

## Cardinal Pizzaballa: “Christian voters’ turnout is extremely important”

The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Cardinal **Pierbattista Pizzaballa** has sent a message to Christian citizens of the Kingdom of Jordan, urging them to cast their vote in the upcoming parliamentary elections on 10 September. “Under the leadership of King Abdullah II – the Cardinal writes - Jordan has been committed to modernising its political arena and to strengthening the role of political parties, despite the many challenges facing the Kingdom.” For the Patriarch, whose pastoral jurisdiction extends to Jordan, “this vision requires concerted efforts and the participation of all to ensure the success of this process, which will enhance the results and contribute to building a brighter future.”

The text underscores the pivotal role of active participation by Jordanian Christians in public life, exemplified by exercising the right to vote in the upcoming parliamentary elections. “Jordan is taking bold steps towards modernisation and reforms,” writes Cardinal Pizzaballa. “In light of the historical contribution of Jordanian Christians in the development of their society, it is incumbent upon them to persevere in their active engagement and participate with resolve in strengthening the role of constitutional bodies and enriching harmonious pluralism throughout society.” The Patriarch continued by citing the Gospel passage in which Jesus tells his disciples, “You are the salt of the earth... you are the light of the world,” thereby emphasizing that those who follow Christ must serve their fellow human beings. “It is our mission to be, in accordance with God's will, the light and salt of the earth, serving the common good and imbued with life-giving hope and change-generating positivity for the greater good of humankind. Let us pray to God that He may grant Jordan strength and stability under the leadership of King Abdallah II and his family.” The Patriarch participated in the Iftar offered by King Abdallah II during Ramadan last March. On that occasion, he also expressed his gratitude on behalf of the Christians of Gaza to the sovereign for the humanitarian aid sent to the Strip and for his continuous efforts “for the care and protection of Christian and Muslim holy places.”



[\*\*A country confronted by instability.\*\* The impending elections coincide with a climate of street protests and rallies, partly precipitated by the ongoing conflict in Gaza between Israel and Hamas. The Hashemite Kingdom has consistently advocated for regional de-escalation, while simultaneously denouncing Israel's actions in Gaza and striving to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza population. The government has prohibited or dismantled numerous protests against Israel, including by enforcing the controversial cybersecurity law, which grants judges substantial discretion in its implementation. In terms of the economy, despite the prevailing regional tensions, Jordan is exhibiting some modest indications of recovery, despite various critical aspects. In 2023, the GDP growth rate was 2.6%. The World Bank's 2024 estimates indicate a projected growth rate of +2.5%. The war in Gaza has had a particularly detrimental impact on the tourism sector, which has historically served as a primary driver of Jordan's economy. Despite a decline of 1.5%, unemployment in the Hashemite Kingdom at the end of 2023 stood at 21.4%, exceeding the rate observed during the initial decade of the 2000s. Jordan's foreign policy, historically closely aligned with the US \(with the Hashemite Kingdom receiving approximately \\$1.5 billion from the US annually - Ed.'s note\), is markedly affected by its relations with Israel. The two countries have maintained a close relationship since the 1994 Treaty of Wadi Araba. However, the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and subsequent policies have resulted in a](#)

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considerable deterioration in mutual relations. This is particularly the case in the current political climate, given the presence of right-wing extremists such as Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich in the Israeli government, whom the Jordanian population, largely of Palestinian origin, holds in low regard. In fact, thousands of Iraqi and Syrian refugees sought refuge in the country. The situation in Gaza raises concerns in relation to the West Bank, where an escalation of violence could potentially impact the Hashemite Kingdom and Syria, where problems of internal security are further exacerbated by the trafficking of captagon, also known as the '*ISIS drug*', used by Hamas to fuel the aggressiveness and resilience of its militants. The Jordanian parliament is composed of 130 members, most of whom are independent or affiliated with tribal groups. According to official data, the voter turnout in the last parliamentary elections, held in 2020, stood at 30%, representing a decline from the 36% recorded in the 2016 elections.

Daniele Rocchi