

The impact of COVID-19 on Palestinian refugees' wellbeing

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Waking up to the planetary health emergency webinar series - Webinar 3

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Outline

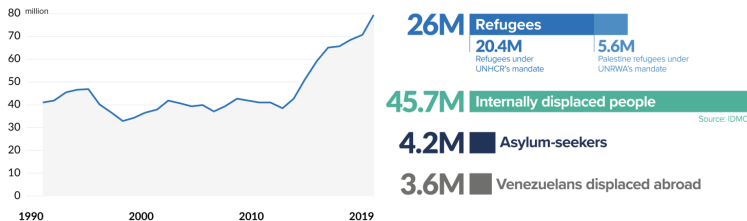
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Contextual Details

- Refugees are not economic migrants; they are people fleeing armed conflicts, persecution or climate change.
- "Climate Refugees Will Soon Surpass Those Displaced by War" (TomDispatch, 2020).
- From 1990 to 2020, the number of forced immigrants has doubled from 40 to 79.5 million (UNCHR, 2020).

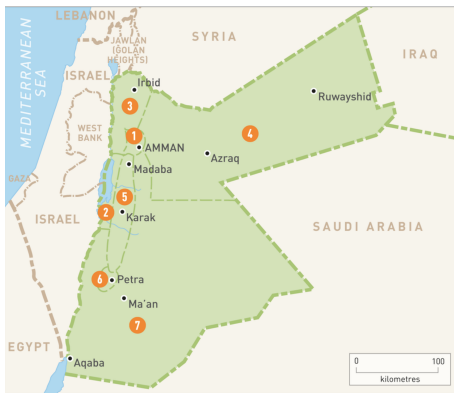
79.5 MILLION forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2019

Source: UNHCR / 18 June 2020



Refugee Crisis

- 85 percent of the world's displaced people are in developing countries.
- Jordan is a small country in the Middle East region. (It's land size is almost three times smaller than the UK.)
- 661,997 Syrians (UNHCR, 2020).
- 2,206,736 Palestinians (UNRWA, 2020).



- Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus.
- Based on WHO data, there were 55,236,907 COVID-19 cases, and 1,333,742 deaths in 220 countries, areas or territories as of 18th of November 2020.
- Many countries implemented restrictions such as partial and nationwide lockdown, closure of business.

Coronavirus Crisis

- To prevent or limit the spread of a contagious disease; "Stay at home", "Wash your hands", "Keep your social Distance".
- "We are all in this together" (WHO, 2020; UNHCR, 2020; Sobande, 2020)



Key Questions

- Who is the "we"?
- To what extent are "we all in this together?"
- What is the impact of COVID-19 on refugees' welfare in the camp?

General Assessment of the Refugees in Jerash Camp

- The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) provides basic services.
- The camp was set up as an 'emergency camp' in 1968
- The camp is temporary type of shelter?



- It is the absolute poorest out of ten refugee camps (Dowling, 2020).
- 52,7 per cent of Palestine refugees having an income below the national poverty line (Fafo, 2013).
- UNRWA data shows that approximately thirty thousand refugees
- There is only one health center for primary services, with the lack of doctors.
- Medical Aid for Palestinians [MAP]

Coronavirus Crisis in Jerash Refugee Camp.

- There was nationwide lockdown from mid-March to first week of May 2020.
- Closure of all business.
- All borders were closed until the first week of August 2020.
- These preventive restrictions have deepened refugees socio-economic welfare.

General Assessment Cont.

- My first observation was about poor infrastructure in the camp.
- Poor sewage system.
- Each building is very close to each other in the camp as the streets were quite narrow.



General Assessment Cont.

- There are 39 closed sectors.
- Low-skilled jobs such as construction, food service agriculture.
- Most people rely on daily work/payment.



Abdallah, 28-years-old camp resident, informed me about the main challenges during the COVID-19 measures:

- “Many people in the camp work in manual labour jobs; and most people earn a little amount of money which is enough to meet only basic needs. They do not have any savings; they do not have any social protection either. Unfortunately, many people could not pay their rent during these COVID-19 restrictions as they did not have any financial support from any organisation.” [Interview, August 2020]

According to the UNRWA (2020b) report, almost half of the respondents (49.6 per cent) indicated that their work disrupted by COVID-19 with a significant difference between females (75 per cent) and males (37 per cent) during the COVID-19 crisis.

Asia, 48-years-old camp resident, highlighted about the lack of socio-economic assistance during the COVID-19 restrictions, and she pointed out:

- “we did not have any financial support from the government, and UNRWA did not provide enough basic services for people in the camp. We were alone; we only tried to help each other in the camp.”
[Interview, September 2020]

- One in five – 22.1 per cent – of the adult population in conflict-affected areas have mental health problems (WHO, 2020).
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the most prevalent condition among refugees.
- Due to the uncertainties, the most common problems are depression and anxiety.
- Most refugees have no savings.

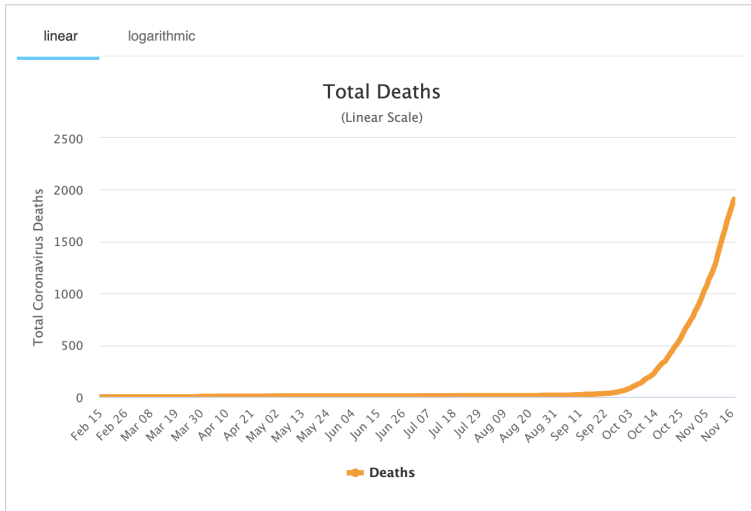
Are 'we' all in this Together?

- Structural Inequalities among countries and individuals
- Billionaires' wealth rises to 10.2 trillion [US dollars] amid Covid crisis (The Guardian, 2020)
- Those on the margins of society

- Jordan remains the second largest refugee host per capita worldwide (approximately 28 per cent of whole population)
- There were around 3 million refugees as of November 2020 in Jordan with around 10 million population.
- According to the UNHCR data, by the end of 2018 there were 126,720 refugees, 45,244 pending asylum cases and 125 stateless persons in the UK, with around 66 million population.
- Just because the the UK's prime minister Boris Johnson and the Prince of Wales have had Covid-19 doesn't mean the disease strikes all people equally.
- Those who live in poor socio-economic condition

Discussion

- The Covid-19 Crisis is not over yet.
Total Coronavirus Deaths in Jordan



- It may be true that many people have been affected by COVID-19 and its measures, but not everyone has been experiencing this crisis the same way.
- Collective responsibility is needed.
- Developed countries should provide socio-economic support to Jordan.
- Jordan should reorganize its refugee policy.

Thank You
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