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**APF Member Reports - Jordan**

**H.E. Mr. Shaher Bak  
Commissioner General  
The National Centre for Human Rights Jordan**

**Background**

The National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) was established in 2002 by virtue of Provisional Law No. 75 (2002). Thus, it was the de facto successor of the Royal Commission for Human Rights (RCHR), which concluded its mission that year and recommended the establishment by law of a national human rights body.

The establishment of the Center was yet another step along Jordan's quest for building a society, where justice and equality among all citizens are sovereign without any discrimination, and where respect for human dignity, rights and basic freedoms is paramount.

According to the provisions of the NCHR Law, the Center aims to enhance human rights in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; establish the human rights culture at both the intellectual and practical levels; promote non-discrimination among citizens regardless of race, language, religion or gender; and enhance the democratic approach in the Kingdom with a view to fashioning an integrative, balanced model based on spreading freedoms, ensuring political pluralism, respecting sovereignty of the Law and guaranteeing the right to economic, social and cultural development.

In order to achieve its objectives, the Center utilizes several approaches, notably verifying that human rights observance in Jordan when addressing any encroachments or violations thereof and following up on the adoption of the necessary measures towards that end, including settlement or referral to the relevant executive, legislative or judicial authority in order to stop these encroachments and violations and eliminate their effects.

Following the formation of the NCHR's Board of Trustees and the selection of a Commissioner General for Human Rights, the Center started functioning on the 1st of June 2003. The NCHR Secretariat consists of four units with a total of 27 staff members:

- Research and Documentation Unit,
- Complaints and Legal Services Unit,
- Awareness and Training Unit,
- Administrative and Financial Affairs Unit.

**The Strategic Plan (2005-2008)**

After endorsement by the Board of Trustees, the Center's three-year (2005–2008) strategic plan was finalized and adopted in late 2004. The plan consists of seven domains, namely:

1. Human Rights Education
2. Strengthening Justice and developing legislation
3. Developing institutional capacity of the NCHR and strengthening the role of civil society institutions
4. Marginalized groups
5. Enhancing the bases for democracy and political development
6. Economic, social, and cultural rights
7. Writing reports

### **The First Annual Report on the State of Human Rights in Jordan**

On the 29th of May 2005, the Board of Trustees endorsed the NCHR Report on the State of Human Rights in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which consists of two parts, the first dealing with civil and political rights and the second with economic, social and cultural rights. This report is the Center's first national report and a benchmark for future reports. It is planned to issue the second NCHR report in January 2006.

This report depicts and evaluates the human rights situation in the Kingdom during the period from the 1st of June 2003 until the 31st of December 2004. Preparation of the report relied heavily on results of the Center's activities, as well as its day-to-day follow-up on the human rights situation in the Kingdom as much as it was possible. The report's findings and recommendations depict the Center's views and positions vis-à-vis the various HR issues and developments, which the Center monitored during the period covered by the report.

The report does not involve any comparisons between the human rights situation in the Kingdom and that of human rights in other States anywhere in the World rather the evaluation criteria employed in this report are essentially those HR criteria endorsed by the United Nations.

On the basis of these criteria, and in view of the local, regional and international economic, social, political and security conditions, the human rights situation in the Kingdom during the period covered by this Report was judged as:

- Good, at the planning and policy level;
- Acceptable, in the area of economic, social and cultural rights; and
- Poor, in the area of civil and political rights.

### **NCHR Activities**

Since its inception two years ago the NCHR has made a clear effort to involve its staff in specialized training sessions in order to develop their skills. These were all efforts made by the NCHR in order to build strong foundations for its work.

With regard to its legal services capacity, the NCHR has developed a set of procedures for receiving complaints, documenting, monitoring, and following-up on human rights violations. However, the NCHR welcomes support in this area in order to develop these procedures further based on the expertise and knowledge of similar institutions. Furthermore, the NCHR is developing its capacity in the area of fact-finding and investigations which are mandated by the law of the centre.

With regard to specialized training programs for professional groups, the NCHR has already held several training sessions for targeted groups such as judges, lawyers, police officials, parliamentarians, and media people. Further, the NCHR has implemented programs for young school children as well as for youth in universities. The training workshops included as proposed activities in the strategic plan of the NCHR for the period 2005-2008 include a continuation and broadening of these specialized training programs as per component 4 in NCHR's strategic plan and technical support is welcomed for the design and implementation of these training programs.

In addition to capacity building programs for the staff of the centre, the NCHR hopes to develop its role as a catalyst and facilitator for capacity building of other non-governmental organizations working in the field of human rights. The NCHR has already built a network of relationships with local NGOs in the field of human in an effort to co-ordinate, synchronize, and support the on-going initiatives of civil society organizations working in the field. These NGOs now look to the NCHR for more support and the NCHR plans to fill this expectation. Further, the NCHR has also initiated the process of building professional links and partnerships with international human rights organizations.

The centre has already initiated community-based programs to cover the geographical regions of the country. The centre has implemented many programs that address basic human rights issues and raise awareness regarding the main conventions that Jordan is signatory to. Furthermore, the centre is committed to media coverage of its activities as part of reaching a larger segment of the Jordanian population. As part of the strategic plan for the coming few years, the centre aims to develop an effective and efficient media strategy and to produce media resources aimed at promoting both general and specific human rights issues.

The NCHR has also developed its capacity with regard to documentation and research and has already initiated the process of developing several databases regarding human rights issues and organizations. Furthermore, analysis of the existing research on human rights issues has led to the identification of gaps and priorities for research. The NCHR has already commenced work on a number of priority research topics and plans to continue this process of responding to research needs via well-designed and action oriented research.

The NCHR is strengthening its advocacy role as a clearing house of information regarding human rights issues. This role was enhanced through the launch of the newsletter "The Newsletter" and the development of different kinds of theme-specific information leaflets. Moreover, the launch of the basic website for the NCHR

([www.nchr.org.jo](http://www.nchr.org.jo)) is a good step towards networking and cooperating with similar organizations worldwide.