

Impact of Syrian Asylum on Jordanian Society Economy (2011-2017)

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Abstract

Original Research Article

The Arab Spring has been shaped by successive episodes of the revolutions of freedom, the largest geopolitical movement that has rocked the Arab world and the Middle East since the 1960s, which witnessed the eruption of the so-called national revolution that sanctified the Arab exodus from the yoke of old colonialism and their aspiration to independence, freedom, dignity and national sovereignty, like other nations. This study aimed at determines the role played by the Jordanian society during the Syrian crisis in all fields, and to identify the impact of the Syrian crisis on Jordanian society (economy). In order to achieve the objective of the study, a questionnaire was designed as a main tool for collecting data. It included (54) items depended into variable (economy). The sample comprised of (177) individual's that selected randomly from all employees of the Jordanian Refugee Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Interior. After the distribution of the questionnaire and data collection, the SPSS software was used to answer the study questions through the use of descriptive analysis. The study found that there is great impact of Syrian asylum on Jordanian society in all aspects, the threats facing Jordan, due to Syrian asylum, are not only linked to direct security and military threats and Syrian refugees have exhausted economic infrastructure and resources in Jordan, and Jordan faces significant challenges to its economic resources under Syrian asylum. In the light of the results the study recommended that the Syrian crisis, its continuation and its impact on Jordan require a new course through the holistic approach to transform the Syrian refugee crisis into a development opportunity that positively reflected on host communities and refugees.

Keywords: Crisis, Syrian, Jordanian, revolution, economy.

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INTRODUCTION

The Arab revolutions began with peaceful protests demanding equality, social justice and other legitimate rights of citizens because of several factors and internal determinants, such as the economic, social and cultural policies of the state, which are among the most important reasons behind the emergence of Arab revolutions. The Arab revolutions led to political changes, characterized by a kind of inclusiveness and expansion, which resulted in a complete change in the Arab region [10].

In light of the disintegration and fragmentation experienced by the Arab countries after the beginning of the "Arab Spring" since 2011, so far, Jordan has managed to maintain the unity of its people, and overcome cracks within its components as happened in other countries. In addition, Jordan has adopted a more neutral official policy toward Syria. For this reason, since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, the Jordanian position has been ambiguous and hesitant to make a decisive decision. For the first two years of the Syrian crisis, Jordan has only been able to send letters

of advice and receive refugees on its northern border, and politically, Jordan warned, along with other neighbors, such as Iraq and Israel, that the regime in Syria would not emerge easily [1, 2].

The Syrian refugee crisis has exacerbated the political and economic challenges and the chronic resource challenges in Jordan. As the conflict in Syria enters a long-term situation, Jordan has reduced its humanitarian response. However, the roots of the challenges facing Jordan seem to be deeper than the refugee crisis, and if left unresolved, it will create instability, therefore meeting these challenges and continuing to provide safe haven to Syrian refugees requires increased international support for Jordan [10].

Therefore, this study came to try to identify the effects of the Syrian crisis on the Jordanian society as a whole, as these effects are varied and different in all areas, economic and social.

Problem statement

For decades, Jordan has overtaken the arrival of refugees and the different political and economic

crises that are generated, diminishing the power of the opposition and increasing the distribution of benefits and privileges to groups of political power to create cohesion in the Bases of the policy. The kingdom has always been able to create a sustainable internal situation by focusing on the good geographical situation that the country enjoys. Also, Jordan has benefited from external stability, given its stability within the region, mainly dependent on incomes and aid received from abroad, especially from the United States and Saudi Arabia, as well as from remittances from Jordanian workers in the Gulf countries [14].

However, Jordan has not escaped the consequences of a wave of regional instability. The chaos in Syria has caused a flood of refugees across the northern Jordan border. Initially, the Jordanian government benefited politically from the flow of refugees. The war-scarred Syrians were a thunderous reminder of the potential consequences of the revolution, and thus curbed Jordanians' appetite for wider political change. More importantly, during this period of regional instability, the number of Syrian refugees has become a scapegoat to meet the national challenges that preceded the refugee crisis.

Besides, Syrian refugees have had a positive and negative impact on the Hashemite kingdom,

although Jordanian society is extremely critical in the presence of refugees. 85% of Jordanian workers believe that Syrians should not be able to enter the country freely and 65% believe that Syrians should only live in refugee camps. With this discontent of the population, the government faces numerous difficulties in making decisions as the perception of the Jordanian population is that the state is offering too many facilities to the refugees. As a result, aid to the Syrians is decreasing at the same time as mistrust in international aid intensifies, water scarcity increases and an environment of insecurity created which may affect the stability of the regime [16].

In addition, 60 percent of Jordanian exports to Turkey and Europe was passing through Syrian territory, therefore after the outbreak of events the Jordanian exports through Syrian country completely stopped, and the Jaber border crossing closed that considered the vital road between the two countries, which has led to negative results on the Jordanian economy, especially the food sector, agricultural pr The following figure shows the Syria import and export of period (2009-2013).

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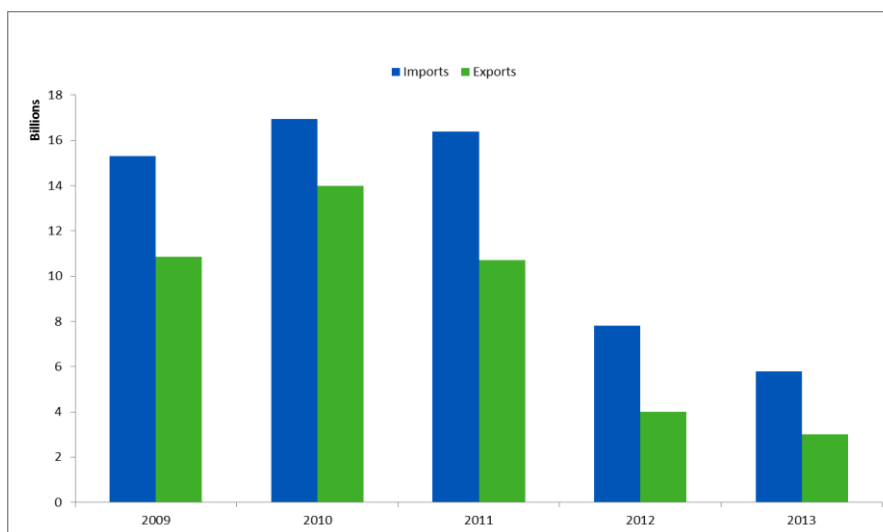


Fig-1.2: Syria import and export of period (2009-2013)

Source: World Bank

All this motivated the researcher to study and analyze the impact of the Syrian crisis on the Jordanian society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Syria is one of the Middle East countries, with a population of about 22 million, the borders of Syria were drawn by the French and British colonists, where it bordered to the south by Jordan, Turkey to the north, Lebanon to the west, and Palestine to the east. Syrian society consists of many sects with diverse religious

and ethnic backgrounds, such as Alawies, Sunnis, Shiites, Christians, although power is in the Alawies hands, but their constitute 13% of the total population of Syria. The Sunni Muslims represent (75%) of the total population of Syria, while the Kurds are living in the north-eastern part of Syria, has dominated the Baath Party to rule in Syria for more than forty years, since 2000 until now the President of Syria is Bashar al-Assad [10].

The current Syrian situation is more rigid in a way closer to the revolutionary illusion than to a real revolution, the idea of the survival of the revolution means the continuation of political, popular, economical, and administrative pressures, forcing the government to declare the failure of any administrative action concerning the state, but when hear about the organization of the Damascus government for a constitutional referendum followed by legislative elections. That means that the state is moving normally and that there is no real impact on its overall performance in all areas, including the service field, which is one of the most important areas that reach the citizen in the country [11].

However, the deterioration of the current crisis in Syria since the spring of 2011 to an armed conflict has caused tragic consequences in the development performance through the extensive destruction of infrastructure and economic capabilities and potential; to reach the losses are not possible for current and future generations. The government's ineffective economic and social policies during the last decade have played a fundamental role in the situation, as well as other objective conditions such as economic sanctions imposed on Syria by the United States of America and later by the European Union as well as other means of pressure to force Syria to abandon its own vision of economic development and ways to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict [8].

The conflict in Syria has resulted in the greatest refugee crisis of our time, with enormous human, economic and social costs for refugees to be borne by host countries and host communities. The plight of the refugees is very serious, and the lives and dignity of millions are at stake. The crisis has implications beyond the Middle East where desperate refugees begin to move to Europe and beyond [6].

Effects of Syrian Crisis on Jordan Society

At the level of Jordanian society, after the revolution in Syria, it became clear that the Jordanian society was involved in a debate over this revolution and its results. At the beginning of the crisis, it was clear that most of the votes from the Jordanian street were biased with the popular opposition against the ruling regime, especially the voices of Islamic parties and the voices of many activists who are not affiliated with political parties or movements, but with the presence of some people and leftist parties and communism, which stood in the camp of the Syrian regime against the popular opposition [5].

The Syrian refugee crisis has exacerbated the political and economic challenges and the chronic resource challenges in Jordan. As the conflict in Syria enters a long-term situation, Jordan has reduced its humanitarian response. However, the roots of the challenges facing Jordan seem to be deeper than the

refugee crisis, and if left unresolved, it will create instability, therefore meeting these challenges and continuing to provide safe haven to Syrian refugees requires increased international support for Jordan [3].

There have been many studies on the effects of Syrian refugees on many aspects of life, including social and economic effects at several levels global, regional and national due to the widespread spread of Syrian immigrants around the world, in a study entitled "Refugees and economic growth in the European Union: Challenges and Opportunities", which aimed to test the impact of the influx of refugees from the Arab region on economic growth due to long conflicts and civil wars, the study found that the opinions of EU leaders are divided into two parts. While some see refugee flows as a humanitarian crisis that member states must act accordingly, others believe that these people are immigrants, not refugees, because they want to go to the more developed countries of the European Union, where they can have better opportunities to live. This group of leaders therefore considered the influx of refugees to be a challenge and a threat to the host States, in economic terms. Where some analysts believe that the large influx of refugees is an economic and social opportunity because of the demographic challenge facing Europe, because of population aging which considered one of the main issues facing most EU countries, therefore one of the possible measures against the effects of aging may be migration, where new immigrants contribute to an increase in population and an increase in the number of young people in the long term. Other economists believe that refugees can adversely affect the well-being of host countries through the spread of disease, food scarcity, wage competition, burdensome education and health care, environmental degradation, and increased criminality. Moreover, voices are indicating that the level of human capital of refugees is on average less than host countries, which will have a significant impact on the sustainable economy of the European Union. The study concluded that the impact of refugees on the economic growth of the EU countries could be seen from several points of view: the view of the negative effects on the level of human capital of the host countries, and the view that the difficulty of integration in the host country and its relation to the social environment and different cultural and religious backgrounds of refugees, As well as a view of the risk of internal conflicts that may increase in countries receiving more refugees [8].

Several studies have been conducted to assess the impact of the flow of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian economy, including the effects on the labor market, such as the study of the economic and social effects of the Syrian refugee crisis on the Jordanian economy and the host communities. The study concluded that despite the financial gains Jordan has received from the influx of refugees and Syrian residents, the cost and great burdens borne by the

Jordanian economy from this crisis make the returns do not compensate for any existing or future burdens [9].

The Jordanian Independent Economic Observatory also prepared a study entitled "The economic and social impact of the Syrian refugees on Jordan, turning the challenges into opportunities" spoke about the challenges imposed by the Syrian asylum on different sectors such as education, finance, food, water, shelter and others, by shifting the challenges associated with refugees to opportunities that contribute to the economy of the host country, including opportunities to influence the local economy, where refugees increase the consumer market, create new markets, bring in new skills, jobs and employment, and create more space for workers in sectors of heavy human consumption, which are not occupied by Jordanians such as the agriculture and construction sectors, thus increasing production and profits for Jordanian employers, this requires a change in the perception of Syrian refugees as a burden on the state to be seen as opportunities for socio-economic development, and the need for more efforts to create an investment environment that encourages refugees to stop relying on government and humanitarian aid to benefit the Jordanian economy, according to the study that this requires a comprehensive strategy of integration and acceptance in order to guide the procedures and policies adopted by the government to invest opportunities arising from the reception of Syrian refugees, and to develop appropriate tools and means to grant economic and social freedoms to refugees and to create a supportive legislative environment to increase benefits and reduce costs, and to facilitate the investment of Syrian refugees by introducing more encouraging measures [3].

International Labour Organization conducted study aimed at assessing the impact of the influx of large numbers of Syrian refugees on the labor market in the governorates of Irbid, Mafraq and the capital, the most significant result of the study on the change in industrial occupations among Jordanians is the fact that about 30% from Jordanian workers who was worked in industry and agriculture just before the Syrian crisis, they do not work in these industries today, the study showed indicators of the Syrian-Jordanian conflict to a certain extent in the construction, retail and retail sectors, where 23% of the Syrian refugee workers outside the camps found employment in the retail and sale sector. The study showed that all Syrian refugees who work outside the camps do not have work permits and therefore work in the informal economy and outside the scope of the Jordanian Labor Law, the study also showed that, there are four main effects of the influx of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian labor market have been identified, including the loss of the opportunity to increase Jordanians' employment in newly emerging and low-skilled jobs, the second to increase competition for existing jobs, and third, future threats to overcrowding in the labor market, in addition to the

general deterioration in working conditions, leading to an increase in the lack of decent work in Jordan [11].

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

This research avoids using a survey approach to collect information from employees of the Jordanian Refugee Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Interior. According to Popper [5] the questionnaire considered as a suitable instrument for this study, because it is the best way to get new information and facts not provided by other sources, it is characterized by the ease and speed of distribution by mail on a wide geographical area, save time and costs, and it gives the respondent the freedom to make any information he wants.

Designing questionnaire Schedule

The questionnaire used in this research has been adapted from various studies conducted in many countries including [12-15]. The researcher in the current study relied on the questionnaire as a main tool for collecting data. The questionnaire includes a set of different questions that are related to each other in a manner that achieves the objective that the researcher seeks through the problem posed by his research. The number of questions in the questionnaire should be sufficient and appropriate to achieve the research objective.

Study Respondents

The respondents of the current study are employees of the Jordanian Refugee Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Interior, totalled about (300) employees, where the reasons for choose this respondents stem out from their knowledge and culture about the topic of this study. Also, the researcher considered the significant information that can be collect from this population.

Sample Size

Sekaran and Bougie [6] defined sampling to be the method by which a sample is selected from a population in order to make the generalization of the sample of the whole population. The target population of this study is employees of the Jordanian Refugee Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Interior, totaled about (300) employees. According to Cavana *et al.* [16], the required sample size for this study will be about 169 founded on the rules provided by Krejcie and Morgan [17] for sample size decisions. According to Leveugle [9] with 95% assurance level and +/-5% margin of error, 177 sets of the questionnaire are going to be distributed to the respondents in case of the occurrence of unused data.

Data analysis

For the analysis of the study data will be analyzed by SPSS program (23), through: The descriptive statistics (arithmetic mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage): Descriptive statistics is a set of methods for describing the main

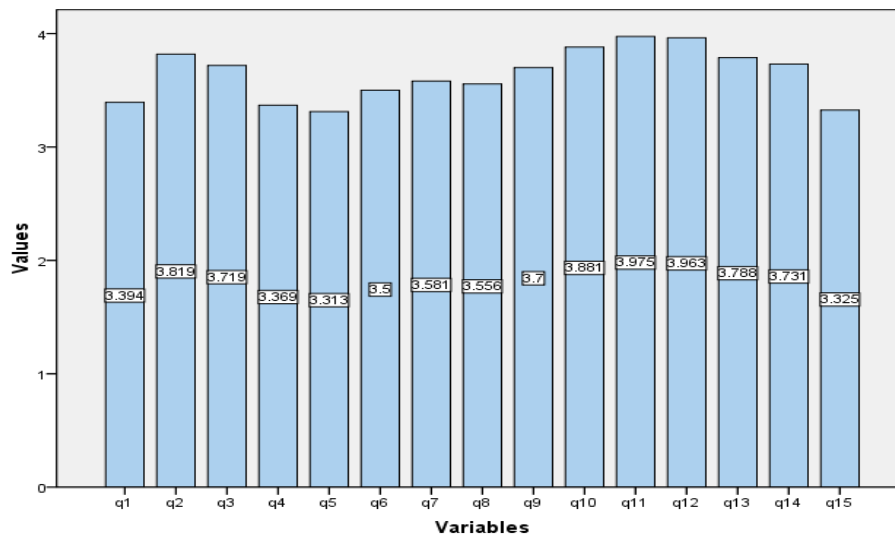
characteristics of a quantitative data set using tables and diagrams. The descriptive statistics with the explanatory statistics are the statistics sections. Unlike descriptive statistics, descriptive statistics are not used in order to

generalize the results to the population.

Descriptive Analysis for Economic Section

Table-1: Descriptive Analysis for Economic Section

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Syrian refugee crisis has exacerbated economic challenges.	160	3.39	.58
Syrian refugees have exhausted economic infrastructure and resources in Jordan	160	3.81	.47
Syrian refugees are a key factor responsible for economic problems in Jordan	160	3.71	.51
Jordan's economic infrastructure suffers from structural problems before the refugee crisis.	160	3.36	.69
The Syrian refugee crisis led to a state of economic instability.	160	3.31	.63
The economic burden of hosting the Syrians often accumulates on the vulnerable population of Jordanians	160	3.50	.63
Jordan faces significant challenges to its economic resources under Syrian asylum	160	3.58	.67
Competition for job opportunities in the informal sector has led to lower wages and deteriorating economic conditions for the poorest Jordanians.	160	3.55	.59
The provision of public and social services to Syrian refugees burdens government funds	160	3.70	.59
Jordan depends on foreign aid to achieve economic stability.	160	3.88	.41
The Syrian crisis has caused a regional economic downturn and destabilized a number of Jordan's main trading partners	160	3.97	.46
The Syrian crisis has negative effects on unemployment and high commodity prices in Jordan.	160	3.96	.48
Syrian asylum has reduced wages in the informal economic sector in Jordan.	160	3.78	.49
The entry of Syrians into the informal sectors of the economy has led to increased marginalization in Jordan.	160	3.73	.47
Syrian refugee influx has led to increased unemployment rates.	160	3.32	.55
Economic	160	3.64	.27



The researcher explains this finding that the reception of Syrian refugees was a major economic challenge for Jordan, which has not yet recovered from the consequences of the global financial crisis that hit the world and the region at the end of 2008. The Syrian refugee crisis has also increased the economic burden on Jordan, and imposed challenges affecting various sectors.

economic activity in Jordan, as there is a negative impact of the Syrian conflict on the overall economic activity in Jordan, and is mostly the interruption of Syrian export routes in addition to the hesitated that hit the mood of investors.

The researcher pointed out that there is a negative impact of the Syrian conflict on the overall

In addition, the informal sector has grown in Jordan because Syrian refugees, whom the law prohibits from working in Jordan, are looking for jobs in the informal labour market. This increase in informal activities has had negative consequences for the

Jordanian economy, the most important of which is the competition of Jordanian labour (where Syrian refugees tend to accept low wages) and the loss of tax revenues that the government would have had if the same activity had taken place in the formal sector. There is also the cost of Syrian refugees themselves because they waive all forms of protection associated with official employment.

The crisis also cost the Jordanian trade balance. Imports increased to meet the needs associated with population growth. Non-energy imports increased significantly. At the same time, exports have fallen due to the loss of a major export route through Syria to Europe and other countries of the region. Indeed, exports to Lebanon, Turkey, and Europe have fallen by a high rate. But the impact on the current account has been tempered by relief from aid agencies and individual transfers to support refugees.

CONCLUSION

Syrian asylum in Jordan has been reflected in various sectors, economic, social, security and other aspects of life, forcing the Jordanian government to appeal to donor countries to assist refugees and help them to secure their needs and the needs of host communities, especially since the majority of the Syrian refugees who came to Jordan are living below the local poverty line.

The Syrian crisis has overshadowed neighboring countries, including Jordan, where Jordan has received an overwhelming number of refugees. They have formed a pressing element on all levels of security, social, economic and political. The influx of refugees has put increasing pressure on Jordan's resources and infrastructure, including its economy and social fabric.

The Syrian crisis has led to the influx of a large number of Syrian refugees into Jordan in the past eight years. The Population and Housing Census conducted in 2015 indicated that the total number of Syrians reached 1.3 million. According to the statistics of the Syrian High Commission for Refugees In 2016, 655,217 registered Syrian refugees, 80% of whom live in host communities, and 78% of Syrian refugees live in the governorates of Mafraq, Irbid, and Amman.

The effects of the Syrian refugee crisis on the labor market in Jordan range from the decline in average wages and employment opportunities to harsh labor conditions to the spread of child labor and the expansion of the informal labor market. In addition to the lack of funding to help Jordan in the current crisis.

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