

## Empowering Local Governments in Jordan:

# Enhancing Political and Developmental Relations between Local Governments and Local Communities

**Event:** Regional Workshop

**Date/Place:** October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Jerash Municipality Auditorium (King Abdullah II Auditorium), Jerash, Jordan

**Concept:** Dr. Khaled Awamleh, Dr. Martin Beck

**Organization:** Visions Center For Strategic and Development Studies, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman

### 1. Program Overview

#### Wednesday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Visions Center for Strategic  
And Development Studies  
Amman-Jordan

Dr. Khaled Al Awamleh

Resident Representative of the  
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman

Dr. Martin Beck

Chairman of the Greater Municipality of  
Jerash

Eng. Bilal Al Momani

Master Plan for the Greater Jerash  
Municipality

Eng. Iman Zaki, Head of Master  
Planning Department  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs

#### First Session: Universal Charts and Investment Maps for Development Projects

The Role of Municipalities in Enhancing  
Local Development

Dr. Ali Kokazah  
Head of Judiciary Department  
Greater Jerash Municipality

Good Governance and the Expected  
Role of Municipality Councils

Dr. Ahmad Hawmdeh  
Dean of Faculty of Law

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

**AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN**

October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**WARREN ALTOUNIAN**  
**DR. MARTIN BECK**  
**NIDAA AL-SHRAIDEH**

[www.kas.de/amman](http://www.kas.de/amman)

Master Plan for Greater Jerash  
Municipality

Moderation

**Second Session: Decentralization and the Management of Local Resources**

Regional Planning as an Effective Tool  
for Raising the Efficiency of Local  
Councils and Equal Distribution of  
Development Revenues

The Role of Administrative  
Governance in Development and  
Reform

Financing in Municipalities

Moderation

Jerash Private University

Eng. Iman Zaki,  
Head of Master Planning Department  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs  
HE Dr. Khaled Al Omari  
President of Jerash Private University

Prof. Sedki Al Momani  
Dean of Princess Alia College  
Balqaa Applied University  
Salt - Jordan

Dr. Mohammad Al Awamreh  
Chairman of Elections and  
Development Department  
Balqaa Governorate, Salt – Jordan

Mr. Chris August  
Managing Director  
Banking Solutions Ltd.

Dr. Ali Kokazah  
Head of Judiciary Department  
Greater Jerash Municipality

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN

October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

WARREN ALTOUNIAN  
DR. MARTIN BECK  
NIDAA AL-SHRAIDEH

[www.kas.de/amman](http://www.kas.de/amman)

## 2. Objectives

In light of the recent events in Egypt, Syria, and other Arab states, the need for comprehensive political reform is imperative to the government of Jordan. The Arab world is rife with notions of democracy, and aspirations of self-governance exist more now than ever. Capitalizing on this momentous energy, the Jordanian government has increasingly emphasized the role of municipalities in the reform process.

In 2010, KAS Amman and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies formed a partnership to organize workshops focused on the decentralization of government, and empowerment of municipalities to conduct political and economic development. These workshops seek to bring decision-makers, academics, experts, and the general population to the table. Without pretense, the need for open discussion on the issues that most affect the citizens of Jordan is paramount for continued stability and political growth. Decentralization of government power is the vehicle through which positive change can be made. The requisite desire for citizens to be active participants in the ventures and development of their communities is unprecedented in the region. KAS Amman and the Visions Center are deeply committed to strengthening the role of municipalities and subsidiarity in government affairs.

The workshop, held at the Jerash Municipality Auditorium on October 26, 2011, included officials, experts, and professors from both the public and private sector. Participants discussed a range of topics including the integral concept of good governance, limitations of financial capacity, and development strategies for the greater Jerash municipality. In addition they addressed unemployment, expanding

tourism, and the necessity to better coordinate public and private sector investment. There was an opportunity for citizens in attendance to ask questions and address concerns, as well as offer suggestions to the panel. The ultimate goal was to encourage dialogue and foster an environment in which veritable progress could be made.

## 3. Details

**Dr. Khaled Al Awamleh**, Director of the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies Amman, began the workshop by addressing the Royal vision of achieving sustainable development through community participation. Dr. Al Awamleh thanked all participants and those in attendance. He outlined the principles of citizen participation: understanding municipal development, the role of decentralization, and the goals of the Jordanian reform agenda. He recognized the complementary role the central government has in integrating municipalities, granting them the authority required to self-govern. Dr. Al Awamleh concluded by stressing the importance of socioeconomic reform through citizen involvement at the most basic levels of development.

**Dr. Martin Beck**, Resident Representative of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Amman, began by identifying the role of municipalities as a technical function. Actors on this level are better suited for implementation than central government, yet empowering them is a political process. Dr. Beck continued by defining the concept of subsidiarity; the idea that the smallest possible group capable of handling a problem should address it, unchallenged by a bureaucratic hierarchy. He stated the central authority should deal with concerns beyond the scope of these groups, like maintaining the military and border protection. Human beings need

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

**AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN**

October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**WARREN ALTOUNIAN  
DR. MARTIN BECK  
NIDAA AL-SHRAIDEH**

[www.kas.de/amman](http://www.kas.de/amman)

autonomy in order to be active in political society.

Municipalities must be able to deal with their own affairs, as they are best fit to determine and assess local needs. Dr. Beck asserted that without financial redistribution, they will be nothing more than paper tigers. It requires political will to empower municipalities, but without active local participation it cannot be done.

Dr. Beck conceded that central state agencies employ methods of power projection and control over the population as a means of posturing to neighboring countries, showing strength in the face of potential opposition. Though, this certainly is not exclusive to Jordan, all countries engage in these behaviors in one form or another. He concluded by affirming that KAS Amman is not in a position to sell an ideal model of government. Rather it is about sharing experiences learned by European governments in their political reform and encouraging similar dialogue in Jordan and the rest of the Arab world.

**Eng. Bilal Al Momani**, Chariman of the Greater Municipality of Jerash, recognized the increased level of participation by the citizenry of Jordan to improve the role of municipalities. Eng. Al Momani asserted municipalities must become pioneers of development, citing the need for financial and technical support in order to do so. Through transparent development and coordinated master planning, the needs of local communities can be better served. The goal, he said, is to make the Jordanian municipality system a model for the rest of the Arab world. And in doing so, promoting institutional growth throughout the country.

**Eng. Ms. Iman Zaki** stood in for the Minister of Municipal Affairs, **HE Mahir Abul Samin**, whom was unable to attend due to the opening of the Jordanian Parliament on

the same day. Eng. Zaki began by highlighting how positive development is characterized by good governance. Competent leadership plays a central role in building solid infrastructure. She stated the difficulty with addressing geographic and demographical challenges when developing land. She aspired for Jordan to be one of the first countries of the region to be successful in bridging the gaps between government and private investment in a manner that benefits the general population. Eng. Zaki presented a twenty year goal to unify citizens, secure financial investment, and fight unemployment. It will require the assistance of all actors in the development process including private citizens, government institutions, and NGOs in order for this goal to be realized.

**First Session: The Role of Municipalities in Local Development**

**Dr. Eyad M. Malkawi**, Dean of Business Administration Faculty, Jerash University, moderated the first session. He emphasized that the problems facing Jerash exist in all other municipalities, and that the conclusions from this conference are important for the others to consider. He outlined the session by acknowledging not all topics of development could be discussed, rather the focus would be on the most important which face Jerash.

**Dr. Ali Kokazah**, Head of the Judiciary Department of the Greater Jerash Municipality, began by stating municipalities provide not only services, but play a developmental role as they are imbedded in the communities' needs and aspirations. With respect to Jerash, Dr. Kokazah noted the strong connection which exists between the municipality and local community, providing a solid foundation for future development. He maintained the future of the municipality lies in agriculture development, tourism, and archaeological research. However advancing this agenda

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN

October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

WARREN ALTOUNIAN  
DR. MARTIN BECK  
NIDAA AL-SHRAIDEH

[www.kas.de/amman](http://www.kas.de/amman)

requires substantial funding and current budget deficits are a major inhibitor of progress.

Regarding provincial councils, Dr. Kokazah suggested requiring government officials to be perennial students. Because no one person can be an expert in all fields, training courses should be offered in areas of public service and development to maintain competent, good governance. He concluded by noting the progress Jerash has made in recent years, but insisted on the need for its continuity through direct government involvement in partnership with the private sector.

**Dr. Ahmed Hawamdeh**, Dean of Law at Jerash Private University, presented his paper entitled 'Governance and the Expected Role of Municipal Councils.' He began identifying the four themes of the paper: The history of municipalities starting in 11<sup>th</sup> century England, specific challenges to Jordan, government under the new laws, and the impact of these laws on local government.

In contrast with Dr. Kokazah, Dr. Hawamdeh maintained the need for a ground-up approach, suggesting the central government can be inefficient in dealing with local matters. There exists overlapping incompetence within the government, with infighting and constant blaming of failures between different agencies. Misuse of funds, overstaffed offices, and nepotism are systemic problems. He went on to list what he considers to be the triangle of good government: accountability, transparency, and participation. Dr. Hawamdeh noted how allegations of corruption exist, yet there are rarely any convictions. In order for government to be transparent, those in power must be held accountable for wrongdoings. Yet none of these are possible without an active political community with vested interest in government decisions.

He lauded some of the new provisions for their progressive bearing. For example, Article 202 requires government appointment based on merit rather than bias. But the implementations of these laws are in the early stages and their success must endure the test of time.

Dr. Hawamdeh's critique of the status quo was with the intent of stressing the importance of decentralization. Making the successes and failures of governance the responsibility of local communities is the only way to improve the system and root out corruption. He concluded by suggesting elections be held under the supervision of nonpartisan commissions, rather than the central government. Empowerment through democratic ideals is the long term goal for Jordan.

**Eng. Iman Zaki** reiterated some of the points made at the beginning of the conference. Her responsibility lies in the generation of master plans for future development, as envisioned by His Majesty, King Abdullah II. She presented a detailed slideshow projecting future urban expansion and land optimization in the Jerash corridor. Eng. Zaki stated the government's interest to protect agricultural land in the face of population growth, noting the clash between public and private interests. She asserted the functional role government takes in protecting the interests of future generations, especially with regard to the encroachment of agricultural areas. Ultimately, she stated, the Jerash corridor is one of the areas in Jordan with the highest developmental potential. Therefore it should be the central government, in cooperation with the municipalities, to determine the best approach to its growth.

The first session ended with a lively debate between panelists and audience members. The audience was particularly critical of government projects and structures on

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN

October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

WARREN ALTOUNIAN  
DR. MARTIN BECK  
NIDAA AL-SHRAIDEH

[www.kas.de/amman](http://www.kas.de/amman)

agricultural tracts, and the high debt of the municipality. The panelists defended their positions and offered the audience consolation, stating improved measures had already been undertaken to remedy their grievances.

### **Second Session: Decentralization and the Management of Local Resources**

**Professor Sediki Al Momani**, Dean of Princess Alia College Balqaa Applied University, accented the service-providing role municipalities take and the requirement that they provide for all people in the community. He explained local planning within Jerash is a very objective process. This includes the logistics of street planning, public transportation, and trash collection. The municipality exists to provide services with the least costs and highest efficiency.

**Dr. Mohammad Al Awamreh**, presented his paper, "The Role of the Administrative Government." He began by suggesting Jerash be a case study of the developmental reforms. He posed the question of whether or not municipalities are capable of developing on their own, or if it is necessary to merge with the central government. Collapsing government programs is just as expensive as reforming them, he assured. Dr. Al Awamreh demanded for good leadership characterized by integrity, morality, and modesty. The duty of government is to uphold these ideals; there cannot be economic development when there is political underdevelopment.

**Mr. Chris August**, Managing Director of Banking Solutions Ltd., expounded the need to overhaul Jordan's financial system and the way the government conducts business. He noted the poor implementation of appropriated funds in government offices, meanwhile agencies continue to draw up ambitious master plans without adequate financial projections. Because Jordan is a

poor country, relative to other nations in the region, there is a need for solid structural financing. Mr. August mentioned, despite financial concerns, there are improvements that can be made without cost. Good governance and transparency are based on institutional and personal integrity, not revenue. Financial decisions made for political gains are a detriment to the system.

Mr. August suggested investment in the development of Jordan's oil shale as one way to stem the country's financial strife. Substantial amounts of money have been loaned to Jordan, and if managed properly, these investments will pay dividends in the near future. Mr. August left the audience with the impression that the status quo is pushing Jordan beyond the brink of sustainability. The crisis exists today, and without recourse, the effects of the financial problems will not be seen in a later generation but within a few years.

### **4. Conclusion**

The joint workshop of KAS Amman and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies provided a successful foundation on which similar workshops can be held. The turnout of participants and audience members was indicative of the importance this event carried for the people of Jerash. It illuminated the interest the citizenry has taken in the development of their communities, intending to be active participants in that process. The themes of integrity, transparency, and modesty were echoed throughout the conference. Competent and prudent actions by government are based on these core ideas. The state of Jordan's financial affairs was the other major concern. Interest in the distribution of funds, generation of income, and financial management were universal amongst the panelists and audience alike. Redress of their concerns and weighted

**Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.**

**AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN**

**October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**WARREN ALTOUNIAN  
DR. MARTIN BECK  
NIDAA AL-SHRAIDEH**

**[www.kas.de/amman](http://www.kas.de/amman)**

consideration of their suggestions is crucial for the development of individual municipalities and the country as a whole.

Dr. Beck recommended the institutionalization of conferences akin to the one held on October 26<sup>th</sup>, and others hosted by KAS Amman and the Visions Center. Dialogue between decision-makers, experts, academics, and citizens is the first step in action towards comprehensive reform. The KAS Amman and the Visions Center have promoted the concepts of decentralization and subsidiarity in the national conversation, and are positive advocates of this development. These workshops have been successful in the attempt to allay the disconnect which sometimes exists between governments and the general population.

***HYPER LINKS***

The joint workshop of KAS Amman and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies received a high coverage from national media. It was

covered by several renowned daily newspapers. A report on the press coverage can be found at:  
<http://www.kas.de/jordanien/en/pages/6609/>