

Identity politics and ethnic humour in contemporary Jordan

*In The European Journal of Humour Research, Vol. 11 No. 3
(2023)*

Yousef Barahmeh

Following political turbulence and instability in the Middle East, Jordan has become a home for a large number of Palestinians, Iraqis, and Syrians, and now includes a significant number of Egyptians in its workforce. This growing diversity in the population has impacted the country not only socially and economically but quite noticeably in terms of identity politics and ethnic humour (how do indigenous people perceive the other(s) and how do others perceive the indigenous people?). This is explained through the rising tensions between Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin in relation to the formation of ethnic humour that is based on the idea of urban and rural division in Jordanian society. The discussion in this article argues that the people of Transjordanian towns, such as As-Salt, At-Tafilah, and As-Sarih, have ‘unexpectedly’ become the target of many ethnic jokes by the urbanites in Amman and elsewhere, who now make up the majority of Jordanians of Palestinian origin. The people of these Transjordanian small towns and villages have been the target of Jordanian ethnic humour because of their backwardness, lack of discretion, and stupidity, compared to the cleverness, modernity, and high culture of the Jordanian urbanites and their cultural superiority. However, since the 2011 Arab Spring, the people of these Transjordanian towns have developed a counter-superiority tendency to laugh at the powerful in urban centres and make fun of the government and its institutionalised discourse about reform and progress.

More Information

<https://europeanjournalofhumour.org/ejhr/article/view/786>

Bio

Yousef Barahmeh is Assistant Professor of English language and linguistics at Department of English Language and Translation of Isra University, Amman, Jordan. He received his PhD in 2020 from the University of Portsmouth, UK, on the politics of Jordanian humour after the Arab Spring.