



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section(s): *History***Impact of the 1988 disengagement decision on the Palestinian cause**Alaa Kamel Saadeh^{1*}, Abdulmajid Ibrahim Al-Hajj Ali¹, Khader Eid Al-Sarhan¹, Asma Jadallah Khasawneh², Ikhlas Khalaf Al-Atawi², Abdullah Ahmad Al-Shiyab²¹Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Al al-Bayt University, Jordan²Department of History, Jadara University, JordanCorrespondence: Saadeh1981@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

This research aims to study the results and effects of the legal and administrative disengagement decision on the Palestinian cause, both locally and internationally. This includes examining its impact on supporting the Palestinian national movement, highlighting Palestinian identity, and striving for Palestinian independence and the establishment of a Palestinian state on Palestinian soil—all of which serve the interests of the Palestinian cause and the Arab Palestinian people. The research employs a descriptive historical approach, based on collecting and analyzing primary sources, namely speeches by His Majesty King Hussein related to the disengagement decision, as well as other relevant references. These sources are then studied and analyzed. The legal and administrative disengagement decision was intended to highlight the Palestinian cause from an Arab perspective, supporting and striving for Palestinian independence and statehood, given that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Conferences held in several Arab cities and Arab summits contributed to pressuring Jordan to issue the disengagement decision, which actually occurred in 1988. However, despite this decision, the Palestinian issue remains an Arab, international, and global issue, representing the right of the Palestinian people, who continue to demand their legitimate right to establish their state on the occupied Palestinian land.

KEYWORDS: Disengagement, Palestinian issue, King Hussein bin Talal, Arab Summit**Research Journal in Advanced Humanities**

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Introduction

The factors uniting any two or more countries are numerous and diverse. Some are based on religious aspects, while others are based on intellectual, political, or social factors. The Arab world has enjoyed unity since the Islamic era, particularly during the Rashidun, Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman periods. However, with the collapse of the latter after the end of World War I in 1918, and the resulting colonial agreements that benefited the victorious powers, primarily Britain and France, such as the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, and the Sykes-Picot-Sazonov Agreement of 1916, which divided Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria into colonial spheres of influence between Britain and France, and other colonial agreements aimed at fragmenting the Arab world into disconnected states, thus preventing the unity of the Arab region.

Everything that occurred as a result of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the infiltration of foreign religious, intellectual, linguistic, and social elements into the Arab world, is contrary to what some perceive as its disintegration and assimilation. On the contrary, this infiltration spurred the Arab world to resist and challenge, in accordance with the theory of challenge and response. At the beginning of colonialism, the challenge seemed too great for the Arabs to simply stand up and confront. However, history demonstrates that this region has repeatedly experienced various forms of colonialism, and the Arab world has consistently resisted and responded to these challenges, ultimately achieving independence.

Despite this, several signs of unity have emerged in contemporary history, albeit on a limited scale. Unity was established between Egypt and Sudan, as well as between Egypt and Syria, and between Syria and Lebanon. While not all of these were political and economic unions, they generally constituted social unity and economic and political solidarity. In this research, which addresses the decision to dissolve the union and disengagement between Jordan and Palestine, an examination of the factors that led to the unity between the East and West Banks of the Jordan River, as well as the factors that led to its dissolution, reveals that these factors are largely similar in their main aspects.

Undoubtedly, addressing the issue of disengagement on July 31, 1988, requires careful research and thorough investigation to identify the factors and considerations that influenced this decision. Upon delving into the research, the authors found a near consensus that the reasons for disengagement stemmed from several factors, which can be summarized as follows:

- 1- The recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) at the Rabat Conference in 1974 as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.
- 2- The necessity of asserting a Palestinian identity that is politically independent from Jordan.
- 3- The necessity of implementing the right to self-determination.

These are the most prominent factors that led to the disengagement, according to most of the sources and references consulted by the researchers, despite their limited number. However, the researchers also identified other regional and international factors that contributed to the disengagement, which were addressed in the body of the research and further explained in the conclusion.

Existing research on Jordanian–Palestinian political discourse, media representations, and sociopolitical narratives provides an essential foundation for understanding the broader implications of the 1988 disengagement decision, particularly studies examining protest movements, news framing, ideological polarization, and corpus-driven patterns across Arabic and English media (Abu Rumman & Haider, 2023; Al-Salman & Haider, 2021; Dibas, Rabab'ah, & Haider, 2022; Haider, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017, 2019a; Haider, 2019b; Haider, Ahmad, Yagi, & Hammo, 2023). This research examines the impact of the Jordanian disengagement on the Palestinian issue from several perspectives. Comprising six topics, the research begins with an introduction, followed by a prelude to pave the way for delving into the research subject. The first topic discusses the factors that led to the unification of the two banks of the Jordan River. The second topic addresses the principles that prompted and paved the way for the disengagement, summarizing them in four parts. The third topic then moves on to the disengagement between the West Bank of the Jordan River and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The fourth topic examines the set of considerations that led and prompted King Hussein to make his decision on July 31, 1988, to disengage. The fifth topic discusses the consequences of the disengagement decision. The research concludes with the sixth topic, which examines the reactions to the disengagement decision. A conclusion summarizes the researchers' findings on the topic of disengagement, and the list of sources and references is the final page.

The researchers consulted several references that addressed the research topic, some of which were obtained from the Mu'tah University Library and others from the University of Jordan Library. One of the sources was a collection

of speeches by King Hussein, from which the authors extracted the speech delivered by King Hussein regarding the disengagement decision, in addition to a master's thesis obtained from the University of Jordan entitled "Disengagement in 1988: An Analytical Study of its Causes and Effects on Jordanian-Palestinian Relations," prepared by Sahar Al-Kabariti and supervised by Prof. Mohammad Fadda of the Department of Political Science at the University of Jordan in 1976, which the research benefited from, along with several other references that will be listed in the bibliography.

This study addresses the issue of disengagement, through which the researchers attempted to arrive at a more accurate picture of the factors and circumstances that led to the disengagement decision, clarifying the considerations and consequences resulting from this decision.

Contextual Background

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is linked to Palestine by several historical, geographical, popular, and social ties, in addition to the factors of Arab national unity. Jordan and Palestine are Arab countries, and their people are Arab Muslims. Historically, Jordan and Palestine, throughout the Islamic eras, formed a single unit, whether through their shared location in the Levant or through the historical ties dictated by their geographical position. Jordan constitutes the longest Arab border confronting the Zionist enemy, and its borders with Israel are longer than those of the West Bank and Gaza Strip combined. Therefore, the historical and strategic geographical dimensions that Jordan represents for Palestine necessitates that it fulfills historical and religious responsibilities towards the Holy Land occupied by the Zionists (Al Khalaileh, 1988, p.165).

The popular bond between the two countries is also influenced by this geographical dimension, represented by the connection between western Jordanian regions and eastern Palestinian regions. More specifically, the Jordanian regions of Balqa and Salt are adjacent to the Palestinian region of Nablus, and the Jordanian regions of Karak and Tafila are connected to the Palestinian region of Hebron. Furthermore, the extension formed by the Jordan Valley between Jordan and Palestine has been a crucial preparatory factor linking Jordan to Palestine and the Palestinian cause. Jordan constitutes an essential strategic and political dimension for Palestine and its cause.

Since Jordan's independence on May 25, 1946, the founding King, Abdullah I, son of Sharif Hussein bin Ali, assumed religious responsibilities towards the historical holy sites in the Palestinian territories. This pertains to the Jordanian perspective on Palestine. As for the Palestinian perspective, representatives of Palestinian thought and politics have consistently envisioned culminating the historical, political, and demographic relationship between Jordan and Palestine in a bond of unity.

First: Factors that paved the way for unity between the two banks of the Jordan River

Several factors contributed to the unity between Jordan and Palestine, including geographical location and the demographic similarities between the two peoples. In addition, several Jordanian and Palestinian factors played a role, most notably the desire of politicians in both countries to achieve unity. This unity was intended to create a stable platform from which legitimate Palestinian demands could be raised on the regional and international stage from an independent territory—Jordan. The main factors that actually contributed to achieving unity can be summarized as follows:

First: The All-Palestine Government: The formation of the All-Palestine Government, headed by Ahmed Hilmi Abdel Baqi, was announced in Gaza on September 23, 1948. The government derived its authority from a representative council based on democratic principles. Its objectives were (Al Kabariti, 1996, p.44):

- a. To guarantee the rights of minorities and foreigners.
- b. To protect holy sites.
- c. To protect freedom of worship for all religions.

Many Palestinians, after the two truces between the Arabs and Israel, saw that the best way to preserve what remained of Palestine was unity with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, especially since a part of the Jordanian Arab Army was still stationed on the remaining part of the Palestinian land, and was supervising its administration. Others saw the necessity of forming a Palestinian government, so the All-Palestine Government was formed and based in Gaza. However, this government was weak and had no power, and it collapsed at its first test with Israel (Al Btoush, 2007, pp.162-163). The formation of the All-Palestine Government led King Abdullah I, the founder, to feel that this government posed a challenge to the Jordanian role in preserving the Palestinian lands, and would also weaken the Jordanian position

in the peace efforts with Israel, in addition to the future repercussions on Jordanian interests in Palestine (Al Khalaileh, 1988, p.261). Therefore, the All-Palestine Government faced several different opinions and positions, as each country was looking to achieve its interests. Egypt supported the government project, while the Gaza government did not take a clear stance because it represented a minority opinion and lacked popular support. This was due to opposition from Palestinians themselves, who did not want to return to the rule of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini. Regarding Jordan's position on the All-Palestine Government, King Abdullah was pressured to recognize it, but he did not support the project because, in his view, his approval would mean partition. His reasons included the fact that this government was merely a symbolic and formal declaration with no real power to protect the Arab parts or the occupied territories. Furthermore, the formation of the government contradicted the wishes of the Palestinian people themselves, both those inside Palestine and those displaced, who feared it would lead to the loss of the rest of Palestine. Additionally, the existence of a military force within the government, known as the "Holy War," which operated behind the Arab Army, posed a problem for Jordan. This conflicted with King Abdullah's wishes, so he strove to abolish the government project to preserve the unity of the land and prevent its division. The United Nations' position on the All-Palestine Government focused on two points (Al Kabariti, 1996, pp. 44-45):

- 1- Establishing a union of the Arab region by annexing Palestine to Transjordan.
- 2- Half of the Arab region of Palestine to Transjordan, and the other half to Egypt. Egypt supported this, but the Palestinian desire was for the country not to be divided.

Second: The Amman Conference on October 1, 1948

Due to King Abdullah I's opposition to the aforementioned All-Palestine Government—the Jordanian government facilitated the meeting of Palestinians in Amman and provided the necessary facilities for organizing the conference. The preparatory committee for the conference consisted of: Suleiman al-Faruqi, Saad al-Din al-Alami, Ajaj Nuwayhid, Hikmat al-Faruqi, Mustafa al-Ansari, and Izzat al-Karzon. The conference aimed to study the current situation in Palestine, organize opposition against the All-Palestine Government, call for unity, and pledge allegiance to King Abdullah I as King of Palestine. The conference issued several resolutions, the most important of which were (Al Khalaileh, 1988, pp.163-164):

- 1- The mission of the Arab armies has not ended and will not end until Zionism is defeated.
- 2- The Arab Palestinians will await with eagerness and patience the United Nations resolution, which they hope will be just and legitimate.
- 3- The conference draws the attention of Arab governments and peoples to the fact that forming a Palestinian government in Gaza at a time when the Palestinian people were divided is a harmful and damaging act. The conference holds the Arab governments that supported the Gaza government responsible for any future disaster or tragedy that may befall the Palestinian people.
4. This government, in its current form, contradicts a previous Arab League resolution stipulating that no government should be formed before the liberation of all Palestinian territories from Zionism, and that the Palestinian people must be assisted in determining their own destiny.
5. Given the national relations and ties between Palestine and Jordan, the conference places its greatest hopes on King Abdullah to defend Palestine and preserve its Arab identity and sanctity. The conference grants His Majesty unlimited confidence to speak on behalf of the Arabs of Palestine, to negotiate and act in all matters on their behalf to reach a solution to their situation in the manner he desires.
6. The conference is determined to inform the Arab Higher Committee in Palestine that the Arabs of Palestine have withdrawn their confidence in it, and that it is no longer entitled to represent them or speak on their behalf.
7. The conference decided to send copies of these resolutions to the Jordanian government and to the Arab and foreign representatives in Amman, so that they may deliver them to their respective governments.

This conference represents the first indication of a move towards unity between Jordan and Palestine through the rejection of the All-Palestine Government and the granting of unlimited confidence to King Abdullah I, the founder, to speak on behalf of the Arabs of Palestine. Thus, the Amman Conference constituted a serious step towards unity between the two banks of the Jordan River, which materialized and was realized in 1950.

On October 5, 1948, King Abdullah I, the founder, called on the Arab League to dissolve the All-Palestine Government. He also informed the Jordanian Parliament on November 1 that his disagreements with the Arab states

regarding the Gaza government were a matter of principle. In mid-November, King Abdullah visited the Old City of Jerusalem and other Palestinian cities, engaging with Palestinian leaders and religious figures to garner support for the Jordanian role in Palestine. He encouraged the convening of popular conferences in Palestine to ensure that support was both popular and democratic (Al Khalaileh, 1988, p.262).

Third: The Jericho Conference on December 1, 1948

Under the supervision of the Jordanian military governor, Omar Pasha Matar, the Jericho Popular Conference was held at the Nazzal Hotel. It was chaired by Sheikh Muhammad Ali al-Ja'bari, mayor of Hebron, with Issa al-Bandak (Bethlehem) serving as secretary. A preparatory committee, comprised of Sheikh Suleiman al-Taji al-Faruqi, Ajaj Nuwayhid, and Sheikh Sa'd al-Din al-Alami, oversaw the conference. More than 200 prominent Palestinian figures from cities, villages, and Bedouin communities attended, along with leading lawyers such as Aziz Shahada, Anwar al-Khatib, Dr. Musa al-Husseini, Abdullah al-Rimawi, Kamal Nasser, and Abdullah Nawas. After several discussions, the conference adopted a resolution calling for the unification of the West Bank and East Bank under the Hashemite throne. The attendees criticized the Arab League, declaring, "Only King Abdullah represents us." The following day, Sheikh al-Ja'bari traveled to Amman, where he presented the conference resolutions to King Abdullah. He then forwarded them to the Arab League, which was approved by the Jordanian government, headed by Tawfiq Abu al-Huda. The Jordanian government then proceeded to constitutional measures for achieving it (Al Natour, 1996, p.159).

The most prominent decisions of the Jericho Conference are (Al Khalaileh, 1988, p.263):

1- The Conference believes in the unity of Palestine, and any solution that contradicts this will not be considered a final solution.

2- The Arab states will not be able to combat the dangers they face and that threaten Palestine if they do not achieve comprehensive Arab unity.

3- The Conference pledges allegiance to King Abdullah as King of Palestine and salutes his valiant army and the Arab armies that fought and continue to fight in defense of Palestine.

4- The Conference proposes to His Majesty the establishment of a system for electing legitimate representatives of the Arabs of Palestine to be consulted on their affairs.

The Jericho Conference formed the cornerstone of unity between the two banks of the Jordan River. It was initiated at the request of prominent Palestinian leaders and figures, and was welcomed by the Jordanian Parliament and Cabinet, and blessed by King Abdullah I. Despite differing Arab positions on the Jericho Conference resolutions, the prevailing trend was to proceed with the conference's decisions to achieve unity between Jordan and Palestine.

Then, a conference was held in Ramallah on December 26, 1948, to endorse the Jericho Conference. This was followed by a conference in Nablus on December 28 of the same year, despite a demonstration and partial strike protesting the Jericho Conference. A delegation including Suleiman Touqan, Ahmed Touqan, Adel Shakaa, Hikmat al-Masri, Hamdi Kanaan, Hashem al-Jayousi, and others visited King Abdullah and presented the conference's resolutions for unity. The Jordanian National Assembly then convened and passed resolutions approving the Jericho, Ramallah, and Nablus conferences (Al Natour, 1996, p. 160).

Thus, the unity between the two banks of the Jordan River resulted from meetings in December 1948: the first in Jericho and the second in Nablus, attended by leaders and notables of the West Bank representing the Palestinian Arabs, including those displaced from their homes in Palestine. Resolutions were passed requesting King Abdullah of Jordan to unite the lands of the East and West Banks, along with their inhabitants, into a single state under his rule. Elections were then held to elect representatives of the West Bank to the Jordanian National Council (Talal, 1981, pp. 40-41).

In March 1949, the Jordanian government issued a law abolishing the positions of military governors in Palestine. They would be replaced by civil servants, and on May 7, 1949, the first unity government was formed, headed by Tawfiq Abu al-Huda. It consisted of eight ministers in addition to the prime minister, including three Palestinian ministers: Foreign Minister Rawhi Abd al-Hadi, Minister of Trade and Agriculture Khulusi al-Khairi, and Minister of Transportation Musa al-Nasir (Al Btoush, 2007, p. 166).

In June 1949, the Palestinian radio station in Ramallah became affiliated with the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In July 1949, an assistant to the Governor-General of Palestine was appointed, along with other officials holding the ranks of District Governor, District Commissioner, and Director of Passports. On July 16, 1949, the Jordanian Consulate in Jerusalem was closed, as Jerusalem was considered to be under Jordanian administration. In August 1949, the Jordanian government established a special Ministry for Refugees. In November 1949, all border forces were removed

from the Jordan River between its two banks. On December 12, 1949, a constitutional amendment increased the number of representatives from twenty to forty, and the number of senators to twenty, seven of whom were Palestinians. On December 13, 1949, a royal decree was issued declaring all Palestinians residing in Jordan and the West Bank of the Jordan River to be Jordanian citizens under all circumstances (Al Khalaileh, 1988, p.266).

Fourth: The Rhodes Armistice Agreement of April 3, 1949

The Rhodes Agreement was a draft between Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon on one side, and Israel on the other. It was an armistice agreement comprising twelve articles and two annexes. Its most important points included (Al Kabariti, 1996, p. 44):

- 1- Non-use of military force.
- 2- Peaceful settlement of the issue.
- 3- Establishment of an international body between the two parties.
- 4- Defining the borders according to maps included in the agreement.
- 5- Defining the defense force.

These four factors preceding the unity agreement led to the emergence of the idea of unity between the East and West Banks of the Jordan River. Each of these four factors played a role in highlighting the necessity of tangible support on the ground, embodied by Jordan, to stand with the Palestinian cause, rather than mere symbolic and media support represented by speeches, Arab League meetings, and addresses by Arab presidents and kings.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan continued to introduce, implement, and amend procedures to ensure the establishment of unity between the two banks. The Jordanian government abolished the administrative system in Palestine and placed the Palestinian territories directly under the authority of the Jordanian Minister of the Interior. On January 1, 1950, the House of Representatives was dissolved, and a new parliament was elected on April 11, 1950. On April 12, 1950, a new cabinet was formed, headed by Said al-Mufti and comprising ten ministers, five of whom were Palestinian. The Senate was dissolved on April 20, 1950, and reconstituted the same day with twenty members, headed by Tawfiq Abu al-Huda, including seven Palestinians (Al Khalaileh, 1988, p.267).

On April 24, 1950, three weeks after the signing of the Rhodes Armistice Agreement between Jordan and Israel, the new Jordanian Council, composed of representatives and dignitaries from both banks of the Jordan River (east and west), convened. At this session, a unanimous declaration was issued announcing the union of the two banks of the Jordan River, both in terms of land and people, and their integration into a single independent Arab state under a monarchy known as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. A legislative law issued by the Jordanian National Council, pursuant to the Jordanian Constitution, granted the union constitutional effect according to the internal law of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Britain and Northern Ireland officially recognized this union and declared that His Majesty's Government considered the 1948 Treaty of Alliance between the two countries to be valid for all territories within the union. Subsequently, Pakistan granted similar recognition to the union. No other country issued such recognition until the June 1967 war between Israel and Jordan and the rest of the Arab states (Talal, 1981, p. 41).

Some Arabs referred to the union as "annexation," considering it a union imposed without the Palestinians' consent. They described it as coercion or domination, deeming it illegal and contrary to international law. This is despite the fact that both the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples had a strong desire for the unity of the two banks of the Jordan River and to prevent partition. The ties between the two peoples are intimate, deep-rooted, and close (Al Kabariti, 1996, p. 47).

The decision to unite sparked a wave of strong opposition among Arab states. On April 25, 1950—the day after the unity decision—the All-Palestine Government requested that the Political Committee of the League of Arab States address the situation. On May 15, 1950, the Committee adopted several resolutions, the most important of which were (Al Khalaileh, 1988, pp.269-270):

- 1- The Jordanian government's annexation of East Palestine constitutes a violation of the League Council's resolution of April 13, 1950.
- 2- In accordance with the provisions of the League Charter, the delegates of Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Egypt approved the League Council's recommendation to expel the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from its membership. The delegates of Iraq and Yemen requested a postponement of the meeting to allow them to consult with their respective governments on this matter.

The Israeli entity was furious about the unification of the two banks of the Jordan River, Britain's recognition of it, and the inclusion of the Palestinian section annexed to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty. This was despite Britain's legal recognition of the Israeli entity at the same time as its recognition of the unification of the two banks of the Jordan. The Israeli entity's anger stemmed from the fact that they saw this action as an obstacle to their expansionist ambitions. The Israeli parliament debated the issue of unification, and their government declared that it did not recognize the unification or the extension of the treaty, considering it an act of malice and hostility. They stated they were prepared to accept the existing armistice lines as a basis for a regional settlement with Jordan, but this did not occur. Therefore, they could not bear the fate of a region linked to the Israeli entity militarily and historically. The Israeli parliament approved this government policy, and Jordanian banknotes were introduced into circulation in Palestine to replace Palestinian banknotes starting in October 1950 (Al Btoush, 2007, p. 168).

Changes resulting from the union between the two banks (Al Kabariti, 1996, pp. 47-48)

1- Increase in demographic density, the population of Amman, for example, rose to 120,000, compared to 50,000 at the beginning of 1948.

2- Specialized bodies were established, known as the Association of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce. A large number of merchants in Transjordan joined these chambers and organized themselves within the trade and industry sectors in Jordan.

3- Politically, there was greater freedom of dialogue. King Abdullah did not impose his will on the Palestinian people. He made decisions in the country, which were then approved by the Cabinet and the Legislative Council.

The Jordanian government formed a committee to draft a new constitution based on the principle of ministerial accountability to the National Assembly and maintaining a balance of power among the three branches of government. The draft constitution was submitted to the National Assembly, which made some amendments before its approval. The King ratified it, and it was issued on January 8, 1952, during the reign of King Talal bin Abdullah (Al Khalaileh, 1988, p.268).

Second: The factors that paved the way for the disengagement decision:

First: The Arab Summit Conference in Rabat in 1974

From the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 until 1974, the atmosphere remained conducive to instability in Jordanian-Palestinian relations, which were characterized by a degree of coolness. Therefore, a new framework linking the Jordanian and Palestinian entities was necessary. This led to the Seventh Arab Summit Conference, held in Rabat in 1974. At that conference, it was decided that the PLO would be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This decision was strongly supported by the Arab Republic of Egypt and other Arab states, while Jordan expressed strong reservations regarding the decision, which did not take into account Jordan's role in the Palestinian cause (Al Kabariti, 1996, p.66).

Jordan's position regarding the Palestinian issue was defined by the agreement signed between Egypt and Jordan on July 18, 1974, calling on Arab states to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in its independent form at the Geneva Conference. Jordan supported this desire and agreed to Resolutions 242 and 338, in line with the Arab desire to recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. King Hussein emphasized this in his address to the Rabat Conference, stating: "On behalf of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, I hold them responsible for their opinion, their decision, and all its consequences. I consider this a release of our current political and fundamental responsibilities... It becomes imperative for us to withdraw from participation in the Geneva Conference and from any diplomatic or international action or activity in which we have entered, because in the aforementioned situation, we find ourselves in a position not recognized by our Arab brothers at the conference and in the political negotiations... The Palestinian cause is the cause of the entire Arab nation." The following are the most prominent outcomes of the Rabat Conference (Al Kabariti, 1996, p.67):

1- Recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, with the right to establish a Palestinian authority and must be supported at all stages.

2- Providing military aid to the frontline states, in addition to supporting the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in continuing its activities.

3- Rejecting any partial solution to the Palestinian issue.

4- Achieving a form of Arab integration—economically, politically, and militarily—in addition to reviewing the

relations of Arab states with African and European countries in light of evolving positions regarding the Palestinian issue. As for the Jordanian position towards the Palestinian people after the Rabat Conference resolution of 1974, which recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, Jordan supported the conference resolutions because it had no other option, and in light of the Palestinian people's desire for a Palestinian entity independent of Jordan.

Despite Jordan being relieved of its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people following the Rabat Conference declaration, it maintained contact with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) through the joint Jordanian-Palestinian committee formed at the ministerial level immediately after the conference. This committee was tasked with coordinating policies and procedures related to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, supporting the internal resistance movement against the occupation, and managing the distribution of aid decided upon by summit conferences to support the inhabitants of the occupied territories. The committee continued its work until the decision to sever legal and administrative ties with the West Bank on July 31, 1988. Jordan also continued its responsibilities towards the West Bank, as the Rabat Conference decision did not affect the application of laws and citizenship or support for Palestinians, since the decision was political and did not contradict the Jordanian constitution or the Palestinians' right to self-determination, the implementation of which would follow the return of the occupied territories (Al Khalaileh, 1988, p.331).

Second: The Arab Summit Conference in Fez in 1982

The resolutions of the 1982 Fez Summit called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to restore its national rights and exercise its right to self-determination. King Hussein affirmed this, stating: "Jordan has no ambitions or designs on the land of Palestine." (Al Natour, 1996, p.206)

Third: The Amman Agreement in 1985

The Amman Agreement of February 11, 1985, between Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was reached under various political and international pressures. After Yasser Arafat, the head of the PLO, began to move closer to Egypt and Iraq, Syria realized that the Palestinian issue was slipping from its control. It escalated its rhetoric against the PLO leadership and encouraged some Palestinian organizations, as well as groups within Fatah itself, to oppose this new approach. Syria openly sought to establish an alternative PLO leadership that would be subservient to it and subject to its political will (Dhibyan, 1995, p.336).

All these events and others created a problem regarding the venue for the 17th session of the Palestinian National Council, which had been repeatedly postponed. It was decided that the session would be held in Amman, and indeed, the conference opened on February 22, 1985. The most important point on the Council's agenda was the need to break the deadlock of neither war nor peace that threatened both Palestinians and Jordanians as a result of the persistent extremist rhetoric of Israeli leaders, who are using time to empty the occupied land of its people. His Majesty King Hussein opened the Council session in his comprehensive address, stating: "The international position is that it is possible to recover the occupied land through a Jordanian-Palestinian formula." (Dhibyan, 1995, pp.336- 337).

This agreement represents a serious step towards a new phase in the process of resolving the Palestinian issue at both the regional and international levels. This step solidified Jordan's active role in resolving the Palestinian question. The agreement stipulated working together to achieve a just and peaceful settlement to the Arab world cause, ending the Israeli occupation of the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem. It stipulated that the issue be resolved in accordance with UN resolutions and principles, specifically the principle of land for peace. Furthermore, it stipulated a solution to the Palestinian question and the refugee issue through negotiations with the Israeli side. Based on these principles, it was agreed to participate in any international conference attended by the parties to the conflict, with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) participating as part of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. The Jordanian-Palestinian agreement in Amman in 1985 resulted in a formula for a new agreement on Jordanian-Palestinian relations, based on restoring the relationship between them to its normal course (Al Kabariti, 1996, p.71).

However, the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) later insisted that the United States recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. His Majesty King Hussein exerted tremendous efforts to achieve this, but these efforts did not yield the desired result. This necessitated coordination with the PLO, and His Majesty delivered an important speech in which he explained to the Arab peoples, and to the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples, the background of the political circumstances that had occurred two years prior to the disengagement decision. In this

speech, he announced the termination of cooperation with the PLO and affirmed that the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples were equal in rights and duties. Consultations with the organization continued, and the Intifada began to take a new direction in its activities, which helped to complete and mature the political efforts to break the deadlock. His Majesty emphasized the importance of the work being done on the international political stage, while simultaneously affirming that the PLO was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people (Dhibyan, 1995, p.337).

Fourth: The Arab Summit Conference in Algiers, 1988

In light of the resolutions of the Algiers Summit, held in Algiers in June 7-8, 1988, which reflected the Arab inclination to support the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve their national goals, highlight the Palestinian identity, and enable the Palestine Liberation Organization to fully assume its responsibilities (Al Natour, 1996, p.207).

King Hussein bin Talal's speech at the Algiers Arab Summit, despite its bitterness and frustration, demonstrated his conviction that the Palestinians aspired to achieve their national identity and establish their own independent entity. It was, of course, a prelude to the announcement of the decision to sever legal and administrative ties between Jordan and the West Bank (Mahafzah, 2020, pp.152-153).

In its final statement, the conference criticized the American position, which was biased towards Israel and hostile to Palestinian rights. The conference pledged financial support to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and commended the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories. Jordan's opportunity to lead the peace process and safeguard its national interests had become slim in light of American pressure and Arab neglect of the role Jordan could play in the Palestinian cause in the future. King Hussein's speech at the Algiers conference clarified Jordan's political strategy towards the Palestinian issue after the 1967 war. This strategy was based on supporting the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and striving to end the occupation. The King's speech addressed the sensitivity of the relationship with the PLO, due to its suspicions about Jordan's intentions and its accusations that Jordan was attempting to dominate Palestinian land and circumvent the organization. King Hussein declared his respect for and support of the Palestinian people's desire to separate from Jordan (Al Khalaileh, 1988, pp. 336-337).

This overview of the three Arab summit conferences in Rabat, Fez, and Algiers reveals that all emphasized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This was crucial for establishing Palestinian identity and enabling the PLO to fully assume its responsibilities. As long as the West Bank remained united with the East Bank, the PLO could not effectively operate. Disengagement was necessary for the organization to function properly.

Despite these demands, Jordan remained committed to unity until the disengagement decision of July 31, 1988. Jordan did not relinquish its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people, recognizing the vital role unity played in safeguarding the rights of Islamic holy sites and the Palestinian people. However, the PLO and most Arab states pressed Jordan to recognize the necessity of establishing a Palestinian identity and an independent body to advocate for the rights of the Palestinian people, namely the PLO.

Third: The 1988 Disengagement Decision

The idea of disengaging between the West Bank and the East Bank of the Jordan River originated at the 1974 Rabat Conference (mentioned above), one of whose most prominent resolutions was the declaration of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people on the liberated land.

Therefore, the period between the 1974 Rabat Summit and 1988 can be considered a preparatory period for the issuance of the decision to legally and administratively disengage, after the PLO and most Arab states called for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination independently of Jordan, so that the PLO could represent the Palestinian people and demand their legitimate rights on their land.

In light of the above, Jordan had to take proactive steps to set things right, end the period of uncertainty, demonstrate its ability to influence events, and maintain the dynamism necessary for its survival. The decision to sever ties between the West Bank and Jordan was preceded by a series of preliminary measures. On July 28, 1988, the Jordanian government decided to cancel the West Bank development plan and dissolve all development, tender, and procurement committees operating within its framework. On July 30, 1988, a royal decree was issued dissolving the House of Representatives, which included representatives from the occupied West Bank. The Jordanian justification for this action was that it was taken to highlight Palestinian identity, to enable the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to fulfill its responsibilities, and to dispel any doubts about Jordan's position. The official Jordanian statement also

emphasized that these measures would not affect national unity and that Jordan would continue to assist the Palestinian people in the occupied territories by all available means and within its capabilities. The decision was strategic, based on Jordan's supreme interests in light of the new political realities in the region, and was not merely a tactical diplomatic maneuver (Al Khalaileh, 1988, p. 337).

King Hussein's initiative, announced at the time, was based on his adherence to the principle of land for peace and UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 as the framework for a peaceful settlement through an international peace conference. This conference, held in Rabat in 1974, became a reality, and relations between Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) continued, characterized by ongoing cooperation and coordination (Dhibyan, 1995, p. 337). Based on this, Jordan chose to align itself with the general Palestinian and Arab position. Jordan redefined its relationship with Palestine, and King Hussein issued his decision to sever legal and administrative ties with the West Bank, in accordance with Arab wishes, the resolutions of the Arab Summit, and the PLO's persistent demands for representation of the Palestinian people and all matters pertaining to their political and economic cause (Al Natour, 1996, p. 207).

Abu Odeh, the former political advisor to King Hussein bin Talal, stated that when the Intifada began at the end of 1987, we did not expect it to last. We expected Israel to crush it quickly. However, it grew stronger and more intense as the number of martyrs, wounded, and detainees increased. For the first time since 1967, Palestinians inside felt capable of confronting the Israeli occupation and its formidable military machine, and that they would not accept allegiance or subservience to anyone outside. They wanted the world to hear that they were a people under occupation, suffering its brunt, and that they were now at the height of their strength. They wished to prove and affirm their independence from all Palestinian and Arab forces and entities outside Palestine. (Your Majesty, I think that we should let them proceed in this direction, for it may lead them to liberation.) (Mahafzah, 2001, p.40).

Abu Odeh then said, (So, let us allow them to struggle to regain their land, without abandoning our support for them, and let us declare the separation of the West Bank from the East Bank.) Abu Odeh notes that the King did not accept this opinion, considering it an abdication by Jordan of its national responsibilities and obligations (Mahafzah, 2001, p.41).

The disengagement decision came 38 years after the unification of the two banks (1950-1988), 14 years after the Rabat Summit resolution of 1974, and six years after the Fez Summit resolution of 1982, all of which agreed on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip as a foundation and outcome of a peaceful settlement (A Collection of Speeches by His Majesty the Commander, p. 203).

On the evening of July 31, 1988, King Hussein announced the decision to sever legal and administrative ties between the West Bank and Gaza after 38 years of unity. In his address, he outlined the justifications and motivations for this decision, stating: "In light of a thorough and in-depth study, a series of measures have been taken to support the Palestinian national cause and highlight the Palestinian identity, with the aim of serving the interests of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian Arab people (Mahafzah, 2020, p.153).

The disengagement decision is considered a historic, strategic, and political one, resulting from astute analysis, a sound interpretation, and a bold stance to avert a more dangerous future had direct intervention not been undertaken at that time, thus imposing separation on all parties involved in the political equation (Al Habashneh, 2014, pp. 128-129). Following the implementation of the disengagement decision, King Hussein bin Talal announced the suspension of a \$1.3 billion development program for the West Bank, explaining that this measure aimed to allow the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) greater responsibility in the region. Two days later, he officially dissolved the parliament, thereby ending the West Bank's representation in the Legislative Council. Consequently, electoral districts were redrawn to represent the East Bank only. This disengagement decision represents a turning point that launched the current democratic process and began a new phase in Jordan's relationship with the Palestinians of the West Bank (Al Majali, 2024, pp. 17-18).

The disengagement decision was consistent with the Palestinian and Arab desire for independent representation and King Hussein's keenness to maintain the bonds of Jordanian-Palestinian relations. King Hussein recognized the legitimacy of the Palestinian people and their right to express their Palestinian identity and establish an independent Palestinian state. The decision resulted in several outcomes, summarized as follows (Al Kabariti, 1996, p.73):

1- The end of the existing unity between the two banks of the Jordan River, because the Arab Summit Conference held in Rabat in 1974 recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

2- The establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, after the enemy's withdrawal from them.

3- Arab support for the PLO.

A resolution issued by the Council of Arab Ministers, in light of the resolutions of the Extraordinary Summit in Algiers, clarified the desire of most Arab states to disengage. Based on the conclusions reached by the Council of Arab Ministers in their deliberations, and in adherence to the resolutions of the Rabat and Fez Summits, and in response to the wishes of the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan decided on several measures to implement the disengagement decision (Al Btoush, 2007, pp. 195-196).

Fourth: Considerations that led to the disengagement decision

On July 31, 1988 (A Collection of Speeches by His Majesty the Commander, pp. 253-258), King Hussein addressed the considerations and reasons that led to the decision to disengage from the West Bank. These reasons and considerations can be summarized as follows:

First: The Palestinian Consideration

The Palestinian consideration is represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its position as the sole legitimate and independent representative of the Palestinian people. This emphasized the separation of the East and West Banks of the Jordan River.

The Palestinian leadership—the leadership of the Intifada—in the occupied territories supported the decision. Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), the second-in-command of the PLO, spoke about the decision, saying in this context: “Despite all that has been said, the Jordanian step of severing ties with the West Bank was courageous, and it was in the interest of the Palestinian people and their struggle... It is a step that fulfilled a demand of the Palestinian people and pushed matters in the Middle East in a new direction... For the first time, we see Jordanian recognition of the Palestinian identity by King Hussein and recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.” The disengagement decision played a significant role in the Palestinian people's struggle to regain their rights following UN Resolution 242. This decision underscored the strong desire to reclaim these rights, including the right of return, the right to compensation, and the right to self-determination (Al Kabariti, 1996, pp. 74-75).

The day after the disengagement decision, King Hussein addressed the Jordanian people and the Arab nation, announcing his decision to sever Jordan's administrative and legal ties with the West Bank. He stated: “This decision comes fourteen years after the Rabat Summit resolution recognizing the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, which unanimously agreed on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a foundation and outcome of the settlement. Therefore, we are responding to the wishes of the PLO and the Arab trend to affirm Palestinian identity.” Political events have proven that Jordan's disengagement decision was a step in the right direction to affirm Palestinian national and Arab identity alongside other Arab identities—a natural sentiment whose legitimacy has been confirmed by subsequent developments. In accordance with King Hussein's address, the Jordanian government took practical measures to implement the disengagement (Hazem and Bakr, 2015, p.198).

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) benefited from Jordan's decision on July 31, 1988 to sever its administrative and legal ties with the West Bank, thereby confirming its official and sole representation of the people of the West Bank. During its period of engagement with the West Bank, Jordan sought to thwart the proposals and ideas frequently discussed by Israel by presenting the “Jordanian option,” which asserted that Jordanian land was the homeland of the Palestinians. At the 19th session of the Palestinian National Council, held between November 12 and 15, 1988, important decisions were made concerning the political objective of the Intifada. These decisions centered on accepting international resolutions and declaring an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, later known as the “Palestinian Peace Initiative” (Amr, 2016, p.37).

Secondly: Jordan's Considerations

Given the aforementioned considerations, Jordan had no option but to maintain a neutral stance. Despite Jordan's position on the Palestinian issue, the existence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its recognition at the 1974 Rabat Conference as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people compelled Jordan to adhere to and

comply with international, Arab, and Palestinian demands.

King Hussein clarified Jordan's considerations in his speech on July 31, 1988, which included the disengagement decision. He stated that: "...the considerations and convictions that we witnessed to respond to the wishes of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the general Arab trend aligned with these wishes. We could not continue in this state of limbo, which served neither Jordan nor the Palestinian cause. It was imperative to emerge from the labyrinth of fears and doubts into an era of clarity and transparency, where mutual trust would flourish and understanding, cooperation, and affection would blossom for the benefit of the Palestinian cause and for the sake of Arab unity, which will remain a cherished goal, one that all Arab peoples will strive to achieve (A Collection of Speeches by His Majesty the Commander, p. 256).

In the disengagement speech, King Hussein pointed out two considerations that have always guided discussions about the relationship between the West Bank and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, against the backdrop of the PLO's call for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. These considerations can be summarized as follows (A Collection of Speeches by His Majesty the Commander, p. 254):

1- A principled consideration: related to the issue of Arab unity, as a national goal upon which the hearts of the Arab peoples converge and which they aspire to achieve.

2- A political consideration: related to the extent to which the Palestinian struggle benefits from maintaining the legal relationship between the two banks of the Kingdom.

In a new development regarding the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship, the disengagement decision came as a surprise to both the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples, but it was a shock to the residents of the West Bank in particular, as it was considered a negative step that left their fate hanging in the balance. Meanwhile, in the East Bank of the Kingdom, the decision was met with mixed reactions, ranging from satisfaction to incomprehension and skepticism about its seriousness. While the justifications included in the decision and the real motives behind its issuance were appreciated, it was a political decision whose constitutional dimensions are still subject to differing interpretations. While the decision to unite the two banks in 1950 was ratified by the National Assembly as a pivotal decision with political and constitutional dimensions, the decision to disengage the West Bank from the Kingdom in 1988 should also have been presented to the National Assembly. However, the executive authority had dissolved the Assembly and unilaterally made the decision in the manner in which it was done, which deprived it of constitutional legitimacy and significantly diminished its political credibility (Ayed, 1995, p.5).

Third: The Arab considerations, as embodied in the position of the Arab states

The Arab states played a significant role in the future of the Palestinian cause, particularly concerning the unification of the East and West Banks in 1950 and the events that followed. The Syrian position was declared in opposition to unity by the President of the Republic and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. King Farouk and his Prime Minister declared that Egypt would continue to recognize the Gaza government. Al-Azhar scholars condemned this unity, and the Saudi position supported the Syrian and Egyptian stances. The Secretary-General of the Arab League also denounced the legitimacy of the Jericho Conference resolution, which endorsed unity between the two banks of the Jordan River, and denied its right to speak on behalf of the Palestinian people. Iraq, on December 15, 1948, sent a delegation headed by Nuri al-Said to meet with King Abdullah in Shuna and request that he postpone approval of the Jericho Conference resolutions, arguing that the current time was not suitable for their implementation (Al Khalaileh, 1988, pp. 264-265).

The international Arab position had been opposed to the idea of unity between the two banks of the Jordan River since its inception in 1950. They argued that it lacked legal foundations and did not represent the views of the entire Palestinian people, and they called for a return to the previous status quo to establish Palestine as an independent entity, free from any affiliation.

The Arab states undertook several initiatives aimed at implementing their desire for Palestine to remain an independent entity. This culminated in the Arab Summit Conference in Rabat in 1974, which called for the affirmation of an independent Palestinian identity and its representation by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) (Al Kabariti, 1996, p.76).

Fourth: International Considerations

The international stance on the disengagement plan is based on the United Nations' call for the establishment of two states: a Jewish state and an Arab state. This idea, proposed by the United Nations, can only be realized by severing the

connection between the two banks. Similarly, the idea of an alternative homeland was supported by a number of foreign countries. This idea was proposed by an American citizen working for US intelligence agencies named Fisher. Fisher's project aimed to create an alternative homeland by surrounding the resistance with the Jordanian regime, handing over the reins of power in Jordan, and then establishing a Palestinian People's Republic. However, the Palestinian people rejected this idea because it meant accepting the occupation and losing their land. Conversely, the Geneva Conference on the Palestinian Question was established in 1983, aiming to resolve the Palestinian issue, restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, their right to self-determination, and the establishment of their independent state (Al Kabariti, 1996, pp.76-77). All of this required severing ties with Jordan so that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) could replace the Jordanian administration in Palestine and carry out its duties, which would ultimately lead to a resolution of the Palestinian issue.

Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee, indicated that this approach was in line with Soviet and Arab advice, directives from within the leadership of the Intifada, and American proposals to enhance the PLO's standing on the political map of the conflict in the region. The peace initiative stipulated the necessity of convening an effective international conference on the Middle East issue, with the Palestinian question at its core, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of the permanent members of the UN Security Council and all parties to the conflict in the region, including the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing with the others. This international conference was to be held on the basis of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, guaranteeing the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people (Amr, 2016, p.37).

Fifth: The Consequences of the Disengagement Decision:

The disengagement decision resulted in several consequences, namely the restoration of each entity's independence from the other, whether administratively, economically, politically, or in terms of population. The consequences of disengagement can be summarized as follows (Al Kabariti, 1996, pp.81-83):

1- Independence in administrative and legal matters between the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) emerged on the international stage independently of Jordan.

2- The establishment of a Palestinian embassy in Jordan, in addition to a Jordanian representative office in Gaza.

3- The emergence of several options for the Palestinian people regarding the nature of their relationship with Jordan, as follows:

a. The option of returning to unity between the East and West Banks.

b. The option of establishing a confederation comprising Jordan and Palestine.

c. Independence for the Palestinian people.

4- The emergence of different viewpoints within the Palestinian and Jordanian populations. Among the Palestinians, two main groups exist. The first advocates for a distinct Palestinian identity separate from Jordan and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. The second group believes in the integration and unity of the two peoples, forming a truly powerful and unified entity. The Jordanian side is divided into three categories: the first believes in the Palestinian people's right to preserve their national identity and their right to establish their independent state; the second believes in dialogue between Jordan and Palestine to establish unity and integration between the two peoples, given the historical and social ties that bind them; and the final approach calls for the creation of a political and social framework that preserves Jordanian-Palestinian unity and deepens ties by regulating the relationship between them as it was previously.

Furthermore, a series of measures were taken, termed the disengagement of legal, administrative, and financial ties with the West Bank. These disengagement measures included the Jordanian government's decision to (Al Habashneh, 2014, p.129):

1- Cancel the Jordanian Development Plan for the West Bank.

2- Replace the Ministry of Occupied Territories Affairs with the Department of Palestinian Affairs within the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

3- Terminate the services of approximately 21,000 employees in the West Bank, with a temporary exception for Islamic endowments and Sharia courts.

4- Remove some Palestinian members from the Jordanian Senate.

5- Revoke Jordanian citizenship documents from citizens of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Sixth: Reactions to the Disengagement Decision:

Reactions were mixed regarding Jordan's motives and objectives in the disengagement decision. Some Palestinian circles expressed their opposition and rejection of this decision and measure, while other Palestinian sources questioned Jordan's intentions, suggesting that the purpose of this measure was to embarrass the PLO and increase its burdens. Among the Palestinian figures who opposed the separation of the West Bank from Jordan was Anwar al-Khatib, the former governor of Jerusalem. al-Khatib expressed his opinion on the matter, saying: "Those who pushed Jordan to sever legal and administrative ties with the West Bank... have harmed Palestine... Our cause has been set back... The Arabs entered Palestine in 1948, fought, and were defeated... After that, we found no refuge except in Jordan, while some Arab countries imprisoned or ghettoized Palestinians" (Al Khalaileh, 1988, pp. 337-338)

Another perspective indicated that Jordan's disengagement decision was intended to thwart the Zionist enemy's attempts to dismantle any support for the Palestinian cause. This historic decision aimed to bring Palestinian action into existence in the most appropriate way and by all available means. Following the disengagement decision, the Palestinian cause played a prominent role in King Hussein's policies and, consequently, influenced Jordan's political trajectory due to its weight and importance. The two sides subsequently continued the peace process together (Dhibyan, 1995, p.338).

In his speech announcing the disengagement decision, King Hussein emphasized that this decision did not signify abandoning the Palestinian cause or Arab unity. Therefore, Jordan promptly recognized the State of Palestine. The Cabinet, in its session held on November 25, 1988, approved this recognition. The Jordanian government had previously recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and that the Palestinian National Council represented the will of the Palestinian people. The Jordanian government further demonstrated its goodwill and desire to grant the Palestinian people their aspirations for self-determination and the expression of their identity by upgrading the PLO office in Amman to an embassy of the State of Palestine. The Palestinian flag was raised at the embassy in a ceremony marking the occasion (Al Natour, 1996, p.207).

Jordan continued to implement the necessary procedures following the disengagement, while maintaining its oversight of the holy sites, Islamic endowments (waqf), and the Sharia courts. Employees of the Department of Endowments and the Department of the Chief Justice were exempted from the mandatory retirement imposed on other employees working in the occupied territories. The PLO began to take steps to clarify the Jordanian position and requested assistance in providing facilities that would serve the interests of the Palestinian people in the West Bank until the Palestinian Authority was able to assume this responsibility. The meeting between the Jordanian and Palestinian delegations on August 11, 1988, in Amman was sufficient to outline the foundations upon which the future relationship between the two sides would be based. Both sides agreed that the disengagement measures were intended to serve the Palestinian cause and the aspirations of the Palestinian people to assert their independent Palestinian identity. Furthermore, the disengagement was seen as supportive of the Palestinian Intifada and a reaffirmation of the PLO's role in its pursuit of establishing an independent Palestinian state on Palestinian national soil. These measures would not affect the Jordanian citizenship rights of those of Palestinian origin. The two parties agreed to continue consultations, and the PLO affirmed its desire to establish a confederation between Jordan and the independent Palestinian state (Al Khalaileh, 1988, pp. 338-339).

Conclusion

The Jordanian-Palestinian relationship is based on several historical, geographical, and political dimensions. Therefore, the reality of this relationship is interconnected from multiple perspectives. The decision of the Palestinian people to unite with Jordan in 1950 came as a desire of the Palestinian people, which was endorsed by King Abdullah the founder with a royal decree stipulating approval. Similarly, the disengagement in 1988 also arose from a popular Palestinian demand, which was met with the approval of King Hussein. Let us pause to consider the period between the annexation decision and the disengagement decision. Several changes emerged on the domestic scene between Jordan and Palestine, on the Arab international scene, and on the global stage—as mentioned in the research. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) emerged in 1964, and the Arab Summit Conference held in Rabat in 1974 legitimized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, tasked with establishing an independent Palestine on the land it would liberate. How could the PLO operate while unity existed? And how could an independent Palestinian identity emerge while the East and West Banks of the Jordan River remained intertwined?

However, if we examine the broader Arab context, we find that the two largest Arab states, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, opposed the idea of unity from its inception. Egypt wanted to appear as the champion and protector of the Palestinian

cause, but how could it do so while tied to Jordan? Saudi Arabia, for its part, feared the expansion of Hashemite influence in the Arab region. Furthermore, this opposition stemmed from the fact that Jordan, Syria, and Iraq were each ruled by an Arab Hashemite monarchy, and when this Hashemite influence dwindled in Syria and Iraq, Saudi Arabia perceived that Jordan had extended its left wing towards Palestine, a move that conflicted with Saudi policy and ideology.

Following this review of the Palestinian, regional, Saudi, and Egyptian positions within the Arab world, it is essential to address the perspective of the United Nations, which represented the global stance. America, Britain, and France continued to propose various projects, including the alternative homeland plan, a confederation between Jordan and Palestine, the right of return, and the right to compensation. Faced with these positions, Jordan, with its government, people, and monarch, adopted a middle ground, attempting to find common ground in order to keep pace with and satisfy all parties. Given the insistence of most Arab states and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Jordan saw no alternative but to comply with these demands. However, this did not mean abandoning the Palestinian cause entirely. The stated purpose of the disengagement decision issued on July 31, 1988, was to affirm the identity of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, and to entrust the PLO with its responsibilities within Palestine, as well as its representation abroad in international forums.

However, the researchers argue that this disengagement had broader implications. During the 38-year period of the union, Jordan did not marginalize the Palestinian identity. Furthermore, Jordan formed a cabinet with eight ministers, three of whom were Palestinian, and included 20 Palestinian members of parliament alongside 20 Jordanian members. A similar arrangement existed in the Senate. Isn't all of this a clear affirmation of the Palestinian identity? And did Jordan, during the period of unity, explicitly declare its intention to impose a Jordanian identity on the Palestinian entity and people?

A deeper examination of the issue of disengagement reveals that this decision, which the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan hesitated to implement despite Arab and international circumstances being ripe for it since 1974, should have been adopted in 1988, or in the years before or after. Jordan's annexation of the West Bank was only possible due to the necessity outlined in the Jericho Conference of 1948. However, the positions of the Arab states, as expressed in Arab summit conferences, regarding unity between the two banks of the Jordan River, repeatedly warned that the Palestinian cause would be harmed if unity continued. Therefore, from their perspective, disengagement was necessary.

In his speech regarding the disengagement, King Hussein bin Talal clarified the extent of the Palestinian and Arab need and urgency for this decision. As the King explained, this decision was made to remove "the labyrinth of fears and doubts" and to reach "the realm of clarity and transparency." These two statements by King Hussein indicate the extent of the political pressure exerted on Jordan by its Arab brethren to issue the disengagement decision.

As for the claim by some that the disengagement decision was intended to prove the Palestine Liberation Organization's inability to lead the Palestinian entity, this position is not supported by reality, either before or after the disengagement. Jordan remained a steadfast supporter of the Palestinian cause after the disengagement decision. The question that arises here is: where did the Palestinian cause, the right to self-determination, and the Palestine Liberation Organization stand after the disengagement decision?

In conclusion to this research, which addresses the issue of Jordan's disengagement and its impact on the Palestinian cause, the disengagement has had a tangible effect. The Palestinian cause stagnated after having attempted to rise with its connection to Jordan.

Thus, throughout contemporary history, the Palestinian cause has been adopted by various Arab states throughout different periods—sometimes Egypt, sometimes Syria, sometimes Qatar, sometimes Jordan, and in the recent past, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries. This demonstrates that the Palestinian cause lacks a unified approach or path, whether regional or pan-Arab, to resolve the issue, or even a part of it. However, reality proves otherwise; the cause currently suffers from fragmentation within the corridors and salons of politics. Consequently, Jordan remains the primary and genuine supporter of the Palestinian cause, providing support in international forums and conferences, as well as on the ground whenever Palestine faces hardship or its rights are marginalized.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the purpose of disengagement was that the reality in which this measure was adopted was inevitable due to a series of regional and international events and developments—detailed in this research—that left Jordan with no option but to adopt a neutral stance, despite its close ties to and unwavering support for the Palestinian cause. Ultimately, however, most Palestinian and Arab factions recognized the necessity of an independent Palestinian entity to march toward the freedom and independence that the Palestinian cause continues to aspire to.

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