

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

The conflict in Syria, entering its seventh year, has spawned one of the most protracted and complex humanitarian crises of modern times. Grappling with the overwhelming influx of people has highlighted key gaps in international governance architecture. It has also exacerbated preexisting political fault lines and accelerated the widespread rise of populist/nationalist movements. Values that have long been the anchor of the West's liberal order – tolerance and openness – have given way to exclusionary politics, xenophobia, and the continued weakening of regional and international institutions. Brexit in the UK, the rise of the far right across Europe, and the election of Donald Trump in the US are the latest iterations of these growing trends. The seismic shifts occurring across the West will undoubtedly continue to reverberate, with key elections and referendums in Europe coming up in 2017.

On a political level, the refugee crisis has highlighted the failure of diplomatic efforts to end the conflict in Syria – the principle driver of displacement. Contributing to a growing sense of powerlessness in ending the carnage is the unprecedented fragility of the EU project as well as deep divisions within the bloc, a potentially changing US policy in the Middle East, Russia's continued support of Bashar al Assad's brutal regime, and Iran's ability to project its power through Shiite militias.

The inability to end the war is accompanied by an uneven and inadequate humanitarian response by the international community to the refugee crisis. In relation to the level of need, the international community is not accepting enough refugees, nor providing enough financial assistance. Currently, there is a disproportionate burden being placed on regional host countries – Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan mainly – which together are harboring over 4.8 million Syrian refugees. These countries are inundated with absorbing the influx of people, which is putting a strain on resources, services, and infrastructure, as well as exacerbating political tensions. This is especially the case in Turkey – the country hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees (over 2.7 million). While Turkey has been commended for its humanitarian response, policies for the long-term integration of Syrians have lagged.

In TPQ's Fall 2016 issue, our authors take up the complex nature of the Syrian refugee crisis, in particular its impact on Turkey's demographic, political, and social landscape. Examining the approaches of the Turkish state, NGOs, and international actors, our authors emphasize the importance of shifting from an emergency response to finding durable solutions, implementing integration policies, agreement in education and employment, ensuring the resilience of the Turkey-EU deal, and fostering dialogue between refugees and the host community.

Providing an overview of the Turkish state's refugee policy, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu outlines the unique aspects of the temporary-protection framework, which respects Syrians' *non-refoulement* and grants them the option of settling in temporary protection centers (camps) or living in urban areas. However, only 10 percent of refugees are in the camps, which is why the state has taken measures to enhance the accessibility of education, health care, and employment opportunities for the 2.5 million Syrians who are in urban areas, points out the Foreign Minister. Also touting the Turkey-EU agreement on refugees, Çavuşoğlu argues that the deal has led to a dramatic decrease in the number of deaths in the Aegean Sea, and has transformed the basin into a more stable one. In the final section of the article, the Foreign Minister issues a call to the international community to provide more support to the countries bordering Syria, which are shouldering the majority of the humanitarian burden. A collective global response is necessary in order to forge a realistic and durable solution to the refugee crisis, argues the Foreign Minister.

In his article, Deputy Chairman of the Republican People's Party (CHP) Veli Ağbaba lays out policy recommendations for the integration of Turkey's Syrian refugees, which is articulated in the CHP's refugee report, *In Between Borders: From A Human Tragedy to a Trial of Humanity* published in July 2016. On a structural level, Ağbaba underlines the importance of Turkey lifting its geographical limitation on the 1951 Geneva Convention, recommends the establishment of a Ministry for Migration and Integration, and cautions the ruling party against using the refugee population as an instrument of extending its own power. The Deputy Chairman argues that the services provided to Syrian refugees are inadequate, and that there is an urgent need to make quality health care accessible, even for unregistered refugees. Access to education remains another area in which efforts must be strengthened. Ağbaba points out that including Syrian children in the education sector will lead to the decrease of crime, early and forced marriages, the recruitment of child soldiers, and child trafficking. Finally, Ağbaba expresses his conviction that Turkey needs to prioritize coordination between international NGOs, international organizations such as the UNHCR, and involved regional actors such as the EU.

EU-Turkey relations within the context of cooperation over the refugee crisis has wavered between constructive and precarious. The deal signed between the two on 18 March 2016 to stem the flow of refugees to Europe signaled the reinvigoration of relations: Ankara pledged to take refugees sent back from Greece, and in exchange the EU pledged a financial aid package to refugees in Turkey, as well as visa liberalization for Turkish nationals. This deal, argues Gerald Knaus, Founding Chairman of the European Stability Initiative, is in imminent danger of collapsing, with potentially negative consequences for the already tense relationship between the EU and

Turkey. One of the main problems Knaus identifies is that compared to the number of arrivals on the Greek islands, the number of returns to Turkey is quite low. This is primarily due to concerns that Turkey is not a safe third country and lacks a transparent procedure for the refugees that are returned, points out Knaus. The author stresses that both sides need to take several concrete steps in order to keep the agreement afloat. Turkey should address its lack of transparency to ensure it is a credible third country. In turn, the EU should provide the full financial assistance to the refugees that it promised and support Greece with asylum and relocation requests.

The refugee crisis is a global one, however it is often painted as Euro-specific due to the tendency of Europeans to focus on their own predicament. Dr. George Mavrommatis, a lecturer at Harokopio University in Athens, critically analyzes the discourse of the “so-called” European refugee crisis, arguing that it is reductionist and Euro-centric. The author explains that the death of the Western Balkan route spawned a number of national crises, such as the Greek refugee crisis. Mavrommatis relays his observations from an ethnographic study he conducted of the informal Port of Piraeus camp in Athens. He argues that policy inaction at the state level led to the emergency of a transnational civil society in the beginning stages of the refugee crisis. Through interviews and encounters with Syrians at the Port of Piraeus, the author concludes that many refugees applied for asylum in Greece as a means to continue their journey and eventually settle in Northern Europe.

Many of the articles in this issue focus on Turkey’s migration and asylum system, the challenges of integrating the over 2.7 million Syrian refugees in the country, and the importance of providing education and employment opportunities for Syrians.

In his article, Dr. Metin Çorabatır, President of the Research Centre on Asylum and Migration (IGAM) in Ankara, evaluates the shortcomings of Turkey’s legal framework to adequately deal with the Syrian influx and their integration. The fall of Aleppo and the likelihood of new waves of refugees pouring into the country highlights the urgency of making a paradigmatic shift, emphasizes Çorabatır. This should start by lifting the geographical limitation to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which denies the right of asylum to non-Europeans. The author points out that Turkey’s current temporary protection regime provides the basic rights of refugees in theory, however in reality Syrians face many obstacles to registration, health care, education, and employment. While recognizing the limitations to effective integration, Çorabatır also stresses that there have been positive developments: the passing of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) in 2014; the decision to issue work permits for Syrian refugees who have been in Turkey for more than six months; and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s announcement in July 2016 that

some Syrian refugees could receive citizenship. Although controversial, and potentially an instrument of political gain, this announcement signals that long-term policymaking to find a durable and sustainable solution to Turkey's refugee crisis is not too far off, posits Çorabatır.

Also taking up the topic of Turkey's asylum regime in their article, Dr. Ahmet İçduygu, Director of the Migration Research Center and Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities at Koç University, and Dr. Doğu Şimşek, a post-doctoral fellow at the Migration Research Center, provide an overview of Syrian refugee flows to Turkey from 2011 to the present. The authors argue that state authorities have begun to view the refugees as a long-term situation. However, ad hoc and delayed policymaking at the state level has resulted in numerous barriers for refugees with regards to employment, education, health care, and housing. Dr. İçduygu and Dr. Şimşek call attention to the language used in legislation passed in 2013; the term "harmonization" is used rather than "integration," which reflects an ambiguous commitment to the pursuance of targeted integration policies.

Ameliorating the integration of Syrian refugees into Turkish society largely hinges on providing adequate employment opportunities. As the leading UN agency in dealing with employment and livelihood issues, the International Labour Organization (ILO) plays a critical role in creating job opportunities for the Syrian refugee community. In his article, Numan Özcan, Director of ILO Turkey, outlines the challenges facing Syrians in accessing formal employment. The growth of the informal employment sector has come hand in hand with unsafe working conditions, the prevalence of child labor, and low wages. In this vein, Özcan calls the Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners under Temporary Protection (January 2016) an important step towards increasing the livelihood opportunities of Syrians. The author also recognizes the need to bridge the gap between host communities' grievances and refugee expectations. To that end, ILO Turkey has intensified its efforts, its director explains. This is based on a five-pillar response: facilitating policy development, strengthening institutional capacities, conducting research, carrying out training, and raising awareness among Syrian and host communities.

Providing the view from another regional host country, Dr. Maha Kattaa, Crisis Response Coordinator at the ILO Jordan office, addresses the Jordan Compact Plan – the state's response to the expansion of the informal labor market – and how the ILO is supporting this initiative. Kattaa contextualizes the current situation by explaining that Jordan faced a number of labor market challenges – high national unemployment and dependency on foreign labor – prior to the influx of Syrian refugees. In response to the additional strain on the country's fragile labor market

posed by Syrian refugees, Jordan has set out a number of commitments aimed at improving the economic resilience of the refugee and host communities. Dr. Kattaa sheds light upon the various ways in which ILO Jordan is coordinating with the government on this development-based approach: facilitating the process of obtaining work permits, and joining efforts with cooperatives in which many Syrians are employed, such as in the agricultural and construction sectors. Overall, the author concludes that legalizing and formalizing the employment of Syrians in Jordan is necessary in order to mitigate the burgeoning informal economy.

In addition to employment, removing the obstacles to education for Syrian refugee children is critical for integration, recovering from the trauma of conflict, and preventing a lost generation. In his article, Yasser M. Dallal, who is Chairman of an NGO supporting Syrians in Turkey, *HayatSür Derneği*, assesses the education situation for Syrian children in Turkey. There are approximately one million Syrian refugee children of school-age in the country, although only 325,000 are enrolled Turkish state schools, Dallal explains. The majority of Syrian children in Turkey attend Temporary Education Centers (TECs) – staffed by Syrian teachers and using a modified Syrian Arabic curriculum – which face a number of challenges, ranging from administrative to problems with the curriculum to the poor quality of the educators, points out Dallal. Although Turkish officials intend to phase out TECs within the next three years, Dallal posits that the Ministry of Education envisions a special education system for Syrians due to the fact that they continue to provide vocational training programs for Syrian teachers. As a result, Dallal argues that a number of actions must be taken to ensure the right of education for Syrian children. Firstly, a commission must be established that is responsible for solving school-related problems. Secondly, at the provincial level, centers must be established to monitor the education process. Lastly, the provision of psychological support and counseling services to Syrian children in their native tongue is a necessity, asserts Dallal.

A lack of access to education indirectly breeds the prevalence of child labor, a topic which Sezen Yalçın, Child Protection Program Manager at *Hayata Destek* (Support to Life), a humanitarian aid agency working with Syrian refugee communities in Turkey, addresses in her article. Although child labor in Turkey existed before the influx of Syrian refugees, the author argues that it has been augmented since the conflict in Syria. Drawing from a number of reports and fieldwork carried out by the team of *Hayata Destek*, Yalçın provides statistics which reflect this reality. In Şanlıurfa, 15 percent of Syrian households have at least one child working, and 24 percent of Syrian households in Hatay have at least one child working. Reasons for the high rate of child labor range from poverty to a lack of employment opportunities for adults to not being able to attend school. Yalçın argues that in order to

eliminate the worst forms of child labor, the government must implement policies and regulations to ensure a child's rights are upheld. Secondly, jobs should be made more accessible for Syrian adults. Yalçın also emphasizes the role of the private sector in combating child labor: companies need to comply with national legislation, as well UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Life for Syrians in Istanbul – the city with the highest number of refugees – can often be an alienating and precarious experience. In response, several grassroots initiatives have been established, which are providing an important life-line to refugees. Shannon Kay is Co-Director of one such initiative – Small Projects Istanbul (SPI), an education and community center in Fatih, Istanbul. In her article, Kay comments on her personal experience running the center, as well as her observations vis-à-vis the Turkish community's reception of Syrians. Social consciousness and fostering engagement between refugees and the host community, Kay believes, is key to the positive integration of Syrians in Turkey. Kay also expresses her frustration with the label, "lost generation" in relation to Syrian children, as it perceives them as powerless, rather than potential agents of change.

Dr. Selin Yıldız Nielsen, co-founder of Glocally Connected, an NGO helping refugees through community building, addresses the importance of perceptions between Syrian refugees and their host community. In her piece, Dr. Nielsen reflects on the challenges Syrian communities are facing in settling into Turkish society because of the somewhat hostile perceptions. The author explains that at the onset of the conflict in Syria, the Turkish community welcomed their "guests" with compassion. However, with the realization of the likely long-term settlement of Syrians in Turkey, this compassion changed into hostility, in some cases. Nielsen notes that competition for jobs, housing, and the perception that refugees constitute security threats are some of the reasons for the change in sentiment. The article concludes with an emphasis on the need for multi-layered policymaking to ensure the sustainable and peaceful co-existence between the Syrian and host communities.

In an anecdotal piece, Elie Gardner, a freelance photojournalist based in Istanbul, follows the story of Ziad Al-Taha, a 28-year old Syrian refugee, who left the perils of working in Istanbul behind to pursue a new life for himself in Europe. The author reflects on Ziad's experiences of settling in Mandal, Norway – his obstacles, fears, hopes, and dreams. Facing difficulties at first, Ziad eventually thrived in his new community and integrated well – he became a leading figure in the Syrian community, learned Norwegian, made new friends, and won a prize for being an exemplary resident of Mandal. The voice of refugees is all too often not heard in rhetorical discussions and Gardner's piece provides us with much needed perspective. Gardner

ends with an existential reflection on the concept of “home.” For Ziad, “home” is not a place, it is something that exists within himself. For the millions of people who have been displaced by conflict in the world, Garder hopes that they too can find home within themselves.

Nathalie Versavel, a freelance editor based in Istanbul, takes up the topic of militarization in refugee camps. Juxtaposing Turkey’s situation to case studies in Kenya and Jordan, Versavel argues that while there is ample evidence of militarization in the latter two, there appears to be limited evidence of the practice in Turkey’s camps. The absence is due to the efficient running of the camps by AFAD and the Turkish government. Versavel also points to the importance of self governance in Turkey’s camps – refugees are able to elect their own community leaders which liaison closely with officials running the camp – as a means of reducing dissatisfaction and the risk of militarization. In conclusion, Versavel says that while the risk may not be high in the camps, the risk of radicalization is still present for the 90 percent that are not in camps.

Dr. Laçın İdil Öztuğ, a research assistant in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Yıldız Technical University, provides a chronological overview of the Syrian conflict since its outbreak, in relation to Turkey’s humanitarian response. The author calls the country’s initial emergency response successful and commendable, yet also identifies areas in which efforts could be strengthened to improve the living conditions of Syrian. These include regulatory and bureaucratic changes, social policies aimed at fostering the peaceful coexistence between Turkish and Syrian people, and strengthening the bureaucracy focused at language and vocational support to Syrians.

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As always, we thank the authors of this issue for sharing their expertise and opinions, and welcome feedback from our readers.

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