

Digital Storytelling

Jennifer Quigley-Jones
@jenqj



الطفل حمزه الخطيب ومشهد بيت



Harvard Field Study Group, January 2014, Jordan

Non-Paper on the International Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis

The Syrian refugee crisis represents one of the greatest humanitarian challenges the international community has faced over the recent years, prompting record-high levels of international aid. In view of the complexity of the political and social environment in which these challenges arise and the historical scale of the population affected, innovative and creative programmatic responses are essential to address the short and middle-term needs of refugees and reducing instability in the Middle East region.

Key Facts

- **The ongoing conflict in Syria has generated the displacement of over two million refugees since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, resulting in one of the largest refugee crises in recent history.**¹ It is projected by UNHCR that by end of 2014, the total refugee population in the region, particularly in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq, could reach up to four million people.
- **Causes of displacement are multifaceted.** Political violence within Syria remains a primary cause of the displacement of populations seeking security within the country and across its borders. Additional causes include increasing communal violence due to the collapse of law and order in some areas as well as the lack of access to food, shelter, health and other services. As such, it is very difficult to predict the pattern and flow of displacement due to the constantly evolving circumstances within Syria and at its borders.
- **There is an increasing proportion of Syrian refugees who are choosing to reside in urban settings compared to camp settings, where available.** In the five key hosting countries (Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, and Jordan), 81% of refugees currently live in non-camp/urban environments, and UNHCR projects that the number of refugees in the region living in non-camp settings will rise to 84% in 2014.² Even those who initially settle in camp settings often choose to migrate to urban environments. Between April

¹UNHCR, "2014 Syria Regional Response Plan," December 16, 2013. Accessed January 12, 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/docs/Syria-rrp6-full-report.pdf>.

² UNHCR, "2014 Syria Regional Response Plan."

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Discourses within Syrian refugee host nations consistently point to the economic burdens that refugee presence places on their economies. The large scale of Syrian refugee populations makes the impact of this crisis particularly acute – Syrian refugees equate to roughly 10% of Jordan's and 25% of Lebanon's populations. Common themes in Jordanian media link to pressure on education and healthcare services, rent inflation, and illegal employment of Syrians as a threat to Jordanian

economic and social stability. The Jordanian host community is encouraged to only see the costs of Syrian refugees, without any consideration of their potential benefits, and support the prohibition on

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Baba Umar

Mohammad Umar
Baba (who writes under the byline

Baba Umar) is an online producer with Al Jazeera English. He has covered...



Aimal Faizi

Aimal Faizi is an Afghan journalist and former

spokesperson for former Afghan President Hamid Karzai from 2011-2014.



Aylin Kocaman









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