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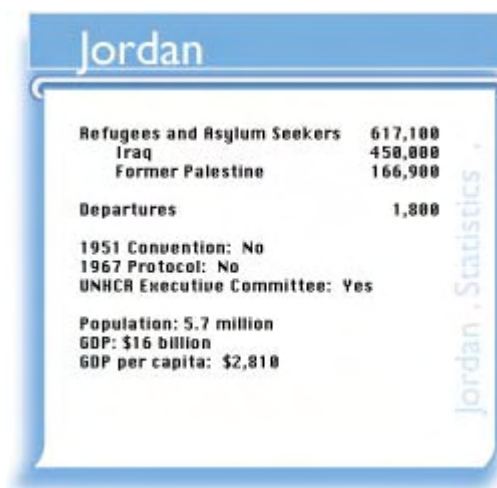


World Refugee Survey 2008 - Jordan

Introduction

Jordan hosted approximately 617,000 refugees, including 450,000 from Iraq. While it also hosted nearly 2 million Palestinians, all but 166,900 held Jordanian citizenship and USCRI did not count them as refugees.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) registered 52,000 Iraqis by the end of the year, including those registered as asylum seekers. Of these, UNHCR granted refugee status to nearly 8,100 Iraqis and referred them for resettlement, of whom 1,600 departed for resettlement countries. Additionally, 110 Palestinians who had fled Iraq and whom Jordan had confined to Al Ruweished Camp departed for Brazil, emptying the camp.



Jordan	
Refugees and Asylum Seekers	617,100
Iraq	450,000
Former Palestine	166,900
Departures	1,800
1951 Convention:	No
1967 Protocol:	No
UNHCR Executive Committee:	Yes
Population:	5.7 million
GDP:	\$16 billion
GDP per capita:	\$2,810

Refoulement/Physical Protection

Jordan generally did not forcibly return Iraqi refugees, but did deport some Iraqis it detained for alleged criminal offenses, without allowing UNHCR to determine if they were refugees. It deported at least 100 Iraqis, most of whom the General Intelligence Department had detained for criminal activity or endangering national security. Jordan generally allowed Iraqi deportees the option of going to Syria rather than Iraq, although this became more problematic after Syria imposed a visa regime in October. Jordan generally did not deport those it detained for offenses under the Foreigners Act, including working illegally and overstaying visas.

Policies toward deportees were inconsistent. Officials stamped the passports of some with marks banning them from reentering the country for variable periods of time, ranging from less than five years to life. Officials allowed some potential deportees who had overstayed their visas to pay a fine of 1.50 dinars (\$2) per day that they had overstayed in order to avoid deportation. Others had to pay the same fine to avoid having their passports stamped, which allowed them to reenter the country more easily.

If UNHCR was aware of a recognized refugee among the deportees, Jordan would delay the deportation until UNHCR found a resettlement country willing to accept the deportee.

Some Iraqi women domestic workers reported physical and sexual abuse by their employers.

Jordan was not party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and had no refugee

law, but its 1952 Constitution prohibited extradition of "political refugees ... on account of their political beliefs or for their defense of liberty." According to a 1998 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), asylum seekers could remain in Jordan pending status determination, and UNHCR-recognized refugees could remain six months after recognition, during which time UNHCR had to find resettlement countries for them. This was not always possible, but the Government generally did not deport them.

Jordan's 1973 Law of Residency and Foreigners' Affairs required that those entering the country as political asylum seekers must present themselves to a police station within 48 hours of arrival. There were no further provisions on who was eligible for asylum or how they could go about obtaining it. The law granted the Minister of the Interior the authority to determine on a case-by-case basis whether persons would be deported. Jordan's labor law also authorized the Minister of Labor to deport foreigners working without permission.

While most Palestinians in Jordan were citizens, some 162,000 Palestinians who fled from the Gaza Strip in 1967 did not qualify for citizenship and received only two-year passports. More than 800 refugees from Iraq, Russia, and Syria awaited resettlement and the Government allowed about 100 Chechens to remain indefinitely pending repatriation.

Detention/Access to Courts

Jordan detained at least 525 Iraqis through November, 479 of whom had registered with UNHCR. Of these, UNHCR bailed out 330. The International Committee of the Red Cross had access to all detention facilities and made regular visits. Jordan's Law of Residency and Foreigners' Affairs mandated penalties of one to six months' detention and fines of 10 to 50 dinars (\$14 to \$71) for illegal entry, but theoretically exempted asylum seekers from such penalties. Officials also had the option to deport detainees or grant them residency.

To release a refugee on bail, a Jordanian citizen had to leave his or her identity card, along with the detainee's passport, with the police. Some Jordanians reportedly extorted money from Iraqis in exchange for bailing them out.

The 1952 Constitution promised all persons protection from arbitrary detention or imprisonment, but refugees and asylum seekers could not challenge administrative detention in court and bail was available only in court-ordered detentions with judges' discretion. The Constitution reserved to nationals the right to equal treatment before the law but the MOU and Jordanian law provided for refugees' and asylum seekers' access to courts and legal assistance on par with nationals. Few asylum seekers availed themselves of this because of their lack of legal residence.

UNHCR issued a series of identification cards of different colors and types to refugees and asylum seekers, all stamped by the Jordanian interior ministry and good for six months. Applicants awaiting their first interviews received orange cards, while recognized refugees received blue. Once applicants had their interviews, UNHCR issued asylum seeker certificates, but these explicitly stated they were not permits for work or residency. UNHCR also issued special letters to those set for resettlement. Authorities were inconsistent in recognizing these documents, but UNHCR made efforts to educate officials about them.

To obtain legal residency from the Government, Iraqis had to deposit and maintain approximately \$150,000 in a bank account.

Palestinians displaced from Gaza in 1967 held temporary Jordanian passports without national identity numbers, which were valid for two years.

Freedom of Movement and Residence

Following the November closure of Al Ruweished camp, there were no restrictions on the residence or movement of refugees in Jordan, but under the Law of Residency and Foreigners' Affairs, all foreigners had to notify the authorities of their residence and any movement.

About 332,000 Palestinians (including Jordanian citizens of Palestinian descent) also lived in camps throughout the country. More than 50 squatter settlements in mostly urban areas housed some 60,000 to 70,000 Palestinians ineligible for status with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), including some of the former Gazan population.

Gazans held temporary Jordanian passports renewable every two years, as well as cards for crossing between Jordan and the West Bank, subject to Israeli closures and other restrictions. The Government refused to renew the passports of some 10,000 to 12,000 Palestinian former residents at its embassies outside the country for failure to prove former residence. Refugees registered with UNHCR did not have access to international travel documents.

Right to Earn a Livelihood

It was difficult for refugees with residence permits to work legally and virtually impossible for those without them, including many asylum seekers. Iraqis working informally, especially female domestic workers and male day laborers, reported nonpayment and other forms of exploitation. Some small medical clinics employed Iraqi doctors but refused to pay them.

The 1952 Constitution reserved the right to work to citizens. The 1996 Labor Law required non-Jordanians with legal residency and valid passports to obtain work permits from the Ministry of Labor showing that the job required experience or skills unavailable among Jordanians, with preference to Arabs but with no exceptions for refugees and asylum seekers. The law required employers to pay a fee, and the permits were valid for one year or less, but were renewable. Violators were subject to cumulative fines and expulsion of the foreign worker at the employer's expense.

In addition to work permits, foreigners wishing to practice professions had to obtain the certification of Jordanian professional societies, which granted it based on reciprocal privileges in the foreigners' home countries. Many Iraqi doctors worked without the approval of the Jordanian Medical Association at lower wages than Jordanian doctors received.

According to Jordanian courts, a legal employment contract between a Jordanian and a foreigner protected the basic rights of the foreigner in cases of exploitation, but few signed such contracts with Iraqi workers.

All bearers of temporary passports, including Palestinians displaced from Gaza since 1967, had to obtain permits to work legally. Palestinian refugees holding temporary Jordanian passports could work for the Government only on a contractual basis.

Jordanian law did not permit foreigners to join unions but its labor laws did generally apply to noncitizens. Access to social security benefits depended on reciprocal privileges in the worker's country of origin, rendering stateless Palestinians ineligible.

The MOU provided that a legally resident refugee could work "for his own account whenever the Laws and regulations permit" and conditioned the right to practice professions on the same requirements.

According to Jordan's Investment Promotion Law, foreigners could not own more than a half-interest in enterprises in mining, trade and retail, and construction contracting. Temporary passport holders had to obtain ministerial permission and find a Jordanian partner to own property. Although the 1952 Constitution protected the property of all persons from arbitrary expropriation or confiscation, few refugees took advantage of these restricted rights largely due to their lack of residence status.

Public Relief and Education

The Government insisted on pre-approving some assistance projects for Iraqi refugees, and some nongovernmental organizations reported that the Ministry of Social Development made the approval and registration processes difficult.

All foreigners in Jordan, including refugees and asylum seekers regardless of their legal status, had access to Jordan's public health system at rates subsidized by the Government. The Government covered 80 percent of the cost for insured Jordanians, 70 percent for uninsured Jordanians, and 60 percent for foreigners. In November, UNHCR and Jordan signed an agreement granting Iraqis access at the rate for uninsured Jordanians.

The 1952 Constitution reserved the right to free primary education to nationals, but beginning in

August, Jordan opened its schools to Iraqi children at the request of King Abdullah II. By September, some 22,000 students had registered. Iraqis still had to pay school fees – 20 dinars (\$28) for primary school, 30 (\$43) for secondary school, and 40 (\$57) for vocational education – and buy books, uniforms, and other supplies. In November, the Government allowed Iraqis access to homeschooling and other nonformal education.

In May, UNHCR and the Jordanian Women's Union provided legal counseling, shelter for women and children, and job training for women.

UNHCR and its partners provided services to about 70,000 refugees during the year, including food, cash assistance, education, counseling, health services, and safehouses.

Palestinians from Gaza holding temporary Jordanian passports had to pay school fees in foreign currency where applicable and a fee for medical services. Public hospitals and health centers treated patients regardless of status, but non-Jordanians paid higher fees than citizens did. Palestinians displaced from Gaza since 1967 did not enjoy social security benefits, medical services, public education, or other social services that Palestinian citizens of Jordan enjoyed. UNRWA operated 24 medical clinics inside and outside the refugee camps.

Children of Palestinians from Gaza holding temporary Jordanian passports could enroll in Jordanian schools. Additionally, UNRWA operated 180 schools and two vocational training centers for Palestinian refugees. Universities, however, restricted foreign students with quotas and required them to pay twice as much as Jordanians.

USCRI Reports

- USCRI Says Slow Progress in Iraq Rehabilitation Impedes Iraqi Refugee Repatriation; Finds that Iraqis Lack Information and Feel Excluded from Decision-Making (Press Releases)
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