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Subj: JORDAN
visit of Hussein
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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

22 December 1983

**PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. 1228/83**

Dear Ron.

I had a long talk with King Hussein on 16 December. I told him that I would be in touch with you after our conversation. When I visited you in Washington in September we agreed on the importance of ensuring the integrity of Jordan. It is principally with that question in mind that I write to you now.

Leaving aside what he had to say about the Lebanon, the main burden of the King's remarks concerned the current Palestinian situation and your recent agreement with Prime Minister Shamir on United States/Israeli strategic co-operation.

On the first of these questions, which he fears is being lost sight of because of the Lebanese crisis, King Hussein spoke forcefully about Syrian attempts to control the PLO. Because of the PLO requirement for consensus, the radical minority were always able to prevent positive moves. He wished that moderate Palestinian leaders would remember that their strength lay in their constituents. If moderate leaders would identify with their people, Jordan would see what could be achieved - and was already in touch with Egypt about this. But as things were, the Palestinian people, especially those in the Occupied Territories, were in despair. His priority now was to put the Palestine/Jordan relationship in order and then make "a final effort" to get a dialogue going. He told me that he would have to recall the Jordanian Parliament in the next month or so, and that he would be explaining his proposals to the moderate Arab world and to the moderate PLO.

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Secondly, King Hussein expressed himself strongly about the developments announced during Prime Minister Shamir's visit. In his view they sharply increased the dangers of polarisation in the Middle East, with the US and Israel on one side and the Soviet Union and many of the Arab countries on the other. The King also repeated his idea of the early convening of an international conference on the Middle East. I warned him against this. Such a conference would have no chance of success at this time.

You and I were in firm agreement when we met in September on the crucial role of Jordan in the Arab/Israeli dispute, and on the vital need to preserve that country's stability. We both of us appreciate the value of King Hussein himself as a moderate, courageous and pro-Western force for stability in the Middle East. I am worried that despite what you have been able to tell him he should still appear to feel so unsure of his relationship with the United States. It is nonetheless encouraging that he is still clearly seeking to play an active part in the search for peace. If the peace process is to remain alive, we need such leaders on the Arab side, and with Egypt still in the sidelines, King Hussein is one of the few who can help us. You will be well aware of the implications of his decision to recall Parliament and the risks that this, and any attempts at a dialogue with the PLO, will carry for him. The Syrians will be implacably opposed, as will radical elements of the PLO: and Jordan is already facing a terrorist campaign.

This vulnerability demands that we, the West, should consider urgently what kind of support we can best give to Hussein at this difficult time. We should do this, I believe, in two main ways. First, we should give what help we can to the Palestinians (whether on the West Bank or in the Diaspora) to encourage them to take the moderate road to negotiation. Second, we should make it plain to the moderate Arab states that the West remains actively committed to the search for a comprehensive solution of the Arab/Israel conflict, of which the Palestinian problem is the core.

To do this it is essential that we avoid the polarisation that King Hussein fears so much. It remains as vital as ever that

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the US should be seen as the impartial mediator of goodwill and should stand firm on Security Council Resolution 242, calling for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, and that the US should press Israel harder to show her desire for peace by freezing the expansion of settlements on the West Bank. I know the difficulties you face in moving the Israelis on this, but it is an important part of your proposals of 1 September 1982, and unless it is actually achieved (and soon) we may face an irreparable setback to peace. I believe that the people of the West Bank would welcome a sign that you do not wish to see them absorbed by Israel. This cannot be done simply by aid programmes although we are looking at what more we can do here. It needs unmistakable political signals. Otherwise I fear that Palestinian despair will become acute and create a situation which may lead some countries in the area to try to involve the Soviet Union more deeply in its problems.

I have expressed my views frankly, as you and I always do to each other, because the question is of such great importance to both our countries.

*With every good wish
for Christmas and the New Year
Yours
Ragan*

The President of the United States of America.