

The British are orchestrating the destabilization of Jordan

by Our Special Correspondent

Although Jordan is routinely portrayed in the press as a model of stability and a cooperative partner in the peace process, a closer look at the situation in the Hashemite Kingdom reveals quite a different picture. Internal tensions have escalated to such a degree over the past two months, that a descent into violence, reminiscent of the 1970 Black September crisis, is not to be ruled out. Now, as then, when government troops killed thousands of Palestinians, the domestic crisis is being artfully manipulated by external forces.

Superficially, the Jordanian crisis appears as the result of the peace treaty with Israel, signed in October 1994. Opposition to the peace plan, particularly among Palestinians who make up 60% of the Jordanian population, and among hardliners ideologically opposed to dealing with Israel, has been strong from the outset. It was temporarily dampened by the great expectations raised, that the treaty would bring with it economic cooperation and, consequently, more jobs and a higher standard of living in the kingdom. Then, when it became clear that the international financial support required for vast infrastructure projects envisioned in the treaty was not forthcoming, the hopes pinned on the peace dividend collapsed. Jordanians have seen no improvement in their living standard, and the general climate of uncertainty regarding government intentions on the legislative plane has paralyzed part of the economy.

The approach of the government and of King Hussein has been to push all the harder to speed up the normalization process with Israel. Ironically, the more "successful" this has been, the graver the crisis has become. Not only has opposition broadened; for the first time, the king himself has been subject to open criticism, and his authority questioned. Furthermore, the confrontation has led to political upheavals and obscure deaths.

The criticism levelled against the government and monarchy concerns the mode in which relations with Israel are being normalized and the manner in which the government is dealing with its internal opposition. On May 29, a meeting of opposition groups which had been scheduled, was abruptly cancelled by the government. Thereafter, Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Ibrahim Izzedrine resigned, in what was considered a protest against the government's

ban. Shortly thereafter, in the first week of June, a man from a leading East Jordanian family was reportedly killed by security forces in his home.

The man, Mahmoud Al Awamleh, had voiced his criticism of the normalization process, from the standpoint of the Koran, and had sent his considerations to the king and to Prime Minister Sherif Zaid Ben Shaker. The correspondent of the German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in Cairo, Wolfgang Köhler, broke the story on July 9, which, he said, had stunned the nation. Köhler underlined the importance of the fact that the man who had criticized the government, belonged to a prominent family of East Jordanians, who are traditionally the pillars of support for the king. Most Jordanians, Köhler wrote, viewed the death as "an execution without trial." The three-day funeral assumed the stature of a political statement, as mourners, dressed in white, celebrated the dead man as a martyr.

Shubeilat seeks a formal inquiry

Among the prominent Jordanians present at the funeral was Laith Shubeilat, a former independent Islamist parliamentarian, who has been outspoken in his criticism of the manner in which relations with Israel have been handled. Shubeilat called for a formal inquiry into the circumstances of Awamleh's death, about which the government has issued no official statements. Shubeilat's demands were answered indirectly by a broadside against him, authored by the cultural minister, which appeared prominently in all major press. A response penned by Shubeilat and sent to all major newspapers, has not been published. Furthermore, the king singled Shubeilat out for criticism (though not by name) in the course of a speech the king delivered to a group of editors-in-chief in late June.

Other pressures against Shubeilat have become so great that the former parliamentarian stated in an interview with *Al Qods* that he thought he had to reckon with the possibility that he could be assassinated. Shubeilat was the victim in 1992 of a juridical frame-up, orchestrated by the political machine of George Bush through corrupt elements in the Jordanian security apparatus. The prime minister at the time was Sherif Zaid Ben Shaker, the same who, having returned

to that post, is being credited with organizing the wave of repression in the country today.

Another person emerging, curiously, as a rallying point for opposition is Ahmad Obeidat, a former prime minister and former chief of intelligence for many years. Obeidat had lost his Senate seat following his vocal opposition to the treaty with Israel, and in early July, was quoted in the Texas-based *Arab Times* attacking Crown Prince Hassan. Reports of his comments in Jordan prompted him to deny having made any such statements.

Elections draw protests

The straw which broke the camel's back was the way the municipal elections on July 11 were handled. Candidates from the opposition Islamic Action Front (IAF) were expected to pull up to 50%. Instead, they were credited with 3.02%, amid charges of widespread rigging. The government had sent troops into the city of Zarqa, where the Islamists are particularly strong, just prior to the poll. Even government press had acknowledged that the Islamists were poised to win hands down in Zarqa, the second largest city in the land, where they control universities, hospitals, and social and charitable organizations.

In protest, the Islamists withdrew from the election, while the government trumpeted the results as a clear mandate "for the normalization process." Formal protests are being lodged in court by the IAF, which says it has witnesses and documentary proof of election fraud, beginning with discriminatory actions toward pro-Islamists in voter registration procedures. A radical response, including demonstrations and riots reminiscent of social unrest in 1989, has not been ruled out.

Comprehensive peace sought

As for the substance of the issue of normalization, the main target of critics is a series of legislative initiatives pushed by Prime Minister Zaid Ben Shaker. On June 28, the opposition failed to block a government bill to repeal the boycott against Israel, which Jordan, like other Arab states, has had on the books for decades. Among the demands made by opponents of lifting the ban is that a comprehensive peace agreement be reached, including fulfillment of U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338, regarding the return of occupied land to the Palestinians. The population more broadly is questioning the wisdom of lifting the Israeli boycott, while an international embargo against Iraq remains in place. King Hussein has been repeatedly outspoken in his demand that the sanctions against Iraq be lifted, most recently during a state visit to Paris.

Even more controversial is the government's draft law which would make it legal for Israelis to purchase land in Jordan. IAF parliamentary spokesman Hamzeh Mansour charged that the law would mean "ceding" territory to Israel. Others have charged that the provision would violate the

Constitution, despite Zaid Ben Shaker's assurances that foreign ownership of land would be subject to certain restrictions. The fear uppermost in the minds of Jordanian citizens is that such changes in the law would open the country up for "colonization" by Israel, through land purchases. Further legislation, aimed at making the country more attractive to foreign investors and at satisfying the demands of the International Monetary Fund, includes proposals to lift price controls on some basic commodities, increase the price of water for irrigation, and reorganize tax law.

The arguments put forth by the opposition contain plenty of merit. The normalization process has been rammed through with little concern for the subjective factor, culturally and historically shaped. There is no way to force a population to embrace its former enemy as an ally, without there being any concrete proof that the peace is just, beneficial, and enduring.

The question of succession

Yet, there is more involved in the Jordanian crisis than the issues per se. According to well-informed region specialists, there are factional tensions rippling through the institutions of the Hashemite Kingdom—from the security apparatus to the government and up to the royal family itself—around the question of the succession. It is reported that Prime Minister Zaid Ben Shaker is heading up a faction which wants to overturn current procedures, which would see power pass to the king's brother, Crown Prince Hassan, and have the line of succession run through the king's eldest son. Zaid Ben Shaker, who is a military man, was trained at Sandhurst, and is considered to be very close to the British.

There are two developments cited by analysts to back up this hypothesis. First, there is the case of the recent coup in Qatar, a tiny emirate on the Persian Gulf controlled historically by the British. There, the ruling emir, Sheik Kalifa Ibn Hamad Al Thani, was overthrown by his son Sheik Hamad, while the former was absent from the country. Among the first measures introduced by the new sheik was a formal change in the rules of succession; instead of having power pass to the brother of the ruling emir, it should from now on pass down to the eldest son. The peaceful palace coup in Qatar has been widely interpreted as a British-backed move to establish a precedent in the region, among other things. It is known that Hamad, also a Sandhurst graduate, was in London two weeks before he seized power, and that the British Crown and British government were the first to recognize the new leader. The change in succession rules has profound implications for American ally Saudi Arabia, which is already in the throes of a succession crisis. It has been mooted that the Qatar events could be used in Jordan, to justify a similar move.

Second, King Hussein has been spending an inordinate amount of time outside the country, primarily in London,

leading to speculation about his state of health. Just weeks ago, there was the unusual situation, when the king, the crown prince, and the prime minister were all out of the country at the same time. The person given powers in the interim was the king's son. Furthermore, it has been made public that a palatial estate nearing completion after years of construction near Vienna, is the property of King Hussein. Does he plan to withdraw to this residence, perhaps after having handed over power?

The escalating confrontation inside Jordan must be viewed in the context of other dramatic shifts toward confrontationism in the region in the past weeks. First, in order of time, was the assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, which catalyzed an anti-Sudan campaign from Cairo. Then, the Algerian government broke off talks with the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), the opposition Islamist party, and an eighty-five-year-old co-founder of the FIS was murdered in a Paris mosque. Both moves conform to the strategy elaborated by British geopolitical think-tanks, for so-called wars of the "North" against the "South," under the rubric of an assault on "Islamic fundamentalism."

Britain's anti-Islam strategy foresees the outbreak of chaos along the entire Mediterranean, from North Africa into the Middle East, and eastward through the Gulf into the Indian subcontinent. In such a perspective, hopes for a durable settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, through mutually beneficial economic cooperation, must be dashed by all means. Chaos is the name of the game, chaos leading to economic and social disintegration, and demographic decline.

One local variant of the British plan for chaos entails civil war breaking out among the Palestinian population in the autonomous areas and the occupied territories. Such internecine warfare, sparked by opposition to the Gaza-Jericho arrangement, would quickly spread into neighboring Jordan, whose population is largely Palestinian. In the eyes of extremist Zionists like Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon, this process would be the prelude to wholesale expulsion of the Palestinian population into Jordan, since, in their jargon, "Jordan is Palestine." Neither the West Bank Palestinians, who rightfully demand sovereignty over the land which has been taken from them through force, nor the East Jordanians, who wish to maintain a position of hegemony within Jordan, would accept this.

Jordan has entered a perilous spiral of radicalization, whereby opposition is being met with repression, which in turn, is fueling radical response. To steer the currently unstable situation away from its course toward violence, requires a rare quality of leadership: the ability to rise above domestic intrigues to view ongoing processes from the standpoint of the global, strategic picture, and to act with full sovereignty in the long-term, historic interests of the populations of the region.

Amnesty Int'l, still trying to save Peru's Shining Path

by Gretchen Small

In its *1995 Report*, released to the world public on July 5, Amnesty International singled out Peru as one of the five or six worst human rights violators worldwide, alleging the practice of "severe and systematic human rights violations" by its government and military, and the unjust jailing of thousands of "political prisoners" by illegitimate courts.

As Peru is, at last, largely at peace, for the first time since Pol Pot's allies in Shining Path launched their terrorist war in 1980, Amnesty's wildly fraudulent allegations against Peru constitute an international scandal. The "prisoners of conscience" who Amnesty demands be "immediately and unconditionally" released, are precisely the Shining Path terrorists defeated by Peru's Armed Forces. Amnesty International, that front for the British Foreign Office which parades as the world's premier human rights "non-governmental organization," is still mobilizing to resuscitate Shining Path, one of the worst gangs of "killers and torturers" known in the 20th century.

Revealing timing for Amnesty's attack

Amnesty ran cover for Shining Path throughout 14 years of war, but the utter absurdity of its listing Peru, today, in this world, as a human rights crisis, reveals the depth of hysteria which reigns in the British Foreign Office over the collapse of the project, for which Shining Path was the instrument, to rip Peru into pieces.

President Alberto Fujimori, who led the defeat of Shining Path, begins his second term in office with a mandate provided by 65% of the Peruvian electorate. Worse, from the standpoint of London, is that the Clinton administration is now working with the Fujimori government to crush the dope trade's extensive tentacles inside the country, providing Peru with radar, intelligence collaboration, and possibly military equipment. The U.S. cooperation effectively ends the Fujimori government's status as an international pariah state, which Britain's friends in the Bush administration had orchestrated.

Either Amnesty "knows absolutely nothing about Peru's reality, or it has other intentions. To say that [Shining Path