Amman Center for Human Rights Studies

Annual Report 2019
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About the Center

Our Fundamentals and Priorities

Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) is an independent non-governmental Think Tank center advocating for the enhancement of democracy and human rights in Jordan and the MENA region. The center’s five priorities are the right to life, the right to speak, the right to think, the right to participate, and women’s rights. The Center works to achieve its goals by lobbying; spreading awareness via conferences and symposiums; writing official statements, declarations, reports, articles, and booklets; and establishing and maintaining relations with international organizations and embassies. Furthermore, ACHRS has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

Objectives

- Disseminating human rights and spreading knowledge about international human rights and humanitarian law in Jordan and the Arab region
- Contributing to a more democratic society and enhancing the rule of law in a way that respects human rights
- Providing a free platform for dialogue for coordinating efforts undertaken by governmental and non-governmental organizations that are active in human rights
- Aiding governmental and non-governmental organizations in monitoring, documenting, and following up on human rights, as a step towards enforcing these rights on all legislative and executive levels
- Participating in the revision of local laws and regulations in order to support and uphold human rights
- Dedicating attention to those segments of society in need of special protection
The Center’s Activities in 2019

Projects

Project on ‘Supporting Political Dialogue between Civil Society and the Parliament in Jordan ’

Chairman of the House of Representatives: - A meeting was organized with the Chairman of the House of Representatives in his office in the House of Representatives, where he announced his support for the project and instructed directly the staff of the parliament with the implementation of the project and the tasks that are assigned to them.
With the financial assistance of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), ACHRS launched a project aimed at strengthening political dialogue between civil society and the Parliament of Jordan. The objective of this project is to improve the collaboration between civil societies and the Jordanian Parliament on the promotion of human rights. The project revolves around three pillars in order to achieve this: (1) the training of members of the Parliament, (2) the strengthening of the relationship between the members of the Parliament and Civil Society organizations and (3) the creation of awareness within the Jordanian society on the role the Parliament could play in the protection of human rights. On the one hand, the sessions have raised awareness among the Parliamentarians regarding current human rights issues within the Jordanian society. On the other hand, the sessions have underlined the responsibility the Parliament has in ensuring and safeguarding these human rights.
Trainings and Workshops

Arab Coalition against the Death Penalty

The Arab Coalition against the Death Penalty is an initiative of ACHRSH that was launched in 2007. It consists of national coalitions against the death penalty in Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Mauritania, Palestine, Tunisia, and Iraq. There are numerous efforts the Arab Coalition against the Death Penalty has already undertaken. For instance, (1) the issuance of statements condemning cases of arbitrary execution, extrajudicial executions or wholesale executes carried out in parts of the Arab world, (2) participation in the issuance of the Alexandria Declaration of 2008 that urges Arab countries to implement UN recommendation No. 62/149 and (3) the organization of regional seminars against the death penalty in the Arab world in cooperation and support of the International Organization for Penal Reform, the European Commission, representatives of national alliances against the death penalty and a number of specialists, researchers and activists. In addition, the Coalition is working actively to urge the Arab countries that have not yet joined the Alliance to join. It should be pointed out that the Arab Coalition against the Death Penalty has achieved its goal of breaking the silence around the death penalty. As for the Jordanian Coalition specifically, it has held several seminars on the death penalty in coordination with - among other NGOs - ACHRSH.
Human Rights Training for Members of the Kurdish Armed Forces

In cooperation with the Swiss Embassy in Amman and the Kurdistan Human Rights Watch (KHRW), ACHRSP hosted high-ranked officers of the Kurdish armed forces from the 4th until the 6th of March. The officers were taking part in courses focusing on awareness-raising of gender-based violence and human rights training. The training included visits to the National Center for Human Rights, the Directorate of Moral Guidance in the Jordanian Armed Forces, the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Political Development, and lastly the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies. These visits were aimed at offering insight into the role of these institutions in the protection of human rights. Participants said they have gained a lot of in-depth knowledge on human rights protection, which will improve the current situation in Iraqi Kurdistan. In the words of the First Lieutenant Ghyath Razoqi, these approaches will eventually be incorporated in their training centres in order to prevent abuses in the future.
Dialogue Meeting at the University of Isra

As part of an UNDEF funded project called ‘Supporting Political Dialogue between Civil Society and Parliament’, ACHRS organised a dialogue meeting at the University of Isra with students of the Faculty of Law within the project of social dialogue with deputies, engaging youth as a key partner in social dialogue with Members of Parliament to reach stable legislation in line with international covenants. The youth should have an instrumental role in enriching discussions on the amendment of laws during parliamentary sessions. Dr. Hamdi Qubailat stated that the meeting aims to involve university students in dialogues with deputies on the amendment of laws, in particular the legislative stage, and the work of the House of Representatives, adding that university students can provide a great level of knowledge and expertise for Members of Parliament. A number of young participants pointed to a lack of dialogue and democratic practices, such as respect for the views of others, the marginalisation of the role of youth in decision-making, and the absence of a culture of dialogue in society.
ACHRS initiates a project addressed to University students on leadership and democracy

Throughout the months of August and September eighteen University students from Jordan have engaged in a series of discussion sessions concerning topics related to political engagement and leadership. Following in the footsteps of the previous programmer, the Jordanian Institute for Women Leaders Project that was held in 2010, this project focuses on educating and engaging women in the discussion on human rights, political participation, and leadership skills.

Participants of the project said that they have learned what makes a good leader, understood the importance of sharing one’s ideas without fear, as well as realizing “that it is our duty to try to find innovative ways to safeguard human rights”.

Rand, 19-year old medicine student says that “the most important thing that I’ve learned from this workshop is to be able to share your ideas without fear. Life is not just about school, marks and studying, in fact, I believe that it is fundamental to be an effective part of society and participate in the political process”.
According to Mohammad (19), “the best quality of a leader is wise management. A leader must have a powerful personality, and he must be able to use his/her knowledge to make sensible decisions and to understand his/her people”.

Pharmacy student Leen (19) feels enthusiastic about what she has learnt and she is looking forward to continuing the seminar, and after participating at twelve sessions she is confident that the right to speak is a unalienable right: “I must defend my rights in every situation and I think that it is our duty to try to find innovative ways to safeguard human rights”.

Conferences

Conference on the Role of Civil Society in Building Peace in Yemen

From February 5th to the 7th, ACHRIS attended a conference in the capital of Tunisia, Tunis. This conference was organised by the Tunisian Center of
Press Freedom in collaboration with the Moroccan Association for Human Rights. Amongst the participants were ten human rights organizations that represented Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Yemen. The main focus was the discussion of the role of civil society organizations in the peace building process in Yemen. Eventually, the participants adopted the Tunis Declaration for the Cessation of War and Aggression, Lifting the Siege and Building Peace in Yemen.

Conference on Academic Freedom in Strasbourg, France

On the 20th of June 2019 100-150 members of NGOs, representatives of public authorities and leaders from Europe and the United States gathered in Strasbourg, France to discuss the current state of academic freedom. Debates included, the link between democracy and academic freedom, the status quo of academic freedom in Europe and how it is currently experiencing a crisis, how to define a clear and concise definition of academic freedom that is globally acceptable and applicable, the importance of institutional autonomy and developing a system that makes it possible to monitor academic freedom. ACHRS was present at the conference and due to its years of experience, ACHRS was able to explain the situation in Jordan and what has been and is being done to guarantee academic freedom in Jordan. At the end of the global conference a declaration was adopted by the experts, leaders and representatives.
Conference on the Right to Life

The conference was held on October 14th and was concerned with one of the center’s main objectives - the right to life. Therefore, the conference focus was on discussing how to raise more awareness among local communities, how to engage the youth, and also on lobbying decision to adopt a gradual policy of abolishing articles pertaining to the death penalty. First, the importance of this topic was discussed. It is worth mentioning that between 1977 and 2009 the number of countries that abolished the death penalty rose from 16 to 105. Although the death penalty has not been abolished in Jordan some great work has been done from the civil society activists, which have condemned the number of articles that call for the death penalty from 32 to 18. Nevertheless, this should not undermine the fact that there is still much work to be done.

International Visits

Australia’s Ambassador to Jordan visits ACHRS

During August the ACHRS hosted a meeting with the Australian Ambassador to Jordan, Miles Armitage, to introduce the ambassador to the work the center does, but mainly to discuss the death penalty in Jordan. It was concluded that the death penalty, more so than any other issue, is a political issue. Therefore, the ambassador suggested focusing on the short term goal of narrowing down the legislative article of the death penalty. Through the knowledge of ACHRS combined with the support of Australia’s Ambassador, there is a chance to build a systemic and strategic path in the struggle.
against the death penalty, and hopefully, the future will give us the chance to work together through potential further cooperation.

**Students from United States Universities visiting ACHRS**

On April 2nd, ten students coming from various universities around the US visited ACHRS. This visit was part of a study trip through Jordan, where the students had the chance to get acquainted with the work of different international and local organisations. Through questions and dialogues, the students were provided with a better understanding of the activities and work of ACHRS, and the human rights situation in the Middle East in general.

**Other activities**

**Election of the Executive Committee of the Alliance of the JCADP**

The General Assembly of the Jordanian Coalition against the Death Penalty (JCADP) held its biannual meeting on the 21st of September to elect a new Executive Committee of the Alliance and discuss coalition strategies at the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies. 19 of the total of 24 organisations were present at the meeting and discussed and reviewed the current situation of the coalition. Attendees discussed ways to develop the special interests of the JCADP and advance coalition objectives. The Executive Committee noted their standout accomplishments during the current period which include:

- Hosting awareness seminars regarding the right to life
- Organizing training workshops for civil society organizations and those in the legal field
- Participating in the Annual World Day Against the Death Penalty on October 10th
Furthermore, the coalition recommended adopting a bottom up approach by engaging the youth in the project. The idea was to reach more of the youth through social media and explaining the important link between the right to life and the abolition of the death penalty. At the end of the day the executive committee was decided on.
Participation in the 40th Session of the Human Rights Council
ACHRS was proud to participate in the 40th session of the Human Rights Council taking place at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. During this session, ACHRS organised a side event on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and delivered oral statements on the Universal Periodic Review regarding Jordan and the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

Participation in the 41st Session of the Human Rights Council
ACHRS was proud to participate in the 41st session of the Human Rights Council taking place at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Here, ACHRS delivered an oral statement on the right to education focusing on Academic Freedom in the Arab World.

Brainstorming Sessions on Draft Universal Declaration of Academic Freedom

Second brainstorming on October 30, 2019
During a number of brainstorming session ACHRS met with academics from universities all over Jordan, teachers and lawyers to discuss the current situation of academic freedom in Jordan and how it can be positively influenced to create change. These meetings built upon a longstanding support for academic freedom which ACHRS started supporting in 2004 when it launched the “Amman Declaration on Academic Freedoms and the Independence of Higher Education and Scientific Research Institutions in Arab Universities”. ACHRS started to hold a series of sessions, seminars and conferences in Jordan, Arab countries and internationally to prepare the proposal for submission to UNESCO on draft “Universal Declaration of Academic Freedoms” prepared by ACHRS, hoping that it will fit into the usual course of discussion and adoption of this draft.

First brainstorming on September 28, 2019

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

November 29th marks the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People create by the United Nations in 1977. The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies acknowledges that Palestinians have not yet obtained their full rights and deserve the inalienable right to self-determination without external interference. The International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian People honors all those who have struggled and continue to struggle for independence, or lost their lives in war, under occupation, or in exile. This day must not be a symbolic message for governments and institutions as a political leveraging mechanism. Rather, ACHRS encourages
people to act in solidarity with the Palestinian people to end the continuing injustice in Palestine. Therefore, ACHRS suggests six actions to take to stand up for Palestinian rights:

1. Seek out opportunities to listen and learn (books, documentaries, lectures).
2. Learning about and donating to community based organizations.
3. Take economic actions with the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement (BDS).
4. Join and national network or advocacy group for Palestinian rights.
5. Talk with friends, family and colleagues.

ACHRS Participation at the CWWM 10th International Consultation

The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies participated in the 10th International Consultation of Churches Witnessing with migrants in November in Quito, Ecuador. The International Consultation brought together 59 participants from 25 countries, discussed topics such as forced migration, migrant narratives, advocacies and involvements and sustainable human mobility.

The consultation also consisted of a high-level interfaith event with leaders of religious bodies and institutions were held at a local Evangelical Lutheran Church in Quito. In the interfaith platform, the religious leaders asserted and insisted on providing spaces and upholding the voices of migrants, refugees, and other displaced peoples of the world. They affirmed human mobility as fundamentally good, inherent in the humanity of every person, and is a protected human right.

ACHRS was attending the consultation for the third time and is looking forward to working closely with CWWM in the future.
Statements

Statement on the Amendments to the Temporary Labour Law No.26

In this statement, ACHR expressed its concern on the amendments to the temporary labour law no. (26) of 2010, which contains articles of the labour law no. (8) of 1996. It should be pointed out that ACHR supports multiple amendments made to the draft law, i.e. (1) the introduction of a new definition of the concept of flexible work and discrimination in wages and part-time work, (2) the exemption of Palestinians and Gazans living in Jordan from the obtainment of work permits, (3) the rise of the annual leave for workers, and (4) the grant of paternity leave to workers for a total of three paid days. Despite these positive changes, ACHR is very discouraged with other adjustments, including but not limited to, article 2, 27 and 36, and therefore urged the government to implement the stated recommendations.
Statement on the 1948 Convention on the Prevention of Genocide

To commemorate the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, which takes place annually on April 7th, ACHRS calls for the implementation of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in addition to their accountability for protection in accordance with the 2009 report of the Secretary-general. It is very unfortunate that the hatred and violence based on ethnic intolerance which was seen in Rwanda a quarter of a century ago, is still happening in others parts of the world - even to the extent to threaten the recurrence of genocide in some continents.

Statement on Sri Lanka and Report on Egypt

ACHRS strongly condemned the horrific attacks that occurred on the afternoon of Easter Sunday. The attacks targeted St. Anthony’s Shrine in Colombo, St. Sebastian’s in Negombo, Zion Church in Batticaloa, along with explosions at three hotels and two other locations in Colombo. Official numbers have shown that the death toll has reached more than 300 civilians with more than 500 injured. Sri Lankan society represents cohesiveness of different communities and religions, and this attack is a clear and direct rupture of that. The Center expresses its deepest sympathy to the victims and their families and stands in solidarity with Sri Lanka.

Statement on the Mass Executions Carried Out by the Saudi Authorities

In April, the Saudi authorities announced it had executed 37 Saudi human rights prisoners after convictions of terrorism-related charges, disruption of security, and creation of chaos and provokement of sectarian strife. All those charges are commonly used in prosecutions of political dissidents, particularly coming from sectarian minorities. It is evident that this is a great shock to all those opposed to the death penalty, and a major setback for Arab countries in their attempts to reform legislation and to find alternative sanctions far from the penalty of violating the sacred right to life. Saudi Arabia still has one of the highest rates of execution rates; it should be emphasized that such cruel and inhuman punishment is inexcusable.
Joint Press Release on Sudan

A total of 58 human rights networks, coalitions and organizations in 13 Arab countries condemn the massacre of the military junta in Khartoum. The signatories of the statement condemn the use of armed force in the peaceful sit-in by the military junta in the capital Khartoum, which result to the death of more than 30 martyrs and a number of 559 wounded peaceful protesters. Furthermore, 120 protesters have been arrested in the northern region of Khartoum and a number of martyr bodies have been dumped in the Nile river. The signatories demand the military coup council, which took over force on April 11, to hand over power to a civilian-led transitional authority and put an immediate end to attempts to procrastinate, deceive the people and the international community. Also, the signatories appeal to the international community for not recognizing the military coup and call on the Human Rights Council to establish an international commission of inquiry to investigate the excessive use of force exercised by the Bashir regime and its generals since the start of the Sudanese people’s peaceful movement on December 19, 2018, and to bring those responsible for the atrocities before justice.

Joint Open Letter on Sudan

Following up on prior statements, 70 human rights networks, coalitions and organisations in 13 Arab states call upon the African Union to undertake an urgent investigation into the crimes of the Sudanese military council that happened in Khartoum on June 3.

Statement on the Lebanon Protest

The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies stated that they stand in solidarity with the protestors in Lebanon as they push for government reforms. As the protests are on-going ACHRS wants to acknowledge and support the rights and demands that many Lebanese citizens are making to the government. Protestors are standing up against yet another tax, as they struggle with corruption, high unemployment rates, as well as a lack of education, transportation, waste management, medical care and electricity. Additionally, the protestors are also standing for the removal of Lebanon’s corrupt ruling class and believe they should be brought to justice for their crimes, which have resulted in the collapse of the Lebanese economy.
Statement on the Urgent Human Rights Situation in Iran

In solidarity with the Iranian workers and people, the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies supports their protests and strikes in Iran to achieve basic rights. The livelihoods of various Iranian strata, especially factory workers and laborers, are currently very difficult and millions are below the poverty line. Workers from large manufacturing and construction company located in the western province of Markazi are calling for humane working conditions and fair pay. Demonstrations have occurred throughout Iran. Furthermore, 94 cities across Iran, including Tehran are witnessing escalating protests after a gasoline price hike imposed by the state-run National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company. People in Tehran and other major cities throughout the country are blocking roads and highways in their sign of protests. Dozens of people have been killed in various cities by direct firing by the Iranian security forces, thousands have been injured or arrested and taken to the regime's prisons by the security forces. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) have exerted excessive force onto these demonstrators. Dozens of people have been killed in various cities by direct firing by the Iranian security forces, thousands have been injured or arrested and taken to the regime's prisons by the security forces. Peaceful protests, young people and uninvolved individuals have been targeted in arrests and beatings throughout October and November. Article 27 of the Iranian Regime Constitution protects a citizen’s legal right to protest; however, any form of dissent against the regime could warrant an arrest of demonstrators, human rights defenders and critics. The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) calls upon the public rights advocacy bodies and governmental organizations to condemn the violations of the basic rights of Iranian workers, people and students. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of political protestors arrested during the strikes. Furthermore, ACHRS calls upon trade unions, federations, and syndicates in various countries to join the declaration of solidarity with the Iranian workers and demand justice for the wrongfully imprisoned.
Reports and Publications

ACHRS ’Report on Sudan

ACHRS has been keeping a close eye on the events of Sudan, and is proud to publish a report on the six months of revolution happening in Sudan. Massive protests have taken place in Sudan since December 19 that reached an eventual climax on April 11 with the ousting of Omar Al-Bashir. This put an end to a 30-year iron-fisted ruling and hence, fostered an atmosphere of hope among the civilians. Seven months after the beginning of the protests, the revolution entered in the transitional phase, which gives us time to look back on the revolts; What are its biggest characteristics? How can we understand the temporality of the protests? Who are its main actors?