

Country Operation Plan Jordan

1/1/2002-31/12/2002

Part I – Executive Committee Summary

1. The continuation of the HCR's presence in Jordan is essentially linked to the situation in Iraq with an increasing number of asylum seekers crossing into the country and needing protection upon RSD as well as the pursuit of durable solutions. Given the large and long presence of Palestine refugees in the country, over 1.5 million, the government limits asylum to other refugees to 6 months, upon RSD conducted by the BO. Within that period, the BO is responsible to find durable solutions, mainly through resettlement to a third country. It should be noted that Jordan has not acceded to either the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol.
2. The activities of the BO could assume an emergency phase, should the situation in Iraq deteriorate dramatically, leading to a mass influx.
3. This presence is also linked to the development of a national mechanism that has started with the signature of the MOU and may lead to accession and the establishment of a legal infrastructure. Institution building is thus seen as the prerequisite for networking and eventually reducing the operational level of the BO.
4. The population/theme is protection, assistance and the search of durable solutions for urban refugees in accordance with the Mandate.
5. In summary, activities of UNHCR in Jordan are registration of asylum seekers; RSD; securing asylum and protection for refugees as well as appropriate standards of treatment; selected provision of assistance for the statutory 6 months; processing resettlement as the main durable solution; promoting accession; enforcement of the protection space and the establishment of a legal infrastructure while creating law capacity at government and NGO level and; pursue harmonization of procedures and treatment with other offices in the region dealing with similar caseloads.
6. UNHCR is present in Jordan with a BO in the capital Amman. The presence of HCR in Jordan continues to be justified while a legal infrastructure dealing with refugees is being put in place and the situation in Iraq, with serious violations of human rights and the effect of sanctions over the social fabric of the society, continues to deteriorate. Thus compelling many Iraqis to seek asylum in Jordan. It should be noted that during the past 50 years Jordan has been hosting an ever-increasing number of Palestinian refugees with a proportionally shrinking assistance from the international community. In addition, for the past ten years an estimated average of between 170,000 - 250,000 refugees has been in the country, mostly in an illegal situation. The deteriorating security situation in Palestine has the potential for de-stabilization in the whole region. Jordan has already been affected, politically as well as economically.

7. Despite the continued pressure posed by the unresolved Palestinian problem and the continuation of the regime of sanctions in Iraq, Jordan is continuing its efforts for democratization and respect of human rights and freedom of expression.

8. In particular, there is a high level, albeit informal, of cooperation on refugee matters with operational arrangements, uncommon in some countries that are signatory of the 1951 Convention.

9. The operation is clearly defined and integrated where, on one hand, we discharge our mandate (RSD, monitoring the authorities' observance of the non-refoulement principle and standards of treatment, resettlement) and, on the other, we assist in the development of a domestic protection regime through institution building. The main institutions responsible for protection within the MOI are the Refugee Unit, the Public Security Department (PSD), and the Immigration Department. In addition, the General Intelligence Directorate (GID) is intervening to regularise the situation of asylum seekers who have entered the country illegally.

10. In addition to the institution building effort, the BO will continue to host seconded staff from government departments to provide indepth training.

11. The respective focal points in the MOI and PSD are responsible with the issuance of documentation for both recognised refugees and asylum seekers and the provision of instructions and guidance to governorates and police points to ensure that the provisions of the MOU are respected.

12. Training is focused on developing of procedures with the intention to gradually reduce the BO's operational involvement in protection activities (issuance of documentation, registration, RSD, and so on).

13. NGOs, PARinAC and capacity-building:

The BO has developed an extensive network of NGOs involved with medical assistance and counselling and particularly concerned with women and children. We have also identified local funding for the NGO that will provide legal counselling to asylum seekers.

14. Inter-agency cooperation

This section is only applicable to contingency planning and the general dissemination on Human Rights, as there is no involvement in refugee matters (other than the Palestinian) by other agencies. This co-operation will, however, be expanded with UNICEF in the area of refugee children and women protection.

15. Linkage with other country operations

15. 1 Harmonization of procedures, especially in RSD remains a priority in the region. This is fostered through joint training of eligibility staff and the creation of a UNHCR jurisprudence that is shared with UNHCR offices facing a similar caseload (Syria/Lebanon/ Turkey on RSD, Lybia/Yemen/Emirates/Kuwait on irregular movers, etc.). Quarterly sub-regional meetings are conducted and there is a direct communication among protection staff.

15. 2 Updated country of origin information is also an important tool for achieving such a linkage. The pool of expertise that has been developed, should be put at the disposal of other countries for short assignments in case of a sudden crisis so as to further exchange experiences. Equally, meeting of national counterparts is becoming relevant to address issues like irregular movement, trafficking as well as sharing the experiences of countries more advanced in the implementation of a protection regime.

16. Emergency preparedness/contingency planning

16. 1 UNHCR is continually updating the contingency plan through chairing of the Inter-Agency Meeting (WFP/WHO/UNICEF/UNRWA/UNDP/IFRC/JRCS/IOM/MECC) and bilateral discussions with the MOI (which is the chair of the government response mechanism in case of disasters).

16.2 As such, the current stocks available and the logistics concerning possible preposition are constantly reviewed. The national plan foresees that refugee emergencies and refugee movements are included as a topic in regular training organised by the Jordanian Centre for Disaster Management.