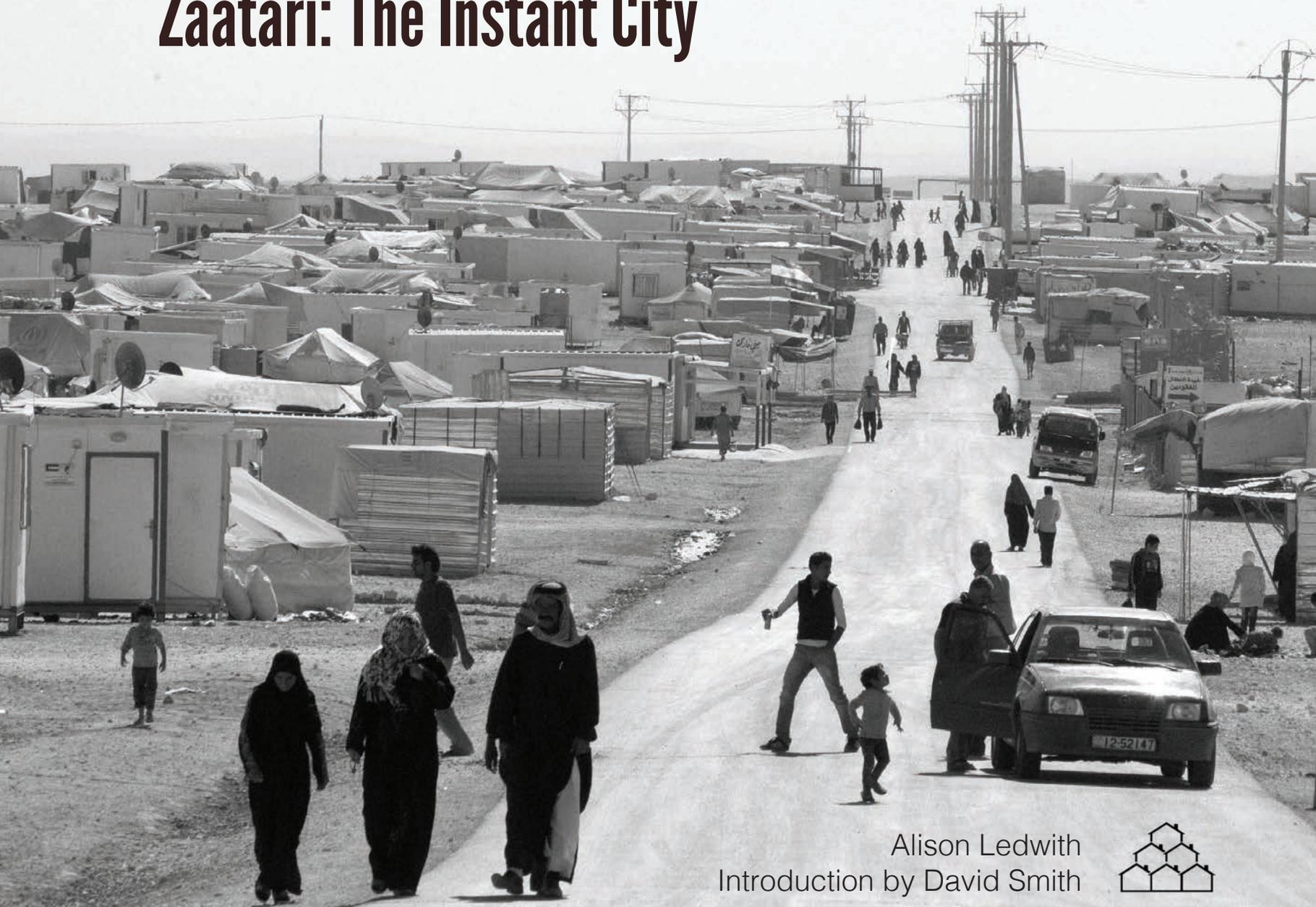


# Zaatari: The Instant City



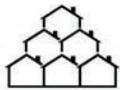
Alison Ledwith  
Introduction by David Smith



*An Affordable Housing Institute Publication*



# Zaatari: The Instant City



Alison Ledwith  
Introduction by David Smith

***An Affordable Housing Institute Publication***

Edited by: Anya Brickman Raredon, Joyce Lee, and Molly McGowan

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Front Cover: Street view of Zaatari, Jordan. | *Luke N. Vargas, modified by author*  
Back Cover: Overlooking a shop in Zaatari, Jordan | *Courtesy of Dalia Khamissy, modified by author*



## Editor's Note

To date, the Syrian conflict persists and refugee conditions in Zaatari continually change. This book represents a glimpse of camp dynamics as understood in January 2014, with updates to key questions as understood in July 2014. It is not intended to reflect all realities or nuances of the camp, rather, it offers insight on select areas of interest. Research for this book spanned over the course of five months, capturing the cumulative work of countless aid organizations, scholars, and reporters. Throughout the research process, data sources often presented competing accounts of camp life. This book attempts to curate those disparate findings into a factual reference guide.



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# Contents

<b>Introduction by David Smith</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>10</b>
Overview	14
History	16
By the Numbers	20
Zaatari Price List (USD)	22
Planning and Development	24
Built Environment	32
Legal System	38
Social Infrastructure	46
Health	58
Criminal Activity	64
Lessons Learned and Future Plans	72
<b>Appendix: Acronyms and Names</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>About the Affordable Housing Institute</b>	<b>95</b>



# Introduction by David Smith

If the road to hell is paved with good intentions, then the world's newest slum, Zaatari in Jordan, is a four-lane highway there.

No one says this, of course, instead calling Zaatari a 'camp,' a word connoting family vacations to sylvan lakes where we unfold the tent, cook fresh-caught fish on the lakeside grill, and temporarily holiday from civilization. Instead, everyone pretends that Zaatari will somehow dissolve into vapor when the Syrian civil war ends, a fantasy that nevertheless allows us to turn our eyes away from the tragedy that is being speedily created not by those who would do evil but by those who want to do good.

Displaced-person (DP) camps have existed for a little over a century since they were invented in 1901 by the British in South Africa (and called 'concentration camps') as a place to hold Afrikaner women and children whom the British had burned out of their farms because the farms supported Boer commandos – and, as far as I can tell, they have never worked as communities, becoming instead places of dependency, despair, and disconnection from any sort of normalcy. After World War II, much of central Europe was one large DP camp and it took nearly a decade to repatriate people back to their homelands. Many never went home, instead emigrating to the U.S., Canada, or Australia. But the modern DP camp has taken on a life of its own caused by the fiction that it is a 'temporary camp,' not a soon-to-be permanent city, despite the grim statistic that the average DP camp exists for 17 years, hobbling the generation of children who grow up knowing nothing of the world their parents left, nor the world they will eventually arrive into.

Except in extraordinary situations, refugee populations never disappear; either they become integrated residents of their new location or they turn into embittered outcasts. Everyone involved wants to deny this; the host country's government (because then it would have to provide for the newcomers), the relief agencies (because then



they have no 'exit strategy'), the host country's citizens (who see the newcomers as a cultural and economic threat), and the newcomers themselves (because then they have to postpone their dream of returning to the time before). Instead, one by one the great and the good arrive, tour by helicopter, walk the streets in entourage and say a few encouraging words to the pre-screened people they meet, deplore for the cameras ... and go home. But the people in Zaatari have no home to go home to.

The means do not justify the ends, but the ends may indict the means. The ends are terribly wrong in Zaatari, so those who have the means must change their approach.

At AHI, everything we do aims at impact, and impact is elusive. Sometimes we pursue it through action; sometimes through advice; and sometimes all we can do is witness.

This beautiful and tragic and compelling book by Alison Ledwith is our witnessing. It speaks in words and numbers and pictures.

After reading it, you may say the problem is intractable; you may say there is nothing you can do; but no longer will you be able to say, we had no idea.

David A. Smith

Boston, MA

July 31, 2014





May 30, 2009



July 19, 2013

# Executive Summary

Al Zaatari Refugee Camp in Mafraq Governate, Jordan, has grown out of deserts conditions to become the second largest refugee camp in the world and the fourth largest city in Jordan<sup>1</sup>. The 530-hectare camp costs U.S. \$500,000<sup>†</sup> per day to operate, paid for by the United Nations (UN), partner organizations, and the government of Jordan<sup>2</sup>.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO) jointly planned and developed the camp on Jordanian armed forces-owned land<sup>3</sup>. The original organization of the camp featured housing placed in rows to allow for access, fire prevention, and sanitation management<sup>4</sup>. Syrian refugees then rearranged the housing units, tents, and caravans, to create U-shaped and courtyard houses that function as compounds for extended families<sup>5</sup>. The preferred form of housing is the caravan, a one-room prefabricated housing unit. To date, surrounding nations (primarily Saudi Arabia) have donated 24,000 units at a cost of U.S. \$3,125 apiece<sup>6</sup>. At the beginning of winter in 2013, one of the harshest winters in Jordanian history, 40 percent of households still lacked a caravan<sup>7</sup>. Caravans serve multiple functions beyond housing. Camp residents buy, sell, and steal caravans to adapt them for commercial use or social space<sup>8</sup>.

A patchwork of organizations provides water, waste, and electric services. These organizations truck water into Zaatari and truck waste out<sup>9</sup>. Initially, electric service was installed to service critical buildings, such as hospitals and schools, and a grid of streetlights in the older sections of the camp, but streetlights are scarce in the newer sections<sup>10</sup>. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of households have electricity connections, although all personal electrical connections are illegally wired<sup>11</sup>.

Since March 2013, UNHCR, under the supervision of Camp Manager Kilian Kleinschmidt, has run the camp<sup>12</sup>. Informal power structures of organized crime and the

<sup>†</sup> All dollar values are presented in U.S. \$ unless otherwise indicated.

Pages 08 + 09: Satellite image over Mafraq Governate, before and after the construction of Zaatari. | *NASA Earth Observatory*



semi-formal power structures of street leaders parallel the formal UNHCR system<sup>13</sup>. The Jordanian Public Security Department (PSD) provides police services and the Jordanian Gendarmerie Forces provide external camp security<sup>14</sup>. In turn, partner organizations, upwards of 139 participating government entities and non-government organizations (NGOs), handle individual sectors, such as health and education<sup>15</sup>.

Aid organizations and the community at large provide social infrastructure. Basic needs, including staple foods, food vouchers, blankets, and shelter are distributed to anyone holding the aid documentation obtained through formal registration<sup>16</sup>. Eleven collaborating NGOs provide education targeting children 5-17 years old, although the low attendance rate of 40 percent leads to fears of an illiterate “lost generation” following the crisis<sup>17</sup>. The mosque has become a key center of life in Zaatari as in Syria, with 120 mosques in the camp<sup>18</sup>. Several donors, such as the Asian Football Development Project and Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), provide enriching activities for residents, such as football, which has successfully brought residents together<sup>19</sup>. However, for many refugees, the move to the camp weakened their community ties. Children born to unregistered marriages run the risk of statelessness, as citizenship in Syria can only be passed through the father’s line<sup>20</sup>. Early marriage and forced marriage are common; Syrian women and girls have been exploited by foreign men who marry them for less than a month while passing through the region<sup>21</sup>.

There is little formal employment available within the camp. Thus, refugees monetize what they have – possessions, supplied aid, labor, and even their own bodies<sup>22</sup>. Child labor is common<sup>23</sup>. Some refugees, including experienced merchants and electricians, can start successful business enterprises, though many of the commercial activities are questionably or actually illegal<sup>24</sup>.

There are three main hospitals in Zaatari as well as over 100 Syrian medical volunteers treating conditions including war injuries, malnutrition, and women's or maternal health<sup>25</sup>. Mental health conditions resulting from war trauma are common, and children are especially vulnerable<sup>26</sup>. Children also face a greater risk of early or forced marriage and child labor, and boys suffer trauma from fighting in the conflict<sup>27</sup>. Poor sanitation in public WASH facilities also causes health concerns<sup>28</sup>.

Crime is a problem in Zaatari. Even though it is now safe enough for aid workers to live in the camp with the refugees, many forms of crime still exist<sup>29</sup>. Smuggling, theft, violence, sexual- and gender-based violence, and armed-forces recruiting have all been observed in Zaatari<sup>30</sup>. In addition, since the Jordanian government will not let refugees enter the general population without a bailout guarantee, illegal escaping of refugees and bailout guarantee forgery are common crimes in Zaatari<sup>31</sup>.

Zaatari and its leaders seek to transform the camp into a place of empowerment, dignity, and reduced dependence on foreign aid<sup>32</sup>. Future plans under development by the Association of Municipalities show Zaatari progressing further toward becoming a permanent city; self-governance, a proper electrical grid, proper water and sewage hookups, paved streets, and green areas are all proposed in the forthcoming city plan<sup>33</sup>. It is said that the lessons learned planning Zaatari were taken into account in planning Azraq, another Syrian refugee camp that began accepting refugees on April 30, 2014<sup>34</sup>.

Right: 2013 birds-eye view of Zaatari. | AP





# Overview

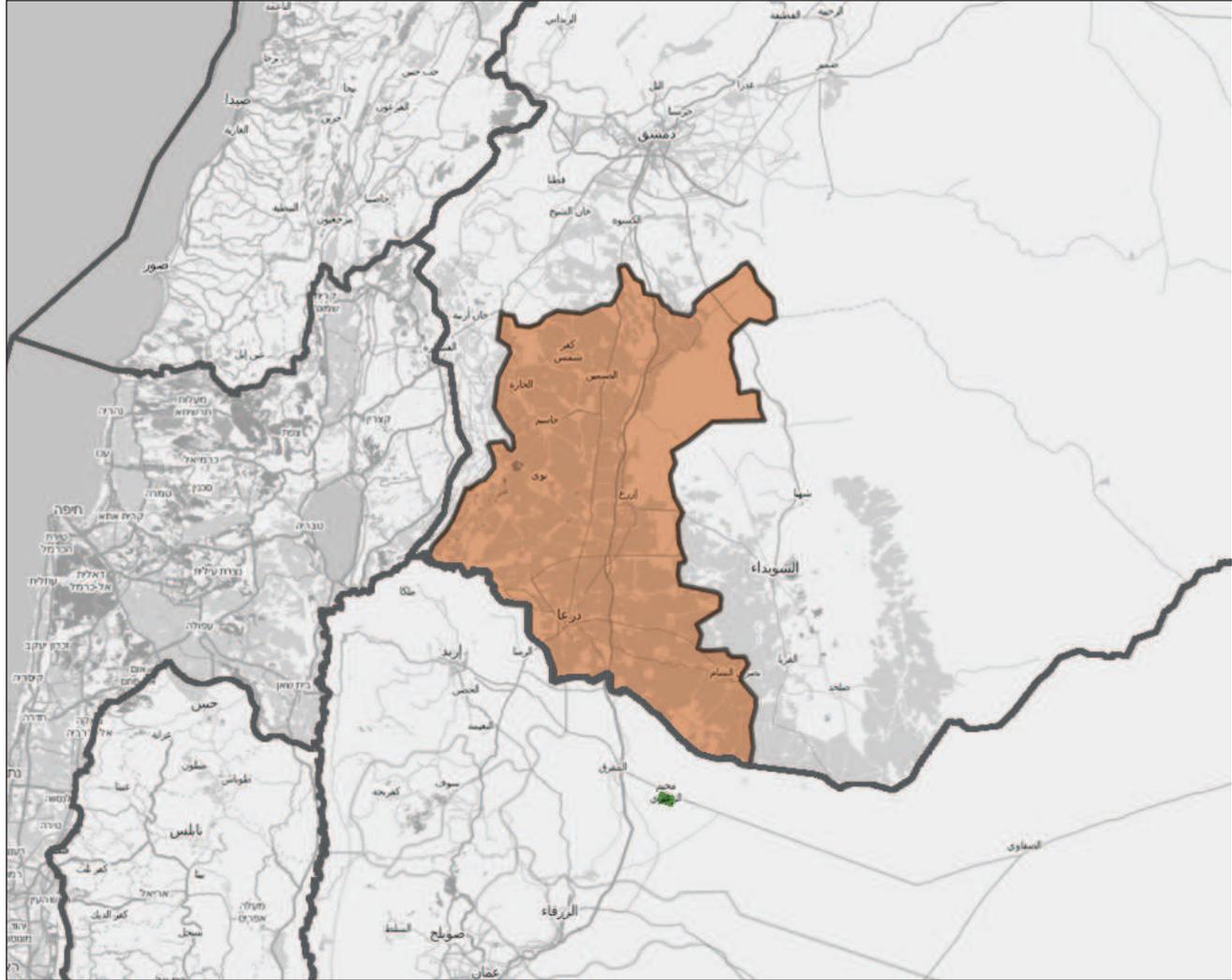
Al Zaatari Refugee Camp opened on July 28, 2012 in the Mafraq Governorate of Jordan as part of the UN-sponsored relief effort to house those displaced by the Syrian civil war<sup>35</sup>. The conflict between President Assad (who is Alawite, which is an offshoot of the Shia sect of Islam) and the rebels led by the Free Syrian Army (who are predominately Sunni) takes on religious as well as political tones, with outside governments and groups (like Hezbollah or the Iranian Revolutionary Guard) supplying weapons or fighting for one side or the other<sup>36</sup>.

The politics of hosting refugees is also complicated by religious and political overtones. Politically, all host countries are concerned with their own balance of power. They also want to avoid the fighting, and especially in Jordan's case, prevent jihadism from igniting among their own citizens under Syrian influence<sup>37</sup>. With respect to religion, most Syrian refugees in Jordan are Sunni, which was the majority sect in Syria in its prewar state<sup>38</sup>. Notably, Jordan has refused entrance to several thousand Syrian-Palestinian and Syrian-Iraqi refugees, single men, and people without documentation<sup>39</sup>. Only 20 percent of the Syrian refugees in Jordan live in Zaatari, the world's second largest refugee camp<sup>40</sup>.

Hamid Dabashi of Columbia University, a scholar and prolific commentator on the Arab Spring conflicts, believes optimistically that Zaatari will bring the demise of the current postcolonial Middle East and the birth of a new Syrian democracy<sup>41</sup>. However, aid organizations on the ground believe that Syria's lost generation will become a pressing regional issue in the next decade<sup>42</sup>.

Right: Regional map showing Daraa, Syria in relation to Zaatari, Jordan. | *Image adapted by author. Original © OpenStreetMap contributors. Data subject to Open Database License and tiles subject to CC BY-SA*





**Legend**

 Zaatari Refugee Camp

 Daraa, Syria

 International Border

0 5 10 20 30 40 Kilometers



# History

Since July 2012, Zaatari has developed from an empty stretch of desert into the home of roughly 100,000 people<sup>43</sup>. Zaatari's population peaked in April 2013 at a size of over 200,000; from mid-2012 through mid-2013 Zaatari received as many as 3,000 to 4,000 refugees per night<sup>44</sup>. Reported growth rates vary widely, however, with one source indicating a steady increase between 500 and 1,000 new arrivals per night (15,500 to 31,000 per month) between March and June 2013, while another indicates that by May 2013 the arrival rate had declined from 1,500 to 300 or fewer refugees nightly<sup>45</sup>. In comparison, Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp located in Kenya, grew by 154,450 people over eleven months, for an approximate rate of 462 people daily<sup>46</sup>. In April 2014, the Jordanian government closed the unofficial border crossings in Daraa<sup>47</sup>.

The camp's growth rate, measured by number of dwellings, experienced the following increases over time<sup>48</sup>:

Date	Dwellings	Percent of Previous
September 2012	2,400 dwellings	---
October 2012	No data	---
November 2012	5,163 dwellings	215%
December 2012	No data	---
January 2013	11,966 dwellings	232%
February 2013	18,169 dwellings	152%
March 2013	26,242 dwellings	144%
April 2013	25,378 dwellings	101%

When the camp opened, residents expressed anger and hostility toward the authoritarian nature of the camp, the internment-like feel of the settlement, and the camp's

Right: Satellite imagery of Zaatari's development over seven months' time. | Includes material © CNES 2013, Distribution Astrium Services / Spot Image S.A., France, all rights reserved





September 2012



November 2012



January 2013



February 2013



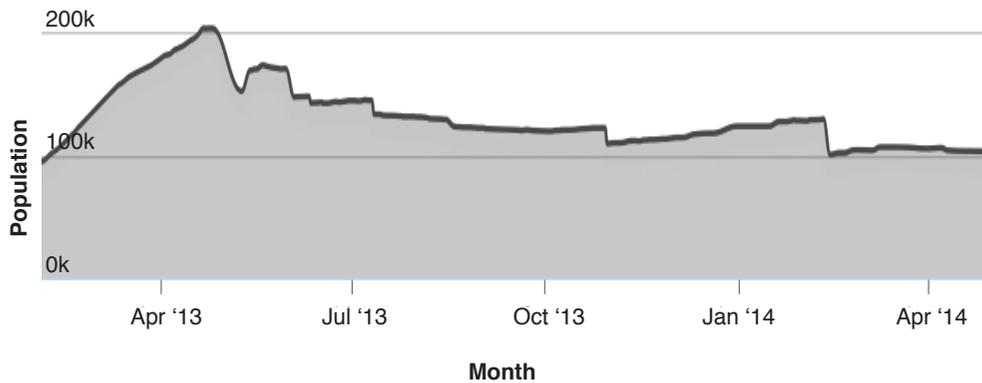
March 2013



April 2013



poor living conditions, which included little food, low-quality water, and floods<sup>49</sup>. Many residents were also angry with the media's representation of the camp. In one instance, for example, residents protested a television crew that was filming the camp after seeing an unrelated false report published on the Internet. These problems and residents' complaints about the slanderous nature of some reports demonstrate the overarching concerns about the accuracy of the reporting on Zaatari and suggest that it may be difficult to ascertain the true nature of the settlement<sup>50</sup>.



Left: Population of Zaatari during 2013 and early 2014. | UNHCR

Right: The general infrastructure of Zaatari as of September 2013. | Satellite image Worldview 2 © DigitalGlobe 2014, analysis by UNITAR/ UNOSAT





### Legend

- Camp entrance
- Roads**
- Market road
- Asphalted road
- Main road
- Small road

### WASH facilities

- WASH Centre: female
- WASH Centre: male
- Septic tank
- Elevated water tank
- Waterpoint
- Borehole or Pumping Station
- Mobile or Temporary Toilet

### Garbage collection points

- Bin, 1m<sup>3</sup>
- Bin, 10m<sup>3</sup>
- Camp facilities**
- Shop
- Recreation Area
- Child Friendly Space or Play area
- Registration

- Offices
- Clinic / Health Facility
- Distribution Center
- Storage / Warehouse
- Common Space
- Mosque or Musallah
- Police
- School

- Kitchen
- Facility status**
- Under construction
- Damaged or unusable



# By the Numbers

**120,000** Syrians<sup>51, t</sup>

**530** Hectares<sup>52</sup>

**17,000** Caravans<sup>53, t</sup>

**8,000** Tents<sup>53, t</sup>

**90** Percent of refugees are from the Daraa province<sup>54, tt</sup>

**2,500** Total shops<sup>51, t</sup>

**680** Large stores<sup>51, t</sup>

**680** Shops that employ children<sup>55, tt</sup>

**65** Percent employment<sup>51, t, ^</sup>

**360** Water truck arrivals per day<sup>51, t</sup>

---

**500,000** USD to run camp per day<sup>58, tt</sup>

**1,500** NGO-offered jobs<sup>56, tt</sup>

**120** Mosques<sup>51, t</sup>

**3** Hospitals<sup>51, t</sup>

**200** Children born per month<sup>51, t</sup>

**3** Schools<sup>51, t</sup>

**300** Kilometers of illegal electrical wires<sup>57, tt</sup>

**500,000** Pitas distributed per day<sup>51, t</sup>

**16,130** USD worth of electricity used per day<sup>51, t</sup>

† Data reported December 2013.

†† Data reported November 2013.

^ Most employment comes from Syrian-run businesses.

Right: Two children pose for a picture outside a falafel stall in Zaatari. | *Caroline Gluck/ Oxfam International*





## Zaatari Price List (USD)

15-day meal voucher <sup>59, tt</sup> .....	<b>8.50</b>	Smuggling on foot <sup>61, t</sup> .....	<b>14-21</b>
Qatayef <sup>^</sup> , 1 kg, plain <sup>60, ttt</sup> .....	<b>1.10</b>	Caravan (donor cost) <sup>62, tttt</sup> ...	<b>3,125</b>
Qatayef <sup>^</sup> , 1 kg, filled <sup>60, ttt</sup> .....	<b>1.40</b>	Caravan (refugee sale) <sup>59, tt</sup> .....	<b>706</b>
Wedding dress rental <sup>59, tt</sup> .....	<b>42</b>	Small commercial space <sup>63, t,**</sup> ...	<b>635</b>
Bailout <sup>^^</sup> , official <sup>61, t,*</sup> .....	<b>7,060</b>	Large commercial space <sup>63, t,**</sup>	<b>2,120</b>
Bailout <sup>^^</sup> , forged <sup>61, t</sup> .....	<b>106-212</b>	New tents, resale <sup>61, t</sup> .....	<b>42-71</b>
Smuggling in vehicle <sup>61, t</sup> .	<b>71-212</b>	Used tents, resale <sup>61, t</sup> .....	<b>21-35</b>
Total estimated economic turnover per month <sup>63, t</sup> .....			<b>11,300,000</b>

† Data reported December 2013.

†† Data reported November 2013.

††† Data reported July 2013.

†††† Data reported June 2013.

^ A traditional folded pancake confection prepared during Ramadan<sup>60</sup>.

^^ A bailout is the paperwork required to legally leave Zaatari and live elsewhere in Jordan<sup>61</sup>.

\* This value may represent the purchase of bail or the penalty for failing to meet the requirements of the bail. Reports vary<sup>64</sup>.

\*\* Refugee sale

Right: Champs Elysées, the primary shopping street in Zaatari established by refugees. | UNHCR





**“And where are refugees getting that kind of cash? From the UN.”<sup>65</sup>**

# Planning and Development

Jordanian authorities supplied land for Zaatari's development and provide security within the camp<sup>66</sup>. The camp includes 530 hectares (220 square meters) of land encircled by an 8.3-kilometer ring road and measuring 3.5 kilometers from east to west<sup>67</sup>. The west or "old side" of town was settled first, in July 2012; the old side of town includes the downtown and slums of Zaatari<sup>68</sup>. Tensions erupted during the planning of the city because the Jordanian government had (and continues to have) a vested interest in the Syrian refugees leaving at the end of the conflict. Stakeholders must continuously balance the needs of the refugees and Jordanian concerns that Zaatari will become a permanent city<sup>69</sup>.

## Layout

The formal layout of the camp is a grid system with caravans placed in rows; the spacing of the caravans is designed to accommodate vehicles, guard against fire, and promote hygiene<sup>70</sup>. Surveyors decide where to put the caravans and aid workers are required to place the caravans where the surveyors requested<sup>71</sup>. Since the caravans were not donated at the start of the camp, the original planning fabric from the tent infrastructure is visible in the old camp. As caravans replace tents in the old town, the close spacing requires surveyors to place more caravans than advisable in a given area<sup>72</sup>.

The informal layout of the camp arose after the residents received the caravans. The residents, rather than maintaining the row shapes, re-position their caravans in "little compounds" — typically with a U-shape or a courtyard shape — so that they may live together with their extended families<sup>73</sup>. Other rearrangements of the camp allow refugees to move closer to people from their villages; these unsanctioned modifications result in a redrawn, "maze-like" map<sup>74</sup>.

Right: Caravans in Zaatari in their original grid layout. | UNHCR





### **Building Codes**

Researchers report limitations on the permanence of infrastructure; specifically, no trees may be planted and no roads or surfaces may be paved<sup>75</sup>. No mention of formal building codes has been found in any literature. Tents and caravans are the two major building types, and both arrive at Zaatari fully constructed<sup>76</sup>. Projects for communal facilities fall under the authority of the sponsoring government or NGO<sup>77</sup>. Refugees perform other construction in Zaatari and, for the most part, there is no organizing body that condones or oversees this activity<sup>78</sup>.

In spite of the legal structure, residents regularly undertake construction and improvement projects on their shelters. Scrap wood and aluminum siding can be purchased by the bundle for U.S. \$10<sup>79</sup>. Damage to key communal infrastructure is common, with residents appropriating toilets, water tanks, fence posts, and building materials for their personal use<sup>80</sup>. Back streets are often in poor condition, with water filling numerous craters left by residents seeking sand for construction<sup>81</sup>. Flooding, especially in the winter of 2012-2013, makes the streets further impassible<sup>82</sup>.

### **Utility Hookups**

Water must be trucked into the region to supplement water available from the local aquifer<sup>83</sup>. The Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), in partnership with The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), is the main water provider<sup>84</sup>. In May 2013, they trucked 3.8 million liters of water into the region each day<sup>85</sup>. By November 2013, increased per-capita consumption increased the demand to 300 tankers, bringing the total to 15.1 million liters of water daily<sup>86</sup>. Per-capita water consumption is approximately 35-53 liters per day, greater than the 15-liter Sphere-recommended minimum standard, but a fraction of Jordan's 100-liter and the United States' 900-liter per capita averages<sup>87</sup>.

Right: Residents unable to obtain a caravan construct a makeshift housing structure. | AP





The number of water tankers needed to service the camp reached the point where Jordanians in nearby towns began to complain of road damage in the surrounding area<sup>88</sup>. With so many tankers entering the region, Jordanians have long-term fears regarding the over-pumping and pollution of the aquifer beneath Zaatari, one of the most important water sources in one of the ten most water-poor nations on Earth<sup>89</sup>. Though a February 2014 analysis by Jordan's Water Ministry found the aquifer to be unpolluted, one study indicated that pollution from mismanaged wastewater is likely to occur within one to ten years<sup>90</sup>.

The majority of residents access water through communal water tanks and taps, though as of June 2013, eight percent of residents had private water tanks<sup>91</sup>. Access to materials is limited and residents often take components from public toilets for their private household's water equipment<sup>92</sup>. While there are plans to provide piped water to every household, it is not clear when or how these infrastructure improvements will be implemented<sup>93</sup>.

The United Nations funds, installs, and maintains the electricity used for streetlights and other key infrastructure in the camp. However, due to the high costs of this service, the UN is unable to provide equal lighting service to all areas<sup>94</sup>. The result is a section of "haves" that has full street lighting in the old part of the city, and a section of "have-nots" that lives with sporadic street lighting<sup>95</sup>. As of June 2013, full street lighting became available at the camp entrance to help refugees arrive safely<sup>96</sup>. Oxfam International also installed solar-powered lighting near its WASH facilities to improve safety and reliability<sup>97</sup>.

The location of streetlights is not only a safety issue, but also an economic one. As of November 2013, an estimated 73 percent of the camp illegally tapped the streetlight grid for private electrical connections<sup>98</sup>. Therefore, those without access

† Reports vary.

Right: A boy retrieves water from one of the WASH blocks in Zaatari.  
| Karl Schembri/ Oxfam International





to streetlights wish to have them so that they may also install private electrical connections<sup>99</sup>. Policing the installation of electrical connections is difficult because the identity of the lead electrician is unknown and residents disguise their construction; in one case, trenches and concrete walls hid the connections from aid workers for days<sup>100</sup>. The spaghetti-like existence of illegal connections makes maintenance of the electrical grid difficult for engineers and creates a safety hazard<sup>101</sup>. In response, camp officials worked with the 350 electricians responsible for the illegal connections to install pylons and more powerful transformers to provide more reliable service and flood protection<sup>102</sup>.

Currently, the UN pays for all of the costs associated with electricity at roughly U.S. \$500,000 per month during the summer and U.S. \$700,000 per month during the winter<sup>103</sup>. The UN is introducing metered electricity as part of its upgrading plan, with 50 percent completion reached in February 2014<sup>104</sup>. With the current setup, seven shops share a single electricity meter<sup>105</sup>.

### **Waste Disposal**

Waste disposal is primarily accomplished by trucks; 200 tankers transport dirty water out of the camp every day<sup>106</sup>. Assuming the same capacity as the trucks arriving, this would indicate 2.7 million liters of daily waste water<sup>107</sup>. Since the camp lacks a sewer system, the camp is designed for residents to rely on common blocks of latrines for their sanitation needs<sup>108</sup>. However, by the end of 2013, roughly 60 to 70 percent of residents had built in-home pit latrines that could be individually pumped, or dug out; this creates drainage and sanitation challenges with the rainwater runoff system<sup>109</sup>.

Right: Illegal electrical wiring attached to UN-installed streetlights. |  
*Luke N. Vargas*





# Built Environment

There are two types of buildings in Zaatari – the caravan, a prefabricated modular dwelling, and the tent<sup>110</sup>. Many shops are constructed out of the same modules used for housing<sup>111</sup>. As of December 2013, Zaatari included 17,000 residential caravans, 8,000 tents, and 3,000 shops<sup>112</sup>.

## Housing

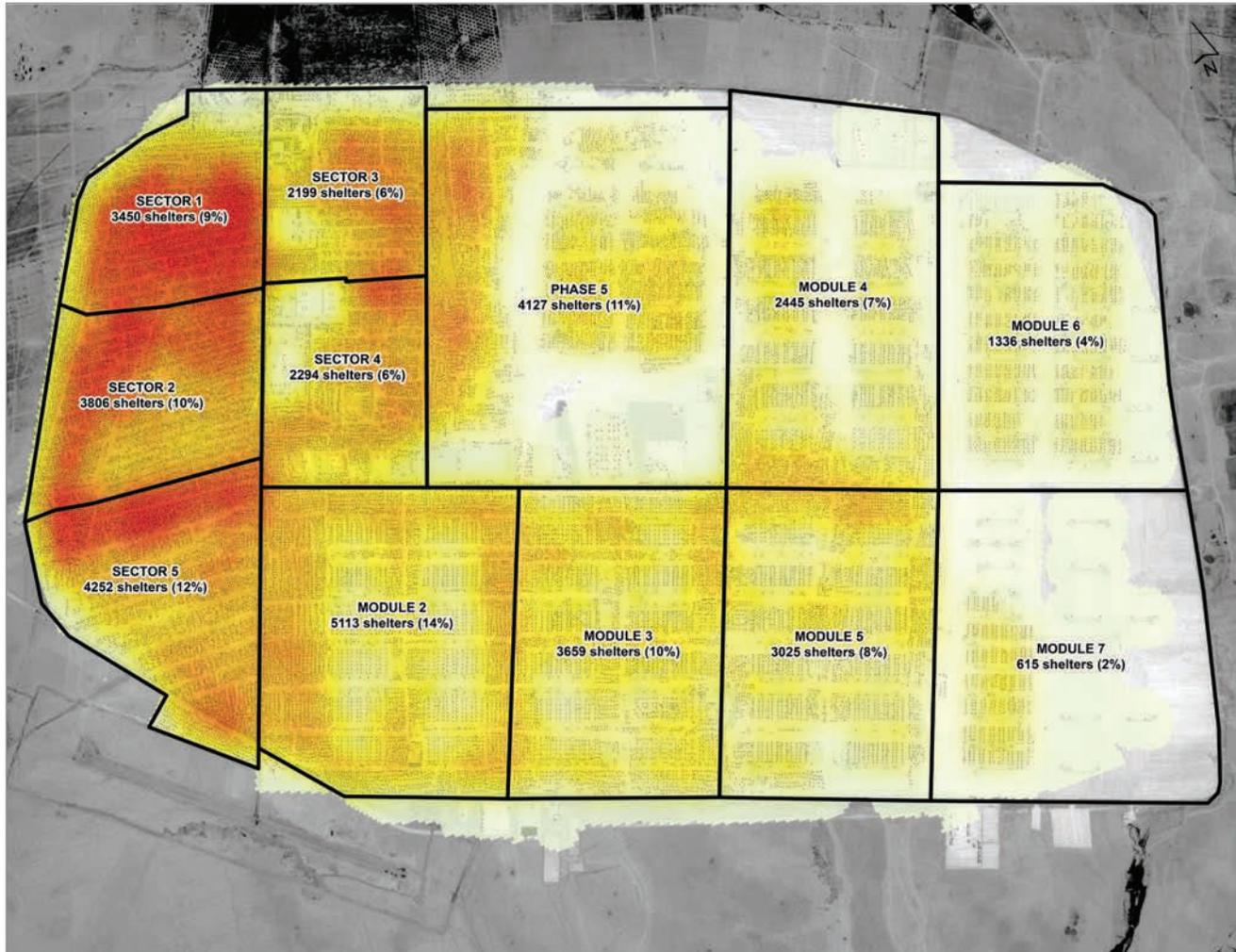
In July 2012, almost the entire population lived in tents<sup>113</sup>. Caravans were introduced later when the displacement lasted longer than expected and more stable housing solutions were required<sup>114</sup>. The tents are made of canvas, while the caravans are prefabricated units<sup>115,†</sup>. Caravans are far superior due to their protection against weather and vermin, increased privacy, and overall structural stability and tenure<sup>116</sup>. Donors, primarily Saudi Arabia, have spent U.S. \$75 million to construct 24,000 caravan units at roughly U.S. \$3,125 per unit<sup>117</sup>. The caravans are built in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States including Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman<sup>118</sup>.

Although all sources agree that official caravan distribution is uniform, there are several discrepancies in the amount of space allocated per person. In its documentary series, UNHCR reports that every family receives one caravan and larger families also receive a tent<sup>119</sup>. A news source, however, reports that one caravan is allocated for every six people<sup>120</sup>. Some refugees complain about the number of people to a caravan and the wait time for caravans; others have tried to trick aid workers into providing them a second structure, which could then be sold or used for additional housing or commercial space<sup>121</sup>. In general, refugee leaders decide which families receive caravans first<sup>122</sup>. Since reports of the disreputability of refugee leaders abound<sup>123</sup>, this system allows for corruption to play a part in housing distribution.

† Data and specifications for these units are limited.

Right: Density of shelters in Zaatari as of March 31, 2013. | *REACH Initiative*





**Legend**

-  Sector or module boundaries
-  Shelters

**Shelter density**  
 High  
 Low



Distribution of the caravans has been slow. In June 2013, tensions in the camp were so high that officials were lucky to distribute 50 per day, compared to a typical figure of 100 caravans per day<sup>124</sup>. Between June and November of 2013, 4,000 caravans were distributed to families, leaving another 4,000 families without caravans<sup>125</sup>. At times, donors also slowed or stopped funding caravan distribution due to reports of abuses in the system. One news service reported a suspension of donations between August and November 2013 due to reports of caravan sales outside the camp<sup>126</sup>. Another report suggested slow arrivals at the start of winter 2013 due to reports of their use as retail space<sup>127</sup>. UNHCR leaders hoped to distribute a caravan to everyone who was still living in a tent during the winter of 2013 – about 40 percent of camp residents – by the end of January 2014<sup>128</sup>. A February 2014 report indicated that only five percent of residents were living in tents – all new arrivals<sup>129</sup>.

Aftermarket improvements to the caravans and their arrangements are commonplace. Illegal electricity connections power 73 percent of homes<sup>130</sup>, while 40 percent of households have televisions<sup>131</sup>. Residents often steal components from communal facilities to improve their personal spaces<sup>132</sup>. This results in highly unequal housing. As an example, in November 2013, one family of 10 had four caravans while another still lived in a tent after 11 months<sup>133</sup>. Some residents paved their courtyards with concrete to create setups similar to those they left in Syria<sup>134</sup>.

### **Commercial Space**

While donors may not approve of the trade in caravans, sources cite it as a key driver of the Zaatari economy<sup>135</sup>. Refugees generally sell caravans they no longer need rather than return them to the UNHCR<sup>136</sup>. Syrians also purchase retail space using their own money or borrowed money<sup>137</sup>. Aid donors do not provide retail space, however, the Syrian refugees create spaces for retail themselves<sup>138</sup>.

Top Right: Caravans, the preferred form of shelter in Zaatari, are provided by donor nations for refugees. | *UNHCR*

Bottom Right: Tents are provided to refugees upon arrival; refugees live in tents until a caravan can be provided. | *AP*





The main commerce street, Champs-Élysées, includes vegetable stands, butchers, clothing stores, footwear stores, rotisseries, falafel restaurants, and pet shops<sup>139</sup>. Legally, the Syrians do not own any of this land, but that does not stop them from selling stalls along this street for prices ranging from U.S. \$635 to U.S. \$2,120<sup>140</sup>. Many Syrian merchants have re-established their businesses in Zaatari<sup>141</sup>. For example, restaurant owner Abu Mohammed was one of Daraa's largest restaurant owners and now owns the restaurant *Arabi and Turki* in Zaatari<sup>142</sup>.

### **Open Space**

As refugees settle into the camp, they convert many spaces into private open spaces, featuring fountains and courtyards paved with cement<sup>143</sup>. One key type of public open space is the football fields and game areas. Volunteers from the Jordan women's national team, as well as donors from the United Kingdom and South Korea, have helped bring community-building football resources to the camp<sup>144</sup>. The Netherlands-based Association of Municipalities' city plan for the future of Zaatari reportedly includes green space as a key addition to the current design<sup>145</sup>.

Right: Restaurant space established and operated by Syrian refugees in Zaatari. | Luke N. Vargas





# Legal System

Zaatari, as a new and rapidly expanding city, has both formal and informal components in its legal system. Furthermore, some informal components are slowly being formalized as the camp develops into a more permanent settlement<sup>146</sup>.

## Government

The current legal system began with the arrival of Camp Manager Kilian Kleinschmidt on March 11, 2013<sup>147</sup>. Kleinschmidt, an employee of UNHCR, oversees the camp and often refers to himself as the mayor of Zaatari<sup>148</sup>.

A series of informal leaders run a parallel legal system. There are seven major tribal leaders, or “chiefs,” that had great influence at home and retained this influence with the people of Zaatari<sup>149</sup>. Informal leaders control key streets and are known as “street leaders”<sup>150</sup>. Informal leaders have formal responsibilities in the camp, such as deciding who will receive a caravan and who will receive official camp employment<sup>151</sup>. Officially, the people choose their street leaders; in reality, they are often self-appointed, disreputable people who are underground leaders or involved in organized crime<sup>152</sup>. Many street leaders are not above using exploitation, violence, and theft to keep their positions in tact<sup>153</sup>.

Reports have surfaced of community leaders, or people claiming to be community leaders, confiscating rations and blankets<sup>154</sup>. Minority groups, including the 10 percent of residents not from the Daraa province, are often more vulnerable within this informal system<sup>155</sup>.

When Kleinschmidt arrived in March 2013, the aid workers did not know the informal leaders and the informal leaders did not know the aid workers<sup>156</sup>. Even among themselves, the aid workers shared little information about their responsibilities and jurisdictions<sup>157</sup>. Kleinschmidt has tried to change this. He started by attempting to gain the trust of the leaders by moving into the camp, borrowing their showers, and

Right: Camp Manager Kilian Kleinschmidt makes key decisions in the camp. | Lynsey Addario/ Reportage by Getty Images





sharing their living conditions<sup>158</sup>. He also includes informal leaders in the planning process through meetings; the goal is for both sets of leaders to work together to build a better city<sup>159</sup>.

Kleinschmidt organized twelve districts for Zaatari after his arrival<sup>160, t</sup>. By June 2013, he or his staff organized daily meetings with street leaders<sup>161</sup>. By November 2013, each district had its own neighborhood council, a governing body, and police force to handle local problems; these officials must be appointed by the UNHCR because elections are illegal<sup>162, tt</sup>. According to Kleinschmidt, the long-term goal is to replace the street leaders with the community policing system<sup>163</sup>.

### Law Enforcement

The Jordanian Public Security Department (PSD) provides the police, security, fire, and emergency medical forces for Zaatari as part of its agreement with UNHCR<sup>164</sup>. In Zaatari's early days, the police would not patrol during the night due to the dangers of the camp; Kleinschmidt convinced them to start night patrols to increase safety<sup>165</sup>. The Jordanian Gendarmerie Forces secure the borders of the compound, which are fortified with a fence, a ditch, and a two-meter high earthen wall<sup>166</sup>. Jordanian law is in effect in the camp<sup>167</sup>.

The code of conduct is an ongoing problem, as refugee leaders, police, and security work with the refugees to determine which behaviors are acceptable and how laws should be enforced<sup>168</sup>. One refugee describes the Jordanian police forces as “the guards of all the inefficiencies,” while Kleinschmidt describes their service as a balance between enabling and prohibiting behavior<sup>169</sup>.

In November 2013, Kleinschmidt arranged for the training of 600 Syrians, 50 for each of the 12 districts, to act as a refugee police force that would supplement the Jordanian security<sup>170</sup>. This is part of the long-term plan for self-governance of Zaatari<sup>171</sup>.

† No specific date could be obtained.

†† Jordanian law allows local elections at the discretion of the national government<sup>172</sup>.

Right: Map of Zaatari street leaders (“abus”) as of March 2013. | *REACH Initiative*





## Stakeholders

The Zaatari camp is the product of a collaborative effort headed by the UNHCR and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan<sup>173</sup>. The implementing and operational partners in the process include government agencies, over 50 UN agencies, and NGOs<sup>174</sup>. The UNHCR reports the following list of 70 organizations for 2014, but others have seen estimates as high as 139 organizations<sup>175</sup>.

## Sectors

Early provision of services by NGOs largely went unregulated; that is, each organization would determine its own agenda<sup>176</sup>. By June 2013, Kleinschmidt convinced most NGOs to report their activities<sup>177</sup>. The following list from the UNHCR itemizes the specific partners operating in key institutions, governing functions, or relief efforts, as of January 2014<sup>178</sup>. Unabbreviated names can be found in the Appendix.

- 1 **Agriculture**, JHCO
- 1 **Child Protection**, FCA, IFH/NHF, IMC, IOM, JHAS, LWF, MercyCorps, NHF, SC, TdH - Lausanne, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, UPP
- 2 **Environment**, IRD, JHCO
- 3 **Food Security**, CARITAS, HRF, IRW, JHCO, SC, UNHCR, WFP
- 4 **Health**, ACTED, CARITAS, GSF, HI, IFH/NHF, IMC, IOCC, IOM, IRC, IRD, IRW, JHAS, JICA, MdM, MoH Jordan, MSF, NHF, SC, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UPP, WHO
- 5 **Protection**, ARDD-LA, DRC, HI, IOM, IRC, JHCO, MercyCorps, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UPP
- 6 **Shelter**, ADRA, ICMC, IRW, JHCO, LWF, MercyCorps, Medair, ShelterBox, UNHCR, UPP
- 7 **Camp Management**, JHCO, LWF

Right: Girls attend classes in one of the Zaatari schools. | AP





- 8 **Coordination**, IFH/NHF, IMC, IOM, IRC, JHCO, UNHCR, UNICEF
- 9 **Education**, CARITAS, Children without Borders-KnK, FCA, IOCC, IRD, JEN, JHCO, JICA, LWF, Madrasati, MercyCorps, MoE Jordan, NHF, NRC, SC, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UPP
- 10 **HIV/AIDS**, CARITAS, IRD
- 11 **Information Management**, UNHCR, UNICEF
- 12 **Livelihood**, ADRA, CARITAS, IRD, JHCO, NHF, NRC, UNWOMEN
- 13 **Nutrition**, JHAS, Medair, MSF, OPM, SC, UNHCR, UNICEF
- 14 **Registration**, IRD, JHCO, UNHCR
- 15 **Reproductive Health**, IFH/NHF, IMC, IRC, IRD, JICA, UNFPA, UNICEF
- 16 **Transportation**, IOM
- 17 **Cash Assistance**, DRC
- 18 **Community Services**, IFH/NHF, IRD, JEN, MercyCorps, NHF, UNHCR, UNICEF
- 19 **Core Relief Items**, CARE, CARITAS, DRC, ICMC, IOCC, IRD, IRW, JEN, JHAS, JHCO, LWF, MercyCorps, OPM, ShelterBox, UNHCR, UNICEF
- 20 **Gender-Based Violence**, ICMC, IFH/NHF, IRC, IRD, JHAS, NHF, SC, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, UPP
- 21 **Logistics**, IOM, IRC, IRD, JHCO, THW
- 22 **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support**, AHSI, AVSI, CARE, CVT, DAHGCC, DAW, FI, FPD, GCC, HI, ICSC, IMC, IRC, JHAS, JPA, JRC, JRF, JRS, LWF, NHF, TdH - Lausanne, UNICEF, UPP
- 23 **Water and Sanitation**, ACTED, IRD, JEN, MercyCorps, OXFAM, THW, UNESCO, UNICEF

Right: Oxfam International helps install latrines in the camp. | Caroline Gluck/ Oxfam International





# Social Infrastructure

NGOs and aid organizations contribute to social and societal functions in Zaatari<sup>179</sup>. These contributions are insufficient or non-existent in certain key areas, prompting Syrians to develop a social infrastructure of their own<sup>180</sup>.

## Basic Needs

Aid organizations document refugees upon their arrival into the camp<sup>181</sup>. This documentation provides access to all of the assistance provided in the camp<sup>182</sup>. NGOs and aid organizations provide water and hot tea to arriving refugees<sup>183</sup>. The UN issues two blankets per person<sup>184</sup>.

When the camp opened in July 2012, refugees received prepackaged food in pizza boxes twice a day<sup>185</sup>. Resident feedback led to a more flexible system by September 2013 that allowed vouchers to be provided for some food needs<sup>186</sup>. The vouchers, valued at U.S. \$8.50, are distributed biweekly to the residents, and there are strict rules on what camp residents can and cannot buy<sup>187</sup>. The World Food Programme continues to provide four pitas per person per day, free of charge, from Zaatari's five bread centers<sup>188</sup>. Other free foods include rice, bulgar, lentils, oil, sugar, and date biscuits – totaling 2,100 calories per day and U.S. \$4 million per month (U.S. \$30 per refugee)<sup>189</sup>.

## Education

There are three schools in Zaatari<sup>190</sup>. The Jordanian Ministry of Education promotes quality by certifying schools; only schools taught by Jordanian teachers can be certified, though Syrian teachers may work as assistants<sup>191</sup>. Donor countries or organizations take responsibility for the physical construction of schools<sup>192</sup>. One facility, for example, is described as a conglomeration of wooden huts from Saudi Arabia surrounding a courtyard with a water cooler<sup>193</sup>. In contrast, the Bahrain Educational Complex is a U.S. \$2 million construction project involving four mobile schools built

Right: One of Zaatari's five bread distribution centers hands out daily allotments of pita. | AP





to Ministry of Education standards<sup>194</sup>. Electricity supply to the schools is unreliable because so many refugees steal power for their residences<sup>195</sup>.

In April 2013, approximately 36,000 refugees were school-aged children, however only 22 percent of them enrolled in school<sup>196</sup>. Education for children ages 6 to 17, segregated by sex, is provided free of charge<sup>197</sup>. Each of the three schools have a capacity of roughly 5,000 students, and double shifts are used to provide better access to education<sup>198</sup>. Girls attend in the morning and boys in the afternoon, with 60 boys enrolled for every 40 girls<sup>199</sup>. Reasons children do not attend school include harassment and violence to, from, and during school; abuse and corporal punishment from teachers; desire to remain with family; employment needed to support the family, travel distance, and insufficient toilet facilities<sup>200</sup>. The result is a generation of children coping with boredom even though the majority report a desire to attend school<sup>201</sup>.

By November 2013, school attendance rose to 12,000 students and major criminal incidents involving children fell significantly<sup>202</sup>. Groups such as Relief International are providing remedial education to allow more students to catch up with the Jordanian curriculum<sup>203</sup>. Still, first-quarter 2014 estimates of 60 percent school attendance (20,608 students) are low, and experts fear the lack of education may result in an illiterate generation<sup>204</sup>.

Adult education is also slowly developing in Zaatari. The Women and Girls Oasis is a job-training program that teaches women sewing or hairdressing so they may earn a living<sup>205</sup>. As of November 2013, 700 women have benefitted from the program<sup>206</sup>.

### **Employment**

Sources report 60 to 65 percent employment in Zaatari (through any source of income); these high estimates are almost entirely due to the initiative of Syrians in developing their own businesses<sup>207</sup>. The camp management of Zaatari hires only

Right: Girls play outside one of Zaatari's three schools. | AP





1,500 refugees to conduct cleaning and orderly tasks for U.S. \$1.40 per hour<sup>208</sup>. The two-week positions are allocated at the discretion of street leaders, who are known to show favoritism in giving out positions<sup>209</sup>.

Most refugees earn a living by monetizing whatever they have. A select few use their education<sup>210</sup>. One woman, for example, uses her college degree to teach English in the camp<sup>211</sup>. Many use their foreign aid to earn a living<sup>212</sup>. For instance, a 13-year-old boy buys bread from other refugees and sells it to a Jordanian man to use as animal feed, in order to feed his family<sup>213</sup>. Marrying off daughters is commonplace, even young girls. Some Syrian families require a bride price to be paid to her family<sup>214</sup>. Children are often forced to work; more than 680 shops in Zaatari are known to employ children and one in two households depends in part or in whole on the income of children<sup>215</sup>.

Those refugees who can gather enough capital can become merchants<sup>216</sup>. Often, successful merchants and restaurant-owners from Syria adapt quickly to running shops in Zaatari; in fact, some merchants from rural Syria are seeing better profits than they did at home due to the larger market base<sup>217</sup>. Merchants sell goods both for daily living and special occasions<sup>218</sup>. One Zaatari bridal shop provides dress rental, hair, and makeup at such reasonable prices that some Jordanian women from nearby towns shop there<sup>219</sup>. Many merchants have begun charging normal Jordanian prices, and there is resentment among refugees that merchants do not pass the savings resulting from free electricity and no taxation to the customer<sup>220</sup>.

Many reports of residents earning “extra income” involve employment sources that are not strictly legal<sup>221</sup>. One good example of this gray area is the cohort of 350 refugees who operate as electricians and provide 73 percent of camp residents with access to electricity<sup>222</sup>. Some reports call them entrepreneurs who are earning a

Right: A refugee-owned food shop in Zaatari.  
| Courtesy of Dalia Khamissy





living by charging for initial connections and maintenance<sup>223</sup>. Other reports indicate that these are criminals involved in turf wars<sup>224</sup>. Regardless, the electricians' wiring is illegally connected to UN infrastructure; to improve safety, the UN plans to partner with these electricians to raise the wiring off the ground<sup>225</sup>.

UN officials report that, due to the skill and mercantile drive of the Syrian refugees, Zaatari's development has surpassed in six months what many camps see in 20 years<sup>226</sup>. Many believe that this development is due in large part to the semi-illegal trade in relief items, such as caravans<sup>227</sup>. Aid organizations recognize the legality of sales within the camp, but sales on the Jordanian market are illegal and complicate relationships with donors, who do not see their relief aid being used for its intended purpose<sup>228</sup>.

### **Marriage and Family**

Syrian law makes marriages an important component of Zaatari's social infrastructure. Because only a father can pass Syrian citizenship to his children, children born in unregistered marriages or to unmarried women in Zaatari are not Syrian citizens<sup>229</sup>. Jordanian citizenship is acquired if the father is a Jordanian citizen or if the mother is Jordanian and the father is of unknown citizenship, making Syrian refugee children ineligible<sup>230</sup>. Thus, Zaatari children without a valid (legal) Syrian paternal lineage are technically born stateless<sup>231</sup>.

The Syrian age of eligibility for marriage is between 15 and 18 years old for boys and between 13 and 17 years old for girls<sup>232, 1</sup>. Although some qualitative reports indicate that child marriage is common in rural Syria, a 2006 report shows that roughly only 13 percent of Syrian women were married before the age of 18 in both urban and rural areas<sup>233</sup>. Reports cite several possible reasons why early marriage is common in Zaatari. Some, for instance, show that many refugees come from areas where early

† The lower age is the minimum age for marriage with authorization; the upper age is based on personal status laws that apply to all Muslims.

Right: A refugee-owned cigarette store in Zaatari.  
| Courtesy of Dalia Khamissy





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marriage is common; others explain that girls in the camp are under strong pressure to marry so that resources within a family are not spread so thin<sup>234</sup>. One reporter argues that even though early marriage may be common in Syria, the wide spousal age gaps common in Zaatari are not<sup>235</sup>.

Marriage to foreigners, and especially early marriage to foreigners, is a common concern in the camp<sup>236</sup>. A Syrian family may marry their own teenage girl off to a much older man, such as an arranged marriage to a 40-year-old wealthy Saudi, in the hopes of giving her a better life and reducing their own financial burden<sup>237</sup>. Refugees in Zaatari are regularly asked about women available for marriage<sup>238</sup>. Even the head of the Ketab and Sunna Society, an aid organization, receives requests from men searching for brides in Zaatari<sup>239</sup>.

Many foreign marriages last only a few days to a month, and such exploitation of refugee women has decreased willingness to accept foreign marriage proposals<sup>240</sup>. Still, matchmakers continue to arrange such marriages for a profit, prompting responses from government, activist, and humanitarian groups<sup>241</sup>. As of January 2014, Jordanians are upholding a 2009 anti-trafficking law that prevents the legal recognition of marriages for people under 18<sup>242</sup>. In the same vein, one Syrian activist group, the National Campaign for the Protection of Syrian Women, opposes the practice, calling forced and early marriages in Zaatari a form of slavery and sex trade<sup>243</sup>. UNICEF also observed the problem and referred to it as “a human rights and a public health problem.”<sup>244</sup> One imam in Zaatari will no longer marry camp residents under 18 due to concerns of exploitation, despite his support of early marriage traditions in Syria<sup>245</sup>.

### **Community**

As in Syria, religion and the mosque are an integral part of the Zaatari community. There are at least 120 mosques in Zaatari, and religious services and celebrations

Right: Wedding dresses displayed at a refugee-owned shop. | *Courtesy of Dalia Khamissy*





continue despite the displacement<sup>246</sup>. Families celebrated Eid at the end of Ramadan together, and confectioners in Zaatari made qatayef, a traditional pancake<sup>247</sup>. While the plain pancakes sell for U.S. \$1.10 per kilogram and the filled pancakes (cream is the only affordable filling in Zaatari) sell for U.S. \$1.40 per kilogram, business owners estimated they gave away 20 percent of their product for free to refugees who could not afford them in an attempt to spread holiday spirit<sup>248</sup>.

Informal leaders also contribute – whether positively or negatively – to the social infrastructure of their particular areas<sup>249</sup>. Street leaders can sometimes choose who can live on their block, a policy that provides security and community to the block's current residents<sup>250</sup>. Street leaders also have responsibility for delegating access to communal facilities, such as kitchens<sup>251</sup>.

Donors and refugees provide enrichment activities in Zaatari<sup>252</sup>. Clowns without Borders and a Dutch guitar group provided performances, and a Syrian music teacher attempts to build community and offers solace with his oud, a lute-like instrument common in Arab countries<sup>253</sup>. The South Korean ambassador arranged Taekwondo lessons for the children in the camp<sup>254</sup>. UNICEF provides safe spaces for children<sup>255</sup>.

Several donors and organizations use football to bring people together and to educate children about the dangers of former warzones, such as landmines<sup>256</sup>. Although men and boys played in their home country, women and girls were not accustomed to playing before living in the camp<sup>257</sup>. Abeer Rantisi, a member of the Jordan national team, began teaching women to play the sport and worked with camp officials to identify locations where women could play<sup>258</sup>. For instance, Norway donated separate fields for boys and girls; the Norway Football Field for Girls opened in December 2013 and uses tarpaulin-covered fences to ensure privacy<sup>259</sup>.

Right: A caravan has been converted into one of Zaatari's mosques. | credit to Jordan Times





# Health

Since Zaatari houses war refugees, some of the most pressing health concerns for camp officials are the physical and psychological impacts of the conflict<sup>260</sup>. Additional concerns are the ongoing health and sanitation problems that result from living in a refugee camp<sup>261</sup>.

## Medicine

Dr. Ana Calvo, the Camp Doctor, coordinates medical services<sup>262</sup>. A UNHCR employee, Calvo is responsible for the partner organizations, clinics, hospitals, and volunteers that create the Zaatari medical system<sup>263</sup>. There are three main hospitals in Zaatari, all of which are run by partner organizations<sup>264</sup>. Hospitals, such as the French military hospital neonatal ward, operated for some time in tents. In the summer of 2013, caravans replaced the tents to increase the security and stability of this critical infrastructure<sup>265</sup>.

There are more than 100 Syrian medical volunteers serving the camp<sup>266</sup>. This group, colloquially referred to as “Syrians healing Syrians”, is made up of former nurses, doctors, and additional volunteers. Syrian medical volunteers make between 20 to 30 case visits per day, walking two to five kilometers, on average<sup>267</sup>.

The Zaatari medical system provides in-patient treatment for a variety of conditions and outside referrals to Jordanian hospitals when facilities are insufficient<sup>268</sup>. As of April 2014, 73 full-time physicians provided primary healthcare – averaging 33 consultations per day – at the following facilities: the IMC Clinic, the JHAS Clinic, the Jordan Italian Field Hospital, the MDM Clinics 1 and 2, the Moroccan Field Hospital, and the Saudi Clinic<sup>269</sup>. Treatment ranges from vaccinations – all refugee children are vaccinated immediately upon arrival – to conflict-related injury treatment<sup>270</sup>. In October and November 2013, health officials undertook a campaign to vaccinate children against polio to prevent the outbreak in Syria from traveling across the border<sup>271</sup>.

Right: A child waits for registration; all children are vaccinated upon arrival at the camp. | AP





Since many refugees are wounded when crossing the border (including old or hidden wounds), doctors regularly treat amputees and shrapnel injuries<sup>272</sup>. Some preventive care services exist and hospital staff regularly manage the delivery of newborns<sup>273</sup>.

Perhaps most concerning are the ongoing health concerns that plague the camp<sup>274</sup>. One problem is poor nutrition, which is the result of the poor and variable access to the right foods. Even for healthy people, reduced nutrition can tax the entire body<sup>275</sup>. Diarrhea is common among children in the camp, and refugees suspect this is due to poor sanitation and contaminated drinking water<sup>276</sup>. Medical issues arising from safety concerns also exist; women have a high frequency of urinary tract infections since WASH facilities are too dangerous to use at night<sup>277</sup>. Some refugees do not trust the hospitals; one family paid a smuggler to “escape” the camp in order to have a Caesarean procedure performed at a Jordanian hospital<sup>278</sup>.

### **Mental Health**

Not surprisingly, mental health is a major concern for the camp residents<sup>279</sup>. Psychological trauma is common in adults and children who operate in survival mode after coming from conflict zones<sup>280</sup>. In just the journey to Zaatari, camp residents suffered the psychological impact of traveling kilometers in the dark, and the risks that come from traveling in a war zone<sup>281</sup>. Reports of human rights violations in the war, including the public rape of men, women, and children, suggest that the psychological trauma from this conflict is especially severe<sup>282</sup>.

UNICEF specialists raise the concern that the psychological toll of prolonged conflict on Syrian children is worse than in similar conflicts, citing an unusually high level of violence perpetrated by children as evidence<sup>283</sup>. Many children experience safety concerns, boredom, poor living conditions, aggression and violence, worry for the future, shock from wartime experiences, and guilt from leaving friends behind<sup>284</sup>. Both

Right: Women wait inside one of Zaatari's hospital tents. | AP





boys and girls report concern and anxiety over a disrupted education; some children have had no access to education since 2011<sup>285</sup>. Specific circumstances for some children, such as child marriage, child labor, and recovery from child conscription, have also been stressors for children in the camp<sup>286</sup>.

Combating the terrible effects of this conflict on children's the mental health is difficult. Many believe that efforts to avoid producing a "lost generation" of Syrian children are most effective at the individual counseling level, provided the finances are available<sup>287</sup>.

### **Sanitation**

According to one street leader, poor sanitation is one of the most common complaints of camp residents<sup>288</sup>. Poor coordination among camp officials and NGOs causes difficulties, as well. In one case, for instance, an NGO removed WASH facilities in poor condition, only for them to remain un-replaced three months later<sup>289</sup>. This has led some residents to construct alternatives; in-home pit latrines could be found in 60 to 70 percent of homes by the end of 2013<sup>290</sup>. While one news source indicates that in-home toilets with sewage pits can be emptied by truck, aid organizations report that these facilities lack the ability to contain sewage, resulting in standing gray and black water in the camp<sup>291</sup>. The underground aquifer, containing a substantial percentage of Jordan's water reserves, limits the ability to construct a full sewer system and raises concerns of groundwater contamination from these makeshift facilities<sup>292</sup>.

Right: Standing water can be seen on Zaatari's streets. | *Oxfam International*





# Criminal Activity

In the early operation of the camp, aid workers lived outside the camp boundaries in fenced structures, leaving Zaatari for the evening due to nighttime safety issues<sup>293</sup>. Despite the effort, refugees could circumvent the fence and loot the caravans in the aid community<sup>294</sup>. By June 2013, aid workers began moving into the boundaries, and by December 2013, the camp manager could walk the camp at night unguarded<sup>295</sup>. Meetings between refugees and aid workers enabled better understanding, increased cooperation, and established common goals and concerns; the efforts resulted in some relief from crime<sup>296</sup>.

Camp Manager Kleinschmidt identifies key three reasons for the high levels of criminal activity in Zaatari: (1) Syrians' historical mistrust of elites begets mistrust of aid workers who often constrict camp residents' freedoms; (2) the anger at the international community's failure to end the fighting, resulting in feelings of entitlement; and (3) organized crime<sup>297</sup>.

## Informal Power Structures

The move to Zaatari resulted in social upheaval for all refugees; the transition was especially difficult for rural-living Syrians who were accustomed to having local leaders settle all disputes<sup>298</sup>. As a result, informal power structures have arisen, with the powerful members of society and organized crime benefiting from the instability — gaining their power through fear and control over key services like electricity provision<sup>299</sup>.

## Smuggling

Smuggling results from the absence of a traditional economy and a culture of fear perpetuated by informal power structures<sup>300</sup>. As of December 2013, Colonel Zaher Abu Shehab, a Zaatari Camp Director affiliated with the security forces, reported 429 cases of smuggling of goods and people<sup>301</sup>. Refugee aid, including food and tents, is

Right: The entrance of Zaatari is fenced, gated, and guarded, but smuggling and escaping are still common. | *Reuters*





نرحب بكم في مخيم الزعتري، محافظة المفرق .

Welcome to Zaa'tari Refugee Camp,  
Mafrqa Governorate .



smuggled to the open markets outside of Zaatari where it can be easily sold 50 to 75 percent below Jordanian market prices<sup>302</sup>. In July 2013, police intercepted a smuggling operation of 6,000 tents and seven tons of food<sup>303</sup>.

### “Escaping”

By summer 2013, daily fence repair became necessary as a result of residents climbing over the fence and damaging it<sup>304</sup>. December 2013 reports from the Jordanian Ministry of the Interior indicate that 54,000 Syrians bribed their way out of Zaatari<sup>305</sup>. Refugees indicate the lack of basic provisions, bathrooms, infrastructure, and safety as the key reasons for choosing to escape Zaatari<sup>306</sup>.

Refugees are often smuggled out of the camp in supply vehicles, including cars, trucks, and water tankers, because these vehicles typically leave the compound un-inspected<sup>307</sup>. This service is priced between 20 JD and 200 JD – or U.S. \$28 and U.S. \$282 – per person<sup>308</sup>. Prices depend on a number of factors, including which camp gate is used<sup>309</sup>. The cost of smuggling on foot ranges from U.S. \$14 to U.S. \$21<sup>310</sup>. Refugees can raise the money necessary to flee the camp by selling their humanitarian aid supplies to refugee shop owners or Jordanians<sup>311</sup>.

Wadah al-Hamoud, the Jordanian Director of Syrian Refugee Camps, insists that officers rarely receive bribes to smuggle refugees, citing the low number of officers who have been disciplined<sup>312</sup>. Journalists, however, write that the coordination and payment between smugglers and security forces is a normal occurrence<sup>313</sup>. While accepting bribes is a crime for Jordanian officers, there is no written law against smuggling people from Zaatari, so no criminal penalty can be enforced<sup>314</sup>. If Jordanian authorities find escaped refugees, they are forced to swear to the courts not to escape again and are returned with no penalty<sup>315</sup>.

Right: Zaatari is not an enclosed camp. Residents are free to wander out so long as they do not pass through one of the camp's two main gates, both of which are guarded. | *Luke N. Vargas*





Journalists tracked eight smugglers who moved 800 people in a single week, averaging about 14 people per smuggler per day<sup>316</sup>. The average percent of the smuggling fee kept by the brokers was 62 percent, for net earnings of 300 JD or U.S. \$424 per day, while the remainder is distributed to the driver, auctioneer, smuggler, and security forces<sup>317</sup>. One interviewed refugee estimated that for every 1,000 people that enter Zaatari each day, nearly 300 escape<sup>318</sup>.

### **Bailout Guarantee Forgery**

To legally leave Zaatari and live elsewhere in Jordan, Syrian refugees must obtain a bailout guarantee<sup>319</sup>. The rationales behind bailout guarantees are numerous. Sources indicate that the reasons include economic protectionism, employment concerns among Jordanians, overcrowding in schools, and the control of the spread of jihadism<sup>320</sup>. The document costs U.S. \$7,060<sup>†</sup> and requires the beneficiary to locate a guarantor, or a person over 35 years of age with Jordanian residence and close ties to the refugee<sup>321</sup>. In spite of these restrictions, aid organizations worry about the possibility for trafficking, abuse, and other forms of exploitation within this system<sup>322</sup>.

A forged bailout guarantee costs anywhere from U.S. \$106 to U.S. \$212, but sometimes lacks key elements like an official seal, which makes it impossible for refugees to obtain authorized work<sup>323</sup>. Residents not authorized to leave can only legally leave the camp for three days at a time, and only 50 to 100 refugees can obtain this permission at any given time<sup>324</sup>.

### **Theft**

Theft – both of personally-held goods and publicly-held goods – is a common problem in Zaatari<sup>325</sup>. Residents steal UN-owned fence posts to create handcarts, which are then used to steal caravans<sup>326</sup>. Informal leaders and camp residents involved in organized crime confiscate rations and blankets from other refugees<sup>327</sup>. In the spring

† An alternative source indicates that 100 JD – or U.S. \$141 – is charged to secure a bailout and 5000 JD – or U.S. \$7,060 – is charged for violating the terms of the bail<sup>328</sup>.



of 2013, a group of children ages 10 to 12 stole an entire police station after a miscommunication between units left the station vacant between shifts<sup>329</sup>.

### **Violence**

At the camp's start, violence was an inescapable problem — to the point where refugees would fight for space on the buses returning to Syria<sup>330</sup>. Rocks, which were placed over the sand to keep the sand in place, became the weapon of choice for refugees<sup>331</sup>. Authorities often had to resort to tear gas to disperse groups<sup>332</sup>. Aid workers and police officers suffered broken bones and head injuries while attempting to distribute supplies and maintain order<sup>333</sup>. Stabbings and fist fights regularly broke out in the camp<sup>334</sup>. A mother murdered her son by gasoline injection, in what she called an effort to save him from the conditions of the camp<sup>335</sup>. Fifty children throwing stones once targeted Camp Manager Kleinschmidt<sup>336</sup>.

While violence subsided for a time, April 2014 saw an increase of violence to the mid-2013 levels<sup>337</sup>. Increased fighting in Syria led to many new arrivals in Zaatari, exacerbating the long-standing tensions over the living conditions<sup>338</sup>. For instance, on April 5, tensions erupted following the arrests of refugees attempting to leave the camp illegally, leading to refugees setting fire to residences and attacking a police station<sup>339</sup>. Police responded with tear gas and gunfire<sup>340</sup>. Twenty-nine police officers were injured, two refugees were shot, and one refugee is confirmed dead<sup>341</sup>.

### **Sexual and Gender Based Violence**

Although some health reports do not indicate a substantial sexual violence problem, many believe that these reports should be interpreted with caution, as underreporting due to social norms is common<sup>342</sup>. From January through September 2013, only 10 sexual assaults were officially filed. The tenth official report made regional news — the gang rape of a 14-year-old by three men<sup>343</sup>. One trend indicates that women will



admit to seeing other women raped but will not admit to being victims themselves, while others have indicated a cultural preference to see many situations as adultery rather than rape<sup>344</sup>. Finally, reports indicate prevalent domestic violence and marital rape<sup>345</sup>.

Journalists interviewing refugees indicate the presence of rape, gender-based violence, and organized crime-managed brothels<sup>346</sup>. Kleinschmidt notes that relationships between organized crime in Zaatari, human trafficking groups, and the Free Syrian Army fuel prostitution<sup>347</sup>.

#### **Armed Forces Recruiting**

It is illegal for humanitarian efforts in Zaatari to be involved or aligned in the Syrian civil war. However, reports show that the Free Syrian Army (FSA) recruits in the camp<sup>348</sup>. Teenage boys and men are recruited as soldiers, while women are trained in first aid and combat skills<sup>349</sup>. Soldier training occurs in south Syria or in Jordan, though forbidden by the Jordanian government<sup>350</sup>. Other groups, including the Syrian National Coalition of the Opposition, the Syrian National Council, the Syrian Tribal Council, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and Jabhat Al Nusra, also have presences on the ground in Zaatari that promote ideologies and often engage in recruiting<sup>351</sup>.

Right: Demonstrators gather for a rally in Zaatari. | Photo by Alex Pena. Used with permission. © Stars and Stripes





الابكر الله تظمن القلوب



# Lessons Learned and Future Plans

One writer attributes Kleinschmidt's success as Camp Manager to an effort to quell rebellion in favor of building a city<sup>352</sup>. As of November 2013, the Netherlands-based Association of Municipalities is actively preparing a master plan for Zaatari's next phase<sup>353</sup>. The plan purportedly includes self-governance, a proper electrical grid, proper water and sewage hookups, paved streets, and green areas<sup>354</sup>. Metered electricity will be installed; residents with sufficient income will begin paying for utilities while others will continue to receive it free of charge<sup>355</sup>. Water will be provided to every household with the new city plans<sup>356</sup>. As of February 2014, some improvements are underway; 50 percent of electricity meters have been installed, providing one meter per seven shops<sup>357</sup>.

Reports indicate that the Jordanians do not want Zaatari to become a permanent settlement, because they fear the refugees will permanently alter the demography of Jordan in similar ways to the Palestinian crises of 1948 and 1967<sup>358</sup>. Kleinschmidt describes his steps forward as a careful balance between refugees' need for stability and permanency and Jordan's need to ensure that Zaatari is vacated at the end of the war<sup>359</sup>. One critical component to stability is the concern for the children of refugees, described as a potential "Lost Generation"<sup>360</sup>. As one refugee put it: "We're displaced and we are refugees... I understand, but we just need a solution for the children."<sup>361</sup>

Camp officials intend to use the lessons learned from Zaatari in the design for Azraq, the second major refugee camp to be built in Jordan<sup>362</sup>. Azraq was designed for 130,000 refugees and opened on April 30, 2014<sup>363</sup>. The planning committee for Azraq included Zaatari officials such as Dr. Ana Calvo, Camp Doctor at Zaatari<sup>364</sup>.

Kleinschmidt summarizes the ultimate goal of creating the city as: "It empowers them to return as responsible people in dignity; and the dependence syndrome is reduced."<sup>365</sup>

Right: The infrastructure for Azraq Refugee Camp as of January 2014, three months before its opening. | *Rachel Smalley*





# Appendix: Acronyms and Names

**ACTED**, Agency for Technical  
Cooperation and Development

**ADRA**, Adventist Development and  
Relief Agency

**AHSI**, Al Hussein Social Institute

**ARDD-LA**, Arab Renaissance for  
Democracy and Development  
– Legal Aid

**AVSI**, AVSI Foundation

**CARE**, CARE International

**CARITAS**, Caritas Internationalis

**Children without Borders-KnK**, Children  
without Borders (Kokkyo naki  
Kodomotachi)

**CVT**, Center for Victims of Torture

**DAHGCC**, Dar Al Hanan Girls Care  
Center

**DAW**, Dar Al Wifaq, The Hashemite  
Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of  
Social Development<sup>366</sup>

**DRC**, Danish Refugee Council

**FI**, Fida International

**FCA**, Finn Church Aid

**FDP**, Family Protection Department

**GCC**, Girls Care Center

**GSF**, Gynécologie Sans Frontières

**HI**, Handicap International

**HRF**, Human Relief Foundation

**ICMC**, International Catholic Migration  
Commission

**IFH/NHF**, Institute for Family Health/  
Noor Al Hussein Foundation

**IMC**, International Medical Corps

**IOCC**, International Orthodox Christian  
Charities

**IOM**, International Organization for  
Migration

**IRC**, International Rescue Committee

**IRD**, International Relief &  
Development

**IRW**, Islamic Relief Worldwide

**JEN**, Japan Emergency NGO

+ All agency acronyms  
and names obtained from  
the UNHCR unless other-  
wise indicated<sup>367</sup>.



**JHAS**, Jordan Health Aid Society

**JHCO**, Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization

**JICA**, Japanese International Cooperation Agency

**JPA**, Jordanian Psychological Association

**JRC**, Jordan Red Crescent

**JRF**, Jordan River Foundation

**JRS**, Jesuit Refugee Service

**LWF**, Lutheran World Federation

**Madrasati**, Madrasati Initiative

**MdM**, Médecins du Monde

**Medair**, Medair

**MercyCorps**, Mercy Corps

**MoE Jordan**, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Education

**MoH Jordan**, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Health

**MSF**, Médecins Sans Frontières

**NHF**, Noor Al Hussein Foundation

**NRC**, Norwegian Refugee Council

**OPM**, Operation Mercy

**OXFAM**, OXFAM International

**SC**, Save the Children

**ShelterBox**, ShelterBox

**TdH – Lausanne**, Terre des Hommes – Lausanne

**THW**, German Federal Agency for Technical Relief

**UNESCO**, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**UNFPA**, United Nations Population Fund

**UNHCR**, United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees

**UNICEF**, United Nations Children's Fund

**UNWOMEN**, UN Women

**UPP**, Un Ponte Per

**WFP**, World Food Programme

**WHO**, World Health Organization



# Endnotes

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- 5 (UNHCR 2013c)
- 6 (UNHCR 2013o)
- 7 (Al-Makhadhi 2013; UNHCR 2013c)
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- 9 (Tran 2013; Rudoren 2013a)
- 10 (UNHCR 2013d; Würger 2013; Chulov 2013b)
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- 12 (Al-Makhadhi 2013)
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- 56 (Laub and Daraghmeh 2013)
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- 61 (Khandaji and Makawi 2013)
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- 64 (Sullivan and Tobin 2014; Khandaji and Makawi 2013)
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- 66 (UNHCR 2014a)
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- 73 (UNHCR 2013a; UNHCR 2013c)
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- 249 (Abouzeid 2013b; Abouzeid 2013a; Sullivan and Tobin 2014; Würger 2013)
- 250 (Abouzeid 2013b)
- 251 (Sullivan and Tobin 2014)
- 252 (Würger 2013; Altuwaijri 2013b; Rudoren 2013a; Wilson 2013; “Arsenal Opens Football Field at Syrian Refugee Camp” 2013)
- 253 (Würger 2013; Altuwaijri 2013b)
- 254 (Würger 2013)
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- 256 (Würger 2013; “Arsenal Opens Football Field at Syrian Refugee Camp” 2013; Wilson 2013; Geddes 2013)
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- 264 (Al-Makhadhi 2013; UNHCR 2013h; UNHCR 2013g)
- 265 (UNHCR 2013n)
- 266 (UNHCR 2013g)
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- 270 (UNHCR 2013f; UNHCR 2014f)
- 271 (UNHCR 2014d, 217)
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- 273 (UNHCR 2014d; UNHCR 2014f)
- 274 (Chulov 2013a; Amnesty International 2013)
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# About the Affordable Housing Institute

AHI is a global nonprofit consulting firm that helps government, private-sector developers, and banks develop and finance affordable housing in emerging markets.

Affordable housing – especially in urban areas – does not just happen. It is the result of a complex system of relationships, actions, and results between governments, real estate developers, banks, NGOs, and individuals. AHI works with any or all of these entities to support affordable housing – by building development models for real estate developers to enter the affordable housing market, designing innovative financial products to provide low-income people the financing necessary to buy or rent homes, and influencing government-level policy to implement the subsidies and tax incentives that support the development of affordable homes. We help define and explain the process by which affordable housing can be delivered so that each entity knows the role it needs to play and how to play it. When all entities aren't on board, we also work with clients to build those necessary connections.

AHI provides the tools necessary to bridge the gap between what the market will produce (regular commercial rate housing) and what government can provide (public housing). These tools include development models, financial products, and policies.

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