10).

We have also hosted a video advocacy course, given by *WITNESS*, in partnership with *Sisters' Arab Forum* (SAF).

As far as the international relations unit is concerned, we have also been very busy. We are currently working on a project, to be funded by the *European Union*, and on a regional training course on the universal

periodic review, to funded by the UN.

In addition, we are writing reports on the universal periodic review, both an analysis and a country report.

The IRU also welcomed the help of Emma, from Sweden, who volunteered with us during May and July, and has received two additional interns in the last few weeks. Lubna is working for the centre part-time and is spearheading a project on Iraqi Refugees, whilst Imke, from Germany, is going to be taking on the reins from us at the end of July.

The centre as a whole has been working on many different projects over the past three months and is looking forward to a productive third quarter of 2008.

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Training Courses, Seminars and Meetings

Over the past three months, the Amman Center has conducted twenty-two training courses on human rights issues in the Arab region. Some of these courses have been new initiatives and some have been follow-up events to previous courses.

Training courses on election monitoring for Iraqi civil society organizations



Between the 8th and the 22nd April 2008, a training course was held in Amman for twenty-two representatives of Iraqi civil society organisations from different governorates in election monitoring.

This course was held in cooperation with the *United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq* (UNAMI) and the *United Nations Office for Project Services* (UNOPS).

Between the 12th and 17th April 2008,

a second training course was held on election monitoring for Iraqi civil society organisations, this time in Erbil, Iraq.

This course was again attended by twenty-two participants from different governorates of Iraq and was run by ACHRS, in cooperation with *Public Aid Organisation* (PAO), the *United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq* (UNAMI) and the *United Nations Office for Project Services* (UNOPS).

Training Course on Building Institutional Abilities

Throughout this quarter of 2008, the Amman Center has organized a series of training courses on building the institutional abilities of civil society organizations. (12-13th April, 26-28th April, 3rd May, 4th May, 10th May, 17th May, 24th May, 13-15th June). In this course took part about 25 participants in each session.

The course took place in Amman from the early March to the 15th of June 2008 and was divided in nine different sessions (12-

The course was organized in partnership with the *Jordanian Coalition of Civil Society Organizations* and through the support of the *Canadian Fund*.



Second Training Course on Media Laws



ACHRS has organized the second training course focusing on the legal regulation of Media involving a number of participants coming from several Arab countries. The course was held in Amman

from the 10th to the 14th of April 2008. Twenty four participants took part in the course, all of them are employed in the field of media and information. Participants were from Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Training Course on Elections Monitoring for Domestic Observers



ACHRS has organized a training course specifically targeting the needs of the personnel involved in the monitoring of elections of their own country. The ACHRS course took place in Amman the 14th and the 15th of April. The course exclusively tar-

geted personnel from Kuwaiti Civil Society. Twenty five participants took part in the course.

The course was organized in partnership with the *Elections Network in the Arab World* and the *Kuwait Labour Umbrella Organization (Ma'ak)*.

Educational Course on: "The right to Participate"

Among the aims of ACHRS there is also the promotion of human rights amongst younger generations.

On this basis the ACHRS organized an educational course on the "right to participate" that targeted specifically school students .

The course was held twice on the 15th of April and the 30th of April 2008.

This course was held in the Mafraq governorate and 60 students from the local schools attended the classes.

Round Table on the Social Insurance Law

On the 1st of June 2008 the ACHRS hosted, in its premises, the second round table on the Social Insurance Law in Jordan. The round table was attended by activists of the *Jordanian Labor Movement*.

Training Course on Human Rights for Parliamentary Personnel



The ACHRS does not address exclusively civil society but also entertains constructive relations with governmental branches.

The 23rd and the 24th of April 2008 the ACHRS organized a training course on hu-

man rights targeting specifically the staff of the *Jordanian House of Deputies*.

Twenty four participants from different departments of the *House of Parliament* took part in the training held in Amman.

Course on Video Advocacy on Human Rights

The ACHRS hosted a course on human rights advocacy through the use of video organized by *Witness* an NGO specialized in this topic.

The course was held in Amman from the 6th to the 12th of June in the premises of ACHRS.

The course trained participants on a number of different skills useful to the development of videos recording human rights violations.

The course was attended by four members of the ACHRS as well as by six members of *Sister's Arab Forum for Human Rights* from Yemen.



Workshop on the Misuse of Small Arms



The ACHRS organized a workshop on the misuse of small

weapons.

The workshop analyzed the impact of this phenomenon on the local community and discussed how to eliminate small weapons.

Another aspect discussed in the workshop was the role of civil society organizations and the

international actors in eliminating the use of small arms.

The workshop was held on the 8th of June 2008 in the International Shehan School and attended by 10 members from civil society organizations.

Seminar: “Moratorium on the use of the Death Penalty in the Arab Region”



From the 12th to the 14th of May 2008 the Director of ACHRS took part in a regional seminar against the use of capital punishment in the Arab region.

The Seminar was organized by the *Swedish Institute Alexandria* in partnership with ACHRS, *Penal Reform International (PRI)*, and *MAAT Center for Constitutional and Legal Studies*.

The central objectives of the seminar were to consolidate the prospects of a moratorium on the death penalty leading to eventual abolition in those countries in the MENA region that have started to renounce the practice and to encourage other countries in the MENA region which are retentionist to reconsider their position on the death penalty and not least to facilitate an exchange of expertise and good practices among national coalitions.

The seminar was held in Alexandria, Egypt.

International Labor Day ACHRS Seminar

On the 1st of May 2008 ACHRS celebrated International Labor Day promoting discussion and exchange of ideas among leading members of the *Jordanian Labor Trade Unions* and the *Labor Education Committee*.

A number of Delegates from Jordanian trade unions met in the ACHRS premises to discuss the new Jordanian Labor Law and the Proposed Social Security Bill.

Preparation of Alternative Human Rights Reports Course



ACHRS organized a course on the drafting of alternative human

rights reports.

The course was organized in cooperation with the *Arab Organization for Human Rights in Jordan*, 2008. The course was attended by 28 participants from the *Arab Women Organization (AWO)* and the *Jordanian Society for Human Rights*.

The course was supported by the European Union and was held from the 5th to the 8th of June

The course was attended by 28 participants from the promoting organizations.

Assistance for Fighting Drugs Course



ACHRS has held a course for university students in which we taught and trained students about the role of youth and that of human rights in fighting the consumption of drugs in Jordan. The course was held on the 6th and 7th of May in the premises of the *Fighting Drugs Administration*, in Amman.

New Cooperation Agreement with JNP Iraq

In April 2008 a cooperation agreement between the ACHRS and the Justice Network for Prisoners (JNP)/Iraq was signed. The agreement envisions to strengthen bilateral relations between the two institutions with regards to the exchange of experiences and expertise in the field of prisoners rights. As a result of the intensified dialogue one of JNP's staff member is going to participate in a Training of Trainers course (ToT) addressing womens' rights conducted in August 2008. In addition to that a proposal on prisoners rights has been drafted. It is hoped that in the future ACHRS and JNP will continue to work closely together to achieve an efficient outcome from which both organizations will benefit.

Academics and International Organizations Visiting ACHRS

During the last three months ACHRS has been visited by the members of academic delegations and international organizations.

On the 20th of May 2008 a Swedish delegation composed of 5 professors from the University of Stockholm and the University of Umea visited the ACHRS. In the meeting the delegation discussed the possibility of establishing relations with universities in the Arab region to develop research projects in the Area.

On the 24th of April 2008 4 professors of the University of Padua (Italy) visited the center and met with the Director, who presented the center activities and briefed on the most urgent human rights issues in Jordan in a comparative way. ACHRS established a convention with Padua Human Rights Center to employ students as interns in the International Relations Unit of the ACHRS.

On the 20th of May 2008 a delegation from the Council for Assisiing Refugee Academics (CARA) visited ACHRS and met with the director. The visit was due to the interest of CARA in establishing a local branch in Amman and registering the organization with the local authorities.

ACHRS and the Universal Periodic Review



From the 3rd to the 13th of April 2008 a delegation of the International Relations Unit of the ACHRS attended the working group of the first session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, Switzerland.

The UPR is a new intergovernmental mechanism for the monitoring of states' human rights record, as well as promoting the participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The session held in March was the first ever held and focused on the revision of reports submitted by a number of Arab countries; Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco.

The interest of ACHRS in attending this new process was twofold; firstly it was an opportunity to acquire knowledge about the human rights record in Arab region and, secondly, of greater importance, it was a unique opportunity to learn practices and knowledge about formal and informal procedures for the participation of NGOs in the UPR. This is particularly important because in the 4th UPR session to be held in 2009 the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan will be under revision in the HRC and ACHRS intends to use its experience in this .

On the basis of the attendance of ACHRS delegates to the UPR, the International

Relations Unit wrote a strategic report that illustrates the procedures of the UPR and the possible strategies that can be implemented in order to render the role of CSOs as influential as possible in the UPR. The report "UPR: report for a common strategy" is written in English, is 35 pages long and can be downloaded from the ACHRS web site in PDF format (www.achrs.org/english).

In the coming months, preceding the UPR of Jordan, ACHRS is planning to organize a national network of human rights organizations in order to favour cooperation among the parties involved.

Review and Report of the First Session of the 15th Jordanian Parliament



The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies has issued its first report concerning the observation for the 15th Jordanian Parliament. The report aims to make sure that the Jordanian parliament is fulfilling its assigned tasks, which are listed in the constitution and other related laws and regulations, especially in the field of legislation and in providing observation over the executive authority's performance.

The report intends to illustrate a tangible progress through interaction, in order to keep this legislative institution as the main guarantor of the democratic process. Moreover, in the second part, the report focused on the local press' (particularly the written press) covering of the Jordanian parliament tasks, to examine the role of the press over the monitoring parliament's tasks. This report has been prepared in order to enhance

public observation for the parliament's performance, which has been applied through monitoring reports and through questioning the parliament's representatives during different meetings at their election districts, also during which the public got the chance to question the parliament's performance about their aid contributions for citizens. This is the first report done by Amman Center for Human Rights Studies in the field of parliament performance observation.

As a result of the diagnosis and the conclusions regarding the parliament's performance, the report has endorsed the following:

1-Coverage must be extended through the media, press and reporters, as it is considered as a support and boost for citizens who are being pressured because of practicing freedom of expression. Increased coverage could also be used to counter abuses which may

occur by the political and economic systems and to set an obstacle against the efforts that are being produced to ignore the laws which limit freedoms and diminish civil society's role for observation.

2-To ensure the importance of press participation in issuing regulations to protect human rights and guarantee that it is being applied properly; the press and media has a significant role to contribute in creating public opinion which guarantees the authorities' full respect for the citizens' will and rights.

3- It is really important that all different parts of the community interact and enjoy a conversational environment about the community's vital issues and to orientate civil society associations to work to protect personal and public rights and enhance its involvement in questioning and observation.

4-To enhance the press' role in setting up a culture of freedom of expression, as it is an important condition to create a free and independent media in Jordan.

5-The delegates must participate in training courses regarding the universal criteria for freedom of expression and the universal declaration of human rights, as the prior and current experiences of the parliament members showed a partial acceptance for human rights principles.

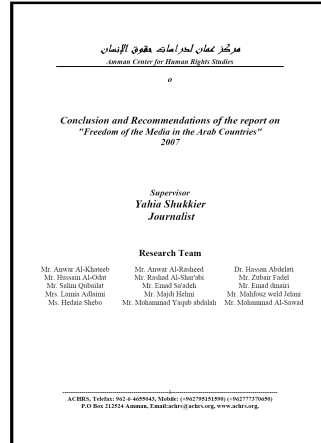
New reports

2007 Report on Press Freedom in the Arab World

In April 2008 the ACHRS has released a new report on Press freedom in the Arab World in 2007.

The Report has been developed by a research team supervised by the journalist Ahmad Shukkieh. The document in Arabic and English is available on the ACHRS website (www.achrs.org) in PDF format and can be downloaded for free.

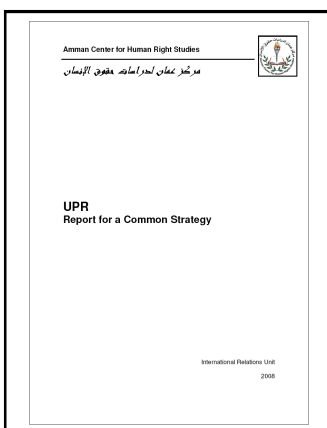
The report was developed through a research covering the following countries: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Syria,



Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania, and Yemen. For each of the countries mentioned 10 to 15 workers in the media have been asked to answer a questionnaire prepared by the research that became the main source for the assessment of press freedom in the Arab context. The questionnaire was based on 26 questions related to the legal and professional capacity of individuals to operate in the field of media and particularly the press.

The report includes the conclusions of the research and a number of recommendations for the full implementation of the freedom of the press in the Arab world, which is a human right guaranteed by a number of treaties and declarations ratified by Arab states.

Special Report on the UPR



for providing accessible information about the procedures related to review process, in-

In the last months the International Relations Unit has written a strategic report on the Universal Period Review with strategic purposes. Indeed, the report, apart

cludes a number of recommendations about how civil society organization can be more efficient in influencing process of revision of states members of the Human Rights Council. The idea to release this report comes from the need to spread knowledge about this new human rights mechanism and promote the inclusion of NGOs in the process. The Hashemite kingdom of Jordan will be under revision next year, in the 4th UPR session. The report will be published soon in English on the ACHRS website (www.achrs.org) in PDF format and will be available for free.

Report on the process of revision of the Jordanian Landlord and Tenants Law

The Jordanian recent changes and amendments in the Landlord and Tenants law might produce negative consequences on the rental market in the short term that may affect the right to adequate standards of living for a number of Jordanians and Refugees in the Jordanian territory. This phenomenon is even more problematic considering the increasing number of population of refugees from Iraq and the unstable condition of the occupied Palestinian territories which does not allow the return of Palestinians to their land.

A pool of researcher from the Harvard Law School has developed a detailed report on the Jordanian Landlord and Tenants Law, mostly from a legal perspective, analyzing the present situation and giving recommendations in order to avoid an imminent crisis.

The report was developed in partnership with ACHRS and is available on the ACHRS website in English (www.achrs.org/english).

First Report on Unknown Lineage Children

This report analyzes the problem of unknown lineage children in Jordan from a human rights perspective.

In addition to the provision of information about the phenomenon of unknown lineage the report analyzes how the problem is considered by Islamic ethics and law especially with reference to abortion and woman honor. The report suggests a number of recommendations that can improve the condition of unknown lineage children and reduce the crimes related to the phenomenon such as abandonment or killing of infants and illegal abortion.

The report links the phenomenon of unknown lineage children to the condition of poverty of many women, the rising costs of life in Jordan and the question

of honor for women becoming pregnant out of marriage.

Among the recommendations made in the report there is the need for a better coordination between the relevant ministries of the Jordanian government, the institution of an official registry to facilitate the monitoring of the phenomenon and a higher degree of interaction between the state and the civil society organization. Also, the report recommend the state to clarify the legal responsibility of the health sector when dealing with non married pregnant women.

Indeed, the report consider the phenomenon of unknown lineage children as multidimensional since it is relevant from moral, religious and legal points of view.

Books

Human Rights Within Framework of Criminal Justice Volumes 1 and 2



The ACHRS has recently published a collection of studies about human rights in relation to the administration of criminal justice in the Arab world.



lated to the administration of criminal justice in the Arab context in relation to human rights.

The publication is divided in two volumes is eight

This publication collects articles from thirty two different scholars, lawyers, members of the army and the civil society and analyzes the several issues re-

hundreds pages long and is written in Arabic. The publication was edited by Dr. Nizam Asaf, director of ACHRS.

Contact Details



Address: Al Abdali, Al Sharaf Building
4th Floor,
P.O. Box 212524,
Amman 11121,
Jordan

Tel/Fax: +962 6 46 55 043

Email: ir@achrs.org, achrs@achrs.org

Website: www.achrs.org

About ACHRS

Ammman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) is an independent, regional, scientific, advocacy center for studies, research and training on issues of human rights and democracy.

In pursuit of contributing to the **dissemination of a culture of human rights**, our work and activities aim at **strengthening civil society** in Jordan and in the Arab World, and at inducing a change to the general level of awareness and sensibility towards human rights and democracy.

The projects carried out by ACHRS mainly concentrate on training for democracy and human rights as they are closely related and highly complementary. Conducting studies and research to serve as an informational basis is a further means to achieve our aims.

Being an organisation, founded in 1999 and registered in Jordan, the work of ACHRS strongly depends on the knowledge and skills of its staff and

volunteers. Currently ACHRS has a personnel staff of 10 and counts 150 actively contributing volunteers.

The Center aims at helping in spreading and strengthening human rights culture in the Arab World. For this sake, the ACHRS is **committed to all the criteria which are contained in the provisions of international and regional conventions and declarations on human rights**, as issued by the United Nations or by regional, Arab, and Jordanian organizations.

The ACHRS seeks to achieve its goals through educational, intellectual, and cultural activities, particularly through **studies, research, and seminars**. These activities are either organized by ACHRS alone, or in collaboration with other international, Arab and Jordanian organizations, active in the field of human rights.

The ACHRS implements scientific and educational programs, such as theoretical and applied re-

search and studies; carries out programs on general awareness and education on human rights; organizes training courses; convenes conferences, seminars, workshops and study sessions; offers consultations, technical and scientific services, and information to students and researchers, interested in human rights issues. The Center also publishes bulletins, reports, and specialized periodicals on human rights. In addition, ACHRS trains target groups of men and women activists from governmental and non-governmental human rights organizations on the skills of dialogue, collective work, critical thinking, and effective communication.

In pursuit of its goals, the ACHRS cooperates with local, Arab, and international scientific institutions, whose activities are compatible with ACHRS activities.

The ACHRS refrains from carrying out any political or religious activities, nor is it involved in any Jordanian, Arab or international political association which might negatively affect the neutrality or scientific objectivity of its activities.

ACHRS and the other organizations

ACHRS is:

- In consultative status with UN ECOSOC
- Constituting member of the Federation of Human Rights Centers in the Arab World
- Member of the Arab Network for NGOs
- Member of the Arab Society for Academic Freedom
- Member of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- Member of the Election Network in the Arab World
- Member of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC)
- Member of the Arab Coalition for the International Criminal Court
- Member of the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA)
- Member of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)
- Member of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform
- Member of the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Forum