



ASILE

Global Asylum
Governance and
the European
Union's Role

Country Fiche

JORDAN

Authors

Dr. Gerasimos Tsourapas (*University of Birmingham*), in collaboration with
Dr. Simon Verduijn (*Mixed Migration Centre - MMC*)

*DRC/MMC Jordan**

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Executive summary¹

Jordan constitutes one of the key migrant host states in the Middle East. In terms of the country's foreign populations overall, Jordan's latest population census (2015) reported 2,918,125 foreign nationals (31%) in a total population of 9,531,712. Currently Jordan has the highest Palestinian refugee to citizen ratio in the world (Mencütek 2018, 189). Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War Jordan hosted the largest number of Palestinian refugees, who fell under the responsibility of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The state responded by granting citizenship to those Palestinians who wished to become Jordanian citizens in 1950 – as well as their descendants, who would automatically be granted citizenship according to the Family Book of Jordanian Law – but not to those seeking refuge in the country after 1950.

Legally, Jordan's only law discussing 'asylum' or 'refugees' – Law of Residence and Foreign Affairs No. 24 / 1973 and its subsequent amendments – does not define who may constitute a refugee. While Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, the international refugee apparatus has been expanded across the country. The Ministry of Interior (MoI) is entitled to specify the conditions under which refugees are able to enter into Jordan, as well as the documentation that needs to be issued. This is based on a country-of-origin model, which allows Jordan to implement selective refugee policies depending on a person's nationality or citizenship, with the agreement of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and international donors.

Jordan's refugee response is driven by the 1998 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with UNHCR. The treaty grants UNHCR full responsibility for determining refugee status, with Jordan committing itself to respect the principle of *non-refoulement*. This was applied to the influx of Iraqis following the 2003 Gulf War (estimates vary between 450,000 and 750,000; see Gibson 2015), as well as to approximately 20,000 refugees from Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. The country-of-origin model also applied to those fleeing the Syrian Civil War:

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between 2012 and 2015, Syrians were granted *prima facie* refugee status while other refugees had to undergo refugee status determination (Mencütek 2018, 193). However, Palestinians entering Jordan carrying Syrian travel documents would fall under the jurisdiction of UNRWA rather than UNHCR (Bidinger et al. 2014). Jordan hosts approximately 657,000 Syrian registered refugees; as of May 2020, approximately 19% of them are residing in refugee camps (UNHCR 2020). However, Jordan often refers to a total of 1.3 million Syrian refugees residing in Jordan, but the accuracy of this number is subject to debate. As with their documentation of Iraqi refugees, Jordan has been charged with inflating the number of Syrian refugees to attract international aid (Turner 2015; Tsourapas 2019b; Lenner 2020).

A range of national policies and international agreements complete the policy framework on Jordan's refugee response. National policy implementation is guided by three-year plans, namely Jordan Response Plans (JRP). These are coordinated by a number of state and international institutions and operate under the regional umbrella of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP). Outside the national framework, and beyond specific agreements with the European Union (EU), the 2016 EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities and Compact has been coordinating humanitarian and developmental aid inflows to Jordan, which is expected to grant formal labour market access to Syrian refugees. While the 1952 Constitution grants the right to employment exclusively to Jordanian citizens, foreigners with valid residence permits have also been employed in limited professions and industries since 1973. At the same time, Jordan is implementing the stipulations of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), particularly with regard to its labour market provisions that involve granting refugees the right to work within the country in specific contexts.

1. Introduction

1.1. Historic overview

The fact that Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol allows domestic stakeholders considerable flexibility in the terminology used to describe Jordan's policy towards forcibly displaced communities. The main relevant law – Law of Residence and Foreign Affairs 24/1973 – does not define these groups. Jordanian policy is also driven by the 1998 MoU signed with the UNHCR. The agreement grants UNHCR full responsibility for determining refugee status, with Jordan committing to respect the principle of *non-refoulement*. The process of



determination may take up to six months, during which asylum seekers may reside in Jordan. Jordan retains firm control over the right to employment, which rests exclusively with Jordanian citizens, although it is legal for foreigners with valid residence permits to also be employed in limited professions and industries. The Ministry of Interior is entitled to specify the conditions under which refugees can enter into Jordan, as well as the documentation that needs to be issued. This is based on a country-of-origin model, which allows Jordan to implement selective refugee policies depending on a person's nationality or citizenship, with the agreement of UNHCR and international donors. For instance, between 2012 and 2015, Syrians were granted *prima facie* refugee status while other refugees had to undergo refugee status determination (RSD) via UNCHR (Mencütek 2018, 193). Similarly, Palestinians entering Jordan carrying Syrian travel documents fall under the jurisdiction of UNRWA rather than the UNHCR (Bidinger et al 2014).

Jordan's geographical placement in the region has meant that it has served as a main port of call for displaced populations groups across the Levant and the Gulf. Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, remembered as the Catastrophe (*al-Nakba*), Jordan hosted the largest number of Palestinian refugees, as well as the subsequent 1956 and 1967 wars. In 1950, the state granted citizenship to those Palestinians who wished to become Jordanian citizens as well as their descendants (but not those arriving afterwards). Following Jordan's 1988 disengagement from the West Bank, West Bank Palestinians were granted Jordanian passports if they sought to travel abroad, but these papers are subject to frequent renewal and do not constitute citizenship. In the aftermath of the 1990-91 Gulf War, roughly 300,000 Palestinians, the vast majority of whom held Jordanian citizenship, returned to Jordan (Van Hear 2005). Due to the 2003 Iraq War, 500,000 to 750,000 Iraqi refugees arrived in Jordan between 2003 and 2007 (Chatelard 2015). In March 2011, Syrians first started seeking protection in Jordan in March 2011. Until 2013, Jordan broadly implemented an open-door policy towards Syrians (Achilli 2015). However, around mid-2013, facing an increasing number of Syrian asylum arrivals, Jordan shifted their policy, by which time the number of Syrian refugees in the country had reached half a million. In August 2013, due to a number of border security breaches, Jordanian border authorities began denying entry to Syrians, thereby restricting access to asylum. As a result, thousands were stranded at the Rukban camp, constructed in 2014 along the demilitarized berm between Jordan and Syria, a no man's land for which neither state assumes responsibility.



1.2. Refugees and the Economy

From 1948 onwards Jordan has received international economic support in exchange for its hosting of refugee communities, leading to its characterisation as a refugee rentier state (Tsourapas 2019). In fact, the country has one of the highest ratio of refugees to host population worldwide, a fact ‘that the Jordanian authorities frequently stress, if only to spur donor countries to keep funding’ going (Chatelard 2010; cf. Lenner and Turner 2018). King Abdullah repeatedly stressed this point, arguing that ‘I think it’s gotten to a boiling point . . . sooner or later, I think, the dam is going to burst,’ while warning that ‘we can’t do it anymore’ (BBC 2016). In the context of Syrian refugees, Jordan adopted a resilience-based agenda focused on the economic and development challenges of forced displacement (Turner 2015), placed in the context of the 2015 “refugee crisis” and European responses to it. This developed into the bi-yearly Jordan Response Plans from 2015, which shifted focus from short-term emergency and humanitarian aid to long-term development. Signed with the EU, the 2016 Jordan Compact epitomises this approach, and serves as the second key document on Syrian refugees in Jordan. This was followed by the 2019 London Initiative, led by the United Kingdom and Jordan, aiming to ‘unlock growth, jobs and investment’ (Jordan Times 2019).

Numerous Jordanian state ministerial authorities, donor states, as well as humanitarian organizations are currently involved in the refugee response and implementation of the Jordan Compact and its numerous challenges. Such challenges include access to education for school-aged refugees, access to livelihoods as a key route to self-sufficiency, as well as the provision of social safety nets in order to prevent dependence on aid (Durable Solutions Platform 2020a). At the same time, given that the JRP and the Jordan Compact were explicitly developed as a response to Syrian refugees’ need for protection, they do not address the specific needs of the non-Syrian refugee populations: Iraqi, Yemeni, Sudanese, and Somali refugee communities remain marginalised, unable to secure even the (limited) employment rights granted to their Syrian counterparts. In fact, the January 2019 Cabinet decision to suspend UNHCR registration or the issuance of documents to new asylum-seekers had an immediate impact on non-Syrian communities that sought protection in Jordan, including vulnerable groups of Sudanese, Yemenis, and Somalis.



1.3. Main debates in the academic literature

As a main refugee host state in the Middle East since the late 1940s, Jordan's relationship with refugee protection has featured in a range of social sciences research including work in history (Plascov 1981; Robins 2004), political economy (Reiter 2004; El Dardiry 2017), demography (Fargues 2013; De Bel-Air 2016), anthropology and sociology (Chatelard 2010; Achilli 2015), and political science (Betts, Ali, and Memişoğlu 2017; Mencütek 2018). Such work is instrumental in contextualising Jordanian refugee policy within a range of frameworks that pay attention to the colonial, religious, and institutional dimensions of Jordanian policymaking (El-Abed 2014; Lenner 2020). A range of scholars also examines the impact of refugees for Jordanian domestic politics (Abu-Odeh 1999; Massad 2001), paying particular attention to questions of citizenship for Palestinian refugees and the relations between Palestinians and Transjordanians (Reiter 2004). Analyses of Jordanian politics are also present within broader works that examine refugee policymaking within the Middle East (Humphrey 1993; Chatty 2010).

In terms of Jordan's refugee policymaking itself, we can identify three broad groups of scholars. The first looks at Jordan as a target of international actors' policies, paying particular attention to the Jordan Compact as a novel form of managing forced migration in the Global South (Turner 2015; Lenner and Turner 2018). This ties into the work of a range of researchers that aim to untangle the country's complex refugee policymaking towards Palestinians (Soh, You, and Yu 2016), Iraqis (Gibson 2015), Syrians (Lenner 2015), and smaller communities (Davis et al. 2016). This strand of research typically examines how Jordanian practices adopt, adapt to, or stray from international expectations in terms of forced migration, with a particular emphasis on the interaction with international organisations such as UNRWA and the UNHCR.

A second group of scholars aims to approach Jordanian refugee policymaking via an emphasis on legal dimension (for instance, Dib 1978; Stevens 2013). For Stevens, Jordan's legal regime reveals a tension between UNHCR's concepts of 'protection' and 'protection space' and the Jordanian Government's own approach to sanctuary across multiple policy areas (2013). Panizzon examines the nature of the Jordan Compact as a hybrid legal-political document, paying particular attention to how trade serves to incentivize refugee employment as a 'deterrence migration strategy' and keep Syrians from reaching Europe (2019, p. 255) – thereby, implementing a logic of 'containment.'



A final strand of research focuses more on the agency that Jordanian elites have had in terms of regional and international policymaking. For Arar, Jordan has been able to leverage its sovereignty vis-à-vis the international refugee regime (Arar 2017), while Tsourapas argues that Jordan, as well as other refugee host states, develop foreign policy strategies to extract international humanitarian and development aid – or refugee rent – from Western states and international organisations (Tsourapas 2019b). This relates to the broader use of migrants and refugees as instruments of Middle East migration diplomacy (Adamson and Tsourapas 2019; Seeberg 2020). This links to a broader line of literature that highlights how Jordan has been able to secure political and economic benefits as a refugee host state (Brynen 1992; Seeley 2019). Taking a more historical approach, a range of political scientists also examine the foreign policy importance of Palestinian refugees in Jordan's intra-Arab relations (Brand 2006; Ryan 2009; Brand 2013).

1.4 Latest policy developments

A main debate around Jordanian asylum and refugee governance relates to pronounced processes of securitisation – namely, how cross-border population mobility (asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants) affects, and is affected by, the security priorities of the Jordanian state. This debate goes back to the first large wave of Palestinian refugees and the fragility of the Jordanian state, both with regards to its limited state capacity as well as its demographic make-up (Plascov 1981; Robins 2004). The uncertain status of Palestinian refugees who arrived after 1950, coupled with the troubled relationship between the Jordanian monarchy and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leadership culminated in a full-blown military conflict in the Black September events of 1970, all contributing to a precarious legal and socio-economic status of the Palestinian community in Jordan (Brand 1988). Jordan's experience with Palestinians has produced spillover effects in terms of current processes of securitisation of Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers – this involves particular policies with regard to allowing entry into the Kingdom, the construction of new refugee camps, as well as the granting of rights (Mencütek 2018; Turner 2015). At the same time, the new Syrian camps demonstrate a shift in how Jordan approaches refugee camps: the Azraq camp, for instance, which hosts Syrian refugees in the Jordanian desert, marks a change from the major Palestinian camps in its attempt to provide an unprecedented integration of humanitarian service



delivery and harsh security measures (Hoffman 2017; for a discussion on how Syrian refugee camps differ, see Dorai 2018).

Jordan's policy responses to Syrian refugees coincided with a number of international developments. For one, the 2015 European "refugee crisis" shifted global attention to Jordan and led to the acceleration of a range of bilateral and multilateral initiatives – including consecutive Brussels Conferences for supporting Syria and the region. The pro-refugee international sentiment of the time also contributed to a peak in resettlement spaces for Syrians by the United States and Canada in 2016 (Durable Solutions Platform 2020b). That said, Jordanian security concerns have also impacted upon these developments. The US-led 'Deal of the Century,' for instance, coupled with Israel's commitment to annexing parts of the West Bank, has sparked fears across Jordanian elites of greater numbers of Palestinian refugees seeking protection into the Kingdom, thereby 'upsetting the country's demographic balance and ultimately turning it into a Palestinian state' (Sawalha 2020). At the same time, Jordan's securitisation priorities continue to impact upon the country's relations with European partners, particularly with regard to building a Mediterranean security community via institutional initiatives such as the Union for the Mediterranean and the Mobility Partnership (Seeberg 2016).

The development and implementation of the Jordan Compact (Mellinger and van Berlo 2016) have produced a novel round of scholarly debates in terms of refugee and asylum seekers' governance practices. This feeds into a broader discussion about issue-linkage strategies between trade, investment, and migration management (Tsourapas 2018; Panizzon 2020) as well as the shortcomings of the global refugee regime (Betts 2017; cf. Loescher 2001). A separate debate is also gaining ground with regard to the limits of interstate cooperation on refugee governance, particularly across the Global South (Betts 2011). A number of scholars try to unpack the logistics and rationale behind non-Jordanians' access to the domestic labour market (Lenner and Turner 2018), as well as to education, social protection, livelihoods, and housing (Durable Solutions Platform 2020a), while others raise a broader issue with regard to the global commodification of refugees (Tsourapas 2019a).



2. Asylum and refugee statistics

In terms of the country's foreign populations overall, Jordan's latest population census (2015) reported 2,918,125 foreign nationals (31%) in a total population of 9,531,712 (see [Table 1](#), below). As far as non-Jordanians are concerned, the country's latest population census (2015) reported main nationalities of foreign residents as follows: Syrians: 1,265,514 (43%); Egyptians: 636,270 (22%); Palestinians: 634,182 (22%); Iraqis: 130,911 (4%); Yemenis: 31,163 (1%); Libyans: 22,700 (1%); Others: 197,385 (7%).

Table 1 – Distribution of non-Jordanian Population Living in Jordan (2015)

Country of Nationality	Number	Percentage of Total
Arab Asian Countries		
Syria	1,265,514	43.37%
Palestine	634,182	21.73%
Iraq	130,911	4.49%
Yemen	31,163	1.07%
Saudi Arabia	17,339	0.59%
Other Arab Asian Countries	19,088	0.65%
Total Arab Asian Countries	2,098,197	71.90%
Non-Arab Asian Countries		
Bangladesh	19,390	0.66%
Philippines	17,810	0.61%
India	8,979	0.31%
Other Non-Arab Asian Countries	39,939	1.37%
Total Non-Arab Asian Countries	86,118	2.95%
Arab African Countries		



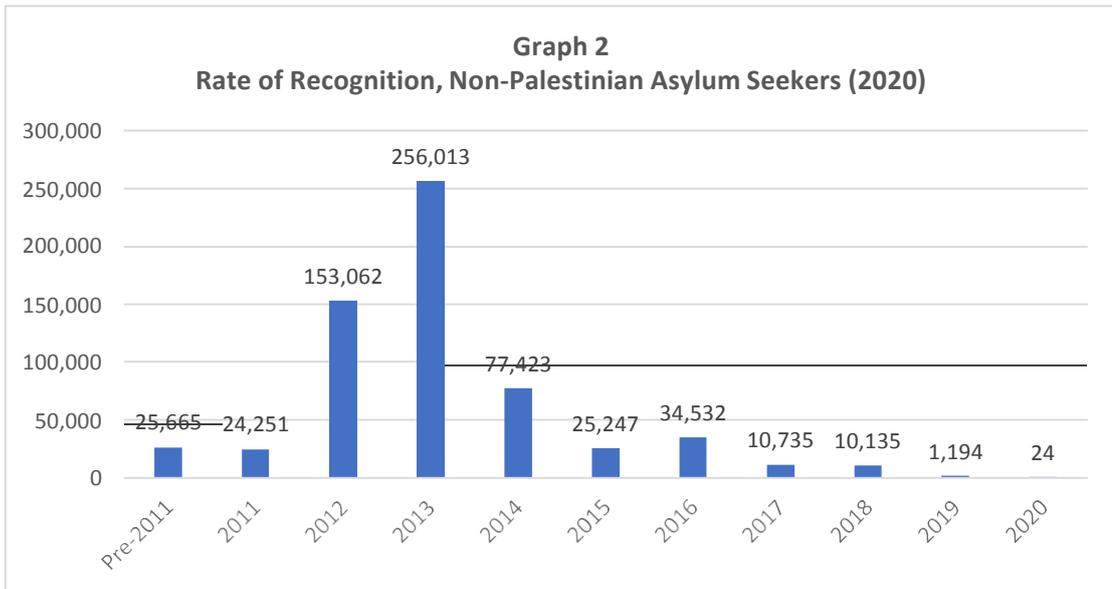
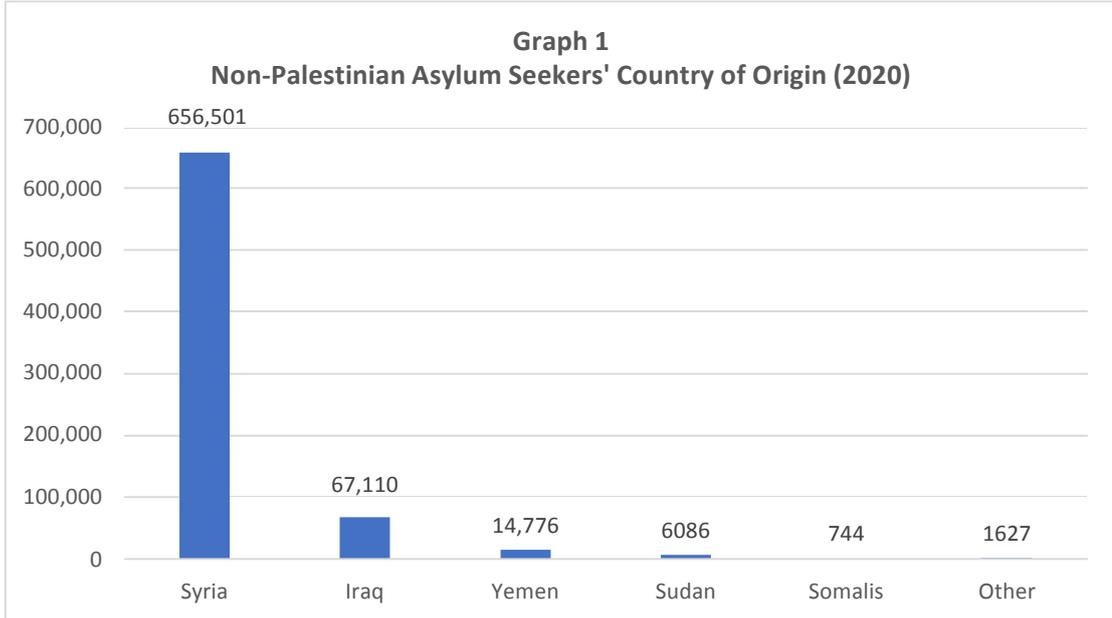
Egypt	636,270	21.80%
Libya	22,700	0.78%
Sudan	10,128	0.35%
Other Arab African Countries	5,843	0.20%
Total Arab African Countries	674,941	23.13%
Other Countries	94,486	2.02%
Total	2,918,125	100%

The numbers on irregular migrants (namely refugees, asylum seekers, and those who overstay their permits) in Jordan are not reliable. Experts agree that the majority of irregular migrants are Egyptian agricultural workers that overstay their annual work permit, with estimates at anywhere between 500,000 to over a million. The second largest group is domestic workers (mainly women) from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Currently, Jordan hosts 2,206,736 registered Palestinian refugees. This number includes 13,836 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) who arrived in Jordan between 2011 and 2013 (after which Jordan barred entry to PRS). Approximately 370,000 currently reside in ten refugee camps inside Jordan (or, 17%).

With regard to non-Palestinian asylum seekers within Jordan (who are under UNRWA remit), UNHCR identified 746,844 persons of concern, of whom 622,899 (83.4%) are urban versus 123,945 (16.6%) in camps (as of 15 March 2020). Their country of origin is listed in [Graph 1](#), below. Beyond Syrians, which will be discussed below, Jordan hosts sizeable communities of Iraqi, Yemeni, and Sudanese asylum-seekers, as well as smaller numbers of Somalis and other nationalities. Overall, the total of registered Palestinian and non-Palestinian refugees is 2,953,580, as of 15 March 2020. The rate of recognition (pre-2011 to 2020) is listed in [Graph 2](#), below.²

² Other includes citizens from the United Arab Emirates, Libya, Lebanon, Ethiopia, and Russia.



In terms of Syrian refugees, in particular, registration peaked in 2012; their arrivals peaked in 2013 (see Tables 2, 3 below), which is consistent with the Jordanian government’s approach to managing the entry and registration of Syrians as detailed in Section 2: Table 2 demonstrates that registrations peaked in 2012 (62.3% of total); however, arrivals continued to increase until 2013, when they reached 248,143 persons – Table 3 demonstrates the effect of Jordan’s post-2013 shift to a closed-doors policy.



The plurality of Syrian refugees in Jordan come from Dar'a, with Homs and Aleppo also being major places of origin (Table 4). The majority of them are not enclosed in camps (see Graph 3). Finally, Jordan has a significant number of resettlement submission and departures (see Graph 4).

Year	Number of Refugees	Percentage
2011	130,204	12.1%
2012	667,421	62.3%
2013	14,546	1.4%
2014	108,686	10.1%
2015	43,017	4.0%
2016	52,233	4.9%
2017	28,625	2.7%
2018	26,924	2.5%
2019	22,144	2.1%
2020	3,411	0.3%



Table 3 – Arrivals of Syrian Refugees (as of May 15 2020)

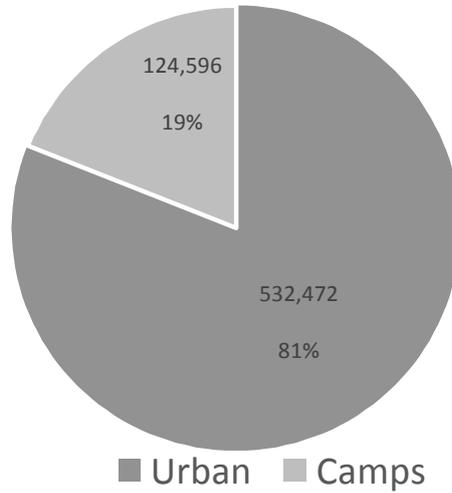
Pre-2011	10,293	1.6%
2011	21,267	3.2%
2012	149,163	22.7%
2013	248,143	37.8%
2014	59,368	9.0%
2015	13,927	2.1%
2016	24,464	3.7%
2017	2,835	0.4%
2018	2,211	0.3%
2019	1,149	0.2%
2020	24	0.0%

Table 4 – Syrian Refugees' Place of Origin (as of May 15 2020)

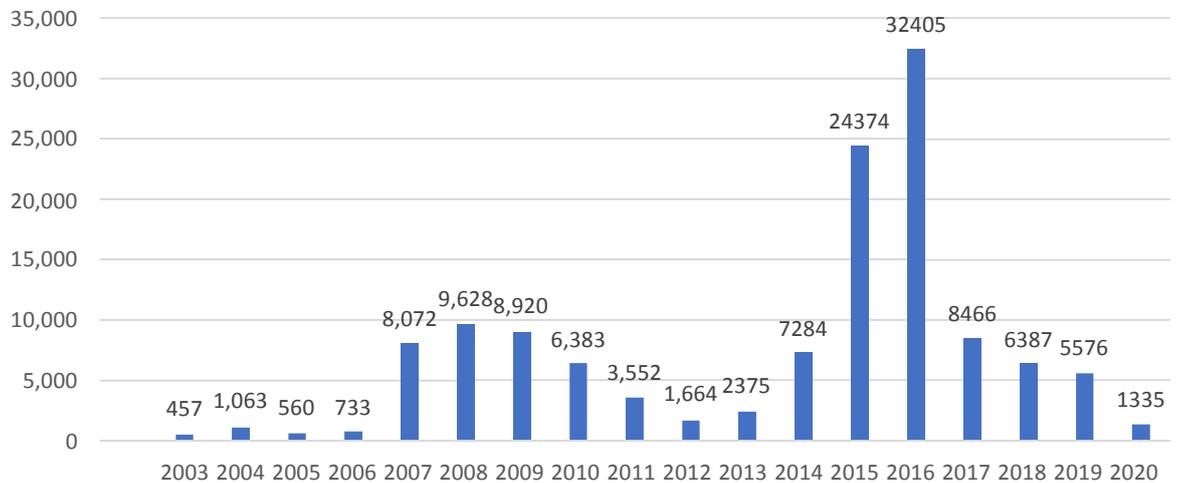
Dar'a	261,994	39.9%
Homs	106,267	16.2%
Aleppo	74,623	11.4%
Rural Damascus	74,599	11.4%
Damascus	46,776	7.1%
Hama	37,795	5.8%
Ar-raqqa	18,171	2.8%
Idleb	12,272	1.9%
Deir-ez-zor	7,544	1.1%
Other	5,483	0.8%
Al-hasakeh	5,404	0.8%
Quneitra	2,800	0.4%
As-sweida	1,602	0.2%
Latakia	1,367	0.2%
Tartous	371	0.1%



**Graph 3 - Syrian Refugees in Jordan (in- and out-of-camp)
May 15, 2020**



Graph 4
Number of refugees who have applied to depart, or departed, to a third state
from Jordan (via UNHCR's resettlement programme)





3. Asylum governance instruments

Jordan is characteristic in its governance of asylum seekers and refugees for two primary reasons that refer to the state's political economy and geographical position as well as with its historical engagement with forced migration and its socio-economic effects. A first key dimension concerns Jordanian policymakers' reliance on external economic aid in support of the massive inflows of refugees into its territory. The Kingdom's geographical position, as well as its intricate relations with neighbouring Arab and non-Arab states, has led to it become a "refugee haven" for millions of Palestinian, Iraqi, and, most recently, Syrian asylum seekers. Yet, Jordanian economy's substantial limitations do now allow national governance instruments to cater to refugee communities' needs without external economic support. As a result, UNRWA and the UNHCR – and their financial resources they can draw upon – have become a key component of the country's asylum governance practices and cooperate with ministerial instruments. It is important to note that the MoU only examines two out of the three durable solutions promoted by UNHCR, namely resettlement and voluntary repatriation; Jordan prefers to not consider 'local integration.' Jordanian governments have engaged in a range of other agreements with the European Union that promise successful management of forced migration in return for economic and security cooperation. Yet, Jordan also needs to take into consideration the domestic political repercussions of hosting refugee populations – particularly given the troubled history of the PLO aiming to gain more political power in 1970. Therefore, instruments such as Law No. 6 of 1954 on Nationality and Law No. 24 of 1973 on Residence and Foreign Affairs are either restrictive or deliberately vague.

Jordanian asylum governance aims for a fine balancing act. On the one hand, it provides a haven for displaced Arab populations and co-operates with a multitude of third states, international organisations and NGOs – particularly with the EU following the 2002 Association Agreement and culminating in the 2016 EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities & Compact, to be discussed below. This allows Jordan to secure much-needed inflows of economic aid and to amplify its geopolitical position as an important, buffer state in the Middle East, which is key in understanding the development of the Jordan Response Plan to the Syria Crisis within successive Regional Refugee and Resilience Plans (3RP). On the other hand, Jordan is hesitant to cede wider roles to international actors that



would explicitly prioritise the rights and needs of refugees and asylum seekers - including access to work and medical care, legal residency, or access to education. Beyond the political cost of providing further assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers, Jordan also considers the social cost of such a move to be considerable, given the economic struggles of Jordanian citizens themselves. Overall, a delicate relationship built on mutual interest has formed between national and international asylum governance instruments in Jordan: national ones need economic support from international actors, while international ones rely on state-level cooperation in order to succeed. As a result of this dimension of refugee governance, Jordan arguably seeks to protect its international reputation by respecting the principle of *non-refoulement*, albeit with some exceptions (see Human Rights Watch 2017). Similarly, existing instruments affect the right to seek asylum and refugee protection by introducing political variables, such as barring the entry to Palestinians from Syria (Doraï 2018), or offering unverified estimates on the number of Syrian refugees in the country (Turner 2015).

At the same time, a second characteristic that relates to this is the fact that Jordan has been at the forefront of the shift towards a more sustainable global refugee management system. An influential paper on introducing Syrians into the Jordanian labour market by two Oxford academics eventually contributed to the development of the 2016 EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities & Compact, following on from the Jordan Compact (see Betts and Collier 2017). This centred on an understanding between international institutions, political actors, as well as academics that the Syrian refugee crisis required the development of novel policy instruments. The novel governance instrument that emerged amplifies the tensions discussed above: the Jordanian government is eager to secure additional economic aid from international donors but is limited in its ability to introduce Syrians into a weak labour market in ways that would not disenfranchise Jordanian citizens or others. Thus, a number of issues emerge. For instance, the Jordanian government would not discuss the number of Syrian refugees that are employed; instead, it made public only the number of granted work permits, which is higher given that it includes work permit renewals. This number, however, does not accurately reflect the number of people employed. In fact, it artificially inflates the number of Syrians employed in the labour market (Government of Jordan, Ministry of Labour 2020). The focus on introducing Syrian refugees into the labour market has contributed to discrimination against other migrant groups, such as Egyptians, in order to open up posts for Syrians (Tsourapas 2018). The literature has also critiqued the



attempts to impose a formalisation of the inclusion of women, minors, and young male adults into the labour market (Lenner and Turner 2018).

3.1 Jordan and the Global Compact on Refugees

Jordan constitutes a “good practice” example of the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). GCR activities in the country aim to complement the priorities of the Jordan Compact, particularly with regard to easing the pressures on host countries and enhancing refugee self-reliance (GCR aims 1 & 2, respectively). The Jordanian government has been involved in the GCR implementation via a number of national actors, namely the Ministries of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC), Labour (MoL), Interior (MoI), Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Education (MoE), Social Development (MoSD), and Health (MoH). These actors interact with a range of international ones (WFP, UNICEF, ILO and UNWOMEN) as well as sub-state actors at the municipality level, including the Greater Amman Municipality. Currently, 48 pledges have been made for GCR implementation in Jordan by NGOs, international organisations, states, academic organizations, faith-based organisations, refugee groups, sports organisations, and the private sector. At the same time, the Talent Beyond Boundaries initiative has built a “Talent Catalog” that captures in-depth information about refugees’ skills, qualifications and work experience that is relevant to global employers, in order to contribute to GCR Objectives 1, 2, and 3. However, results thus far have been limited, given the low number of participants.

A number of NGOs are exploring the strategic use of third country resettlement and complementary pathways to international protection together with major actors such as IOM and UNHCR, although obstacles exist, both generally as well as within the Middle East. The UNHCR-led process of the ‘strategic use of resettlement’ is faced with a lack of understanding of what the process entails, an absence of evidence that would demonstrate its successful implementation to host state actors, as well as a lack of mainstreaming in the actions of forced displacement and resettlement actors (Durable Solutions Platform 2020b, 6). Reportedly, the impact of resettlement in Jordan was low, and ‘potentially nonexistent’ due to the comparatively small number of resettlement places compared to the country’s overall refugee population and its needs (*Ibid.*).



4. Governance actors

The governance of refugees and asylum seekers in Jordan falls under the responsibilities of a range of national, regional, and international actors. On a national level, a number of state actors are involved via the main framework, namely the Jordan Response Plan to the Syria Crisis (JRP, formerly the Host Community Support Platform - HCSP). The JRP is also the primary strategic document on Jordanian refugee responses, which is responsible for developing successive two-year plans of action. The implementation of the JRP is led by MoPIC, which chairs the Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis (JRPSC) under the overall leadership of the Government of Jordan. The Platform constitutes the strategic partnership mechanism between the Government of Jordan, donors, UN agencies and NGOs for the development of an integrated refugee, resilience-strengthening and development response to the impact of the Syria crisis on Jordan. JRPSC is supported by eleven sector Task Forces, each led by a line ministry and composed of donors, UN agencies and NGOs representatives. The JRPSC Secretariat works with MoPIC's Humanitarian Relief Coordination Unit (HRCU, under MoPIC's Secretary General) to facilitate the swift implementation and accurate monitoring of JRP projects. The MoI is responsible for issuing refugees with service cards (the MoI card), while Syrian refugees living outside of camps also need a second document – namely, the UNHCR-issued Asylum-Seeker Certificate (ASC). 'Together, these verify that Syrian refugees are permitted to live outside of the camps, and also enable them to access a variety of assistance and service programs' (Durable Solutions Platform 2020a, 9).

At the regional level, the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) was firstly launched in December 2014. The 3RP brings together plans developed under the leadership of national authorities to ensure protection, humanitarian assistance and strengthen resilience. The 3RP is aligned with existing national plans, including the Jordan Response Plan to the Syria Crisis 2017 – 2019. Therefore, JRP 2017 - 2019 in its entirety is the 3RP country chapter for Jordan. At the international level, UNHCR coordinates the refugee response under the leadership of the Government of Jordan in a collaborative effort with the donor community, UN agencies, international and national NGOs, community-based organizations, refugees and host communities. UNHCR work in Jordan consists of eight strategic subdivisions (Sector Working Groups). UNHCR also coordinates regional responses across Jordan in Irbid, Mafraq, and Amman, as well as South Jordan. A particular policy that the UNHCR has been promoting is the "One Refugee" Working Group, a group of NGO and civil society actors that operates



outside the UNHCR co-led coordination system, which focuses on the rights of non-Syrian refugees, albeit with limited success so far.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the inter-agency refugee response had been overseen by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF), chaired by the UNHCR Representative. The IATF was composed of heads of humanitarian UN agencies and NGOs who are contributing to the response and acting as a “Steering Committee”. Through the Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG), the IATF oversaw the system of Sector Working Groups and the related strategic, advocacy and funding processes. In August 2013, the Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG) was formed as a forum of the sectors’ chairs, aimed at encouraging synergies between sectors, avoiding duplication, and working on common processes. The ISWG is the main bridge between the Sector Working Groups. It meets monthly, with membership of the sectors’ chairs and representatives of the INGO Forum. Finally, the Jordan INGO Forum (JIF) was created in 2014 as an independent network of 59 international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) implementing development and humanitarian programs to respond to the needs of vulnerable Jordanians, and refugees living in Jordan. All JIF members have an equal voice in decision-making. JIF includes a Country Directors Group (CDG) a five-person Steering Committee (SC) led by a Chairperson. Current SC members include Danish Refugee Council (Chair), International Orthodox Christian Charities, International Catholic Migration Commission, Norwegian Refugee Council, and Medair.

5. Conclusions

An analysis of asylum governance in Jordan allows for numerous conclusions, given the country’s refugee-hosting experience as well as stakeholders’ engagement at both national and international levels. The country has experienced successive movements of millions of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees, while it had also served as a host state of a range of other refugee and migrant communities, including Egyptians, Somalis, and Yemenis. The UNHCR and, more importantly, UNRWA have been active in the country for decades, working to support these communities in cooperation with national instruments. Jordan had already been negotiating a number of international treaties, primarily with the EU, that linked the management of forced migration with a range of other socio-economic, security, and political issues. Yet, the sheer magnitude of the Syrian refugee crisis and the degree to which it affected Jordan led to ground-breaking innovative approaches in terms of the governance of forced migration, as



embodied in the 2016 Jordan Compact. So far, the experience in implementing the Jordan Compact and the Global Compact on Refugees via national and international actors appears mixed, although a full review of these initiatives' implementation and efficacy needs to be a long-term process.

On the one hand, Jordan demonstrates the ample possibilities for cooperation between state and international actors in implementing ambitious refugee governance schemes: Jordan has included a range of national instruments in this process as it has coordinated successfully with actors at regional and international levels. This has arguably been supported by the linking of humanitarian and development aid as well as international actors' willingness to provide economic support for both refugee populations as well as vulnerable Jordanian ones. The influx of economic grants, low-interest loans, as well as the support provided for Jordan's national development strategy have unlocked the potential for further support of forcibly displaced communities currently residing within Jordan. Regardless of issues that have arisen in the course of developing and implementing local solutions – and these have been numerous – few would disagree with the overall principle that the international community needs to support states that have been most affected by forced displacement.

At the same time, however, the Jordanian experience leaves a number of pressing, unanswered questions for the future. A main set of questions refers to the sustainability of existing initiatives and the viability of the humanitarian-development nexus in Jordan, particularly in the face of shifting global priorities and emerging crises. Although the levels of international funds that flowed into Jordan in the 2015-16 period are unlikely to be repeated in the future, Syrian refugees' needs continue to exist. This is related to the question of refugee return – to what extent will Syrians be able to voluntarily return to their home country, or will Jordan experience another group of refugees that will remain in the Kingdom over generations? Arguably, COVID-19 has produced novel, unprecedented challenges whose effects on asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Jordan have yet to be analysed. Within a range of questions that potentially arise, one set of issues refers to the social dimension of hosting refugees in Jordan and, more generally, across major host states of refugees: how are host states, such as Jordan, able to address the perpetual marginalisation of non-Syrian refugees in light of international aid targeted to specific population groups? How do efforts at granting differential access to labour markets ensure that certain groups are not stigmatised? Importantly, do efforts to encourage the participation of refugees into domestic labour markets



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encourage a blurring of the line between migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and, if so, what legal, socio-economic, or human rights questions have resulted from this? As issues continue to arise with regard to Jordanian asylum governance, there can only be cautious hope for the future.



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ASILE PARTNERS



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Project Coordinator

CEPS

1 Place du Congrès, B-1000

Brussels, Belgium

info.asileproject@ceps.eu

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