

HASHEMITES' CUSTODIANSHIP OF JERUSALEM ISLAMIC HOLY SITES

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Abstract

This study aims to demonstrate the Jordanian Hashemites' custodianship of the Islamic sanctities in Jerusalem and their role in preserving its Islamic identity from the attempts of Judaization exposed by the Israeli State. The reigns of his Majesty King Abdullah I and King Hussein (kings of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) were taken as a model for the

study, by presenting the most prominent services provided to Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, such as restoration, renovation, rebuilding, and providing financial and non-financial support to these sanctities. The study concludes that the Hashemites' custodianship of the Islamic sanctities in Jerusalem was not only connected with the Jordanian-Palestinian relations, but also came out of the Hashemites' faith in their religious and national duty to preserve Jerusalem identity and stand in the face of any attempt to Judaize, control and divide Jerusalem. This custody began since the era of Sharif Hussein bin Ali and it has continued to the present time.

Keywords: Al-Aqsa Mosque, Hashemites, Islamic holy places, Jerusalem, King Hussein Bin Talal, Palestine.

A. Introduction

The Hashemites (also called Hāshimī) are any of the Arab descendants, either direct or collateral, of the Prophet Muhammad, from among whom came the family that created the 20th-century Hashemite dynasty in Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. Muhammad, the messenger, was a member of the house of Hāshim (Hashem), a subdivision of the Quraysh tribe in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Hashemites have ruled in Jordan since 1921 after the Great Arab Revolt. His Majesty King Abdullah I, ruled Jordan as Emir of Transjordan from 1921 to 1946, and then he became the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from 1946 till he was murdered in 1951. Then his Majesty King Talal ruled Jordan from 1951 to 1952. After that, his Majesty King Al-Hussein, ruled from 1952 to 1999. From 1999 till now, his Majesty King Abdullah II has been the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The role of the royal family in caring for the holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif (Jerusalem) goes back to their lineage,

giving them great legitimacy to preserve the holy sites in Jerusalem. Their lineage goes back to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through his daughter Fatima Al-Zahra and her husband Ali bin Abi Talib (may God honor him), the cousin of the Prophet Muhammad. And from their descendants come 'Al-Asyad' (masters), who are the grandchildren of Hassan (the eldest son Ali bin Abi Talib), and the *Ashraf* (the nobles) are the grandchildren of Al-Hussein (the youngest son of Ali bin Abi Talib). The Hashemites (or Hashemite family) in Jordan belong to the *Ashraf* Hashemite branch, which ruled Makkah Al-Mukarramah (Mecca) from 1201 AD until 1925 AD. For the Hashemites, (Jerusalem) has a great place as it contains the most important Islamic sanctities. The Hashemites rely on religious legitimacy for their care with Jerusalem because they belong to the Prophet Muhammad and the historical legitimacy through the role that Bani Hashem (Hashemites) played in the history of the Arabs before and after Islam and the sacrifices they made for the sake of Arabism and Islam (Mahasis, 2011).

Remarkably, the Arabs and Muslims were closely associated with Jerusalem due to its sanctity and its status in the Islamic faith, history, and Islamic conscience. It includes Al-Aqsa Mosque's precinct, the first of the two qiblahs, and the third of the Two Holy masjids (mosques in Mecca and Madinah), from which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ascended to the highest heavens.

When discussing the issue of Jerusalem and the repeated Israeli attempts to Judaize it and obliterate its Islamic features, it is necessary to explain the attitude of the Hashemites towards it. The present study demonstrates the Hashemites' efforts in caring for the holy sites in Jerusalem,

focusing on the prominent role of King Abdullah I (1921-1951) and King Hussein (1952-1999) in standing up in the face of all Israeli attempts to Judaize Jerusalem. They considered the responsibility of preserving Islamic sanctities a religious and historical message that the Hashemites carried generation after generation. Majesty King Hussein said in this context that they had been the guardians of Jerusalem and its protectors through many centuries, and they would not be stingy in sacrificing their lives in order to preserve their right to exist in the city. He added that Jerusalem would return to Arabs (Al-Zabin, 1993).

B. The Beginnings of the Hashemites' Custodianship of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem (The Era of Sharif Hussein and King Abdullah I 1916-1952)

The Hashemites paid special attention to the Islamic holy places in Jerusalem, to keep its Arabic identity and Islamic characteristics. This care came as a reaction to the Israeli's plans which aimed to demolish Al-Aqsa Mosque and eradicate its Islamic identity. There were several repeated attempts to fire Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Israelis, but the Hashemites' custodianship of Al-Aqsa Mosque was always ready to prevent these attacks. The custodianship started after the outbreak of The Great Arab Revolution in 1916 when Al-Sharif Hussein Bin Ali affirmed in his letters to the Palestinian people that Palestine was Arab land. He emphasized the Arabic identity of Palestine and considered it an integral part of the Arabs State. In his talks and negotiations with Britain, Al Sharif Hussein insisted on the British Hejaz Treaty to recognize Palestine's independence, and protect the Holy Mosque and Al-Haram

Al-Qudsi (Jerusalem) (Al-Zabin, 1993; Fildis & Nisanci, 2019; Mahafzah, 1973).

C. The First Hashemite Reconstruction

Sharif Hussein bin Ali was the first to respond to the call of the people of Jerusalem when he initiated the Supreme Islamic Council in Jerusalem in 1922, which is an Islamic non-governmental organization to preserve the noble heritage of Jerusalem. A delegation from Jerusalem visited Sharif Hussein in 1924 in Hijaz, headed by Haj Muhammad Amin Al-Husseini (the head of the Supreme Islamic Sharia Council). After Sharif Hussein heard a summary of the dangers to which Al-Aqsa Mosque was exposed to, he donated 24 thousand gold *liras* from his own money to restore the Dome of the Rock. This donation formed the basis of Islamic money for reconstructing Al-Aqsa Mosque and other mosques in Palestine (Najim, 2008). This is considered the first Hashemites' reconstruction of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem.

After Sharif Hussein bin Ali, King Abdullah I (the son of Sharif Hussein bin Ali), who is considered the founding king of Jordan, followed his father's approach in his support of the Palestinians in their cause in general, and Al-Quds Al-Sharif in particular. He strongly rejected the Zionists' demands to make a passage to the Al-Buraq Wall and the demands of the Vatican for the internationalization of the holy places. He also continued taking care of the Islamic holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and reconstructing Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. He donated about a thousand pounds to the Nation Fund in 1945, supervised by an Egyptian engineering

company at the time, to restore Al-Aqsa Mosque and *masjid qubat alsakhrah almushrafah* (The Dome of the Rock).

Also, in 1950, King Abdullah I sponsored a project to repair the windows of Al-Aqsa Mosque, and refinish the marble columns (Zahran & Amayreh, 2000). Noticeably, King Abdullah I's keenness to take care of Jerusalem and its sanctities increased after Jericho Conference in 1950 and the union between Jordan and Palestine (Al-Madhi & Al-Musa, 1959). The conference was the starting point for integrating the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples together in one state and one spirit which increased the interdependence between the two peoples. King Abdullah I continued following up on the construction of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, visiting them all the time and providing Palestinians with financial and moral support in order to preserve and protect them until he was martyred on July 20, 1951, at the gates of Al-Aqsa Mosque while he was entering the gate to perform the Friday prayer (Omaish, 2012).

D. The Second Hashemites' Reconstruction Era: King Hussein Bin Talal (1953-1999)

Since his ascending to the throne and assuming his constitutional powers on May 2, 1953, his Majesty the late Hussein bin Talal, placed Jerusalem with its immortal Islamic landmarks in his vision as a Hashemite jewel. As soon as he assumed his constitutional powers, he put the reconstruction of the Jerusalem city and the preservation of its buildings in the Jordanian policy priorities (Al-Khatib, 1991). He ordered the formation of a committee to reconstruct Islamic holy sites on Al-Haram Al-Qudsi Al-Sharif (Jerusalem) under Special

Law No. (32) in (1954), which included that the committee would supervise the reconstruction of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, and supervise all purchases necessary. The decision of the committee would be subject to approval by the Prime Minister if the value of the purchases exceeded five hundred dinars.

In 1955, the Jordanian Cabinet issued a decision to form a committee for the reconstruction of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in which the Council of Ministers included Mr. Hazza' Al-Majali (acting judge), four persons among them the heads of courts, directors of Al-Awqāf (Islamic endowments), and significant merchants (Al-Shafi'i *et al.*, 1970). His Majesty, the late King Hussein bin Talal, made his contacts with the kings and heads of Arab countries and asked the Egyptian president, Jamal Abdel Nasser, to provide a body of engineers that could design and oversee the previous reconstruction (Blackwell, 2013). On April 25, 1956, the Egyptian Council of Ministers issued a decision to form the architectural office for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Holy Rock in Jerusalem, and the Egyptian government donated money and secured technical expertise from engineers, workers and specialists from the Egyptian Ministry of Housing (Al-Shafi'i *et al.*, 1970). Hence, the work phase of the second reconstruction began. It lasted approximately eleven years and cost eleven million Jordanian dinars (\$15.500.000). It included the reconstruction of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the restoration of its outer stone walls, the installation of marble columns for four corridors on its eastern side, the installation of stained-glass windows, the restoration of the ceilings and the internal and external walls (Al-Smadi, 1997) as well as the reconstruction of the Dome of the Rock, where an external

dome of golden aluminum was installed, marble was installed for the internal and external walls, and the mosaics were restored in it along with the writings of Quranic verses. On August 6, 1964, his Majesty King Hussein bin Talal personally sponsored the official celebration marking the completion of this reconstruction (Ashton, 2008; Al-Abadi, 1998).

E. The Third Hashemites' Reconstruction Era

After Al-Aqsa Mosque was exposed to fire on August 21, 1969, by Denis Rohan, a Jewish of Australian origin and a group of terrorists, as their aim behind this was to obliterate the cultural landmarks of the Islamic religion in Al-Aqsa Mosque, his Majesty King Hussein ordered 'the third Hashemites' reconstruction period by forming a reconstruction committee to remove the effects caused by the fire. The committee was formed of scholars, engineers and technicians specialized in the reconstruction of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock and other religious buildings in the Holy Mosque. His Majesty donated the money for this reconstruction, which amounted to approximately 8,249,000 US dollars. This reconstruction continued until 1994 (Al-Smadi, 1997). The reconstruction works included removing the effects of the fire that destroyed about a third of Al-Aqsa Mosque, re-making Al-Aqsa Mosque minbar (pulpit) to be as close as possible to the original one that was burned, restoring the wooden dome, the marble, the ceilings, the arches, the columns, and the decorations, re-installing the outer dome by replacing the aluminum panels with lead ones, re-installing Surat Al-Isra' with gilded mosaics, and installing a fire alarm and extinguishing devices with the latest specifications (Najim, 2008).

This reconstruction was distinct from the previous Hashemites' constructions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, where there was

coordination between the Committee for the Reconstruction of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock on the one hand, and UNESCO, the Italian Association "International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property" (ICCROM), and the Copper Development Association in London on the other hand in order to ensure the required level of specifications and qualifications before starting work. The committee used international laboratories to examine the materials used in restoration, such as wood and lead, through cooperation with Arab and German laboratories, in addition to the Royal Scientific Society in Amman. The committee also used the historical and archaeological studies of all the monuments they were restored to return them to their previous place without changing or modifying their elements (Najim, 2008).

His Majesty King Hussein bin Talal had ordered, during the period of work, to remove the effects of the fire, the formation of the Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs in 1971, which was chaired by HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal (King Hussein's brother). The committee's tasks included taking care of Jerusalem affairs and defending its identity in various places, sites, conferences, and international seminars and forums. Among the most important objectives of the Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs were gathering daily information on the Judaization of Jerusalem, collecting documents, manuscripts, books and references on the history of Jerusalem, drawing Jordanian policy, explaining point of view on the issue of Jerusalem, and focusing on its principles in fully rejecting internationalization. It came in the 1948 project or other projects focusing on the Arabism of Jerusalem, whether from the point of view of Muslims or Christians (Gada, 2017; Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs).

F. The Hashemite Custodianship of the Holy Sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the Unity Resolution between Jordan and Palestine

As discussed earlier, the Hashemites' stance toward Islamic sanctities in Jerusalem stemmed from their religious and historical responsibility rather than any political ambitions. However, some Arab and Palestinian politicians and leaders were suspected and accused due to the decision of unity between Jordan and the remaining Palestinian territories, which were not occupied by Israel (including occupied Jerusalem). This unity with Jordan came at the will of the Palestinians after the end of the 1948 war and the loss of a large part of the Palestinian lands in this war, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. This unity played a major role in strengthening the international legitimacy of the Hashemites to confront all the repeated Israeli attempts to attack the Palestinian territories and to speak more forcefully in the international forums, considering Palestine and Jordan as one state.

However, some critics took this unity as a pretext against the Hashemites and accused them of having political goals at the Palestinian cause's expense (Adayleh, 2007). The Hashemites faced a number of accusations and difficulties at the Arab level, and the Arab League stood in the face of the Jordanian policy towards Jerusalem, accusing it of seeking to erase the Palestinian's identity. The Hashemites' role was also affected by the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), especially after the escalation of its role after the 1967 war and its demand to disengage from Jordan. It led to tension in relations between the organization and Jordan, as some Palestinian forces believed that Jordan, under the Hashemite leadership, was violating the rights of the Palestinians in

managing the interests of their prospective state, and on the independence of their decision to consider the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people after the decision of the Arab Summit in Rabat on September 23, 1969. Therefore, the PLO viewed Jordan as the guardian imposed on it, and this negatively affected Jordan's role in the city of Jerusalem (Katz, 2005) and Jordan's role towards Jerusalem was negatively affected, not because of King Hussein's negligence, but because of international and Arab pressure on Jordan to stop speaking on behalf of the Palestinians.

During the third Hashemites' reconstruction of Al-Aqsa Mosque, some tensions in relations between Jordan and Palestine were marked (Tahboub, 1994). The Jordanian-Palestinian relations in the period from 1970-1974 went through critical and tense conditions when an active political conflict occurred between the two countries, especially when his Majesty King Hussein bin Talal announced the United Kingdom project on March 15, 1972, which brought together Jordan and Palestine (Tahboub, 1994). The project aimed to maintain the political initiative regarding the Palestinian cause to determine the fate of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian territories, especially after the Israel's occupation of the West Bank in 1967. As such, this project would contribute from an economic and social point of view to the integration of Palestine and Jordan within the social system in Jordan, and would enhance the chances of success for an economic and social development plan. The Palestinian reactions to this project came with rejection as a large number of Palestinian figures accused King Hussein of trying to expand his reign and liquidate the Palestinian cause at the expense of the Palestinian lands (Al-Sayegh, 1987). The Palestinian People's

Congress, which was held in Cairo in April 1972, announced its rejection of the project, and called for the formation of the unity of the two banks under a national democratic system, which led to the freezing of this project (Al-Sayegh, 1987).

Despite the importance of international legitimacy that the unity between Jordan and Palestine gave to King Hussein to demand the international community confronts the ambitions of the Jews in Jerusalem and their attempts to obliterate its Arab and Islamic features, King Hussein agreed at Rabat Summit, held on October 26-29, 1974, that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Jordan agreed to that in line with the Arab consensus. His Majesty King Hussein bin Talal clarified the negative aspects of this decision on the Palestinian cause if Jordan is excluded from representing the Palestinian people, and the role it can play in favor of Palestine and Jerusalem (Al-Musa, 1995; Reiter, 2019).

In response to a press question about the decision of Rabat conference and its impact on the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship, his Majesty King Hussein bin Talal stated that the Hashemites have always worked faithfully for the benefit of the Palestinian people and their legitimate national rights. His only goal since then was to help the Palestinians recover their lost homeland. One way or another, he extended a helping hand as much as possible (Al-Hussein Bin Talal, 1978). After the decision of Rabat Summit, there was broad international recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) recognized PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. At that time, Jordan announced its refusal to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians, even if the Palestinians and the

Arabs requested it. The Jordanian Foreign Minister, Marwan Al-Qasim, stated that they would not negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians because it is a historical and Palestinian responsibility for Palestinian land (Al-Midfa'i, 1993). Nonetheless, this decision had no effect on King Hussein's support and care for the holy sites in Jerusalem. Remarkably, he had always emphasized in every occasion the Arabness of Jerusalem and the responsibility of the Hashemites to take care of the holy sites in it.

G. The Role of the Hashemites in Preserving the Identity of Jerusalem through UNESCO

King Hussein did not abandon his religious, historical and political duties towards Jerusalem after the decision of the Rabat Summit in 1974 and the international affirmation of the PLO as the Palestinians' sole legitimate representative. Thus, this refutes the skeptics' claims and affirms that the relationship between the Hashemites and Jerusalem stems from their belief in their religious and historical duty to protect and care for Islamic sanctities in all parts of the world, and it is not linked to the decision of political unity between Jordan and Palestine only. Among the initiatives and achievements recorded by the Hashemites in preserving Jerusalem and its sanctities, from Israel's repeated attempts to obliterate its Islamic features, is the continuous and pressing communication with UNESCO to protect the city of Jerusalem and preserve its Islamic identity. Among the most important successes that have been achieved in this direction is that Jordan, under the leadership of King Hussein, succeeded in persuading UNESCO to include the Old City of Jerusalem on

the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1981. Also, the Old City was included on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1982 in order to put pressure on Israel to prevent changing the historical and heritage monuments of Jerusalem, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was considered responsible to take supervision over this heritage. The UNESCO provided financial and technical assistance to the Jordanian government to preserve the heritage of Jerusalem, but the amount, estimated at \$160,000, had a negligible impact on the maintenance of some historical monuments and shrines in Al-Quds Al-Sharif (Najim, 2008).

In 1983, Jordan submitted reports to UNESCO, stating that Israel is still carrying out excavations that have damaged the historical and cultural character of the city of Jerusalem, and that Al-Aqsa Mosque was exposed to more severe dangers. The report pointed out that the establishment of settlements around the city of Jerusalem aimed to Judaize the holy city. The UNESCO responded to this report and appointed a representative to follow up on the issue of Jerusalem. The representative used to visit Jerusalem twice a year to submit reports. The reports recommended that Jerusalem's Islamic and Christian heritage be restored, and it was not permissible to demolish or remove any religious buildings at the expense of rebuilding an ancient heritage (Al Zuraigat, 2021; Najim, 2008).

Among the reports sent to the Jordanian government was the '1993 report' which stated that the Jordanian government had assumed its official responsibility for the management, maintenance, and reconstruction of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem and the West Bank since 1952, following the declaration of the Palestinian people to annex the West Bank to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It was recognized by the

Kingdom of Jordan, and its responsibility towards Jerusalem and its sanctities continued without interference from any other country. Any financial or technical cooperation offered for reconstruction had to take place under the responsibility of the Jordanian authorities concerned with reconstruction (Najim, 2008). The continuous efforts of the Hashemites succeeded in obtaining a number of decisions from UNESCO, whether in the Executive Council or in the World Heritage Committee, which stipulated the confirmation of the name Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif as synonymous (i.e., they have one meaning), emphasizing that the Mughrabi Gate is an integral part of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, affirming the right to manage Al-Awqāf of Jerusalem (the Islamic endowments) and the affairs of the Al-Aqsa Mosque to Jordan as the exclusive and sole legal authority responsible for supervising the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Haram in their management, maintenance, preservation and regulation of entry to it as well as calling on Israel to stop excavation and constructing tunnels and all illegal works in East Jerusalem.

H. King Hussein's Stance on the Palestinian Cause and the Holy Sites in Jerusalem after Jordan and Palestine's Decision of Disengagement

King Hussein blessed the Palestinians' decision in 1988 to make their decision independent and make PLO their representative. On July 31, 1988, King Hussein announced the decision of breaking legal and administrative relations between Jordan and Palestine, with Jordan's keenness that this decision does not affect the brotherhood, loyalty and common blood between Jordanians and Palestinians (Al-

Dustour 'a Jordanian newspaper', 1988). In his speeches, his Majesty used to raise the story of the Jordanian-Palestinian unity, and mentioned the constitutional formula for the unity of the two banks (The East Bank 'Jordan' and The West bank 'Palestine'). He stated that it is a "restricted unity" according to the text of the Jordanian Parliament's decision dated April 24, 1950, which indicated not to prejudice the final settlement of its just cause (Palestine Cause) within the scope of national aspirations, Arab cooperation, and international justice (King Abdullah I, 1979; Mahafzah, 1988).

His Majesty King Hussein bin Talal also affirmed before the administrative and legal disengagement announcement that Jerusalem and its sanctities would not be affected by the disengagement. In his speech addressed to the Jordanian people on October 10, 1987, in which he defined the spiritual status of Jerusalem among Arabs and Muslims, he stated that his responsibility towards Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Palestinian Cause is a deep-rooted and continuous responsibility that is not interrupted by a political decision to dismantle the legal and administrative relationship with the West Bank. This responsibility stems from the core of an Arab-Islamic message that the Hashemites have carried throughout their long history; he must continue to carry it in fulfillment of the trust and the fulfillment of duty.

When King Hussein could not find a way in the face of international and Arab pressures to break the unity between Jordan and Palestine, he kept working hard to keep the city of Jerusalem under the guardianship and care of the Hashemites, so that it would not fall into the void or infiltrated by the occupation. Under its Hashemite leadership, Jordan continued to care for and defended the city's sanctities, providing the

necessary support to its people. Jordan retained for itself, and in full coordination with the Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, the right and eligibility to manage religious Islamic endowments affairs legally and administratively, which would help the PLO to bear all other political burdens, taking into account full coordination between Al-Awqāf in Jordan (Islamic endowments) and Al-Awqāf in Palestine to the fullest (Al-Qaisi, 2008).

Through the preceding, it can be said that King Hussein's allegiance to Jerusalem is because it embraces the holy places of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the first qiblah for Muslims, and it is the place from which the Messenger of God ascended to heaven. This allegiance rises to the level of the divine message that the Hashemites inherited from father to grandfather, so neglecting it is absolutely out of the question, even if it costs the Hashemites their lives (Najim, 2008).

After the disengagement between Jordan and Palestine, the Jordanian Ministry of 'Al-Awqāf' (Islamic endowments), Islamic Affairs and Holy Places continued to exercise its duties in managing and maintaining Al-Aqsa Mosque, as the third Hashemite reconstruction era continued until 1994 (Al-Smadi, 1997). In the Jerusalem city, it had established a department known as the "Al-Awqāf Department" (Department of Islamic endowments), with three divisions affiliated to it which are: *'The Department of Islamic Archeology'*, which documents and maintains Islamic monuments that are exposed to danger, *'The Chief Justice Department'*, which is based in Amman, and supervises the Sharia courts (courts following Islamic principles) in Jerusalem, and *'The Committee for the Reconstruction of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock'*, which was formed according to Jordanian Law No. (33) of

1954, and was headed by the Chief Justice; nonetheless, the law was amended in 1991, and the Minister of Al-Awqāf and Islamic Affairs of Holy Places became its head (Zahran & Amayreh, 2000).

When Jordan signed the peace treaty with Israel on October 26, 1994, the US President Mr. Clinton addressed King Hussein saying, “Your Majesty...and in this declaration that you will sign, your role as the protector of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, including Al-Aqsa Mosque, has been preserved for you” (Jordan Times, 2020). In Article 9 of the agreement, Israel was obligated to respect the special and distinguished Jordanian’s role in caring for and supervising the holy sites, and Israel must respect this role. The article reported “... Israel must respect the current special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the holy sites in Jerusalem, and when the final status negotiations take place, Israel will give high priority to the historical Jordanian role in these places” (Jordan Media Committee, Peace Treaty between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the State of Israel October 26, 1994). This confirms that the conviction of the United States and Israel of Jordan’s historical devotion to Jerusalem and its insistence on preserving its Arab identity and religious sanctities prompted America and Israel to recognize the legitimacy of the Hashemites and their entitlement to Jerusalem. Therefore, the repercussions of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty were positive as Jordan has continued to a large extent in the reconstruction of Jerusalem, its religious sanctities, and its claim to be the capital of the independent Palestinian state (Tayfur, 2009).

King Hussein continued to support the Palestinian people financially and morally and made every possible effort

to establish a just peace and inaugurate an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. He struggled and fought for that until he passed away in 1999. After King Hussein, his son, King Abdullah II, took power in 1999 and followed the path of his father and grandfathers, assuming responsibility for reconstructing Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. He considered this a responsibility of an ideological issue that confirms the civilizational and historical dimension and shows the importance of Jerusalem throughout history. King Abdullah II expressed it when he stated that Palestine is Arab and it must remain Arab until God wills (Al-Smadi, 1997; Mahasneh, 2019).

I. King Hussein's Vision for Solutions Projects with Israel, Especially in Jerusalem

King Hussein's vision for dealing with settlement projects in the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially in the issue of Jerusalem, differed according to the different circumstances and political variables of the Arab-Israeli conflict. His stances were governed by the variables of this conflict through the various stages it has gone through since the establishment of the State of Israel until the present time. In the first phase of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which extended until the June War of 1967, Hussein's stance was consistent with the principled view of this conflict and thus the impossibility of making peace with Israel. This means there is no peace with the existence of the State of Israel in the Arab region. He categorically rejected the internationalization of the city of Jerusalem; if there is no way other than internationalization, it must include the city in its eastern and western halves. In this regard, King

Hussein mentioned in a letter sent to his Holiness Pope Paul VI, his Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenas Gorse, and his Eminence Cardinal Paul Peter Al-Maouchi (the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East), and his Eminence Archbishop of Canterbury, published on June 4, 1971, stating that Jerusalem, in his view, is the essence of peace. It will only be achieved through the preservation of all Arabs' rights in it and the withdrawal of the occupation from all that was occupied in June 1967. He affirmed his determination to make it the city of all believers in God and safeguard their rights in sanctities and their divine access to all. Meanwhile, the search for internationalization is an extension of what was stated in the United Nations partition resolution in 1947, the limit that he can discuss is the internationalization of all Jerusalem, both Arab Jerusalem and Israeli Jerusalem, and the implementation of all that was mentioned in the aforementioned partition resolutions. King Hussein affirmed that he was thinking about the future of the region and peace in the entire world as Muslims and Christians' attachment to Jerusalem and its holy sites in all cases is inevitably not lesser than the attachment of the Jews to it.

King Hussein refused to internationalize the city of Jerusalem and preferred not to internationalize it unless internationalization included its two parts. It is natural for him to reject and resist that Jerusalem be the unified and eternal capital of Israel. He refused from the beginning the occupation the annexation of the city and the adoption of Israel of the city as its capital. He continued to demand the return of Jerusalem to Arab and Islamic sovereignty and opposed the policies that supported Israel in its expansionist tendencies, even if they came from countries that had good relations with Jordan.

For the Hashemites, peace and Jerusalem are sanctified, and Jerusalem return to Arabs is the criterion for the sincerity of those countries calling for peace as he asserted, "The true symbol of peace in Jerusalem, and its return to the Arab world is the only criterion for the sincerity of those calling for peace in the region" (Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs).

In the second phase, extending from the 'June War of 1967', it was characterized by a semi-comprehensive official Arab readiness to accept a political settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict. The devastating results brought by Israel's aggressive and expansionist war on June 5, 1967, on the Arab confrontation countries made King Hussein show flexibility in his political movement. This flexibility was not limited to the position of the Hashemite leadership but rather included the majority of Arab countries, as the slogan circulating at the Arab level in the wake of the Khartoum Summit held in the period from August 29 to September 1, 1967, became: "Remove the effects of aggression". This means a shift in the Arab politics from the liberation of all of Palestine to the removal of the effects of aggression and thus the transformation of the Zionist-Arab conflict from a principled and stable conflict to a political conflict that can be settled, after Egypt, Jordan, Syria and most other Arab countries' acceptance of the Security Council Resolution No. 242 which ordains to withdraw from the occupied Arab lands and recognize the State of Israel without stipulating direct negotiations.

In addition, Jordan's vision of the Palestinian cause, including Jerusalem, was governed by the principle that Israel must withdraw from all occupied Arab lands, foremost of which Arab Jerusalem, and the right of the Palestinian Arab people to self-determination after their liberation from the

occupation (Tayfur, 2009). The idea of peace and the principle that Jerusalem should be of a multi-religious nature and the settlement of the conflict with Israel by peaceful means and coexistence with it is not only a possibility but rather a political goal for all confrontation states. In this sense, dealing with Israel's existence had become inevitable, especially with the increasing strength of Israel, due to the support of world centers of power, especially the United States of America, in addition to the disunity of Arab leaders and the weaknesses of a large number of them in participating and taking into serious consideration the Arabic issues, and the tremendous pressure attempts by Arab and Western leaders on King Hussein and Jordan, especially after the Gulf War in 1991, when a political and economic embargo was imposed on Jordan.

This called on King Hussein to use wisdom in keeping pace with events, so he agreed to conduct peace talks with Israel, where a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation was formed, which confirms King Hussein's devotion to the Palestinian cause. These talks and negotiations resulted in the conclusion of a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, and mutual recognition between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, following their conclusion in secret negotiations to the Oslo Accords in 1993 and the signing of the Palestinian-Israeli Principles Agreement on September 13 93 at the White House in Washington.

It must be recalled here that King Hussein's approval to sign the peace agreement with Israel came after the Palestinians had signed a secret treaty with Israel and put Israel's recognition of the continuity of the Hashemite guardianship over the Islamic holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif as a condition of the peace agreement (Jordanian Media Committee, 1994). This

confirmed King Hussein's keenness in all the circumstances and pressures he was subjected to his adherence to his religious and historical duty toward the Islamic holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif (the Committee Royal Jerusalem Affairs).

King Hussein rejected and resisted all projects that did not lead to the return of Jerusalem to Arab sovereignty. However, he did not oppose its re-division on the condition that it be the capital of the two states: one for the prospective Palestinian State and another for Israel State in the sense that sovereignty is divided for the Palestinians on the eastern part and the Israelis on the western part of Jerusalem (the Committee Royal Jerusalem Affairs). Regional circumstances also dictated King Hussein to create the principle of "religious guardianship" or sovereignty over Islamic and other places and sanctities because of the imbalance of power which was completely in favor of Israel after the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the destruction of Iraq. Jordan's situation after the destruction of Iraq was terrible in many domains (the Committee Royal Jerusalem Affairs).

Therefore, it was necessary for King Hussein to mobilize and employ his mental vitalities because of his long political experience at the national, regional, and international levels, his insight into the future, and his competence in dealing with politics and dealt with these circumstances with special wisdom. Some skeptics accused King Hussein of having a far-reaching goal in this principle, as he wanted to wait for the decisive moment to restore the West Bank with Jerusalem in the conditions accepted by Israel. Despite all attempts to belittle and question the Hashemites' stance on the issue of Jerusalem and its sanctities, the Hashemites' honest and sincere attitudes proved their good intentions.

J. The Hashemites' Care for Islamic Holy Sites in Jerusalem in All Political Circumstances

The Hashemites took upon themselves the responsibility of taking care of the Islamic holy sites in the city of Jerusalem. This care was the purpose of their actions and their love for Jerusalem. The holy sites were the major concern of the Hashemites. They have taken care and attention to it since a long time ago. The Hashemites are the closest people to Jerusalem and the holy sites, and they are the true rulers responsible for the holy sites in terms of care, maintenance, and construction. They are the guardians and sponsors of this trust, and they have saved no money, soul, or effort to serve the Palestinian cause, particularly the holy sanctities in Jerusalem.

The stages of the Hashemite care of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem and the political stances of the Hashemites against all of the Israel's attempts to Judaize it and obliterate its Arab-Islamic identity prove the importance of the Hashemites' role in preserving the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem and preserving its Arab-Islamic identity. The Hashemites stood in the face of repeated Israeli allegations and attacks on Islamic sanctities in Jerusalem, especially during the reign of King Hussein, the period on which the study is focusing on. These allegations represented a threat to Jerusalem city, its Arabic cultural heritage, and its Islamic and Christian sanctities.

Based on the sequence of stages of the Hashemites' care for Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem in all political circumstances, the Hashemite reconstruction and care for Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem were not linked to the political unity between Jordan and Palestine or the Hashemites' attempts to annex Palestine to Jordan at the expense of the

Palestinian cause, as some skeptics claimed. Rather, the political unity between Jordan and Palestine has given the Hashemites international legitimacy and strengthened their political position in confronting Israel's repeated attempts to obliterate the features of the Islamic city of Jerusalem. This is what the Hashemites wanted from this unity. However, they did not exploit it to obliterate the Palestinian cause, as their stance on the Palestinian cause and the care of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem stemmed from the sense of fear that leaving responsibility would lead to the loss of Al-Aqsa and the destruction of religious and historical buildings in Jerusalem. This was proven by King Hussein when he continued to defend the Palestinians' right to regain their lands and sanctities.

He continued his claim on every occasion and in every international forum demanding for the right of the Palestinians to recover their lands, including Jerusalem, while stressing his duty to care and supervise the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem after the decision of political disengagement between Jordan, and the resumption of King Hussein insistence on confirming the Hashemite custodianship of Islamic holy sites after signing the peace treaty with Israel. This decision confirms the critical role that Jordan and the Hashemites played in protecting the city of Jerusalem and its sanctities.

K. Conclusion

The study concluded that the Hashemites made great efforts in sponsoring and reconstructing Al-Aqsa Mosque and holy sites in Jerusalem. The Hashemites' custodianship of Jerusalem and its holy sites was not related to the nature of political relations between Jordan and Palestine as this came before the decision to the unity of Jordan and

Palestine. Otherwise, it continued after the end of the union. The Hashemites' custodianship was a strong reaction to the repeated attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Israeli authorities, which aimed to obliterate the Islamic identity of Al-Aqsa Mosque when it was exposed to fire by some extremist Israeli groups in order to build their alleged temple in place of Al-Aqsa Mosque. Despite the continuation of the Israeli attacks, this was not an obstacle for the Hashemite family in performing their religious and historical duty to protect Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, and to prove that Jerusalem is an Arabic and Islamic land.

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