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Refugee UN Volunteer Medical Doctor Israa Haqqi (Iraq), serving with the emergency team at Al-Bashir Hospital in Amman, Jordan.

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Refugee UN Volunteer Medics join Jordanian COVID-19 Response

Earlier this month, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) announced the deployment of six Refugee UN Volunteer medical specialists in Jordan, including some trained as surgeons, anesthesiologists and general doctors, who have started working in hospitals and clinics across the Kingdom. This step, taken in partnership with the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV), highlights the value of volunteer-based solutions in designing and implementing an inclusive COVID-19 response.

The deployment of these health professionals marked a major step forward in creating additional livelihood opportunities for refugees in Jordan and followed months of discussions between Jordan's Ministry of Health and UNHCR about how refugees can contribute to stopping the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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“ This is a great opportunity and at the same time an important responsibility for refugees, who have been eager to directly contribute to the national COVID-19 response. --Dominik Bartsch, UNHCR Representative in Jordan

"As doctors, nurses, and a wealth of other professions, there is a huge potential for refugees to give back to the country that has been generously hosting them," Mr Bartsch added.

Back in October 2020, UNHCR put out a call to refugees who had previous experience and qualifications of working in medical professions. After receiving over 300 responses, it was clear that many were eager to put their knowledge to use as the pandemic continued to spread. The six medics initially chosen are all specialist doctors from Syria, Iraq and Yemen, who have several years of experience.

“ We hope this first deployment of Refugee UN Volunteers in the region will encourage other countries to embark on similar initiatives that leverage the talent of refugees through volunteerism in addressing challenges commonly faced with host communities. --Ouarda Derafa, UNV Regional Portfolio Manager, Arab States

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees have been generously included by the Government of Jordan within the national response plan, able to access health care and medical treatment as Jordanian citizens can. Since January, they have been receiving the COVID-19 vaccine alongside their Jordanian hosts.

“ As a refugee, I know what it feels like to lose your loved ones, your home and your country. I am fortunate to have this opportunity to provide aid and to be productive. We feel our value in being active members of our communities. --Dr Waleed Ahmed, Refugee UN Volunteer Medical Doctor serving in Basma Hospital, Irbid, Jordan

Waleed sends a message to other refugees "Do not give up, improve yourself, hone talents and be a productive person in the community."

Since the pandemic is still raging across the globe, including in Jordan, it is expected that even more refugee medics will be asked to join the initial cohort of UN Volunteers. UNV stands hand in hand with UNHCR in support of their eventual deployment, as well as refugee UN Volunteers in other professions, in close coordination with relevant authorities in Jordan.

** This is a slightly edited version of the original news story published by [UNHCR Jordan](#) on 4 September 2021.*

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