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Research article

## Women's Political Participation in Jordan

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**Abstract.** Jordanian women's participation in public policy dates back to 1950s. However, political activism came to a halt in the period between 1956 and 1992. In 1992, the new Political Parties Law granted women the right to participate in political parties. Since then, women became an active member of political parties, but their participation remained largely symbolic and not influential. Women did not seek to join parties. As a result, women are still largely unrepresented in the state. In addition, and the number of women involved in these parties remains low. There are a number of challenges that prevent women's participation in political life in Jordan, such as social restrictions resulting from the traditional structure of Jordanian society. This article discusses the political participation of women in Jordan and addresses the most prominent challenges facing the political work of women in Jordan.

**Key words:** political participation, women in politics, Jordan, political parties, parliament elections, Government

One of the most important manifestations of democracy at the present time is the increasing participation of women in political life. Which western countries have gone a long way in comparison with many third world countries; the Kingdom of Jordan has ratified international treaties and conventions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Jordan has taken a number of steps to reform its legal framework in order to encourage increased women's inclusion in politics and increase their overall political participation. Ratify international conventions whose principles support gender equality (i.e. CEDAW, ISECR, and ICCPR).

### Women's representation in political life

Since 1921, Jordanian women have played different roles in public life, especially in charitable societies. The Jordanian Women's Union was founded in the early 1940s. After that, the number of women's charities with multiple goals increased, and since 1950 women's participation in political parties began [1].

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Since 1955, Jordanian women obtained the right to vote, but have not been obtained the right to run for election and have not exercised their full right to run for election until 1974 [2].

The actual change in political and parliamentary life was with the 1989 elections. For the first time, the Jordanian woman participated as a candidate, but they did not get any seat in the house of Parliament in 1989. In 1993, Toujan Faisal became the first woman elected to Jordan's lower house of parliament.

In reading the presence of Jordanian women in the House of parliament since the return of democratic life in 1989 until the 2016 elections, it is possible to **observe the following:** In 1989, women participated in the elections in which 12 women were nominated, but no women won. In 1993 three women were nominated and one woman won. In 1997, seventeen women were nominated but no female candidates were elected, in 2003 elections, 54 women were nominated. During the elections, the quota system was introduced, which allowed six women to enter the House of parliament, but not outside the quota system\*, but with the help of the quota, in 2007, 199 women were nominated and six women won on the basis of the quota system, while one candidate won free competition, In the 2010 elections, women won 13 more seats out of 78, in the 2013 elections, women won 18 out of 150 seats , in the 2016 elections, women won 20 out of 130 seats, the highest representation of women in the Jordanian parliament [3].

As for the participation of Jordanian women in the government, ministerial posts continued to be reserved for men until 1980, in that year, the first woman was appointed of the ministerial post, the Ministry of Social Development. Only one ministerial portfolio was obtained in each cabinet reshuffle until 2009, when four women held ministerial posts in Nader Dahabi's government [4].

As for the participation of women in the political parties, it is still very low despite the fact that the Parties Law gave women the right to participate in the establishment and affiliation of parties. However, the statistics indicate that the participation rate of women in the constituent bodies of parties does not exceed 10%. It is noted that most of the licensed political parties in Jordan do not address the issue of women in a serious, effective and independent manner in their programs.

The Jordanian State recognizes the importance of women's presence and participation in political life in the belief that this is an essential part of the process of development in general and political development in particular. Jordan is one of the first countries to recognize the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which gave every man or woman the right of freedom opinion and expression. Jordan is one of the first signatories to the International Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, As well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which constituted a powerful level for the growing rights of Jordanian women and a step towards enabling them to participate in political life, in addition to empowering women in the parties and electoral law, and more of a civil and political rights [5].

Jordan ranks 11th among in the Middle East countries in terms of women's representation in lower or single houses of Parliament [3] (table 1, table 2).

Table 1

**Women's regional representation in lower or unicameral houses of parliament (%)**

Rank	Country	Chamber (Lower House/Unicameral)	Women MP's
1	Tunisia	Majlis Nawwab ash-sha'ab	31.3%
2	Sudan	Majlis Watani	30.5%
3	Isreal	Knesset	27.5%
4	Algeria	Al-Majlis Al-Chaabi Al-Watani	25.8%
5	Iraq	Council of Representativesof	25.3%
6	Mauritania	Majlis Watai Itihadi	25.2%
7	United Arab Emirates	Al Jamiya-Al-Watani Itihadi	22.5%
8	Morocco	Majliss-annouwab	20.5%
9	Saudi Arabia	Majlis Ash-Shura	19.9%
10	Libya	Majlis Al-Nuwaab	16.0%
11	Jordan	Majlis Al-Nuwaab	15.4%
12	Egypt	Majlis Al-Nuwaab	14.9%
13	Syrian Arab republic	Majlis Al-Chaab	13.2%
14	Qatar	Majlis Al-Shura	9.8%
15	Bahrain	Majlis Al-Nuwaab	7.5%
16	Lebanon	Majlis Al-Nuwaab	3.1%
17	Kuwait	Majlis Al-Nuwaab	3.1%
18	Oman	Majlis Ash-Shura	1.2%
19	Yemen	Majlis Al-Nuwaab	0%

Source: IPU Open Data (2018) <https://data.ipu.org/>.

Table 2

**Women's Representation in Jordan's House of Representatives (1989–2016)**

House of Representatives	Year of election	Total Number of MPs	Number Of Female MPs	Women's Representation (%)
11 <sup>th</sup>	1989	80	0	0%
12 <sup>th</sup>	1993	80	1	13%
13 <sup>th</sup>	1997	80	0	0%
14 <sup>th</sup>	2003	110	6	5.4%
15 <sup>th</sup>	2007	110	7	6.4%
16 <sup>th</sup>	2010	120	13	10.8%
17 <sup>th</sup>	2013	150	18	12%
18 <sup>th</sup>	2016	130	20	15.4%

Source: IPU Election Archives for Jordan: Majlis Al-Nuwaab (House of Representaives).

## **Remaining obstacles to women's political participation**

It is possible to say that there are a number of obstacles and challenges that prevent the participation of Jordanian women in political life. The most prominent of these are: the dominance of patriarchal culture in the Jordanian society, based on the social and economic culture; the lack of experience of Jordanian women in the political field; This field, Weak civil society institutions in Jordan, which affects its role in activating and enhancing the political participation of male and female citizens as modern units that can be alternative units to traditional units, where political parties and other civil society organizations suffer from weakness and instability, which negatively affect the advancement of women's role in political participation. In addition to, weak political awareness of the Jordanian society members in general, and women in particular about the importance of women political participation, Economic dependency of women on men due to their low participation in economic activity and men's ownership of scarce resources.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the quotas for female inclusion in national and municipal bodies, political participation remains limited. In addition, women represent only one-sixth of the seats in Jordanian parliament. Although support for improvement does exist, there are many obstacles that effect the participation of women on political life in return.

The political role of Jordanian women in parliament is still limited, although Jordanian women make up about 52 percent of the electorate. In terms of female representation in parliament, Jordan lags behind other countries generally, with a ranking of 13 in the Arab world and 141st globally. In the last elections of 2016, five women managed to reach the parliament directly by winning elections, while 15 women succeeded to reach it through the quota system, bringing the total number of women in the 130-member house to 20. Which is the highest percentage in the history of women's political participation.

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Научная статья

## Участие женщин в политической жизни в Иордании

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**Аннотация.** Начало участия иорданских женщин в государственной политике датируется 1950-ми годами, однако в период с 1956 по 1992 год их политическая активность прекратилась. В 1992 году новый закон о политических партиях предоставил женщинам право участвовать в политических партиях. С тех пор женщины стали основателями и активными членами политических партий, но их участие оставалось в основном символическим и не оказывало влияния на реальные политические процессы в стране. Женщины не стремились вступать в политические партии. В результате женщины по-прежнему практически не представлены в числе государственных и политических деятелей. Кроме того, сегодня число иорданских женщин, участвующих в деятельности партий, остается низким. Авторы выделяют ряд проблем, препятствующих участию женщин в политической жизни Иордании, в первую очередь социальные ограничения, обусловленные традиционной структурой иорданского общества. В статье рассматривается участие женщин в политической жизни Иордании и анализируются наиболее важные проблемы, влияющие на политическую деятельность женщин в стране.

**Ключевые слова:** политическое участие, женщины в политике, Иордания, политические партии, парламентские выборы, правительство

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