

economic, then the unions must have a political representation because they are the people's biggest partner and the most targetted by the conservatives, market economy capital, and the International Monetary Fund." Shubeilat was quoted as forecasting that the prices of bread and water would increase dramatically within weeks. He said he believed that, if present trends were to continue, then popular protest against declining living standards could not be ruled out. The reference was to widespread riots and demonstrations that broke out in 1989, precisely in response to such IMF-style austerity measures.

Thus, his rejection of "free-market" economics is the real basis on which the charges have been levelled. Although it can be demonstrated, that it is the IMF policies which have produced the deleterious economic effects mentioned, the authorities have attempted to lay the blame on the person

who has spoken up about it. This is perhaps the first time that a public figure in Jordan has been incriminated for having told the truth about the IMF.

Shubeilat has denied all the charges brought against him. If convicted, he could face up to three years in prison. If further charges are added to the indictment, relating to incitement to insurrection, sedition, or the like, he would risk a more severe punishment of 20 years to life in prison.

A political hot potato

Immediately following the arrest, the associations and many political figures mobilized for Shubeilat's immediate release. The case quickly turned from a legal and security issue into a major political question, which aroused the concern of most of the population, especially the professional and political circles, regarding the political and economic

Who is Laith Shubeilat?

Laith Shubeilat is a 52-year-old Jordanian, from a prominent political family. His father was close to the king, serving as a minister as well as an ambassador for several years. Laith Shubeilat entered Parliament as an independent Islamist in 1989, when democracy was reintroduced in Jordan. He was elected by an overwhelming mandate, from voters in the Third District of Amman. His was the highest total for any single candidate, which made him the most popular personality in the country, outside the royal family.

In 1992, Shubeilat was arrested and charged with plotting the overthrow of the monarchy. He was accused of belonging to a group called Shabab al Nafeer (the Vanguard of Islamic Youth). After a railroad trial before a security court, which involved testimony by phony witnesses, he was convicted, and sentenced to 20 years of hard labor. Later, he was freed under the terms of a general amnesty granted by the king.

Shubeilat refused to run for re-election in 1993, in protest against the change in electoral laws, which he denounced as a blow to Jordan's democratic system. After thus leaving a political career, Shubeilat was elected president of the Jordanian Engineers Association (JEA), the most powerful of the dozen or so professional unions which represent the country's doctors, engineers, lawyers, and so forth. From that position, he has become the de facto leader of the opposition to "normalization" with Israel.

Shubeilat has campaigned in Jordan, and throughout the Arab and Islamic world, against the policies of the



Five days before his arrest, Laith Shubeilat was told by a government minister that "it would be better" if he did not run for re-election as head of the powerful Jordan Engineers Association.

International Monetary Fund, and for a new, just world economic order. Although he differs with Lyndon LaRouche on Middle East policy, Shubeilat campaigned for LaRouche's liberation and exoneration, organizing broad support throughout the Muslim intelligentsia. Shubeilat has also been active in efforts to forge an ecumenical alliance of the monotheistic religious traditions, on the basis of a commitment to the principle, that all men are created in the image of God the Creator. He has lectured widely throughout the world, and has authored numerous articles and essays.