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## *Syrian Refugees in Jordan: a Reality Check*

*Luigi Achilli, Migration Policy Centre, EUI*

POLICY  
BRIEF

### *Abstract*

As of February 2015, over 622,000 Syrians had registered with UNHCR in Jordan. The protracted nature of the Syrian crisis has been dramatic: both the Syrian refugees themselves and the host communities in Jordan are paying a high price. Further political and economic deterioration may follow as the number of refugees is simply too great for Jordan to deal with. The EU and its member states have been actively involved in responding to the Syrian crisis both in political and humanitarian terms. The European approach has primarily consisted in providing support to the countries bordering Syria, in order to contain the crisis within the Middle East. However, as of 2014 and early 2015, worrying changes in the Jordanian Government's attitude towards Syrian refugees show how such an approach is becoming unsustainable.

### *Key Words:*

Syrian crisis, Jordan, Europe, Humanitarian Organisations, Protection, Resettlement.



## Introduction

“Syria has become the great tragedy of this century”, says UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, “a disgraceful humanitarian calamity with suffering and displacement unparalleled in recent history.” Since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria, it is estimated that almost 4 million people have fled seeking refuge in neighbouring countries: Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Jordan<sup>1</sup>.

As of February 2015, over 622,000 Syrians had registered with UNHCR in Jordan<sup>2</sup>. The large influx of refugees over almost five years has had a serious impact on what were already meagre national resources. According to the Jordanian Economic and Social Council, the Syrian crisis cost the country US\$1.2 billion, and the financial burden is expected to rise to \$4.2 billion by 2016<sup>3</sup>. Jordan’s international trade has been gravely affected by the loss of one of the principal points of access to regional trade through Syria. A recent study reveals that the Syrian crisis has had a particular negative impact on Jordanian structural vulnerabilities. The influx of refugees has increased intolerably the demand on school, sanitation, housing, food, energy and water. In particular, the arrival of Syrian refugees seems to have had a negative impact on Jordan’s housing sector. Rent prices have tripled or even quadrupled in border zones and other areas of high refugee density. As the majority of Syrians do not live in camps, this rise can be explained by the sharp increase in demand for housing and by refugees’ capacity to afford higher prices by sharing housing with others to bring down costs<sup>4</sup>. It should be noted, however, that while rents continue to increase for both Jordanians and Syrians, the former tend to pay higher sums than Jordanian households<sup>5</sup>.

The protracted nature of the Syrian crisis and its negative, real or perceived, impact on the living conditions of Jordanians has meant that Jordanians, who, at first, welcomed refugees, have become hostile: those who were originally *dyuf* (guests) are now *laji’in* (refugees). The belief that refugees are thriving on scarce local resources is widespread amongst an increasingly resentful host community. The job market constitutes a clear point of friction. Principally due to prohibitive costs and administrative obstacles, work permits for Syrians are not being issued. Non-Jordanians with legal residency and valid passports can obtain work permits only if the prospective employer pays a fee and shows that the job requires experience or skills not to be found among the Jordanian population. A recent UNHCR survey reports that only 1% of visited refugee households had a member with a work permit in Jordan<sup>6</sup>. However, despite the official restrictions on working, many refugees work informally. Jordanians often perceive Syrians as competitors for jobs<sup>7</sup>. This has sparked protests and tensions between refugees and host communities.

<sup>1</sup>This paper is largely based on the author’s field research in Jordan (May 2012 to December 2014).

<sup>2</sup>UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107> [Accessed: 6 February 2015]. note these numbers are total ‘persons of concern’.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Kilani, K. 2014. A duty and a burden on Jordan, *Forced Migration Review*, 47, September, [http://www.fmreview.org/syria/alkilani#\\_edn2](http://www.fmreview.org/syria/alkilani#_edn2) [Accessed: 6 February 2015].

<sup>4</sup>REACH, 2014. Evaluating the Effect of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Stability and Resilience in Jordanian Host Communities, [http://www.reach-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/jeffrey.frankens-10022014-093154-REACH-FCO\\_Syrian-Refugees-in-Host-Communities\\_Preliminary-Impact-Assessment.pdf](http://www.reach-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/jeffrey.frankens-10022014-093154-REACH-FCO_Syrian-Refugees-in-Host-Communities_Preliminary-Impact-Assessment.pdf).



Further political and economic deterioration may follow as the number of refugees is simply too great for Jordan to handle. Both Syrian refugees and the host communities in Jordan are now paying a high price. The EU and its member states have been actively involved in responding to the Syrian crisis at the political and humanitarian level. The EU approach has primarily consisted in providing support to the countries neighbouring Syria in order to contain the crisis within the Middle East. However, as of 2014 and early 2015, a number of worrying trends in the Jordanian Government's attitude toward Syrian refugees show how such an approach is becoming unsustainable.

### *Open borders?*

The Jordanian government has often been praised for its open-border policy and humanitarian stance towards Syrian refugees<sup>8</sup>. Since the beginning of the crisis, Jordan has received a massive number of Syrian refugees (see figure 1&table 1). This large influx has been facilitated by several factors such as refugees' kinship and friendship ties in Jordan, the political stability of the Hashemite Kingdom, and the historically tight cultural and geographical relationship between the two countries<sup>9</sup>.

That said, little information is available on the way Syrians cross the border, the criteria for access, and how the kingdom manages the informal border crossing.

To reach Jordan, asylum seekers traverse a long and dangerous road, often across lines of fighting. Syrian refugees entering Jordan comes mainly from Dara'a, Aleppo and Homs and most arrived through the eastern border crossing. Many of the new arrivals are children and households with female heads (see figure 2). Refugees accessing Jordan through formal border crossings are transported from the frontier to Raba' al Sarhan (the transit centre managed jointly by the Jordanian government and UNHCR). There they are registered with UNHCR and they are then transferred to one of several camps: Zaatari, Azraq, the Emirati-Jordanian Camp (EJC), King Hussein Park (KAP) and Cyber City.

<sup>5</sup>According to CARE International, "Shelter is reported as the single most pressing need. The average rental expenditure is JOD 166. Syrian households on average pay JOD 193 for rent, indicating a 28% increase from the baseline data for urban areas outside of Amman. Jordanians report lower monthly rental expenditure (JOD 107)." CARE, 2014. *Lives Unseen: Urban Syrian Refugees and Jordanian Host Communities Three Years into the Syria Crisis*, [http://www.care-international.org/UploadDocument/files/CARE\\_Syrian%20refugee%20Assessment%20in%20Jordan\\_April%202014\(1\).pdf](http://www.care-international.org/UploadDocument/files/CARE_Syrian%20refugee%20Assessment%20in%20Jordan_April%202014(1).pdf) [Accessed: 13 February 2015], p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>UNHCR, 2014. *Living in the Shadow*, <http://www.unhcr.org/54b685079.pdf> [Accessed: 6 February 2015], p. 28.

<sup>7</sup>A recent report published by ILO shows not only that unemployment rates are not correlated with the areas of large influx of Syrian refugees, but also that Syrian refugees are mainly working in jobs in the informal sector commonly performed by non-Jordanian migrant workers such as Egyptians – e.g. agriculture, construction, food service and retail. ILO, 2014. *The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on the Labour Market in Jordan: Preliminary Analysis*, [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_242021.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_242021.pdf) [Accessed: 6 February 2015], p. 14.

<sup>8</sup>It must be remembered that the Kingdom is not a signatory state to the UN 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. Jordan receives Syrian refugees within the framework of its Law of Residency and Foreigners' Affairs (according to which Syrians are allowed to enter Jordan with their passport only, whereas visa and residency permit are not required) and it is subject to the principle of non-refoulement under customary law. Refugees can receive temporary protection from UNHCR under the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 1998 with the Jordanian Ministry of Interior.

<sup>9</sup>Olwan, M. and Shiyab. A. *Forced Migration of Syrians to Jordan: An Exploratory Study*, MPC Research Report 2012/06, <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/MPC%202012%20EN%2006.pdf> [Accessed: 6 February 2015], p. 1.



Throughout 2014, however, the daily arrival rate has steadily decreased. It seems that the government has drastically limited access to Jordan. UNHCR has claimed, on several occasions, that local authorities have refused to let Syrian refugees cross the border. Humanitarian organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have also reported several cases of *refoulement* of vulnerable Syrian refugees back to Syria in overt violation of international obligations<sup>10</sup>. All this seems to replicate a scenario already seen with Palestinian refugees from Syria. Prior to April 2012, Palestinian refugees from Syria could enter the country following the same procedures applied to any other Syrian refugees. However, after that date, Jordan adopted a no-entry policy that has prevented refugees from crossing into Jordan and that has subjected those in the Kingdom to the risk of *refoulement* to Syria<sup>11</sup>.

So far, Government authorities have been adamant in denying any change to the open-border policy. “There is no change in our open-border policy,” Mohammad Momani, Jordan’s information minister recently claimed. “Those who are injured, women and children continue to cross”<sup>12</sup>.

Nonetheless, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) concur that no new arrivals of Syrian refugees have been recorded since early October – with the exception of a limited number of women, children, and civilians with urgent medical needs. This seems to be confirmed by the 43% increase in makeshift shelters on the Syrian side of the border from July to October 2014. It is also suggested by the recent clearing of the land between the Jordan-Syrian border where refugees used to be held for extensive screening before entering the country<sup>13</sup>.

The increasing border restrictions may be explained by the fact that the influx of Syrians has strained Jordan’s already overburdened infrastructure and the Kingdom’s limited resources. However, Jordan’s participation in the United States-led military campaign against the Islamic State and Jabhat Al-Nusra in Syria and Iraq is another likely cause behind the tightening of borders. Each strike of the coalition against the militants in Syria prompts fears of terrorist reprisals in Jordan by IS militants. Thousands of Jordanians have supposedly joined the ranks of the Al Nusra Front and IS<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> SNAP, 2014. Regional Analysis for Syria Q3 2014, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/q-snap-ras-quarterly-oct-2014.pdf> [Accessed: 6 February 2015].

<sup>11</sup> HRW, 2014. Not Welcome: Jordan’s Treatment of Palestinians Escaping Syria [http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/jordan0814\\_ForUpload\\_0.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/jordan0814_ForUpload_0.pdf) [Accessed: 6 February 2015].

<sup>12</sup> Sweis, R. 2014. No Syrians Are Allowed Into Jordan, New York Times, October 8, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/09/world/middleeast/syrian-refugees-jordan-border-united-nations.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/09/world/middleeast/syrian-refugees-jordan-border-united-nations.html?_r=0) [Accessed: 6 February 2015].

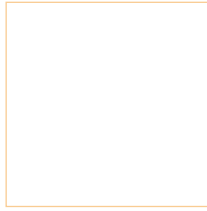
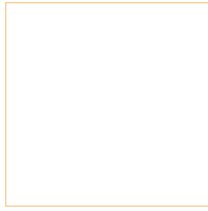
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<sup>13</sup> SNAP, 2014. Regional Analysis for Syria Q3 2014, p. 74.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Jazeera, 2014, Five Jordanians jailed for ISIL, July 10, membership <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/11/five-jordanians-jailed-isil-membership-20141117155225707489.html> [Accessed: 6 February 2015].

<sup>15</sup> Su, A. 2014. Fade to black: Jordanian city Ma’an copes with Islamic State threat, Al-Jazeera, September 2, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/9/2/jordan-maan-daashthreat.html> [Accessed: 6 February 2015].

<sup>16</sup> The Jordan Times, 2014, Border guards kill infiltrator on Syrian border, Aug 19, <http://jordantimes.com/border-guards-kill-infiltrator-on-syrian-border> [Accessed: 6 February 2015].



Security forces have detained several suspects in the northern governorates for participation in pro-IS rallies<sup>15</sup>. In addition, the government has reported a number of attempted infiltrations from the Syrian and Iraqi borders during the third quarter of 2014<sup>16</sup>. According to Manar Rachwani, columnist at the independent Jordanian newspaper Al Ghad, “Tightening the border is a logical reaction from the government’s perspective, especially because the Nusra Front, Al Qaeda’s wing in Syria, is on its border, and [the Nusra Front] are being targeted by the U.S./Arab-led coalition”<sup>17</sup>.

*An encampment policy*

Tightened restrictions for refugees trying to enter the Kingdom are also a side-effect of the new policies implemented by the Government of Jordan to curtail the ever-growing urban refugee community.

Approximately 16% of the entire refugee registered population reside in the five official refugee camps, the largest of which (Zaatari camp) is home to over 80,000 people<sup>18</sup>. More than 520,000 of refugees live dispersed in host communities, concentrated around Jordanian urban centres, mostly in the central and northern governorates (see table 2). In north Jordan, the governorates of Amman, Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa alone host more than the 70% of registered refugees outside the camps (see figure 3)<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Sweis, R. 2014. No Syrians Are Allowed Into Jordan, New York Times.

<sup>18</sup> On 30 April, Azraq camp opened in the northern governorate of Zarqa. Even though at full capacity it can accommodate around 130,000 refugees, the camp is nearly empty: the area’s harsh climate and the camp’s isolation from services and livelihood opportunities have persuaded many refugees to abandon Azraq. Many people have also left the other camps due to a number of problems, mainly related to lack of security (particularly for women and girls) and inter-community tensions. REACH, 2014. Informal Tented Settlements in Jordan: A Multi-Sector, Baseline Assessment, [http://www.reach-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/REACH\\_UNICEF\\_ITS\\_MS\\_AUGUST2014\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.reach-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/REACH_UNICEF_ITS_MS_AUGUST2014_FINAL.pdf) [Accessed: 6 February 2015].

Here, about 20% of refugees live in substandard accommodation, such as garages, chicken houses, and tents. In addition, a smaller number of refugees reside in informal tented settlements (ITS) spread through the country, often lacking basic services such as health, education, water and food.

Although there are not exact figures on ITS in Jordan and their population, a recent assessment carried out by REACH in five governorates revealed that the number of ITS is on the rise: 7000 individuals as of June 2014<sup>20</sup>.

Since the second half of 2014 the Jordanian authorities have progressively restrained Syrian refugees’ freedom of movement in urban areas. Refugees used to be able to register with UNHCR no matter the status of their documentation. The government has, since 14 July 2014, though instructed UNHCR to stop issuing Asylum Seeker Certificates (ASCs) to Syrian refugees that have left the camps without proper “bail out” documentation<sup>21</sup>. Without a valid ASC, refugees cannot access UNHCR and its implementing partners’ (IPs) services such as cash and food assistance. The certificate provides Syrian refugees with the proof of registration as a person of concern, as well as access to all UNHCR services in urban areas. Most importantly, however, the 14 July procedure affects the services offered by the Jordanian government. The ASC is indispensable for obtaining Ministry of Interior (MoI) Service Card for refugee access to public health care and education services in host communities. According to trusted sources, the new policy has already affected many Syrian households, including those who left the camp long before the more strictly applied procedures.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR, 2015. Syria Regional Refugee Response, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107> [Accessed: 16 February 2015].

<sup>20</sup> REACH, 2014. Informal Tented Settlements in Jordan.

<sup>21</sup> The “bail out” is the legal process by which the Jordanian authorities grant Syrian refugees the permission to leave camps and holding facilities.



The “14 July procedure” has come at a time when the government is more generally enforcing bail out procedures from camps. Formal bail out applications must be submitted to the Syrian Refugee Assistance Department (SRAD) by camp residents and requires a Jordanian sponsor, ostensibly someone over 35 years of age, married, with a stable job, no police record, and in a direct family relation with the applicant. This process has not changed since the institution of Zaatari camp in 2012. What has changed, however, is the stiffening of the relatively flexible attitude previously held by the government toward those refugees who cannot comply with all the requirements. As a matter of fact, proper bailout documentation seems very difficult to obtain. Since the opening of Azraq camp in April 2014, the overwhelming majority of bailout applications have been denied by SRAD, which appears to have discretionary power in determining the number and type of applications to approve.

It seems evident that the goal of the government is twofold: restricting refugees’ freedom of movement in urban areas, while making it more complicated for them to leave the camps. To enforce this new agenda, a “verification” exercise in urban areas has been announced and is currently being implemented by the Jordanian government. Syrian refugees are expected to present themselves to local police stations and go through a biometric scanning procedure. The objective of the urban verification exercise is to issue new MOI Cards to all Syrians residing outside of camps in Jordan and to return original Syrian documents to their owners<sup>22</sup>.

However, the real goal of the verification exercise remains unclear. The same verification, previously carried out in Zaatari Camp seems to have resulted in a number of forced returns to Syria. The current verification process is understandably creating anxieties and fears of *refoulement* and deportation to camps among refugees living in host communities.

### *Implications*

A bleak scenario is playing out against the backdrop of the Jordanian government’s new policies. The encampment policy has affected most Syrian refugees in Jordan at three interrelated levels: it has shrunk the humanitarian space and raised considerable protection concerns; it has increased the number of ITS ejections, refugee deportations to camps, and *refoulement* to Syria; and it has forced refugees into negative coping mechanisms. These developments are all the more worrying as resources are already declining. At the end of 2014, WFP announced a cut in food assistance and the danger that it would have to suspend its programme in urban areas for lack of funding<sup>23</sup>. The Jordanian government interrupted, at almost the same time, the provision of free health care to Syrians<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Note that up to 2014, Jordanian authorities used to confiscate identification documents from Syrian refugees entering the Kingdom.

<sup>23</sup> SNAP, 2014. Regional Analysis for Syria Q3 2014, p. 74.

<sup>24</sup> UNHCR, 2014. Health Sector Jordan. Monthly Report, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=7762> [Accessed: 6 February 2015].

<sup>25</sup> SNAP, 2014. Regional Analysis for Syria Q3 2014, p. 77.



Humanitarian assistance is coming increasingly under the control of the Jordanian government with clear negative repercussions in terms of protection and services provision. Refugee assistance projects need to receive the authorization of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC). Long and not always clear, in procedural terms, approval mechanisms have hindered humanitarian organizations from delivering assistance and providing protection services. According to reliable sources, the government has also instructed humanitarian organizations to serve only refugees with complete documentation. This request is currently preventing large numbers of refugees in host communities from accessing humanitarian services and has exposed them to a number of potential and actual protection issues, including arrest, exploitation, and limited access to basic services<sup>25</sup>. Humanitarian actors fear that those excluded may be the most vulnerable – households with female heads, children, elderly, disabled, and so on – who, for example, cannot afford the costs of an MOI card and/or have limited freedom of movement. Moreover, these restrictions have also negatively affected the level of trust toward UNHCR, INGOs and other stakeholders, which refugees now perceive as being in collusion with local authorities in implementing an encampment policy.

The number of cases of forced and voluntary return to Syria has also spiked in recent months. The Government of Jordan ensures that the principle of non-*refoulement* is consistently respected. However, international organizations concur that hundreds of Syrian refugees, including children, have been forcibly returned to Syria<sup>26</sup>. This is clearly connected with an increasing trend of forced returns to camps for those found without proper documentation or working illegally. International organizations have also reported a growing number of ITS evictions over the past months. In June 2014, for example, around 1,300 Syrian refugees living in an ITS in the proximities of Amman, the capital of Jordan, were forcibly evicted and sent to Azraq camp<sup>27</sup>. Also the number of voluntary returns to Syria has apparently been on the rise since the beginning of 2014. Little is known of what persuades refugees to embark on the dangerous journey back to Syria despite the many perils and the general lack of assistance there. Border restrictions and the consequent separation from family members who cannot come to Jordan might explain, in part, such a high rate of return. However, the complete motivations behind these returns remain unclear. Given the restrictive policies adopted by the government, many refugees have developed negative coping mechanisms.

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<sup>26</sup> SNAP, 2014. Regional Analysis for Syria Q4 2014, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/p-regional-analysis-for-syria---part-b-host-countries-oct-dec-2014.pdf> [Accessed: 19February 2015].

<sup>27</sup> REACH, 2014. Informal Tented Settlements in Jordan.



Refugee families have coped with the first years of displacement by liquidating the few assets that they were able to bring along with them, relying on humanitarian assistance and working, mostly illegally. However, these work and humanitarian “opportunities” decreased steadily in 2014 and almost disappeared toward the end of 2014. People have sold their personal assets in the context of their protracted displacement in Jordan; they have witnessed the drastic reduction of assistance within the progressive shrinking of the humanitarian space; and their already meagre chances of securing a decent job have been curtailed even further by the restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement by the Jordanian authorities. Child labour, early marriage, restriction of movement, domestic violence as a consequence of increased stress, high level of debt are all on the rise. Overall, vulnerability is increasing, and to survive refugees have often to recur to negative coping mechanisms. An ILO study reports, for example, that close to half of the families have one working child<sup>28</sup>. A previous UNWOMEN assessment reveals that 47% of households’ paid employment came from children<sup>29</sup>. Syrian families have also been readier to resort to early marriage a practice often resorted to by some parts of the Syrian community to ensure a better economic and a safer space for their daughters<sup>30</sup>.

### *What could Europe do?*

As the crisis enters its fifth year, the situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan has fallen off dramatically. In the words of Andrew Harper, UNHCR Representative, “We are seeing Syrian refugees in Jordan having entered a downward spiral in terms of their ability to sustain themselves. We are concerned that this will deteriorate even further in 2015. We are all accountable for their protection and well-being.”

In this context, Europe can certainly do something. To begin with, the EU can actively work against the shrinking of humanitarian space in Jordan. The official Jordanian policy of open borders has been undermined by the dramatic decrease in admissions after the 1st of October 2014. This has currently left many Syrians in serious humanitarian need in the no man’s land between countries and, has, very likely, increased the risk of trafficking and smuggling. The EU and its member states should use sustained diplomacy to encourage the Jordanian government to enact a genuine open-border policy and to respect the principle of non-*refoulement*. The EU should also ensure that humanitarian and development actors are able to target the most vulnerable populations according to their needs without regard to their legal/administrative status. Concerns should be voiced about the Government of Jordan’s request to UNHCR and its implementing partners that they not provide assistance to unregistered refugees.

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<sup>28</sup> ILO, 2014. Rapid Assessment on Child Labor in the Urban Informal Sector in Three Governorates of Jordan, [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/genericdocument/wcms\\_246207.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/genericdocument/wcms_246207.pdf) [Accessed: 6 February 2015]. Also note that many studies have shown how child labour amongst Syrian refugees is a widespread phenomenon, which is not perceived by local communities as being inherently negative. See, for example, UN Ponte Per..., 2012. Comprehensive Assessment On Syrian Refugees Residing In The Community In Northern Jordan, [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UPP%20COMPREHENSIVE\\_ASSESSMENT\\_SYRIAN\\_REFUGEES\\_2012.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UPP%20COMPREHENSIVE_ASSESSMENT_SYRIAN_REFUGEES_2012.pdf), [Accessed: 19 February 2015].

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<sup>29</sup> UNWOMEN, 2013. Gender-based Violence and Child Protection among Syrian refugees in Jordan, with a focus on Early Marriage, <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/7/report-web%20pdf.pdf%29> [Accessed: 6 February 2015], p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Note that Syrian refugees have also developed some positive coping strategies. One example is the relevance of community support as one of the main sources of income for many households. Care, 2013. Syrian Refugees in urban Jordan report, <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=1922> [Accessed: 6 February 2015].





However, notwithstanding the importance of advocacy, the EU's messages to the Government of Jordan are likely to remain unheard if not combined with the implementation of more durable solutions. The protracted Syrian civil war and the endless arrival of refugees threaten the stability of Jordan and further accentuate the extremely poor conditions of Syrian refugees and vulnerable hosting communities in the country. Jordanian infrastructure is sagging under pressure. Over 600,000 registered Syrian refugees now reside in the Kingdom – the equivalent of 10 per cent of its entire population. The relationship between host communities and refugees is progressively deteriorating. In order to reduce the pressure on Jordan and other countries bordering Syria, the number of refugees temporarily relocated or resettled in EU member states needs to increase.

In this sense, the EU response to the Syrian crisis has been inadequate. As of December 2014, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt were hosting 95% of the overall refugee flow. With very few exceptions, EU member states have enacted a politics of containment by providing assistance to the countries bordering Syria and by reinforcing Europe's borders. As a matter of fact, only a very small number of refugees have found an abode in Europe. The amplification of the flow of Syrian refugees to European countries after the outbreak of the civil war has actually ushered a progressive contraction of EU borders: the overall number of refugees accepted in Europe has dramatically fallen from 29.4 percent in 2011 to 2.3 percent in 2013<sup>31</sup>. The response has not only been limited it has also been uneven. Out of the 28 Member States, Sweden and Germany has pledged the vast majority of resettlement places for Syrian refugees.

<sup>31</sup> Fargues, P. 2014. Europe Must Take on its Share of the Syrian Refugee Burden, but How?, Migration Policy Centre, [http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/29919/MPC\\_PB\\_2014\\_01.pdf?sequence=3](http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/29919/MPC_PB_2014_01.pdf?sequence=3) [Accessed: 6 February 2015]

<sup>32</sup> Amnesty International, 2015. Left Out in the Cold

The remaining 26 EU countries have only offered 5,105 resettlement places, which amounts to just 0.13% of Syrian refugees in the main host countries<sup>32</sup>.

Whilst providing significant humanitarian assistance for refugees in those countries is laudable, the EU policy of containment is dangerous as it threatens the stability of the countries bordering Syria. Moreover, the case of Jordan clearly demonstrates that open border policy can easily become a mere rhetorical device which a country can use for domestic priorities: for example, to secure the conspicuous flux of money channelled through humanitarian aid. Paradoxically, European countries can enforce a genuine open-border policy only by accepting more refugees currently hosted in Jordan in Europe – and helping Jordan to scale down its burden. In this context, European countries should implement a range of measures largely, but not only, centred on temporary protection: these are easier to implement than resettlement and, thus, best suited to address the Syrian refugee emergency. As other studies have argued, this can be done by simply reinforcing pre-existing norms and policies: extending humanitarian admission/temporary protection regimes for refugees (not only Syrians) in the EU; expanding European countries' resettlement programmes; exempting Syrian refugees from visa requirements; and by developing alternative legal routes for refugees, such as family reunification, university fellowships and scholarships, training programmes, private sponsorships, and labour mobility<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> For more, see Akram S. et al., Protecting Syrian Refugees: Laws, Policies, and Global Responsibility Sharing, <http://www.bu.edu/law/central/jd/programs/clinics/international-human-rights/documents/FINALFullReport.pdf> [Accessed: 6 February 2015]; Fargues, P. 2014. Europe Must Take on its Share of the Syrian Refugee Burden, but How?; Orchard, C. and Miller, A. 2014. Protection in Europe for refugees from Syria, Refugee Studies Centre, Forced Migration Policy Briefing 10, <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/publications/policy-briefing-series/pb10-protection-europe-refugees-syria-2014.pdf> [Accessed: 6 February 2015].

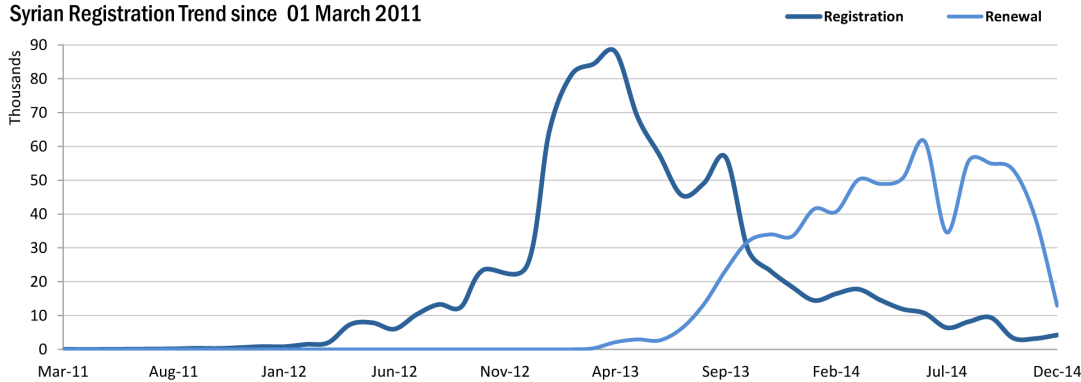


Obviously, not all Syrian refugees can find an abode in Europe: the displaced population is enormous. Fearing socio-cultural estrangement, refugees themselves may be unwilling to leave Jordan for an unfamiliar destination in Europe. As such, the EU and its member states need to continue supporting Jordan through specific programmes and funding schemes. Since the beginning of the crisis, EU has channelled 428 million euro to Jordan through humanitarian, development, and budget support programmes. Moreover, in September 2014 the EU reaffirmed its commitment through the European Regional Protection Programme (RPP) and the Mobility Partnership<sup>34</sup>. However, funding is expected to physiologically decrease as the crisis enters its fifth year. The EU should not only continue funding the response through multilateral and bilateral aid, it should also ensure a flexible use of funds for the whole range of interventions needed in Jordan: from lifesaving humanitarian actions to development plans focusing on resilient and durable solutions, including, crucially, livelihoods programmes for Syrians. The streamlining of humanitarian and development instruments is vital in building up neighbouring countries' capacities to cope with the crisis and the impact that this can have on the stability of the whole Middle Eastern region.

Jordan is under severe strain. The massive influx of refugees has overstretched its infrastructure and has threatened its domestic stability. This has had a significant negative impact on the living conditions of Syrian refugees residing in the Kingdom. If the current situation is grim, the protraction of the civil conflict in Syria does not leave much room for hope in the future. For reasons of regional security and humanitarian aid there is an urgent need to work on a more durable solution to the refugee crisis in Jordan.

<sup>34</sup> ENPI, 2014. EU pledges to step up partnership with Jordan amid devastating impact of violent conflict in the, <http://enpi-info.eu/medportal/news/latest/38663/EU-pledges-to-step-up-partnership-with-Jordan-amid-devastating-impact-of-violent-conflict-in-the-region> [Accessed: 6 February 2015]

Figure 1: *Syrian registration trend in Jordan since 1 March 2011 (24 January 2015)*



Source: UNHCR



Table 1: Syrian Arrival and Registration Trends in Jordan (24 January 2015)

Arrivals		
Year	N.	%
Pre-2011	9080	1.5
2011	22588	3.6
2012	186369	30.0
2013	320062	51.5
2014	82969	13.4
2015	336	0.1
Registration Trend		
Year	N.	%
2011	2306	0.3
2012	129896	14.1
2013	666411	72.4
2014	120569	13.1
2015	1195	0.1

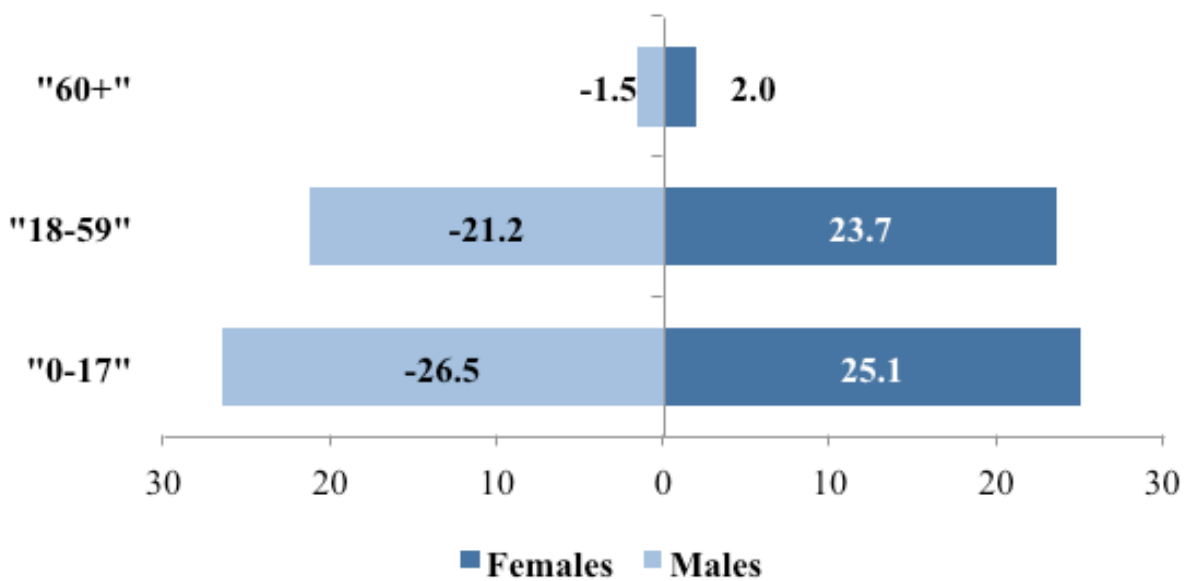
Source: UNHCR

Table 2: Registered Syrian Refugees in Jordan living inside/outside camps (as of 24 January 2015)

	N.	%
Inside camps	100,382	16.2
Outside camps	521,022	83.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>621,404</b>	<b>100.0</b>

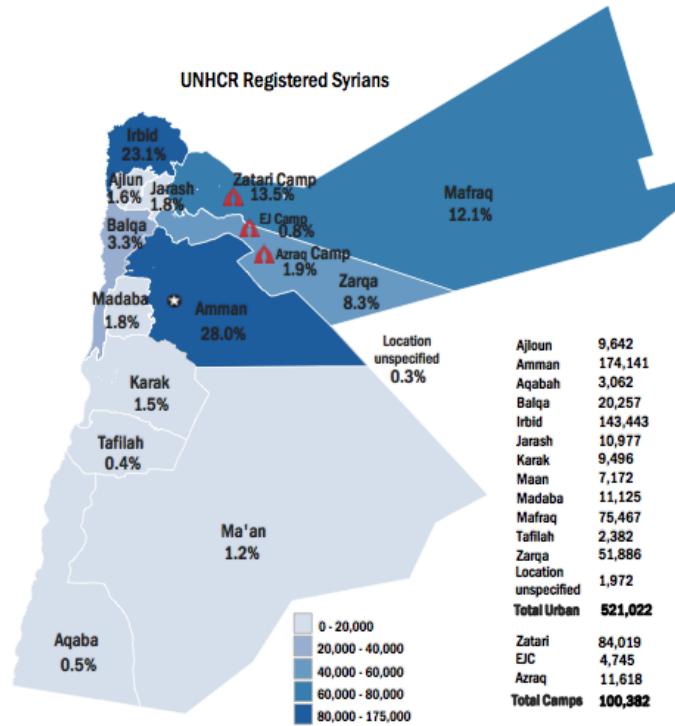
Source: UNHCR

Figure 2: Registered Syrian Refugees in Jordan by age group and sex (as of 24 January 2015)



Source: UNHCR

Figure 3: Geographical concentration of registered Syrian refugees living in hosting communities (colour does not include camps population) (24 January 2015)



Source: UNHCR

### Migration Policy Centre

The Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute, Florence, conducts advanced research on global migration to serve migration governance needs at European level, from developing, implementing and monitoring migration-related policies to assessing their impact on the wider economy and society. The Migration Policy Centre is co-financed by the European Union.

Migration Policy Centre Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies - European University Institute  
Via delle Fontanelle 19I-50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI) Italy

Tel: (+39) 055 4685 817  
Fax: (+39) 055 4685 770  
[mpc@eui.eu](mailto:mpc@eui.eu)



Complete information on our activities can be found online at: [www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/](http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/)