

Jordan National Movement

Amman, Jordan

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Mission Statement: An authentic, independent Jordanian organization seeks to promote democracy, human rights, and political, economic and social reforms, and national strategic issues in Jordan, and constructive and peaceful dialogue to settle current and future conflicts in the Middle East region

Corruption Report (1)

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Significant Growth of Corruption Scandals in Jordan: Report to the International Community

One of the major hindrances to economic growth and prosperity in any country is the absence of these important dimensions: genuine democracy; separation of executive legislative and judicial systems; quality management and effective ways and means of fighting and eradicating corruption. To a large extent, all of these essential dimensions do not exist in Jordan. According to the annual survey by the Berlin-based organization Transparency International, Jordan scored 5.7. “A score of 5.0 is the number Transparency International considers the borderline figure distinguishing countries that do and do not have a serious corruption problem.”

Jordan has become a true presidential monarchy! The leading opposition figure in Jordan, Mr. Laith Shubeilat, stated recently that “King Abdullah is unelected, unaccountable and conducting all the business of government.” The attitude of the king and his corrupt cohorts are steering the country into a landslide disaster. Ayman Al-Safadi, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Ghad daily newspaper, wrote on Thursday, September 7, 2006, “There is a significant social, cultural and political cover for corruption practices that carry significant damage on [Jordanian] society, namely favoritism and continuous violations of existing laws and the current constitution.”

While the king, his wife and members of the royal family are living lavish lives, shopping in London, Rome and Paris for the latest fashions in clothes, jewelry and materialistic things, and gambling in Las Vegas, the majority of Jordanians are dying slowly!

According to official reports from Jordan's Ministry of Health, "88,185 pounds of poisonous and expired food is found every month in the country's grocery shops and markets." This is mainly due to lax management and despicable corrupt arrangements made between the business community and high-ranking governmental officials to sell consumed commodities and food items to the public just days before expiration dates. Further, another report published by the Ministry on Saturday, September 15, 2006, indicated that "thirty thousand K-12 students have been recently diagnosed with various types of dangerous diseases due to malnutrition, complete lack of sanitations, poor and unsafe school environments and abject poverty." What has the royal court and unelected government done re: these ludicrous incidents and situation? The answer simply: nothing!

It takes the royal court and appointed government several years to do something about corruption scandals. The State Military Court prosecutor on Thursday, September 7, 2006, charged 31 suspects and 12 international companies with embezzling \$170 million from Philadelphia Bank in the late 1990s. Further, the General Union of Charity Associations is now under investigation by the unelected State General Prosecutor (SGP) for embezzlement charges estimated at \$333 thousands. Further, the file of Ibrahim Al-Moussa's Financial Advisory Group was also referred to the SGP in September, 2006, for financial fraud that led to embezzling \$14.1 million from 2500 Jordanian citizens.

Corruption in Jordan is rising to frightening levels. Jordan's intellectuals and leaders of civil and non-governmental organizations say the country is being managed and led by very corrupt cliques in the royal court and appointed government. The people of Jordan are outraged by the recent shameful actions of members of the royal family and leading governmental figures. For instance, when the State of Kuwait presented free donations of oil to the people of Jordan in 2004, the royal family and a former appointed Prime Minister, made shocking "behind the scenes" arrangements to sell a major part of this donation to a foreign oil exporting firm, known by the name Free Market Petroleum, and deposited the proceeds into their private accounts outside of Jordan. The information of the fund transferring process was confirmed by member of Kuwait's Parliament, Mr. Ahmad Al-Sadoon, in April, 2004. Another major scandal discovered just a few weeks ago is a cell phone franchise state license that was sold, through secretive arrangements between the royal court and high ranking appointed officials in the unelected government, to an unknown local IT company for \$6.3 million. Within a few weeks, the same company sold the license to another IT company in the Kingdom of Bahrain for \$635 million!!! This significant illegal profit was cashed in the banking accounts of members of the royal family and other involved appointed officials. Of course, these absurd practices go unnoticed due the fact that the royal family in Jordan is above the law!

In Jordan, major corruption scandals usually end up with prosecutions of low-level governmental employees and cover ups for senior and royal personalities. The major problem is that these corrupt individuals are part of the corrupt royal institution and live on pensions paid by the king, called in Jordan "Al-Barbeesh," or the water pipe. They were trained not to rise up against the king or the royal family, always to defend the policies of the appointed government, to never say the truth and to endorse decisions

even if they are wrong and disastrous. Otherwise, they will lose power, and Al-Barbeesh will be cut!

The era of creating and exchanging creative ideas, constructive dialogue and shared decision making is over in this country of 6 million people. Despite promises (<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/story?id=583538&page=1>) made by King Abdullah to the late Peter Jennings, ABC news anchor, on Tuesday, March 15, 2005, that he is open to constitutional monarchy, the king has done nothing to that effect. In fact, the situation has become even worse than ever before. In Jordan, the king is running the show: Every single executive, legislative and judicial decision must be ratified and blessed by him and members of the royal family.

Do we need another Saddam Hussein and a countless number of cruel terrorists? If the answer is no, then we need to do something about the exacerbating circumstances in Jordan. The travesty of corruption, clear lack of political and judicial reforms, and unaccountability of the royal family are now widespread and growing rapidly. Today, these daily corrupt practices are generating public anger and creating potential junior and senior Jordanian terrorists (e.g., Zarqawi, Al-Maqdsi, Abu Trab and Al-Smmadi) who would have nothing but hate towards those counties that support corrupt absolute monarchical regimes such as the current one headed by the illustrious King Abdullah of Jordan.

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Transparency International

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