

JORDAN

His Majesty King Abdullah II Calls for Interfaith Tolerance

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Washington - In his recent trip the United States, Jordan's King Abdullah II met with Jewish-American religious leaders, continuing an unprecedented series of interfaith dialogues intended to combat global division and promote understanding among Muslim, Christian and Jewish believers. In his meetings, His Majesty King Abdullah II called for an open and honest interfaith dialogue, to replace the notion of a clash of civilizations and interfaith tension. "It is only by adopting this attitude that we can combat the extremist threat and live in peace with each other," the King said.

His Majesty also met with Muslim American leaders at the Islamic Cultural Center in Washington, where the King encouraged Muslim-Americans to

work for peace, tolerance, and coexistence, and congratulated Muslim-Americans on their continuing efforts to reject violence perpetrated in the name of religion and to rectify the image of Islam in American society. Earlier, the King met with Christian leaders in Washington and New York, where he delivered speeches at the Catholic University of America and Riverside Church, respectively.

King Abdullah's interfaith meetings are part of an international initiative against religious tension and extremism. En route to the United States, His Majesty met with Pope Benedict XVI at the papal summer retreat Castel Gandolfo, in which both leaders agreed on the need to

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Jordan Donates \$100,000 to Hurricane Relief

At a meeting held on October 7 at the Archdiocese of Washington's Pastoral Center, Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington, thanked Jordan's Ambassador to the United States Karim Kwar for a \$100,000 donation to assist victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The donation from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was made at the direction of His Majesty King Abdullah II who delivered an address at The Catholic University of America's Columbus School



Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington and Jordan's Ambassador to the United States His Excellency Karim Kwar

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Investments in 8 months Exceed Projection for the Whole of 2005

At JD231.5 million, foreign investments accounted for 43 per cent of the total

By Mahmoud Al Yahya

Amman (Jordan Times) — Investments during the first eight months of this year surged beyond the JD500 million projected for the whole of 2005, a senior official said.

According to Jordan Investment Board (JIB) CEO Maan Nsour, total investments topped JD532 million during the January-August period of this year compared to JD248.1 million during the same time in 2004

At JD231.5 million, foreign investments accounted for 43 per cent of the total, eclipsing the JD49.9 million registered at the end of August 2004.

“JD87.4 million of foreign investments went into industrial ventures and only JD2.7 million into agriculture,” Nsour remarked.

The JIB chief cited “economic reasons” for the government’s decision to stop the citizenship-investment link.

“Jordan is now an attractive investment place and there is no need any more to tempt Arab nationals to invest in Jordan through offering them the Jordanian citizenship,” said Nsour.

Arab nationals were previously given the Jordanian citizenship if they invested more than JD750,000 and created 20 employment opportunities.

According to Nsour, JIB will continue to sponsor investment promotion bureaux outside Jordan to help increase investments in the country.

King, Queen Discuss Interfaith Dialogue with Students at Washington’s Banneker Highschool

In their September trip to the United States His Majesty King Abdullah II and Her Majesty Queen Rania met with students from The Hebrew Academy, the International Saudi Academy, Banneker High School, and Cordozo Senior High School in an effort to open a dialogue with the American youth on peace, tolerance and interfaith coexistence. His Majesty King Abdullah’s visit to the United States has focused on the intra-Islamic, interfaith initiative Jordan is leading, which aims to build bridges of peace and understanding among people

throughout the world, including religious and political leaders, academics, and policymakers as well as youth.

-Jordan Information Bureau



Their Majesties King Abdullah II and Queen Rania with students at Washington’s Banneker High School



Their Majesties King Abdullah II and Queen Rania with students from The Hebrew Academy, the International Saudi Academy, Banneker High School, and Cordozo Senior High School (Washington, D.C.)

National Strategy for the Jordanian Family Launched

By Mohammad Ghazal

AMMAN (Jordan Times) — Jordan launched its first national strategy on September 12, 2005 seeking to guide Jordanian families on how to build a healthy and solid family structure for future generations.

The National Strategy for the Jordanian Family, devised by researchers as well as civil society and governmental entities over the past two years, highlights some of the social, economic and health challenges affecting families today.

Prime Minister Adnan Badran, who deputised for Their Majesties King Abdullah and Queen Rania at the launch, stressed the government's commitment to implement the executive plan of the strat-

egy, pointing out that the government was ready to provide all necessary support.

The strategy's executive action plan is expected to be unveiled in two weeks time, National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) Acting Secretary General Lara Hussein said recently.

According to NCFA, which spearheaded the strategy's creation, the strategy presents eight components related to family life and the priorities needed for intervention.

"The strategy is designed to enhance the role of the family in various fields espe-

cially since the family is the basis for the progress of the societies," Hussein said at the launch.



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Jordan Donates
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“We are all in God's hands. And together, we are called to a common duty - to help, to share, to comfort and heal - to build a better future for every person on our earth.”

- His Majesty King Abdullah during his speech at the Catholic University.

of Law in Washington, DC on September 13. At that time, he spoke of the natural disaster, saying, “We are all in God's hands. And together, we are called to a common duty – to help, to share, to comfort and heal – to build a better future for every person on our earth.”

Ambassador Kawar noted the donation was “a small token” and said His Majesty chose “the Archdiocese of Washington because it is a leading organization in channeling effective aid to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.”

Cardinal McCarrick called the contribution “not just a symbolic gift, but a great blessing.”

“When I met with His Majesty earlier this year, we spoke of how nations might walk together in unity, fellowship and love. I offer my deep gratitude to His Majesty and to the people of Jordan for this extraordinary gift, which will assist the many people who have suffered so terribly from the recent hurricanes,” Cardinal McCarrick said, continuing, “It is an example of how we may all work together, regardless of nation or faith, to help our brothers and sisters in need.”

The funds will be disbursed to dioceses and Catholic agencies in the affected regions that are providing direct assistance to people in need, regardless of faith.

-Jordan Information Bureau

Citizens Believe Level of Democracy Improved in 2005 - CSS

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh

AMMAN (Jordan Times) — Citizens believe that the level of democracy in the Kingdom improved in 2005, giving it an unprecedented 6.29 per cent out of 10 score, a public opinion poll showed Tuesday.

According to the poll, conducted by the Jordan University's Centre for Strategic Studies (CSS), people's perception that the level of democracy has surpassed its midway status — scores ranging between 4-5.7 out of 10 since 1993 when the first such CSS poll was conducted — could be attributed to increased debate about public freedoms and the

growing percentage of people boldly discussing controversial issues.

“One of the reasons why people felt democracy improved has to do with the intensity and maximisation of subjects and scope of debate on various issues including the relation between Parliament and the executive authority and the formation of Adnan Badran's government and the ensuing reshuffle,” said CSS pollster Fares Braizat.

Polls conducted in 2003, 2004 had shown democracy was at a standstill. They also indicated that there was no major variation in the level of democracy between 1993-2004 — scores hovered at around 5 out of 10.

UPCOMING EVENTS in JORDAN 2006

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Youth Forum Promotes Dialogue on Development Process

AMMAN (JT) — A total of 100 young Jordanians gathered on Sept. 29 at a youth forum aimed at involving the younger generation in the development process by encouraging dialogue on a variety of issues. The forum, took place at Al Hussein Cultural Centre, seeks to enhance young people with their community and acquaint them with their civil and legal rights, according to National Forum for Youth and Culture (NFYC) Secretary Emad Fuqaha. Participants aged between 18-32 debated on issues such as peace, justice, reform and human rights, among other related issues.

Jordan Times Book Review by Sally Bland **Nationalist Voices in Jordan: The Street and the State**

Betty S. Anderson

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005

Pp. 287

\$22.95

While many history books on Jordan concentrate on the royal family, others take the bedouin population as their point of departure. In “Nationalist Voices of Jordan”, Betty Anderson broadens the analytical lens to encompass the urban population, focusing on the educated middle class from whose ranks emerged the leaders of the Jordanian National Movement of the 1940s and 50s.

The book also offers a broader perspective by situating the evolution of Jordanian identity in the context of the spread of Arab nationalism throughout the Fertile Crescent from the time of World War I and the Great Arab Revolt up through the 1950s. In tandem with this, the growth of national consciousness in Palestine in the 1930s and 40s is also analysed in depth.

The growth of the educational system and its impact on the population are key concepts in Anderson’s presentation of Jordan’s early political development. “In a situation like Jordan’s, where the state was so very new and the focus of loyalty so fluid, schools provide a powerful means for regrouping and redefining the identities of students.” (p. 64)

At the same time, education imparts new information and tools for critical thinking, enabling students to question power structures and policies. So it was that by the time Jordan became independent, a new generation, educated at Salt’s secondary school and at universities in Beirut, Damascus and Cairo, had emerged.

In part, “the state itself facilitated the

growth of a new stratum in the society, the urban professional intelligentsia, because it required these men to literally build its country”. (p. 83)

On the other hand, many of them coalesced into an oppositional force and put forward their own vision of Jordan’s future.

Aided by rapid urbanisation and a massive expansion of schools and media

outlets in the 1950s, the Jordanian National Movement mobilised “the street” to demand political freedoms and an end to British colonial influence.

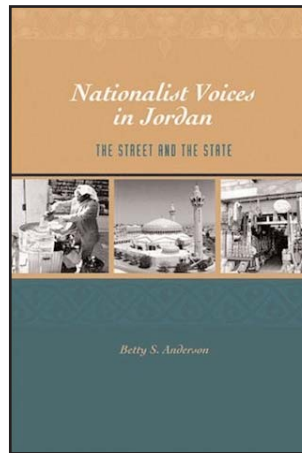
“In the early 1950s, the liberalisation of the political system under the new kings seemed to presage a peaceful transition from the established political leaders to a ‘new’ generation.” (p. 147)

Popular mobilisation reached a peak, demanding the ouster of General Glubb and rejection of the Baghdad Pact. In sync with the sentiments of most Jordanians, King Hussein dismissed Glubb, Arabised the army, declared free elections and chose as prime minister Suleiman Nabulsi, the de facto leader of the Jordanian National Movement.

While in many countries national liberation movements, coups or revolutions have been the catalysts for overthrowing colonial control, in Jordan, “the Hashemites successfully preempted the national movement by taking on that position themselves”. (p. 20)

When the nationalist government mounted a serious challenge to the establishment, the king was in a strong enough

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Madaba's Historical Sights Attract Growing Number of Tourists

By Mohammad Ghazal

MADABA (Jordan Times) — For centuries a place of pilgrimage, the ancient Biblical town of Madaba opened its first three-star hotel on Tuesday as part of a strategy to encourage visitors to stop over, while providing job opportunities for local people.

The Madaba Inn Hotel, owned by the Social Security Corporation, is situated in the heart of the town opposite the Greek Orthodox Church of St. George, famous for its 6th century mosaic map of the Holy Land.

Munther Hamarneh, director of accommodation and public relations at the hotel, told The Jordan Times that the hotel was constructed following a feasibility study.

“The rationale behind the establishment of the hotel is to encourage tourists to stay in Madaba overnight, rather than just visiting the archaeological sites in one day due to a lack of suitable accommodation,” said Hamarneh.

The new 33-room hotel, which provides jobs for 45 local citizens, features a restaurant and café, a multi-purpose hall suitable for holding wedding parties, a business centre with access to high-speed wireless Internet and indoor and outdoor parking.

Located just 30 kilometres southwest of Amman, Madaba has long been a favoured destination for foreign visitors.

The history of the town goes back 3,500 years and the city's strategic position has meant it has been fought over for centuries. It was here that the Israelite King David defeated the Ammonites. The town has been dubbed the “city of mosaics,” the most spectacular of which is the 6th century map of the Holy Land in the Church of St. George.

In addition to its world famous mosaics and Byzantine treasures, Madaba is also known for its hand-woven carpets, saddlebags and tapestries, and is located just 10 kilometres east of Mount Nebo, one of the most revered holy sites in the country, where the Biblical Prophet Moses is said to be buried.

According to Madaba's Tourism Department, visitor levels are on the up with more than 60,000 tourists grouping all nationalities visiting in the first seven months of 2005 alone.

Hamarneh said there has been a 30 per cent increase in tourism last year.

Firas Sawalha, a representative from the Grand Palace Hotels Company, which is operating the hotel, said the hotel is promising, as it is the only three-star hotel in the area.

Half of the employees at the hotel are females, according to Sawalha.

Among them is Natali Hamarneh, who quit her job at a business company in Amman to work in the hotel.

“Working at the hotel seems promising to me and besides it is closer to my home

His Majesty
from page 1

continue working to build bridges of understanding and interfaith coexistence.

Pointing to the shared values of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, King Abdullah stressed that followers and scholars of the three monotheistic religions need to work in harmony to combat violence and extremism and challenge those who abuse religion to justify their wrongdoings. “At one time or another, all religions have faced extremists who abuse the power of faith,” comments King Abdullah. “We must show zero tolerance towards those who promote extremism.”

Jordan has led efforts with the international Islamic community to reclaim moderate Islam from fringe extremist groups and to oppose extremist interpretations of the religious text. His Majesty underlined the importance of the historic Amman Message, which articulates Islam's core teachings on peace, tolerance and justice. He also discussed the International Islamic Conference that was held in Amman last July, which was attended by Islamic scholars from 45 countries representing all Madhahib of Sunni, Shi'ite and Ibadi Islam. The final declaration of this conference, signed by 180 Islamic scholars, reaffirmed the traditional qualifications for issuing a fatwa and proclaimed that “no one can call another Muslim an apostate — as the extremists do to those who disagree with them.”

-Jordan Information Bureau

since I am a Madaba resident,” she said.

Currently there are eight hotels in Madaba, five of them one-star hotels employing a total of 145 people. The remaining hotels are unclassified.

National Strategy
from page 3

The strategy seeks to enhance the family structure and its interaction with the community and strengthen relations within the family itself, according to a statement released by the NCFA.



It also cites many factors that have weakened the identity and structure of the Jordanian family unit and hindered its growth as a productive group.

The strategy will ensure that the policies and programmes developed for the family are in line with those of the population, the society and the economy, according to the statement.

The strategy, which cites globalisation as one factor responsible for marginalising the role of families as the primary source of socialisation and preserver of cultural values and national identity, seeks to enhance its cultural role and ability to deal with the cultural consequences of globalisation.

The strategy also aims to contribute to the formulation of legislative policies that provide a favourable environment to establish a unified family and protect it from social disorganisation. In addition, it seeks to sustain contacts with Jordanian families abroad.

The strategy cites urbanisation as having caused an imbalance in the family unit, where many have shifted from extended families to nuclear units today.

It also indicates the importance of helping families to be financially secure and self-sufficient and open to modernisation without losing their cultural identity.

The NCFA will be responsible for monitoring and following up on the strategy.

Jordanian-American Displaced by Rita

By Salim Khutat
Jordan Information Bureau

Hurricane Katrina forced Abdallah Yousef Ahmed, A Jordanian-American citizen, along with his family to flee their home in Silsbee, Texas for several weeks due to damages caused to their home.

Abdallah and his family sought refuge in another home owned by Abdallah that was far enough to have escaped the ravages of Hurricane Rita. Although his family remained in their safe house until mid-October, Abdallah was back in the area to inspect damages to their home and return to his work as a technician for a field services corporation.

El Paso Field Services, the company which Abdallah works for, provided him with a power generator along with food and supplies so he can take part in rebuilding efforts in the area.

Fortunately, damages caused by Hurricane Rita were limited to the rear section of the family residence, none of his family were hurt and are now safely back in Silsbee where his children are again attending school.

In a related story, many Jordanian expatriates living in the area offered their assistance to fellow Jordanians affected by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. One such person is Dr. Abdallah Akrouk, PhD. from Boynton Beach, Florida who offered to host any Jordanian individual or family seeking assistance.

Book Review
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position to dismiss Nabulsi and banish the Jordanian National Movement from the scene.

There are conflicting narratives of this tumultuous time in terms of what really happened, the motives of the various political players and so on. Anderson explores the issues from all sides before going on to chronicle how King Hussein worked to consolidate the state in the ensuing years. Since then, "the Hashemite national project has been successful in gathering enough support to counteract any opposition activities or views and thus has survived far longer than any neighbouring regime." (p. 204)

Betty Anderson is assistant professor of Middle East and World History at

Boston University. In 1993-95 she was a Fulbright Scholar in Jordan. Her account is especially interesting because she does not merely recount political events but "focuses more on the reactions people had to given events and the influences people found the most useful in their route towards national identification..." (p. 11)

The reader gets a real taste of the times of which she writes because of the diversity and originality of her sources. These range from official documents, history and school textbooks to extensive passages of Arar's poetry, memoirs of the political actors of the time, and her own interviews with cadre of the Jordanian National Movement, wherein communists, Arab Nationalists and Baathists share their remembrances of events, as well as their personal feelings and evaluations in retrospect.

Teachers from Chicago Take Part in School Program

AQABA (Petra) — Last August, visiting teachers from schools in the US city of Chicago and Jordanian teachers from five public schools in Aqaba have ended a month-long meeting under a programme for promoting teaching skills at local schools. The two groups will be tackling ways to teach English and Computer Science to help local teachers receive the International Computer Driving License.

Jordan Tourism Board Launches First Jordan Road Show in Canada

Vancouver, B.C. (October 2005) - Jordan tourism officials will hold workshops in several Canadian cities this fall in a two-tiered "Jordan-Canada Road Show" program that will educate eager travel executives as well as travel media on this magnificent destination. The program started on October 27th in Vancouver.

"We have experienced a surge of inquiries over the past year from travel agents who have not previously sold Jordan as a destination or who would like fresh information on what we have to offer, so the time is ripe to personally connect with these agents to help them get better acquainted with our rich product offering and diversity," said Malia Asfour, director of the Jordan Tourism Board, North America (JTBNA).

In May, the World Travel and Tourism

Council (WTTC) released its 2005 Travel and Tourism Forecasts for the Middle East, which projected the rise in tourism to the region would continue climbing at a growth rate of 4.8%, leveling out after a phenomenal regional growth rate in 2004 of 9.1%. The WTTC forecast for Jordan expects tourism to "equal or exceed the robust level posted for 2004." The news that tourists are discovering Jordan is good indeed for Jordanians, who know tourism is a vital component of their national economy.

In 2004, His Majesty King Abdullah outlined a national tourism strategy that seeks to double the kingdom's tourism economy by 2010. Already, tourism contributes more than US\$800 million to Jordan's economy and accounts for about 10 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP).

For the first Jordan-Canada Road Show, JTBNA is bringing in, Ibrahim Abdelhaq, a Jordanian tour guide who will present his country to the audience. "Agents will experience a virtual tour of Jordan firsthand from one of our top guides," said Gisele Abrahao, marketing manager of the Jordan Tourism Board, North America (JTBNA). "This will help them to get a much better feel for our various niche markets so that they can more knowledgeable and easily sell our product."

Road Show Schedule

October 27th , Vancouver
October 31st , Calgary
November 3rd , Toronto

For more information or to participate in one of the road-show workshops, please contact Frank A. LaFleche - JTBNA Market Development Canada - (250) 721-1955.

JORDANinFIGURES

Winning Figures: Unemployment Among Women Falls by 20.2% Over a Decade

Jordanian women are closing in on men when it comes to participation in the labour market. In little more than a decade, unemployment among women has plunged 20.2% points — from 36.7 to 16.5%, according to official figures from the Department of Statistics (DoS). Male unemployment dropped 5 % during the same period.

Just last year, the percentage of unemployed women dropped 4.3 points to the present low of 16.5, while unemployment among men currently stands at 11.8%.

Women are increasingly seeking employment in the private sector. According to DoS, between 1994 and 2004 the number of women working in the private sector has almost quadrupled to more than 80,000.

More than half the number of working women are employed in the fields of health, education and social work.

Challenging Figures: Unemployment Rises to 15.7% -DoS Survey *The Second Quarterly Survey involved 10,000 Families*

Overall unemployment in Jordan rose to 15.7% in the second quarter of 2005, up from 13.4% recorded at the end of March, according to a survey conducted by the Department of Statistics (DoS).

The study, the second quarterly round of the survey for the year, involved 10,000 families.

Unemployment among males stood at 13.4%, while among females it was 28.4 %, according to the study's findings. The figures were 12.3 and 19.6 %, respectively, in the first quarter. (*Jordan Times*)

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