AMMAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES' 2012 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER, NO.20

COVERING: INTERNATIONAL WOMENSDAY, SUPPORT TO FREE DR. MOURAD DHINA NGO STATEMENT TO NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AMONG MANY OTHER ITEMS
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1. Introduction

30th of December 2012, Amman

Dear readers,

The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies is pleased to present its 20th newsletter which is, as an exception, an annual edition. ACHRS has had a hectic year due to the turbulences countries in the Middle East and North Africa are experiencing. Despite calamities and difficulties the contemporary situations throughout the MENA region can be seen as a turn towards improved empowerment of the people, such as the Yemeni, Libyan and Egyptian population, who persisted in their demands for a democratic, just and transparent government. Still, to live up to these words a lot has to be done. ACHRS, together with its partner organizations, did its best to support these calls by organizing trainings, participating in conferences and monitoring elections. This newsletter hopes to give color to ACHRS various activities by subdividing a Women, MENA, Death Penalty, Global, Urgent and Praise section. Because, genuine progression is driven by open dialogue, ACHRS is always open to your suggestions. Future newsletter will again be published on quarterly basis.

Happy New Year 2013

Lavinia Steinfort
ACHRS' intern

2. Women section

2.1 GRADUATION OF THE SECOND GROUP OF THE JORDANIAN INSTITUTE FOR WOMAN'S LEADERSHIP

On July the 18th the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) organized the ceremony for the second group of graduators of the Jordanian Institute for Woman’s Leadership (JIWAL, supported by the Finn Church Aid). Eleven women from different governorates of Jordan and from different scientific disciplines participated over the year in lectures and exercises on international conventions on human rights, like women’s rights and on the knowledge and skills of leaders.

In the opening ceremony Dr. Nizam Assaf argued that the program aimed at empowering women practically and theoretically in order be effective in the development of a fair and equal society.

One of the graduates Susan Afifi said this opportunity enables the change of many of the old beliefs of society and allowed her and the other graduates to receive knowledge, experience on the meaning of true citizenship.
12 Woman graduated in the first, previous group. One of them won the membership of the Jordanian House of Representatives on the current list of women's quota.

Miss Outi Behm, on behalf of donor partner organization the Finn Church Aid, encourage the participants to bring the gained knowledge and experience back to their environment to share the understanding of democratic institutions, decision-making and in order to advocate for women's needs. Men have traditionally occupied many leading roles in various societies. However, if women could participate in a more active way, there could be more creative solutions to the old problems. She concluded with Gandhi's words, 'so be the change you wish to see in the world'.

67% of the participants in the ACHRS training sessions are women.

2.2 VARIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

"Hundred years, but the rights are still incomplete"

1. Nabeela Hamza's speech at the celebration of the International

In the revolution last year we witnessed women participating in among others the revolutions of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Syria. The woman strongly contributed in these battles for equality and dignity in a free society where human rights and the rule of law are prevailing.

While the revolution changed many things and realized many achievements, many objectives still need to be accomplished. That's I ask myself, ‘Do we, the Arab women, have the right to celebrate the International Women's Day?’

It is sure that the revolutions could not necessarily lead to equality between genders and the full citizenship of the woman. Especially in the Arabic states it could even result in a retreat of weak and fragile rights that have been laboriously earned under oppressive regimes. Unfortunately, dangerous evolutions occur in the aftermath of some uprisings.

During the revolution in Egypt, women were subjected to the virginity test, sexual harassment and sometimes even to beatings in Tahrer square. Momentary, women's quota are cancelled; women are excluded from the commission of the constitution amendment; women are ignored in the formation of the new government; last, in the parliament women are presented by 10% only.

Although Tunisia witnessed improvement by a new law acknowledging the 50/50 principle in the election lists, fundamental, discriminatory activities have increased since the outbreak of the revolution. To name a few changes, the adoption law has been cancelled; customary marriages and polygamy returned; the new legislation of
violence against women; the imposition of the veil on non adult girls; and the populist fabrication of the burqa issue in universities. Next to these misfortunes, Salafi preachers took power preaching for female circumcision, while others call for the re-islamization. Hence, to convert these disasters into progress genuine awareness is crucial.

Coming back to my initial question, 'Do we have the right to celebrate in these situations?' I would say 'Yes'. Despite these difficulties, we are living in a historical times full of challenges and opportunities. Egypt and Tunisia are in the process of drafting new constitutions that will define the shapes of the societies that we are looking for, and the type of the political regimes that we are struggling for.

By rearranging our powers and gathering support to our aims and struggles we have the opportunity to demand just representation and equal opportunities in legislative, executive and juridical authorities. The time has come to gather young energies and to build strong alliances between women's organizations at national and regional levels. I can celebrate Woman's Day, because the door is open for building a new society, the society of equality and social justice.

2. (Attorney) Nour Al Ernam's orated on behalf of the Women’s Committee in the Jordanian Bar Association

In Jordan young women, as well as men, are participating in the movement of reform, which aims to prosecute corruption and advance a democratic approach. Adjustments, like greater rule of law, an independent electoral commission and a constitutional court, have been made towards democratic governing. Yet our concern is the actual impact of these changes for the improvement of the political participation of women.

A few, ambiguous, changes
- We have seen several initiatives of women and human rights organizations to amend article (6) of the Constitution in order to emphasize the equality of all Jordanians, men and women, which were unfortunately overruled.
- The newly law on the Constitutional Court does not give individuals the right to complain over the unconstitutionality of the texts. Additionally it denied civil society organizations to monitor and interfere before the submission of cases. Women quota not reached the aspired 30%, but only made it to 15 seats on the basis of a woman for each province.
- The first draft of the law on political parties decided positively to have 10% of female founders. This is an opportunity for women to engage in political action, to obtain an umbrella for protection and to develop programs to make women leaders and to abolish of all forms of discrimination and change the stereotype of women. I have to emphasize the hope that the actual implementation of this law will not be subjected to partisanship.

Finally, we have to stay seriously and actively engaged in order to achieve women rights. Do not wait for political grants, because; rights are taken, not granted.

The reason for a claim to amend Article (6) was to reflect its impact on all legislation texts immediately. In the hope of resulting in a modification of all legislation that include any form of discrimination against women, for example Jordanian nationality law that distinguishes between women and men in the right to grant citizenship to their children and husbands.
3. Lina Jazrawi, the coordinator of the Woman's unit of ACHRS contributed the following ideas

I would like you all to join me to step into the future by noticing the progression of gender equity by Amman Center for Human Rights Studies. ACHRS’ dream to have a special women’s unit as a center for research and studies, is very close to realization. This unit is aimed towards the creation of an enlightened women’s thought, through the development of social concepts and values towards the cause of women in a society built on the respect of human rights regardless of color, ethnicity or sex, where the humans naturally struggled for their rights in freedom, dignity, justice and equality.

The women’s unit focuses on realizing its objectives on improving the Jordanian women’s status in the society, through lectures, seminars and workshops about the female thought and the pressing female issues.

The most important contribution of the center is probably integrating the gender approach in his activities, where the participation of the women in his courses exceeded 60% of the total participation.

"Our Vision: Building an enlightened female thought, through the development of values and concepts for men and women together, as a national duty that raises the value of the citizen and maintains his freedom in a society ruled by justice and equality."

We have had some experience in the last few years, where we have targeted a number of women in special projects for the building of leadership capabilities of women. The Jordanian center for female leaders, has graduated the first group of female leaders for the year 2010/2011. This center, which belongs to the Amman center, prepares Jordanian women for political partnership, to share in the political decision making.

This celebration nominated for women, doesn't mean in any way the separation between rights and duties, but we reaffirm that our continuous demands to gain more rights shall reflect positively on our commitment for more duties.

In addition, we intend to utilize the tools of the social communication to fight the stereotypical image of women, and enhance their awareness in their legal and juridical rights.

Finally I would like to share following objective which the center is set to realize

- To spread knowledge of the human rights culture for women by fighting illiteracy in legal affairs.
- To change the concepts and values that dedicate the stereotypical and traditional role of women.
- To spread human rights concepts and teaching it.
- To enable women to strengthen their role in social, educational, economical, and political life.
3. MENA section

3.1 FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE (FFF) AND ACHRS PARTICIPATED IN PREPARING LIBYAN DOMESTIC OBSERVERS

FFF and ACHRS conducted four training courses to develop and build the capacity of civil society organizations in Libya in the field of domestic observation for the election of the General National Conference in order to prepare Libyan domestic observers.

Through the training program local groups were prepared to form a group of domestic observers to monitor their elections according to the international standards and international practices on fair, free elections.

The four workshops were held in various areas between June and July. The first session was attended by 28 male and female participants; at the second session 64 people participated; the third was visited by 26 male and female participants; and, 58 people were prepared at the fourth session.

The scope of the training material included the different experiences due to the different skills and information necessary to have an oversight of the elections. Constructive dialogue had a prominent role throughout the training sessions and attention was paid to the differences in the theory and practice of monitoring elections.

3.2 TRAINING OF TRAINERS ON HUMAN RIGHTS FOR THE POLICE OFFICERS OF THE IRAQI KURDISTAN REGION

The training of Trainers (ToT) was organized by The Popular Aid Organization (PAO) and ACHR in cooperation with Norwegian Popular Aid (NPA) and the Ministry of Interior Government in the Iraqi Kurdistan region.
A dozen police officers participated in this 10-day session with a focus on freedom of expression, to implement human rights within the judicial component of the government and the international conventions on inhuman penalties. These topics were part of the training process of successful communicative methods. The participants were trained by Dr. Muhammad EL Tarawneh, Yahya Shugayr, Manhal Al Sidah and Dr. Nizam Assaf.

On the 10th day the participants made presentation on the rights and guarantees and rights of defendants under Shar'iah and civil law, and the right to life from Shar'iah perspective. Moreover the human rights of adolescents, women and prisoners in Kurdistan were discussed. At last the bridges were build between the human rights principles and police work.

For five years ACHRS and PAO have been linked by the strategic cooperation agreement. The agreement aimed at forming the Iraqi League of Human Rights Trainers in 2007 and the Iraqi Alliance of the Human Rights Organizations in 2009. This is the 17th session in the series of ToT on human rights. A total of 250 male and female participants from 12 Arab countries participated in these sessions.

3.3 ACHRS' OPENING SPEECH AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE "THE YEMEN WE WANT"

On the 18/19th of January 2012 ACHRS' director Dr. Nizam Assaf delivered a speech at the national conference 'The Yemen We Want' to 130 participants, including struggling activists jurists, media people, politicians and academics from all over Yemen in order to discuss the most relevant topic 'The Yemen We Want'.

A civil and democratic Yemen could be attained through the foundation of the state of modern institutions, the creation of social justice and good governance, with equal citizenship and true sharing of authority and fortune, the respect of human rights and the rights of the women and her protection.

After Tunisia, Yemen was one of the first Arab countries who rebelled against their president, asking him to step down, demanding to close the chapter of dictatorship and totalitarian regime. Yemeni people have surprised the whole world with his ability to withstand and hold to his legal national demands. During eleven months, the sons and daughters of Yemen have paid high prices.
The Yemeni revolution started on February 11th 2011; the same day Egypt's regime fell. Yemeni youth were the leader of his revolution, starting with demands for political and constitutional reform, the realization of democracy and the fall of the head of the regime. This was accompanied by bad economical and social situations, as well as the spread of corruption, unemployment and poverty, and the trials to suppress the people’s protests in the south.

The greatest challenge to be faces is how to bring Yemen away from anarchy, violence and civil war. The Yemeni revolution is writing history, with its peaceful approach, very well aware of the values of freedom, dignity, justice, equality, good governance and sustainable development.

I hope that this important conference will successfully end up with a total national vision of the Yemen you want to see, by finding a mechanism for coexistence between all the parts of the political spectrum, especially for the youth of your hopeful Yemen. I am certain of your ability in the democratic dialog, and your wisdom in agreeability on a common vision that shapes the civil and democratic Yemeni state, guarantees a better life and promising future for the young men and women.

Dr. Nizam Assaf
Director of the Center

3.4 SEMINAR ON THE LAW OF THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

On the 14 and 15 January 2012 specialists in the fields of elections participated in the seminar on the law of the independent electoral commission. The seminar took place in the context of the constitutional amendments that have been provided for the Constitution of Jordan to set up an independent body to manage the parliamentary elections

The dialogues of the first two days focused on a number of issues including: the concept of independence of the Commission under the appointment of a majority of the members; the presence of vague terms in the law; the disadvantages of neglecting political parties during the commission formation; how the law of parties and election law corresponds with the law of the independent commission; the role of the judiciary in the electoral process and the power of the Prime Minister in the law. The participation of civil society organizations, of law and of the participants during the dialogue confirmed the need to raise the level of electoral
culture among the people and to determine a maximum limit of election campaigns in advertising campaigns. Additionally the conditions of membership and who determines them and the faced obstacles were discussed, such as the control and supervision on the elections. At last, the participants reviewed models of the systems and regulatory bodies in terms of Jordan's iniquity.

Legal remarks:
• The law must address the appointment of senior positions in the Commission filed by the Secretary General of the Commission and approval by the Board of Commissioners.
• The need to discuss ways of deciding complaints and appeals.
• The necessity to publish for three days the decisions on the three official newspapers and in the website of the commission.
• The law must decide about the pension privileges of commissioners after the expiration of their terms.
• The need to include a paragraph within the functions of the commission to give it full power in elections in the absence of matters not covered in the law, namely: the Commission is responsible to put all the rules and regulations that preserve the integrity of the electoral process.
• The need to determine the competent authorities empowered to ratify the election results after the announcement by the commission, and by every round of elections, whether parliamentary or local election, the Constitutional Court or competent authorities of law need to be named.
• Law needs to address the mechanism of protest and objection against the decisions of the Commission and it must be determined by law which judicial body is responsible for deciding appeals.
• It is preferred to add a paragraph to the conditions of the selection of Commissioners and to take into account the representation of women in the formation of the Board of Commissioners.

3.5 MEETING BETWEEN ELECTION NETWORK ENAR AND PRESIDENT OF THE CARTER CENTER FOR PEACE

Concerning the monitoring activities of the Egyptian elections on May 23 and 24 2012, ENAR (The Election Network in the Arab Region) attended the meeting of the Jimmy Carter, President of the Carter Center for Peace, on the methods of monitoring the Egyptian presidential election in order to share preliminary observation of the international observations team. The ENAR was represented by Dr. Nizam Assaf and lawyer Ayman Oqeel.
3.6 THREE TRAINING COURSES FOR PARTY MEMBERS IN LYBIA

In light of the Libyan election ACHRS carried out three training sessions for 75 members of the Justice and Construction Party. The training sessions covered the international standards for elections, the observer's rules of behavior, and the control mechanisms for the agents of parties in elections.

3.7 MONITORING REPORT ON THE ELECTIONS IN LYBIA

On July 7th 2012 the polling station opened in 13 general districts and 73 sub-districts. ENAR, the Election Network in the Arab Region, located 16 international observers over the 5 big and 20 small districts. The network team assisted the staff in the electoral offices at the opening and monitored the electoral process, from opening until counting activities in 51 centers.

Following the most important positive aspects:
1. A safe environment appropriate for the arrival of voters to the polls, and facilitating the task of their ballot.
2. Adoption of international standards for direct voting.
3. Transparency about the instructions and procedures of the election and polling process.
4. In general on time opening of polling stations.
5. The broad participation of the Libyan people from all communities, especially women and young people.
6. Quick and immediate action were take in cases of irregularities.
7. Wide participation of civil society.
8. High-level of organization and professionalism shown by polling staff.
9. Adoption of the number assigned to each electorate room of 500 voters, as it is consistent with international standards for elections.
10. High rate of youth participation in the management of the electoral process.
11. The broad participation of Libyan women in the management of the electoral process.
12. Using a unified method of recording through combining registration data, the card, and voting in a coherent and useful way.
13. Closing the boxes and conduct the screening process in accordance with international standards.

Negative aspects:
1. Shortage in means that facilitate the access to ballot, and the voting of people with special needs.
2. The voting booths were too close to each other, which does not provide complete privacy of ballot.
3. Some polling stations were more than 500 meter away from the voters' residence.
4. Some voters used their mobile telephone in the voting booths.
In conclusion

The network team confirmed that the election process for the General National Conference 2012 had in general been in accordance with Libyan law and procedures. In addition, the standards of confidentiality, generality, and transparency were adopted, indicating that the standards for free and fair elections are available.

3.8 PUBLICATION OF ‘THE ELECTIONS MONITORING REPORTS IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES’

Amman Center for Human Right Studies published a book, covering the reports on the elections in the Arab countries. It includes the final reports and statements issued by the Election Network in the Arab Region (ENAR) and its partners on presidential, parliamentary and local elections.


3.9 AMMAN CENTER WELCOMES THE DECISION TO STOP THE DEPORTATION OF EGYPTIAN MIGRANT WORKERS

The 16th of December the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies expressed appreciation for the decision of Ministry of Labor to halt procedures of deporting the Egyptian workers who are violating their residency in Jordan, and give them a chance to rectify their situations.

The Center has, with great concern, been following the deportation of more than a thousand Egyptian workers to their country, especially as the unfortunate procedures affected a large number of legal workers who have valid work permits, which could harm the efforts made over the past years to urge non-regular workers to correct their legal status. A process in which the center and its partners had a practical role, through many seminars and workshops in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Interior, the Egyptian embassy, and a number of related union organizations and civil society institutions. At the time mechanisms and
procedures were examined that limit the spread of illegal employment in the labor market, aiming to encourage migrant workers to be legal; to protect them from exploitation or exposure to deportation.

Also, it is not prudent to use workers to pressure their government for discussing economic relations between the two countries. Most of the victims of deportation are poor workers who have direct economic obligations toward their families, unable to afford the results of such arbitrary actions which affect them and their rights. Thus, it is not just a violation of the bilateral agreements, but a major violation of human rights and conventions on ‘the right to work’, which should also guarantee the right of migrant workers against any arbitrary actions, such as the deportation campaign of Egyptian workers.

Sadly the recent procedures of deporting Egyptian workers came as a result of poor political relationship between the two countries. Moreover, we stress the strategic relationship with our neighbor Egypt which serve the interests of both countries and their people. Hence, it is unacceptable for new Egyptian leadership to stop the implementation of bilateral economic agreements and sacrifice profound relationship by turning it into a political pressure point.

Finally we call upon the Jordanian and Egyptian governments to serve the development of bilateral relations, to act in favour of economic integration, to conclude bilateral agreements that serve the troubled economies of both countries, to abide by letter and spirit to serve the two brotherly peoples, and to protect the life of the Egyptian worker in Jordan or Jordanian student in Egypt to be free from discriminatory treatment, to establish steady trade relations between the two countries that is stable and not influenced by the difficulties of the economic climates in both countries, since both peoples have more than enough economic and non-economic challenges.

4. Death Penalty section

4.1 MEETING BY THE ARAB COALITION AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

The Executive Committee held a meeting in Amman on June 11th which was led by the coalition’s President Dr. Mohammed Al Tarawneh. The meeting was attended by representatives of coalitions in Egypt, Yemen, Palestine, Jordan, and Kurdistan.

The meeting reviewed the situation of Arab Coalitions and mechanisms to activate its work in 2013, and concluded concrete proposals to improve the coordination and networking between members of the coalition and the need to expand its membership.
4.2 SEMINAR ON INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND ITS ROLE IN PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO LIFE

For the occasion of the World Day Against the Death Penalty the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies held on the 8th of October a symposium on 'international justice and the right to life'.

The symposium gave the stage to Taghreed Hikmat, the first Arab Judge in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, who spoke about the international conventions on the protection of human rights and the UN resolution that called its abolition. She also pointed out the international commotion over the death penalty, for it has been proven in studies and research that the death penalty involves discrimination directed against ethnicities, unfair trials, in addition to the undeniable possibility of executing a person by mistake. Moreover, it has not been proven globally that the death penalty has a deterrent effect on crime prevention in communities. Although some Arab countries like Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Yemen still apply the death penalty, two-thirds of the world has abolished this grave form of punishment.

Ms Hikmat praised Jordan for not using the death sentence on any political prisoners and for equating in legislation the death penalty with the most serious crimes. Adding, that Islamic law can and must protect human dignity and the right to life and liberty, for Islam considered murder as if directed towards all humanity. She expressed the need to humanize legislation, since laws are not static but subjected to interpretation.

Finally she addressed everybody to work towards abolishing the death penalty, by beginning to reduce the number of crimes punishable by death, by prevention torture, which drives the defendant to confess a crime he did not commit, and rejecting the confessions under torture.

Next, Dr. Hamdi Murad expressed the common misconception on Islam, which led the West to market the idea that Islam is a religion that incites the thought of terrorism. However ideas have nothing to do with Islam, since rejects the death penalty.

The audience indicated in their comments the importance of raising awareness for judges to reverse the death penalty, and the abolition of articles stipulated in the Penal Code which are punishable by death.

4.3 STATEMENT BY THE ARAB COALITION AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

On October 10 The Arab Coalition Against the Death Penalty underlined the efforts made that resulted in the coalition and the many events and activities directed at awareness raising on the importance of the right to life. However, in order to move forward serious steps have to be implements to completely abolish the death penalty in the political, legislative, social and religious arena’s.

Moreover the coalition, which includes national coalitions (in Palestine, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Mauritania, and Jordan) expresses deep concern over the
implemented executions in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and the, sometimes of arbitrary and extrajudicial natured, executions in Libya and Syria. Thus, governments and communities of Arab countries are urged to take international resolutions into account by reviewing their position on the death penalty.

5. Global section

5.1 STATEMENT ON RECENT ARRESTS OF MEMBERS OF POPULAR MOVEMENTS

On April 7th both human rights and civil society organizations in Jordan signed this statement pressure the Jordanian government to release all the popular movement members who were arrested for participating in the peaceful sit-ins in front of the cabinet.

The organizations are concerned about the ill-treatment of the arrested activists by the gendarmerie and security forces during the arrest, and insults, abuse and torture in the security centers by the police. These actions disturb the public opinion as excessive use of force and torture prevail as oppressive means to which has become a growing concern in public opinion of Jordan as a result of the prevalence of excessive use of force and torture as oppressive means to silence contemporary's protests.

Civil society condemns above actions as they severely violate the freedom of expression, assembly, and demonstration. All signed organization demand immediate release of the detained members, punishment of the perpetrators and ask the Jordanian government to fulfill their promise with regards to the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens.

5.2 NGO STATEMENT ON NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROMOTIONS AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Amman. On 4th and 5th of November 2012 ACHRS organized in collaboration with the Asian Network for Non-governmental Organizations, NHRI and the Jordanian National Commission for Women the NGO Forum. The statement is the result of participation of more than hundred NGO's, from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe in the NGO Forum on the role of National Institutions in promoting human rights for women and girls and gender equality.
The statement acknowledges all international human rights instruments, such as the statements and recommendations of the committee for the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW). Yet according to the NGO forum there is a need to emphasize CEDAW General Recommendation 23 on women in public and political life, General Recommendation 24 on women and health, General Recommendation 25 on temporary special measures, General Recommendation 21 on equality in marriage and family matters, General Recommendation 19 on violence against women, General Recommendation 27 on older women, and General Recommendation 28 on core obligations of states under Article 2 of the Convention.

Next to this emphasis the statement pressed the following points:

- Call on National Institutions to prioritize the rights of women and girls in the various programs and activities carried out by National Institutions.
- Urge National Institutions to ensure close collaborative working processes with specialized women’s commissions and children’s commissions at all levels.
- Urge National Institutions to ensure gender equality through representation across all levels of governance, leadership and staff positions within National Institutions, as well as ensuring that National Institutions as workplaces are free of sexual harassment, violence and intimidation.
- Urge National Institutions to focus on gender-specific violations faced by women human rights defenders for being women or because of the causes that they defend.
- Urge National Institutions to develop a National Plan for the dissemination and promotion of a culture of human rights with a focus on the rights of women and girls as a comprehensive national strategy in various fields.
- Call National Institutions to take affirmative measures by appointing women in no less than 30% of all governmental positions.
- Urge National Institutions to realize of economic social and cultural rights on an equal footing with civil and political rights as human rights, by adopting measures for the protection of women’s rights, particularly of poor women in neo-liberal globalization processes, through engagement with various institutions.
- Urge National Institutions to address the root causes of gender-based violence, promote and support the adoption of laws against all types of gender-based violence against women.
- Call National Institutions to recognize and protect the right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children, and on matters related to their bodily rights and sexual autonomy, including sexual orientation and gender identity.

ACHRS hopes these recommendations are going to be considered for incorporation into the outcome document of the 11th International Conference of the International Coordinating Committee and National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection for Human Rights.
5.3 CELEBRATION OF THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD DAY OF THE RIGHTS TO KNOWLEDGE

On Sunday, the 30th of December, the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies organized at Jerusalem International a symposium to celebrate the World Day of the Right to Knowledge. Information Minister Samih Maaytah sponsored the event, which present two working papers of Professor Muhammad Yunus Abadi and Professor Yahya Shugai.

In the opening ceremony Dr. Mohammed Tarawneh remarked the importance of the Right to Knowledge as one of the basic human rights, closely linked to freedom of access to information, circulation and dissemination. He reviewed the activities of Amman Center for Human Rights Studies over the past years as it organized many courses on the right to access to information and added that the center has voluntarily completed the first annual report of its kind "on the right to access information in the Arab countries" in 2009.

When the Minister took the stage he acknowledged that civil society organizations play a key role in raising awareness on human rights, in the forefront of which is the right to obtain information. This referred to the cooperation that prevailed during the previous period between official bodies and civil society organizations, resulting in proposed amendments on the right to have access to information, which got recently approved by the government and is now in its legislative stages. Finally the Minister expressed the urge to develop the use of law qualitatively.

Professor Muhammad Yunus Abadi* lectured about the Information Council “its missions, authorities, and achievements” by sharing the adopted models to seek information, the activities to promote a culture of the right to knowledge and access to information and the issued bulletins. The Council also works to enhance access to information and access to documents owned by the state for all people. To exemplify, the National Library and the Jordanian government are archiving laws, regulations and instructions from 1923 until now which are published on the library’s website. Where you will also find more than half a million government documents, obtained from the state ministries and institutions, dealing with all the details of life, and especially the political, economic, and social decisions. In conclusion he remarked Jordan advanced strides in the field of transparency, believing that the freedom of access to information is a cornerstone of press and public freedoms.

Yahya Shuqair. "Information is the "oxygen of democracy"
When Mr. Yahya Shuqair presented his proposal "to amend the law to guarantee the right of access to information" he stated that the public's right to know and access to information is one of the most important pillars of the democratic structure of any country in the world, since the active participation of citizens rely on information. So in order for democracy to work, you must enable citizens to obtain information to be able to take valuable decisions. Shugair realized that the approved law on the flow of information did not serve administration, journalist, nor the most important beneficiaries, Jordan's citizens. Therefore he expressed the need for a law is guided by the principle of maximum disclosure, meaning that information is available to all the public bodies.

On "the benefits of the law to ensure the Jordanian right of access to information" a few honorable media and law students of various Jordanian Universities received a price. First place winners were Amer Al Halasa and Abdulkarim Al Rayyan. Second place winner was Zarin Eras and the third place went to Enas Zayed.

5.4 PRESS RELEASE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PRESS FREEDOM

Non western countries commemorate the third of March for upholding the role of free press as it helps citizens to seek, receive and share information and opinions.

In addition the dangers of restrictions of journalism were expressed and the important role of journalism to accurately inform the population.

Last year Jordan's constitutional amendments repeatedly emphasized the freedoms of opinion, press, publishing and media. Even so journalist Jamal Al Muthassib was arrested and journalists were beaten in Palm (Nakheel) Square. For this reason the Jordanian government was reminded to honor the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is even parts of Jordan's legislation.

Finally, the signatories urged the government to release Al Muthassib and respect media freedoms, ensuring the right of access to information on the internet.

6. Urgent section

6.1 SUPPORT COMMITTEE TO FREE DR. MOURAD DHINA

"The Free Mourad Support Committee" unites leading intellectual, political and human rights figures outraged over Dr Mourad Dhina's arrest by French police at Paris-Orly Airport on 16 January 2012 and his detention pending extradition on request from the Algerian government.
Who is Dr Mourad Dhina?
After the military coup d’état of January eleventh 1992, Dr. Mourad Dhina joined the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), the opposition of the Algerian government. Today, Dr Dhina is Executive Director of Alkarama, a Geneva-based NGO working on human rights throughout the Arab world. As founding member of the Algerian political movement Rachad, created in 2007, he endeavors to bring about non-violent political change in Algeria.

Historical context
In Algeria leaders and members of the FIS were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and executed. While in France they were subjected to the interior minister, Charles Pasqua, rather willing to help the regime by arresting and extraditing France-based FIS activists. Therefore, Dr. Dhina sought asylum in Switzerland, playing a vital role in unifying the FIS, whilst strongly denouncing the “dirty war” launched by the Algerian, military leadership, in particular by the Department of Intelligence and Security (DRS).

Since the 1992 coup d’état, some 200,000 people have been killed; 20,000 have been disappeared; tens of thousands were subjected to torture; and tens of thousands were forced to flee the country.

Why is Dr Mourad Dhina in danger?
Since 1993, the Algerian authorities have made various efforts to suppress Dr Mourad Dhina’s activities. Dr. Dhina took part in subversive activities in Switzerland, from 1997 until 1999 and in 2003, which led to accusations, an arrest warrant and several sentences by the Algerian state. Yet, due to the political nature it never prompted the Swiss authorities to prosecute him. In case Dr Mourad Dhina were to be extradited to Algeria, it is clear that his physical integrity, and life, would be in great danger.

Serious human rights violations continue to be committed: Secret and arbitrary detention, unfair trials, and torture to extract confessions. The Algerian regime fails to respect many of the international legal treaties which it ratified.

What will the Committee of Support do?
The Support Committee will act to avoid a prolonged detention of Dr Mourad Dhina in order to prevent his extradition to Algeria and to ensure his quick release. To achieve this, we will raise awareness among French and International public opinion; alert French and European politicians; inform French and international media and launch public campaigns addressed to the French authorities.

*Before the creation of the committee, on 26 January 2012, eleven French and international NGOs sent an open letter to the French Prime Minister calling for the immediate release of Dr. Dhina. As of 1 February 2012 the “#FreeMourad” petition is open for signature on the website established for Dr. Dhina’s release (www.freemourad.org).
6.2 JOINT URGENT APPEAL FOR DETAINED DEFENDER AL KHAWAJA

In June 2011 Abdullhadi Al Khawaja was sentenced to life imprisonment by the military court for fabricated charges of terrorism and attempts to overthrow the regime. The military court rejected in November the appeal of Al Khawaja’s case. On April 2nd 2012 the Court of Cassation refused his lawyer’s appeal to release him on health grounds, due to Al Khawaja’s continuously deteriorating condition. The next hearing, set on April 23rd, may be fatal given his current health condition.

Zainab, Al Khawaja’s daughter, was arrested 3 days prior to the first anniversary of Al Khawaja’s arrest on April 8th, 2011. She is currently being detained at Al Hoora police station, and is being refused legal counsel. Al Khawaja’s family lawyer, Mohamed Al Jishi confirmed that the activist Zainab Al Khawaja was arrested after refusing to leave the prison hospital where her father is being detained. Protests all over Bahrain demand the release of Al Khawaja all of which are being attacked by Bahraini riot police forces. There are reports of a number of arrests among other protesters, in the areas around Bahrain.

Al Khawaja is the main founder of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights and co-founder and previous president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and the previous Middle East and North Africa Coordinator for Front Line Defenders

Yesterday Mohammed Al Jishi was able to visit him in the prison’s hospital and released a severely disturbing picture of a famished Al Khawaja. Doctors said he has lost around 25% of his weight and his pulse is so weak he may go into cardiac arrest at any minute or into a coma. Currently, Al Khawaja is unable to move, with very low sugar and blood pressure levels. Moreover, the blood in his urine might indicate kidney failure.

Today marks the 57th day of Al Khawaja’s hunger strike, which started last February to protest against his unlawful arrest in April 2011. Al Khawaja, with both a Bahrain and Danish nationality was subjected to severe torture and sexual assault leading to fractures in his face, as documented in case number 8 in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report. During his surgical recovery after the incident, the Bahraini authorities continued to torture him.

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), the Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR) and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) are extremely concerned about the continued deterioration of the health status of jailed human rights defender Al Khawaja and hold the Government of Bahrain directly responsible for his life and for any health damage he sustains.
**Appeal**

ACHRS calls on the international community and the United Nations, and all related international and regional human rights mechanisms, to stand up and take responsibility of protecting human rights and freedoms in Bahrain and ensure the immediate release of human rights defender Al Khawaja as recommended by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry. As requested by the Danish Foreign Minister, we recommend that he be immediately released to the Danish Authorities on humanitarian grounds.

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**7. Praise section**

**7.1 THE HONORING OF THE OUTSTANDING HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST KAMAL JENDOUBI**

Every two years an award is granted by the Amman Center to praise individuals and organizations for promoting and protecting human rights since 2008. The award includes a certificate for appreciation and the symbolic amount of 1948 Swiss francs, symbolizing the year wherein the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was born.

On January 15 2012 ACHRS honored with the 2012’s ‘Amman Center Award for Excellence in Human Rights’ the meritorious human rights activist Kamal Jendoubi, president of the Euro-Mediterranean Network for Human Rights and Chairman of the Independent High Electoral Committee. The ceremony, held in Amman, was attended by various international organizations and institutions in addition to a number of activists, employees and experts in the field of human rights, from Arab countries, such as Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and Tunisia.

Hani Dahleh, among other Chairman of the Arab Organization for Human Rights, speeched to express the importance of human rights organizations as well as to express his concern over the limitations of civil society organizations to, sometimes, overcome states’ restrictions. He articulated how the activation of the role of the United Nations and other international institutions can increase Inter-state Corporation to improve the living standards of citizens in the Arab world; to increase people’s freedoms; as well as to propagate the principles of democracy. In conclusion Dahleh celebrated Jendoubi’s struggle on behalf of human rights, where after Jendoubi was appointed as President of the Independent Commission for the elections of the Constituent Assembly of Tunisia, resulting in the management of fair elections.
The Syrian Daniel Saud, Chairman of the Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights Defense Committee in Syria who due to Syrian authorities could not attend, pointed out Jendoubi's role in establishing over twenty human rights organizations in the Arab region and its Diaspora. According to Saud, Jendoubi strived to achieve democracy pluralism that recognizes the rights of all citizens, whatever their political and ideological inclinations were, and profoundly defended women and their rights, whom he considered the first victim of the authoritarian state.

Finally Dr. Mohammed Al-Tarawneh, Member of the Scientific Council in the Center, congratulated Jendoubi for "Amman Center Award for in the of Human Rights in 2010," as one of the most prominent activists in the field of human rights in the Arab region and internationally, and as a recognition by Amman Center and all participating and supporting of this celebration for the big efforts of Jendoubi in the dissemination of a culture of human rights, and lobbying in the European community for the benefit of Arab human rights.

*Kamal Jendoubi was chosen to be awarded in 2010, but Jendoubi health conditions in December 2010 prevented him from the ceremony marking the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Rights and receive the award at that time.

8. In conclusion

ACHRS’ HISTORY IN A NUTSHELL

In 1999 the Amman Center was established in order to strengthen and spread the human rights culture in Jordan and in the MENA region by facilitating a platform that promotes dialogue, integration and coordination of governmental and non-governmental efforts. ACHRS accomplishes its objectives through education, cultural and intellectual activities, such as conferences, workshops and research on the human rights situations throughout the Middle East and North Africa. All of which serve to raise awareness to promote and protect the sanctity human rights.
Initiator for establishment OF the following NETWORKS
- Elections Network in the Arab Region (ENAR) (2006)
- Jordanian Coalition Against Death Penalty (2007)
- Arab Coalition Against Death Penalty (2007)
- Arab Society on Academic Freedom (2008)
- Jordanian Network for Civil Society Organizations (2008)

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.achrs.org/english, general website of Amman Center for Human Rights Studies.
www.arabew.org, focuses on elections issues in the Arab World.
www.afwinfo.org, focuses on academic freedom in the Arab World.
www.hartwaw.org, focuses on the Human rights trainers in the Arab world.
www.achrs.org/dp focuses on the Death Penalty in Arab world.