Shadi is a 36 year-old Syrian refugee who lives in Mafraq and is married with 3 children including one infant. He wants to work in the construction sector to help his Jordanian neighbor Abu Saleem and is a trained engineer. Shadi and his family members have the UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate which they received upon arrival to Jordan but not the MOI card.

Abu Saleem is a small businessman in Mafraq governorate who used to trade regularly with clients in Dera’a, Syria, before the crisis, including with Shadi’s uncle. With the border closed, Abu Saleem now runs a construction company near Zaatari camp and regularly employs foreign laborers, including Syrian refugees. With his company growing fast, he wants to bid on larger tenders and needs formal workers on his crews.

As of 7 December, 34,467 work permits have been issued to Syrian refugees.

THE WORK PERMIT MAZE

This process describes the steps Shadi needs to take in order to obtain his work permit. Every successful step means he can proceed to the next. If not successful, his journey ends as illustrated in red.

1. As the police station, the Jordanian authorities decline Shadi’s request for a security clearance for unknown reasons.
2. The following day, Shadi asks his landlord for a rental contract as he needs a proof of address to obtain the new MOI card.
3. Shadi is able to borrow money to pay 20 JOD (5 JOD/person) to the department of health in Mafraq for his family’s medical certificate fees.
4. Shadi takes all the requested documents to the police, only to find out that his security check is still pending. Eventually, he is cleared and obtains his MOI card.
5. Abu Saleem applies for a work permit from the labor department in Mafraq on behalf of Shadi and has to submit a certificate of incorporation, occupational licensure certificate, statement from social security confirming his company’s registration, and Shadi’s employment contract.
6. Shadi is unable to work as an engineer as the labor department considers it an occupation for refugees and refuses to issue his work permit.
7. Shadi, frustrated by the delays and worried that his permit is only valid for one year, decides his family will be better off if he continues to work informally.
8. Shadi’s landlord refuses to give him a rental contract. Shadi can approach UNHCR and request an address statement which will be delivered to him on the spot. It will be accepted by the police in lieu of the rental contract.

Abu Saleem goes back to the labor department where he submitted all of his documents and receives Shadi’s work permit, valid for one year to work at his company as a general laborer. Abu Saleem is told that Shadi can only be employed as a general laborer even though he is an engineer and has to wait for Shadi’s security clearance to be issued.

Abu Saleem also needs to register Shadi with social security and submit the registration info for the business, signed contract, ID cards and MOI service card, and first month’s payment of 21% of salary.

Unfortunately, Abu Saleem’s construction firm is not officially registered with Jordan Contractors Union.

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Abu Saleem is told that Shadi can only be employed as a general laborer even though he is an engineer and has to wait for Shadi’s security clearance to be issued.

Shadi is unable to find 20 JOD for the health check.

At the police station the Jordanian authorities decline Shadi’s request for a security clearance for unknown reasons.

Shadi is unable to work as an engineer as the labor department considers it an occupation for refugees and refuses to issue his work permit.

Shadi is unable to find 20 JOD for the health check.

Shadi is frustrated by the delays and worried that his permit is only valid for one year, decides his family will be better off if he continues to work informally.

One year later, Abu Saleem and Shadi have to go through a renewal process. If Shadi wants to change jobs, he and his new employer repeat the entire process from step 5 on.

As a first step, Shadi needs to apply for a Ministry of Interior card at the closest police station. There, the police ask him for his UNHCR Asylum Seeker Certificate, his Syrian national ID, Syrian Passport, or other official certificates or affidavits, which Shadi has.