

**Iraq/Jordan/Turkey: Syrians Blocked from Fleeing War** Human Rights Watch 1 July 2013

Iraqi, Jordanian, and Turkish border guards are pushing back tens of thousands of people trying to flee Syria. Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey have either closed numerous border crossings entirely or allowed only limited numbers of Syrians to cross, leaving tens of thousands stranded in dangerous conditions in Syria's conflict-ridden border regions. Only Lebanon has an open border policy for Syrians fleeing the conflict. (...)

Human Rights Watch has documented the refugee situation on Syria's borders: - Although Jordan denies it has closed its borders, recently arrived Syrian refugees in Jordan say that Jordanian border guards blocked their and others' entry for days or weeks in May. Since late 2011, Jordan has prevented Palestinians, Iraqis, single military-aged men, and anyone without identity documents from entering Jordan.

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Authorities in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) admit that they closed their border with Syria in May, and that since mid-June only some Syrians in need of emergency humanitarian assistance have been allowed to cross.

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Authorities in central Iraq maintain that they will admit "urgent humanitarian cases" and family reunification cases. But they have severely limited the number of Syrians allowed to enter since August 2012, and new arrivals virtually ceased in late March.

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Turkey is blocking the entry of thousands of Syrians at the Bab al-Salam, Atma, and other border crossings with Syria. Turkey only sporadically allows small numbers from the Bab al-Salam camp and other displaced Syrian camps in Syria close to the Turkish border to cross into Turkey, with thousands blocked for weeks or months inside Syria. In October, a senior Turkish official told Human Rights Watch that the country's refugee camps were full and said that instead of allowing more Syrian refugees to enter, the government was making sure that assistance reached Syrians in areas close to the border. (...)

The 1951 Refugee Convention, customary international refugee law and international human rights law require all countries to respect the principle of non-refoulement. They are prohibited from sending anyone back to – or pushing back anyone trying to leave – a country where their life or freedom would be threatened or where they would face a serious risk of torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights upholds "the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."

International donors should urge Syria's neighbors to keep their borders open to asylum seekers. The donors should also provide generous financial support to humanitarian agencies addressing the refugee crisis and operational support to the governments of Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, Human Rights Watch said.

“Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey risk turning Syria into an open-air prison for tens of thousands of Syrians unable to escape the carnage in their country,” Simpson said. “Neither the pressure those countries are under due to rising refugee numbers, nor giving aid inside Syria, can justify violating people's basic right to seek asylum from persecution and other abuse.”(...) [Read full article.](#)