

Introduction to Jordan

From The World Factbook

Background

Following World War I and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the League of Nations awarded Britain the mandate to govern much of the Middle East. Britain demarcated a semi-autonomous region of Transjordan from Palestine in the early 1920s. The area gained its independence in 1946 and thereafter became The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The country's long-time ruler, King HUSSEIN (1953-99), 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 Six-Day War. King HUSSEIN in 1988 permanently relinquished Jordanian claims to the West Bank; 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 1999. He implemented modest political and economic reforms, but in the wake of the "Arab Revolution" across the Middle East, Jordanians continue to press for further political liberalization, government reforms, and economic improvements. In January 2014, Jordan assumed a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2014-15 term.



Geography

Location:

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

Land boundaries:

Border Countries (5): Iraq 179 km, Israel 307 km, Saudi Arabia 731 km, Syria 379 km, West Bank 148 km

Area - comparative:

About three-quarters the size of Pennsylvania; slightly smaller than Indiana

Area comparison map:



Coastline:

26 km

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 eastern and western banks of the Jordan River

Environment - Current Issues:

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

The World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html>

Public Domain

2014



People and Society

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:

Muslim 97.2% (official; predominantly Sunni), Christian 2.2% (majority Greek Orthodox, but some Greek and Roman Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Protestant denominations), Buddhist 0.4%, Hindu 0.1%, Jewish <.1, folk religion <.1, unaffiliated <.1, other <.1 (2010 est.)

Population:

8,117,564

Note: increased estimate reflects revised assumptions about the net migration rate due to the increased flow of Syrian refugees (July 2015 est.)

Urban Population: 83.7% of total population (2015)

Life expectancy at birth:

74.35 years

Literacy:

Definition: age 15 and over can read and write

Total Population: 95.4%

Male: 97.7%

Female: 92.9% (2015 est.)



Government

Country name:

Conventional Long Form: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Conventional Short Form: Jordan

Local Long Form: Al Mamlakah al Urduniyah al Hashimiyah

Local Short Form: Al Urdun

Former: Transjordan

Government type:

Constitutional Monarchy

Capital:

Amman

Administrative divisions:

12 governorates (muhafazat, singular - muhafazah):

'Ajlun, Al 'Aqabah, Al Balqa', Al Karak, Al Mafraq, Al'Asimah, At Tafilah, Az Zarqa', Irbid, Jarash, Ma'an, Madaba

Independence:

25 May 1946

Constitution:

Previous 1928 (preindependence); latest initially adopted 28 November 1947, revised and ratified 1 January 1952; amended several times, last in 2014 (2014)

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:

Chief of state:

King ABDALLAH II (since 7 February 1999); Crown Prince

HUSSEIN (born 28 June 1994), eldest son of King ABDALLAH II

Head of government:

Prime Minister Abdullah NSOUR (since 11 October 2012)

Cabinet:

Cabinet appointed by the prime minister in consultation with the monarch

Elections/appointments:

The monarchy is hereditary; prime minister appointed by the monarch

Legislative branch:

Bicameral National Assembly or Majlis al-'Umma consists of the Senate, or the House of Notables or Majlis al-Ayan (60 seats; members appointed by the monarch to serve 4-year terms) and the Chamber of

Deputies or House of Representatives or Majlis al-Nuwaab (150 seats; 108 members directly elected in single- and multi-seat constituencies by simple majority vote, 27 directly elected in a single national constituency by proportional representation vote, and 15 seats reserved for women; members serve 4-year terms)

Note - the electoral law enacted in July 2012 allocated an additional 10 seats - 6 for women, 2 for Amman, and 1 seat each for the cities of Zarqa and Irbid

Judicial branch:

Highest court(s):

Court of Cassation or Supreme Court (consists of 7 judges including the chief justice; 7-judge panels for important cases and 5 judge panels for most appeals cases)

Judge selection and term of office:

Chief justice appointed by the king; other judges nominated by the Higher Judicial Council and approved by the king; judge tenure NA

Subordinate courts:

Courts of appeal; magistrate courts; courts of first instance; religious courts; State Security Court

Flag description:

Three equal horizontal bands of black, representing the Abbassid Caliphate, white, representing the Umayyad Caliphate, and green, representing the Fatimid Caliphate; a red isosceles triangle on the hoist side, representing the Great Arab Revolt of 1916, and bearing a small white seven-pointed star symbolizing the seven verses of the opening Sura (Al-Fatiha) of the Holy Koran; the seven points on the star represent faith in One God, humanity, national spirit, humility, social justice, virtue, and aspirations; design based on the Arab Revolt flag of World War I



National symbol(s):

eagle; national colors: black, white, green, red

Economy

Jordan's economy is among the smallest in the Middle East, with insufficient supplies of water, oil, and other natural resources underlying the government's heavy reliance on foreign assistance. Other economic challenges for the government include chronic high rates of poverty, unemployment, inflation, and a large budget deficit and resulting government debt. King ABDALLAH, during the first decade of the 2000s, implemented significant economic reforms, such as opening up foreign trade and privatizing state-owned companies that attracted foreign investment and contributed to average annual economic growth of 8% for 2004 through 2008. The global economic slowdown and regional turmoil since, however, reduced the average annual growth rate to 2.6% for the 2010-2013 period and hurt export-oriented sectors, construction, and tourism. Jordan's finances have been strained by a series of natural gas pipeline attacks in Egypt, causing Jordan to substitute more expensive diesel imports, primarily from Saudi Arabia, to generate electricity. To diversify its energy mix, Jordan is currently exploring nuclear power generation, exploitation of abundant oil shale reserves and renewable technologies, as well as the import of Israeli offshore gas. In August 2012, to correct budgetary and balance of payments imbalances, Jordan entered into a \$2.1 billion, three year International Monetary Fund Stand-By Arrangement. In 2014, fiscal reform measures enacted in the previous few years continued to boost government revenues and reduced the budget deficit even as an influx of over 620,000 Syrian refugees since 2011 put additional pressure on expenditures.

Agriculture - products:

Citrus, tomatoes, cucumbers, olives, strawberries, stone fruits; sheep, poultry, dairy

Industries:

Tourism, information technology, clothing, fertilizers, potash, phosphate mining, pharmaceuticals, petroleum refining, cement, inorganic chemicals, light manufacturing

Exports - commodities:

Clothing, fertilizers, potash, phosphates, vegetables, pharmaceuticals

Imports - commodities:

Crude oil, refined petroleum products, machinery, transport equipment, iron, cereals