

Research Report

Human Rights Council

Ensuring the safety and rehabilitation of Syrian
refugees

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| Forum | Human Rights Council |
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Introduction

In March 2013, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees announced that the Syrian Civil war, after three years of on-going conflict, has forced over 9 million people from their homes, half of them being children. Around two and a half million Syrians seek refugee outside of Syria, and 6.5 million are displaced within the country.

This humanitarian catastrophe is taking a heavy toll on the economies and living conditions of its immediate neighbours. Lebanon, with 1.107.550 refugees (estimate made on 19.06.2014), faces great pressure and risk of instability. The risk of violent clashes is great and with already scarce resources, such as water in the north of the country, the aid of rich countries and humanitarian organisations is more than welcome.

Countries like Germany, Sweden, Brazil and the USA have taken in refugees and contributed humanitarian aid, yet the international support is wearing thin. The never-ending amount of people leaving the country increases by the day and asylum seekers face brutal and painfully long bureaucracy to flee the conflict.

The millions pushed out of their homes in Syria due to the violence, poverty and dangers of the conflict are now spreading through the Middle East. Forces like the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda haunt refugee camps, making the hosts nervous about their guests. The rise of unrest in camps, along with the brutal consequences of war, threatens the whole region.

Definition of Key Terms

Refugee

An individual who is forced by a third party to leave their residence and thus seeks for asylum (refuge and protection) somewhere else is considered a refugee. Examples of the third party include be wars, diseases or natural catastrophes.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is a process by which something is restored to its primordial state. In this context, it means the normalization of communities and/or people's lives. Since wars or catastrophes are often traumatic events, the majority of refugees need help processing said events and acclimatizing to their new situation.

Humanitarian Aid

'Humanitarian Aid' can be defined as resources, both logistical and material, that preserve life and aid those in need. It also sustains human dignity in zones of humanitarian catastrophes.

General Overview

People have been being displaced ever since March 2011, when the Syrian conflict began. The flood of refugees spread throughout Syria, then to other parts of the Middle Eastern region almost immediately. With no clarity about their safety and future, along with multilateral fighting and rule of the extremists and other warlords, many chose to leave their homes to seek protection and escape the violence.

The unrest in Syria spread throughout the country. Battles near Aleppo and Damascus forced millions out of their homes. Syrians have left for places as far as Brazil, by plane or even by crossing the deserts of the region. All neighboring countries but Israel have taken in refugees. These countries face challenges such as economic instability, outnumbering of locals, increasing violence, poverty, disease and criminality. Escalation of the conflict has brought about international concerns. The UN and other organisations plead for funds and international support for the region. Refugees seeking asylum in the developed West faced lots of difficulties and a lack of support, while rising economies offer refuge to those willing to travel the distance, like Brazil or Colombia.



Syrian refugees have made it to the covers of international newspapers several times during the span of the conflict. The world is worried about Syria and the export of possible unrest and instability to refugee camps around the region. The different responses given to the issue by the different world players has also shown the shifting of power and willingness to contribute.

The rise of extremist forces, failing diplomacy and scarce resources make the mission to rehabilitate the refugees a very hard task. Overfilled refugee camps in Turkey, Iraq and Jordan are feeding grounds for disease, conflict and extremism due to poor conditions, overpopulation and interfering forces. Previous attempts to tackle the issue are dwarfed by the rapid increase of refugees, and international aid never seems to be enough, yet they make the difference for those lucky enough to receive it.

All in all, the question of Syrian refugees has brought with it difficult global conflicts. Is the world able to deal with these conflicts like it has before, and are institutions like the UN and NGOs able to support the millions of people in need?

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

European Union

The European Union is one of richest neighboring multinational entities offering its support to the Syrian people. Alongside the United Nations and its branches, the EU has been very keen to encourage neighboring countries to take in Syrian refugees, as well as financially aiding both internal and external refugees. With about 1.5 billion euros (in November 2013) being used for humanitarian purposes, the EU is the leading organization in the conflict. This aid represents about half of the donations to the cause.

Despite its financial support for the afflicted, the European Union doesn't take many refugees in. Only 11 out of 28 states have taken in about 8000 Syrian refugees in total, not more than 4% of the displaced population. The European Union does house some more refugees who illegally entered the Union, though against the will of its constituent states.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR nowadays focuses mostly on the regional impact of the humanitarian crisis. They seek to provide aid, support and cooperation Syria, its neighboring states, host states and refugees. The High Commissioner has instructed that refugee camps be built near the Syrian border and provides humanitarian aid to the refugees, whilst also raising

awareness and co-operation around the world. This branch of the UN collaborates with around 55 humanitarian organisations, national and international, governmental and non-governmental. Together they seek to provide humanitarian aid, raise funds and provide security for the refugees.

Lebanon

About 677.702 individuals are now seeking refuge in Lebanon. The country faces great pressure because of its conflicted past with Syria. The sectarian parties also feel that the inflow of refugees will destabilize the country. Escalation of the conflict seems very possible as well as attacks led by terrorist groups, which are in turn backed by the rebels and/or the Syrian government like Hezbollah or Al Qaeda. The fear that this creates has made Lebanese officials unwilling to protect those seeking refuge. No camps were built and most humanitarian aid comes from those willing to help and NGOs, thus making humanitarian efforts a more difficult task to pursue.

Iraq

In 2013, around 37.000 Syrian refugees fled to Iraq, mostly to the Kurdish north. These refugees have been fleeing from forces like the ISIS and other rebels as well as the Syrian regime. They sought asylum in Iraqi Kurdistan, a breakaway region of Iraq. Most of the refugees being Kurdish themselves, they left the north of Syria alongside the spreading of the civil war. The Kurdish Regional Government welcomed them, and about 15.000 arrived at the Kawrgosk camp. There the situation worsened with the empowerment of the Islamic State of greater Syria and Iraq (ISIS), a jihadist group with the aim to create a new caliphate in the region. The state of war has spread from the refugee camps into Iraq itself and has therefore increased the number of refugees. The brutality of the extremists makes the situation complex, for access to the refugees is difficult.

Jordan

Jordan houses about 500.000 Syrian refugees. Most of them are in the poor, thinly populated north of the country. Large refugee camps are being built both by Jordan and international entities. Jordan spends about 2% of its GPD (about 851 million USD) already in providing humanitarian aid to the refugees. An example of the struggles that the country faces are the overcrowded camps, where unrest, disease and instability increase by the day. Following this issue, the thin international financial aid, the country's frail economy and the constant danger of war spilling over the boundaries also present hard conditions for the

refugees in Jordan. The international community and Jordan try to help most of the refugees, but all efforts seem to be sub-par.

Turkey

With 783.065 refugees by June 2014, Turkey is one of the largest refugee receivers in the conflict. Turkey is Syria's neighbor to the north. The countries share a long border by which thousands cross everyday seeking peace. The Turkish do not demand that Syrian citizens have a visa, which has made Turkey not only a receptor but also a transit state. Turkey represents the gate to Europe. In the northwest, some refugees try to illegally enter the European Union through Greece or Bulgaria.

Even though Turkey has been accepting all refugees, camps near the border are full now and the welcoming may be wearing thin. Refugees in Turkey are prone to human trade, especially widows and children. The trade of child wives is increasing in the region as well as criminality and unemployment. These woes are making the Turkish hosts feel more uncomfortable by the day.

Timeline of Events

| Date | Description of event |
|----------------|---|
| March 2011 | Protests begin in Damascus, protestors are shot dead by governmental agents, and nation-wide unrest spreads quickly |
| April 2011 | Refugee Crisis begins: over 5000 flee the country |
| Rest of 2011 | Turkey and Jordan receive the fleeing refugees |
| March 2012 | The Bekaa Valley (Lebanon) becomes a large settlement area for refugees |
| April 2012 | Refugee outflow increases after UN ceasefire |
| July 2012 | Fighting reaches Aleppo in the North; many flee to Turkey |
| 29th Jul 2012 | UNHCR opens Za'atari refugee camp in northern Jordan |
| September 2012 | Protests in Za'atari camp due to poor conditions |
| December 2012 | Tuberculosis found amongst Syrian refugees |
| 4th Jan 2013 | Lebanon starts registering refugees |



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| 22th Jan 2013 | UNICEF launches the #ChildrenofSyria Awareness Campaign |
| August 2013 | Refugees increase in Iraq |
| September 2013 | Two million Syrian refugees. UNICEF reports 50% are children |
| 11th Sept 2013 | Largest resettlement plan: Germany agrees to resettle 5000 Syrian refugees |
| 7th Oct 2013 | Turkey builds wall on the Syrian border |
| November 2013 | Greek border officers push back Syrian refugees |
| December 2013 | Bulgaria plans to build a fence on the Turkish border |
| 9th Dec 2013 | UNICEF and WHO launch the largest polio vaccination campaign in the Middle East, with 23 million beneficiaries |
| 2 Mar 2014 | The situation of Syrian refugees goes viral on social media |

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Appointment of UNHCR regional refugee coordinator in May 2011
- UNHCR urges Europe to ease its asylum policies in October 2012
- In December 2012, the UNHCR and its partners launch a US\$ 1 billion Regional Response Plan
- June 2013: the biggest aid appeal in history. UN humanitarian agencies plead for a total of 4 Billion US dollars to cover aid in Syria and neighboring states with The Regional Response Plan, The Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Plan and aid for the governments of Jordan and Lebanon
- To ease aid delivery to Syrians, the UN provides relieve from 'chilling darkness' on January 22nd 2014 (**SC/11292/2139**)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The Syrian humanitarian catastrophe sparked a series of statements and actions. Involved countries reacted quickly, as well as NGOs and others. The string of reactions was very broad in regard to the actions that would be taken.

Countries like Turkey and Jordan opened their borders to the refugees and built camps for them. Along with NGOs, they provided for the refugees, yet the unrest is growing as fast as the issues that accompany refugees. These include poverty, unemployment, criminality and inequality, as well as disease and possible undercover agents of extremist groups.

The hospitality in receptor countries is growing thin. The unrest and poor conditions are leaving their marks on the refugees and efforts do not reach all. The immediate problem in this case is the scarcity of funds and international help. Little is done to help the states on an international level, and cooperation is rather tricky. Some countries simply try to avoid dealing with the issue like Lebanon or Israel, making official dialogue and cooperation tactics almost impossible.

On a wider stage, the UN and the UNHCR have managed to work closely with NGOs and other parties in the matters of local support and fundraising. Bodies like the European Union support greatly with financial humanitarian aid as well, yet they fail when it comes to house refugees. In America, the US and Canada house and contribute to the humanitarian cause, and Colombia and Brazil offer to relocate refugees as well.

Previous attempts to solve the issue did yield results, yet none really brought long-term solutions. The roots of the Syrian Conflict and the different approaches to it have proven that the conflict will indeed remain on the long hold. This means that drastic changes need to come. Better cooperation between rich countries, organizations and those directly affected (Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq, for example). European countries should start granting visas and other permits to refugees to avoid illegal crossings, which cost hundred of lives and increase criminality. Neighboring countries also need monitor the state they keep the refugees in, for conflicts could come tied to the luggage of those seeking refuge.

Possible Solutions

The problematic surging in the latest affairs is the overfilling of refugee camps and the outnumbering of locals in certain areas. The uneven resettling of the refugees is problematic, for in the near future a return to Syria doesn't seem to be a possibility, yet the further mobilization of refugees into countries like Lebanon and Iraq will destabilize them.

A possible solution would be for the UN High Commissioner to establish dialogue between Syria's neighbors, major humanitarian organisations and other countries that are willing to resettle refugees. The European Union and Israel should also open their migratory

policies to let Syrian refugees resettle or at least pass through these countries. A good middle ground would be to grant temporary asylums to those in ultimate risk, like broken families, orphans and the sick. However, the compromising situations of countries like Israel should be kept in mind.

Furthermore, international cooperation seems to be on the rise. Brazil's predisposition to relocate refugees and contribute within the frame of the UN shows the world's willingness to cooperate in times of need. This predisposition is, however, not always well coordinated, and this being one of the roots of the discontent in refugee camps, it is of outmost importance to enhance the dialogue between nations and cooperating organisations. As stated in the previous idea, a submission led by the UNHRC would be able to achieve this.

Although the safety of refugees should be the UN's top priority, many refugees who have been brought to physical safety and have spent some time in refugee camps are now experiencing another form of peril: emotional turbulence. As it does not seem likely that the majority of Syrian refugees will be returning to their homes any time soon, rehabilitation must also be a step taken in many refugee camps and other locations. This includes services like counseling, support groups, and ultimately, the complete relocation of some Syrians to places that are not within their national boundaries. In any case, providing opportunities such as employment and semi-permanent housing would help improve the emotional state of many refugees, which is arguably equally as important as a person's physical state.

A fourth and final point to solve the issue of the refugee crisis would be to find an international compromise to finally end the Syrian Conflict. Even though the UN has failed to offer any major help in the matter, it can still pressure main power brokers in the region and the world into action. This can be achieved with smart tactical diplomacy and convincing facts tied with coherent action plans such as but not limited to: more funding to refugee camps, legal advising for refugees, financing for long distance refuge seekers and further humanitarian and administrative measures.

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