

The Situation of Refugees in Jordan – 2025

On the Occasion of World Refugee Day



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Amman – Celebrated annually on June 20, World Refugee Day serves as a global platform to raise awareness about the plight of refugees and the hardships they endure. This year’s observance comes against the backdrop of intensifying armed conflicts, worsening economic conditions in various regions, and ongoing wars—all of which have exacerbated forced displacement crises and underscored the pressing need for coordinated humanitarian and legal interventions by the international community.

According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is defined as a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside their country of nationality or habitual residence and is unable or unwilling to return due to that fear. Refugees typically seek political or humanitarian asylum and are entitled to legal protection under the Convention, which requires states to safeguard their rights and prohibits their forced return to places where their lives or freedoms may be at risk.

It is important to distinguish between the terms “refugees” and “internally displaced persons” (IDPs), which are often mistakenly used interchangeably. Refugees have crossed international borders to escape danger, while IDPs have been displaced within their own country. This distinction carries significant legal implications: refugees fall under the protection of the UNHCR, whereas the responsibility for IDPs lies with their national government.

In recognition of World Refugee Day, Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights aims to shed light on the key violations and challenges experienced by refugees, as reflected in the complaints received by the organization throughout 2024 and the first quarter of 2025. This report categorizes the complaints by employment sector, nationality, and type of abuse, and includes a historical overview of the refugee presence in Jordan.

Refugees in Jordan

As reported by UNHCR in 2025, Jordan is home to 615,715 registered refugees and asylum seekers, excluding Palestinian refugees under the care of UNRWA. Syrian nationals make up the overwhelming majority at 90.7%, followed by Iraqis at 6.6%, with the remaining percentage comprising refugees from Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and other countries.

UNRWA data shows that Jordan also hosts approximately 2.4 million registered Palestinian refugees—accounting for more than a quarter of the country's population. Most refugees (about 80.9%) reside in urban and rural areas outside official camps, while 19.1% live in designated refugee camps. The largest of these is Zaatari Camp, accommodating 70,292 refugees, followed by Azraq Camp with 40,569 residents.

In terms of geographic distribution, the capital Amman hosts the largest refugee population (215,335 or 35%), followed by Irbid (107,908 or 17.5%) and Mafraq (74,001 or 12%). Other governorates such as Zarqa, Balqa, Madaba, Ma'an, Karak, and Jerash host varying numbers, while southern areas like Aqaba and Tafileh report the lowest refugee populations.

Demographically, children under 18 years old represent 37.2% of the refugee population, adults 57.7%, and seniors 5%. A significant rise in disability rates has been observed, with 149,379 refugees (24.3%) identified as having special conditions, including 85,835 with serious medical issues (13.9%) and 57,122 individuals with disabilities (9.3%). Additionally, 25,815 children (4.2%) are classified as at risk, 12,355 households (2%) are headed by women, and 9,004 women (1.5%) are considered at risk according to UNHCR criteria.

Furthermore, 2025 recorded the lowest number of newly registered refugees in more than a decade, with only 2,670 new registrations by mid-year. This decline is largely attributed to stricter border controls, economic hardship, and diminishing international support for asylum and protection programs.

Refugee Workers' Complaints Received by Tamkeen (2024–Q1 2025)

Between 2024 and the first quarter of 2025, Tamkeen received a total of 64 complaints related to violations of refugee workers' rights. These complaints were analyzed according to several categories:

Gender

Men submitted 77% of the complaints, while women accounted for 23%. This imbalance reflects the greater participation of men in the labor market, as well as the social and cultural barriers that often prevent women from reporting workplace violations.

Nationality

54 complaints (84%) were submitted by Syrian refugees

8 by Sudanese refugees

1 each from Palestinian and Yemeni refugees

This distribution mirrors the significant presence of Syrian refugees in Jordan and their heightened vulnerability to labor exploitation, particularly due to their dependence on short-term or informal employment arrangements.

Work Sectors

The highest number of violations occurred in:

- **Construction** (31 cases): a sector known for its hazardous conditions and weak labor protections
- **Agriculture** (15 cases): heavily dependent on undocumented labor and largely unregulated
- **Factories** (5 cases)
- **Security services** (3), **restaurants** (3), and other sectors such as **cleaning, painting, and salons**

These results highlight that labor violations span across a wide range of sectors, particularly those characterized by informal or day-wage employment models.

Nature of Violations

- **Wage-related abuses** were the most commonly reported:
 - 47 workers reported delayed, deducted, or incomplete wages
 - 11 workers said they had not received any wages at all
- **Social security violations** were raised in 25 cases, involving either non-enrollment or deductions not transferred to the system
- **Work and residency permit issues** included:
 - 25 complaints about employers failing to renew permits
 - 13 complaints from workers who never received permits, leaving them in a highly precarious legal position
- **Other reported violations** included:
 - 14 cases of arbitrary dismissal
 - 9 instances of denial of leave or rest days
 - 6 cases involving excessive working hours
 - 2 cases related to fines, often stemming from violations of residency or labor regulations

Conclusion and Recommendations

World Refugee Day serves as a critical reminder of the need to support and protect refugees who continue to face significant hardships amidst escalating humanitarian crises. While Jordan has made notable strides in hosting and safeguarding large refugee populations, there remains a pressing need to reinforce legal and social protection systems—especially for refugee workers who are frequently subjected to labor rights violations.

In response, Tamkeen for Legal Aid and Human Rights puts forward the following recommendations:

1. Intensify monitoring efforts and strengthen labor inspections, particularly in the construction and agricultural sectors.
2. Establish accessible and secure reporting mechanisms that enable workers to file complaints confidentially and without fear of retaliation.
3. Mandate employers to renew work permits at their own cost, with clear legal accountability for non-compliance.
4. Amend relevant laws to introduce stricter penalties for employers who deny workers their fundamental rights.
5. Scale up legal awareness campaigns, with a focus on reaching women and workers in remote or underserved areas.
6. Improve coordination between the Ministry of Labor, UNHCR, and human rights organizations to create an early warning system for identifying and responding to large-scale labor violations.

