

August 10, 2012

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“How to Approach Key Development Issues in Jordan: Perspectives from the Jordanian Civil Society”

Event: Workshop

Date, Place: Monday, July 16th 2012, Sheraton Hotel Amman - Jordan

Organization: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Amman Office

Program Overview

Welcome Speech

Dr. Martin Beck

Resident Representative
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
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Amman - Jordan

Objectives

Session 1: Key Issues

Moderator:

Ms. Nida'a Al Shraideh

Project Manager
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
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Jordan's Development through Civic Participation in Jordan

Dr. Khaled Al Awamleh

Chairman
Visions Center for Strategic
and Development Studies
Amman - Jordan

Jordan's Development through Freedom of Speech and Media

Mr. Emad Nuseir

Journalist
Jordan Radio & TV
Amman - Jordan

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How to Achieve Human Security for Jordanians

Mr. Ayman Khalil

Director
Arab Institute for Security Studies
Amman – Jordan

Discussion

Session 2: Jordanian Civil Society Approaches For a Change in Jordan

Moderator:

Ms. Rasha Al Rashed

Project Manager
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
Amman Office
Amman - Jordan

How to link Civil Society, Business and Government?

Dr. Mustafa Nasreddin

Senior Executive Director
Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization
Amman – Jordan

How to link Civil Society and Political Decision Makers?

Mr. Oraib Al Rantawi

Director General
Al-Quds Center for Political Studies
Amman - Jordan

How Academia Can Contribute to Jordan's Development

Dr. Wafa Khadra

Comparative Literature
Department of English
American University of Madaba (MUB)
Madaba - Jordan

Ways in Which Germany Could Support Jordan's Development

HE Mr. Hassan Abu Nimeh

Writer and Lecturer
Al Rai Newspaper
Jordan Times Newspaper
Amman - Jordan

Discussion

Closing Session

Ms. Simone Hueser

Research Fellow & Project Coordinator
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
Amman Office
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Welcome Speech

Dr. Martin Beck opened the workshop by introducing the topic of the workshop: Key development issues in Jordan from a perspective of the Civil Society. He stated that a political system could only be effective if it is based on a strong civil society with a strong voice shaped by the different opinions of the population, and not only the political elite.

Dr. Beck emphasized the importance of the partner organizations of KAS Amman and thanked them for their extraordinary cooperation which shaped the overall work of KAS Amman in the past years. He also mentioned that all the partner organizations, show the great potential of the Jordanian Civil Society.

Finally, Dr. Beck introduced Dr. Ottmar Öhring, who will be the new resident representative of KAS Amman from January 2013 onwards, as well as the interim director Ms. Maria Zandt.

Session 1: Key Development Issues

Jordan's Development through Civic Participation in Jordan

Dr. Khaled Al Awamleh, thanked Dr. Beck for a successful collaboration in the past years.

At the beginning of his presentation Dr. Al Awamleh emphasized that a lot more has to be done to improve the participation of the civil society in politics. He pointed out that it is of utmost importance to restructure governmental organizations, particularly in ministries, and to increase their capacity. If these new capacities are structured effectively, a major achievement for development could be accomplished.

Dr. Awamleh stressed that the most important factor for political development in Jordan is decentralization. An encompassing national decentralization process would significantly increase the local participation and help to implement the principle of

subsidiarity. Furthermore, decentralization could achieve a better monitoring of political affairs. For Dr. Al Awamleh it is of high priority that most of the decisions dealing with local problems are delegated to the local councils and governments in order to identify and to respond to the needs of the local population. He emphasized that an encompassing decentralization process must include financial autonomy. This could also increase transparency as the local authorities and national government would have to present their budget plans to the communities which could, eventually, limit corruption.

Workshops should help to create better networks between the political actors in Jordan working on different levels, not only between executive and legislative but also between national governments, local governments, political parties, and NGOs.

Jordan's Development through Freedom of Speech and Media

Mr. Emad Nuseir focused on the impact of media on the development process in Jordan. He elaborated that media is one of the major non-parliamentary pillars of influence in the political landscape of a country. The different types of media sources such as newspapers, radio, television, or the Internet are substantial and essential for the opinion building of the population. A variety of positions within the media lead to an exchange of opinions and different sources of information. If perspectives and problems are censored and blocked, the population will not be able to create an independent and information based opinion, which is a significant step in every developmental process. The Internet, and as part of that also Blogs and social networks, are often more effective as well as interactive, as they are not as easily restricted as other media sources.

He further elaborated that media has to be realistic, honest and as neutral as possible in the presentation of news. Beautifying facts is not helpful and harms the

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development process more than triggering improvement.



From left to right: Ayman Khalil, Emad Nuseir, Khaled Al Awamleh

However, it also has to be considered that illiteracy is still prevalent in Jordan. Additionally, while almost every Jordanian has access to TV and radio, not everyone has access to the Internet.

How to Achieve Human Security for Jordanians

Dr. Ayman Khalil stressed the importance of Human Security in the development process of Jordan. The term was formed in 1990 by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and deals with all different sources of security affecting the well being of humans. These factors might be water, energy, as well as neighbouring countries in war. In order to provide the citizens with stability and security, good governance and an efficient management of resources is a prerequisite.

For Jordan, an inclusive security system covering environmental issues, water issues and questions of human rights should be the basis.

Dr. Ayman Khalil stated that one has to guarantee energy security first in order to then assure water access for all people, simply because by new energy techniques, a lot of water can be saved and water can actually be recycled and used several times.

Security has always been important to Jordan, especially if one takes a look at the conflicts in the neighbouring countries. The

Israel-Palestine conflict for instance, has been going on for the past 40 years. Due to the close links between Palestine and Jordan this conflict is of major importance for Jordan as a country, particularly regarding questions such as water issues and safety. According to Dr. Khalil, regional security cannot be guaranteed as long as Israel is clearly taking advantage of its hegemony in the West Bank and Gaza. Additional to the ongoing occupation of the West Bank, the rise of Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon, and problems in Sinai indicate that it needs not only diplomatic solutions but a major disarmament of the region to increase Jordan's safety.

Dr. Khalil's advocated was a broad security cooperation on a national and regional level which might bring the Middle East to peace.

Discussion

The first part of the conference was closed by a fruitful discussion among the audience and speakers on several main issues. One was the thesis Dr. Ayman Khalil stated that energy security should come before water security. Several participants disagreed and pointed out that water can be used as source of energy. Additionally, it was raised that water has become extremely politicized due to the fact that Israel is in the possession of significant amounts of water, which it uses rather for local agriculture than distributing it to the Arab populations. Other participants mentioned that the Jordanian media is far away from creating independency and sensibility but rather holds back information.



Workshop participants

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Session 2: Jordanian Civil Society Approaches For a Change in Jordan

How to link Civil Society, Business and Government?

Mr. Mustafa Nasreddin opened the second session of the workshop with a speech about the the three major sectors within a state: the civil sector, the private sector, and the public sector. These three branches are represented by the Civil Society (civil sector), the business companies (private sector) and the government and governmental institutions (public sector). The main sources for all three branches are money (private), laws and regulations (public) and norms and values (civil). However, these three sources cannot be perfectly distinguished from each other and usually interact.

Mr. Nasreddin emphasized that some sectors tend to be stronger than others. An example from South Africa shows how the Civil Society became stronger, and as a result, successfully influenced the public sector. These tendencies can be also seen in other countries.

Mr. Nasreddin presented a diagram showing the relation of the sectors in two major economic superpowers, the USA and China.

Both states have different distributions; the USA has three rather big sectors, with the private sector being the largest. China in contrast, has a big public sector. The private sector is rather small and the civil society of China stays underrepresented for now.

Hence, the aim for Jordan should be to bring up the Civil Society to a level, where it is similarly strong as the two other sectors.

Ideally, all three sectors are somehow equal and eventually melt together as one 'perfect' state; a construct which, however, does not exist so far.

How to link Civil Society and Political Decision Makers?

Mr. Oraib Al Rantawi focused in his speech on the success of Civil Society organizations in democratizing Jordan.

Idealistically, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) exist to bring the society closer towards democracy. The organisations work together for this aim and create an educated society with a free will. Yet, if one takes a look at Jordan's development, it can be seen that this process has only been slightly successful: The state still refrains from encouraging the Civil Society and focuses on organisations working for economic reform, which encourages capitalism as an ideology of the state. The other namely 4000 CSOs are still heavily marginalized. Additionally, the middle class, which should be considered as the class being free of any dependencies, is still heavily controlled by the state.

However, Jordanian CSOs should also ask themselves, why they don't work together successfully. According to Mr. Al Rantawi, many organizations are heavily fragmented, are working for their own goals, and are lacking professionalism. This lack of professionalism can be seen in the way that they beautify their achievements in order to attract donors and, as a consequence, don't present their results realistically. Thus, many of the CSO's are affiliated with donors and governmental bodies, which hinders them to work independently.

Efficiency was another key argument Mr. Al Rantawi was referring to. He pointed out that the lack of efficiency and hence, the lack of actions and achievements, is a major problem in all of Jordan.

Therefore, the CSOs should get professionalized (without the government interfering) in order to achieve a common goal and to become a reasonable actor in the democratization process in Jordan.

Actual ways of a broad modernization would be massive capacity building, support

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through external organizations such as KAS, a creation of students unions - in order to foster early public participation - as well as more transparency within the state to decrease possible corruption.

How Academia Can Contribute to Jordan's Development

Dr. Wafa Khadra discussed the importance of academia for Jordan's development. She explained that the first university in the world was not opened in the big cities in Europe but in Fes, in Morocco.

However, nowadays, universities in the Middle East, especially public ones, have difficulties being successful contributors to the development of a country like Jordan. Recent rankings presented the public Jordanian universities in a rather bad light. Reasons for that are multi-faceted: Low paid faculties; skill gaps between theory and practice; a lack of a research environment; indifferences and frustration among students; as well as rather outdated curricula. These flaws create major problems, which inhibit universities to become a part in the development of the state.



From left to right: Mustafa Nasreddin, Oraib Al Rantawi, HE Hassan Abu Nimeh, Wafa Khadra

While some of these flaws might be easy to approach others need significant time and financial means to be solved such as the missing capacities. In China, the number of students is extremely high. Still, due to adequate capacities, students can reach desirable outcomes. In Jordan, in contrast, the capacities are limited, which has a negative effect on the student's education.

Furthermore, the missing campus life leaves the students with a lack of interaction.

Dr. Khadra closed her presentation by suggesting that partnerships between companies and universities should be set up and fostered. Such projects could provide students with internships combating the gap between theory and praxis and preparing them better for their time after graduation. Additionally, companies would get the opportunity to set up contacts and train future employees.

Ways in Which Germany Could Support Jordan's Development

HE Hassan Abu Nimeh elaborated on Germany's role in the development of Jordan. He started his presentation by pointing out that the two countries have had bilateral relations for five decades; during this time Jordan has become one of the most important partners of Germany in the Middle East.

Especially for Germany, the relations to Middle Eastern states are of major importance due to political and security reasons. Here, Jordan represents a strategic partner as it is a stable country: It is far from any form of extremism, it is modern with regard to political flexibility, and it is one of the few states in the region having official relations to Israel and recognizing its sovereignty.

Although the collaborations between Germany and Jordan are already intense, HE Abu Nimeh pointed out that a lot more could be done, especially with regard to Germany having an economic and political system Jordan can learn from.

Debts as well as unemployment and poverty are internal problems, which have to mainly be solved on a domestic level. As Jordan has already passed important laws and reforms a few years ago and thus, already started its 'Jordanian Spring' before the world got to know the Arab Spring, no major riots broke out.

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However, HE Abu Nimah emphasized that Germany can contribute in several issues such as the establishment of a well-working system of public transportation, technical assistance in various fields, assistance in the field of environment, including water management, as well as further assistance in the process of democratization.

Discussion

According to some members of the audience, the three sectors Mr. Nasreddin elaborated on should not be distinguished as strict: the boundaries are not clear and traditions and values influence not only the civil society but all of the three sectors. Mr. Nasreddin agreed and pointed out that, as mentioned in his presentation, the sectors are interdependent and overlap.

Another point that was discussed was the question how student unions can be successful if they are appointed by the university and not by the student body. The main response was that it is inefficient if unions are not directly elected by the student body. Due to the fact that politics has been removed from universities in the past, it is extremely hard to today re-integrate responsible and independent unions.

Closing Session

Ms. Simone Hüser thanked all speakers and participants for their fruitful contributions. The presentations elaborated on features such as civic participation, freedom of speech, decentralization, security, economic development and education which are crucial characteristics, not just in the Jordanian process of democratization, but in every transition. In order to foster these features, an independent civil society is a prerequisite. Such civil society is responsible to, first, monitor and point out major flaws within a state that hinder democratization and development. Second, to give active support in form of seminars, workshops, etc. and hence, to foster dialogue and third, to come

together with decision makers at one table as, eventually, all laws or amendments need to be implemented in the state. At this point, interaction between civil society and political decision makers is indispensable.

Ms. Hueser emphasized that especially now, after a new reform process has been announced by the government, Jordan needs such an independent and active civil society that is able to point to the major flaws in the political system and to confront decision makers in form of dialogue.

She closed the workshop by pointing out that, although impacts are difficult to measure, KAS Amman has been able to make a contribution in the last years which was due to the work, expertise, cooperation, and professionalism of its partner organizations which KAS Amman highly appreciated at every stage.