

## Muslim Brotherhood Ready for More Active Role in Jordan

From VOA Learning English, this is IN THE NEWS in Special English.

The Muslim Brotherhood is one of the largest Islamic groups in the Arab world. For years, the Brotherhood has been banned in a number of Middle Eastern countries. Yet the group has long had an influential voice in the kingdom of Jordan. It also is considered the most organized political force in the nation.

Jordanians' demands for change have been growing stronger, partly because of economic problems. Their demands have, at times, led to conflict with the nation's monarch, King Abdullah.



The Muslim Brotherhood seems ready for a more active role in Jordanian politics. But the group says it wants no part in changing the government. Nimer al-Assaf is a top official in the Brotherhood's political organization.

"We are a peaceful movement and what we are asking for are reforms under the auspices of the monarchy."

The Muslim Brotherhood has been active in Jordan since the 1940s. Since then, the group has worked with the government as it slowly built a following. But changes are taking place, partly because of the Arab Spring and the civil war in neighboring Syria.

Oraib al-Rantawi is with the Al Quds Center for Political Studies in Amman. He believes the group has been watching what is happening in Syria.

"They spent more than one year and a half waiting for what will happen in Syria because they feel if Muslim Brothers there reach power, this will empower them by default."

The Brotherhood says it is watching the Syrian conflict, but not taking an active part in it. Nimer al-Assaf says the group's leaders do not send warriors to fight, although he argues it is their right.

It is not clear what the long-term goals of the Brotherhood are in Jordan.

The group has refused discussions with the United States and Israel. Yet, the Jordanian government honors a peace treaty with Israel. Mr. Assaf admits this would change should the Brotherhood become a leading political player.

"Things become different. You have to deal with the world, whether you like them or not."

He says any changes might come through a special nationwide vote.

Opponents of the Brotherhood see the rise of Islamists in Jordan and across the Middle East as a hijacking of the hopes and goals of the Arab Spring. Mister al-Rantawi believes that wealthy conservatives in Saudi Arabia and Qatar are to blame. But the group dismisses such criticism, linking its rise to the expression of popular will.

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood came to power following the ouster of longtime leader Hosni Mubarak. The group's presidential candidate, Mohamed Morsi, took office earlier this year.

This week, Egypt revisited protests similar to those almost two years ago. Tanks were deployed to the presidential palace in Cairo following deadly clashes between supporters and opponents of Mr. Morsi.

Opposition protesters want the president to cancel an order expanding his powers. They also oppose a proposed constitution they say was the work of Islamists, without help from those who disagree with Mr. Morsi. A nationwide vote on the constitution is set for December 15<sup>th</sup>.