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**Who Are This
Year's Most
Powerful People?**

Jordan Business

THE 4th POWER 30 ISSUE

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

Marianne Williamson (1952–)
Author and spiritual activist

Rank does not confer privilege or give power.
It imposes responsibility.

Peter F. Drucker (1909–2005)
Writer and management consultant

A Power License

Power is predictable. It carries prejudice and pretense, it feeds off the dubious and the double-edged, it is slavish to the self and to kin and its association with wealth is inextricable and tenacious. Periodically, however, power settles on the underdog and the unsuspecting.

This 2010 Power 30 List, compiled through online voting by *Jordan Business* readers over the past two months, reflects this description. Dispiritingly familiar and endemically male-oriented, the voting mirrors the choice of a readership steeped in affinity with recognizable and wealth-allied names. A good number of the same names, notably in the categories of business and politics, also popped up in the *Jordan Business* Power 30 lists of previous years. The third category of influential Jordanians, by far the most dynamic, carries no such predictive attribute.

Jordan Business readers were asked to vote from a list of over 200 nominees. The aim was to extract 30 individuals deemed to have inspired positive change in the country or who readers felt were likely to instigate change for the better. Within the motley groups of political players, business and influential people, a few were self-starters – individuals who had made business and political strides on their own merit, perhaps because they saw a genuine need for a certain direction and labored hard to execute it.

The *Jordan Business* Power 30 List is not intended as an accurate reflection of the reality or the true worth of power-wielding individuals and their responsibilities towards society. The limitations of a voting exercise that can extend no further than a specific demographic boundary are evident. The aim, therefore, is to peek into a confined set of popular assumptions of power. Is power associated with positive influence in people's minds?

The original list of nominees was populated by widely divergent individuals. The hope then was to detect a shift in voters' choices from past years – a change that may indicate a new way of thinking. Would it be fair to reflect on the underlying reasons for voter choices? If measured from the original list of individuals for nomination, the answer is yes.

What the 2010 Power 30 List generally indicates is a fixation with the old school, the familiar and the tribal – a significant show of hands for the political and business "name brands" within the country. New names in these fields have filtered into the final roll but, with few notable exceptions, these tend to reflect recent government appointments or the size of commercial wealth rather than effort, direction, intent and genuine accomplishment.

The politically conservative pervades the 2010 Power 30 political category. Not far behind, individuals from a more recent spurt of jumps from the private sector and into politics were included. Troublingly, several individuals in the final count have, at one stage or another, been dogged by allegations of corruption. Ostensibly no longer operating within their power domes, some of these very same individuals appear to continue exercising a considerable but ghostly influence behind the scenes.

No current representatives from the country's largest opposition party, the Islamic Action Front, were chosen this year. However, a couple of figures from the historical recesses of political opposition found their way into the final votes for the influential category.

By contrast, the creative and media industries saw more representation in the influential category than in previous years. New names have entered the final tally but a couple have re-

mained super-glued to the Power 30 canvas over the years.

A conscious effort was made by *Jordan Business* to include a good number of women candidates within the three different categories. The predilection towards reactionary voting meant that no woman from the business and political fields made it to the final Power 30 List of 2010. This is by no means a gloomy indictment on our society. Power may be ominous and stridently loud in this part of the world, but social change and, within that, the overall awareness of what constitutes the elements for a better society are present but often imperceptible.

That is the premise, at least, for one important statement made by this year's voters. The 2010 Power 30 List holds the most number of women selected within the category of influential Jordanians. Five of those voted in this year are women, constituting, in effect, half the influential category. This may seem like an insignificant number, but considering that the 2008, 2007 and 2006 Power 30 lists secured two women each, five feels very much like a conquest.

The women voted into the final Power 30 this year are individuals with creative educational enterprise, legal prowess, persistent investigative skill, practical and demonstrable empathy and strong civic sense. These are qualities that even on a singular basis would do well in the political and business arenas.

Power may be a monolithic attribute, and the paths to its attainment and subsequent deployment may not always be aligned to social altruism. They rarely are anywhere. It is, however, possible to imagine a final Power 30 list where voters look beyond the traditional and totemic and into the qualities essential to a developing country. We all have the power license for that kind of optimism. ■



Taher Masri

President, Jordanian Senate

Back in the 2008 *Jordan Business* Power 30 list when he was vice-president of the Senate, we mentioned that Taher Masri had seemingly filled every possible post in the Jordanian government. Well, in late 2009, His Majesty King Abdullah II appointed him as the Senate president, adding one more title to the long list of political positions that Masri has occupied in a career dating back from 1973. By no means a “yes man” seeking to curry favor with the higher echelons of the state in order to win positions, Masri’s career has been characterized by numerous stands against what he believes to be wrong with politics, including a boycott of parliamentary elections in the mid-1990s, in protest against hasty normalization with Israel and the retreat from the democratization process in 1989. His beliefs caused him to be briefly marginalized, before being brought back into the fold in 1998 with a Senate appointment. His ability to voice dissent and yet still be valued and taken seriously is testament to his integrity and to the respect he commands from Jordan’s political class and beyond.