

date visited 2/8/13

Middle East :: Jordan

page last updated on February 5, 2013



Introduction :: Jordan

Background:

Following World War I and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the UK received a mandate to govern much of the Middle East. Britain separated out a semi-autonomous region of Transjordan from Palestine in the early 1920s, and the area gained its independence in 1946; it adopted the name of Jordan in 1950. The country's long-time ruler was King HUSSEIN (1953-99). A pragmatic leader, he successfully navigated competing pressures from the major powers (US, USSR, and UK), various Arab states, Israel, and a large internal Palestinian population. Jordan lost the West Bank to Israel in the 1967 war and defeated Palestinian rebels who attempted to overthrow the monarchy in 1970. King HUSSEIN in 1988 permanently relinquished Jordanian claims to the West Bank. In 1989, he reinstated parliamentary elections and initiated a gradual political liberalization; political parties were legalized in 1992. In 1994, he signed a peace treaty with Israel. King ABDALLAH II, King HUSSEIN's eldest son, assumed the throne following his father's death in February 1999. Since then, he has consolidated his power and implemented some economic and political reforms. Jordan acceded to the World Trade Organization in 2000, and began to participate in the European Free Trade Association in 2001. In 2003, Jordan staunchly supported the Coalition ouster of SADDAM in Iraq and, following the outbreak of insurgent violence in Iraq, absorbed thousands of displaced Iraqis. Municipal elections were held in July 2007 under a system in which 20% of seats in all municipal councils were reserved by quota for women. Parliamentary elections were last held in November 2010 and saw independent pro-government candidates win the vast majority of seats.

Beginning in January 2011 in the wake of unrest in Tunisia and Egypt, as many as several thousand Jordanians staged weekly demonstrations and marches in Amman and other cities throughout Jordan to push for political reforms and protest government corruption, rising prices, rampant poverty, and high unemployment. In response, King ABDALLAH replaced his prime minister and formed two commissions - one to propose specific reforms to Jordan's electoral and political parties laws, and the other to consider limited constitutional amendments. In a televised speech in June 2011, the King announced plans to work toward transferring authority for appointing future prime ministers and cabinet ministers to parliament; in a subsequent announcement, he outlined a revised political parties law intended to encourage greater political participation. Protesters and opposition elements generally acknowledged those measures as steps in the right direction but many continue to push for greater limits on the King's authority and to fight against government

date visited 2/8/13

corruption. In September 2011, a royal decree approved constitutional amendments passed by the Parliament aimed at strengthening a more independent judiciary and establishing a constitutional court and independent election commission to oversee the next municipal and parliamentary elections, slated for April 2012 and fall 2012, respectively. King ABDALLAH in October 2011 dismissed the Jordanian cabinet and replaced the prime minister in response to widespread public dissatisfaction with government performance and escalating criticism of the premier because of public concerns over his reported involvement in corruption.

Geography ::Jordan

Location:

Middle East, northwest of Saudi Arabia, between Israel (to the west) and Iraq

Geographic coordinates:

31 00 N, 36 00 E

Map references:

Middle East

Area:

total: 89,342 sq km

country comparison to the world: [112](#)

land: 88,802 sq km

water: 540 sq km

Area - comparative:

slightly smaller than Indiana

Land boundaries:

total: 1,635 km

border countries: Iraq 181 km, Israel 238 km, Saudi Arabia 744 km, Syria 375 km, West Bank 97 km

Coastline:

26 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 3 nm

Climate:

mostly arid desert; rainy season in west (November to April)

Terrain:

mostly desert plateau in east, highland area in west; Great Rift Valley separates East and West Banks of the Jordan River

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Dead Sea -408 m

highest point: Jabal Umm ad Dami 1,854 m

Natural resources:

phosphates, potash, shale oil

Land use:

date visited 2/8/13

arable land: 3.32%
 permanent crops: 1.18%
 other: 95.5% (2005)

Irrigated land:

820 sq km (2003)

Total renewable water resources:

0.9 cu km (1997)

Freshwater withdrawal (domestic/industrial/agricultural):

total: 1.01 cu km/yr (21%/4%/75%)

per capita: 177 cu m/yr (2000)

Natural hazards:

droughts; periodic earthquakes

Environment - current issues:

limited natural freshwater resources; deforestation; overgrazing; soil erosion; desertification

Environment - international agreements:

party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands

signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements

Geography - note:

strategic location at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba and as the Arab country that shares the longest border with Israel and the occupied West Bank

People and Society ::Jordan

Nationality:

noun: Jordanian(s)

adjective: Jordanian

Ethnic groups:

Arab 98%, Circassian 1%, Armenian 1%

Languages:

Arabic (official), English (widely understood among upper and middle classes)

Religions:

Sunni Muslim 92% (official), Christian 6% (majority Greek Orthodox, but some Greek and Roman Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Protestant denominations), other 2% (several small Shia Muslim and Druze populations) (2001 est.)

Population:

6,508,887 (July 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: [104](#)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 34.9% (male 1,168,406/female 1,102,892)

15-24 years: 20.1% (male 673,794/female 636,925)

date visited 2/8/13

25-54 years: 35.8% (male 1,177,521/female 1,155,117)

55-64 years: 4.2% (male 131,416/female 140,680)

65 years and over: 4.9% (male 156,735/female 165,401) (2012 est.)

population pyramid:



Median age:

total: 22.4 years

male: 22 years

female: 22.7 years (2012 est.)

Population growth rate:

-0.965% (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: [228](#)

Birth rate:

26.52 births/1,000 population (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: [51](#)

Death rate:

2.74 deaths/1,000 population (July 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: [220](#)

Net migration rate:

-33.42 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: [220](#)

Urbanization:

urban population: 79% of total population (2010)

rate of urbanization: 1.6% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

Major cities - population:

AMMAN (capital) 1.088 million (2009)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.06 male(s)/female

under 15 years: 1.06 male(s)/female

15-64 years: 1.03 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.95 male(s)/female

total population: 1.03 male(s)/female (2011 est.)

Maternal mortality rate:

63 deaths/100,000 live births (2010)

country comparison to the world: [97](#)

Infant mortality rate:

total: 15.83 deaths/1,000 live births

country comparison to the world: [108](#)

male: 16.42 deaths/1,000 live births

female: 15.2 deaths/1,000 live births (2012 est.)

Life expectancy at birth: