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## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN JORDAN

### RÓŻNORODNOŚĆ KULTUROWA I ADMINISTRACJA PUBLICZNA W JORDANII

#### **Summary**

The aim of the article is to present the cultural diversity and public administration in Jordan. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a monarchy. Its legal order is based on the provisions of the Constitution of January 1, 1952. Because of the nature of its cultural and demographic diversity, the Kingdom has been affected in terms of legal sovereignty. The legal system of the country is characterized as a mixed legal system between civil and Sharia law with the classical separation of powers.

#### **Keywords**

culture, diversity, public administration, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

#### **Streszczenie**

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie występującego w Jordanii zróżnicowania kulturowego i administracji publicznej tego kraju. Jordańskie Królestwo Haszymidzkie jest monarchią opierającą swój porządek prawny na Konstytucji z dnia 1 stycznia 1952 r. Istniejąca w kraju różnorodność kulturowa oraz demograficzna mają wpływ na system prawny tego kraju, który stanowi połączenie prawa świeckiego z prawem szariatu. Prawo jordańskie gwarantuje także klasyczny trójpodział władzy.

#### **Słowa kluczowe**

kultura, różnorodność, administracja publiczna, Jordańskie Królestwo Haszymidzkie

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (in Arabic language: Al-Mamlaka al-Urdunn-iyya al-Haszimijja) is a monarchy which legal order is based on the provisions of the Constitution of January 1, 1952 [The Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan of January 1, 1952, further: the Constitution]. According to the article 1 of The Constitution “The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is an independent sovereign Arab State. It is indivisible and inalienable and no part of it may be ceded. The people of Jordan form a part of the Arab Nation, and its system of government is parliamentary with

a hereditary monarchy.” The religion of the State is Islam and Arabic is its official language [Article 2 of the Constitution].

Because of the nature of its cultural and demographic diversity, the Kingdom has been affected in terms of legal sovereignty. The domestic legal system of the country is characterized as a mixed legal system between civil and Sharia law based on the rule of classical separation of powers. Jordan was established in 1951 and inherited a parliamentary type of Government. The State ensures freedom of religion, press, private life and property [see: Chapter II of the Constitution titled “Rights and Duties of Jordanians”]. Since 1989’s elections, the parliament has lifted martial law and authorized political parties, with further elections in 1993 and 1997. It should be noted here that with regard to the political system of Jordan, the country enjoys a cultural diversity in terms of the nature of societal composition and that many factors have influenced this diversity, including the most important – the political factor, which has led Jordan to the political stability in the region and make it an important economic centre of the region and attractive location for foreign investors.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is located in the west of Israel and the Jordan river. It is a country at the crossroads of the following continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. Jordan shares borders with Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Palestine. The country shares maritime borders with Egypt neighboring countries too. Due the recent political unrest in the middle-east region, Jordan has seen a huge influx of immigrants and refugees. The open policy of Jordanian government ensures that those people are welcomed into its borders, and are allowed to share their culture and values to enrich the Kingdom. Furthermore the relatively big percentage of the immigrants are young, skilled workers, who carries further economic, social and political benefits for the Jordan as a whole [Visit Jordan].

I would like to point out that in 2018, the population<sup>1</sup> of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is 9,903,802 million, male 50.64%, female 49.36%. Jordanian society is one of the youngest in the world. One with fifth of the population in the Kingdom is in the age group 15–24. Ethnically in Jordan live many nations: Muslim Sunni (92%), Christians (mostly Greek Orthodox) (6%), Circassia’s (1%) and Armenians (1%) [The Official Website of the Jordanian e-Government]. Therefore, article 6 of the Constitution requires there be no discrimination between people who live in Jordan as regards to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion. And Constitution ensures that all Jordanians are equal before the law.

## 1. Culture in Jordan

It should be underlined that nowadays culture is a wide concept. Culture can be defined in many ways. And it should be noted that culture cannot be summarized in a few words. Culture, according to the website of the Ministry of Culture of Jordan, “is a cumulative result of human experience along the continuous extension of history within a geographic domain. It is a group effort, not produced by the elite alone, although it is directed and lead by it that includes, within the unit, various types and colors that are formed by virtue of the development of society, and it is ever growing and reacting with cultures of different nations, in both directions, as long as communication channels with the other are open and opportunities for friction are available and well-facilitated, as is currently prevalent” [Ministry of Culture].

It should be noted however, that such openness carries its burdens. Art and culture industry in Jordan is fragmented between varied products, each with a unique need for marketing, economic analysis and artistic needs. Due to that the Ministry of Culture has to oversee a branching industry, with national and expatriate product being distributed freely through both public and private channels. “Its interests and objectives also vary, as each has its own interest in the prevalence of the cultural patterns that suits it and achieves its interests, which indicates that culture is a distinctive factor in comprehensive development and a hotline of confrontation between nations in an age where traditional confrontation methods lose their effectiveness after losing their ability to create it, in light of prevailing knowledge and globalized culture.” [Ministry of Culture]

The culture of Jordan is mostly based on Arab and Islamic elements. However, nowadays in the country there is also visible a large influence of western culture (especially in the newly emerging culture). The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has always had an intersection with the three continents of the ancient world. Thus, due to its unique policy and geographical location Jordan can be seen as a focal point for the surrounding States culture. Diversity has always been central for Jordan, and it shows in the variety of customs and folklore, which are all distilled with the unique Arabic homogeneity [Jordan Tourist Board].

The very important aspects of the Jordanian culture are hospitality and generosity of Jordanian people, and cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is a part of Jordan’s cultural coexistence model, roughly translated to the “Jordanian Spectra”, the ideal assumes that every minority that participates in culture, increases the sum of its total value (i.e. the movement of Iraq citizens to Jordan). Through this acceptance Jordan has become an important cultural center of the region, and enjoys a rich and diverse art movement. Amman itself reflects that with its numerous theatres, galleries and art centers [Al Ghad, 2005].

Traditionally Jordanians enjoy expressing their culture through clothes, costumes and dances. An example of one is “dabke”, a traditional dance during various festivities. This dance traces its roots back to the military, where it was danced in order to evoke soldiers’ feelings of enthusiasm and bloodlust [The Dabke – An Arabik Folk Dance, 2005].

Historically this depth of cultural exchange is not a novelty in Jordan. Its location has allowed the Kingdom to be a melting pot of various nationalities and customs since the antiquity. Through ages and progression of Islamic history until the establishment of the Empire of Jordan in 1921, Jordan has welcomed varied host of people such as the Arabs, Circassians, Kurds, Armenians, Chechens, Jews and Europeans. While united under one flag all of Jordans component cells were allowed to maintain their unique characteristics and enjoyed a host of what is currently known as “human rights”, such as the freedom of religion and practice, free speech and respect for private life and belief [The World Factbook, 2015].

## **2. The Role of Women in Jordanian Culture and Public Administration**

It is worth emphasizing that nowadays women hold greater role in reviving the culture in Jordan, and in recent years it has become clear that they are the frontrunners of the Jordanian culture in the public sphere. Especially young women are strongly encourage to pursue a career in arts, where – as it is widely agreed among Jordanian society – their perceived sensitiveness can be more valued and influence the rest of society.

I would like to point out that Jordanian women<sup>2</sup> during recent times, managed to break into many areas that were previously reserved for men. Contrary to their counterparts in neighboring countries, Jordanian women are able to achieve leadership roles in the public sector, such as the position of the Director and Deputy Prime Minister, members of the parliament, judiciary, trade unions etc. Additionally the institution of “alcutta” in the House of Representatives is promoting women’s status in Jordanian society [The website of Alraicenter, 2011].

Two notable examples of women’s public participation are the Royal Commission on Human Rights, which is chaired by the Queen Rania, and the National committee for Women’s Affairs chaired by the Princess Basma. Both of those institutions have been active politically and legislatively in their fight for equality and women rights [Human Rights Day, 2013].

The Constitution of Jordan has been drafted in a way that emphasize equality and fair treatment. The goal of the Drafters was to create an inclusive society and support any and all effort of women and minorities in their struggle to achieve equal social footing. Furthermore Jordan is party to various international conventions aimed specifically

at providing women with a high and equal standard of living (such as the 1992 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). Currently women have proven themselves to be equal partners to their male counterparts in all fields of work, and hold high position in both public and private sector. With agriculture, education and health industries being particularly female oriented. This push for equality has inadvertently resulted in economic and social growth, with visible reduction in unemployment and increased standard of living for the Kingdom as a whole [see more: Al Shalabi and Al Assad, 2012].

As for the role of Jordanian women in public life the Qur'an doesn't distinguish in mandating religious men and women stating that both men and women have responsibility in the community.

It has to be point out that the Majesty King Abdullah who handed the reins in the year 1999 up to open the door wide for Jordanian women in order to contribute to the progress and construction operations. The King understood the necessity of an inclusive and equal society that makes no distinction based on gender, as the goal to which Jordan should aspire. And this begun the campaign to present women as essential partners in building economic, social and cultural system of Jordan [Arab Army, 2010].

Nowadays in Jordan are currently dozens of Jordanian women's organizations and private bodies dealing with women's affairs and working to enable them to achieve great achievements in various fields [The website of Woman Organizations in Jordan].

Furthermore King Hussein Allah has encouraged women to join the armed forces of Jordan, seeing their successful inclusion in other areas of everyday life. By order of King's Commander – Abdullah II Bin Al-Hussein, the military begun to train female staff in nursing, support and logistics positions and include them in active military duties. Since that the rate in which Jordanian women are employed in the military has been steadily rising [Arab Army, 2010].

It is said that Jordanian armed forces has been eager since the beginnings of the principle of equality between males and females between the members. Directorate of women's affairs was established to contribute to raise and develop the role of women in the Jordanian armed forces and focuses on the principle of equality and equal opportunities between men and women [The website of Civil Society Organizations in Jordan].

“No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive” said once Mahatma Gandhi [Gandhi, 1959, p. 173]. It is uncontroversial that the survival of any community depends on accepting change and on interacting with different neighboring communities. Flexibility and willingness to change are the main keys to the advancements of any society [Altakhaineh, 2013].

### **3. Branches of Power in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**

Now I would like to present the separation of powers in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The separation of powers is a vital element of Jordanian culture in public sphere of life.

#### **3.1. Legislative Branch**

Legislative power in Jordan is vested in the National Assembly and the King. The National Assembly consists of the Senate (Majlis al-Ayan) and the House of Representatives (Majlis al-Nuwaab).

The Senate consists of the Speaker and no more than half of the members of the House of Representatives. Senators are appointed by the King. In order to be the Senate member one should be over 40. A period of membership in the Senate lasts 4 years, the appointment is renewed every four years [The website of the Jordanian Senate]. According to the article 60 of the Constitution “Senators whose term of office had expired may be reappointed for a further term.” [Article 60 of the Constitution]

Members of the House of Representatives, in accordance with the current Election Act, are elected in direct secret ballot. In order to be a member of the House of Representatives one must be over 30. The term of office of the House of Representatives is four years. However, the term of office can be extended by Royal Decree for at least one year and for not longer than two years.

Only Jordanians can be the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Both chambers of the Jordanian National Assembly have the right to vote on legislation. Proposals are referred to the House of Representatives by the Prime Minister. And they can be accepted, amended or rejected by the members of the House of Representatives. It has to be borne in mind that each proposal is referred for consideration to a special committee in the House of Representatives. In the case of acceptance the proposal by the members of the House of Representatives, it is referred to the government which is obliged to draft it in the form of a bill and submit it back to the House of Representatives for its acceptance. If a bill is approved, it is passed to the Senate for debate and a vote. Approved bills are submitted to the King, who grants his consent by royal decree or returns the bill unapproved. In the latter case, he has to justify his refusal [The Legislative Branch].

#### **3.2. Executive Branch**

Executive power in Jordan is vested in the King and handled by his ministers in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution [Isaias and Jennings, 2013].

According to the article 28 of the Constitution “The Throne of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is hereditary to the dynasty of King Abdullah Bin Al-Hussein in a direct line through the male heirs” pursuant to the provisions listed in that article. Due to the article 30 of the Constitution “The King is the Head of the State and is immune from every liability and responsibility.”

The Council of Ministers is composed of the Prime Minister and of a number of ministers pursuant to the need and public interest [article 41 of the Constitution]. One Minister may fulfill more than one function, and it is left to the Prime Minister to organize their own cabinet [Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2004].

The Cabinet is responsible for managing all internal and external affairs of the State, except for what has been assigned or entrusted such matters under the Constitution or any other legislation to any person or entity [Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2004].

The Prime Minister and Ministers are accountable to the House of Representatives joint responsibility for State policy, and every Minister accountable to the Parliament on the work of his Ministry, King’s oral or written no Ministers abandoned their responsibility (art. 48 and 51 of the Constitution) [Isaias and Jennings, 2013].

There are following ministries of Jordan:

- Ministry of Interior,
- Ministry of Municipality Affairs,
- Ministry of Planning and International Co-operation,
- Ministry of Public Sector Development,
- Ministry of Finance,
- Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs [Isaias and Jennings, 2013].

To conclude, I would like to add that the kingdom’s vision is always been considering the seeking of promote the decentralization and advocates for the implementation of key open government principles including participation, transparency and accountability. This vision places citizens at the heart of the reform process. The endorsement of the Decentralization Law and Municipality Law by parliament in 2015 which Jordan now is leading to the way of successes and the improvements which could lead to impressive and tangible changes for the shape of the recent kingdom.

### **3.3. Judiciary Branch**

Jordanian’s law guarantees judicial independence. In Jordan jurisdiction is vested by the courts of different types and degrees of all judgments in accordance with the law in the name of the King. Article 97 of the Constitution states that Jordanian’s judges are independent and subject to no authority other than the law. Regular and legitimate court judges are appointed and recalled by a Royal Decree in accordance with the provisions of the laws.

According to the article 99 of the Constitution there are three types of courts in Jordan:

1. regular courts,
2. religious courts<sup>3</sup>,
3. special courts.

As stated in the article 100 of the Constitution “The types of all courts, their levels, divisions, jurisdictions and the manner of their administration shall be specified by a special law, provided that such law shall provide for the establishment of an Administrative Jurisdiction in two levels.”

The courts are open to everyone and are protected from interference in their affairs, and the hearings are public unless the Court deems to be confidential to public order or morality [Isaias and Jennings, 2013].

Barring special cases, where the case will be relegated to the religious court, all legal matters in Jordan are delegated to its network of public courts [The website of Judicial Council].

#### **4. Problems in Public Administration in Jordan**

Jordan’s proximity to the military conflicts in Syria and Iraq has resulted in a large influx of refugees which has put additional pressures on available economic opportunities and access to public services (i.e. housing). High vulnerability of the economy to external economic influence given the dependence on international grants, relatively weak private sector activity and high import levels due to adverse geographical characteristics (i.e. water, energy, food) [European Commission, 2018].

According to the Report of OECD from 2017 “High unemployment and low economic participation rates affect all groups in society but in particular, women (i.e. only 16% of women participate in the labor market) and youth’s, the short lifespan of governments and parliaments has threatened the continuity and sustainability of government initiatives. Strong tribal affiliations continue to be a major determinant of political life and sustain the role of the parliament as a service provider rather than policy shaper or oversight body of government action. A bloated public sector (i.e. public salaries and pension obligations account for 27% of annual government expenditures) leaves limited fiscal space for investments and the high centralization of political power and administrative organization in policy planning and service delivery.” [OECD Report, 2017]

Abovementioned Report of OECD states that: “The need to improve administrative capacities and self-generated resources at the governorate and municipality level has resulted in dissatisfaction with the performance of sub-national government. Jordan



is characterized by large regional (economic) disparities, and poverty remains a national challenge in among both the rural (16.8%) and urban (13.9%) population (2010).” [OECD Report, 2017]

Moreover, the Report of OECD states that the implementation of the national obligations in terms of creation an open, participatory, transparent and accountable governance in Jordan has been achieved thanks to the absence of institutionalized forms of COS/ citizen engagement across all levels of government, lack of the integrity system and the legacy of traditional norms. [OECD Report] “This has hindered equal opportunities for all segments of society, including women and youth, to fully participate in all spheres of the Decentralization Law and Municipality Law by parliament milestone in translating King Abdullah II’s vision into practice. Through the elected governorate and local councils, the laws introduce and unprecedented opportunity for public participation in national and local development.” [OECD Report, 2017]

Nowadays one of the most important issues for young Jordanians is the idea of “wasta”, which assumes that social position and seniority are sufficient qualification for office, or other position of power within public administration. The long term-chair is the concept of the same person taken the power of position for too long period of time without consider the idea of changing the concept of ideas and visions of person’s could be the main way to improvements and give the equal chances to other’s to have the chance to be part of this process. This concept is based on the idea that the old elders are more qualified and more experience which is ignoring the role of youth resources to have the chance to push the fresh ideas and even the experience into practical and blocking the way of another vision of thinking and creativity to create the influence for improvement in all dimension’s in public administration.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion I would like to say that in spite of the political conflicts and unstable environment and wars in the Middle East which especially affected Jordan, as well as facing challenges in the economic and political spectra, Jordan strongly stayed in the race of strength in the area, which is reflected in the impact and the ability of Jordan to face such challenges. Jordan didn’t simply survive but kept evolving and growing and worked to develop as much as possible of the internal and external perspective. The political stability in Jordan reflects the improvement that reached and could be reach in the future.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Population of Jordan has been increasing lately according to the statistics and because of the unstable situations for the neighboring countries we can notice the number of immigrations

<sup>2</sup> Jordanian women had long history for women's rights which make it unique and strongly binding to the rights of participation.

<sup>3</sup> Considering the religious cases as marriages.

