

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

**Research Response Number:** JOR32180  
**Country:** Jordan  
**Date:** 26 September 2007

**Keywords:** Jordan – Al Outoum tribe – Al Ootoom tribe – Marriage – Tribal customs – Honour crimes – State protection

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**Questions**

- 1. Please advise whether there is any evidence that male members of the Al Outoum (or any other tribe) face sanctions if they marry outside tribal custom.**
- 2. Please provide any information suggesting that this is not the case.**
- 3. Please advise where Jarash is. Is it rural or urban?**
- 4. Please advise whether tribal custom would apply equally in all areas of Jordan.**
- 5. Would state protection be available against any harm inflicted by a tribe in these circumstances?**

**RESPONSE**

- 1. Please advise whether there is any evidence that male members of the Al Outoum (or any other tribe) face sanctions if they marry outside tribal custom.**
- 2. Please provide any information suggesting that this is not the case.**

References to, or discussion of, the Al Outoum tribe in Jordan in the sources consulted are very limited. The Wikipedia entry for Jerash states that the city “consisted from several tribes but the largest and most known is Al-Ootoom” (‘Jerash’ (undated), Wikipedia website <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerash> – Accessed 10 September 2007 – Accessed 10 September 2007 – Attachment 1). **[Users should be aware that Wikipedia is a Web-based free-content encyclopaedia which is written collaboratively by volunteers.** The Research Service recommends that users of Wikipedia familiarise themselves with the regulatory practices which Wikipedia employs as a preventative measure against vandalism, bias and inaccuracy.] A Google search with the term *Al-Ootoom* would appear to indicate that this is not an uncommon surname in Jordan. A reference to the mayor of Jerash, Mr Al-Outoum, was found in a 9 September 2005 document on the Canadian Embassy in Jordan website

(‘Ambassador Holmes graduates 30 community leaders’, 2005, Canadian Embassy in Jordan website, 9 September <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/world/embassies/jordan/news-holmes-en.asp> – Accessed 5 September 2007 – Attachment 2). A search of other possible translations for the terms *Al Outoum* and *Al-Otoom* was also conducted for this response. This did not reveal any references to a tribe or group in Jordan.

While not referring to tribal marriage practices, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada in September 2004 conducted research into the risk to men found to be engaged in illicit affairs in Jordan, honour killings against men, and the state protection available to men in such situations in Jordan. The research relied on expert advice provided by two anthropologists at universities in the Netherlands and Sweden. The Netherlands anthropologist indicated that the chance of a threat being carried out is influenced by the extent to which the family is “publicly shamed” and the affair can be proven:

The anthropologist indicated that while honour crimes are more often directed toward women, **men can also be the object of such crimes**. In Jordan, the strong social stigma associated with illicit sexual relations means that threats of “violent revenge” are commonplace. These threats are directed at both the woman and the man involved in the affair. The anthropologist stressed that it was not the actual illicit liaison but rather the fact that it was made public that provokes a response. **The degree to which the family is publicly shamed and the extent to which the affair can be proven both influence the likelihood of threats being carried out.** Referring to not only Jordanian but honour crimes in general, the anthropologist stated that murder is not a typical outcome of honour crimes and occurs only in the most extreme scenarios; normal methods of saving face include divorcing an adulterous woman, marrying off a young woman, moving away, or “finding excuses” for certain behaviours.

The anthropologist went on to mention that couples that do not meet the approval of their families, society or Jordanian law (e.g. in the case of a Muslim woman and a Christian man) commonly leave Jordan for fear of revenge. The anthropologist had come across a case in which relatives treated their transgressing kin as deceased. When asked about the daughter, the family told the anthropologist that they would shoot her and her husband if they ever returned. According to the anthropologist,

... [a] man who has an illicit relation with a girl but does not want to marry her, or the man who seduces a married woman and is discovered would do well to seek refuge elsewhere. When people talk about violent revenge this is always stated in terms of death. A severe beating of the man who violated the honour of a family is not sufficient to clear the blemished honour.

The anthropologist indicated that she was unaware of any **protection** available to men threatened with honour crimes, apart from the “often lighter” punishment for honour crimes.

The anthropologist was aware of one case in Jordan in which an unmarried Muslim man eloped with a Christian girl (their marriage would not be legal in Jordan). The girl’s brother tracked them down and attacked the man and both men were killed in the ensuing gun battle. Apart from this “historical case,” the anthropologist said that while violent threats are often expressed, most couples flee before they must face any severe reprisals.

In 31 August 2004 correspondence with the Research Directorate, a professor of anthropology at Linköping University in Sweden, who specializes in gender development in Jordan and Syria, agreed that in Jordan, **men who are accused of having illicit affairs can also be subject to threats**. She added that to her knowledge, **no protection was available from the Jordanian State**. However, the anthropologist went on to state that she had **never come**

**across a case in which a man had been killed in an honour crime, as women are generally blamed when an honour crime involves illicit sex** (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2004, *JOR42883.E – Jordan: Risk to men, who have been accused by relatives of a girl, of engaging in an illicit affair, and threatened with death; protection available to such men; examples of cases in which men have been “honour-killed”*, 2 September – Attachment 3).

Earlier research conducted by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada in September 2002, inquired into the risk faced by a Palestinian from the tribe of the Jordanian women with whom he wished to have a relationship. The research quotes three sources: the director of the Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre (SHAML), an independent non-governmental organisation based in Jerusalem, a professor of political science at McGill University, and the director of the BADIL Resource Centre:

The director of the Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre (SHAML), an independent non-governmental organization based in Jerusalem and dedicated to Palestinians, ...stated that **outside of Amman, tribal society dominates** .... A tribe could refuse a marriage, but, in his opinion, **it would be rare that this would lead to threatening the life of the Palestinian**. A professor of political science at McGill University agrees that, in his opinion, any inter-ethnic problems between Jordanian tribes people and a Palestinian man wishing to court one of their women would be a consequence of “insider/outsider issues” more than “Palestinian/Jordanian ones” (4 Sept. 2002). The professor further stated that he “doubted he could fear for his life”.

However, the director of the BADIL Resource Center, which aims to provide a resource pool of alternative, critical and progressive information on the question of Palestinians: “The life of a Palestinian can be threatened, if he makes advances to a woman of a Jordanian tribe which are rejected by the leaders of the tribe. Examples of cases of use of violence are numerous. Violence in such cases is often tolerated by the authorities, even if prohibited by law.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *Jordan: Treatment of Palestinians; inter-ethnic relations between Palestinians and Jordanian tribes as well as state protection available to Palestinians who are physically assaulted by Jordanian tribes people (upon the Palestinian’s decision to court a tribeswoman)*, 6 September – Attachment 4)

The deaths of men categorised as family or honour killings are recorded in human rights reports and news articles. Amnesty International in its 2007 *Annual Report* refers to official government figures showing that two men were killed in “family killings” alongside twelve women:

Discrimination and violence against women

Temporary amendments to legislation concerning women remained pending before Parliament. These amendments would give women the right to divorce without their husband’s consent and establish penalties for perpetrators of family killings.

Article 98 of the Penal Code continued to be used as a defence in cases where men killed their female relatives. The Article allows for reduced sentences where the killing is deemed to be committed in a “fit of rage” caused by unlawful or dangerous acts on the part of the victim. In March, after Article 98 was invoked, the Criminal Court passed a sentence of only one year’s imprisonment against a man convicted of killing his daughter.

According to official records, 12 women **and two men were victims of family killings during the year** (Amnesty International 2007, *Amnesty International Annual Report 2007 – Jordan*, <http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/Regions/Middle-East-and-North-Africa/Jordan> – Accessed 5 September 2007 – Attachment 5).

The circumstances of the killing of one male in 2007 are described in a June 2007 *Associated Press* article:

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) – Jordan’s criminal court Tuesday sentenced a 70-year-old woman to seven and a half years in jail for killing her daughter, and a man to one year imprisonment for **the murder of a male relative in two separate cases known as “honor crimes.”**

... In a separate case, the same court handed a lenient one-year sentence to a man for shooting a relative dead while in “state of fury,” **after seeing the relative naked in the room of his brother’s widow, who was in a nightgown.** The man went to his apartment in the same building, loaded his gun and returned to his sister-in-law’s where the shooting took place, court documents said.

Both verdicts can be appealed.

... But attempts to introduce harsher sentences for honor killings have been blocked in Jordan’s parliament, where the **predominantly conservative Bedouin lawmakers** argue that tougher penalties would lead to promiscuity (Mattar, S. 2007, ‘Jordanian court sentences 70-year-old woman, a man in honor killings’, *Associated Press*, 27 June – Attachment 6).

The strength of tribal custom and ways of thinking as the driving force behind female honour killings was affirmed by a leading women’s rights activist as recently as the 11 March 2007. Reem Abu Hassan was quoted in an article on female honour killings on the IRIN news website:

...”There is no political will to fight so-called honour crimes. The **tribal mentality** is the main driving force that makes this phenomenon spin out of control,” said Reem Abu Hassan, a leading women’s rights activist in the kingdom.

Since the beginning of this year, four women have been killed by brothers, fathers or cousins who felt the women had done something that brought disgrace on their family name.

“We have to change the whole mentality of the nation. To spill someone’s blood that easily has become a socially acceptable practice,” said Reem. (Font de Matas, M. 2007, ‘Honour killings still tolerated’, IRIN website, 11 March <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=70634> – Accessed 5 September 2007 – Attachment 7).

### 3. Please advise where Jarash is. Is it rural or urban?

Jarash (or Jerash) is located approximately one hour’s drive (51 kilometers) north west of the capital Amman. The location of Jarash relative to Amman is represented in a map provided in Attachment 8 (‘Jarash’, Encarta World Atlas website, (undated) – Attachment 8; Fattah, H.M. 2005, ‘For displaced Arab onlookers, pullout is a victory tinged with regret’, *The New York Times*, 18 August – Attachment 9). Demographic information presented below would appear to indicate that Jarash is a mixed urban and rural location. The city is a major tourist destination as it contains well-preserved Roman monuments and, according to the already cited Wikipedia entry, the “total population of the city and the nearby villages exceeds 120, 000 people” (‘Jarash, Ajloun & Umm Al-Jimal’ (undated), Jordan Tourism Board website, [http://www.jtb.com.jo/brochures/guide\\_jerash.html](http://www.jtb.com.jo/brochures/guide_jerash.html) – Accessed 5 September 2007 – Attachment 10; and ‘Jerash’ (undated), Wikipedia website <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerash> – Accessed 10 September 2007 – Attachment 1). The

Department of Statistics of the Government of Jordan provided the following information of population, households, housing units and buildings in Jarash District and Jarash city in 1994:

**Population (by Sex), Number of Households, Housing Units and Buildings in JARASH  
Governorate by Administrative Division, as of 10/12/1994**

Administrative Division Name	Population			No. of Households	No. of Housing Units	No. of Buildings
	Total	Female	Male			
<b>Jarash Governorate</b>	123190	59182	64008	18792	23640	19059
<b>Jarash District</b>	123190	59182	64008	18792	23640	19059
<b>Jarash Sub- District</b>	123190	59182	64008	18792	23640	19059
<b>Jarash Nahia</b>	123190	59182	64008	18792	23640	19059
<b>Jarash</b>	21278	9844	11434	3517	4247	2564

(Source: 'Population (by Sex), Number of Households, Housing Units and Buildings in JARASH Governorate by Administrative Division', 1994, Government of Jordan, Department of Statistics website, 10 December [http://www.dos.gov.jo/sdb\\_pop/jarash\\_e.htm](http://www.dos.gov.jo/sdb_pop/jarash_e.htm) - Accessed 10 September 2007 – Attachment 11. Attachment 11 also provides demographic details for all the smaller villages in the Jarash Governorate/District.)

Honour killings against females have been reported as occurring in Jarash. Fadia Faqir in an August 2000 paper on the Center for Enquiry website refers to a 1994 case in which a “a thirty-seven-year-old divorced woman and a mother of fourteen children was shot dead by her forty-two-year-old brother in Jarash, a town north of Jordan, because “someone told him that his sister was seeing a man.”(Faqir, F. 2000, 'Intra-family femicide in defence of Honour: The Case of Jordan', Center for Inquiry website, August [http://www.centerforinquiry.net/isis/articles\\_and\\_books/intrafamily\\_femicide\\_in\\_defence\\_of\\_honour\\_the\\_case\\_of\\_jordan/](http://www.centerforinquiry.net/isis/articles_and_books/intrafamily_femicide_in_defence_of_honour_the_case_of_jordan/) – Accessed 4 September 2007 – Attachment 12).

- 4. Please advise whether tribal custom would apply equally in all areas of Jordan.**
- 5. Would state protection be available against any harm inflicted by a tribe in these circumstances?**

No information was found on the geographical spread in Jordan of tribal marriage practices. The strength of tribal and clan relations in general in Jordanian society, as well as their heavy influence on voting patterns, is emphasised in an October 2003 report by the International Crisis Group, *The Challenge of Political Reform: Jordanian Democratisation and Regional Instability*. The report also comments that the state, including the police, is “largely” absent from relationships based on tribal loyalties and is perceived as “non-transparent, unresponsive and unaccountable”:

...the regime’s Achilles heel is the feeble bond of trust between most citizens and the state. **Meaningful relationships are based primarily on family or tribal loyalties**, with religion also an important social glue. **The state, however, is largely absent from these relations, being broadly perceived as non-transparent, unresponsive and unaccountable. This extends from the omnipotent security services, through the police, to civil servants protecting the state’s interests at all corners of the bureaucracy.** Curbs on freedoms of expression and association have discouraged peaceful dissent outside the narrow limits of

parliamentary debate and the political discourse of small political parties, a moderate and acquiescent Islamist and disparate civil society groupings.

In Jordan's **highly tribal and family-based society**, a one-person-one-vote system inevitably will produce patterns that privilege those types of ties rather than political or ideological affiliation.

...Tribal influence on national politics routinely are on vivid display during parliamentary elections in Jordan, both during the selection process of candidates and in voting patterns. It is common custom among tribes to hold formal by-elections or convene a meeting of elders to select their choice of tribal candidate in advance of elections. Selected candidates in turn promote themselves as representing their tribe rather than running on a political ticket. Then, in line with tribal solidarity, Jordanian voters prioritise family and clan allegiances over their political and ideological inclinations.

Two thirds of the seats [in the 2003 elections] went to the tribal figures, only 21 to Islamist candidates (International Crisis Group 2003, *The Challenge of Political Reform: Jordanian Democratisation and Regional Instability*, International Crisis Group website, 8 October [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle\\_east\\_north\\_africa/jordan\\_political\\_reform08\\_10\\_03.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle_east_north_africa/jordan_political_reform08_10_03.pdf) – Accessed 5 September 2007 – Attachment 13).

Several reports comment on the spread of tribal customs with regard to female honour killings. One report indicates that these take place mostly in the poorer parts of the capital city Amman. Milon Nagi, in an article detailing the current work of anti-honour killing campaigner and Jordanian journalist Rana Hussein, wrote on 9 June 2007 that:

Around 20 to 25 “honor” killings take place in Jordan each year, according to Hussein, most of them in poorer, densely populated parts of the capital city, Amman (Nagi, M. 2007, ‘Jordanian Journalist Breaks Taboos Campaigning Against Violence’, AlertNet Website, 9 June <http://www.alternet.org/rights/53583/> – Accessed 5 September 2007 – Attachment 14).

In an earlier April 2005 news article on the IRIN news website, Rana Hussein, is again quoted on the regional spread of female honour crimes in Jordan. Here she states that such crimes are not restricted to certain regions of the country:

Hussein, a journalist, has been calling on the government to implement stricter laws and punishments for those who commit these crimes. She has written extensively on the subject and attends court proceedings to follow up on cases.

“[My work involves] exposing these crimes for what they really are, cold-blooded and senseless murders, and struggling with the law to restore dignity to women and consider them full human beings,” she told IRIN in the capital Amman.

**“The problem of honour crimes is not restricted to any particular class of Jordanian society or certain regions,” she added.**

#### ... REASONS BEHIND THE KILLINGS

The crime occurs as a result of embedded perceptions of discrimination between the sexes in customs, traditions, and social values, the campaigner explained.

According to a paper by the Jordanian author and university professor, Fadia Faqir, the majority of men and women in Jordanian society believe that “an unchaste woman destroys not only her own reputation, but also the name and honour of all her family.”



Ghazi Bin Talal, the Jordanian king's adviser on tribal affairs, further explains in his book 'The tribes of Jordan at the beginning of the 21st century', that while Jordan continues to prosper, we see "changes caused by modernization. The erosion of much of the traditional tribal lifestyle has entrenched all the rigidity and conservatism of the old tribal 'shame culture' while denuding it of its old chivalric instincts".

Experts say other reasons for honour crimes include, rape, to cover up for incest, adultery, unlawful or undesired pregnancies and for inheritance purposes ('JORDAN: Special report on honour killings', 2005, IRIN news website, 18 April <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=25021> – Accessed 5 September 2007 – Attachment 15).

Very little information was found indicating the level or effectiveness of state protection available to a male faced with harm from tribal groups on account of breaking marriage customs. As reported in answer to question one above, two anthropologists interviewed by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada in 2004 indicated that they had no knowledge of state protection available to men involved in honour crimes or that no such protection existed (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2004, *JOR42883.E – Jordan: Risk to men, who have been accused by relatives of a girl, of engaging in an illicit affair, and threatened with death; protection available to such men; examples of cases in which men have been "honour-killed"*, 2 September – Attachment 3). Sources do discuss state protection available to women involved in honour crimes. The US Department of State in its most recent report on human rights practices in Jordan indicates that potential female victims of honour crimes are placed in protective custody:

Authorities prosecuted all 18 reported instances of honor crimes that resulted in death of the victim. These killings derive from customary notions of family honor among some communities, both Muslim and Christian. According to women's rights activists, there was evidence of a societal trend toward condemnation of honor crimes. **The police regularly placed potential victims of honor crimes in protective custody.** Activists estimated that at year's end more than 25 women were in protective custody. At least one NGO was working in conjunction with the government to establish a shelter where the women could live in relative anonymity as an alternate to protective custody (US Department of State 2007, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006 – Jordan*, 6 March – Attachment 16).

In 2004, Human Rights Watch published a comprehensive report on female honour crimes in Jordan titled, *Honoring the Killers: Justice denied for "honor" crimes in Jordan*. The report includes some general remarks on the effectiveness of police in the context of honour-crimes:

Police rarely investigate "honor" killings, seldom take any initiative to deter these crimes, and typically treat the killers as vindicated men.

... Jordanian police are known for mistreating criminal suspects. Prosecutor General Rawashdeh, for example, told Human Rights Watch that the police routinely beat detainees to obtain evidence: "[The] accused are beaten for evidence—I sent them to the forensic doctor—I would not take their confession." These same police are also known for sympathizing with "honor" killers. As Asma Khader, minister of state and government spokesperson, has said, when "honor" killers turn themselves in to the police, the police "try to calm them down, give them a cigarette. The culture deals with them as heroes."

Added to the bias in favor of men who commit "honor" crimes is the virtual absence of training to deal with domestic violence. Currently, only fifteen to twenty police officers per

year receive any training on domestic violence, according to Colonel al-Humoud, coordinator of the Family Protection Unit (FPU) within the Directorate of Public Security. The training lasts only a few days, too brief to be serious, and within the program there is no material dealing specifically with “honor” crimes (Human Rights Watch 2004, *Honoring the Killers: Justice denied for “honor” crimes in Jordan*, April 2004, [http://hrw.org/reports/2004/jordan0404/5.htm#\\_Toc69798570](http://hrw.org/reports/2004/jordan0404/5.htm#_Toc69798570) – Attachment 17).

An email was sent on 6 September 2007 to Rana Hussein requesting information on the above questions relating to male honours crimes (RRT Research & Information 2007, Email to Rana Hussein ‘Request for information JOR32180 from the Migration Review Tribunal - Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia’, 6 September – Attachment 18). A response by email was received from Ms Hussein on 24 September 2007:

Thank you very much for your email and supportive words. I am really grateful to receive an email from you to inquire about the case mentioned below. As I never wrote about such a case in the past, I had to check with some of my sources who are more familiar with such matters.

My sources confirmed to me that the person in this case could be subjected to extreme harm by his family if he did go ahead and marry the Australian woman, especially if they have fiercely objected his marriage.

On some occasions, many families would prefer their children marry people from their surrounding and this mostly has to do with financial reasons, especially of the person owned some family assets. It is too bad that money is still a major determine in some individual's choices in this life.

To answer your questions:

1. Whether there is any evidence that male members of the Al Outoum, or any other tribe, face sanctions if they marry outside tribal custom?

The answer is yes. It is very possible, according to the sources I consulted with.

2. Does tribal custom apply equally in all areas of Jordan?

This is a very general question that needs extensive research and questioning of more people. If you feel this question is extremely relevant, then I will ask around for other tribes as well.

3. Would protection from the state be available against any harm inflicted by a tribe in these circumstances?

The only protection this individual would get is for the state to lock him behind bars for indefinite periods to protect him from his family (as they do with women).

...

(Hussein, R. 2007, Email to RRT Research & Information ‘Re: Request for information JOR32180 on male honour killing from the Migration Review Tribunal - Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia’, 24 September – Attachment 19).

An email was also sent on 4 September 2007 to Dr Yoav Alon, Senior Lecturer of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University, requesting information on the above questions relating to male honours crimes (RRT Research & Information 2007, Email to Dr Yoav Alon ‘Request for information JOR32180 from the Migration Review Tribunal -



Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia', 4 September – Attachment 20). A detailed response by email was received from Dr. Alon on 26 September 2007:

In reply to your inquiry about marriage customs among tribesmen in Jordan, I can offer the following observations. They are based on more than 10 years' interest in and study of Jordan and its tribes. During this time I conducted historical research into the process of tribal integration following the establishment of modern Jordan (Yoav Alon, *The Making of Jordan: Tribes, Colonialism and the Modern State*. London: IB Tauris, 2007). A large part of my research was done during a six months' visit to the country in 1998. Since then, I keep visiting the country and follow its developments closely.

I am afraid the case you are now examining is rather a complex one and cannot be answered unequivocally. Nevertheless, I will try to provide you with some insights and background information that will hopefully allow you to assess it as accurately as possible.

Jordan is a tribal society and tribal customs still prevail, especially among the Transjordanian sector of society, namely the original inhabitants of the country who resided there before the influx of Palestinians in the aftermath of the 1948 war in Palestine. The Utum in Jarash are a well known Transjordanian tribe and although I never conducted an 'anthropological' research among them, they most probably adhere to this tribal culture. In fact, and in reply to one of your questions, tribal custom applies equally to all areas of Jordan, with some modifications according to local tradition.

According to tribal custom and social norm, the family has a lot to say when it comes to marriage. The father (or a senior family member, such as an old uncle or brother, when the father is no longer alive) has to give his consent for the marriage, and ask the potential bride's family for their consent. If this consent is indeed granted, then the father negotiates the dowry payment. Without his family's consent, a family member risks being a social outcast, a sanction which has severe implications in a state and society that regulates nearly everything along lines of kinship. These include the most basic practicalities. For one, family and tribal identities effect all aspects of social life, such as the way people socialise, choose a wife, or even reside: families tend to live together in a household that accommodates two or three generations, so that the brothers and their families reside in one compound with their parents, their unmarried siblings and the grandparents. Familial and tribal allegiances also considerably shape career paths, from securing a place at university, to obtaining a job or achieving promotions. Finally, the family or tribe are expected to come to the help of their members in case of financial difficulties. The latter issue is most pertinent these days as Jordan is experiencing a decade or more of economic crisis which only worsened since the war in Iraq and the influx of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. Many Jordanians have become impoverished and rely on family solidarity. All of the above would be derived from a tribe's member who does not toe his family's line. Indeed, it happens that an Arab man, married to a Western woman against his family's will, is asked by his father not to come back home.

It is not unlikely that the family of the concerned man objected to his choice of marriage partner and threatened with sanctions, although probably not ones which involve physical harm. This is although there is no provision in tribal law that prohibits a man's marriage to a foreign woman, as well as the fact that mixed marriages are a common phenomenon in Jordan today. The practice of marrying Western women probably began with King Hussein's marriage to the British Toni Gardiner (the mother of the current monarch, King Abdullah II, known as Princess Muna) in 1961 and spread along Jordanian society. During the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s many Jordanian men took foreign wives, a match which was quite desirable at the time. However, today there is a backlash and growing opposition to such practice. The change of attitude is partly related to tribal custom. In many cases these kinds of mixed marriages broke down and the women took their children and left the country. According to

tribal custom, which is also stipulated by Jordanian civil and religious laws, the children of a divorced couple belong to the father and are seen as part of his family. However, Jordanian civil law gives a divorced mother, even if she is a foreigner, the right to keep the children with her until they reach the age of 18. Most families respect this law, but, in the case of a Western divorced or separated mother, family members become very anxious if she chooses to return to her home country with the children. Their reservations derive from the completely different cultural environment within which the children will be raised, as well as from the physical separation from the father. Moreover, recent years have shown that in cases where Jordanian men refused to divorce their foreign wives, these women managed to flee the country assisted by their respective embassies, severing the children from their family. This is probably the basis for the family's objection to marrying a foreigner.

It must be emphasised, however, that as far as I am aware there were no instances where a family went as far as taking the life of a man who had married a foreigner. It might be speculated that in a fit of anger the father of the concerned man threatened him lest he marry the Australian girl. If there was a threat of physical harm it might be seen as a figure of speech rather than a declaration of intention, though this possibility cannot be ruled out entirely. Indeed, had it been the other way round, namely a Jordanian girl marrying a foreigner, most likely her family would have tried an attempt on her life in order to 'clean' what is perceived as the tainted family honour.

Lastly, as far as the role of the state is concerned it should be noted that Jordan tends to respect tribal law and customs and allows much autonomy to its tribes in conducting their own internal affairs. In fact, the Jordanian legal system informally recognises the existence of tribal law side by side with civil law. For instance, a conflict between two families would be dealt with in court but at the same time the families would try to solve their case through tribal processes of conflict resolution (temporary truce, mediation, arbitration, compensation, reconciliation, etc.). Moreover, a clause in the civil law reduces the punishment of a brother/husband indicted with killing his sister/wife whom he suspected of immoral behaviour ('honour killing') to a mere one year in prison.

I hope I was able to be of some help to you. I will be happy to answer further questions or inquiries regarding this statement should you require (Alon, Y. 2007, Email to RRT Research & Information 'Re: Request for information JOR32180 on male honour killing from the Migration Review Tribunal - Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia', 26 September – Attachment 21).

## **List of Sources Consulted**

### Internet Sources:

#### **United Nations (UN)**

IRIN website <http://www.irinnews.org>

#### **International News & Politics**

AlertNet Website <http://www.alternet.org/>

#### **Search Engines**

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

#### **Online Subscription Services**

#### **Library Networks**

#### **University Sites**

### Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)  
REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)  
ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)  
RRT Library Catalogue

### List of Attachments

1. 'Jerash' (undated), Wikipedia website <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerash> – Accessed 10 September 2007 – Accessed 10 September 2007.
2. 'Ambassador Holmes graduates 30 community leaders' 2005, Canadian Embassy in Jordan website, 9 September <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/world/embassies/jordan/news-holmes-en.asp> – Accessed 5 September 2007.
3. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2004, *JOR42883.E – Jordan: Risk to men, who have been accused by relatives of a girl, of engaging in an illicit affair, and threatened with death; protection available to such men; examples of cases in which men have been "honour-killed"*, 2 September.
4. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *JOR39847.E – Jordan: Treatment of Palestinians; inter-ethnic relations between Palestinians and Jordanian tribes as well as state protection available to Palestinians who are physically assaulted by Jordanian tribes people (upon the Palestinian's decision to court a tribeswoman)*, 6 September. (CISNET Jordan)
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