

JORDAN'S REFUGEE CRISIS

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The Syrian refugee crisis has exacerbated endemic political, economic, and resource challenges in Jordan. As the conflict in Syria enters a protracted state and public discontent and other tensions rise, Jordan has limited its humanitarian response. Yet, the roots of the kingdom's challenges run deeper than the refugee crisis and if left unaddressed will be harbingers of instability. If Jordan is to confront its national challenges and continue to provide a safe haven for Syrian refugees, the country will depend on increased international support.

Jordan's Many Challenges

- The Syrian refugee influx into Jordan has been massive. As of June 2015, more than 620,000 Syrians were registered with the United Nations Refugee Agency in Jordan. Eighty-four percent of these Syrians live in host communities as opposed to refugee camps.
- Syrian refugees have stressed economic and resource infrastructure in Jordan, which was already suffering from structural issues before the refugee crisis.
- The Jordanian public consistently overstates the negative impacts of the Syrian refugee influx, while the positive impacts receive far less attention, highlighting the politicized nature of the refugee crisis in Jordan. Public sentiment toward Syrian refugees has a deleterious effect on the government's ability to respond productively to the refugee influx.
- Confronted with persistently underfunded humanitarian appeals, Jordan has lost confidence in international donor support. Without additional aid and a sustainable response to the refugee crisis, Jordan will continue to restrict the protection space for Syrians. Doing so will increase the long-term risks of instability in Jordan and the region.

Key Takeaways for Jordan and the International Community

Prioritize the integration of development and humanitarian aid. Jordan has historically viewed refugee influxes as opportunities to advance its national development. The international community must recognize this dynamic and prioritize the integration of national development aid and humanitarian aid in its response to the Syrian refugee crisis, which will benefit both host communities and refugees.

Maintain protection space for Syrian refugees. As host-community tensions rise, Jordan should resist the political manipulation of protection space for refugees; it is imperative for the human security of Syrians that Jordan ensure asylum for refugees.

Formalize access to livelihoods. Actors responding to the Syrian crisis in Jordan must shift their policy responses from an emergency basis toward sustainable long-term approaches. With the Syrian crisis persisting, formalizing the economic sector and enabling access to livelihoods in Jordan will mitigate refugee vulnerability, strengthen the Jordanian economy, and reduce emergency humanitarian appeals.

Empower local governance actors. International aid should integrate capacity-building programs to strengthen the ability of Jordanian municipal actors to deliver services to their populaces and Syrian refugees.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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