

## Jordanian Political Parties Monitoring Report July 2023

The deadline given to existing parties to rectify their status according to the provisions of the new law ended on May 14, 2023. A total of 26 parties, in addition to the newly established "Erada" party, have complied. While the parties that managed to rectify their status are in a state of relief, some have already started preparing for the 2024 parliamentary elections. Others are awaiting legal dissolution procedures or re-registering themselves anew. All of this has resulted in a significant political party momentum in recent months and an unprecedented interaction with local and regional developments, particularly regarding the developments concerning the Palestinian Cause.

This report, which is the sixth in a series of reports monitoring the political and party movements in the country, covers the period from the beginning of February 2023 until mid-June 2023. It highlights the developments in the formation and mergers of parties, as well as the issues that have been raised on the sidelines of this process.

### 1. Results of the "Retrification" Phase

The spokesperson for the Independent Electoral Commission, Mohammed Khair Al-Rawashdeh, announced the names of the parties that have successfully regularized their status, totalling 26 parties in addition to the newly established Erada Party. He also revealed the failure of 19 parties to regularize their status.

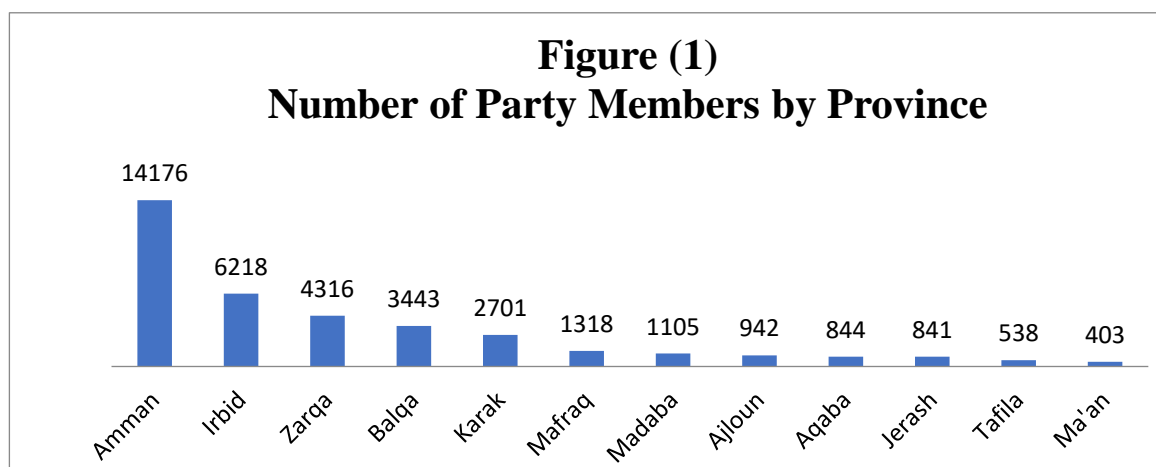
Table (1) presents the data of the parties that have successfully regularized their status.

Table (1)							
Classification	No.	Party	Total	Male	Female	Youths (18-35)	Number of Governorates that have achieved percentages
Islamic and Conservative Parties	1.	Islamic Action Front	1080	828	252	248	11
	2.	National Coalition	1265	913	352	296	10
Nationalist Parties	3.	National Movement	1045	429	616	364	6
	4.	Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party – Jordan	1003	583	420	377	6
Leftist Parties	5.	Jordanian Democratic People's Party (Hashd)	1000	394	606	373	8
	6.	Jordanian Democratic People's Party (Hashd)	1009	679	330	418	6
	7.	Jordanian Communist Party	1005	682	323	251	6
Center-Left Parties (Civil)	8.	Jordanian Social Democratic Party	1216	702	514	543	9
	9.	Labor Party	1240	913	327	493	7
Centrist Parties (Programmatic)	10.	Jordan Equality	1033	430	603	521	6
	11.	Jordanian Model	1004	554	450	452	7
	12.	New Approach	1005	497	508	501	8
	13.	Blessed Land	1003	428	575	396	8
	14.	Jordanian Consultative Council	1123	373	750	404	6
	15.	National Charter	4040	3006	1034	1544	11
	16.	Jordanian Democratic Unionists	1015	554	461	468	6

17.	<b>Erada</b>	<b>4583</b>	<b>3506</b>	<b>1077</b>	<b>1632</b>	<b>12</b>
18.	<b>National Unity</b>	<b>1275</b>	<b>824</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>7</b>
19.	<b>Al-Ghad</b>	<b>1623</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>6</b>
20.	<b>Jordan's Future and Life</b>	<b>1272</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>7</b>
21.	<b>Justice and Reform</b>	<b>1315</b>	<b>635</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>6</b>
22.	<b>National Integration</b>	<b>1253</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>6</b>
23.	<b>National Constitutional</b>	<b>1324</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>6</b>
24.	<b>Jordanian Reform and Renewal "Harvest"</b>	<b>1005</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>6</b>
25.	<b>Jordanian Torch</b>	<b>1021</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>6</b>
26.	<b>Jordan's Supporters</b>	<b>1117</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>8</b>
27.	<b>National Current</b>	<b>1002</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>9</b>

### 1.1. Distribution of Founding Members of Political Parties by Provinces

The data released by the Independent Electoral Commission shows that the capital city, Amman, occupies the first position in terms of the number of founding members of political parties. Figure (1) illustrates the distribution of these parties' founding members by province.



## 1.2. Renewal in Party Leadership

Most political parties that have successfully regularized their status are relatively newly established, so it seems early to talk about leadership renewal. However, six "established" parties have managed to introduce changes to their top leadership positions. Table (2) provides details of this process:

Table (2)			
		Leadership	Party
No.	New	Previous	
1.	Salman Nakrash <sup>1</sup>	Jameel Nimri	Social Democratic Party
2.	Dr. Rami Shahin	Mohammed Al-Khashman	National Union Party
3.	Ghazi Al-Alayan	Nazir Arabiyat	Justice and Reform Party
4.	Saud Qubailat	Faraj Atmizah	Ghazi Al-Alyan
5.	Abdul Rahman Kasab	Dhaifallah Farraj	National Movement Party
6.	Dr. Othman Al-Suwaie	Rizk Al-Balawneh	Al-Shula Party

Furthermore, the merger processes between parties have resulted in changes in the leadership composition of the emerging parties. The following table, Table (3), illustrates the new leadership structure of the merged parties:

Table (3)				
No.	Party	Leadership		
		Previous		New
1.	Blessed Land Party	Raya Party	Shahama Party	Mashhur
		Bilal Al-Dhaisat	Mashhur Zreiqat	Zreiqat

<sup>1</sup> Note: Regarding the Social Democratic Party, despite the change in the position of the Secretary-General from Jameel Nimri to Salman Nukresh, the amendments made to the internal party system have granted extensive powers to the position of party president, currently held by the former Secretary-General, Jameel Nimri.

.1	<b>National Charter Party</b>	<b>Wafa Party</b>	<b>Awn Party</b>	<b>Mithaq Party</b>	Dr. Mohammed Al-Moumani
		Luay Jaradat	Faisal Al-Awar	-	
.2	<b>Jordan's Future and Life Party</b>	<b>Hayat Party</b>	<b>Future Party</b>		Dr. Salah Al-Qudah
		Dr. Abdul Fattah Al-Kilani	Dr. Salah Al-Qudah		

### 1.3. Successes and Failures

Both the Hayat and Mustaqbal parties have successfully merged under the name "Jordanian Future and Life Party," achieving regularization. They became the third merged party following Blessed Land (Raya and Shahama) and National Charter (Wafa, Awn, and Mithaq). On the other hand, the National Youth Party failed again in finding a partner. The Nidaa Party withdrew from the merger process under the name "Nidaa al-Shababi" due to unresolved disputes of unspecified nature. Subsequently, both parties failed to regularize their status.

The Independent Electoral Commission also approved the merger of the Democratic National Gathering "Tawad", Al-Fursan, and Justice and Development under the name "Jordanian Democratic Centrist Current." Similarly, the merger of Al-Muhafizin, Jordan Our Home, Al-Muwatana, and Social Justice under the name "National Reform Current" was approved. However, both parties failed to regularize their status.

On the other hand, the Democratic Civil Party submitted its documents to the Independent Electoral Commission and obtained the status of a "party under formation" by attracting over 500 members.

Furthermore, the Development and Renewal Current Party held its second preparatory conference on June 25th, 2023, and submitted its documents to the Independent Electoral Commission to obtain the status of "party under formation."

## 2. Party Activities

The intensified efforts of the parties to enhance their chances of regularizing their status have resulted in significant momentum in recent months. In this section, we will review these activities in terms of their characteristics and patterns based on the data collected from newspapers, party platforms on social media channels, and direct communications with the parties themselves.

It is noteworthy that the parties that have successfully regularized their status were more active than those that failed. However, it is important to note that the Partnership and Rescue Party may be an exception to this observation. Although it had significant activity during the reconciliation phase, it was included in the list of "dissolved" parties. There is an issue raised regarding the party's registration, which is currently under review by the judiciary following the decision of the Independent Electoral Commission and the party's objection to the idea of dissolution.

The parties presented themselves to the public in various formats and forms. Some parties focused their activities on intellectual and ideological justifications, such as traditional leftist and conservative parties and civil parties leaning towards the centre-left.

However, it surprised many observers that some other parties succeeded in regularizing their status. This raises many questions about the methods and mechanisms used to attract new members. In this context, the following observations can be made regarding the "recruitment" process and the expansion of membership, including, but not limited to:

- Identity gathering: Some actors within the party resort to requesting citizens' identities and persuading them, "through embarrassing them," to join the party to reconcile its status. Relying on social networks and family and tribal backgrounds: Party actors exploit familial and tribal relationships to attract new members.
- Vertical recruitment to enhance horizontal recruitment: Parties engage influential figures socially to encourage citizens to join the party.

In this context, the parties have attracted individuals with diverse characteristics based on their preferences. The following is a breakdown of the types of individuals attracted by each party:

- Partnership and Rescue: Activists (youth movements, tribal movements, teachers' movements), critics, opposition members, human rights activists, and retired military personnel. Backgrounds can be civil or conservative.
- Will Party: Former deputies, mostly members of provincial councils and heads/members of municipal councils.
- Democratic Civil Party: Former ministers, artists, writers, and elite figures (leftist, nationalist, and civil).
- Al-Nahj Al-Jadid Party: Local leaders and dignitaries (school principals, mayors, sports club presidents).
- National Current Party: Local leaders, dignitaries, former election candidates, and academics.
- Mithaq Party: Its general profile consists of former and current deputies, dignitaries, ministers, technocrats, academics, as well as influential social, familial, and tribal figures.

## 2.1. Party Interactions with Local, Regional, and International Developments

- The Palestinian issue recently topped the agenda of Jordanian political parties in light of the Israeli escalation in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The focus was not limited to parties that traditionally engaged with this issue but also included newly formed parties. They organized a series of solidarity activities with the Palestinian people in their efforts to expand their membership base. This aligns with the official Jordanian stance supporting the Palestinian cause and condemnation of Israeli attacks and violations.
- Political parties in Jordan responded to the humanitarian crisis caused by the earthquake that struck Turkey and northern Syria on February 6th, 2023. Some parties quickly coordinated initiatives to collect donations from Jordanians to aid the affected people. While Islamic and conservative parties assisted the two affected countries, nationalist and leftist parties focused their support on Syria. They condemned the international sanctions imposed on Syria and highlighted their impact on hindering aid delivery. These parties organized a protest in front of the US embassy, calling for lifting the siege on Syria.
- Jordanian political parties also reacted to the signing of the Saudi-Iranian agreement under Chinese sponsorship, with some parties welcoming it and others expressing concerns, such as the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party.
- The decision by the Arab League to readmit Syria was well-received by several Jordanian political parties, especially those associated with nationalist and leftist ideologies.
- The Islamic Action Front and the Future and Life Party reacted to the results of the Turkish elections, where the Justice and Development Party (AKP) emerged as the winner, and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was re-elected for a new term.
- Several parties, including the Islamic Action Front, Al-Mithaq, and Al-Nahj Al-Jadid, strongly condemned the burning of a copy of the Quran in Denmark.
- The decision by the government to backtrack on its plan to abolish the Ministry of Labor was well-received by Jordanian political parties, as they had expressed reservations about this direction from the beginning. They recognized the importance of the ministry's role in maintaining balance in the Jordanian labour market.
- Jordanian political parties interacted with Labour Day by issuing congratulatory statements on the occasion, each in their own way. They called on the government to make efforts to organize the labour market. The Democratic Socialist Party organized a celebration and held a gathering in the city of Zarqa to commemorate this day. The Al-Mithaq Party also celebrated this occasion and honoured a group of workers in the country.

## 2.2. Political Parties and Media

Political parties in Jordan have been competing to secure their presence in traditional media outlets such as newspapers and news websites. They have also turned to social media platforms, which are widely used among Jordanians, to connect with the public, present their visions, rally support, and attract members and supporters. In addition to mainstream media channels, parties have their own media outlets, including newspapers and news websites. Here are some examples:

- **Al-Wahda Al-Sha'abiya Party: Newspaper "Nida Al-Watan."**
- **Al-Sha'ab Al-Dimuqrati Party (Hashd): Newspaper "Al-Ahali."**
- **Jordanian Communist Party: Newspaper "Al-Jamahir."**
- **Islamic Action Front Party: Affiliated channel "Al-Yarmouk TV" and radio station "Hayat FM."**

## 3. More "Under Establishment"

The process of forming new parties will not stop, despite the existence of 27 officially registered political parties with the Independent Electoral Commission. This scene is reminiscent of the process of "rectifying" the situation after 2007, where many parties attempted to renew their licenses after failing in their first attempt, resulting in the existence of over fifty Jordanian political parties.

The Independent Electoral Commission has revealed five parties that are currently under establishment, namely "Sama Al-Urdun Al-Dimuqrati" (Sky of Democratic Jordan), "Ru'ya" (Vision), "Nimaa" (Growth), "Al-Madani Al-Dimuqrati" (Civil Democratic), and "Taqqaddum" (Progress). Additionally, the "Tayyar Al-Tanmiyah Wal-Tahdeeth" (Development and Renewal Party) has submitted its documents to the Commission and held its second preparatory conference during this period (the reporting period).

It is worth noting two important observations in this context:

Firstly, some parties that were supposed to continue fulfilling the requirements for their re-establishment have realized that time is running out, and their chances of participating in the 2024 parliamentary elections are narrowing. This is because the election law stipulates that a party must be established for at least one year to be eligible to participate in the elections. As a result, these parties have started exploring opportunities for individual or collective mergers with existing parties.

The second observation is the intensity of "**merger offers**" presented by some registered parties to the "under formation" party projects. These offers include special privileges if a particular project joins their party structure. This has led to another tactical equation,



which involves announcing a party project and gathering as many supporters as possible, followed by comparing the available "merger offers" to make a decision.

#### 4. Controversial Issues Accompanying the Reform

- On March 26th, 2023, the system of financial contributions to support political parties was approved. The system links active participation with financing. Except for providing 5,000 dinars every four years to cover the expenses of the general conference, the system connects support, not exceeding 120,000 dinars, with electoral participation, exceeding the threshold percentage and electoral achievement, enhancing the role of youth, women, persons with disabilities, or entering party alliances, in addition to providing financial incentives for integration. The system has sparked controversy. While some consider it positive and in line with the recommendations of the Royal Committee for Political System Update, as it reduces the influence of inactive parties, others believe that this financial support is insufficient and that the system itself restricts party activities without covering their operational costs, hindering the party from fulfilling its duties. According to this view, the funding should be generous enough to enable the party to represent the taxpayers and defend their interests and rights, considering it not as a "gift" or "favour" from the government but as a right of the party and its supporters. Some also view linking the funding to election results as a means for the executive authority to pressure parties that may intend to "boycott" the elections for various reasons, as has happened in the past.

Observers have been focusing on criticizing Jordanian political parties in recent months due to the continued phenomenon of party disengagement and the citizens' weak trust in parties. These discussions were fueled by the results of a survey conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, which revealed that only one per cent of Jordanians consider joining political parties. The mentioned survey also indicated that 86% of Jordanians believe that the performance of political parties in Jordan has not been successful. Furthermore, only four per cent have heard about new parties that have been established, licensed, or reformed, and only two per cent follow party activities and events. Additionally, only one per cent of Jordanians are considering joining existing political parties. The study also highlighted a decline in social trust, with 78% believing they cannot trust most people. The study showed that trust in tribes reached 65%, while trust in political parties reached 15%. This survey, conducted in May 2023, sparked debate within political and party circles due to its perceived disappointing or expected results. Various explanations have been put forward for the phenomenon of disengagement.

- Historical Factor: The influence of customary practices during previous periods may contribute to a negative perception of party work in the present.
- Social Factor: Represented by the limited culture of volunteer and collective work in Jordan, which may affect people's engagement with political parties.

- Political Factor: Known as the phenomenon of "party engineering," some argue that official bodies favour certain parties while opposing others and apply double standards in dealing with parties.
- Economic factor: The decline in political engagement is attributed to the focus of Jordanians on seeking employment and improving their livelihoods.
- Structural Factor: Described as the "inherent flaws" within the parties themselves, extensively discussed by observers.
- The decision of the Independent Election Commission to consider the Partnership and Rescue Party as dissolved has sparked widespread controversy. This is due to the nature of the party itself as an opposition party closely associated with youth movements and the phenomenon of "retired military personnel," in addition to its previous complaints about pressures exerted on its members, including arrests and attempts to force resignations. The party submitted its documents to the Independent Election Commission on April 19th, 2023, and scheduled its general conference for May 13th, 2023. However, according to party sources, the Commission rejected this date, which led the party to hold its conference with the participation of 612 members, but without the presence of the Commission's observers. The Commission did not recognize the results of the party's general conference and listed it among the parties that failed to regularize their status. Several other parties, such as the Jordanian Communist Party, the People's Unity Party, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, and the Islamic Action Front, expressed solidarity with the party and criticized the Independent Election Commission's stance, considering it a violation of the Parties Law, which stipulates that a party can only be dissolved by a definitive judicial decision.