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## THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS AS A RESULT OF THE UNRESOLVED CONFLICT IN SYRIA

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The ongoing conflict in Syria that began in early 2011 has not only spread death and destruction across the country, but has also led to a refugee movement of enormous proportions among Syrian citizens. Of Syria's 21.9 million inhabitants, approximately 4.25 million have become internally displaced persons (IDPs),<sup>1</sup> or people who, although they still live in Syria, no longer live in their original place of residence. In addition, the conflict has led a further 1.76 million people<sup>2</sup> to flee Syria for neighbouring countries, according to the United Nations' Refugee Agency (UNHCR). This means that approximately 27.5 per cent of the Syrian population have fled; just under 19.4 per cent as internally displaced persons and more than eight per cent as refugees – and these numbers are increasing by the day.

According to the governments of Syria's neighbouring countries, the number of Syrian refugees who have sought asylum within their borders is already well over two million. According to official reports, Egypt has taken in 160,000<sup>3</sup>

- 1 | Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), "Syria: A full-scale displacement and humanitarian crisis with no solutions in sight", [http://internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpCountries\)/9F19CC00280C471C802570A7004CE12F](http://internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpCountries)/9F19CC00280C471C802570A7004CE12F) (accessed 12 Jul 2013).
- 2 | Cf. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syria Regional Refugee Response, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, "Regional Overview", as at 9 Jul 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> (accessed 12 Jul 2013).
- 3 | Cf. UNHCR, as at 24 Apr 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=8> (accessed 10 Jul 2013).

refugees, Jordan approximately 600,000,<sup>4</sup> Lebanon one million,<sup>5</sup> and Turkey 490,000<sup>6</sup> – no corresponding reports are available for Iraq. The difference between the governments' reports and those of the UNHCR is due not least to the fact that these countries are seeking to utilise these figures in raising funds from international organisations and third countries – the higher the number of refugees, the higher the expected proceeds for their efforts, according to the simplest calculations.<sup>7</sup>

### **SYRIAN REFUGEES IN EGYPT, IRAQ, JORDAN, LEBANON AND TURKEY**

The majority of Syrian refugees in Egypt live in the Cairo area, primarily in the 6<sup>th</sup> of October City; beyond that they live in the suburbs of Giza, in the cities of Obur, Nasr City and Rehab, and are also scattered across the governorates of Alexandria, BeniSuef, Sohag, Minia and Luxor.<sup>8</sup> The Syrian refugees in Iraq can primarily be found in the greater Dohuk area – in the refugee camp at Domiz, where approximately 40,000 people are housed.<sup>9</sup> Two additional refugee camps are to be constructed in the

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4 | Cf. UNHCR, as at 7 Jul 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrian-refugees/country.php?id=107> (accessed 10 Jul 2013).

5 | Cf. UNHCR, as at 11 Jul 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrian-refugees/country.php?id=122> (accessed 12 Jul 2013).

6 | Cf. UNHCR, as at 11 Jul 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrian-refugees/country.php?id=224> (accessed 12 Jul 2013).

7 | The UNHCR's figures are well below these. According to them, so far 596,936 refugees have fled Syria for Lebanon, 501,330 have gone to Jordan, 402,176 to Turkey, 160,632 to Iraq and 88,460 to Egypt. The discrepancy between the UNHCR's figures and those of the various governments can be accounted for, at least partially, by the fact that not all refugees seeking asylum in neighbouring countries register with the UNHCR. Lebanon: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> [04.08.2013], Jordan: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107> (accessed 4 Aug 2013), Turkey: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224> (accessed 4 Aug 2013), Iraq: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103> (accessed 4 Aug 2013), Egypt: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=8> (accessed 4 Aug 2013), all as at 9 Jul 2013.

8 | Hend El-Behary and Luiz Sanchez, "Syrian Refugees: No work, no home", *Daily News Egypt*, 19 May 2013, <http://dailynews.egypt.com/2013/05/19/syrian-re> (accessed 13 Jul 2013).

9 | UNHCR, as at 9 Jul 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrian-refugees/country.php?id=103> (accessed 10 Jul 2013)

greater Erbil and Sulaimaniyya areas with space for 15,000 refugees each.<sup>10</sup> The refugee camp at Zaatari in Jordan has meanwhile become the country's fifth largest city.<sup>11</sup> In order to meet the demand for space, supervision and security and to be able to manage the steadily increasing electricity needs for refugees in the future, two further camps were opened in April: Zarqa and Mirajeb Al-Fohoud.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, both transit camps, King Abdullah Park and Cyber City in Ramtha, which were established directly on the Syrian border in April 2012, have come into operation.<sup>13</sup>

Fig. 1

**Flows of refugees from Syria<sup>14</sup>**

Source: UNHCR, © Lesniewski / Fotolia, racken.

10 | Abdel Hamid Zebari, "Iraqi Kurdistan Region Struggles To Cope With Syrian Refugees", *Al-Monitor Iraq Pulse*, 12 Jun 2013, <http://al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/06/iraq-kurdistan-syrian-refugees-aid.html> (accessed 13 Jul 2013).

11 | Cf. UNHCR, as at 9 Jul 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrian-refugees/country.php?id=107> (accessed 12 Jul 2013).

12 | Ebd.

13 | Ebd.

14 | Mismatch of data in the article compared to this map is due to an earlier submission date of the text. Cf. UNHCR, "Stories from Syrian refugees. Discovering the human face of a tragedy", <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/syria.php> (accessed 22 Aug 2013).

The UNHCR was originally meant to oversee the establishment of a total of 18 refugee camps in Lebanon<sup>15</sup> – twelve with a capacity for 100,000 people, a further six with a capacity for 15,000 people. This has so far not been carried out for political reasons. The Shia Hezbollah is likely not only to fear that the majority Sunni refugee population will remain in Lebanon for a long time and has prevented the camps from being built. Given the overwhelming number of Syrian refugees, the UNHCR is now considering opening three refugee camps: one camp near Chaat in the northern Bekaa Valley and two others near Joub Janine and Tall Zhouh in the western Bekaa Valley. These plans are not without problems given the fact that the Bekaa Valley is dominated and controlled by Hezbollah.<sup>16</sup>



Tents in the Zaatari refugee camp: the camp, comprising more than 120,000 inhabitants, is Jordan's fifth largest city. | Source: © Vera Voss.

The approximately 200,000 Syrian refugees who fled to Turkey are living there in 21 refugee camps, nearly all of which are in provinces directly on the Syrian border. They are getting on with their lives here as best they can; nearly 30,000 Syrian children and young people attend school in

15 | According to reports from the UNHCR, 200,357 Syrian refugees are living in the Bekaa Valley, 196,279 in northern Lebanon in the area near the city of Tripoli, 124,097 in the Beirut and Mont Liban areas, and 76,203 in South Lebanon.

16 | Jamie Dettmer, "It's About Time: United Nations Plans Refugee Camps for Syrians in Lebanon", *The Daily Beast*, 12 Jun 2013, <http://thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/06/12/it-s-about-time-united-nations-plans-refugee-camps-for-syrians-in-lebanon.html> (accessed 13 Jul 2013).

the camps. By 21 June 2013, field hospitals and mobile health care centres carried out more than one million medical treatments in the refugee camps. Furthermore, 3,664 babies have been born in the camps.

### SYRIAN REFUGEES' LEGAL STATUS

The Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees<sup>17</sup> has not been signed by Iraq, Jordan or Lebanon and thus has also not been ratified. Though Turkey signed the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951 and ratified it in 1962, it largely only employs it for refugees from member states of the Council of Europe, to which Syria does not belong.<sup>18</sup> Egypt ratified the Convention in 1981 but it does not make full use of it either.<sup>19</sup> To that effect, Syrian refugees do not enjoy refugee status in terms of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey.

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The consequences of these circumstances have already been studied extensively through the example of Iraqi refugees after 2003. Even entry into the above-mentioned countries was a problem. Turkey demanded entry visas, as did Jordan and Syria; only in Lebanon could one enter without having a visa. Jordan and Syria's visa rules have also continually changed, quite obviously with the goal being to deter the influx of refugees. In Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, Iraqi refugees were treated as *wafidin*, as guests. No consideration was given over how to handle them in the long term. Iraqi refugees did not enjoy a secured status in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria or Turkey. They received no documentation and ran the risk of being sent back to Iraq should they be picked up by the police. Even registering with the UNHCR did nothing to change these circumstances.

17 | UN, Geneva Convention from 28 Jul 1951, entered into effect on 22 Apr 1954, [http://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?&src=UNTSOnline&mtdsg\\_no=V~2&chapter=5&Temp=mtdsg2&lang=en#EndDec](http://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?&src=UNTSOnline&mtdsg_no=V~2&chapter=5&Temp=mtdsg2&lang=en#EndDec) (accessed 5 Aug 2013).

18 | Mehmet Atakan Foça, "Turkey Sticks to 'Limited' Application of the Geneva Convention", BIA News Center, 1 Aug 2011, <http://bianet.org/english/world/131856-turkey-sticks-to-limited-application-of-the-geneva-convention> (accessed 12 Jul 2013).

19 | Cf. UN, n. 17.

Because the refugees were considered virtual illegal immigrants, they were also unable to work. However, at the same time they had to earn money to be able to survive. In many cases it was the women and under-age children who went to work because it was considered too risky for men to take up work. They were paid a pittance and were often not even compensated at all. Appealing to the police was pointless because refugees would then have had to reveal themselves and, under the circumstances, would then have been sent back to Iraq, which occurred time and again. Access to state-run education and health care was initially unregulated and therefore difficult. The longer the Iraqi refugee crisis lasted, the more pragmatically the authorities in Jordan, Syria and Turkey conducted themselves. Refugees were now entitled to time-limited residency that could be extended under certain circumstances – though they were not legally secure. However, in the process Jordan restricted the influx of refugees to those who could save a part of their assets. In the course of this development, refugees were then allowed largely unlimited access to state-run education and health care services in these countries. Only Lebanon's policy toward the Iraqi refugees did not further develop at any point in time, which can be ascribed to Lebanon's leading denominational groups' – Muslims and Christians – conflicting and absolutely incongruous interests.

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The Iraqi refugee crisis has meanwhile made history; its consequences are clearly still felt in Iraq's neighbouring countries. Several thousand Iraqi refugees are still living in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. They have either built a new life in their receiving country – this applies for example to a multitude of Iraqis in Jordan – or, for certain reasons, could not or would not return to Iraq and who have yet to gain admittance into a third country. Among those people are most notably members of religious minorities – e.g. Christians, Mandaean – but also Sunni-Shiite spouses and their children and grandchildren who are afraid to return either to now distinctly Sunni or Shia dominated parts of Iraq.

The Syrian refugee crisis reached the extent of the Iraqi refugee crisis long ago. The Iraqi refugee crisis saw four million people become refugees,<sup>20</sup> but with the Syrian conflict one can speak of more than six million refugees.<sup>21</sup> Jordan and Turkey's handling of Syrian refugees indicates that these countries have learned little from their experience with the Iraqi refugee crisis.

### **STATUS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN EGYPT**

Up until very recently, Egypt was accessible to Syrians without a visa and was considered by many Syrian refugees to be a safe haven. Though hardly any support was expected from the Egyptian authorities, those who had made it to Egypt and were not completely without means could eke out an existence there.

**The military coup in Egypt has only further complicated the situation for Syrian refugees who wanted to temporarily establish themselves in Egypt. Egypt is now demanding that Syrian citizens have visas.**

But the severance of diplomatic ties between Egypt and Syria by the Morsi regime brought with it great difficulties for Syrian refugees who had hoped to journey on to a secure third country because they could no longer obtain travel documents at the Syrian embassy in Cairo. The military coup in Egypt has only further complicated the situation for Syrian refugees who wanted to temporarily establish themselves in Egypt. Egypt is now demanding that Syrian citizens have visas and justifies this, for example, by saying that Syrians who reside in Egypt would participate in the country's current disputes on the side of the Muslim Brotherhood. Against this backdrop, 20 organisations aiding Syrian refugees in Egypt have recently signed a memorandum calling for all Syrians in the country to remain neutral with regard to Egypt's internal matters. Prior to this, two television commentators from the anti-Morsi camp, Youssef el-Husseini and Tawfiq Okasha, had warned Syrians against interfering. Okasha even went so far as to call on Egyptians to apprehend Syrians as soon as they set eyes on them. UNHCR now not only fears that it will become very difficult for Syrians to obtain an Egyptian visa, but also that Egypt may no longer be considered a place of refuge for Syrians.

20 | Cf. UNHCR, <http://unhcr.org/461f7cb92.html> (accessed 5 Aug 2013).

21 | Cf. UNHCR, n. 2; IDMC, n. 1.

## STATUS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN IRAQ

With the Syrian refugees in Iraq, to a large extent it is a matter of Syrian Kurds from all parts of Syria, but particularly from the Al-Hasakah and Deir-ez-Zor governorates on the Syrian-Iraq border who have fled to the Kurdistan Autonomous Region of Iraq.<sup>22</sup> The fact that fewer than 0.5 per cent of Syrian refugees who have fled to Iraq reside outside the Kurdistan Autonomous Region is associated with the fact that entry into parts of the country controlled by the Iraqi central government is difficult and residency in these parts of the country depends on residence permits that are difficult to obtain and are time-limited. This also explains why 7,000 Syrian refugees have recently returned to Syria from the Qaim district in the Iraqi governorate of Anbar. In contrast, Syrian refugees are able to enter the Kurdistan Autonomous Region without issue. Here they are permitted to work and have access to state-run education and health care.<sup>23</sup>

## STATUS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN<sup>24</sup>

At the start of the Syrian conflict, which began in Deraa, close to the Jordanian border, scores of Syrians fled the areas near the border for Jordan to temporarily stay with relatives. Many of them did not consider themselves refugees as their families had always lived on both sides of the border. As the conflict expanded and the violent disputes intensified in Syria, more and more Syrians entered the country who did not have family ties on that side of the border and who were dependent on the aid of third parties. Until summer 2012, only local non-governmental organisations were looking after refugees, organising accommodation and supplying material aid.<sup>25</sup>

22 | Mohamed Salman, "Assessment of the situation of the Syrian refugees in Kurdistan region Iraq", *MPC Research Report 2012/15*, <http://migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/MPC%202012%2015.pdf> (accessed 13 Jul 2013).

23 | Zebari, n. 11.

24 | For further details, see: Sarah van der Walle, Simone Hüser and Otmar Oehring, "Syrischer Massenexodus nach Jordanien. Auswirkungen und Folgen", KAS Country Report, <http://kas.de/jordanien/de/publications/35012> (accessed 28 Aug 2013).

25 | Migration Policy Centre, "Syrian Refugees. A Snapshot of the Crisis – In the Middle East and Europe", [http://syrianrefugees.eu/?page\\_id=87](http://syrianrefugees.eu/?page_id=87) (accessed 10 Jul 2013).



Only in summer 2012 – by this time 1,000 refugees were coming to Jordan from Syria every day – the Jordanian state established the refugee camp at Zaatari where today more than 120,000 people are living. The influx of Syrian

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refugees increased in early 2013 in connection with the bombing of villages and cities near the border by the Syrian army to more than 3,000 refugees per day at times. The transit camps at King Abdullah Park and Cyber City in Ramtha directly on the border to Syria and the refugee camp at Zaatari reached their capacity and two further camps had to be established at Zarqa and Mirajeb Al-Fohoud; a total of approximately 200,000 people live in these camps.<sup>26</sup> By far the largest portion of refugees are scattered across the country, making them hard to reach and chronically undersupplied, the more so as the lion's share of state and international aid is going to the refugee camps.<sup>27</sup> In fact nothing has changed in terms of the status of Syrian refugees compared to those who fled Iraq for Jordan approximately ten years ago. While Jordan acted quite restrictively in terms of accepting refugees at the time, even as of now no official considerations have been made concerning whether to slow or even completely halt the influx of refugees by closing the border to Syria. The unchecked influx of Syrian refugees poses a great challenge to the country's economy, its infrastructure – particularly its water and electricity supply – and the health and education systems. This has been made especially clear in Amman and the two less economically developed border provinces of Irbid and al-Mafraq where the vast majority of refugees reside.

In many places the native population witnessing this is becoming resentful that the refugees are receiving support which has been denied them. This resentment will surely increase further if the influx of refugees continues unchecked through the end of the year and the number of refugees reaches one million or even 1.5 million. At the same time, Jordan can count itself fortunate that the Syrian refugees who are at least partially heavily polarised

26 | UNHCR, n. 2.

27 | Taylor Luck, "Influx of Syrian Refugees raises tension in Jordan as resources are stretched", *The Guardian*, 23 Apr 2013, <http://gu.com/p/3faf7> (accessed 10 Jul 2013).

and highly politicised and who carry with them the conflict, which has unloaded the denominational differences present in their Syrian homeland, have at the very least come to a religiously homogeneous country, Jordan,<sup>28</sup> where such denominational differences do not exist as they do in Syria.



UNICEF is providing a box for each school class in the refugee camp. The unbridled inflow of Syrian refugees is a formidable challenge for the Jordanian educational system. | Source: © Vera Voss.

## STATUS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

Without a doubt the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is the most difficult and abstruse. It is the most difficult situation because half a million to one million people are living as refugees in a country that, according to reliable estimates, has a population of only approximately 4.5 million,<sup>29</sup> in which the question of how to handle refugees is deeply divided along religious lines (Sunni and Shia), which despite decades of experience in refugee crises does not know how to handle them, and at the same time will receive neither counsel nor aid from international organisations

28 | King Abdullah II expressly spoke of this in an interview on 26 Jun 2013 published in the London newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat*. Cf. Adel Al-Toraifi, "King Abdullah II: The View from Amman", *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 26 Jun 2013, <http://m.asharq-e.com/content/1372267502482820700> (accessed 5 Aug 2013).

29 | Cf. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), "Lebanon", [http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel\\_population.htm](http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel_population.htm) (accessed 5 Aug 2013).

such as the UNHCR. The victims of this attitude are the refugees and the native population who are suffering due to the unchecked influx of refugees. Syrian refugees who enter the country officially are at least tolerated, while the steadily growing group of those who cross the Green Line are treated as illegals. Officially, at least those Syrians who entered legally have open access to state education and health care facilities.<sup>30</sup>

Any nation would face problems by accepting a refugee population that makes up between eleven and 22 per cent of its own population. Also worth considering is that Syrian refugees are entering a country which is just as deeply polarised along the same religious borders as their own country. The developments in Aarsal and Tripoli, where Sunnis and Alawis are fighting each other, however, have just as little to do with the influx of Syrian refugees as the conflicts between the Shia Hezbollah in southern Lebanon or the Bekaa Valley and the Sunni population in other parts of the country. Yet the influx of so many Syrian refugees stokes fears that the civil war in Syria could spark a new civil war in Lebanon. In addition, the influx of refugees and the fact that they are crowding the labour market in Lebanon – even though they may be illegals – is stirring up bad memories of the post-1990 era when Lebanon was virtually occupied by Syria for years and was forced to accept an army of approximately one million Syrian labourers.

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The lack of adequate structures to house such a large number of refugees – i.e. refugee camps – has in most instances led refugees to seek shelter in approximately 1,200 closed settlements. In reality, however, only a small proportion of refugees has the material capability of affording suitable housing. Because of this, many Syrian refugees are tending to live under the same degrading conditions Iraqi civil war refugees were previously faced with. At the same time, they are not permitted to work and have no access to state-run educational and health care services.

30 | Cf. UNHCR, "Lebanon Response Plan", <http://unhcr.org/51b0a6059.html> (accessed 15 Jul 2013).

## STATUS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

In Turkey in 2009, several agencies were legally<sup>31</sup> consolidated under the umbrella of the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of the Turkish Prime Ministry (AFAD): the General Directorate of Civil Defence under the Ministry of Interior, the General Directorate of Disaster Affairs under the Ministry of Public Works and Settlement and the General Directorate of Turkish Emergency Management under the Prime Ministry.<sup>32</sup> It has been officially stated that the Presidency was formed after the experiences associated with the earthquake catastrophe at the Sea of Marmara in 1999. However, the fact remains that Turkey also had a truly difficult time with the effects of the Iraqi refugee crisis after 2003. The AFAD alone is now responsible for the coordination of all measures relating to the Syrian refugee crisis and it appears

that this has led to a marked increase in the efficiency of all corresponding measures. But Turkey has not only made significant progress from an organisational point of view with regard to coping with relevant crises;

numerous specialised civilian organisations have been pressuring the Turkish legislature for years to overhaul and improve the immigration and refugee laws in effect to date. In addition, the EU and EU member states have called upon the Republic of Turkey to further develop their immigration and refugee laws. On 20 March 2013, a bill for a new law regarding foreign nationals and international protection (Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu) was finally introduced in the Turkish parliament that, according to appraisals by experts on Turkish refugee law, will broadly improve the situation of refugees in Turkey. However, it is likely that it will be another two years at least

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31 | Cf. T.C. Başbakanlık Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı (AFAD), Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığının Teşkilat ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun, 17 Jun 2009, <http://www.afad.gov.tr/UserFiles/File/5902%20say%C4%B1%C4%B1%20afet%20ve%20acil%20durum%20y%C3%B6netimi%20ba%C5%9Fkanl%C4%B1%C4%9F%C4%B1n%C4%B1n%20te%C5%9Fkilat%20ve%20g%C3%B6revleri%20hakk%C4%B1nda%20kanun.pdf> (accessed 10 Jul 2013).

32 | See also: AFAD, <http://afad.gov.tr/EN> (accessed 5 Aug 2013).

after the passage of the law on 4 April 2013<sup>33</sup> before it can be implemented.<sup>34</sup>

**The Turkish administration's handling of the Syrian refugees can be positively evaluated overall. Refugees have access to state-run educational and health care services.**

Irrespective of the specified legal framework and the expected improvement, the Turkish administration's handling of the Syrian refugees can be positively evaluated overall. Refugees

are registered as soon as they enter the country by representatives from the AFAD – they are able to register with the UNHCR later; they then receive a residence permit (*ikamet*), are permitted to work and have unrestricted access to state-run educational and health care services. Nevertheless, Turkish policies towards Syrian refugees have also been criticised. Taner Kılıç, head of the refugee organisation Mülteci-Der,<sup>35</sup> criticised the state bureaucracy's conduct in an interview with the newspaper *Hürriyet*. According to Kılıç, this has created the impression that Turkey does not need any support from the UNHCR. He says the administration's lack of willingness to make use of the UNHCR's expertise regarding the organisation of refugee camps is based on false pride. Additionally, he says that Syrian refugees are asked to wait on the Syrian side of the border for flimsy reasons, which makes it clear that an open door policy is no longer in place.<sup>36</sup>

## ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS

The refugees who are seeking to flee the situation in Syria and leave their existence behind in the process are paying a high price. The costs adding up for the receiving countries through the refugee crisis are similarly high. So far it is clear that only the costs being generated by the operations supporting the refugees from national and international

33 | Cf. Haber Merkezi, "Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Yasası Kabul Edildi", *Bianet*, 5 Apr 2013, <http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/145625-yabancilar-ve-uluslararasi-koruma-yasasi-kabul-edildi> (accessed 12 Jul 2013).

34 | Dersim Yabasun, "Turkey: Establishing a new asylum system", *The Foreign Report*, 28 Mar 2013, <http://theforeignreport.com/2013/03/28/turkey-establishing-a-new-asylum-system> (accessed 12 Jul 2013).

35 | Cf. Mülteci-Der, <http://multeci.org.tr> (accessed 5 Aug 2013).

36 | Cf. interview with Taner Kılıç, the head of the Association for Solidarity with Refugees (Mülteci-Der): Barçın Yınanç, "Poor transparency shadows Turkey's Syria refugee policy", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 27 May 2013, <http://hurriyetdailynews.com/?PageID=238&NID=47639> (accessed 12 Jul 2013).

organisations have been calculated. The UNHCR estimates that all the necessary measures in support of the Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey will amount to a total of 2,981,640,112 U.S. dollars in 2013, of which only 1,038,381,164 U.S. dollars has been committed so far.<sup>37</sup> The percentage of costs associated with admitting Syrian refugees taken on by the respective receiving countries is quite variable and is not clearly documented in every case.<sup>38</sup>

By the end of 2012, approximately 100,000 Syrian refugees had entered Egypt – the Egyptian authorities at the time assumed that number would be 140,000 refugees. By June 2013, there had been another heavy influx of Syrian refugees, which, under the circumstances, will now likely decline sharply due to changes in the political situation since the beginning of June 2013 (the severing of diplomatic ties with Syria, the military coup). According to the Regional Response Plan assembled by the UNHCR together with all the international and domestic organisations working with refugees and with the Egyptian government, the total costs for Egypt in connection with the influx of Syrian refugees in 2013 is expected to reach 66,705,984 U.S. dollars, which must be raised entirely by national and international organisations. The costs to the state accrued by accepting Syrian refugees were not specified in the UNHCR's Regional Response Plan. It was merely indicated that Syrian refugees have, for example, access to state educational and health care services free of charge.<sup>39</sup>

37 | Cf. UNHCR, n. 2.

38 | In Egypt, the costs of all the measures taken in support of Syrian refugees in 2013 was estimated at 66,705,984 U.S. dollars, 310,858,973 in Iraq, 976,576,971 in Jordan, 1,216,189,393 in Lebanon and 372,390,514 in Turkey. These figures are accompanied by commitments of 14,352,998 U.S. dollars (22 per cent) in Egypt, commitments of 63,927,143 (21 per cent) in Iraq, commitments of 397,841,029 (41 per cent) in Jordan, commitments of 394,549,946 (32 per cent) in Lebanon and commitments of 97,042,393 (26 per cent) in Turkey. Each as at 15 Jul 2013: Egypt: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=8> (accessed 15 Jul 2013); Iraq: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103> (accessed 15 Jul 2013); Jordan: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107> (accessed 15 Jul 2013); Lebanon: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> (accessed 15 Jul 2013); Turkey: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224> (accessed 15 Jul 2013).

39 | Cf. UNHCR, n. 30.

**The Kurdistan Autonomous Region has provided 20 million U.S. dollars for the support of Syrian refugees since the beginning of the year.**

Currently more than 140,000 Syrian refugees are living in Iraq. By the end of the year, up to 350,000 refugees are expected, of which approximately 300,000 will reside in the Kurdistan Autonomous Region. According to the Regional Response Plan prepared by the UNHCR together with all the international and domestic organisations working with refugees and with the Iraqi authorities, the total costs for Iraq in connection with the influx of Syrian refugees in 2013 is expected to reach 310,858,973 U.S. dollars, which must be predominantly raised by national and international organisations.<sup>40</sup> According to Dindar Zebari, the deputy head of Kurdistan's Department of Foreign Relations, the Kurdistan Autonomous Region, which receives 17 per cent of Iraq's budget and can expect to receive 18 billion U.S. dollars in 2013, has provided 20 million U.S. dollars for the support of Syrian refugees since the beginning of the year.<sup>41</sup>

By the end of 2012, approximately 300,000 Syrian refugees had entered Jordan. The costs associated with this have amounted to 251 million U.S. dollars, according to official reports. The Jordanian government is expecting costs of up to 851.5 million U.S. dollars in 2013 on the premise of an influx of up to one million Syrian refugees.<sup>42</sup>

By the end of 2012, approximately 570,000 Syrian refugees had entered Lebanon. According to the Regional Response Plan prepared by the UNHCR together with all the international and domestic organisations working with refugees and with the Lebanese government assuming an influx of up to one million refugees by the end of 2013, the total costs for Lebanon in connection with the further

40 | Cf. *ibid.*

41 | Zebari, n. 11.

42 | Of that, 178.8 million U.S. dollars are allocated to the energy sector, 91.3 million to the supply of water, 26.2 million to education, 93.6 million to the public health sector, 9.8 million to additional costs for communities and 80 million for costs relating to the admission and safety of refugees. A further 371.8 million U.S. dollars are expected in pro rata subsidies for electricity (275.85 million U.S. dollars), water (52.15 million U.S. dollars), household gas (27.7 million U.S. dollars) and flour (16.1 million U.S. dollars). Cf. UNHCR, "Syria Regional response Plan. Annex 1: Response Plan for Hosting Syrians by the Government of Jordan", 1 Apr 2013, <http://unhcr.org/51b0a6ff9.html> (accessed 15 Jul 2013).

influx of Syrian refugees in 2013 is expected to reach 1,665,824,257 U.S. dollars, of which 449,634,864 U.S. dollars fall to the state.<sup>43</sup>

In Turkey, a further increase in the influx of Syrian refugees is expected by the end of 2013. By the end of the year, up to one million Syrian refugees are expected to enter the country, of which 300,000 would then be housed in camps while the other 700,000 would live outside of the camps. The total costs for the measures taken by specialised UN organisations in connection with this are estimated at 372,390,514 U.S. dollars for 2013. Precise information on the costs to the Turkish government associated with admitting Syrian refugees is not available. According to official statements, however, the influx up to May of this year alone has cost approximately 800 million U.S. dollars.<sup>44</sup>

## OUTLOOK

As long as the Syrian conflict remains unsolved – and it seems it will remain so for now – the influx of Syrian refugees into neighbouring countries will increase further.

**It is possible that by the end of the year more than 300,000 Syrian refugees will reside in Egypt, one million in Lebanon, 350,000 in Iraq and approximately one million each in Jordan and Turkey.**

It is possible that by the end of the year more than 300,000 Syrian refugees will reside in Egypt, one million in Lebanon, 350,000 in Iraq and approximately one million each in Jordan and Turkey.

Turkey will likely bear the brunt of this, both as regards the costs as well as the ratio of its own population to the refugee population. Supposedly reasonable or politically motivated misgivings that Syrian intelligence agents could enter the country with the refugees and from there foster unrest by, for example, encouraging the Alawis<sup>45</sup> in the Hatay province to fraternise with the Alawi-supported Assad regime have so far proved unfounded. Of course, further attacks are anticipated after the series of bombings in Reyhanlı in May 2013, and it is still not conclusively clear who carried them out. These developments will certainly

43 | Cf. UNHCR, n. 30.

44 | Cf. *ibid.*

45 | The Alawis in Syria are not the same as the group by the same name, although transcribed differently as Alevi, who predominantly live in Turkey.



not destabilise Turkey, but they may further complicate the Syrian refugees' already difficult living conditions.

Lebanon is likely to have the greatest problems in coping with a further influx of Syrian refugees – not only due to economic reasons, but also because some of the refugees bring the conflict from their homeland into Lebanon and in doing so they hit upon a corresponding population profile. Though conflicts between Sunnis and Shias are still reported on a local level, to some extent – e.g. in Aarsal and Tripoli – they have already displayed characteristics of a regional civil war. The answer to the question of how long the Lebanese state can continue to limit these conflicts will also decide whether or not the country will descend into a new civil war.

The pressure on the Jordanian economy will further increase with the ongoing unchecked influx of Syrian refugees because the burden on the state would likewise increase with such an influx. Someone will have to pay the bill. Failing all else, that someone will once again be those donor countries who have ensured over the past twenty or thirty years that Jordan remained a safe haven in an unstable region. However, the donors' current welcome engagement in terms of the refugees will not contribute to setting about making urgently needed reforms in Jordan.

The influx of Syrian refugees into Egypt and Iraq will have essentially no effect on the circumstances in these countries. From an economic viewpoint, Iraq and particularly the Kurdistan Autonomous Region, where most Syrian refugees move to, can afford the influx. And in the Kurdistan Autonomous Region, the influx of primarily Kurdish refugees from Syria was by all means initially desirable, at least for political reasons. To date, Syrian refugees have left for Egypt because the conditions are seen as less problematic than those in Lebanon, for example. Should these circumstances change again, the Syrian refugees will reorient themselves.

This article was completed on 18 July 2013.