

# **Between aid dependence, neighbourhood solidarity and the EU–Jordan Compact**

**Livelihood analysis of Syrian refugees in Greater Amman**

**Elke Grawert \ BICC  
with input from Rawan Alhomeimat**

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## SUMMARY

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Jordan, with a population of about ten million, hosts 1.3 million Syrians of whom 670,000 are UNHCR-registered refugees, as well as nearly 85,000 registered refugees from other countries and is thus one of the countries with the highest proportion of refugees in the world. Most of them (83 per cent) are staying outside camps and many have rented flats mainly in the Jordanian capital Amman and its surroundings.

The particular conditions for refugees from Syria staying in a receiving area among people with a history of protracted displacement are in the focus of this *Working Paper*. How do refugees from Syria secure their livelihood in the neighbourhoods of Palestinians who share the experience of a volatile legal status and limited economic rights? Does the EU-Jordan Compact improve Syrians' livelihoods?

These questions are addressed by an analytical livelihood approach that includes social relationships as a significant conducive or constraining factor for refugees' agency (ability to act) in making use of local livelihood options. The findings generated in field research between November 2016 and July 2017 reveal dynamics within the Palestinian receiving community that have shifted from empathy and solidarity to more ambiguous interaction up to the exploitation and seclusion of refugees. The *Paper* shows how self-organised assistance groups of Jordanians with Palestinian origin take care of refugees from Syria in dire need for help, no matter what legal status they have. They support some refugees in regaining their agency and thus contribute to securing their livelihood. The central argument of this *Paper* is that the agenda of international aid and development agencies of enhancing resilience and promoting self-reliance of refugees does not strengthen refugees' agency. Instead of considering the refugees' own priorities and intentions about their livelihood, it pre-designs basic needs to different refugee groups and attempts to integrate them into a presumed market economy that in fact is distorted for political purposes (mainly shielding Jordanians from foreign competitors).

This is most pronounced in the EU-Jordan Compact, established to provide Syrians with preferential access to (low-skilled) employment in return for alleviated access of Jordanian companies to the European market. The study discloses how the Compact contradicts the idea of resilience of the refugees. In the conclusion, the *Paper* questions the collusion of the international community with the Jordanian government in using the presence of the refugees for external interests—promoting liberal market expansion through the EU-Jordan Compact in return for continuous aid.

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## Main findings

### **Despite many constraints, refugees from Syria try to maintain or regain a way of life that they consider necessary for keeping their human dignity**

Priorities of refugees from Syria are safety, privacy for families, access to social services and income-generation through appropriate jobs. Avoiding refugee camps and moving to Greater Amman is a conscious decision to use livelihood options closer to their own standard of a dignified, self-determined way of life.

### **The interest in keeping bureaucratic control over the refugees determines the cooperation between the Jordanian government and UN agencies**

This common interest sets the framework for humanitarian assistance for specified (vulnerable) target groups in health care and basic needs while excluding non-registered groups of refugees from Syria.

### **The agenda of international aid and development agencies of enhancing resilience and promoting self-reliance of refugees does not strengthen the refugees' ability to act ('agency')**

This agenda does not consider the refugees' own priorities and intentions about their livelihood. It rather pre-designs basic needs for different refugee groups and attempts to integrate them into a presumed market economy that is distorted for political purposes (mainly shielding Jordanians from foreign competitors).

### **Refugees from Syria benefit from the solidarity of Palestinian–Jordanians; however, the longer Syrians are displaced, the more they are treated as outsiders by host communities**

Besides distorted prices for rent and commodities, the availability of aid, social inequality and class differences contribute to a widening gap between

'established' and 'outsiders' in the Palestinian settlements (UNRWA-run camps). This gap manifests itself most when it comes to gender relations characterised by the subjugation of refugee women and girls.

### **Self-organised groups initiated by Jordanians with Palestinian origin and Syrians assist refugees according to their needs, thus encouraging refugees' agency**

Some of these groups risk imprisonment because they also provide aid to illegal refugees. The non-bureaucratic assistance, however, fits into the refugees' own ideas of a life of dignity, which include social, cultural, psychological and religious needs besides material aid. Different from professional international agencies, these groups respond flexibly and rapidly to the specific demands of refugees independent of their status and do not impose an external agenda upon them.

### **The EU–Jordan Compact does not reflect the livelihood intentions of its target group**

The common interest of the Compact Parties is to shift the burden of caring for large numbers of refugees to the employers in designated factories in Jordan's free economic zones. External actors from the European Union thus exploit the economic and social pressure on the Jordanian government by the high numbers of refugees. Ultimately, refugees are a simple means to strike a deal toward Jordan's market expansion and formalisation of its economy. However, Syrian refugees have various motives why they do not take up low-paid jobs in factories, and there are many reasons why Jordanian companies hesitate to employ Syrians.



# Introduction

*I just thought that maybe my story could be worth being written. I might write it myself one day.*

This was the answer of a 50-year-old Syrian woman, a former teacher, in Amman in January 2017, when the researchers<sup>1</sup>—worried because the talk faltered slightly—had asked if the author's note-taking disturbed her. It was the second meeting with her, and the interview finally lasted for more than four hours. The woman was a Syrian refugee in Amman and one of the persons the author visited to understand how refugees made their living on the outset of a protracted refugee situation—forced to remain displaced for at least five years.

As much research on Syrian refugees has already been conducted in the Jordanian camps located in the north of the country near the Syrian border,<sup>2</sup> this study focuses on the less researched groups of Syrians who live in protracted displacement situations in the Jordanian capital Amman and its surroundings. Greater Amman, which includes the city and reaches into Balqa Governorate in the north-west, is an area where the majority of Syrian families and individuals have sought refuge after leaving the camps in northern Jordan, determined to try and make their living in town. In Amman city alone, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has registered 179,887 refugees from Syria, that is, 27 per cent of all registered Syrian refugees in 2017 (UNHCR, 2017). Including the unregistered refugees and migrants, Amman hosted an estimated 435,578 Syrians in 2016 (Ghazal, 2016). Only the most vulnerable among the registered refugees are eligible for assistance by the UNHCR. Those who are not registered live at risk of being caught by the police as illegals who will be deported or at least, arrested in a temporary camp near the Syrian border.

1 \ The research team consisted of the author and two local assistants (see section on methods of field research). The author is deeply grateful to the research assistants without whose help in collecting data the study would not have reached the depth and comprehensiveness presented in this *Paper*. Special thanks go to Conrad Schetter, Ruth Vollmer, Benjamin Etzold, Clara Schmitz-Pranghe, Katja Mielke and Mohammed Y. Aburok, whose comments contributed greatly to improve the clarity of the argument.

2 \ Among others, cf. Couatts & Fouad (2013) on the health crisis in the camps; Farishta (2014) on the impact of refugees in camps on Jordan's water resources; Wall et al. (2015) on information precarity in the camps. Some academic livelihood or work-related studies have been conducted in refugee camps and in the northern Jordanian cities of Irbid and al-Mafraq (Betts & Collier, 2015; Turner, 2015; Achilli, 2016; Bank, 2016).

## Box 1 Refugees in Jordan

*Jordanians have long been used to receive migrants and refugees from the region; the history of Amman itself is a history of settlers that established ever new quarters and thus shaped the structure of the city. Extrapolations of the Jordanian Department of Statistics calculated 10,265,514 inhabitants of Jordan in October 2018 (DoS, 2018). According to the national census of 2016, about one third of the inhabitants of Amman are non-Jordanians (see also Annex I for an overview of refugees in Jordan's governorates). The census of 2016 stated that out of the total non-Jordanian population, 1.265 million were Syrians, 636,270 Egyptians and there were 634,182 Palestinians that did not hold national identity cards. Iraqi nationals amounted to 130,911, and there were altogether 251,248 people from further smaller nationalities (Ghazal, 2016).*

*The largest group of people in a protracted refugee situation in Jordan are the Palestinians, who arrived in two large waves after the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967. Whereas the Palestinians arriving in 1948 received Jordanian citizenship, most of those coming after 1967 got temporary residence permits to be renewed every two to five years (El-Abed, 2004, 2005; Chatelard, 2010; for an overview of the various status of Palestinians in Jordan see Annex II). In 2017, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) had registered 2,175,491 Palestinian refugees staying in ten official camps in Jordan. Two of these camps are inside Amman (al-Hussayn and Wihdat), and three are in Greater Amman (Talbieh, Hittin (Marka), and Baqaa), hosting 186,442 Palestinian inhabitants that are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) besides many other inhabitants (UNRWA, 2017).*

*Nearly one million refugees from Iraq had arrived in 1991 and 2003; in 2016, there were still about 130,000 Iraqi refugees staying in Jordan (Ghazal, 2016). Syrian refugees started to arrive in Jordan in 2011. In 2012, 176,020 and in 2013, an estimated 301,620 refugees entered Jordan, of whom the UNHCR registered more than 290,000. In 2016, about 44,000 new Syrian refugees were registered (ACAPS, 2014; UNHCR, 2017b). In July 2017, the UNHCR had registered a total of 661,114 Syrian refugees in Jordan. By October 2018, the number of Syrian refugees registered with the UNHCR had increased to 671,919 persons (UNHCR, 2018c), mainly because of a high birth rate of Syrians and the rejection of contraceptives by Syrian men (Alabaster, 2016). Among the non-registered Syrian refugees, there are an estimated 17,000 Syrians with Palestinian origin (Amin, 2017). Only 17 per cent of the Syrian refugees are staying in camps, whereas 83 per cent are living in urban areas (UNHCR, 2018).*

*Of the estimated four million inhabitants of Amman, 1,441,300 were non-Jordanians, among them 435,578 Syrians in 2016. There were about 308,091 Palestinians who did not hold a Jordanian identity card (Ghazal, 2016). Jordan always has been a receiving country for Syrian migrants, and including these, the government of Jordan estimated the total number of Syrians living in Jordan at above 1.3 million in 2017 (MOPIC, 2018).*

As Jordan never joined the Geneva Refugee Convention of 1951 or its extension through the Protocol of 1967,<sup>3</sup> refugees can neither receive a legal asylum status nor Jordanian citizenship. Instead, they are considered as ‘guests’, which leaves them to arbitrary and ever-changing treatment by the government. In 1998, the government of Jordan agreed to a memorandum of understanding with the UNHCR according to which the UNHCR can register refugees and provide them with basic humanitarian assistance for six months that can be extended. The government of Jordan also accepted the principle of non-refoulement.

The two parties renewed the memorandum of understanding in 2014 at the height of the mass arrival of Syrian refugees (ILO, 2015). In March 2018, the government of Jordan announced the ‘regularisation’ or ‘amnesty’ for Syrians who had left Jordan’s refugee camps without government permission before July 2017 to seek better living conditions in towns and cities (UNHCR, 2018b). According to this policy, the Ministry of the Interior (MoI) issues cards for refugees that had previously not registered with the UNHCR. The MoI card allows them to legally stay in Jordan outside of camps (IRC, 2018). About 20,000 Syrian refugees had approached the UNHCR for regularisation by October 2018. The amnesty campaign has been extended until the end of March 2019 (Roya News, 2018). This policy change may increase the protection of Syrian refugees from arrests and punishment for illegal movement outside camps. However, many Syrian refugees do not meet Jordan’s stringent conditions to register as asylum seekers and can be stopped by the police at any time. If they cannot prove that they left the camps lawfully, they may be arrested, involuntarily transferred to the refugee camps or summarily deported to Syria (HRW, 2018).

In Greater Amman, many Syrian refugees have rented flats from Jordanians with Palestinian origin (Palestinian-Jordanians<sup>4</sup>) or stay in Palestinian camps (that have become solid settlements over the decades) among Palestinian-Jordanian neighbours. How Syrian refugees interact with the earlier generations of refugees from Palestine has not been studied yet. To close this research gap, the authors attempted to gain insights into how Syrian refugees secure their livelihood under the constrained conditions of being ‘guests’ with a volatile legal status in Jordan. This *Paper* thus examines how staying in communities of earlier refugee generations of Palestinian-Jordanians affects the livelihood of Syrian refugees.

‘Livelihood’ is used here as an analytical concept. Accordingly, securing one’s own or a family’s livelihood requires the ability to act (‘agency’) of a collective (part of a family, the nuclear family, extended family or a larger community) that is directed towards maintaining or re-achieving a way of life in dignity according to the standards of the collective. It takes on a perspective that is distinct from the ‘conditions of living’, which refer to the legal, political, social, or economic structures that constrain the scope of action of individuals and collectives (cf. also Grawert, 1998; De Haan, 2017).

To understand Syrian refugees’ actions particularly in Greater Amman and in Palestinian-Jordanian communities for maintaining a way of life in dignity, the author, together with the research assistants, conducted livelihood research using qualitative methods of social research. The team focused on Syrian refugees and Palestinian-Jordanian inhabitants, their histories of displacement, and their interaction in Greater Amman, covering the period from November 2016 to July 2017. The following chapter outlines the analytical livelihood approach applied and the methods of research, presents the conditions under which refugees are living in Greater Amman, and describes refugees’

3 \ According to Article 1 A2 of the Geneva Refugee Convention, the Convention referred only to refugees who had left their countries for causes that had occurred within Europe prior to 1951. The Protocol that was added in 1967 extends the validity of the Convention to refugees that left their countries of origin for causes occurring outside Europe and after 1951, through Art. 1, 2 of the Protocol (UNHCR, 2010).

4 \ ‘Palestinian-Jordanians’ refers to “Palestinians who were in Jordan on the date of the disengagement [of the Jordanian government from the West Bank in 1988] with no material connection to the West Bank or Gaza Strip, or who were Jordanian citizenship holders abroad. These are regarded as Jordanians for all legal purposes” (Jamjoum, 2011). The differences in legal status among Palestinians are outlined in Annex II.

self-help capacity ('agency') in an environment that is characterised by many constraints. Next, the *Paper* looks from a livelihood perspective into the neighbourhood relations of Syrian refugees in the largely Palestinian-Jordanian quarters of Amman and some suburbs, showing how relationships matter for the self-help capacity of the refugees. This is succeeded by a chapter describing collective activities by local initiatives to assist refugees. It examines different informal initiatives guided by the question whether they can be considered as an emerging social movement that fulfils relevant functions in families' attempts to secure their livelihood. Earning an income is crucial for the livelihood of refugees. An entire chapter is dedicated to access to work and explains the restrictions to employment as well as the efforts of international agencies to create niches for Syrian refugees to enter the labour market legally. That chapter also shows why many Syrians refuse to take up these offers as their priorities to secure their livelihood are different from those of the agencies. In the Conclusion, the different interventions in the protracted displacement situation of Syrians in Jordan are compared in light of their conducive or constraining effects on the agency (ability to act) of different groups of refugees.

## Making a living under precarious conditions

The roots of the analytical livelihood approach and of ‘livelihoods programming’ applied by humanitarian agencies since 2012 stem from development studies of the late 1980s, in particular, Robert Chambers (1988) who established the ‘sustainable livelihoods approach’. During the 1990s, development agencies adopted the approach for projects aiming to reduce poverty, based on assessments of the activities people carry out to sustain their living. Characteristic for this approach has been putting people and their agency as well as their perceptions of constraints and opportunities in the centre instead of resources or structural factors (see among many others IFAD, no year; DFID, no year). ‘Agency’ is defined as the ability of people to act, comprising the capacity for self-help and the power to determine activities people regard as appropriate.

‘Making a living’ in its meaning of earning sufficient money is just one component of the academic concept of securing one’s livelihood that guided the research on refugees from Syria in Jordan. This Chapter outlines the analytical livelihood approach and then contrasts the academic livelihood approach with humanitarian agencies’ ‘livelihood programming’. An explanation of the methods applied to conduct the academic livelihood research follows. After that, the Chapter specifies the living conditions of Syrian refugees in Greater Amman based on the perceptions of interview partners during the author’s field research. The last part highlights the opportunities and constraints of the livelihood-related agency of the refugees.

### Using a livelihood approach for research on refugees in receiving communities

From an analytical research perspective, a livelihood does not only comprise access to housing, income, land, possession of assets, markets, social services, aid, support or remittances from family members staying elsewhere but also reciprocal or other relationships contributing to making a living of individuals or collectives, mainly (parts of) families.

Hence, the focus is on people’ agency or self-help capacity originally present in the concept of Robert Chambers. Agency thus includes material efforts (jobs, growing food for personal use, accumulation of wealth, etc.) and social relationships. Crises, such as displacement due to war and violent conflict, affect the livelihood options available to social groups, closing some options and opening new ones, with great differences for disparate groups (Grawert, 1998a, Chapter 2).

The analytical livelihood approach enables researchers to capture the dynamics that shape the lives of displaced people. On the one hand, it conceptualises the options available to individuals and groups as an assessment of (changing) access to material needs. On the other, it looks into (changing) chances and opportunities generated through the interaction between displaced persons and individuals, formal and informal organisations as well as state authorities. Moreover, it captures the agency of displaced persons within networks in the receiving community as well as within those reaching into the larger society and beyond into the transnational social realm (De Haan, 2017; Grawert & Mielke, 2018).

The concept of the figuration of the ‘established’ and the ‘outsiders’ (Elias & Scotson, 1994) provides a useful avenue to capture livelihood-related interactions in the neighbourhoods or communities that receive refugees. The established-outsider figuration points to power differentials due to differences in internal cohesion and degree of organisation within the group of the established (the receiving community) and the outsiders (here: the refugees settling in the receiving community). According to this concept, the presence of newcomers enhances social control among the group of the established and induces them to reinforce markers of identity, derived from characteristics of the role models of the perceived ‘best’ members of their group. The newcomers tend to be stigmatised according to identity markers derived from those members of the group with the perceived ‘lowest’ performance. The established use this difference to reserve social or political positions for their members, thus reinforcing their cohesion, while

members of the newcomers are excluded. The newcomers identify themselves with the negative characteristics allotted to their group and accept the established as 'better' (Elias & Scotson, 1994). The assumed impact on refugees' livelihood is their withdrawal from public life in the neighbourhood and from interaction with the host community with the consequence of missing potential livelihood options available in the community (cf. also De Haan, 2017, pp. 6-9).

Livelihood studies hence focus on how people perceive life in dignity that is spent according to their own measures. Livelihood studies cover what people do to maintain their way of living and the capacity to act they have to make use of available options in a broad sense in the economic, social, cultural, political realms. Livelihood studies try to be responsive to the fact that people change and adjust their measure of a dignified life over time and according to varying contexts.

#### **Distinguishing humanitarian agencies' livelihoods programming from the academic approach**

Humanitarian agencies have adopted the livelihood approach for displaced people and refugees since 2012 (UNHCR, 2012). To foster people's resilience and self-reliance "throughout all phases of displacement" (UNHCR, 2015, p. 3), the UNHCR has created guidelines for "livelihoods programming" (UNHCR, 2015), which inform the agency's baseline assessments of the refugees' and the local population in the receiving communities' socio-economic situation together with assessments of the local market and value chain analyses. Humanitarian agencies use this baseline to appraise the vulnerability of refugees and define the "targeting of livelihood programmes" (UNHCR, 2015, p. 7) with a perspective of several years. "Livelihoods partners" (UNHCR, 2015, p. 8) cooperate in these programmes, and "livelihoods staff" (UNHCR, 2015, 9) receives guidance for professional work. The focus of the agencies' activities for sustainable livelihoods is on resilience and the market integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees through micro-credit programmes (UNHCR, 2015, p. 9).

Along the lines of the UNHCR livelihoods programming, the UNHCR office in Jordan has established a 'livelihood working group' consisting of most of the international organisations active in refugee assistance. The aim of the 'provision of livelihood' project is to implement "(i)mproved short term self-reliance measures in order to promote protection, human dignity and social cohesion in preparation for long-term economic opportunities" (UNHCR, 2016). Under the label of 'livelihood', the activities of the agencies focus on the provision of basic needs and assistance for the most vulnerable groups.<sup>5</sup> The International Labour Organisation (ILO), which is part of the livelihood working group, addresses, in particular, the problem of employment for Syrian refugees (ILO, 2017). The organisations forming the livelihood working group provide regularly updated data on the conditions of living and labour-related issues relevant for Syrian refugees, with a natural bias towards the registered ones.

Yet, the original intention of development agencies to establish an approach that focuses on people's agency has given way to a highly bureaucratic and technical approach that inevitably tends to objectify people as 'target groups'. Accordingly, researchers have criticised development agencies' livelihood programmes in that they are establishing "frameworks, toolboxes and flow diagrams with mechanic feedback arrows and little historical and theoretical depth" (Haan, 2017, pp. 3-4). The analytical livelihood approach applied in this *Paper* to generate knowledge on how refugees attempt to maintain a life in dignity, is in stark contrast to that as it focuses on the refugees and the context that enables refugees' agency.

5 \ The livelihood provisions project includes improving "the ability of vulnerable households to meet basic needs and stabilize household assets through community and municipality-based cash-for-work opportunities; (t)o provide short term, gender and disability sensitive livelihood tools and support to economically marginalized individuals; (t)o increase refugees' involvement in service provision in camps through cash for work ensuring age, gender, and diversity mainstreaming and the inclusion of vulnerable groups" (UNHCR, 2016).

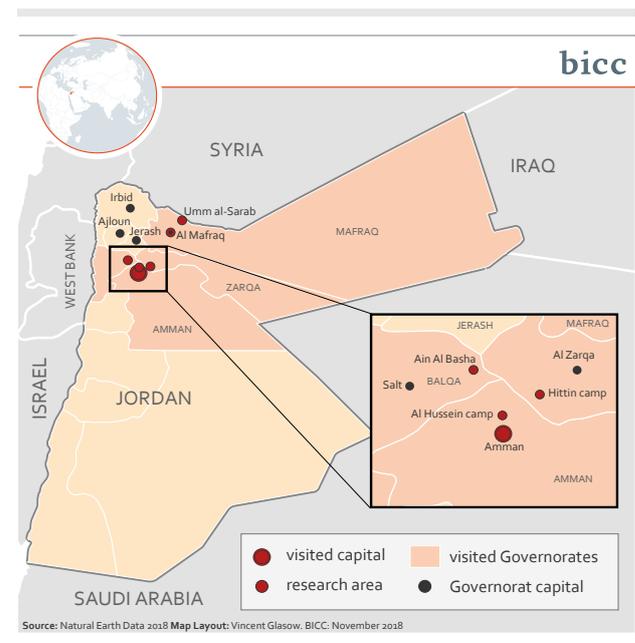
### Methods of field research

The comprehensive academic livelihood approach that includes established-outsider relations guides the analysis of interaction and interrelationships the research team was able to observe during their field research and which interview partners mentioned in their narrations. Accordingly, much of the research relied on observation and qualitative interviews with individuals and groups that the team had selected through purposive as well as snowball sampling while applying a maximum structural variation of the perspective (Kleining, 1982; see list of interview partners at the end of this *Paper*). Rawan Alhomeimat, who holds a Master's degree in Urban Planning, Habitat and International Cooperation from the Institute of Urbanism, Grenoble, France, and a Syrian student from the University of Jordan in Amman closely worked with the author as assistants. Through the contacts of the student assistant with Syrian refugees and support initiatives in Amman, the team was able to get access to a range of informants and interview partners during the intensive phase of field research, which took place from early November 2016 until the end of January 2017. The focus of the research on Syrians in Palestinian neighbourhoods and the issue of Syrians' response to the offers of the EU-Jordan Compact were developed on the basis of a preliminary field visit by Heidrun Bohnet. Findings were updated on the occasion of further visits of interview partners until July 2017.

The author and her assistants encouraged interview partners to tell their stories starting from their life in Syria, their displacement and movements until they reached Greater Amman. Then, the team asked them to describe their current life, including the means of living (aid, support, jobs, trade, etc.), relationships they are part of within and beyond their families and their experiences with neighbours. The author's research sites were some of the camps established by UNRWA for Palestinian refugees that have developed into urban and peri-urban settlements, among them mainly al-Hussayn, Hittin (Marka), Ain al-Basha and, for a comparison, Mafraq as a major receiving area for Syrian refugees in northern Jordan (see Map).

Map 1

### Research sites in Greater Amman



Among the interview partners were Syrian refugees as well as Jordanian and Palestinian landlords and neighbours of Syrians living in areas within and around Amman. The study covered various social classes, whole and partial families, women and men of different generations as well as informal initiatives created to assist refugees in Greater Amman. The research team visited some of the interview partners and initiatives several times and partly engaged in participant observation such as attending a Qur'an class in an Islamic centre. The team also consulted data and documents of the humanitarian agencies working with Syrian refugees in Jordan and the ILO as well as the relevant academic literature. The result of the study is a picture full of facets that deserve further and longer-term research on refugees' interaction with their neighbours, which this *Paper* aims to stimulate.

## Syrian refugees in Greater Amman

Most Syrian refugees who live in Greater Amman have been on the move since their arrival in Jordan in 2012 or 2013. For many, the place where they stayed in Amman in 2017 was still a transitional place. While each refugee's story is unique, the stories have also much in common. The experience of destruction due to war, the opportunities of movement from Syria to Jordan, and the particular conditions of living in town with the status of a refugee show commonalities that allow us to outline some general features of the livelihood of Syrian refugees in Greater Amman. Moreover, it has to be noted that the refugees who arrived in Jordan have some statistical particularities. Among the refugees registered by the UNHCR, more than 50 per cent are younger than 18 years old, and there are slightly more women (23.5 per cent) than men (21.7 per cent) of working age (18-59 years). 2.2 per cent of the refugees are women of 60 years and older, and 1.6 per cent are older men (UNHCR, 2017b). These data suggest that families or partial families form a large part of the Syrian refugees arriving in Jordan.<sup>6</sup>

Arriving in Jordan did not mark the beginning of living under precarious conditions. Most of the refugees had left their homes when the war killed family members, when relatives died under torture in the regime's prisons, or when their home was destroyed. The main areas of origin of the UNHCR-registered refugees were Deraa (41.8%), Homs (15.9%) and rural Damascus (11.9%) (UNHCR, 2017b). One example may suffice to describe the situation before arrival in Jordan.

They fled for political causes—the fear that the male family members would be recruited by the Syrian army or the FSA that consisted mostly of defected soldiers who fought on the side of the opposition against the Regime (*nidham*).<sup>7</sup> The course they took indicates that the family had no clear plan to leave

Syria, but tried first to spend time at safer places than their home so that they were able to return as soon as possible. They were 'internally displaced people' (IDPs) in Syria for several months. When hope for return and opportunities of staying as IDPs in Syria declined, they decided to cross the border to Jordan, where they already had some relatives. Many interview partners had similar experiences of displacement within Syria until they reached Greater Amman.

### Box 2 Account of displacement

*The family of an elderly couple interviewed originated from Duma, Sahet al-Ghanim near Damascus. The couple had owned two houses and a farm. The man had had a small laundry and was a sheep trader. When the war reached the village in 2012, his sheep were stolen and the laundry destroyed. The family hid in the basement while bombs hit their house. They said that it was the regime (nidham), 'the Syrian army', which did this. They saw their house and their farm go up in flames. They fled with four sons and three daughters. First, they moved to Adra, then Otaia, then Hamesh, and then still to another place. They were displaced again and again, staying in each place between two and five months. Sometimes, they paid rent; sometimes they were invited to stay. They were afraid that the nidham would force their sons or the sons-in-law to join the army or that the Free Syrian Army (FSA) would recruit them. Two daughters had left with their husbands for Jordan earlier on, and the elderly couple finally followed them. They rented a pick-up car for US \$2,500 together with other refugees and left the country with the whole family, except the wife's sisters who remained in Syria. In early 2013, the family arrived at Zaatari camp in Jordan and left the camp without any problem on the same day. They left in two groups, because they did not have enough money for all. They called their nieces and spent the first days at their place in Greater Amman.*

6 \ Among the unregistered refugees, too, there are many partial families, mostly widows or single women with children. As statistics about unregistered refugees are not available, this information relies on the insights from informal organisations engaging in voluntary assistance for refugees and on the author's observations and interviews.

7 \ For the practice of forceful recruitment in the Syrian war, cf. also Zuhur (2016, p. 200).

### **Moving from the Jordanian refugee camps to Greater Amman—or not**

Virtually all Syrian refugees who had fled to Jordan since mid-2012 were initially taken to the Zaatari or Azraq refugee camps, where most of them registered with UNHCR. Until July 2014, Jordan permitted refugees to leave the camps and move to urban areas, but later only allowed them to move if sponsored by a close relative who met other stringent conditions (“bail out” according to Achilli, 2017). This process was suspended in early 2015 when Syrian refugees were granted the permission to leave the camp briefly only after having obtained “vacation passes” (HRW, 2018).

Syrian refugees who cannot prove that they live outside of camps legally are at risk of being arrested by the Jordanian police. Human Rights Watch reports that when fathers are arrested, Syrian refugee families may split up between the camp and town and start to rely on the labour force of their children who then drop out of school to work. Until 2016, Syrians living outside camps without permission were unable to obtain the special identification cards needed to apply for work permits and enrol their children in school. Those living outside the camps without permission were also not eligible for the monthly cash grants UN agencies provide for the most vulnerable refugee families (HRW, 2018). This changed in 2016 (see below).

Nevertheless, all interview partners in Greater Amman tell the research team that they try by all means to cut the initial stay at the camp as short as possible as they want to move to Jordanian towns. Women in particular who have fled from Syria with their children mostly try to leave the refugee camps as soon as possible after registration to join members of the extended family in Jordanian towns. According to studies conducted in the camps, poor housing and, in particular, the lack of privacy, is one of the main reasons why many Syrian families—often headed by women—prefer moving to towns (see for example Ledwith, 2014; Jabbar & Zaza, 2014). Several interview partners report that the situation in the camps was chaotic until 2013, so that it was easy for them to leave the camp without hindrance. Refugees arriving

in 2014 or later tell us that they were kept at the camp for lengthy bureaucratic procedures and had to prove that they had a Jordanian citizen as a guarantor (cf. also Turner, 2015; Achilli, 2017). Others mention that they paid someone who took them out of the camp secretly and immediately. For this purpose, some Jordanians pretend to be a brother of a Syrian and direct them where to move, such as to Hittin camp in Amman, which has cheaper housing opportunities than many other places.

Whereas registration by the UNHCR is the official entrance procedure for Syrian nationals, Syrians with Palestinian origin are not eligible for protection under the UNHCR mandate. The Jordanian government considers them as cases to be dealt with by UNRWA, which takes care of Palestinians categorised as vulnerable groups. As Syrian Palestinians are not allowed to enter the common refugee camps, they rely on finding flats in Jordanian towns. Those discovered by the Jordanian police are detained in a special camp called ‘Cyber City’ close to the Syrian border. The Jordanian government has deported some of these refugees (only men, who had to leave their families behind in Cyber City) to Syria, thus violating the right to protection from refoulement (HRW, 2014). The reason for these harsh measures is that the Jordanian government refuses “to solve Israel’s problems”, as Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour stated publicly in 2013; in fact, the Jordanian government fears that many more Palestinians will enter Jordan from Syria seeking protection, which the government is not ready to grant (ARRD, 2015). The existence of these refugees hence touches on the sensitivities of the Middle East conflict between Israel and the Arab states, which puts this group of refugees in a worse situation than the Syrian nationals.

The most common type of accommodation for refugee families outside the refugee camps are rented flats in town or the suburbs of Amman including those extending into neighbouring governorates such as Ain al-Basha in Balqa governorate. However, the cost of the rent, the electricity bill, the poor condition of the flat (broken sanitation, dripping taps and leaking pipes, damp walls), and often the great

distance of the flat from areas where other relatives stay have made many people move from one flat to another. The rent for a flat with a salon, kitchen, bathroom and two bedrooms ranged between US \$210 and 280 in 2017; the electricity bill easily reached US \$70, as often between four and eight persons live there.

Often three generations stay together in the same flat; unmarried youth with families and small children, aunts and uncles and sometimes grandmother or grandfather or both. In a few cases, some family members managed to rent flats next door; this seems to be the most preferable option, in particular for women, because this allows them to enjoy both privacy and close contact with the extended family. Complaints concentrate on issues like the low quality of the buildings and still high rents to pay. There are no complaints about overcrowded flats. An older woman explained that it was possible to stay with so many people because the women kept wearing veils in the house.

### **Staying near Syria as a priority**

Although living conditions in Jordan are difficult for many Syrian refugees, many do not want to join the UNHCR resettlement programme to a third country. Several interview partners report that the UNHCR has offered them and their whole family to join a resettlement programme to the United States (interviews in Amman and Mafraq, November 2016). The team's male interview partners welcome the opportunity of resettlement more than women do as they expect to find employment abroad. Women, however, tend to refuse directly and in some cases do not even talk to their husbands before they make this decision. The reasons usually are anxieties about the strange country and its culture, the fear of having to stay in an environment without Muslim neighbours and, in particular, fears that their daughters might be abducted and assaulted or lose the Islamic values when abroad (interviews with Syrian women in Amman, January 2017, and Mafraq, November 2016). Rumours influence the Syrian women, such as cases where the American government took the children from a mother because she had yelled at them and beaten them. The reflections of one of the team's interview

partners on resettlement reveals the dilemmas women often feel confronted with:

*America is very far and a foreign country, but on the other hand then, we know that in the West there is more humanity and they respect the human being while here, we have no value and our rights are lost. We also know that education is better, and we will also have healthcare there. So, we may change our mind and reconsider the offer, if still possible. My sister's daughters are in America, and they are happy there, and they are all learning the language, adults and kids (Syrian woman in al-Hussayn camp, Amman, January 2017).*

According to several interview partners, contact with relatives who have been resettled to the United States is not guaranteed; one Syrian refugee in Amman explains that her family no longer communicates with the relatives abroad, because "they are not friends at all" (Syrian woman in al-Hussayn, January 2017). Rarely Syrians interviewed state that they receive assistance from resettled relatives. This attitude may explain partly why in 2017, only 4,989 refugees left Jordan for resettlement (to more than 13 countries), whereas in 2016, 21,000 persons (still less than five per cent of the Syrian refugees in Jordan) had been resettled (UNHCR, 2018e).

The following sections provide insights into the conditions under which the majority of refugees from Syria live in Greater Amman, most of them with the perspective of staying on until return to Syria becomes possible.

### **Illness**

The number of persons suffering from injuries and illnesses among the Syrian refugees is very high. According to the UNHCR, the number of vulnerable people with regard to health increased from 48 per cent of all (registered) refugees in 2015 to 55 per cent in 2017, of which five per cent were categorised as severely vulnerable persons (UNHCR, 2018d). Nearly 20,000 (three per cent) of the refugees were disabled. The UNHCR considers nearly 30 per cent of the (registered) refugees as in need of special assistance (UNHCR, 2017b).

Within the team's (non-representative) sample, too, many interview partners complain about suffering from pain or illnesses or take care of disabled children and family members with chronic diseases. Men frequently suffer from back problems and are either completely unable to work or can only work for a limited period of time. Mental health issues among men are also abundant. Wives often describe their husbands as depressed. The statement of one woman is representative for many others as it shows what this implies for the family. Her husband is "very depressed; he doesn't want to get out of the room or see anyone; he is always very angry, because he cannot work and feels discriminated against" (interview with a female Syrian refugee in al-Hussayn camp, November 2016). These accounts show that illnesses among the refugees are a result of their living conditions, which include the difficulties of finding employment and work as well as discrimination by neighbours (see the section on neighbourhood relations for details). One more example will suffice to shed light on the effects of illness or injury on Syrian refugee families (see Box 3).

The example shows that in cases where a man is unable to work due to an injury, the wife tries to care for the family by seeking a cheap flat, applying for food vouchers from the UNHCR, starting a home business, and in addition, using all means to get support from relatives and sponsors to pay for medical treatment. Complications requiring surgeries bring a household to its edge; Syrian refugees increasingly are unable to cover the costs as their displacement becomes protracted and they have used up their savings.

Between 2012 and 2014, Syrian refugees benefitted from a special policy of the Jordanian government that provided free health care to the newcomers. In the following years, the government included Syrian refugees in the subsidies that uninsured Jordanians enjoy (HRW, 2018). A study from 2015 that focused on the perceptions of Syrian refugees of health provision in Jordan found that most of the refugees considered the costs to be the primary constraint to health care access. The interview partners in that study identified "(p)erceived unfair aid distribution,

### Box 3

#### Effects of injury on a refugee family

*A Syrian refugee family that lives in Hittin camp is struggling with deteriorating living conditions. After having completed her high school exam, the mother worked in a private company for storage security in Homs, Syria, while her husband was employed at a restaurant and later at a vegetable shop. Her husband was injured when a bomb dropped on the shop. They left their home, and learned that soon after, their house was also hit by a bomb. The family arrived in Jordan in 2014. Since then, the mother has been caring for her husband and looking after the two small children who were both born in Jordan. UNHCR post-natal support to women had already been discontinued when she gave birth. Her husband's leg injury from the bomb attack in Syria prevents him from working as the wound was not healing after some surgery funded by a French agency and performed in a nearby hospital. The mother has not been able to source any funding for more surgery so far, which will cost JOD 3,500 (US \$4,900). He will continue to need further treatment.*

*The family receives food vouchers from UNHCR. In 2016, they received some support for paying the rent, but this has stopped. They have used up the money they came with and are currently receiving some support from her brother, who has a job in Irbid. They also receive donations from persons who help people in need, whom the woman does not know. One of her sisters fled to Germany and is now trying to invite the family, as a resettlement could make treatment of the injury possible. Currently, the woman is planning to start training as a seamstress in Marka, the quarter to which Hittin camp belongs. She is looking forward to working from home (interview with a refugee woman from Syria in Hittin, January 2017).*

discrimination and tensions with host communities" (Al-Rousan et al., 2018, p. 251) as the main reasons for health problems, thus confirming the above statement of the team's Syrian interview partner on the causes of her husband's depression.

During the interviews in 2016 and 2017, several individuals mentioned that family members needed surgery but that the family could not afford it. One woman hoped to be eligible for resettlement and get all the treatment needed for her grandchild for free in America (mother of two widowed daughters, Amman, 2017). A couple who had one daughter did not have the money to pay for surgery the wife needed to be able to give birth again but was content with one child (Syrian family in Ain al-Basha, 2016). Attitudes of the refugees about the entitlement to health care

that goes beyond the very basic needs vary between different families, ranging from very modest to high expectations and anger about not being treated according to the expected level.

In 2018, the Jordanian government revoked the eligibility for subsidised health care for Syrian refugees who lived outside refugee camps. The new policy requires Syrian refugees to pay 80 per cent of the rate for health care like any other foreigner in Jordan (UNHCR, 2018e). At public hospitals, 80 per cent of the costs for treatment have to be paid up-front (HRW, 2018). The increase in fees for services for Syrian refugees amounts to twice to five times the former rate. Although not an illness, giving birth has become very expensive in hospitals with the charge rising from JOD 60 (US \$85) before the policy change to JOD 240 (US \$338) in 2018 (Dunmore & Sakkab, 2018).

This statement points to a huge discrepancy in Jordanian policies introduced in 2018. On the one hand, the status regularisation of Syrian refugees outside camps may increase options for legal employment,

access to aid and education. On the other hand, the closure of subsidies for health care will affect the majority of Syrian refugees who depend on support to get necessary medical treatment.

Two-thirds of the Jordanian population are covered by health insurance. In Amman, the percentage of insured Jordanians is lower (50.2 per cent) than in all other governorates, whereas the percentage of Jordanians with health insurance in Balqa governorate is the highest (76 per cent) (Ghazal, 2016). The reason for this difference is probably related to the fact that a large number of Palestinian-Jordanians live in Amman. Lower class Jordanians either depend on donations or, if they are lucky, get access to government services, which they cannot rely on as they are not legally binding. Palestinian-Jordanians who are categorised as vulnerable people are supposed to receive assistance from UNRWA in those quarters of Amman that are still called 'camps'. UNRWA receives donations from the Arab and Turkish governments as well as donations from private sponsors (UNRWA, 2018). The Royal Court of Jordan also has its own support scheme:

#### Box 4

##### Impact of the abolishment of medical subsidies for Syrian refugees

*According to a survey of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), three-quarters of Syrian household members who are unable to get medicine or care for chronic illnesses state that they cannot afford the costs. The survey further establishes that 45 per cent of the Syrian children under the age of six do not receive necessary health care such as vaccinations (HRW, 2018). The majority of registered Syrian refugees already spent 40 to 45 per cent of their income on medicines and medical treatment when the subsidies of 2016/17 were still in place (IRC, 2018). The UNHCR warns that the cost of transport and other barriers to public health services may induce Syrian refugees to buy drugs at the market without a medical diagnosis and to deliver at home (UNHCR, 2018e). Bill Van Esveld, a children's rights researcher at Human Rights Watch, points out that "(t)he move to regularize the status of Syrian refugees in Jordan's urban areas means that they no longer have to live underground, promising a better future for their children ... Jordan and its international donors should not undermine these improvements by pulling the rug out from under refugees on health care that families are already struggling to afford" (HRW, 2018).*

#### Box 5

##### Aid by UNRWA vs aid by the Royal Court of Jordan

*According to an elderly Palestinian refugee living in al-Hussayn camp, the Jordanian Royal Hashemite Court provides the local hospital with medical supplies. There, the interview partner receives standard drugs for free. He only has to pay for special medication, which costs JOD 25 (US \$35) per month. He is not eligible for assistance by UNRWA (not categorised as vulnerable). He stresses that he prefers the help he can obtain through the Royal Court, because it includes the costs for staying in hospital whereas UNRWA only provides medicine. He tells us that some time ago, UNRWA used to distribute food packages containing sugar and flour to his family, but they no longer do so. The man believes that to avoid aid dependence, assistance through the Royal Court is better than through UNRWA. Moreover, he emphasises that he favours a general social system that supports the elderly and the poor (interview, January 2017).*

Hence, in the Palestinian communities that host Syrian refugees, many inhabitants do not have better access to health services than the refugees from Syria among them.

## Poverty

According to UNHCR figures, 80 per cent of all registered refugees live off less than three US dollars per day (Dunmore, 2018); 85 per cent of the refugees staying outside the refugee camps live below the national poverty line of Jordan (UNHCR, 2018e).

In 2015, Jordan became the first country where the UNHCR used the iris scan technology for the identification of refugees eligible for monthly assistance in cash, a safe method to prevent fraud or double receipts of payments for refugees staying outside camps in towns (Dunmore, 2015). Besides 100,000 refugees inside the camps, 30,000 Syrian refugees outside the camps received cash assistance in 2018 (UNHCR, 2018b, e). The UNHCR also provides monthly food vouchers (value of JOD 120; US \$169) and medicine (value up to JOD 125; US \$176), in particular to those with chronic illnesses. During the interviews, several Syrian refugees complained that the UNHCR did not recognise them as poor and refused to include them in the category of refugees who are identified through iris scan and eligible for cash assistance.

Poverty means that refugees, in particular the elderly and women with children, deliberately try to eat little to save costs. It also means saving on gas heating so that they either huddle under blankets or use one single gas heater around which the whole family gathers together. Small children sometimes faint from breathing in the gas. Illnesses—even of children—are not immediately treated, or treatment is even abandoned because the families cannot afford it (authors' observations in houses of refugees in Amman and Mafraq, 2016).

Poverty forces refugee families to send their children to work and agree to child marriages, which leads to them dropping out of school. Child labour can have severe consequences for families that are staying as undocumented refugees outside the refugee camps. When the Jordanian police arrests the children, they cannot be reunified with their parents as the children will not tell where they live. A study by Achilli (2017) on undocumented families reveals that forced encampment and even deportation of minors to Syria increasingly follow after the arrest of

working children. Achilli (2017) stresses that this violates children's rights severely but is very difficult to deal with because of the irregular status of their families.

According to the Islamic culture, Muslims should preferentially donate to widows and orphans to protect them from poverty. However, this culture can be abused, as the example below reveals:

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### Box 6

#### Abuse of widows and orphans

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*A family with two widowed daughters and several orphans staying in al-Hussayn camp receives occasional visitors, who come because they want to help orphans. The visitors claim to know about the family from other people or through orphanage centres. The mother reports that people keep telling her and her daughters that they are lucky because they have orphans; this means that they will receive much more assistance. In fact, the family has been able to move into an apartment in al-Hussayn and pay the rent of JOD 200 (US \$281), as part of the cost is covered by benefactors who promised that they would pay the rent for one year. The benefactors wanted to help them because there are four orphans in the house.*

*The visitors intending to donate to widows and orphans are often men from different backgrounds—Syrians, Jordanian–Palestinians and Jordanians. Some of them said that they intended to sponsor the orphans, but then started to ask their mothers out or immediately proposed to marry them, although all these men were already married and mostly old. When the young mothers refused, the visitors stopped coming and donating. Some men would ring them up at night and tell them that they will help the orphans and then start talking dirty. The daughters always refused and hung up the phone. Once a woman from al-Aboura centre (an Islamic centre in the neighbourhood) called the young women and tried to persuade them to enter into an arranged marriage. However, the young mothers had received the information that the woman would be paid by the groom-to-be if they accepted the offer and refused the deal.*

*One of the young women reports that even the doctor who had agreed on the surgery for her father asked her out. She believed that this is why the family has not heard from him again about the surgery appointment for one-and-a-half months (interview in al-Hussayn, January 2017).*

*The young widows managed to reject the men with the support of their mother and keep their dignity despite their need of money—at least for the time being.*

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In another case, a young refugee whose two children were sick and whose husband was working during the day, mentioned a similar behaviour of men. In urgent need of money, she agreed to have extra-marital sex, but felt exploited and desperate at the same time (interview in al-Hussayn, January 2017). Young female refugees are thus under massive pressure to protect and defend themselves against sexual assaults by men. The men in these examples ignore the cultural rules of proposing for marriage, which would require the involvement of the parents and further relatives, negotiations about a bride price and, hence, meetings between the families of groom and bride, if meant seriously. Their behaviour reveals a high degree of discrimination of the Syrian women, implying that as refugees they are weak and poor and hence, easy and cheap victims that can be abused. The accounts reveal that female refugees, in particular widows, are weakened as the protection through established family structures is lacking and legal protection is almost non-existent.

### Adjustments by a Jordanian aid and development organisation to the mass arrival of refugees

Social protection in Jordan comprises subsidies, cash transfer schemes, tax exemptions and social services.<sup>8</sup> The public social welfare system in Jordan applies only to Jordanian employees and is based on monthly contributions of 5.5 per cent of salaries from each the employer and the employee. Foreigners and refugees are excluded; however, the Jordanian social

welfare system also does not reach poor, unemployed or informally hired Jordanians in need. The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD), was established as a charity organisation for poor Jordanians as early as in 1977. JOHUD has close connections to the Jordanian government and operates alongside various ministries towards implementing the government's development plans (JOHUD, 2018). Since 2013, the agency has extended its assistance beyond poor Jordanians and included Syrian refugees. This organisation is presented here in some detail to provide insights into the response of Jordanian institutions to the needs of Syrian refugees.

### Box 7 JOHUD

*JOHUD has a large office in a multi-organisation building, which is protected by security officers at each entrance. Big framed photos of King Abdullah and King Hussein are hanging on the wall like in any government office. According to the human resources manager, JOHUD is "the biggest and oldest Jordanian NGO, ... currently running 51 development centres all over Jordan and employing over 800 persons in total" (interview in November, 2016). According to JOHUD's homepage, 2,500 volunteers work in partnership with the organisation (JOHUD, 2018a). Princess Basma bint al-Hussayn is the chair of JOHUD's board of trustees. Obviously, JOHUD is a government-organised non-governmental organisation (NGO), which is a typical phenomenon in countries with a public sector-dominated economy (Brown & Kortzen, 1989).*

*JOHUD operates in the fields of poverty alleviation, empowerment of women and community development, targeting less fortunate Jordanians. The manager emphasises that Palestinians are well integrated in the Jordanian society and maintains that there are no more Palestinian refugees in Jordan as they all received a Jordanian passport and have become part of the social tissue.<sup>1</sup> They are included in JOHUD's projects like any other disadvantaged Jordanian. More recently, Syrian refugees have also been covered by JOHUD's projects (cf. JOHUD, 2018). The manager claims that in contrast to Palestinian-Jordanians, tensions have occurred between Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities, predominantly in Mafraq province, since 2012 (cf. also MerciCorps, 2012).*

8 \ According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Jordan's social security system consists of four major programmes targeting different social groups.

\ "a public social insurance programme administered by the Social Security Corporation (SSC), which covers all workers subject to the rules of the Labour Law regardless of their sex or nationalities ranging between 16 and 60 years old for males and 16 and 55 for females, as well as public employees not subject to civil or military retirement law, and Jordanians employed at foreign political, military or international mission in Jordan;

\ a public program for the civil service and military which is currently being phased out;

\ a publicly funded social assistance programme through the National Aid Fund (NAF);

\ an assistance programme for Palestinian refugees delivered through the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)." (ILO, 2017a).

The increasing resort to self-organised social assistance among Jordanians has been studied by Baylouny (2010), a deeper discussion of which will be beyond the scope of this Paper.

1 \ This is a personal view of the interview partner and does not reflect the difficult legal status of Palestinian-Jordanians (for details, see Annex II).

A closer look at the tensions between marginalised Jordanians and Syrian refugees in Mafraq is justified here as it provides insights not only into the relationship between refugees and host communities but also into responses of the Jordanian extended social welfare system. According to the human resources manager, JOHUD was one of the first NGOs to notice these tensions that started in Mafraq, an area where high numbers of poor Jordanians had been living already before the Syrian crisis started and the province where the largest refugee camp al-Zaatari received Syrians crossing the border.<sup>9</sup>

As Syrians started to become part of Jordanian communities in many parts of Jordan, JOHUD gave up its focus on assisting solely poor Jordanians. Since 2013, it has included Syrians in their projects making sure that at least 50 per cent of the beneficiaries still are Jordanians. JOHUD has never worked in projects dedicated only to Syrians and never in the Syrian camps (human resource manager of JOHUD, Amman, November 2016).

The repercussions of the Syrian crisis have led to significant changes for JOHUD. Earlier on, the organisation had received basic funding by the Jordanian government and raised additional funds from various donors. In 2013, the Jordanian government stopped subsidising JOHUD. Since then, the organisation has been relying on fundraising for its ongoing assistance of Jordanians who are living below the poverty line with initial capital to start small projects. JOHUD is competing with other local organisations in getting project proposals approved by international donors, which provide funding for limited periods of time. Currently, JOHUD is working as implementing organisation for the World Food Programme in training young Jordanians in poverty pockets, for the UNHCR in women empowerment projects for Jordanians and Syrians, and for UNICEF targeting both Jordanian and Syrian children. In cooperation with the German development agency GIZ, JOHUD runs a project rehabilitating water supply and sewage for Syrians and Jordanians in Irbid (human resource manager of JOHUD, Amman, November 2016; cf. also JOHUD, 2018;

<sup>9</sup> \ The population of Mafraq province more than doubled between 2012 and 2015, due to incoming refugees from Syria (Malkawi, 2015).

## Box 8

### Tensions between Jordanian inhabitants and Syrian refugees in Mafraq

*The local JOHUD team witnessed increasing grievances among marginalised Jordanians about the quantity of aid that international organisations distributed to the refugees at the beginning of the crisis. Poor Jordanians who were no better off than the Syrian refugees were not considered. Moreover, as Syrians began to sell the food packages they had received as in-kind aid on the black market of Mafraq, the small grocery shops run and frequented by Jordanians were not able to compete with the cheap food appearing on the market and made losses. Furthermore, growing numbers of Jordanians had to leave their apartments in Mafraq, because of rising rents that they could no longer afford as an effect of rent subsidies from UNHCR for Syrians.<sup>1</sup> Further repercussions of the mass settlement of refugees in Mafraq and the subsequent impoverishment of Jordanians were visible in changed livelihood strategies. Reportedly, some Jordanians started to work in blue-collar and casual jobs (that usually are taken by migrants). Allegedly a Jordanian mother told the manager of JOHUD that “he shouldn’t be shocked if he sees her daughters getting out of a stranger’s car from the Gulf” (interview in Amman, November 2016), indicating that poverty has become so severe that Jordanian girls are driven into prostitution. According to the manager of JOHUD, “the culture of shame has faded dramatically after the arrival of Syrians ... Things have changed a lot. New houses for prostitution have emerged—a crucial indicator of change because people at Mafraq used to be very conservative.” According to the manager, JOHUD immediately informed the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the rising grievances and adverse developments following the mass influx of Syrian refugees into Mafraq province. They suggested to the ministries to implement a similar policy as the Jordanian government had used towards Iraqi refugees, which had obliged donors to allot a share of 25 per cent of any assistance for refugees to less fortunate members of the Jordanian host communities. The Jordanian government adopted this policy for communities that received Syrian refugees soon after this request (cf. also JOHUD, 2018). However, according to the JOHUD human resources manager, a share of 25 per cent of the incoming aid funds is not sufficient to support the poor Jordanians and compensate them for the hardships they suffer because of the mass influx of Syrian refugees (interview with the human resource manager of JOHUD, Amman, November 2016).*

<sup>1</sup> \ This was confirmed by a Jordanian pastor whom the author consulted in Mafraq in November 2016 and by Ann-Christin Wagner, who did her PhD research in Mafraq (oral communication in November, 2016).

2016). This indicates that a reliance on international aid has replaced state subsidies for this NGO in the context of the mass arrival of Syrian refugees and increased international funding. Moreover, the case of JOHUD shows that they were no longer able to focus on charity for poor Jordanians only given that the newcomers deeply affected the livelihood of the local population, which has been most outstanding in Mafraq.

Different from Mafraq province, JOHUD staff members operating in the three community development centres in Amman have not observed any tensions between Syrians and Jordanians in Amman, although competition in the labour market has been strong in the urban areas. According to the human resource manager of JOHUD, Syrians have merged into the society of the city as they used to live in Amman even before the Syrian crisis (Amman, November 2016). This observation must be verified and, if this is true, further explained. The section on neighbourhood relations below will do this.

#### **Livelihood-related agency of the refugees**

The sections above show that Syrian refugees are subject to numerous legal and social constraints. Those who are poor or sick depend on aid and, hence, on the decisions about their treatment (including selection for resettlement) by the UNHCR and local humanitarian and development agencies. However, the refugees also make their own decisions and act independently, first and foremost by leaving the refugee camps in high numbers. These actions indicate some capacity to act ('agency') towards self-determined ends, despite adverse conditions.

Initially, when the camps were still being set up, leaving the camps required finding 'traffickers' who helped the refugees to circumvent camp bureaucracy and make their way to Amman. Later on and still today, Syrian refugees who have relatives in Jordan can be bailed out through a guarantor. Trans-local family networks thus open up more livelihood options that they can use through their own agency. Many Syrian refugees, however, do not have such networks. Hence, they face more difficulties and are forced to use

irregular and expensive ways to reach Amman without a guarantor, such as using their savings (if they have any) to pay Jordanians to pretend to be a relative. Syrians who arrive in Jordan empty-handed do not have this option and either stay in the camps or choose a life as irregular persons with all the risks of being arrested, encamped or deported. A priority for the refugee families interviewed in Amman has been privacy—which is a matter of preserving their dignity, especially for women—, which they seek to achieve by staying with their core or extended family in rented flats, be it legally or as undocumented persons.

Housing was affordable at the beginning of the refugee influx. Over the years, rents have increased even for flats that are in bad shape, in particular in overcrowded Mafraq, but in other areas of Jordan as well including Greater Amman. Syrian refugees take action by moving to different flats and trying their best to join other family members, thus laying the ground for better opportunities of keeping their own culture and identity under adverse conditions in a foreign country.

Illness, particularly when it affects the men, appears to be a nearly insurmountable problem for many families, as it prevents the men from taking the initiative and deprives them of own agency. Illness also seems to be inextricably linked to the traumas of the war and the banishment of Syrians from employment in the jobs that they had been trained to do before. Under these conditions, women have to take over small service jobs that they can do from home and to go out and ask relatives for help—who may still be in Syria or abroad as part the family's trans-local network. Women also ask for help in the neighbourhood, from informal aid initiatives, and sometimes, humanitarian agencies. The activities pursued by most of the interviewed refugees indicate a strong desire to keep going by adhering as closely as possible to the ways they know from home.

Being a refugee, losing husbands and family members in the war and being forced to take responsibility for families on their own are conditions that throw many Syrian women into poverty. They try to keep their dignity and a way of life that resembles at

least faintly the livelihood they used to have in Syria. However, there is a fine line between managing life in poverty and making decisions out of desperation, which can force a mother to earn money by selling her body—with or without (forced) marriage—to have the means to care for herself and her children. The horrifying experience of war in Syria, the displacement and continuous movement from flat to flat in Jordan, the attempts to adjust to the new environment in Greater Amman and the illnesses in the family all influence women's attitudes. The mother interviewed in al-Hussayn camp (see Box 6) is convinced that marrying at a young age (13 and 15), as it has been common in many parts of Syria, will become less frequent in the future. Women have become more self-confident and are no longer prepared to submit to men who want to control them. The agency of these women is characterised by steadfastness towards the approaches of men, offers of money, marriage and donations, in order to preserve their self-esteem.

Refusing offers for resettlement is a way of securing a way of life that is still close to the livelihood people had in Syria. Women, in particular, hesitate to leave Jordan despite poor living conditions to stay close to Syria so that they may return as soon as the violence subsides. The option of resettlement, however, appears to be a solution for women in families with ill members, mainly because treatment is expensive in Jordan and they expect cheaper medical care in Western countries. Men are in a genuine dilemma as they suffer because they have lost their role as breadwinner for the family and hence, a crucial component of what they consider life in dignity. It is for this reason that they would agree more easily than women to resettlement, hoping to have a better opportunity to return to the role that is expected of a man.

As a whole, the section has shown that the family is the crucial unit around which refugees from Syria build their livelihood. They embrace or refuse available options having the well-being of spouses and children as well as parts of the extended family in mind. To gain

a more comprehensive understanding of the ways refugees from Syria cope with protracted displacement in Greater Amman, the author will examine how these options are affected within neighbourhoods of former Palestinian refugees in the following.

# Neighbourhood relations between Syrian refugees and Jordanian–Palestinians

Many Syrian refugees have found flats in the Palestinian ‘camps’—quarters of Amman like al-Hussayn camp or in the surrounding governorates like Ain al-Basha. However, as they have no income and often depend on UNHCR food vouchers, many of them are indebted to previous or current landlords, who often live in the same house. According to several interview partners, landlords and landladies will be patient and understanding when the Syrian refugees cannot pay the rent and let them pay it in very small instalments even after they have moved out. This holds true for landlords and landladies from any origin—Palestinian, Jordanian or Iraqi. Some Palestinian-Jordanians and Iraqi owners of apartments only rent to Syrians (interviews with Syrian tenants and Palestinian-Jordanian landlords in Ain al-Basha and Hittin, November 2016 and January 2017).

Whereas Syrian respondents consider this as an act of friendliness, in fact, they are a potential goldmine for landlords. The UNHCR and other international humanitarian agencies paid the rents for many Syrian refugees outside camps for an initial period of six months, which became an incentive for landlords to increase the rents. Consequently, Syrian families plunged into a debt trap when UNHCR subsidies stopped and they were no longer to afford the rent. This has not only occurred in Mafraq in northern Jordan, where the number of inhabitants doubled due to the influx of Syrian refugees (Bank, 2016), but also in Greater Amman.

Many Syrian refugees have moved to al-Hussayn as well as other Palestinian former camps, for example, in al-Zarqa governorate, to join relatives who already live there. Among the refugees from Syria, there is a tendency not to interact much with one’s neighbours, no matter whether they are also Syrians, Iraqis or Jordanians. Syrian interview partners report that they do not trust them and that they prefer to spend their time with their already extended family. The following sections provide insights into the refugees’ perception of their neighbours and vice versa.

## Neighbours

Ain al-Basha is a small middle-class town in the periphery of Amman where extended Jordanian families have lived for a long time and owned the land. This peri-suburban neighbourhood is located close to a Palestinian camp and therefore inhabited by native Jordanians as well as Jordanians with Palestinian origin that have managed to acquire some wealth. Some of those Palestinians who got the Jordanian citizenship through a ‘yellow passport’<sup>10</sup> migrated to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries and invested their income in a house in Ain al-Basha. Some rent out flats, often to Syrian refugees. Most of the Syrian refugees interviewed in Ain al-Bash consider their neighbourhood as kind and helpful; Jordanian landlords with Palestinian origin have been welcoming and supportive to the refugees. As the majority of refugees in this neighbourhood came from rural areas in Syria and was used to living in large houses and own land, it is still hard for them to adapt to the cramped conditions.

In contrast to a middle-class area like Ain al-Basha, Hittin camp in Marka, a suburb of Amman, had consisted of tents in the 1950s like all other Palestinian refugee camps and has gradually become a low-class quarter of Amman inhabited mainly by Palestinian refugees and their offspring. UNRWA is in charge of the camp, and government regulations are not valid as long as UNRWA takes care of the settlement. Traders have negotiated special contracts with UNRWA so that they can turn part of their houses into shops. Some of the camp inhabitants rent out flats to Syrians. A local trader says, “people do everything under UNRWA, but the land will belong to the government when they leave for Palestine ...”, indicating the temporary status of Palestinians living in Jordan, which has lasted for 70 years already (more explanations in Annex II). The mountain site across the road passing Hittin camp does not belong to the UNRWA-controlled camp, but to private owners. Many new houses are being constructed there because the influx of

10 \ Those who originated from the West Bank but stayed within Jordan. For more information on the passport system see Annex II.

**Box 9****Low-cost housing and privacy**

*A Syrian family who had arrived from Homs in 2014 has just recently moved to a new flat in Hittin camp, because the rent of their previous flat was increased from JOD 85 (US \$119) to JOD 100 (US \$141), although it had no windows. The family has to pay JOD 90 (US \$126) plus fees for water and electricity for the new flat, which the woman considers as "healthy", because it has windows.*

*The woman, who cares for her injured husband and two small children, has some relationships with other Syrian women in the neighbourhood, but not with Palestinians. She wants to visit the Islamic centre nearby. Her husband has two brothers who stay in Marka, the suburb within which Hittin camp is located. The woman feels comfortable in the new neighbourhood as everybody minds their own business. The main problems are the rising rents and transport expenses (interview with a Syrian woman in Hittin, January 2017).*

Syrians promises high profits for landlords who rent out flats to them. Within Hittin, however, Syrians with very low income stay in small and simple flats rented out by Palestinian-Jordanian landlords, as the example in Box 9 shows.

This example is typical for Syrian families staying in the Palestinian camps. They are absorbed with their own affairs and problems and mostly relate to their family, not to the neighbourhood. The only attractive place to visit besides regular shopping with food vouchers is the nearby Islamic centre. However, the local population increasingly perceives Syrians as a problem, as the example, also from Hittin camp, shows. (see Box 10)

These members of the host community perceive strong differences between themselves and the newcomers in terms of (assumed) wealth, support (which they consider as unfair as needy Jordanians do not get it), and culture (making noise at night). They dislike the increased competition in the labour and housing markets as conditions are unequal and (Palestinian-) Jordanians at a disadvantage. At the same time, in fulfilment of their religious obligations, they give donations to the refugees. From their perspective, this should suffice, and the Syrians should

**Box 10****Two Palestinian traders' perception of Syrian refugees**

*A jeweller's whose parents had fled from Palestine in 1948 and an owner of a shoe shop who introduces himself as a Jordanian emphasise that "nothing should be put between Jordanians and Palestinians". They consider the Syrian refugees as competitors as they work for low wages. According to them, many shop owners in Hittin camp employ Syrians, but the two interview partners do not, although Syrians have asked them for a job. One of the men has three Jordanian employees who have worked for him for a long time. He says: "Yes, the Syrians compete for jobs and also get aid ... therefore, it is right when they get low wages." The other one adds: "The Syrians buy gold. They live much better than the Palestinians. They have gold and better housing. When they came, they first asked to rent an apartment, then for work". He adds, "at night, the Syrians make a lot of noise". The first one mentions that "Syrians got water heaters and everything in their houses. Palestinians cannot afford those things". The second one tells us that he has helped Syrians to find a flat and states that "their situation has always been good. Jordanian charity organisations have helped them". Both shop owners donate money to Syrians through charity organisations and explain that it is part of zakat (Islamic tax for helping the poor). One of them states that "Jordan provides a place of safety, also for Syrians. There are equal laws, and there is no discrimination. There are charity organisations for the poor".*

*Both traders' businesses are doing well, but one of them says: "Jordanians' living conditions are not good, and they do not get support, but the international organisations provide a good living to Yemenites, Iraqis - it should also be like that for Jordanians. The Iraqis came with a lot of money and still got aid." The two men agree that "the Syrians should not be allowed to work". Then they address the issue of increasing rents, which have tripled within a short time. One of the men says: "The rent is JOD 150 (US \$211) instead of JOD 50 (US \$70) before. The Syrian neighbours are able to pay JOD 300 (US \$422). If you want an apartment, the landlords will prefer Syrians. They have money through the UNHCR and can be kicked out easily. This is very convenient for landlords. Some landlords divide the flats and rent them out to two Syrian families. Some former tenants moved out by themselves, others were asked to leave, and Syrian tenants moved in". The other one confirms that "private persons benefit from the Syrian tenants. The landlords benefit. Poor people are forced to pay much higher rents."*

not demand more. More or less implicitly, these two host community representatives consider the standard of living of Syrians and their attempts to maintain it not appropriate compared with the living standard of the host community.

This example reveals a clear established-outsider figuration in which Jordanian and Palestinian members of the host community perceive themselves as one group of ‘good people’ that defends its position against the outsiders that they perceive as having bad habits. The figuration contains a further element, palpable in the blame the camp inhabitants place on the profiteering landlords. The increased demand for flats by Syrian refugees has brought to light the local class differences that intersect with the differences between Jordanians, who own land, and Palestinians, who do not. How the influx of the Syrian refugees enhances pre-existing tensions also becomes visible in al-Hussayn camp.

Many Palestinian refugees have settled in al-Hussayn ‘camp’ in Amman; some have been staying there since the early 1960s. At that time, there were neither streets nor water or sewage system. Nowadays, al-Hussayn is an ordinary lower- to middle-class housing area like many other quarters in Amman. According to a long-term inhabitant, mainly Palestinians and many Egyptian workers, Filipinos, Sudanese and Iraqis live there, but very few Jordanians who do not have a Palestinian background. Most Jordanians of Palestinian origin received their houses from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and do not have to pay rent. Typical occupations of Palestinian-Jordanians are jobs as drivers, labourers, retail traders or mechanics; many are working informally. Many of them live in the UNRWA-run settlements (‘camps’) and have relatives in different other ‘camps’ in Greater Amman. The following examples from the interviews shed light on the neighbourhood relations between Syrian refugees and Palestinian-Jordanian hosts.

The Syrian women tell the interviewer that they feel like outsiders in al-Hussayn camp. They describe it as a status that cannot be hidden and exposes them to different treatment by the local population. Both the positive experiences of getting help and the negative incidences of being harassed make them feel constrained in taking any action they consider appropriate. They also feel guilty of causing higher rents. In short, they regard themselves as a burden

#### Box 11

##### Two female refugees' perception of neighbourhood relations

*Asked about her contacts in the neighbourhood, a Syrian woman living in al-Hussayn camp reports that when she does not have the money to buy medicine, a pharmacist who is close by helps her for free. Her mother adds that “we know that we Syrians are causing a lot of trouble here, we made the rent high while people are already poor here. We feel that they are right when they accuse us of the deterioration of conditions, but it was not our choice and we also have no voice here”. She continues that people at the market sometimes sexually harass her and her daughters and that some say very bad words about Syrians in general when they see them. Both women claim that they are recognised as Syrians because they wear the veil differently compared to the local women and that they also wear more black clothes than the others. Moreover, the local people know that they are Syrians when they speak because of their accent. The young woman adds that there is a particular person that keeps harassing her very rudely. He has a shop near their house. To avoid him, she says: “I now change my way home, and my sisters and mother do the same. The whole neighbourhood knows this man and avoids him. I often imagine that I let his wife or mother know about his acts. However, I do not want any problems with him, because if my father or brother knows that he annoys me, they will fight with him, and the other man is evil and might hurt them. I just don’t want to cause any trouble” (interview in al-Hussayn, January 2017).*

to the host community and feel obliged to keep their suffering to themselves so that they do not cause severe trouble within the community or for their own family.

The precarious living conditions of Jordanians with Palestinian origin who have experienced barriers to the Jordanian labour market and suffered from their permanent exile situation have led to mixed feelings towards the Syrian newcomers. The original residents of the camp express ambiguous attitudes towards the refugees and believe that they do not belong to the community. These attitudes include welcoming and empathic feelings as well as suspicions that the Syrians might not be as needy as they pretend; in fact, they might be in a better situation than the host community, as the statement in Box 12 reveals.

**Box 12****An elderly Palestinian's perception of neighbourhood relations**

*An elderly man of Palestinian origin tells us that socially, al-Hussayn has deteriorated. He claims that "there is no social unity and no social spirit any more. The old generation has left or died. The children have different values. They are engaged in new technologies and have adopted a different lifestyle". He adds that people at his age used to share food, whereas the younger generation is no longer doing this. Men would get up from their seats on the bus so that women could sit down. Now, sometimes men will ask women to stand.*

*The elderly man, who had been working as an x-ray technician in the Gulf, has no longer any income and says that his three children are also in a difficult situation. They received secondary education and are all labourers. They have Jordanian citizenship – then he says: "Now you enter into politics!", and when we ask whether the Jordanian passport has made life easier, he says: "No answer!" (for an explanation, see Annex II). He has a contract with UNRWA since the 1980s according to which he is allowed to stay in this house without paying rent. His children cannot inherit it legally, but he says, in fact, they will inherit it. The elderly man states that when Syrian refugees arrived in Jordan, he remembered his own fate as a refugee. He says that many people have behaved compassionately towards Syrians and that there is empathy and help, especially when it comes to jobs. He cautions that he himself has not had any personal experiences but has only heard of it. He adds that the Syrians compete for the same jobs as Jordanians with Palestinian origin—not in government and the army, but everywhere else. They accept lower wages than the host community. For example, the sister of his daughter's husband dismissed a Palestinian worker and replaced him by a Syrian. He mentions that the Syrians get aid in addition to income from jobs and that the government helps them with cheap health services. According to him, "what is happening is part of a bigger issue. The Syrians are in all neighbouring countries. This is a strategy to gain aid for all those states".*

*His wife knows several Syrians and has made friends with them in al-Hussayn camp; she visits them, and they visit her. She says: "First, it was very bad for Syrians. They had nothing. Palestinians and Jordanians gave them furniture and other things. Now their situation has improved a lot. They do not work but receive assistance and even buy gold. They have more money than my husband and me. I have never been able to buy a single gold ring". She claims that she has only Syrian friends, not from other countries, as in this neighbourhood there are no women from other countries, only men. Iraqi women are in Amman, too, but not exactly in this neighbourhood (interview in al-Hussayn, January 2017)..*

The elderly man's views are strongly shaped by his history as a Palestinian refugee, the disappointments and political setbacks he has witnessed and the suspicions that the Arab governments in the region benefit from the suffering of people. The couple has a mixed relationship with Syrians, characterised by empathy and the wish to help, on the one hand, and some distrust in the genuineness of their distress, on the other. The rumours that Syrians have gold, better access to informal employment than Palestinian-Jordanians and are wealthier than the people in the host community have been repeated by other Palestinian-Jordanians in different camps.

The human resource manager of JOHUD states that every wave of refugees has affected Jordanians differently. When the Iraqi refugees arrived,<sup>11</sup> prices increased, because many refugees were rather wealthy and invested in Jordan. Some Jordanian landowners sold plots to Iraqis and invested the money—a new phenomenon in the Jordanian society. Whereas many Jordanians perceive the impact of the Iraqi refugees on their society as positive, this is not the case for the Syrians, who arrived with no or little money. The manager explains that Syrians and Jordanians have a very similar culture in which dignity is a fundamental characteristic; hence, "the Syrians are rivals to Jordanians. They don't accept having been beaten, and they beat Jordanians back. For example, during their first days in Zaatari camp, Syrians demonstrated for their rights and damned the Jordanian government" (human resource manager of JOHUD, Amman, November 2016). The perceived rivalry is thus a further aspect that shapes the established-outsider figuration between Syrians and Jordanians (and Palestinian-Jordanians).

Mixed feelings within the host community also occur due to differences in educational opportunities. Even in middle-class suburban Ain al-Basha, local inhabitants consider it an injustice when Syrians are given the opportunity to seek help to pay for university fees while the local people were never able to

11 \ After the military intervention of the US-led forces to topple Saddam Hussein in 2003, about 1.2 million displaced Iraqis arrived as refugees in Syria (Dorai, 2008).

afford to study. For Syrians, striving for high education is more a matter of course than for Jordanians, as in Syria university education is free whereas in Jordan, it is not.

## Schooling and education as an aspect of neighbourhood relations

Syrian refugees are very eager to get their children into schools in Jordan. Schooling requires engaging with children, their parents and teachers at a neighbourhood level. Whereas Syrians who are registered with the UNHCR and have official identity cards as refugees are allowed to attend Jordanian schools, those without registration were blocked from visiting schools until 2017. 126,127 or 60 per cent of the Syrian children at school age were enrolled in formal schools in Jordan in the academic year of 2016/17. The Jordanian government hired additional teachers in response to increasing enrolments so that 209 schools in Jordan could offer double-shift schooling. Usually, Syrian children attend afternoon classes and are separated from Jordanian children (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2017). In September 2017, the Jordanian Prime Minister finally approved a regulation allowing every Syrian refugee child, even without the required documents, to enrol in the afternoon classes provided by public schools (Al Abed, 2017).

Several Syrian parents interviewed complain about the quality of teaching in the Jordanian afternoon classes.

The account in Box 13 shows that members of the host community insist on having separate classes for Syrian and Jordanian children. The official policy of non-integration is thus reflected in society. Syrian parents are hugely disappointed with the teaching standards for their children. Interviews show that schooling is a high priority for Syrian refugees; if at all possible, they try to make sure that their children attend school; if there are no formal schools or if the children are facing too much harassment, then they arrange for informal teachers who come to their house.

### Box 13

#### Harassment at school

*A female refugee in al-Hussayn camp said: "Education is very bad, the teachers do not explain things well to the students; my children don't understand anything. Many teachers are very rude with our children; they swear at them and say very bad words. The children at the school are very chaotic; there is no discipline. They beat each other a lot. I tried to move my children to morning classes. When I went to the school, there was also a Palestinian-Jordanian mother from al-Hussayn camp. She said that she did not want her kids to stay with 'Syrians' and said 'no way with Syrians!' The administration agreed to move the Jordanian children to the morning class and refused to shift my children" (Syrian refugee woman, al-Hussayn, November 2016).*

The founder of an Islamic centre in Ain al-Basha that focuses on caring for Syrian children confirms that the level of education provided to Syrian children in afternoon classes is low. He states that one reason for this is that teachers are already exhausted from the first shift and that doing extra hours reduces their concentration. Further reasons for complaints by Syrian parents are racism and aggressiveness Syrian children are facing at school, in particular by Jordanian children coming from families that are not exposed to different people like in the urban context of Amman. He claims that segregating children at school will not solve the problem as groups of Syrian children walking to school in the afternoon often are harassed in the streets, and walking outside late, especially in winter, is not convenient for girls. As a result, parents will not allow them to attend school. He urges that to avoid this adverse impact, more schools need to be built (interview with the founder of an Islamic centre in Ain al-Basha, November 2016).

According to the human resource manager of the Jordanian humanitarian and development organisation JOHUD, problems in the education system do not affect Syrians alone. He states that in his opinion, the educational system in Jordan collapsed a couple of years ago. Previously, only good students were able to enter public universities whereas others joined

military schools and services or vocational training. With the level of educational standards declining, students get high marks at their secondary school exam, and many more can enter public universities; often relying on *wasta* [relationships with influential individuals], which enhances injustice. Poverty and its mental effects on the parents also plays a role: “When the father is always stressed and shouts at home, the child may imagine that this is normal” (human resource manager of JOHUD, Amman, November 2016) and start misbehaving accordingly. He adds that the misbehaviour of youth towards Syrians may also be linked to the changing role of tribes in the Jordanian society. Previously, a *sheikh* who was usually “old and wise and people tended to listen to him” used to govern a tribe, but “these days, the wealthiest man in the tribe is the man that has the power. But although he invites the biggest number of people frequently to dinner, people don’t tend to listen to him often” (human resource manager of JOHUD, Amman, November 2016). Nevertheless, “the youth are part of tribal communities rather than political parties. Because they [the parties] were banned,<sup>12</sup> the Jordanian youth are very ignorant on the political level” explains the manager. He adds that “the Jordanian is already aggressive; not only towards the Syrian refugee. If there is no Syrian, Jordanians will beat each other” (human resource manager of JOHUD, Amman, November 2016).

According to this explanation, aggressiveness and harassment by Jordanian children and youth are driven by uncertainties stemming from the social transformation in Jordan, which is not reflected adequately in the political institutions. Political parties have no significant role in the Jordanian constitutional monarchy, a regime where political power is concentrated in the king, and the judiciary is linked

to the executive. Tribal affiliations and patronage networks linked to the king are the principal mechanisms through which individuals gain political power and the ability to represent the interests of their followers. Economic wealth and financial relations play an increasing role in access to political power. Hence, children with prosperous parents who comply with this system and belong to the favoured tribes, automatically have a dominant position in school and university, no matter how well they do in academic terms. Inequality among Jordanians on these grounds has grown; Syrian children and youth do not have the chance to enter this system and are neither welcomed by their Jordanian peers nor by the political administration.

This section has shown that preventing integration—the official policy of the Jordanian government towards refugees—already starts at school, which most of the time is the first government institution young refugees are confronted with in their lives. Disappointed Syrian mothers like in the example above ascribe bad behaviour to teachers as well as Jordanian mothers and children in an attempt to preserve their own and their children’s self-esteem. They consider the administration as acting unfairly when it supports the cause of Jordanians and denies Syrians the same rights. Opening more schools and employing more teachers may be a possibility to redress segregation and improve schooling conditions for girls, but requires the political will to do so—and will not overcome the ongoing erosion of the educational system. Schooling in separate classes for Jordanian and Syrian children is thus only the surface of a deep-rooted entrenched structure that perpetuates inequality in Jordanian society. It enhances the feeling among the Syrian refugees of being outsiders and the attitude of being ‘the established’ among Jordanians.

12 \ Until the early 1990s, political parties were banned in Jordan. According to the political observer Abu Nimah (2017), “most of the political parties that appeared in Jordan following the lifting of the ban were artificial structures built around individuals hoping to claim a share in the next government. And because they did not have broad popular bases to rely upon, they either returned to the clan or the tribe for support, an option that annuls the very principle of party politics, or sought government support in return for committing to be steadily on the government’s side on all issues, which also contradicts the entire idea of parliamentary supervision of government’s function.”

## Repercussions of neighbourhood relations on the livelihood of Syrian refugees

Neighbourhood relations can enable refugees to extend their scope of action if they receive support and help in situations of need and find friends among their hosts. The availability of family members increases the potential to have positive relationships, as the refugees—women in particular—will not feel left alone in the strange environment. Due to such interaction, they receive information about jobs, customers and opportunities to get assistance, about different conditions in various schools, centres they can visit for religious purposes, and other things. Syrians use these options as far as the relationships with the host community allow, thus adding components to creating a livelihood according to their own standards within the limited scope available.

On the other hand, factors like restrictive government policies towards refugees, intransparent eligibility for assistance by humanitarian agencies, being of a different social class than the neighbours, a different behaviour, clothing and dialect can create distrust and suspicions within the host community. Such a situation closes options for the agency of the refugees and makes them withdraw into their houses, avoid public exposure, or move on to another place where there are relatives whom they may join. Withdrawal may enhance the suspicion of the host community, as this gives space for rumours and unproven assumptions about the real conditions the refugees are living in. Envy and greed can accrue, in particular in low-class environments, where the host community members themselves are struggling to make a living. Social inequality regarding low-class neighbourhood and refugees with a middle-class background enhances the tension. Interaction can become hostile; local children will voice and show the disrespect towards the newcomers even more openly than their parents. This makes Syrian children suffer at school and in the streets and lead Syrian parents to the decision to take their children out of school. The livelihood of the refugees deteriorates under these conditions, and their space for agency shrinks.

## An emerging 'social movement' to help refugees

Beyond neighbourhood relations between individuals, Jordanians—often of Palestinian origin—and even some Syrian students have created more-or-less institutionalised initiatives that aim to help the Syrian refugees. The particular missions of these initiatives vary between charity, medical assistance, religious schooling, psychological support, and the provision of small and informal income opportunities. These initiatives are not or only remotely connected with professional humanitarian agencies or the Jordanian government. They are self-organised by groups of people with a strong common motivation to directly help Syrian refugees who arrive in Jordan in a flexible, informal way by mobilising financial and medical support from empathic citizens in Jordan, the region and beyond. Some say that the social engagement of the volunteers in Jordan and more indirectly, their supporters that are mobilised mainly through social media, has features of a local social movement with some transnational dimensions.

A social movement is characterised conceptually by particular motivations of participants, mobilisation, collective action, public opinion, social and political engagement, resource acquisition and allocation or sponsorship as well as particular tactics and attempts to influence policies (Klandermans & Smith, 2002; Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002). From a more general perspective, social movements have been defined as “conscious, concerted, and sustained efforts by ordinary people to change some aspect of their society by using extra-institutional means” (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015, p. 3). In the case of the refugee support initiatives in Amman, political engagement and influencing policies have to be excluded as this would immediately be suppressed by the government of Jordan, which opposes a local integration of refugees for strategic reasons.<sup>13</sup> Conscious, concerted, and sustained efforts to generate support for Syrian refugees through means outside of government institutions, however, have prevailed since 2012. Three examples are shown below: One of several medical

assistance groups, one of many Islamic centres, and an initiative that helps Syrian refugees with Palestinian origin in particular.

### Voluntary medical assistance groups

Several voluntary medical assistance groups are active in Amman trying to satisfy the health needs of refugees that the government of Jordan is not meeting sufficiently. One example is the Molham team, a group of young Syrian men and women that provides medical help.

Molham Volunteering Team is well-known within the community of Syrian refugees in Amman. It is famous for its speedy response to health needs, for its lack of red tape, and for being free of corruption. Syrian refugees inform each other about Molham Team through word of mouth and through social media. Hospitals know the Molham Voluntary Team and give Syrians the contact details so that they can ask for an assessment and may become eligible for assistance. Syrian refugees consider Molham Team as saviours as the medical aid the refugees receive from the United Nations or the Jordanian government does not cover surgery. “Very efficient and quick” were the testimonies the author received from several Syrian refugees. In fact, the team perfectly matches one of the most urgent needs of Syrian refugees, which is appropriate medical treatment.

The reason of the students’ commitment is that they have the same background of war and displacement as their fellow Syrians. The difference is that they are well educated and come from a middle-class background with access to means like social media. Their ability to learn fast and make practical use of their knowledge allowed these students to initiate a highly successful charity movement with growing numbers of volunteers in countries where the bulk of Syrians have sought refuge. Molham Voluntary Team is not the only initiative of this kind, started by an educated group of individuals and operating independently of international humanitarian agencies

<sup>13</sup> \ As mentioned earlier, the Jordanian government fears that any policy of refugee integration may lead to the requirement of integrating Palestinians, as well, which will close the option to establish a Palestinian state forever.

**Box 14****Foundation, funding, operations and growth of Molham Volunteering Team**

*During the research team's visit to the office of Molham Volunteering Team and talk to the founder, Atif Nanu'a, and some members, they tell them that ten Syrian students founded the Molham team in 2012. They were studying at the same private university in Amman and had not known each other back in Syria. They gathered and developed the idea to give Syrian refugee children in Jordan some fun time and gifts during eid (celebration at the end of Ramadan, the month of religious fasting). The group managed to raise funds through Facebook for this purpose and succeeded in bringing together a big crowd to the event. There, they met some Syrian refugees who were in dire need of surgery. As medical assistance for refugees is mostly limited to and mainly covers medical consultations, many Syrians who need surgery depend on additional aid. Prompted by this need, they took the initiative and provided Syrian refugees with medical help and food. As the regulations of registration of any organisation require a Jordanian partner, the Jordanian mother of a team member's friend volunteered to be the official partner. In the following, Molham Volunteering Team was officially established and obtained a license. Molham Volunteering Team is registered as an NGO and has, meanwhile, established offices in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan.<sup>1</sup>*

*In 2012, a first donor, who decided to remain anonymous, transferred an initial amount of US \$15,000 to the Molham team's account. The initial sponsor has continued to pay for the office rent in the three countries and for four volunteers who receive monthly honorariums for their work and get transport and some food expenses covered. These four members devote all their time to the Molham team. According to the founder, their payment is strictly separated from donations for health cases. Altogether, Molham Volunteering Team in the Middle East had around 100 unpaid volunteers in 2017.*

*The members explain that the NGO is structured into several teams. The case management team receives requests for assistance through Facebook, WhatsApp, phone, or personal visits. A small team—often including a medical or pharmaceutical student—will then assess each case through home visits. If they identify the need for assistance, the case will receive an administrative number, and the Molham team will publish an abstract or metaphoric photo and some details on its Facebook page and start collecting money.<sup>2</sup> The donors are from many different countries, not only from the Arab world. The organisation continuously announces cases for special donations and preserves some funds for emergency cases.<sup>3</sup> Further teams are working for campaigns such as Ramadhan, winter assistance, and orphans. Some volunteers design and maintain the website, others post updates on social media.*

*Most of the volunteers are Syrians. As the ten Syrian students of the initial team meanwhile have obtained their degrees, they are in a dilemma whether to stay with the Molham team or start their professional careers—a challenge as Syrians do not obtain work permits as engineers or medical doctors. One of the founders, for example, decided to stay with the Molham Volunteering Team and not to work as an architect, for which he got his degree in 2015. The commitment of the members in the office stems from their perception of an urgent need for medical services that are otherwise not available for Syrians. They see the primary value of their initiative in its independence and flexibility as nearly no bureaucracy is involved. There are no regulations that constrain aid distributions like in the big international NGOs, and the team is neither restricted to specific locations of refugees, age or gender of beneficiaries, or any other limiting factors. The team members emphasise that all volunteers respect Molham Volunteering Team's agenda and are proud not to have to consider the agenda of any other organisation. To maintain their independence, the Molham team refuses to accept funds from international donors despite the high demand for medical assistance by the refugees (interviews with the founder and members of Molham Voluntary Team, Amman, between November 2016 and January 2017).*

1 \ The NGO is also registered in France, Sweden and Canada but it does not have offices there. The homepage is available at <https://molhamteam.com/en/contact>.

2 \ People usually donate via PayPal, but also via bank accounts and Western Union or directly in cash. The donors receive an e-mail stating the amount they paid. Each donation is anonymised and visible on the team's homepage (Molham Volunteering Team, 2018).

3 \ The organisation has accounts in banks in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and France. Donations are sent to PayPal in France and from there, the money is directly transferred to hospitals that treat or enlist Syrians in need. The Molham team continuously has raised funds for cases in need and collected more than US \$2.7 million between 2015 and early 2017. In 2018, it reached nearly US \$9 million (Molham Volunteering Team, 2018).

with a high degree of flexibility and according to their own rules. Therefore it is justified to consider these initiatives as a kind of social movement among

middle-class Syrians and some (Palestinian) Jordanians that has sprung up to take assistance for the refugees in these groups' own hands.

**Box 15****Foundation, funding and operations of an Islamic centre in Ain al-Basha**

The Islamic centre the research team visited in Ain al-Basha was founded in 2015 by a young Jordanian with Palestinian origin. His intention was to offer 'appropriate support' to Syrian refugee children, particularly, to Syrian orphans and children whose fathers are reported missing, and their mothers. 'Appropriate support' derives from the founder's observation that "Syrian parents will not care much if their children are bullied at school, but they will care if they are not getting good marks" (Ain al-Basha, November 2016). Hence, he set up a project that aims to provide a place for psychological support for Syrian children who experience aggressiveness and segregation. At the same time, it functions as "a gate to religious education" (founder of the Islamic centre, Ain al-Basha, November 2016).

The Islamic centre is located next to one of the Makani ('my space') centres run by UNICEF, which offer services and assistance to vulnerable groups in the communities. The Makani centres run programmes linking "interventions in education – learning support services; child protection—psychosocial support services; adolescent and youth participation—life skills and innovation labs (with) ... health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services ... (and) a community outreach component" (UNICEF, no year) and operate in all of the 12 Jordanian governorates as well as in the refugee camps. The Islamic centre, by contrast, focuses on the psychological needs of Syrian children and their mothers. It offers various kinds of sports and play activities, religious lessons, free drawing and painting, occasional excursions and competitions to develop children's talents playfully. Religious education for Syrian children usually takes place in Qur'an classes with competitions in learning the verses by heart or specialising on tajweed (a set of rules for proper pronunciation and recital of the Qur'an). The founder emphasises that his centre strictly avoids competitions in which the best Qur'an citers will receive a reward, as it is common in some other Islamic centres in Amman.

The Islamic centre in Ain al-Basha also offers weekly Qur'an classes for Syrian women in cooperation with another neighbourhood initiative. Psychologists are hired for an honorarium to give courses tailored to the needs of female Syrian refugees; topics are, for example, the relationship between mother and son, or raising awareness among children of sexual harassment (interview by R. Alhomeimat with course participants and the founder of the Islamic Centre, Ain al-Basha, January 2017). By early 2017, 300 Syrian children had enrolled in the centre's various activities. It had an additional 60 Syrian children in its free kindergarten. Many children still are on a waiting list.

Although he is not professionally trained, the founder of the centre tries to comfort refugee children by allowing them to play freely and do sports and by talking to them one-to-one about their feelings and the problems they are facing at school, like bullying and racism. His main motivation is religious, as helping orphans in Islam is a good deed. According to him, the Syrian children under his care perform better at school than before. While the parents make their children go to public schools, they do not force them to visit the centre. The children enjoy spending time there and use its offers of their own accord (interviews with mothers of children at the Islamic centre, Ain al-Basha, between November 2016 and January 2017; author's observations).

Beyond activities for children and classes, the Islamic centre engages in creating small income opportunities for female Syrian refugees by buying them sewing or hairdressing equipment so that they can work from home. In another Islamic centre in al-Zarqa governorate, steps have been taken to establish a 'productive collective kitchen' where Syrian women cook together and gain some profit. From this profit, a portion is set aside to open new kitchens where more Syrian women can be employed. Such small jobs for women did not require a work permit (until 2018) and were tolerated by the Jordanian government.<sup>1</sup>

According to the founder of the Islamic centre in Ain al-Basha, his concept and commitment attracted the interest of al-Rahma International, a long-established Kuwaiti charity organisation affiliated to the Social Reform Association (Eslah) (Kuwait News Agency, 2017).<sup>2</sup> A representative of al-Rahma had attended one of the Islamic centre's charity events and acknowledged the high motivation, the familiarity of the founder with the local inhabitants and, in particular, his interaction with Syrian refugee children. Al-Rahma offered to raise funds for the Islamic centre and agreed not to interfere in the agenda of the founder, who first was concerned that the charity organisation would impose on him an agenda he would have to execute. Until the time of the author's interviews in early 2017, no interference had occurred, and funds were coming in in varying amounts and times.

1 \ A change in regulations for home-based small businesses in October 2017 is likely to force the women to close down their small-scale catering service businesses. See section on work and employment below.

2 \ The Kuwaiti organisation raises funds for financing various projects. For example, in 2017 al-Rahma won a Saudi Arabian charity organisation as a donor in support of a kindergarten project of the Islamic centre. Al-Rahma also supports other Islamic centres in Amman, Irbid and al-Zarqa by raising funds from the governments of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar as well as from individual donors who prefer to visit families and donate personally. The range of funds varies from two to five thousand Jordanian Dinars and from one month to another (interview by R. Alhomeimat with the founder of the Islamic centre, Ain al-Basha, January 2017).

## Islamic centres

Different from medical assistance initiatives, the Islamic centres in Jordan are religious institutions some of which focus on assisting Syrian refugees. For Syrian women living in Greater Amman, visiting Islamic centres in their neighbourhood is a culturally accepted opportunity to participate in activities outside their houses and meet each other. Most of the research team's female interview partners indicated that they try to attend weekly Qur'an lessons in an Islamic centre in their neighbourhood. Many parents send their children to an Islamic centre for afternoon activities. The example of one Islamic centre in Ain al-Basha is presented in detail here to shed light on its role and meaning for female Syrian refugees (see Box 15).

Syrian female refugees in Greater Amman tend to reproduce the lifestyle they had in Syria as far as possible. When asked about work or any interaction with other people, many reply that they visit the religious centre in their neighbourhood as an opportunity to learn about Islam and the Qur'an, this allows them to feel at home when comparing themselves with refugees in non-Muslim or Western countries. Meeting with other Syrian women keeps them updated about issues like work permits and opportunities for Syrian refugees or new laws concerning them. Like many of such centres, the Islamic centre became popular through word of mouth rather than brochures or advertisement. Syrian women hear about it mostly from their children who know about it from schoolmates. The women view the centre as a place where children like to go and where they can play and learn the Qur'an, an activity that the Syrian women the author encountered appreciate (interviews with women present at the Islamic centre, Ain al-Basha, November 2016).

According to several women interviewed, visiting the Islamic centre offers them a way to adjust themselves to the new neighbourhood. They enjoy meeting with other Syrian women there. Moreover, the contacts at the centre increase their chances of getting material or financial aid, because frequently there are

visitors from the Gulf region, in particular from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, who wish to donate for refugees in need. Besides the potential of benefitting from donations, the Syrian women find clients there for the products of their small income-generating activities at home such as prepared food, hairdressing or sewing. Sometimes they can cater for occasions at the centre, which they also consider beneficial. A few female Syrian refugees volunteer in the centre and provide help to Syrian children, in particular to those who missed classes while being displaced, and receive a modest compensation amounting to about JOD 100 every month from the Islamic centre. This opportunity, however, is only available to very few women as funds for this purpose are limited. The perspective of the voluntary work is not clear, too, so that women cannot rely on the compensation for a longer period (interview with one of the female volunteers and the founder of the Islamic centre, Ain al-Basha, November 2016). For female Syrian refugees, the Islamic centre thus provides livelihood opportunities that make it possible for them to reproduce their previous lifestyle to some degree, and it is a site where women are building social capital.

However, the Islamic centre also faces challenges related to the availability of numerous and various aid organisations focusing on Syrian refugees. Some Syrian refugee families take advantage of the fact that community-based organisations, international NGOs and United Nations agencies poorly coordinate their supply of aid to accumulate aid from different donors. Some organisations do not want to coordinate and are not concerned by doubling or tripling the aid for certain families, because reaching a large group of beneficiaries is most important for these organisations as this impresses their donors and hence sustains the donations. According to the founder of the Islamic centre in Ain al-Basha, the availability of funds has also prompted individuals to establish Qur'an teaching organisations, who never before had engaged in religious practices. Some of these organisations remunerate children who win in arranged competitions after having learned certain parts of Qur'an by heart. Currently, funding is declining, and

enhanced competition among organisations that care for orphans increasingly prevents cooperation between them. In this environment, coordination is a major challenge for the Islamic centre in Ain al-Basha, as it tries to avoid assisting people that already receive aid from other bodies. For this purpose, its founder coordinates the centre's activities with six other organisations in the neighbourhood. However, according to his assessment, more collective effort is required towards this end (interview by R. Alhomeimat, Ain al-Basha, January 2017).

To sum up, the Islamic centre in Ain al-Basha tries to take on a complementary role by not providing the same activities as the neighbouring Makani centre for children run by UNICEF and other religious organisations. In contrast to UNICEF that operates with its own (Jordanian) staff, the Islamic centre works with carefully selected Syrian volunteers. None of them should have relations with any political or radical party, but a genuine interest in helping orphans. This explains part of the success of the Islamic centre, which attracts much higher numbers of children than the UNICEF centre. The Syrian volunteers have an original motivation for caring about their children and continue working even if they are not paid in certain months (interview with founder and volunteers of the Islamic centre, Ain al-Basha, January 2017).

Running an Islamic centre with a focus on Syrian orphans and widows is ambiguous. On the one hand, by offering religious activities to refugees, it helps them to preserve a culture that women had practised already in Syria and allows them to reproduce their previous lifestyle in a protected place. Moreover, it contributes to the refugees' livelihood by assisting with small jobs and education. It is thus an example of an institution, self-organised by a Jordanian (with Palestinian origin) that provides the Syrian refugees (women and children) with opportunities to meet, socialise and maintain a certain level of livelihood. On the other, the centre creates a parallel society for refugees in the neighbourhood, because its activities do not bridge the gap between refugees and the host

society. The centre is open for Syrian children and Syrian women only. The volunteers are also Syrians. The centre thus enhances the segregation of Syrians from their neighbours. This will neither reduce the aggressiveness of Jordanian children towards Syrians at school nor the suspicions of adult neighbours towards the 'outsiders'.

### Clandestine assistance groups

The third type of initiative introduced here has a particular focus on assisting the about 17,000 Syrian Palestinians who have fled from the war in Syria (Amin, 2017) and many of whom have arrived from Yarmouk Camp, Damascus, Deraa town or Deraa Camp in Syria. In the following, some background information on the precarious status of this group will be provided to put the role of clandestine support organisations into perspective.

Before the start of the protest movement in 2011, about 550,000 Palestinian refugees had been staying in Syria (BADIL, 2014; Amin, 2017) for more than 40 years, protected by the Syrian governments. Both governments, the current under Bashar al-Asad and the previous under his father Hafiz al-Asad had claimed to be guardians of the Palestinian refugees and their right of return to Palestine. Hence, Palestinians enjoyed equal civil rights as Syrian citizens, with the exception of obtaining full Syrian citizenship and the right to vote (Gilen et al., 1994). They were allowed to join the Syrian Army, they often intermarried with Syrians (Bolongaro, 2016), and they had access to public Syrian health centres and hospitals as well as to UNRWA primary health services (Amin, 2017).

In 2012, the Palestinian camps of Deraa and Yarmouk came under attack in the course of the Syrian war, resulting in extensive civilian casualties and destruction as well as high numbers of internally displaced Palestinians. UNRWA estimates that 280,000 Palestinians have been displaced in Syria and 120,000 have fled to neighbouring countries (UNRWA, 2018a). However, as Palestinians, they are politically

not accepted as refugees in Jordan. According to UNRWA (2015),

*since January 2013, the Government of Jordan's official policy has been not to allow Palestine refugees from Syria into Jordan. Many who have managed to enter Jordan have done so irregularly, thus exacerbating their vulnerability. Many live in constant fear of forced return and have limited mobility and access to employment, services and civil and legal processes.*

In a nutshell, the reason is the following.

*(A)fter a relatively tolerant phase during which some 10,000 Palestinian refugees have been able to enter the country, Jordan has tightened its entry policy*

*since late 2012 on behalf of the need to counter the Israeli vision of Jordan as Palestinian homeland of substitution (Al-Husseini, 2015; translation from French in Dorai, 2018).*

The government of Jordan is concerned that the Palestinian-Syrians, unlike other Syrians, may choose not to return to Syria when the war ends (Amin, 2017), thus creating facts that imply the risk, from the Jordanian perspective, to make Jordan the home country of Palestinians. As a consequence, this will render the establishment of a Palestinian state impossible. To preclude such a development, the government of Jordan closed its borders for this group of

## Box 16

### Foundation, funding and operations of one clandestine assistance group for Palestinian-Syrian refugees

*The interview partner was born in Jordan and has Jordanian citizenship. His father had fled from the Palestinian territories to Jordan in 1967; his mother is a Palestinian from Syria and had received Jordanian citizenship through her husband (for details on the status of Palestinians, see Annex II). The interview partner had been living in Yarmouk camp, a large settlement of Palestinians in Damascus, Syria, for some time and currently has regular employment in Amman. In 2012, when growing numbers of Palestinian-Syrians arrived together with Syrian refugees in Jordan, he founded a group with seven members all of whom have a Palestinian background; five of them have a Jordanian passport. The group members have known each other from Yarmouk camp. More volunteers joined the group over the years, most of them are men.*

*Like other self-organised assistance groups, this group also collects funds to assist Syrian refugees, supplies them with basic needs and rapidly provides assistance in an informal, flexible manner when the group hears about any emergency. What is special to them is that they include undocumented Palestinian-Syrians in their operations. The interview partner claims that the assistance group has no administrative expenses, a point he repeatedly emphasises with pride. According to him, each member of the group pays for himself, although according to Islam, a Muslim who raises funds for charity purposes legitimately can keep a share for himself. The group has no constant donors. Sometimes friends who have a good income donate; some donors are Jordanians who live in Saudi Arabia. The interview partner adds that "here in Jordan, they do not donate. They are afraid," indicating that some of the assistance his group provides is against Jordanian law. Sometimes, the group provides persons from abroad who are willing to donate with the contact of Syrian refugees in need so that they can support these persons directly. Donors know about the group through Facebook and word of mouth. Between 2012 and 2016, the group raised about JOD 1.200 million (US \$1.693 million) to support mainly Palestinian refugees from Syria (founder of assistance group for Palestinian-Syrian refugees, Amman, November 2016).*

*The group focused its assistance on Palestinian refugees during the siege by nidham (the [Syrian] regime) of Yarmouk camp that started in 2013. The interview partner says: "We started with Syrian refugees. Then we saw that nobody helped the Palestinian-Syrian refugees". Besides the perceived assistance gap, the motivation of the group to help Palestinian refugees from Syria is influenced by the fact that members have relatives who live in Yarmouk camp. In general, according to the founder, the group's activities are guided by the desire to maintain the right of the refugees to return to Palestine; hence, the group rejects any endeavours that could lead to Jordan becoming an alternative homeland for Palestinians (for details, see Annex II). A further guiding principle seems to be to keep a respectful distance to young women. The group members usually ask parents if their daughters have everything they need. Moreover, they try to protect girls from early marriages as far as possible. The interview partner tells us that once he had a fight with a Jordanian guard in Zaatari camp where the group secretly distributed goods. The guard wanted a young refugee girl to marry his brother. The interview partner reports that as a consequence of the fight, this guard made sure that he was not allowed to enter any refugee camp in Jordan again (interview with the founder of assistance group for Palestinian-Syrian refugees, Amman, November 2016).*

refugees already in April 2012 (UNRWA, 2018a; BADIL, 2014) and officially announced a policy of non-admittance for Palestinian-Syrians in January 2013.

Due to this policy, Palestinian-Syrian refugees are not allowed to enter the established camps like Zaatari in Jordan; as Palestinians, they fall under the care of UNRWA (Amin, 2017). The Jordanian government also revoked permits for Palestinians from Syria to leave their temporary facilities. Those refugees whom the Jordanian police can catch are forcibly deported back to Syria. The Jordanian authorities arbitrarily detain Palestinian refugees from Syria in a closed refugee holding facility at Cyber City near Ramtha at the Syrian border, denying them any option for release other than return to Syria.

*By declaring Palestinian-Syrian refugees personae non gratae, the Jordanian Authorities stripped them from their right to protection, and by such making them susceptible to abuses, exploitation, arrest, and deportation. Additionally, all unregistered Palestinian refugees are denied access to education and healthcare, and they cannot work. Moreover, Palestinian refugees from Syria are not allowed into established refugee camps, therefore are forced to seek housing in the expensive private market (BADIL, 2014).*

The Palestinians from Syria face the same difficult conditions and are affected by illnesses and traumata like other refugees from Syria (Amin, 2017), but are not subject to any legal protection. They do not have access to international assistance in Jordan like Syrian citizens do, and income opportunities for them are limited to illegal jobs in the informal economy. Many rely mainly on UNRWA support for basic needs including food and shelter, medical care and access to schools (UNRWA, 2015).<sup>14</sup> For some time, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) also

14 \ The study by Amin (2017) shows that UNRWA-registered Palestinian-Syrians enjoy free medical treatment funded by UNRWA and that they generally receive better services than Palestinian refugees from Gaza living in Jordan. According to the founder of a group that assists Palestinian-Syrian refugees, there is an agreement between UNRWA and the Jordanian government about certain files of Palestinians from Syria, which UNRWA is allowed to keep confidential. UNRWA has the right to assist the persons who are listed in these files without informing the Jordanian government (interview in Amman, November 2017). The author is unable to verify this

supported Palestinians in need including those coming from Syria with some occasional assistance.<sup>15</sup> Many Palestinian-Syrians, however, hide in Greater Amman without being registered anywhere out of fear of being deported.

### **Self-organised assistance for Palestinian-Syrian refugees**

A few small organisations have formed that try to assist Palestinian-Syrians in particular. As this group of refugees is persecuted by Jordanian authorities, these organisations are working underground. The author had the opportunity to conduct an in-depth interview with one of the volunteers and join him during visits of refugees under the care of his self-organised assistance group (observations and interviews with a member of a volunteer assistance group for Syrian refugees, Amman, November 2016).

The interview partner estimates that 600 Palestinian-Syrian families stay in Jordan illegally. Among them are Palestinians from Syria who previously had the Jordanian citizenship; however, they lost it in the course of the revocation of citizenship in 2009 and became stateless (see Annex II for a background on this). Some had been deported to Syria from the detention camp in Cyber City and come back to Jordan illegally. Palestinian refugees from Syria who are not registered are not eligible to UNRWA services (founder of assistance group for Palestinian-Syrian refugees, Amman, November 2016). Supporting a criminalised target group requires particular strategies to identify the needy and supply them with assistance

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15 \ According to a Palestinian-Jordanian the team interviewed in Amman in November 2016, recently the PLO no longer has been approved by the Jordanian Intelligence and hence cannot provide assistance to Palestinians in Jordan officially. The author is unable to verify this.

illegally. Palestinian refugees from Syria who are not registered are not eligible to UNRWA services (founder of assistance group for Palestinian–Syrian refugees, Amman, November 2016).<sup>16</sup> Supporting a criminalised target group requires particular strategies to identify the needy and supply them with assistance.

### Assistance strategies for threatened people

The self-organised group assists Palestinian refugees from Syria who live in Jordanian towns under dire conditions. Male Palestinian refugees without documents cannot risk walking in the streets of Amman, because they are at constant risk of being caught and deported. Hence, they face a similar threat as in Syria where police or intelligence would either imprison them or recruit them into the army. Staying in al-Hussayn is particularly risky because the Jordanian intelligence systematically searches for Palestinian–Syrian refugees there. Therefore, the refugees remain in the margins of the settlement and avoid any interaction with their neighbours, trying hard not to be discovered. To protect the men, women will go out and buy the daily necessities for their families whereas men stay at home. However, even if families receive assistance from UNRWA, they increasingly face the problem of rising costs of living in Jordan. For those Palestinian–Syrian refugees who cannot afford to pay for what is required, the assistance group distributes furniture, clothes, medicine, food and sometimes money. Whenever the assistance group hears about landlords expelling Palestinian–Syrian refugees from their homes, they would offer them a furnished apartment. To provide some entertainment to Palestinian–Syrians who are confined to their homes in the suburbs of Jordan, the assistance group has made secret excursions with some of them into the desert.

Once, the group helped a Palestinian refugee from Syria who was an artist and who was pursued by the Jordanian intelligence. The group managed to help him get asylum for himself and his family in

France. In another case, the police arrested two teenagers (16 and 14) and deported them to Syria. The mother had a Jordanian passport, and the father was not present. The assistance group helped the teenagers to cross the border again and return to Jordan.

The assistance group helps not only Palestinian–Syrian refugees but also Syrians. In Zaatari camp, some refugees have not got a UNHCR card but want to leave the camp. They have the option to return to the camp and get the UNHCR card, but they will have to wait for it for a long time. The assistance group helps them leave the camp through volunteers who are staying in Zaatari. The group also has several Jordanian volunteers who teach refugee children in the camps.

The group does not only operate in Jordan but also has supported Palestinians who were caught in the siege of Yarmouk camp in Damascus, which started in 2013. Yarmouk then became a battle site between Daesh and the Syrian Army until April 2018 when the siege ended (Rollins, 2018). The founder of the assistance group explains that his group collected funds from Palestinians in Jordan and sent the money to individuals in the camp through agents in Jordan and Syria who would receive a commission. Money used to flow in both directions; Palestinian–Syrians would send money to Palestinians in Jordan and vice versa. Through this procedure, they circumvented the ban of taking money or valuable goods out of Syria, which otherwise would be seized by the Syrian regime forces at the airport. The group preferred to provide the Palestinians in Yarmouk with cash, because the armed guards (paramilitary forces called *aknaaf bayt al-magdis*) confiscated all aid packages destined for the camp inhabitants and sold them inside the camp at high prices. The cash assistance allowed the Palestinians inside Yarmouk camp to buy the aid packages from the guards. People in need know about the group through relatives, friends, and social media. The relatives of the interview partner in Syria, for example, have his phone number, and if they encounter

<sup>16</sup> \ In general, Palestinians without Jordanian citizenship are facing restrictions with regard to access to healthcare. They have to pay higher fees than Jordanian citizens, and they have to pay for infant vaccinations (HRW, 2010, pp. 3, 49).

a family in need, they will inform him, so that the group can organise assistance. One relative works as a nurse in Yarmouk camp and continuously keeps him updated. When the siege of Yarmouk was relaxed, some Palestinians there did no longer need assistance. Upon calls by friends, group members continue to assist families in Yarmouk as well as others who left the camp and need assistance elsewhere in Damascus.

These examples show that the assistance group's responses to the particular needs of Syrian and Palestinian-Syrian refugees are extremely flexible with activities ranging from providing furniture to reuniting families after deportation. The group acts beyond the legal limitations of the country out of empathy and solidarity with people who have fallen between the cracks of ordinary social life.

Similar to the Molham Voluntary Team and the Islamic centre in Ain al-Basha, the group that assists the Palestinian-Syrian refugees in particular is not convinced of the work of the international humanitarian agencies. More outspoken than the interview partners of the other self-organised groups, the founder of the Palestinian-Syrian refugee assistance group points out that the international humanitarian organisations "are all thieves, or very unprofessional". He continues: "We are aware that aid agencies use a lot of funds for their own administration, logistics, and staff. They are thieves. Religious organisations are also thieves" (founder of the group assisting Palestinian-Syrian refugees, Amman, November 2016). He argues that Jordanians themselves can provide the assistance many refugees would benefit from.

*People who are working in Jordan have an income. They could easily employ those who do not have employment. Reasonable projects could be made, such as women producing cheese, cooking, or working as hair stylists, or mechanics; people can work with their hands. If I had the money, I would open a salon for a woman, and she could work as a hair stylist, and she would get her share of the income, and with the rest, I would open another shop. In any case, I would pay a salary, no matter if it is legal or illegal (founder of the group assisting Palestinian-Syrian refugees, Amman, November 2016).*

The self-organised group cannot provide this kind of more sustainable assistance because it only collects funds for immediate help. The founder of the group is particularly concerned about Palestinian-Syrian refugees' children who have to work illegally instead of attending school. Adults also have to work illegally, hidden in their houses, whereas Syrians of non-Palestinian origin can obtain work permits (see section on work and employment below). Asked about the possibilities of finding Palestinian businessmen who could donate a larger amount for such an employment project, the interview partner argues that most wealthy people he has met want their name to be emphasised and made public so that the project is run under their name. He says:

*They want to use it for other purposes, mostly political ones. For example, a Jordanian in Cyber City offered me JOD 20,000 (US \$28,000) for a start-up project, but I refused for this reason. There is another example of a known political powerholder and arms trader. If he became a sponsor, this would damage the image of our group. He would want to make us clients, dependent on him, in return for donations (founder of the group assisting Palestinian-Syrian refugees, Amman, November 2016).*

The founder of the group expects the United Nations to react to the difficult situation of Palestinian refugees from Syria. He suggests that the UN should insist on an agreement between the Jordanian government and UNRWA according to which Palestinian-Syrian refugees can obtain a residence permit and based on that, a work permit, as many of these refugees have valuable skills.

This self-organised assistance group shows the most extreme engagement in providing refugees from Syria with as much ability to act on their own behalf as possible under particularly harsh conditions. To this aim, the group does not shy away from engaging in illegal activities in response to the criminalisation of Palestinian refugees from Syria and Syrians who do not comply with the camp bureaucracy in Jordan. Arguably, the mothers with small children hiding in Greater Amman and fearing to be caught by the police whenever they leave the house to buy food

are one of the most vulnerable groups of refugees currently staying in Jordan. Interviews with some of them in their houses confirm the dauntless efforts of the assistance group that gives intimidated refugees a feeling of being protected when it comes to emergencies like being forced to leave the flat without notice, illnesses, and when exhausted mothers are desperate (authors' observation and interviews with female Palestinian refugees from Syria, Amman, November 2016). The livelihood support the assistance group provides may refer to very basic needs such as enabling Palestinian-Syrian refugees to buy food, medicine, or live in a furnished flat. It may just be support to realise the desire of Syrian refugees to leave Zaatari camp or to return to the family in Jordan after being deported to Syria. For those caught in Yarmouk camp in Syria during the siege, the money the group members sent to them to buy the aid packages previously confiscated by the regime may just prevent some families from starvation. As a whole, these activities appear to be the closest possible response to the various needs of war-affected families from Syria to overcome their current hardship.

This voluntary assistance group for Syrian refugees thus appears to be the deepest extension of a broader social movement committing itself to non-bureaucratic and self-organised assistance to refugees from Syria. The three groups presented in depth here have three things in common. They insist on identifying the beneficiaries personally; they make the decisions on what kind and amount of assistance they can provide taking into consideration the various needs they encounter, and they respond with great flexibility and speed to whatever needs they have identified. Hence, in the eyes of the beneficiaries, the groups' activities are a major contribution to maintaining their livelihoods as much as possible under the adverse conditions of being (criminalised) refugees and to supporting their agency. One of the limitations of these voluntary groups is that they are unable to provide refugees with sustainable income-generating activities. This dimension of securing refugees' livelihood in Jordan deserves a chapter on its own as it touches the sensitive political issue of protecting nationals from the economic competition by foreigners.

## Work and employment—A sensitive issue

Until 2015, Syrian refugees had no right to be employed or work in Jordan, except those about ten per cent who had obtained a work permit individually through their employer in one way or another. According to the ILO (2017), “(t)he rest of the Syrian refugee workforce was working in an expanding informal economy, characterised by low and declining wages, long working days, and poor working conditions, including lack of work contracts” (2017). The ILO estimates that slightly more than half of the male Syrian refugees are employed formally or informally in Jordan.

Nevertheless, competition over employment between Jordanians, Syrian refugees and labour migrants from neighbouring countries is high. Although foreign engineers or doctors are not granted work permits, Syrian doctors work illegally in private medical centres for low salaries and engineers in private real estate or IT companies (interviews with the human resource manager of JOHUD and a Syrian engineer in Amman, November 2016). Syrians are considered to be particularly skilful and hence, easily get freelance contracts in construction, carpentry, as office boys or in agriculture without any work permit. In these fields, they mainly compete with Egyptian labour migrants, but recently, also with Jordanians, in particular in the fertile areas of Ghor al-Safi and Ghor al-Mazra’a (human resource manager of JOHUD, November 2016).

According to a study of economists, only 20 per cent of the Syrians living outside camps and 13 per cent inside the camps were employed in 2016. Among the employed Syrian refugees, 43 per cent held a work permit. Whereas only 40 per cent of the informally employed Syrian refugees had a work permit, but neither a work contract nor social insurance, 73 per cent of the formally employed Syrian refugees (with contract and insurance) had obtained a work permit (Krafft et al., 2018). Moreover, the number of child labourers has increased rapidly in Jordan. It more than doubled between 2007 and 2016 to 69,000 children of whom about 44,000 were working under hazardous conditions.<sup>17</sup> Families facing the economic

17 \ According to Shteivi et al. (2016), 95 per cent of Jordanian and 72.5 per cent of the Syrian children in a sample of 20,000 children between age 5 and 17 in Jordan were enrolled in schools. This suggests that the in-

pressures of protracted displacement consider the work of children to be an important part of their livelihood (Achilli, 2017). In general, working standards declined in Jordan as a consequence of the influx of Syrian informal workers, and Jordanians perceived the Syrian refugees increasingly as competitors for scarce employment opportunities.<sup>18</sup>

The government of Jordan has been hesitant to issue work permits to Syrian refugees. From an economic perspective, Jordan could benefit from skilled Syrian workers. The human resource manager of JOHUD commented on the issue of work permits for Syrian refugees that if Syrians and Jordanians worked together, the Jordanians would learn from the Syrians; however, there would be the danger of Syrians taking advantage of market opportunities at the expense of the Jordanians. The manager draws a typical conclusion from the Jordanian perspective: “What we really need is regulatory legislation to consider both communities” (human resource manager of JOHUD, Amman, November 2016). The call for more regulation to protect Jordanians from competition reflects the predominance of the public sector in the Jordanian economy, a system that is deeply entrenched in Jordanian society and opposes efforts to liberalise, privatise and open up the economy to neo-liberal globalisation (cf. also Lenner & Turner, 2018).

A second reason that speaks against work permits for Syrian refugees comes from a political point of view. In line with the government of Jordan, the JOHUD manager points out that

*we don't want this work permit to let the Syrians maintain a livelihood in Jordan permanently, leading to the fact that Syrians settle in Jordan for good like what happened in the case of Palestinians. It is a pity that the young generation of Jordanians who are Palestinians by birth feel that they do not belong in Palestine and have lost their Palestinian identity*

crease in child labour is driven by the increase in the Syrian population that has arrived in Jordan since 2012.

18 \ The unemployment rate in Jordan amounted to 18.2 percent of the labour force in the first quarter of 2017 (Azzeh, 2017) and to 18.7 per cent in the second quarter of 2018 (DoS, 2018). Unemployment had increased by 3.6 percent from the first quarter of 2016 and in 2017, it had reached the highest rate in 25 years. Unemployment affected 13.9 percent of the men and 33 percent of the women in 2017 (Azzeh, 2017) and 16.8 percent of the men and 26.8 percent of the women in 2018 (DoS, 2018).

*and their connection to their land. We don't want this for Syrians to happen (human resource manager of JOHUD, Amman, November 2016).*

From this perspective, Syrian refugees should not be offered opportunities that could allow them to make a living and settle. Some officials believe that issuing work permits to Syrian refugees is the first step towards this end, which explains the Jordanian government's reluctant response to requests of alleviating access to work permits for Syrian refugees. "We always think about Syrians in a humanitarian way; they are our brothers and neighbours", adds the JOHUD manager (Amman, November 2016). This also reflects the view of the Jordanian government, which has to be understood against the background of the legacy of the decade-long stay of Palestinian refugees in Jordan. The Jordanian government has objected the formal or legal integration of Palestinians to keep the option of an independent Palestine with the ensuing return of the Palestinians who live in Jordan politically open. The politics of hosting Palestinian refugees and denying them integration intend to not preclude the establishment of a Palestinian state. The unsolved Palestinian issue thus entails the political impossibility of 'integrating'—in this case Syrian—refugees. The concern that a similar fate threatens the Syrian refugees does not seem to be exaggerated from the Jordanian historical experience (cf. also El-Abed, 2014).

### **Changing conditions of employment for Syrians in Jordan: The EU–Jordan Compact**

According to an insightful study on the workings of the Jordanian labour market by Lenner & Turner (2018), three main underlying dynamics have shaped Jordan's political economy for the past decades:

- 1\ a 'zonal development' strategy intended to enhance economic growth through investment in special economic zones and development corridors,

- 2\ a segmented labour market that reserves white-collar employment to Jordanians and allocates blue-collar work to migrants who are kept in precarious labour conditions, and
- 3\ "the political creation of informality" (Lenner & Turner, 2018, p. 2) represented by a large informal economic sector that provides fall-back options for significant numbers of Jordanians, but also for numerous migrants and refugees that have dropped out of or never entered the formal economy (Collier & Betts, 2017). Collier & Betts (2017) rightly point out that the mass influx of Syrian refugees has provided an opportunity for the Jordanian government to tap into new money flows from international aid agencies that support Jordanian refugee camps; an incentive that prevents the government from integrating refugees in the national labour market. According to Collier & Betts (2017), "while most [Syrian refugees in Jordan] subsist via the informal economy, few are able to access formal work permits, either because they are prohibitively expensive or because of the restrictive bureaucratic process".

Three years into the Syrian crisis, the renowned economists Alexander Betts and Paul Collier used their expert status to propagate an alternative and recommended a strong policy towards labour market integration of Syrians in Jordan. The two main reasons for this advice were averting the aid dependency syndrome from Syrians in protracted displacement in Jordan and avoiding inefficiency by excluding refugees and their skills from the labour markets. Aiming to make refugees "agents of development" (Collier & Betts, 2017), the two economists used their influence to pave the way for realising this vision through the EU–Jordan Compact (Barbelet et al., 2018).

In February 2016, a donor conference for Syria in London pledged funds amounting to US \$1.7 billion for grants and concessional financial support for Jordan's national Syrian refugee response plan. This was a new effort to address the perceived critical condition of the Jordanian economy with its huge public

sector and rudimentary capitalist private sector, while informal employment was growing.<sup>19</sup> The pledges contained the commitment by the European Union (EU) member states to simplify the rules of origin to facilitate exports from Jordan to the European market. According to the EU–Jordan Compact between the European Union, the government of Jordan and the World Bank, the rules governing the export of a wide range of commodities produced in factories in 18 designated economic zones and industrial areas in Jordan were relaxed for ten years. The time frame for the simpler rules of origin will be extended when the target of employing 200,000 Syrian refugees with formal contracts, based on work permits to be issued by the Jordanian Ministry of Labour, has been reached. The factories are required to hire up to 15 per cent Syrians of the total workforce per factory (European Commission, 2016). In December 2018, the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan drew consequences from the low performance of the EU–Jordan Compact. They agreed to extend it up to 2030 and further relax the criteria for companies operating in Jordan to become eligible for the preferential trade regime (EEAS, 2018).

The government of Jordan used to issue work permits for foreign labour mainly in the sectors of construction, agriculture and manufacturing, areas where migrant workers prevail and which do not involve any significant competition with Jordanians.<sup>20</sup> Employment in trade and sales, white-collar jobs, teaching, working in health or education, information technology and other services is closed for

non-Jordanians (Barbelet et al., 2018).<sup>21</sup> Hence, migrant workers from Middle Eastern, North African and Asian countries are the main competitors for Syrians in the setting of the EU–Jordan Compact, whereas Jordanian workers do not face employment threats (ILO, 2017), as they rarely work in the low-paid unskilled jobs available in those factories. The Compact also stipulates improvements of the business and investment environment in Jordan and the formalisation of Syrian businesses, which always require Jordanian partners. With regard to social services, the EU–Jordan Compact contains the commitment to provide capacities in schools for all Syrian children as well as some vocational training opportunities (Barbelet et al., 2018).

Considered from a strategic perspective, the EU–Jordan Compact is an experiment that brings together interests in drawing on refugees’ assumed resilience and a reduction of the need for aid, boosting stagnant economies through their incorporation into the globalised economy, and keeping refugees away from Europe. In the words of Lenner & Turner (2018, p. 12),

*(r)ather than refugees being an economic burden, this zonal economy—a second-tier and temporary form of socioeconomic integration—would boost the overall local economy, particularly in export-oriented manufacturing. At the same time, formal employment possibilities in neighboring states would provide the incentive for Syrians to stay where they are, rather than attempt the journey to Europe.*

Furthermore, the Compact is an attempt to enhance the private sector and thus open up the Jordanian public sector-dominated economy towards a (neo-)liberal market economy.

19 \ The donors included the United Nations and governments from Europe and the Gulf.

20 \ According to the ILO, “work permit requirements can be understood as set provisions that either the worker or employer must comply with before they can proceed to submit a work permit application. Requirements currently include obtaining a business license (for the employer), a Ministry of Interior service card (for Syrian employee) and, for the employer, complying with other regulations related to migrant workers (quotas/closed sectors/closed occupations/maximum number of work permits)” (ILO, 2017, p. 37).

21 \ The professions that are closed for non-Jordanians are medical professions; engineering professions; administrative and accounting professions; clerical work including typing and secretarial work, switchboards, telephones and connections work; work in warehouses, in sales, including all groups; hairdressers; decorators; teachers, including all specialties except for the rare ones when there is no Jordanian available; selling fuel in main cities; professions dealing with electricity; mechanics and professions dealing with car repairs; drivers; guards and servants; caretakers (Arida Law Firm, no year).

### The policies of work permit waivers

From the perspective of the planners of the EU-Jordan Compact, one major obstacle to this endeavour is the cost of work permits (Collier & Betts, 2017). The fees for work permits for Arab migrant workers are between JOD 60 (US \$84) in agriculture and JOD 180 (US \$254) in all other sectors permitted for migrants. For non-Arab workers, permits cost about twice as much. Work permits have to be renewed annually or when a person changes their employer (Arida Law Firm, no year).

To facilitate the implementation of the EU-Jordan Compact, a waiver of work permit fees for Syrian refugees (valid for three months) was issued by the Jordanian cabinet in December 2016. Since then, the waiver for Syrian refugees has been extended every three months (Government of Jordan, 2018). In December 2018, the Government of Jordan extended the grace period until end of 2019 (Government of Jordan, 2018). Whereas in December 2015, only 4,000 Syrians had obtained a work permit, until late 2018, the number of Syrians with a work permit allegedly had increased to 120,000 in those fields of employment permitted for non-Jordanians, among them five per cent women (UNHCR, 2017; 2019).<sup>22</sup> However, a study by the International Rescue Committee (IRC, 2018) points out that many of the work permits are re-issued permits and not new ones.<sup>23</sup> Obviously, the number of work permits is still far from the envisioned 200,000 for 2018. Moreover, an ILO survey revealed that only 20 per cent of the Syrian employees with work permits were covered by social security even though it is required by Jordanian labour law (ILO, 2017).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> \ Another source mentions only four per cent women (Leghtas, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> \ Some sources mention up to 112,000 work permits issued for Syrian refugees in Jordan (ILO, 2018). The government of Jordan, 2018, states that 105,404 work permits were issued between 1 January 2016 and 30 June 2018. According to the government of Jordan (2018), 17,730 work permits were issued for Syrian refugees residing in Amman from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018, and 9,740 between January and June 2018, whereas 17,470 work permits were issued in the refugee camps over the same period (Government of Jordan, 2018). However, all these figures include renewals of work permits and, hence, do not provide evidence on the real number of refugees working in the formal economy.

<sup>24</sup> \ The sample comprised 450 Syrian refugees with and without work permits as well as employers in four governorates (ILO, 2017, p. 17).

The ILO survey indicates that from the perspective of Syrian refugees, the main advantage of having a work permit is better protection from being caught by the police that would take them back to a camp. The ILO also reports that incidences where Syrian workers are not paid at all or below the minimum wages for migrants of JOD 150 (US \$211) per month are higher among Syrians without a work permit (estimated at 20 per cent by ILO) than among those with a work permit (about 10 per cent) (ILO, 2017). Hence, those refugees that obtain a work permit get some protection from exploitation. Syrians without a work permit often obtain jobs in areas that are legally closed for non-Jordanians, where they earn less than Jordanians, but much more than the minimum wage (authors' interviews with Syrian refugees working in white-collar jobs in Amman).

Adjusting to the fact that agricultural workers change employers frequently during seasons and over the year, the Jordanian Ministry of Labour introduced a special work permit for 'agricultural cooperatives' in December 2016. Frequent change of agricultural employers can thus be covered by a single work permit, which is meant as an incentive for more Syrian refugees to be employed with a work permit. Until the end of January 2018, the Ministry of Labour had issued 31,074 work permits for Syrians under the section of 'cooperatives in agriculture' (Government of Jordan, 2018). The agricultural work permit does not contain any social security coverage, though (ILO, 2017).

Until 2017, Syrian refugees used to be hired for short-term jobs, cash for work and employment-intensive construction and infrastructure programmes in the refugee camps, funded by international development agencies of the United Nations or bilateral development agencies (ILO, 2017; UN Women, 2015; GIZ, 2016). In the construction sector, workers generally change employers frequently and are employed in short-term jobs. In cooperation with the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU) and the Ministry of Labour, the ILO succeeded in establishing a cooperative solution in the construction sector like in agriculture. This allows Syrian refugees to change employers with the same work permit.

More than 16,000 flexible work permits were issued during the year following the introduction of this new regulation in August 2017 (Prieto, 2018). In 2018, the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with the ILO and the GFJTU introduced electronic work permits that can be extended digitally (ILO, 2018).

The ILO thus has put much effort into technical improvements alleviating administrative procedures, into negotiating one short-term waiver for work permit fees for Syrian refugees after the other with the rather reluctant government of Jordan and into the introduction of cooperative work permits. Nevertheless, the participation of Syrian refugees in the formal labour market has remained low. According to a survey of mid-2017, only 23 per cent of interviewed Syrian respondents in Jordan reported working with a valid work permit. One reason for the low rate of work permits in use is that employers are reluctant to register their employees formally because employing irregular migrants is cheaper. Another reason is that before receiving a work permit, an employee must have a regular status in Jordan, which many Syrian refugees do not have or do not get renewed (Achilli, 2017). Only two years into the implementation of the Jordan Compact, the government of Jordan, in the context of its regularisation policy, introduced the MoI card that allows refugees to stay in Jordan outside of camps legally (IRC, 2018; see also the Introduction of this *Paper*).

Still, in 2018, many Syrian refugees who had a work permit were not or only paid in part after they had finished their work—contrary to what had been agreed upon. Some did not receive a copy of the work contract. Many were not covered by social insurance or health insurance and did not get annual leave or sick leave. Overtime was rarely paid. Critics stated in *The Jordan Times* that the decisions about labour market integration of Syrian refugees

*were issued at such a rapid speed that it caused confusion among employers and workers at the labour directorates ... this whirlwind of successive decisions resulted in neither the worker nor the employer or even the employee at the directorate to understand the process of issuing permits (Linda Al-Kalash, Director of Tamkeen Fields for Aid, quoted in Prieto, 2018a).*

Lenner & Turner (2018) argue instead that employers may well understand the procedure but remain reluctant to apply for work permits for Syrians as without permits, employers benefit from a still cheap—and often skilled—labour force that cannot claim any labour rights.

In a study of 2017, the ILO admits that the attempts of the donors to formalise and regularise the labour market, to involve Syrian refugees in this market, and to boost growth through an export boom from Jordan to the European market is unlikely to lead to quick success (ILO, 2017, pp. 55-56). One significant obstacle is the fact that the Jordanian political economy is built on clear divisions of the Jordanian labour market into formal, migrant and informal sectors. The measures of the EU-Jordan Compact go counter this long-established system (Lenner & Turner, 2018). The current attempts at “(t)urning the Syrian refugee crisis into a development opportunity” (Lenner & Turner, 2018, p. 2) seem to be doomed to fail. Another obstacle stems from the Syrian refugees’ efforts to regain a livelihood that they consider appropriate, which is not in line with becoming factory workers. The next section provides insights into this that the author obtained during her research.

## Work and work permits in Jordan from the perspective of Syrian refugees

During the period of field research at the end of 2016 and early 2017, most of the team's interview partners did not know about the waiver on work permit fees and, therefore, had not tried to get a permit as they assumed that it would still be too expensive. However, for many, the waiver would not provide an incentive as their main problem was the limited access to the Jordanian labour market. Interview partners in the author's sample had been plumbers, electricians, shopkeepers or owners of various small businesses such as a laundry, a bakery, a repair workshop in Syria—professions for which they will not get a work permit in Jordan. Informally, without a contract, insurance or permit, Syrian men work as occasional labourers in painting and tiling, as food

vendors or as carpenters in Amman. Women usually work from home as hairdressers or food caterers for private customers. Income is badly needed to pay for the families' food, rent and electricity bills, the medicine and the debts several refugees owe previous or current landlords.

Whereas the ILO (2017) report indicates that payment for Syrians is much lower than for Jordanians, the author's research findings suggest a more cautious assessment. A Syrian shop vendor working for twelve hours per day is paid JOD 300 (US \$422) per month, whereas Jordanians get JOD 450 (US \$633) for the same job. However, a Jordanian serving in the army earns around JOD 300 (US \$422) or 400 (US \$562), the same as a bus driver and not much more than Syrian workers. A Syrian refugee working informally in a car wash earns JOD 8 (US \$11.24) per day and about JOD 200 (US \$281) a month and receives food coupons for his family in addition to this (authors' interviews in Hittin camp, 2017).

Though hardly any competition occurs between native Jordanians and Syrians, this is different for Jordanians with Palestinian origin, many of whom also work as informal labourers. Shop and workshop or service shop owners currently prefer to employ Syrians informally; they hardly care whether they work in fields closed to non-Jordanians or not. Informally employed Syrians thus compete mainly with Palestinian-Jordanians but not with Jordanians who are employed by the government or the army or in offices of private companies (authors' interviews in Ain al-Basha and al-Hussayn camp, 2016 and 2017).

Following the EU-Jordan Compact and related endeavours to increase the employment of Syrian refugee women, a young mother told the author that a friend had suggested that they could work in a chocolate factory in Marka near Amman. When the two women learnt that the wages were JOD 200 (US \$281) and did not include transportation, they refused the offer, because they would need most of the wages to pay for transport. This illustrates a general perception by Syrian interview partners most of whom were not ready to work for wages that were by far not sufficient to cover families' basic needs.

For several Syrian women in the author's sample, having a work permit was less relevant for legal employment than for legalising their residency in urban areas rather than in the camp. Hence, before the government of Jordan finally regularised refugees through the MoI card, the work permit already fulfilled this function as a de facto residence permit for Syrians. For example, Syrian refugees use the work permit to get a visa for Saudi Arabia allowing them (mostly Syrian women) to practice *omra*, a short pilgrimage journey to the holy sites. Local Islamic centres in Greater Amman usually organise the pilgrimage for work permit holders upon request (author's interviews in Islamic centres in Greater Amman, 2016 and 2017). These examples indicate that Syrians have a range of reasons to apply or not apply for work permits; some are economic, but others are of a social and cultural nature. This implies that numbers of work permits issued hardly indicate fulfilment of the Jordan Compact's aims of bringing 200,000 Syrian refugees into employment, but involve several other uses of the document. The findings indicate that free work permits intended to incorporate Syrian refugees in the lower layers of the Jordanian formal labour market do not meet the priorities Syrian refugees have for their livelihood.

## Jobs as a livelihood option

Informal jobs and self-employment are crucial livelihood options for Syrian refugees, no matter whether these are legal or informal. Most importantly, these occupations ought to be, in the point of view of refugee men, appropriate and dignified. For them, livelihood does not just mean generating an income by any means. Although wages often are very low, and sometimes employers do not pay the illegal labourers at all, Syrian men go to great lengths to get jobs outside the house so that they preserve their role and self-esteem as men in the cultural context of Syrian families. They change employers when they are not paid at the end of their work and take many risks as illegally employed persons. However, often, employers protect them, as they benefit from cheap labour. In this sense, male Syrian refugees and Jordanian em-

ployers form a clandestine alliance against the restrictive government policy of closed professions.

Women are as eager as men to secure the family's livelihood. Some manage to contribute an extra income through home business such as hairdressing, tailoring, catering and other small services, which they usually provide for other Syrian families. This is a decent way for Syrian women to work without exposing themselves to a perceived hostile public that manifests itself through harassment by Jordanian or Palestinian-Jordanian men. Until 2017, women's income-generating activities were hidden activities that kept them protected within their houses and families and that did not come to the attention of state authorities (interviews with women in al-Hussayn and Ain al-Basha, 2016 and 2017). However, this changed when the government of Jordan introduced a new regulation for home-based businesses in October 2017 in an attempt to include this sector in the formal economy, supported by the ILO and international NGOs. Syrian women running home-based micro-businesses will now become criminalised if they do not obtain licenses. Moreover, the government of Jordan introduced a ceiling for the support to refugees by NGOs. With this ceiling, the support provided by NGOs to Syrian home producers or service providers is greatly curtailed.<sup>25</sup> In November 2018, the government amended the regulation, allowing registered home-based businesses in food-processing, handicrafts and tailoring to operate as long as 70 per cent of the support benefits Jordanians (Government of Jordan, 2018).

This effort to regulate the large shadow economy in Jordan has adverse effects on the livelihood of Syrian refugee families. Many of them depend on women's small home businesses irrespective of the number of Jordanians working in the same sector. The regulation—even after the amendment—is likely to increase families' need for aid, thus contradicting measures of opening livelihood options for Syrian refugees that make them resilient. The argument by the government that the regulation should prevent competition with Jordanians does not hold in this case as the

customers of Syrian refugee women's home businesses are mainly other Syrian women; hence, they do not interfere in the markets of Jordanians (Grawert, 2019).

In the research team's (non-representative) sample, many Syrian refugee women are either not able to be homemakers who generate an income in this way, or they are unable to find customers. Some are ill and traumatised or have to care for sick children, parents, or husbands (authors' interviews in Ain al-Basha, al-Hussayn camp and Hittin camp, 2016 and 2017). Jobs or self-employment are not feasible for refugee women in these conditions, and some of them revert to prostitution or marrying off their daughters at a very young age as presented in the section on poverty above. As shown in the previous chapters, securing a family's livelihood does not exclusively depend on income generation. For refugees from Syria, an essential dimension of making a living in dignity is to belong to a network; most importantly, of family members.

25 \ US \$4.2 million is the amount the Jordan Response Plan allows for the support of homemakers (IRC, 2018).

## Conclusion

This *Paper* has provided insights into how refugees from Syria secure their livelihood in Greater Amman, mostly in the neighbourhoods ('camps') of host communities consisting predominantly of Jordanians with Palestinian origin. The refugees face all the typical constraints that come along with their status, such as restrictions of movement, numerous bureaucratic requirements, dependence on aid for social services and basic needs, limitations in opportunities to generate their income. After a high degree of solidarity of receiving communities in the Palestinian camps, grievances increased due to rising rents and prices for commodities, which contributed to rising incidences where refugees had to endure harassment and discrimination. Many Syrian refugees are traumatised from war, adding to the loss of self-help capacities as a result of their being refugees, constraining further the ability to determine on their own how they maintain their livelihood.

The *Paper* applied 'livelihood' as a conceptual approach, thus emphasising the agency of refugees towards maintaining or re-gaining a way of life that they consider as keeping their human dignity. This research perspective brought the livelihood options existing in the receiving society, the access of refugees to or their preclusion from these options and the role of neighbourhood relationships in enhancing or limiting refugees' agency into the focus of research. The author systematically described

- 1\ the needs that in the eyes of Syrian refugees must be satisfied to secure their livelihood and the limitations they are facing,
- 2\ the role of neighbourhood relationships of Syrian refugees in Palestinian host communities with regard to the refugees' livelihood,
- 3\ the role of self-organised Jordanian-Palestinian support groups aiming to help the most needy refugees towards increased agency of the latter with regard to their livelihood,
- 4\ measures by the international community (here the combined efforts of the UNHCR, ILO, EU and humanitarian and development agencies participating in the Livelihood Working Group) to influence the government of Jordan towards alleviating access to employment for Syrian refugees.

Most striking has been the contrast between the endeavours of the international community to bring Syrian refugees into employment and the protection activities of the self-organised assistance groups. The analysis of the implementation of the EU-Jordan Compact revealed that the Compact contains a strong agenda driven by the interest of the European Union in keeping Syrian refugees out of Europe. For this purpose, the two parties struck a deal that may alleviate access of Jordanian companies to the EU market, if they employ a fixed percentage of Syrians in their factories. Yet, the statements of Syrian refugees collected in this *Paper* indicate that the Compact touches only marginally the livelihood intentions of its target group. The author's research findings indicate that Syrian refugees are hardly interested in low-paid employment in factories. On the contrary, they intend to lead a life that accommodates their physical abilities and perception of their role as family head or mother (numerous Syrian men still suffer from injuries, are too old to work in a factory or want to use their skills in different professions to take care of their families; women do not want to be employed far away from their children for wages that are too low to make a living when transport costs are deducted). Counter to the imposed agenda of the EU-Jordan Compact, the self-organised groups seem to provide assistance to Syrian refugees that is tailored to their needs and fits into the refugees' ideas of a life in dignity. Besides fulfilling basic and special (mainly medical) requirements, these self-organised groups meet social, cultural, psychological and religious needs of (single) mothers and children in particular, upon request. It has to be emphasised that these groups respond to specific demands of refugees flexibly and rapidly without any external agenda.

The author's analysis identified these self-organised assistance groups as an emerging social movement consisting of independent initiatives by Jordanians with Palestinian origin that work with Syrians as volunteers or for small rewards and operate in the Palestinian camps where many Syrians have sought refuge. Hence, these initiatives can be considered as part of the neighbourhood relations Syrian refugees

rely on to secure their livelihood. The author has shown that these relationships are ambiguous and have been subject to dynamics over time. After an initial generous welcoming reception of the refugees, Palestinian landlords and landladies have started to insist more strongly on the payment of rent and have increased it—partly as a response to rent payment for refugees by humanitarian agencies that the owners of flats rightly took as an opportunity to make a profit. In contrast to that trend, the members of the self-organised social initiatives assisting refugees have upheld their initial empathy and tried to help them in anyway they can.

Following an initial period during which Palestinian-Jordanians had perceived the Syrians as people that shared the same fate of being displaced, refugees increasingly felt and were regarded as ‘different’. The author used the dynamics of established-outsider relations that often lead to a stronger perception of coherence among the group of the established (here Palestinian-Jordanians in the camps) versus the outsiders (the refugees from Syria who tend to enclose themselves in their houses and concentrate on family affairs, avoiding interaction with neighbours) to explain the growing feeling of being different. Social inequality and class differences contributed to a widening gap between established and outsiders, in particular where Syrians came from a middle-class background and currently live among disadvantaged and lower-class Palestinians. However, as the study showed, hostile perceptions of Syrian neighbours may also come from members of the Palestinian-Jordanian middle class, strengthening the explanation provided by the established-outsider figuration.

The research findings also indicate that Syrian women and children, in particular, have become victims of harassment by Jordanians, Jordanian-Palestinians and foreigners who all increasingly exploit the dire situation of desperately impoverished Syrian widows, single mothers, and their children and harass them pretending that they want to help but in reality making shady offers of marriage. The growing social gap between the established and the outsiders thus

best manifests itself in gender relations that are characterised by the subjugation of women and girls.

Below the surface of a non-integrative arrangement of schooling, the author's research has identified challenges to the educational system in Jordan as reflections of the tribalised society and the narrow political representation possible at the political level. Relationships with powerful patrons have become the means of pursuing individual interests (also in education) and personal achievement for Jordanians—a structure that excludes newcomers like the Syrian refugees. At the same time, the long history of settlement of migrants and refugees in Jordan, particularly that of wealthy newcomers to the class of capital and landowners, may provide some Syrian newcomers from the middle class with the opportunity to gradually integrate in the long term.

Against this multi-dimensional and dynamic web of interaction within the society of Jordan, the assistance of the UNHCR and UNRWA single out particular (vulnerable) groups whom they provide with basic assistance according to rather technical criteria, which have to be approved by the government of Jordan.<sup>26</sup> Hence, the interests of the government and the UN agencies in keeping a bureaucratic control over the refugees are in the foreground. The measures of integrating Syrian refugees in the formal labour market through the EU-Jordan Compact appear to be a marginal endeavour against the multitude of factors relevant to the livelihood of refugees from Syria. In this light, the self-organised assistance groups can be assessed as independent social formations that step into the breach left by the professional international agencies who pursue their agendas in cooperation with the Jordanian government. By calling the professional agencies thieves and liars, the members of self-organised groups thus touch upon the complex web of self-interest that guides external interventions. The fact that the Jordanian government, NGOs and the international agencies themselves benefit from the influx of aid meant to help

26 \ The introduction of the iris scan to identify refugees eligible for assistance is one example that confirms the interest in gaining comprehensive control over the refugees. The requirement of registration is another example for this. This excludes those refugees that are denied refuge for political reasons, like Palestinians fleeing from the war in Syria.

the refugees and receiving communities is one dimension of the deep-seated mistrust expressed by the self-organised groups. Using the distress of the Syrian refugees as a gateway to formalising the large informal economy of Jordan is a second dimension that generates fears in the population that the destruction of admittedly precarious jobs may lead to an overall reduction of income opportunities. This shows that the agenda of enhancing resilience and promoting refugees' self-reliance does not start from the refugees' own priorities and intentions about their livelihood. Instead, this agenda is part of an external idea of a liberal market economy that may have chances to expand when governments come under pressure because they have to host high numbers of refugees.

The sobering result of this analysis is that there is no interest on the part of international agencies and the Jordanian government to enhance the agency of refugees and open avenues to self-determinedly secure their livelihoods. Neither will they decriminalise politically unwanted self-organised groups that help refugees. Hence their desperately needed work will continue underground.

## List of interview partners

### Families and individuals in Greater Amman

- \ Older Syrian family, Hay Amir Ali, November 2016
- \ Syrian widow and neighbour, Hay Amir Ali, December 2016
- \ Palestinian-Jordanian landlady, Hai al-Zaitoon, Ain al-Basha, November 2016
- \ Syrian couple, Hai al-Zaitoon, Ain al-Basha, November 2016
- \ Syrian trader, Ain al-Basha, January 2017
- \ Syrian woman, al-Hussayn camp, January 2017
- \ Syrian woman with widowed daughters, al-Hussayn camp, January 2017
- \ Syrian Palestinian family, al-Hussayn camp, January 2017
- \ Palestinian-Jordanian older man and his wife, al-Hussayn camp, January 2017
- \ Palestinian-Jordanian taxi driver, Amman, January 2017
- \ Palestinian-Jordanian shop owners, Hittin camp, January 2017
- \ Syrian worker, Hittin camp, January 2017
- \ Syrian family, Hittin camp, January 2017
- \ Syrian woman, Hittin camp, January 2017
- \ Syrian student, university, November 2016
- \ Syrian man, university, December 2016
- \ Palestinian-Jordanian man, Amman, January 2017
- \ Syrian Christian man, Amman, January 2017
- \ Syrian man with work permit, Amman, January 2017
- \ Iraqi family, Amman, January 2017
- \ Syrian woman, Dowar al-Sina'a
- \ Syrian woman teacher, Marka, November 2016

### Interviews outside Amman

- \ Jordanian pastor, Mafraq, November 2016
- \ Syrian family in Um al-Sarb village near Mafraq, November 2016
- \ Syrian teacher, Mafraq - al-Hussayn camp, November 2016

### Charity initiatives

- \ Islamic centre in Ain al-Basha, several visits between November 2016 and July 2017
- \ JOHUD, Amman, November 2016 (interview with the human resources manager)
- \ Molham Team, Amman, several visits between November 2016 and January 2017
- \ Student Unit assisting Syrian refugees, University of Amman, November 2016 and January 2017
- \ Volunteers for Syrian refugee assistance, Amman, November 2016

### Expert talks and meetings

- \ Ann-Christin Wagner, Amman and Mafraq, November 2016
- \ Anja Wehler-Schöck, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, November 2016
- \ Dr Oroub al-Abed, Amman, January 2017
- \ UNHCR Livelihood Working Group, Amman, November 2016 - January 2017
- \ Nina Lutter, BMZ, January 2017
- \ Hani Khleifat, Mohammed Badran, Eman Qaraeen, GIZ, January 2017
- \ Diana Potpara, UNRWA, Amman, January 2017
- \ Dr Salih Alkilani, Ministry of Labour, Amman, January 2017
- \ Maha Katta, ILO, Amman, January 2017
- \ Meeting for discussion of the research project at the Institut français du proche-orient (Ifpo), Amman

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<i>FSA</i>	Free Syrian Army	<i>FSA</i>
<i>GFJTU</i>	General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions	<i>GFJTU</i>
<i>GIZ</i>	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German development agency)	<i>GIZ</i>
<i>IDP</i>	Internally displaced person	<i>IDP</i>
<i>ILO</i>	International Labour Organisation	<i>ILO</i>
<i>JOD</i>	Jordanian Dinar	<i>JOD</i>
<i>JOHUD</i>	Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development	<i>JOHUD</i>
<i>NGO</i>	Non-governmental organisation	<i>NGO</i>
<i>PLO</i>	Palestine Liberation Organization	<i>PLO</i>
<i>UNHCR</i>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	<i>UNHCR</i>
<i>UNICEF</i>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund	<i>UNICEF</i>
<i>UNRWA</i>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency	<i>UNRWA</i>

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## ANNEX

## Annex 1

## Registered refugees by region as of January 2017

Governorate	No. of inhabitants*	% of population	No. of registered refugees**	% of registered refugees per governorate	Registered refugees per governorate population
<i>Amman Governorate</i>	4,000,000	42.0	175,381	26.8	4.4
<i>Mafrq Governorate</i>	549,948	5.8	158,165	24.1	28.8
<i>Irbid Governorate</i>	1,770,000	18.6	135,364	20.7	7.6
<i>Zarqa Governorate</i>	1,364,000	14.3	109,103	16.6	8.0
<i>Balqa Governorate</i>	491,709	5.2	18,902	2.9	3.8
<i>Madaba Governorate</i>	189,192	2.0	10,781	1.6	5.7
<i>Jarash Governorate</i>	237,959	2.5	9,605	1.5	4.0
<i>Dispersed in Jordan</i>			9,377	1.4	
<i>Karak Governorate</i>	316,629	3.3	8,513	1.3	2.7
<i>Ajlun Governorate</i>	176,080	1.8	7,873	1.2	4.5
<i>Maan Governorate</i>	144,083	1.5	7,480	1.1	5.2
<i>Aqaba Governorate</i>	188,160	2.0	3,362	0.5	1.8
<i>Tafilah Governorate</i>	96,291	1.0	1,493	0.2	1.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,524,051</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>655,399</b>	<b>99.9</b>	

Sources: UNHCR 2017c; Ghazal 2016 reporting about national census data as of November 2015

Notes: \* November 2015 \*\* January 2017

## Annex II: Status of Palestinian refugees in Jordan

Palestinians have a different citizenship status in Jordan according to their time of arrival and place of origin (Gaza or West Bank); they also have been subject to policy changes. This Annex is structured accordingly.<sup>1</sup>

### Palestinians arriving in the context of the First Arab–Israeli War in 1948

According to Art. 3, B of the 1954 Nationality Act of Jordan, Palestinians who had the Palestinian nationality before 15 May 1948, and resided in the Kingdom of Jordan between 20 December 1949 and 16 February 1954, were considered Jordanian citizens. The right to nationality entailed the right to education, medical care, work, property ownership, travel and state protection (Shiblak, 1996) and concerned an estimated number of round 440,000 persons. Granting Palestinians who arrived in 1948 citizenship rights did not result in the loss of their status as refugees as defined by UNRWA (Fafo, 1994) and allows UNRWA to provide vulnerable persons among the Palestinians with assistance. Due to the history of displacement of Palestinians and the particular role of Jordan as host country, the Kingdom of Jordan refused to sign the Geneva Convention of 1951 so that Jordan would never be considered as an alternative homeland to Palestinians.

### Palestinians arriving as a result of the ‘Six Day War’ of June 1967

A new wave of displaced Palestinians arrived in Jordan in 1967. Like those displaced in 1948, the vast majority sought refuge in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. The legal framework on residency of each state shapes the livelihoods of the Palestinians (ARDD, 2015). This framework determines the conditions of “personal security, economic opportunities and social situation of refugees” (Gilen et al. 1994).

At least 240,000 Palestinians arrived in Jordan in the context of the war of 1967, when Jordan lost the West Bank to Israel, and Israel occupied the Gaza strip.<sup>2</sup> Soon after, a growing social cleavage between Palestinians originating from the West Bank and native Jordanians (so-called ‘East Bankers’) came to the surface during the ‘Black September’ in 1970, when the Jordanian King Hussein declared military rule and the Jordanian Armed Forces clashed with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) under the leadership of Yasser Arafat (Gilen et al. 1994). The Jordanian government expelled and killed thousands of Palestinian fighters (*fedayeen*) whom it accused of establishing a ‘state within the state’ and undermining the power of the King. Following this traumatic event, a group of Palestinians founded the ‘Black September’ as a clandestine organisation operating as a branch of the military wing of the PLO (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 2008).

Refugees from Gaza, most of whom arrived during and after the war of 1967, were never granted citizenship rights in Jordan. They have to apply for residence and work permits like any other foreigner. During the following decades, they were only allowed to travel if they had Egyptian travel documents and had to apply for a return visa before departing from Jordan; otherwise, they were not allowed to enter Jordan again (El-Abed 2012: 4). In 1983, the Jordanian government introduced a colour-coded system of travel documents according to which the travel documents of Palestinians originating from Gaza were labelled ‘blue cards’ while Jordanian citizens living in the West Bank received ‘green cards’, and those who originated from the West Bank but stayed within Jordan were given ‘yellow cards’ (ARRD, 2015).<sup>3</sup> All Palestinians except those from Gaza thus were granted Jordanian citizenship (Gabbay, 2014).

<sup>1</sup> \ Due to limitations of space, this *Paper* will not explain the causes and details of the Arab–Israeli wars.

<sup>2</sup> \ Palestinian sources estimated the number of refugees and their descendants at up to 800,000 in 1996 (Shiblak, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> \ The coloured cards were relevant for the Jordanian government to document how many Palestinians crossed the border to Israel and returned (BADIL, 2014).

### Constraints for Palestinians in Jordan following the 'Black September' of 1970

Since the events of the 'Black September', Palestinian political activity has been considered a sensitive subject in Jordan, and full integration of Palestinians is not desired for political reasons (Gilen et al., 1994).

The concern of the Jordanian government about political and religious radicalism among Palestinians has been reflected in the fact that Palestinians have been underrepresented in the Jordanian government throughout. In the 1993 election law, the Jordanian government designed constituencies for the ballot for the Chamber of Deputies in a way that diluted urban and thus Palestinian representation. As a response, Islamist parties and their largely Palestinian constituents boycotted the elections of 1997 "in protest against the skewed apportionment of seats to the monarchy's rural base of (non-Palestinian) supporters" (MRG, 2016). Jordan is divided into twelve governorates, but none is led by a Palestinian. Only nine of the 55 senators appointed by the King of Jordan are Palestinian, and in the Chamber of Deputies, Palestinians have only 18 out of 110 seats (MRG, 2016). The fears of Palestinian political activism by the Jordanian state and society have also been the main reason why access of Palestinians to employment in the public sector has been sharply restricted. Only those who received 'family cards' could find employment in the public sector, received social services and were allowed to send their children to school (Shiblak, 1996). According to MRG (2016), discrimination against Palestinians is also common in the private sector, and a quota system limits the number of university admissions for Palestinians. Moreover, "(g)overnment security operations disproportionately target Palestinians, especially operations conducted in the name of fighting terror" (MRG 2016).

### Repercussions of the withdrawal of Jordan from the West Bank in 1988 for Palestinians

In 1988, King Hussein declared the 'administrative disengagement' from the occupied territory of the West Bank and relinquished Jordan's claims for

sovereignty over this territory (Shiblak, 1996).<sup>4</sup> Around 1.5 million Palestinians who were living in the West Bank ('green card holders') in 1988 were now considered Palestinian citizens. In an interview, the lawyer Anis F. Kassim stated, "over one-and-a-half million Palestinians went to bed on 31 July 1988 as Jordanian citizens, and woke up on 1 August 1988 as stateless persons" (BADIL, 2010, p. 25). Those staying in the West Bank could get temporary passports without a national number,<sup>5</sup> which allows them to visit Jordan for 30 days at a time, but does not provide the right of permanent residency in Jordan (Shiblak, 1996). These passports were extended to 'two-year passports' that have to be renewed regularly; for some, they have been extended to 'five-year passports' since 1995 (Shiblak, 1996). However, as these passports are issued without a national number, their worth is limited to that of a travel document. The status of Palestinians from the West Bank henceforth resembled those from Gaza, who have always relied on travel documents (blue cards).<sup>6</sup> To make things worse for the Palestinians, the government of Jordan has put obstacles in place for Palestinians who want to renew their temporary passports (Gilen et al. 1994; BADIL 2010; UN, 2014; Gabbay, 2014).

187,000 individuals lost their Jordanian citizenship due to this change of rules (El-Abed 2012: 3). The 'East Bankers' and Palestinians originating from the West Bank and staying abroad or in Jordan already ('yellow card' holders), however, kept their status and enjoyed Jordanian citizenship rights.

4 \ The political background was to give way to the PLO as main negotiator with the United States and Israel about the future of Palestine; in this way, the government of Jordan tried to enforce international recognition of the PLO as representative of the Palestinians (BADIL, 2014).

5 \ According to Gabbay (2014), every Jordanian citizen "is issued a number which serves as proof of Jordanian nationality. This number allows citizens to enjoy basic rights, and is needed for a myriad of day-to-day necessities. For example, the national number is required to acquire a driver's license, to buy and sell property (including stocks and bonds), vote, and open a bank account. This number is also the distinguishing factor of what a Jordanian passport means for its holder."

6 \ Only Palestinian women from Gaza who are married to a Jordanian national can get the 'two-year passport', too (Fafo, 1994; Gilen et al., 1994; MRG, 2016). Since 1994, the government of Egypt has stopped issuing travel documents for Palestinians from Gaza and only allows students and medical patients with special permission to enter the country (Shiblak, 1996).

### **Increased arbitrariness in granting citizenship to Palestinians during the 1990s**

The Jordanian two-year passport serves as an identification document, a residence permit, and a travel document (UN, 2014). However, Arab states do not recognise the Jordanian ‘two-year passport’ and hence, do not issue visa to Palestinians, which restricts their freedom of movement. Already in 1994, Syria started to deny entry to Palestinians with Jordanian passports or coming from the occupied territories (Shiblak, 1996).

The government of Syria issued similar regulations as Jordan for the status of Palestinians living in Syria. Palestinians are granted equal civil rights as Syrian citizens but are excluded from citizenship, the right to vote, and the right to own property except for their own residency. Both countries allow Palestinians to work; in Jordan, however, this pertains only to those with a ‘five-year passport’. Both governments allow Palestinians only very limited access to employment in the public sector (ten per cent in Jordan in 1996). Whereas the government of Syria extended its services equally to the Palestinian refugees, Jordan increasingly curtailed the services (Shiblak, 1996).

Within Jordan, the temporary passport served the Jordanian government to curtail Palestinians’ residency rights, rights to work and property ownership as well as their access to social services, access to education, health care and social benefits (Shiblak, 1996). Hence, Palestinians who hold a two-year passport have to live with legal restrictions, and have to cope with unsafe living conditions (UN, 2014). They are not allowed to seek employment in the public or private sector, apply for a driving license for public transport, go into higher education, open a bank account or own shops or real estate. They are not allowed to invest and thus, have fewer rights than foreigners (El-Abed, 2012, p. 4). If they want to renew their passport, they have to pay fees (HRW, 2010).

Furthermore, the Jordanian authorities withdrew the travel documents of some Palestinians originating from Gaza who had joined military groups outside Jordan in the 1990s and then returned (El-Abed, 2012, p. 5). Most Palestinian refugees from this group

moved to Jerash refugee camp (‘Gaza camp’) and Hittin camp in Marka, just outside Amman. Both camps receive services from UNRWA (IRB, 2014). The group of Palestinian refugees from Gaza and those who remained in the West Bank after 1967 and only later came to Jordan are estimated at 150,000 persons (MRG, 2016).

Soon after this change in the legal status of Palestinians in Jordan, the Iraqi invasion in Kuwait of 1990 caused around 300,000 displaced Palestinians from Kuwait and other Gulf countries to seek refuge in Jordan. As a response, the Jordanian government further restricted the rights of Palestinians.

### **Revocation of Jordanian citizenship from Palestinians**

In the mid-2000s, the Jordanian authorities increasingly revoked the Jordanian citizenship of Palestinians, even of those who held ‘yellow cards’, and issued them ‘green cards’ with temporary permits of residence instead. Legal and human rights organisations claim that this has rendered an increasing number of Palestinians in Jordan de facto stateless and, as a result of this, denies them access to employment, as they require a work permit like foreigners, and employers are obliged to prove that no Jordanian has been available with a suitable qualification for the job. Moreover, those Palestinian refugees whose citizenship was revoked are not able to work as professionals (for example, in engineering or law), as this requires membership in professional associations, which is only allowed for people with Jordanian citizenship. Furthermore, the children of the Palestinians whose citizenship was revoked lost access to free schooling and subsidised university studies; costs for health care and interactions with Jordanian authorities are higher; they are not able to buy property, register a car or liquidate investments. The revocation of Jordanian citizenship was introduced without previous warnings and rather arbitrarily (HRW, 2010; ARRD, 2015). The legal rights organisation ARRD states that “(t)he revocation of Palestinian-Jordanian nationality is in contravention of the Jordanian Constitution which states in Article 5 that nationality is defined by law, and thus should not be removable through an ad-

ministrative act of the state” (ARRD, 2015, p. 5). According to Gabbay (2014), “(t)he random and fickle nature of who is allowed to retain citizenship holds Jordanians of Palestinian origin in a perpetual state of uncertainty.”

In 2009, the Jordanian Follow-up and Inspection Department of the Ministry of the Interior maintained that it would review another 300,000 Palestinian-Jordanians (‘yellow card’ holders). Subsequently, Palestinian refugees have used relationships to influential persons (*wasta*) to get protection from the revocation of their citizenship rights (HRW, 2010). In 2012, the review was transferred to the Jordanian governmental department of Passports and Civil Affairs, which needed the approval of the cabinet to withdraw ‘yellow cards’. The department received 3,400 petitions of grievance and reinstated 129 citizenships (ARRD, 2015). A representative of UNRWA summarises: “The preconditions for Palestinians to reside in Jordan depend both on the particular individual’s date of entry to Jordan (e. g. 1948, 1967, post-January 2013) and the most recent place of residence from which the Palestine refugee has fled (e. g. the legal status is different if a Palestine refugee fled from Gaza in 1967, or from the West Bank in 1967)” (UN, 2014). This has created varying legal statuses for the about three million Palestinians in Jordan and thus varying rights, responsibilities and burdens (ARDD, 2015; MRG, 2016).







bicc \  
Internationales Konversionszentrum Bonn  
Bonn International Center for Conversion GmbH

Pfarrer-Byns-Straße 1, 53121 Bonn, Germany  
+49 (0)228 911 96-0, Fax -22, [bicc@bicc.de](mailto:bicc@bicc.de)

[www.bicc.de](http://www.bicc.de)  
[www.facebook.com/bicc.de](https://www.facebook.com/bicc.de)

**bicc** Bonn  
International Center  
for Conversion \

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Director for Research  
Professor Dr Conrad Schetter

Director for Administration  
Michael Dedek

AUTHOR

**Dr Elke Grawert** is Senior Researcher at BICC  
with input by Rawan Alhomeimat

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