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REFORM:

Jordan's

Stubborn Stability

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**Democracy and
Rule of Law Project**



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SINCE INDEPENDENCE IN 1947, Jordan has shown a remarkable ability to survive as a political entity. Surrounded by regional conflict and starved of resources, it has endured a massive influx of Palestinian refugees and numerous coup attempts. For decades, the Hashemite monarchy has overcome these political and economic storms by weakening institutionalized opposition to its rule and relying on the distribution of benefits and privileges to create a cohesive support base and a security establishment loyal to the existing political order. The regime has been able to sustain this situation by capitalizing on Jordan's geographic centrality. Benefiting from Jordan's image as an oasis of stability in a deeply troubled region, the monarchy has been able to secure a flow of external assistance that has helped counteract the lack of natural resources and maintain domestic political stability. But the balance has always been precarious. The contemporary process of political reform in Jordan must be understood in this context.

Launched by King Hussein in the late 1980s and continuing under his son Abdullah II after he took power in 1999, Jordan's reform process has brought about positive changes. Political parties are now legal, parliamentary elections have become more regular, and significant economic reforms have been introduced. The process, however, has not resulted in democratic change. Rather, it has been a halfhearted and hesitant top-down reform effort, driven by the monarchy's desire to build its support base and maintain domestic political stability in the face of significant external challenges. As a result, the changes have been limited. Many initiatives have been launched and committees created, but substantive change has not matched the rhetoric. While there is now open debate about the fundamental problems in the Jordanian political system, real structural reforms are not on the agenda. The monarchy retains its monopoly on power in the country, and major decisions are still made by institutions not accountable to the electorate, such as the royal court and the intelligence services.

In the past several years, Jordan has witnessed a significant setback in political freedom. King Abdullah II has responded to pressures created by a deteriorating regional situation and continuing economic troubles by clamping down on political and civil liberties and increasing the pervasive role of the security services. The question about Jordan's political future is not whether the political reform process will continue, but whether there will be one at all. The answer depends on whether the regime will be convinced that Jordan's stability is best maintained through a political opening rather than through repression.

The regime's decision will be affected by whether and how it can resist pressures for change arising from regional and domestic challenges. Can the monarchy continue to walk a tightrope and keep the opposition in check despite widespread dissatisfaction with the country's foreign policy? Will economic policy alienate the monarchy's support base? What role can the United States and Europe play in these changing dynamics? Unlike the situation a few decades ago, today the survival

of Jordan as a state is not threatened. The Hashemite monarchy has succeeded in creating enough interests (both domestic and foreign) in the survival of the state to assure Jordan's place in a changing regional order. However, while Jordan's existence is not at stake, the shape of its political future is unclear.

JORDAN'S DILEMMAS

Jordan's political reform process cannot be understood without an appreciation of the external and domestic threats the modern Jordanian political system has faced. The Hashemite Jordanian Kingdom has long seemed precarious. Established by Great Britain in 1921, it was a resource-scarce land with a population lacking a cohesive ethnic or religious identity or a strong loyalty to the installed Hashemite ruler from Mecca. Moreover, its geographic location has often made it susceptible to the push and pull of regional geopolitics. The Arab-Israeli conflict in particular has had a profound effect on Jordan's domestic balance of power and interests. Political reform must thus be viewed against the backdrop of the monarchy's continuous struggle to maintain the existing political order and stabilize the country in light of perceived and real threats to its authority.

Ever since its establishment, the Hashemite monarchy has relied on a strategy of seeking aid from abroad to create a domestic support base. Initially dependent on subsidies from Britain, the monarchy was later able to convince the United States and conservative Arab states of its vital role in maintaining regional security. The resulting flow of external assistance from these states permitted payoffs that allowed the monarchy to build a support base.¹

The monarchy rallied support by offering government jobs and special privileges to certain population groups, a practice that began when Transjordan was still a British mandate. Abdullah I (1921–1951), son of Hashemite King Hussein of Mecca, consolidated his rule by forming a coalition composed of tribal leaders (descendants of Bedouins who had migrated from Arabia), Christians, Circassians, and Chechens (who came to Jordan in the early twentieth century, fleeing Russia's southward expansion into the Caucasus). Abdullah also shifted the electoral balance from rapidly growing urban population centers to rural areas, where he cultivated a loyal constituency. This practice continued under King Talal (1951–52) and King Hussein (1952–1999). As a result, members of these communities came to occupy most public jobs, while electoral laws guaranteed their overrepresentation in parliament.

Capitalizing on this support, the monarchy was able to unilaterally control political life. The 1952 constitution declared Jordan a constitutional monarchy, but it allowed the king to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, the cabinet, and the upper house of parliament at his discretion. It also allowed the monarch to dissolve parliament, veto legislation, and decree "provisional laws," which have the full effect of law when the parliament is dissolved.² It gave institutions outside the monarchy, such as the cabinet and parliament, limited powers: legislation passed by the elected lower house has to be approved by the senate, whose members are appointed directly by the king. These institutions were also prevented from functioning efficiently. Real power rested not in constitutional institutions like the cabinet and the parliament, but in the royal court and the security services, which were not regulated by the constitution and not accountable to parliament.

This political arrangement, however, has continuously faced tremendous pressure due to changing internal and regional conditions. In the past 80 years, Jordan has found itself at the heart of ideological and political struggles in the Middle East. The emergence of Arab nationalist and leftist groups in Jordan and in powerful neighboring countries, such as Syria and Iraq, in the 1950s and 1960s clashed with the conservative, pro-Western stance of the Hashemite monarchy. In 1957, rising demands for Jordan's transformation into a republic or for its union with Syria and Egypt threatened not only the authority but the existence of the monarchy. The state was also in danger of being pulled apart by Cold War rivalries. In the 1950s, the Hashemite monarchy witnessed various attempted coups d'état by antiroyalist movements (supported in many cases by other Arab states).

The most significant challenge to Hashemite authority, however, has been the Arab-Israeli conflict. While it has affected most Arab states to some extent, in Jordan the conflict has such a profound impact that many consider it a domestic issue. Successive waves of Palestinian refugees since 1948 and the 1950 decision of King Abdullah I to incorporate the West Bank into Jordan's territory brought into the already weak state an urbanized, educated, and politicized element with no strong affinity for or allegiance to the Hashemite monarchy. The reality of a large population of Palestinian origin has been a defining element of Jordan's internal dynamics.

The history of Palestinian-Jordanian relations is a traumatic one for both Jordanians of East Bank and West Bank origin. In the late 1960s, the presence of many Palestinian political groups, such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, in Jordan threatened the authority of the king. These groups acted as autonomous movements outside the authority of the king and some even called openly for the overthrow of the monarchy. The situation eventually led to open warfare between the regime and leftist guerrilla groups in the Palestinian refugee camps in 1970–71. By July 1971, the regime had forced most Palestinian movements, including the PLO, to relocate to other countries. The monarchy had survived one of the greatest challenges to its authority and asserted its control over the country.

Although the security threat was neutralized, the Palestinian issue has continued to threaten the Jordanian state. The greatest threat is the claim by many Israeli right-wing groups that the Palestinians do not have the right to establish an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza, because a Palestinian state—Jordan—already exists on the East Bank of the Jordan River. This so-called “Jordan option” was espoused by Ariel Sharon when he entered politics in 1974, and he repeatedly advocated removal of the “artificial kingdom of Jordan” and transformation of the country into a Palestinian state.

The presence of a large number of Jordanians of Palestinian origin also threatens the monarchy's system of governance, which favors traditional East Bank elites. The exact composition of Jordan's population is a sensitive and contested issue. According to a September 2002 official statement, Palestinians constitute 43 percent of the Jordanian population, but the more commonly cited estimate is 60 percent. The overall balance of political and economic power between Jordanians of Palestinian origin and Jordanians of East Bank origin is highly complex, and a detailed discussion falls outside the scope of this paper.³ Suffice to say that although Jordan hosted successive waves of Palestinian refugees and offered them citizenship, many of those who arrived after the 1948 war and after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967 felt that they were treated unfairly and remained estranged from the Jordanian system. In contrast, wealthier Palestinians who migrated to

the country from Kuwait during the 1990 Iraqi invasion were able to integrate and are now part of the economic elite.

Palestinian Jordanians, however, remain largely underrepresented in the public sector and in the political power structure. Only 7 of the 55 senators—all appointed by the king—are of Palestinian origin, and the electoral laws for the lower house of parliament are designed to overrepresent segments of the population allied with the regime. Rural, promonarchy districts are favored, while urban areas that are bastions of Palestinian or Islamist support are underrepresented. Palestinians rarely hold more than 17 of 110 lower house seats. As a result, turnout in rural areas tends to be very high, while urban Palestinian-majority districts register the lowest turnouts in the kingdom.

Careful manipulation of the political system has not always sufficed to maintain stability in the kingdom, however, and Jordan has experienced repeated crises. Historically, the monarchy responded to open challenges by cracking down on all political activity. Following attempted coups in the 1950s, Arab nationalist and leftist opponents of the Hashemites were severely repressed. Political parties were only legal between 1955 and 1957, and martial law was declared after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Although the constitution recognized the basic freedoms of expression and assembly, press and penal laws were enacted to prohibit criticism of the royal family and the armed forces or any statement considered harmful to national unity or Jordan's foreign relations. Parliament was dissolved numerous times—most notably for two decades between 1968 and 1989—whenever the monarchy sought to avoid potential opposition to controversial policies and legislation. Successive kings also relied on the powerful General Intelligence Department (GID), or *mukhabarat*, to suppress political activity.

HUSSEIN'S ABORTIVE POLITICAL OPENING

Beginning in 1980, Jordan's strategy of depending on external revenue as a way of preserving its internal political balance was severely undermined by a decline in U.S. support and remittances from its citizens working in the Persian Gulf. In response to significant revenue loss, in 1989 King Hussein introduced limited openings in the political system. The political liberalization process was designed to generate support for economic policies rather than to introduce real political change.

In 1980, the United States terminated its economic package to Jordan after King Hussein refused to join Egypt in signing a peace treaty with Israel. At the same time, the Gulf states diverted assistance from Jordan to Iraq to support its war against Iran. As the price of oil fell during the 1980s and the demand for foreign workers decreased, Jordan also lost some of the funds it had been accruing from its citizens' remittances. By 1989, the kingdom was forced to default on its foreign debt and resort to a loan by the International Monetary Fund with strict conditions. The mandated decreases of subsidies on fuel and food led to civil disturbances in the southern city of Maan, a traditional heartland of Hashemite support, which eventually spread to other towns and cities also viewed as bastions of support for the regime. While the rioters did not criticize the king or make explicit demands for democracy and civil liberties, they called for the revocation of austerity measures, the resignation of the government, new parliamentary elections, and the punishment of corrupt officials. Ultimately, the riots prompted a shaken regime to respond with promises of

political reforms. Between 1989 and 1993, the Jordanian political system witnessed significant liberalization.

The reforms were designed to reward regime supporters and to redefine the relationship between the regime and the opposition. A major step was allowing parliamentary elections in 1989, the first such elections since 1967. Although political parties were still illegal, independent candidates were allowed and the elections were considered honest. Islamist candidates achieved a major victory, gaining almost 40 percent of the seats in parliament. Twenty of the 26 Muslim Brotherhood candidates who ran as well as 12 independent Islamists won seats (in total, 32 of 86 contested seats).

Another landmark event was the issuance of the 1991 National Charter, which laid the foundation for political pluralism in Jordan. In the wake of the riots and the resumption of parliamentary life, King Hussein appointed a 60-member commission—which included well-known government supporters as well as leading members of leftist parties and the Muslim Brotherhood—to draft a charter to define the goals and parameters of Jordan’s liberalization process. During the drafting of the charter, the government offered the opposition a basic proposition: if the opposition recognized the legitimacy of the Hashemite monarchy, the regime would allow a reemergence of political party pluralism in Jordan under the power of the king. As a result of the charter, martial law was lifted and parliament authorized the formation of political parties in 1992. Political exiles were permitted to return and the government relaxed restrictions on demonstrations.

Finally, a new Press and Publications Law in 1993 lifted some restrictions on Jordan’s print media and several new weekly newspapers were licensed. While journalists at the time criticized the law for not being liberal enough (particularly the stipulation that journalists must be members of the Jordan Press Club to work legally), it is now lauded as the most liberal that Jordan has known.

Never truly committed to democratization, King Hussein started undermining the reforms as soon as he saw an opportunity to win back U.S. financial and political support. The opening of talks between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Israel at the 1991 Madrid peace conference (in which Palestinians were included in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation) provided Hussein with an opportunity to play a role in the process. This, Hussein hoped, would confirm Jordan’s political role in the region, neutralize the Israeli threat of turning Jordan into a Palestinian state, restore good relations with the United States, and secure renewed U.S. assistance. The Jordanian regime publicly sought debt reduction, foreign aid, and foreign investments for Jordan as a reward for signing a peace treaty with Israel, but this official position ran into considerable opposition by a public deeply distrustful of Israel and the United States. In an attempt to undermine internal opposition to the peace treaty, the regime orchestrated a series of measures designed to decrease the influence and voice of opponents, particularly Islamists.

The most important measure was the amendment to the electoral law. Under the old law, voters could choose as many candidates as there were seats in their district. In August 1993, presumably to curb the electoral success of Islamists in the 1989 elections, the law was amended, restricting each voter to choosing only one candidate, no matter how many seats were to be filled in the district. The controversial “one-person, one-vote” law, as it became known, bolstered tribal candidates and undermined large parties: forced to make only one choice, voters tended to pick the candidate they knew personally. As a result, the 1993 elections heavily reduced the influence of the Islamic Action Front (the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood) in parliament. In November 1994, the peace treaty with Israel, signed on October 26, 1994, was ratified by a comfortable margin.

The regime also rolled back reforms in other areas. A 1997 decree amending the press law raised the minimum capital requirements for newspapers, increased penalties for violations of the law, and increased prohibitions on content. The amendments were annulled by the High Court of Justice, which found them unconstitutional, but most restrictions were reinstated by a 1998 law. In response to domestic and international criticism, a more liberal law was passed in 1999. It halved the capitalization requirement for weeklies, reduced fines for violations, transferred the power to revoke a publication's license from the minister of information to the court system, and withdrew the courts' authority to suspend a publication.

By the time of Hussein's death in February 1999, it was clear that the liberalization experiment had been a temporary tactic by the king to reduce opposition to unpopular economic policies. The changes had never been intended to actually open to public choice the basic structures of the political system. Opponents of regime policies concluded that they could only express their dissent outside the system. Many boycotted the November 1997 parliamentary elections and demanded the revocation of the one-person one-vote law and the amendments to the press law as well as an end to normalization with Israel.

Despite the opposition it generated, the peace treaty brought significant rewards to the regime. The United States declared Jordan a major non-NATO strategic ally, wrote off its debt, and raised aid levels progressively, making Jordan in less than a decade the fourth largest recipient of U.S. economic and military assistance.⁴ Jordan also became one of the first countries in the region to sign a partnership agreement with the European Union.

REFORMS UNDER ABDULLAH

As in other Arab countries where a son succeeded the father in the late 1990s (Bahrain, Morocco, and Syria), the accession of King Abdullah to the throne in February 1999 brought with it expectations that Jordan would move forward with reform. Indeed, at the opening of the parliamentary session on November 1, 1999 the new king proclaimed that Jordan's democratic course would remain a "national and unwavering choice." It was soon clear, however, that economic reform and regime stability would take priority over political reform. Abdullah's approach to political reform in his first years in office was similar to his father's. It was designed to temper the effects of significant regional challenges by strengthening the political base of the monarchy, promoting national unity, and shifting public attention from the crises brewing on Jordan's frontiers. It was not designed to transfer political power from the monarchy to elected institutions.

Abdullah made economic reform his primary concern, with a particular focus on attracting foreign investment and increasing exports. In a departure from his father, Abdullah surrounded himself with economic specialists. In his first two years in office, he renewed Jordan's program with the International Monetary Fund and launched reforms that would lead to Jordan's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2000. The showpiece achievement of this effort was the Free Trade Agreement with the United States in 2001 and the Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ) program, under which manufacturers could export tariff free to the U.S market by meeting precise rules of origin.⁵ Furthermore, the government privatized part of Jordan's telecommunication system and railways and passed news laws concerning intellectual property and antitrust regulations. The king also gave special attention to administrative reform and the need to fight corruption in the public sector.

As regional pressure mounted following the collapse of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, and as U.S. plans for an Iraq war materialized, security concerns brought about restrictions on political activity. The clearest example of this was the delay of parliamentary elections, originally scheduled for 2001. Elections were first postponed to allow for the implementation of a new electoral law and then on the grounds that the regional climate was “difficult.” Having decided to quietly support the United States in the war in Iraq, the regime was concerned with criticism and political activity from a public opposed to the war.

While parliament was suspended (between June 2001 and June 2003), King Abdullah issued 211 provisional laws and amendments, many of which marked a significant reversal in civil liberties. The Public Gatherings law of August 2001 banned rallies and public meetings without the government’s prior written consent. In practice, few permits were granted, and when they were, the government dictated the locale and the number of protesters. Amendments to the penal code in October 2001 imposed fines and prison sentences on publications that carried “false or libelous information that can undermine national unity or the country’s reputation.” Another decree allowed the prime minister to refer any case to the state security court and denied the right of appeal to people convicted of misdemeanors. More recently, there have been several attempts to limit the activities of professional associations, which had become the main opponents to normalization with Israel after the 1994 peace treaty. The government has proposed a draft law that would require associations to adopt a new, indirect method of leadership selection, obtain advance written approval from the interior ministry to hold a gathering or meeting, and cover only topics that the government specifically designates “professional matters.” These include “cultivating scientific research,” “publishing specialized scientific publications,” and “providing advice to official bodies in relation to the practice of a profession and its development.”

Beginning in 2002, King Abdullah took a series of steps to refocus attention away from the Palestinian problem and on domestic issues—economic development, modernization, and gradual political reform. These measures include the “Jordan First” initiative launched in October 2002, the creation of the ministry of political development in December 2003, and the 2006 National Agenda. While containing some fairly explicit recommendations about economic transformation and modernization, these documents are vague about political change. For example, the National Agenda, which outlines a 10-year plan for comprehensive reform, including “political development,” only makes general statements about the need to “enact a law to guarantee the freedom of political activity and ensure the protection of individuals and groups engaging in such activity” and to make sure that “legislative amendments shall aim to achieve increased protection and greater respect for human rights.”

King Abdullah has often stressed the need to amend the political party and electoral laws. Although advances have been made in the realm of political party legislation, no serious talk on the much more important issue of electoral reform has occurred.

According to the government, the new political party legislation must produce “powerful political parties” and eradicate the “culture of fear,” which prevents Jordanians from joining political parties. The Jordan First initiative suggested merging the present numerous, fragmented political parties into three main currents (Islamist, leftist, and nationalist). The launching of the ministry of political development also aimed to “create strong parties that endorse King Abdullah’s vision of ‘Jordan First’; to increase the political participation of women and youth; to advance democratic dialogue

and respect for the opinion of others; and to promote a responsible press which serves the objectives of the Jordanian state and its people.” The National Agenda proposed that the government finance political parties in accordance with the number of seats a given party wins in parliamentary or local elections. A political party draft law issued in March 2006 includes a mechanism for public financing of political party activities and allows parties to establish their own media outlets without prior permission from the government. It also stipulates that the number of founders of a political party should be at least 250 (instead of the current 50) and that members must be from at least five of Jordan’s 12 governorates.

Political party legislation is unlikely to strengthen the parties unless the electoral law is also changed, most Jordanian analysts believe, because the electoral system is the real cause of party weakness. While the National Agenda outlines aims and principles for electoral law reform, even the biggest proponents of the agenda admit that serious electoral reform is not on the table because it is too contentious.⁶

LOOKING AHEAD: PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL REFORM

Reforms in Jordan under King Hussein and King Abdullah have aimed to stabilize the regime in the face of regional and economic challenges rather than to significantly open the political system. In the last 15 years, martial law has been lifted, political parties have been legalized, there have been significant efforts to improve the socioeconomic situation, and media freedom has increased. But none of the reforms have targeted the distribution of political power. The fundamental power relationship between the monarchy and the citizenry is unchanged. Political liberalization has allowed the expression of some public grievances, but all substantive decisions are still made by the palace. Real power remains not with the cabinet or the parliament, but with the royal court and the intelligence services. Although there are clear and vocal demands for structural reform, such as addressing the shortcomings of the election law, fundamental issues have never really been on the table. Successive amendments to the Electoral Law have changed the number of seats and electoral constituencies, somewhat improved the transparency of the electoral process, but they have not addressed the underrepresentation of opposition voices and the predominance of the traditional elites—on the contrary, they have reinforced them. In summary, there is little substance to show for the various initiatives and dialogues launched by the regime.

Furthermore, the process of political reform has come to a complete halt or even been reversed whenever the regime calculated that cracking down on civil and political liberties would maintain stability. Even prominent political figures have been arrested for stepping over certain red lines. In the most famous recent case, Toujan Feisal, a prominent feminist activist and former member of parliament, was arrested in 2002 and convicted of “defaming” the prime minister and the government. Although Feisal was later pardoned and released, she was barred from running in the 2003 elections. Suspects continue to be routinely detained without a warrant, and there is evidence of torture and other mistreatment of political detainees.⁷ Editors and journalists continue to receive official warnings not to publish certain articles, and security officials still pressure printers to hold publication until editors agree to remove sensitive stories.

Given this history of oscillation between liberalization and repression, it is clear that Jordan has not yet embarked on a process of democratization. For Jordan to actually democratize, the

monarchy would have to move toward becoming a constitutional monarchy not just in name but also in practice.

To date, deep reform has been hindered by three main factors: an unstable regional situation that has placed security considerations above political reform; an opposition that has been unable and often unwilling to push for such change; and a regime support base that believes that a central and uncontested role for the monarchy is in their best interest. The possibility of democratization in Jordan depends on whether changes in these three fronts will force the regime to significantly open the political space.

Regional Conflict

Since its establishment, the monarchy has faced real threats to its survival as a political institution and it has chosen to deal with them by restricting political freedom in the kingdom. Regional political instability has long exerted pressure on the monarchy that has led it to delay the path toward greater political freedom. Today, the monarchy finds itself once again surrounded by regional conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Iraq war have served to put political reform in Jordan on the back burner.

As long as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is unresolved, the monarchy will not be forced to reform the electoral law and settle the question of Palestinian Jordanian representation in the kingdom. The Hashemite monarchy has delayed reforming the electoral system by trying to forge an identity consensus between Transjordanians and Palestinians, one that depends on maintaining the notion that Palestinians might someday have the choice to return to their homes in what is now Israel. As such, government officials repeatedly argue that fundamental changes to the electoral law (amending the district boundaries and sizes) cannot be made until a final peace settlement is reached between Israelis and Palestinians.

While this argument may serve as a convenient excuse to maintain a system that favors regime supporters, it is also based on a real concern among some pillars of the political establishment that an increase in the representation of Jordanians of Palestinian origin will confirm the stance of Israeli right-wingers who argue that a Palestinian state already exists in Jordan. This fear is exacerbated by the deterioration of Israeli-Palestinian relations and Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. The regime fears that the lack of options for a viable Palestinian state will encourage Palestinians to leave the territories, further altering Jordan's demographic balance. Thus, King Abdullah has repeatedly urged Washington not to endorse the Israeli unilateral withdrawal plan from the West Bank, which would hurt the chances for an independent and geographically connected Palestinian state.

The worsening conflict has also hindered political reform by strengthening conservative elements around the monarchy, especially the security establishment, and undermining the more reformist elements in the regime. Recurrent episodes of violence, especially since the 2000 *Intifada*, strengthen the security elite and make the regime respond to criticisms of its policies from opposition movements as a security threat. In recent years, the unrest in Palestine has resulted in violent clashes between protesters and security forces. The relationship between the monarchy and the main opposition movement, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), has also become more confrontational because the regime is concerned about ties between the IAF and Hamas, particularly since the latter's victory in the Palestinian legislative elections in January 2006. In

addition, the government has stepped up its efforts to clamp down on “anti-normalization” activism in the professional associations.

The conflict in Iraq has exacerbated the regime’s feeling of insecurity. Given Jordan’s proximity to Iraq, its reliance on Iraqi oil, and Jordanian popular opposition to the war, the monarchy has, since the start of the war, feared a popular backlash. The suicide attacks on hotels in Amman on November 9, 2005, which killed 60 people, revealed how vulnerable Jordan is to the situation across its border. Masterminded by Abu Musab Al Zaraqawi, a Jordanian jihadi commander fighting in Iraq, they were carried out by Iraqis who were angered by events in their country and chose a close U.S. ally as a target. A new counter-terrorism law, passed in September 2006, expanded the power of the secret police and the intelligence services. It gives the security services carte blanche to take measures against those the authorities believe support terrorist ideas, incite attacks, or express sympathy for suicide bombings. Since the Iraq war began, Human Rights Watch has issued a series of reports detailing the rising power of an unchecked GID.

As long as the regime feels threatened by the situation in Palestine and Iraq, it is unlikely to open up the system. Jordan’s history shows that threatening regional scenarios undermine the reform agenda by increasing the influence of security-oriented figures in the elite and undermining reformist voices. If the regime will not willingly open up amid the current regional conflicts, the question is whether pressure from below can force it to open up.

The Jordanian regime’s response to both the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the war in Iraq is a source of deep popular discontent. King Abdullah has placed the highest priority on maintaining close security relations with the United States. Having long been aligned with U.S. policy in the Middle East, since September 11, 2001 Jordan has taken a more active role in supporting the American regional agenda and has adopted a key role in the U.S.-led war on terror. Jordan’s General Intelligence Department has been described as the United States’ most effective allied counter-terrorism agency in the Middle East.

U.S. policy toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the war in Iraq has created unprecedented anti-U.S. sentiment in Jordan. Analysts of Jordanian politics unanimously point to the widespread discontent beneath the surface in Jordan and to a public that is increasingly alienated from its leaders. While this sentiment may trigger sporadic outbursts of fury, it is unlikely that pressure from below will make the regime introduce reforms, unless it comes from a strongly organized opposition movement capable of sustained action.

How Far Can the Opposition Go?

There is consensus among opposition groups in Jordan—which include independent civic actors as well as secular and religious political parties—about necessary political changes: a democratically elected government in which the prime minister would be elected by the parliament rather than appointed by the king; a strong parliament and longer parliamentary sessions; a new Press and Publications Law with more lenient licensing and censorship practices; new legislation that prevents the government from controlling the internal functioning and financing of NGOs; a reduced role for the security services in politics and public affairs; a new municipalities law under which all members of municipal councils are elected; the establishment of a Constitutional Court to help resolve

disputes over the constitutionality of laws and decrees; and electoral reform that would make elected bodies, particularly the parliament, more reflective of the country's demographic makeup.

Despite the consensus, individuals and organizations calling for these changes lack the ability to push them through. Civic associations lack the power to pressure for change. By law, they cannot engage in any political activities and must abide by tedious and complicated administrative and oversight requirements.⁸ The government directly interferes with their leadership to remove members it deems threatening to state interests. Trade unions have limited power and independence: they are required by the government to be members of the General Federation of Jordanian Unions (the sole trade union federation), whose salaries and activities are subsidized and audited by the government. Furthermore, the Public Assemblies Law limits worker rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

The most independent and openly critical civic groups are the professional associations. Given the relative weakness of the party system, the professional associations have become a potent alternative force and an institutional base for opposition within Jordanian politics. Factions of the various opposition groups generally led the professional associations during the mid 1990s. Currently, most of them are controlled by members of the Muslim Brotherhood. The associations challenge the government's political decisions—especially those on foreign policy—as out of step with majority opinion in the kingdom and too close to U.S. policy in the region. After the 1994 peace treaty with Israel, opposition to normalization with Israel became one of the central concerns of the professional associations. In recent years, they have called for new press and association laws and have led a campaign against counter-terrorism legislation. These bodies, however, are very limited in their ability to serve as instruments of political change because they do not have formal institutionalized venues in which to pursue their policies. While they may oppose certain policies and voice their concerns in meetings with government officials and personalities close to the regime, they cannot actively alter the course of policy. Furthermore, the government consistently invokes the law to punish professional associations for political activism. In November 2002, for example, it dissolved the Council of the Engineers Association, the most powerful of Jordan's professional associations.

Political parties, which were banned for 36 years, are extremely weak. Most of the 31 registered parties have no more than several hundred members, lack clear agendas, and do not influence decision making. They are viewed by the general public as being ineffective and unable to field winning candidates or influence government. The majority of parties, in fact, do not even declare their candidates, who stand as independents for fear that voters from tribal and rural areas will refrain from voting for them if they are seen as affiliated with a political party.

The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood—and its political party, the Islamic Action Front (IAF)—is the only truly organized opposition movement. The Muslim Brotherhood has been prominent on Jordan's political scene since its establishment in 1945. Unlike leftist and Palestinian movements that clashed with the regime during the turbulent 1950s and 1960s, the Muslim Brotherhood did not threaten the monarchy but asked instead to be allowed to pursue its Islamic path in Jordan. It has been argued that the Muslim Brotherhood provided the monarchy with a reliable ally and a counterweight to the influence of communists, Baathists, and pan-Arabists. The Muslim Brotherhood remained legal during the 36-year ban on political parties, because it was considered a social organization, not a political group.

Many of its members served in government, and after the 1989 elections, the movement controlled the education and health portfolios. Participating unofficially in elections since the 1950s, it has used parliament as a forum to call for the implementation of Islamic law. When parties were legalized in 1992, the Muslim Brotherhood founded the Islamic Action Front under the conditions set in the Political Party Law. The relation between the Muslim Brotherhood and the IAF has been defined as a strategic division of power, allowing the former to continue to function as an Islamic charity organization unhindered by the Political Parties Law.

Despite its close relationship with the monarchy, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood was never fully co-opted. It has always maintained a somewhat critical stance, but only toward policies, not the regime itself. A central focus of the criticism has been the regime's foreign policy, particularly Jordan's peace treaty with Israel. In May 1994, before the treaty was signed, the IAF and seven leftist and Arab nationalist parties formed the Committee for Resisting Submission and Normalization. The Muslim Brotherhood has also been very critical of the U.S.-led war on Iraq. IAF members in parliament have increasingly called for political reforms, such as greater public liberties, press freedom, and greater respect for human rights. Criticisms of corruption and of deteriorating socioeconomic conditions have also figured among its main initiatives in parliament. In recent years, the IAF has led a campaign against the government's attempts to amend laws on professional associations, political parties, and counter-terrorism legislation.

Despite this critical stance, the Muslim Brotherhood's capacity to be a catalyst for reform is limited. First, there are deep divisions within the movement about reform priorities and also about the relationship with the regime. More importantly, there are severe institutional constraints on the IAF's power, since it is hemmed in by an election law designed to weaken its influence. The 1993 "one person, one vote" electoral law was enacted after the IAF's strong showing in the 1989 election to prevent a repeat.

The Muslim Brotherhood has called for a repeal of this law as well as for new rules on electoral districts that would give urban areas fair representation—at present, for example, one seat represents 19,691 people in Tafila and 85,728 in Amman. The regime has responded to criticism of the electoral system by simplifying voter registration procedures, counting votes in a more transparent manner, and so forth. But it has not been responsive to the call for a fundamental review of districting.

There is very little the IAF can do to push for more fundamental change. Outraged by the 1993 election results, the IAF led other opposition parties, associations, and prominent independent political figures in a boycott of the November 1997 parliamentary elections, demanding annulment of the one-person-one-vote system, abolition of the changes to the press law, and an end to normalization with Israel. But the leadership of the IAF eventually realized that by operating outside parliament it lost rather than gained leverage and decided to participate in the 2003 elections. It won 17 of 110 seats. The experience of 1997 clearly demonstrated the limits to the IAF's options for influencing policy making in Jordan. By agreeing to play by the rules of the Jordanian political game, the furthest it can go is a boycott of elections, and many members believe that is not in their best interest. Unless the Islamists want to push harder on the system, which they have so far shown no inclination to do, their ability to press for change in Jordan is limited.

Cracks in the Regime's Support Base

The greatest pressure for political reform is thus likely to come not from the opposition but from economic changes and conditions that affect the regime's support base. To date, the Jordanian system has been sustained in large part by groups that believe that a central and uncontested role for the monarchy is in their best interest. The economic and political challenges the country faces, however, are beginning to erode some of this support.

Jordan's economic reforms have produced mixed results. Through generous assistance from the United States and through the IMF structural adjustment program, Jordan has been able to liberalize the private investment regime and establish modern regulations and institutions for the development of the private sector. There has been a steady growth in the economy in recent years, but this growth has yet to improve the living standards of many Jordanians. Opponents criticize the regime's emphasis on export-oriented growth, foreign aid, and foreign investment as opposed to social welfare and income distribution. Unemployment remains high (the official rate is 13.5 percent, but the real rate is over 20 percent), and there is an expanding and very visible gap between rich and poor. The Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs), established to increase foreign direct investment and to help alleviate chronic unemployment, have not so far contributed to productive development or employment growth. Most jobs have gone to South Asian immigrants (who cannot legally unionize or engage in collective action). In 2003, only half of 50,000 workers in the QIZs were Jordanian nationals. More than 80 percent of the firms located in Jordan's QIZ are South Asian textile manufacturers.

Jordan's mixed record in improving economic conditions has led to widespread dissatisfaction in traditional areas of Hashemite support, straining relations between the monarchy and the rural tribes and ethnic minorities that historically had been its most loyal constituencies. As mentioned earlier, removal of subsidies on some food and fuel in 1989 led to riots in the southern town of Maan, considered a bastion of Transjordanian support for the regime. Since then, there have been four additional incidents of political violence in Maan, the most recent in November 2002. Although the Jordanian government insists that the violence in 2002 was caused by armed thugs and smugglers, many analysts believe that it was primarily a consequence of the government's failed socioeconomic, security, and political policies.⁹

The Jordanian regime is thus caught in a quandary. The policies it must adopt to face the challenge of economic development—particularly administrative reform and privatization—threaten the monarchy's support base. Privatization and civil service reform are crucial to making Jordan more competitive and to attracting foreign investment, but in the short run they would result in a significant number of dismissals from the bureaucracy and state-owned enterprises, weakening the social contract that has maintained regime stability. The monarchy has long relied on a strategy of placing Transjordanians in the public sector. Given the Palestinian private sector/Transjordanian public sector divide, it is not surprising that Transjordanians feel threatened by economic restructuring.

So far, the monarchy has handled this problem by remaining in control of partially privatized entities so it can supervise the economy. Partial privatization aims to reduce the government's budget deficit by offering public enterprises for sale to "strategic investors" (i.e. investors with strong ties to the palace). For example, in June 2005, King Abdullah ordered shares of privatized companies to be set aside and offered at reduced prices to past and present members of the security forces. This policy

avoids the political consequences of unemployment, maintains certain privileged positions, and ensures that alternative power bases do not emerge. The monarchy is thus able to avoid alienating the Transjordanian base.

Jordan's economic liberalization measures to date have attempted to maintain the monarchy's relationship with both its Transjordanian support base and the local business community. The monarchy has rewarded both groups with public jobs, subsidies, regulatory protection, and state contracts. In recent years, however, the powerful private business elite, who had long supported Hashemite rule because it furthered its economic interests, has become more influential. It may push for more privatization.

The monarchy's traditional support base has also expressed concern that King Abdullah, unlike his father, is too westernized and insensitive to their demands. This discontent has already led the parliament to block some choices made by the king. The most prominent example was the decision of "loyalist" MPs to prevent a confidence vote in support of the nomination of the liberal Adnan Badran as prime minister in early 2005.

Balance Sheet

Since independence, Jordan's political system has survived severe challenges to its legitimacy through a delicate balancing act. Today, Jordan faces another critical moment. Deteriorating conditions on its borders, a lack of tangible economic success, and an extremely unpopular foreign policy are emboldening an increasingly vocal Islamist opposition movement, while simultaneously eroding the regime's traditional support base.

While this mix of factors creates some pressure for change, it does not constitute a democratic push and the monarchy is unlikely to respond with democratization. First, the current regional conditions have exacerbated the monarchy's feeling of insecurity, and it is unlikely to open up the system if it feels threatened. Barring fundamental changes in Jordan's neighborhood, such as an end of violence in Iraq or the renewal of a peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, reformers in the political elite are unlikely to gain the upper hand over more security-minded figures. Second, the Jordanian opposition remains weak due to structural conditions that are unlikely to change in the near future. Impediments such as the highly fragmented structure of the opposition, the marginal role of parliament in the political process, the central role of tribal relations, and the legacy of three decades of martial law will continue to hinder the opposition's ability to promote its goals. In addition, opposition groups have been unable to join forces, except on rare occasions, such as protests against the politics of normalization with Israel. Even the most popular and best-organized movement, the Islamic Action Front, is unable to move beyond a political battle with the regime and periodic confrontations. Finally, the discontented elements in the monarchy's traditional support base are not calling for greater political openings, but rather for maintaining their privileges in a changing economic system.

The regime's reaction to these pressures will be, at best, gradual and limited liberalization, not far-reaching political reform. From the monarchy's point of view, the choice is between maintaining political stability by a gradual, limited opening of political space or by continuing to clamp down on liberties. So far, King Abdullah has chosen to resist these pressures by increasing the pervasive role of the security services and limiting political space. At a time when public dissatisfaction with Jordan's

foreign policy is increasing, such an approach merely delays dealing with problems that may worsen over time.

THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL ACTORS IN PROMOTING REFORM

The United States and Europe have the potential to play a significant role in pushing for political reform in Jordan, given the close political and economic relations they maintain with the regime. Through economic and military assistance, strategic cooperation, and trade, the United States and Europe have played a decisive role in helping Jordan maintain its stability and prosperity. Despite this potential, the prospects for the United States and Europe advocating democratization are not promising.

Jordan is a classic case of the United States and Europe shying away from promoting political reform because of other strategic interests. For Washington, Jordan's significance does not stem from how democratic its political system may be, but from its role as a dependable strategic ally in the region. Jordan's military and intelligence cooperation with the United States (most recently in the U.S. war on terrorism) and its proximity to and peaceful relations with Israel render its stability a primary goal of U.S. foreign policy. For Europe, Jordan plays a similar and valuable role as a "stabilizing and modernizing factor" and a "consistent force of peace in the region and a key partner in attempts to find a political solution to the conflict."¹⁰

It is unrealistic to expect a transformation in this relationship anytime soon. Jordan is likely to remain the clearest example of the reluctance of the United States and Europe to integrate support for democratic principles into their wider strategic interests. Ultimately, however, the long-term interests of both the United States and Europe are best served by an opening in Jordan's political space. Jordan's stabilizing role in the region would be best fulfilled not by the superficial appearance of stability maintained by political oppression, but rather by a process of political opening that provides legitimate channels through which concerns can be expressed.

The United States and Europe thus need to encourage a political opening in Jordan by pressing the Jordanian government to start a dialogue with opposition movements and to deepen formal and informal channels of communication and representation. This can be done in a number of ways.

The most significant tools the United States and Europe can use to encourage the regime to open the political system are economic assistance and trade relationships. Given Jordan's reliance on large aid packages as well as trade agreements with these countries, making this assistance dependent on demonstrable progress toward democracy would provide great incentives for reform.

Jordan has been rewarded by the U.S. government for its role as a moderate, pro-American Muslim country with generous economic and military aid since 1951 and is currently the fourth-largest recipient of U.S. aid worldwide, after Israel, Egypt, and Colombia. Levels of aid have fluctuated. They significantly increased after Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994—Jordan has received approximately \$225 million in annual U.S. assistance since the mid 1990s. After the war in Iraq began, Washington doubled its annual grants to Jordan to around \$450 million (\$250 million in economic aid and \$200 million in military assistance), in addition to more than a \$1 billion supplement to offset the effects of the war on Jordan's economy and bolster its security.

Since entering the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1997, Jordan has received over €570 million from the European Union (EU), making it the second largest recipient of EU assistance per capita after Palestine. None of this aid, however, has been conditional on political reform in the country.

The entry of Jordan into the Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) Threshold Program in September 2006 offers an opportunity for constructive change. The MCC approved up to \$25 million in assistance to Jordan to advance reforms in three of the 16 indicators MCC measures to select countries eligible for funding—"political rights," "voice and accountability," and "trade policy." As presently envisioned, however, progress will be measured by the success of two initiatives: "strengthening municipal governance" and "modernizing customs administration." More substantive reforms—reforming the electoral system, strengthening political parties, enhancing the roles of the parliament and judiciary, increasing government transparency, broadening freedoms of the press and assembly, and decreasing public corruption and human rights violations—are mentioned in the program as "related reforms." While municipal governance is worthy of attention, Jordan should not be upgraded for Millennium Challenge Account Compact assistance unless there are signs of significant improvement in at least some of the "related reforms."

In addition to direct economic assistance, trade is a very important element in U.S.-Jordanian and U.S.-European relations and should also be used to leverage political change in Jordan. Jordan is the linchpin of the Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) and became the first Arab country to sign a free trade agreement with the United States. Political reform in Jordan was not a determinant in the negotiations for the United States-Jordan Free Trade Agreement, which went into effect in December 2001. However, the United States can still use the agreement to articulate its support for political reform and the improvement of human rights. The key is that this is the first trade agreement concluded by the United States that, within the text of the agreement itself, conditions trade privileges upon the parties' continuing enforcement of their respective domestic labor laws and their adherence to the core labor standards outlined in the International Labor Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

The agreement explicitly lists the right of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, and the prohibition on use of forced or compulsory labor. It allows each government to take "appropriate" measures if a dispute remains unresolved after completing all the steps in the dispute resolution process. These measures may include a visit from an ILO delegation, a training program for workplace inspectors, a monetary fine, and/or the withdrawal of trade benefits covered in the agreement. However, before Congress voted on the FTA, the U.S. trade representative and the Jordanian ambassador exchanged letters in which they agreed that they would not "expect or intend" to use trade sanctions to enforce any provisions in the agreement. The United States should return to the spirit of the agreement and state that the respect for human rights is a central element of the U.S.-Jordanian relationship.

The EU's Association Agreements with Jordan link free trade and political reform, but the EU has so far avoided utilizing its economic leverage to push the regime to democratize. Like all association agreements, the EU-Jordan agreement includes a legally binding, nonnegotiable commitment on the part of the Jordanian government to "human rights and democratic principles." In principle, this clause would allow the EU to suspend parts of the aid and trade provisions, but in practice, the conditions which would allow such a suspension are ambiguous. The EU's Neighborhood Policy has attempted to create a more direct link between the prospects of greater trade integration and political

reform, good governance, democracy, and human rights. However, the new policy is still plagued by ambiguities and the lack of clearly defined benchmarks about the type of reform the EU expects. These flaws can be explained by the particular institutional and procedural constraints under which EU decision making and policy implementation in foreign affairs takes place. In the case of Jordan, there are deep differences among the union's member states on the desirability of making aid conditional on reform.

In addition to making assistance and trade relations dependent on Jordan's progress toward democracy, the United States and European countries should support reformist voices in Jordan through direct democracy assistance. To date, a very small portion of American and European funds have been destined to democracy promotion. Furthermore, these funds have not been used in the most productive way.

The European Union provides some democracy assistance to Jordan through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), but this aid is focused on a wide range of activities that are not directly related to democracy promotion. For example, the EMP Country Strategy Paper of 2002–2006 provided €7 million (of €110 million) to: strengthening women rights; protecting children's rights; promoting freedom of the media, association, and assembly; strengthening civil society; promoting the fight against drugs and organized crime; and managing migration and refugees. EU democracy assistance would be more effective if democracy promotion projects were separated from more generic socioeconomic goals. A constructive change was the creation of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in 1999, but since Jordan was not identified as a priority country, it is only eligible for a few microprojects.

Furthermore, the European Union provides assistance to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but much of the funding distribution has to be agreed to by the Jordanian government and, as a result, ends up going to NGOs headed by members of the royal family (known in Jordan as the "royal NGOs"). European Union assistance would be much more effective if greater efforts were placed in funding independent civil society groups.

The U.S. government also provides limited democracy assistance. For example, of \$247.5 million in economic assistance funds for FY2006, \$14.9 million were destined to support initiatives aimed at "strengthening civil society to promote philanthropy and encourage civic participation; strengthening journalism; and improving the legal system."

Through the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the International Republican Institute, the United States also provides democracy assistance aimed at: developing the political and advocacy skills of emerging community leaders to enable them to run for office, training political parties in building and mobilizing constituencies, training MPs to better cater to their constituents' needs, and advocating women's rights. While these are worthy goals, they do not get at the heart of Jordan's political problems, such as political party weakness and voter apathy. While it is true that Jordan's political parties are disorganized and could benefit from the training, fundamentally their weakness lies in a deeply flawed electoral system that does not encourage voters to join political parties and to vote. It is useless to support political parties if the legislative process does not change. In this context, the best and most effective way for the United States and Europe to support reformists is by pressing the government to adopt policy changes to open up the system.

The United States and Europe should press the Jordanian regime on the issue of political reform in public statements as well as in private meetings between officials. At the very least, they should refrain from praising Jordan's government at times when a clear crackdown on civil and political liberties is occurring. The fact that Jordan has emerged unscathed from the Bush administration's emphasis on political reform in Arab countries robs the policy of any credibility. At a time when even longstanding U.S. allies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia have been publicly rebuked at least occasionally by U.S. officials for their authoritarian practices, Jordan should not be hailed as "a force for reform and positive change in the region."¹¹ In October 2006, in the midst of a government crackdown on opposition in Jordan, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice singled Jordan out at a press conference, affirming that "Jordan is making really great strides in its political evolution."¹² To the Jordanian government, such statements confirm that reform is irrelevant to its relations with the United States. To Jordanian democracy and human rights activists (and to activists around the Arab world), they confirm the belief that the Bush administration is not really interested in promoting reform.

Pressuring the Jordanian regime to open the political system will not undermine Jordan's role as an ally in the region. This pressure is highly unlikely to lead the regime to stop cooperating in military and counter-terrorism efforts. The Jordanian regime cooperates on these issues based on its own calculations, not as a favor to the United States or Europe and, therefore, will continue to do so even if pressured to reform. To avoid alienating the regime, the United States and Europe should negotiate with the Jordanian government over the expected improvements. A good start would be to focus on the demands already put forth by Jordanian activists, such as: expanding legislative powers, adopting new press legislation, decreasing regulations on NGOs, and undertaking electoral system reform. In this manner, the United States and Europe could play a constructive role in promoting an environment in which Jordanians can address these issues and begin to find long-term solutions to Jordan's dilemmas.

NOTES

- ¹ Laurie A. Brand, *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations: The Political Economy of Alliance Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
- ² The Jordanian constitution allows provisional laws to be issued when there are necessitating circumstances. As specified by the High Court of Justice in January 1998, these circumstances arise only in times of war, catastrophe, or internal strife. Provisional laws can also cover matters which “admit no delay or which necessitate expenditures incapable of postponement.” The parliament can nullify or amend them.
- ³ For details, see Adnan Abu Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians, and the Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process*, Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace, 1999. Also see Laurie Brand, “Palestine and Jordan: A Crisis of Identity,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4 (Summer 1996).
- ⁴ Jordan was designated as a major non-NATO ally of the United States on November 13, 1996. This status “makes Jordan eligible for priority consideration for transfer of excess defense articles, the use of already appropriated military assistance funds for procurement through commercial leases, the stockpiling of U.S. military material, and the purchase of depleted uranium munitions.” Alfred B. Prados and Jeremy M. Sharp, “Jordan: U.S. Relations and Bilateral Issues,” *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, May 19, 2005, p. 14. <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/48595.pdf>
- ⁵ The rules specify that a minimum of 11.7 percent of the exported goods must be from Jordan, 7-8 percent from Israel, and the remainder from any combination of the United States, Jordan, Israel, or the West Bank and Gaza.
- ⁶ The National Agenda proposed a mixed electoral system that combines both district and proportional (party) lists and stipulates that electoral districts shall be drawn in line with the set objectives and that the “supervision of the elections shall be assigned to an independent committee comprising judges and public figures known for their integrity and impartiality.” Most importantly, it calls for the elimination of the “current closed districts and other appropriations (quota) systems, and divides the Kingdom into electoral districts along demographic, geographic and social lines, ensuring fair representation of the country’s regions.”
- ⁷ Under the constitution, suspects may be detained for up to 48 hours without a warrant, and up to 10 days without formal charges being filed. Courts routinely grant prosecutors 15-day extensions of this deadline.
- ⁸ NGOs must obtain a permit from the ministry of social development, which has the right to reject an application for any reason, and there is no mechanism for judicial review of the decision. The ministry can order the dissolution of any NGO at whim—without judicial oversight and an appeals process—and can send representatives to observe any meeting or election and to inspect any records at any time. Many NGOs register under the ministry of trade as nonprofits to avoid these problems.
- ⁹ For more detail, see “Red Alert in Jordan: Recurrent Unrest in Maan,” International Crisis Group Briefing (February 19, 2003). Also see “Ma’an: An Open-ended Crisis,” Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan (September 2003).
- ¹⁰ “Jordan: Country Strategy Paper 2002–2006,” http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/jordan/csp/index.htm
- ¹¹ Remarks by President George W. Bush at a White House press conference with King Abdullah on May 6, 2004, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/05/20040506-9.html>
- ¹² Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice press briefing on October 1, 2006. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/73397.htm>

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