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“SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN JORDAN”

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**Pilot Project for the Promotion of Social Dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean
Neighbourhood**

“Social Dialogue in Jordan”

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1. Introduction

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines social dialogue “to include all types of negotiation, consultation, or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. It is an instrument, a tool of good governance in various areas and its relevance is not just related to the process of globalization but in general to any effort to make the economy more performing and more competitive and to make society in general more stable and more equitable.”¹As such, it is one of the four pillars of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda.

At the same time, however, social dialogue is the only of the four pillars not explicitly enshrined in the eighth of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (SDGs), pertaining to Decent Work, seeing as it is widely understood to be an indispensable element of any strategy aimed at building a more just, equitable and inclusive society, through the promotion of “appropriately designed wage policies, including minimum wages; collective bargaining; labour inspection (...); strong employment services; unemployment benefits with strong links to social protection programs; targeted measures to increase labour market participation of women and under-represented groups; as well as, measures to help low-income households to escape poverty and access freely chosen employment.”² In that capacity, the importance of social dialogue extends to other SDGs, such as the eradication of poverty, the reduction of socioeconomic inequalities, and the advancement of gender equality.

In regards to Decent Work, especially, social dialogue requires that freedom of association (i.e., the right to join and form trade unions) be protected, so that labor-related policies may be negotiated, and information and expertise shared, on equal terms, through tripartite consultations between government, and workers’ and employers’ representatives. Most recently, civil society organizations (CSOs) have emerged as a fourth actor in these exchanges, introducing important changes into the once tripartite paradigm.

Traditionally, social dialogue may fall into one of three categories) negotiation, consultation, and informationsharing), which are defined by the ILO as follows: “negotiation is an integral and one of the most widespread forms of social dialogue.” It can be quite simply defined as “collective bargaining at the enterprise, sectoral, regional, national and even multinational level.” Consultation “requires an engagement by the parties through an exchange of views which in turn can lead to more

¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), Social Dialogue. Finding a common voice [brochure], 2, without date.

² Matt Simonds et al., “Decent work for all by 2030: taking on the private sector”, in Spotlight on Sustainable Development, Beirut: ANND, 2016, p.71

in-depth dialogue. The parties participating in tripartite or bipartite bodies can engage in negotiations and the conclusion of formal agreements. Some of them are only consultative and information bodies, others are empowered to reach agreements that are binding on the parties (e.g. Governments, workers and employers).” It is worth underlining that, although CSOs have become increasingly impactful actors in social dialogue, their role is not yet formally recognized, as in definitions such as the one cited above. Finally, information-sharing “implies no real discussion or action on the issues but it is nevertheless an essential part of those processes by which dialogue and decisions take place.”³

Social justice may only arise from the equitable dialogue between actors, i.e., the peaceful clashing of divergent needs, interests, and goals, within a framework which postulates their equal degree of legitimacy. But likewise, in the narrower sense, which concerns us here, of social dialogue as a means of finding balance within the inherently conflicting dynamics of the labor market, it is also indispensable in mediating its tensions. Simply put, social dialogue is a fundamental tool of democratic governance, in that it empowers each stakeholder in such a way as to allow for the negotiation of terms of interaction, and even partnership, on an equitable basis which fosters respect, understanding, and compromise, in the name of social justice and cohesion. It requires, therefore, that each concerned party enjoy the same degree of legal power and negotiation capacity, thus ensuring that the needs and interests of, say, employers, do not inevitably override those of workers and their representatives.

Considerations regarding social dialogue must necessarily articulate two broad dimensions: on the one hand, they must account for the theoretical framework of social dialogue, i.e., its several forms, techniques, actors, and purpose, as briefly outlined above; on the other hand, it is imperative that the specific cultural, political, historical, and socioeconomic context of the country or region at hand be taken into consideration. In the case of Jordan, this means understanding how national political dynamics, the regional political environment, the refugee crisis, unemployment levels, and even the threat of extremism affect on social dialogue.

The aim of this paper will be to provide an overview of social dialogue in Jordan, including its main related actors, processes, and challenges, with particular emphasis on the importance of trade unions. Social dialogue will thus assume a centerpiece role in this research as a key guarantor of compliance with the principles of Decent Work and International Labor Standards.

In light of the aforementioned investigative requirements, this inquiry will begin by providing an outline of the political and legal context in the country. This first section will focus on issues such as the country’s core political institutions and their respective attitudes towards workers’ organizations

³ ILO, op.cit.

and their role in policy-drawing; the rule of Parliament; political freedoms and tendencies; level of democratic rule; the imbalances between the degree of strength and influence of each partner in social dialogue; and others.

Subsequently, attention will be given to the Kingdom's present socioeconomic landscape, particularly the situation in the labor market. This section will include an analysis of unemployment levels, employment generation capabilities, levels of labor market engagement, and the substantial impact of migration, neighboring conflicts, and the Syrian refugee crisis on the national economy, infrastructure, and labor market. Throughout the text, recent developments in the role of trade unions, along with their current activities, diversity, and limitations, will also be analyzed.

The final section will consist of a reflection on the conclusions to be drawn from the information gathered, presented, and analyzed in the course of the previous two. It will outline the main challenges to social dialogue in Jordan, and their causes, and provide a list of recommendations for the promotion of equitable dialogue and nationwide collective bargaining, integrating a freer and more capable labor movement.

2. Political and Legal Context

Some of the key aspects of the political landscape in Jordan particularly affect social dialogue in the Kingdom. One such aspect rests with the centers of political gravity: As certain governmental bodies see their roles strengthened, a process of political and administrative centralization is operated, weakening democratic governance – note the dwindling rule of Parliament, and even Government – and shrinking the space of freedom, as attested by the diminished role of political parties, and the decreased ability of civil society (trade unions included) to operate, as some recent studies have also pointed out.

Parliament, the only directly elected political body, to which workers began to turn as the inability of the classical trade union movement to safeguard their rights and interests became increasingly blatant, for reasons discussed below – is now particularly weak. In general, the Chamber of Deputies – the Parliament, or Lower House – may approve, reject, or amend proposed laws, though it requires the royally-appointed Senate's (Upper House) approval to enact them. Nevertheless, in regards to the degree of democratic governance, it is worth mentioning some of the obstacles which beset the electoral process, which is very heavily influenced by familial and tribal affiliations, particularly in the rural areas, where these ties are strongest. In the metropolitan areas, such as the Amman governorate, votes are cast more along religious and political lines – as well as according to personal interests – due to the higher concentration of citizens, who possess no tribal ties. Another pervasive phenomenon worth mentioning regards the role of certain big business owners and other centers of economic power in the elections. To elaborate, many have been found to offer pecuniary

incentives for votes to be cast in a favorable direction.

The weakness of political parties, likewise hinders political plurality and, consequently, political dialogue. Most existing parties, currently totaling 50, with another 24 awaiting registration⁴, suffer from lack of funds, organizational skills, and clear political platforms.

Regarding civil, political and socio-economic rights, certain international principles and standards, namely pertaining to Decent Work, are indeed accounted for in Jordanian legislation both the country's Constitution and Labor Code dedicate important sections to such provisions as the right to organize. Art. 23 (f) of the 2011 amended Constitution, for example, states that free trade unions may be formed within the limits of the law; and the Kingdom's Labor Code clearly provides that the employment of a worker shall not hinge on his or her waving of the right to join or form a trade union. Freedom of association is further supported by Art. 128, which states: "The laws issued by virtue of this Constitution to regulate the rights and freedoms shall not impair the substance of these rights or affect their fundamentals."

Jordan has so far ratified a total of 7 out of the 8 Conventions integral to the ILO Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which constitutes the foundation of International Labor Standards. The Declaration rests on four core pillars: "freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labor, the abolition of child labor, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation." In fact, the only ILO Convention which Jordan has thus far failed to ratify is Convention No. 87, on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize. On this subject, furthermore, it is important to note that, regardless of whether the given ILO Convention has been ratified by the Kingdom, Jordan is obliged to respect and protect the principles it enshrines, insofar as it is an integral part of the aforementioned Declaration.

Jordan has, however, ratified, namely, the International Convention for Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention for Socioeconomic and Cultural Rights, and the ILO Convention No. 98 on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining. This is particularly important seeing as, since 2006, when they were published in the National Gazette, they have come to integrate the national legislative system.

Importantly, the C144 Convention on Tripartite Consultation, which forms the core of the ILO's standards for social dialogue, has also been ratified by Jordan. Yet, the country's legal and political framework does not allow for social dialogue to abide by the Convention's standards, as will be shown below.

Convention ratifications and constitutional provisions are, then, often outweighed by important omissions and restrictions. For one, the articles of the Labor Code pertaining to trade union

organization apply only in part of the private sector⁵. For its part, the public sector is regulated, in this regard, by the Civil Servants bylaw, which includes no provisions regarding trade union organization, in spite of the fact that this contradicts the Constitutional Court's August 2013 decision in favor of civil servants' rights to form and join trade unions. The aforementioned ruling, however, has yet to be implemented and integrated into national law. Furthermore, a governmental law drafted circa 2014 concerning the establishment of trade unions for the public sector stipulated that such unions would be managed as governmental units, as opposed to independent entities – i.e., union meetings, internal elections, and demands, for instance, would require ministerial approval.

Even within the private sector, unionization is considerably restrained, for a number of different reasons: 50 founding members are required to create a union; every new union requires approval from the Tripartite Committee, which is charged with considering which sectors warrant the establishment of workers' unions; union membership is restricted, due to a lack of internal democratic practices; interference by executive authorities; among other factors. In addition, the condition which requires founding members of a trade union to hold Jordanian citizenship is also prohibitive, given that an estimated 40% of the country's workforce isn't Jordanian. Regarding this prerequisite, upon evaluating Jordan's accordance with the 1948 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention (which Jordan ratified), the ILO Compliance Committee urged policymakers to "ensure that foreign workers may become founding members and leaders of trade unions and employers' associations."⁶

The General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU) is the only recognized trade union federation, with which a mere 17 sector unions are associated – a figure which has remained unchanged since 1976. In practice, the GFJTU could hardly be termed an effective agent for change, seeing as its positions have never strayed too far from Government policies. It encompasses all recognized trade unions, and holds authority over their bylaws and internal affairs; the majority of its member unions largely fail to comply with democratic standards and, much as the GFJTU itself, have gone a long time without holding serious elections.

Regarding employers' organizations, it is worth mentioning that, according to the Labor Code Art. 43, employers should be represented by employers' unions, and not by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, which is what happens in practice. In reality, the two Chambers, which have shown themselves to be notoriously disinterested in conducting social dialogue with workers' organizations, are the de facto representatives of employers in all bodies and committees.

Apart from the centralized system of officially recognized unions, which effectively supports the GFJTU's monopoly on social dialogue, there exists a movement of independent trade unions mostly operating under the umbrella of the Federation of Independent Jordanian Trade Unions (FIJTU), which was established in April 2013. In spite of there being constitutional provisions in place

which safeguard the right to form and join trade unions, no new unions have, as noted above, been granted official status since 1976. Accordingly, in 2011, the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association was confronted with the case of two organizations – the Independent Trade Union of Phosphate Sector Workers and the Independent Trade Union of workers in the Jordanian Electricity Company – who decried the refusal of their recognition as conflicting with the principles of freedom of association.

The independent trade union movement in Jordan, which began in 2011 as a renewal of the workers' movement of the mid-2000s, has thus met with serious opposition since its inception; in spite of its newly-found vitality, the post-Arab Spring labor movement in Jordan was all but neutralized by the country's conservative forces. The FJITU still lacks official status, and relies on the work of volunteers; it is not allowed to open headquarters, collect membership fees, or conduct collective bargaining, and is under considerable pressure from governmental bodies to cease functions. The independent labor movement, however, isn't limited to the FJITU's activities; numerous other workers' organizations, including some independent unions not affiliated with the FJITU, are likewise demanding to have a voice in social dialogue, though with roughly the same degree of success.

As mentioned above, the recognition of new trade unions is the prerogative of the Tripartite Committee – composed of representatives from the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the GFJTU, and the Ministry of Labor, commitment to the status quo, and a legal framework which is prohibitive to the involvement of independent workers' organizations, have all hindered social dialogue in Jordan.

For its part, the GFJTU continues to lobby the Government to force the FJITU to cease activities, including meeting with CSOs and other such organizations. Over the past years it has issued numerous letters, namely to the Ministry of Labor and the Prime Minister, requesting not only that the Government cease all dealings with independent trade unions, but also that it impose limitations on the activities of civil society organizations supporting them.

To elaborate briefly on the Tripartite Committee, its existence is provided for in Arts. 43 and 52 of the Labor Code. In addition to the indirect approval of new trade unions (see page 5), it is charged with making decisions regarding minimum wage at the national level. In the absence of a unanimous decision, however, power of decision falls to the Minister. Through potentially effective, legally broad in scope⁷, and armed with sufficient technical resources, in practice the Tripartite Committee's activities are limited, and do not concern wider socioeconomic policies such as employment, skills, and economic policies. Its powers are also formally limited: There is no obligatory pre-consultation on draft legislation, no official advisory role, or a link between the Tripartite Committee and the legislator⁸. It thus fails to ensure that social dialogue, even in this limited range, effectively addresses the main issues – alluded to above – which are typically at stake in such tripartite negotiations. As such, its dealings remain limited to issues pertaining to the national minimum wage.

Another institution worthy of mention is the Jordanian Economic and Social Council (JESC). Established in 2007, it is composed of four groups of 11 members each, totaling 44 members, with each group representing ministers, employers, workers, and 'others'. The creation of a fifth group, representing youths, is thought to be underway. Over the past 10 years, JESC has served as a governmental think tank, producing dozens of studies, papers, and policy recommendations, and conducting numerous workshops on all kinds of socioeconomic issues in Jordan. As a result of resistance on behalf of both the Government and Parliament to seriously consider its findings, however, the Council remains largely inconsequential.

In short, the Jordanian political and legal framework fails, if not purportedly avoids, to set up an adequate platform for equitable and productive social dialogue. Where social dialogue does take place, it does so punctually, as opposed to systematically. As such, the joint decision process which it should embody is instead relegated to the Government, and what little social dialogue exists cannot justly be termed a tool of democratic governance and socioeconomic advancement.

A noteworthy example, which adequately illustrates these imbalances, is that of the Government's push, in early 2016, to increase the national minimum wage, which has stood at 190 JOD per month since 2012. Following pressures from the Chamber of Industry, the Government withdrew and the move failed. This situation clearly demonstrates how the influence and bargaining power of workers in Jordan pales in comparison with that of employers, whose organizations, in the absence of stronger institutions dedicated to championing workers' rights, are all too often allowed to pursue their agendas unchecked and without having to compromise.

This, however, is not to say that equality exists among the employers themselves. Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Jordan are typically excluded from social dialogue processes – employers' organizations represent big businesses exclusively, and smaller businesses are denied the right even to vote on or integrate the governing bodies of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry. In general, public policy largely favors big business corporations at the expense of both the smaller-scale private sector, and the labor movement.

In general, the lack of democratic practices, in accordance with the principles of Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly, greatly impairs the development of the balance in social powers needed for the conduction of effective social dialogue in Jordan. Policymaking remains highly centralized and prohibitive of the exchanges needed to foster understanding and compromise between the several stakeholders. In addition to the absence of an effective involvement by independent workers' and employers' organizations, the role of civil society actors is also systematically stifled in Jordan. CSOs continue to demand greater inclusion in policymaking, namely in deliberations regarding amendments to the Press and Publications Law, though no steps are seemingly being taken in that direction.

A number of recent cases further exemplify just how freedom of assembly and collective bargaining – both of them necessary elements for effective social dialogue – have been stifled in the Kingdom. Perhaps most critically, there have been several instances of workers’ representatives being arrested in the course of negotiations with employers, such as in the city of Aqaba, where, in November 2015, in the context of a wave of protests to demand better working conditions for port workers, negotiators were arrested during a meeting with employers’ representatives (one of many such instances). In Madaba, too, in July 2015, workers at the Al-Saafi Clothing Factory demanding salary increases were arrested by police forces and imprisoned for several days. Such measures, apart from being legally dubious, seriously harm the mutual trust needed for the creation of a favorable environment for social dialogue.

In short, if societies and governance are indeed to be understood as collective endeavors, the absence of a platform where each actor is able to freely share its views, information, and suggestions, and to voice its demands and concerns independently – that is, the absence of those practices which make up healthy, productive social dialogue – will forever be harmful, and contrary to the principles of democratic governance.

3. Socioeconomic Context

In addition to the aforementioned political and legal factors, the socioeconomic context in Jordan, and its well-known hardships, must also be taken into consideration. Factors such as substantial unemployment (most critically among the youth), the refugee crisis and its impact on the national labor market and public infrastructure, and the size of the informal sector, which currently represents an estimated 30% of the national economy⁹, all weigh heavily on the national environment for social dialogue.

Some progress made in the field of social security has brought much-needed relief to the informal sector, where social dialogue is notoriously absent, and where, therefore, additional devices are in want that may somehow counteract the lack of decent work conditions, and the workers’ paucity in bargaining power – which has among its main causes the unfair competition posed by migrant workers and refugees.

On this point, the need to secure labor market opportunities for Syrian refugees and migrant workers has also been a contentious issue. An estimated 1 million migrant workers are currently engaged in the Jordanian labor force and, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the country was hosting nearly 700,000 registered Syrian refugees by the end of 2015. To underline the fact further, this figure does not account for unregistered refugees and Syrians who had been living in Jordan before the war in Syria broke out, which, along with the estimated number

of unregistered refugees, may well bring the figure up to 1.3 million Syrians in total¹⁰. The presence of these workers not only puts the estimated size of the informal economy at 50-60% of the Kingdom's total workforce, seeing as many such workers are informally engaged; it also harms social dialogue, especially at lower levels of employment, by weakening the leverage of workers vis-à-vis their employers on issues such as wages and working conditions, seeing as there now exists a virtually unlimited supply of laborers who are, for example, willing to work more hours for less pay, out of sheer necessity. Many do not seek to organize or negotiate their working conditions, on account of the precariousness of their situation. Further still, even if these workers were willing to unionize, the informal nature of their labor would prevent them from forming bodies capable of conducting collective bargaining and becoming effective partners in social dialogue; as such, they are insufficiently, if at all, protected against violations of their rights, such as sub-standard working conditions and unfairly low wages.

Briefly put, Jordan is entrenched within an economic and financial paradigm which must be reassessed if true progress is to be made regarding Decent Work and social dialogue. Instead, however, the desire for change in this regard seems to lack among policymakers, who are simultaneously constrained by the conditionalities through which international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the IMF influence national policies.

Jordan first resorted to an IMF loan in 1989, amidst an economic crisis. Ever since the 1989 programs, the country has been in and out of economic crises, which international financial institutions ceaselessly sought to solve by resorting to the same policies which had quite clearly caused them in the first place: Privatization of state-owned companies; reduction and outright elimination of subsidies; public sector cuts, which included the freezing of salaries and the reduction of public sector unemployment; and various reforms aimed at promoting a 'business-friendly' environment, including lenient wage policies and flexible employment (e.g., facilitation of layoffs). Naturally, in a country unable to reduce either payments on interest or military and security spending (which is still the case), such uncompromising fiscal austerity had its greatest impact on the poorer social strata, which translated into steep rises in poverty and unemployment levels. Within the same pre-2011 period, the job-creating industrial sector was all but destroyed in favor of importation; where increases in employment were indeed witnessed, they were accompanied by a steep drop in working conditions.

Jordan concluded its last pre-2011 IMF program in 2005. In 2012, however, the country signed yet another 2 billion USD stabilization loan with the international institution. This was claimed to have been done to respond to the Kingdom's new economic challenges, which included the effects of the region's instability, high oil prices, unsustainable rent-seeking activities, and high reported levels of official corruption¹¹ and tax evasion¹², which had serious adverse impacts on Jordan's balance of payments. The package imposed by the IMF, which again focused on improving the 'business environment' in the Kingdom, promoted flexible employment and fostered trade, and was mostly

austerity-oriented; and the wave of riots and protests which subsequently spread across the country, particularly in 2012, is directly related to the socioeconomic policies adopted following the program's implementation. Though the IMF's 2012 report on Jordan stressed the importance of job creation, reduction of inequalities¹³, and fostering equal opportunities as indispensable elements of an inclusive growth strategy for the country, the main tool through which the IMF set out to achieve these goals was unbridled trade and employment liberalization, which, again, seems to have been at the heart of the problem from the start.

Yet, Jordan's dire economic situation – most notably its broad budget and balance of payments deficits – make the country heavily dependent on foreign assistance, placing it in a somewhat delicate predicament. For instance, taking the public budget for 2016 into consideration, it is estimated that 21% of total government spending – 2,160 million JOD – currently comes from external aid. Naturally, such dependence on grants and loans has also produced unprecedented external debt, reaching 95% of GDP. As a result, and as it often happens, policymakers are left with little choice with regards to the policies and developmental models prescribed by the lenders, most notably the IMF.

Over the past years, the agricultural and industrial sectors have waned before the flourishing of the services sector. In 2015, figures had shown 81% of the Jordanian workforce to be engaged in the services sector¹⁴. In terms of Decent Work and social dialogue, this shift is particularly worrisome due to the fact that, unlike the agricultural and industrial sectors, which are unified, and therefore offer workers the opportunity to form sector-wide unions, the services sector is fragmentary – it is composed mainly of small businesses and, even ignoring the fact that the vast majority are informal enterprises, their separation offers no possibility for the creation of representative institutions, which of course means exclusion from social dialogue.

Jordan's developmental model, heavily influenced by the IMF and WB visions, further exacerbated the problem, particularly at the regional level. By favoring big businesses, mostly concentrated in the capital, Amman, official developmental strategies all but neglected the country's remaining regions, where socioeconomic indicators continued to decline. With 62% of wage earners living on less than 400 JOD per month, and with 14% of the population living under the poverty line, the lives of most are nowadays marked by a daily struggle against the disproportionately high price rates of goods and services in the Kingdom.

In light of these facts, some observers have remarked upon the need for a change in paradigm – a necessary step, namely for the achievement of the sustainable development goal for 2030 concerning Decent Work. This would, of course, require abandoning a model favoring profit maximization to the detriment of fair wages and decent working conditions, in addition to strengthening social protection floors. Committed adherence to ILO Conventions would likewise, in

this regard, be key 15.

Nevertheless, it seems to be the case that Decent Work cannot adequately be promoted and protected in the absence of the necessary conditions for meaningful social dialogue. In the case of migrant workers and refugees, for instance, it has been shown that the precariousness of their situation – namely, the fact that the irregularity of their work precludes them from organizing and conducting collective bargaining – doesn't affect them alone. For as long as broad swathes of the workforce remain which are wholly incapable of negotiating their work conditions, the remaining workers who, legally or through social dialogue, may demand more from employers in return, will remain threatened. It comes down to the simple fact that lower salaries, and lesser demands, are favorable to business.

This, of course, brings us to the IMF and several policymakers' insistence on creating a 'favorable business environment'. Coming back to the basic concept of social dialogue, it is to be understood as a series of exchanges between workers and employers, mediated by the Government. Amongst its various purposes, it serves as a tool through which compromises are reached between that which is favorable to business and that which is in the interest of workers. 'Business-friendly' strategies – especially if irresponsibly pursued – invariably tip the scales in what should be a negotiation on equal terms; that is, they shatter the very purpose of social dialogue.

In any healthy society – economically or otherwise – balances must be strived for. This, which is perhaps the quintessential principle of politics, is also the foundation of economic and political stability.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Social dialogue in Jordan is beset on all sides by challenges impairing its development. In the midst of an already fragile economy further debilitated by successive exogenous shocks, the will is lacking among policymakers and large business owners to provide workers and their representatives with a seat at the table. The ratification of fundamental ILO Conventions has so far failed to translate into the creation of a political and social environment favorable to the protection of workers' rights and livelihoods, and national realities continue to fall short of living up to the principles enshrined in those documents, which are meant to help set the standards of political life and practice in the Kingdom. Instead, the space of freedom continues to shrink, and freedom of association, in particular, remains severely limited, which greatly threatens social dialogue.

Simultaneously, an unrelenting process of political and administrative centralization is underway, which has unfolded with increasing momentum over the past few years. The main parties to social dialogue nurture deep ties with the central administration, and whereas the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and those they represent, stand but to gain from the 'business-friendly' policies which set the tone of the current state of political affairs, the GFJTU is too deeply entrenched in the status quo to venture too far in its demands.

In this context, the need is deeply felt for independent representative institutions on both the employers' and the workers' sides to be formed and strengthened – though it is the workers' bargaining power which is most threatened by the current framework. An additional step forward, in light of recent developments in the social landscape, would be the inclusion of civil society in such deliberations. Yet, as the independent labor movement continues to be stifled and denied a role in policymaking and negotiation, partly due to the influence of conservative forces in the country, no changes seem to be in the cards for the near future in what concerns social dialogue in Jordan.

Taking into consideration the findings and conclusions set forth in this study, the following recommendations are deemed pertinent:

- Promote political and legal reform towards the greater protection of political freedoms, namely Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Association, and Freedom of Peaceful Assembly. This should involve enabling workers to create new organizations, including in the public sector, as well as the timely recognition of the legitimacy of independent trade unions in Jordan, and of the JFITU, allowing them to freely conduct their activities. Civil society should also be progressively included in the process of social dialogue.
- Ensure social accountability in economic policy. The preparation of economic strategies to be

integrated into the country's developmental model should take into consideration the social impact of the measures to be implemented, integrating a human rights-based perspective into policymaking.

- Amend the Labor Code in order to enhance social dialogue processes in Jordan, by encouraging exchanges between employers and workers. Those articles already included in the Labor Code which provide for the conduction of inclusive social dialogue should be better enforced to that effect.
- Strive for the formalization of informal work. The upsetting number of workers represented in the informal sector of the Jordanian economy greatly destabilizes labor market competition and hinders the conditions for effective social dialogue. In the absence of a more formalized labor market, neither socioeconomic stability nor compliance with Decent Work standards can be expected to be adequately achieved.
- Ratify the ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize, in order to better ensure compliance with International Labor Standards and substantiate the demands of workers and their representatives for an increased freedom to organize and form trade unions.

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