

Taleb Rifai
Former UNTWO Secretary General
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Biography

Dr. Taleb Rifai, a Jordanian national, was the Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization heading the (UNWTO) from 2009-2018 for two consecutive terms, based in Madrid.

Dr. Rifai has an extensive background in international and national public service, the private sector, and academia.

Before his election as Secretary General of the UNWTO, Dr. Rifai was Assistant Director General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), based in Beirut and Geneva.

Prior to assuming his responsibilities as an International public servant (2004 - 2018), Dr. Rifai held several Ministerial portfolios in the Government of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1999 - 2004). First as Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, then as Minister of Information and spokesman for the Government and Minister of Tourism and Antiquities. As Minister of information, he led the major restructuring of Jordan Television (JTV).

Prior to his ministerial responsibilities, Dr. Rifai was CEO of Jordan's Cement Company (1997 - 1999). During this time he successfully led the first large-scale privatization and restructuring scheme in Jordan in the 1990's.

From 1995 to 1997 Dr, Rifai was the first Director General of the newly established Investment Promotion Corporation of Jordan, after having served from 1993 to 1995 as the Director of the newly established Economic Mission of Jordan to the USA in Washington DC.

As an Architect and Urban planner, Dr. Rifai's career for 20 years (1973 - 1993) was in Academia. As such he had the opportunity to teach at universities both in the USA and Jordan, where he helped establish the first Department of Architecture in Jordan at the newly established School of Engineering at the University of Jordan and consequently became the Director of "The Center of Consultations and Studies" at the University of Jordan.

Dr. Rifai has a Ph.D. in Urban Design and Regional Planning from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, USA, 1982, an M.A. in Engineering and Architecture from Illinois Institute of Technology, IIT in Chicago, USA, 1979, and a B.Sc. in Architectural Engineering from the University of Cairo in Egypt 1973.

Current Positions

- Travel Advisory Board Member – FINN Partners
- Secretary General – World Tourism Forum Institute
- Member of Advisory Council - AirBnB
- Ambassador – World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)
- Member of the Royal consultative group for the Baptism site, Jordan
- Member of Board of Trustees – Mediterranean Tourism Foundation (MTF)
- Patron – African Tourism Board (ATB)
- Chairman – International Institute of peace for tourism (IIPT)
- Chairman –International Tourism Investment Conference (ITIC)
- Chairman – United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), CIFAL Malaga
- Co-Chairman - International Tourism Resilience & Crises Management (ICTRCM)
- Co-Chairman - Resilience Council London
- Vice Chairman - Board of Trustees Middle East University (MEU) Jordan
- Member of Board of Trustees – American University of Malta (AUM)
- Vice Chairman - International Sports & Tourism Organization (ISTO)
- Special Advisor- Adventure Travel and Tourism Association (ATTA)

Orders, Decorations & Medals

| Country | Order/Decoration/Medal | Year |
|--------------|---|------|
| Japan | Order of the Rising Sun | 2019 |
| Spain | Orden de Isabel La Catolica | 2017 |
| Saudi Arabia | Order of King Abdelaziz Medal of the First Degree | 2017 |
| Mexico | Order of the Aguila Azteca | 2017 |
| Azerbaijan | Order of Dostluq | 2017 |
| Kenya | Elder of the Golden Heart 1st Class | 2017 |
| El Salvador | Condecoracion del Libertador de los Esclavos Jose Simeon Canas, Grado de Granc Cruz Placa Oro | 2017 |
| Honduras | Orden de Fransisco Morazan "Gran Ofical" | 2017 |
| Georgia | Order of Honor Medal | 2017 |
| Mali | Order National de Mali | 2016 |
| Sudan | Order of Al-Neillain 1st Class | 2016 |
| San Marino | Order of Saint Agatha | 2015 |
| France | Lorden National De Merite Officer | 2004 |
| Italy | Order of Merit of the Italian Republic 1 st Type, Knight Grand Cros | 2002 |
| Jordan | Kawkab 1st Degree | 2002 |
| Jordan | Istiqlaa 1st Degree | 1995 |