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## RED ALERT IN JORDAN: RECURRENT UNREST IN MAAN

### I. OVERVIEW

In successive incidents over eight days in November 2002, the city of Maan in the south of Jordan was the scene of intense armed clashes between security forces and elements of the Maani population. What began as a routine police operation rapidly escalated into incidents in which thousands of police, soldiers, and special forces fought militants in and around the town before subduing them. The clashes left six dead, many more wounded, over 150 arrested for questioning or prosecution, and property destroyed. As of early February 2003, over 45 people remained in custody and several others were still being sought.

The November 2002 clashes were the fourth eruption of political violence in Maan since 1989, a period of less than fourteen years during which similar clashes also occurred in nearby Kerak and Tafileh. All these incidents were both spontaneous and indigenous, although external parties may have tried to exploit the tensions. Reports concerning the precise sequence of events in Maan in October-November 2002, and views on their causes and consequences, diverge widely. The Jordanian government insists it was a straightforward case of eliminating a lawless gang of armed thugs and smugglers that for months had terrorised the local population and challenged state authority. Some senior officials also asserted that the police operation was preventive, to round up troublemakers in anticipation of a possible war in Iraq.

Others, including many Maanis, believe that while the violence partly reflects local criminal elements, it is primarily a consequence of failed government socio-economic, regional planning, security and political policies. They also point to shortcomings in the private sector and in the work of NGOs. In other words, both sides viewed their resort to violence as a legitimate response to the other's action.

ICG field-work suggests that the recurrent violence in Maan since 1989 is rooted in multiple factors that,

together, have made the city highly volatile. In all cases, the scenario is roughly similar: it begins with a single, localised incident that spreads to other parts of the city and, beyond, to other parts of south Jordan. As this process unfolds, the incident takes on a broader significance, tapping underlying tensions, both local and national, and becoming in effect a surrogate for far more profound discontent.

Maan is, in many ways, a distinct entity within Jordan. In this sense the November 2002 incidents were specific to it, and on this occasion they did not spread. Characteristics that have contributed to its tradition of political violence include its unique political status in the country and recent transformation from a regional hub to a peripheral town; its deteriorating socio-economic conditions, insular social and cultural traditions; rising tensions between residents and the police force; and the new phenomenon of an armed, militant Islamism.

A convergence of unique trends, in other words, has generated a volatile environment that, when sparked by specific political or economic events such as a price increase, conflict in the occupied Palestinian territories or Iraq, or tensions between residents and police has repeatedly erupted into violence.

But it would be a mistake to interpret Maan events through a purely local lens and so conclude that they are isolated from broader national issues. Several phenomena that have contributed to the violence that exists, albeit in less pronounced fashion, elsewhere in south Jordan and, in some instances, in the country as a whole. Moreover, those underlying tensions that are unique to Maan are compounded by concerns shared more generally in the country. Problems of economic development, deficiencies in Jordan's local and national systems of political representation, law enforcement issues, anger about the ongoing conflict in the Palestinian territories and the Iraq crisis are matters that affect all Jordanians.

The events of late 2002 provide an apt illustration. Initial clashes were triggered by attempts to question

a local militant Islamist leader, Muhammad Shalabi (aka Abu Sayyaf), in the aftermath of the 28 October assassination in Amman of an American citizen, Laurence Foley of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID). This incident, in turn, fanned existing local resentment against the police and quickly developed into street fighting that was exacerbated by small armed criminal groups. The clashes were further fuelled by political disaffection related to broader national and regional issues, principally the situation in Iraq and the occupied Palestinian territories and restrictions on peaceful dissent.

Unless corrective action is taken, Maan's history suggests that its problems are likely to resurface in the form of extra-institutional protest and violence. But because Maan also is a place where regional and national cleavages converge and are magnified, the recent events are a timely, and indeed urgent, warning of the potential for broader dissatisfaction and unrest in the country as a whole should economic, social and political difficulties remain unaddressed.

- Jordan's ongoing political reforms should be deepened and accelerated in order to strengthen the ability of its citizens to participate in political decision-making, more effectively express their views and hold public authorities accountable.
- The country's various regions should enjoy a greater ability to participate in formulating local and national development programs. A key goal should be to establish more effective monitoring mechanisms that can identify economic and social disparities at their early stages and so facilitate the timely introduction of policies to reduce the marginalisation of provincial and rural areas.
- Although tribal, Islamic and other traditional conflict-resolution methods have an important role to play alongside the national civil and criminal legal codes, a consistent standard of law enforcement is needed throughout the country, particularly with regards to policies and methods that have generated hostility among Maanis and other Jordanians. Laws should be made internally consistent within the country and brought into line with international norms.
- It would also be useful for Jordan's public and private sectors to launch new training and education programs to enhance young Maanis'

employment skills and opportunities, and improve investment prospects in Maan and other provincial areas.

## II. THE EVENTS OF OCTOBER/ NOVEMBER 2002

Immediately after the 28 October 2002 assassination of Laurence Foley in Amman, the Jordanian police sought to question Mohammad Shalabi and other known militant Islamists whom it suspected of possessing information that could help apprehend the culprits. While returning from Amman to Maan on 29 October with his disabled wife, who had visited the capital for medical treatment, Shalabi's car stopped at a routine highway checkpoint at Qatrana, about 110 kilometres north of Maan. He was asked to follow the police to the nearby police station. According to Maani activists, Shalabi was hesitant to enter even temporary custody without a lawyer or fellow Maanis present, on account of previous experiences in police detention. Instead he fled to Maan, in the process running several roadblocks, exchanging fire with the police, and receiving a bullet wound in the shoulder. Contacting his followers in Maan by mobile telephone, he was met upon arrival and taken to his father's home.

Several of Shalabi's followers, incensed at his wounding, fired automatic weapons at the first police car they encountered, which turned out to be that of the recently-appointed Maan chief of police, who was not hurt.<sup>1</sup> Shalabi was taken for treatment to a government hospital in Maan. There, too, he avoided arrest as armed followers took control of the building, then returned him to his father's home, where he was protected by about 50 of his supporters. From unindicted militant whom the police sought merely to question, Shalabi became a wanted fugitive who had exchanged fire with officers and whose armed followers had attacked a police car and taken control of a public hospital.

On 6 November, the first day of Ramadan, Interior Minister Qaftan al-Majali, the director of public

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<sup>1</sup> One of those allegedly involved in this attack was Majdi Azzam, a colleague of Shalabi when both worked in the Ministry of Religious Affairs as *imams*, or Islamic clerics. Both were fired from their posts and sent to prison for a year due to political attacks against the king and government, which are proscribed by law.

security, the governor of Maan and other senior officials met with more than 100 Maani elders at an *iftar* meal (held to break the daytime fast) in the city. They sought to take custody of Shalabi and 48 others charged with criminal acts or wanted for questioning, and informed the elders that the government would not act for three days so that its demands could be achieved peacefully. Maani elders, some of whom previously had asked the government to clamp down on the criminality that plagued their town (thefts, shootings, intimidation), tried to convince Shalabi to turn himself in for questioning. He refused, invoking previous experiences in police custody during which he and his followers reportedly had been tortured.<sup>2</sup> He also argued that in the absence of formal charges, no one should be detained.

Fearful to spark a shoot-out, the elders chose to neither protect Shalabi's group nor compel them to surrender. At the conclusion of the grace period, the government was determined not to allow the defiance to persist. On 9 November, police moved into Maan to apprehend Shalabi and his followers, and shots were quickly exchanged.

From the outset, the government referred to Shalabi's men as a lawless gang of arms and drug smugglers, thieves and terrorists who tried to take the law into their own hands and sought to replace the Jordanian state with a militant Islamic theocracy.<sup>3</sup> It also said it had received complaints from Maani citizens and notables about harassment and violence throughout 2002, including attacks against dormitories and cars belonging to women students and staff at the local Hussein Bin Talal University.<sup>4</sup>

According to unidentified government officials, the police action aimed in part to round up known Islamist and other militants in order to pre-empt street demonstrations or violent protests during an anticipated Iraq war.<sup>5</sup> The government was also widely assumed to want to avoid further unrest

stemming from widespread anger at the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The many in Maan and among opposition groups who hold such views believe that the show of force was designed primarily to assert that the state would not tolerate any defiance of its authority or opposition to its domestic or regional policies;<sup>6</sup> some also suspect that the government was seeking to please the U.S. by demonstrating resolve against terrorism and determination "to teach us all a lesson about not demonstrating against any American attack against Iraq".<sup>7</sup>

Three days of clashes from 10 to 12 November were followed by a brief respite, during which the police started collecting weapons from residents, and the government declared Maan a "weapons-free zone". On 17 November another round of clashes broke out when a crowd of men, angered by reports that a policeman had killed a young man playing with firecrackers, left the mosque after evening prayers and attacked a local police station, killing an officer. Interior Ministry officials and the Governor of Maan contended that militants routinely used boys to provoke and attack the police with firecrackers, firebombs and explosives. Notably, this new round of violence was not directly related to the efforts to apprehend armed groups. Rather, it reflected – and exacerbated – pre-existing tensions between police and residents. From 9 November onwards, six people were killed (two policemen and four civilians), and many more injured.

The entire city was placed under curfew for five days. All road, telephone and radio communications with the rest of the country were severed, and media access was limited to representatives of the official state outlets. As locals and police continued to exchange fire, the government dispatched several thousand army and Special Forces troops to subdue militants and restore order. The escalating violence included automatic weapons fire at security forces, heavy-calibre fire at buildings from which militants had been shooting, the use of helicopters, and

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<sup>2</sup> ICG Interviews with Maani activists, National Forum leaders, and Jordanian university professors who have worked in Maan, November-December 2002.

<sup>3</sup> In statements to the press during the first days of the police operation in Maan, Information Minister Mohammad Adwan said, "the army operation will continue for as long as it takes to arrest the outlaws". Agence France-Presse, 12 November 2002.

<sup>4</sup> To this day, considerable disagreement and uncertainty surrounds the identity of those who perpetrated these acts.

<sup>5</sup> "Jordan city under siege seethes with tension," Suleiman al-Khalidi, Reuters, 22 November 2002.

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<sup>6</sup> See "Occupied Maan, Jordan's Closed Military Zone", by Jillian Schwedler, MERIP PIN 112, 3 December 2002, Washington D.C.; "The king is cleaning out the stables", Zvi Bar'el, *Ha'aretz*, 4 December 2002; and, "Globalism and the Attack on Civil Society in Jordan", Ibrahim Alloush, the Free Arab Voice ([www.freearabvoice.org/articles/GlobalismJordan.htm](http://www.freearabvoice.org/articles/GlobalismJordan.htm)).

<sup>7</sup> ICG interviews with Maani activists in Maan and National Forum leaders in Amman, 24 November, 18 December and 22 December, all 2002.

extensive house-to-house searches. The psychological and political, if not physical, toll was great.

The events aggravated the feeling among Maanis and other Jordanians that the government relied too heavily on security measures to resolve issues rooted in political, social and economic conditions. Maanis complained about the use of heavy-calibre ammunition (50 mm bullets), widespread forced entry into private homes, rough treatment of civilians on the streets, maintenance of an expanded security presence in the town (including armoured personnel carriers on main thoroughfares) for weeks after, and the continuing "siege" of Maan through checkpoints controlling movement into, out of and within the city.<sup>8</sup>

In Amman, the Islamic Action Front (the national Islamist organisation which is also Jordan's largest political party) established an *ad hoc*, opposition-based National Forum on Maan. On 11 November, it contacted Prime Minister Ali Abu al-Raghib and "offered him all our resources to help resolve the problem in Maan", stating that it was acting on the basis of three principles: no person or group can act above the law, any accused and wanted persons should face a civil trial, and no party should resort to violence.<sup>9</sup> The Prime Minister reportedly welcomed the approach and promised to contact the Forum after returning from Saudi Arabia. However, two days later he informed it that Maan was a security issue that could only be resolved through security means. Maan Governor Mohammad Breikat told the press: "The gang wanted to take the place of the state ... they created a state of fear where everything in the city became insecure. It reached a point at night where any security man became a target for them to shoot at any time or place".<sup>10</sup> Since then, the government has refused any mediation.

Maani notables expressed their anger by boycotting an *iftar* banquet hosted by King Abdallah II, while also sending several memos to the King and his government asking for a political resolution and reconciliation. Nevertheless, the Interior Ministry refused a National Forum delegation permission to pay condolences to the families of the dead civilians and policemen, informing the Forum that there was no problem in need of resolution but

rather a routine security operation to apprehend wanted and dangerous men.

The political standoff persists. A number of Shalabi's followers have been apprehended but several dozen others, including the three most wanted, escaped and are thought to be hiding somewhere in Jordan. The five-day military operation was noteworthy for many Jordanians in that, unlike the 1970-1971 conflict with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, it was home-grown, pitting security services against indigenous Transjordanians – or, as one of several prominent political leaders put it, against "the regime's oldest and strongest constituency".<sup>11</sup>

### III. MAAN'S LEGACY OF CLASHES

Hints of discord in Maan began to emerge in the mid-1980s. They included a demonstration by truck drivers during a visit by the late King Hussein, tensions related to local politics and a limited police raid designed to collect guns.<sup>12</sup> The first serious clashes with national implications, in April 1989, were sparked by a sudden increase in fuel prices that seriously eroded the incomes of local truck owners and drivers. When the government rejected their requests for a fee adjustment as compensation, the truckers prompted local residents and students to take to the streets. The ensuing clashes left sixteen dead and scores injured. (Shalabi, who then worked at a nearby military base, was briefly arrested). While the clashes deeply shocked the Jordanian people and leadership, they appear to have emboldened a number of Maanis, who believe that their actions helped launch the subsequent democratisation process and elections.

The confluence of local and national grievances was evident in subsequent incidents. In 1994, following a series of bombings in the country blamed on small bands of militants Islamists (some of whom were apprehended and tried in court), Shalabi and other militant Islamists were arrested. In August 1996, after a sudden increase in the price of bread, Maan saw further clashes that had started in Kerak and Tafileh and were put down by the armed forces. In February 1998, a young man was shot dead in Maan during

<sup>8</sup> ICG interviews with residents of Maan.

<sup>9</sup> ICG interview with National Forum leaders in Amman, 23 December 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Reuters news report, 22 November 2002.

<sup>11</sup> ICG interview with former government officials and notables in Amman and Maan, November-December 2002.

<sup>12</sup> ICG interview with the Minister of Interior, Amman, 26 December 2002.

demonstrations against Anglo-American bombing in Iraq. Shalabi was again arrested but was released in February 1999 under the amnesty decreed by King Abdullah II upon his accession. Demonstrations erupted again in November 2001, primarily to protest the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan.

In January 2002, some demonstrators expressed support for Osama Bin Laden while calling for release of a local man detained by the police for organising an unauthorised gathering in solidarity with the Palestinians. Tensions arising out of these incidents were exacerbated by developments related to Sulaiman al-Fanatsa, a sixteen-year-old student the police suspected of robbery (and, according to some Maanis, also of sympathising with Shalabi), who was cornered by residents on the roof of a low building. After leaping down, he sought the protection of a local tribal leader, who turned him over to the police, was questioned at a nearby police station, then taken to a hospital in Amman for urgent medical treatment where he died within a week.

According to the government, he died from kidney failure caused by his jump from the roof. Maanis widely believe that he died as a result of police torture. In a sign intended to demonstrate the existence of an unsettled account, the al-Fanatsa family initially refused to bury their son and demanded that the police investigate his death and punish anyone found responsible. When the government refused, armed men (followers of Shalabi, according to the Interior Ministry) attacked the police station and burned the governor's car. The family elders subsequently met with Interior Minister al-Majali and Jordan's Chief of Police, who persuaded them to bury the corpse.

Immediately following the burial, however, an angry crowd went to the local police station and, in the ensuing clash, set it ablaze. One policeman was killed and twelve others along with seven civilians were injured. The Interior Minister visited Maan and asked elders to take responsibility for clearing the streets of armed men and stone-throwing demonstrators so that the police could enter the city and restore order. The elders complied, and the police detained scores of men, some of whom later asserted that they were badly beaten in custody.

The recurring clashes were interpreted in widely different ways. For many Maanis, the violence was a legitimate reaction to illegitimate policies that

reinforced a self-perception of a daring and politically courageous town suffering from police brutality. To the authorities, it was intolerable lawlessness and defiance of authority in the face of which the police showed restraint.<sup>13</sup>

The intensity of the November 2002 clashes is, in part, a legacy of these events and in particular of the January 2002 incidents, which intensified the authorities' concern regarding armed local groups but also generated widespread local hostility to the police and radicalised elements of the community. Dramatising wider criticisms of police strategies in Maan since 1998, Shalabi and his followers vowed at that time never again to allow themselves to be held in police custody, reportedly stating they preferred death.<sup>14</sup>

#### **IV. CONTEXT AND CAUSES OF UNREST IN MAAN**

##### **A. POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DECLINE**

Maan's history also helps explain the recurrent clashes. It is only relatively recently that the town has come to be portrayed routinely as a poor, isolated and lawless fringe community living off smuggling.

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<sup>13</sup> In particular, the authorities claim that most bullets removed from the bodies of civilian dead were not of the type used by the police. ICG interviews in Amman with the Minister of Interior, 26 December 2002, and in Maan with the Governor of Maan, 18 December 2002.

<sup>14</sup> ICG interviews with local leaders, merchants, and activists in Amman and Maan, 24 November 2002 and 17-18 December 2002. Many Maanis objected to the decision to deploy the police widely throughout the town, to police's behaviour during the detention and questioning of suspects, and to the tendency to open fire quickly in the city, search homes extensively and keep armoured personnel carriers on city streets weeks after the violence had ended. That said, and although ill-feeling towards the police is widespread in Maan, it is a narrowly focused and recent phenomenon and does not appear to reflect wider antagonism toward the security services and armed forces. The latter seem to be held in high esteem, and attract many recruits from Maan. When, for example, the army began recruiting in Maan Governorate in mid-December 2002, several thousand young men sought to join. By contrast, Maanis and others who have studied the region routinely report far less enthusiasm for joining the police.

Maanis resent that characterisation and see their history quite differently.<sup>15</sup>

Until the early twentieth century, Maan was largely identified with the northern Hijaz (the north-western region of contemporary Saudi Arabia), and derived its status primarily from its role as a major oasis, rest station and transit point on the *hajj* (pilgrimage) route between Damascus and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. It lived from trade and by servicing the pilgrimage and commercial traffic that passed through. An Ottoman garrison and construction of the Hijaz Railway in the early twentieth century further strengthened Maan's role, security and status. Migrants from Syria, Turkey, and the Arabian Peninsula spawned a small town that boasted, among other things, Jordan's first medical clinic.

Settled Muslim and Christian trading families formed the core of its urban population, and since that time its leading families have been categorised as *Hijaziyyeh* (Hijazi) or *Shamiyyeh* (Syrian). The townsfolk differed culturally from the tribal and more traditional Bedouin of the surrounding regions, but the two populations enjoyed good relations due to their symbiotic economic relationship and the town's aura as a gateway for Muslim pilgrims.

Recognising Maan's importance as a regional centre, the Hashemite Emir Abdullah (modern Jordan's first ruler) settled there when he entered the territory at the conclusion of the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during World War I. He remained for three months in 1920-1921, a period that still generates great pride among Maanis who call their town "Jordan's first capital" and harbour strong feelings of loyalty to the Hashemite throne.

In fact, Maan and the South were not included in the Emirate of Transjordan when it was established in 1921, and were only joined to it in 1925. The Emirate and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which

succeeded it in 1946, generated new sources of income for Maan, which became the communications hub and centre of state administration in the South (serving Petra, Shobak, Aqaba and other towns). It benefited greatly after the 1960s from the Desert Highway that passed through it and development of the port of Aqaba on the Red Sea. Maanis took advantage of many new job opportunities throughout the South, including government service, Aqaba's port, the Hijaz Railway, tourism, truck transport and various mineral industries. Transit truck traffic to and from Iraq after the mid-1970s provided a temporary, but significant economic boost. Thus, Maan's population enjoyed sustained improvements in basic services, job opportunities and income for most of the century – until the 1980s.

Maan's troubles followed an unusual convergence of local and national trends that resulted in the simultaneous deterioration or collapse of virtually all the pillars of its economic vitality. In the decade after 1982, the Desert Highway was re-routed so that it bypassed the city, the pilgrims' rest station was moved outside it, the Hijaz Railway lost its passenger traffic and was privatised, and Aqaba and Petra were administratively detached. Furthermore, the government drastically lowered the permissible load limit per truck in order to put an end to the repeated collapse of sections of the Aqaba-Amman highway, fuel prices increased sharply, and traffic volume dropped precipitously after the 1991 Gulf War, all of which led to a steep drop in income deriving from transit traffic with Iraq.<sup>16</sup>

The post-1986 recession in the Middle East, combined with the structural adjustment program Jordan began in 1988, severely affected the economic prospects of young, educated men and women throughout the country, and especially in rural and provincial areas like Maan where there were few new investments and even fewer new jobs. Government subsidies decreased, living costs rose, income levels declined and poverty and unemployment increased throughout the country.

Maan was hit harder than other towns since its economy was dominated by the public sector and

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<sup>15</sup> ICG is indebted to Yarmouk University Anthropology Professor Dr Mohammad Tarawneh for much of the information in this section. Data sources for the section also include: Hussein Bin Talal University 2000 *Survey of Maan Governorate*, Maan, Jordan, 2002; *Household Expenditure and Income Survey*, Department of Statistics, Amman, 1999; Jordan Department of Statistics Annual Yearbooks for 1998 and 1999; *Jordan Human Development Report 2000*, Ministry of Planning and UNDP, Amman, 2001; *Living Conditions in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, FAFO report 253, Jon Hanssen-Bauer, Jon Pedersen, and Age A. Tiltnes (eds.), Oslo, Norway, 1998.

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<sup>16</sup> With around 1,000 trucks owned and operated by Maanis, an average of some seven people per family, and an average income of some JD 1,000 [approx. U.S.\$1400] per truckload to and from Iraq, the decline in the trucking sector immediately and severely hurt the living standards of thousands of Maanis.

transit trade that was not anchored in local economic enterprises, and the growing number of poor had no alternative sources of income. Extremely limited local private economic activity meant that in contrast to towns such as Aqaba or Amman, unemployed young men could not find work in the informal sector (the “black economy”). Even desperate activities like children selling chewing gum in the street or begging were not available, mainly due to the social stigma in an insular society where all families know one another.

The concentration of the local labour force in a handful of major industries (trucking, port, railway, minerals) meant that the recession’s impact was felt rapidly. The late 1980s also widened the gap between the region’s two very different demographic groups. Trade-oriented, family-based city dwellers were unable to stop their gradual slide towards economic and political marginalisation; rural Bedouin were able to activate tribal solidarity and self-reliance mechanisms while enjoying superior ability to tap the resources of the central state.

Today, Maan (along with south Jordan) consistently ranks at the bottom of the national list in terms of most basic indicators. The 2000 Jordan Human Development Report shows Maan last among twelve governorates in its human development index. Average annual household income is roughly 20 per cent below the national average. The unemployment rate in 2000 was 19.2 per cent, compared to 14.7 per cent for the country as a whole and reached 40 per cent and 52 per cent among young men and women respectively. The illiteracy rate (19 per cent; 25 per cent among women) is the highest in the country and double Amman’s. Nearly half (46 per cent) of surveyed households in the governorate report that monthly expenditures exceed income. Moreover, Maan’s average household size – 7.64 persons compared to six nationally – and polygamy rates of 9.5 per cent in Maan town and 11 per cent in the governorate (the highest in the country) mean that head of household income must support more individuals.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Other indicators are equally disturbing. The infant mortality rate of 42 per 1,000 births is considerably higher than the national average (32). The southern region of Jordan as a whole has the nation’s highest infant and child mortality rate as well as the highest rate of malnourished children aged twelve to 59 months (over 12 per cent). Some one-third of the inhabitants of the city of Maan have no health insurance.

Throughout Jordan, the triple pressures of poverty, low income and unemployment have resulted in a relatively large percentage of the population living just above or below the poverty line, with little leeway in the family budget. The attendant political tensions are especially high in places like Maan, where job prospects are weak due to low private sector investment and the absence of an informal economy. This generates the strongest fears among young men, who are a large proportion of Maan’s population. Young Maanis – and 61 per cent of the population are under eighteen – feel not only socially and economically disadvantaged but also politically discriminated against by their own government and compatriots.<sup>18</sup>

Within a relatively short period, the city’s dwindling status helped develop a new, negative self-image. For the most part, residents felt physically, politically, socially and economically cut off from mainstream Jordanian life and powerless to change matters – in a word, superfluous.

Maan’s rapid socio-economic deterioration and its impact on the population’s self-image are critical factors. For Maanis, who tend to identify solidarity and courage as their most important values,<sup>19</sup> the

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Only 5.5 per cent of households in the governorate have a computer and 13 per cent own a satellite television. Data sources: Hussein Bin Talal University 2000 *Survey of Maan Governorate*, Maan, Jordan, 2002; *Household Expenditure and Income Survey*, Department of Statistics, Amman, 1999; Jordan Department of Statistics Annual Yearbooks for 1998 and 1999; *Jordan Human Development Report 2000*, Ministry of Planning and UNDP, Amman, 2001; *Living Conditions in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, FAFO report 253, Jon Hanssen-Bauer, Jon Pedersen, and Age A. Tiltnes (eds.), Oslo, Norway, 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Dr. Adel Tweisi, President of Maan’s Hussein Bin Talal University, concludes his analysis of the 2000 survey by stating that “the roots of the tensions and troubles in Maan are social and economic and ultimately reflect weak developmental efforts and achievements, which is exploited by members or groups in the community to instigate the people of the city to challenge the government”. ICG interview in Maan, December 18, 2002. Directors of a local cultural club also interviewed by ICG on that date pointed out that while young men, in particular, felt vulnerable and voiceless, they used the few mechanisms at their disposal (such as public discussions, lectures, and cultural performances) to express their concerns about employment, income, and the political system.

<sup>19</sup> ICG interviews with scholars, Maanis, and other Jordanians, November-December 2002. Also, see various essays in *Muhafazat Maan..Afaq Al Tanmiya wal Tahdeeth (Maan Governorate: Horizons of Development and Modernization)*,

negative self-perception came at considerable cost. By contrast, the eruption of protest and violence served to revive a local sense of self-worth. In fact, within the South and Jordan as a whole, some have started to view Maan as a political symbol: “the courageous people of Maan who are not afraid to challenge the state” in the words of one former senior government official.<sup>20</sup> This sentiment was echoed by a Maani activist who explained that with every new incident of violent protest, residents enhance their self-perception as the most politically courageous Jordanians: “In the past two decades most Jordanians have become afraid of the state and its security forces – except for the Maanis”.<sup>21</sup>

## B. MAAN’S “SPECIAL STATUS”<sup>22</sup>

Traditionally, Maan has been seen and treated differently from the rest of Jordan, a place that could play by its own rules. Socially and culturally, it is unique for being a relatively insular society that has received few immigrants or refugees from other parts of the country or even from its own region. A survey conducted by Hussein Bin Talal University in 2000 showed that 60 per cent of marriages in the governorate are among cousins.

Again, the gap in perceptions is striking. For Jordanians from other areas who work on local development projects, the strict and often rigid social values of Maan are evident and lessen the feasibility of such projects. The university survey documented a very limited NGO sector, few opportunities for volunteer work and a lack of public awareness and advocacy campaigns aimed at promoting modern values among the population.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast, Maanis take pride in their traditions while denying that they are hostile to modernity. They note that 80 per cent of students at the university are women, and 40 per cent are from within Maan Governorate. Local cultural leaders

also note rising female participation in public events, such as lectures and the arts. As one leading Maani notable explained with some exasperation: “We are not against modernity or girls in the university. We are simply angry at having all our problems here blamed on Maan’s social values”.<sup>24</sup>

This discrepancy in both reality and perception is one reason why outsiders who have sought to promote grass-roots development projects (such as micro-finance schemes) have rarely succeeded.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, Maan belongs to two cultural and political worlds: Arabia and Jordan. Families from Maan still live in the northern Saudi Arabian city of Tabuk, pastoralists routinely cross the frontier, and small-scale smuggling takes place under the permissive watch of authorities in both countries. Some south Jordanian tribal sheikhs and notables received cash support from Saudi Arabia into the 1970s. During the first clashes in 1989, some Maanis taunted the authorities by flying Saudi flags.<sup>26</sup> For their part, the authorities in Amman have consistently “appeased” the town’s residents by allowing them special privileges, such as the use of Saudi license plates to avoid paying Jordan’s high customs duties.<sup>27</sup>

The possession of weapons is another distinguishing characteristic of Maan and the South. As in Yemen, Oman and similar regions, arms customarily ensured security when state authority fell short. The advent of the modern kingdom of Jordan with its security system did not significantly change this tradition in the Maan region, whose residents routinely carried firearms.<sup>28</sup> However, the state’s relaxed attitude to

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Hussein Bin Talal University and Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Center, Amman, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> ICG interview in Amman, 25 November 2002.

<sup>21</sup> ICG interview in Amman, 27 November 2002.

<sup>22</sup> A term used by a former prime minister of Jordan to describe the town, ICG interview, Amman, 16 December 2002.

<sup>23</sup> “Socio-Economic Conditions of Families in Ma’an Governorate: Results of the 2000 Social and Economic Survey”, Hussein Bin Talal University, Maan, 2001 (in Arabic).

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<sup>24</sup> ICG interview in Maan, 18 December 2002.

<sup>25</sup> ICG interviews in Amman with economists, sociologists, and social science analysts who have worked in Maan and the South.

<sup>26</sup> This widely reported incident was confirmed in several ICG interviews with former senior officials of the palace and the government.

<sup>27</sup> Government and palace officials consistently use the word “appeasement” to describe the traditional policy of the state towards the residents of Maan town and governorate. The importance of the Saudi link is clear, but often overstated. The central role of religion in Maan’s lifestyle and value system is less a function of Saudi influence than of the city’s traditional position as the pilgrims’ gateway to Mecca, its closed social system and the lack of alternative social or cultural outlets. Thus, when Mohammad Shalabi invoked religion to appeal to disenchanting and alienated young men, he was building on local sentiment rather than imposing on it.

<sup>28</sup> One of the most contentious issues in the recent conflicting explanations about what happened in Maan involved an “arms



the local arms culture resulted in conflicting understandings of the larger issues of the law and its enforcement.

The government and police often allowed Maanis to resolve local disputes according to local traditions and gave family elders custody of detained men instead of sending them to court or prison. They sometimes asked elders to deter or control disruptive local elements, which they usually were willing and able to do.<sup>29</sup> This approach maintained security for decades but problems emerged in the 1990s when small armed groups began to interpret and enforce the law as they saw fit, using their own traditions and weapons and disregarding the state's laws, courts and police.

In fact, Maan has become a town defined by multiple and overlapping law-enforcement systems including tribal, religious and state laws, the informal "law" of long-tolerated, low-intensity criminal activity, and the "law" enforced by one's own guns and bravado. As one former senior government minister put it: "For many years in Maan, the law has been what you make it, and what you can do".<sup>30</sup>

Government officials concede that in recent years parts of Maan effectively became "no-go areas" for the police, notably the low-income et-Tor area.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the recent confrontations saw citizens and authorities alike complain about unequal application of or respect for the law. This is one negative consequence of allowing Maan to operate under the dual systems of tribal and national law, and of turning a blind eye to smuggling and unlicensed gun ownership in the South. Maanis are also confused and upset that the local police suddenly replaced their relaxed methods of law enforcement with a massive military deployment that has included

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factory" discovered by the police during their sweep of the city and prominently shown on television. Citizens interviewed in Maan and Amman contend that it was a gun repair shop that had been licensed by the government for many years but was closed when business slowed down and was then moved to the owner's home. The very fact that Maan had licensed private sector gun repair shops reflects the widespread presence of personal arms in the city and region.

<sup>29</sup> One of the recurring themes from interviews with all concerned parties in Maan is the consistent willingness of the security forces and town elders to work together to enforce the law, which augurs well for finding a resolution to current tensions.

<sup>30</sup> ICG interview, Amman, 23 November 2002.

<sup>31</sup> ICG interviews with Ministry of Interior officials, Amman and Maan, 18 December and 26 December 2002.

searches of homes and shops and strict application of laws that had never previously been applied.<sup>32</sup>

Given Maan's special status, when some of its angry young men took action in recent years they did so in a very different way from the rest of the country, provoking both puzzlement and concern on the part of the authorities. They "feel alienated from the government in Amman and from the rest of the country, and they don't seem to belong to the norm of the rest of Jordan," one senior government official said privately. "We know that, but we don't know if this is a result of poor policies, their own attitudes and values or a lack of political institutions that could provide a stronger link between the people and the government".<sup>33</sup>

Most Jordanian analysts and officials interviewed by ICG agree, however, that an important cause of the recent violence was the official policy of treating Maan differently from the rest of the country, whether by "appeasing" it through economic inducements and lax application of the law, or "punishing" it by repeated use of military force to quell demonstrations. If the legacy of violence is to end, a crucial step would seem to be the application of uniform political, economic, judicial, and security policies throughout the country.

### C. MAAN AND NATIONAL GOVERNANCE

The events that shook Maan raise several political questions about Jordan's system of governance: questions of popular participation, of the adequacy of existing institutional mechanisms of representation and of the state's responsiveness to local discontent. They also raise the question of what

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<sup>32</sup> A recurring Maani complaint these days is about their perplexed irritation with the sudden police decision to introduce strict enforcement of the law requiring passengers in the front seats of cars to wear safety belts. Many Maanis see this as a "provocative" move by the government to assert its authority in a heavy-handed and humiliating way. Several Jordanian academics who have worked in Maan and analysed the results of the 2000 university survey recognised the major dilemma that multiple levels of law enforcement presents. One professor at Hussein Bin Talal University in Maan concluded that "occasional lax and inconsistent enforcement of the law in Maan by the police was one reason for the decline in local residents' respect for the state and its authority". ICG interviews with university professors in Maan and Amman, 22 November 2002 and 19 December 2002.

<sup>33</sup> ICG interview, Amman, December 2002.

the government should do when limits have been transgressed and anger turns into violent protest.

By and large, the national political system failed to address the social, political and economic tensions that began to emerge in Maan in the 1980s. One important lesson from this period is that while Amman was consistently receiving information about the frustration in Maan and the South through official survey data, it did not act proactively on it. Small, even symbolic, actions at an early stage might well have defused mounting tension, thus providing the time and political space to craft longer-term solutions.

With weak political leadership, however, Maanis were unable to communicate effectively, and the central government was unable to respond. At the local level, increasingly bitter feuds between leading families ended the informal arrangements that, until the mid-1980s, had apportioned power within the municipal council and representation in the national parliament. At the national level, newly-installed prime ministers cultivated Maani leaders who had migrated to Amman as a means of countering the influence of leaders from Maan who had been allied with previous prime ministers. As a result, Maan's local and national political leadership lost both its continuity and its credibility, leaving it unable to mediate.

Cut off from their constituency, prominent Maanis in parliament, government and the security forces failed to convey to the national leadership the sense of exclusion and disempowerment shared by many of their fellow townspeople, and the local leadership was equally ineffective in transmitting popular concerns. When crisis struck, no influential actor was able to communicate simultaneously with the central government and the local population. According to an unpublished analysis by Hussein Bin Talal University, a conviction prevalent among Maanis that they did not get their fair share of senior and mid-level government posts further heightened their sense of being discriminated against.

As one former prime minister noted candidly:

Maan's situation represents a failure of the Jordanian political elite, because most government policies in Amman have been formulated by people who do not know the local realities in Maan and other parts of the South. The cabinet does not feel the pressure to act because the ministers all represent themselves rather than organised political

forces that could bring pressure on the government to achieve better results.<sup>34</sup>

Jordanians disagree on why the modern parliamentary system has failed to play an effective mediating role in this regard, but a number of reasons are commonly cited. These include the concentration of power in the hands of the monarchy and the executive branch to the detriment of political parties and the legislative branch (a power imbalance exemplified most explicitly by the repeated promulgation of temporary laws in the absence of a sitting parliament); the predominance of the tribal system as a means of determining power relationships within society; a skewed representation within the parliament itself (principally due to electoral districting configurations that provide disproportional weight to provincial and rural areas); and the part-time nature of a parliament that furthermore lacks independent research and investigative capabilities.

The inadequacy of official, formal mechanisms of representation (local government, parliament, the state bureaucracy), was compounded by the deficiencies of more informal channels that might have helped address the burgeoning problems (civil society, political parties, local leadership, the mass media, academic centres and religious institutions).<sup>35</sup> One result was the advent of a small group of armed Islamist militants in Maan in the late 1990s, a phenomenon that contrasts sharply with the rest of the country.

The growth of Islamist activism is by no means peculiar to Maan, but for much of the country it has taken the form of non-violent, institutional politics. The Islamic Action Front, Jordan's largest political grouping, plays by the modern state's rules: it contests local and national elections, sits in parliament and municipal councils, accepts cabinet posts and works to achieve its goals through traditional consensus-building. Nationally, the Islamists accepted the king's challenge to promote development by working through state and civil society institutions. Even their decision in 1997 to boycott parliamentary elections because they felt the government had manipulated the electoral law involved no extra-institutional protest or violence.

The angry young men of Maan, by contrast, never bought into any of this. They perceived

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<sup>34</sup> ICG interview, Amman, 16 December 2002.

<sup>35</sup> ICG interviews in Amman, 24 November 2002.

the rhetoric of democratic, transparent, accountable governance as “the language of a foreign country or distant planet”.<sup>36</sup> Cooptation of local Maani leaders was regarded as evidence of both the state’s and the local leaders’ moral and political duplicity. Angry Maanis felt no obligations to the state they believed ignored them, including to its local symbols such as the university, hospital, courts, customs and police. In the initial April 1989 demonstrations, some threw eggs and tomatoes at the cars of senior officials – a shocking, unprecedented show of defiance toward the state in contemporary Jordan.

The violence of April 1989 stunned King Hussein and the Hashemite leadership. The monarch instinctively recognised that while economics (a fuel price increase) had triggered the violence, the basic complaints were about political issues such as corruption, autocratic governance, abuse of authority and the periphery’s sense of abandonment. He responded with a liberalisation that included lifting martial law, legalising political parties (banned since 1956), reinstating parliament (suspended since 1967), removing most state controls from the press and holding elections that autumn. Some Maanis subsequently took credit for instigating this democratisation but they also felt especially bitter that they had not shared adequately in its fruits. And they felt that the state responded only after they turned to violence.

## V. THE PHENOMENON OF MUHAMMAD SHALABI (ABU SAYYAF)

Maan’s trajectory of steady decline in the 1980s and 1990s, within a context that offered no remedies or alternatives, generated widespread feelings of vulnerability and quiet shame and pushed some young men to the only place available for them to congregate and discuss their plight: the local mosque. During the late 1990s, a few young men fell under the influence of people like Muhammad Shalabi, commonly known as Abu Sayyaf.

Shalabi’s reputation and impact are fiercely disputed. To the state, he is a dangerous gangster, who defies the law of the land, terrorises his

community and opportunistically exploits religion. It sees him as using links with smugglers and terrorists to promote chaos, overthrow the government and establish Islamic rule.

Maanis have a decidedly more mixed view. Initially, few considered his group a serious threat, despite its extreme ideology and public displays of militancy. To most, he was a political firebrand who used the language and appeal of religion; a leader of one of several local groups that carried and occasionally used weapons; a slightly eccentric local extremist who talked big and displayed bravado but was also a devoted man of faith who tried to help the poor.<sup>37</sup> The local population referred to Shalabi and his group by several different names, including Salafis, Muslim Brothers, *usuliyyin* (“fundamentalists”), and *al-ahbab* (from *ahbab Allah*, or “the ones whom God loves”). Some of the militants call themselves *al-mukhlisin*, meaning people of loyalty and integrity, who act to redeem their society.

In Maan such groups are broadly seen as composed of pious individuals who work to help the needy, reflect local community concerns and uphold local rights and dignity. That they are armed is not unusual for the South, their use of religious rhetoric is in line with local values, and their defiance of the state reflects a general sense of offended dignity among ordinary people.

A member of the prominent Khattab family, Shalabi followed in his father’s footsteps and joined the military instead of completing high school. He served at the air force base east of Maan during the 1989 clashes, when his outspoken reputation caused him to be briefly detained and questioned but then released without charge. During this time, he came under the influence of charismatic Salafi Islamist figures in Amman and eventually left the air force to become a cleric (*imam*) in the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. Shalabi was dismissed when his fiery preaching became increasingly strident and critical of the government and sovereign.

The appeal of Shalabi’s militant religious message, defined by the twin themes of victimisation and self-assertion, was enhanced in his close-knit native community by his personal credibility as a member of a leading local family. Yet, he attracted only a handful of followers. Maanis overwhelmingly

<sup>36</sup> ICG interviews with Maani political activists in Amman and Maan, 15 November and 28 December 2002.

<sup>37</sup> ICG interviews with officials, private citizens, and scholars in Maan and Amman, November-December 2002.

rejected his argument that, in response to state policies that impoverished the town, they had no option but to arm in order to protect themselves and their families.

Shalabi's initial organisation had the form of a marginal sect but by 1996-1997 the government was keeping an eye on him and other young militants who were tapping into local frustrations. However, due to Maan's "special status", Shalabi's men were permitted to operate relatively openly as long as they did not engage in violence. They were occasionally detained and questioned by the police but were usually quickly released to family custody. His small, isolated movement of several dozen followers in Maan reflected the militant "jihadi" Islamism that emerged from the Afghani experience, and was quite distinct from the mainstream Jordanian Islamists represented in the political arena by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Action Front.

After the 1998 clashes in Maan, the state increasingly viewed Shalabi's group as a violent threat. By 2001-2002, Shalabi was branding government officials and others as apostates, whose killing, accordingly, was religiously permissible. His followers asserted their militancy by publicly displaying weapons and, allegedly, attacking what they considered symbols of religious apostasy (such as the university residences of single women) and state oppression (police posts). Some press reports and political analysts have suggested there may be links between Shalabi and the *Takfir wal Hijra* movement in Egypt, which advocates the revolutionary overthrow of the government in order to create an Islamic state (and, to this end, assassinated President Anwar Sadat and initiated a failed uprising in 1981).<sup>38</sup>

A series of violent incidents in mid-2002 marked a turning point. In June a local smuggler, Majed Fawaz Sharari, led an armed raid against the Maan customs post to retrieve a car and guns that the authorities had seized. The government asked local notables to deliver Sharari to the police, which they promptly did, but during the trial an armed group attacked the courtroom and freed him. In August, north of Maan, the police chased and apprehended a car driven by a known local arms smuggler and dealer, Khamis Abu Darwish, who was found in possession of weapons including rocket-propelled grenades, machine-guns and explosives. Officials saw these as proof of a

formal alliance between Shalabi and other armed groups and local weapons dealers and smugglers. The state security services concluded that they had to act.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the government accused local armed gangs of operating with Shalabi's men, and charged that Shalabi carefully recruited from Maan's major tribes and families to ensure local solidarity and protection.

While others continued to maintain that Shalabi's movement was a distinct political-religious phenomenon operating separately from – and for different reasons than – local criminal gangs, the October 2002 assassination of Laurence Foley rendered such distinctions irrelevant. At that point, and given the wider context (the war against terrorism and the prospect of a war against Iraq in particular), the government felt it no longer could tolerate pockets of lawlessness anywhere in Jordan, lest they develop links with regional or global terror rings. In November, security forces entered Maan in strength to arrest Shalabi and halt the activities of such groups.

Shalabi's ideological motives and goals remain a subject of wide debate but as one government minister said privately, "it is clear that Shalabi has been able to harness the social fabric of Maan to his own cause and interests".<sup>40</sup>

## VI. CONCLUSION

Just as the 1989 disturbances began as economic protest and turned political, so too the November 2002 troubles migrated from the issue of Shalabi's arrest to the wider tensions pitting government and police against many Maanis and national opposition groups.

Unemployment, poverty, political frustration, social conservatism and a sense of political marginalisation initially fostered a small, radical movement of militant Islamism in Maan and, since 1989, has resulted in recurring political violence. Elsewhere in the country, though subjected to many roughly similar factors, Jordanians resorted to – or took refuge in – quite different forms of activity such as tribalism, corruption, crime, drugs, political and civil society activism or mainstream Islamism. The explanation for the difference that immediately

<sup>38</sup> Such analysts also say they discern support for Osama bin Laden among Shalabi's followers.

<sup>39</sup> ICG interviews in Maan and Amman, December 2002.

<sup>40</sup> ICG interview in Amman, 25 November 2002.

suggests itself has to do with Maan's special status and distinctive history.

The town's mix of Islamist militancy and defiance of the central government does reflect a unique convergence of volatile home-grown and national factors sparked by specific local incidents. Nowhere else has there been the same devastating combination of a sharp reversal of a traditional regional role; sustained economic distress; weak political leadership; negligible civil society and private sector investments; isolation from the national mainstream; a culture of arms possession; inconsistent law enforcement policies; and repeated interventions by the police and security forces which many among the local population see as unwarranted punishment, harassment and humiliation.

Viewed in this light, the events in Maan – unique, localised and affecting relatively few people – may not seem particularly important beyond the governorate. But this interpretation may well be misleading. Jordan's most urgent area of concern is the South, where, with the exception of Aqaba – and unlike the rest of the country – negativity and cynicism are widespread.<sup>41</sup> To many in south Jordan, the future holds little hope for either them or their children.

But the lessons in Maan's story hold for more than the South. The confrontations in the town have been localised events, to be sure, but by and large they have dealt with national issues – inadequate popular participation, political representation and government responsiveness; economic distress in the face of rapid change and dislocation; uneven law enforcement and arbitrary security tactics; and anger at developments in the occupied Palestinian territories and Iraq.

Most experts agree that the small group of armed Islamists that emerged in Maan is unlikely to be replicated elsewhere in the country. But since 1989, Maan has served as a warning sign, an indicator that socio-economic tensions and deficiencies in the political system can breed extremism, lawlessness, rebellion and violence. As one Jordanian analyst explained:

We can see echoes of the Maan issues beneath the surface throughout the country, and also in

other parts of the Middle East. Security must be restored, but security can only be a temporary measure. The long-term solutions must address the underlying political, social, and economic issues.<sup>42</sup>

Nor can the effect of the state's reactions to events in Maan be confined to that locality. As a Jordanian social scientist put it, "if the government over-reacts militarily in one incident it can plant the seeds for future outbursts, in the same place or in other parts of the country". Similarly, if the state under-reacts to local lawlessness, it could unwittingly promote similar problems in other parts of the country.<sup>43</sup>

The primacy of safeguarding security and of respect for the rule of law was emphasised by every Jordanian citizen and official alike whom ICG interviewed. This consensus offers a useful basis from which to seek solutions to both Maan's short-term violence and longer-term socio-economic problems. The main challenges fall into three broad categories:

- *Strengthening the democratic political system.* Maan's predicament since 1989 has evolved from socio-economic complaints to explicitly political grievances. The key appears to be to deepen formal and informal channels of communication, representation and accountability. Jordanians interviewed by ICG unanimously agreed that a more responsive full-time parliamentary system could have avoided several key problems that emerged in Maan and the South by providing a legitimate, institutionalised channel through which concerns could be expressed and remedies negotiated. Elected MPs could act as credible mediators and intermediaries to prevent and resolve crises. Political tensions also could be further reduced by making it easier for citizens to express political views, including by granting them wider and more equitable access to the media.

Because policy decisions taken at the centre in Amman impact peripheral regions, a more consultative approach would be likely to minimise negative impacts on provincial and rural regions and maximise local cooperation. If anything, the last fourteen years in Maan have underscored the need for more effective mechanisms to identify emerging

<sup>41</sup> ICG interviews in Amman and Maan, 27 November 2002 and 19 December 2002.

<sup>42</sup> ICG interview in Amman, 25 November 2002.

<sup>43</sup> ICG interview in Amman, 27 November 2002.

needs and disparities and seek appropriate remedial action at an early stage – through the parliament, political parties and local government, of course, but also the media, academic institutions and civil society more broadly.

- *Applying a single, consistent standard of law throughout the kingdom.* The events in Maan highlight the tension between overlapping systems of law – the central system, with its civil-law base for maintaining public order and more traditional, tribal mechanisms of conflict resolution. To address this, it would be desirable to modernise and standardise law enforcement and, in particular, involve all regions in formulating and implementing programs to this end. Since 1998 police conduct during law enforcement operations in Maan has emerged as a primary source of tension that, combined with the tendency among some residents to use firearms against the police, has fuelled a cycle of political troubles that now overrides the town's underlying socio-economic problems.<sup>44</sup>

A related, disturbing trend recognised by local security officials and citizens alike is the negative attitude to the police that has developed among children.<sup>45</sup> If not addressed, this, too, could mushroom into an issue with national implications. A fresh approach to citizen-police relations that includes public education programs, sensitivity training, and joint councils, or ombudsman-type mechanisms to examine routine complaints would be beneficial

- *Undertaking new socio-economic development programs.* In the longer run, improved economic prospects will be critical. Appropriate responses might include intensive job-training and skills-building efforts to enhance young Maanis' technical and administrative capabilities, coupled with serious efforts to expand private sector investment. A priority should be steps to broaden opportunities and offer new social outlets for young people, for example by

developing local tourism, encouraging volunteer programs, and building cultural and sports facilities.

Addressing the challenges presented in Maan exclusively through security means would be a recipe for further trouble and for deepening the alienation and distrust that have developed over the years. The underlying causes of the recent political and criminal violence remain, with the ever-present risk that it could erupt yet again, for the fifth time since 1989. Maan has become something of a litmus test for Jordan – a test of governmental policies, national institutions, the private sector and civil society. There has been a collective failure of all four to date, and time is running short.

**Amman/Brussels, 19 February 2003**

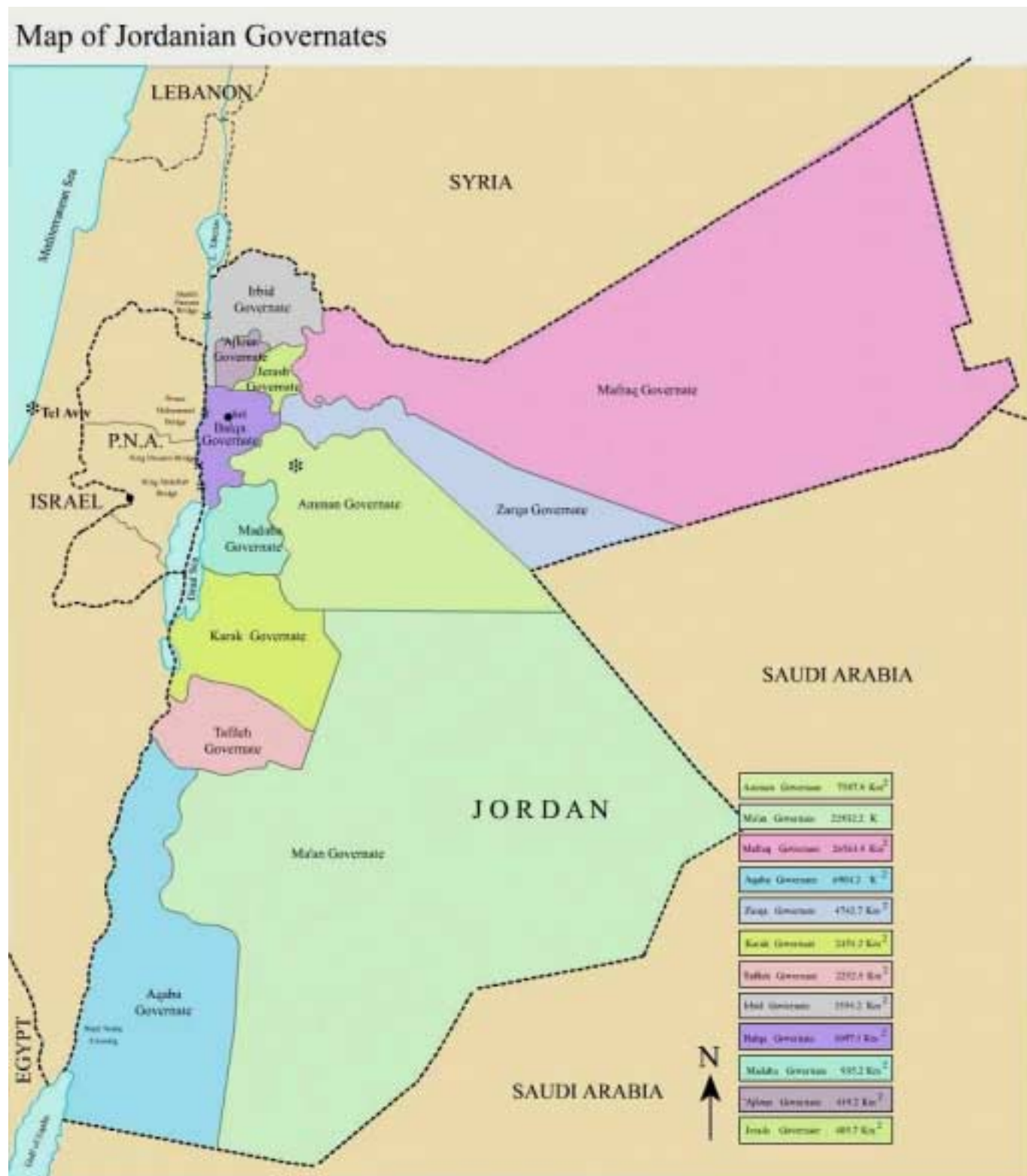
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<sup>44</sup> In ICG interviews with a wide range of citizens in Maan, their prevalent demand was for the government to withdraw immediately the additional troops and armoured personnel carriers that were stationed in the city and remove the new checkpoints around the city, in order to launch a process of reconciliation.

<sup>45</sup> Local activists in education and cultural affairs also say that increasing numbers of children in Maan show signs of rebelliousness against parents and teachers.

## APPENDIX

### MAP OF JORDAN



Source: King Hussein Website



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