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MIDDLE EAST STUDIES IN ACTION

Protracted Hosting in Jordan: Policy, Identity, and the Gaza Effect

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MESA UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH WORKSHOP



01. Introduction

- Jordan hosts one of the world's largest per-capita refugee populations, with Palestinian displacement since the Nakba of 1948
- **Thesis:** Across three generations, Palestinian life in Jordan shifts from camp-based survival to deeper civic inclusion, yet remains constrained by funding dependence, documentation status, and conflict shocks (the "Gaza effect")
- **Contribution:** Blends family narratives, policy history, and recent scholarship to show how wars and policy choices structure identity and opportunity over time

02. Objective

To examine how three generations of Palestinian refugees in Jordan have navigated identity, integration, and belonging from 1948 to the present. While assessing how post-colonial legacies and contemporary conflicts, particularly the 2023–25 Gaza war, have shaped Jordan's refugee policies, socioeconomic stability, and international responsibilities

03. Methodology

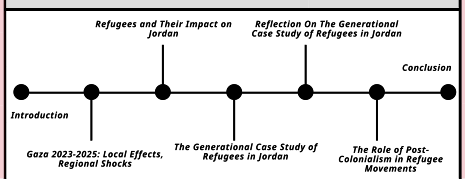
- Qualitative case study using three linked family narratives (Subhi, Feryal, Aya) spanning 1948→present
- Document analysis of UNRWA/WFP/World Bank and Jordanian policy sources
- Comparative policy history across key inflection points (1948, 1967, 2023–25)
- **Analytical lenses:** Postcoloniality; integration/identity; state capacity vs. external funding

04. Results/Findings

- **Gaza Effect (2023–25):** Protests surged; Amman set a "no-displacement" line, recalled the Israeli ambassador, and intensified ceasefire/aid diplomacy as UNRWA funding faltered
- **Services/Economy:** Red Sea/Aqaba disruptions and weaker tourism strained budgets; schools and clinics in Irbid–Mafraq–Amman grew crowded
- **Labour Market:** Refugee work concentrated in agriculture, construction, and services, with wage depression and informality risks
- **Stratified Rights:** 1948 arrivals mostly integrated as citizens; many post-1967 Gazans remain on two-year travel documents (no National ID)
- **Generational Case Study:**
- **Generation 1 (Subhi):** Camp survival → early exit to work; gratitude for Jordan's hospitality
- **Generation 2 (Feryal):** UNRWA-to-university; civil service career; sees documentation-based gaps for students without citizenship
- **Generation 3 (Aya):** Fully integrated citizen with strong diasporic identity; volunteers in camps; "phone-in-hand war" intensifies empathy/trauma

05. Analysis

- **Assistance-For-Stability Bargain:** Jordan leverages sovereignty in the refugee regime for funds/diplomatic capital while managing street pressure and security
- **Postcolonial Roots:** Colonial-era decisions engineered statelessness and durable displacement patterns that today's policies must navigate
- **Integration ≠ Erasure:** Civic inclusion deepens, but documentation tiers and conflict shocks reproduce unequal belonging; identity persists across generations



07. Related Literature

- **Arar (2017):** Jordan leverages sovereignty within the international refugee regime for funding and influence
- **Francis (2015):** Outlines how Jordan's economy and politics have been shaped by hosting refugees since 1948
- **ACAPS (2023):** Summarizes current humanitarian and policy pressures facing Jordan as a refugee-hosting state
- **Lemberg-Pedersen et al. (2023):** Uses a postcolonial lens to explain enduring displacement and power asymmetries in refugee governance



Alt Text: Subhi Khalil, Aya Khalil and Feryal Shaqo (Left to right)

06. Conclusion

- **Key Takeaways:**
  1) Integration has deepened intergenerationally
  2) Documentation/funding regimes sustain tiered citizenship
  3) The war in Gaza tightened fiscal and political margins
- **Policy Actions:**
  -Predictable multi-year financing (UNRWA & public services)
  -Documentation reforms to shrink rights gaps for non-citizen Palestinians
  -Regional de-escalation to reduce new displacement
- **Why It Matters:**
  -Jordan cannot carry protracted hosting alone
  -Breaking the cycle requires addressing root causes, not only managing effects

Figure 1.

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