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Jordan: Treatment of Palestinians by the government and its agents (2005 - 2006)
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According to a renowned expert on the Middle East, who is also president of the consulting firm Near East Support Services, Palestinians have been "well-established" in Jordan since 1948 (President 12 Dec. 2006) and constitute approximately 60 percent of the Jordanian population (*ibid.*; HRW 7 Nov. 2006). A report by the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) maintains that "the largest number of Palestine refugees" lives in Jordan and that the majority are full Jordanian citizens, can work in the government and have access to governmental and other assistance (UN 2005, 8). An article in a University of Oxford journal on refugee studies also states that Jordan hosts the largest group of Palestinian refugees among the Arab countries, although it highlights that this group faces "subtle forms of discrimination" and does not enjoy equal political participation (*Forced Migration Review* 4 Sept. 2006).

In a 13 December 2006 telephone interview, an international relations professor at the University of Southern California stated that although Palestinians and Jordanians are equal under Jordanian law, there is informal discrimination against Palestinians. The Professor explained that should an individual, Palestinian or Jordanian, require assistance or protection from the government, the individual is best served if he or she is well-connected or comes from a prominent family (Professor 13 Dec. 2006). The Professor added that Palestinians are not as likely as Jordanians to have good connections or to come from well-known families, and therefore not as likely to benefit from such assistance (*ibid.*).

Sources also identify two distinct groups of Palestinians subject to differing treatment (*Daily Star Egypt* 5 Nov. 2006; MERIA Mar. 2006). They are Palestinians who became Jordanian citizens following annexation of the West Bank during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and who are referred to as Palestinian-Jordanians (*ibid.*), and those Palestinians who are known as Gaza Palestinians because they moved to Gaza in 1948 and were forced out of the region after the 1967 war (*Daily Star Egypt* 5 Nov. 2006). The United States (US) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005* indicates that Jordan issues five-year passports to Palestinian-Jordanians but not to the roughly 150,000 Palestinian refugees from Gaza who do not qualify for full Jordanian citizenship (8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). These individuals are eligible for three-year travel passports that do not signify full Jordanian citizenship (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). In slight contrast, a news article from *The Daily Star Egypt* states that Gaza Palestinians are eligible for two-year passports (5 Nov. 2006; USCRI 14 June 2005) that, upon expiration, are problematic to renew (*The Daily Star Egypt* 5 Nov. 2006). Jordan also issues different types of passports, neither of which include the national numbers that ascribe citizenship, to Palestinians living in the West Bank who have no other travel documents and to Palestinian refugees from Gaza (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). According to the *Country Reports 2005*, human rights activists allege that government officials have revoked the national numbers from Palestinian-Jordanians, which is tantamount to revoking full Jordanian citizenship, as well as confiscated the temporary passports of Palestinians returning from the West Bank (*ibid.*).

With respect to elections and political participation, the *Country Reports 2005* documents how the mapping of electoral districts has favoured and given greater representation to rural and southern regions of Jordan over urban areas (*ibid.*, Sec. 3). The rural and southern regions are acknowledged as supporting traditional, pro-monarchy viewpoints while the urban areas are more densely populated with Palestinian-Jordanians (*ibid.*; Freedom House 7 Sept. 2006). As a result, the electoral system has been criticized for underrepresenting the Palestinian population (*ibid.*; MERIA Mar. 2006). According to Joost Hilteerman of the International Crisis Group (ICG), Transjordanians, native Jordanians, are concerned that amending the electoral law to give more equitable representation to Palestinians would transform Jordan into a de facto Palestinian state (UN 17 Jan. 2006).

At the end of 2005, 6 out of 28 ministers, 7 out of 55 senators and 17 out of 110 lower house representatives were Palestinian-Jordanians; none of Jordan's 12 governors were Palestinians (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 3). Discrimination prevents Palestinian-Jordanians from being selected for positions in senior government and the military (*ibid.* Sec. 5; Freedom House 7 Sept. 2006). A Reuters news article states that while Palestinians are prominent in the business sector, their presence is believed to be insignificant in the public service, military and the upper echelons of government (6 Nov. 2006b). An exception was made in April 2006, however, when King Abdullah II appointed Bassem (also Bassim) Awadallah as director of his office and Farouk Kasrawi (also Farouq Qsrawi) as

his special advisor (*The Jerusalem Post* 8 May 2006; Jordan 2006), both of whom are Palestinian-Jordanians (*The Jerusalem Post* 8 May 2006).

Specific instances of unfavourable treatment of Palestinians include the story of Adnan Abu Odeh (HRW 7 Nov. 2006). In November 2006, the Jordanian government filed charges against Odeh for slander and causing internal strife for remarks he made during an Al Jazeera television interview on 28 October 2006 (ibid.; Reuters 6 Nov. 2006a). Odeh, a former aide to the deceased King Hussein, complained of the inadequate political representation in parliament of Jordanians of Palestinian origin (ibid.; HRW 7 Nov. 2006). The charges against Odeh were dropped on 5 November 2006 (Reuters 6 Nov. 2006b). According to the *Country Reports 2005*, the founder of the Jordan Organization for Citizen Rights reported that, in April 2005, a government official threatened legal or administrative action against him should he pursue the cause of Palestinian rights (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 4). At the end of 2005, no further government action had been taken against the founder of the Jordan Organization for Citizen Rights (ibid.). As a Reuters news article explains, the "political empowerment of Jordanians of Palestinian origin is a sensitive issue" (6 Nov. 2006a).

With respect to employment, housing and education, *The Daily Star Egypt* reports that Palestinians from Gaza encounter "severe" discrimination (5 Nov. 2006). Prior to looking for employment, they must receive the permission of Jordanian security employees (*Daily Star Egypt* 5 Nov. 2006). In addition, Gaza Palestinians are not permitted to buy land in Jordan, and they have difficulty in gaining entrance to Jordanian universities (ibid.), as do Palestinian-Jordanians (Freedom House 7 Sept. 2006). The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) *World Refugee Survey 2006* states that Gaza Palestinians with temporary passports are subject to higher fees at Jordanian universities (2006). Gaza Palestinians are reportedly considered "Arab foreigners" by Jordanian universities (*Daily Star Egypt* 5 Nov. 2006).

Amnesty International (AI) reports that Palestinian-Jordanians "are more likely to be tortured" by Jordan's security forces than other nationals (24 July 2006). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Middle East politics professors at Appalachian State University, the University of Guelph and the University of Maryland did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Alternative Information Center, *Arab Studies Journal*, BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine, Center for Strategic Studies (University of Jordan), Collective for Research and Training on Development - Action (CRTD-A), The Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS), *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES), The Jerusalem Fund, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Middle East Institute (MEI), Middle East Policy Council, Middle East Studies Association, National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, Palestinian Development Gateway, Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group (PHRMG), Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, SHAML Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre.

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