Inside

Cooperation and Political Dialogue
Political Systems and the Role of Parliaments in the Emerging Arab Democracies
The Media and its Role in Monitoring Municipal Elections
Rule of Law and Good Governance
Empowering Local Governments in Jordan: Enhancing Political and Developmental Relations Between Local Governments and Local Communities
Women Empowerment through Research
Corporate Governance for Family Business

Political Report
KAS Has A Face
Rasha Al-Rashed

Recent Publications
Recent Interviews
Recent Lectures
Upcoming Events
Upcoming Publications

KAS Events During Autumn 2011

During the Arab Autumn, Tunisians, Egyptians, and Libyans toppled their autocratic leaders, thereby initiating a promising, albeit complex and difficult period of political transition. Although Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad lost all credibility among Syrians, Arabs, and people beyond the Middle East who care for human rights, he still maintains power. In light of this situation, KAS staff Simone Hüser and I wrote a short article on "Syria and the Arab Spring" which is available on our website in English and German. We argue that strategic groups, both in the military and civilian state bureaucracy, in Syria as well as in the private sector, have not yet dismissed their allegiance towards the regime. On the one hand, the regime and its forces missed the opportunity to set in motion an incremental reform approach; on the other hand, the pre-Arab Spring era of a weak Syrian opposition is over. Rather, the opposition knows that giving up would expose all who participated in the uprising to extreme repression. On the basis of this finding, Simone and I presented and briefly discussed three future scenarios. Comments to our article are always highly welcomed.

Cooperation and Political Dialogue

Political Systems and the Role of Parliaments in the Emerging Arab Democracies, with Al-Quds Center for Political Studies

The onset of the Arab Spring compelled societies in the Middle East to demand for their rights to meaningful democracy. Establishing a democracy requires political institutions, in particular, parliaments that are able and willing to fully represent the interests and requests of the people. Current dictatorships in the Middle East have considerably marginalized the role of the political systems through corruption, anti-pluralism, and repression. The Arab Spring presents, despite its difficulties and challenges, significant political opportunities to the systems in transition.

Thus, in light of these developments, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Amman and Al-Quds Center for Political Studies jointly organized an international conference on October 1-2, 2011 to discuss the role political bodies in these states play in achieving democracy and preventing the return of autocracy. More than 50 participants from 10 countries attended the two day conference, offering various revealing presentations, and also showed an intense and impressive exchange of opinions by various scholars, politicians, and activists in the name of democracy. The event demonstrated that notions of democracy are not solely a Western concept, but a global one. The Arab world is in the same way vocal in its demand for rights as people elsewhere, and it is of crucial importance to encourage them in this time of transition. In this respect, it can be concluded that the event gave all participants, representing various counties of the Arab world, significant input in a time of remarkable magnitude for their future development.

The Media and its Role in Monitoring Municipal Elections, with First Media Company

On October 22nd, KAS Amman, in cooperation with First Media Company, held a roundtable discussion that brought experts together to discuss "The Media and its Role in Monitoring Municipal Elections". Panelists tackled questions of competency of municipalities, transparency and integrity in municipal elections; and the power of media in fostering positive change in the administration of elections, as well as in the public perception of elections.

The joint workshop of KAS Amman and the First Media Company, patronized by HE Dr. Hazim Qashou’, was successful in raising awareness among young people to motivate their participation in politics. The turnout of participants, especially young journalists, is indicative of its success. It illustrates the increased importance of media for politics as it makes politics easier accessible to youth, thereby fostering interest in political debate. Modern media is evolving at an ever accelerating pace and now highly impacts public opinion. It is thus essential for governments to take account of these developments. The major themes concerning governmental preparation for elections were the questions of competency of municipalities, transparency, and integrity, as well as women’s participation in elections. The panelists all evaluated the influence of media positively in increasing transparency of electoral processes and enabling accountability of governmental agencies for electoral procedures. It was also commonly held that municipal elections are important for the achievement of democratic ideals, but that often municipalities encounter problems in administering elections. KAS Amman and the First Media Company provided a solid
Rule of Law and Good Governance

Empowering Local Governments in Jordan: Enhancing Political and Developmental Relations Between Local Governments and Local Communities, with Visions Center

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. 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.

The workshop, held at the Jerash Municipality Auditorium on October 26, 2011, included officials, experts, and professors from both the public and private sectors. 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 consideration of their suggestions is crucial for the development of individual municipalities and the country as a whole. 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.

Women Empowerment through Research, with Women Empowerment Organization & Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World

On November 17-18, 2011, KAS Amman, in partnership with the Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) in Iraq and the Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the Lebanese American University, organized a regional roundtable discussion in Beirut, Lebanon entitled “Women Empowerment through Research.” The two day workshop was held at the Lebanese American University, and was attended by esteemed members of the academic community and civil society organizations. The event was chaired by the workshop primarily focused on case studies pertaining to the empowerment of women in Iraq by Iraqi academics and CSO activists. The presentations highlighted the challenges women face in the post-2003 war era and its implications for women’s rights. The studies found that access to education and employment is greatly limited due to Iraq’s highly destabilized political climate. Their findings concluded it to be necessary to create a network between universities, civil society, and the international academic community to provide education and vocational training, in order to prepare Iraqi women for a competitive workforce.

The Lebanese participants enriched the discussion by providing insight, due to having established institutions dedicated to research on gender studies. They also identified many of the challenges researchers and activists face while working together. Despite having similar goals, differing opinions on research methodology and a lack of communication were indicated as points of contention. It was stressed that better cooperation between academia and CSOs is needed in order to better achieve their mutual objective: Empowering women in the region, Iraq in particular.

The participants were provided an opportunity to voice concerns and offer solutions in solving the problems between their respective professional communities. Their consensus was to establish a center for women’s studies in Iraq, incorporating all major actors: Major universities, government ministries, NGOs, and other bodies working for women’s rights. The chairs of the event forecasted a progressive 2012 for the relationship between CSO activists and the academic community.

Corporate Governance for Family Business, with Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization

In recent decades, the focus of international bodies such as the IMF and World Bank has increased towards policies of corporate governance: a system of laws, customs, and ethical behaviors which impact the administration of a business. On November 21, 2011, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Amman, in cooperation with Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization, organized a discussion forum entitled “Corporate Governance for Family
Rasha Al-Rashed

Today is: Rasha Al-Rashed
Working for KAS Amman Since: June 2011
Email: Rasha.Alrashed@kas.de
Rasha about Rasha: I have been working with KAS Amman since June 2011 as a Project Coordinator. I feel very engaged in the issues of women’s and human rights, as well as education. I am currently earning my Master of Business Administration Degree (MBA), and expect to graduate in July 2012. On a personal level, I’m a very socially active person who likes to meet new and interesting people. During my free time, I enjoy hiking many of the amazing natural trails in Jordan. I also enjoy traveling, exploring new countries and cultures, reading, social work, and being in nature.

Recent Publication

Recent Interviews
- Dr. Martin Beck gave an interview to “Deutsche Welle” on recent events in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Follow the link (available in German: http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,15490497,00.html).
- On the 21st of December, 2011, Mr. Emad Nusair from Scoopat sat down with Dr. Martin Beck and Nida’a Al-Shraideh to discuss the activities of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Amman. The following interview was conducted to provide better insight into this highly active political foundation. Available at: http://scoopat.net/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1/konrad-adenauer-stiftung-amman-0.

Recent Lectures
- Dr. Martin Beck instructed future Jordanian diplomats on cross-mediterranean relations at the Institute of Diplomacy. The four-day course was held from October 3rd to 6th and covered historical and theoretical aspects of Euro-Arab relations, the relevance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the challenges of the Arab Spring.
- On October 16th, Dr. Martin Beck held a lecture on “Peace-Building in the Middle East: EU Perspectives in the Light of the Arab Spring”, at a scientific conference on “Advancing Justice and Reconciliation for Long-Term Peace Building in the Middle East”. The conference which took place on October 16-17 was organised by the Regional Center for Conflict Prevention/ Jordan Institute of Diplomacy in Amman.

Recent Publication

Recent Interviews
- Dr. Martin Beck gave an interview to “Deutsche Welle” on recent events in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Follow the link (available in German: http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,15490497,00.html).
- On the 21st of December, 2011, Mr. Emad Nusair from Scoopat sat down with Dr. Martin Beck and Nida’a Al-Shraideh to discuss the activities of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Amman. The following interview was conducted to provide better insight into this highly active political foundation. Available at: http://scoopat.net/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1/konrad-adenauer-stiftung-amman-0.

Recent Lectures
- Dr. Martin Beck instructed future Jordanian diplomats on cross-mediterranean relations at the Institute of Diplomacy. The four-day course was held from October 3rd to 6th and covered historical and theoretical aspects of Euro-Arab relations, the relevance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the challenges of the Arab Spring.
- On October 16th, Dr. Martin Beck held a lecture on “Peace-Building in the Middle East: EU Perspectives in the Light of the Arab Spring”, at a scientific conference on “Advancing Justice and Reconciliation for Long-Term Peace Building in the Middle East”. The conference which took place on October 16-17 was organised by the Regional Center for Conflict Prevention/ Jordan Institute of Diplomacy in Amman.

Upcoming Events
- “Capacity building for local governments and communities in Jordan: Promoting civic and political participation through the decentralization process” - February 2012, with Visions Center
- “Good Governance: Increasing the Efficiency of Members of the Associations Governing Bodies and the Ministries’ staff” - February 2012, with Ministry of Social Development & Visions Center
- “The Media and its Role in Women Empowerment” - February 2012, with First Media Company

Upcoming Publication
- What about the other? A Question for Cross-Cultural Education in the 21st century, with Adyan Foundation on January 2012