

National Integrity Systems

Country Study Report

Jordan 2001

Report Authors

Basem Sakijha. Consultant, Arab Archives Institute and columnist at Ad-Dustour newspaper.

Sa'eda Kilani (editor). Director, Arab Archives Institute.

Jordan

Introduction

There is a certain degree of corruption in any society, according to Transparency International Source Book. This study will conclude by saying: Jordan is certainly not an exception. There is corruption in Jordan, there is political and social will to fight it. But it seems they are not powerful enough.

In an opinion poll conducted on Wasta¹ in Jordan, around 87 percent of respondents stressed that while they believed in the need to eradicate Wasta because it was one form of corruption, more than 90 per cent believed they would be always using it in the future.²

This report intends to explore the means of formulating a forceful system of integrity and how reducing the spread of corruption to the minimum is possible with a clear political will, fruitful cooperation, continuous coordination and solid coalitions among the private and public sectors, civil society institutions and the judiciary.

This is where Jordan is currently heading under the directives of King Abdullah II. This study will aim at evaluating the degree of corruption in Jordan through analysing the different components of an integrity system.

General overview

Jordan is a small country with an approximate five million in population, its area reaches eighty nine thousand square kilometres. More than 85 per cent of the land is desert and semi desert. Political and economic life is centered in the capital Amman and its close surrounding where more than two-thirds of the inhabitants reside.

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy which has been ruled by King Hussein since 1952 and until his death in February 1999 after which he was succeeded by his eldest son Abdullah, who is currently ruling the country. The king has considerable executive and legislative powers. He has the authority to form and dismiss cabinets, appoint and remove prime ministers, dissolve parliament and establish the broad outlines of domestic and foreign policy.

The Jordanian parliament is composed of two Houses: the Senate which is composed of 40 members and is appointed by the king for a four-year term that can be renewed, and the Lower House which has 80 seats and is elected for a four-year term in general elections.

Since the reintroduction of democracy in 1989 and the lifting of martial law in 1991 (that was in force since 1957), Jordanians experienced openness in debate and an official tolerance of criticism.

The process of liberalisation was initiated after rioting occurred in some Jordanian cities in April that year in protest against price rises on fuel. As part of the reform process, national elections for the 80-seat House of representatives were held for the first time since 22 years. Islamists gained 22 seats, which allowed them to hold several ministerial positions. The same principle was not followed in all successive governments.

In 1992, the political parties' law was promulgated that allowed parties to function in the kingdom for the first time since a ban imposed since 1956. There are now 22 political parties, most of which are weak except for the Islamic Action Front party. In 1993, Jordan promulgated the press law that allowed for the first time the individual's right to publish. The relatively liberal law allowed the press industry to flourish. However, four years later, the government imposed a restrictive press law that was followed by two other laws similar in nature. The press never recuperated.

There are now four daily newspapers and more than ten weeklies.

In 1994, Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel but hopes of economic prosperity never materialised. The disappointment fostered claims of opponents to peace with Israel and tension heightened with opposition parties, mainly Islamists and leftists.

The government imposed a restrictive temporary press law in May 1997 which, inter alia, led to the formulation of a centrist Parliament. Restrictive measures against the press and civil society

institutions increased in the last four years. They continued in 1999 as it was the succession year of King Abdullah to the throne. Hopes were pinned on the new leadership to introduce new changes, fight corruption and enhance freedoms.

Jordan has a relatively good constitution, in terms of national integrity level. But it remains restricted by laws and norms.

Article 44 of the Constitution stipulates that “no minister may purchase or lease any government property even if the sale or lease thereof has been offered in public auction. He/she shall not, while holding his/her ministerial office, become a member of the board of directors of any company or take part in any commercial or financial transaction or receive a salary from any company.”

This provision has not been implemented in practice mainly due to the confusion between official and private business.

The public sector in Jordan is the largest employer. Around two-thirds of the 2001 budget is allocated to salaries. According to Mohammad Thuneibat, Minister of State for Administrative Development, as much as half a million Jordanians receive their salaries from the state,³ as employees or retired and around three million people are dependent on the state considering that the average family members in Jordan is 5.9 members.

The nature of the population make-up is unique. The irregular circumstances that resulted from the immigration of Circassians, immigrants (from Greater Syria and Hijaz) at the beginning of last century into the country, as well as the forced migration in the middle of the century of Palestinians (as a result of the 1948 and 1967 wars), made a noticeable and accelerated increase within the population. Such geographic and populace composition had its reflection on the economic and political structure, which by definition had its impact on the possibility of formulating a national integrity system.

Jordanian policies, laws and institutions are likewise heavily influenced by the political circumstances in the region. Jordan was in direct contact with events related to the Palestinian issue, partly because of its geographic and social affinity since half of its population is of Palestinian origin. While they maintain their Jordanian citizenship, they uphold their right to return to their country, which produces uncertainty and confusion in identity. Such complexities are naturally reflected on the political and economic system. They were also the reason behind the regime’s favouritism to certain groups over others which, in its turn, had its implications on the economic performance and its integrity.

In recent years, the state started advocating for privatisation. It is however facing serious difficulties because of social circumstances and the incapability of the economy to create new job opportunities.

The experience of the past ten years shows that the issue of corruption had been frequently tackled but little action was taken to fight it. This is due to several reasons:

- Constitutional: The constitution places several restrictions on prosecuting senior officials.
- Legal: Jordanian laws conflict each other on one hand and on the other hand.
- Political: Real representation of the people is absent in parliament.
- Civil: Civil society institutions are weak and do not perform their anticipated role in fighting corruption.
- Economic: The private sector’s contribution to the economic process is meagre.
- Cultural: Traditions and acquired rights encourage certain pro-corruption practices.

This study will attempt to analyse these elements combined through discussing and shedding light on the main impediments that counter anti-corruption work, in law and in practice.

The Pillars

Executive authority and fighting corruption

The executive authority monopolises fighting corruption in Jordan. It refuses until now to allow civil society forces and the private sector to participate in the work of the concerned parties. Cooperation and coordination among all sectors are non-existent.

The government of Ali Abul Ragheb had taken steps to limit privileges accorded to former senior officials.⁴ The new measures included re-organising public properties and public procurement

concerning government cars and telephone bills of former senior officials. The news item in Al Rai said that the government paid in 2000 a bill of around 35,000 dinars for telephone bills and that government cars cost an annual amount of 50 million dinars. The source quoted by the newspaper hoped that a study was carried out to limit expenses and that measures will be taken and hoped that other government institutions follow suit.⁵

But other manifestations of corruption had not been tackled, such as:

- Former ministers and deputies, who can by their official title acquire easily loans from the banks, do not pay back. For example, a number of senior officials had taken loans from the agricultural lending institution in amounts that far exceed those that local farmers can get and have not paid back the amount that reaches around 7.5 million dinars.⁶ Not only that, but employees get threatened if they ask the officials to pay back.⁷
- Ministries and public institutions are indebted to The Social Security Corporation with an amount that reached 30.5 in August 2000.⁸
- The weekly al Shahed reported that there were 40 employees charged with corruption related cases while they were still working.⁹

On July 30, 2000, the government, upon the king's directives, formed a higher ministerial committee to fight corruption. The committee, under the chairmanship of deputy prime minister, minister of Justice, is composed of the directors of the Audit Bureau, the Monitoring and Inspection Bureau, the Anti-Corruption unit at the Intelligence Department in addition to the Minister of Administrative Development, and the companies monitor at the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

Although the committee is purely governmental and was under criticism since its formation committee because it was void of representatives of civil society institutions, it was nonetheless an admission of the incapacity of the existing agencies to perform their proper role in fighting corruption. The press questioned the reasoning behind designating a government-committee to monitor the performance of the government itself and its institutions.¹⁰

Hussein Rawashdeh, a writer in Ad-Dustour commented on the governments' will to fight corruption by saying: "With the exception of very few cases, the war of words that the successive governments launched against corruption did not yield any result. The public would not be convinced now that the formed committee, the taken decisions and the given promises will eventually lead to containing the epidemy or limit its spread after it became impossible to do so."¹¹

In a positive development and as part and parcel of its campaign to fight corruption, the government embarked on the electronic government project that will be implemented in 3 to 5 years. Deputy prime minister, minister of state for economic affairs was quoted by the Petra news agency as confirming the government's will and intention to carry out the project in time which will facilitate government procedures and reduce the application of connections to carry out government papers.

Parliament

TI Source Book defines elected parliaments as the heart of the national integrity system, simply because corruption spreads in the undemocratic environment. In this respect, the Jordanian parliamentary life had its ups and downs in the last twelve years. In 1989, parliamentary life was restored after twenty-two years and fair and free elections resulted in a dynamic parliament, active in pursuing accountability and transparency.

However, the government imposed a new temporary one-person, one-vote election law four years later (in 1993) that was shortly afterwards endorsed by parliament and became a permanent law. Until this day, heated debate revolves around this controversial bill and the extent to which it ensures equal representation of all political shades in the country. In 1997, key political groupings and political parties, most notably the Islamists, pan-Arab movements, leftist and independents, boycotted the parliamentary elections, a stand that might recur in 2001 if the same law were still in force

The law has re-instated tribal, familial and parochial representation and alienated candidates who have political programmes from winning a seat in Parliament. Some deputies won with hundreds of votes for a seat that naturally requires tens of thousands of votes.

The law allows one vote for each person in constituencies distributed around the kingdom in a limited fashion, which restricts possible coalitions. While the previous law allowed each voter equal number of votes to the number of deputies in his/her constituency, it helped formulating solid coalitions among

politicians possible. This formula resulted in the emergence of strong candidates to parliament and the ensuing formulation of an opposition bloc that reached one-third of the 80-member House.

There is a contradiction in the official point of view and its justification of the one-person, one-vote law. Official statements relate the law to final status negotiations of the Palestinian issue which means that the law is by necessity targeting a lower number of representatives of Palestinian origin, while studies show that the government originally planned to decrease the influence of the Islamic movement within parliament.¹²

The current House (1997-2001), is composed of tribalists and centrist representatives in form and political tendency, which was a burden on the new era of King Abdullah II. It eventually failed to pass key modern and progressive laws and the amendment of backward provisions in certain legislation. The situation raises soul-searching questions over the regime's interest in harboring a parliament that does not represent the society and places hurdles in front of the new policies of the new regime.¹³

Several studies and articles indicate that the 1997 parliamentary elections were not fair and free. Doubt was cast on the election process in relation to manipulation in voting cards, voters records, the voting of armed forces (which is not permissible by law) and the impartiality of state-run media.

A former interior minister, who oversaw the parliamentary elections process, admitted that there were flaws with the number of voters.¹⁴ Private newspapers published a number of repeated voting cards for the same person as well as the appearance of voting cards for deceased people.¹⁵

It was natural that the seriousness in fighting corruption differed among the three parliaments in the past twelve years, mostly depending on the strength of the opposition in each of them.

The 11th parliament and the nine cases of corruption

Corruption was a key issue in the 11th parliament's work. It is the parliament that discussed the famous nine corruption cases. One of them was the case of the Petra bank, one of the largest banks in the country, whose bankruptcy was suddenly announced in 1988. At the time, the Central Bank of Jordan was forced to pay a sum of 300 million Jordanian Dinars (around a billion dollars at that time's exchange rate) following the escape of its chairperson from Jordan. It was the only case among the other famous cases that was referred to court and witnessed rulings against perpetrators.

As regards to the other cases, judicial prosecution was stopped on the basis of a constitutional provision that makes prosecution of senior officials difficult or even impossible. These cases involved the purchase of gold reserves at the Central bank whereby a former prime minister and several former ministers were involved; administrative and financial corruption in the building of a large suburb in Abu Nuseir area in Amman where several former ministers were involved; the erection of Suwaqa prison, where two ministers were involved. The remaining cases were related to large commissions taken to carry out projects.

Discussions over the cases did not produce the desired outcome. Following investigation that lasted for two years, and after deliberations at the Lower House of Parliament, the prosecution procedures turned out to be inaccurate. The cases were referred to regular courts, while they were not within the specialty of these courts as an interpretation of the constitutional provision revealed later on. They were consequently excluded for technical reasons.

Article 55 of the constitution stipulates that a high tribunal shall try ministers for offences that may be attributed to them in the course of the performance of their duties.¹⁶

And article 59 stipulates that judgements shall be given by the High Tribunal by a majority of six votes.

The word "Ministers" in the provisions was interpreted as the current and former ministers and not current ministers alone. Therefore, the cases should have been referred to a High Tribunal and not to a regular court.

This interpretation not only produced disappointment in trying senior officials for corruption related crimes, but it also set a precedent against prosecuting former ministers as well. There are now more than 450 former and current ministers in Jordan who according to this case enjoy immunity.

Illegitimate profit making law

In 2000, the parliament attempted to revive the Illegitimate Profit-Making Law (Illegitimate profits are gains acquired by any official as a result of misuse of public post or title). It was referred back to the government. Following heated debate and public pressure, the parliament discussed the law, which in essence fights corruption and bans accumulation of wealth based on misuse of public post but was

rejected by parliament for the fourth time.¹⁷ In a joint session for deputies and senators, 54 members voted in favour out of 104 attending. The needed majority was 70 members.

Political parties

Political parties were banned in Jordan since 1956 when all parties were dissolved. Laws and legislation incorporated penalties to all those who belong to political parties. However, political parties continued to function underground and through the professional associations that later became powerful as a result. With the return of parliamentary life in 1989, and the relative overture to political life, a new political parties law was promulgated in 1992 allowing any group above 50 members to form a party.

More than 22 parties were formed most of which remained without public basis with the exception of the Islamic Action Front party (IAF), the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. IAF, historically powerful due to the regime's long-term alliance with the MB movement, succeeded in winning 22 seats in the 80-seat parliament in 1989, and 16 seats in the 12th parliament. It boycotted the 13th parliament.

Against this background of political reality was the emergence of another phenomenon: the sharp decrease in the number of registered voters and the low number of eligible voters who turned up at the polling centers low. Figures show that those do not exceed 15 percent of Jordanians, which again reflects the lack of confidence in the elections.

Political parties are weak in Jordan. They rarely take part in activities and have almost no role in fighting corruption. The Islamic Action Front party is an exception. It has a larger base than other parties and it frequently adopts corruption related cases through its newspaper, As-Sabeel and through its representatives in the students unions in universities or in professional associations, where the Islamists have the most control.

Accountability and monitoring instruments

In addition to the Audit Bureau, there is also the Monitoring and Inspection Bureau which is in charge of monitoring daily administrative decisions. In 1996, the government founded the Anti-Corruption Unit at the General Intelligence Department in response to local and international campaign calling for placing fighting corruption on the national agenda.

Audit Bureau

The audit bureau in Jordan is the government's monitoring arm in financial matters. Article 21-1 of the Audit Bureau Law for 1952 stipulates that the Bureau's director should present an annual report to Parliament. He/she has to include his/her observations on the public institutions and departments to which auditing is made according to article 4 of the same law.

A general reading of the Audit Bureau history reveals that its performance was effective in the 1950s and 1960s. But since the mid-1970s until the late 1980s, Jordan witnessed inflation in the administrative apparatus. Oil boom in the region that brought with it colossal economic aid and huge bank transfers from workers in the Gulf had a positive impact on the economy that prospered but work at the Audit Bureau remained incapable of going hand in hand with speedy development.

In 1994, Adel Qudah the director of the Audit Bureau submitted a report to the then speaker of the Lower House Taher Masri (also former prime minister) that outlined the difficulties the bureau is facing in performing its monitoring role.¹⁸ It said: There are still legal obstacles that are negatively affecting its effectiveness and its activities. Its current law does not meet the ambitions of the bureau in properly monitoring public funds. The lack of financial and administrative independence and the fact that the director does not enjoy immunity stipulated by the constitution are the main obstacles confronted by the Bureau.

Although nine years have passed on the recommendations, the complaint is still as is. The bureau director insists the bureau should have the right of transferring violators to court directly without the need to pass through numerous channels.

The bureau submits a report to parliament every six months for discussion. In the past five years, the bureau presented critical reports on embezzlements and thefts that reached a billion dinars. Also, the bureau prepared a strategy to upgrade its performance that ends in 2008.

Monitoring and Inspection Bureau

The Bureau is the executive branch's arm in monitoring the different government institutions in the field of fighting corruption. It unveils violations and pinpoints the ones responsible. It also ensures that laws and legislation are properly implemented in the civil status field, or government tenders or government works. The department does not issue a regular report but its director presents the annual work to the press without revealing the details of violations. In 2000, 4413 administrative and financial violations were discovered. The department started work this year in accordance with a new law that the government presented for promulgation within the framework of the anti-corruption strategy. The new law is expected to expand the powers granted to the department

Judiciary

In one of the cases that shook the Jordanian society for months, the Jordanian judiciary released a convict prosecuted for 86 charges. The Appeals Court ruled that the former Sri Lankan Consul, Tawfiq Abu Khajil charged with 86 charges related to selling babies and forging passports and family books, etc.¹⁹. Khajil was condemned for three years in prison only by the Criminal court. The decision was however overruled by the Appeals Court who found him innocent.

Punishing corrupt practices is rarely carried out. The public does not have confidence in its judiciary system. Some people resort to tribal law or take their right on their own, as some confided in the author but wish not to be named.

Forms of challenges to the judiciary²⁰

- The executive authority has the power that is granted by law to deputise judges and recommend pensioning them off. These powers could be abused to pressure judges to deliver the desired rulings;
- Judges are not specialised, they are being monitored by senior judges who also give orders to issue the desired ruling;
- There is also bad recording of the sessions' minutes; disorder in keeping files of cases;
- The dominance of traditions that allows notables to go to judges pleading them to change their minds or to issue the desired ruling "the dominance of tribal traditions opens the door for violations and makes corruption cases exonerated."²¹

The Jordanian parliament endorsed the Independence of the Judiciary law following a study that stretched for a year and a long debate in the society and in the press over the government's interference in the Judiciary Council's decisions. The law had limited the government's powers but it fell far beyond expectations

Press and access to information

The government owns the main media means. It owns 61 percent of shares in the leading daily, Al Rai and 35 percent of shares in the second leading Ad-Dustour. It exercises influence, in public and clandestinely, on the other two dailies, Al-Aswaq and Al Arab Al Yawm.

The promulgation of a temporary press law on May 17, 1997 was primarily intended to suspend weekly publications as part and parcel of a government campaign to better administer and control parliamentary elections in November that year.²²

Until 1997, the press had played a pivotal role in tackling corruption since the restoration of democracy in 1989. The private press, most of which is weekly, revealed tens of corruption-related cases. It could also be said that a large number of cases referred to court were initially raised by the press

Between 1997 and 2001, four press laws were promulgated. All of them are restrictive and limit the press's role in monitoring the government performance and in revealing corruption related stories. The government harasses and attacks newspapers that are critical of its policies or that reveal corruption. This is what happened to Al Arab Al Yawm newspaper that was ferociously attacked when it published a complete story on water pollution. The article, based on a report prepared by an American company called Stanley, unveiled the government's knowledge of the pollution and concealed it from the public.²³ The government denied the news and prosecuted the newspaper on many other accounts.

Information is hoarded by the government. Access to information is non-existent except for which is allowed by the government sources. There are practically no independent newspapers in Jordan and journalists who work in private newspapers are usually harassed, detained and persecuted. Such practices have decreased during the minister Taleb Rifai's mandate. But the laws have not changed.

Also, the Law on Protecting State Confidential Secrets and Documents makes access to information almost impossible. Although the current 1999 Press and Publications Law does not allow prior censorship on newspapers, the press, in practice does not enjoy full freedom in publishing. Appointments of chief editors are carried out according to government's orders either through proposing a certain person for the post or granting approval for a candidate. Another obstacle that limits press freedoms is mandatory membership in the Jordan Press Association, which also restricts the performance of journalists.

Other media means, such as Television and Radio, are state-owned. Although parliament recently promulgated a law that allowed the set-up of a new board of directors composed of both the private and public sectors, the majority of the board is composed of representatives of the public sector. One board member, who preferred not to be named, confided to the author the main points of a study carried out by the board prior to introducing reforms within the Radio and Television Corporation which could be set as an example for other institutions. The study revealed the following:

- One thousand employees were appointed in the last five years without particular need for their expertise.
- The corporation is indebted for five million Jordanian Dinars.
- The commercial department allocates an amount of JD3000 to the Prime Minister, and JD3000 to the minister of information without specific purpose or reason.
- The corporation's carpentry was used to produce bedrooms for senior employees.
- The administration is ignorant of the exact number of employees.
- There is possible corruption in the publicity section where there is discrepancy in revenues in comparison with orders signed for publicity.
- Political hypocrisy is carried out at a large scale. For example, a lorry carrying video-tapes of each parliamentary session is sent to deputies and senators.

The new Television law can be considered as better than the former one but it still falls far beyond expectations. The Council of ministers still holds the right of appointing the General Director and not the assigned board of directors whose authority is more formal than real.

NGOs

NGOs are recently established in Jordan. Most organisations started taking shape after the mid-1990's. A number of NGOs are formed by royalties.

In general, NGOs in Jordan are weak and do not play a role in revealing corruption, misdemeanours and defaults in the society. This is attributed to several reasons:

The Associations Law is backward and places restrictions on the work of associations. The law allows the minister or his/her deputy to search the premises of any association and take the files of any association at any time.

Most associations are recently established. They lack expertise and knowledge of running and administering an association and they are not aware of their role in lobbying, pressuring, and monitoring the government and other bodies' performance.

Most associations suffer from financial difficulties. Those who succeed in getting funds for their activities are fought on the basis of receiving what has come to be known as "foreign funding".

However, in general the government rarely opposes the establishment of any society. It also rarely interferes in NGOs work, not even human rights organisations. For example, Amnesty International opened up an office in February 1993 but closed down later on because of internal clashes and not because of government pressure. The government even regretted at the time that AI took such a decision. Although it is still unclear, NGOs are becoming more professional and more effective with time. But most of the successful ones are semi-governmental or run by royalties.

Human rights

Jordan is one of the few countries in the region that does not harbor the culture of political prisoners. The country also does not practice detentions and imprisonment of anti-corruption activists.

In fact, most decisions related to the upgrading of human rights came from the leadership. The right of women to vote and run as candidates was granted by the late King Hussein in the 1970's. The establishment of human rights centre in the Arab World in the early 1990's was also King Hussein's though it did not materialise for several complexities at the time. However, the prime ministry has a human rights unit that work, inter alia, on incorporating human rights in the educational system.

However, violations of human rights at a political level increase especially during politically tense periods. In February 1998, a demonstration in Ma'an protesting US attacks on Iraq resulted in the death of one citizen and the siege on the whole city where telephone lines were cut and electricity as well for days.²⁴ The situation resulted in banning pro-Iraqi marches until the advent of King Abdullah II. The marches are allowed with prior approval, which is not always granted.

A major part of International and Local human rights reports concentrate on the discriminatory policies among citizens on the basis of geographic affiliation. A debate spurred in 2000 over lack of rights of Jordanians of Palestinian origin because of their alienation from senior posts in the government and because of them being targeted by the one-person, one-vote election law that reduces its real representation.

A critical report²⁵ adopted by seven local human rights organisations, which was later presented to the Special Commission on discrimination at the United Nations, tackled the discrimination issue on geographical basis. The government refrained from making any reaction in that regard.

Even parliament held a secret session to discuss the matter further with the government²⁶.

Human rights reports also criticise the government's appointments policies especially in the Greater Amman municipality where half of the Council's members are appointed by the government. Also, recently the government applied the same principle on students unions in universities where half of their councils are appointed which eventually led to clashes with police force. The government was about to adopt the same principle in the countries municipalities but stopped the last minute following mounting protests in the press.

Overview: the national integrity system

King Abdullah concentrated, since he acceded to the throne in early 1999, on reform policy of the national economy. This policy is linked with fighting corruption and enhancing transparency in decision-making process. Jordanians were surprised to see their ruler on the Television screen disguising as an old man, moving from one government department to the other, and asking ordinary people about their daily transactions, whether they were asked for bribes or not.

The king's rounds were a clear demonstration of the lack of confidence in the traditional anti-corruption systems. In a visit made to the Anti-Corruption Unit, the king stressed that focus should be made on the real cases and not on limited stories of small bribes, though noting their importance.

The king also supported a conference held on the theme of fighting corruption that was organised by Jordan's information chapter. In a meeting with a delegation from Transparency International, the king announced his support for the conference's recommendations, especially in subjects related to the Judiciary, public procurement, press and human rights.

The conference was a landmark in the Jordanian current campaign to fight corruption. It was attended by representatives of the various political, social and economic sectors. Its recommendations were highly covered in the local media. The King's letter of designation to the new government of Ali Abul Ragheb, that was formed a month after the conference, included some of the main points raised in the recommendations- as they constitute the plan of action for the coming era. Focus in the king's speech was made on transparency in public procurement, independence of the judiciary, amendment of conflicting laws, privatisation of the press and the drafting of a code of honour against the use of wasta and nepotism.

It could be said that the government that was formed on this background is working seriously on implementing this programme:

- A higher committee to fight corruption was formed. The committee succeeded in changing a package of laws and legislation and is working on amending other ones. Deputy prime minister, minister of justice, who is also the committee's chairperson, informed us that there will also be a new legislation on public procurement whose objective is to unify public procurement concerned departments and implement a mechanism of announcing each government transaction. The committee also reached a decision that was adopted by the Council of Ministers on March 13, 2001 that restricts the use of government cars which is expected to save the budget around 50 million Jordanian Dinars. The government used to spend an approximate amount of 80 million Dinars annually until 2000. The committee is also working on drafting regulations related to gifts donated to public officials.
- A higher committee for the independence of the Judiciary was formed. It was involved in the promulgation of two laws: the independence of the Judiciary and the Fundamentals of Criminal Hearings Code which were enacted in February 2001. It is working on Fundamentals of Civil Hearings code which will be submitted to the government soon.
- Also, a higher committee for Human rights was formed. The committee is currently reviewing laws related to human rights in an attempt to improving them to go hand in hand with international standards.
- The government unveiled its intention to privatise press institutions, selling government shares. However, the matter is still under discussion and had not been put into implementation. The government is also taking steps to include the private sector in the state -owned Television and Broadcasting corporation.
- There is a growing focus on an awareness campaign to fight wasta and nepotism.
- Certain files of public companies suspected of corruption have been referred to the Prosecutor General such as the Phosphate Company file and the director of the National Assistance Fund.
- Measures are taken to modernise the administrative apparatus in order to achieve the electronic government project. The government expects the project to be implemented between three to five years. The project aims to lessen friction between the citizen and the administration, which also reduces bribery, wasta and other forms of corruption.

A national campaign against corruption has started in 2000. The press carries corruption-related stories such as the one that implicated the former prime minister's son where he was accused of corruption. Investigation proved his innocence.

Another major case is the trial of the chairperson of the National Tobacco Company, who is also a former president of a political party. He is accused of embezzlement of tens of millions of Dinars.

Despite the positive steps towards fighting corruption, it is still below expectations. The inflated administrative apparatus that was a result of administrative corruption is a heavy burden on the budget and cannot be easily fought. The government still considers itself the guardian on fighting corruption and does not involve civil society in its plans. Also, the lack of real representation of the society in Parliament because of the election law still in force, in addition to the dominance of social traditions such as wasta that encourages corruption, necessitates long-term policies and programmes to be eradicated.

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Index

A

Abdullah, king of Jordan 1999-, 3, 10
 Abuse of office, 6
 Access to information, 9, 11
 Ad-Dustour, 5, 8, 12, 13
 Al Arab Al Yawm, 8, 12, 13
 Al Hadath, 12
 Al Quds Al Arabi, 12
 Al Rai, 4, 8, 12
 Al Shahed, 5, 12
 Al-Aswaq, 8, 12
 Amnesty International (AI), 9
 Anti-corruption strategy. *See* Government anti-corruption strategy
 Anti-Corruption Unit, 5, 7, 10, 11
 Arab Archives Institute (AAI), 12
 As-Sabeel, 7, 12
 Assets, declaration of. *See* Disclosure provisions
 Audit Bureau, 7

B

Badarin, Bassam, 12
 Banking, 6
 Bribery, 11
 Broadcasting. *See* Media

C

Censorship, 9
 Central Bank of Jordan, 6
 Civil service. *See* Public sector
 Civil society, 9
 Level of activity, 4, 9
 Relationship with authorities, 3, 9
 Role in anti-corruption, 4, 9, 11
 Civil unrest, 3, 10
 Codes of conduct, 10
 Conferences, 10
 Conflict of interest, 4. *See also* Disclosure provisions
 Constitution. *See* Law; Laws
 Corrupt relationships, 3, 8, 10, 11, 12
 Corruption, culture of, 4, 8, 11
 Corruption, presence of
 Banking, 6
 Executive, 5, 6, 9
 Judiciary, 8
 Media, 9
 Public procurement, 6
 Public sector, 11

D

Democratisation, 3

Demographics, 3, 4
 Disclosure provisions, 11

E

Economic crime
 Embezzlement, 11
 Economy
 Employment, 4
 Performance, 4
 Private sector, 4
 Election monitoring, 6
 Elections, 3, 5, 7
 Electoral misconduct, 6
 Embezzlement, 11
 Executive, 4–5
 Prosecution of, 6
 Reforms, 4, 11
 Rules and procedures, 4

F

Freedom of the press, 9

G

General Intelligence Department, 7
 Gifts. *See* Disclosure provisions
 Government anti-corruption strategy, 4–5, 10–11

H

Higher committee for the independence of the judiciary, 11
 Higher ministerial committee to fight corruption, 5, 11
 Hospitality. *See* Disclosure provisions
 Human rights, 10, 11
 Hussein, king of Jordan 1952-1999, 3, 10

I

International law
 Jordan's peace treaty with Israel, 3
 Investigative/watchdog agencies, 5, 7, 8, 11
 Effectiveness, 5, 10
 Independence, 5
 Reporting, 8
 Islamic Action Front (IAF), 3, 7

J

Jordan Press Association, 9
 Judiciary, 8
 Capacity, 8
 Effectiveness, 8
 Independence, 8, 10, 11
 Prosecutions, 6

K

Khajil, Tawfiq Abu, 8

L

Law

Civil society, 9
 Effectiveness, 4, 6, 10
 Elections, 5, 10
 Executive, 4
 Investigative/watchdog agencies, 8
 Judiciary, 8, 11
 Media, 3, 8, 9
 Political parties, 3
 Public procurement, 11
 Reforms, 6
 Supreme audit institution, 7

Laws, Jordan

Associations Law, 9
 Audit Bureau Law, 1952
 Article 21-1, 7
 Constitution
 Article 44, 4
 Article 55, 6
 Article 59, 6
 Fundamentals of Civil Hearings Code, 11
 Fundamentals of Criminal Hearings Code, 2001, 11
 Illegitimate Profit-making Law, 6
 Independence of the Judiciary Law, 2001, 8, 11
 Law on Protecting State Confidential Secrets, 9
 One-person, One-vote Election Law, 1993, 5, 10
 Political Parties' Law, 1992, 3
 Press Law, 1993, 3
 Press Law, 1997, 3
 Television Law, 9
 Temporary Press Law, 1997, 8
 Legislature, 3, 4-7
 Effectiveness, 6

M

Masri, Taher, 7

Media, 3, 8-9

Impartiality, 6
 Investigative journalism, 8, 11
 Journalists, 9
 Ownership, 8, 9, 10, 11
 Restrictions, 3, 9
 Sanctions, 8

Monarchy

Powers, 3

Monitoring and Inspection Bureau, 5, 7, 8

Muslim Brotherhood (MB), 7

N

Names of individuals, Jordan

Abdullah, king of Jordan 1999-, 3, 10
 Badarin, Bassam, correspondent, 12
 Hussein, king of Jordan 1952-1999, 3, 10

Khajil, Tawfiq Abu, former Sri Lankan consul, 8
 Masri, Taher, former prime minister, 7
 Qudah, Adel, director of the audit bureau, 7
 Ragheb, Ali Abul, 4, 10
 Rashid, Natheer, former interior minister, 12
 Rawashdeh, Hussein, journalist, 5
 Rifai, Taleb, minister, 9
 Thuneibat, Mohammad, minister of state for administrative development, 4
 National Assistance Fund, 11
 National integrity systems, discussion of, 10-11
 National Tobacco Company, 11
 Nepotism, 10, 11
 Newspapers. *See* Media
 NGOs. *See* Civil society

O

Organisations, international

Amnesty International (AI), 9
 Transparency International (TI), 10, 12
 United Nations (UN), 10

Organisations, Jordan

Ad-Dustour, 5, 8, 12, 13
 Al Arab Al Yawm, 8, 12, 13
 Al Hadath, 12
 Al Quds Al Arabi, 12
 Al Rai, 4, 8, 12
 Al Shahed, 5, 12
 Al-Aswaq, 8, 12
 Anti-Corruption Unit, 5, 7, 10
 Arab Archives Institute (AAI), 12
 As-Sabeel, 7, 12
 Audit Bureau, 7
 Central Bank of Jordan, 6
 General Intelligence Department, 7
 Higher committee for the independence of the judiciary, 11
 Higher ministerial committee to fight corruption, 5, 11
 Islamic Action Front (IAF), 3, 7
 Jordan Press Association, 9
 Monitoring and Inspection Bureau, 5, 7, 8
 Muslim Brotherhood (MB), 7
 National Assistance Fund, 11
 National Tobacco Company, 11
 Petra Bank, 6
 Petra News Agency, 5
 Phosphate Company, 11
 Radio and Television Corporation, 9
 Shihan, 12
 Social Security Corporation, 5
 Overview, country, 3-4

P

Parliament. *See* Legislature

Petra Bank, 6

Petra News Agency, 5

Phosphate Company, 11

Political parties. *See* Politics, Political parties

Politics
 Partisan politics, 4, 5
 Political parties, 3, 5, 7
 Regional politics, 4
 Representation, 4, 10
 Population. *See* Demographics
 Private sector, 4
 Privatisation, 4, 11
 Public awareness campaigns, 11
 Public procurement, 4, 10
 Monitoring, 8
 Reforms, 11
 Public sector, 4
 Effectiveness, 11
 Reforms, 5, 11
 Rules and procedures, 11
 Public sector reform, 5, 11
 Public service. *See* Public sector

Q

Qudah, Adel, 7

R

Radio and Television Corporation, 9
 Ragheb, Ali Abul, 4, 10
 Rashid, Natheer, 12
 Rawashdeh, Hussein, 5
 References, Jordan, 12–13

Registers. *See* Disclosure provisions; Conflict of interest
 Rifai, Taleb, 9

S

Shihan, 12
 Social Security Corporation, 5
 Standards of conduct. *See* Codes of conduct
 Supreme audit institution, 7
 Effectiveness, 7
 Independence, 7
 Reporting, 7
 Surveys, 12

T

Technology, use of, 5, 11
 Thuneibat, Mohammad, 4
 Transparency International (TI), 10, 12
 Treaties. *See* International law
 Tribalism. *See* Politics, Partisan politics

U

United Nations (UN), 10

W

Wasta, 3, 10, 11, 12. *See also* Corrupt relationships