Time has come for legislation that does not tolerate rapists or killers of women – Princess Basma


With around 38 women killed in Jordan since the start of the year, activists on Wednesday called for legislative, societal and security measures to end such crimes.

In continuation of the 16-Day of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, held this year under the theme “Stop the Killing of Women and Girls”, an event was held at Al al Bayt University in Mafraq to generate momentum in support of its goals.

“Twenty-five years on from the start of the 16-day international campaign to combat violence against women, there are still women who are unable to escape the cycle of violence, with all the injury and suffering that entails,” HRH Princess Basma said.

Addressing the ceremony, she added that a quarter of a century has also passed and there are “still those who justify violence and advise women to accept the status quo — these might be parents, neighbours or even staff in institutions that battered women turn to”.

“Twenty-five years on, measures to protect battered women are still inadequate,” said the princess, adding that various stakeholders are still struggling to implement initiatives to put an end to crimes of violence against women. She highlighted that efforts to counter violence “still fall short”, while the “timid steps” being taken to aid women bring more violence, killing and oppression. “Twenty-five years on, families still waive victims’ personal rights, while perpetrators are still afforded mitigating excuses that encourage rather than deter assault and murder,” Princess Basma said, noting that rapists can still escape punishment by marrying their victims, who may still be minors. “The time has come for women to lead decent lives not fraught with feeling terrified and deprived of dignity. The time has come to have the will to stop these crimes. The time has come to have legislation that does not tolerate rapists or killers of women,” she stressed.

Administrative detention of women under the pretext of protecting them, the so-called honour crimes and the “social tolerance” of domestic violence against women were some of the issues discussed by lawmakers, human right activists and religious figures at the Mafraq meeting, held by the Jordanian National Commission for Women.

“What is called honour-crime does not exist in Islam, which requires solid evidence corroborated by four male witnesses confirming the illicit sexual act before a woman can be punished for it,” said Hassan Abu Arqoub, from the Iftaa Department.

Quoting the department’s fatwa (religious edict) against so-called honour crimes, he noted that since the degree of evidence in this case cannot be attained, no such case has ever been proven in the history of Islam. “No court can lawfully condemn a woman or a man for such a sin,” Abu Arqoub said, stressing that those who commit “honour crimes” should be punished as in every other crime.

Hala Ahed, legal consultant at the Jordanian Women’s Union, cited the injustices women face in administrative detention under the pretext of protecting them against murder.
Rather than detaining those who threaten women or plan to murder them, women are the ones who pay the price. As illogical as this is, it is justified by the law,” she said, citing the Crime Prevention Law, which authorises administrative governors to detain women “for their protection”. During a panel discussion, MP Wafaa Bani Mustafa said the law “encroaches on the executive authorities”.

“This law is unconstitutional,” she said.

Participants at the event criticised the lack of crucial laws related to women on the agenda of the Lower House’s deliberations.

Israa Tawalbeh, a forensic doctor, estimates the number of crimes committed against women in Jordan to be higher than the official figure, saying that many cases of women’s deaths that are considered accidents turn out to be murder. “I would like to note here that 90 to 95 per cent of women murdered in the name of honour in Jordan are virgins and not found to be sexually active,” she said.

A documentary showing all types of violence Jordanian women face was screened during the event. Princess Basma and the attendees also signed a petition to call for an end stop of violence against women and girls.

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign originating from the first Women’s Global Leadership Institute and sponsored by the Centre for Women’s Global Leadership in 1991.

Participants chose the dates November 25 — the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women — and December 10 — International Human Rights Day — to symbolically link violence against women and human rights and to emphasise that such violence is a violation of human rights.

**UNESCO launches educational project for Jordanians, Syrians**


UNESCO, under the patronage of the Ministry of Education, is partnering with Al Quds College in launching an educational project specifically dedicated to 250 Jordanian and Syrian youths affected by the Syrian crisis, according to a statement released on Wednesday by UNESCO Amman Office.

The project, titled “Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Syrian and Jordanian Youth in Jordan”, is financially underpinned by the Korean government and will be based at Al Quds College in Amman.

The young students, half of whom will be women, will be taught the BTEC Level 3 Diploma programme, a one-year internationally accredited programme focusing on seven different specialities.

They will also attend courses on English language, life skills, computer literacy and study skills, according to the statement.
AMMAN (UN Communications Group) — A 17-year old woman who came to Jordan four years ago won the first award in her life when she participated in PLURAL+ Film Festival, an initiative of the UN Alliance of Civilisations and the International Organisation for Migration.

Walaa, who is originally from Daraa in south Syria and took refuge in Jordan along with her family of 10 four years ago, needed to express what had happened to her and to tell her story. She participated in a training course on filmmaking for girls organised by the International Rescue Committee, which armed her with the tools to do exactly that and to tell her story through the short film “The Girl whose Shadow Reflects the Moon”. She loves to read and write, but to hold a camera and use it to film, that was first.

Walaa believes that a combination of her hobbies helped her to produce a good video, through which she wanted to encourage women to speak about problems they face; to tell them that they should not keep their silence when they face gender-based violence, and that certain messages are easier to express through art.

In her case, her family was not comfortable when they first saw her video; they belong to an older generation, and they were afraid of exposing her story publicly. However, she managed to make them understand that whatever happened to her, she should not feel guilty because it was not her fault. Walaa believes that girls should be given the opportunity of choosing whether they want to talk or remain silent. All the books she had read and the films she watched have encouraged her to speak up, which is why she thinks that art is very important for women, and the education of girls is very important for the development of society. Telling stories about the lives of refugees is important to her because she wants the world to know what it means to be a refugee.

The life of a refugee is difficult, but it is even more difficult for a girl. In Daraa, women used to work and study; in this new context, women are supposed to have children and work at home because the brothers and fathers want to protect them. When under severe stress, some brothers and fathers are more likely to use violence against their daughters, sisters and wives. They don’t realise that violence strangles society and life itself. Early marriage is another challenge faced by girls in difficult contexts.

Walaa believes that a girl under 18 is not capable of carrying out the responsibility of leading a family. She has a clear plan for her future as she wants to study filmmaking, journalism and Arabic literature. If she finds time, she would also like to study English literature. She hopes to change the situation of women through her work, encouraging them to speak out loud and strong. Her short film can be streamed at http://pluralplus.unaoc.org/. More information about the PLURAL+ initiative is also available on the website.

This story was contributed by the UN Communications Group in Jordan as part of the “16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence” campaign.
Jordan marks International Day of Persons with Disabilities
Published on 3 December 2016 in the Jordan Times: http://bit.ly/2h72Ns4

Jordan on Saturday celebrated the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD), with this year’s theme being “Achieving 17 Goals for the Future We Want”.

The Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities on Friday issued a statement explaining that the UN adopted this theme under several priorities, including the assessment of the current compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The council said Jordan’s celebration of this occasion aims at raising awareness of disability issues and supporting people with disabilities to enjoy their rights as enshrined in the law, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. Since 1992, IDPD has been celebrated annually on December 3 around the world, according to the UN’s website.

When it comes to future of girls, we are all responsible – Princess Basma

HRH Princess Basma on Thursday stressed the important role that society plays in shaping the futures and lives of girls.

“Let us remember that we are all responsible. Let us remember that our every word or deed, positive or negative, can affect the road [a 10-year-old girl] travels from this crossroads in her life. This is what will shape her role in society, which is to say our society, and our world,” Princess Basma said at the launch of the State of the World Population Report 2016.

The UNFPA prepared the report under the theme “10: how our future depends on a girl at this decisive age”.

The report, which focuses on the well-being of 10-year-old girls and the importance of investing in them, said 89 per cent of the world’s 125 million 10-year-old girls live in developing countries and face obstacles related to equal education, healthcare and safety.

Princess Basma said that in some parts of the world, a 10-year-old girl looks forward to her horizons opening up so she can achieve her goals. “Elsewhere, however, she is up against closed doors. Her prospects are limited while her future is determined by others or by her harsh environment including factors threatening her safety and socioeconomic promise,” added the princess, who is also UNFPA’s global goodwill ambassador. “In our society,” she explained, when a girl reaches the critical age of 10, and signs of maturity start to appear, “that’s when her freedom begins to erode due to a kind of social pressure”. “She may be deprived of education or employment, or productive participation in public life. In this decisive window of time, we must see to it that she continues her education at a level of quality that measures up to international standards,” the princess continued.

This year’s State of World Population report highlights practices that harm girls and violate their human rights — starting at age 10 — preventing them from realising their full potential as adults and from contributing to the economic and social progress of their communities and nations. Without their contribution, the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its accompanying 17 Sustainable Development Goals may never be achieved, according to the report.
Speaking at the launch ceremony, Daniel Baker, regional humanitarian coordinator and head of the UNFPA Jordan’s country office, said that today “we are highlighting the findings of a report that shows vividly how all of our futures are critically dependent on the future prospects of young girls everywhere, including here in Jordan”.

Baker highlighted that the report is all about something the UNFPA is setting out as the key to reaching the sustainable development goals in 15 years — “that is, realising the demographic dividend, of which Jordan is a prime example”.

He added that since the future of girls is “our common future”, everyone — women and men, girls and boys — should be involved in challenging gender discriminatory norms. “This also means freedom from violence of any sort,” the UN official stressed.

Higher Education Minister Adel Tweisi also spoke about the education opportunity that Jordan provides to all, regardless of gender or religion. He noted that the government is keen to empower all children through compulsory education, with a special focus on girls.

In Jordan, there are 72,500 girls at the age of 10, and some 31,300 Syrian girls of the same age, according to Suad Nabhan, assistant representative at the UNFPA Jordan’s office.

“We have so many girls at this age to deal with,” Nabhan said, adding that the 10-year-old girls now will be 25 in 2030, when the world will check the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Thus, they are the future.

**Report highlights**

- Nine out of ten 10-year-old girls live in developing countries, and one in five lives in a least developed country
- Each year of education delivers an additional 11.7% uplift in wages in later life for girls (compared with 9.6% for men). Yet, 16 million girls between the ages of 6 and 11 will never start school, twice the number of boys
- If all the 10-year-old girls who drop out of school or do not attend school in developing countries completed secondary education, they would trigger a $21 billion annual dividend
- 10% of 5-to-14 year-old girls do more than 28 hours of household chores per week, twice that of boys
- Three in four girls labourers are unpaid
- Every day, an estimated 47,700 girls are married before 18

*Source: UNFPA World Population Report 2016*

**Jordanian delegation tours Europe to study media self-regulation systems**


UNESCO, in partnership with the Swedish Fojo Media Institute, is organising a study tour on media self-regulation for major representatives of Jordanian media, government and civil society, according to a statement released on Sunday by UNESCO Amman Office.

The initiative comes under the scope of UNESCO’s “Support to Media in Jordan” Project, funded by the EU and endorsed by the Ministry of State for Media Affairs.

The delegation is touring Sweden, Denmark and the UK in the period between December 4 and 14 to meet and network with self-regulatory bodies, leading media organisations, broadcasters, government officials and media experts. The move aims to strengthen Jordanian stakeholders’ awareness of the importance of self-regulatory systems through exposure to long-running models in the field. The study tour will be rounded up by a summit to be held in Jordan in February 2017, the statement added.
Sama Sarhan woman breaks through male-dominated profession with her own tyre shop


This year has been quite exceptional for Thuraya Fadly, who is engaged in what is deemed a male-dominated profession in a “very conservative” region.

Divorced and a mother of a six-year-old son, the 33-year-old woman had defied many societal norms when she decided to open her own tyre shop in Sama Sarhan in Mafraq, some 80km northeast of Amman.

“I wanted to start a business that is guaranteed to flourish. I found out that tyre shops are missing in seven villages, including Sama Sarhan,” Fadly told The Jordan Times over the phone on Sunday. The idea to initiate her own business was prompted by the mother’s need for independence and ensuring a better life for her son.

“I receive a total of JD20 in monthly support from my ex-husband for my son. Although my family’s financial situation is not bad, I started to feel like a burden,” said Fadly, who has a secondary education degree.

Her efforts to secure support landed her with the UNDP Emergency Project (3x6 Approach), which is funded by the Regional Development and Protection Programme and the World Food Programme in cooperation with the National Microfinance Bank.

“I consulted my family with the idea of opening a tyre sale and repair shop. They supported the idea after some hesitation. My brother agreed to help me manage the business,” she said.

Thanks to training courses she attended through the UNDP and the financial support she received, Fadly is now an owner of a fully-operational tyre shop in the downtown of Sama Sarhan.

“UNDP has paved the way for me to become a businesswoman. The training workshops have sharpened my ideas and skills,” noted Fadly, who insists on offering her clients the option to pay cash or through monthly instalments.

“Winning customers’ trust is more important for me than making money. It is true that the profit I make now is nominal, but I am thinking long term,” she highlighted.

As a divorced woman who is running an unfamiliar profession for women in her society, Fadly said customers still show their surprise when they see her managing the shop.

“My brother and another employee stay at the shop most of the time, but I make sure to be present when I can,” she said. On her future plan, Fadly is now focusing on developing her businesses and looking for funding channels to support her endeavours. “Usama’s Shop will continue to accommodate the local community’s needs of automobile services,” she said.
Food for Training programme a chance to work, learn for vulnerable Jordanians

Published on 4 December 2016 in the Jordan Times: http://bit.ly/2g1odC0

Known as Jordan’s industrial district, Sahab is 16km southeast of the capital. Driving into its barren landscape, one will come across large manufacturing businesses known to many Jordanians. Nineteen-year-old Lamia Abdallah is working to gain the skills and experience to support her family in one of the Sahab factories. Abdallah has secured the job opportunity through WFP’s Food for Training programme. Her employers at the Aqaba Vegetable Oil Factory have given her enough flexibility to alternate between her university studies and her work. Her job is always there waiting for her after the end of the university term. Having the ability to work and study is vital to Abdallah. “Studying for me is the solution to my challenges,” she said. Abdallah is one of 2,000 participants in the WFP programme, which is being implemented in partnership with local NGO National Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition (NAJMAH) to leverage work opportunities with the aim of increasing employment and — subsequently — food security for vulnerable Jordanians. Supported by Japan, the Food for Training programme distributes food vouchers to the participants, who are trained in various vocational fields, from factory production work to construction, agriculture and food production. The training lasts three months, with each participant receiving around JD6-worth of food vouchers for every day of training. Around 4,000 Jordanians in total have been trained in these vocational fields since the launch of the programme in 2014. WFP Spokesperson Shaza Moghraby said Food for Training gives employees both the practical experience and the confidence needed to enter the labour market. “What sets this programme apart from other WFP skills training programmes is the in-depth market research that was done to identify the vocational sectors that have the highest demands for jobs,” Moghraby explained. The results of the market research suggested factory production is in high demand in Jordan.

NAJMAH’s representative Afnan Hiyari’s job is to visit the factories and find opportunities for work. Based on the vacancies, she recruits workers and connects them with the factory owners. Hiyari’s job also extends beyond this role. She continues to mediate between the factory owner and workers with matters specifically to do with their wellbeing. She works to enforce a system that protects the rights of each trainee and employee. The director of a factory working with the programme, Jad Wakileh, explained: “As management, we work with Ms Hiyari to find out what is needed. It is much easier for the female workers to talk to someone like her instead of us. This communication is crucial to both the factory and the workers”. At the Aqaba Vegetable Oil Factory, Manager Yasin Abdil Rahman, revealed that just like Abdallah, each one of his female workers has a story to tell. “We take into account people who face a lot of personal challenges and difficulties. Our policy is to provide them with jobs that accommodate their circumstances.” Abdallah said she went against her family’s wishes, which were for her to pursue a career in nursing. Instead, she chose to study nutrition and food processing at university. As a result of her decision she has been subjected to certain hardships. “My father cut me off from all financial support for a while. I couldn’t pay for my studies,” she said. She dreams of a time when she is fully capable of supporting her mother in the same way she has relentlessly supported her throughout her life. As WFP transitions from direct food aid to building the capacity and resilience of vulnerable populations, it works to emphasise the personal experience of each of its beneficiaries. Programmes like Food for Training reflect the future of humanitarian aid; rather than relying on direct assistance, vulnerable people will be given the capacity to support themselves. Ultimately, Food for Training sets an example of what a successful partnership between a UN body like WFP, a local NGO like NAJMAH and the private sector could be. Similarly, participants like Abdallah set an example in their determination and their willingness to learn. “I have a long way to go. I finished one year of studies and have four years left. But I will persevere. Through my work, I am able to help my mum in buying her medication and supporting my family in the best way I can.” The writer is an education specialist who also blogs about culture and food (www.alifeonaplate.com). She has partnered with WFP to write a series of articles that explores the lives of vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees through their food.
Three new schools inaugurated at Azraq Refugee camp

Three new schools have been opened recently for Syrian children at the Azraq Refugee Camp, according to a UNICEF statement released this week. Ministry of Education officials and representatives of donors to the Jordan Compact Education Fund — including ambassadors of the EU and Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the UK and the US — attended the inauguration ceremony.

Over 35,000 Syrians are currently living in the Azraq Refugee Camp, including close to 13,000 children of school age. “With just two schools [that had been] operational in the camp accommodating about 6,000 children, more than half of the children, close to 7,000 children, were out of the formal education system,” the statement said. “The opening of the three new schools will ensure that there is adequate space in school for every child of school-going age,” it added.

‘Industries still facing difficulties in recruiting Syrian workers’

The reluctance of Syrian labourers to work in the industrial sector is a hindrance for the Kingdom to benefit from the deal with the EU on relaxed rules of origin, Secretary General of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply Yousef Shamali said Monday.

In an interview with the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Shamali called on the UNHCR to launch an awareness campaign among Syrian refugees, focusing on how their given rights will not be affected if they receive a job through official channels.

There are challenges facing benefiting from the EU deal, including the requirement of having Syrian refugees work in the private sector at a percentage of no less than 15 per cent during the first two years since the decision enters into force, to reach 25 per cent during the third year, Shamali said.

“Our ambition is to grant 200,000 Syrians work permits, which would enable all Jordanian industries to benefit from the decision to relax the rules of origin,” the official explained, noting that so far, 33,000 work permits have been issued for Syrian refugees.

He added that the authorities are considering giving Syrian workers permits valid for three to five years and maintaining the decision to exempt them from the permits’ fees in order to encourage them to work in the industrial sector.

However, Shamali said employing Syrian workers will not come at the expense of Jordanian workers, noting that the EU deal is bound to increase investment rates and bring more foreign investments into the Kingdom, which increases job opportunities for Jordanians, in addition to reducing the trade balance deficit and opening new markets for local products.

The EU deal to simplify the rules of origin is a chance for Jordanian exports to enter European markets, Shamali said, noting that adopting 18 industrial estates in the decision covers around 90 per cent of the industrial sectors.

Six Jordanian companies have submitted applications to benefit from the deal, he added. Shamali said the ministry is ready to provide technical support to factories wishing to export to the EU, noting that the industrial development directorate in the ministry oversees their applications, requirements and approvals.

Moreover, he said a Dutch expert has been employed in the Industry and Trade Ministry, under the support of the Dutch government, to help industrial sectors have their products enter European markets and achieve maximum benefit from the EU deal.

Jordanian exports to the EU amounted to JD144 million in 2002 and increased to JD206 million in 2014, but in 2015 they decreased to only JD123 million, Petra reported, adding that imports from EU member states increased from JD1 billion in 2002 to JD3 billion in 2015.
Kingdom secures $2.8b in grants, soft loans so far in 2016
Published on 5 December 2016 in the Jordan Times: http://bit.ly/2hg5He7

Planning and International cooperation Minister Imad Fakhoury on Monday said that the total sum Jordan has received in grants for the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) to the Syrian crisis 2016-2018 has reached $1.02 billion, accounting for 38.4 per cent of the total plea. JRP aims to enhance Jordan's resilience and sustain the services provided to host communities and Syrian refugees. Donors committed to $700 million grants under the Jordan Compact over 2016-2018 to fund priority projects that target host communities.

The “Jordan Compact”, which was presented at the 2016 London conference, sets out a series of major commitments by donors and Jordan aimed at improving the resilience of refugee and host communities. Fakhoury, according to a ministry statement, stressed that the grants came as a result of the London meeting, which “begt additional commitments to the yearly support for the Kingdom to fund the JRP”.

Of JRP’s additional grants, $325.9 million is allocated to cover the additional costs generated from the Syrian refugee crisis, $216 million destined for the refugees and $251 million to implement priority projects that target host communities.

UN organisations such as UNHCR and the World Food Programme have implemented projects targeting the refugees at a cost of $224 million, out of which $194 million was delivered in cash.

Fakhoury said that the total amount of aid is expected to be increased to $1.18 billion with additional grants worth $170 million, noting that support for the JRP is expected to cover 45 per cent of its requirements, compared to the 30 per cent in previous years. The education sector has received the largest amount of aid compared to other sectors, totalling $146.2 million, the minister explained.

Fakhoury called on donor countries to support the ministry’s education plan for Syrian refugees, worth $1 billion for 2016-2018, noting that the world’s contribution to the cost of education has covered only 44 per cent. As for concessional financing, Jordan has been given a financing ceiling to receive long-term soft loans worth $1.9 billion over three years with a low interest rate that accounts for 0.5-2 per cent and up to seven-year grace period. The long-term loans will help bridge the gap between spending and revenues in the state budget, which will allow public debt restructuring in accordance with the financial reform programme agreed upon with the International Monetary Fund.

So far, the government has signed several loan agreements with a value of $390 million, and is scheduled to sign more, worth $550 million, by the end of 2016. The total sum of loans received and intended to be agreed on for 2016 has reached $939.7 million, some $848.3 million of which is to support the Treasury and $91.4 to be spent on water and sewerage projects. The value of the annual grants that are committed to Jordan through bilateral agreements with donor countries has reached $662.8 million distributed among several sectors such as water and sewerage, municipalities, education, health, energy, economic opportunities, and supporting the general budget. The ministry is working on signing the rest of these deals, which are worth $71 million, before the end of 2016. The minister said that the total value of annual and additional assistance provided to the Kingdom in the entire year of 2016 will reach $2.8 billion, some $939.7 million of which was in the form of soft loans and $1.18 billion in grants to finance the JRP. Fakhoury expressed appreciation for the international community and the donor countries for supporting Jordan, noting that the Jordanian government will continue to follow up on the commitments that were announced during London’s conference.
Conference on youth and peacekeeping concludes

Published on 6 December 2016 in the Jordan Times: http://bit.ly/2h1uCyR

Deputising for HRH Crown Prince Hussein, Youth Minister Rami Wreikat on Tuesday attended the closing ceremony of the “Youth, Peace and Security in the Arab States Region” conference.

Young people representing 18 Arab countries participated in the three-day conference, organised by several UN agencies.

Panellists and attendees discussed the youth's role in achieving peace and security, and discarding extremism and terrorism, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In a speech at the closing ceremony, Wreikat said that young people around the world have key roles in spreading peace and achieving international security, noting that what the region is going through requires comprehensive action with a flexible and well-built mechanism.

He also referred to Crown Prince Hussein's role in supporting youth initiatives, noting that His Royal Highness — through holding the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security held in Amman in 2015 — alerted the world to shed more light on youth issues and give them more priorities in policymaking.

The forum, considered an umbrella for the largest assembly of international youth organisations, contributed to reaching the Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security.

The declaration seeks to enhance young people’s participation and leadership in issues of peace and security, and enhance their involvement in violence prevention and peacebuilding.

Wreikat added that the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 was based on the content of the declaration, resulting in a historic resolution that calls for integrating the youth as a main partner in making sustainable peace, fighting extremism and ending conflicts.

On the sidelines of the conference, the minister participated in a regional consultation and high-level dialogue, which was moderated by UN Secretary General’s Youth Envoy Ahmad Hindawi.

Head of General Security of Dubai Lt. Gen. Dahi Khalfan, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Sigrid Kaag and UNDP Country Director Zena Ali-Ahmad also participated in the consultation and dialogue.

Participants in the meeting highlighted the importance of the youth participation in political life and national development plans.

They called for engaging young people in the decision-making process, narrowing the gap between young people in job opportunities, establishing a database that allows young people to better communicate in global context means and ensuring them the right to access information, among others.

The conference was a follow-up on the recommendations of the global forum, based on what Crown Prince Hussein announced in April, 2015 while chairing a UN Security Council open debate on the “Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace”, Petra reported.

At the UN session, the Crown Prince said: “The youth of today need all of you. You are the policymakers, who can impact world peace and security, and the decision makers, who can partner with young people in building efforts, instead of leaving them as a target of violence and destruction. Your generation is also in charge of drawing up education, development and economic policies.”
Judeh receives France’s former FM, UN official
Published on 6 December 2016 in the Jordan Times: http://bit.ly/2g9KlKM

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh on Tuesday met with former French foreign minister Philippe Douste-Blazy and reviewed Jordanian-French relations.

Judeh and Douste-Blazy, the French candidate to head the World Health Organisation, also went over the latest regional developments and challenges, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Also on Tuesday, Judeh met with UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Sigrid Kaag and discussed bilateral cooperation between Amman and the UN, and the repercussions of the Syrian refugee influx on neighbouring countries.

Kaag praised the Jordanian role in dealing with regional challenges, voicing keenness to maintain cooperation and coordination with the Kingdom, according to Petra.

“Rukban” camp: plants are the only means of heating for refugees
Published on 6 December 2016 in Al Ghad Newspaper in Arabic: http://bit.ly/2h5Kovl

Syrian refugees at the Rukban camp are suffering from cold weather conditions which has been effecting the Kingdom these days. This only adds to the tragedy of more than 75 thousand Syrian refugees who have been forced to live in the buffer zone between Jordan and Syria.

Refugees cannot find anything but firewood from a plant called (Al Shinan) as means of heating, especially that this plant is considered a source of alternative energy to gas and electricity. The refugees in the camp are collecting the firewood from the desert and some are purchasing them from dealers inside the camp, since the area of the camp is completely empty from this plant.

Ali Al Jassem, the Head of the Syrian Tribal Council, said that the refugees in Rukban are suffering from the cold weather conditions and the extreme drops in temperatures, as the area of the camp is a desert and this causes a lot of suffering from different physical and mental illnesses. He stressed that the refugees need urgent winterization assistance ranging from tents, blankets and means of heating, especially for children who cannot handle the harsh cold. He indicated that several children have already died because of the cold and poor health conditions and no medical assistance.

Social media activist called on international organizations to speed up the humanitarian aid delivery process in Rukban, to protect the refugees from the cold and illnesses.

International media had released news about the death of two children in Rukban due to the harsh weather conditions which led to the death of these children.

UNHCR recently developed a plan for humanitarian assistance to the refugees for 2016 – 2017 requiring $25 million to cover the needs, while Filippo Grande, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, stressed that the situation at the Syrian Jordanian borders is an international responsibility since the area is outside of Jordanian borders.
UNDP signs grant deals with 34 community organisations

UNDP said on Wednesday it has signed grant agreements with 34 community based organisations (CBOs) in Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa. In a statement, the agency said the grants, totaling $1.3 million, come under the scope of its “social cohesion and stability programme” backed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the Japanese and Kuwaiti governments.

Also on Wednesday, UNDP said it held the “first national meeting of entrepreneurs for the emergency employment project (3X6)-Jordan”. The meeting aimed to increase networking among 3X6 entrepreneurs in Mafraq.

The project improved the income of the beneficiaries’ families by about 54 per cent, with 1,350 young people participating in the first phase of the emergency employment project.

Some 441 young men and women were also supported to establish their small businesses to become entrepreneurs in Mafraq, UNDP said in a second statement. Japanese Ambassador Shuichi Sakurai attended the meeting.

‘Haqiq with UNICEF’ training concludes

The Crown Prince Foundation (CPF) on Friday concluded the activities of the “Haqiq with UNICEF” programme, held by UNICEF-linked Alexander Bodini Award and CPF-affiliated Haqiq Initiative, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported on Saturday.

HRH Crown Prince Hussein launched Haqiq (achieve) Initiative in 2013 to help shape young men and women from an intellectual and skills perspective. The activity that concluded last week involved 120 male and female participants from around the Kingdom in Ghamadan Forest.

CPF CEO Omar Masarweh and Robert Jenkins, UNICEF representative to Jordan, attended the conclusion ceremony.

The ceremony included the graduation of the participants, who received training on various topics, including human rights. Haqiq received the Alexander Bodini Award for its work as a youth-oriented global initiative.
France’s candidate to lead WHO calls for long-term solutions to address refugee healthcare needs


Addressing the healthcare of refugees and migrants needs to be through a long-term solution where the international community — not only the host countries — shoulder the responsibility, said one nominee for the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) director post.

Philippe Douste-Blazy, France’s candidate to the post, said that if elected as WHO director, he will work towards setting up a global taskforce for the health of migrants and refugees, as there should be a mechanism to ensure having long-term funding for that purpose. “Innovative funding is what we need today,” Douste-Blazy said in a recent interview with The Jordan Times during his visit to Amman, where he also met with Jordanian health officials. He noted that WHO should be the organisation that defines health as a “political priority” and ensures universal access to medicine and drugs.

As director general, the former French foreign and health minister said, he would focus on five areas of priorities to strength and bolster WHO work. These priorities are ensuring that WHO responds effectively to emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases; bolstering health systems to implement universal health coverage; increasing the availability, affordability and access to essential medicines; tackling the growing challenge of antimicrobial resistance to ensure more effective management of demand for and use of antimicrobial agents; and strengthening surveillance of drug resistance and antimicrobial consumption in humans and animals and increase the supply of new drugs, diagnostics and vaccines. The fifth priority, he said, is to tackle the unprecedented growth of non-communicable diseases, especially ensuring that socioeconomic issues, cultural aspects and gender-related factors are better taken into account in the development of health projects.

According to Douste-Blazy, antimicrobial resistance should be tackled, and WHO should be involved in a global awareness campaign regarding the use of antibiotics. “Without action in this regard, we are going to lose all the health gains that humans have been working on over the last century,” he warned, adding that 80 per cent of the antibiotics that humans consume come from eating meat. He noted that today many producers give antibiotics to animals, and when humans eat meat they eat antibiotics.

Since 1987 no major class of antibiotics have been produced, Douste-Blazy explained, adding that WHO has to support a technical platform in which “we can make incentives for manufacturers who are going to produce new antibiotics”. Meanwhile, Douste-Blazy stressed the need to address gender-based violence through a comprehensive global strategy. “Gender-based violence is also one of the main public health issues that should be addressed with other concerned UN agencies,” he said.

Addressing this issue needs a strategy that includes education, having trained public health workers who are dedicated to that matter, and empowering women to report domestic violence. As for women’s and reproductive health, the WHO candidate said the sexual and reproductive health paradigm necessitates understanding women’s individual experiences and constraints and the social factors that influence sexual and reproductive health across their lives. “Reproductive rights are recognised as valuable ends in themselves, and essential to the enjoyment of other fundamental rights,” he said, adding that the importance of reproductive rights is enshrined in a wide range of frameworks, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Programme of Action of International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Sustainable Development Goals. These frameworks converge in affirming that the empowerment of women, gender equality, the rights and empowerment of adolescents and youth, and the universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, must continue to be placed at the heart of sustainable development.
Khuloud received funding for her business through the Regional Programme for the Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in the Southern Mediterranean Region (Photo courtesy of UN Communications Group)

Micro-loan helps Mafraq woman challenge stereotypes, build ‘something that lasts’
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Khuloud is a farmer and a volunteer at a community-based organisation in a rural area in the northeastern governorate of Mafraq. A year ago, Khuloud received a micro-loan which she used to start her own business. She bought grapevines and was soon able to start selling the products at the local farmers’ market.

Khuloud was inspired to start her business by another woman in her community who went through the same path.
“It was the first time I ever heard of a woman in my area receiving support to start a business, and I thought that, if she can do it, maybe I could do it too,” Khuloud recalls. Once the investment began to generate dividends, Khuloud bought chickens to expand her business and to supplement her family’s income. The mother-of-four’s first supporters are her husband and children.

“At the beginning, my work was criticised. People in my neighbourhood would tell me that it’s not acceptable for a woman to work at the farmers’ market, because most of the workers in the market are men and I would have been absent from the house during the day due to long commuting hours to reach the place,” she says.

Initially, Khuloud promoted the business in her community, starting from her children’s teachers. Through word of mouth, she managed to gradually expand her client base and systematise her marketing at a larger scale. “As time went by, these people got used to the idea and stopped criticising me, and I believe that this happened because I proved myself. I didn’t step down or give up. What truly matters is to have a clear vision and not to feel vulnerable, while gathering the support and the motivation needed from your family and beloved ones,” Khuloud says.

She received support through a project funded by the EU under the Regional Programme for the Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in the Southern Mediterranean Region (“Spring Forward for Women”). The programme is implemented by UN Women, with the primary focus being to encourage the effective participation of marginalised women in economic and public life by addressing the barriers that have impeded their engagement in these areas. Building on her personal experience, Khuloud is now convinced that having a solid business plan is the key to success.

“Few women seem to know how to structure business plans in my area to make the best out of their ideas. I think this is why most of them fail or don’t even know how to begin in the first place.” With more income available, Khuloud is now encouraging her older children, a boy aged 16 and a girl aged 13, to pursue higher education, with the hope that one day they will have the chance to start their own businesses. Khuloud has always strived to work and she is passionate to continue scaling up her initiative. “It makes me feel strong. It changed me as a person as no other experience in my life did. Having my own business taught me dedication and patience. After all the hard work, I treasure what I have learned to build something that lasts.”

This story was contributed by the UN Communications Group in Jordan as part of the “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence” campaign
The gap is widening between what is being said and what is being done on issues related to human rights in the Kingdom, said a report issued by the Phenix Centre for Economic and Informatics Studies on the occasion of Human Rights Day. The report, a copy of which was sent to The Jordan Times, said that despite the measures adopted by the government to ensure better implementation of human rights in Jordan, this has not been sufficiently reflected in the status of human rights in the country. According to the report, there are still restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly in the Kingdom, and several activities by civil society organisations were prohibited in 2016. In addition, the report said the government is still restricting the establishment of independent labour unions other than the already existing 17, criticising the restrictions imposed on collective bargaining for workers.

The minimum wage in Jordan (JD190) is another issue that should be revisited to ensure a better life for workers and their families, the watchdog said, noting that it is below the poverty line and has not been raised since 2012. However, at a press conference last week, Government Spokesperson Mohammad Momani said the government is studying the possibility of increasing the minimum wage. But he added that the government has to review the issue thoroughly as there are many employees at public agencies who receive the minimum wage. Any increase, Momani explained, will cost the government millions of dinars, and this needs to be taken into consideration.

Meanwhile, in its report for 2015, the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) said last year was marked by increased official involvement in the various human rights issues through endorsing the national plan for human rights by the Cabinet. “This plan contributed to encouraging the government to follow up on reported violations by some executive bodies,” the centre said in the report issued in October. The concerned ministries and agencies have taken the necessary measures to address these violations (although they were limited).

Although practical steps were taken to address the issue of procrastination in implementing the NCHR’s recommendations from the government’s side, this did not lead to a quantitative change in relation to the human rights status in Jordan in 2015, the NCHR said, adding that “the absence of implementation or the slow implementation is an issue of concern to the centre”.

In a statement issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Saturday to mark Human Rights Day, HH Prince Zeid, the high commissioner, called on people to stand up for the rights of others. “2016 has been a disastrous year for human rights across the globe, and if the growing erosion of the carefully constructed system of human rights and rule of law continues to gather momentum, ultimately everyone will suffer,” Prince Zeid said, according to the statement. He added that “many of us are fearful about the way the world is heading”. “Extremist movements subject people to horrific violence. Conflicts and deprivation are forcing families from their homes. Climate change darkens our horizons,” the prince said. “Discrimination, yawning economic disparities and the ruthless desire to gain or maintain power at any cost are the principal drivers of current political and human rights crises. Humane values are under attack — and so many people feel overwhelmed, unsure what to do or where to turn,” he added. “Many leaders are failing to grapple effectively and honestly with these complex social and economic issues,” he said. “So people are turning in desperation to the siren voices exploiting fears, sowing disinformation and division, and making alluring promises they cannot fulfil.” “Human rights are the basis of effective policy, in societies where people know they can trust government and rely on the law. Tearing up the laws and institutions that were so painstakingly built up over the last half of the 20th century — designed to protect all individuals, as well as promote stability and economic well-being — is short-sighted and dangerous. These are not trifles to be tossed aside for personal or political gain,” the human rights commissioner warned.
Jordan’s ambassador to UN, Sudan sworn in


Two new Jordanian ambassadors were sworn in on Monday before His Majesty King Abdullah, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. Sima Bahous took the oath of office as Jordan’s permanent representative to the UN and a non-resident ambassador to Cuba and the Caribbean countries.

At the same ceremony, held at Al Husseiniya Palace, Mahmoud Khazaaleh was sworn in as the Kingdom’s ambassador to Sudan.

Germany’s assistance to Jordan reaches all-time high

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Germany announced 79 million euros in grants and loans to Jordan Tuesday, increasing the country’s pledged assistance to the Kingdom in 2016 to around 472 million euros, which is an all-time high in terms of volume in a year.

“This aid aims to help Jordan’s host communities that are affected by the influx of Syrian refugees. It also includes humanitarian assistance and is part of development cooperation,” Germany’s special representative for the Middle East Stability Partnership, Ambassador Joachim Rücker, said at a press conference.

Of the total, around 70 million euros is in soft loans while the rest is in the form of grants, he said. Some 100-200 million euros has already been disbursed, while the majority of the remaining amount has already been contracted, said the German official. The 79 million euros announced Tuesday include a 30-million-euro soft loan agreement signed between Jordan and the German Development Bank (KfW), while the rest is a grant. The assistance is aimed at supporting Jordan’s projects in the sanitation and water sectors. Referring to the relaxed rules of origin deal with Jordan, Rücker said the deal is an important step towards boosting trade, investment and economic development in the Kingdom. The official said he held several meetings with Jordanian officials to maximise the benefit of the deal and be able to address challenges facing it.

“It is very important to make the deal come to life,” he said, adding that discussions with Jordanian officials covered preparations for an upcoming meeting in Brussels on January 25 when representatives of some 40 Jordanian enterprises will meet with EU buyers and companies.

“There is a need for better advertisements of the deal and its benefits as many still do not know about it and its benefits,” said Rücker. Commending Jordan’s efforts in employing Syrians and providing education to Syrian children, the official said Jordan has already granted around 34,500 work permits to Syrians since the beginning of the year. “This is a very positive development,” he said.

He added that Germany, under the Middle East Employment Drive, has been helping to ensure that more people can earn their own livelihood. Since February, 11,046 people in Jordan alone have benefited from the initiative and found job opportunities. Jordan, with Germany’s support, has taken substantial measures to enable an additional 50,000 Syrian refugee children to attend school by expanding the double shift school system and removing administrative obstacles. A catch-up programme for another 25,000 Syrian children who have not been able to attend school for a long time has been set up with help from UNICEF. He said that Jordan has achieved about 80-90 per cent of a target set after the London conference to have all Syrian children of school-age enrolled in the scholastic semesters, adding that this percentage is higher than that achieved in other countries such as Lebanon and Turkey.

Meanwhile, Planning and International Cooperation Minister Imad Fakhoury met with Rücker over progress in the Jordan Compact, especially implementing decisions related to simplifying the rules of origin for Jordanian products, the pledged German aid for 2016 and projects in the pipeline, according to a ministry statement. Fakhoury stressed that the Kingdom had already reached the limit, hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees on behalf of the world, and he urged the international community to honour its pledges to Jordan not only for 2016 but for the next two years. The minister also expressed appreciation to Germany for supporting Jordan during the London conference.
Six cases of online sexual exploitation of children have been recently detected by the concerned authorities after the establishment of a cyber crime unit supported by UNICEF.

Maha Homsi, UNICEF’s chief of child protection programme, said the UN agency supported the training of Jordanian police in the UK on detecting such crimes online and a cyber crime unit has been recently established at the Family Protection Department.

The unit will take action to identify and protect victims, remove child sexual abuse material from the Internet, and strengthen cooperation to track down abusers.

“Initially, our agreement with the police was to set up a unit with six members, but after knowing the extent of the work, they commissioned 12 people,” Homsi told The Jordan Times in a recent interview, adding that UNICEF also equipped the unit with top-notch equipment for decrypting mobile phones and examining computers and social media.

Those who post any pornographic material online can now be detected, the UNICEF official explained.

According to Homsi, the Interpol plays a role in the process, and they did not grant access for Jordanian police officers to detect such abuses until after they received the required training.

“Now they have this skill and the forensic investigation skills on the mobile, they are allowed to enter cyberspace and work on these cases… The Interpol has referred to them three cases so far, and they are working on other cases,” she explained.

Some of the cases they have been working on are associated with sexual assault, involving the perpetrator raping the victim and filming the crime, according to Homsi.

In one of the cases uncovered by Interpol, she added, an IP address was identified for publishing 600 pornographic pictures.

Some of these issues have now been brought to the surface through an initiative by the Family Protection Department, the Ministry of Interior and the National Council for Family Affairs.

The project is supported by the UK Department for International Development, according to the UNICEF official.

In addition, Homsi said UNICEF is working on an awareness campaign to help young people use the Internet wisely. “This will start very soon for youth… We will use social media.”

The first focus of the campaign is adolescents who are in the 15-16 age bracket, then “we will be designing other material to cover another age group because our children, unfortunately, use the Internet earlier than they are supposed to”, Homsi added.
Deal signed to promote jobs in refugee host communities

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AMMAN — The Public Works and Housing Ministry on Monday signed an agreement with the International Labour Organisation to support communities hosting Syrian refugees, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The agreement is financially backed by the German Development Bank (KfW) and includes rehabilitation and maintenance of rainwater drainage systems and side protection of agricultural and village roads, with a specific focus on employment promotion.

The agreement is valued at JD2.5 million to cover 12 projects, six in Irbid and six in Mafraq, Public Works Minister Sami Halaseh said.

‘16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence’ conclude


AMMAN — The Sisterhood Is Global Institute (SIGI) on Wednesday concluded the “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence” campaign by conducting a specialised workshop, a SIGI statement said.

The workshop was held to evaluate the campaign on a national level, especially after the passage of 25 years since its launch in cooperation with the Greater Amman Municipality, SIGI said, adding that it aimed at evaluating the campaign’s achievements and the most significant challenges facing the concerned institutions and societies that work in the field of combating gender-based violence.

During the workshop, Asma Khader, the president of SIGI in Jordan, underlined the importance of the 16-day campaign in shedding light on the injustices of Article 308 and creating social momentum against it.