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**King Hussein Bridge – Karameh Crossing:  
Transit Crisis as a Tool of Israeli Political Control**

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## Executive Summary

- The worsening crossing crisis at the King Hussein Bridge - Karameh Crossing (congestion, waiting lines, and frequent closures) shows that it is not an operational malfunction separate from the political context, but rather a complex crisis in which Israeli restrictions on movement and freedom of movement through procedures (operating hours, number of buses, sudden closures) are compounded by operational and service gaps on both sides of the administration, in addition to a shadow economy/services represented by bribes that take advantage of the lack of services and the tight time for movement.
- On an operational level, the crisis intensifies during peak seasons (holidays, Hajj and Umrah seasons, summer and vacation periods) when demand rises and traffic increases at the crossing from both the Jordanian and Palestinian sides. This is exacerbated by limited operating hours, a vague queuing system, and the accumulation of travelers, leading to increased friction at the bridge. Furthermore, the situation is compounded by the mixing of truck and passenger traffic, inadequate staffing, insufficient routes and internal services, and repetitive bureaucratic procedures (multiple queues and passport collection points)
- The pre-booking platforms (the one operated by the Public Security Directorate for departures) and the VIP business class booking system of the JETT transport regulatory tools intended to alleviate pressure<sup>1</sup> company have transformed from and congestion into operational stress points related to design governance, oversight, and unequal access to service among travelers. Therefore, these services require urgent review based on user

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<sup>1</sup> Jett, Business Class (Service B), is a premium travel service for those departing from Jordan to the West Bank. It includes quick online booking (approximately 3 minutes) via the official website or app, private and comfortable .buses, and punctuality. First launched on July 17, 2025. See: February 6, 2026  
<https://www.jett.com.jo/ar/book?from=16&to=41>

feedback, with options ranging from radical reform to temporary suspension pending resolution if they are found to exacerbate the bridge/crossing crisis.

- Bribery and extortion are among the factors that reproduce the crisis by creating "parallel routes" within the bridge/crossing in order to facilitate movement and speed up procedures, which undermines the fairness of the role and increases tension between travelers and workers on the one hand, and between travelers themselves on the other hand, and weakens confidence in the existing organizational arrangements on both sides.
- The paper estimates that mitigating the severity of the crisis does not require waiting for a comprehensive political settlement, despite its roots being linked to the occupation. Immediate internal margins can be activated to reduce human harm, control exploitation, and improve service quality, in parallel with an organized diplomatic pressure track to gradually increase operating hours, reaching 24-hour operation as a sustainable structural solution.
- On the other hand, there is a problem in governance, design and control, not in the idea itself, but the common denominator was the need for an urgent review based on data and user experience, with the option of radical reform or downsizing and freezing if they prove to be deepening the crisis.

The paper recommends a package of phased interventions at the near/medium levels, including:

1. Demand and queue management: improving the queuing system, increasing staffing, standardizing collection points and reducing procedural redundancies, and building an official traveler information system (time updates, guidance, complaints) .
2. Movement separation and interference reduction: Separating truck traffic from passenger traffic within specific time windows, and allocating separate lanes for the most vulnerable groups (people with disabilities, pregnant women, the elderly, children).
3. Controlling paid services and bribes: by regulating, licensing and monitoring baggage handling and assistance services within the crossing to reduce bribes.

4. Infrastructure development through urgent service improvements: expansion and increase of waiting rooms, sanitary facilities, water, seating, umbrellas/air conditioning, and crowd management.
5. VIP business class booking system Redesign governance, controls, and access standards based on operational data and documented feedback, or temporarily suspend them if their negative impact is proven in order to address it.
6. Supporting technology solutions: Electronic crossing/path cards to reduce contact and multiple staff, and development of an information/alert application that shows the level of congestion and the estimated/expected time to alleviate the severity of the bridge congestion.
7. The political-diplomatic track: Forming a permanent Jordanian-Palestinian team to follow up, unify the discourse, and work to gradually increase operating hours (with the goal of reaching 24 hours) through diplomatic pressure on international bodies to pressure the Israeli side
8. The main demand is to increase the number of operating hours to 24 hours, with a minimum of 8 hours per day. In addition to reducing the departure tax. From the Palestinian side, the return of Palestinian crews to the bridge and the establishment of national committees to combat smuggling on the bridge,

## Introduction

The King Hussein Bridge – Karameh Crossing – is a vital gateway for the Palestinian side, serving as their primary point of entry for travel for education, work, leisure, family reunification, and other purposes. It also holds significant political importance for both sides, particularly for Jordan, as it is a crucial artery for delivering Jordanian aid to the Gaza Strip, thus reinforcing Jordan's role and commitment to supporting the resilience of the Palestinian people. Data from the movement indicates the high level of reliance on and around 2,2023<sup>2</sup> the bridge; approximately 1.5 million travelers were recorded in This underscores the bridge's 2025<sup>3</sup> million in both directions were projected for importance and vital role for both sides, and the resulting economic and social impact on Jordanians and Palestinians alike.

However, the problem revolves around sustaining and facilitating this movement/crossing in light of the repeated Israeli pressures, especially after October 7, 2023, which limit the movement of both sides, especially with the repeated closures and limiting working hours to five and a half hours, including peak seasons of movement and travel such as the summer season, Hajj and Umrah seasons, holidays, and others, in addition to operational problems on the Jordanian and Palestinian sides, which has negatively affected the freedom of movement of the Palestinian side to and from the West Bank, resulting in increased congestion and therefore increased waiting times, and increased friction.

In addition to the growth in the number of travelers at normal rates that may exceed 9% which means the need to develop a proactive approach that increases,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 1.5 ,One million travelers have crossed the King Hussein Bridge since the beginning of this year," July 12, 2026 Kingdom. <https://bitly.cx/zldbw>

<sup>3</sup> ,A security source explains the reasons for the crises witnessed at the King Hussein Bridge, January 20, 2026 " Petra News Agency. <https://bitly.cx/Obru>

<sup>4</sup>.According to a source in the Palestinian Ministry of Transport. February 8, 2026

capacity, improves the service and administrative reality at the crossing, and reduces the impact of/takes into account the sudden frequent closures.

The paper starts from the premise that the essence of the transit/mobility crisis is political but mitigating its severity requires a two-pronged approach: An urgent operational path within the margins available internally in order to improve service and control violations, and an organized diplomatic path to gradually increase operating hours until a longer and more stable operating ceiling is reached, represented by working around the clock/24 hours.

### **Deconstructing the Crisis: Levels and Actors**

The real challenge is to move beyond describing the paths of the crisis to implementable paths that resolve the problems and balance between the political dimension of the crisis (Israeli control/domination/restrictions), which constitutes the core of the crisis, and an administrative-operational dimension in which direct intervention is possible to reduce human harm and raise the quality of service, while unifying/consistent Jordanian-Palestinian messages/discourse/efforts in a way that serves the path of international pressure, which is relied upon to make a difference.

On the political level, the core of the crisis is linked to the occupation's measures of reducing working hours under security pretexts, controlling capacity and the movement of buses and individuals, and the frequent and sudden closures. The latest of these was on September 15, 2025, and extended until the end of the month, and included preventing the passage of Jordanian humanitarian aid trucks to the Gaza Strip until the following a shooting incident by a Jordanian truck,<sup>5</sup> end of December of the same year driver on Israeli soldiers at the crossing, which resulted in the death of two soldiers and the death of the perpetrator.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Under US pressure: Karameh/Allenby crossing reopened for aid and goods transfers," December 9, 2025, Israeli Broadcasting Corporation <https://bitly.cx/9dPbR>

<sup>6</sup> "Jordan calls for keeping the "Allenby" crossing open and not closing it under any pretext," December 9, 2025 " .Kingdom <https://bitly.cx/2XMla>

The tightening of procedures since the end of 2022 and the aftermath of the Gaza war can perhaps be linked to a broader framework of restructuring the crossing and consequently, the Palestinian territories in the West Bank—security-wise, politically, and socially. This is achieved through the accumulation of daily pressure, manifested in the constriction of life and the pushing of Palestinians toward coercive options—a form of forced/slow/soft displacement"—namely, migration to neighboring countries, primarily" Naturally, other internal economic and security pressures transform the bridge .Jordan Ultimately, the .into a flashpoint, a potential flashpoint that could erupt at any moment bridge is now being used more as a political tool than a border facility. In this context, even if the crisis is structurally created by the occupation, mitigating its severity does not require a comprehensive political solution. Internal interventions can alleviate suffering, reduce opportunities for exploitation, and increase the capacity to absorb the impact of the closures.

Undoubtedly, these indicators demonstrate that the deliberate policies of the occupation lead, in one way or another, to long-term control policies that contribute to increasing the suffocating conditions for Palestinians, given that the crossing is the main gateway for Palestinians to Jordan and then to the world. This is evident in the control of bus traffic, the setting of crossing hours, and the closure of the bridge under security pretexts. Re-engineering human geography, if restrictions accumulate, may force people to rearrange their lives (longer stay outside the West Bank/Gaza, or relocation)

(study/work, or immigration options), meaning that "movement control" becomes a medium- and long-term socio-demographic influence tool.

On an operational and service level, the infrastructure and services file is a matter that cannot be postponed. There is a need for facilities befitting the volume of traffic and the symbolic importance of the crossing: waiting areas, restrooms, environmental regulations (designated smoking rooms/restrooms), clear pathways, and increased capacity. It was noted that Jordan possesses experience in operating large facilities (such as the airport), and some of this experience could be transferred to the crossing within a more professional management model. This is in addition to the unregulated paid services (baggage handling, etc.), which indicate a regulatory vacuum that allows for quasi-

monopolistic practices, even if unofficial, necessitating clear regulation or oversight to prevent them from becoming a source of constant extortion.

Regarding coordination and responsibilities, while it is true that Israel controls the core of the crossing through the Movement and Coordination Office, which determines and regulates the number of trucks, buses, and individuals permitted to access the crossing, Jordan possesses relatively greater leeway in improving operations on its territory and leveraging its international relations for diplomatic pressure. Meanwhile, the Palestinian operational margin is diminished by Israeli control. Therefore, consistency in Jordanian and Palestinian positions is essential for any effective pressure campaign. Divergent messages or priorities weaken the ability to exert external pressure and facilitate the transformation of the issue into an exchange of accusations, rather than establishing it as a matter of rights and freedom of movement that benefits both sides

### **Actors and margins of influence**

- On the Jordanian side: The problems are related to weak governance and management of peak flow (limited lanes, insufficient staff, early queues) redundant procedures, and declining infrastructure and service quality. Furthermore, the ambiguity of queuing rules and weak oversight lead to increased opportunities for bribery, undermining fairness and damaging the image of the crossing as a public facility.
- The Israeli side: sets the operational limits and traffic flow by reducing hours, restricting buses, imposing sudden closures, and managing congestion to serve political pressure tactics. Furthermore, it diverts the crossing's economic revenues to Israel by promoting alternative routes (such as Ramon Airport) as part of redirecting traffic to align with its security, political, and economic control objectives.
- On the Palestinian side: The operational control margin is affected by the reality of Israeli control, which increases the importance of coordination with Jordan. Furthermore, marginal behaviors emerge, fueled by economic

strangulation and pressure (such as attempts at circumvention/smuggling), which also necessitates addressing governance issues.

The recommendations are distributed across three interconnected timeframes, as addressing the crisis is not solely about capacity, but also about governance, flow management, and service quality. Accordingly, the paper proposes a phased reform path that balances what can be implemented immediately at a limited cost, what requires operational and structural adjustments, and what necessitates a political/diplomatic approach to ensure sustainability.

1. Short-term measures (urgent and low-cost)

- Order and queue management: Clearly improve the queuing system and queue management, increase staffing during peak times, unify collection points and reduce procedural redundancies as much as possible.
- Priority pathways for vulnerable groups: Adoption of a publicly announced protocol for separate pathways for people with disabilities, pregnant women, the elderly, children (and those whose health condition requires priority).
- Rapid health/environmental improvements: Raising the minimum standards of the waiting environment (cleanliness, water, seating, shade/air conditioning, smoking (regulation, crowd management.
- Regulating paid services and unregulated practices: Regulating/licensing baggage handling and assistance services within the crossing with advertised pricing and monitoring and complaint mechanisms, to reduce bribery and "parallel routes".
- Official passenger information system: an official channel for congestion and estimated time updates, practical guidance, and a clear pathway for receiving complaints and grievances.

2. Medium-term measures (operational/organizational structure)

- Movement separation and interference reduction: Separating truck traffic from passenger traffic within specific time windows and separate routes, to reduce congestion during peak pedestrian traffic.
- Review of the booking platform and business class booking system VIP.
- Redesigning governance, oversight, and access standards based on operational data and passenger feedback; with the option of radical modification or suspension/temporary halt if they prove to be deepening the crisis, pending resolution.
- Expanding waiting rooms and developing infrastructure: through expanding/rehabilitating waiting rooms, improving service facilities to match the volume of traffic, and enabling the private sector to play this role by making investment available.
- Supporting technology solutions: Introducing "electronic cards" to reduce contact with staff, and developing an official alert application/service that shows the level of congestion and the expected time to alleviate it, which helps in distributing the demand

### **3. Long-term measures (structural/political) to ensure sustainability**

- Gradually increasing operating hours: Raising operating hours to 12 hours as a transitional phase, with an ultimate goal of longer/closer operating hours to 24 hours in a gradual manner.
- The political-diplomatic track: Forming a permanent Jordanian-Palestinian team to follow up and unify the discourse, and building a diplomatic pressure campaign on international parties to increase operating hours, establish the right to movement under occupation, and reduce the arbitrariness in closure decisions.
- Governance and management of land ports: A study on allocating a single management body/authority for land ports to unify responsibilities and reduce their dispersal among institutions, with clear coordination mechanisms with relevant authorities (Public Security, Transport, Public Works, Municipalities, etc.).

- Comprehensive structural upgrade: Developing and financing the crossing's infrastructure within a clear governance framework and performance indicators, thereby increasing capacity and reducing future bottlenecks.
- Accompanying public policy requirements: Explore the option of reducing/eliminating the departure tax within an assessment of its financial and political impact, and from the Palestinian side, support the return of Palestinian crews to the bridge, and form national committees to combat smuggling (as a behavior that increases pressure and creates justifications for restrictions).