

SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES AMIDST A GLOBAL TRIPLE THREAT OF CONFLICTS, COVID-19, AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

COUNTRIES HOSTING DISPLACED PERSONS

PART 6

Editors:

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Omar S. Rasheed

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**Socioeconomic Challenges
Amidst a Global Triple Threat
of Conflicts, COVID-19, and
Climate Change:**

***Countries Hosting Displaced
Persons***

(Part 6)

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FOREWORD

Although conflict and disasters are the main drivers of forced displacement, other factors include rapid urbanization, generalized violence, and human rights violations. Displaced people are particularly vulnerable due to the sudden loss of homes, livelihoods, and social networks, which often results in extreme poverty, insecurity, and limited access to basic services such as health care and sanitation. They also face heightened risks of violence and exploitation. People displaced by conflict are especially vulnerable to climate risks because they often settle in marginal, hazard-prone areas and lack the resources needed to adapt to or recover from extreme weather. Having already lost assets and support systems, they are more exposed to repeated disasters and are frequently excluded from early warning systems and disaster risk reduction planning. Forcibly displaced populations, particularly those uprooted by natural disasters and climate-related hazards, face a compounding cycle of risk, often exchanging one set of vulnerabilities for another in host or resettlement areas, and becoming trapped in poverty and marginalization. Children, women, and the elderly are the most vulnerable due to dependence, limited mobility or autonomy, and greater exposure to exploitation, health risks, and economic insecurity. Pre-existing inequalities such as poverty, gender discrimination, and age-related fragility are further intensified by conflict and climate shocks, leading to repeated displacement and reduced access to protection and essential services.

By 2025, more than 139 million people are projected to be forcibly displaced worldwide due to persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights abuses, either as refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs), according to UNHCR. Over the past decade, displacement driven by conflict and violence has surged, nearly doubling since 2014, alongside a tripling of internal displacement in Africa over one and a half decades. Natural disasters triggered a record 45.8 million new internal displacements in 2024 alone, with nearly 265 million movements driven by climate or other disasters in the decade preceding 2024. Climate refugees remain largely uncounted and overlooked, even as populations at high risk from rising seas have risen from 160 million to 260 million over the past three decades—mostly in poorer developing nations and small island states. While conflict remains the primary driver, climate change intensifies an already severe crisis, causing repeated displacement as conflicts persist and disasters accumulate, disproportionately affecting the world's most vulnerable populations, including refugees, IDPs, and host communities.

While refugees face overlapping challenges—including the loss of livelihoods, unsafe and inadequate housing, limited access to healthcare, food insecurity, language and cultural barriers, disrupted education, psychological trauma, family separation, disability-related exclusion, and prolonged uncertainty that makes rebuilding stable lives extremely difficult—countries that provide asylum face equally complex and far-reaching pressures that strain national infrastructure, economies, public services, and social cohesion, particularly in low- and middle-income nations that host the majority of the world's displaced populations. Refugee inflows can place heavy pressure on already scarce local resources and infrastructure, often increasing costs and fueling social tensions despite humanitarian assistance and some localized economic benefits. At the same time, refugees frequently encounter barriers to formal employment and legal work rights, while host communities may experience intensified job competition, rising living costs, overburdened public services, and growing friction over limited resources. In many settings, refugee settlements and camps can also accelerate environmental degradation by straining water, land, and food systems, disproportionately affecting the poorest host communities. Overcrowded living conditions, inadequate WASH services, and limited healthcare access further turn many refugee

settlements into hotspots for disease transmission, increasing the spread of infectious illnesses and worsening overall health outcomes for both displaced and nearby populations. The analysis of countries that host displaced populations discusses that predominantly low- and middle-income nations face significant strain from large-scale displacement driven by conflict and climate shocks, affecting economies, public services, and social cohesion. It notes that these pressures lead to fiscal burdens, labor market disruption, environmental stress, and heightened health and social tensions within host communities. At the same time, it emphasizes that effective integration and international cooperation can help transform displacement into long-term developmental and economic gains.

Since the onset of the Israel– Hamas War in October 2023, more than 6 million people have been displaced across the Middle East, affecting over a dozen countries. In Lebanon alone, roughly one in four people is a refugee, and one in five children lacks stable housing—marking a stark reversal for a country once called the “Switzerland of the Middle East.” As of early 2026, Lebanon continues to host the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, with nearly 1.5 million Syrian refugees and about half a million Palestinian refugees, despite more than half a million Syrians having returned in recent years. If proposals for the so-called “Gazafication” of southern Lebanon as a buffer zone, or the politicization of a religious narrative tied to a projected “Greater Israel” extending toward the Litani River, advance, they would likely deepen regional instability and displacement. By April 2026, nearly 1.2 million people had been uprooted—many for a second time within months—with about 14% of the territory under evacuation orders amid worsening shortages of food, fuel, water, and shelter. The Russia–Ukraine War has further deepened Lebanon’s economic crisis by intensifying food and energy shortages, driving record inflation, and exposing fragile supply chains already weakened by the Beirut port explosion. This has left minimal grain reserves and triggered recurring panic over shortages. Amid broader Middle East conflicts, Lebanon’s economy contracted by about 5.7–6.6% in 2024, pushing cumulative GDP losses beyond 38% since 2019 and reflecting a \$4.2 billion hit to consumption and exports, alongside worsening fiscal and monetary fragility. By early 2026, Lebanon’s economy teeters between internal collapse and competing U.S.–China influence, as Western aid contrasts with China’s increasingly attractive infrastructure-driven support. The chapter on Lebanon portrays a compounding national collapse driven by economic freefall, pandemic shocks, infrastructural devastation, climate stress, and conflict-induced disruptions that have severely weakened livelihoods and state capacity, while refugee pressures and regional instability further intensify resource scarcity, food insecurity, and systemic strain.

Jordan, home to iconic landmarks such as Petra, Jerash, and major biblical sites, has long positioned itself as a regional mediator in Middle East peace efforts and a consistent refuge for displaced populations. Since 1995, it has maintained a fixed exchange rate (of 1 USD = 0.709 JOD), supported by foreign reserves of about \$20 billion in 2024, helping preserve monetary stability and control inflation despite persistent regional and domestic economic pressures. As of early 2026, the country hosts more than 2.5 million Palestinian refugees and has historically accommodated about 1.4 million Syrian refugees, with reports indicating that over 185,000 Syrians returned from Jordan to Syria between December 2024 and mid-February 2026. Jordan has also borne a heavy financial burden from hosting Syrian refugees since 2011, with annual costs estimated at \$2–2.5 billion (around 5–6% of GDP) and cumulative expenses exceeding \$10 billion by 2016. Meanwhile, intensified Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon in 2026 further deepened regional displacement, with over 200,000 Syrian refugees and Lebanese transiting through Syria toward Jordan, adding new pressure on an already strained humanitarian situation. Since 1989, Jordan’s repeated IMF loan programs have failed to stabilize its economy, with public debt surpassing 92% of GDP by May 2025,

while post-COVID youth unemployment—persistently above 40%—and poverty levels exceeding 15% have continued to rise. Corruption concerns, highlighted by the 2021 Pandora Papers’ allegations of offshore-linked luxury property holdings worth over \$100 million tied to King Abdullah II, have further intensified scrutiny of governance amid ongoing aid dependence. Climate change has intensified Jordan’s status as the world’s second most water-stressed nation, worsening water scarcity, agricultural decline, and infrastructure strain amid rising heatwaves and droughts, threatening long-term economic stability. The Ukraine war indirectly worsened Jordan’s post-pandemic recovery by driving up food and energy costs and straining its trade balance, while the Red Sea crisis (2023–24) disrupted trade through Aqaba and weakened tourism, slowing growth to about 2.4% in 2024 amid persistent unemployment and debt pressures. Jordan has also navigated US–China tensions by relying on U.S. aid and security while attracting Chinese investment in infrastructure and green energy, balancing geopolitical risks with limited diversification gains. However, heavy reliance on U.S. assistance—exceeding \$1 billion annually, accounting for roughly 40% of overseas development aid in 2023 and rising to about \$1.7 billion by 2025—has left Jordan vulnerable to external political pressure, culminating in the 2025 Trump Gaza “relocation” proposal that triggered a diplomatic crisis and forced rejection amid fears of economic strain and national instability. Overall, the chapter on Jordan discusses how massive refugee inflows, combined with pandemic-driven contraction, high debt, chronic unemployment, and climate stress, have placed severe strain on its social and economic systems, while overlapping regional and global shocks have deepened vulnerability, poverty, food insecurity, and dependence on limited international aid.

Therefore, forced displacement driven by disasters, urbanization, conflicts and human rights violations, leaving affected populations highly vulnerable due to loss of shelter, livelihoods, and essential services. They face compounded risks of poverty, exploitation, climate hazards, and exclusion from protection systems, with women, children, and the elderly most severely affected. Host countries bear significant economic, social, environmental, and public service pressures, even as large-scale displacement continues to rise globally. Studying these dynamics is essential for understanding shared global responsibility, improving resilience, and designing policies that transform displacement challenges into opportunities for inclusive development through cooperation and sustainable planning.

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Preface

The book opens in a world quietly reshaped by movement—of people, of borders, and of responsibilities that no longer remain confined within national lines, where displacement is not a distant crisis but an enduring global condition that binds origin and destination in a shared, uneasy reality. It tells not only the story of those forced to flee conflict, disaster, and deepening inequalities, but equally of the countries that receive them—nations, often with limited means, that have become the frontlines of humanitarian response. What begins as a sudden rupture—loss of home, livelihood, and community—evolves into a prolonged struggle for stability, as displaced populations navigate unfamiliar systems, fragile shelter, and uncertain futures. Yet the journey does not end at arrival; instead, it transforms into a new phase of vulnerability, where safety remains partial and access to opportunity is uneven. Host countries, already grappling with economic constraints, environmental stress, and political pressures, must expand their infrastructures and public services to accommodate growing populations, often at significant fiscal and social cost. Cities stretch beyond their limits, labor markets shift under pressure, and natural resources—water, land, and food—face intensified demand, sometimes accelerating environmental degradation and deepening inequality within host communities themselves. In these settings, generosity coexists with strain, as solidarity is tested by rising living costs, competition for jobs, and overburdened healthcare and sanitation systems. Meanwhile, displaced individuals carry with them not only loss but resilience, though this resilience is repeatedly tested by cycles of insecurity, exposure to climate risks, and exclusion from formal systems of protection and planning. For many, displacement becomes a recurring condition rather than a temporary disruption, particularly as climate change and conflict intersect to produce repeated uprooting. Women, children, and the elderly bear disproportionate burdens within this landscape, their vulnerabilities intensified by structural inequalities that limit mobility, access, and protection. The experience of displacement thus unfolds as a layered crisis—social, economic, and environmental—shared across both displaced populations and the societies that host them. And yet, within this complex interplay lies the potential for transformation: with thoughtful policy, inclusive planning, and sustained international cooperation, the pressures of displacement can be redirected toward long-term development gains, fostering resilience not only among those who arrive, but also within the communities that receive them. This book, therefore, invites the reader to look beyond the immediacy of crisis and toward a deeper understanding of coexistence in a world where the boundaries between refuge and responsibility continue to blur.

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Section 1 (Countries Hosting Displaced Populations)

CHAPTER 1

Challenges of the Countries Where War- or Climate-Related Displaced People Took Asylum

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Abstract: Displacement exacerbates vulnerability, limiting access to healthcare and essential services, increasing disability rates, and disproportionately affecting women and children, who face higher risks of death, abuse, and exploitation. Older individuals are often left behind, either contributing to recovery efforts or being seen as burdens. Migration flows generally move from disaster-affected, often developing, nations toward wealthier countries, yet most displaced populations remain within their borders, straining already limited resources. Host communities face economic challenges, environmental degradation, strained healthcare systems, and sociopolitical tensions. Forced migration has reached historic levels, with 120 million people displaced globally in 2024—1.5% of the world’s population—more than double the number from a decade ago. Conflict and violence primarily drive cross-border displacement, while climate-related disasters are the leading cause of internal displacement. By 2050, climate change and natural disasters could forcibly displace up to 1.2 billion people. Balancing humanitarian responsibilities with national interests presents a complex challenge for host nations, as they struggle to maintain security, economic stability, and social cohesion while addressing the needs of displaced people. A comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach is necessary to provide immediate relief, build long-term resilience, and create sustainable solutions for displaced populations and their host communities. This includes improving integration opportunities, fostering economic contributions from displaced individuals, and ensuring safe pathways for return. Ultimately, addressing forced migration effectively requires international cooperation, innovative policies, and a commitment to balancing compassion with pragmatic governance to mitigate the long-term impacts of displacement on global stability and human welfare.

Keywords: Asylum seekers, Disasters, Forced migration, Host countries, Human displacement, Human mobility, Humanitarian crisis, Immigration, Internally displaced populations, Migrants, Refugees.

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INTRODUCTION

Disasters, whether natural or human-made, often lead to significant population displacements and forced migration. Affected individuals may seek safety outside their homes, leading to internal or international displacement. Those who remain within their country are classified as “Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs),” while those who cross international borders are recognized as “Refugees” or “Asylum Seekers.” Each group carries distinctive characteristics influenced by geopolitical status, political legitimacy, demographics, and humanitarian needs (Lischer, 2007). Refugees and asylum seekers fall under international jurisdiction, while IDPs remain primarily the responsibility of their own national authorities (UN, 1998). Understanding these distinctions is critical, as the causes, management, and challenges of displacement vary based on status and context (Cantor *et al.*, 2021). However, reports often conflate these categories, treating all displacement crises uniformly. Refugees, as defined by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019), flee their countries due to well-founded fears of persecution, exemplified by Sudanese refugees in Chad, where Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) documented over 600,000 arrivals amid resource scarcity by 2024. Asylum seekers, such as those at the US-Mexico border, applied for international protection, yet over 2,500 daily cases faced rejections under restrictive policies in 2024. Migrants, moving voluntarily for economic opportunities, encountered hazards like Mediterranean crossings, with 62,000 arrivals by June 2024 but 613 fatalities (MSF Press Release, 2024). By the end of 2024, close to 90% of Gaza's population had been displaced, with aid severely restricted due to border inspections (IRC, 2025), while over 2.4 million people were displaced in the first half of 2024 alone by conflicts in the DRC, according to IDMC's expert analysis (Uebersax, 2024). Stateless individuals, like the Rohingya in Myanmar, faced extreme vulnerability, denied citizenship by the 1982 nationality law, and subjected to dangerous journeys, with over 3.5 million Rohingya globally, and only 600,000 remaining in Myanmar after the 2017 genocide. By mid-2024, more than 1.6 million Rohingya, registered or unregistered, were living in Bangladesh (MSF Press Release, 2024; Rahman, 2024).

Forced displacement emerged as a multifaceted crisis shaped by the intersection of health, conflict, disasters, gender, childhood vulnerabilities, and intergenerational migration patterns, with over 110 million people displaced globally by mid-2023 and figures rising to 117.3 million by year's end. Spiegel *et al.* (2024) highlighted the health-conflict nexus, revealing that systematic attacks on healthcare facilities and infrastructure not only disrupted essential services but also increased vulnerability to infectious diseases, malnutrition, and mental health crises, exacerbating forced migration. Conflict-related mortality reached a 26-year

high, while weakened asylum and refugee laws left displaced populations in increasingly precarious conditions, exposing the inadequacies of humanitarian responses. Jaime *et al.* (2024) examined the disaster-conflict nexus, demonstrating that conflict heightened exposure to hydrometeorological hazards by undermining economic and institutional resilience, with affected regions experiencing disproportionately high displacement due to the interplay of extreme weather, violence, and economic instability. Their analysis of 384 studies from 2004 to 2022 revealed a critical research gap: only 3.4% considered conflict a risk factor, despite its significant role in exacerbating disaster impacts, particularly in high-intensity conflict zones such as Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen. Brück *et al.* (2024) analyzed gender disparities, reporting that women and girls constituted over half of the displaced population and faced heightened risks of gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence and exploitation, particularly in conflict-affected regions like Colombia, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Using nationally representative datasets from 2019–2023, the study demonstrated that displaced women encountered lower earnings, higher poverty rates, and systemic barriers to employment due to care responsibilities and legal restrictions, reinforcing economic marginalization. Save the Children (2024) documented an unprecedented 50 million displaced children by 2023, with 10.5 million newly displaced, particularly in Sudan and Somalia, where conflict and climate-related disasters intensified vulnerabilities. As of October 2023, children accounted for 40% of the global displaced population, yet many remained invisible in displacement data, limiting effective policy interventions to address their unique needs, including loss of education, healthcare, and exposure to child labor and exploitation. Brunarska & Ivlevs (2023) investigated the intergenerational impact of forced displacement, demonstrating through data from the 2016 Life in Transition Survey-III, covering 32 Eurasian countries and 41,977 respondents, that descendants of forced migrants from World War II were 1.9 percentage points more likely to express migration intentions. Their findings supported the “family migration capital” hypothesis, revealing that displacement experiences shaped future migration patterns by fostering a sense of agency, increasing perceived behavioral control, and shifting investment priorities toward portable human capital.

Climate change emerged as a critical global challenge, affecting millions of vulnerable individuals and emphasizing the urgent need for comprehensive responses. Climate change disproportionately impacts marginalized populations, leading to the forced displacement of over 30 million people annually, with disasters constituting 53% of internal displacements in 2022 (TSF News Release, 2024). The frequency of climate-induced catastrophes nearly tripled from 1980 to 2020, resulting in significant casualties and infrastructure damage, as extreme weather events displaced 32.6 million people in 2022 alone. Projections indicated

CHAPTER 2

Lebanon: Drowned in the Darkness of Crises

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Abstract: Lebanon, once celebrated as the “Switzerland of the Middle East” and a beacon of financial prosperity and cultural vibrancy, now finds itself engulfed in an unparalleled crisis, a victim of both internal fragility and external turbulence. The nation’s descent into economic collapse was accelerated by decades of political corruption, mismanagement, and overreliance on foreign remittances, rendering it particularly vulnerable to global shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic devastated an already crumbling economy, leading to mass unemployment, a collapsing currency, and one of the worst financial meltdowns in modern history. As Lebanon struggled to recover, the spillover from regional conflicts—most notably the Syrian civil war and ongoing tensions with Israel—further destabilized the country, leading to an unprecedented refugee influx that overwhelmed infrastructure and fueled social unrest. The Beirut Port explosion of 2020 served as a tragic metaphor for the state’s dysfunction, exposing systemic negligence and accelerating the country’s downward spiral. The Ukraine war disrupted global food supply chains, driving inflation to catastrophic levels and deepening Lebanon’s dependence on imports, while climate change threatens to reshape the country’s future by exacerbating water scarcity, agricultural decline, and economic stagnation. Forecasts predict a 14% GDP contraction by 2040 due to climate-related disruptions alone. What was once a thriving, cosmopolitan center of the Arab world now faces an existential crisis, marked by hunger, power shortages, and financial ruin. Lebanon stands at a crossroads, with its survival hinging on urgent reforms, international aid, and a reinvention of its political and economic structures. Whether it can reclaim its former stature or descend further into instability remains one of the most defining questions of its modern history.

Keywords: Civil war, Currency devaluation, Debt crisis, Drug shortages, Energy crisis, Food inflation, Forced displacement, Hyperinflation, Lockdown, State bankruptcy, Syrian refugee, Unemployment, Vaccine hesitancy.

INTRODUCTION

Lebanon's history is almost as old as the earliest signs of humankind, earning it the moniker “the Switzerland of the Middle East” or “Pearl in the Middle East”

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during the 1960s. It had an economic boom prior to the onset of the Lebanese civil war in 1975. Traditional economies like agriculture and industry made up the majority of GDP. Lebanon made advances in education during this time, and as a result, it had the highest literacy rate among Arab nations. It is perhaps the only country in the Middle East without a desert; it contains five UNESCO World Heritage sites. It is a small and picturesque nation on the eastern bank of the Mediterranean Sea, surrounded on three sides by three other war-torn and refugee-filled countries: Syria, Jordan, and Palestine, and uniquely placed at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and Africa (Fig. 1).

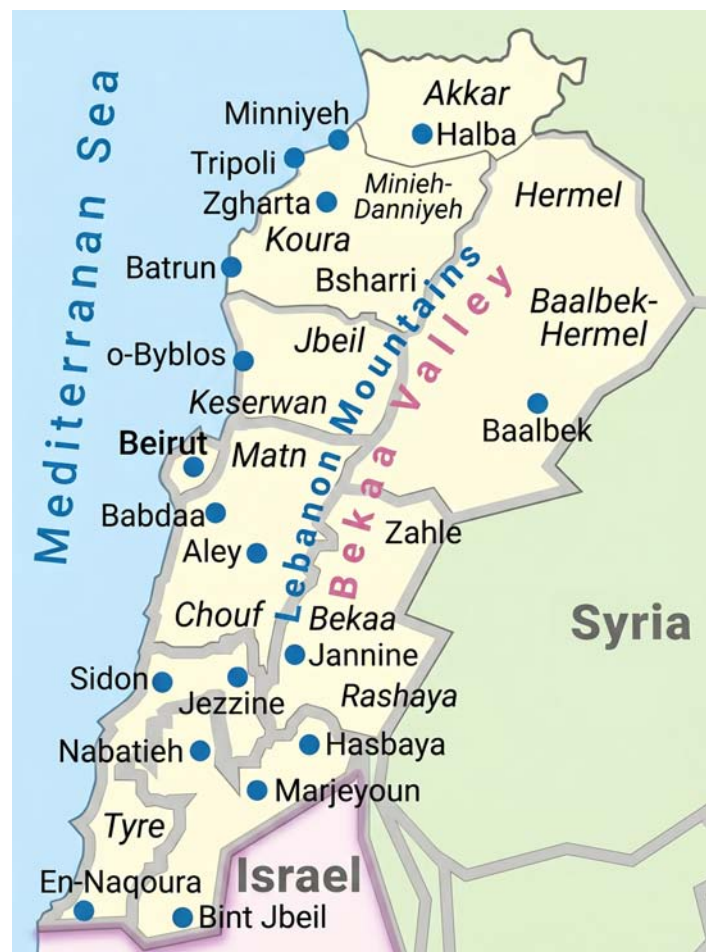


Fig. (1). Republic of Lebanon and surrounding landscape (authors own work by Canva illustrator).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the catastrophic Beirut Port explosion of August 2020 significantly exacerbated Lebanon's health and economic crises. The

explosion caused extensive damage to 292 health facilities, while daily COVID-19 cases surged by 220% in its aftermath before stabilizing after October 2020 (Mjaess *et al.*, 2021). The healthcare sector was further crippled by a mass exodus of medical professionals, driven by chronic shortages of staff, basic supplies, and adequate salaries (Todman & McCaffrey, 2021). According to the Lebanese Order of Physicians, around 3,000 physicians and 5,000 nurses have fled the nation since 2019 as a result of the consequences of this crisis (López-Tomás, 2023). Also, the head of the Lebanese Order of Nurses warned that more than 55% of working nurses intend to leave their positions and the nation during the next two years (EL Hage, 2023). Economically, the consumer price index soared by 150 points to 261.28 between 2019 and October 2020, with food prices escalating by a staggering 441% (Central Administration of Statistics, Trading Economics Live Data). The World Bank classified Lebanon's economic collapse as one of the worst globally since the mid-19th century, with nominal GDP plummeting from \$55 billion in 2018 to \$20.5 billion in 2021 and the Lebanese pound losing over 90% of its value against the US dollar (World Bank, 2021).

The Ukraine war, which began in February 2022, had profound geopolitical and economic impacts on Lebanon, a country already grappling with severe crises. Geopolitically, it catalyzed a landmark agreement between Lebanon and Israel to resolve a 12-year maritime border dispute, allowing Lebanon to exploit offshore gas reserves under U.S. mediation (Kodalazian, 2023). Economically, Lebanon's reliance on imports and the collapse of its currency exacerbated its challenges. Diesel prices surged by 2000% within a year, making transportation unaffordable for most citizens (UNHRC, 2022). Before the war, Lebanon had faced a 22% GDP decline in 2020, inflation of 215% by February 2022, and a 95% devaluation of its currency within two years. Over 75% of its population lived below the poverty line by 2021 (Breisinger *et al.*, 2023). Heavily dependent on Russia and Ukraine for 70-90% of its wheat imports, which constituted 25% of calorie intake, Lebanon's food security was further strained (Breisinger *et al.*, 2023). By April 2022, Lebanon was in its third year of financial collapse caused by decades of corruption and mismanagement, with its currency losing over 90% of its value and banks denying depositors access to funds. While the Central Bank Governor denied insolvency, the Deputy Prime Minister declared the central bank bankrupt (Azhari *et al.*, 2022). Real GDP per capita had dropped by more than 37%, leading the World Bank in July 2022 to downgrade Lebanon from an upper-middle-income country to a lower-middle-income country (Karam *et al.*, 2023).

Since the onset of Lebanon's economic crisis in 2019, depositors endured informal capital controls, losing access to life savings. The crisis was exacerbated by the former central bank governor, an Interpol-wanted criminal accused of launching flawed monetary policies in 2016 and engaging in corruption and

CHAPTER 3

Refugee Crisis in Jordan: Thorns of Harsh Reality

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Abstract: Jordan's socioeconomic landscape had long been shaped by an intricate web of regional and global crises, each compounding the nation's historical economic vulnerabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, and an escalating climate crisis collectively strained Jordan's fragile economy, worsening slow growth, high unemployment, and chronic resource scarcity. The Syrian civil war triggered an unprecedented refugee influx into Jordan, with approximately 1.4 million Syrians seeking refuge since 2011 and overwhelming healthcare, education, labor markets, and public services, while by early 2026 the country was also hosting more than 2.5 million Palestinian refugees. Over the decades, Jordan had also absorbed displaced populations from Palestine, Iraq, and other conflict zones, making it the second-largest refugee-hosting country per capita worldwide. This prolonged influx depleted economic resources and reshaped national sentiment, fueling socio-political tensions between host communities and displaced populations. Though the Syrian war ended with lingering uncertainties about refugee returns, the prospect of further displacement—particularly from Palestine—remained. Renewed Israeli-Palestinian hostilities risked driving thousands more into Jordan, exacerbating economic distress and deepening societal fragmentation. The pandemic-induced downturn further entrenched these hardships, pushing unemployment to nearly 23% and escalating public debt, while the Ukraine war precipitated inflationary shocks, amplifying food and energy insecurity. Climate change further threatened Jordan's future, as rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and worsening water shortages jeopardized agricultural sustainability and food security. As one of the world's most water-deprived nations, Jordan faced mounting difficulties in sustaining its growing population. Addressing these crises required structural economic reforms, sustainable resource governance, regional cooperation, and strategic diplomacy to ensure long-term stability and resilience.

Keywords: Competition for resources, Debt crisis, Energy crisis, Forced displacement, Influx of refugees, Middle-East politics, Social crisis, Unemployment.

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INTRODUCTION

Jordan, officially known as the “Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan”, is located in a region with complex socioeconomic challenges and various geopolitical issues. Its geographical location in the Middle East places it close to several countries facing crises and conflicts (Fig. 1). Jordan borders Syria, Iraq, and Palestine, all of which have experienced conflict, war, and displacement. The spill-over effects of these conflicts have had direct impacts on Jordan, including the influx of refugees, security concerns, and disruptions in trade and transit routes. The presence of extremist groups and terrorist activities in neighboring countries has prompted Jordan to strengthen its security measures to prevent spillover and threats within its own borders. The instability in neighboring countries, coupled with disruptions in trade routes and the closure of border crossings due to conflicts, has had adverse effects on Jordan's economy.



Fig. (1). The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and surrounding countries (generated by MapChart).

Jordan's economic growth and development have been constrained by regional conflicts and geopolitical challenges. Its strategic location, historical ties, and security concerns shape its interests in Middle Eastern dynamics. The unresolved Palestinian and Syrian crises continue to impact regional stability, complicating Jordan's diplomatic landscape (al-Omari, 2022; Tokmajyan, 2023). Navigating complex relationships with regional players, Jordan faces fluctuating ties with Syria, where post-Assad uncertainties, HTS's rise, and economic trade-offs influence its stance. While renewed trade may provide economic relief, refugee returns remain uncertain, and long-term stability in Syria is unlikely (Dajah, 2024; Khurma, 2025). Despite these challenges, Jordan has played a mediating role in regional diplomacy, leveraging its political stability to facilitate negotiations and manage competing interests. However, maintaining this balance remains a persistent diplomatic challenge.

Nearly 2.4 million Palestinian refugees resided in Jordan under various legal statuses (Jordan Times, 2023; Pulse Opinion, 2024). Unlike Lebanon, Jordan granted Palestinian refugees full citizenship, providing them with access to health care and opportunities for political and economic participation (Alduraidi & Waters, 2017). While many refugee-hosting countries established designated settlements—such as Bekaa in Lebanon, Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, and Kakuma or Dadaab in Kenya—more than 80% of Jordan's refugees lived in urban and peri-urban areas. The majority of Palestinian refugees resided in the ten official and three unofficial camps managed by UNRWA, which also provided essential services, including health care. NGOs such as UNRWA and UNHCR played a crucial role in supporting Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Jordan (Jordan News, 2023b; UNHCR, 2023a). Overall, refugees from 49 different countries accounted for approximately one-third of Jordan's total population, presenting significant demographic and socio-economic challenges (WHO, 2024).

According to the World Bank, Jordan ranked among the world's most water-scarce countries, with per capita water availability falling below the basic human need threshold of 100 liters per day (Grosclaude *et al.*, 2022). The country relied on imports for over 90% of its energy and grain consumption, making it highly vulnerable to external market fluctuations (El-Naser, 2022; Manna' & Saffouri, 2022). Over the past two decades, Jordan's population more than doubled, rising from 5 million to 11 million, placing further pressure on its already strained natural resources (World Bank Overview, 2024). In addition to its water scarcity, Jordan faces numerous climate-related challenges, including rising temperatures, declining precipitation, and an increasing frequency of droughts. Despite its severe water shortages, the country lost nearly half of its piped water supply due to leaks, theft, inaccurate metering, and other forms of non-revenue water (World Bank, 2023). Furthermore, three-quarters of Jordan's groundwater basins suffered

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