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SYRIAN CRISIS: MASSIVE DISPLACEMENT, DIRE NEEDS AND A SHORTAGE OF SOLUTIONS

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Front Cover Photograph: Syrian refugee children post with their siblings in Amman, Jordan, August 19, 2013 (CARE/ Josh Estey)

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ACRONYMS

AFAD	Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency
AKP	Justice and Development Party
CoI	Commission of Inquiry
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EDAM	Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
EU	European Union
FSA	Free Syrian Army
GA	General Assembly
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham
JAN	<i>Jabhat al-Nusra</i>
JNAP	Joint National Action Plan
J-RANS	Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria
J-RANS II	Second Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
LBP	Lebanese Pound

MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	<i>Médecins Sans Frontières</i>
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PRS	Palestine Refugees from Syria
PYD	<i>Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat</i>
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
R&R	Rest and Recuperation
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
SHARP	Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan
SNAP	Syria Needs Analysis Project
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mounting civilian casualties in Syria and the displacement of over 6 million Syrians – with prospects of both more casualties and more displacement – make this the most daunting humanitarian crisis facing the world today.¹ The international community is struggling to respond to the humanitarian situation inside Syria and throughout the region. Political actors, unable to agree on how to end the civil war, seem to agree that humanitarian assistance is needed,² but the funds are neither sufficient now nor likely to be sustainable in the long term. The humanitarian crisis has implications not only for Syrian civilians, but also for the course of the conflict, governments in and beyond the region, the international humanitarian system and, indeed, for global governance. The available data paint a graphic picture of the human misery that has become commonplace in Syria.

This policy brief examines the various dimensions of the Syrian humanitarian crisis. Following a brief description of the evolution of the crisis, analysis turns to the humanitarian situation inside Syria and beyond Syria's borders, focusing on both the immediate and long-term impact of the crisis on Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, with briefer reports on Iraq and Egypt. The brief then turns to conclusions based on this analysis and offers a series of recommendations for key stakeholders. This present summary provides a brief look at the displacement situation before presenting recommendations; further analysis is provided in the policy brief.

The humanitarian effects of this conflict are horrific and we hope that this report will lead to a redoubling of efforts by the international community and particularly by the United States, to help Syrians find a political solution and bring an end to the war.

In Limbo: The Displacement Crisis

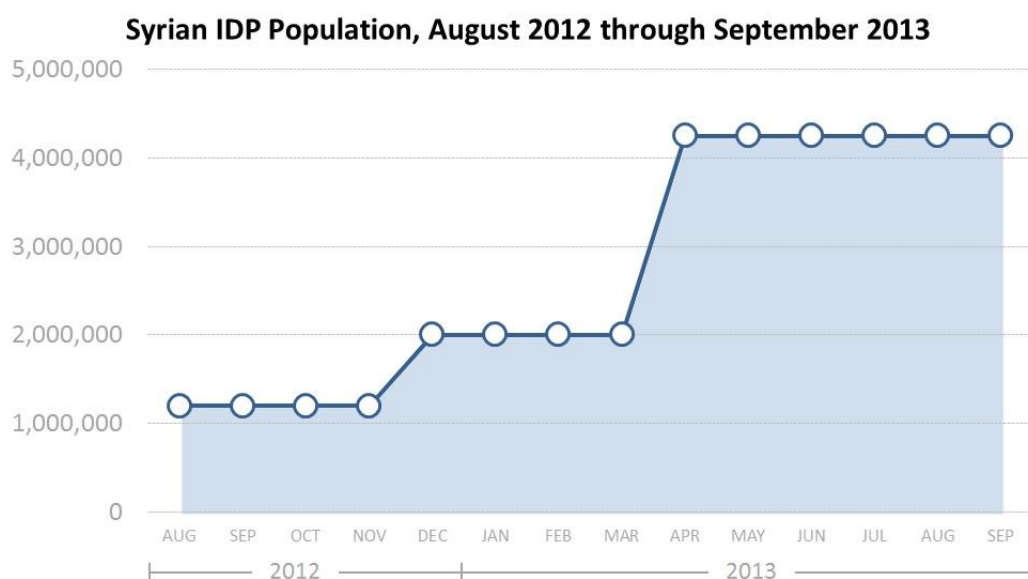
While there were 2 million refugees at the time of writing, the UN estimates that there will be 3.45 million Syrian refugees in the region by the end of 2013; unfortunately, all present indications are consistent with this target being met.³ In addition, as of September 2013, there were at least 4.25 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) many of whom have been displaced multiple times in search of safety. This means that almost one-third of Syria's people have been forced to leave their communities. It should be noted that those who are displaced may not be the individuals most in need in Syria. In fact, it is likely that those who are unable to leave their homes – because they are elderly, disabled or simply lack the resources to move – are the most vulnerable. Those who are displaced, however, do have certain identifiable needs which require assistance.

¹ There were over 2 million refugees according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as of 15 September 2013, and estimates of the numbers of IDPs range from 4.25 million to 5.1 million. According to official UN figures since April 2013, as of mid-September 2013, there were 4.25 million IDPs. The higher figure of 5.1 million results from combining OCHA figures with estimates from the seven northern governorates of Syria assessed as part of the Second Joint Rapid Assessment in Northern Syria (J-RANS II); see further, Syria Needs Analysis Project (SNAP), *Regional Analysis Syria*, 30 May 2013, <http://acaps.org/en/pages/syria-snap-project>, p. 9; OCHA, *OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin Syria*, Issue 33, 9 September 2013, www.unocha.org/crisis/syria

² International Crisis Group (ICG), *Syria's Metastasizing Conflicts*, No.143, 27 June 2013, p. iii, www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2013/mena/syrias-metastasizing-conflicts.aspx

³ The 3.45 million figure includes some 100,000 Palestine refugees registered with and assisted by UNRWA who are projected to be displaced from Syria, mainly to Lebanon (80,000) and Jordan (10,000); see UN, *Syria Regional Response Plan – January to December 2013*, 7 June 2013, p. 6, <http://unhcr.org/51b04c9c9.html>

The widespread displacement in Syria is the result of the failure of the Syrian government to resolve internal conflicts and to respect the basic rights of its people, and the failure of both sides of the conflict to respect international humanitarian law. The fact that so many Syrians have been displaced is also an indication of the inability of the international community to prevent the atrocities, large-scale violence, and widespread human rights violations that have forced a third of the country's population to leave their homes.



Note: Figures are not always available for the exact end of the month due to varying OCHA reporting times. Hence, a month's data may be taken from the earliest report of the following month in order to capture the most complete IDP flow statistics for the previous month. Sources: OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin: Syria, Issues 1-33.

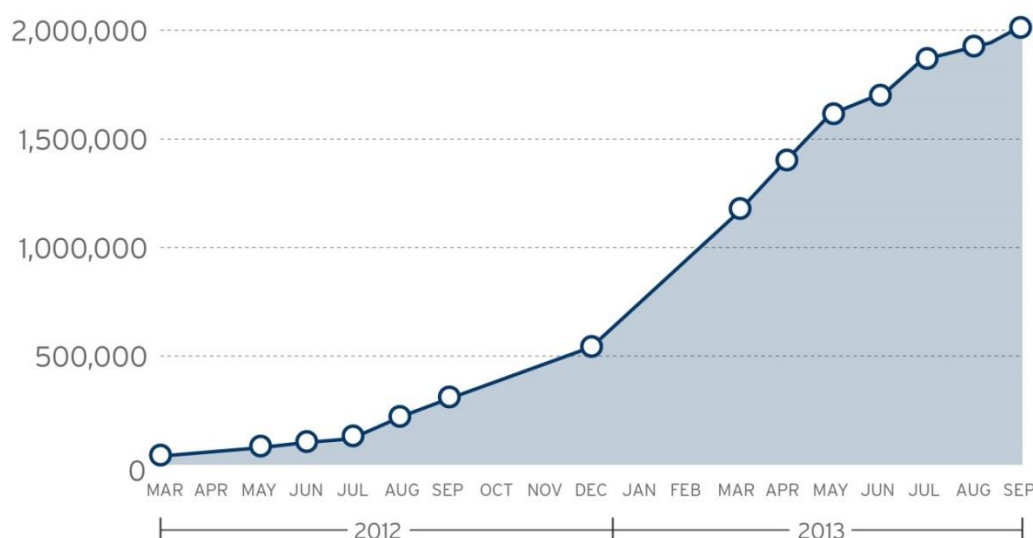
Displacement in and from Syria is highly dynamic. There seems to be a direct relationship between those displaced inside Syria and refugee movements into neighboring countries. Many of those turning up as refugees in Jordan and Lebanon report having been displaced within Syria before making it across a border. There are also reports of Syrians returning from other countries – either because of a perception that security back home has improved, because they want to check on relatives or property or because conditions in host countries are so bad.

Governments in the region – those of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt – initially responded with generosity and solidarity to the arrival of refugees on their borders. Although all of the governments have imposed restrictions on entry of one kind or another, they deserve recognition and appreciation for their policies of openness and welcome to refugees. They also deserve the financial support of the international community. It is hard to imagine Western countries responding with similar generosity should a comparable number of refugees have arrived on their borders. Governments hosting the region's two million registered refugees need support to defray some of the economic, social and political costs they have borne in allowing the refugees to enter and in providing for at least some of their basic necessities. As we discuss in this policy brief, the presence of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries incurs not only financial costs, but also presents political dilemmas for the host governments, particularly in

their relationships with other countries in the region and the ethnic and sectarian balance in their own countries.

These refugee-recipient or ‘host’ governments also deserve support because their actions affirm the international system of refugee protection. This refugee regime, which has evolved since 1951, is based on the idea that countries offer protection and assistance to arriving refugees on behalf of the international community. While notions of burden-sharing have been hotly debated almost since the beginning of the refugee regime, the idea that responding to refugees is a shared international responsibility – and not only the responsibility of the country on whose border they happen to have arrived – is a precious international norm which deserves to be upheld. And governments such as those of Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan have demonstrated a commitment to this norm, which is a positive affirmation of global systems that have been eroding on many fronts in recent years.

Syrian Refugee Population, March 2012 through September 2013



Note: Figures are not always available for the exact end of the month due to varying OCHA reporting times. Hence, a month's data may be taken from the earliest report of the following month in order to capture the most complete refugee flow statistics for the previous month. For example, by 21 June 2012, there were 86,293 refugees, but 103,000 as of 5 July 2012, with 3,000 of them fleeing in the first three days of July. Sources: OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin: Syria, Issues 1-33.

The displacement of Syrians, both within the country and across borders, is likely to continue as long as the war continues and people perceive that they are more likely to be safe elsewhere. A swift end to the war is unlikely. Given the lack of political negotiations, the inability of the UN Security Council to take robust action, the reluctance of outside actors to intervene with decisive force, and the present military stalemate, the most likely scenario is that the war will continue. People will continue to flee their homes to places they perceive to be safer. Their choice of destinations will depend on their physical abilities, financial capacities, the openness of borders

and their family and social networks. In light of these realities, a series of recommendations is outlined below.

Inside Syria

- 1. All parties to the armed conflict – including the Syrian government, paramilitary forces and the many opposition groups – should comply with the basic principles of international humanitarian law (IHL) and uphold basic, internationally-recognized human rights.** Under IHL, states and non-state armed actors have the obligation to ensure assistance to and protection of people within their jurisdiction. The Syrian government and opposition movements therefore need to understand and respect international humanitarian law and to uphold the rights of all individuals under their jurisdiction, including the internally displaced. There is a critical need for training on IHL and humanitarian principles for parties to the conflict and participation in such training should be a condition of any support by the US government to the opposition. The failure to consider the protection of all civilians, regardless of which side they support, will result in the undermining of hopes for any coalition government. Steps to protect minorities are particularly important – not only for the needed protection of vulnerable groups – but in affecting the course of the country’s political future. There is a particular need to equitably protect and assist Palestinian refugees who had been living in Syria and are now either displaced internally or turned back at borders of neighboring states.
- 2. The humanitarian community should develop and maintain better statistics and assessments on internal displacement inside Syria.** The present UN estimates of 4.25 million IDPs date from 22 April 2013 and have remained unchanged even as the number of Syrian refugees has increased significantly. 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 OCHA, which is responsible for compiling figures on IDPs, to be more transparent in its methodology. While assessments such as the Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria assessments, the Syria Needs Analysis Project 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.
- 3. The Syrian government should remove obstacles to increasing humanitarian assistance inside Syria.** The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, UN, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), international NGOs and civil society organizations have all been working hard to access populations in need and yet both the bureaucratic and security obstacles are formidable. The Syrian government has a responsibility to enable the humanitarian action of international agencies, as set forth in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which reflect international

law and international human rights standards.⁴ The Syrian government should be pressed by the concerted action of the UN Security Council to exercise its responsibility to enable the humanitarian action of international agencies. As UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, stated to the UN Security Council in April and again in July 2013, these obstacles include long procedures for renewing visas, importing vehicles and medical supplies, restrictions on movement within the country, etc. These bureaucratic obstacles need to be removed.

- 4. International agencies must continue to affirm the humanitarian and non-political nature of assistance.** In accordance with basic humanitarian principles and the UN Guiding Principles, humanitarian action inside Syria should be carried out solely on the basis of need, respecting impartiality and humanity, not on the basis of political objectives, and without discrimination. Assumptions should not be made that all those living in government or opposition-controlled areas are supportive of armed actors controlling those areas. The ICRC's Professional Standards for Protection Work should be applied by all parties offering assistance in Syria.⁵ International organizations working with these actors should provide opportunities for basic training in IHL and in professional standards for humanitarian operations.
- 5. The UN Security Council should develop strongly-worded resolutions to support the necessary access for humanitarian assistance operations.** In April 2013, following a briefing by Valerie Amos, the UN Security Council issued a statement (not a resolution) calling on all parties in Syria, in particular the Syrian authorities, to cooperate fully with the UN and relevant humanitarian organizations and urged all parties to 'assure safe and unimpeded access.'⁶ This is much weaker than the many Security Council resolutions referencing humanitarian assistance in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁷ Other efforts to address issues of humanitarian access in Syria have been blocked within the Security Council.
- 6. Cross-border operations for assisting IDPs and others affected by conflict should be continued and expanded.** Given the desperate condition of internally displaced

⁴ As the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement state, "International humanitarian organizations and other appropriate actors have the right to offer their services in support of the internally displaced. Such an offer shall not be regarded as an unfriendly act or an interference in a State's internal affairs and shall be considered in good faith. Consent thereto shall not be arbitrarily withheld, particularly when authorities concerned are unable or unwilling to provide the required humanitarian assistance." United Nations, *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 1999, Principle 25, para. 2, www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/idp/GPEnglish.pdf; see also, Walter Kalin, *The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: Annotations* (2nd Edition), The American Society of International Law and the Brookings Institution, 2008, www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2008/05/spring-guiding-principles.

⁵ ICRC, *Professional Standards for Protection Work Carried out by Humanitarian and Human Rights Actors in Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence*, 2013, www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc-002-0999.pdf

⁶ See UN Security Council, "Top UN Official Says Situation in Syria 'Humanitarian Catastrophe,' Calls on Security Council to Take Actions Needed to End 'Brutal Conflict,'" 18 April 2013, SC/10981, www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc10981.doc.htm

⁷ UN Security Council, Resolution 819: Bosnia and Herzegovina, 16 April 1993, S/RES/819.

Syrians and the difficulties international agencies face in accessing IDPs and other affected communities in parts of the country, these operations are needed to ensure the protection and assistance of vulnerable civilians. While cross-border operations are presently taking place, these need to be expanded and their legitimacy recognized through Security Council resolutions. Establishing any UN cross-border humanitarian aid operation will be tremendously challenging both politically and logistically, but there are precedents that can and should be used.

7. **International agencies, with the support of the United Nations, should consider the use of humanitarian ‘corridors’ and humanitarian ‘pauses’ to increase humanitarian assistance.** While some have suggested the establishment of safe zones,⁸ it seems that the necessary international support for this is limited. For example, Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu’s idea of an internationally imposed safe zone or haven was met with silence or even disapproval from UNHCR and major powers when he presented it at the UN General assembly in August 2012.⁹ There are precedents, however, for the use of more limited ceasefires to enable the evacuation of wounded and the vaccination of children. Humanitarian corridors have been used occasionally by humanitarian actors in situations as diverse as Angola, the occupied Palestinian Territory and the Democratic Republic of Congo. While these precedents were far from perfect, they do offer suggestions for ways of improving assistance in the midst of armed conflict. In this regard, a research project to systematically evaluate the conditions and processes of past efforts and their relevance to Syria could be useful.
8. **If the Security Council is unable to act on issues of humanitarian corridors, humanitarian pauses or cross-border operations, the UN General Assembly (GA) should mobilize action.** As noted above, the record of the UN Security Council in either ending the conflict or strongly asserting humanitarian principles in the case of Syria has been disappointing.¹⁰ By substantial majorities, the GA has adopted resolutions deploring the Security Council’s inability to find a political solution (August 2012) and calling for an end to indiscriminate violence in Syria (May 2013). Perhaps it is time for the GA to engage more forcefully on issues of respect for international humanitarian law, displacement and basic principles of humanitarian assistance. In particular, this is an issue where the BRICS (Brazil, India, and South

⁸ Diane Paul has written a persuasive article on how safe areas, protected by no-fly zones, can be used in Syria: “State of play in Syria: Rising human costs and the danger of Assad’s ‘Samson Button’,” Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection, 7 June 2013, <http://phap.org/articles/state-play-syria-rising-human-costs-and-danger-assad%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98samson-button%E2%80%99>.

⁹ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, no.225, 30 April 2013, p.39, www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/225-blurring-the-borders-syrian-spillover-risks-for-turkey.ashx.

¹⁰ See for example, Security Council Report, *Chronology of Events: Syria*, revised 29 August 2013, www.securitycouncilreport.org/chronology/syria.php.

Africa in particular) and the 120 strong Non-Aligned Movement can and should assert greater leadership. In this regard, we suggest that exploratory meetings be held in New York to consider ways of strengthening GA action on humanitarian issues.

IDPs, Refugees and Asylum

- 9. Collaboration and coordination of humanitarian response should be strengthened, particularly with respect to non-traditional actors.** A wide array of local and regional actors is presently working on humanitarian issues, both inside and outside Syria. In fact, most of the assistance being provided inside Syria is being delivered by local Syrian and regional NGOs. Many of these actors are not part of traditional coordination mechanisms and are acting independently in support of humanitarian – and sometimes, political – objectives. The UN and other international organizations have a responsibility to reach out to and support these actors by joining forces with other Syrian, Arab, and Islamic NGOs. At a minimum, those NGOs have a responsibility to share information on their activities with international agencies mandated to coordinate humanitarian efforts.
- 10. Governments should be supported to preserve asylum space in the region.** Being able to seek protection in other countries is a basic human right – governments in the region need to be affirmed and financially supported to allow refugees to enter. Presently, the UN consolidated appeal for the regional response for June-December 2013 is just under 50 percent funded. Interestingly, for the first time ever, the consolidated appeal included funds to support the governments of Lebanon and Jordan. Turkey, however, has received disproportionately less international assistance than other host governments and the limits of its capacity to shelter and provide services to refugees may be being reached. If host governments do not receive the support they need, it is likely that the living conditions for refugees will deteriorate, resulting in public health hazards for the host communities as well as the refugees. The security of humanitarian workers could be compromised, refugees could turn to violent protests, refugees might be returned to Syria and/or deterred from arriving in host countries or might seek protection elsewhere.
- 11. Support to refugees and IDPs in urban areas should be improved and increased.** While it is perhaps understandable that international attention has focused on the large visible refugee camps in Jordan, Iraq and Turkey, the fact is that far more attention needs to be directed toward those living outside of camps. The issue of urban refugees has received significant attention from international bodies for more than ten years but there is still a great deal that is not known. For example, what are the pros and cons of targeting refugees and IDPs when host populations are also needy? What are good models of working with local governments and service-providers? Should international agencies be making contributions to the on-going work of such authorities? If so, should there be a requirement that a certain

percentage of beneficiaries are refugees or IDPs? The sheer scale of Syrian displacement in non-camp settings suggests the need for much more attention to the practicalities of providing assistance to host communities and the displaced. In this respect, it would be helpful for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to review its past efforts to address the needs of non-camp refugees and IDPs in order to provide concrete guidance to agencies and donors about effective models of assistance.

- 12. Gender perspectives should be incorporated into all humanitarian and development programs.** While there has been some much-needed attention to sexual and gender-based violence among Syrian refugees, there needs to be a recognition that during crises such as these gender roles can be transformed. Support should be given for Syrian women to participate actively in consultative mechanisms and leadership structures that emerge among refugees in both camp and non-camp settings. Issues to address livelihood issues and documentation are especially important for Syrian women and their children. Birth registration of babies born to refugees are particularly difficult when women do not have documentation of their citizenship or marriage.
- 13. Education must receive priority attention from governments in the region, international agencies and civil society groups.** The fact that many Syrian children, whether internally displaced or refugees, do not have access to education is a major human rights issue with long-term implications for the future of the country. As this report highlights, the fact that most refugee children in Jordan and Syria are not attending school should be a cause for alarm – not only for over-stretched humanitarian agencies but also for development actors and advocacy groups.
- 14. Host countries must increase their efforts to guarantee the security of Syrian refugees.** In the last year, there have been violent attacks against Syrians in Egypt, kidnappings and assassinations in Lebanon and on-going security incidents in the Za'atari camp of Jordan. Young men and increasingly children have been recruited into armed groups. Unsafe security conditions will often prompt Syrians to return to their homes before conditions warrant, further increasing their security risks.
- 15. Assistance to refugees should be increased.** This could include the possibility of introducing or expanding cash assistance to refugees. Except for those living in camps in Jordan and Turkey, refugees throughout the region struggle to pay rent; most of the refugees arrived came with meager financial resources and those that did come with cash have found their reserves depleted. This leads them to be at further risk for protection concerns, by going into debt, returning to their homes despite ongoing violence, moving elsewhere, reducing their consumption of food, or resorting to early marriage or survival sex or child labor. In this respect, more attention needs to be given to supporting refugee livelihoods. Host countries have been resistant to allowing refugees to be involved in microfinance or vocational

training programs, but since displacement is likely to be protracted, this kind of support is needed to enable refugees to become more self-sufficient and to contribute to the economies of the host country.

Long-Term Thinking

16. Initiatives need to be carried out now to think about the long-term future of Syria's IDPs and refugee. While it has become commonplace for international agencies to call for thinking about solutions to displacement early in the process, in fact it is extraordinarily hard to do when faced with overwhelming demands for emergency assistance. It is perhaps natural that those most knowledgeable and involved in humanitarian response are caught up in the intense demands of the day. But, surely with the international community asked to raise \$5 billion to support refugees and IDPs over the next six months, more thought is needed now about how the situation will play out in the long-term.¹¹ For example, what are the options – for the region and the international community – if the Syrian refugees cannot return home this year – or in the next five years? It is difficult to predict how the conflict will unfold, of course, but it is unlikely that the war will be over soon. And when the conflict does end, it is also unlikely that the 6 million+ refugees and IDPs will immediately pack up their belongings, go back home and resume their lives. The issue of returns is a complex issue, raising issues not only of reconstruction, but also issues of legal assistance with property claims and transitional justice. While there are ongoing initiatives to plan for transition in Syria, these have largely focused on the political, military and economic future of the country.¹² Equal attention needs to be paid to the long-term future of Syrian refugees and IDPs. As we have pointed out in this analysis, Syrian displacement is the most recent case of the region's long history of displacements occurring since 1948, few of which can be said to have been resolved. The Middle East risks becoming a “region of the permanently displaced.” In this regard, we suggest that key donors support a research project which examines lessons learned from other on-going and persistent cases of displacement in the Middle East and which examines the particular strains caused by recurrent displacement.

¹¹ In June 2013, the United Nations launched a \$4.4 billion humanitarian appeal – the largest aid request in its history – to assist those affected by the crisis in Syria. The appeal was revised from \$1.5 billion in January and covers relief activities for the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) and the Regional Response Plan (RRP). Of the \$4.4 billion, \$1.4 billion will go to SHARP, assisting Syrians inside Syria, and \$3 billion to RRP, which provides life-saving aid and protection to refugees in the immediate surrounding region. In addition to this, the governments of Lebanon and Jordan are seeking \$450 million and \$380 million, respectively, to support the efforts to provide education, health and other services to the refugees who are now in their countries.

¹² For example, US Institute of Peace, “The Day After Project,” August 2012, www.usip.org/programs/projects/the-day-after-project

17. Development actors should become fully engaged in addressing both the needs of the displaced and the communities which host them and in seeking solutions. As displacement becomes protracted, issues of livelihoods, provision of basic services, infrastructure development, local economies and environmental impact become more important. In addition, there is the need to address land tenure issues before any sustainable return can occur. These are all development issues. And yet, as long as this is seen as a ‘refugee’ emergency or a ‘humanitarian’ crisis, development actors will be reluctant to invest their scarce resources in what is seen to be the responsibility of the humanitarian community. While some development actors, such as the World Bank, have taken important steps to incorporate displacement concerns in their long-term planning, they need to be supported and other multilateral and bilateral development agencies need to play a more active role. We specifically suggest that states explore setting up an Arab States Stabilization Fund to mitigate the financial and service provision burdens of key countries in the region as a result of the Syria conflict. Such a fund should be administered by the World Bank and could perhaps help draw in the Gulf states to work with other international donors in a constructive way.

18. Plans need to be made now for the likelihood that displacement will be protracted, including in terms of addressing likely increase in numbers of refugees seeking asylum outside of the region. In 2012 according to UNHCR, Syria became the second highest-ranking source country of asylum seekers among the 44 industrialized countries, up from 15th place a year earlier.¹³ Most fled in the second half of the year due to the sharp intensification of the armed conflict. There are also reports of increasing number of irregular Syrian arrivals. While the UN High Commissioner for Refugees affirmed in July 2013 that the number of Syrian asylum claims in EU countries “remains manageable...,” if displacement drags on and international assistance is inadequate, this will change.¹⁴ European governments, in particular, should prioritize thinking about a collective response to Syrian asylum-seekers which upholds their rights and shares responsibility for response.

19. Focus should be placed on the appropriate role for resettlement of refugees outside the region. So far, Germany has agreed to resettle on a temporary basis some 5,000 vulnerable Syrians and Sweden has announced that it will give asylum to

¹³ In 2012, more than half of the Syrian asylum seekers requested refugee status in Sweden (7,800 claims) and Germany (6,200 claims). In Sweden, the figure increased twelve-fold (650 claims in 2011), while in Germany it more than doubled (2,600 claims in 2011). Other important destination countries were the United Kingdom (1,300 claims), Switzerland (1,400 claims) and Austria (920 claims). See UNHCR, *Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries – 2012*, 2013, p. 16, www.unhcr.org/5149b81e9.html; in this report, UNHCR notes that in virtually all 44 countries, the number of Syrian asylum-seekers went up in 2012, with the exception of Greece. A growing number of Syrian nationals were recorded irregularly entering or present in Greece but asylum claim numbers from this group remained low.

¹⁴ UNHCR, “UN’s High Commissioner for Refugees urges Europe to do more for Syrian asylum-seekers,” 18 July 2013, www.unhcr.org/51e7ecc56.html

all Syrian refugees who apply. The Obama administration recently announced a new target of 2,000 Syrians for resettlement, an increase from the 90 or so Syrian refugees who have been permanently admitted to the US in the last two years. These are positive signals, but they are just a drop in the bucket in terms of the millions of Syrians who have been displaced by the violence. Resettlement programs do not just offer solutions to individual refugees but can also play an important role in demonstrating responsibility-sharing with regional governments hosting large numbers of refugees. Bold, creative, strategic thinking on resettlement is needed. For example, could present cumbersome US procedures to process refugees be revised to expedite and expand an eventual Syrian refugee resettlement program? Could countries which are relatively new to resettlement, such as Brazil, be encouraged to resettle more refugees from Syria? Could temporary resettlement mechanisms, such as the Humanitarian Evacuation program from Kosovo serve as models for new thinking about the role of resettlement in Syria?

20. Discussions should be started now about the eventual establishment of an international mechanism to support solutions for displacement in Syria.

International processes have, in the past, served as vehicles for creative multilateral approaches to resolving long-standing crises, for example in Central America and in Southeast Asia. Thought should be given now about what future mechanisms or processes could be used to resolve Syrian displacement when circumstances allow. For example, the role of regional organizations, Gulf states, UN agencies and donor governments should be considered. Ministerial-level meetings with governments of host countries are currently being held to discuss the challenges of humanitarian response. These could be important opportunities for informal consultations about long-term future efforts. Even when the international system seems blocked and weak in bringing about an end to the violence, creative steps can and should be taken – steps which could be implemented to bring about an end to long-term displacement and the suffering it has caused.

INTRODUCTION

The mounting civilian casualties in Syria and the displacement of over 6 million Syrians – with prospects of both more casualties and more displacement – make this the most daunting humanitarian crisis facing the world today.¹⁵ The international community is struggling to respond to the humanitarian situation inside Syria and throughout the region. Political actors, unable to agree on how to end the civil war, seem to agree that humanitarian assistance is needed,¹⁶ but the funds are neither sufficient now nor likely to be sustainable in the long term. The humanitarian crisis has implications not only for Syrian civilians, but also for the course of the conflict, governments in and beyond the region, the international humanitarian system and, indeed, for global governance.



Hundreds of Syrian refugees cross into Iraq at the Peshkhabour border crossing in Dohuk Governorate on August 15, 2013. (UNHCR / G. Gubaeva)

This policy brief examines the various dimensions of the Syrian humanitarian crisis. Following a brief description of the evolution of the crisis, analysis turns to the humanitarian situation inside Syria and beyond Syria's borders, focusing on both the immediate and long-term impact of the crisis on Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, with briefer reports on Iraq and Egypt. The brief then turns to conclusions based on this analysis and offers a series of recommendations for key stakeholders.

Given the political impasse in exercising the international community's responsibility to protect civilians inside Syria, especially in the aftermath of the August 2013 alleged use of chemical weapons by the Assad government in the Eastern Ghouta district of Damascus, scaling up humanitarian action may be the most positive response the international community can muster at this time. But, as our analysis shows, humanitarian assistance is not an easy or straightforward option and there are inherent political implications to the humanitarian response.

Estimates of the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria range from 4.25 to 5.1 million – although given the difficulties of international access, the actual number could be higher.¹⁷ The issue of internal displacement is not only indicative of widespread human need in the country, but raises a host of operational issues around security of humanitarian workers and working with local partners from a distance. Responding to internal displacement also raises

¹⁵ There were over 2 million refugees according to UNHCR as of 15 September 2013, and estimates of the numbers of IDPs range from 4.25 million to 5.1 million; see footnote 18, *infra*.

¹⁶ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Syria's Metastasizing Conflicts*, No.143, 27 June 2013, p. iii, www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2013/mena/syrias-metastasizing-conflicts.aspx

¹⁷ According to official UN figures since April 2013, as of mid-September 2013, there were 4.25 million IDPs. The higher figure of 5.1 million results from combining OCHA figures with estimates from the seven northern governorates of Syria assessed as part of the Second Joint Rapid Assessment in Northern Syria (J-RANS II); see further, Syria Needs Analysis Project (SNAP), *Regional Analysis Syria*, 30 May 2013, <http://acaps.org/en/pages/syria-snap-project>, p. 9; OCHA, *OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin Syria*, Issue 33, 9 September 2013, www.unocha.org/crisis/syria

larger questions of sovereignty, particularly in the context of cross-border operations and negotiating access to affected communities with armed actors. Most fundamentally, responding to internal displacement illustrates the limits of humanitarian action.

The number of Syrians registered as refugees or awaiting registration as a result of the war reached 2 million by September 2013 and is estimated to reach 3.45 million by the end of the year.¹⁸ These are UN estimates of registered refugees (and those waiting to be registered). The actual number of Syrians who have crossed borders may be far higher. In all of the neighboring countries, the refugees are adding to economic, political and social pressures on societies and governments. Jordan and Lebanon are hosting significant numbers of Syrian refugees; as of mid-September 2013, the official figures stood at nearly 520,000 and nearly 740,000, respectively.¹⁹ Jordan has been most outspoken about the burden of the refugees. Indeed, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussein, Ambassador of Jordan, addressed the UN Security Council in a private meeting on 30 April 2013 to seek the Council's determination that the influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan represents "a threat to international peace and security"²⁰ and "threatens the security and stability of our country."²¹ Although Jordan has been extraordinarily generous in allowing Syrians to enter its territory, it has imposed some restrictions against the entry of single young men and Palestinians. The Jordanian government is politically fragile and Jordanians are concerned about the threat of extremists crossing the border and carrying out activities inside Jordan – as occurred in 2005 alongside the flow of refugees from Iraq. If Jordan's political situation is fragile, Lebanon's stability is even more vulnerable, compounded by the fact that it is receiving even less international support than Jordan. With the recent spate of tit-for-tat bombings in predominantly Shi'a and Sunni areas of the country, Lebanese apprehension is growing that Syria's civil war is spilling over into their country and will reignite a sectarian civil conflict there. UN planning figures for Lebanon anticipate one million refugees in the country by the end of 2013, up from the 740,000 as of September 2013.²² This would mean that the refugees would account for 25 per cent of the country's population.²³

Turkey is currently hosting 450,000 registered refugees. In addition, more than 100,000 internally displaced Syrians are living near the Turkish border in a de facto safe zone that is neither internationally recognized nor particularly safe. Cross-border operations from Turkey (and to a lesser extent from Jordan) are the major source of assistance to internally displaced persons and others in need in the rebel-held areas of Syria. But the borders in the region are porous: not only is humanitarian assistance moving across borders but so are rebels, smugglers

¹⁸ See UNHCR, "Syria Regional Refugee Response Regional Overview," *Syria Regional Refugee Response*, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, September 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> and UN, *Syria Regional Response Plan: January to December 2013*, June 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/syria-regional-response-plan-january-december-2013>

¹⁹ See UNHCR, "Syria Regional Refugee Response Regional Overview," *Syria Regional Refugee Response*, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

²⁰ UN SC, *Letter dated 25 April 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 25 April 2013, www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2013_247.pdf

²¹ UN SC, *Letter dated 25 April 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 25 April 2013.

²² UN, *Syria Regional Response Plan: January to December 2013*, June 2013, p. 26.

²³ UN, *Syria Regional Response Plan: January to December 2013*, June 2013, p. 26.

and arms.²⁴ There is also growing concern about the manner in which the ethnic and sectarian aspects of the conflict in Syria could spill over into neighboring countries, including Turkey. In the event that the conflict in Syria and the humanitarian crisis persists, secondary movements of refugees towards the European Union are likely to increase with implications for European relations with countries in the region, particularly Turkey.²⁵

Iraq hosts 10 percent of the Syrian refugees – some 200,000 as of early September 2013 – yet has only received a fraction of international funding assistance and scant international attention.²⁶ Most of the refugees are Kurds who have fled to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), with the majority living in urban areas outside of camps. Some 55,000 refugees reside in Domiz camp, near Dohuk, which was originally designed to host only 20,000 when it opened in April 2012.²⁷ At least 40,000 fled to KRG in mid-August 2013 when the KRG reopened the only legal crossing, the Peshkhabour border crossing, after three months. While Syrian refugees have the legal right to work if they have a residency permit – for which legal documentation is required, which many refugees leave behind or no longer have – and the KRG has been generous, resources are strained and refugees often face difficulties accessing basic services.²⁸ As a result of these difficulties, some Syrians are reportedly opting to return home, trading the relative safety of the KRG for a warzone.²⁹

Conditions for Syrian refugees in Egypt have become precarious. Egypt initially welcomed Syrians with open arms, and presently hosts around 100,000 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR. Many Syrians who fled to Egypt have been, by and large, more affluent than Syrians who fled to neighboring countries, working as small business owners or in white-collar industries.³⁰ However, since former President Mohamed Morsi's ousting, many Syrians in Egypt have become victims of xenophobia and scapegoating under the new transitional government, who see Syrians as aligned with former President Morsi and his supporters.³¹

²⁴ Jonathon Burch, "Turkish troops repel hundreds of 'smugglers' on Syrian border," *Reuters*, 15 August 2013, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/08/15/uk-syria-crisis-turkey-border-idUKBRE97E0M520130815>

²⁵ See BBC News, "Syrians and Egyptians' among migrants reaching Italy," *BBC News*, 9 August 2013, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-2363086; Reuters "Hundreds of fleeing Syrian refugees reach Italian coast," *Washington Post*, 14 September 2013, www.washingtonpost.com/world/hundreds-of-fleeing-syrian-refugees-reach-italian-coast/2013/09/14/4d266fb4-1d61-11e3-8685-5021e0c41964_story.html

²⁶ Figure is estimate by UNHCR: See UNHCR, "Iraq," Syria Regional Refugee Response, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103>; IRC, *Hidden But Hopeful Life Beyond the Camp for Syrian Refugees in Northern Iraq*, August 2013, p.1, www.rescue-uk.org/sites/default/files/iraq%20report.pdf; UNHCR, *From Slow Boil to Breaking Point: A Real-Time Evaluation of UNHCR's Response to the Syrian Refugee Emergency*, Policy Development and Evaluation Service, July 2013, www.unhcr.org/51f7d9919.html

²⁷ IRC, *Hidden But Hopeful Life Beyond the Camp for Syrian Refugees in Northern Iraq*, August 2013, p.2; Rebecca Gang, "Syrian refugees in Iraq risking lives to return home amid funding shortfall," *The Guardian*, 30 August 2013, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/aug/30/syrian-refugees-iraq

²⁸ IRC, *Hidden But Hopeful Life Beyond the Camp for Syrian Refugees in Northern Iraq*, August 2013, pp.1-2.

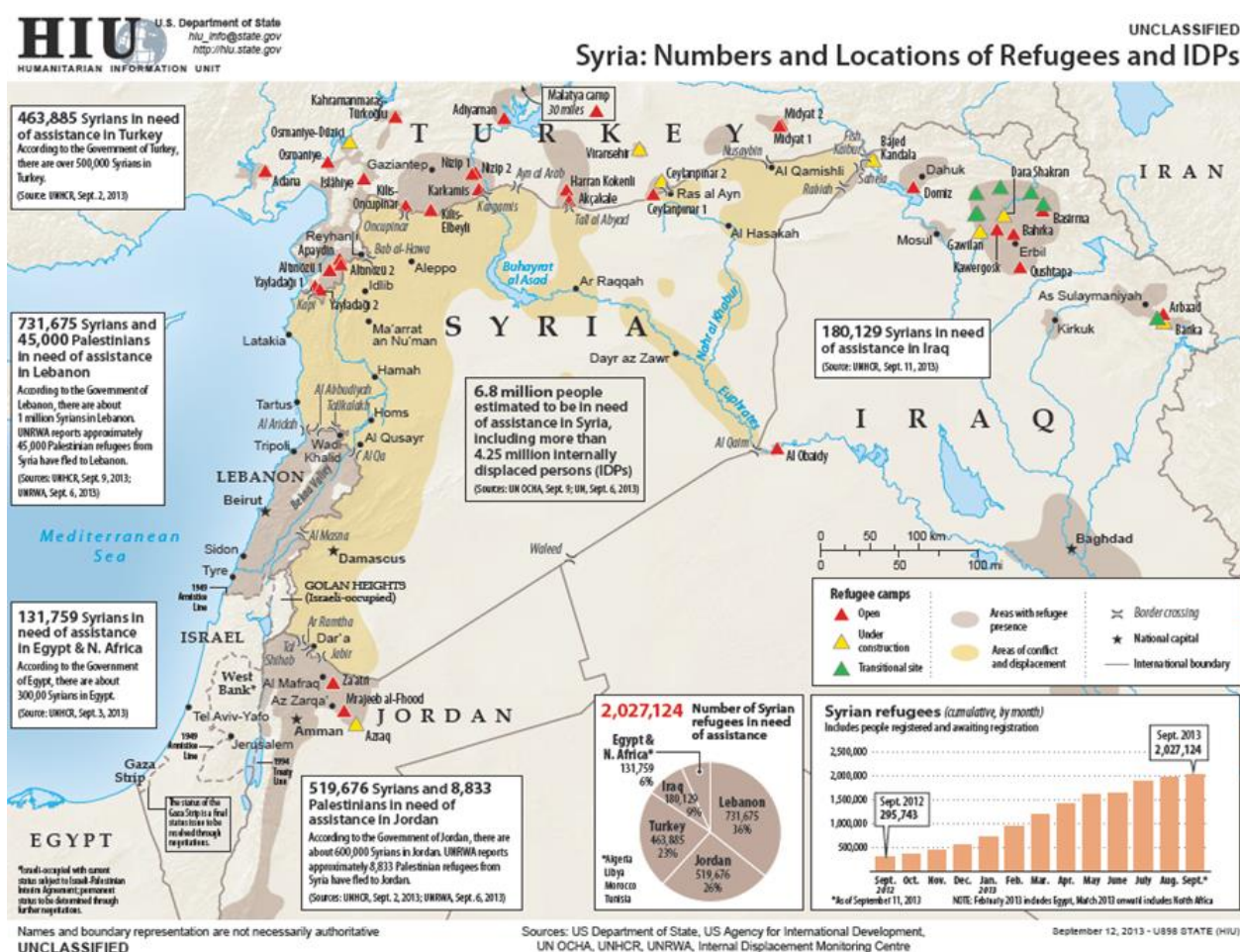
²⁹ Rebecca Gang, "Syrian refugees in Iraq risking lives to return home amid funding shortfall," *The Guardian*, 30 August 2013.

³⁰ According to the Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies in September 2013, Syrians in Egypt launched more than 370 small businesses over the last two years; see Daria Solovieva, "US Syria Bombing: Syrian Refugees In Egypt Face Increasing Hostility Due to Crackdown On Islamists, While Their Numbers Grow," *International Business Times*, 7 September 2013, www.ibtimes.com/us-syria-bombing-syrian-refugees-egypt-face-increasing-hostility-due-crackdown-islamists-while-their

³¹ See the Egypt section, *infra*.

The Syrian humanitarian crisis has important implications for the international humanitarian system and indeed for global governance, throwing into stark relief the inability of UN mechanisms, including the concept of the responsibility to protect (R2P), to bring an end to the violence. This policy brief is intended to provide a deeper understanding of the implications of Syria's displacement crisis and offer recommendations for policy-makers. As in other politically complex situations, the path to a solution is difficult and complex and does not look likely any time soon. For now, the international community is faced with making decisions based on least-bad options.

Map 1. Syria: Number and Locations of Refugees and IDPs, September 13, 2013³²



³² Department of State, Humanitarian Information Unit, "Syria: Numbers and Locations of Refugees and IDPs" [map], Humanitarian Information Unit, 12 September 2013, https://hiu.state.gov/Products/Syria_DisplacementRefugees_2013Sept12_HIU_U898.pdf.

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN?

Since the conflict began in March 2011, patterns of displacement in Syria have reflected the escalating violence. The first exodus of Syrians to neighboring countries started shortly after the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in March 2011 when some 250 refugees entered Turkey's Hatay region. Two months later, Syrians fled the violence in Talkalakh, a town in the governorate of Homs, with many crossing into northern Lebanon to seek shelter in the towns of Wadi Khaled and Tripoli. In June 2011, the military siege of Jisr al-Shughour, in northwestern Syria, prompted thousands to cross the border into neighboring Turkey due to heavy shelling and fighting. By mid-month, the number of Syrians housed in refugee camps across the Syrian-Turkish border had reached 7,000.³³ Displacement during this initial phase of the conflict, however, remained sparse, featuring large groups of people fleeing hot spots of violence as a result of targeted and localized violence.³⁴



*Portrait of a young Syrian refugee taken in her mobile home in the Zaatari's camp in Jordan.
(UNHCR / O. Laban-Mattei / June 2013)*

The nature of displacement in Syria entered a new critical phase following the intensification of the conflict in early 2012. The Syrian regime's operations in Zabadani, Duma and Damascus in late January and its brutal crackdown on the city of Homs in February marked a major shift in the government's counter-revolutionary strategy. This new shift –from targeted repression to the disproportionate use of military force against civilian populations – resulted in the use of increasingly heavy artillery and the systematic shelling of entire neighborhoods, such as Baba Amr, leaving countless Syrians homeless and leading to an exponential rise in the numbers of refugees and internally displaced (50,000 to 60,000 from Homs alone).³⁵ Large influxes of Syrian refugees fleeing fighting in central and northern Syria were reported in Lebanon and Turkey. According to UNHCR, the number of refugees in neighboring countries had reached 40,000 by March 2012. In response to the escalating humanitarian crisis, UNHCR, along with seven other UN agencies, issued an appeal for \$84 million to help Syrian refugees, including a regional response plan setting out humanitarian needs for the region for a period of six months.³⁶

Meanwhile, the newly appointed UN-Arab League envoy Kofi Annan was garnering international and Syrian support for a six-point peace initiative involving a ceasefire between government troops and rebel forces. Fighting and levels of violence, however, increased dramatically in advance of the April 10 ceasefire set by the Annan plan. On April 5, over 2,800 refugees crossed the Turkish-Syrian border on one day, the highest single-day figure ever

³³ "Syrian refugee flow to Turkey rises," *Financial Times*, 13 June 2011, www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/b37e4c38-9446-11e0-8768-00144feab49a.html#axzz2dFmluN5E

³⁴ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *No safe haven - A country on the move, a nation on the brink*, 16 August 2012, www.internal-displacement.org

³⁵ ICG, *Syria's Metastasizing Conflicts*, No.143, 27 June 2013, p. 6; IDMC, *No safe haven - A country on the move, a nation on the brink*, 16 August 2012.

³⁶ UN, *Syria Regional Response Plan, March 2012*, 2012, p. 4, www.unhcr.org/4f6c80a49.html

recorded.³⁷ On April 10, the UN reported that the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey had jumped by 40 percent in the previous weeks and stood at about 55,000 registered refugees, while 200,000 or more Syrians were now displaced in their own country.³⁸

Refugee numbers soared during the summer of 2012 following rebel offensives on the cities of Damascus and Aleppo. After a bomb attack that killed Assad's brother-in-law and other high-ranking security officials in Damascus on July 18, up to 30,000 people were reported to have crossed the Masnaa border into Lebanon within 48 hours.³⁹ Furthermore, intense warfare raging in Aleppo caused up to 200,000 to flee the city at the end of July, with thousands crossing over into Turkey. As the government stepped up its assault on the northern city, the UN reported that more than 100,000 Syrians fled their country in August 2012 – the highest monthly figure thus far – bringing the total number of refugees to 235,300 in the space of a month.⁴⁰ These patterns of rapid displacement and major refugee movements are a stark warning of what could happen in the future if the central parts of Damascus (with an estimated population of 1.7 million),⁴¹ become embroiled in major fighting.

Since mid-2012, Syria's refugee crisis has steadily climbed, increasing ten-fold in the last 12 months. According to UNHCR in early September 2013, while roughly one million refugees left Syria during the first two years of the crisis, the second million fled the country in just the last six months.⁴² The numbers of those displaced internally are estimated at between 4.2 and 5.1 million but, as discussed below, are much 'softer' than figures for refugees.

Why are people leaving their communities? Most obviously, they are fleeing the brutal dynamics of armed conflict and atrocities committed on both sides of the conflict. As UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons Chaloka Beyani noted in his recent report to the UN General Assembly, "Gross violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law by Government forces and dissident armed groups continue to be key drivers of internal displacement."⁴³ The UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (CoI) found that that war crimes and gross human rights violations continued to be perpetrated on an ever larger scale as the violence escalated, and found both government forces and affiliated militia and anti-government armed groups were implicated in these crimes (although recognizing that more

³⁷ Adrian Blomfield, "Turkey warns UN over surge in Syrian refugees," *The Telegraph*, 6 April 2012, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9190822/Turkey-warns-UN-over-surge-in-Syrian-refugees.html

³⁸ Reuters, "Syrian refugee exodus grows," *Chicago Tribune*, 10 April 2012, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-04-10/business/sns-rt-syriarefugees-factboxl6e8fa2nd-20120410_1_syrian-refugees-refugee-camp-hatay

³⁹ BBC News, "Syria crisis: Thousands of refugees flee violence," *BBC*, 20 July 2012, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18929940

⁴⁰ BBC News, "Syria refugees reached record levels in August, says UN," *BBC* 4 September 2012, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19473478

⁴¹ This is an estimate from 2011.

⁴² Tom Miles, "Syrian refugee numbers reach two million in 'tragedy of century': U.N.," *Reuters* 3 September 2013, www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/03/us-syria-crisis-refugees-idUSBRE9820I420130903

⁴³ Beyani further elaborated by drawing attention to the Commission of Inquiry's findings; see UN General Assembly, 15 July 2013, A/67/931, para. 16, www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/idp/CB_GA_Report_Syria_July2013.pdf

atrocities have been committed from the government side).⁴⁴ The *shabiha*, armed groups operating with the support of the Syrian government, have terrorized civilians.⁴⁵ The CoI summarized its findings with regard to government forces and affiliated militia by explaining that:

“Government forces and affiliated militia have committed murder, torture, rape, forcible displacement, enforced disappearance and other inhumane acts. Many of these crimes were perpetrated as part of widespread or systematic attacks against civilian populations and constitute crimes against humanity. War crimes and gross violations of international human rights law – including summary execution, arbitrary arrest and detention, unlawful attack, attacking protected objects, and pillaging and destruction of property – have also been committed.”⁴⁶

With respect to anti-government armed groups, the CoI found that:

“Anti-Government armed groups have also committed war crimes, including murder, sentencing and execution without due process, torture, hostage-taking and pillage. They continue to endanger the civilian population by positioning military objectives in civilian areas. The violations and abuses committed by anti-Government armed groups did not, however, reach the intensity and scale of those committed by Government forces and affiliated militia.”⁴⁷

These findings were echoed in the CoI’s August 2013 report, which also found that Kurdish armed groups (in addition to anti-government armed groups, as also reported in its July report) have recruited and used child soldiers in hostilities.⁴⁸

Furthermore, according to the CoI’s June 2013 report, there were “reasonable grounds” that chemical agents had been used as weapons.⁴⁹ In March 2013, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed Swedish scientist Dr. Åke Sellström as head of the UN investigation into allegations of reported chemical weapons use in Syria, which was launched following a formal request from the Syrian government.⁵⁰ Receiving much media coverage around the world was an attack on August 21 on Damascus suburbs that killed hundreds of people. This attack was the subject of further allegations of the use of chemical weapons. In its August report, the CoI noted that investigations into the use of chemical weapons were ongoing, stating that, “Allegations

⁴⁴ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/23/58, 4 June 2013, p.1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁴⁶ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/23/58, 4 June 2013, Summary, p. 1.

⁴⁷ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/23/58, 4 June 2013, Summary, p.1.

⁴⁸ Reporting on its investigations conducted between 15 May and 15 July 2013, UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/24/46, 16 August 2013.

⁴⁹ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/23/58, 4 June 2013, Summary, p.1.

⁵⁰ UN News Centre, “Head of UN probe into chemical weapons use in Syria says preparatory work has begun,” *UN News*, 27 March 2013, www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44507&Cr=syria&Cr1=chemical&Kw1=syria&Kw2=chemical&Kw3=inspections

were received regarding the use of chemical weapons, predominantly by government forces. On the evidence currently available, it was not possible to reach a finding about the chemical agents used, their delivery systems or the perpetrators.”⁵¹ At the time of this writing, the UN chemical weapons team was completing its report.

The Syrian military opposition includes an assortment of diverse groups, some under the nominal control of the Supreme Military Council, others more focused on community defense.⁵² In addition, some 5-10,000 foreign jihadists are estimated to be fighting in Syria.⁵³ Further, the rise of radical extremist groups and their consolidating hold on rebel-held territories has proven a destabilizing factor for local populations, prompting many to leave their homes. In the last year, *jihadi* groups such as *Jabhat al-Nusra* (JAN) and the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS), affiliated with al-Qaeda, have established a number of local *shariah* courts and hard-line governance structures in their effort to administer “liberated” areas, such as Raqqa, and gradually lay the foundations for the creation of an Islamic state of Syria (or caliphate in some cases).⁵⁴ This forced imposition of *shariah* law, including the frequent cases of persecution and, in some cases killings by *takfiri*⁵⁵ groups has prompted many moderate Syrians, and minorities in particular, to move away from the rule of al-Qaeda. A recent example of this phenomenon has been the large wave of Kurdish refugees flowing into Iraq from north-western Syria, some of whom were fleeing the latest attacks by ISIS on Kurdish-majority villages and towns during the summer of 2013.

There are growing concerns about the increasing sectarian nature of the conflict; ethnic and sectarian conflicts tend to lead not only to large-scale but also protracted displacement.

There are growing concerns about the increasing sectarian nature of the conflict; ethnic and sectarian conflicts tend to lead not only to large-scale but also protracted displacement. Syria is estimated to be 74 percent Sunni Muslim, 10-12 percent Alawi and 10 percent Christian, with smaller numbers of Druze and other minorities.⁵⁶ The Alawi-dominated Assad regime has been particularly adept at playing minorities against each other and getting the message across to minorities, especially Alawis and Christians, that “the current regime alone stands between them and a Sunni Arab successor that might choose among options ranging from explicit sectarian rule

⁵¹ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/24/46, 16 August 2013, para. 170.

⁵² Kenneth M. Pollack, “Breaking the Stalemate: The Military Dynamics of the Syrian Civil War and Options for Limited U.S. Intervention, Middle East Memo No. 30,” Brookings Institution, August 2013, www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2013/08/09-military-syria-civil-war-us-intervention-pollack

⁵³ Foreign Policy, “Making Sense of the Syrian Rebels’ Order of Battle,” *Foreign Policy*, 6 September 2012, http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/09/06/making_sense_of_the_syrian_rebels_order_of_battle

⁵⁴ Valerie Szybala, “Al-Qaeda Shows its True Colors in Syria,” Institute for the Study of War, 1 August 2013, www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/al-qaeda-shows-its-true-colors-syria

⁵⁵ Muslims who accuse other Muslims of apostasy

⁵⁶ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *The World Factbook: Syria*, updated as of 13 August 2013, www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sy.html; on the Alawi community, see Michael S. Doran and Salman Shaikh, “The Ghosts of Hama,” in Kenneth M. Pollack, Daniel L. Byman et al., *The Arab Awakening: America and the Transformation of the Middle East* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2011), p. 232.

to the application of Islamic law to expulsion and slaughter.”⁵⁷ The regime has used the ‘sectarian card’ to instill fear in Alawis and other minorities and that their future lies with the regime.⁵⁸ Back in November 2011, ICG wrote that as repression escalated, “many Syrians have shifted from blaming elements of the regime, to blaming the regime as a whole and finally, to blaming the Alawi community itself.”⁵⁹ The sectarian tensions have become starker and more violent over the past two years.

In addition to repression and destruction carried out by the regime, violence at the hands of opposition armed groups, and prospects for even greater sectarian conflict, Syrians are also subject to growing criminal violence such as kidnappings and banditry. Moreover, the war has led to the breakdown of the economy and public services, which has made life unbearable for many Syrians and has led many to leave their communities and the country.

Into this volatile situation, the evidence that chemical weapons were used in the outskirts of Damascus and threat of a US strike led to an escalation of the number of Syrians fleeing the country. UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres warned at the end of August that Syria could be “on the verge of the abyss,” anticipating a likely increase in the nearly 2 million refugees who have already fled the country’s civil war.⁶⁰ According to Lebanese immigration officials, roughly 10,000 Syrians have been crossing the border into Lebanon every day since the alleged gas attack on 21 August 2013, while thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, are stranded at the border with Jordan, unable to leave the country or return to their homes.⁶¹ Given the likelihood of military escalation, especially in and around Damascus, and the unlikely achievement of a political solution any time soon, the humanitarian crisis in Syria is only set to deteriorate.

The escalation of the conflict over the past two and a half years has led to a humanitarian crisis of mammoth proportions. The displacement crisis has reflected changes on the battlefield and created a dynamic, fluid situation which has complicated the efforts of humanitarian actors. As rebel forces seized control of towns in parts of the country and as front-lines shifted, sometimes on a daily or hourly basis, the challenge of accessing people in need of assistance became more difficult.

⁵⁷ Frederic Hof, “Syria 2013: Will the Poison Pill of Sectarianism Work?” Atlantic Council, 3 January 2013, www.acus.org/viewpoint/syria-2013-will-poison-pill-sectarianism-work

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ ICG, *Uncharted Waters: Thinking through Syria’s Dynamics*, Middle East Briefing No. 31, 24 Nov 2011, p. 2, www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/egypt-syria-lebanon/syria/B031-uncharted-waters-thinking-through-syrias-dynamics.aspx

⁶⁰ Adam Schreck, “UN: Syria Refugee Crisis ‘On The Verge Of The Abyss’ As Nearly 2 Million Have Already Fled Country,” Associated Press in *The Huffington Post*, 27 August 2013, www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/27/un-syria-refugee-crisis_n_3825417.html

⁶¹ Aryn Baker, “The U.S. Weighs Syria Strikes: How Military Action Could Make Things Worse,” *TIME*, 29 August 2013, <http://world.time.com/2013/08/29/the-u-s-weighs-syria-strikes-how-military-action-could-make-things-worse/>
Taylor Luck, “Thousands of Syrians who fled chemical attack remain stranded along border with Jordan,” *Washington Post*, 29 August 2013, www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/as-syrian-attack-survivors-mass-along-jordan-border-area-residents-cite-humanitarian-crisis/2013/08/29/8a8d7530-10f2-11e3-b4cb-fd7ce041d814_story.htm. Note that a recent article in the Telegraph cites 40,000 Syrians waiting at the border. David Blair and Holly Watt, “Tens of thousands of Syrian refugees stranded on Jordanian border,” *The Telegraph*, 03 September 2013, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10284503/Tens-of-thousands-of-Syrian-refugees-stranded-on-Jordanian-border.html

THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION INSIDE SYRIA

The figures change constantly, but as of 1 September there were an estimated 4.2-5.1 million internally displaced persons and 2 million refugees. This means that more than 1 in 3 Syrians have been displaced while the number of Syrians who are considered to be in need of humanitarian assistance is far higher. Given the difficulties in accessing many parts of the country, assessments of humanitarian need are incomplete. The Second Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria II (J-RANS II) needs assessment in May 2013, for example, indicated that some 91 percent of the assessed population in the 7 northern governorates in Syria was at risk. When combined with the Aleppo assessment in March 2013, the estimated number of people at risk in these areas was 13 million.⁶²



The Talae'e IDP camp hosts in Hassakeh hosts 140 families (800 individuals) who came from Deir Ezzor 4-5 months ago. (UNHCR / B. Diab / November 2012)

Often overlooked in discussions of displacement and humanitarian need in Syria is the plight of the foreigners who were living in Syria at the time the crisis erupted. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that 120-150,000 migrant workers, of which 15,000 would need evacuation assistance, were working in Syria before the crisis and notes that even before the war, they were vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.⁶³ On top of this number are undocumented or irregular migrants whose estimates were as high as 700,000.⁶⁴ With the outbreak of the crisis, many of the foreigners have undoubtedly left the country, but only a handful – nearly 650 as of August 2013 – have done so with international assistance.⁶⁵

Other groups of people displaced and otherwise affected by the conflict include Palestine refugees and Iraqi refugees.⁶⁶ In January 2011, there were some 500,000 Palestine refugees registered in Syria with UNRWA, about 30 percent of whom lived in camps.⁶⁷ UNRWA estimated at the end of August 2013 that approximately 50 percent of registered Palestine refugees in Syria had been displaced either in the country or to neighboring countries.⁶⁸ Of the

⁶² Assessment Working for Northern Syria, *Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria II—Final Report*, 22 May 2013, p. 6, <http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/joint-rapid-assessment-northern-syria-ii-final-report>

⁶³ IOM, *EMERGENCY APPEAL: SYRIA CRISIS, JANUARY – JUNE 2013*, p.3, www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/Country/docs/IOM_Syria_Crisis_Response_Appeal_January-June_2013.pdf

⁶⁴ IOM, *Syria Crisis: A Migration Perspective: A Working Paper*, December 2012, p. 5.

⁶⁵ IOM, *IOM Regional Response to the Syria Crisis*, 9 August 2012, p. 1, <http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/iom-regional-response-syria-crisis-update-9-august-2012>

⁶⁶ Under the operational definition employed by the UN Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which provides assistance, protection and advocacy for some 5 million registered Palestine refugees in the Middle East, “Palestine refugees” are people whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.

⁶⁷ See UNRWA, “UNRWA in Figures,” www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=253

⁶⁸ According to UNRWA, approximately 235,000 refugees were displaced in Syria with over 200,000 in Damascus, around 6600 in Aleppo, 4500 in Latakia, 3050 in Hama, 6450 in Homs and 13,100 in Dera'a. 8,732 PR from Syria (PRS) have registered with UNRWA for assistance in Jordan. UNRWA tracks reports of PRS in Egypt, Turkey, Gaza and UNHCR reports up to 1000 fled to Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. UNRWA, *Syria crisis Situation Update*, Iss. No. 58, 26 August 2013, www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=1860

235,000 displaced within Syria, nearly all (200,000) were seeking refuge in Damascus.⁶⁹ UNRWA reports that every Palestine refugee camp in Syria has been affected by the conflict and that their civilian character and neutrality are no longer respected.⁷⁰ The destruction of homes in Palestine refugee camps, the violence, the loss of livelihoods and the exhaustion of savings and assets have forced many to flee their communities. Most Palestine refugees have become internally displaced persons (IDPs) and have been turned back by border officials when seeking protection in neighboring states. The Lebanese government began, on 6 August 2013, to bar Palestinians from entering the country from Syria, leaving over 200 stranded at the border.⁷¹

Less information is available about Iraqi refugees. As of May 2011, there were an estimated 127,000 registered Iraqi refugees in Syria, although the actual number could have been as high as 1 - 1.5 million, given that most Iraqis in Syria were not registered with the authorities.⁷² Many of the Iraqi refugees in Syria have begun to return home because of the conflict. In July 2012, the rate of return for Iraqi refugees living Syria rose significantly following an increase in violence; over 20,000 returned within a nine day period alone.⁷³

SYRIANS ON THE MOVE: INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

There have been periods in Syria's recent history when large-scale displacement has occurred -- most notably in Hama in 1982 when 250,000 residents were displaced (and more than 25,000 killed) when the government put down protests by the Muslim brotherhood⁷⁴ and since 2006, displacement caused by devastating drought. But, historically, rates of rural-urban migration have been relatively low in Syria.

Since March 2011, internal displacement has been widespread. As in other conflicts, displacement occurs for a number of reasons. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians have led many to flee the dangers of being caught in the crossfire or being deliberately targeted by armed actors. Many refugees in neighboring countries report that they fled their homes because of attacks, bombardments or fear of being the target of military action. But there are also indications of targeted human rights violations and particularly fears about the growing sectarian nature of the conflict. The CoI found that fear of sexual violence has been a trigger for displacement, stating that "...fear of rape is a driving motivation for families fleeing the violence."⁷⁵ The Commission also found that government forces systematically displaced people, including from sites where IDPs had sought refuge such as in Deir Atiyah in April 2013. The CoI concluded that these instances of forced displacement, together with indiscriminate

⁶⁹ UNRWA, *Syria crisis Situation Update*, iss. No. 58, 26 August 2013.

⁷⁰ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons*, 15 July 2013, A/67/ Slot no.31125, draft version, para. 55, on file with the authors.

⁷¹ Human Rights Watch, "Lebanon: Palestinians Fleeing Syria Denied Entry," 6 August 2013, www.hrw.org/news/2013/08/07/lebanon-palestinians-fleeing-syria-denied-entry

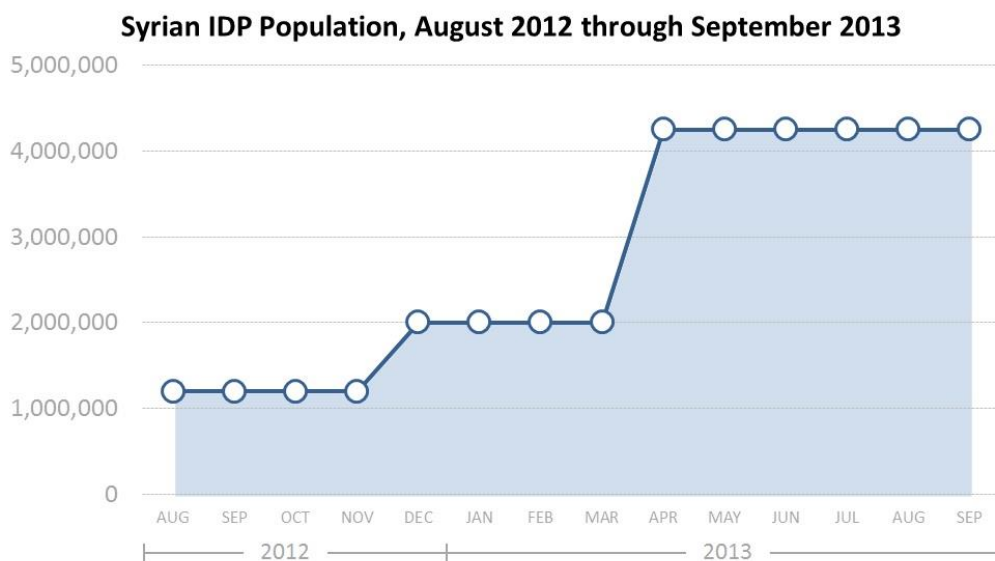
⁷² IOM, *Syria Crisis: A Migration Perspective: A Working Paper*, December 2012, p 6.

⁷³ UNHCR, *Iraqi Returnees and Syrian Refugees Enter Iraq*, 9 August 2012, p.1, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Fact%2520sheet%2520on%2520Syrian%2520refugees-En.pdf>

⁷⁴ IOM, *Syria Crisis: A Migration Perspective: A Working Paper*, December 2012, p. 9.

⁷⁵ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, Advance Unedited Version, 4 June 2013, A/HRC/23/58, para 91.

bombardment of civilian locations, constituted a crime against humanity and a war crime.⁷⁶ There are also indications that displacement is being used as a tool of sectarian cleansing. As a November 2011 ICG report stated, "...communal instincts and, in certain instances, genuine threats, are inducing citizens to resettle in like-minded areas, producing a worrying pattern of sectarian segregation."⁷⁷ As in Bosnia and Iraq, displacement can not only be an unintended byproduct of conflict, but also a deliberate strategy.



Note: Figures are not always available for the exact end of the month due to varying OCHA reporting times. Hence, a month's data may be taken from the earliest report of the following month in order to capture the most complete IDP flow statistics for the previous month. Sources: OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin: Syria, Issues 1-33.

People are displaced not only because of direct attacks and other forms of violence, but also because they can no longer survive in their communities due to the effects of armed conflict. When people lose their jobs and cannot access basic services, they move to areas where they are able to survive, often first within the country and then later across a border. It is difficult to over-estimate the impact of the armed conflict on life in Syria. The regular assessments by UN agencies of conditions inside Syria provide a gloomy picture of the consequences of the war – particularly considering the data represent a partial view of the situation, given the constraints of collecting data in the midst of conflict. The destruction of utilities and essential infrastructure, the unraveling of basic public services such as waste disposal, electricity, fuel, education and medical care have disrupted the functioning of life on all levels. Violence, the devaluation of the Syrian currency, mounting unemployment, decreases in cereal and livestock production, disruption of food supply networks and rising food prices, have increased food insecurity in the country. Year-on-year inflation rose by 50 percent since the outbreak of the conflict in 2011, with food prices climbing up to 300 percent or more, as reported in Al Hassakeh, Hama and

⁷⁶UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 4 June 2013, paras 149-151.

⁷⁷ ICG, *Uncharted Waters: Thinking through Syria's Dynamics*, 2011, p. 6, www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Syria/B031%20Uncharted%20Waters%20-%20Thinking%20Through%20Syrias%20Dynamics.pdf

Aleppo, according to the World Food Programme (WFP).⁷⁸ All of this has resulted in a deteriorating nutritional situation for children under 5 and other vulnerable groups, such as lactating women.⁷⁹ International agencies have stepped up their assistance programs, but their efforts are hampered by the security situation on the ground. In July 2013, WFP reduced its rations in Syria due in part to inadequate resourcing and in August, was only able to provide food to 2.4 million people in the country – short of its goal of feeding three million people per month – as a result of the deteriorating security situation.⁸⁰ By early September 2013, WFP was aiming to feed three million people inside Syria every month and up to 6.5 million Syrians by the end of the year, a figure which includes 4 million people inside Syria – on both sides of the front lines – and 2.5 million refugees in neighboring countries.⁸¹

The country's GDP has decreased by 40-60 percent since the crisis began and an estimated 50 percent of the population have lost their jobs. Those who do still have jobs are often unable to get to work because of insecurity and the large number of checkpoints. The public sector – which employs 30 percent of the country's workforce – has been less affected and these salaries are important to the economy as a whole. Because of disruptions in internet connectivity and damage to ATMs, banks are often unable to provide any services to their customers or salaries for workers paid through these banks.⁸²

Health care, once a strong sector in Syria, has seriously deteriorated as a result of the conflict and the resulting displacement. Health care personnel and health facilities have been targeted by parties to the conflict as “a tactic of war,” which in some areas has driven healthcare underground, in clandestine and makeshift locales.⁸³ Many Syrian doctors and other medical personnel have fled the country, are internally displaced, have perished in the conflict, or have been arrested, imprisoned, tortured or killed by the regime as they are deemed ‘enemies of the regime’ for providing medical assistance to the injured.⁸⁴ In Aleppo, the number of physicians has reportedly fallen from some 2,000 to an estimated 35-100 who were working at or near the

⁷⁸ WFP, “WFP Appeals For More Access To People In Need Inside Syria As Refugees Hit The Two Million Mark,” 3 September 2013, www.wfp.org/news/news-release/wfp-appeals-more-access-people-need-inside-syria-refugees-hit-two-million-mark

⁷⁹ Save the Children, *Childhood under Fire*, 13 March 2013, pp. v, 14-15,

www.savethechildren.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=8rKLIXMGIp14E&b=8486803&ct=13020737

⁸⁰ WFP, *WFP Syria Crisis Response: Situation Update Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt*, 28 June-16 July 2013, July 2013,

<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP%20Syria%20Crisis%20Situation%20Update%2016%20July%202013.pdf>

⁸¹ WFP, “Syria Emergency,” www.wfp.org/crisis/syria; WFP, “WFP Appeals For More Access To People In Need Inside Syria As Refugees Hit The Two Million Mark,” 3 September 2013.

⁸² Syria Needs Analysis Project (SNAP), *Regional Analysis Syria: Part I – Syria*, 31 July 2013, p. 17.

⁸³ Citation from UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 11 March 2013, para. 10, A/HRC/22/CRP.1, www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/PeriodicUpdate11March2013_en.pdf. See also, UN General Assembly, UN Security Council, *Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 15 May 2013, A/67/845–S/2013/245, para. 159; MSF, *Syria Two Years On - The Failure of International Aid*, March 2013; ICRC, “Syria: The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement calls for the urgent protection of health care personnel and aid workers,” ICRC Statement, 25 March 2013, www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/statement/2013/03-25-syria-rcrc-movement-statement.htm.

⁸⁴ [Government of the Syrian Arab Republic](http://www.governmentofsyria.gov.sy) and [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](http://ochaonline.org) (OCHA), *Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) January - December 2013*, 7 June 2013, p. 49, <http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/revised-syria-humanitarian-assistance-response-plan-sharp-january>; MSF, *Syria Two Years On: The Failure of International Aid*, 6 March 2013.

front lines, and half of the 12 government hospitals had closed. By June 2013, at least 57 percent of public hospitals were considered affected and the majority of the country's ambulances were no longer functioning.⁸⁵ Local production of medicines has fallen by 90 percent and blood banks have been damaged or compromised.⁸⁶ There are fears that the breakdown of the water supply system will result in increased health risks, a risk exacerbated by the low immunization coverage and the disruption of solid waste collection and disposal. In addition, there have been outbreaks of communicable diseases such as cutaneous leishmaniasis and typhoid fever.⁸⁷ In some areas, births by caesarean section are 3-5 times higher than in normal conditions as women fear that they won't be able to reach a hospital or clinic because of the roadblocks and conflict.⁸⁸ Those with chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart ailments, find it difficult to access needed medicines and care.⁸⁹

Water availability per capita in Syria has decreased by one-third of the levels before the conflict. Most of the country's public water systems are either not functional or subject to significant service disruptions. Shortages of water treatment chemicals such as chlorine have increased levels of discharge of untreated waste water, contaminating ground and surface water and affecting the availability of drinking water. The government estimates that 35 percent of the country's water treatment plants have been damaged.⁹⁰

Given both the direct and indirect effects of the conflict, millions of Syrians have left their communities in search of safety and survival and continue to move in search of security.

Given both the direct and indirect effects of the conflict, millions of Syrians have left their communities in search of safety and survival and continue to move in search of security. Displacement in Syria, as elsewhere, is a dynamic process. People return to their homes to check on property and relatives, they go to stay with relatives in areas perceived as safer and then move on when either conditions deteriorate or when they perceive it is no longer safe. As a Jordanian

⁸⁵ [Government of the Syrian Arab Republic](#) and OCHA, *Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) January - December 2013*, 7 June 2013, pp. 24, 49.

⁸⁶ Neil Macfarquhar and Hala Droubi, "In Syria's Civil War, Doctors Find Themselves in Cross Hairs," 23 March 2013, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2012/12/19/world/middleeast/aleppo-residents-battered-by-war-struggle-to-survive.html?pagewanted=all; IRIN, "Syria: Healthcare system crumbling," 11 December 2012, www.irinnews.org/report/97011/syria-healthcare-system-crumbling; On the difficulties in storing blood and in providing blood transfusions, see for example, MSF, *Syria Two Years On - The Failure of International Aid so far*, 6 March 2013.

⁸⁷ Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, OCHA, *Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) January - December 2013*, 7 June 2013, p. 50; MSF, *Syria Two Years On - The Failure of International Aid so far*, March 2013, p. 10.

⁸⁸ SNAP, *Regional Analysis Syria*, July 2013, p. 14.

⁸⁹ Ron Waldman, "Another Casualty of Syria's War: Its Medical System," 5 September 2013, www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2013/09/05/the-breakdown-of-syrias-medical-system-amid-civil-war

⁹⁰ SNAP, *Regional Analysis Syria*, July 2013, p. 3.

Foreign Ministry official stated, “Jordan is typically the fourth stop for Syrians; most of the refugees arriving have been previously displaced at least three times inside Syria.”⁹¹

For those displaced within Syria, shelter is an immediate and serious concern. The overwhelming majority of IDPs (85 percent) stay with relatives or friends or rent accommodations in the communities where they arrive.⁹² But when resources run out, or when IDPs have no relatives or friends to stay with, they seek alternative accommodations. IDPs living in makeshift collective centers endure overcrowded conditions and lack access to clean water, electricity and waste management.⁹³ A May 2013 Assessment Working Group for Northern Syria report concluded that IDPs in collective shelters were the group facing the biggest risks across all assessed sectors.⁹⁴ However, given the lack of any systematic information about IDPs living dispersed in the community, it is hard to draw conclusions about groups that are particularly vulnerable.

In comparison with refugees, those displaced within Syria are probably more vulnerable (as they are closer to the violence), less likely to be assessed and counted, less likely to be able to access international assistance, and perhaps more vulnerable than groups that have made it out of the country. Older people, for example, may be less able to travel. While people over 65 made up some 6 percent of Syria’s pre-war population, they account for only 1.6 percent of registered refugees.⁹⁵

IDPs face serious protection needs related to the ongoing conflict. Families have been separated, there is a heightened risk of sexual violence, and children experience trauma. Both IDP and refugee women report increased domestic violence and pressure to adopt negative coping methods such as early marriage and prostitution.⁹⁶ IDPs living in makeshift camps near the Turkish border have been attacked.⁹⁷ The proliferation of small arms and reported widespread presence of mines and unexploded ordinance pose a particular threat for children. In Syria, children have been used as human shields and recruited into armed forces in particular by armed opposition groups, while in Lebanon some have reportedly engaged in armed hostilities.⁹⁸ There are concerns that IDPs may not have registered their newborns because of their displacement, disruption of the registration system and the fear that they would be identified as coming from the anti-government communities if they try to register in their place of displacement. IDPs also

⁹¹ Interview with E. Ferris, 4 June 2013.

⁹² UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons*, 15 July 2013, A/67/ Slot no.31125, draft version, para. 31, on file with the authors; WHO, “WHO warns of increased risk of disease epidemics in Syria and in neighbouring countries as summer approaches,” 3 June 2013,

<http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/who-warns-increased-risk-disease-epidemics-syria-and-neighboring>.

⁹³ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons*, 15 July 2013, draft version, para. 31.

⁹⁴ Assessment Working Group for Northern Syria, *Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria II: Final Report*, 22 May 2013, p. 7.

⁹⁵ As of September 2013; see the age break-down in refugee figures listed at UNHCR, “Syria Regional Refugee Response Regional Overview,” Syria Regional Refugee Response, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

⁹⁶ Global Protection Cluster, *War in Syria: The hidden costs of gender-based violence*, April 2013, pp 1-2, http://gbvaor.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/GBV-AoR-Advocacy-Note_Syria_July.pdf

⁹⁷ On 30 April 2013, artillery bombs reportedly hit a makeshift IDP camp near Bab Al-Hawa on the Turkish border, resulting in a least 50 persons wounded and five killed, UNDSS Information, 30 April 2013. See also: Khaled Yacoub Oweis, “Syrian air strike on Turkish border kills at least five,” Reuters, 30 April 2013, www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/30/us-syria-crisis-turkey-idUSBRE93T0QQ20130430

⁹⁸ UN General Assembly, UN Security Council, *Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 15 May 2013, A/67/845–S/2013/245, paras 77, 151-60.

face protection risks because of the loss of social networks which can protect people in conflict situations by providing trusted guidance on security issues.

Many internally displaced children have no access to education due to the lack of security and financial resources. Parents may be reluctant to allow their children to travel to schools or lack funds for supplies or transport.⁹⁹ Schools in Syria have been reportedly used, targeted and damaged by parties to the conflict.¹⁰⁰ Over 20 percent of Syria's 22,000 schools are no longer functioning because they are damaged or destroyed or are serving as shelters for IDPs.¹⁰¹ Many are occupied by parties to the conflict.¹⁰² The Second Joint Rapid Assessment in Northern Syria (J-RANS II) survey found that only 43 percent of schools in seven northern governorates were functional and being used for educational purposes.¹⁰³ Anecdotal reports indicate that nearly half of all IDP children have dropped out of school and some children have already lost two years of schooling.¹⁰⁴

An increasing number of humanitarian workers and UN staff members have been killed, injured or kidnapped and attacks on goods and facilities including UN vehicles have multiplied.

Provision of international humanitarian assistance to IDPs within Syria has been particularly difficult. The UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and international NGOs have worked through local partnerships, particularly with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society and have established humanitarian hubs in Homs and Tartous. There have also been inter-agency cross-line convoys into areas which had previously been inaccessible. Security-related impediments to access include active fighting and military operations, closure of key access routes and formal and informal checkpoints. In addition, an increasing number of humanitarian workers and UN staff members have been killed, injured or kidnapped and attacks on goods and facilities including UN vehicles have multiplied.¹⁰⁵ The World Food Programme was unable to access its warehouses in Damascus for a month due to fighting in the area.¹⁰⁶ There are reports that many local humanitarian workers are unable to reach their offices and sometimes are trapped

⁹⁹ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons*, 15 July 2013, draft version, para. 40.

¹⁰⁰ UN General Assembly, UN Security Council, *Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 15 May 2013, A/67/845-S/2013/245, paras 157-158.

¹⁰¹ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons*, 15 July 2013, draft version, para. 40; Office of SRSF for Children and Armed Conflict, Statement by Leila Zerrougui to the Security Council, 18 April 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/security-council-must-ensure-end-violence-against-children-syria>

¹⁰² An estimated 2500 educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed while approximately 2000 schools are being used as shelters for IDPs, according to, Office of SRSF for Children and Armed Conflict, Statement by Leila Zerrougui to the Security Council, 18 April 2013.

¹⁰³ J-RANS II, May 2013, p. 13.

¹⁰⁴ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons*, 15 July 2013, draft version, para. 40.

¹⁰⁵ See Valerie Amos, Security Council Briefing 18 April 2013, p. 3, www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_pv_6949.pdf

¹⁰⁶ SNAP, *Regional Analysis Syria*, July 2013, p. 6.

in them by explosions and gunfire.¹⁰⁷ Diversion of aid by both opposition and government forces reportedly is a frequent occurrence. Twenty UNRWA vehicles, for example, had been stolen and, as of late July 2013, were unaccounted for.¹⁰⁸

Bureaucratic obstacles have also increased since January 2013. The government-approved list of NGOs has been reduced and approvals of international NGOs to operate in the country have been painstakingly slow. Aid workers also report visa restrictions for UN and INGO staff, restrictions on importing equipment and vehicles, excessive administrative procedures for humanitarian missions and special restrictions on the delivery of medical equipment and supplies to opposition-held areas.¹⁰⁹ At the end of June 2013 in an effort to penalize cross-border operations, the Syrian government promulgated a new law which imposes a prison sentence and a fine of up to \$50,000 for anyone entering the country illegally.¹¹⁰

One of the tactics used in the war has been besiegement and areas under siege, such as Aleppo and Homs, have little or no access to aid. Indeed both the government of Syria and opposition groups have cut off movement to and from certain areas.¹¹¹ In addition, humanitarian assistance is restricted by the limited availability of fuel, damaged infrastructure, and the lack of drivers and transportation companies willing to operate in certain areas of the country. The May 2013 report on needs assessment in northern Syria found that 79 percent of sub-districts reported problems with humanitarian access, both for humanitarian actors trying to deliver goods and affected populations trying to access relief. The report also found that governorates closest to the Turkish border receive more assistance than those further from the border.¹¹² This suggests a common paradox in humanitarian assistance: those most in need of aid tend to be found in the areas most difficult for international organizations to access.

Finally, the ability to provide assistance to those displaced within Syria is also limited by financial constraints. By mid-August 2013, the \$1.41 billion requested for humanitarian assistance inside Syria under the SHARP was funded at only 48 percent.¹¹³ WFP announced that after cutting rations in Syria in July, there would be a complete halt to food distribution by mid-August.¹¹⁴ Although food distribution was not completely cut, WFP was unable to reach its goal of three million people during the month of August, falling short by 600,000, due to lack of funding and security concerns.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ See Valerie Amos, Briefing to Security Council, 16 July 2013,

<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/USG%20Security%20Council%20Briefing%20on%20Syria%2016Jul2013.pdf>

¹¹⁰ SNAP, *Regional Analysis Syria*, July 2013, p. 6.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹² SNAP, *Regional Analysis Syria*, 30 May 2013 p. 6.

¹¹³ Financial Tracking Service, "Syrian Arab Republic Civil Unrest, 2013 Humanitarian Funding : Actual," 20 August 2013, <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/pub?key=0AusGu5uwbtt-dEp0eHRzcWdVd2hBQmpBVWwxUHRjcUE&single=true&gid=0&output=html>

¹¹⁴ SNAP, *Regional Analysis Syria*, July 2013, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ WFP, "WFP Appeals for More Access to People in Need Inside Syria as Refugees Hit the Two Million Mark," 3 September 2013, www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2013/07/wfp-fears-funding-shortfall-will-impede-delivery-of-food-and-hope-in-syria/

The case of Kurdish displacement inside Syria

The widespread internal displacement in Syria is affecting patterns of sectarian settlement in the country. When people are displaced, they tend to move to areas where their ethnic group or sect is in a majority (as was the case in Iraq and Bosnia). The case of the Syrian Kurds is particularly interesting in this regard as it demonstrates the relationship between displacement, ethnic and sectarian divisions, the military struggle and perhaps some of the future political consequences of displacement.

Syria's Kurdish population lives near the Turkish and Iraqi borders though there are also substantial Kurdish populations in Syria's large cities. But, unlike Iraq, the territory of Kurdish settlement is not contiguous and does not have the mountains in which an armed insurgency against central rule can be organized. Over the years, the Syrian Kurds were partly coopted by the regime where their political activities – vis à vis Turkey – and their smuggling was tolerated by the Syrian government. However, they have also seethed under systematic discrimination and repression. Traditional Kurdish political parties feared reprisals if they actively joined the opposition even though many young Kurds did so. And the regime for the most part left the Kurds alone.¹¹⁶ The largest and most influential of the Syrian Kurdish political parties, the Democratic Union Party (Kurdish: *Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat*, PYD), was perceived as a Syrian-Kurdish offshoot of the Turkish Kurdish group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

With the present conflict and the ensuing displacement, the situation has changed as Kurds previously displaced from the region returned to Syria's Kurdish regions in the north; as of October 2012, half of Syria's Kurdish regions were controlled by local Kurdish leaders, including at border points with Iraq's Kurdish autonomous region.¹¹⁷ By mid-2012 the PYD took advantage of the partial withdrawal of regime forces from Kurdish areas to firmly establish its political and security presence and openly asserted itself as the authority in charge of state institutions in most predominantly Kurdish towns. The only Kurdish political rival to the PYD is a coalition of Kurdish parties aligned with the KRG in Iraq. But Kurdish factions compete not only with each other but also with non-Kurdish opposition groups and most are alienated from the Islamist and Arab nationalist opposition groups (in part because of the dependence of these groups on Turkey and Gulf-based conservative sponsors). Sectarian and ethnic tensions are building up as evidenced by clashes between the PYD fighters and the FSA.¹¹⁸ In recent months, clashes have occurred and escalated between Kurdish militia and JAN in Syria's northern provinces. There have been reports that Kurdish refugees arriving in northern Iraq in late August 2013 were, in fact, being driven out by the PYD which has been increasingly engaged in fighting Nusra fighters. There are also indications that tribes in the area are also joining the fight against the PYD and reports of fighting between the FSA and JAN/ISIS in a number of areas. In the areas under opposition control, a 'triangular' conflict seems to be developing, with serious implications for displacement and humanitarian action. As discussed further below, the displacement of Syrian Kurds has particular implications for Turkey, which has significantly improved relations with the KRG in recent years and is trying to keep a peace process with the PKK alive against all odds.

¹¹⁶ ICG, *Syria's Kurds: A Struggle within a Struggle*, Middle East report no. 136, 2 January 2013, p. i, www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/egypt-syria-lebanon/syria/136-syrias-kurds-a-struggle-within-a-struggle.aspx

¹¹⁷ IOM, *Syria Crisis: A Migration Perspective: A Working Paper*, December 2012, p. 11.

¹¹⁸ ICG, *Syria's Kurds: A Struggle within a Struggle*, January 2013, p. ii.

The displacement of Kurds to their historical homeland and the establishment of Kurdish parties' control of these areas offer the possibility of the establishment of a Kurdish homeland – an outcome obviously feared by the Turkish government which is concerned about the impact of such an outcome on its own Kurdish population.¹¹⁹ In the meantime, the Turkish government and the head of KRG, Masoud Barzani, appear to be concerned about the rise of PYD influence in Syria at the expense of other Kurdish groups including the Kurdish Democratic Party.

Displacement inside Syria thus has direct implications for the future of Kurds in Syria and the region. Internal displacement inside Syria is also linked to the movement of refugees across all of Syria's borders¹²⁰ – a phenomenon that could also have long-range consequences for the region.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. iii.

¹²⁰ The exception is Israel, which has kept its borders closed to Syrians. But even in Israel, there are reports of Syrians being allowed to enter the country for medical treatment; see Isabel Kershner, "Across Forbidden Border, Doctors in Israel Quietly Tend to Syria's Wounded," *The New York Times*, 5 August 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/08/06/world/middleeast/across-forbidden-border-doctors-in-israel-quietly-tend-to-syrias-wounded.html?pagewanted=all&r=0

SYRIANS ON THE MOVE: REFUGEES IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

It is important to emphasize that current refugee flows in the region are superimposed on long-standing patterns of migration. Syrians regularly went to Lebanon and Turkey to work, often in seasonal agricultural work or in construction. In Lebanon, for example, an estimated 300-500,000 Syrians were working in the country at any given time.¹²¹ Often this migration was circular; men would work in Lebanon for a few months while their families remained at home. One of the difficulties with the new flow of refugees is the legal status of these seasonal migrants who are now not returning to Syria but rather are often now bringing their families to Lebanon.¹²²



Zahle Waffa, 6, fled Syria with her mother and sister. Since her arrival in Lebanon five months ago, she has barely spoken, and she won't engage with the other children, her mother says (UNHCR/E.Dorfman / May 22, 2013)

Since 2011 and particularly since 2012, the flow of refugees from Syria into neighboring countries has been both massive and rapid. In the space of 18 months, the number of refugees has increased from 40,000 in March 2012 to two million in September 2013. And this figure refers only to those who are registered or are known to be waiting to register.¹²³ In addition to those who are in the registration process, there are also Syrians living in all of these countries who are not in the registration process –either because they were present beforehand as undocumented workers or because they have chosen not to identify themselves to authorities. The graph below presents the best documented estimates of the number of refugees although governments in the region assess the figures as much higher. In both Turkey and Lebanon, for example, government officials refer to half a million Syrians in each country outside the registration process in addition to the large number of Syrians in the official registration process. While these Syrians are considered ‘undocumented’ in the case of Lebanon, in Turkey many Syrians entered the country legally with their passports (as Turkey does not require a visa for Syrians) but some may have overstayed or not obtained residence permits.

¹²¹ IOM, *Syria Crisis: A Migration Perspective: A Working Paper*, December 2012, p. 8.

¹²² These Syrians would be considered ‘refugees sur place’ under international refugee law, but as Lebanon has not signed the Convention, the government has to date refused to recognize them as such.

¹²³ Given the pace of arrivals, UNHCR is not able to keep up with registering people who arrive in urban areas and so there is a backlog of refugees waiting to be formally registered. At times over the past year the backlog was several months and refugees were given appointments to return to the office and register then.

Syrian Refugee Population, March 2012 through September 2013



Note: Figures are not always available for the exact end of the month due to varying OCHA reporting times. Hence, a month's data may be taken from the earliest report of the following month in order to capture the most complete refugee flow statistics for the previous month. For example, by 21 June 2012, there were 86,293 refugees, but 103,000 as of 5 July 2012, with 3,000 of them fleeing in the first three days of July. Sources: OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin: Syria, Issues 1-33.

Table 1. Total Population and Estimated Numbers of Syrian Refugees, Sept. 2013

Host country	Total national population (millions)	Number of registered refugees	Persons awaiting registration
Lebanon	4.1	636,000	103,823
Turkey	80.7	450,584	13,301
Egypt	85.3	99,712	17,758
Jordan	6.5	492,526	27,150
Iraq	31.8	est. 200,000	24,734

Source: Population data are estimates from US Central Intelligence Agency, *CIA World Factbook*, July 2013, www.cia.gov; Refugee data from UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, 12 September 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

The current influx of Syrian refugees comes on top of earlier influxes of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees, as shown in Table 2, below. Response to the current influx of Syrians is shaped, at least in Jordan and Lebanon, by those countries' experiences with earlier Palestinian arrivals. In both Jordan and Lebanon, government officials are careful to emphasize that the presence of Syrians is a temporary phenomenon and have resisted any efforts or programs which would imply that the Syrians will be staying for more than a temporary sojourn. For example, both the Jordanian and Lebanese authorities have prohibited any programs on livelihoods or vocational training or, in the case of Lebanon, construction of permanent sites.

Table 2. Palestine and Iraqi refugees, 2013, by Host Country

Country	Number of Iraqi refugees (as of Dec. 2012) ¹²⁴	Number of Palestine refugees (as of Jan. 2013) ¹²⁵	Number of <i>displaced</i> Palestine refugees (as of March 2013) ¹²⁶
Iraq	----	11,740	unknown
Syria	62,700	499,189	235,000 (Aug. 2013)
Jordan	63,000	2,034,641	4,794
Turkey	9,500	unknown	unknown
Lebanon	6,500	441,543	33,500
Egypt	5,700	unknown	unknown

More than 90 percent of the refugees fleeing Syria into neighboring countries identify themselves as Sunni Muslims with very few religious minorities registering with UNHCR. Particularly in Lebanon, there may be religious minorities, particularly Christians, who have entered the country but who choose not to register, perhaps because they fear negative repercussions from Sunni refugees of identifying with the regime. They also fear that if they return to Syria, the Syrian government will view them as disloyal for having sought safe haven in a neighboring country.¹²⁷ In Turkey, a separate camp has been established for Turkmen refugees and in Jordan, UN officials make sure that Alawi refugees are not put in Za'atari refugee camp but settle in urban areas, often through sponsorship by local Jordanians.

The Syrian refugees, particularly in the three countries with the highest numbers, all have an impact on political dynamics within their host countries. Except for Egypt, Israel and Yemen, none of the countries in the Middle East is a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. While Turkey has signed the Convention, it maintains the geographic exclusion which limits refugee status to Europeans but has formally extended temporary protection to Syrians since the end of 2011. While signatories to the Convention are obliged to allow those recognized as refugees to work and to access public services such as health care and education, the

¹²⁴ According to UNHCR, the numbers of Iraqi refugees in Syria have dwindled due to insecurity in Syria; see UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Report 2012 - Syrian Arab Republic*, 1 June 2013, p. 1, www.unhcr.org/51b1d63cb.html. The refugee figure of some 63,000 Iraqis in Jordan is a Government estimate; some 27,800 are assisted by UNHCR, see: UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Report 2012 - Jordan*, 1 June 2013, p. 2, www.unhcr.org/51b1d63bd.html; UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Report 2012 - Turkey*, 1 June 2013, p. 3, www.unhcr.org/51b1d643b.html; UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Report 2012 - Lebanon*, 1 June 2013, p. 2, www.unhcr.org/51b1d63c0.html; UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Report 2012 - Egypt*, 1 June 2013, p. 2, www.unhcr.org/51b1d63816.html.

¹²⁵ Except for Iraq figures, data reflects those Palestine refugees registered with United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA); see UNWRA, *UNWRA in Figures*, January 2013, www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2013042435340.pdf. Iraq figures are UNHCR estimates for January 2013; see UNHCR, "UNHCR 2013 planning figures for Iraq," *2013 UNHCR country operations profile – Iraq*, www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486426.html.

¹²⁶ UNRWA, *Regional Analysis Syria*, 28 March 2013, p. 3, www.mapaction.org/component/mapcat/download/2929.html?fmt=pdf

¹²⁷ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), *Factsheet Syria*, July 2013, p. 2, www.uscifr.gov/images/Syria%20Factsheet%20-%20July%2018.pdf

governments hosting the Syrians have extended limited rights to the refugees, as spelled out in the table below.

Table 3. Official Entry and Employment Requirements for Syrians¹²⁸

Country	Entry	Employment
Lebanon	Has maintained open borders during the conflict. In early August 2013, Lebanese authorities began requiring Syrians to provide valid identification and explain their reason for arrival. Syrians with damaged identity documents are no longer allowed to enter Lebanon. ¹²⁹	Work permit required for all Syrians. Most who work do so illegally.
Jordan	Jordanian authorities have reportedly blocked for days or weeks the entry of Syrians ¹³⁰ . By 20 August 2013, Jordanian authorities were denying entry to Syrians with valid identity documents, stamping them with “return in one month.” ¹³¹ By early September 2013, thousands of Syrians were reportedly stranded on the Syrian side of the border, unable to cross into Jordan.	Work permit required, but not granted in practice, to Syrians. 160,000 Syrians are working illegally in Jordan, mostly in informal jobs and subject to exploitation and exposure to hazards.

¹²⁸ For further details about border closures, see: Human Rights Watch, “Iraq/Jordan/Turkey: Syrians Blocked from Fleeing War,” 1 July 2013, www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/01/iraqjordan-turkey-syrians-blocked-fleeing-war; Human Rights Watch, “Iraq/Turkey: Open Borders to All Syrian Refugees,” 12 December 2012, www.hrw.org/news/2012/10/14/iraq-turkey-open-borders-all-syrian-refugees-0. For further information on access to employment, see: SNAP, *Legal status of individuals fleeing Syria*, June 2013, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/legal_status_of_individuals_fleeing_syria.pdf.

¹²⁹ *The Daily Star*, “UNHCR says helping 677,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon,” 10 August 2013, www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Aug-10/226876-unhcr-says-helping-677000-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon.ashx#ixzz2cjdkjcWD

¹³⁰ For reports on the closing of the Jordanian border to Syrian refugees, see: David Blair and Holly Watt, “Tens of thousands of Syrian refugees stranded on Jordanian border,” 3 September 2013, *The Telegraph*, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10284503/Tens-of-thousands-of-Syrian-refugees-stranded-on-Jordanian-border.html.

¹³¹ *The Daily Star*, “Jordan urged not to deny entry to Syria refugees,” August 20 2013, www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Aug-20/227986-jordan-urged-not-to-deny-entry-to-syria-refugees.ashx#ixzz2cjaDtiRU

Turkey	<p>Officially has an open-door policy for Syrians; Syrians with passports can cross the border freely without an entry visa. However, there are reports that in practice the government has limited the number of Syrians crossing the border in an effort to manage the influx. Official crossings controlled by the Syrian Kurdish Forces have either been closed or subject to strict controls.</p>	Work permit required but difficult to obtain. Many who work do so illegally.
Iraq and KRG	<p>Iraqi and KRG authorities have either closed border crossings entirely or allowed only limited numbers of Syrians to cross.</p> <p>According to aid agencies on 20 August 2013, the KRG had set a daily quota of 3,000 refugees to cope with a sudden influx of 35,000 Syrian refugees.¹³²</p>	In the KRG, those with residency permits can work legally. Elsewhere, those in camps cannot work.
Egypt	<p>Under President Morsi, Syrians were allowed to enter the country without any visa requirements. Shortly after Morsi's ouster, however, authorities began requiring Syrians to obtain paid visas and prior security clearance. In July 2013, authorities stated that the visa fees would be waived.</p> <p>By late July 2013, Egyptian authorities were reportedly arbitrarily detaining Syrians and threatening to deport them.¹³³</p>	Work permit required but difficult to obtain, as employer must prove that no Egyptian national is available to do the work.

¹³² Murad Talaat, "Syrian Kurds' flight drags Iraq deeper into neighbor's war," *Reuters*, 20 August 2013, www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/20/us-syria-crisis-iraq-idUSBRE97J0OY20130820

¹³³ Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Arrests of Syrians Raise Deportation Fears," 25 July 2013, www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/25/egypt-arrests-syrians-raise-deportation-fears

REFUGEES IN THE REGION

Throughout the region, the large-scale and rapid influx of refugees has challenged governments to provide needed services to the refugees and to local communities which have been impacted by the influx. While all host governments face financial pressures and all are concerned about the impact of the refugees on national security, they have adopted different policies. Turkey has built camps where about half of the Syrian refugees live. Jordan has one large camp, Za'atari, housing over 100,000 refugees (with several hundred refugees living in two smaller camps) while most of the refugees live dispersed within broader urban communities. Lebanon has resisted establishing camps and the refugees live dispersed throughout the country in various housing alternatives.



A young mother crosses the border from Syria into Jordan and becomes a refugee. In her arms she carries her one month old son Hamid. (UNHCR / S. Rich / April 2013)

Jordan: Hospitality under pressure

Jordanians and US leaders fear that Jordan's stability will be threatened by the Syrian conflict. King Abdullah has long walked a political tightrope at home as well as within the region. As a result of increased domestic pressures from the Arab Spring, Jordan had embarked on a number of economic and political reforms. But these reforms were seen differently by the wide range of political actors in Jordan.

There are also economic challenges that threaten the country. Late last year, Jordan sought an emergency International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan of \$2 billion to deal with a desperate cash flow crisis but one of the conditions was the elimination of fuel subsidies responsible for much of the budget deficit. Cutting these subsidies led to a 50 percent rise in fuel prices and widespread protests, which brought into sharp relief the challenges facing the Kingdom.¹³⁴ Given the economic costs of hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, humanitarian workers in the region question the timing of the conditions imposed by this loan.¹³⁵

In this context, the Syrian conflict is seen as posing serious threats to the stability of the Jordanian government and the region. It is important to recognize that distances between Syria, Jordan and Lebanon are very short. Damascus is less than 200 kilometers from Amman and the fighting in Dara'a is just across the Jordanian border. The sounds of the shelling in Syria can be heard from Jordanian border towns. The conflict in Syria is affecting Jordan's stability and security in a number of ways, most immediately in the dramatic and massive influx of refugees and the growing importance of the Jordanian-Syrian border in terms of the movement of weapons and fighters, including jihadists, into Syria.

¹³⁴ Tony Karon, "Jordan is living Dangerously as Syria Burns," *Time*, 16 January 2013, <http://world.time.com/2013/01/16/jordan-is-living-dangerously-as-syria-burns/>

¹³⁵ E. Ferris, interviews with humanitarian officials in Jordan, June 2013.

In November 2011, King Abdullah called on Assad to step down but since then concerns have grown over the potential implications for Jordan of a rebel victory. The Jordanian security forces have been working overtime to ensure that Syrian Islamists, including the terrorist-designated *Jabhat al-Nusra*, (JAN) are no longer using Jordan as a rear guard for staging support for the rebellion in the south. In particular, they have sought to halt foreign fighters, including jihadists, from crossing the Jordan-Syria border to support the rebels.¹³⁶ There are concerns about the impact of the return of these battle-hardened Islamists to Jordan and the threat they may pose to the regime.¹³⁷

Jordan has also stepped up its diplomatic efforts, with bilateral talks with Iran, Russia, Turkey, the United States and the European Union and has been particularly active with the UN and other multilateral organizations. It has brought the issue of Syrian refugees and their impact on Jordan to the UN Security Council in an attempt to raise awareness of the significant costs the refugees pose and to enhance burden-sharing.

Jordan's policy toward the Syrian refugees has been shaped by its long tradition of welcoming Palestinian refugees. Indeed this tradition of hospitality has led the Jordanian government to accept numbers of refugees far beyond what any western government would contemplate. Jordan was also a primary destination of Iraqis fleeing the violence in their country – although estimates of the number of Iraqis have long been a source of contention (32,000 were registered by UNHCR, though governmental estimates ranged as high as 450,000.)¹³⁸ These experiences have shaped Jordanian policies toward Syrian refugees arriving on its territory.

Syrian refugees began crossing into Jordan in significant numbers in the first half of 2012. Like refugees throughout the region, they initially moved in with family members or friends or rented accommodations in the towns and cities. But as the number of arrivals began to increase dramatically, in July 2012, the Jordanian government established the Za'atari refugee camp which by October 2012 housed 20,000 refugees. As of September 2013, the camp's population stood at over 122,000¹³⁹ and construction had begun to open another camp, at Ashraq (slated for September 2013), as numbers continue to increase.

Jordan, not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, has nonetheless allowed the vast majority of Syrians arriving at its border to enter, with the notable exceptions of Palestine refugees, single young men traveling on their own, and others deemed to be a security risk. Arriving Syrians are considered to be asylum-seekers, rather than formally recognized as refugees. When Syrians arrive at the border, they are transported to Za'atari refugee camp where they are registered by UN officials and given accommodation. Refugees can legally move out of the camp if they are sponsored – or 'bailed out' – by a Jordanian citizen, which involves both a statement of responsibility on the part of the sponsor and a financial guarantee. But in fact, the

¹³⁶ See: Nicolas Pelham, "Jordan's Syria Problem," *The New York Review of Books*, 10 January 2013, www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2013/jan/10/jordans-syria-problem/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+nybooks+%28The+New+York+Review+of+Books%29; Tony Karon, "Jordan is Living Dangerously as Syria Burns," *Time*, 16 January 2013.

¹³⁷ Tony Karon, "Jordan is Living Dangerously as Syria Burns," *Time*, 16 January 2013.

¹³⁸ IOM, *Syria Crisis: A Migration Perspective: A Working Paper*, December 2012, p. 14.

¹³⁹ 2012 figures from: IOM, *Syria Crisis: A Migration Perspective: A Working Paper*, December 2012, p. 14; 2013 figures from UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter agency Information, "Jordan: Mafraq Governorate: Za'atari refugee camp," 2 September 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=176&country=107®ion=77>

borders between the camp and the community are porous and there is constant movement in and out of the camp. By late 2012, some 4,000 Syrians were crossing into Jordan every day, leading to pressures to restrict entry. By mid-2013 the number of daily arrivals had fallen dramatically.

Living conditions in the camp are mixed.¹⁴⁰ The refugees are generally safe and have access to food and medical care (and to a much lesser extent, to education). The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Za'atari as evidenced by the abundance of shops, cafes and cell phone stores. But it has been difficult for the international agencies to set up systems to control what goes on in Za'atari and several donors have set up their own sub-sections of the camp, in which “lucky” refugees are housed in containers in lieu of tents. This has created some resentment as refugees perceive a bias in deciding who gets to live in a tent or a container (known as caravans in the camp.) It is no secret that the Free Syrian Army uses Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan for recruitment, medical care and R&R for its soldiers.¹⁴¹ Nor is it a secret that criminal gangs exercise powerful influence over the camp's economic life¹⁴² and that camp residents sometimes threaten staff. A recent report noted that even the Jordanian teachers don't feel safe in Za'atari classrooms.¹⁴³ Za'atari has become a ‘mini-Syria.’ Money that is earned in the camp is re-injected into Syria to fund the rebellion and there is an unspoken alliance between many of the refugees in Za'atari and the FSA fighters.

As of June 2013, there were 60,000 children in the camp, half of whom are of school-age, but less than 25 percent were attending school.¹⁴⁴ This reflects the lack of educational opportunities in the camp, but also raises concerns about the increased vulnerability of children for recruitment into the armed opposition groups. While security remains a major concern in Za'atari, recent reports indicate that the situation may be improving as a result of efforts to establish defined administrative zones within the camp and the increased presence of Jordanian security forces.



Children play outside their tent in Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan (UNHCR / M. Abu Asaker / October 9, 2012)

While much international attention has focused on Syrian refugees in the Za'atari camp, the vast majority of Syrian refugees in Jordan continue to live dispersed in communities. As their savings run out, they face increasing problems in paying rent and consequently face eviction. Moreover, the large numbers of Syrians living in Jordanian communities are triggering a backlash against the government's policies, and the refugees themselves. In parts of northern Jordan, Syrian

¹⁴⁰ Matthew Hall, “The Syrian Crisis in Jordan,” Middle East Research and Information Project, 24 June 2013, www.merip.org/mero/mero062413?ip_login_no_cache=90e237cff14bc92b3879ce43867264e4

¹⁴¹ Given difficulties facing young men traveling alone to cross into Jordan, refugee families are reportedly traveling back to Syria to accompany their young male family members. E. Ferris, interview, Za'atari refugee camp, June 2013.

¹⁴² Alia Allana, “Desert Refuge,” *Fountain Ink*, June 4 2013, <http://fountainink.in/?p=3600>

¹⁴³ The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), *Regional Analysis Syria: Part II – Host countries*, 26 June 2013, www.acaps.org/img/documents/r-regional-analysis-for-syria---part-ii-host-countries-june-2013.pdf

¹⁴⁴ Alia Allana, “Desert Refuge,” *Fountain Ink*, 4 June 2013, <http://fountainink.in/?p=3600>

refugees make up more than half of the local population.¹⁴⁵ Popular resentment against the Syrian refugees is growing as Jordanians blame the Syrians for shortages of goods, rising prices, increasing rental costs, and increasing unemployment.¹⁴⁶ There are particular concerns about shortages of water which has long been an issue in the country. While it is important to note that some Jordanians have profited immensely from the presence of the refugees (and the aid workers who have poured into Amman), many working-class Jordanians feel threatened by the presence of the refugees – which has political consequences as well.

In terms of the impact of the refugees on domestic political life in Jordan, the tribal Bedouin support base for the Hashemite kingdom has already long been threatened by the Palestinian refugee population that now constitutes a majority of Jordan's citizens. The arrival of large numbers of Syrian refugees raises concerns that Bedouin interests will become an even smaller minority in the future.¹⁴⁷

By mid-2013, the number of Syrian arrivals in Jordan had decreased considerably with no clear explanation as to the reasons for the decline. The Jordanian government maintained that arrivals had declined because of developments on the Syrian side of the border. The Syrian government, the argument goes, controls areas closest to Jordanian border and both their restrictions and the increased fighting in the region is the main reason that fewer people are seeking to cross into Jordan. Other observers maintain that the Jordanian government is becoming much more selective about allowing people to enter and there are reports that many Syrians are waiting on the Syrian side of the Jordanian border to cross into Jordan, living in homes abandoned by other refugees.¹⁴⁸

Like the situation of internally displaced Syrians, the situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan is not static. People are moving constantly, from the camp to the towns, sometimes returning to the camp when they cannot pay rent. And thousands of Syrian refugees have returned to Syria – some to fight, some to check their homes, some because they've heard it is now safer. To date, the Jordanian government has not sent refugees back to Syria.

While the Jordanian government's hospitality to the sudden arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees is admirable,¹⁴⁹ if borders are to remain open, continued international support will be necessary.

Lebanon: On the frontline

While all countries in the region have been affected by the influx of refugees, no country has been more impacted than Lebanon. This is partly due to the sheer scale of arrivals – over 720,000 at the time of this writing—in addition to perhaps 500,000 Syrian migrants working in the country at the time of the crisis. Lebanese officials refer to the present number of Syrians as

¹⁴⁵ Marc Pierini, "Helping Jordan Weather the Syrian Storm," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 27 May 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/05/27/helping-jordan-weather-syrian-storm/g6p3>

¹⁴⁶ Rana Sweis, "Resentment Grows Against Syrian Refugees in Jordan," *The New York Times*, 9 May 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/05/09/world/middleeast/09iht-m09-jordan-syria.html?pagewanted=all

¹⁴⁷ Tony Karon, "Jordan is Living Dangerously as Syria Burns," *Time*, 16 January 2013, <http://world.time.com/2013/01/16/jordan-is-living-dangerously-as-syria-burns/>

¹⁴⁸ SNAP, *Regional Analysis Syria*, 26 June 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/r-regional-analysis-for-syria---crisis-overview-june-2013.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ Megan Bradley, "Hospitality in Crisis: Reflections on Jordan's Role in Responding to Syrian Displacement," 27 August 2013, Brookings Up Front Blog, www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/08/27-syrian-refugees-jordan-bradley

1-1.2 million. The country is expected to host 1 million Syrian refugees by the end of the year. Lebanon, a country with a population of 4 million people, has also hosted Palestine refugees for decades. In addition, some 30,000 Lebanese have returned from Syria and reportedly face difficulties finding jobs, housing and social support. There were 442,000 Palestine refugees in Lebanon in January 2013 and approximately 45,000 Palestine Refugees from Syria were in Lebanon by early September, most of whom are living in Palestine refugee camps.¹⁵⁰ A United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) assessment found that 73 percent of the newly arrived Palestine refugees reported that they were fleeing armed conflict in Syria and 24 percent the destruction of their homes.¹⁵¹

Lebanon, which has a population of 4 million, is expected to host one million Syrian refugees by the end of the year and has also hosted Palestine refugees for decades.

When the Arab Spring broke out, the Lebanese government declared a policy of ‘dissociation’ – trying to keep the country out of the conflicts swirling around it. But the presence of the refugees is drawing Lebanon into the conflict and the conflict is playing out on Lebanese streets in Tripoli, Sidon and Beirut.¹⁵²

The Lebanese government is in a particularly weak position. Parliamentary elections were supposed to take place in mid-June 2013 but on 31 May the parliament voted to extend its own mandate for 17 months after rival political parties failed to reach agreement on a new electoral law – a condition of holding elections. Prime Minister-designate Tammam Salaam has been struggling to put together a new government and is reluctant to take decisions without a clear consensus among the parties – and in the absence of such a consensus, there is no clear policy. Political parties in Lebanon include those allied with the Syrian government (e.g. Hezbollah) as well as those allied with the opposition. The General Security Office in Lebanon which is responsible for border management has historically had close ties with the Syrian government.

Lebanon and Syria have a long and tortured history. On the one hand, there are many close family relationships and even before the crisis 15 percent of Syria’s workforce was in Lebanon. But Syria largely occupied Lebanon for decades until forced to leave in 2006, following the assassination of President Hariri, protests by over a million Lebanese (out of a population of 4 million) and the concerted action of the US and France. The increasing involvement of Hezbollah – a major political party in Lebanon and US-designated terrorist organization – in Syria is a major concern.

¹⁵⁰ UNRWA, *UNRWA in Figures*, 1 January 2013, www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2013042435340.pdf; UNRWA, *Syria crisis situation update*, issue 59, 6 September 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-crisis-situation-update-issue-59-6-september-2013>

¹⁵¹ SNAP, *Regional Analysis Syria: Part II – Host Countries*, 26 June 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/a-annex---information-products-overview-june-2013.pdf>

¹⁵² Loveday Morris and Suzan Haidamous, “Beirut car bomb kills at least 21,” *The Washington Post*, 15 August 2013 http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-08-15/world/41412483_1_car-bomb-hezbollah-blast-site

Hezbollah has offered the Assad regime all-out support. For its Shi'a rank-and-file, there are fears that if Sunnis dominate a new Syrian regime, they will be caught between it and Lebanon's own Sunni community. And here the international dimension comes in as well. In the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia, toppling Assad is seen as a critical step toward crippling Hezbollah and isolating Iran.¹⁵³ The more Hezbollah "and Tehran perceive the Syrian crisis as an existential struggle designed to deal them a decisive blow, the greater the risk that they would choose to go for broke."¹⁵⁴ If and when the Syrian regime collapses, it could reignite a bloody domestic conflict. Lebanese Sunnis have been supporting the Syrian opposition. But even if Assad is overthrown, the Lebanese Shi'as would remain by far the most powerful Lebanese actor with strong popular support among Shi'as and Christians.¹⁵⁵

The border remains open though arriving refugees report difficulties with security checks, bribes and landmines on the Syrian side of the border. 89 percent of registered Syrian refugees cross into Lebanon through official border entry posts and are given a six month residency permit (including the right to work) which is renewable for another six months. The refugees then must pay a fee of LBP 300,000 (\$200) per person for renewal – a fee which is prohibitive for many. For those who cross into Lebanon through non-official channels, the process of regularization has proven difficult. For non-Syrian refugees, there is still a high risk of detention and deportation and UNHCR continues to work to resettle them. At the same time the Syrian government has been very reluctant to permit resettlement of Syrians – it is hard to get exit permits from the General Security Office for Syrians accepted for resettlement – reportedly because of close ties between the Syrian government and the General Security Office.

The Lebanese government has openly declared that its border will remain open and assured that Syrians will not be returned, but there is no legal framework for receiving refugees in Lebanon. The government has not ratified the 1951 Convention on refugees and its agreement with UNHCR consists of an MOU which dates back to 2003 – a time when the number of refugees entering the country was a fraction of the present number. Before the crisis, Lebanon was not a country of asylum. If UNHCR couldn't resettle refugees to a third country, then those illegally in the country would be detained and deported. At the time those were the risks facing the 10,000 or so, mostly Iraqi refugees. The Lebanese government has opposed the creation of refugee camps and opposes any policies or programs which might give rise to an impression that the refugees' stay will be anything but temporary.

The combined economic impact of the war in Syria on Lebanon, the presence of the refugees, and Lebanese political instability, is serious. Tourism has plummeted, investment is slowing, there is a fall-off in construction, hourly wages are falling, unemployment is increasing and crime rates are reportedly up by 30-40 percent over recent years.¹⁵⁶ Trade has been seriously

¹⁵³ ICG, *Uncharted Waters: Thinking through Syria's Dynamics*, no. 31, 24 November 2011, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ The World Bank, *Lebanon Economic Monitor: Growing Tensions In A Resilient Economy*, Spring 2013, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/LEBANONEXTN/Resources/Mashreq_News_Spring2013.pdf?resourceurlname=Mashreq_News_Spring2013.pdf; Elizabeth Ferris, "From Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley: Trip Report on Syrian Refugees," 10 July 2013, www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/07/10-syria-lebanon-jordan-ferris

affected as routes through Syria have been cut.¹⁵⁷ In all such cases, there are both winners and losers; as in Jordan, some of the economic ‘winners’ are landlords.

Refugees in Lebanon – as is the case for refugees throughout the region – are renting accommodations or living with friends and families. Tensions are rising as the refugees’ savings run out. Housing is a major issue for refugees in Lebanon. As other alternatives have dried up, they increasingly began to construct ‘informal tented settlements’ – a euphemism for makeshift tents or plastic/cardboard shacks – which are scattered around the country. As of mid-2013, there were over 1400 of these settlements, some consisting of only a few tents while others had hundreds of inhabitants. More settlements were sprouting up every day. Even in these informal settlements the refugees need to pay rent – and funds for rent are hard to come by. There are very few opportunities for employment and the Lebanese government has cracked down on Syrians opening small businesses because of competition with Lebanese nationals.¹⁵⁸

As in Jordan, educational opportunities for Syrian refugee children are limited. About 30,000 of an estimated 100,000 Syrian school-aged children were enrolled in Lebanese schools as of mid-2013. While Syrian refugee children formally have access to education, the practical barriers to accessing education are many. For example, the physical capacity of existing schools is limited and many Syrian children are still on waiting lists. The language of instruction in Lebanon is English and French while in Syria it is Arabic. Transportation costs are high and some families are reluctant to send their daughters to mixed schools (in Syria, schools are segregated by gender). The fact that many, perhaps most, Syrian refugee children had already missed one or two years of schooling back in Syria coupled with the trauma experienced by many children pose additional difficulties for their continued education in exile. UNHCR reports that while 38 percent of school-aged children are in primary school, just 2 percent of secondary-school aged children are attending school.¹⁵⁹

Health services are overstretched and in many places hospitals have reached capacity. While agreements have been worked out with primary health care centers to care for refugees, reports are that clinics suffer from shortages of essential medicines, reduced health care staff and limited hours. UNHCR support for secondary health care focuses on life-saving emergency care.

A poll in late May 2013 found that 52 percent of Lebanese respondents believed that Syrian refugees pose a threat to national security and stability and more than 90 percent said that the Syrian conflict has had a negative impact on the Lebanese government’s capacity to protect Lebanese citizens and to govern. Two-thirds of those polled said the UN should open camps in Lebanon for Syrian refugees.¹⁶⁰

There have been increasing security incidents in Lebanon – rockets have been fired into Hezbollah areas, there is fighting in Tripoli and Sidon, the recent car bomb in South Beirut

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ See, Jeremy Loveless, “Crisis in Lebanon: camps for Syrian refugees?” *Forced Migration Review*, no. 43, May 2013, p. 66-68, www.fmreview.org/en/fragilestates/loveless.pdf

¹⁵⁹ ACAPS, *Regional Analysis Syria: Part II – Host countries*, 26 June 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/a-annex---information-products-overview-june-2013.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ Fafo, *Local response to Syrian refugees in Lebanon: Summary of Poll Findings*, May 2013, www.fafo.no/ais/middeast/lebanon/91369-syrian-refugees.html

apparently directed at Hezbollah has triggered fears of a ‘dark era’ for Lebanon.¹⁶¹ Internal conflict in Lebanon has led to secondary and tertiary displacement of Syrian refugees. The refugees are engaging in more negative coping behavior, including activities such as child labor, early marriage, theft, smuggling and survival sex. Restrictions on entry of Syrian refugees in Jordan, Iraq and Turkey are expected to lead to more pressure on Lebanon.¹⁶²

But it is the fear of the spillover of violence that is causing major concern. The increased engagement of Hezbollah fighters in Syria is a concern while there are Salafist warnings of war within Lebanon if Hezbollah doesn’t disengage. The fact that most of the refugees are Sunni and that many are settling in the Hezbollah-controlled Bekaa valley raises fears of increased sectarian violence.¹⁶³ The minority Christian community feels particularly threatened, especially as the already delicate ethnic and social balance of the country tilts further towards a Muslim-dominated majority.

Turkey: Refugees and politics

The influx of large numbers of Syrians into Turkey raises a series of questions for Turkey about its relations with Syria and the broader region as well as about domestic ethnic-sectarian relations within the country. Furthermore, the crisis is also impacting on Turkey’s long-standing Kurdish problem. Lastly, the government is also facing growing challenges with respect to managing an ever expanding refugee population in and outside camps.

Turkey and Syria have been closely linked historically. Indeed, the province of Hatay was originally part of French-mandated Syria and voted in a referendum in 1939 to join Turkey. For a long time Syria refused to recognize Hatay’s incorporation into Turkey and today there are still residual claims by Syria, especially in Baathist circles, of the province (known as Alexandretta by Syria.) During the Cold War, relations between the two countries were very tense as Turkey was aligned with the West and Syria with the Soviet Union. The border was heavily secured as well as mined. Relations were also aggravated by disputes over the sharing of the waters of the Euphrates River and Syrian support for the separatist Kurdish group the PKK. In October 1998 this support for the PKK led to Turkey threatening to invade Syria. But after Damascus expelled PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, Turkey and Syria entered a process of reconciliation when the then-Turkish President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, attended the funeral of Hafiz Assad in June 2000. Relations warmed up dramatically after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in November 2002, encouraged by Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkish minister of foreign affairs, famous “zero problems with neighbors policy.”¹⁶⁴ This policy encouraged greater economic integration between Turkey and the Middle East and introduced visa-free travel for the nationals of both countries. Turkey very quickly became a major trading and diplomatic partner of Syria, accompanied by the development of a close and intimate relationship between Turkish prime

¹⁶¹ Loveday Morris and Suzan Haidamous, “Blast seen as omen of ‘dark era’ for Lebanon,” *The Washington Post*, 16 August 2013, www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/beirut-blast-seen-as-omen-of-dark-era-for-lebanon/2013/08/16/a5ddc3ee-06ac-11e3-bfc5-406b928603b2_story.html

¹⁶² ACAPS, *Regional Analysis Syria: Part II – Host countries*, 26 June 2013.

¹⁶³ Antoine Ghattas Saab and Wassim Mroueh, “Militant cells planning more attacks,” *The Daily Star*, July 12 2013, www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Jul-12/223392-militant-cells-planning-more-attacks.ashx#axzz2djo2r6YA

¹⁶⁴ Ahmet Davutoglu, “Turkey’s Zero-Problems Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Policy*, 20 May 2010, www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/20/turkeys_zero_problems_foreign_policy; Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Zero Problems in a New Era,” *Foreign Policy*, 21 March 2013, www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/21/zero_problems_in_a_new_era_turkey

minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. At one point, this close relationship even permitted Erdoğan to initiate indirect mediation talks between Syria and Israel. However, the Syrian crisis has completely undermined this relationship. Instead, it appears that a very porous 911 kilometer-long border and the intensifying war in Syria are poised to continue to affect Turkey deeply.

When the conflict broke out, Erdoğan pressed Assad on a number of occasions to reform. As the situation deteriorated, especially during Ramadan in the summer of 2011, he dispatched Davutoğlu to Damascus. But the mission failed and Turkey adopted a complete U-turn in its policy towards Syria.¹⁶⁵ In September 2011 Erdoğan called unequivocally for Assad to go and recognized the Syrian National Council as the official representative of the Syrian opposition two months later. Both sides withdrew their diplomatic representations and the free trade agreement between the two sides was put on hold.¹⁶⁶ In June 2012, a Turkish jet crashed in Syrian waters and Syria said it shot down the plane.¹⁶⁷ There were also a number of occasions when artillery shells fell into Turkey and Turkish civilians were killed or injured by gun fire coming from the Syrian side. In January 2013, US and European missile batteries were stationed along the border in response to a Turkish request to NATO for support. In February, a car bomb at a border crossing and then another one in May in the city of Reyhanlı led to dozens of deaths and reminded Turks that the violence next door directly impacts their own security.¹⁶⁸

Since the break with the Syrian government in August 2011, Turkey has become deeply involved in the crisis in Syria. Politically, Turkey openly supports the opposition in Syria and is now aligned with conservative Sunni Muslim partners such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia.¹⁶⁹ Syrian rebels receive arms through Turkey as well as logistical support.¹⁷⁰ There are also growing allegations that Turkey provides support for radical salafist groups such as JAN.¹⁷¹ This level of involvement in the Syrian crisis has deeply undermined Turkey's "zero problems with neighbors" policy.¹⁷² In the Middle East, the cornerstone of this policy was Turkey's ability to

¹⁶⁵ Nada Bakri, "Turkish Minister and Other Envoys Press Syrian Leader," *New York Times*, August 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/08/10/world/middleeast/10syria.html?_r=0

¹⁶⁶ Erol Cebeci and Kadir Ustun, "The Syrian Quagmire: What is Holding Back Turkey?" *Insight Turkey*, Spring 2012, http://file.insightturkey.com/Files/Pdf/insight-turkey_vol_14_no_2_2012_cebeci_ustun.pdf

¹⁶⁷ BBC, "Turkish f-4 Warplane 'Shot Down' Near Syrian Border," 22 June 2012, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18554246

¹⁶⁸ Matthew Weaver, "Turkey blames Syria over Reyhanli bombings," *The Guardian*, May 2013, www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/12/turkey-blames-syria-reyhanli-bombings

¹⁶⁹ Sebnem Arsu and Tim Arango, "Turks Grant Recognition to Coalition of Syrians," *New York Times*, 15 November 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/11/16/world/middleeast/turkey-recognizes-new-syrian-rebel-group-as-legitimate-leader-of-syria.html; Muhittin Ataman, "Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?" *Seta*, no. 57, July 2012, <http://setav.org/en/turkey-and-saudi-arabia-newly-discovered-partners/policy-brief/1233>

¹⁷⁰ Justin Vela, "The Syrian Supply Chain" *Foreign Policy*, 22 June 2013, www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/22/the_syrian_supply_chain_turkey_arms_rebels; Ernesto Londoño and Greg Miller, "U.S. weapons reaching Syrian rebels," *The Washington Post*, September 11 2013, www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-begins-weapons-delivery-to-syrian-rebels/2013/09/11/9fcf2ed8-1b0c-11e3-a628-7e6dde8f889d_story.html

¹⁷¹ Soner Cagaptay and Aaron Zelin, "Turkey's Jihadi Dilemma," *Global Public Square CNN*, 5 August 2013, <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/08/05/turkeys-jihadi-dilemma/>

¹⁷² Piotr Zalewski, "How Turkey Went From 'Zero Problems' to Zero Friends," *Foreign Policy*, 22 August 2013, www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/08/21/how_turkey_foreign_policy_went_from_zero_problems_to_zero_friends

improve its relations with neighboring countries and to talk to all parties involved in the region's disputes.

However, Turkey's current alignment with the opposition movement in Syria has dramatically altered Turkey's position and influence in the region. The government has faced growing criticism that its policy has put Turkey in conflict with Iran, Iraq and Hezbollah as well as with Russia. Furthermore, the government is also criticized for having moved Turkey's position from one of an impartial soft power in the region enjoying considerable influence to a position of inflaming sectarian divisions and undermining Turkey's interests, especially economic ones. As a result, many Turkish and international commentators have come to characterize this dramatic transformation in Turkish foreign policy since the worsening of the Syrian crisis as "zero neighbors without problems."¹⁷³ At home, only 33 percent of the population supports the government's Syria policy with 44 percent supporting a Turkish policy of neutrality in the Syrian civil war.¹⁷⁴ A poll by Transatlantic Trends in June 2013 in Turkey found that 72 percent of the respondents said that their country should stay out of Syria, up 15 percent from 2012.¹⁷⁵

The ever growing presence of mostly Sunni refugees together with the presence of Syrian opposition fighters have created tensions in Hatay and there have been occasional attacks against Syrian refugees.

There are also concerns about the impact of the largely Sunni refugees on inter-ethnic relations in Turkey. Syrian Alawis are known in Turkey as Nusayris and are distinct from the larger Turkish Alevi minority in Turkey as discussed further below.¹⁷⁶ Hatay, the Turkish region along the Syrian border is in many ways a microcosm of Syria, populated by Sunni Turks, Sunni Arabs, Kurds as well as Nusayris especially in the Hatay region and very small Christian communities. The ever growing presence of mostly Sunni refugees together with the presence of Syrian opposition fighters have created tensions in Hatay and there have been occasional attacks against Syrian refugees.¹⁷⁷ These developments are of particular concern because this region in

¹⁷³ Joost Lagendijk, "Zero neighbors without problems," *Today's Zaman*, 1 November 2011, www.todayszaman.com/columnists-261591-zero-neighbors-without-problems.html

¹⁷⁴ ICG, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, April 2013, p.29.

¹⁷⁵ Transatlantic Trends, *Survey: U.S., European, and Turkish Publics Oppose Intervention in Syrian Conflict, Favor Democracy over Stability in MENA Region*, 6 September 2013 <http://trends.gmfus.org/survey-u-s-european-and-turkish-publics-oppose-intervention-in-syrian-conflict-favor-democracy-over-stability-in-mena-region/>; Kadri Gursel, "Turks Oppose War in Syria" *Al-Monitor*, 7 September 2013, www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/turksopposewarsyria.html

¹⁷⁶ Soner Cagaptay, "Are Syrian Alawites and Turkish Alevis the same?" *CNN Global Public Square*, 17 April 2012, <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2012/04/17/are-syrian-alawites-and-turkish-alevis-the-same/>; Cengiz Çandar, "Suriye 'Kerbela' mı? 'Aleviler' mi? 'Nusayriler' mi?", *Radikal*, September 2009, www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/cengiz_candar/suriye_kerbela_mi_aleviler_mi_nusayriler_mi-1099700; Emma Lundgren Jörum, "Ethnicity, religion and foreign policy: Turkish-Syrian relations since the 1980s" in Raymond Hinnebusch and Özlem Tür (Ed.), *Turkey-Syria Relations: Between Enmity and Amity*, Ashgate Publishing, May 2013.

¹⁷⁷ Mazlumder, *Hatay/Reyhanlı Ön İnceleme Raporu*, May 2013, www.mazlumder.org/yayinlar/detay/yurt-ici-raporlar/3/mazlumder-hatay-reyhanli-on-inceleme-raporu/1084

Turkey had historically been recognized as a region where different ethnic and religious groups lived in harmony. While Hatay has experienced public protests against Erdoğan's anti-Assad policy,¹⁷⁸ so far the government and community leaders have succeeded in preventing these tensions from spilling into conflicts between Turkish citizens. The government has introduced strict rules limiting the activities and movements of foreign fighters. Even though the region has lost significant income from Syrian tourism and trade, paradoxically the presence of refugees has also generated a mini economic boom which may have helped to prevent the escalation of ethnic and political tensions.¹⁷⁹

There is another dimension to this situation. In addition to the Nusayris, who are ethnically Arab, Turkey also has a large Alevi minority of ethnic Turks and Kurds which may comprise more than 10 percent of Turkey's 75 million people.¹⁸⁰ Although these two sects share some religious similarities, they have traditionally been seen as very separate from each other. However, the conflict in Syria and the Turkish government's approach to the Syrian crisis has led to greater identification between the Nusayris in Turkey and the Syrian Alawis on the one hand and the Alevis on the other. This comes at a time when the Turkish government is being criticized for emphasizing the Sunni aspect of Turkish identity.¹⁸¹ The situation was further aggravated when the prime minister in June referred to the people who were killed by the Reyhanlı bombing as "my 53 Sunni citizens"¹⁸² which was inappropriate in part because the victims were in the multi-ethnic region of Hatay, in part also because it is seen as unusual and divisive to emphasize the Sunni identity of citizenship. The prime minister also accused Alevis in Turkey of supporting or sympathizing with the Assad regime in Syria.¹⁸³ These developments raise concerns that the crisis in Syria and the Turkish government response could complicate minority Alevi and majority Sunni relations within Turkey.¹⁸⁴

Another Turkish domestic issue affected by developments in Syria is the Kurdish question. Over the past decade, Turkey has taken a number of reforms to uphold the rights of Kurds, but these efforts have been challenged by the Assad regime's efforts to point to its close relations with the PYD which undermined Turkey's grander strategy of encouraging unity within the Syrian opposition. An additional complication also arose from Turkey's concerns that the rise of the PYD and its domination of the northeastern parts of Syrian could undermine Turkey's increasingly warm relations with the KRG. Hence, initially, Kurdish-speaking Syrians were not allowed to cross into Turkey and the border to Kurdish areas in Syria was closed to humanitarian

¹⁷⁸ ICG, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, April 2013, p.22.

¹⁷⁹ Didem Collinsworth, "Hatay: The Syrian Crisis and a Case of Turkish Economic Resilience," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Spring 2013, Vol. 12, No. 1 p. 119-124; Idil Bilgic Alpaslan, "Suriye Krizi Türkiye Ekonomisini Nasıl Etkiler?" *TEPAV*, August 2012, www.tepav.org.tr/tr/yayin/s/555

¹⁸⁰ ICG, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, April 2013, p.19.

¹⁸¹ Fehim Taştekin, "Turkey's Sunni Identity Test", *Al Monitor*, 21 June 2013, www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/06/turkey-sunnism-sectarian-rhetoric.html; US Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2012: Turkey*, www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper

¹⁸² Kadri Gürsel, "Erdoğan'ın Sorunu Nedir?" *Al-Monitor*, 17 June 2013, www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/contents/articles/opinion/2013/06/erdogan-turkey-protests-strategy.html

¹⁸³ Stephen Schwartz, "Erdogan, Iran, Syrian Alawites, and Turkish Alevis," *The Weekly Standard*, 29 March 2012, www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/erdogan-iran-syrian-alawites-and-turkish-alevis_634834.html

¹⁸⁴ Robert Koptaş, "Alevi-Sünni gerginliği korkutuyor," *Agos*, 16 May 2013, www.agos.com.tr/haber.php?seo=rober-koptas-yazdi-alevisunni-gerginligi-korkutuyor&haberid=5082

aid. Instead, almost all Syrian Kurds went to Iraqi Kurdistan.¹⁸⁵ However, in the course of the last few months this situation has also changed as the leader of PYD, Salih Muslim, has been invited to Turkey to meet with Turkish officials on a number of occasions.¹⁸⁶ There have also been promises of greater trilateral cooperation between Turkey, PYD and KRG, including the extension of humanitarian assistance from Turkey to Kurdish-populated areas in Syria. Nevertheless, Turkish officials remain concerned about the impact of developments in PYD-held parts of Syria on Turkish governmental efforts to reach a political deal with the PKK at home as well as its efforts to encourage and nurture unity within the Syrian opposition against the Assad regime.¹⁸⁷ Clearly, the crisis in Syria will continue to bear heavily on Turkey's Kurdish problem for a while to come.

Finally, the most visible manifestation of the crisis in Syria results from the arrival of an ever growing number of Syrian refugees into Turkey.¹⁸⁸ Turkey's open door policy to the Syrian refugees received a legal basis when, in October 2011, Turkey extended 'temporary protection' to Syrian refugees inspired by the European Union's July 2001 directive.¹⁸⁹ The policy calls for registration of refugees, including those living in camps as well as outside of camps. In April 2013 Turkey adopted its long awaited law on 'Foreigners and International Protection.' The law provides for 'temporary protection' and also creates a new migration management body that will be responsible for the registration and processing of refugees. However, this new body and the law will take effect only in April 2014. In the meantime the Turkish Red Crescent and the Turkish Disaster Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) are responsible for management of the camps.¹⁹⁰

At present, there are some 200,000 Syrian refugees living in 21 camps, where they benefit from health and educational facilities and where they are encouraged to participate in the management of these camps.¹⁹¹ The provision of services ranges from psychological assistance to television rooms and the quality of accommodation has led the International Crisis Group to refer to these refugee camps as the "best refugee camps ever seen."¹⁹² However, there are problems, beginning with the financial burden on the Turkish government. According to Davutoğlu, the government has already spent around two billion dollars on the refugees from the national budget, not including funds spent by Turkish NGOs and local governments. Turkish officials raise questions about the sustainability of continuing to care for the refugees in the absence of

¹⁸⁵ ICG, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, April 2013, p.25,

¹⁸⁶ Hemin Khoshanaw, "Salih Muslim's Ankara Visit Marks Major Policy Change," *Rudaw*, 27 July 2013, <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/29072013>

¹⁸⁷ David Pollock says that Kurds are united among themselves, but not with opposition. See: Hemin Khoshanaw, "Salih Muslim's Ankara Visit Marks Major Policy Change," *Rudaw*, 27 July 2013.

¹⁸⁸ Mehmet Güçer, Sema Karaca, and O. Bahadır Dinçer, *Sınırlar Arasında Yaşam Savaşı: Suriye'li Mülteciler*, USAK Sosyal Araştırmalar Merkezi, May 2013, www.usak.org.tr/images_upload/files/suriyeli%20m%C3%BClteciler%20film%20nete.pdf

¹⁸⁹ UN News Centre, "Turkish law on protection of foreigners wins UN praise," 12 April 2013, www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44637

¹⁹⁰ ICG, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, April 2013,; Mehmet Güçer, Sema Karaca, and O. Bahadır Dinçer, *Sınırlar Arasında Yaşam Savaşı: Suriye'li Mülteciler*, USAK Sosyal Araştırmalar Merkezi, May 2013.

¹⁹¹ Inter-Agency Regional Response for Syrian Refugees: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, 5 - 11 September 2013, 12 September 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Inter-Agency%20Regional%20Response%20-%20Syrian%20Refugees%2020130911.pdf>

¹⁹² International Crisis Group (ICG), *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, no.225, 30 April 2013, p.8.

international burden sharing.¹⁹³ Davutoğlu also complained about the fact that Turkey had received so far only \$133 million from bilateral and multilateral contributions. Another difficulty stems from the refugee registration process, as there is no sharing of information between camps which means that a refugee could return to Syria and then re-enter Turkey and go to another camp.¹⁹⁴ However, considerable progress has recently been achieved in improving the registration of refugees in camps. Still, another problem related to the camps is that by mid-April only three international NGOs had been fully registered – in part because of administrative obstacles. The Turkish government strictly limits access to the camps;¹⁹⁵ neither UNHCR nor the EU has yet a permanent presence.¹⁹⁶ However, there are some 37 international NGOs working along Turkey’s southern border and inside Northern Syria.¹⁹⁷ As in Jordan, there are also concerns that Syrian opposition fighters, largely Sunni Muslim, use camps in Turkey and areas around them as off-duty resting places “to visit their families, receive medical services and purchase supplies.”¹⁹⁸ This has caused considerable tension with local populations, especially in the Hatay region where a significant percentage of the population is Nusayri. Finally, local communities complain that the services provided to refugees living in camps are greater than those they receive.¹⁹⁹

Much less is known about Syrian refugees living outside camps. The government instituted a policy allowing Syrian nationals who enter the country with passports to acquire residence permits. Davutoğlu, in his September 2013 address to UNHCR, put the number of Syrians living outside camps at more than 300,000.²⁰⁰ In fact, this number is likely to be much higher as many Syrians simply cross the border without proper papers.²⁰¹ Syrians living outside of camps have mostly lived off of savings, remittances sent from abroad and odd jobs. There are efforts to mount a campaign to register those living outside of camps to enable them to access health and educational services. While there is little systematic information about the problems faced by refugees living outside camps, the Turkish media have reported problems ranging from exploitation of refugees’ labor by unscrupulous employers, cases of rape and of young girls and women being forced into prostitution as well as tragedies resulting from the sinking of boats in the Aegean Sea carrying Syrian refugees into Greece.²⁰²

¹⁹³ ICG, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, April 2013; Mehmet Güçer, Sema Karaca, and O. Bahadır Dinçer, *Sınırlar Arasında Yaşam Savaşı: Suriye’li Mülteciler*, USAK Sosyal Araştırmalar Merkezi, May 2013, p. 64; Kemal Kirişçi, “Syrian Refugees in Turkey: The Limits of an Open Door Policy,” The Brookings Institution, 27 June 2013, www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/06/27-syrian-refugees-in-turkey-kirischi

¹⁹⁴ ICG, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, no.225, 30 April 2013, p.10, www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/225-blurring-the-borders-syrian-spillover-risks-for-turkey.ashx; Mehmet Güçer, Sema Karaca, and O. Bahadır Dinçer, *Sınırlar Arasında Yaşam Savaşı: Suriye’li Mülteciler*, USAK Sosyal Araştırmalar Merkezi, May 2013, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ ICG, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, April 2013, p. 15.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p 16.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p.1.

¹⁹⁹ Sema Karaca, “Savaş Coğrafyasında Daimi Mülteci Döngüsü,” *Analist*, May 2013, www.usakanalist.com/detail.php?id=541

²⁰⁰ *Today’s Zaman*, “Davutoğlu: Syrian refugee influx to continue if chemical attack ignored,” 5 September 2013, www.todayszaman.com/news-325490-davutoglu-syrian-refugee-influx-to-continue-if-chemical-attack-ignored.html

²⁰¹ ICG, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, April 2013, p. 11.

²⁰² Yilmaz Ozdil, “İnsani heyelan,” *Hurriyet*, 1 September 2013.

As the number of arrivals on the Turkish border mounted, the government instituted a policy of limiting the number allowed to enter until space became available.²⁰³ This has led to a buildup of Syrians on the Syrian side of the Turkish border and the emergence of makeshift IDP camps. There is very little information about the location of these camps and their numbers are put at more than 100,000 according to AFAD. The IDPs in these camps live in precarious conditions and suffer from serious security threats as evidenced in the November 2012 bombing by Syrian forces of the Atmeh camp area inside Syria.²⁰⁴ There are also reports that these IDPs face rough treatment by both opposition forces and criminals.²⁰⁵ In an effort to address the wider humanitarian crisis prevailing in northern Syria, Turkey has also implemented a policy of ‘zero point border delivery system’ in which humanitarian assistance is brought by the Turkish Red Crescent to the border where it is turned over to Syrian opposition groups for distribution inside Syria.²⁰⁶ So far, Turkey has delivered humanitarian assistance across the border in the range of \$200 million.²⁰⁷

For Turkey, the recent chemical weapons attacks and the resulting tense climate has increased the number of arrivals of refugees from Syria including of Alawis.

Syrian refugees are likely to remain in Turkey for some time and the UN projects that the number of refugees in Turkey may well reach one million by December 2013.²⁰⁸ The potential of an even greater increase in refugee number raises serious questions about Turkey’s ability to pay for their management and protection. Indeed, Davutoğlu has called for the need of greater burden sharing and increased contributions, in particular to the UN’s plans: the Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP) and the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP).²⁰⁹ The recent chemical weapons attacks and the resulting tense climate has seen an increase in the number of arrivals of refugees from Syria including of Alawis. Interestingly, as the situation for Syrian refugees in Egypt has become more difficult as a result of the overthrow of the Morsi government, and as the number of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon has climbed, secondary movements of Syrian refugees into Turkey are being reported. In the meantime, Turkish security authorities are increasingly concerned that they are losing control over Turkey’s border with

²⁰³ ICG, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, April 2013, p. 9; Sema Karaca, “Suriyeli Mülteciler İçin Çetin Sınırlar,” *Analist*, August 2013, www.usakanalist.com/detail.php?id=673

²⁰⁴ ICG, *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, April 2013, p. 32.

²⁰⁵ Mona Chalabi, “Syria’s hidden emergencies,” *The Guardian*, 25 July 2013, www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/jul/25/syria-emergencies

²⁰⁶ Sevil Erkuş, “Refugee limit 400,000 despite economic woes,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, October 2012, www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?pageID=238&nid=32586

²⁰⁷ According to Suphi Atan, a spokesman for the Turkish Foreign Ministry, cited in Stephen Franklin, “Syrians Stream Across the Turkish Border,” *Address by his excellency Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Ministerial Meeting of the Syria Bordering Countries*, 4 September 2013, UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva.

²⁰⁸ UN, *Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan: June to December 2013*, June 2013, p. 212.

²⁰⁹ *Address by his excellency Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Ministerial Meeting of the Syria Bordering Countries*, 4 September 2013, UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva

Syria and fear for the undermining of Turkey's security.²¹⁰ Furthermore, there are questions being raised about the long term consequences of the presence of ever growing number of refugees and the impact that this could have on the economic, social and political fabric of the country.

While the vast majority of Syrian refugees are arriving in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, significant numbers have also crossed into Iraq and have traveled to Egypt.

Iraq: An August Influx

Until the Syrian crisis of 2013, Iraq had produced more displacement – both refugees and IDPs – than any other Middle Eastern situation since the Palestinian exodus of 1948. From 2003-2009, the number of Iraqi refugees was estimated at 2 million with another 2.5 million displaced internally by the violence. However, the issue of Iraqi displacement faded from the international agenda²¹¹ and it appeared that most of the Iraqi refugees in the region were either getting by or were waiting for resettlement. Meanwhile, the past year has witnessed an increase in violence inside Iraq, which, like all the countries in the region, has been affected in unique ways by the arrival of Syrian refugees.²¹²

Terrorism and sectarian violence have surged in Iraq in recent months, “at levels unseen since 2008,” according to the US State Department.²¹³ It is increasingly hard to deny that the increased violence in Iraq is linked to the war in Syria. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has acknowledged as much. Following a spate of bombings targeting predominantly Shi'a areas of Baghdad in late August 2013, al-Maliki said, “The internal situation in Syria is playing a major role with what's happening in Iraq.”²¹⁴ Al-Maliki had previously warned that a victory by the Syrian opposition would lead to a sectarian war in Iraq.²¹⁵ Yet, while Iraq has publicly tried to maintain its neutrality in the conflict, the Obama administration has criticized the Iraqi prime

²¹⁰ Tolga Şardan, “El Muhaberat ve PKK da geliyor,” 12 September 2013, <http://gundem.milliyet.com.tr/el-muhaberat-ve-pkk-da-geliyor-/gundem/detay/1759594/default.htm>; Cumali Önal, “Serious flaws along Syrian border increase security risks,” *Today's Zaman*, 8 September 2013, www.todayszaman.com/news-325791-serious-flaws-along-syrian-border-increase-security-risks.html; Hürriyet Daily News, “Turkey's Syria border crossings uncontrolled, says governor's office,” 6 September, 2013 www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-syria-border-crossings-uncontrolled-says-governors-office.aspx?pageID=238&nID=53982&NewsCatID=341

²¹¹ For a discussion of the current status of Iraqi displacement, see: Elizabeth Ferris, “Remembering Iraq's Displaced,” Brookings Institution, 18 March 2013, www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2013/03/18-iraq-displaced-ferris

²¹² See for example, International Rescue Committee, *Hidden but Hopeful: Life Beyond the Camp for Syrian Refugees in Northern Iraq*, August 2013, p. 8. www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/Policy%20Brief%20Syrian%20Refugees%20in%20Iraq.pdf

²¹³ According to the U.S. State Department's update of its travel warning to Americans. see: U.S. Department of State, “Travel Warning: Iraq,” 5 September 2013, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_6063.html. According to a senior U.S. official, in 2011 and 2012, suicide bombings in Iraq averaged 5 to 10 a month, but in the 90 days previous to mid-August 2013, the number surged to about 30 a month; see Michael R. Gordon and Tim Arango, “Syrian War Fueling Attacks by Al Qaeda in Iraq, Officials Say,” *The New York Times*, 15 August 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/08/16/world/middleeast/syrian-war-fueling-attacks-by-al-qaeda-in-iraq-officials-say.html

²¹⁴ Tom Peter, “Where Iraq's Maliki pins the blame for Baghdad bombings,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 August 2013, www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2013/0828/Where-Iraq-s-Maliki-pins-the-blame-for-Baghdad-bombings-video

²¹⁵ Adam Schreck and Qassim Abdul-Zahra, “AP Interview: Iraq PM Warns Syria War Could Spread,” *Associated Press*, 27 February 2013, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/ap-interview-iraq-premier-syria-war-could-spread>

minister, alleging that Iraq has aided arms transfers to Syria by granting Iran access to its airspace. Al-Maliki has denied this: "Not to the regime and not to the opposition. No weapon is being transferred through Iraqi skies, territories or waters," he reportedly said.²¹⁶ Furthermore, Iraqi fighters have fled to fight in Syria, and according to the State Department, Syria is serving as a sanctuary for the leader of Al Qaeda's Iraq affiliate, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and other senior members of the group, who are orchestrating attacks in Baghdad and other cities.²¹⁷

Out of security concerns, the Iraqi government and the KRG authorities have periodically closed and reopened numerous official border crossings throughout the crisis.²¹⁸ Of the present 150,000 or so registered Syrian refugees in Iraq, 94 percent are in KRG while around 7,000 live in and around al Qai'im in Anbar governorate. The number of new arrivals has more than doubled in the past year and half with 800-1000 arriving each day in April-May 2013. While 40 percent of the refugees are living in camps, 60 percent are living dispersed throughout communities.

The first camp was built in Al-Waleed just outside al-Qaim, but violence spilled over from the Syrian side of border and reports of infiltration by rebel groups led to the border closing in September 2012. However, Syrian (mostly Kurdish) refugees are still entering into Northern Iraq through Duhok. As in other countries in the region, the number of Syrian arrivals mushroomed from 335 reported in March 2012, to 36,500 in October 2012 to 67,000 in December 2012. As of mid- September 2013, in light of the August influx, the total estimated number of refugees in Iraq stood at 200,000, according to UNHCR.²¹⁹

There are differences in the legal status of those living in and outside camps. Until April 2013, Syrian refugees in KRG were registered with UNHCR and government offices in the governorates of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah and issued with an asylum seeker certificate valid for a year; the registration process facilitated the issuance of six-month residency permits. However, in April the governorates of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah suspended issuing residency permits to new arrivals. Refugees in Al Qa'im are not issued residency permits.²²⁰

At the time of writing, there were several camps in Iraq but the camps are over-crowded. In Domiz camp, some 3,500 families do not have their own tents because of lack of land. Efforts were underway to build new camps in Dohuk Governorate to decongest Domiz camp although reports are that the new arrivals in August 2013 were occupying the semi-built camp.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ See: SNAP , *Syrian border crossings*, September 2013, <http://acaps.org/en/pages/syria-snap-project>; Duraid Adnan and Rod Nordland, "Syrians are Stung by Hostile Reception in Iraq," 29 July 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/07/30/world/middleeast/syrian-refugees-stung-by-hostile-reception-in-iraq.html?pagewanted=all&r=0; Mushreq Abbas, "Iraq's Border Becomes New Fault Line in Syrian War," *Al-Monitor: Iraq Pulse*, 5 March 2013, www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/iraq-syria-border-skirmishes.html#ixzz2epIZO1k0; Human Rights Watch, "Iraq/Jordan/Turkey: Syrians Blocked from Fleeing War," 1 July 2013; Isabel Coles, "Iraq shuts border post after Syrian rebels seize frontier," *Reuters*, 3 March 2013, www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/03/us-iraq-syria-border-idUSBRE92206U20130303

²¹⁹ UNHCR, *Syria Regional Refugee Response*, Syria Regional Refugee Response, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, 12 September 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

²²⁰ UNHCR, *Syria regional response plan – January to December 2013*, June 2013, p. 256.

On August 15 2013, the Peshkhabour pontoon bridge was opened, north of Saleha, prompting more than 40,000 Syrians to cross into Iraqi Kurdistan during the last two weeks of the month – possibly, the largest cross-border migration since the start of the Syrian conflict.²²¹ The overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees in Iraq are of Kurdish origin, seeking respite from the economic difficulties and deteriorating security conditions afflicting many Kurdish areas in north-western Syria. To lessen the burden on host communities, the Kurdistan Regional Government was planning as of August 2013 to open three new camps in Sulaymaniyah, Erbil and Dohuk governorates.



Hundreds of Syrian refugees cross into Iraq at the Peshkhabour border crossing in Dohuk Governorate on August 15, 2013. (UNHCR / G. Gubaeva)

According to one report, increasing numbers of Kurdish Syrian children and youth do not have access to education, with many having missed more than a year of school.²²² An estimated one-third of the August 2013 arrivals in KRG are school-aged children. The KRG has taken great strides to accommodate the education of refugees in Domiz camp and others under construction, including by committing its own resources, but the education system simply cannot cope with the influx, including in terms of the fact that there are not enough Arabic-language schools in existence.²²³ There is virtually no information about access of Syrian refugee children to educational facilities outside of camps, while there are significant shortcomings in the provision of education to refugees in camps.²²⁴

But presently, the main political impact of the arrival of Syrian refugees is in Kurdistan. In early August, Iraq's regional president Massud Barzani threatened intervention in Syria if the plight of the Syrian Kurds did not improve.²²⁵ If "it appears that innocent Kurdish citizens and women and children are under threat of death and terrorism, the Iraqi Kurdistan region will... be prepared to defend" them, Barzani reportedly stated.²²⁶ The presence and influx of Syrian Kurds into the KRG has led the president of the autonomous Kurdish territory, Barzani, to push a pro-Kurdish agenda in the region, as a leader for the Kurdish people. He has "...lately sought to position himself as not just the leader of Iraq's Kurds, but someone who can unite all Kurds as they push for more independence and more democratic rights."²²⁷ Following the influx of refugees who

²²¹ Sylvia Westall and Murad Jambaz, "Syrian Kurds trek to Iraq over parched hills," 26 August 2013, www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/26/us-syria-crisis-iraq-idUSBRE97P09G20130826

²²² International Rescue Committee, *Hidden but Hopeful: Life Beyond the Camp for Syrian Refugees in Northern Iraq*, August 2013, p. 8.

²²³ Ibid., p. 8.

²²⁴ UNHCR, *Syria regional response plan – January to December 2013*, June 2013, p. 279. On the efforts of, and constraints facing, the KRG authorities to support access to education, see: International Rescue Committee, *Hidden but Hopeful: Life Beyond the Camp for Syrian Refugees in Northern Iraq*, August 2013.

²²⁵ Bangkok Post, "Hungry and scared, Syrian refugees flood Iraq," 19 August 2013, www.bangkokpost.com/news/world/365242/hungry-and-scared-syrian-refugees-flood-iraq

²²⁶ Daily News, "Iraqi Kurds ready to defend Syrian Kurds: Barzani," 10 August 2013, www.hurriyetdailynews.com/iraqi-kurds-ready-to-defend-syrian-kurds-barzani.aspx?pageID=238&nid=52303

²²⁷ Tim Arango, "Syrian Kurds Find More Than a Refuge in Northern Iraq," *The New York Times*, 23 August 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/08/24/world/middleeast/syrian-kurds-find-more-than-a-refuge-in-iraqi-kurdistan.html?pagewanted=all

crossed the pontoon bridge at Peshkhabour over the Tigris River when it was opened in mid-August 2013, Barzani welcomed his Syrian Kurd “brothers,” but called on Kurds still in “Western Kurdistan” to “stay and defend their land and try to attain their legitimate rights,” because “we do not want Western Kurdistan to be emptied of its Kurdish residents...”²²⁸ Barzani has asserted his leadership even further by threatening to send the peshmerga to defend Kurds in Syria, and by recently hosting a regional Kurdish conference in Erbil, in which the Syrian Kurdish factions united against President Bashar al-Assad.²²⁹

In addition to the influx of Syrian refugees, UNHCR reported that over 68,000 Iraqis had returned from Syria since July 2012, according to the latest reported data as of January 2013.²³⁰ Moreover, it is important to underscore that Iraq still has 1.3 million IDPs – those returning from outside Iraq are considered as returnees, not as IDPs, even when they do not return to their place of origin.²³¹

Egypt: No longer welcomed

In 2012, the Egyptian government announced a change in policy, allowing Syrians to enter Egypt without a visa and to access public education and health services on an equal footing with Egyptians. Syrians are given 3 month visitor visas upon arrival which can be regularized by extending their residency permits every six months. However, work permits are difficult to obtain as the employer must certify that no Egyptian national is available and qualified to do the work. As there are no refugee camps in Egypt, all refugees live with families, friends or in rented accommodations, primarily in Greater Cairo and Alexandria. As of 18 July 2013 UNHCR reported more than 92,000 refugees in Egypt and projected the number to reach 200,000 by the end of the year. Many Syrian refugees have not registered with UNHCR – as there is a certain stigma against being registered as a refugee among the Syrian community -- and some have chosen to regularize their stay via normal immigration channels. The refugees come to Egypt directly by air from Syria (with flights from Damascus fully booked weeks in advance) or from Lebanon and Jordan, as the number of refugees in those countries has reached very high levels. UNHCR reports that while Syrian refugees arriving in 2012 came with sufficient savings to tide them over for a few months, those arriving in 2013 had significantly fewer resources.

While Syrian refugee children had access to education, they faced particular difficulties as schools are overcrowded, difficulties in adjusting to the Egyptian dialect and curriculum,²³² and especially for girls, sexual harassment. While the government also granted Syrians access to the public health system, these facilities are also often insufficient and further support is needed.

²²⁸ Sherzad Shekhani, “Barzani calls on Syrian Kurds to stay and fight,” *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 19 August 2013, www.aawsat.net/2013/08/article55314096; Ali Kurdistani, “A Fine Balance: Can Barzani Help Syrian Kurds?” *Al-Monitor*, 13 April 2013, www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/a-fine-balance-can-barzani-help.html

²²⁹ Hazal Ates, “Barzani Unites Syrian Kurds Against Assad,” *Al-Monitor*, 13 July 2012, www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/07/barzani-grabs-assads-kurdish-car.html

²³⁰ This number includes returnees who are registered with Syria as refugees and those who are not. It also includes individuals who cross the border for their private related reasons on a daily basis. UNHCR, *Syria Situation Bi-Monthly Update*, no. 34, January 2013, pp. 9 – 22. <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Syria%20Situation%20Bi-Monthly%20Update%20No.34%2C%209%20-%2022%20January%202013.pdf>

²³¹ IOM, *Syria Crisis: A Migration Perspective: A Working Paper*, December 2012, p.18.

²³² UNHCR, *Syria regional response plan – January to December 2013*, June 2013, p. 321.

The political turmoil following the ouster of Muhammad Morsi has had serious repercussions on Syrians in Egypt. At the time of writing, Syrians were subject to a full-fledged state media campaign against them, violence, destruction of Syrian-owned businesses, and increased arbitrary detentions, including of asylum seekers and legal residents.²³³ Syrians have been accused of joining sides or even taking up arms with the Egyptian Muslims Brotherhood in Egypt's political unrest. A former member of Parliament called for Syrians and other foreigners to be executed.²³⁴ In early July 2013, Egypt's transitional government began what it called a temporary security measure by requiring all Syrians to have a visa and security clearance to enter the country.²³⁵ Clearly, the transitional government is concerned about the security implications of continuing to allow large numbers of Syrians to enter the country.

This expansive backlash against Syrians stands, meanwhile, to impact not only their personal prospects in terms of their safety and where they seek refugee – many have fled reportedly further afield to the Gulf, Europe, or closer to home in Turkey – but also the fragile Egyptian economy. A Coalition of Syrian Businessmen in Egypt issued a statement halting its investments in Egyptian businesses, estimated at \$700 million.²³⁶ Arrests and the persecution of Syrian refugees are likely to continue if El-Sisi's military backed regime remains in power. It comes as no surprise, then, that many Syrians have reportedly returned to Damascus in light of the recent violence in Cairo.²³⁷

While recognizing its security concerns, the Egyptian government should be encouraged to adopt less restrictive policies toward the Syrian refugees and to take steps to diminish the hostility they are currently experiencing. In this context, support by the Gulf states for Syrian refugees could play a useful role.

²³³ Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Arrests of Syrians Raise Deportation Fears," 25 July 2013, www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/25/egypt-arrests-syrians-raise-deportation-fears; UNHCR, "UNHCR concerned at arbitrary detention of Syrian refugees in Egypt," *News Stories*, 26 July 2013, www.unhcr.org/51f27733540.html; Peter Schwartzstein, "Egypt's Latest Conspiracy Theories Target the Country's Syrian Refugees," *The Atlantic*, 12 September 2013, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/09/egypts-latest-conspiracy-theories-target-the-countrys-syrian-refugees/279585/; Sam Kimball, "Egypt's Military-Backed Government Cracks down on Syrian Refugees," *Time*, 24 August 2013, <http://world.time.com/2013/08/24/egypts-military-backed-government-cracks-down-on-syrian-refugees/>

²³⁴ Sarah Mousa and Kareem Fahim, "In Egypt, a Welcome for Syrian Refugees Turns Bitter," *The New York Times*, 7 September 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/09/08/world/middleeast/in-egypt-a-welcome-for-refugees-turns-bitter.html?pagewanted=all&r=0; Sam Kimball, "Egypt's Military-Backed Government Cracks down on Syrian Refugees," *Time*, 24 August 2013, <http://world.time.com/2013/08/24/egypts-military-backed-government-cracks-down-on-syrian-refugees/>

²³⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Arrests of Syrians Raise Deportation Fears," 25 July 2013, www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/25/egypt-arrests-syrians-raise-deportation-fears

²³⁶ Daria Solovieva, "US Syria Bombing: Syrian Refugees In Egypt Face Increasing Hostility Due to Crackdown On Islamists, While Their Numbers Grow," *International Business Times*, 7 September 2013, www.ibtimes.com/us-syria-bombing-syrian-refugees-egypt-face-increasing-hostility-due-crackdown-islamists-while-their

²³⁷ Maggie Fick, "Egyptian welcome mat pulled out from under Syrian refugees," *Reuters*, 12 September 2013, www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/12/us-syria-crisis-egypt-refugees-idUSBRE98B0OE20130912

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

People the world over do not flee their homes, communities and countries unless they perceive that they have no alternatives. The massive and rapid displacement of over 2 million Syrians over an 18 month period reflects failure: the failure of the Syrian regime to resolve internal conflicts and to respect the basic rights of its people; the failure of both sides of the conflict to respect international humanitarian law; and the failure of the international community to prevent the atrocities and widespread human rights violations which have forced a third of the country's population to leave their homes. Of course, there are different and legitimate arguments about what could and should have been done early in the Syrian conflict. Perhaps a more robust diplomatic effort earlier in 2011-2012 or earlier and more direct support for the opposition to the Assad regime could have prevented the escalation of the conflict and its current stalemate. But regardless of the roads not taken, the fact that so many of Syria's people have been displaced is an indication of the inability of the international community to prevent the large-scale violence that has wreaked havoc with millions of lives.

Syrian displacement, both internal and cross-border, will continue as long as the war does. Few expect a rapid end of the war. Their choice of destinations will depend on their physical ability to move elsewhere and the openness of borders. The UN's Consolidated Appeal for 2013 uses as a planning figure 3.45 million Syrian refugees by the end of 2013;²³⁸ all present indications are consistent with this target being met. It should be noted that those who are displaced may not be the individuals most in need in Syria. In fact, it is likely that those who are unable to leave their homes – because they are elderly, disabled or simply lack the resources to move – are the most vulnerable. Those who are displaced, however, do have certain identifiable needs, such as shelter, and require targeted assistance.

Displacement in and from Syria is dynamic. There seems to be a direct relationship between those displaced inside Syria and refugee movements into neighboring countries. Many of those turning up as refugees in Jordan and Lebanon report having been displaced multiple times within Syria before making it across a border. There are also reports of Syrians returning to Syria from other countries – either because of a perception that security in their home community has improved, because of a need to care for family members or protect property or because conditions as refugees are so bad. Even in periods when fighting has escalated, some Syrians have gone back to their communities.

The initial response of governments in the region – Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt – was one of generosity and solidarity to the two million registered refugees arriving on their borders. With the passage of time and the increase in numbers of arrivals, there are signs that the welcome is wearing thin. While all of the governments have imposed restrictions on entry of one kind or another, they deserve recognition and appreciation for their policies of openness and welcome to refugees. They also deserve the financial support of the international community. It is hard to imagine Western countries responding with similar generosity should a comparable number of refugees have arrived on their borders.

Governments in the region need support to defray some of the economic, social and political costs they have born in allowing the refugees to enter and in providing for at least some of their

²³⁸ See: UNHCR, *Syria Regional Refugee Response*, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>; UN, *Syria Regional Response Plan: January to December 2013*, June 2013.

basic necessities. But they also deserve support because their actions affirm the international system of refugee protection. This refugee regime which has evolved since 1951 is based on the idea that countries offer protection and assistance to arriving refugees on behalf of the international community. While notions of burden-sharing have been hotly debated almost since the beginning of the refugee regime, the idea that responding to refugees is a shared international responsibility – and not only the responsibility of the country on whose border they happen to have arrived – is a precious international norm which deserves to be upheld. As governments in Europe, North America and Australia have tightened up their borders, it is significant that countries with far fewer resources have shown breathtaking levels of hospitality, and a principled commitment to protecting civilians.

Recommendations

We now turn to a series of policy recommendations to address the grim humanitarian situation inside Syria and to improve the protection of and assistance to the IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers that the armed conflict has caused.

Inside Syria

- 1. All parties to the armed conflict – including the Syrian government, paramilitary forces and the many opposition groups – should comply with the basic principles of international humanitarian law (IHL) and uphold basic, internationally-recognized human rights.** Under IHL, states and non-state armed actors have the obligation to ensure assistance to and protection of people within their jurisdiction. The Syrian government and opposition movements therefore need to understand and respect international humanitarian law and to uphold the rights of all individuals under their jurisdiction, including the internally displaced. There is a critical need for training on IHL and humanitarian principles for parties to the conflict and participation in such training should be a condition of any support by the US government to the opposition. The failure to consider the protection of all civilians, regardless of which side they support, will result in the undermining of hopes for any coalition government. Steps to protect minorities are particularly important – not only for the needed protection of vulnerable groups – but in affecting the course of the country's political future. There is a particular need to equitably protect and assist Palestinian refugees who had been living in Syria and are now either displaced internally or turned back at borders of neighboring states.
- 2. The humanitarian community should develop and maintain better statistics and assessments on internal displacement inside Syria.** The present UN estimates of 4.25 million IDPs date from 22 April 2013 and have remained unchanged even as the number of Syrian refugees has increased significantly. 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 OCHA, which is responsible for compiling figures on IDPs, to be more transparent in its methodology. While assessments such as the Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria

assessments, the Syria Needs Analysis Project 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.

3. **The Syrian government should remove obstacles to increasing humanitarian assistance inside Syria.** The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, UN, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), international NGOs and civil society organizations have all been working hard to access populations in need and yet both the bureaucratic and security obstacles are formidable. The Syrian government has a responsibility to enable the humanitarian action of international agencies, as set forth in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which reflect international law and international human rights standards.²³⁹ The Syrian government should be pressed by the concerted action of the UN Security Council to exercise its responsibility to enable the humanitarian action of international agencies. As UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, stated to the UN Security Council in April and again in July 2013, these obstacles include long procedures for renewing visas, importing vehicles and medical supplies, restrictions on movement within the country, etc. These bureaucratic obstacles need to be removed.
4. **International agencies must continue to affirm the humanitarian and non-political nature of assistance.** In accordance with basic humanitarian principles and the UN Guiding Principles, humanitarian action inside Syria should be carried out solely on the basis of need, respecting impartiality and humanity, not on the basis of political objectives, and without discrimination. Assumptions should not be made that all those living in government or opposition-controlled areas are supportive of armed actors controlling those areas. The ICRC's Professional Standards for Protection Work should be applied by all parties offering assistance in Syria.²⁴⁰ International organizations working with these actors should provide opportunities for basic training in IHL and in professional standards for humanitarian operations.
5. **The UN Security Council should develop strongly-worded resolutions to support the necessary access for humanitarian assistance operations.** In April 2013, following a briefing by Valerie Amos, the UN Security Council issued a statement (not a resolution) calling on all parties in Syria, in particular the Syrian authorities, to

²³⁹ As the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement state, "International humanitarian organizations and other appropriate actors have the right to offer their services in support of the internally displaced. Such an offer shall not be regarded as an unfriendly act or an interference in a State's internal affairs and shall be considered in good faith. Consent thereto shall not be arbitrarily withheld, particularly when authorities concerned are unable or unwilling to provide the required humanitarian assistance." United Nations, *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 1999, Principle 25, para. 2, www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/idp/GPEnglish.pdf; see also, Walter Kalin, *The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: Annotations* (2nd Edition), The American Society of International Law and the Brookings Institution, 2008, www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2008/05/spring-guiding-principles.

²⁴⁰ ICRC, *Professional Standards for Protection Work Carried out by Humanitarian and Human Rights Actors in Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence*, 2013, www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc-002-0999.pdf

cooperate fully with the UN and relevant humanitarian organizations and urged all parties to “assure safe and unimpeded access.”²⁴¹ This is much weaker than the many Security Council resolutions referencing humanitarian assistance in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁴² Other efforts to address issues of humanitarian access in Syria have been blocked within the Security Council.

6. **Cross-border operations for assisting IDPs and others affected by conflict should be continued and expanded.** Given the desperate condition of internally displaced Syrians and the difficulties international agencies face in accessing IDPs and other affected communities in parts of the country, these operations are needed to ensure the protection and assistance of vulnerable civilians. While cross-border operations are presently taking place, these need to be expanded and their legitimacy recognized through Security Council resolutions. Establishing any UN cross-border humanitarian aid operation will be tremendously challenging both politically and logistically, but there are precedents that can and should be used.
7. **International agencies, with the support of the United Nations, should consider the use of humanitarian ‘corridors’ and humanitarian ‘pauses’ to increase humanitarian assistance.** While some have suggested the establishment of safe zones,²⁴³ it seems that the necessary international support for this is limited. For example, Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu’s idea of an internationally imposed safe zone or haven was met with silence or even disapproval from UNHCR and major powers when he presented it at the UN General assembly in August 2012.²⁴⁴ There are precedents, however, for the use of more limited ceasefires to enable the evacuation of wounded and the vaccination of children. Humanitarian corridors have been used occasionally by humanitarian actors in situations as diverse as Angola, the occupied Palestinian Territory and the Democratic Republic of Congo. While these precedents were far from perfect, they do offer suggestions for ways of improving assistance in the midst of armed conflict. In this regard, a research project to systematically evaluate the conditions and processes of past efforts and their relevance to Syria could be useful.
8. **If the Security Council is unable to act on issues of humanitarian corridors, humanitarian pauses or cross-border operations, the UN General Assembly**

²⁴¹ See UN Security Council, “Top UN Official Says Situation in Syria ‘Humanitarian Catastrophe,’ Calls on Security Council to Take Actions Needed to End ‘Brutal Conflict,’” 18 April 2013, SC/10981, www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc10981.doc.htm

²⁴² UN Security Council, Resolution 819: Bosnia and Herzegovina, 16 April 1993, S/RES/819.

²⁴³ Diane Paul has written a persuasive article on how safe areas, protected by no-fly zones, can be used in Syria: “State of play in Syria: Rising human costs and the danger of Assad’s ‘Samson Button,’” Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection, 7 June 2013, <http://phap.org/articles/state-play-syria-rising-human-costs-and-danger-assad%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98samson-button%E2%80%99>.

²⁴⁴ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey*, no.225, 30 April 2013, p.39, www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/225-blurring-the-borders-syrian-spillover-risks-for-turkey.ashx.

(GA) should mobilize action. As noted above, the record of the UN Security Council in either ending the conflict or strongly asserting humanitarian principles in the case of Syria has been disappointing.²⁴⁵ By substantial majorities, the GA has adopted resolutions deploring the Security Council's inability to find a political solution (August 2012) and calling for an end to indiscriminate violence in Syria (May 2013). Perhaps it is time for the GA to engage more forcefully on issues of respect for international humanitarian law, displacement and basic principles of humanitarian assistance. In particular, this is an issue where the BRICS (Brazil, India, and South Africa in particular) and the 120 strong Non-Aligned Movement can and should assert greater leadership. In this regard, we suggest that exploratory meetings be held in New York to consider ways of strengthening GA action on humanitarian issues.

IDPs, Refugees and Asylum

- 9. Collaboration and coordination of humanitarian response should be strengthened, particularly with respect to non-traditional actors.** A wide array of local and regional actors is presently working on humanitarian issues, both inside and outside Syria. In fact, most of the assistance being provided inside Syria is being delivered by local Syrian and regional NGOs. Many of these actors are not part of traditional coordination mechanisms and are acting independently in support of humanitarian – and sometimes, political – objectives. The UN and other international organizations have a responsibility to reach out to and support these actors by joining forces with other Syrian, Arab, and Islamic NGOs. At a minimum, those NGOs have a responsibility to share information on their activities with international agencies mandated to coordinate humanitarian efforts.
- 10. Governments should be supported to preserve asylum space in the region.** Being able to seek protection in other countries is a basic human right – governments in the region need to be affirmed and financially supported to allow refugees to enter. Presently, the UN consolidated appeal for the regional response for June-December 2013 is just under 50 percent funded. Interestingly, for the first time ever, the consolidated appeal included funds to support the governments of Lebanon and Jordan. Turkey, however, has received disproportionately less international assistance than other host governments and the limits of its capacity to shelter and provide services to refugees may be being reached. If host governments do not receive the support they need, it is likely that the living conditions for refugees will deteriorate, resulting in public health hazards for the host communities as well as the refugees. The security of humanitarian workers could be compromised, refugees could turn to violent protests, refugees might be returned to Syria and/or deterred from arriving in host countries or might seek protection elsewhere.

²⁴⁵ See for example, Security Council Report, *Chronology of Events: Syria*, revised 29 August 2013, www.securitycouncilreport.org/chronology/syria.php.

11. Support to refugees and IDPs in urban areas should be improved and increased.

While it is perhaps understandable that international attention has focused on the large visible refugee camps in Jordan, Iraq and Turkey, the fact is that far more attention needs to be directed toward those living outside of camps. The issue of urban refugees has received significant attention from international bodies for more than ten years but there is still a great deal that is not known. For example, what are the pros and cons of targeting refugees and IDPs when host populations are also needy? What are good models of working with local governments and service-providers? Should international agencies be making contributions to the on-going work of such authorities? If so, should there be a requirement that a certain percentage of beneficiaries are refugees or IDPs? The sheer scale of Syrian displacement in non-camp settings suggests the need for much more attention to the practicalities of providing assistance to host communities and the displaced. In this respect, it would be helpful for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to review its past efforts to address the needs of non-camp refugees and IDPs in order to provide concrete guidance to agencies and donors about effective models of assistance.

12. Gender perspectives should be incorporated into all humanitarian and development programs. While there has been some much-needed attention to sexual and gender-based violence among Syrian refugees, there needs to be a recognition that during crises such as these gender roles can be transformed. Support should be given for Syrian women to participate actively in consultative mechanisms and leadership structures that emerge among refugees in both camp and non-camp settings. Issues to address livelihood issues and documentation are especially important for Syrian women and their children. Birth registrations of babies born to refugees are particularly difficult when women do not have documentation of their citizenship or marriage.

13. Education must receive priority attention from governments in the region, international agencies and civil society groups. The fact that many Syrian children, whether internally displaced or refugees, do not have access to education is a major human rights issue with long-term implications for the future of the country. As this report highlights, the fact that most refugee children in Jordan and Syria are not attending school should be a cause for alarm – not only for over-stretched humanitarian agencies but also for development actors and advocacy groups.

14. Host countries must increase their efforts to guarantee the security of Syrian refugees. In the last year, there have been violent attacks against Syrians in Egypt, kidnappings and assassinations in Lebanon and on-going security incidents in the Za'atari camp of Jordan. Young men and increasingly children have been recruited into armed groups. Unsafe security conditions will often prompt Syrians to return to their homes before conditions warrant, further increasing their security risks.

15. Assistance to refugees should be increased. This could include the possibility of introducing or expanding cash assistance to refugees. Except for those living in camps in Jordan and Turkey, refugees throughout the region struggle to pay rent; most of the refugees arrived came with meager financial resources and those that did come with cash have found their reserves depleted. This leads them to be at further risk for protection concerns by going into debt, returning to their homes despite ongoing violence, moving elsewhere, reducing their consumption of food, or resorting to early marriage or survival sex or child labor. In this respect, more attention needs to be given to supporting refugee livelihoods. Host countries have been resistant to allowing refugees to be involved in microfinance or vocational training programs, but since displacement is likely to be protracted, this kind of support is needed to enable refugees to become more self-sufficient and to contribute to the economies of the host country.

Long-Term Thinking

16. Initiatives need to be carried out now to think about the long-term future of Syria's IDPs and refugee. While it has become commonplace for international agencies to call for thinking about solutions to displacement early in the process, in fact it is extraordinarily hard to do when faced with overwhelming demands for emergency assistance. It is perhaps natural that those most knowledgeable and involved in humanitarian response are caught up in the intense demands of the day. But, surely with the international community asked to raise \$5 billion to support refugees and IDPs over the next six months, more thought is needed now about how the situation will play out in the long-term.²⁴⁶ For example, what are the options – for the region and the international community – if the Syrian refugees cannot return home this year – or in the next five years? It is difficult to predict how the conflict will unfold, of course, but it is unlikely that the war will be over soon. And when the conflict does end, it is also unlikely that the 6 million+ refugees and IDPs will immediately pack up their belongings, go back home and resume their lives. The issue of returns is a complex issue, raising issues not only of reconstruction, but also issues of legal assistance with property claims and transitional justice. While there are ongoing initiatives to plan for transition in Syria, these have largely focused on the political, military and economic future of the country.²⁴⁷ Equal attention needs to be

²⁴⁶ In June 2013, the United Nations launched a \$4.4 billion humanitarian appeal – the largest aid request in its history – to assist those affected by the crisis in Syria. The appeal was revised from \$1.5 billion in January and covers relief activities for the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) and the Regional Response Plan (RRP). Of the \$4.4 billion, \$1.4 billion will go to SHARP, assisting Syrians inside Syria, and \$3 billion to RRP, which provides life-saving aid and protection to refugees in the immediate surrounding region. In addition to this, the governments of Lebanon and Jordan are seeking \$450 million and \$380 million, respectively, to support the efforts to provide education, health and other services to the refugees who are now in their countries.

²⁴⁷ For example, US Institute of Peace, “The Day After Project,” August 2012, www.usip.org/programs/projects/the-day-after-project

paid to the long-term future of Syrian refugees and IDPs. As we have pointed out in this analysis, Syrian displacement is the most recent case of the region's long history of displacements occurring since 1948, few of which can be said to have been resolved. The Middle East risks becoming a "region of the permanently displaced." In this regard, we suggest that key donors support a research project which examines lessons learned from other on-going and persistent cases of displacement in the Middle East and which examines the particular strains caused by recurrent displacement.

17. Development actors should become fully engaged in addressing both the needs of the displaced and the communities which host them and in seeking solutions. As displacement becomes protracted, issues of livelihoods, provision of basic services, infrastructure development, local economies and environmental impact become more important. In addition, there is the need to address land tenure issues before any sustainable return can occur. These are all development issues. And yet, as long as this is seen as a 'refugee' emergency or a 'humanitarian' crisis, development actors will be reluctant to invest their scarce resources in what is seen to be the responsibility of the humanitarian community. While some development actors, such as the World Bank, have taken important steps to incorporate displacement concerns in their long-term planning, they need to be supported and other multilateral and bilateral development agencies need to play a more active role. We specifically suggest that states explore setting up an Arab States Stabilization Fund to mitigate the financial and service provision burdens of key countries in the region as a result of the Syria conflict. Such a fund should be administered by the World Bank and could perhaps help draw in the Gulf states to work with other international donors in a constructive way.

18. Plans need to be made now for the likelihood that displacement will be protracted, including in terms of addressing likely increase in numbers of refugees seeking asylum outside of the region. In 2012 according to UNHCR, Syria became the second highest-ranking source country of asylum seekers among the 44 industrialized countries, up from 15th place a year earlier.²⁴⁸ Most fled in the second half of the year due to the sharp intensification of the armed conflict. There are also reports of increasing number of irregular Syrian arrivals. While the UN High Commissioner for Refugees affirmed in July 2013 that the number of Syrian asylum

²⁴⁸ In 2012, more than half of the Syrian asylum seekers requested refugee status in Sweden (7,800 claims) and Germany (6,200 claims). In Sweden, the figure increased twelve-fold (650 claims in 2011), while in Germany it more than doubled (2,600 claims in 2011). Other important destination countries were the United Kingdom (1,300 claims), Switzerland (1,400 claims) and Austria (920 claims). See UNHCR, *Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries – 2012, 2013*, p. 16, www.unhcr.org/5149b81e9.html; in this report, UNHCR notes that in virtually all 44 countries, the number of Syrian asylum-seekers went up in 2012, with the exception of Greece. A growing number of Syrian nationals were recorded irregularly entering or present in Greece but asylum claim numbers from this group remained low.

claims in EU countries “remains manageable...,” if displacement drags on and international assistance is inadequate, this will change.²⁴⁹ European governments, in particular, should prioritize thinking about a collective response to Syrian asylum-seekers which upholds their rights and shares responsibility for response.

19. Focus should be placed on the appropriate role for resettlement of refugees

outside the region. So far, Germany has agreed to resettle on a temporary basis some 5,000 vulnerable Syrians and Sweden has announced that it will give asylum to all Syrian refugees who apply. The Obama administration recently announced a new target of 2,000 Syrians for resettlement, an increase from the 90 or so Syrian refugees who have been permanently admitted to the US in the last two years. These are positive signals, but they are just a drop in the bucket in terms of the millions of Syrians who have been displaced by the violence. Resettlement programs do not just offer solutions to individual refugees but can also play an important role in demonstrating responsibility-sharing with regional governments hosting large numbers of refugees. Bold, creative, strategic thinking on resettlement is needed. For example, could present cumbersome US procedures to process refugees be revised to expedite and expand an eventual Syrian refugee resettlement program? Could countries which are relatively new to resettlement, such as Brazil, be encouraged to resettle more refugees from Syria? Could temporary resettlement mechanisms, such as the Humanitarian Evacuation program from Kosovo serve as models for new thinking about the role of resettlement in Syria?

20. Discussions should be started now about the eventual establishment of an international mechanism to support solutions for displacement in Syria.

International processes have, in the past, served as vehicles for creative multilateral approaches to resolving long-standing crises, for example in Central America and in Southeast Asia. Thought should be given now about what future mechanisms or processes could be used to resolve Syrian displacement when circumstances allow. For example, the role of regional organizations, Gulf states, UN agencies and donor governments should be considered. Ministerial-level meetings with governments of host countries are currently being held to discuss the challenges of humanitarian response. These could be important opportunities for informal consultations about long-term future efforts. Even when the international system seems blocked and weak in bringing about an end to the violence, creative steps can and should be taken – steps which could be implemented to bring about an end to long-term displacement and the suffering it has caused.

²⁴⁹ UNHCR, “UN’s High Commissioner for Refugees urges Europe to do more for Syrian asylum-seekers,” 18 July 2013, www.unhcr.org/51e7ecc56.html

