

Remember

Those in Bonds – Hebrews 13:3

Jordan Background Briefing

“I am now a refugee, living the life of a refugee. Once upon a time, though, I was not a refugee. I had a house, a village, a community and a life. Before anyone remembers that I’m a refugee now, they should remember this. That once, before 2003, my situation was just like theirs is now...”

The refugee problem in the Middle East

Jordan is a country in the heart of the Middle East. It is central, and because of this plays a big part in dealing with the region’s problems. It is surrounded by countries that are either in constant war with each other or are fighting civil wars. Because Jordan is attempting to maintain neutrality in these struggles, it has by default become a safe haven for refugees fleeing their own countries.

Jordan began accepting refugees as early as 1948 after the war in Israel. Israel and Iraq are the two countries from which most of the refugees come. Today, more than 70% of the Palestinian population world wide lives in Jordan. Jordan has allowed them to set up refugee camps located throughout the country. These camps range from all sizes. The largest is Baqa’a, with an estimated ninety thousand refugees occupying the camp!¹

¹ Listed below are some facts about the conditions of the camps and what they have to offer. This is based out of the total camps combined, which is a total of three hundred thirty-one thousand and six individuals.

CAMP	NUMBER OF REGISTERED REFUGEES
Baqa'a	90,575
Amman New Camp	50,609
Marka	44,198
Jabal el-Hussein	29,520
Irbid	24,758
Husn	21,441
Zarqa	18,335
Souf	19,429
Jerash	23,034
Talbieh	6,107

<http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/jordan.html>

Since the Iraq war in February, 2003, several million Iraqis have been displaced from their homes. In theory, there are three options for those fleeing Iraq: repatriation, local integration in the region, and resettlement to third countries.² The refugees that fled to neighboring countries are causing severe economical stress on the countries, and are being denied entry. Iraqis now account for more than 10 percent of the total population of Jordan. Between the Iraqi refugees and a long-standing population of Palestinians, Jordan now hosts the largest number of refugees, per capita, of any country on earth.³

Camps located throughout Jordan contain many refugees. While most of these are for Palestinian refugees, there are undoubtedly Iraqi refugees in these camps as well.

Iraqi Refugees in Jordan

It is estimated that around 2.25 million Iraqis have fled the country and have gone over into Syria and Jordan. Of these there are around 700,000 Iraqi refugees dispersed throughout Jordan, but in Jordan and Syria combined 2.25 million refugees.⁴

After crossing from Iraq to Jordan through the windy and inhospitable frontier post of Al-Karama, Timor Din finally felt safe. A year ago, death threats (he was doubly targeted as an engineer and as a Christian) drove him to leave his house in Baghdad. From the border he drove 220 miles across the desert reaching the city of Amman, Jordan's capital. Once a teacher at Baghdad University, he now crafts religious paintings to make ends meet, hoping to start a new life somewhere else.⁵

TV images train us to recognize refugees: tent cities, plastic sheeting, food and water distribution, doctors in emergency field clinics, and so forth.

With Iraqis in Jordan, "urban caseload," in the humanitarian jargon, there is no such footage. So how would one know that this charming man in an artist's atelier on King Talal Street was a recent refugee from the civil war in Iraq? The newcomers look just like the host population, but their accents give them away. Perhaps this is why the growing exodus of Iraqis was ignored for almost a year.⁶

² "With Iraqi Refugees in Jordan"

[Http://www.slate.com/id/2159359/](http://www.slate.com/id/2159359/)

³ "Iraqi Refugees in Jordan"

[Http://www.humanrightsfirst.info/pdf/irp-jordan-syria.pdf](http://www.humanrightsfirst.info/pdf/irp-jordan-syria.pdf)

⁴ Iraqi Refugees in Jordan and Syria - Quick facts

Total estimated number of Iraqi refugees in both countries	2.25 million
*Who are Sunni	45%
*Who are Shiite	25%
*Who are Christian	20%
*Who are Sabians	5%
*Who originate from Baghdad	50%

http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/asylum/lifeline/pages.asp?country=iq&id=8&misc1=facts_country

⁵ "With Iraqi Refugees in Jordan."

<http://www.slate.com/id/2159359/>

⁶ *Ibid.*

Robert Breen, the head of UNHCR in Amman, says that there is nothing sudden in the flight—it is a "compounded emergency," that is, an emergency that has grown steadily over the last year. But it is an emergency all the same.

Jordan was the first neighboring country to open its borders to refugees from Iraq for humanitarian reasons. In past the Jordanian government has been more than willing to help, but due to the major influx of refugees the government has changed the way they feel. Once an open inviting nation they are now adamant that refugees will not be allowed to stay permanently.

Today, Jordan recognizes few Iraqi refugees as actual refugees; rather they are considered "guests". This new term results in their stay being less permanent, as well as denying the same rights given to refugees. Though Jordanian authorities agreed to provide temporary shelter for only a total of three months, it has over time stretched into nearly four years.⁷

For the few that become refugees there is a strict criterion to enter Jordan. Iraqi refugees have to be more than 40 years old or younger than 20, have enough money to support themselves inside the kingdom and have a new passport. Many of those fleeing are doctors, lawyers, and engineers, all professionals looking for work or for visas to move on to other countries.

"It does stretch the country. It is a strain on our natural resources," said Nasser Judeh, a Jordanian government spokesman. "Our economy is already strained. We have problems with unemployment." He also voiced concern about the possibility of letting in the wrong people resulting in the violence from Iraq spilling over inside the kingdom.⁸

Things that are being done to help the Iraqi Refugees

There are a variety of organizations at work in Jordan presently. Some have been started since the Iraqi war, and some have been in Jordan since the Palestinian refugees first started to come. These organizations are much needed help to both the Iraqi and Palestinian refugees in constant need.

One such organization is *Caritas Jordan*. They are a confederation of 162 Catholic relief, development and social service organizations. They have been involved in the Iraqi refugee plight since 2002. Currently, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and its partners are implementing programs in Jordan providing access to health services, education and humanitarian assistance to Iraqi refugees. They are trying to setup an office in Amman as well to expand their reach in the region.⁹

⁷ "Feelings from the Jordanian Government"
<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=64370>

⁸ "Map of Iraqi Flight"
<http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/meast/03/06/iraq.refugees/index.html>

⁹ "Caritas Jordan"
http://www.icmc.net/e/programmes_operations/present_programmes/jordan.htm

Christian Aid Missions is another organization that is working with the Iraqi refugees. Their mission statement is: “Seek to establish a witness for our Lord Jesus among unreached people groups, by assisting highly effective native missionaries in poorer countries who already know the languages and culture and are getting the job done for less cost.”

The Jordan Red Crescent is the Middle East branch of the Red Cross, providing relief to refugees by setting up camps, providing food and shelter. The Jordan Red Crescent also provides available medical clinics for both refugees as well as people who have trouble becoming refugees to protect against outbreaks.

Other foreign governments have been getting involved including the United States, Japan, and New Zealand. Some of these countries are doing a great job in offering aid, financial support and helping to move the Iraqi refugees to safer places. This task is often very hard because of all the red tape and politics that have to go on when dealing in these situations.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been operating in the country since October 1991, initially to deal with the influx of asylum seekers seeking refuge following the Gulf war (Iraqis being the overwhelming majority). Jordan has made UNHCR’s operations conditional on the fact that refugees are resettled in a third country within six months of their recognition, thereby rejecting the principle of local integration.

Asylum seekers are provided with a registration card and the Jordanian authorities grant them temporary protection as normal aliens with a valid residence permit. *Neither asylum seekers nor refugees are entitled to work permits or any public aid from Jordan.* UNHCR screens asylum seekers, provides recognized refugees with monthly assistance, education and medical care (subcontracting the Jordanian Red Crescent Society) until they are resettled, and deals with countries that have resettlement quotas. The organization has experienced recent budget cuts making it unable to provide part of its social services anymore.¹⁰

The UN is trying to return refugees or relocate them to a safer location but it is met with little success.¹¹ Money is needed to assist such a large number of refugees. Last month, UNHCR appealed for \$60 million for the coming year (twice the amount for 2006) to help hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable Iraqis displaced internally and externally.¹² There are too many people and not enough money to relocate a large amount. Many of the refugees have thereby been left trapped in Jordan. One young man

¹⁰ “UNHCR and Their Actions in Jordan”
<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/RESEARCH/3d57aa757.pdf>

¹¹ “Iraqi Refugee Problem Starts Drawing Response,”
http://select.nytimes.com/ihl/2007/04/20/world/IHT-20globalist.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

¹² “With Iraqi Refugees in Jordan.”
<http://www.slate.com/id/2159359/>

compared not being able to become a Jordanian citizen and lodging in the country to being no better than prison.

Remember's Work in Jordan

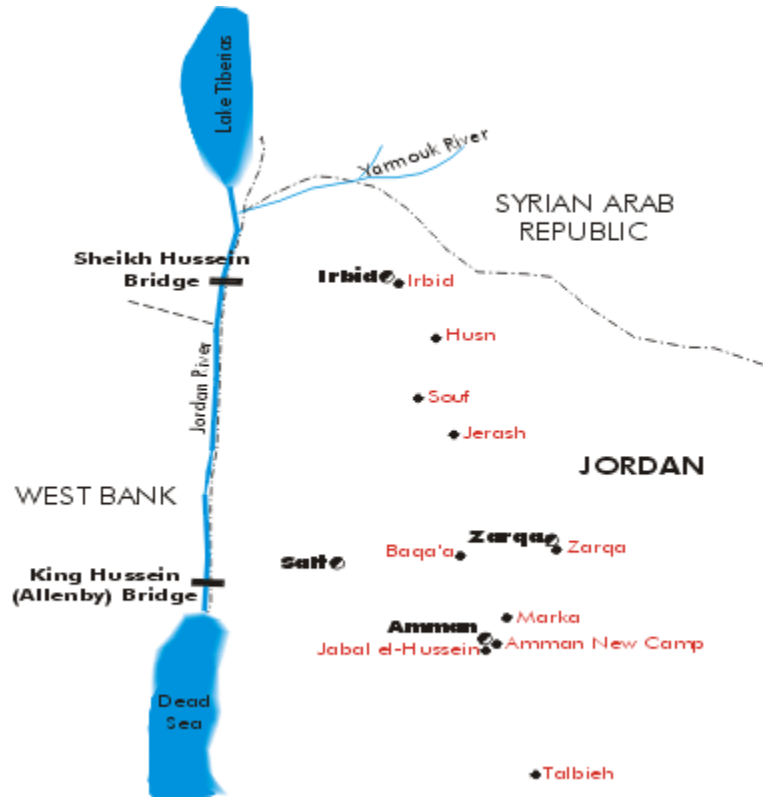
Remember will be going to Jordan to offer medical aid, setting up clinics in Amman and the outlying cities. We will be taking a team of five individuals and will be there approximately ten days.

When we arrive we will be working with New Testament Baptist Church of Amman, using their contacts to provide ministry to refugees through the local church.

We will primarily work with the Christian Iraqi refugees that have fled their country, their homes and their positions. We will be visiting some of the refugee camps and assessing the need there. Camera footage will be a priority as we seek to raise awareness about the crisis that is going on in these poverty-riddled areas. Along with providing the short medical clinic we will be taking supplies to aid in the future.

For the refugees in Jordan the need is. We as Christians have a responsibility to help them. The Bible states this responsibility clearly when it says, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."-*Hebrews 13:3*. We have a calling to serve the body of Christ and help those in need, "especially unto them who are of the household of faith."-*Galatians 6:10*

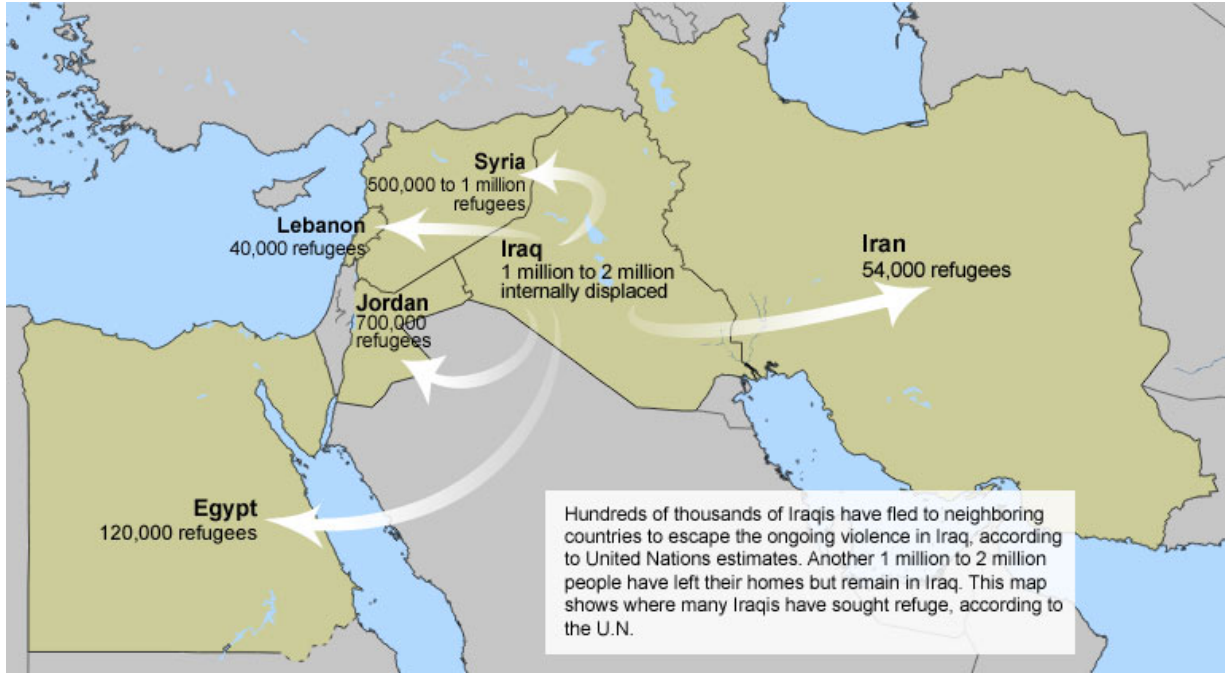
Appendix A – Refugee Camps



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¹³ “Maps and Layouts of Refugee Camps”
<http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/jordan.html>

Appendix B—flight of Iraqi Refugees



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¹⁴ “Map of Iraqi flight”
<http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/meast/03/06/iraq.refugees/index.html>