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COI QUERY

Country of Origin

JORDAN

Title	Status of residency for Syrians
Reference period	January 2021 to 26 April 2022
Topic(s)	1. Registration of Syrian asylum-seekers with UNHCR 2. Residency documents for Syrian refugees in Jordan 3. Requirements for re-entering Jordan for Syrian nationals 4. Documented cases of deportation of Syrian refugees from Jordan
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All sources used are referenced and cited in the bibliography section. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned COI methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive or conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Jordan

Status of residency for Syrians

1. Registration of Syrian asylum-seekers with UNHCR

Jordan is not a signatory of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, nor of its 1967 Protocol.¹ In 1998, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Government of Jordan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU, amended in 2014²), mandating the agency to carry out registration and refugee status determination activities in the country.³

On its website, UNHCR informs that registration of asylum-seekers takes place in centres in Amman, Mafrqa and Irbid, while individuals 'living in the governorates of Karak, Ma'an, Tafilah, Aqaba and Ruwaished' are asked instead to 'request an appointment for the next mobile registration mission'. Useful documents for the registration include: 'identity documents (passport, national ID, driving license), Ministry of Interior service card (for Syrians only), family and military booklets, marriage or divorce certificates, birth certificates for children, education and employment certificates, work permit in Jordan, medical certificates, or Custody/guardianship documents'. It is not mandatory to have any identification documents for people to register, however, they will be asked the reason for not having them. Adult individuals must fill out a registration form, stating their 'name, date of birth, nationality, place of birth, family members', and reasons for leaving their country of origin. The next step involves an oral interview. At the end of the registration process, asylum-seekers are issued a UNHCR asylum-seeker Certificate which confirms that the holder is 'under the international protection of UNHCR in Jordan'. The Certificate is valid for one year, and renewable. It can be used to confirm registration with UNHCR, and for enrolling children in public schools. However, the Certificate 'does not replace the residency or a work permit'.⁴

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, UNCHR has carried out 'the majority of its activities' remotely, including interviews for the renewal of asylum-seeker/refugee Certificates. According to the agency, persons 'processed remotely will be sent an appointment SMS to approach registration centers to pick up their renewed asylum-seeker/refugee Certificates'.⁵ In 2021, Jordan decided to accept expired UNHCR Certificates as valid until the end of the year.⁶

¹ Clutterbuck M. et al., Alternative protection in Jordan and Lebanon: the role of legal aid, in Forced Migration Review, Public Health and WASH/ Non signatory States and the international refugee regime FRM 67, July 2021, [url](#); UNHCR, States parties, including reservations and declarations, to the 1951 Refugee Convention, n.d., [url](#); UNHCR, States parties, including reservations and declarations, to the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, n.d., [url](#)

² UNCHR, Global Appeal 2015, [url](#), p. 1; Jordan Times (The), Gov't, UNHCR sign amendments to cooperation memo, 31 March 2014, [url](#)

³ UNCHR, Global Appeal 2015, [url](#), p. 1

⁴ UNHCR Jordan, Registration, n.d., [url](#)

⁵ UNHCR Jordan, Registration, n.d., [url](#)

⁶ UNHCR Jordan, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Certificates Valid until December 2021, 31 May 2021, [url](#)

In addition to registration, UNHCR is also mandated to perform refugee status determination. Following registration, asylum-seekers may ‘receive an appointment for a refugee status determination interview, depending on the needs identified’. In any case, ‘asylum-seeker and refugee certificates grant the same level of protection against deportation, as well as the same level of ‘access to services and assistance’.⁷

2. Residency documents for Syrian refugees in Jordan

All Syrian asylum-seekers in Jordan, whether registered with UNHCR or not, must register with the Ministry of Interior (MOI), and be issued a MOI service card (also referred to as a ‘MOI card’).⁸ The MOI card ‘is considered a residency permit in districts where it is issued’.⁹ Like the UNHCR Certificate, the MOI card is valid for one year and renewable and serves as ‘a *de facto* recognition of refugee status before government and humanitarian authorities’, providing Syrians with protection from *refoulement*¹⁰, as well as facilitating access to other public services.¹¹

According to a 2021 report by the World Refugee & Migration Council, the MOI card ‘allows Syrian refugees [...] to travel freely throughout Jordan’.¹² The United States Department of State (USDOS) noted that, during 2021, Jordan placed ‘some restrictions on the free internal movement of registered Syrian refugees and asylum seekers’, such as requiring Syrians living in refugee camps to ask ‘for permission to relocate from or temporarily depart the camp for family visits or work’.¹³

Although outside the reference period of this COI query response, the following information might be useful:

In a November 2016 report, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) provided details about the MOI card. Quoting information from UNHCR, the source stated that ‘MOI card “serves as proof of legal Jordanian residency in a host community in a specific district”’. With regards to the procedure for acquiring a MOI card, Syrians must go to a local police station and present documents, which include proof of identity, the asylum-seeker Certificate (if available), proof of address, and ‘for every Syrian over the age of 12, a health certificate obtained in Jordan from

⁷ UNHCR Jordan, Refugee Status Determination, n.d., [url](#)

⁸ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Jordan, 12 April 2022, [url](#); World Refugee & Migration Council, Moving beyond Humanitarian Assistance Supporting Jordan as a Refugee-hosting Country, September 2021, [url](#), p.11; Alexander Burlin and Ruba Ahmad, Recognition beyond RSD: Civil and legal documentation for Syrian refugees in Jordan, 25 September 2020, [url](#)

⁹ World Refugee & Migration Council, Moving beyond Humanitarian Assistance Supporting Jordan as a Refugee-hosting Country, September 2021, [url](#), p.11

¹⁰ Burlin A. and Ahmad R., Recognition beyond RSD: Civil and legal documentation for Syrian refugees in Jordan, in Refugee Law Initiative Blog – Schools of Advanced Study university of London, 25 September 2020, [url](#)

¹¹ ILO, Impact of work permits on decent work for Syrians in Jordan, September 2021, [url](#), p.21; World Refugee & Migration Council, Moving beyond Humanitarian Assistance Supporting Jordan as a Refugee-hosting Country, September 2021, [url](#), p.11; Burlin A. and Ahmad R., Recognition beyond RSD: Civil and legal documentation for Syrian refugees in Jordan, 25 September 2020, [url](#)

¹² World Refugee & Migration Council, Moving beyond Humanitarian Assistance Supporting Jordan as a Refugee-hosting Country, September 2021, [url](#), p.11

¹³ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Jordan, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

an authorized health centre'. According to NRC, the MOI card is only valid if 'the Syrian remains living in the district where the card was issued'.¹⁴

3. Requirements for re-entering Jordan for Syrian nationals

According to USDOS, 'Syrians staying in Jordan as refugees may visit Syria for a short period without losing their status in Jordan, if they obtain permission in advance from the Ministry of Interior to re-enter Jordan'.¹⁵ To travel to Syria from Jordan, Syrian returnees shall 'present a Syrian passport or a Syrian *laissez-passer* (LP)'. When a Syrian returnee applies for a passport or LP at the Syrian Embassy in Amman, his/her name will be run into a centralised database to verify whether the person has links to any opposition or 'terrorist' groups. Meanwhile, a Syrian who has left Jordan on a Syrian LP cannot re-enter Jordan on the basis of that document. Syrian passport holders can (re-)enter Jordan provided they comply with a set of requirements, which include having a valid passport, security approval, and an entry or exit/entry permit.¹⁶

According to a 2021 report by Human Rights Watch (HRW), 'while Jordan does not impose a formal re-entry ban on Syrian refugees, refugees nearly uniformly told Human Rights Watch that Jordanian border guards said they could not re-enter Jordan for three to five years'.¹⁷

4. Documented cases of deportation of Syrian refugees from Jordan

Information on deportations of Syrian refugees from Jordan could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

The principle of *non-refoulement* is recognised by both the 1952 Constitution of Jordan¹⁸, as well as the 1998 MoU between UNHCR and Jordan.¹⁹

According to USDOS, during 2021, some Syrian refugees were forcefully relocated 'to Azraq refugee camp, including many to Azraq's restricted Village 5, as an alternative to deportation'. The source stated that the relocations took place as punishment for having committed offenses including "irregular status" (expired registration documents or working without a work permit), criminal activities, and potential security risks, which were not clearly defined'.²⁰

On 10 September 2021, Amnesty International (AI) accused the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent of planning to forcefully transfer refugees from Rukban refugee camp to

¹⁴ NRC, Securing Status Syrian refugees and the documentation of legal status, identity, and family relationships in Jordan, November 2016, [url](#), pp. 8,10

¹⁵ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Jordan, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶ EASO, COI Report: Syria Situation of returnees from abroad, July 2021, [url](#), para 1.3.4

¹⁷ HRW, "Our Lives Are Like Death", Syrian Refugee Returns from Lebanon and Jordan, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸ Jordan, Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1 January 1952, [url](#), Article 21(i)

¹⁹ UNHCR, Submission on Jordan 17th UPR session, 2013, [url](#), p. 7; ILO, Refugees Right to Work in Jordan, A view of the Syrian refugee crisis through labour law and policy, September 2017, [url](#), p. 9

²⁰ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Jordan, 12 April 2022, [url](#)



Homs in Syria, where, according to AI, they would be at risk of ill-treatment by Syrian authorities.²¹ The UN denied the accusations, stating that it had planned for the transfer of Syrian refugees who had registered for voluntary return. The transfer operation was eventually cancelled.²²

²¹ AI, Syria/Jordan: UN-led return operation will put refugees at risk of abuses in Syria, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

²² National (The), Displaced Syrians angry at UN over empty aid lorries, Displaced Syrians angry at UN over empty aid lorries, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

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ADDITIONAL SOURCES CONSULTED

ECOI.net; European Union – EUAA COI Portal; Refworld; Reliefweb