Chapter III

Developments of the Syrian Refugee Crisis with Specific Reference to Jordan

This chapter discusses the development of the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan, though it starts with a review of Jordan's long history of addressing refugee crises since 1948. It then provides some facts and figures particularly relating to the Syrian refugee issue in Jordan since the outbreak of the crisis in the first quarter of 2011. It also reviews, in summary, the international obligations of Jordan in dealing with refugees and highlights some key data about Syrian refugees in the region.

1. Jordan and Refugees: A Historical Review

Since its foundation, Jordan has always hosted Arab and non-Arab influxes of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The earliest recorded wave of refugees dates back to the 19th century with the coming of Muslim Circassians, who fled the Russian invasion of their homelands in Caucasus region. The same situation applied to Chechens and a small Armenian minority.[13] In more recent times, particularly after the foundation of the Kingdom in 1921 and its independence in 1946, Jordan received several IDP and refugee waves, the latest of which is the Syrians. Two years after its independence, Jordan received a huge influx of Arab refugees in the wake of the 1948 war, the occupation of around 80% of Palestine and the creation of Israel as an internationally recognized state. In the aftermath, over 100,000 Palestinians were officially registered as refugees in Jordan. In the midst of the concomitant economic and political burdens, Jordan moved ahead in forming a confederation with the West Bank in 1950. However, before the country could begin its macroeconomic development in the new reality imposed by the confederation, the June 1967 war broke out, displacing into Jordan over 140,000 citizens fleeing a new occupation and seeking safety in the more stable part of the country. Today's statistics show that Jordan hosts the largest number of Palestinian refugees and IDPs, amounting in total to over 1.6 million.

It is an established historical fact that in 1948, around 100,000 refugees crossed the Jordan River seeking shelter in temporarily built tents, mosques, schools and villages. In response, international organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), followed by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), offered emergency assistance and care to the refugees. The camps were afterwards replaced by housing units built by the UNRWA, but those units became overcrowded with the growth in the refugee population and the reunions of Palestinian families. This added to the financial burden on the Kingdom, which faced the need to spend more on the infrastructure and superstructure of the camps. The country was taken aback, however, two decades later by the 1967 war

13 For more details on Jordan's demographics, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Jordan

that ended in the occupation of all West Bank territories, in addition to the Gaza Strip and some parts of Syria and Egypt. The immediate consequence was the influx of a new wave of 140,000 refugees and around 240,000 IDPs to Jordan. That reality required the building of new camps, entailing huge additional pressures on the infrastructure and increasing the financial burdens on Jordan's economy. Although UNRWA helped in improving the roads and associated infrastructure, Jordan still had to shoulder the largest portion of the burden by being the host country.[14] Some studies of the 1967 war state that Jordan received around 400,000 displaced persons from the West Bank, accounting at that time for around a third of Jordan's population. The figure suggests the tremendous pressures on the infrastructure, not to mention the losses in resources sustained by Jordan in agriculture, tourism and industry as a direct result of the occupation of the West Bank.

Jordan's experience with refugees IDPs, however, was not limited to Palestinians. It received several flows of refugees and IDPs from its Arab neighbors as a result of the many incidents hammering the Arab region. In 1974, it received Lebanese refugees after the outbreak of the civil war in Lebanon. Some of those were businessmen, families and international organizations that used to be based in Lebanon, such as ESCWA and UNESCO. No accurate number is given for Lebanese refugees as the situation ended in either resettlement in third countries or the refugees remaining in the country, including some international organizations, as residents and not as refugees, in the technical sense. Jordan also received limited waves of Iraqi refugees or residents during the Iran-Iraq War between the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In August 1990, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait displaced to Jordan another massive wave of over 300,000 Jordanian and Palestinian expatriates. That involuntary return, as shown in Table (1) below, caused a sudden and abnormal increase in the population by 10%. The economy had, once again, to accommodate for those returnees, with serious implications for the infrastructure of an economy unprepared to address such a huge abnormality. Though the Iraqi war ended with the liberation of Kuwait in February 1991, the socio-economic consequences could not be eased. Many returnees could not go back to Kuwait for various reasons. Meanwhile, economic sanctions were imposed on Iraq, resulting in waves of refugees and IDPs, culminating in 2003 with the American-NATO invasion of Iraq. Estimates vary for the consequences of the Iraq on Jordan. The available figures, however, show that Jordan dealt with not less than 750,000 refugees and foreign residents, which accounted at that time for around 15% of the total population. As a result, the infrastructure continued to be strained despite the arrival of several Iraqi businessmen, investors and wealthy people, who could do without assistance from the state. Indirect pressures began to be felt on the infrastructure, including roads, water supply, electricity, communications, education and health. There was also competition between Jordanians and other groups over public subsidies on basic commodities, fuel products and publics services.

14 For more details, see http://www.unrwa.org/atemplate.php?id=118

Table (1): Development of the number of refugees and IDPs in Jordan (1948-2013)

Year	Overall Population	IDPs and Refugees	Ratio to Population (%)
1948	400,000	100,000	25%
1967	1,278,416	380,000	30%
1974	1,747,710	Not available	---
1990	3,170,000	300,000	9.5%
2003	5,164,000	750,000	14.5%
2011	6,508,271	1,500	0.023%
2012	6,508,887	230,000	3.1%
2013	7,300,000	952,000	13.0%

Source: Researcher's calculations in light of available official statistics.

The most recent wave of refugees is that of the Syrians, starting in 2011. The crisis in Syria generated large numbers of refugees officially registered with UNHCR in Jordan and exceeding 600,000. An equal number of refugees have crossed the official border entry points in successive waves without registration. They spread all over the country, benefiting from the strong social ties, kinship and business relations established between Jordanians and Syrians over a long period of time. A later chapter of this study will be specifically devoted to the analysis of this issue in broader scope after a brief discussion of Jordan's obligations before the international community in refugee-related matters.

2. The Present Problem of Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Facts and Figures

Figures (1-4) below show the development of the problem of flows of UNHCR- registered Syrian refugees since the outbreak of the crisis in March 2011 until 2014. Tables (2-4) also show the numbers of Syrian refugees and migrants according to official Jordanian figures. Statistics show that the total number of Syrian refugees, whether residing in the official camps or entering the country through the official border entry points, reached around 230,000 by the end of 2012. The numbers rose by the end of 2013 to over 550,000 officially registered refugees.[15] According to UNHCR (Figure 1), officially registered Syrian refugees amounted to 11 persons in March 2011, rising to around 67,000 by the end of 2012. Figure (2) shows the increase in numbers in 2013 amounting in some months, such as April, to around 88,000, averaging 3,000 refugees a day. The trend then declined by the end of 2013 to over 600 refugees a day. In 2014, there has been some drop in the daily flows, to reach around 400 refugees a day. It is worth noting that the aforementioned UNHCR data (as in the figures below) mainly include Syrian refugees living in the official shelters, particularly in the bordering cities of Mafraq and Ramtha.

15 The number of officially registered refugees increased to around 600,000 by the end of February 2014; that is before one considers unregistered Syrians, who exceed that number, amounting, according to the PSD's statistics, to around 750,000.

Figure (1): Aggregate numbers of Syrian refugees since the outbreak of the crisis until the end of 2012 (UNHCR)

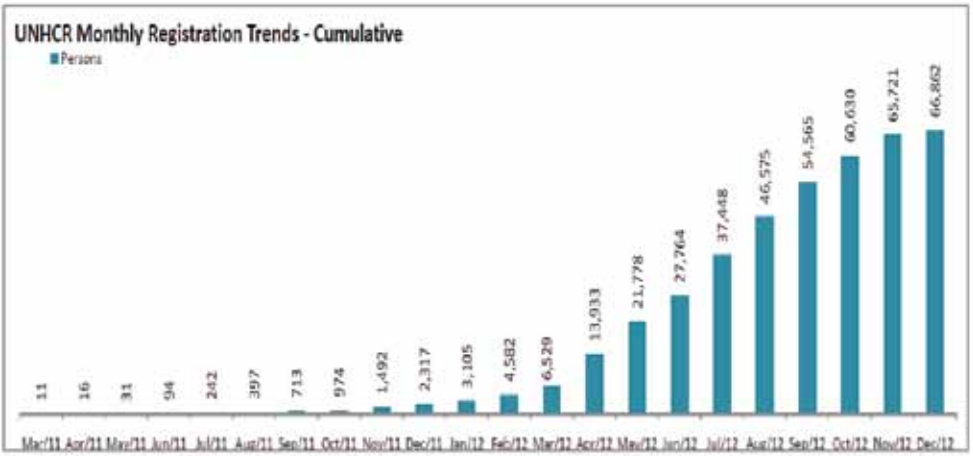


Figure (2): Aggregate numbers of Syrian refugees between 2013 and early 2014 (UNHCR)

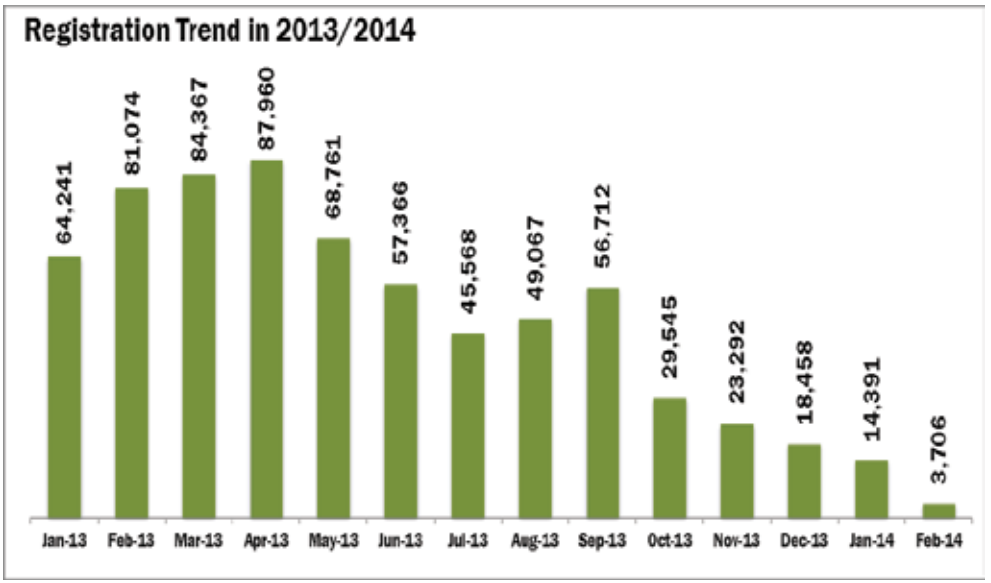


Table (2) above shows the quantity, distribution and locations of Syrian refugees as of early 2014. It is based on a review of the official figures obtained from PSD and Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO) covers all persons entering the country, including those who came through the non-official entry points on the 375 km long borders and those who entered the country through the official entry points.

Getting the figures from PSD data ensures the accuracy of the findings of the study as this data shows the exact locations of the refugees and calculates their number by subtracting the number of persons who left for Syria or to a third country. As shown in Table (3) and Figure (3), around 81% of the total refugees live in Amman and the border governorates of Jordan, namely Mafraq (35%) and Irbid (21%), especially in Ramtha, bringing the total to 56%. On the family level, JHCO and official data on registered Syrian refugees show that the Syrian refugees are distributed in families composed of 5.8 persons per family.

Table (2): Numbers and distribution of Syrian refugees and residents in the Kingdom as of early 2014

Location of Refugees	Number (thousands)
Al Za'atari/ Mafraq	112,874
Sakan Al Hadeeqa/ Ramtha	810
Murejeb Al Fuhood Camp/ Mafraq	3,848
Sakan Camp/ Mafraq	1,260
Outside the camps	431,593
Total officially registered refugees	550,385
Refugees guaranteed through the governor	32,006
Departures to Syria	(54,000)
Non-refugee Syrian residents	750,000
Total Syrian residents in Jordan	1,302,717

Source: PSD-SRCD.

Table (3): Distribution of Syrian refugees in the Kingdom

City/Town	Number	Ratio (%)
Mafraq	65.0	10.5
Al Za'atari	126,3	24.4
Murejeb Al Fuhood	3,8	0.7
Irbid	130,1	21,1
Amman	143,5	23.7
Zarqa	46,5	8.3
Balqa	15,5	2.5
Jerash	10,7	1.8
Ajloun	10,0	1.7
Medaba	8,2	1.3
Karak	8,8	1.6
Ma'an	6,4	1.0
Aqaba	2,4	0.4
Tafilah	2,2	0.4
Others	3,4	0.7

Source: PSD-SRCD.

Figure (4) and Table (4) below show that over 51% of refugees are females. According to age, the largest segment falls in the 18-35 age group, which accounts for around 30% of total refugees. Children make up to a fifth of children below the age of four. The other fifth is in the range of 5-11 years of age. This means that about 40% of children are below 11, which increases the pressures on the state in catering for their wellbeing. Statistics also show that females and children below the age of 11 make up 70% of Syrian refugees, which also incurs considerable cost for the provision of social protection and welfare including health, education, social care, basic commodities such as household gas and bread. This also means that Syrian refugees are, eventually, benefiting from the subsidies given on those commodities and services. The UNHCR's statistics also show that the majority of refugees (around 63%) originally sought refuge from insecurity in their homeland while 34% sought asylum on political grounds. Whatever the reasons, those persons will not be likely return to their country before the end of the crisis and the restoration of peace and security in their country. This in turn links any additional costs to Jordan's economy with the solution of the Syrian crisis.

Figure (3): Geographical distribution of Syrian refugees in Jordan's governorates

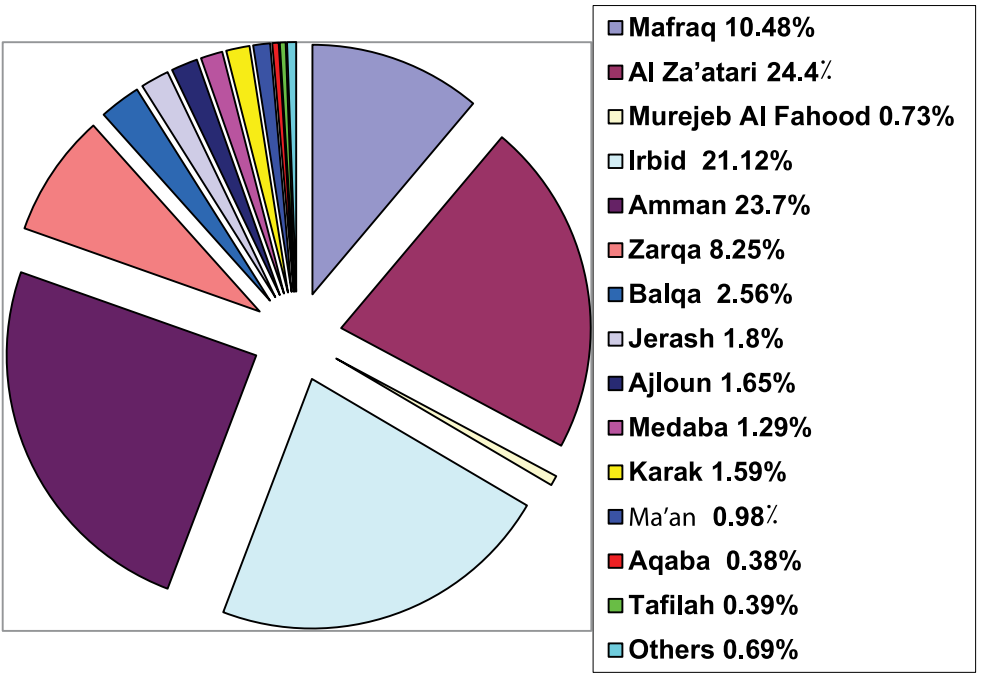


Figure (4): Demographics of Syrian refugees (UNHCR)

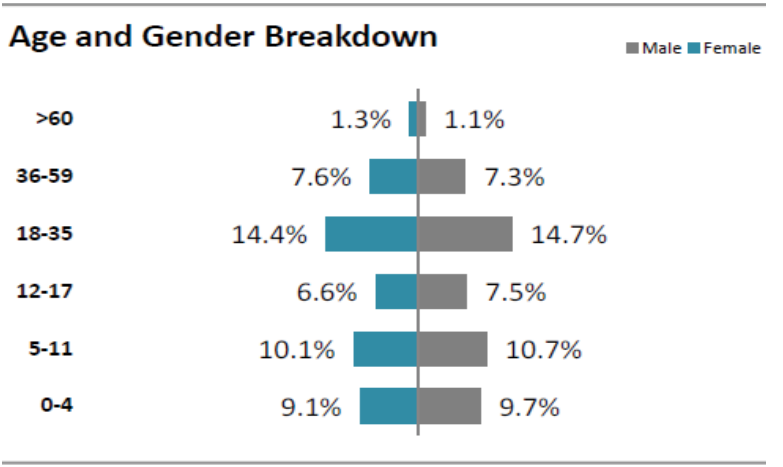


Table (4): Syrian refugees according to age and gender

Age	0-4	5-11	12-17	18-35	36-59	+60	Total
Females	49,551	59,263	40,621	90,596	50,013	11,727	301,771
Males	50,651	61,351	42,460	78,512	39,376	8,443	28,0972
Total	100,202	120,793	83,081	169,108	39,389	20,170	582,743
Ratio	17.2%	20.7%	14.3%	29.0%	15.3%	3.5%	100%

Source: PSD-SRCD

Since the outbreak of the crisis, Jordan coordinated with UNHCR to deal with the Syrian refugee situation, particularly in light of the incoming refugee families. The first waves of Syrian refugees began with some Syrian families seeking refuge with Jordanian families in bordering towns, especially Ramtha. Some Jordanian families hosted Syrian refugees. Afterwards, Syrian refugees were hosted in Al Bashabshe as a safe haven, but with the increase in the influxes, Syrians were seen squatting public parks and spaces. In the meantime, Al Za'atari Camp was established in Mafraq. The following points show how Jordan addressed the massive flows of Syrian refugees.

1- Syrian refugees were initially admitted to the country through non-official entry points across the borders. Then they were hosted in Ramtha shelters, public parks, industrial cities and public facilities. The government allowed the UNHCR to establish several offices in the shelters to facilitate the registration of those refugees. It also allowed for a guarantee system whereby a Syrian individual or family is allowed to personally host Syrian refugees if the requirements are met. Registration was also facilitated for those who live in and out of Amman and the government facilitated their travel to Amman for registration with the UNHCR.

2- Jordan's government created a high commission mandated with Syrian refugee affairs. It was chaired by the Prime Minister with the membership of minsters and competent authorities including PSD, the Armed Forces (JAF) and JHCO. The government appointed a spokesman on refugees to update the committee on matters pertaining to the Syrian refugees.

3- The government appointed JHCO as the sole agency authorized to deal with all local and foreign charities willing to make monetary and in-kind donations to the Syrian refugees inside and outside the camps.

4- Jordan's government issued a joint appeal on Syria with UNHCR and other international humanitarian agencies in August 2012. The appeal states that the total costs that need to be covered to host around 200,000 Syrian refugees exceeds US$600 million. The United Nations and its humanitarian partners had already made an appeal in March 2012 for aid amounting to US$84 million to help in covering the costs of hosting refugees for six months.

5- Al Za'atari Camp was established in July 2012 in Mafraq, which borders Syria, in cooperation with UNHCR; it has become the second largest refugee camp in the world. The size of the camp is over 8 km2 and had an initial capacity for accommodating 80,000 refugees. In its early days, a part of the camp 1.2 km2 in size was used, with a capacity for around 40,000 refugees. Today, the camp hosts over 120,000 refugees.
UNHCR is responsible for refugees in the camp, which is run by the PSD-SCRD. The camp was supplied with the best possible infrastructure and was developed in line with the increasing inflows of refugees, climate and physical and structural needs. Four field schools were established in cooperation with the Bahraini Royal Charity Organization in addition to four field hospitals, three of which were donated by Morocco, France and Italy, as well as one outside the camp provided by the United Arab Emirates.

Al Za'atari Camp located close to Mafraq

6- Al Za'atari Camp located close to Mafraq
6- The Council of Ministers has recently appointed a chairman for all executive bodies, committees and official agencies in charge of refugees. The chairman answers to the Prime Minister.

Figure (5): Distribution of Syrian refugees in Jordan up to 2012

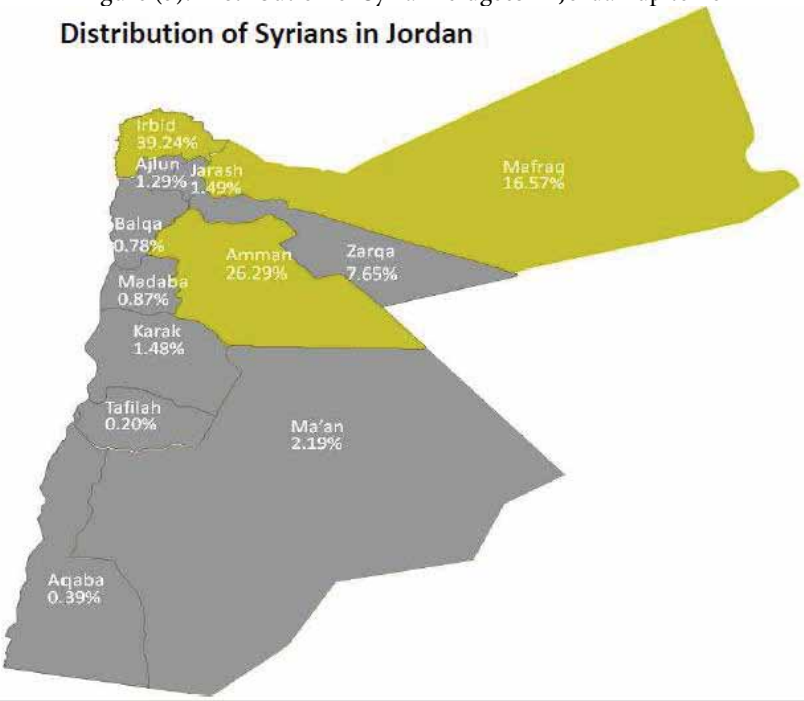
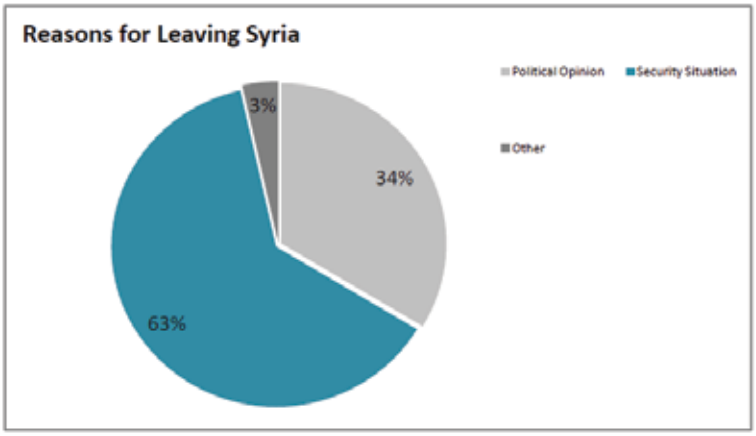


Figure (5): Distribution of Syrian refugees according to reasons for asylum as of November 7th, 2012 (UNHCR)



63% of Syrians registered expressed fear of return due to the general security situation, mainly fear of physical harm. 34% expressed fear of return due to their political opinion.

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3. International Constraints on Refugees

The first constraint is the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which is the key legal document defining who is a refugee, their rights and the legal obligations of states towards them. It was adopted in July 1951 by Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. The aim was for the UN to affirm that "everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms without any discrimination". The preamble of the Convention, however, suggested that the granting of asylum may place unduly heavy burdens on certain countries and that the international scope and nature of its proposals could not, therefore, be achieved without international cooperation. As such, the Convention called upon the parties to support the UNHCR in dealing with refugee issues around the world. This underpins the second constraint on dealing with refugees around the world: the obligations of all countries towards supporting any international or national effort aimed at addressing the humanitarian, economic, political and social implications of refugees. Those countries that are unwillingly receiving influxes of refugees and which abide by relevant legal instruments, including the 1951 Convention and other human rights covenants, deserve without any doubt to be assisted by the international community. Otherwise, those same countries will not be able to handle such a humanitarian crisis as an issue of priority. This applies especially to those countries which are hampered by their poor resources in dealing with the worsening of existing domestic economic challenges. Jordan is a good example of such as country. The state budget has been so strained that it can no longer fulfill its social compact vis-à-vis impoverished and low-income citizens, even before facing such the unavoidable humanitarian situation on its borders with Syria.

The refugee issue has intensified around the world, with large waves of influxes of forced migrants crossing borders, particularly in the developing world. People in such influxes have been given refugee status in accordance with the 1951 Convention and the associated 1967 Protocol. Accordingly, refugees receive the rights recognized by international conventions and charters (16) .This requires countries to provide full protection for refugees in large-scale inflows and to take all necessary measures for holding the international community, including the UNHCR, responsible for sharing the burden collectively and offering help to these countries. The United Nations, in addressing large-scale influxes of forced migrants, has defined a number of requirements. These require governments of the relevant host states to provide at least temporary shelter for refugees and call for the provision of immediate help from other countries in order to share the burden on a fair basis. The rationale is that observing human rights is a collective responsibility to be taken up by all countries. It is not the sole obligation of a given country.

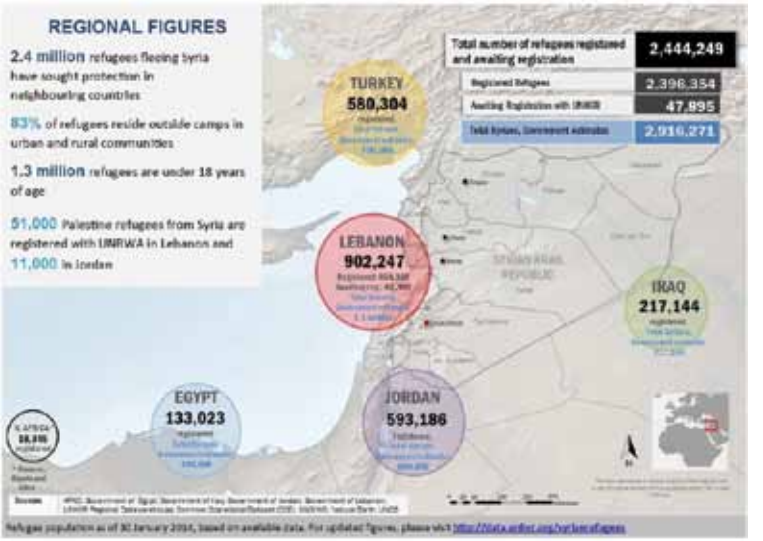
16 More information on defining refugee status, either for individuals or as groups, and their rights, duties and treatment can be found in the many topical papers and lectures delivered by Reyad Al Sulh.

Therefore, the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, in addition to the decisions of the UNHCR's Executive Committee, defined the manner in which to address all aspects of refugees. These include the procedures for defining the status of refugees and affording them adequate guarantees. Handbooks and conditions are also provided and state parties are permitted to participate in several ways in setting the criteria for defining the status of refugees. All of this is subject to fact- checking procedures and to the treatment of the various cases of refugees in terms of their social, physical, mental and gender status.

The 1951 Convention provides for the rights of refugees in addition to those guaranteed by international covenants relating to human rights. Such rights and privileges, according to the Convention, comprise three tiers. The first tier guarantees the refugee a legal status on an equal footing with foreigners residing in the host country; the second guarantees refugees a better position than that of a foreigner. The third guarantees refugees rights and privileges equal to those granted to the citizens of host countries. Obviously, those rights and privileges impose on host countries huge financial burdens, particularly in relation to education, health, labor rights, housing rights, welfare, water, protection, access to services and administrative assistance. Perhaps the only right that is guaranteed in international law yet not practiced in reality is the right to election and involvement in public affairs. In sum, hosting refugees incurs a heavy burden both on the macroeconomic and microeconomic levels which is worth discussing with reference to Jordan. This will be the subject of the last chapter of this study.

4. Facts and Figures for Syrian Refugees across the Region

Since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011, around two million Syrians have left the country, with 97% heading for the neighboring countries of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The refugees have had a financial and demographic impact on those countries, particularly Lebanon and Jordan, both of which are poor in terms of resources. The following discussion highlights the impact of the refugee crisis on Lebanon and Turkey using the available relevant facts and figures. The figure below shows the distribution of Syrian refugees in Syria's neighbors as adopted from UNHCR .



Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (17)

The number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon up until early 2014 is estimated at around 897,613, including 849,565 registered with the UNHCR in addition to a further 195,644 registered households. Official Lebanese figures indicate that there are around 1.5 million Syrian refugees, accounting for 25% of the total population and distributed among some 1,400 sites. The refugee crisis has had an impact on Lebanon with GDP for the years 2012-2014 declining by 2.9%, leading to further significant declines in wages, tax revenues, incomes, investment and public spending.

According to official statistics, the crisis has pushed approximately 170,000 Lebanese into poverty (over and above the one million currently living below the poverty line of US$4 per day). The social security system is already fragile as Lebanon needs about US$50 million of aid to achieve stability and improve the services provided to the poor and less privileged sections of the population.

17 For more information on the economic and social impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon, see the World Bank's study Lebanon Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict, September 2013.

The spillover into Lebanon has moved beyond the humanitarian to the social and economic spheres as unemployment rates rose to 20%, with the number of unemployed expected to range from 220,000 to 324,000, most of whom are unskilled. A World Bank study also estimates a need for around US$166-242 million for short-term job creation in response to the impact of the Syrian crisis on the labor market.

On the revenue side, spillovers from the conflict are estimated to cut US$1.5 billion in revenue collection and increase public spending by US$1.1 billion, which means the total cost of Syrian refugees stands at US$2.6 billion. All sectors have been affected, entailing a need for the government to receive US$2.5 billion in aid to preserve its economic stability. Other catastrophic impacts on the economy are foreseen as GDP is expected to drop by 2.9%, causing major damage worth billions of dollars.

The Syrian crisis had huge social impacts in 2012, as around 40,000 Syrian students were enrolled in public schools at a cost of US$29 million. The figure is set to rise to 170,000 in 2014, accounting for 57% of total enrollment rates at schools. The cost of this impact is estimated at US$183 million in 2013 and around US$434 in 2014.

The forecasted fiscal cost to the infrastructure for the years 2012-2013 and 2014 is shown in Table (5) below and ranges from US$455 in the base influx scenario to US$589 in the overflow scenario. Lebanon's electricity sector, for example, which is already facing numerous challenges, will be negatively impacted by the refugee crisis with aggregate losses amounting to around half a billion dollars. This brings the total fiscal impact on infrastructure services, including electricity, water and garbage disposal to over US$1.1 billion for the same period, according to the World Bank's estimates.

Table (5): Impact of Syrian refugees on Lebanon's infrastructure (US$ million)

Impacted areas	2012	2013	Base influx scenario 2014	Overflow scenario 2014	Total 2012-2014 (base influx of refugees)
Infrastructure	21	208	360	455	589
Electricity	16	170	314	393	500
Water and sanitation	5	5	8	10	18
Garbage disposal and municipal services	-	33	39	52	71

Source: World Bank's calculations and estimates.

The Problem of Syrian Refugees in Turkey

In the early period of the Syrian crisis in 2011, 252 Syrians fled to Turkey, but with the escalation of protests and violence in Syria, the figures dramatically increased. According to official statistics, over 80,000 Syrians had sought refuge in Turkey by the end of 2012 and 440,000 in 2013. By the start of 2014, the figure had risen to around 580,542 Syrian refugees and will continue to rise if the situation persists. The number of Syrian refugees in the camps in 2013 is estimated at around 200,000, in addition to 220,000 outside the camps. There are also around 15,000 refugees with official residence permits. According to UNHCR estimates, there are around 100,000 to 200,000 Syrian refugees who illegally reside in Turkey, which places the total number of refugees for 2014 between 680,000 and 780,000. Syrian residents account for around 0.8% of total population in Turkey, which is lower than the rates in Jordan or in Lebanon, where Syrians account for 20%-25% of the total population. The majority of registered Syrian refugees live in the southern parts of Turkey along the borders of their homeland. Refugee camps there host 21,000 in Kahramanmaraş, 13,000 in Adana, 10,000 in Adiyaman, 10,000 in Osmaniye and around 6,300 in Maltiye.

Losses sustained by Turkey because of the Syrian and refugee crises are estimated at around US$1.5 billion for 2013. Those losses, however, are not as catastrophic and alarming as in Jordan or Lebanon because of the stronger economy in Turkey and its ability to absorb such crises. For example, although Turkish exports to Syria dropped in 2011 by 15%, a total increase of 18% was recorded in 2012. The most affected province was Gaziantep, which borders Syria. Its exports to Syria dropped by 44%; but in return the exports to Iraq rose by 30%, with total exports rising in value from US$4.8 billion in 2011 to US$5.6 billion in 2012. This was not the case in Sanliurfa, where the 18.8% rise in exports to Iraq could not make up for the 28.5% decline in exports to Syria, making such exports drop from US$148.3 million in 2011 to US$110 million in 2012. In Hatay, total exports slightly declined from US$2.05 billion to US$2.04, with exports to Syria dropping by 37.4% and exports to Iraq increasing by 28.9%.

Studies on Turkey indicate that the key social impact of the crisis was an imbalanced demography in the southern region, particularly in Hatay. The province suffered from political unrest caused by the presence of members of the pro-Syrian Alawite sect, who opposed the Turkish response to the Syrian crisis. Other social impacts include the rise of crime, extremism and the proliferation of extremist organizations. This, in effect, provoked Turkish public opinion as official statistics show that 12.49% of terrorist acts committed in Turkey had their roots in Syria. Other studies confirmed the widespread presence of Al-Qaeda in Turkey and the military recruitment of combatants, particularly in the southern region of the country.