



Thinking Long-term About Syrian Refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey

Event Report

World Refugee & Migration Council

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Acknowledgements

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▶ Introduction

Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have hosted Syrian refugees since the very beginning of the country's civil war in 2011. Presently over 5 million Syrians live in these three countries, each of which has its own unique political, social and economic context. As the Syrian conflict either winds down or enters a new phase, the fate of the refugees depends on political and economic developments in Syria, on the willingness of host countries to allow them to remain, and on international support for host countries.

Pressures on the refugees to return to Syria are increasing and are likely to grow in the coming months and years. While the international community has mobilized significant amounts of humanitarian assistance, the host governments need additional support as well as innovative strategies in continuing to provide the refugees a chance for security, self-reliance and dignity in their countries of refuge.

Not only is this question important for the over 5 million Syrian refugees currently living in uncertainty and poverty, but it is also

important for the international refugee system – which has been stretched to the breaking point in recent years.

The research presented seeks to answer and propose solutions for realistic alternatives for Syrian refugees and the governments that host them in the medium- to long-term and ways in which host countries be supported to continue hosting refugees in light of growing pressures for return.

The reports presented focus on the following themes:

- ▶ The impact of hosting refugees on host country economies
- ▶ The impact of humanitarian assistance in the region
- ▶ The issue of return of refugees to Syria
- ▶ The attitudes toward return and local integration of Syrian refugees and host communities

► Thinking Long-term About Syrian Refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey

On September 9, 2021 the World Refugee & Migration Council (WRMC) hosted a virtual panel discussion to launch new research focusing on long-term prospects for Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

The event was moderated by WRMC Vice-President of Research Elizabeth Ferris and included presentations from four authors of the reports including: Yusuf Mansur, Chairman of the board of Trustees of TAG University

“The treatment of refugees and asylum seekers is not just about protection and sanctuary, but more generally about the nature of their human identity, their personhood, if you would like to use that expression, and the nature of citizenship, belonging and national identity.”

– **WRMC Honorary Chair HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal**

College for Innovation, CEO of EnConsult in Jordan; Catherine Brun, Director of the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice at Oxford Brookes University; Maha Shuayb, Director, Centre for Lebanese Studies; and Kemal Kirişci, Nonresident senior fellow in the Center on the United States and Europe at the Brookings Institution and research associate at, IGAM Academy. Opening and closing remarks were delivered by WRMC Honorary Chair HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal and WRMC Chair Lloyd Axworthy.

WRMC Honorary Chair HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan opened the discussion with remarks on how to [move from seeing refugees as a burden to human capital](#). In his remarks, His Royal Highness discussed the rising levels of donor fatigue as crises continue to unfold around the world and the need for the international community to share responsibility and unite to assist forcibly displaced persons from Syria and further abroad.

“These are not insurmountable issues – it simply takes some serious negotiation, diplomacy, agreement, consensus building and the reallocation of militarized spending that has been used to manage refugees.”

– **WRMC Chair Lloyd Axworthy**

In his closing remarks WRMC Chair Lloyd Axworthy discussed how the world is at a crossroads as the number of displaced persons in the world grows to never before seen levels. On one hand, countries are retreating into national agendas, unwilling to assist forcibly displaced persons. On the other hand, there are growing demands for more multilateral and humanitarian efforts to assist the world's most vulnerable - most notably refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

In order to ensure that more work is done to assist forcibly displaced persons, there must be more sharing of responsibility amongst members of the international community and collaboration between all sectors of society including government, civil society and faith based groups, and the business community to reset the response to forced displacement.

The first report presented was [“The Economic Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: What It Means for Current Policies”](#) by authors Cathrine Brun, Ali Fakhri, Maha Shuayb and Mohammad Hammoud. The authors highlighted that while Syrian refugees are often blamed for poor economic conditions in Lebanon, the country was already experiencing an economic downturn before their arrival. In contrast to narratives of the Lebanese Government, the authors found that the Lebanese economy has in fact benefited from Syrian refugees. However,

despite this, Lebanon has adopted increasingly exclusionary policies over the last 10 years towards Syrian refugees, resulting in Syrian refugees experiencing difficulty in maintaining their residency permits and living in poor conditions with limited government supervision and protection.

“The government of Lebanon sees refugees as a security threat, they don’t see them as potential. This is a big issue we need to address and humanitarian organisations should be involved in this response”

– **Maha Shuayb**

While there are no “quick fixes” to the situation, the authors put forward six recommendations born out of the WRC’s *A Call to Action* (2019) to help resolve the situation in Lebanon:

- ▶ Changing the lens of how Syrian refugees are perceived by shifting the lens from deficit to asset
- ▶ Acknowledging Syrian refugees’ positive role in the economy and stop blaming them for the country’s economic woes
- ▶ Reframing policy to focus on the local, rather than exclusively national, level of policymaking to integrate refugees into different sectors of the economy
- ▶ Creating institutional measures to incorporate, and foster the participation of Syrian refugees into local communities
- ▶ Address pre-existing issues of marginalisation and inequality among Syrian and Lebanese populations
- ▶ Reframe the Lebanese response to Syrian refugees from a security issue to a development and humanitarian issue.

The second report, "[Moving beyond Humanitarian Assistance: Supporting Jordan as a Refugee-hosting Country](#)" was co-authored by Rasha Istaiteyeh, Belal Fallah and Yusuf Mansur. The authors highlighted the impact of Syrian refugees on Jordan's economy and suggested ways that the international community can deliver more international support. Following a review of the characteristics of Syrian refugees in Jordan, possibilities for Syrian refugees to find solutions to a lack of economic opportunities, and an analysis of the international assistance provided to Jordan from 2012-2019 the authors highlighted recommendations from the WRMC's A Call to Action that can be taken to support Jordan as a refugee host nation including, encouraging non-traditional international support for refugee-hosting countries through international financial institutions.

"In terms of trade, the World Trade Organization should give allowances to Jordan for hosting refugees and offer export duty relief given certain qualifying criteria... but this is not enough - countries should work on enabling market access beyond rules of origin qualifications."

– **Yusuf Mansur**

For example, Jordan should support WRMC's call upon the WTO Ministerial Conference to allow trade concessions for refugee/migrant host countries. Furthermore, the Jordanian government should also support WRMC's call on individual WTO members to seek duties relief within the scope of the existing GSP, including appropriate qualifying criteria, to support refugee-hosting countries. This would be similar to the treatment regarding the rules

of origin qualification that Jordan received from the European Union in the Jordan Compact and would open global markets to Jordanian exports.

The WRMC also called on political leaders to eschew xenophobic impulses and short-term political gains when they are making policies affecting refugees and displaced persons. True leadership entails the protection of the most vulnerable and disenfranchised populations; it means doing what is right even when there are incentives to do otherwise. In Jordan, the demonizing of refugees became less common after the Jordan Compact introduced additional aid flows for refugees and their host communities. However, additional work needs to be done to combat xenophobia. Leaders not only must be convinced, but they must also convince their constituencies that the integration of refugees into the economy can be beneficial and should not be viewed as a threat.

The final report "[Improving Syrian Refugee Inclusion in the Turkish Economy: How can the International Community Help?](#)" was written by Murat Erdoğan, Kemal Kirişci and Gokce Uysal. In the report the authors highlight that in a span of less than a decade, Turkey has become host to the largest population of refugees in the world and the country needs more international support from development agencies to support its work with refugees.

In their recommendations the authors called for an array of measures to improve Syrian refugee inclusion in the Turkish economy. Recommendations included measures to increase formal employment of Syrian refugees in the Turkish economy – particularly in the agricultural and industrial sectors – and the establishment of special economic zones on

“So far, the effort has been on the supply side, preparing Syrians for the Turkish labor market...much more emphasis needs to be put on the demand side for Syrian refugee labor and job creation.”

– **Kemal Kirişci**

the border of Syria and Turkey where refugee populations are concentrated.

The authors gave special attention to improving local integration of Syrian refugees by granting citizenship to refugees through a process where those who have been under temporary protection for a certain period can enjoy the right to apply for “residency” first and later “citizenship.” In addition, the authors highlighted the need for the Turkish government to amend municipal law to ensure that the provision of

funds is based on “the number of residents, including refugees” instead of “the number of citizens.” Such an amendment would facilitate municipalities’ ability to play a more comprehensive role in managing proper refugee inclusion and social cohesion, while also assisting municipalities in cooperating with international stakeholders to receive funding for programs.

Over half of Syria’s 17 million population is now displaced. Prospects for voluntary return for those refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey remain dim and there is little opportunity for Syrian refugees to seek refuge elsewhere. Most refugees are stuck in limbo as host governments feel that international support has been insufficient. As a result, welcome is wearing thin among local populations that had previously welcomed Syrian refugees. As a

result, there is reduced protection for Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan as the three governments increase pressure on Syrian refugees to return to the country they fled - despite evidence of human rights violations for those that do.

As shown in these reports – and presented by the authors – the situation for Syrian refugees is worsening. Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon are all experiencing economic downturns as a result of COVID-19 and Syrian refugees have become scapegoats for the economic problems of host countries – particularly in Turkey. Further, despite large amounts of international assistance to each of the three host countries it has not been enough to relieve the pressure they face. Worse, as COVID-19 continues to hinder countries economically around the world

“Narratives don’t change overnight. However, we know that political leadership and fostering social cohesion between refugees and host communities makes a difference.”

– **Elizabeth Ferris and Diana Rayes**

and emerging crises continue to develop – such as Afghanistan – humanitarian donors are finding it difficult to maintain even present levels of support.

In order to address these shortcomings, new sources of support beyond humanitarian relief must be located - such as through trade policy and working with international organisations such as the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund – as pointed out

by the authors of the reports. Further, host countries must come to accept that refugees are not an ephemeral phenomenon, and take measures – supported by the international community – to incorporate them into society and their formal economies. A change in narrative about Syrian refugees is needed, for if they remain as outsiders in countries where they have lived for 10 years, their quality of life will continue to deteriorate with widespread ramifications for human, economic, and security concerns both for refugees and the host countries alike.

▶ Panelists



Elizabeth Ferris, Moderator, WRMC Vice-President of Research

Elizabeth Ferris is the World Refugee & Migration Council's vice-president of research, and is Research Professor with the Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and an adjunct professor in the Georgetown Law School. She has also served as Senior Advisor to the UN General Assembly's Summit for Refugees and Migrants in New York (2016) and as expert advisor to the UN's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement (2019-2021).

JORDAN



Yusuf Mansur, Chairman of the board of Trustees of TAG University College for Innovation, CEO of EnConsult in Jordan

Yusuf Mansur is the chairman of the board of Trustees of TAG University College for Innovation, and the CEO of EnConsult in Jordan. He has previously held senior positions in the government, including Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Senior Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister. He specializes in economic consulting in the areas of economic policy, refugees, investment, trade, antitrust, capacity building, competitiveness and strategy. He taught at the University of Oklahoma, Texas A&M University in the United States, and several universities in Jordan. He received his Master's and Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Oklahoma in 1991.

LEBANON



Cathrine Brun, Director of the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice at Oxford Brookes University

Cathrine Brun is Director of the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice at Oxford Brookes University. A professor of human geography, her expertise covers long-term displacement, the ethics and politics of humanitarianism, housing and home. Working closely with local and national organisations in Georgia, Sri Lanka, Malawi, Jordan and Lebanon, her approach to research is qualitative, ethnographic, and uses action research as a way of co-producing knowledge. Together with Dr Maha Shuayb at The Centre for Lebanese Studies in Beirut, she runs a research programme funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), titled: "From education to employment? Trajectories of young people in Lebanon's and Jordan's refugee crisis".



Maha Shuayb, Director, Centre for Lebanese Studies

Maha Shuayb has been the Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies at the Lebanese American University since 2012 and is a visiting fellow at the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge since 2020. Prior to that, she was a Senior Fellow at St. Anthony's College, University of Oxford and the American University of Beirut. Maha holds a PhD in education from the University of Cambridge. She is a founding member and the former president of the Lebanese Association for History. She is also a co-founding member of the Disability Hub, a collective initiative that aims to promote research and advocacy around disability in the Arab World. Maha's research focuses on the sociology and politics of education, particularly equity and equality in education, and the implications of inequalities on marginalised groups in particular refugee children. Her publications cover an array of topics, including education in emergency, education reform, and social cohesion

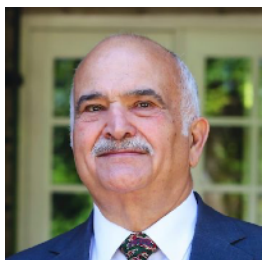
TURKEY



Dr. Saad Jaber, Former Jordanian Minister of Health

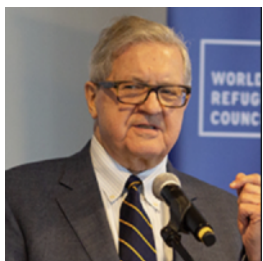
Dr. Saad F. Jaber is a Consultant Cardiovascular Surgeon with over 30 years of experience. He was the Jordanian Minister of Health since May 2019 and during the Covid19 Pandemic, ending his term in October 2020. He comes from a military background having been the General Director of the Jordanian Royal Medical Services. Previously, he held several high ranking military positions and was deployed in several humanitarian missions including Former Yugoslavia (UN), Iraq, Gaza, Yemen and the West Bank. He was the head of the Arab Board Exam Committee for Cardiovascular Surgery; certifying all new and upcoming Arab cardiovascular surgeons. He was also the President of the Jordan Cardiac Society, ensuring healthy communication between doctors in the cardiac field.

FEATURED SPEAKERS



HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal, Honorary Chair, World Refugee & Migration Council

His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal was born in Amman in 1947. HRH is the youngest son of Their late Majesties King Talal and Queen Zein El Sharaf, the brother of His late Majesty King Hussein, and the uncle of HM King Abdullah II. Prince Hassan served as Jordan's Crown Prince from April 1965 until January 1999. HRH's early schooling was in Amman. He later went to Summerfields, followed by Harrow and then Christ Church, Oxford University from where he graduated with a B.A. (Hons.) in Oriental Studies.



Lloyd Axworthy, WRMC Chair and Former Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy is the chair of the World Refugee & Migration Council and one of Canada's leading voices on global migration and refugee protection. After a 27-year political career, where he served as Canada's minister of Foreign Affairs and minister of Employment and Immigration, among other postings, Mr. Axworthy has continued to work extensively on human security, refugee protection and human rights in Canada and abroad. He was presented with the Pearson Peace Medal by the Governor General of Canada in May 2017. In his term as president and vice-chancellor of the University of Winnipeg, Mr. Axworthy initiated innovative programs for migrant and aboriginal youth communities, and has also done a great deal of work on refugee reform as a Richard von Weizsäcker fellow at Germany's Robert Bosch Academy.



► Acknowledgments and Resources

The research was supported by the International Development Research Centre and Cuso International, and carried out by the Centre for Lebanese Studies, IGAM Academy in Turkey and three economists looking at the Jordanian situation and was supported by a research advisory group of experts from the region.

The research presented builds on the WRMC's *A Call to Action: Transforming the Global Refugee System* report, which recognized the inadequacy of current responsibility-sharing measures and urged the mobilization of non-traditional support to support host countries, including through trade and international financial institutions. Since then, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented economic hardship for the hosting countries as detailed in research carried out on the impact of COVID-19 on Syrian refugees in Jordan.

For a full recap of this event, you can watch the event in full on [YouTube](#) or on the [event page](#). To stay up to date with more news and events from the WRMC, [subscribe](#) to our monthly newsletter and be sure to visit our [webpage](#) on a regular basis.

Research Papers: Thinking Long-Term about Syrian Refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey

- Summary Report – [Thinking Long-term about Syrian Refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey](#) (PDF)
- Summary Report – [Arabic Version](#) (PDF); [Turkish Version](#) (PDF)
- [Moving beyond Humanitarian Assistance: Supporting Jordan as a Refugee-hosting Country](#) – Rasha Istaiteyeh, Belal Fallah and Yusuf Mansur

- [The Economic Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: What It Means for Current Policies](#) – Cathrine Brun, Ali Fakih, Maha Shuayb and Mohammad Hammoud
- [Improving Syrian Refugee Inclusion in the Turkish Economy: How can the International Community Help?](#) – Murat Erdoğan, Kemal Kirişci and Gokce Uysal

FURTHER READING

[When Welcome Wears Thin: Bolstering Support for Countries Hosting Syrian Refugees](#), by Elizabeth Ferris and Diana Rayes





World Refugee & Migration Council

Chaired by former Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, the World Refugee & Migration Council offers bold thinking on how the international community can respond to refugees through cooperation & responsibility sharing.

This conference was made possible through a partnership with [Cuso International](#).

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