

HM King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein

King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Custodian of Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem

Gaza War: Whilst the King has not been able to stop the war in Gaza to date, despite Jordan's relative poverty he has emerged this year as the most effective Arab and Islamic leader in the world for a number of critical steps he has taken to stop a larger regional war, and bring life-saving aid to the people of Gaza and the West Bank.

1. After the October 7th 2023 attacks on Israel, Hamas did not bother trying to explain their position and their actions to the world, or even in English. This left many in Israel (including in the Knesset and the government itself—as had been fully documented by South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice in Le Hague) calling for Gaza to be obliterated with nuclear weapons and for the 2.5 million residents there to be killed. Figures like US Senator Lindsey Graham publicly supported this idea even in 2024. A steady procession of western leaders made political pilgrimages to Tel Aviv, to give Israel the money, the means, the weapons and the cover to do whatever it wanted. Israel also put out a false narrative (thoroughly exposed by Jewish journalist Max Blumenthal on his YouTube Channel The Grayzone) depicting the attacks as even more horrific than they actually were, and falsely accusing Hamas of raping women, beheading babies and burning their victims (which was actually the result the Israeli army's own Hellfire missiles in 'friendly fire'). It fell on King Abdullah to change the opinion of Western decision-makers through shuttle diplomacy—which he tirelessly did thereby avoiding worse responses—just as his wife Queen Rania (see: Woman of the Year on page 55) undertook changing western general public opinion.
2. Short of killing everyone in Gaza, Israel's 'Plan B' led many quarters in Israel to call for forcibly expelling all the remaining population of Gaza to Egypt, and then immediately the population of the West Bank to Jordan. Israeli settlers stepped up their violence and harassment in the West Bank and threatened genocide, leaving maps at night showing routes to

escape to Jordan. King Abdullah along with President Sisi of Egypt made it clear that forcible transfer was a 'red line'. Jordan's feisty foreign minister Ayman Safadi threatened several times that this would lead to war with Jordan. Despite unimaginable suffering—on June 12, 2024 the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres declared that Gaza has 'a unique level of destruction'—the Palestinian populations of the Gaza Strip and West Bank held firm, forcible transfer was avoided. But then 'Plan C' to strangle and starve Gaza was activated.

3. In response to the starvation of Gaza, on November 30, 2023 the King organised an international donors conference in Amman. Whilst many international agencies mobilised aid—most by private donors—almost all of this aid lay rotting on the Egyptian border unable to enter Gaza. Even when it entered Gaza, the Israeli army checkpoints made sure most of it exited again or was dumped on the borders out of reach of Gazans. Moreover, the agencies had no mechanism for co-ordination so many of them had purchased the wrong things or the same things so that critical items like ketamine (an anaesthetic for surgical operations), insulin, baby formula, and fuel for the desalination plants were not being bought at all. The King's conference put a spotlight on this and more effective aid gradually entered Gaza. When even this aid was curtailed, the Jordanian air force started parachuting aid to Gaza on November 6th 2023, with the King himself personally on the aid planes. The Israeli air force was informed but not asked permission and begrudgingly allowed these drops, which continue until this day. Food conveys from Jordan to the North of Gaza were also set up, and formed a critical lifeline, and indeed Jordan also provides a critical lifeline to the entire West Bank in terms of food and medicine. As of July 2024, the Jordanian military had by itself trucked over 30,000 pallets of food, aid and medicine into Gaza alone, comprising some 20,000 metric tons.

This is the third largest military assistance operation in the world since the Berlin airlift of 1948-1949, almost all at Jordan's expense.

4. Jordan has military hospitals in Tal al-Hawa and two in Khan Yunus in Gaza (including a women's and maternity hospital) in addition to a mobile bespoke prosthetics 3D printer which has so far manufactured over 14,000 prosthetic limbs (as well as other military hospitals in Jenin, Ramallah and Nablus in the West Bank). Israel systematically bombed all of Gaza's own hospitals—most infamously the Ahli hospital, killing over 500 civilians—bringing the entire medical system to its knees under the pretext that they harboured 'terrorist tunnels' underneath them. The only effective healthcare that now exists in Gaza are Jordan's two military hospitals—one of which existed before the war—and which Israel harasses but does not destroy. As of September 2024, these have performed 160,000 operations and treated over 4 million cases during the war.
5. 'Plan D': Israel tried repeatedly to drag Iran and the US into a wider regional war. On April 1st they bombed the Iranian Consulate in Syria and on July 31st they assassinated Hamas's political leader Ismail Haniyeh (see page 238) in Tehran. In response to the first, and in co-ordination with allies, Jordan shot down Iranian missiles headed for Israel over Jordan, and in response to the second, the King dispatched his foreign minister to the new, moderate President in Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian (see page 230) to convince him not to respond. The king was at first criticised in the Islamic world, even in Jordan, for both actions, but a wider war has so far been averted, and conflict remains at the level of controlled tit-for-tat attacks between Israel and Iran's regional allies (Hezbollah in Lebanon and Ansarullah in the Yemen) to this day, proving the King right, and keeping the focus on the suffering in Palestine.

In summary: though the Gaza war is abominable and has so far killed over 40,000 Gazans (over 25,000 women and children), 1000 Israelis and 1000 Palestinians in the West Bank, in the end Israel is a world nuclear power and a regional superpower, and only the USA can reign it in completely. Yet Jordan's King Abdullah has patiently and shrewdly managed to contain the Gaza war from becoming far worse

and developing into a full scale regional, and possibly world, war.

The King's Position: King Abdullah is not the leader of a rich or populous country, nor is he a religious scholar, but what makes his role vital is being the linchpin to the central cause of the Islamic world: the issue of Palestine and Jerusalem, and his being the Custodian of the Muslim and Christian Holy Sites there. There are over 12 million Palestinians in the world, 3 million in Jordan itself, around another 5 million in the Occupied Territories and Israel, and 2 million in Gaza. As Palestine is not recognized as a state by the entire international community, the responsibility for an equitable peace falls largely on its next-door neighbour Jordan, and on King Abdullah II in particular, especially as his family have been the hereditary Custodians of the Holy Sites from before the creation of the state of Jordan itself. Moreover, in the face of attempts to dissolve the very notion of Palestinian identity, dissolve UNRWA and illegally and unilaterally grant Jerusalem to Israel, King Abdullah has been the only influential voice actively—but responsibly—resisting this catastrophe for the Islamic world. Moreover, Jerusalem is one of Islam's three holiest sites and is as holy to Muslims as it is to Jews and Christians, and its loss would represent a grievance based not only on justice but on faith to all the world's 2.1 billion Muslims, a situation with explosive potential consequences, to say the least.

The King's Lineage: King Abdullah II is a 41st-generation direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through the line of the Prophet's ﷺ grandson Al-Hasan. The Hashemite Dynasty is the second-oldest ruling dynasty in the world, after that of Japan. As the current bearer of the Hashemite legacy, HM King Abdullah II has a unique prestige in the Islamic world, and is now the longest-serving Arab ruler; having assumed the throne in 1999 and celebrated his Silver Jubilee as king in 2024. His father King Hussein himself ruled for 47 years and was the longest-serving Arab leader when he died in 1999.

The King's Heritage: HM King Abdullah II is the Custodian of Al-Haram Al-Sharif in Jerusalem, the sacred compound which contains Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Indeed, the Hashemite Custodianship of the Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem is essential in safeguarding the pre-1967 Status Quo at the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The Status Quo is a critical insurance against attempts at temporal and spatial division of

Country: Jordan

Born: 30 January 1962 (age 62)

Source of Influence: Custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

Influence: King with authority over 12 million Jordanians; outreach to Traditional Islam

School of Thought: Traditional Sunni

2024 (5)

2023 (5)

2022 (5)

On September 15th during his official visit to Singapore, HH Pope Francis said (in a historic politically and spiritually unprecedented statement from a Catholic Pope about a Muslim ruler):

'And I want to say something, this may be a bit of me getting involved in politics: I am very, very grateful to the King of Jordan. He is a man of peace. King Abdullah is a good man.'

Over:

4.1 million medical cases treated in Gaza by the Jordanian military since the start of the war

41st generation direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ



ﷺ I ﷺ

His Majesty

King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein

Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Judaizing its surroundings. His Majesty is also the custodian of Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem. He has firmly supported the upkeep and renovation of these sites. In 2016 King Abdullah issued a Royal Benefaction to provide for the restoration of Jesus' Tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, at his own personal expense. And in 2018 he helped fund the restoration of the entire Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem from his own funds.

The King's Reforms: In 2021, HM King Abdullah II pushed for political modernization and announced the introduction of a new committee of 92 members tasked to modernize the political system and to propose new laws for local governments. The committee proposed draft laws for political parties and elections, as well as 22 amendments to the Jordanian Constitution regarding parliamentary work and empowering women and youth. This year, in 2024, under his guidance, parliamentary democratic elections under a party or coalition system are taking place for the first time.

The King's Traditions: 80% of Jordan's laws are based on the Ottoman *Majalla* and hence on traditional Hanafi shariah. Jordan has a Chief Mufti, official muftis in every province, army and police grand muftis and shariah courts for all personal status issues for Muslims. Yet it has Orthodox-Priest-run courts for its native Christian population in Christian personal status issues, and Jordan guarantees Christian seats in the Parliament and de facto at every level of government. It has civil law for all citizens and additional tribal laws and customs for tribesmen and tribeswomen.

The King's Faith: In response to growing Islamophobia in the West in the wake of 9/11 and rising sectarian strife, King Abdullah II launched the Amman Message initiative in 2004 (see "www.ammanmessage.com" on page 148), which was unanimously adopted by the Islamic World's political and tempo-

ral leaderships. King Abdullah II has also initiated many projects which promote traditional Islam such as: Altafsir.com (see page 201); the World Islamic Sciences and Education University (W.I.S.E.) in Jordan (see www.wise.edu.jo); Integral Professorial Chairs for the study of the work of Imam Al-Ghazali at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Imam Al-Razi at the King Hussein Mosque, Imam Al-Suyuti's Work at Al-Husseini Grand Mosque and Imam Al-Nawawi's Work at Al-Salt Grand Mosque and at (W.I.S.E.).

HM King Abdullah II is also lauded as an interfaith leader for his support of the 2007 A Common Word initiative (see page 159). He was also the initiator and driving force behind the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week Resolution in 2010 (see page 190). In 2014 HM King Abdullah hosted HH Pope Francis in Jordan (having previously hosted both HH Pope Benedict XVI and HH Pope John Paul II). In 2015 the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ on Jordan's River Bank was unanimously voted a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Thus, at the same time that DA'ISH was destroying Syria and Iraq's historical and archaeological treasures, King Abdullah was preserving not just Muslim Holy Sites, but Christian Holy Sites and universal historical and religious treasures as well. In 2014 King Abdullah established a fellowship for the study of love in religion at Regent's Park College, Oxford University.

The King's Protection: Jordan has around 2 million registered and unregistered refugees from Syria and Iraq and other regional conflicts (such as Libya and Yemen), in addition to around 3 million refugees from the Palestine conflict. Despite its paucity of resources, Jordan has welcomed and accommodated a staggering number of refugees and is seen by many as the most stable country in a turbulent region. It has the highest percentage of refugees of any country in the world.

'The Blessed Tree', under which the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ sat and rested in the Jordanian Desert

