



Jordan

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Jordan.

In Mark Juergensmeyer and Wade Clark Roof (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of Global Religion* (Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2012).

In Jordan, Sunni Islam is the official religion of the monarch and the State, however legal existence is granted to a dozen Christian denominations. Officially 96% of the population is Sunni Moslem while Christians amount to 4%. Religious affiliation is a compulsory element of the civil status of all Jordanian citizens but freedom of belief and religious practice are guaranteed by law. Jordan constitutes an interesting example where, under an Islamic order of religious coexistence and pluralism, the State has carved a communal space for the expression of several faiths and the performance of their respective religious duties while a relatively neutral space is maintained for political participation. Islam is regulated by State institutions that exert control over the building and management of mosques and the appointment of imams (preachers) through a specialised ministry (The Ministry of *Awqaf* or public religious endowments). Recognised Christian denominations have full rights to build churches and maintain educational, social and charitable institutions. They are autonomous for what concerns their internal matters and the personal status and family affairs of their members. Political participation is guaranteed to all citizens on equal terms, and representation of Christians is ensured through quotas for parliamentary elections. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the Hashemite monarchy supported the social and religious activities of the Moslem Brotherhood to contain the development of opposition political ideologies with a secular or atheistic orientation. On the other hand, Jerusalem's Moslem and Christian sites, under Hashemite rule between 1948 and 1967, were a major aspect of Jordan's official national identity and religious pluralism. After these sites fell under Israeli occupation following the 1967 war, Jordan maintained an official role vis-à-vis Moslem sites, a role contested by the Palestinian National Authority. As of the 1980s, and following internal and regional dynamics, the public sphere and space in Jordan experienced Islamization through an increase in the proportion of mosques, the development of media and educational programmes with a religious content, enforcement of the fast of Ramadan in public places, and the activities of Islamic charitable societies and political parties. However, political inclusion of the mainstream Islamist party, the Islamic Action Front, and its ability to articulate agendas on religious terms have produced ideological moderation rather than the radicalization witnessed in other national contexts. To balance public tokens of Islamization, the regime has developed its own conception of moderate Islam that it promotes inside and outside the Islamic world. The monarchy is actively engaged in interfaith dialogue with Christians and Jews worldwide and defends religious pluralism at home under the guardianship of its version of modernized Islam.

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See also Islamism, Jerusalem, Middle East, Muslim Brotherhood, Palestine, Politics and Religion, Religion and State, Sunni.

Further readings:

Messara, A. (1993). La régulation étatique de la religion dans le monde arabe: le cas de la Jordanie [The official regulation of religion: the case of Jordan]. *Social Compass*, 4, 581-588.

Schwedler, J. (2006). *Faith in Moderation: Islamic Parties in Jordan and Yemen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.