

Life in Syria unbearable, say refugees in Jordan
By AFP, The Khaleej Times
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RAMTHA, Jordan —Haurani fled Syria to escape a lethal crackdown in his country, joining some 3,000 compatriots who have taken shelter in Jordan. His brother, who stayed behind, was killed by Syrians forces at the weekend.

“The situation in Syria has become unbearable and what the media broadcast is nothing but a tiny fraction of the painful reality,” said the 26-year-old computer engineer.

Five months ago he fled with his wife and their eight-month-old baby daughter their home in the southern province of Daraa, cradle of 11 months of protests against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s regime.

“I left my country to avoid my brother’s fate,” he said as he received condolences for his sibling in a modest flat in the border town of Ramtha.

“Regime forces shot him dead along with 17 other people during an incursion on Saturday, according to my father,” he told AFP.

“My brother has been buried secretly. The army raided my family’s house looking for his body because he took part in protests calling for the downfall of the regime.”

The young father refused to be photographed or reveal his real name, fearing reprisals against his relatives who stayed behind in Syria.

More than 6,000 people have been killed in the crackdown, according to monitors. The United Nations put the figure at more than 5,400 in late December, before it gave up counting the toll, citing difficulties on the ground.

“I do not know what do. I am jobless and the future is grim,” said the man who calls himself Haurani after the Hauran southwestern region of Syria where he hails from.

Government figures are unavailable on Syrian refugees, but UN chief Ban Ki-moon said in Amman last month that the kingdom was hosting 2,500 Syrians. Independent estimates put the figure at more than 3,000.

“The days of Assad and his regime are numbered. There is a system breakdown in Syria and the regime and its army are expected to fall down in a month or two,” said Mustafa, a 24-year-old cell phone vendor from Daraa.

“My brother and I came to Jordan six months ago after we took part in anti-regime demonstrations. We had no other choice,” he added as he and other compatriots watched Syrian television for news from back home.

Jordan’s Hashemite Charity Organisation has said it would open a 30-dunum refugee camp (each equivalent to 1,000 square metres) by the end of this week to host Syrians near the border.

“Currently there are 700 Syrian families in the southern city of Mafraq, where the organisation has rented houses for them,” organisation secretary general Ahmad Emyan said.

The UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, has opened a medical centre in Ramtha, where nearly 50 Syrians are treated daily, and where many Jordanians have relatives on the other side of the border.

“A large number of Syrians suffer from serious health problems and they receive free medical care at the centre,” said one of the refugees.

Jordan has said it was ready to provide medical care to Syrian refugees if they are registered with the UNHCR.

"I was arrested and tortured for four months after the beginning of the uprising because I wrote on the walls of Daraa slogans like 'the people want the downfall of regime,'" said Abu Imad, 30.

"We are really fed up with this (Syrian) regime. After the Arab Spring, there is no place for fear in our hearts," he added, puffing a cigarette.

Last year, a wave of popular revolts swept the Middle East and North Africa, toppling strongmen in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya and paved the way for the removal of Yemen's president.

"We have escaped the killing in our country and came here leaving behind almost everything," said a Syrian woman in an angry tone, refusing to reveal her identity.

"All what we want is our freedom."

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