



International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)
A Peer-Reviewed Bi-monthly Bi-lingual Research Journal
ISSN: 2349-6959 (Online), ISSN: 2349-6711 (Print)
Volume-III, Issue-II, September 2016, Page No. 96-115
Published by Scholar Publications, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711
Website: <http://www.ijhsss.com>

Women's Political Rights in the Jordanian Legislation (1952-2014): A Historical Study

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Abstract

This article investigates women's political rights in the Jordanian legislation which, like all laws, asserts the natural rights and public freedoms of man. It follows up women struggle to obtain their rights, and the development of the relevant Jordanian legislation- two processes affected by social, economic and political factors. It has arrived at the fact that unwritten laws still prevail and give men the edge over women. To redress the situation, Jordan has reformed its laws and is battling against some cultural and social considerations which help exercise gender-based discrimination. The study recommends the need for all stakeholders such as governmental bodies, civil institutions, companies and societal organisations to join forces to effect a qualitative change in the view of the society regarding full political participation of women and erase all aspects of discrimination against them.

Key words: women's rights, constitution, discrimination, gender equality, quota.

Women's political rights in the Jordanian legislation (1952-2014): a historical study

Introduction: Political rights refer to the citizen's authorities as stipulated by legislation by means of which s/he can carry out certain actions and therefore participate in the administration of the state such as the right to election, protection and the assumption of public posts. The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a growing interest in the rights of women. A large scale international movement gained momentum aiming to boost interest in this issue and became axis for the action of social groups and organizations which pronounce equality and human rights in the world. International agreements such as the CEDAW were employed to exert pressure on countries which violate these rights to make them change their policies to avoid international boycott. The countries signatories to these agreements have to put at the top of their priorities the creation of an appropriate environment to show their readiness to apply the provisions of these conventions. Governments and civil society institutions exerted efforts to effect changes as to the status of women and their role in the human life. Their main goal is to assert the empowerment of

women to participate in the public, political, economic and cultural aspects of life and end discrimination.

In many parts of the world, women were able to achieve important successes in the service of their societies. In the Arab world, women were marginalized-thanks to the social structure. In Jordan, women's participation in the political life is still short of expectations: their representation is still poor in governments, parliaments, associations, political parties, diplomatic corps and higher posts.

The issue of the political rights of women in the Jordanian legislations has not been given due attention. This article aims to bridge this gap, document women's' movement in Jordan and shed light on their rights by examining the Jordanian legislation: the Constitution of Jordan of 1952, relevant laws, regulations and government instructions. This will hopefully benefit decision makers.

The article adopts the historical approach whereby we review the political rights of women in the Jordanian legislation (1952-2014). It addresses eight themes: the role of the Jordanian women in the political struggle; the status of women in the Declaration of Human Rights and international agreements and the stance of Jordan thereof; the political rights of women in the 1952 Constitution and the 1991 National Convention; the participation of women in the Executive Authority; women's political rights in the Elections Law; the political rights of women in the Municipalities Law; the rights of women in the Independence of Jurisdiction Laws and the regulations of the Legislative Institute, and the rights of women in the laws of political parties.

1- The role of the Jordanian women in the political struggle: The interest of Jordanian women in the public life can be traced back to the independence of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1946. In the fifties of the last century, some political organisations emerged and showed interest in gender equality at a time when women were looked at with suspicion. At that time, women played economic roles: they worked on farms to help secure the needs of the family. They were also involved in voluntary work and formed charities and voluntary women organizations to address the urgent humanitarian and social issues resulting from the 1948 war in neighbouring Palestine. They offered health and educational services, donated material and in-kind aid to the needy families.¹ This led to the creation of the Department of Social Affairs in 1949 and the passing of the Law of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1951. This development led to the formation of specialized societies with women-related programs to boost women's cultural and social awareness without necessarily involving them in the political side. But due to the 1948 war developments, the unification of the East and West banks (of the River Jordan), the endorsement of the 1952 Constitution and the events which befell the Arab world (for example, the 1956 Tripartite Aggression against Egypt, the Palestinian struggle for independence, political parties publicly playing their

¹ Waleed al-'Uwaimer, 'Huqūq al-mar'ah al-siyāsiyya fil-qawānīn wal-tashrī'ā al-Urdinayya', al-mu'tamar al-thaqāfiyy al-Urdiniyy al-khāmes: "Al-Mar'ah fi al-thaqāfa al-waṭaniyya (1900-2008). Al-Jame'ah al-Urdiniyya, 2010, pp. 155-56.

roles and the formation of a party-government presided over by Suleiman al-Nabulsi in 1956), political awareness started to grow among the people; and they, therefore, began to demand democratic liberties. Women's participation in this era manifested itself in taking part in demonstrations, signing petitions, holding meetings and pan-Arab and international seminars in support of the Palestinian and Algerian women in their struggle against the British and French occupation respectively.¹

In 1951, thousands of men and women from different Arab countries signed an appeal to hold a convention for the peoples of the Near East and North Africa to consolidate efforts to avoid the terror of wars and get independence. Women societies also signed the national appeal to hold a convention for peace between the big powers and to form a movement for the supporters of peace in Jordan. In 1952 a number of women were arrested for participating in demonstrations in support of the Iraqi people who were struggling for independence and for the annulation of the treaty between Iraq and Britain. Women also took part in the struggle against the military alliances and called for the annulation of the treaty between Jordan and Britain.²

As women awareness grew, they began to talk about their special grievances, such as gender equality, social justice and lifting discrimination against them. In 1954, a hundred women established The Arab Women's Union headed by Emili Bsharat. The Union aimed at fighting illiteracy among women and boosting their social, moral and economic levels to encourage them demand and practice their rights as citizens. It also aimed at developing the ties of friendship between Arab women and other women in the world to improve the conditions of the Arab world in all fields.

The Arab Women's Union called to amend the Personal Status Law and the Law of Work, and for the right of women to election to the parliament. The last demand was met when the cabinet passed a resolution on September 2, 1955 endorsing the election bill which gave *educated* women the right to election, but not to nomination. The Union, therefore, submitted a petition to the parliament thumb-stumped by thousands of women³ demanding the right to nomination and election to the municipality and rural councils. It also petitioned to the Cabinet, the Senate and the Parliament asking for women's full rights on par with men.⁴ During the Tripartite aggression, the Union organized courses for civil

¹ Emili Naffa', 'Dawr al-mar'ah al-Urduniyya fil-neḍāl al-siyāsiyy', Nadwat al-mar'ah al-Urduniyya fi dhil al-qawānīn wal-tashrī'āt al-ḥāliyya, Amman, 1992; p. 4; Haifa' Jamal, 'Athar al-qawānīn fī taṭawur al-tandhīmāt al-nisā'yya al-Urduniyya', Nadwat al-mar'ah al-Urduniyya fi dhil al-qawānīn wal-tashrī'āt al-ḥāliyya, pp. 4-5.

² Ibid.

³ See documents presented to the Parliament speaker in Zaghulula al-Salem (2004), 'Wāqe' al-mar'ah al-Urduniyya', Amman: Dar Yafa, pp. 535-42.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 543-45.

defense, military training and first aid in support of the Egyptian people.¹ However, the Union was dissolved in the same year for financial and political reasons²- the thing which led to the resignation of al-Nabulsi government, the imposition of martial law³ and curfew and the dissolution of parties. Naturally, charity activities were restricted.

In 1970, there appeared societies (under the Societies' law No. 303 of 1966) such as the Arab Women's Society which became member of the International Women's Democratic Union, and carried out covert political activities to maintain legitimacy.⁴ But the martial law which applied the 1966 Associations Law restricted the activities of the societies and clubs and prevented them from practicing any political role, and therefore impeded the development of the Jordanian society in general and women's activities in particular.⁵ After the UN declared 1975 as the International Women's Year, the Jordanian Women Committee was formed. It issued a leaflet about women's political, social, cultural and economic demands, and presented memos to the concerned bodies to this effect. The Jordanian Women's Union was recreated; but it was a fiasco as it turned into a political and national facade overshadowing the real interests of women. It also failed to reach out to, and coordinate with, its bases to integrate its programs into the societies'.

The 1980s witnessed the formation of several women associations with political and social aims representing women's programs. Among these societies was the Democratic Women Union which aimed to unify the efforts of the Jordanian women in defending their political, economic and social rights. The unions exercised their activities secretly: they took part in festivals, marches and seminars in solidarity with the Palestinian and Iraqi peoples. They also played a role in the 11th parliament. Realizing the need for a concrete organization frame, they started to address the feminine audiences- but to no avail. They then opened membership for individuals and committees and could attract 15,000 women. The Union began to consolidate its identity as a union for all women in Jordan and to boost democracy inside its leaderships and bases. Preparations started to convene a national conference to elect a new leadership; but the Ministry of Development interfered prejudicing a certain group against another. To mobilize the public opinion, the general authority, therefore, rejected and impugned the election results before the Supreme Court. They won the case and held the first national conference.⁶

¹ Jamal, 'Athar al-qawānīn fī taṭawwūr at-tandhīmāt al-nesā'yya al-Urduniyya', pp., 5-6.

² Zaghlula al-Salem, 'Wāqe' al-mar'ah al-Urduniyya', pp., 425, 536.

³ See articles 2; 4-5, Official Gazette 2010, June 5th 1967, p. 859, (henceforth O.G.)

⁴ Abdul Majeed al-Shunnaq, (2000), 'Al-Madkhal ila tārīkh al-Urdun wa ḥaḍāratuh', Amman: Author, pp. 358-62.

⁵ Emili Naffa', 'Al-Mar'ah al-Urduniyya fil-neḍāl al-siyāsiyy', p. 5; see also Haifa Jamal, 'Athar al-qawānīn fī taṭawwūr at-tandhīmāt al-nesā'yya al-Urduniyya', p. 9.

⁶ Haifa Jamal, 'Athar al-qawānīn fī taṭawwūr al-tandhīmāt al-nesā'yya al-Urduniyya', pp., 12-14

In the 1990s, there were dozens of such women societies which worked hard to defend women's rights.¹ Among these societies were The Jordanian National Commission for Women (1992), the National Jordanian Assembly of the Societies of Women, The Society of Humanitarian Assembly for the Rights of Women (1995), The International Institute for Women Solidarity (1998) and The Women in Business and Crafts Club (2003).

2- The status of women in the Declaration of Human Rights and international agreements and the stance of Jordan thereof: Given that women make up half the society, it is vital to mobilize this human force as a partner (to man) in the comprehensive development process.² Sustainable development can only be achieved by the implementation of the principles of justice and gender equality in the different aspects of life.³ Almost all regional and international organizations have expressed faith in human rights and equality between men and women. And the UN Charter emphasized just that. The UN General Assembly pronounced the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and stipulated in article 1 that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Article 2 stated that "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, et cetera."⁴ This position was reiterated by the 1993 Vienna Human Rights Conference,⁵ Mexico Conference (1975), Peking Conferences (1976, 1995), Copenhagen Conference (1980), Nairobi Conference (1985) and the Rio de Janeiro Conference (1992).⁶

Recently, Jordan has witnessed intensive efforts, signed many agreements and taken several measures to balance the situation in favor of women. Among these measures are:

1- The endorsement and publishing in the official gazette (O.G.) of the International Covenant on the Civil and Political Rights of 1966 and 2006. Articles 2 and 3 state that signatory countries pledge to accord men and women equal political and civil rights and to take necessary legislative measures to secure the implementation of these pledges.⁷

2- The endorsement of the 1967 Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Declaration considers discrimination unjust and constitutes an offence against human dignity. It calls on the states to take all necessary measures to ensure equality between men and women. It also calls for the elimination of prejudice against women

¹ See Bare'ah al-Naqshabandi, 'Al-Mushāraka al-siyāsiyya lil-mar'ah al-Urduniyya fil-Urdun wa ba'd al-duwal al-Arabiyya', 2001, Amman: al-Mu'assasa al-Arabiyya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr, p. 226; see also Muhammad al-Jraibee', (2004) Al-Mar'ah wal-mushāraka al-siyāsiyya fil-Urdun, dirāsāt hālat adā' munadhmāt al-mujtama' al-Urduniyy', Amman: Markaz al-Urdun al-Jadeed.

² www.iraqija.iq

³ Higher Council for Population, General annual report, 2004, pp. 32-33.

⁴ Manshūrāt Markaz 'Adalah.

⁵ www.ohchr.org

⁶ Faculty.ksu.edu.sa/ar.wikipedia.org,www.imow.org

⁷ O.G., issue No. 4764, June 15th, 2006, p. 2227.

through public education, and for women to enjoy full electoral rights, including the right to vote and the right to hold public offices.¹

3- The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on December 3rd, 1980. The Convention, however, became legally binding in 2007.² In article 1, it defines discrimination against women as

... any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Article 4, paragraph 1, states that

Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.³

This article asserts that the international community realizes that there is no equality between men and women in actual life and that we have two kinds of laws: written laws and unwritten laws (that is, conventions and social norms) and that the latter kind is stronger than the former. The law gives structure to a relationship between two parties that are equal; but a cultural and social heritage causes the loss of this equilibrium.

Though signed by 185 countries, many countries expressed reservations on a number of the Convention's clauses for cultural or religious considerations especially those relating to marriage or civil status law. Jordan expressed reservation on three articles:⁴

- a- Article 9/2. This article stipulates that women shall have equal rights with men with regard to passing their nationality to their children. The government's reservations are triggered by political considerations as a great number of Jordanians are of a Palestinian origin. Jordan also claimed that it is a signatory to a special agreement with the Arab League which states the illegitimacy of the resident holding two nationalities at the same time.
- b- Article 15/4. This article gives women equal rights with men regarding the freedom of individuals and their freedom to choose their residence and

¹ Articles 1-4, Manshūrāt Markaz 'Adalah.

² Al-Multaqa al-Ensāni li Ḥuqūq al-Mar'ah: 'Ḥuqūq al-mar'ah fi ettifāqiyyat al-qadā' 'alā jamī' ashkāl al-tamyīz did al-mar'ah wal-tashrē'āt al-Urduniyya wa aḥkām al-Sharia, pp.16, 23.

³ Ibid., p.12.

⁴ Ibid., p.12; pp. 17-18.

domicile. The government, however, lifted this reservation in February 2009 on the basis that Islamic Sharia gives the wife the right to decide in writing her residence in the marriage contract.

- c- Article 16/e, h, and j. It has to do with equal rights and obligations during marriage life. This contradicts the rulings of Islam which state that "Men are in charge of women"¹ and because Islam allows the practice of any decent work by the wife proviso that the husband consents and that the work does not conflict with her duties and commitments as a housewife and mother.²
- 4- The 1998 Understanding Memo with the UN High Commission for Refugees on the basis of the Cooperation Agreement between them.
- 5- Signing the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.
- 6- Endorsing Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in July 2003.³
- 7- Endorsing the 2004 Arab Charter on Human Rights which stipulates in (3/3) that: "Men and women are equal in human dignity, in rights and in duties, within the framework of the positive discrimination established in favor of women by Islamic sharia and other divine laws, legislation and international instruments." Consequently, each State Party to the present Charter shall undertake all necessary measures to guarantee the effective equality between men and women.⁴

It is worth noting that when states sign international agreements, they have to abide by their provisions; and in case the constitution or national law contradicts them, the state is no longer considered a state of law.⁵ In Jordan, a number of laws which impinge the interests of women such as the Labor Law and the Law of Civil Status, Social security Law, the System of Civil Service, the Penal Law, the Elections Law and Parties Law have been amended. Another group of laws are still under consideration.⁶

3- The political rights of women in the 1952 Constitution and the 1991 National Convention: It is the constitution, international agreements and conventions as well as local laws that accord legitimacy to the political participation of women. The 1952 Constitution (chapter 2) professed the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and duties of the Jordanians. As for political rights, article 6/1 stated that "the Jordanians are equal before the law and that there is no discrimination between them in rights and duties." In article 6/2, the state guaranteed "the right to assembly within the limits of law",

¹ In fact this verse is in favour of women as it adds to the responsibilities of men and lifts many tough tasks from women's shoulders; but feminists misinterpret it.

² O.G. issue No. 4839 (2007); O.G. issue NO. 4960, 30 April, 2009, p. 2098; see also 'al-Multaqa al-ensāni li-ḥuqūq al-mar'ah fil-qadā' 'alā Jamī' ashkāl al-tamyīz did al-mar'ah wal-tashrē'āt al-Urduniyya wa aḥkām al-Sharia, p.12; pp. 17-18.

³ Manshūrāt Markaz 'Adala

⁴ O.G., issue No. 4675, 16 July 2004, p. 4675.

⁵ www.iraqija.iq

⁶ Eman Freihat, 'Al-Tarbiya al-wataniyya', 2013, Amman: Author, pp. 213-17.

and "the right to form societies and political parties proviso that their goals are legitimate and their means peaceful and they do not contradict the provisions of the Constitution." Article 17 gave the Jordanians "the right to address the public authorities with regard to personal matters affecting them or any matter relating to public affairs in the manner and conditions prescribed by law." Article 22 stated that "every Jordanian shall be entitled to be appointed to public offices under such conditions as are prescribed by law or regulations." It also stated that "appointment to any government office or body, or to any municipal office, whether such appointment is permanent or temporary, shall be made on the basis of merit and qualifications."¹

Article 23/1 asserted that "Work is the right of every citizen, and the State shall provide opportunities for work to all citizens by directing the national economy." Article 23/d stated that "Special conditions shall be made for the employment of women and juveniles."² This means that these conditions are prejudiced against women.

Reviewing the articles addressing political rights, we find that *Jordanian* and *Jordanians* were used generically and refer to all citizens irrespective of sex; article 6 did not expressly state that "sex" is a basis for discrimination in terms of rights and obligations as is the case with other Arab constitutions (for example, the 1971 Constitution of Egypt and the 1966 International Charter on Political and Civil Rights.) Article 6 restricted the bases of discrimination on race, language and religion- a provision that subsumes all other constitutional rights. This article is still controversial because it is vague. The 1991 National Charter was clearer and more specific in identifying the rights of women: chapter 1 (clause 8) mentioned the Charter's pillar: "Jordanian men and women are equal under the law. In chapter 2, clause 3, paragraph d, the Charter expressly stated the need to attain "equality, justice and equal opportunities for all citizens, male and female, without discrimination." In chapter 5, paragraph 6, the Charter stressed that:

Women are men's partners and equals in contributing to the growth and development of Jordanian society. This requires an affirmation of women's constitutional and legal right to equality, guidance, training and employment as a means of enabling them to play their proper role in the growth and development of society.³

4- The participation of women in the Executive Authority: Despite the fact that the 1952 Constitution made no discrimination between men and women, the ministerial post remained the privilege of men until 1979. The Constitution expressly states that "No person

¹ O.G., issue No. 1093, 8 January 1952, pp. 3-4.

² Ibid. p. 4.

³ The National Charter in al-Rai, Amman, issue No. 4761, 31 December 1990, p.15; see also Renad al-Khateeb, (1966), 'Taṭawur al-mar'ah al-Urdiniyya fi 'ahd al-Ḥussein, Amman: Wazarat al-Shabab', pp. 37-38.

shall be appointed a Minister unless he is a Jordanian"¹- with *Jordanian* referring to both men and women. Women, therefore, can take part in the executive authority.

The first woman to be appointed minister was En'am al-Mufti in the 1979 government of Abdul-Hameed Sharaf; later, Laila Sharaf became minister of Media in the 1984 government of 'Ubaidat; and Rema Khalaf was appointed minister of Industry and Trade in the 1993 government of Abdul-Salam al-Majali. In 1995, two women ministers (Salma al-Masri and Rema Khalaf) were appointed minister of Social Development and minister of Planning respectively. Between 1996-1999, Rema Khalaf was appointed minister of Planning in the governments of al-Kabariti and of al-Majali. In the government of al-Rawabdeh (1999-2000), Rema Khalaf was appointed deputy prime minister and minister of Planning. In the first and second governments of Abul-Ragheb (2000-2002, 2002-2003), Tamam al-Ghoul was appointed minister of Social Development; in his third term of office as prime minister, Ruwaida al-Ma'a'ita was appointed minister of Social Development. And in the government of al-Fayez (2003-2005) three women held ministerial posts. These were 'Alya' Buran (Tourism and Antiquities portfolio), Amal Farhan (Municipal Affairs portfolio) and Asma Khaḍr (minister of State). Prime minister Badran had four women ministers in his cabinet in 2005; Al-Bakhit had one; al-Dhahabi (2005) four.²

In al-Refa'e's first government of 2009-2010 Hala Ltuf was appointed minister of Social Development, and minister of Social Development and women Issues in his second government of 2010-2011; al-Bakhit had two women ministers in his 2011 government (i.e. Salma al-Damen as minister of Social Development and Haifa Abu Ghazaleh minister of Tourism and Antiquities). This was also the case with al-Khasawni's government (2011) when he appointed Ruwaida al-Ma'a'ita minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Nisreen Barakat minister of Social Development; and al-Tarawneh's (2012) who appointed Nadia Hashem minister of Women Issues.³ In the first government of al-Nsur (2012) the Ministry of Women Issues was cancelled⁴, and one woman minister (i.e.

¹ 1952 Constitution, article 24; O.G., issue No. 10934, 8 January 1952, pp. 6-7; article 10 issue No. 5117, 1 September 2011, p. 4455.

² Omar Ṣaleḥ al-Omari and Muhammad al-'Anaqra, (2013), 'Al-Ḥukumat al-Urdiniyya fi 'ahd al-malek Abullah al-Thani Ibn al-Hussein (1999-2012)', Amman: Document Preparers, pp. 47-8; 101-3; 139-40; 157-9; 205-6; 241-3; 303-5; 351-3; see also Omar al-Boureni and Hani al-Hindi, 'Al-Mar'ah al-Urdiniyya', 1994, Amman: Dar al-Jamee', pp. 60-1; see also Diab Makhadmeh et al. 'Tarekh wa ḥaḍarat al-Urdun wal-ḥukumat al-mut'aqeba fil-fatra ma bain 1979-2007', (n.d., n. p.), pp. 96-7.

³ Omar Saleḥ al-Omari and Muhammad al-'Anaqra, (2013), 'Al-Ḥukumat al-Urdiniyya fi 'ahd al-malek Abullah al-Thani Ibn al-Hussein (1999-2012)', pp. 402-4; 421-3; 461-2; 509-10; 555-7.

⁴ See www.almadenahnews.com.

Reem Abu Hassan) was appointed minister of Social Development.¹ This was shocking for the women movement, the thing which made the Women's Solidarity Society and Women's Union exert pressure on the Prime Minister to increase women representation and to appoint women to influential ministerial portfolios, such as the Ministry of Interior. They also demanded to be given ministerial posts in al-Nsur's second government and to be represented in the Senate and higher public posts with a percentage not less than 30 percent.² As a result, women's representation was raised to 11.1 percent: two other women (Lana Mamkegh as minister of Culture and Lena Shbaib as minister of Transportation) were given ministerial posts, and the government, therefore, had three women.³

To sum up, there were ninety eight governments in Jordan between 1921- 2014, and that women held thirty four different ministerial posts in twenty one governments. No woman, however, was appointed minister of Interior, minister of Foreign Affairs or even in the diplomatic corps.

In 1970, an emeritus female ambassador was appointed. Later, in 2001, 2002 and 2004, The Arab States Regional Office reported that seventeen women were on the diplomatic corps (that is 7.4 percent). These posts were distributed as follows: diplomatic attaché (seven), secretary III (four), secretary II (two), secretary I (two), ambassadors (two);⁴ but no woman was appointed councilor or plenipotentiary.

The following table shows the relative distribution of the diplomatic corps staff according to gender for certain selected years:⁵

5- Women's political rights in the Elections Law: Parliamentary elections in Jordan have been run since 1947 according to six laws and scores of amendments thereof, in addition to relevant regulations and instructions. Elections up to the fifth parliament (1947-1961) were run under the 1947 and 1960 laws. Article 3 of 1947 laws stated that "Every non-Bedouin male Jordanian shall have the right to elect members of the Chamber of Deputies."⁶ This made the Women Union present petitions and memos demanding political rights for women. As a result, the cabinet issued a resolution in 1955 consenting to give educated women the right to elect. Illiterate women protested and held thumb-printed posters high demanding the right to elect on par with their illiterate brothers.⁷ Their demand

¹ Snarah net, www.pm-gov.jo

² www.almadenahnews.com.

³ Assawsana.com, snarah.net; www.addustour.com

⁴ Markaz al-E'lamiyyat al-Arabiyyat, 'Al-Nisā'u qādemāt', 2004, Amman, p. 10; p. 40.

⁵ Daerat al-Ehsa'at al-'Ammah, 'Al-Mar'ah wal-rajul fi arqām', 2008, p. 44; Daerat al-Ehsa'at al-'Ammah, al-Mar'ah wal-rajul fi arqām 2010, p. 71; see also www.dos.gov.jo

⁶ O.G., issue No. 898, 16 April 1947, p. 744; see also O.G., issue No. 1494, 11 June 1960, p. 606.

⁷ Omar al-Bourini and Hani al-Hindi, 'Al-Mar'a al-Urdiniyya', 1994, Amman: Dar al-Jamee', p.57.

was not met until 1974 when the amended law 8 was issued. Article 2 of law 8 used "...a Jordanian, male or female"¹ instead of "...a male Jordanian".

But due to the circumstances following the 1967 war, the ninth Parliament (1967-1974) was dissolved. Parliamentary life came to a standstill and the National Consultative Council was established under law 17 of 1978 to do the job of the parliament.² Its members were chosen by a royal decree and upon the recommendation of the prime minister. Three such councils were formed. Each council lasted two years and had three women³ (against fifty seven and seventy two men on the first and second councils respectively.)⁴

Only in 1984 did women practice the right to vote; albeit in the complementary elections. Nominations, however, were man-only. In 1989, parliamentary life returned to Jordan. But there were several domestic and international factors which gave it a new flavor. Among them were the legal and administrative resolution of disengagement between the East and West Banks in 1988 (the thing which resulted in the reformation of election circles to represent the East Bank only), the emergence of the new world order following the collapse of the then Soviet Union, and the boosting of democracy and human rights.

In 1989, the 11th parliament elections were run: twelve women were nominated (1.95 percent) representing seven/twenty constituencies. No woman won! One woman (against thirty nine men) was appointed in the Senate. In 1993 only three women (out of 534) constituting 0.6 percent were nominated. Only one woman won (compared with seventy nine men)! One woman was appointed in the Senate (in comparison to thirty nine men); that is 2.5 percent. In 1997, seventeen women making 3.1 percent were nominated for the 13th parliament. No woman won; but three women were appointed in the Senate which had thirty seven men.

Following this catastrophic result, the coordinating committee of the non-governmental organizations regrouped and collected 150,000 signatures calling for allocating a woman quota of at least 20 percent to enter the parliament. The aim was to persuade the society that there were women capable of changing the prevailing societal culture and urge women to decide for themselves and elect the best instead of acquiescing to the family code.⁵ These efforts, however, were a fiasco!

¹ O.G., Issue No. 2481, 10 April 1974, p. 449.

² Hani Khair, 'Al-Ḥayat al-niyabiyya fil-Urdun 1920-1993', 1993, Amman: Lajant Tareekh al-Urdun, pp. 197-8.

³ Zaghlulah al-Salem, 'Waqe' al-mar'ah al-qanuniyy wal-ijtima'iyy, 2004, Amman: Dar Yafa al-'Alamiyya lil-Nashr wal-Tawzee', p. 81.

⁴ O.G. (Article 2), issue No, 3067, 19 April 1982, p. 586.

⁵ Daerat al-Ehsa'at al-'Ammah, 'Al-Mar'ah wal-rajul fi arqām, 2008', p.42; see also Dhiab Makhadmeh et al. 'Tareekh wa ḥadarat al-Urdun', ((n.d. n. p.)), p. 97; See also Emily

In the following year, a national commission was established by a royal decree and "Jordan First" was born. This document recommended that election laws empower women to take part in elections and to allocate a provisional quota for women in the parliament. In 2002, the prime minister recommended the amendment of the election laws and the formation of an ad hoc committee to ensure that up to six women are competitively elected. Therefore, and under the amended interim elections law No. 11 of the year 2003 and the amended system No. 17 of the year 2003, it was decided to add six parliamentary seats to be occupied by women nominees who obtain the highest votes in their respective constituencies. In case there is a draw between two nominees, a lot shall be drawn.¹ In case a woman's seat becomes vacant, it shall be filled through sub-elections in the ad hoc constituency² - in a period not exceeding sixty days from the notification to this effect of the prime minister by the Parliament provided that only women who meet the nomination conditions can run for the elections.³

In the 14th Parliament elections, there were fifty four women nominees (7.1 percent), in comparison to 104 men; six women reached the Parliament. Seven women (10.1 percent) were appointed in the Senate, in comparison to forty eight men.⁴

Women organizations, however, were dissatisfied with these results: women, figures show, had no significant weight in the parliament!⁵ They were also displeased with the type of the constituencies women were allowed to run for elections in as these were small and remote; this would determine the type of the would-be parliamentary women.⁶

Following the elections, women organizations came up with and presented to the parliament "The Document of the Jordanian Women." It consisted of many themes: the cancellation of one-man one-vote law, the redistribution of constituencies, increasing women representation to 30 percent in accord with the Beijing Conference, and the recognition of the civil society right to monitor elections.⁷ They also started a signature-collecting campaign to exert pressure on the government to allocate 20 percent of the seats and distribute them to governorates, or to re-think the way women are considered winners. These demands were rejected. Elections for the 15th Parliament were run in 2007 without amending any law. Women won seven seats (6.4 percent), compared with 103 men. Seven

Naffa', 'Tajribat al-mar'ah al-Urduniyya lil-wuṣul ela al-Barlaman'; see also, www.elections.jo.com

¹ O.G. (Article 3), issue No. 4586, 16 February 2003, p. 716.

² Article 4/w of the amended provisional Elections Law No. 11, 2003.

³ O.G. (Article 3), issue No. 4586, 16 February 2003, p. 700.

⁴ Daerat al-Ehsa' at al-'Ammah, 'Al-Mar'ah wal-rajul fi arqām, 2008', p.42.

⁵ www.womengatenet.net

⁶ For example, the Islamic Action Front nominee obtained 10.6% of the constituency votes; another nominee got 8%; while the others' percentage ranged between 5.2%-6.5%.

⁷ www.womengateway.com

women were appointed in the Senate, compared with forty eight men.¹ The government, however, consented to increase women membership in the municipality councils within the quota limits. Women were also given 15 percent in the Judicial Institute to qualify them as judges, and the same percentage in the executive authority as four women (out of twenty seven) were appointed ministers in 2007. Naturally, there were anti- and pro-quota people; but it was the only system that guaranteed the participation of women in the parliament.²

There were several factors which led to the failure of women reaching the parliament in acceptable figures. Among these were: the martial law which remained effective from 1957 and which barred women from practicing political activities; social customs and conventions which see women subordinate to men; anti-women campaigns; unorganized work by women as some of them ran for elections without the support of influential bodies and some were lacking election-related skills; women acquiescing to men pressure not to support women; tribal trends as tribes usually prefer to support their male nominees; the need to do two jobs: job work and household chores; women economic dependence; the fact that the majority of women nominees came from poor economic, political and social backgrounds; and the ineffective, unorganized work of women organizations.³

Under the constituency system No. 26 of 2010, constituencies and the areas to which they belong witnessed no substantial change. Sub-constituencies were created, the number of parliamentary seats was raised to 120 and twelve seats were allocated for women.⁴ The system stipulated that in any one governorate or constituency only one woman could win.

In 2012, the elections Law No. 25 was issued as a result of political activities which demanded the cancellation of one-man one-vote. But nothing of substance changed. There were 108 seats, fifteen of which were given to women. But this time, and in case there was a draw between two winners, they had to run for sub-elections. The Law also explained how to fill a vacancy and showed the difference between three cases:

- a- The vacancy shall be filled from within the same constituency.
- b- In case the vacant seat belongs to a certain winning list in a certain constituency, it shall be filled from the same list.

¹ Daerat al-Ehsa'at al-'Ammah, 'Al-Mar'ah wal-rajul fi arqām', 2008, p.4, p.42; see also Maisa' al-Qroum and Jamal Ibrahim, 'Panorama al-entikhabat al-niyabiyya', 2009, (n. p.), p. 542.

² See Intikhābāt 2007, 'Nahwa qānūn 'aṣri', pp. 219-27.

³ Al-Boureni wal-Hindi, 'Al-Mar'ah fil-Urdun', p. 60, pp. 104-6; al-Habashni wa 'Awf, 'Al-Mar'ah al-Urdiniyya wa qanun al-entikhab', p. 76; pp. 107-8, 119-20; Husni Ayeshe et al. 'Al-Mar'ah wal- dawr (Nadhra Urdiniyya)', Amman: Mu'ssasat Abdul Ḥameed Shuman, pp. 186-90; Belal H., al-Tal et al. 'Derāsāt al-intikhābāt al-baladiyya al-Urdiniyya', 1996, Amman: al-Markaz al-Dawli wal-Islami lil-Derāsāt wal-Ma'lūmāt, p. 67; 'Intikhabat 2007, Nahwa qanun entikhabiyy 'asre', pp. 218-20.

⁴ Article 4 of the Regulations, O.G., issue No. 5033, 20 May 2010, p. 2964.

c- In case a woman seat becomes vacant, it shall be filled through sub-elections by a woman who meets nomination conditions from the same constituency within sixty days of the notification by the Parliament or by the Elections Independent Commission.¹

In 2013 elections for the 17th parliament were held: 1,528 nominees were competing for 150 seats; amongst them there were 203 women. The quota seats were fifteen plus three seats for north, middle and south badia. Three women won under the competition system. Women participation was 16.7 percent as nominees, 51.8 percent as voters; while women representation in the Senate was 12 percent: nine women (vis-a-vis sixty six men) were appointed by a royal decree. Among women senators were Emili Naffa², Asma Khadr and Mai Abul-Samn who were influential figures in the women movement.² The presence of women in the Senate and the Parliament has a bearing on the weight of laws taken and the process of decision making itself. It boosts their role in the administration of the state affairs and women issues. Women as members become more capable of raising certain issues and coming up with solutions to them that others cannot do.³

6- The political rights of women in the Municipalities Law: The municipality is a national institution which enjoys financial and administrative powers. It initiates, cancels and defines its territory, functions and authorities in accord with the provisions of the Law of Municipalities. It aims to prepare, implement and follow up the plans and programs necessary to achieve sustainable development with the aid of local communities and to carry out all that is related to local development and run all services, facilities and local projects within its jurisdiction, on its own or with the participation of the private sector or civil society institutions.⁴ Municipality councils have political and administrative aspects. Politically, the council's head and members are democratically elected according to certain conditions which define the criteria that both the candidate and the voter should meet, the constituencies, nomination and sorting procedures as well as announcing the results. Administration-wise, the council runs all local facilities and interests.⁵

The municipality laws (1925-1954) did not restrict nomination, voting and/or appointment to local council to males. They were absolute. The laws of 1937 and 1938 gave the right to nomination to every qualified Jordanian who has completed twenty five years of age, and the right to voting to anyone who has completed eighteen years of age.⁶

¹ Article 1, O. G., issue No. 5165, 1 July 2012, p. 2967.

² www.almadenahnews.com; see also www.dos.gov.jo

³ Nuha Nafe', 'Al-Mar'ah wal-siyasa fi Misr', 2004, Al-Eskandariyya: al-Makataba al-Misriyya lil-Tiba'a wal-Nashr', p.182.

⁴ Article 13, Municipalities Law, No. 14 of 2007; see also O.G., issue No. 4820, 8 April 2007, p. 2178; Municipalities Law, No. 13 of 2011; O.G. issue No. 5114, 15 September 2011, p. 4209.

⁵ 'Ayesh et al., 'Al-Mar'ah wal-dawr'.

⁶ Articles 11, 14, 15; see also O.G. issue No. 579, 11 October 1937, pp. 641-2; O.G., issue No. 5864, 1 February 1938, pp. 53-4.

Nevertheless, women did not practice the right to voting or nomination until 1982 when the amending law (22) stipulated that "anyone who meets certain conditions can have his/her name enlisted on the voters' list".¹ 1987 and 2007 municipality amending laws (2 and 14 respectively) stipulated the same. To guarantee women representation in these councils, women were given 20 percent quota; women who score the highest votes shall occupy a seat each. But in case there were not enough women candidates, the cabinet shall complete the quota with respect to the members of the Council of Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) by appointment upon the recommendations of both the minister of Municipal Affairs and the prime minister.²

In 1980, however, one woman was appointed in the GAM council. Half the council members were appointed, and the rest were elected. The lawmaker had restricted the right to nomination to males. In 1986, one woman was nominated in al-Salt Council; but she did not win. To boost women participation, princess Basma requested in 1995 that ninety nine women be appointed in the rural and municipal councils. The cabinet consented. This encouraged twenty two women to nominate themselves for the general municipal elections the same year.³ Ten women won. In 1999, forty three women nominated themselves; eight won. The government appointed another woman mayor; and twenty five other women were appointed in councils where women were not represented. In 2003, forty six women (compared with 1,760 men) ran for municipal elections; five women won (0.9 percent). Ninety nine women were appointed council members and one woman mayor. Men constituted more than almost two thirds of council members; women 27.2 percent only.⁴ The Municipalities Law of 2011 No. 13 increased women membership to 25 percent minimum, whether by election or by appointment; the latter to be executed upon the recommendation of the minister of Municipal Affairs and the prime minister but only with respect to the GAM.⁵

In 2007 municipality elections were held: 97,8594 men and 92,6416 women registered for voting. The number of men and women was almost equal. There were 2,345 men and 361 women candidates for municipal councils presidency and membership. These were distributed as follows: 739 men and six women for presidency; 1,586 men and 355 women for membership. There were 929 seats, out of which 211 seats were allocated for women.

This occurred following 2007 Law No. 14 which allocated 20 percent for women to empower them take decisions. Twenty one women won outside the quota;⁶ 195 won under the quota system and sixteen by appointment as these seats remained vacant.¹

¹ O.G., issue No. 3061, 1 April 982, p. 485.

² (Articles 2,9/5,12) O. G. issue No. 4820, 8 April 2007, p. 2178.

³ Al-tal et al. 'Derāsāt al-entikhābāt al-Urdiniyya li-'Ām 1995', p. 76.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 68-70; see also 'Ayesb et al. 'Al-Mar'ah wal-dawr', pp. 154-6; see also www.achrs.org.

⁵ (Articles 2, 9/5, 12) O.G. Issue No. 5114, 5 September 2011, p. 4209.

⁶ www.achrs.org

In 2011 elections, there were 437 women against 2,333 men competing for membership, and eight women against 700 men contesting on presidency. Sixty eight women won by attestation and thus women percentage was close to 30 percent; a percentage commended by international conventions.

In 2013 elections, there were 488 women competing against 3040 men; fifty six women won through competition, 270 others through the quota. The percentage was 29 percent. In 2015, women are targeting to get 50 percent.² Compared with former elections results, we can safely say the society trust in women grew noticeably even though women failed to win the presidency.³

7- The rights of women in the Independence of Jurisdiction laws and the regulations of the Legislative Institute: There are two prevailing attitudes in the Arab world regarding women assuming the post of judge. The first one sees that women cannot be judges on the basis that no woman was a judge since early Islam and until the end of the Ottoman Empire. The second view, which is new and rather secular, sees that women have the right to hold the position of judge on par with men on the basis of gender equality.⁴

Religion's say in this concern can be summed up in three views. The first sees that women are absolutely prohibited from holding this post. This is the view of the majority of scholars.⁵ The second view sees that women absolutely have the right to assume this post.⁶ The third view sees that women have the right to be judges but with restricted permission.⁷ Juristic law issued a historic judgment to the effect that Islamic Sharia does not include any objection whatsoever to women assuming the judge post.⁸

In Jordan, the Constitution makes no distinction between men and women with regard to assuming public posts. Article 6 expressly states that "Jordanians are equal before the law"; the 1991 National Charter interprets "Jordanians" as meaning "men and women". Article 24 expressly stipulates that women make half the Umma (i.e. society) which is the source of authorities. Women, therefore, have the right to be judges; but it was jurisdiction norms and cultural heritage that led to the alienation of women from this post.

¹ Law No. 14, clause b.

² www.awapp.org

³ www.alrai.com

⁴ Mahmud Mohammad Hashim, 'Qanun al-qaḍa' al-madani', 1981, Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, p. 216; Ramzi Saif, 'Al-Waseet fi sharḥ qanun al-murafa'at al-madaniyya wal-tijariyya', 1969.

⁵ This is the view of al-Shafi'yy, Ibn Hanbal, al-Maliki, and others.

⁶ This is the view of Al-Tabari and Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi.

⁷ This is the view of Abu Haneefa who attaches the condition that women judges should be quite knowledgeable of the Islamic Sharia; see al-Shkūkāni, 'Nayl al-awṭār', 1975, al-Qahera: al-Maṭba'a al-'Uthmaniyya al-Misriyya, p.255.

⁸ www.iraqja.iq

It was in 1995 when Taghreed Hikmat became the first woman judge in Jordan. Naturally, there was uproar: some claimed that women were passionate and could not apply the law without prejudice.¹ But as a matter of fact, women were successful as students of law and as lawyers in public and private sectors. Besides, certain cases specifically need women discretion, such as family issues, personal status and cases of juveniles. Furthermore, women judges thrived in neighboring Arab countries and they succeeded in the Parliament and Senate, women activists argued.²

To sum up, we can say that the Independence of Jurisdiction laws and their amendments No. 49 of 1972, No. 19 of 1995, No. 15 of 2001, and No. 21 of 2010 did not exclude women from jurisdiction posts. Furthermore, the legal requirements needed to be met by candidate judges do not include any attached legal strings which prevent women from jurisdiction posts³.

Regarding the Legal Institute, article 6 of the regulations No. 88 of 2007 gave females who pass the entrance exam 15 percent of the aggregate number of students.⁴ The number of graduates from the Institute up to 2013 was 501 males and 167 females. The percentage of female judges and staff members who took training courses at the Institute in 2012 was 23.5 percent.⁵ These activities were crowned with the appointment of a woman judge at the Administrative Court in 2014.⁶

8- The rights of women in the laws of political parties: Joining political parties is one of the most important forms of participation in the public life. Women in Jordan were involved in political party activities as early as 1951, according to Emili Naffa' member of the political bureau of the Ba'ath party which was the first party to recruit women in its ranks. Among the most prominent women members in that era were Salwa Shhadeh, Salwa Zyadeen, Rifqa Ghusain, Milada Khamees, Jala Hanna and Emili Naffa'. In the Ba'ath party, there were Lam'a al-Razzaz, Is'af Shqair, Suhalia al-Remawi and Zaha Mango; while Raghda Jardani joined Nationalist parties.⁷

Women's activities then were limited to raising women's awareness, distributing posters, communications, leading demonstrations against military alliances or in support of the Palestinians, the nationalization of the Suez Canal, and the like.⁸ In these parties, they acted

¹ Al-Shawabkeh, 'Al-Mar'ah al-Urduniyya wa mehnat al-qaḍa', Amman: n. p., pp. 78-86.

² Waḍ' al-mar'a fil-tashrīḥāt al-qānūniyya, pp. 15-16.

³ O.G., (Article 10), issue No. 2383, 1 September 1972, pp. 1828-9.

⁴ O.G., issue No. 4843, 18 August 2007, p. 5196.

⁵ Legislative Authority Annual Report of 2012, p. 34.

⁶ www.jfranews.net; www.alghad.com; www.jordannews.com

⁷ Markaz al-Quds lil-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya, 'Dirāsa ḥawl wāqi' al-mar'ah fil-aḥzāb al-siyāsiyya', 2007, Amman, pp. 13-14.

⁸ Suhair al-Tal, 'Muqaddemat ḥawla qaḍiyyat al-mar'ah wal-ḥaraka al-nisa'iyya fil-Urdun', 1985, Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-Arabiyya lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, p.113; Raslan bani Yaseen and Nidham 'Assaf, 'Nadwat dawr wuṣūl al-mar'ah lil-Barlamān', al-Markaz al-Thaqāfi al-Volume-III, Issue-II

within women-only cells to avoid social defamation. This muted their effectiveness given that parties were not quite interested in the issues of women.¹ The martial law suppressed political activities and hence made women demands secondary; it also suspended parliamentary life and party activities.²

Women participation in political parties is mediocre: about 6 percent in the religious and nationalist currents, 5 percent in the leftist parties, but a little bit higher in the founding commissions of middle currents.³ At the grassroots level, women participation was poor, and poorer at the leadership and the secretariat levels. A study released by the Centre for Strategic Studies in 1966 about seventeen political parties shows the following⁴:

- 1- Women representation in the founding committees of five parties was nonexistent; in other committees very poor.
- 2- With the exception of four parties, women representation in the decision-making and/or executive committees was also nonexistent.
- 3- All party secretary generals were men.

8.1 Laws regulating political party activities in Jordan: In their programs, political parties did try to attract women but only as members and looked at their roles in the society in a traditional way.⁵ With the exception of the Jordanian Democratic Popular Unity Party which stated that "women membership in the central committee should be taken into consideration",⁶ women were not given privileges or quotas to help them rise and overcome the blocks standing in their way.⁷ Furthermore, women appointment as founding members in certain parties did not aim to empower women, but rather to meet the conditions set by the new 2007 party laws; and many of them were wives or relatives of important party members.⁸ They, therefore, held positions to support their relative male members.

Malaki, 1997, Amman, 29-31 March, p. 53-4; Ahmad Nawfal, 'Dawr al-aḥzāb fil-tanmiya al-siyāsiyya', 1997, Amman: Markaz al-Riyādah lil-Ma'lūmāt wal-Dirāsāt, p.17.

¹ Al-Tal, 'Muqaddema ḥawla qaḍiyyat al-mar'ah wal-ḥaraka al-nisa'iyyah fil-Urdun', 1985, pp. 115-6; Yaseen and 'Assaf, 'Nadwat dawr mu'assasāt al-mujtama' al-madani', p. 57.

² Yaseen and 'Assaf, 'Mu'assasāt al-mujtama' al-madani fi wuṣūl al-mar'ah lil-Barlaman', pp. 56-58.

³ Markaz al-Quds lil-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya, 'Dirāsa ḥḥawl wāqe' al-mar'ah fil-aḥzab al-siyāsiyya', p.15.

⁴ Yaseen and 'Assaf, 'Dawr mu'assasāt al-mujtama' al-madani fi wuṣūl al-mar'ah lil-Barlaman', pp. 57-9.

⁵ Ibid. , pp.15-19.

⁶ Article 2/10.

⁷ Laws regulating political party activities in Jordan, pp. 86-87.

⁸ Ibid., p.93.

Political parties prefer to push their male members forward to be elected. This is because of the one-man one-vote system. In countries where the list system is adopted, there is wider opportunity for women to win.¹

For the empowerment of women, the Jordanian political parties have to amend women-related clauses and to address their problems in a straightforward manner. They have to amend their regulations to allow more women into higher positions, train their women cadres through courses, workshops, mass communications and campaign administration, etc. They should also give them the opportunity to take decisions, support party women members in elections, sponsor their social activities to encourage them to join parties,² and allocate a quota for them.³

On paper, all party laws (of 2007 and 2012) which carry the name of the system 62 of 2013 included many amendments to the effect that both men and women shall equally have the right to found, and be members of, political parties. It did that by clearly defining *political party* as "a political organization that may be established by a group of Jordanians."⁴

8.2 Conditions of political party membership: It was not until 2012 when the party law stated that the number of any party founders should not be less 500 people, that they should come from 7 governorates, each one to be represented by 5 percent, and that women should have no less than 10 percent.⁵ This means that party founding was linked to women presence (through the quota) as this would activate their participation. The National Commission for Women Issues requested the parliament to endorse the law and increase the percentage to 10 percent in order to boost their expertise in the leading positions and keep abreast with the treaties and agreements Jordan has ratified.⁶

9- Conclusions: By way of winding up this article we can say that women in Jordan have done their best to get out of the shell they were put into for ages and ages. They joined women movements, staged demonstrations, presented petitions and held conferences to prove that they are worthy of a decent life.

¹Yaseen and 'Assaf, 'Dawr mu'assasāt al-mujtama' al-madani fi wuṣūl al-mar'ah lil-Barlaman', p. 60.

²Alqudscenter.org; www.uop.edu.jo; see also Suhaila al-Shalabi, 'Al-Mar'ah al-Urdiniyya wal-aḥzāb al-siyāsiyya', 2004, unpublished paper for Āl al-Bait University, 3rd Conference, pp. 10-12; al-Ḥabashneh and 'Awad, 'Al-Mar'ah al-Urdiniyya wa qānūn al-entikhāb, pp. 128-33; Nawfal et al. 'Dawr al-aḥzāb fil-tanmiya al-siyāsiyya', pp. 40-1.

³Asma' al-Samri, 'Al-Tajriba al-ḥizbiyya lil-mar'ah al-Urdiniyya, al-wāqe' wal-ṭumūh', p. 187.

⁴Article 3, O.G., issue No. 3851, September 1992, p. 2670; issue No. 4821, 16 April 2007, p. 2234; No. 5161, 7 June 2012, p. 2529.

⁵Law No. 16, article 6/a; O. G. issue No. 5161, 7 June 2012, p. 2530.

⁶Petra.gov.jo,alarabalyawm.net; alkawnnews.net.

Women in Jordan are currently leading a completely different life from that which their grandmothers or even mothers have led: they are in the Parliament, the Senate, political parties, companies, TV and Radio, to cite but a few. But there are still deep-rooted cultural concepts that impede their progress and dwarf their achievements.

To be fair, it is not religion that blocks the free movement of women. For no heavenly religion sponsors oppression or suppression against others. Islam, for example, does not see women inferior, but different. They are biologically different and, therefore, deserve a *softer* treatment.

The problem stems from both men and women: some men still see them inferior, and some women still see themselves inferior. This is a long cultural heritage that needs a long time to change. More effort, action and enlightened vision that are needed to gradually change things.

To empower women, nurseries should be provided at no or little cost; laws related to maternity leave should be wisely applied; men of religion should issue enlightened judgments to regulate the new emerging intra-spouse economic and housework relations. And the press, mass communication means, political parties and proper family raising of children could also be influential agents for effecting change.