# Za'atari Refugee Camp
## 2013 Safety and Security Report

## Contents

### *Acronyms*

**CFW** Cash for Work
**FSA** Free Syrian Army
**FSU** Field Safety Unit (UNHCR)
**IP** Implementing Partner
**JOC** Joint Operations centre
**PSD** Public Security Directorate
**SRCD** Syrian Refugee Camps Directorate
**SWG** Security Working Group

This report is intended to provide UNHCR staff and implementing partners (IPs) in Za'atari camp with an overview of the 2013 security context. The report is by no means an attempt to 'securitise' the relationship between refugees and staff in the camp, but instead to present the types of incidents which occurred in the camp, the reasons - where determined - why the incidents took place, while also examining the primary influencers of security in the camp.

The Za'atari refugee camp comprises approximately 8.75 square kilometres of land in the district of Badiah Gharbiyah, Mafraq Governorate, located approximately 75 kilometres north of Amman and 12 kilometres directly south of the Syrian border. The camp first opened in July 2012 and has evolved dramatically over the past 18 months with more than 400,000 people being registered and at the end of 2013, a population estimated at between 80,000 to 90,000 people. The camp has had a very high media profile due to it being one of the most visible manifestations of the Syrian crisis, while situated in an accessible context.

Perceptions of UNHCR staff and many IPs in the camp support the quantitative conclusions of a general improvement in the safety and security context - for both the broader security environment as well as the operating environment for UNHCR and IPs.

This report is essentially presented in three parts. The first section is a monthly overview of the major incidents and events of 2013 as well as the perceived drivers of the security context.

The second section (Factors Influencing the Security Context) examines the incident trends over the year and lists several of the leading contributing influences on the security context.

The final section looks at the frequency of incidents that involved staff relocations, program disruptions and property damage and secondly the reasons attributed in incident reports as to why the incident occurred (if mentioned).

There appears to be a broad agreement that the camp is becoming more settled, a full range of services (electricity, food, NFI, roads, shelter and WASH) are being implemented and these services are being implemented more efficiently. As the conflict in Syria continues without respite, then many households are holding a longer term perspective on their residence in the camp. When these factors are combined then there appears to have been a broader shift away from grievance based gatherings and protests and accompanying stone throwing in the first half of 2013, to more localised and individual-specific incidents in the second half of the year.

As the camp becomes more settled, then the trend of more 'civil' based incidents and personal disputes is likely to continue, though external factors such as the weather, the prevailing political and security situation in Syria and perhaps increasingly importantly, host community relations will also play a role.

*UNHCR FSU Jordan*

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***A Note on Incidents:*** The incidents discussed or graphically illustrated in the report are derived from reports voluntarily provided to the Field Safety Unit (FSU) of UNHCR by UNHCR staff, IPs, SRCD and the contacts of FSU staff. Further requests to IPs were made in late January and early February 2014 for a summary of incidents from 2013. The data should be considered indicative of the operating environment rather than fully representative. As many of the reported incidents involve more than one organisation, no distinction has been made between the UNHCR, UN Agencies and NGOs.

***The Growth of Za'atari Refugee Camp***

**A Summary of the 2013 Security Context**

*An overview of significant events and challenges during 2013*

At the beginning of the year, the number of refugees registered in the camp began to rise significantly as fighting in the neighbouring Syrian governorate of Dara'a intensified leading to an increasing number of the displaced. In the last seven days of **January** an average of 3,270 persons of concern were registered in Za'atari on a daily basis. In addition to the large refugee flows, the weather presented significant challenges for both refugees and implementing organisations. On 7 and 8 January, a storm front brought heavy rains and associated flooding to many areas of the camp forcing the movement of people to drier, but unfinished areas of the camp. Heavy snowfalls, also during the month, placed further pressure on the provision of services with numerous threatened and realised sit-ins and demonstrations by refugees related to shelter and heating. On 8 January, a food distribution following the two days of heavy rain and snow led to a riot leaving at least six implementing partners' staff injured. Communal facilities (toilets and kitchens) were also regularly targeted for vandalism and theft, with the concept of 'community property' being challenged by increasing demands for the privatisation of such services to the individual household level. The intimidation of implementing staff, delivery drivers and other contractors especially in the more established areas of the camp (districts 1 & 2) occurred frequently as a result.

Until mid-January, the security for the camp had been managed by the Jordanian military. Following the recognition of the need to establish a structure specific to the Syrian Refugee context in Jordan the Syrian Refugee Camps Directorate (SRCD) first assumed their security responsibilities in the camp on 18 January. The new force initially included 150 Gendarmes, 20 Civil Defence forces and approximately 30 policemen and officers from the Public Security Department (PSD). By the end of January, the number of persons of concern registered in Za'atari reached 91,197.

The rapid expansion of the camp population in **February** led to an increasing number of disturbances at food and NFI distributions as well as continued demands for caravans, which first began to be distributed in November 2012. Winterisation kit distributions were particularly vulnerable to disturbances with serious disorder or violent riots requiring the intervention of the Gendarmerie occurring on 3, 17, 18, 20 and 22 February. At the same time, several IPs, in the first four to five months of 2013, reported a high prevalence of stone throwing incidents, primarily by male youth. In several instances, the frequency of such acts forced staff to be relocated from decentralised distributions to the main offices near the entrance to the camp. One organisation was undertaking relocations 'three times a week' in response to the rock throwing, which led to several injuries and subsequent hospitalisations during the month of February. The establishment of the SRCD and their introduction to the camp the month before also introduced a new security dynamic. The smell of tear gas became overly familiar for NGO and UN staff in the camp. Though ostensibly originating from different events (the absence of sufficient repatriation buses, the arrest of a refugee, perceived delay in responding to a fire) very quickly small incidents of stone throwing led to a broader escalation and the intervention of the Gendarme on 3, 10, 11 and 18 February in what could have also been perceived as a testing of the authority of the new security apparatus by certain segments of the camp's population.

On **1 March**, the management of the camp changed from the national NGO Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation (JHCO) to UNHCR after JHCO had been responsible for the running of the camp since inception in July 2012. With the new management structure in place, UNHCR's Field Safety Unit (FSU) in concert with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) established a Security Working Group (SWG), where all IPs were invited as well as the SRCD.

With the prevalence of gas canisters being used for both heating and cooking in tents and caravans and the illicit tapping of the electricity grid using 'spaghetti' wire, the risk

of fire hazards increased significantly. During the month of March, ten separate fires were reported in the camp, which left one person dead and eight others seriously inured. Following two of these fires (8 & 9 March) crowds of rock throwing youth targeted Civil Defence personnel leaving several vehicles damaged and a number of personnel injured. The fire on 8 March destroyed at least 40 tents in high winds, though fortunately only resulted in the hospitalisation of two individuals with mild smoke inhalation as Civil Defence personnel and up to 40 water trucks were deployed. Several demonstrations were also organised during the month in support of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) as news from the conflict was quick to spread via social media and direct communications with family members remaining in Syria. For example, on 24 March a rumour spread in the camp that the FSA had captured and occupied the regime-aligned 91st Battalion HQ in Dara'a, where more than 90% of the refugees in the camp originate. Several hundred people gathered in support of the FSA, without incident. The absence of conflicting political or ideological parties to the war in Syria has meant that political rallies rarely if ever devolve into violence. During the month of **April**, several IPs were obliged to undertake relocations on an increasingly frequent basis due to the prevalence of stone throwing, the intimidation of staff and/or threats to disrupt distributions. The primary driver of the incidents appears to have been the issue of caravan distribution, but organisations working in WASH, food distributions and health clinics were also affected.

With the camp now one month under new management, a number of individuals claiming to be representatives of the camp population, typically 'street leaders' became active in their representations to camp management. There was no one single coherent mechanism for the appointment of 'street leaders' in the early stages of the camp. Some street leaders were self-appointed; others claimed to have been elected by the street, while the former camp management appointed others. Districts 1 and 2, comprising the oldest areas of the camp, hosted the most active street leadership structure and in April and May, there were several attempts to informally engage the camp management on the provision of services. One such gathering of street leaders on 8 April was indicative of the broader issue. The street leaders complained of the continual power outages in their areas, which camp management pointed out was a result of the overloading of the system from the wires which households were connecting to the main convertors illegally.

Two separate incidents in April served to emphasise the ease with which host community/refugee relations can be undermined. On 12 April, up to 250 youth began to throw stones at the police near the main gate following a report that a Syrian refugee had been assaulted and his belongings stolen by Jordanians within view of the camp security. The demonstration was dispersed by the Gendarmerie without casualties. A week later, however, the killing of a Gendarme inside the camp threatened more serious consequences for the broader camp population. Shortly before 19:00hrs on 19

## A Summary of the 2013 Security Context

*An overview of significant events and challenges during 2013*



*Photo 1: A view south from the centre of the camp.*

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April, Public Security forces from the SRCD attempted to seize a vehicle near the Saudi Compound area (currently district 5) following reports that the vehicle was being used to smuggle people, NFIs and food out of the camp. The seizure quickly led to a gathering of youth and stone throwing, which was met via a reinforced SRCD presence. The ensuing violent riot led to the death of a Gendarme from Karak, the injury to eight Public Security policemen, several police vehicles and two Gendarme armoured vehicles damaged, two civilian vehicles burned, an SRCD caravan torched and the main police station losing all of its windows to stones. UNHCR and IPs were relocated from the camp due to the violence. That night reports suggested that the family of the victim was marshalling support in Karak to drive en masse to the camp. On 20 April, Jordanians blocked the main access to the camp and several vehicles were burned or turned over in the vicinity of the main entrance. Eight refugees were arrested by SRCD in relation to the previous day's riot.

Though incidents targeting SRCD or IPs are more likely to be reported, violence in the camp between groups or individuals is most likely significantly under-reported. The majority of disputes, according to interviews with IPs for this report, are related to economic disputes often over the trade of smuggled goods or influence over economic activity within the camp. On 28 April, a dispute between families in district five left one refugee wounded with a stab wound and two days later, a dispute between trolley workers (those that move caravans or goods on improvised trollies for a fee) resulted in an extended brawl and two hospitalisations.

In **May**, following consultations with SRCD, a legal distinction between 'public and private property' was agreed upon, which would therefore provide the legal justification to interdict the smuggling of caravans, tents and other property, which was now officially classified as 'public.' Prior to this, the seizure of goods exiting the camp appears to have occurred on a somewhat more informal basis. The extent of the smuggling was illustrated by a report in the second week of May that during the evening hours in one section of the camp, caravans were being dismantled and packed onto waiting pickup trucks for sale outside the camp.

For IPs in the camp, intimidation of staff and disorder at distributions were focused on caravan and food distributions, with two of the more serious reports of disorder involving the need to relocate staff occurring at the main WFP distribution compound on 20 and 28 May. Also on 20 May, approximately 150 refugees threatened to occupy the Bahrain school unless they were provided with caravans. Several other sit-ins at IP compounds, nearly completed caravans and schools were also reported. For IPs who employed refugees as guards or for Cash for Work (CFW) programs, although the programs injected money to the household level, one of the negatives involved attempts by informally self-appointed leaders to control the process of recruitment and rotation and possibly extract other financial benefits from the appointment of refugees participating in CFW programs. One particular IP faced frequent and credible threats (arson) to their assets in an attempt to influence the recruitment process.

Challenges in the distribution of caravans continued in June and not only affected staff

directly involved with the caravans but often other IPs attempting to implement programs within the camp. Programming or distributions were temporarily stopped on June 12, 14, 25, 26 and 28 by refugees attempting to leverage access or allow distributions by IPs in exchange for preferential treatment in the distribution of caravans. On the ring road on 25 June, at least 20 hostile refugees stopped a UNHCR vehicle and declared their intention to take the staff hostage until a disagreement among them allowed the staff to drive away from the scene unharmed.

Reports of the seizure of vehicles attempting to smuggle both food and NFI continued into **June** and most likely only represent a small percentage of total items that are smuggled out of the camp. On 1 June, the SRCD seized a truck loaded with five tonnes of food as it was attempting to leave the camp and the following day, a group of refugees attacked the police at the main gate with stones in an attempt to allow a vehicle of refugees to exit the camp without a permit. Two policemen were injured. For refugees a permit is required to leave the camp even though there is no exterior fence. Refugees that are caught by the police outside the camp without a permit face a forced return to the camp along with an obligation to sign a document declaring that they will not leave the camp again on risk of judicial penalty. Early in the morning on 4 June, SRCD also led a raid against a caravan- dismantling workshop arresting two refugees and closing the workshop.

District 3 contains the primary WFP food distribution compound, the large Bahrain school and also one side of the Champs Elysees or Market Street, where the retail heart of the camp is located. The area, therefore, has often hosted localized conflicts primarily of an economic nature between groups based on either a geographic location (village, town or plain in Syria) or clanic affiliation. On 3 **July,** a mass brawl broke out outside the WFP distribution centre between two groups trading food items. The next day outside the Bahrain School two different refugee groups identifying by geographical

location fought using knives, sticks and stones. On 21 July, disorder broke out inside the WFP distribution centre during a percales (quilt) distribution, which later was suspected to have been fomented by the guards following a rumour that Jordanians would replace all refugee guards. In the three incidents, distributions were stopped and in two of the cases, staff were relocated.

The massive influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan and in particular Mafraq governorate have placed pressure on the provision of public services as some villages and towns in Mafraq have more than doubled in population. The associated rise in the cost of living and perceptions of comparably favourable assistance provided to the refugees among many other factors, provide ample fuel during times of tensions. During the night of 19 **August**, three killings were reported in the governorate capital, Mafraq City. The first incident involved the shooting of two individuals from a prominent northern clan allegedly over a drug dispute and the second involved the settling of a long-standing personal feud, which led to the death of another individual. Following the first incident, unofficial and official reports initially stated that the killer was a Syrian refugee. Family members of the deceased occupied the main street of the city, cars and shops were burned and more than four additional battalions of Gendarmes reinforced the local security apparatus. The following day, UNHCR's registration facility in Raba'a Al Sarhan and staff in Za'atari relocated following reports that demonstrations of angry Jordanians were descending on both facilities. As information circulated that both the killers and victims were Jordanian, the protests were abandoned. On 22 August, Syrian refugees were accused of the stabbing of three Jordanians in Mafraq City, which led to further riots in the city, but no threat to Za'atari.

As the efforts of the international community became more tangibly visible in the camp (food, NFIs, roads, shelter, wash, NFIs), the large scale demonstrations that had been witnessed for much of the first half of the

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*Photo 3: An NRC distribution centre*

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year, receded, though in their place there appears to have been an increase in the reporting of intimidation and lower levels of civil disturbance in **September** regarding issues such as 'sewage overflow from an illegal ditch,' the removal of private access wires to the electricity grid, caravans, the shortage of stationary in a school and the occupation of a school to pressure the SRCD to release a detained refugee. Though stone throwing and occasional relocations to base-camp continued to occur, the frequency and severity of incidents appeared to have turned. Towards the end of September, the operations of sweeping teams were interrupted as several streets in Districts 3 and 4 were using non-co-operation as a method to demand caravans.

**October** continued the trend of an overall reduction in the number of large-scale incidents. As occurred in September, acts of stone throwing, intimidation and physical assault were primarily recorded as issue-specific rather than broad based or organised gatherings. These incidents were recorded infrequently at the new arrivals reception centre, two separate schools and at decentralised distributions. Also during the month, the SRCD seized several vehicles involved in the smuggling of disassembled caravans, tents and in one case 440kg of sugar.

**November** witnessed an increase in the number of gatherings and interruptions to the verification process from groups attempting to again use non-cooperation in the verification process as a means to be prioritised in caravan distributions or who were against the verification process itself. The verification process has a direct impact on those individuals benefiting from

benefits/assistance through the position of localised influence and hence there is an interest to disrupt or subvert the process. Several demonstrations and attempts to disrupt the verification teams were reported primarily focused in districts 3, 4 and 5 and on 19 November a crowd of approximately 500 people mobilised outside the UNHCR registration area to protest against the verification process. A large demonstration also took place on 20 November outside the WFP compound for the same reasons.

Also on 19 November, a group of 60 refugees with sticks and metal bars occupied the Bahrain school and demanded that all Jordanian staff leave the building. The occupation was in relation to demands to the SRCD to release a family member who was detained by the authorities the day before. IP staff were relocated and negotiations with the group by UNHCR's FSU defused the situation and the group left the building after a couple of hours. Family/clanic clashes were also recorded during the month in district 1 (14th) and district 4 (20th), the latter forced the relocation of IP staff.
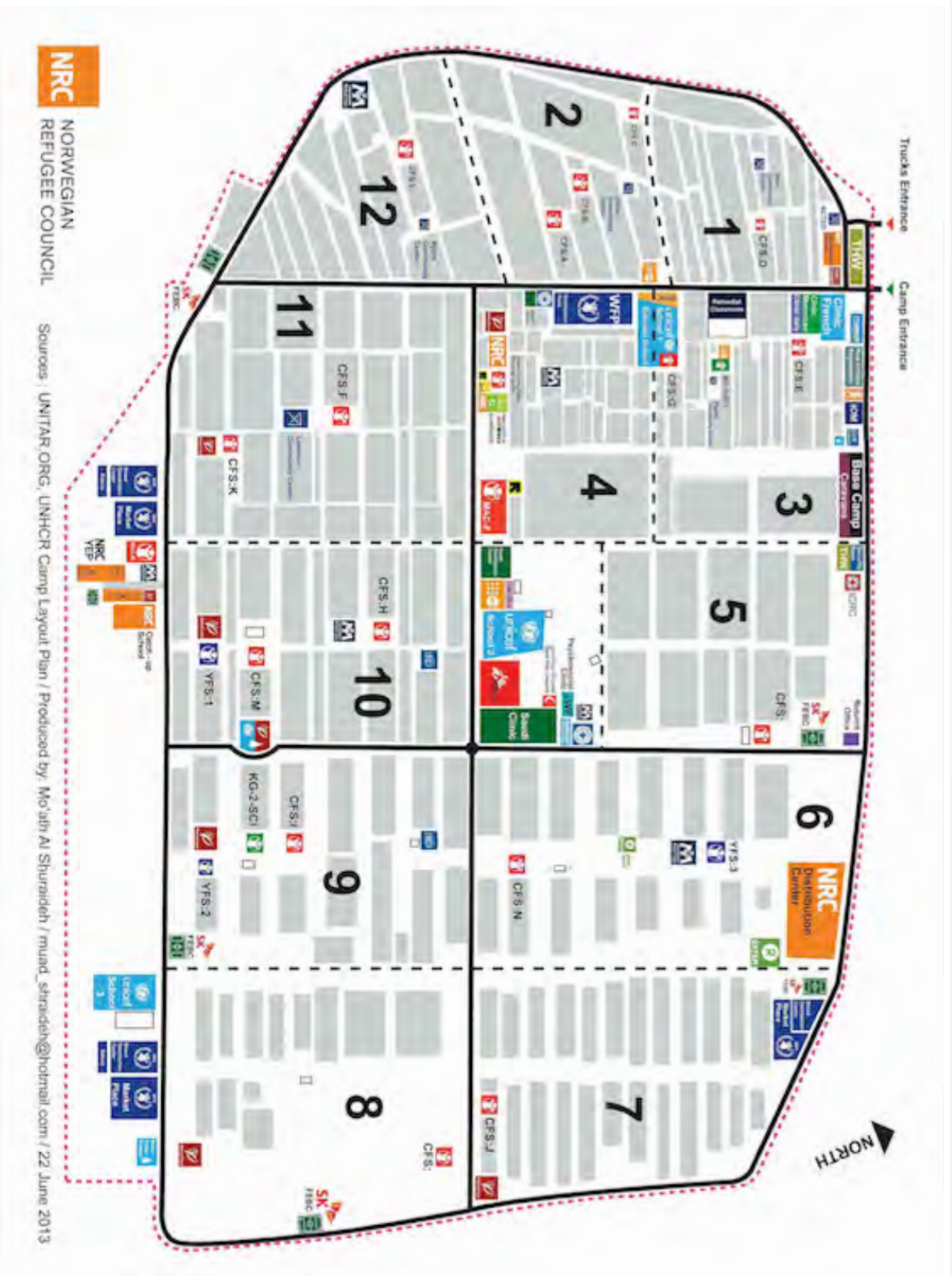
Due to the heavy rains and subsequent flooding around 5 **December**, a number of small and medium sized gatherings were organised near the main entrance to the camp. In the middle of the month, a fire reportedly started by a gas leak in a tent, resulted in the death of four people in district 11. On 16 December, at the centralised gas distribution point, approximately 1,000 people attempted to climb over the fences creating disorder as a result of gas bottle shortages. The official gas bottle quota for the camp was significantly reduced due to prioritised needs in other areas of the country.

Za'atari Refugee Camp - Safety & Security Report (2013)

NORTH

NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

Sources : UNITAR.ORG, UNHCR Camp Layout Plan / Produced by: Mo'ath Al Shuraideh / muad_shraideh@hotmail.com / 22 June 2013

Trucks Entrance

Camp Entrance

NRC

Base Camp

NRC Distribution Center

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
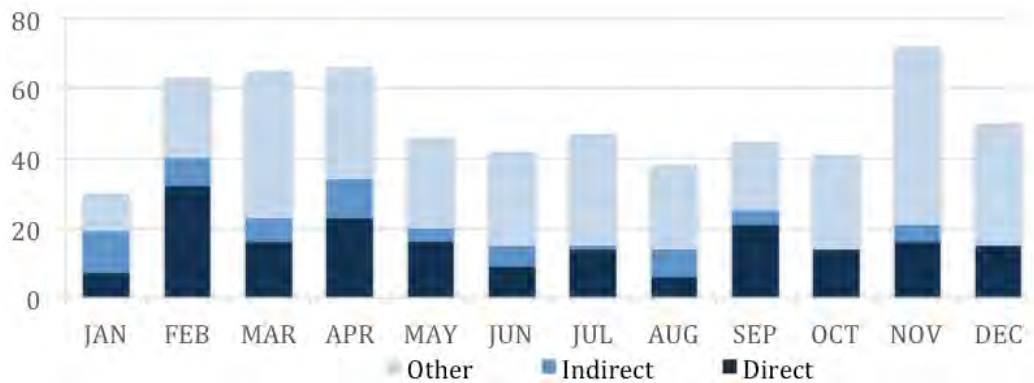
**Explanation:** *Direct* = Security incidents that have directly targeted implementing organisations. *Indirect* = Incidents that did not directly target IP, but resulted in some form of impact. *Other* = All other reported incidents to UNHR's FSU by IPs, UNHCR staff and SRCD.

***Factors Influencing the Security Context***

*An overview of the primary factors that have shaped the security context in Za'atari camp*

**Figure 1** represents the monthly totals of security incidents within the camp as were reported to UNHCR's Field Safety Unit (FSU). UNHCR staff and IPs noted that there was an underreporting of incidents in the first quarter of 2013 – prior to UNHCR assuming camp management responsibilities and the establishment of the Security Working Group (SWG) – which was partly due to the absence of reporting structures, but also the frequency with which certain incidents occurred (stone- throwing, distribution disruptions and disorder) that were considered so common place as to negate the need for reporting.

What is discernible from Figure 1 is that there has been a significant downturn in the number of both direct and indirect incidents reported against UNHCR and IPs in the camp. Combined direct and indirect incidents totalled 50 in the last quarter of 2013 compared to 81 in the first quarter. An assumption could also be made that incidents are somewhat cyclical, with a higher number of incidents occurring in the wetter and colder winter months as demands for heating, shelter and other NFIs are amplified and living conditions becoming more challenging.

It is also of interest to note that the number of direct incidents as a percentage of the overall total is relatively high. In the first quarter 2013, 35% of all reported incidents involved or targeted UNHCR or IPs, which fell to 27.5% in the last quarter. Similarly, the number of indirect incidents (not directly targeting UNHCR or IPs, but having an

impact or effect) was recorded as 17% of all incidents in the first quarter and falling to 3% in the last quarter. Firstly, the high 'direct' number of incidents could be partially explained by the absence of conflicting parties or groups in the camp and that therefore UNHCR staff, IPs and SRCD are being targeted as they are the providers of services to the population. If for example, both 'pro' and 'anti' Syrian regime groups were present in the camp, the percentage of 'other' and 'indirect' incidents would be significantly higher. Secondly, the drop in the number of 'indirect' incidents is primarily a result in the downturn in the broader number of disorder, physical assault, violent protests and stone throwing incidents.

**Figure 2** on the following page, also supports the narrative of a downturn in the levels of violence within the camp through a breakdown by types of incidents by month. In February, slightly more than one violent incident was reported to the FSU on a daily basis, which included disorder, stone throwing, physical assault and violent protests, which was three times the number of reports of peaceful civil disturbance (gatherings, sit-ins, protests). For December, the number of acts of civil disturbance with violence decreased to 14 with a corresponding drop of peaceful civil disturbance reports to four.

Figure 2 also illustrates the comparative increase over the year in the number of reported acts of intimidation, which primarily relates to UNHCR and IPs, though this could be attributed to improved

reporting mechanisms in the camp. The figure doubled from a low base of four to nine, though an alternative explanation could be that individual demands are becoming more entrenched in place of broader based reports of intimidation at distributions.

The number of reported incidents attributed to hazards, which includes fires, gas, electricity faults and vehicle accidents peaked in March (Figure 2) with 11 reported fires – three involving casualties - a relocation of an IP due to hazardous electricity and a vehicle accident, which killed a young refugee. Several of the fires were accidents resulting from faulty electricity connections or from gas bottles though some fires during the year were reportedly started to procure caravans in place of tents.

## Contributing Influences

Za'atari Refugee Camp lies 12 kilometres directly from the Syrian border and 45 kilometres from the city of Dara'a, where in mid-March 2011, the imprisonment of 15 youth for spraying an anti-regime slogan on a wall led to their imprisonment and in turn a local uprising against the harsh sentencing, which many have attributed to the beginning of the Syrian Crisis.

To date, the Syrian Crisis has not become a cross-border conflict as has been witnessed in Lebanon and to a lesser degree in several points along the Turkish border. The effects on Jordan have been indirect through over 576,354 refugees crossing over the border by the end of 2013, the economic costs of reduced trade and commerce with Jordan's

northern neighbour and thirdly, the economic strain of hosting Syrian refugees, who equate approximately to 10% of the population. This section is intended to provide an overview of the contributing influences to the safety and security context in Za'atari camp in 2013. The sub-headings are listed alphabetically and therefore do not represent an order of influence.

### Camp Management

The management of Za'atari Refugee Camp was assumed by UNHCR on 1 March from the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation (JHCO), which had been managing the camp from its inception in July 2012. The camp had grown exponentially (see page 2 for 2013 expansion) during that time and with the growth of the camp, so came the need for additional resources. Prior to UNHCR assuming the camp management role, JHCO held the coordination and primary implementation role in the camp, while a Jordanian civil servant undertook the 'governorship' of the camp. This model was to undergo fundamental changes at the beginning of 2013. The SRCD (see page 15) assumed responsibilities for the security of Za'atari and as mentioned, UNHCR began to directly manage the camp at the beginning of March. With this new model, new resources in terms of assistance and co-ordination were deployed including a strategy of outreach to the informal leaders of the camp that occurred in earnest from June.

With the 'humanitarian space' or perhaps more specifically the 'public space'

*Factors Influencing the Security Context*

*An overview of the primary factors that have shaped the security context in Za'atari camp challenges during 2013*



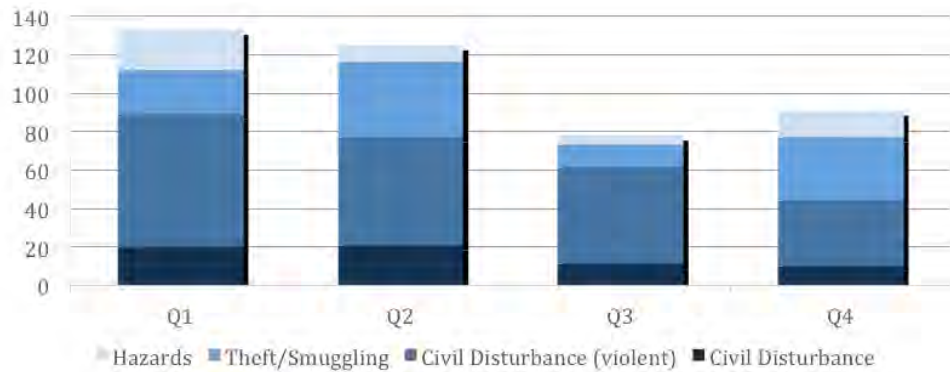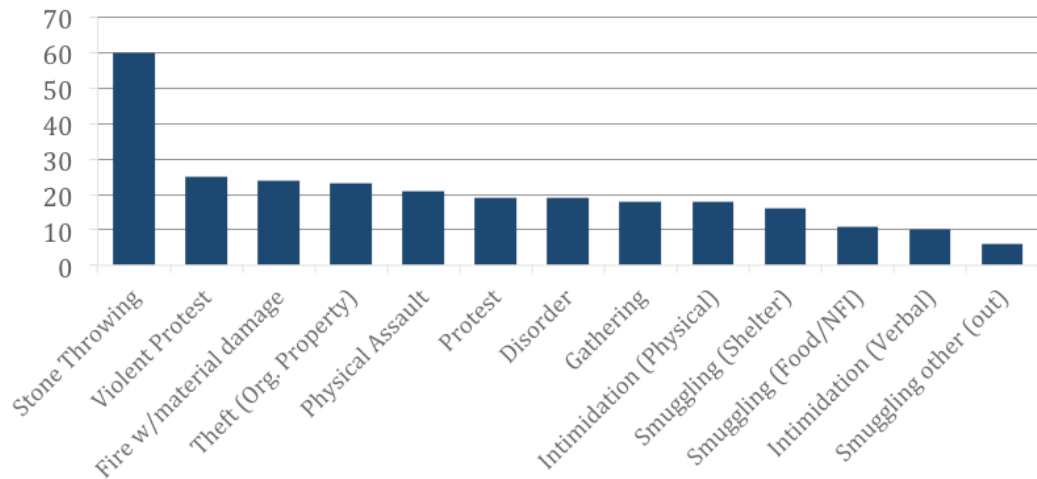*Figure 2: 2013: Reported security incidents by type and month*
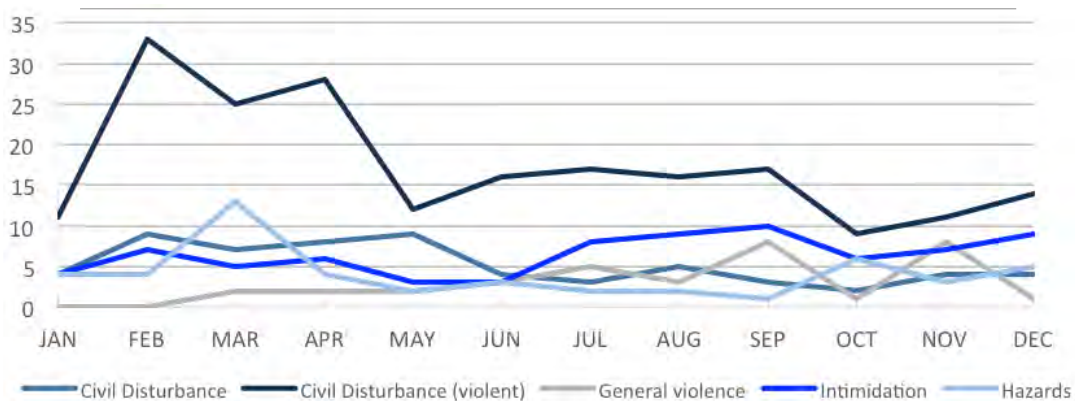
**Explanation:** The groupings of incidents are broken down by quarter. Theft/ Smuggling = Reports received from UNHCR, IPs and SRCD of acts of property theft or attempts to smuggle items in or out of the camp.
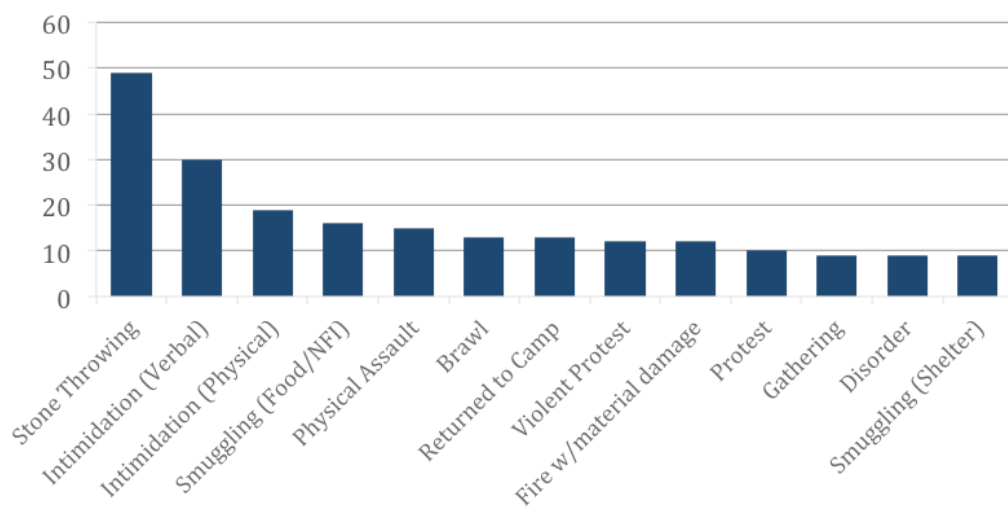
**Explanation:** ***Direct*** = The groupings of incidents are broken down by quarter. ***Theft/ Smuggling*** = Reports received from UNHCR, IPs and SRCD of acts of property theft or attempts to smuggle items in or out of the camp.

**Explanation:** ***Theft (Org. Property)*** = Theft reported of property that is considered an asset by an IP or is an item that has yet to be distributed; ***Physical Intimidation*** = The presence of a weapon or aggressive posture to change a particular decision or behaviour; ***Verbal Intimidation*** = A threat via telephone or delivered verbally without a physical aspect.

**Explanation:** ***Gathering*** = A group of refugees grouping together over a particular grievance; ***Protest*** = A larger scale gathering with an element of organisation; ***Disorder*** = A distribution by an IP, which suffers from a breakdown in order with the possibility of violence, injury or property damage.

(defined as the ability to implement programs based on needs, rather than influence of other actors) arguably long contested between some of the longer-staying informal refugee leaders and the camp management, then a number of confidence building measures were required in the second and third quarters of 2013. These measures were implemented with a view to gaining acceptance among the broader camp population and the first 'district level' meetings comprising representative figures, rather than those figures that influenced the security dynamic, also occurred in June – according to one IP.

It was commonly understood that a significant percentage of the security incidents that took place in the first and second quarters of 2013, particular the stone throwing, protests and in some cases disorder and violent protests were orchestrated by informal leaders in the camp to effect an outcome (change in distribution criteria) or preserve existing influence (being against verification processes).

With the camp co-ordination broadened along a sectorial approach and new IPs entering the camp together with an amenable donor environment, tangible evidence of the international community's assistance was realised.

In addition to the changes in camp management, the FSU in concert with NRC established a Security Working Group and a weekly meeting for security focal points, which included UN agencies, NGOs, other implementing partners as well as SRCD with the objective of sharing information on the safety context and solving operational security issues.

### *Economics*

Economics or more specifically money contribute fundamentally to the camp dynamic. The *Champs Elysees* or Market street has impressed even seasoned humanitarian workers as well as Jordanians with experience of other refugee camps in their country. The level of entrepreneurialism across all facets of camp life has shaped a particular dynamic, which

in turn has led more than one IP to declare that 'economic factors are the main drivers of insecurity.'

Some unconfirmed estimates suggest that the retail activity in Za'atari camp equates to approximately US$ 2 million a month, which is believed to exclude the illicit economy. According to a senior camp official '400,000 people came in and 300,000 left. With the property that was sold, it created an economy ' expanding to 'the issue of buying consent from 'host families.' Separately, though related, an ACTED Livelihoods Survey from August 2013, stated that 'selling goods from donations inside the camp' comprised 27% of income generating activities.

If the reported control over some cash for work (CFW) sites, 'protection' for retail properties, rent for retail properties and various other illicit activities are included, then the real economy within the camp would be significantly higher. With a financial incentive, competition between groups (clan or village) becomes solidified, which has led to numerous media reports of 'mafia-like' activities in the camp.

Where the economic factors can influence the safety and security context is when the economic interests of a group or informal leader is curtailed or threatened. Arguably, this has occurred during the 'sweeping' or verification waves in the camp, when certain teams were denied access to primarily some of the older areas of the camp. It has also occurred during numerous caravan distributions, as they are viewed as a highly prized commodity in addition, of course, to being preferable to tents. Numerous sit-ins, seizures, thefts and smuggling of caravans have occurred, which have not uniquely been attributed to the shelter needs of refugee households. It is highly probable that the majority of intra-refugee intimidation and violence is not reported and settled informally and therefore the true scale of the economic conflicts within the camp are almost impossible to ascertain.

### *Governance (formal & Informal)*

In order to create decentralised interlocutors

*Factors Influencing the Security Context*

*An overview of the primary factors that have shaped the security context in Za'atari camp challenges during 2013*

*Photo 4: 'Champs Elysees' or Market St*



**Factors Influencing the Security Context**

*An overview of the primary factors that have shaped the security context in Za'atari camp*

with whom IPs and the security authorities could interact, 'street leaders' became an informal element of camp governance in 2012. The naming of street leaders appears to have been a combination of self-appointment, street appointed or organisationally appointed with the one common requirement that the names be vetted through SRCD or its forerunner. The nature of their appointment appears to have reflected how representative they are. In numerous instances there is more than one street leader per street. One IP described the informal governance structure as originating from 'the absence of formal authority and decentralised humanitarian structures,' which lead to 'street leaders being born. The majority of (whom) were self-appointed and behind them are the super-Abus.' The term 'Abus' and street leaders are often used interchangeably in the camp by organisations and more broadly refer to someone of influence within a particular area. 'Super-Abus' is another term used by organisations and refers to an ill-defined structure of senior Abus who occasionally deal with senior camp management officials or IPs on issues of concern, though the membership appears to be somewhat opaque and transient and there are questions as to how representative the body is.

Being in a position of appointed authority and acting in many cases as the interlocutors between implementing organisations and residents of their streets afforded some, though by no means all, a degree of privilege that was financially advantageous. Especially in the older districts of the camp,

street leaders became aligned along village/town or clanic lines, which has led to allegations of mafia-like behaviour in some instances.

The camp management is intending to decentralise formal governance to the district level, which will result in up to eight sub-committees with refugee participation and also including UNHCR field teams, IPs, SRCD and Jordanian civil servants if final approval is provided. If the complete district governance model is implemented then the role of the street leaders will be gradually rolled back, though they may be incorporated into sub-committees. The decentralisation of the formal governance structure is likely to improve the all-important communication to refugees, create a grievance/help desk and associated referral system at the district level, while also addressing civil issues at their origin. Previously, numerous security incidents (stone throwing, sit-ins, protests) were attributed to the absence of a problem solving or decentralised grievance addressing mechanism and therefore the latest governance developments have the potential to address those concerns.

## *Host Community*

Massive influxes of refugee populations anywhere have the potential to lead to localised as well as national level tensions and associated insecurity. Two reports have well documented the situation in Northern Jordan (REACH, 'Evaluating the effect of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Stability and Resilience in Jordanian Host Communities, January 2014; Mercy Corps, Mapping of Host Community-Refugee Tensions in Mafraq and

Ramtha, May 2013). According to several mayors from villages in the vicinity of Za'atari refugee camp, Syrian refugee populations have surpassed that of the indigenous Jordanian populations straining the already resourced-challenged local health, education, water and waste disposal services and increasing prices for local residents. To date, tensions have been reported between the two communities, though to the present it appears that any acts of insecurity have been somewhat limited or isolated, though two previously mentioned incidents serve to underline the importance of the issue:

• On 19 April, the SRCD seized a vehicle in Za'atari that was allegedly involved in smuggling activities. Crowds gathered and a confrontation ensued leading to the Gendarme intervening and a violent riot occurring leaving one Gendarme dead and eight policemen wounded. The Gendarme's was from Karak and a convoy from his hometown was reportedly heading to the camp to seek revenge until the intervention of senior Jordanian figures. The next day, a violent riot by Jordanians outside the camp against the killing led to several vehicles being torched and access being denied.

• On 19 August, the murder of two individuals from a prominent clan in Mafraq City led to rumours that the killer was a Syrian refugee. Violent riots in the city left extensive damage and UNHCR's staff in Raba'a Al Sarhan and Za'atari relocated following reports that demonstrations of angry Jordanians were descending on both locations. Once reports confirmed that the killings were a result of a drug feud, the tensions subsided.

The two examples are of the more high profile type, though more localised host- community refugees tensions could lead to an increasingly challenging safety context unless more visible evidence of the international community's presence and commitment to host communities is realised.

## *Identity*

The Hauran plains are an area stretching from the mountains along the Syrian/ Lebanese border southeast into northern Jordan. The population of the plains has a shared history and culture far predating the Jordanian/Syrian national boundaries delineated by colonial authorities. As a result, there are many similarities between the peoples on either side of the Jordanian/ Syrian border, which has been sustained through intermarriage as well as trade and commerce of varying types and degrees of legality. The common culture and familial links are likely one of the primary reasons as to why 42% of all registered Syrian refugees in Jordan are residing in Mafraq governorate (UNHCR; 23/2/14), though the proximity to their origins most definitely plays an equally significant part.

Approximately 90% of the current refugees in Za'atari camp are reportedly from Dara'a, the Syrian governorate neighbouring Mafraq. Mapping of the geographical origins of the refugees and their location in Za'atari camp (REACH) has illustrated that clustering by geographical area is occurring and that an identity within the camp is often attached to the village or town origins of the refugees. Some of the larger populations in the camp as defined by geographical origin are Al Mahjeh, Sahwa, Ankhal, Sanamaen and Hrak. More recently, there have been arrivals of refugees from the suburbs of Damascus, who have reportedly clustered primarily in districts 5, 7 and 8 within the camp. A Bedouin population, also from Damascus,

*Factors Influencing the Security Context*

*An overview of the primary factors that have shaped the security context in Za'atari camp challenges during 2013*



*Photo 4: The village of Za'atari, viewed from the refugee camp with the berm to limit smuggling in the*

appears to have settled in district 8. The self-identification with geographical origin is also broken down further by family unit among refugees and is an integral part the informal governance structures in the camp.

A clanic identity, primarily that of the al Hariri clan, is also present in the camp. The Al Hariri are original derived from just north of Dara'a on the road to Damascus. The fact that the overwhelming majority of the refugees in Za'atari camp share similar geographic, clanic or a combination of the two identifiers is viewed as a factor in the relative stability of intra-refugee relations. Though occasional brawls and clashes are reported between families or groups associated with different geographical areas, there has been no overt and sustained conflict that has undermined the broader security context in the camp. Similarly, the camp does not host elements of the different conflicting parties to the conflict in Syria. By the number of protests and flags present in the camp, there appears to be a strong coherence of support for the FSA, which again leads to a negation of conflict based on ideological, religious or political grounds.

## SRCD

Prior to January 18, the camp security was managed by the military in concert with a governor as designated by the Jordanian authorities. The SRCD was created and operationalised with funding by the Canadian government as an integrated directorate comprising elements of the Public Security (police), Civil Defence (ambulance and fire) and Gendarmerie (public order and reinforcements for the police). Initially, the SRCD equated to approximately 100 men in total and by the end of 2013, it is understood that that were 300 Gendarmes, 50 Civil Defence members and 200 Public Security policemen.

As the numbers of SRCD personnel grew, so did their familiarity with the camp and the refugees informal governance structures. It has been suggested that several incidents initiated within the camp, could partly be explained as a test of the authority of the relatively new SRCD, such as the above mentioned 19 April incident, which involved

a violent riot and the death of a Gendarme. The SRCD maintains an active engagement with street leaders and other centres of power and influence within the camp, which has reportedly led to a gradual shift in refugee perceptions of the 'police' and greater information flows to the SRCD.

Towards the end of 2013, a new policing concept was being finalised prior to its implementation in early 2014 – that of community policing. A detachment of Public Security forces, working with UK advisors, were training to work inside Za'atari camp through foot patrols with the intent of bringing the police closer to the community and addressing or referring any grievances to the relevant authority prior to the issues becoming 'securitised.' A separate initiative in the camp and with external reporting lines is that of a 'community watch' structure, which reportedly involves up to 500 individuals within the camp being paid to look after their areas and report any security concerns. The paid element of the initiative and the lack of transparency as to its relationships or not with formal structures led to the suspension of the program towards the end of 2013.

## The Syrian Conflict

Similar to the above-mentioned influences, the Syrian conflict has heavily influenced the security context in the camp. Two particular events in Syria, according to a senior camp-management official, fundamentally altered the refugees' perceptions of the length of their stay in Za'atari and by association their sense of ownership or participation in the camp. The first event was the formal announcement by Hezbollah on 25 May of their entry into the Syrian conflict and the second followed shortly after on 5 June, when the Syrian Army with support from Hezbollah captured the strategic city of Al Qusayr. Combining these two events contributed to the perception in the camp, supported by calls to family in Syria and through social media, that the Syrian regime would not fall in the short to intermediate-term, that the conflict would continue and subsequently their stay in Jordan will be longer than originally anticipated.
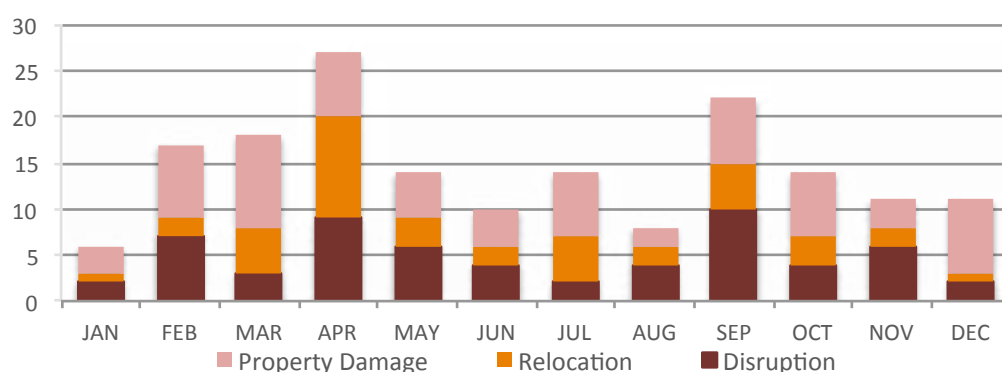
**Explanation:** Property Damage = organisational property, Disruption = programming/distributions were halted; Relocation = Staff were forced to leave a particular location for security reasons.

Security incidents, depending on their type and severity, have impacted both UNHCR and IPs working in the camp. In the first quarter of 2013 (incidents were underreported during this period due to the absence of a formal reporting mechanism) some IPs reported several relocations a week from decentralised locations in the camp. The types of incidents included stone throwing, intimidation, disorder at distributions and protests. Figure 6 should be considered indicative of the overall trends rather than a fully accurate picture of the frequency of such occurrences. The uptick in September in the disruptions to implementations is primarily attributed to the commencement of the work of 'sweeping teams,' and some refugees using non-co-operation or intimidation in an attempt to receive caravans. More broadly speaking there was a downturn in the number of relocations and disruptions as the year progressed.

Figure 7 lists the reasons attributed in incident narrative reports as either the location or 'cause' of the security incident. Similar to Figure 6, there is an overall increase in the number of incidents related to 'beneficiary determination,' which is related to the work of 'sweeping teams', verification work and litigation teams. In the last quarter, there was less than half of the incidents reported that were attributed to attempts to curb illicit activity, which would suggest an overall drop in such activity or a more permissible environment, though the former is more likely.

Also of note, is the number of incidents related to politics (demonstrations, gatherings) that virtually disappeared in the last quarter of 2013. Finally, the drop in the number of incidents related to the general services in the camp declined by more than two thirds between the first quarter of 2013 and the last.

*Impact on UNHCR and IPs*

*A descriptive of the impact on organisations in the camp and the 'reasons' attributed to security incidents*
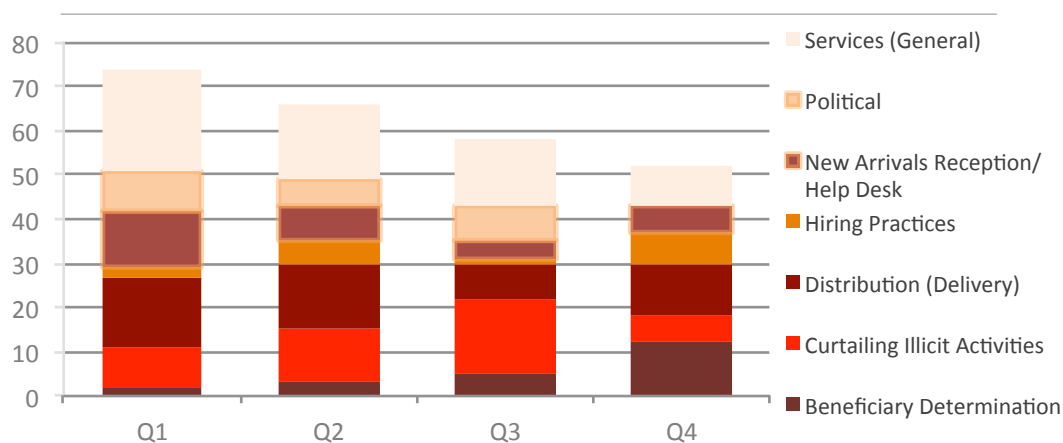


*Figure 7: Reasons 'attributed' in incident narratives*

This report has intended to illustrate the underlying safety and security context for the benefit of UNHCR staff and IPs. Though incidents against staff occur frequently, their impact on programming have been mostly limited to temporary relocations, brief program interruptions and minor injuries to staff. The security environment within the camp has often been described as 'unpredictable' and and to a lesser degree, 'volatile,' primarily due to the rapid increase in refugee numbers, pressure on services, challenging weather conditions, internal camp power dynamics and the political situation in Syria. As the camp becomes more settled, then the types of incidents as described in the report are likely to evolve, which will necessitate continued training, an emphasis on the sharing of information and best practices as well as thematic reports authored to assist programming. The below are a series of recommendations based on the experiences of 2013.

### *Staff Training & Workshops*

With international staff turnover considered high and many national staff relatively new to the humanitarian sector, the need for training and applied workshop is significant. In particular:

- Interpersonal Conflict Mitigation and Communication
- Staff Safety and Security Awareness
- Managing Staff Safety (Training for Security Focal Points)

- Incident Reporting and Information Management
- First Aid
- Dealing with Crowds, Mobs and Demonstrations
- Safe Driving *(for drivers)*
- Fire Safety Education for refugees

### *Joint Operations Centre*

The Joint Operations Centre (JOC) was established in December and is intended to act as the security coordination centre for the camp (UNHCR Radio room, UNHCR operations manager, SRCD) for implementing organisations in the camp. The Civil Defence and Radio room element was established at the outset, though the recruitment of an Operations Manager and the inclusion of an SRCD presence are pending and would be required to ensure the success of the initiative.

### *Reporting*

In addition to encouraging staff to report incidents or safety concerns, the following would contribute to a greater understanding of the operating context for UNHCR and IP's in the camp:

- A report on the informal governance structures within the camp (clanic, geographic, hierarchical identities) and the effect on the safety and security context
- Mapping of host community dynamics , recommendations for local interlocutors and conflict mitigation



*Photo 5: Za'atari Camp, 6 February 2013 view from the south. The oldest areas of the camp are in the top left of the photo. (UNHCR)*

## *Reporting (cont)*

- A comprehensive review of best practices from the initial establishment of the camp in July 2012 that have improved or stablised the safety and security context, which would include:

  - Camp Management - co-ordination, mass communication, site planning, engagement with informal refugee leaders & host community engagement

  - Distributions - safety and security issues specifically associated with distributions and how these challenges were addressed.

  - Security Management - The contribution of FSU, the creation of the SWG and the establishment of the JOC and how these structures contributed to camp safety.

  - SRCD - The evolution of the organisation within the camp, the impact of community policing and more broadly perceptions of the SRCD among refugees

## *SRCD*

The SRCD was established in January 2013 as a department specific to Syrian refugees in Jordan. The organisation has undergone a significant evolution in terms of practices and resources as donor funding by the Canadian and UK governments has increased.

Additional donor funding is being sought to expand the SRCD presence into urban areas with a significant Syrian refugee population.

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Za'atari Refugee Camp

Azraq Refugee Camp
*(30 April, 2014)*

Amman