

# Gender Equality and Decent Work in Jordan

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ILO

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The International Labour Organization (ILO) works in close partnership with the Government of Jordan (GoJ), ILO social partners, Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) and General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU) the [Jordanian National Committee for Women \(JNCW\)](#) and civil society organisations (CSOs). The goal is to address gender and decent work challenges, particularly among women and youth, in line with international labour standards as well as the [National Strategy for Women in Jordan \(2020-2025\)](#).

A specialised agency of the United Nations, the ILO provides technical and programmatic assistance in Jordan, backing efforts by tripartite (government, employers, and workers) and civil society partners to combat gender discrimination. This assistance is part of the [Jordan Decent Work Country Programme \(2018-2022\)](#), which aims to promote decent work, social justice, and equity. Crucial issues, such as violence and harassment in the world of work, gender equality, and pay equity, are top priorities.

Despite progress in certain areas, Jordan still ranks low in the [Global Gender Gap Index](#), 138th out of 153 countries in 2020 (145th in economic participation and opportunity, 149th in labour force participation). The female labour force participation in Jordan remains low at 14 per cent, compared to 54 per cent for males, according to 2019 figures issued by the Department of Statistics (DOS). A [2018 DOS report](#) estimated the gender pay gap in the public sector at 18 per cent, and in the private sector at 14.1 per cent. The national estimate of unemployment for Jordanian women in the third quarter of 2020 was 33.6 per cent, compared to 21.2 per cent for men.



# Maternity and paternity at work

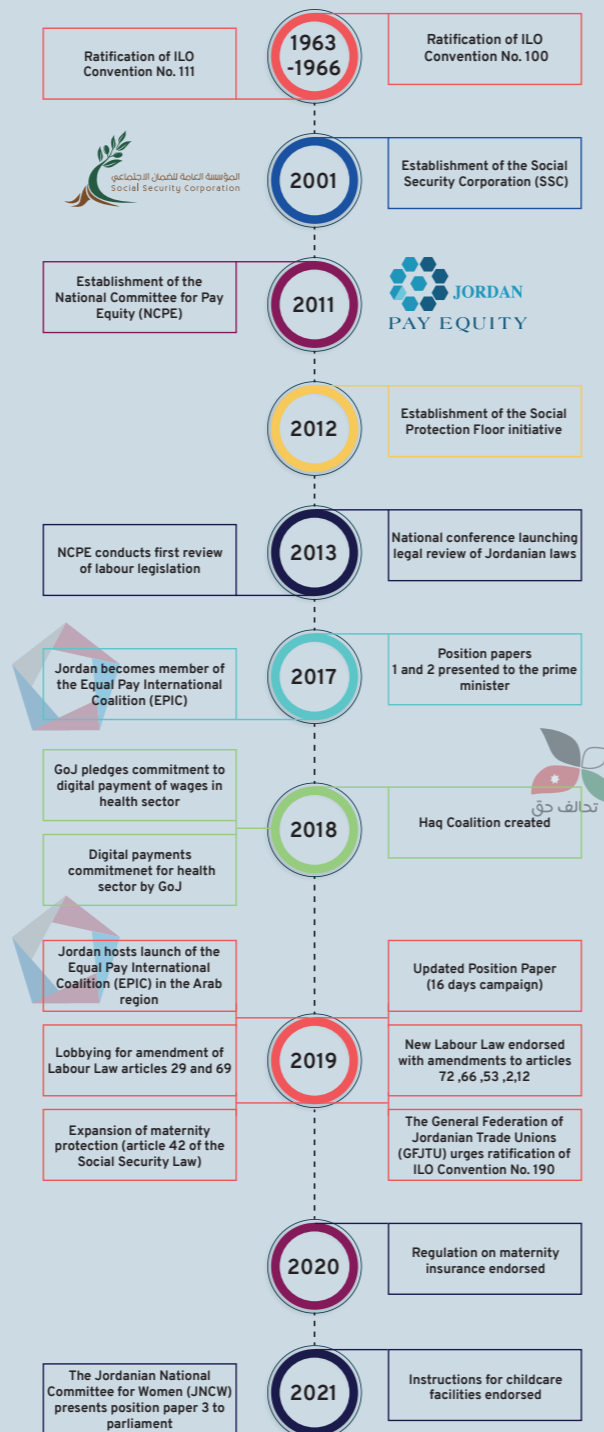
## National Framework for Daycare

Working in partnership with the ILO, national civil society organisation (CSO) [SADAQA](#) aims to promote the value of caregiving as a profession. The objectives of this effort are to build the capacity of employed caregivers, helping them keep their jobs under COVID-19, increase the employability of job seekers, and ensure caregivers obtain professional certification from government-accredited organisations. SADAQA advocates for enhanced workplace rights for women in Jordan. The COVID-19 crisis forced 1,600 registered nurseries into closure, but national efforts, including by the ILO and SADAQA, helped hundreds of these facilities go back to business and seek financial support from the Social Security Corporation (SSC).

## Paternity leave

Supported by the ILO, Jordan's National Committee for Pay Equity (NCPE) in 2013 proposed amendments to the [Civil Service Regulation](#). As a result, a two-days paternity leave has been introduced. The NCPE also proposed several [Labour Law](#) amendments, and five were endorsed in 2019, including a three-day paternity leave for private sector workers. Created in 2011 under a Norwegian-funded ILO initiative, the NCPE is jointly led by the Ministry of Labour (MoL) and the JNCW. Mandated to promote policies and practices aimed at tackling the gender pay gap in the country and wage protection, the NCPE is comprised of 22 members representing the GoJ, workers, the civil society, employers, the legislature, and the media.

### Gender related legislative amendments in Jordan



## Maternity insurance

ILO efforts and lobbying led to the 2014 enactment of a new [Social Security Law](#), expanding the pension system to formally introduce maternity insurance with cash benefits, in line with [ILO labour standards](#). In 2020, Jordan took another step, endorsing the [Regulation No. \(93\)](#) of 2020 on Maternity Social Protection under the Social Security Law. The regulation [enables working mothers](#) to return to work while securing childcare for their children either at a childcare facility or at home. It also allows for registered childcare centres to receive direct cash benefits to cover operational costs. Workers registered with the SSC represent almost half of Jordan's total labour force -- which stands at around 2.64 million. Of the approximately 390,000 SSC-registered women, 32 per cent work in the public sector and are therefore receive maternity benefits under civil service regulations, while the remaining women are eligible to receive these benefits from maternity insurance schemes. An ILO-commissioned assessment report had called for a maternity protection system in Jordan, emphasising that such protection is essential for safeguarding the nutritional needs, health, and wellbeing of mothers and their children. Around 28,000 families can benefit from the maternity insurance.

## Flexible work arrangements

Jordan announced a 2017 [regulation on flexible work arrangements](#), followed by related instructions in 2018. These arrangements, include flexible hours, part-time jobs, shared jobs, a compressed week, annual salary averaging, and teleworking. At the time, only few employers made use of this opportunity as the regulation was still not binding outside the defence ordinances, issued by the GoJ to cope with COVID-19 impacts on the country. The pandemic reemphasised the importance of flexible work arrangements. In 2020, the MoL issued decision requesting private sector employers to comply with the regulation as part of GoJ efforts to prevent/control the spread of COVID-19.



Maternity protection is key to safeguarding children's health and nutrition.

# Pay equity and wage protection

## Stand-up with the Teacher campaign

The ILO and its social partners continue to support this [campaign](#) by taking action designed to ensure compliance of private schools with government regulations safeguarding the rights of teachers. The campaign has a key role in protecting wages of teachers through mandatory digital/bank wage transfers, and in monitoring contractual obligations.

## Digital wage payments

With technical and financial support from the ILO, the NCPE and the Stand-up with the Teacher campaign have [successfully lobbied](#) the Government of Jordan (GoJ) for enactment of the Regulation on Registration and Licensing of Private and International Schools. Under this regulation, these schools are required to deposit wages of teachers electronically (e-wallets/bank transfers). Electronic payment of wages enhances transparency and ensures fair remuneration with no interruptions. Proposed amendments to Article 46 of the Labour Law seek to make digital wage payments mandatory for all employers.



The Stand-up with the Teacher campaign plays an important role in protection of the rights and wages of private-sector teachers.



## EPIC launch in Arab region

Jordan has been a member of the [Equal Pay International Coalition \(EPIC\)](#) since its launch at the UN General Assembly in 2017. The country was the only Arab member of the EPIC and member of its Steering Committee. In 2019, the JNCW, in partnership with the ILO, UN Women, and the OECD, launched the [EPIC in Arab region](#), to help reduce the gender pay gap, promote pay equity, and enable Arab countries to exchange knowledge. As a result, six governments, nine employers' organizations, five workers' organisations, and one civil society organisation made and announced 21 pledges to promote pay equity. Constituents, including the Palestinian government, as well as Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI), and the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) have expressed intention to join the EPIC. From the Arab region, Tunisia and Egypt are now EPIC member states, in addition to Jordan.



Jordan has been a member of the EPIC since its launch at the UN General Assembly in 2017, when then Jordanian Minister of Planning, Mary Kawar, and ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder (upper left), took part in the event.



The Women in Sports programme seeks to reduce unemployment, and break misconceptions and stereotypes about women's capabilities.

## Leadership and equal opportunity

►► The ILO is forging partnerships in a bid to tackle the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and advance women's economic empowerment.

### Women on Boards of Jordan programme

The ILO is partnering with Women on Boards, a national non-governmental organisation (NGO), to tackle the underrepresentation of women on boards of directors and in decision-making positions in the public and private sectors. An ultimate goal of the programme, which focuses on the banking sector, where women's representation on boards currently stands at 8.1 per cent, is to create meaningful change through a measurable impact on women's empowerment and leadership on boards of private companies, state-owned enterprises, and syndicates. The programme aims at advocating, raising awareness about gender diversity at the legislative level; encouraging the private sector to adopt gender equality and diversity policies; engaging directly with the banking sector to change perception and practices; and building the capacity of women in leadership positions. It is currently lobbying for amendments to legislation, including governance instructions for listed shareholding companies, to introduce a quota system ensuring that a board of directors comprises at least 20 per cent of either sex.

### Women in Sports programme

Working in partnership with the GoJ and Mudarrib, a local social enterprise, the ILO launched this project to enhance the training of female graduates of physical education programmes to improve access to decent jobs in gyms and sports facilities. The programme is part of efforts to advance women's empowerment, provide them with decent work, and reduce unemployment. Through effective utilisation of the media, the programme aims at breaking misconceptions and stereotypes about women's capabilities. The pilot phase is designed to train and employ 75 persons. The cost of the training and employment of each participant is estimated at USD 500 -- which is very modest compared with similar initiatives elsewhere. Out of the 75 women, 69 signed employment contracts with employers Jordan, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

# Violence and harassment in the world of work

Empowering, supporting and encouraging women politically, economically and socially limits violence and sexual harassment, and can ensure communities are free from the two phenomena.

Fida Hamoud, President of the Legislation and Opinion Bureau, Amman Jordan.

## Legal gap analysis

The ILO conducted a comparative analysis examining the compatibility of Jordanian legislation and [ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(No. 190\)](#), in addition to its accompanying [Recommendation, 2019 \(No. 206\)](#). The general objective of this analysis was to propose amendments to Jordanian legislation that are consistent with ILO conventions. The ILO in 2020 published a [briefing note](#) highlighting the relevance of Convention C190 to the COVID-19 pandemic. The document provides examples of work-related violence and harassment that have been reported across countries in the context of COVID-19 and mentions specific provisions of Convention C190 and its accompanying Recommendation R206 that can help prevent and address such situations.

## National prevention strategy

Following the legal gap analysis and in-depth discussions with stakeholders, the ILO and its partners, including the JNCW and the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU), launched a proposed "National Strategy for the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work". Endorsed by more than 50 stakeholders representing workers, employers and CSOs, strategy is built on the main elements of prevention, response, and protection, as well as integrated policy and accountability mechanisms. The strategy cited a JNCW research study as reporting that 41 per cent of workers in Jordan have been subjected to some form of violence and harassment at work (2017). A separate study by the Jordan-based Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) found that 75.3 per cent of women exposed to workplace harassment

"My employer's son sexually abused me during lockdown. I am thankful for still being alive. All I want is justice".

Domestic worker  
Jordan

have not considered legal action (2018). The MoL has adopted a [violence and harassment prevention policy](#) and code of conduct. In addition, the government submitted amendments to [Article 29](#) of the Labour Law to the Lower House of Parliament. These amendments include recommendations by civil society institutions, agreed upon following dialogue organised by the ILO and its social partners.

## Collective bargaining agreements

Through [Better Work Jordan \(BWJ\)](#), a joint initiative of the ILO and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a three-year collective bargaining agreement (CBA) [was signed](#) in 2019 between workers and employers in Jordan's garment industry. The sector-wide CBA introduced a clause on the elimination of violence, harassment and discrimination in the workplace and among workers. This clause was the first of its kind in collective bargaining agreements in Jordan. Creating an internal grievance redress mechanism for all workers, the agreement also prohibits pre-employment pregnancy tests. A separate CBA was signed in 2019 for workers in the private education sector, addressing two forms of violence and harassment in the world of work: sexual harassment and pay discrimination. The GFJTU has repeatedly called on the GoJ to ratify Convention C190.



The 2019 CBA in the garment sector prohibits pre-employment pregnancy tests, and seeks the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work as well as pay discrimination.

## COVID-19 impact

### Female owners of private nurseries, kindergartens, and schools

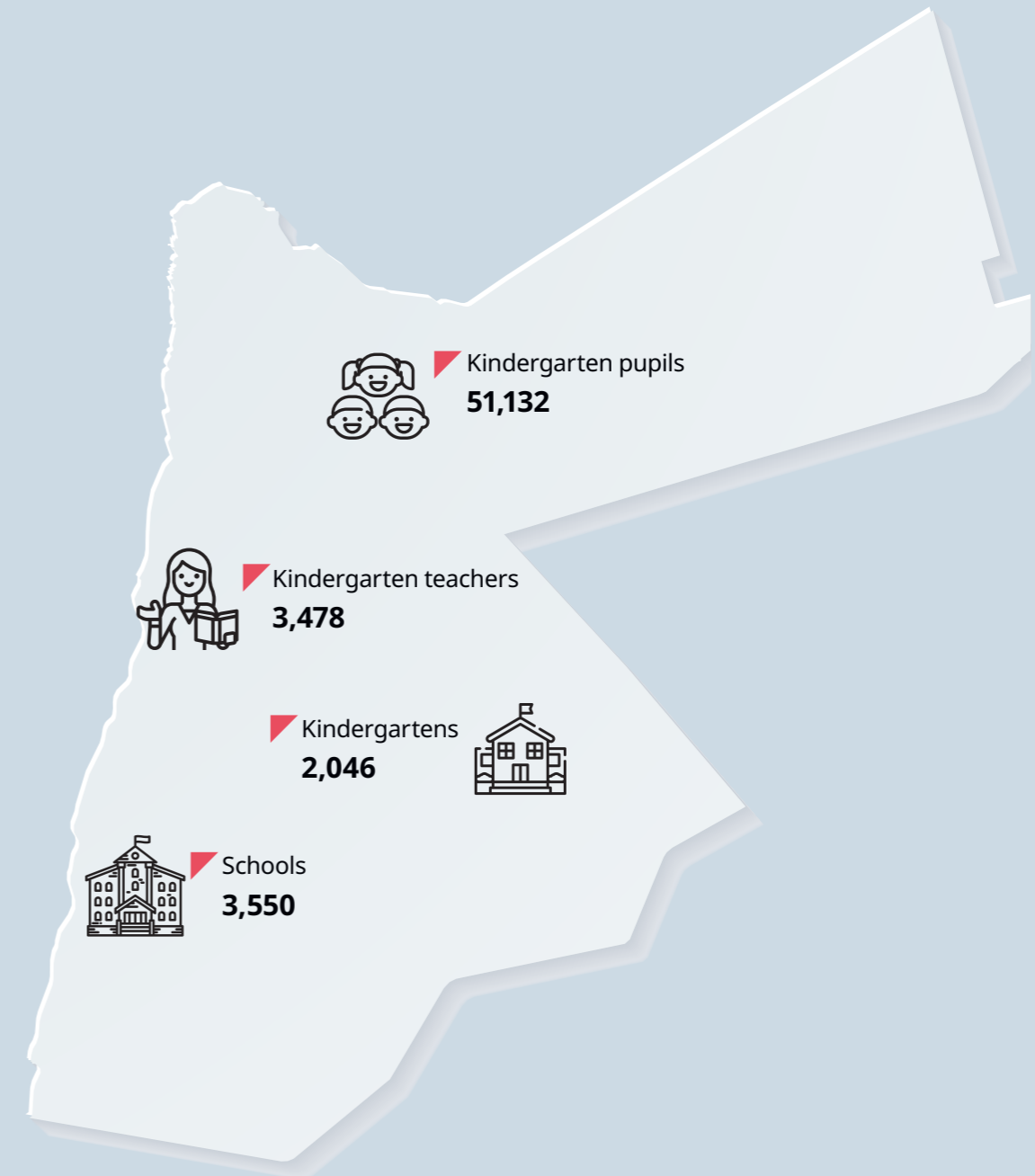
The ILO is providing support for these employers who are among the hardest hit by COVID-19 impacts on Jordan. Seeking assistance from the GoJ, banks, and CSOs to offset COVID-19 impacts, the owners of private nurseries, kindergartens, and schools formed a coalition in 2020 following ILO-facilitated planning. The ILO is helping the coalition build and organise its efforts, advocacy capacity, communication skills, and lobbying techniques. Backed by ILO, the coalition is engaging with the media and in contact with the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) and the SSC to tackle COVID-19 challenges. Backing these efforts, the ILO launched an initiative in collaboration with the Association of Banks in Jordan (ABJ) and the Centre for Women's Studies at the Hashemite University to collect data from private nurseries, kindergartens, and schools. The data helps ILO assess the financial vulnerability and solvency of these institutions. ILO trained female university students on data collection and explained to them the objectives of the initiative. The highly feminised sector has 3,550 schools, and 2,046 kindergartens, generating income for approximately 37,000 teachers.

### Health workers

ILO efforts include organising and mobilising of health workers, particularly women. The ILO, in partnership with the General Trade Union of Workers in Health Services and Pharmaceutical Industries and Ahel for Community Organising, aims to increase female labour force participation, bridge the gender pay gap, and improve workplace/employment conditions. Ahel is cooperating with the union to identify, organise, and mobilise sector leaders, building their advocacy capacity, and enabling them to advocate for gender equality.



With support from its social partners, the ILO aims at organising health workers, particularly women.





ILO Gender Technical Specialist, Reem Aslam, takes part in a social dialogue session with ILO social partners.

## Awareness and national campaigns

### Convention C190

On the first anniversary (June 21) of the adoption of ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), the ILO and UN Women launched a four-day social media [campaign](#) in Jordan affirming the right of workers to a world of work free from violence and harassment. The campaign drummed up community and official support for the endorsement of legislation guaranteeing the right of women and men to an environment free from violence and harassment, the campaign posted on social media platforms brief messages from workers, employers, GoJ officials, legislators, and public figures, highlighting psychological, health, and economic impacts of violence and harassment on the world of work.

### Equal Pay Day

Marking the first International Equal Pay Day (18 September), the ILO and its partners launched a public engagement campaign to examine people's understanding of [pay discrimination](#) as well as different forms of violence and harassment in the world of work. Publishing multiple-choice quiz on social media platforms, the campaign sought to measure public support for pay equity, and to increase awareness at individual and institutional levels.

### Training

The ILO conducted a multi-session training for 50 presenters and editors of state-owned Al Mamlaka broadcaster, raising awareness about the use of gender-inclusive language in news programmes. The training addressed gender discrimination, stereotypes, and misconceptions.

### Webinars

The ILO, CSOs, trade unions, and schools, held several sessions on women's economic empowerment, with a focus on the COVID-19 impact on female workers and owners of businesses.



## Proposed legislative amendments

Urging more gender-inclusive legislation, the ILO and its partners have proposed amendments to Labour Law articles **2, 27, 28, 29, 45, 46, 55, 67, 69, and 70**. The proposed amendments fall in line with:

- [ILO Hours of Work \(Industry\) Convention, 1919 \(No. 1\)](#)
- [Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 \(No. 100\)](#)
- [Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention, 1958 \(No. 111\)](#)
- [Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 \(No. 155\)](#)
- [Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 \(No. 156\)](#)
- [Night Work Convention, 1990 \(No. 171\)](#)
- [Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 \(No. 183\)](#)
- [Convention C190.](#)

Several NCPE legislative proposals are being examined by the GoJ. These proposals cover prevention of violence and harassment in the world of work; expansion of wage protection through electronic payment systems to cover all workers; increasing of paid maternity leave from 70 days to 98 days (14 weeks); removal of restrictions on women's employment and hours of work for specific occupations, and protection of pregnant women. Jordan has [ratified](#) 26 ILO conventions including 7 out of 8 core conventions.



The ILO and its social partners are lobbying the Jordanian parliament to endorse legislative amendments.



The ILO holds social dialogue sessions with its social partners as part of national efforts to advance gender equality and decent work in Jordan.

## Publications and translations

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### Assessment of maternity insurance

Commissioned by the ILO and the SSC, "[Assessment of the Maternity Insurance in Jordan](#)", a piece of qualitative research, looked into the impact of the insurance on female labour force participation and women's decisions whether to join the labour market and keep working, as well as on families/households. It also examined how maternity insurance influences perspectives/views of employers, as well as prospects of improvement of procedures and expansion of scope. The purpose was to create an enhanced response to the needs of women and men in the world of work, and their families, as well as the Jordanian economy and society.

### E-wallets

The ILO and the JNCW conducted a 2020 [poll](#) to explore digital wage payment difficulties faced by private sectors. The [results](#) highlighted the need for e-wallets and other digital tools as useful tools to meet COVID-19 challenges, and ensure workers receive facilitated services protecting their wages, particularly women, who face pay gaps and violations.

### Decent work and gender equality in Jordanian pharmacies

An ILO-commissioned a research study on Decent Work and Gender Equality in Jordanian Pharmacies to understand decent work deficits in the private sector. Conducted by a research consulting team, the study offered quantitative and qualitative data to help design and implement effective interventions to address these deficits.

### COVID-19

The ILO gender team translated and disseminated a series of ILO briefing notes on the COVID-19 response and recovery. [One](#) of these documents lists twelve!! ways Convention C190 can tackle workplace violence and harassment under COVID-19.

### Collaboration

The ILO continues to coordinate national and regional efforts through the UN Country Team (UNCT) system as well as through the World Bank including, the [Mashreq Gender Facility Technical Committee](#) and the Technical Committee of the [National Strategy for Women in Jordan](#) (2020-2025). This ongoing collaboration ensures that resources are best utilised and cost effective.



## Acknowledgement

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