

Delegation from
Jordan

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Position Paper for the HRC

The issues before the Human right council are Strengthening human rights of Returnees and Internally Displaced persons in conflict ridden regions, Access to safe drinking water as a fundamental right and deterring discrimination and violence against persons with disabilities.

I) Strengthening human rights of Returnees and Internally Displaced persons in conflict ridden regions

The civil war in Syria has made the topic of Internally Displaced persons a major one for Jordan: since the beginning of the war the country has hosted around 300 000 Syrian returnees, 120 000 in the only camp of Zaatari. Since the country has a strong tradition of hospitality towards asylum-seekers and refugees, we kept our borders open, allowing Syrians fleeing the violence to cross the international border. We provided these refugees with shelter, food, water, sanitation and other basic services.

However, the resources of host communities are limited and may be exhausted in the coming months as the capacity of the camps: new camp locations may be needed to be considered. Violence is increasing in the camps and the situation is becoming worse every day. The impact of Syrian refugees on local communities is considerable, particularly as the majority is in the northern border area, which is among the poorest regions in the country: the Jordan society is being disturbed by such a situation. This issue is becoming so urgent that the king of the country, Abdallah II, asked in Davos more help from the international community in order to be able to face the huge flows of refugees: more financial aid is needed and alternative means of aiding refugees have to be sought.

Of course the Government of Jordan will continue to host Syrians and to allow them free access to the public health and education system but that means more substantial international support and help to maintain and strengthen the favorable protection environment.

Therefore, as a member of the HCR committee, the delegation of Jordan recommends increasing the means for the help of refugees: more hospitals, drugs, doctors are needed. Food is becoming scarcer and the country alone will not be able to keep providing enough food for the refugees. Moreover, as we can't keep all the refugees in camp, cash assistance is needed to allow individuals and families to meet their daily needs in cities. The question of education, employment is also a major one for the refugees as much as their status in the country. The HCR must continue to prevent and respond to violence, to advocate for an end to the detention of asylum-seekers and refugees and to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable. The budget must be increased and all the countries have to take part in the help we need.

II) Access to safe water as a fundamental right

Today, Jordan is facing a particularly critical situation concerning its access to safe drinking water. It's one of the ten countries in the world where the water is the rarest. 80% of the country is desert. The 75% of the 5,7millions of Jordan live in urban regions where there's not enough water to the consumption and far less for the agriculture. According to the Irrigation and water minister, the volume of water available for every inhabitant is lower down 200m³ each year whereas the world average is 6800 m³. Today the WHO considers that the economic development is threatened and the human health is jeopardized when a person accesses to less than 1000m³ of water a year.

The different waves of refugees hosted in the country have increased the lack of water, so that poor people are affected by a double risk: hydric and eating insecurities. Jordan is dependent on superficial waters of Tiberiad Lake of the Yarmouk River and underground resources to supply towns. Therefore, worsening aggravation signs are observable in the region. Water issues have not only consequences on economic and social development of Jordan but they hardly impact the environment : lower lever of the Tiberiad Lake whose water is becoming brackish and the Dead Sea is drying up progressively and it would disappear in the next 50 years, to quote only two consequences. Today, water is a real strategic stake for countries which share this resource.

For instance, the River Jordan is solicited by every country it crosses, leading to a destabilizing situation in the region.

Different factors explain the problem of the water management. First, the lack of natural resources: Jordan is deeply dependent on climate and the major part of the consumed water comes from the Jordan, the only river which crosses the country and which significantly dried up last years. Moreover, the river is exploited by Israel. It leads the traditional way of life to be more and more tricky to assume. Delivery infrastructures are dilapidated and frequently unusable as they are to be repaired. Every conflict in the Middle East has affected Jordan with refugee crowd: Kuwaiti after the Gulf war, Iraqi after the 2003 war and now Syrian one because of the unstable situation of Syria. Therefore during the four hottest months in the year, when the need in water is the most serious, authorities are forced to supply the different suburbs in turns so that entire families are often condemned to have no access to drink water during several days.

The Highland Water Forum helps inhabitants to better manage the water. Specialists inform Jordan citizens and help them to save up water. The government is little by little replacing old system of irrigation by the drip system which is more economical.

The accords previously signed are not sufficient anymore. In 1994, the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan established cooperation between both countries: Israel promised to furnish 50millions m³ of water a year to Jordan, to share the Yarmouk River and to help Jordan in case of dryness. In 1999, Jordan really accelerated its investment efforts in the water sector to find sustainable solutions. However, financial resources of Jordan are limited as the country does not dispose of petroleum incomes contrary to Gulf countries. World Bank intervened to ensure necessary financings to help population to satisfy its vital needs. The king Abdallah II has underlined the emergency of the situation and the need to finalize vital projects to prepare the future of Jordan. Therefore, the country has today a water national strategy which costs more than 8billions dollars to reach its goals. However, the country cannot resolve the issue by itself. Every country should feel concerned by an issue which is not only national but regional and which affects and entire region in the world. If nobody intervenes, the lack of water will worsen all the more that the demand should strongly increase in close future: Jordan needs the participation of its neighbors and international instances to benefit from financial helps and establish sustainable projects which could really change the deal.

III) Deterring discrimination and violence against persons with disabilities

Jordan is recognized by the international community as leading the Arab world in promoting disability rights: it was the first country in the Middle East to enact disability-specific legislation and to introduce building codes aimed at disability. It was the First Arab or Islamic state to receive the Franklin D. Roosevelt International Disability Award in 2005 thanks to its previous actions. In 2007 the country signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which seeks to improve the lives of the world's people with disabilities. The aim was to develop local policies, review legislation and enrich related programs in order to achieve more progress for the disabled. This convention coincides with the endorsement of the 2007 law for people with disabilities in Jordan. All this shows that our country plays a major role in the evolution of the struggle against discrimination and violence against people with disabilities.

Nowadays our aim is to spread our views on disability rights to other nations in our region thanks to the action of the UN. Therefore we recommend focusing on education for disabled people: we think that their integration in society goes through education. In order to help ensure the realization of this, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities. States Parties shall also ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. And in this way, the UN has a role to play.

Agenda:

First: Strengthening human rights of Returnees and Internally Displaced persons in conflict ridden regions

Second: Access to safe drinking water as a fundamental right

Third: Deterring discrimination and violence against persons with disabilities