

THE STATUS OF IRAQI REFUGEES IN SYRIA AND JORDAN

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled “**THE STATUS OF IRAQI REFUGEES IN SYRIA AND JORDAN**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Amnesty International
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DPT	Diphtheria-Pertussis- Tetanus
DREF	Disaster Relief Emergency Fund
FAFO	Fagbevaegelsens Forsknings Organisation, a Norwegian foundation that develops and disseminates knowledge about changes in living and working conditions
G CC	Gulf Cooperation Council
ICMC-USCCB	International Catholic Migration Commission and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRCRCS	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NCCI	NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Countries
PDES	Policy Development and Evaluation Service
RRP	Regional Response Plan
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women

UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRC	United Nations Refugee Convention
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency
UNU/WIDER	United Nations University /World Institute for Development Economics Research
USD	United States Dollar
USGAO	United States Government Accountability Office
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

INTRODUCTION

Population movement between different countries has been an enduring feature of human civilization. Throughout history, people have been moving in large numbers for various reasons. It is not only a natural phenomenon but also created by people through the process of their political, social and economic activities. In this process some people move voluntarily and others forcefully.

Among the countries covered by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), one third of all refugees were residing in Asia and Pacific region, with three quarters of them being Afghans. The West Asia and North Africa region was host to about one fifth (22 percent) of all refugees (primarily from Iraq) while Africa (excluding North Africa) and Europe hosted respectively 20 and 15 percent of the world's refugees. The American region had the smallest share of refugees (8 percent), with Colombians constituting the largest number (UNHCR June 2009: 7).

There were some 42 million forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2008. This includes 15.2 million refugees. The UNHCR identified some 6.6 million stateless persons in 58 countries. It also estimated that the overall number of stateless persons worldwide was far higher, about 12 million people. Developing countries are host to four-fifths of the world's refugees. Based on the data available for 8.8 million refugees, the UNHCR estimates that half of the world's refugees reside in urban areas and one-third in camps. However, seven out of ten refugees in sub-Saharan Africa reside in camps. Pakistan is host to the largest number of refugees worldwide followed by the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Afghan and Iraqi refugees account for almost half (45 per cent) of all refugees under the UNHCR's responsibility worldwide. One out of four refugees in the world is from Afghanistan and Afghans are located in 69 different countries. Iraqis are the second largest refugee group, having sought refuge mainly in neighbouring countries (UNHCR Global Trend 2009: 2).

When we look at the world refugee crisis, we can see that the area surrounding West Asia is the worst and most vulnerable in the world. Afghan people are struggling to settle their life across the region, Sri Lankans have been fleeing their country for the last twenty years, the Sudanese have been running for their lives in Africa, and now the Iraqi people are on their way seeking to establish a new life in any land.

For Iraq, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are hardly a new phenomenon. Under Saddam Hussein's long rule, forced displacement was a usual phenomenon. The United States invasion and the toppling of Saddam Hussein far from resolved the problems in Iraq. They did so in the name of strengthening the human rights situation in Iraq, its political stability through democratization and for a peaceful and stable West Asian region through eliminating its so-called Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). However, at the end, most of the US' allegations especially about the potential threat of WMD were found to be false and exaggerated and above all, it made the Iraqi situation worse than ever before. It threw the country into a combination of intense and bloody sectarian violence, coalition military action, fighting between the government and the militant groups like Al-Qaida and Mehdi army, and generalized violence and criminality caused massive displacement and uprooting. In 2007, some 60,000 Iraqis were reportedly fled their homes each month.

In Iraq, a refugee crisis was feared before the US- led invasion in 2003, but it came later than anticipated, and on a more disastrous scale. While there is uncertainty about their exact number, the scale of the crisis is not in dispute. Tremendous socio-political and other changes have occurred in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussain. Among these, one of the challenging changes is the displacement of Iraqi people as refugees both inside and outside the country. Now a large chunk of Iraqi people are displaced, migrants, and refugees and at the same time they are involved in the fight for political survival.

An estimated 1.2 million Iraqis were displaced before 2006 and 1.5 million Iraqis were displaced between 2006 and 2007. While there are some reports of limited improvements—decreasing violence, reduced levels of displacement, and some returns in a few governorates—the situation in general remains without much progress and requires sustained attention from the international community (CRS 2009: 2).

The US occupation of Iraq has produced a flood of refugees not witnessed in West Asia since 1948 when the Zionist state forcefully vacated millions of Palestinians from their homes. Palestinian refugees, impoverished and treated as second-class citizens, have become a permanent feature of West Asia. Now it is the turn of Iraqis, and millions of Iraqi people are confronting a similar fate (Grenfell 2008). These millions of people at risk include various religious and ethnic groups: Sunni and Shia Muslims, Christians, Sabean- Mandeans¹, Palestinians and others have fled their homes and most are now struggling to survive.

A huge number of Iraqi people had fled their country before the US- led War began in 2003, but the overwhelming majority of the displacement has occurred since February 2006, when large scale sectarian violence erupted in the aftermath of the bombing of the al- Askaria mosque, a sacred Shia shrine in Samarra (US Senate 2008: 3). Many of them were internally displaced in different parts of Iraq or have taken residence in neighboring countries, particularly Jordan and Syria. This sudden refugee crisis has led to increased international attention to the living conditions of the Iraqi community in these host countries.

When we examine the features of the Iraq refugee crisis, the early refugee flow was comprised of minorities facing persecution. Now, sectarian violence has produced widespread vulnerability. Many of those leaving are from Iraq's middle class and are skilled professionals. Since the beginning of the war in Iraq and the subsequent sectarian violence, millions of Iraqis have been forced to flee to various parts of the world, especially to neighboring countries like Syria and Jordan. The increasing number of refugees and challenges to the host states ran parallel. Of the 2 million

1. The Sabean Mandeans are by all means not Muslims. They are considered unbelievers by Muslims. Mandeans consider Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad to be false prophets. For them the greatest of the prophets is John the Baptist. According to Mandaean dogma, Mandaeanism was the original religion of Adam. They have a hierarchical clergy; they practice frequent baptism, and hold public worship on Sundays. They deplore fasting and monasticism, and believe in peace above all.

Iraqi refugees living in neighboring countries, the UNHCR estimates that 1.2 million are in Syria and 750,000 in Jordan. Other neighboring countries with Iraqi refugee populations include Egypt, Iran, Lebanon and Turkey. The burden of Iraqi refugees is putting a major economic strain on these countries, especially Jordan and Syria, and causing some to make their borders harder to cross.

During the past decade, and especially since the fall of Saddam Hussein, thousands have escaped from Iraq, choosing self-exile and escape rather than death and persecution, and the vast majority of them have been displaced to locations outside Iraq. In response to the large number of Iraqi refugees in the region, the neighboring countries are responding by tightening their borders. Saudi Arabia is building a barrier to keep Iraqis out, and Egypt has begun imposing procedures that are more restrictive. These countries are not alone in refusing entry to Iraqi refugees. The states outside the region are also imposing restrictions on Iraqi refugees despite their partial role in the current tragedy of the Iraqi people.

Although both Jordan and Syria have been widely commended for admitting large numbers of Iraqis, Jordan began to restrict entry at the end of 2006 and Syria began to restrict entry in the fall of 2007. It is feared that the two governments could in time deport the refugees back to Iraq or make life so untenable for them that they will have no choice but to return. By now, eight to twelve percent of the populations of Jordan and Syria are Iraqis. It is estimated that 1.2 million Iraqis were displaced before 2006, 1.5 million Iraqis were displaced between 2006 and 2007 (CRS Report 2009: 2).

Therefore, since the 2003 invasion, displacement of Iraqi peoples has steadily increased in size and complexity. Today, the number of displaced people is the highest ever. At the same time, the lack of effective response by the international community means that the ability of those fleeing Iraq to access protection outside the country is increasingly being troubled. New visa restrictions imposed in neighbouring states mean that the ability of people to obtain refuge from the threat they face in Iraq now rests increasingly on their finances, rather than on their needs or rights under international refugee or human rights law (Amnesty International (AI) 2008: 2- 3).

The bulk of Iraqi refugees do not have access to the formal labour market in the major three host countries (Syria, Jordan and Lebanon). They find themselves living in the

capital cities of middle-income countries, where they are obliged to rent accommodation and meet the cost of other essential items, such as food, clothing and transport (UNHCR'S Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES): 35). A significant proportion of Iraqi refugees suffer from psychological and emotional problems due to the trauma they have experienced prior to and during flight, as well as the difficulties they encounter in their asylum countries (UNHCR'S Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES): 42). When Iraqi refugees began to arrive in neighbouring countries, they were considered as 'guests' by the governments concerned, rather than refugees. In keeping with this principle, the host countries concluded that the Iraqis should, to the extent possible, be allowed to make use of existing public and private facilities, and that dedicated services for the new arrivals (such as those that are invariably found in refugee camps) should not be established. The arrangements put in place in Jordan and Syria have enabled very large numbers of refugees to gain access to schools, health centres, hospitals and other facilities maintained by the state and by Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This has undoubtedly contributed to their immediate physical and psychological well-being and it has helped them to prepare for their future, wherever that might be (UNHCR'S Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES): 45).

The number of Iraqis newly seeking shelter in neighbouring countries has largely stabilized and sharply decreased by resettlement departures and improvement of the security situation in Iraq. New registrations in the three countries with the largest populations of Iraqi refugees combined – Syria, Jordan and Lebanon – averaged 3,845 per month in 2009 to date, compared with 7,739 and 12,642 per month in 2008 and 2007. After verification exercises in the two largest countries of asylum, the number of Iraqi refugees actively registered with the UNHCR in the region now stands at 29,41,485 down marginally from the 310,427 reported one year ago (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN 2010: 4).

According to UNHCR, a definition of protracted refugee situations should include not only the humanitarian elements of the phenomenon but also its political and strategic aspects. In addition, a definition must recognize that countries of origin, host countries and the international community are all implicated in the causes of refugee situations. In protracted situations, refugees populations have moved beyond the

emergency phase – where the focus is on life saving assistance – but cannot expect durable solutions in the near future (Hieronymi 2009: 15).

This study attempts to answer the questions such as, what are the major factors that contributed to the Iraqi refugee crisis? What are the characteristics of Iraqi refugees and their social and political status in the region? What are the challenges faced by Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Syria and how do their boosting numbers affect the socio-political and economic situations of these host countries? To what extent are the UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies able to deliver services to Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan? In short, this study provides an analysis of the current crisis, including an overview of the conditions of those displaced from Iraq, with special emphasis on their situations in Syria and Jordan.

The following chapter would initially focus on the definition and interpretations of the refugees under international law. It will focus on the trends of refugee crisis in West Asia, particularly the Iraqi refugee crisis. The aspects of history, characteristics, causes and consequences of the Iraqi refugee crisis will be given special attention here. The subsequent two chapters would focus on the status of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan. These will go through their profile in detail including demographic composition, settlement and humanitarian conditions. This part would also focus on the status of women, children, education, health and the economic impact of the Iraqis on host countries. The host governments' attitude towards them, their political status, role of humanitarian agencies in assisting Iraqi refugees and the impact of refugees on host society and state will also be a major concern of these chapters. The study would mainly focus on the situation of the Iraqi refugees who left their country after the US invasion of 2003 or the post- Saddam crisis.

The fifth chapter will provide a comparative analysis of the social and political status of the Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan. It will bring out the similarities and differences in the social and political status of Iraqi refugees in these host states. The final chapter will summarise the findings of the study.

Syria and Jordan have been selected as the relevant and suitable cases for studying the social and political status of Iraqi refugees and the focus is only on the post- Saddam Iraqi refugee crisis. Given the nature of the proposed research work, I have conducted

a broad review and comparative analysis of relevant and existing works, especially various Survey reports, projects, and working papers related to the topic and mainly the UNHCR reports of various years.

Countless scholars, national agencies, international institutions and NGOs have done some amount of work on the Iraqi refugee crisis. Yet, this topic has not received the full attention that it deserves. In that sense, this work tries to explore at least the social and political status of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan. It is very difficult to suggest a solution to this human tragedy, but through this work, I wish to invite attention to this particular humanitarian crisis so as to highlight the intensity of the tragic situation of millions of displaced people.

THE IRAQI REFUGEE CRISIS

For thousands of years, people have been moving across various regions, countries and continents. In this process, we can see different categories of people with different purposes moving from one place to another. In the case of nomads settlement and resettlement is the very foundation of their way of life. However, for others, it was different; some moved willingly- to escape from poverty, disease, disaster or to pursue wealth; others unwillingly- fleeing because of civil war, political instability or foreign intervention or insecurity feeling. In other words, the refugee crisis is the consequence of the political dynamics in state formation, transformation and increasing global interdependence (Guterres 2008).

As Samia Qumri points out, in recent years West Asia is reported to have received more than ten percent of the world's migrants. This migration is diversified and involves legal workers and their families, irregular migrants, refugees and displaced persons. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), West Asia is a host for about “fourteen million international migrants, mostly economic migrants², and six million refugees. Iraqis represent the largest number of migrants, categorized under forced migration (Qumri 2007).

Domestic strife and civil war frequently produce large population dislocations and refugee flows across national boundaries. Mass refugee flows often entail negative consequences for the receiving states. Many contemporary conflicts, particularly those in Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan and the ongoing Palestine- Israel conflict have generated substantial refugee flows. Syria and Jordan, for instance, have accepted

2. Economic migrants are those who leave their country of origin for financial reasons, rather than for refugee ones.

hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees, placing strains on their economies, social services, and internal stability.

Iraqi refugees have been victims of the political crisis in their country and they are also victims of foreign invasion and occupation. The region's political diversity sometimes becomes an obstacle to the refugees aspiring to get citizenship, the basis for social membership in the modern nation- state. Many states in the region are hosting diverse groups of the refugee population. In such a condition, national integration remains fragile, along with civil war and foreign intervention. Therefore, no state in the region has risked giving full and equal voice to all its population, particularly to its refugee population.

In the case of Iraq, Saddam Hussein's authoritarian rule caused the uprooting of thousands of Iraqis. Moreover, US' military invasion in 2003 and the subsequent sectarian violence between various ethnic groups, especially the Sunni- Shia conflicts have brought about a major surge in the number of displaced people. Following a first wave of forced migration during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), a huge number of Iraqis had fled their country. But during the 1991 Gulf War and in the following decade, thousands of Iraqi people became displaced not only as a direct consequence of the US- led bombing of the country but mainly because of two episodes of failed uprising against the regime of Saddam Hussein. In 1991, the Kurds in the Northern provinces and the Shiites in the central area revolted and both uprisings were crushed. The sanctions and the parallel foreign military interventions also fueled the rapid growth of the refugee population. The situation has greatly worsened since early 2006 after the bombing of a Shia mosque in February. Since then, according to the United Nations (UN), some 500,000 Iraqis have been displaced from their homes, and 40,000 to 50,000 more are leaving every month.

It is clear that the displacement of Iraqi people has occurred frequently since the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s and regularly they have sought refuge in Syria. During the Saddam Hussein years, they sought refuge most often in Jordan. Significant numbers of Iraqis went to neighboring countries in 1991 following the first Gulf War and, in many cases, remained there. The already existing ties and human relationships have facilitated the present movement. Since the start of the conflict in 2003, and in increasing numbers since 2006, the Iraqis have fled from instability and insecurity.

Over two million Iraqis have crossed borders during the past years to save their lives and livelihoods.

This chapter offers the definitions of the term “refugee” and its various interpretations by different national and international actors. It deals with the West Asian refugee crisis and gives the trends, patterns and the various aspects of the Iraqi refugees and a brief note on the role of various organizations in the ongoing Iraqi refugee crisis.

Who is a Refugee?

There are many interpretations available for the term “refugee”. It is of great international concern that conceptually an individual should belong to a state. Once anyone falls out of the state- citizen relationship, the individual becomes an international individual and part of the international community (Haddad 2008). A ‘well-founded fear of persecution’ was stated to be a criterion for recognising the refugee.

According to the 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention (UNRC),

A refugee is a person who, owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (UNHCR: Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees 2007: 16).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a ‘humanitarian crisis’ as when four things take place: dislocation of population; destruction of social networks, including destruction of health and social systems; insecurity; and abuse of human rights. All four happened in Iraq post-2003, and the common denominator of these four characteristics is violence. A good definition of refugees is, therefore, ‘persons whose presence abroad is attributable to a well founded fear of violence’ (Sasson 2009: 3). “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948: 4). Almost 150 UN members have signed the convention relating to the status of refugees, obliging them not to penalise refugees who have entered illegally, and to refrain from

patriating refugees if they have a legitimate fear of persecution at home (Spellman 2008: 9).

In most refugee situations - when people cross that fated border due to various bitter experiences and threats and which is so precisely defined in international refugee law – there is still an element of individual, family, or group decision. This is all the more so as both in the past and under present conditions fleeing from persecution, fleeing from actual or potential violence, is not a simple matter: in most cases it requires preparation, it is risky, it is a heart-rending decision. Do we prefer to stay and face the known threats, dangers, and suffering, or do we flee and give up whatever was left to cherish and try to move to greater safety, to survival, and a chance for greater freedom and prosperity. Accepting to flee, accepting to become a refugee means, accepting uncertainty: but it also means choosing the hope of a better future. Without this hope, it is no use fleeing (Hieronymi 2009: 6).

In terms of legal data, thirty-six of the fifty-seven Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) member states have acceded to the 1951 Geneva Convention/1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. The OIC and the League of Arab States have also adopted a number of declarations and other instruments of direct relevance to asylum, which are indicative of the broader thinking behind it. In 1994, the League of Arab States even adopted an “Arab Convention on Regulating Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries”. The 2004 Arab Charter on Human Rights prescribes in article 28 that every citizen shall have the right to seek political asylum in other countries in order to escape persecution. Similarly, in October 2003 the OIC Summit adopted the landmark Resolution No. 15/10-P (IS) on the “Problem of Refugees in the Muslim World” in Malaysia. It is also worth noting that both the OIC in 1988 and the League of Arab States in 2000 signed cooperation agreements with UNHCR. This factual background reveals the importance and relevance of today’s discussions over refugee crisis (Turk 2008: 3- 4).

Refugees are the people forced to flee their country because they have been persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group. Refugees do not choose to leave their country and they can never go back to their country. Today every second there are people fleeing from their homes and cities seeking safe havens. Around the world, more than 33 million

people have no place to call home. Persecution and terror have forced these refugees and internally displaced persons to flee, leaving everything behind. They have lost family members, friends, possessions and the familiar places of their homeland (The Refugee Highway Partnership 2009).

The movement of people in large numbers is difficult to measure with any accuracy but a common estimate is that since 1945 some 50 to 60 million people have been uprooted and have left their homes either voluntarily or involuntarily. The victims of persecution and conflict seek safety and opportunity elsewhere. Today, there are at least 17 million people in transit seeking some form of asylum—over 6 million in Asia, 4.2 million in Africa, and 4.2 million in Europe. Probably half of these unfortunates are women and children. It is difficult to calculate the size of the migrant flow in view of its sensational diversity and changes in its composition and profile. There will be those desperate to get away from persecution and discrimination whom the world will acknowledge as genuine refugees (Whittaker 2006: 1).

In a humanitarian sense whenever weaker states are incapable of effectively carrying out their responsibilities and providing the needs of their own citizens, other states need to take on or are forced to carry their burdens. Scholars argue that the state and its citizens have a definite duty, under certain circumstances to assist non-citizens.

Simply put, refugees are the people who cross the national frontier to seek relief or a better life. They need massive humanitarian assistance both from the host states and from the international community. The condition to be a refugee is, he / she must have been forced to leave the country of their nationality and secondly they should have well founded fears.

The Refugee Crisis and West Asia

As we know, West Asia is not only the region known to be of the cradle of civilizations- Babylonian, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian, and the birthplace of three major religions- Islam, Christianity, and Judaism and also of ideologies- Arab nationalism, Zionism, Pan Arabism, or even the hub of natural resources - oil and natural gas, but it is now the zone of refugees- Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. The West Asian region is also the birthplace of refugees and they are spreading throughout the region and sometimes beyond at a surprising and alarming pace.

About 8.7 million refugees currently live in Member States of the OIC. This includes some 4 million Palestine refugees who are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). There is not one single country of the OIC that has not been confronted in one form or another with the refugee issue. In OIC countries, we have also seen the most dramatic refugee situations ever witnessed both in terms of sheer size, their lifelong nature, and complexity. The Palestine refugee problem is one such example and the Afghan refugee situation another. It is difficult to imagine how countries like Iran and Pakistan coped with millions of Afghan refugees for decades. Still today, Pakistan and Iran host some 1 million Afghan refugees each. Today we have the tragedy of the images of Iraqi refugees fleeing by US- led invasion and the subsequent sectarian strife in Iraq. An estimated 2.2 million refugees from Iraq are currently staying in Jordan, Syria, and other countries of West Asia while some 2.4 million are internally displaced inside Iraq. Their fate is all but certain, and the generosity of the countries hosting them is commendable (Turk 2008: 2). West Asia and North Africa is home to at least 5 million refugees, arguably the largest refugee population in the world (Fahimi and Kent 2007: 13).

The presence of refugees constitutes a strain on the infrastructure of the host countries and could lead to the forced repatriation of these refugees unless generous amounts of humanitarian assistance are provided to these key host countries. Most of the states in the region are already struggling with the Palestinian refugee crisis and the massive influx of Iraqi refugees will again deteriorate the current crisis.

History of the Iraqi Refugee Crisis

The Iraqi refugee crisis is not a new or surprising one; rather it is a long rooted and an expected tragedy of human making. It is imperative to understand the deeper context of this marginalized social group, the causes that have led to the current pace and growth of the crisis, and its conditions and consequences in the entire region, in order to get a better insight into this phenomenon, and to find a concrete solution to this ongoing tragedy.

When we trace the historical background and the chronology of the Iraqi refugee crisis, it shows that 1974, 1988, 1991, 1996, 2003 and a more worsened crisis of 2006 as the remarkable years of Iraqi peoples' tragedy. The Kurdish refugee crisis of 1974 was a direct outcome of the war between Mulla Mustafa Barzani's Peshmergas and Iraqi forces, brought on by the former's rejection of the Autonomy Law, offered to the Kurds by the government. The Iraqi army overran much of Kurdish controlled territory, and defeat for the Kurds seemed almost impossible to avoid. After the Iran-Iraq agreement over Shatt al Arab of March 6, 1975 and the withdrawal of all Iranian and other foreign aid for the Kurds, the rebels capitulated. Well over 100,000 Kurds, fighters, their families and others, crossed into Iran to join the 100,000 Kurdish refugees already there (Alborzi 2006: 26- 27). By the autumn of 1989, chemical attacks and high explosive air attacks in Anfal and Halabja resulted in a massive increase in the number of Kurdish refugees in Iran and Turkey, about 250,000 (Alborzi 2006: 29- 31). The 1991 war in Kuwait – and the refugee crisis it generated – was another tragedy for the Iraqi people. It was another result of the failed uprising of the Kurdish movement and its suppression by the Iraqi forces. As a result, over 1.5 million Kurds abandoned their homes in a mad stampede to reach safety either in Turkey or Iran (Alborzi 2006: 34). Again, in 1996 the civil war that broke out in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq followed by the intervention of Iraqi forces further created another mass exodus of Kurdish people to the neighbouring countries, especially to Iran.

In short, the Iraqi refugee crisis can be divided into mainly three periods: the 1980s, prior to and following the Iran-Iraq War, and after the 1991 Gulf War. At the time of the 2003 U.S. invasion, between one and two million Iraqis lived outside Iraq, including 300,000 who had obtained refugee status. Most receiving states did not recognize the Iraqis as refugees, with the exception of Iran (which hosted 200,000 refugees). Between 2003 and 2006, more than 300,000 Iraqis returned home, mainly from Iran (Lischer 2008: 102).

The expulsion policy toward so-called Tabai-ya during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, resulted in thousands of mostly Iraqi Shias suspected of disloyalty being expelled from Iraq because of their supposed Persian origins. The dramatic change in power relations resulting from the U.S.-led invasion caused a new wave of forced evictions,

often perpetrated by those who had been the victims of the Ba'ath forced displacement policies. Throughout this period, ongoing military operations and fighting between the U.S.-led forces and insurgents caused further displacement (Isser and Peter 2009: 3).

The peak of the forced displacement of Iraqi refugees was in the second half of 2006 with a fifth of all registered population reached in neighbouring countries. This reflects the spread of violence after the Samarra Bombing. Between 2003 and the first half of 2006, one third of the registered Iraqi population arrived. Another 39 percent arrived between the first half of 2007 and the end of 2008 (UNHCR Iraq Refugees Registration Data Comparative Analysis, 2007-2008: 25).

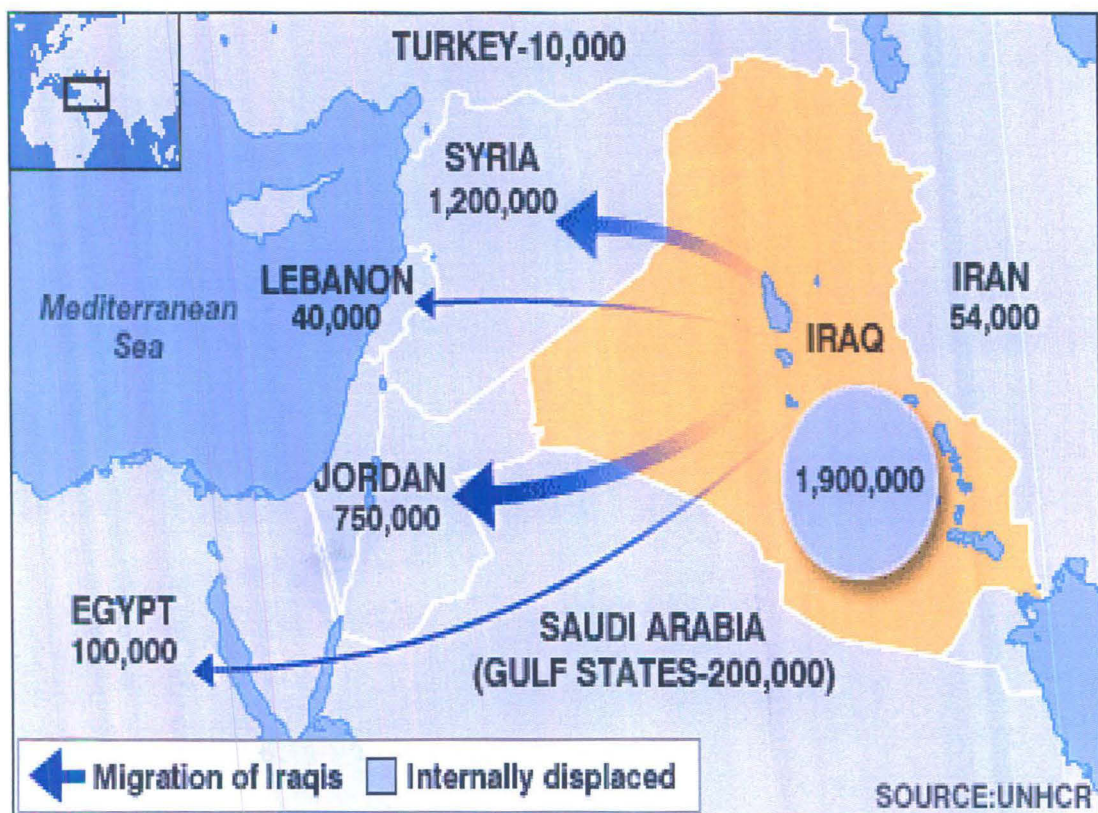
As much as 20 percent of Iraq's population has moved since 2003, half within the country and half across its international border (Laipson 2009: 3). According to some estimates, Iraq's population is 26.8 million; this means that approximately 17 percent of the population may be displaced. There are many patterns of displacement, some that have their origins decades ago, but have now evolved into a new phase—for example, the approximately 300,000 refugees who were in Iran before the 2003 War, then returned to Iraq, and now are believed to have been displaced again, this time within Iraq. Others were refugees from other countries in the region who fled to Iraq and are now on the move again within its borders. Saddam Hussein's brutal regime left a legacy of displacement, as his regime forcibly displaced Iraqi Shiites and Kurds in order to control territory, terrorize the population, and fight insurrection. Some experts estimate as many as 1.5 million may have been displaced over the three decades of his regime (Congressional Research Survey (CRS) Report 2009: 3).

Characteristics of the Iraqi Refugee Crisis

Among those registered with UNHCR in 2007 and 2008, 31 percent of Iraqi refugees arrived prior to 2003; 20 percent in the second half of 2006 and 10 percent in the first half of 2007. The ratio of different religious and ethnic backgrounds change depending on the time of arrival of the refugees and the country. Similarly, those who came from Baghdad constitute 51 percent of those who arrived before 2003, 84 percent of those who came in the second half of 2006 and 60 percent of those who came in the second half of 2008 (UNHCR Iraqi Refugees Registration Data Analysis 2007-2008: 4).

When Iraqis first arrived, most brought resources along with them and many were not in need of assistance. They did not register with UNHCR and they were not housed in camps, and they remained hidden and anonymous in their respective urban sanctuaries. Several years on, that situation has changed and hundreds of thousands of refugees are no longer able to look after themselves (Harper 2008: 171).

The exact figures of the Iraqi refugees in host countries are difficult to scrutinise. Most refugees live in urban areas, and so are difficult to identify; only some register with UNHCR and many move from place to place. Therefore, in such a situation we are forced to adopt the estimates of host countries. What is certain is that life for most of the 2 million Iraq refugees in the region is extremely tough.



Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, UNHCR, Displaced Iraqis, April 2007.

Note: The number of Iraqi refugees in Jordan was revised from 450,000 to 500,000 as of May 2007 because of a survey requested by the Jordanian government, carried out by the FAFO. It is an outdated data and so it may change.

Table1: Number of Iraqi Refugees in Neighbouring Countries- 2009

Host countries	Registered with UNHCR	Host governments' estimate
Syria	221,506	1,200,000-1,500,000
Jordan	54,411	450,000-500-000
Lebanon	10,764	50,000
Egypt	10,163	Not available
Turkey	6,610	Not available
Iran	4,861	27,725
GCC Countries	2,112	2,00,000

Sources: UNHCR and the UN 2009 Consolidated Appeal for Iraq and the Region (Taken from USGAO Report to Congressional Committee).

The actual size of the refugee population is the subject of some debate. According to government estimates, the figure stands as between 1.2 and 1.5 million in Syria, 450,000- 500,000 in Jordan and 50,000 in Lebanon But the number of refugees registered with UNHCR is considerably smaller: around 221,506 in Syria 54,411 in Jordan, 10,764 in Lebanon in 2009.

The below table shows that the largest religious affiliations of Iraqi refugees are Islam – Sunni (56 percent), Shia (21 percent) and Unspecified Islam (4 percent). Minorities include Christian (14 percent), Sabeen/Mandean (3.5 percent) and Yezidis (0.5 percent). Both Syria and Jordan follows the above trends, but there are some changes in the trends in the case of Iran (majority Shias- 58 percent), Turkey (majority Christians- 56.9 percent), and Lebanon (majority Shias 46.9 percent).

Table 2: Religious Background of Registered Iraqi Refugees- 2009

Host countries	Sunni %	Shiite %	Christian %	Sebean %	Yazidis %	Others %
Syria	60.7	18	13.1	3.8	0.6	0.8
Jordan	50.3	29.2	12.6	4.5	0.1	0.8
Lebanon	19.8	46.9	24.6	0.1	0.1	1.7
Egypt	59.5	16.5	1.8			1.6
Turkey	23.9	7	56.9	0.1	0.8	1.3
Iran	4.1	58.2	0.2			36.6
Total	56	21	14	3.5	0.5	1

Source: UNHCR Iraq Situation Update 2009 (restructured)

Table 3: Ethnic Origin of Registered Iraqi Refugees- 2009

Host country	Arab %	Armenian %	Assyrian %	Chaldean %	Kurd %	Turkmen %	Others%
Syria	85.6	0.7	3.4	7.2	1.3	0.3	1.6
Jordan	86.2	0.7	4.2	5.9	1.6	0.4	1.1
Lebanon	61.9	0.6	2.7	16.3	0.7	0.1	17.8
Egypt	94.3		0.1	0.4	0.5	0.2	4.5
Turkey	23.8	1.1	10.9	44.5	6.2	13	0.4
Iran	61.5				9.1	0.2	29.1
Total	82	0.5	3.5	8	2	1	3

Source: UNHCR Iraq Update 2009 (restructured)

In terms of ethnicity, as table 3 shows, the majority of Iraqi refugees are Arab (82 percent), followed by Chaldean (8 percent), Assyrians (3.5 percent), Kurd (2 percent) and Turkmen (1 percent) and Armenian (0.5 percent). Syria and Jordan's demography

follows the above pattern. But in Turkey, Chaldeans constitute the major ethnic population (44.5 percent), not the Arabs (23.8 percent).

There were about 40,000–60,000, Mandaean community in Iraq prior to the US-led invasion, has dwindled to less than 5,000 currently. There is now a large Mandaean refugee population in Syria (2,100 families), Jordan (500 families), and in Yemen (46 individuals) (Nashi and Bolender 2009).

According to UNHCR, approximately 34,000 Palestinians were living in Iraq before 2003. Now there are about 15,000 living in Baghdad. Their situation is extremely vulnerable. Many of those who fled in search of refuge elsewhere used forged documents. Some 2,700 Palestinians denied entry by Syria are stranded in two makeshift camps at the Syria/Iraq border where conditions are extremely harsh. Al-Waleed camp, near the border with Syria, but inside Iraq, hosts at least 2,000 Palestinians. Al-Tanf camp, in the no-man's land, was hosting 710 people as of 14 May 2008. A third camp, al-Hol camp, in al-Hassakah governorate in northeast Syria, housed 326 Palestinians (AI, June 2008: 61).

Among the Iraqi refugees in the West Asian region, the male-female breakdown is found to be to the tune of female 47 percent and male 53 percent. The largest age group is 18-59 years old (57 percent), followed by 5-17 years old (28 percent), 0-4 years old (9 percent) and 60+ years old (6 percent). Male/female breakdown within each age group follows largely the general ratio (UNHCR Iraq Refugees Registration Data Analysis, 2007-2008: 7).

In case of education, some 16 percent of the registered Iraqi refugees have university degrees, whereas 14 percent is with no education. Overall, 33 percent of all registered adults have attended Grade 9 -14 and 29 percent Grade 1-8. Jordan and Egypt have the largest portion of Iraqi refugees with university degree (24 percent) (UNHCR Iraq Refugees Registration Data Analysis, 2007-2008: 8).

About 17 percent of the registered Iraqi refugees have no occupation, 17 percent of them are housekeepers, and Medical Professions constitute around 2 percent and Teaching 3 percent. There is no significant difference between the countries (UNHCR Iraq Refugees Registration Data Analysis, 2007-2008: 9).

While Iraqi refugees are far from being assimilated into their host country, they have blended into urban areas, settling into cities like Amman and Damascus. Many Iraqis who fled the country before/after the U.S. invasion had some temporary means of supporting themselves either through their personal savings or through remittances from relatives abroad. The diplomatic community and the press dubbed wealthy Ba'ath party members and supporters of the Saddam Hussein regime who fled to Jordan in 2003 "Mercedes refugees". Nevertheless, aid workers assert that the newer waves of Iraqis who crossed the border are progressively poorer than their predecessors and prioritizing those most in need of assistance has become more critical. Aid workers note that because the Iraqi refugee population has blended into urban areas, they are harder to identify, document, and assist (CRS 2009: 6- 7).

The profile of Iraqi refugees, in general, is urban with about two-thirds originating from Baghdad of which more than four-fifths of adults had primary education or higher and at least one half of the adults were engaged in a job prior to displacement. Male/female ratio is 53:47; with just less than a third of the population in the age group between 18-59 years. Among the adult population, 13 percent have no education. Prior to displacement, among the adult population, 17 percent had no occupation, 26 percent were students and another 17 percent were housekeepers (UNHCR Iraqi Refugees Registration Data Analysis 2007-2008: 4).

The other characteristic of Iraqi refugees in the region is that 73 percent of the Iraqis registered with the UNHCR originate from Baghdad. The next highest Governorate of origin is Ninewa at 9 percent and Basrah at 4 percent (UNHCR 2009: 1- 2). The population is relatively well educated, with half of the heads of household having completed tertiary, undergraduate or postgraduate education. 75 to 90 percent of Iraqis reside in the capitals making this the world's largest urban refugee population (UNHCR Iraq Needs Analysis 2008: 2).

Over two-thirds of the displaced are those displaced from Baghdad alone, and many have relocated within that city. Of the Iraqi refugee population, more than half are Sunni. Conversely, over half of Iraqis displaced internally are Shia (Oliker 2010: 9).

Therefore, what makes the Iraqi refugee crisis unique is the fact that many of the refugees were urban, educated middle class who fled to large urban areas, making it

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extremely difficult for humanitarian agencies to provide the right services and to collate accurate information from an 'invisible' refugee population. The well off and educated were amongst the first to leave, followed by the middle class. The most vulnerable and poor stayed behind because they lack the resources to leave. Most of the earlier refugees were Sunnis and non-Muslim minorities, but as violence spread throughout the country, large numbers of Shia were also left with no option but to leave. By 2006, the refugee movement encompassed all religions and sects. In a way, the horrors of civil war and ethnic cleansing unite those refugees, and it is critical to remember that 'all refugees escape various forms of misery, leaving behind them relatives, friends, possessions' and that fundamental to their stories must be 'the central theme of loss'(Sasson 2009: 5)

According to the Iraqi Ministry for Migration and Displacement, almost half the members of Iraq's non-Muslim minorities have fled abroad. Although comprising only 4 to 5 percent of Iraq's pre-War population, UNHCR reports that almost 40 percent of registered refugees are Christians. According to the Mandaean Society of America, approximately 85 percent of Iraqi Mandaeans have fled Iraq since 2003. Sixty-two percent of Iraqi refugees who have arrived in the US for resettlement are Christian (Donnel and Newland 2008: 8- 9).

Since 2003, nearly 15 percent of Iraq's total population has fled their homes – 50 percent of them children; amongst those fleeing are doctors, nurses and teachers - a devastating brain drain leaving many Iraqi schoolchildren without access to quality education and basic health care (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) 2007: 2).

Causes of Iraqi Refugee Crisis

Without certain reasons nothing will happen. Iraqi refugee crisis or the displacement of Iraqi people is also not an exceptional one or an accidental byproduct of conflict or foreign invasion but is both an objective and a strategy in the armed struggle- a way of consolidating territorial and political control (Ferris 2008: 11). Earlier the Iraqi ruling party did it for their political interest and now it was the turn of foreign powers for their political and economic interests. However, the sad fact is that the victims are the same- the Iraqi people.



Schmeidl (2001) says, military intervention and intrastate conflicts with foreign intervention are the strongest producer of refugee migration. Iraq had experienced all such crisis so far. Moreover, it had not experienced a 'normal' state of affairs for almost the last four decades. The carnage and disaster of the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq War; the 1991 Gulf War; the uprising in the south following the 1991 War; the numerous savage attacks on the Kurds in the north and the Shia in the south; and finally more than a decade of sanctions (Sasson 2009: 1). Neither the war with Iran nor the Gulf War followed by more than a decade of sanctions, led to reform or the internal collapse of Saddam's regime, but left the mass of the population in a dire situation (Sasson 2009: 2). Iraq's exodus and brain drain after 2003 is just a continuation of the pre-invasion period and thus it is not a real 'crisis'. However, there are fundamental differences. The state under the Ba'th regime functioned despite being constrained by severe and inhumane sanctions. The occupation authorities, on the other hand, dismantled the key pillars of the state before setting up new ones. As a result, many parts of the functioning machine imploded, leading to a dramatic degradation in the provision of essential services, health care, education and the civil service. Corruption, which existed before, spread and permeated all levels of government. There is no doubt that the decline in all vital sectors began in the 1990s, but after the invasion, the state could barely function (Sasson 2009: 3).

Since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, millions of Iraqis have been forced to flee their homes because of fear—fear of sectarian violence, fear of coalition forces, and fear of kidnappers. Many leave because they have been targeted by sectarian militias or because of explicit threats to their lives. Some leave because they cannot get medical care inside Iraq, because their children cannot go to schools, or because their businesses are no longer sustainable.

The wider human rights situation in Iraq remains dire. Armed groups, the Multinational Forces, Iraqi security forces, and private military and security guards are killing people every month. Kidnappings, torture, ill-treatment and arbitrary detentions pervade the daily lives of Iraqis. Violence against women and girls, including rapes and killings in "honour crimes", is reportedly on the rise (Amnesty International (AI, June 2008: 7).

It is the cumulative effect of pressures on the Iraqi population that is the key to understanding recent patterns of movement. Living standards have declined steadily since 2003, while new crises of security have led more and more Iraqis to seek 'exit'. Iraqi society has been transformed by violence and the pervasiveness of deep mistrust amongst its population. The ties, fragile as they were, that held the society together, began loosening with the explosion of ethnic violence (Sasson 2009: 4).

When we look at the immediate reason for the current Iraqi refugee crisis, we can see the role of the US invasion based on some false allegations. About one million Iraqis were displaced by the time of the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003—the product of the Saddam Hussein regime's policies of forcibly displacing Iraqis for political ends. In the months preceding the War, the international humanitarian community predicted that a massive outpouring of refugees could result and engaged in significant contingency planning. But the invasion did not produce an immediate flow of refugees. In fact, most Iraqis stayed where they were. Between 2003 and 2005, 190,000 Iraqis were displaced. The situation changed dramatically with the bombing of the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra in February 2006. Displacement mushroomed between February 2006 and August 2007 (Ferris 2008: 24).

As of the end of August 2008, UNHCR had registered 219,010 Iraqis in Syria, 54,064 in Jordan, and 10,674 in Lebanon. Some 50 to 60 percent of those registered are Sunni. Shiites represent less than 30 percent of the total registered in Jordan and Syria, while in Lebanon, Sunnis make up 44 percent of the registered Iraqi population. In the Sunni majority Jordan, Shiites represent only 27 percent of the Iraqi refugees (Evans 2009: 15).

Consequences

Definitely, the Iraqi refugee crisis has some consequences, but we cannot count or measure its intensity; and it is difficult to limit the crisis to inside the Iraqi territory alone. As many Iraqis have fled to neighboring countries, and as the situation in Iraq affects the rest of the West Asia, it would be foolish to believe that the consequences will be limited to Iraq. Indeed, they will have to last throughout the region and even have a global impact.

The civil war that lasted for almost 18 months, from February 2006 to summer 2007, created the largest displacement of population in the West Asia since 1948. As violence engulfed Iraq, it triggered the internal and external displacement of hundreds of thousands. The refugee movement, which began in 2004, gathered momentum throughout the next three years and peaked in late 2006 (Sasson 2009: 4- 5).

In addition to producing massive flight, the war in Iraq has profoundly affected political and economic relations throughout the West Asia. Iraqi trade relations have been reformulated. Previous alliances have been broken and new alliances formed, largely on ethnic bases. The chaotic conditions in Iraq enable extremism to flourish there and, potentially, to spread beyond. Security concerns are at the heart of regional policies toward Iraqi refugees (Fagen 2007: 9).

The spontaneous flow of Iraqis away from their homes has had huge consequences for Iraq, including the tragic loss of cultural diversity and coexistence in many urban neighborhoods and remote villages, the brain drain of well-trained professionals, and shifts in national identity that are provoked by abrupt shift in Iraqi demographics. As much as 20 percent of Iraq's population has moved since 2003, half within the country and half across its international borders. Non-governmental organizations and various experts on the ground considered those figures to be inflated by as much as 30-40 percent, but even revised figures would suggest over a million Iraqis in need, outside of Iraq (Laipson 2009).

In addition to the sheer numbers of displaced people, the characteristics of the displaced population create further significant problems. Particularly damaging to Iraqi society has been the massive flight of the professional class since the 2003 invasion. At the beginning of the crisis, the first people to leave Iraq were those with sufficient resources to survive abroad. Targeted threats against professionals also induced this "brain drain." The Iraqi Medical Association reports that 50 percent of doctors have left Iraq. An Oxfam/ NCCI (NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq) study states that at least 40 percent of Iraq's professional staff has left the country since 2003. More than 230 university professors have been assassinated, and 3,000 have fled the country since 2003. In 2007, deans of three major universities in Baghdad reported that teacher populations had fallen by 80 percent (Lischer 2008:

103). Thus, we cannot imagine the intensity of this crisis and how much it will affect the present and future generations of the Iraqi people.

Governments in the region fear that the Iraqis may not only stay a long time, but that Iraq's conflict may spill over into their countries. Most governments in the region essentially closed their borders to Iraqis at the outset of the war. Currently, even those that responded generously in the early days of the crisis—Jordan and especially Syria—have also closed their borders, leaving few safe options for refugees (Ferris 2008: 20). The displacement of Iraqis has increased Sunni–Shi'i tensions and there is no doubt that this has raised alarm in all Arab countries.

UNHCR estimated that 4.5 million Iraqis had been displaced both before and after the 2003 US invasion — 2.2 million crossing the border and 2.3 million remaining internally displaced within Iraq (Donnel and Newland 2008: 3). The majority of displaced Iraqis are Shia and Sunni Muslims. According to IOM, about 63 percent of the internally displaced Iraqis were Shia Muslim and about 32 percent were Sunni Muslim (Donnel and Newland 2008: 7). All this can change the social and political dynamics of Iraq and it will have longstanding consequences throughout the region. Beyond the dire humanitarian consequences of scattering nearly 10 percent of Iraq's pre-war population into neighboring countries lay the long-term impact of this large-scale displacement on the geopolitics of the West Asia (CRS 2009: 6).

Situation of Iraqi Refugees in West Asia

Present regional havens for Iraqi refugees include Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Iran, the Gulf States and Turkey. Of these, only Egypt and Turkey have signed the UNHCR refugee Convention—with heavy restrictions and limited effective protection. A November 2006 Human Rights Watch report stated, “Generally, Iraqis throughout the West Asia remain unregistered, uncouned, unassisted and unprotected” (Fagen 2007: 11).

The current situation and the profile of the Iraqi refugees are not heterogeneous and have evolved with time. While some arrived early after the beginning of the war, some have just arrived a few months ago. Some arrived with good personal savings allowing them to set up and live in relatively good conditions, some arrived without money and assets and have immediately faced particularly precarious conditions. However, progressively, with the long lasting situation and work restrictions, many people with medium savings

have seen them quickly evaporated, and they are now in need of basic material, financial, social and medical assistance (Reslan 2008).

Iraqi refugees are in search of substantial housing assistance. Partially due to the large influx of Iraqis seeking shelter in limited housing markets, rents in the cities of neighbouring states have increased in the past three years, and constitute the largest single expense for Iraqi families. Though many families were living in basic conditions - with outdoor plumbing, poor insulation from cold and heat, little or no cooking facilities, and inadequate bedding - they were often behind on rent. Many families were without electricity and behind on other utilities and bills as well (Younes and Garcia 2006).

Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, the top Iraqi refugee-receiving countries, are not signatories to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Refugees in those countries have limited means of legal protection, and they are continually subject to changing requirements for entry and stay. Syria introduced visa restrictions from October 1, 2007, although some reports from the field indicate that many Iraqis who approach the border are able to get visas there. Jordan closed its borders at the end of 2005, and Saudi Arabia is building a 560-mile fence along the Iraq border to keep out illegal migrants and insurgents from Iraq (Donne and Newland 2008: 1).

There are many challenges facing the Iraqi refugees living abroad. Aside from the social isolation that accompanies their separation from family and tribe, Iraqis may face discrimination and disdain from citizens who view them as competition for jobs and access to strained social welfare services. Unemployment was already high the West Asian region especially in Syria and Jordan before the Iraqis' arrival, and both countries bar them from legally working during their stay. Access to affordable health care is difficult for most refugees without significant personal savings, forcing many new arrivals to turn to international aid agencies. Some estimate that hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children are not attending public school while in exile (CRS 2009: 7).

For those lucky enough to access a territory outside Iraq, their situation is steadily worsening. Their need to pay rent, buy food and fund medical treatment, combined with the limited capacity of humanitarian agencies to meet these needs, are threatening the survival of millions of Iraqi refugees. Savings go only so far. Years on

from their initial flight, many families are now destitute and facing impossible choices and new risks, including child labour, prostitution and the prospect of being forced through circumstances to undertake “voluntary” return to Iraq (AI June 2008: 3)

Middle class Iraqis' resources are being further depleted by their inability to work legally in host countries. Though they have marketable skills, having worked as doctors, teachers, architects, blacksmiths, hairdressers, they are barred from practicing their trade. Work in the informal sector is hard to come by, and many Iraqis who are able to work despite their undocumented status report workplace abuses, including a failure to receive payment. Additionally, many Iraqis are afraid to work for fear of having their papers checked and then being deported back to Iraq. These circumstances have plunged the Iraqi middle class amongst the urban poor in Damascus, Amman, and Beirut (Younes and Garcia 2006).

At least 729 Palestinian refugees who have fled Iraq are stranded in appalling conditions in al-Tanf camp in the no-man's land on the Iraq-Syria border. The narrow strip of land, wedged between a concrete wall and the main transit road from Baghdad to Damascus, is dry and dusty. Temperatures soar to 50 degree Celsius in summer and plunge to below freezing in winter. Overcrowded tents are the only protection from the heat, the snow and the blinding sandstorms. According to UNHCR, since 2003 the number of Palestinians in Iraq has fallen from 34,000 to around 15,000. UNHCR considers Palestinians, especially those at al-Tanf, to be among the most vulnerable among the 2 million refugees who have fled Iraq. The Syrian authorities are generally not willing to accept Palestinian refugees (AI, April 2008: 2).

In the case of Palestinean refugees from Iraq, since the US invasion, they have been abducted, tortured, killed, intimidated and threatened with death by Shi'a armed militia groups, in particular the Mahdi Army. They have been targeted because of their ethnicity and because they are reputed to have received preferential treatment under the former Ba'ath government headed by Saddam Hussain. According to UNHCR, approximately 34,000 Palestinians were living in Iraq before 2003. Now there are about 15,000 living in Baghdad. Many of those who fled in search of refuge elsewhere used forged documents. Thousands have ended up in makeshift camps near the border, where conditions are harsh. Some 2,700 Palestinians denied entry by Syria are stranded in two makeshift camps at the Syria/Iraq border where conditions are

extremely harsh. Al-Waleed camp, near the border with Syria, but inside Iraq, hosts at least 2,000 Palestinians. Al-Tanf camp, in the no-man's land, was hosting 710 people as of 14 May 2008. A third camp, al-Hol camp, in al-Hassakah governorate in northeast Syria, housed 326 Palestinians (AI, June 2008: 61).

Information about the socio-economic circumstances of displaced Iraqis is largely based on small and localized surveys, depending on the country. It is important to recognize that most Iraqis have settled in local communities, not in camps, although there are large concentrations in certain areas. They may either be living with families or renting their own accommodation, often in overcrowded conditions (Joint Appeal by UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UNHCR, UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP) and WHO 2007: 3)

Most of the current violence occurs in towns and cities, which serves as battlegrounds for coalition forces fighting insurgents and are the primary site for sectarian violence. This is an urban war and thus it is no surprise that those who are displaced are an urban population. Some 80 percent of the displaced in the country are from Baghdad, many of whom have moved to other neighborhoods in the capital city. Iraqi refugees in other countries are also urban refugees. In fact, this is the largest urban refugee situation in the world. While there are many positive aspects to the Iraqi dispersal among the host communities' populations rather than concentrated in camps, one of the clear consequences of the urban nature of the displacement is that it is less visible. It is harder to get a handle on the conditions facing urban IDPs and refugees and even on their numbers. This makes it more difficult to organize humanitarian assistance to people who seek security by remaining out of sight (Ferris 2008: 20).

Table: 4 Specific Needs of the Iraqi Refugees- 2009

Host countries	Child at risk %	Disabled %	Medical %	Older person %	Single person %	Protection n %	UAM* %	WAR** %
Syria	4.4	2.5	19	1.7	0.2	20	0.1	3.8
Jordan	0.02	1.6	13.4	1.1	0.05	3.6	0.2	2.5

Source: UNHCR Iraq Situation Update 2009 (restructured)

*UAM- Unaccompanied Minor, **WAR- Woman At Risk

The above table gives us the details of the needs and vulnerable situation of the helpless Iraqi refugees in the neighbouring countries. It shows that the Iraqi refugees in Syria are the most vulnerable and needy in almost all cases among the neighbouring states followed by Jordan and Lebanon. In the case of unaccompanied minor refugees all the states show only narrow differences.

Over 33 percent of those registered have special needs, including chronic illnesses/injuries, survivors of torture and trauma, children or adolescents at risk, women at risk, disabled and older persons; The MoH in Syria has confirmed increased stunting and wasting of children under 5, Some 25 to 28 percent of those registered are of school going age; 96 percent rent a house, with 62 percent paying between US Dollar (USD) 100 and USD 300 (over 51 percent are paying in excess of USD 220); As Iraqis are not allowed to work, 86 percent are reliant on remittances from relatives and or friends in Syria, Iraq or abroad. Over half had no regular income (UNHCR Iraq Needs Analysis 2008: 2).

The most striking aspect of this situation is the reluctance of refugees to return despite their difficulties. Most have so far enjoyed basic physical security but face serious problems in relation to income, employment, housing, health and education in the host countries of the West Asia, where they are regarded as temporary guests or visitors (Marfleet and Chatty 2009: 2). So the status of Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Syria is further complicated by the reaction of these states to the strain of the Iraqi presence on their infrastructures, in addition to security considerations.

UNHCR presents two sets of statistics as “planning figures” for Iraqi refugees living in neighbouring states: those provided by governments in the region and those registered with the agency. According to Chaletard, over many generations, Iraqis have migrated as business people, workers, professionals, students, pilgrims and as refugees, some settling in cities such as Amman and Damascus and maintaining links with Iraq which have shaped further complex movements. The question of who among such communities should be counted as a ‘refugee’ is made more complex by the approach of governments in the region. Further difficulty is added by the outcomes of recent surveys conducted by NGOs, research consultancies and government agencies (Marfleet and Chatty 2009: 13).

Nearly seven years after the US- led invasion of Iraq, there is no end in sight to the difficulties the Iraqi refugees have to face in neighbouring countries such as Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Facing government harassment, unemployment and a lack of

basic essentials where they are, or the prospect of returning to sectarian violence, looting and economic hardship in Iraq, these refugees are struggling to live.

Iraq today is faced with a multi layered displacement crisis that is massive in both size and complexity. It is estimated that 3.8 million Iraqis were displaced from their homes from 2003 to 2008, with the majority of them becoming displaced in 2006 and the first half of 2007. This figure, which includes both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, is in addition to the one million Iraqis who had already been displaced because of the policies of the former Ba'th Party regime (Isser and Peter 2009: 2).

The fragmentation of Iraq's population has serious implications not only for the country but for the whole region. Iraq's relationship with its neighbouring countries and the Arab world underwent dramatic changes following the occupation, and there is no doubt that this will have an important impact on the balance of power in the West Asia for years to come. In addition, the fact that almost two million Iraqis fled to neighbouring countries and constitute about 9 percent of Jordan's and roughly 7 percent of Syria's population will gravely affect those countries, particularly in times of political or economic instability. The sheer number of refugees in Jordan and Syria may affect the geo-political situation in the West Asia, an area already plagued with uncertainty and discord. In general, all host countries in the region are extremely worried about Iraq's ethnic polarization and the potential contagion effects. They feel nervous of having all those Iraqis in their midst and fear they could disrupt their social fabric. These countries are also anxious that the refugees will never return to Iraq as many have lost their homes and jobs (Sasson 2009: 6).

The number one need of Iraqi refugees is housing assistance. Access to education for children is the second greatest need. The Iraqis' medical needs are also largely unanswered in all three countries. Since 2003, Iraq's neighbors either willingly or unwillingly absorbed approximately 2 million refugees fleeing violence and instability in their home country. Jordan and Syria have been the primary destination for the displaced, and by all accounts, both countries have been stretched thin in trying to provide adequate services for largely unwanted refugee populations. Although the plight of many Iraqis refugees is difficult but not dire, there is much concern that the situation could deteriorate over time if the existing refugee

populations remain for a prolonged period or if new waves of refugees flood Iraq's neighbors.

The Iraqi refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria are scattered amongst a much larger urban population and across a much bigger geographical area. Some are immobile due to ill health or family commitments, while others live a long distance and an expensive journey away from UNHCR's offices. In addition, those distances are getting longer. As their time in exile becomes more protracted and their financial assets diminish, some Iraqi refugees are moving to out-of-town neighborhoods in order to find cheaper accommodation, their primary item of expenditure. In these circumstances, there is a danger that a 'survival of the fittest' scenario might arise, whereby the refugees who have most contact with UNHCR are not the most vulnerable, but are the most articulate, entrepreneurial and physically able members of the Iraqi population. A relatively large proportion is elderly or has complex medical problems. Because they are not officially allowed to work, men have been stripped of their role as family provider and feel that their masculinity has been undermined. This has contributed to a situation in which refugee women and girls are at risk of domestic violence, sexual exploitation and early marriage (UNHCR's PDES 2009: 27).

The Iraqi displacement is unlike many other refugee crises because of the dispersed, urban settlement patterns of most of the refugees. While the concentration of refugees in camps often produces pathologies, such as domestic and criminal violence, militarization, and radicalization, it does simplify the distribution of aid through humanitarian agencies. Because of the urban living arrangements of most Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan, they blend in with the local culture, making it more difficult for aid agencies to identify, register, and assist them, and for Iraqis to access assistance. As Iraqis are forced to move to the peripheries of urban centers due to the cost of living, they are even further removed from assistance (Donnel and Newland 2008: 3). The condition of the Iraqi refugees in the neighbouring West Asian states is pathetic and it will become more tragic unless and until the attention of international community reaches there with proper solution.

IRAQI REFUGEES IN SYRIA

Syria is one of the most densely populated countries in West Asia. It has been overwhelmed by the large influx of refugees from various parts of the region in different periods, of which Palestinians and Iraqis constitute the bulk. Since its independence, it has kept open its borders for Arab migrants. The refugees get Syrian services in health and education. Syria is considered as a secular and religiously diverse country. The majority of its citizens are Sunnis and there are influential minorities of Allawite Muslims, Shias, Christians and Druze. Iraqis also constitute almost all these denominations; therefore, they can find co-groups. Nevertheless, it is this very reason that makes Syria fear a deformation in the sectarian harmony that characterizes Syrian society, and poses potential challenges to the secular state, particularly because of the arrival of a large number of Shia refugees (Fagen 2007: 15).

History of Iraqi Refugees in Syria

Over the course of the past 25 years, there have been two waves of Iraqi refugees coming into Syria - during the Saddam period and after the US- led invasion in 2003. In 1970s and 1980s, many of them were Sunnis who opposed the Saddam Hussein regime. Others included the Shia population fleeing persecution. The second wave of the flow of Iraqi refugees started in 2003 because of the US invasion. Following the US- led invasion in 2003, various religious, ethnic, economic and political groups began coming to Syria at different times. Before the war, there were already Shia refugees, people who were employed in Syria. Since the war started, in the initial stage, there were members of the former regime, majority of them Sunnis and wealthy. After that, wealthier and secular Shia refugees came. Following the Samarra bombing in 2006, a large number of poor Shias arrived and finally, in early 2007, due to the fear of more violence, there has been a influx of both Sunnis and Shias. Now, because of the poor security situation, both Sunnis and Shias are crossing the border and majority of them belong to a poor background. (Al Khalidi et al. 2007: 9).

Syria has a long record of hosting Iraqi refugees. An Amnesty International report in 2007 reveals that before 2003, many opponents of the Saddam regime lived in and used Syria as a base for political opposition activities and Iraqis with diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds were welcomed in Syria. Some of these Iraqis returned home following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, including some who joined the new government. However, another large chunk of Iraqis has replaced them, particularly since 2006. Since the 1980s, opponents of the Saddam regime from all groups, including dissident Sunnis have found refuge in Syria. Among them were members of the current Iraqi administration. Kurds also have come to Syria and through Syria, they tried to reach Kurdistan (Fagen 2007: 14).

When we look at the situation of Iraqis before 2003 in the Syrian Arab Republic, According to Dorai (2007),

They were mostly of Arab ethnicity, 70 percent were Shias originating from southern Iraq, and around 15 percent were Sunnis and the remainders were Kurds, Assyrians from Baghdad and Basra, Turkomen from the Khanaquin region and Yazidis from the Sinjar area. Some 2,400 Iraqis had been granted or were being considered for refugee status by UNHCR. Furthermore, there were around 60,000-70,000 Iraqis who had never approached UNHCR or had been denied refugee status through the UNHCR refugee status determination process and continued to reside illegally in the country, tolerated by the Syrian authorities. Most Iraqis in Syria were concentrated in the Saida Zeineb quarter in Damascus located near prominent Shia shrines. Since 2003, the situation has dramatically changed and Iraqis are now located in most of the Damascus suburbs and neighbouring cities (Dorai 2007: 4).

As mentioned by Mohamed Kamel Dorai, the number of Iraqis entering Syria has rapidly increased since 1999, starting from 58,136 to 253,120 in 2003, this number being multiplied by three times in 2004 and exceeding 900,000 in 2005. An average of 30,000 to 40,000 Iraqis enters Syrian territory each month according to *Al Baath* newspaper. A survey of Iraqi refugees by a global survey-based market research company based in France (IPSOS) in 2007 reveals that 30 percent of the respondents arrived in Syria in 2006, 12 percent between January and March 2007, 16 percent between April and June 2007, 34.5 percent between July and October 2007 and 7.5 percent arrived prior to 2006.

According to the UNHCR, in 2002 there were only 1716 Iraqi refugees in Syria and 2435 in 2003. In 2006, it was around 4.5 lakh. Then the situation totally changed, and

the number of Iraqi refugees had been increasing gradually since the US- led invasion or in the post- Saddam period and increased rapidly after 2006 because of the bomb attack on a Shia shrine in Samarra, and in 2009, it has reached a figure between 1.2 - 1.5 million.

Syria as the Destination

For the displaced persons or forced migrants, there must be some calculation and considerations in choosing a country for settlement or shelter, among them the first consideration would be whether that country will be willing to allow entry to their territory. Next will be whether they can offer the prospects of a peaceful life. In addition, their history of treating refugees would be a criterion.

The lion's share of the Iraqi refugees sought refuge in Syria. The reasons for this are: the geographic proximity of Syria as the immediate neighbour of Iraq, simple entry requirements for refugees, easy access to services in Syria, common language (Arabic), the low cost of living and sometimes the presence of relatives and friends. Among this, the main factor is that Syria is close to Iraq, which shares a common border. It is easier to get to Syria than any other country in the region including Jordan. To enter the country, Syria does not require a visa for other Arabs, because of its strong commitment to pan-Arab solidarity. Easy access to Syrian services like education and health was also a factor. As far as economic factors are concerned, it is easier for the refugees in Syria to find small jobs. The cost of living is also lower in Syria when compared to other neighboring countries. If we examine the sectarian considerations too, there are so many reasons for Iraqis to choose Syria as their first preference. For Sunni refugees from Iraq, Syria is not a pro-US state as some other Arab countries in the region are. For many Shias, Syrians did not receive from the Saddam Hussein regime the preferential treatment they believe many Jordanians and Palestinians received (although some Syrian political opponents did receive preferential treatment). Other reasons include the fact that Iraqis and Syrians have similar living conditions, which makes them closer. Iraqis feel that Syrians lack the arrogance they perceive from others, for instance from the people in the Gulf countries. All these factors led the bulk of Iraqi refugees to choose Syria as their prime destination. (Al Khalidi et al.2007: 20). Syria is the primary destination of refugees due to the historical relations between the two countries, and because the

regulations in force do not require them to obtain an entrance visa (Al Miqdad, 2007: 19).

It may come as a surprise that a number of Iraqi Shias have sought refuge in Sunni majority Syria even when there is a Shia majority southern Iraq and Iran. According to The Brookings Institution's report on Iraqi refugees staying in Syria, there are several answers to this factor. First, like many other Iraqi refugees, Iraqi Shias leave their country for Syria not only to seek security but also in the hope of better economic conditions – work opportunities in Iraq are, of course, very limited, even in the relatively stable areas of the South. Second, many Shias go to Syria in the hope of obtaining asylum or resettlement in third countries, something they cannot do in Iraq. Third, many urban moderate or secular Shias do not want to live under the strict religious laws of the South, or under the control of the different radical Shia groups that control most of the South. Fourth, over the past some months, most southern governorates (Basra, Muthanna, Dhi-Qar, Kerbala and Babylon) have restricted the entry of displaced people who do not have relatives in the governorate, do not belong to local tribes or do not have kin with whom they can live. Lastly and importantly, Shia Iraqis do not move to Iran because the vast majority feel more comfortable in an Arab country, where people speak Arabic.

In Syria, the Government's generosity towards Iraqis has proved commendably enduring, with refugees enjoying relatively easy admission to its territory and access to the same health care and education services as Syrian nationals (OCHA, UNHCR 2010: 12). All the above factors played a major role in leading a mass of Iraqi refugees to Syria.

Entry and Visa

Historically, many West Asian countries have maintained a relatively open door policy regarding non-nationals, particularly if coming from a fellow Arab nation. In line with pan-Arabism and likely connected to the notion of 'aman' in Islam, the Syrian regime has, for example, traditionally allowed any Arab visitor to enter Syria without a visa (Barnes 2009: 16).

Families with children attending schools in Syria or with family members in need of medical treatment can apply for temporary residence permits, which must be renewed

monthly and only for up to a year. Such permits allow Iraqis to obtain permission from the Syrian authorities to travel to Iraq with an option of returning to Syria within three months (AI, June 2008: 10).

Until the end of 2006, Iraqis who entered Syria had their passports stamped at the border and were issued with a three-month visa. This could then be renewed for a further three months at any Syrian Immigration Department office in Damascus or another centre. This changed at the beginning of 2007, when the Syrian authorities reduced the length of the initial visa from three months to one month. The one-month visa is renewable for a further two months at the same office in Damascus or another centre. Once a visa has been extended for two months and is about to expire, Iraqis are then required to leave the country and to obtain a new visa if they wish to reenter. In practice, this has meant that many Iraqis have had to travel to the border checkpoint in order to exit Syria, so obtaining an exit stamp, and then immediately re-enter, obtaining a new one-month visa (renewable for a further two months). At the most fundamental level, access to protection through entry to Syria is now severely restricted, despite the on-going need of individuals to flee Iraq. Until October 2007, Iraqis could enter Syria freely. However, the Syrian government, faced with the huge increase in the Iraqi refugee population, the lack of support from the international community, and at the request of the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, decided to introduce strict visa requirements (AI June 2008: 9).

Although Syria is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, initially the Syrian government opened its borders to the Iraqis and allowed them access to state provided social programs. However, Syria closed its borders in late 2007 in response to the growing economic and social stresses. The Syrian government began issuing one-month visas (which are renewable for two additional months). Iraqis were now required to reenter Iraq and obtain a new visa if they wanted to remain in Syria (Lischer 2008: 108). In the face of the growing Iraqi population, Syria started imposing restrictions on Iraqi refugees; it now charges for health care that used to be free. Similarly, until recently Iraqis were issued six-month visas. Recent policy changes now limit Iraqis to a three-month visa, and force them to undertake expensive trips to exit the country and renew their visas (Younes and Garcia 2006: 1).

The Syrian government introduced new regulations, preventing the renewal of the three-month visas on expiry. Instead of visas, refugees found exit stamps put in their passports. Those who stay in Syria illegally risk police persecution and imprisonment (Grenfell 2008). Iraqi refugees who do manage to enter Syria face insecurity both politically and socially. Despite some Iraqis having managed to obtain a temporary residence permit, and some having registered with UNHCR, the majority Iraqi refugees in Syria are in an irregular situation with no legal status. Until the end of 2007, the Syrian government allowed unrestricted entry of Iraqi children to local schools, and Iraqis had the same access to health and other public services as Syrians. Those without formal status usually find badly paid employment in the informal sector, but Syrians grant work permits to high-level professionals and/or to Iraqis who establish their own businesses (Fagen 2007: 16).

Syria used to allow all Iraqis to stay for six months without a visa, but its open-border policy has changed since 10 September 2007, when new pre-entry visa restrictions were imposed on all Iraqis wishing to enter with a few exceptions for certain professional categories, such as academics and businesspersons. Iraqis wishing to enter Syria are now required to apply for visas at the Syrian embassy in Baghdad, but many are reportedly unable or unwilling to travel to the capital, mainly because of security concerns. In Syria, most Iraqis are illegally overstaying their visas, but until now, this has been quite tolerated by the Syrian government. (International Organization for Migration (IOM) Survey Report 2008: 47).

UNHCR Global Appeal 2010–11 also shows that while new and stricter visa requirements were introduced for Iraqis at the end of 2007, and residence permits are only issued for short periods of time, Iraqis have largely been able to remain in the country. However, there have been reports of some detention and deportation in 2009. The authorities have shown some tolerance towards refugees working in the informal market, although they are barred from formal employment.

Those who can obtain entry visas include academics and their immediate families; Iraqi students enrolled in Syrian universities and other higher education institutions; truck and passenger drivers operating on the Baghdad-Damascus route; members of cultural and sporting delegations visiting or passing through Syria; and traders and business people with commercial interests needing to travel to Syria. Such permits allow Iraqis to obtain permission from the Syrian authorities to travel to Iraq with an option to return

to Syria within three months. Although not officially mentioned in the new directives, people associated with the former Iraqi Baath party and people opposed to the current Iraqi government are reported generally to be granted residence permits (AI Briefing 2008: 5).

Legal Status and Registration

There is Syrian government documentation and UNHCR registration for the Iraqi refugees who enter into the Syrian territory. All refugee certificates issued or renewed are valid for two years. The number of applicants with medical problems has remained high with up to 50 percent of those registering with the UNHCR in Syria in recent months having specific needs. In Syria, the waiting period for non-urgent new registration interviews is currently around 12 weeks compared to two to three days in Jordan. It is mainly because of the needs to renew the registration of the existing refugee population in the former (UNHCR Iraq Situation Update February 2009: 3).

According to the UNICEF Regional Response Plan for Iraqi refugees in 2010, new registrations with UNHCR have been stable in 2009, and remains around 3,000 per month. Provided the situation in Iraq does not deteriorate, new registrations are likely to decline as fewer Iraqis come to Syria and the number of previously unregistered refugees continues to diminish.

The report of the Amnesty International in the year 2008 found that most Iraqis in Syria are not in a secure position. The Syrian authorities do not officially consider them as refugees. Some Iraqis register with UNHCR, but this does not protect them against refoulement. Some have been granted temporary residence, but it is not clear what may happen to them once their residence permit has run out. As of early March 2008, about 170,000 Iraqis had registered with UNHCR, 45 percent of them women and girls. The number of those registered had almost doubled since mid-June 2007 when 90,000 Iraqis were registered. At the beginning of May 2008, the UNHCR stated that to date the agency had registered over 194,273 Iraqi refugees (52 percent male, 48 percent female). Until the end of March 2007, Iraqis who registered with the UNHCR received temporary protection letters from the agency that were valid for six months and then renewable. However, since April 2007, the UNHCR recognizes all Iraqis from the central and southern areas of Iraq as refugees on a *prima facie* basis, although they are still interviewed by UNHCR protection officers in order to establish

that they are from these regions. Despite the best efforts of the UNHCR, the letters are not sufficient to protect individuals against the threat of refoulement.

Until the end of 2006 Iraqis who entered Syria had their passports stamped at the border and were issued with three-month visas. These could then be renewed for a further three months at any Syrian Immigration Department office in Damascus or another centre. This changed at the beginning of 2007, however, when the Syrian authorities reduced the length of the initial visa from three months to one month, this new visa being renewable for a further two months when it expired, again in Damascus or another centre with an Immigration Department office. Once a visa has been extended for two months, and is about to expire, Iraqis are then required to leave the country and to obtain a new visa if they wish to re-enter. In practice, this means that many Iraqis travel to the border checkpoint in order to exit Syria, so obtaining an exit stamp, and then immediately re-enter, obtaining a new one month visa (renewable for a further two months) when doing so (AI 2007: 4).

For the Iraqi refugees, registration with UNHCR is valuable for several reasons. First, it gives the registered refugee a temporary protection letter that ensures in theory that the refugee cannot be deported, even though Syria is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention (UNRC), which means that the temporary refugee protection is not enforceable. Second, registration makes possible some reimbursement for health expenses through the Syrian Red Crescent. Third, it opens the door for resettlement (Al Khalidi 2007: 28).

Political Status of Iraqi Refugees

As Sassoon (2009) mentions, Syria's policy towards the Iraqi refugees in part reflects political, security and economic calculations. Syria has a fear that Iraqi refugees might bring their sectarian rivalries with them. The security issues mainly arise from the Shia 'factor' in Syria, which is not to be underestimated given the role that religious Shia institutions play in Syria, while the Sunnis lack such organizations. There is also a potential threat that extreme Sunni Iraqis could radicalize Syria's Sunni community against domination by the Allawite minority. Iraqis in Syria are not allowed to have their associations and in any case, under Syrian law, the government has extensive jurisdiction to control the day-to-day operations of any association. According to the Article 34 of the Syrian Constitution, political refugees cannot be extradited because of their political principles or their defense of freedom.

Political Affiliation

The first Iraqi wave to enter Syria following the US invasion consisted of the more politicized and politically threatened members of the Baath party, including leaders in Saddam Hussein's government and party. Iraqi Palestinians, also targeted as allied with Saddam Hussein, came as well. The fighting in Falluja in November 2004 brought a flood of Iraqis to Syria. They were still Sunni in the majority, but with that event, the flight of people escaping from the carnage far outstripped that of political leaders. Since then, the Shiites predominate among the new entries (Fagen 2007: 14).

The Amnesty International report of 2007 also strengthens the above fact, when it reveals that the Iraqis currently living in Syria also include many former members of the Ba'th party and people who formerly were military or security officials under Saddam Hussein, Shias as well as Sunnis, who fled after he was toppled from power because armed groups targeted them. Some also went to Syria because they feared the security forces of the new Iraqi government would arrest them because they had served under the ousted Ba'th regime. There are reports of the presence of Iraqi radical group members in Syria. Numerous sources confirm that both Sunni and Shia radical armed groups have people in Syria. The Baathist resistance is without doubt the group with the strongest presence (Al Khalidi et al. 2007: 15). Militant leaders present a greater threat to political order than ordinary Iraqi refugees do. Radical groups, both Shiite and Sunni, have established offices in exile, which could provide a staging ground for future militant activity.

Field research by the Brookings Institution found that "in the past one to two years . . . people linked at a lower level to both Sunni and Shia radical and insurgent groups have begun coming to Syria, some as refugees. . . . What is unclear, however, is the extent to which these people remain part of their organizations once in Syria. Active members of the radical groups—again, both Sunni and Shia—come to Syria to procure goods and especially to contact non-Iraqi insurgents headed for Iraq (Lischer 2008: 107).

Virtually all Iraqi factions and parties have some sort of presence in Syria, primarily by running offices in Damascus. Many Iraqi refugees in Syria say they prefer to stay away from them, but add that they do not sense that they pose any threat to them even if some of these same parties caused their flight from Iraq. These parties and politicians include Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi

movement, the al-Da'wa party, the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (formerly Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq), the two main Kurdish parties the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), Sheikh Juher Muhi'eddin al-Harki (a leader of the Kurdish Harki tribe), the Iraqi Ba'th faction headed by Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, another rival Ba'th faction led by Muhammad Yunis al-Ahmad (who is believed to be living in Syria), and Hareth al-Dari's Association of Muslim Scholars (al-Dari lives in Amman but visits Damascus frequently). Few of these parties in Syria are politically active let alone involved in recruitment efforts among Iraqi refugees. None of the Iraqi political activists interviewed by the author took part in humanitarian efforts or acts of charity to fellow Iraqis (Leenders 2008: 1575).

Iraqi Sunni politicians and parties have been given somewhat more freedom in terms of staging political activities, but their efforts remain limited. There are several initiatives of Iraqi Ba'thist organised conferences in order to close ranks against the US occupation in Iraq, and even some unconfirmed reports of merging of the Syrian and Iraqi branches of the Ba'th party. However, internal divisions among Iraqi activists and restrictions set by the Syrian government have thus far caused such initiatives to have little concrete significance. Against this background it appears that the Syrian regime prefers to keep its options open and ensure it sustains good relations with all Iraqi factions in the event of developments in Iraq escalating, hoping that its currently limited influence in Iraq will be enhanced via its contacts with Iraqi political activists among its refugee population (Leenders 2008: 1576).

The Brookings Institution Report says that there are very few self-help organizations within the Iraqi refugee community, mainly Christian and Sabean. Some Shia offices in Sayyida Zeinab - a Sistani-affiliated (*hauza*) office, a Sadr office and a Shahid al-Mihrab (SCIRI) office - operate openly but do not provide much assistance, sometimes helping to gather money for Iraqis who want to return but cannot afford the bus fare. They mostly organize Shia ceremonies and register the marriages of Iraqi Shia. These types of self-help among the Iraqi Muslim refugees are limited to friends and kin. But there is little formal organizing among the refugees. It is difficult to start an association or organization in Syria, but this lack of organization is nevertheless striking. Relatively speaking, Christians and the Sabeans are more active in organizing solidarity networks within their communities that go beyond extended families and circles of friends.

Profile of Iraqi Refugees Since 2003

Among the host countries, Syria hosts the largest Iraqi refugee population in the world. However, the fact is that there has been no official census; some estimates place the figure around 1.5 million. When we examine the profile, we find a large number of Iraqi refugees from various religious, ethnic, political and economic backgrounds in Syria.

It is very complex and confusing to get the exact number of Iraqi refugees in Syria. Because the true number is not available, we have the data from UNHCR, Syrian government, the Iraqi embassy in Damascus, and some NGOs, etc. However, when we explore the data from the above institutions we can get an approximate number of Iraqi refugees, which is around 1- 1.5 million.

At present, UNHCR has approximately 205,754 Iraqis registered in Syria. In addition, there are an unknown number of unregistered Iraqis not supported by UNHCR. The number of the Iraqis displaced in Syria who need assistance in one way or another remain at the official figure circulated by UNHCR and the government of Syria which is between 1.2 - 1.4 million (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2009: 2). There has been no official census carried out on the number of Iraqi refugees. However, according to the Syrian Government, there are around 1.6 million Iraqis living in Syria, while the UNHCR said that there are between 1.2 and 1.5 million. (UNHCR, Iraq Situation Update, April-May 2008).

The Iraqi Embassy in Damascus estimates the total number to be between 800,000 and 1 million. Of the UNHCR registered refugees in Syria, 55.7 percent are Sunnis, 20.2 percent Shia, 16 percent Christians, 2.3 percent Islam unspecified, 4.3 percent Mandeian-Sabeian, 0.8 percent Yezidis and 0.7 percent other (UNHCR Iraq Situation Update, April-May 2008).

According to the UNHCR Iraq Refugees Registration Data Comparative Analysis, 2007-2008,

In Syria, those who arrived prior to 2003 and registered with UNHCR are largely Shia (65 percent), but become fewer among those who arrived in the first half of 2006 (16 percent); thereafter, the Shia ratio is averaged between 14 – 17 percent. Mirroring this change is the increase of Sunnis, from 19

percent prior to 2003 to more than two-thirds in the first half of 2006, thereafter, continuing to be the majority. The ratio of Christians ranges between 41 percent in 2004 to 10 percent in 2006, and 20 percent in the second half of 2008. The ratio of Yezedis is the highest among arrivals in the second half of 2007 (2 percent). The ratio of Sabean/Mandean shows the highest among arrival in 2004 (8 percent) while at other times between 2 – 6 percent. The ratio of others is consistent throughout all periods between 0 – 2 percent. In Syria, Arab is the majority throughout different times of arrival between 62 – 91 percent. The ratio of Chaldeans is the highest among those who arrived in 2004 (25 percent), and for the rest of the period remains between 2 -11 percent. There is a 13 percent of Kurds among those who arrived before 2003, which reduces to less than 3 percent from 2003 onwards (UNHCR Iraq Refugees Registration Data Comparative Analysis, 2007-2008).

When we examine the Iraqi refugees' profile and peculiarity, we can see that they include both majority and minority religious and ethnic groups, urban and mixed. This has many reasons; much of the sectarian violence occurred in the mixed Sunni and Shia areas that are, or were, overwhelmingly urban. These include Iraq's largest cities: Baghdad, Mosul and Basra. There are three minority groups among the Iraqi refugees staying in Syria who deserve special mention – the Christians, the Sabean-Madeans and the Palestinians.

Among the minority refugee groups from Iraq, the Christian and Mandaean minority are over-represented (15% and 4%), compared with their small numbers in Iraq. This is partly because they have a well-established migratory network. Some groups are also helped by having an established diaspora in the West (Gustavsberg 2008).

According to the Brooking Institution Report, Christians constitutes a considerable part of the Iraqi refugees in Syria – a far larger proportion than they did in Iraq. A number of them left Iraq in the 1990s, because of the economic crisis, radicals and high insecurity. Many Christians fled Iraq after the church bombings in 2004. A number of Sabeans left Iraq in the 1990s, fleeing intense discrimination and since US invasion in 2003, they became targets of both armed gangs and radical groups in the cities. Many Sabeans moved to Syria where their spiritual leader, Dr. Abdul-Sattar al-Hilu now lives, in Damascus' Jaramana neighborhood, where many others live as well. Many Sabeans have opened groceries and alcohol shops. The Sabeans form an integrated community with high degree of solidarity; they formed an unofficial society in Syria, al-Jam'iiyya al-Mindaiyya. Both Iraqi Christians and Sabeans have generated hostility in more conservative Syrian circles because of their involvement

in selling alcohol. In the case of Palestinians from Iraq, the report says, because of the violence against them, many Palestinians came to Syria. At first, the Syrian government permitted them to enter. Palestinians from Iraq entered Syria between 2003 and 2005 live in northern Syria, while most moved to the Yarmouk Palestinian 'camp' (in fact, a suburb), near Damascus, and other parts of Damascus. In early 2006, the Syria started restricting the entry of Palestinians coming from Iraq. Most were refused entry and forced to stay in Al-Tanf, on the Syrian side of the no-man's land between the two. They live in a tented camp, in very poor conditions. There are currently around 350 refugees in at-Tanf and they are being denied entry altogether. Palestinians in Syria are very concerned about the plight of the Palestinian refugees in Iraq, but they have nothing to offer to help them except some drops of tears.

A number of Palestinians from Iraq were able to enter Syria secretly. Of 700 families, one in three households are female-headed with children constituting a major part. Recently about two hundred of these refugees have been deported to Al-Tanf Camp. Unlike other refugees from Iraq, Palestinians are actively being targeted and deported. (Younes and Campbell 2008: 3).

Features of Iraqi Refugees

All refugees would have passed through some critical situations, but Iraqi refugees in Syria are worse than some other refugee groups. The following data describes their bitter experience and feature:

77 percent reported being affected by air bombardments and shelling or rocket attacks, and 80 percent reported being witnesses to a shooting; 68 percent reported interrogation or harassment (with threats to life) by militias or other groups, while 22 percent said they had been beaten by militias or other groups. Results also showed that many reported being kidnapped, 72 percent reported being witnesses to a car bombing and 75 percent reported that someone close to them had been killed or murdered (Report of the IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees March 2008: 3).

The Brooking Institution report in 2007 on Iraqi refugees in Syria says, unlike other refugee crises, most of the Iraqis who fled are skilled or have access to some finances. They do not live in tented camps or collective centers, but like most Syrian urban dwellers, in apartments.

Settlement and Housing

The IPSOS market research agency survey of Iraqi refugees in 2007 reveals,

17 percent have 7 to 11 family members, 21 percent have four family members, and 7 percent live alone. 63 percent of the total of Iraqis interviewed has family abroad. Among those with family abroad, their relatives are in Sweden (28 percent), United States of America (USA) (18 percent), and United Kingdom (UK) (10 percent) etc. 98 percent of the total rent a house and 2 percent own their home. 15 percent share their apartment with another family, down from the 23 percent who were sharing their apartment in May 2007. 71 percent are renting between 2-4 rooms, 23 percent are renting one room, and 6 percent are renting 5-6 rooms (IPSOS 2007).

According to the Government of Syria and UN Development Programme (UNDP) report in 2007, around 79 percent of Iraqi refugees currently live in Damascus suburbs, such as Sayeda Zaynab, Qudsaya and Jaramana, with the remaining population in other cities; Hassakkeh, Tartous, Aleppo. They live in apartment houses, often shared with other families, depending on the financial setup. While those who came to Syria in the early 2003 are more affluent and financially stable, those coming after 2006 are less so where two families or more tend to live in one apartment, with an average family size of five persons.

Brooking Institutions Report on Iraqi refugees in Syria in 2007 says, majority of Iraqi refugees are living in Damascus and surrounding areas because it has long offered opportunities for employment, as well as a wide array of rental options, at least initially. Above all, all embassies including Iraq and other international institutions especially UNHCR are there. Iraqis from all backgrounds live and work in Jaramana, because the rents are affordable and local people there were willing to rent to Iraqis. In Sayyida Zeinab, Shias - mostly poor or rural – who tend to be more religious are predominant. Here shops have Iraqi names and there is much Shia-religious wares for sale – portraits of Ali and Hussein, tapes of Shia religious songs (*husseiniyyat*) and small disks of holy Kerbala earth to lean one's forehead against during prayer. In Aleppo the majority of the Iraqis are Sunnis from all social backgrounds – poor, middle class and wealthy. In the towns of Hasaka and Qamishli, as well as in the village of Sahnaya (near Damascus), many of the Iraqis are Christians, mostly poor or lower middle class who went to these towns because of their sizable Syrian Christian minorities. As in Iraq, there is no sectarian violence spilled across the border. Most of

the neighborhoods in which Iraqis settle are mixed. Unlike in Jordan, few Iraqis buy property in Syria, and prices for real estate and rents for apartments are increasing.

Single Iraqi men usually live together and share the rent. People who feel especially at risk – former regime cadres, rich merchants, people who worked with the Iraqi government – try not to mix except with people they know, and try to live away from other Iraqis. There is no homelessness to speak of because of the strict attitude of the authorities on that issue (Al Khaleefa et al. 2007: 30).

The Iraqi refugees in Syria primarily live in rented accommodation and increasingly Iraqi families are sharing accommodation with other families in order to manage the high rental and living costs. (Report of the ICMC-USCCB 2007: 4). Their living conditions are deteriorating rapidly as many Iraqis resort to over-crowded and unsanitary urban housing arrangements, and suffer from gradual impoverishment due to their inability to earn a living (Fagen 2007: 16).

The location of the Iraqi refugees in Damascus is strongly related to the geography of the city and its suburbs. As urban refugees, Iraqis are not driven to specific places upon their arrival in the Syrian capital, but they are free "to choose" the place where they will settle, without interference of the UNHCR or the Syrian authorities. Most of the Iraqis are living in neighbourhoods dominated by Palestinian refugees, displaced Syrians from the Golan and internal migrants coming from rural areas. It is the case for three of the main places where Iraqis settled: Jaramana, Sayda Zaynab and Yarmouk. Jaramana is one of the biggest Iraqi neighbourhoods in Damascus with Sayda Zaynab, with a high concentration of Christians. Inhabitants belong to lower middle class and poor refugees. By the end of 2005, it was estimated that around 16,000 Iraqis were living in Jaramana, 30,400 in Sayda Zaynab, whereas in Massaken Barzeh, majority of refugees belong to the middle class. Because the rental prices are more expensive, this part of the city being closer to the Damascus city centre and well connected to the rest of the city (Dorai 2007: 13).

Iraqi refugees in Syria normally stay with families, relatives or friends, at least in the initial days. Many Iraqis have bought their own houses or apartments, causing increase in housing prices, and many others have moved into rented accommodation, pushing up rental costs. However, many Iraqi refugees are becoming poorer and struggling to meet the costs of their rent. Property owners, both Iraqi and Syrian, are exploiting the situation in order to boost their income, especially during the summer because of high demand for housing due to the visitors from the Gulf (AI 2007: 11).

Humanitarian Conditions and Social Status

As with other refugees all over the world, the Iraqi refugees in Syria are also suffering from difficulties from various angles, be it from the host society, state or due to their own economic weakness. A majority of Iraqi refugees who came to Syria following the US invasion have little resources, putting them into deep poverty and destitution. Inflation and increases in food prices, rents for housing, dwindling resources and no prospect of legal work make daily life even more difficult for the displaced Iraqis. Still, the Iraqis in Syria are in principle entitled to the same services as Syrian citizens, i.e. Iraqi children are welcome to attend the Syrian primary schools free. However, Iraqi refugees are not allowed to work, therefore getting money to purchase school uniforms, books and other materials is difficult (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRCS) 2009: 3).

Conditions for Iraqi refugees in Syria are rapidly deteriorating; they are struggling with depleted savings and have limited access to basic services and employment in an overburdened country that lacks the resources to adequately provide for the refugees (IRC 2008). According to the 2009 report of The International Federation of Red Cross and Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society, the Iraqi people are facing difficulties and many are seeking assistance, counseling and protection, including an increased number of female-headed households. Financial hardship is leading them to search for cheaper living costs and accommodation. Because of lack of resources, 2009 has seen an increased number of children dropping out of school to support their families.

Preliminary findings from the July 2007 Ministry of Health (MOH), UNICEF and WHO Rapid Assessment showed that 62 percent of household heads were unemployed; while 35.8- percent work in private jobs. The assessment further indicates that 45.4 percent of Iraqi refugee families can be classified as poor or extremely poor, based on their family income. The study has also revealed that the majority of families (72 percent) live in shared accommodation with Syrian or Iraqi families. As the average family size is five persons, sharing accommodation with one or more families leads to overcrowding which increases the risk of the spread of infection, especially among vulnerable groups like the elderly and young children. There is evidence of poverty and poor nutrition affecting health including a preliminary study by the MOH in Syria showing increased stunting and wasting among children under five. The WFP rapid food needs assessment conducted in February 2007 in Syria estimated that 15 percent of those registering with UNHCR are unable to meet their expenses for more than three months from the date of arrival in Syria. There is no data available for the level of food insecurity of those not

registered (Joint Appeal by UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO 2007: 3).

Status of Women and Children

Most of the Iraqi women are playing the role of the head of their families after their husbands were killed, imprisoned or kidnapped following the US invasion. Above half of the female-headed households have between two and three children and among that, 65 percent children are not enrolled in Syrian schools because their mothers give priority to child labour over education. Half of the female heads of households have secondary or higher education and are between 35 and 50 years of age. On the other side, around half of the Iraqi women have no individual or household monthly income, with savings, loans, donations and remittances being their main source of income, and they expect this assistance to last between one and three months only (Sassoon 2009: 67).

Amnesty International Briefing 2008 reveals women to be among the largest Iraqi refugee population in Syria. The majority left Iraq alone or with only their children because they were divorced or widows. Of those who fled to Syria with their husbands, the husbands subsequently returned to Iraq or went elsewhere to find work. One of the worst consequences of this condition is that they feel despair and poverty and has pushed some families into sending their daughters to work in nightclubs or even selling them into prostitution.

Given the deteriorating economic situation of those refugees, a UN report found that, many girls and women in severe need are forced to prostitution, some in secret and others even with the knowledge of the family. It points out that as violence in Iraq has increased the number of female-headed households and unaccompanied women are increasing among the refugees (Zoepf 2007: 2).

As Hieronymi (2009) noted, the issue of children should be at the heart of the “refugee debate” not only because they are half the total “refugee population” in the world and their vulnerability, or because of their ability to cope, but primarily because they are even more directly affected in their lives than their parents and other adults by the “success” or “failure” of their refugee experience.

Since 2003, there are 1.2 million Iraqis in the country. Of them 450,000 are children, the majority of whom live in poverty. It restricts their access to essential medical care. As a result, 65 percent of the children lack immunity for measles and 75 percent for polio/OPV3. In addition, many children do not receive education; about 30 percent of children between ages 6-11 are not in schools; instead most of them work to try and support their families. This leads to the tragic issue of trafficking of young girls for sex work, which, while not yet widespread, is present (Al Khaleefa and Al- Khaleefa 2007: 3). 46 percent of children had to drop out of school, with 10 percent of children working (Harper 2008: 173- 174).

Many Iraqi children work in Syria, though it is difficult to estimate numbers. The majority of them lives and works in the poor areas of Sayyida Zeinab. Many are poor Shia. They sell simple goods on benches: food items, children's clothes, household wares, toiletries, etc. Some walk around selling lottery papers, religious booklets, shining shoes or cleaning windshields. Others offer to carry groceries for shoppers in the market. It is in fact often more about begging than selling. Many of the children are girls. Some older children work in shops and offices such transportation offices, restaurants, bakeries and so on. Some girls work in tailoring, either in factories or at home with their mothers. Based on the children we talked to, the average daily wage for Iraqi children is about 50 to 100 SL (\$1 to 2). The relationship can be highly exploitative (Al Khaleefa and Al-Khaleefa 2007: 37- 38).

Among the Iraqi refugees, the Syrian Government has recognized child labour as a growing and widespread phenomenon. Some children who have experienced distressing experiences in the past are in uncertainty regarding their present and future. Women and girls as young as 12 have been forced in to prostitution, as they have no other option to live. In addition, they risk falling victim to rape, forced marriage or trafficking. Girls whose parents are sick or disabled or who are from single-headed households are considered particularly vulnerable. Prostitution is illegal in Syria, and Iraqi minors are detained in the juvenile and rehabilitation centre once they are caught, with risk of deportation to Iraq. A figure shows 35 percent of the girls coming to the Social Education Institution are Iraqi girls accused of prostitution (UNICEF Regional Response Plan (RRP) for Iraqi Refugees 2010: 19).

Economic condition and Employment

The Amnesty International Briefing 2008 says many Iraqi refugees in Syria are in poverty. Some of them are visits to Iraq to get pensions and food rations to survive in

Syria. They have no permission to work in Syria, although some work illegally for very low wages. As a result, they are struggling to pay for accommodation due to high rents and forcing to share even their rooms with other refugees.

The IPSOS market research agency survey of Iraqi refugees (2007) reveals, 37 percent of refugees' main source of income is savings, 24 percent remittances, 24 percent salary, and 12 percent pension. 33 percent expect their money to last less than three months while 53 percent do not know how long this money will last. 35 percent' main income provider is the male head of household, while 36 percent said the main income provider is the female head of household. 8.5 percent main income provider is their husband and 0.5 percent said the main income provider is their wife. Main provider's monthly income is between 5,000 and 10,000 Syrian Pound (SYP) (22 percent), 10,000 to 20,000 SYP (19 percent), 20,000-30,000 SYP (9 percent), less than 5,000 (5 percent).

As far as banking facilities for Iraqi refugees is concerned, they are not allowed to open bank accounts in Syria until they have an annual residency (in Jordan, it is enough to show a valid passport), except in Al-Mahjar bank, but it requires high minimum deposits. Majority of the Iraqi refugees use the hawala system (money traders). Some Iraqis continue to draw government pensions and even salaries while in Syria. Some of them travel back to Iraq to take the money personally. Others nominate an agent by registering him at the Iraqi Embassy in Damascus. The agent registration document is sent back to the person in Iraq, where it is registered at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Then the agent can begin collecting the pension. (Al Khaleefa and Al- Khaleefa 2007: 36).

Still the Iraqi refugees have the right to get their food rations from their mother country. Sometimes family members have been able to collect the rations and pay drivers to ship them to Syria (Lischer 2008: 109). Their financial insecurity has forced them to take desperate measures to survive, including longtime professional fasting, even prostitution. (Grenfell 2008). When we look at the Iraqi refugees' employment status, they do not have legal employment authorization. However, many of them find work in both formal and informal labour sectors and the latter constituting the exploitative and cheapest labour force in Syria (Government of Syria and UNDP Report 2007: 3).

The bulk of Iraqis find work only in the informal sector, where they face abuse and exploitation in many ways. Their wages are often inadequate to pay their living cost.

There are financial assistance schemes for them, but limited in scale, benefiting only 12,000 families as of September 2009. In 2009, more than 35,000 families regularly received food rations at distribution points across Syria (UNICEF RRP for Iraqi refugees 2010: 19).

Those who have found work have integrated themselves into Syria's labor market in many different ways. Among those were art dealers, beauticians, electricians, imams, tailors and others. Some refugees were able to maintain their previous profession – doctors found work as doctors, bakers as bakers – while others had to adjust – taxi drivers became bakers, a former dentist opened up an Internet café. For the most part securing employment involves improvisation and many people found jobs in the informal sectors of the economy: they are waiters, petty traders, construction laborers, housekeepers, stevedores and market workers, and so on. Petty traders and grocers are from all backgrounds: Sunni, Shia, Sabean, Christian. They sell Iraqi special food items – pickles, spices, qaimar (cream), fish – as well as fruit and vegetables, clothes, toys, pens and small office supplies. Some sell sweets or bean (chickpeas, baqilla – fava beans) in small carts, the Iraqi way. Some women work as haffafas – removing body hair with a small thread (haf al-wajeh): this is an Iraqi specialty and has grown to be in demand in Syrian and Jordanian hair salons and barbershops. Iraqis usually work with a Syrian partner. The latter will register the company, while giving his Iraqi counterpart some form of guarantee. The Syrian partner is especially necessary for businesses that require a security permit, such as Internet cafes.

Education

Most of the refugee population are well educated, 31 percent have completed a university education, and fewer than 3 percent are uneducated or illiterate (Harper 2008: 173- 174). IPSOS market research agency survey of Iraqi refugees in 2007 reveals that “Of those attending school, 94 percent of children are enrolled in public schools. Most Iraqi children (69 percent) are adapting to the Syrian curriculum well to moderately well, while 19 percent are not adapting so well and 12 percent are in need of educational assistance”. Among the Iraqi refugees, only a small proportion of children attend school; as of May 2008, 43,749 out of an estimated 200,000 school-aged Iraqi children were in primary and secondary schools (Evans 2009: 22).

UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report 2008 on displaced Iraqis in Syria shows that there are at least 300,000 Iraqi school-aged children in Syria. Only about 10 percent of them were enrolled in Syrian schools during the 2006-07 school years despite Syrian public schools being accessible to all Arab nationals and primary education being free and compulsory. According to the Ministry of Education (MoE), only

34,000 Iraqi children were enrolled in both public and private schools in 2006-07. There are many reasons for the limited school enrollment, low attendance and high dropout rates among Iraqi children: lack of space or overcrowded classrooms, lack of documentation, and financial constraints are some of the reasons. Some families are concerned about the long journeys their children would have to make on buses to attend schools in distant neighbourhoods. Some Iraqi children drop out of school because they find the different curriculum hard to cope with (AI June 2008: 14). Girls, working children and children with special needs are particularly vulnerable to missing out on education. Anyhow, these children's lost education opportunities will lead to an emerging uneducated and alienated generation of Iraqis.

The Syrian Directorate of Statistics and Planning reported that only 33,500 students registered for the 2008-2009 academic year. It represents a 30 percent reduction compared to the 49,132 student registered in 2007-08 academic year. While there is a possibility many Iraqis have returned to Iraq or have been resettled, the survey indicated that the majority Iraqi students have dropped mainly because of the economic constraints and the they have been forced to work in order to supplement their family income (UNHCR Iraq update in February 2009:)

Health Care

Currently, Iraqi refugees can receive free health care in government hospitals but they have to pay for certain serious illnesses, such as cancer or heart ailments because of the high cost of its medicines. Therefore many Iraqis depend on private clinics and hospitals, which are largely funded and run by charities, although government hospitals continue to receive emergency patients who are treated free. In addition, because of an agreement between the UNHCR and the Syrian Ministry of Health, those who are registered with the UNHCR and have serious illnesses can receive treatment, including surgical operations, at clinics run by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society (SARCS). In such cases, the UNHCR meets 80 percent of the treatment cost and the remaining by the patient. (AI 2007: 9).

Among the Iraqi refugees, the disabilities are: Physical (31 percent), mental (17 percent), amputee (4 percent), deaf (9 percent), dumb (2 percent), blind 5 percent), other mobility (25 percent), difficulty seeing even with glasses (13 percent), Down syndrome (1 percent). The disabilities come under the following four categories: injury (49 percent), since birth (30 percent), disease

(16 percent), and aging (4 percent) (IPSOS Market Research Agency Survey 2007: 7).

Amongst the injuries, 64 percent are a result of war or conflict related fighting and 46 percent are injured after the United States led invasion in 2003. Of children under five being vaccinated, 56 percent of children have been vaccinated in Iraq, 18 percent have been vaccinated in Syria, 25 percent have been vaccinated in both Iraq and Syria and 1 percent do not know, 4 percent of Iraqi children under five have not received any vaccination (IPSOS Market Research Agency Survey 2007: 9).

The UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report 2008 reveals that the Syrian MoH provides primary health-care services to Iraqi children and families through its health centres. It includes immunization, maternal health, health education and treatment of emergency cases. However, poor access to safe drinking water, crowded living quarters and limited financial resources are aggravating the health and nutrition problem of Iraqi families. The Iraqi refugees' health needs are mounting, especially among women, children and the elder persons. The Syrian government is doing their best with their limited resources to meet Iraqis needs, including carrying out necessary surgical operations, health care interventions, vaccinations against epidemics and childhood immunisations (Al-Miqdad 2007: 19).

According to a report by the UNHCR in 2006, 82 percent of the households have adequate food consumption, around 17 percent have marginally adequate diet and the remaining 1.3 percent have poor dietary intake, with insufficient food and diversity. Preliminary results of a rapid assessment carried out by the MOH, UNICEF and WHO in Syria in July 2007 on the health and nutritional status of displaced Iraqi children less than five years of age and of women of childbearing age. This survey of a small sample of families showing, the immunization coverage among children under five was 89 percent for Diphtheria-Pertussis- Tetanus (DPT) and Haemophilus influenzae type B (third dose); 82 percent for measles, and 81 percent for Hepatitis B3. The prevalence rates of diarrhea (in last two weeks), cough and fever were 8.3 percent, 8.2 percent and 12.1 percent, respectively; 21.2 percent of children were reported to be mildly/moderately stunted, while 10.8 percent were severely stunted (chronic malnutrition).

UNHCR registration statistics as of August 2007 show that 19 percent of those registering in Syria report having a significant medical condition. Furthermore, many of the displaced Iraqis have been exposed to terrifying experiences of

terror and violence, and approximately 22 percent of Iraqis who have registered with the UNHCR have reported experiencing personal traumatic events. The mental and psychosocial distress have been further aggravated by the increasing financial difficulties, unemployment, different living environment, and an uncertain future, resulting in psychological fragility, distress and in some cases trauma (Joint Appeal by UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO 2007: 4- 5).

The requirement of medical care among Iraqis is higher than normal because of the trauma they suffered by the continuous conflict and war. For Iraqis access to health services has improved since 2007, but the high number needing specialist care for serious illness shows that many are not receiving the treatment they required (AI June 2008: 14). Primary health care is free to all Iraqis where they can seek emergency treatment at any government hospital. Private clinics and doctors are also available for at a cost of roughly \$ 10 a visit. However, in 2005 due to rising expenses on the Syrian government, additional treatments for illnesses, serious conditions and disabilities, and surgeries, etc. must be paid by the Iraqi patient (Government of Syria and UNDP Report 2007: 4).

There is no impact of religious affiliation on the quality of health care received by the Iraqi refugees, but their wealth can be a determinant. Relatively poor Shia refugees are large in number, and they depend on the Red Crescent clinics. Pregnant Iraqi refugee women can give birth in Syrian government hospitals, though they have to pay a fee. The fee (about \$100) is reduced by 50 percent if they get documentation from the Syrian Bath Party. In private hospitals, childbirth costs between \$300 and \$400 and the hospitals provide a birth certificate (if the parents can provide a marriage certificate) (Al Khaleefa and Al- Khaleefa 2007: 31).

Coexistence among Iraqi Refugees

Outside Iraq, refugees have to coexist, because the situation will be different when we are out of our country. However, inside Iraq, people are still fighting each other based on religion, ethnicity or ideology. As one Mandeian living in Damascus said: 'In exile, everyone is a brother. We are now Iraqis and not Sunnis, Shia or Mandeans'. Along the same lines, an Iraqi told a journalist that 'being strangers in other countries has taught us to be more tolerant of one another. Thus, non-Muslim minorities' lives are similar to those of other Iraqis. Depending on their socio-economic conditions, Iraqi refugees have to cope with the same basic issues: employment, housing, securing

income for an undefined period, health, education, visas and building a new life in Syria or waiting to be resettled (Sassoon, 2009, p.74). That is why the majority of refugees are running away from sectarianism and consciously trying to distance themselves from sectarian groups.

Obviously, there must be a question among all: is there any sectarian division among refugees in Syria? Brookings Institutions' Report on Iraqi refugees in Syria says that ethnicity is not always a relevant criterion to categorize the Iraqi refugees in Syria. In Syria, sectarian identity becomes less of a factor in the day-to-day life of the Iraqis. It may be encouraged by the softer sectarian divides in Syrian society. Sectarian identity is not damaged as openly Syria as it is in Iraq today. Neighborhoods are not organized on a communal basis the way as in Iraq. Among the refugees, ethnicity and religion only play a determining role in as much as they help determine the economic position (eg., rich Sunni Ba'thists), the economic activity (e.g., Sabians and Christians selling alcohol) or how hard it is to travel to and from Iraq (more dangerous for the Shias).

Assistance and Humanitarian Response

Based on humanitarian concerns, large number of displaced persons all over the world with the reasons of practical political, economic, and strategic interest made it imperative system to establish a system of international protection and assistance for refugees (Cohen and Deng 1998: 2). In Syria, there are some national and international agencies, state and non-state actors, religious and non-religious services assisting the Iraqi refugees. The Syrian Government is fairly in assisting the Iraqi refugees through government services and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. In addition to these services, mosques and Christian churches also provide assistance as well as many local Syrian professionals (Report of the International Catholic Migration Commission and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (ICMC-USCCB) 2007: 3).

UN agencies especially UNHCR and non-governmental organizations have increased efforts to identify and support vulnerable Iraqis. The UNHCR gives cash grants to survivors of gender-based violence, older people without support, families with children with disabilities, female-headed households and others. It assists refugees with medical care, legal and psychosocial support, and emergency financial support. It has also developed a relationship with the Syrian Government that has allowed for

greater civil society presence and public information campaigns for Iraqi refugees (Younes 2008: 3).

In Syria, while UNHCR remains the major agency in addressing the Iraqi refugee crisis, UNICEF is helping over 50,000 children go to school and hopes to start reaching out to teenagers. WFP is providing food rations to almost all Iraqis registered with UNHCR, and the UN Fund for Population Activities is working on addressing reproductive health and gender-based violence. The Government of Syria has given initial approval for 14 international NGOs to start operating in the country, and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society has signed memorandums of understanding allowing seven of them, including a U.S.-based NGO, to operate (Younes 2008: 3).

In collaboration with WFP and with the support of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society (SARC), UNHCR distributes food and non-food items to eligible members (currently 91 percent) of the registered population. Cash assistance is mainly for female-headed households to prevent school dropouts, child labour, homelessness, and sexual and gender based violence (UNHCR's PDES 2009: 36). In Damascus, UNHCR has appointed around 75 female Outreach Volunteers from all segments of the refugee population and residing in all parts of the country where refugees are to be found. Their functions include identifying and visiting the refugees, particularly those who are in vulnerable and referring them to UNHCR if necessary and providing refugees with counseling and practical forms of assistance (UNHCR's PDES 2009: 30).

UNICEF's Humanitarian Action Report 2010 reveals that in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Damascus University, the World Health Organization and Johns Hopkins University, UNICEF organized public health surveys in Iraqi concentrated areas to monitor the health and nutritional status of Iraqi children throughout the year. In education, the physical environment of over 140 schools has improved. In addition, approximately 500 out-of-school Iraqi refugee children were supported with vocational skills training in preparation for a potential return to Iraq while learners at risk of dropping out of school received a remedial education.

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), together with the International Federation, has distributed non-food items (kitchen sets, hygiene kits, mattresses, blankets, school kits and school uniforms) for 30,000 families through its branches. Throughout the year 2008, SARC, in coordination with UNHCR, has also distributed food items to

approximately 80,000 families in six consecutive rounds of distributions (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2009: 7).

Impact of Refugees in Syria

The Iraqi refugees now make up about 10 percent of Syria's population, placing a considerable strain on the country's infrastructure (UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report 2008: 1). There is no need for further explanation about how the Iraqi refugees affect the Syrian state and social infrastructure. Their number (10 percent) is very high to accommodate and adjust for a state like Syria, which is already struggling with its own problems.

Host countries are also under indirect social, economical, political or security threats because of large, chronic refugee populations. The host countries in the developing world carry the economic and social burden of the world's refugee populations. The long-term presence of these refugees can again worsen the existing social balance, particularly in failing states or those with vulnerable economic or social infrastructure. The same have undermined the Syrian economy by the Iraqi refugees. As Syria's deputy foreign minister asserts, there has been a sharp increase in the cost of living. . . . The prices of foodstuffs and basic goods have gone up by 30 percent, property prices by 40 percent, and rentals by 150 percent." Crime rates have also skyrocketed (Lischer 2008: 108).

According to United State Government Accountability Office report 2009, education and health sectors are the most affected by the refugee situation. According to Syria's Prime Minister, the influx of 1.5 million Iraqis is equivalent to an added burden of 300,000 Syrian families who consume US\$1 billion per year in diesel, electricity, water, sanitation and household gas. In addition, Prices for oil, electricity, water and kerosene have risen by 20 percent, low standard rents have tripled since 2005 and subsidies have been scaled back (Barnes 2009: 15).

The Government of Syria and UNDP Report in 2007 reveals, because of the large influx of Iraqi refugees and the high demand and rigidities in supply of commodities, inflation levels have reached unprecedented levels. Real estate prices have increased 300 percent with rental prices rising by 150 percent and caused to restricting access to affordable housing. Food and basic commodities have almost doubled in price, the demand for bread in Damascus alone has risen 35 percent, and the consumption of potable water is also up by 21 percent. Similarly, electricity rates, kerosene and

cooking gas consumption rates are up. There is increasing concern over crime rise as well as higher incidents of ransom and blackmail. Huge number of Iraqi refugees also worsened the insecurity and unemployment in Syria. The entire above crisis are not the consequences of the presence of Iraqi refugees, but they are the main factor behind the fueling and worsening the crisis of the already troubled state.

In the initial period of the post- Saddam Iraqi refugee crisis, the Government of Syria welcomed a large number of Iraqi refugees and still Syria accommodates a large majority of them. The Iraqi refugees recieved assistance from various state and non-state agencies. But later, they faced many problems because of their massive and rapid influx and also because of the troubled infrastructure of Syria. The condition of some of the Iraqi refugees worsened in Syria in recent times. Many of them are facing an uncertain future.

IRAQI REFUGEES IN JORDAN

Refugee flow to Jordan is not a new phenomenon. Regional political instability, continuous wars and Jordan's policy of openness to Arab migrants, all led to Jordan becoming a state of refugees. They are already accommodating large numbers of Palestinian refugees. Today, Jordan has one of the highest ratios of refugees to total population of any country in the world. It is a nation of nearly six million people and it is a haven for around 500,000 Iraqi refugees. Majority of them reached in the initial period of US- led invasion on Iraq. Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and that is why it has no legal limitations for the classification of foreign visitors or their rights. Consequently, the Jordan government has categorized Iraqis not as refugees, but rather as "guests" or "temporary visitors".

In March 2009 Iraq Fact Sheet, UNHCR Report that there are 52,390 Iraqis registered with it in Jordan. However, the officially circulated figure by a Norwegian foundation that develops and disseminates knowledge about changes in living and working conditions (FAFO) and the Government of Jordan in November 2007 is between 450,000 and 500,000 (as of May 2007, it constitutes approximately 8 percent of the Jordanian population). The Iraqis' condition in Jordan is becoming more vulnerable due to the rising living cost (IFRCRCS International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2009: 3).

Iraqi Refugees in Jordan Before 2003

Iraqis are not new comers for Jordan. There was migration of Iraqis to Jordan dating back from 1958 when the Iraqi Monarchy was toppled and King Hussein of Jordan, a close relative of the assassinated Iraqi monarch, welcomed members of the former ruling elite. This group, and successive ones who came before the large influx of the 1990s, were composed of members of the political, intellectual and business elite who were either incorporated into the equivalent social class in Jordan or later migrated durably to third countries mostly in Europe and America (Chaterlard 2009: 6- 7).

During the 1990-1991 Gulf War, 1 million Iraqis and foreigners working in Iraq had crossed into Jordan over a period of 2 months. In the following years, while some refugees returned to Iraq, successive groups of individuals kept arriving in Jordan, the only country neighbouring Iraq whose border constantly remained open between 1990 and 2003. Iraqis were fleeing the deteriorating economic situation ensuing from the UN-imposed embargo on Iraq, various types of violence exerted by the regime on active or perceived opponents and for other security reasons. Most Iraqis identified as members of the educated middle-class, with a large proportion of professionals and former civil servants (Chaterlard 2009: 5).

There are no accurate statistics on Iraqi refugees in Jordan before the 2003 War. It was estimated that by 1996 there were 100,000 Iraqis in Jordan. By 2003, their numbers were put at 250,000 to 350,000 and only 30,000 were legally permanent residents in Jordan. In a 2003 paper, UNU/WIDER (United Nations University /World Institute for Development Economics Research) reports that, among the Iraqi refugees, there were, 56.3 percent were men and 43.7 percent were women, and two thirds in her survey were between 25 and 39 years old. A sizable majority (66.8 percent) were Shia, followed by Christians (13 percent) and Sunnis (11.7 percent). Many of Iraqis were middle class, including doctors and teachers. Most of the migrants of pre-2003 sold all their properties and brought large amounts of money with them which indicated that they were not planning to go back to Iraq (the same cannot be said of the post-2003 refugees (Sassoon 2009: 33).

The world refugee survey in 2002 says the number of Iraqis living in Jordan range from 200,000 to 350,000. But it is unclear how many of them are refugees. Others enter Jordan legally on Iraqi passports, which even individuals with a well-founded fear of persecution can procure if they have enough money to pay the requisite bribes. The government generally allows Iraqis, documented or not, to remain in Jordan for up to six months, after which they must either return to Iraq or depart to a third country in order to renew their visa.

A few thousands Iraqi professionals and academics who arrived in the 1990s accessed a status as foreign residents with a work contract. Many of those were still professionally active in Jordan in the 2000s. Other Iraqis, who had less social or professional capital to negotiate in Jordan and with members of the previous

generation of exiles, did not form a cohesive group. Interactions were limited by the absence of financial means, feelings of insecurity and mistrust, and several layers of social barriers that resulted in socialisations and solidarities taking place along religious lines. Whereas Iraqi Christians could associate with Jordanian Christians of the same social class, Sabeen families remained socially isolated although they received help from several Christian congregations. The religiously- oriented Shiites were the most marginalised in a staunchly Sunni country that denied them communal organisation (Chatelard 2009: 7).

Why Jordan?

Despite its small size and weak economy, Jordan hosts about half a million refugees who fled Iraq since the US-led invasion in 2003. There must have been certain reasons for them to choose Jordan as their destination. The host states' geography, political aspects, employment opportunities and their history of treating refugees would be a criterion. All the above factors have played key roles in the Iraqi refugees choosing Jordan as their settlement place; be it temporarily or permanently.

Jordan was a meeting point for Iraqis from previous decades and those who left Iraq more recently to settle in Western countries, and allowing for marriages and other family-based or communal-based strategies of secondary migration. Jordan's integration in international communication and transport networks, the presence of several foreign embassies, the availability of technologies for forging identity and other documents allowed the development of a trade in services for irregular migration to the West were also a major factor. Air transport was available to other Arab countries that offered employment opportunities (Chaterlard 2009: 9). Compared to the pre-2003 period, what attracted Iraqis in Jordan was the high-level involvement of institutional humanitarian actors and refugee organisations especially the strong presence of the UNHCR (Chaterlard 2009: 14).

A survey conducted by FAFO with the cooperation of the Jordan government in 2007 shows the main reasons for Iraqis to stay in Jordan; the most important is the difficult security situation in Iraq, particularly true for the non-Muslim and particularly for Men. The second reason for Iraqis to stay in Jordan is family reunion. Thirty-eight percent of them indicate this as their main reason for residing in the country,

particularly for women and children and among the wealthy part of the population. Another most important incentive for residing in Jordan among the Iraqi population is that they came for work; this reason is more often given by the male part of the population and among those with high education.

Post- Saddam Iraqi Refugees in Jordan: Profile and Dynamics

Soon after the end of the Saddam Hussein regime in April 2003, a new wave of Iraqi refugees came to Jordan. In initial period they were closely associated with the former regime and feared arrest or revenge, then mainly after 2006, many others who experienced or feared sectarian, political and criminal violence. Their life is entirely different from what they enjoyed or suffered from their mother country. Now they are leading a new life with new social and political status in their host country.

Place of Origin

There were massive outflow of refugees from Iraqi areas where the crisis has affected most dangerously. In Jordan the majority of those registered (80 percent) come from Baghdad, the highest numbers are register in the first quarter of 2007 (89 percents). Many refugees also come from Basra (on an average 5 percent) with an increase from 2007 (3 percent) to 2008 (6 percent). Others are from Ninewa (3 percent), Muthanna (2 percent), Anbar (2 percent), Diyala (2 percent) and Babylon (1 percent). These areas were the most affected Iraqi cities by various violence after the US invasion (UNHCR Iraq Refugees Registration Data Comparative Analysis 2007-2008: 18).

Demographic Composition and Characteristics

In Jordan, every eight in ten Iraqis are Muslims and more often belong to the wealthiest segments of the population whereas as others belong to the poor segments (FAFO report 2008: 15). Among the Muslims, there are some sub traditions. 80 percent belong to the Sunni tradition and 20 percent belong to the Shia tradition. On the ethnic basis, the majority of the Iraqis in Jordan are Arabs (87 percent), about five percent Kildani, three percent Ashurian and three percent Kurds. Several other ethnicities are represented with less or around one percent of the population (UNHCR Iraq Refugees Registration Data Comparative Analysis 2007-2008: 16).

Non-Muslim minorities constitute roughly 16 percent of the Iraqi population (which equates to about 75,000 to 80,000 individuals). About 12.5 percent are Christian (8.2 percent Catholic, 3.6 percent Orthodox, 0.7 percent Assyrian and 0.1 percent Protestant); 2.5 percent Sabean; and 1.1 percent Yazidis and others. Related to other Iraqis, non-Muslim minorities came from all socio-economic classes. After they arrived in Jordan, they faced the same issues of trying to find housing and employment and provide education and health care for all members of their families. Once their entry visas expired and they live illegally, they begin to move from one neighbourhood to another depending on the jobs they can find and the state of their savings (Sassoon 2009: 45).

When we examine on their age structure, 56 percent of the Iraqi refugee population is 25 years of age and above, 26 percent of the population is below 15 years of age and the remaining 18 percent are between 15 and 24 years of age (FAFO report 2008: 15).

About one in five households are female-headed; female-headed households are more often found among poorer households and among households where the education of the household head is relatively low. The distribution of households according to the religion of the household head shows that a household head that identifies with the Sunni affiliation of Islam heads most Iraqi households; more than 60 percent of the Iraqi households in Jordan belong to the Sunni tradition. Other large groups according to religious affiliation are Shia (about 18 percent), Christians about 15 percent and people that characterize themselves as belonging to "other religions affiliations" particularly Sabean and Yedizis heading the remaining five percent of the Iraqi households. Two of three Iraqi households have children under the age of 18 years as members. The average size of an Iraqi household in Jordan is 4.1 persons (FAFO report 2008: 10).

According to the 2008 International Review of Red Cross, majority of Iraqis have arrived as family units and 77 percent of them arrived after 2003. Two-thirds of families have children under 18 years of age; 20 percent of families are female-headed and belong to the poorer population; only 35 percent of them are registered with the UNHCR.

When we examine the ratio of Iraqi refugees who have come to Jordan, prior to the US invasion in 2003, Shiites are high (38 percent). However, in the post- Saddam period their ratio remains between 20 – 28 percent. Then the Sunnis became the majority among those who arrived in the first half of 2006 with a ratio between 57 – 62 percent. A higher ratio of Christians had arrived prior to 2003 (28 percent), but

after that they remain between 12 – 19 percent. While Sabean/ Mandeans display a higher ratio in 2004 (18 percent) and 2005 (15 percent), thereafter the ratio falls to between 0 – 2 percent. Others have been stable between 0 – 2 percent throughout the different arrival times (UNHCR Iraq Refugees Registration Data Comparative Analysis 2007-2008: 28).

FAFO's study concluded that there were between 450,000 and 500,000 Iraqi residents in Jordan in May 2007, and 77 percent of whom came after the 2003 invasion. A high percent of the Iraq refugees are children and young people. This has serious ramifications for education. Another feature of theirs is that they are urban in nature, with the majority living in the Amman and 76 percent of them originally from Baghdad. It shows that the majority of them came from the capital city and settled in the host country's capital (Sassoon 200: 38).

Settlement and Housing

As noted above, one of the interesting aspects about the Iraqi refugees is that they are mostly displaced from the urban areas in Iraq and settled in the host countries' urban areas. Although there is around 25 percent of Iraqi families who own flats and houses live in decent districts around West Amman, the majority of Iraqis live in rented houses. In order to afford the spiralling rents, an increasing number of Iraqi families are compelled to share apartments or even rooms, overcrowded accommodations that often lack proper ventilation, electricity or water (IOM Survey Report 2008: 49).

The FAFO survey reveals that Iraqis mainly live exclusively in urban areas and hence most of them benefit from the infrastructure in the capital city of Amman and other large cities. Majority households are connected to the public electricity network, the water network and the sewage network. Poor households more often live outside of Amman; this is also the case of the households that arrived in Jordan before 2003.

The Iraqi refugees who came after 2003 also have settled mostly in Amman and in less numbers in other cities in the north of the country, with those with less financial capacities finding rented accommodation in middle and lower-middle class neighborhoods, and others, who could pay higher rents or buy properties, in more affluent areas of the capital. It shows their settlement and housing have happened based on class and income, with a few clustering along similar lines as those Iraqis

who came between 1990 and 2002, in particular, for poorer Christians and Sabbeans, near existing churches that offer them social services (Chatelard 2009: 11).

State Policy and Political Status

Article 21(i) of the Jordanian Constitution states that political refugees shall not be extradited on account of their political beliefs or for their defence of liberty. But at the same time, the Iraqi refugees are considered only as their guests. Samia Qumri explains in his paper on Iraqi refugees in Jordan that neither in Jordanian law, nor in any official documents are Iraqis referred to as refugees. Jordan is not party to any international instrument concerning non-Palestinian refugees, and has devised no domestic framework for granting asylum. Rather, non-Palestinian refugees fall under the responsibilities of the UNHCR in Amman, which is charged with the task of refugee status determination and the subsequent resettlement to a third country, usually Western countries.

Jordan has adopted a semi-protectionist policy towards from forced migrants from Iraq. The Jordanian government permitted them to enter, but denies them refugee status. Before and immediate by after the US- led invasion on Iraq in 2003, Jordan had always opened its border with Iraq, but it soon closed the borders and the Iraqi people were now allowed entry on a temporary visa that only permitted a stay for 6 months. Jordan has implemented several social measures against Iraqi migrants, including those registered as asylum seekers. It reduced their ability to seek employment, education, and denied them basic medical or financial aid for medical treatment, except for fee for service well above that of which a Jordanian citizen would pay (Menser and Dickerson 2009: 11).

The Jordanian government was soft toward the entry of Iraqis until the November 2005 suicide bombings of Amman hotels by three Iraqis, in which 60 people died. Since that incident, it started deporting Iraqi nationals from their territory, the government limited the number of residence permits and prohibited the entry of men between ages of 18 and 35 (Donnel and Newland 2008: 15).

Like all foreigners, Iraqis also living in Jordan are banned from forming a Jam'iyya (society) or a club to prevent the gathering of a large number of people. It hinders the

provision of assistance for the neediest Iraqis by the Iraqi community itself (Sassoon 2009: 53).

As Joseph Sassoon points out, Jordanian policy towards the Iraqi refugees is based on two principal issues – security and economy. Jordan opened its doors to Iraqis in accordance with the strong traditions of Arab hospitality and unity. However, it is clear that in Jordan, there is “a strong determination not to establish arrangements that might lead to permanence”. In the security issue, primarily, Jordan was confused and troubled about the spreading violence and the possibility of an infection effect in the sense that external unrest can lead to internal turmoil. This fear was amplified by the bombing of three hotels in Amman by Iraqi nationals in 2005. From 2006, Jordan barred single men and boys between the ages of 17 and 35 from entering; then the Jordanian authorities insisted that Iraqis produce newly-issued passports of what became known as the G category, as many forgeries were discovered in the then existing passports. This caused delays for Iraqi families attempting to take refuge in Jordan as the Iraqi authorities were issuing only 3,000 G passports every month. The economic issues include the increase in unemployment and inflation; and lack or shortage of resources is also a serious problem, especially water availability. Jordan itself is struggling to obtain much-needed water and other resources to feed their rapidly growing population. So the authority was forced to adopt a restrictive policy towards the Iraqi refugees.

In February 2008 Jordan announced a decision to renounce visa fines of 1.5 Jordanian Dinar (JD) approximately 2\$ per day on illegal Iraqi residents wishing to return home. The Government also promised to reduce visa fines by 50 percent for those who wished to remain there: the amnesty lasted for three months from 17th February to 17th May, 2008 (Bel-Air 2008: 9).

The Jordanian public, with encouragement from the government, has become increasingly distrustful of Shii Iraqis. They were singled out and reports that Jordanian soldiers would ask Iraqis for their ethnic affiliation before allowing them to cross the border. While the bias against Shias was heightened after the 2003 War, it existed there even before (Sassoon 2009: 54).

In any number of instances, Jordan has bent the rules to accommodate particular Iraqi refugees and their needs. Nevertheless, the Jordanian policy of humanitarian flexibility is double edged in practice. It allows different authorities to interpret the regulations differently, which opens the way to frequent abuse against the Iraqi population. Iraqi refugees have been rejected at the border or expelled from the country with no clear explanations as to why. They have been treated with discrimination and—principles notwithstanding—many have been sent back to Iraq (Fagen 2007: 9). As pointed out by Duncan (2008),

Jordan is largely Sunni and has been reluctant to offer the Iraqi Shia population opportunity for public expression of their religion. Similarly, the Sabean religious minority is not able to celebrate their holy days in any public setting. It is widely thought this is in effort to control the possible spread of sectarian violence, which they fear that Iraqis may import to Jordan. Christians, as a religion previously present in Jordan, are able to worship and organize as they wish. Churches and other religious institutions have been somewhat responsive in Jordan with some very notable examples of humanitarian care, but wider awareness of the need among religious bodies has been slow. It is considered that the frequently stated belief that the Iraqis are all wealthy and not in need of assistance has inhibited the churches' efforts to notice and respond broadly to the need. Islamic charities and individual mosques similarly seem to be responding to individual need, as it is perceived, but have not thought there was a wider, more systematic response needed until recently (Duncan 2008: 22).

There are no official restrictions on the residence or movement of refugees in Jordan, but under the Law of Residency and Foreigners' Affairs, all foreigners have to notify the authorities of their residence and any movement. "Authorities have reportedly tried to block Iraqis from visiting shrines dedicated to historical Shi'a figures by barring a bus company from transporting them".(World Refugee Survey (WRS) USCRI, Jordan 2009)

Entry, Visa and Residential Status

A survey on Iraqi refugees in Jordan conducted by FAFO, a Norwegian think tank, reports: "when an Iraqi enters Jordan, he is granted two weeks stay. Then, he applies at the Jordanian Interior Ministry and gets another month of temporary residency from the Directorate of Residency and Borders. Temporary residency can then be extended to 2 months".

In Jordan, Iraqis are not considered as refugees but temporary visitors,

measures were regularly taken to facilitate border-crossing procedures, allow purchase of lands and housing, business partnership, investment, etc. among the Iraqis, rich could get legal residency permits by depositing between \$70,000 and \$150,000 in a Jordanian bank and investing or buying property. Purchase of Jordanian limited-duration passports has even been made possible (Bel-Air 2007: 10).

As expressed by a Human Rights Watch Report,

Until November 2005, the Jordanian government and Jordanian law enforcement officials had demonstrated considerable leniency in enforcing immigration laws, usually deporting Iraqis only if they violated other laws. However, an end was put to the relatively uncontrolled access and sojourn of Iraqis to Jordan after the attacks of hotels in Amman in 2005, when three Iraqis killed 60 people by setting off bombs in four hotels in the town. It followed some limitations and restrictive measures on Iraqis. However, they were not widely publicized and even denied in official speeches. The first measure, taken on January 2, 2006, prohibited vehicles with Iraqi license plates from entering the country. The second, promulgated in February, forced Iraqis to hold a new model of electronically-readable passports ("G" series, instead of the old "S" series passports) made available in Iraq only two months before, thus difficult to obtain. Moreover, Jordan started denying entry to increasing numbers of Iraqis at the border at al-Karama, the only land crossing between Iraq and Jordan, according to unofficial accounts from travelers. Similar measures were also conducted at Queen Alia Airport, where candidates were turned away or imposed endless waiting and procedures before entering Jordan. Later, Iraqis were withdrawn the right to purchase land and housing properties (Bel-Air 2007: 11-12).

Under Jordanian law, Iraqi refugees must pay up to US \$761 for every year they overstay their visa. The Jordanian authorities announced in February 2008 that they would exempt Iraqis from accumulated fines if they decided to return home or travel to a third country, but that those who wanted to stay had to pay 50 percents of their dues and rectify their status, or risk never being accepted for residency. In April 2008, a one-month extension was announced to this arrangement (Barnes 2009: 2). World Refugee Survey report in 2009 explores,

According to a 1998 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), asylum seekers can remain in Jordan pending status determination, and UNHCR-recognized refugees can remain six months after recognition, during which time UNHCR has to find resettlement countries for them. This is not always possible, but the Government generally does not deport them. Jordan's 1973 Law of Residency and Foreign Affairs requires that those entering the country as political asylum seekers must present themselves to a police station within 48 hours of arrival. There are no further provisions on who is eligible for asylum or how they can go about obtaining it. The law grants the Minister of the Interior the authority to determine on a case-by-case basis whether persons will be deported.

Jordan's labor law also authorizes the Minister of Labor to deport foreigners working without permission. To obtain legal residency from the Government, Iraqis have to deposit and maintain approximately \$150,000 in a bank account or possess major business investments in the country (World Refugee Survey Report 2009).

In addition to that, foreigners wishing to practice professions have to obtain the certification of Jordanian professional societies, which grant it based on reciprocal privileges in the foreigners' home countries. Many Iraqi doctors work without the approval of the Jordanian Medical Association at lower wages than Jordanian doctors receive (World Refugee Survey Report 2009).

The Iraqi refugees have permission to a total stay of six months and fourteen days. The three-month residence permit with the extended extra three-months is stamped on their passports. If they overstayed in Jordan, a fine of 1.5 Jordanian Dinars (JD) or an equivalent of US\$2.14 per day is payable upon leaving the country. Many leave illegally to avoid paying the fine. Only registered migrants and other migrants who decide to leave the country are exempted from paying the fines, by stamping their passports not to return to Jordan for five years, according to the Ministry of Interior. Some Iraqi nationals enter Jordan via illegal ways, with fraudulent documents and passports they obtain before leaving Iraq by paying large sum of money. Majority of the Iraqi nationals tend to take up lawful residence in Jordan. A one-year residence permit is obtainable on two conditions: firstly, applicants have to be able to show they have money in the bank or business interests in Jordan. In addition, if the sum in the bank amounts to 150,000 JD or US\$214,000 they are officially granted residency permits. Iraqis are most likely to obtain residence permits in order to live legally in the country to receive education for their children. Iraqis are found everywhere in Jordan whether they are affluent and live in luxury flats and villas, or the less fortunate who crowd in Amman's old downtown hotels or share a one-bedroom with other compatriots. Iraqis are not allowed to go to the press to have their voices heard and let the media bring out to the public and the world their real situation (Qumri 2007: 18).

Jordan had introduced tougher entry requirements, in particular for single males, following the multiple suicide bombings in 2005. It was easy for many Iraqi professionals including doctors, university professors and businesspersons to obtain

Jordanian residence permits during the early phases of the influx. However, hundreds of thousands of other Iraqis have only been given two-month tourist visas that have to be renewed by exiting and re-entering the country or else a fine of \$2 is paid for each day overstayed (Harper 2008: 179). The visa restrictions introduced by Jordan in February 2008 require Iraqis to apply for a visa in Iraq, rather than at the Jordanian border crossing (Lischer 2008: 108). According to the 2008 International Review of Red Cross only 22 percent of the poorest section of the Iraqi community surveyed had a valid residence permit; 56 percent overall had a valid residence permit. Among the Iraqi refugees registered with the UNHCR, the proportions are higher among Christians and the poor; only 15 percent of wealthier refugees had registered, compared with 50 percent of poorer ones. (Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) 2009: 95).

Interaction with the Host Community

It is very difficult to interact and integrate with the host community. Most of the Iraqi refugee families in Jordan are grateful to the host country, and recognize the empathy of their neighbours. However, in schools and particularly against religious minorities mainly Sabean and Shia, there have been reported cases of mistreatment and discrimination against Iraqis (IOM Survey Report 2008: 17). Many stakeholders have often reported complete isolation of some families from both the local community and the rest of the displaced Iraqis. Many Iraqi families do not have any opportunity to share their feelings and experiences with others and they feel isolated. In addition, they are not in a position to activate any solidarity networks or to collect and share useful information. Again, such isolation often prevents them from finding out about services provided by national and international organizations and their support, which further exacerbates their sense of isolation and helplessness. In the case of those refugee families who are more integrated to the host society, there is a feeling of “second class citizens”. In such situations, parents believe that children are more able to create relations with the host society because they get chance to interact with host children at schools, play in the neighborhood, and are more resilient and feel less the consequences of uprooting (IOM Survey Report 2008: 80).

The Iraqi refugees can still celebrate their traditional rituals, including weddings and funerals in Jordan. There are a few exceptions: Sabbeans face discrimination related to

their beliefs and ritual and the impossibility to practice them. In addition, Shias living in Sunni neighbourhoods also have to face minor cases of intolerance. Their main problem is the impossibility to perform the yearly celebration of Ashura (IOM Survey Report 2008: 81).

In Jordan, because of their weak financial setup and prevention from working, the situation of Iraqi refugees is worsening. It is forcing many of them to work in the black economy and making them subject to exploitation and abuse. Iraqi refugees lack opportunities for socialization given their illegal status and various economic constraints. There for 80 percent of the Iraqi population do not intend to integrate into the host community (Bel-Air 2008: 14). In general, except those Iraqi refugees who have a legal status via professional, class or family connections, most Iraqis interacted with Jordanians only when it was necessary to ensure their basic living requirements. Mistrust was the norm, accompanied by a feeling of bitterness that what they had expected from Arab brothers in Jordan, a country that was famous for Arabness, was unmet. This feeling of loneliness, bitter experience and isolation led them to withdraw into the close circle of family members, friends and co-religionists with whom to share trust, mutual assistance, and the feeling of a common experience in Iraq and in Jordan (Chatelard 2009: 8).

In the words of one highly placed Jordanian, “when the Iraqis go home, we want them to leave with good memories of the time they spent in our country. We do not want them to have a grudge against us”(UNHCR PDES July 2009: 20).

Relation between Refugees

For Iraqis it is an interesting question how Muslim and non-Muslim minorities or Shiites and Sunnis live side by side and coexist as they had bitter experience of ethnic conflicts. But it has not affected their attitudes towards each other in Jordan. Muslims and non-Muslims work and play sport together in a way not seen in Iraq since the 2003 invasion. Majority of Iraqi refugees in Jordan agreed that the common identity of being a refugee and their quest for a new peaceful life has reduced the ethnic and religious tensions, but not deleted them totally. However, among the lower and poor classes who have suffered most, coexistence is less common due to accumulated hostilities towards the other sects. While Amman is not an ethnically segregated city,

there is a geographical clustering of the Iraqi Christians and Mandeans in the capital (Sassoon 2009: 45).

Samia Qumri in a paper in 2007 on Iraqi refugees in Jordan mentioned that,

Under one of the hills of Amman and near the ruins of the great Roman amphitheater, lies Al-Hashemite Square, now more commonly referred to by most Iraqis as, little Iraq or little Baghdad. Like Baghdad, the neighborhood is a place of Sunnis and Shiites, Assyrians and Chaldeans. Iraqis from every sect gather as they arrive in Amman. They come carrying all their belongings or anything they can sell to secure a few days of food and shelter (Qumri 2007).

The relation between refugee family members is also a concern. There are 12.5 percents of all Iraqi households in Jordan, the wife or the children are working, while the husband is not. For women and youth, the possibility to detain is allegedly less because of their illegal status. Men, who in the Iraqi patriarchal structures have a very prominent role in the family, mainly associated with providing for the family, safety, and security, are in these cases, gradually losing their role and power. Iraqi men increasingly stay at home, thereby losing their traditional role of being the breadwinners within the family. This has consequences on the sense of autonomy of these men, as one of the interviewees affirmed: what a shame a man can feel to ask his wife for pocket money. This also reflects on the relationship between children and parents, mainly fathers, some of whom referred to them as being dull within the family. Another father mentioned,...I used to stare for one second in my children's eyes and they knew what I meant... Today, I cannot tell my son, don't be late, don't go out... even for my daughter I'm not the hero anymore (IOM Survey Report 2008: 75).

About 20 percent of the Iraqi families are separated because of security constraints or other reasons. Majority households have wives living in Jordan with the younger children, while the husband stays in Syria or in Iraq. Older children usually stay by themselves or with the mother. In few cases, older sons live with the father (IOM survey report 2008: 76).

For the Iraqi refugees, the separation of the family members brings fears, preoccupations, anxiety related with security conditions, sadness and sense of loneliness. Moreover, women are taking up new responsibilities and become capable to face new challenges. Men, on the other side are progressively losing their role and mandate. This has consequences on the self-reliance of the men(IOM survey report 2008: 16).

Relation with Iraq

The IOM survey points out that most of the Iraqi refugees insisted on the importance of keeping tight bonds with Iraq, by staying in touch with relatives and friends. For it they use phone messages and calls, even emails when Internet is available, and letters. However, it has some limitations and often made difficult by financial and security constraints. Every day, most Iraqi refugees in Jordan look for news about Iraq, through TV, radios broadcast, newspapers or oral narratives of friends and newcomers. Most parents try to keep the bond between their children and their native country, through memories, stories, and family accounts from the past. By contrary, the Iraqi refugees have different approaches towards the children's exposure to what is happening today in Iraq. Most of them try to avoid the children's exposure to such images, stories and narratives because "...they should only remember the Iraq they know, not the one they show on TV", as stated by a Priest (IOM Survey Report: 2008).

In Jordan 12 percent of Iraqis are confused about or do not have a plan for the future. 50 percent of the families aim to travel to a third country, 30 percent to voluntarily return to their country and 20 percent to integrate in the host community (IOM survey report 2008: 14). It shows that, even though they like to keep contact with their native country for various purposes, only 30 percent of them wish to go back to the home country. The ongoing insecurity and instability in Iraq is the main reason for that.

Infrastructure

Because of their urban settlement nature, most of the Iraqi refugees benefit from the infrastructure like electricity, water and sewage network in the capital city of Amman and other large cities. One in every three households obtains drinking water from the public water network, whereas the rest of the households rely on buying bottled water for drinking. The use of bottled drinking water is a choice by the household more than a necessity since almost all households are connected to the water network. Seventy five percent of households have toilet facilities that are connected to the public sewage network; about 18 percent have ventilated improved pit latrines, particularly common among the poorer segments of them (FAFO Report 2008: 11).

Health

For refugees, health care is a problem throughout their life of displacement. It depends on the services they are getting from their host country. In the case of Iraqi refugees, they have basic access to emergency health care in Jordan. However, they have to pay for further medical treatment.

Only one in eight Iraqis has valid health insurance, whether the insurance is private or governmental. The Iraqis have to pay for treatment of chronic non-communicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular problems. Access to health care for Iraqis is provided through government health centres, Caritas Internationalis (a confederation of Catholic relief, development and social service organizations) and the Jordanian Red Crescent. But Caritas Internationalis provides health care only to Iraqis registered with the UNHCR, including those recognized as refugees and who are awaiting resettlement. Similarly, the Jordanian Red Crescent facilities are only accessible to Iraqis who are registered officially either with the Jordanian government or with the UNHCR. So that, majority of Iraqi refugees cannot access these health facilities (Sassoon 2009: 42).

Among the Iraqi refugees, 90 percent are using the private sector clinics and hospitals rather than the government ones. Because of the less vulnerable groups who can afford the private health care system, and many of the Iraqis who lack legal status in Jordan, are fearful of being identified and reported if they were to use the government sector. In addition, many refugees cannot afford to pay for medical care and medicine even when they are subsidized (Sassoon 2009: 43).

The Jordanian MOH reports that Iraqi refugees currently represent a major proportion (25 percents annually) of TB cases in non-Jordanian patients (Joint Appeal by UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO 2007: 5).

The UNHCR says that out of 53,683 persons currently registered with the UNHCR, only 13 percent accessed health services in 2009. 94 percent of the 2009 health beneficiaries are registered Iraqi and non-Iraqi refugees, while 4 percent are non-registered Iraqis. The Iraqi population most often utilizes the private sector health care system when they need medical care, two in three (66 percent) consulted a specialist, about 23 percent went to a general physician and the remaining 11 percent sought help from other sources (FAFO Report 2008: 19).

In the case of Iraqi women refugees, they are not receiving critical reproductive health care because of poverty, lack of services and religious policy restrictions at the main clinics for refugees (Sassoon 2009: 40). 25 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 50 have given birth during the last 5 years. Majority of them sought medical aid during the pregnancy and gave birth with the help and supervision of qualified assistance. About three in four of all births took place in private hospitals (FAFO Report 2008).

Education

Usually the level and standard of education among refugees will be very poor, but for Iraqi refugees when they reached Jordan, it was an exceptional case in spite of their life in a chaotic and unstable atmosphere.

The educational level among the Iraqi population in Jordan is very high. Close to half of the adult population (16 years and older) have completed an education on Bachelor level or higher (46 percent), men are somewhat overrepresented with concern to the highest educational group, but women are also very well educated, 42 percent of all Iraqi adult females in Jordan have a university degree (FAFO Report 2008: 20).

Sassoon explains that from 2003 until September 2007, Jordan's policy towards Iraqi children enrolling in Jordanian schools was ambiguous, some say deliberately. But it changed this policy under coordinated international pressure before the 2007–08 school year when it was confirmed in August 2007 that Iraqis will be allowed to access all types and levels of public education regardless of their parents' residential status. Even after that, many children still did not enroll due to a number of reasons. The primary factor is the fear of deportation if their children gave personal details and addresses for school registration. Many parents were often reluctant to allow their children to leave the house. A second reason is that many Iraqi children have been out of the school system for one to three years, which means it is very difficult for them to return to formal education. There are an estimated 62 percent of school-aged children who may have been out of school for over a year. The third reason is that Iraqi children have experienced harassment, which makes them reluctant to attend classes. Among other obstacles to register in school is the fact that many families simply cannot afford it (registration of 20–40 Jordanian Dinars, cost of books and

transportation). Lack of appropriate documentation also forced many to keep away. Religious concerns were the problem for minority groups.

Among those Iraqi children enrolled in school, about three in four attend private schools and the remaining in governmental schools. It is 20 percent in private schools and 80 percent in governmental schools for Jordanian children (FAFO Report 2008: 21).

Many of the Iraqi refugees of school age suffer major gaps in their education or are not being educated at all. With little or no income and dwindling financial reserves, private education is out of reach for the majority of Iraqi families in Jordan. A limited number of refugee children are being supported by NGOs, either through fee-paying assistance or through provision of formal and informal education programmes. But resources are scarce. Despite these challenges, some refugee children get permission to sit in on classes. They receive no certification and no official advancement. They are not allowed to sit for exams or use school materials. Yet at least they are learning and hope one day to be admitted into the class (Clements 2007: 1- 2).

A Joint Appeal by UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO in 2007 observed that for most Iraqi children in Jordan, access to education has been difficult until the start of the 2007 school year. As mentioned earlier, in August 2007, the Jordanian government took the decision to allow all Iraqi children to attend public schools, regardless of their registration status. However, many Iraqi children have been out of school for over three years (in Jordan and in Iraq) and needed special assistance to be able to rejoin the education system.

Jordan's schools also remain an inhospitable place for Iraqi children. A recent assessment by Save the Children and Vancouver University found that many Iraqi children in Jordan go to school, but find it a "difficult and dangerous place" where they are subjected to "violence and discrimination at school by Jordanian students, administrators and teachers"(Nicholas 2008).

There are concerns over the performance of Iraqi children in Jordan. Due to psychological issues, like sense of disorientation, sense of inferiority towards the resident children, the isolation and lack of stimuli in which many children live, their performance is poor. The difference between the school curricula in Iraq and that in Jordan, the prolonged absence of Iraqi children from school, as well as precarious living conditions as they often live in overcrowded households, where studying may

be difficult at times etc impact upon the quality of education children receive in Jordan (IOM Survey Report 2008: 80). Lyman (2009) points out that the Iraqi children are competing for precious space in overcrowded classrooms, which impacts upon the quality of their education. Students have also missed a lot of their schooling and need to catch up. Some families are struggling to afford the transport and school supplies or need their children to work to support the family. Jordan has recently announced that all Iraqis will be allowed access to every type and level of public education, but their education sector already struggles to accommodate the 24,000 Iraqi refugee children it currently schools (Evans 2009: 22- 23).

Employment Opportunities and Economic Status

Employment must be the primary concern of a refugee after getting a place for settlement, because their future standard of life depends on their economic status and the employment opportunities they will get from the host country. In Jordan, we can see some Iraqi refugees are wealthy and many are very poor but all of them have no permission to do work legally. Therefore, in sum, the condition of Iraqi refugees is vulnerable, be it for men, women or children.

The FAFO Report in 2008 shows that, close to 70 percent of the Iraqi population in Jordan is of the working age (15+); of these, about 30 percent are participating in the work force. The participation rate is particularly low for women among whom only about 15 percent actively participate in the labour market. The rate is substantially higher for men, but still only about every second Iraqi man in working age participates in the workforce. Of the Iraqis who have employment, about 60 percent work as employees for someone else. This is particularly true for the few Iraqi women who work; someone else employs 70 percent of them. About 30 percent of the Iraqi men who participate in the work force report that they are employers. About 25 percent of the economically active Iraqi women and 13 percent of men are self-employed. About one in ten of Iraqis with current employment would like to change their job if they could, the main reason given by most is that the income in the current job is insufficient; another important reason stated is that “the current job does not fit my qualifications”. The poorer part of the population emphasize bad working conditions as important reasons to change jobs, whereas the argument regarding

qualifications is more often used by those with high socio economic status and high education.

According to the 2008 International Review of Red Cross (IRRC), 22 percent of Iraqi adults are employed, 42 percent survive on remittances from Iraq. This means that a large segment of Iraqis in Jordan is at risk of becoming vulnerable with the depletion of savings and/or cessation of transfers.

Unemployment is a widespread phenomenon among the Iraqi population. Apart from a small number of displaced Iraqis who have been able to regularize their status, refugees are not allowed to work. In 30 percents of the interviewed families in Jordan, no member of the family is employed. They rely on savings, help from friends, relatives, and humanitarian assistance, or a combination of all these. An additional 12 percent in Jordan rely solely on humanitarian assistance to survive. However, since savings are diminishing, many Iraqis are obliged to work, and the sole chance they have is to work illegally. As for heads of households who report having a job, two thirds of interviewees in Jordan, have an irregular or under-the-table one. However, working does not necessarily mean improving the living conditions. The employer often takes advantage of their illegal status to pay them less or not pay them at all, and since they are not in a position to file an official claim, Iraqi adults who manage to find an illegal job are often exploited (IOM Survey Report, 2008: 77).

Joseph Sassoon says that many of those refugees who left Iraq because of the US invasion were doctors, including senior Iraqi doctors, who were top specialists in Iraq. But in Jordan they working as junior doctors. Junior doctors are working to specialize in Jordanian teaching hospitals, are not paid any salary as these hospitals exploit them because they do not have legal residency permits and thus are not eligible to work. Of the Iraqis working in Jordan, 61.4 percent are employees, about 15 percent are self-employed, and roughly, 23 percent are employers (only 2.6 percent of working women are employers). Of those who are employers, 62 percent come from the high wealth and highest wealth groups.

Human Rights First's fact sheet (2007) notes that without a residency card, the refugees do not have the right to work. As a result, many refugees including the

middle class professionals like judges and professors do not enough chance and ability to earn for their family.

Finances of the refugees' families are often devoted to satisfaction of basic needs only. Therefore, recreational activities and additional services become unaffordable (IOM Survey Report 2008: 78). Because of the lack of work permit, Iraqis get only less income from employment and so other income sources are very important for them. A large part of Iraqi refugee households (42 percent) is highly dependent on transfers from Iraq as an income source. Other important income sources are employment, self-employment and transfer incomes from a third country. The type of income sources they depend on differs between the different sub groups of Iraqi households. Among the Iraqi refugees, the poorest households are more dependent on income from employment, whereas the more wealthy households depend on self-employment and on transfers from Iraq. The middle wealth groups receive the least income from employment and are hence most dependent on transfers from outside the household. Iraqi households currently residing in Jordan have investments Jordan, in Iraq and in third countries. It is strongly correlated with their economic status (FAFO report 2008: 12- 13).

Sassoon observes, 25 percent of Iraqi households in Jordan own their dwellings. Household wealth plays a factor in home ownership; 60 percent of the households in the highest wealth group own their houses, whereas only 1 percent of the poor households do. There is a real gap in wealth and status among Iraqis in Jordan. While there are stories of successful entrepreneurs whose business is booming, thousands of other Iraqis are relying on humanitarian aid for food and blankets. Within the households in the highest wealth group, 40 percent have investments in Jordan, 28 percent have investments outside Jordan and 25 percent of those groups have kept investments in Iraq. One of the interesting facts about the wealth among Iraqi refugees in Jordan is that there is no wide gap between Sunnis and Shias in Jordan. However, compared to Christians, Muslim households have more investments in Jordan and in Iraq. In addition, among non-Jordanians, Iraqi investors are the group with the highest investments in the country.

Many Iraqi refugees are at risk because of the depletion of their savings and are vulnerable to deteriorating security conditions in Iraq, which may affect the flow of

transfers. In the cases of those who do work illegally, they are vulnerable to low pay, exploitation and arbitrary dismissals (Evans 2009: 21).

Regardless of political affiliations, wealthy Iraqis of all ethnicity have invested in Jordan over the years as a barrier against instability and repression in Iraq, and often acquired properties there. Both Sunnis and Shiites had financial interests in Jordan and resources to invest. Iraqis with financial means have been absorbed in Amman insofar as they have acquired property, businesses, and jobs. Jordanians typically distinguish Iraqis as wealthy property owners, and the characterization is not without foundation (Fagen 2007: 6- 7).

The Iraqis who have done well in Jordan are those who have been able to take advantage of the Jordanian regulations encouraging investments and offering tax exemptions for the investors in sectors deemed beneficial to the economy. Iraqis with resources to invest have undertaken projects with generous terms, and have become important and very visible business owners and property holders. Importantly, investments in business and/or employment in jobs deemed economically important to Jordan—such as university professors--not only ensure livelihoods but also provide a path to legal status based on yearly, renewable, residence permits. Only those Iraqis who are able to invest in Jordanian enterprises or who are employed in fields deemed to be of national interest have been able to obtain long-term status. The investment entitles them to receive yearly residence permits, to seek employment in specified fields, send their children to schools and access public services. On the other side, many Iraqis who arrived with some wealth but were unable to invest in income generating businesses or obtain professional positions have exhausted their savings and have been impoverished. The majority of Iraqis who do not have funds to invest have faced hardships. Foreigners entering Jordan who do not invest in enterprises must show they are able to support themselves in order to obtain and renew residence permits (Fagen 2007: 8).

Status of Women and Children

As with any refugee crisis, majority of the Iraqi refugees are women and children, and they are the most vulnerable group. According to the Women's Commission Report on Jordan in July 2007, many Iraqi women have come to Jordan only with their

children, because their husbands either were killed in the war or remain in Iraq. Most live in Jordan illegally and can be deported at any time because the state did not recognize them as refugees. They are not allowed to work, have little or no source of sustainable income, and are struggling to support themselves and their children. They have limited access to basic health services; treatment for any health need beyond the most fundamental ones cost more than what the average refugee can afford. As a result, many Iraqi women and children with treatable illnesses are suffering greatly and are at risk of dying from even the most preventable maladies.

At present, clinical care for a rape survivor, who includes emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy and medicine to reduce HIV transmission, was not available at the clinics or hospitals the team visited. Iraqi women are delaying having children due to their difficult circumstances, and access to contraceptives is a challenge for poor, unmarried and youngster refugees. However, some contraceptives, including oral contraceptives and condoms, are available over the counter in Jordan. The price of these contraceptives seemed reasonable to the refugee women, but the contraceptives were still unaffordable for many women. Women also reported that a pharmacist would not sell contraceptives to adolescent or unmarried women in East Amman, a poorer area where the majority of Iraqis live. Two people said that refugee women ask their families to send contraceptives from Iraq, where they are less expensive, and some request drivers to transport such contraceptives into Jordan, as they are a valuable commodity (Women's Commission Report (WCR) September 2007: 7).

Pregnant refugees are getting good services; they are able to receive free delivery services, including emergency obstetric care, through faith-based humanitarian organizations. The women were satisfied with their care during delivery. However, significant gaps in the provision of services remain. For example, women and girls must present a marriage certificate to receive care at the faith-based clinic that serves refugees. Further, refugee women also needed to be registered with UNHCR to receive care (Women's Commission Report (WCR) September 2007: 7).

80 percent of the economically inactive Iraqi refugees are housewives, 20 percent of households are female-headed, and these are amongst the poorest households. During 2003–07, 25 percent of Iraqi women in Jordan between the ages of 15 and 50 gave birth, and around three-quarters of these births took place in private hospitals (Sassoon 2009: 38).

Many vulnerable Iraqi women are suffering from sexual abuse and exploitation because of the poverty, lack of jobs and depletion of savings they face. Deprived women and girls are being forced into prostitution for the survival of the family. Sex work among Iraqi refugees is a growing problem and in Jordan, customers usually come directly to women's homes or to other private venues (Sassoon 2009: 39).

Women with education and from the middle class 'have also encountered difficulties in surviving in Jordan, particularly those who are single or non- Muslim minorities'. They cannot legally work, live on their dwindling savings and cannot afford proper education or health care for their children. As a result, mental stress within the family reaches a breaking point and violence erupts (Sassoon 2009: 39).

Because of the lack of education, many Iraqi children work at increasingly younger ages. Child labour is already a growing problem among Iraqi refugees with a significant number engaged in casual work. As family savings dry up and the situation becomes more desperate, they will be under increasing pressure to find jobs, risking exploitation (Clements 2007: 2). According to an interview conducted by the World Vision in 2007,

It is hard to find a family among Iraqi refugees where a child has not been exposed to violence. Many have witnessed gruesome events: murders, bomb blasts, etc. Many of the children suffer from bed-wetting, sleeplessness, regular nightmares and even panic attacks. Others expressed constant loneliness despite their crowded living conditions. Instead of attending school, most children stay in their homes all day. Fear of deportation keeps families indoors and restricts children from forming relationships outside the family. These young refugees are spending their childhoods in frustration and boredom, afraid to venture outdoors, with few friends, and minimal opportunities for social interaction (World Vision 2007).

Humanitarian Actors, Activities and Assistance

There are Government agencies like Ministries of the Interior, Planning and International Coordination, Education, Health and Social Development, the Public Security Directorate, Family Protection Unit, The National Center for Security and Crisis, which assist Iraqi refugees in Jordan. In addition, some NGOs like Caritas Jordan, International Relief and Development, Jordan River Foundation, Mercy

Corps, Mizan, National Center for Human rights, Noor Al-Hussein Foundation, Questscope, Terre Des Hommes, Jordan Women's Union, Jordanian Alliance Against Hunger, Jordan Red Crescent, Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization, International Rescue Committee World Vision, American Near East Refugee Aid, International Catholic Migration Commission, international institutions like UNRWA, UNOPS, UNDP, UNV, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UNFEM, International Committee of the Red Cross, and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Society are also carrying out an important role in helping the Iraqi refugees in Jordan with various measures (UNHCR Global Appeal 2010–11: 3).

Among the humanitarian agencies, the UNHCR is the predominant one, which provides services directly, through NGOs and through the government with programmes for food and cash assistance, health, community services, education, and legal assistance. NGOs operate humanitarian programmes for vulnerable groups and poor families among refugees with delivering food aid, funds for school fees, health care, and community improvement efforts.

The above humanitarian actors are either assisting Iraqis in specialized areas or the assistance offered is multi-dimensional. In Iraqi refugees' education, Relief International, Quest Scope, Save the Children, Caritas, UNICEF, Mercy Corps are the important players. In addition, International Rescue Committee is providing non-formal education, catch-up learning and training for teachers. In recreational activities, Relief International, Care, QuestScope, Terre des Hommes, Save the Children, World Vision and Mercy Corps are supporting displaced Iraqis with training, safe spaces for children and vocational training. For medical services, Caritas, IFRC, Noor Al Houssein Foundation, Jordanian Red Crescent, International Relief and Development, Medicines du Monde, International Medical Corps, WHO are offering medical assistance to in-patients and outpatients, primary health care including outreach units, pediatric and reproductive health care, and medical assistance for severely injured and traumatized Iraqis. Jordanian Red Cross, Caritas, Terre des Hommes, International Rescue Committee, UNHCR, Mercy Corps, Care and International Catholic Migration Commission are assisting displaced Iraqis with the distribution of food and non-food items, besides providing cash assistance. Legal aid is offered by Mizan, Noor Al Hussein Foundation, Jordanian Women Union,

National Centre for Human Rights and Alliance Centre (IOM Survey Report 2008: 10):

The IRC has launched a two-year programme in Jordan that will train local aid workers to respond to violence against women, predominantly Iraqi refugees. The program, which is supported by the United Nations Development Fund for Women. UNIFEM will also help a local aid organization, the Jordan River Foundation, establish a case management centre in the eastern part of the capital, Amman, home to most Iraqi refugees (IRC 2009).

According to the UNICEF's Humanitarian Action Report 2010,

In close cooperation with the Government of Jordan, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, as well as seven NGOs and several community-based groups, the UNICEF helped 27,000 Iraqi children back into lessons by offering access to a safe learning environment in some 20 double-shift schools and 72 rented schools. Special education was also provided for children with disabilities. Remedial and vocational classes were also supported in areas with a high concentration of Iraqi children. The capacity of primary health care clinics and community based organizations to identify and address the mental and psychosocial needs of Iraqi refugees has also increased through training and coordination support (UNICEF's Humanitarian Action Report 2010).

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Report in 2009 points out,

Through the International Federation support, the Jordan RC has completed five rounds of food and non-food items distribution. The non-food items include blankets, bed sheets, kitchen sets, school kits and hygiene kits for 16,500 Iraqi families. The German RC has supported the distribution of food parcels and hygiene kits for 5,500 families. By combining the two actions, the Jordan RC has reached 22,000 families, which exceed the 20,000 target of the Emergency Appeal. However, there are a growing number of vulnerable families who need further assistance (IFRCRCS 2009: 7).

Impact on Jordan Society

The population in Jordan had already been altered by the Palestinian refugees after the creation of Israel and they became a clear majority of around two thirds of the population although many of the refugees integrated with the East Bank population (George 2005: 24). Now Jordan is loaded with rapid influx of Iraqi refugees especially since 2003. There are positive and negative impacts on the Jordan society

due to the influx of these massive numbers of Iraqi refugees. The urban areas especially Amman, are the most affected areas by the rapid and large Iraqi influx, because the majority of them are concentrated in urban cities to access public infrastructure.

According to different estimates, between 500,000 and 750,000 Iraqi refugees settled there following the 2003 Iraq War. Their massive influx increased the Jordanian population by 15 to 20 percent. Jordan does not have sufficient infrastructure. It has no water, no energy and not enough roads and houses for them. The affluence the wealthy Iraqi refugees brought did not reach beyond Amman to the periphery and the result was that the elite got richer but the poor got poorer, and the rise in real estate prices made the situation even worse (David 2008).

It is a consequence of Iraqi wealth and Iraqi poverty; and virtually all segments of Jordanian society feel it directly or indirectly. Citizens in Amman typically cite the Iraqis as the reason for their own deteriorating quality of life, ie. High prices, unavailable and prohibitively expensive housing, inflation, deteriorating public services and infrastructure, crime, and impossible traffic. The government subsidizes public services, and all the state bureaucracies—from property registration offices, to public safety units, to municipal water and sanitation administrations—have added personnel but complain of being unable to cope with the added workload. Public safety officers working in Amman affirm that while crime has increased for other reasons, the Iraqis have not created any particular security problems. Their workload has increased because of the rising population, and policing duties at the borders have greatly increased as well, as one would expect in such circumstances. They do purchase very large quantities of Jordanian goods and services, and they employ Jordanian construction workers, doctors, concierges, technicians, etc. Their economic activity, especially in construction, boosts employment but, at the same time Jordanians and Iraqis do compete for some jobs (Fagen 2007: 12).

Samia Qumri observes,

The availability of cheap and trained labor, growing investments and a bustling transport sector are some of the positive impacts. The government in some ways welcomes this influx of investment. First because Iraqi cash into the Kingdom has helped to offset the country's international debt burden estimated to be around US\$7 billion. Second, forced migrants and refugees tend to contribute to the country's economy because of the international assistance packages that accompany them. According to a Jordanian official, Iraqis have caused a rise in illicit crimes and general 'immoral' behavior, in addition to a burst of prostitution in Amman's street corners and bars (Qumri 2007: 27- 28).

Jordan already lacks an adequate amount of water for its own population; Iraqis are putting a severe strain on that depleting resource. In addition, Jordan imports 97 percent of its oil, and after the refugees came, the demand for fuel has increased by approximately 9 percent and it results in rising prices for an already overstretched supply (Barnes 2009: 15).

Since the US- led War on Iraq, massive Iraqi forced migrants have been arriving in Jordan. Among the Iraqi refugees who fled to Jordanian territory include educated middle-class together with the secular political opposition and various sectarian groups. The plight of Iraqi refugees are still a major issue despite them enjoying some amount of services and assistance from various state and other agencies. Among the Iraqi refugees in Jordan, only a small percent has an intention to return to Iraq.

STATUS OF IRAQI REFUGEES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SYRIA AND JORDAN

As the immediate neighbours of Iraq, Syria and Jordan, have exhibited commendable nobility and hospitality towards the massive number of Iraqi refugees on various occasions and continue to do so even today. Their generosity is creditable because both these countries are already hosting a large number of Palestinian refugees for over six decades and both are struggling with their own economic constraints, lack of resources and other security issues. The rapid influx of Iraqi refugees, especially since the US- led invasion of Iraq in 2003 further worsened the situation of the host countries and the plight of Iraqi refugees in these countries.

There were a number of reasons for the Iraqi refugees to choose Syria and Jordan as their destinations of settlement. The primary reason was the easy access to these states. The political condition, history of treating refugees, language and living condition there, all had an important role to play in their choice. As far as Iraqi refugees are concerned, both these states have given them certain opportunities and obstacles.

When we compare the social and political status of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan, we will get some similarities and differences in many areas. This can be seen from the point of entry to return or resettlement in various areas at various contexts. From this study, one can say that there are more similarities in the condition and status of Iraqi refugees in these states than differences. Here, an attempt is made to compare the areas like host states' policy towards Iraqi refugees in various aspects. The options, opportunities and obstacles before the Iraqi refugees in social, political, and economic spheres in Jordan and Syria form the major aspect of discussion below.

Both Syria and Jordan are hosting Iraqi refugees who amount to around 10 percent of each country's population. For each country, their presence is a potential threat to the stability and peaceful existence, and therefore many times these states have reacted with both generosity and with some harsh measures to maintain a balance between the

Iraqi refugees and the host society in many fields. The standard and status of Iraqi refugees in these states very much depend on three aspects. Firstly, the host state's policy and attitudes towards them, second, Iraqi refugees' relations with the host community, their mutual interaction and their attitude towards each other, and finally and most importantly, the political, religious, ethnic, and economic background of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan. All the above factors shape the social and political status of Iraqi refugees in these countries.

Similarities

There are many similarities in the situation of the Iraqis living in Syria and Jordan. Both countries are neither a participant nor have ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, therefore the Iraqi refugees do not have many rights as refugees in these countries. These countries were and are still cautious of the Iraqi refugees, thus they are not integrated politically, legally or economically to the host state or society, and in the future, there is no chance to integrate them fully. In the case of economic status, employment opportunities are scarce and the majority of Iraqis work in the informal economy of these countries. In total, as detailed in the previous two chapters, politically, economically, educationally and in health care also, the Iraqi refugees are marginalized, dependent and have limitations in two countries that host about 90 percent of them.

The Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan are similar in the trauma they experienced and their reasons for having left Iraq. Majority of them are suffering from some kind of economic constraint in both countries, while Jordan has a population of wealthy Iraqis. Both countries have responded to a destabilizing influx with both generosity and an effort to maintain control and to prevent political instability from affecting their countries.

There are many examples of Iraqis receiving food or other help from their local neighbors or from local mosques or churches. On the other hand, however, many examples of gradually increasing bullying in schools in both countries exist and children report not finding local friends or joining in neighborhood games and play. Parents have reported of being fearful letting their children leave the home, although many are willing and happy to have their children attend school or, with some reluctance, go out to work. They have widely stated though that they want their children to return home immediately and remain in the house after school or work, citing insecurity. In

Syria, through humanitarian institutions with considerable donation to alleviate the plight of Iraqis is needed. This is not absent in Jordan, but has been performed in a somewhat slower pace compared to the quite swift and striking degree of the voluntary response in Syria. Iraqis appear not to fear individual Syrians or Jordanians, but generally feel that they need to keep a low profile and retreat into isolation at the first hint of bullying or other expression of discomfort from local neighbors (Duncan 2008: 19).

One of the common features of Iraqi refugees in both these countries is that they have a sense of isolation related to many other refugee situations all over the world. Their trauma and stress turn up as symptoms affecting most adults and children. The majority of Iraqis are fleeing generalized violence and social disorder; most of the families have experienced personal traumatic events related directly to them or a specific member of their family. In both the host states, Iraqi refugees continue to experience the scars of the traumatic experiences they had in Iraq that continue to affect them in their adjustment in the countries they settled.

Syria and Jordan have responded to Iraqi refugees with generosity especially during the early stages of the flow of refugees after the US invasion in 2003. Both countries recognised the massive influx of Iraqis initially as a self-limiting problem, which would be resolved when the crisis in Iraq would end and the refugee people would return to Iraq. Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan, who are remaining after the expiration of the allowable period of stay in the host country, are concerned about their status. Given the case that they are not considered refugees, and there being no clarity on their status, many of them are fearful of having to return to Iraq.

One of the most important features of these host states is that both Syria and Jordan are Muslim majority countries but both offer freedom of religion as a strong principle. In each country, mosques or churches extend themselves to offer humanitarian help to those in need. It has very much helped to improve the status of the refugees.

The Iraqi refugees are diverse in terms of religion, ethnicity, and geographical, social, and economic background. Those individuals who left Iraq earlier in the conflict were wealthier and less desperate than newer arrivals, who are disproportionately located in Syria.

Settlement and Housing

The place of settlement by the refugees and their condition of residence is an important consideration.

The bulk of Iraqi refugees are living in the capital cities of Syria and Jordan, that is Damascus and Amman respectively, where they seek to keep as low a profile as possible for fear of deportation. Because of expensiveness of these two cities to lead their lives and dwindling resources, secondary movements are increasingly common. In Syria, most Iraqis are thought to live near Damascus, but increasing numbers are moving outside the capital where it is less expensive. On the case of Jordan, Iraqis are now migrating from the wealthier neighbourhoods of west Amman to the less affluent east Amman, and from east to still more affordable suburbs and villages beyond (US Senate Report 2008: 4).

Hiltermann (2008) points out that there is no conflict between the Sunnis and Shiites in both Syria and Jordan, because the issues that exist in Iraq do not exist in exile and so there is no sectarian violence and conflict among the refugee communities.

According to the US Senate data, Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan form invisible communities that only reluctantly make themselves known to the authorities and humanitarian actors. They typically live in cramped, barely heated basement apartments in the neighborhood that show no outward sign of Iraqi presence.

Political Status

The political status of Iraqi refugees is almost the same in the two countries. As in Jordan, Iraqis in Syria are not allowed to have their associations and in any case, under Syrian law the government has extensive jurisdiction to control the day-to-day operations of any association (Sassoon 2009: 80).

Under Jordanian law, Iraqis must pay up to US\$761 for every year they overstay their visa. The Jordanian authorities announced in February 2008 that they would exempt Iraqis from accumulated fines if they decided to return home or travel to a third country, but that those who wanted to stay had until 17 August to pay 50 percent of their dues and rectify their status, or risk never being accepted for residency. In Jordan, many Iraqi refugees, including those registered with the UNHCR do not meet the criteria for obtaining a residence permit. To do so they must either invest in Jordanian business enterprises, be employed in fields deemed to be of national interest or prove they are able to support themselves. This means they are required to deposit what amounts to nearly US\$150,000 in a Jordanian bank and must maintain a sufficient balance (about half) to earn interest. In Syria, while some Iraqi

refugees have managed to obtain a temporary residence permit, the majority does not have residence permits (Evans 2009: 20- 21).

Iraqi refugees do not feel secure or protected in either of the countries. They live in fear of deportation at any time, and with no permission to work legally the majority of them are mainly dependent on the assistance from humanitarian agencies and transfers from their relatives from Iraq or from other states for living.

The Iraqis refugees in Syria and Jordan fear that they will be returned to Iraq against their will and will die if returned. While both governments had welcomed them earlier with open borders, now they have tightened visa requirements; the instances of actual deportations appear rare, although reports have indicated specific situations of deportations of individuals leading to an underlying sense of fear. While the UNHCR and some local organizations in Jordan have mechanisms in place to assist the refugees, they have been unable to act quickly or effectively in some cases, reinforcing the Iraqi sense of a fragile safety in either Jordan or Syria (Duncan 2008: 20).

In Syria and Jordan, the Iraqi refugees want to shed their sectarian violence and they live together. This is also related to their feelings of insecurity, because these host states are very much aware and cautious about the bitter history of Iraqi sectarian violence. Therefore, the Iraqi refugees are very much conscious that if there are any such incidents from their part they will simply be deported from the host countries. Therefore, unlike in Iraq, the refugees are living side-by-side leaving their sectarian differences in their mother country.

Education

In Jordan, Iraqi children are required to bring official school documents from Iraq and prove they have been absent from school for over three years. Similar requirements exist in Syria too (Evans 2009: 23). In Syria and Jordan, lack of correct documentation, such as school reports and certificates have led to schools refusing to enroll the Iraqi refugee children. Sometimes, they were assigned to lower classes and as a result, the children refused to attend. In certain cases where the families do not have the visas to stay in Syria, they are extremely reluctant to register their children for fear of being discovered and expelled from the country (Sassoon, 2009: 69).

Economic Status

In these countries, Iraqi refugees are depending on their relatives and friends in Iraq or abroad and humanitarian agencies for life expenditure and no doubt, their financial status is depleting day by day. The major reasons for their weak economic status are that they are not allowed to work legally and that are increasing life expenses in Syria and Jordan. "In both countries, Iraqis complain that employers harass and refuse to pay refugees who, because they work illegally, have no legal resource. Apart from that, for many Iraqi men, their refugee status is a symbol of shame - for relying on humanitarian assistance, for not being able to provide for their families, and for having been displaced in the first place" (US Senate report 2008: 4).

In Syria and Jordan, the Iraqi embassies are unresponsive, unreliable, and unsympathetic towards troubles of refugees. Embassies are unable to provide humanitarian assistance or pensions to Iraqi refugees. It costs about \$25 dollars to renew a passport even for refugees. For those Iraqi families of six or eight members, it can be very expensive (US Senate Report 2008: 5).

Health

In these states, the health condition of the Iraqi refugees is very poor. Majority of them are suffering from chronic diseases. Another serious issue is that many of them do not have enough money to spend on their health care. Primary health services are free for them in both countries, but majority of them do not go to public health centers because of fear of deportation given that many of them are staying without required documents.

A serious gap in the health services in both these states is the lack of psychological counselling and the proper structures for helping traumatized refugees (Sassoon 2009: 73). The 2008 US Senate Report says that Jordan and Syria theoretically opened their health care system to Iraqis for primary care, but in practice, they are turned away and are reluctant to seek health care.

Status of Women and Children

Women and children are the most affected by the political crisis in Iraq and the following refugee crisis. Their condition is almost the same or more disastrous in the

host countries too. It is same in the case of status or hardships that the Iraqi refugee women are facing, be it domestic violence, deterioration in health conditions, trauma and psychological problems, and dealing with the ever-increasing problems of their children and their education (Sassoon 2009:69).

According to 2006 UNICEF report on Iraqi children and women in Syria and Jordan are in an equally precarious position,

The majority are either already poor or living on rapidly dwindling resources. Initial assessments indicate that large numbers of Iraqi children in Jordan and Syria are out of school (as many as 320,000 Iraqi children in Syria alone), while others are struggling to learn in over-crowded classrooms. Uncertainty over residency permits and visas has made many families reluctant to seek out health and education services. The ever-increasing financial burden on local host communities and government services is challenging support to these refugees. Refugee families, particularly those headed by women, are seriously struggling and a growing number of children are now out of school and into work – threatening their childhood and exposing them to potential abuse (UNICEF Report 2006).

Status of Palestinians from Iraq

It is the most interesting common factor for both the host countries that neither country allowed a few thousand Iraqi Palestinians to enter, and instead both kept them in camps on their borders. Their situation deteriorated and has remained worse than that of the Iraqi refugees settled in the urban areas of these countries. The Palestinians with a double refugee status are in isolated camps without proper infrastructure and materials.

Differences

There are dissimilarities also when we compare the social and political status of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan. But the degree of difference is not that wide in many areas. Some notable differences are in the status of minorities and in their economic and living conditions. There are some differences also in areas such as their status in education, health, assistance from humanitarian agencies and in political status. Syria hosts the majority of Iraqi refugees. Thus, there is a variety of Iraqi population in Syria with more of the poorer population segments. In the case of Iraqi refugees in Jordan, they have a reputation for being the wealthy business and upper classes; however, this reputation is not accurate overall. Many Iraqis in Jordan are in desperate

circumstances and have never been among the small group of the wealthy and the elite (Duncan 2008: 18).

The experiences of the Iraqi refugees are not the same in each host country. In Syria for example, economic conditions are dire despite the Syrian governments' position that the refugee problem is manageable. Many have depleted their savings or proceeds from selling homes and businesses in Iraq, and are not able to seek formal employment in the Syrian labor market. In Jordan, the government rigorously screens refugees to determine eligibility to enter the country, as there are concerns regarding the spread of sectarian consciousness and other forms of political activism that could disrupt the domestic peace. Jordan also views Iraqi refugees in the context of their Palestinian experience. It grants Iraqis asylum-seeking status, rather than refugee status. They are provided with a six-month visa, without work authorizations (Laipson 2009).

When we make a comparison of the humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi refugees in these states,

Jordan has been generally receptive to the influx of international NGO's and has a fairly robust local quasi-governmental sector, which is active in providing assistance. While initially the authorities were less receptive to UNHCR, they are beginning to work more effectively with the UN and international agencies now. The authorities have been receptive to the assistance and presence of U.S. funded agencies, although the pro-active coordination role still requires efforts. Syria has had a good relationship with the UN agencies, including the UNHCR, but has been slower to develop any comfort level with International NGOs. Nevertheless, the private sector in Syria, largely religious based, has responded generously and with competence. Therefore, in Syria too, coordination and communication have been difficult and still require efforts (Duncan 2008: 21).

Entry

Initially, Syria offered a warmer welcome to Iraqis than did Jordan (Lischer 2008: 108). For the Iraqi refugees, both countries are neighbours, even though it is easier to get to Syria than to Jordan. This was particularly true for the Shias who had to cross the Sunni Anbar province to get to Amman. Overall, the roads to Syria were safer than those to Jordan (Sassoon 2009: 63).

According to UNHCR Iraq Update in February 2009, in Syria, the waiting period for non-urgent new registration interviews is around 12 weeks. In Jordan, the waiting period is two to three days. The relatively long waiting period in Syria is due to the need to renew the registration of the existing refugee population.

Health

In Syria, Iraqi refugees enjoy relatively easy admission to its territory and access to the same health care and education services as Syrian nationals. Syria continues to shoulder the main burden of refugees' presence, with assistance from the international community's contribution, even while facing severe challenges in the form of an economic downturn and a two-year drought in the North Eastern governorates (UNICEF RRP for Iraqi Refugees 2010: 16).

Syria has the highest percentage of Iraqi refugees with special needs- 37 percent, where as Jordan has only 17 percent. In Syria, one in five of all registered cases has an Important Medical Condition whereas in Jordan, it is one in eight (UNHCR Iraq Refugees Registration Data Comparative Analysis, 2007-2008: 10).

The number of Iraqi refugees in Syria with critical food shortages increased fivefold between December 2006 and December 2007 to approximately 30,000. While in Jordan the situation is less dire, public health professionals in Jordan have reported some levels of malnutrition among Iraqi children (US Senate Report 2008: 10).

Access, or at least partial access, to health and education services in Syria is far easier than in Jordan and for the Iraqi refugees, this was a significant consideration. (Sassoon 2009: 64). In Jordan, medical services are limited to emergency care. Syria gave Iraqis free access to medical services until 2005; since then they have been required to pay (Younes and Garcia 2006). The differences in health care of the Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan are seen in the table no. 4 in the first chapter.

Education

Education is an important area when we compare the social status of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan, In Syria, during 2007 an average of 25 percent of registered refugees has a University education. This drops to 18 percent in 2008, while the average proportion of those with only a Grade 1-8 education rises from 16 percent to 22 percent during the same period. In Jordan, many are registered with University education throughout the registration period (above 35 percent). There are also a relatively high number with Grade 9-14 education (average 33percent) throughout the

registration period with the highest in the first quarter of 2007 (39 percent) (UNHCR Iraq Refugees Registration Data Comparative Analysis 2007-2008: 17).

Syrian schools are accessible, and here there was no ambiguity about the admission policy unlike in Jordan (Sassoon 2009: 69). For Iraqi refugees, education in Jordan is more restrictive than in Syria. While Jordan does not deny Iraqis access to schools, the government conditions make it dependent on the availability of space and gives headmasters the authority to admit or deny children access. The best option for Iraqis in Jordan is to send their children to private school, but most cannot afford tuition (Younes and Garcia 2006).

Status of Women and Children

In both Jordan and Syria, many Iraqi women assumed the role of the head of their families or households after their husbands were killed, imprisoned or kidnapped following the invasion of 2003. This is more widespread in Syria than in Jordan because Syria hosts poorer refugee families than Jordan (Sassoon 2009: 67).

As Sasson says, “whatever the real number is, there is little doubt that the percentage of prostitutes within the Iraqi population in Syria is far higher than in Jordan or other host countries due to the fact that many Iraqis who fled to Syria were less affluent and more susceptible to destitution than their compatriots in Jordan” (Sassoon 2009: 68).

The Women’s Commission Report in September 2007 on Iraqi refugee women and youth in Jordan mentions, sexual exploitation of Iraqi women and girls is present in Jordan, but the extent is not yet documented. While commercial sex work of Iraqi refugees in Syria generally takes place in nightclubs, in Jordan customers usually come directly to women’s homes or to other private venues.

The issue of malnutrition seems to exist in Syria on a wider scale than in Jordan due to the deteriorating economic conditions of Iraqis in Syria. 2 percent of children are malnourished and a further 3.5 percent have the potential to become malnourished (Sassoon 2009: 72).

Economic Status and Living Conditions

One of the strong differences between the status of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan is with respect to their economic situation and their living conditions. The impact of the refugees on Syria's economy is dissimilar from Jordan; the Iraqis did not commit large capital to investments in industry and the stock market (which in any case does not exist in Syria). Many of the businesspersons who came to Syria already had ties in the country, but those who did not have large investments pre-2003 chose to move to Jordan where the business environment is more attractive (Sassoon 2009: 76).

Before and after the US invasion in 2003, the wealthy Iraqis fearing instability tended to invest and establish residences more often in Jordan than Syria, but Syria also received some of the Iraqi wealth. Overall, the Syria-bound migrations were poorer and until recently relatively smaller (Fagen 2007: 14).

Syria's informal economy is much larger than Jordan's and the cost of living is much lower than in Jordan. These two economic aspects played influential roles for Iraqis, particularly the poorer ones, in choosing Syria rather than Jordan as their destination for settlement. The Brookings Institution report says that unlike in Jordan, few Iraqis buy property in Syria, and prices for real estate and rents for apartments are increasing. It is easier for the refugees to find small jobs in Syria than it is in Jordan, where Iraqi refugees who have jobs sometimes report difficulties being paid at the end of the month.

The other difference is in their banking facility and rules; Iraqis are not allowed to open bank accounts in Syria until they have an annual residency; in Jordan, it is enough to show a valid passport. Both of these have an impact on their living standard in these states.

In Syria, the situation of Iraqi refugees is potentially more serious, as its Iraqi population is generally poorer than those fleeing to Jordan are and the state has even fewer resources to accommodate the largest Iraqi refugees. Syria's initial opening of its borders to the refugees appears to have been driven largely by ideology, to boost its pan-Arab bonafides on the regional stage, with little regard for the economic consequences. 80- 90 percent of Iraqi refugees have clustered in Damascus, resulting in overcrowding and increasingly unsanitary living conditions (Oliker 2010: 31).

Status of Minorities

This is an important area of concern when we compare the social and political status of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan, because both the countries have absorbed a large number of Iraqi refugees belonging to minority groups like Christians and Sabeans and there are a number of minorities already present there.

Syria is less homogeneous than Jordan in the sense that it has always had large minorities and has been the friendliest to Shia among destination countries. The 'Alawis, to whom the ruling family of Al-Assad belong, are themselves a minority. Given the strengthening relations between Syria and Iran, Shias enjoy the help of Shi'i charitable institutions, some of which are supported directly by Iranian religious groups. This is a critical factor for Shias given the fact that no such setup exists in Jordan. Syrians have a better reputation among Iraqis than other Arabs; many Sunnis cherish the fact that Syria is not pro-America, while Shias perceive the Syrians differently from the Jordanians and Palestinians who had preferential treatment from Saddam Hussein's regime (Sassoon 2009: 64).

Jordan, a largely Sunni nation, has been reluctant to offer the Iraqi Shia population opportunity for public expression of their religion. Similarly, the Sabean religious minority is not able to celebrate their holy days in any public setting. It is widely thought that this is in effort to control the possible spread of sectarian violence, which they fear Iraqis may import to Jordan.

In the above comparison of Iraqi refugees living in Syria and Jordan, only some important indicators of social and political status are mentioned. There are actually some similarities in their place of origin, age structure, and percent of religious and ethnic people, etc. in the host countries. Meanwhile, there are some huge differences in the numbers residing in these host states. While Syria hosts 1.2- 1.5 million Iraqi refugees, Jordan hosts only 4.5- 5 lakh. This is not an important aspect for comparison of relative statuses, but it can influence the host states' policy towards them and their living standard.

CONCLUSION

The West Asian region has received more than ten percent of the world's migrants. Domestic strife and foreign intervention frequently produce large population dislocations and refugee flows across national boundaries. It often entails negative consequences for the receiving states. Many contemporary conflicts, particularly those in Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan and the ongoing Palestine- Israel conflict have generated substantial refugee flows.

For Iraqis, forced displacement is not a new phenomenon; it has a history of over four or five decades. It started from 1958 when the Iraqi monarchy was toppled. Then because of successive wars, sectarian violence mainly between the Sunnis and Shias, sanctions by UN and others, foreign invasion and the subsequent complex social and political situations in Iraq, and finally when the US- led invasion started in 2003 and more clearly after the end of Saddam era, Iraqi refugee flow attained its peak. It worsened and became massive after the bombing of the holy Shi'a shrine in Samarra in 2006 and still there is a continuing concern about the lack of effective protection of people's human rights in Iraq.

Since the war started in 2003 in Iraq, millions of Iraqis have fled their country, seeking refuge mostly in Syria and Jordan. Because of the geographical proximity of Syria and Jordan, the presence of Iraqi diaspora there, similar language, culture, social and political features, scope of resettlement and more importantly their history of dealing with the refugees especially with Arabs, Iraqi displaced persons chose with greater frequency these two nations as their temporary destination. There are no accurate statistics or official figures available on the profile of Iraqi refugees, because majority of them are living illegally in these host countries. Compared to other neighbouring countries or host states, Syria and Jordan have been the most generous countries in hosting Iraqi refugees. According to government estimates, the figure stands as between 1.2 and 1.5 million in Syria, 450,000- 500,000 in Jordan, and 50,000 in Lebanon and the other countries in the region host less than the above number and the six GCC states together host only 2,00,000.

The host states of majority of the Iraqi refugees, Syria and Jordan are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention and do not have a refugee law or asylum procedures.

Even then, until recently, they have been generally tolerant towards the Iraqi refugees settled in their territory. But because of the social, political and economic problem faced by these states given the rapid and massive influx of Iraqi refugees, they have had to implement restrictions and other measures to cope with them.

When we check the social and political status of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan, in both countries they are not considered as “refugees”, but only as “guests”. The host states policy towards them is based on two principal issues –security and economy. Therefore, they are banned from forming any type of civil society or any other movements or solidarity organisations and are not allowed to work legally. That is why the unemployment rate is very high among the Iraqi refugees settled in these two states. Many of them are depending on their relatives outside the host states and humanitarian agencies for financial assistance. The global economic downturn and its local impact, the history and legacy of Iraq’s relations with these host countries, and the host governments’ views of the changing situation in Iraq and prospects for return are also a deciding factor for the refugees’ status.

For Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Syria, it is very difficult to find jobs, especially for women to support their families. Their access to health services is limited. Many Iraqi women and girls have been forced into prostitution in order to reduce the financial constraints of their families. Many families are not allowing their children to attend school in the host states because of the insecurity, lack of proper infrastructure, and more over, because of economic limitations. Although the governments of Syria and Jordan allow Iraqi refugees to attend public schools the percent of Iraqi children who actually do so is less than 30. In both countries, there is a growing popular anger over Iraqi refugees, and there are reports of the exploitation of Iraqi labor including child labour with low wages. The majority of Iraqis have fled from their cities and settled in urban centers, particularly in the capital cities and its suburban areas, in apartments rather than camps. Both host states have not established camps for the Iraqis, because neither state has granted them refugee status.

The situation of the Iraqi refugees settled in Syria and Jordan remains desperate. The legal status of many Iraqi families remains uncertain and many now face tight visa restrictions and have cases of detention and deportation against them. As for their social status, Iraqi refugees are in distress as they increasingly find themselves unable

to access productive livelihood opportunities or basic social services because of their depleting economic condition.

Since 2003, Iraqi refugees have been fleeing from their homes and cities seeking a more secure life and future. Whatever their final destinations, Iraqi refugees are still in search of a safer haven. Globally, if we are to rank refugee crises in their relative order of suffering, UN experts say that Iraq's would be the world's second-worst crisis, second only to Afghanistan, and ahead of Sudan.

The Iraqi refugees are themselves fighting with problems of security, crisis of identity as to whether they are foreigners, guests, asylum seekers or refugees, and above all, they are struggling for survival and existence. The negative consequences of this exodus could go well as a humanitarian tragedy.

When the Iraqi refugees left their homeland, they hoped that the crisis would not persist for a long time, and within a short time, they would be able to return to Iraq, reclaim their property and resume their previous life. But political developments in Iraq have faded their expectations and they live with few choices with regard to their future.

This work has shown that Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan are desperate socially, politically and economically. One of the most important features of Iraqi refugees in these host states is that they do not want to practice their sectarian divisions and violence in the host states and would rather live together amicably. Because they have long bitter history of sectarian violence, they know very well such practices would be harmful to their existence in host countries.

Every refugee crisis definitely needs a solution, be it repatriation, resettlement, or any other proper and practicable solution. In the case of the Iraqi refugee crisis, it is very urgent, because it is not only a problem of Iraq or its people, but also that of the host states, of the region, and also of the world. Millions of Iraqi refugees in the region continue to live with little hope of finding a solution to their plight. However, there are some solutions, though unpredictable about to what extent these measures will actually be successful. The practicable solutions are (i) voluntary repatriation to the home country that is Iraq; (ii) resettlement in a third country; or (iii) finding appropriate permanent integration mechanisms in the host country.

It is very easy to introduce some terms like resettlement, repatriation etc. to resolve the big and complex issue of refugee crisis, but to implement these policies is an exceedingly complex task. However the best solution for most of the refugees is to return to their homes in Iraq, but safe repatriation cannot be undertaken now or in the near future. Some of them may return to Iraq, simply because of the hardship of living in the host countries. Others may be able to find a temporary opportunity in the host society and economy, but without the legal residency rights, they will not feel secure. Therefore, all these measures have their own problems and possibilities and that is why it is very difficult to suggest an absolute solution for the plight of Iraqi refugees. Considering the improbability of any rapid resolution to this human tragedy, concerns have arisen over the prospect of massive number of refugees and about the sustainability of the situation in Jordan and Syria. No doubt, their number and crises will increase significantly, if both Jordan and Syria keep their borders closed and tighten the restrictions over Iraqi refugees. Anyhow, one question remains: Both the host countries are not unfamiliar with refugee populations and these host states and their people have extended a great deal of hospitality, but now their attitude is changing gradually, and so we are not sure how long that kind of hospitality will last.

The question of Iraqi refugees continues to be one of the largest and complex running humanitarian problem in the world today, which has remained unresolved and the intensity of which is growing at an alarming rate. The Iraqi refugee crisis is a human tragedy or a process of large-scale human displacement at a rapid pace. These refugees are the living martyrs in this political game of power and survival. They are forced to live a life of uncertainty and suffer endless psychological/ mental trauma and anxieties about their socio- political and economic existence. Today, they hopelessly hope for a better future in the host countries, a peaceful repatriation, and a harmonious life in their mother country.

The growing Iraqi refugee crisis in the West Asian region has the potential to destabilize the region socially, politically and economically. Therefore, to conclude, if there is no proper recognition of and concrete solution to this human tragedy, a stable and secure West Asia will remain a distant dream. The Iraqi refugees had a bitter past, they live in a dangerous present, and their future is uncertain.

THE *****END

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