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NEIGHBOURING HOST-COUNTRIES' POLICIES FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES: THE CASES OF JORDAN, LEBANON, AND TURKEY

Luigi Achilli, Nasser Yassin and M. Murat Erdoğan

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Neighbouring host-countries' policies for Syrian refugees: The cases of Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey

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Introduction

Combined, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have taken in around 5 million Syrians since the start of the war; over 90% of the fleeing population[1]. As the stream of refugees continues, so does the pressure to adequately cater to needs, absorb potential, and mediate integration between the local and the incoming populations. Each country differs in its response strategy; whether in terms of policies – or lack thereof - on housing conditions, labour rights, education, and registration stature.

The question of how neighbouring countries manage the socioeconomic challenges of incoming Syrian refugees thus necessitates assessment of the policies developed, over the past few years by these governments, to tackle the embracement strategies and financial challenges, whether through international, humanitarian or bilateral aid or national resources. This paper is composed of three chapters; each dedicated to one of three aforementioned countries. The status quo is discussed in terms of the latest data on the numbers of Syrians, the financial costs and the apparent socioeconomic implications. How policies are developed and financed by these neighbouring host countries, and what lessons and recommendations can be drawn from this analysis of policies and their financing is also evaluated.

As the European response has largely preferred to contain the crisis at arms-length away, across the shores of the Mediterranean, evaluation of neighbouring countries' absorption capacities and local contexts calls into question whether it is merely a matter of local resilience-building amidst a setting of distorted international humanitarian responsibility. Luigi Achilli's writing on Jordan, Nasser Yassin's writing on Lebanon and M. Murat Erdoğan's writing on Turkey offer a picture of each countries' capacity and management trajectory. The paper does not try to establish a single trajectory as neither more nor less successful than the rest.

It addresses encampment of refugees and how historical experiences influence policies towards them. Subsequently, it explores how states' economic development goals and refugees' socioeconomic standing have a crucial impact on response and assistance policies. Financial aid pumped into neighbouring host countries as fast as possible to upkeep and improve refugees' conditions, perhaps while simultaneously upgrading local national infrastructure, brings to light concerns over the temporal and spatial quality of provided services and resilience building. That is, the long-term effectiveness and impact of these policies and strategies given countries' economic, social and environmental challenges and capabilities. This links to policies' rhetoric dealing with refugees as temporary and apart from local populations, yet ultimately both are bound and part of the whole which impacts and is impacted by the national

1 "Syria Country Profile: About the Crisis". United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. http://www.unocha.org/syrian-arab-republic/syria-country-profile/about-crisis

economy and its apparent need to grow. As a result of this rhetoric (and that of media reporting), the local and the incoming populations perceptions of each other - though neither are a single unit - feeds into support for or resentment of the policies, compliance or non-compliance, social integration and overall potential for the objective of prosperity at large.

Jordan

There is little doubt that Jordan has shown extraordinary capacity to handle one the most dramatic refugee crisis in modern history. As of June 2016, over 655,000 Syrians had registered with UNHCR in Jordan[2]. The influx of Syrians fleeing the war makes Jordan – along with Lebanon – the country with the highest per capita rate of Syrian refugees in the region. Figures are even more impressive if we give credit to the Government of Jordan's claim that Syrian refugees in the Kingdom account to almost 1.3 million people and constitute over 20 percent of its total population[3]. However, worrying changes in the Government of Jordan's attitude towards Syrian refugees show how the international community's approach to the Syrian crisis is becoming unsustainable.

Government of Jordan's claim that Syrian refugees in the Kingdom account to almost 1.3 million people and constitute over 20 percent of its total population

Syrian refugees in Jordan

The large influx of refugees over the past five years has had a serious impact on the Jordanian economy. When refugees began to arrive, the country was already undergoing a period of economic contraction. In 2008, the global financial crisis hit hard on Jordan, leading to a substantial shrinking of foreign direct investment and private capital flows to Amman[4]. The outbreak of the Arab revolts in the region in the following years add to Jordan's economic downturn by disrupting the country's trading relationships with key partners in the region. For example, the disruption of cheap gas supplies from Egypt sparked volatile fluctuations in the regional oil supply and prices[5]. Already crippled by the global financial crisis and regional political unrest, Jordan's economy suffered further with the arrival of Syrian refugees. Between 2011 and 2014, the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate shrunk by 56 per cent. Real GDP increased by two per cent in the following year, compared with 3.2 per cent during the first quarter of 2014. Between 2011 and 2015, public debt increased by 53 per cent to reach around 81 per cent of GDP – especially due to government borrowing to cover the cost of accommodating Syrian refugees – which the Jordanian government estimates at JOD 1.4 billion[6]. According to the government, by mid-2015 "debt had increased by a further JOD 649 million or 3.2 per cent to JOD 21.2 billion [equivalent to EUR 26.9 billion]"[7].

2 UNHCR. *Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal.* http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107.

3 It is plausible to think that the actual number of refugees is higher than the figure provided by the UNHCR. Many people may have not registered with the UN agency either for fear that their name could be revealed to the Syrian authorities or because they were not in need of its services. On the other hand, it is also true that that Jordan has clear interests in inflating the numbers of refugees, for example, by counting also those Syrians who were in the territory prior the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. Numbers are potent reminders to the international community that Jordan deserves financial help and that the decrease in the humanitarian services will only lead to the collapse of the country's economy with severe repercussions at socio-political level. See GHAZAL, Mohammed. "Population stands at around 9.5 million, including 2.9 million guests". *The Jordan Times*, 30 Jan 2016.

4 MOPIC. 2014. Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis, http://www.jrpsc.org.

5 FRANCIS, Alexandra. 2015. J*ordan's Refugee Crisis.* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

6 1 JOD: 1.26 EURO (on 23 September 2016, http://www.xe.com)

7 MOPIC. 2015. *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis* 2016-2018, http://www.jrpsc.org/: 150.

The crisis also had severe negative reverberation on trade and tourism. According to Jordan's Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC), trade deficit has multiplied six-fold in particular due to the loss of one of the principal points of access to regional trade through Syria. Between 2011 and 2014, income from tourism plummeted to half its growth rate prior to the crisis. However, the Syrian crisis especially impacted Jordanian structural vulnerabilities. The influx of refugees has had a negative impact especially on school, sanitation, housing, food, energy and water, and particularly in the northern governorates where the majority of Syrian refugees reside. As public schools became saturated with Syrian refugees, host communities expressed concern about shortened class times, overcrowded classrooms, and double-shifting[8]. The proportion of students attending double-shifted schools increased from 7.6 percent in 2009 to 13.4 percent in 2014. The Ministry of Health also reports a sharp increase in the number of overall outpatient visits to primary health care – from 68 in January 2012 to 15,975 in March 2013 – and in the number of Syrian refugees accessing government hospitals – from 300 to 10,330 during the same period of time[9]. In particular, the arrival of Syrian refugees seems to have had a negative impact on Jordan's housing sector. Rent prices have tripled or even quadrupled in border zones and other areas of high refugee density. As the majority of Syrians do not live in camps, this rise can be explained by the sharp increase in demand for housing and by refugees' capacity to afford higher prices by sharing housing with others to bring down costs.

Rent prices have tripled or even quadrupled in border zones and other areas of high refugee density

The economic crisis and the strain on public services have especially affected the most vulnerable communities in northern Jordan among which the majority of Syrians reside. Lower-income families have been displaced by higher rents; while their already meagre prospects of livelihood have been curbed by the economic downturns. There is also the widespread belief among less advantaged Jordanians that Syrian refugees thrive thanks to a lavishly generous international community that is fulfilling the needs of the latter while leaving the former stranded and without resources. This has radically changed the originally welcoming attitude of Jordanians. At the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the large influx of refugees to Jordan was generally accompanied by demonstrations of solidarity, hospitality and tolerance from the host society towards the newcomers. Family ties as well as linguistic and cultural relations between Syrian

8 The double-shift system groups students in two separate shifts: Jordanians attend morning classes, while Syrians go the second late afternoon and early evening shift.

9 MOPIC. 2014. *Needs Assessment Review* 2014, http://www.jrpsc.org/: 150.

refugees and the members of Jordanian host communities have facilitated the reception of Syrians in the Kingdom of Jordan. However, the protracted nature of the crisis is now affecting the relationship between the two communities. Today, the belief that refugees are thriving on scarce local resources is common cause for resentment amongst the host community.

The belief that refugees are thriving on scarce local resources is common cause for resentment amongst the host community

However, the downturn of the Jordanian economy cannot be ascribed only to the arrival of the refugees in the Kingdom. As Al-Wazani points out, the Jordanian deficit reached its peak in 2012 but decreased in the following two years, when the majority of refugees arrived in the country[10]. Also the widespread belief among the Jordanian public that the influx of Syrian refugees has increased the competition over jobs is controversial. Clearly, the job market constitutes a clear point of friction. Principally due to prohibitive costs and administrative obstacles, work permits for Syrians are not being issued. Non-Jordanians with legal residency and valid passports can obtain work permits only if the prospective employer pays a fee and shows that the job requires experience or skills not to be found among the Jordanian population. In 2014, a UNHCR survey reported that only 1% of visited refugee households had a member with a work permit in Jordan[11]. However, despite the official restrictions on working, many refugees work informally. Jordanians perception of Syrians as competitors for jobs has sparked protests and tensions between refugees and host communities. A report published by ILO shows not only that unemployment rates are not correlated with the areas of large Syrian refugee influx, but also that Syrian refugees mainly work in jobs in the informal sector commonly performed by non-Jordanian migrant workers such as Egyptians and Sudanese in agriculture, construction, food service and retail[12].

Importantly, the Jordanian economy has also benefited from the Syrian crisis – especially the northern governorates of Jordan with the greatest proportion of Syrians[13]. The large influx of people boosted public investment and growth in a variety of sectors: construction, communication, service, and manufacturing. In 2012, GDP grew by 2.7 percent. Syrians bolstered private consumption and foreign direct investments leading to a real GDP increase by 2.8 percent in 2013 and 3.1 percent in 2014[14]. Jordanians have profited from the availability of a vast pool of cheap labour; many have also entered into business partnership

10 AL WAZANI, Khalid. 2014. *The Socio-Economic Implications of Syrian Refugees on Jordan: A Cost-Benefit Framework.* Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

11 UNHCR. 2014. Living in the Shadow, http://www.unhcr. org/54b685079.pdf, p. 28.

12 ILO, 2014. The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on the Labour Market in Jordan: Preliminary Analysis, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/ groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publica-tion/wcms_242021.pdf, p. 14

13 See, for example, CARRION, Doris. 2015. *Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Confronting Difficult Truths.* Chatham House; and SCHENKER, David. 2015. *Jordan's Economy Surprises.* The Washington Institute, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/jordans-economy-surprises.

14 FRANCIS, Alexandra. 2015. *Jordan's Refugee Crisis.* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

with Syrians, contributing further to the economic development of the territory[15]. Furthermore, while rents continue to increase for both Jordanians and Syrians, the latter tend to pay higher sums than Jordanian households[16]. Jordan has also profited from the unprecedented expansion of international aid and development grants to face the crisis. The total amount of foreign grants and soft loans during the period 2011-2015 amounted to US$9.5 billion: almost double the funding received in the previous five years (2006-2010). Finally, the Syrian crisis served the political interests of the Jordanian regime. The atrocities committed in Syria in the wake of the revolutionary momentum reminded the Jordanian public that the same could be repeated in Jordan. In addition, Syrian refugees have become the perfect scapegoat, drawing public attention away from the chronic flaws of the Jordanian political and economic system[17].

Jordan's response

The exodus of Syrian refugees in Jordan has been facilitated by several factors – not least of which is kinship and friendship ties and the historically tight cultural and geographical relationship between the two countries. Jordan has historically acted as a safe haven for forced migrants from the Middle East region. A role explained by Jordan's location and the country's general openness to Arab migrants[18]. Throughout the years, indeed, waves of migrants have entered the country: the Palestinian refugees since the establishment of the State of Israel in the l948, displaced people from the Lebanese conflict in 1975, and Iraqi refugees since 1991. Since 2011, the Jordanian government has hosted Syrian refugees fleeing their war-torn country. The majority of them have found refuge in the urban centres in the capital, Amman, and the border governorates of Jordan. A minority of Syrians – around 20 per cent – live in camps. The largest of Jordan's four camps is Za'atari refugee camp, established in 2012 near the Syrian border. At the time of its maximum expansion, the camp housed around 120,000 people. In 2013, Jordan opened the Emirati Jordanian Camp and the following year Azraq Camp – both in the northern governorate of Zarqa. The fourth camp is Cyber City – a closed holding centre mostly for Palestinian refugees from Syria.

Jordan has historically acted as a safe haven for forced migrants from the Middle East region

Against this backdrop, it may sound surprising that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is not a signatory state to the UN 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. The country receives

15 CARRION, Doris. 2015. *Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Confronting Difficult Truths.* Chatham House

16 According to CARE International, "Shelter is reported as the single most pressing need. The average rental expenditure is JOD 166. Syrian households on average pay JOD 193 for rent, indicating a 28% increase from the baseline data for urban areas outside of Amman. Jordanians report lower monthly rental expenditure (JOD 107)." CARE, 2014. Lives Unseen: Urban Syrian Refugees and Jordanian Host Communities Three Years into the Syria Crisis, http://www.care-international.org/UploadDocument/files/CARE_Syrian%20refugee%20Assess-ment%20in%20Jordan_April%202014(1).pdf, p. 8.

17 MOPIC. http://www.mop.gov.jo/DetailsPage/PartnersAndReportsOfExternalAssistanceEN.aspx?CourseID=18

18 DE BEL-AIR, Francoise. 2007. *State Policies on Migration and Refugees in Jordan.* AUC.

Syrian refugees within the framework of its Law of Residency and Foreigners' Affairs (according to which Syrians are allowed to enter Jordan with their passport only, whereas visa and residency permit are not required) and it is subject to the principle of non-refoulement under customary law. Refugees can receive temporary protection from UNHCR under the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 1998 with the Jordanian Ministry of Interior.

Jordan's limited obligations under international law signifies that the country has no legal obligation to accept and assist Syrians fleeing war. Such a degree of agency in its policy responses to refugee influxes has also allowed the government to retain a substantial amount of control over the humanitarian response. The government is expected to assist the UNHCR in carrying out its mandate and managing the camps, particularly Za'atari. However, since the outbreak of the crisis, humanitarian assistance has come increasingly under the control of the Jordanian government[19]. Jordanian top ranking officials have an almost discretionary power in defining policy towards refugees. Furthermore, any refugee assistance projects need to receive the authorisation of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC).

The international community has consistently failed to meet the funding request

The protraction of the Syrian crisis has led to the greater involvement of the Jordanian authorities in the management of the humanitarian response. In 2013, the MOPIC established the Host Communities Support Platform (HCSP) – a strategic body comprised of government ministries, donor bodies, UN, and INGOs. The HCSP ushers in a new era in the management of the crisis. In 2014, the Government of Jordan drafts the National Resilience Plan (NRP). As stated in the document, "By establishing the HCSP, […] and initiating a participatory process for the development of the NRP, the government has taken a leadership role in seeking to mitigate the consequences of the crisis in the region and in the Kingdom"[20]. With the intended goal of complementing the main humanitarian support package of the Regional Response Plan (RRP6)[21], the NRP provides a three-year programme of high priority investments that seeks to address the accumulating fiscal burden as a result of the impact of the Syrian crisis on Jordanian host communities and the Jordanian economy. The plan included a request to supplement Jordan with US$4.128 billion to foster investments in education, energy, health, housing, livelihood and employment, municipality services, security and water sectors.

19 This has had clear negative repercussions in terms of protection and services provision. See ACHILLI, Luigi. 2015. Syrian Refugees in Jordan, Migration Policy Centre Policy Brief, 2015/02, February, MPC-Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

20 MOPIC. 2014. The National Resilience Plan, http://un.org.jo/uploaded/publications_book/1458650480.pdf: 10.

21 http://www.unhcr.org/partners/donors/52b170e49/2014-syria-regional-response-plan-rrp6-january-december-2014.html.

In 2015, the NRP evolves into the Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis (JRPSC). The government describes the plan as "the first nationally-led response of its kind, joining refugee and development responses in one comprehensive national plan"[22]. A total of US$1.14 billion was requested for direct budget support to the Government of Jordan and US$1.185 billion for a programmatic response[23].

In early 2016, Jordan moves forward and proposes a response plan for 2016-2018. Led by the MOPIC the plan further ties the resilience of national systems and institutions with the international response to the Syrian crisis. In its own words, "the plan seeks to […] foster the resilience and effectiveness of Jordan's service delivery system in the areas of education, energy, health, justice, municipal services, social protection, and water and sanitation." Almost US$8 billion is being requested over the next three years for its response plan[24]. It is important to remark that the international community has consistently failed to meet the funding request. Nonetheless, the JRP2015 and more recently the JRP2016-18 steer the evolution of the response from a mainly humanitarian refugee response to a long-term developmental action. With the JRP, Jordan demonstrates its determination to use the "Syrian crisis" as a lever to foster the development of its infrastructures and boost the economy. The move was to draw a clear link between the Syrian crisis and the Jordanian economic downturn: if the country undergoes a severe economic crisis, this is because of Syrian refugees' overstretching local resources and infrastructures; hence, the need to tackle the whole society with a comprehensive economic and development plan. As the government put it, "the patience of vulnerable Jordanians who have shared their resources for the past five years and borne the brunt of the increased strain on basic services is running thin, and many are beginning to demand that their needs be considered a priority"[25].

The dark side of the response

The EU and its member states have been actively involved in responding to the Syrian crisis at the political and humanitarian level. The EU approach has primarily consisted of providing support to the countries neighbouring Syria in order to contain the crisis within the Middle East. However, international donor support has seldom been adequate to face the crisis. To cope, the Jordanian Government has thus adopted a set of measures that have had important negative repercussions on the living condition of Syrian refugees in the Kingdom.

Government authorities have also progressively restrained Syrian refugees' freedom of movement in urban areas within Jordan

22 http://www.jrpsc.org/

23 MOPIC. 2015. Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis 2015, http://www.jrpsc.org/.

24 MOPIC. 2016. Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis 2016-2018, http://www.jrpsc.org/.

25 Ibid: 14.

To begin with, the daily arrival rate has steadily decreased since 2014. According to well-informed sources, the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan who return to Syria is alarmingly higher than the number of those who enter the Kingdom[26]. Humanitarian organisations have claimed, on several occasions, that local authorities have refused to let Syrian refugees – including those requiring emergency treatment – cross the border. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have also reported several cases of *refoulement* of vulnerable Syrian refugees back to Syria in overt violation of international obligations[27]. Government authorities have never provided any official reason for this change of policy. During the Third International Pledging Conference for Syria in March 2015, Jordan's Prime Minister has briefly commented on the issue by stating that the capacity of the country to host Syrian refugees had been exceeded. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) concur that almost no new arrivals of Syrian refugees have been recorded since early October 2014 – with the exception of a limited number of women, children, and civilians with urgent medical needs. This seems to be confirmed by the 43% increase in makeshift shelters on the Syrian side of the border from July to October 2014. It is also suggested by the clearing of the land between the Jordan-Syrian borders where refugees used to be held for extensive screening before entering the country[28].

Furthermore, ever since the second half of 2014, government authorities have also progressively restrained Syrian refugees' freedom of movement in urban areas within Jordan. Refugees used to be able to register with the UNHCR no matter the status of their documentation. Since 14 July 2014, the government has instructed the UNHCR to stop issuing Asylum Seeker Certificates (ASCs) to Syrian refugees that have left the camps without proper "bail out" documentation. The new policy has consequently affected many Syrian households. The ASC is indispensable for obtaining the Ministry of Interior (MoI) Service Card, which grants refugees access to public healthcare and education services in host communities, and is renewed yearly. As of early 2015, the cost of renewing a MOI card was around EUR 60 for each member, which made it extremely expensive for large households. Refugees without a valid MoI card have to pay a fine; the authorities deport those refugees who have not paid the fine within three months to either Syria or the refugee camps[29].

Free healthcare provided to Syrians overburdened the country's capacity to maintain the service

Many humanitarian organisations have also reported the great challenges that Syrian refugees have to face to access basic services. For example, public hospitals –

26 ACHILLI, Luigi. 2016. "Back to Syria? Conflicting patterns of mobility among Syrian refugees in Jordan". Orient, I, 7-13.
27 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. 2016. Living on Margins: Syrian Refugees in Jordan Struggle to Access Health Care.
28 SNAP, 2014. Regional Analysis for Syria Q3 2014, p. 74.
29 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. 2016. Living on Margins: Syrian Refugees in Jordan Struggle to Access Health Care.

subsidised by the UN – were open to Syrian refugees for over three years after the outbreak of the Syrian conflict. However, free healthcare provided to Syrians overburdened the country's capacity to maintain the service. Since July 2014, primary health care services are available to all registered Syrians at subsidised prices only upon the presentation of a health certificate that the Government of Jordan provides to all Syrian refugees with a valid MoI card. The certificate, however, covers only a limited range of health issues. In addition, Syrians without MoI service cards in Jordan pay like any other foreigner, which is 35-60% more than an uninsured Jordanian citizen. A number of issues also create barriers to refugees' enrolment and attendance in the education system. These barriers range from financial constraints and restrictions on movement to structural weaknesses in the Jordanian education systems. Syrians in Jordan additionally need the annually-renewed MoI card to access education services. As the procedures to renew residency permits and legalise status are increasingly cumbersome and expensive, many refugees do not have valid documentation and cannot access free education[30].

Due to prohibitive costs and administrative obstacles, work permits for Syrians are not being issued.

Concerned about potential negative effects on the labour market, the Jordanian government has also curbed Syrian refugees' access to the job market. Principally due to prohibitive costs and administrative obstacles, work permits for Syrians are not being issued. A recent survey found that only 1% of visited refugee households had a member with a valid work permit in Jordan[31]. The Jordanian government has initially turned a blind eye to the infringement of the norms regulating working entitlement. With the protraction of the Syrian crisis, however, the government has ceased to demonstrate any leniency towards those who are working in the black market (UNHCR, 2014: 28). As a result, many refugees claim to work mostly illegally and occasionally, on an average of five days a month: a level of employment that is insufficient for household expenditures. Therefore, many refugees are today fearful of being detained or deported because of lapsed residency visas and their involvement in illegal labour[32].

What next?

As the Syria crisis enters its sixth year, the conditions faced by Syria's refugees in the countries of first asylum continue to deteriorate. What can the international community

30 Ibid.

31 STAVE, E. SVEIN, and HILLESUND, Solveig. 2015. *Impact of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian labour market.* FAFO.

32 See ACHILLI, Luigi. *Tariq al-Euroba: Displacement Trends of Syrian Asylum Seekers to the EU.* MPC RR 2016/01, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute.

do to unburden the host countries from the incredible strain placed on them and alleviate the hardships of Syrian refugees living in these territories? A solution seems to have been found in the integration of development and humanitarian aid: the route to real change in regard to the Syrian crisis has to pass through the recognition of the role refugees in advancing national development in the host countries[33].

The real change in the Syrian crisis has to pass through the recognition of the role refugees i n advancing national development in the host countries

Jordan's plan to join refugee and resilience responses in one single plan has found a sympathetic audience among the 70 heads of state, the UN Secretary General, heads of international organisations, NGOs and private sector representatives who gathered in London on 4 February 2016 for the key conference "Supporting Syria & the Region". The goal of the conference was to raise new funding to meet the growing aid needs of the Syrian people – a goal all the more pronounced in light of the current migrant crisis to Europe. The bleak scenario of a Europe crumbling under the sheer weight of mounting waves of refugees persuaded international donors of the necessity of doing more in order to improve the condition of Syrians in the host countries and prevent them from departing.

It is not surprising then that the funding pledges made at the London conference were higher than at any of the three previous pledging conferences. Pledges made in London account to around $700 million of grants in support of the JRP for 2016; the majority of the money was allocated for "the priorities outlined in the resilience component of the plan targeting host communities"[34]. Additional pledges of around $700 million have been made for the following two years. Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) have considered the possibility of substantially increasing their support from $800 million to $1.9 billion as part of a plan that seeks to pave the way for the gradual integration of refugees in Jordan's labour market.

The London Conference seems to open the door to a brighter future for the millions of Syrians who are now living in the countries of first asylum. However, as experts have remarked, things may not be that simple. Katharina Lenner, for example, points out, how "the route to substantive policy changes with regard to employment – let alone to mass employment creation – is much more complicated"[35]. It is a route fraught with a number

33 See, for example, BETTS, Alexander and COLLIER, Paul. 2015. "Help Refugees Help Themselves: Let Displaced Syrians Join the Labor Market", *Foreign Affairs,* 94 (6); GOVERNMENT OF JORDAN. 2016. "The Jordan Compact: A New Holistic Approach between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the International Community to deal with the Syrian Refugee Crisis". *Supporting Syria & the Region, London 2016.*

34 GOVERNMENT OF JORDAN. 2016. "The Jordan Compact: A New Holistic Approach between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the International Community to deal with the Syrian Refugee Crisis". S*upporting Syria & the Region, London 2016.*

35 LENNER, Katharina. 2016. "The politics of pledging: reflections on the London donors conference for Syria". Migration Policy Centre Policy Brief, 2016/03, February, MPC-Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

of economic, political, and legal issues – not least of which is the reticence of the host communities to comply with the normalisation of Syrian refugees' stay in Jordan. On the other hand, further political and economic deterioration may follow as the number of refugees is simply too great for Jordan to handle. Both Syrian refugees and the Jordanian host community are now paying a high price. The EU and its member states have been actively involved in responding to the Syrian crisis at the political and humanitarian level. The EU approach has primarily consisted in providing support to the countries neighbouring Syria in order to contain the crisis within the Middle East. However, as of 2014 and early 2015, a number of worrying trends in the Jordanian Government's attitude toward Syrian refugees show how such an approach is becoming unsustainable.

As the crisis enters its sixth year, the situation for Syrian refugees in Jordan has worsened dramatically. In this context, Europe can certainly do something. To begin with, the EU can actively work against the shrinking of humanitarian space in Jordan. The official Jordanian policy of open borders has been undermined by the dramatic decrease in admissions after the 1st of October 2014. This has currently left many Syrians in serious humanitarian need in the no man's land between countries and, has, very likely, increased the risk of trafficking and smug-gling. The EU and its member states, through sustained diplomacy, could encourage the Jordanian government to enact a genuine open-border policy and to respect the principle of non-*refoulement*. The EU should also ensure that humanitarian and development actors are able to target the most vulnerable populations according to their needs without regard to their legal/administrative status. Concerns should be voiced about the Government of Jordan's request that the UNHCR and its implementing partners not provide assistance to unregistered refugees.

EU should ensure that humanitarian actors are able to target the most vulnerable populations according to their needs without regard to their legal status

However, notwithstanding the importance of advocacy, the EU's messages to the Government of Jordan are likely to remain unheard if not combined with the implementation of more durable solutions. The protracted Syrian civil war and the endless arrival of refugees threaten the stability of Jordan and further accentuate the extremely poor conditions of Syrian refugees as well as the most vulnerable segment of the host community in the country. Jordanian infrastructure is sagging under pressure. Over

650,000 registered Syrian refugees now reside in the Kingdom – the equivalent of 10 per cent of its entire population. The relationship between host communities and refugees is progres-sively deteriorating. In order to reduce the pressure on Jordan and other countries bordering Syria, the number of refugees temporarily relocated or resettled in EU member states needs to increase.

In this sense, the EU response to the Syrian crisis has been inadequate. As of June 2016, Syria's neighbouring countries were hosting the large majority of Syrian refugees. With very few exceptions, EU member states have enacted a politics of containment by providing assistance to the countries bordering Syria and by reinforcing Europe's borders. As a matter of fact, only a very small number of refugees have found an abode in Europe.

Whilst providing significant humanitarian assistance for refugees in those countries is laudable, the EU policy of containment is dangerous as it threatens the stability of the countries bordering Syria. Moreover, the case of Jordan clearly demonstrates that open border policy can easily become a rhetorical device which a country can use for domestic priorities: to secure the conspicuous flux of money channelled through humanitarian aid, for example. Paradoxically, European countries can enforce a genuine open-border policy only by accepting more refugees currently hosted in Jordan into Europe, thus helping Jordan to scale down its burden. In this context, European countries should implement a range of measures largely, but not only, centred on temporary protection. These are easier to implement than resettlement and, thus, better suited to address the Syrian refugee emergency. As other studies have argued, this can be done by simply reinforcing pre-existing norms and policies: extending humanitarian admis-sion/temporary protection regimes for refugees (not only Syrians) in the EU; expanding European countries' resettlement programmes; exempting Syrian refugees from visa requirements; and by developing alternative legal routes for refugees, such as family reunification, university fellowships and scholarships, training programmes, private sponsorships, and labour mobility[36].

European countries should implement a range of measures largely, but not only, centred on temporary protection

Obviously, not all Syrian refugees can find an abode in Europe. Fearing socio-cultural estrangement, refugees themselves may be unwilling to leave Jordan for an unfamiliar destination in Europe[37]. As such, the EU and its member states need to continue

36 For more, see AKRAM, Susan. et al., *Protecting Syrian Refugees: Laws, Policies, and Global Responsibility Sharing.* http://www.bu.edu/law/central/jd/programs/clinics/international-human-rights/documents/FINALFullReport.pdf; ORCHARD, Cynthia and MILLER, Andrew. 2014. *Protection in Europe for refugees from Syria.* Refugee Studies Centre, Forced Migration Policy Briefing 10, http:// www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/publications/policy-briefing-series/ pb10-protection-europe-refugees-syria-2014.pdf.

37 ACHILLI, Luigi. 2016. "Back to Syria? Conflicting patterns of mobility among Syrian refugees in Jordan". Orient, I, 7-13.

supporting Jordan through specific programmes and funding schemes. However, the integrating development programme and the humanitarian aid in its response to the refugee crisis in Jordan is unlikely to draw the line under the predicament of Syrians in the country. Neither is "changing labour market regulations […] the silver bullet hoped for by the international community"[38]. Jordan is under severe strain. The massive influx of refugees has overstretched its infrastructure and has threatened its domestic stability. This has also had a significant negative impact on the living conditions of Syrian refugees residing in the Kingdom. If the current situation is grim, the protraction of the civil conflict in Syria does not leave much room for hope in the future. For reasons of regional security and humanitarian aid there is an urgent need to work on a more durable solution to the refugee crisis in Jordan. The only way forward is the political resolution to the Syrian conflict.

38 LENNER, Katharina. 2016. "The politics of pledging: reflections on the London donors conference for Syria". Migration Policy Centre Policy Brief, 2016/03, February, MPC-Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

Lebanon

With the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011, an overwhelming number of Syrians fled the ravaging civil war in their country seeking safety and refuge in Lebanon. There are, at the moment, 1.1 million Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in Lebanon. However, the actual number is expected to be much higher because of the significant number of refugees who are either unregistered or who entered illegally. In addition to the increasing number of Syrian refugees, Lebanon currently hosts 42,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), 6000 Iraqi refugees and around 450,000 refugees from Palestine[39]. The refugee-to-citizen population ratio in Lebanon is the highest in the world where one in every four persons is a refugee. This high number of refugees in a small and under-resourced country like Lebanon is putting the political and economic system of the country to a severe test.

The refugee-to-citizen population ratio in Lebanon is the highest in the world where one in every four persons is a refugee

Syrians are currently spread across Lebanon's 1108 municipalities where, in some villages, their numbers at times exceed that of locals. The vast majority of the Syrian refugees predominantly reside in North Lebanon and Bekaa, two of the poorer and underdeveloped regions in Lebanon, in addition to settling in or around highly impoverished Palestinian camps. As the Lebanese state adopted a "no camp" policy, the majority of Syrian refugees reside in urban or peri-urban areas, mainly renting places in run-down buildings such as garages and abandoned farms. The UNHCR estimated in March 2015 that the majority of refugees (about 57%) live in rented apartments or houses, 15% live in informal settlements, and the remainder live in substandard buildings, unused sites, or collective shelters. The apparent substantial growth of informal settlements also increases risk to the refugees and intensifies social tension.

The government's decision (or indecision) to actively engage in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis can be explained by political resistance to setting up camps or the fact the Lebanon does not want to relive its experience with Palestinian refugees, many of whom have been stranded in Lebanon for over 60 years. Furthermore, the Lebanese view camps as potential breeding ground for radicalisation and militarisation[40]. Any kind of built structure was instructed by the government to be temporary, which drove Syrians to reside in informal tent settlements or in sub-optimal buildings. This comes despite the "no camp" policy meaning to provide them with freedom of choice and space to exercise their rights. As put by UNHCR, "refugees have the possibility to live with greater dignity,

39 DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL. *Summary of regional migration trends: Middle East.* 2016.

40 YASSIN, Nasser. No place to stay? Reflections on the Syrian refugee shelter policy in Lebanon. UN Habitat, Issam Fares. 2015.

independence and normality as members of the community"[41]. However, the policy brought along its own challenges. The lack of structured camps could make the work of relief organisations much more difficult when it comes to supporting refugees and providing the needed assistance to the most vulnerable.

Implications

As the crisis escalated and the numbers of refugees increased significantly, ensuring security and basic needs for refugees proved to be challenging. This significant increase poses a tremendous challenge to the country and places pressure on the already sub-standard infrastructure and unstable governance system. For a small country such as Lebanon and with limited national resources, this crisis has had a staggering impact on all sectors including housing, education, health, electricity, and water, with the pressure also felt in the labour market. The crisis had an impact on the livelihood of an already vulnerable Lebanese population as well as Syrian refugees, whose lives are now engulfed in poverty and debt.

Economically, the Syrian crisis has hit vital sectors. Lebanon has suffered a loss of trade, tourism and investment

Economically, the Syrian crisis has hit vital sectors. Lebanon has suffered a loss of trade, tourism and investment. Figures show that the number of people living under poverty in Lebanon has risen by nearly two thirds since 2011. In an assessment carried out by the World Bank in 2013, the Syrian refugee crisis has strained already inefficient public services. It has also widened the fiscal deficit[42]. The country's infrastructure, which is severely frail, is currently overstretched; the World Bank assessment shows that fiscal cost of the Syrian conflict on Lebanese infrastructure is estimated at $589 million (€526.7 million), in addition for the need of $2.5 billion (€2.23 billion) in order to restore access and quality of services to the standards before the Syrian crisis[43]. As a result, this burden has taken a toll on Lebanon's GDP which is declining by almost three per cent annually[44].

There has been an exacerbated competition for resources especially apparent in the labour market where Syrians work illegally in the informal economy for lower wages. According to the World Bank, the labour supply expanded by 30% in 2013, and was expected to increase to 54% in 2014. The sudden expansion of the labour pool has pushed down wages for both the Lebanese and the Syrians. Given the economic crisis,

41 UNHCR. *Policy on alternatives to camps.* 2014.
42 WORLD BANK. *Lebanon - Economic and social impact assessment of the Syrian conflict.* Washington DC; World Bank. 2013.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.

work opportunities to generate a decent income are not available enough to cover demand, therefore, refugees are more likely to resort to borrowing money which drives them into a vicious cycle of debt. A study by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) shows that the average value of loans per refugee household is about $500 USD[45] (€447.16). Some Syrian refugees rely on coping strategies such as child labour and early marriages. Therefore, it could be established that legal status is essential when refugees are asked to provide for themselves; it helps them to easily integrate into the host community and contribute to the local economy.

> The sectarian strife in Syria is spilling over into Lebanon, which is especially critical given Lebanon's delicate confessional balance

In addition to the economic and livelihood dimension of the crisis, political and social tensions are on the rise[46]. It is apparent that the sectarian strife in Syria is spilling over into Lebanon[47]. This is especially critical given Lebanon s delicate sectarian and confessional balance. The sectarian background of the different regions of Lebanon affects relations between host communities and refugees, with some, therefore, arguing that there are contrasting reactions to the influx of refugees. As such, economic challenges coupled with political insecurities could foster social tension between host communities and the refugee population; especially that Lebanon already exhibits a clear sectarian and fragmented nature.

However, the fostered resentment is not only directed towards the refugee communities but also towards that international community. The feeling amongst the poor in host communities, that international aid is only reaching refugees whilst the Lebanese are neglected, is feeding into this social cleavage. Host communities' perception that there is uneven or unfair distribution of aid creates hostility towards the refugee population.

Policies and response

At the beginning, Lebanon did not have an explicit policy towards the influx of Syrian refugees. Rather, it was an ad hoc response. Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention nor does it have specific legislation or administrative practices for refugees and asylum seekers. Thus, its actions towards the crisis since the beginning have been governed by ad hoc policies. The government insists on its longstanding

45 LEHAMANN Christian and MASTERSON, Daniel. Emergency economies: The impact of cash assistance in Lebanon. International Rescue Committee (IRC). 2014.

46 CASSIDY, John. The economics of Syrian refugees. The New Yorker. 2015.

47 VAN VLIET HOURANI GUITA, Sam. Regional differences in the conditions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The Civil Society Knowledge Centre. 2014.

position that it is neither a country of asylum nor a final destination for refugees. Therefore, Syrian refugees in Lebanon are referred to as "displaced persons" (*nazihin*) – rather than "refugees" (*laji'een*). These circumstances created what is referred to as a 'no-policy context' and a total absence of an official Lebanese response to the crisis[48]. Lebanese political representatives could not even come to an agreement as to whether Lebanon's borders with Syria should be open or closed, further contributing to the no-policy context and rendering the border policy de *facto* open; a move that was praised by the international community, and which permitted a larger than anticipated influx of refugees into the country[49, 50].

Government insists on its longstanding position that it is neither a country of asylum nor a final destination for refugees

Lebanon was largely praised at the start of the Syrian crisis for operating an 'open border' policy, though it was a short-lived one. Gradually, restrictions have been increasing for those seeking refuge in Lebanon, as the government began voicing increasing disgruntlement towards the influx.

In August 2013, Palestinians from Syria (PRS) seeking safety in Lebanon were faced with measures restricting their entry into Lebanon, which included the need for a valid pre-approved visa via an application made by a Lebanese guarantor[51]. Restrictions were further intensified in May 2014, to prohibit the entry of all PRS. These measures would later extend to Syrian refugees as well. The Lebanese Prime Minister Tammam Salam has expressed on several occasions that the burden on Lebanon is becoming too large to handle, as the flow of refugees has hardly abated and the financial challenges are increasing exponentially[52].

The year 2014 was a turning point in Lebanese policies as the number of Syrian refugees reached 1 million, and the ramifications of this figure began to be realised by the government. They could not turn a blind eye to the crisis any longer. With a new government in office in February 2014, an inter-ministerial crisis cell was formed within six months to oversee the government s response to the crisis[53]. After mounting criticism from the international community against Lebanon's lack of strategy to deal

48 EL MUFTI, Karim. Official response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, the disastrous policy of no-policy. Civil Society Knowledge Centre. 2014.

49 RASSI, Rima. Struggling to Cope: The Syrian refugee crisis and its impact on Lebanon. In SULLIVAN, Denis., and A Tobin, Sarah. (eds.). Understanding today's Middle East: Peoples and places of the Arab spring. Boston, MA: Northeastern University. 2014.

50 YASSIN, Nasser. No Place to Stay? Reflections on the Syrian refugee shelter policy in Lebanon, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, UN Habitat, 2015.

51 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. Pushed to the Edge: Syrian refugees face increased restrictions in Lebanon. 2015.

52 Statement by H.E. Mr. Tammam Salam, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Lebanon, at the meeting of the 'international support group for Lebanon' New York, Friday, September 26, 2014.

53 Government of Lebanon and United Nations. Lebanon crisis response plan 2015-2016. 2014.

with the crisis, Lebanon's Council of Ministers adopted a refugee policy paper that was authorised in October 2014. It was the first comprehensive policy dealing with the influx, and it had three primary aims to manage the crisis: (i) reducing the numbers of Syrian refugees, (ii) addressing the rising security concerns which resulted from the crisis, and (iii) alleviating the burden placed on the people and the economy[54]. The policy paper was later put into practice by a set of regulations issued by the General Security Office; it presents new restrictive measures for the entry of Syrians and the renewal of residency permits for Syrians already in Lebanon[55]. In May 2015 the Lebanese government instructed UNHCR to stop registering Syrian refugees, including those who are already in the country and new arrivals. Despite these restrictive policies adopted by the Lebanese government, reports show that they failed to halt the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanese territory[56].

The Lebanese Government also got more involved in the response to Syrian refugees needs as well as those of poor local host communities. In 2015, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) was produced to outline the nature and scope of response. The LCRP is co-managed by the Government of Lebanon (GOL), represented by the Minister of Social Affairs, and the United Nations, represented by the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator. The plan aims to address the humanitarian needs of refugees and other vulnerable populations as well as invest in Lebanese institutions, services and systems, in a manner that helps maintain Lebanon's stability throughout the crisis. These efforts engage over 50 partners.

However, what can be observed throughout the Syrian crisis is that Lebanon lacks a clear national strategy to systematically and efficiently respond to the Syrian crisis. Five years into the crisis and Lebanon's government has still failed to set a clear policy in regards to the growing number of refugees. The lack of a standardised response left municipalities responsible for absorbing and dealing with these substantial numbers of refugees, while providing them and host communities with basic needs.

Municipal response

After the *de facto* rule of having "no camp" policy, unofficial camps, or informal settlements were starting to appear sporadically across the country especially in the North and Bekaa. Regulating these unofficial settlements became a challenge not only to the national government but to local authorities as well. The absence of a clear national strategy to the Syrian crisis placed municipalities on the front line to address and cope with the refugee crisis and its implications. With limited resources but an urge to respond

54 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. Pushed to the edge: Syrian refugees face increased restrictions in Lebanon. 2015.
55 JANMYR, Maja. The legal status of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut. 2016.
56 HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH. I just wanted to be treated like a person: How Lebanon's residency rules facilitate abuse of Syrian refugees. 2016.

to the mounting needs, municipalities found themselves with no other choice but to make their own decisions with regards to a response, seizing 'the prerogative of law and order in the absence of official services'[57]. They started catering to needed services including adequate water and sanitation services, providing shelter, education and health care. The surge in demand for public services, which has exceeded the capacity of already overstretched municipalities resources, became a daily challenge amongst mayors, vice-mayors and municipal staff. Social and health services are a priority need in vulnerable communities impacted by the crisis. Consequently, municipalities enhanced their collaborations with UN agencies and international NGOs. The collaboration was framed within addressing the needs of both refugees and host communities.

With limited resources, municipalities found themselves with no other choice but to take their own decisions concerning a response to the refugee's situation

Some municipalities resorted to imposing unconstitutional and illegal curfews to curb refugee influx and movement; some of these curfews were considered retaliatory measures following the fighting in Arsal[58]. Although the international community and Lebanese civil society have denounced the curfews, local authorities regard them as essential in maintaining public order and security in Lebanon, especially with the lack of central state authority[59].

However, this autonomy granted to the municipalities added further to the fragmented response, driving each municipality to respond to the crisis depending on their already existing resources and the amount of funds each is receiving - whether from the central government or the international organisations - in addition to the political dynamics at each municipality[60]. There is no official communication channel that currently exists between the national government and local authorities to respond to the crisis. In fact, the LCRP, which can be regarded as the centralised Lebanese government s response to the Syrian refugee crisis, does not incorporate municipalities or local authorities in the plan although they have proven to be the key players in providing for the refugees and mitigating the impact on the host communities. Instead, they are simply regarded as means to implement the national government's vision. An assessment carried out by Mercy Corps amongst 12 vulnerable municipalities, in the Bekaa, North and South Lebanon governorates, highlighted their primary needs as a result of the Syrian refugee crisis. It revealed that 91% of municipalities cited lack of resources and funding as their

57 EL MUFTI, Karim. Official response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, the disastrous policy of no-policy. Civil Society Knowledge Centre. 2014.

58 DIONIGI, Filippo. The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon: State fragility and social resilience. LSE Middle East Center. 2016.

59 AL-SAADI, Yazan. Examining curfews against Syrians in Lebanon. Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support. 2014.

60 DIONIGI, Filippo. The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon: State fragility and social resilience. LSE Middle East Center. 2016.

greatest need, 79% cited a need for service delivery, including water, sanitation, electricity, education and health care, while 50% cited a need for greater collaboration and involvement of the central government[61]. Therefore, local authorities regard funding as the primary challenge facing them due the refugee crisis. As the international community comes to realise the importance of municipalities as authoritative local bodies, more international organisations are providing support to municipalities and leaders at the local level to manage the crisis and reduce tensions. International organisations are actually targeting vulnerable municipalities directly to deliver them the needed assistance.

Nonetheless, an additional challenge is the over-emphasis on the more visible informal refugee settlements, which only host 17% of the refugees, while less support is provided to the significant number of refugees who reside in urban areas, mostly in substandard buildings[62]. While it is hard to capture urban refugees, there needs to be an innovative mechanism where support can reach those most in need.

Funding

As the Syrian refugees grow in number the humanitarian emergency response turned into a crisis due to exacerbation by a sharp decrease in funding by international donors. This shortage in funds is hampering with humanitarian and development assistance, despite Syrian refugees large reliance on this. The insufficiency of aid can be attributed to donor fatigue, donors are weary of sending their money to Lebanon and neighbouring countries, especially when the aid is not being received under a clear political strategy[63]. Nonetheless, Lebanon was able to secure over $465 million (€416.7 million) of support for refugees and host communities in Lebanon, pledged by the UK, in addition to contributions by the EU and the UN[64].

The insufficiency of aid can be attributed to donor fatigue, especially when the aid i s not being received under a clear political strategy

As of September 2016, Lebanon only received 41% of the requested and pledged $2.48 billion (€2.22 billion) through the LCRP to be able to cope with the refugee crisis, creating a gap of 59%. There are 251 communities in need, or what the UN referred to as most vulnerable municipalities . Currently the international and national organisations were able to reach out to 181 of these communities, primarily in the South and Bekaa[65].

61 MERCY CORPS. Municipal Guide: Successful municipal strategies to respond to the Syria refugee crisis. 2014.
62 YASSIN, Nasser. No place to stay? Reflections on the Syrian refugee shelter policy in Lebanon. UN Habitat, Issam Fares. 2015.
63 M. PATRICK, Stewart. Aid fatigue is hurting displaced Syrians. Newsweek. 2014.
64 BRITISH EMBASSY BEIRUT. Lebanon in the heart of the conference on supporting Syria and the region. 2016.
65 INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION Lebanon. LCRP Q1 Funding update Jan-Mar 2016. 2016.

The gap in funding extends to all sectors of services, out of the $473.5 million (€424.43 million) appeal made for food security in LCRP - only $68.5 (€61.4) is covered, while $68.5 million (€61.4 million) are received for energy and water out of an appeal for $391.3 million (€350.7 million). In the education sector Lebanon has received $133.1 million (€119.3 million) out of a total appeal of $388.2 million[66] (€348 million). These disparities between need and aid response are exacerbating the economic and social burden on Lebanon.

66 Ibid.

Turkey

When anti-government protests in Syria escalated into domestic disorder, then a civil war within a short time, Syrians began to flee to neighbouring countries. With its 911 km shared border with Syria, Turkey has become the country with the highest proportion of Syrian refugees. The first entry of refugees, consisting of 252 Syrians, reached Turkey from Syria on 28 April 2011[67]. Then with Turkey s open-door policy and the crisis in Syria reaching its peak, the flow of refugees continued. As of 7 April 2016, the number of Syrians in Turkey, registered by the relevant authorities of the Turkish Republic and reported to the UNHCR, is 2,748,367[68]. As registration is ongoing, this number is increasing with each passing day. Given the people that have not been registered yet, the actual number of Syrians in Turkey around April 2016 is widely estimated to be around 2.8-3 million. After 2011, Turkey also has witnessed a rise in the numbers (over 300,000) of non-Syrian refugees from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, and others. Only from Iraq, for example, Turkey received more than 170,000 refugees. This means that by mid-2016, in Turkey, there are more than 3.2 million refugees, with Turkey becoming the biggest refugee-hosting country in the world as of 2014.

With its 911 km shared border with Syria,
Turkey has become the country with the highest proportion
of Syrian refugees.

The millions of Syrians in Turkey now account for 3.4-3.5% of Turkey s 78 million population[69]. Although Turkey has always witnessed migrations throughout its history, the current experience is unprecedented. For example, the number of refugees and asylum seekers and migrants coming to Turkey from abroad between 1923 and 2011 was around 2 million[70]. It is known that almost all were from regions such as the Balkans, Central Asia, Caucasia and the Middle East, and almost all were of Turkish origin, speaking Turkish, and - more importantly - were resettled and integrated into the society from the beginning. However, it is also evident that the most important feature of the refugee flows witnessed during the years of the Republic was that most of the refugees were of Turkish origin and were settled within the scope of a system from the very beginning[71]. The process that has been ongoing with Syrians since April 2011, indicates in many aspects that Turkey is on the verge of a more difficult and unique situation. The situation in the first two years (April 2011 to Mid-2013) changed as follows: Many of the Syrians that fled to Turkey were not initially registered at first due to the expectation that "*Assad will be gone soon anyway and Syrians would go back in a short span of time*". They thus spread across Turkey of their own accord, with language-related problems

67 AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) https://www.afad.gov.tr/tr/2373/Giris

68 UNHCR: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php

69 See: Ministry of Development of Turkish Republic: First Stage Needs Assessment Covering 2016-2018 Period for Syrians with Temporary Protection Status in Turkey, 2016.

70 MURAT ERDOĞAN, M., and KAYA, Ayhan. Türkiye'nin Göç Tarihi (Turkish Migration History), stanbul Bilgi Univ. Press. 2015.

71 Ibid.

arising while Turkey maintained an approach that found integration and related settlement policies unnecessary. No serious registration efforts were made by Turkey until mid-2013.

A temporary stay?

The crisis in Syria is now in its fifth year and the prospect of a peaceful Syria, in the short and medium terms, has faded considerably. There is increasing probability that the refugees will stay in Turkey permanently, and the possibility of their return is decreasing day by day. The following factors could cause Syrians to stay permanently in Turkey and make it hard for them to return:

- The war in Syria, which is getting more and more complex each day, seriously threatens lives and it is not expected to be over in the short or medium terms.
- 54.2% of Syrians in Turkey are children and adolescents under the age of 18[72]. Families, would not consider returning back, unless absolute peace and security is restored in Syria, since they are concerned about raising their children in a safe place.
- The number of refugees living in camps in Turkey falls below 9% (264,169 refugees) and the remaining 91% (2,484,198 refugees) are spread across Turkey, moving constantly from one place to another. The dispersal and mobility of Syrians within Turkey makes it almost impossible to implement a decision with regards to "returning Syrians back to their country" in the future.
- At least 400,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey are working irregularly and informally[73]. The number of Syrians working within Turkey is expected to increase after the January 2016 labour law on their right to work. It allows them to adapt into Turkish society making their return harder.

The number of refugees living in camps in Turkey
falls below 9%, with the remaining 91% spread across Turkey

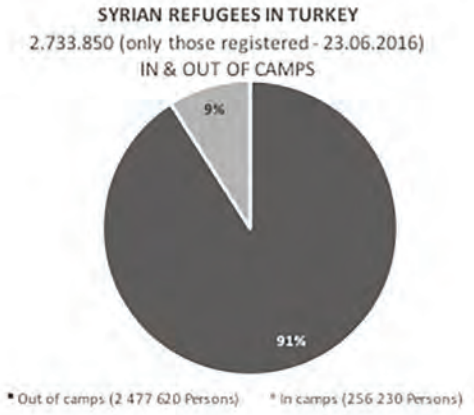
The abovementioned factors, among others, indicate that Syrians are far more likely to stay in Turkey permanently. It is even expected by migration experts that the number of Syrians in Turkey will increase further in the forthcoming years. Both the ongoing flows of people across the borders and the natural population increase by an average of 45,000 new-borns every year (125 babies daily) contribute to this[74]. Another factor that could increase refugee numbers is potential "*family reunifications*" in the future.

72 UNHCR. http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224

73 MURAT ERDOĞAN, M., and ÜNVER, Can. The Perspectives, Expectations and Suggestions of the Turkish Business Sector on Syrians in Turkey, TISK, Ankara. 2015.

74 AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) https://www.afad.gov.tr/tr/2373/Giris

Figure 1. Distribution of Syrians in Turkey by living area (in or out of temporary accommodation centres (refugee camps) as of 23.06.2016)



Source: Ministry of Interior, Directorate General of Migration Management http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik

Demographic characteristics of Syrians in Turkey

The most prominent demographic characteristic of Syrians in Turkey is their youth. Around 54% (1.5 million people) are under the age of 18 years. According to UNHCR data[75], 20% (around 550,000 children) are within the age group of 0-4 years. Children born in Turkey are not granted citizenship by neither the Turkish Republic nor the Syrian Arab Republic. Consequently, children (just over a third of those in the 0-4 age group) born to Syrians with the longest duration of stay in Turkey (3 years), are born "stateless".

Table 1. Age and gender composition of Syrians in Turkey

AGE AND GENDER COMPOSITION OF SYRIANS IN TURKEY (only those registered - 23.06.2016)				
AGE (Years)	MALE (%)	FEMALE (%)	TOTAL (%)	TOTAL IN NUMBERS
0-4	10.5	9.5	20.0	549 000
5-11	10.3	9.9	21.6	593 000
12-17	7.2	6.8	12.7	349 000
18-59	21.1	21.2	42.3	1 162 000
60+	1.8	1.8	3.6	98 000
TOTALS	50.8	49.2	100.0	2 751 000

Source: Ministry of Interior, Directorate General of Migration Management http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik

75 UNHCR. http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php

Education

The number of Syrian children at school-age (5-17 years) in Turkey is more than 942,000. Thus it is necessary to adapt educational services provision in Turkey[76]. The (former) Turkish Minister of National Education, Nabi Avcı stated on 11 April 2016 that only about 75,000 of these children are enrolled in Turkish schools, receiving their education in Turkish, while the 255,000 of the rest (85,000 in the camps, 170,000 outside the camps) receive education in Arabic through Syrian refugee teachers based on the Syrian curriculum in "Temporary Education Centres" (TEC). Their books are also from Syria. In this sense, out of 942,000 school-age children as stated by the Minister, about 65% do not go to school. This also means that around 600,000 children have now not gone to school in the last 2-5 years. This is not an easy challenge in both the short and medium terms and represents both an organisational and financial challenge for Turkey.

Around 600,000 Syrian children have not gone to school in the last 2-5 years

Refugee camps in Turkey

In Turkey, as of June 2016, Syrian refugees under temporary protection is over 2.7 million[77]. Only 9% (264,169 people) live in 25 refugee camps in 10 cities close to the border. Studies such as Demiröz and Erdo an (2016) have shown that eventually refugees living in camps can come to feel that they live in an "open prison"[78]. While having lost their connection with their home-communities, this may impact their ability and willingness to socialise. Tens of thousands of children, for example, have been in camps for 3-4 years, and are unaware of life outside; they have not been to the city centre yet. This potentially adds to the trauma experienced by these children and negatively impacts their adaptation into Turkish society more than children outside the camps.

Social acceptance and integration

A comprehensive survey study by Hacettepe University Migration and Politics Research Centre (HUGO) show that despite the occasional negative attitudes along the lines of racism, xenophobia, and hate, the level of general social acceptance is

76 UNHCR. http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224

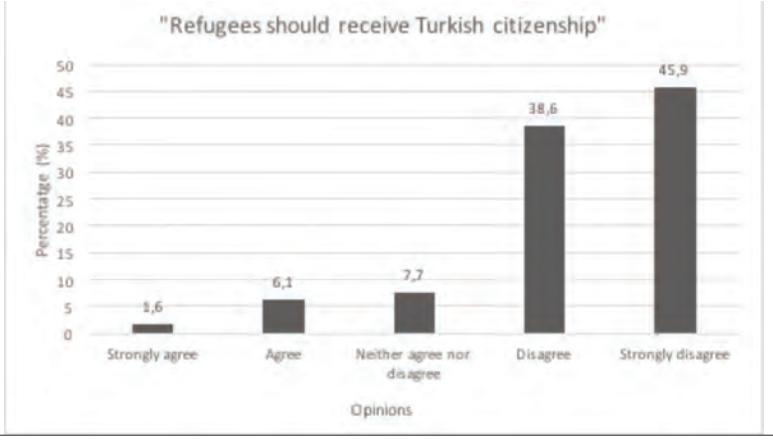
77 AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) https://www.afad.gov.tr/tr/2373/Giris

78 MURAT ERDO AN, M., and DEMIRÖZ, Filiz.. Child Protection Program: Children Friendly Spaces in Refugee Camps, HUGO, Ankara. 2016.

unusually high for Syrians in Turkey[79]. However, social acceptance is not always open-ended, infinite nor sustainable in its current form. The continuity of social acceptance, despite all financial and humanitarian sacrifices, may further be ensured through social inclusion in the management process beyond simply the fraternity discourse. HUGO's survey findings reveal that there is a large cultural gap between Turks and Syrians, where the former largely do not support the granting of Turkish citizenship to the latter. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to gather data through scientific methods, as a knowledge base for policy creation.

NGO's, INGO's, EU, UNHCR and some migration experts have also requested the removal of the geographical restriction Turkey has in relation to the UN Convention of the Status of Refugees, which only allows those fleeing from events occurring in Europe refugee status. This prevents Syrians from being legally recognized as refugees. Highly skilled and qualified refugees also expressed that they would like to be transferred to a third country if possible. They are concerned and discontented that their children are not receiving or cannot access education.

Figure 2. Opinion poll results on Syrian refugees receipt of Turkish citizenship



Source: HUGO survey study "Syrian Refugees in Public Perception" (2014)

From the Turkish point of view, it is no longer sustainable for Turkey to base its policies towards Syrian refugees on the assumption of temporariness. Delayed management, and a short-term view, may bring severe problems in the future. This suggests that an integration policy could enhance Turkey s efforts and curb financial costs. Therefore, while domestic and foreign policy for Syrians to return home play out, it is necessary to recognize that a significant proportion of them will stay in Turkey permanently and

79 MURAT ERDOĞAN, M. Syrians in Turkey: Social Acceptance and Integration, HUGO, Ankara. 2015. http://fs.hacettepe.edu.tr/hugo/dosyalar/TurkiyedekiSuriyeliler-Syrians%20in%20Turkey-Rapor-TR-EN-19022015.pdf

strategies of coexistence must be developed in line with that. For these strategies, embracing a science-based approach with the knowledge and counsel of experts, academics, NGOs, international institutions and organizations, is essential. To that end also, it is of vital importance that the strategies catering to the potential "permanence" of refugees stay be humane and rights-based, while harnessing and fostering the support of Turkish society.

A burden or a benefit

It is clear that the Syrian crisis has placed significant economic, security, political and social burdens onto Turkey. Since March 2011, the insights that shaped Turkey's policies on Syria have not proved effective as the Assad regime is still in power, and more than 2.7 million Syrians have entered Turkey. All of these factors have accumulated to pose several great risks to Turkey.

Education should be at the centre of Turkey's short and medium term strategy for responding to the refugee problem

Currently thousands of Syrian refugee children are attending temporary education centres, where they are taught in Arabic utilising educational curriculums of questionable quality[80]. Therefore, it is clear that education should be at the centre of Turkey's short and medium term strategy for responding to the refugee problem. Additionally, the financial expense of the crisis has been significantly high. Costs of health services to Syrian refugees, alone, is more than €1.5 billion. Foreign funding has also only covered under 5% of all country expenditures on the crisis thus far[81]. In this regard, the EU-Turkey Refugee deal and its suggested €3 billion of financial assistance is likely to only cover a modest percentage of the required costs. However, the social, political and security risks faced by Turkey from the Syrian conflict appear to be much higher. Focusing on the financial bargaining and implications for the country, therefore, detracts from the many other efforts by Turkey to address the needs of Syrians thus far.

Syrians and work life

The effect of Syrians in Turkey on the country's economy is another crucial point for consideration. Although Syrians in Turkey were given work permits on 15 January 2016, the proportion of Syrians within the registered labour force is only 2500. The reality of

80 MURAT ERDOĞAN, M., and DEMIRÖZ, Filiz. Child Protection within the Scope of the Syria Emergency Response Child Friendly Spaces (CFS), Kızılay, Ankara. 2016.

81 See: Ministry of Development of Turkish Republic: First Stage Needs Assessment Covering 2016-2018 Period for Syrians with Temporary Protection Status in Turkey, 2016, p.9.

an informal sector may create resentment and possibly reaction by the Turkish working masses over time, potentially destabilizing the Turkish economy. The unregistered Syrian labour force, among whom a large number are children, may be profitable for small-to-medium size businesses as 'cheap labour' - informally or temporarily. Others may regard them as raising the risk of local labourers losing their jobs. Issues such as market distortions in terms of unequal competition amongst labourers, the burden to the state of those out of work, or tax evasion by those working informally are issues likely to rise in the future. However, the state's inaction to date against those increasing their production rates via the use of this cheap labour is noteworthy in the short-term[82].

Syrians in Turkey have also had substantial implications for Turkey-EU relations. Fear rhetoric in dialogue over refugees has shifted EU-Turkey talks away from accession, democracy, human rights, and freedom of the press towards, instead, keeping refugees in Turkey. This makes it likely that Turkey may once again assume the buffer-zone role it once played in the Cold War era, where securitisation policies were prioritised over democracy.

Fear rhetoric in dialogue over refugees
has shifted EU-Turkey talks away from accession
or democracy towards, instead, keeping refugees in Turkey

As of May 2016 Turkey still has no formal coordinated policy regarding Syrian refugees in its territory. At the heart of these integration policies core issues are reliable registration, enhanced coordination, education, language, vocational training, working rights and awareness and suitable housing assistance. The accomplishment of such a policy, reinforces the contemplation and question of Syrians permanently residing in Turkey. This would be likely to incur additional challenges to Turkish society, economy, political system and national security at large. In light of this, it may be more appropriate to form debate around both how Turkey can minimize the costs of managing its current crisis and how Turkey could successfully manage the crisis. Such a refocusing could lead to the devising of more medium-to-long term policies, rather than continuing to produce *ad-hoc* and uncoordinated policies and emotional statements.

For the successful realisation of such policies, there is an urgent need for a new institutional structure – such as a ministry, advisory or directorate - and new legal regulations to form and implement the necessary mandate. Rather than defining Turkey-

82 Open Society Foundation Turkey: On the Brink of a Lost Generation: http://www.aciktoplumvakfi.org.tr/pdf/On_the_Brink_of_a_Lost_Generation_2.pdf.

EU relations based on refugees remaining in Turkey in exchange for financial aid and visa-free movement for Turks in Europe, it is necessary to forge solid, strategic, and continuous cooperation that establishes a common refugee integration policy, considering the best interests of all concerned parties. One should not forget that due to the abovementioned reasons, even if the war in Syria were to end abruptly, many of the Syrians currently residing in Turkey will remain within its borders. The issue thus needs to be taken seriously, and there is a pressing need for realist domestic and foreign policies.

Refugees in Europe

As of the beginning of the Syrian crisis and especially since 2015, the number of Syrian and non-Syrian refugees attempting to reach the shores of Europe has been unprecedented. The management of this, or lack thereof, has split sides, created tensions and highlighted lacking solidarity within the EU. The first visible effect of this was seen in the different reaction and response approaches taken by countries. Led by Germany and Sweden, only 8 from amongst the EU s 28 countries welcomed refugees. This was met with excessive outrage amongst other EU countries and acted as a significant signal of disparity and a potential breaking-point concerning the future of the EU.

Currently there are over 50 million refugees worldwide, and only a paucity of them successfully make their way to Europe[83]. Refugees in Turkey, a nation of 78 million people, constitute approximately 3.5 percent of its total population. The equivalent proportions in Lebanon and Jordan are 24 and 10 per cent respectively. The number of refugees reaching Europe only amounts to about 0.025 per cent of the 508 million European population. However, the region's apparent extraordinary levels of panic far exceed what is reflective of such a proportion, which some find hard to comprehend. Over the course of the past 2 years, perhaps many more trying to reach Europe in their masses have come from Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, and Pakistan, while others still trying and failing.

Refugees in Turkey constitute approximately 3.5% of its population; in Lebanon 24% and in Jordan 10%: refugees reaching Europe represent about 0.025%

Refugee management in Turkey

Turkish national policy on Syria focused more on the Assad regime rather than managing the inflows of refugees. Therefore, a central strategic decision is still lacking. For Turkey,

83 GRAHAM, David A. Violence Has Forced 60 Million People From Their Homes. The Atlantic. 2015. http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/06/refugees-global-peace-index/396122/ and NEBEHAY, Stephanie. UN: The number of refugees worldwide has surpassed a record 60 million. Business Insider. 2015. http://www.businessinsider.com/r-worlds-refugees-and-displaced-exceed-record-60-million-un-2015-12.

who sees the Syrian issue as part of its foreign policy, the presence and the future of refugees are not fully taken into consideration in national planning. This is reflective of the country's current administrative and legal regulations. Turkey, by maintaining the "geographical limitation" of the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, is only one in four countries in the world (alongside the Congo, Madagascar, and Monaco) to still implement this geographic exception, aimed to protect itself from mass refugee exodus. For refugees who came from outside of Europe, Turkey's expects that they would be repatriated, or if recognised as a refugee by the UNHCR then they would be resettled elsewhere with Turkey hosting them within its borders only until then. Although legal reforms took place in 2013 and 2014, they were all reflective of a "geographical exception" logic which continues to drive the "temporary" status issue that refugees are now facing.

A lack of strategic national decision-making regarding Syrians, especially related to their permanent stay in Turkey, can be attributed to vast coordination problems within state institutions that cause severe losses in time and public resources. Although laws on foreigners and international protection indicate that management of this issue is a requirement for the Ministry of Interior s Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), in practice it is still unclear which institution is responsible. As can be seen from the table below, in addition to DGMM, the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Development are all involved in management of the issue. However, since there is no specific unit established to ensure coordination between these institutions, organisation and coordination problems also surround the financial assistance yet to be sent from the EU. As a country with a very centrally governed system, Turkey is in urgent need of a new governance structure to address this matter.

Moving forward

The developments that took place in Syria in March-April 2011 have been described as the last phase of the Arab Spring. These events have exceeded all initial expectations as the civil war progressed. With an initial population of 22 million people in early 201, over 250,000 people have died, 6-7 million have had to relocate within Syria, and 5 million or

With an initial population of 22 million people in early 2011, over 250,000 people have died, 6-7 million have had to relocate within Syria, and 5 million or more have fled

more have fled. The neighbouring countries who maintain an open door policy have borne a large burden, coinciding with the failure of a world-wide responsibility and solidarity system. Turkey, which has a 911 km long border with Syria, has hosted 2.8-3 million Syrians over the past 5 years, and an additional 300,000 refugees from other countries. The potentiality of Syrian refugees (of which 54.2% are under the age of 18) to stay permanently is increasing day-by-day. The numbers are such that we cannot speak of temporariness any longer.

That the mass refugee influxes seen to date are no more stoppable than before is significant. Existing unequal world structures strengthen the will of people to flee their homes for more peaceful countries. The EU and other developed countries cannot stop refugees travelling by strengthening security measures and building higher walls. Refugee movements put an ethical responsibility on developed nations too. Therefore, strategies taken by Turkey and the EU should not only be about stopping refugees from embarking on journeys across the Mediterranean, but also about developing a much more comprehensive, medium-to-long term strategy including a common refugee and integration policy.

The notion of "let us give money to neighbouring countries to keep the refugees there" as pushed for by the EU cannot be sustained. No matter how relations with the EU materialise, Turkey needs to accept the reality of living alongside at least 3 million Syrians in the future. In accepting this, immediate action is necessary for devising integration policies focused on education, working rights, and housing needs. The 'problem in Turkey' has long been more than 'Turkey's problem'. It involves great risks to Europe too, and hence cooperation amongst Turkey and the EU is crucial.

The '*problem in Turkey*' has long been more than 'Turkey's problem': it involves great risks to Europe too

Also important is the changing in priorities within the EU's Turkey policy. The EU is in panic and allowing itself to tolerate Turkey's turning-away from universal values as long as it stops migrants from entering its borders. Scaling the issue down into numbers, Euros, and mere financial matters undermines larger and more substantial issues at play potentially with higher medium-to-long term costs. This approach could cause very serious problems in Turkey and greater risks for the EU. Seemingly favourable refugee

management and security solutions, in the short run, should not compensate Turkey s regressive democratic tendencies – especially given that the EU is in accession negotiations with Turkey.

The extraordinary efforts and societal solidarity shown in Turkey over the past 5 years should be commended. After Syria, Turkey has borne the highest burden as a result of the Syrian crisis. It is not Turkey's responsibility to stop refugees from entering Europe. However, Turkey could immediately take a strategic position and start to formalise progressive integration policies, thus utilising the crisis, instead, as an opportunity for Turkey-EU relations to evolve towards Turkey's accession into the EU. The EU's financial and political assistance is of crucial importance to this formal integration process and without their support, social, economic, security and political problems are likely to only escalate further in the near future.

Conclusion

Neighbouring countries have been heavily impacted by the large number of those fleeing Syria. To a large degree they have relied on the support of international humanitarian aid in addition to local resources. The strain continues to grow as a result of mismanaged short-term solutions, deeming refugees as temporary and apart from the local population, disregarding their potential role in national economic development, the incompatibility of international political and social preferences with local contexts, and the failure to reach a comprehensive and sustainable political solution in Syria. As a result the larger negative and potentially irreversible impact falls on the Syrian refugees livelihood and well-being. A lack of clear management mechanisms to recognise those most vulnerable and to receive and distribute financial assistance on the part of national governments has set humanitarian aid delivery back. Dealing with refugees, in rhetoric or in practice, as "a temporary problem" and "a burden" that is separate to already present local and national challenges exacerbates a feeling among the local population of competition with the incoming population over resources and economic opportunities. As the matter becomes expressed as one of the overall national capacity to intake refugees, it may reinforce actions such as closure of the gates. In turn, this may leave people stranded in between borders and liable to kidnapping, trafficking, and smuggling or worse. Thus while it is a large responsibility for neighbouring countries, the consequences of not admitting refugees could lie larger and heavier on the humanitarian conscience and, of course, the refugees themselves.

As history has shown in previous refugee crises solving the core conflict producing these numbers of refugees could take decades

The EU sentiment of extending finance to neighbouring host countries as a means of resolving the limited local capacities problem, is not a sustainable nor an adequate solution mechanism. In return for containing the refugee crisis on the other side of the Mediterranean, a certain leniency in universal human rights compliance could then become admissible; in the name of order and security.

As history has shown in previous refugee crises solving the core conflict producing these numbers of refugees could take decades. Management of such crises is also much more complex than simple non-refoulement and humanitarian aid extension. The length of refugees stay could extend long past most estimates and, for some, could even extend after a resolution of conflict in Syria. Thus, beyond immediate humanitarian aid, the

challenge is provision of and access to quality housing, health services, education, and employment. These are the socioeconomic factors associated with successful human beings and without which there would be no enabling or empowering of refugees to integrate, tend to themselves, and contribute back to society and the economy over time.

IEMed.

The European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), founded in 1989, is a consortium comprising the Government of Catalonia, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and Barcelona City Council. It incorporates civil society through its Board of Trustees and its Advisory Council formed by Mediterranean universities, companies, organisations and personalities of renowned prestige.

In accordance with the principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's Barcelona Process, and today with the objectives of the Union for the Mediterranean the aim of the IEMed is to foster actions and projects which contribute to mutual understanding, exchange and cooperation between the different Mediterranean countries, societies and cultures as well as to promote the progressive construction of a space of peace and stability, shared prosperity and dialogue between cultures and civilisations in the Mediterranean.

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