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FM AMMAN
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FCO FOR EMERGENCY UNIT

JORDAN'S REFUGEE PROBLEM

REFERENCE: TELECON HOPE IN EU/ALLEN IN AMMAN

SUMMARY

1. REFUGEES ARE CROSSING IN LARGE NUMBERS. THEIR EMBASSIES ARE COPING IN AMMAN BUT, IN THE ABSENCE OF MAJOR JORDANIAN EFFORT, REFUGEES FACE SEVERE PROBLEMS AT THE FRONTIER. ICRC NOT YET IN ACTION. WE CANNOT BE CERTAIN OF JORDANIAN ATTITUDE TO OUTSIDE HELP BUT WORTH MAKING THE OFFER.

THE PROBLEM

2. PRECISE FIGURES FOR THE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES FROM IRAQ AND KUWAIT CROSSING INTO JORDAN ARE NOT OBTAINABLE. BUT OUR RESEARCHES WITH EMBASSIES IN AMMAN UNDERPIN THOSE CARRIED BY THE MEDIA. THE JORDANIAN MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR HAS SAID THAT OVER 100,000 HAVE CROSSED INTO JORDAN SINCE THE CRISIS BEGAN - APPROXIMATELY 17,000 ARRIVED ON 19 AUGUST. THE EGYPTIANS HAVE 10,000 AT THE JORDANIAN/IRAQI FRONTIER, AL-RUWAISHID, 4,000 AT MA'AN, 3,000 AT AL-GUWAIRAH AND 2,000 AT AQABA: 17,000 EGYPTIANS HAVE ALREADY LEFT BY FERRY: THE INDIANS HAVE 350 IN AMMAN, 135 ON THEIR WAY - THEY ARE EXPECTING 300-400 A DAY: THE FILIPPINOS HAVE 1,000: THE PAKISTANIS ABOUT 700 IN AMMAN. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO GUESS HOW MANY MORE REFUGEES MAY CROSS INTO JORDAN. IT IS PROBABLY FAIR TO ESTIMATE UP TO 20,000 A DAY FOR THE TIME BEING.

3. THE JORDANIANS HAVE BEEN HELPFUL AT THE BORDER. MOSQUES HAVE BEEN OPENED TO HOUSE REFUGEES OVERNIGHT. ACCORDING TO A PRESS REPORT, THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR HAS ASKED THE IRAQIS TO REDUCE THE NUMBERS LEAVING IRAQ SO THAT THE JORDANIANS MAY COPE BETTER. FOREIGN EMBASSIES HAVE DONE THEIR BEST TO MANAGE FROM THEIR OWN RESOURCES - BOOKING HOTELS,

HIRING FLATS AND ALLOWING REFUGEES TO CAMP IN THEIR GROUNDS. THE FILIPPINOS, PAKISTANIS AND EGYPTIANS HAVE NOT APPLIED TO THE JORDANIANS FOR HELP. THE ICRC REPRESENTATIVE HAS TOLD US THAT THE JORDANIAN MFA HAS NOT RESPONDED TO AN OFFER OF HELP. HE HAS BEEN NEGOTIATING WITH THE LOCAL RED CRESCENT TO PROVIDE A PERMANENT MEDICAL PRESENCE AT AL-RUWAISHID, BUT HE HAS NO ICRC MANDATE TO PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AS THE REFUGEES ARE NOT REFUGEES UNDER ICRC DEFINITIONS BECAUSE IRAQ IS NOT TECHNICALLY A COUNTRY IN CONFLICT.

4. HOW MIGHT WE HELP QUES. OUR INITIAL VIEW IS THAT THE PARAMOUNT NEED IS FOR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO THOSE AT THE JORDANIAN/IRAQI FRONTIER WHERE WATER, SANITATION AND SHADE ARE ALL LIMITED AND WHERE DELAYS IN ONWARD TRANSPORT TO AMMAN ARE SEVERE. TENTS FOR SHADE, FIELD SANITATION AND CLINICS (WITH DRUGS) AND FIELD KITCHENS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY NEEDED.

5. PROBABLY THE REFUGEES AT PRESENT ARE CAUGHT BETWEEN A RELUCTANCE, PARTICULARLY BY THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, TO SEEK OFFICIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE JORDANIANS AND THE JORDANIANS' OWN INABILITY AND LACK OF RESOURCES TO MOUNT A MAJOR SUPPORT OPERATION AT THE FRONTIER. HELP OFFERED BY A THIRD PARTY, BEING CLEARLY HUMANITARIAN IN NATURE MIGHT THEREFORE BE WELCOME, BUT WE CANNOT TAKE THIS FOR GRANTED. THE JORDANIANS MIGHT BE RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT ASSISTANCE WHICH APPEARED TO PUT IN DOUBT THEIR OWN ABILITY TO ORGANISE THE EVACUATION. THE PRESENCE OF A LARGE BRITISH PRESS CONTINGENT IN AMMAN IS ALSO RELEVANT. THEIR COVERAGE OF THE STORY WOULD BE A BONUS FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, BUT IT MIGHT ADD TO JORDANIAN RELUCTANCE TO ACCEPT OUTSIDE HELP. IN SHORT, I CANNOT BE CERTAIN OF A POSITIVE RESPONSE BUT I THINK IT WOULD BE WORTH MAKING THE OFFER. WE SHOULD ALSO EXPECT THE LARGE BRITISH PRESS CONTINGENT IN AMMAN TO WANT TO COVER THE STORY AND THUS BRING MORE ATTENTION TO BEAR ON THE PLIGHT OF THOSE DISPLACED BY IRAQ'S INVASION.

REEVE

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