

Consolidated Disability Findings from the 2015 United States Department of State Reports on Human Rights and Practices

Near East

Introduction to the Department of State Report on Disability Human Rights

The U.S. Department of State Report on Human Rights in 2015 is based on research performed by the State Department, specifically the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. The reports focus on the role of government in establishing policies to protect the human rights of all citizens.

USICD has consolidated the references on disability from each country report into one comprehensive document. Each country summary within the document is organized into four possible subheadings:

1. **Constitution and Laws:** If and how a country's constitution or laws cover disability rights.
2. **Persons with Disabilities:** Material drawn from the report's section on "Persons with Disabilities."
3. **Other Relevant References:** Disability highlighted elsewhere in a country's report (e.g. within the section on children, women, or prison and detention center conditions, etc.).
4. **The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:** The status of a country's signature and ratification of the CRPD (Note: ratification dates are in a date/month/year format).

The following condensed reports are intended to be a resource only and do not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the quality of content or perspective contained within the reports. All content is pulled directly from the State Department reports with the exception of the CRPD status, which was added by USICD staff.

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Near East

Algeria

Constitution and Laws

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services, although the government did not effectively enforce these provisions. Persons with disabilities faced widespread social discrimination. Few government buildings were accessible to persons with disabilities. Few businesses abided by the law that they reserve 1 percent of jobs for persons with disabilities. Businesses that did not meet the 1-percent quota received a DZD 140,000 (\$1,330) fine. It was unclear if the government enforced payment of fines. Social security provided payments for orthopedic equipment. The Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and the Status of Women provided some financial support to health-care-oriented NGOs, but for many NGOs such financial support represented a small fraction of their budgets.

Government statistics from 2013 stated there were two million individuals with disabilities in the country, and NGOs working with persons with disabilities agreed that number remained accurate. The Ministry of Solidarity stated that it paid disability benefits to 830,000 persons with disabilities, which accounted for those who registered with the government.

In November dozens of persons with disabilities and their families protested in Algiers to call for increased disability benefits.

The Ministry of Solidarity reported that it ran 232 centers throughout the country that provided psychopedagogical support for persons with intellectual, auditory, visual, and physical disabilities. The ministry stated that it began in concert with the Ministry of Education a pilot program to integrate children with disabilities into public schools to promote inclusion. The majority of the ministry's programs for children with disabilities remained in social centers for children with disabilities rather than in formal educational institutions. Advocacy groups reported that children with disabilities rarely attended school past the secondary level. Many schools lacked teachers to work with children with disabilities, threatening the viability of efforts to mainstream children with disabilities into public schools. Numerous private schools existed but, according to advocacy organizations, staff acted more as caretakers than teachers due to lack of training.

In April 2014 the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and the Status of Women established the National Council of Handicapped Persons in response to a 2006 presidential decree. It serves as a consultative organ to study issues such as accessibility for persons with disabilities, autism, and the education of children with disabilities. In March the ministry signed a memorandum of understanding with the NGO Handicap International that formalized their partnership and cooperation.

Many persons with disabilities faced challenges in voting due to voting centers that lacked accessible features.

Other References

Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life: September 10, several newspapers reported that Benchikh Aissa died in a Ghardaia prison. His lawyers said that he suffered from depression and prison officials refused to provide necessary health services.

Employment: The law prohibits discrimination with respect to employment, salary, and work environment based on age, gender, social and marital status, family links, political conviction, disability and affiliation with a union. The law does not prohibit discrimination respect to employment based on sexual orientation, HIV-positive status, or religion. The government did not adequately enforce the law since discrimination reportedly existed, specifically against migrant workers who lacked legal means to address unfair working conditions.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Algeria signed the CRPD on March 30 2007. The government ratified the CRPD on 4 Dec 2009.

Bahrain

Constitution and Laws

Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

On January 30, police shot at rioters in Diraz and hit 14-year-old Mohammed Mahdi al-Sawad, who was playing outside of his grandparent's house. The shotgun pellets reportedly blinded him in one eye. The SIU investigated the incident, but there was no further information at year's end.

Persons with Disabilities

The law stipulates equal treatment for persons with disabilities with regard to employment, and violations of the law are punishable with fines. It was unclear whether the government enforced these laws. According to the government, it re-established in 2012 a committee originally formed in 2011 to care for persons with disabilities and included representatives from all relevant ministries, NGOs, and the private sector. The committee is responsible for monitoring violations against persons with disabilities; it was unclear whether the committee acted on any incidents during the year.

Authorities mandated a variety of governmental, quasi-governmental, and religious institutions to support and protect persons with disabilities. New public buildings in the Central Municipality must include facilities for persons with disabilities. The law, however, does not outline specific criteria for what authorities required for facilities to be accessible for persons with disabilities. The law does not mandate access to other nonresidential buildings for persons with disabilities. There was no information available regarding a law providing access for persons with disabilities to information and communication.

There was no information available on the responsibilities of government agencies to protect the rights of persons with disabilities or on actions taken by government agencies to improve respect for their rights. According to anecdotal evidence, however, such persons routinely lacked access to public education and employment. The one government school for children with hearing disabilities did not operate past the 10th grade. Some public schools had specialized education programs for children with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, speech disabilities, and Down syndrome, but the government did not fund private programs for children who could not find appropriate programs in public schools.

Eligible voters can vote either in their regular precincts or in a general polling station. The local precincts, which are mostly in schools, sometimes offered problems to those with mobility disabilities; however, the general polling stations are in public spaces such as malls, which allow for assistance devices. One candidate with disabilities in the November 2014 parliamentary election complained that access restrictions separated him from the other candidates at a function, as there was no ramp for his wheelchair to access the stage. There were also complaints there were no provisions made for those who were restricted to their house or a hospital to vote, as there was no absentee ballot system.

The law requires the government to provide vocational training for persons with disabilities who wish to work. The law also requires employers of more than 100 persons to hire at least 2 percent of its employees from the government's list of workers with disabilities. The government did not monitor compliance. The government placed persons with disabilities in some public sector jobs.

In 2013 Minister of Social Development and Chairperson for the High Committee for Persons with Disabilities Fatima Mohamed al-Balooshi announced the launch of a National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in cooperation with the UN Development Program. At year's end, the Ministry of Labor and Social Development continued to work with the UN agency on support activities connected to this strategy.

Other References

Prison and Detention Center Conditions: There were no accommodations for persons with disabilities in prisons and mental detention centers. Human rights groups reported prisoners who became physically or mentally disabled while in custody relied on fellow prisoners for their care.

Employment: The constitution provides for equality between men and women in political, social, cultural, and economic spheres without breaching the provisions of Islamic cannon law. There are no specific protections regarding race, disability, language, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, HIV-positive status or having other communicable diseases, or social status. The government lacked any specific implementing regulations or processes to identify proactively cases of discrimination or to address and seek remedy for any cases of which they might become aware.

As in 2014 the Ministry of Social Development continued to fund the Disabled Services Center, which helped train and find work for Bahrainis with disabilities. It remained rare, however, for persons with disabilities to find employment in positions of responsibility. Many work places

remained difficult to access for those needing assistance due to a lack of ramps, narrow doorways, and unpaved parking lots.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Bahrain signed the CRPD on 25 June 2007. The government ratified the CRPD on 22 Sep 2011.

Egypt

Constitution and Laws

The constitution states that all citizens “are equal in rights, freedoms, and general duties without discrimination based on religion, belief, gender, origin, race, color, language, disability, social class, political or geographic affiliation, or any other reason.” Many aspects of the law discriminate against women and religious minorities, and the government did not effectively enforce prohibitions against such discrimination.

Persons with Disabilities

The constitution states that all citizens “are equal in rights, freedoms, and general duties without discrimination based on... disability” among other attributes, but does not explicitly “prohibit” discrimination.

The law provides for persons with disabilities to gain access to vocational training and employment but does not outlaw discrimination altogether (see section 7.d.). Government policy for employing persons with disabilities is based on a quota (5 percent of workers with disabilities) for companies with more than 50 employees. According to most sources, however, authorities did not enforce this quota, and companies often had persons with disabilities on their payroll to meet their quota without actually employing them. Although the constitution states persons with disabilities are equal without discrimination before the law, at year’s end no laws prohibited discrimination against persons with disabilities in education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services, nor did laws mandate access to buildings or transportation. Widespread discrimination continued against persons with disabilities, particularly persons with mental disabilities, resulting in a lack of acceptance into mainstream society. Government-operated treatment centers for persons with disabilities, especially children, were of poor quality.

The Ministries of Education and Social Solidarity share responsibilities for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities rode government-owned mass transit buses free of charge, but the buses were not wheelchair-accessible, and access required assistance from others. Persons with disabilities received special subsidies to purchase household products, wheelchairs, and prosthetic devices. Persons with disabilities also received expeditious approval for the installation of new telephone lines and received reductions on customs duties for specially equipped private vehicles.

Other References

Women: On May 24, the Giza Criminal Court sentenced Khaled Abdel Rahman Mohamed, a low-ranking police officer, to life imprisonment for raping a 16-year-old female detainee with mental disabilities at Imbaba Police Station in August 2014.

Employment: The constitution states all citizens “are equal in rights, freedoms, and general duties without discrimination based on religion, belief, gender, origin, race, color, language, disability, social class, political or geographic affiliation, or any other reason.” It does not specify age, citizenship, sexual orientation or gender identity, or HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases. The law provides for persons with disabilities to gain access to vocational training and employment but does not completely outlaw discrimination. The government did not effectively enforce prohibitions against such discrimination. Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to women and persons with disabilities (see section 6). Discrimination against migrant workers occurred (see section 2.d.).

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Egypt signed the CRPD on 4 Apr 2007. The government ratified the CRPD on 14 Apr 2008.

Iran

Constitution and Laws

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, and social status “in conformity with Islamic criteria,” but the government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions, and many discriminatory provisions are built into the law.

Persons with Disabilities

The law generally prohibits discrimination by government actors against persons with disabilities. No information was available regarding authorities’ effectiveness in enforcing the law. The law does not apply to private actors, and electoral law prohibits blind and deaf persons from running for seats in parliament. While the law provides for government-funded vocational education for persons with disabilities, according to domestic news reports, vocational centers were located in urban areas and unable to meet the needs of the entire population.

The law provides for public accessibility to government-funded buildings, and new structures appeared to comply with the standards in these provisions. There were efforts to increase the access of persons with disabilities to historical sites. Nevertheless, government buildings that predated existing accessibility standards remained largely inaccessible, and general accessibility for persons with disabilities remained a widespread problem. Persons with disabilities had limited access to information, education, and community activities.

The Welfare Organization of Iran is the principal governmental agency charged with protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

Other References

Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: Judicially sanctioned corporal punishment included flogging, blinding, and amputation, which the government defended as “punishment,” not torture. According to Reporters Without Borders, on an unknown date in January or February, a court sentenced former journalist and current director of the Iranian Historical Society, Abbas Salimi Namin, to six months in prison and 74 public lashes for “insulting” former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and judicial officials in 2011. According to Iran Human Rights, authorities amputated the right hand and left foot of a prisoner identified by local authorities as “M.R.” on August 9 in Mashhad’s Vakilabad Prison for charges including “enmity against God,” armed robbery, and consuming alcohol and illegal drugs. In an October report, the UN special rapporteur documented two cases of forced blinding as “retribution in kind,” for two men found guilty in acid attacks in March and January.

Employment: The constitution bars discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, and social status “in conformity with Islamic criteria,” but the government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. It further states that “everyone has the right to choose any occupation he wishes, if it is not contrary to Islam and the public interests, and does not infringe the rights of others.”

Discrimination occurred based on the above categories with respect to employment and occupation (see also section 6).

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The government accessioned the CRPD on 23 Oct 2009.

Iraq

Constitution and Laws

The constitution provides that all citizens are equal before the law without regard to gender, sect, opinion, belief, nationality, or origin. The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, language, religion, social origin, political opinion, age, or social status. The government was ineffective in enforcing these provisions. The law does not address sexual orientation or gender identity, disability, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases.

Persons with Disabilities

Although the constitution states the government, through law and regulations, should care for and rehabilitate persons with disabilities in order to reintegrate them into society, there are no

laws prohibiting discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, or the provision of other state services. There were reports that persons with disabilities continued to experience discrimination due to social stigma. Although the Council of Ministers issued a decree ordering access for persons with disabilities to buildings and to educational and work settings, incomplete implementation limited access. Local NGOs reported many children with disabilities dropped out of public school due to insufficient physical access to school buildings, a lack of appropriate learning materials in schools, and a shortage of teachers qualified to work with children with developmental or intellectual disabilities. NGOs also reported that authorities denied some children with physical disabilities access to schools.

A 2013 law authorized the establishment of a commission for persons with disabilities led by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs but designed to remain independent of the government. The KRG has a similar law. In January the government launched the Commission for Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs with 19 members, including representatives from government ministries, disability rights groups, and other civil society organizations. The commission had a working budget of 18 billion dinars (\$16.3 million). The deputy minister of labor and social affairs leads the commission.

In 2013 the Council of Ministers approved a 5 percent public sector employment quota for persons with disabilities, but employment discrimination persisted, and observers projected that the quota was not likely to be met by year's end (see also section 7.d.). Central government and KRG officials reported they had few resources to accommodate persons with disabilities in prisons, detention centers, and temporary holding facilities. Mental health support for prisoners with mental disabilities did not exist.

Other References

Employment: The constitution provides that all citizens are equal before the law without regard to gender, sect, opinion, belief, nationality, or origin. The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, social origin, political opinion, language, or social status. The government was ineffective in enforcing these provisions. The law does not prohibit discrimination on disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The government acceded to the CRPD on 20 Mar 2013.

Israel and the Occupied Territories

Constitution and Laws

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation and gender identity, or social status, and the government was generally effective in

enforcing these prohibitions. Adalah maintained a database of more than 50 laws it claimed discriminated-either explicitly or in practice- against Arab citizens.

Persons with Disabilities

The Basic Laws provide a legal framework for prohibiting discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual and mental disabilities in employment (including hiring, work environment, and evaluation), education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, and the provision of other government services. The 1988 Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Law augments the Basic Laws and specifically prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities, including with regard to public facilities and services. The legislation mandates access to buildings, transportation, and physical accommodations and services in the workplace, and access to mental health services as part of government-subsidized health insurance. In July 2014 the minister of economy signed an order requiring that 2 percent of the workforce of employers with more than 100 employees be persons with disabilities with the proportion rising to 3 percent beginning in October. According to NGOs, government progress in enforcing these laws was limited. Government agencies for persons with disabilities worked to encourage leadership from within the community of persons with disabilities.

Societal discrimination and lack of accessibility persisted in employment, housing, and education. According to the Commissioner for the Rights of People with Disabilities, although the employment rate of persons with disabilities rose between 2007 and 2012, the rate remained lower than the employment rate for persons without disabilities, and many people with disabilities who are working have part-time, low-wage jobs. The Ministry of the Economy decreed that all sectors should increase their hiring so that persons with disabilities would constitute 3 percent of the workforce by the end of 2017, and the government continues to provide support and education for employers and workers with disabilities to close the gap. According to the commissioner for the rights of people with disabilities, 100 percent of municipal buses and 60 percent of intercity buses were accessible, as of November 23.

The advocacy organization Bizchut reported that Arab citizens with disabilities were employed at roughly half the rate of Jews with disabilities. Shortages of funding for Arab municipalities, including for education, adversely affected Arabs with disabilities.

Access to community-based independent living facilities for persons with disabilities remained limited. According to the disability rights NGO Bizchut, more than 8,000 persons with intellectual disabilities lived in institutions and large hostels while only 1,500 lived in community-based settings. During the year the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services began implementing a pilot program to move 900 persons with intellectual disabilities from institutions into community-based housing facilities over the next three years.

The law prioritizes access by persons with disabilities to public services, such as eliminating waiting in line as well as providing adapted seating and accessible facilities in public places other than buildings, such as public beaches, municipal parks, swimming pools, and cemeteries. For hearing-impaired persons, the law provides for short-message public-announcement services.

The Commission for Equal Rights of People with Disabilities within the MOJ oversees the implementation of laws protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and worked with government ministries to enact regulations. The Unit for the Integration of Persons with

Disabilities in the Labor Market, located within the Ministry of Economy, examined and promoted the employment of persons with disabilities. The unit had three support centers designed to assist employers who wish to hire persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services provides accommodation to persons with intellectual disabilities and/or autism who are either suspects or victims in criminal investigations.

Other References

Employment: The law charges the Commission for Equal Employment Opportunities with the implementation and civil enforcement of the Equal Employment Opportunities Law. The 26-member commission includes one member each from organizations that promote employment rights for Arab Muslims, Arab Christians, Druze, Circassians, Haredim, immigrants, elderly persons, women, and army veterans. Additionally, the commission must have adequate representation of citizens of Ethiopian descent and persons with disabilities. The government provided no details regarding violations of the law or enforcement activities (see sections 7.b. and 7.e. for treatment of migrant workers).

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Israel signed the CRPD on 30 Mar 2007. The government of Israel ratified the CRPD on 28 Sep 2012. The government of the Occupied Territories/State of Palestine accessioned the CRPD on 2 Apr 2014.

Jordan

Constitution and Laws

The constitution states that all citizens are equal under the law and prohibits discrimination based on race, language, and religion; the constitution and other laws prohibit discrimination based on political opinion. The government did not effectively enforce these provisions, however. Furthermore, the penal code does not address discrimination, thereby severely limiting judicial remedies. Discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, national origin or citizenship, social origin, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, or HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases is not specifically prohibited and remained a problem. Women faced significant and widespread discrimination across society.

Persons with Disabilities

The law generally provides equal rights to persons with disabilities, but such legal protections were not upheld. Activists noted the law on the rights of persons with disabilities lacked implementing regulations. The HCAPD, a government body, worked with ministries, the private sector, and NGOs to formulate and implement strategies to assist persons with disabilities. Citizens and NGOs universally reported that persons with disabilities faced problems in

obtaining employment and accessing education, health care, transportation, and other services, particularly in rural areas.

Human rights activists reported that institutions and rehabilitation centers subjected some persons with disabilities to negligence and cruel and inhuman treatment. There were no reported allegations against government-run care centers during the year.

In April 2014 the Ministry of Social Development launched an investigation into allegations that staff at the government-run Karak Rehabilitation Center physically and sexually assaulted a resident. After news sources published photographs of the abuse, the Ministry of Social Development Suspended six employees, who faced charges of negligence and failure to report a crime. The ministry stated the resident's injuries resulted from a fight with another resident rather than from abuse by center staff. The Karak Criminal Magistrate Court acquitted the defendants on January 8, citing insufficient evidence against the defendants and agreeing with the ministry that the injuries resulted from a fight with another resident.

The electoral law directs the government to verify that voting facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities and allows such persons to bring a personal assistant to the polling station; the Independent Electoral Commission has responsibility for implementing this law. Following the January 2013 parliamentary elections, the NCHR noted that accessibility for persons with disabilities needed improvement. Following the August 2013 municipal elections, the NCHR reported that most of the polling centers were not accessible to persons with disabilities.

Banks commonly refused to allow persons with vision disabilities to open a bank account independently and required blind applicants to bring two male witnesses to certify each transaction. Banks commonly refused to issue customers with vision disabilities automated teller machine cards.

According to the HCAPD, only 3 percent of children with disabilities were enrolled in schools. The 2013 NCHR report noted that school classrooms were not fully accessible and that there were no qualified teachers for children with disabilities, problems that remained throughout the year. The HCAPD reported that educational accommodations were more readily available at the university level than in elementary and secondary schools. At all levels of education, children with certain types of disabilities were excluded from studying certain subjects and often could not access critical educational support services, such as sign-language interpretation. Authorities did not train general education teachers to work with students with various disabilities. Families of children with disabilities reported that teachers and principals often refused to include children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The education ministry provided accessible transportation to specialized centers for children with disabilities, but not to mainstream schools. There remained insufficient capacity in specialized centers for all students who required accommodations. Students with significant intellectual disabilities fell under the authority of the Ministry of Social Development rather than the Ministry of Education.

The Special Buildings Code Department is tasked with enforcing accessibility provisions and oversees retrofitting of existing buildings to comply with building codes. The vast majority of private and public office buildings continued to have limited or no access for persons with disabilities. Municipal infrastructure such as public transport, streets, sidewalks, and intersections was not accessible. A 2014 report by the HCAPD, the Department of Statistics, and the Washington Group found that 76 percent of persons with disabilities over the age of 15 years were economically inactive.

The law mandates that public and private sector establishments with between 25 and 50 workers employ at least one person with disabilities and that establishments with more than 50 workers must reserve 4 percent of their positions for persons with disabilities. The law lacked implementing regulations, and authorities rarely enforced it. Additionally, employers who state the nature of the work is not suitable for persons with disabilities are exempt from the quota. Employers, including the government's Civil Service Bureau, frequently required potential employees with disabilities to present a medical letter certifying the bearer was competent to perform the job in question. Human rights activists considered the letter a significant barrier to participation in public life because some medical professionals were not aware of the full range of accommodations available and thus certified individuals as not able to perform certain tasks. Girls and women with disabilities were particularly at risk for gender-based violence.

Human rights activists and the media reported that children and adults with disabilities were vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse while in institutions, rehabilitation centers, or other care settings, including their family homes. The government operated some of these institutions, and some of the abusers were government employees. Media reported several instances of abuse of persons with disabilities by family members during the year; the government launched investigations into many of these cases and referred the victims for assistance.

The government endorsed instructions giving tariff exemptions for the vehicles of persons with disabilities and reduced the costs of hiring domestic help for persons with disabilities. Approximately 10,000 persons with disabilities (some 17 percent of the total estimated population with disabilities) benefited from these measures.

Other References

Protection of Refugees: The government forcibly returned Syrian refugees, including women, children, war-injured, and persons with disabilities into Syria. Human Rights Watch reported that some refugees crossing at informal border crossings in the Northeast were brought to the Raba'a Saarhan processing center to be screened, and then forcibly returned to Syria without being registered as refugees or asylum seekers. International organizations also reported that the government carried out a preliminary screening of refugees waiting at the eastern border and prevented some Syrians seeking refuge from entering the country for official processing at Raba'a Sarhan.

Women: The government did not effectively enforce the law against rape, and violence and abuse against women was widespread. Women's rights activists speculated that many incidents went unreported because violence against women remained a taboo subject due to societal and familial pressures. The PSD's Family Protection Department (FPD) reported 1,588 cases of domestic abuse as of September. Human rights activists stated that girls and women with disabilities were particularly at risk of gender-based violence.

Couples had the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children, and individuals were able to make such decisions free from discrimination and coercion. Contraceptives were generally accessible to all men and women, both married and single, and provided free of charge in public clinics. Comprehensive essential obstetric, prenatal, and postnatal care was provided throughout the country in the public and private sectors. The Sisterhood is Global Institute estimated that 65 hysterectomies were preformed on

women and girls with intellectual disabilities as recently as 2013. In April 2014 the General Fatwa Department issued a fatwa banning the practice, and the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities (HCAPD) stated they heard no reports of hysterectomies performed on women with intellectual disabilities during the year.

Children: Education is compulsory from ages six through 16 and free until age 18. No legislation exists to enforce the law or to punish guardians for violating it. Children without legal residency do not have the right to attend public school. The Ministry of Education allows Syrians to enroll at local public schools, with the exception of students who have been out of school for three or more years who were not permitted to register. In some cases refugee children were not permitted to register in school due to lack of residency documentation. UNICEF helped cover the cost and provided a supplement to Jordanian teachers who worked in Za'atri and Azraq camps and in the host communities. According to UNICEF, of approximately 222,000 school-aged Syrian refugees, only around 140,000 were registered in public schools for the 2015-2016 school year. An additional 30,000 children attended informal education, while approximately 60,000 Syrian refugee children did not participate in any form of organized learning. UNICEF and Save the Children reported many who were registered did not attend due to the distance to schools, child labor, harassment, and the lack of space and resources in schools. Additionally, UNRWA operated 174 primary schools for approximately 120,000 Palestinian refugee children and opened enrollment to Palestinian refugee children from Syria. Some children of female citizens and noncitizen fathers must apply for residency permits every year, and permission was not assured. (See Section 2.d on statelessness.) Children with disabilities experienced extreme difficulty in accessing constitutionally protected early and primary education.

A 2013 government report found no physical or sexual abuse in governmental institutions, but NGOs reported such abuses occurred. According to the NCHR, some juveniles in detention alleged mistreatment. Cases involving violence against persons with disabilities or institutionalized persons are automatically referred to the FPD. During the year the Ministry of Social Development closed two day-care centers for violations. The community monitoring committee highlighted the pervasive use of physical discipline, physical and verbal abuse, unacceptable living conditions, and a lack of educational, rehabilitative, or psychosocial services for wards and inmates. NGOs noted that the ministry was responsive and followed up on reports from the community monitoring committee. Activists for orphans' rights alleged that adult orphans and former wards of the state were especially vulnerable to forced and early marriage, labor trafficking, and sexual exploitation.

Employment: Labor laws do not prohibit discrimination with respect to employment and occupation on the basis of race, sex, gender, disability, language, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, age, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, or social status.

Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to sex, gender, disability, and sexual orientation (see section 6).

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Jordan signed the CRPD on 30 Mar 2007. The government ratified the CRPD on 31 Mar 2008.

Kuwait

Constitution and Laws

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, origin, disability or language. The government did not consistently enforce laws against discrimination, and a number of laws and regulations discriminated against women, Bidoon, noncitizens, and foreign workers.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with permanent physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities, in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, or the provision of other government services. It imposes penalties on employers who refrain without reasonable cause from hiring persons with disabilities. The law also mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities. The government generally enforced these provisions. Noncitizens with disabilities neither had access to government-operated facilities nor received stipends paid to citizens with disabilities that covered transportation, housing, job training, and social welfare costs. The government still has not fully implemented social and workplace aids for people with physical, and in particular, visual disabilities.

The government stated there were 47,000 citizens and 7,000 noncitizens with disabilities in the country. There is a disability law, and a parliamentary Committee for Disabled Affairs. Under that law, the monthly allowance given to the mother of a disabled child or the wife of a person with disabilities is granted 600 dinars (from \$1,000 to \$2,000 families of citizens with disabilities are eligible to receive grants worth up to 20,000 dinars (\$67,000).

During the year the government reserved a small number of admissions in Kuwait University for citizens with disabilities, and there was regular media coverage of students with disabilities attending university classes. However, authorities did not provide disabled noncitizens the same educational opportunities such as lack of accessible materials and lack of reasonable accommodations in schools.

Children with disabilities attended public school, but information on whether there were patterns of abuse in educational settings was unavailable. The law does not restrict the right of persons with disabilities to vote and participate in civic affairs. Representatives from ministries, other governmental bodies, Kuwait University, and several NGOs constituted the government's Higher Council for Handicapped Affairs, which makes policy recommendations; provides direct financial aid to citizens with disabilities; and facilitates their integration into schools, jobs, and other social institutions. The government supervised and contributed to schools and job training programs oriented to persons with special needs.

Other References

Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights: Locally licensed NGOs devoted to the rights or welfare of specific groups – such as women, children, prisoners, or persons with disabilities – operated with little government interference, as did a few dozen local, unregistered human rights groups. The government and various National Assembly committees met occasionally with local NGOs and generally responded to their inquiries.

Employment: The law prohibits discrimination in employment based on race, sex, gender and disability. The government immediately deports HIV-positive foreign workers, and there is no protection for workers based on sexual orientation. No laws prohibit labor discrimination based on language, non-HIV communicable diseases, or social status, but there were no reported cases of discrimination in these areas.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The government ratified the CRPD on 22 Aug 2013.

Lebanon

Constitution and Laws

The law provides for equality among all citizens and prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language or social status. Although the government generally respected these provisions, they were not enforced, especially with regard to economic matters, and aspects of the law and traditional beliefs discriminated against women. The law does not protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Persons with Disabilities

Although prohibited by law, discrimination against persons with disabilities continued. Employment law defines a “disability” as a physical, sight, hearing, or mental disability. The law stipulates that at least 3 percent of all government and private sector positions be filled by persons with disabilities, provided such persons fulfill the qualifications for the position; however, no evidence indicated it was enforced. Employers are legally exempt from penalties if they provide evidence no otherwise qualified person with disabilities applied for employment within three months of advertisement. The law mandates access to buildings by persons with disabilities, but the government failed to amend building codes. Many persons with mental disabilities received care in private institutions, several of which the government subsidized (see section 7.d.).

The Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Council of Disabled is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. According to the president of the Arab Organization of

Disabled People, little progress had occurred since parliament passed the law on disabilities in 2000. Approximately 100 relatively active but poorly funded private organizations provided most of the assistance received by persons with disabilities.

Depending on the type and nature of the disability, children with a disability may attend mainstream school. Due to a lack of awareness or knowledge, school staff often did not identify a specific disability in children and could not adequately advise parents. In such cases children often repeated classes or dropped out of school.

A 2002 Ministry of Education and Higher Education decree for new school building construction stipulates: "Schools should include all necessary facilities in order to receive the physically challenged." Nonetheless, the public school system was ill equipped to accommodate students with disabilities. Problems included a poor regulatory framework; poor infrastructure that was not accessible to persons with disabilities; curricula that did not include material to assist children with disabilities; laboratories and workshops that lacked the equipment required for children with disabilities; laboratories that lacked space and access for persons with disabilities, especially those using wheelchairs; teaching media and tools that relied increasingly on computers and audiovisual material that were not accessible to students with disabilities, including students who were blind, deaf, and those with physical disabilities; and lack of accessible transportation to and from schools.

Some NGOs (often managed by religious entities) offered education and health services for children with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs contributed to the cost, although the ministry often delayed payments to the organizations. According to the ministry, it supported school attendance, vocational training, and rehabilitation for approximately 8,000 persons in 2014.

In the 2009 election, a Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union study showed only six of the country's 1,741 polling stations satisfied all criteria for accessibility.

Other References

Prison and Detention Center Conditions: Prison and detention centers were harsh, and prisoners often lacked access to basic sanitation. In some prisons, such as the central prison in Roumieh, conditions were life-threatening. Facilities were not adequately equipped for persons with disabilities.

Employment: The law provides for equality among all citizens and prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status. The law does not specifically provide for protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV status, or other communicable diseases.

Although the government generally respected these provisions, they were not enforced, especially in economic matters, and aspects of the law and traditional beliefs discriminated against women. Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to women, persons with disabilities, foreign domestic workers, and LGBTI and HIV-positive persons (see section 6).

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The government signed the CRPD on 14 Jun 2007.

Libya

Constitution and Laws

Persons with Disabilities

The Constitutional Declaration addresses the rights of persons with disabilities by providing monetary and other types of social assistance for the “protection” of persons with “special needs” with respect to employment, education, access to health care, and the provision of other state services, but it does not explicitly prohibit discrimination. The government did not effectively enforce these provisions.

The government did not enact or effectively implement laws and programs to ensure access to buildings, information, and communications, but a number of organizations provided services to persons with disabilities. Few public facilities had adequate access for persons with physical disabilities, resulting in restricted access to employment, education, and health care. New sidewalks did not have curb cuts for persons in wheelchairs, and new construction often did not have accessible entrances. There was limited access to information or communications.

Other References

Employment: The Constitutional Declaration prohibits any form of discrimination on the basis of religion, race, political opinion, language, wealth, kinship, political opinions, social status, and tribal, regional or familial loyalty. The law does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, social status, HIV-positive status, or having other communicable diseases. The law does not specifically prohibit discrimination concerning employment or occupation. The Constitutional Declaration provides for a right of work to every citizen.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Libya signed the CRPD on 1 May 2008.

Morocco

Constitution and Laws

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, social status, faith, culture, regional origin, or any other personal circumstance. Discrimination occurred nonetheless based on each of these factors. The constitution mandates the creation of a body to promote gender equality and resolve parity issues – the Authority for Equality and the Fight against All forms of Discrimination – but authorities did not fashion implementing legislation for the body by year's end.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, and access to health care. The law also provides for regulations and building codes that provide for access for persons with disabilities. The government did not effectively enforce or implement these laws and regulations. While building codes enacted in 2003 require accessibility for all persons, the codes exempt most pre-2003 structures, and authorities rarely enforced them for new construction. Most public transportation was inaccessible to persons with disabilities, although the national rail system offered wheelchair ramps, handicap-accessible bathrooms, and special seating areas. Government policy provides that persons with disabilities should have equal access to information and communications. Special communication devices for the blind and deaf were not widely available.

The Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity has responsibility for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and attempted to integrate persons with disabilities into society by implementing a quota of 7 percent for persons with disabilities in vocational training in the public sector and 5 percent in the private sector. Both sectors were far from achieving the quotas. The government maintained more than 400 integrated classes for children with learning disabilities, but private charities were primarily responsible for integration. Families typically supported persons with disabilities, although some survived by begging.

Other References

Prison and Detention Center Conditions: Local NGOs asserted that prison facilities did not provide adequate access to health care and did not accommodate the needs of prisoners with disabilities, although government sources stated that each prisoner received an average of six consultations with a medical professional per year. The government reported that 119 inmates died in prison during the year, 14 en route to and 82 in a hospital. Local human rights NGOs could not confirm these numbers. Prisoners lodged complaints about the quality of food, specifically the availability of meat; friends and family frequently were called upon to supplement prisoners' diets with the delivery of food baskets. NGOs frequently cited cases where prisoners protested the conditions of their detention with hunger strikes.

Women: The law does not specifically prohibit domestic violence against women, but the general prohibitions of the criminal code address such violence. By law high-level misdemeanors occur when a victim suffers injuries that result in 20 days of disability leave from work. Low-level misdemeanors occur when victims suffer disability for less than 20 days. According to NGOs the courts rarely prosecuted perpetrators of low-level misdemeanors.

Police generally treated domestic violence as a social rather than a criminal matter. Statistics provided by the government indicated that it provided direct support to 50 counseling centers for female victims of violence as part of a broader effort to support projects benefitting women in society. The government also reported that in 2014 it had dedicated more than 11 million dirhams (\$1.1 million) to outreach programs to women regarding their rights.

The government operated hotlines for victims of domestic violence. A small number of groups, such as the Anaruz Network and the Democratic League for Women's Rights, were also available to provide assistance and guidance to victims. Counseling centers existed exclusively in urban areas. Services for victims of violence in rural areas were generally limited to those provided by local police. Women's shelters were not government funded. A few NGOs made efforts to provide shelter for victims of domestic abuse. There were reports, however, that these shelters were not accessible to persons with disabilities. Courts had "victims of abuse cells" that brought together prosecutors, lawyers, judges, women's NGO representatives, and hospital personnel to review domestic and child abuse cases to provide for the best interests of women or children according to proper procedure.

Employment: The labor code prohibits discrimination with respect to employment and occupation on the basis of race, color, gender, disability, marital status, religion, political opinion, trade union affiliation, national ancestry, or social origin, resulting in a violation or alteration of the principle of equal opportunity or treatment on equal footing regarding employment or the practice of a profession. This was true in particular with regard to recruitment, conduct and labor distribution, vocational training, wage, advances, the granting of social benefits, disciplinary measures, and dismissal. The law does not address sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases in this context. The law provides for equal pay for equal work. The law prohibits the employment of women and youths (between the ages of 15 and 17) in certain occupations that authorities considered hazardous, such as mining.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Morocco signed the CRPD on 30 Mar 2007. The government ratified the CRPD and the Optional Protocol on 8 Apr 2009; additionally, the government accepted the individual communications procedure and inquiry procedure on this date.

Oman

Constitution and Laws

Persons with Disabilities

The law provides persons with disabilities, including physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities, the same rights as other citizens in employment, education, access to health care, and the provision of other state services. Persons with disabilities, however, continued to face discrimination. The law mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities, but may

older buildings, including government buildings and schools, did not conform to the law. The law also requires private enterprises employing more than 50 persons to reserve at least 2 percent of positions for persons with disabilities. Authorities did not systematically enforce this regulation.

No protective legislation provides for equal educational opportunities for persons with disabilities. The government provided alternative education opportunities for more than 500 children with disabilities, including overseas schooling when appropriate; this was largely due to lack of capacity within the country.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education collaborated with the International Council for Educational Reform and Development to create a curriculum for students with mental disabilities within the standard school system, which was in place throughout the year. There were a number of civil society groups raising awareness of the experiences and needs of those with disabilities.

The Ministry of Social Development is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. The Directorate General of Disabled Affairs within the Ministry of Social Development creates programs for disabled persons, and implements these programs in coordination with relevant authorities. The directorate was authorized further to supervise all of the ministry's rehabilitation and treatment centers for the disabled.

Other References

Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights: No registered, autonomous domestic human rights organizations existed. There were civil society groups that advocated for persons protected under human rights conventions, particularly women and the disabled. These groups were required to register with the Ministry of Social Development.

Employment: Labor laws and regulations do not address discrimination based on race, sex, gender, nationality, political views, disability, language, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, or social status. Discrimination occurred based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. For further discussion of discrimination, see section 6.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Oman signed the CRPD on 17 Mar 2008. The government ratified the CRPD on 6 Jan 2009.

Qatar

Constitution and Laws

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, language, and religion, but it did not effectively enforce these prohibitions. The law does not prohibit discrimination based upon political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status or other disease status. Local custom outweighed government enforcement of nondiscrimination laws. Legal, cultural, and institutional discrimination existed against women, noncitizens, and foreign workers. The UN special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants reported salaries were sometimes calculated on the basis of nationality rather than experience or qualification levels.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against--and requires the allocation of resources for--persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, and other state services or other areas. Information on whether there were patterns of abuse at education facilities, mental health facilities, or prisons was not available. The government is charged with acting on complaints from individuals and the NHRC and enforcing compliance (see section 7.d.).

Private and independent schools generally provided most of the required services for students with disabilities, but government schools did not. Few public buildings met the required standards of accessibility for persons with disabilities, and new buildings generally did not comply with standards. The SCFA is responsible for verifying compliance with the rights and provisions mandated under the law, but compliance was not effectively enforced.

Other References

Employment: The constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, language, and religion, but not political opinion, national origin, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, or HIV-positive status. Local custom, however, outweighed government enforcement of nondiscrimination laws, and legal, cultural, and institutional discrimination existed against women, noncitizens, and foreign workers. The government prohibited lower paid male workers from residing in specific "family" residential zones throughout the country. The government discriminated against noncitizens in employment, education, housing, and health services (see section 6).

The law requires reserving 2 percent of jobs in government agencies and public institutions for persons with disabilities, and most government entities appeared to carry out this law. Private sector businesses employing a minimum of 25 persons are also required to hire persons with disabilities as 2 percent of their staff. Employers who violate these employment provisions are subject to fines of up to QAR 20,000 (\$5,500). There were no reports of violations of the hiring quota requirement during the year.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with **Disabilities**

Qatar signed the CRPD on 9 Jul 2007. The government ratified the CRPD on 13 May 2008.

Saudi Arabia

Constitution and Laws

The law prohibits discrimination based on race but not gender, sex, disability, language, sexual orientation and gender identity, or social status. The law and tradition discriminate based on gender. The law and the guardianship system restrict women to the status of legal dependents vis-à-vis their male guardians. This status is unchanged, even after women reach adulthood. Women and some men faced widespread and state-forced segregation based on societal, cultural, and religious traditions.

The government generally reinforced sharia-based traditional prohibitions on discrimination based on disability, language, social status, or race. Nevertheless, discrimination based on race, lineage, or social status were common.

Persons with Disabilities

The law does not prohibit discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, or the provision of other state services or other areas. The law does not require public accessibility to buildings, information, and communications. Newer commercial buildings often included such access, as did some newer government buildings. Children with disabilities could attend government-supported schools. Persons with disabilities had equal access to information and communications.

Information about patterns of abuse of persons with disabilities in prisons and educational and mental health institutions was not widely available. Persons with disabilities could generally participate in civic affairs, and there were no legal restrictions that prevented persons with disabilities from voting in municipal council elections, although lack of accessibility of buildings, information, and communications likely limited some persons with disabilities from participating fully. In 2013 the HRC appointed four subject matter experts to work as advocates for persons with disabilities in the kingdom and to respond to complaints of discrimination; their work expanded during the year to include participation in international conferences on discrimination against persons with disabilities. The King Salman Center for Disability Research, a nonprofit research foundation, continued to conduct laboratory and field research on a range of disability and quality of life issues. The Ministry of Social Affairs was responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Vocational rehabilitation projects and social care programs increasingly brought persons with disabilities into the mainstream.

Other References

Prison and Detention Center Conditions: Authorities held pretrial detainees together with convicted prisoners. They separated persons suspected or convicted of terrorism offences from

the general population but held them in similar facilities. Activists alleged that authorities sometimes detained individuals in the same cells as individuals with mental disabilities as a form of punishment and indicated that authorities mistreated persons with disabilities.

Women: Nationality law discriminates against women, who cannot directly transmit citizenship to their children (see section 2.d.). The country's interpretation of sharia prohibits women from marrying non-Muslims, but men may marry Christians and Jews. Women require government permission to marry noncitizens; men must be more than 25 years old to marry a foreigner and must obtain government permission if they intend to marry citizens from countries other than Gulf Cooperation Council member states (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE). Regulations prohibit men from marrying women from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Chad, and Burma. The government additionally required Saudi men wishing to marry a second wife who is a foreigner to submit documentation attesting to the fact that his first wife is either disabled, suffering from a chronic disease, or sterile.

Employment: Labor laws and regulations do not prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, or HIV-positive status. Discrimination with respect to employment and occupation occurred with respect to all these categories.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The government accessioned the CRPD on 24 Jun 2008; additionally, the government accepted the individual communications procedure and inquiry procedure on the same date.

Syria

Constitution and Laws

The constitution provides for equal rights and equal opportunity for all citizens and prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status. The government did not enforce the law effectively or make any serious attempt to do so. Women faced widespread violence, discrimination, and significant restrictions on their rights. Da'esh imposed severe restrictions on women's personal conduct, attire, and freedom of movement in the territory it controlled (see section 1.g).

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities and seeks to integrate them into the public sector workforce, but the government did not effectively enforce these provisions. The law protects against persons with disabilities from discrimination in education, access to health care, or provision of other state services, and it reserves 4 percent of government sector jobs and 2 percent of private-sector jobs for persons with disabilities. Private businesses are eligible for tax exemptions after hiring persons with disabilities. The law does not address specific disabilities.

Authorities did not fully document the number of persons with disabilities, but the conflict negatively affected persons with disabilities and increased their numbers through injuries. The SNHR reported the deaths of hundreds of citizens with pre-existing health conditions who could not access medical facilities due to conflict-related travel restrictions, including both government and extremist checkpoints. In other instances, government blockades prevented the movement of medical supplies and persons to opposition-held areas and prevented persons with medical needs from seeking appropriate treatment.

The government did not effectively work to provide access for persons with disabilities to buildings, communication, or information. Along with their peers, the conflict increasingly hampered the ability of children with disabilities to attend primary and secondary school in addition to seeking higher education.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor is responsible for assisting persons with disabilities and worked through dedicated charities and organizations to provide assistance.

Other References

Prison and Detention Center Conditions: Inside prisons and detention centers, the prevalence of death from disease remained high due to unsanitary conditions and the withholding of medical care and medication. Local NGOs and medical professionals reported that authorities denied medical care to prisoners with pre-existing health needs, such as diabetes, asthma, and breast cancer, and denied pregnant women any medical care. Authorities retaliated against prisoners who requested attention for the sick. Released prisoners commonly reported sickness and injury resulting from such conditions. Information on conditions and care for prisoners with disabilities was unavailable.

Use of Excessive Force and Other Abuses in Internal Conflicts: Observers and international aid organizations reported that the government specifically targeted health-care workers, medical facilities, ambulances, and patients and restricted access to medical facilities and services to civilians and prisoners. The COI also reported that government sniper fire and military assaults on medical facilities intentionally targeted sick and injured persons as well as pregnant women and persons with disabilities. According to reports, the government deliberately obstructed the efforts of sick and injured persons to obtain help, and many such individuals elected not to seek medical assistance in hospitals due to fear of arrest, detention, torture, or death. Government forces also reportedly targeted medical professionals for arrest. In a December press release, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) documented the deaths of 697 medical personnel and 336 attacks on 240 medical facilities between March 2011 and November 2015; PHR attributed 90 percent of the attacks to the government and its allied forces.

Employment: The constitution prohibits discrimination based on gender, although personal status and penal laws continued to discriminate. Since homosexuality is a legally prohibited activity (see section 6, Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity), many persons faced discrimination due to their sexual orientation. The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, marital status, belief, political opinion, trade union membership, nationality, descent, clothing or dress style, or disability. There were no reports of government activities to encourage participation or

prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities. Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to certain ethnic groups (see section 6, National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities).

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Syria signed the CRPD on 30 Mar 2007. The government ratified the CRPD and the Optional Protocol on 10 Jul 2009, and additionally accepted the individual communications procedure on the same date.

Tunisia

Constitution and Laws

The law and constitution explicitly prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, and the government generally enforced these prohibitions, although discrimination against women occurred due to customary law and social norms. The law is silent regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical or mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, or the provision of other state services. It mandates that at least 1 percent of public and private sector jobs be reserved for persons with disabilities. NGOs reported that authorities did not widely enforce this law, and many employers were not aware of it. There were no statistics on patterns of abuse in educational and mental health facilities, and individual cases of employment discrimination against persons with disabilities were rarely reported.

A 1991 law requires all public buildings to be accessible to persons with physical disabilities, and the government generally enforced the law. Persons with physical disabilities did not have access to most buildings built before 1991. The government did not ensure access to information and communications.

The government issued cards to persons with disabilities for benefits such as unrestricted parking, free and priority medical services, free and preferential seating on public transportation, and consumer discounts. The government provided tax incentives to companies to encourage the hiring of persons with physical disabilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs is charged with protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. There were approximately 300 government-administered schools for children with disabilities, five schools for the blind, one higher-education school, and one vocational training institution. The Ministry of Social Affairs managed centers in Tunis, Kairouan, Nabeul, and Sfax that provided short-and long-term accommodation and medical services to persons with disabilities who lacked other means of support.

Other References

Employment: The law and regulations prohibit employment discrimination regarding race, sex, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation and gender identity, HIV-positive status or presence of other communicable diseases, or social status. The government did not always effectively enforce those laws and regulations due to lack of resources and difficulty in identifying when employers' traditional attitudes toward gender identity or sexual orientation resulted in discriminatory employment practices (see also section 6).

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Tunisia signed the CRPD on 30 Mar 2007. The government ratified the CRPD on 2 Apr 2008; additionally, it accepted the individual communications and inquiry procedures on the same date.

United Arab Emirates

Constitution and Laws

The constitution provides for equality of citizens without regard to race or social status. Additionally, the law (including the Anti-Discrimination Law) prohibits discrimination based on disability, religion, belief, sect, faith, creed, race, and ethnicity. Legal and cultural discrimination, however, existed and went unpunished. The law does not prohibit discrimination based on sex, political opinion, national origin, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, or communicable diseases; however, the constitution states all persons are equal before the law. The government took some steps to advance the rights of women and promote their role in all sectors of society such as encouraging their participation as candidates in the October FNC election.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons who have physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, or the provision of other state services; however, some discrimination occurred.

Public and private facilities provided education, health services, sports, and vocational rehabilitation for persons with disabilities; however, capacity was insufficient. Many of the facilities were reserved for citizens, thereby excluding noncitizen persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs is the central body dealing with the rights of persons with disabilities and raising awareness at the federal and local level.

In accordance with the law, most public buildings provided some form of entry access for persons with disabilities.

Government entities, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Services for Educational Development Foundation for Inclusion, and the UAE Sports Organizations for Persons with Disabilities, sponsored conferences and workshops emphasizing the inclusion and integration of

persons with disabilities into schools and workplaces. The Ministry of Social Affairs, which ran a number of rehabilitation centers, stated that the increased emphasis on integrating children with disabilities into regular schools opened up space in their rehabilitation centers to better accommodate persons with more significant disabilities.

Various departments within the Ministries of Labor, Education, and Social Affairs are responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, and the government enforced these rights in areas related to employment, housing, and other entitlement programs. While enforcement was effective for jobs in the public sector, the government did not sufficiently encourage hiring in the private sector. The emirate of Abu Dhabi reserved 2 percent of government jobs for citizens with disabilities, and other emirates and the federal government included statements in their human resources regulations emphasizing priority for hiring citizens with disabilities in the public sector. Public sector employers provided reasonable accommodations, defined broadly, for employees with disabilities. The employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector remained a challenge due to a lack of training and opportunities, and societal discrimination.

The government sponsored several initiatives to host international conferences for persons with disabilities emphasizing rights, opportunities, and the importance of inclusion into society. The government also worked to improve the accessibility of parks, swimming pools, and other public areas.

The General Authority of Sports and Youth Welfare provided programs to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in sporting activities. The Disabled Sports Federation was established to support these initiatives.

Officials overseeing the FNC election assisted voters with disabilities, and polling stations had wheelchair ramps at both the men's and women's entrances, as well as specific voting machines dedicated to persons with disabilities.

Other References

Prison and Detention Center Conditions: Prisons attempt to accommodate persons with disabilities based on their specific needs, such as by placing a wheelchair user on a lower floor. Reportedly it is common for authorities to grant a humanitarian pardon in cases where a person with a disability has been convicted of a minor offense.

Employment: The Anti-Discrimination Law prohibits all forms of discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, or race, although without specific reference to employment. No specific law prohibits or regulates discrimination regarding sex, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability sexual orientation or gender identity, age, language, or communicable diseases with respect to employment or occupation. Women who worked in the private sector, however, regularly did not receive equal benefits and reportedly faced discrimination in promotions and equality of wages. In free zones, individualized laws govern employment requirements. For example, in the Dubai International Financial Center, employers may not discriminate against any person based on sex, marital status, race, national identity, religion, or disability. Nevertheless, job advertisements requesting applications only from certain nationalities were common and not regulated.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The United Arab Emirates signed the CRPD on 8 Feb 2008. The government ratified the CRPD on 19 Mar 2010.

Western Sahara

Constitution and Laws

The living conditions and social mores affecting women, children, and persons with disabilities, as well as sexual orientation and gender issues, paralleled those in internationally recognized Morocco, and government laws and practice are the same. Reports of anti-Semitism were similarly rare as in Morocco, and the size of the Jewish community is unknown. Please see the Department of State's 2015 Human Rights Report for more detailed information on Morocco.

Other References

Employment: Generally, the conditions of workplace discrimination were similar to those in internationally recognized Morocco. The labor law prohibits discrimination with respect to employment and occupation based on race, color, gender, disability, marital status, religion, political opinion, trade-union affiliation, national ancestry, or social origin. The law does not address sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases. The law provides for equal pay for equal work.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Western Sahara has not signed or ratified the CRPD or Optional Protocol.

Yemen

Constitution and Laws

The law provides for equal rights and equal opportunity regardless of race, gender, language, belief, or disability, in accordance with the UN Charter, the International Declaration of Human Rights, and the Charter of the Arab League, as affirmed by the 1994 constitution, but the government-in-exile could not enforce the law in country. Discrimination based on race, gender, social status, sexual orientation and gender identity, and disability remained a serious problem. Some groups, such as the marginalized Muhamaheen or Akhdam community and the Muwaladeen (Yemenis born to foreign parents), faced social and institutional discrimination based on social status. Societal discrimination severely limited women's ability to exercise equal rights.

Article 75 of the draft constitution completed in January, under the authority of the provisional government and awaiting review (see section 3), affirmed “equal rights, freedoms, and public duties without discrimination due to sex, skin color, race, origin, religion, sect, belief, opinion, economic or social status, disability, political or geographical affiliation, occupation, birth, or any other considerations.”

Persons with Disabilities

Several laws mandate the rights and care of persons with disabilities, but the government-in-exile was unable to enforce them. The law permits persons with disabilities to exercise the same rights as persons without disabilities, but this did not happen in practice. Prior to the outbreak of conflict, social stigma and official indifference were obstacles to implementation.

The law reserves 5 percent of government jobs for persons with disabilities, and the law mandates the acceptance of persons with disabilities in universities, exempts them from paying tuition, and requires that schools be made more accessible to persons with disabilities. The extent to which any authority implemented these laws was unclear.

Children with disabilities may attend public schools, although schools make no special accommodations for them. There were some private educational institutions for persons with disabilities in large cities. Many parents refused to send their children with disabilities to public schools, due to concern about potential harassment.

Although the law mandates new buildings have access for persons with disabilities, compliance was poor. Most persons with disabilities relied on their extended family for support.

Information about patterns of abuse of persons with disabilities in educational and mental health institutions was not publicly available.

Prior to the outbreak of conflict, authorities imprisoned persons with mental disabilities with criminals without providing adequate medical care and in some instances without legal charge. At that time the Ministry of Interior reported that family members sometimes brought relatives with mental disabilities to ministry-run prisons, asking officers to imprison the individuals. Ministry-run prisons in Sana’a, Aden, and Ta’iz operated semiautonomous units for prisoners with mental disabilities in cooperation with the Red Crescent Society. Conditions in these units reportedly were deficient in cleanliness and professional care. Prior to its exile, the government did not act on a 2005 Ministry of Interior initiative to establish centers for persons with mental disabilities and, once in exile, the government could not act on it.

The Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. The government-in-exile could not continue collaboration with the World Bank to administer a Social Development Fund; nor was the ministry able to oversee the Fund for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled, which provided limited basic services and supported more than 60 NGOs assisting persons with disabilities.

Other References

Prison and Detention Center Conditions: Prison conditions were harsh and life-threatening and did not meet international standards. Prisoners lacked many basic needs. The government-in-exile exercised no effective control over prison facilities during the year. In past years,

government officials and NGOs identified overcrowding, lack of professional training for corrections officials, poor sanitation, inadequate access to justice, intermingling of pretrial and convicted inmates, lack of effective case management, lack of funding, and deteriorating infrastructure as problems within the 18 central prisons and 25 reserve prisons (also known as pretrial detention centers). Authorities held prisoners with physical or mental disabilities with the general population with no special accommodations.

Employment: Labor laws and regulations prohibit discrimination with regard to race, sex, color, beliefs, language, or disability, and specifically state “Women shall be equal with men in relation to conditions of employment and employment rights.” The law does not address sexual orientation, political opinion, national origin, social origin, gender identity, HIV status, or other communicable diseases. Authorities did not consistently enforce these laws, and discrimination based on race, gender and disability remained a serious problem in employment and occupation.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Yemen signed the CRPD on 30 Mar 2007. The government-in-exile ratified the CRPD on 26 Mar 2009; and additionally accepted the individual communications procedure and inquiry procedure on the same date.