

King Abdullah II and Jerusalem

Commentary for February 17, 2010 — The Core Issue in the Middle East

On January 29, 2010 King Abdullah II, King of Jordan, was interviewed by Fareed Zakaria, CNN interview show host and Editor, *Newsweek International*, at the 2010 World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.

King Abdullah's statements in this matter are important because between 1946 until 1967 Jordan ruled over East Jerusalem and maintained the Holy sites there, particularly the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque contained on the Haram esh-Sharif. Since the 1967 Six-Day War when Israel captured all of Jerusalem, Jordan continues to maintain supervision and financing of the Haram esh-Sharif.¹

I watched the broadcast of this interview on CNN on February 7, and I noted the King made several interesting points, so I found the transcript of the interview. Answering Zakaria's question about whether he was optimistic or pessimistic about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, King Abdullah said the following:

"[T]his is probably the first time where I am somewhat pessimistic, as we all know that the core issue in the region is the Israeli-Palestinian issue. And as you said, it's been going on for so many decades, so much suffering, so much frustration. And it can only get worse if we don't solve the problem. ... all of us in the international community are frustrated.

You have to understand the connectivity: all of us in the international community also pay the price for not solving this problem. The process is at the moment: we are working to try and get the Israelis and Palestinians back to the tables. Their proximity talks hopefully will come underway. We are waiting for the United States to hopefully give us their undivided attention on this issue."

• [Conversation with the King of Jordan](#)

This statement is very interesting. King Abdullah and others in the international community look to the United States to solve the Israeli-Palestinian problem. In my opinion this is not very realistic because the United States has shown little interest in forcing any of the parties to participate in talks, much less force an outcome.

King Abdullah then stated the central problem of the Israeli-Palestinian hostility and the larger Middle East conflict. He says exactly what Dr. Martin had said for decades:

"I still go back to saying the core issue is the Israel-Palestinian problem, because all roads in our part of the world — all the conflicts — lead to Jerusalem."

The Israel-Palestinian problem is the core issue because the issue of control of the false "Temple Mount" (the Haram esh-Sharif) broke up the peace talks in the year 2000, and it has been the main stumbling block ever since that time.

Later in the interview King Abdullah said several other interesting things:

1. At present the Palestinian Authority personnel control and guard the Haram, but the Kingdom of Jordan pays for expenses and upkeep of the Dome of the Rock and the mosques on the Haram. See the Jordanian government website "[Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places, General Information.](#)"

"... if we solve the Israeli-Palestinian problem, why would Iranians want to spend so much money on a military programme? It makes no sense. I mean, the country has social challenges, it has economic challenges."

"... there's always going to be an enemy to Israel if we don't solve the issue."

"... the Israeli-Palestinian issue [is] a tremendous recruiting ground for the disenfranchised youth that we have in the Middle East."

Zakaria asked the King:

"Why is it that there is still, though, this cancer [terrorism] within the world of Islam? Any time there is a terrorist attack anywhere in the world now, honestly you really don't have to think about, you know, who did it in the sense that what community that person came from. You know that it is some fanatical, wrong-headed Muslim. What is it that has made it – and you know that so many people say, 'Why is it that moderates don't condemn these attacks? Why is it that the world of Islam allows this?'"

King Abdullah answered:

"The Israeli-Palestinian issue is such an emotional issue inside of Islam that everyone tries to hijack it for very destructive ends. This is why it is so imperative for all of us to solve this problem. Otherwise, we will always live under the shadow of terror and terror is not something, as you well know, that [only] Israelis are having to deal with; Arabs, Muslims, the West are dealing with all because of the core issue of the Middle East, which is the Israeli-Palestinian one."

Terror has become a problem around the world because of the Israeli-Palestinian problem.

Zakaria then asked King Abdullah whether the Israeli-Palestinian issue has been an excuse by Middle East regimes to justify political repression and about political and economic reform in the Arab world in particular and in the Middle East in general. Abdullah responded:

"I think reform is not something that you can wait until the Israeli-Palestinian issue is resolved. ... [the Middle East has] the largest youth cohort in history. We have 200 million young men and women that need jobs in the next several years. If we don't create a positive future where they have a role and a say in their future, definitely we are going to have a major problem. I think the issues are interconnected, but on the political, emotional issue don't discount the Israeli-Palestinian one."

"It all comes down to the Israelis and Palestinians solving their problem, that releases the tensions across the world. President Obama said something that was very, very critical about the future of the Middle East. He said that for the first time – and I think it should have happened many, many decades ago – America wants to see a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because it is in the vital national-security interest of the United States."

King Abdullah is a very well informed individual, the ruler of the Kingdom of Jordan which is located east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. His whole life has been shaped by the great issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and more specifically the issue of who will control the Haram esh-Sharif. The stress level will continue to rise until it boils over in the future:

"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, ... And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: ..."

• ***Zechariah 12:2–3***

David Sielaff
david@askelm.com