

PRESS RELEASE

Background information

H.M. King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein

Münster/Westphalia, October 5, 2016 - H.M. King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein has been King of Jordan since February 1999. Like his father, King Hussein ibn Talal, he enjoys a high reputation today in both the Arab and Western world as a mediator in various conflicts. In the so-called Middle East conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in which many Palestinians live, has a central role to play when it comes to developing a just peace solution. King Abdullah is firmly of the opinion that security and peace in the Middle East region essentially require a mutual willingness to coexist and live together. King Abdullah fears that the existing armed conflicts in the Middle East will also affect Israel and Palestine and the entire region into an unprecedented war if a mutually acceptable peace solution between Israel and the Palestinians is not found soon. In his book "The Last Chance - My Fight for Peace in the Middle East", King Abdullah also criticizes efforts calling for further armed action against Iran. For him, "a just and lasting peace is one of the strongest weapons against extremism".

However, he also calls for joint action - both Middle Eastern and Western - against the current religious fanaticism with which the so-called "Islamic State" is overrunning entire regions in Syria and Iraq and causing serious damage to the reputation of moderate and modern Islam. As a comparatively small state, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is doing an outstanding job of taking in and caring for refugees. While it was first the Palestinians who sought refuge here after 1948 and 1967, hundreds of thousands came after the last Iraq war, and now over 1.5 million Syrians have been cared for since 2011. Jordan, which is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world, is therefore facing enormous challenges in the coming years. Mastering these challenges and securing Jordan's stability will require the support of all those who have an interest in bringing peace to the entire region.

King Abdullah himself has a Western background: he was educated at Sandhurst Military Academy in the south of England, joined the British Army and studied international politics at Oxford and Georgetown University in Washington D.C. He then returned to Jordan as a career officer. There he continued his military career, was promoted to commander in 1994 and finally to major general in 1998. In 1993, he married the Palestinian Rania Faisal Yasin, who had fled Kuwait during the Second Gulf War. Queen Rania is known for her global commitment to peace, education and tolerance, among other things. She also embodies a modern image of women in a liberal and cosmopolitan Islam, which she is particularly committed to.

King Abdullah is striving to open up his country to foreign investors. This includes projects in the infrastructure and energy sector - for example wind farms, solar projects, water treatment and electricity generation. New laws ensure transparency and quality standards. In the course of the "Arab Spring", there were also demonstrations in Jordan, but these were comparatively peaceful and not directed against the king.

The royal family reacted quickly, showed understanding and acted prudently to ease the situation: For example, wages in the public sector were increased. As part of so-called "reforms from above", a constitutional court was set up and a new electoral and party law was introduced.