



## Our Collective Challenge

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BY HIS MAJESTY  
KING ABDULLAH II OF JORDAN

***“We must never forget that our collective action now is not only an answer to today's suffering; it is the groundwork for the future... Jobs, education, health and peace are essential to make such a thriving future”***

It has never been clearer that our Euro-Mediterranean neighbourhood shares deep common challenges and interests. Sickening atrocities, like those in Paris, or in Amman ten years ago, clearly demonstrate that terrorists target, not just innocent lives, but the mutual trust and co-existence that is part of our regions' strength and prosperity. This is a global war we should fight together as one.

Today, Europeans are facing a refugee problem that we in Jordan have faced for many years. Regional conflicts, violence and desperation have sent millions of people fleeing to our safe country and now, increasingly, to your countries. Although the challenge will not be solved quickly, there are immediate, necessary actions we can take to address today's crisis and prevent it from deepening further.

Jordan is shouldering a significant part of the burden. Our population, smaller than Austria's, now hosts 1.4 million Syrians - one for every five Jordanians. This is in addition to hundreds of thousands of refugees, Muslim and Christian alike, from Iraq, Yemen, Libya and elsewhere. Jordan has become the second largest refugee host country, per-capita, in the world.

For Jordanians, caring for those in need is a moral duty and part of our national character. However, today's refugee burden is pushing us to the limits of our resources. Images of vast refugee camps are in reality only a small part of the picture. Over 90% of Syrian refugees live in Jordanian cities and communities, over-stretching our schools and health clinics, consuming very scarce water resources and competing for a limited number of jobs with Jordanian youth.

The complex impact of the crisis, in Jordan and beyond, demands an equally multifaceted response. It is time for our regions to move beyond emergency-driven thinking, toward a collective, sustainable approach. That means comprehensive, medium-term development initiatives that meet the urgent needs of refugees and local hosts, such as Jordan and Lebanon, and the related, underlying need for employment opportunities, expanded service infrastructure and fiscal support. This will strengthen the foundations of confidence and stability for us all.

A critical first step is to provide over-burdened regional hosts with sustainable solutions: improved access to trade, investments, concessionary funding and grants for health, water and education infrastructure. Failing to fulfil today's commitments will simply raise the ultimate costs. And it is a disservice to the world to allow a key country like Jordan - stable, moderate, with a proven track record of economic reform and growth - to shoulder a burden that consumes 26% of its annual budget and creates higher levels of indebtedness, on behalf of the world.

Side-by-side with economic responses, there must be a determined diplomatic effort to find a political solution to the Syrian conflict. Recent talks in Vienna offer a new opportunity for international engagement to bring the Syrian parties together in a political process that we hope could lead to a credible, inclusive, non-sectarian future, preserving Syria's unity and independence. We must build on this opportunity to achieve results.

Finally, we must continue to work together, collectively and closely, to defeat the Khawarej, those outlaws of Islam who spread nothing but hate and fear. We must act as one because it is a battle for our humanity.

We must never forget that our collective action now is not only an answer to today's suffering; it is the groundwork for the future, helping prepare for post-conflict Syria, and building and strengthening a stable, inclusive region. Jobs, education, health and peace are essential to make such a thriving future, a future that will enhance stability and security for both our regions.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN DER STANDARD