

Overview of a meeting between His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the UK Parliament on 13 July 2020

In attendance from the Foreign Affairs Committee

Tom Tugendhat MP (Chair)

Chris Bryant MP

Alicia Kearns MP

Bob Seely MP

Henry Smith MP

Royston Smith MP

Claudia Webbe MP

In attendance from the Jordanian delegation

HM King Abdullah II of Jordan (Main speaker)

HRH Crown Prince Hussein Bin Abdullah

Ayman Safadi, Foreign Minister

Bisher Khasawneh, Adviser to His Majesty for Communication and Coordination

Kemal Al Nasser, Adviser to His Majesty for Policies and Media

Omar Nahar, Ambassador of Jordan to the UK

Discussion with His Majesty King Abdullah II

1. FAC Chair, Tom Tugendhat MP, began by welcoming His Majesty King Abdullah II and emphasised Jordan's position as one of the UK's longest standing allies. He underlined the importance of hearing the King's insights, especially at this time of the UK's changing role in foreign affairs.
2. His Majesty King Abdullah II began by thanking the UK for its support for Jordan and emphasised the strong military and security ties that exists between the two countries. Jordan and the UK have also fought side by side against extremism. The UK and Jordan continue to coordinate in the fight against extremism, including in countering Daesh and in considering ways to prevent radicalisation online or via social media.

The Jordan-UK relationship

3. The King underlined the UK's historic role within the Middle East and the strong links that this has created for the UK in the region. He said that the UK as a strong voice on regional issues (such as Syria, Iraq, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) and that the UK played a valuable role in seeking to mediate a solution to regional challenges. The King highlighted again the strong military and security relationship, stating that

Jordan valued UK engagement in the Middle East region and that such engagement played a constructive role in seeking to resolve regional challenges.

4. According to the King, the UK's diplomatic capabilities in the Middle East are helped by its unique history and its understanding of the region. The UK also understands the nuances of Jordan's challenges, which creates a special relationship.
5. Regarding the upcoming DFID/FCO merger in the UK, the Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi explained that Jordan understands the need for more political packaging of UK aid, so it hopes that the DFID-FCO merger will, for example, lead to political as well as development attention for UNRWA and the issue of Palestinian refugees. The merger can also bring political as well as developmental attention to the issue of stabilisation efforts in Syria.
6. The discussion focused on bolstering Jordan-UK cooperation across various sectors, especially economic, military and security fields, as well as efforts to counter and contain Covid-19 and maintain coordination to alleviate its humanitarian and economic implications. The King referred to Jordan's advanced pharmaceutical sector and highlighted the Kingdom as a medical tourism destination, in line with public health and safety standards. The King also emphasised the support that Jordan was ready to offer the UK during Covid-19.

Upcoming challenges in the Middle East and for the wider international order

7. Regarding future challenges for the Middle East, the King said that a major concern in coming years will be Libya and Yemen. The UK can help to play a mediating and dialogue role in seeking to resolve both crises.
8. The King warned that Covid-19 is expected to create challenges to food security in the Middle East region. The solution will require cooperation between countries, and Jordan is ready to assist.
9. The King judged that the most immediate development and potential threat to stability in the Middle East region is plans by Israel to annex parts of the West Bank. He emphasised that the UK and Jordan play a key role as facilitators in discussions between the Israelis and the Palestinians.
10. The King also underlined that the fight against Daesh is a long-term battle for hearts and minds. This involves working with social media companies, as 'lone-wolf' operations in the world can often be traced back to social media.

Threats to multilateralism

11. While saying that some multilateral organisations might benefit from reform, the King underlined that multilateral organisations are vital international platforms for allowing the world effectively to interact. He warned that undermining such organisations, especially during a pandemic, would be disastrous. He also warned that multilateralism is under threat, and highlighted that Jordan and the UK are

working together to preserve the rules-based international order and multilateralism.

The UK's role within the world

12. The King highlighted that, from the Jordanian and Arab perspective, the UK had not been seen to have retreated from its global role in recent years, although the UK had perhaps been looking more inwards than usual due to the two challenges of Brexit and Covid-19. The King stated that the UK has continued to be engaged with regional security challenges in the Middle East.
13. To preserve the rules-based international order, the King emphasised that the Western leadership should be rooted in the moral values that the UK stands for. The King said that it was beneficial for international diplomacy when countries stood up for the values that they represented.