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Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan

NEWSLETTER

*The official newsletter of the Embassy of Switzerland in
Jordan - December 2021*

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Dear Fellow Swiss Citizens,

As the New Year is approaching, I want to take this as an opportunity to extend my heartfelt greetings for the season and reflect on the Embassy's accomplishments and achievements for 2021.

This year has been great despite the challenges of COVID-19. We were able to sign several memoranda of understanding (MoU) and agreements with different government entities and partners in Jordan, as well as host high level delegations from the headquarters of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Bern, Switzerland. Iraq has been given a special attention, with the official visit of the Vice-President of Switzerland, Ignazio Cassis to Baghdad in April 2021, as well as numerous other missions from the Headquarters and my team. We have strengthened and further diversified Swiss-Iraqi relations. Another milestone we are proud to have reached in mid-year is that all employees at the Embassy are fully vaccinated, creating a safer, more comfortable environment for all staff.

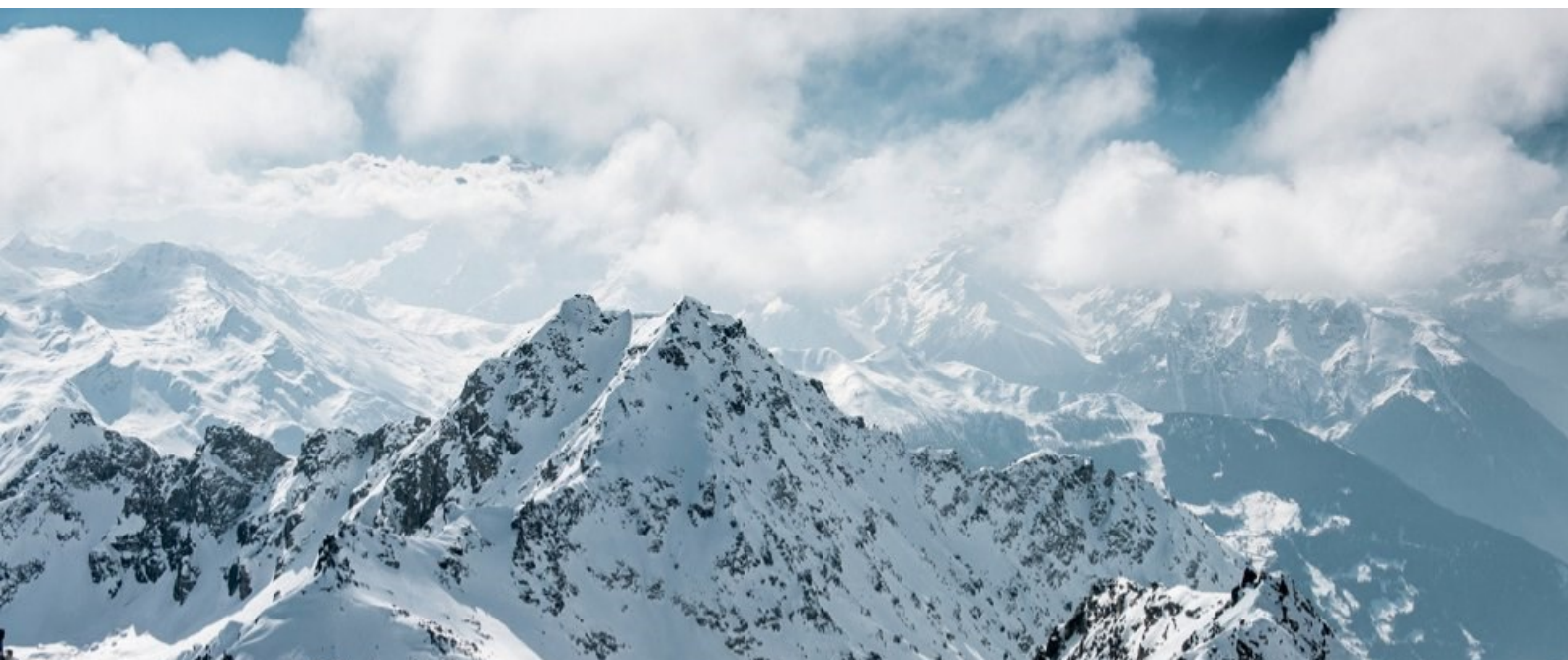
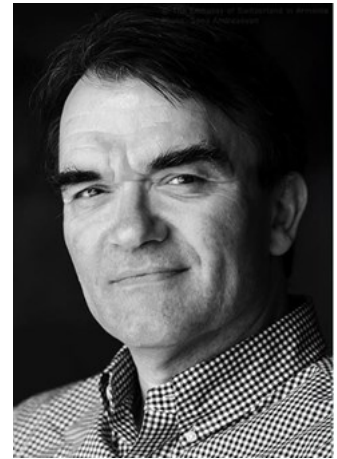
I would also like to thank all the staff at the Embassy for the support and dedication and for a successful year. I am looking forward to the new opportunities and challenges ahead for all of us. Let's prepare for this New Year with positivity and excitement.

Hoping that you will find this newsletter informative, I wish all of you a very happy and prosperous new year.

Stay safe and happy reading!

Lukas Gasser

Ambassador of Switzerland to Jordan and Iraq





IRAQ'S STABILITY: MAIN PRIORITY FOR SWITZERLAND



Ambassador Gasser with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Ali Allawi

With travel measures easing up around the world, Ambassador Lukas Gasser was able to visit Iraq eight times in 2021.

During the latest trip to Baghdad, which dated between 4 and 6 December 2021, the Ambassador was accompanied by Edouard Jay, Head of Diplomatic Affairs and Rasha Akkash, Political Analyst from the Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan, accredited to the Republic of Iraq. The party of three attended several meetings with different government ministries and discussed a range of topics including water diplomacy, possible Swiss investments in Iraq, Iraq's new role within the regional context that is seen as a pillar of stability and peace-making, the possibility of

opening a Swiss representation in Iraq and the upcoming political consultations between Switzerland and Iraq which are scheduled to take place on 25 January 2022.

The Ambassador took the opportunity to congratulate Iraq on the success of their latest parliamentary elections which took place on 10 October 2021 and stressed Switzerland's position on encouraging the formation of an inclusive Iraqi government. Switzerland financially supported the biggest United Nations electoral mission worldwide which worked on enhancing the credibility and transparency of Iraq's electoral process and contributed towards Sustainability Goal 16: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".



Ambassador Gasser with Minister of Water Resources Rashid Hamdani

On a previous trip to Baghdad between 14 and 16 September 2021, the delegation from the Embassy was headed by Ambassador Gasser along with Stefan Hutter, Head of Finance, Administration and Personnel, Oliver Muller, Middle East Analyst from the Federal Department of Justice and Police, and Rasha Akkash, Political Analyst. Ehab Younis, the Regional Director of Hitachi-ABB also joined the trip.

The main goal of the trip to Baghdad was to follow up on bilateral relations with the Iraqi authorities and to assess the possibility of a stronger Swiss

engagement in Iraq, especially in the energy field. The delegation also discussed topics related to migration and camps closures.



Ambassador Gasser with Senior Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Nizar Khairallah

Several meetings with a range of government officials, UN representatives and members of the diplomatic community took place where the delegation discussed a wide range of issues and topics of mutual interest. During the trip, the delegation managed to visit the Swiss land plot in the International Zone and discussed the possibility of opening a Swiss diplomatic representation in Iraq with the concerned Iraqi officials.



Ambassador Gasser with the Director of Trade Bank of Iraq Salem Chalabi

The COVID situation allowing, Ambassador Lukas Gasser will resume his regular trips to Iraq in 2022 and continue the important cooperation with the Iraqi government.



A TRIBUTE TO NATURE: SWISS FILMS & EXHIBITION



Presented by the Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan in collaboration with the Royal Film Commission, the Tribute to Nature Festival featured two award-winning Swiss films, an exhibition on twenty innovative, environmentally-friendly solutions from Switzerland and a panel discussion with distinguished experts from both

countries. The event ran from 28 July 2021 until 7 August 2021 at the premises of the Royal Film Commission in Jabal Amman.

“If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years left to live.” Albert Einstein.

The festival kicked off with the screening of the film “More than Honey” by Swiss filmmaker Markus Imhoof which took the viewers on a journey to meet with people whose lives depend on bees, and reports on how bees are vanishing. The film won among numerous other prizes the Swiss Film Award in 2013, the Audience Award at the UK Green Film Festivals in the same year and was submitted for the Oscar for Best Foreign Language

Film at the 86th Academy Awards. The documentary was followed by a panel discussion featuring Yehya Khaled, Director General of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, Dr. Nizar Haddad, General Director of the National Agricultural Research Center, Prof. Said Ahmad Damhoureyeh, Regional Councilor at the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Mr. Andreas Koenig, President of the Aargau Beekeepers' Association in Switzerland.



Alongside "More than Honey", the Festival also included the screening of the feature film "Paradise War - the Story of Bruno Manser" which is based on a true story. "Paradise War - The Story of Bruno Manser" directed by Niklaus Hilber was presented in several festivals in Switzerland and honored among other prizes with the Science Film Award at the Zurich Film Festival 2019.



In addition, the Tribute to Nature Festival hosted an exhibition called "Can Tech Save the World?" showcasing twenty innovative solutions developed in Switzerland to protect the environment and make our societies more resilient. The aim of the exhibition, which has already been presented in various cities around the globe as well as in Aqaba in June 2021, is to create dialogue and accelerate the sharing of solutions around five major environmental challenges. Access to quality water, waste recovery, maintenance of biodiversity, access to energy for all and carbon-free mobility are the key topics being highlighted at the exhibition.



The Festival was supported by Presence Switzerland, the agency of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs responsible for promoting Switzerland's image abroad.



SWISS COOPERATION IN JORDAN

The humanitarian and development needs in the region are constantly increasing. It remains important to Switzerland to therefore contribute to the stability and resilience of the region, considering existing challenges and but also potential further shocks in Syria and in the countries affected by the crisis. Therefore Switzerland's regional cooperation approach remains highly relevant.

From 12 to 18 October 2021 a mission of high level representatives of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Peace and Human Rights division took place to Lebanon and the regional hub in Amman, aiming at learning and identifying the interlinkage of all Swiss efforts in humanitarian, development and peace work. In Jordan Manuel Bessler, Deputy Director General and Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid and Thomas Gass, Assistant Director General and Head of South Cooperation

visited several initiatives supported by Switzerland and used their presence to exchange with other donors and civil society representatives.



During the trip, the delegation visited a school in Rusaifah which was rehabilitated by SDC. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) were also present as they support children and adolescents, including refugees, in progressing through formal

education in public schools. The principal of the school briefed the delegation on the effects of the rehabilitation on the students. They discussed with some students the challenges faced and were able to attend some of the classes taking place.



On the second day, Ambassador Lukas Gasser along with the Swiss guests headed to the Ministry of Higher Education to meet with the Minister of Education, Dr Wajih Owais. The Minister presented the priorities of the Jordanian education sector, which includes institutional development of Jordan's vocational education and training to align them to the needs of the labour market.



The delegation also visited Azraq refugee camp. Switzerland has a long standing engagement through UNICEF Jordan, to set up a more sustainable, equitable and climate-resilient water supply system, and that refugee children have a chance to follow formal education with the support of Relief International.



The visit to the Middle East confirmed that Switzerland's engagement responds to the most acute needs and provides solutions to structural challenges always thinking of ensuring the added value of Switzerland for Jordan.

WE ARE ALL VACCINATED AGAINST COVID-19!



The Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan is proud to announce that during these turbulent times of uncertainty, a milestone was reached at the Embassy. All staff are now fully vaccinated with the two doses against COVID-19.

Since the start of the pandemic, we faced many challenges to keep operations going at the Embassy. First, we switched to working from home and travel was banned. As the months went by, we were able to return to some normalcy, with 50% of our staff back at the office. Social distancing,

wearing of masks and sanitation of the work space and following ALL the government protocols were procedures that protected us from spreading infections within the office staff.

As the time went by, the vaccination campaign started in Jordan and one by one, all staff at the Embassy were vaccinated with the 2 doses of COVID-19.

So now, we can safely say that at the Embassy – we feel safe and are happy to be back at work in full force.



REPATRIATION OF TWO MINORS FROM THE ROJ CAMP IN NORTH-EAST SYRIA

The Swiss authorities have negotiated the release of two half-sisters, aged 15 and nine, from a Kurdish-controlled camp in Syria back to Switzerland.

The two girls were taken from Geneva to Syria by their mother in 2016 when she joined the Islamic State terror group. The mother and two half-sisters ended up in the Kurdish controlled Roj detention camp in north-eastern Syria.

The foreign ministry confirmed that the girls had arrived at Geneva Airport in Switzerland having first been transferred to Iraq.

This repatriation was carried out with the consent of the children's mother and of the mother's lawyer, and within the framework of the Federal Council's decision of 8 March 2019, which allows the repatriation of minors subject to an examination and in the interest of the child.

The operation was conducted in collaboration with the competent authorities in Switzerland and abroad, including those in charge of the camp the children were in.

FIRST SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUMMIT IN JORDAN



Organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship (MoDEE), and supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and NAUA (an initiative from the Crown Prince Foundation), the first annual Social Entrepreneurship Summit in Jordan was launched on 29 November 2021.

The aims of the Summit was to advance the development of the social entrepreneurship sector in Jordan; to build a thriving social economy; to promote policy dialogue to address challenges; and build on opportunities amongst youth innovators, social enterprises and startups in Jordan and the region.

The event brought together Jordanian social enterprises, NGOs and civil society, with Government representatives, global leaders in social impact business development, established networks from across the Middle East and Europe, along with experts from the UN, donors and research intuitions.

Participants conducted an in-depth review of the Jordan social enterprise ecosystem during the two-day Summit, with the aim of concluding policy recommendations for the Government to consider on topics such as: attracting impact investment, institutional frameworks, inclusiveness, enabling access to finance and markets, impact measurement and management, research, and international impact certification practices.



SDC took the opportunity of the summit to launch its regional project 'Strengthening Social Entrepreneurship for Migration Development (SEMD)'. The SEMD project will be active in Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon, with the aim of strengthening social entrepreneurship ecosystems to enable innovative entrepreneurial solutions to migration and development challenges in the region.

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

Zeina Al Zaghloul

Position: Visa officer and Administrative Assistant
Years with the Embassy: 15 years

“My favourite thing about working here is the good cooperation and the overall team spirit with my colleagues from the consular section, chatting and laughing with Lara is also something I really enjoy. I have a Bachelor’s degree in Translation, DELF and DALF French certificates. Before joining the Embassy, I worked in temporary contracts with the Canadian Embassy and the Embassy of Hungary. Family, Friendship, independency, self-motivation, and knowledge are values that motivate me. Outside of work, I spend time with my kids, watch TV shows, listen to music and cook.”



Hesham Quran

Position: Financial Controller
Years with the Embassy: 14

“The work atmosphere and my colleagues at the Embassy is what I most like about working here. Before joining, I worked for Tala Bay and Ta’ameer for property development. I have a BA in Accounting from NYU Stern School of Business and a Master degree in Finance from the same university. My values in life are loyalty, dedication to work, determination, morals and ethics. During my breaks I enjoy chatting with my colleagues in their offices.”



Lara Dababneh

Position: Chancery Officer
Years with the Embassy: 13 years

“Cultural diversity, meeting new people, the atmosphere within my team are some of the reasons why I enjoy working at the Embassy. I am half Austrian, half Jordanian. I have a BA in languages (German/English) and 2 Masters degrees; one in translation and the second in conflict resolution. The values that drive me are honesty, courage, kindness, integrity and loyalty. When I am not working, I enjoy reading, spending time with the family watching Netflix and shopping.”



Ajith Dissanayaka

Position: Driver
Years with the Embassy: 11

"I enjoy driving around Jordan with my colleagues and I also enjoy my time when I am helping around the Embassy with tools. I came to Jordan in 2000, before working at the Embassy I worked in Toshiba Medical Equipment and before that I was a family driver. I joined the team in 2010 and have been working here ever since. When I am not working, I enjoy spending time with my friends, socializing and playing cards. I also enjoy watching movies."



Ahmad Al-Qaissy

Position: Logistics Assistant / Driver
Years with the Embassy: 10 years

"Since I am driving the Head of Mission, I like that every day offers a new challenge that I strive to achieve in a way that I could be proud of. I appreciate the trust we work with, the Embassy always puts all their trust in us to achieve our tasks which encourages me to achieve my tasks smoothly and professionally. Before working at the Embassy, I worked in European and Arab Embassies in Logistics and as a driver. Honesty, morals and dignity are my values. Outside work, I enjoy spending time with the family and I really like travelling and exploring new cultures and countries."



Jane Rujoub

Position: National Quality Assurance Officer
Years with the Embassy: 10

"What I really like about working at the Embassy is the difference we make through the Swiss contributions as well as the team I work with. I have been in SDC for 10 years, starting as an Assistant to the managements, transferring to operations as a programme assistant, then to my current position. Prior to that I worked as a programme coordinator at the Greater Amman Municipality. The values that drive me are making a difference, delivering quality and being a part of the team. After work, I enjoy spending time with my kids and reading."



CELEBRATING SWISS LANGUAGES

As multilingualism is part of the Swiss DNA and as languages contribute to Switzerland's cultural diversity, the Embassy of Switzerland celebrated the national languages of Switzerland through different events, film screenings and activities.

On the European Day of Languages, the Embassy partnered with the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), multiple European countries, the French Institute and Goethe Institute to host free mini language classes, short film screenings, music performances, puppet shows, and VR experiences at the Boulevard on 2 October 2021. At the event, Switzerland raised awareness on all 4 Swiss languages (German, French, Italian and Romansh) with quizzes, music and mini language classes.



In collaboration with the Royal Film Commission and the Embassy of Italy in Amman, the Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan screened the film "Atlas" by Swiss director Niccolò Castelli on 25 October 2021 in the context of this year's Week of the Italian Language "Settimana Della Lingua Italiana". The Week of the Italian Language is celebrated all over the world by Switzerland and Italy, the countries that share Italian as an official language every year in October.

Due to COVID-19 measures, the celebration for the French language "Francophonie" and the Romansh language were held online on the social media platforms of the Embassy.



SWISS GOVERNMENT EXCELLENCE SCHOLARSHIP

Each year the Swiss Confederation awards three types of Government Excellence Scholarships to promote international exchange and research cooperation between Switzerland and over 180 other countries. Recipients are selected by the awarding body, the Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS).

The Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are aimed at young researchers from abroad who have completed a master's degree or PhD and at foreign artists holding a bachelor's degree.

Starting in August, the Embassy sends out the application package to interested persons in Jordan and Iraq. An announcement is made on the website of the Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan as well as on the Embassy's social media accounts.

A recent study shows that former beneficiaries view the FCS scholarship as very positive and important for their career and expressed their gratitude for the opportunity offered to them by the FCS scholarship.



EMBASSY TEAM EVENT!

An organizing committee of four employees (Judith Nydegger, Issam Zayed, Corinne Duriaux, and Bader Dado) planned a memorable day where the staff at the Embassy discovered the city of As Salt. On 26 October 2021, Embassy employees hopped on a bus and took a road trip to As Salt city. Upon arrival, groups were formed and the treasure hunt began. The staff had to wear the traditional clothing of the city, find the oldest street,

look for the only Kunafeh in Jordan without cheese and look for the small mosque in Hammam Street and many more quests.

When the treasure hunt was over, all the staff met at Bait Aziz restaurant for a nice traditional meal before heading back to Amman. Here is a glimpse of the hunt!



COVID-19 MEASURES IN SWITZERLAND

As of 6 December 2021, COVID certificates will be required to enter all indoor spaces at all public events, as well as for all amateur sporting and cultural activities and restaurants. This decision was taken by the Federal Council at its meeting on 3 December after consulting the cantons, social partners and the relevant parliamentary committees. The new measures will remain in place until 24 January 2022.

In addition, the Federal Council has lifted the quarantine rule and there will be no countries on the quarantine list. Stricter rules on testing will

come into force for persons entering the country. This testing requirement also applies to those who have been vaccinated or have recovered from the disease. In addition to taking a PCR test before travelling, a second test (PCR test or rapid antigen test) must be carried out between the fourth and seventh day after arrival.

You can apply for a Swiss COVID certificate if you are fully vaccinated in Jordan with a vaccine recognized in Switzerland. For details visit our homepage and read the information under the title Coronavirus - Travel. www.eda.admin.ch/amman.



NEW FACES AT THE EMBASSY



Name: Larissa Meier
Section: International Cooperation
Position: Quality Assurance Advisor
Starting date: August 2021



Name: Rasha Akkash
Section: Diplomatic Affairs
Position: Political Analyst
Starting date: August 2021



Name: Susantha Mudalige
Section: Administration
Position: Caretaker
Starting date: August 2021



Name: Patrice Moix
Section: International Cooperation
Position: Programme Officer for
Iraq and North East Syria
Starting date: September 2021



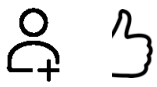
Name: Judith Nydegger
Section: International Cooperation
Position: Assistant Programme
Manager, Jordan
Starting date: June 2021



Name: Edouard Jay
Section: Diplomatic Affairs
Position: Head of Diplomatic Affairs
Starting date: September 2021

CONTACT US

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Important notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic! Please be aware that for safety and security reasons visitors must make an appointment by sending an e-mail to the Embassy prior to their arrival. You are kindly requested to follow the Embassy's safety instructions during when entering our premises.

