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## TURKEY AND SYRIAN REFUGEES: THE LIMITS OF HOSPITALITY

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*Cover photo: Syrian children wave from Bab al-Salame IDP camp, Azaz, Syria (USAK, February 2013).*

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A list of the institutions and organizations whose representatives were interviewed and who participated at the seminar are provided at the end of this report.

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## Acronyms

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<b>ACU</b>	Assistance Coordination Unit
<b>AFAD</b>	Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency
<b>AI</b>	Amnesty International
<b>EYDAS</b>	Electronic Aid Distribution System
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FSA</b>	Free Syrian Army
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IGOs</b>	Intergovernmental Organizations
<b>İHH</b>	Foundation for Human Rights, Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organization
<b>J-RANS</b>	Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>PYD</b>	Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat
<b>SNAP</b>	Syria Needs Analysis Project
<b>SNC</b>	Syrian National Council
<b>TL</b>	Turkish Lira
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>USAK</b>	International Strategic Research Organization
<b>USD</b>	United States Dollar
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

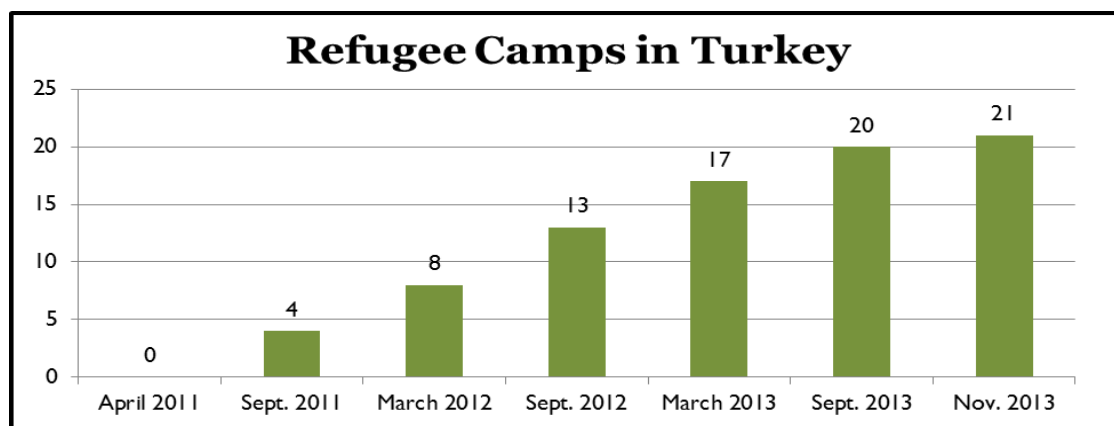
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## INTRODUCTION

**O**n April 29, 2011, the first Syrian refugees crossed the border into Turkey. Two years later, the country hosts some 600,000 Syrian refugees—200,000 of them living in 21 refugee camps with an additional 400,000 living outside of the camps (see charts 1 and 2 below). These estimates, reported by both the Turkish government and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), are conservative.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, officials working directly with refugees on the ground suggest that the number living outside of the camps may be as high as 800,000.

These numbers are increasing: according to United Nations (UN) estimates, Turkey will be home to one million Syrians by the end of 2013.<sup>2</sup> Syrians have fled to Turkey in search of safety from a horrific conflict, leaving behind loved ones, jobs and property. Syrians from all walks of life - doctors and housewives, civil servants and farmers, the very old and the very young - have poured across the Turkish border. The Turkish people and the government, mainly through the Prime Ministry's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), responded generously to the refugees, offering them sanctuary and hospitality. But as the conflict intensifies – with no end in sight – and as the resources of the Turkish government and society are stretched thin, questions arise about the limits of Turkey's hospitality. The continued deterioration of the situation inside Syria is putting enormous pressures on Turkey's ability to manage the refugee situation within its borders as well as its capacity to ensure the continued flow of humanitarian assistance into Syria.

*Chart 1: Refugee Camps in Turkey*

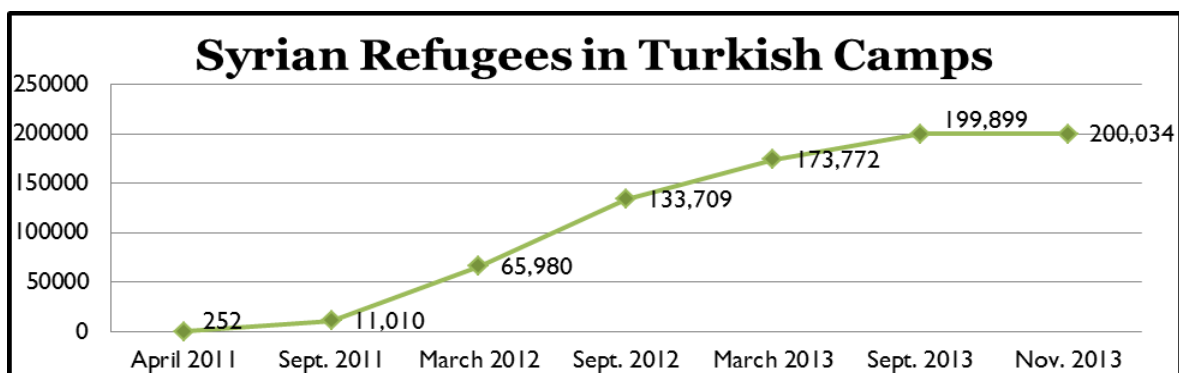


Source: Graph created by USAK with data from AFAD

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, "Syria Regional Refugee Response Regional Overview," *Syria Regional Refugee Response*, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, November 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>. These numbers are updated daily and are available on the AFAD website, see: [www.afad.gov.tr/TR/IcerikDetay1.aspx?IcerikID=848&ID=16](http://www.afad.gov.tr/TR/IcerikDetay1.aspx?IcerikID=848&ID=16)

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, *Syria regional response plan – January to December 2013*, June 2013, <http://unhcr.org/51b04c9c9.html>

Chart 2: Syrian Refugees in Official Turkish Camps



Source: Graph created by USAK with data from AFAD

This policy brief is the product of a strong collaborative effort between the Brookings Institution, a Washington, DC-based think-tank committed to quality, independence and impact and the Ankara-based International Strategic Research Organization (USAK), a leading Turkish think-tank which seeks to encourage greater public awareness of national and international developments through research and expert analyses. For the Brookings Institution, this represents the second component of a three-part research project involving the collaboration of three scholars working in three different programs: Elizabeth Ferris (Brookings Institution-London School of Economics Project on Internal Displacement), Kemal Kirişci (Center for the US and Europe – Turkey Project) and Salman Shaikh (Brookings Doha Center). The project consists of three phases:

- (i) The first part of the project was a substantive policy brief providing an overview of Syria's humanitarian crisis.<sup>3</sup>
- (ii) The second part, represented here, is an in-depth examination of the implications of Syrian refugees for Turkey and will be followed by a longer report on Turkey, the European Union and Syrian displacement (to be published in early 2014 by Kemal Kirişci).
- (iii) The third part will be a roundtable organized by the Brookings Doha Center (BDC), focused on strengthening coordination and cooperation between Gulf, regional and international actors working inside Syria. This will be followed by a BDC policy brief that examines humanitarian needs and emerging governance structures across the

<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth Ferris, Kemal Kirişci and Salman Sheikh, *Syrian Crisis: Massive Displacement, Dire Needs and a Shortage of Solutions*, 18 September 2013, Brookings Institution, Washington DC, [www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/09/18-syria-humanitarian-political-crisis-ferris-shaikh-kirisci](http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/09/18-syria-humanitarian-political-crisis-ferris-shaikh-kirisci); Kemal Kirişci, "Syrian Refugees in Turkey: The Limits of an Open Door Policy", Brookings Institution, 27 June 2013, [www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/06/27-syrian-refugees-in-turkey-kirisci](http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/06/27-syrian-refugees-in-turkey-kirisci); Elizabeth Ferris, "The Syrian Humanitarian Crisis: Five Uncomfortable Questions for the International Community," Brookings Institutions, July 8, 2013, [www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/07/08-syria-humanitarian-crisis](http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/07/08-syria-humanitarian-crisis);



rebel-held north of the country. In a broad sense, this initiative seeks to complement the work of other scholars who concentrate on the military and political dimensions of the crisis. By focusing on humanitarian needs in Syria, a more comprehensive assessment of the present and future situation is possible.

USAK has been following the issue of Syrian refugees closely since the beginning of the crisis. It has recently published a comprehensive report entitled *The Struggle for Life between Borders: Syrian Refugees* based on a survey of Syrian refugees living in refugee camps in Turkey.<sup>4</sup> USAK's monthly magazine *Analist* has also been regularly covering the Syrian humanitarian crisis, with a particular emphasis on examining the challenges that both the conflict and the refugees pose for Turkey.<sup>5</sup> In this vein, USAK continues to carry out research and to recommend actions which can be taken to address these challenges.

This policy brief is based on a joint Brookings-USAK research trip to the border region by Elizabeth Ferris, Kemal Kirişci, Vittoria Federici, Osman Bahadır Dinçer, Sema Karaca and Elif Özmenek Çarmıklı and interviews conducted in Istanbul, Ankara, Gaziantep, Kilis and Hatay. It also draws from a joint Brookings-USAK seminar held in Ankara on 25 October 2013 which brought together some 45 participants from the Turkish government, civil society, national and international NGOs, international organizations and academic researchers.

Given that the seminar was held under the Chatham House Rule, there are no direct attributions to participants. The seminar included sessions on: the Syrian refugee and humanitarian situation in Turkey; the political and security dimension of the refugee and humanitarian crisis; and the international cooperation and burden-sharing dimension of the Syrian crisis on the Turkish border.

The authors hope that this policy brief will be helpful to both the Turkish government and civil society organizations and to international actors seeking to aid Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The authors are also grateful to the Turkish government for the comments provided to the text, which have been incorporated into this revised version. The impact of the Syrian refugee influx on Turkey is significant and deserves more attention from the international community. Most of all, the authors hope that political solutions are found that will bring an end to the massive displacement of the Syrian people.

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<sup>4</sup> Mehmet Güçer, Sema Karaca and Osman Bahadır Dinçer, *The Struggle for Life between Borders: Syrian Refugees*, USAK Publications, Ankara, Report No13-04, May 2013, [http://usak.org.tr/usak\\_det.php?id=1&cat=817&h=3#.UnzdQfIT7fI](http://usak.org.tr/usak_det.php?id=1&cat=817&h=3#.UnzdQfIT7fI)

<sup>5</sup> Osman Bahadır Dinçer, Sema Karaca and Hale Yavuz, "Göçün İkinci Yılında Suriyeli Savaş Mağdurları" [Syrian Victims of War in the Second Year of Refugee Crisis], *Analist*, March 2013, pp. 18-27, [www.usakanalist.com/detail.php?id=540](http://www.usakanalist.com/detail.php?id=540); Sema Karaca, "Kayıt Dışı Mülteciler, Kayda Değer Sorunlar" [Unregistered Refugees and Noteworthy Problems], *Analist*, September 2013, pp. 72-73, [www.usakanalist.com/detail.php?id=694](http://www.usakanalist.com/detail.php?id=694); İhsan Bal, "Suriyeli Mülteciler Krizinde Yeni Gerçek" [A New Reality in the Syrian Refugee Crisis], *Analist*, September 2013, pp. 36-37, <http://www.usakanalist.com/detail.php?id=682>

## SENSITIVE AND COMPLEX BORDER ISSUES

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When Syrians began arriving at the Turkish-Syrian border in the spring of 2011, all were allowed to enter Turkey. Those who came with passports entered Turkey as they had done in normal times and those without documents were admitted to temporary refugee camps. As their numbers grew, the government built an ever-increasing number of camps near the border to house the refugees – or “guests”, as they were known. In October 2011 the government extended “temporary protection” to Syrian refugees, the only country to do so in the region. This was a reflection of Turkey’s open door policy, its policy of *non-refoulement* and its commitment to ensure basic humanitarian services to refugees.



*The truck queue at the Turkish-Syrian border (USAK, October 2013)*

However, as refugee numbers continued to grow throughout the summer of 2012, particularly as a result of the intensifying conflict in Aleppo and its surroundings, the capacity of the government-run camps began to come under strain. By the second half of 2012 the Turkish government started taking measures to limit entry, leading to the emergence of more than 20 makeshift camps along the Syrian side of the border for those waiting to gain admission to Turkey. Some of these makeshift camps – Atmeh, Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salame, for example – soon became semi-permanent fixtures along the border (see map and tables on next page). In the meantime, a growing number of Syrians fleeing the violence in northern Syria began to enter Turkey through so-called unofficial crossing points and joined the ranks of a growing non-camp refugee population in Turkey. More recently, IDPs have also been resorting to the services of smugglers as Turkey begins to close both unofficial and official crossing points due to the deteriorating security situation on the Syrian side of the border.

Map 1: Locations of Refugee and IDP Camps Along the Turkish-Syrian Border

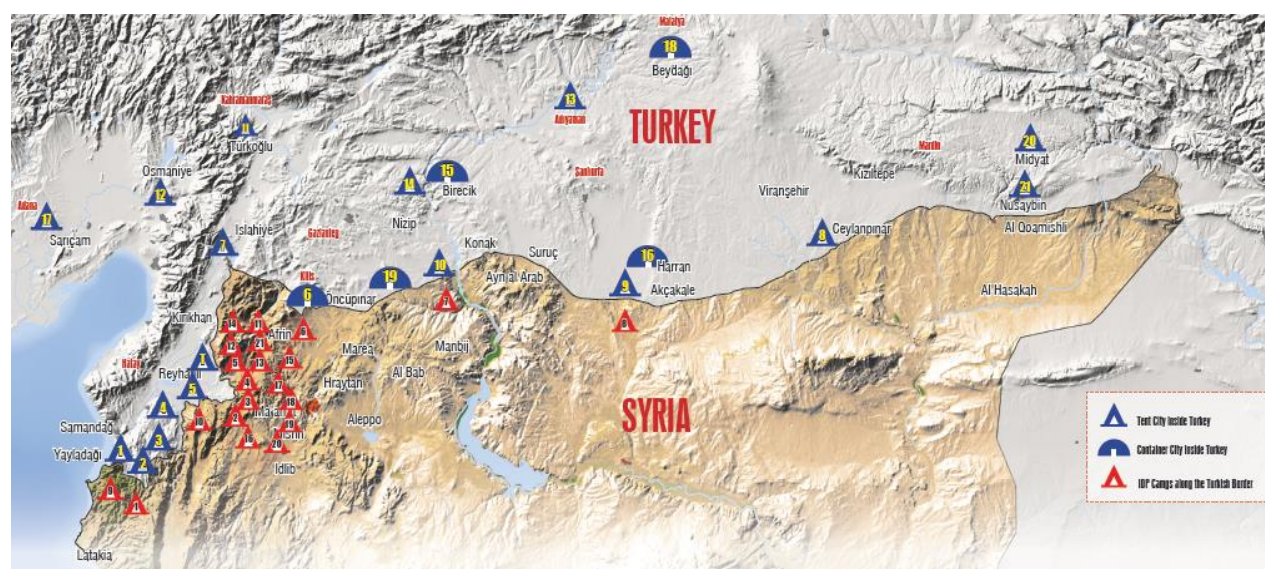


Table 1: IDP Camps Along the Turkish Border Inside Syria (these are indicated in Map 1)

IDP Camps along the Turkish Border				November 2013
Camp	Population	Camp	Population	
1 Yamadi	850	15 Kah-2	3,889	
2 Bab al-Hawa	7,000	16 Ikhaa	Unkown	
3 Akrobat	6,000	17 Al-Salame	2,305	
4 Kah-1	5,500	18 Al-Nasir	1,608	
5 Atmeh	29,958	19 Al-Midan	1,204	
6 Bab as-Salame	15,000	20 Al-Almal	Unkown	
7 Jarablus	2,500	21 Safa	1,138	
8 Tel Abyad	5,000	22 Al-Nour	1,050	
9 Kasab	Unkown	23 Ummah (Aloma)	280	
10 Ayidoun	4,500	24 Al-Golan	Unkown	
11 Taybeh	2,604	25 Daem	2,639	
12 Al Karama	4,345			
13 Jolan	1,575			
14 Al-Shohadea	650			

Table 2: Syrian Refugee Camps Inside Turkey (these are indicated in Map 1)

Refugee Camps in Turkey				November 2013
1	Yayladağı -1 Tent City	11	Kahramanmaraş Tent City	
2	Yayladağı – 2 Tent City	12	Cevdediye Tent City	
3	Altınözü - 1	13	Adıyaman Tent City	
4	Altınözü – 2	14	Nizip- 1 Tent City	
5	Apaydın	15	Nizip-2 Container City	
6	Öncüpinar Container City	16	Harran Container City	
7	İslahiye Tent City	17	Sarıçam Tent City	
8	Ceylanpınar Tent City	18	Beydağı Container City	
9	Akçakale Tent City	19	Elbeyi Container City	
10	Karkamış Tent City	20	Midyat Tent City	
T	Reyhanlı Gathering Center	21	Nusaybin Tent City (under construction)	

Source: Tables and the map created by USAK with data from AFAD and UNHCR

It is important to note that the border between Syria and Turkey has always been a very porous one. While during the Cold War era of the 1950s landmines were laid along parts of the border, they did not seem to act as a deterrent to cross-border movements of people and goods. Cross-border smuggling was commonplace long before the Syrian displacement crisis began, although it has increased as the number of Syrians seeking to cross has escalated. Rates ranging from 15 to 30 Turkish liras (8 to 15 USD) to cross from Syria into Turkey and from 30 to 100 TL (15 to 50 USD) to go the other way have been reported. In the meantime, Turkey continues to allow Syrians who arrive with a valid passport to enter Turkey freely and acquire residence permits.

The border crossings are allegedly used not only by refugees fleeing Syria, but also by opposition fighters moving back and forth between refugee camps and Syria. According to frequent reports, these fighters come to the camps for family visits and for rest and recreation.<sup>6</sup> During one period, there were reports of fighters carrying arms while they moved from place to place inside Turkey.<sup>7</sup> However, growing concerns about security and complaints by the local population have led to a clampdown, and such fighters are no longer permitted to bear arms in Turkey. While residents of refugee camps are free to move in and out of the camps, this movement is tightly monitored, and camp authorities permit neither the flow of arms into the camps nor the open recruitment of fighters. A separate refugee camp in Hatay (Apaydın Camp) houses defectors from Syrian security forces and wounded members of the Free Syrian Army.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, reports have criticized the Turkish government for allowing foreign fighters – often from the ranks of radical Islamist groups – and arms to cross into Syria.<sup>9</sup> These reports and criticisms have been vehemently rejected by the Turkish authorities.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> International Crisis Group, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, 30 April 2013, p. 36, [www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/225-blurring-the-borders-syrian-spillover-risks-for-turkey.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/225-blurring-the-borders-syrian-spillover-risks-for-turkey.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 36

<sup>8</sup> “Davutoğlu’ndan Apaydın Kampı Açıklaması” [Davutoğlu’s Apaydın Camp Statement], *BBC Türkçe* [BBC Turkey], 29 August 2012, [www.bbc.co.uk/turkce/haberler/2012/08/120829\\_turkishfm\\_syria.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkce/haberler/2012/08/120829_turkishfm_syria.shtml); Muharrem Sarıkaya, “Apaydın Kampı” [Apaydın Camp], *Habertürk*, 30 August 2012, [www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/muharrem-sarikaya/772261-apaydin-kampi](http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/muharrem-sarikaya/772261-apaydin-kampi)

<sup>9</sup> “Arms Airlift to Syria Rebels Expands, With Aid From C.I.A.,” *New York Times*, 24 March 2013, [www.nytimes.com/2013/03/25/world/middleeast/arms-airlift-to-syrian-rebels-expands-with-cia-aid.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/25/world/middleeast/arms-airlift-to-syrian-rebels-expands-with-cia-aid.html); Fehim Taştekin, “Radical Groups Operate On Turkey’s Border”, *Al Monitor*, 17 October, 2013; “Turkey’s Spymaster Plots Own Course on Syria”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 10 October, 2013. <http://stream.wsj.com/story/latest-headlines/SS-2-63399/SS-2-350761/>; Nick Paton Walsh, “The secret jihadi smuggling route through Turkey”, *CNN*, 5 November 2013, [http://edition.cnn.com/2013/11/04/world/europe/isis-gaining-strength-on-syria-turkey-border/index.html?iid=article\\_sidebar](http://edition.cnn.com/2013/11/04/world/europe/isis-gaining-strength-on-syria-turkey-border/index.html?iid=article_sidebar); Ruth Sherlock, “Al-Qaeda recruits entering Syria from Turkey safehouses”, *Daily Telegraph*, 30 October 2013, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10415935/Al-Qaeda-recruits-entering-Syria-from-Turkey-safehouses.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10415935/Al-Qaeda-recruits-entering-Syria-from-Turkey-safehouses.html)

<sup>10</sup> Also see. International Crisis Group, *Blurring the Borders*, p. 37 and “Davutoğlu: Türkiye hakkındaki iddialar mesnetsiz” [Davutoğlu: the allegations about Turkey are unfounded], *Radikal*, 31 October 2013, [www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/davutoglu\\_turkiye\\_hakkındaki\\_iddialar\\_mesnetsiz-1158416](http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/davutoglu_turkiye_hakkındaki_iddialar_mesnetsiz-1158416); Johan Sennero and Hümeysra Pamuk, “Turkish PM denies helping al Qaeda in Syria, criticizes Russia”, *Reuters*, 7 November 2013, [www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/07/us-syria-crisis-turkey-qaeda-idUSBRE9A60KL20131107](http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/07/us-syria-crisis-turkey-qaeda-idUSBRE9A60KL20131107)

Even though political relations between the two countries have deteriorated significantly over the last two years, Turkish-Syrian trade continues. The research team passed a nine kilometer queue of trucks at Reyhanlı’s Cilvegözü border crossing waiting to cross – with an exceptionally long three to four day wait due to the closure of other border crossings. Truck drivers told the researchers that they would not actually enter Syria but would unload their goods in a buffer zone (located within Turkish territory) and would work with trusted middle men who would arrange for truck drivers coming from the other side to load up the goods and take them into Syria. Turkish citizens are not presently allowed to cross into Syria for security reasons.<sup>11</sup> Before the Syrian crisis erupted there was bustling trade between Turkey and Syria. The volume of this trade peaked at 2.3 billion USD in 2010 before collapsing to around half a billion in 2012. Yet, in the first seven months of 2013 official recorded trade had expanded by almost 60 percent from 381 to 575 million USD.<sup>12</sup> As one Turkish truck driver commented, “Life and trade go on inside Syria—the rest is all about politics. People need tomatoes, cement, steel and cars.”

“Life and trade go on inside Syria—the rest is all about politics. People need tomatoes, cement, steel and cars.”

- A truck driver at Cilvegözü crossing

Many of the Syrian refugee camps are very close to the border, including the Öncüpınar Container camp in Kilis which is flush against the border. While there is a shortage of suitable land for construction of Temporary Protection Centers and this location makes it easy for the authorities to directly process arriving refugees into the camp, locating the camps near the border also raises security concerns. For example, camp administrators mentioned the danger of stray bullets flying from the other side of the border into the camp as the result of regular fighting between opposition groups taking place just a few miles from the camp. Movement in and out of the camps is constant. While people have a basic human right to freedom of movement, the location of the camp so close to the border raises security concerns. It should be noted that the location of the camp runs counter to the UNHCR practice of not locating camps within 50 kilometers of a border as a basic security policy.

In addition to the Syrian regime’s violent crackdown on civilians, increasing fighting between opposition groups, particularly resulting from the increased role of radical Islamist groups, is provoking and prolonging displacement inside Syria. This fragmentation not only worsens the situation of IDPs but also negatively affects the expectations of Syrians living in Turkey, both in and outside of camps. Almost all of the interviews conducted with Syrians ended up with expressions of disappointment and loss of hope for the future of their country.

<sup>11</sup> “Suriye’ye Çıkış Yok” [No Exit In Syria] *Star*, 28 August 2012, <http://stargazete.com/ekonomi/suriyeye-cikis-yok/haber-647243>

<sup>12</sup> Turkish Statistical Institute, [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr).

The violence and displacement crisis in Syria has also impacted the security of Turkey's border regions.

There were two major car bomb explosions at a border crossing into Turkey on 11 February 2013<sup>13</sup> and a car bomb in the Turkish town of Reyhanlı on 11 May 2013 that killed more than 50 people.<sup>14</sup> These incidents provoked negative reactions against refugees and were stark reminders of how Turkish security is directly affected by the Syrian crisis. In spite of such tensions, Syrian refugees repeatedly observed how generous and welcoming the local people have been towards them; as one refugee said,

“Initially, all the refugees wanted to return to Syria. But with the growing chaos and the increasing involvement of radical groups, there is a feeling that this is not the Syria they want to go back to.”

- NGO representative, Hatay

“We feel at home here.” These observations are consistent with a USAK report published earlier in the year based on surveys of refugees.<sup>15</sup> The possible exception to this appears to be parts of the Hatay province along the Mediterranean Sea bordering Syria. This province of Turkey is known for its ethnic and sectarian diversity as well as its long-standing reputation for exemplary harmony and co-existence. However, the Syrian displacement crisis and the fact that the majority of the refugees have been Sunni Arabs have led to emerging tensions between Sunni refugees and local Turkish citizens of Arab origin who share the same faith as the Alawites of Syria. The government has introduced measures to prevent these tensions from escalating.<sup>16</sup>

There have also been reports that the construction of a physical barrier along parts of the border is being considered, particularly in Nusaybin, across from Kurdish-populated areas of Syria. These reports have been denied by authorities, even as the mayor of this town was on a hunger strike in protest of the construction of the barrier.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, reports are circulating that Bulgaria is considering construction of a fence along parts of its border with Turkey to deter Syrians from crossing into European Union (EU) territory.

<sup>13</sup> “Sınır kapısında patlama: 13 Ölü” [Explosion at the border crossing: 13 Dead], *NTVMSNBC*, 11 February 2013, [www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25421222/](http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25421222/)

<sup>14</sup> “Reyhanlı cehenneme döndü” [Reyhanlı turned to hell], *Hurriyet*, 11 May 2013, [www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/23257089.asp](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/23257089.asp)

<sup>15</sup> Mehmet Güçer, Sema Karaca and Osman Bahadır Dinçer, *The Struggle for Life between Borders: Syrian Refugees*, p. 43, graph 23.

<sup>16</sup> “Mezhep Çatışmasının Kapısından Döndük” [We Have Narrowly Avoided a Sectarian Conflict] *Ihlas News Agency*, 28 September 2013, [www.ihlassondakika.com/haber/Mezhep-catismasinin-kapisindan-donduk\\_577981.html](http://www.ihlassondakika.com/haber/Mezhep-catismasinin-kapisindan-donduk_577981.html)

<sup>17</sup> “Turkish mayor stops hunger strike over Syria border wall”, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 7 November 2013, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-mayor-stops-hunger-strike-over-syria-border-wall-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=57544&NewsCatID=338](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-mayor-stops-hunger-strike-over-syria-border-wall-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=57544&NewsCatID=338) and “Kurds protest against wall along Turkey's border with Syria” *Reuters*, 7 November 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/07/us-syria-crisis-turkey-kurds-idUSBRE9A610720131107>.

Finally, the fact that Syrians cross the Turkish border in need of urgent medical care impacts Turkey's health services in the region. As will be discussed below in greater detail, an important aspect of Turkey's "temporary protection" policy has been the extension of health services to Syrian refugees. This plays out on the border with the ferrying of wounded and seriously sick civilians – as well as fighters – to local Turkish hospitals. When soldiers – or civilians – are wounded in fighting inside Syria, they are brought to the border, where Turkish ambulances take them to hospitals for treatment. They then go to care houses set up for convalescing wounded soldiers, with all allegedly paid for by foreign governments.

### ***Concerns and recommendations on border issues:***

It is a basic human rights principle (Article 14, Universal Declaration of Human Rights) that people have the right to seek asylum in another country. There are growing concerns that many Syrians are unable to enjoy this basic human right since the Turkish government has introduced a more managed system for admitting refugees into its territory. While the efforts of the Turkish government to welcome Syrians and to provide assistance to refugees in camps are exemplary, the research team is concerned about the safety of Syrians who are unable to cross the border legally into Turkey. As much as Turkish officials insist that the "open door" pillar of the temporary protection policy is indeed still in place, the growing number of makeshift camps across the Turkish border suggests otherwise. While it is also true that some of these IDPs may indeed prefer to remain in Syria to enjoy easier access to their property and family back home, the growth in the number of non-camp refugees in Turkey suggests that many Syrians continue to enter Turkey unofficially. This inevitably makes them vulnerable to abuse as well as extortion from smugglers and undermines Turkey's commitment to protecting the refugees. In response to this report, the Turkish government has emphasized that it has opened its doors to Syrian citizens who have concerns about their lives in their country.

"When there are reports of fighting – and we can see the smoke from here – a medical team goes to the border to perform triage on the wounded. But sometimes there are just too many."

- NGO representative in Kilis

The researchers were struck by the lack of independent human rights monitoring in the border area. While UNHCR has access to the camps and monitors voluntary returns, UNHCR is not present at the border. Apart from a report by Human Rights Watch and a shorter report by Amnesty International (AI), there are no independent reports of what is happening at the border.<sup>18</sup> The need to provide for systematic monitoring of the human rights situation of refugees

<sup>18</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Iraq/Jordan/Turkey: Syrians Blocked from Fleeing War," 1 July 2013, [www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/01/iraqjordanturkey-syrians-blocked-fleeing-war](http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/01/iraqjordanturkey-syrians-blocked-fleeing-war); Amnesty International, "Turkey: National Authorities and the International Community Must Act In Partnership to Meet the Needs of Syrian Refugees", April 2013, [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR44/009/2013/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR44/009/2013/en)

has been raised frequently by Turkish human rights NGOs ranging from the Turkish branch of Amnesty International to Helsinki Yurttaşlar Derneği and Mazlum-Der.

The Turkish government and the international community should explore all means possible to ensure better safety for IDPs in northern Syria along the border.

The Turkish government and the international community should explore all possible means to ensure better safety for IDPs in northern Syria along the border.

Human rights groups – Turkish and/or international – are encouraged to visit the border region and undertake a systematic analysis of human rights issues occurring when Syrian refugees seek to enter Turkey. This should be based on interviews with Turkish government officials, to assess the criteria used to allow Syrians to cross the border; with Syrian refugees who have crossed over; with Syrian IDPs on the Syrian side of the border; and with other groups and individuals concerned. The Turkish government is urged to support and facilitate such monitoring activities, while international human rights organizations and other actors are encouraged to provide support for such monitoring and research activities.



## REFUGEE CAMPS

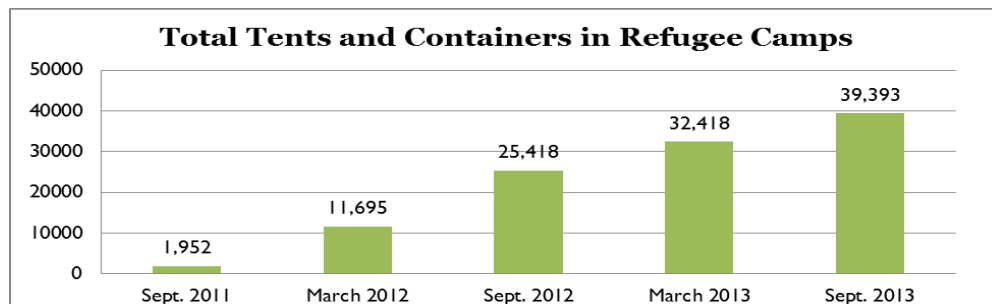
The refugee camps established by the Turkish government are impressive. The two camps visited by the team – the first a tent camp near the town of Nizip,<sup>19</sup> the second a container camp next to the Öncüpinar<sup>20</sup> border crossing – were carefully planned, and the level of assistance was remarkable (see chart below for tent and containers in refugee camps). The camps resembled well-established towns with primary and secondary schools, health clinics, community centers, supermarkets, playgrounds and even laundry rooms. Refugees were given refrigerators and stoves; accommodations had hot water and, in some cases, televisions and air conditioning. Upon registration, refugees are provided with cash cards with a monthly allowance of 80 to 100 TL (40-50 USD) per person, depending on the camp, in order to purchase food products, cleaning materials and minutes for their phones. While refugee camps are never good places to live (and indeed people have left the camps for the uncertainty and the freedom of the cities) the camps visited by the team were impressive in the quality and quantity of assistance and services available. Turkey in general and the Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency in particular deserve to be commended.



*Elizabeth Ferris speaks with students at a primary school at Öncüpinar (USAK, October 2013).*

The education of all students in Temporary Protection Centers is provided in accordance with their national curriculum. The diplomas of 1,700 Syrian high school graduates have been recognized and with the cooperation between Gaziantep University and TÖMER and the support of UNICEF, Turkish language courses have been provided to these students, enabling them to register in universities.

*Chart 3: Total Number of Tents and Containers in Turkish Refugee Camps*



Source: Graph created by USAK with data from AFAD

<sup>19</sup> Nizip 1 Tent City

<sup>20</sup> Öncüpinar Container City

A list of the location, opening date and population of Turkish refugee camps is available below.

Table 3: Refugee Camps in Turkey

### Refugee Camps in Turkey

Province	Refugee Camps in Turkey	Opening Date	Tents/Containers	Camp Population
<b>HATAY</b>	Altınözü1 Tent City	09.06.2011	259	1,595
	Altınözü2 Tent City	10.06.2011	620	2,669
	Yayladağı1 Tent City	30.04.2011	563	3,217
	Yayladağı2 Tent City	12.07.2011	510	3,529
	Apaydın Tent City	09.10.2011	1,165	4,779
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>3,117</b>
<b>KILIS</b>	Oncupınar Container City	17.03.2012	2,053	13,570
	Elbeyli Container City	03.06.2013	3,592	17,210
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>5,645</b>	<b>30,780</b>
<b>SANLIURFA</b>	Ceylanpınar Tent City	01.03.2012	4,771	27,229
	Akçakale Tent City	06.07.2012	5,046	26,364
	Harran Container City	13.01.2013	2,000	13,540
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>9,817 tents + 2,000 containers</b>	<b>67,133</b>
<b>GAZIANTEP</b>	Islahiye Tent City	17.03.2012	1,754	9,392
	Karkamış Tent City	28.08.2012	1,636	7,366
	Nizip1 Tent City	03.10.2012	1,858	11,196
	Nizip2 Container City	11.02.2012	1,000	5,138
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>5,248 tents + 1,000 containers</b>	<b>33,070</b>
<b>KAHRAMANMARAS</b>	Kahramanmaraş Tent City	01.09.2012	2,737	14,986
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,737</b>	<b>14,986</b>
<b>OSMANIYE</b>	Cevdediye Tent City	09.09.2012	2,012	8,515
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,012</b>	<b>8,515</b>
<b>ADIYAMAN</b>	Adiyaman Tent City	22.09.2012	2,292	9,998
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,292</b>	<b>9,998</b>
<b>ADANA</b>	Sancam Tent City	28.01.2013	2,142	10,189
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,142</b>	<b>10,189</b>
<b>MARDIN</b>	Midyat Tent City	19.06.2013	1,300	2,366
	Nusaybin Tent City	Under construction		
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,300</b>	<b>2,366</b>
<b>MALATYA</b>	Beydağı Container City	12.06.2013	2,083	6,551
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,083</b>	<b>6,551</b>

Source: Prime Ministry, Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD).

AFAD is the lead government agency responsible for the refugees, while the Turkish police are responsible for registering refugees in the camp and issuing them ID cards. However, the registration system has not yet been centralized. The team was told that the absence of such a system makes it difficult to track whether a refugee has left one camp and gone to another. Administrators said that, in practice, they know of cases where some refugees have changed camps. There are reports that some refugees are simultaneously registered at different camps, receiving multiple aid services provided by AFAD, the Turkish Red Crescent and the World Food Program (WFP). Registering refugees is essential for managing assistance but is also an important protection tool. However, in response, the Turkish government notes that AFAD and the Turkish National Police have worked together since mid-2013 to record biometric identities of refugees. This ensures that refugees who leave one camp and move to other are tracked by fingerprint to avoid receiving aid from multiple sources. Similarly Syrians leaving and entering the camps are tracked simultaneously through fingerprint-based software.

Perhaps because of its background as a civil protection agency, AFAD may be less aware of the security concerns arising in the camps. Security services in the camps are outsourced, with private security companies responsible for day-to-day security matters. A May 2013 USAK survey revealed that 62 percent of the refugees in the camps were very satisfied with the security services in the camps.<sup>21</sup>

The camps are mostly closed to outsiders. Although UNHCR has access to the camps and some NGOs are allowed to enter to provide services, the camps are much less open to outsiders than refugee camps in other countries. For example, while the research team received permission to visit camps in Gaziantep and Kilis, requests to visit camps in Hatay were not granted. Camp administrators explained that these restrictions are intended to protect the refugees from the risk of provocations by outsiders visiting the camps and to preserve the dignity of the refugees.

Although contraceptives are available, birth control is a controversial issue in light of the high Syrian casualties in the war. Syrians see the issue of birth control as a threat to their very existence, the group was told by camp administrators.

Registration of births in the camps is another concern. For example, in the Öncüpınar Container camp an average of 2.5 babies are born every day. From May 2011 to October 2013, over 6,000 births occurred inside Syrian refugee camps in Turkey. These babies are immediately registered by AFAD and birth certificates are given to all babies born in Turkey. However, at this point these babies are in effect stateless because their parents often do not have the proper forms of identity documents and are unable to have their babies registered by the authorities in Syria.

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<sup>21</sup> Mehmet Güçer, Sema Karaca and Osman Bahadır Dinçer, *The Struggle for Life between Borders: Syrian Refugees*, graph:18, p.41

AFAD's current registration practice will need to be tied into birth registration in Syria when the war finally comes to an end. Or as the Turkish government responded, the birth records of Syrian babies can be registered on the basis of birth certificates when the war comes to an end. The high birth rate is another issue in the camps. Although contraceptives are available, birth control is a controversial issue in light of the high Syrian casualties in the war. Syrians see the issue of birth control as a threat to their very existence, the group was told by camp administrators.

“These border camps have saved humanity’s honor.”

- Turkish Ministry of Interior official

Although excellent educational facilities are provided in the camps for children at all age levels, the issue of officially-recognized diplomas remains a major problem and source of concern for parents and Syrian community leaders in Turkey. This concern was expressed by Syrian National Coalition education representatives as well as members of the Syrian Free Judges and Prosecutors. There are also vocational training facilities in the camps; in some cases, such as the Adiyaman Temporary Protection Centers, women who have completed training in the carpet business are beginning to receive needed additional income. The Turkish policy is to support refugees to acquire professions which will be useful when they return to their countries. It is encouraging to hear that the vocational training programs at Adiyaman are being applied in other Temporary Protection Centers. These are important initiatives which should be replicated more widely, including supporting refugees living outside of the camps to take advantage of vocational training opportunities.

Finally, while it was difficult to ascertain the sectarian composition of the camps, AFAD stressed its non-discrimination policy. The camps, they affirmed, were open to everyone regardless of the religious or ethnic background of Syrian refugees. In fact, the majority of the camp population is of Sunni Arab origin; while there are reports that Assyrian Christians, Turkmen<sup>22</sup> and others are sometimes placed in separate camps to avoid sectarian tensions, the Turkish government emphasizes that Syrians are never asked about their religious or sectarian affiliation when accepting them into the Temporary Protection Centers.

### ***Concerns and recommendations on camp refugees:***

The Turkish government deserves widespread commendation and support for the quality of the assistance provided in the camps. At the same time, the government is encouraged to allow more international organizations and NGOs to visit the camps in order to raise awareness of the conditions inside the camp and to mobilize additional resources.

Similarly, it is understood that AFAD has carried out surveys and studies of conditions and attitudes of Syrian refugees living in camps. The government would be well-served to make these reports publicly available.

<sup>22</sup> Camps in Malatya, Osmaniye, Yayladağı and Islahiye.

Given the proximity of some refugee camps to the border area, it is vital that the Turkish government continues to prohibit access to militants and keep weapons out of the camps in order to insulate these civilian safe havens from the Syrian conflict.

## NON - CAMP REFUGEES

While the Syrian refugees living in camps are by and large well-assisted, it is a different situation for those refugees living outside the camps, whose numbers are estimated to be at least 400,000 or twice the number of those accommodated in camps. There are no publicly-available comprehensive reports on the living situations of non-camp refugees, with the exception of a report prepared by Mazlum-Der on the non-camp refugee population in Istanbul.<sup>23</sup> Many non-camp refugees are renting accommodations and there are concerns about how they will manage when their savings run-out.



*Kimse Yok Mu volunteers in Kilis serve Syrian refugees at field kitchens (Elizabeth Ferris, October 2013).*

There are also concerns about the rising rental costs and scarcity of accommodation in the border areas. In Kilis, for example, average monthly rents were between 200-300 TL (100-150 USD). These have now skyrocketed to 700-1000 TL (350-500 USD). The increase in rents is even more dramatic in the case of Istanbul where rents in relatively poor parts of the city have increased from around 700-800 to 1400-1500 TL (350-750 USD). Many of the refugees, especially in the border areas, are living with host families who have responded generously to their relatives fleeing the bloodshed in Syria. However, the team heard anecdotal reports of the growing financial burden of host families who are going into debt to support their relatives. Some of the refugees are camping out in parks and squatting in unoccupied and often derelict buildings, an unsustainable solution given the harsh winter that lies ahead. AFAD has collected some data on non-camp refugees and the research team was told that this would soon be made publicly available. These non-camp refugees do not receive financial assistance from the government, although programs are beginning to be developed by NGOs such as Kimse Yok Mu, İHH, Deniz Feneri,

“It seems that the state victimizes Syrians living in Kilis when compared to those living in the camps in terms of aid. Thus, the people of Kilis who try to close this gap have become materially and spiritually tired and weakened.”

- A community leader in Kilis

<sup>23</sup> Halim Yılmaz, "Türkiye'de Suriyeli Mülteciler: İstanbul Örneği/Tespitler, İhtiyaçlar ve Öneriler" [Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Istanbul Case/Findings, Needs and Recommendations], *Mazlum-Der*, 12 September 2013.

Uluslararası Mavi Hilal and Ortak Akıl Platformu to assist them with their rental payments as well as food needs.

One of the main problems is that Syrians who do not have passports and who have entered the country through unofficial channels have no identity cards – and thus no way of accessing public services. The government has recognized the importance of registering non-camp refugees, and the team visited a registration center in Gaziantep.<sup>24</sup> While three registration centers have been established (Gaziantep, Kilis and Osmaniye), these only register non-camp refugees in their areas of jurisdiction. Refugees living outside these areas and outside camps have no way of being registered with the government or of obtaining the identity cards needed to access services. The team learned that UNHCR is making 23 mobile registration units available, which will undoubtedly improve the capacity to register refugees living outside the area served by the three existing centers.

On 18 January 2013 the government issued a decree<sup>25</sup> stating that all Syrians, registered or not, in the eleven provinces bordering Syria<sup>26</sup> were entitled to the same health services as Turkish citizens. But in conversations in the border regions, the team heard that this is not uniformly applied at the local level. In the province of Hatay, for example, the team was told that unregistered non-camp Syrian refugees, i.e. the majority, were experiencing difficulties accessing this service. Access to tertiary health care is also particularly problematic. While emergency health care is available to all, follow-up visits are not covered. Some NGOs are beginning to provide health services to non-registered, non-camp refugees, but are unable to meet all of their needs. Following its January decree on access to health care in the border regions, the government subsequently introduced a new decree to cover 81 provinces in Turkey.<sup>27</sup> However reports about access to health services, especially for the chronically sick such as diabetics and cancer patients, continue to persist. In some provinces hospital administrations refuse to recognize this recent decree and demand payments to cover health care costs. The team also heard reports of overworked and exhausted hospital workers, especially in locations close to the Syrian border, who are increasingly requesting transfers out of the area, leading to concerns about a shortage of qualified medical personnel in the border areas.

In its response, the Turkish government noted that 63 Syrian doctors and 18 Syrian pharmacists have taken up positions in the Temporary Protection Centers with the approval of the Ministry of Health and that similar arrangements will be made outside of these Centers. Working with UNHCR and the European Union, plans are also well underway to open 10 fully equipped hospitals and 12 mobile health units to increase Syrians' access to health care.

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<sup>24</sup> Opened on 25 January 2013. , As of 22 October 2013 approximately 82.000 Syrians were registered by Gaziantep Registration Office.

<sup>25</sup> AFAD Communique, 2013/1 No. 374, Article 2.

<sup>26</sup> (Hatay, Osmaniye, Kilis, Kahramanmaraş, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Adıyaman, Adana, Mersin, Malatya, Batman)

<sup>27</sup> AFAD Communique, 2013/8 No. 12816.

Only 10 percent of urban refugees have the opportunity to pursue their education.

Education is a particularly difficult area for non-camp refugees. Only 10 percent of urban refugees have the opportunity to pursue their education. On the one hand, access to Turkish schools is limited to those who have passports, are registered with the police and hold a residence permit. Furthermore, the fact that the language of education is Turkish makes it difficult for many refugee children to follow the curriculum. Syrian schools – taught by Syrian teachers in Arabic using the Syrian curriculum – are springing up. The team was told that there are 55 such schools in the country, a number well short of accommodating all school-age children. There are also complaints that the quality of the schools is uneven. Students graduating from these Syrian schools – as well as the schools in the camps – are given diplomas which are not recognized by Turkish authorities, limiting opportunities for a university education. However, the Turkish government has made informal arrangements for Syrian university students who are refugees in Turkey, allowing some to attend Turkish universities.<sup>28</sup> The Turkish government has planned to open schools for Syrian students living outside of camps, initially to include 12 regions where Syrians are concentrated.

The issue of Syrian refugee access to education also raises broader issues. When the refugees arrived, they – and the Turkish government – expected that this would be a temporary phenomenon and that the refugees would soon return to Syria. Thus many of the refugees were not interested in learning Turkish. However, the situation has changed and there is now more demand for Turkish language instruction (also for adults). A number of NGOs have started to offer courses in Turkish, and this appears to be encouraged by AFAD to ease the challenges that non-camp refugees face in their daily lives. This raises the issue of the relationship between education and eventual sustainable solutions for the refugees. Admission to Turkish schools and learning the Turkish language will make it easier for the refugees to integrate into Turkey, but at the same time could complicate their eventual return to Syria.

So far, the Turkish government has adopted an incremental approach in dealing with non-camp refugees, which perhaps explains why the nature of assistance to such beneficiaries has been both *ad hoc* and insufficient. This is due not just to the lack of a clear governmental policy but also to weak coordination between local and international NGOs assisting non-camp refugees. A further obstacle is posed by the difficulty for international NGOs to register and work legally inside Turkey, thus hindering activities and assistance programs to urban refugees.

AFAD has developed a new web-based software system called Electronic Aid Distribution System (EYDAS) which links potential donors (both national and international) with Syrian

<sup>28</sup> "Suriyeli Mültecilere Üniversite Yolu" [Syrian Refugees Granted Access to University Education], *NTVMSNBC*, 22 September, 2012, [www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25384153/](http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25384153/); See Resolution of General Assembly of Turkish Higher Education Council dated 29 August 2012 (on file with the authors).



citizens in need. Donors can get the necessary information about the needs of Syrians in particular locations and then develop appropriate distribution plans. This system is one of the first models in the world where nongovernmental and governmental organizations are able to work together in the same system to increase the effectiveness of aid delivery.

### ***Concerns and recommendations on non-camp refugees:***

The efforts of the Turkish government to make health care and education available to Syrian refugees merit commendation and support. However, there seems to be a gap between the national level decree giving access to health care to all Syrians and its implementation on the ground.

As in the case of refugees in camps, AFAD has conducted studies and surveys of Syrian refugees living outside of camps; these studies should be made available to the public.

While commending the Turkish government for recognizing the importance of ensuring registration for all refugees, current operations should be systematized and expanded.

As education plays a critical role in durable solutions for refugees, the government should address the issue of valid diplomas for refugee children in camps as well as those receiving their education in Syrian schools in Turkey.

The Turkish government should ease registration restrictions for international NGOs seeking to work inside Turkey, particularly with regard to expanding assistance to non-camp refugees in dire need. At the same time, the government should take measures to promote collaboration between local and international NGOs.

## IDPS AND CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS

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The presence of refugees in Turkey is symptomatic of a much broader displacement crisis. In addition to the two million Syrian refugees in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, in addition to those in Egypt, there are at least 6.5 million<sup>29</sup> internally-displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria. Much less is known about IDPs than refugees; even estimates of their number are uncertain. Reports are, however, that displacement is widespread and dynamic, with people moving multiple times in search of safety and assistance.<sup>30</sup>



*A view of the Bab al-Salame IDP camp (USAK, February 2013).*

As noted above, displacement in northern Syria – the region closest to Turkey – is widespread, and IDPs are living in areas contested by various armed groups, including the regime, the Free Syrian Army (FSA), the Partiya Yekitiya Democrat (PYD) and different al-Qaeda affiliates. Across from the Öncüpınar refugee camp on the Syrian side of the border is the makeshift IDP camp of Bab al-Salame. Presently, 15,000 Syrian IDPs live in the camp alongside the Turkish border. While the research team was told by the government officials that these IDPs preferred to stay on the Syrian side, virtually everyone else interviewed asserted that the IDPs would prefer to enter Turkey but were being turned back from the border because of their lack of documentation.

Are the border IDP camps safe for the Syrians who live there? The Assad regime would not dare to bomb the Bab al-Salame camp, the team was told, because as soon as planes approach the area, Turkish fighter jets would immediately take off. Indeed, Syrian planes would have to cross into Turkish air space in order to attack this particular makeshift camp along the border. Actually, it is possible to argue that a *de facto* “safe haven” exists along at least part of the border with Syria, as Turkish fighter planes do scramble to the region any time a Syrian helicopter or

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<sup>29</sup> Lyse Doucet, “UN aid chief says 40% of Syrians in need of assistance,” *BBC News*, 4 November 2013, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24813902](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24813902); SNAP, “Regional Analysis Syria” 30 October 2013, Prt.1 p. 8, [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/part\\_i\\_syria\\_0.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/part_i_syria_0.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> UN General Assembly, *Protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons: situation of internally displaced persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons*, 15 July 2013, A/67/931, [www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/idp/CB\\_GA\\_Report\\_Syria\\_July2013.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/idp/CB_GA_Report_Syria_July2013.pdf); see also, an article which erroneously refers to IDPs in Syria as “refugees”: Anne Barnard, “Hardships Mounting for Refugees Inside Syria,” *The New York Times*, 24 October 2013, [www.nytimes.com/2013/10/25/world/middleeast/hardships-mounting-for-refugees-inside-syria.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/25/world/middleeast/hardships-mounting-for-refugees-inside-syria.html?_r=0)

aircraft approaches the border areas. Early in October, a Syrian helicopter was shot down, and subsequently Syrian fighter planes were forced out of the area.<sup>31</sup>

However, a greater security challenge is the frequent fighting that occurs in the nearby town of Azaz, between the Northern Storm Brigade (which controls the Bab al-Salame camp together with Liwa' al-Tawhid) and the al-Qaeda linked Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham. Furthermore, in addition to the threats posed by organized armed groups, there are also reports that criminal activity in these makeshift camps is increasing, and that health, educational and nutritional conditions are extremely poor. All these factors lead to growing concerns about the safety of the IDPs in northern Syria.

Cross-border assistance operations are widespread, but there is little information about the extent to which the needs of IDPs are being met. The Turkish government is presently assisting about 135,000 IDPs – 100,000 of whom live in IDP camps and 35,000 living outside of camps in villages in northern Syria. These are in areas controlled by the opposition, although given the nature of the conflict and the proliferation of armed groups, the front lines are constantly shifting and the areas under the control of various groups frequently change.

The Turkish government's "zero point delivery" functions similarly to the commercial trade described above.<sup>32</sup> AFAD delivers aid (approximately USD 128 million thus far) inside Syria with the support of the Turkish Red Crescent and (The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief) İHH. This aid is brought to a buffer zone where it is then picked up and delivered by Syrian groups. İHH plays a critical role in the transfer of this aid to the make-shift IDP camps on the Syrian side of the border but also to areas deeper inside Syria. In addition, an unknown number of bilateral donors, INGOs, opposition forces and other actors provide cross-border assistance. All of these groups work with local partners. Despite repeated inquiries by the research team, however, it was difficult to ascertain who administers IDP camps and which local groups and partners (whether the FSA or Syrian NGOs), are in charge of distributing and delivering the aid coming through the Turkish government inside the country. Another surprising factor was the lack of collaboration and coordination between different organizations working inside Syria, whether Turkish, Arab or international. The majority claimed to work independently and appeared to be uninformed of the work carried out by other organizations inside the country.

The Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU), for example, which is the humanitarian arm of the Istanbul-based Syrian National Coalition, is a case in point. Established as a bridge between international donors wanting to assist Syrians living in opposition-controlled areas and local partners, the ACU does not collaborate with AFAD or other NGOs, but works mainly through

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<sup>31</sup> Saif Tawfiq, "Turkish warplanes shoot down Syrian helicopter," *Reuters*, 16 September 2013, [www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/16/us-syria-crisis-turkey-idUSBRE98F0K920130916](http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/16/us-syria-crisis-turkey-idUSBRE98F0K920130916)

<sup>32</sup> AFAD, "Afet Raporu Suriye: Suriye Sıfır Noktasında İnsani Yardım" [Syria Disaster Report: Zero Point Humanitarian Aid Distribution] [www.afad.gov.tr/TR/IcerikDetay1.aspx?IcerikID=759&ID=16](http://www.afad.gov.tr/TR/IcerikDetay1.aspx?IcerikID=759&ID=16)

Syrian local councils. These local councils vary tremendously in terms of their capacity, orientation and relationships with armed groups; there are some 300 local councils in Idlib, for example. ACU members made no secret of the difficulties they faced in selecting trusted local partners who could pass the vetting process of Western donor governments. It goes without saying that delivering humanitarian assistance of the most basic nature is becoming increasingly difficult due to the proliferating number of armed checkpoints and high transportation costs. Moreover, fragmentation among the opposition groups has become increasingly violent and volatile with obvious negative effects on access to Syrians in desperate need of assistance.

### ***Concerns and recommendations on IDPs and cross-border operations***

Cross-border operations to assist Syrian IDPs and others affected by the conflict are acutely needed and should be expanded. The fact that many of these operations are semi-clandestine in nature and that there is virtually no information on the Syrian partners delivering the goods means that humanitarian aid and other forms of assistance are mixed. The need for greater transparency and coordination on all sides is urgently needed.

The fact that UN agencies are presently precluded from involvement in cross-border operations, due to the lack of a UN Security Council resolution, is a major impediment to coordination. While other entities may be equally effective in operational response, the UN plays a unique role in coordinating aid activities. The October 2013 Security Council Presidential Statement was an important symbolic action by the United Nations, but it lacks the force of a Security Council resolution and has yet to produce concrete results.<sup>33</sup>

The international community should recognize the particularly serious plight of Syrian IDPs by providing more assessments of the numbers and needs of IDPs, estimating the scale of displacement and pressing responsible actors to ensure that IDPs are protected as well as assisted. Given the restrictions on access inside Syria and the fluid nature of displacement, it is obviously more difficult to estimate the number of IDPs than refugees living in neighboring countries. Nonetheless, more clarity is needed. It would be helpful for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which is responsible for compiling figures on IDPs, to be more transparent in its methodology. While assessments such as the Joint Rapid Assessment in Northern Syria (J-RANS) assessments, the Syria Needs Analysis Project (SNAP), and data collected by individual NGOs provide very useful information on humanitarian conditions, there is a need for better coordination of efforts and regular joint compilation and review of gathered data.

The Turkish government should be commended for its diplomatic efforts to introduce the “zero point humanitarian assistance delivery” policy, but the government should further its diplomatic

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<sup>33</sup> UN Security Council, *Statement [made on behalf of the Security Council, at the 7039th meeting, 2 Oct. 2013, in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in the Middle East"]*, 2 October 2013, S/PRST/2013/15, [www.refworld.org/docid/524d32c04.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/524d32c04.html)

efforts to extend the scope of the Security Council Presidential Statement, which calls on all parties to allow for cross-line and cross-border humanitarian assistance and respect for humanitarian principles. If the Security Council is unable to adopt a resolution on humanitarian access in Syria, perhaps Turkey should work to mobilize action by the General Assembly.

## EMERGING LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

The Turkish government initially referred to Syrian arrivals as “guests”, but as their numbers increased, it turned to the 2001 European directive on temporary protection<sup>34</sup> and since October 2011 has awarded them temporary protected status. However, in practice, the research team found considerable confusion and varying practices among Turkish officials with respect to whether Syrian refugees are to be called “refugees,” “individuals under temporary protection” or “guests.” The team also observed confusion over the legal meaning of these terms and their implied obligations for the Turkish government. For example, the team talked with one government official who claimed that “according to the laws of the UN (sic) these people were NOT refugees but guests.” Even if the confusion in terminology does not appear to have undermined the quality of protection, particularly with respect to ensuring *non-refoulement* of Syrian refugees, it does not bode well in terms of ensuring consistency within the state apparatus.



*A view of the Öncüpınar border crossing between Turkey and Syria (USAK, October 2013).*

This confusion in status is also complicated by the practice of extending residence permits to Syrian refugees who have entered Turkey with valid passports. This not only facilitates access to health and education services in Turkey but also at least theoretically to legal access to the labor market. Non-camp refugees who do not possess a passport and who are not registered do not enjoy such benefits. This inevitably creates a two-tiered system where one group of refugees enjoys broader rights than others. Moreover, the situation is likely to become further complicated when those Syrians with valid passports find that their passports have expired and cannot be renewed.

“According to the laws of the UN (sic) these people were NOT refugees but guests.”

- A mid-rank Turkish government official

Syrians who entered the country through the official border crossings and who have passports can apply for residence permits and then the right to work (theoretically, at least). In practice, this is a long and cumbersome practice, and the team did not hear of any cases where Syrian refugees had been granted work authorization. This means that Syrians, when they are able to find work in the informal economy, are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Rarely do they

<sup>34</sup> L 212/12 Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/justice\\_freedom\\_security/free\\_movement\\_of\\_persons\\_asylum\\_immigration/33124\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/33124_en.htm)

make enough money to support their families and rarely is their income stable. The team did speak with a Turkish businessman who hires Syrians for construction projects, but these jobs are neither permanent nor steady. As their savings are depleted, Syrian refugees living outside of camps are not receiving steady governmental assistance and are unable to work legally. In some cases Syrian children find it easier to find jobs as employers know that they can pay them less.<sup>35</sup> Overall, the economic situation of Syrian refugees is deteriorating. At the same time, Syrian refugees who are forced to take up jobs illegally are depressing wages and provoking resentment among local wage earners. This was a problem particularly highlighted by a report prepared by a Turkish NGO in the city of Kilis.<sup>36</sup>

In the midst of this mass influx, Turkey adopted its first comprehensive law on migration in April 2013, due to come into effect in April 2014. This is a major undertaking and representatives of the UNHCR as well as other international organizations have emphasized the generous provisions of the new law in comparison with past practices. Considering the fact that the new law was adopted in the midst of a major refugee crisis, this is a considerable accomplishment – particularly as this action was taken at a time when many developed countries are introducing dramatic measures to exclude refugees and migrants, including the construction of physical barriers such as fences and walls. The new law includes a provision for temporary protected status in case of mass influx of refugees. However, implementing legislation has still to be developed and put into effect for the law to come into force. The law also provides for the establishment of a “migration organization” that would coordinate with other governmental bodies, including AFAD and effectively be responsible for implementing the law in the case of mass influxes of refugees.

### ***Concerns and recommendations on the legal framework***

The Turkish government’s adoption of a new migration law – the country’s first – is welcomed, and seems to be on track with the adoption of policies and recommendations which will translate the law into practice.

The Turkish government should consider allowing Syrian refugees whose passports expire to keep their residence permits until such time as they are able to return safely to Syria or find another durable solution.

The Turkish government should be reminded that the EU Directive on temporary protection allows for the possibility of individuals to seek individual asylum under certain very specific conditions and this should be borne in mind while the secondary legislation to define the term “temporary protection” is being prepared.

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<sup>35</sup> “40 bin Suriyeli İşbaşı Yapıyor” [40 thousand Syrians Begin Work], *Sabah*, February 21, 2013, [www.sabah.com.tr/Ekonomi/2013/02/21/40-bin-suriyeli-isbasi-yapiyor](http://www.sabah.com.tr/Ekonomi/2013/02/21/40-bin-suriyeli-isbasi-yapiyor)

<sup>36</sup> “Kilis'teki Suriye: Sorunların Tespiti ve Çözümlerine İlişkin Rapor” [The Syria Within Kilis: Determining the Problems and Finding Solutions], *Kilis Ortak Akıl Topluluğu [Kilis Common Mind Association]*, September 2013.

## THE IMPACT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES ON TURKEY

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For the first year or so of the crisis, the main impact of Syrian refugees was concentrated in the border regions Turkey, and these are the areas which continue to be the most heavily impacted.<sup>37</sup> The town of Kilis, for example, had a pre-crisis population of 80,000 and presently hosts some 60-80,000 Syrian refugees. As refugees have spread throughout the country (with a reported 100,000 living in Istanbul alone)<sup>38</sup> awareness has grown that this is an issue of national – not local – concern for the Turkish government and the Turkish people.

Economically, the Turkish government reports that it has spent over \$2 billion USD on assistance to Syrians – mostly Syrian refugees but also Syrians in northern Syria through its zero point delivery system. This figure probably understates the costs incurred by the government as it does not include all health care expenses or expenditures by municipal authorities and NGOs. The commitment of the Turkish government to providing high-quality assistance to the 200,000 refugees living in camps is exemplary. It is a source of pride for the Turkish government and stands as an example to the world of the actions of a strong national government response. As discussed below, it also raises questions about the sustainability of assistance and a call for greater burden-sharing.

The economic impact of Syrian refugees goes beyond the expenditures by the government. Prices, especially rental costs, have increased, particularly in the border regions. As one of the truck drivers waiting to enter Syria remarked to the team, “One kilogram of tomatoes has gone up from 1 TL to 3 TL.” This is a 200 percent increase in a country with an inflation rate just under 10 percent. This is a considerable increase in the cost of living for the majority of Turkish people along the border region where per capita income is usually lower than the national average of 10,500 USD.<sup>39</sup> Economic losses also include the fact that normally lively trade



*A Turkish truck driver serves the authors tea while waiting in the queue to cross into Syria (Elizabeth Ferris, October 2013).*

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<sup>37</sup> Mehmet Güçer, Sema Karaca and Osman Bahadır Dinçer, *The Struggle for Life between Borders: Syrian Refugees*, p. 22.

<sup>38</sup> Halim Yılmaz, "Türkiye'de Suriyeli Mülteciler: İstanbul Örneği/Tespitler, İhtiyaçlar ve Öneriler" [Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Istanbul Case/Findings, Needs and Recommendations], *Mazlum-Der*, 12 September 2013, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> "Türkiye'nin en zengin ve fakir illeri" [Richest and Poorest Cities in Turkey], *Sabah* 25 December, 2012 [www.sabah.com.tr/fotohaber/ekonomi/turkiyenin-en-zengin-ve-en-fakir-illeri/45769](http://www.sabah.com.tr/fotohaber/ekonomi/turkiyenin-en-zengin-ve-en-fakir-illeri/45769)



between the border region and Syria (as well as Arab countries beyond) has been adversely affected by the conflict.<sup>40</sup>

But it is also important to note that there have been economic benefits resulting from the influx of funds into the border regions. For example, in border cities such as Gaziantep, Mersin and Hatay, Syrians opened 122 companies in the first 7 months of 2013 as well as 106 more companies in Istanbul and Bursa in 2013. It is estimated that the total capital entering Turkey from Syria is 39 million TLs or 20 million USD.<sup>41</sup> Economic benefits from the influx of Syrians also include the increased demand for goods and services benefitting commerce in the region.<sup>42</sup>

During their trip to Gaziantep, Kilis and Hatay, team members were touched by the sincere empathy and hospitality of all of the Turks with whom they spoke about the refugees. Turks know about the massacres and atrocities being committed across the border in Syria and have responded generously to Syrians who have come to Turkey to escape the violence. Family and ethnic ties have been important sources of connection. Turkmen communities, for example, seem to serve as a bridge between Turkish and Syrian cultures, while there are large Arab communities in Hatay and Urfa and Kurdish communities along other parts of the border.

Nevertheless, as is always the case when refugees (or IDPs) live in non-camp settings, the longer the displacement lasts the more likely tensions are to increase between refugees and the communities where they live. The team also heard of Turkish social service organizations set up to help the poor who are now devoting their resources to Syrian refugees, leaving poor Turks to ask "what about us?"

In spite of the fact that national and local governments have sought to respond to the needs of the refugees, there is a risk that social problems will develop in the future. Local communities, many of whom are of limited means, are doing their best by hosting the refugees in their homes without compensation, giving them priority at the hospitals or personally taking great pains to collect and distribute in-kind aid. Yet, the question arises: to what extent is this a sustainable and manageable task?

"An unnamed cold wind is blowing in Kilis. The government should take certain precautions against the possibility of a worse situation in the future."

- An NGO  
representative in Kilis

The team also heard concerns about the impact of Syrian refugees on Turkish values and family structures. A report prepared by Ortak Akıl, a local initiative made up of volunteers from the people of Kilis, offers a rich analysis of the extent of the impact of Syrian refugees on the social

<sup>40</sup> Idil Bilgic Alpaslan, "Suriye Krizi Türkiye Ekonomisini Nasıl Etkiler?" [How Will the Syrian Crisis Effect the Turkish Economy?], *TEPAV*, August 2012, [www.tepav.org.tr/tr/yayin/s/555](http://www.tepav.org.tr/tr/yayin/s/555)

<sup>41</sup> Fehim Genç, "Suriyeli İşi Ticarete Döktü" [Syrians Entrepreneurs Ready for Business in Turkey], *Milliyet*, 17 Ağustos 2013, <http://ekonomi.milliyet.com.tr/suriyeli-isi-ticarete-doktu/ekonomi/detay/1750920/default.htm>

<sup>42</sup> Didem Collinsworth, "Hatay: The Syrian Crisis and a Case of Turkish Economic Resilience," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Spring 2013, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 119-124.

life of Kilis.<sup>43</sup> For example, multiple wives and early marriages are common in Syria, but prohibited by the Turkish Civil Code. Presently, some Turkish men are marrying young Syrian women, sometimes taking them as second wives to their Turkish wives. Apparently, thousands of these marriages have occurred since the arrival of Syrian refugees (although Turkish-Syrian marriages had occurred before the crisis as well.) But as the Syrian women usually do not have passports, the necessary forms cannot be completed and these marriages cannot be officially registered in Turkey. Nor can their children be considered as Turkish citizens, raising questions about the nationality of children resulting from these marriages. Given the lack of resources of the refugees, it seems that at least some of these marriages represent a survival strategy for Syrian families.

Other social problems include an increase in begging as well as petty crime. There were complaints about accidents involving uninsured, Syrian-registered cars in which Turkish drivers had to cover the cost of damages from their own resources. Turkish police also complain that they are unable to enforce traffic regulations with Syrian drivers and cannot track Syrian-registered cars as they cannot read the Arabic license plates. The report by Ortak Akıl, cited above, provides further extensive details of the many ways in which Syrian refugees are adversely impacting day-to-day life in Kilis and calls on the government to act before the situation continues to deteriorate in the city.

### ***Concerns and recommendations on the impact of the Syrian refugees on Turkey***

A study should be commissioned on the economic impact of the refugees, including both the economic costs but also the benefits resulting from their presence. The September 2013 World Bank assessment of the impact of Syrian refugees on Lebanon's host communities may provide a helpful model.<sup>44</sup>

The Turkish government should also look into the possibility of issuing some form of temporary license plates to Syrian vehicles operating in Turkey.

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<sup>43</sup> "Kilis'teki Suriye: Sorunların Tespiti ve Çözümlerine İlişkin Rapor" [The Syria within Kilis: Determining the Problems and Finding Solutions], *Kilis Ortak Akıl Topluluğu [Kilis Common Mind Association]*, September 2013.

<sup>44</sup> World Bank, *Economic and social impact assessment of the Syrian conflict*, September 2013, [www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/09/24/lebanon-bears-the-brunt-of-the-economic-and-social-spillovers-of-the-syrian-conflict](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/09/24/lebanon-bears-the-brunt-of-the-economic-and-social-spillovers-of-the-syrian-conflict)

## WHITHER INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY?

While the international community has recognized the enormous contributions of the Turkish government, this has not been accompanied by sufficient financial assistance. For example, while Turkey is included in the UN's Regional Response Plan, with an appeal for \$372 million, it has only been funded at the 32 percent level.<sup>45</sup> In comparison, the overall appeal has been funded at a rate of 53 percent. Turkish officials feel that their capacity has been reached and expect the international community to provide additional funds as an expression of solidarity and burden-sharing.<sup>46</sup>

In the discussion at the seminar, there was affirmation on the need for increased support to the Turkish government but also a suggestion that the narrative used by the government in seeking this support needs to change. More transparency on the part of the Turkish government and more involvement by NGOs would be important steps which could lead to greater financial support for programs to serve refugees. As one seminar participant put it “Turkey has to help the international community to help Turkey.” However, seminar participants were also critical of the current patronizing culture of Western humanitarian assistance community and noted that this system needs to change to recognize the central role of host country governments and organizations. NGO representatives who met with the team in the field as well as those represented in the seminar noted that Turkish and Syrian NGOs are systematically excluded from coordination meetings among international NGOs while the European Union insists on channeling its humanitarian assistance through INGOs and intergovernmental organizations.

On the other hand, in spite of the constant complaints about inadequate international assistance the Turkish government has allowed only 10-12 international NGOs to register, and there have been cases where applications have been rejected by the government. While the team was told by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the approval process only takes four to six weeks after the file is completed, NGOs reported that the process is indeed cumbersome and much lengthier. A more open approach to international NGOs would not only enable greater funds to flow into Turkey and alleviate at least some of the complaints about lack of burden-sharing, but would also



*A wheelchair sits in front of a tent in Bab al-Salame camp (USAK, February 2013).*

<sup>45</sup> UNHCR, “Syria Regional Refugee Response,” Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, June 2013, [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Inter-Agency%20Regional%20Response%20for%20Syrian%20refugees\\_1.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Inter-Agency%20Regional%20Response%20for%20Syrian%20refugees_1.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Foreign Minister Davutoğlu participates in the “Ministerial Meeting of Syria Bordering Countries”, 4 September 2013, [www.mfa.gov.tr/foreign-minister-davutoglu-participates-in-the-ministerial-meeting-of-syria-bordering-countries.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/foreign-minister-davutoglu-participates-in-the-ministerial-meeting-of-syria-bordering-countries.en.mfa)

directly benefit the refugees, especially those living outside of camps. In the meantime, AFAD's EYDAS<sup>47</sup> will operate somewhat like an exchange market where humanitarian needs can be matched with donors. The system, if well implemented and adopted by the international community, could serve as an effective and efficient mechanism to overcome shortages and bottlenecks in need assessments and distribution of assistance.

In its field trip the team was struck by the complaints received about the large number of Westerners who visit the area to talk to local authorities, refugee representatives, Turkish NGOs and Syrian National Council (SNC) representatives with little concrete assistance resulting from these visits.

The problem was best expressed by an official of the education board of the SNC who remarked that “it is all talk, talk, talk and then bye-bye” as he waved his hand to the team. It will be even more critical in the future that this “talk and no action” challenge be effectively addressed by the international community.

While the international community appears to be focusing mostly on the political and military dimension of the Syrian crisis, there is a serious risk that the urgent humanitarian needs of Syrians are not receiving sufficient attention and indeed that present levels of international solidarity cannot be maintained even as the needs increase. As a UNHCR official who spoke with the team put it, “The international community has to depoliticize the problem and see the face of the child that has not gone to school.” Even as the international community must redouble its efforts to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis, it is equally urgent that attention be focused on mobilizing the resources – and the will – to alleviate the humanitarian disaster that continues to unfold.

“The international community has to depoliticize the problem and see the face of the child that has not gone to school.”

- A UNHCR official

### ***Concerns and recommendations on international solidarity***

The Turkish government is urged to expedite the registration process of international NGOs, recognizing that these organizations bring resources and expertise which can complement the assistance programs of the government. At the same time, NGOs must respect Turkish laws and security concerns, including the responsibility of the Turkish government to monitor their activities.

The Turkish government should consider framing its requests for international financial support in terms of partnerships, collaboration and joint initiatives rather than simply as requests for support of existing governmental programs. It also might be helpful if these requests could be

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<sup>47</sup> “Afadkart [Afadcard]”, *Hürriyet*, 11 October 2013, [www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/24900964.asp](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/24900964.asp)

formulated in terms of their impact on preparing for post-conflict transition, building Syria's future, and ensuring the continuity of Syrian culture.

International donors are urged to honor their financial pledges and to provide Turkey with the financial support needed to cope with the growing burden posed by the long-term nature of the Syrian crisis.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

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Syria's humanitarian crisis and the outflow of refugees are having a profound impact on Turkey in ways that were not anticipated by either the government or the international community. When the Turkish government opened its borders to Syrian refugees in April 2011, immediately extending generous assistance to them and temporary protection a few months later, the expectation was that the crisis in Syria would be resolved fairly quickly and that the refugees would soon return home. Instead the crisis in Syria has not only lasted far longer than anticipated, but has escalated, bringing with it widespread destruction and displacement. In the words of a former Syrian judge, “calamity has descended” on the Syrian people. As a consequence, the number of refugees in Turkey may well reach one million by the end of the year. All available evidence suggests that the humanitarian crisis will persist. In this context, Turkey increasingly needs and seeks concrete assistance through burden-sharing from the international community.



*School girls prepare for primary school in Öncüpınar Container City (USAK, October 2013).*

There are at least five major challenges that Turkey presently faces. Addressing each of these challenges will require significant funding and much more international cooperation than has been received to date. The first challenge is how to continue to provide assistance and protection for an ever-growing number of refugees. Clearly, Turkey cannot continue with the policy it began in 2011 and keep constructing new camps with “five-star” services. To meet the needs of the present refugee population, this policy would require another roughly 40-50 camps and enormous resources well beyond the \$2 billion USD that the Turkish government has already spent. Furthermore, it is also far from certain that Syrian refugees want to go into these camps. Simply put, this approach is not sustainable. Hence, it is evident that the bulk of the refugees will continue to live outside camps; the challenge for Turkey will be in determining how to continue implementing its “temporary protection” policy in a way that meets the protection and assistance needs of the hundreds of thousands of refugees living outside the camps. The new Asylum Law that is due to come into force early next year provides a legal framework for addressing this challenge. However, this law was never intended to respond to a major mass influx of refugees and includes no provisions which offer these refugees lasting solutions in the form of integration into the host society.

The idea of “integration” as a possible long-term solution will be a highly controversial and politically sensitive issue in Turkey. Yet, given the current situation in Syria, voluntary massive

repatriation of the refugees to Syria is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future. Nor do the prospects of significant resettlement (or for that matter, even large-scale temporary evacuation) seem like realistic possibilities. If neither large-scale repatriation nor resettlement to third countries occurs, then the Turkish government has two choices. The first and most likely long-term response to the refugee crisis for the Turkish government will be to continue muddling through the refugee crisis with all the risks that this entails. Alternatively, the government could seriously consider the possibility of extending local integration to the refugees. In either case, enhanced international coordination and cooperation will be needed.

Hence, the second challenge that Turkey faces is in mobilizing international solidarity. The refugee and accompanying humanitarian crisis is not solely the responsibility of Turkey. It is unequivocally an international one. Yet, from the Turkish perspective, the level of that solidarity has left much to be desired. At the same time, the language and narrative that the Turkish government has been using does not appear to have helped mobilize such solidarity and burden-sharing. It will be critical for the Turkish government to switch from an accusatory-shaming language to a narrative that is both much more constructive and more realistic. The Turkish government will need to form strong cooperative relationships with other regional governments as well as with major international governmental organizations, including many specialized agencies such as the UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund and the WFP. Turkey, working with regional governments directly affected by the crisis and like-minded states, will have lead efforts to get the UN Security Council – or if not, the General Assembly – to adopt resolutions enabling the international community to address the humanitarian crisis more effectively. For Turkey, it will also be critical that the issue of burden-sharing does not become yet another bitter grievance in Turkish-EU relations. Instead, Turkey and the EU should use the Syrian refugee and humanitarian crisis as an opportunity to develop a much-needed constructive climate for this relationship. This would not only benefit both Turkey and the EU but would have a particularly important positive result for the victims of the Syrian crisis.

A third related challenge is the implementation of Turkey's "zero point delivery policy." Turkish authorities have ingeniously come up with a policy that enables the extension of cross-border assistance without directly challenging the principle of Syrian national sovereignty. AFAD, the Turkish Red Crescent and İHH play a critical role in managing this assistance. However, both the legal and practical bases of this policy remain very precarious. Beyond the Syrian "zero point" on the border İHH has the sole responsibility of ensuring that assistance finds its way into the hands of those who most need the aid. Given the lawlessness and chaos in this part of Syria, this is a heavy responsibility that should not be left solely on the shoulders of a single NGO, not even an NGO like the İHH that enjoys extensive goodwill and has significant experience in providing humanitarian assistance around the world. Turkey should work with other governments in the region and the international community – particularly those UN agencies with vast experience in delivery of humanitarian assistance – to make cross-border assistance a recognized international responsibility and ensure its effectiveness, transparency and security.

This is an urgent task highlighted recently by António Guterres and David Miliband in the *Washington Post*, where they welcomed the destruction of chemical weapons as a positive step but added that “(f)or the millions of Syrians who have been uprooted from their homes, the more pressing questions of life and death stem from basic concerns: food, water, shelter and medicine. And with the onset of winter, the challenge to survive grows even more daunting.”<sup>48</sup>

A fourth and related challenge for the Turkish government will be to address security issues resulting from both the violence in Syria and presence of an ever-increasing number of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Here the term “security” needs to be understood in the broadest sense of the word, including traditional understandings of national security, but also societal security as well as the security of refugees. Turkey will need to continue to protect Turkish citizens and Turkish infrastructure as well as refugees from military attacks, both from the Syrian regime and from groups within the opposition. Already, a number of Turkish citizens have died as a result of stray bullets and shells as well as a car bomb in the border region. Some of the refugee camps are located either directly on the border or very close to it, exposing civilians to the frequent fighting between opposing groups vying for the control of territory along the border. Furthermore, the security of IDPs living in very fragile makeshift camps along the Turkish border is precarious. There is also the controversial and highly-contested issue of movement of contraband weapons and opposition fighters across the Turkish border. If indeed this is happening, it not only jeopardizes Turkish national security, but also the security of refugee camps in which fighters allegedly come to rest and recuperate.

The presence of Syrian refugees, especially those living outside camps, is impacting the economic and social day-to-day lives of a growing number of Turkish citizens living throughout the country.

Furthermore, the presence of Syrian refugees, especially those living outside camps, is impacting the economic and social day-to-day lives of a growing number of Turkish citizens living throughout the country. Complaints and grievances are increasingly being raised in this respect and these will need to be addressed if social peace and harmony is to be maintained in these towns and cities. An even greater security challenge emerges from the way in which the conflict in Syria risks spilling over into Turkey because of ethnic and sectarian minorities that straddle the border. The government and politicians will need to be particularly alert and sensitive towards dangers of undermining societal security by victimizing one ethnic or sectarian group or another. Lastly, there are many related issues which threaten the safety and security of refugees and especially of vulnerable groups such as women and children. For example, there are growing

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<sup>48</sup> António Guterres and David Miliband, “Need for Syrian aid grows more urgent as winter approaches”, *The Washington Post*, 1 November, 2013. [www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/need-for-syrian-aid-grows-more-urgent-as-winter-approaches/2013/10/31/babc4dd0-3c08-11e3-b7ba-503fb5822c3e\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/need-for-syrian-aid-grows-more-urgent-as-winter-approaches/2013/10/31/babc4dd0-3c08-11e3-b7ba-503fb5822c3e_story.html)



reports of refugees being abused by criminals and opportunists; this abuse is likely to continue and increase if the refugees do not receive adequate assistance. In fact, assistance to Syrian refugees must be recognized as an essential protection strategy.

The fifth and likely the most difficult challenge is the need to recognize that humanitarian action cannot take the place of political action to resolve the broader Syrian crisis. The Syrian displacement crisis is the consequence, first and foremost, of the decision by the Syrian government to brutally repress protests against its regime, followed by the widening conflict in Syria that has now brought violent and radical Islamic groups into Syria. Syrian civilians are now fleeing not only the destruction inflicted on them by the regime but also by these radical groups that are fighting amongst themselves as well as against other groups in the broader Syrian opposition. The Turkish government, like many others, did not expect the conflict to reach this level of intensity and destruction. Instead, the assumption of the government was that the Syrian regime would collapse quickly and be replaced by a more representative and peaceful one. However, the conflict has reached a level of complexity that challenges the Turkish government's early and simple distinction between the "oppressor and the victims." Clearly, the number of "oppressors" have multiplied and made an easy resolution of the conflict in Syria very difficult. As much as the Turkish government's preferred position was to see the removal of the Syrian regime (if necessary by force), this has not occurred and does not seem likely to occur. Turkey is a key player in the region and it will be critical that it adopts a policy based on both realism and diplomacy in support of two objectives. The first is to advocate measures to prevent the humanitarian situation from worsening and the second is to ensure that whatever settlement emerges from the Syrian crisis is that addresses the need for Syrians to find solutions to their displacement, including their return and rehabilitation in their home communities in Syria.

# ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES MET WITH DURING OCTOBER 2013 FIELD TRIP AND SEMINAR

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## **Participants of the Seminar in Ankara**

### **Government Agencies**

Ministry of Interior, Department of Migration  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Gendarme General Command, Department of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime  
Centre for Excellence in Defense against Terrorism  
Prime Ministry, Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency  
Ankara Department of Police  
International Centre for Terrorism and Transnational Crime

### **International Agencies**

UNHCR  
EU Delegation to Turkey  
ECHO-EU Delegation to Turkey  
International Organization for Migration

### **Embassies**

Australian Embassy  
Swedish Embassy  
US Embassy

### **National NGOs**

Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants  
Asylum and Migration Research Center  
Helsinki Citizens Assembly  
Support to Life Foundation

### **International NGOs**

OXFAM  
Doctors without Borders  
Amnesty International  
Crimes of War Project

Refugees International  
International Crisis Group

### **Universities**

Columbia University  
İpek University  
Çağ University  
Middle East Technical University  
Georgetown University  
Bilkent University

### **Field Trip to the Border Region**

#### **Government Agencies**

Kilis Governorate  
Gaziantep Governorate  
Gaziantep- Coordination Governorate  
Gaziantep- The Registration and Coordination Centre for Syrian Refugees  
Common Mind Association of Gaziantep Municipality  
Nizip Tent City Administration  
Öncüpınar Container City Administration

#### **Syrian Agencies**

Educational Presidency of Syrian National Coalition  
Assistance Coordination Unit  
Union of Free Syrian Judges

#### **National NGOs**

Kimse Yok Mu Relief Organization  
International Blue Crescent  
Common Mind Association of Kilis  
The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief

#### **International NGOs**

Doctors without Borders

