

# IRAQI REFUGEES IN JORDAN

## INTRODUCTION

Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and has not established refugee-specific legislation. Therefore, refugees are subject to general provisions of immigration and residency laws, distinguishing between nationalities, facilitating status and requirements depending on the country of origin. As a result, refugees and asylum-seekers may face varying levels of obstacles when seeking to enter the country, gain legal residency, obtain a work permit, receive medical care, or enjoy access to education. Laws concerning legal stay in Jordan can also complicate the status of non-Syrian refugees, including Iraqis who are in most cases already considered no longer in legal stay status in the country, and may have accrued substantial overstay fines as well as prohibitions on legal re-entry to the country, required for some forms of residency.

*"Laws concerning legal stay in Jordan can also complicate the status of non-Syrian refugees, including Iraqis"*

These distinctions in treatment between countries of origin under immigration and related laws are a primary source of difference in rights and status between refugees from various countries, with those from countries other than Syria generally disadvantaged. Rarely in fully legal immigration status and with little chance of obtaining legal employment, refugees from other countries face higher risks of arrest, detention, penalties, and in some cases deportation for immigration or labor law violations.

Iraqis in Jordan came during different times and under many circumstances. The first wave of Iraqis came to Jordan in 1991 as a result of the First Gulf War. The second batch came in 2006 after the eruption of sectarian strife between Sunnis and Shiites in the aftermath of exploding major



Shiite shrines and after the US invasion of this country and toppling the former regime in 2003. The third exodus was in 2014 when thousands of Iraqi Christians fled ISIS (Daesh) incursion to their homeland in Mosul and Nineveh plain, forcing them either to leave, convert to Islam or stay but pay Jizieh (money for their protection).

According to UNHCR Jordan statistics, until November 15, 2020, there are 66,801 Iraqi refugees registered by the agency. According to Caritas Jordan registration data until November 2020, the number of displaced Iraqis in Jordan who are under Caritas Jordan guardianship has come to around 4700 families, making 16238 individuals.

The current refugee response in Jordan developed largely as a result of the Syrian crisis. In 2015, the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) was introduced as the main instrument for planning and funding Jordan's assistance for the Syria response crisis. In 2016, the Government of Jordan and the European Union signed the Jordan Compact. This significant funding agreement aimed to turn the influx of refugees in Jordan into an opportunity for economic growth. While these innovative approaches have had a major positive impact on the Jordanian's humanitarian situation, the JRP nor the Jordan Compact specifically addresses Iraqi refugees.

In 2018, a Multi donor account (MDA) was established to assist the Jordanian health system. Current international donors who contribute to this account include the governments of Germany, Denmark, Qatar, Canada, Italy along with the World Bank and USAID, who led the establishment of this account. Part of the MDA was used to

support the Jordanian government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. But it is also used to subsidize refugee's health care.

*"In 2018, a Multi donor account (MDA) was established to assist the Jordanian health system"*

In 2019 the fund allowed Syrian Refugees to access health care services at the same rate as non-insured Jordanians. Non-Syrian refugees, however, were still paying rates for foreigners and faced extremely high costs for their health care. In 2020 this policy was finally adopted.

Through the MDA funding, non-Syrian refugees can now finally access health care at hospitals and medical facilities run by the Ministry of Health to non-insured Jordanian rates by presenting their UNHCR-issued Asylum Seeker/Refugee certificates.

## CHALLENGES

### 1. Registration document

Iraqi refugees face unique challenges in Jordan, mainly because of their difficult legal status. While the international community and the Jordanian government have undertaken significant efforts to improve the Syrian refugees' situation in Jordan, most of the created regulations do not apply to non-Syrian refugees.

For example, while the Jordanian government issues registration documents (Ministry of Interior Cards) to Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees do not receive any government-issued documents, which leads to disadvantages when interacting with police, enrolling children in school, or negotiating lease agreements with landlords<sup>1</sup>.

### 2. Work opportunity and monthly income resource

Iraqi refugees face difficulties securing their monthly income source either by the low coverage of humanitarian assistance/cash assistance received from UNHCR and other NGOs or by work. But, obtaining a legal work permit is forbidden due to the refugees' regulations associated with their legal status, so they seek to work on informal or temporary work, which is often at risk of exploitation of long working hours, low wages, delayed payment, or security concern being caught by the authorities<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. Basic needs

According to UNHCR Iraqi situation report in August 2020, the securing funds stands at 33%, negatively influencing the Iraqi situation. UNHCR will cut or reduce its winterization assistance provided in cash grants; thus, Iraqis will face increased vulnerabilities, protection risks, worsening health conditions, avoid education enrollment, decrease legal and psychosocial support, and adopting negative coping mechanisms to meet this winter-2020 needs<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Protection Working Group Guidance Note on Persons of Concern from Countries other than Syria, 20. July 2019.

<sup>2</sup> WFP Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment, p.51/52.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/underfunding-2020/wp-content/uploads/sites/107/2020/09/Underfunding-2020-Iraq.pdf>

#### 4. Food security

Food security is especially among non-Syrian refugees, and the level of food insecurity is particularly high because they struggle to cover the increasing costs for essential commodities, as most refugees depend on consumption-based coping strategies for maintaining their access to food. These strategies include relying on less preferred items and reducing the number of meals consumed or the portion size<sup>4</sup>.

#### 5. Health

Health care is a high priority concern for non-Syrian refugees and, according to WFP, ranks among the top unmet needs of this group<sup>5</sup>. They complain of limited options for free medical care and difficulties accessing subsidies. The quality of and awareness about the free health care available is poor and inconsistent. Sudanese and Yemenis spend a higher percentage of their household expenditure on health care compared to Syrians.

In light of the current COVID-19 crisis, health care for non-Syrian refugees remains the main gap. Although Jordan has made enormous progress in recent years in reducing maternal and infant mortality and expanding and improving health infrastructure (according to a recent study by USAID<sup>6</sup>), Jordan still struggles to ensure that everyone can access quality health care due to a growing national population and the high number of refugees. Hospitals are overcrowded, the country faces challenges retaining and appropriately deploying a skilled health-care workforce, and limited finances make it difficult to realize universal health coverage. The Kingdom faces the dual challenge of extending its overburdened health services to meet this increased demand while continuing to strengthen the resilience and quality of those services. Especially since the COVID 19 crisis has reached Jordan, government clinics (which allow non-Syrian refugees to be treated at low rates) are extremely overcrowded and refugees report that they have been unable to receive appointments to access needed health care. Caritas clinics, therefore, help to cover the gap in health care and complement the overburdened national health infrastructure. Since only a handful of other NGOs offer medical care for non-Syrians, Caritas services are highly needed<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> WFP, p. 51

<sup>5</sup> WFP, p. 52

<sup>6</sup> [www.usaid.gov/jordan/fact-sheets/improving-access-quality-health-care](https://www.usaid.gov/jordan/fact-sheets/improving-access-quality-health-care)

<sup>7</sup> Realizing the Rights of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Jordan from Countries other than Syria, with a focus on Yemeni and Sudanese. April 2019, p. 38/39

## 6. Education

Even though Iraqi parents consider education very precious and essential for their children's educational growth, the work permit limitation hinders Iraqis from sustaining monthly income and covering some urgent needs, additional costs such as; rent, food, health, education fees, etc...

Iraqi students face challenges to be enrolled in schools due to the fact that the public schools are exceeding their capacity, as thousands of Syrians share Jordanians 2 schooling shifts, in addition, Iraqis willing to be enrolled in public schools are requested to pay fees. This situation leaves Iraqis with two options: either to be enrolled in private schools or be enrolled in non-formal afternoon classes. In both cases, somebody should cover the cost of such academic activities.

## CONCLUSION

Donations are becoming less, while global attention is declining, which means more handshippers will be created for these Iraqis. Handful organizations try their best to assist them with health care, education, housing, and logistics, but the problem is much more significant.

These challenges have had a tremendous impact on Iraqi refugees', as they always articulate desperate words about losing hope and the miserable conditions they live under. They experience frustration, loneliness, isolation, despair and sadness over their forced exodus from their country, families, history, current situation and future.

Despite high vulnerability levels and often protracted refugee situations, Iraqi refugee populations have received comparatively less focus from state actors, including donor agencies. Unequal access to basic assistance including medical services and primary education have been raised as concerns by advocates, communities, and humanitarians, providing opportunities to ensure that the aid framework in Jordan is adapted and responsive to the conditions and needs of all refugees residing in Jordan, without discrimination based on nationality.



## CARITAS JORDAN INTERVENTIONS

### 2014 - 2016

*Caritas Jordan  
provided critical  
relief to Iraqi  
refugee*

1. Caritas Jordan with the support of the Government of Jordan/JHCO, provided critical relief to Iraqi refugees who have arrived in Jordan since the ISIS takeover. Caritas Jordan, on behalf of the Catholic Church, opened 16 church halls to approximately 1,000 of the most vulnerable refugees to ensure they have temporary shelter and that their immediate basic needs, food items, hygiene items, health care inside and outside hospitals, psychosocial support, besides various entertainment activities for their children are being met. Since August 2014, with donations and in-kind contributions from

Caritas organizations, local partners, and communities, CJ covered nearly JD 3 million worth of assistance to meet the needs of the newly arrived Iraqis. In cooperation with JHCO, Iraqis were placed in caravans stationed in Amman and Madaba, receiving different services through CJ and charity bodies.

2. CJ, in cooperation with the local Church in Jordan and with the support of reliable and strategic partners, took direct response to find shelters and provide, in addition of the education following the IS invasion to their areas of living and their arrival to Jordan in 2014. CJ managed to assist Iraqi families to find houses outside the church premises, and all needed assistance from food items to bedding materials and also to send all their children to the schools and to find some jobs for some of them. There were no camps to host them in Jordan but instead. Finally, and after the resettlement of the vast majority, hundreds were given assistance for rent, accommodation and daily expenses until durable solutions come up, noting that resettlement chances are dramatically diminishing.

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### 2016 until present:

3. While the transition to more sustainable livelihoods policies and efforts towards building resilience are underway, CJ plans to continue providing life-saving humanitarian assistance for vulnerable refugees and Jordanians as long as this remains necessary and funds are available. CJ is engaged in projects which aim at creating better chances of future economic self-reliance and at enhancing resilience and substantially reducing dependency on direct outside assistance.
4. Over the past years till 2020, Caritas Jordan, in partnership with its partners, develop and design projects to sustain services to Iraqi refugees based on the registered families in CJ database system, illustrating the following figures:



1. 4700 Iraqi families, 16238 individuals. Representing 49 % Females - 51% males.
2. 4902 Iraqi individuals with disabilities, representing 30%.
3. 3665 Iraqi individuals with chronic conditions, representing 23%.
4. 9243 Iraqi individuals received medical services, representing 57%.
5. 4156 Iraqi families are resorting to severe negative coping strategies, representing 88%. (examples: Buy food on credit or limit food expenses, reduce essential non-food expenditure, change accommodation place to reduce rent cost, indebt themselves to cover heating cost during winter season 2020.
6. 1329 Iraqi families have a very high dependency ratio, which means that each family member works to cover essential needs for up to 4 unemployed family members.
7. 3.50 - 4 average Iraqi family size.

CJ, along with the local church in Jordan and partners, developed a livelihood approach to Iraqis through establishing Business Definition Areas (BDA):

### **1. Business- Definition Areas: 2016 until present:**

**Garden of Our Lady of Peace Center-OLOPC:** In 2016, Mercy Garden at Our Lady of Peace Centre that belongs to the Latin Patriarchate in Jordan, became the Business Definition Area-BDA for Iraqi refugees and vulnerable Jordanians where they are able to work in occupational skills. A group of Iraqis works on Up-cycling outdoor furniture, agriculture field, soap making, sewing workshop, Productive Kitchen and Herbal drying workshop, wood-work accessories, and decorations.

**Garden of Mosaic workshop:** It was established the same year following Iraqi refugees' resettlement their caravans have been used as mosaic production workshops, located in the Greek Melkite Church in Madaba. In addition to mosaic, the workshops entail production chains, packing, and packaging, productive kitchen.

### **2. CJ PROJECTS THAT SUPPORTED IRAQI REFUGEES:**

Throughout projects implementations, CJ has been assisting Iraqi refugees in Jordan with essential services. These services entail primary and secondary health care, formal education, livelihood, relief aid, and protection.

*CJ, along with the local church in Jordan and partners, developed a livelihood approach to Iraqis*

*Main  
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projects  
from  
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2020*

**The following list demonstrates the main funded projects from 2016- 2020:**

1. Non-food item support to refugee and vulnerable host-community populations in Jordan with Education services 2020; targeting 2635 Iraqi beneficiaries, funded by MCC.
2. Non-food item support to refugee and vulnerable host-community populations in Jordan with WASH services 2020; targeting 5185 Iraqi beneficiaries, funded by MCC.
3. Non-food item support to refugee and vulnerable host-community populations in Jordan with basic needs services 2020; targeting 9180 Iraqi beneficiaries, funded by MCC.
4. Provision of Health Services for Refugees and Asylum Seekers with health services 2020; targeting 4000 Iraqi beneficiaries, funded by UNHCR.
5. Livelihoods Opportunity for Iraqi refugees with livelihood services 2020; targeting 16 Iraqi beneficiaries, funded by Hungary Helps.
6. Livelihoods Opportunity for Iraqi refugees with livelihood services 2020; targeting 15 Iraqi beneficiaries, funded by Caritas Australia.
7. Livelihoods Opportunity for Iraqi refugees with livelihood services 2020; targeting 15 Iraqi beneficiaries, funded by Caritas Spain.
8. Supporting Iraqi Students with education services 2020; targeting 150 Iraqi students, funded by French Embassy.
9. Music Learning and psychosocial support for Refugee children and vulnerable Jordanians with counseling services 2020; targeting 220 Iraqi beneficiaries, funded by Porticus.
10. Health and MHPSS services for Iraqi Refugees in Jordan with counseling services 2020; targeting 1050 Iraqi beneficiaries, funded by Caritas Germany.
11. Health and MHPSS services for Iraqi Refugees in Jordan with health services 2020; targeting 3500 Iraqi beneficiaries, funded by Caritas Germany.
12. Supporting Iraqi Refugees and Vulnerable Jordanians with Empowerment and Livelihood skills 2020; targeting 21 Iraqi beneficiaries, funded by Catholic Relief Service (CRS).
13. SUPPORTING IRAQI REFUGEES AND VULNERABLE JORDANIANS 2019-2020 with health: targeting 250 Iraqi and Jordanian beneficiaries,
14. Supporting Iraqi Refugees and Vulnerable Jordanians with Empowerment and Livelihood skills" 2019, serving 200 beneficiaries, funded by AMO.
15. Supporting Iraqi Students in 2019 with education, serving 200 Iraqi, funded by Polonia.
16. Supporting Iraqi Students in 2019 with education, serving 153 Iraqis, funded by



the French Embassy.

17. Supporting Iraqi refugee children in their Education Pursuits in 2018: target group: 1785, funded by MISEROR, Germany.
18. Supporting Iraqi refugee children in education in 2018, targeting 790 Iraqi and Jordanian students, funded by KINDER MISSIONWERK, Germany.
19. SHELTER for CHRISTIAN IRAQI REFUGEES FAMILIES in JORDAN in 2017: Target Group: 1000 Iraqi Christian families, Funded by: Conference Episcopal of Italy- CEI.
20. Relief and Recovery Project for Syrian, Iraqi Refugees and vulnerable Jordanians in Jordan in 2017: Total number of beneficiaries is 42,640, funded by Caritas Internationalis (CI).
21. Supporting Iraqi Refugees and Vulnerable Jordanians with empowerment and livelihood skills in 2016: Number of direct beneficiaries: 150 participants. Number of indirect beneficiaries 600 beneficiaries. The project was funded by Azione Per Un Mondo Unito- Onlus (AMO), Conference of Episcopal of Italy (CEI).
22. Formal and informal education for CHRISTIAN IRAQI REFUGEES and Vulnerable Jordanians in 2016: Target Group: 2450 Iraqi Christian, Funded by: Conference Episcopal of Italy- CEI.
23. Supporting Iraqi Refugees and Vulnerable Jordanians in 2016: Basic health care, psychological services and psychological services, Direct beneficiaries – 13,650 beneficiaries; (9,855 Syrians/ 3,795 Jordanians), funded by Caritas Germany.

## CARITAS RECOMMENDATION

Given the protracted crisis is still ongoing and the needs are tremendously high, CJ recommends that services provided to Iraqi refugees in Jordan remain unchanged until their problem is completely solved and durable solutions become clearer. These services are likely to promote Iraqis resilience and help them cope with their stresses and meet urgent needs. More advocacy on "One refugee approach", advocating and raising awareness of assistance provided to non-Syrians/ Iraqi, by including them and increasing benefit to all programming and encourage donors to include them in their projects, especially for covering needs related to emergency response during COVID-19, basic needs



Advocating for the inclusion of non-Syrian refugees in the formal economy, and registration documents (Ministry of Interior Cards) status to improve the living conditions.