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Humanitarian Crisis in Syria

**A Special Report on the Impact of
Syrian Refugees in the OSCE Region**

12 February 2013

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Authors

Research Fellows of the International Secretariat

Sarah Robin
Wesli Turner
Alejandro Marx
Matteo De Donà
Mikhail Kapitsky

Edited by Nathaniel Parry, Neil H. Simon, Maria Chepurina

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Spencer Oliver, Secretary General



International Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
Tordenskjoldsgade 1, 1055 Copenhagen K, Denmark
Tel : +45 33 37 80 40 / osce@oscepa.dk / www.oscepa.org

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Introduction

Syria's internal conflict 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.¹ The Government responded with force resulting in the deaths of four protesters.² Demonstrations quickly spread across much of the country resulting in what many saw as a popular uprising.³

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

After over a year of continuous fighting, diplomatic attempts at a peaceful resolution have been unsuccessful. In February 2012, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Secretary General of the League of Arab States Nabil Elaraby appointed former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan as joint special envoy on the Syrian crisis.⁷ 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 assembly.⁸



Demonstration in Idlib, Syria. Photo by Syria Freedom

For a few days in April, the ceasefire led to a decrease in violence which proved to be short-lived.⁹ Four months later, without successfully ending the violence in Syria, Annan resigned as special envoy. By mid-August 2012, air assaults by the Syrian government increased, resulting in refugees fleeing by the thousands.¹⁰ Lakhdar Brahimi of Algeria was appointed Joint Special Representative for Syria on 17 August. In January 2013, he said the Syrian conflict has reached "unprecedented levels of horror".¹¹

According to the UN, over 60,000 people have been killed since the onset of the crisis. Rocket and bomb attacks have been reported in urban centres, including attacks on residential neighbourhoods, markets and aid convoys.¹²

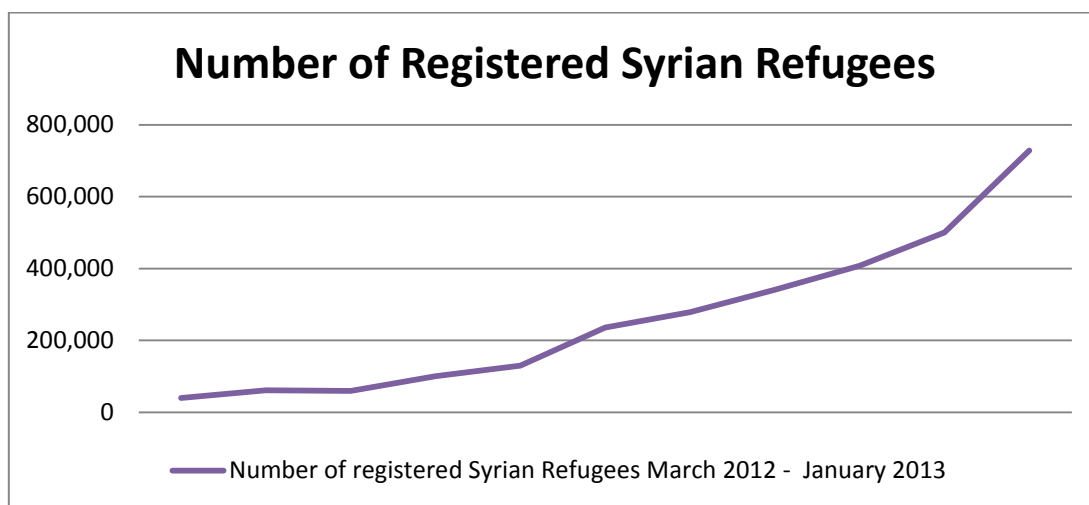
The conflict in Syria continues to expand beyond its borders directly impacting peripheral States as well as others. With concerns mounting about the instability within Syria and what could become of weapons in the country, as well as the possible use or transfer of chemical and biological weapons.

This report looks at the impact of the more than 275,000 Syrian refugees in the OSCE area, and 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, lays out policy recommendations for OSCE participating States.



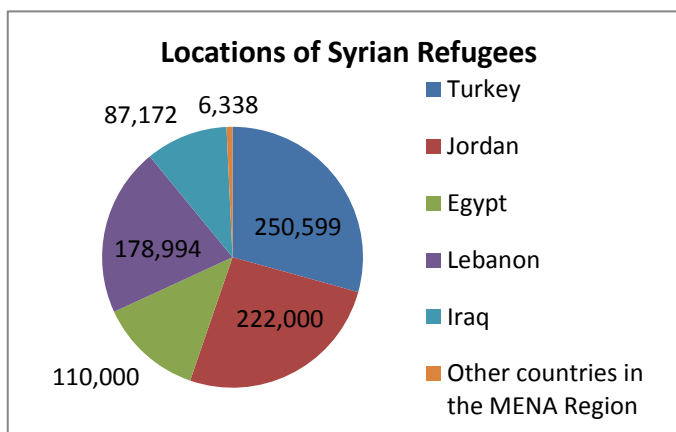
Source: globalcitymaps.com

1. General Figures on Refugees



Source: UNHCR as of 30 January 2013

Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt continue to host an overwhelming number of refugees from the fighting in Syria. As of 30 January 2013, an estimated 728,553 Syrians have either formally registered as refugees or are being assisted in those countries – including 6,338 registered in North Africa, according to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR).¹³ The latest UNHCR figures show that the number could reach 1.1 million by June 2013.¹⁴ According to the January reports, 3,000 people are fleeing Syria every day.¹⁵ The number of Syrian asylum-seekers in the EU has been relatively small, with about 25,000 asylum claims filed by Syrians since the beginning of the crisis.¹⁶ From January to June 2013, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) plans to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to up to 360,000 people affected by conflict in Syria – out of the total of 520,000 – up to 5,500 Palestinian refugees from Syria in Jordan, and up to 20,000 in Lebanon.¹⁷ The UNRWA is providing them with cash, food assistance and non-food items.



Source: UNHCR and Government sources cited within this report

While half of the Syrian refugee population was living in refugee camps in September,¹⁸ 67 per cent are now living outside camps.¹⁹ Women and children make up 78 per cent of the refugee population.²⁰ Inside Syria, the UN estimates that four million people need urgent humanitarian assistance, including two million who have fled their homes and are now living without the most basic services: clean water, sanitation facilities and electricity.²¹ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates there are between 120,000 and 150,000 migrant workers in Syria of which 15,000 may be in priority need of assistance for evacuation, transit or border reception, repatriation, health services and psychosocial support. As of 1 February 2013, some 6,800 stranded migrants

have already contacted their embassies and the IOM directly to communicate their urgent need for repatriation assistance.²² Since March 2011, the IOM has helped some 3,300 vulnerable migrants from 36 countries to safely return home.²³

On 3 December 2012, the UN has decided to send all non-essential international staff out of Syria and to temporarily halt all field trips outside of the capital.²⁴

More than 30,000 Syrian refugees have applied for asylum in the OSCE region, predominantly in Western Europe.

Status of Asylum Applications

Country	Number of Asylum Applications	Number of Applications Granted / protection	Number of Applications Denied
Austria	922	n/a	n/a
Belgium	796	480	n/a
Bosnia and Herzegovina	35	19	1
Bulgaria	183	n/a	n/a
Canada	350	n/a	n/a
Denmark	907	483	n/a
France	635	584	n/a
Georgia	n/a	100	n/a
Germany	5,597	n/a	n/a
Greece	115	0	115
Montenegro	19	n/a	8
Norway	327	n/a	n/a
Russia	n/a	700	n/a
Serbia	287	n/a	n/a
Spain	255	n/a	n/a
Sweden	8,000	n/a	n/a
Switzerland	1,665	n/a	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

The table includes details on asylum applications; more information is available in Annex 1.2. For additional details on the refugee population, including age, gender and regional breakdowns see Annex 1.1 Refugee Population Updates.

2. Humanitarian Response

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

UNHCR issued an appeal in March 2012 for USD 84 million to provide aid to 100,000 refugees over six months. The plan was revised in September to USD 488 million to support 710,000 Syrian refugees.²⁵ By December, UNHCR doubled the request, appealing for USD 1 billion to help 1.1 million people by June 2013. The appeal brings together efforts of over 60 international and national agencies with UNHCR continuing to lead the overall response.²⁶ As of January, 22.3 per cent of the effort was funded.²⁷

In July 2012, OCHA made its first appeal for Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) in the amount of USD 180 million. It was revised twice to USD 348 million in September and to USD 520 million in December.²⁸ As of January 2013, 10 per cent of the project was funded.²⁹

On 30 January 2013, donor countries met in Kuwait and pledged more than USD 1.5 billion to help Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees said the funding commitments were “unprecedented” and “generous”. However, it is unclear at the moment how the funds will be allocated.³⁰

The World Food Programme (WFP) is reaching about 1.5 million people a month in Syria with vital food assistance and is helping the hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled into neighbouring countries. As needs are growing, with serious bread and fuel shortages across the country, WFP is working to



Photo by UNHCR

reach more people. The agency also provides handling services and transportation for non-food items, including blankets, medical supplies, clothes and cooking utensils on behalf of other humanitarian agencies.³¹ The WFP launched its Regional Emergency Operation in July 2012.³²

In emergency situations, health officials have warned instances of disease and death are highest among children under five years old.³³ To address this aspect of the crisis, on 30 January 2013, four UN agencies, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), urged people displaced in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey to take measures to avoid unnecessary childhood illnesses and death. They promoted breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding and strongly discouraged the uncontrolled distribution of breast milk substitutes or the sharing of

bottles and teats. UNICEF appealed for USD 68.5 million to carry out life-saving programmes inside Syria during the first six months of 2013. Slightly over USD 8 million has been received as of 1 February.³⁴

In January 2013, IOM appealed for USD 13.6 million to fund the repatriation of stranded migrants and provide emergency aid to the internally displaced and other conflict-affected people in Syria. As of 1 February, no contribution has been received for activities in Syria under this appeal.³⁵

UNRWA's September plan appealed for USD 53.8 million, of which 57 per cent was committed in pledges, and 35 per cent was received by mid-December 2012. For the first six months of 2013, UNRWA reports needing USD 91 million of which USD 75 million is to be programmed inside Syria, USD 13 million in Lebanon and USD 3 million in Jordan.³⁶

Syrian women identified rape as a primary reason their families fled the country, according to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) assessments in Lebanon and Jordan. The IRC calls for increasing funding for programmes that prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, inside and outside of camps. Programmes would include clinical care and emotional support for survivors, improving safety in camps, minimizing survival sex and forced marriage, preventing domestic violence and providing economic aid so that women do not turn to exploitative jobs.³⁷

3. Impact in Turkey and Mediterranean Partner States

3.1. Turkey



Source: UNHCR 17-28 January 2013

Turkey and Syria share a 910-km-long border. The two societies are interwoven a common history, with the security and stability of Syria and Turkey inextricably linked.

The Syrian crisis increasingly deteriorated during the course of 2012 as the security threats stemming from the crisis gained new dimensions. According to official Turkish sources, an unarmed RF-4 Turkish aircraft was shot down by the Syrian forces in international airspace on 22 June.³⁸ During the clashes in northern Syria, Turkish territory was also severely affected by Syrian artillery and mortar shelling. Thus, on 3 October, five people, all of whom were women and children, were killed in Akçakale. Condemning the attacks in Akçakale, the 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.”³⁹

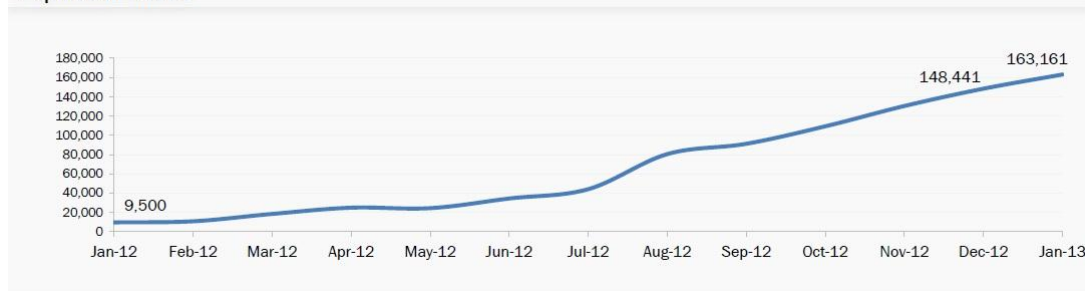
On 12 October 2012 a commercial civilian aircraft belonging to Syrian Airways en route to Damascus from Moscow was forced to land in Ankara. After the inspection of the cargo, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey reported that the “plane was carrying cargo of a nature that could not possibly be in compliance with the rules of civil aviation”.⁴⁰

In view of these developments, on 4 October 2012, the Turkish Parliament adopted a decree authorizing the government to dispatch the Turkish Armed Forces to foreign countries.⁴¹ Moreover, in response to Turkey’s formal request of 21 November 2012, NATO agreed to bolster Turkish national air defence to protect the Turkish population and territories and to contribute to the de-escalation of the crisis along the Alliance’s border. In this framework, Patriot batteries were deployed on Turkish territory.⁴²

A statement made to the OSCE PA by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey to the OSCE clarifies the Government’s objectives in humanitarian sphere: “First; in line with the international law and in cooperation with the UNHCR, we have consistently maintained an open door policy to extend protection to all the Syrians regardless of their political, ethnic, cultural or religious affiliations. Second; supporting the UN efforts to extend aid to Syria under the coordination of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, we have established a legitimate and transparent mechanism to channel humanitarian assistance to Syria at the zero point of the border.”⁴³

According to official sources, Turkey has spent USD 500 million to accommodate 250,599 Syrian citizens inside the country’s shelter camps, where around 3,000 staff members are currently working. With a reported 73,212 Syrians having returned to Syria, the total number of Syrians under temporary protection⁴⁴ in Turkish shelter camps reached 177,387 as of 8 February 2013. A significant proportion of Syrians (officially estimated at 80,000-100,000) arriving in Turkey have also installed themselves in towns outside the camps. The Turkish government has taken measures to provide them with free basic services.⁴⁵ On 31 January the Government announced that they are expected to receive permission to work in Turkey by mid-February.⁴⁶

Population Trends



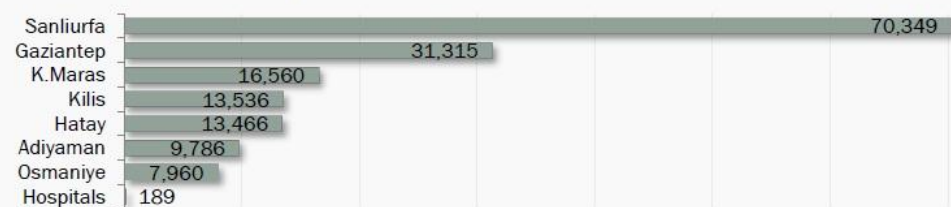
Source: by UNHCR – 17-28 January 2013

Under the revised response plan, Turkey could host up to 380,000 Syrians under temporary protection in camps by June 2013.⁴⁷ Refugee camps are operated by the Government, co-ordinated by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of Turkey (AFAD) and implemented by the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS). Turkey also appointed a “co-ordinator governor” exclusively for Syrian refugees currently residing in the country.⁴⁸ The UNHCR team covers all seven provinces hosting refugee camps and is able to access them regularly. The team provides technical assistance, including refugee registration, camp management, and assisting with voluntary repatriation.⁴⁹

In early August, Turkey introduced a system to help Turkish relief groups delivering assistance inside Syria, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW).⁵⁰ The country is also asking for the establishment of shelter camps inside Syria⁵¹ as due to a massive influx of refugees the camps established for Syrian citizens in Turkey are rapidly reaching their capacity limits. As a result, Syrian citizens who are not under threat of attack are required to wait on the other side of the border until new camps are established.⁵² Although committed to continuing its contribution, Turkey is becoming increasingly concerned by the financial burden posed by its humanitarian engagement. “The international assistance to Turkey has been minimal compared to the size of the burden. We have so far received in-kind contributions through the UN in the amount of USD 29 million. As of 30 January, the amount of bilateral contributions is in the range of USD 5 million,” the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey reports.⁵³

Number of Syrians by Province

The number of Syrians living in the Urban Area are not included



Age & Gender of Registered Syrian Refugees



Source: by UNHCR – 17-28 January 2013

3.2. Jordan

As of 30 January 2013, Jordan is hosting more than 222,000 Syrian refugees, who have registered with the UNHCR or have appointments to do so.⁵⁴ Jordan has recently experienced a record number of refugee arrivals⁵⁵ with more than 55,000 arrivals in January, a number larger than expected. In its Syria Regional Response Plan issued in December 2012, the UNHCR projected that the Syrian refugee population would be 300,000 by the end of June 2013.⁵⁶ The UN agency received official authorization to conduct off-site refugee registration outside of Amman.⁵⁷ Jordanian officials report more than 330,000 Syrian refugees in the country.⁵⁸ According to the Government the number of Syrians in Jordan will be between 700,000 and one million by the end of 2013.⁵⁹ The UNICEF Representative to Jordan said 24,000 Syrian refugee children entered Jordan in January alone – the highest number ever. The influx to the camp means more showers, toilets, shelters, and schools are needed,⁶⁰ but it also means a rising demand for water in Jordan, already the fourth most water scarce country in the world.⁶¹ In December, Jordan and the UNHCR agreed to create a joint Jordanian-UN operations centre to further strengthen co-ordination of the humanitarian response.⁶²

The Jordanian Government has pledged to maintain its open-border policy for humanitarian reasons⁶³ and to only close the border as a last resort.⁶⁴ Due to the migration, the Kingdom's population has increased three per cent in 18 months.⁶⁵ As of January 2013, Jordan provides refugees *de facto* temporary protection, which means that those formally recognised as refugees are granted six months of legal status, and it also respects the principle of non-refoulement. A large percentage of the hundreds of Syrians who flee to Jordan each day arrive with little or no official documentation, posing a great challenge to both authorities and refugees alike.

In response to this situation the Government of Jordan has started issuing service cards to Syrian refugees⁶⁶, giving them access to the labour market in accordance with Jordanian law. However, according to the UNHCR, the vast majority of persons fleeing Syria entered Jordan through unofficial border crossings and, as a consequence, their freedom of movement is curtailed and their identity documents are retained at refugee camps or transit sites by Jordanian authorities. Once sponsored by a Jordanian, their identity documentation is returned to them and they are free to settle in urban areas throughout Jordan.⁶⁷ Regarding the Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria, "Jordan has made a clear and explicit sovereign decision to not allow the crossing to Jordan by our Palestinian brothers who hold Syrian documents," then-Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour said on 11 January 2013.⁶⁸ According to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, as of January 2013, 3,600 Palestinian refugees have gone to Jordan from Syria. That is in addition to the 2.1 million Palestinian refugees who were already registered in Jordan.⁶⁹ Ensour said Jordan would close its border in case of violence or a mass exodus if the Assad regime collapses and that Jordan would then dispatch Special Forces to "secure safe havens for the Syrians inside their country."⁷⁰

Since the beginning of the influx, refugees have received wide-ranging humanitarian assistance upon arrival, including from host communities, local NGOs and community-based organizations, in co-ordination with the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization, appointed to this role by the Government.⁷¹

The main humanitarian efforts are dedicated to the refugees in transit sites and in the camps. In 2012, humanitarian actors responded to the emergency, ensuring access to

basic services, such as education, water, sanitation and hygiene kits, cash, non-food items, and winterisation kits, in the camps as well as in the urban settings. However in 2013, UNHCR and partners need to look beyond immediate emergency responses to ensure that social structures are analysed, coping mechanisms identified and built upon, and safety nets put in place.⁷² The Executive Director of the WFP, Ertharin Cousin, visited Jordan for the second time in less than three month on 26 January. WFP provides ready-to-eat food to Syrians arriving at the camp and supplies food rations to cook in communal kitchens. Elsewhere in Jordan, WFP provides food vouchers to Syrian refugees living with host communities. Cousin said countries like Jordan are exhausting their resources to deal with the crisis. The UN food agency is stocking up on meals in anticipation of increased refugee flows and has increased its daily bread delivery to over 15.5 metric tons a day, with additional bakeries on standby to increase delivery if the need arises. But the rise in the number of refugees is straining resources.⁷³

In Za'atari camp, Jordan's largest, 30,000 refugees arrived since the beginning of the year, in comparison to 16,400 who arrived in December, 13,000 in November and 10,000 in October, according to the UNHCR. The camp currently hosts over 65,000 people.⁷⁴ According to the joint Jordan-UN appeal in October 2012, the camp's capacity is 80,000 inhabitants.⁷⁵

However, conditions in the camp during the winter are deteriorating and the heavy rain and snow damaged 500 out of the 4,500 tents and displaced over 2,000 people.⁷⁶ The media also reported some incidents of fires in tents that have killed several refugees⁷⁷ and seven aid workers were injured after a riot involving dozens of refugees angry about poor conditions in the camp.⁷⁸ On 20 January, around 50 Jordanians from the Jordanian Commission to Support the Syrian People and the *Wataawano* campaign gathered to demand the closure of Za'atari camp. They expressed outrage over the conditions at the camp and called on Jordanians to open their houses to Syrian refugees.⁷⁹ The Jordanian Government is currently working with the UN agency and other partners to prepare a second major camp in the Rughel Mureib area near the northern city of Zarqa. It should be open in future weeks⁸⁰ with an initial capacity of 5,000 refugees and is expected to eventually accommodate up to 30,000 residents.⁸¹ Other camps or settlement centres still need to be expanded and maintained.



Za'atari refugee camp, Jordan. Photo by UNHCR

As of January 2013, roughly 80 per cent of the refugee population was residing in urban areas.⁸² Seventy-eight per cent of UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees in Jordan are women, children or elderly and among the urban refugee population, 8.8 per cent have been identified as presenting particular vulnerabilities and requiring specific attention.⁸³ In urban areas, refugees face great challenges in paying for their accommodation (rented flats) and accessing basic household items, including winter kits, water, sanitation and food. Obtaining healthcare, education and jobs remains a struggle as well. The Economic and Social Council, an advisory body to the Jordanian Government, reported that 38,000 jobs have been offered to Syrian refugees between 2011 and 2012.⁸⁴ The majority of new

arrivals are now transferred to camps in order to minimize competition on already scarce natural resources.⁸⁵

On 23 January, Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh said the government has called on the international community for “urgent aid” in order to cope with an “unprecedented” exodus that saw the arrival of more than 20,000 Syrian refugees in six days.⁸⁶ On 26 January, the Government called on the international community to urgently address the Syrian crisis. “The situation in Syria is unlikely to end soon and this poses a challenge on our infrastructure to provide Syrian refugees with their basic needs,” said Government Spokesperson Samih Maaytah.⁸⁷ Jordan has said the rapidly growing refugee population cost the country some USD 600 million in 2012 – a figure forecast to reach USD 800 million in 2013 should the crisis persist.⁸⁸

The Economic and Social Council reported in January 2013 that the cost of hosting Syrian refugees on Jordan’s economy is about 3 per cent – almost USD 420 million – of Jordan’s gross domestic product. The study evaluated the impact of refugees on key sectors such as education, medical care, security and infrastructure.⁸⁹

3.3. Egypt

As of 30 January, the UNHCR Cairo office reported a total of 14,478 refugees (5,476 families) registered, including 4,261 who registered in Alexandria and 1,265 in New Damietta. This figure is expected to rise to 30,000 by the end of June 2013.⁹⁰ However, according to the government, there are between 100,000 and 120,000 Syrian refugees living in Egypt.⁹¹ In December, the UN included Egypt for the first time in the Regional Response Plan with USD 14,337,831 to be allocated for operations in the country by UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP until end of June 2013. Egyptian authorities grant Syrians a visa-free entry followed by a renewable three-month residency, and access to public schools and hospitals without bearing additional costs. Until 15 January, 2,924 Syrians received financial assistance, 1,794 students received education grants, and 997 received health care service.⁹² Many Syrians arriving in Egypt are living off their savings instead of registering with UNHCR, but agency officials warn more Syrians may register as refugees once their individual resources are depleted.⁹³

3.4. Israel

Despite Israeli officials having indicated to the media they would prevent “waves of refugees” from fleeing Syria into the Golan Heights,⁹⁴ the Government has not formally responded to the arrival of Syrian refugees into Israel. However, should Israel receive official requests from international bodies, such as the UNHCR or the Red Cross, it will consider such requests on their merits. Israel notes that the border between Israel and Syria is under UN supervision and a massive flow of refugees cannot be allowed to enter in an unsupervised manner.⁹⁵ In January 2013, Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced plans to build a security fence along the armistice line with Syria similar to the one on Israel’s southern border with Egypt,⁹⁶ and in general, Israel seeks to increase supervision of the border line and to seal it.⁹⁷ Palestinian and Israeli leaders have not agreed whether Palestinian refugees in Syria can flee to Israel or the Palestinian Territories.⁹⁸

3.5. North Africa

Morocco. According to the UNHCR Office in Morocco, as of October 2012, 600 asylum seekers have registered from Syria. Ninety per cent of those seeking asylum travelled to Algeria first before crossing the border to Morocco. 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.⁹⁹ On 18 and 19 October, Moroccan King Mohammed VI visited the Za'atari camp in Jordan and inspected a Moroccan field hospital.¹⁰⁰ As of February 2013, the Government of Morocco has advised that it is seeking to develop a mechanism to address the situation of Syrians in the country. Meanwhile, UNHCR in Morocco has stopped the registration of refugees from Syria.¹⁰¹

Tunisia. The Tunisian Red Crescent reports an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 Syrian refugees in Tunisia.¹⁰² This number has been confirmed by the authorities¹⁰³ but the UNHCR in Tunisia has registered only a handful of refugees.¹⁰⁴ Most of them crossed the border illegally¹⁰⁵ from Algeria,¹⁰⁶ came directly from Damascus when there were flight connections and a Tunisian Embassy (which closed in February 2012¹⁰⁷), or indirectly through other countries like Lebanon.¹⁰⁸ The Tunisian authorities have repeatedly expressed their support and willingness to help refugees.¹⁰⁹ While the Government has indicated that it would let Syrians remain in the country for the time being and that there would be no forcible returns to Syria, no specific reception arrangements have been put in place. Also, no legal status (residence permit) is being granted to those who entered Tunisia legally or illegally. Syrians are therefore finding accommodation and means of subsistence on their own or with the help of Tunisians or compatriots already established in Tunisia. According to the UNHCR, civil society now seems to be more concerned and aware of the plight of the refugees, who can only receive UNHCR assistance if they register with the refugee agency.¹¹⁰ Tunisian authorities have offered assistance to refugees in camps in Jordan,¹¹¹ and sent two planes of aid to Turkey.¹¹²

Algeria. On 30 January, the Algerian Government said that the country had received 18,000 Syrian refugees, provided them with shelter and enrolled students in schools and colleges.¹¹³ Some of them had tried to reach Algeria by boat but were intercepted by the authorities.¹¹⁴

4. Impact in Europe

The European Commission plans to double its humanitarian funding in 2013 adding to USD 134 million already allocated for the crisis in 2011-2012 to cover top priorities, such as emergency medical response, food and safe water, sanitation infrastructure, shelter, registration, and protection of refugees and internally displaced people.¹¹⁵

European Union Commissioner for home affairs, Cecilia Malmstrom, said that the EU was focusing on the humanitarian situation and had already approved spending of USD 482 million for the refugee camps.¹¹⁶

Top 5 Donors – OCHA 2012

Country	Percentage of funding
Russian Federation	15%
European Commission	13%
United Kingdom	13%
UN funds	13%
Saudi Arabia	11%
Others	35%

Source: OCHA 26 January 2013

An estimated 25,000 Syrian nationals have sought asylum in the European Union as of January 2013,¹¹⁷ while in October, this number was 23,500.¹¹⁸ Some 93 per cent of applicants are reported to have been accepted with different degrees of protection.¹¹⁹ While the European Union denounces the escalating violence in Syria, not all of its Member States have fully welcomed fleeing Syrians, as reported by UNHCR. Some countries have rejected more than half of the Syrians seeking asylum. Other countries are offering Syrians only a “tolerated stay” placing refugees at risk of being denied the rights to which they are entitled as refugees under EU and international law, thus compelling them to move.¹²⁰

Some Members of the European Parliament, such as H  l  ne Flautre, Chair of the Delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, called on the EU to stop preventing Syrian refugees from entering European territory. She stressed that they are not illegal immigrants but refugees, and therefore should be granted the right to asylum and protection.¹²¹ Several NGOs, including Human Rights Watch¹²² and Amnesty International¹²³, have urged the European Union to create a common policy, establish a Regional Protection Programme, follow European Commission directives and harmonize national procedures, including for lodging asylum claims.

Daniel Endres from UNHCR said the agency can only help refugees resettle in Europe if they have been granted official refugee status.¹²⁴

Syrians are also transferred between EU countries under the Dublin II Regulation, which permits Member States to send asylum applicants back to the first country of EU entry, which could delay their access to protection.¹²⁵ 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, leaving Syrians no place to go in their country to begin their process of seeking asylum.

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, the Netherlands four, Finland and Sweden two each as of October 2012.¹²⁶

Syrian refugees are increasingly seeking asylum in Greece,¹²⁷ leading to a fivefold increase in the number of Syrian citizens’ arrests in 2012 on the border of Greece and Turkey.¹²⁸ The number of Syrians trying to enter Greek territory illegally reached a critical level in July 2012, when up to 800 Syrians were crossing the Greek-Turkish land border every week.¹²⁹ The Greek Government foresees hosting 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 underway.¹³⁰ Implementation of the Greek Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management was submitted to a national Commission in August 2010 and then revised and improved according to its current state and actual needs of the national authorities. The revision was made according to two main criteria, access to international protection and establishment of an effective system of border management and returns. Since August 2012 accommodation and asylum services, appeals authority and a returns system based on IOM programmes on assisted voluntary return and reintegration as well as on forced returns according to various readmission agreements with third countries have been established in this framework.¹³¹

Accordingly, as opposed to most EU Member States, which have frozen expulsions of Syrians, Greece has deported Syrian nationals. In the fall of 2012, more than 32 per cent of sea arrivals to the Greek Islands were Syrian nationals. In 2012, 7,927 refugees from Syria were detained at the Greek borders, and only 2.5 per cent of them had submitted asylum applications to get refugee status. Of 214 asylum seekers that submitted applications between January and October 2012 only one was granted refugee status, and five others received subsidiary protection, according to Amnesty International. Some Syrians trying to enter Greece told Amnesty International and International Catholic Migration Commission, that Greek authorities urged them to seek asylum in Turkey instead.¹³² Similar concerns were voiced after a PACE delegation visit. PACE Rapporteur Tineke Strik condemned the fact that Syrians, who are being subjected to detention upon arrival in Greece, are in practice denied access to the asylum procedure due to the lack of legal assistance, interpretation or information about their situation.¹³³ PACE however recognized Greece's efforts and noted that an honest and open evaluation would come to the conclusion that Greece currently does not have the capacity, the expertise, the resources or the political and social stability to deal with the scale of problems it is facing. PACE called on Member States of the Council of Europe to substantially increase their assistance to Greece, Turkey and other front-line countries to ensure that they have a realistic possibility of achieving what is expected of them.¹³⁴

From April 2011 to October 2012, 15,000 Syrians applied for asylum in Germany and Sweden.¹³⁵

Germany 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.¹³⁶ Germany has agreed to accept 300 refugees a year between 2012 and 2014.¹³⁷ 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 UN, the EU and refugee aid groups.¹³⁸ Previously, the Government announced that it has no intention to receive refugees.¹³⁹ In 2011, Germany received on average 220 monthly asylum requests from Syrians, for this year (until August 2012) the average is 370, and from January 2011 to August 2012, 5,597 Syrians applied.¹⁴⁰

Sweden and Norway grant automatic asylum to Syrians.¹⁴¹ Sweden received nearly 8,000 Syrians in 2012, and expects more than twice as many this year. The Migration Board recruited 400 employees last year to manage the applicants. Sweden already had a large

Syrian community but officials say the flow would be smaller and more manageable if other EU countries adopted similar asylum policies. Despite the apartments designated for asylum seekers, the board is now sending refugees to campgrounds and hostels.¹⁴² The number of asylum seekers from Syria to Norway was 198 in 2011 and 327 in 2012.¹⁴³

Cyprus has drawn up plans in case of a massive flow of up to 200,000 refugees from the fighting in Syria,¹⁴⁴ however this would represent one fourth of the country and therefore the authorities would not be able to welcome all of them. According to a joint statement from a number of NGOs, Cyprus reportedly refused to examine subsequent asylum applications from Syrians who wanted their claims re-examined.¹⁴⁵ Officials deny this fact and underline that rejected asylum applications can be appealed before the courts requiring authorities to re-examine all claims. They also emphasize that this is a case-by-case issue.¹⁴⁶

From January to July 2012, Belgium received 796 asylum requests.¹⁴⁷ As of August, 77 were accepted (4.7 per cent of the total requests). Belgium would grant refugee status or subsidiary protection status in the majority of cases.¹⁴⁸ 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.¹⁴⁹ According to the Belgian Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, of the 480 cases of Syrian asylum seekers resolved in 2012, 98 received refugee status and 382 were granted subsidiary protection. UNHCR asked to suspend all returns to Syria, even asylum seekers who would ultimately not be to protection in Belgium.¹⁵⁰

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.¹⁵¹ In 2012, up to 650 students of Syrian nationality, pursuing their higher education in the UK ran the risk of being expelled and deported to Syria after the funding of their studies was suspended or ceased as a result of the civil war. There has been a high profile case of a Syrian national scheduled to be sent back to Damascus in October. The student's appeal for asylum in the UK was rejected. On 11 October, he was detained as he tried to register his presence with the British Home Office. Two days before his scheduled departure the British High Court granted an injunction allowing him to stay in a UK detention centre.¹⁵² An on-line petition, "Stop UK universities from expelling Syrian students!" launched on 10 January 2013, had collected more than 40 thousand signatures by the end of the month.¹⁵³

In October 2012, the Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi warned of startling signs of human trafficking among the Syrian refugees and recalled that watercrafts carrying Syrians have recently reached the Italian coasts.¹⁵⁴ A first significant event in this regard occurred in early August, when 160 migrants fleeing Syria disembarked near the Southern Italian town of Crotone.¹⁵⁵ 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 donated a field hospital to the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan which can shelter more than 130 patients per day.¹⁵⁶ The Italian Government is also supplying emergency funds and operating special

humanitarian flights. As of December 2012, these initiatives brought Italy's contribution in solving the regional crisis to the amount of USD 10 million.¹⁵⁷

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 customs officers were not helpful with the refugees. The commission described 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.¹⁵⁸ 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.¹⁵⁹ The year 2012 saw 255 asylum applications by Syrian citizens, with the Spanish asylum authorities starting to take decision on these applications in November 2012. Spain can grant either a subsidiary protection status or refugee convention status. Asylum-seekers, refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries are entitled to integration assistance programmes by the Spanish Ministry for Employment and Social Security. However, due to Spain's 26 per cent unemployment rate, it is particularly difficult for refugees and asylum-seekers to find jobs and integrate in the Spanish society. Since 26 September 2011, Syrians were required transit visas if they stopped on Spanish territory. These visas could only be obtained through the Syrian authorities so many asylum-seekers had to seek forged passports that made them vulnerable to human trafficking.¹⁶⁰ The situation changed after the Spanish Embassy in Damascus closed. According to the website of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, updated on 20 March 2012, Syrians are no longer required to obtain a transit visa to fly to Spain.¹⁶¹

According to the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, 635 Syrians applied for asylum in 2012. French authorities gave protection to 92 per cent of the applicants, two-thirds with asylum and one-third with subsidiary protection. France granted asylum to 100 Syrians in 2011.¹⁶² In February 2013, France reintroduced temporarily the airport transit visa for Syrian citizens, to fight against "misuse of procedure," said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Officials stressed that with this system, Syrians can stay in the international area of an airport while waiting for a connecting flight and they added that refugees have access to all French embassies and consulates. This decision has been criticized by many NGOs as a hindrance to the right to seek asylum, underlining that Syrians are most likely not aware of this change.¹⁶³ The authorities indicated that the reintroduction of this visa does not preclude seeking asylum in France.¹⁶⁴ The overall aid from France to the Syrian people reached more than USD 17 million in 2012.¹⁶⁵

According to the latest information from the Danish Immigration Service, in 2012, there were 907 asylum seekers from Syria in Denmark. In 2011, the number was 483.¹⁶⁶

In 2012, there were 922 applications in Austria by Syrian nationals (422 in 2011).¹⁶⁷

Monaco has provided financial resources for Syrian refugees to the UNHCR and several NGOs.¹⁶⁸

As of November 2012, there were around 200 Syrian refugees in Bulgaria seeking protection. Bulgarian authorities revealed that most of the migrants attempting to illegally

cross the Bulgarian-Turkish border are Syrians. Bulgaria's Interior Minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov has explained that the migrant pressure on Bulgaria's south eastern border has increased by 50 per cent in September - October.¹⁶⁹ 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.¹⁷⁰ Milen Penev, deputy director of the Border Police General Directorate, said he expects that the flow of Syrian migrants will continue at least until the end of the conflict. Data by the Bulgarian border police shows that each day at least two people try to illegally cross the Bulgarian border, leading to the arrest of more than 350 Syrian citizens.¹⁷¹ Between April and September 2012, Bulgaria received 133 applications for asylum.



Source: d-maps.com

Asked about Bulgaria's capacity to host foreigners, Kazakov replied that, as of October, the State Agency was able to shelter 260 more people. He also said that an emergency situation would be declared in case more than 500 immigrants enter the country in a single day.¹⁷² In response to an appeal by the UNHCR, Bulgaria has allocated around USD 134,000 for emergency humanitarian aid for Syrian refugees.¹⁷³ Bulgaria is also able to host a temporary shelter for Syrian refugees on the border with Turkey in the town of Harmanli. According to the Government, it will be able to host around 1,000 people (including non-Syrians).¹⁷⁴ Even though the refugee centre is to open only in case of a major refugee or immigration wave, Harmanli citizens and the local authorities opposed the establishment of such a camp for immigrants in the town centre. 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.¹⁷⁵ Police presence along the border has been enhanced in order to prevent trespassers from Turkey. However, according to local UNHCR press officer Boris Cheshirkov, Bulgaria is still far from witnessing a wave of refugees,¹⁷⁶ a view shared by the local migrant housing officer.¹⁷⁷

Kosovo is also facing difficulties processing asylum-seekers, a new issue for Kosovo, which does not have adequate reception and protection instruments.¹⁷⁸ 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.¹⁷⁹ 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.¹⁸⁰ However, Kosovo Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj, has met members of the Syrian opposition.¹⁸¹ Kosovo is not currently recognized by Syria. The OSCE is officially neutral regarding the status of Kosovo.

5. Impact in other OSCE Participating States

5.1. Albania

Albania had 24 asylum-seekers in its territory as of January 2012. However, there is a relatively important community of some 20,000 Albanian citizens originally from Syria. Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha promised to deliver aid to the refugee camps.¹⁸² Albania could manage the arrival of refugees in its territory, if it receives needed support. The country has experience dealing with large numbers of refugees arriving to its territory. In 1999, during the Kosovo crisis, 465,000 refugees fled to Albania.¹⁸³

5.2. 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 100,000 ethnic Armenians estimated to be residing in Syria, with roughly 80,000 concentrated in Aleppo.¹⁸⁴ According to Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan, an estimated 7,000 Syrian-Armenian refugees have arrived in Armenia since the start of the conflict.¹⁸⁵ The Armenian Government has been offering visas upon arrival, recognizing Syrian driving licenses, expediting passports as part of a dual citizenship law and assisting with housing refugees who do not have relatives in Armenia.¹⁸⁶ 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.¹⁸⁷

In recent months, 29 refugee families, roughly 90 people, have resettled in the Kashatagh district. Internationally, this area is known as Lachin and serves as a land bridge between the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.¹⁸⁸ Robert Matevosian, Head of the *de facto* district government's Resettlement Department said many Syrian-Armenians arriving in Yerevan have contacted the department about relocating to the area. Newly arriving families receive housing and a plot of land.¹⁸⁹

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 to assist refugees resettling in Armenia.¹⁹⁰

5.3. 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.¹⁹¹ In 2011, Bosnia and Herzegovina received two requests for asylum from Syrian nationals. Their cases were still pending the same year.¹⁹² 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.¹⁹³ In 2012, there were 35 asylum-seeker applications by Syrian nationals, with 19 applicants granted subsidiary protection. One application was rejected, six were closed and 26 cases were still pending at the end of 2012. Subsidiary protection status entitles people to housing, healthcare, social welfare, education and work under the same conditions as nationals. This status is granted for a period of one year with a possible extension.¹⁹⁴

5.4. Canada

In 2012, the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board received 350 asylum applications. This compares to 182 in all of 2011, 127 in all of 2010, 84 in 2009, 70 in 2008 and 68 in 2007. Syrian-Canadians are asking the Canadian government to open its 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.¹⁹⁵ Canadian Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney, who paid a visit to Syrians living in refugee camps in Turkey, has stated that his country would resettle up to 5,000 mostly Iraqi and Iranian refugees currently living in Turkey by 2018. The statement added that, to date, some 12,000 Iraqi refugees have been resettled in Canada, mostly out of Syria.¹⁹⁶ To date, Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency, has provided \$48.5 million in humanitarian assistance to address the needs of those affected by the crisis, including those who have fled to the neighbourhood countries of Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt.¹⁹⁷



*Refugee families transported to Lebanon.
Photo by UNHCR*

5.5. 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 procedure and ensure refugee access to social and economic rights compatible with international standards and EU accession requirements.¹⁹⁸ The Government did not publish numbers of Syrian asylum-seekers in 2012, and the number of positive or negative responses to applications is unknown, due to the high number of asylum-seekers who leave the country within weeks of filing their application.¹⁹⁹

5.6. Georgia

Georgia 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.²⁰⁰ 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, but rather categorize them as people who wish to return to their “historical homeland”.

5.7. Montenegro

Montenegro’s national asylum practices still need improvement, according to the UNCHR. In 2011, one Syrian national sought asylum, but was rejected.²⁰¹ In 2012, according to the UNHCR office in Montenegro, 19 Syrian nationals applied for asylum. Eleven applicants left Montenegro before their procedures were completed. The remaining eight applicants were rejected and left Montenegro.²⁰²

5.8. Russian Federation

The Russian Federation's reception of Syrian refugees is concentrated in the North Caucasus region. In particular, members of the Circassian community, refugees of the Caucasus war of the 19th century who fled to Syria, often 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.²⁰³ There are 250,000 families in Syria with Russian passports with potential to become refugees.²⁰⁴

In the course of a humanitarian operation initiated by Russia, 77 Russian citizens including 27 children returned to Moscow from Beirut in January 2013, after travelling from Syria by road.²⁰⁵ Another two previously, workers with the Hmisho Steel Company, detained as hostages since December by rebels were released.²⁰⁶ Eighty Syrians have been recently enrolled into the Kabardino-Balkar University by the university administration.²⁰⁷ According to Russian President, Russia is ready to provide Syrian refugees in Lebanon – “tents, medicines and humanitarian aid”. Also President Putin gave his consent to host an international conference on Syrian refugee issues.²⁰⁸

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.²⁰⁹

5.9. Serbia

Serbia has limited budgetary resources to hand refugees and lacks the overall capacity to receive them due to insufficient staff and accommodations. The UNHCR covers expenses of essential services for interpretation and legal advice. Over the course of 2011 and 2012 relevant Serbian authorities financed the projects of local NGOs whose goal was to provide free legal assistance and translation services to asylum seekers. UNHCR with the assistance of the Danish Refugee Council provides support in the acquisition of some specific medications, whereas local primary health facilities provide basic health services to asylum-seekers in accordance with the Rules of Procedure prepared by the Serbian Ministry of Health.²¹⁰ There are two asylum centers in Serbia (Banja Koviljača 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. However, no legal provision prevents the asylum-seekers accommodated outside Asylum Centers to enter the procedure of registration. The Asylum Office of Serbia has yet to be officially established and is currently part of the Border Police Directorate.

In 2011, Serbia did not have any asylum applications from the Syrian nationals. However, 20 intentions to seek asylum have been registered, since these are two different categories, according to the national legislation. In 2012 Serbia had 287 intentions to seek asylum by the Syrian nationals and eight asylum applications. In December 2012 there were 79 intentions and 3 applications.²¹¹ 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.²¹²

5.10. Switzerland

A family of 36 Syrians (17 adults and 19 children) have arrived in Switzerland in September as part of a United Nations resettlement programme in the aftermath of the unrest in their homeland.²¹³ The applications from about 40 refugees living in Syria are currently under consideration. During the first six months of 2012, 548 Syrians applied for asylum. The number of Syrian refugees in Switzerland in 2012 is estimated at 1,665, (pending applications) with an average of 102 arriving monthly versus 69 in 2011. Until the end of 2012, Switzerland had allocated USD 22 million for the humanitarian assistance to the people affected by this crisis in Syria itself as well as those fleeing their home to the neighbouring countries. For 2013, Switzerland has allocated an additional USD 11 million. Switzerland is ready to allocate further resources. Switzerland focuses its efforts on the protection and assistance of the affected population in Syria as well as in the neighbouring countries by way of the following three action lines: Financial and in-kind contributions to humanitarian actors (ICRC, UN, International NGOs, local charities); direct bilateral actions; deployment of technical experts from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit to UN partners (secondments).²¹⁴

A Swiss member of the UNHCR called on Switzerland to accept more refugees, especially to avoid illegal immigration.²¹⁵

5.11. Ukraine

Ukraine, the 2013 OSCE Chair-in-Office, 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 refugee law’s protection clause with EU standards.²¹⁶ 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.²¹⁷

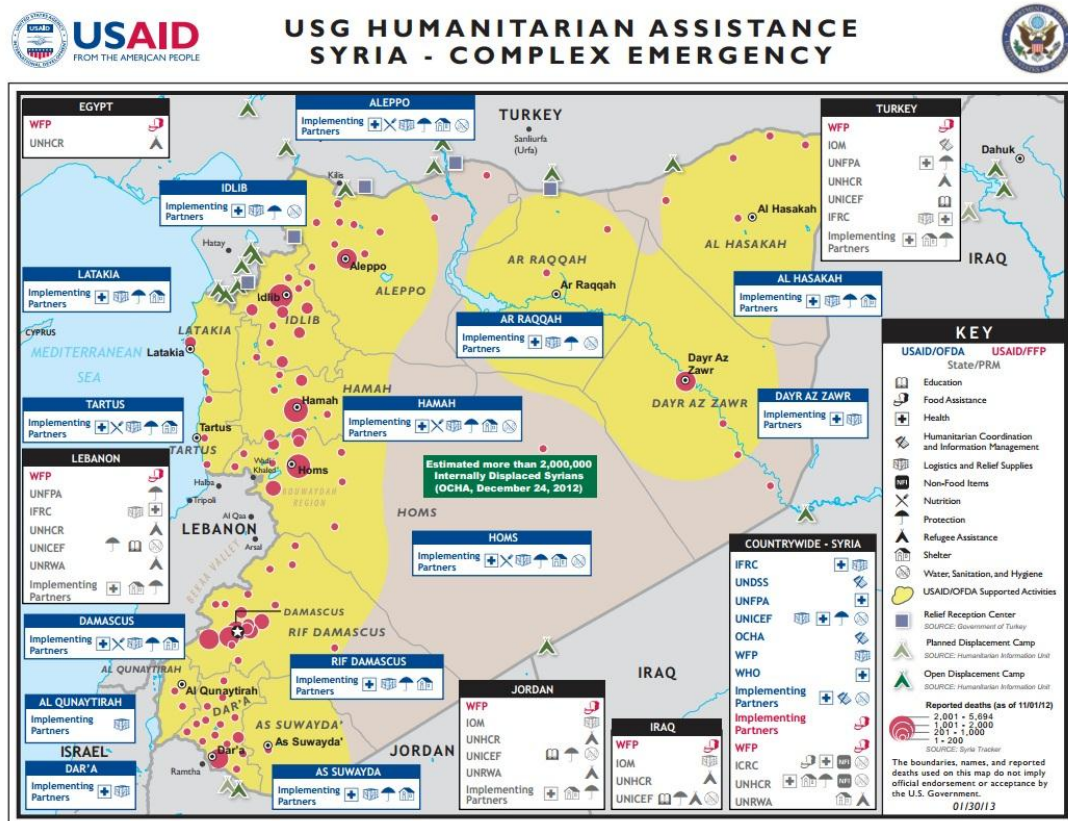
According to the Ukrainian News agency, Ukraine has transferred about USD 122,000 of humanitarian aid to a special UN account for Syrian refugees.²¹⁸ This move was highly commended by the UNHCR as it marked Ukraine’s first time as an international donor.²¹⁹

5.12. United States of America

The United States is the largest single donor to the humanitarian relief effort in and around Syria, contributing more than USD 365 million to aid refugees.

The US Government has also enacted visa provisions to assist refugees fleeing the conflict. On 23 March 2012, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano issued

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Syrian nationals who are currently present in the United States.²²⁰ 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.²²¹ 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.



Source: USAID, These figures are current as of January 30, 2013

The U.S. State Department contributed USD 130 million to international organizations that are on the ground in Syria and refugee-receiving countries.²²² The primary recipients of the funds are the World Food Programme and UNHCR. Although funds are also being appropriated to NGOs, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), the UNRWA, UNICEF, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the UN Department of Safety and Security for support of humanitarian operations.²²³

Humanitarian Funding to Syria Humanitarian Response in FY 12 and FY 13

USAID/OFDA	USD 76,434,965
USAID/FFP	USD 116,018,000
State/PRM	USD 172,760,000
Total USG Assistance to the Syria Humanitarian Response	USD 365,212,965

Source: USAID, These figures are current as of January 30, 2013

On 29 January 2013, President Obama announced an additional USD 155 million in humanitarian assistance to help those affected by the conflict.²²⁴ This includes USD 42.8 million to NGOs to provide additional winter relief supplies, nutrition and protection support, health care, shelter assistance, and emergency food assistance. The remaining USD 112.2 million will be allocated to UN agencies and international organizations.²²⁵

6. Policy Recommendations

The extent to which each country is affected by the presence of refugees is greatly attributed to its geographical proximity to the ongoing conflict.²²⁶ 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. This crisis underscores the interconnectedness of security and human rights at the core of OSCE principles.

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.²²⁷ The absence of existing schemes, infrastructure and governmental support is quite evident in the current refugee situation.

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 makes 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 proven to be 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

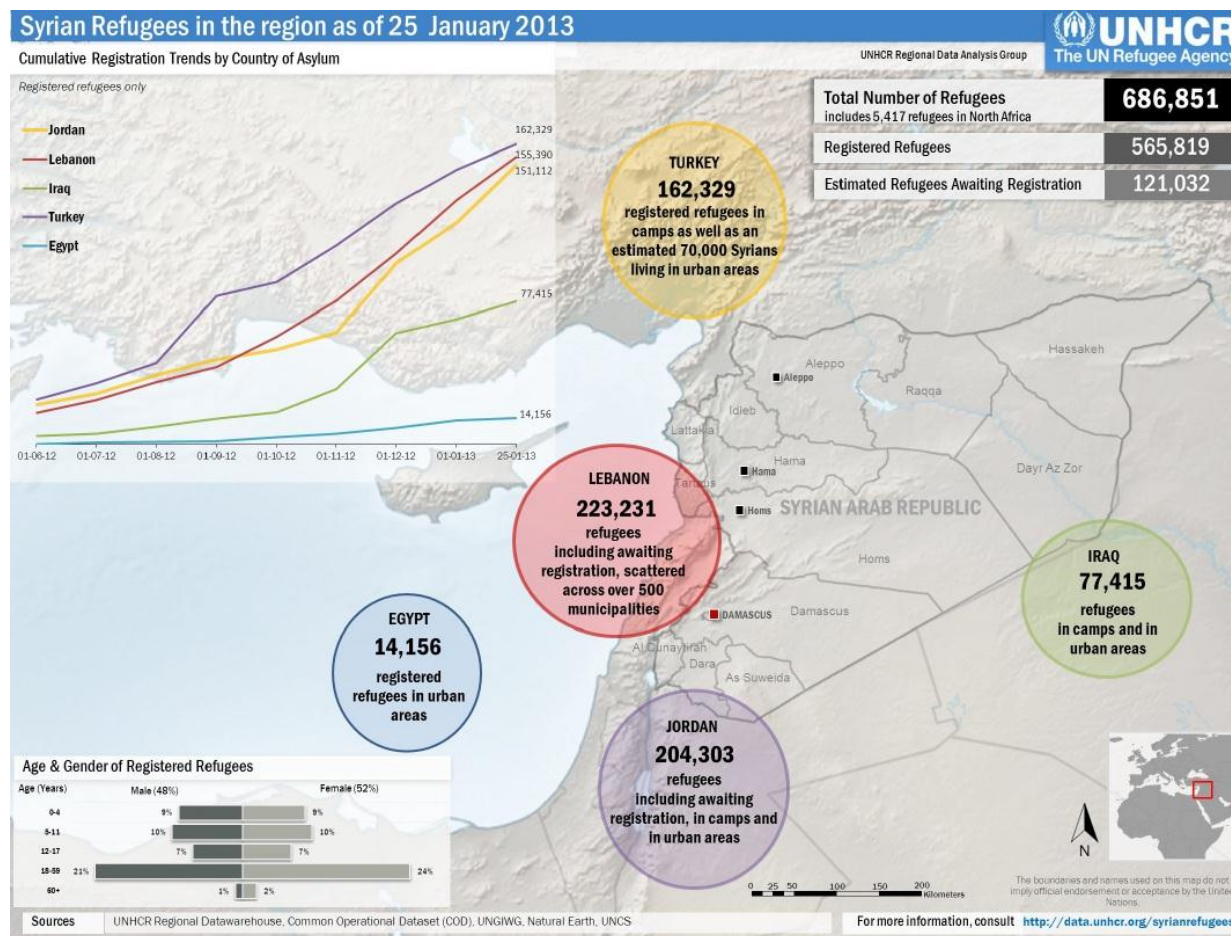
Oslo Declaration 2010 is key. Special attention should be given to the protection of vulnerable members of society, in particular women and children.

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 fulfilment 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.

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.

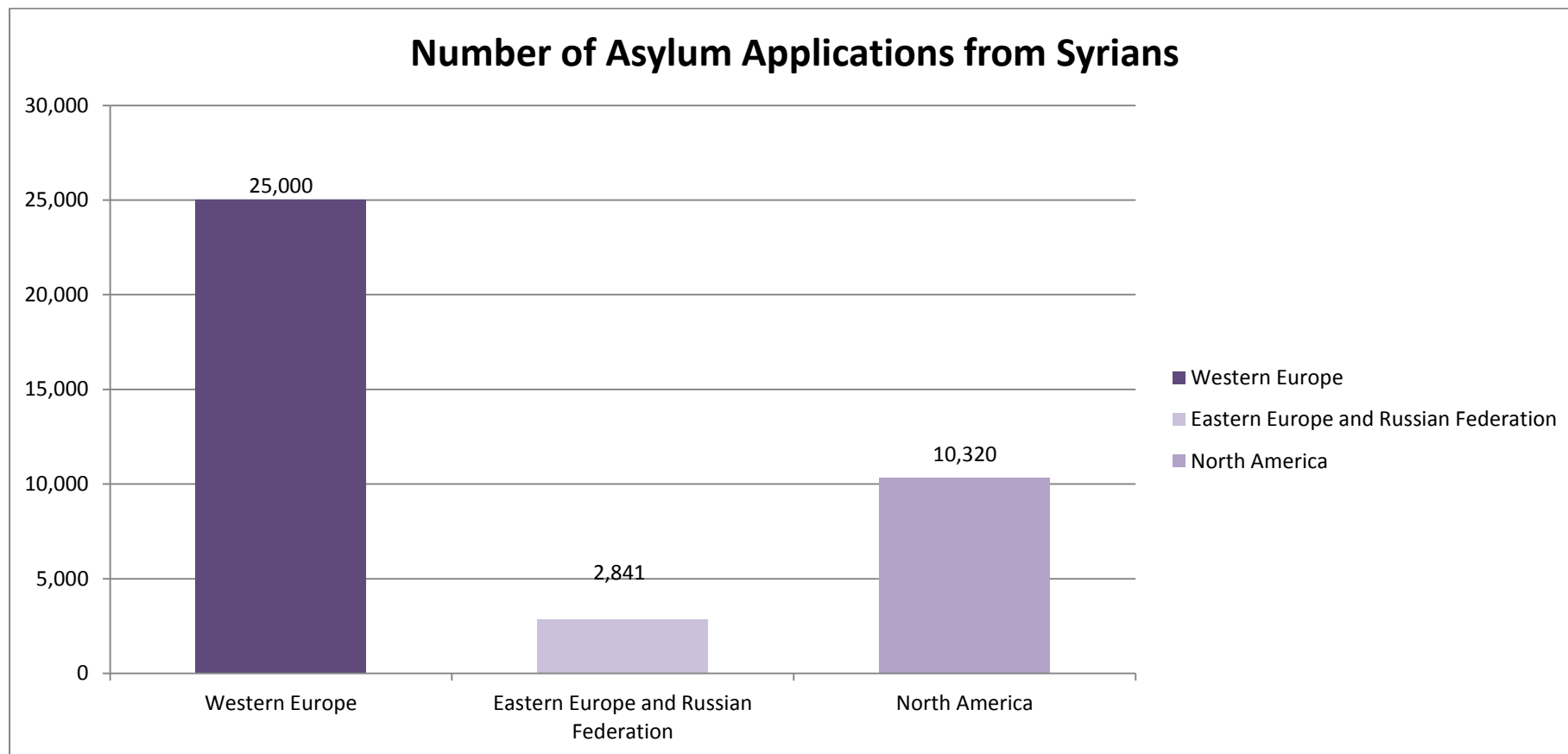
Annexes

1. Refugee Population Updates as of 25 January 2013



Source: UNHCR

2. Number of Asylum Applications from Syrians



Source: UNHCR and individual governments, as of January 2013

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- ¹ New York Times “Syria” 6 November 2012, <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/syria/index.html> (accessed 7 November 2012).
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- ⁹ 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).
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- ¹¹ BBC, “Syria crisis: Brahimi warns horror is ‘unprecedented’”, 30 January 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-21255536> (accessed on 30 January 2013).
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- ¹³ United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Demographic Data of Registered Population”, 30 January 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, (Accessed on 1 February 2013).
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OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

International Secretariat

Tordenskjoldsgade 1

1055 Copenhagen K

Denmark

Telephone: +45 33 37 80 40

Telefax: +45 33 37 80 30

E-mail: osce@oscepa.dk

www.oscepa.org