

Freedom of Association in Jordan

Fact Sheet

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- The Jordanian Constitution amended in 2011 includes many articles enabling workers to establish their unions, such as Art. 16 and 23, supported by Art. 128 which stated that all legislations and all laws issued on freedom and rights, based on the Constitution, should not include any article against the spirit of freedoms and rights. But the Jordanian Labor Law still has many restrictions against freedom of association in Art. 98 and others. Also, the Civil Servant bylaw does not allow the employees in the public sector to establish trade union, despite the Constitutional Court' constitutional decision that allows all employees in the public sector to establish their trade unions.
- Jordan ratified the International Convention for Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention for Socioeconomic and Cultural Rights in 1975 and published it in the national Gazette in 2006. Additionally, Jordan ratified also the ILO Convention No. 98 named Right to organize and collective bargaining.
- As regards the establishment of trade unions, the Jordanian Labor Law imposes them - as mandatory requirement - to obtain a prior approval from the Tripartite Committee, composed of existing employers' unions (Chamber of Commerce and Industry), existing trade unions and the Ministry of Labor. However, all applications to establish trade unions have been rejected up to now, such as in the cases of the Independent Trade Union of workers in the phosphate sector, the Independent Trade Union of workers in the Jordan Electricity Corporation, and the Independent Union of airplanes maintenance technicians.
- Since 1976, the number of official trade unions is limited to 17, operating under the umbrella of the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU), which imposes the trade unions to be member of the Federation itself and to follow the unified internal bylaw of procedure which includes several articles enabling the Federation to intervene in the internal affairs of trade

unions. The majority of these trade unions do not comply with democratic standards and have not conducted elections since many years, and do not accept any new member;

- Since 2011, several independent and new trade unions were founded in Jordan. In April 2013 twelve independent and new trade unions active in Jordan formed a federation, named the newly established Jordanian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FITU). However, the new unions lack official status and are operating under extremely difficult conditions, so the federation neither can open headquarters, nor collect fees from its members, and not even conduct collective bargaining. Many of the new trade unions' activities are subject to pressure from the governmental bodies; these ones forcing the new trade unions to stop their actions.
- The General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU) is putting pressure on the independent and new trade unions, asking the Government to stop its activities and meetings with representatives of new trade unions and related CSOs. For instance, the GFJTU sent an official letter in October 2015, asking the Ministry of Labor to prevent works of Phenix Center and FES, because they are supporting the new trade unions. Additionally, the GFJTU sent the Ministry of Transport an official letter asking not to deal with the independent trade unions of drivers and workers in the air transport sector; the Federation also sent an official letter to the Prime Minister in April 2016 asking him to prevent all governmental institutions and/or all semi-governmental corporation not to deal with the new and independent trade unions. Finally, the GFJTU sent a letter to the mayor of Amman to prevent the activities of independent trade union of workers in the Amman Municipality. For this reason, many Ministries refused to hold meetings with several independent trade unions and the Amman mayor prevented all their activities in April 2016;
- Many labor protests conducted in Jordan during the last year have been subject to forced stop by government and/or the management or employers, such as during the strike of workers in Aqaba port, in September 2015 and labor strikes of workers in a textile factory in Madaba, and others.
- **For all of the above, we recommend the following:**
 - To reconsider the all legislations, labor law and the civil service law related to the freedom of associations to enable all workers and employees in Jordan to establish their unions freely based on international labor standards;
 - To issue a new law to organize workers employed in the public sector, in terms of freedom of association and international labor standards;
 - To stop the official action against labor protests, respecting the freedom of peaceful assembly and collective bargaining principles as part of international labor standards and decent working agenda;

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- To ratify the ILO Convention No. 87 on “freedom of association and protection of the right to organize union”.