



## Nassib Crossing: A Glimpse of Opportunity for Syria and Jordan

on Dec 20, 2018

The Nassib border crossing between Syria and Jordan has long served as a pivotal vein for the flow of persons and commodities, making it an important transit that facilitates the exchange of products between Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and the Gulf States. This article assessed the challenges and opportunities for both Syria and Jordan concerning the crossing's strategic location and how both players perceive each other's socio-economic interests.

The Nassib border crossing between Syria and Jordan has long served as a pivotal vein for the flow of persons and commodities. The crossing's strategic location makes it an important transit that facilitates the exchange of products between Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and the Gulf States. Notably, both Syria and Jordan perceive the Nassib crossing as a fundamental contributor to their economies. The exchange of goods and services via Nassib between the two states was estimated at around \$2 billion per year with more than 6,000 trucks crossing daily before its closure in 2015[1]. The border's closure created a heavy economic burden for all sides with an annual loss exceeding \$7 billion.

The significant role played by Nassib crossing created a difficulty for states to replace their dependency on a different route. A good example was the initiative made by states to utilize the Latakia and Tripoli ports to ship products through Suez Canal to Jordan's Aqaba Port. This process was more expensive and products needed around 40 days to reach Jordan while the route via Nassib only needed a single day[2]. As a result, regional countries were keen to resume their activities through Nassib.

After series of negotiations between Syria and Jordan, Nassib was reopened on the 15th of October 2018. This marked the opening of new beneficial opportunities for regional states. For Syria, the government aims to re-entrench its position in the region through maintaining the country's pre-war status quo. Damascus acknowledges the importance of Nassib crossing but never prioritized it over its territorial integrity. Syria turned down various proposals made by Jordan to reopen the border in context of the rebel's 3-years control over it. As a result, Syria aims to utilize the reopening of Nassib crossing through various aspects. First, controlling the border consolidates Syria's legitimacy after recapturing

borderline and border crossing Southern Syria. Second, opening the Nassib crossing inches Syria into better ties with regional powers through Syria's line of exports.

Third, Damascus strives to heal its financial crisis caused by closure of the border. Nassib crossing is a fundamental pillar in Syria's economy with an annual income that exceeds \$5 billion. Since its closure, Syria lost around \$15 million on daily bases[3]. Hence, reopening Nassib crossing is a key asset in reviving the bleeding Syrian economy. Fourth, Syrian migrants that reside in Jordan today could return back via Nassib to Syria, particularly to the southern parts of the country. However, it is important to mention that the border's reopening provides an unbalanced treatment emanating from the Syrian-Jordanian agreement that stipulates visa restrictions on Syrians entering into Jordan while Jordanians are allowed free entry into Syria. As a result, we could anticipate unrest from the Syrian population that might demands equal treatment.

On the other hand, closure of Nassib crossing adulterated Jordan's economy. As mentioned earlier, the exchange of goods and services between Syria and Jordan was estimated at around \$2 billion per year[4], representing %5 of Jordan's GDP. Jordan's economy depends heavily on Nassib crossing and is regarded as the country's northern lungs. This assists in explaining the several proposals made by Jordan to Syria to maintain the activities at the border despite the rebels control over southern parts in Syria. It's important to take into consideration that products imported by Jordan are much cheaper than those available in the country's local market.

For example, 1 liter of benzine costs around \$1.16 in Jordan while it is available in Syria for around \$0.47. We can also see the price differences in the market for fruits and vegetables where, for example, 1 kilogram of lemon costs around \$0.68 in Syria while in Jordan the cost would exceed \$1. Thus, some Jordanians believed that the border's closure imposed a blockade on Jordan rather than Syria. This could also be concluded from King Abdullah's letter to Omar Al-Razzaz, the newly appointed prime minister, in which the repercussions of Nassib's closure on Jordan's economy were implicitly mentioned.

As a result of the border's closure, Jordan suffered a daily loss exceeding \$2 million. Jordan's annual income from Nassib is estimated at around \$800 millions[5]. This amount consists of the revenues from both exporting products through and to Syria as well as customs collected from the border's transit. Furthermore, the northern parts of Jordan that accommodate the Nassib crossing comprise a duty free area with various firms and factories that rely on financial activities via Nassib crossing. As a result, a variety of these investments were shut-down causing hundreds to lose their jobs. Thus, Nassib's reopening is a utility for an overarching improvement in Jordan's economy, particularly in the context of Jordan's surplus in cement that could be used for future reconstruction plans in Syria.

## BRUSSELS INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND HUMAN RIGHTS



**MOHAMMED SAMI**  
**MIDDLE EAST ANALYST**

BIC is an independent, non-profit, think-and-do tank based in the capital of Europe that develops solutions to address the cyclical drivers of insecurity, economic fragility, and conflict in the Middle East and Africa. BIC works to identify and explore underlying historical, economic, social, and political drivers behind today's global challenges, and uses these insights to provide forward-thinking, pragmatic, data-driven recommendations.

Our goal is to use research to promote human rights, peace, and security by informing policy-makers, building partnerships, and promoting community engagement.

 /BICBrussels

 @bicrh

 @bicrhr

Avenue Louise, 89 - 1050 Brussels - Belgium

Tel: +32 02 725 84 66

[www.bic-rhr.com](http://www.bic-rhr.com)

[info@bic-rhr.com](mailto:info@bic-rhr.com)