

## The effects of civil war in Syria and Turkey's position regarding human security

*Füsum Özerdem, Muğla Sıti Koçman University*

**Abstract:** *Now in its fifth year, the civil war in Syria has created one of the world's largest humanitarian and security crises. The crisis in itself contains the historical background to the situation of Syrian refugees. While the issue is subject to another discussion, it is important to refer to the Muslim refugee problem for a better understanding of today's situation. Approaches to the Muslim refugee crisis differ considerably throughout the world. Probably the most striking point is that while the West has sheltered Muslims, providing them with homes and jobs, the neighbouring countries sharing the same religion have ignored the Muslim population and done nothing. This is an important criticism directed at fellow Arabs who have always blamed the West for the refugee crisis and will be addressed in the article in detail. The number of Syrians seeking refuge in Turkey is currently close to 2 million. Turkey, implementing an "open door" policy to every Syrian crossing the border and issuing "temporary protection" status, has spent 5 billion dollars on the refugee crisis up to November 2014. For the Syrians in Turkey, the possibility of returning to their own country has been gradually decreasing due to the escalation of the civil war. The situation revealing the severity of the situation of Syrian asylum seekers points out that the issue has evolved into a complex problem that requires a multi-dimensional analysis in all its humanitarian, legal, political, social and financial aspects. This article is written mainly based on online research and a deep assessment of reports prepared by GOs, NGOs, the UN and other international agencies and various news pieces and articles. The policy of the Turkish Government has also been closely analysed by including the discourse of President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in relation to the civil war that has evolved into a global refugee and human security crisis demanding urgent and coordinated humanitarian actions, apart from the military and political response. This article tries to explain Syrian asylum seekers' position in Turkey and Turkey's position from the perspective of human security and the rest of the world's perception.*

**Keywords:** *Civil war in Syria, human security, Turkey, Western States.*

**Sommario:** *Nel suo quinto anno, la guerra civile in Siria ha creato una delle crisi umanitarie e di sicurezza più grande nel mondo. La crisi in sé contiene uno storico background alla situazione dei rifugiati siriani. Mentre la questione è soggetta a un'altra discussione, è importante riferirsi al problema del rifugiato musulmano per meglio capire la situazione attuale. Gli approcci alla crisi del rifugiato musulmano differiscono considerevolmente per tutto il mondo. Probabilmente il punto che colpisce di più è che, mentre l'Occidente ha protetto i musulmani fornendo ad essi casa e lavoro, i paesi vicini che condividono la stessa religione hanno ignorato la popolazione musulmana e non hanno fatto niente. Questa è un'importante critica diretta ai compagni arabi che hanno sempre incolpato l'Occidente della crisi dei rifugiati, e ciò è approfondito in dettaglio nell'articolo. Il numero dei siriani che hanno cercato rifugio in Turchia è attualmente vicino ai 2 milioni. La Turchia, mettendo in pratica la politica della "porta aperta" a ogni siriano che attraversa il confine e al quale attribuisce lo status di "temporanea protezione", ha speso 5 miliardi di dollari per la crisi dei rifugiati fino al novembre 2014. Per i siriani in Turchia, la possibilità di ritornare nel proprio paese è stata progressivamente in diminuzione a causa dell'intensificazione della guerra civile. La situazione che rivela la gravità della situazione dei siriani che ricercano asilo indica che la questione è evoluta in un problema complesso che richiede un'analisi multidimensionale in tutti i suoi aspetti umanitari, legali, politici, sociali e finanziari. Questo articolo è scritto principalmente basandosi su una ricerca online e un'approfondita valutazione dei reports preparati dalle organizzazioni governative (GOs), dalle organizzazioni non governative (NGOs), dalle agenzie dell'ONU e di altre agenzie internazionali e varie notizie e articoli. La politica del governo turco è stata analizzata includendovi il discorso del presidente della Repubblica di Turchia, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, relativamente alla guerra civile che è sviluppata in una crisi globale del rifugiato e della sicurezza, richiedente azioni umanitarie urgenti e coordinate, oltreché risposte militari e politiche. L'articolo spiega la posizione dei siriani che cercano asilo in Turchia e la posizione della Turchia dalla prospettive della sicurezza umana e della percezione del mondo.*

**Parole chiave:** *Guerra civile in Siria, sicurezza umana, Turchia, stati occidentali.*

## General perspective

The civil war in Syria in the last five years has created one of the biggest humanitarian and security crises in the world. Turkey's "Syrian refugee"<sup>1</sup> problem, which began with 252 people on 29th April 2011, has since acquired a new degree of magnitude with nearly 2 million Syrians, including 200,000 people who have migrated to Turkey from Kobani since that date. Turkey has adopted an "open door" policy to all Syrians crossing the border and given them "temporary protection" status; up to November 2014, Turkey has spent 5 billion dollars on the refugee crisis. For Syrian asylum seekers in Turkey, the possibility of returning to their own country has been increasingly remote because of the intensification of the civil war. The gravity of the situation of Syrian asylum seekers shows that the situation has evolved into a complex problem that requires a multi-dimensional analysis in all its humanitarian, legal, political, social and financial aspects.

Because of the civil war 11 million people out of 23 million in the country are now in need of humanitarian aid; 7 million people are internally displaced in the country; more than 3 million Syrian asylum seekers have taken refuge in neighboring countries; the economic devastation in the country has reached 150 billion dollars. The civil war and mass migration going on since March 2011 has affected domestic policies and economic and social dynamics of the countries in the region, Turkey in particular. Syrian asylum seekers, whose numbers have reached nearly 4 million, are one of the most important results of the war. This number increases by 100,000 on average every month<sup>2</sup>.

According to the latest data of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) dated November 2014, Turkey is the neighbouring country where the second largest number of registered Syrian citizens have taken refuge (Table 1). Today Turkey alone hosts more than half of the 3 million asylum seekers who have fled Syria. Nearly 2 million refugees more

---

1 The reason the term "refugee" or "refugee crisis" has been used in quotation marks is that the author stands apart from using the term itself although it is the common usage. The author prefers "asylum seeker" instead of the term refugee for Syrians escaping from the civil war because of the geographic limitation put forward by Turkey's objections to the UN Geneva Convention and permanent status of the term refugee.

2 Birleşmiş Milletler Yüksek Komiserliği, <http://www.unher.org.tr>, Accessed: 3.08.2015.

might have to take refuge in Turkey in the event of a new migration wave from Aleppo.

*Tab. 1. The number of Syrian asylum seekers who took refuge in neighbouring countries<sup>3</sup>*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Syrian Asylum Seeker Number</b>
Lebanon	1.132.601
Turkey	1.065.902
Jordan	618.508
Iraq	223.923
Egypt	140.289

Source: Data elaborated by the author.

Implementing an “open door” policy from the beginning of the crisis, Turkey allowed in all of the Syrian citizens who wanted to cross the border<sup>4</sup>. Praise in the national and international press for the refugee camps built in the cities near the border played an encouraging role. As a result of these, the number of Syrian asylum seekers has increased incrementally day by day. Because of the worsening civil war, the number of asylum seekers who take refuge in Turkey increases by 7 thousand on average per day. Since November 2014, it is thought that the number of Syrian asylum seekers in Turkey is around 1,600,000. The fact that 53 percent of this number is Syrians under the age of 18 reveals the seriousness of the situation. Nearly 220,000 of the Syrians who took refuge in Turkey live in comfortable conditions in 22 camps, consisting of 16 tent cities and six container camps, built in 10 cities. The remainder of the people, more than one million, struggle for life in different cities dispersed on their own.

<sup>3</sup> Birleşmiş Milletler Mülteci Yüksek Komiserliği, Accessed: 11. 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Dışişleri Bakanlığı, *Türkiye-Suriye siyasi ilişkileri*, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-suriyesiyasi-iliskileri-.tr.mfa>, Accessed: 3 Ağustos 2014.

Today, there are only 9 cities in Turkey where there are no Syrian people<sup>5</sup>. The Syrians who are outside the camps manage by working at temporary jobs, begging in the streets or by getting social aid. The city where most of the Syrians live in Turkey is Istanbul; Gaziantep, with 200,000 people, follows Istanbul, which hosts nearly 330,000 people. The number of Syrians living in Istanbul alone is close to that of Saryyer district, whose population is 330,000<sup>6</sup>.

### **“Syrian Asylum Seekers” under temporary protection in Turkey**

The legal status of Syrian asylum seekers who took refuge in Turkey is one of the most controversial aspects of the issue. The Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees dated 1951 forms the basis of refugee legislation in Turkey. Adhering to this agreement with “geographical limitation”, Turkey gives refugee status only to people who are coming from Europe to Turkey. People who come from outside Europe can take refuge temporarily and they are given “asylum seeker” status. For this reason, Syrians who flee to Turkey do not have the status of “refugee” but the status of “asylum seeker”. Because “asylum seeker” status does not involve some of the principal rights of “refugee” status, Turkey put into effect some special measures by making regulations and issuing notices in favour of Syrians.

Turkey provides “temporary protection” to Syrians to whom “asylum seeker” status is given in accordance with the 1994 Migration and Asylum Regulation. Syrian asylum seekers who are under temporary protection have the legal permission “to stay in Turkey for a reasonable time” and “the temporary asylum right until being accepted by a third country as a refugee”. Within the framework of the “open door” policy implemented by Turkey, the “temporary protection” regime applied to all accepted Syrian asylum seekers, includ-

---

5 The New York Times, *How to build a perfect refugee camp*, February 13 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/16/magazine/how-to-build-a-perfect-refugee-camp.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/16/magazine/how-to-build-a-perfect-refugee-camp.html?_r=0)

6 Habertürk, *İstanbul'da Saryyer nüfusu kadar Suriyeli yaşıyor*, <http://m.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/975425-istanbulda-sariyer-nufusu-kadar-suriyeliyasiyor>. Accessed: 01.08.2014.

ing those who do not have passports, is evaluated according to international law and humanitarian responsibilities by international organisations<sup>7</sup>.

The Syrian case has to be treated as a serious situation called flight or forced displacement, rather than mass migration; the latter may give a mild impression of the serious societal and regional crisis. With the assumption that Syrian refugees will return to their country at the end of civil war, Turkey formed the policy towards Syrian refugees with the determination that the mass migration/forced migration is a temporary situation. For this reason, Syrian refugees were called “our guests” in official discourse. The “temporary asylum regime” applied to Syrian asylum seekers was criticised a lot on the grounds that Syrian people’s legal status is not clear.

With the deepening of Syrian civil war in 2014 and the clear emergence of the fact that most of the asylum seekers are permanent, Turkey changed its policy. The first positive step was that Law on Foreigners and International Protection came into effect in April 2014. The law included some articles that would clarify the legal status of refugees in Turkey. Later, the Temporary Protection Directive was published in October 2014. The directive regulates the temporary protection regime applied to Syrians given “temporary protection status” in Turkey. The legal status, rights and social assistance for Syrian refugees were made clear and finalised<sup>8</sup>.

Syrians are called “people who are temporarily protected” in the Temporary Protection Directive. According to the Directive, a “temporary protection identity card” is given to Syrians who are “protected temporarily” and these people are provided with health, education, access to the labour market, social assistance and translation services. One of the most important regulations in this context is that people who have this identity card can have work permits for certain lines of business. Implementing the regulation precisely is

---

7 Birleşmiş Milletler Yüksek Komiserliği, *Sıkça sorulan sorular Türkiye’deki Suriyeli mülteciler hakkında sık sorulan sorular*, [http://www.unhcr.org.tr/uploads/root/faq\\_-\\_turkish\\_+90.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org.tr/uploads/root/faq_-_turkish_+90.pdf), Accessed: 3.05.2016.

8 Geçici Koruma Yönetmeliği, 22 Ekim 2014. <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2014/10/20141022-15-1.pdf>.

of vital importance both for protecting the rights of refugees and for public officials to be able to solve refugees' problems more effectively<sup>9</sup>.

The social aspect of "Syrian refugees" issue is one of the most important agenda topics of recent months. The news about negative reactions towards "refugees" in some cities resulted in comments about Syrians no longer being seen as welcome "guests"<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, recent comprehensive survey shows that society's level of acceptance of Syrians is high. 72.2 percent of participants in the survey defined Syrians as "people running away from oppression", "our guests in Turkey", "our religious fellows". It shows that, contrary to what is believed, social acceptance regarding Syrians in Turkey is fairly high<sup>11</sup>.

Turkey's meeting all kinds of needs of Syrians under "temporary protection" makes the economic aspect of this situation a current issue. The amount of aid given to Syrian asylum seekers from April 2011 to November 2014 has reached 5 billion dollars. When the aid given by Kızılay (the Red Crescent) to Syrian asylum seekers beyond border areas is added to this amount, Turkey's total expenditure for Syrians reaches very large sums. However, there is no thoroughgoing research on the heavy burden of more than a million Syrians living outside the camps in cities on the government budget.

In an assessment of "Syrian refugees" in Turkey, the security issue should not be neglected. The explosion at the Cilvegözü border crossing on 11 February 2013 and more than 50 people who lost their lives in Reyhanlı on 11 May 2013 point to the threat for border and internal security posed by illegal groups coming with refugees from Syria to Turkey. The Future of Syrian Refugees: An important issue pointed out by Turkey's Future Citizens is the fact that Turkey is becoming an "immigration country". Because of its geographical location, Turkey has experienced a lot of mass migration movements and

9 Uluslararası Af Örgütü, *Hayatta kalma mücadelesi: Türkiye'deki Suriye'den gelen mülteciler*, <http://amnesty.org.tr/uploads/Docs/hayattakalma-mucadelesi-turkiye'deki-suriye'den-gelenmülteciler720.pdf>, Accessed: 19.11.2015.

10 Euronews, *Suriyeli mülteciler Türkiye'ye ağır gelmeye başladı*, <http://tr.euronews.com/2014/08/02/suriyelimülteciler-turkiye-ye-agir-gelmeye-basladi>, Accessed: 02.08.2015.

11 Hacettepe Üniversitesi Göç ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Merkezi, *Türkiye'deki Suriyeliler: Toplumsal Kabul ve Uyum Araştırması*, <http://www.hugo.hacettepe.edu.tr/TurkiyedekiSuriyeliler-ToplumsalKabulveUyumHUGO.pdf>, Accessed: 20.11.2015.

in recent years it has become the “target country”, leaving its situation as a “transit country” behind. Since the 1980s, Turkey is not only an emigrant country but also an immigrant-receiving country<sup>12</sup>. In this context, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection that came into effect recently includes some articles pointing out that immigrants might become permanent residents and Turkey is becoming an “immigrant-receiving country”<sup>13</sup>.

It is really hard to foresee when the Syrian crisis, deepened by the involvement of extremists, will come to an end and the length of time that Syrians will stay in Turkey. This uncertainty makes it difficult to draw up a legal and political framework for the “Syrian refugee” problem<sup>14</sup>. In several research projects conducted by national and international organisations on Syrian asylum seekers, solutions are postulated on the assumption that most of the Syrians will probably stay in Turkey in the foreseeable future. In the research, which argues that short-term policies are not the solution for the refugee problem, the need for “making institutional regulations towards the integration of refugees” is pointed out<sup>15</sup>. In a 2013 Progress Report prepared by the EU, it was stated that there is not “a comprehensive national strategy” towards the needs of “Syrian refugees”<sup>16</sup>.

Initially approaching the Syrian refugee issue as a temporary situation, Turkey has started to create new policies by accepting that the refugees are permanent residents as a result of the civil war, now in its 5th year. Some important regulations have been introduced to integrate Syrian asylum seekers into society in recent months. With this aim, measures have been imple-

---

12 İçişleri Bakanlığı Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, [http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik3/turkiyenin-duzen-sizgocle-mucadelesi\\_409\\_422\\_424](http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik3/turkiyenin-duzen-sizgocle-mucadelesi_409_422_424).

13 İçduydu, *Dış politika Suriye meselesinde baştan beri belirleyici roldeydi ancak takıldığı yer sosyal coğrafya oldu, Analist*, 2013 Mart, pp. 41.

14 AFAD, *Suriye’den Türkiye’ye nüfus hareketleri: kardeş topraklarındaki misafirlik*, <https://www.afad.gov.tr/Dokuman/TR/79-20140529153928-suriye'den-turkiye'ye-nufushareketleri,-kardes-topraklarındaki-misafirlik,-2014.pdf>, pp. 147-148, Accessed: 3.08.2015.

15 Suna Gülfer İhlamur-Öner, *Türkiye’nin Suriyeli mültecilere yönelik politikası*, Ortadoğu Analiz, Mart-Nisan 2014. Gönül Tol, *Suriye iç savaşının Türkiye’ye etkileri ve mülteciler*, TÜSİAD Görüş Dergisi, 12. 2013.

16 AB Bakanlığı, *Avrupa Komisyonu tarafından hazırlanan 2013 İlerleme Raporu*, [http://www.abgs.gov.tr/files/strateji/2013\\_ilerleme\\_raporu\\_tr.pdf](http://www.abgs.gov.tr/files/strateji/2013_ilerleme_raporu_tr.pdf).



mented such as taking all Syrians in Turkey under biometric registration<sup>17</sup> and placing Syrian asylum seekers in open vacancies without harming the local workforce<sup>18</sup>. Also set up was a Foreign Students Data Operating System that enables 200,000 Syrian children who are deprived of educational services and who live in Turkey to enrol at schools on an electronic system<sup>19</sup>. There are nearly 50 schools where Syrian children are educated in Istanbul. There are around 450 such schools throughout Turkey and the number of students who have education in these schools is around 100,000. Non-governmental organisations, the support of Turkey and the Education Commission created by the Syrian Opposition Coalition supply some of the needs of these schools<sup>20</sup>. Granting work permits to Syrians for their labour force participation has become a current issue<sup>21</sup>. In spite of these regulations that entered into force, Turkey has not still set a strategy for the solution of the problem.

### **Limited Contribution of the international community to Syrian asylum seekers**

While Turkey hosts nearly 2 million Syrian asylum seekers whose cost increases day by day, international actors contribute to this problem on a limited scale. The UN's calls for the EU and other actors to take more responsibility for this issue are not having the desired effect. The UN request for 6.5 billion dollars in aid for Syria operations in 2014 has produced 30 percent of that amount<sup>22</sup>.

17 Hürriyet, *Kurtulmuş: 1.6 milyon Suriyeli kalıcı*, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/27525856.asp>. Accessed: 6 Kasım 2014.

18 Milliyet, *Suriyelilere Çalışma İzni*, 12 Kasım 2014. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/suriyelilere-calisma-izni/ekonomi/detay/1951900/default.htm>, Accessed: 20.04.2016.

19 Hürriyet, "Suriyeli Öğrencilere "Tek Tuşla" Ulaşılacak", <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/egitim/27593775.asp>. Accessed: 17 Kasım 2014.

20 Sabah, *10 Soruda Mülteci Sorunu*, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/galeri/yasam/10-soruda-mul-teci-sorunu/5>, Accessed: 15.05.2016.

21 Yeni Şafak, *Suriyeli Sığınmacılara çalışma izni*, <http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/ekonomi/suriyeli-siginmacilara-calisma-izni-701851>, Accessed: 20 Kasım 2015, Accessed: 11 Kasım 2014.

22 The UN Refugee Agency, *2014 Syria regional response plan: Mid-Year update*, <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/midyear/>, Accessed: 03.04.2016.

The immigration policies of the EU and EU member states are based on preventing refugees from entering from the EU<sup>23</sup>. EU countries are unwilling to take responsibility for the refugee problem<sup>24</sup>. According to UNHCR data, 97 percent of more than 3 million Syrians who had to leave their country have settled in Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt; only 4 percent of them have requested asylum in Europe. Internal political and economic concerns lead most of the EU countries to implement a “closed door policy” to Syrian refugees. In addition to this, the EU and its member countries, in the position of being international actors providing the most humanitarian aid to Syrians, provided 3 billion euros in financial aid to Syria and to the countries in the region which host refugees, according to November 2014 data<sup>25</sup>.

The leaders ruling Balkan countries and the leaders ruling European countries were caught unprepared by this tragic wave of immigrants and could not show common position under these circumstances. As a result, opposition and right-wing parties gained strength through the immigrant crisis and became more popular, claiming that the social, economic and political balance in their countries would be upset.

Another political climate that refugees coming to European countries created was the issue of who would host incoming refugees. In consideration of the European Commission’s offer of sharing 120,000 people, deciding to determine the number of refugees per country according to the country’s population and per capita income, Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia gave dissenting votes at the beginning and Finland abstained. Today, Germany and France take more refugees in comparison to other European countries; however, the total number cannot even be compared with Turkey’s<sup>26</sup>.

---

23 Amnesty International, *Kale Avrupası’nın insani bedeli Avrupa sınırlarında göçmen ve mültecilerin karşılaştıkları insan hakları ihlalleri*, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR05/001/2014/en/146bad2c-1183-4aee-a96ae15f8fc1ef7f/eur050012014tr.pdf>, Accessed: 3.04.2016.

24 Birleşmiş Milletler Yüksek Komiserliği, *Avrupa’daki Suriyeli mülteciler: Avrupa, koruma ve dayanışmayı sağlamak için ne yapabilir*, <http://www.unhcr.org.tr/?content=574>, Accessed: 03.04.2016.

25 European Commission, Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, *Syria*, <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/where/middle-eastnorth-africa/syria>, Accessed: 20.04.2016.

26 The Local, *Refugee crisis: Merkel warns of war in Balkans*, <http://www.thelocal.de/20151103/merkel-warns-of-military-conflict-in-balkans>, Accessed: 10.01.2016.

It is seen that Chancellor Merkel faced a barrage of criticism from right-wing parties and coalition partners because of the “Open Door Policy” and started to lose her popularity. However, in spite of all the opposition, Angela Merkel created two strategies to show that the European Union can be effective against the refugee/asylum seeker crisis and bring it under control in Balkan countries with the slogan “Ja, Wir machen Das” – Yes, We Can.

- Take steps towards founding reception centres throughout the Balkan route,
- Balkan countries’ keeping their borders open<sup>27</sup>.

This request caused new diplomatic discussions between many leaders of the EU and Balkan countries. Speaking at the meeting organised by the CDU in Darmstadt, Angela Merkel said “I do not want that military conflicts to start again there”, pointing out that if Germany closed its Austrian border because of Hungary’s closure of its borders, conflicts might occur in the area and also tension might increase in Balkans, and she stated that she is against the idea of the closure of borders<sup>28</sup>.

Merkel’s statement reinforced claims that geopolitical and geostrategic concepts have regained importance. The flow of immigrants in Balkan countries not only disrupts the demography of these countries but also can cause conflicts (a Third World War) that have severe consequences locally and worldwide. This was because every great power (Russia, Germany, the USA and Turkey) has its own domain in Balkan countries. It is obvious that they would not let other big governments have an impact on these domains. In this context, the attitude of Russia towards Montenegro’s NATO membership<sup>29</sup> confirms our claim. Furthermore, it is pretty obvious that Merkel points to these domains in an indirect way.

---

27 The Guardian, *Angela Merkel stands by refugee policy despite security fears*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/25/angela-merkel-stands-by-refugee-policy-syria-despite-security-fears>, Accessed: 15.05.2016. Die Welt, *Das ist Merkels letzte chance in der Flüchtlingskrise*, <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article151097242/Das-ist-Merkels-letzte-Chance-in-der-Fluechtlingskrise.html>, Accessed: 15.05.2016.

28 Hürriyet, *Merkel: Balkanlarda askeri çatışmanın başlamasını istemiyorum*, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/merkel-balkanlarda-askeri-catismanin-baslamasini-istemiyorum-40009561>, Accessed: 12.01.2016.

29 Sabah, *Rusya’dan Karadağ’a tehdit: iptal ederiz*, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2015/12/02/rusyadan-karadaga-tehdit-iptal-ederiz>, Accessed: 02.01.2016.

On the other hand, any step that Germany takes towards closing its borders will worsen the humanitarian plight in the EU and Balkan areas and the closure of the border between Hungary and Serbia by Hungary causes refugees entering Serbia to be subjected to inhuman treatment. The closure of the border between Serbia and Croatia by Croatia caused Serbia to react, stating that if Croatia does not open its borders, it will impose sanctions on Croatia<sup>30</sup>. This was because refugees coming from the south started to gather in Serbia, which not only disrupted the country's demography but also started to pose an economic threat. Serbia's move increased tension between Balkan countries. The negative approach of Croatia and Serbia towards refugees caused refugees to prefer the Croatia-Slovenia route to reach some West European countries. However, the situation in which 200,000 people entered Croatia in one month and 105,000 refugees entered Slovenia in two weeks caused the outbreak of the crisis between Croatia and Slovenia<sup>31</sup>.

It has been seen clearly that none of the Balkan countries want to take refugees in their countries. In this context, refugees entering these countries were subjected to inhuman treatment to induce them to migrate to Western Europe. Also, it is understood that these countries have made some foreign policy moves to make the refugees settled in their countries migrate to Western Europe.

It is not hard to guess that a "forced migration" policy will spread to other Western European countries. For example; Minister of the Interior Mikl-Leitner, who once criticised the constructing of a wire mesh fence and closing the border, stated in a speech made on 28 October on behalf of the Austrian government that a wire mesh fence will be constructed at Spielfeld on the Slovene border. Although a lot of Western European countries seem to have a positive approach towards refugees and make statements accordingly for now,

---

30 Hürriyet, *Sırbistan*, Hırvatistan sınırını tır ve mal trafiğine kapadı, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/sirbistan-hrvatistan-sinirini-tir-ve-mal-trafigine-kapadi-30159625>, Accessed: 09.04.2016.

31 Euronews, *Migrant crisis: Slovenia begins building fence on border with Croatia*, <http://www.euronews.com/2015/11/11/migrant-crisis-slovenia-begins-building-fence-on-border-with-croatia>. Accessed: 09.01.2016. Balkan Insight, *Slovenia starts building fence on Croatia Border*, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/slovenia-setting-a-fence-on-border-with-croatia-11-11-2015>, Accessed: 05.05.2016.

it is possible to say that after some time they will make a “U” turn in their foreign policy – like Austria.

On the one hand, there are discussions on how to deal with refugees in Europe; on the other hand, it is expected that more than 600,000 refugees will enter Western European countries through Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, taking the risk of a dangerous Mediterranean journey in the 2016 winter season. An example of this is that the number of refugees entering Macedonia exceeds 22 thousand, and 518 entered between 1st and 6th January 2016<sup>32</sup>. On the other hand, it is possible to see that the refugee crisis is fuelling the rise of extreme right-wing parties in many European and Balkan countries: the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in England, the National Front (FN) in France, the Alternative for Germany (AFD) and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) in Austria.

Viktor Orban, who is known as anti-refugees/immigrants in Hungary, stated that refugees/immigrants coming to Europe “seem like an army”. Frauke Petry, president of the right-populist Alternative for Germany Party, stated in an interview with the Mannheimer Morgen newspaper that “unregistered asylum seekers must be prevented from coming to this country through Austria”. Petry, who said that “None of the police officers wants to shoot an asylum seeker” stated that “The police have to prevent illegal border crossings, and if needed, they have to use weapons, it is written in the law<sup>33</sup>.” The increase in this kind of statement recently by European leaders shows that there is not only a refugee crisis but also serious Islamophobia and xenophobia in Europe.

While the situation is like that in European countries, Turkey alone hosts more than 2.2 million Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Turkey hosts 42 percent of the Syrians who have migrated to neighbouring countries and other parts of the world because of the civil war. 1,758,000 thousand of the 2 million Syrians who have come to Turkey in the last 3 years were registered by Turkish official authorities. But it is estimated that the actual number is more than 2 million.

---

32 Yeni Balkan, *2016'da Giriş yapan mülteci sayısı 22 bini aştı*, <http://www.yenibalkan.com/makedonya/2016da-giris-yapan-multeci-sayisi-22-bini-asti-h5446.html>. Accessed: 06.05.2016.

33 Hürriyet, *Polis gerektiğinde Sığınmacıları vurmali*, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/polis-siginmacilari-gerektiginde-vurmali-40047372>, Accessed: 15.06.2016.

Speaking at an opening ceremony, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said “Shame on those who don’t show sensitivity to the women and children who reach out to them for help. Shame on those who deny the sensitivity they show to whales, seals and turtles in the sea to 23 million Syrians. Shame on those who put their own welfare and comfort ahead of other people’s struggle for survival. Shame on those who have their eyes on the money in refugees’ wallets and their jewellery and who have a mentality that is a remnant of slavery and the colonial period”, and criticised the West for its improbity towards Syrian refugees<sup>34</sup>.

European Union officials say that the refugee crisis might last for years. On the one hand, European countries try to place hundreds of thousands of Syrians in their countries working day and night. Even non-Muslim countries like Brazil, Chile and Venezuela have volunteered to take thousands of refugees. According to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the West is the one to blame. Erdoğan criticised the West for taking only 250,000 refugees in March. However, millions of Muslims try to reach the borders of a civilisation that they have blamed for all kinds of evil things all over the world, including in their own countries, throughout history. Turkish leaders blame non-Muslims in this tragedy. However, they do not utter even a word to their super-rich Muslim neighbours. They do not blame Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman, which do not take even a single refugee. (All of them recruit mostly Asian workers.)

There is a history showing which part of the world political map approaches the Muslim refugee problem with relative solidarity and which part of it shows apparent cruelty. While all of the Muslim refugees in the West have been successfully integrated into countries like England (mostly Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims), France (mostly North African Muslims) and Germany (mostly Turkish Muslims), Arab landlords have not provided this opportunity, for example by giving Palestinian refugees citizenship and other rights. When Saudi Arabia faced a labour shortage in the 1970s and 1980s, it employed thousands of South Koreans and other Asian workers but rejected Palestin-

---

34 Aljazeera, *Erdoğan: Hassasiyetini Suriyelilerden esirgeyenlere yazıklar olsun*, <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/erdogan-hassasiyetini-suriyelilerden-esirgeyenlere-yaziklar-olsun>, Accessed: 15.05.2016.

ian refugees. Kuwait employed a great number of Palestinians until the First Gulf War; however, it did not give citizenship rights. After the war, Kuwait deported 300,000 Palestinian refugees. After Saddam Hussein's fall, Palestinian refugees in Iraq became the target of systematic attacks by Muslim Shia militants. They were even denied medical care. In 2012, at least 300,000 Palestinian refugees were living in Lebanon. Human Rights Watch defined their social and economic situation as "terrifying". However, the Lebanese government has consistently ignored their demand for the right to acquire more property. And before summer 2012, Egypt implemented a restrictive travel policy to Palestinian people coming from Gaza to Egypt. Palestinians had to enter the country accompanied by the security forces.

### **"In lieu" of a conclusion**

The late King of Jordan Abdullah said of the "Palestinian tragedy" that "most of the leaders paralysed their people with wrong and baseless statements such as they are not alone, 80 million Arab people and 400 million Muslims will give them immediate and miraculous succour". Decades later, Syrians are running away from the civil war in their homeland that is the basic cause of the world refugee tragedy. Officially, Muslim Turkey hosts most of the Syrian refugees (1.9 million). Lebanon hosts 1.2 million Syrians, Jordan hosts more than 600,000 Syrians and Egypt more than 100,000 Syrians. In total, that makes 4 million Syrians, mostly Muslims. However, what is considered paradoxical (or not) is that most of the refugees who see the Christian West as "a devil" risk their lives to migrate there. Hundreds of thousands of people migrate to Greece from Turkey or to Italy from Libya and thousands of them drown in Aegean and Mediterranean waters when the dinghies carrying them sink.

While Turkey has been hosting nearly 2 million Syrian asylum seekers whose human and economic costs are increasing day by day, international actors help with the problem within a limited liability. The call of the United Nations to the EU and other actors to take more responsibility for the issue has not achieved the desired effect. The UN request for 6.5 billion dollars in assistance for Syrians in 2014 was met only to the tune of 30%. Internal political and economic concerns are leading most of the EU countries to follow "closed

door policy” regarding Syrian asylum seekers. However, the international actors providing the most humanitarian aid to the Syrians are EU and its Member States. It is quite difficult for Turkey to bear the cost of more than 2 million Syrian asylum seekers with its own facilities, even though it has pledged to continue the open door policy and help the asylum seekers in any case. A solution may be found to the problem, which grows every single day as the war in Syria intensifies, only if the international community meets the responsibilities arising from the international community and the rights of refugees.

The Syrian refugee crisis that leads to Europe’s heart from the Middle East is another big part of the multi-dimensional Middle East dilemma: Muslims in this part of the world see the West as “a devil”; however, Christian lands are the best places to live economically and politically. Rich Arab countries resolutely turn their backs on the plight of their Muslim brothers and Islamist hypocrites blame the West for this situation.

Unfortunately, no one asks why Muslims “who hate the West” go to the West, why their Arab fellow Muslims sit on their hands and do not help, or why non-Muslims have to pay for a war and immigration wave created by Muslims.