

**REMARKS BY
HIS MAJESTY KING ABDULLAH II
AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE
78TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS
19 SEPTEMBER 2023**

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful
Mr President,
Mr Secretary General,
Your Excellencies:

When human catastrophes seem beyond description, we turn to the appalling statistics.

This year, around the world, more than 345 million people face food insecurity, daily hunger, or starvation.

Among the most vulnerable are 108 million refugees, people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes and ways of life.

And forty percent of these refugees are children, the most defenceless of all.

Yet these numbers cannot really convey the tragedy—or the failure.

Refugees are our brothers, our sisters. They look to our countries to help end the crises that have driven them from home.

Refugees are mothers, fathers, grandparents, who have made perilous journeys to save their families.

They are young people with big dreams, and little children who deserve the chance to dream big.

They depend on the international community for their survival, and multiple UN agencies provide vital services to help meet the need.

But in recent months, one by one, these agencies have been delivering difficult news—a severe shortfall in international funds has forced them to cut support.

Is this what we've come to? Is the international community going to watch as refugee families find themselves forced to send their children to work instead of school?

In Jordan, where refugees make up over one third of our 11-million population, cuts have already thrown the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees into uncertainty.

The impact of such humanitarian shortfalls is never limited to a country or a region. Fear and want bring on sharp increases in the number of refugees fleeing to Europe and beyond, on journeys that too often end in tragedy.

My Friends,

Jordanians are serious about our duty to those in need. We have done everything we can to secure a dignified life for refugees.

Nearly half of the almost 1.4 million Syrians we host are under 18 years of age. For many of them, Jordan is the only place they have ever known—over 230,000 Syrian children have been born in Jordan since 2011.

We are sharing precious resources to help them meet basic needs— food, energy, and especially, water. We are among the water-poorest countries in the world, even as our water supplies face extraordinary demand.

And we face these pressures just when another crisis has hit our region—climate change, with its destructive heatwaves, drought and flooding.

And to meet the refugee burden, we have been carefully managing to combine our limited resources with essential support from the international community. Because the responsibility to act falls on everyone’s shoulders. Because the world cannot afford to walk away and leave a lost generation behind.

But today, Jordan’s capacity to deliver necessary services to refugees has surpassed our limits.

Syrian refugees’ future is in their country, not in host countries. But until they are able to return, we must all do right by them.

And the fact is refugees are far from returning. On the contrary, more Syrians are likely to leave their country as the crisis persists.

And Jordan will not have the ability nor the resources to host and care for more.

We must find a political solution consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. The step-for-step approach, offers a path forward. Proposed by Jordan as the basis for

engagement with the Syrian government, and coordinated with the UN, this approach sets a roadmap to incrementally resolve the crisis and deal with all its consequences.

Until then, we will protect our country against any future threats the crisis could pose to our national security.

My Friends,

Jordan's case is a microcosm of our entire region. For all our peoples' immense potential, repeated crises have held back the promise of greater development and prosperity.

Our region is a focal point, where some of the most urgent global challenges are converging.

How will our world respond?

Will we come together in global solidarity, to get to the root of the problem: the conflicts and crises that destroy life and hope?

Will we work as one, to rebuild the lost trust in international action, and help those in want?

My Friends,

Our region will continue to suffer until the world helps lift the shadow of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict—the central issue in the Middle East.

No architecture for regional security and development can stand over the burning ashes of this conflict.

But seven and a half decades on, it still smoulders. Where are we going?

Without clarity on where Palestinians' future lies, it will be impossible to converge on a political solution to this conflict.

Five million Palestinians live under occupation—no civil rights; no freedom of mobility; no say in their lives.

Yet every UN resolution since the beginning of this conflict recognises the equal rights of the Palestinian people to a future of peace, dignity, and hope. This is the heart of the two-state solution—the only path to a comprehensive, lasting peace.

We can see the Israeli people actively defending and engaging in the expression of their national identity. Yet the Palestinian people are deprived of that same right! To express and fulfil their own national identity! The basic requirement for that right is the establishment of their own independent and viable state, on the June 4th, 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living alongside Israel in peace, security, and prosperity.

And delaying justice and peace has brought endless cycles of violence—2023 has been the deadliest for the Palestinian people in the past 15 years.

How can people trust in global justice while settlement building, land confiscations, and home demolitions continue? Where is the global solidarity to make UN resolutions believable by people in need of our help?

Jerusalem is a flash point for global concern. Under the Hashemite Custodianship of Islamic and Christian holy sites, Jordan remains committed to safeguarding the city's identity.

But preserving Jerusalem, as the city of faith and peace for Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, is a responsibility that we all share.

And we must not abandon Palestinian refugees to the forces of despair. Sustainable funding is urgently needed by UNRWA, the UN agency that provides vital relief, education, and health services to millions of Palestinian refugees. This is essential to protect families, keep communities stable, and prepare young people for productive lives.

We must protect young Palestinians from extremists who prey on their frustrations and hopelessness, by making sure they continue to learn at schools under the blue flag of the United Nations, as the alternative will be the black flags of terror, hate, and extremism.

My Friends,

We come together here as partners, to deal with our challenges and shape a better future.

We speak here for our people. We speak for families and the younger generations. We speak for victims of conflict, displacement, hunger, climate change disasters, and more.

They are not mere statistics. They are our fellow human beings, sharing our world. Only by restoring trust, only by acting in solidarity, will we create the future all our peoples desire and deserve.

We cannot allow for a lost generation on our watch.
Thank you.