

Borders
An Atlas of Syrian Border Crossings

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Introduction

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) calls the ongoing Syrian conflict “the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era.” Since 2011, violence has led to nearly 400,000 lives lost, 6.3 million Syrians have been internally displaced, and over 4.8 million have fled across borders. While the written and photographic reporting of Syrian stories uses captivating imagery and testimonials to convey the traumatic experiences of individuals, the expression of these experiences in the accompanying cartographic coverage is limited.

I ask the following research question: How can the cartographic portrayal of Syrian peoples’ border experiences be improved to better represent their experiences? I interviewed seven humanitarian workers, activists, and displaced Syrians and using a critical feminist lens, I developed an alternative mapping solution that more accurately reflects Syrian border (traditional and non-traditional) crossings. I applied my mapping technique to their stories.

Here, I present my alternative feminist mapping technique and the collection of maps and stories in atlas form. The stories are presented as personal accounts or contextually as a matter of perspective. The final map series aggregates their stories into one depiction.

More information and digital copies of the atlas can be found at:
Author’s website

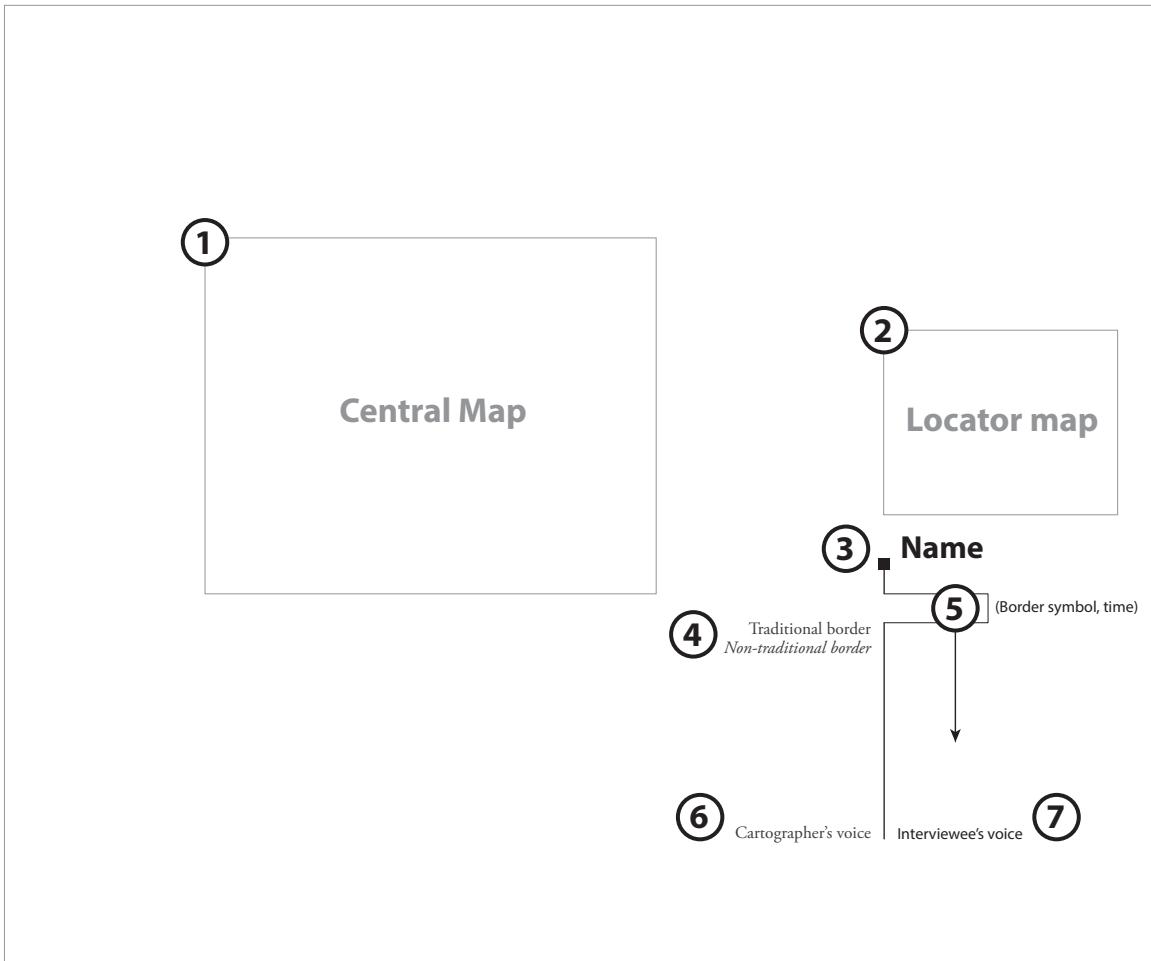
Positionality

My positionality as a woman, an academic, and American outsider living in the United States played a significant role in the creation of this atlas and related research. I fully recognize that my positionality has changed throughout the cartographic process and the atlas itself changed given my positionality. Here, I briefly explain my position, my biases, my assumptions, and my subjectivities.

I am an outsider. I do not speak Arabic. I am not a Muslim woman. I collaborated with a local NGO and a colleague working in Zaatri refugee camp. I am well-informed (as much as I can be). I'm a researcher. Lastly, I'm a critical cartographer trained in Western cartographic traditions.

I fully recognize that my identity, background, and lack of direct experience in the region have influenced my interactions with interviewees, the cartographic process, and the resulting atlas. Any errors, mistakes, or partialities are my own.

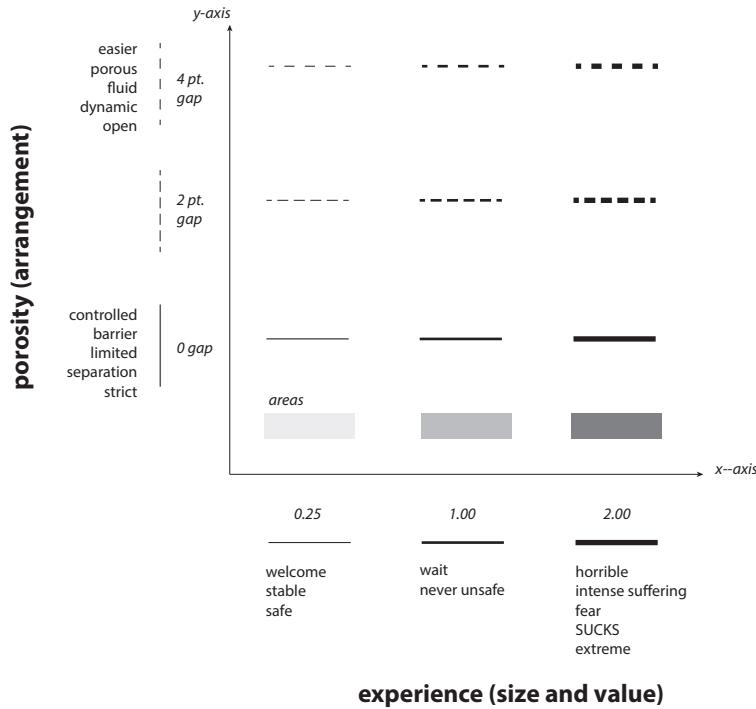
Thank you to all those that have participated and guided this work!



The Techniques Layout

The central map (1) is the main focus of the layout. The viewer then moves to the locator map (2), which provides context and uses conventional techniques for comparison. The right panel provides information to the viewer about the individual (3) and the border (4).

The legend and border symbol (5) moves downward as the story progresses. My voice, the cartographer, (6) is on the left and the individual's voice (7) is on the right.

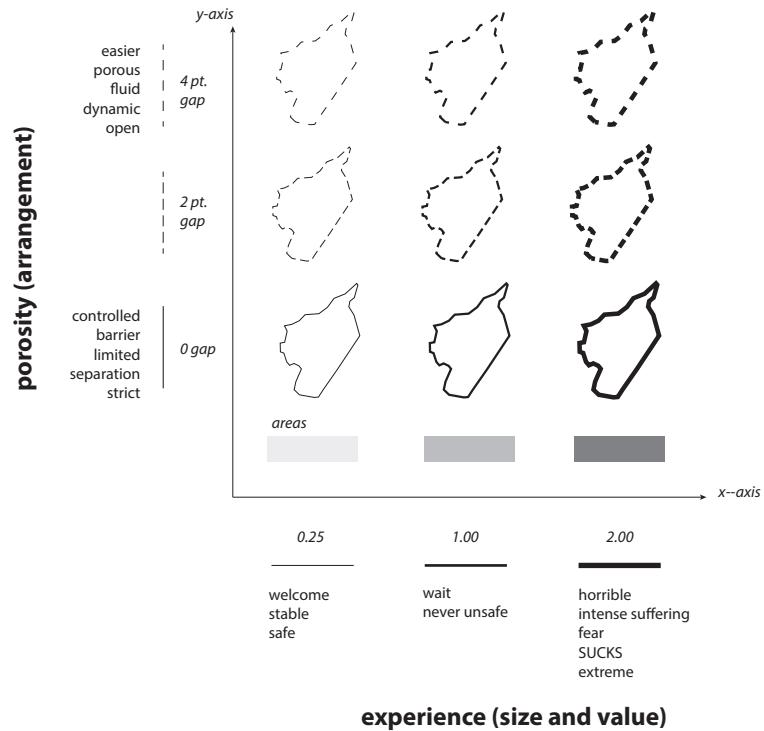


The Techniques

Border Symbolization

The border in the central map is the focus of each page and map layout. I developed a bivariate line symbolization scheme (above) based on my interviews with Syrian refugees and humanitarian aid workers.

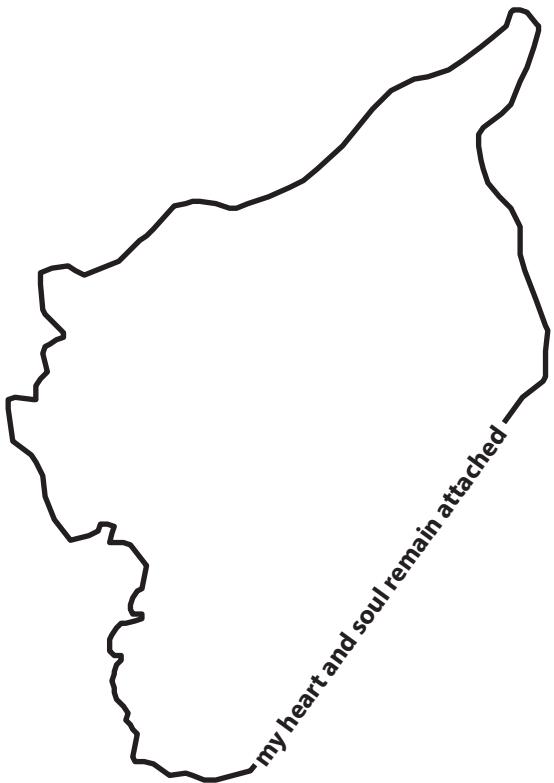
The x-axis depicts individual experience and the y-axis depicts the border's porosity. I applied this line symbolization scheme to each border encountered by my interviewees. For the aggregated map (see Aggregated Map Techniques), I used the median symbolization for all interviewees that mentioned a specific border.



The Techniques

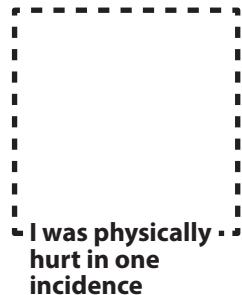
Border Symbolization

Here, the symbols are applied to the Syrian border alone. The thickness and porosity of each border changes. An extreme or emotional event at a closed border would render a solid, thick line. A positive or secure situation at a porous border would render a thin, dashed line. This allows the viewer to quickly gauge the experience and border type.



The Techniques Experiential Label

I labeled each border with a passage taken from my interviews to encapsulate the individual's experience or perspective in one eyespan. By adding the experience to the label, the individual's voice is maintained. The individual and his or her experience embodies the line.



The Techniques

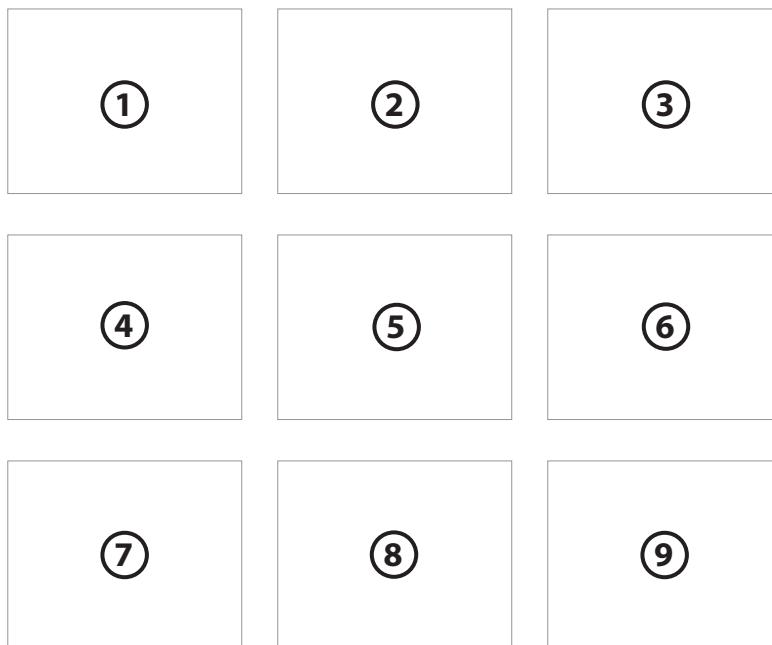
Non-traditional Borders

The stories in this atlas present traditional and non-traditional border experiences. Traditional borders like Syria's border with Jordan have a "precise" geographic location and can be easily mapped. Non-traditional borders like the home, social boundaries, or the body are often left off the map because they lack geographic information. To render these borders visible, I map non-traditional borders as square spaces. This technique provides abstract space to unspecified, but real places.

Serif | San Serif

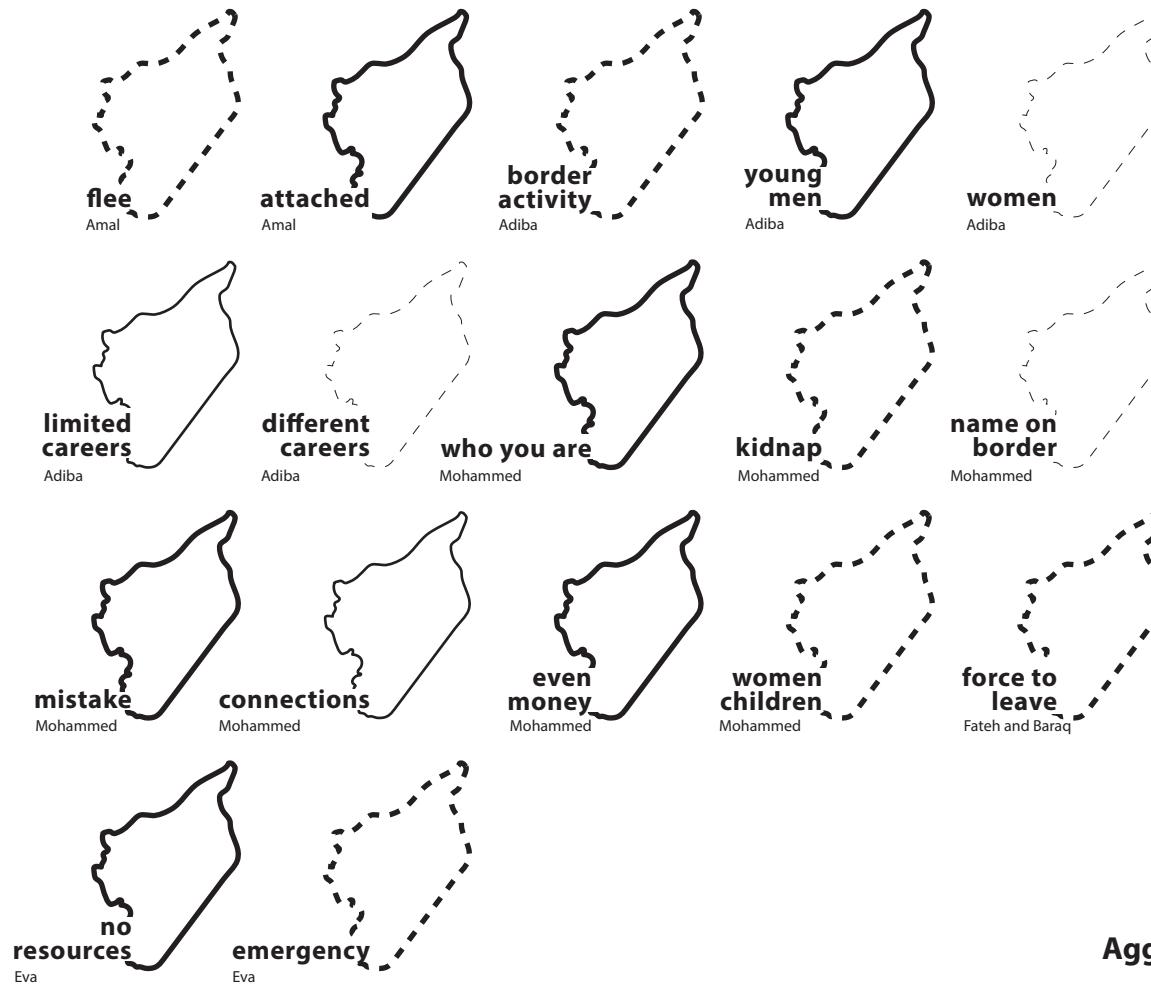
The Techniques Voice

To maintain transparency and my position as outsider, I separated my voice (serif typeface) as the cartographer from the voice of the interviewee (san serif typeface) in the right panel. This kept the individuals voice on the page, while minimizing my perspective. I wanted to avoid speaking for the individuals.



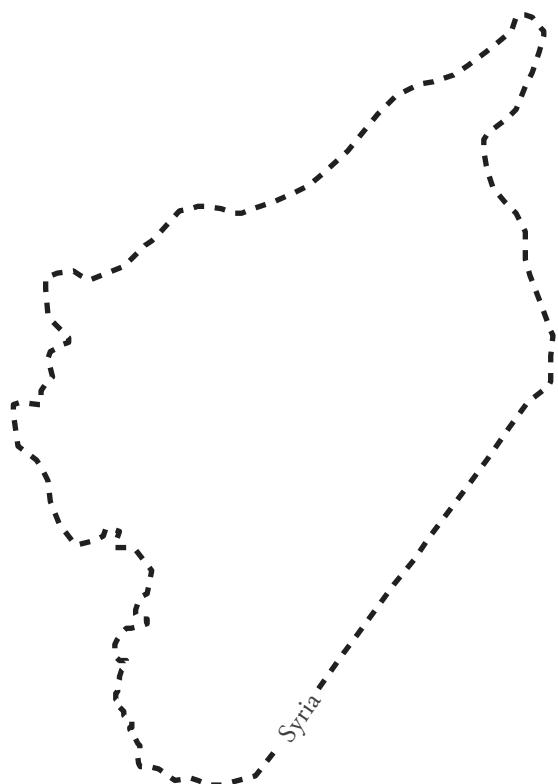
The Techniques Sequencing

All border experiences (experiences with traditional borders like the Syrian-Turkish border or non-traditional like the home or the body) are presented on their own page. This technique paces the viewer through the story and emphasizes each border experience equally. The individual carries the viewer through the story with each page turn.



Aggregated Map Techniques Small Multiples Map

In the aggregated map series, each border is presented with two maps: a small multiples map and an aggregated map. The small multiple map provides a visual comparison and illustrates the complexities, similarities, and intersectional differences between individual experiences.



Aggregated Map Techniques

Aggregated Map

In the aggregated map series, each border is presented with two maps: a small multiples map and an aggregated map. The aggregated map is meant to show a single aggregated overview that averages the border symbolization displayed in the small multiples maps. This pairing simultaneously recognizes the individual and the multiplicity of experiences embedded in aggregating techniques.

Individual Maps
Adiba Contextual

Adiba

I would just describe it as **the most complex humanitarian crisis of the century**, definitely. I mean, just in the past 50 years for sure. Syria is very different because there are a variety of issues relative to other humanitarian crises. There are a lot of political undertones. A lot of different components or factors, I guess, that have contributed to the crisis. Part of the reason why it has been so long lasting is because of its complexity.

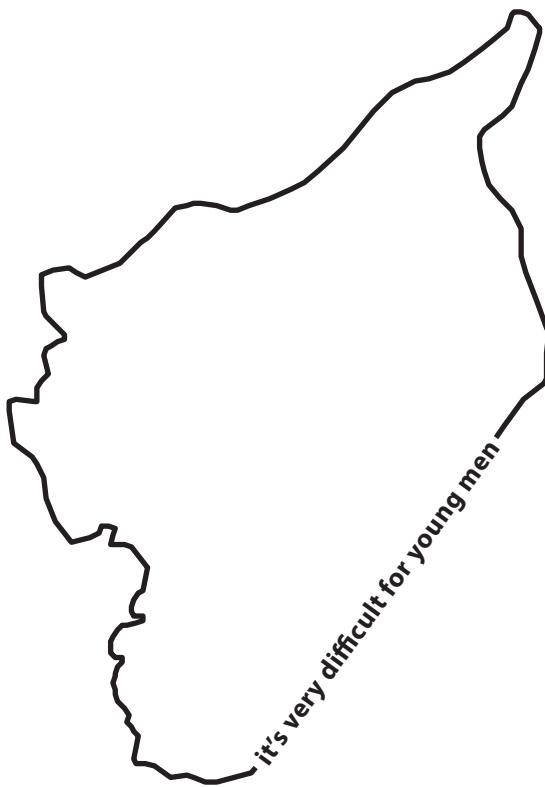
Adiba is Syrian-American born in the United States and now she works in the humanitarian aid field. Her organization provides aid packages and medical care to Syrians affected by the conflict. Adiba's perspective uncovers various borders faced by Syrian refugees. Adiba began our conversation by describing the overall context of the Syrian conflict and humanitarian aid.

*cross-border activity is essential
to the crisis itself*

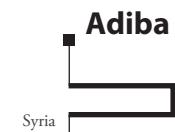


Adiba
Syria

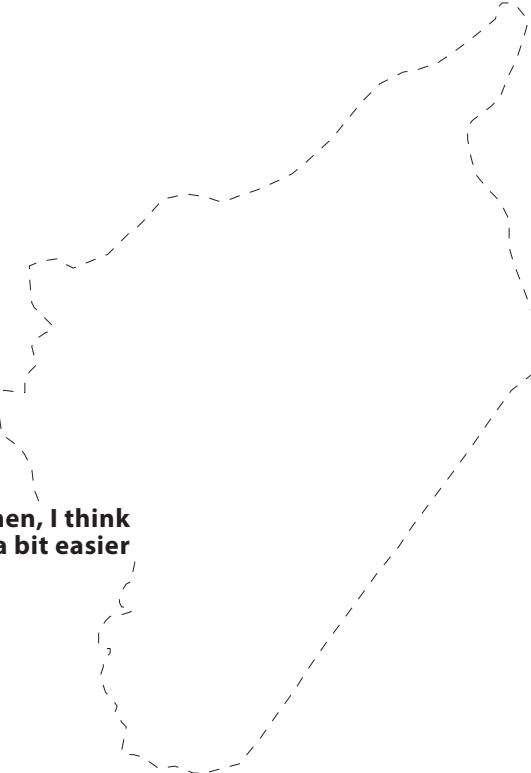
One of the major factors for our work and even the reason why we've been able to deliver so much aid primarily is because of the fluidity of those borders... **Cross border activity is just essential to the crisis itself.** I know with a lot of UN resolutions, it kind of is one of the main components of it is ensuring that there is a lot of access to the border from, you know, surrounding countries.



Adiba described the varied experiences of borders and factors affecting access to Syria's borders.



I know from what we've seen so far, you know, it's very difficult for young men, like early twenties, mid-twenties, late-twenties. That's kind of I guess, like a high-risk age to be trying to leave... Either they are called to... serve in the Syrian Army or they are just at that age, they're not coming back...



**For women, I think
it's been a bit easier**



Adiba

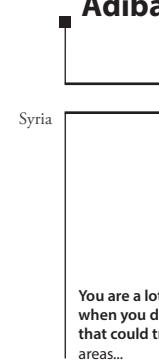
For women, I think it's been a bit easier...
if you want to come to Europe, make sure
you have one of your children at least
with you because that makes a big
difference in kind of how the host
community will treat you. It makes a
difference between staying in a tent or
like a caravan versus them actually
providing you with an apartment...



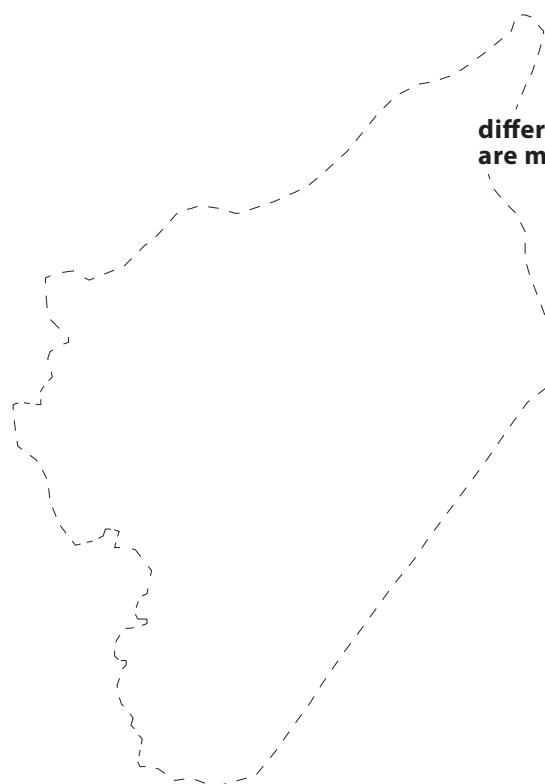
**you are bound and limited
when you don't have a
career that translates**



Adiba



You are a lot more bound and limited
when you don't have a type of career
that could translate well with different
areas...



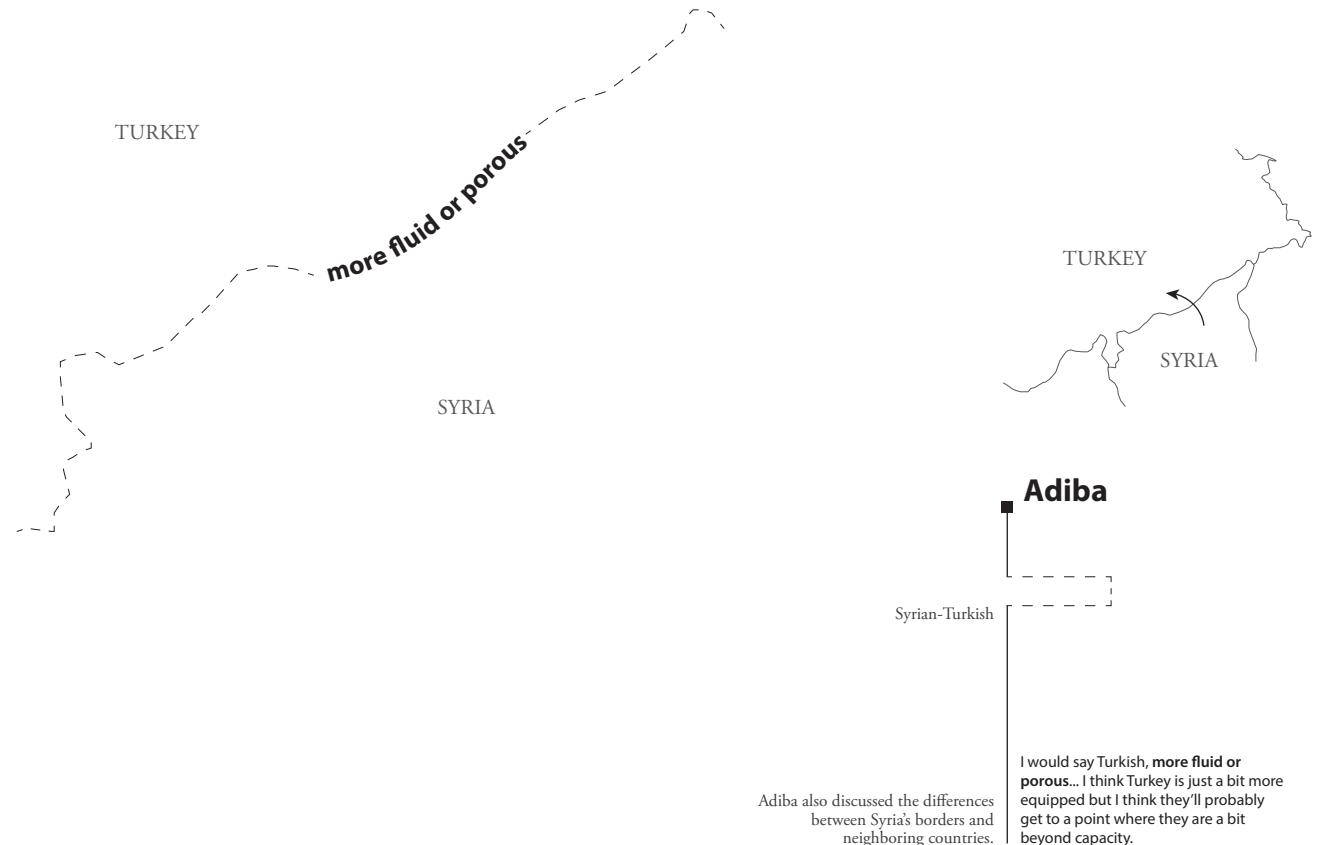
**different careers
are more versatile**

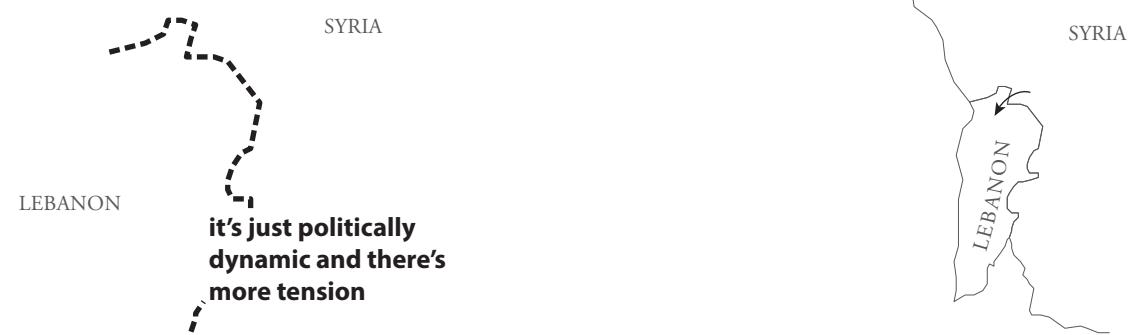


Adiba

Syria

There's economic boundaries, limitations... of how, how well you can thrive outside of Syria... A big component of that obviously, is being able to have a career that translates well, whether it's engineering or medicine, or you know, law. Different careers, I mean, definitely are more versatile.





Adiba

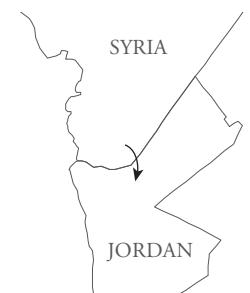
Syrian-Lebanese

The Lebanese more unpredictable... I know with Lebanon, it's such as, **it's just more politically dynamic as well and there's a bit more tension** between, you know, Syria and Lebanon generally. And so that, in itself, is more difficult in terms of aid as well and also with people.

temperamental, it's very finicky

SYRIA

JORDAN



Adiba

Syrian-Jordanian

Jordanian is very temperamental... it's very finicky... it definitely effects the type of aid delivered in and out and also people leaving... Syrians are being [prevented] for the most part right now from Syria into Jordan... it's not to say that Jordan hasn't been a good host community, it's just that they are over capacity. They are bubbling over with refugees of all kinds: Iraqis, Palestinians, Syrians.

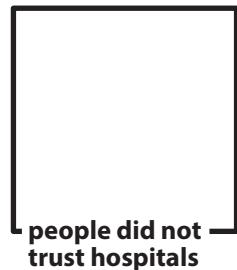
Individual Maps
Amal Personal



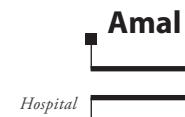
Amal

When the Syrian revolution erupted in March 2011, I was holding a teaching position at Aleppo School of Medicine, and preparing for a PhD advance degree in histopathology. My previous experience with the Syrian regime's brutality prevented me initially from direct involvement in the revolution.

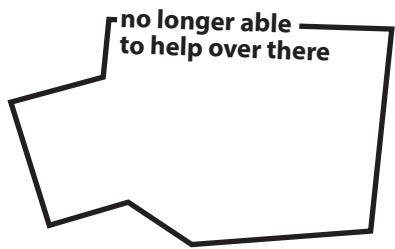
Amal is a Syrian doctor displaced in Turkey. His wife and daughter are separated in Egypt.



people did not
trust hospitals



After the famous "Central Square" massacre, in my own city Homs, I found myself obligated to help the civilians and work secretly in local field hospitals. **People did not trust going to the governmental hospitals**, fearing of arrest, torture, and even execution.



no longer able
to help over there



Amal

Old City, Homs

I continued to work secretly, while the situation continued to get worse... Eventually, the government managed to have a total siege over the Old City, which was the most active war zone then. I was no longer able to help over there.

my wife and daughter flee

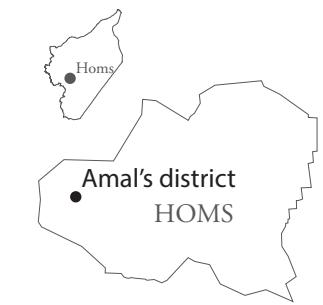


Syria and United Arab Emirates

Amal

My wife had quit her laboratory specialty training, and my daughter, who was only two and half years old, could not stop crying every time she heard a shooting or a bomb near our home... For those reasons and others, I had to make **my wife and daughter flee the country** toward UAE in May 2013.

I was unable to move in and out easily



Amal

Amal's district

My own district was under a sub-total siege and I was unable to move in and out easily.
Eventually...



Amal

*Borderland between
Shabiha and rebels*

I had to treat both sides of the war, the rebels and the Shabiha. My medical ethics and humanitarian side forced me to do so... While medically helping both sides of the war felt the right thing to do, this very issue placed additional pressure on me. Not only I had to avoid disclosing my role in helping the rebels from the government, but also I had to face increasing scrutiny from the rebels because of my help to the other side...

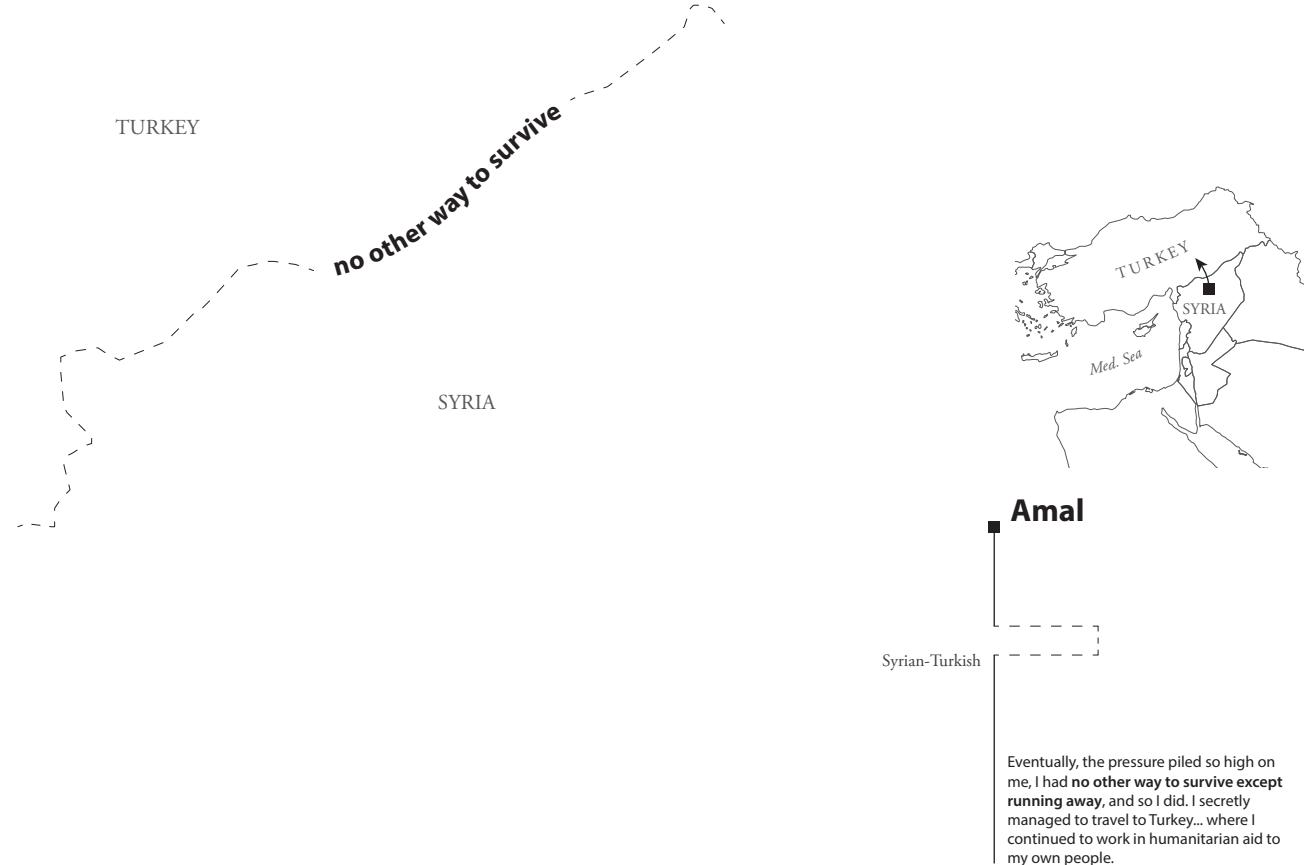
I was physically
hurt in one
incidence

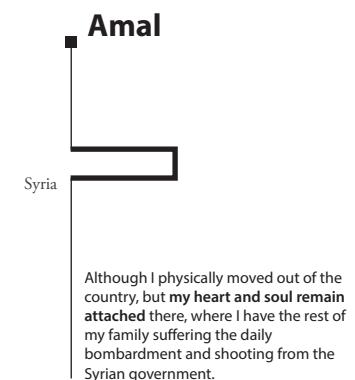
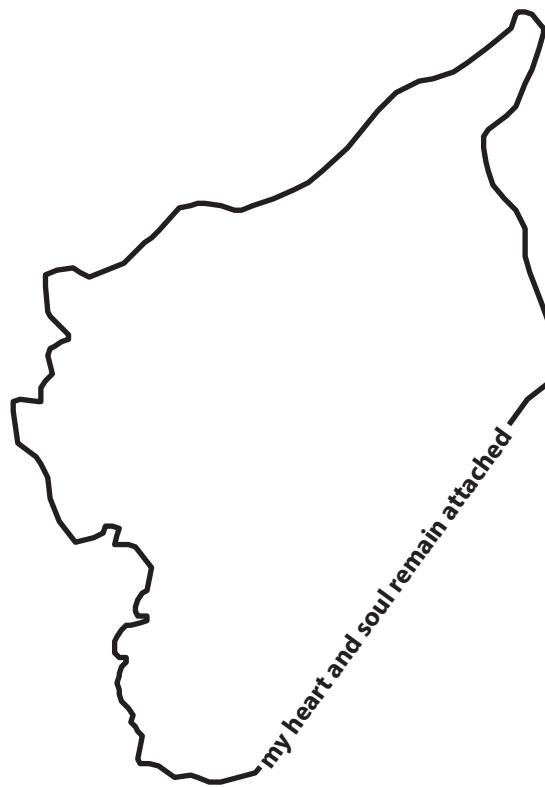


Amal

Amal's body

I received multiple threat letters, not only concerning myself, but also concerning my parents and my siblings. In fact, I was physically hurt in one incident.





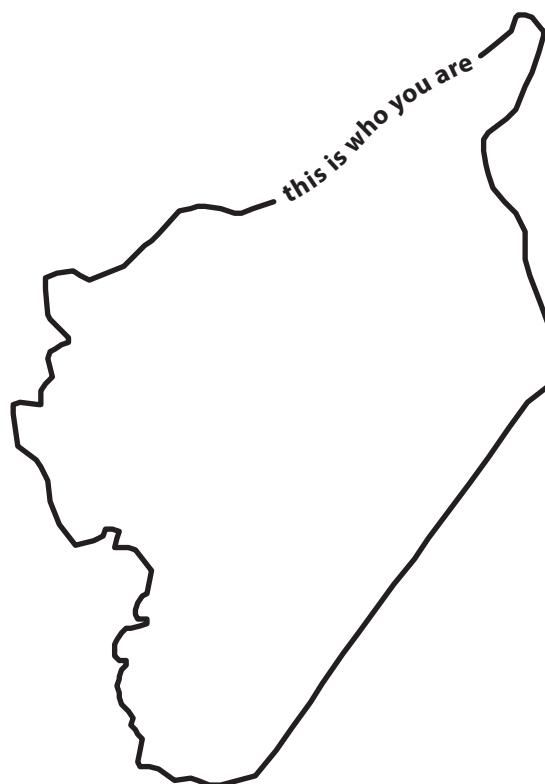
Individual Maps
Mohammed Personal



Mohammed

Mohammed is a Syrian refugee displaced in the United States.

I'm originally from the Damascus, Syria area... When the revolution started, I was working with the Syrian Center for Media and Development...



this is who you are



Mohammed
Syria

I got this feeling when it started it just like something walked around inside of me and was like, yeah, **this is who you are**. This is what should happen here too... [This is] the best place to be.

**they were forced
to release me
under pressure
from my family**



Mohammed

Prison

So I was arrested the first time for like
some relief work... They were forced to
released me under pressure from my
family because they have... um... some
connections

got me special
presidential
amnesty and I
was released



Mohammed

Later on... they caught on to my relief work so they arrested me again. Some family member, he spoke to the president and got me special presidential amnesty and I was released.

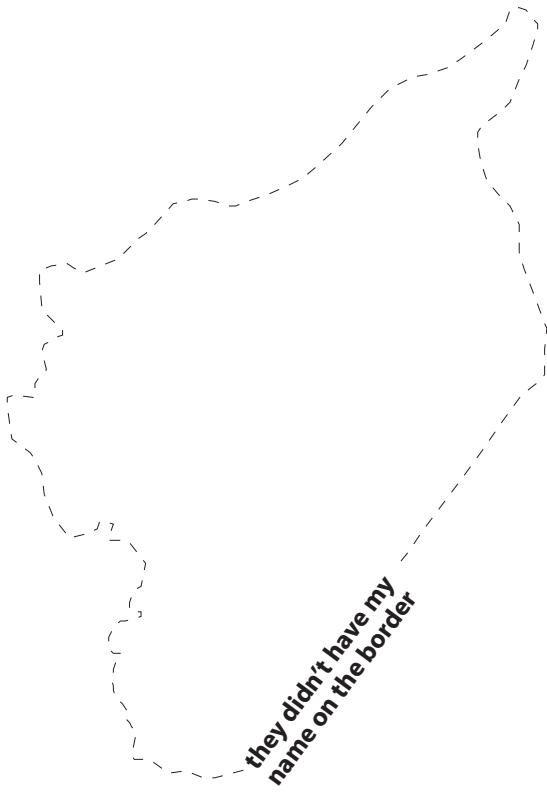
they decided to try to
kidnap my little brother,
so I decided to leave



Mohammed

Syria

I decided to hide but then they decided to try to kidnap my little brother to force, like to deliver myself so I decided to leave.



*they didn't have my
name on the border*



Mohammed



Syria



I was lucky. They didn't really have my
name on the border and like my family
arranged like me, me getting out and just
like, everything after.



the only word that comes to
my mind is M-I-S-T-A-K-E



Mohammed

Syria

The only word that comes to mind when
I think about leaving Syria is mistake...
M-I-S-T-A-K-E... when you leave Syria,
you're not fully with the people, living
what they live, being under shelling,
bombing and under, facing what they
face in their daily lives...

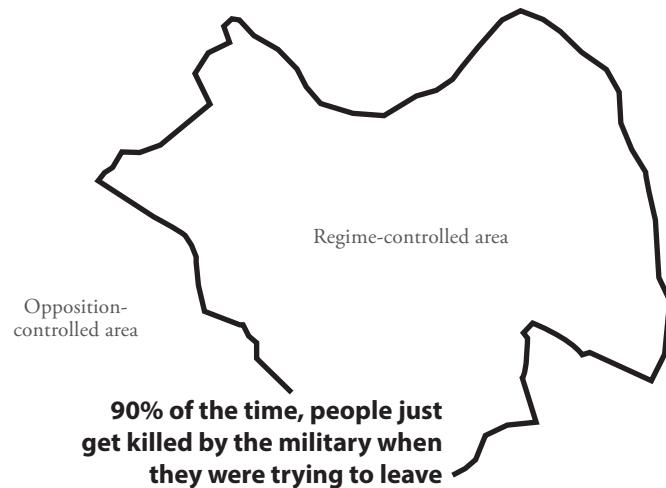
I asked Mohammed to describe life
outside of Syria in one word.

Individual Maps
Mohammed Contextual



Mohammed

Mohammed is an activist and Syrian refugee displaced in the United States. His personal and professional experiences shed light on borders crossed and experienced by refugees.

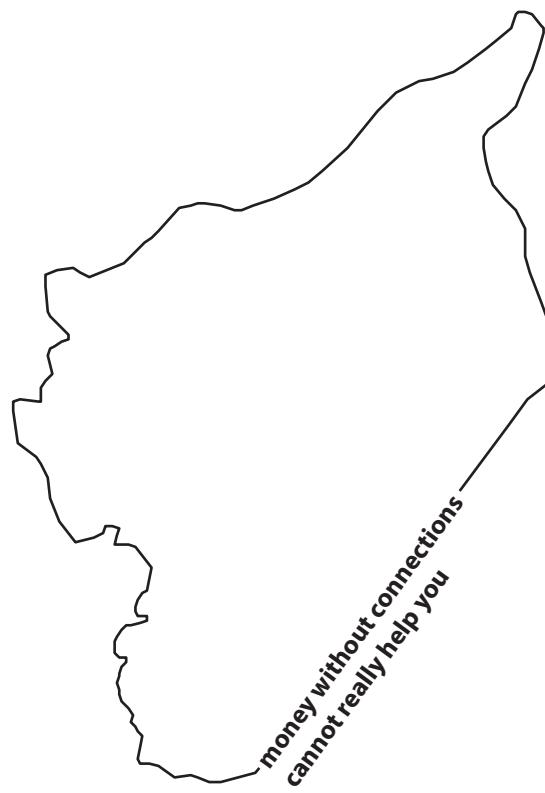


Mohammed

Controlled areas

Between any opposition controlled area or regime area, there are like borders... [in Damascus] 90% of the time, people just get killed by, by the military when they were like trying to leave through this route.

Mohammed began by talking about obstacles within Syria.



money without connections
cannot really help you



Mohammed

Syria

I asked Mohammed to describe the Syrian border and factors involved in crossing it.

Even if you have money, you need connections. **Money without connections cannot really help you...**



Mohammed noted that these factors change over time.
And now even money with connections like, it's so hard to get anyone out...

women and children
have an easier time
crossing any border



Mohammed

Syria

Women and children have an easier time crossing any border as opposed to a young adult male... Yeah, that's true.

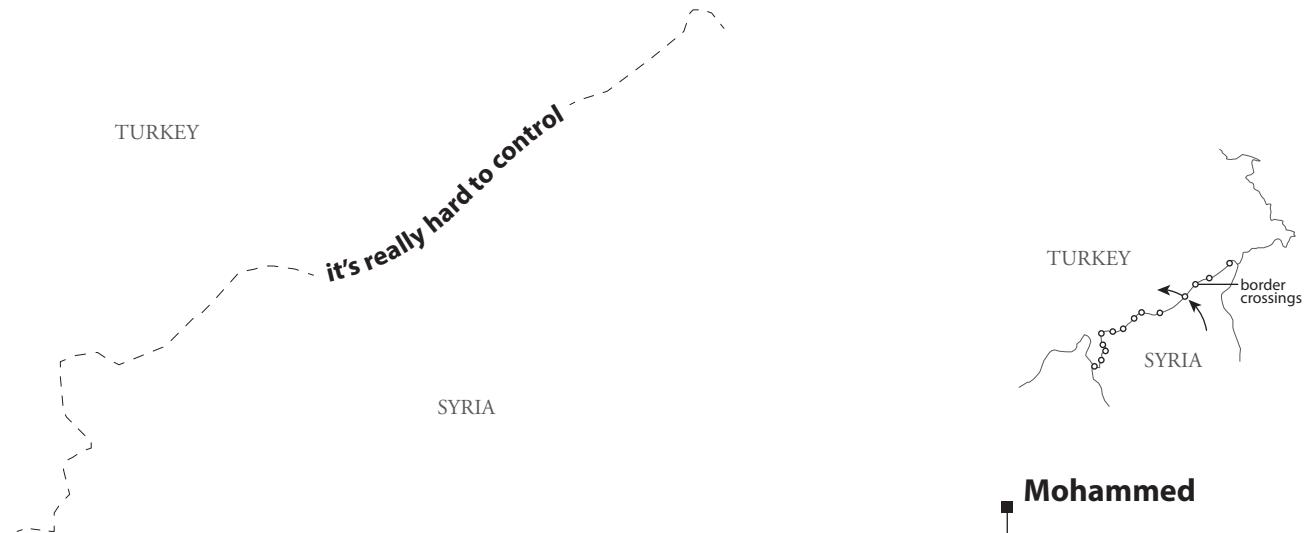


Mohammed

Syrian-Lebanese

Later on... they put more checkpoints between Damascus and Beirut... you have to go through the mountains and take backroads through villages... It's like walking into a mine field

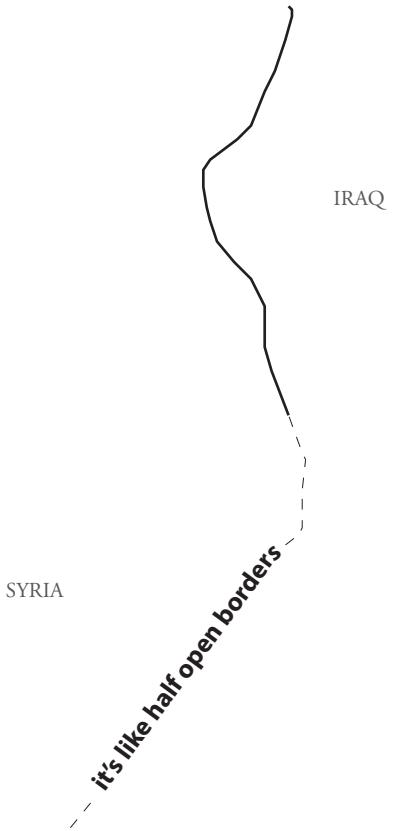
Mohammed described each of Syria's neighboring borders separately.



Mohammed

Syrian-Turkish

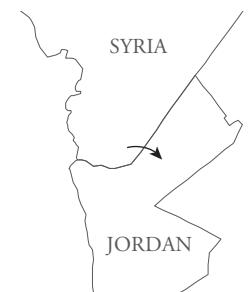
With Turkey, it's so different. Their border's like almost 800-900 kilometers so it's really hard to control... So yeah, it is much easier to like go back... there's like thirteen official crossings



Mohammed

Syrian-Iraqi

The Iraqi-Syrian border, it's like, it's kind of depends on which half. Half that, I say fairly controlling. It's like half open borders.



Mohammed

Syrian-Jordanian

On the south side, the Jordanian-Syrian borders, it's totally one hundred percent controlled by the, by the Jordanian government. **No one or nothing goes in and out** unless the Jordanian intelligence knows about it...

Individual Maps
Hannah Personal

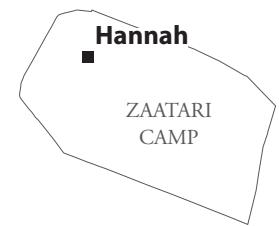


Hannah

Hannah lives in Amman, Jordan and works in Zaatari refugee camp for an international NGO. As a foreign humanitarian aid worker, Hannah faces her own personal borders and boundaries.



I've never really
felt unsafe

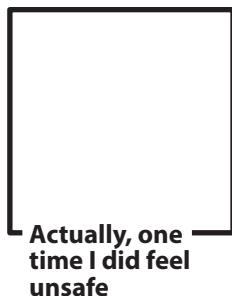


Hannah

Hannah's body

I asked Hannah about her personal
feelings of safety in the camp.

I've never really felt unsafe. I would say
at first, I was more uncomfortable just in
the amount of attention you get...



Actually, one time I did feel unsafe

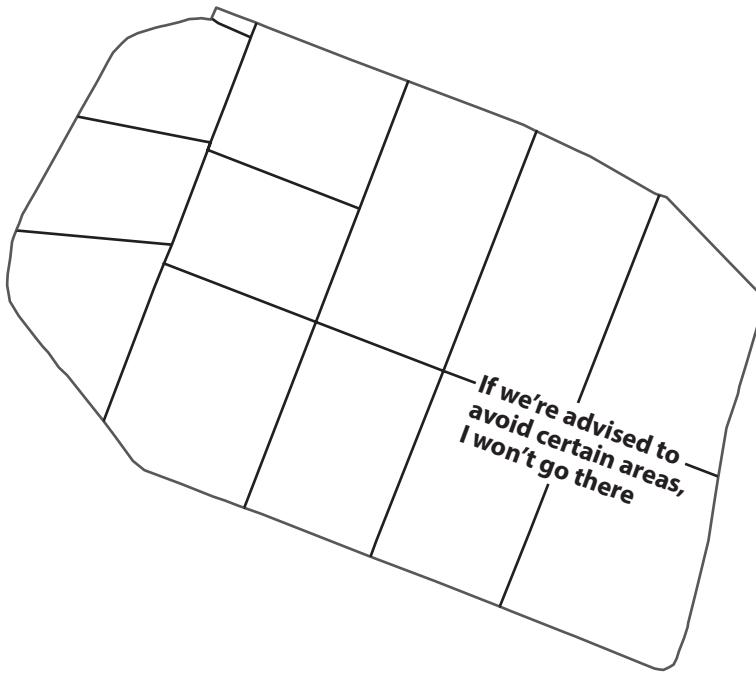


Hannah

Hannah's body

A moment later, Hannah recalled a specific event.

Actually, one time I did feel unsafe. We were walking down Market Street. It was, there was probably a group of five girls... young boys, were like surrounding us and trying to touch us. Not in any sexual way just like wanted, I don't know... see what they can get away with.



Areas in Zaatari refugee camp

SYRIA

Zaatari Camp

JORDAN

Hannah

Hannah expanded on her feelings of safety and comfort within the camp.

There's not really an area that I wouldn't go generally in the camp... If we're advised to avoid certain areas because there's like groups gathering, then yeah, of course, I won't go there... But in general, if the situation is calm, there's not really an area of the camp that I wouldn't go.

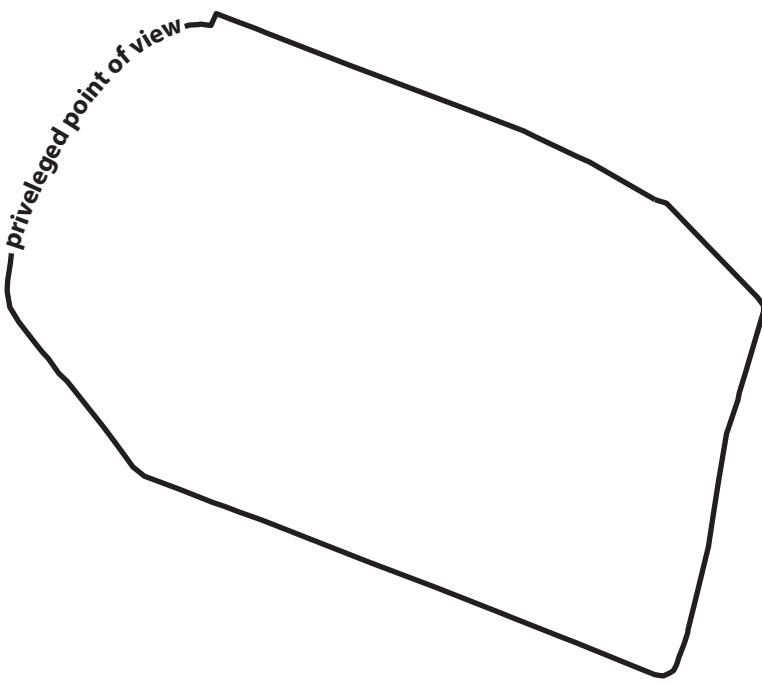
**they'll ask you
in their homes
for tea or coffee**



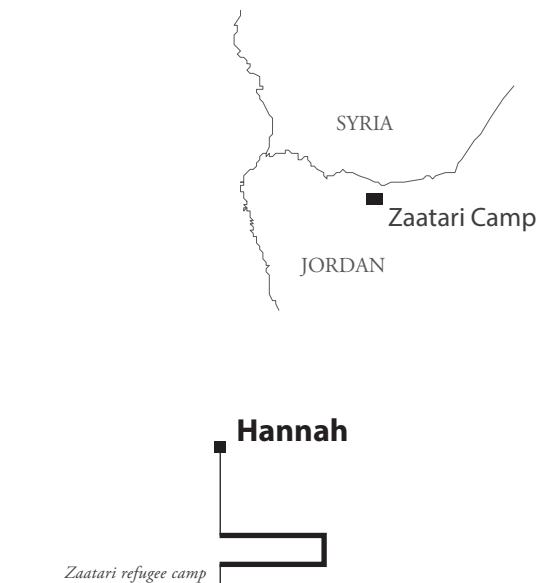
Hannah

Home in Zaatari refugee camp

Most people are friendly and very welcoming, you know, **they'll ask you in their homes for tea or coffee...** I feel very welcome actually walking around rather than uncomfortable or unsafe.



privileged point of view



Hannah

Zaatari refugee camp

After she discussed her personal safety as an outsider, Hannah acknowledged her separation as an outsider.

I mean, that's coming from a foreigner's perspective... I think it's generally a safe place to be in but then again, I'm only there during the day and you know, I'm never there when it's dark and I'm always accompanied by a, usually, a male Jordanian staff person. So I guess that's coming from, you know, from a sort of **privileged point of view** in terms of my safety...

Individual Maps
Hannah Contextual



Hannah

Hannah works in Zaatari refugee camp as a GIS officer for an international NGO. Her work focuses on needs-based assessments and mapping the camp's infrastructure. Hannah's work illuminates several borders faced by Syrian refugees fleeing to Jordan.

Lthey are wary of anything having to do with the police

ZAATARI
CAMP

Hannah

Social boundary with police

They are **wary** of anything having to do with the police... People in general just worry like "oh maybe the police, if I say something wrong, they police will take away my caravan or my shelter or something." And also, I mean they're coming from a civil war where their government is bombing them...

At the time of the interview, Hannah's organization was mapping perceived safety within Zaatari refugee camp. They had difficulty recruiting participants because the project is funded by the community police.



**they definitely will
not walk alone when
it's dark**

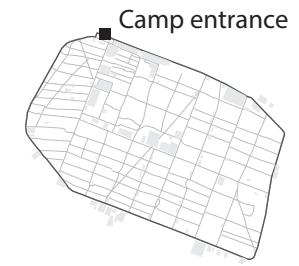
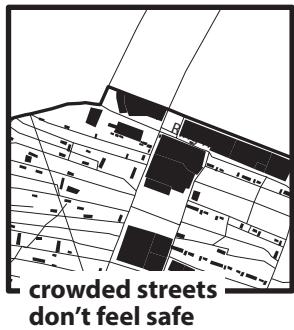


Hannah



We had a group of women and the big thing was at night time... either **they definitely will not walk alone when it's dark** and some, just not at all even if they were accompanied by a brother or other relative... It's also a cultural thing for women to not really be out after a certain time... they feel more unsafe during that time.

Hannah's first focus group consisted of adult, Syrian women in the camp.

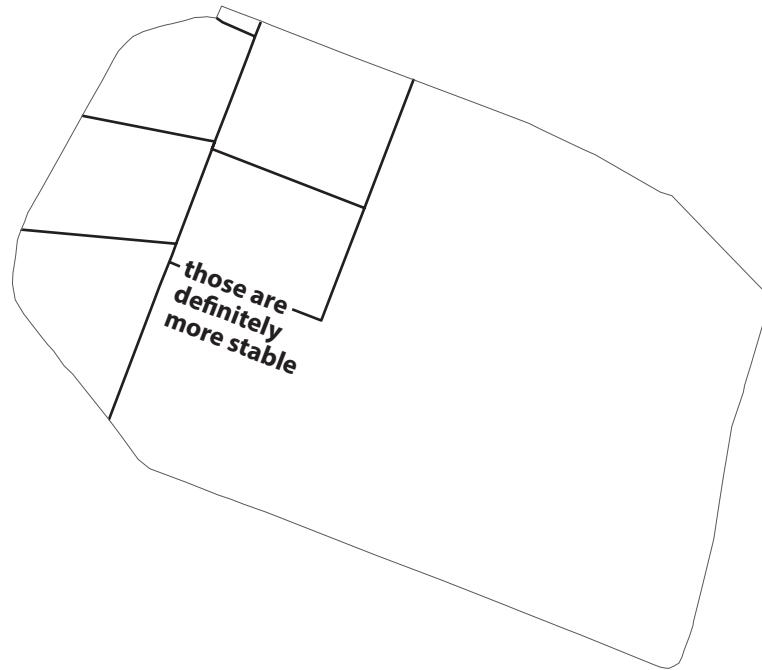


Hannah

Zaatari camp entrance

The women highlighted particular areas where they won't go, where they feel unsafe.

But as far as [safe] areas, some streets that are really crowded that don't feel safe. I think someone mentioned that they feel like someone might steal, try to steal something from them... the main entrance of the camp because again, there are a lot of cars and there's not a separate area for pedestrians...



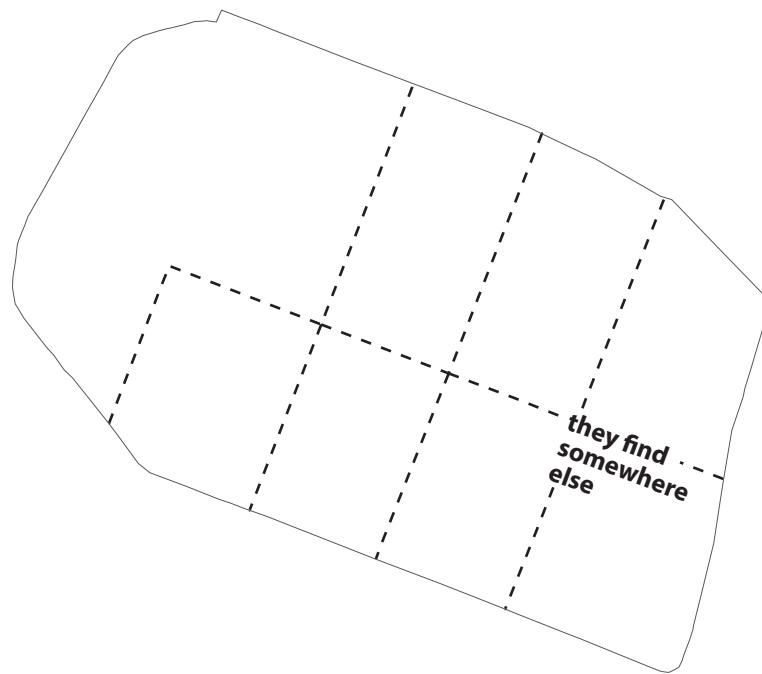
Old Camp districts in Za'atari

Hannah described the camp's 12 districts. Each district is supported by several amenities such as kitchens, water stations, mosques, and schools.



Hannah

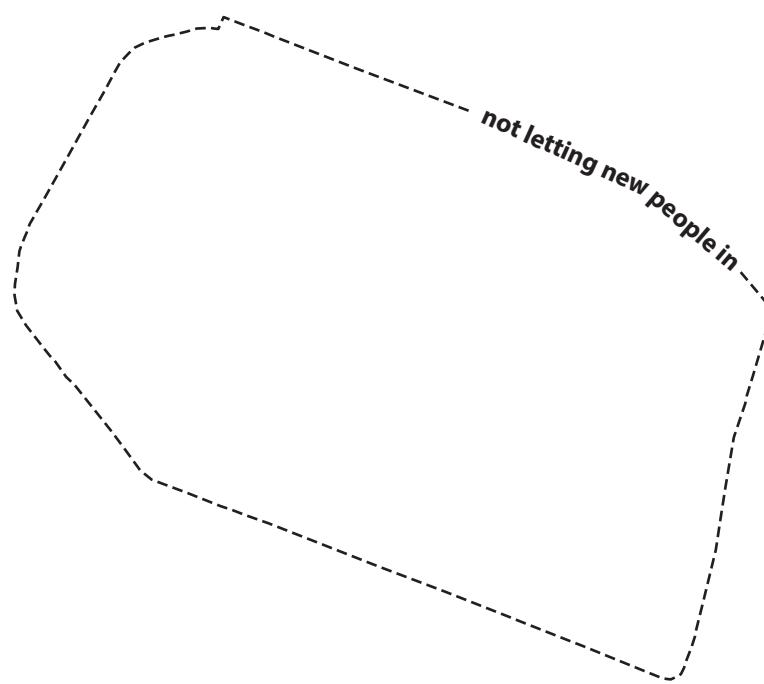
There's what they call the "Old Camp" which is like five districts that have been there the longest and so **those are definitely more stable**. Populations don't really fluctuate, you know? People don't really go in and out as much of those districts because they are more permanent.



Hannah

Zaatari camp districts

But the newer districts... When people first arrive, they're usually assigned to one district and then they probably stay there for a bit and then if **they find somewhere else** that's closer to family or friends then they would move to another district.

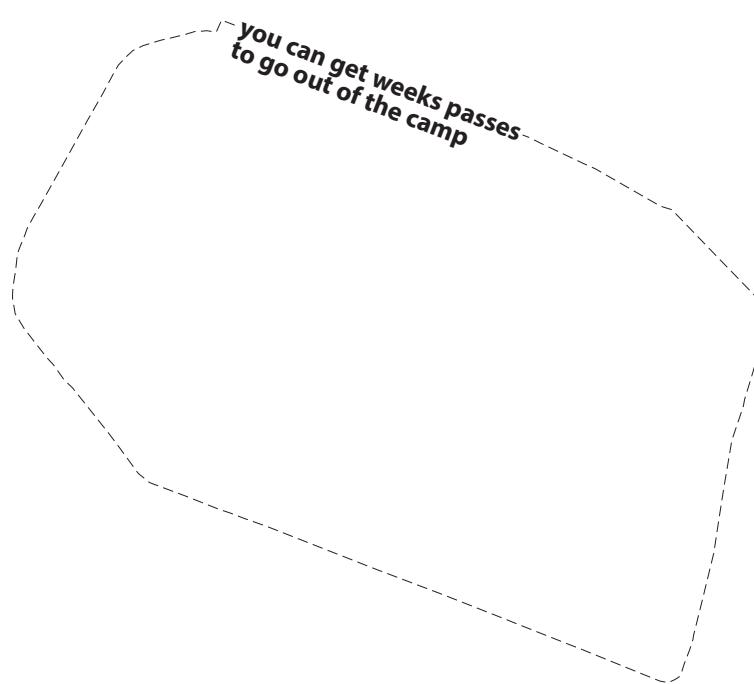


Hannah

Zaatari refugee camp

She noted changes in the number of refugees allowed into the camp.

I don't know if it's at capacity but the authorities are not really taking on, you know, **not letting as many new people in**. Basically, you can get into Zaatari if you have like maybe family members that live there so you can, you know, family reunification. And also, war wounded people...

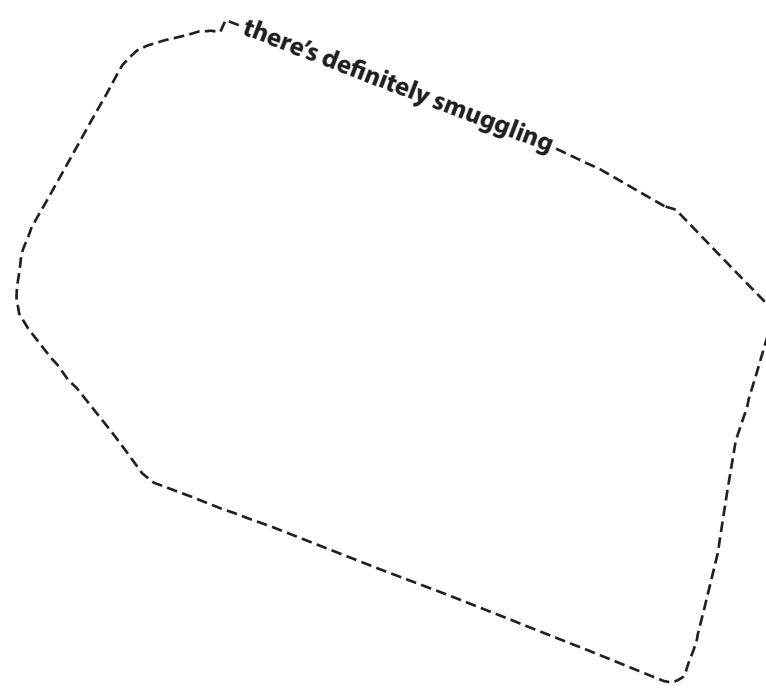


Hannah

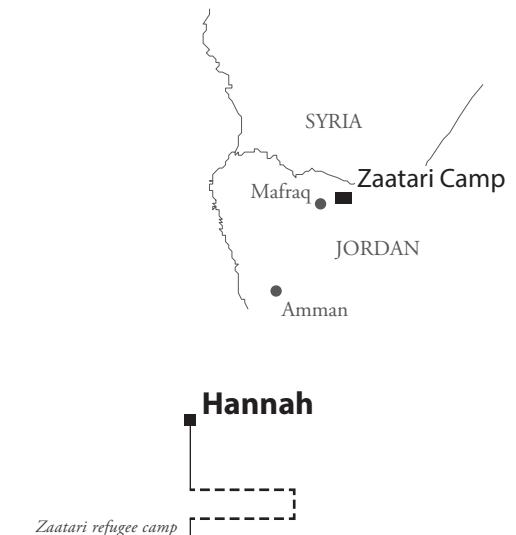
Zaatari refugee camp

In addition to inward flows, Hannah also mentioned flows out of the camp.

People are also leaving the camp... quite frequently. You can get day or week passes to go out of the camp and then come back...



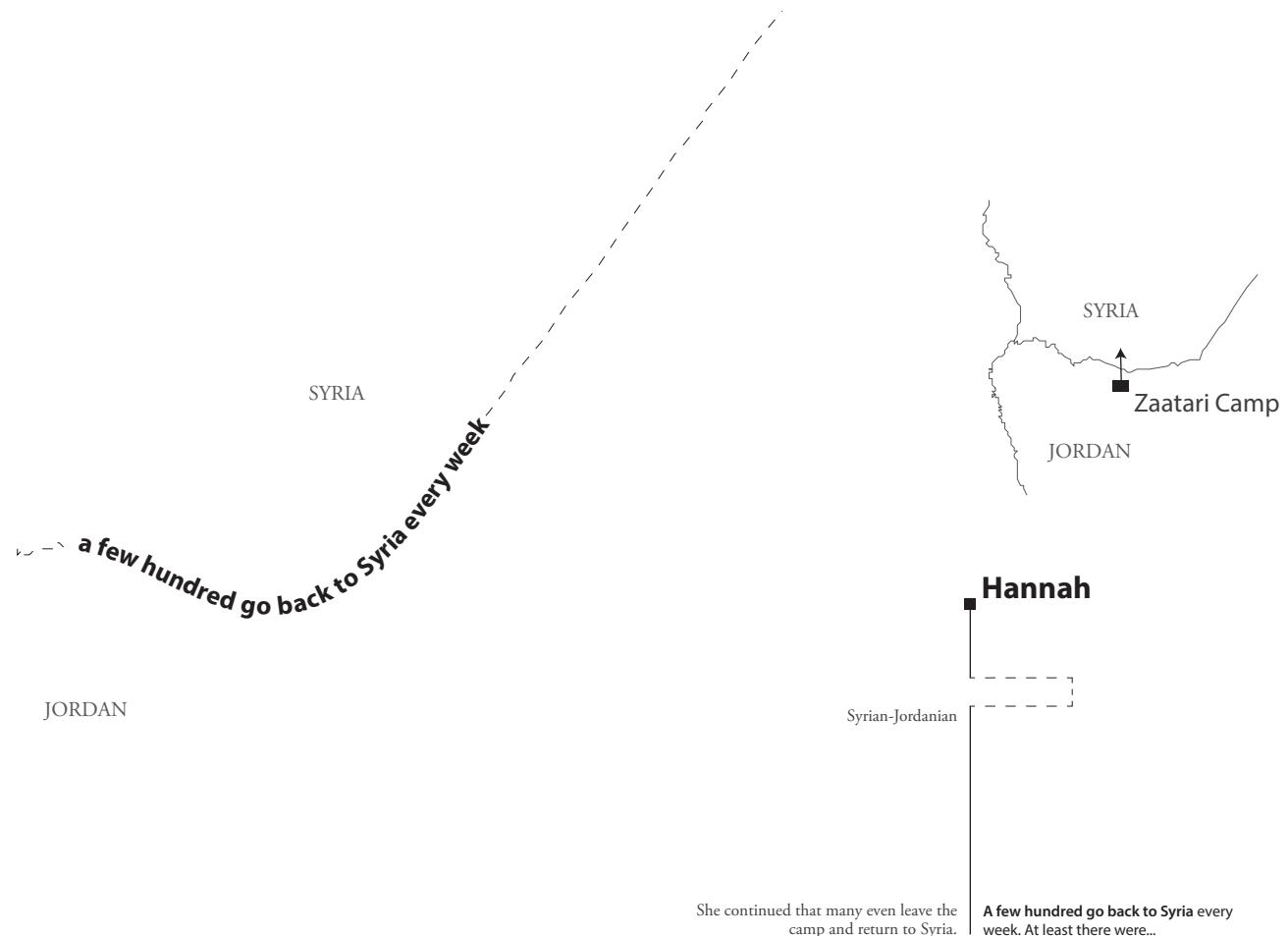
'there's definitely smuggling'

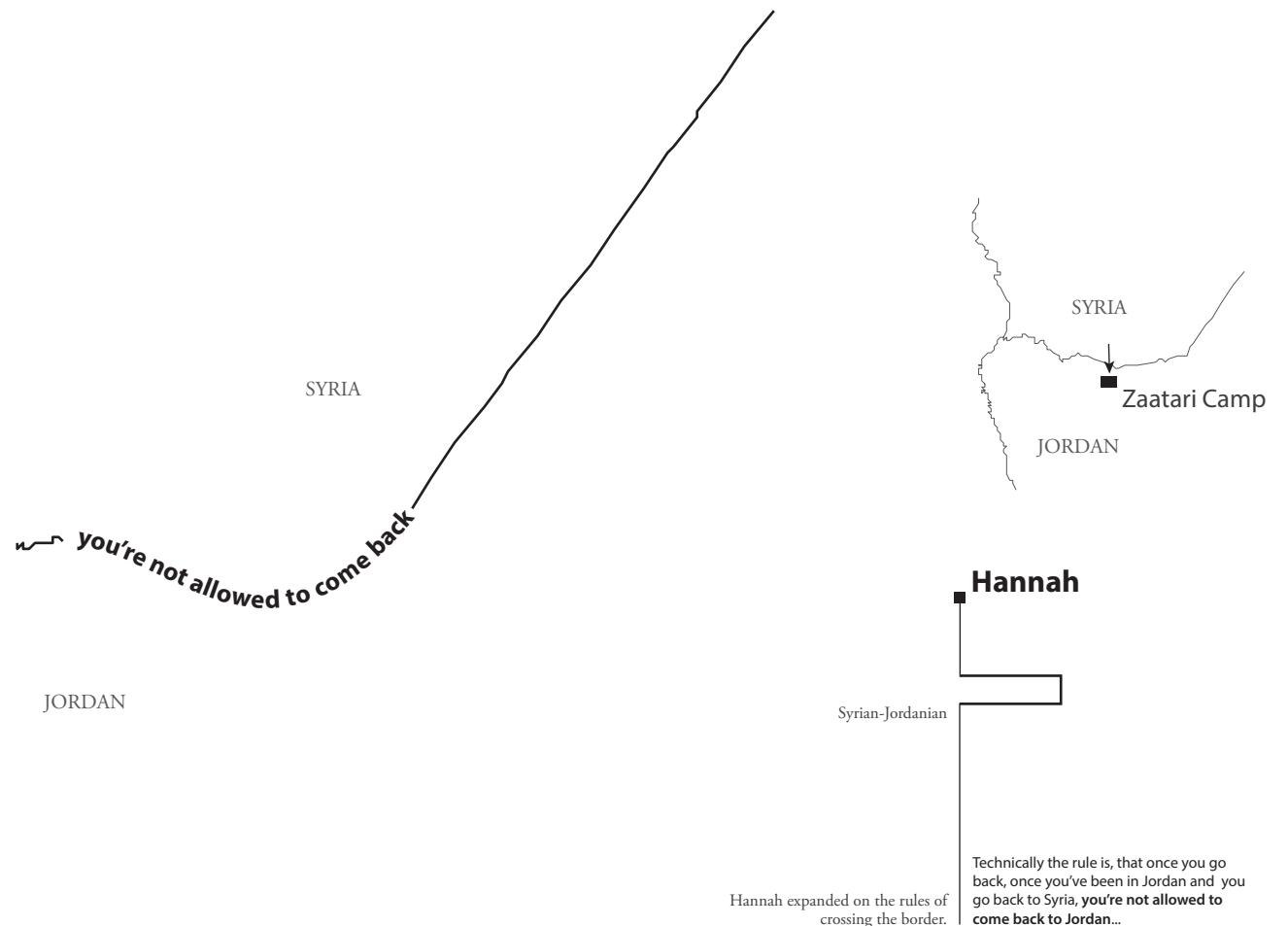


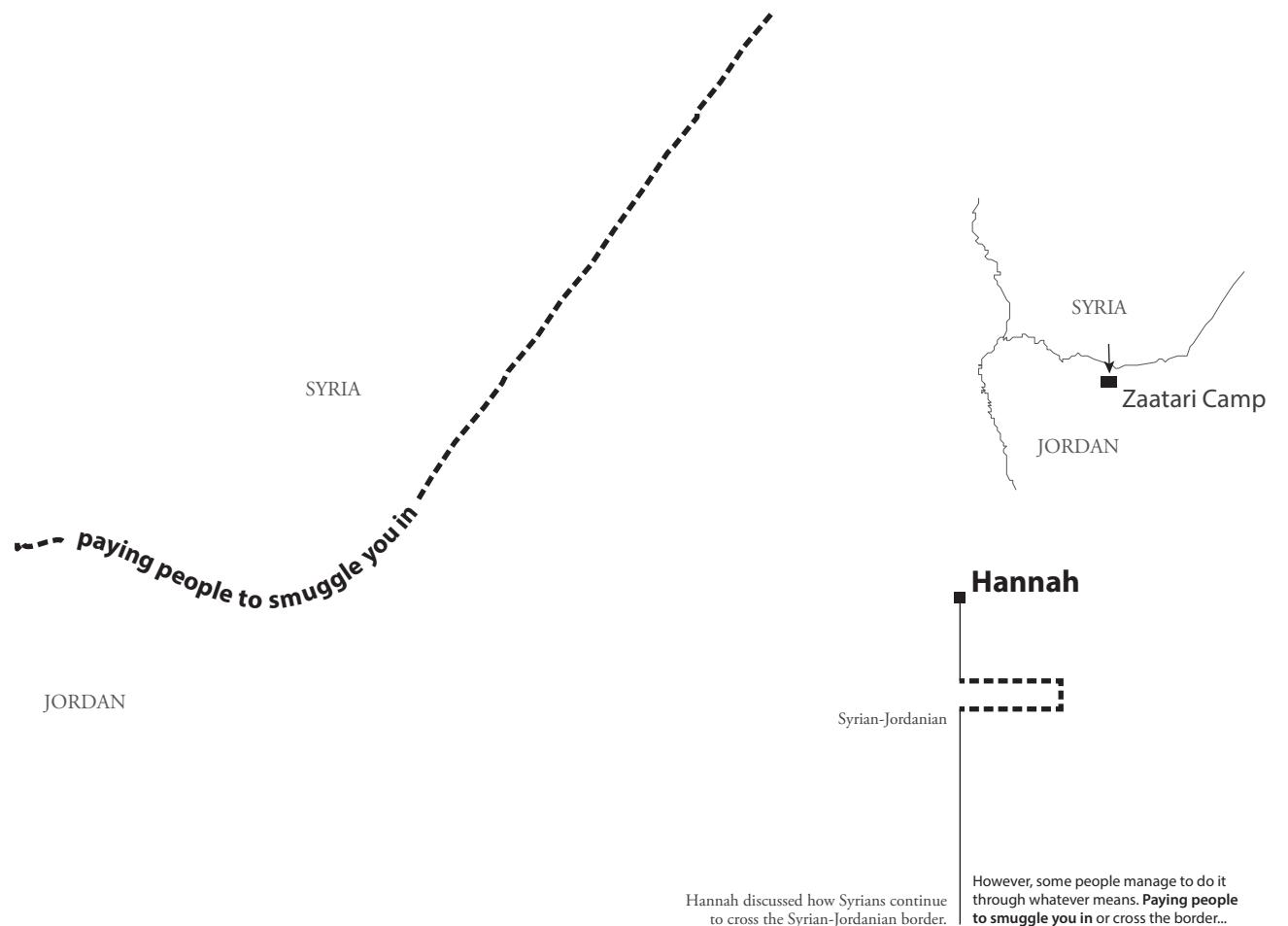
Zaatari refugee camp

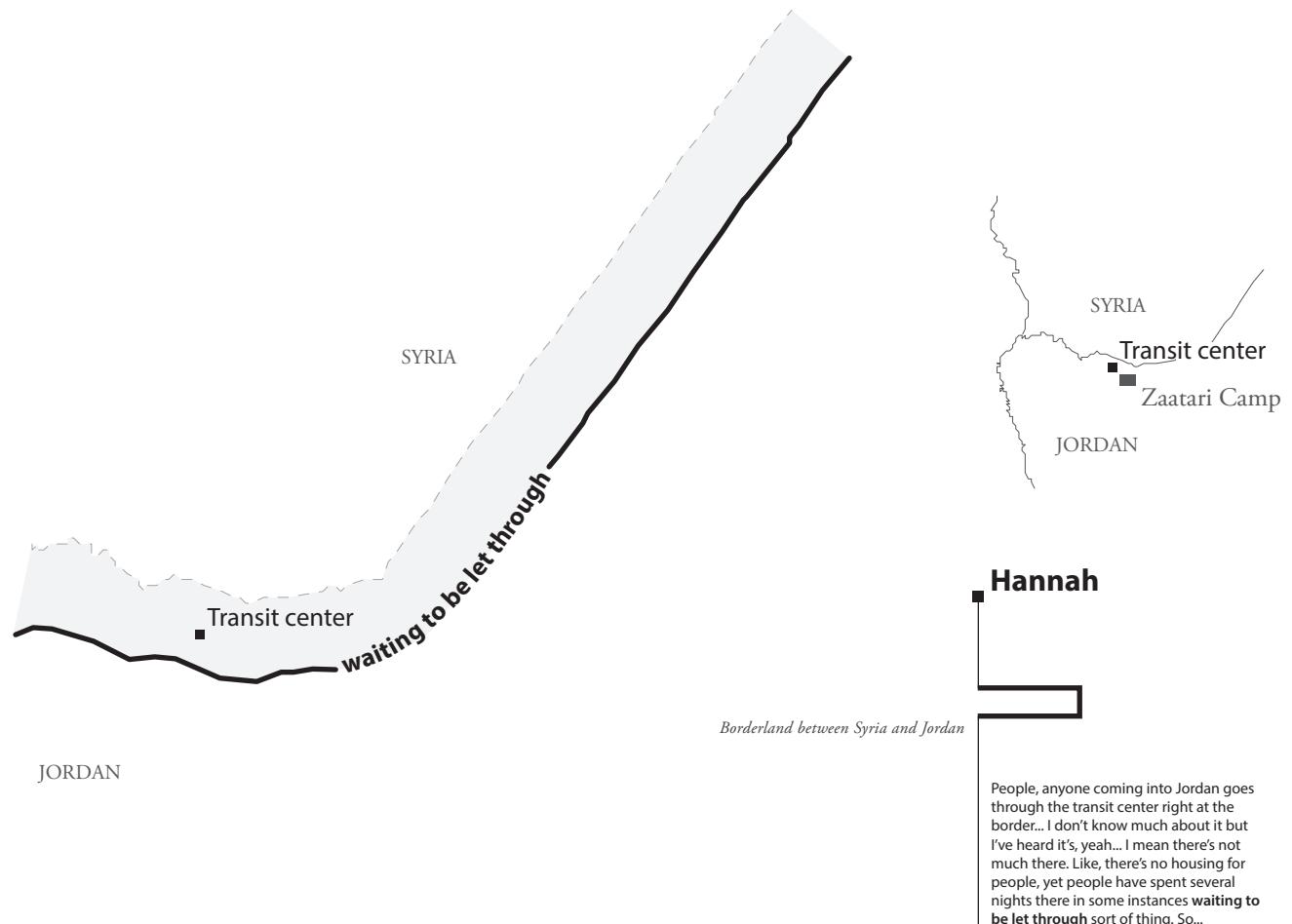
Hannah

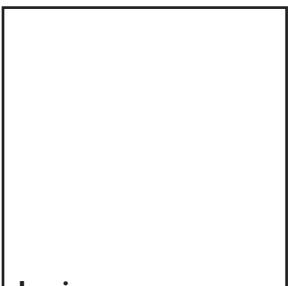
There's definitely smuggling of... mostly of like items that are distributed within the camp and then taken out of the camp and sold for money...











**having a caravan
is definitely more
secure**



ZAATARI
CAMP

Hannah

The home, caravan

I asked Hannah about safety and the home.

Having a caravan is definitely more secure. You can lock it from the inside... I think **perceived safety can go a long way**... I think, generally, people will feel safer in closer proximity to their household because most people are situated, living around family and people that they know... they're not alone

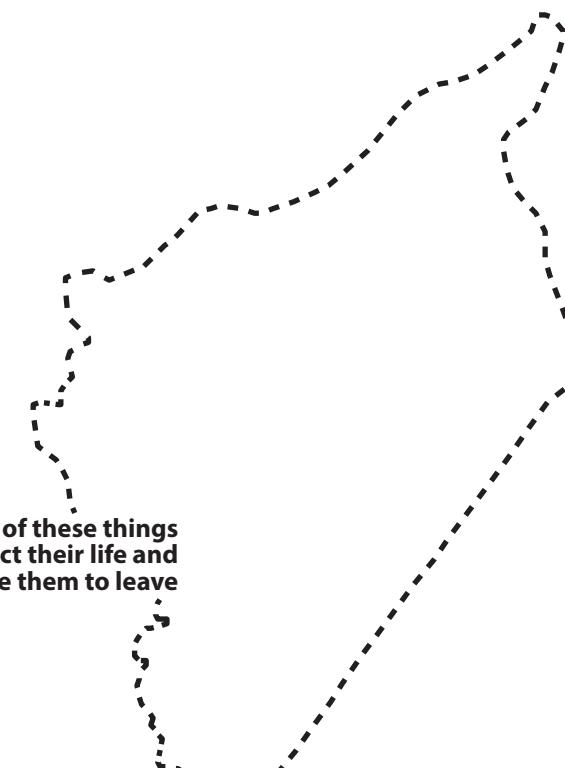
Individual Maps
Fateh and Baraq Contextual



Fateh and Baraq

Fateh and Baraq are Jordanian humanitarian aid workers. They work in Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. Together, they provide insight into various borders faced by Syrian refugees, before, during, and after their arrival in Jordan.

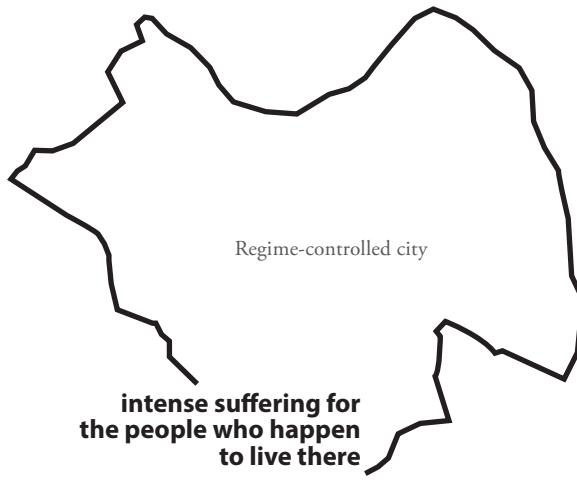
**All of these things
affect their life and
force them to leave**



Fateh and Baraq

Syria

Daily life in Syria is horrible and not stable at all... there is conflict and shelling by airstrike... prices of food... are increased, the service is going down... there is a lack of food, medicine, water... **All of these things affect their life and force them to leave...** heading to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq....

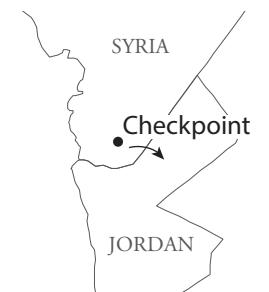


Fateh and Baraq

Regime-controlled cities

Villages, cities which are under the seige by the regime cause an intense suffering for the people who happen to live there. There is significant shortage in basic human needs such as food, water, shelter...

most difficulties
and constraints the
Syrians face are
the checkpoints



Fateh and Baraq

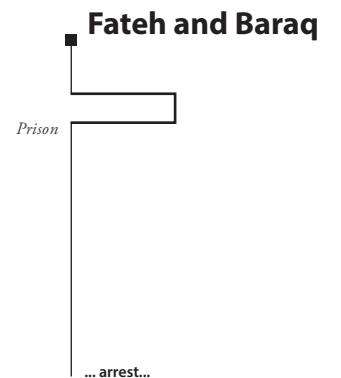
Checkpoints

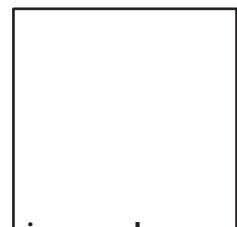
Fateh and Baraq discussed several
barriers encountered by Syrians.

Most difficulties and constraints the
Syrians face before leaving are, the
checkpoints...

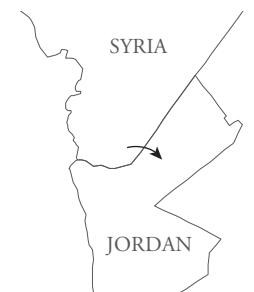


arrest

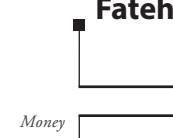




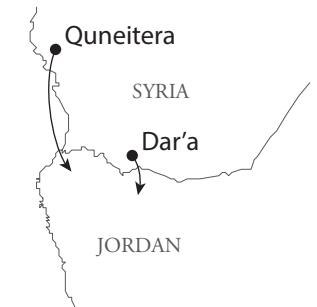
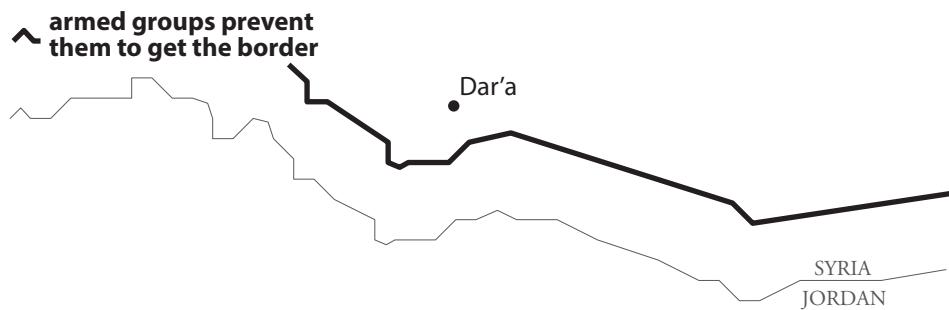
increased
transportation
cost considers a
constraint



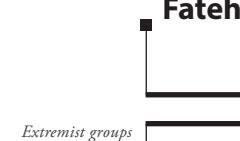
Fateh and Baraq



... lack of money to pay for transportation... increased transportation cost
considers a constraint.

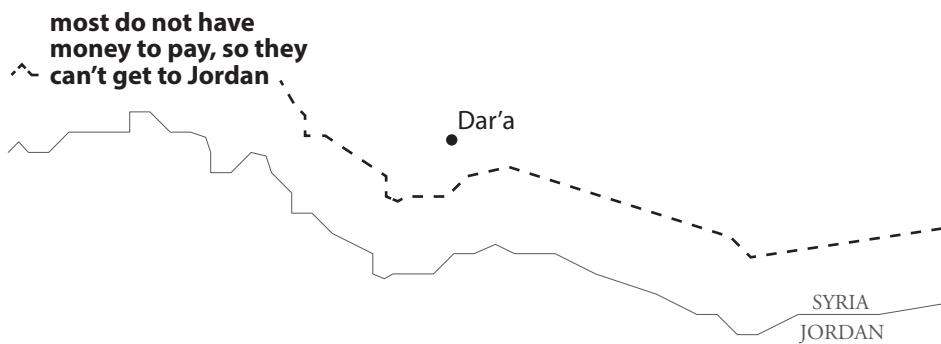


Fateh and Baraq



Armed groups as well consider a barrier for the Syrian, and prevent them to get to the border...Between the Syrian villages (Dar'a and Quneitera) and Jordan borders... there are extremist groups on that villages.

People, actors in the conflict affect the movement of Syrians.



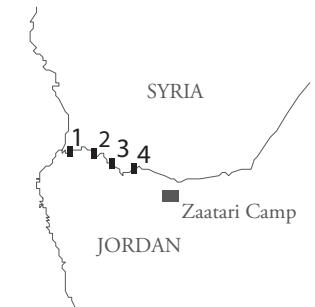
Fateh and Baraq

Bedwin clans

Villages from Dar'a-Izra' to the Beir Qasab in the south way in Syria are controlled by the Bedwin Clans, and that considers a barrier for the civilians because they have to pay for them and most of the civilians do not have money to pay, so at the results they can't get to Jordan.



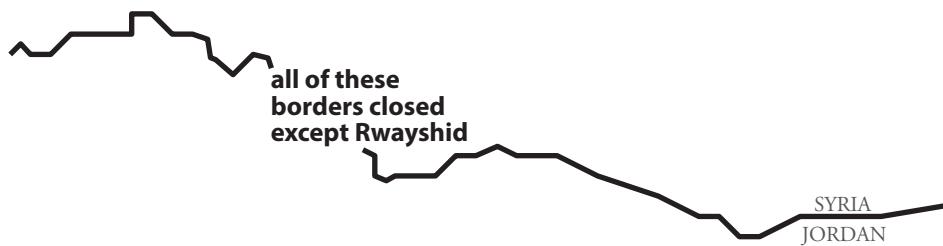
SYRIA
JORDAN



Fateh and Baraq

Syrian-Jordanian

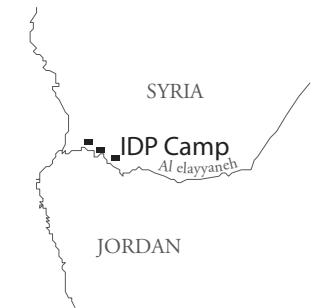
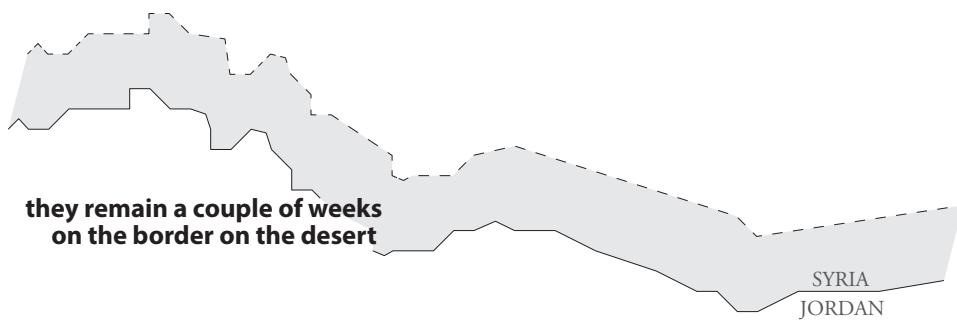
In the beginning of the Syrian crisis, there were four crossing points in Jordan, and the refugees had access to getting by these borders, and these borders called 1-Nassib, 2-Tall Shihab, 3-Ar Ramtha, 4-Rwayshid.
Syria's borders have changed over time.



Fateh and Baraq

Syrian-Jordanian

But in the beginning of 2014, all of these borders are closed except Rwayshid border and that is because of Jordanian government decision, and this decision affected on decrease the number of refugees, and the security issues affect on decrease the number as well.



Fateh and Baraq

Syrian-Jordanian borderland

For those that reach the border, Fateh and Baraq described the border as space, not a line.

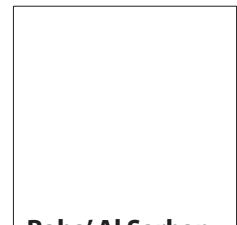
Several months ago, there were like 5000 refugee on the border waiting for the Jordan government approval to give them the permission to enter Jordan, so they remain a couple of weeks on the border... the Jordanian army and UNHCR distributed the food, water, and shelter during that time... they spent some days on the desert in area called Al elayyaneh...



Fateh and Baraq

Syrian-Jordanian borderland

Its worth to mention that generally civilians at the camp don't feel secure enough staying in the desert area. There is a lot of fear of being raped or attacked by mobs that do exist nearby... destabilizing the situation by terrifying innocent women and children.



Raba' Al Sarhan
they waited for
three days



Fateh and Baraq

Raba' Al Sarhan, reception center



After they cross the Jordan point
(Rwayshid), the Jordan army guide them
to a place called Raba' Al Sarhan... they
waited for 3 days

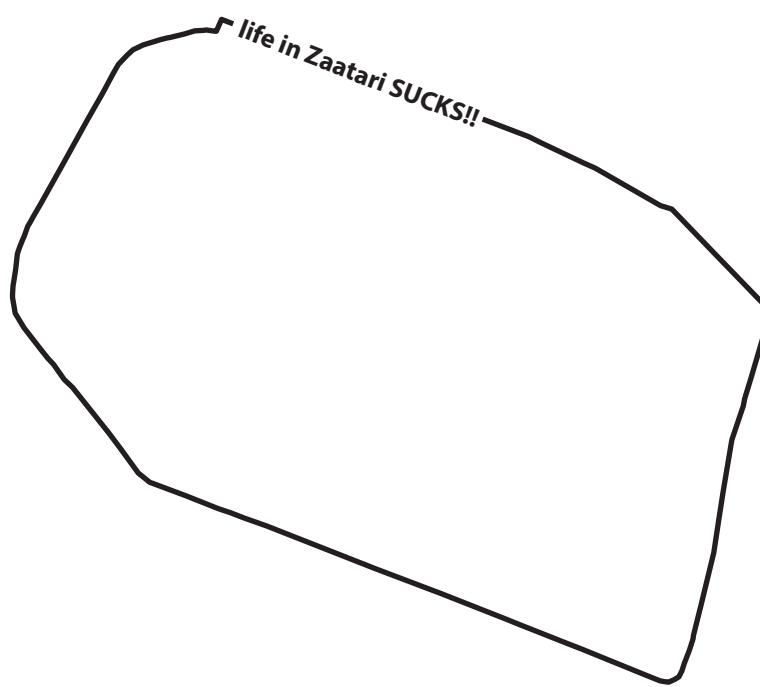
- they do an eye contact and register as a refugee



Fateh and Baraq

The body

There, they do the eye contact (eye print) and register as a refugee then they receive the UNCHR card... After these process, the police ride them to the camp by the police bus, and in the camp they get the tent...



life in Zaatar SUCKS!!

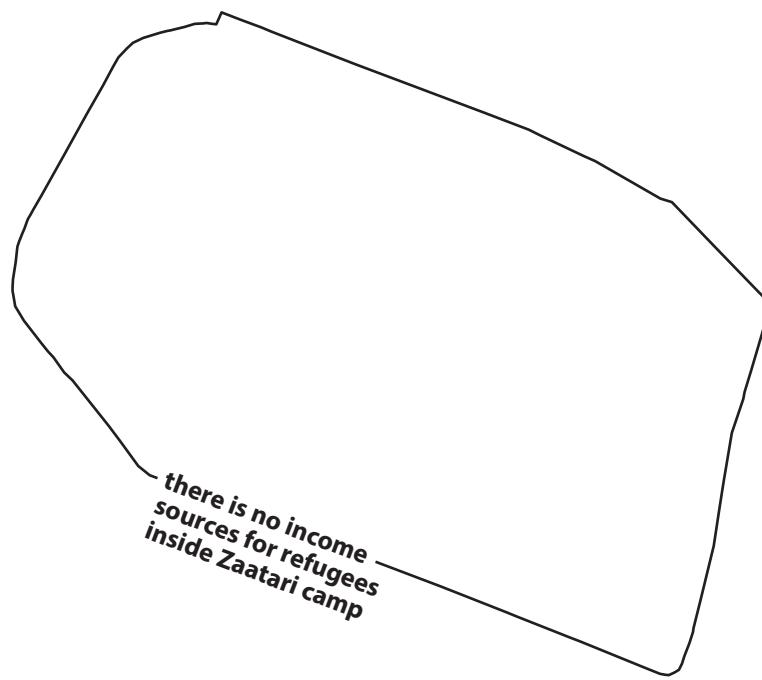


Fateh and Baraq

Zaatari refugee camp

I asked Fateh and Baraq to describe life
in the camp in one word.

Life in Zaatari SUCKS!! And for sure
difficulties are much more than
opportunities. Refugees live in tents and
caravans which are being extremely hot
during summer days and very cold and
unsafe during the cold weather...



*there is no income
sources for refugees
inside Zaatri camp*



ZAATARI
CAMP

Fateh and Baraq

Zaatari refugee camp

There is no income sources for refugees inside Zaatri camp but the voucher's they receive and working with NGO's inside the camp or self-employment...
They expanded further.

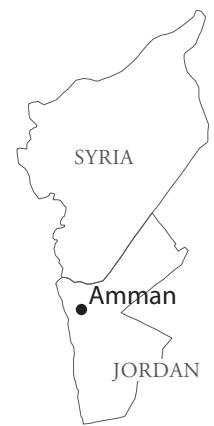


ZAATARI
CAMP

Fateh and Baraq

It's a refugee camp in desert you are free
to imagine the situation.

Individual Maps
Eva Personal



Eva

Eva is an American researcher working in Jordan for a start-up NGO. Eva faces her own borders in her line of work as a humanitarian researcher.



**it immediately
makes people
distrust you**

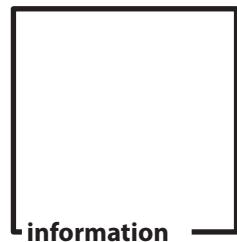


Eva

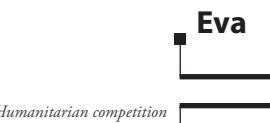
Eva's body

Yes, borders. I'm not sure really because it's incredibly difficult to be a humanitarian research and ask about borders. Because **it immediately make people distrust you...** we're not going to ask you anything about armed conflict... the political situation. We just want to know how many hours in a day do you have electricity....

I asked Eva about her encounters with Syrians as a humanitarian researcher.



information
sharing in
humatarian aid
is frigid



Humanitarian competition

Eva stressed the importance of open data in humanitarian situations and its current limitations in her work. The atmosphere of information sharing in humanitarian aid is unexpectedly frigid... so we're trying to get people to share their data but so far, it's a bit of an upward battle... It is like this sort of "ones-up-manship" that is about battling for, for contracts... from large donors...

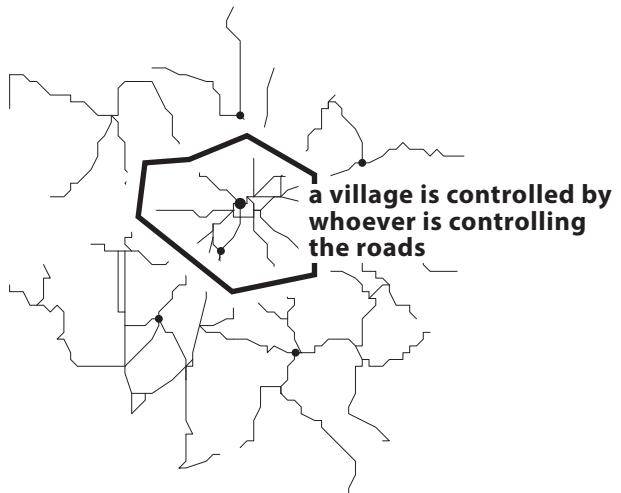
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Individual Maps
Eva Contextual



Eva

Eva is an American researcher working in Jordan for an NGO. Her work focuses on needs assessments and IDPs in the governorate of Idlib, Syria. Although her work stops at the international border, several other borders are apparent in Eva's story, many of which are inside Syria.

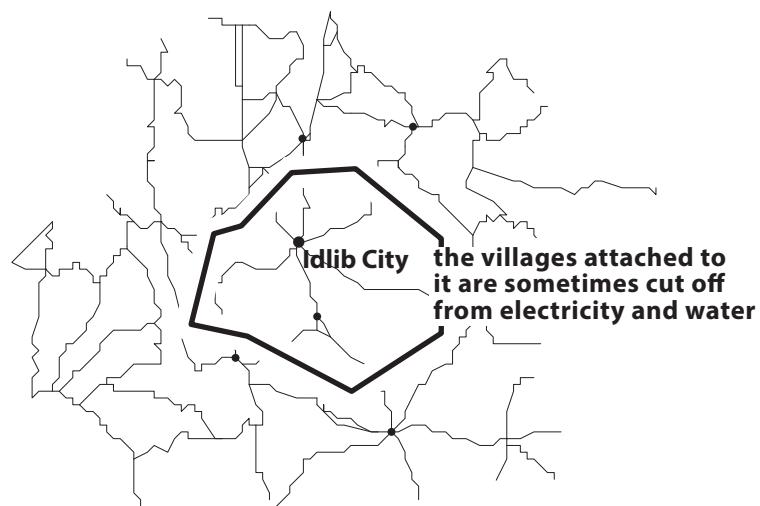


Eva

Controlled roads

What is needed differs extremely by locale... because the flow of resources is restricted essentially by whoever's in control, political control... So one thing you'll see in... Idlib... is that like, a **village that is connected to a city... is controlled by whoever is controlling the roads around that place...**

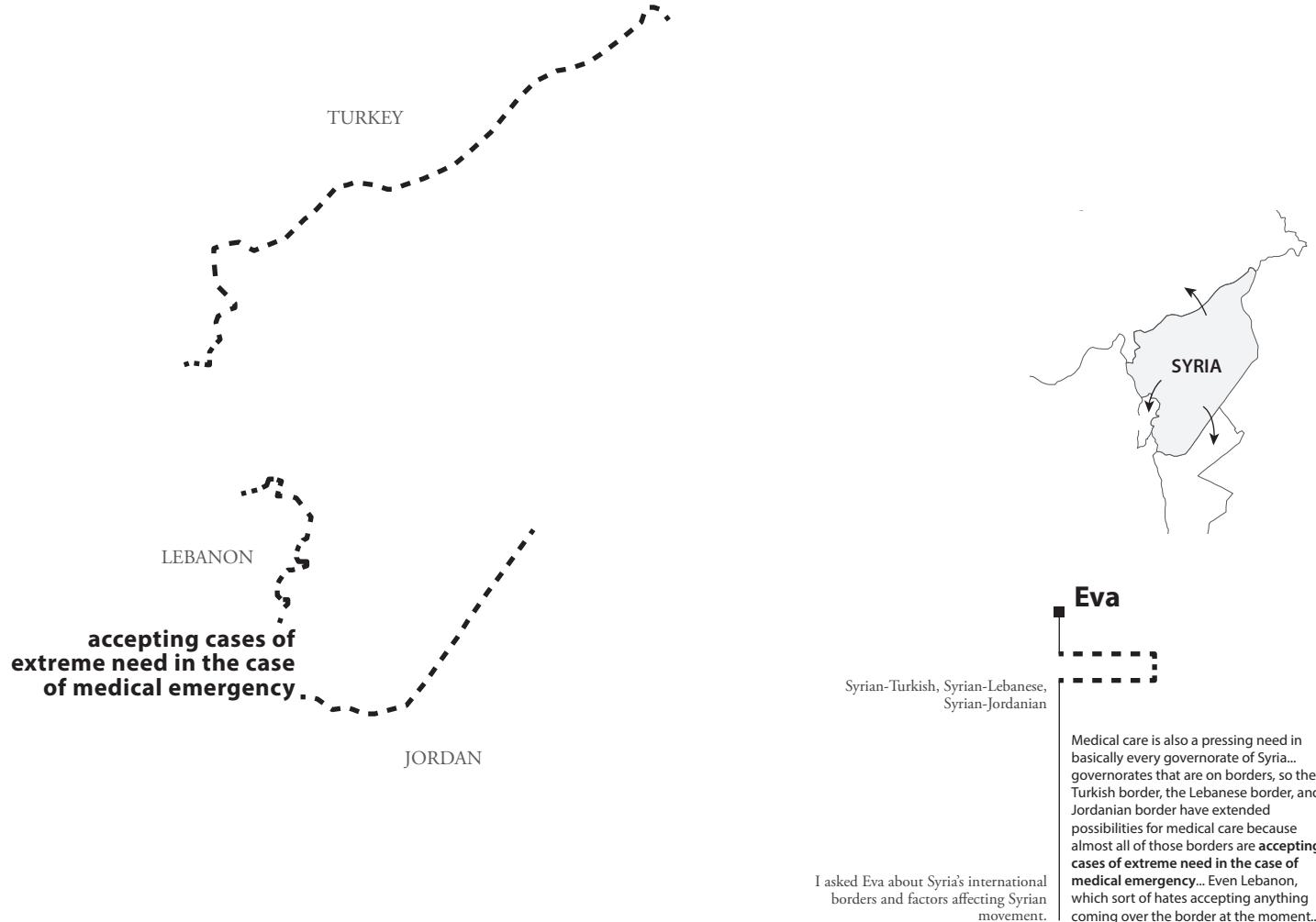
Eva discussed borders in relationship to aid delivery and resources.



Eva

Controlled roads

Idlib City, at the moment, is under government of Syria control and so the villages that are attached to it are sometimes cut off from electricity and water...



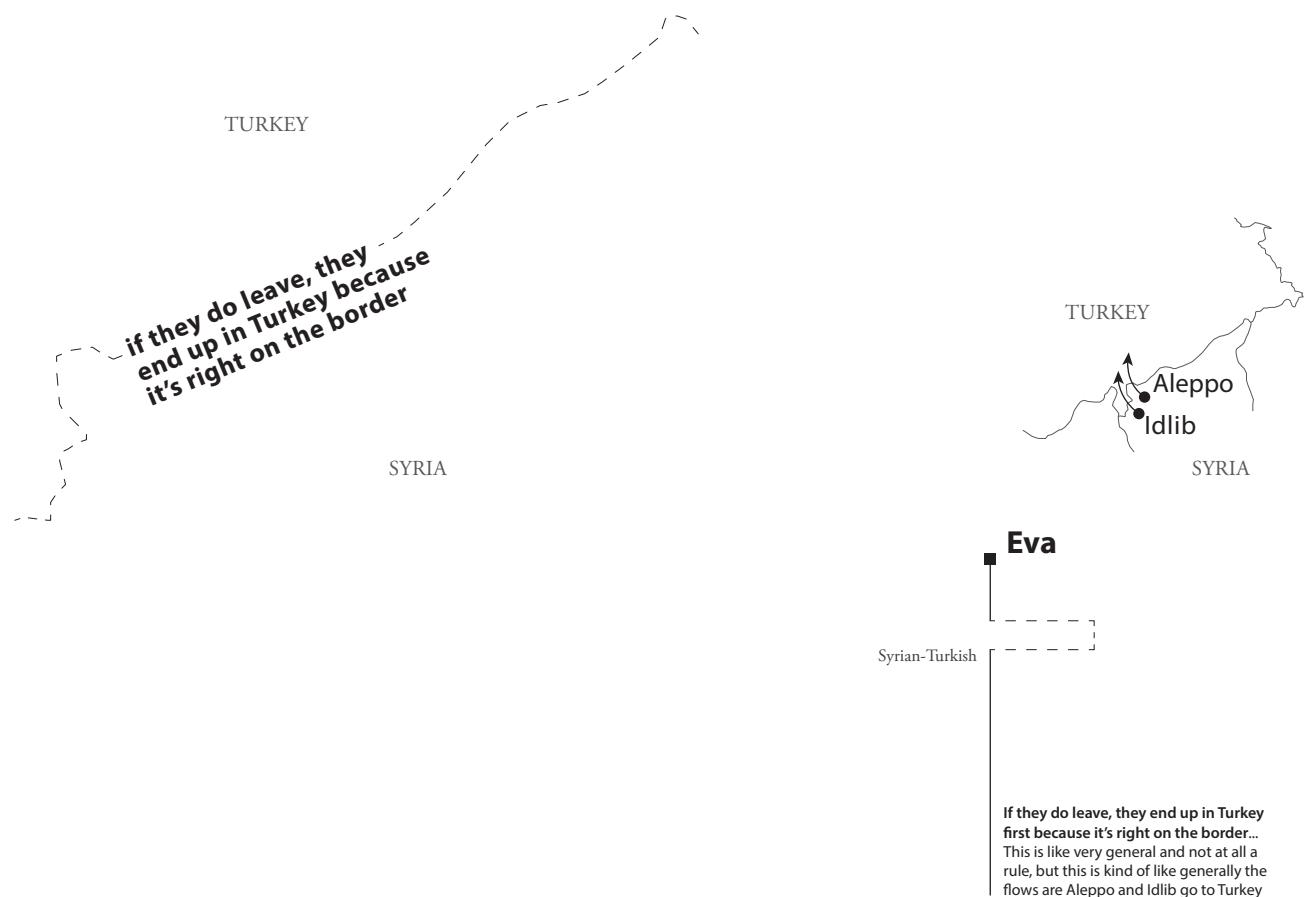


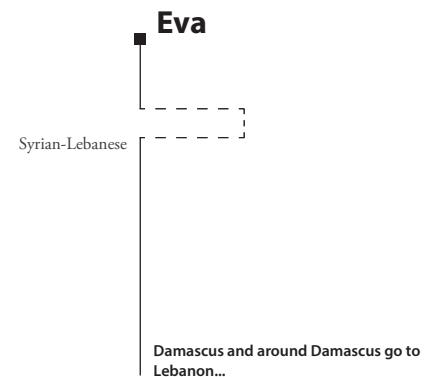
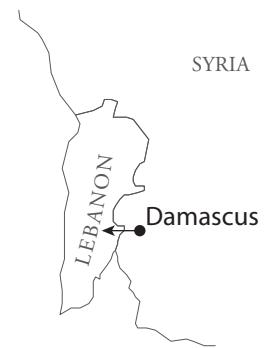
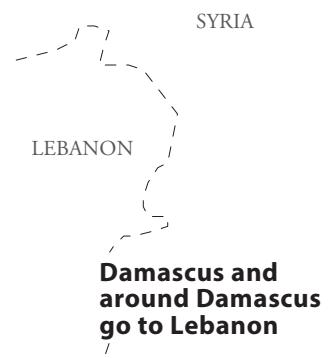
**the people who are
left are people who
don't have the resources**

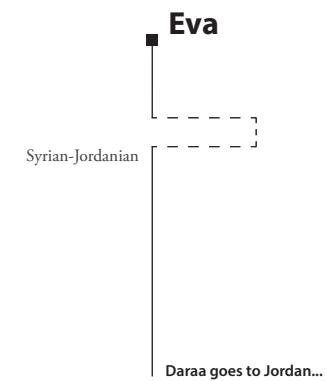
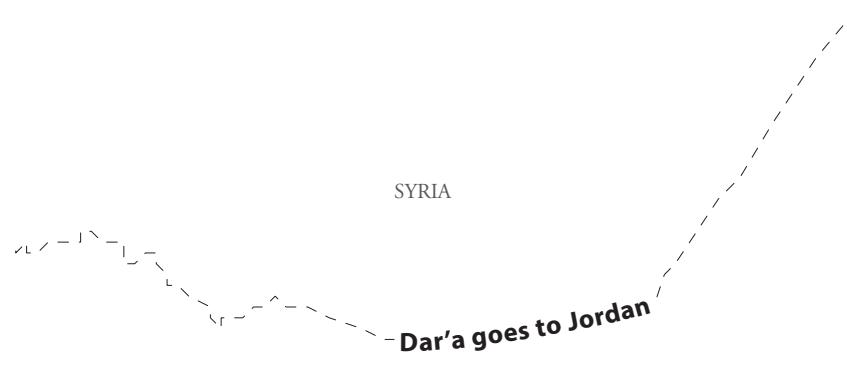


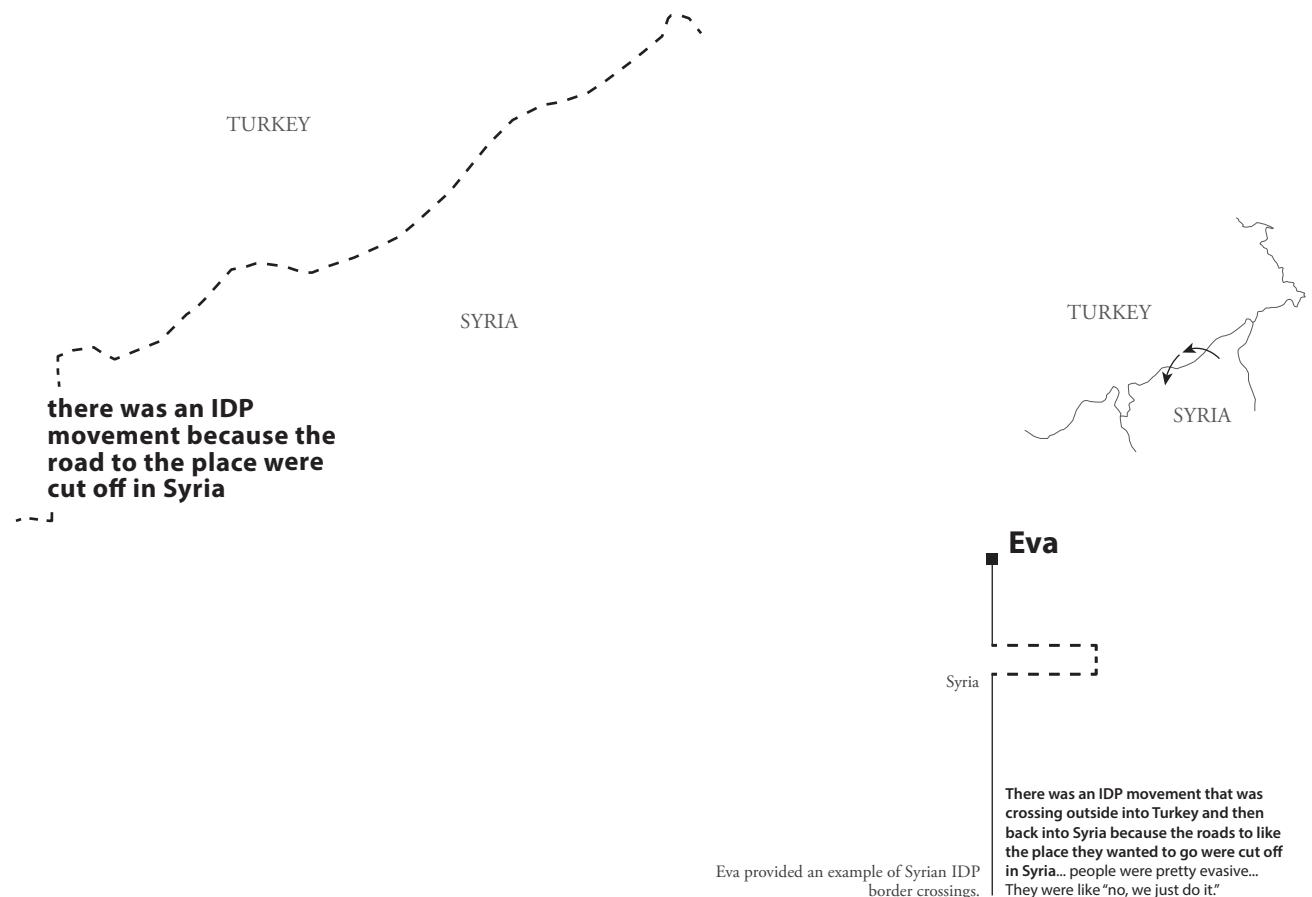
Eva
Syria

Most people who have gone to other countries have gone. And **the people who are left are people who don't have the resources**. So they're just kind of moving around trying not to be bombed... So it's either kind of people who are committed to witnessing the events for the world... or people who literally can't go anywhere...









local knowledge
is so valuable



Eva

Local knowledge

Eva explained several non-traditional borders, including: local knowledge, cities, language, and the Internet.

Often times, the optimal road is not an option so there's all these weird ways of getting places... **local knowledge in this kind of conflict is so valuable** and also, everybody's afraid of it... Local knowledge in aid provision may be like one of these non-traditional borders... you get these foreign run initiatives... that... just dump aid wherever they end up...



they write down your
name and disseminate it
to other checkpoints



Eva

Government-controlled city

If you're trying to leave a city that's government of Syria controlled or even go on a road that's even government of Syria controlled, they write down your name... and disseminate it to other checkpoints... Basically, you have to come back to the city. Otherwise, you are said to be joining the opposition... It's just like a means to keeping tabs on people.

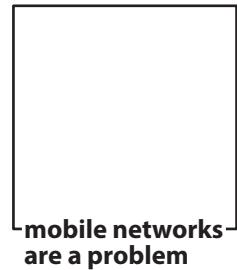
**just getting the
town wrong**



Eva

Language

There's just a lot of languages flying around... Information that flows the most widely is often in English whether or not it's correct... There's a lot of re-quoting of not entirely factual information... Three hospitals were bombed in X town and **just getting the town wrong**... this is something we've seen a lot which is quite scary actually



mobile networks
are a problem



Eva

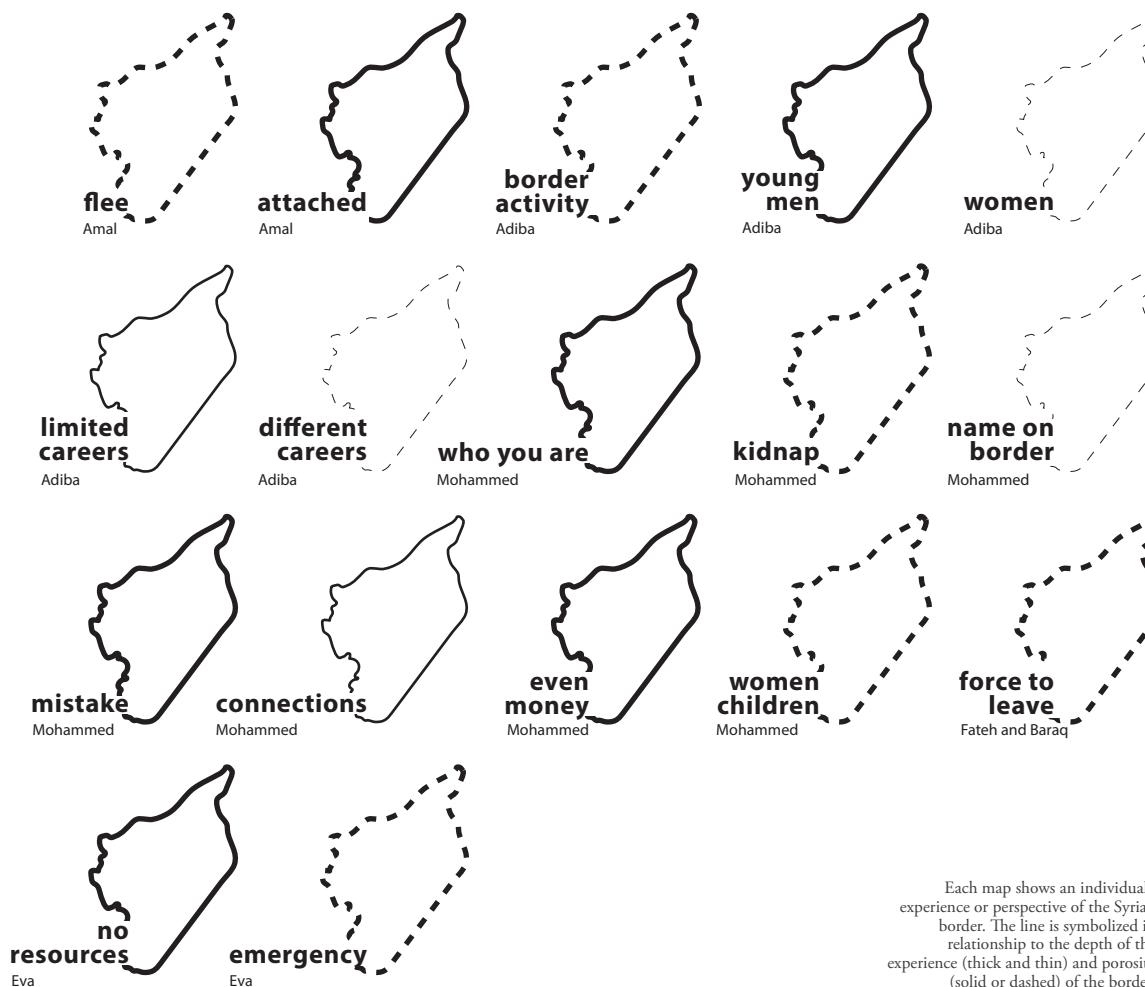
Internet access

We give people an option of a bazillion different ways they can contact us and they choose whichever one is easier.
Mobile networks are a problem in most places in Syria. So people mostly contact anyone via Internet, whether it be email, Facebook, Skype...

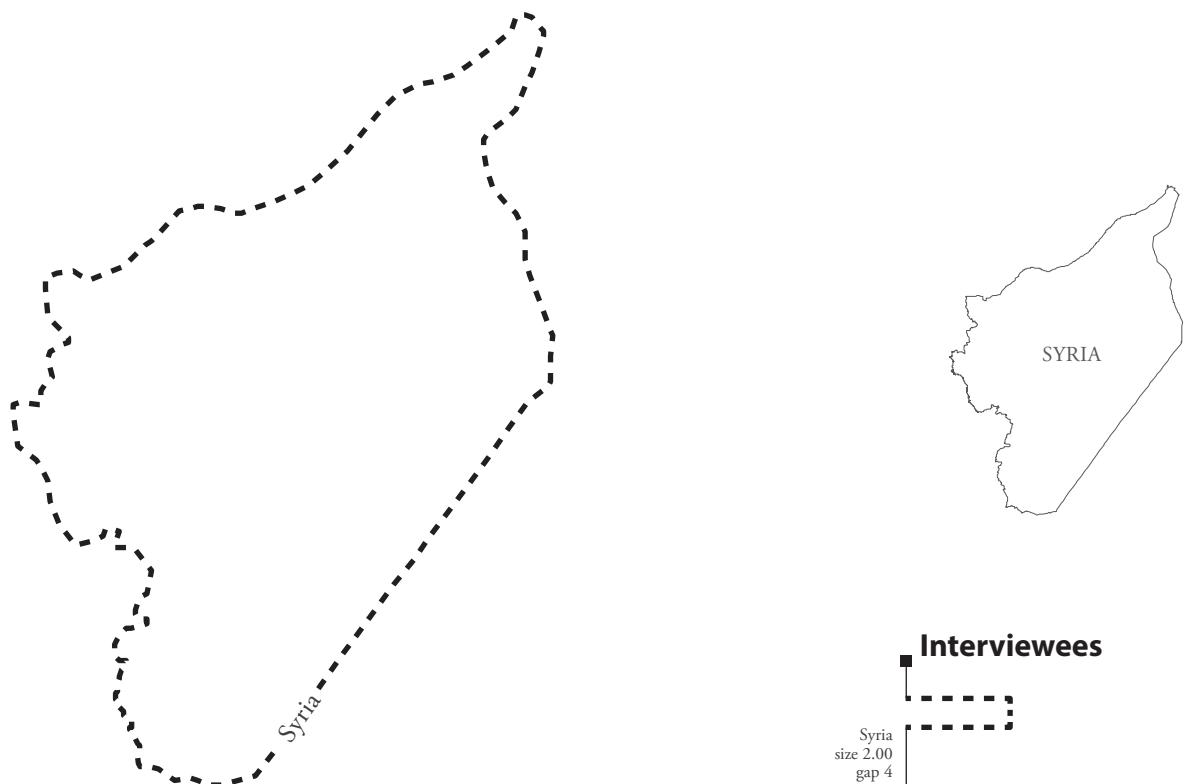
Aggregated Maps



UNHCR calls the Syrian crisis “the biggest humanitarian disaster of our era.” Borders—traditional and *non-traditional*—are central to the crisis itself. The maps presented here represent seven individuals and their border stories or perspectives. With symbolization and labeling, the composite map layouts illuminate the various border experiences discussed in the interviews. The second, smaller scale map aggregates these experiences by taking the median symbolization based on size and arrangement (gap) from the composite maps. Each aggregated map is labeled in my voice.



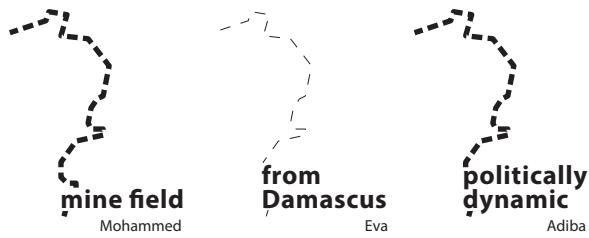
Each map shows an individual's experience or perspective of the Syrian border. The line is symbolized in relationship to the depth of the experience (thick and thin) and porosity (solid or dashed) of the border.



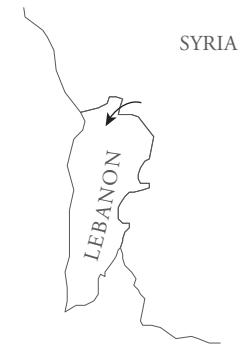
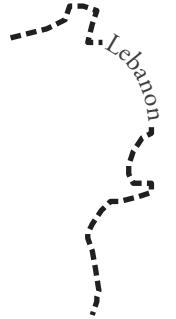
Syria
size 2.00
gap 4

Interviewees

The Syrian border is experienced in many ways. Some cross with relative ease, while thousands wait in the borderland between chaos and safety. Young men are viewed as security risks and are often declined. Humanitarian workers rely on this border to deliver aid to the millions of displaced individuals. The border is dynamic, changing over time and between experiences. This line also embodies identity, home, and regret.



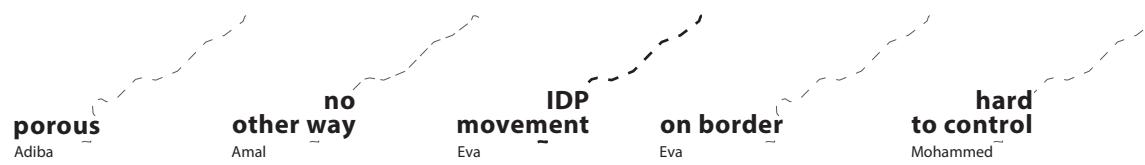
Each map shows one experience or perspective of the Syrian-Lebanese border. In addition to symbolization, the line is labeled with a direct quote from the individual's story. This label provides context for the line's symbolization.



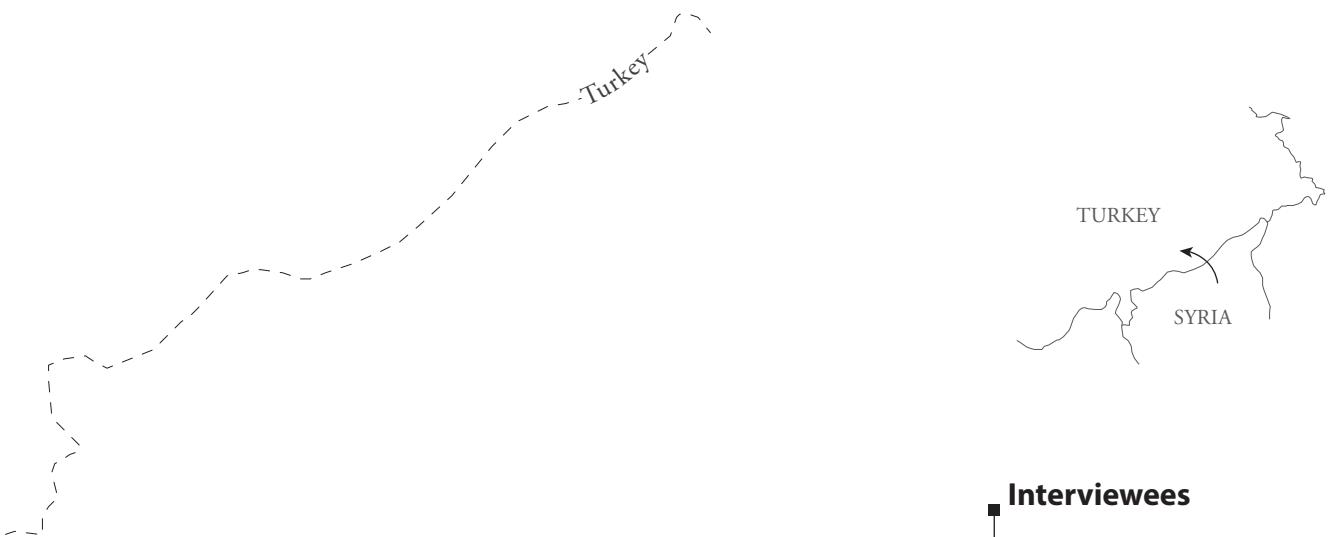
Interviewees

Syrian-Lebanese border
size 2.00
gap 2

The Syrian-Lebanese border is described as the most dangerous border. Geopolitical tension remains between the two countries as fleeing Syrians trek through the treacherous terrain to reach the border. Checkpoints and villages under siege result in hostility and violence making this route a mine field.



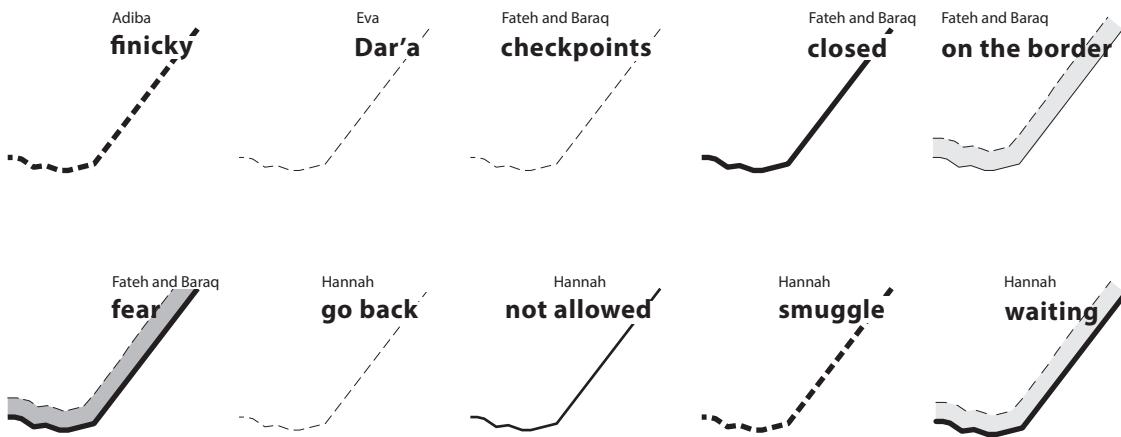
These maps show experiences or perspectives of the Syrian-Turkish border. The name of the individual describing the border is written by each map to connect the map viewer to the individual's experience.



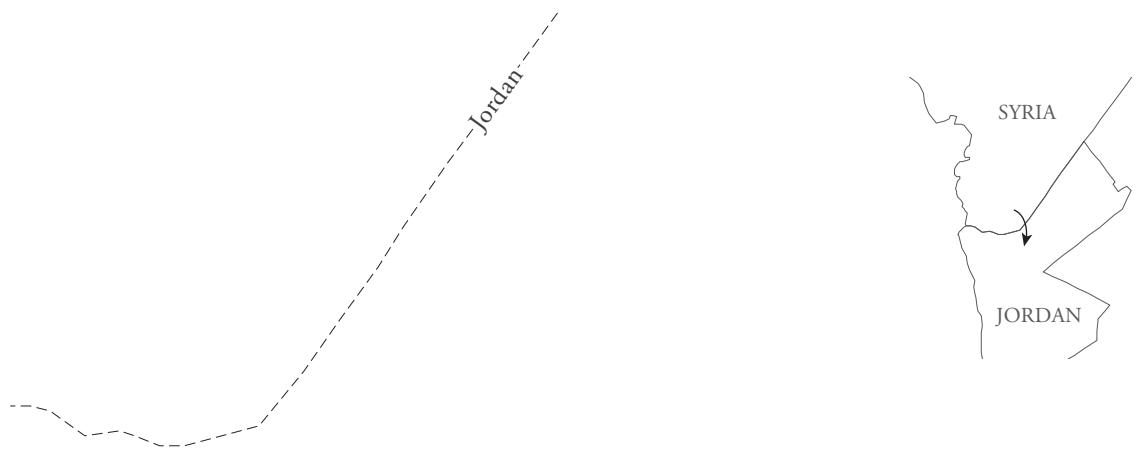
Interviewees

Syrian-Turkish border
size 0.25
gap 4

The Turkish border is the most accessible border, at least for the time being. The border has extensive length, which makes it difficult to control as thousands cross legally and illegally. Although Turkey has been a gracious host, Turkey may be nearing its capacity to take on more refugees. This thin, porous border continues to evolve.



Each map shows the Syrian-Jordanian border through the lens of one interviewee. Most of the borders were described as lines, but two interviewees described the border as an area, a borderland. In areas, changes in value show depth of experience.



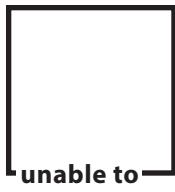
Interviewees

Syrian-Jordanian
size 0.25
gap 2

The Jordanian border has fluctuated over time. The border was relatively open at the beginning of the crisis. Now, many border crossings have closed due to overcapacity. Thousands wait in borderland camps. Others rely on smuggling across. The return trip from Jordan to Syria, however, is much easier.



get killed
Mohammed



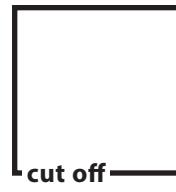
unable to move
Amal



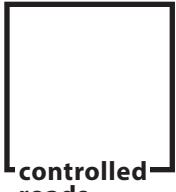
total seige
Amal



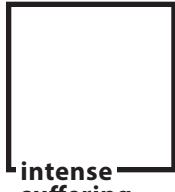
write your name down
Eva



cut off
Eva

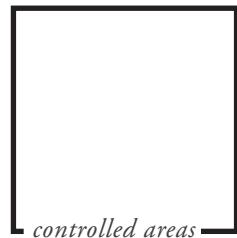


Eva



Fateh and Baraq

Each map shows one individual's description of controlled areas. Controlled areas are non-traditional borders that frequently lack a precise location. As such, many are not mapped. These squares map these undefined spaces.



Interviewees

■
Controlled areas
size 2.00
gap 0

Areas controlled by the regime and opposition groups (cities, districts, checkpoints, roads) are heavily reinforced. They are experienced, dangerous, and prominent across the Syrian landscape. Mobility is restricted and threatened in many of these areas.



Each map shows a prison as an abstract, non-traditional border. The border fluctuates as Mohammed is arrested and released twice as seen in the latter four maps.



Interviewees

Prison
size 1.00
gap 2

Many fear arrest and torture when attempting to leave the country. The prisons are bordered with walls and security preventing the movement of individuals. This border changes based on money, power, and connections.



**not letting
as many**

Hannah



week passes

Hannah



**definitely
smuggling**

Hannah



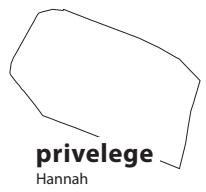
welcome

Hannah



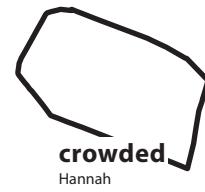
no income

Fateh and Baraq



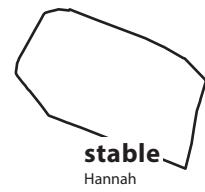
privilege

Hannah



crowded

Hannah



stable

Hannah



**somewhere
else**

Hannah



SUCKS

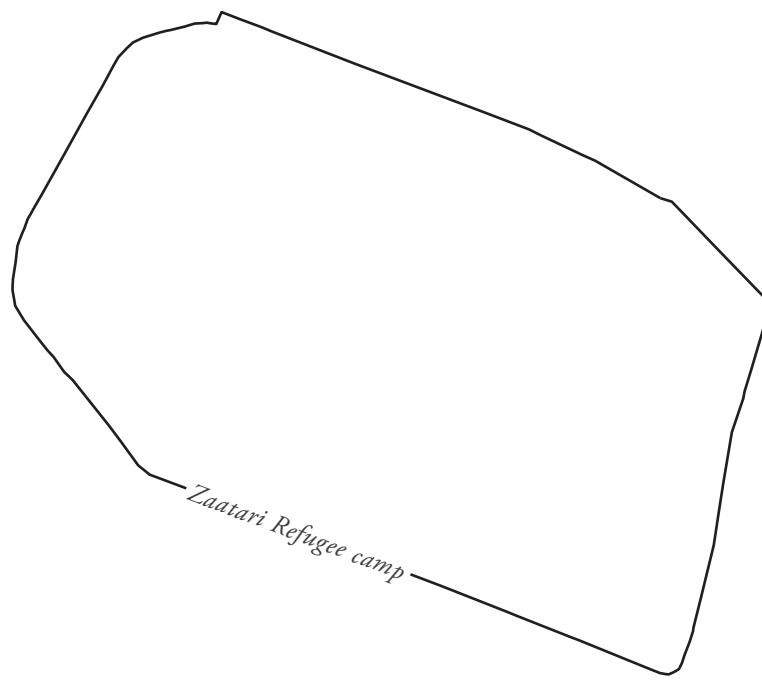
Fateh and Baraq



no income

Fateh and Baraq

Each map shows one individual's experience or description of Zaatari refugee camp, a non-traditional border for many Syrian refugees that leave the country.



Zaatari Refugee camp



Interviewees

Zaatari Refugee Camp
size 1.00
gap 0

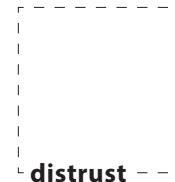
Women in particular, feel unsafe in certain areas of the camp such as crowded areas away from the home. The conditions in the camp are unbearable for many living in the tent and caravan city of 80,000+ people and no income.



Fateh and Baraq



Amal



Eva

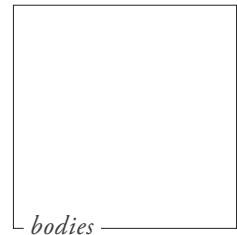


Hannah



Hannah

Each map shows the body as a bordered space based on one individual's experience or perspective.



bodies



Interviewees

The Body
size 0.25
gap 0

The body is the most intimate border experienced. The border and personal sovereignty changes through experiences (physical harm), perspectives (outsider), and feelings (trust or fear).

Concluding Remarks

The goal of this atlas was to examine the border and its associated visual variables, as a means to bring the experiences of refugees back into the map. In this atlas, I offer an alternative mapping solution that focuses on the representation of borders—both traditional and non-traditional. Through this borders lens, I expand the use of conventional cartographic language and the visual variables to reflect individual experiences of borders and apply my technique to six border border stories. These stories range from Syrian refugees that have fled, to humanitarian workers work in the region, to activists working abroad. As such, each border and border experience is different. Therefore, a thin, black line on a map does not accurately reflect his experiences in those moments or days of interaction with each border. It is in this context that I negotiate the symbolization of borders and rethink ‘the line’ as a narrative technique bound in experience.

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Margaret Pearce, and committee, Dr. Terry Slocum and Dr. Alexander C. Diener for their support and guidance. Thank you to my collaborators. Without your assistance, this project would not exist! Last, thank you to the University of Kansas, Department of Geography and the AAG Cartography Special Group for their financial support.