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# Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations

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## Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations

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 conflict and instability in the West Bank/Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and security concerns in Iraq and the Gulf states magnify 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 and advocates for continued robust U.S. assistance to the kingdom. Jordan also hosts over 3,000 U.S. troops.

The ongoing Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and conflicts in southern Lebanon/northern Israel and the Red Sea are profoundly affecting the kingdom in myriad ways. The Jordanian government has expressed concern that fighting between Israel, Iran, and Iran-supported groups could spill over into Jordan. Already, three American soldiers have been killed inside Jordan by an Iran-supported Iraqi group, and a direct Iranian missile and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attack against Israel traversed Jordanian airspace. Overall, ongoing Israeli military operations in Gaza and the West Bank resulting in Palestinian civilian casualties also are of concern to the Jordanian government in part because a significant percentage of Jordan's population is of Palestinian descent.

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 FY2025 budget request includes \$1.45 billion for Jordan. On September 16, 2022, the United States and Jordan signed their fourth Memorandum of Understanding 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 Congress, several pieces of legislation would continue and/or increase U.S. support for Jordan. H.R. 8771, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2025, would provide "not less than" \$1.65 billion in aid to Jordan (the same amount provided in FY2024), plus an additional \$400 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF), all of which would be made available for budget support, and another \$50 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF). Thus, the House would appropriate \$2.1 billion in total U.S. assistance to Jordan, a record amount of annual funding. In the Senate, S. 4563 seeks to improve defense cooperation between the United States and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, particularly in countering UAVs. Beyond assistance from the State and Foreign Operations appropriations accounts, H.R. 8774, the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2025, allows "up to \$500 million" of the funds appropriated under "Operation and Maintenance, Defense-Wide" for the Defense Security Cooperation Agency to be used to support the armed forces of Jordan.

## Contents

Overview .....	1
Current Issues for Congress.....	3
Jordan and the War in Gaza.....	3
Iran Attacks Israel and Jordan’s Role .....	6
Syria .....	7
Syrian Refugees in Jordan .....	8
Country Background .....	9
The Hashemite Royal Family.....	10
Political System and Key Institutions .....	10
Political Reform and Human Rights .....	11
U.S. Relations.....	12
Overview .....	12
U.S.-Jordanian Security Cooperation.....	13
The Case of Ahlam al Tamimi.....	14
U.S. Foreign Assistance to Jordan .....	15
U.S.-Jordanian Agreement on Foreign Assistance .....	15
Economic Assistance.....	17
Military Assistance.....	18
Foreign Military Financing and DOD Security Assistance.....	18
Excess Defense Articles.....	19

## Contacts

Author Information.....	20
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## Overview

As of June 2024, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (hereinafter referred to as “Jordan”), ruled since 1999 by King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein (herein referred to as King Abdullah II), appears stable and, according to U.S. policymakers, remains a vital U.S. security partner in the Middle East. However, the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and conflicts in southern Lebanon/northern Israel and the Red Sea are profoundly affecting the kingdom in myriad ways. As discussed below, the Jordanian government has expressed concern that fighting between Israel, Iran, and Iran-supported groups could spill over into Jordan. In 2024, three American soldiers were killed inside Jordan by an Iran-supported group inside Iraq, and a direct Iranian attack against Israel traversed Jordanian airspace. Overall, ongoing Israeli military operations in Gaza and the West Bank resulting in Palestinian civilian casualties also are of concern to the Jordanian government, in part because a significant percentage of Jordan’s population is of Palestinian descent.

**Figure 1. Jordan at a Glance**



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

**Population:** 11,174,024 (2024); Amman (capital): 2.23 million (2024).

**Refugees (Country of Origin):** 2.4 million (Palestinian refugees) (2020); 12,866 (Yemen), 6,013 Sudan (2021); 33,951 (Iraq) (2022); 638,760 (Syria) (2024).

**Religion:** Sunni Muslim 97.1%, Christian 2.1% (majority Greek Orthodox, but some Greek and Roman Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Protestant denominations), Buddhist 0.4%, Other 0.3%.

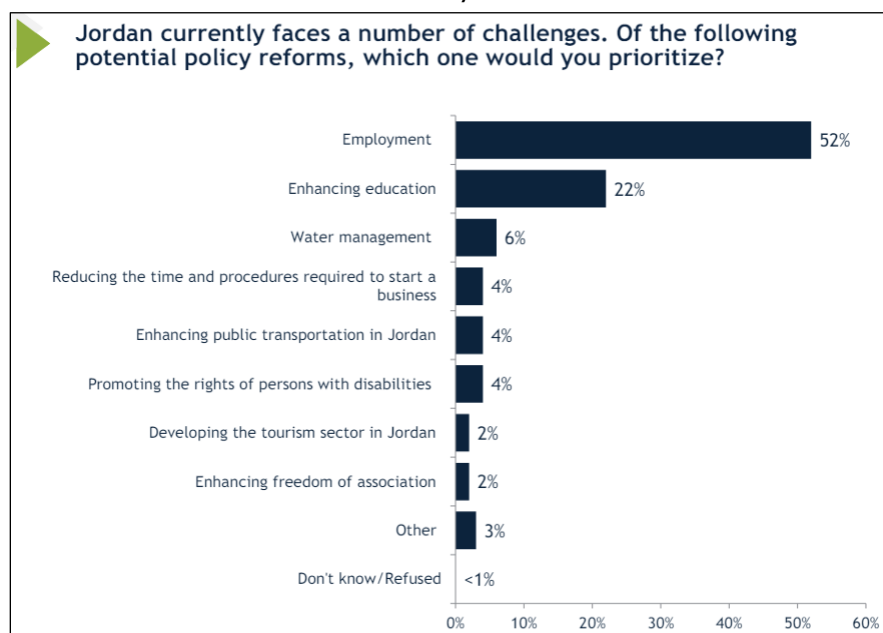
**Youth Unemployment (ages 15-24):** 40.5% (2021).

**Source:** Map created by CRS. Figures from *CIA World Factbook*.

Demographically, 60% of Jordan's population is below the age of 30, and Jordanians who were surveyed cited Jordan's chronically high unemployment as a top reform priority (see **Figure 2**). With the private sector unable to provide enough attractive jobs to young workers, the government has sought to support those workers who do not emigrate to Gulf states or elsewhere. The national budget runs perennial deficits in part due to an oversized public workforce and subsidization program. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been working with Jordan to reduce deficit spending; 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.

**Figure 2. Jordanian Public Concerns over Employment and Education**

February 2024



**Source:** International Republican Institute (IRI), State of the State – Nationwide Survey of Jordan | Wave 4 | Feb 2024

In order to buttress Jordan both from regional instability and economic stagnation, Jordanian leaders often turn to both the United States and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)<sup>1</sup> for political and financial backing. The United States has provided annual foreign assistance to Jordan totaling over \$1.6 billion, and the GCC states, in addition providing Jordan with aid, are a destination for Jordanian expatriate labor. According to official government statistics, an estimated 800,000 Jordanian expatriates remitted \$3.5 billion in 2023; a third of these workers live in Saudi Arabia, followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the United States, Kuwait, and Qatar.<sup>2</sup>

In Congress, there are several pieces of draft legislation through which lawmakers may continue or increase ongoing U.S. support for Jordan, including:

- In report language accompanying H.R. 8070, the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025

<sup>1</sup> GCC members are Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

<sup>2</sup> "Jordanian expatriates' remittances reach \$3.5 billion in 2023," Jordan News Agency (Petra), January 30, 2024.

- (passed the House), House Armed Service Committee members direct the U.S. Department of Defense to brief lawmakers on “any current and future plans to utilize existing authorities, including Section 333 under Title 10, to increase air defense for counter unmanned aerial systems in Jordan to protect United States and partner interests.”
- Also in report language accompanying H.R. 8070, members recognize “the importance of the Jordanian Air Force’s proposal to acquire Block 52 F-16 fighter aircraft.”
  - In H.R. 8771, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2025, House appropriators specify “not less than” \$1.65 billion in aid to Jordan (the same amount provided in FY2024), plus an additional \$400 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF), all of which would be made available for budget support, and another \$50 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF). Thus, the House would appropriate \$2.1 billion in total U.S. assistance to Jordan, a record amount of annual funding to the country.
  - H.R. 8774, the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2025, allows “up to \$500 million” of the funds appropriated under “Operation and Maintenance, Defense-Wide” for the Defense Security Cooperation Agency may be used to support the armed forces of Jordan.

## Current Issues for Congress

### Jordan and the War in Gaza

Since October 7, 2023, Israel and Hamas have been at war in what has become the deadliest conflict between them. The conflict is a conundrum for King Abdullah II and other leading Jordanian officials. On the one hand, Jordan seeks to maintain its 1994 peace treaty with Israel, security cooperation with the United States, and its longstanding policy of support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On the other hand, Jordan’s population, a significant percentage of which is of Palestinian descent, strongly opposes Israel’s military operations in Gaza, U.S. military support for Israel, and the current Israeli government’s rejection of diplomatic options for Palestinian statehood.<sup>3</sup> Hamas once operated officially in Jordan, and some Jordanians may support the group politically and/or materially. Historically, the activities and presence in Jordan of Palestinian armed groups and political movements have posed security and political challenges for the Jordanian monarchy.

In November 2023, Jordan recalled its ambassador from Israel (the fourth recall since 1994) in protest of Palestinian civilian casualties. Also that month, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi announced that Jordan had refused to ratify the final details of an energy and water deal involving Israel and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>4</sup>

To date, the Jordanian Interior Ministry has permitted the holding of peaceful protests in the capital Amman (outside the Grand Hussein Mosque after prayer on Fridays) opposing Israeli military operations, the 1994 peace treaty, and Jordan-Israeli trade and cooperation.<sup>5</sup> When

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<sup>3</sup> Aaron Magid, “Jordan was already walking a tightrope. Then the Gaza war happened,” MENASource, The Atlantic Council, April 3, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> “Jordan says it won’t sign energy for water deal with Israel,” Reuters, November 16, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> “Thousands rally in Amman for Gaza ceasefire,” *Arab News*, November 4, 2023.

protests occur near the Israeli Embassy<sup>6</sup> in Amman (near the Al Kalouty Mosque in Amman), the General Directorate of Gendarmerie has stationed police units nearby. At times, Jordanian riot police have dispersed and arrested protestors, sometimes using tear gas,<sup>7</sup> as the government seeks to prevent Jordanians from storming the Israeli Embassy compound.<sup>8</sup>

In order to aid Palestinian civilians in Gaza, the Jordanian government has pursued multiple lines of effort, including:

- **Opening a Field Hospital in Gaza:** In November 2023, the Jordanian Armed Forces, which has maintained a field hospital in northern Gaza since 2009, opened a second facility in Khan Younis.
- **Conducting Air Drops of Humanitarian Aid:** Since November 2023, the Royal Jordanian Air Force, with Israeli permission and other international support, has been conducting air drops of humanitarian aid affixed with GPS-guided parachutes into Gaza. To date, there have been 358 airdrops of aid into Gaza.<sup>9</sup>
- **Shipping Aid to Gaza via the “Jordan Corridor”:** In order to bring more humanitarian aid into Gaza, Jordanian authorities have enabled humanitarian organizations, such as the World Food Program, to ship aid overland from Amman to Aqaba before crossing into Nuweiba, Egypt, where aid shipments are then airlifted to Al Arish, Egypt before eventually being brought into Gaza through Israel’s Kerem Shalom crossing or Erez West crossing.<sup>10</sup> Some convoys departing from Jordan and traversing the West Bank have been attacked by Israeli settler groups opposed to aiding civilians in Gaza.<sup>11</sup> In June 2024, pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 14115, the Biden Administration designated *Tzav 9*, a violent extremist Israeli group, for blocking humanitarian convoys along their route from Jordan to Gaza.<sup>12</sup>
- **Opposing Efforts to Isolate UNRWA:** Jordanian officials also have called on select foreign governments to continue support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).<sup>13</sup> According to UNRWA, more than 2 million registered Palestine refugees (comprising original refugees and their descendants) live in Jordan, the largest number of Palestine refugees of all UNRWA field sites, with 18% of all registered Palestine refugees living in the ten recognized camps inside Jordan.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Israel’s Ambassador to Jordan Amir Weissbrod departed Jordan for Israel for security reasons soon after the October 7, 2023 attacks. Since then, he has not returned.

<sup>7</sup> Amnesty International, “Jordan: Stop cracking down on pro-Gaza protests and release those charged for exercising their freedoms of assembly and expression,” April 11, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> “Jordanian anti-riot police use batons to push back protesters near Israeli embassy,” Reuters, March 26, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> “Jordanian army carries out over 100 airdrops of aid into Gaza alone, 257 in cooperation with other countries — JAF,” *Jordan Times*, June 11, 2024.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Gaza Humanitarian Response Update (20-26 May 2024), May 27, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Beatrice Farhat, “Israeli settlers attack aid convoy of 98 trucks heading to Gaza from Jordan,” *Al Monitor*, May 13, 2024.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Sanctioning Israeli Group for Disrupting and Destroying Humanitarian Aid to Civilians,” June 14, 2024.

<sup>13</sup> “Lower House’s Palestine Committee visits UNRWA,” *Jordan Times*, February 7, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> UNRWA, “Where We Work,” available at <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>; see also <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/refugees> and CRS Report RL34074, *The Palestinians: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Jim Zanotti.



- **Holding a Pledging Conference:** In June 2024, Jordan hosted the “Call for Action: Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza” conference. At the conference, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that the United States would provide another \$404 million for Palestinians.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps in part in response to public opinion, select Jordanian officials, including members of the royal family, have been publicly critical of Israel’s conduct of the war, the Israeli coalition government itself, and U.S. support for Israel. In a May 2024 interview on CBS’s *Face the Nation*, Queen Rania remarked that “People view the U.S. as being a party to this war.... Because, you know, Israeli officials say that without U.S. support, they couldn’t launch this war.”<sup>16</sup> Several weeks later, Crown Prince Hussein remarked in an interview that “We are dealing with a government [Israel] controlled by an extremist agenda, with ministers who openly call for the annihilation of the Palestinians.”<sup>17</sup>

While Israeli-Jordanian relations are strained, the Jordanian government has resisted domestic calls to rescind its 1994 peace treaty with Israel. Jordan and Israel renewed their longstanding water-sharing agreement in May 2024.

The Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and its broader regional spillover has affected Jordan in other ways. Economically, the war in Gaza and continued Houthi attacks against Red Sea shipping have decreased consumer confidence and stifled investment to some degree.<sup>18</sup> Foreign tourism, on which Jordan relies heavily to generate foreign exchange, declined initially in fall 2023, but rebounded over winter 2024.<sup>19</sup> The war also has heightened anti-American sentiment in the kingdom, as evidenced by a social media-driven campaign to boycott American companies that has gained some traction.<sup>20</sup>

As the conflict in Gaza continues, King Abdullah II may continue to balance efforts to address pro-Palestinian public sentiment in Jordan alongside the kingdom’s ongoing security cooperation with Israel, especially regarding the West Bank. Jordan may be more invested in the West Bank’s stability than in Gaza’s because of the direct border and close people-to-people ties between Jordan and the West Bank. Gaza has traditionally been more in Egypt’s sphere of influence, as Egypt directly borders Gaza and occupied it from 1948-1967. The Jordanian government has had a troubled history with Hamas.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the longer the conflict persists in Gaza, the harder it may become for the palace to stem popular anti-Israel, anti-U.S. sentiment. Jordan is expected to hold a parliamentary election in September 2024; it is unclear whether the elections will be

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Antony J. Blinken At the ‘Call for Action: Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza’ Conference,” June 11, 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Kaia Hubbard, “Queen Rania of Jordan says U.S. is seen as ‘enabler’ of Israel,” *Face the Nation* (CBS News), May 5, 2024.

<sup>17</sup> “Prince Hussein says Jordan in ‘diplomatic battle’ with Israel, questions benefits of normalisation,” *The New Arab*, May 27, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Patricia Cohen, “War Has Already Damaged the Economies of Israel’s Neighbors,” *New York Times*, January 24, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> “Tourism inflows remain surprisingly resilient in Jordan,” *Economist Intelligence Unit*, May 10, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Saud Al-Sharafat, “What Does the War in Gaza Mean for Jordan’s National Security?” Fikra Forum, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, December 22, 2023, “Boycott campaigns over Gaza war hit Western brands in some Arab countries,” Reuters, November 23, 2023.

<sup>21</sup> In 1999, King Abdullah II exiled Hamas’ political leadership from Jordan to Qatar two years after a failed Israeli assassination attempt against then-Hamas politburo leader Khaled Meshaal elevated Meshaal’s status in the eyes of many Palestinians and Jordanians. See, William A. Orme Jr., “Jordan Frees Four Jailed Hamas Leaders and Expels Them,” *New York Times*, November 22, 1999.



held as scheduled and whether Islamist parties (such as the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood) will be permitted to run.

As of June 2024, Jordan's position on any post-war plans for Gaza is unclear. It would appear that the kingdom, in concert with other Arab countries, strongly prefers clarification on a broad political settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before it might commit resources to stabilizing either Gaza or the West Bank.<sup>22</sup> In the past, Jordan has trained Palestinian Authority security forces at the Jordanian International Police Training Center (JIPTC).<sup>23</sup> Jordan, along with Egypt, has been adamant in opposing Israeli annexation of West Bank areas or the resettlement of displaced Palestinians from Gaza in the two countries.<sup>24</sup> Ongoing violence in the West Bank involving Israeli settlers and security forces, as well as Palestinian militants, presents further challenges for Jordan.

## **Iran Attacks Israel and Jordan's Role**

Both before and after the October 7 Hamas attacks against Israel, Jordan has confronted the destabilizing role of Iran and Iran-supported groups on its border and inside the kingdom. After Iran-supported groups, in apparent solidarity with Hamas, began attacking U.S. forces stationed in the Middle East, Jordan had initially avoided being a theater of retaliation (with the exception of drone shrapnel launched by Iran-backed armed groups landing on Jordanian territory). However, the January 2024 attack against U.S. troops stationed at Tower 22 in Jordan, which resulted in three U.S. deaths and more than 40 injuries, signaled a willingness by Iran-supported militias to target U.S. interests in the kingdom.

On April 13, 2024, Iran initiated the first-ever direct military action against Israel from Iranian territory in the form of aerial attacks (drones and ballistic and cruise missiles).<sup>25</sup> In total, Iran and allied groups reportedly launched approximately 350 drones and missiles from Iran, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen toward Israel. Once Iranian projectiles were airborne, Israel, along with the United States, Jordan, France, and the United Kingdom, reportedly intercepted most of them, using an array of combat aircraft and missile defense systems. The Israel Defense Forces said that nearly all the estimated 350 drones and missiles fired were downed outside Israeli airspace by Israel and its partners or were intercepted by Israel's Arrow missile defense system.

For its part, the Royal Jordanian Air Force used combat fighter aircraft to intercept dozens of Iranian drones that entered Jordanian airspace.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the United States reportedly coordinated the deployment of both Jordanian and Israeli fighters over Jordanian air space to intercept Iranian projectiles heading toward Israel.<sup>27</sup> Several days after the attacks, King Abdullah II reportedly told President Biden that Jordanian intervention was taken to protect the kingdom's

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<sup>22</sup> Missy Ryan, "Arab states reticent as U.S. pushes postwar plan for Gaza," *Washington Post*, April 29, 2024.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Palestinian Authority: U.S. Assistance Is Training and Equipping Security Forces, but the Program Needs to Measure Progress and Faces Logistical Constraints," GAO report number GAO-10-505, May 12, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Eyad Kourdi, "Jordanian king warns against forced migration of Palestinians to Jordan and Egypt," CNN, October 17, 2023; "Jordan fears 'the worst is coming' in Gaza war," Reuters, October 19, 2023.

<sup>25</sup> For more background, see CRS Insight IN12347, *Escalation of the Israel-Iran Conflict*, by Clayton Thomas, Jim Zanotti, and Jeremy M. Sharp, April 22, 2024.

<sup>26</sup> "Jordan airforce shoots down Iranian drones flying over to Israel," Reuters, April 13, 2024.

<sup>27</sup> "Jordan let Israeli jets use its airspace during Iran attack — report," *Times of Israel*, April 15, 2024.

citizenry and that he will not allow Jordan to be a “theater of war” for any side of the Israel-Iran conflict.<sup>28</sup>

### Jordanian Concern over Iran and Iran-Supported Militias

Prior to the October 7 attacks, some reports had already identified Jordan as a source and pathway for Iranian arms smuggling into the West Bank,<sup>29</sup> including via drones from Syria.<sup>30</sup> In May 2023, Israel arrested Imad al Adwan, an elected member of Jordan's parliament, at the Allenby border crossing on suspicion of arms smuggling.<sup>31</sup> According to reports, Jordanian officials are concerned that Iran and Iran-supported groups are attempting to recruit junior members of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, as part of a broader attempt at expanding Iran's axis of resistance to Israel.<sup>32</sup> One senior Iraqi commander of the Iran-supported Kata'ib Hizballah, a U.S.-designated FTO, has claimed that his organization is working to establish a Jordanian militia subordinate to his organization and to Iran.<sup>33</sup> In response to these recent perceived provocations, Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said, “We don't want conflict with Iran. We don't want conflict in the whole region. But in order for good relations with Iran to develop, we have to address all causes of tension with Iran, which include some intervention and some threats to our national security, including through or by militias affiliated with Iran that are trying to flood Jordan with drugs and weapons.”<sup>34</sup> The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood has denied any official collaboration with Iran, stressing the group's nationalist credentials and that it seeks to preserve “Jordan's security and stability.”<sup>35</sup> In June 2024, Jordanian security forces discovered several caches of explosives hidden by suspects tied to an “Iran-linked plot to destabilize a key U.S. ally [Jordan].”<sup>36</sup>

## Syria

Along with the war in Gaza, another major security concern for Jordan is its 225-mile border with Syria, where Asad regime-supported criminal networks smuggle synthetic drugs into Jordan, and Iranian-backed militias, such as Hezbollah, attempt to gain influence. For the past several years, Syria-based synthetic drug smugglers have routinely attempted to penetrate Jordan's borders and traffic Captagon pills. Captagon (the drug compound fenethylline hydrochloride) is a cheap amphetamine-type stimulant used across the Middle East. Despite several years of Jordanian-Syria diplomatic engagement and the normalization of relations, Syrian smuggling efforts into and across Jordan have increased, leading Jordan to retaliate with armed force. The Royal Jordanian Air Force has carried out several air strikes against both smugglers and facilities containing illicit narcotics inside Syria (**Figure 3**).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>28</sup> “King Abdullah: Jordan will not be battleground in Israel-Iran confrontation,” *Voice of America*, April 17, 2024.

<sup>29</sup> Farnaz Fassihi, Ronen Bergman and Eric Schmitt, “Iran Smuggles Arms to West Bank, Officials Say, to Foment Unrest with Israel,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2024.

<sup>30</sup> Sune Engel Rasmussen and Benoit Faucon, “Weapons Flood Israel's West Bank, Fueling Fears of New War Front,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 25, 2023.

<sup>31</sup> “Jordanian lawmaker charged for trying to smuggle over 200 guns into West Bank,” *Times of Israel*, May 17, 2023.

<sup>32</sup> “Jordan foils arms plot as kingdom caught in Iran-Israel shadow war,” Reuters, May 15, 2024.

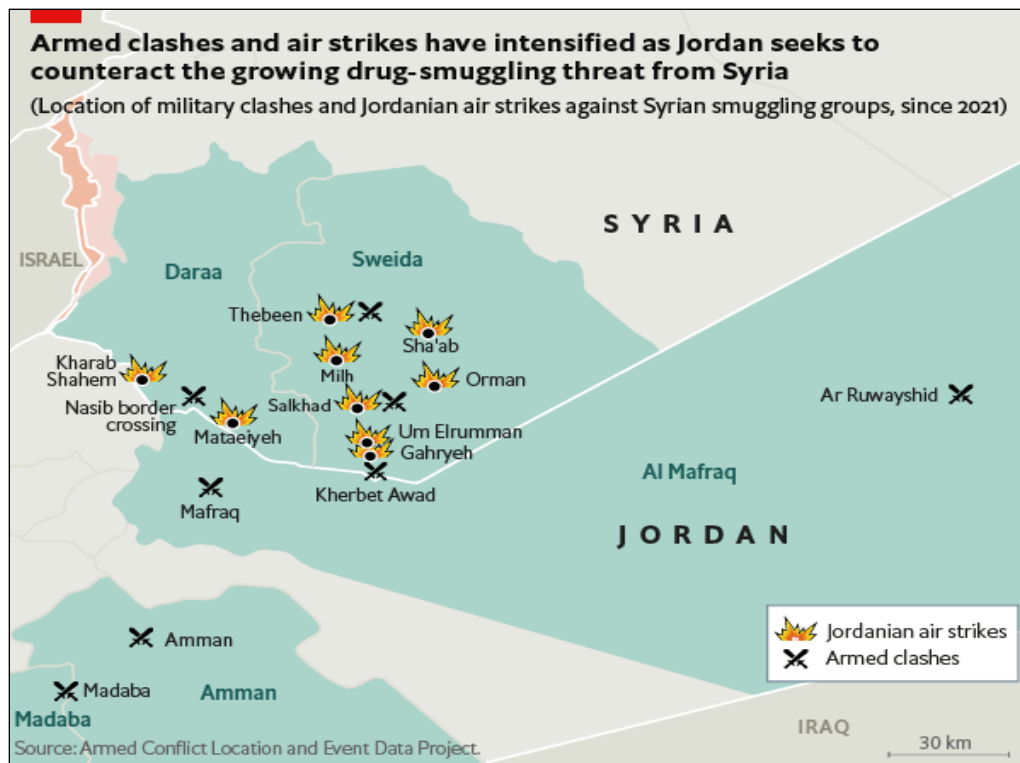
<sup>33</sup> “Elements in the Iran-Led Resistance Axis: ‘Jordan Is A New Resistance Front,’” *The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI)*, April 5, 2024.

<sup>34</sup> “Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi Interviewed on CNN,” CNN, April 15, 2024.

<sup>35</sup> “Jordan Muslim Brotherhood denies reports Iran is sending it weapons,” *Middle East Monitor*, May 16, 2024.

<sup>36</sup> “Jordan police say they detonated explosives hidden in a warehouse in capital,” Reuters, June 24, 2024.

<sup>37</sup> Abdullah Hayek and Ahmad Sharawi, “Jordan's Escalating Border Threats Amid Regional Upheaval,” PolicyWatch 3829, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 9, 2024.

**Figure 3. Fighting along the Jordanian-Syria Border: 2021-2024**

**Source:** Economist Intelligence Unit using data from Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, January 2024.

### Syrian Refugees in Jordan

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. As of May 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there were 631,656 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan. Since 2011, the influx of Syrian refugees has placed 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 summer 2023, the World Food Program reduced monthly cash food assistance by a third for all 119,000 Syrian refugees in Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps in Jordan due to a shortage in overall global funding for humanitarian operations. In response, King Abdullah II said before the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2023 that "Jordan will not have the ability nor the resources to host and care for more [refugees]."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> United Nations General Assembly, His Majesty Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, September 19, 2023.

## 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.<sup>39</sup> 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 Arab-Israeli War.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> According to Marwan Muasher, a former Jordanian foreign minister and current vice president at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace:

Although the Jordanian constitution affirms that all citizens are equal before the law, the Jordanian establishment—the so-called East Jordanians, or the population in Jordan before 1948—never fully accepted that new order. The unwritten position is that Jordanians of Palestinian origin have to fully absorb the Jordanian identity, as defined by the East Jordanians pre-1948, no matter what the numbers of both communities are, out of fear that East Jordanian identity was in danger. This tension over identity remains unresolved.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> For historical background, see Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, *Country Profile: Jordan*, September 2006.

<sup>40</sup> 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](http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/88_july31.html).

<sup>41</sup> 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.

<sup>42</sup> Marwan Muasher, “Jordan’s Redline on Admitting Palestinians Is Unlikely to Change,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 21, 2023.

## The Hashemite Royal Family

Jordan is a hereditary constitutional monarchy under the Hashemite family, which claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad and once ruled the Hejaz and Muslim holy cities that are now in western Saudi Arabia. King Abdullah II (age 62) 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.

**Figure 4. King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein**



**Source:** Alexandros Michailidis / Shutterstock.com.

The king's son, Prince Hussein bin Abdullah (born in 1994), is the designated crown prince.<sup>43</sup> On June 1, 2023, Crown Prince Hussein married Rajwa al Saif, an architect, Saudi citizen, and second cousin to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Their marriage engendered speculation as to whether this union would foster closer Jordanian-Saudi ties.<sup>44</sup> As previously mentioned, Jordan is dependent on Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies for direct aid, soft loans, and work permits for Jordanian citizens seeking opportunities abroad.

## Political System and Key Institutions

The Jordanian constitution, most recently amended in 2022, gives the king broad executive powers.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> The king can circumvent parliament through a constitutional mechanism that allows the cabinet to issue provisional legislation when parliament is not sitting or has been dissolved.<sup>47</sup> 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

<sup>43</sup> 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 29, is a graduate of Georgetown University and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (UK). He holds the rank of second lieutenant in the Jordanian Armed Forces.

<sup>44</sup> "A wishful wedding: Can Jordan fall in love with Saudi Arabia?" *The Economist*, May 25, 2023.

<sup>45</sup> In the last thirteen years, Jordan's constitution has been amended three times (2011, 2016, and 2022).

<sup>46</sup> 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 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." See Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Constitutional Court, "Jordanian Constitution," available at <https://cco.gov.jo/en-us/Jordanian-Constitutional>.

<sup>47</sup> Amendments to Article 94 in 2011 put some restrictions on when the executive is allowed to issue temporary laws.

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.<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup> In addition, voter turnout tends to be much higher in pro-government areas, since many East Bank Jordanians depend on familial and tribal connections as a means to access patronage jobs.<sup>50</sup> The next parliamentary election is scheduled for September 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."<sup>51</sup> Religious courts for both Muslims and Christians adjudicate matters of personal status, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance.<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup> During periods of domestic unrest, Jordanian leaders have taken limited steps to liberalize the political system without fundamentally altering the monarchical power structure. In times of crisis, the government also often appeals for Jordanian unity,<sup>54</sup> while calling the opposition divisive or even disloyal.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Kristen Kao, "How Jordan's Election Revealed Enduring Weaknesses in Its Political System," *Washington Post*, October 3, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Rachel Bessette, "Jordan's Parliamentary Elections: Why They Do (and Don't) Matter for the Kingdom's Future," *Lawfare*, September 29, 2016.

<sup>50</sup> 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.

<sup>51</sup> 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/>.

<sup>52</sup> U.S. Department of State, *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Jordan*.

<sup>53</sup> See Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, "Making Our Democratic System Work for All Jordanians," royal discussion paper, January 16, 2013; Curtis R. Ryan, "The King's Speech," *Foreign Policy*, June 17, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> 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 nationwide 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.

<sup>55</sup> "Jordan's solid national unity is what makes it special—King," *Jordan Times*, September 16, 2015.



### Gender Issues in Jordan

Jordan has consistently ranked in the bottom quintile of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap index (126 of 146 countries in 2023, though above most countries in the Middle East and North Africa 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.<sup>56</sup> Despite having one of the highest rates of female literacy in the Middle East, Jordan's female labor force participation rate is considered low (14% as of 2023).<sup>57</sup> The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) allocates U.S. bilateral economic assistance to support programs that, among other things, enhance women's economic and political engagement in public life, remove structural and cultural barriers to women's rights and empowerment, protect victims of gender-based violence, and improve women's access to in the private sector.

Unlike in neighboring Egypt, the kingdom tolerates Muslim Brotherhood political activity, and Brotherhood candidates sometimes compete in parliamentary elections, though 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.<sup>58</sup>

## U.S. Relations

### Overview

U.S. officials frequently express their support for Jordan, citing its role in promoting Middle East peace, combatting terrorism, and serving as a refuge to displaced people. U.S. officials also support, both rhetorically and programmatically, Jordanian government reform plans. During a June 2024 visit to Jordan, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed "continued unwavering U.S. support for Jordan and the Jordanian people and commended the King's commitment to economic modernization and vital public sector reforms."<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Rana F. Sweis, "Women, 86 Percent Absent from Jordan's Work Force, Are Left Behind," *New York Times*, April 3, 2021.

<sup>57</sup> Data retrieved from World Bank Gender Data Portal, Jordan. Holly Welborn Benner and Anders Pedersen, "Want Jordan to prosper? Engage women!" *World Bank Blog*, December 22, 2021.

<sup>58</sup> Suha Ma'ayeh and Rana F. Sweis, *Jordan's 2020 Parliamentary Election: Settling for the Status Quo*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, February 2021.

<sup>59</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Secretary Blinken's Meeting with Jordanian King Abdullah II," June 11, 2024.



Nevertheless, while government-to-government ties remain strong, the ongoing war in Gaza may be diminishing U.S. standing amongst the Jordanian populace. In 2022, 41% of Jordanians surveyed expressed a favorable or somewhat favorable view of the United States.<sup>60</sup> One January 2024 poll by the Arab Center revealed that 76% of respondents in the region, including Jordanians, had shifted their attitudes toward U.S. policy in the Arab region in a more negative direction since Israel began military operations in Gaza.<sup>61</sup> Throughout the kingdom, Jordanians are actively boycotting American retail products and businesses.<sup>62</sup> An estimated 56% of the Jordanian population uses social media,<sup>63</sup> and throughout the Middle East, users have been using platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, to circulate war-time images and videos, reflecting and arguably amplifying public outrage.<sup>64</sup> Jordan's 2023 cybercrimes law punishes (imprisonment and fines) any person who disseminates information via a social media platform that, among other things, promotes sectarian strife or distributes hate speech.<sup>65</sup>

**Figure 5. President Biden and King Abdullah II at the White House**

May 2024



**Source:** The Embassy of Jordan in Washington

## U.S.-Jordanian Security Cooperation

U.S.-Jordanian security cooperation is the heart of the bilateral relationship. 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).<sup>66</sup> The 2021 DCA formalizes years of U.S.-Jordanian military cooperation, which became more visible at the start of Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) against the Islamic State (IS, also known as ISIL/ISIS) in 2014. In May 2024, the United States and Jordan participated in the 11<sup>th</sup> iteration of Eager Lion, the largest multinational military exercise hosted by Jordan.

As of June 2024, there are approximately 3,813 United States military personnel deployed to Jordan to “support Defeat-ISIS operations, to enhance Jordan’s security, and to promote regional stability.”<sup>67</sup> Though the 2021 DCA governs U.S.-Jordanian military cooperation, the presence of

<sup>60</sup> Arab Barometer, Wave VII Jordan, August 2022.

<sup>61</sup> “Arab Public Opinion about Israel’s War on Gaza,” Arab Center Washington DC, February 8, 2024.

<sup>62</sup> “In Jordan, American companies see boycotts sparked by the U.S.’s support for Israel,” National Public Radio, March 13, 2024.

<sup>63</sup> Datareportal.com, “Digital 2024: Jordan,” February 23, 2024.

<sup>64</sup> Stefanie Hausheer Ali, “Five impacts of the Gaza war to watch,” *MENASource* (blog), The Atlantic Council, June 3, 2024.

<sup>65</sup> George Sadek, “Jordan: New Anti-cybercrimes Law Enacted,” The Law Library, Library of Congress, September 28, 2023.

<sup>66</sup> U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Security Cooperation with Jordan,” fact sheet, May 21, 2021.

<sup>67</sup> White House, “Letter to the Speaker of the House and President pro tempore of the Senate regarding the War Powers Report,” press release, June 7, 2024.

armed U.S. military personnel in the kingdom remains a sensitive domestic issue in Jordanian politics.<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup>

According to one media report, the 332<sup>nd</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing, which is officially located in “Southwest Asia” may be based in Jordan,<sup>70</sup> where it operates in support of CJTF-OIR against the Islamic State.<sup>71</sup> The wing operates combat aircraft, such as the F-15E and F-16C, transport and refueling aircraft, such as the HC-130P and KC-135R, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) unmanned craft, such as the MQ-9.<sup>72</sup>

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.<sup>73</sup> While the United States never officially acknowledged its presence at Muwaffaq Salti Air Base prior to the 2021 agreement, according to one media report, “satellite imagery shows it has hosted US Air Force (USAF) unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and fast jets since at least 2016.”<sup>74</sup>

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 U.S. facility in Qatar would be moved to Jordan.<sup>75</sup>

## The Case of Ahlam al Tamimi

Ahlam al Tamimi is a Jordanian national who was an accomplice 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

<sup>68</sup> Saud al Sharafat, “Critics react to US-Jordan defense agreement,” *Al Monitor*, April 1, 2021.

<sup>69</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Agreement between the United States of America and Jordan with Exchange of Notes, Treaties and Other International Acts Series 21-317*, signed at Amman January 31, 2021, entered into force March 17, 2021.

<sup>70</sup> J. P. Lawrence, “Pentagon awards latest contract in \$265 million project to expand remote air base in Jordan,” *Stars and Stripes*, May 13, 2022.

<sup>71</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Air Force Central, “332<sup>nd</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing Fact Sheet.”

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> 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.

<sup>74</sup> Jeremy Binnie, “US Carrying out Major Upgrade to Jordanian Airbase,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, December 1, 2021.

<sup>75</sup> 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.

Federal Bureau of Investigation's Most Wanted Terrorist List.<sup>76</sup> The United States and Jordan have an extradition treaty, which, according to the U.S. State Department, entered into force on July 29, 1995.<sup>77</sup> 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."<sup>78</sup>

According to an 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.<sup>79</sup> One unnamed U.S. State Department official was quoted as stating 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."<sup>80</sup> In July 2022, the U.S. National Security Council stated 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."<sup>81</sup> During her confirmation hearing, U.S. Ambassador-designate to Jordan Yael Lempert remarked that "if confirmed, I will do everything in my power to ensure that Ahlam al Tamimi faces justice in the United States for her horrific crimes."<sup>82</sup> In January 2024, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations wrote to Secretary of State Blinken requesting that the United States "prioritize Tamimi's extradition in our bilateral relations with Jordan."<sup>83</sup>

## 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 \$2.1 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. 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.

## 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.

<sup>76</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Most Wanted Terrorist: Ahlam Ahmad al-Tamimi," available at [https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/wanted\\_terrorists/ahlam-ahmad-al-tamimi/@download.pdf](https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/wanted_terrorists/ahlam-ahmad-al-tamimi/@download.pdf).

<sup>77</sup> The kingdom's courts have ruled that Al Tamimi cannot be extradited until such a treaty is endorsed by the Jordanian parliament.

<sup>78</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2019: Jordan."

<sup>79</sup> Yonah Jeremy Bob, "Will Ahlam Tamimi be extradited from Jordan for the Murder of Malki Roth?," *Jerusalem Post*, April 30, 2021.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

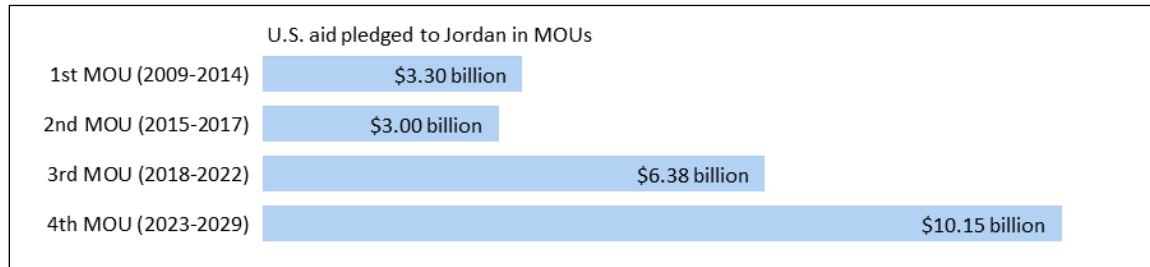
<sup>81</sup> "US seeks extradition of Palestinian attacker in Jordan," Associated Press, July 11, 2022.

<sup>82</sup> CQ Congressional Transcripts, U.S. Congress, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, hearing on Pending Nominations, 118<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., May 4, 2023.

<sup>83</sup> "Letter to Secretary Blinken Demanding the Extradition of Ahlam Ahmad Al-Tamimi," The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, January 16, 2024.

It represents the largest multi-year U.S. foreign assistance commitment (\$10.15 billion over seven years) to the kingdom. Congress has regularly exceeded levels agreed to in the MOU, appropriating between \$1.5 billion and \$1.65 billion in total annual aid to Jordan since FY2018.

**Figure 6. U.S. Aid to Jordan over Decades**



**Source:** Figure created by CRS.

**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.<sup>84</sup> Although the Jordanian media has described the newest 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.<sup>85</sup> 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.<sup>86</sup>

For FY2025, the Biden Administration is seeking a total of \$1.45 billion in assistance for Jordan in line with the MOU (see **Table 1**). According to the FY2025 CBJ, U.S. economic aid to Jordan will “advance the [Government of Jordan’s (GoJ’s)] economic reform agenda, mitigate the impacts of refugees from neighboring countries, and provide direct budget support to the GoJ for nonmilitary expenditures, thereby decreasing the GoJ’s budget shortfalls.”<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> 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.

<sup>85</sup> Mohammad Ghazal, “No strings attached to \$10.15b US aid package to Jordan—ambassador,” *Jordan Times*, October 5, 2022.

<sup>86</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi at a Joint Press Availability,” press release, September 16, 2022.

<sup>87</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations, Appendix 2, Fiscal Year 2025*, p. 279.

**Table 1. U.S. Bilateral Aid to Jordan: FY2021-FY2025 Request**

In millions of current U.S. dollars

Account	FY2021 Actual	FY2022 Actual	FY2023 Actual	FY2024 Enacted	FY2025 Request
Development Assistance (DA)	85.00	—	—	—	—
Economic Support Fund (ESF)	1,122.40	1,203.40	1,210.80	1,210.80	1,035.00
Foreign Military Financing (FMF)	425.00	425.00	425.00	425.00	400.00
International Military Education and Training (IMET)	4.00	1.95	3.80	3.80	3.80
INCLE	—	2.50	—	—	2.50
Non-Proliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR)	13.60	13.20	10.40	10.40	5.90
Global Health Programs (GHP)	—	4.00	—	—	2.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,650.00</b>	<b>1,650.05</b>	<b>1,650.00</b>	<b>1,650.00</b>	<b>1,450.00</b>

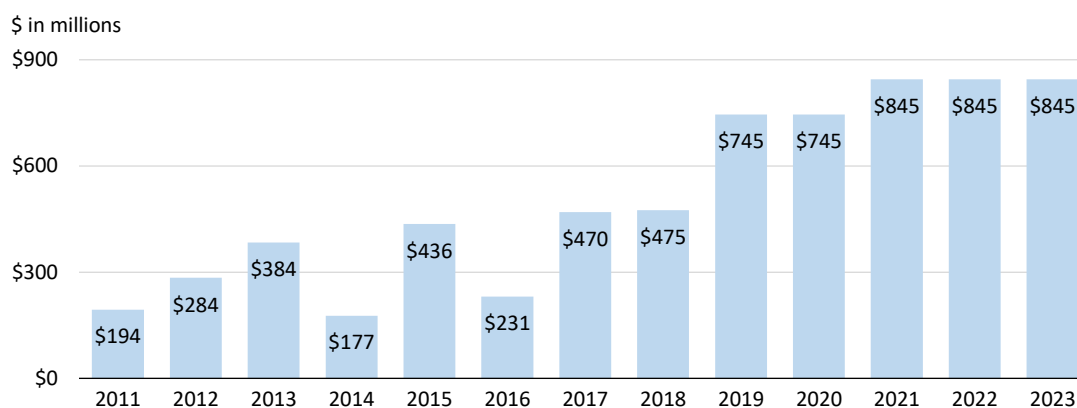
**Sources:** Department of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Congressional Budget Justifications (FY2022-FY2025); P.L. 118-47, Division F; P.L. 118-50, Division A; and CRS calculations and rounding.

## 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.<sup>88</sup> 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.)

**Figure 7. U.S. Cash Transfers to Jordan**

(Obligated funds since 2011)



**Source:** Data from USAID Foreign Aid Explorer. Figure created by CRS.

<sup>88</sup> Other budget support aid recipients include the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau.

## 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 44 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.<sup>89</sup>

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.”<sup>90</sup>

## Foreign Military Financing 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.<sup>91</sup>

**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

<sup>89</sup> At the last meeting of the JMC, U.S. defense officials pledged to “continue efforts to improve Jordan’s air defense and ability to counter UASs [Uncrewed Aerial Systems], which will improve the interoperability and effectiveness of the Royal Jordanian Air Force.” See, U.S. Department of Defense, “44th U.S.-Jordan Joint Military Commission,” May 2, 2024.

<sup>90</sup> U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Security Cooperation with Jordan,” fact sheet, October 26, 2018.

<sup>91</sup> Gareth Jennings, “US Contracts Black Hawk for Jordan’s Royal Squadron,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, October 21, 2020.



Administration has granted Jordan the ability to finance the purchase over multiple years, which may be necessary given the cost of the proposed sale.<sup>92</sup> 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 fleet.<sup>93</sup> In 2021, 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 Operation Inherent Resolve 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.<sup>94</sup>

### 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.<sup>95</sup> In the past decade, the United States has provided \$52.6 million (current \$ value) in excess U.S. defense articles to Jordan, including three AH-1 Cobra Helicopters and M577A3 Tracked Command Post Carriers.<sup>96</sup>

In December 2021, the U.S. 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."<sup>97</sup>

**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.

<sup>92</sup> Section 23 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. §2763) 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."

<sup>93</sup> Gareth Jennings, "Jordan signs LOA for F-16 Block 70s," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, June 17, 2022.

<sup>94</sup> CRS Correspondence with CENTCOM officials, August 24, 2022.

<sup>95</sup> See "Presidential Determination No. 97-4 of November 12, 1996, Designation of Jordan as Major Non-NATO Ally," 61 *Federal Register* 59809, November 25, 1996.

<sup>96</sup> Defense Security Cooperation Agency, EDA DataBase Tool, accessed June 2024.

<sup>97</sup> 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.



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