

THE IMPACT OF SYRIAN ASYLUM ON THE JORDANIAN SOCIETY- BETWEEN REALITY AND FUTURE SOLUTIONS

The Jordan Office of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) organized in collaboration with Mossawah Center for Civil Society Development a panel discussion in Al-Ramtha on the impact of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian Society. This panel discussion is one of four other panel discussions which will be held in various governorates of Jordan.

The two-day event, held in November 15-16, 2014, brought together key experts from the media, the private sector, civil society, local communities and governmental organizations deliberating the issue of the Syrian refugee influx. Afterwards the dialogue was deepened with Syrian refugees.

The chairman of Isnaad Consulting and Economic expert, Dr. Khalid Al Wazani, talked about the impact of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian economy and the labor market. He gave an overall view of the Jordanian economy and its challenges before and after the coming of Syrian refugees.

He also pointed out to the current pressures on the labor market, a serious problem mainly caused by the entry of competitive Syrian workers.

Al Wazani underscored the necessity of cooperation between and among all sectors to afford young Jordanians job opportunities while benefiting from the experience of their skillful Syrian counterparts.

"Syrian workers should not be left unmonitored and Jordanian workers

should be protected from being replaced by Syrian workers" he said.

The director of the quality directorate in the Ministry of Health (MoH), Dr. Ghassan Al Fakhour, in his panel intervention, talked about the impact of Syrian refugees on the health and environmental sectors. He summarized the services provided by the Jordanian health sector for Syrian refugees and the challenges imposed on the health sector by such an additional demand. MoE, through its hospitals and medical centers, has always been a big supporter of Syrian refugees, but the increasing numbers of Syrian patients are overwhelming the health sector. To cope with such burdens, there is a need for more staff but also more medical equipment for public hospitals, which is depleting the already over-strained national budget.

At the beginning of the second day of the panel discussion, former Secretary General of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs Mr. Jamal Abu Obeid, talked about the impact of Syrian refugees on municipalities.

"Our municipalities are under-resourced and they have lack adequate staff to address the new situation imposed by the Syrian refugees' influxes". "This is an additional burden that is most obvious in waste management, - transportation and -disposal."

According to Abu Obeid, future solutions should include raising awareness among the population in regard to waste management and hygiene best practices, highlighting, at the same time, the necessity to train municipali-

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN

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Muna Sukhni

Dr. Otmar Oehring

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ty employees on such issues and make them trainers of other staff.

Deputy Director General of the Public Security Directorate Mr. Ali Salameh Al Khaldi discussed the impact of Syrian refugees on social peace and national security system. He recalled the role of the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) and Jordan's role in international peace and security.

Al Khaldi defined national security and social peace, warning of their vulnerability because of the Syrian refugee influxes as a tension has started to float on the surface between Jordanians and Syrian refugees mainly on grounds of competition in the labor market. The national security agencies will have to address the challenges of a possible rise in crime and disputes, which add up to the burdens lay on Jordan. Al Khaldi described the national security as threatened and also as a major challenge, particularly at the borders, due to the unnumbered incidences of infiltration and smuggling, interdicted by JAF's border security guards.

Director of education at Al Mafraq Mr. Ahmed Bani Khaled discussed the impact of Syrian refugees on the educational sector. Bani Khalid emphasized how the education sector has been severely affected by the Syrian refugees. "The Syrian refugee crisis has severely affected our educational system, especially when it comes to the capacities of classrooms in our public schools, not to mention the resulting shortage in teaching material and staff". He said ad-hoc solutions were improvised to distribute the students in two shifts a day.

Afterwards Bani Khalid suggested some possible solutions such as the construction of new schools or the creation of new classrooms through financial support by international donors,

active role of the private sector in improving the educational infrastructure and the elaboration of programs for psychological support of Syrian students.

The event was marked by the active participation of Syrian refugees and Jordanians. It facilitated the exchange of ideas and solution proposals and established contact among the participants heralding a good starting point for future cooperation.

The participants have come up with the following recommendations:

- The reception of Syrian refugees should only take place in humanitarian cases;
- Strengthen the coordination between Syrian refugees and local communities to do volunteer work to mitigate the impact of Syrian asylum and to integrate Syrians into the Jordanian community;
- Jordanian should benefit from the skills and expertise of Syrian refugees. Jordanians should be trained by the Syrians;
- The Syrian labor market should be monitored and supervised to make sure it complies with the Jordanian rules and laws;
- Media should highlight the Syrian refugee issue to guide international support to Jordan, which positively could affect the Syrian refugees as well as the Jordanian population;
- Awareness programs targeting Syrians and Jordanian should be implemented (in the field of health, security, economy, culture)