

Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations

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The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a key U.S. partner in the Middle East, and the two countries have cooperated on a number of regional and international issues. Jordan remains at peace with Israel and is a primary interlocutor with the Palestinians. Ongoing instability in neighboring Syria and Iraq magnifies Jordan's strategic importance to the United States. Jordan also is a longtime U.S. partner in global counterterrorism operations. U.S.-Jordanian military, intelligence, and diplomatic cooperation seeks to empower political moderates, reduce sectarian conflict, and eliminate terrorist threats in the region. U.S. officials frequently express their support for Jordan. U.S. assistance has helped Jordan address serious vulnerabilities, both internal and external. Jordan's small size, refugee burden, and lack of major economic resources have made it dependent on aid from Western and various Arab sources. The Biden Administration has acknowledged Jordan's role as a central U.S. partner in promoting Israeli-Palestinian peace, as many U.S. policymakers advocate for continued robust U.S. assistance to the kingdom. Jordan also hosts nearly 3,000 U.S. troops.

Annual U.S. aid to Jordan has tripled in historical terms over the last 15 years. The United States has provided economic and military aid to Jordan since 1951 and 1957, respectively. Total bilateral U.S. aid (overseen by the Departments of State and Defense) to Jordan through FY2020 amounted to approximately \$26.4 billion. The President's FY2023 budget request includes \$1.45 billion for Jordan. On September 16, 2022, the United States and Jordan signed their fourth Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) governing U.S. foreign aid to Jordan. The seven-year agreement (FY2023-FY2029), subject to appropriations of Congress, commits the Administration to seeking a total of \$1.45 billion in annual economic and military aid for Jordan.

In the 117th Congress, P.L. 117-103, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, provided \$1.65 billion in total bilateral foreign assistance to Jordan. This included over \$1.2 billion in Economic Support Funds (ESF), of which \$845 million was specified as a direct cash transfer to the Jordanian government. The act also provided \$425 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF). In the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying P.L. 117-103, appropriators noted that the act "supports critical economic assistance needed this fiscal year to help ensure Jordan's ongoing stability, including to strengthen Jordan's borders and to help mitigate the impact of hosting millions of refugees." They also directed the Secretary of State to "continue to support the Government of Jordan's efforts to implement economic and democratic reforms" and to "consult with the Committees on Appropriations on prospective policy proposals aimed at assisting Jordan achieve additional and long-lasting reforms, including in its water and public sectors."

Beyond assistance from the State and Foreign Operations appropriations accounts, P.L. 117-103 also provided Jordan with security assistance from Defense Department appropriations accounts. The act specified that Jordan receive "not less than" \$150 million from the Defense Department's Operation and Maintenance, Defense-Wide account for the Defense Security Cooperation Agency to reimburse Jordan for border security. Starting in FY2016 (Section 1226 of P.L. 114-92), successive National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAAs) have authorized the Secretary of Defense, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, to provide support, on a reimbursement basis, to Jordan (among other countries) for the purpose of supporting and enhancing its military's efforts to increase security along the border with Iraq and Syria. P.L. 117-103 also included "up to" \$500 million in Defense Department assistance to support "the armed forces of Jordan and to enhance security along its borders." The act also included authority for loan guarantees for Jordan.

For FY2023, H.R. 8282, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2023 would provide Jordan "not less than" \$1.65 billion in total aid, of which "not less than" \$1.035 billion is for ESF, "including for budget support, incentive funds, and programs administered by USAID" that are "consistent with the applicable bilateral agreement between the Government of the United States and the Government of Jordan for fiscal year 2023." The bill also would provide an additional \$200 million in ESF made available "pursuant to the commitments made under such bilateral agreement." The bill also would commit "not less than" \$400 million in FMF. S. 4662, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2023 would provide Jordan \$1.457 billion in total aid. The bill would set aside \$75 million in appropriated ESF and make it available through FY2026 for "assistance if negotiated benchmarks towards reforms are met." In report language accompanying the Senate-introduced bill, appropriators expressed concern with "corruption and abuses within Jordan's judicial system, including arbitrary and incommunicado detention, mistreatment of detainees by law enforcement personnel, and irregularities by prosecutorial authorities, and urges the Government of Jordan to prioritize law enforcement and judicial reforms."

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Overview

As of November 2022, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (hereinafter referred to as “Jordan”) remains a stable and, according to U.S. policymakers, vital U.S. security partner in the Middle East. Successive presidential administrations have considered Jordan to be, along with Israel, one of the most reliable U.S. security partners in the Middle East. During President Biden’s July 2022 meeting with King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein (hereinafter King Abdullah II) of Jordan in Saudi Arabia, the President “reaffirmed the United States’ unwavering support to Jordan as a key ally and a force for peace in the region, and for King Abdullah II’s leadership.”¹

Jordan considers the United States to be one of its most important international supporters, though it also relies heavily on members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)² for political and financial backing. In 2017, Saudi Arabia provided \$3 billion in capital to establish the Saudi Jordanian Investment Fund, which has committed to building a \$400 million university hospital in Amman. In addition to investment by GCC states in Jordan, the oil-rich Gulf monarchies are a destination for Jordanian expatriate labor. According to *The Economist*, an estimated 800,000 Jordanians work in the Arab Gulf states and remit to Jordan approximately \$2.4 billion annually.³

Despite its powerful friends, Jordan faces a number of ongoing challenges—some systemic and long-standing, and others more recent. From a security standpoint, Jordan is a U.S. partner in the global fight against international terrorism, serving as a coalition member in Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR). Ongoing Israeli-Palestinian tensions also are a major concern, particularly as they relate to Jerusalem and its holy sites. Jordan is an ardent advocate for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Jordanian monarchs trace their lineage to the Prophet Muhammad, and King Abdullah II’s role as guardian of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem is critical to his domestic legitimacy. A large portion of Jordan’s population—perhaps a majority—identify as Palestinians, so Israeli-Palestinian issues have major implications for domestic political sentiment within the kingdom. The decade-old Syrian civil war also threatens Jordanian security, particularly as criminal elements within the Asad regime have turned to synthetic drug smuggling across the Jordanian-Syrian border (**see below**).

Economically, Jordan is beset by chronically high youth unemployment. With the private sector unable to provide enough attractive jobs to young workers, the government has had to absorb those workers who do not emigrate to Gulf states or elsewhere (unemployment overall is 22.6%). The national budget runs perennial deficits in part due to an oversized public workforce and subsidization program. Nonetheless, in November 2022, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) concluded that Jordan’s “sound fiscal and monetary policies” have helped it maintain macroeconomic stability despite turbulent global economic conditions.⁴ From 2020 to 2024, the IMF intends to disburse \$2.46 billion in loans contingent upon certain economic reforms, such as raising government revenue by reducing tax evasion and closing tax loopholes.

To date, King Abdullah II has been able to manage these various domestic and regional challenges, though not without dissent from within the royal family. The king’s half-brother

¹ White House, Joint Statement Following Meeting of President Joseph R. Biden and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Jeddah, July 16, 2022.

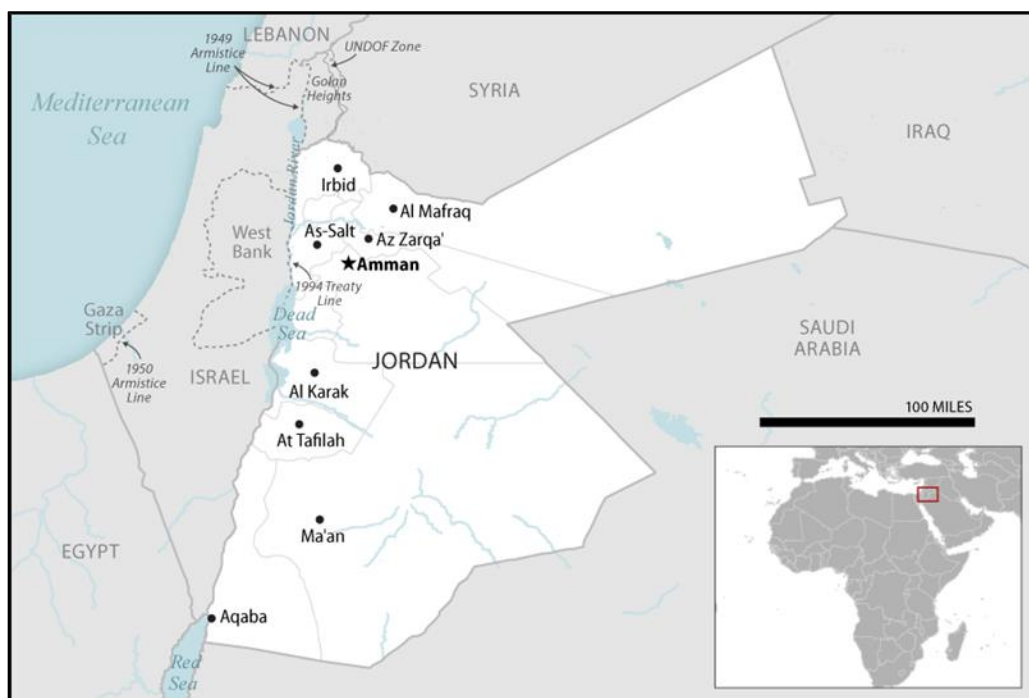
² GCC members are: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

³ “Unstable neighbours and bad policy are just two of Jordan’s problems,” *The Economist*, April 28, 2018.

⁴ International Monetary Fund, IMF Staff Reach Staff-Level Agreement with Jordan on the Fifth Review Under the Extended Fund Facility, November 15, 2022.

Hamzah voiced rare public criticism of the monarch and has been under indefinite house arrest since spring 2022. In April 2022, Hamzah renounced his title as prince. In May 2022 remarks, King Abdullah II said that “We will provide Hamzah with all that he requires to live a comfortable life, but he will not have the space he once abused to offend the nation, its institutions, and his family, nor to undermine Jordan’s stability.”⁵

Figure 1. Jordan at a Glance



Area: 89,342 sq. km. (34,495 sq. mi., slightly smaller than Indiana).

Population: 10,998,531 (2022); Amman (capital): 2.2 million (2022).

Country of Origin: Jordanian 69.3%, Syrian 13.3%, Palestinian 6.7%, Egyptian 6.7%, Iraqi 1.4%, other 2.6% (includes Armenian, Circassian) (2015 est.) note: data represent population by self-identified nationality

Religion: Sunni Muslim 97.2%; Christian 2.2%; Buddhist 0.4%; Hindu 0.1%.

Percent of Population Under Age 25: 52% (2022).

Youth Unemployment (ages 15-24): 37.3% (2019).

Source: Graphic created by CRS using figures from CIA World Factbook.

Country Background

Jordan, created by colonial powers after World War I, initially consisted of desert or semidesert territory east of the Jordan River, inhabited largely by people of Bedouin tribal background, the original “East Bank” Jordanians.⁶ The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 brought large numbers of Palestinian refugees to Jordan, which subsequently unilaterally annexed a Palestinian enclave west of the Jordan River known as the West Bank—later captured by Israel in the 1967

⁵ “Jordan king places half brother Prince Hamzah under house arrest,” *Al Jazeera*, May 19, 2022.

⁶ For historical background, see Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, Country Profile: Jordan, September 2006.

Arab-Israeli War.⁷ The “East Bank” Jordanians, though probably no longer a majority in Jordan, remain predominant in the country’s political and military establishments and form the bedrock of support for the Jordanian monarchy. Jordanians of Palestinian origin make up an estimated 55% to 70% of the population. They tend to gravitate toward employment in the private sector, most likely due to their alleged general exclusion from certain public-sector and military positions.⁸

The Hashemite Royal Family

Jordan is a hereditary constitutional monarchy under the prestigious Hashemite family, which claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad. King Abdullah II (age 60) has ruled the country since 1999, when he succeeded to the throne upon the death of his father, the late King Hussein, who had ruled for 47 years. Educated largely in Britain and the United States, King Abdullah II had earlier pursued a military career, ultimately serving as commander of Jordan’s Special Operations Forces with the rank of major general. The king’s son, Prince Hussein bin Abdullah (born in 1994), is the designated crown prince.⁹

Figure 2. King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein



Source: Alexandros Michailidis / Shutterstock.com.

Political System and Key Institutions

The Jordanian constitution, most recently amended in 2022, gives the king broad executive powers.¹⁰ The king appoints the prime minister and may dismiss him or accept his resignation. He also has the sole power to appoint the crown prince, senior military leaders, justices of the constitutional court, and all members of the senate, as well as cabinet ministers. The constitution enables the king to dissolve both houses of parliament and postpone lower house elections for two years.¹¹ The king can circumvent parliament through a constitutional mechanism that allows

⁷ Though there was little international recognition of Jordan’s 1950 annexation of the West Bank, Jordan maintained control of it (including East Jerusalem) until Israel took military control of it during the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War, and maintained its claim to it until relinquishing the claim to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1988. In an address to the nation, the late King Hussein stated on July 31, 1988 that “We respect the wish of the PLO, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, to secede from us as an independent Palestinian state.” See, http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/88_july31.html.

⁸ Speculation over the ratio of East Bankers to Palestinians (those who arrived as refugees and immigrants since 1948 and their descendants) in Jordanian society is a sensitive domestic issue. Jordan last conducted a national census in 2015, and it is unclear whether or not the government maintains such national-origin statistics. Over time, intermarriage has made it more difficult to discern distinct differences between the two communities, though divisions do persist.

⁹ In July 2009, King Abdullah II named Prince Hussein (then 15 years old) as crown prince. The position had been vacant since 2004, when King Abdullah II removed the title from his half-brother, Prince Hamzah. Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II, now 28, is a graduate of Georgetown University and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (UK). He holds the rank of second lieutenant in the Jordan Armed Forces.

¹⁰ In the last decade, Jordan’s constitution has been amended three times (2011, 2016, and 2022).

¹¹ The king also may declare martial law. According to Article 125, “In the event of an emergency of such a serious nature that action under the preceding Article of the present Constitution will be considered insufficient for the defense

the cabinet to issue provisional legislation when parliament is not sitting or has been dissolved.¹² The king also must approve laws before they can take effect, although a two-thirds majority of both houses of parliament can modify legislation. The king also can issue royal decrees, which are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny. The king commands the armed forces, declares war, and ratifies treaties. Finally, Article 195 of the Jordanian Penal Code prohibits insulting the dignity of the king (*lèse-majesté*), with criminal penalties of one to three years in prison. Article 38 of the constitution grants the king the power to issue pardons.

Successive Jordanian parliaments have mostly complied with the policies laid out by the Royal Court. The legislative branch's independence has been curtailed not only by a legal system that rests authority largely in the hands of the monarch, but also by electoral laws designed to produce pro-palace majorities with each new election.¹³ Due to frequent gerrymandering, in which electoral districts arguably are drawn to favor more rural pro-government constituencies over densely populated urban areas, parliamentary elections have produced large pro-government majorities dominated by representatives of prominent tribal families.¹⁴ In addition, voter turnout tends to be much higher in pro-government areas, since many East Bank Jordanians depend on family/tribal connections as a means to access patronage jobs.¹⁵ The next parliamentary election is scheduled for November 2024.

Jordan's constitution provides for an independent judiciary. According to Article 97, "Judges are independent, and in the exercise of their judicial functions they are subject to no authority other than that of the law." Jordan has three main types of courts: civil courts, special courts (some of which are military/state security courts), and religious courts. State security courts administered by military and civilian judges handle criminal cases involving espionage, bribery of public officials, trafficking in narcotics or weapons, black marketeering, and "security offenses."¹⁶ Religious courts for both Muslims and Christians adjudicate matters of personal status, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance.¹⁷ The king may appoint and dismiss judges by decree, though in practice a palace-appointed Higher Judicial Council manages court appointments, promotions, transfers, and retirements.

Political Reform and Human Rights

Since his ascension to the throne in 1999, King Abdullah II has at times laid out a vision of Jordan's gradual transition from a constitutional monarchy into a full-fledged parliamentary democracy.¹⁸ During periods of domestic unrest, Jordanian leaders have taken limited steps to

of the Kingdom, the King may by a Royal Decree, based on a decision of the Council of Ministers, declare martial law in the whole or any part of the Kingdom."

¹² Amendments to Article 94 in 2011 have put some restrictions on when the executive is allowed to issue temporary laws.

¹³ "How Jordan's Election Revealed Enduring Weaknesses in Its Political System," *Washington Post*, October 3, 2016.

¹⁴ Rachel Bessette, "Jordan's Parliamentary Elections: Why They Do (and Don't) Matter for the Kingdom's Future," *Lawfare*, September 29, 2016.

¹⁵ Sean L. Yom, "Tribal Politics in Contemporary Jordan: The Case of the Hirak Movement," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Spring 2014), pp. 229-247.

¹⁶ See U.S. Embassy in Jordan, Jordanian Legal System, available at <https://jo.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/local-resources-of-u-s-citizens/attorneys/jordanian-legal-system/>.

¹⁷ In Muslim sharia courts, the testimony of one man equals that of two women, with exceptions in certain cases. U.S. Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Jordan*, March 30, 2021.

¹⁸ See "Making Our Democratic System Work for All Jordanians," Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, January 16, 2013. Also, see Curtis R. Ryan, "The King's Speech," *Foreign Policy*, June 17, 2011.

liberalize the political system without fundamentally altering the monarchical power structure. In times of crisis, the government also often appeals for Jordanian unity,¹⁹ while calling the opposition divisive or even disloyal.²⁰

Gender Issues in Jordan

Jordan has consistently ranked in the bottom quintile of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap index (122 of 146 countries in 2022, though above most countries in the North Africa Middle East region). Some have pointed to "traditional attitudes, discriminatory legislation, a lack of access to public transportation and pay disparities" as barriers to women's advancement in Jordan.²¹ Despite having one of the highest rates of female literacy in the Middle East, Jordan's female labor force participation rate is considered low (15% as of 2021).²² Unequal pay also is an issue in Jordan, where the gender wage gap (as of 2018) is estimated at 18% in the public sector and 14% in the private sector.²³

In 2022, Jordan amended the title of Chapter Two of the constitution, which guarantees equal rights for all citizens. The title was changed from "Rights and Duties of Jordanians" to "The Rights and Duties of Jordanian Men and Women." During parliamentary debate over this change, an altercation broke out, as some Jordanian lawmakers opposed granting women greater equality, especially on matters of inheritance and citizenship.²⁴

Jordan has received funding through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-administered Women's Global Development and Prosperity Fund, launched in 2019, specifically to support government efforts to amend the country's labor code to prohibit gender discrimination.²⁵ USAID allocates U.S. bilateral economic assistance to support programs that protect victims of gender-based violence, improve women's access to jobs and leadership opportunities in the private sector, and support the advancement of women to decision-making positions. In addition to partnering with various government ministries, USAID also partners with the Jordanian National Commission for Women headed by Princess Basma Bint Talal, paternal aunt to King Abdullah II.

Unlike in neighboring Egypt, the kingdom tolerates Muslim Brotherhood political activity, and Brotherhood candidates sometimes compete in parliamentary elections. (The Brotherhood also has boycotted previous elections in protest.) The Brotherhood is currently divided between Islamists who are willing to participate in the political system and those who reject it. In the 2020 parliamentary election, Brotherhood candidates ran together on a list called the National Alliance Reform. The list won 10 seats in Jordan's 130-member House of Representatives (down from 16 in the 2016 election); of those 10 seats, 6 went to actual Islamist-leaning candidates.²⁶

Over the past 15 years, as Jordan's economic growth has stalled (see **Figure 3 below**), economic grievances have spurred protests in Jordan, and authorities have responded by limiting the space for the expression of political opposition. While traditionally, Jordan had been considered to be somewhat more tolerant of dissent than its Arab neighbors, the international democracy watchdog

¹⁹ In 2002, just a few years into his reign and amid a Palestinian uprising against Israelis (including in the neighboring West Bank), King Abdullah II launched a nation-wide campaign known as "Jordan First," in which he called on citizens to reaffirm their "loyalty to the homeland." See, Sana Abdallah, "Jordan's King Launches Identity Campaign," *UPI*, October 31, 2002.

²⁰ "Jordan's solid national unity is what makes it special—King," *Jordan Times*, September 16, 2015.

²¹ Rana F. Sweis, "Women, 86 Percent Absent from Jordan's Work Force, Are Left Behind," *New York Times*, April 3, 2021.

²² Holly Welborn Benner and Anders Pedersen, "Want Jordan to prosper? Engage women!" *World Bank Blog*, December 22, 2021.

²³ International Labour Organization, *Gender Equality and Decent Work in Jordan*, April 30, 2021.

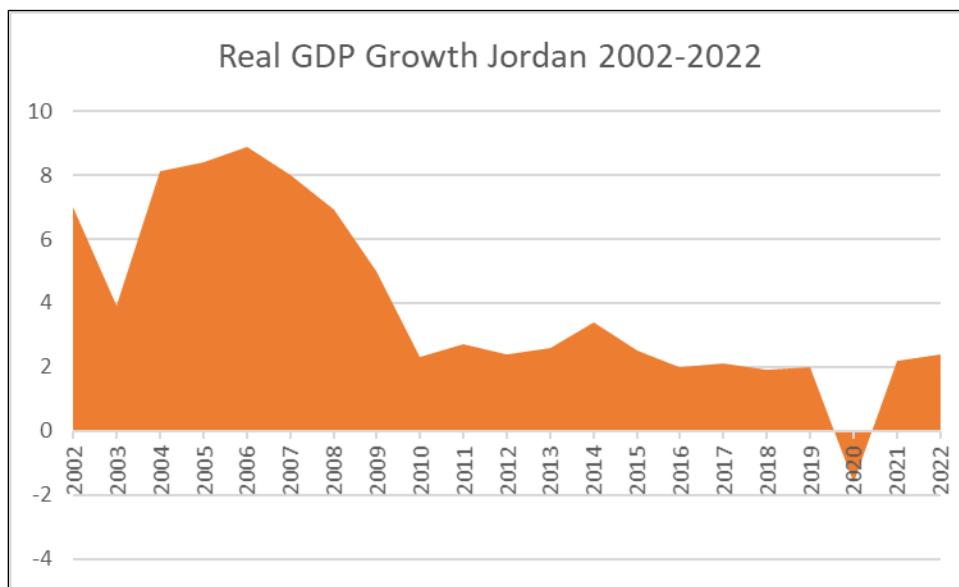
²⁴ Celine Alkhalidi, "Jordanian Lawmakers Trade Punches in Parliament amid Heated Discussion on Women's Rights," *CNN*, December 29, 2021.

²⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Women's Global Development and Prosperity Annual Report 2020-2021*, January 2021.

²⁶ Suha Ma'ayeh and Rana F. Sweis, "Jordan's 2020 Parliamentary Election: Settling for the Status Quo," Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, February 2021.

organization Freedom House changed Jordan's rating in 2021 from "partially free to "not free," asserting that Jordan's status declined due to harsh new restrictions on freedom of assembly, among other things (it also ranked "not free" in 2022).²⁷ In September 2022, Human Rights Watch stated that "Civic space in Jordan has shrunk over the past four years as authorities persecute and harass citizens organizing peacefully and engaging in political dissent."²⁸ Internet freedom is a particularly sensitive issue in Jordan, where journalists have decried the ambiguity of cybercrime legislation, such as Article 11 of the 2015 Cybercrime Law.²⁹ The law states that "anyone who on purpose posts or reposts statements or information on the internet, that include tort and slander, or the denigration of anyone, faces no less than three months in jail and a fine of no less than JD100 [or 100 Jordanian dinars] (\$140) and not more than JD1,000 (\$1,400)."

Figure 3. Twenty Years of GDP Growth in Jordan
2002 to 2022



Source: International Monetary Fund DATAMAPPER

Economy

Though Jordan is a net oil importer, many of its citizens benefit indirectly from energy revenues in GCC states because of remittances sent by family members working in those countries. With higher global oil prices and the return of international tourism, Jordan's economy has fared better than originally anticipated in 2022.³⁰ GDP growth for the year is now projected to be 2.7% (up from earlier predictions of 2.4%).

²⁷ Freedom House, *Jordan, Freedom in the World 2021*.

²⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Jordan: Government Crushes Civic Space Detentions, Interrogations, Harassment and Restrictions on Basic Rights*, September 18, 2022.

²⁹ Mustafa Abu Sneineh, "Jordan: Prominent Palestinian journalist detained at airport under Cybercrime Law," *Middle East Eye*, March 8, 2022.

³⁰ "Jordan's economy posts faster growth despite global turmoil –IMF," Reuters, November 15, 2022.

Despite this somewhat more positive outlook, economists remain concerned about Jordan's sovereign debt load (114% of GDP in 2021). According to *The Economist*, "Jordan's total debt/GDP ratio is high by regional standards and limits the government's ability to provide subsidies or fund social support, increasing the risk of social unrest."³¹ Servicing Jordan's growing national debt continues to constrain government spending, increasing the possibility that without external assistance, costs in the form of increased taxes and reduced subsidies may be passed on to Jordanian consumers. The World Bank has noted that Jordan benefits from a "relatively favorable debt structure," in that its external creditors provide concessional loans on favorable repayment terms.³²

Foreign Relations

Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinians

The Jordanian government has long described efforts to secure a lasting end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as one of its highest priorities. In 1994, Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty.³³ Nearly three decades after the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, the persistence of Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to be a major challenge for Jordan, as the issue of Palestinian rights resonates with much of the population, and the conflict has soured attempts to improve Jordanian-Israeli people-to-people relations.

While Jordanian-Israeli government-to-government military cooperation is quietly ongoing, civil relations between governments wax and wane depending on the attitudes and policy positions of the countries' respective leaders. Typically, right-of-center Israeli parties, which tend to take positions opposing or the exchange of land for peace with the Palestinians, have more difficult relations with the kingdom when in power, as evidenced by the era of strained ties between King Abdullah II and Benjamin Netanyahu during his second stint as prime minister (2009-2021).³⁴ Right-of-center parties have dominated Israeli politics since 2001.

In the wake of the November 2022 Israeli election, Jordanian officials are concerned that the next Israeli coalition government, which will likely be led once again by Prime Minister Netanyahu and include ultra-nationalist parties within the Religious Zionism electoral list, may exacerbate ongoing Israeli-Arab tensions in Israel and the West Bank.³⁵ Since the election, Jordanian officials have repeatedly called on the new Israeli government to maintain the historic "status quo" (see **text box below**) that allows only Muslims to worship at the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif

³¹ Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report Jordan, November 20, 2022.

³² World Bank, Jordan Economic Monitor, Global Turbulence Dampens Recovery and Job Creation, Spring 2022.

³³ Jordan and Israel signed the peace treaty on October 26, 1994. Later, the two countries exchanged ambassadors, Israel returned approximately 131 square miles of territory near the Rift Valley to Jordan, Jordan's parliament repealed laws banning contacts with Israel, and the two countries signed a number of bilateral agreements between 1994 and 1996 to normalize economic and cultural links. Water sharing, a recurring problem, is addressed in Annex II of the treaty and coordinated by the Joint Water Committee comprised of Israeli and Jordanian officials. According to the 1994 treaty, in exchange for certain Jordanian concessions to Israel, Israel agreed to supply Jordan with 50 million cubic meters of water a year from the northern part of Israel (in a separate agreement, Israel agreed to sell Jordan another 10 million cubic meters in 2010). The Annex also states that "Israel and Jordan shall cooperate in finding sources for the supply to Jordan of an additional quantity of (50) MCM/year [million cubic meters] of water of drinkable standards."

³⁴ David Schenker and Ghaith al-Omari, "Getting the Israel-Jordan Relationship back on Track," Policy Alert, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 12, 2021.

³⁵ Daoud Kuttab, "Jordan braces for Netanyahu and his right-wing government," *Axios*, November 9, 2022.

(“Mount/Haram”) in Jerusalem’s Old City.³⁶ Jordanian officials have long asserted that Israeli authorities under successive governments—regardless of their political tilt—have undermined the prohibition of non-Muslim worship in the main mosque compound on the Mount/Haram.³⁷ In a speech before the United Nations General Assembly in September 2022, King Abdullah II warned that “undermining Jerusalem’s legal and historical status quo triggers global tensions and deepens religious divides.”³⁸

Holy Sites in Jerusalem³⁹

Per arrangements dating back to 1967 (when the Israeli military seized East Jerusalem—including its Old City—from Jordan) and then subsequently confirmed in the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty, Israel acknowledges a continuing role for Jordan vis-à-vis Jerusalem’s historic Muslim shrines.⁴⁰ A Jordanian *waqf* (or Islamic custodial trust) has long administered the Temple Mount (known by Muslims as the Haram al Sharif or Noble Sanctuary) and its holy sites, and this role is key to bolstering the religious legitimacy of the Jordanian royal family’s rule. As mentioned above, Jordanian monarchs trace their lineage to the Prophet Muhammad. Disputes over Jerusalem that appear to circumscribe King Abdullah II’s role as guardian of the Islamic holy sites create a domestic political problem for the king. Jewish worship on the Mount/Haram is prohibited under a long-standing “status quo” arrangement that dates back to the era of Ottoman control during the centuries before World War I.

Water Scarcity and Regional Water Cooperation

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Jordan is the second-most water poor nation in the world in terms of water resources per inhabitant.⁴¹ Jordan’s increase in water scarcity over the past 75 years is attributable to population growth, a decrease in the flow of the Yarmouk River due to the building of dams upstream in Syria, gradual declines in rainfall, and depleting groundwater resources due to overuse.⁴² The illegal construction of thousands of private wells has also contributed to unsustainable groundwater extraction. The large influx of Syrian refugees has heightened water demand in the north. A Stanford University study predicts that dwindling water supplies and continued population growth will, without intervention, halve per capita water use in Jordan by the end of this century.⁴³

To secure new sources of water, Jordan is increasing its regional cooperation. In 2021, Israel agreed to sell Jordan 50 million cubic meters of additional water annually from the Sea of Galilee. Also in 2021, Israel, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) reached a trilateral

³⁶ “Jordan said to warn incoming government against touching Temple Mount status quo,” *Times of Israel*, November 7, 2022.

³⁷ “Jordan pushing to restore Jerusalem mosque status quo – sources,” Reuters, April 27, 2022.

³⁸ “King delivers Jordan’s address at 77th UNGA session,” Jordan News Agency (Petra), September 20, 2022.

³⁹ For more information on Jerusalem and its holy sites, see CRS Report RL33476, *Israel: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Jim Zanotti.

⁴⁰ Article 9, Clause 2, of the peace treaty says that “Israel respects the present special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Muslim Holy shrines in Jerusalem. When negotiations on the permanent status will take place, Israel will give high priority to the Jordanian historic role in these shrines.” In 2013, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) reaffirmed in a bilateral agreement with Jordan that the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan will continue to serve as the “Custodian of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem,” a title that successive Jordanian monarchs have used since 1924 (see footnote below).

⁴¹ United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, *Review of World Water Resources by Country*, Rome, 2003.

⁴² Deepthi Rajsekhar and Steven M. Gorelick, “Increasing drought in Jordan: Climate Change and Cascading Syrian Land-Use Impacts on Reducing Transboundary Flow,” *Science Advances*, August 30, 2017: vol. 3, no. 8.

⁴³ Josie Garthwaite, “Stanford Study Reveals a Deepening Water Crisis in Jordan—and a Way Forward,” Stanford University News, March 29, 2021.

energy-for-water agreement, whereby the UAE is to finance additional solar production capacity in Jordan to be exported to Israel (600 megawatts) in exchange for 200 million cubic meters of desalinated water. On November 22, 2021, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry traveled to the UAE for the signing ceremony for the energy-for-water deal, dubbed “Project Prosperity.”

Jordan also is pursuing domestic water development projects. In July 2021, after years of delays in evaluating the now-defunct trilateral project (Israel-Jordan-Palestinian Authority) known as the Red-Dead Sea Conveyance Project, Jordan moved ahead with plans to build its own desalination plant in Aqaba, along with a water treatment facility, pumping station, and a 280-mile pipeline to carry water to Amman and elsewhere. The aim of the Aqaba-Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project (AAWDCP) is to bring 300 million cubic meters of potable water annually to water-stressed areas. The Jordanian government is currently evaluating private company bids for the \$2.5 billion project. USAID and the European Investment Bank (EIB) have provided funding to conduct feasibility studies.⁴⁴ According to USAID, the U.S. government has provided over \$10 million in technical support to the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation to study the feasibility of the AAWDCP; over the next five years, the United States government has pledged \$700 million, with \$300 million in grant funding from USAID, subject to the availability of funds, and up to \$400 million in loans to the project company from the U.S. Development Finance Corporation, subject to bankability requirements.⁴⁵

Water Scarcity in Jordan

In Jordan, water scarcity is most acute in rural areas and in small villages and towns, a disparity with urban areas that has the potential for breeding resentment against the government based in Amman. The agricultural sector uses 50% of the kingdom’s water, but accounts only for 5.6% of its GDP. However, according to one analysis, if the government were to limit water usage for agricultural production, it would be considered “highly politically contentious.”⁴⁶ In Jordan, many citizens already do not have access to constantly running water; instead water is released to specific locales either weekly or monthly. Only those with means are able to purchase water storage tanks and water distributed privately by truck.⁴⁷

Syria

The ongoing civil war in Syria has created unstable conditions along portions of the 225-mile Jordanian-Syrian border, where criminal networks smuggle synthetic drugs into Jordan and Iranian-backed militias, such as Hezbollah, attempt to gain influence. For the past several years, Syrian-based synthetic drug smugglers have routinely attempted to penetrate Jordan’s borders and traffic Captagon pills.⁴⁸ Captagon (the drug compound fenethylline hydrochloride) is a popular and cheap amphetamine-type stimulant used across the Middle East. According to one report:

After a decade of civil war and conflict in Syria, there aren’t many job prospects, leaving many to turn to drug trafficking to support themselves, fueling what is now a multi-billion-dollar trade. While the Syrian government publicly denounces Captagon trafficking, many Syrian business and military leaders have been implicated in its illicit lifecycle.

⁴⁴ USAID, Jordan Water Infrastructure, Annual Progress Report, Period 12th—July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021.

⁴⁵ CRS Correspondence with USAID, April 2022.

⁴⁶ Economist Intelligence Unit, “Jordan’s government warns of looming water crisis,” July 28, 2022.

⁴⁷ Karen Zraick, “Jordan Is Running Out of Water, a Grim Glimpse of the Future,” *New York Times*, November 9, 2022.

⁴⁸ “Jordan says drug trafficking from Syria is ‘organised,’” Agence France Presse, February 17, 2022.

Circumstantially, most of the amphetamine is manufactured in areas controlled by the regime or their associates. Drug trafficking has become Syria's highest grossing export, far beyond any legal exports, essentially making it a "narco-state."⁴⁹

In order to counter Captagon smuggling, the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) have allocated more human and technological resources to enhance its Directorate of Border Security. In addition, it has loosened rules of engagement for its soldiers to more forcefully engage smugglers.⁵⁰ Jordan also relies on longtime U.S. security assistance for its border security. Since 2009, the Jordan Border Security Program has helped Jordan secure its land borders by providing the JAF "forward-looking infrared cameras, surveillance radars, fencing sensors, and intrusion detection devices."⁵¹

In October 2022, Jordan's Public Security Directorate (PSD) signed an agreement with the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) to strengthen cooperation on countering drug trafficking. The agreement commits both parties to sharing information, technology, and science related to tackling cross-border narcotics trafficking.⁵² In Congress, H.R. 6265, the "Countering Assad's Proliferation Trafficking And Garnering Of Narcotics Act" or the "CAPTAGON Act," would, among other things, require the Administration to provide specific committees with a "written strategy to disrupt and dismantle narcotics production and trafficking and affiliated networks linked to the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria."⁵³ In fall 2022, the Royal Jordanian Air Force received the first U.S. upgraded IOMAX Air Tractor AT-802 Border Patrol Aircraft (BPA).⁵⁴ Nearly a decade ago, the UAE gifted six AT-802s to Jordan, and the United States is in the process of upgrading their capabilities to assist in patrolling and defending Jordan's borders.

In addition to narcotics smuggling, Jordan has broader concerns about the presence of Iranian-sponsored militias in Syria moving closer to the Jordanian border.⁵⁵ As Russia has redeployed some of its forces from Syria to Ukraine, Jordan has engaged Russian officials in order to ensure a continued security presence in Syria's southern governorates. According to one report, Russia has "stepped up military police patrols along the Syrian side of the border in a move to assure Jordan it will not allow Teheran-backed militias to hold sway along the border area."⁵⁶

The kingdom also continues to host hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees, many of whom are reluctant to return to their homes for fear of Syrian regime retribution against them.⁵⁷ As of October 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are 676,621 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan.

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of State, Captagon: Drug Trafficking in the Middle East, Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), Bureau of Diplomatic Security, April 25, 2022.

⁵⁰ Elliot Chapman, Shady Alkhayer, and Mohammed Najib, "Border busts: Jordanian authorities respond to Syrian drug trafficking groups," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, July 21, 2022.

⁵¹ U.S. Department of Defense, Inspector General, Audit of Jordan Border Security Program Oversight, December 20, 2019.

⁵² Elliot Chapman, "US-Jordan agreement on combating drug smuggling likely to increase Jordanian intelligence and policing capabilities," *Jane's Country Risk Daily Report*, October 11, 2022.

⁵³ H.R. 6265 was passed by the House in September 2022, and incorporated into the House-engrossed version of the FY2023 NDAA (Section 1229).

⁵⁴ Gareth Jennings, "Jordan to receive IOMAX-upgraded Air Tractor," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 21, 2022.

⁵⁵ "Jordan's King Abdullah II says Tehran should stop interfering in region," *The National* (UAE), July 24, 2022.

⁵⁶ "Jordan seeks more coordination with Russia to bring stability to southern Syria," Reuters, November 3, 2022.

⁵⁷ "Trapped in Jordan, Syrian Refugees See No Way Home," Associated Press, September 11, 2019.

Since 2011, the influx of Syrian refugees has placed tremendous strain on Jordan's government and local economies, especially in the northern governorates of Mafraq, Irbid, Ar Ramtha, and Zarqa. With the Syrian crisis now in its second decade, an entire generation of Syrian refugees are being raised in Jordan. In the Zaatari Refugee Camp in northern Jordan, home to about 11% of the registered Syrian refugees in Jordan, refugees have received food, shelter, and medical services, but now seek education and employment services.⁵⁸

Source: UN High Commissioner for Refugees, October 31, 2022.

Jordan's housing of more than 675,000 Syrian refugees, support for Iraq's stability, and partnership in the fight against global terrorism. The two leaders reiterated their commitment to pursuing a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and also recognized "the necessity of upholding the historic status quo in Jerusalem's holy sites," and the "key role of the Hashemite Custodianship in that regard."⁶¹

The Allenby Bridge Crossing between the West Bank and Jordan

During President Biden's July 2022 trip to the Middle East, the President sought Israeli cooperation in increasing Palestinian accessibility to the Allenby Bridge (referred to by Jordanians as the King Hussein Bridge). Due to Israeli security concerns, most Palestinians in the West Bank are barred from traveling abroad through Israel's Ben Gurion Airport; instead, they cross over into Jordan via the Allenby Bridge and fly abroad from the main international airport in Amman.⁶² However, crossing times are limited and can take considerable time. The Biden Administration has urged Israel to enable access "24 hours per day, 7 days per week" and has supported working groups to make the crossing more efficient for travelers while addressing Israel's security considerations.⁶³ According to Israeli officials, a pilot program to operate the Allenby crossing between the West Bank and Jordan 24/7 began in November 2022.

Many U.S. policymakers advocate for continued robust U.S. assistance to the kingdom. Annual aid to Jordan has tripled in historical terms over the past 15 years. According to the U.S. State Department, the United States and Jordan have a 1996 Status of Forces Agreement, a 2006 Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, and a 2021 Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA).⁶⁴

The 2021 DCA formalizes years of U.S.-Jordanian military cooperation, which became more visible at the start of CJTF-OIR against the Islamic State (IS, also known as ISIL/ISIS) in 2014. In September 2022, the United States and Jordan participated in the 10th iteration of Eager Lion, the largest multinational military exercise hosted by Jordan. According to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), approximately 1,700 U.S. service members, 2,200 Jordanian Armed Forces, and 591 coalition personnel from 28 other partner nations participated in Eager Lion 2022.⁶⁵

Jordanian air bases have been particularly important for the U.S. conduct of intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions in Syria and Iraq. U.S. forces have operated out of various Jordanian air bases, such as Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Azraq, Jordan.⁶⁶ While the United States never officially acknowledged its presence at Muwaffaq Salti Air Base prior to the 2021 agreement, according to one report, "satellite imagery shows it has hosted US Air Force (USAF) unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and fast jets since at least 2016."⁶⁷

As of June 2022, there are approximately 2,833 United States military personnel deployed to Jordan to counter the Islamic State and enhance Jordan's security.⁶⁸ Though the 2021 DCA

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² See U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs, Israel, the West Bank and Gaza International Travel Information, "Entry, Exit, and Visa Requirements."

⁶³ White House, Fact Sheet: The United States-Palestinian Relationship, July 14, 2022.

⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State, U.S. Security Cooperation with Jordan, Fact Sheet, May 21, 2021.

⁶⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Central Command, Jordan Hosts U.S. forces and partner nations for premiere Exercise Eager Lion, September 4, 2022.

⁶⁶ The National Defense Authorization Act for FY2018 (P.L. 115-91) authorized \$143 million in Air Force construction funds to expand the ramp space at Muwaffaq Salti Air Base.

⁶⁷ "Jeremy Binnie, "US Carrying out Major Upgrade to Jordanian Airbase," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, December 1, 2021.

⁶⁸ White House, Letter to the Speaker of the House and President pro tempore of the Senate regarding the War Powers

governs U.S.-Jordanian military cooperation, the presence of armed U.S. military personnel in the kingdom remains a sensitive domestic issue in Jordanian politics.⁶⁹ According to the 2021 agreement

Jordan shall provide unimpeded access to and use of Agreed Facilities and Areas to U.S. forces, U.S. personnel, U.S. contractors, and others as mutually agreed, for activities including visits; training; exercises; maneuvers; transit; support and related activities; refueling of aircraft; landing and recovery of aircraft; bunkering of vessels; temporary maintenance of vehicles, vessels, and aircraft; accommodation of personnel; communications; staging and deploying of forces and materiel; pre-positioning of equipment, supplies, and materiel; security assistance and cooperation activities; joint and combined training activities; humanitarian and disaster relief; contingency operations; and other activities as mutually agreed by the Parties or their Executive Agents.⁷⁰

Beyond the need to use Jordanian facilities to counter the Islamic State throughout the region, CENTCOM may seek to partner more closely with Jordan in order to position U.S. materiel to counter Iran. In summer 2021, the U.S. Department of Defense announced that equipment and materiel previously stored at a now-closed U.S. base in Qatar would be moved to Jordan.⁷¹

The Case of Ahlam al Tamimi

Ahlam al Tamimi is a Jordanian national who participated in the 2001 suicide bombing of a Jerusalem pizza restaurant that killed 15 people, including two Americans. In Israel, she had been sentenced to life in prison but was released and returned to Jordan in 2011 as part of a prisoner exchange deal between Israel and Hamas. The U.S. Justice Department filed criminal charges against Tamimi in 2013, and those charges were unsealed in early 2017. Tamimi is on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Most Wanted Terrorist List.⁷² The United States and Jordan have an extradition treaty, which, according to the U.S. State Department, entered into force on July 29, 1995.⁷³ The United States requested Tamimi's extradition in 2017, but Jordan's Court of Cassation ruled that the extradition treaty was invalid. In November 2019, the State Department said that "the United States regards the extradition treaty as valid."

According to a April 2021 media account one reason why the U.S. and Israeli governments have not applied further visible pressure on the government of Jordan to extradite Tamimi is concern for the stability of Jordan.⁷⁴ One unnamed U.S. State Department official noted that "while [King] Abdullah has no love for Tamimi, giving her up to America would put the king in a very difficult position with his own people."⁷⁵ On March 23, 2022, six lawmakers sent a letter to Secretary of State Blinken requesting responses to questions regarding why Jordan has not extradited

Report, June 8, 2022.

⁶⁹ Saud al Sharafat, "Critics react to US-Jordan defense agreement," *Al Monitor*, April 1, 2021.

⁷⁰ U.S. Department of State, Treaties and Other International Acts Series 21-317, Agreement between the United States of America and Jordan with Exchange of Notes, Signed at Amman January 31, 2021, Entered into force March 17, 2021.

⁷¹ J.P. Lawrence, "US Military Shifts Army Basing from Qatar to Jordan in Move that Could Provide Leverage against Iran," *Stars and Stripes*, July 1, 2021.

⁷² https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/wanted_terrorists/ahlam-ahmad-al-tamimi/@@download.pdf.

The kingdom's courts have ruled that Al Tamimi cannot be extradited until such a treaty is endorsed by the Jordanian parliament.

⁷⁴ Yonah Jeremy Bob, "Justice Ignored," *Jerusalem Post*, April 30, 2021.

⁷⁵ Op. cit.

Tamimi.⁷⁶ In July 2022, the National Security Council said that the “U.S. government continues to seek her extradition and the Government of Jordan’s assistance in bringing her to justice for her role in the heinous attack.”⁷⁷

U.S. Foreign Assistance to Jordan

The United States has provided economic and military aid to Jordan since 1951 and 1957, respectively. Total bilateral U.S. aid (overseen by the Departments of State and Defense) to Jordan through FY2020 amounted to approximately \$26.4 billion. Jordan also has received over \$1.87 billion in additional military aid since FY2015, channeled through the Defense Department’s various security assistance accounts. U.S. assistance to Jordan accounts for over 40% of the total amount of official aid the kingdom receives annually. For FY2023, the Biden Administration is requesting \$1.45 billion in total bilateral assistance, which would make Jordan, after Israel, the second-largest targeted recipient of annual U.S. foreign aid in the President’s congressional budget justification.

Table 1. Bilateral Aid to Jordan

(in millions of current dollars)

	FY2018 actual	FY2019 actual	FY2020 actual	FY2021 actual	FY2022 enacted	FY2023 request
DA	—	—	—	85.00	—	—
ESF	1,082.40	1,082.40	1,082.40	1,122.40	1,207.40	1,035.80
FMF	425.00	425.00	425.00	425.00	425.00	400.00
IMET	4.01	3.99	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.80
NADR	13.60	13.60	13.60	13.60	13.60	10.40
Total	1,525.01	1,524.99	1,525.00	1,650.00	1,650.00	1,450.00

Sources: Department of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Congressional Budget Justifications (FY2020-FY2023), P.L. 117-103, and CRS calculations and rounding.

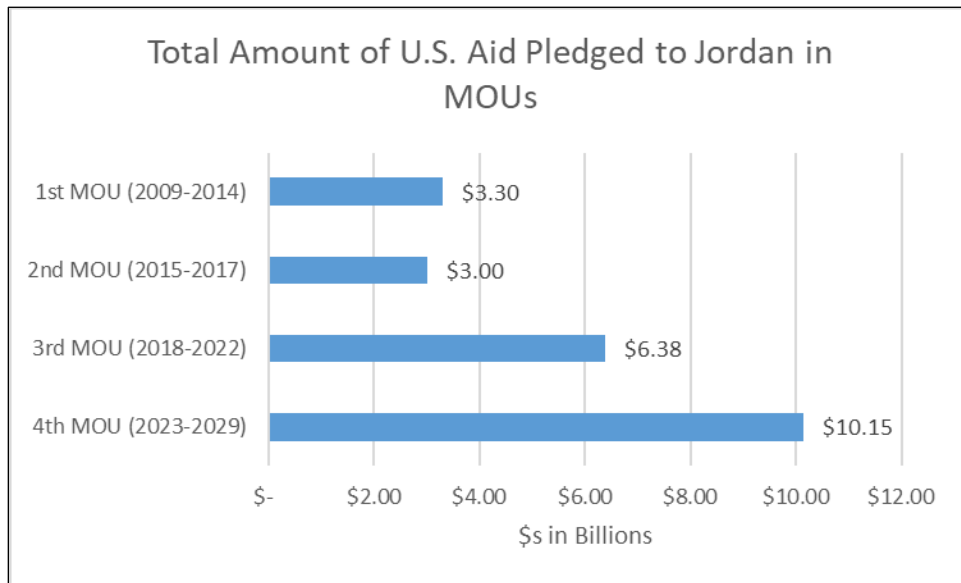
Notes: Prior-year funds not included in this table: \$125 million in ESF in FY2020 (P.L. 116-93); \$50 million in Relief and Recovery Fund (RRF) aid in FY2019 (P.L. 116-6).

U.S.-Jordanian Agreement on Foreign Assistance

On September 16, 2022, the United States and Jordan signed their fourth Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) governing U.S. foreign aid to Jordan. The seven-year agreement (FY2023-FY2029), subject to appropriations of Congress, commits the Administration to seeking a total of \$1.45 billion in annual economic and military aid for Jordan. When compared to the previous MOU, this fourth MOU is 13.7% higher annually and lasts for seven fiscal years instead of five. It represents the largest multi-year U.S. foreign assistance commitment (\$10.15 billion over seven years) to the kingdom. Congress has appropriated between \$1.5 billion and \$1.65 billion in total annual aid to Jordan since FY2018.

⁷⁶ Twitter, Congressman Greg Steube, March 24, 2022.

⁷⁷ “US seeks extradition of Palestinian attacker in Jordan,” Associated Press, July 11, 2022.

Figure 5. U.S. Aid to Jordan over Decades

Source: CRS Graphics

Notes: Includes bilateral U.S. military and economic assistance only. Does not include funds administered by the U.S. Defense Department.

The new MOU is subdivided into four baskets of funds, including: \$610 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) for direct U.S. budget support for the Jordanian government – the most of any country worldwide; \$400 million in Foreign Military Funds (FMF) for Jordanian Armed Forces to procure U.S. equipment; \$350 million in ESF for USAID programming; and \$75 million in “incentive” ESF to support Jordanian economic and public sector reforms.⁷⁸ Although the Jordanian media has described the new MOU as coming with “no strings attached” and the Biden Administration has been careful to discuss reforms stipulated in the new MOU as emanating from Jordan, the new agreement does call on Jordan to take specific steps with regard to its water sector and civil workforce.⁷⁹ According to Secretary of State Antony Blinken:

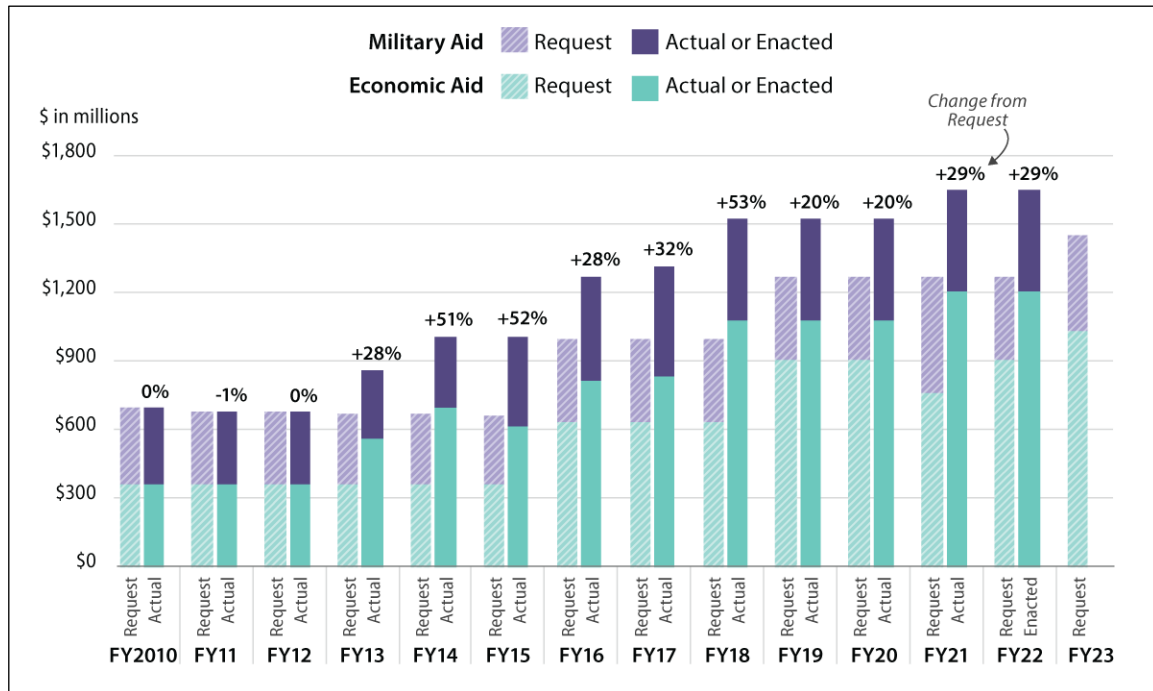
The MOU will support key reforms conceived of, and led by, King Abdullah’s government focusing on improving the lives of Jordanians in tangible ways, reforms like improving essential public services, tackling the water crisis, which is being exacerbated by climate change, expanding economic opportunities so that everyone in Jordan, including women, under-served groups can reach their full potential.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ According to the text of the new MOU, the \$75 million in ESF incentive funds are “intended to be disbursed through modalities determined by the two governments.” See, Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Partnership between The Government of the United States of America and The Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

⁷⁹ Mohammad Ghazal, “No strings attached to \$10.15b US aid package to Jordan — ambassador,” *Jordan Times*, October 5, 2022.

⁸⁰ U.S. Department of State, Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi at a Joint Press Availability, September 16, 2022.

Figure 6. State Department and USAID Assistance to Jordan, FY2010-FY2023
(Executive branch requests vs. actual allocations in millions of current dollars)



Source: Created by CRS using data from annual State Department Congressional Budget Justifications, legislation, and explanatory statements.

Notes: Economic aid from the following accounts: Economic Support Fund (ESF), and Food for Peace Act, Title II (P.L. 480). Military aid from the following accounts: Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE), and Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR).

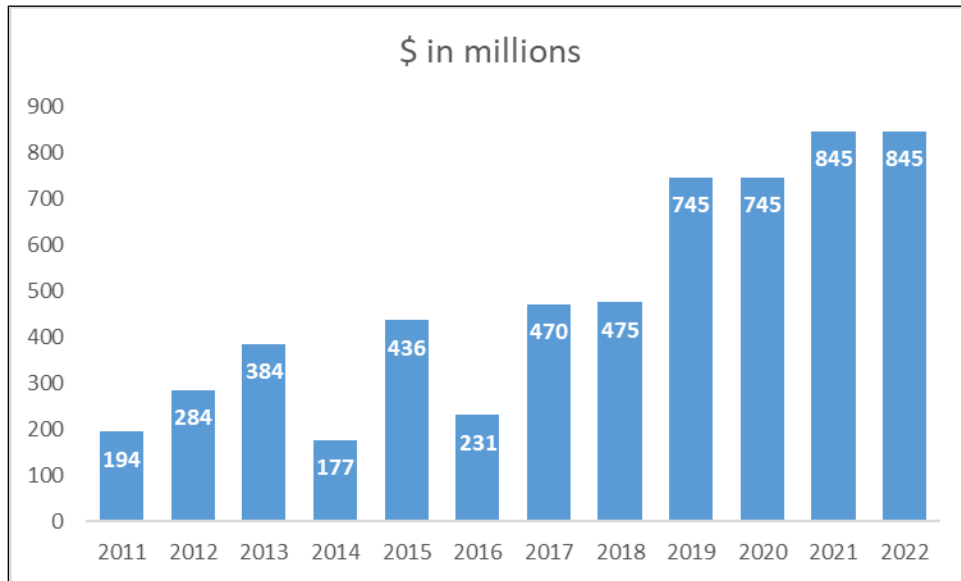
Economic Assistance

The United States provides economic aid to Jordan for (1) budgetary support (cash transfer), (2) USAID programs in Jordan, and (3) loan guarantees. As noted, the cash transfer portion of U.S. economic assistance to Jordan is the largest amount of budget support given to any U.S. foreign aid recipient worldwide.⁸¹ U.S. cash assistance is provided to help the kingdom with foreign debt payments, Syrian refugee support, and fuel import costs. (Jordan is almost entirely reliant on imports for its domestic energy needs.) According to USAID, ESF cash transfer funds are deposited in a single tranche into a U.S.-domiciled interest-bearing account and are not commingled with other funds.⁸² U.S. budget support (excluding military aid) to Jordan represents 6% of the kingdom's entire annual budget (\$15 billion for 2022).

⁸¹ Other budget support aid recipients include the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau.

⁸² USAID Congressional Notification, May 15, 2020.

Figure 7. U.S. Cash Transfers to Jordan
(Obligated funds since 2011 in millions of dollars)



Source: Created by CRS with data from USAID Foreign Aid Explorer.

USAID programs in Jordan focus on a variety of sectors, including democracy assistance, water conservation, decentralization, health, and education (particularly building and renovating public schools).

- In the **democracy** sector, U.S. assistance has supported capacity-building programs for the parliament's support offices, the Jordanian Judicial Council, the Jordan Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission, and the Ministry of Justice. The International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute also have received U.S. grants to train, among other groups, the Jordanian Independent Election Commission (IEC),⁸³ Jordanian political parties, and members of parliament.
- In the **water** sector, the bulk of U.S. economic assistance is devoted to optimizing the management of scarce water resources. USAID helps improve the capacity of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, as well as local water utilities, such as Miyahuna, Aqaba Water Company, the Yarmouk Water Companies, the Water Authority of Jordan, and the Jordan Valley Authority.
- In the area of **decentralization**, Chemonics International is USAID's primary U.S. partner in implementing the Cities Implementing Transparent, Innovative, and Effective Solutions (CITIES) project, which aims to improve how Jordanian municipalities deliver core services.⁸⁴ USAID also uses ESF to fund infrastructure development in Jordanian municipalities in order to help create jobs for Syrian refugees and Jordanians.

⁸³ USAID also has provided grant assistance to the IEC to improve the transparency of elections administration.

⁸⁴ Chemonics International, Strengthening Municipal Governance in Jordan, at <https://chemonics.com/projects/strengthening-municipal-governance-jordan/>.

- In the **health** sector, USAID grants support the Jordanian Ministry of Health in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, in conjunction with implementing partners, such as Family Health International (FHI), Management Systems International (MSI), and Abt Associates, USAID provides funding to deliver improved reproductive, maternal, neonatal, and child health services.⁸⁵
- In the **education** sector, USAID has supported the Jordan Compact Education Fund, a multi-donor funding mechanism that has enabled 134,121 Syrian children to enroll in Jordanian schools.⁸⁶

U.S. Sovereign Loan Guarantees (or LGs) allow recipient governments (in this case, Jordan) to issue debt securities that are fully guaranteed by the United States government in capital markets,⁸⁷ effectively subsidizing the cost for governments of accessing financing. Since 2013, Congress has authorized⁸⁸ LGs for Jordan and appropriated \$413 million in ESF (the “subsidy cost”) to support three separate tranches, enabling Jordan to borrow a total of \$3.75 billion at concessional lending rates.⁸⁹

Humanitarian Assistance for Syrian Refugees in Jordan

The U.S. State Department estimates that, since large-scale U.S. aid to Syrian refugees began in FY2012, it has allocated nearly \$2 billion in humanitarian assistance from global accounts for programs in Jordan to meet the needs of Syrian refugees and, indirectly, to ease the burden on Jordan.⁹⁰ U.S. humanitarian assistance is provided both as cash assistance to refugees and through programs to meet their basic needs, such as child health care, education, water, and sanitation. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Jordan, the United States has provided \$8.4 million in aid, most of which is targeted toward Syrian refugees living in Jordan.⁹¹

Military Assistance

U.S.-Jordanian military cooperation is a key component in bilateral relations. U.S. military assistance is primarily directed toward enabling the Jordanian military to procure and maintain U.S.-origin conventional weapons systems. U.S. and Jordanian officials have conducted 42 meetings of the U.S.-Jordan Joint Military Commission (JMC) in which high-level officers from both countries engage in discussions on enhancing cooperation and future procurement. Annual

⁸⁵ USAID, Congressional Notification #59, FY2020—Country Narrative, December 3, 2020.

⁸⁶ U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Terrorism, 2019.

⁸⁷ “A Helping Hand,” *International Financial Law Review*, April 2014.

⁸⁸ Congress initially authorized additional economic assistance to Jordan in Section 7041 of P.L. 112-74, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012. P.L. 113-6, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013, specified that such assistance should take the form of a loan guarantee. Section 1706(j) of the same act also appropriated \$30 million (from FY2011) for the initial cost of sovereign loan guarantees. Congress reauthorized loan guarantees for Jordan in Section 7034 in each of the past eight consolidated appropriations acts (FY2015-FY2022).

⁸⁹ For the latest Loan Guarantee Agreement between the United States and Jordan, see Treaties and Other International Acts Series 15-624, Loan Guarantee Agreement between the United States of America and Jordan, Signed at Amman May 31, 2015.

⁹⁰ CRS Correspondence with USAID, April 2022.

⁹¹ USAID, State Department: Update: The United States Continues to Lead the Global Response to COVID-19, available at <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/coronavirus/fact-sheets/may-29-2020-update-united-states-continues-lead-global-response-covid-19>.

U.S. military aid represents at least 20% of Jordan's total military defense budget.⁹² According to the State Department, Jordan receives one of the largest allocations of International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding worldwide, and IMET graduates in Jordan include "King Abdullah II, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Vice Chairman, the Air Force commander, the Special Forces commander, and numerous other commanders."⁹³

Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and DOD Security Assistance

FMF overseen by the State Department is designed to support the Jordanian armed forces' multiyear (usually five-year) procurement plans, while DOD-administered security assistance supports ad hoc defense systems to respond to immediate threats and other contingencies. FMF may be used to purchase new equipment (e.g., precision-guided munitions, night vision) or to sustain previous acquisitions (e.g., Blackhawk helicopters, AT-802 fixed-wing aircraft). FMF grants have enabled the Royal Jordanian Air Force to procure munitions for its F-16 fighter aircraft and a fleet of 31 UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters.⁹⁴

Figure 8. U.S.-Supplied Black Hawk Helicopters for Jordan



Source: *Jane's Defence Weekly*.

In June 2022, the Royal Jordanian Air Force (RJAF) signed a Letter of Acceptance (LOA) with Lockheed Martin to acquire eight F-16 Block 70/72 aircraft. In February 2022, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) notified Congress of the potential sale of up to 12 F-16 Block 70 fighters to Jordan estimated at \$4.21 billion. It is unclear whether the Biden Administration has granted Jordan the ability to finance the purchase over multiple years, which may be necessary given the cost of the proposed sale.⁹⁵ According to *Jane's World Air Forces*, the RJAF fields 43 F-16A and 18 F-16B Fighting Falcons, and it is in the process of upgrading its

⁹² According to *Jane's*, Jordan's 2022 defense budget is \$2.17 billion. See *Jane's Defence Budgets*, Jordan, April 5, 2022.

⁹³ U.S. Department of State, U.S. Security Cooperation with Jordan, Fact Sheet, October 26, 2018.

⁹⁴ Gareth Jennings, "US Contracts Black Hawk for Jordan's Royal Squadron," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 21, 2020.

⁹⁵ Section 23 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. §276351) authorizes the President to finance the "procurement of defense articles, defense services, and design and construction services by friendly foreign countries and international organizations, on such terms and conditions as he may determine consistent with the requirements of this section."

fleet.⁹⁶ Last year, DSCA notified Congress of a potential Foreign Military Sale to Jordan of a \$60 million Lockheed Martin F-16 Air Combat Training Center.

As a result of the Syrian civil war and CJTF-OIR against the Islamic State, the United States has increased military aid to Jordan and channeled these increases through DOD-managed accounts (e.g., 333/1226/Coalition Support Funds). DOD assistance has helped finance the creation of the Jordan Border Security System, an integrated network of guard towers, surveillance cameras, and radar to guard the kingdom's borders with Syria and Iraq. According to CENTCOM correspondence with CRS, DOD funds support the maintenance and upgrades of UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, reimbursement to the Royal Jordanian Air Force for flight time patrols and fuel in support of CJTF-OIR, and reimbursement for U.S. equipment Jordan needs to comply with CJTF-OIR technological requirements, such as friendly fire pods on F-16 fighters.⁹⁷

In December 2021, the United States Air Force, under C-130 Ramp-to-Ramp (R2R) transfer program, donated three C-130 transport aircraft to the Royal Jordanian Air Force. According to the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan, "The transfer of the USAF C-130 aircraft boosts RJAF fixed wing tactical airlift capability by nearly 50% and saves RJAF approximately \$30 million in equipment renovation costs."⁹⁸

Excess Defense Articles

In 1996, the United States granted Jordan Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA) status, a designation that, among other things, makes Jordan eligible to receive excess U.S. defense articles, training, and loans of equipment for cooperative research and development.⁹⁹ In the past decade, the United States has provided \$83.3 million (current \$ value) in excess U.S. defense articles to Jordan, including three AH-1 Cobra Helicopters, 45 Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles (MRAPs), and M577A3 Tracked Command Post Carriers.¹⁰⁰

Congressional Action

FY2023 National Defense Authorization bills - In House and Senate drafts of the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 7900 and S. 4543), lawmakers would authorize \$50 million for the U.S. Air Force to construct petroleum storage units and new hangars at the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan. Section 1611 of S. 4543 would mandate U.S.-Jordanian cybersecurity cooperation, such as training in computer network defense, and requires the Defense Department to report to Congress on the implementation of cooperation.

FY2023 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) bills – H.R. 8282, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2023 would provide Jordan "not less than" \$1.65 billion in total aid, of which "not less than" \$1.035 billion is for ESF, "including for budget support, incentive funds, and programs administered by USAID" that are "consistent with the applicable bilateral agreement between the Government of the United States and the Government of Jordan for fiscal year 2023." The bill also would provide an additional \$200 million in ESF made available "pursuant to the

⁹⁶ Gareth Jennings, "Jordan signs LOA for F-16 Block 70s," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, June 17, 2022.

⁹⁷ CRS Correspondence with CENTCOM officials, August 24, 2022.

⁹⁸ U.S. Department of State, U.S. Embassy in Jordan, United States Air Force Transfers Three C-130 Aircraft to Royal Jordanian Air Force, December 9, 2021.

⁹⁹ See Designation of Jordan As Major Non-NATO Ally, Determination of President of the United States, No. 97-4, November 12, 1996, 61 F.R. 59809.

¹⁰⁰ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, EDA DataBase Tool, accessed April 2022.

commitments made under such bilateral agreement.” The bill also would commit “not less than” \$400 million in FMF. S. 4662, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2023 would provide Jordan \$1.457 billion in total aid. The bill would set aside \$75 million in appropriated ESF and make it available through FY2026 for “assistance if negotiated benchmarks towards reforms are met.” In report language accompanying the Senate-introduced bill, appropriators expressed concern with “corruption and abuses within Jordan’s judicial system, including arbitrary and incommunicado detention, mistreatment of detainees by law enforcement personnel, and irregularities by prosecutorial authorities, and urges the Government of Jordan to prioritize law enforcement and judicial reforms.”

FY2023 Defense Appropriations - H.R. 8236, the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2023, would set a floor of “not less than” \$150 million for Jordan for border security. The bill also sets a ceiling of “up to” \$500 million in the same defense account to support the armed forces of Jordan and to enhance security along its borders. The Senate companion bill, S. 4663, names Jordan as eligible for defense appropriations, but does not provide either a specific amount or a minimum/maximum threshold.

Table 2. U.S. Foreign Aid Obligations to Jordan: 1946-2020
(in millions of current dollars)

Total Economic Assistance	Total Military Assistance	Total
\$17,201.700	\$9,252.900	\$26,454.600

Source: USAID Overseas Loans and Grants, July 1, 1945-September 30, 2020.

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