



VIII CEMOFPSC INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR:  
"THE 'ARAB SPRING': The Conflict in Syria:  
Current Status and Consequences"



## Interview made by CEMOFPSC

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**AMANI SALEH**

Emergency Response Fund Manager for Syria and the countries affected by the Syrian Crisis. UN. (Amman, Jordan).

1. During the eighth international seminar organized by the CEMOFPSC to discuss the current conflict in Syria and its consequences, the experts had reflected on the situation in Syria.

One of the most crucial discussed issues at VIII CEMOFPSC International Seminar: "THE 'ARAB SPRING': The Conflict in Syria. Current status and consequences", is how the situation in Syria influences the neighbouring countries, in regard to the refugees. In Lebanon 1/3 of the population consists of refugees, which creates tension among the refugees and the locals. What are your remarks on this situation? What are the main new emerging challenges?

It is important to highlight that the situation in the neighbouring countries is not that great. There is lack of a many services, especially of the health and education service. The primarily health care is provided. However, during my visits to the refugees in Jordan and Syria I have noted that there is a lack of health service for people with chronicle diseases. There is a big number of people with chronicle diseases among the refugees. Those people were provided with health services in their own country and now they are not getting any because of a shortage in financial support.

Just a limited number of humanitarian agencies are providing health services to chronicle diseases.



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I heard a story in Lebanon where a family said that they were trying to go back to Syria to get the needed medication which they could get there for free. They did not see any other solution to get the medication. Imagine the risk that those people undergo. First they fled to another country because they were living in an insecure situation and then another burden was placed on them when they were feeling the need to go back. This put them in a dangerous situation.

Education is another difficulty. There are children now that are missing school classes. The curriculum in Lebanon is completely different to the curriculum in Syria. Therefore, children are facing difficulties in terms of adapting to a new system. UNICEF and UNESCO started to imply the Syrian curriculum to the Syrian children. It is not an easy process but I think that they are getting there.

One thing that we should consider is that maybe the Syrian refugees are in a better situation than the Syrians still in the country. Those children have missed two school years. If we look at a generation that is missing education, at what kind of a generation are we looking at?

The Syrian children are missing education because the schools are either bombarded or they are used as a shelter. The Syrian Education Ministry has provided us with a number of 50% of schools that are either used as shelter for IDP people or completely damaged.

The education and health for the IDP people and the refugees are the main factors that we need to focus upon. We need to examine the capacity of the neighbouring countries to absorb the increase in the refugees. However, the resources are limited. If things will be continued the way they are both Lebanon and Jordan will at some point not be able to absorb all the refugees because they are using the resources of the community. Both countries are small and with limited resources, especially those of water.

In Jordan the local population was already suffering from a lack of water during the summer, so imagine what the situation will be now with half a million of refugees.

The donors continue to provide funds but the recession worldwide is an extra burden for the country. If the crisis continues there is the possibility that the donors will get tired of supporting the Syrians.



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Unless we will find a potential solution that can be carried out in the near future, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan will face a very complicated situation.

2. One of the subjects discussed during the debate was the tension between the poor local community and the refugees. Could you comment on that? Is there any difference between the situation in North Jordan and that of Lebanon?

When the refugee crisis in Lebanon started the NGO's and the humanitarian actors were not taking into the consideration the vulnerability of the locals. Therefore, they were only addressing the refugee needs and maybe even sometimes were providing more goods and services than was needed. On one side there were refugees being oversaturated and on the other side there were the poor locals who opened their doors for the refugees but their needs were being ignored.

This situation has caused tension between both groups of people.

I visited a refugee family which is staying in the North of Lebanon and also a very poor Lebanese family who is living in the same area and I have seen that the first family was better off.

The NGO's and humanitarian agencies are now changing their methodology in terms of providing assistance. They are trying to identify vulnerable local people and addressing their different needs.

By doing this, they are trying to create some kind of a balance. It is still not perfect but at least some tension is absorbed. It shows that the refugees and the local poor people are treated in the same way.

The government of Jordan came up with a clever requirement. The project proposals for refugee aid would be accepted on condition that at least 30-40% of the total funding would be spent on the host communities.

This is in my opinion a very clever idea in order to absorb the tension of the host communities who have opened their doors for and shared their resources with the refugees. I am not aware if the Lebanese are having the same requirement.

In Jordan we have set up a camp and we are now opening a new one. The refugees are receiving the minimum services. Despite of that, the situation for many is not satisfactory and causes people to demonstrate.



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It is true that the living situation is harsh in the summer and in the wintertime and despite that those people were poor in their own country it is still a more difficult situation for them to handle.

People are not used to being a refugee and the living standards in camps are for them very confronting and sometimes degrading.

I have talked with refugees from different countries and all of them have said that when the situation will calm down in their country of origin they will go back. No matter what the price is.

The refugees who are living in camps are receiving water, food and health assistance on a regular basis. For the refugees who live outside the camps that is not the case but at least they have their freedom and maybe an opportunity to find a job. The refugees are spread all over the country and some are better off than others, but at least they can live a normal life.

3. Is there anything else you would like to address in relation to the situation in Syria?

The last thing that I would like to highlight is that the situation in Syria requires that we all focus on the provision of humanitarian assistance. We should try to look at the future. What are we going to do with the children who missed two years of school lectures? They are the future of the country.