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**Situation of Syrian Refugees and
Mass Migration Projections from
Syria to Neighboring Countries:
Findings, Conclusions and
Recommendations**

May 20, 2014

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Basic Data about the Syrian Refugees

| Country | Refugees living in camps | Registered refugees living outside camps | Total Number of Registered Refugees |
|----------------|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Turkey | 210.358 | 600.000 | 800.000 |
| Jordan | 115.000 | 480.000 | 588,792 |
| Lebanon | 200.000 | 800.000 | 981,820 |
| Iraq | 95.770 | 129.100 | 226.934 |
| Total | 620.000 | 2.100.000 | 2.720.000 |

Basic Data about the Syrian Refugees

| Country | Refugees' Place of Origin | The Cities that Refugees are Settled in the Host Country |
|----------------|---|---|
| Turkey | 1. Aleppo 2. Idlib 3. Raqqa 4. Latakia | 1. Gaziantep 2. Hatay 3. Şanlıurfa 4. Mardin |
| Jordan | 1. Dara 2. Damascus 3. Hama 4. Homs | 1. Irbid 2. Mafraq 3. Amman 4. Zarqa |
| Lebanon | 1. Homs 2. Hama 3. Damascus 4. Aleppo | 1. Akkar 2. Tripoli 3. Zahle |
| Iraq | 1. Hasaqah 2. Aleppo 3. Damascus | 1. Dohuk 2. Arbil 3. Suleymaniye |

a. The Situation of Camps

Turkey



Jordan



Lebanon



Iraq



b. New Refugee Waves

- The basic reason for the Syrians' immigration is instability. The most important reason for determining the destination is geography. Turkey and Iraq receive immigration from the north and east parts of Syria; and immigration towards Lebanon and Jordan originates from the western and southern regions. Therefore, it is the security situation in mentioned areas, which will determine new refugee waves.

-Lebanon and Jordan are under the high risk of being exposed to new refugee waves. The worst case scenario for Lebanon and Jordan is the intensification of battles for Damascus, the city with the highest population, which will cause evacuation in the city on a major scale, similar to Aleppo. Under these circumstances, the people of Damascus will head towards Lebanon and Jordan due to geographical proximity.

- The security situation in the north of Syria will determine refugee flows towards Turkey.

-Since the Iraqi Central Government do not accept refugees, new refugee waves may head towards the territories controlled by the KRG. However this is closely related to the security situation in the regions of Syria where Kurds form the majority. As of April 2014, these regions are relatively safe. However, there are sporadic clashes between Kurd and al-Qaeda affiliated groups. If these groups capture the settlements where Kurds form the majority, there may be a mass refugee wave towards Iraqi Kurdish region. However, since the number of refugees and the probability of instability is low, Iraq is under a small risk.

- There is also the fact that most of the Syrians brought their families with them, which reduces risk for all countries involved. Every Syrian refugee who left family in Syria wants to bring the rest of the family in a short time. However these people are low in number.

c. Local-Refugee Relations

There is anger towards refugees in all four countries; however none of them has the risk of an all-out social conflict. Syrians' major concern is safety. They feel safer near their relatives and near people with similar ethnic and sectarian origins. The Syrians living in the south of the country migrated to the north of Jordan, where they have kinship relations with the people living there. Most of the Syrians who migrated to Lebanon are Sunnis and they settled in the north of Lebanon, where the Sunni population lives. The immigration towards Iraq is almost wholly the immigration of the Syrian Kurds to the territories controlled by the KRG. Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and Christians migrated to Turkey. For Turkmen and Kurds, both sides of the border are connected with kinship relations. Mardin is the old settlement of the Syrian Christians. Therefore, notwithstanding the exceptions, the immigration patterns have a close correlation with ethnic-sectarian identity. Nevertheless, economic factors rather than identity values determined the relations between local people and Syrian refugees. In all four countries, local people initially felt sympathy for refugees; however they started to feel resentment towards refugees over time. In Lebanon, the Sunni people are disquiet for the reason that they are exposed to the social and economic impact of refugee flows. Similarly, the Kurdish people in Iraq started to complain about refugees, which they initially felt sympathy and affinity. This is similar in Turkey and Jordan as well. The popular reaction in Jordan is mostly in the northern provinces. The popular resentment is limited to a few border provinces in Turkey, since Turkey is geographically larger and its economy is not directly affected.

d. The Situation of the Syrians Living Outside Camps

The refugees living outside camps try to survive in tough conditions. These Syrians cause problems about social integration in all four countries. Refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq speak the same language as the local people. Shared language and culture facilitates integration in these countries. In contrast, the Syrians in Turkey suffer from a language barrier. However Turkey's advantages are geographical size, population and economic capacity. These advantages facilitate integration of refugees in Turkey. For example, the province of Gaziantep in Turkey is foremost among the provinces housing Syrian refugees. There are 100,000 refugees in Gaziantep, however since its population is 2 million, the refugees is hardly seen as a problem. Besides, Gaziantep's advanced economy is capable of absorbing excess labor force. This problem is worse in the other countries and makes it difficult for social integration.

e. Ethnic-Sectarian Polarization

Lebanon is a troubled country in terms of ethnic-sectarian polarization. The most important reason for that is the social and political structure of Lebanon, which is based on the population ratio among the sectarian groups. Sunni Arabs form the majority of refugees, which deteriorates the already-existing Shiite-Sunni polarization in Lebanon. The Lebanese Shiites worry that the Syrian refugees will stay in Lebanon and alter the demographic structure. Jordan and the KRG do not have a similar problem, since they have a homogeneous demographic structure and close affinity between peoples on both sides of the border. In Turkey, the sectarian polarization is confined in the province of Hatay. The most important cause of this situation is the heterogeneous demographic structure of the city and its cultural ties with Syria.

f. The Desire to Migrate to Third Countries

Turkey and Lebanon are the countries, from which the refugees are more likely to migrate to third countries. Even though there are good camp conditions and many economic opportunities, many Syrians try to live under harsh conditions outside the camps. Many Syrians in Turkey might as well be trying to go to Western countries, since Turkey is geographically closer to Europe. Initially, Syrians had been staying in the border provinces; however they spread elsewhere in Turkey over time. Currently, there are lots of Syrians in Istanbul. It is probable that most of these Syrians will migrate to Europe. According to the UNHCR officials in Lebanon, there are numerous demands about immigration to third countries. The Syrians in Iraqi Kurdistan are the less likely to migrate to a third country.

g. Radicalization Trends among the Syrians

This is a risk factor that is valid for all four countries. However, Zatari Camp in Jordan is the most suitable place for misconduct and therefore radicalization, because of the size of the camp, worse conditions and insufficient security measures. The Syrians in Lebanon live under harsh conditions as well. Besides, the Syrian civil conflict has spread to Lebanon. The Lebanese people support either the regime or the opposition. For this reason, the refugees in Lebanon are highly politicized. Considering the harsh conditions of living, the Syrians in Lebanon are more likely to radicalize. Suicide attacks after long years and increasing al Nusra activity in Lebanon are indicative of this process.

Evaluation about Turkey

The most important issue about the Syrians in Turkey is that they are going to remain in Turkey for a long time, since the stability in Syria will not be restored in the short term. There are even some estimates about new mass immigration waves towards Turkey, which will raise the Syrian count to 1.5 million in 2014. Therefore, two basic issues will need attention. The first is preparing for meeting the basic needs of Syrians that will arrive in Turkey, such as sheltering, security, food, education and health. In this framework, establishing new camps and launching projects about the Syrians living outside of camps are measures that are worth considering. Another possible measure is the approach that focuses on addressing the problems of the Syrians inside Syria, since their problems increase when they cross to Turkey. The aid projects at zero point might alleviate the conditions of camps on the Syrian side of the border. The second basic issue is preparations for the Syrians' integration to Turkey, with respect to the possibility of the Syrians remaining in Turkey for longer durations.

Evaluation about Jordan

Refugees from several countries form the majority in Jordan, which is at the same time a serious burden for the country. However, Jordan is the most successful country, considering that it managed to transform the Syrian crisis into an opportunity, utilizing its past experience with refugees. This observation does not mean that the refugees' contribution is greater than their negative effects. Jordan's financial hardship is the lowest among the other neighboring countries, since it receives a substantial international aid. Jordan's weak economy and non-existent natural resources help it transform the crisis into an opportunity. Therefore, it is able to carry the burden of refugees despite its weakness and the high numbers of refugees within its borders. Jordan is a haven of stability in the Middle East. This is a major cause of mass refugee waves towards Jordan in times of crisis. Besides, international community and regional states seek to protect Jordan's stability during crises. Even Israel provides aid to the Syrian refugees in Jordan. It provides water, which is Jordan's most severe problem.

Despite all these problems, the international aid to Jordan needs to continue and improve. Zatari camp is the most populous camp in all four countries. The conditions in Zatar are worst among all other camps as well. The camp is exposed to potential risks of instability, radicalization and misconduct, which enable radical groups to recruit members among the refugees. A social explosion caused by this many people will affect first Jordan and then the regional stability negatively. Therefore, Jordan needs to stand strong.

Evaluation about Lebanon

According to the estimations of the UNHCR, it is expected that the registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon will have increased to 1.500.000 by the end of the year 2014. When the unregistered Syrian refugees are considered, the number is supposed to be 2.000.000. Therefore, the problems counted in this study are likely to increase incrementally in number and variety. On the other hand, beyond the expectations of the UNHCR, there may be a massive influx of Syrian refugees due to the increasing violence in the clashes in Syria and its concentration on Damascus and its surroundings. In case of the realization of such a scenario, the problems are likely to turn into an impasse. In terms of the Syrians in Lebanon, it can be said that the problems of accommodation, education and healthcare will increasingly continue. The increasing continuation of these problems may lead in the short run to an increase in the judicial cases between the Syrians and the Lebanese and also an increase in the social problems that the Syrians experience. Besides, the tensions between the Lebanese and the Syrians are also increasing. The middle and long-term impact of the educational problems that the Syrians in Lebanon have will be worse than its impact in the short-term, because a socially lost generation is likely to emerge when the youngsters, which consists more than 50% of the Syrian population in Lebanon, do not receive education. This uneducated generation will be a significant problem for Lebanon as long as they stay in Lebanon and for Syria as well if they happen to return to Syria. Another aspect of this problem that needs to be mentioned is that it is irreversible.

Evaluation about Iraq

- It is disadvantageous for the Kurds' aim of establishing an integral Kurdish federal region, encompassing the north of Syria.
- In the long run, the camps may have the risk of affecting Turkey-Iraqi Kurdistan relations negatively, like the case of Mahmur camp.
- The harsh living conditions in the camps provide a fertile ground for misconduct and exploitation. The refugee camps and the refugees that live in the cities have the potential to cause instability in Iraq and its neighbors.
- The PYD is the most active political movement among the Syrian Kurds. The Syrian Kurdish immigration towards Iraqi Kurdistan may cause the PKK/PYD to emerge as a stronger actor in the Iraqi Kurdish politics. The PKK may strengthen its power base in Iraqi Kurdistan, where it is the weakest among all four countries.
- The increasing local reaction towards the refugees has to be nullified through some programs promoting the well-being of the local people.

Recomendations

Lastly, these points are to be taken into consideration in order to lessen the problems of the refugees living in neighboring countries:

- There are both similar and different cases about the Syrian refugees' conditions and impacts in all four countries. Rising rental prices in settlements that refugees live, decreasing labor costs, polygamous marriages, increase in prostitution and resentment among the local people about the aids that Syrians receive are common observations about the social and economic impacts of Syrians in all neighboring countries. In contrast, there are different outcomes in all four countries with respect to camp conditions, political tensions, ethnic-sectarian polarization, general economic situation and security.
- People with low income feel resentment against the Syrians in all four countries and the basic reason behind it is economy. Therefore, it is imperative for governments, international organizations and NGOs to consider the local people when planning aid projects for the Syrians.
- Syrians in all four countries respond positively to the question about whether they want to return to Syria or not. They want to return when the stability and economic conditions in Syria are restored. They are hopeless, when they are asked when they expect the civil conflict would end. Therefore, Syrians need to prepare for even longer durations of refuge. Besides, it is probable that the security situation in Syria will worsen and there will be a new wave of mass refugees. Every country should have measures against it.

- Provided the conditions are good, the camps should offer more amenities in terms of control and basic services. It is difficult to provide services to the Syrians, who live outside camps. And it is quite impossible to contain the effects that it will cause within the country. Therefore, all four countries need to build new camps and enhance the camp conditions, except for Turkey. The camps in the countries other than Turkey focus only on meeting the basic needs of Syrian. The problems in the camps in Turkey are the lack of a control mechanism and perceived freedom limitations. Turkey should uphold flexible camp rules for promoting camp life. For Lebanon, it is currently imperative to build a camp, according to officials. Lebanon no longer pursues a camp policy, because of past experience with refugees and its political scene. However, it is no longer sustainable. In Jordan, Azrak camp proves to be a good preparation for the future, considering its enhanced capacity and conditions.

- Even though, camp life is promoted, most of the refugees will prefer living in city centers. Syrian will stay in those neighboring countries for a long time. Considering these two points, it is imperative that these countries should begin thinking about measures for integration of Syrians in local society.

- Lastly, the refugee problem is not a phenomenon, which affects the receiving country negatively. Syrians' contributions to receiving countries should be taken into consideration. These contributions are close affinity between neighboring peoples and Syrians provided that social integration is successful, long term political and economic cooperation opportunities enabled by strong social links, Syrians' positive impact on receiving countries' economies (dynamism, entrepreneurship, Syrian businessmen's investments and capital transfers, etc.).

Syrians on the Edge: The Status of Refugees in Neighboring Countries

May 20, 2014

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