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Jordan's elections: Islamism, nationalism, and tribalism converge

Jordan's parliamentary elections have sparked a deep political shift that has unsettled the monarchy, revealing mounting resistance to its fragile peace with Israel and the growing influence these forces may exert over the kingdom's future direction.

Jordanian Prime Minister Bisher al-Khasawneh submitted his government's [resignation](#) to King Abdullah II just days after the 10 September parliamentary elections, after the opposition Islamic Action Front ([IAF](#)) made significant gains in legislature seats.

As a backdrop to the official election results, two pivotal scenes reveal the deeper realities of the challenges Jordan's monarchy faces today. The first involves [Ahmad al-Daqamseh](#), a Jordanian soldier released from prison after serving a 20-year sentence for killing seven Israeli women in 1997 near the Jordanian–Israeli border.

Daqamseh was seen attending the mourning tent of [Maher al-Jazi](#), the truck driver and former soldier who carried out the Karameh crossing operation against Israeli border personnel earlier this month.

The second scene features jubilant supporters of the Islamic Action Front, the party that secured the most seats in parliamentary elections, celebrating chants that praised Abu Obeida, the military spokesperson for the armed wing of Hamas in Gaza.

These two moments encapsulate the shifting undercurrents of Jordan's political reality, where traditional narratives and official statistics have given way to a much more complex and uncertain picture.

Extraordinary elections

The election results in Jordan were far from ordinary. The government's concern over the growing unrest in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, [exacerbated](#) by Israel's war crimes, now seems increasingly relevant in the wake of the recent resistance operation and the Islamist rise in Jordan.

The prominence of Islamist forces, many closely tied to the Muslim Brotherhood, has sparked questions that extend far beyond the ballot box. Since 2016, Jordanians have watched as the government shut down Muslim Brotherhood headquarters in several cities, from Amman to Madaba.

Despite this clampdown, the Brotherhood's political wing, the IAF, has now risen to control 31 seats in parliament, a significant bloc that constitutes 22 percent of the assembly. Although this does not amount to a dominant majority, it represents a significant shift in Jordan's political balance.

One Jordanian source describing himself as an independent tells *The Cradle* that the concerns faced by the Jordanian monarchy in the era of the Arab Spring are quite different from those of today.

The source, who asked to remain anonymous, explains that while the Brotherhood has been officially licensed in Jordan since the time of the first King Abdullah in 1946, the upheavals of the Arab Spring raised internal fears about the group's potential to destabilize the kingdom, especially given the movement's involvement in protests and violence in Egypt, Syria, and Libya.

As a result, King Abdullah II saw an opportunity to curtail the Brotherhood's influence. Yet, despite government efforts to contain the group, the Brotherhood has [resurfaced as a major player](#) in Jordanian politics, particularly through the IAF.

Islamist surge and Amman's stance

The Jordanian government's approval of new electoral laws in 2022, which aimed to strengthen political parties' representation in parliament, was introduced before the current wave of regional tensions.

A Jordanian analyst informs *The Cradle* that Amman's strategy had been to maintain control of parliament by reinforcing the influence of tribal representatives, [traditionally loyal](#) to the throne, while promoting moderate and centrist MPs.

However, the electoral outcome defied these expectations. The election saw the IAF achieve the largest victory by any Islamist group since the return to parliamentary work in 1989, tripling their representation from the previous parliament.

This unexpected success has baffled observers, especially given that the electoral system was deliberately designed to favor rural, tribal areas over cities, where Jordanians of Palestinian origin – who are generally more politically active and supportive of the Islamic movement – constitute a large portion of the population.

The IAF's ability to gain seats in these traditionally tribal districts highlights an ironic shift. Despite efforts to marginalize their influence, Islamists managed to break into areas that were once nearly closed to them, including those dominated by tribal affiliations.

In Amman's second constituency, IAF candidates secured several seats, including a Christian candidate, [Jihad Madanat](#), and a woman, Rakeen Abu Haniyeh. This development illustrates how Islamists have succeeded in blending with tribal and other traditional elements of Jordanian society in a way that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago.

Further illustrating this political shift, the IAF delegation's visit to the mourning tent of the Jazi clan carried deep political connotations. An Arab observer of Jordanian affairs explains to *The Cradle* that such a visit by the leaders of the Islamic movement to the Huweitat tribe, to which the Jazi belongs, represents the convergence of nationalist and Islamist forces around the Palestinian cause.

This convergence has created a growing belief among Jordanians that the election results were a clear endorsement of the Palestinian resistance. Whether supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood or not, many Jordanians now view the Islamist electoral victory as a vote in favor of resistance against the occupation state's aggression in Gaza and the West Bank.

It is not something that bodes well for King Abdallah's defiant stance on maintaining official ties with Israel.

Putting Jordan first

Beyond this, the election results point to an even broader concern. One independent Jordanian source suggests that many Jordanians see the Israeli threat as one that extends beyond Palestinian territories, posing a direct danger to Jordan itself.

In this context, the vote was not just a symbolic gesture but a resounding political message aimed at protecting Jordanian sovereignty. This perspective has grown increasingly common as the IAF calls for freezing trade and security agreements with Tel Aviv, including the controversial [Wadi Araba Treaty](#), which normalized relations between Jordan and Israel in 1994 under the late King Hussein.

As Amman grapples with the implications of these election results, the Jordanian monarchy finds itself facing a set of new political realities. The king may be forced to acknowledge the

growing convergence between tribal and Islamist forces, thereby impacting relations with Israel.

Although King Abdullah II retains broad powers, including the ability to dissolve parliament, it is becoming increasingly likely that Islamists will have a more substantial role in shaping the next government. Some sources speculate that the king may even be compelled to appoint figures from the Islamic current to ministerial positions.

However, despite the IAF's significant electoral gains, the party's 31 seats do not grant overwhelming power within the 138-seat parliament. Moreover, Jordan's political system remains firmly in the hands of the monarchy, which retains the final say in most matters of national policy.

Filling the void

Several factors contributed to the IAF's [electoral success](#). Observers note that the electoral law was deliberately designed to prevent any single party, including Islamists, from achieving a majority. Yet, despite these constraints, voters rewarded the Islamist movement for its consistent presence on the streets, particularly for leading protests outside the Israeli embassy in solidarity with Gaza.

Meanwhile, Jordan's traditional leftist and nationalist parties failed to engage with the public effectively or address their needs, leaving a vacuum that Islamists were quick to fill.

The martyrdom of Jazi, whose funeral tent became a symbolic shrine for many Jordanians, also played a role in shaping the electoral outcome. The presence of Islamic leaders at the mourning tent on the eve of election day sent a clear message of solidarity with Palestine while also reinforcing the broader alignment between the Huweitat tribe and the Islamist movement.

As the Jordanian government reflects on the outcome of the elections, it may attempt to use the Islamist rise to its advantage by presenting it as a warning to western allies, particularly the US. Amman could argue that the ongoing war in Gaza has created a new political reality in Jordan, one that must be taken seriously.

For many Jordanians, however, the election results reflect a growing sense that the situation on the east bank of the Jordan River is changing. Israel's extremist, far-right government, which many believe intends to trigger a new [Nakba against Palestinians in the West Bank](#), faces a growing threat to its security from across the Jordanian border.

The Jordanian voice objecting to Israeli policies and the US military presence is only likely to grow louder. The election has revealed much more than a mere shift in parliamentary seats –

it has unveiled a new political reality, one that the Jordanian monarchy cannot afford to ignore.

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