

# Humanitarian Crisis in Syria

## A Special Report on the Impact of the Syrian Refugees in Turkey and the OSCE Region



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# **Humanitarian Crisis in Syria**

## **Special Report on the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Turkey and the OSCE region**

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## Introduction

Syria's internal conflict, which has been teetering on the brink of a full-blown civil war, began on 15 March 2011 when residents of Daraa took to the streets against the arrest and torture of students who put up anti-government graffiti.<sup>1</sup> The Government responded with force resulting in the deaths of four protesters.<sup>2</sup> Demonstrations quickly spread across much of the country resulting in what many have called a popular uprising.<sup>3</sup>

The ethnic fabric of Syria is quite diverse, adding to the complexity of the conflict, of Syria's estimated 22 million people, 74 per cent of the population identify as Sunni, while President al-Assad and much of the nation's elite, especially the military, identify as Alawite.<sup>4</sup> Alawite is a minority sect of Shia Islam which is estimated to represent 11 per cent of the total population.<sup>5</sup> Other minority groups include: Christians (10 per cent), Kurds (10 per cent), Palestinians (2.3 per cent) and Armenians (1.7 per cent).<sup>6</sup>



*Demonstration in Idlib, Syria. Photo by Syria Freedom*

After over a year of endless fighting, diplomatic attempts at a peaceful resolution have failed. In February 2012, Kofi Annan, former United

Nations Secretary General, was appointed by the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Secretary General of the League of Arab States Nabil Elaraby as joint special envoy on the Syrian crisis.<sup>7</sup> Annan negotiated a six-point peace plan with President Bashar al-Assad in April. The plan called for co-operation with the UN envoy, a ceasefire and military draw-back from urban areas, timely humanitarian assistance, release of arbitrarily detained persons, freedom of movement throughout the country and respect for freedom of association and peaceful demonstration.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> New York Times "Syria" 6 November 2012.

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/syria/index.html> (accessed 7 November 2012)

<sup>2</sup> BBC World, "Syria: The Origins of the Uprising" 8 June 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17344858> (accessed 7 November 2012)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Syria Demographics Profile 2012 [http://www.indexmundi.com/syria/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/syria/demographics_profile.html) (accessed

<sup>4</sup> Syria Demographics Profile 2012 [http://www.indexmundi.com/syria/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/syria/demographics_profile.html) (accessed 7 November 2012)

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, "World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples- Syria: Overview" October 2011 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,,COUNTRYPROF,SYR,,4954ce5ac,0.html> (accessed 7 November 2012)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Secretary General SG/SM/14124 23 February 2012

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2012/sgsm14124.doc.htm> (accessed 7 November 2012)

<sup>8</sup> Reuters "Text of Annan's six-point peace plan for Syria" 4 April 2012

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/04/us-syria-ceasefire-idUSBRE8330HJ20120404> (accessed 7 November 2012)

For a few days in April, the ceasefire led to a decrease in violence however it was to be short-lived.<sup>9</sup> Failing to successfully end the violence in Syria, Annan resigned as UN and Arab League special envoy to Syria in August. By mid-August 2012, air assaults by the Syrian government increased, resulting in Syrian refugees fleeing by the thousands.<sup>10</sup> Lakhdar Brahimi was appointed Joint Special Representative for Syria on 17 August.

On 13 November, French President François Hollande officially recognized the Syrian National Coalition as the sole legitimate representative of the people of Syria.<sup>11</sup> Two days later Turkey reiterated its recognition of the SNC and called on members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to do the same.<sup>12</sup>



Source: globalcitymaps.com

This report looks at the impact of Syrian refugees of more than 135,000 in the OSCE area, in particular Turkey whose shared border has become inundated with Syrian refugees. This report also identifies key areas in which the governments of OSCE participating States, and partner States are contributing to, and being affected by, the humanitarian crisis, and finally this report lays out policy recommendations for the OSCE.

## 1. Relations between Turkey and Syria

Relations between Turkey and Syria have plummeted in recent months.<sup>13</sup> Most notably in June 2012, Turkey's Prime Minister warned Syria of the wrath of Turkey after a Turkish warplane was shot down killing both pilots. This was followed by a series of cross-border mortar bombs fired from Syria and landing in the South-Eastern Turkish town of Akçakale. On 3 October 2012 a woman and four children from the same family were

<sup>9</sup> The Guardian, "Kofi Annan's resignation is no surprise, his Syria peace plan undermined" 2 August 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/02/kofi-annan-resignation-syria-peace-plan> (accessed 7 November 2012)

<sup>10</sup> New York Times "Syria" 6 November 2012.

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/syria/index.html> (accessed 7 November 2012)

<sup>11</sup> New York Times, "France Grants Its Recognition to Syria Rebels 13 November 2012

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/14/world/middleeast/syria-war-developments.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/14/world/middleeast/syria-war-developments.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed 15 November 2012)

<sup>12</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, "Turkey recognizes Syrian coalition as legitimate representative of Syrian people", 15 November 2012, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkey-recognizes-syrian-coalition-as-legitimate-representative-of-syrian-people.aspx?pageID=238&nID=34717&NewsCatID=352>, (accessed 15 November 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Al Jazeera, "Turkey-Syria relations: Taking a nose dive?", 24 June 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidesyria/2012/06/201262483740123476.html>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

killed helping to fuel a bill authorising the deployment of Turkish troops abroad.<sup>14</sup> In condemning the attacks in Akçakale, OSCE PA President Riccardo Migliori said, “The situation in Syria demands an international response. Silence from world leaders is a tacit allowance for the continued crushing of freedom and lives in Syria.”<sup>15</sup> Turkey’s NATO membership has done little to subdue the attacks although NATO’s official response to the attacks was to demand an immediate halt to “aggressive acts”.<sup>16</sup> Turkey’s Parliament has since authorised troops to launch cross-border action against Syria, which Deputy Prime Minister Besir Atalay insists is a deterrent and not a mandate for war.<sup>17</sup> While Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan also stated that his country does not want war, he warned Syria not to make a “fatal mistake” by testing its resolve.<sup>18</sup>

Turkey’s policy of “zero problems with neighbours” is cracking. On 10 October Turkey forced the landing of a commercial passenger plane suspected of carrying military equipment to Syria from Moscow.<sup>19</sup> Syria’s Transport Minister accused Turkey of “air piracy”<sup>20</sup> while Moscow accused Ankara of endangering Russian lives. Turkey replied it had acted within international law.<sup>21</sup> Turkey’s Prime Minister stated the aircraft had been carrying Russian-made munitions destined for Syria’s armed forces<sup>22</sup> and Turkey banned all Syrian aircraft from its air space.<sup>23</sup> Following the incident, Turkey established a practice of requesting cargo inspections for flights through Turkish airspace bound for Syria. On 8 November a private Armenian aircraft carrying humanitarian aid from the “Help your Brother” initiative was forced to land at Erzurum airport for cargo inspection.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The Economist, “A powder keg in south-eastern Turkey”, 4 October 2012, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/newsbook/2012/10/turkey-and-syria>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>15</sup> OSCE PA “Presidential Statement on Syria-Turkey Violence” 4 October 2012 <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/1102-syria> (accessed 13 November 2012)

<sup>16</sup> Reuters, “UPDATE 1-NATO demands halt to Syria aggression against Turkey”, 3 October 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/03/syria-crisis-alliance-idUSL6E8L3JR920121003>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

<sup>17</sup> BBC, “Turkey’s parliament authorises military action in Syria”, 4 October 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19830928>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Reuters, “WRAPUP 3-Turkey warns Syria more strikes would be fatal mistake”, 5 October 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/05/syria-crisis-idUSL6E8L59EA20121005>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Reuters, “Turkey briefly detains Syrian plane as tension heightens”, 10 October 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/10/us-syria-crisis-turkey-military-idUSBRE8990AI20121010>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Reuters, “Syrian minister accuses Turkey of piracy: TV”, 11 October 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/11/us-syria-crisis-minister-idUSBRE89A0CI20121011>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Reuters, “WRAPUP 2-Russia-Turkey put lives at risk over plane grounding”, 11 October 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/11/syria-crisis-idUSL6E8LB29B20121011>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Reuters, “No weapons on Syrian plane Turkey intercepted: Russia”, 12 October 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/12/us-syria-russia-aircraft-idUSBRE89B0WT20121012>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Reuters, “WRAPUP 5-Turkey bans Syrian planes from its air space, rebels gain”, 14 October 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/14/syria-crisis-idUSL5E8LE1I20121014>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

<sup>24</sup> Syrian Arab News Agency “Turkey Forces Armenian Plane Carrying Humanitarian Aid to Syria to Land at Erzurum Airport” 8 November 2012 <http://sana.sy/eng/22/2012/11/08/451461.htm> (accessed 12 November 2012)

On 13 October, Prime Minister Erdogan rebuked the UN Security Council for inaction over Syria, saying the world body was repeating mistakes that led to massacres in Bosnia.<sup>25</sup> On 15 October, an Armenian plane flying to the Syrian city of Aleppo was forced to land and was allowed to continue only after the search in the eastern Turkish city of Erzurum confirmed it was carrying humanitarian aid.<sup>26</sup>

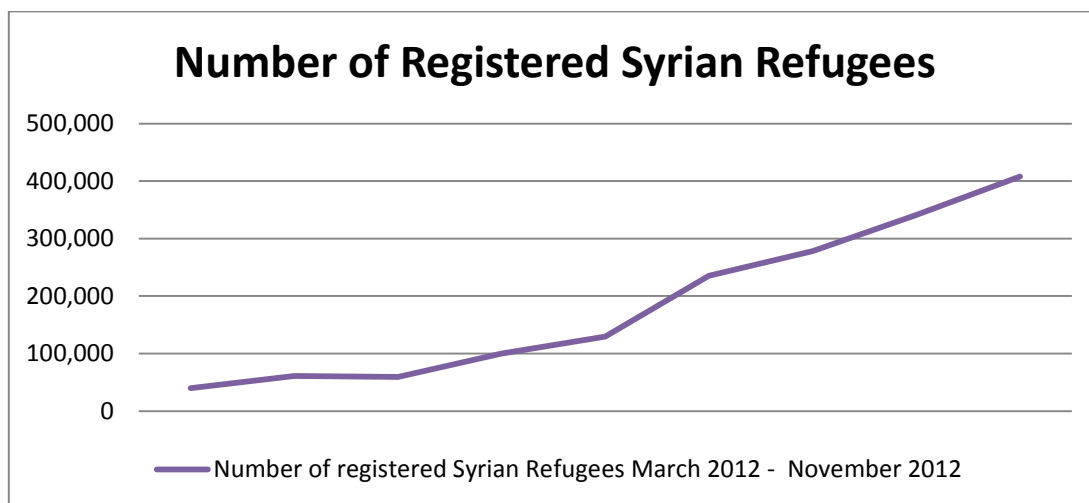
Turkey ruled out any dialogue with the Syrian regime, and Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said on 30 October, "There is no point in engaging in dialogue with a regime that continues to carry out such a massacre against its own people, even during Eidul-Azha". The Friends of the Syrian People group will likely meet either in November or early December in Morocco, he said, adding that work toward reorganizing the Syrian opposition will begin on 8 November. Davutoğlu is also seeking the safe return of two Turkish journalists who were arrested and have been held in Syria since September.

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<sup>25</sup> Reuters, "Turkey cites Srebrenica in appeal for action on Syria", 13 October 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/13/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE88J0X720121013>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

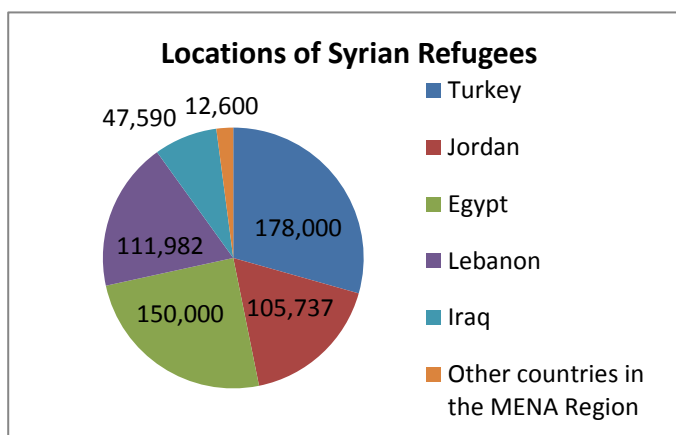
<sup>26</sup> Reuters, "UPDATE 3-Armenian plane en route to Syria searched in Turkey", 15 October 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/15/syria-crisis-turkey-armenia-idUSL5E8LF87B20121015>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

## 2. General Figures on Refugees



Source: UNHCR as of 13 November 2012

Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq continue to host an overwhelming number of Syrian refugees. An estimated 408,000 Syrians have either formally registered as refugees or are being assisted in those countries, according to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>27</sup> The latest UNHCR figures show that the number could reach 700,000 before the end of the year.<sup>28</sup> According to the September numbers, 2,000 to 3,000 Syrians are now fleeing daily.<sup>29</sup> The number of Syrian asylum-seekers in the EU has been relatively small, with less than 20,000 asylum claims filed by Syrians in the past 18 months.<sup>30</sup> An estimated 225,000 Palestinians in Syria have been affected by the conflict and The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is providing them with cash and food



Source: UNHCR and Government sources cited within this report

<sup>27</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, "Record numbers of Syrian refugees flee as UN warns of critically low funding", 9 November 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/509d68b59.html>, (accessed on 12 November 2012).

<sup>28</sup> United Nations, "UN and Lebanon review winter needs of growing number of Syrian refugees", 8 October 2012, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43229&Cr=Syria&Cr1=#.UHbli8XAF6Y>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

<sup>29</sup> International Rescue Committee, "On Syria conflict's deadliest day, UN doubles its appeal for refugee aid", 27 September 2012, <http://www.rescue.org/blog/syria-conflicts-deadliest-day-un-doubles-its-appeal-refugee-aid>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>30</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, "As Syria crisis continues, UNHCR urges EU states to uphold Common Asylum System principles", 16 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/507d49629.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).



assistance.<sup>31</sup>

Half of the Syrian refugee population is living in refugee camps, the majority in tents.<sup>32</sup> Women and children make up 75 per cent of the refugee population.<sup>33</sup> Inside Syria, more than a million people are homeless and more than twice that number require aid.<sup>34</sup> UNHCR currently has more than 350 staff and three offices across Syria. Over the next three months, a USD 32.4 million UNHCR “Keeping Families Warm” programme will target 500,000 Syrians. The plan is based on three main elements: rehabilitation of communal shelters; distribution of non-food aid; and provision of one-time cash assistance to the vulnerable.<sup>35</sup>

More than 28,000 Syrian refugees have applied for asylum in the OSCE region, predominantly in Western Europe. The below table includes details on asylum applications; more information is available in Annex 1.2.

### Status of Asylum Applications

Country	Number of Asylum Applications	Number of Applications Granted	Number of Applications Denied
Austria	972	n/a	n/a
Denmark	908	429	n/a
Sweden	2,506	n/a	n/a
Germany	5,515	n/a	n/a
France	225	100	n/a
United Kingdom	912	n/a	n/a
Bulgaria	183	n/a	n/a
Turkey	120,000	n/a	n/a
Jordan	105,737	n/a	n/a
Greece	115	0	115
Belgium	796	n/a	n/a
Switzerland	1,405	n/a	n/a
Spain	97	n/a	n/a
Canada	533	n/a	n/a
Serbia	33	0	n/a
Ukraine	55	n/a	13
United States	n/a	10,000	n/a
Russia	n/a	700	n/a
Georgia	n/a	100	n/a

*Note: Governments do not regularly disclose data on denied or total number of asylum applications*

*Source: UNHCR and Government sources cited within this report*

<sup>31</sup> United States Department of State, “U.S. Humanitarian Aid Reaching Syria and Neighboring Countries”, 2 August 2012, [www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/08/195965.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/08/195965.htm), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>32</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “UNHCR and partners seek extra USD 295 million for Syria refugee ops”, 27 September 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/50641d1b6.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> International Rescue Committee, “Syria crisis deepens with 200,000 now displaced”, 31 August 2012, <http://www.rescue.org/blog/syria-crisis-deepens-200000-now-displaced>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>35</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Winter preparations underway for tens of thousands of uprooted Syrians”, 12 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/5077f3a69.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

For additional details on the refugee population, including age, gender and regional breakdowns see Annex 1.1 Refugee Population Updates.

### 3. Humanitarian Response

The main actors providing humanitarian response within Syria are: the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).



*Photo by UNHCR*

In July, OCHA made its first appeal for Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response in the amount of USD 180 million. In September, it was revised to USD 348 million. As of 23 October, 45 per cent of the project was funded.<sup>36</sup>

UNHCR issued an appeal in March 2012 for USD 84 million to aid 100,000 refugees over six months. The plan was revised in September to USD 488 million to support 710,000 Syrian refugees. The revised plan, a result of co-ordinated efforts of 52 international and national agencies and 10 NGOs also focuses on preparations for winter and support to vulnerable refugees and host communities, particularly children.<sup>37</sup> As of 9 November, 35 per cent of the effort was funded.<sup>38</sup> The UNHCR is budgeting more than USD 64 million for winter preparations throughout the region, including for internally displaced Syrians.

The mandate of the World Food Programme (WFP) is to support the distribution of food in camps and among hosting communities in Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. It provides the camps with food through food distribution, hot meals and innovative food vouchers.<sup>39</sup>

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is providing support to children, while ensuring education, full immunization and clothing for cold weather.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – Financial Tracking Service, “Emergency: Syrian Arab Republic - Civil Unrest 2012”, <http://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emerg-emergencyDetails&appealID=974>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>37</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Syria Regional Response Plan - Second revision”, September 2012, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/uploads/SyriaRRP.pdf>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

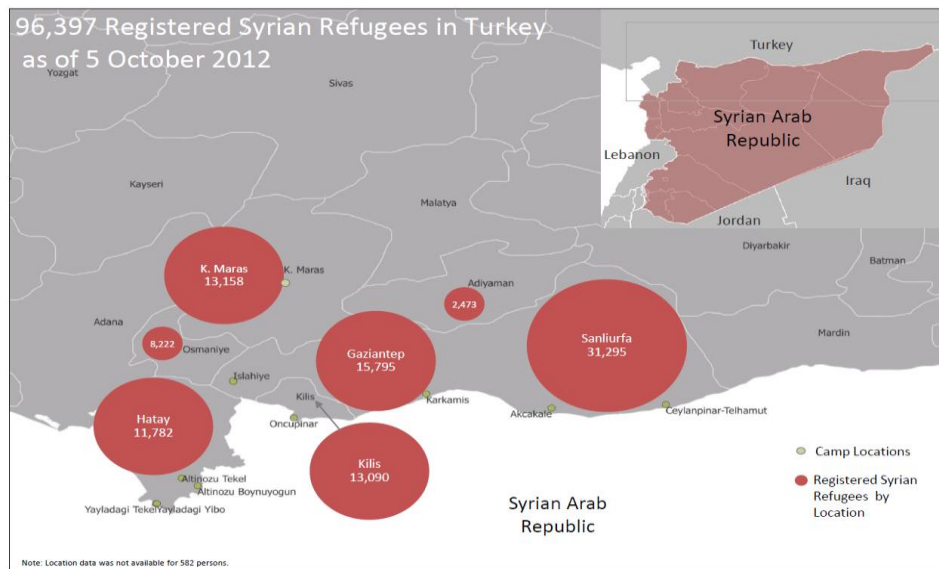
<sup>38</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Record numbers of Syrian refugees flee as UN warns of critically low funding”, 9 November 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/509d68b59.html>, (accessed on 12 November 2012).

<sup>39</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “UNHCR and partners seek extra USD 295 million for Syria refugee ops”, 27 September 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/50641d1b6.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC), citing alarming levels of sexual and physical violence against women and girls fleeing Syria,<sup>41</sup> is launching a new project aimed at benefiting some 6,000 in Jordan.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4. Turkey



*Graphic by UNHCR*

As of 17 October, Turkey spent USD 220 million<sup>43</sup> while the number of refugees has reached 122,000<sup>44</sup> in 14 camps and an estimated 70,000 refugees reside outside the camps.<sup>45</sup> Under the revised response plan, Turkey could host up to 280,000 refugees by the end of the year.<sup>46</sup> On 11 October, a senior Turkish official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Turkey was working hard to set up two more camps with a capacity to shelter 30,000 people, but needed international support.<sup>47</sup> Turkey is asking for the establishment of refugee camps inside Syria.<sup>48</sup> According to Human Rights Watch

<sup>41</sup> International Rescue Committee, "Crisis in Syria: The IRC's emergency response", 2012, <http://www.rescue.org/video/crisis-syria-ircs-emergency-response>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>42</sup> International Rescue Committee, "IRC to expand support for Syrian refugee women", 27 September 2012, <http://www.rescue.org/blog/irc-expand-support-syrian-refugee-women>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>43</sup> Reuters, "Turkey says has spent 400 mln lira on Syrian refugees", 16 October 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/16/turkey-budget-syria-refugees-idUSI7E8KO00S20121016>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>44</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, "Record numbers of Syrian refugees flee as UN warns of critically low funding", 9 November 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/509d68b59.html>, (accessed on 12 November 2012).

<sup>45</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, "Number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon passes 100,000 mark", 23 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/508671c36.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

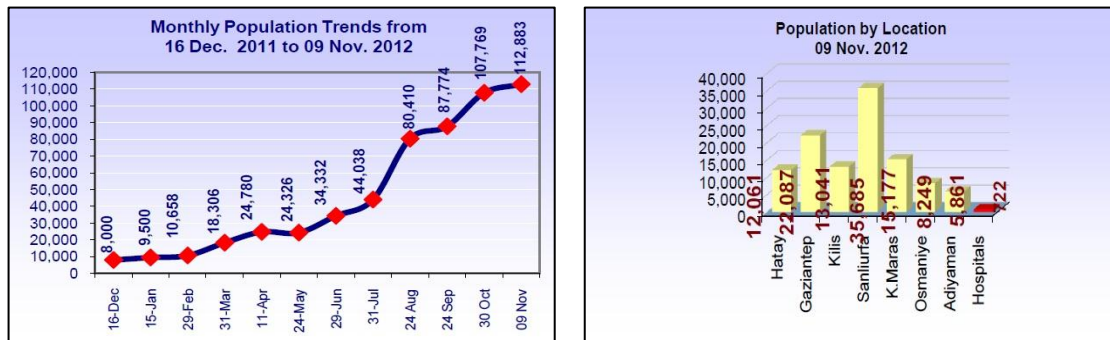
<sup>46</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, "Number of registered Syrian refugees triples to more than 300,000 in three months", 2 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/506ab7259.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>47</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Iraq/Turkey: Open Borders to All Syrian Refugees", 14 October 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/10/14/iraqturkey-open-borders-all-syrian-refugees-0>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

(HRW), in early August, Turkey introduced a “zero point delivery system,” helping Turkish groups to deliver assistance inside Syria. As of 11 October, those groups were collecting aid at five border crossings: in Kilis (Öncüpına/Bab al Salaam), Gaziantep (Karkamış/Jarablous), Akçakale (Şanlıurfa/Tel Abyad) and Hatay (Cilvegözü/Bab al Hawa and Yayladağı/ al-Yamadiya).<sup>49</sup>

### Syrian Refugees in Turkey



Source: Reliefweb.int

Refugee camps in Turkey are operated by the Government, co-ordinated by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) and implemented by the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS). Winter shelter options are currently under consideration where the average temperatures could reach below 1°C, including the use of pre-fabricated homes in some camps. Some of these homes are already in place in Oncupinar Camp, Kilis. A winter tent has been developed by the AFAD and the TRCS, who have ordered 30,000 from a local supplier. Authorities also plan to use winterized shelter extensions and upgrading and add weatherproofing to existing tents. UNHCR is prepared to offer its support and expertise in a number of areas, including procurement, technical specifications for various types of equipment, compilation of non-food aid packages, supply and logistics. Discussions are also underway to ensure preparations for the needs of any refugees residing in urban areas who may ultimately seek shelter in the camps during the winter months.<sup>50</sup>

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), as of 8 October, registered Syrian refugees had received “temporary protection”. Some entering with passports have been given three month visas that allow them to move freely in Turkey but do not entitle them to any form of support.<sup>51</sup> Turkey has also seen an increase in the number of urban asylum applications over the past 15 months. The new arrivals are mostly from Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Winter preparations underway for tens of thousands of uprooted Syrians”, 12 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/5077f3a69.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Iraq/Turkey: Open Borders to All Syrian Refugees”, 14 October 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/10/14/iraqturkey-open-borders-all-syrian-refugees-0>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>52</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Number of registered Syrian refugees triples to more than 300,000 in three months”, 2 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/506ab7259.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).



Some organizations, including HRW, have reported that many Syrians have been unable to cross into Turkey for several months.<sup>53</sup> The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that in early October there were 12,000 Syrians – 8,000 at Öncüpınar/Bab al Salaamand, and 4,000 at Reyhanlı/Atmaborder – waiting to cross, who were “being gradually admitted.”<sup>54</sup> The UNHCR sent a delegation to Turkey in October over mounting concerns that its borders are being unlawfully blocked. The Turkish authorities insist that borders are being kept open. Erika Feller, UNHCR Assistant Commissioner for Refugees, said UNHCR accepted Turkey’s insistence that its borders were open, but said refugees continue to be blocked at the Turkish border.<sup>55</sup> HRW underlined the case of pregnant women who crossed the border to give birth but were sent back to Syria with their babies by the Turkish officials.<sup>56</sup>

## 5. Impact in Mediterranean Partner States

### 5.1 Jordan

As of 23 October, Jordan is hosting 105,737 Syrians who have either registered or are awaiting registration as refugees by UNHCR – four times more than in June.<sup>57</sup> The new regional response plans estimates some 250,000 will need assistance by the end of 2012.<sup>58</sup>



*Za'atari refugee camp, Jordan. Photo by UNHCR*

About 65 per cent of Syrian refugees are in urban areas, while the remaining 35 per cent are in the camp at Za'atari.<sup>59</sup> A growing number of those relying on the local economy are struggling and have contacted UNHCR, in fear of eviction.<sup>60</sup> Now, all new arrivals are being sent directly to the camps.<sup>61</sup> On 26 August, a Government spokesman said that the

<sup>53</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Iraq/Turkey: Open Borders to All Syrian Refugees”, 14 October 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/10/14/iraqturkey-open-borders-all-syrian-refugees-0>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> The Guardian, “Syria's humanitarian crisis getting 'rapidly worse' UN warns - Friday 9 November 2012”, 9 November 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/middle-east-live/2012/nov/09/syria-humanitarian-crisis-worsens-un-live>, (accessed on 14 November 2012).

<sup>56</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Iraq/Turkey: Open Borders to All Syrian Refugees”, 14 October 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/10/14/iraqturkey-open-borders-all-syrian-refugees-0>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>57</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon passes 100,000 mark”, 23 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/508671c36.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

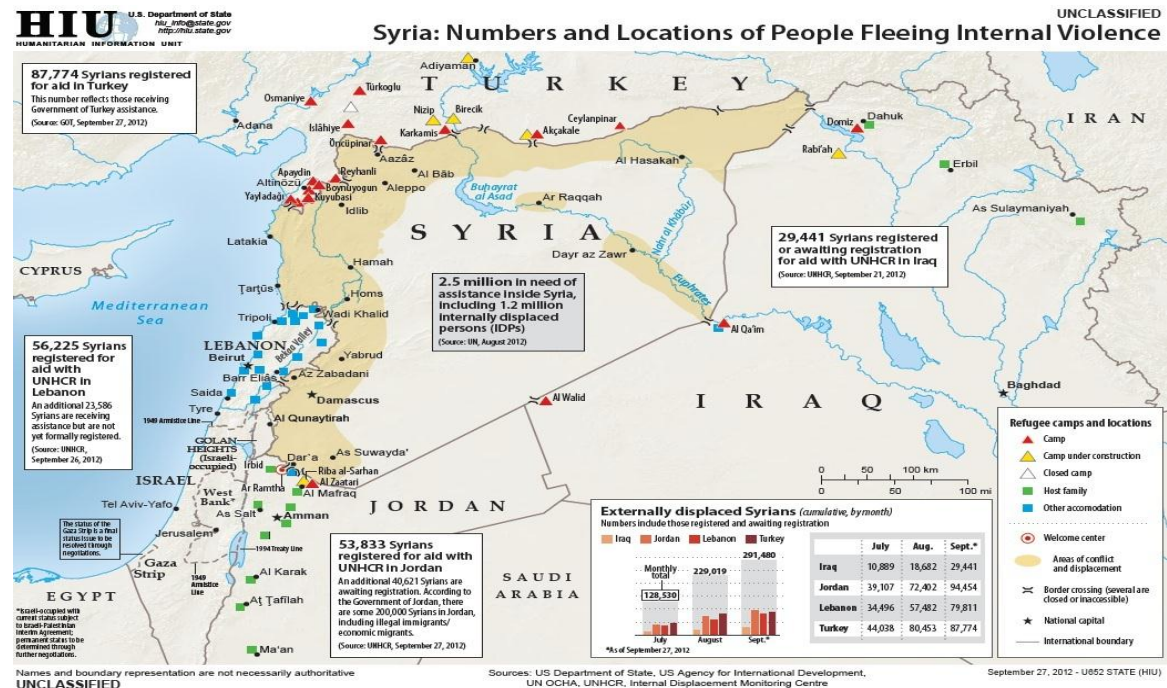
<sup>58</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Number of registered Syrian refugees triples to more than 300,000 in three months”, 2 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/506ab7259.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> International Rescue Committee, “Syria crisis deepens with 200,000 now displaced”, August 31 2012, <http://www.rescue.org/blog/syria-crisis-deepens-200000-now-displaced>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

number of refugees “has surpassed what the Za’atari camp can tolerate and necessitates extra efforts beyond the capacity of the institutions managing the camp”.<sup>62</sup> Hundreds of Syrian refugees demanding help to return home from a camp in northern Jordan rioted and clashed with security forces on 24 September. Jordanian authorities said they were very reluctant to take people to the border, where they have seen a lot of insecurity.<sup>63</sup> A few days later, some refugees protested against the living conditions, forcing UN staff to abandon the camp for a couple of hours.<sup>64</sup> In mid-October, Jordan said it is planning to open a second camp<sup>65</sup> with capacity for 20,000 refugees, which will be set up in the city of Zarqa, 30 km North-East of Amman.<sup>66</sup> More than 1,500 Palestinians have fled from Syria to Jordan.<sup>67</sup>



*Graphic by U.S. State Department*

UNHCR offers a variety of programmes to assist urban refugees, including cash assistance and the provision of a package of household items. Since March, some 55,000 have received aid items, while cash grants have gone to more than 2,600 of the most

<sup>62</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Syria Neighbors: Keep Borders Open for Refugees”, 14 October 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/08/29/syria-neighbors-keep-borders-open-refugees>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>63</sup> Reuters, “Hundreds of Syrian refugees riot in Jordanian camp”, 25 September 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/25/us-syria-crisis-jordan-idUSBRE8800XW20120925>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>64</sup> The Christian Science Monitor, “Rioting forces UN staff to abandon Syrian refugee camp in Jordan”, 2 October 2012, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/1002/Rioting-forces-UN-staff-to-abandon-Syrian-refugee-camp-in-Jordan>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>65</sup> CBC News, “Jordan plans 2nd camp for Syrian refugees”, 15 October 2012, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2012/10/15/syria-turkey.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>66</sup> ANSA Med, “Syria: Jordan to open 2nd refugee camp with 20,000 capacity”, 15 October 2012, [http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/generalnews/2012/10/15/Syria-Jordan-open-2nd-refugee-camp-20-000-capacity\\_7635592.html](http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/generalnews/2012/10/15/Syria-Jordan-open-2nd-refugee-camp-20-000-capacity_7635592.html), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>67</sup> United States Department of State, “U.S. Humanitarian Aid Reaching Syria and Neighboring Countries”, 2 August 2012, [www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/08/195965.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/08/195965.htm), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

destitute families.<sup>68</sup> The International Rescue Committee (IRC) opened two medical clinics in northern Jordan in June with approximately 20 doctors, nurses and administrative staff.<sup>69</sup>

The UNHCR estimated budget for winter refugee projects in Jordan is USD 15 million. UNHCR will provide additional assistance to at least 10,000 urban refugee families for winterization in November and December – and possibly January – on top of an increased monthly stipend (from USD 70 to USD 210). The United Nations intends to further improve living conditions by providing infrastructure so camp residents can cook their own food. Temporary tents will be replaced with containers as they become available.<sup>70</sup> A strategy for the Za'atari camp prepared with the Norwegian Refugee Council includes distribution of a winter package that contains stoves and fuel, warm clothing, thermal blankets, plastic sheeting, hot water bottles and other items. This is in addition to the regular provisions refugees receive, including blankets, sleeping mats, mattresses, jerry cans, kitchen sets, buckets, solar lamps and hygiene kits. Tent modifications are also planned to improve insulation protection from the elements. This will include an attached “porch” for each tent that will serve as a windbreak and provide a safe space for a kerosene stove. Donors are providing more than 2,500 prefabricated family shelters, some 300 of which have already been set up in the camp. Another 500 have been built and will soon be delivered. In addition, a drainage system has been designed for the camp to ensure proper rain runoff during the winter.<sup>71</sup>

## 5.2 Egypt

As of mid-October, there were about 4,000 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in Cairo. However, the UN estimates there are actually 150,000 refugees in the country.<sup>72</sup> The Government allows Syrians to enter without a visa. Many Syrians arriving in Egypt are living off their savings instead of registering with UNHCR, but agency officials warn Syrians wanting to register may spike once their individual resources dry up. The United Nations is urging Egypt to maintain an “open door policy” not only for Syrians, but also for Palestinian refugees in Syria.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Number of registered Syrian refugees triples to more than 300,000 in three months”, 2 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/506ab7259.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>69</sup> International Rescue Committee, “Helping Syrian refugees with new health care clinics”, 12 July 2012, <http://www.rescue.org/blog/helping-syrian-refugees-new-health-care-clinics>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>70</sup> International Rescue Committee, “New refugee camp in Jordan striving to support Syrian influx”, 14 August 2012, <http://www.rescue.org/blog/new-refugee-camp-jordan-striving-support-syrian-influx>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>71</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Winter preparations underway for tens of thousands of uprooted Syrians”, 12 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/5077f3a69.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>72</sup> Huffington Post, “UN: 150,000 Syrian refugees have fled to Egypt”, 18 October 2012, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/huff-wires/20121018/ml-egypt-syrian-refugees/>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>73</sup> Associated Press, “UN: 150,000 Syrian Refugees Have Fled to Egypt”, 18 October 2012, <http://news.yahoo.com/un-150-000-syrian-refugees-fled-egypt-114105346.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

### 5.3 Israel

Israel's Defence Minister has said that Israel would prevent "waves of refugees" from fleeing Syria to the occupied Golan Heights.<sup>74</sup> On 15 October, authorities have drawn lines around land that will be used to absorb a potential flood of Syrians. Military sources said the areas were designated "in co-operation with the United Nations and according to human rights standards," adding Israel's intention is to "prevent any spill over of the crisis in Syria into Israel's internal arena".<sup>75</sup>

### 5.4 North Africa

According to the UNHCR Office in Morocco, as of October 2012, 600 asylum seekers have registered. Ninety per cent of those seeking asylum travelled to Algeria first before crossing the borders to Morocco. As this is a new caseload, UNHCR is consulting with the Government of Morocco to provide temporary protection. The Office in Rabat has expanded its efforts and level of protection by providing Syrians with documentation to protect them from arrest or deportation. UNHCR is also providing assistance to vulnerable asylum-seekers.<sup>76</sup> On 18 and 19 October, Moroccan King Mohammed VI visited the Za'atari camp in Jordan and inspected a Moroccan field hospital.<sup>77</sup>

In July 2012, the authorities decided to "take charge of Syrians who have sought refuge in Algeria, and whose number is estimated officially at 12,000", although Syrian opposition sources put the number at up to 20,000.<sup>78</sup> Some of them tried to reach Algeria by boat.<sup>79</sup>

The Tunisian Red Crescent reports an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 Syrian refugees in Tunisia.<sup>80</sup> Most of them crossed the border from Algeria.<sup>81</sup> The Tunisian authorities have

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<sup>74</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Syria Neighbors: Keep Borders Open for Refugees", 29 August 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/08/29/syria-neighbors-keep-borders-open-refugees>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>75</sup> Arutz Sheva, "Israel Preparing for Flood of Syrian Refugees", 15 October 2012, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/160905#.UIe6asXAF6Y>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>76</sup> Mohamed Abdel Wahab, Protection officer on Mission, UNHCR Rabat (personal communication, 30 October, 2012).

<sup>77</sup> The Daily Star Lebanon, "Morocco king visits Syrian refugee camp in Jordan", 18 October 2012, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Oct-18/191912-morocco-king-visits-syrian-refugee-camp-in-jordan.ashx#ixzz2A76DS5vd>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>78</sup> The Daily Star Lebanon, "12,000 Syrian refugees in Algeria: official source", 29 July 2012, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Jul-29/182499-12000-syrian-refugees-in-algeria-official-source.ashx#ixzz2A750H9Qr>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>79</sup> Algeria Press Service, "18 would-be immigrants intercepted off Annaba coast", 7 October 2012, <http://www.aps.dz/18-would-be-immigrants-intercepted.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>80</sup> La Presse de Tunisie, « Les réfugiés syriens en Tunisie - Intégration soutenue par les associations », 18 November 2012, <http://www.lapresse.tn/18112012/58315/integration-soutenue-par-les-associations.html>, (accessed 19 November 2012).

<sup>81</sup> Azeri-Press Agency, "Syrian refugees arrive in Tunisia", 5 July 2012, <http://www.en.apa.az/news.php?id=175081>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).



repeatedly expressed their support and willingness to help refugees.<sup>82</sup> They are especially offering assistance to camps in Jordan.<sup>83</sup>

## 6. Impact in Europe

An estimated 16,474 Syrian nationals have sought asylum in the Europe Union<sup>84</sup> and this number continues to increase.<sup>85</sup> The European Union said it would continue assisting Ankara but made no offer to receive refugees and German Foreign Minister Guido Westerlunde noted that the “majority of the refugees want to remain in the region [around Syria], so as to be able to return immediately to their country once circumstances allow them to”.<sup>86</sup> While the European Union denounces the escalating violence in Syria, not all of its member nations have welcomed fleeing Syrians with open arms, as reported by UNHCR. Some countries on the eastern edges of the EU are rejecting more than half of Syrians who seek asylum. Other countries are offering Syrians only “tolerated stay” placing refugees at risk will not be given the level of protection needed and will be denied the rights to which they are entitled under EU or international law, thus compelling them to move on.<sup>87</sup> The asylum process is further complicated by the fact that in light of the violence in Syria, most countries have pulled their diplomatic presence out of Damascus.

The EU and non-members Norway and Switzerland have fielded almost 17,000 asylum applications from Syrians in more than a year and a half. Roughly a third were filed with Germany, which has granted asylum to the vast majority of Syrians who applied this year; smaller numbers sought safe haven in Sweden, Switzerland, Austria and Britain, which granted asylum to the majority of Syrian applicants. European countries have also chipped in financially to aid the refugees, standing as some of the biggest donors to the UN campaign to provide for the masses pouring out of Syria. The EU itself has donated more than USD 10 million to the cause.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Agence Tunis Afrique Presse, “Tunisia willing to assist Syrian refugees, Marzouki”, 20 October 2012, <http://www.tap.info.tn/en/index.php/politic/1751-tunisia-willing-to-assist-syrian-refugees-marzouki>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>83</sup> Jordan Times, “Jordan to open more Syrian camps amid refugee exodus”, 4 September 2012, <http://jordantimes.com/jordan-to-open-more-syrian-camps-amid-refugee-exodus>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>84</sup> Le Monde, “L'UE doit protéger les réfugiés syriens”, 28 August 2012, [http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/08/28/l-ue-doit-proteger-les-refugies-syriens\\_1752409\\_3232.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/08/28/l-ue-doit-proteger-les-refugies-syriens_1752409_3232.html), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>85</sup> Arc Info, “Plus de 16'000 demandes d'asile de Syriens déposées en Europe”, 16 October 2012, <http://www.arcinfo.ch/fr/monde/plus-de-16-000-demandes-d-asile-de-syriens-deposees-en-europe-577-1051303>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>86</sup> The Daily Star Lebanon, “Germany ready to receive Syrian refugees if international framework agreed”, 17 October 2012, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Oct-17/191674-germany-ready-to-receive-syrian-refugees-if-international-framework-agreed.ashx#ixzz2A7VCxHlt>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>87</sup> UN News Centre “As Syrians continue to flee, UN urges European Union to uphold asylum principles” 16 October <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43297&Cr=syria&Cr1#.UKJOvOTAepk> (accessed 13 November 2012)

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

### Top 5 Donors of Total Funding (appeal and non-appeal)

Country	Percentage of funding
United States	22.2%
European Commission	17.3%
United Kingdom	9.8%
Central Emergency Response Fund (United Nations)	5.9%
Germany	5.4%

Source: OCHA 7 November 2012

From January 2011 to August 2012, the following EU countries received requests for asylum from Syrian refugees; Sweden (2,506), Austria (972) and Denmark (908).<sup>89</sup>

Some Iraq war refugees that Syria hosted have benefited from the resettlement programme in Europe. The United Kingdom has hosted 18 Iraq war refugees, Norway eight, Netherlands four, Finland and Sweden two each.<sup>90</sup>

Germany has agreed to accept 300 refugees a year between 2012 and 2014.<sup>91</sup> On 16 October, Germany said it was “ready in principle to welcome Syrian refugees”, but added that it must be done under an international framework. German Foreign Minister Westerwelle called for a co-ordinated plan to be put in place with the United Nations, the European Union and refugee aid groups.<sup>92</sup> Previously, the Government announced that it has no intention to receive refugees.<sup>93</sup> In 2011, Germany received on average 220 monthly asylum requests from Syrians, for this year the average is 317,<sup>94</sup> and from January 2011 to August 2012, 5,515 Syrians applied.<sup>95</sup>

Syrian refugees increasingly seek asylum in Greece. They try to reach EU territory not through the border in the Evros region in the North, but via the Eastern Aegean islands.<sup>96</sup> The Government “foresees providing hospitality to 20,000 refugees from Syria who will be accommodated in special facilities on the island of Crete and Rhodes”. A plan to turn unused barracks around the country into holding centres for migrants is already reportedly

<sup>89</sup> Arc Info, “Plus de 16'000 demandes d'asile de Syriens déposées en Europe”, 16 October 2012, <http://www.arcinfo.ch/fr/monde/plus-de-16-000-demandes-d-asile-de-syriens-deposees-en-europe-577-1051303>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>90</sup> Le Monde, “L'UE doit protéger les réfugiés syriens”, 28 August 2012, [http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/08/28/l-ue-doit-protoger-les-refugies-syriens\\_1752409\\_3232.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/08/28/l-ue-doit-protoger-les-refugies-syriens_1752409_3232.html), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>91</sup> United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, “Iraqi Refugees Leave Turkey for New Lives in Germany”, 10 October 2012, <http://www.unric.org/en/latest-un-buzz/27914-iraqi-refugees-leave-turkey-for-new-lives-in-germany>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>92</sup> The Local, “Germany will take Syrian refugees but not alone”, 16 October 2012, <http://www.thelocal.de/politics/20121016-45577.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>93</sup> Bahrain News Agency, “Germany has no Intention to Receive Syrian Refugees”, 24 August 2012, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/521777>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>94</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, 31 August 2012, “Poursuite de l'exode de réfugiés syriens - les écoles sont surchargées”, <http://www.unhcr.fr/5045b318c.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>95</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Syria Crisis: UNHCR urges European Union states to honour their asylum system principles”, 16 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/507d4c586.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>96</sup> Deutsche Welle, “Europe's uncoordinated refugee policy”, 5 October 2012, <http://www.dw.de/europes-uncoordinated-refugee-policy/a-16286640>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

underway,<sup>97</sup> but the country rejected every one of the 115 Syrian asylum applications under consideration between January and June, according to European Commission statistics. More than 60 Syrians trying to reach Greece by boat perished in the attempt.<sup>98</sup> UNHCR said Greece has fallen short in protecting refugees. Human rights groups have long complained that Greece throws up steep barriers to those seeking asylum; the country contends that it bears an unfairly heavy immigration burden because of its location on the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>99</sup>

Cyprus has drawn up plans to take in up to 200,000 refugees from the fighting in Syria.<sup>100</sup>

In 2011, France accepted 100 asylum requests from Syrians.<sup>101</sup> In 2012, between January and July, 255 Syrians applied.<sup>102</sup>

From January to July 2012, Belgium received 796 asylum requests.<sup>103</sup> As of August, 77 were accepted (4.7 per cent of the total requests). Belgium will grant refugee status or subsidiary protection status in the majority of cases.<sup>104</sup> However, in March some Iraqi refugees from Syria had their asylum application rejected. The Belgian authorities said that the situation in Syria did not pose a threat to the asylum seekers.<sup>105</sup>

The number of asylum application to the United Kingdom has increased 10-fold this year to reach almost 100 per month, with a total of 912 from January 2011 to August 2012. The UK agency responsible for border control has temporarily eased visa procedures for nationals from Syria located in the UK, including allowing them to renew their visas without having to return to Syria.<sup>106</sup> There has been a high profile case of a Syrian

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<sup>97</sup> France 24, "Greek islands set to take 20,000 Syrian refugees", 11 October 2012, <http://www.france24.com/en/20121011-greek-islands-set-take-20000-syrian-refugees>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>98</sup> Reuters, "Migrant boat sinks off Turkey, children among 61 dead", 6 September 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/06/us-turkey-boat-idUSBRE8850GQ20120906>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>99</sup> Los Angeles Times, "Some EU nations rejecting Syrians seeking asylum", 16 October 2012, [http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world\\_now/2012/10/syria-refugees-european-union-asylum.html](http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world_now/2012/10/syria-refugees-european-union-asylum.html), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>100</sup> Reuters, "Cyprus prepares for up to 200,000 Syrian refugees", 7 October 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/10/us-syria-crisis-cyprus-idUSBRE8690OW20120710>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>101</sup> Le Monde, "Les demandes d'asile en hausse en France pour la quatrième année consécutive", 21 June 2012, [http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/06/21/les-demandes-d-asile-en-hausse-en-france-en-2011\\_1722516\\_3224.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/06/21/les-demandes-d-asile-en-hausse-en-france-en-2011_1722516_3224.html), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>102</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, 31 August 2012, "Poursuite de l'exode de réfugiés syriens - les écoles sont surchargées", <http://www.unhcr.fr/5045b318c.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>103</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, "Syria Crisis: UNHCR urges European Union states to honour their asylum system principles", 16 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/507d4c586.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>104</sup> La Libre, "Augmentation des demandes d'asile en provenance de Syrie", 5 September 2012, <http://www.lalibre.be/actu/belgique/article/758912/augmentation-des-demandes-d-asile-en-provenance-de-syrie.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>105</sup> Zoé Génot, "La Belgique a encore expulsé vers la Syrie en mars 2012", 17 April 2012, <http://www.zoegenot.be/La-Belgique-a-encore-expulse-vers.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>106</sup> Menara, "Forte hausse des demandes d'asile déposées par des Syriens en GB", 19 October 2012, <http://www.menara.ma/fr/2012/10/19/319073-forte-hausse-des-demandes-d-asile-deposees-par-des-syriens-en-gb.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012). United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, "Syria Crisis: UNHCR urges European Union states to honour their asylum system principles", 16 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/507d4c586.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

national scheduled to be sent back to Damascus in October. The student appealed for asylum in the UK but that claim was rejected. On 11 October, he was detained as he tried to register his presence with the Home Office. Two days before his scheduled departure the British High Court granted an injunction allowing him to stay in a UK detention centre. Amnesty International has reported it is not aware of any other EU countries are currently returning Syrian asylum seekers to Syria.<sup>107</sup>

Given its proximity to Turkey, Bulgaria is one of the EU Member States which is likely to experience the arrival of a significant flow of Syrian refugees in the upcoming months. As of 15 October 2012, 183 refugees are in Bulgaria seeking protection. Bulgaria's Interior Minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov has explained that the migrant pressure on Bulgaria's southeastern border has increased by 50 per cent over the last two months.<sup>108</sup> Tsvetanov pointed out that Bulgaria is applying high-tech solutions to counter illegal border crossings, meeting technical requirements for admission to the European Union's Schengen visa zone.<sup>109</sup> The President of Bulgaria's State Agency for Refugees Nikola Kazakov reported that "the number of Syrian citizens, who have applied for asylum in Bulgaria, increased almost two and a half times in August and September this year, compared to the previous months".<sup>110</sup> Between April and September, Bulgaria has received 133 applications for asylum. Asked about Bulgaria's capacity to host foreigners, Kazakov has replied that the State Agency is able to shelter 260 more people. He also reminded that an emergency situation would be declared in case more than 500 immigrants enter the country in a single day.<sup>111</sup>



Source: d-maps.com

In the meantime, Bulgaria is set to build a temporary shelter for Syrian refugees on the border with Turkey, due to increasing daily attempts of illegal immigrants, notably from Syria, to enter Bulgaria. The location chosen is the town of Harmanli, which, according to the government, will be able to host around 1,000 people (also including non-Syrians).<sup>112</sup> Even though the refugee center in Harmanli is to

<sup>107</sup> The Telegraph, "Britain 'tried to deport Syrian activist back home'", 25 October 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9631691/Britain-tried-to-deport-Syrian-activist-back-home.html>, (accessed on 13 November 2012).

<sup>108</sup> Novinite: "Bulgaria Sees Increased Syrian Refugee Pressure", 15 October 2012, available at [http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=144148](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=144148), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>109</sup> The Sofia Globe: "Bulgaria to build temporary refugee shelter near Turkish border following increase in asylum-seekers", 18 October 2012, available at <http://sofiaglobe.com/2012/10/18/bulgaria-to-build-temporary-refugee-shelter-near-turkish-border-following-increase-in-asylum-seekers/>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>110</sup> FOCUS Information Agency: "Nikola Kazakov: Syrian citizens seeking protection increase almost two and a half times in August, September", 15 October 2012, available at <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=f3046>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>111</sup> Novinite: "Bulgaria Sees Increased Syrian Refugee Pressure", 15 October 2012, available at [http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=144148](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=144148), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>112</sup> The Daily Star Lebanon: "Bulgaria to build temporary shelter for Syrian refugees: government", 17 October 2012, available at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Oct-17/191755-bulgaria->



open only in case of a major refugee or immigration wave, Harmanli citizens and the local authorities oppose the establishment of such a tent camp for immigrants in the town center. Mihail Liskov, Mayor of the Harmanli Municipality, warned that 1,000 refugees would require a substantial security presence. The Haskovo District Governor has tried to convince the community that their fears are unfounded.<sup>113</sup> Police presence along the border has been enhanced in order to prevent trespassers from its southeastern neighbour. However, according to local UNHCR press officer Boris Cheshirkov, Bulgaria is still far from witnessing a wave of refugees,<sup>114</sup> a view shared by the local migrant housing officer.<sup>115</sup>

Kosovo is also facing difficulties processing asylum-seekers, a new issue for Kosovo, which does not have adequate reception and protection instruments.<sup>116</sup> Kosovo is unique in that it does not apply a visa regime for foreigners, except that they must have valid documents, sufficient funds for their stay, a return ticket, and provide a reason for their journey.<sup>117</sup> The Russian Federation has emphasized a link between Kosovo and Syrian rebels through accusations of Kosovo's involvement in the military training of the Syrian opposition. The Kosovo authorities deny these accusations.<sup>118</sup> However, Kosovo Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj, has met members of the Syrian opposition.<sup>119</sup> Kosovo is not currently recognized by Syria. The OSCE is officially neutral regarding the status of Kosovo.

Italy, a main actor in the Mediterranean area, is bracing itself for a possible flow of refugees from Syria. Even if not experiencing a direct migratory pressure from the Arab country, Italy is active at the political and diplomatic level with a series of initiatives aimed at mitigating the plight of many Syrian citizens. According to Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi, Italy is not only dedicated to achieving a political solution in Syria, but is also playing an important role in humanitarian action, "supporting the tens of thousands of Syrian refugees and displaced people".<sup>120</sup> In October 2012, Terzi warned about startling signals of human trafficking among the Syrian refugees and recalled that watercrafts carrying Syrians have recently reached the Italian coasts.<sup>121</sup> A first significant

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to-build-temporary-shelter-for-syrian-refugees-government.ashx#axzz29kayRCKI, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>113</sup> Novinite: "Bulgaria to Set Up Tent Camp for Syrian Refugees in Harmanli", 19 October 2012, available at [http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=144281](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=144281), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>114</sup> The Daily Star Lebanon: "Bulgaria to build temporary shelter for Syrian refugees: government", 17 October 2012, available at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Oct-17/191755-bulgaria-to-build-temporary-shelter-for-syrian-refugees-government.ashx#axzz29kayRCKI>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>115</sup> Radio Bulgaria: "Flow of Syrian refugees to Bulgaria on the rise", 17 October 2012, available at [http://bnr.bg/sites/en/News\\_eng/Pages/en1710\\_B7.aspx](http://bnr.bg/sites/en/News_eng/Pages/en1710_B7.aspx), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>116</sup> UNHCR: "2012 UNHCR country operations profile - Serbia (and Kosovo: SC Res. 1244)", <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e48d9f6&submit=GO> (accessed 02 November 2012)

<sup>117</sup> Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Visa for foreign citizens", <http://www.mfa-ks.net/?page=2,20> (accessed 02 November 2012)

<sup>118</sup> Reuters: "Kosovo voices strong support for Syrian opposition", 14 May 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/14/us-syria-kosovo-idUSBRE84D1EI20120514> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>119</sup> Kosovapress: "Syrian opposition supports Kosova's independence", 26 April 2012, <http://www.kosovapress.com/?cid=2,86,146490> (accessed 02 November 2012)

<sup>120</sup> TM News: "Siria/ Terzi: Italia sostiene soluzione politica", 12 October 2012, [http://www.tmnews.it/web/sezioni/news/PN\\_20121012\\_00213.shtml](http://www.tmnews.it/web/sezioni/news/PN_20121012_00213.shtml), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>121</sup> ASCA: "Siria: Terzi, prime avvisaglie traffico esseri umani tra rifugiati", 11 October 2012, <http://it.notizie.yahoo.com/siria-terzi-prime-avvisaglie-traffico-esseri-umani-tra-073200860.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

event in this regard occurred in early August, when 160 migrants fleeing Syria disembarked near the Southern Italian town of Crotona.<sup>122</sup> Margherita Boniver, Minister Terzi's Special Envoy for Humanitarian Emergencies, visited Lebanon and Jordan in September 2012 in order to assess the situation of Syrian refugees in the countries and to support the Lebanese and Jordanian governments in their work. Italy has recently provided material support to the Syrian neighbouring countries, via bilateral and UN aid, Italy's donation of a field hospital in the Za'atari refugee camp, at the Jordan-Syria border can shelter more than 130 patients per day.<sup>123</sup>

Spain also sees the arrival of Syrian asylum-seekers in its territory, often at international airports. The Spanish Commission to Help Refugees has criticized the fact that Custom Officers were not helpful with the refugees. The Commission describes the case of Syrian refugees whose asylum-seeking process could not start until they pronounced the word "asilo" (asylum in Spanish). Other asylum-seekers were sent back to Syria because they were not able to pronounce this word, despite clear declarations that were asking for protection in Spain.<sup>124</sup> Spain had 97 asylum applications in 2011, in addition to 139 pending applications which were not resolved at the start of the year 2011. One application had been rejected and three others closed.<sup>125</sup>

Since 26 September 2011, Syrians required transit visas if they stopped in the Spanish territory in accordance with decision CE 810/2009 of the European Parliament and the European Council of 13 July 2009. These transit visas could only be obtained through the Syrians authorities so many asylum-seekers bought forged passports. This was making them vulnerable to human trafficking.<sup>126</sup> However, according to the website of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, actualized on 20 March 2012, Syrians are no longer required to obtain a transit visa to fly to Spain.<sup>127</sup> The Spanish Embassy in Damascus is currently closed and the network of Honorary Consulates suspended.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Consiglio Italiano per i Rifugiati (CIR): "Siria, sbarcati in Calabria 160 migranti", 9 August 2012, <http://www.cir-onlus.org/Primo%20piano.htm>, (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>123</sup> Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "Siria: impegno dell'Italia a favore dei profughi. Missione dell'inviato speciale del Ministro Terzi, Margherita Boniver", 17 September 2012, [http://www.esteri.it/MAE/IT/Sala Stampa/ArchivioNotizie/Comunicati/2012/09/20120917\\_missioneBoniver.htm](http://www.esteri.it/MAE/IT/Sala Stampa/ArchivioNotizie/Comunicati/2012/09/20120917_missioneBoniver.htm), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

<sup>124</sup> Informe Comición Española de Ayuda al Refugiado: "La situación de las personas refugiadas en España, Informe 2012", P.43, <http://cear.es/index.php/publicaciones/informes-cear/> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>125</sup> UNCHR Statistical Online Population Database, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a013eb06.html> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>126</sup> Informe Comición Española de Ayuda al Refugiado: "La situación de las personas refugiadas en España, Informe 2012", P. 60- 61 <http://cear.es/index.php/publicaciones/informes-cear/> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>127</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain: "List of foreign citizens requiring a transit visa in Spain", [http://www.maec.es/subwebs/Consulados/Lima/es/MenuPpal/visados/visados-transito-aeropuerto/Paginas/paises\\_visadoaeropuerto.aspx](http://www.maec.es/subwebs/Consulados/Lima/es/MenuPpal/visados/visados-transito-aeropuerto/Paginas/paises_visadoaeropuerto.aspx) (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>128</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain: "Embassy of Spain in Syria" [http://www.maec.es/subwebs/Embajadas/Damasco/es/MenuPpal/Embajada/Paginas/canal1\\_damasco.aspx](http://www.maec.es/subwebs/Embajadas/Damasco/es/MenuPpal/Embajada/Paginas/canal1_damasco.aspx) (accessed 2 November 2012)

## 7. Impact in other OSCE Participating States

### 7.1 Albania

Albania had 24 asylum-seekers in its territory as of January 2012. However, there is a relatively important community of citizens of Albanian origin in Syria (20,000). Albanian Prime Minister, Sali Berisha, promised to deliver aid to the refugee camps.<sup>129</sup> Albania could manage the arrival of refugees in its territory, if it receives needed support. The country has experience dealing with massive numbers of refugees arriving to its territory. In 1999, during the Kosovo crisis, 465,000 refugees came to Albania.<sup>130</sup> Albania does not have representation in Syria. The closest diplomatic representations are in Turkey and Egypt.<sup>131</sup>

### 7.2 Armenia

The spillover effect of the Syrian refugee crisis has been felt by neighbouring countries such as Jordan; however those countries bordering Turkey, the country receiving the most refugees, could soon face a similar challenge. For countries like Armenia with a large diaspora in the Middle East, a portion of which is concentrated within Syria, this could provide a huge influx of returns from the diaspora.

There are roughly 100,000 ethnic Armenians estimated to be residing in Syria, predominately in Aleppo.<sup>132</sup> According to Hranush Hakobyan, the head of Armenia's diaspora ministry, an estimated 6,000 Syrian-Armenian refugees have arrived in Armenia since the start of the conflict.<sup>133</sup> The Armenian government has been offering visas upon arrival, recognizing their Syrian driving licenses, and expediting passports as part of a dual citizenship law. In addition, in the capital city of Yerevan, a public school is offering classes for Syrian-Armenian children who can continue to follow the curriculum established in Syria.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> UNHCR: "2012 Regional Operations Profile - Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe" <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e48d676&submit=GO> (accessed 2 November 2012)

Info Albania: "Berisha: Albania aid for Syrian refugees in camps in Turkey", 20 August 2012, <http://www.infoalbania.org/lajme-home/lajme-vendi/41151-berisha-shqiperia-ndihme-per-refugjatet-siriane-ne-kampet-e-turqise.html> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>130</sup> U.S. Committee for Refugees: "U.S. Committee for Refugees World Refugee Survey 2000 – Albania", 01 June 2000, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USCRI,,ALB,,3ae6a8cb48,0.html> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>131</sup> Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "Where to apply for a visa to enter the Republic of Albania", [http://www.mfa.gov.al/index.php?option=com\\_multicategories&view=article&id=7208%3Awhere-to-apply-for-a-visa-to-enter-the-republic-of-albania&Itemid=89&lang=en](http://www.mfa.gov.al/index.php?option=com_multicategories&view=article&id=7208%3Awhere-to-apply-for-a-visa-to-enter-the-republic-of-albania&Itemid=89&lang=en) (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>132</sup> Eurasianet.org. "Armenia: An Uncertain 'Homecoming' for Syria's Diaspora" <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65728> (accessed 1 November 2012)

<sup>133</sup> Hetq. "Syrian Armenians: Our enemy's flag made us happy, but ashamed" 13 November 2012 <http://hetq.am/eng/articles/20490/syrian-armenians-our-enemys-flag-made-us-happy-but-ashamed.html> (accessed 13 November 2012)

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

In addition, an emergency fund for Syrian- Armenians in the amount of USD 1 million has been set up by the Armenian General Benevolent Union.<sup>135</sup>

### 7.3 Bosnia and Herzegovina

UNCHR aims to work with Bosnia and Herzegovina to strengthen the asylum system and insure that asylum seekers have access to their rights.<sup>136</sup> In 2011 Bosnia and Herzegovina received two requests for asylum from Syrian nationals. Their cases were still pending the same year.<sup>137</sup> The closest consulate in the region is in Amman, Jordan, which could increase the flow of refugees in Jordan as people travel to request asylum.<sup>138</sup> During 2012, the Ministry of Security issued two positive decisions granting subsidiary protection to two Syrians. As of 1 October 2012, there are six cases (11 persons originating from Syria) pending decision by the Ministry of Security.<sup>139</sup>

### 7.4 Canada

Since January 2011, the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board received 320 asylum applications, including 213 from October through June 2012. This compares to 127 in all of 2010, 84 in 2009, 70 in 2008 and 68 in 2007. Syrian-Canadians are asking the federal government to open the doors to friends and relatives. "There is a limited number of people that are in really grave danger that we can admit," said Faizel Alazem of the Syrian Canadian Council.<sup>140</sup>

### 7.5 The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

UNCHR is currently working with the authorities in Skopje to advocate better national asylum practices to improve the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure and ensure refugee access to social and economic rights compatible with international standards and EU accession requirements.<sup>141</sup> Two Syrian nationals applied for 2011, and were later closed with no further changes.<sup>142</sup> The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia does not have diplomatic representation in Syria. The closest consulates are in

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<sup>135</sup> Armenian General Benevolent Union, "AGBU Central Board sets aside a \$1 Million Emergency Fund for Humanitarian Assistance to the Armenian Community in Syria 3 August 2012

<http://www.agbu.org/pressoffice/article.asp?ID=925> (accessed 1 November 2012)

<sup>136</sup> UNHCR : 2012 UNHCR country operations profile - Bosnia and Herzegovina <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e48d766&submit=GO> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>137</sup> UNCHR Statistical Online Population Database, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a013eb06.html> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>138</sup> BIH Ministry of Foreign Affairs, visa information, [http://www.mfa.ba/konzularne\\_informacije/vize/Default.aspx?template\\_id=16&s1=314&id=5103](http://www.mfa.ba/konzularne_informacije/vize/Default.aspx?template_id=16&s1=314&id=5103) (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>139</sup> Ljiljana Kokotovic, Assistant Protection Officer, UNHCR Representation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, (personal communication, 5 November 2012).

<sup>140</sup> Canada.com, "Syrian refugees in 'grave danger' seek safe haven in Canada", 27 July 2012, <http://www.canada.com/news/Syrian+refugees+grave+danger+seek+safe+haven+Canada/7002677/story.html>, (accessed on 1 November 2012).

<sup>141</sup> UNHCR : "2012 Regional Operations Profile - South-Eastern Europe" <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e48d986&submit=GO> (accessed 02 November 2012)

<sup>142</sup> UNCHR Statistical Online Population Database, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a013eb06.html> (accessed 2 November 2012)



Turkey and Israel.<sup>143</sup> There is no clear number of Syrian asylum-seekers in 2012 (UNHCR does not share data if the number is less than five). Also, the number of positive or negative response to applications is unknown, due to the high number of asylum-seekers who leave former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia within weeks of lodging an application.<sup>144</sup>

## 7.6 Georgia

Georgia, despite its lack of a concentrated diaspora within Syria, could also see an increase of refugees due to its close proximity to Turkey.

In May 2012, de-facto authorities of Abkhazia, Georgia, reported the resettlement of 30 Syrians.<sup>145</sup> Overall, de-facto authorities acknowledge that over 100 individuals from Syria have been resettled in Abkhazia, Georgia. De facto authorities however, do not consider these individuals as refugees in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1951, but rather categorize these individuals as those who wish to return to their “historical homeland”. Georgia does not have an established diplomatic presence in Syria.

## 7.7 Montenegro

Montenegro’s national asylum practices still need improvement, according to the UNCHR. In 2011, one Syrian national sought asylum, but was rejected.<sup>146</sup> In 2012, 19 according to the UNHCR office in Montenegro, Syrian nationals applied for asylum. Eleven applicants left Montenegro before their procedures were completed. The remaining eight applicants had their applications rejected, and subsequently left the Montenegrin territory without lodging appeals.<sup>147</sup>

## 7.8 Russian Federation

The Russian Federation’s reception of Syrian refugees is concentrated in the North Caucasus region. Often members of the Circassian community, refugees of the Caucasus war of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who fled to Syria, try to return to their historical homeland. There are an estimated 55,000 to 100,000 Circassians in Syria. Since the start of the conflict, 500 Circassians have been repatriated to Kabardino-Balkaria, and 200 to the Adygeya Republic. North Ossetia has refused to give shelter to Circassian refugees despite an estimated 700 Ossetians residing in Syria.<sup>148</sup> There are 250,000 families in Syria with a Russian passport with potential to become refugees.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> FYROM Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic Mission, <http://www.mfa.gov.mk/?q=node/441&language=en-gb#> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>144</sup> UNHCR representation in Skopje, (personal communication, 5 November 2012).

<sup>145</sup> Apsnypress, “Compatriots Have Returned to Abkhazia From Syria” 6 May 2012 [www.Apsnypress.info/en/news/383.html](http://www.Apsnypress.info/en/news/383.html) (accessed 1 November 2012)

<sup>146</sup> UNCHR Statistical Online Population Database, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a013eb06.html> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>147</sup> Milica Pejovic Radonjic, UNHCR Protection Assistant (personal communication to author, 05 November 2012)

<sup>148</sup> RFERL: “Circassian, Ossetian, Chechen Minorities Solicit Russian Help To Leave Syria”, 12 August 2012, <http://www.rferl.org/content/circassian-ossetian-chechen-minorities-solicit-russian-help-to-leave-syria/24674280.html> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>149</sup> Russia Today: “Three-time Refugees: Syrian Circassians back to Russia”, 08 October 2012, <http://rt.com/news/syrian-refugees-russia-kevorkova-751/> (accessed 2 November 2012)

A delegation representing Chechens in Syria met the Human Rights Ombudsman of Chechnya in August 2012 to discuss the possibility of resettlement. The ombudsman said the 500 Chechens from Syria could obtain permanent residence visas, after first obtaining temporary residence status.<sup>150</sup>

## 7.9 Serbia

Serbia has no dedicated budget to hand refugees and lacks the capacity to receive them due to insufficient staff and accommodations. The UNHCR covers expenses of essential services for interpretation and legal advice and with the assistance of the Danish Refugee Council provide basic health services to asylum-seekers in co-operation with the local primary health facilities and the Serbian Ministry of Health.<sup>151</sup> There are two asylum centers in Serbia (Banka Koviljaca and Bogovadja). Together they have the capacity to house 280 people. Unable to shelter everyone, asylum-seekers are forced to rent rooms in the area. The high demand for accommodation in the Asylum Centers is one of the factor stopping asylum-seekers from continuing their registration process through the Asylum Office. The Asylum Office of Serbia has yet to be officially established and is currently part of the Border Police Directorate.

The country received 33 applications for asylum from Syrian nationals in 2011. All cases were closed without further developments.<sup>152</sup> In 2012, 121 Syrian citizens have expressed the intention to file for asylum.<sup>153</sup> Syrian nationals are required to have a certified letter of invitation to obtain a visa to Serbia, or obtain a visa from the final destination country to obtain a Serbian Transit Visa.<sup>154</sup>

## 7.10 Switzerland

A family of 36 Syrians families (17 adults and 19 children) have recently arrived in Switzerland as part of a United Nations resettlement programme in the aftermath of the unrest in their homeland.<sup>155</sup> The applications from 40 Syrian refugees are currently under consideration. However, the total number that Switzerland has agreed to accept has not been made public. During the first six months of 2012, 777 Syrians applied for asylum. Those arriving now will live in a settlement organised by the UNHCR. The number of

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<sup>150</sup> RFERL: "Circassian, Ossetian, Chechen Minorities Solicit Russian Help To Leave Syria", 12 August 2012, <http://www.rferl.org/content/circassian-ossetian-chechen-minorities-solicit-russian-help-to-leave-syria/24674280.html> (accessed 2 November 2012)

Chechen Info: "About 500 Chechens from Syria want to go back to Chechnya", 10 August 2012, <http://www.checheninfo.ru/13716-okolo-500-chechencev-iz-sirii-hotyat-vernutsya-v-chechnyu.html> (accessed 13 November 2012)

<sup>151</sup> UNHCR Report: "Serbia as a country of Asylum: Observations on the situation of Asylum-seekers and the beneficiaries of International Protection in Serbia", August 2012, <http://www.unhcr.rs/en/resources/research/serbia-as-country-of-asylum.html> (accessed 13 November 2012)

<sup>152</sup> UNCHR Statistical Online Population Database, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a013eb06.html> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>153</sup> Dusan Aralica (personal communication to author, 02 November 2012)

<sup>154</sup> Serbian Embassy in Syria, [http://www.srbija-damask.org/English/index\\_english.html](http://www.srbija-damask.org/English/index_english.html) (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>155</sup> Swiss Info, "Syrian refugees arrive in Switzerland", 16 September 2012, [http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/foreign\\_affairs/Syrian\\_refugees\\_arrive\\_in\\_Switzerland.html?cid=33549622](http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/foreign_affairs/Syrian_refugees_arrive_in_Switzerland.html?cid=33549622), (accessed on 31 October 2012).

Syrian refugees in Switzerland is estimated at 1,405,<sup>156</sup> with an average of 85 arriving monthly versus 57 in 2011.<sup>157</sup>

### 7.11 Ukraine

Ukraine is in the process of aligning its asylum-seeking law with EU Standards. On 12 October 2012, Ukraine made several amendments to the “Law on Issues of Refugees and Persons Who Are in Need of Complementary or Temporary Protection”. These amendments harmonize the protection clause of the Ukrainian law on refugees with EU standards.<sup>158</sup> The State Migration Service is also being reformed.

According to the UNHCR in Ukraine, in 2011, Ukraine saw 55 Syrian citizens apply for asylum status. Only one was granted asylum while 13 had their applications rejected. Twelve cases were ‘otherwise closed’, meaning their application had not been approved or denied. Such situations leading to this result may include withdrawal of application, abandonment, inadmissibility, Dublin II procedures or death. Fifty-one applications are still pending. The preliminary number for 2012 show that there are 211 applications for international protection, none were granted and 49 were rejected.<sup>159</sup>

### 7.12 United States of America

Government visa provisions as well as financial aid contributions have been made on behalf of the United States in order to assist refugees fleeing the conflict.

On 23 March 2012, the Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, issued Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Syrian nationals who are currently present in the United States.<sup>160</sup> Temporary Protected Status gives a safe haven to citizens whose home country has an ongoing conflict that poses a serious threat to personal safety of its citizens should they return home.<sup>161</sup> The status is usually granted for up to 18 months during which time citizens of the protected country (i.e. Syria) may remain and work in the United States, as long as they appropriately register for TPS and pass security checks. Syrians seeking visas from outside of the United States are not eligible for this status.

The U.S. State Department contributed USD 130 million to international organizations that are on the ground in Syria and refugee-receiving countries.<sup>162</sup> The primary recipients of the funds are the World Food Programme and the UN High Commissioner for

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<sup>156</sup> 24 heures, “Plus de 1400 demandeurs d’asile Syriens en Suisse”, 16 October 2012, <http://www.24heures.ch/monde/Plus-de-1400-demandeurs-d-asile-Syriens-en-Suisse/story/24606430>, (accessed on 31 October 2012)

<sup>157</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Poursuite de l’exode de réfugiés syriens - les écoles sont surchargées”, 31 August 2012, <http://www.unhcr.fr/5045b318c.html>, (accessed on 31 October 2012)

<sup>158</sup> UNHCR Ukraine: “Harmonization of Legislation Relating to Beneficiaries of International Protection”, 16 October 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org.ua/en/2011-08-26-06-58-56/news-archive/821> (accessed 2 November 2012)

<sup>159</sup> Noel Calhoun, Regional Protection Officer (personal communication with author, 01 November 2012)

<sup>160</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “Statement from Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano on Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Syrian Nationals” 23 March 2012 <http://www.dhs.gov/news/2012/03/23/statement-secretary-homeland-security-janet-napolitano-temporary-protected-status> (accessed 1 November 2012).

<sup>161</sup> Huffington Post, “Syria Designated for Temporary Protected Status” 26 March 2012 [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-leopold/syria-refugees-temporary-protected-status\\_b\\_1376072.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-leopold/syria-refugees-temporary-protected-status_b_1376072.html)

<sup>162</sup> U.S. Department of State; The Syrian Humanitarian Crisis 10 October 2012 [www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/remarks/2012/198970.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/remarks/2012/198970.htm) (accessed 1 November 2012).

Refugees. Although funds are also being appropriated to NGOs, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), UNICEF, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) as well as donations to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and to the UN Department of Safety and Security for support of humanitarian operations.<sup>163</sup>



*Refugee families transported to Lebanon.  
Photo by UNHCR*

According to the Refugee Processing Center (RPC) 30 September 2012 report for the fiscal year 2012 on Refugee Arrivals by Country Location the United States has granted asylum to over 10,000 individuals from Syria and its border states including; Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.<sup>164</sup> The United States reports asylum data based on the country from which a refugee is located when he/she applied for asylum. Therefore, Turkey accounts for many of the US asylum applications though the vast majority of the asylum-seekers are originally from Syria.

## 8. Policy Recommendations

The extent to which each country is affected by the presence of refugees is greatly attributed to its geographical proximity to the on-going conflict.<sup>165</sup> Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon have shouldered the largest burden by accepting Syrian refugees on a massive scale. Recalling the commitments made at the OSCE PA 2010 Annual Session in Oslo on the equitable sharing of the flow of refugees, governments should first and foremost offer their capacity to accommodate refugees. States that are receiving large numbers of refugees but lack the capacity to host them should enter into bilateral and multilateral agreements with States that have the capacity and willingness to host refugees. As the conflict continues, and refugees flee in the thousands, additional material, financial and human resources are needed. It is a crisis that underscores the interconnectedness of security and human rights at the founding of the OSCE.

Consistent cohesive migration policy schemes with reference to asylum-seekers across the OSCE region would greatly benefit not only individuals seeking asylum, but receiving countries and neighbours of receiving countries.<sup>166</sup> The absence of existing schemes, infrastructure and governmental support is quite evident in the current refugee situation.

<sup>163</sup> U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Humanitarian Aid Reaching Syria and Neighboring Countries 2 August 2012 [www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/08/195965.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/08/195965.htm) (accessed 1 November 2012).

<sup>164</sup> "Refugee Arrivals by Country Location, Fiscal Year 2012 as of 30 September 2012" Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration Office of Admissions.

<sup>165</sup> OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Oslo Declaration 2010; Resolution on Partnership in Assisting Refugees para5.

<sup>166</sup> OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Belgrade Declaration 2011; Resolution on the Co-ordination of Migration Policy in the OSCE

The Dublin II Regulation, adopted in 2003 by the European Union, provides that only one Member State is responsible for examining an asylum application, however the deficiency in accommodations or resources make it difficult, often impossible, for refugees to stay in their host country while awaiting the results of their application for asylum. This regulation should not be used as means of discouraging asylum applications, but the gap in resources, infrastructure and policies should be filled.

The lack of transparency in the number of applications registered, accepted and denied by governments provides a cloud of mystery as to the level of protection countries are actually providing. Co-operation between international organizations and local authorities on the number of applications as well as the number of those accepted and denied would add greatly to the transparency of government policies towards refugees.

The 2011 OSCE PA resolution on migration calls for the establishment of an international network of focal points in the OSCE region. This network would be critical to increasing international communication about refugee patterns and creating harmonizing policies to address urgent refugee challenges. Similar networks of national contact persons already exist within the OSCE, for instance in combating human trafficking and in the fight against organized crime. Close co-operation and the sharing of experiences and expertise between the countries have proved highly effective in these policy areas.

Strengthening co-operation with key actors in the field of migration and asylum, notably the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross and international and national non-governmental organizations as called for in the Oslo Declaration 2010 is key. Special attention should be given to the protection of vulnerable members of society, in particular women and children.

Participating States should extend visas for Syrian nationals who are currently working or studying abroad. In addition, offering Syrians educational opportunities until the conflict subsides would guarantee the fulfillment of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as underlined in the OSCE PA 2010 Oslo resolution on migration.

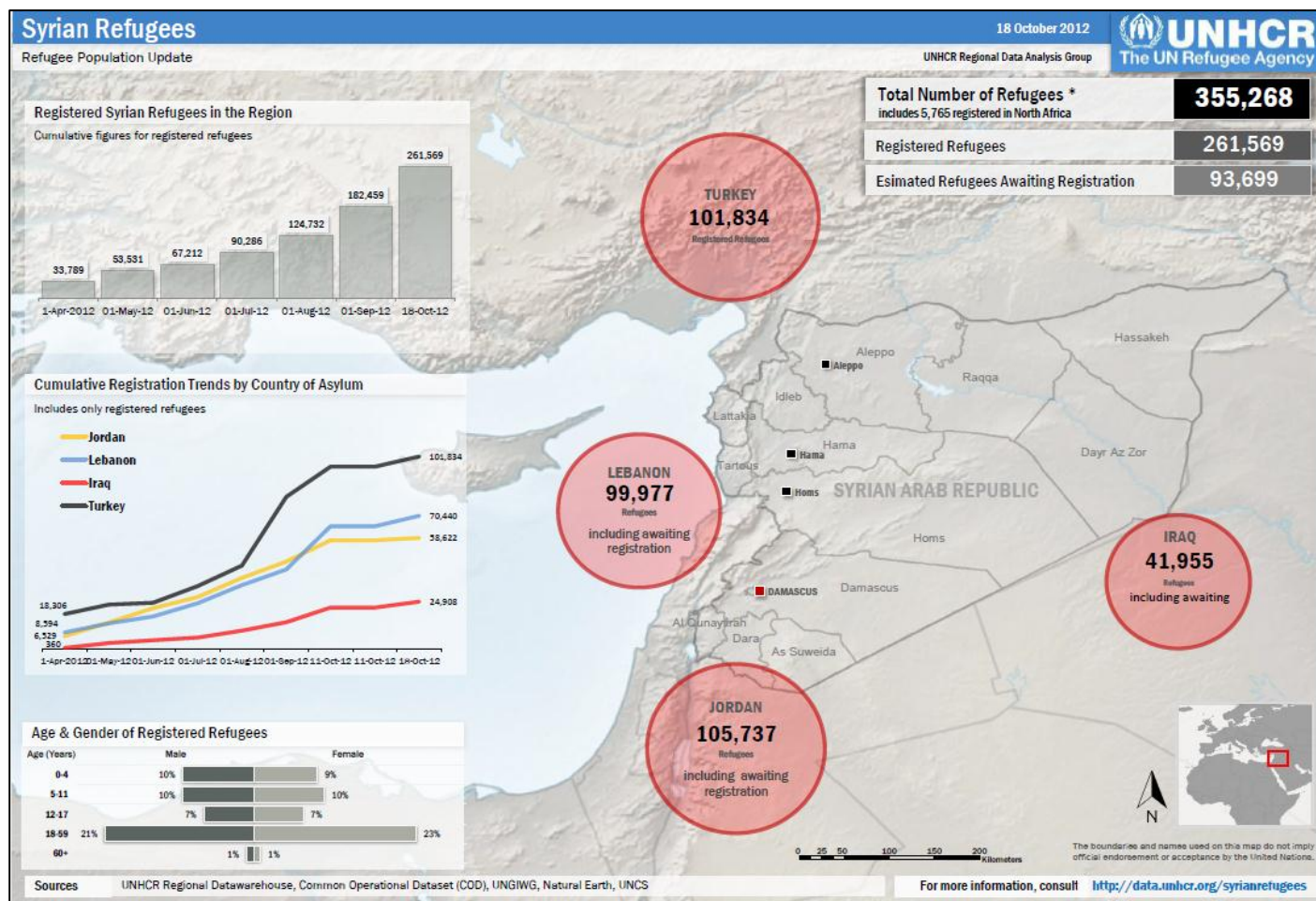
Participating States should also offer Syrian refugees within their borders temporary protective status, and generally err on the side of empathy while the situation in Syria remains violent. Recalling the OSCE PA 2009 Vilnius Declaration, and its resolution on aid and assistance to refugees; “that the main priority for refugees is to resume their own lives in their own countries, at the heart of their own cultural and social contexts, as soon as possible, once all danger has subsided”.

Mediterranean Partners were a part of the Helsinki Final Act from its inception, and the OSCE has always recognized that security in the Mediterranean region is part and parcel to stability of the wider OSCE region. Each refugee fleeing the violence in Syria today is a reminder that the OSCE’s model for co-operation is needed now more than ever to unite countries in common purpose through common refugee policies that allow families the best possible quality of life during this tumultuous period.



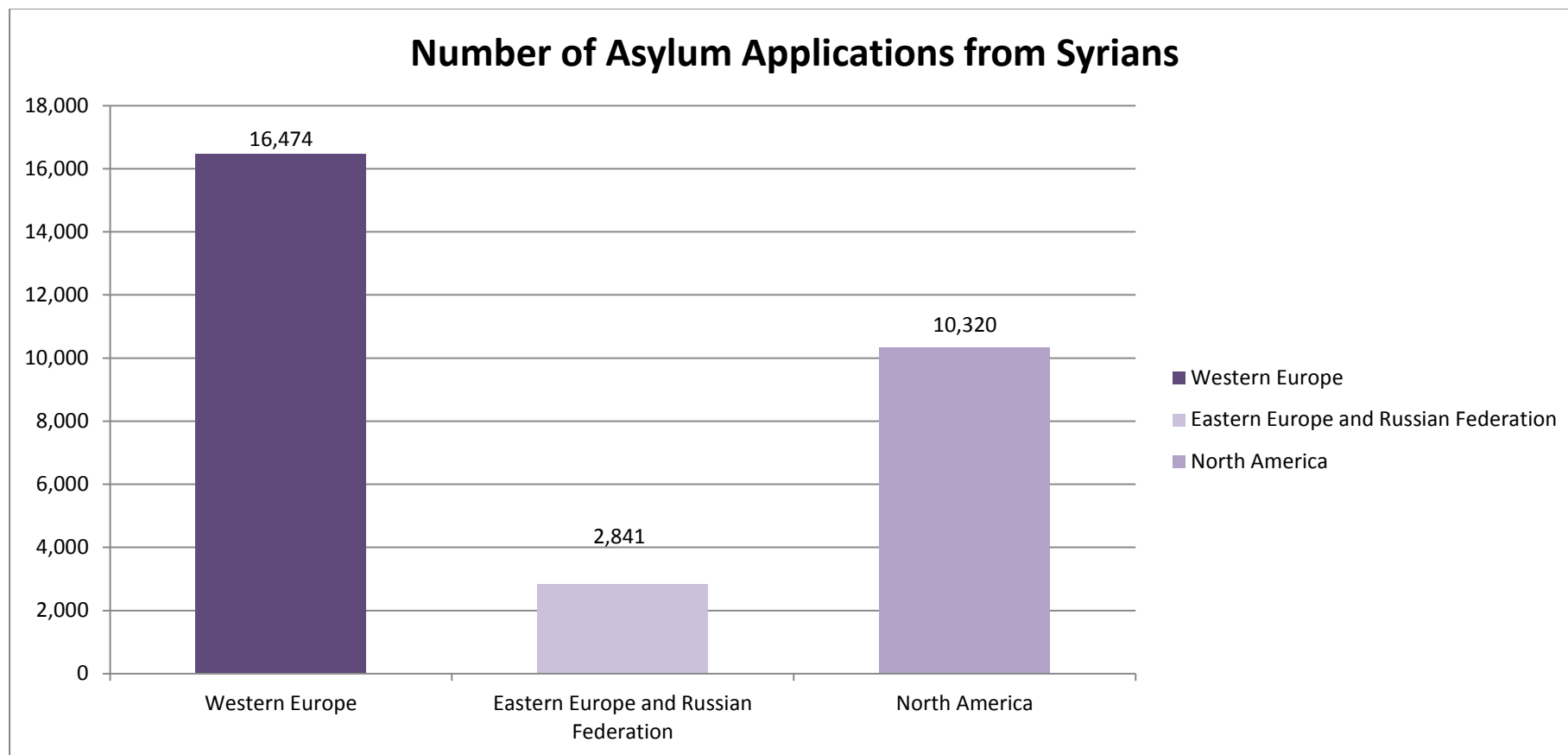
## Annexes

### 1.1 Refugee Population Updates as of 18 October 2012



Source: UNHCR

## 1.2 Number of Asylum Applications from Syrians



*Source: UNHCR and individual governments, as of October 2012*



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