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Greetings from ACHRS

The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies had a very busy quarter, involving a wide range of activities.
In October ACHRS met a group of six representatives of different NGOs and international organizations and during this meeting the center had the opportunity to present itself, its activities and principles: right to thought, to speech and to participation.
Several workshops have been carried out in different fields: one educational workshop for the fifth BAQA females' junior high school, the NEAR workshop on Academic Freedom in Arab Universities, the workshop in preparation of the second conference of the Arab network for human rights trainers, which will be carried out in 2011, two workshops with the Arab Coalition Against the Death Penalty.
The meetings of the Arab Coalition Against Death Penalty sought to find solutions for eliminating laws and articles that allow the death penalty from the legislation of Arab countries. It has been discussed also the Action Plan for the next two years and the President of the Executive Committee, Dr. Mohammed al Tarawneh, has been elected.
During the celebrations of the international community for ending violence against women, ACHRS organized a three days training workshop in Ain Al-Basha female school, in cooperation with women's rights researcher Lena Jamil Jazrawi, who held the training.
In occasion of the November parliamentary elections, 21 observers from ten Arab countries of the Arab World Election Network participated in observing the elections.
A ceremony with representatives of the Parliament, public sector, judiciary, political parties, trade unions, professional unions, civil society organizations, journalists, along with representatives of embassies and international organizations have been organized in occasion of the 62nd anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.
Furthermore, the Jordanian Institute for Women Leaders (JIWL) project continues its activities with workshops held in collaboration with Finn Church Aid. Journalists, NGO workers, public officials and lawyers took part in these activities, all of whom helped ensure the success of our projects.
Enjoy reading our newsletter and thanks for your interest in ACHRS activities!
ACHRS meets a group of 6 representatives from different NGOs/organizations

On the 7th October, 2010 ACHRS met a group of 6 representatives from different NGOs/organizations (UNDP-Castan Center for Human Right Law and others).

In the meeting we had the occasion to present ACHRS, its activities and its principles: right to speech, to participation and to thought.

In relation to this, we spoke about the next activities of the Center, our ideas to organize a meeting between donors and NGOs, to discuss about positive and negative points, impacts and projects’ implementation in the Region and we spoke also about the elections in Jordan.

Mrs. Mitra Motlagh (UNDP) and the other participants to the meeting asked information about the collaboration between ACHRS and the National Center for Human Rights (suggestions/changes/problems).

Since one year ACHRS is working with the National Center for Human Rights, even though the collaboration is not continuous.

Dr. Nizam Assaf underlined the utility of a National Center as a good idea also for a collaboration with other NGOs and donors.

ACHRS also hopes that in the future the collaboration with the National Center will be more intense and useful.

The meetings have been concluded with two suggestions that come from Dr. Nizam Assaf:

- ACHRS should continue the work which began with the National Center for Human Rights but requires greater organization, increased circulation of information and greater collaboration with the other NGOs and donors.
- ACHRS hopes in a real and positive collaboration with the National Center for the next elections in Jordan.
On 5 and 6 November, 2010, a conference related to the project on Academic Freedom in Arab Universities, aimed at identifying new challenges and seeking to promote academic freedom in Arab Universities, has been held at Princess Sumaya University of Technology in Amman.

Prof. Dr. Issa Batarneh opened the works of the two days conference. He pointed out that Universities are facing a lot of challenges in this period, and this fact is more evident in Arab countries, since the Universities have little chance to compete at a regional and international level. It is imperative to work hard to re-examine policies, procedures and objectives, and this is why this conference is so important.

The key point is in fact the support of the academics in educating the young generation freely, without risking incidents and harassment. Academic freedom is not important just for Professors, but for civil society as well.
Dr. Nizam Assaf, Director of the Amman Centre of Human Rights Studies (ACHRS), which organized the conference, stressed that the challenges to be faced in the Arab academic world are a lot. The most important ones are financial, as it is extremely important to seek further funds and direct fundraising also to private sector, thus differentiating the financial sources, and developmental, since the research is the basis for promoting freedom in Universities.

Prof. John Akkar, Director of NEAR, the 10 years old network created by UNESCO to provide a world focus on academic freedom and to provide academics with its knowledge and expertise, coordinated all the meeting.

During the conference several topics have been discussed. The 2010 report made by ACHRS have been illustrated and distributed to the participants and the Action Plan for the following years has been enriched with important concrete suggestions.

The priorities agreed are: the website, for gathering further information on violations of academic freedom in Arab Universities; the 2010 report, which will be updated with a two-pages report from all the countries participating in the project; the research on academic freedom. In the next months two committees will also be formed, to develop the terms of reference and a concept paper on academic freedom in Arab Universities.

A lot of work has been done and a lot remains to be done. The enthusiasm and the commitment of the participants, all academics from different Arab countries, make us more than optimistic about the results to be achieved in the next steps of the project.

For more information:

http://www.nearinternational.org/

http://scholarsatrisk.nyu.edu/
ACHRS organized educational workshop tour for the fifth BAQA females’ junior high school

ACHRS organized educational workshop for the fifth BAQA females’ junior high school on Monday, November 1, 2010. Students were the audience and the guests of workshop in education in human rights issues. Center director Dr. Nizam Assaf reviews the principles and concepts of human rights, its origins, evolution, and talk about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the requirements formulated and shape of the value of human rights and ethical for the international community.

During the session many topics been cleared and we talked about the rights mentioned in each Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Questions had been answered from the Director of the Center about activation of the international agreements of the human rights and materials contained therein in the Arab and the local Jordanian society.

In the end of the workshop the Center thanks the approximately fifty students who participated in the workshop and shown high motivation and interest in human rights.

The workshop came in the context of the Center activities, aiming at contributing to the promotion of human rights and at developing awareness thus serving the human rights culture.
The Arab Coalition against the Death Penalty

The Arab Coalition against the Death Penalty includes all the national coalitions against the death penalty in the Arab world. A meeting of the coalition has been held on 11th November 2010 in Amman, at the headquarters of the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies, which promoted the initiative. The purpose of the meeting was to seek to find solutions for eliminating laws and articles (in some countries more than 300) that allow the death penalty from the legislation of Arab countries.

During the meeting have been discussed some important issues:
- The mechanisms of coordination among national coalitions against death penalty
- The procedure for developing further activities
- The Action Plan for the next two years
- The election of the President of the Executive Committee, Dr. Mohammed al Tarawneh

The signatory coalition participants were:
- Attorney Ayman Sabeer Taha Mostafa Okeil, Coordinator of the Egyptian Coalition against the Death Penalty
- Attorney Radeef Anwar Mustafa, Coordinator of the Syrian Coalition against the Death Penalty
- Attorney Musa Jamil Hussein Abudheim, Coordinator of the Palestinian Coalition against the Death Penalty
- Dr. Nasser Abbod, Coordinator of the Iraqi Coalition against the Death Penalty
- Attorney Isa al Gayeb Bahrein, Coordinator of the Bahrein Society for Human Rights
- Attorney Samih Daoud Abdelfou Sinoqrout, Coordinator of the Jordanian Coalition against the Death Penalty
- Mr. Mahmoud El Hacene, Coordinator of the Mauritanian Coalition against the Death Penalty
- Attorney Ali al-Dailami, Coordinator of the Yemeni Coalition against the Death Penalty
Preparation for the second conference of the Arab network for human rights trainers

The Arab network of human rights trainers decided to organize the second conference during next year (2011). The decision have been taken during the third meeting of the board of trustees of the network. The participants in the meeting also discussed the effectiveness of the strategic plan for the network.

The meetings reviewed the decisions, recommendations and activities of the network between the second and third meeting. More attention was brought to the establishment of the observatory for the human rights trainers by initiative from the ACHRS which contains data of 177 trainers in the human rights field from 14 Arab countries.

Furthermore, the meeting distributed the tasks and responsibilities that the members’ of the board has to accomplish through the next three months in many aspects like: special training, documentations, membership, and seeking fund. Lawyer Manhel AL Seada was elected to be the executive director of the network.

The network has been established 2008 by ACHRS initiative where also it hosts its location too. The network has more than 100 trainers as members in the human rights field from several Arab countries like: Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain Yemen Kuwait, Sudan, Morocco and Algeria.
On 11, 12, 13 December, 2010, a training workshop on human rights has been carried out in Zarqa, at the fourth preparatory male school. 13 trainers participated and facilitated the workshops. The target groups have been teachers and school administrative staff.

Furthermore, a five days workshop from December 12 to December 16, focused on training of trainers, human rights and gender issues have targeted 24 male and female medicine doctors and Ministry of Health specialists.

The main topics discussed in the workshops have been: human rights basic principles and concepts (universality, equality and end to discrimination); international conventions on human rights with a special focus on the international convention on economic, social and cultural rights and the international convention against torture; CEDAW; health care rights; violations in the field of health care (violation from the society against the doctors, and vice versa); gender issues (right to work and gender balance at work, health care, reproductive health) and how to include human rights principles, values and rights inside the curricula of the schools.
ACHRS organized specialized workshop under the term of
(no to violence against women)

During the celebrations of the international community for ending the vio- 
lence against Women, ACHRS organized a training workshop for three 
days in Ain Al-Basha females school. Women rights researcher Lena Jamil 
Jazrawi, the coordinator of the Women's Unit in the Centre, conducted the 
training.

On the first day the lecturer expanded explanation on violence against 
women, its causes, forms and its effects on women, family and society. 
The second day included an extensive explanation of violence against 
children, the students and some mothers were actively participated in the 
issue, where they expressed their refusal to violent behaviour against the 
women. The workshop also addressed a statement to clarify the negative 
effects on family members, especially children who are abused and be-
come more likely to enter the world of crime and delinquency.
The speaker made it clear that, we did not get in Jordan to stage of wide spreading the phenomenon, but as we are part of the international community it is our responsibility to shed light and attention to the problem and as a worker in the field of human rights to change some customs and traditions that encourage violence in our society.

The workshop aimed also to clarify the types of violence prevalent to the Jordanian community, which has implications in the long run, such as psychological and economic violence and health, where we still suffer what is called the (culture of silence), associated with the privacy of the eastern culture, which holds women brunt of any defect affecting their family, and prevents them from going to the centers of reform and family protection centers for assistance.

Jazrawi emphasized on the importance of women empowerment; by encouraging the women completing their education and entry into the labor market and how that would contribute to their economic independence in reducing their vulnerability to violence, to become true partners in decision-making.

The workshop ended on the third day, where students presented written solutions under the name of (no to violence against women) and included claims to amend laws and regulations which discriminate against women, such as Law 340 of the Jordanian Penal Code. Furthermore, the workshop emphasized the need for active media to real role as the fourth power in the country and to contribute to the prevention of establishing the stereotyped image of Arab women, the image of women as vulnerable fearful and silent.
The Egyptian press has recently published a news report that a regional conference on the capital punishment in the Middle East and North Africa was held in Alexandria in the period of 20-21 September 2010 and that the conference was organized by the Swedish Institute in Alexandria.

We pay tribute to the efforts made by the Swedish Institute in Alexandria which took the initiative to hold such a conference on the death penalty and to emphasize the need that it should be curbed. It is noteworthy that the Swedish Institute has also held a workshop from 12-14 May 2008 in which we participated as an Arab Coalitions against the Death Penalty.

Nonetheless, we would like to express our extreme regrets for the overlooking by the Swedish Institute and its lack of interest in the continuous and systematic action and efforts which the Arab alliance made with existing Arab entities concerned about the opposition to the capital punishment in each of Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Mauritania.

The state of lack of interest by the Swedish Institute was confirmed when the institute failed to extend invitations to the Arab Coalitions to attend the conference held in September 2010. This also confirms that the Swedish Institute and the parties that finance it are working separately and do not build on the efforts made by these Arab alliances, but regrettably, they begin from square one, and this confirms that they are squandering financial resources and the efforts made by the Arab alliances in this regard.

This should prompt the Swedish Institute and its financiers who support the institute and its conferences to pause, because they spend hefty amounts of money toward new players who have just been formed. These new players (against the death penalty) discuss the opportunities, challenges and strategies-activities that Arab Coalitions have conducted for years. The Swedish Institute ignores the fact that conferences, seminars and meetings were held by the experienced Arab Coalitions in the past, rendering these actions as insignificant. In reality, the movement is not in its beginning stages, the movement has mobilized effectively for several years now.
The alliances signing this statement would like to assert to all the parties concerned that the ability to secure funding by these organizations and institutes is not alone sufficient to make achievements. These issues cannot be solved purely by holding of conferences, inviting new persons to attend these conference, and re-discussing topics that were discussed a few years ago is not a sound attitude under any circumstance. What is more useful and more important than this is institutional and systematic work that is done through national and regional alliances which enjoy sufficient assets of experience in this field, and this applies to each of the Arab coalitions for opposing the death penalty and the national alliances in the said countries. It is noteworthy that these alliances were formed since 2007, with significant amount of effort being exerted before the official formation.

The coalitions signing this statement are requesting the foreign organizations which receive funds from donors to carry out projects in the Arab region in accordance with accuracy and transparency. Foreign organizations such as the Swedish Institute should find constructive ways to work with existing national organizations to help curb capital punishment in the region. These actions will prevent repetition of previous efforts and allow for the better spending of valuable resources and manpower. Cooperation with experienced regional organizations will also maximize the social benefits and advances on issues such as human rights, the right to life, and the right to self-determination.

The signatory coalitions:

- The Arab Coalition against Death Penalty.
- The Egyptian Coalition against Death Penalty.
- The Yemeni Coalition against Death Penalty.
- The Jordanian Coalition against Death Penalty.
- The Iraqi Coalition against Death Penalty.
- The Mauritanian Coalition against Death Penalty.
- The Palestinian Coalition against Death Penalty.
- The Syrian Coalition against Death Penalty.
- The Lebanese Coalition against Death Penalty.
On November 9, 2010, 21 international observers of the Elections Network in the Arab Region had been distributed in Amman and in 10 other provinces, al-Karak, Ma'an, Jerash, Ajloun, Irbid, Balqa, Madaba, Zarqa, Mafraq and Tafila.

The purpose were to observe the whole electoral process, from the polling period to the closing and counting in 28 electoral districts, including 70 Centers with 237 boxes.

The Elections Network in the Arab Region announced three different reports on the opening, voting and closing of the elections.

The Network issued also a detailed report about the overall electoral process for the session of Jordanian Parliament after the issuance of the final official results.

The process of screening in general was transparent and smooth. Although, there have been a discrepancy between the heads of the committees in the application of screening procedures, and this indicated a lack of access to all the information to the commissions, and that they have not been adequately trained.

In light of this, the Network sum up the most important points on the positive and negative aspects relating to electoral day within the electoral process of the elections to the sixteenth session of the Jordanian Parliament.

Positive points: providing an appropriate security environment for the arrival of voters to the centers; facilitating the voting of those with special needs and the illiterate; opening the centers in a timely manner and the presence of the required number of workers in the committees and the provision of basic supplies; use of Technology; participation rate; quick and immediate action on some cases of fraud and violation.

Negative points: continuing the electoral campaign inside the campus of the electoral center, leaving the ballot paper to be written by voters, which led to raise the level of invalid papers; remoteness of the electoral centers from the polling center of more than 500 m, which led to the non-arrival of some people, especially for elderly and the sick.
In the report have been issued some recommendations about the election day: the division of electoral constituencies on the basis of identification of voters; the raising of the level of skills of workers in the electoral administration; the application of the international standard distance of 100 m and around the electoral center concerning the election campaign; to continue using benefits from the technology to provide the necessary needs; to work to facilitate the task of voters in terms of access to the site of the ballot; to draw up a list of the names of candidates on the ballot paper with their photos in order to facilitate the task of polling especially for the illiterate and reduce the invalid papers; to give the opportunity to observers from the monitoring network to observe and develop reports in assessing the electoral process, thus drawing lesson learnt and recommendations for the future processes.
ACHRS celebrate the 62nd anniversary of the UDHR

ACHRS Award for 2010 was given to Kamel Jandoubi

On Wednesday December 15th the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies hosted the sixty-second anniversary ceremony of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the Jerusalem Hotel in Amman, Jordan.

The purpose of the event was not only to celebrate the declaration of Human Rights but to also push for reform within the field of human rights internationally, within the Arab world, and a special focus on the country of Jordan.

The ACHRS presented three well established and highly accomplished speakers to the crowd of over two hundred foreign and domestic dignitaries, human rights workers, and members of the press from all over the Arab world.

The first speech of the event was given by Dr. Nizam Asaaf, director of the ACHRS, who opened the night noting that though the ACHRS “highly valued the gains made in Jordan in the field of health, education and multi-party politics and parliamentary life and the empowerment of women economically, politically, and increase of their participation in decision-making positions including increasing women's quota in the Parliament...”
He also wanted to make sure he expressed and noted: “the slowness in the coping of our national (Jordan) legislation with international conventions on human rights ratified by the successive Jordanian governments”

He went on to address this issue by explaining specific examples within Jordanian society that he feels are unjust in relation to international law saying: “the Jordanian woman still does not give her nationality to her children despite the fact that the Jordanian constitution had stipulated that all Jordanians are equal before the law, and there are still aspects of the use of violence inside the university campuses, during the parliamentary elections, or after the end of the football games.

The provisions of laws of public freedoms (elections, parties, associations, and assembly) still need substantial modifications to make them democratic laws and a modern verification of political reform and political development in speeches and directives of the higher leadership in the Jordanian State.

He went on to stress the “importance of interaction and cooperation between various governmental institutions and civil society organizations for the protection and promotion of human rights.”

Next to take the podium was Taghreed Al-Naji, a member of the board of the Arab Women’s Association, to deliver a speech on behalf of the Jordanian Network for Civil Society Organizations.

Al-Naji emphasized the importance of the attendees to help “steer the struggle of women” so that important measures and objectives can be achieved. She went on to clarify those objectives stating the importance to achieve various different objectives including: “to achieve social justice and woman’s empowerment and autonomy, and building a democratic society which guarantees the freedom of woman… and equality, dignity and security, and her access to decision-making, and promulgates a fair package of legislations in the areas of nationality, divorce, and motherhood.”

She went on to say that the Arab world must continue to “combat all forms of violence against women, particularly with regard to crimes of honor, and the development of the necessary legislations governing abuse of women, and provide her with a safe life away from fear and anxiety.”
Then concluding with a call for all to: “act to compel the Arab states to implement human rights conventions to which they have committed themselves legally and morally before the international community and before their people…” as well as to: “Support the struggle of Arab women in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon and the occupied Syrian Golan in all forms, and solidarity with the women at these sites in order to publicize their suffering, and defend them against the occupiers and enemies.”

Closing out the evening was a speech given by Jordan’s Minister of Justice, His Excellency Hisham Al-Tal. His Excellency, boldly stated that: “The state that respects human rights, is the state of democracy, progress and the rule of law…” also pointing out that: “Jordan has ratified all the conventions and charters of the human rights declaration, the two Covenants (ex. civil and political rights and social, economic and social rights) in addition to the conventions for women and children and torture, to be translated to practical application of the principles and concepts of human rights.”

His Excellency concluded the celebration by thanking all who had taken a stand for human rights over the years within “Jordan and beyond” and that: “the real celebration of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights requires all of us to put the principles and ideas contained in it into practice. At the end of the day, reality states that the theoretical texts of the conventions on human rights, constitutions and legislation, if not applied in practice become just ideal texts that do not serve the cause of human rights.”

Other important notes: though he was not present at the ceremony, Kamel Al-Jendoubi was given the Inaugural Amman Center for Human Rights Studies “Activist of the Year” award, for his tireless work within the field of human rights in Tunisia and the whole Arab world. Mr. Al-Jendoubi is the president of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network.
ACHRS has organized workshop for the trainers of the ministry of health by the title of human rights and gender from the period of 12 – 16 of Dec, 2010 at landmark hotel in Amman. The workshop was conducted by 24 participants.

Dr. Nizam Assaf talked on the first session about the principles and the meaning of human rights. The second lecture was on the international declaration of the human rights by lawyer Nael Alfarha who presented the thirty main articles of the declaration.

The main international agreements of the human rights was the third and concluded lecture of the first day by Dr. Mohammad Al Tarawneh where he demonstrated that one of the most noble and new measures of all, is the degree of countries in applying and respecting the human rights concepts. The second day started with lawyer Manar Alnizami on The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The second lecture of the day was by the lawyer Samih Sonokrout who talked about the right of health care as one crucial and ultimate right for human being. The day was finished by the lawyer Majd Klob lecture about the type of violence and the medical services.

The third day started with the title of fertility health and human right by Mahmoud Heshmeh, where the main international agreements presented in the issue, especially those signed by Jordan. Following were the second and third titles, by Lawyer Rana Hussain on the meaning of gender and by Lena Aljazi on the gender and the effects of social culture, where the speakers discussed with the audience the meaning and differences between sex and gender and those economical, social, political and civil factors that have effects on the issue.
The fourth day was full of presenting the issue of gender. Eman Ziad talked about gender and its integration in society. The audience was very interested and expanded through wide notes and detailed feedback.

Lena Aljazrawi talked about the neutral factor when dealing with gender for the health care personal when they dealing with victims of violence. Amal Shawahdeh then gave her title in integration of the gender in the development programs. Ferial Al Asaf finished the fifth and last day of the meeting in evaluation the work based on gender.
The Center was established in 1999 with the aim of spreading and strengthening human rights culture in the Arab World and providing a democratic platform for dialogue, coordination and integration of the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations of human rights. The Center achieves its goals through educational, intellectual and cultural activities including research and studies, conferences, seminars and workshops as well as offering consultations, technical and scientific services, publications and specialized periodicals on human rights. The main objective is to promote human rights by raising awareness. Raising awareness is done via training courses, conferences, seminars etc.

General information:

ACHRS was founded in 1999
- Currently ACHRS consists of 10 full-time staff, several full-time interns and 50 volunteer members (Acadimets, Lawyers, Journalists, Activests, Judges, Researchers....etc).
- 50% of the work of ACHRS is done on a voluntary basis
- The focus of ACHRS is 50% on Jordan and 50% on the MENA region

ACHRS is:
- Consultative status with ECOSOC
- Member of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- Member of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)
- Member of the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA)
Constituting Member of the following Networks:

- Elections Network in the Arab Region (ENAR) (2006)
- Arab Coalition Against Death Penalty (2007)
- Arab Coalition Against Death Penalty (2007)
- Arab Society on Academic Freedom (2008)
- Jordanian Network for Civil Society Organizations (2008)

Training courses:

- 355 Training courses since 1999
- 9432 participants from across the Arab region
- Participants: 65% under the age of 30, 62% female
- Target groups: judges, layers, officers, journalists, university students, teachers, staff from civil society organizations.

Websites:

www.achrs.org/english, general website of Amman Center for Human Rights Studies.
www.awrd.net, focuses on reform and democracy in the Middle East.
www.alerhab.net, focuses on terrorism globally.
www.arabew.org, focuses on elections in the Arab World.
www.afwininfo.org, focuses on academic freedom in the Arab World.
joeelections.org, focuses on the Jordanian Parliament.
www.jafwininfo.org, focuses on the academic freedom in Jordan
www.hartwaw.org, focuses on the Human rights trainers in the Arab world.