

The Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau

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Objective:To instill and promote the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and equal opportunity in the public administration- ensuring further efficiency and services. The Ombudsman Bureau has various roles including investigating citizens' complaints against the public administration, ensuring transparency, resolving small-scale issues to make suggestions in order to correct governmental policies; strengthening and amending certain laws; and monitoring public authorities and officials through these citizen complaints.

Mission:To promote confidence between beneficiaries and the public administration as well as employees and their administration- enhancing relations between the public sector and citizens.

Vision:To contribute the establishment of effective mechanisms for safeguarding basic rights and freedoms as well as promoting the rule of law and accountability to achieve justice and equality under the Hashemite leadership. To reach out to all citizens, both local and foreign residents, in all parts of Jordan and help protect their rights against any discrimination and/or poor service from the public sector. The Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau also investigates and covers cases dealing with the Military, Public Security Directorate, National Gendarmerie and Intelligence Department.

Current president of the Ombudsman Bureau: His Excellency Alaeddin Armouty/ Acting president

Cooperative Work with other Local Institutions and Organizations

The work of the Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau complements that of other entities, such as the Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Centre for Human Rights, securing the achievement of justice and the improvement of relations between the general public and public administration.

The Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau signed a mutual agreement with the Anti-Corruption Commission to build a joint-database to cooperate and exchange complaints accordingly- as our work ties in closely tied together.

Another important governmental institution that the Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau closely works with is the Audit Bureau - dealing with governmental spending and financial expenditure.

In attempts to reach out to citizens and foreign residents, The Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau has signed a mutual agreement with the Jordan Post to ensure easy access to anyone across the country in the process of sending their complaints to the Ombudsman Bureau through the postal service. With 356 Jordan Post branches across different parts of Jordan, any citizen can send their complaints free of charge to the Ombudsman Bureau. The Ombudsman Bureau will cover all costs of this postal service to encourage more and more citizens to send their complaints—regardless of their location.

The Establishment:

The Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau started receiving complaints February 2009, pursuant to Law No. 11 of 2008. These complaints received from individuals and entities against public administrations were investigated, verified and resolved. The Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau's inception was in response to the importance of affirming principles of integrity and transparency between citizens and the public administration.

Our first annual report was for 2009, issued in December of 2010, in which we received a total of 2,716 complaints against public administrations. The Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau placed high priority on group complaints, particularly those affecting thousands of individuals.

The Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau settled 264 complaints via mediation in an official or amicable way; 81% of 327 complaints exposed errors that were made by public administration. A total of 177 complaints were provided with necessary guidance, while 63 recommendations were given to administrations that committed administrative faults. Investigation revealed that 641 complaints had revealed no administrative errors. As for the remaining complaints, many were rejected due to formality, while 105 are still undergoing follow-up.

Background for the Establishment of the Organization:

Islamic culture knew several judicial and quasi judicial institutions, such as judicial panels, the Hisba (accountability) system, and on the Muslim caliphs that reviewed and resolved disputes among their constituencies. The institutionalization of said process happened during the Caliph

Omar Bin Abed Al Aziz era, who named this institution as the Grievances Bureau. In contemporary times, the Ombudsman Office phenomenon emerged in modern states since 1809, the first of which was in Sweden.

Since the days of the late King Abdullah I, the Hashemites followed the path of alleviating injustice among its citizens-hearing complaints and helping victims of injustices. This was done through councils held for the sole purpose of hearing citizens' complaints or through personal visits aimed at identifying citizens' needs and sufferings in order to provide them with needed relief.

Since the Kingdom's establishment, the protection of the rights of Jordanians ranked high, whereby article (6) of the Constitution stipulates that "the State shall ensure a state of tranquility and equal opportunities for all its citizens" and article (17) states that "Jordanians are entitled to address public authorities on any personal matter affecting them or any matter relevant to public affairs."

The Jordanian National charter also states that in order to fortify the basic pillars of the rule of law and instill democratic structures within the Jordanian state and society, the state should work to achieve a number of goals. Among these goals is "the establishment of an independent institution called the Ombudsman (Grievances) Bureau by the issuance of a special law. The Bureau shall be entrusted with the administrative inspection and monitoring of the public administration's performance and the conduct of its officers. The Bureau shall submit its reports to the Parliament and Council for Ministers, according to the provision of the constitution and the applicable regulations and laws without any prejudice to the independence and jurisdiction of the Judiciary."

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein, the government recognized the need to create an institution independent from both the Executive and the Judiciary branches of government. The government wanted to create an entity to address imbalances and complexities of public administrations that are not detected through traditional forms of monitoring and supervision. The government began serious consideration about establishing an Ombudsman Bureau, an entity which would be entrusted to follow-up on complaints against public administrations. Its goal would be to strengthen and support the principles of justice, equality, transparency, and fairness. Additionally, it would seek to clearly institutionalize the complaints and grievances processes in terms of jurisdiction, work, mechanisms, investigation methods, reporting, and decision-issuance procedures. The new institution would also strengthen communications within and among various relevant public administration departments and institutions which support the enhancement of government services and public sector performance. It would also aid in reaching acceptable and fair compromises between the public administration and citizen grievances. Additionally, it would strengthen the rule of law culture and awareness related to citizens' rights and the administrations' duties and responsibilities.

To ensure the success of this new entity, a review of excellence models implemented in other countries was conducted. Special consideration was taken into account to address Jordan's unique culture. A temporary technical unit was created to study the feasibility of an Ombudsman Bureau. Three workshops were held and attended by members of the Senate (the upper house of Parliament), senior state officials, of media, and civil society representatives. These workshops constituted the beginning of a comprehensive national dialogue pertinent to the establishment of the Ombudsman Bureau.

A regional conference was held in Amman in 2004 to review and discuss all information and recommendations obtained from the technical committee responsible for surveying the viability and need of the Ombudsman Bureau.

In His Majesty's speech from the Throne, before the fifteenth parliament of December 2, 2007, His Majesty expressed the importance of not delaying the adoption of the Ombudsman Bureau draft law.

Pursuant to Parliament's vote, the Ombudsman Bureau Law No. (11) of 2008 was enacted. The Ombudsman Bureau began its operations in early February 2009.