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Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan

# NEWSLETTER

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

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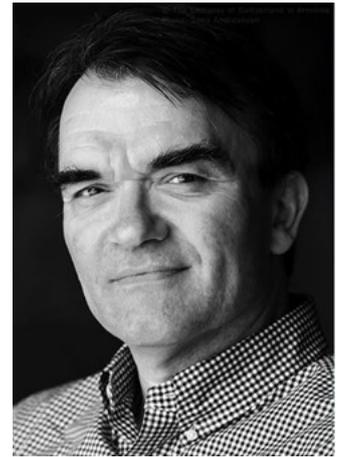
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## Dear Fellow Swiss Citizens,

The last months have been intense, as we start to see light at the end of the tunnel. Several measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic were already reduced in Jordan. Increasing numbers of people are being vaccinated (also at the Embassy). Business is slowly but surely returning back to normal. There is much pent-up demand for events, gatherings and actual people-to-people contacts.



Our highlight of the past half year was certainly the trip to Iraq of Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, in what constituted the first visit of a Swiss minister since over 40 years! Another milestone has undoubtedly been the launch of the 2021-2024 expedition of the Transnational Red Sea Center in Aqaba at the end of June – a Swiss initiative aimed at investigating, monitoring and protecting the unique coral reefs of the Red Sea.

Despite these motivating latest developments, COVID-19 isn't giving up easily. It is still premature to organize large gatherings, such as my Embassy is usually hosting for the Swiss National Day. However, this will not prevent us from celebrating 1 August and I am glad to inform you that, similarly to last year, the party still will take place – virtually, from the comfort of your homes. Please join me and my team on the platform created specifically for this event where you can find Swiss recipes and manuals to create your own decorations, listen to Swiss music, and share with us what Switzerland means to you!  
<https://www.missione1agosto.org/>

I hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and hopefully we can meet in person very soon.

Stay safe and happy reading!

**Lukas Gasser**

**Ambassador of Switzerland to Jordan and Iraq**

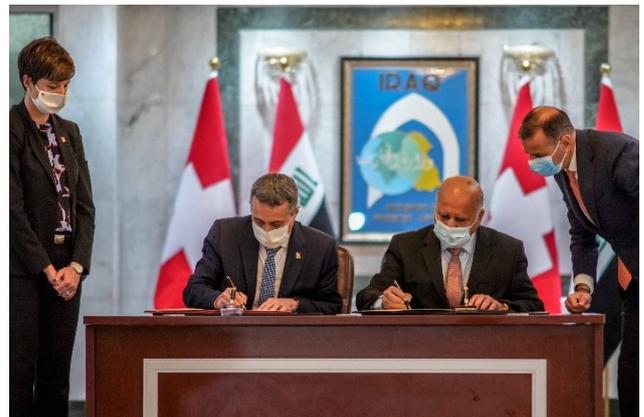




## FEDERAL COUNCILLOR IGNAZIO CASSIS VISITS IRAQ

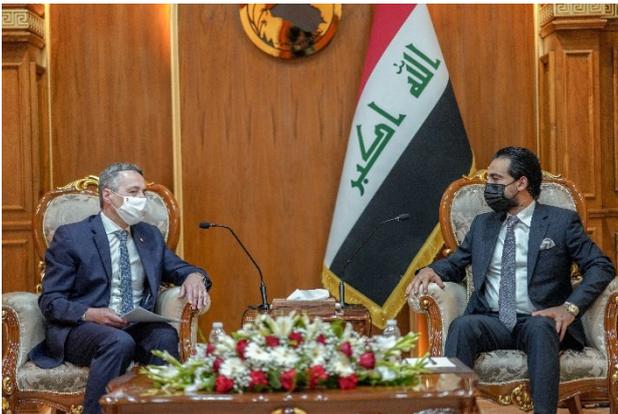
Federal Councilor Ignazio Cassis, Vice-President of Switzerland and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), travelled to Baghdad at the beginning of April 2021 in what constituted the first visit of a Swiss Minister to Iraq since 1979. Mr. Cassis was accompanied by his spouse Paola Rodoni Cassis, two members of the upper house of the Swiss Parliament (Andrea Gmür-Schönenberger and Damian Müller) and various staff members of the FDFA, including Ambassador Lukas Gasser and other employees of the Embassy of Switzerland in Amman. The delegation's trip to Baghdad took place in the context of a three-country-roundtrip to Iraq, Oman and Lebanon with the goal to present the newly

adopted MENA-strategy of the FDFA to the regional partners and to promote dialogue, sustainable development and humanitarian engagement in the region.



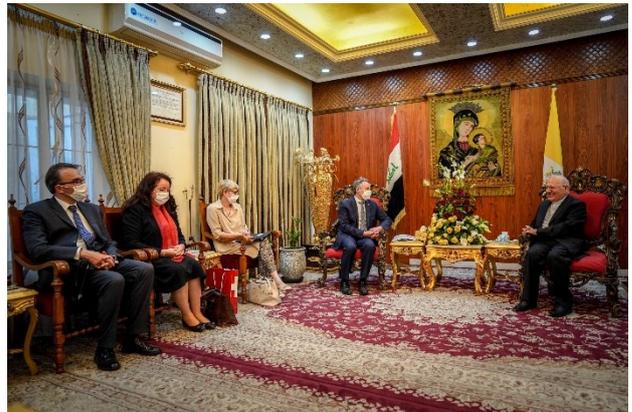
Mr. Cassis' agenda during his two-day stay in Baghdad was crammed with official meetings. Shortly after the arrival of the delegation at Baghdad International Airport, the Federal Councillor signed a Memorandum of Understanding with his Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein, that establishes annual political consultations between the two countries.

Mr. Cassis also discussed regional topics with Mr. Hussein, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al Kadhimi and Speaker of Parliament Mohammad Al Halbousi, and stated Switzerland's intention to re-open a diplomatic presence in Baghdad, 30 years after the Embassy of Switzerland in Iraq was closed during the first Gulf War. In this context, the delegation visited the Swiss-owned land plot in Baghdad's International Zone to get a first-hand impression regarding the conditions on the ground.



Besides official business, Mr. Cassis and his delegation were also able to get insight into Iraq's rich history, culture and customs. The delegation visited the renowned Iraqi National Museum, which contains precious relics from the Mesopotamian, Persian and Islamic eras from the country known as the "cradle of civilization". They could also catch a glimpse of the everyday life of Iraqis during a stopover at the famous Mutanabbi Book Market, where they sipped tea with locals, listened to the tunes of a wandering flute player and admired the handicraft of the resident artisans. A courtesy visit paid to Cardinal Sakho provided the Federal Councillor with a first-hand account about the situation of the Christian and

other religious minorities in Iraq, as well as on Pope Francis' visit to the country a month earlier. Last but certainly not least, Mr. Cassis was welcomed as a guest of honor to an event organized by the Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan on the premises of the Baghdad Gymnasium – which was designed by the prominent Swiss architect LeCorbusier in 1956 – where members of Iraq's nascent start-up community pitched their business ideas to a small crowd of interested parties and potential investors.



Mr. Cassis' two-day visit to Baghdad ended with a dinner composed of various Iraqi specialties – including the famous "Masgouf" fish – on the shore of the Tigris River. On the next morning, the Federal Councillor and his delegation took their flight to Oman, enriched by new impressions of the fascinating Iraqi culture and with a reinforced resolve to expand the Swiss presence in the country.

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# 2021-2024 EXPEDITION BY THE TRANSNATIONAL RED SEA CENTER – LAUNCHING OF A SWISS INITIATIVE TO SAVE THE LAST « CORAL REFUGE » ON EARTH

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Recent scientific progress shows that the Gulf of Aqaba and Red Sea corals are unique in the world in their capability to resist global warming beyond this century. This finding is particularly important on the backdrop of the fact that over the past 30 years, 50% of the world's corals have disappeared due to global warming, pollution and other destructive human activities, and only 10% are expected to survive beyond 2050.

With the goal of further exploring the great scientific potential of this last refuge of corals on Earth, the Transnational Red Sea Center (TRSC) launched its first expedition to study, monitor, and strengthen the protection of these unique reef ecosystems only a few days ago in Aqaba. The TRSC was established at Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL) in 2019 with the official support of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The expedition will provide cutting-edge scientific assessments of the functioning, health and biodiversity of the Red Sea reefs, as well as

environmental impact assessments of socio-economic developments creating pressure on the reefs.



## Science Diplomacy

Despite this resilience, local sources of pollution may easily destroy these reefs. The preservation of this ecosystem requires an effective, regional-scale protection strategy. The expedition's objective is therefore also to unite scientists across the Red Sea region and to strengthen ties at all levels between neighbouring countries through the joint promotion of preservation of Red Sea corals.

Switzerland is proud to contribute to peace and stability in the region through this innovative and very hands-on initiative which is perfectly in line with its neutrality, its longstanding tradition of promoting dialogue, and its reputation for scientific excellence.



### Kick-off event in Aqaba

On 24 June 2021, a kick-off event at Ayla in Aqaba marked the official launching of a 4-year scientific expedition of TRSC on board the Swiss sailboat Fleur de Passion. Professor Anders Meibom, Director of the Transnational Red Sea Center, and his team travelled to Jordan for this ceremony which was co-hosted by EPFL, the Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan and the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) and took place in cooperation with the Royal Hashemite Court. The event was attended by a range of high-ranking officials, scientists and other partners of the initiative and received widespread attention from local and international media.



With the aim to raise awareness for this important initiative, the 33m-long ketch opened its doors for the general public during the weekend following the official kick-off and prior to the boat's departure for its scientific mission. Over thirty members of the Swiss community in Jordan and followers of the Embassy's social media pages registered for one of the two sailing trips on the Fleur de Passion during which they gained unique insights about the expedition from the boat's crew. The visitors were accompanied by staff members from the Embassy.



Without any doubt, the expedition marks a milestone in the TRSC's long term commitment in favour of the Red Sea corals. The Embassy wishes the eight scientists aboard the Fleur de Passion a very successful first season of field research and outreach activities. Ship ahoy!



# CAN TECH SAVE THE WORLD?



Take on a journey through the most beautiful Swiss landscapes to discover 20 innovative solutions which aim to make our societies resolutely more sustainable. Together with Presence Switzerland and local partners, the Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan is organizing an exhibition titled “Can Tech Save the World?” to shed light at Swiss solutions that protect the environment.

**“We are using resources as if we had two planets, not one. There can be no plan B because there is no planet B”.**

**Ban Ki-Moon, 8th Secretary General of the United Nations.**

Switzerland is widely known for its picture-postcard scenery, shaped by mountains, clear lakes and rivers, cows and green meadows... Behind this idyllic backdrop lies a country wholly committed to cleantech – developing technologies to create a world that is more respectful of natural

resources, to make the transition to renewable energies and to ensure greater biodiversity.

The objective of this itinerant exhibition which has been displayed in four countries all over the world already, is to stimulate debate around innovative solutions for environmental protection. It is in line with Switzerland’s constant engagement to promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals and consists of 20 panels with solutions around five major environmental challenges: access to quality water, waste recovery, maintenance of biodiversity, access to energy for all and carbon-free mobility. The kick-off of the exhibition took place in the Marina area in Ayla – Aqaba on 17 June 2021. A small opening ceremony was held in collaboration with Ayla and the visitors had the opportunity to discuss with representatives of the Embassy their views on cleantech in Jordan and elsewhere. The show remained on display in Ayla ‘until 7 July 2021.





In Amman, the Embassy is partnering up with the Royal Film Commission (RFC) to screen the documentary film “More than Honey” by Markus Imhoof. The film impressively illustrates the importance of bees to preserve biodiversity on planet Earth and will be screened on 28 July 2021 within the Tribute-to-Nature Festival at the RFC’s premises on Rainbow Street. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion with Swiss and Jordanian experts and a reception. Kindly note that due to COVID-19 regulations, participation to this event is limited. For more information, please contact: [amman@eda.admin.ch](mailto:amman@eda.admin.ch)





# SWISS EFFORTS TO TURN WATER INTO A PATHWAY FOR PEACE, NOT CONFLICT

Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey are part of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region which covers an area of 433,970 square kilometres and stretches across 12 countries, most of them faced with acute water problems. However, the plight of the people cannot simply be attributed to the unavailability or scarcity of water, it is also due to the insufficient management and politicisation of this precious commodity. “Even though some of the countries in the Middle East such as Lebanon have sufficient water, the quality is often far below drinking quality which has to be

improved,” says Dr Mark Zeitoun, Professor of Water Security and Policy at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom. “Countries have to share this common resource more fairly which takes a lot of negotiating between governments. For this reason, it is important that the stakeholders are well-informed and have refined negotiation skills,” Zeitoun continues.

In order to fill these gaps, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) supports the Water Diplomacy Centre (WDC), which was established at the end of 2019. The centre is part

of the Yarmouk Future Project and aims at coordinating research and providing training for cooperation and negotiation skills in the field of water and diplomacy across the Middle East and North Africa. "It is essential to share information and provide the decision-makers with correct data and tools for transboundary water management," explains Mufleh Alalaween, the SDC's regional advisor and liaison officer on water cooperation in Amman. "The centre is the first of its kind in the MENA region and is a flagship for Switzerland."

The WDC also aspires to equip decision-makers in the region with expertise and knowledge in transboundary water issues with a focus on legal, negotiating, and technical aspects. "Our main aim is to train professionals from various local and national institutions, international organisations, university professors, researchers and students who are working in the water sector", says WDC director Professor Suhil Kiwan who also lectures at the Jordan University of Science and Technology where the centre is physically based.

The WDC is to become a regional centre to promote and facilitate transboundary cooperation on water and related topics. "It shall serve to offer an information base that provides scientific knowledge, support for research and applied studies related to the water sector focussing on conducting training courses that raise knowledge and build capacity in terms of water management, international water law and the science of negotiations," he emphasises.

### **Better cooperation between the ministries**

One of the reasons why it is challenging to reach good international agreements on water is that politicians sometimes lack knowledge about water management and water experts do not know enough about international laws and international relations. "We need more politicians who know more about water and more water experts with better negotiation skills," says Dr Mark Zeitoun, who is the project manager of Yarmouk Future Project. The information gap among politicians, however, can also be filled by well-informed water experts. "You need a strong water team to convince politicians, as experts are often the catalysis to convince them," Mufleh adds.

If tackled correctly, water is a greater pathway to peace than conflict in the world's river basins. International cooperation around water has a long and successful history, and according to UNESCO some of the world's most vociferous enemies have negotiated water agreements or are in the process of doing so. The Mekong Committee, for example, established by the governments of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam as an intergovernmental agency in 1957, exchanged data and information on water resources development throughout the Vietnam War while the Indus River Commission set up under the Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan in 1960 survived two major Indo-Pakistani wars in 1965 and 1971.

# DO YOU KNOW THE RECENT HISTORY OF JAMEED?



Elise Tancoigne, a researcher from the University of Lausanne who is doing her post-doc on the history of modern milk industry in Switzerland, France and Jordan, spent almost two months in the Kingdom for a field study on Jameed. The Embassy invited her to publish a guest article in this newsletter to share her experience with you:

“When I started working on the history of Jameed in Jordan, many of my friends, colleagues and relatives in Switzerland did not know what I was talking about. As they heard “Jordan” they soon started to describe the wonders of Petra and the stargazing nights of Wadi Rum. Sometimes they also mentioned mansaf and rushed into their rooms to come back with one of those “I survived mansaf” T-shirts that they proudly waved in front of me so that I could read the inscription. But when it came to Jameed, they did not have much to add. Yet they perfectly knew other famous dishes, dips and ingredients from the Middle-Eastern cuisine. Unlike Swiss cheeses, like Gruyère or Raclette, Jameed remains a confidential ingredient of the Jordanian cuisine and heritage. A trend confirmed

by its trade balance: today, most of Jameed is produced outside Jordan (60%), and imported in the country so as to satisfy the growing demand. Export remains very low, mostly at destination of the U.S. and the Emirates, where the majority of the Jordanian diaspora leaves.

Dairy products are the result of highly sophisticated fermentation processes: bacteria, moulds and yeasts are the main artisans of fermented food. As both a historian of science and a dairy lover, my role is to investigate what part the science of microbiology – or, more specifically, microbiologists – played in the development of dairy production. Soon it appeared that investigating France and Switzerland was not enough to understand the big picture: the two countries are too similar in terms of dairy technology and use of quality labels (such as Designated Protection of Origin). I had to start another fieldwork to balance the results I had found so far. What else would be better than working on one of the oldest dairy area in the world?



The Middle East is often presented as the cradle of dairy production, because it is the area where

the first traces of ruminant domestication are found. Its industry is based mostly on yoghurt technologies: unlike cheese technologies, the milk is fermented, not coagulated. Skimmed-dried yoghurt Jameed is one of the oldest forms of milk preservation invented by nomads to benefit from milk after the end of the spring milking season. Since the end of the 90s, it is undergoing very important changes. A new form of Jameed, liquid Jameed, appeared on the market. Medium-scale factories were created, alongside an import market. Standards were enacted and new production techniques were experimented with. Scientists, especially microbiologists, played an important role in such a change. Many interesting questions arise: where does the expertise that is used to develop Jameed production come from? Are there forms of expertise that are excluded? Who decides what is (or should be) a good Jameed? How are the microbial artisans handled in this process? These are some of the questions I am now trying to answer.



Should you desire to be kept informed about the progress of this research, or should you know anything about this topic, I would be more than happy to be reached at [elise.tancoigne@unil.ch](mailto:elise.tancoigne@unil.ch) or on WhatsApp at +962 7 9117 2706.”

# DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ

Swiss experts provide emergency aid to people in need across the globe, no matter whether they are affected by natural disaster or conflict. The specialists implement direct projects of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and support governments and United Nations agencies in alleviating suffering, wherever needed.



One such expert is Marjolaine Greentree. She has been with the Swiss Humanitarian Assistance since 2014 and supported the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq from September 2019 to August 2020. “During my secondment, I was able to elaborate a plan for Durable Solutions for IDPs in Iraq,” the senior advisor on Durable Solutions explains from her current deployment at the Embassy of Switzerland in Amman. “I was pleased to see the plan being endorsed in spring 2020 and a Durable Solution Taskforce being launched,” she says. “However, there are still some stumbling blocks that have hindered the process, but I am confident that the Government, the United Nations, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and the donors are committed to working together to find Durable Solutions for the IDPs.”



## What do ‘Durable Solutions’ for IDPs exactly look like?

Returns are seen as the main option in Iraq, where just under 1.4 million people remain displaced and over four million are in need of humanitarian aid. The most difficult predicament are families with perceived affiliations to extremist groups who face not only formal barriers to return, but also rejection by people at home. “Unfortunately in Iraq, the option of local integration or resettlement elsewhere is not so much considered and returns to the places of origin seem the main option,” Marjolaine clarifies. However, such returns are often impossible as conditions do not allow the people to return to their homes. Houses are still destroyed or occupied, tribal feuds are ongoing, and people are discriminated for their perceived affiliations to extremist groups such as the Islamic State (IS). “Most of the IDPs are women heading a household with children. Their alleged affiliation is sometimes just having a father, a husband or a brother who was with IS and is currently missing, dead or in prison. These families cannot go back to their communities for obvious reasons,” Marjolaine explains.

The optimal goal of finding Durable Solutions is not just to put the IDPs back into their communities of origin. “We have to work in a way that the affected people are at the core of our process. They should have the same rights as the citizens of their chosen location without any discrimination which is related to their displacement stages,” highlights Marjolaine.

Various UN agencies have adopted Durable Solutions as an end to protracted displacement as a common objective, and NGOs are now receiving funds allocated to it, which is a great step in the right direction.



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### **Durable Solutions versus Humanitarian, Development Peace Nexus**

Durable Solutions is a reasonably new field and one of the founding fathers is the Swiss humanitarian and international human rights lawyer, Professor Walter Kälin. He has been concerned with the future of IDPs for over a decade and in 2010 developed the Framework for Durable Solutions for IDPs and the Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters. “Protection for IDPs ultimately entails ensuring a durable solution to their plight. Yet, the difficulties it takes to achieve them cannot be underestimated. Durable Solutions are not simple solutions, because they are usually linked to larger

struggles,” Kälin writes in his foreword to the framework. “Professor Kälin’s work is brilliant as he has redefined Durable Solutions. Thanks to his efforts, we are now at the forefront of installing them soundly into UN policies and joint programming,” Marjolaine observes.

It is obvious that Marjolaine is passionate about her work and what she has done in the field of Durable Solutions, however, her secondment in Iraq was not always easy. “It was one of the most difficult missions of my life. I was not affiliated to a specific programme, which on one hand gave me a lot of freedom, but on the other hand made me feel a bit lonely at times,” she says remembering that she also felt slightly stressed as she was expected to come up with the ideas and develop a sustainable plan. “It was a mix of anxiety and exhilaration, but in the end my plan was successful, and I could leave in a good way,” she comments.



After a year in Iraq, Marjolaine now lives next door in the Jordanian capital Amman, where she is directly employed by the SDC working on the protection portfolio. “Of course, I am still emotionally involved in my work in Iraq as it was very intense and interesting,” she says. Meanwhile, she started her new position as Regional Protection Advisor at the Swiss Cooperation Office in Amman. “The protection file related to the Syria and Iraq crises is thick and complex, but the relation between Durable Solutions and Protection is becoming increasingly apparent, and I am really glad to take on this task from a different perspective.



# SWITZERLAND WELCOMES YOU AGAIN!

The Embassy of Switzerland is very happy to announce that the Federal Council relaxed the rules to entry to Switzerland for fully vaccinated people. For appointments, our [online visa system](#) is now on the Embassy homepage.

Persons entering from the Schengen area will no longer be required to quarantine. The requirement to be tested will now apply only to persons arriving by plane who have not been vaccinated or have not recovered from COVID-19. Contact details will still be required when arriving by plane. In addition, Switzerland is easing the existing entry restrictions for persons arriving from third countries who can prove they have been vaccinated. If you are not vaccinated the restrictions still apply and you can only travel for very exceptional circumstances. For more information check the Embassy Website [www.eda.admin.ch/amman](http://www.eda.admin.ch/amman) or call +962 6 593 08 29.

For the time being, the following vaccines are approved: BionTech/Pfizer, Moderna, Astra-Zeneca, Sinopharm but NOT Sputnik.

For more information, please visit the following link: <https://travelcheck.admin.ch/home>



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# SWISS DEFENCE ATTACHÉ ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE JORDAN MILITARY ATTACHÉS ASSOCIATION

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In June 2021, the members of the Jordan Military Attachés Association (JMAA) elected Lieutenant Colonel Nicolas Winteregg, the Defence Attaché at the Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan, as their President. Lt Col Winteregg is accredited to Jordan, Lebanon and Cyprus. He started his mission in Jordan in 2018 to represent the Swiss Armed Forces and cooperate with the armed forces and other services of the accredited countries.

The JMAA is the organization of military and defence attachés, accredited to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, who hold a diplomatic passport and serve in the defence section. The JMAA is composed of roughly 50 defence attachés who are residents in Jordan and represent different embassies.

The JMAA holds meetings on a regular basis in order to organize military-related activities in cooperation with the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF) and bring together JMAA members for shared events and occasions. The purpose of the JMAA is to promote good relationships between the military attachés residing in Amman and the Jordanian authorities. The JMAA is a self-organized and financially independent association administered by an executive committee. It is supported by the “International Affairs” unit of JAF. The JMAA General Assembly convenes to discuss all matters of significance, approve the budget and elect the President, the Secretary and Treasurer.

As the President of the JMAA, Lt Col Winteregg will act as the chairman of executive committee, oversee and coordinate its work, chair General Assembly meetings, represent the JMAA in official functions and stand in for the Dean, when necessary.

The Embassy is very proud to see that Lt Col Winteregg has been entrusted with this important role and wishes him plenty of success in his endeavours as President of the JMAA!

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# MEETING THE EMBASSY'S SMALL GRANTS PARTNERS: ABOUT FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND THE NEED OF INTEGRITY FOR DEVELOPMENT

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At the beginning of 2021, the Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan once again selected a small number of local projects to be supported in the context of its Small Grants Program. This year, Embassy designated the topics of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, democratization and political participation and promotion of due process, fight against impunity and death penalty as central themes. After a rigorous selection process where over 50 different organizations in Jordan and Iraq competed for only a small number of available grants, four projects – one in Iraq and three in Jordan – were chosen by the Embassy.



**Roya TV** is one of the Embassy's project partners this year. Its project called "bel-Qanoon" ("within the law") consists of airing six segments during the channel's main morning show with the objective of informing the Jordanians about their fundamental rights under the law and constitution. The diplomatic affairs team of the Embassy visited the premises of Roya TV within the context of this project and was able to get a glimpse of the hectic but fascinating work environment of live television. While visiting the main set pieces where most Roya shows are filmed, the Embassy team had the opportunity to sit on the set of the "Donya Ya

Donya” morning show, where the episodes sponsored by the Embassy will be aired soon. If you are an Arabic-speaking law-aficionado or just interested in your fundamental rights assured by the constitution and laws of the country, stay tuned for the Embassy-sponsored mini-episodes starting mid-July!

The Embassy is also partnering up this year with **We Rise Center for Development** whose aim is to raise awareness on integrity issues, to empower female candidates to make a case for integrity in their election campaign, thus providing knowledge and expertise which will be useful for candidates when serving in a governmental function at the local level. The implementation of the project called “Integrity for Development” is well underway, the Embassy having had the opportunity to join the discussion round that was held in Aqaba on 23 June. The round table was an open and encouraging exchange between youth activists and experienced politicians and other personalities of public life, including the long-serving female MP Tamam Al Riyati. The results of the discussion will be used to create a toolkit for female candidates for the upcoming municipal elections in Jordan.



In Iraq, the Embassy supports a project of the **Bent Al-Rafedain Organization** that seeks to enhance active participation in the upcoming Iraqi elections in October 2021 in a time where the Iraqi society has lost its confidence in the political process. Last but not least, the Embassy is proud to support **Penal Reform International** in Jordan in the promotion of the use of electronic monitoring bracelets as an alternative measure to imprisonment. Alternative forms of punishments are especially relevant in the context of Jordan’s overcrowded prisons that pose a particular challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stay tuned and learn more about these two projects in our next newsletter!



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# MEET OUR INTERN DAVID BITTL!

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**In the Spotlight:** David Bittl **Favourite place** in Amman: Downtown "Wasat Al Balad" **Favourite Restaurant:** Fakhr Al Deen  
**Hobbies:** Hiking, Swimming and Climbing **Favourite Arabic word:** Ya Affo Allah!

## What inspired you to apply for the Academic Intern position at the Embassy of Switzerland in Jordan?

I previously did an internship at the FDFA in Bern and was looking for a new opportunity abroad where I can gain new experiences and expand on my Arabic language skills. One of my Arabic teacher is Jordanian and he always told me how nice Jordan is and I was intrigued to learn more about it.

## Did the COVID-19 situation limit your experience?

Honestly, in the beginning when I arrived in Jordan, a new curfew measure was issued and that worried me a little bit because I thought I would go through my internship at home office. However, I was able to work from the Embassy most of the time and even managed to meet different partners and plan a cultural project! So, overall, I would have appreciated it more if there was no pandemic but since I have never experienced Jordan without a pandemic, my experience is still great.

## What do you feel is the biggest gain you took from this experience?

I plan to do my master's degree in politics of the Middle East. Interning at the Diplomatic Affairs section gave me significant insight on the politics of Jordan and the region. It opened my eyes to different point of views and perspectives on current events.



## What did you find the most challenging at working at the embassy?

It is not a challenge that is related to working at the Embassy *per se* – but I speak the Moroccan dialect in Arabic and I found it difficult to understand or even speak the Jordanian dialect when I first moved here. As the days went by, I became more familiar with it and now it is a bit easier for me to understand.

## What is your favourite thing about Jordan and would you come visit it again?

The hospitality of the people is amazing. Everywhere I go I meet nice people. Jordanians are always very interested in getting in touch with foreigners, which makes it very easy to build up new friendships. I would definitely visit again soon – I met great people and love the welcoming culture.

**Three words that you would use to describe the Embassy?**

Polyvalent – innovative – Jocund

**Career aspirations? Where do you see yourself in ten years?**

I would love to work abroad. For example, in the Middle East region. This experience opened my eyes to the possibility of having a career in Diplomacy.



**David along with his team: Nicolas Merz,** Political Analyst; **Dunia Abu Osba,** Communication Officer and **Alexandra Häfliger,** Head of Diplomatic Affairs section at the Embassy.

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# NEW FACES

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Name: David Bittl

Section: Diplomatic Affairs

Position: Academic Intern

Starting Date: March 2021



Name: Sandra Grendelmeier

Section: Administration

Position: Deputy Head of  
Administration

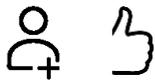
Starting Date: June 2021

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follow us on **Facebook** and  
**Instagram** to stay updated with the  
Embassy's activities and news.



**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.

