



## Human Rights Watch Statement

### UPR outcome report of Jordan

11 June 2009

Human Rights Watch welcomes the UPR outcome report on Jordan in which the kingdom's delegation voiced satisfaction at the "constant review" of its human rights standards. Jordan should endeavor to implement recommendations to prevent torture, eliminate administrative detention, and strengthen freedom of assembly and association.

Jordan's rejection of some important recommendations geared toward eradicating torture is deeply disappointing, since many countries voiced concern over torture in Jordan and, indeed, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security Directorate in Jordan are considering some of the very measures Jordan's delegation summarily rejected.

Jordan committed to "never overlook" acts of torture and to prosecute those responsible. However, Jordan's current mechanisms to detect, prosecute, and provide redress for torture and other ill-treatment are inadequate. Jordan should quickly implement recommendations to set up an independent complaints mechanism, allow unannounced prison visits by nongovernmental organizations, and abolish exceptional courts such as the Police Court, where the police chief appoints police officers as judges and prosecutors, with jurisdiction over torture allegedly committed by officials in the Public Security Directorate.

Currently, police prosecutors investigate their fellow officers for allegations of torture, but no clarity exists over the circumstances in which they must initiate prosecution at the Police Court or accept as satisfactory internal review or disciplinary measures.

One in five inmates in Jordan is administratively detained for an indefinite period of time. Deprivation of liberty is a criminal sanction that, in the case of administrative detention in Jordan, is not based on any finding of a criminal offense, but is imposed by the governor based on vague provisions of the Law of Crime Prevention, which allows the detention of persons a governor considers a "danger to the people."

This law in practice allows for the administrative detention of persons whose guilt and punishment for a criminal offense should properly be the domain of the independent criminal justice system, not of appointed officials in the Ministry of Interior. Jordan should abolish administrative detention.

Jordan has curtailed its practice of administratively detaining women threatened with violence by family members, and tribal members threatened with violence by members of other tribes. However, the government has made no concerted effort to apprehend or prosecute those who issue such violent threats.

Human Rights Watch is heartened by Jordan's readiness to listen to all ideas to uphold freedom of assembly. Our recommendation is to abolish prior approval for public meetings, and to require only notification of the authorities. Jordan is also proposing amendments to the 2008 Law of Societies. However, these amendments do not alleviate current concerns over the law. We recommend the government lift provisions governing executive approval to register a society, requiring only notification instead. We also urge the removal of excessive powers of government interference, including prior approval for foreign funding, attendance by government officials at certain meetings of societies, government approval of certain decisions by the society, and government discretion to remove the management of a society and to legally dissolve it.

\* \* \*