

European Dimensions of the Refugee Crisis | July 2016

Facts on the European Dimension of Displacement and Asylum: JORDAN

Jordan has experience with refugees, but the recent arrivals from Syria are a severe challenge for the resource-poor country. Government and civil society are preventing a true crisis. What are needed now are sustainable projects. Europe is contributing considerable aid, but the necessary social, economic and political reforms are lacking.

OVERVIEW

Demographic Structure

Population	6.7 million ¹
Growth rate	5.3% ¹ (average comp. with 2004 census)
Ethnic groups	98% Arabs (approx. 50% Palestinian heritage), Circassian and Armenian minorities
Languages	Arabic (official language), English, minority languages
Religions	98.4% Muslim (of which 98% Sunni, 2% Shiite), 1.5% Christian, small number of Druze, etc.
Median age (EU)	22 years (42.2 years)

Economy & Employment

GDP (per capita)	US\$37.5 bn (\$5,590)	↗
GDP growth rate	2.4%	↘
GNI as PPP (per capita)	US\$81.6 bn (\$10,740)	↗
Inflation (CPI)	1.2%	↘
Unemployment	12.5%	↗
Youth unemployment (15-24 years)	28.8% ²	↘
FDI (inflows)	US\$1.3 bn	↘
Share of EU 28	NA	
Imports of goods	€18.2 bn	↗
Share of EU 28	21.6%	
Exports of goods	€6.1 bn	↗
Share of EU 28	21.0%	
Remittances	\$3.8 bn	↗

(All figures for 2015, unless otherwise noted; ¹Preliminary data from the official 2015 census; ²2014; arrows = change from prev. year)

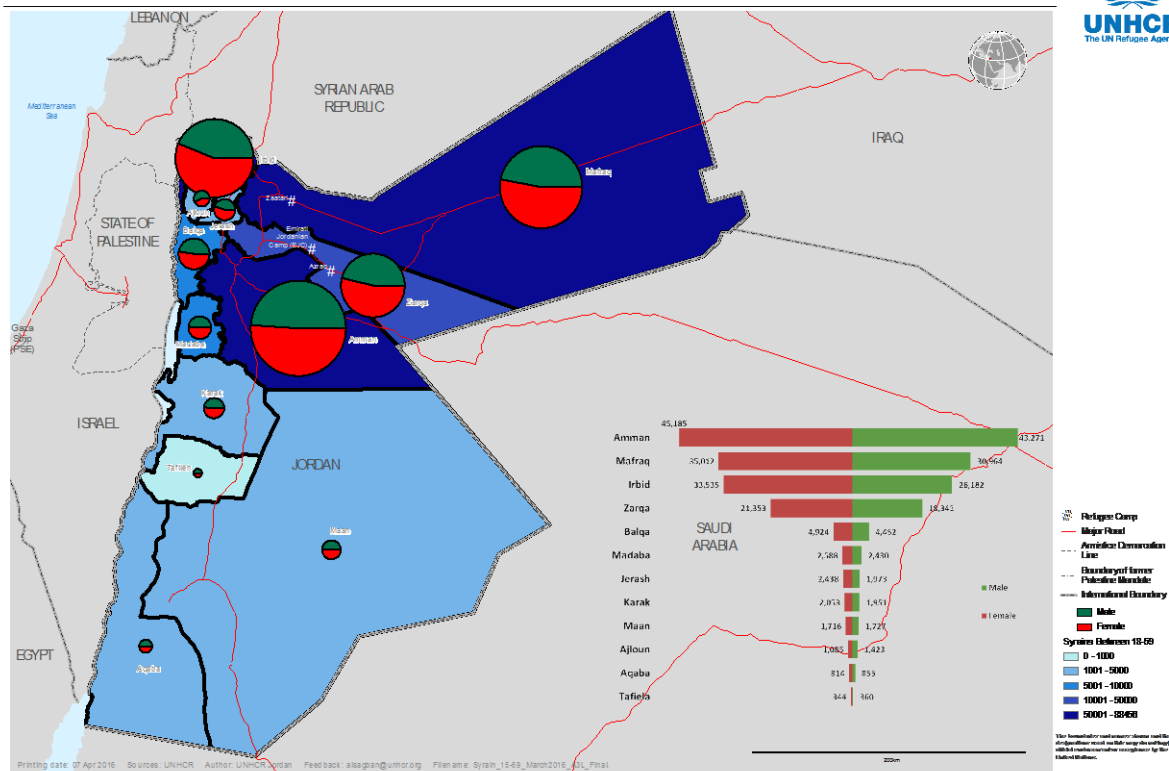
Political System & Relations with the EU

Type of state/government	Constitutional monarchy in which the king is accorded key prerogatives; elements of parliamentary democracy
Transformation	Compared to 129 developing and transitions countries (Bertelsmann Stiftung, Transformation Index 2016): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political transformation: 4.03 out of 10, No. 88 out of 129 (“moderate autocracy”), comparable to Zimbabwe and Venezuela. 2. Economic transformation: 6.14 out of 10, No. 45 out of 129 (“market economy with functional shortcomings”), comparable to India and Jamaica. 3. Good governance: 4.68 out of 10, No. 75 out of 129 (“weak transformation management”), comparable to China and Hungary.
Human rights and protection of minorities	Human Rights Watch, World Report 2016 – Jordan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictions on freedom of expression through criminalization of speech critical of the king, Islam and many other topics. • Broad application of the revised 2014 counterterrorism law in order to detain and prosecute activists and journalists. • Improvement in freedom of assembly since no official permission has been required for demonstrations since 2011. • Legal discrimination of women: Marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men prohibited; only men can pass on Jordanian citizenship to their children; reduced sentences for “honor crimes.” • Revival of capital punishment in 2014 and insufficient legal prosecution of security forces accused of torture or ill-treatment.
Corruption	Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2015 Country ranking: 45 out of 168 (lower = better), comp. to Rwanda and Namibia.
Freedom of the press	2016 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders): Status: difficult situation Country ranking: 135 out of 180 (lower = better), comp. to Colombia and Thailand.
Relations with the European Union	Previous steps to integration: Association Agreement (since 2002) Status of relations: Jordan is a member of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Because of its “advanced status” (since 2010) Jordan has a more possibilities for cooperation at its disposal. The EU and Jordan formed a “mobility partnership” in 2014 and negotiations are underway to create a “deep and comprehensive free trade agreement” (DCFTA). Because of the refugee crisis, the European Commission has allocated supplemental support of €637 million, including €180 million in long-term credit. Another €500 million are being provided from line items in the ENP budget. At the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference in London in February, the EU promised Lebanon and Jordan additional financial aid of approx. €1 billion in 2016 and 2017.

SITUATION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN JORDAN

Category	Source, transit and destination country Jordan is not a party to the Geneva Convention on Refugees, nor has it passed laws governing asylum and refugees.
As country of origin	According to UN estimates, some 700,000 Jordanians (approx. 11%) live abroad.
As transit and destination country	Some 2.9 million migrants and refugees live in Jordan, of whom approx. 720,000 are UNHCR-registered refugees. By nationality, there are approximately: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.27 million Syrians, of whom 658,000 are registered refugees • 636,000 Egyptians • 634,000 Palestinians (without a Jordanian “national ID”) • 130,000 Iraqis, of whom 55,000 are registered refugees • 31,000 Yemenis, of whom 4,000 are registered refugees • 22,700 Libyans • 197,000 others

Syrian Refugees in Jordan between 18-59 Years (Urban and Camp Based)
as of 31 March 2016



© UNHCR 2016/Registration – Syrian Refugees in Jordan between 18-59 Years (Urban and Camp Based) – 31 March 2016
<https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=10689>

Housing for refugees

Some 20% of the Syrian refugees (142,000) live in the country's two major refugee camps, Zaatari and Azraq, and in three much smaller camps, the Emirati Jordanian Camp, King Abdallah Park and Cyber City. Another estimated 77,000 Syrians reside in the improvised Rukban encampment in the demilitarized zone between Syrian and Jordan. For security reasons, the Jordanian authorities had been admitting only 300 refugees into the country each day. The border is now closed completely following a suicide attack carried out by ISIS in June.

Approximately 80% of the Syrian refugees (517,000) live outside the camps, above all in Irbid near the Syrian border and in Amman, the capital. Apartments are shared by at least 3 or 4 families, and each family pays an average of €125 in rent. The apartments' normal tenants use the gains from the inflated rents to move to nicer apartments in other parts of the city.

Status of refugees from Syria

Jordan's legal code makes no provisions for granting residence permits to refugees, who are therefore considered "guests." The Geneva Convention on Refugees only applies to the extent that it is referenced in a memorandum of understanding signed by the government and UNHCR in 1998. If they have registered with UNHCR, refugees outside the camps can apply for a "service card" at the Interior Ministry which gives them access to health care and education. An estimated 160,000 Syrians have not yet done so because they have been misinformed.

Since Jordan has not granted refugees work permits until recently, an estimated 160,000 to 200,000 Syrians are working illegally, earning an average €250 per month. They work largely in the low-wage and agricultural sector where they compete with foreign workers from Egypt and Asia.

As a result of pressure from international donors and following the EU's announcement that it will temporarily ease its rules of origin for products from Jordan, the government has agreed to issue 50,000 work permits.

Permit-holders' fees will initially be paid by UNHCR. A 90-day grace period was also granted to encourage employers to register illegal workers, which resulted in 13,000 work-permit applications being submitted by July. Experts also estimate that 90% of Syrian refugees are living near the national poverty line in urban areas and that 85% of them are in debt.

Until now some 146,000 children living in and outside the camps have been attending school. According to EU representatives in Jordan, that means another 70,000 children are not receiving an education. According to the aid organization CARE, the biggest obstacle is the Syrian families' lack of financial resources, which results in their children being sent to work instead of to school.

Health care is also a problem. Although Syrians are permitted to seek assistance at the country's medical facilities, almost one-third had no access to health-care services in 2015, usually for financial reasons.

Another important issue for the refugees is reuniting families, either by having relatives from Syria join them in Jordan or by joining relatives already in Europe.

Funding	<p>The UN has appealed for some €1.1 billion as part of its Syria Regional Refugee Response in Jordan in 2016. Until now, 29% of the requested funds have been made available by the international community. Germany is the second largest donor after the United States.</p> <p>The World Food Programme is reaching about 80% of all Syrian refugees and supports them with either €12.50 or €25 per month, based on their level of need.</p>
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Jordan and the Syrian refugee crisis

Jordan is a small country. Geographically it is somewhat smaller than Portugal and it has fewer inhabitants than Sweden. It is surrounded by powerful neighbors such as Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The unresolved Palestinian issue, the civil war in Syria and Jordan's proximity to the territory near the Iraq border where the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) is waging war are all having a destabilizing effect on the country.

Some 6.7 million Jordanian citizens live in the country. According to the UN, approximately 660,000 Syrian refugees also reside there, although the Jordanian government puts the figure at 1.3 million. The discrepancy can be explained by the fact that, de facto, there are two groups of Syrians living in the country:

1. Foreign workers and business owners who have residence and work permits and who were present before the outbreak of Syria's civil war in 2011.
2. The actual refugees from the civil war, of whom almost all – some 660,000 – have been registered by UNHCR. These refugees are not living in tents as in Lebanon, but either in one of the five camps offering prefabricated dwellings or in villages and cities near the Syrian border, or in

the impoverished "Syrian Quarters" in East Amman. The latter have developed as Jordanians have sublet their apartments to three or four Syrian families for €125 per room per month and have used the excess from the inflated rent to pay for a new apartment in a nicer neighborhood.

The distress among Syrian refugees is not as extreme in Jordan as it is in Lebanon: No one is going hungry and most have a solid roof over their head. Nevertheless, almost 90% are living close to the national poverty line, 85% are indebted, 75% are working (mostly illegally) and 35% of their children are not enrolled in school.

The Syrian refugees are therefore struggling with a number of issues: education, health care, high rents, the high cost of living and poorly paid work or unemployment. Since it is not clear when they will be able to return to Syria, many would like to be reunited with family members either by having those still in Syria join them or by joining those who are now in Europe. Many are also exhausted from what they have been through, and most no longer have enough money to pay smugglers.

Tolerated as "guests" without residence permits, the Syrian war refugees in Jordan are stuck in a gray zone. Their status must therefore be

legalized to protect them from deportation. UNHCR is calling on all war refugees to register so that at least their status as refugees is confirmed. This would also allow them to receive an electronic ID from the Interior Ministry, which would give them access to support services and make it possible to work, since international donors have persuaded the Jordanian government to issue 50,000 work permits. UNHCR announced it would cover the costs of issuing the initial permits and the government declared a 90-day grace period, which allowed employers to register illegally employed refugees and not be sanctioned. However, by the time the grace period ended at the end of July, only 13,000 applications for permits had been received.

Stressed refugees and natives

Jordanians are feeling the pressure from the refugee crisis since, like the refugees, they are confronted with high prices and low wages and live in communities where large numbers of refugees are now present. Everyone must share the local infrastructure, such as preschools, schools and hospitals. To that extent, the refugee crisis has increased social tensions in the country.

One social problem of particular concern is the relatively high number of households – one in three – headed solely by Syrian women. Since their husbands have been killed or have stayed behind in Syria, they must seek assistance in the community and, beyond that, do what they can to survive on their own, finding answers to questions such as who will earn money for the family and who will see to it that everyday tasks are taken care of. A model project being run by GIZ, the German aid agency, is helping these women learn a practical trade such as plumbing. In order to reduce tensions with the native population, GIZ is making it possible for both Syrian and Jordanian women to participate. Many have already established small plumbing services. Other women would like to learn other occupations.

International NGOs such as CARE run social centers that offer refugees counseling services for dealing with their current life circumstances

and with the trauma resulting from their war-related experiences. To ensure the refugees, especially the women, make use of these services, childcare is offered at the same time, for which the French NGO Libraries Without Borders provides books and other learning materials.

With support from the World Bank, Syrian business leaders have opened factories near the refugee camps in north Jordan. The factories provide work to both refugees living in the camps and Jordanians from nearby villages.

Experience with refugees but no integration policy

In addition to emergency aid, extensive efforts are being made to improve the Syrian refugees' long-term prospects, for example by providing them with official work permits and access to training programs, as well as to jobs created by Syrian entrepreneurs. Critics fear, however, that these measures could give rise to permanent structures that could ultimately result in the Syrian refugees remaining in Jordan for decades, as has been the case with the Palestinian and Iraqi refugees.

It's a double-edged sword: Jordan has considerable experience dealing with refugees but has not actively implemented an integration policy. It has not done so, first, with the Palestinian refugees who have resided in the country since the wars with Israel in 1948 and 1967, a group that now makes up the majority of Jordan's population. Most of the Palestinians live in poverty-stricken areas. The Palestinians who have been successful in Jordanian society are the major players economically, but have next to no access to positions of political power. Second, Jordan has not integrated the Iraqi refugees who arrived after the United States invaded Iraq in 2003. They number approximately 130,000, most of whom are well off. Many live in Amman and are doing business with their native country.

No resources – diverse international aid

The more than 700,000 refugees present in Jordan have pushed the small country to its limits. Jordan has no natural resources and the

additional inhabitants are increasing the consumption of water, land, energy and infrastructure. Since all of the countries from the Balkans to Turkey are closing their borders and introducing visa requirements, Jordan has also sealed its border to Syria and does not want to accept any additional refugees. According to the UN, that has left up to 80,000 Syrians who desperately need assistance stuck in no-man's-land.

The Jordanian economy is also under strain. The number of hotel stays by tourists has declined dramatically, hardly any investment is taking place, trade routes are blocked, natural resources are scarce and water supplies are an ongoing problem. As a result, the situation for most Jordanians is tense: 85% of the population lives on the verge of poverty, most wages are too low and approximately one million Jordanians are unemployed – while one million foreign workers have been brought into the country to take on low-wage jobs.

Aid organizations and donor nations – above all, the EU – are supporting the international institutions operating in Jordan and the country's government by providing large sums of money. Amman will be receiving over €1 billion in financial aid in 2016. Jordan has a long history of accepting assistance from abroad and has developed a talent for easily acquiring foreign money and projects. In addition to emergency aid, projects are currently running to promote sustainable development. It is important to use educational initiatives and vocational training programs, for example, to reach Syrians, Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian heritage all in equal measure.

Donors should make more of an effort to ensure their financial aid actually ends up in those communities whose infrastructure is especially burdened by the influx of refugees.

Moreover, by giving poor and refugee families an incentive to send their children to school instead of to work, the Cash for Education program can help the 35% of youngsters who are not currently getting an education.

The aid dilemma: resistance to reform

Jordan is not only burdened by the refugee crisis and the Syrian civil war, but by the unresolved Palestinian issue and the country's proximity to the territory under attack by ISIS near the border to Iraq. Given the various challenges involved – Jordan's stability, Israel's security and the ongoing management of the Syrian refugee crisis – western nations are doing all they can to maintain the status quo in this small Middle Eastern kingdom.

There is, however, a flip side to the short-term stabilization efforts: The social, political and economic reforms required for long-term stabilization are not taking place.

Maintaining the status quo depends more and more on foreign aid flowing into the country. Yet what happens if the refugee crisis soon fades from the world's radar screen and donor fatigue sets in? If that occurs, Jordan's economy and society will have to stand more on their own feet. In other words, the country needs to diversify and stimulate its economy so it can generate more tax revenues and create jobs. Economic reforms are urgently required if the country is to modernize in this way, reforms that are being blocked by the royal family and the well-to-do elite.

Despite that, the European Commission is doing the right thing by promoting projects designed to improve the business and investment climate and rule of law. Such steps are crucial for avoiding developments such as the following: Jordan's IT industry has carved out a niche market for itself by providing Internet content in Arabic, an economic segment with potential. Various IT firms are now leaving for Dubai, however, since they no longer want to deal with the bureaucracy and corruption prevalent in Jordan.

In addition to money and expertise, what these EU projects need is for policy makers in Brussels and other EU capitals to convince Jordan's leaders that the required reforms must actually be carried out.

What the EU can do to help most in economic terms is to open its markets for more Jordanian products. This would, in turn, provide additional incentives for introducing reforms.

Given the situation in Jordan, European assistance is both a sensible and necessary response. Yet as they provide aid, western nations cannot stop focusing on negative developments. One regrettable example: The country's royal palace is restricting the freedom of Jordan's citizens, civil society and parliament. At the same time, the country's security apparatus is being strengthened. The measures needed to protect against terrorism cannot be implemented at the expense of rule of law and diversity. After all, stability and security are also achieved by granting the legal freedoms needed to participate in civil society, business and political processes.

Frustration and lack of prospects

People express their frustration and lack of prospects in the polling booth. Voter turnout was only 11% during the local-level elections in Amman in 2013. Jordan, however, has the potential to redress this situation, something that can be seen in projects such as Leaders of Tomorrow, which uses online debates and public forums to create venues for open discussion. Such projects are helping reduce frustration, especially among young people, who make up the majority of Jordanian society and who say they are unhappy about the lack of affordable education in particular.

Frustration and a bleak future also drive young people to join ISIS, which promises its followers a "regular income" and "meaningful responsibilities." More than 2,000 young Jordanians are believed to be fighting for ISIS. Jordan itself is supporting the international coalition opposing ISIS. Experts are concerned about the increasing influence religion is having on politics and societies throughout the Middle East and recommend promoting secularity and rule of law. Perhaps a reliable legal framework and social justice can help Jordanians acquire more of a national identity, something the country has had difficulty achieving.

The reasons for this are that Jordan is a young nation with artificial borders, a mostly Palestinian population and an original population made up of Jordanian-Bedouins, and it now hosts Syrian and Iraqi refugees. It also has a royal family which

was forced to flee Saudi Arabia and which was installed in Transjordan by Britain as its regent.

More than half of the Jordanian population has Palestinian roots. The frustration among this group is high and their prospects dim. If Jordan is to remain stable, the Palestinian question must therefore find some sort of resolution. The royal family and the government have long been pressing for a two-state solution. The international community must once again focus on bringing an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. France's current diplomatic efforts would also benefit if governments of Arab countries such as Jordan were to bring new political momentum to the Arab peace initiative.

The situation in Jordan is a cause for concern

A number of factors are providing short-term stability: financial aid from the international community, close cooperation on security issues with the west and Israel, the fears people have of chaos and war, and the considerable interest the royal palace and Jordanian elite have in maintaining the status quo, an interest shared by influential Palestinians and Iraqis who use Jordan as a transit country or hub for doing business and visiting relatives in the West Bank / East Jerusalem and Iraq.

Jordan will only experience long-term stability, however, when there is more political and social participation, when the war in Syria has ended, when the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been resolved, when the country implements a more proactive integration policy and when Islam is no longer used for political purposes to the extent it currently is.

Finally, the self-perpetuating cycle must be broken, the one fueled by increasing infusions of foreign aid and the resulting lack of reform. This, too, is a strategy that cannot be maintained over the long term.

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