



Refuge at Risk

The Syria Crisis and U.S. Leadership

November 2013



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333 Seventh Avenue 805 15th Street, N.W.
13th Floor Suite 900
New York, NY 10001-5108 Washington, DC 20005-2212

Tel.: 212.845.5200 Tel: 202.547.5692
Fax: 212.845.5299 Fax: 202.543.5999

This report is available online at humanrightsfirst.org.

Acknowledgements

This report was authored by Duncan Breen, Kate Norland, Eleanor Acer and Anwen Hughes. Sarah Graham designed the report and its cover. This report is based on research and interviews conducted in Jordan and Turkey in late October and early November 2013. Human Rights First wishes to thank the many individuals who shared their time and provided information, comments, and/or input, especially the refugees we met with in Jordan and Turkey, as well as officials of the Governments of Jordan and Turkey, staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the region, in Geneva, and in Washington, D.C., staff of the many NGOs working in Jordan, Turkey, and Syria, U.S. Government officials, and staff of resettlement support centers.

Human Rights First wishes to express its appreciation to the donors that support our work to advance protection for Syrian refugees, as well as Human Rights First's general support and Refugee Protection Program donors—both foundations and individuals—who make our research and advocacy possible. We also wish to thank the ACE Rule of Law Fund and the University of Pennsylvania Law School for creating the program that supports Ms. Norland's fellowship at Human Rights First.

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Executive Summary

The Syrian conflict has provided the context for some of the world's most extreme human rights abuses. The U.S. threat of force against President Assad this summer led to an international agreement to dismantle the regime's chemical weapons program. Despite the presence of international weapons monitors in the country and preparations for a peace process in Geneva, however, relentless, widespread, and systematic attacks on civilians in Syria continue. More than 115,000 people have been killed; an estimated 6.5 million are displaced within Syria, and more than two million have fled. The United Nations reports that 9.3 million people inside the country need life-saving assistance, but access is being blocked or delayed, primarily by the regime. Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt are all hosting large numbers of refugees. The influx is straining these countries, and the U.N. estimates that another two million people will flee Syria in the next year. If other countries don't increase their support and advocacy for the protection of Syria's refugees, this crisis will deepen and threaten to further destabilize the region.

How the United States addresses this refugee crisis will be a critical test for U.S. leadership in the region. The displacement of millions of Syrians is likely to be a defining feature of the Middle East for many years to come. Too many Syrian children run the risk of growing up without education and struggling to survive — deprivations that could have lasting effects for generations. Vital human rights protections long championed by the United States are being undermined, sending a message that the international community will stand by while people fleeing brutal conflict and persecution are turned away at borders. Syria's neighbors face massive challenges too in hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees while at the same time addressing the needs of their citizens. This is a major crisis that requires engagement by many countries and international agencies.

Beyond the moral imperative, it is in the clear strategic interest of the U.S. government to lead this international effort. Destabilization of the region, which includes countries closely allied with the United States, would deal a blow to American foreign policy priorities. A strong and sustained effort to help Syrian civilians would help bolster American credibility and influence in a region where perceptions of the United States are often negative. And by standing up for Syria's civilians, the United States can send a strong message that respecting human rights is central to upholding security as well as saving lives. Although the task is massive, it is an achievable goal, with enormous moral and political payoffs. How the United States leads and uses its influence in a crisis of massive proportions will become a defining feature of the U.S. position in the region for the next generation. To succeed, the administration will need to articulate and execute a vision for assisting, protecting, and finding solutions for refugees in the immediate and longer term, supporting Syria's neighbors and working with a range of stakeholders — leading as only the United States can.

A Human Rights First delegation traveled to Jordan and Turkey in late October and early November to assess the problems facing refugees from Syria. In Jordan and Turkey, we interviewed more than 60 refugees as well as humanitarian workers and government officials. This report contains our findings and outlines steps the U.S. government should take to help address this crisis.

Many refugees have been turned back at the border in violation of international law. Neighboring states are imposing bans, restrictions, closures, and quotas that are leaving many people trapped in Syria or forced to attempt perilous escapes. We met with refugees who had been prevented from crossing at their first attempt or whose family members had been turned away. Turkey first restricted entry in August 2012 and in June this year, Jordan followed suit. Lebanon too is instituting stricter documentation requirements for Syrian refugees. Iraq and Egypt, which host lesser numbers, have also restricted their borders or otherwise made it harder for refugees to enter.

- **Jordan.** Single men face particular difficulty trying to enter, and in some cases families have also been denied. For example, in October at the Jaber border

post, authorities turned away a woman and her five year-old daughter. Jordan has denied entry to hundreds of Palestinian refugees from Syria and does not allow Iraqis to enter from Syria, including some at risk due to their work with the U.S. military or other American entities. Many people blocked by Jordan have been told that they would have to wait a month or forty days before trying to enter. In one such case at the Nasib crossing, forty people — including an elderly woman — were sent back to Damascus on a bus.

- **Turkey.** Border officials have turned fleeing Syrians away when the camps are full and have required refugees to have documents to enter — a violation of international protection standards. Some of those blocked by Turkey are now stranded in camps on the Syria side of the border, which provide meager humanitarian assistance and have been hit by airstrikes.

Both governments continue to allow many refugees to enter and have publicly pledged that borders are open to refugees fleeing the conflict, but these kinds of restrictions, bans, and rejections at the border are denying refuge to many who are entitled to protection under international law. The countries that border Syria have legitimate security concerns, but they can address these through individualized assessments conducted in accordance with international law. Blanket or random denials of entry violate the Refugee Convention and international law prohibitions against return. Drafted in the wake of World War II and in the context of the many border restrictions that denied refuge to those fleeing Nazi persecution, the Convention prohibits states from *refoulement* — returning people to places where their lives or freedom would be at risk.

The basic needs of many refugees are not being met.

Despite the generosity of Syria's neighbors, and the support of the United States and other donor countries, many Syrian refugees are struggling to survive. For Syria's neighbors, it is a gigantic logistical and political challenge to provide humanitarian relief to hundreds of thousands of people. The influx has strained the infrastructures and services of some communities, which are struggling to provide medical care, education, electricity, sewage, and waste removal, and the needs of refugees are only

becoming more acute with the onset of winter. While the United States and other countries have supported the relief effort, the U.N. refugee appeal continues to lag, with only 63% of requested funds collected. The suffering is widespread, but two subsets of refugees are in particular need: those living outside the official camps and children.

- Refugees living outside the official camps endure the worst hardship. We visited a home in Amman where about 40 Syrians lived in three rooms. In Turkey, where the official camps generally have appropriate conditions, there is scarce help for refugees who live elsewhere and no systematic effort to identify the most vulnerable. We visited a makeshift camp where a family of seven lived in a tiny tent patched together from plastic, sack material, and linen sheets held up by wire strung from tree branches. Their tent, like half the tents in the camp, sits at the bottom of a slope. Water and mud, along with mice and frogs, flow in when it rains. The families here lack access to food, electricity, toilets, and running water.
- Hundreds of thousands of children have fled Syria after enduring horrific violence only to face further suffering in their host countries. Many lack basic necessities; some live in squalor. An alarming number aren't attending school due to lack of access or inability to pay for supplies and fees. And because refugees aren't allowed to work — and adults risk detention if they do — many children are working to support their families rather than attending school.

The United States has played a lead role in addressing this crisis, providing \$1.3 billion toward relief efforts both inside Syria and in neighboring countries. This effort reflects both U.S. leadership on humanitarian relief and its strategic interest in preventing the region from becoming destabilized.

The U.S. government can and should do more. Perhaps most notably, the United States should do more to champion the protection of refugees trying to flee from Syria. The United States has moreover not launched — or taken key steps to prepare for — a significant resettlement initiative that would demonstrate to Syria's neighbors a real commitment to share in hosting at least some of Syria's refugees and would encourage other resettlement

states to follow suit. Nor has it addressed some of the impediments relating to admissibility under U.S. immigration law that could deny U.S. protection to some of the very refugees of particular concern to the United States. Unless swift action is taken, the United States will exclude from its protection anyone who assisted opposition groups, even those whose military efforts the U.S. government supports, against a regime it has repeatedly condemned.

The recommendations outlined in this report will help prevent this crisis from spiraling into a greater regional catastrophe. Greater targeted assistance to refugee-hosting communities and meaningful resettlement initiatives will help to preserve the stability of Syria's neighbors. The future of Syria will be much bleaker if many of its children are denied education, and its adults are barred from working to support their families. And respect for human rights throughout the region will be undermined without strong leadership in the face of border restrictions that lead some who are fleeing persecution and violence to be turned away. By standing up for Syria's civilians, the United States can send a strong message that respecting human rights is the best hope for stability and a better future.

Recommendations

Because of its range of relationships with political, military, and civil society leaders in the region, the United States is uniquely situated to help address these challenges. Indeed, it must lead to guard against instability, secure respect for human rights, alleviate suffering, and save lives:

Press parties to participate in peace talks and provide humanitarian access in Syria.

- Continue to encourage all parties to participate in the Geneva II peace talks.
- Continue to press for a UN Security Council resolution allowing for cross border delivery of aid and press parties to agree to ceasefires to allow for delivery.
- USAID and the State Department should encourage strengthened coordination by aid groups and local NGOs of assistance for displaced Syrians living in IDP camps along the Turkish border.

Champion protection for those fleeing persecution and conflict.

- **Press states to lift barriers to protection.** U.S. officials, including President Obama and Secretary Kerry, and Members of Congress should urge all states to end any bans, prohibitions, closures, entry quotas, and restrictions that are inconsistent with international human rights and refugee protection standards.
- **Compile weekly reports on the border situation:** U.S. Embassies should compile weekly reports on the ability of refugees to cross from Syria based on information from Jordanian and Turkish government counterparts, humanitarian partners and U.S. government sources, including information on the numbers denied entry and the reasons they were turned away. U.S. officials should raise reports of restrictions, bans, closures, delays, and denials of entry with Jordanian and Turkish government counterparts.
- **Step up support to refugee-hosting states.** The United States and other countries should increase support for refugee-hosting states through development assistance, bilateral aid, and increased funding of UN humanitarian appeals.
- **Support meaningful border monitoring.** The U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) should encourage and support human rights and refugee protection monitoring at borders and at airports by UNHCR and independent human rights monitors. PRM should encourage UNHCR to include questions on access at the border in its registration for new arrivals and to raise restrictions on access directly with refugee-hosting states as well as publicly.

Step up support for protection of refugees, addressing acute needs outside camps.

- **Strengthen support for refugees outside camps:** The United States should provide additional funding for urban refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, prioritizing cash assistance, shelter, and education as well as protection monitoring and advocacy, and make

assistance inclusive of marginalized and underserved groups. The U.S. Embassy in Turkey should encourage the Turkish government to develop protection-sensitive registration in urban areas to inform decisions on how to assist the most vulnerable.

- **Support host countries with bilateral aid to assist with costs associated with hosting refugees.** The United States should support Jordan with increased bilateral aid, targeted to help refugee-hosting communities and needs, and work with other donors to provide bilateral aid to Turkey.
- **Increase support for host communities through development aid:** U.S. Embassies, USAID, and the State Department should continue to work with host governments and development actors to increase support for host communities addressing acute infrastructure needs that may be impacted by refugees, including education and medical care.
- **Encourage countries to make work authorization more accessible.** This would reduce dependence on aid and allow refugees to contribute to the economy and retain skills for when return to Syria is possible.
- **Improve access to education:** The United States should work with the government of Jordan and humanitarian partners to address bullying in schools, discrimination by school principals, and other obstacles to access. It should also encourage Turkey to waive residence requirements to register in Turkish schools, provide accreditation for schools teaching the Syrian curriculum, and support efforts to expand these schools. The United States should also support higher education initiatives.
- **Speak out against detention:** The U.S. should request regular updates from UNHCR and NGO partners regarding detention of Syrian, Iraqi and other refugees and raise concerns with host governments.

Lay groundwork for eventual returns and launch a meaningful resettlement initiative.

- **Lay groundwork for return.** The United States should support efforts to make sure returns are voluntary and informed, and invest in programs preparing for eventual return movements, addressing issues of land, property rights, documentation, and reconstruction.
- **Launch a Meaningful Resettlement Initiative.** The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) —with support and leadership from the White House and security vetting agencies — should increase resettlement for Syrian refugees. Key steps are detailed in this report. This initiative should aim to resettle at least 15,000 refugees a year from Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey, depending on the evolving needs.
- **Proactively address unintended and unjust impediments to resettlement.** The Department of Homeland Security, the Department of State, and the Department of Justice should act now to implement their discretionary authority to grant exemptions from provisions of U.S. immigration law that treat any rebellion against any established government as “terrorist activity” and any assistance to such a rebellion as “material support” to terrorism.
- **Continue and improve resettlement of Iraqi and other refugees.** The United States should continue to resettle Iraqi refugees and find ways to conduct U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services interviews with Iraqis trapped in Syria who are waiting to be resettled to the United States. Bringing them to safety should be a higher priority for the United States, which has a special responsibility to this population.

Introduction

The conflict in Syria has caused the largest displacement crisis in over 30 years. In Geneva in September, Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns described the scale and scope of the crisis in Syria as “staggering,” observing that “more people have been displaced from Syria than from genocide in Rwanda or ethnic cleansing in the Balkans.”¹ Last month, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that more than 115,000 people had been killed including 41,000 civilians.² The United Nations (U.N.) has reported that 2.2 million have fled to neighboring countries as refugees, 6.5 million more are displaced from their homes within Syria, and 9.3 million are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.³ No end to the crisis is in sight. Efforts to convene peace talks have been delayed but there is some hope that the Geneva II talks will take place later this year.

The United States has made a major commitment to respond to the humanitarian needs of those inside Syria as well as those who have fled to neighboring countries. So far the United States has contributed more than \$1.3 billion towards humanitarian efforts including providing life-saving food, medical, and other emergency assistance.⁴ Congressional leaders have shown their commitment to helping those affected by the conflict and many, including Senators McCain,⁵ Durbin⁶, Corker⁷, Klobuchar,⁸ Gillibrand, Graham, and Hoeven,⁹ have visited the region and taken time to meet with refugees. The United States also views the Syria crisis, and the resulting refugee flows, as an important foreign policy imperative given the potential impact on regional stability and security as well as the stability of key U.S. allies such as Jordan. As a result, the United States has viewed the provision of aid to assist refugee-hosting countries as an integral component of helping manage the regional impact of the Syrian crisis.



A child living in a makeshift camp at the Kilis border crossing

As Senator Menendez, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said before a hearing on the Syria Crisis, “The regional impact is enormous. In tiny Lebanon, for example, the presence of 750,000 refugees is equivalent to some 58 million refugees entering the United States. Clearly, with 4,000 refugees fleeing Syria every day, for the sake of the region and the world, we must find a resolution to this devastating humanitarian crisis.”¹⁰

The refugee crisis has escalated dramatically. A year ago, a total of 370,000 Syrian refugees were registered in the region. Now Jordan and Turkey each host over 500,000 Syrian refugees, Lebanon hosts over 800,000, and Iraq and Egypt each host over 120,000.¹¹ The war and the refugee crisis have severely affected Syria’s neighbors in many ways. Both Jordan and Turkey have incurred significant costs through provision of access to health care and other services. For example, Jordan subsidizes bread, water, electricity, and household gas as a means of social protection for the poor and the extension of these subsidized items to Syrian refugees has incurred considerable costs to the government.¹² In Turkey’s case, the costs of the 21 camps reportedly amount to over \$2

billion already and there has been limited assistance from other donors. In some areas in particular, the presence of refugees has increased the number of people trying to access education, health care, and other services, as well as seek any form of employment. As a result, citizens in host countries in some areas have experienced more limited access to key services and some face competition from refugees for manual labor jobs.

As it addresses this crisis and the suffering of the Syrian people, the United States needs to continue its efforts to end the conflict, provide humanitarian assistance to those in need inside Syria, and strengthen efforts to protect and assist those who have fled Syria into neighboring countries and beyond.

Aid into Syria

Humanitarian aid has been blocked from reaching parts of Syria where people are most in need. Human Rights First heard from refugees and aid workers that desperately needed aid is still not reaching some areas and people in internally displaced person (IDP) camps along the Syria-Turkey border are living in appalling conditions. There have been reports of children starving to death in besieged areas, some of which have not received proper access to food, water, medical care, or electricity in over a year.¹³ Some parts of Deraa, Homs, Aleppo, and Rural Damascus remain sealed off leading to dire humanitarian needs.¹⁴ With the onset of winter, the situation of those without proper shelter will become even more desperate. Funding for humanitarian assistance has been insufficient to meet the vast need. The Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) that addresses the needs of those inside Syria has received only 58% funding. SHARP will be re-launched in December with planning projects for the next six months and it is critical that donors support humanitarian agencies to provide life-saving assistance inside Syria.

On October 2, a statement by the President of the U.N. Security Council condemned the “widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Syrian authorities, as well as any human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by armed groups.”¹⁵ It called on all parties to facilitate access for humanitarian actors to civilians in need of assistance in areas under their control and across conflict lines, and to implement ‘humanitarian pauses’ to allow for the delivery of aid. It also called for the Syrian authorities to remove ‘bureaucratic obstacles’ to the provision of assistance across conflict lines and borders.¹⁶ ‘Bureaucratic obstacles’ include delays in issuing visas for international staff and approvals for humanitarian actors to operate in areas with the greatest need.

Through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States is working with 26 partners inside Syria to prioritize emergency medical care, food aid, and the provision of critical relief supplies. The United States supports 260 medical facilities inside Syria, which have treated more than 460,000 patients, and, through partnerships with the World Food Program and NGOs, helps to feed three million people inside Syria. Relief supplies have included clothing, blankets, kitchen sets, and provision of clean water.¹⁷ The United States is also working to strengthen humanitarian access. Last month, Secretary of State John Kerry stressed in an op-ed that “if weapons inspectors can carry out their crucial mission to ensure Syria’s chemical weapons can never be used again, then we can also find a way for aid workers on a no less vital mission to deliver food and medical treatment to men, women, and children suffering through no fault of their own.”¹⁸

Access to those most in need remains a critical challenge. Last month at a Security Council briefing, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos reported that the U.N. has been unable to provide aid to an estimated 2.5 million people who remain in hard-to-reach and besieged areas. She stressed that the Syrian government must take immediate steps to facilitate the expansion of humanitarian relief efforts including by reducing lengthy customs procedures and addressing delays in issuing visas and providing written approval for humanitarian convoys. Conditions on the ground remain dangerous and some estimates suggest the presence of around 2,000 armed groups making command and control structures in many areas difficult to navigate.¹⁹

Aid groups working in the north of Syria told Human Rights First that the lack of effective distribution of liquid chlorine to treat water contributes to the outbreak of water-related diseases such as polio. They reported that government-controlled centers ship liquid chlorine to surrounding areas, but they do not provide flocculent, a complementary chemical that reduces turbidity. When water turbidity is high, liquid chlorine alone will not make water safe to drink. In many parts of the country, the destruction of water-pumping stations has made it impossible to pump water even if it were clean.

Aid groups also highlighted the need for more vaccines to be supplied into opposition-controlled areas, possibly through cross-border supply. While the U.N. currently provides cross-line vaccine supply, this requires the cooperation of the Syrian government and is implemented in partnership with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), which is perceived by some Syrians to be too close to the government. As a result, aid groups reported that many Syrians in opposition-held areas surrounding government-held cities, such as Deir Ez-Zor, are afraid to approach government facilities for assistance, including vaccines, for fear of the consequences of registering their names and because of mistrust of the content of SARC-supplied vaccines.

As civilians flee to all parts of the country, around 28 camps have sprung up inside Syria along the Turkish border with a total population estimated at between 76,000²⁰ and 88,000 persons. These camps started forming in August 2012 when Turkey began restricting entry for those fleeing Syria, while they tried to create more space in the refugee camps inside Turkey.²¹ The largest of these is the Atmeh camp, north-west of Idlib and Aleppo, which is home to almost 30,000 people.²² Many of those in the camps hope to cross into Turkey but do not have the necessary documentation²³ while others have fled to the camps so that they can stay close to home, avoid the worst of the fighting, and try to cross into Turkey if necessary.

Conditions in the IDP camps are dire.²⁴ One aid worker told Human Rights First, "I've worked in a number of conflicts and these are some of the worst camps I've ever seen." Aid groups told Human Rights First of concerns regarding lack of coordination and planning in some of the camps with management constantly changing among Syrian NGOs and opposition groups, contributing to poor sanitation procedures, extremely crowded living arrangements, inadequate needs assessments, and

inconsistent provision of assistance. Monitoring reports from the camps show the need to step up food distribution and provide more shelter.²⁵ The camps have not been immune from attack. Media reports show at least three regime attacks on IDP camps including in early December 2012 when six missiles fell on IDP camps in Qah and Atmeh.²⁶ In April 2013, Syrian government planes bombed the camp at Bab al-Hawa, killing 8 people and injuring dozens,²⁷ and in June 2013, airstrikes on Bab al-Salameh wounded seven people.²⁸

Non-Syrians inside the country also face particular risks. The U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has reported that virtually all Palestinian residential areas in Syria have seen some form of armed engagement. Around 235,000 Palestinian refugees have been displaced inside Syria²⁹ and most have few options to escape the violence, with Jordan refusing entry since January 2013 and Lebanon now tightening entry, leading many Palestinian refugees to flee from camp to camp in search of safety. News reports continue to emerge of Palestinians being killed in the Syrian conflict, including those killed while waiting for aid to be distributed,³⁰ while those remaining in Yarmouk, home to the largest community of Palestinians in Syria before the conflict, remain trapped in the middle of fighting and without access to humanitarian aid since July.³¹

As efforts to convene the Geneva II peace talks in search of a political solution to the crisis continue, it is clear that humanitarian needs inside Syria will remain acute for many months to come. To address some of the most urgent challenges, states need to continue efforts to push parties inside Syria to grant unrestricted humanitarian access. As the new humanitarian appeal for needs inside Syria is launched in December, the United States should work with other donors, including non-traditional donors, to ensure a generous response to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people.

Fleeing Syria and Accessing Protection in Neighboring States

Violence continues to escalate in parts of Syria. Thousands of refugees are reported to have entered Lebanon in the past week as regime forces supported by Hezbollah prepare to take the city of Qalamoun near the Lebanese border.³² At the same time, increased Hezbollah support in recent months has helped the regime to secure gains throughout the country, notably in Aleppo and around Damascus.³³ As the regime drops incendiary bombs on Syrian civilians, even targeting children on playgrounds,³⁴ more refugees are likely to flee in the coming months. The UNHCR estimates that another two million Syrians will flee the country in 2014.³⁵

Options for those fleeing the violence are becoming more limited. Jordan and Turkey have both pledged to keep their borders open to refugees but in practice have placed restrictions on the ability of some civilians to cross into their territory. New reports suggest that Lebanon has now put more restrictive border controls in place, is denying entry to refugees with damaged documentation,³⁶ and is limiting entry for some Palestinians from Syria.³⁷ Although Iraq temporarily opened a border crossing at Peshkhabour in August allowing thousands of refugees to cross, entry into Iraq is now very limited. Egypt has imposed visa requirements for Syrian nationals, which effectively bars most Syrian refugees from seeking protection in Egypt. Countries in Europe including Bulgaria and Greece have imposed obstacles preventing Syrians and others from crossing their borders in search of protection. These moves prompted UNHCR to express its concern about European countries placing barriers to entry or forcibly returning asylum-seekers, including those who have fled Syria, and to call for a global moratorium on any return of Syrians to neighboring countries.³⁸ Other countries like the United States that are geographically distant from Syria

use visa requirements as a means of denying access to their territory to Syrians believed likely to seek asylum.



Syrian refugees denied entry into Turkey speak to a Turkish border guard. [Reuters photo]

As a result, those fleeing the conflict face increasing barriers to safety while some groups, such as Palestinian refugees in Syria, are becoming trapped and unable to leave. Syria's neighbors should be commended for hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees and should be provided with continued and increased support to address the needs of refugees and affected host communities. But the denial or delay of access to protection at the border for some trying to flee means that hundreds or possibly thousands are unable to escape prolonged dangers in Syria. A humanitarian group has documented at least one case of a Palestinian refugee in Syria who was killed after having been prevented from crossing a border to safety.

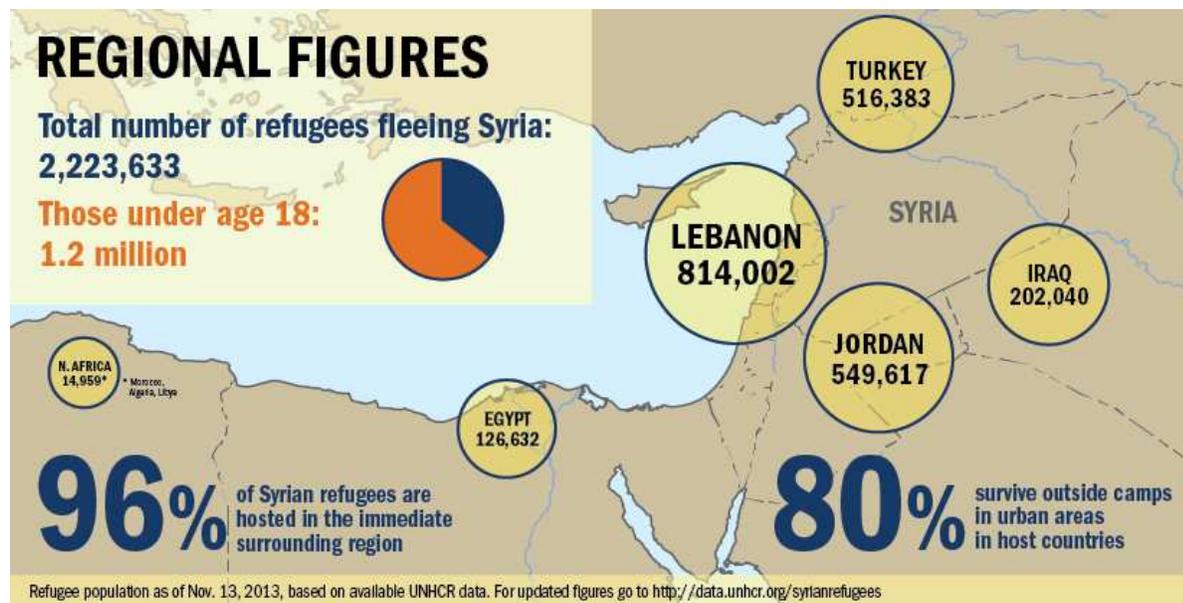
The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has called for states to keep borders open and for those fleeing Syria to be granted access to protection. In his address to the U.N. Security Council, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres stated "I reiterate my call to all states, in the region and further afield, to keep borders open and receive all Syrians who seek protection."³⁹ Guidance issued to states in October 2013 stated "UNHCR continues to urge all countries to ensure that persons fleeing Syria, including Palestine refugees and other habitual residents of Syria in need of international refugee protection, have the right to seek asylum and are admitted into their territory. The entry and admission of persons having fled Syria needs to be dealt with in a protection-sensitive manner, regardless of whether they resort to

seeking entry without appropriate documentation or in an otherwise irregular manner.”⁴⁰

Both Jordan and Turkey have stated publicly that their borders are open. Responding to a recent Amnesty International report on border restrictions, Jordanian government spokesperson Mohammad Momani stated that “Jordan has not and will not close its borders to Syrians seeking safety and security...Under international law and norms, it is unacceptable to close borders to civilians fleeing war and crises, and Jordan respects international conventions in this regard.”⁴¹ Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has also pledged that Turkey’s borders with Syria will remain open to those fleeing the violence.⁴² Despite these commitments many refugees continue to face significant obstacles in crossing from Syria to safety.

without identification documents, as well as many other Syrians who have been refused entry without explanation or told to come back after a month.

At the Syria-Turkey border, Syrians without passports have been prevented from entering Turkey, a prohibition that impacts a wide range of refugees including political activists and others who can’t approach Syrian authorities for a passport. Some Syrians seeking entry to Turkey’s refugee camps have been turned away and prevented from entering Turkey when these camps are full. Thousands of Syrians who have been unable to enter Turkey are now stranded in IDP camps on the Syrian side of the border where they endure extraordinarily poor living conditions and risk air raids by the Syrian regime. As a result of increased restrictions, many Syrians are instead crossing into Turkey through irregular channels rather than



Refugees from Syria continue to arrive in Jordan daily but the numbers have dropped dramatically from June, when 1,000 to 2,000 people were entering each day, to now around 300 — most of whom are entering through unofficial crossings in the eastern desert. Since January 2013, government policy has prevented Palestinian refugees who had lived in Syria from seeking protection in Jordan. As detailed below, hundreds of civilians seeking protection have been turned away at Jordan’s borders, including particular groups such as Palestinian and Iraqi refugees, single men trying to cross without family, those

through formal ports of entry.

UNHCR appears to be aware that while Syria’s neighbors are allowing some refugees to enter the country, they are also denying and delaying access to protection to other refugees. UNHCR has observed restrictions by the Jordanian and Turkish authorities and U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres reported to the U.N. Security Council in July that “the authorities are now carefully managing the borders with Syria, mainly due to national security concerns. The borders are not closed

— refugees continue to cross — but many can only do so in a gradual manner.” He also raised concerns about access to Iraq and Egypt and highlighted the need to “ensure that refugees seeking safety — especially families, elderly people, and women with children — are not stranded in precarious conditions or exposed to the risk of getting caught in the fighting.”⁴³

The Refugee Convention and customary international law prohibit the return of a refugee to any country where his or her life or freedom would be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The Refugee Convention, and the principle of *non-refoulement* embodied in Article 33 of the Refugee Convention, precludes any act of *refoulement* attributable to a state — including non-admittance at borders— which could have the effect of returning an asylum seeker or refugee to a place where his or her life or freedom would be threatened.⁴⁴ *Non-refoulement* is also a principle of customary international law, binding on all states.⁴⁵ *Non-refoulement* applies to the moment at which asylum seekers present themselves for entry at a border or entry point.⁴⁶ It also applies in situations of mass influx.⁴⁷ International human rights conventions also include prohibitions against *refoulement* to any country where a person would face torture or certain other human rights abuses.⁴⁸

Some senior U.S. State Department officials have voiced concern about the increasing restrictions that are preventing refugees from fleeing Syria. At a UNHCR-convened meeting on Syria in September 2013, Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns urged “host countries to refrain from restricting or closing their borders, and to offer refuge to all those fleeing the conflict, including vulnerable Palestinian and Iraqi refugees from Syria.”⁴⁹ Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and

Migration Anne Richard in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa in September 2013 observed that “in recent weeks, the number of refugees crossing has decreased at some border points because refugee-hosting countries have taken steps to restrict the flow. Measures include limiting the number that can cross per day or imposing stricter requirements for identity documents. Some crossing points have been closed completely. In response, we have asked neighboring countries to keep borders open, urged them to respect the rights of people seeking to flee the violence, and discussed different ways to help these governments cope.”⁵⁰ In a November 2013 interview, Assistant Secretary Richard said of those trying to cross from Syria to Jordan, “We worry that there may be people who need to cross who are not getting out.”⁵¹

Jordan

People fleeing the violence in Syria are not freely able to seek protection at Jordan’s borders. Some are simply turned away by Jordanian authorities. Others are told to wait a few days, or a month, or sent to other border crossings.⁵² There is a widespread belief that Jordanian authorities have been restricting the numbers since around late May 2013,⁵³ in some cases reportedly communicating with opposition figures on the Syrian side of the border to

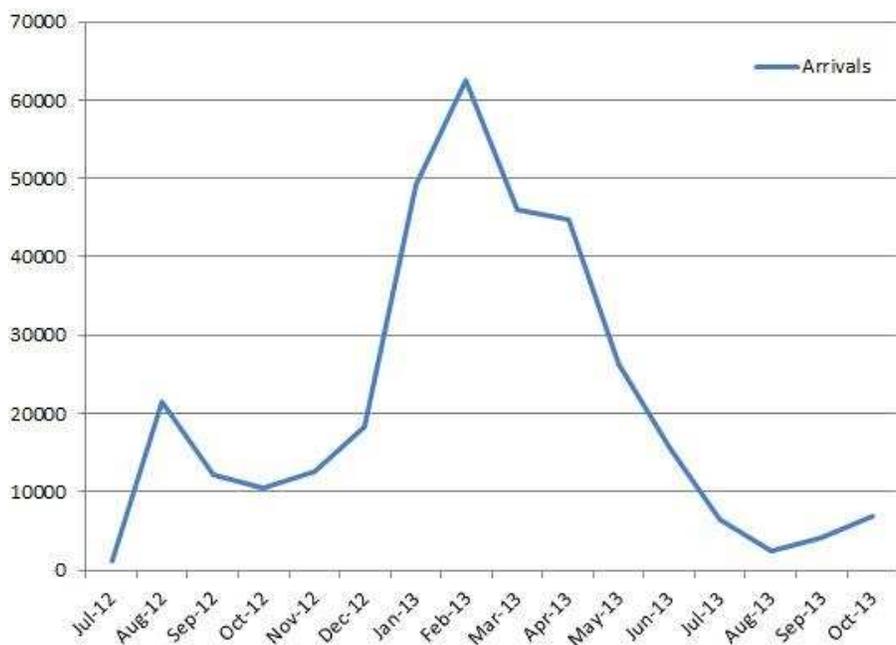


Figure 1: Syrian refugee arrivals in Jordan (Data from UNHCR/IOM)

help limit the number of refugees even allowed to approach the border.⁵⁴ Syrians without valid identification face difficulties in crossing or are entirely unable to cross. In addition there are also obstacles in reaching the border on the Syrian side due to fighting or having to cross through dangerous checkpoints. There is not yet consistent border monitoring but UNHCR has previously reported three cases of deportations amounting to *refoulement* during the first quarter of 2013.⁵⁵ A letter from the Jordanian Commander of the Security Unit in the Syrian Refugee Camps Department sent out in May 2013 to the commanders of Jordan's Syrian refugee camps provides the instruction not to "refoul any Syrian refugee forcibly unless he/she shows a complete willingness of returning back."⁵⁶

Although between 200 and 300 refugees enter Jordan every day,⁵⁷ the vast majority of them do so through irregular channels at the eastern border. This means that many are walking for up to three days through the desert in order to reach Jordan and cross to safety. Among those who have entered Jordan through this route are a couple aged 90 and 88.⁵⁸ Crossing through the eastern border often involves paying smugglers to help with the crossing.



Arrival statistics compiled by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) show a sharp decline from April 2013

when over 40,000 entered Jordan every month to August 2013 when just 1,809 entered. UNHCR data shows that between December 24th and April 24th, Jordan's refugee population rose from 112,329 to 471,146 — an increase of nearly 320% in just five months. Yet for the following five months the total rose to only 525,264.⁵⁹ Over the same period, violence in Syria continued and in some places intensified. Government forces made significant strategic gains amid heavy fighting with the opposition, including massacres by pro-government militias in Baniyas and Al-Bayda,⁶⁰ government bombardment and eventual takeover of key southern border towns and routes,⁶¹ and chemical weapons attacks in Al Ghouta which caused 8,000 civilians to flee to the Jordanian border.⁶² While fighting and government airstrikes around Deraa and the Jordanian border certainly contributed to reducing refugee flows out of Syria, the opposition maintained escape routes amid the fighting. An escalation in fighting alone does not explain the drastic decrease in refugees entering Jordan, as demonstrated by the fact that when rebels retook key border points in October 2013,⁶³ refugee flows did not resume to prior levels. While Jordan's border may be officially open, it is clear that refugees seeking to cross face a range of barriers, impediments, and restrictions.

Human Rights First met with a Syrian human rights activist whose wife and five year-old daughter were turned away from the border by Jordanian authorities in October 2013. The woman had returned briefly to Syria with her youngest child to apply for unpaid leave from her job in the hope of not jeopardizing her future prospects in Syria. When they tried to return to Jordan she and her child were denied entry by Jordanian border authorities at the Jaber border crossing. She has still been unable to rejoin her husband and her four other young children in Jordan.

Human Rights First also met with an older Syrian woman who was turned away from the border at the Nasib border crossing by Jordanian authorities in August 2013. The woman was trying to follow her children and their families to Jordan after having stayed behind in Damascus to care for her sick daughter. When she arrived at Nasib on a bus from Damascus with about 40 people, only five were permitted to enter Jordan and the rest were put back on the bus to Damascus. Their passports were stamped with instructions that they were forbidden to enter Jordan until

at least a month had passed. After a month and ten days, she tried again and was only admitted to Jordan due to her son's intervention with a Jordanian Customs Officer he had befriended. She told us that most of those who arrived with her on this second trip in September 2013 were turned away. Media reports have also confirmed that Syrian refugees are sometimes turned away and told by border officials to return in one month.⁶⁴

In another example, a Syrian refugee couple told us they witnessed 400 to 500 Syrian men turned away in February 2013 at the Nasib border crossing. The couple told Human Rights First that they saw the stamps Jordanian authorities put in some of the men's passports, informing them that they were not to try to return to the border for another 40 days.

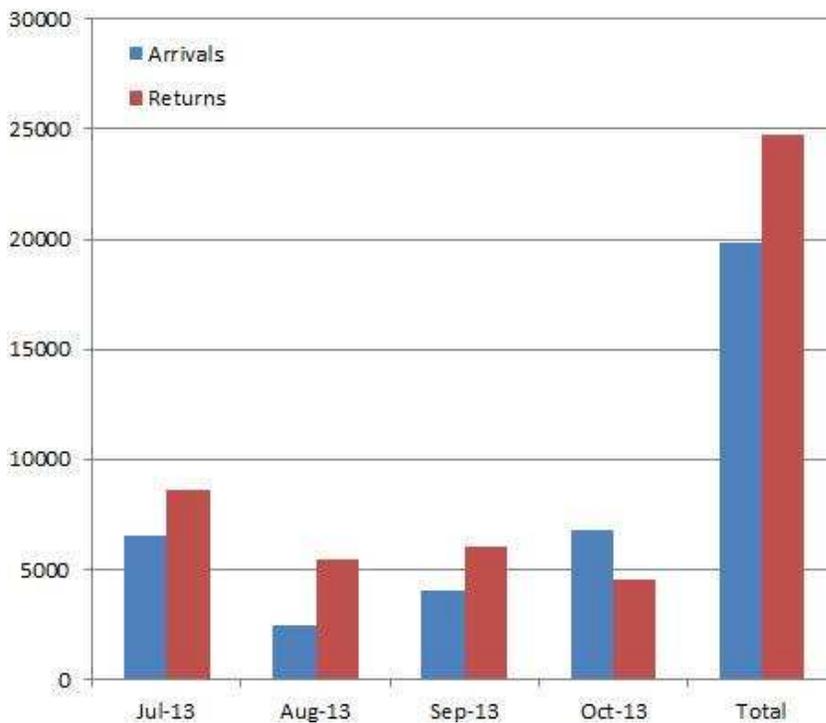


Figure 2: Arrivals and returns of Syrian refugees from Jordan (Data from UNHCR/IOM)

There have been numerous reports suggesting that daily quotas are imposed at some crossing points. For example, Syrian refugees have told media sources that Jordanian officials informed them that there were no entries allowed on a particular day. On another day, Jordanian officials reportedly allowed 15 people to enter but turned the 16th back saying that the quota had been reached.⁶⁵ One

Syrian family told Human Rights First that when they approached the border at Tel Shehab, along with hundreds of other refugees and a Free Syrian Army escort, Jordanian border guards began firing their weapons into the air to make them turn back. They heard that Jordan would admit no more than 200 people per day, and that a woman had been struck by a stray bullet. They tried again the next day and were admitted. While there are no consistent patterns in the numbers let in, one Jordan-based researcher told Human Rights First that these quotas are likely to be guided by the numbers returning to Syria each day. This is supported by UNHCR and IOM statistics that show that between July and the end of October more Syrian refugees returned to Syria than entered into Jordan. For the period between July 1

and October 31, 19,816 Syrian refugees entered Jordan while at least 24,708 returned to Syria.¹

With these returns and other departures, there is certainly space available in the Zaatari refugee camp. More space for newly-arrived refugees is also available at the newly-constructed camp Azraq which has capacity for up to 130,000 people but so far there has been no clear indication of when the camp will open.

Refugees, Jordanian airport police, and other individuals have reported serious difficulties for Syrians attempting to enter Jordan at Queen Alia International Airport in Amman. These problems include detention in poor conditions for up to four days, the absence of a clear procedure for

individualized determinations of eligibility for entry, and multiple cases in which Syrians were sent back to Lebanon or Egypt — or, earlier in the war when airplanes

¹ Data for returns in August only available for August 1 to August 23.

from Syria were still landing in Amman, even sent back to Syria.⁶⁶

Young men travelling without family or without family ties in Jordan are often turned away or face significant difficulties securing entry to Jordan. For example, Human Rights First interviewed Luqa², a 28 year-old Orthodox Christian from Sweida, whose brother was turned away from the Nasib border post in October 2012. Luqa had entered Jordan in April 2012 to avoid compulsory service in the rights-abusing Syrian army. In October 2012, his younger brother, Amin³, was conscripted and also sought to flee Syria. When Amin tried to enter Jordan at the Nasib border post, he was turned away by Jordanian border authorities without explanation. As a result, at great risk to his safety, Amin had little choice but to retrace his steps, risking many dangerous checkpoints as he made his way to Lebanon.

Another refugee interviewed by Human Rights First, a human rights activist and former prisoner of conscience who fled Syria after the rest of his family, told Human Rights First how he was nearly returned to Syria from a transit center on the Jordanian side of the border. His family had passports and had flown to Amman earlier, but he himself was wanted by the Syrian security services for his peaceful activism. The Syrian authorities had barred him from foreign travel several years earlier and refused to issue him a new passport. As a result, he had to flee to Jordan in an irregular manner across the land border. At the border, he provided documentary proof of his family situation and emphasized that his family was already in Amman. Even after his wife and little children traveled to the border to prove their presence in Jordan, he was nearly returned to Syria. He was only finally routed to the Zaatari refugee camp after a very anxious night in the course of which a Jordanian officer tore up the receipt the exhausted activist had been given for his identification documents, which the Jordanian authorities had confiscated.

Media reports indicate that those suspected of posing a security risk are held for up to 24 hours on arrival while

background checks are performed⁶⁷ before a decision is made on whether to allow entry. While security screening may often be appropriate, it should not be applied in such a way that those who pose no risk are also denied protection. There is currently no U.N. or NGO monitoring of this screening to help ensure that individuals in need of international protection are not unfairly denied entry.

Border officials have acknowledged turning away those they deem security threats as well as those with forged documentation. Reports indicate that at least 10-20 Syrians found to be carrying false documents or “suspected of attempting to carry out illicit activities in Jordan such as spying, militant acts and drug trafficking” have been denied entry every day.⁶⁸ Those determined to be defectors from the Syrian Armed Forces during screening are placed in a ‘defectors’ camp’ in Jordan without access to UNHCR registration or monitoring. Those determined to be a security risk are denied entry.

Jordan and other states neighboring Syria should be taking steps to make sure they are not extending safe haven to individuals who have committed grave crimes or to individuals who pose a danger to security. The Refugee Convention’s requirements of protection are subject to exceptions. The Convention’s “exclusion clauses” require host countries to exclude from their protection persons who have committed heinous acts or grave crimes that make them undeserving of international protection as refugees. A separate provision of the Convention allows the return of refugees who pose a danger to the security of the host country. As UNHCR has noted, with respect to people fleeing Syria, “[e]xclusion considerations would be triggered, in particular, in cases involving possible participation in acts of violence, including attacks against civilians, murder, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, kidnappings and hostage-taking or sexual violence.”⁶⁹

In order to be consistent with the Refugee Convention, however, exclusion from protection of a person who meets the refugee definition must be predicated on the refugee’s individual responsibility for serious wrongdoing.⁷⁰ Either the refugee must have individually committed an excludable offense or he or she must have contributed to its commission in a significant way, and have done so knowingly and voluntarily.⁷¹ Similarly, while the Refugee Convention allows a state to deny protection to a refugee

² Name changed to protect identity.

³ Name changed to protect identity.

who poses a danger to it, this must be based on a finding — in an individualized assessment conducted in accordance with international standards — that the refugee actually poses a danger.⁷² As UNHCR has confirmed in its guidance on protection considerations for those fleeing Syria:

In such cases, it will be necessary to examine carefully any issues of individual responsibility for crimes which may give rise to exclusion from international refugee protection. Participation in armed conflict is not, as such, a ground for exclusion. Similarly, mere membership in a group or organization is not a sufficient basis to exclude. An individualized assessment is required in all cases.⁷³

Currently there is no monitoring of Jordan's security screening including of young men traveling alone. The number of reports of people being screened out and stories of those not directly involved in fighting also being denied entry suggests that individuals in need of international protection are most likely being denied access based on their profile as young men traveling alone. In addition, the knowledge that many young men are being denied entry into Jordan is also having the effect of dissuading those still in Syria from trying to flee to Jordan. Having independent human rights monitors at the border should help ensure that people in need of international protection are not unfairly denied entry.

In addition to the categories of people described above for whom access to Jordanian territory is restricted, current Jordanian policy prevents Palestinian refugees in Syria from crossing into Jordan. In January 2013, Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour announced that Jordan would not accept Palestinian refugees resident in Syria.⁷⁴ Since then Palestinian refugees who have tried to cross into Jordan have been turned back at the border and during our visit Human Rights First was informed of at least one documented case where a Palestinian who had been denied entry into Jordan had later been killed. Families with one Syrian and one Palestinian parent trying to cross into Jordan have been separated and only the Syrian nationals allowed to enter Jordan. Under Syrian law children derive their citizenship through the father and so this leads to children of a Palestinian father and Syrian

mother being denied entry to Jordan.⁷⁵ Since January 2013, human rights groups in Jordan have documented at least 58 cases of *refoulement* of Palestinians.

Approximately half were screened and deported from transit centers within 24 hours of their arrival while half were arrested and deported after trying to renew a passport or register a birth or marriage. These groups have also documented "a few hundred cases" where Palestinians who approached the Jordanian border were denied entry.

Iraqi refugees who had fled to Syria have also been denied entry into Jordan. Many Iraqi refugees awaiting resettlement to the United States have been stranded in Syria, including some who were targeted because of their work with the U.S. government or other U.S. groups. There are currently around 4,000 Iraqi refugees in Syria who are waiting to be resettled to the United States but face serious obstacles in being able to access a neighboring country where they could attend a face-to-face interview with U.S. immigration officers as required by U.S. immigration law.

There is not yet consistent protection monitoring by UNHCR or independent human rights monitors of the formal ports of entry, including the airport as well as the more regularly used informal crossings. This was identified as a priority in the Regional Response Plan for July to December 2013 and should become a more urgent priority for 2014. UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior have an agreement in principle to establish a presence at the airport and formal points of entry but this has not yet been approved. UNHCR and NGOs should have a consistent presence at the border in order to ensure that those in need of international protection are not turned away and it is critical that monitoring takes place at the actual points where decisions are made over whether to admit or deny entry, including during security screening, rather than only outside these facilities. Improved border monitoring would also serve Jordan's interest. In addition to providing transparency around access to protection at the border, it would help the government identify impediments to its formal policy of open borders for refugees and ensure it is implemented at a local level.

Turkey

Refugees continue to flee the north of Syria into Turkey. Entry into Turkey depends on whether a particular border post is open, whether the person has a valid passport, and (for those seeking entry into one of the camps) whether there is space available. Turkey first started restricting entry as the initial camps filled up in August 2012 and this led to the establishment of IDP camps on the other side of the border. These camps are currently home to around 77,000 people. When space becomes available in the camps, the Turkish government selects people from the IDP camps for entry. A new camp at Viranşehir in Şanlıurfa is reportedly completed and ready to admit up to 18,000 refugees.⁷⁶

Border posts have been formally closed on a regular basis due to security concerns. For example, after car bombs exploded in Reyhanlı in May 2013, Turkey closed the nearby Yayladagi/Bab al-Kesab border for a month⁷⁷ while after another car bomb attack on the Turkish side of the Cilvegözü/Bab al-Hawa border post in February 2013 Turkey closed that border for four days.⁷⁸ More recently, in September 2013, Turkey closed the border crossing at Kilis due to fighting between the FSA and ISIS at Azaz, three miles from the border. At the time of Human Rights First's visit in November 2013, trucks lined the road to the border crossing and drivers told us that the crossing had been closed for 47 days but was expected to open in the next few days.⁷⁹

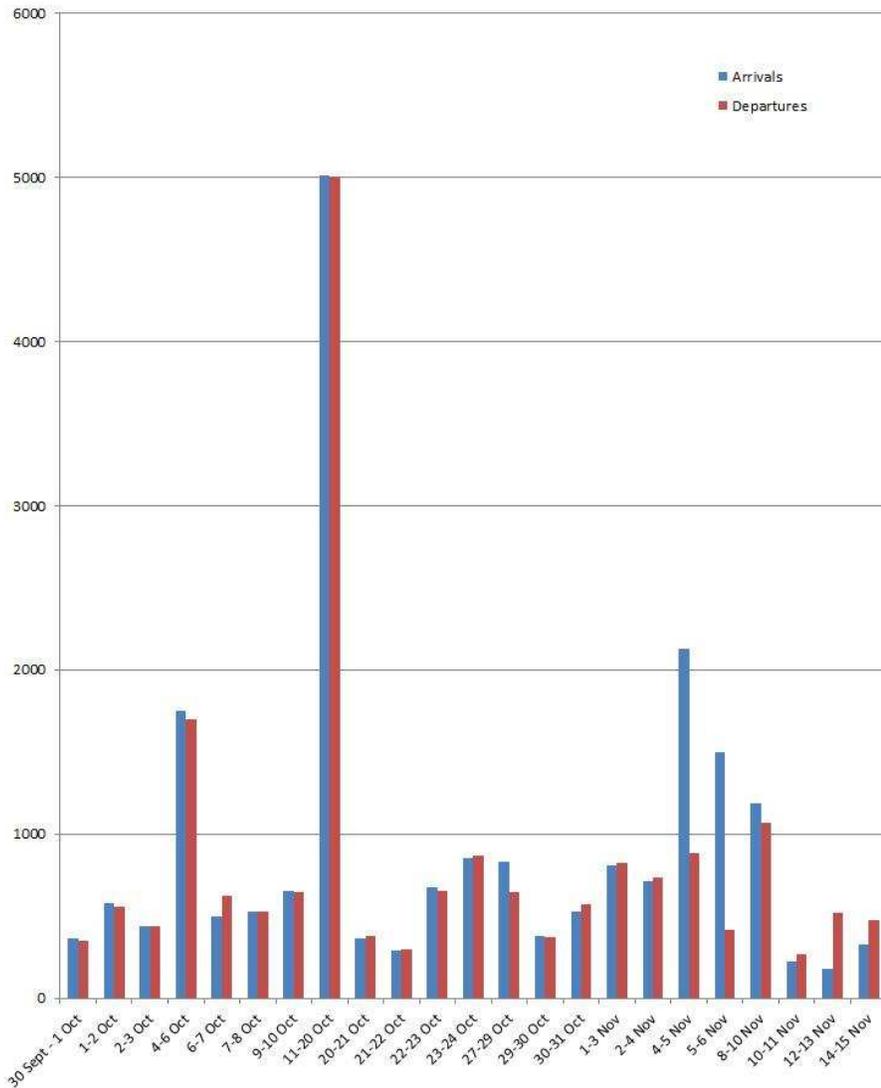


Figure 3: Arrivals of Syrian refugees into camps and returns to Syria from Turkey (Data from UNHCR)

While Turkey — like Jordan - needs to take steps to address legitimate security concerns, as outlined above

military service.⁸⁰ Human Rights First heard reports of crowds of Syrians at the Bab al-Hawa border post having

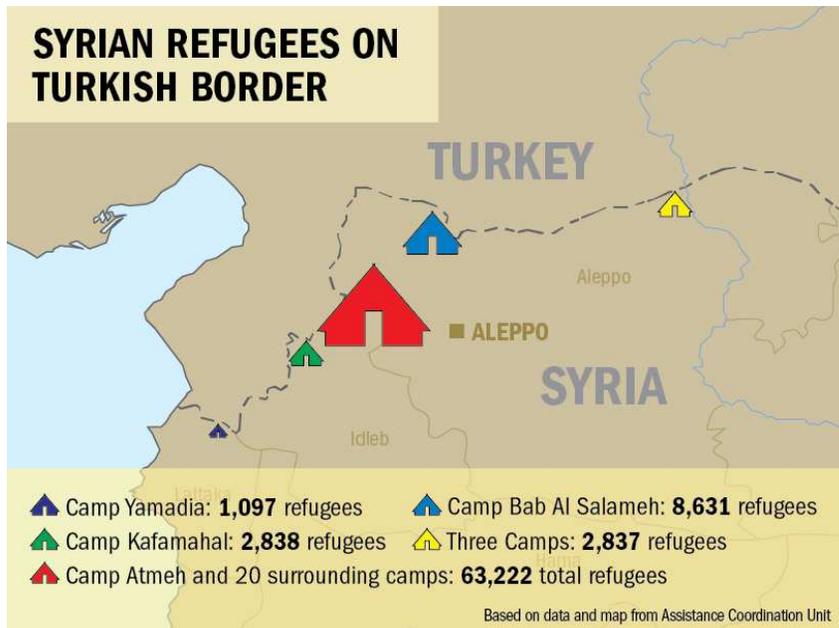
to fight for a place on one of the small buses that transport people across no man's land into Turkey.

Turkey's lengthy border has numerous unofficial crossing points and so those denied access are sometimes able to cross on their own through irregular ports of entry while others have sought assistance from smugglers. There are long established networks of diesel smugglers in parts of the south of Turkey and media reports show that civilians fleeing violence in Syria alongside smugglers have been caught in crossfire with Turkish troops and prevented from crossing.⁸¹

Members of the humanitarian community in Turkey voiced concern that Turkey does not necessarily distinguish between smugglers and those fleeing violence when large groups try to cross together.

Despite restrictions on entry at formal entry points, aid agencies reported that officials are responsive and allow access to people needing emergency medical treatment when these cases are presented at the border.

There is currently almost no protection monitoring at the Syria-Turkey border. UNHCR and human rights groups do not have any presence at formal ports of entry and therefore are unable to intervene in cases where individuals in need of protection are denied entry. There is also no systematic screening of new arrivals in Turkey by UNHCR or human rights monitors to assess whether they faced any obstacles in attempting to enter Turkey.



assessments of who constitutes a security risk should always be done on an individual basis and conducted in accordance with international standards.

Those with valid passports can cross into Turkey due to the visa-free entry agreement with Syria since August 2009 but those without passports are frequently unable to cross unless there is space in one of the camps.

International refugee protection standards are clear that refugees should not be turned away due to lack of valid visas, and as UNHCR stated in its October 2013 protection considerations “entry and admission of persons having fled Syria needs to be dealt with in a protection-sensitive manner regardless of whether they resort to seeking entry without appropriate documentation or in an otherwise irregular manner.” Syrians in opposition-controlled areas face serious obstacles in being able to apply for or renew a passport, particularly those wanted by Syrian intelligence for their activism or those who have not completed their

Challenges Facing Refugees in Communities and Camps

Refugees are struggling to support themselves and their families across the region, including in Jordan and Turkey. These challenges are particularly acute for refugees who are living outside of refugee camps. One of the greatest challenges for those in urban areas in Jordan and Turkey — as well as Lebanon — is being able to pay for accommodation. High rental prices combined with limited financial assistance mean that many refugees live in precarious conditions, which are likely to be exacerbated during the coming winter. In Lebanon and Jordan, the UNHCR has initiated shelter assistance programs that have supported landlords in renovating their properties in return for reduced rental fees for Syrian refugees.

The United States has provided different forms of assistance to support Syrian refugees in the region. The United States has supported UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNRWA, the United Nations Population Fund, IOM, and NGO programs in the region providing food, water, shelter, health care, and schools for refugee children as well as programs to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) has contributed over \$580 million to support these efforts. To improve security in Zaatari camp, staff from the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) are working with Jordanian counterparts to train camp residents to establish community patrols. Other donors, including the European Commission, Kuwait, the United Kingdom, and Germany, have also contributed large amounts, but the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) has received only 63% of the funds humanitarian organizations need to assist Syrian refugees. A revised RRP will be launched in December

indicating the funding required to assist refugees in the region for the next six months.

Despite this assistance, Syrian refugees continue to face a range of serious challenges in Jordan and Turkey including not being able to access work authorization, challenges accessing health care and education, limited access to basic humanitarian assistance, and challenges paying rent.



Ashrafiyeh: a neighborhood in Amman where many Syrian refugees live

Humanitarian Support and Access to Services

Jordan

Like Syrian refugees elsewhere, refugees in Jordan are struggling to support themselves. Around 400,000 Syrian refugees live in urban areas in Jordan and assistance from the humanitarian community is very thinly stretched.

Finding adequate housing and paying the rent are among the greatest challenges facing many Syrian refugees, particularly with prices rising sharply as more and more people seek shelter. One refugee told us, "There are places that used to rent for 80 JD [around \$114] that are now going for 250 [roughly \$355]." A recent survey indicates that 40% of Syrians are living in two bedroom apartments, with at least four people sleeping in each room, and paying 150 JD per month (about \$212).⁸² Although the number of people receiving cash assistance is very limited given the scale of need, several refugees told Human Rights First that some landlords believe refugees are receiving financial support from the U.N. and

so charge them more or require them to pay three or even six months in advance. At present, around 22,000 families receive some form of regular cash assistance from humanitarian agencies⁸³ but, due to insufficient funding, there is simply not enough to address the needs of all the most vulnerable, and Syrian refugees are not allowed to work to support themselves. One family told Human Rights First they had recently been paying 240 JD (around \$340) for a single room below ground level with a corrugated metal roof that did nothing to keep out water. As the weather grew colder and the rain increased, they sold their watches and jewelry and borrowed money from friends in order to find shelter that would keep them dry. Almost all the women participating in a survey of 240 Syrian households in urban centers other than Amman reported distress at having had to sell personal items out of necessity, and 72% of households reported that they were in debt, with the average debt being about 500 JD (\$707).⁸⁴

Many Syrian refugees live in spaces that are insufficient for their families or of poor quality. As one Syrian told us, “Some of the places people are renting are honestly not fit for human habitation. During the winter, for example, when

Winter in Zaatari

When the winter rains arrive in earnest, Zaatari’s dust turns into thick mud and puddles encroach upon tents. UNHCR is implementing plans to make this year’s winter bearable for the approximately 100,000 Syrian refugees living in Zaatari, the sprawling refugee camp. 50 caravans are arriving in the camp every day to replace the less durable tents that 3,500 households are still living in. To get every family out of a tent and into a caravan, UNHCR needs funding for 4,000 more. Thanks to the Norwegian Refugee Council, gas heaters and vouchers for one gas canister every two weeks will be distributed to 25,000 households by early December, along with warm blankets and over 100,000 articles of winter clothing. Efforts are underway to elevate the many electric cables that run along the ground so that they don’t become a hazard as the ground turns to mud, but erecting the necessary poles will cost about \$6 million. Most of these projects depend on solid roads that can withstand heavy rains, and so UNHCR is seeking funding to repave Zaatari’s roadways.

In addition to preparing for winter, Zaatari is preparing for the long term and making adjustments that will give refugees greater autonomy and control over their lives in the camp. First begun as a short term refuge for 60,000 refugees, Zaatari expanded to 150,000 at its peak according to some estimates. Residents initially expressed resentment, and protests took place regularly, limiting the access of aid workers to the camp. One particularly serious riot in late April 2013 resulted in injuries to refugees and Jordanian police—UNHCR camp director Kilian Kleinschmidt described it as a “pitched battle throughout the camp.” Since then, changes have been made to camp management, communication between management and community leaders in the camp has significantly improved, and efforts have been made to better address the needs of Zaatari’s residents. These adjustments include surveying the camp population to learn more about the talents and work experience individuals have brought with them to Zaatari and what kinds of livelihoods they would like to pursue in the camp. The World Food Program is phasing out in-kind food assistance and replacing it with a voucher-based system that should be fully implemented by the end of the year thanks to a partnership with Jordanian Safeway. UNHCR is also taking steps to give Zaatari’s residents better access to local Jordanian government services by introducing a governance plan for Zaatari that will include appointed Jordanian local administrators; urging the Jordanian government to clear the backlog of birth certificates and waive fines due to delayed birth registration as a result of identity papers being taken from refugees upon arrival; and bringing Jordanian personal status courts into the camp to ensure that marriages are valid and registered under Jordanian law. These measures are intended to provide Zaatari’s residents with a greater sense of normality amid life in a refugee camp.

the conditions in Zaatari become unbearable due to the rains, you see families paying money to stay in unfinished buildings in Irbid.” Human Rights First visited one home in Amman where approximately 40 people were living in three rooms. Another family Human Rights First interviewed had been in Amman for 11 months and had been forced to move ten times because they could not pay rent. Their current home consists of a single room on the roof of an apartment building. Bare wires hang from the ceiling and water pours in through the ceiling and outer wall whenever it rains. Several aid workers noted that some refugees were returning to camps because of the challenges of survival in the cities.

Human Rights First heard multiple reports of difficulties accessing medical care in Jordan. The capacity of hospitals and medical clinics is stretched thin, resulting sometimes in denial of care or inadequate care for refugees and Jordanians alike. One Syrian in her twenties who often goes to the hospital either for herself or with an older relative or one of her children said she dreads it and almost always comes home crying because of being turned away or rudely treated. Support is urgently needed to increase Jordan’s capacity to provide primary, secondary, and tertiary medical care, particularly in communities hosting significant numbers of refugees.

Many refugees told us they face difficulties accessing medical care due to the expiration of UNHCR registration documents and delays in renewal of this registration. With a valid UNHCR registration card, refugees can receive treatment at public hospitals and clinics at the same rates that apply to poor Jordanians. Once their U.N. refugee registration card has expired, they must pay full price, which very few can afford. Human Rights First met with many refugees who could not access care because their registration had expired and their renewal appointment was set for a later date. They expressed frustration saying “Why does UNHCR give us appointments for renewal of our refugee registration that are after the date of expiration of our current certificates?”

Human Rights First interviewed a number of refugees who were unable to access care due to an expired refugee certificate, including a fifty year old woman with high blood pressure who could no longer obtain her medication and had run out of the small supply she was able to bring from

Syria; an eight year old girl suffering from multiple cavities; a man in his forties with a chronic ear infection; and a number of elderly men and women with diabetes and high blood pressure. UNHCR has recently taken steps to reduce the registration backlog and notify refugees via SMS but many of those with re-registration appointments for a future date were not aware of this.⁸⁵



Zaatari, October 31, 2013

Turkey

Turkey’s initial response to the influx of Syrian refugees was to establish camps in the south of the country. Once these filled up, and as refugees increasingly entered the country through irregular means due to restrictions at formal ports of entry, more Syrians moved to cities across the country. As of November 15, official statistics reported 202,297 refugees in 21 camps in 10 provinces,⁸⁶ and a government official told Human Rights First that Turkey estimates there to be around 500,000 Syrian refugees in urban areas.

Turkey has provided the camps with good infrastructure and high standards of assistance. The government deserves credit for the quality of these camps. This, rather than the dire need of the urban refugee population, is what most international delegations see when visiting the

country. Despite the high standards of infrastructure in the camps though, humanitarian workers voiced concern to Human Rights First about differing management practices at these camps and a lack of standard operating procedures for particular issues so that responses to domestic violence and minor marriages differ from camp to camp, as do rules governing permission to come and go from camps. Humanitarian workers stressed the need to strengthen the provision of psychosocial services, including by increasing the number of social workers active in each camp.

Some refugees in Turkey are desperately waiting for placement in one of the camps. Human Rights First met with Syrian refugees living along the roadside at Kilis who were hoping to be admitted into the official camp just across the road. Around 500 people currently live opposite the camp in makeshift tents of tarpaulins without regular food, no access to electricity, and very limited access to toilets and running water. Most have been there for three months but have received no answer about when they may be placed in a camp. Some of those we met had relatives or friends in the camp who shared food with them while others were forced to rely on their meager savings and buy from a nearby shop. With the onset of winter, conditions in the camp will deteriorate rapidly as the makeshift tents do little to keep out the cold and the rain water that flows down the bank into the camp.



Muhammad and Ghazal: They and their parents have moved 10 times because they could not pay the rent.

Human Rights First interviewed one family of seven who have been living for the past three months in a tiny tent patched together from plastic, sack material, and linen sheets held up by wire strung from tree branches. The mother told us that they had fled their home in rural Hama when bombs fell on their house, killing her baby daughter. Her four year-old daughter has been so traumatized that she has hardly spoken a word since the attack. Her husband was wounded in the head and stomach in the same attack and rarely sleeps because of the pain, not receiving medical care because he is not in a formal camp. Their tent is at the bottom of a slope, so water and mud pour in whenever it rains, along with mice and frogs.

Very little aid is available to those outside of the camps. Assistance is administered by local authorities and therefore varies across the different provinces. For example, the Governorate of Şanlıurfa identified around 600 Syrians living outside of camps and will reportedly provide coal to assist with winter heating.⁸⁷ The Turkish government is also responsible for registration and has only recently begun to register those outside of the camps. But this registration does not focus on particular needs and vulnerabilities and is not conducted in a confidential setting, making survivors of sexual violence, minority groups facing particular risks, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) refugees less likely to divulge critical information about their protection needs for fear of others overhearing. As a result, the Government of Turkey and humanitarian organizations lack comprehensive data on which refugees are most vulnerable and where they live. As the foreigners police begin a new registration strategy in urban areas in the south, they should include critical protection information. Registration should also be expanded to include those who have migrated north to major cities. This will help guide decisions about how best to assist those living outside of the camps.

A number of NGOs run localized programs such as one in the Hatay area that provides food vouchers to 3,500 families. Many community-based organizations and faith-based groups provide various forms of assistance, but this is not yet well-coordinated. For example, an NGO in Reyhanlı told us that sometimes they hear someone in the street simply yelling for Syrian refugees to come out and

receive food parcels. There has been no widespread vulnerability assessment or mapping of services and there are few coordination forums for assistance to refugees in Turkey. With winter approaching, a number of NGOs have winterization programs such as providing carpets, blankets, and winter clothes, but the geographic spread of such assistance is limited. Some of these groups have developed good local relationships, a strong sense of which families are particularly in need of humanitarian support, and the networks and infrastructure to deliver that support — they simply lack sufficient financial resources to provide this desperately needed aid.

UNHCR and its partners have been exploring providing cash assistance to urban refugees but this requires additional funding as well as agreement with the Turkish government that this assistance should go to the most vulnerable, rather than to all Syrian refugees.

As in Jordan, a major challenge facing Syrian refugees in Turkey is paying the rent. In some areas, landlords require six months deposit up front which constitutes a large part of many families' savings. Humanitarian groups expressed concern to Human Rights First about possible exploitation of Syrian families who are being charged vastly inflated prices by landlords and are living in precarious conditions.

Although the Government of Turkey issued a circular providing access to health care for Syrians, not all local hospitals and clinics have implemented this policy. Some Syrians have also had difficulty accessing medical care because of their inability to speak Turkish. One NGO reported discrimination against Syrians when accessing health care, such as an incident where a doctor refused to treat a malnourished Syrian boy because of resentment

over the levels of assistance provided to Syrians rather than Turkish citizens in need.



A makeshift refugee camp in Kilis at the border with Syria. One hundred families have lived here for three months, hoping to be admitted to an official camp.

The Government of Turkey has generously allowed Syrians to access a range of services. However, greater awareness of those services is needed among local officials as well as refugees. Humanitarian groups suggested that many local officials need guidance on how to include Syrians within the services they provide. Many Syrians have not been informed of the rights they have in Turkey, the services they can access, or the basics of procedures like registering a birth or marriage.

One positive step toward improving assistance to urban refugees has been the increased registration of a number of international NGOs in Turkey — a move which should increase the number of organizations with experience in identifying and assisting hidden vulnerable refugee populations in urban areas.

Access to employment and livelihood opportunities

Most Syrian refugees do not have permission to work in Jordan and Turkey, leaving them to choose between destitution for themselves and their families, working illegally at the risk of detention or deportation, making the dangerous journey back into Syria to sell property or harvest produce there, or sending their children to work since they are less likely to be arrested than adults.

The issue of work authorization for refugees poses several challenges for host governments. On the one hand, the decision to grant work authorization may face political resistance from citizens who fear increased competition for jobs. On the other hand, not granting work authorization increases refugees' dependence, including on the state, and may contribute to increased labor exploitation and the undermining of labor standards such as minimum wage provisions. Refugees may also have skills that can contribute to meeting skills gaps in the domestic labor market, and in many other countries refugees have been able to start businesses that have employed citizens from the host community.

Jordan

Jordanian law effectively prevents Syrian refugees from obtaining work permits by requiring that the employer pay a substantial fee as well as demonstrate that no Jordanian could do the job. A UNHCR report observed that for Syrian refugees, "obtaining a work permit is almost impossible."⁸⁸ Many Syrian refugees identified this as one of the biggest challenges they face with one telling us, "Syrians are forbidden from working. But what are we

Higher Education

Many refugees and humanitarian workers stressed the longer term impact of lack of access to higher education for young Syrians, and noted that if young refugees had access to higher education they could better contribute to Syria's future and to their host communities. A number of models exist that could be replicated or expanded upon. In Turkey, a limited number of placements in state universities are set aside for non-Turkish citizens, and Syrians are allowed to apply for these placements along with other foreigners. Successful applicants attend Turkish universities and their tuition is generously subsidized by the state. But in Jordan, Syrians are not allowed to attend state universities. A program operated by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Amman, in partnership with Regis University in the United States, allows Syrian refugees to participate in online university classes and earn up to 45 university credits, or about one year of university education. Another JRS program offers refugees in Amman 150 hours of advanced English language training by Georgetown University professors. A number of emergency scholarship funds have also been set up for Syrians to complete university education and graduate work. These include:

- the UNHCR's German-sponsored DAFI Scholarship Program, which, in 2013, gave over 40 Syrians in Jordan and Egypt a chance to pursue higher education;
- the International Institute for Education (IIE), which supported 100 Syrian students in 2013 through the emergency fund for scholars and through scholarships offered by a consortium of U.S. universities; and
- the Global Platform 4 Syrian Students, an international initiative launched by the former president of Portugal.

The United States should support the expansion of opportunities for more Syrian refugees to access higher education.

supposed to do—we are not getting aid either, how are we supposed to live?"

Some of those who have been able to work reported receiving lower wages than their Jordanian counterparts due to employers' awareness that Syrians have few means to challenge exploitation. Human Rights First spoke

with the father of a 16 year-old Syrian who works at a construction site in Amman from 8am to 8pm for 3 JD (about \$4.25) per day. A 17 year-old Syrian working in a bread factory said that his employer refused to pay him on at least three occasions, knowing there was nothing he could do about it.

Those working without permission face increasing risks of arrest and possible deportation. Previously, being caught by Jordanian authorities involved dismissal from employment, fines to the employer, and possible detention of the refugee. But refugees and aid workers told us that detention and even deportation have increased sharply in recent months. This reported escalation of detention has reverberated throughout refugee communities, affecting Syrian refugees, as well as Iraqis and others. A mother in Amman whose teenage sons support the family through unauthorized labor told us that, “when they leave for work in the morning, I’m afraid they won’t come back.”

Human Rights First interviewed refugees in Irbid who all confirmed hearing consistent reports over the past three months that Syrian refugees who were caught working illegally were deported back to Syria. Those we interviewed had spoken with women whose husbands or older sons were deported back to Syria. Human Rights First also spoke with a number of Syrians in Amman who had been arrested and detained during raids on their work sites and had been told they would be deported upon a third violation.

Turkey

Most Syrians in Turkey cannot obtain work authorization as they must have a residence permit in order to apply and a prospective employer must show that no Turkish citizen could be found for the job. Unable to support themselves, many rely on scarce aid, or make the dangerous trek to and from Syria, collecting goods to sell in Turkey or harvesting crops. Many work illegally in agriculture or construction, or perform other manual labor. Not speaking Turkish may also constitute a barrier to formal employment. To contribute to the family’s income, many children work, often harvesting olives for 25 TL per week (roughly \$12.50). A number of humanitarian groups told Human Rights First of their concern about possible labor abuse and exploitation of Syrians going unmonitored.

A number of humanitarian workers told Human Rights First that they had observed frustration among refugees over their inability to work or do something meaningful. One NGO has developed a program for women in one camp providing a range of skills training as well as activities to bring Turkish and Syrian women together. Another told Human Rights First of the risks of teenagers becoming involved in negative behavior such as the sale of drugs or being recruited to fight in Syria if they were unable to do meaningful work and help support their families.

Children

Many children, having fled horrific violence in Syria, continue to face dire conditions in the region. Some are survivors of torture while others are severely traumatized by having witnessed violence, often against family members. Many Syrian children are not attending school for reasons including lack of access to local schools, the need to work to contribute to family income, and inability to pay for school supplies and transportation. Syrian refugees described this lack of access to education as a looming national catastrophe for Syria.

Jordan

In Jordan, several aid workers working with traumatized children told us that they had assisted children as young as four, five, and six years old who had been kidnapped, detained for days and sometimes weeks, and tortured. Others lived through the bombing of their schools and saw their friends and teachers killed. Some have had their hair fall out due to the trauma.

Official Jordanian policy has generously allowed Syrian refugee children to attend schools and currently 77 Jordanian schools are now running on “double shifts” to make this possible.⁸⁹ Yet Syrian children face multiple impediments to accessing education such as inability to pay the mandatory 10 JD (about \$14) per child fee for books and supplies or other costs such as book bags and school uniforms. Some schools are located at a distance, and transportation costs are prohibitive for some refugees. As a result, many children are not in school. UNHCR and UNICEF statistics show that only 36% of the 292,946 registered Syrian refugee children of school-going age attend school, with 85,743 in Jordanian schools and 20,526 in camp schools.⁹⁰

In some cases, school administrators or principals have turned Syrian children away or imposed requirements that prevent them from attending school. One Syrian refugee told Human Rights First that his child was turned away from a school in Amman by a principal who simply said, "I'm not taking Syrians." One aid worker reported that five different families in one town had told him that the principal had turned their children away from school. Refugees reported that some schools demand children's school records from Syria and/or children's birth certificates certified by the Syrian Embassy in Amman, all requirements that would be impossible for most refugees. Over and above these impediments, refugees and aid workers reported that Syrian children have faced harassment and bullying at or on the way to school. One nine year-old Syrian boy told us that his English teacher sometimes grabs him by his hair and shakes him, calling him an idiot and a mule because, having never studied English before, he is far behind his Jordanian classmates. When his mother spoke with the teacher, he told her Syrians were taking up all of Jordan's resources and she should instead hire a private tutor for her son.

Even in Zaatari, attendance at school is low and many children are working. A survey conducted in April 2013 indicated that 78% of children in Zaatari between the ages of 6 and 17 are not in school. A major reason given by families and children for this was abuse and harassment in and on the way to school.⁹¹ In a recent incident, humanitarian workers told us that a Jordanian teacher in Zaatari beat one Syrian child so severely that he lost his vision.

With families struggling to afford basic necessities, and adults prohibited from working legally, many Syrian refugee boys and girls have turned to child labor. Several aid workers told Human Rights First that Syrian children engage in a range of daily wage labor, with boys working in grocery stores, agriculture, or construction and girls in agriculture and domestic work. As one aid worker told Human Rights First, "Families are dependent on this money to survive." Other aid workers pointed out that often refugee families feel that it is safer for their children to work because they are less likely than adults to be arrested.

The longer children are out of school, the less likely that they will re-enroll in school, or be able to catch up if they do. A Syrian refugee in Amman involved in educational programs for Syrian refugee children commented to Human Rights First: "I would estimate that over half of Syrian children [in Jordan] under the age of 15 years are not in school. Worse, many of these children have been out of school now for a full academic year. We have children who have been out of school for two full years. We see children who have been out of school for close to three years. If a child was last enrolled in school at the age of 7 and he is now 10 years old, a normal educational curriculum is not going to be suitable for him. He is going to need remedial programs."

Turkey

Outside of the camps, Syrian children have very little access to education. One humanitarian group told Human Rights First that only 13% of Syrian children in urban areas were in school. Although 40 schools staffed by Syrian volunteers have been established in southeast Turkey covering the Syrian curriculum, these are yet to be accredited and are not enough to accommodate the estimated 200,000 Syrian children of school-going age.

In order for their children to access Turkish schools, Syrian families need a residence permit (*an ikamet*). The residence permit requires a passport, an address, entry through a formal port of entry, and 200 TL. Because many Syrians entered Turkey without documents while others entered with passports that have since expired (and that they cannot renew), they cannot register their children in a Turkish school. Human Rights First met a Syrian mother who had registered for her *ikamet* in the southeast of the country and subsequently moved to Hatay province but had been unable to place her children in school due to the restrictions on Syrians living in Hatay and Şırnak. Instead, she had to place her child in a school in a Syrian camp but due to overcrowding and the religious nature of the school, her child is no longer in school.

Because of the pressure to contribute to family income, some Syrian children as young as six years old work as porters or with carpenters and blacksmiths or else sell things in the street.

Particularly Vulnerable Groups

Syrian refugees across the region face serious difficulties, but certain groups are particularly vulnerable, both in Turkey and Jordan. These refugees include survivors of torture, persons with disabilities who cannot access treatment, and single women supporting families. It is critical that humanitarian organizations take steps to ensure marginalized and underserved groups are included in their programs.

Single Syrian women in Jordan and Turkey, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, face particular challenges. Aid organizations reported that domestic violence is a serious challenge exacerbated by the anxiety of fleeing Syria and living in uncertainty without opportunities for legal employment. One refugee in Amman told Human Rights First that her husband had started beating her and the children shortly before they fled when the stress of being pursued by the Syrian government became too much for him. Other women have been traumatized by rape in Syria, and aid groups report that some face the threat of honor killings. Widows and other women heading households face particular challenges. They have no access to childcare, and therefore cannot work. They often fear harassment or verbal abuse when leaving their dwellings. The director of a Jordanian aid group for Syrians told us of single mothers whose landlords demanded sex when they could not pay the rent. A recent survey of Syrian refugee households in urban areas indicated that female headed households (which constituted 18.3% of households interviewed for the survey) were less likely to be registered with the UNHCR and more likely to include children working to support the family.⁹²

Humanitarian groups in Turkey have observed some women become involved in survival sex because of the desperate situation they are in outside the camps. They voiced concern that they have no idea what happens to these women when they come to the attention of the Turkish government — they simply disappear, likely either repatriated or deported.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) Syrian refugees may also face particular vulnerabilities both in Syria and in the countries to which they have fled.

A news report from Syria suggests that radical elements within some opposition groups are targeting LGBTI people for violence.⁹³ One aid worker in Jordan told Human Rights First that some Syrian refugees have been targeted for violence due to their sexual orientation, and that some LGBTI refugees have been referred to UNHCR for protection. Although a U.S.-based NGO used to have an office in Jordan and assist LGBTI refugees, currently there is little specific assistance available. In Turkey, the challenges facing LGBTI refugees, including harassment and sometimes violence, have been well-documented.⁹⁴ Few organizations had encountered LGBTI Syrian refugees — suggesting the need for further discreet outreach to inform LGBTI refugees and others who may be particularly vulnerable of where to turn to for assistance. The UNHCR has had one protection referral for a Syrian LGBTI refugee and based on the nature of the case has been able to make a referral for resettlement.

Adults and children with disabilities are also facing serious protection challenges. The following are examples of refugees, interviewed by Human Rights First in Amman, whose acute protection challenges are not being adequately addressed:

- *A man whose limbs were amputated is unable to secure medical care or accessible housing.* A man with limb ischemia, who has had all of his limbs amputated and fears losing more of his body as the cold sets in, has approached Jordanian hospitals for help, but has found no one familiar with his disease. He lives on the fourth floor of a dilapidated apartment building with no heater and no door. He has no wheelchair or other means of mobility.
- *Two hearing-impaired children are unable to find medical care or secure appropriate education.* A brother and sister, ages 11 and 12, who have profound speech and hearing impairments underwent successful surgery in Syria, but the long term success of the surgery depends on follow-up treatment every two months. Their parents have been unable to find a hospital that can perform the follow-up treatment. They have also been unable to find education for their children. The Ministry of Education suggested that they hire private tutors, which they cannot afford.

■ *Children with leprosy do not have the necessary treatment.* A family of ten in which six of the children have leprosy is struggling to find the necessary topical treatment for the disease. The clinics that the family has access to cannot provide the expensive topical treatments. Their mother purchases as much as she can with help from a Jordanian charity, but it is not enough to cover their basic needs. One of the children, an 11 year-old girl, also has cerebral atrophy. Her

mother wants her either to be in a school with other children with her condition or to be in first grade, but because of her age the school insisted on placing her in fourth grade. Her mother says she is having serious trouble engaging in her lessons.

It is important that humanitarian agencies are sensitized to the needs of particularly vulnerable groups and ensure that any outreach activities are designed in such a way as to be accessible to these groups.

Resettlement, Returns, and Planning Ahead

Refugees first began fleeing Syria in larger numbers in April 2012. As the regime intensified artillery shelling of major population centers, most notably Homs, Idlib, Aleppo, and Rural Damascus, the number of Syrian refugees in the region doubled from 25,000 to 50,000 over the course of the month. Now, almost three years into the crisis, it is time for the international community and refugee hosting states to start planning for the longer term.

While many Syrian refugees still hope to return home, many have also begun to realize that they will not be able to return in a matter of months as they once hoped. With the destruction of homes and infrastructure in Syria, along with the ongoing violence, many are now realizing that their displacement will be more prolonged and may last years. The international community, host governments in the region, and humanitarian organizations need to start exploring longer term options for displaced Syrian refugees.

As of November 2013, the United States has so far resettled very few Syrian refugees and has not yet scaled up for resettlement by increasing staffing at its Resettlement Support Centers in Amman and Istanbul. In the past fiscal year the United States resettled 69,930 refugees from different parts of the world but only 36 were from Syria. In 2012, 31 Syrians were resettled, and in 2011, 29. The United States has committed to resettling another 33,000 refugees from the Near East and South Asia⁹⁵ over the next fiscal year including Syrian refugees. In order to have an impact in supporting host countries through resettlement, the United States must significantly increase the number of Syrians it resettles. Resettlement is not yet an integral part of the response to the Syria crisis and it appears only a very few of the most vulnerable cases have been referred to resettlement states by UNHCR.

Many of the Syrian refugees interviewed by Human Rights First during our visit to Turkey and Jordan expressed a strong desire to return to their homes in Syria, and many at the same time expressed serious interest in resettlement to a third country given the realities that they are facing. Many of those we spoke to long to return home but realize they cannot safely do so because of likely dangers in Syria for years to come. At the same time, many feel that waiting out a prolonged war in Jordan or Turkey, without being allowed to work, is simply not an option. As one man said of his family's situation in Amman, "We are living like dead people."

- One Syrian refugee in Amman explained that he hoped to be resettled to a third country because he believes Assad has caused a sectarian conflict that will rage across Syria for years to come even if the regime were to fall tomorrow. He feels that foreign terrorists fighting for their own extremist ideologies have ruined Syria for his generation and he has no intention of returning as he does not believe it would be safe for him to do so.
- Another family explained to us that if it were possible they would like to go back to Syria, but in reality they had nothing left there. The father, Muhammad, described how he and many of his friends and acquaintances in the Syrian community in Amman had watched the news in eager anticipation when a strike on the Syrian regime appeared imminent. They thought this might end the war and allow them to go home. When the United States changed course, he said, "we lost hope of returning to Syria." Muhammad explained that he wanted to be resettled so that he could work and end his dependence on charity: "I don't want anyone to give me anything without receiving something in return. I want to work and earn money and purchase what my wife and children need."
- Another father of seven living in Amman stressed the humiliation of his life in Jordan. He believed it was unsafe to return to Syria but that life had no purpose in a country where he felt unwelcome and was not allowed to work. He described resettlement as "the only humanitarian thing to do for us."

Many other Syrian refugees in both Jordan and Turkey requested information about resettlement opportunities and expressed to us their deep frustration—with the United States, Europe, Jordan, Turkey, the UNHCR—that Syrians were not being resettled.

Humanitarian workers told us that they are increasingly being asked about resettlement, possibly due to media attention on the subject following the initiation of the German humanitarian admissions program. Humanitarian workers have also observed new efforts by Syrian refugees to adapt to their host country, such as beginning to learn Turkish, due to the increasing realization that it will not be possible to go home any time soon.

Human Rights First met a number of Syrian refugees in Amman whose circumstances put them at particular risk, illustrating that there are indeed Syrian refugees for whom resettlement could very well be the most appropriate durable solution:

- Manal⁴ is one of the many Syrian refugee women who is a single head of her family's household. She is caring for eight children and her elderly mother-in-law. Six of her children have leprosy and she is unable to access appropriate care for them through the hospital and clinics to which UNHCR registration grants access. Paying for their medicine out of pocket in a situation where she cannot work and receives no stable cash assistance is quickly becoming impossible.
- Ahmad, who was forced to flee Syria after being arrested and imprisoned twice and subjected to extreme violence (including in front of his young children) by Syrian security services for his years of peaceful activism, expressed a common focus among Syrian refugees on the need for political change in Syria: "We as refugees are symptoms of the problem—we would hope for a solution to its roots." In addition to his personal history of persecution, Ahmad's extended family has suffered terribly at the hands of government forces. Late last year, Syrian security came to the country home where many members of the family were then staying and arrested

all the able-bodied men. One of his brothers, a married father of three who was taken at that time, has not been heard from since and is a victim of enforced disappearance. The young daughter of another brother was wounded by gunfire at a checkpoint. One of his nephews, a 16-year-old boy, was killed last August; he had gone into an area under attack from government forces to try to help other people, and was killed by a missile. A friend and cousin also known for his peaceful activism died in the smoke from an explosion. Ahmad dreams of return to Syria, but until that becomes possible, he does not see Jordan as a durable solution, as he lives in a state of permanent insecurity due to his inability to work legally, finds Jordan to be a difficult environment for Syrian human rights activists, and is deeply concerned that his school-age son feels unwelcome and alienated at the school where his father with great difficulty succeeded in enrolling him.

- Luqa⁵ is an Orthodox Christian living alone in Amman with a sense of isolation from his host community and from other Syrians. Though Luqa was content with life as a Christian in Syria before the war, he, like many Syrian Christians, now feels threatened by growing numbers of opposition supporters who he believes consider all Christians to be supporters of Assad. He also fears violent retaliation by those loyal to the regime for his refusal to fight in Assad's army.
- Anas⁶, a Syrian man with limb ischemia, has had all of his limbs amputated and fears losing more of his body as winter approaches. He has sought help at Jordanian hospitals, but says that the doctors he has spoken to do not recognize the name of his disease. He lives on the fourth floor of a dilapidated apartment building with no heater and no door. Anas and his wife and their four children receive no cash assistance and have no income. A Saudi donor has paid for the rent on their apartment, but they believe it is coming to an end within a month and they do not know where they will live at that point.

⁴ Name changed to protect identity.

⁵ Name changed to protect identity.

⁶ Name changed to protect identity.

Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan have all expressed an interest in increased resettlement of Syrian refugees—although some fear that a token small resettlement effort would hardly make an impact and might even attract more refugees to their countries. Similarly, several organizations pointed out the need for messaging around resettlement to be carefully planned so as not to create false expectations. A Turkish government official told us that if resettlement countries would commit to receiving a sizeable number of refugees then Turkey would appreciate this as a demonstration of actual support rather than a mere token gesture. When asked what he considered sizeable, he reminded us that Turkey was hosting approximately 700,000 refugees and said, “You do the math.”

UNHCR has encouraged states outside the region to increase the numbers of refugees they receive either through resettlement or humanitarian admission to support the primary host countries in the region. In remarks to states at the High Level Segment on Syrian refugees in early October, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres stated “It is not only financial, economic, and technical support to these States which is needed... It also includes receiving through resettlement, humanitarian admission, family reunification, or similar mechanisms, refugees who are today in the neighboring countries but who can find a solution outside the region.”⁹⁶

UNHCR announced in June that it would seek 2,000 resettlement places for some of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees,⁹⁷ including women and girls at risk, survivors of violence and/or torture, vulnerable older persons, LGBTI refugees at risk, persons with serious medical needs or disabilities, as well as those facing serious risks to their safety. UNHCR has subsequently proposed that countries admit up to 30,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2014 either through resettlement, humanitarian admissions, or other means, including family reunification. So far 17 countries have made commitments amounting to just over 10,000 places for humanitarian admission or resettlement. The largest commitment of resettlement places is 1,000 places by Norway.

In order to meet this goal UNHCR needs to scale up its own capacity to identify those in need of resettlement, screen the applications, and make submissions to resettlement countries. UNHCR has recently increased its

refugee status determination and resettlement capacity in Jordan and Lebanon and is in the process of doing so in Turkey. UNHCR Jordan has begun very limited resettlement of protection cases for individuals whose protection could not be assured in Jordan. Further resettlement capacity needs are outlined in the soon-to-be-launched Regional Response Plan 6. The United States and other donors should ensure that needs related to resettlement capacity are met.

Identifying the most vulnerable also requires good registration data. At present, registration in Turkey does not include sufficient protection-related information to provide a clear picture of who is most in need. The United States and other donors should encourage Turkey to include more protection information in registration as this will help inform decisions on who is most in need of resettlement. Humanitarian workers suggested increased training of NGOs, who are in close contact with refugees and know their needs and circumstances, to identify the most vulnerable who could benefit from resettlement.

Delays and Impediments to U.S. Resettlement

A major obstacle that threatens to delay and impede the resettlement of Syrians to the United States is the overly broad inadmissibility provisions under U.S. immigration law intended to bar those who engaged in terrorist activity. As detailed in two reports issued by Human Rights First, for a number of years now, overbroad definitions and interpretations of the terms “terrorist organization” and “terrorist activity” in U.S. immigration law have ensnared people with no real connection to terrorism.⁹⁸ In a number of interviews throughout the region questions and concerns were raised about the ability to resettle to the United States refugees who have not engaged in or supported any wrongdoing, yet could get swept up by the U.S. immigration law’s inadmissibility provisions. Currently, these definitions are being applied to anyone who at any time used armed force as a non-state actor or gave support to those who did. In the past, these provisions have been used to exclude Iraqi refugees who supported the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, Sudanese who fought against the armed forces of President Omar Al-Bashir, and Eritreans who fought for independence from Ethiopia. As a

coalition of Jewish groups noted in a letter to President Bush in 2006, “Shockingly, under today’s laws, Jews who bravely resisted and survived Nazi terror would be excluded from refuge in the United States. Under current policy, the Warsaw ghetto uprising would be considered a ‘terrorist activity’ because it involved the use of weapons against persons or property for reasons other than ‘mere personal monetary gain.’”⁹⁹

In the Syrian context, these statutory provisions threaten to exclude from refugee protection anyone who fought with any armed opposition group in Syria (regardless of whether or not the individual applicant was involved in any violations of international humanitarian law or other crimes), anyone who provided “material support” to any opposition force or opposition fighter, anyone who solicited funds or members for such a force, and even anyone whose *spouse or parent* is found to have done any of these things. While anyone who bears responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity, or the persecution of other people should be excluded from refugee protection, and is in fact excludable under other provisions of U.S. immigration law, the sweeping nature of the law’s “terrorism”-related provisions would affect people who have engaged in no wrongdoing and pose no threat to the United States.

Ironically, these “terrorism bars” would not apply to any of the actions of the armed forces of the Assad regime, because the U.S. government considers these statutory definitions to concern only non-state actors. The result is that unless swift action is taken to correct this problem, these laws will exclude from refugee protection anyone who assisted opposition groups, even those whose military efforts the U.S. government supports, against a regime it has repeatedly condemned.

More than five years ago, Congress, in a bipartisan effort led by Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Jon Kyl (R-AZ), amended the law to expand the administration’s discretionary authority to exempt persons with no actual connection to terrorism from the effects of these statutory definitions. However, to date, the relevant government agencies have failed to establish workable procedures to implement that authority effectively, and have continued the abuses that legislation was supposed to end. As efforts to address this problem require engagement by multiple

agencies, both the Bush administration and the Obama administration have failed to address this issue in a timely manner, leaving thousands of refugees and their families in limbo. The United States has not yet developed any specific exemptions or policies for addressing the impact of these inadmissibility provisions on resettlement or asylum for Syrian refugees. In the past, the U.S. government’s approach to such situations has been reactive: it has waited until it is presented with actual cases in need of exemptions, and has then taken years to issue them. Given its past practices, concerns abound that the relevant U.S. agencies — the Departments of Homeland Security, State, and Justice (DHS, DOS, and DOJ) — will allow Syrian refugee cases to sit and wait for years before developing the necessary exemptions and clarifications.¹⁰⁰

Overbroad interpretation of the law’s already broad terms compounds the problem: the federal agencies involved in the adjudication of refugee and other immigration cases currently treat virtually *any* assistance to an armed group—of any type and in any amount—as “material support.” This notion has been applied to the most minimal of donations to rebel groups, to ordinary commercial transactions with armed groups or their members, and to assistance that has nothing to do with the furtherance of violent acts, e.g. donations of medical supplies. Many Syrian refugees currently seeking protection abroad were formerly resident in areas of Syria where opposition forces were present or in control, and whose civilian inhabitants were in many cases targeted for overwhelming violence by Syrian government forces. While not all of these ties would make refugees inadmissible under U.S. laws, those laws as currently interpreted and applied would exclude, for example:

- A family who, while their residential neighborhood was being bombed by government forces, sheltered a wounded opposition fighter in their home;
- A boy who, after his father was killed, was recruited by opposition forces and after serving with them for a time, left the conflict to join his mother and younger siblings in a neighboring country;
- A refugee who gave money to members of an opposition group to assist her and her children in

reaching the border to seek safety in a neighboring country; and

- Even the owner of a food stand in a neighborhood under opposition control from whom opposition fighters bought falafel sandwiches.

Some of the legal interpretations at issue here (specifically the treatment of minimal contributions and “routine commercial transactions” as “material support” have been under review by the DHS Office of General Counsel for over two years now. This review needs to be completed. While a lasting solution to the unintended consequences of the immigration law’s “terrorism” bars will require amendment of the underlying statutory definitions so that these focus on actual terrorists, in the interim, the U.S. government should act now to allow exemptions to be issued on a case-by-case basis to anyone who voluntarily provided non-violent assistance to a Syrian armed opposition group. (By statute, such exemptions would not be available to any armed group active in Syria that the United States has designated or listed as a terrorist organization, e.g. the Nusra Front.) Generally applicable exemptions already exist for anyone who provided “material support” to any armed group under duress; it should be noted that a great many Syrian refugees who are found to be inadmissible for contributions or assistance to armed groups will have done so under circumstances that would fall under the analogous legal concept of necessity, and that the existing exemption covering cases of duress could be expanded to resolve such cases. While current combatants will not be eligible for refugee protection, provision should be made for former combatants who otherwise meet the refugee definition and are not subject to any other bars and (1) were children at the time or (2) did not participate in, or knowingly provide material support to, activities that targeted noncombatants or U.S. interests. Such exemptions would be available only to applicants who have passed all relevant security and background checks and established that they pose no danger to the safety or security of the United States.

Human Rights First’s interviews in the region also identified other impediments to resettlement for Syrian refugees at risk. A number of stakeholders expressed concern about the plight of Iraqi refugees who were stranded in Syria but have already been interviewed by

USCIS, as well as other refugees who are facing significant risks that would warrant expedited resettlement in order to assure their protection. Stakeholders highlighted the need to reduce delays such as those due to background security checks that routinely take around five months so that those in the resettlement pipeline are not exposed to danger for lengthy periods. It was suggested that DHS should increase the number of interagency checks (IACs) that can be expedited so that expedites for more than 40 individuals can be requested if necessary each week. Steps are also needed to reduce the general processing time for IACs. These security checks can take months, and sometimes a refugee might wait as long as two years for a final decision. In some cases, refugees wait for extended periods only to receive a rejection due to security checks. Refugees are often frustrated by the lack of information provided to them about the timeline for decision-making in their resettlement requests. These refugees should be given a clear response in a timely manner so that they can plan their lives accordingly. In addition, when refugees have their resettlement application denied, they are often not informed of the reasons for the denial with a level of specificity that would allow them to file a meaningful request for review.

Approximately 4,000 Iraqis, many of whom worked with U.S. troops and NGOs during the war, are stuck in Syria even though they are already in the “pipeline” for resettlement to the United States. 1,500 have been approved and are still awaiting departure. Thousands more are awaiting USCIS interviews before they can be approved for resettlement to the United States. The U.S. Embassy in Damascus is closed and USCIS staff are not traveling to Syria. Jordan has not allowed these refugees to travel to Jordan for USCIS interviews. Those able to reach Iraq are continuing the resettlement process there, but for many the journey from their location within Syria to the border with Iraq is fraught with danger, as is travel within Iraq where they still face the same threats of persecution that precipitated their initial flight. There are few means available to assist this group. Some could be evacuated to an Emergency Transit Facility — one of the facilities run in partnership with UNHCR in Romania, Slovakia, and the Philippines where refugees can be evacuated to and accommodated while completing

resettlement processing — and interviewed there, while others are being resubmitted to other resettlement countries. While U.S. immigration authorities currently take the position that they cannot conduct resettlement interviews by video-conferencing, they could adjust the relevant regulatory language in order to allow for video-conferencing in these kinds of emergency cases and work with the UNHCR and NGO partners to make video-conferencing logistically possible.

Returns

Although some returns to Syria are taking place, Human Rights First did not hear evidence of people returning due to a perception that it was now safe to do so. Instead, we heard from only a few of the refugees we spoke with that they were considering returning to Syria because their lives had become so desperate in Jordan. A mother of two children with profound hearing and speaking impairments spoke of how she and her husband had sold their jewelry and watches and become indebted to friends in order to move out of a cold, leaky, roach-infested underground room: “If things continue like this, I might go back to Syria. We are in debt. I’ve never borrowed in my life, never sold personal items in my life.” She described how life in Syria, even amid the war, sometimes produced less anxiety than her transient life in Jordan: “If you die in a bombing raid, that’s it, you’re done. Here, you have to worry every single day about where you will find food, how you will buy medicine...”

Media reports quote Jordanian officials as saying 100,000 Syrians have returned to the country since the outbreak of the crisis.¹⁰¹ People seem to be returning to Syria for different reasons. Human Rights First spoke to refugees who had family members return home to request leave from a job, while others returned to collect items or harvest

crops. Others told us they had returned home to attend a funeral or to help other family members escape Syria. Humanitarian workers told us of men who announced they were returning to fight while others said they were returning to collect family members. Human Rights First did not hear accounts of people returning with the intention of remaining in Syria due to perceptions of it now being safe.

Very little preparation has begun at this stage for eventual large scale returns. While it may be quite some time before large scale returns occur, they can in some cases happen quickly, so the international community should take steps to assure they are prepared. Estimates suggest at least \$80 billion worth of damage to the Syrian economy has been caused by the crisis¹⁰² and it may take more time for return to become economically viable once the conflict is over. In preparation for returns at a later stage, given the devastation within Syria, and the experiences of other return movements, it is clear that major issues relating to return will include housing, land and property, as well as documentation. The violence has resulted in significant displacement with many people being displaced multiple times internally and over 2.2 million having registered as refugees outside the country. Once people start returning to their homes there may be disputes with others who have since occupied their property. During displacement, families may have lost documentation including documents proving home ownership, which may hamper their efforts to return to their homes. In some cases, displaced widows and orphaned children may be at particular risk of being disinherited of their land or houses due to the loss of the primary income earner to whom the property or land title was attached.¹⁰³ Anticipating and planning for these challenges needs to start now to support those for whom it may be safe to return.

Recommendations

In order to lead in protecting and supporting refugees from Syria, and safeguarding regional stability, the United States should:

1. Press parties to the conflict to participate in peace talks and provide humanitarian access for those in critical need of assistance in Syria:

- The United States should continue to encourage all parties to the conflict to participate in the Geneva II peace talks;
- The United States should continue to press for a U.N. Security Council resolution allowing for cross border delivery of aid and press parties to the conflict to agree to ceasefires to allow for delivery of desperately needed assistance;
- USAID and the State Department should encourage strengthened coordination and assistance by aid groups and local NGOs for displaced Syrians living in IDP camps along the Turkish border.

2. Champion protection for those fleeing persecution and conflict:

- **Press states to lift barriers to protection:** U.S. officials at the highest levels including President Obama and Secretary Kerry as well as Members of Congress should urge all states to end any bans, prohibitions, closures, entry quotas, and restrictions that are inconsistent with international human rights and refugee protection standards — including bans and restrictions that are preventing Iraqis and Palestinians from crossing borders in search of protection. While statements committing to keep borders open to refugees should be warmly welcomed, the United States should also encourage border practices that are consistent with international human rights and refugee protection law. U.S. officials should also urge states to provide protection for Palestinian

refugees from Syria and not deny protection to mixed families of Syrian and Palestinian refugees.

- **Compile weekly reports on the border situation:** U.S. Embassies should compile weekly reports on the ability of refugees to cross from Syria based on information from Jordanian and Turkish government counterparts, humanitarian partners and U.S. government sources, including information on the numbers denied entry and the reasons they were turned away. U.S. officials should raise reports of restrictions, bans, closures, delays, and denials of entry with Jordanian and Turkish government counterparts and intervene to support protection in individual cases when necessary.
- **Step up support to refugee-hosting states:** The United States should step up its support and encourage other states to increase support for refugee-hosting states through development assistance, bilateral aid, and increased funding of U.N. humanitarian appeals. Senior U.S. officials should make clear to states benefiting from U.S. assistance that the United States expects all refugees — regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, or other similar characteristic — to be allowed to cross borders to access protection. Any individuals who present legitimate risks can and should be excluded from protection after a fair and individualized assessment conducted in accordance with international standards.
- **Support meaningful border monitoring by UNHCR and human rights monitors:** The United States should encourage and support the expansion of human rights and refugee protection monitoring at borders and at airports by UNHCR and independent human rights monitors. This should include monitoring inside the facilities where decisions over whether to admit or deny entry take place. PRM should encourage UNHCR to include questions on access at the border in its registration for new arrivals in Jordan and in its monitoring in the camps in Turkey, and should encourage UNHCR to raise restrictions on access directly with refugee-hosting states as well as publicly.

- **Support protection training and capacity at borders:** The United States should work with the European Union and other states to provide support to host governments to implement the training and procedures necessary to ensure that refugees are not turned away at borders, and that individuals are only denied access to protection after a fair and individualized assessment conducted in accordance with international human rights and refugee protection standards. The United States should also include a component on protection of refugees in its existing training programs with border officials.
- 3. Step up support for protection of refugees, addressing acute needs outside camps:**
- **Strengthen support for refugees outside camps:** The United States should urge refugee-hosting states, UNHCR, and other actors to implement additional measures to address the acute needs of refugees living outside of camps in Jordan, Turkey, and throughout the region, including shelter needs. PRM should issue further Requests for Proposals for urban refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey prioritizing cash assistance, shelter support, and educational support as well as protection monitoring and advocacy. Specific effort should be made to encourage partners to ensure their programs are inclusive and accessible to marginalized and underserved groups, including persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) refugees. The U.S. Embassy in Turkey should also encourage the Government of Turkey to develop protection-sensitive registration (including information on refugees' particular needs and vulnerabilities) in urban areas to inform decisions on how to assist the most vulnerable. Instead of only visiting refugee camps in Turkey, congressional delegations and other high level visitors should request to visit refugees in urban areas as this is where the need is greatest.
 - **Encourage refugee-hosting states — including Jordan and Turkey — to make work authorization more accessible for Syrian refugees** as a means of reducing refugees' dependence on aid and allowing them to contribute to the economy as well as retain skills for when return to Syria is possible. Encourage a skills audit of Syrian refugees to help determine how Syrian skills could help fill skills shortages in Jordan and Turkey.
 - **Support host countries with bilateral aid to assist with costs of hosting refugees:** The United States should increase support to Jordan with bilateral aid to assist with the costs of hosting refugees and should work with other donors to provide bilateral aid to Turkey to contribute towards Turkey's costs in assisting refugees.
 - **Increase support for host communities through development aid:** U.S. Embassies, USAID, and the State Department should continue to work with host governments and development actors to identify ways to provide support for host communities in a manner that demonstrates to host communities the potential benefits of hosting refugees. These communities have an array of acute infrastructure needs that may be impacted by refugees, including education and medical care (primary, secondary, and tertiary).
 - **Improve access to education:** Work with the Government of Jordan and partners in Jordan to address bullying in schools, discrimination by school principals, and other obstacles preventing Syrian children from accessing education. Encourage Turkey to waive the residence permit requirements necessary to enroll Syrian children in Turkish schools, provide accreditation for schools teaching the Syrian curriculum, and support efforts to expand these schools, including by providing support for books and school supplies. The United States should invest in Syria's future by supporting and expanding initiatives aimed at helping some young Syrians access higher education.
 - **Speak out against detention of refugees:** The U.S. should request regular updates from UNHCR and NGO partners regarding detention of Syrian, Iraqi, Somali, and Sudanese refugees and raise concerns with host governments where increases are noted.
- 4. Prepare for the longer term by laying groundwork for eventual returns and launching a meaningful resettlement initiative:**

■ **Lay groundwork for return:** The United States should support all efforts to make sure returns are voluntary and informed, and invest in programs aimed at preparing and laying groundwork for eventual return movements, including preparation for addressing issues of land, property rights, documentation, and reconstruction.

■ **Launch a Meaningful Resettlement Initiative:** The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (PRM and DHS) – with support and leadership from the White House and security vetting agencies — should increase resettlement for vulnerable Syrian refugees facing protection challenges — including victims of torture, (LGBTI) persons facing risks, women at risk, and those facing acute security threats — and should take steps to launch a more significant resettlement effort that will demonstrate real burden-sharing to Jordan, Turkey, and other refugee-hosting states in the region. This initiative should aim to resettle at least 15,000 Syrian refugees a year from the region including Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey, depending on the evolving needs and length of the crisis. Key steps include:

- PRM should provide support to help increase UNHCR’s refugee status determination and resettlement capacity;
- PRM should increase staff capacity in U.S. Resettlement Support Centers;
- DHS should increase its capacity to conduct circuit rides to the region to interview refugees slated for potential resettlement;
- DHS should work with security vetting agencies to increase the number of security checks that can be expedited in order to better expedite resettlement for refugees facing significant risks; and
- Security vetting agencies and the White House should ensure sufficient staffing for security background checks.

■ **Proactively address unintended and unjust impediments to resettlement:**

- DHS, DOS, and DOJ should act now to implement their discretionary authority to grant exemptions from provisions of U.S. immigration law that treat any

rebellion against any established government as “terrorist activity” and any assistance to such a rebellion as “material support” to terrorism.

Specifically, DHS, in consultation with DOS and DOJ, should act now to:

- Allow exemptions to be issued on a case-by-case basis to anyone who voluntarily provided non-violent assistance to a Syrian armed opposition group. Such exemptions would only be available to applicants who have passed all applicable security and background checks, have established that they meet the refugee definition and are not subject to any other bars, and did not knowingly support activities that targeted noncombatants or U.S. interests; such exemptions are unavailable by statute to anyone who provided material support to a group that is designated or listed as a terrorist organization by the U.S. government.
- Allow exemptions to be granted on a case-by-case basis to former combatants who otherwise meet the refugee definition and are not subject to any other bars, have passed all applicable security and background checks, establish that they pose no threat to the safety or security of the United States, and (1) were children at the time or (2) did not participate in, or knowingly provide material support to, activities that targeted noncombatants or U.S. interests.
- DHS should also complete a long-pending review of its legal interpretation of the term “material support.” The current application of the “material support” bar to minimal donations and to routine commercial transactions with members of armed groups is greatly inflating the number of cases unjustly affected by this provision of the immigration law.

■ **Continue and improve resettlement of Iraqi and other refugees:** The United States should continue to resettle Iraqi refugees and find ways to conduct USCIS interviews with Iraqis trapped in Syria who are waiting to be resettled to the United States. Bringing these refugees to safety should be a higher priority for U.S.

officials. Options that should be pressed include evacuation and safe passage to Jordan and should also include the use of video-conferencing. The United States has a special responsibility to address the plight of this population. Moreover, continued resettlement of Iraqi refugees — as well as resettlement of Somali,

Sudanese, and other refugees — will demonstrate U.S. commitment to helping host refugees from the region. DHS should also provide more detailed information to refugees awaiting resettlement on the reasons for delays in the adjudication of their applications as well as reasons for denials.

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333 Seventh Avenue
13th Floor
New York, NY 10001

Tel.: 212.845.5200
Fax: 212.845.5299

humanrightsfirst.org

805 15th Street, N.W.
Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005

Tel: 202.547.5692
Fax: 202.543.5999