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The Case of Jordan

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Introduction

War is said to be as old as humanity. At all times, human beings fought for their lands, for their gods, for their culture. The 21st century is no exception: it already witnessed ninety wars and conflicts; sixty being still ongoing around the world. Thus, one may wonder: Is the Syrian conflict one among many? It appears that the Syrian case is peculiar from the many conflicts that have been dividing the world since the end of the Cold War. It stirred up debates and controversy, led to the involvement of the most powerful powers within and outside of the Middle Eastern region, and to the creation of as many as 1,000 armed opposition groups commanding an estimated 100,000 fighters.¹

On the humanitarian front, Syrian refugees were already 1 million in March 2013 and their number reached 3 million in July 2014 after the utilisation of chemical weapons by Bashar al-Assad against the Syrian population and after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared himself the caliph of the Islamic State.² As of September 2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered over 5,6 million

refugees from Syria and estimated that there are over 6,6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Syria's borders. In Syria, fighting continue in spite of international agreements for de-escalation. Humanitarian access remains limited and 3 million Syrians are still surviving in hard-to-reach areas.

Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Kurdistan Region of Iraq are hosting the largest populations of Syrian refugees, many of whom attempt to journey onwards to Europe in search of better conditions. None of those main host countries signed the 1951 Geneva Convention, which defines the status of refugee and sets the requirements for legal identification and rights of refugees.

This article is the first of two papers which offer an overview of the existing literature and available data on the socioeconomic and political impact of Syrian refugees on Jordan and Lebanon. They also review the countries' mechanisms of coping with the rapid influx of the refugee population from Syria.

The History of Refugees in Jordan before the Syrian Conflict

Rampant instability in the Middle Eastern region led Jordan to be one of the main hosts of refugees from numerous countries. Since the independence of the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan in 1946, the country has witnessed two major refugee influxes.

Palestinian Refugees After the 1948 and 1967 Wars

The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 led to a massive departure of 506,200 Palestinians to Jordan.³ Palestinian refugees were rapidly integrated into the Jordanian society. According to article 3 of the 1954 Jordanian Citizenship Law, a Jordanian national is: “Any person with previous Palestinian nationality except the Jews before the date of May 15, 1948 residing in the kingdom during the period from December 20, 1949 and February 16, 1954”.⁴ Palestinians were granted Jordanian nationality on the basis of this law.

In 1967, the military occupation of the West bank, Golan Heights and Gaza Strip by Israel (*El Nakseh War*) led to a second wave of refugees in Jordan. The kingdom welcomed another 390,000 refugees and displaced persons – 345,000 from the West Bank and 45,000 from the Gaza Strip.⁵

The massive arrival of Palestinians in just two decades led to tensions between the Palestinian population, the government, and the Jordanians, which resulted in the “Black September” in 1970. In the context of the conflict between Jordanian Armed Forces led by King Hussein and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, refugee camps were attacked and thousands of Palestinians were killed.⁶

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), more than 2 million Palestinian refugees were living in Jordan in 2017. All but 167,000 have citizenship and are fully eligible for government services including education and health care.⁷

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Iraqi Refugees After the 1991 and 2003 Wars

The first wave of Iraqi refugees arrived in the 1990s in the aftermath of the 1991 Kuwait Crisis, but also following Saddam Hussein's brutal repression of Iraqi Shi'a and Kurds, and the imposition of economic sanctions over the country. Before 2003, between 250,000 and 350,000 Iraqis were thought to have found refuge in Jordan.⁸ These figures include not only Iraqi refugees, but also long-term Iraqi residents who had remained in Jordan to work.

Iraqis did not enjoy the level of integration of the Palestinians in Jordan. Their presence brought the fear of a growing Shi'a presence, even though Shi'as represented only 17% of Iraqi refugees. The spectre of Iran's influence in Jordan led the authorities to prevent Iraqis from visiting historic shrines, to ban the opening of new *huseiniyat* (houses for prayers), and to foster non-Shi'a religious education.⁹

After the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, large numbers of refugees fled to Jordan. Unlike the first wave of refugees following the Kuwait Crisis, the second generation of Iraqi refugees was referred to as an "invisible" refugee population.¹⁰ On the one hand, they

were treated by the kingdom as "guests" instead of "refugees". On the other hand, most of them were middle class urbanites and businessmen, and thus, able to resettle in Jordan without the help of the UNHCR. However, 2005 terrorists' attacks committed by Iraqis combined with the memory of the Black Friday led to the securitisation of Iraqi refugees. Jordan breached the principle of *non-refoulement*, deported and detained Iraqi refugees in large number.

While difficult to identify those "invisible" refugees, the UNHCR estimates that 750,000 to 1 million Iraqis have fled to Jordan before the onset of the conflict against IS.¹¹ The atrocities committed by the jihadi group are thought to have brought more than 63,000 Iraqis to Jordan since February 2013.¹²

Jordan's policy to deal with Iraqi refugees is particularly interesting to understand the kingdom's current strategy for Syrian refugees. In response to the successive influxes of Iraqis, Jordan chose not to establish refugee camps. It affected the country's ability to attract international media attention and aid, and resulted in a very different approach to deal with Syrian refugees.¹³

Jordan's Refugee Population

Results of the General Census of Population and Housing in Jordan of 30 November 2015 indicate that the Jordanian population growth rate between 2004 and 2015 was 5.3%, 18% for non-Jordanians versus 3.1% for Jordanians. This development is undoubtedly linked to the increased influx of migrants into Jordan during that period.

Since the beginning of the Syrian war in 2011, Jordan hosted the largest population of Palestinians and Iraqis, and the third largest population of Syrians. In February 2018, reports recorded that Jordan had the second highest share of refugees compared to its population in the world, namely 89 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants.¹⁴

According to the UNHCR, refugees (including Palestinian refugees who have the Jordanian nationality) account for about 30% of the total Jordanian population which comprises approximately 9,5 million persons according to the latest General Census.¹⁵ As of September 2018, there were an estimated 670,429 people of concern from Syria, over 2 million from Palestine and up to 1 million Iraqi refugees surviving in Jordan.

Jordan's Legal Framework on Refugees before the Syrian Conflict

The Absence of a Domestic Legal Framework for Refugees

Jordan has not signed the 1951 Geneva Convention nor the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. The country's Constitution only provides protection against extradition for political asylum seekers in its article 21(1).¹⁶

In the absence of a specific legislation addressing their status; refugees and asylum seekers in Jordan are subject to Law No. 24 of 1973 concerning Residency and Foreigners' Affairs. However, this law does not make the distinction between refugees and non-refugees. Refugees are considered as foreigners, who are defined in article 2 as anyone who does not have Jordanian nationality.¹⁷

The Hashemite Kingdom's legal framework for the treatment of refugees is based on the 1998 Memorandum of Understanding

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(MoU)¹⁸ signed between Jordan and the UNHCR, and other bilateral agreements.

The 1998 Memorandum of Understanding Between Jordan and the UNHCR

In the Memorandum Jordan accepts the definition of “refugee” contained in the 1951 Convention. The kingdom also agrees to respect the principle of *non-refoulement*, which states that “no person seeking asylum can be forced to return to a country where his/her life or freedom could be threatened because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion”.¹⁹ Finally, Jordan recognises that asylum seekers and refugees should receive treatment according to internationally accepted standards.

However, the MoU describes the presence of refugees as a “sojourn”. It allows refugees “a maximum stay of six months after recognition, during which a durable solution should be found”. Here, “solution” refers to either repatriation or return.

In 2014, two articles of the MoU were amended in order to extend the time for the UNHCR to process refugee applications to ninety days. The validity of refugee identification cards was also extended from

six months up to one year. Yet, the duration of refugees’ stay in Jordan was not amended and should not exceed six months.²⁰ Nevertheless, most refugees have been able to renew their residency in Jordan after their six-month stay ends.²¹

Syrian Refugees in Jordan

At the beginning of the Syrian conflict in March 2011, Syrian refugees who sought refuge in Jordan were 283,215. The registration trend boomed in 2012 (+72.5%) and 2013 (+15%). By the end of the year 2013, the number of Syrians reached 576,354 and progressively peaked to 670,429 in September 2018. However, not all Syrian refugees are registered with the UNHCR, and they are believed to be about 1,5 million in Jordan.²²

The figures released by the UNHCR for 2017 show positive trends as registrations and arrivals are slowing down (respectively +0.4% and +0.3%).²³ Moreover, around 8,000 Syrians are believed to have returned home in 2017 only.²⁴ Most went after a local truce was reached in part of southern Syria in July.

Syrians who fled the conflict in their home country come mainly from Dar'a, at the border with Jordan, and major Syrian cities of Homs, Damascus and Aleppo. In Jordan, about 81.1% of Syrian refugees live in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. The remaining 18.9% are encamped in three main refugee camps: Za'atari Camp in Mafraq governorate and Emirati Jordanian (EJ) and Azraq Camps in Zarqa governorate. Because of its geographical proximity with Syria, the north of the kingdom has become home for almost 90% of the Syrian refugees. This comprises Amman (29.3%), Mafraq (24.4%), Irbid (20.9%) and Zarqa governorates (14.5%).

In spite of the efforts made by the Jordanian government and the support of UNHCR and other external donors to cope with the massive influx of refugees, over 85% Syrians live below the poverty line. Moreover, 48% of them are children under 17 years old and another 29.2% has one or more specific need.²⁵

Jordan's Syrian Refugees Policies

Open-doors Policy

At the onset of the Syrian crisis in 2011, the kingdom was relatively open and tolerant to Syrians. This is due to historically open policies towards Syrian migration and refugees in general. Yet, the purpose of such open-policy until 2013 was to display a neutral position of non-interference in the conflict between the Syrian government and opposition groups. In July 2012, the Jordanian government opened the Za'atari refugee camp in the north of the country only a few miles from the border with Syria. The camp had an initial capacity of 9,000 refugees in 1,800 tents.²⁶

Syrian refugees, thus, found safe haven in Jordan and were welcomed. The government still adopted some restrictions on the right to work and strongly incentivised refugees to settle in camps rather than in urban areas. Palestinian refugees who had found refuge in Syria before the conflict were less welcomed. Reports showed that the Jordanian government attempted to deport Palestinians who entered without documents.²⁷

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From 2013, as the conflict in Syria escalated, Jordan started to securitise Syrian refugees. In March 2013, the government created the Syrian Refugee Camp Directorate (SRCD) in order to control movements in and out refugee camps. In April 2014, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) replaced it with the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD) as a branch of Jordan's security services. The new Directorate has the mission of policing Syrian refugees inside and outside camps. In May 2014, Jordan opened its sixth and largest camp for Syrians. This policy echoes the previous strategy to deal with Iraqi refugees and was thought as a way to increase international visibility and to attract international assistance through encampment. In an interview given in March 2017, the Jordanian security official in charge of the Azraq refugee camp explained: "If we had not built the camps, then the world would not understand that we were going through a crisis".²⁸

The Creation of a Legal Framework to Support Host Communities

Since 2013, the Government of Jordan took a proactive role in seeking to respond to the challenges of the Syrian refugee crisis. In June 2014, the Ministry of Planning and

International Cooperation (MoPIC) formulated the National Resilience Plan (NRP), a three-year program supported by development and humanitarian agencies operating in Jordan. The NRP focuses on addressing the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on the country and host communities. Jordan planned to invest US\$2.41 billion over three years to local institutions and communities in the following sectors: health, education, water & sanitation, livelihood & employment, energy, housing, and social protection.²⁹

In parallel to the development of the NRP, in September 2014 Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis (JRPSC) was established to "coordinate, guide and provide oversight to the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the JRP 2015 and the JRP 2016".³⁰ Jordan Response Plan (JRP) was launched in December 2014 as a one-year program. The plan is underpinned by three main principles: mitigate the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on host communities, sustain socio economic stability, and safeguard the development gains made in recent years. Similarly to the NRP, the JRP outlined almost US\$3 billion to be injected in eleven strategic sectors. Donor contributions to the plan are coordinated

through a unified channel, the Jordan Resilience Fund (JRF) launched by Jordan and the UN.³¹ The JRP 2015 was renewed for another three years. The JRP 2016-2018 has two pillars: Refugees and Resilience.

Finally, Jordan signed the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) launched in December 2014 by the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Republic of Iraq, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Lebanese Republic and the Republic of Turkey. The plan aims to ensure protection, humanitarian assistance and strengthen resilience.³² It is aligned with existing national plans, in the case of Jordan, the Jordan Response Plan to the Syria Crisis 2016-2018.

The Increased Securitisation of Syrian Refugees and IS' Spectre

From June 2013, Jordan closed all its informal western border crossings, forcing Syrian refugees to travel to informal crossings along the eastern side of the border to avoid checkpoints.³³

The turning point of Jordan's policies on Syrian refugees came with the growing influence and violence committed by IS in Syria from September 2014. Jordan responded to the threat with increased

securitisation of the Syrian refugees and with greater restrictions. The governmental policy was echoed by public opinion. A 2014 poll showed that nearly 80% of Jordanians was opposed to receiving more refugees.³⁴

Several reports pointed to many instances of massive *refoulements* and the suspension of registration for new arrivals at the border.³⁵ Thousands of Syrians were turned away and abandoned in a demilitarised area known as "the berms". By April 2015, the last formal crossing with Syria was closed by the Jordanian government after Syrian rebel fighters took control of it.

On the international stage, the Hashemite Kingdom raised its voice to denounce the inadequacy of international responsibility-sharing. It urged European countries to financially support the hosting of over one million Syrian refugees.

It is important to note that a major donor to Jordan is Japan who gave approximately US\$59 million to international organisations operating in Jordan so far. In 2017, the country gave US\$1.494 million grant to the UN Office for Project Services in order to finance a project called "Improving Safety and Security for Syrian Refugees at the

Refugee Camps in Jordan”. In a public statement, Shuichi Sakurai, ambassador of Japan, said that “Japan has acknowledged that security is one of top priorities in managing refugee camps; because assistance for the refugees, who are living in severe condition, can be provided only under a secure and safe environment”.³⁶

The Cooperation with International Donors and the Humanisation of Syrian Refugees

In February 2016 at the London Pledging Summit, Jordan and the European Union concluded “the Jordan Compact” deal to support Syrian refugees in Jordan. The agreement focused on integrating Syrian refugees in the labour market. Jordan softened its strict regulations on refugees’ right to work. For example, the government of Jordan has exempted Syrian refugees from work permit fees. Syrians are required to pay only JD10 administration fees while the fees were originally JD700. The exemption is renewed every year by the Minister council for several low-skilled sectors such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. In return, the donor community committed to better support the Jordan Response Plan, which by 2016 was only 30% funded.³⁷

Jordan also pledged to create up to 200,000 work opportunities for Syrian refugees. More specifically, the Jordan Compact entails a model designed to help Jordan integrating refugees into pre-existing Special Economic Zones (SEZs). In order to facilitate this integration, the EU has offered tariff free access to European markets on condition that businesses in Jordan employ a certain proportion of Syrian refugees. Those businesses should also produce in at least one Jordanian SEZ and in specific product categories. Furthermore, for the first time, the World Bank offered a Concessionary Finance Initiative to Jordan, providing low-interest loans.³⁸

As of December 2017, the Government of Jordan has taken necessary steps to open formal employment opportunities to Syrians. In 2017 alone, 46,000 work permits were issued in sectors approved for foreign workers.³⁹ Syrians have also been formally entitled to work outside the camps for up to one month before returning to renew their paperwork.

Regarding the SEZs, fewer permits have been issued. USAID and DFID have funded the identification of 300 existing manufacturers within the SEZs. Meanwhile, the UNHCR collaborated with the Jordanian

Investment Authority to engage Jordanian firms. Job fairs are now regularly organised in refugee camps, especially in Za'atari, in collaboration with the Norwegian Red Cross and the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate.⁴⁰ Jordan should still increase its efforts in ensuring fair working conditions for Syrians. Another challenge is to attract multinational corporations (MNCs) to establish factories in Jordan and employ Syrian refugees as well as Jordanians.

To conclude, at a national level, the Jordan Compact has proven the sustained commitment of the Jordanian government to invest in Syrian refugees and see them as an opportunity for national development.

Policy Variations at the Sub-National Level

At the sub-national level, identity and interests factors shape the variation in policies towards Syrian refugees.⁴¹ As for identity, tribal affiliation and the historical relationship between the tribes at the two sides of the borders have been influential. It explains that the northern governorates of Mafraq, Sahab and Zarqa were relatively more open even though they faced massive arrival of Syrians. Moreover, the perception of economic opportunity – to seek resources from the central government to cope with

the influx – have encouraged several mayors to have a pro-active politics to integrate refugees.

The Socio Economic Impact of Syrian Refugees on Jordan

It is important to differentiate the effects of tensions and insecurity that exist in the Middle East and the effects of the refugee crisis as such. In Jordan, regional changes had major impact on tourism, foreign investment, the interruption of arrival of gas from Egypt and the reduction of exchange of goods between Jordan and Syria to reach Europe. For example, the loss of major trade routes with Syria has caused a 9% loss in Jordan's trade balance in 2012 only.⁴²

The rapid growth of the Jordanian population inexorably led to the increased competition for access to public services, infrastructures, and jobs. Jordan Independent Economy Watch summarised the main socio-economics impact of the Syrian refugee crisis as follow: 1) Increasing costs of various sectors such as education, health, shelter, water, energy and housing, 2) Increasing pressure on public finances, 3) Exacerbating vulnerabilities for the poorest

segments of the Jordanian population, and 4) Threatening the sustainability of quality service provision in the most affected governorates.⁴³

Macro-economic Impact

According to Planning and International Cooperation Minister Imad Fakhoury, the direct financial impact of the crisis is estimated at around US\$2 billion annually, which equates to 20% of the total annual national revenue and 5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).⁴⁴ As for indirect impact, they are estimated to reach US\$3.5 billion annually by the UN Development Program (UNDP).⁴⁵

The rapid and massive increase of the population in Jordan after the influx of Syrian refugees inexorably put pressure on public services and infrastructures. Hosting one million individuals increased government's expenses across several sectors. Moreover, the Hashemite Kingdom drastically increased its imports of goods and resources, such as electricity and water to meet the need of its refugee and non-refugee population.

Economic growth dropped when the global financial crisis hit Jordan in late 2008.

Jordan's economy was greatly impacted by the external shock and the country's GDP was in decline until 2013. The economic growth experienced a great rebound in 2014. This is due to private consumption from both Jordanians and Syrian refugees, foreign investments and the relocation of many Syrian businesses in Jordan. In Irbid for example twelve factories specialised in food manufacturing relocated from Syria between 2011 and 2015.⁴⁶ Moreover, Syrian investments represent a large share of total foreign direct investments (FDI) in Jordan. In 2013 only, Syrian invested a total of JD34.8 million in almost 1,000 companies in Jordan.⁴⁷ Although the protracted nature of the Syrian conflict led Syrians to invest outside of Jordan after 2014, they still represent a large share of FDI. In 2014, the Jordanian government introduced a series of measures in order to re-attract and boost Syrian investments. Finally, in 2014, Syrians invested JD28.5 million in real estate, 256% more than in 2010. That same year, they ranked third among foreigners purchasing apartments in Jordan.⁴⁸

In 2012, Jordan experienced a major increase in debt, as a share of the GDP. This corresponds to the peak of an energy crisis and the start of inflows of Syrian refugees in

the kingdom. The fact that the net public debt steadily increased in 2013 and 2014 shows the pressure of Syrian refugees on the government expenses. However, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation stated that the refugee burden is not the cause of the increase in debt. Instead, it exacerbated existing pressures on public finances, further inflating the budget.⁴⁹

Syrian refugees also have a positive impact on the public revenues and aid perceived by Jordan. For each Jordanian Dinar spent by a Syrian refugee from the assistance he/she receives, a certain percentage of this Dinar is reaped by the government in the form of a tax. This is the case when a Syrian refugee buys a work permit and renews residency visa. The revenue generated from work permit bought by Syrian refugees only amounted to JD85 million in 2014.⁵⁰ A study realised in 2013 estimated that the benefit of the Syrian refugee crisis would cumulatively reach around JD2 billion for public revenues only.⁵¹ The same study found that Jordanian public revenues accrued from the hosting of Syrian refugees amounted JD780 million in 2013.

Furthermore, Jordan has received large amounts of foreign aid from the international community in order to cope

with the inflows of Syrian refugees. While determining the exact figure for the aid received is impossible, some reports state that the kingdom received around US\$2.8 billion in 2016.⁵² This excludes additional humanitarian aid and the budget of aid agencies working in Jordan. While financial assistance was motivated by the Syrian refugee crisis, much of it has been allocated to Jordanian host communities. According to official data of MoPIC, the amount of foreign aid pledged to Jordan in 2012 and after is more than the double compared to the amount the kingdom received before the Syrian refugee crisis. Official figures states that in 2012, Jordan received \$US3.05 billion, which represents an increase of 300% compared to 2011.⁵³

Impact by Economic Sector

Numerous social and political reforms which had been initiated before the Syrian conflict were paused by the massive influx of Syrian refugees. Competition over access to public services and infrastructures has caused tensions in the population.

Jordan is one of the most energy-dependant countries in the world, accounting for about 97% of its energy needs. Continuous disruptions in energy imports from Egypt,

and the non-encampment of Syrian refugees aggravated the energy consumption level. However, energy is subsidised by the Jordanian government, which spent US\$5.9 billion, or 18.5% of its GDP, in order to provide energy in 2014.⁵⁴ According to the last JRP 2018-2020, it is estimated that during the five first years of the crisis (2011-2015), government subsidies for petroleum and electricity reached US\$7.1 billion.⁵⁵ While the total residential electricity consumption increased by 34% between 2011 and 2016, the per capita energy consumption decreased by 18% over the same period. It shows that both Jordanians and Syrians face severe restrictions in the access to this public service.⁵⁶

As half of the Syrian refugee population are under the age of 18, the crisis has considerably increased the educational demand in Jordan. The impact has been particularly strong on public schooling. From the onset of Syrian refugees influx, Jordan invested US\$200 million to enrol 126,127 Syrian children in public schools.⁵⁷ In school year 2015/2016, 143,000 Syrian students were enrolled in public schools. In spite of those efforts, 40% of Syrian school-age children remain deprived from education in Jordan. The crisis has led to heavy

pressures on the education system. Public schools have become saturated, especially in high population density areas. Teachers have to cover double shifts without receiving fair financial compensation, which means that children spend less time in the classroom. Finally, the recruitment of additional teaching staff is a burden on public finances. All those constraints impede the quality of education and teaching in the country for both Syrians and Jordanians.

The Jordanian government granted free access to public health services for Syrian refugees. This led to an increase on the demand, needs and costs of healthcare system. Moreover, health centres are suffering from a shortage of medicines and vaccines. Between the beginning of the influx and 2016, around 630,000 Syrian refugees were admitted in public hospitals.⁵⁸ Congestion over health services led Jordanians to turn to private centres and hospitals, which are less accessible and more expensive. JRP 2018-2020 points to the increase in the rates of non-communicable diseases, disability and mental health problems that stem from the change in population demographic.⁵⁹ Syrian refugees also have brought the resurgence of communicable diseases that had been

eradicated for years in Jordan such as tuberculosis; poliomyelitis and measles. In order to overcome the tensions over health access, the Jordanian government granted universal and free access to health care for Jordanians, while Syrian refugees were no longer entitled to free medical services.⁶⁰

In terms of food security, up to 26% of the Jordanian population, especially in host communities, are considered food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity.⁶¹ As for Syrian refugees, over 70% of households living outside of refugee camps are almost completely dependent on food assistance. Such assistance is mainly provided by the international community through food vouchers, *ad hoc* in-kind assistance, and meals to schoolchildren. Data of the Ministry of Finance show that the total amount of food subsidies provided by the government in the first five months of 2015 amounts to JD71.6 million. Furthermore, the massive influx of refugees has led to the increase in food demand, with two main effects. First, the increase in imports of basic food resources such as wheat. Second, consumer food prices have increased by 15.5% between 2009 and 2016.⁶²

In 2018, 1,36 million individuals living in Jordan still lack access to adequate housing,

of which 69% are Jordanian and 31% are Syrian refugees.⁶³ In addition, the influx of Syrian refugees in Jordan and the fact that 80% of them live outside camps has led to sub-division of existing units and to the significant rise of rent prices, especially in northern Jordan.⁶⁴ In Mafraq and Ramtha for example, some rents have increased six times the price before the refugee crisis, and on average, house prices have tripled.⁶⁵ Competition for affordable and decent housing has become a main source of tension between Syrian refugees and host communities.

Water scarcity was an issue long before the Syrian refugee crisis, since Jordan is the third country in the world with the least water resources.⁶⁶ Before the refugee influx, Jordan was already suffering from pressure on the demand for potable water. Half of Jordan supply comes from Yarmouk River and the other half comes from the exploitation of groundwater. The increased demand led to the increased exploitation of underground water and ultimately water levels are lowering while water quality is deteriorating.⁶⁷ In northern areas, the average daily supply has fallen below 30 liters per person, well below what is recommended to meet a person's basic needs

(50 liters per person).⁶⁸ The crisis has also put pressure on the already limited sewage and communal waste system, which covers only 62% of the Jordanian population.⁶⁹

The main environmental impact of the refugee influx is 1) deforestation and firewood depletion, 2) land degradation, 3) unsustainable groundwater extraction, and 4) water pollution.⁷⁰ Not only do the refugees have a negative impact on the environment, but the environmental deterioration has an adverse impact on refugees. For instance, settlements in flood zones and the increase of solid wastes intensified the pollution of surface and ground water, which is a major cause for the transmission of diarrheal disease.

Impact on the Labour Market

The competition over access to the labour market has raised the biggest debate in Jordan. The most tangible impact of Syrian refugees is seen on the existing job opportunities, wage level, working conditions, as well as the accessibility to work. Some voices consider that the presence of Syrian refugees in the country is the main cause of rising unemployment. According to an International Labour Organisation (ILO) survey, 96% of

Jordanians consider that the Syrians are taking jobs away from the local population.⁷¹ In northern areas such as Mafraq, Amman and Irbid, unemployment has increased from 14.5% in 2011 to 22.1% in 2014. This is in spite of the fact that Syrian refugees were legally not allowed to work in Jordan until 2016.

However, the ILO study shows that Syrians have occupied 160,000 jobs on the black market, especially in the agriculture, construction, and service sectors – the same sectors that have shown impressive growth since the beginning of the crisis.⁷² Between 2010 and 2013, unemployment grew in the economy while the shadow economy experienced an increase in jobs, which is where Syrians are able to work (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2013).⁷³ As of April 2017, 18.6% of Jordanians were still unemployed, including 30% of the youth. While there is no proof that Syrians directly compete with Jordanians in the access to the labour market, they directly compete with other immigrants such as Egyptians and Sudanese.⁷⁴ Moreover, a 2017 report of the ILO affirms that the low working condition accepted by Syrian refugees put Jordanian workers at a disadvantage.⁷⁵

The report explains that the arrival of Syrian refugees has changed the dynamics of the Jordanian labour market. The latter is now constituted of three groups: Jordanians, migrant workers, and refugees. It is segmented based on nationalities rather than education or skills. Moreover, family situation matters. While migrants came to Jordan alone on a temporary basis and will send part of their salary back to their home countries, Jordanians and Syrians need to balance employment with family responsibilities and will spend their wages in Jordan. Data from the Ministry of Labour recently suggested that there might be as many non-Jordanians as Jordanians working in the Hashemite Kingdom. This demographic change of the labour market poses three main challenges to the Jordanian government: 1) how to increase Jordanian employment, 2) how to ensure decent working conditions for all workers, including migrant workers and refugees, and 3) how to incorporate Syrian refugees without displacing the two other groups?

Political Impact

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is based on the tribal structures of the country. While the demographics have been altered dramatically by the influx of Syrian

refugees, political structures remained unchanged. One example on how Syrian refugees may affect the political legitimacy in Jordan is the nationality law. Legally, Jordanian women do not have the right to grant their own nationality to their child. Therefore, when a Jordanian woman has a child from a non-Jordanian man, the child cannot be considered Jordanian. Many of those cases already occurred with the increasing Palestinian population in Jordan and the occurrence of mixed marriages. It is likely that the next generation of individuals living in Jordan will not have the Jordanian nationality and thus, will constitute an unrepresented “second class”. This fringe of the population may eventually question the legitimacy of the government; ask for more rights or a status equal to the one of Jordanians, which might ultimately lead to social upheavals in the future.

Notes

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- ¹ Charles Lister. 'Syria's insurgency beyond Good Guys and Bad Guys' in *Foreign Policy* 9 September 2013. Accessible online at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/09/09/syrias-insurgency-beyondgoodguys-and-bad-uys/>.
- ² UNHCR. *Syria Regional Refugee Response 2018*. Accessible online at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>.
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