

Jordan

Foreign Nationals and the Death Penalty

Death Penalty Overview

Jordan retains the death penalty for a range of crimes, including murder, rape, terrorism, aggravated robbery, drug trafficking, illegal possessions and use of weapons, war crimes, treason and espionage. Executions are carried out by hanging, and must first be ratified by the King, under Article 93 of the Constitution.

SOME STATISTICS: (Amnesty International 2022)

	Executions	Death Sentences	Known number on death row
2017	15	10+	10+
2018	0	16+	16+
2019	0	8+	8+
2020	0	2+	120+
2021	0	11+	122+
2022	0	4+	219+

'+' indicates that the figure that Amnesty International has calculated is a minimum.

Although not included in the Amnesty figures, Gulf News reported that a Jordanian man was executed in August 2021 in Swaqa prison for murder.

In 2022, Jordan voted a second time in favour of the UN's moratorium on the use of the death penalty, after having first voted in favour in 2020 (Amnesty International 2022).

There have been some political movements to reduce the use of the death penalty in Jordan. In 2005, after widespread criticism from human rights groups regarding the breadth of crimes deemed punishable by death in Jordanian law (Hanafy 2018), King Abdullah announced that:

'in coordination with the European Union, we would like to modify our Penal Code. Jordan could soon become the first country in the Middle East without capital punishment' (Husseini 2014).

Between 2006 and 2014, Jordan adopted a *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty. However, whilst the state carried out no executions during this time, no laws were changed or removed and judges continued to hand down death sentences.

Public opinion blamed the unofficial moratorium for a rise in crime and in 2014 Jordan hanged 11 men convicted of murder,

abandoning its position as a 'rare progressive voice on the death penalty in the region' (Abuqudairi 2014). Two days after the 2014 executions, the University of Jordan released a survey claiming that 81% of Jordanians were in support of capital punishment. (Ibid).



Swaqa Prison, where most prisoners are executed

After the publicised murder of captured Jordanian pilot, Maaz al-Kassasbeh by Islamic State, public opinion called for harsher punishments for terrorists, and in 2015, Jordan executed two men convicted of terrorism.

Notwithstanding any political will to reduce the use of the death penalty, the lack of any amendments to the Jordanian Penal Code

thus allowed for the state to easily renege on its intention to abolish capital punishment.

2017 saw the largest round of executions in the country for over a decade. 15 prisoners - all Jordanian nationals, mostly convicted of murder or rape - were executed by hanging in March 2017.

The resumption of executions was justified by the state in the context of rising crime rates, as well as support for the death penalty by the 'vast majority' of Jordanians (Abuqudairi 2014).

Foreign Nationals

Large numbers of foreign nationals work in Jordan as migrant workers and the same issues relating to migrants' human rights and access to justice etc. prevalent in the rest of the Middle East also occur in Jordan.

However, the majority of executions and death sentences are handed out to Jordanian nationals. The best way to ensure foreign nationals are not sentenced to death is to remove capital punishment from Jordanian law.

Acknowledgements

With special thanks to Francesca Rigg for her assistance with this research in Jordan.



Death Penalty Research Unit, University of Oxford

For more research see:

foreign-nationals.uwazi.io or tinyurl.com/mappingdeathrow