**The Jordanian Opposition Coalition**

**Position Papers**

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**The Jordanian Opposition Coalition’s (JOC) Mission**

The **JOC** consists of Jordanian leaders and civilians from all walks of life who are seeking to replace the Hashemite King and his regime through the establishment of a peaceful government that will promote and enhance civil the political rights of everyone in the country, while promoting peace and stability for the region. The purpose of this new government is to secure, define, promote and implement democratic institutions that ensure secularism, expanded human rights, peaceful coexistence and economic prosperity in Jordan, for the good of the people of Jordan and the region.

In an attempt to construct a platform that will be supported by a wide majority of the people, the **JOC** has devised a platform that is comprised of a series of planks. The Planks are designed to be used as the constitutional foundational for the concepts we will implement, and will be expanded as needed over time. As such, this document contains positions on the following issues:

1. **Economy**
2. **Equality**
3. **Education**
4. **Religious Freedom**
5. **Terrorism (Counter-Terrorism)**
6. **Refugees**
7. **Israel**
8. **Saudi Arabia**
9. **Roadmap To Power**
10. **Once In Power**

**Economic Vision**

The **JOC** envisions that once in office and making positive economic decisions with the citizenry’s elected officials, that within 10 years Jordan will enjoy a thriving economy that offers an equal opportunity to everyone and leaves no Jordanian behind educationally. The **JOC** will achieve this by:

* Eliminating of the wide-spread corruption under the current regime through the introduction of strict counter-corruption laws, as well as the creation of a Counter-Corruption Commission that is empowered with the jurisdiction to investigate, search, arrest, confiscate and prosecute those suspected of economic corruption.
* Eliminating the current unfair and extreme tariff system that charges a fee of up to 200% for a family car, making the basics of life a distant dream for most Jordanians. Instead, the **JOC** will enact policies that will expand our economy and as such, enhance Jordan’s income and sales tax. Combined, the income – if it’s not stolen through corruption - should be sufficient in the short run to cover the Jordanian state’s budget and help us implement educational and economic reforms.
* Enforcing accountability and responsibility for public servants and state officials by establishing a clear salary system, transparency through government oversight and limited access to the state’s assets. This will be done using a similar equation that is used by western governments, including the US Federal Government, with a focus being on salaries, compensations and use of state vehicles. Combined, the **JOC** aims to end the incredible waste that currently occurs under the current regime, including the elimination of the King’s lavish life style that is paid for by taxpayers.
* Expanding economic cooperation with the west, including the United States, UK, France and Germany. This will be done through the establishment of a full free trade agreement, establishment of economic development zones and policies that will not only help US goods could enter Jordan’s market, but allow Jordanian products leave the country for foreign markets with minimal restrictions and fees. This will benefit the world economy, as well as those in Jordan by creating jobs, income and enhancing consumer purchasing power.
* Expanding and reinforcing economic cooperation with our neighbors, including Israel on the manufacturing and delivery of imports and exports. Additionally, as partners, we hope to use Israel’s knowledge and expertise on water, energy, telecommunications and agriculture to enhance Jordan’s future in the economic market place. The best way to do this is by signing a free trade agreement between Israel and Jordan that benefits both parties and reinforces peaceful ties between both sides for generations to come.
* Introducing strict anti-trust laws that will create competition, help multiple products reach the market place and in return, not only reduce the prices of consumer goods by breaking the extreme monopolies, but enhance the quality of those products sold in stores.
* Turning Jordan into an educational hub by expanding not just the eligibility and financing for students to attend universities, but to expand the current university system to include more campuses and educational facilities. The **JOC** believes that Jordan has the infrastructure to welcome regional students and expand its intellectual capacity, but currently many of those choose not to study in Jordan because of the high inflation rate, the current unrest and political instability. The **JOC** will seek to implement policies that not only will establish open universities for all, but will establish ways for the Student Loans to be distributed to those who qualify. Additionally, the **JOC** will work hard to address and eliminate issues that have caused economic stagnation and increased prices. Finally, the **JOC** will enact policies that provide students with economic incentives (tax breaks) for attending schools. One of those policies will be providing both computers and free access to the internet for everyone who graduates from High school, 2 year college, 4 year college and graduate school. Finally, we will launch a vigorous campaign to recruit foreign students to Jordan in the hopes that they will not only bring hard currency to Jordan, but also diversity to the country as a whole.
* Inaugurating the American University of Amman in an effort to serve as a regional hub for American undergraduate and graduate studies in the region. The **JOC** believes that the university’s mission statement will serve as a beacon of enlightenment and peace throughout the region, and open the country to the dialogue of modern civilization. To achieve this, the **JOC** will recruit faculty members from the top ranks of the Western educational system.
* Downsizing and reorganizing the army’s expenses will be a dynamic way to invigorate Jordan’s economy. Currently, the Jordanian army consumes 52% of the country’s budget, and much of that is with duplication and waste. Overall, it has never contributed substantially to any regional war in the last 70 years, nor is it able to effectively defend Jordan today. Further, American forces are present in Jordan and Israel has openly pledged to protect Jordan from **ISIS** and other regional threats. As such, the **JOC** firmly believes that it is in Jordan’s best economic and political interest to restructure, refocus and reduce the army to provide and include modern capabilities and technologies, thus cutting its huge expenditure and making sure that it fits in with the actions of the modern government that we are proposing.
* Expanding US military training and bases in Jordan must continue, with their focus being not just protecting the country, but training future soldiers so they can defend and protect their homeland.
* Introducing a revitalized economic and supportive education-based welfare system that provides the same type of cash payments as those found in many western countries, including but not limited to unemployment and disability benefits, as well as benefits for students, educators and careers for those working with children with special needs and the elderly. Finally, we will enact both private and public investment programs that will/can be used for the establishment of pensions for the elderly and those who may have not contributed to system earlier. This system will be established as a blanket to protect the future of all Jordanians, including those recently naturalized or those returning to Jordan upon enacting of the Jordanian citizenship law which is currently frozen under the Hashemite regime. To do so, the JOC will seek to restructure the military, cutting its waste, with the savings used to cover the expense of the new system.

**Equality**

The **JOC** envisions Jordan’s future being one where everyone is equal under the law, regardless of their race, background, religion, sect, or life style. This will be assured by the introduction of:

* A new constitution dictating that all people on Jordanian soil are equal under the law.
* A counter-discrimination act criminalizing discrimination against different religions, sects, ethnicities, background or life style, be the discrimination in action or verbal.
* The introduction of an affirmative action program designed to spur public employment and the attraction of major companies (above 100 employees) to the country. The JOC hopes that the future of Jordan and this program will be representative of the ethnic and religious makeup of the country.
* A once a decade census that will help to put our affirmative action into effect.
* A hate crime act, which maximizes the penalties for crimes if motivated by or associated with hate towards race, religion, background or life style.

**Education**

The **JOC** will seek to enhance and develop the Jordanian education system to a global standard by:

* Ending the Jordanian unified high school examination system (known as Tawjeehi) and making admission to universities based on each university’s standards and own admission requirement(s). As such, each school will conduct their own exams rather than have standardized, outdated state exams which have been ineffective.
* Expanding Jordan’s university system by expanding or constructing facilities and accepting more students into critical majors such as medicine and law. Additionally, the **JOC** will end the “exclusive clubs” where entry into a program is assigned directly by the King’s office, and is only provided to privileged people who are favored by the regime.
* Inaugurating the American University in Amman, which will have international faculty members who are Western educated. As mentioned above, the American University of Amman will serve as a regional hub for undergraduate and graduate studies in the region, and will have as its foundational mission statement to serve as a beacon of peace and tolerance and dialogue of civilization for the Jordanian people.
* Establishing education agreements with other countries that fosters the exchange of academic knowledge and students in an effort to not only help spread the knowledge, but enhance dialogue and tolerance between Jordan and its people, its neighbors and the rest of the world.

**Religious Freedom**

In order to fit in with today’s modern societies, the **JOC** envisions a Jordan where freedom of worship is constitutionally secured for all people, and as such, be guaranteed by law. This will be done by:

* Creating a constitution and related amendment that ensure the right to practice the religion as each citizen chooses.
* Creating a civil state, one that represents all the people, no matter which religion or political party they belong to.
* Reinforcing and highlighting the values of acceptance, tolerance and love within the state’s religious education at public schools.

**Terrorism**

Terrorism, violence and social disharmony are some of the most important issues facing Jordan, every Jordanian citizen, the **JOC** and each and every citizen of the Middle East. As such, the **JOC** will work hard to establish fundamental social principles and legislative concepts in law that will protect and enhance civil rights while diffusing fundamentalism, terrorism and hate.

In an effort to stem terrorism and enhance fundamental rights, the **JOC** believes that the establishment of a strong secular state goes hand in hand with dynamic policies that create strong economic policies and incentives that create jobs, expands the economy and provides the citizenry with enhanced consumer purchasing power.

To do so, the **JOC** will approach the problem in three ways. First, the **JOC** will work with international experts to legally define the term “Terrorism”, and then enact it into law and apply it to the everyday life of each and every Jordanian citizen. Second, the **JOC** will work with experts to identify those who fall under both the definition and law, and then identify and prosecute them as terrorists. Finally, the **JOC** will work hand in hand with the international community to stamp out and eradicate terrorist practices, thus dissuading the use of Jordan as a base for terroristic activities. Because of the high unemployment in the country, the main tool the **JOC** will use, will be to establish solid economic policies that benefit the citizenry, business, the economy and country, while dissuading them from fighting and waging violence and war.

**Fundamentalist Ideology**: the **JOC** believes that one way to bring peace to the region is to work on establishing policies that fight the establishment of fundamentalist ideologies that are found in the region. The **JOC** believe that the best way to do this is by enhancing civil, personal and religious rights, while ensuring that policies are created that will ensure that Jordan enters the 22nd century as a secular state.

**The Muslim Brotherhood (TMB)**: As an internationally recognized terrorist organization, the **TMB** is influential in the region and as such, has deep ties and working relationships with other organizations and governments in the region. In fact, many believe that some of today’s **ISIS** leaders used to either be, or currently work with, **TMB** on the establishment of regional policy. The **JOC** is outraged and alarmed by the apparent growth, partnership and cooperation between recognized terrorist entities, not to mention the mutual tolerance that currently exists between the Hashemite regime and groups like the **TMB**. In an effort to fight their influence and bring Jordan into the 22nd century, the **JOC** will enact policies that enhance political, religious and civil rights. One of the best ways to do so is to establish policies that enhance the development of political parties, followed by the establishment of fundamental civil rights, including freedom of speech, religion and assembly. Additionally, after establishing a firm definition of terrorism and how to combat it, the **JOC** hopes to radically curtail activities of terrorist organizations like **TMB**. The **JOC** will send a strong signal to the rest of the world just how serious Jordan is about joining the civilized world, as well as a direct message to terrorists that a secure and peaceful Jordan will fight against terrorism and stop the spread of fundamentalist Islamist ideology in the region. Furthermore, once terrorist entities are identified and law is enacted, the **JOC** will curtail their activities; confiscate recognized assets/funds (estimated net value of $3 billion in TMB’s **Islamic Charitable Center**) through the court process and reign in their media by helping expand the country’s TV, radio and newspapers.

**The Palestinian Authority (PA):** The **JOC** is committed to the welfare and progression of the Palestinian people. The JOC also recognizes that the **PA** is severely divided between the **PA** in the West Bank and **Hamas** who controls Gaza with an iron fist. Further, the **JOC** believes that Jordan must accept its responsibilities towards its citizens living in the West Bank, as per Jordan’s very own constitution, which is based on world accords and international design. As such, the **JOC** strongly believes the **PA** must expand its thinking and in turn, improve not only the way it handles its internal affairs, but provide enhanced transparency to its constituency in an effort to avoid corruption at all costs. The **PA** must also either reign in **Hamas** and thus provide for the elections and civil rights it provides in the West Bank, or separate themselves from them. The **JOC** believes that this can only be done through enhanced economics and civil rights that include free speech, freedom of travel, freedom of religion and the right to vote in bi-yearly elections. The **JOC** views this as the only viable choice for our Palestinian brothers, especially as Hamas tightens its iron grip on Gaza. The **JOC** hopes that the **PA** will support peace rather than hinder it with fundamentalist doctrine and hateful incitement. To overcome this, the **JOC** will propose measure to end both the corruption and hateful incitement from the part of the PA that have deepened the unrest and instability of the Palestinian people. In the absence of their ability to participate in a peaceful manner, the **JOC** sees no future in the West Bank or Gaza for **Hamas** which has terrorized the Palestinian people since gaining office.

**Hezbollah:** In the North,political instability comes from a group called **Hezbollah**. As stated above, the **JOC** is committed to the welfare and progression of the Palestinian people in all corners of the world, and therefore strongly believes the actions of this group harm, rather than help the cause of peace. As such, the **JOC** will urge, through speech and action, that **Hezbollah** abandon its violent actions and work towards peace with all its neighbors, as well as establish economic cooperation and ties between Jordan, the PA and Lebanon. Additionally, until **Hezbollah** abandons its violent ways and actions against its neighbors, including but not limited to civilians in Syria, Israel and **elsewhere**, the **JOC** will continue to recognizing Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

**Hamas:** As stated several times in this document, the **JOC** is committed to the welfare and progression of the Palestinian people. Therefore, we strongly believe that **Hamas** must give up all violent acts and reform its ideology, including its “Constitutional Charter”. If they can’t then they should disband for the benefit of the Palestinian people. To do so, the **JOC** calls upon Hamas to not only lay down its arms and use the money they spend on arms purchases for the people by building schools, hospitals and libraries, while establishing a viable economic system. The JOC believes that through enhanced economic practices, the lives of our Palestinian brothers will be enhanced. We also call upon Hamas to establish regular elections and clearly enunciate what their constituencies’ civil rights are. Finally, we call upon them to sit down with Israel and discuss peace, today, and not tomorrow. Like with **Hezbollah**, until **Hamas** undertakes all of the above actions, the **JOC** will not recognize, nor deal with **Hamas** as a legitimate entity, nor tolerate their presence in Jordan. Because of their negative impact on the people of Jordan and Palestinians, the **JOC** currently has no option, but through law, will seek to ban **Hamas** and its activities in Jordan, and through the use of courts and laws, will confiscate all illegal assets and facilities, with a focus being those that are now currently allowed to operate by King Abdullah.

**Refugees**

The **JOC** is committed to securing Jordan’s identity and national pride, especially through upholding the value of citizenship as the core of the state’s identity. To do this, the new Jordanian state will observe the current Jordanian citizenship law, recognized as article number two. This article dictates that all non-Jewish Palestinians who have lived in Jordan—and thus their descendants—are born Jordanians. The **JOC** will not seek to return Jordan into an alternative homeland for anyone. As such, the new Jordanian state will never deny citizenship rights, naturalization and/or absorption of all eligible Jordanian citizens, regardless of their place of birth or current place or length of residency.

Also, the JOC is committed to the welfare and the safety of Syrian refugees already in Jordan, all while feeling concerned by the pressure, created by their presence, on Jordan’s economy and infrastructure, therefore, the JOC will seek further international help, in kind and in cash, to soften the obstacles Jordanians have been facing as a result of the presence of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees in Jordan.

**Israel**

The **Jordanian Opposition Coalition** (**JOC**) views peace with Israel as a strategic choice that is fundamental to the growth and development of Jordan’s stability, economy and social prosperity. As such, it is in the interest of the each and every Jordanian citizen, as well as the region, to settle any and all disputes with our neighbors in the region as soon as possible. To do this, we plan to:

* Recognize and honor all treaties and agreements with international bodies and our neighbors.
* Fortify and expand the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel, focusing in on fulfilling parts of the agreement that King Abdullah, has refused to expand, implement or honor. Those areas include, but are not limited to economic, educational and cultural cooperation(s).
* Eliminate all hate and terror incitement that is currently tolerated, empowered and even promoted by the current regime. This will be done by introducing strong civil rights policies, along with specifically designed counter-terrorism laws that criminalizes the incitement of violence and hate against different races, ethnicities and religions.
* Recognize Israel as an economic and political partner, not a competitor. To do this, we will avidly seek to turn the current cold peace between Israel and Jordan into a thriving regional example of co-existence. This will be based on tolerance, recognition and the establishment of mutual economic and cultural exchanges with the Jewish state.
* Expand economic cooperation with Israel. Using successful models from around the world, including designating, constructing, expanding and operating qualified Industrial Economic Zones in development agreements with individual trading partners. In these expanded economic zones, Jordanian manufacturers will be able to import and export products into the world commerce, using lower customs fees, tax incentives and enhanced transportation processes. These zones currently exist on a rather limited scale and have been aiding Jordan’s economy for over a decade now. The **JOC** sees them as a model to expand and reinforce. As such we will establish enhanced financial programs that will help expand financing for the construction of machinery and the purchase of raw materials clearly designed to help produce product for the world stage.
* Enact legislation that will support the importation of raw materials from our neighbors for use in the manufacturing process.
* The **JOC** highly values Israel’s role in stabilizing the region and therefore has an ambition to sign a mutual defense agreement that is open to Jordan, the US, the UK, Israel and Saudi Arabia. We hope that this peaceful regional alliance, structured using the NATO umbrella, will help expand personal rights while protecting regional stability and keeping terrorist and fundamentalist forces at bay.
* Expand Jordan-Israel-US-UK intelligence cooperation and counter-terrorism effort(s), and share vital and pertinent information with our allies.

**Saudi Arabia**

The **JCO** views Saudi Arabia as a major force of moderation and a cornerstone of stability for the Middle East region. As such, the **JCO** will remain committed to the long-standing friendship between the people and government(s) of Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Furthermore, the **JCO** will seek to cooperate, coordinate and assist Saudi Arabia and its outstanding efforts to counter-terrorism, as well as Iran's influence in our region.

**The JOC’s Roadmap to Power**

Establishing an interim government the day the Hashemite regime falls is vital to ensure both the safety of its citizens, and the future of the country. This government will run the country for an interim period of 2 years before elections. During that time, it will create and implement a variety of electoral laws that will help establish parliamentary and presidential elections, as well as the adoption of a new constitution. A constitution drafting commission will be established to help draft a modern constitution, and it will be voted on by the citizenry. The presidential elections will be held after the parliament has been elected. The President will be elected by public vote.

* The vote: All Jordanians of legal age, male and female over the age of 18, will have the vote and will be eligible to run for president or a seat in the national assembly regardless of ethnic or sectarian background. Those convicted of a felonious crime or have had any relation to terrorism, not including a traffic infraction, are ineligible to vote or run for public office.
* There will be two houses of government, one called a Senate, and the other called an Assembly. The Senate will be voted on directly from each state, while the Assembly will operate as a parliament. To accomplish this, the number of seats in the body will be raised from 150 to 400, and will be designed to secure direct representation for all Jordanians, thus ensuring that all areas, sects and ethnicities will have more representatives in the parliament than under the current regime. The distribution of seats will be based on the population’s concentration and geographic distribution.
* Like other Parliaments around the world, they will have the ability to override or revoke presidential decisions with a two-thirds vote.

**Once in Power**

Once in an interim government is established in Jordan, the **JOC** intends to take the following steps to establish a stable, democratic and peaceful Jordan:

* Establish a constitution drafting committee that will work to write a constitution and then place it on the ballot for a vote of the people. The constitution will be focused on securing not just human and economic rights, but enhancing the image of Jordan around the world.
* Conducting Presidential elections where the president is elected by popular vote.
* Introducing a temporary electoral elections commission by which the new Jordanian parliament is to be elected.
* Introducing a counter-terrorism act that will stop anyone inciting terrorism verbally or by action through laws ranging from a misdemeanor to a felony (depending on the act). Felonies will be decided based on both law and court trials, and will be based on wither the offender’s incitement has led to terrorist acts or physical harm or the destruction of property either in Jordan or abroad. The **JOC** believes that this counter terrorism act will bring tougher punishment for convicted terrorists. Such an act will secure Jordan for Jordanians while banning hate-preachers and terrorism inciters from running for office as they are guilty for their actions and statements, including those made in the past.