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Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations

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SUMMARY

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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 key interlocutor with the Palestinians. Jordan's strategic importance to the United States is evident given ongoing instability in neighboring Syria and Iraq. 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.

U.S. officials frequently express their support for Jordan. U.S. support has helped Jordan address serious vulnerabilities, both internal and external. Jordan's small size 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 key U.S. partner in promoting Middle East peace, as many U.S. policymakers advocate for continued robust U.S. assistance to the kingdom.

Annual U.S. aid to Jordan has nearly quadrupled 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 FY2018 amounted to approximately $22 billion. Jordan also hosts nearly 3,000 U.S. troops. On June 18, 2021, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) announced that several missile defense assets would be withdrawn from the Central Command (CENTCOM) region. Presumably, that may include the Patriot Missile Battery that has been stationed at Jordan's Shaheed Muwaffaq al-Salti Air Base since the height of the Syrian Civil War.

To date, the impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on Jordan has been significant in terms of human and economic costs. As of early July 2021, Jordan has had over 750,000 cases and nearly 10,000 deaths according to the World Health Organization. Real GDP contracted by -1.5% in 2020 and is expected to grow by only 1% in 2021. Losses in government revenue caused by fewer remittances and a weakened market for tourism are expected to widen the budget deficit in the years ahead. As of July 12, 2021, just over 26% of Jordanians had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

The President's FY2022 budget request includes $1.275 billion for Jordan, which is in line with the current five-year U.S.-Jordanian Memorandum of Understanding on Assistance. FY2022 marks the final year of the MOU, and the Administration is expected to negotiate a new deal with the Jordanian government over the upcoming months.

Congress may consider legislation pertaining to U.S. relations with Jordan. In the 117th Congress, the draft House Foreign Operations appropriations bill would provide "not less than" $1.65 billion for assistance to Jordan, including not less than $845.1 million for budget support for the Government of Jordan, $425 million in military aid, and $1.2 billion in economic assistance. The act also includes authority for loan guarantees for Jordan and authorizes Foreign Military Financing (FMF) direct loans for Jordan, not to exceed $4 billion. The draft House Defense Appropriations bill would provide "not less than" $150 million for border security in Jordan. S.Res. 154 and H.Res. 305 would congratulate the people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the centennial of the founding of the Jordanian state.

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Overview

In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (hereinafter referred to as "Jordan"), economic hardship exacerbated by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is further straining the political system. In recent months, the reign of 59-year-old monarch King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein (hereinafter King Abdullah II), has been challenged both from within the royal family and by tribal elites that have formed the bedrock of the kingdom since its establishment a century ago (see below). While as of July 2021 there is no imminent crisis endangering King Abdullah's rule, public infighting from within the royal family, periodic protests from economically disaffected Jordanians, and a recent resumption in Israeli-Palestinian violence may be cause for concern among some U.S. policymakers.[1] The United States considers Jordan a key partner in promoting Middle East peace, countering terrorism, and promoting interfaith cooperation in a volatile region. No other country in the world receives as much direct U.S. economic budgetary aid on an annual basis as Jordan.

Before the pandemic, Jordan had already faced numerous systemic and regional challenges not entirely of its own making. Demographically, the population has doubled since King Abdullah II ascended the throne in 1999.[2] Since 2011, Syrian refugees (666,000 registered with the United Nations as of mid-2021) have resided in Jordan, where the kingdom and international aid agencies have provided them with basic services. Water availability is approaching crisis levels; according to the World Resources Institute, Jordan ranks as the fifth most water-stressed country in the world.[3] Economically, Jordan has endured a decade of stagnation, in which per capita incomes have declined and social unrest among young, educated workers has grown.[4]

Internationally, Jordan also finds itself more isolated. Its relationship with Israel has been repeatedly characterized as strained throughout Benjamin Netanyahu's recent 12 consecutive years as prime minister (see below). Bilateral trade with the neighboring war-torn countries of Syria and Iraq has declined, as the threat of infiltration from Islamic State terrorists has forced the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) to strengthen their border security. Jordan's relationships with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates also have been more distant. The kingdom broke ranks with the Saudi and Emirati blockade of Qatar (2017-2021) by reestablishing diplomatic relations in 2019. Finally, while Jordan did not publicly reject President Trump's 2020 Middle East peace plan, it quietly opposed it; Jordanian officials also may feel isolated by the Abraham Accords for encouraging Israeli-Arab normalization without regard to a final settlement with the Palestinians.[5]

One policy dilemma for the Biden Administration is how to strengthen Jordan in a regional environment in which Israel and the Palestinians just endured another round of violence; the Administration itself has not committed to restarting direct negotiations between Israel and the

[1] According to the readout of a recent call between Vice President Kamala Harris and King Abdullah II, "The Vice President and the King also discussed the economic challenges that Jordan faces, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Vice President highlighted the importance of impactful, high-quality economic reforms." See White House, Readout of Vice President Harris Call with King Abdullah II of Jordan, May 20, 2021.

[2] For demographic estimates, see The United Nations, *2019 Revision of World Population Prospects*.

[3] Hannah Dormido, "These Countries are the Most at Risk from a Water Crisis," *Bloomberg*, August 6, 2019.

[4] See United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Jordan, Economic Development, available at https://www.usaid.gov/jordan/economic-growth-and-trade.

[5] Nicolai Due-Gundersen, "How the Israel-UAE Deal Could Leave Jordan Out in the Cold," Middle East Eye, September 2, 2020.

Palestinians. With Israeli-Arab tensions still lingering over East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, the Administration could rely on Jordan to play a more active diplomatic role in the months ahead.

COVID-19 and the Economic Crisis in Jordan

To date, the impact of COVID-19 on Jordan has been significant in terms of the human and economic costs. As of early July 2021, Jordan has had over 750,000 cases and nearly 10,000 deaths, peaking in March 2021, according to the World Health Organization.[6] In late May 2021, the Jordanian government announced plans to return to normal activity as the kingdom recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the kingdom is in the second phase of reopening, which includes shortened curfew hours and measures to stimulate the tourism sector. By September, all curfew restrictions will be lifted, and schools will resume lessons in classrooms. As of July 12, 2021, just over 26% of Jordanians had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Jordan's fiscal situation is extremely difficult. Real GDP contracted by -1.5% in 2020 and is expected to grow by only 1% in 2021. The official unemployment rate is close to 25%, but probably much higher amongst youth and particularly women (see **textbox** below).[7] In November 2020, Minister of Finance Mohamad al-Ississ projected a $2.89 billion annual budget deficit, with public debt forecast to be 117% of GDP. Of the government's FY2021 budget of $11.1 billion, 65% will be allocated for salaries and pensions, including for retired military personnel.[8]

In May 2021, the World Bank approved additional financing of more than $1.1 billion for Jordan to cope with the pandemic. In July, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) made available another $206 million in lending to Jordan, bringing total IMF disbursements to Jordan since the start of 2020 to $900 million.[9] According to the IMF, "successive COVID-19 waves and the sharp decline in tourism have taken a significant human and economic toll, with unemployment reaching record high levels, and the recovery delayed."[10]

Country Background

Jordan is arguably one of the closest U.S. Arab partners in the Middle East. The kingdom depends on its strong relations with global powers and its standing in the international community, where it has played an outsized role in leading international organizations.[11] Jordan's small size and lack of major economic resources have made it dependent on aid from Western and various Arab sources. U.S. support, in particular, has helped Jordan deal with serious vulnerabilities, both internal and external. Jordan's geographic position—wedged between Israel, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia—has made it vulnerable to the strategic designs of its powerful neighbors but has

[6] Available online at https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/jo.

[7] "Data Reveal Soaring Unemployment in Jordan in 2020," *Economist Intelligence Uni*t, July 2, 2021.

[8] Osama Al Sharif, "Jordan's 2021 Budget is a Harbinger of Worse Things to Come," *Al Monitor*, December 7, 2020.

[9] International Monetary Fund, IMF Executive Board Concludes Second Review Under Jordan's Extended Arrangement and Request for Augmentation of Access to Address the Impact of COVID-19, July 1, 2021.

[10] Op. cit.

[11] For example, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussein, a member of the Hashemite dynasty (from the branch of the royal family that had ruled Iraq), served as the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2014 to 2018.

also given Jordan an important role as a buffer between these countries in their largely adversarial relations with one another.

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.[12] 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.[13] 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.[14]

Figure 1. Jordan at a Glance

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

Population: 10,458,413 (July 2018); *Amman (capital): 4.008 million (2015)*.

Ethnic Groups: Arabs 97%; other 2.6% (includes Armenians, Circassians) (2015).

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

Percent of Population Under Age 25: 54% (2018).

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

[13] Though there was little international recognition of Jordan's 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 in 1988.

[14] Speculation over the ratio of East Bankers to Palestinians (those who arrived as refugees and immigrants since 1948) 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.

Literacy: 95.4% (2015).

Youth Unemployment (ages 15-24): 40.1% (2019).

Source: Graphic created by CRS; facts from CIA World Factbook and World Bank.

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 59) 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.[15]

The king appoints a prime minister to head the government and the Council of Ministers (cabinet). On average, Jordanian governments last no more than 15 months before they are dissolved by royal decree. The king also appoints all judges and is commander of the armed forces.

Dispute Within the Royal Family

In early April 2021, Jordan was thrown into disarray after reports surfaced of a plot to overthrow King Abdullah II. On April 3, 2021, Jordanian authorities detained 41-year-old Prince Hamzah bin Hussein, the king's half-brother and former crown prince, and accused him of conspiring against the throne. In his defense, Prince Hamzah released two videotaped statements (one in English and the other in Arabic) filmed on the day of his arrest denying any participation in a conspiracy, while criticizing the country's ruling system for its corruption, nepotism, and lack of reform. The Jordanian government then claimed that Prince Hamzah had collaborated with former Chief of the Royal Court Bassem Awadallah and unnamed "foreign entities" to destabilize the kingdom.[16] Awadallah, who was an advisor to Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, was arrested along with 17 other prominent Jordanians on April 3.[17] On April 4, Prince Hamzah escalated his confrontation with the government, vowing to disobey orders to remain silent.

On April 5, King Abdullah II entrusted his uncle, Prince Hassan bin Abdullah, to serve as mediator between the Royal Court and Prince Hamzah, who subsequently signed a letter that same day pledging support for the king. A day later, a new audio recording surfaced, in which the Jordanian Military's Chief of Staff, General Yousef Huneiti, told Prince Hamzah that he had been detained for meeting with government critics, who "started talking more than they should." Weeks earlier, Prince Hamzah had attended several tribal meetings where grievances against the

[15] In July 2009, King Abdullah II named his son, 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 27, 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.

[16] Jassar al Tahat and Richard Spencer, "Family Feud and Jealousy behind Split in Arab Royal Family Loved by the West," *The Times* (UK), April 14, 2021.

[17] On April 5, the *Washington Post* reported that during a surprise Saudi delegation visit to Amman led by Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, the Saudi government requested the release of Bassem Awadallah. Shira Rubin, Sarah Dadouch, and Joby Warrick, "Jordan's Prince Hamzeh, under House Arrest after Alleged Coup Attempt, Appears to Affirm Loyalty to the King," *Washington Post*, April 5, 2021. Originally born in east Jerusalem, Bassem Awadallah was a former minister of international cooperation and planning and finance. He also served as head of the King's royal court. He later worked for Arab Bank and served on the board of a banking group in Bahrain.

king and his government had been expressed. He also had met with relatives of victims of an oxygen outage at a coronavirus ward in a Jordanian hospital, an incident that had brought widespread public condemnation of the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.[18]

Prince Hamzah: Anti-Corruption Champion or Disgruntled Prince?

Prince Hamzah, who is 41 years old, is one of King Abdullah's half-brothers. He is the oldest son of Queen Noor, the late King Hussein's fourth wife. In 1999, when King Hussein named Abdullah crown prince just a few weeks before his death, he asked that Abdullah appoint Hamzah as his crown prince. Prince Hamzah served in this role until King Abdullah II rescinded it in 2004. Five years later, King Abdullah II appointed his own son, Hussein, as crown prince. According to one account, the decision to strip the title of crown prince devastated Hamzah, who had been considered "a favorite of King Hussein's, a more polished orator with a more academic mind than King Abdullah II, and had been groomed as a teenager for the throne. Suddenly he [Hamzah] was ejected from the circle of influence, and cast around for a new role."[19] In 2013, King Abdullah II rejected Prince Hamzah's proposal to consolidate the kingdom's intelligence agencies into one and make the prince intelligence chief.[20]

Lacking a prominent role in government, in recent years, Prince Hamzah cultivated close ties to the various heads of Jordan's elite tribal families, the core constituency of the Jordanian state. Some of these families had become disillusioned with Jordan's unspoken social compact, in which the state provides well-paying jobs in the civil service, military, and state-owned enterprises to "East Bank" Jordanians (see above) in return for their continued loyalty. According to one account, "Hamzah, with a physical likeness to his father, has since grown into a romanticized figure by tribal Jordanians pining for the 'golden years' of Hussein's patriarchal reign, when the state was the main provider and employer, life was affordable, and inequality minimal."[21]

As discontent simmered within certain East Bank political circles and youth tribal protest movements, Prince Hamzah received attention for publicly speaking out against government corruption.[22] As previously mentioned, Prince Hamzah's March 2021 visit to a hospital where nine Jordanians infected with COVID-19 died from a lack of oxygen—a visit that occurred just hours after King Abdullah II met with the bereaved families and days before the crown prince visited—had been perceived by the king as a major slight to the crown prince.[23]

On April 11, King Abdullah II and Prince Hamzah appeared side-by-side at a public ceremony marking the kingdom's independence centennial. A day later, Jordanian Prime Minister Bisher al Khasawneh told a closed session of parliament that Prince Hamzah would not stand trial for sedition and that there had been no attempt to overthrow the king, only one to destabilize the country. On April 14, the government announced that the other prominent Jordanians who were arrested will stand trial for sedition before Jordan's State Security Court.[24]

Since then, 16 of the original 18 individuals who were arrested in April have been released; Awadallah (who holds U.S., Saudi, and Jordanian citizenship) and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid al Nasser (a distant member of the royal family with business ties to Saudi Arabia) stood trial for sedition. The trial, though it was closed to the public, became a major source of speculation inside Jordan, which some analysts warned may be further dividing society between those who support

[18] Patrick Kingsley, Rana F. Sweis and Eric Schmitt, "Royal Rivalry Bares Social Tensions Behind Jordan's Stable Veneer," *New York Times*, April 10, 2021.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Mehul Srivastava and Andrew England, "Inside Jordan's Royal Crisis: Why the Prince Turned to Tribal Leaders for Support," *Financial Times*, April 18, 2021.

[21] Taylor Luck, "It Doesn't Happen Here: Why 'coup plot' in Jordan sent Shock Waves," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 5, 2021.

[22] "Leading Jordanian Royal blasts Kingdom's Corruption Problem," *The New Arab*, September 26, 2018.

[23] Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "The Sudden Visit to COVID Victims' Families that Sparked Jordan's Royal Rift," Reuters, April 8, 2021.

[24] The State Security Court has jurisdiction over the crimes of treason and espionage. George Sadek, "Jordan: Former Crown Prince and Others Accused of Destabilizing State Security to Be Referred to State Security Court," Global Legal Monitor, Law Library, Library of Congress, April 12, 2021.

the king and those who are sympathetic to Prince Hamzah.[25] Both defendants pleaded not guilty. On July 12, the court pronounced them guilty and sentenced Awadallah and Sharif Hassan to 15 years in prison; a higher court has 30 days to confirm or overturn the verdict. Awadallah's attorney in the United States, Michael J. Sullivan, issued a statement after the verdict claiming that his client had been mistreated while in custody.[26]

Political System and Key Institutions

The Jordanian constitution, most recently amended in 2016, gives the king broad executive powers. 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 75 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.[27] 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.[28] 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.

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."[29] Religious courts for both Muslims and Christians adjudicate matters of personal status, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance.[30] 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.

King Abdullah II in 2013 laid out a vision of Jordan's gradual transition from a constitutional monarchy into a full-fledged parliamentary democracy,[31] but in reality, successive Jordanian

[25] Taylor Luck, "In Jordan, Coup Trial Shakes Public Confidence in Royal Family," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 23, 2021.

[26] Karin Laub and Omar Akour, "In Jordan Sedition Trial, U.S. Defendant Alleges Torture," Associated Press, July 11, 2021.

[27] 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."

[28] New amendments to Article 94 in 2011 have put some restrictions on when the executive is allowed to issue temporary laws.

[29] 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/.

[30] In 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.

[31] See "Making Our Democratic System Work for All Jordanians," Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, January 16, 2013.

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.[32] 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.[33] 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.[34]

Gender Equality in Jordan

Jordan has consistently ranked among the bottom performers of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap index (138 of 153 countries in 2020). 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.[35] Despite calls from women and activists during the Arab Spring, amendments to the country's constitution in 2011 did not include a provision for gender equality. Women's involvement in the labor force and in politics is limited, though female educational attainment in the country is high.

Effects of COVID-19. Before the pandemic, Jordan had the lowest rate of female labor force participation among MENA countries not experiencing conflict (14.4% compared to the global average of 48%), and some worry that the pandemic will have further negative effects on women's employment in Jordan.[36] The pandemic has increased the already substantial amount of unpaid work for women in Jordan, where "women spend 17.1 times more time than men on unpaid work (vs. a global average of 3.2), while men spend 6.5 more time on paid work than women (vs. a global average of 1.8)."[37] As in other MENA countries, domestic violence reports have increased during the pandemic: a recent Arab Barometer survey found the perceived increase of gender-based violence in Jordan to be 27%.[38]

U.S. Assistance. Jordan has received funding through the USAID-administered Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Fund, launched in 2019, specifically to support government efforts to amend the country's labor code to prohibit gender discrimination.[39] The Biden Administration has requested $24 million in FY2022 for gender programs in Jordan, and its ESF funding request aims to "support the adoption of positive social norms for gender equality and positive youth engagement and strengthen regulatory and institutional frameworks to mitigate barriers to increase economic and political participation."[40]

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

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

[34] 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.

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

[36] CRS Report R46423, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa: Issues for Congress*, by Zoe Danon and Sarah R. Collins; Valentine M. Moghadam, "COVID-19 and Female Labor in the MENA Region," Middle East Institute, June 8, 2021.

[37] U.N. Women, "COVID-19 and Women's Economic Empowerment: Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Jordan's Recovery," September 1, 2020.

[38] Aseel Alayli, "COVID-19 Magnifies Pre-Existing Gender Inequalities in MENA," Arab Barometer, December 1, 2020.

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

[40] U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification, Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, FY2022, Appendix 2*, June 2021, p. 249.

2020 Parliamentary Elections

In November 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the kingdom held parliamentary elections for the 130-seat House of Deputies (lower chamber) without permitting either early or remote voting. Due to the pandemic, the government curtailed campaign events, which usually feature festive public gatherings in small towns and rural areas.[41] Overall turnout (officially 30%) was slightly lower than usual and noticeably lower in urban areas. Out of the 1,700 candidates (368 of whom were women) who ran, no female candidate won a seat in any of the competitive races under the open list proportional representation system.[42] Jordan's electoral system does reserve 15 parliamentary seats for women under its quota system.

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 2020, Brotherhood candidates ran together on a list called the National Alliance Reform and won 10 seats (down from 16 in 2016 election), though of those 10, only 6 belonged to actual Islamist-leaning candidates.[43]

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.[44] Nearly 27 years 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.

With the recent formation of a new coalition government in Israel, Jordan and Israel may be looking to turn the page in their bilateral relationship after an era of strained ties between the King and former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.[45] Over the past decade, there have been numerous irritants and incidents both between the two leaders and in broader diplomatic

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[41] Taylor Luck, "Pandemic Politics? In Jordan, it has Leveled the Playing Field," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 2, 2020.

[42] According to one analysis of Jordan's electoral system, "Candidates must enter into joint electoral lists with a minimum of three candidates on the ballot. Voters then select a list and their preferred candidates within this list. The 2016 elections showed that this system makes it difficult for any single list to win more than one seat per district. Since only the top candidate is likely to win, list members have incentives to discourage their voters from supporting their list allies." See, Kristen Kao and E.J. Karmel, "The Pandemic Compromised Jordan's Parliamentary Elections," *Washington Post*, November 20, 2020.

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

[44] 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, the 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, was partially resolved in May 1997 when the two countries reached an interim arrangement under which Israel began pumping 72,000 cubic meters of water from Lake Tiberias (the Sea of Galilee) to Jordan per day (equivalent to 26.3 million cubic meters per year—a little over half the target amount envisioned in an annex to the peace treaty). See Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement on Water Agreement with Jordan, May 27, 1997.

[45] "Lapid Vows to Rebuild International Ties after 'Reckless' Last Government," *The Times of Israel*, June 14, 2021.

ties.[46] The Biden Administration has attempted to heal the rift by encouraging small steps toward improved relations. In spring 2021, Israel approved a Jordanian request for additional water supplies. Israel had initially denied this request in retaliation over a dispute with Jordan centered around a royal visit to holy sites in Jerusalem; however, after some intervention by the U.S. State Department, Israel acceded to the request, which it had customarily approved in previous years.[47]

Jordan played several different roles during spring 2021 clashes in and around Jerusalem and the May 2021 conflict in Gaza. On the one hand, Jordan has tried to portray itself as a defender of Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem and a supporter of the Palestinian national cause. After a violent standoff between Israeli police and Palestinian protestors who had encamped at the Al Aqsa Mosque compound on the Temple Mount, the Jordanian government issued an official statement saying, "What the Israeli police and special forces are doing, from violations against the mosque to attacks on worshippers, is barbaric (behavior) that is rejected and condemned."[48] Days later, after further hostilities erupted between Israel and Palestinian terrorist groups in Gaza, Jordan attempted to play a supportive role in joining Egypt, France, the United States, and others in calling for a cease-fire.[49] During the outbreak of violence, U.S. and Jordanian officials spoke and agreed on the "urgency of de-escalation and the importance of preserving the historic status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem as well as Jordan's role there."[50]

Holy Sites in Jerusalem[51]

Per arrangements with Israel 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.[52] 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.[53] 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 before World War I.

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[46] 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.

[47] Barak Ravid, "Israel Agrees to Send More Water to Jordan after Push from Biden," *Axios*, April 12, 2021.

[48] "Jordan Warns Israel against 'Barbaric' Attacks on Mosque," Reuters, May 9, 2021.

[49] "France's Macron Says to Work with Jordan, Egypt Leaders on Israel-Gaza Ceasefire," Reuters, May 17, 2021.

[50] U.S. Department of State, Secretary Blinken's Meeting with Jordanian Foreign Minister Safadi, May 10, 2021.

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

[52] 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).

[53] After the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk Sultanate in 1517, the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina, which had long been under the custodianship of the Hashemite family, became nominally part of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman leaders also assumed the title of "Caliph," or leader of the Muslim world. In practice, successive Ottoman Caliphs recognized the role of the Hashemite family in sharing custodianship over Mecca and Medina. This dual arrangement lasted until 1924, when the Ottoman Caliphate was abolished by the nascent republic of Turkey. Hussein bin Ali, then Sharif of Mecca and head of the Hashemite family, declared himself Caliph over all Muslims, but his claim was not universally recognized, and the Hashemites soon lost control over Mecca and Medina to Ibn Saud, founder of modern Saudi Arabia. However, in 1924 Arab religious authorities (the Grand Muftī of Jerusalem and

Water Scarcity and the Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian Water Deal

Jordan is a water-poor nation and, according to the World Resources Institute, is one of the top-five most water-stressed countries in the world.[54] 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.[55] The illegal construction of thousands of private wells also has led 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. [56]

As of July 2021, Jordan is experiencing a severe drought. During the last rainy season (October 2020-April 2021), the kingdom received 60% of normal rainfall.[57] In the spring of 2021, water authorities announced that the state would reduce water availability hours for specific regions of the country during the summer. An infestation of desert locusts also has plagued Jordan this spring, leading to significant crop losses in certain regions.[58]

To secure new sources of fresh water, Jordan has pursued cooperative water projects with its neighbors. In 2013, Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority signed a regional water agreement (officially known as the Memorandum of Understanding on the Red-Dead Sea Conveyance Project) to pave the way for the Red-Dead Canal, a multibillion-dollar project to address declining water levels in the Dead Sea and provide desalinated water to the parties to the agreement.[59] Congress had supported the Red-Dead Sea Conveyance Project. P.L. 114-113, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, specified that $100 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) was to be set aside for water sector support for Jordan, to support the Red Sea-Dead Sea water project. However, after several years of delays, financing concerns, and Israeli uncertainty owing both to environmentalist objections and lack of a functioning government, Jordan decided

Supreme Muslim Council) in British-controlled mandatory Palestine, did recognize Hussein bin Ali's custodianship over holy sites in Jerusalem, which is considered the third holiest city in Islam after Mecca and Medina. Reflecting military and political ties developed between the United Kingdom and the Hashemites during World War I, Hussein's son Abdullah ruled Jordan after its creation (as Transjordan under British mandatory control) in the 1920s under the post-Ottoman settlement of World War I. When Abdullah became Jordan's first king (Abdullah I) in 1946, the West Bank remained under the British Mandate for Palestine. During Abdullah's kingship, Jordan invaded the West Bank and gained control of East Jerusalem and its holy sites in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. King Abdullah I was assassinated in 1951 on the Mount/Haram (during a visit to the Al Aqsa Mosque for Friday prayers) by a Palestinian supposedly concerned about possible Jordan-Israel peace talks. For background, see Victor Kattan, "The Special Role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the Muslim Holy Shrines in Jerusalem," *Arab Law Quarterly*, July 13, 2020.

[54] Rutger Willem Hofste, Paul Reig and Leah Schleifer, "17 Countries, Home to One-Quarter of the World's Population, Face Extremely High Water Stress," World Resources Institute, August 6, 2019.

[55] 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.

[56] Josie Garthwaite, "Stanford Study Reveals a Deepening Water Crisis in Jordan – and a Way Forward," Stanford University News, March 29, 2021.

[57] "Jordan Facing 'One of the most Severe' Droughts in its History," *Al Jazeera*, May 6, 2021.

[58] Jack Kennedy, "Jordan's Drought and Locust Infestation expected to Increase Unrest, but Protests unlikely to Remove Prime Minister, *Jane's Country Risk Daily Report*, May 27, 2021.

[59] On February 26, 2015, Israel and Jordan signed a bilateral agreement ("Seas Canal" Agreement) on the implementation of the Red-Dead Sea Conveyance Project, specifically on the construction of a desalination plant north of Aqaba that would supply water to the Aravah region in Israel and to Aqaba in Jordan.

in the summer of 2021 to cancel the project and will instead build its own desalination plant along the Red Sea.[60]

Syria

Jordanian-Syrian relations have been strained since 2011. King Abdullah II was the first Arab leader to openly call for Syrian President Bashar al Asad's resignation in November 2011, and Jordan supported moderate Syrian rebel groups operating in southwestern Syria until the Asad government largely defeated these groups in 2018.[61] Since the Asad regime reclaimed control of southern Syria (with the help of Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah), Jordan has sought to return to normal bilateral ties. Along the kingdom's northern border with Syria, many Jordanian residents share familial ties with Syrian families. While Jordan and Syria opened the Nasib/Jaber border crossing to facilitate greater bilateral trade, economic relations have not returned to pre-2011 levels, arguably because of trade barriers, sanctions, and security impediments.[62]

Syria remains a primary problem for Jordan's security. The kingdom shares security concerns with Israel over the presence of Iranian and Hezbollah forces operating near Jordan's borders. According to one account, "Former Free Syrian Army rebels who have returned to their hometowns in southern Syria after an amnesty agreement with the regime say Hezbollah is effectively 'governing' several towns and villages. Hezbollah and Shiite militias patrol areas dressed as uniformed Syrian regime forces in order to avoid being hit by Israeli airstrikes, they say, or, more frequently, deploy former rebel fighters to patrol areas and provide intelligence directly to the Iran-backed paramilitary group."[63]

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.[64] As of June 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are 668,332 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan. 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.

Due to the Syrian civil war and the continued presence of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, Jordan has had to more carefully monitor its borders and its citizens, some of whom may have joined terrorist groups abroad. According to the State Department, "There were many Jordanian nationals among FTFs [foreign terrorist fighters] in Iraq and Syria, and the threat of domestic radicalization, especially online, remains. Returning FTFs are an ongoing concern for Jordan's security services."[65] Congress has contributed funding to Jordan's border security efforts in recent defense appropriations legislation (see below).

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[60] "After Years of Delays, Jordan Said to Nix Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal with Israel, PA," *The Times of Israel*, June 17, 2021.

[61] Steven Simon and James Fromson, "Jordan's Pragmatism in Syria, How It Became a Reliable Partner to Washington," *Foreign Affairs*, June 22, 2016.

[62] Nabih Bulos, "Sanctions on Syria Also Felt By U.S. Allies," *Los Angeles Times*, September 13, 2019.

[63] Taylor Luck, "What Russian Deal? Israel and Jordan Cast Wary Eye Toward Syria," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 12, 2019.

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

[65] U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2019: Jordan*, June 24, 2020.

U.S. Relations

U.S. officials frequently express their support for Jordan, citing its role in promoting Middle East peace, upholding U.S. policy toward Syria, and having a moderating influence in the Arab world, both in its regional outlook and internal politics.[66] Many U.S. policymakers advocate for continued robust U.S. assistance to the kingdom. Annual aid to Jordan has nearly quadrupled in historical terms over the past 15 years (see below). 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.[67]

Jordan also hosts U.S. troops. According to President Biden's June 2021 War Powers Resolution Report to Congress, "At the request of the Government of Jordan, approximately 2,976 United States military personnel are deployed to Jordan to support Defeat-ISIS operations, enhance Jordan's security, and promote regional stability."[68] 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.[69]

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 Al Tamimi in 2013, and those charges were unsealed in early 2017. Al Tamimi is on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Most Wanted Terrorist List.[70] The United States and Jordan have an extradition treaty, which, according to the U.S. State Department, entered into force on July 29, 1995.[71] The United States requested Al 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 one recent report, one reason why the U.S. and Israeli governments have not applied further pressure on the government of Jordan to extradite Tamimi is concern for the stability of Jordan.[72] 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."[73]

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[66] U.S. Embassy in Jordan, Secretary of State Blinken's Meeting with His Majesty King Abdullah II, May 26, 2021.

[67] U.S. Department of State, U.S. Security Cooperation With Jordan, Fact Sheet, May 21, 2021.

[68] The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Text of a Letter from the President to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate Regarding the War Powers Report, June 8, 2021.

[69] 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.

[70] 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.

[72] Yonah Jeremy Bob, "Justice Ignored," *Jerusalem Post*, April 30, 2021.

[73] Op. cit.

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 FY2018 amounted to approximately $22 billion. Jordan also has received over 1 billion dollars in additional military aid since FY2014, channeled through the Defense Department's various security assistance accounts. Currently, Jordan is the third-largest recipient of annual U.S. foreign aid globally, after Afghanistan and Israel.

Table 1. Bilateral Aid to Jordan

current U.S. dollars in millions

	FY2017 actual	FY2018 actual	FY2019 actual	FY2020 actual	FY2021 enacted	FY2022 request
DA	—	—	—	—	85.00	—
ESF	832.35	1,082.40	1,082.40	1,082.40	1,122.40	910.80
FMF	470.00	425.00	425.00	425.00	425.00	350.00
IMET	3.88	4.01	3.99	4.00	4.00	3.80
NADR	13.60	13.60	13.60	13.60	13.60	10.40
Total	**1,319.83**	**1,525.01**	**1,524.99**	**1,525.00**	**1,650.00**	**1,275.00**

Source: Department of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Congressional Budget Justifications (FY2019-FY2022), P.L. 116-260, and CRS calculations and rounding.

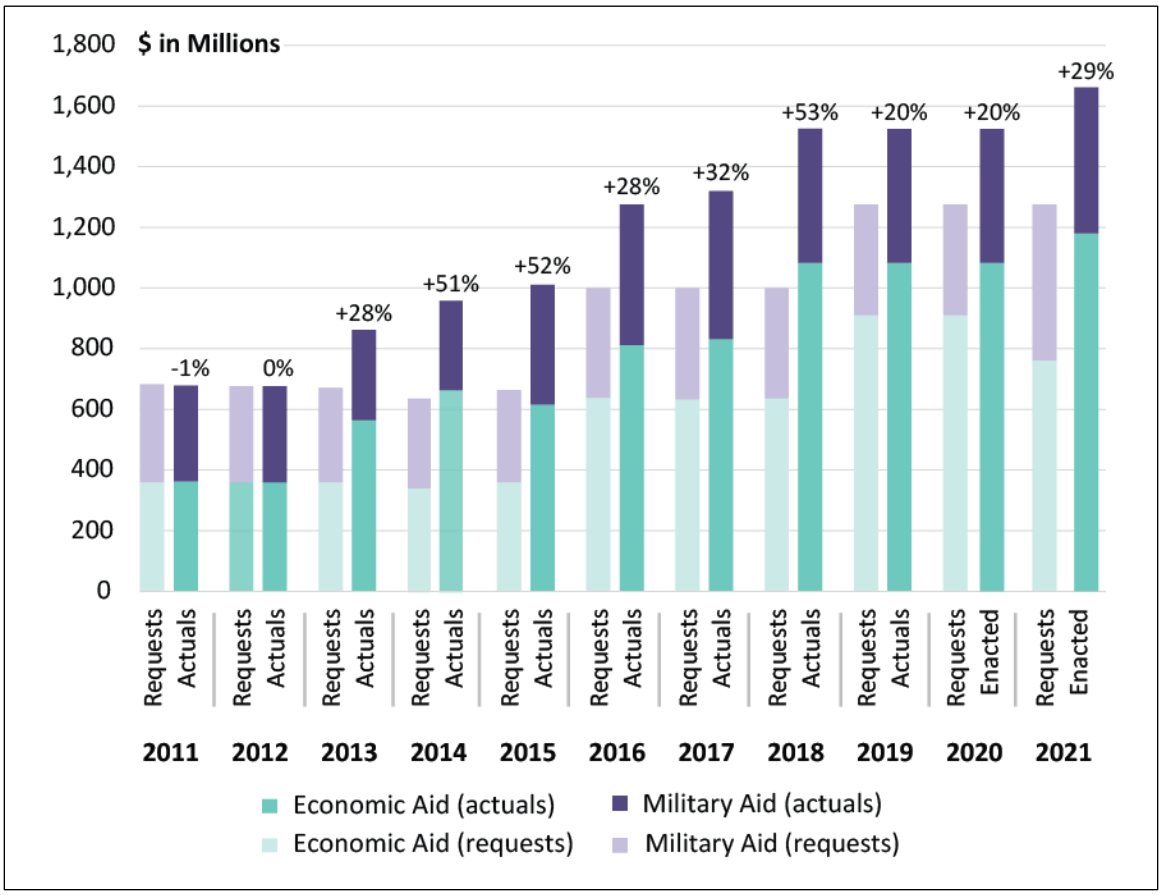
Notes: Prior-year funds not included in this table: $125 million in ESF in FY2020 (P.L. 116-93); $50 million in Relief and Recovery Fund (RRF) aid in FY2019 (P.L. 116-6).

U.S.-Jordanian Agreement on Foreign Assistance

On February 14, 2018, the United States and Jordan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on U.S. foreign assistance to Jordan. The MOU, the third such agreement between the United and Jordan, commits the United States to providing $1.275 billion per year in bilateral foreign assistance over a five-year period for a total of $6.375 billion (FY2018-FY2022). This latest MOU represents a 27% increase in the U.S. commitment to Jordan above the previous iteration and is the first five-year MOU with the kingdom. The previous two MOU agreements had each been in effect for three years.

Figure 2. State Department and USAID Assistance to Jordan, FY2011-FY2021

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

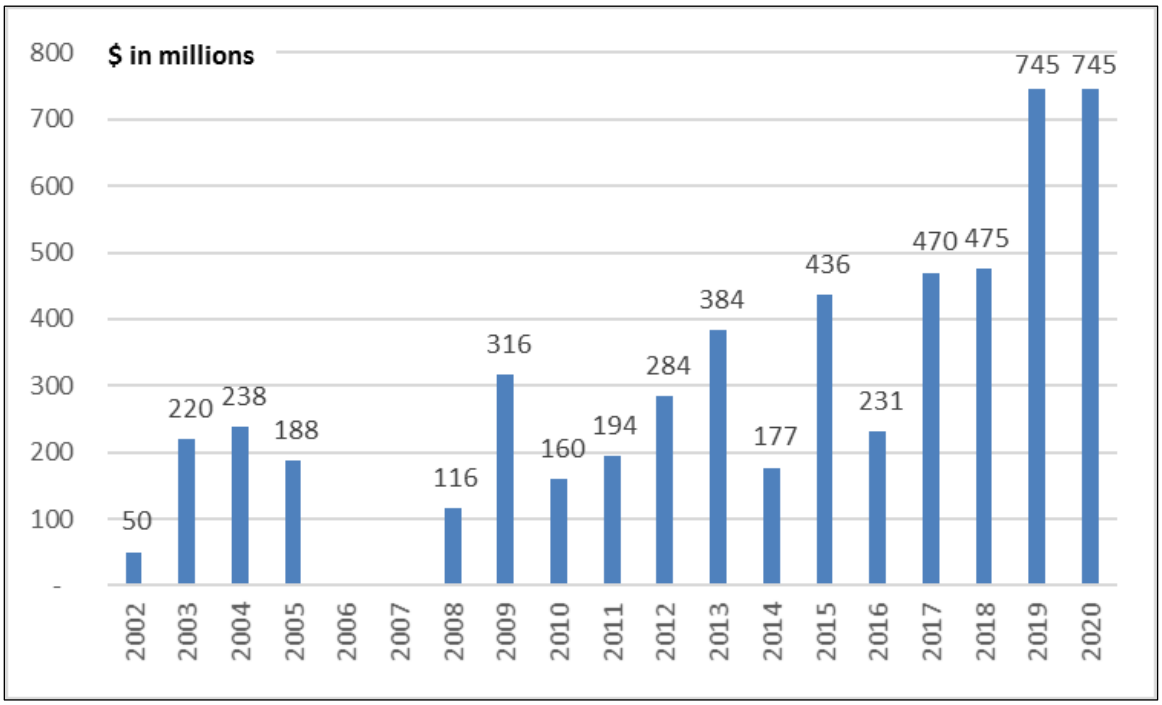
The United States provides economic aid to Jordan for (1) budgetary support (cash transfer), (2) USAID programs in Jordan, and (3) loan guarantees. The cash transfer portion of U.S. economic assistance to Jordan is the largest amount of budget support given to any U.S. foreign aid recipient worldwide.[74] 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.[75]

[74] Other budget support aid recipients include the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau.

[75] USAID Congressional Notification, May 15, 2020.

Figure 3. 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),[76] 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.[77] USAID also uses ESF to fund

[76] USAID also has provided grant assistance to the IEC to improve the transparency of elections administration.

[77] Chemonics International, Strengthening Municipal Governance in Jordan, at https://chemonics.com/projects/strengthening-municipal-governance-jordan/.

infrastructure development in Jordanian municipalities in order to help create jobs for Syrian refugees and Jordanians.

- 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 delivery improved reproductive, maternal, neonatal, and child health services.[78]
- In the **education** sector, USAID has supported the Jordan Compact Education Fund, a multidonor funding mechanism that has enabled 134,121 Syrian children to enroll in Jordanian schools.[79]

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,[80] effectively subsidizing the cost for governments of accessing financing. Since 2013, Congress has authorized[81] 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.[82]

Humanitarian Assistance for Syrian Refugees in Jordan

Figure 4.U.S., Jordan Sign Aid Agreement

($340 million assistance agreement signed May 2020)

Source: U.S. Embassy Amman.

The U.S. State Department estimates that, since large-scale U.S. aid to Syrian refugees began in FY2012, it has allocated more than $1.8 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.[83] 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.[84]

[78] USAID, Congressional Notification #59, FY2020 – Country Narrative, December 3, 2020.

[79] Op. cit., Country Reports on Terrorism 2019.

[80] "A Helping Hand," *International Financial Law Review*, April 2014.

[81] 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 seven consolidated appropriations acts (FY2015-FY2021).

[82] 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.

[83] CRS Correspondence with the U.S. State Department, June 2021.

[84] 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-

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.[85] 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."[86]

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.[87]

Figure 5. U.S.-Supplied Black Hawk Helicopters for Jordan

Source: Jane's Defence Weekly.

As a result of the Syrian civil war and U.S. Operation Inherent Resolve against the Islamic State, the United States has increased military aid to Jordan and channeled these increases through DOD-managed accounts. Although Jordan still receives the bulk of U.S. military aid through the FMF account, Congress has authorized defense appropriations to strengthen Jordan's border security. U.S. assistance has helped finance the creation of the Jordan Border Security System, an

continues-lead-global-response-covid-19.

[85] According to *Jane's Defence Procurement Budgets*, Jordan's 2020 defense budget is $2.07 billion. See *Jane's Defence Budgets*, Jordan, February 2, 2021.

[86] U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Security Cooperation with Jordan," Fact Sheet, October 26, 2018.

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

integrated network of guard towers, surveillance cameras, and radar to guard the kingdom's borders with Syria and Iraq.[88] Since FY2015, total DOD security cooperation funding for Jordan has amounted to $1.5 billion dollars.[89]

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.[90] In the past decade, the United States has provided $83 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.[91]

Table 2. U.S. Foreign Aid Obligations to Jordan: 1946-2018

(in millions of current dollars)

Total Economic Assistance	Total Military Assistance	Total
$13,846.400	$8,252.900	$22,099.300

Source: USAID Overseas Loans and Grants, July 1, 1945-September 30, 2018.

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[88] Jeremy Binnie, "Jordan Planning Border Security Upgrade," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, April 17, 2019.

[89] DOD congressional notifications to Congress.

[90] 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.

[91] Defense Security Cooperation Agency, EDA DataBase Tool, accessed July 2021.