

# Consolidated Disability Findings from the 2010 U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

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## Near East and North Africa

### **Introduction to the State Department Report on Disability Human Rights**

The State Department's 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, released April 2011, represent the culmination of the U.S. State Department's review of the human rights records and situation in 194 countries around the world. The reports are supplied to Congress in accordance with law to assist in matters of foreign affairs.

USICD has consolidated the disability references from the 194 Country Reports into a 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. overlap with the section on children, 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 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 perspectives 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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### Algeria

#### **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 in practice the government did not effectively enforce these provisions. The law provides services, including free medical care, for persons with disabilities; however, there was widespread social discrimination against persons with disabilities. Few government buildings were accessible to persons with disabilities. Public enterprises, in downsizing their work forces, generally ignored a requirement that they reserve one percent of jobs for persons with disabilities. Social security provided payments for orthopedic equipment. The Ministry of National Solidarity (MNS) provided some financial support to health-care-oriented NGOs; however, for many NGOs this financial support represented approximately 2 percent of their budgets.

The MNS maintained that there were two million persons with disabilities in the country, of whom the largest percentages were classified as "chronically ill" or "other" (38 and 30 percent, respectively). However, according to the Algerian Federation of Wheelchair Associations, there were three million persons with disabilities living in the country. The government estimated that approximately 44 percent of disabled citizens had some form of motor disability, 32 percent had communication difficulties, and 24 percent suffered from a visual disability. The government classified approximately 193,000 individuals as "fully disabled" and claimed during the year to have appropriated 9.54 billion dinars (approximately \$129 million) for their welfare.

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## **Other Relevant References**

On June 2, a mentally disabled man, Nouradine Nadri, died in police custody in Saida province, according to the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights' (LADDH) Saida province office. Police arrested Nadri following an altercation with the driver of a vehicle that accidentally struck him. According to LADDH, police brought Nadri to the province's security headquarters instead of transporting him to the hospital as stipulated by article 51 of the code of criminal procedures, which requires a medical examination before placing a suspect in custody. Nadri's family reported to LADDH that their son died following abuse by police.

The government provides free education for children through high school. Education is compulsory until the age of 16 years. The government provided free medical care for all citizens, including children with disabilities, albeit in generally rudimentary facilities, and to both sexes equally.

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

Algeria signed the Convention and Optional Protocol on 30/3/2007. Algeria ratified the Convention on 12/4/2009.

## **Bahrain**

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law protects the rights of persons with disabilities, and a variety of governmental, quasigovernmental, and religious institutions are mandated to support and protect persons with disabilities. In June the Ministry of Social Development announced a partnership with the UN Development Program (UNDP) to develop and implement a National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities.

New public buildings in the central municipality must include facilities for persons with disabilities. The law does not mandate access to nonresidential buildings for persons with disabilities.

There were no official reports of discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, or access to health care, but according to anecdotal evidence, persons with disabilities routinely suffered lack of access to education and employment. The one government school for children with hearing disabilities did not operate past the 10th grade. Certain public schools had specialized education programs for children with learning disabilities, physical handicaps, speech impediments, and Down syndrome, but the government did not fund private programs for children with disabilities who could not find appropriate programs in public schools.

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

There were no restrictions on participation in political and electoral processes for persons with disabilities.

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

Bahrain signed the Convention on 25/6/2007 and ratified the Convention on 2/6/2011.

## **Egypt**

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law provides that all businesses must designate 5 percent of their positions for persons with physical or mental disabilities; however, there are no laws prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities in education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services, nor are

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there laws mandating access to buildings or transportation. Widespread societal discrimination continued against persons with disabilities, particularly mental disabilities, resulting in a lack of acceptance into mainstream society. Government-operated treatment centers for persons with disabilities, especially children, were poor.

The ministries of education and social solidarity share responsibility for protecting rights of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities rode government-owned mass transit buses free of charge and 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. The government also worked closely with UN agencies and other international aid donors to design job-training programs.

### **Other Relevant References**

In November 2009 the Alexandria Criminal Court convicted police officer Akram Soliman of assaulting a mentally disabled man, Ragai Sultan, and sentenced Soliman to five years in prison. On July 4, an appeals court upheld the verdict. According to NGO sources, Soliman remained in prison at year's end.

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

Egypt signed the Convention on 4/4/2007. Egypt ratified the Convention on 14/4/2008.

## **Iran**

### **Constitution and Laws**

Although the constitution formally prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, and social status "in conformity with Islamic criteria," the government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. The law also provided for state-funded vocational education for persons with disabilities, but according to domestic news reports, vocational centers were confined to urban areas and were unable to meet the needs of the entire population. Building accessibility for persons with disabilities remained a widespread problem. The Welfare Organization of Iran is the major governmental agency charged with protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

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

Iran ratified the Convention on 23/10/2009.

## **Iraq**

### **Constitution and Laws**

The constitution provides that all citizens are equal before the law without regard to gender, sect, opinion, belief, nationality, religion, or origin. The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, disability, or social status. The government did not effectively enforce these provisions.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law prohibits discrimination in employment, education, access to health care, and other state services against persons with physical disabilities. The government enforced the law in the government sector but not in the private sector. The government made efforts to ensure access by persons with disabilities during the March 7 election.

The constitution states that the government, through laws and regulations, should care and rehabilitate persons with disabilities and special needs to reintegrate them into society. There are no laws

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prohibiting discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual and mental disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services. Access for persons with disabilities to buildings remained inconsistent.

The government has programs aimed to help persons with disabilities; however, numerous media reports documented the challenges these programs faced, namely in the lack of qualified, trained personnel and large special needs populations. Amputees, persons with other major physical injuries, and persons suffering from mental/psychological trauma were the focus of most media reports. The Health Ministry provides medical care, benefits, and rehabilitation, when available, and persons with disabilities may qualify for benefits from other agencies, including the Prime Minister's Office. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs operates several institutions for children and young adults with disabilities. The Ministry of Health's most recent estimate of the number of persons with physical and mental disabilities was two to three million, approximately 10 percent of the population.

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

Iraq has not signed the Convention.

## **Israel and the occupied territories**

### **Constitution and Laws**

The law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, marital status, political beliefs, disability, or age, and the government effectively enforced these prohibitions.

### **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. Legislation mandates access to buildings and transportation, as well as accommodations for persons with disabilities in services and the work place. The government enforced the laws with limited success but did not formulate specific regulations. Societal discrimination and lack of accessibility persisted in employment and housing. Television channels include subtitles or sign language, and the courts accommodate testimony from persons with intellectual disabilities or mental illness. The law mandates accessibility to urban public transportation, but not interurban buses; as of September 2009, approximately 40 percent of buses did not have such access. Most train stations maintained access for persons with disabilities.

There are an estimated 120,000 to 160,000 persons with severe mental illness, and very few receive rehabilitation services, according to research published by the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.

Various ministries and agencies maintained responsibility for persons with disabilities. The Commission for Equal Rights of People with Disabilities within the Ministry of Justice is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. It receives public inquiries, provides legal advice, represents clients, and educates and promotes best practices. It took legal action in the areas of accessibility and employment, and issued regulations to provide access to services and public sites. However, improvements were slow, according to Bizchut, a domestic NGO that advocates for the rights of persons with disabilities. On December 20, the commission released a report which stated that, of approximately 1.5 million citizens who consider themselves disabled, 43 percent of those with severe disabilities and 29 percent with moderate disabilities went without food at some stage over the past year, while more than one-third of those with severe disabilities and 23 percent with moderate disabilities could not afford essential medicine during at least one period in the year. In addition according to the report, 60 percent of persons with severe disabilities and nearly half of those with moderate disabilities could not afford heat, and 41 percent had their phone disconnected in the reporting period.

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During the year Bizchut's public inquiries hotline received 2,400 calls from individuals alleging that their rights had been violated due to their disability. The main complaints focused on national insurance, education, housing, hospitalization, and legal assistance.

In response to a petition to the Supreme Court submitted by NGOs including Bizchut, the Ministry of Education began a pilot program in one town to award each child with special needs a personal education budget. Bizchut continued to claim throughout the year that the education system did not provide adequate support to children with special needs.

The Division for Integrating Persons with Disabilities in the Labor Market within the Ministry of Industry examines and promotes employment for persons with disabilities. In August 2009 an amendment to the National Insurance Law came into effect that allows persons who receive a disability pension to earn more by permitting a combination of income and pension, rather than requiring the total forfeiture of the disability pension.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services provides out-of-home placement and sheltered employment for persons with cognitive, physical, and communication disabilities. It also handles criminal investigations involving persons with certain disabilities, either victims or offenders, when police request assistance.

The National Insurance Agency provides financial benefits and stipends, the Ministry of Health provides mental health and rehabilitation services, and the Ministry of Education provides special education services. However, Bizchut continued to criticize the lack of services provided in practice to mainstreamed pupils, which effectively limited their integration into regular class settings.

An article in Yediot Ahronot on July 25 described a new IDF program to allow persons with disabilities to complete basic army training; 19 persons graduated from an initial course held in July.

### **Other Relevant References**

Principal human rights problems were institutional, legal, and societal discrimination against Arab citizens, Palestinian residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (see annex), non-Orthodox Jews, and other religious groups; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities; and societal discrimination and domestic violence against women, particularly in Bedouin society.

According to the Ministry of Welfare, there were many cases of children with disabilities who were sexually assaulted that awaited investigation during the year.

There are reduced minimum wages for youths and persons with disabilities.

Domestic abuse of women, societal discrimination against women and persons with disabilities, and child labor remained serious problems.

According to Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-Israel), isolation of prisoners with mental illness was common.

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

Israel signed the Convention on 30/3/2007.

## **Jordan**

### **Constitution and Laws**

The constitution states that all citizens are equal under the law and prohibits discrimination based on race, language, and religion; however, discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, and social status is not specifically prohibited. The penal code does not address discrimination, thereby severely limiting judicial remedies.

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## **Persons with Disabilities**

The law provides equal rights to persons with disabilities, who numbered around 200,000, according to government and NGO estimates. The Higher Council for the Affairs of People with Disabilities works with government ministries, the private sector, and NGOs to formulate and implement strategies to assist persons with disabilities. In July 2009 the council issued national accreditation standards for rehabilitation centers for persons with disabilities. According to the council there were more than 15,000 students with disabilities attending 255 specialized centers and schools.

Citizens and NGOs universally reported that persons with disabilities faced problems accessing education, transportation, and other services, particularly in rural areas. The Special Buildings Code Department is tasked to enforce accessibility provisions and oversees retrofitting of existing buildings to comply with building codes. Many private and public office buildings continued to have limited or no access for persons with disabilities.

The law mandates that public and private sector establishments with between 25 and 50 workers employ at least one person with disabilities, and establishments with more than 50 workers must reserve 2 percent of their positions for persons with disabilities. However, these requirements were rarely enforced. Local organizations received complaints from persons with disabilities regarding employers who discriminated against them.

In 2009 the government provided monetary assistance to citizens with severe mental and multiple physical disabilities whose families earned less than 250 dinars (\$360) per month, and the higher council and local NGOs operated assistance programs. During the year the higher council discontinued financial assistance previously provided to cover a portion of education, training, or rehabilitation expenses for persons with disabilities due to budget cuts.

In September the government announced that it would allow persons with disabilities to vote with the aid of personal assistants rather than verbally, ensuring them greater ballot secrecy and electoral access. Takafo, an NGO aiming to increase voter participation for persons with disabilities, confirmed that the government made the necessary changes for the November 9 parliamentary elections to allow voters with disabilities greater accessibility and greater ballot secrecy.

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

Jordan signed the Convention and Optional Protocol on 30/3/2007. Jordan ratified the Convention on 31/3/2008.

## **Kuwait**

### **Constitution and Laws**

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, origin, disability, or language; discrimination based on social status is not addressed. In practice the government did not uniformly or consistently enforce laws against discrimination, and a number of laws and regulations discriminated against women, Bidoon, noncitizens, and domestic and expatriate workers.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, and mental disabilities and 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. There were no specific reports of discrimination against persons with disabilities; however, noncitizens with disabilities did not have access to government-operated facilities or receive stipends paid to citizens with disabilities, which covered transportation, housing, job training, and social welfare.

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In June the government enacted a new disability law providing larger disability grants, reduced working hours, and improved housing loans for citizens and Bidoon with mental or physical disabilities. The law requires government employers with workforces of 50 persons or more to recruit at least 4 percent of their workforce from vocationally trained persons with special needs. The law also allows citizens with disabilities, or those with disabled children, to receive larger than normal housing grants and earlier pensions. Although Bidoons are not normally entitled to receive housing grants, the new law's provisions included disabled Bidoons, or those with disabled children.

Representatives from ministries, other governmental bodies, Kuwait University, and several NGOs constitute the government's Higher Council for Handicapped Affairs, which makes policy recommendations, provides direct financial aid to persons with disabilities, and facilitates their integration into schools, jobs, and other social institutions. The government supervised and contributed to schools and job and training programs oriented to persons with special needs.

### **Other Relevant References**

The government restricted the operations of domestic and international human rights groups and limits cooperation with them. The law permits the existence of NGOs; however, the government continued to deny licenses to some NGOs. NGOs may not engage in political activity and are prohibited from encouraging sectarianism. They must also demonstrate that their existence is in the public interest. The only local independent NGOs dedicated specifically to human rights were the Kuwait Human Rights Society (KHRS) and the Kuwaiti Society for Fundamental Human Rights. Local licensed NGOs devoted to specific groups, such as women, children, foreign workers, prisoners, and persons with disabilities, were permitted to operate without government interference.

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

Kuwait has not signed the Convention.

## **Lebanon**

### **Constitution and Laws**

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status, and it provides for equality among all citizens. In practice some aspects of the law and traditional beliefs discriminated against women. Although the law reserves a percentage of private sector and government jobs for persons with disabilities, there were few accommodations for them. Discrimination based on race, language, or social status is illegal, but foreign domestic employees often were mistreated, sometimes suffered physical abuse, had pay withheld or unfairly reduced, or were forced to remain locked within their employer's home for the duration of their contracts.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

Although prohibited by law, discrimination against persons with disabilities continued. The Civil Service Board, which is in charge of recruiting government employees, continued to refuse applications from persons with disabilities. The law stipulates 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, there was no evidence the law was enforced in practice. The law mandates access to buildings by persons with disabilities, but the government failed to amend building codes. Many persons with mental disabilities were cared for in private institutions, several of which the government subsidized.

A study by the UN Development Programme in 1990, just after the end of the civil war, estimated one in 10 citizens--as many as 300,000 individuals--had disabilities, but the Ministry of Social Affairs had registered only 70,000 persons for official disability cards at year's end.

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The Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Council of Disabled are responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. According to the president of the Arab Organization of Disabled People, little progress has been made since the law on disabilities was passed in 2000. Approximately 100 relatively active but poorly funded private organizations made most of the efforts to assist persons with disabilities.

On May 13, the MOI issued a decree to ensure accessibility to polling stations for persons with special needs during the June parliamentary voting. Following the decree the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union, sponsored by the International Foundation for Election Systems, conducted a study mapping 1,741 polling stations throughout the country and assessed them according to the ministry's six accessibility criteria. The study showed that only six polling stations out of 1,741 satisfied all six criteria.

### **Other Relevant References**

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without overt government restriction and investigated and published their findings on human rights cases. Domestic human rights groups included: [...] the National Association for the Rights of the Disabled.

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

Lebanon signed the Convention and Optional Protocol on 14/6/2007.

## **Libya**

### **Constitution and Laws**

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, or social status. The government did not enforce these prohibitions effectively, particularly with regard to women and minorities.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law provides for the rights of persons with physical, sensory, intellectual and mental disabilities and provides for monetary and other types of social assistance. A number of government-approved organizations cared for persons with disabilities and protected access to employment, education, health care, and other state services. Few public facilities had adequate access for persons with physical disabilities, and there was limited access to information or communications.

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

Libya signed the Convention on 1/5/2008.

## **Morocco**

### **Constitution and Laws**

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status. In practice societal discrimination against women continued to be a problem, particularly in rural areas.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual and mental disabilities in employment, education, and access to health care; however, the government generally did not effectively enforce these provisions. The law provides for regulations and building codes that assure access for persons with disabilities, but the government did not effectively implement the laws and programs. Although building codes require accessibility for all persons, the codes were rarely enforced. In many cases, builders and building inspectors were unaware of laws requiring accessibility. There is no legislation mandating public accessibility to information and communications. Persons with disabilities had equal access to information and communications; however, special communication devices for the blind and deaf were generally not widely available.

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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 private and public sectors. In 2008 the government created 217 integrated classes for children with disabilities. In practice integration was largely left to private charities. Typically, families supported persons with disabilities, although some survived by begging.

### **Other Relevant References**

The penal code stipulates two types of domestic violence. High-level misdemeanors occur when the victim suffers injuries that result in 20 days of disability from work. Low-level misdemeanors occur for victims who suffer disability for less than 20 days. However, NGOs reported that the courts rarely prosecuted perpetrators of low-level misdemeanors. A local NGO, the Global Women's Institute, reported that often laws are not implemented due to societal concerns regarding breaking up a family and due to the conservative mentality of some police and court officials.

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

Morocco signed the Convention on 30/3/2007. Morocco ratified the Convention and the Optional Protocol on 8/4/2009.

## **Oman**

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law provides persons with disabilities, including physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities the same rights prescribed for other citizens in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services or other areas. However, persons with disabilities continued to face some discrimination. The law mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities, but many older buildings, including government buildings and schools, were not retrofitted to conform to the law. Law also requires private enterprises employing more than 50 persons to reserve at least 2 percent of positions for persons with disabilities. In practice this regulation was not widely enforced.

There is no protective legislation to provide for equal educational opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The Ministry of Social Development is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

During the year the government partnered with NGOs and the private sector to address the needs of persons with disabilities and combat cultural and societal discrimination against such persons through special seminars and vocational training. The government provided alternative education opportunities for over 500 children with disabilities, including overseas schooling when appropriate; this was largely due to lack of capacity within the country. In addition the Ministry of Education in the past partnered 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.

### **Other Relevant References**

No registered domestic human rights NGOs or fully autonomous domestic human rights groups existed in the country. There were civil society groups, however, that advocated for persons protected under human rights conventions, particularly women and the disabled. In the absence of specific human rights groups, during the year the government took an increasing role in human rights protection and establishing reporting mechanisms.

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The law provides for freedom of association "for legitimate objectives and in a proper manner." The Council of Ministers approved the establishment of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)--officially recognized as associations--to work on issues relating to women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, the environment, and other topics approved by the council.

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

Oman signed the Convention on 17/3/2008. Oman ratified the Convention on 6/1/2009.

## **Qatar**

### **Constitution and Laws**

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on nationality, race, language, religion, and disability, but not gender or social status. In practice custom heavily influenced government enforcement of nondiscrimination laws and legal, cultural, and institutional discrimination existed against women, noncitizens, and foreign workers.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law requires the allocation of resources for persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services or other areas and prohibits discrimination against such persons. There was no underlying pattern of abuse of disabled persons at education facilities, mental health facilities, or prisons. The government is charged with acting on complaints from individuals and the NHRC and enforcing compliance. The law requires that 2 percent of jobs in government agencies and public institutions are reserved for persons with disabilities. Private sector businesses employing a minimum of 25 persons were required to hire persons with disabilities. Employers who violated these employment provisions were subject to fines. There were no reports of any employer violating this law during the year.

Private and independent schools in general 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 was charged with ensuring compliance with the rights and provisions mandated under the law, but compliance was not effectively enforced.

### **Other Relevant References**

In cases of divorce, young children usually remain with the mother, regardless of her religion, unless she is found to be unfit. Sons remain in the custody of the mother until the age of 13 and daughters until the age of 15. In certain conditions, the court may extend the age of maternal custody to 15 years for sons and to the time of marriage for daughters. In exceptional cases, the mother retains custody of children with disabilities with no age limit stipulated. Women who are granted guardianship over their children by law receive their financial rights and associated right of residence.

The Department of Public Safety oversaw safety training and conditions, and the state-run petroleum company had its own safety standards and procedures. The regulations listed partial and permanent disabilities for which compensation may be awarded, some connected with handling chemicals and petroleum products or construction injuries. The law specifically set rates of payment and compensation. The government provided free medical treatment to workers who suffered work-related sickness or injuries.

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

Qatar signed the Convention and Optional Protocol on 9/7/2007. Qatar ratified the Convention on 13/5/2008

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## Saudi Arabia

### **Constitution and Laws**

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, and Sharia traditions emphasize human dignity regardless of gender, color, or race. The government generally effectively enforced prohibitions on disability, language, or social status but did not effectively enforce laws prohibiting discrimination based on race.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law does not prohibit discrimination against persons with physical, intellectual, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services or other areas. There is no legislation mandating public accessibility to buildings, information, and communications. Newer commercial buildings often included such access, as did some newer government buildings. Persons with disabilities had equal access to information and communications; however, special communication devices for persons with sensory disabilities were generally not publicly available.

There was NGO and government activity during the year to improve sign language literacy. During the year the Deaf Club of Jeddah concluded sign-language training of 40 media women and social workers and signed an agreement with the government's Human Resources Development Fund to train 1,500 public and private sector employees in sign language. On September 5, the Saudi Gazette reported that the NGO Saudi Society for Hearing Disability launched a campaign to eradicate sign language illiteracy.

Information about patterns of abuse of persons with disabilities in prisons and educational and mental health institutions was not available. The MOSA is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Vocational rehabilitation projects and social care programs increasingly brought persons with disabilities into the mainstream. The government sponsored institutions for the care of paralyzed children in Riyadh and Taif. There were also five houses for vocational rehabilitation, two of which were for girls; three centers for social rehabilitation for those who have severe disabilities; and nine centers for total rehabilitation. The MOSA assisted families who care for relatives with disabilities.

The labor law provides that employers of 25 or more employees allocate 4 percent of positions to persons with disabilities.

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

Saudi Arabia ratified the Convention and the Optional Protocol on 24/6/2008.

## Syria

### **Constitution and Laws**

The constitution provides for equal rights and equal opportunity for all citizens, and discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status is prohibited. The government did not enforce the law effectively. For example, membership in the Ba'ath Party or close familial relations with a prominent party member or powerful government official assisted in economic, social, or educational advancement. Party or government connections made it easier to gain admission into better elementary and secondary schools, to access lucrative employment, and to achieve greater power within the government, the military, and the security services. The government reserved certain prominent positions, such as provincial governorships, solely for Ba'ath Party members.

### **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

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protects persons with disabilities from discrimination in education, access to health, or provision of other state services. Article 7 of Law 50 reserves 4 percent of government jobs for persons with disabilities. Article 136 of Law 17 reserves 2 percent of private business jobs for persons with disabilities. Private businesses are eligible for tax exemptions after hiring persons with disabilities. The MoSAL is responsible for assisting persons with disabilities and worked through dedicated charities and organizations to provide assistance, often to promote self-sufficiency through vocational training. There were no reports of abuse patterns in mental health facilities.

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

Syria signed the Convention on 30/3/2007 and ratified the Convention and Optional Protocol on 10/7/2009.

## **Tunisia**

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical or mental disabilities and mandates that at least 1 percent of public and private sector jobs be reserved for persons who have disabilities; however, NGOs reported that this law was not widely enforced, and many employers were unaware of its existence.

There was some discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, and the provision of other state services. The government increased vocational training programs in handicrafts geared toward persons who have disabilities, with the goal of future employment. As of 1991 all new public buildings must be accessible to persons who have physical disabilities, and this was enforced, but persons with disabilities did not have access to most buildings built before 1991. The government issued cards to persons with disabilities for benefits such as unrestricted parking, priority medical services, preferential seating on public transportation, and consumer discounts. The government provided tax incentives to companies to encourage the hiring of persons with physical disabilities, and it strongly supported NGOs working on behalf of persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Solidarity, and Tunisians Abroad was charged with protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

There continued to be some social stigma associated with mental disabilities; however, several active NGOs provided educational, vocational, and recreational assistance to children and young adults with such disabilities, and the government and international organizations funded several programs.

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

Tunisia signed the Convention and Optional Protocol on 30/3/2007. Tunisia ratified the Convention and the Optional Protocol on 2/4/2008.

## **United Arab Emirates**

### **Constitution and Laws**

The constitution provides for equality for citizens without regard to race, nationality, or social status, and the law prohibits discrimination based on disability; however, legal and cultural discrimination existed and went unpunished. The constitution does not provide for equality for noncitizens.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law prohibits discrimination against persons who have physical and mental disabilities; however, such discrimination occurred in practice. Most public buildings provided some form of access for

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persons with disabilities in accordance with the law. Health care provided in the Ministry of Labor's five federal rehabilitation centers, as well as those in private centers, reportedly was inadequate.

Various departments within the ministries of labor and education were responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, and the government effectively enforced these rights. The government reserved 1 percent of all federal government jobs and 2 percent of government jobs in Abu Dhabi for persons with disabilities. On October 25, the Community Development Authority (CDA) in Dubai held a meeting with government and private sector human resource managers in an effort to promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The CDA offers public and private corporations assistance in hiring persons with disabilities through a program called "Elkayt."

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

United Arab Emirates signed the Convention on 8/2/2008 and Optional Protocol on 12/2/2008. United Arab Emirates ratified the Convention on 19/3/2010.

### **Western Sahara**

*No disability references found.*

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

Western Sahara has not signed the Convention.

### **Yemen**

#### **Constitution and Laws**

The law provides for equal rights and equal opportunity for all citizens; however, the government did not effectively enforce the law. Discrimination based on race, gender, and disability remained a serious problem.

#### **Persons with Disabilities**

Several laws mandate the rights and care of persons with disabilities, but there was discrimination against such persons. No national law mandates accessibility of buildings, information, and communications for persons with disabilities.

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

Authorities imprisoned persons with mental disabilities without providing adequate medical care. According to the MOHR, nurses and doctors watched the inmates. In some instances authorities detained without charge persons with mental disabilities and placed them in prisons with criminals. The MOI reported that at times family members brought relatives with mental disabilities to MOI-run prisons, asking officers to imprison the individuals. At year's end MOI-run prisons in Sana'a, Aden, and Taiz operated in conjunction with the Red Crescent semiautonomous units for prisoners with mental disabilities; conditions in these units reportedly were deficient. At year's end neither the MOI nor Ministry of Health had acted on a 2005 MOI initiative to establish centers for persons with mental illness.

The MSAL is responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. The government's Social Fund for Development and the Fund for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled, administered by the MSAL, provided limited basic services and supported more than 60 NGOs to assist persons with disabilities.

By law 5 percent of government jobs should be reserved for persons with disabilities, and the law mandates the acceptance of persons with disabilities in universities, exempts them from paying tuition,

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and requires that schools be made more accessible to persons with disabilities. It was unclear to what extent these laws were implemented.

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

Yemen signed the Convention on 30/3/2007 and Optional Protocol on 11/4/2007. Yemen ratified the Convention and the Optional Protocol on 26/3/2009.