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King Hussein of Jordan

On March 14, 1984, His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan granted an interview to the American daily New York Times, the text of which appeared in the March 15, 1984 issue of the paper. The interview is reprinted below.

King Hussein: The whole situation is hopeless because it just appears more clearly than ever before that the United States has forsaken its position as a superpower and as a moral defender of the world. It has forsaken its position as a nation that stands by its word and its commitments. It has chosen to disqualify itself as the sole force in the area that could help us all move towards a just and durable peace. The US is not free to move except within the limits of what AIPAC, the Zionists and the State of Israel determine for it.

Q. Was it the American withdrawal from Lebanon that persuaded you that the US was no longer reliable as an honest broker?

A. It is a series of events. Lebanon is part of that series. What it has cost the United States is its credibility. There have been a series of factors in the past, since 1956, really. But if you consider the recent past, first, the President's initiative of Sept. 1: it

was destroyed, as was US credibility, by Israel's rejection of it. This was followed by Israel's settlement activity, which was intensified and which was a direct answer to the President's initiative. This was followed by the Lebanese situation, in which they continued, and still continue to be the occupiers of Lebanese territory. This was followed most recently by their attempts to implement a plan to reallocate people in the occupied territories to the Jordan Valley in what appears to be a final step towards pushing them across the river, consistent with their claim that the Palestinian problem is a problem of people, not the land. In addition, there is a plan to implement Israeli land laws on the rest of the occupied territories.

Through all of this and for the last 17 years, Israel has denied Palestinians living under occupation all of their human rights or the rights to express themselves in freedom.

The US looks at us and speaks of direct

negotiations being the only way out, while we don't know what the US position is.

We see things in the following way: Israel is on our land. It is there by virtue of American military and economic aid that translates into aid for Israeli settlements. Israel is there by virtue of American moral and political [indulgence] to the point where the United States is succumbing to Israeli dictates.

It's obvious that this being the case, there is no way by which anyone should imagine it would be possible for Arabs to sit and talk with Israel as long as things are as they are.

As far as the United States is concerned, the question that is posed is: is the United States able to elevate itself to the status of a superpower? To live up to its commitments and its frequent pronouncements of being even-handed? We don't see it happening. We obviously can't deal with the United States as an ally of Israel or as a mediator.

The United States asserts that its present plan is valid, but is it really? Israel has rejected it; Israel has changed conditions on the ground to the point where it almost makes no sense. We have another year of an election campaign in the United States; contenders must appeal for the favors of AIPAC and Zionism and Israel. Even this year has seen such drastic changes on the ground that within a year, any fragments of hope left of achieving a peaceful solution to the problem will be destroyed. So this is where we are, and that's why I say it's hopeless.

Q. What are the implications of what you're saying?

A. The implications are that as far as I'm concerned, the positions we have adopted over the years, of trying to establish a dialogue with Washington and the United States, of trying to contribute to the

creation of a more balanced approach to the problem, which is in the interests of all of the parties to this conflict, have failed.

You obviously have made your choice and your choice is Israel and support of Israel. That being the case, there is no hope of achieving anything.

In point of fact, we have given more than we have taken. We sought peace in the area; we were ready to try to work with the Reagan plan. Israel was the force that rejected it, that did not wish peace, yet we are portrayed as if we are the party that is opposed to peace. Apart from being unjust, it is also incorrect.

Q. Does this mean that you will not participate in any American-sponsored or American-brokered negotiations with Israel?

A. Not the way things look, no. One has to be a realist. It has cost us a lot. US credibility has suffered, but so have those who have believed in the United States. The possibility of having a meaningful policy, of your standing up and defending meaningful principles have also suffered.

We were sincere and honest, and we tried our best. But I can't see anything happening except further deterioration of the situation. We worked for progress in this area, that's all I can say.

Q. What options does this leave you, where does Jordan turn now?

A. Jordan has always been on its own. We have no strategic alliance with the United States; it has no treaty with the Soviet Union. It has a just cause it has been defending and will continue to do so: the Arab identity, the Arab cause. But we face formidable threats that threaten not only oil in this area but world peace. We have stood against all attempts at polarization in this area and will continue to do so, but it seems again that there are two sides that are working for polarization. Israel on one

side and some of the Arabs on the other. As I see it, there is more commonality between these two allegedly opposing sides.

Q. Do you mean Syria?

A. I mean those who work for polarization on all sides, including the United States.

Q. So what happens to efforts to put together a so-called moderate Arab coalition?

A. Jordan and the Palestinians will continue to work together to secure our relations on a foundation of trust and common clarity of vision. But as I have said time and time again, it is ridiculous that Israel gives itself the right to question the right of those living under occupation to come and meet with us here, or even meet with the PLO. As far as I can understand, when we look at the possibility of a PNC meeting, perhaps very shortly, it is ironic that you have two sides that are preventing the previously silent majority, which isn't silent anymore, from expressing themselves. Israel on one hand and others in Syria who will not participate in the talks—they are preventing the people who really matter from expressing themselves.

Jews in the Soviet Union—the whole world is up in arms that they do not have the right to move, to Israel in particular. Well, they are Soviet citizens and part of the state. The United States has protested vigorously. But people who are not Israeli, who are under occupation, should they not be permitted to voice an opinion about anything, about what should happen to them? And remember, these are Jordanian citizens, or those for whom Egypt is responsible

Q. What would have to change to renew the possibility of direct talks with Israel by Jordan and some Palestinians?

A. Jordan and the Palestinians are one

team. And we will work together on all fronts. But as for any negotiations, since the United States keeps its current policies, it certainly should not have the right to deny others to be present at any new negotiations. That's why I think the Soviets have the right to be there.

But if both superpowers are taking the position of alliances with some of the belligerents, namely Israel on one hand and Syria on the other, then obviously, they alone probably can't make a contribution to the solution, particularly when they themselves do not have any meaningful relations at this time. Maybe since this is the case, the picture should be broadened. Maybe the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council should be parties, plus all of the parties to the conflict.

Q. Including the PLO?

A. Yes, of course

Q. But then is there no one now in a position, neither the US nor the Soviet Union, who can be an honest, broker or mediator?

A. No, least of all the United States.

Q. What about the impact of the United States withdrawal from Lebanon on your thinking, especially since you told me the last time I saw you that the Americans should not withdraw without a change on the ground?

A. I would rather not comment. I have a final thought: I am very concerned about the United States and its double standard everywhere. The saddest point for me is that I've always believed values and courageous principles were an area that we shared. I now realize that principles mean nothing to the United States. Short-term issues, especially in election years, prevail. This is the saddest thing that one can experience. I continue to believe that principles matter. If they don't, that's even more disastrous.