



## **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

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### **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

**Pre-session working group**

**Thirty-ninth session**

23 July-10 August 2007

### **Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the combined third and fourth periodic report of Jordan**

2. The delay in publication of the Convention in the Official Gazette is due to a debate over whether to publish it with reservations or whether it is necessary to review those reservations, withdraw them where possible, and then submit the Convention for consideration and adoption by the Chamber of Deputies. The agenda of the Chamber of Deputies is full and contains a number of temporary laws in need of consideration and adoption. At the present time, the regular and extraordinary sessions of the Chamber of Deputies have ended; therefore, submission and consideration of the Convention is expected during the new parliamentary session. Meanwhile, awareness campaigns on the importance of adopting the Convention are being implemented, and pressure groups for its adoption are being formed by women's and human rights organizations.

3. No measures have been proposed to amend article 6 of the Constitution, and in most quarters it is not seen as necessary to do so, since the Jordanian National Charter provides a clear interpretation of article 6 that affirms that the expression "Jordanians" refers to both men and women. There is a push by the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) and a number of women's and human rights organizations to propose a law guaranteeing equality of opportunity and prohibiting discrimination.

4. JNCW is now working on reformulating its legal framework, restructuring itself and completing a study of ways to enhance its powers, in particular in the area of decision-making and enforcement.

5. The idea of training judges in gender issues is among the Commission's plans for mainstreaming gender in the work of Government institutions and other official agencies, and a number of relevant events and training sessions have been organized. Several other national bodies, such as the National Centre for Human Rights, the National Council on Family Affairs, the Judicial Institute and the



Ministry of Justice, which recently established a directorate for the family and women, are playing a role in these activities, in cooperation with JNCW and other community and civil society organizations.

6. No action has been taken to withdraw the reservations to any article of the Convention that contradicts the Islamic sharia. Political conditions in the region, the influx of refugees and instability in a number of Arab States continue to prevent any attempt to look into the issue of nationality. The Government has shown its readiness to look into and respond to humanitarian concerns.

7. A quota of at least 20 per cent for women in local councils has been approved, which is a major achievement. At the present time, JNCW is continuing to develop and offer training sessions for women candidates for local councils, in conjunction with the Jordanian National Association of Women's Committees and an international organization, which will cover all of the Kingdom's provinces. With regard to women legislators, JNCW has held a number of dialogue and training sessions for women members of both the upper and lower houses, including sessions on the oversight and legislative role of women legislators and the importance of mainstreaming gender in the Kingdom's national budget. Training sessions will be held for candidates for the upcoming elections to the Chamber of Deputies. In addition, efforts are being made to target public opinion and to encourage people, including female voters, to place their trust in women and to vote for them. JNCW and women's organizations are also pushing for an increase to 20 per cent in the number of seats allocated to women in Parliament.

8. There is political will at the highest levels for the advancement of women. The importance of the role played by women and of their active participation in society has been stressed in royal letters of appointment to prime ministers. Mainstreaming gender in the work of ministries and public institutions will bring about a change in stereotypes of women and contribute to increasing the employment of women. The recommendations of conferences and local workshops focus on the importance of women's economic participation and protection of the rights of working women, and there is a push to establish maternity insurance.

9. JNCW receives monthly statistics from the Family Protection Division on cases of rape, honour crimes and sexual harassment.

There is increasing interest on the part of the Department of Statistics in expansion of the provision of data on gender-related issues. There is a special department for gender statistics and the Commission on Social Welfare has recommended that a national registry of domestic violence and violence against women should be established. A number of women's organizations are monitoring cases and providing services to women victims of violence, and have compiled figures and statistics on these issues.

10. After years of demands for a law providing for protection against domestic violence, a draft act on protection against domestic violence has been drawn up by the Ministry of Social Development and is now under discussion in the Council of Ministers. Great strides have thus been taken towards adoption of the act, and it is anticipated that the draft will be submitted to Parliament very soon. The legal working group of JNCW is studying the proposed text with a view to submitting comments, and at the same time a broad alliance of various parties is studying the draft with a view to improving it and preparing for the parliamentary debate phase.

12. The Family Reconciliation Shelters statute has been approved and a Family Reconciliation Shelter has been established to provide refuge for victims of domestic violence. This is in addition to the shelter set up by one of the country's civil society organizations.

13. It should be noted that the incidence of this type of crime has declined and efforts are continuing by all those involved in combating violence against women to raise awareness and protect women's right to life. A new amended draft of the Penal Code, which increases the minimum sentence for such crimes committed "in the heat of anger" to five years in all circumstances, is still under consideration in Parliament.

14. The phenomenon of trafficking in women is not officially recorded in Jordan. However, trafficking is criminalized by law and under the relevant international Convention ratified by Jordan. Because only rare and undocumented reports and a few publicized but unconfirmed cases have surfaced, information on this problem remains limited. JNCW and women's organizations will devote attention to the problem with a view to ensuring the effectiveness of laws and measures to prevent it from spreading, but there are no official statistics in this regard.

15. The Labour Code protects pregnant women against dismissal and grants them nursing breaks. When a complaint of any violation is filed with the Ministry of Labour, it investigates the matter and takes appropriate measures. The Ministry has a special department for women and the General Federation of Labour Unions recently established a committee on working women that held its first conference this month. It follows up all aspects of complaints from working women.

16. There is no explicit reference in the laws on free trade to any particular social class or to gender, so it may be assumed that the laws are directed at both women and men. Although these laws create new and better work opportunities and contribute to improving the quality of services, they might nonetheless present challenges to women or affect them negatively. Competition might lead them to accept any kind of job, seasonal or day labour or lower wages. The many training and qualification requirements might also hinder women's access to job opportunities. Working hours also interfere with their reproductive role, which might force them to look for jobs with flexible hours. The workplace's proximity to or distance from the home also has implications for women. It should also be borne in mind that women who own small businesses might be forced to withdraw from markets if competition is strong, as anticipated. The privatization of education and health provision might also lead to a decline in the basic health and education services available to women.

17. The project on supporting gender equity is designed to identify practical and strategic gender needs. Safe travel to and from the workplace can be a problem for some women. Mainstreaming gender will help identify other obstacles and ways of overcoming them. With regard to sexual harassment, women's organizations are working to draft a proposed amendment to the law. However, the traditional culture and the fear of social stigma make it difficult to bring up, discuss or even acknowledge the existence of such issues, particularly in conservative milieux. This sensitivity constitutes an obstacle to action.

18. There are two categories of women migrant workers: those working in industrial areas, to whom the Jordanian Labour Code applies, and domestic workers.

The Jordanian Labour Code does not cover the latter group, whether Jordanian or migrant (immigrant). However, the Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and an international organization, has worked on the drafting of a standard employment contract, the regulation of employment agencies and the provision of a complaint hotline, as well as the distribution of a handbook in these women's native languages. Awareness campaigns have also been conducted in daily newspapers to inform these women of their rights, with the support of the most widely sold newspaper in Jordan, and cartoons have been published illustrating their human rights and the types of conduct that are acceptable or unacceptable in view of human rights principles. The Ministry of Labour has taken part in numerous conferences that have been designed specifically to highlight issues relating to these women. All the relevant parties from labour ministries, employment agencies and non-governmental organizations concerned with these issues have taken part in these conferences.

Work is currently under way to amend the Labour Code to cover all men and women workers, including domestic servants and those in similar positions, who constitute the majority of immigrant women workers. The amendment may be submitted to Parliament in its upcoming session.

19. Although the number of women in top-level posts in Government agencies is small, it is increasing noticeably, and there is a greater readiness for promotion among women themselves and among the relevant parties. Even so, JNCW is studying amendments to the civil retirement law and the social security law that would help to limit early retirement.

20. Equality in the right of access to an income and to provision for basic needs and the implementation of anti-poverty projects that attend to the needs and capacities of women will contribute to implementation of the Convention. Significant efforts are currently being made in Jordan to support small projects and the provision of small loans and microcredit, from which women in particular benefit.

21. Continued harsh conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the instability and daily killing in Iraq have forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Iraqis into Jordan and neighbouring States. This has placed a burden on resources and has affected social priorities and trends in women's issues. It has also created new problems for women owing to an increase in the number of mixed marriages and competition for work opportunities. Some of these women also require welfare and other services.

22. The Jordanian Ministry of Education has introduced the Jordanian Education Initiative and the Knowledge Economy Project. Both projects have a component related to gender issues and the revision of school curricula to make them more gender-sensitive, as well as training in gender issues for men and women teachers and students. The Ministry of is also beginning to compile gender-disaggregated data. All these efforts will contribute to changing stereotypes in school curricula.

23. Radio and television stations have begun to offer special programmes that address women's issues from a contemporary perspective, such as a programme on women and municipal elections and the "Under the Light" programme. JNCW has established a wide-ranging media network that includes various communications media. Within the network, a media working group has been set up to oversee the

implementation of the media and communications component of the National Strategy for Women (2006-2010).

24. A study of links between educational outcomes and the labour market has been prepared to identify the demands of the labour market and to help both men and women to be aware of labour market priorities. The State also places importance on vocational training and offers such training in various fields to both men and women at centres in more than 40 regions of Jordan. The focus will be on professional education and its importance in educational curricula. In addition, awareness campaigns are conducted by the vocational training centres through the daily newspapers, and efforts are made to encourage enrolment in various programmes that offer nominal wages during the training period and guarantee positions to both men and women.

25. An AIDS awareness programme consisting of campaigns on reproductive health issues has been conducted by various agencies in the Ministry of Health, the High-Level Council on Population, the National Council on Family Affairs and non-governmental organizations.

26. The High-Level Council on Population, in the section of its 2005 annual report on gaining support and adjusting approaches, mentioned many activities to increase awareness of and responsiveness to reproductive health issues among decision makers, service providers and local society, such as the inclusion of reproductive health issues in educational curricula and the organization of a workshop to present the results of a survey of students' grasp of demographic education concepts. There is also a reproductive health awareness project for mosque preachers. The following steps have been taken to increase the provision of information on reproductive health services and to improve access to it: demography, development and reproductive health terminology has been included in the compulsory national curriculum for university students; a seminar on identifying procedural obstacles and broadening health service coverage, including reproductive health services, has taken place; and a workshop on drafting a strategy to ensure sustainability of family planning services has been held. There is also a programme for reproductive health awareness facilitators (instructors).

27. The legal working group of JNCW and many relevant women's organizations are continuing their efforts to review the personal status laws and propose amendments aimed at achieving equality and fairness. Given the link between the personal status laws and the religious authorities, JNCW relies on those religious interpretations that are the fairest and most responsive to women's rights and needs. This process is ongoing, and JNCW has before it a set of proposals of which it is trying to secure the adoption in accordance with procedures. Commission members continue to hold meetings and negotiations with relevant parties in the Government and Parliament and have also engaged public opinion through seminars and conferences designed to ensure the acceptance of and necessary support for the proposals.

28. A national agenda has been approved in the form of a 10-year plan. The "All of Us are Jordan" initiative has also been put forward with the goal of implementing national priorities and putting necessary projects in place. The social welfare component includes objectives related to women.

29. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has detailed statistics and information on refugees in general and women refugees in particular, which we will try to obtain. UNRWA provides primary and preparatory education services to female students and offers primary health care. The children of female refugees have recently been granted the right to the services that UNRWA provides to the children of male refugees, which is a positive development in the direction of equality. Palestinian refugees who do not have a national identification number constitute 7 per cent of all refugees. For these people, employment opportunities are few and are limited to simple jobs. Their lack of national identification numbers bars them from applying for official posts and from admission to Government universities. This means that they must enrol in expensive private universities. This month a conference on refugee women was held at al-Yarmuk University at the initiative of the Centre on Asylum, Displacement and Forced Migration. The recommendations of the conference included a set of approaches to ensuring the human rights of refugee women.

30. A number of women's organizations have called for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, but the priority remains publication of the Convention in the Official Gazette and the removal of discriminatory provisions from legislation.

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