

Greetings from ACHRS

During the spring period, ACHRS engaged in several activities in different fields of action.

The Training of Trainers (ToT) on Gender Mainstreaming, implemented with the financial support of the Dutch Embassy in Amman, was concluded on June 23 2009, with a significant closing ceremony including the presence of the Dutch Ambassador Mrs. Van Vliet. It was an honor to welcome the Ambassador and we are grateful for the appreciable consideration she reserved for this event. The ToT was successful and exceeded our expectations: we received a lot of applications and therefore, decided to raise the number of participants. The Training of Trainers are high-impact initiatives and represent a pillar of ACHRS' activity so far. We would like to thank the Royal Netherlands Embassy Second Secretary Mrs. Bianca Zylfiu, who has been a great asset in the implementation of this initiative and of the previous ones; we wish her the best in her future position and we give her our dearest farewell.

At the international level, ACHRS has strengthened its commitment to the Universal Period Review process, by submitting – together with the Arab Women Union– a joint statement on the recent human rights developments in the country.

Actively campaigning for the abolition of the Death Penalty, ACHRS published the 2008 Annual Report on the Death Penalty in the Arab World (downloadable on www.achrs.org) and took part in the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty General Assembly in Rome on the 13th and 14th of June.

Thanks to our long experience with Iraqi civil society, our Director was invited to take part as facilitator in the international conference held in Velletri, Italy from March 25 - 30, in the frame of the "Iraqi Civil Society Initiative".

An international conference for journalists was held on 29th and 30th June, on the

theme "Preventing torture within the fight against terrorism", with the support of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRTC). The issue is particularly real and impacts strongly at the regional level. For this reason, we invited journalists from Palestine, Bahrain, Yemen, Lebanon and Syria to take part in this initiative. We would like to express our gratefulness to IRCT (in particular to Dorothea Schonfeld) and to Suzanne Jabbour from the Restart Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, based in Lebanon.

On our website, you can now find the downloadable copy in English of the Summary of the Report on "Freedom of the media in the Arab Countries 2008".

During these months we have had several meetings with international and local organizations, to discuss new projects and initiatives. In spite of the upcoming summer period, the next months will be intense and productive, in order to develop and concretely implement all our ideas.

We hope you will enjoy this ACHRS newsletter!

Thank you for reading us!

Iraqi Civil Society Initiatives: ACHRS Participates in International Conference held in Velletri, Italy

An international conference in the frame of the "Iraqi Civil Society Initiative" was held in Velletri, Italy from March 25-30, 2009. Doctor Nizam Assaf, Director of the ACHRS, had the pleasure of participating in the conference as a panel facilitator. Almost one hundred people took part in the conference, including trade unionists, activists for human and women's rights, members of youth and students unions, members of NGOs, representatives of minorities, women and men, citizens of Iraq and from the international community, including America, Europe and Asia. The aim of this conference was to discuss the challenges faced by Iraqi civil society in working to build a free and democratic Iraq, and to strengthen alliances and improve cooperation.

The participants first recognized that in Iraq there exists a vibrant Civil Society which is active and committed to the deep problems still affecting the country. Iraqi civil society deserves to have this place on the international stage as an important actor in improving the Iraqi situation and receiving concrete support from the international civil society.

The CSOs activity is affected by many factors: violence, political problems, political sectarianism of the society, and weakness of organizational experience. Freedom of association, gathering, establishing trade unions, and the media are still not guaranteed in Iraq.

During these days all major challenges for a sovereign and democratic Iraq were deeply discussed between international and Iraqi participants.

Out of the discussions the international participants gained a deeper knowledge of the Iraqi situation that will enable NGOs and activists of Europe, Asia and America to develop more effective solidarity actions to reinforce global support for the work of Iraqis. Another major outcome was the building of reciprocal knowledge and trust, and the establishment of contacts for future joint actions.

On this basis, the participants has proposed a list of joint actions to be developed in the future and will expand this network and built new alliances by inviting more Iraqi and international organization to participate to the process of the Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative.

Watching the House of Representatives: ACHRS published its 3rd report

The ACHRS recently published a review of the Second Ordinary Session of the 15th Jordanian House of Representatives, which took place from 5 November 2008 to 5 February 2009.

The report included the follow-up of the supervisory and legislative performance of the representatives during the Second ordinary Session from 5 November 2008 until 5 February 2009. The report also discussed the opening of the second ordinary session, the process of nomination for the post of speaker of the House of Representatives, the election of the members of its Permanent Bureau, and the election of the members of its committees and rapporteurs. The report reviewed the supervisory and legislative performance of the representatives during the meetings of the second ordinary session of parliament. The report of the financial and economic committee on the general budget of the state for the fiscal year 2009 was attached as an appendix to the third report. The report also tackled the sessions which discussed the general budget and the approval of the 2009 draft general budget in addition to the problem of the absence of quorum in some sessions of the House during the meetings of its second session. The report included a number of resolutions and recommendations aimed at boosting the transparency of the work of the House of Representatives which would positively affect the work and effectiveness of the House and strengthen and guarantee the rights of the voters to become acquainted with the performance of the deputy which they have elected on the supervisory and legislative levels.

You can see the full report at the following link <http://jordandays.com/ArticleDetails.aspx?Aid=383>.

Staff changes

The ACHRS witnessed the departure of Ameerah Phillips, our commuting intern and we wish her the best in her future. It is a pleasure for us to welcome Clint Hougen, an American student, who will contribute to the research carried out by the Centre. We hope he will have a good and fruitful time at ACHRS.

ACHRS' activities on the Death Penalty

In April, ACHRS released its 3rd annual report on the Death Penalty in the Arab world. ACHRS opposes and actively campaigns against the death penalty in all cases and wherever it is used. It considers the death penalty a violation of the right to life and the ultimate form of inhuman, cruel and degrading punishment. This report demonstrates again our commitment to this field.

The report provides a brief overview on the death penalty in 2008, general information about capital punishment in the Arab world and detailed information about the 21 Arab countries. You can find the full report on www.achrs.org.

In June, ACHRS and the Jordanian Alliance Against Capital Punishment held a session of dialogue to oppose capital punishment. Several members of the Alliance, including academics, party officials, intellectuals, media workers and human rights activists participated in the dialogue. The participants discussed the recent proposal to reduce the scope of the Death Penalty in Jordan.

The House of Representatives will consider amending the legal articles contained in Penal Code Number 16 of 1960 and revoke the death penalty from its provisions, particularly Article 120 which states that whoever recruits people in Jordan, without the approval of the government, to work for a foreign country can be punished by temporary arrest, and if the foreign country is an enemy country, can be punished by death.

The death penalty would also be revoked from Article 142 which imposes capital punishment or life imprisonment with hard labor for those who commit assaults aimed at sparking civil war or sectarian fighting, those who arm Jordanian citizens or cause them to be armed in order to fight one against another, and those who instigate them to kill one another and loot commercial stores.

The death penalty would also be revoked from Article 372 which states that if an act of arson results in the death of any person, the death penalty shall be applied against the arsonist in the cases stipulated in Articles 368 and 369, and life imprisonment at hard labor in the cases stipulated in Articles 370 and 371.



The participants in the seminar commended the government trend of continuing to minimize the stipulations relevant to the death penalty in Jordanian legislation and asserted the need for the continuation of these efforts in order to reach the point of having Jordanian laws totally free of the death penalty.

The Arab Coalition Against the Death Penalty, created in 2007 with the Executive Secretariat at ACHRS, participated in the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty General Assembly in Rome on the 13th and 14th of June.

This was an occasion to further discuss many issues among the members of the coalition.

The General Assembly unanimously approved

the Financial and the Activity Reports for 2008. Full agreement was also reached on the Orientation Report, which sets the next actions to be undertaken by the World Coalition. The upcoming initiatives will focus on three major campaigns:

- "Teaching abolition", addressed to 14 -18 years old students and students in law school with a strong link to the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits juvenile executions.
- Towards the universal ratification of the Optional Second Protocol to the ICCPR, that is currently the only international legal instrument to prohibit the death penalty.
- Towards the Universal Moratorium on Executions, supporting the UN General Assembly Resolution voted on December 2007 and on December 2008.

The General Assembly also discussed the 4th World Congress Against the Death Penalty, that will be held in Geneva from the 24th-26th of February 2010. Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort drafted a provisional program that includes plenary sessions, practical workshops for activists, meetings with victims, and several other events.

The Arab Coalition Against the Death Penalty was elected, along with 20 other organizations, to be part of the Steering Committee of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

The first day of Assembly ended with a meeting at the presence of the press and the media with Joaquin Jose, a former prisoner on death row in the state of Florida.

On the 14th of June the Steering Committee meeting took place; on this occasion the members tackled more specific issues regarding membership, fundraising and the state of the campaigns.

These international assemblies are always a fruitful and inspiring opportunity to enhance the organizations' commitment, to share ideas with partners and to jointly set the course of activities.



Human Rights Training Session at the Ministry of Political Development

ACHRS and the Ministry of Political Development concluded a two-day training session (1st and 2nd June) on human rights in which 16 participants from the various sections of the Ministry took part.

At the inauguration of the training session, Minister of Political Development Musa Al-Ma'aytah asserted the need for promoting and deepening the concepts and principles of human rights because of the important role they play in strengthening democratic practices in our government. Promoting a culture of human rights, he said, also contributes to our social and cultural development.

He explained that the Ministry of Political Development has been following a policy of openness toward civil society organizations and that it is seeking collaboration with these organizations to build productive relationships between the government and NGOS to build momentum for political development, the sovereignty of law, the advancement of a democratic culture, and active citizen participation in drawing up policies and implementing these policies in our country.

In the first training session, ACHRS Director Dr Nizam Assaf reviewed the historic development of human rights and human rights policies. His lecture described the classification of universal rights, which are divided by their nature into basic rights and other rights (classic and social).

Dr Muhammad Al-Tarawneh led the second training session, which considered the role of the electoral system in the protection of human rights. He asserted that an independent judicial system is a prerequisite for safeguarding individual rights. Moreover, he argued that the judicial branch of government should play an effective role in controlling the functions of the executive branch of government. He pointed out that popular and non-governmental organizations and all the local organizations involved in the work of human rights should be given proper backing and support by the government to carry out their work of protecting individuals from rights violations, guaranteeing that their rights are upheld.

Addressing the third training session, attorney Zaha' Al-Majali discussed the role of national institutions and civil society organizations in bolstering human rights according to the laws in force and laws that will be issued, based on international rights standards, in the future. He noted that states should be encouraged to accede to the international conventions on human rights, to draft reports on the national level, and to look into the complaints of citizens against human rights violations and consistently follow up on actions in each of these areas.

Addressing the second day of the training session, Dr Nizam Assaf again spoke about elections and human rights. He pointed out that this relationship is based on the principle which says that the people are the source of power and that citizens are entitled to run the affairs of their own society and state in an open and democratic way. He also explained the international criteria for free and fair elections.

Addressing the second session also, journalist Yahya Shuqayr spoke about freedom of opinion and political expression in international and regional conventions. He pointed out the need for legislation which guarantees the freedoms of opinion and expression which are guaranteed in the constitution.

He asserted that the constitution is the cornerstone of the public liberties in a country and an indicator of the level of these liberties.

In the last training session, journalist Manhal Al-Sidah spoke about the existing international mechanisms for the protection of human rights, which included binding and non-binding measures (Measure Number 1503 of 1970 on the infringement on human rights and public liberties, which means that the individual has the right to file a lawsuit against his state, and Measure number 1935 of 1997 on the appointment of a rapporteur who can request information and counsel on the violations and can make field visits).

Since its establishment 10 years ago, the ACHRS has held more than 300 training sessions on human rights in which well over 7,000 participants from Jordan and throughout the rest of the Arab world took part.

Training of Trainers on Gender Mainstreaming

A Training of Trainers on gender mainstreaming was organized by ACHRS with the support of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Amman. It was composed of 2 sessions, for a total of 15 days of trainings. 28 male and female participants from various civil society organizations took part in the session.

The first session (held in May 2009) included informative sessions on the following topics: basic concepts and idioms related to gender, the difference between sex and gender, a historic background on the concept of gender and gender roles, and social consequences related to the degree of awareness of gender.

To address these topics, participants examined national statistics on men and women's incomes, the degree of sensitivity of our establishments to gender, and the methods and strategies for gender mainstreaming in these organizations.

It further included a model for testing of the 'culture' of an organization, a roadmap for integrating gender in an organization, a review of the effect of the impact gender differences, the mainstreaming of gender in development work, and model projects from the International Labor Organization [ILO]. Contributing to the discussion sessions were statistical indicators of gender, the mainstreaming of gender in the media and female participation in decision-making roles especially in political life. Participants examined whether gender has an effect on a person's ability to lead or the way they are treated if they have a physical or mental disability.

The second session (held from the 18th to the 22nd of June 2009) focused on practical aspects, with the aim to emphasize the communication skills and the competences necessary to be an effective trainer. In one of the activities proposed, the participants were asked to put in practice what they had



learned by leading training courses at the field level. So, ACHRS organized five training courses for them on gender topics, in which the same trainee could be trainers for other women and men participating in the courses. The training courses took place in: Amman (2 days, 23 participants)

Irbid (1 day, 25 participants)

Al-Mafraq (1 day, 25 participants)

Al-Rusaifeh (1 day, 25 participants)

Madaba (1 day, 20 participants).

The trainees were evaluated from different perspectives and they received an official certificate at the end of the program. The

closing ceremony was held on the 23rd of June with the presence of the Dutch Ambassador Mrs. Van Vliet. ACHRS would like to thank again the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Amman for the support provided.

Workshop "Preventing Torture within the Fight Against Terrorism" organized by ACHRS

ACHRS organized a two-day training workshop entitled "Preventing Torture Within the Fight Against Terrorism", held in Amman on 29th-30th June 2009. The workshop was realized with the support of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT). The workshop's main objective was to enhance the capacity of the media to report incidents of torture and to document related judicial processes.

Twenty-six journalists and media workers took part in this initiative; the majority of them from Jordan, but also journalists from Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, and Bahrain.

The whole region is deeply concerned by terrorism and terrorist attacks which have occurred recently. Governments have used the pretext of collaboration in the "War on Terror" to restrict freedom of expression and association. Freedom of speech and of the press are limited, particularly by detaining and charging activists critical of government policies and by intimidating journalists and broadcasters into practicing self-censorship. Torture and ill-treatment in detention continues to be reported and carried out with impunity and the authorities have yet to take proper actions to investigate torture allegations.

The ACHRS strongly believes that the right of freedom of information is an important human right, necessary for the enjoyment of other human rights. The right to information can only be effectively exercised and implemented on the basis of laws, regulating this right in accordance with international standards.

Journalists and media workers play a vital role in promoting and enhancing public awareness on human rights as they are considered information multipliers. Therefore, their ability to provide informed and strategic coverage of potential and existing instances of torture is invaluable.

Several speakers addressed different aspects of

the topic.

Dr. Nizam Assaf provided an overview on torture in the context of the "War on Terror", with specific reference to the MENA Region and to legislative provisions.

Suzanne Jabbour, psychologist at the Restart Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, presented the changing nature of torture in recent years and the international legal framework on torture. Due to her long experience in this field, she also addressed the activities undertaken by international organizations and institutions working against torture and the specific aspects of interviewing and reporting on rehabilitation and torture victims.

The interventions lead by Khulod Nejme, human rights activist, focused on the role of human rights NGOs in monitoring on torture and their impact on the public opinion and on journalistic information resources to cover torture.

Majed Saleh, human rights monitoring expert, lead the session "Reporting on torture", focusing on tools, methods and security precautions. He also chaired the session on the analysis of different articles and reports on torture cases and best practices in covering torture.

We would like to thank all the participants and all the trainers for this inspiring and successful workshop.



Arab Network of Human Rights Trainers' Board of Directors Concludes Work in Amman

The participants in the second meeting of the Board of Directors of the Arab Network of Human Rights Trainers were recently hosted by the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies for two days in Amman. The Board of Directors discussed the realities governing the training process pertaining to human rights issues in the Arab World and approved the strategic plan of the network.

The plan focuses on the need to raise the standards of trainers and to upgrade their abilities in the fields of their specialization, primarily done through the exchange of know-how and expertise, improved coordination and deepening of cooperation among members, and sharing best practices regarding financial experiences and expertise in this field.

The participants in the meeting also approved the Articles of Association of the Network. The meeting was concluded with the election of an executive bureau for the network of five members as follows: Dr Nizam Assaf (Jordan) as chairman, Majdi Hilmi (Egypt) as vice chairman for internal affairs, Ghulshan Saghlani (Lebanon) as vice chairman for external affairs, Moukar Jannu (Iraq) as secretary, and Nizar Basalat (Palestine) as treasurer. Preparations for the establishment of the Network were launched at the initiative of ACHRS in 2006. The membership of the Network now totals 220 trainers on human rights from 14 Arab countries. The inaugural conference of the Network was held in Amman, Jordan on December 2008.

Workshop on Light and Small Firearms

During the Global Week of Action against Gun Violence, a seminar was organized by ACHRS with the participation of the Public Security Department and the Radio and Television Corporation of Jordan.

In his presentation, attorney-at-law Al-Majali explained the significance of this question and its sensitivity for the communities at large and the Jordanian community in particular and the impact of this question on slowing down the desired development. He also pointed out the impact of uncontrollable weapons on destabilizing society whether in the countries that are undergoing conflict or the countries that are stable. He also explained the danger posed by these weapons to society from a criminal standpoint.

On the local level, Al-Majali pointed out the imbalance in the Jordanian laws and the need to renew the Jordanian laws to become compatible with the requirements of the desired development and the dangers posed to Jordan, which is located in the midst of areas of tension and conflict, thereby making Jordan a center for trafficking with illegal weapons. This in fact, enhances the opportunity of stockpiling some of these weapons in Jordan.

Attorney Al-Majali pointed out the misuse of weapons in ceremonies, whether in weddings or other occasions of joy and the negative impact of this use on the Jordanian society.

This was followed by a presentation by the Director of the News Department at the Jordanian Radio and Television Corporation, George Tarif, who presented a working paper on the role of the media in curbing the phenomenon of the misuse of small weapons. He explained the important role of the media in guidance and in spreading awareness of the dangers of this phenomenon and media importance in helping our society get rid of it. He said that this message is being conveyed through daily and weekly programs such as the "New Day" program and the "It Is Happening Today" program. This message is coordinated with the Public Security Department and the programs it is carrying out by its media personnel of the public relations section of the department. The message is also conveyed by the "Direct Transmission" program, the "Open Meeting" program, "Good Evening" program and other radio programs and daily and weekly newspapers and electronic sites and private radio and television stations. Transmission of the message is also coordinated with the Public Security Department through advertisements or drama that promote awareness and guidance of citizens concerning the phenomenon of the misuse of the light and medium weapons, highlighting their dangers, and the importance of coping with these dangers.

He added that despite all the efforts that were made, the misuse of small and light weapons is still being repeated, particularly on joyful ceremonies, despite all the instructions that were issued by the Interior Ministry barring shooting from firearms and despite all the instructions requesting local governors to take legal and administrative measures against those who use firearms in such ceremonies. He called on citizens to express their joy in a cultured method without the use of weapons so as to protect the lives of innocent citizens.

On his part, Major Ra'id Al-Assaf of the Criminal Investigation Section of the Public Security Department quoted figures which showed the crimes that are committed by the users of small weapons. He pointed out that there was an increase in the number of weapons used as firearms or fireworks. In 2006, there were 1,118 pieces of these weapons, which rose in 2007 to 1,805 pieces and in 2009 to 2,109.

He said that the use of light weapons has been causing increasing casualties despite the campaigns of awareness and instructions issued by official government services. In 2006, there were 319 casualties, in 2007, there were 493 casualties, and in 2008, there were 626 casualties.

He said that the possession of small and light weapons is closely related to the environment, customs and traditions of our society. He added that shooting from firearms in celebrations is one of the most dangerous phenomenon resulting from the ownership of these weapons and that this phe-

nomenon is increasing in the densely populated areas such as the large cities, thereby increasing the chances of casualties and deaths and the squandering of huge amounts of money on the useless use of these firearms.

On his part, Rapporteur of the Legal Committee at the House of Representatives, Deputy Ayman Shuwayyat, made an intervention which was very useful in indicating the legislative and supervisory roles of the House of Representatives. He also explained the legal and constitutional methods for the amendment of the laws in Jordan. Deputy Shuwayyat voiced his support for imposing stricter penalties on those who use firearms at random, asserting the need to tighten control on the illegal weapons.

Meanwhile, in remarks to the seminar, the representative of the Interior Ministry, Mahmud Al-Zurayqat, explained the procedures for licensing weapons and the conditions which any person should meet to obtain a weapons license. He said that it is not easy to obtain the permission of the security services to own weapons, noting that the Ministry of Interior was eager to apply the law.

In conclusion, the participants asserted the need for paying attention to this dangerous phenomenon posed to society by upgrading local legislation, increasing government and popular cooperation, introducing comprehensive programs on the short-run to combat this phenomenon, and encouraging countries to reach an exclusive agreement on the regulation of all aspects of firearms.

Comments of the Jordanian Network of Civil Society Organizations on the Society Law

The Jordanian Network of Civil Society Organizations, which includes 20 member organizations, recently met to discuss the Jordanian Societies Law No. 51 of 2008. The Network sees infringements on human rights and public liberties in the law, specifically in the stipulations contained in Paragraph (A) of Article Three. Such accountability stipulations make civil society organizations (CSOs) vulnerable to severe penalties provided for in the law, all the more concerning because CSO activities are a main and essential part of political life and climate and the living law regulating it.

The participants at the meeting **proposed the deletion** of the expression "or the achievement of any political goals" at the end of Paragraph (A) of Article Three and of Paragraph (B) of Article Four of the law, which states that the "controller of the registry shall be appointed by a cabinet decision at the recommendation of the Minister and shall be attached to him."

Since the controller of the registry is invested with vast powers under the law, the conferees suggested the deletion of Paragraph (B) and replacing it with the following: "the controller of the registry shall be appointed by a cabinet decision at the recommendation of the Minister and in coordination and consultation with the civil society organizations and shall be attached to him."

Article Five involves the job description of the duties of the controller of the registry. We notice that Paragraph Three of the same Article stipulates that his duties and the powers vested in him are specified according to the provisions of this law and the regulations and instructions issued accordingly. The conferees proposed the deletion of the expression "the regulations and instructions" from this law, and that there should be clear legal provisions of the components of the articles of the law.

Paragraph (A) of Article Six fixed the number of the founding persons at 13 persons for the purposes of the registration of the society. We are not aware of the reasons which prompted the legislator to fix this number, because it is possible for three or more or less persons to form a society, because there are societies which do not require many founding members or special and specific qualifications, particularly that a few number of persons can discharge the duties of these societies. In this connection, the conferees proposed the deletion of the expression "provided that their number are no less than 11 persons."

Paragraph (A) of Article Seven, concerning the founding member, states that the founding member should be a Jordanian national. Paragraph Four of the same article states that he should have a good attitude. As far as the requirement that he should be a Jordanian national, this requirement is in conflict with the internationalism of voluntary work. Moreover, as regards Paragraph (D) stipulating that he should have a good attitude, the paragraph requests the founding applicant to secure the approval of the security services, particularly the General Intelligence Service. Therefore, the conferees proposed the amendment of Paragraph (A) of Article Seven to read: "he should be a **legal resident** of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan" and that the expression of "should have a good attitude" should be deleted from Paragraph (D) of this article.

In Article Eight, one can see a clear intervention by the executive branch of government in the establishment of the CSOs, in the affairs of their members and in their financial resources. Accordingly, members of the conference proposed the deletion of all of Article Eight of the law or replacing it with a clear stipulation for the founders of CSOs.

Article 13 clearly restricts the opening of branches for the society in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and makes the opening of these branches conditional to cabinet approval. This is also a restriction on the right of society to exercise its duties and to achieve its goals within the borders of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It is also a restriction on the expansion of the geographic area of its activities. Therefore, the conferees decided to delete the expression of "with the approval of the competent ministry" from Paragraph (A) of Article 13 and also to delete the expression of "two thirds of its members."

Article 26 provides for the creation of a special court, but without spelling out the nature, method of formation and convening, and the activities of this court. The court is given the power to impose penalties, such as imprisonment and fines on the personnel of these societies. These penalties should in fact, be imposed under the umbrella of the judicial branch of government represented in the regular courts if it is confirmed that these actions or others constitute a legal crime warranting punishment. The conferees proposed in this regard the deletion of the article and empowering the regular courts to impose penalties and to penalize the excesses that violate the law.

The conferees also discussed Articles 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 and other articles and drew up proposals for the amendment of these articles that included ideas and contents that can contribute to the consolidation of political life and democracy in Jordan.

At the end of the meeting, the conferees wrote down general remarks related to the legal aspects of the law. These included the following statement:

"The law as a whole is incompatible with the international criteria and the Jordanian constitution which have guaranteed the freedom of the formation of societies. Moreover, the law as a whole allows the intervention of the executive branch of government in the work of societies and places restrictions on their independence and obstructs their work and role in the service of civil society. Moreover, some stipulations of this law contradict the principles of human rights and public liberties. Moreover, some articles of this law make the civil society organizations, particularly those operating in the field of human rights, lose their dynamism, flexibility and turns them into stereotypes and bureaucratic institutions, and consequently, obstruct and impede their activity."

Participating from the Jordanian Network of the Civil Society Organizations were:

- Amman Center for Human rights studies
- Arab Organization for Human rights in Jordan
- Jordanian Jurists Association
- Jordanian Child rights organization (Haqq)
- Jordanian Society for Human Rights, Arab Women Organization
- National Forum of Youth and Culture
- Amnesty International Group/ Jordan
- Arab Women Media Center, Association of Working Women – Al-Rusaefa
- Cultural Society for Youth and Childhood
- Madaba Establishment for Reinforcing Development
- Al-Badeel Center for Studies and Training
- Society of Housewives
- Pheniq for Economic and informatics Studies
- Jordanian Establishment for Democratic Culture
- Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development
- South Center for Strategic Studies
- Youth Spirit Center
- Almahaba Association / Madaba.

It should be recalled that the remarks made by the participants were referred to the Speaker of the House of Parliament and to the Speaker of the House of Notables and the members of the legal committees in the two houses.

Press Release and Recommendations

The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies would like to remind the Jordanian government that it should respect the recommendations made by civil society organizations submitted on the periphery of the meeting held for the comprehensive review of human rights in Jordan. The ACHRS would also like to call on the government not to acquiesce to pressures to take back its decision regarding the withdrawal of reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women [CESAW], and to remain signatories to the Convention.

The ACHRS would like to announce that together with a group of Jordanian civil society organizations, they have submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Commission on the eve of the UNHRC (United Nations Human Rights Council) discussion on Jordan's UPR process. The review will consider the universal review process which the ACHRS took part in at the UNHRC three months ago, in February 2009. The report on human rights standards in Jordan submitted for the UPR pointed out that the human rights situation is retreating insofar as public liberties, such as the freedom to gather, the freedom to form societies and associations, the freedom to monitor elections, and the general freedoms of participation in public life. Moreover, infringement on the rights of juvenile delinquents continues while the rights of detained persons continued to be violated. To date, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has also continued to display reservations on some provisions of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women [CEDAW].

At the same time, the report noted that some progress was made in Jordan in the field of human rights in 2007 and 2008, particularly on matters pertaining to women's rights in that the Parliament has finally endorsed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The convention was published in the Official Gazette with three reservations on it. A new law on family violence was also approved. Nonetheless, perpetrators of murder within the family, called crimes of honor, which are committed against women and girls, are not subject to trial as common criminals, but they benefit from an excuse that entails a lighter sentence passed against them.

We can sense from the media that there are some positive trends made by the Jordanian government, such as lifting its reservations earlier placed on one of the paragraphs of Article 15 of the Convention while keeping the reservations on others. The new government proposal for the amended Penal Code excluded some conditions in which the death penalty was applied. Nonetheless, the constructive trends, particularly those pertaining to the lifting of the reservations, were met with a fierce attack by societal forces that refused to accept women's rights and have gone as far as demanding the government to pull out of the CEDAW Convention.

We want to express our extreme concern over such demands made by societal forces which should have called for the respect of all human rights conventions. We want to request the government to go ahead in respecting the international conventions on human rights and in removing all the reservations placed on these conventions. We also want to call on the government to accede to the additional protocols appended to these conventions. Moreover, we want to remind the government with the following recommendations that were contained in the report submitted by the Jordanian civil society organizations to the Committee for the Comprehensive Review of the report of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan:

- Full endorsement of the CEDAW Convention, withdrawal of the reservations displayed on three articles in the convention, and signing the additional protocol of the CEDAW Convention.
- Supporting the National Committee for Women's Affairs in its capacity as the supervising body and the instrument entrusted with the enforcement of the CEDAW Convention.
- Raising the age of criminal liability to 12 years old and keeping the children within their own communities. If they are arrested, they should keep their contacts with their families.
- Creation of a specialized judiciary, security services and special prosecution for the issues of the adolescents and taking the necessary measures to expeditiously make decisions on adolescents' issues.
- Devising non-arrest measures, creating an expanded system to serve as an alternative for prison penalties, and allowing adolescents to enjoy their rights to education, work, training, communicating with the outside world, and integrating with society.
- The amended Electoral Law of 2003 should be amended again in a way that guarantees its compatibility with the international criteria pertaining to elections, particularly the formation of an independent election committee and the review of the distribution of seats to the electoral constituencies in the manner that can guarantee fairness in the distribution

of seats commensurate with the population.

- The transparency of elections should be strengthened by allowing the local observation teams to watch the elections and to make their remarks concerning all the phases of the electoral process in view of the fact that reports on watching the elections can strengthen confidence in the results of the elections.
- Efforts should be made to strengthen women's bids to access parliament by increasing the women's quota to 30 per cent of the members of parliament, provided that this rate should be based on proportionate representation and that the shares of minorities should be allocated by the electoral constituencies.
- Amending the laws of societies and congregations to be consistent with international criteria on the right to peaceful organization and congregation.
- Submitting the government's periodic reports to the contractual committees of the various international conventions endorsed by Jordan, particularly the convention against torture.

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

ACHRS AT A GLANCE

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 change to the general level of awareness and sensibility towards issues of 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.

A young organization, founded and registered in Jordan in 1999, 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.

Though keeping in mind that human rights and democracy are relevant to all segments of society, our activities mainly target women and youth. The activities are carried out either solely by ACHRS or in cooperation with other local, Arab and international NGOs and organizations of civil society.

ACHRS is ...

- In consultative Status with ECOSOC
- Constituting member of the Federation of Human Rights Centres in the Arab World
- Member of the Arab Network for NGOs
- Member of the Arab Social Forum
- Correspondent member of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- Member of CIVICUS
- 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

Activities

Since its foundation in 1999, ACHRS has organized and carried out:

- more than 500 courses on various Human Rights topics with more than 13,000 participants from 18 different countries, 65% of which were women and 70% under the age of 30.
- more than 120 conferences, seminars, discussion groups and lectures about different human rights cases with more than 1,200 thinkers, researchers, experts, and activists in human rights and civil society from other Arab and foreign countries.
- published twenty books on human rights and civil society cases, in addition to a myriad of articles and periodical reports.