

June 22nd, 2010

LEA COLLET
MICHAEL TAUCH
DR. MARTIN BECK

Civic Participation and Local Development: Building Effective Communities in Jordan

Event: International Workshop
Date/Place: May 27th, 2010, Mu'tah University- Karak
Conception: Dr. Khaled Al-Awamleh, Dr. Martin Beck
Organisation: KAS Amman, Visions Center For Strategic and Development Studies

1. Program Overview

Thursday, May 27th, 2010

Opening Session

Visions Center for Strategic And Development Studies Amman-Jordan	Dr. Khaled Al-Awamleh
Resident Representative Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman Office - Jordan	Dr. Martin Beck
Gouvernor of Karak City Karak - Jordan	Ali Al-Shora`a
Local Development Directorate Ministry of Interior Amman - Jordan	Dr. Raed Al-Adwan
President of Mu'tah University Karak - Jordan	Prof. Abdelrahim Al-Hunaiti
Vice President of Mu'tah University	Dr. Marouf Al-Bakheit

First Session: Decentralization, Administrative Regulations and Civic Society in Jordan

Decentralization and Human Rights from a Legal Perspective	Dr. Mohammad Shawqi Director of International Law Forum University of Cairo, Egypt
Decentralization and Local Public Administration in Jordan	Dr. Raed Al-Adwan Local Development Directorate Ministry of Interior Amman - Jordan
Moderator	Dr. Marouf Al-Bakheit Board of Chairmen Mu'tah University Karak

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Second Session: Municipalities, Women, Men and Private Sector Participation in Local Development

The Role of Local Observatories in Planning for Local Development	Dr. Jihad Abu Al-Sondas Dean of Planning and Management, Al-Balqa Applied University Al Salt – Jordan
Media Women Role in Local Development	Sawsan Zaideh
Building a Municipality: How to Assure Participation of Men and Women Alike in Local Development	Dr. Renate Reiter Professor for Political Sciences, University of Hagen – Germany
Moderator	Dr. Hussein Mahadeen Sociologist Mu'tah University Karak – Jordan

Final Discussion

Moderator: Dr. Raed Al-Adwan	Governor Ali Al-Shora'a Dr. Jihad Abu Al-Sondos Dr. Martin Beck Dr. Khaled Al-Awamleh Dr. Renate Reiter Prof. Mohammad Shouqi Sawsan Zaideh Dr. Amjad Al-Shraideh
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2. Objectives

With the first competitive elections in 1989 Jordan's late King Hussein paved the way for enhancing the political participation, which is a substantial component of a functioning political system. King Abdullah II initiated the first measures to improve the political, social and economic framework on the way of fair political participation. He therefore founded a royal commission in 2005 to work out a decentralization plan for Jordan's political system. This plan aims at enhancing the political participation of citizens on the local community level, thereby creating an open, transparent and citizen-friendly political system and delegating power from the highly centralized government bureaucracy to the governorate and community level. Though it may be the main objective of the regime to stabilize the prevalent political order with its limited opportunities of political participation, Jordan's citizens should take the government by its

word and should seize the chance of widening the civic participation. During the workshop on May 27th, organized by KAS Amman in cooperation with the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies at Mu'tah University in Karak, participants and experts exchanged ideas and opinions on local development. The topics discussed covered, among others, the fair representation of men and women on the local level, the role of the private sector and of the local community, the decentralisation project of the government and the central government's role in the process of decentralisation.

3. Course of the event

Dr. Khaled Al-Awamleh, Director of the Visions Center, opened the second day of the workshop. In his welcoming speech he talked about the key role of the university in the field of regional and local development. The mission of the university should not

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only be to produce new knowledge, impart and apply it, but also to promote human resources as the basis of social development. The training of stakeholders and experts in economy, politics and society is one of the most important pillars of sustainable national and regional development.

Dr. Martin Beck, Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Amman, pointed out that the workshop can be traced back to the promising initiative of King Abdullah II to decentralize the political decision-making process in Jordan.

However, this decentralization process should further enhance the capacities of municipalities and strengthen the participation on the local level. The government should therefore take measures to help citizens getting the opportunity to take part in the decision-making processes and to implement their interests on the local level. Hence, the government has to provide the municipalities and governorates with the necessary financial means.

Both **Dr. Al-Awamleh** and **Dr. Beck** stated that the KAS-Visions Center workshop is particularly important as it is the first coordinated effort between the government, represented by the directory of the local development at the ministry of interior, municipalities, local media departments, institutions of higher education and advocacy groups to organize a joint event on local development and civic participation in governorates and local communities.

The governor of Karak, **Ali Al-Shora'a**, mentioned the celebrations of the 64th anniversary of Jordan's independence. He stressed that since its independence, the country has faced many challenges. The government has to plan and implement a comprehensive development strategy that guarantees the participation of all Jordanians in the political decision-making process.

Dr. Shawqi opened the first session of the workshop with a speech on the "Role of Decentralisation and Human Rights from a Legal Perspective". At the beginning he de-

defined the concepts of decentralisation and democracy. According to him, decentralisation means political reform measures taken to shift administrative, fiscal and political functions to regional and local levels of administration. He defined democracy as the government of the people, by the people, for the people. The people are the highest sovereign and highest authority of political action of the state. Nevertheless, the people do not rule directly. Modern democracies are marked by political and social institutions like parliaments and political parties which limit the participation of the majority of the people to legally regulated participatory processes.

Subsequently, **Dr. Shawqi** discussed in his presentation whether decentralisation and democracy could be ranked among human rights. From his point of view, article 21 of the UN Human Rights Charta of 1948 and article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 clarify that decentralisation and democracy are part of the human rights because everything that generates human rights is a human right itself. According to the UN Charta and the International Covenant, everyone has the right to equal accession to public offices, to participate in public affairs directly or by freely elected representatives. The people's will is expressed in periodic and genuine elections which have to be held on the basis of universal and equal suffrage and in secrecy. These elections express the will of the people and are the basis of the authority of government.

Dr. Al-Adwan presented in his lecture on "Decentralization and Local Administration" the decentralization plan of the government. Since 2009 a new committee has been working on compiling the financial, political, organizational and judicial framework for the implementation of the decentralization plan. Decentralization envisions a delegation of power, capacities and resources on the governmental and communal level. The capabilities and financial means

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of the 12 governorates have to be strengthened in such a way as to enable the civil society to participate at the political life of the state on all levels. Yet, the huge socio-economic gap between the rural and urban population shows that the decisions of the government do not always reflect the needs and priorities of the citizens.

In the discussion, different options on how to face the marginalisation of organisations of the civil society were discussed. Furthermore, questions were raised on whether democracy is a suitable concept for the Arab world, whether democracy might also have some negative effects and whether a political system coined by tribal structures could be more beneficial to Jordan.

Dr. Renate Reiter opened the second session of the workshop and presented different options to design participation in local communities. She stated that there are differences between traditional forms of political representation such as in presidential or parliamentary systems of government and new forms of participation. She then focused on participation of men and women in local elections and their representation in local institutions. Regarding the passive vote, there are nearly no differences between men and women; both sexes are affected by a significant decline of participation in elections and in political interest in Germany. In comparison to France, where there is a balanced representation of men and women in local councils and high rank executive positions, women are under-represented in Germany. In the following, **Dr. Reiter** discussed reasons for unequal representation in local councils: mainly, equal representation depends on the form of election law. Contrary to the system of majority voting, proportional representation abets balanced active participation. Besides, quotas in political parties should secure career opportunities for women. Moreover, an unequal representation of men and women prevails in local political and social networks. Unequal time resources and gender-

specific tasks inhibit equal representation of man and women in politics, economy and society. Quotas, party competition, strategies of parties and social networks that improve career opportunities of women and new forms of grassroots democracy promote a more equal representation on the local and national level.

Sawsan Zaideh talked about the women quota that has been introduced on the national level in 2003. The problem with the quota is that due to the Jordanian election law it favours women from rural and less populated areas. The new election law for 2010 will raise the women's quota from six to twelve seats. Currently, women are under-represented in the political system of Jordan because of the weak party structures that do not encourage women's candidature. Furthermore, the media do not support women in improving their social position. The media only occasionally promote the participation of woman to alter Jordan's outward image.

Then, **Dr. Jihad Abu Al-Sondas** presented the role of local monitoring in planning for local development. Urban observation centres are necessary to assure correct implementation of the government's development plans. In order to engage local communities in the development and implementation of communal development plans, they should get the opportunity to observe and evaluate the project development and outcomes.

At the end of the workshop, **Dr. Beck** stressed that the Jordanian governorates and local communities need more financial support from the central government.

Dr. Al-Adwan explained that the results of the workshop and the feed back to the decentralization plan would be communicated to the Ministry of Interior. **Dr. Reiter** and **Sawsan Zaideh** emphasized the important role of women in local development and civic participation as agents of gender specific needs.

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4. Conclusion

As a first coordinated effort between the government, represented by the directory of the local development at the ministry of interior, municipalities, local media departments, institutions of higher education, advocacy groups, the joint workshop of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies on civic participation and local development has paved the way for future discussions on decentralization.

The participation of the governor of Karak, **Ali Al-Shora'a**, as well as of other high-ranking experts, showed the importance of discussing concepts on local development, civic participation and decentralization. The workshop fulfilled the function of bringing together experts from different areas who discuss highly significant issues such as decentralizing power and financial resources. Especially the contribution of **Dr. Reiter** on equal representation of men and women provided the audience with a new perspective of gender segregation and equality in political participation.

The feedback on the workshop was very positive. Many participants used the opportunity of a free exchange of opinions on problems that have not been discussed in Jordan so far, to have their say on important issues such as the role of local communities in the government's decentralization plan. Participants expressed their interest for follow-up events.