The civil war in Syria that began in 2011 has been one of the most devastating regional catastrophes in the modern Middle East history. Syria has a population of 22.4 million and almost 50% have been displaced by the war in the past 3 years. The dead now number over 150,000. Many more are casualties. The UN High Commission on Refugees estimates that there are currently over 9 million Syrian refugees – 6 million or more are internally displaced persons. The overwhelming majority of all refugees are children and elderly. Syrians have fled to the neighboring countries of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey in staggering numbers. Jordan and Lebanon have been demographically transformed by the influx of Syrian refugees in a short 3-year period with serious long term political and social consequences.

Over 935,000 Syrian refugees have registered with the UNHCR in Lebanon. Before 2011, Lebanon with a population of 4.4 million was already the host for tens of thousands of Syrian migrant workers. Syrian war refugees whether they are registered with UNHCR or not now make up 20-25% of the entire population of Lebanon. The refugee surge has exacerbated sectarian tensions given that the majority is Sunni and the largest Shi’a political and military party Hizbullah has supported the Syrian government and sent militia forces to fight alongside Syrian regular army forces inside Syria. The civil war in Syria has played out in Lebanon in the form of persistent armed clashes in Tripoli, along the borders with Syria, and with an uptick in car bombings in Beirut and other cities. Security for UN and NGO workers trying to assist the Syrian refugee population is precarious and worsening.

The Syrian refugee population in Jordan has also transformed the country in immediate and irreversible ways. Over 1.25 million Syrian refugees have registered with UNHCR in Jordan since 2011 and most of them are concentrated in the north of the country where there has historically been a large population of Syrian origin, robust cross-border commerce, patterns of inter-marriage, constant travel across the border, as well as Internet and cellphone communication. Syrian refugees are now over 20% of Jordan’s population of 6 million. The sudden influx of refugees has overwhelmed Jordan’s infrastructure and has especially taxed its water resources. The largest tent city refugee camp of Za’atari has a population of over 140,000 (the second largest refugee camp in the world) and is now Jordan’s fourth largest urban concentration. The refugee surge has created a crisis for the education sector. Most of the Syrian refugees are children. The UN currently only has the capacity to accommodate 70% of the school age children inside and outside the camps. The Jordanian primary, secondary, and higher education sectors are less prepared than the UN to deal with educational needs of the Syrian refugee youth population.
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Nancy Gallagher has had a life-long commitment to furthering human rights globally and in particular for women and refugees in the Middle East region. In the past ten years, she has been active in publishing on women and human rights issues in the Middle East region. She has explored the historical role of NGO initiatives with the Palestinian refugee population in Gaza in 1949 in her 2007 book *Quakers in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Dilemmas of NGO Humanitarian Activism*. She has personally conducted site visits to survey women’s and educational NGOs in countries as diverse as Afghanistan, Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey. She has specifically requested a project proposal for furthering post-secondary education for Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Jordan.

The post-secondary educational needs of the Syrian war refugee population in Jordan have been largely ignored by both the UN and the Jordanian government. In the past year several NGOs have initiated preliminary programs to assist college-age Syrian refugees who have had their university education disrupted. Keith Watenpaugh, Director of the UC Davis Human Rights Initiative conducted a study in conjunction with the Institute for International Education in April 2013 in Za’atari refugee camp to assess the extent of post-secondary needs among Syrian refugees. The study found that “university students are present in all major Syrian refugee populations in Jordan” and that “Syrian refugee university students are eager to continue their studies and are prepared to travel further afield to do so.” IIE has a grant program for placing Syrian refugee professors in positions at US institutions. The UC Davis initiative is exploring programs for placing Syrian refugee students currently in Lebanon and Jordan in universities in the Arab World, Europe, and the U.S.

Maria del Mar Longrono-Narbono and Garay Menicucci have conducted discussions in January and April 2014 with the Jesuit Center Refugee Project in Jabal Hussain in Amman to establish a month-long university academic preparedness workshop and individual tutoring sessions for Syrian university refugee students in Amman. The Jesuit Center is currently the only NGO that has ongoing educational programs for Syrian university refugee students. The Center sponsors year-round ESL courses for refugee students and an array of online certificate programs accredited through Regis University and conducted in a Greek Orthodox school in the Asrafiyya district of East Amman.

The Jesuit Center will sponsor a college preparedness workshop for Syrian refugee university students during the first two weeks of August 2014. Nancy Gallagher and other faculty volunteers will meet twice a week with students at the Jabal Hussain Center and design workshop sessions on academic preparedness, U.S. university culture, and how to apply to universities in the U.S. Faculty volunteers will devote the second two weeks to individual tutoring and application mentoring. An additional option is to conduct “pre-orientation” courses on U.S. academic culture for students who will be enrolled in a 3-year online diploma program offered by Regis University. The August 1914 workshops and courses will serve as a pilot model for ongoing programs run by U.S. based faculty volunteers.