

CONCERN GROWS IN JORDAN ...

minister and now head of the House Foreign Relations Committee in parliament.

"The mainstream and the great majority of Jordanians still support Saddam, but people are beginning to think in terms of Jordan," Masri said. "The economic damage we expect is going to be devastating. Tens of thousands of Jordanians who used to work in Kuwait are now among us with their families, their cars, their problems and their worries."

"While people want to believe in Saddam's role as an Arab visionary, an independently Jordanian stand is coming into being," Masri added. "Jordan wants to survive and Saddam started a problem."

He said the frustrations of Palestinians and Jordanians "were Saddam's main allies and friends in this crisis."

Kamal Shaer, a leading contractor and head of the multimillion-dollar Dar Handassa engineering firm, has firmly opposed the invasion and annexation from the outset.

"I strongly feel that the invasion and annexation of Kuwait were wrong and in violation of the United Nations and the Arab League charters. Taking over territories, let alone countries, by the use of force is totally inadmissible as a matter of basic principle. I believe that U.N. resolution 661 should be implemented unconditionally and that includes the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait as well as the restoration of the Kuwaiti government," Shaer said.

What is not clear at this stage is how far Hussein can push Arab allies as well as Saddam to commit themselves to bring back the ruling Kuwaiti family once the crisis eases.

"The deep tragedy is the intensity of Arab exasperation over continued occupation of their land. The marginalization of the Middle East and the failure to apply U.N. resolutions 242 and 338 (calling for Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territories in return for peace and secure borders) were bound to produce explosions everywhere," Shaer, who is an appointed senator, said.

"People here are not basing their opinions on international law, because that has already been violated," Masri said, explaining the

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Concern Grows in Jordan About Backing Saddam

By Nora Boustany
Washington Post Foreign Service

AMMAN, Jordan, Aug. 27 - King Hussein's new push for a diplomatic solution to the Persian Gulf crisis reflects growing misgivings here about Amman's association with Baghdad, according to several prominent Jordanians.

The king is touring Arab capitals this week seeking consensus on a formula for an Iraqi pull-out from Kuwait and a Jordanian politician said he "will try to persuade Saddam to give a signal for withdrawal" from Kuwait with Arab backing. Jordan also will host a meeting set for Thursday between U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz.

The masses in this largely Palestinian country still appear to support Saddam. But increased domestic pressure on Hussein to distance Jordan from Iraq is coming from a small but influential minority of this country's elite, which has begun to speak out openly against what they say are mistakes and pitfalls Hussein should have avoided.

"I would have condemned the invasion and Iraq from day one," a Jordanian senator said. He said the king tried to call Saddam at 6 a.m. on the day of the invasion, hoping to reason with him, upon being alerted by Saudi Arabia's King Fahd of the Iraqi thrust into Kuwait.

"Saddam did not come to the phone. His majesty called again at 9. He still could not speak with the Iraqi president. They did not hear until 1 in the afternoon and by then it was all over," the senator said. "I don't see how such an infringement was going to be employed to cater to Arab needs."

One businessman here said, however, that he doubted that "any Arab army or leader would have blocked Saddam's advance."