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Jordan: Issuance of Jordanian documents to stateless Palestinians

Introduction

The following note describes documents issued to stateless Palestinians by the Jordanian authorities. The note is based on open source material.

Stateless Palestinians and citizenship in Jordan

All Palestinian refugees, who resided in Jordan in the period between 20 December 1949 and 1954, were granted Jordanian nationality with reference to Law no. 6 of 1954 on Nationality. As Jordanian nationals, they were granted access to the same political and civil rights as citizens with Transjordanian background.¹

According to population statistics from 2010, Palestinian refugees and their descendants comprise approximately half of the Jordanian population. The Jordanian authorities operate with five categories of Palestinians with residence in Jordan. They are as follows:

- Refugees from the Arab-Israeli War in 1948
- Displaced persons from the 1967 war
- Refugees from 1948, who were displaced during the 1967 war
- Refugees from Gaza
- Non-refugees

After the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, Jordan annexed the West Bank. The territory remained under Jordanian control until the war in 1967, when Israel occupied it. Although controlled by Israel, Jordan continued to consider the West Bank Jordanian territory until 1988 when King Hussein II announced Jordan's final withdrawal from the West Bank.²

After the final withdrawal, the population on the West Bank were classified as Palestinian by the Jordanian state and no longer acknowledged as Jordanian nationals, whereas Palestinians residing east of the Jordan River retained their Jordanian nationality.³

¹ Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p.5.; Law No. 6 of 1954 on Nationality (last amended 1987) 1 January 1954, article 3.

² Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 6.

³ Landinfo 21 May 2010, p. 10; Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 6.

Passports issued by the Jordanian authorities

According to the sources from 2010 and 2015, the Jordanian authorities continue to issue passports to stateless Palestinians on the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem even though they are not considered Jordanian nationals. The passports do not denote Jordanian citizenship and are only valid as travel documents.⁴

Jordanian passports issued to Palestinians from the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem differ from the Jordanian nationality passports in two ways 1) The passport number begins with a 'T' and 2) there is no Jordanian nationality number (*raqm watani*, pl. *arqam wataniyya*) which is included in Jordanian nationality passports⁵. Due to the 'T' in the passport number, the passports are generally referred to as 'T-passports'.

T-passports were initially valid for a period of two years, but the period of validity was extended to five years in 1996.⁶ Applicants from Gaza may, according to Jordanian authorities, choose to apply for a passport with a validity of two or five years, however, a passport with 5-year validity is more expensive.⁷

The T-passport will additionally display a 10-digit serial number in the cover. If the first digit is a '9', the holder is identified by Jordanian authorities as a stateless Palestinian residing on the West Bank. However, if the first digit is a '5', the person is identified by Jordanian authorities as a stateless Palestinian residing in Gaza.⁸

When the Palestinian Authorities resumed the responsibility for civil matters on the West Bank, the Palestinians increasingly began to apply for passports issued by the Palestinian Authorities instead of T-passports from the Jordanian authorities. It has since been uncommon for Palestinians residing on the West Bank to obtain Jordanian T-passports.⁹

The Palestinian Authorities are, however, not authorised to issue passports to Palestinians residing in East Jerusalem, which is why this population group more often will apply for the Jordanian T-passport than Palestinians residing on the West Bank.¹⁰

⁴ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 29 Oktober 2015 p. 3; Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 6-7; Landinfo, 10 February 2011, p. 17.

⁵ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 29 Oktober 2015 p. 3; Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 6-7

⁶ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 29 Oktober 2015 p. 3; Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 6-7.

⁷ Lifos, 15 October 2019, p.52

⁸ Lifos, 15 October 2019, p.52

⁹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 29 Oktober 2015 p. 3; Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 6-7; Landinfo, 10 February 2011, p. 17.

¹⁰ Lifos, 15 October 2019, p. 35.



- Passport number in a T-passport
- No nationality number

Example of a Jordanian T-passport from Edison



- The passport number does not begin with a 'T'
- Nationality number

Example of a Jordanian nationality passport from Edison

Issuance procedure

T-passports are issued by the Directorate for Civil Matters and Passports (*Dairat al-Ahwal al-madaniyya wa al-jawazat*), which falls under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to diplomatic sources from Amman, the directorate is represented in all cities in Jordan. Each office is constituted by three different departments: a department for passports, a department for civil matters and a department for stateless Palestinians with T-passports.¹¹

Stateless Palestinians with residence in Jordan, who wish to have documents issued or reissued, must firstly apply with the Department of Inspection (*Mutaba wa al-taftish*) to obtain a certificate that makes it possible to submit an application with the Directorate for Civil Matters and Passports. The Department of Inspection is a separate unit within the Jordanian Ministry of Internal Affairs, which maintains a register of all stateless Palestinians in Jordan.¹²

With the certificate from the Department of Inspection, the passport application may hereafter be submitted in person in one of 74 offices of the Department for Civil Matters and Passports in Jordan. It may also be submitted through a Jordanian diplomatic mission abroad. In 2015, the fee for passport application was 50 Jordanian Dinars, and the following supporting documents were required in connection with the application:

¹¹ Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 10.

¹² Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 10.

- Completed application form
- Palestinian proof of nationality and residence
- Two passport photographs
- Green card indicating residence on the West Bank
- Security approval
- Certificate from the Department of Inspection?

Persons applying for issuance of a Jordanian T-passport must be able to prove that they have not obtained a passport or citizenship in another country in a third country. The documentation consists of a signed statement from the applicant.¹³

Passport applications should, as a rule, be submitted in person, but if the applicant is under the age of 18 he or she may be represented by a guardian. The guardian will in most cases be the applicant's father. It is possible in certain other cases for an adult to be represented by a guardian, granted that the applicant has given the guardian a power of attorney. In cases where women submit applications from abroad, they must include within their application an approval from their respective husbands along with their marriage certificate.¹⁴

Crossing cards issued by the Jordanian authorities

In 1983, the Jordanian authorities issued special crossing cards to all Palestinians with a Jordanian passport residing on the West Bank and Gaza. The cards were issued by the Department of Inspections by the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge border crossing between the West Bank and Jordan. The colour of the card reflected the holder's basis for residence in Jordan.

- Yellow cards were issued to Palestinians from the West Bank with permanent residence in Jordan granted before 1 June 1983. In order to have a yellow crossing card issued, the holder must be registered by Israeli authorities as residents on the West Bank based on family reunification.
- Green cards were issued to stateless Palestinians with Jordanian T-passports, who were granted permanent residence on the West Bank before 1 June 1983. The card indicates that the holder resides on the West Bank, but is allowed to visit Jordan for a period of maximum two months at a time.
- Blue cards were issued to stateless Palestinians from Gaza residing in Jordan with Jordanian T-passport.

The cards make it possible for the holder to cross the border between the West Bank and Jordan without having their Jordanian passport stamped by Israeli authorities. Israeli stamps in the passport can potentially be problematic in connection with travels to other Arab countries that do not recognise the state of Israel.¹⁵

¹³ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 29 Oktober 2015 p. 4; Landinfo 23 September 2010, p. 10-11.

¹⁴ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 29 Oktober 2015 p. 4; Landinfo 23 September 2010, p. 10-11.

¹⁵ Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 7.

Although the cards originally had no bearing on the Jordanian nationality, the cards became instrumental in determining which Palestinian would continue to be classified as Jordanian nationals after the Jordanian withdrawal from the West Bank in 1988. From this point on, holders of yellow card retained their status as Jordanian nationals, whereas holders of green cards were categorised as stateless Palestinians.¹⁶

Control and corruption

The Jordanian authorities are continuously keeping tabs on the Jordanian population and other persons residing on Jordanian territory. The state is willing to spend resources on control and reliable registers, and the Jordanian authorities have a well-functioning civil registration system and system for controlling entries and exits from Jordan.¹⁷

The Directorate for Civil Matters and Passports keeps statistics on the number of children entered into the civil register along with the number of documents being issued and renewed by the Directorate. On this basis, Landinfo assessed in a 2010 report, that relatively well-functioning control routines are in place in connection with application and issuance of central ID documents in Jordan.¹⁸

However, in a 2017 report Landinfo stated that corruption is in fact a problem in the Jordanian central administration.¹⁹ The country ranks 120 out of 180 on Transparency International's 2019 Index of most corrupt countries in the world with 1 representing the lowest level of corruption.²⁰

¹⁶ Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 8.

¹⁷ Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 10.

¹⁸ Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 10.

¹⁹ Landinfo, 23 September 2010, p. 10-12; Landinfo, 24 April 2017, p. 2;

²⁰ Transparency International, 2020.

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