Introduction

The creation of Syrian refugees is a consequence of the Syrian Civil War, an ongoing conflict in Syria between those loyal to the Syrian Ba'ath Party Government and those seeking to oust it. Protests, which were initially peaceful in nature, began on March 15, 2011, and involved demands for the resignation of President Basshar-al Assad, whose family held presidency since 1971.

In April 2011, the government ordered the Syrian army to crackdown on the protestors. After a few months of military siege and attacks, the protestors decided to turn to violence in order to respond to the government’s attempts to suppress the protests. The opposition forces became increasingly armed as they unified into larger groups.

The fighting between the Syrian army and opposition forces led to the creation of many refugees, who have fled Syria to neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. Syrian refugees have also fled to North African and European countries such as Egypt and Turkey respectively. On World Refugee Day, the UN officially declared that more than 1.6 million refugees had fled from Syria to Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq itself, while more than 4 million have been internally displaced since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War.

These refugees face numerous problems in host countries, which include xenophobia, overcrowding in refugee camps, poor sanitary conditions in refugee camps, sexual exploitation and child labour. The refugees also face the threat of deportation, with Turkey's reported deportation of Syrian refugees being investigated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for human rights violation (these investigations are being carried out despite Turkey’s official statement denying the deportation of Syrian refugees).

The Syrian refugees have also created problems for host countries. Many take to violence, protesting poor living conditions, as happened in the Zaatari camp in Jordan. The influx of large numbers of refugees also puts a lot of pressure on the natural resources of the host nations. For example, Jordan, which is subjected to ongoing drought, has had water supplies stretched to the breaking point – parts of towns such as Mafraq town have been left without water for days. Moreover, refugees pose an economic burden on host countries. Countries such as Greece, which is in recession and faces insolvency, must bear the financial burden of hosting refugees, thus multiplying their economic troubles.
Definition of Key Terms

Refugee

A refugee is a person who is outside their country of origin or habitual residence because they have suffered persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or because they are a member of a persecuted 'social group'. Refugees may also leave their country of origin or habitual residence because they are trying to escape a war or a natural disaster.¹

Internally Displaced Person

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are those who flee their homes for similar reasons as refugees. However, unlike refugees, they remain in their country of origin or habitual residence. Consequently, they legally remain under the protection of their own government, even though their own government's actions may compel them to flee their homes.²

Deportation

In the context of this case, deportation means the expulsion of a foreigner from a country on grounds of having an illegal status in society.³

Xenophobia

Xenophobia is defined as intense or irrational hatred for or fear of people from other countries. It must be noted that xenophobia is not the same as racism; racism is based solely upon ethnicity and ancestry, while xenophobia can be influenced by many aspects.⁴

Background Information

There are a large number of refugees leaving Syria and entering new countries every day. It has been estimated that 3,000 refugees from Syria enter Jordan every day on an average basis. The number of Syrian refugees is so large that many refugee camps are hosting a significantly greater number of Syrians than they had been initially designed to host. For example, the Domeez camp in Iraq was initially


designed to host 1,000 families, but is now hosting 35,000 refugees. The result is overcrowding in refugee camps. Overcrowding has created problems for Syrians living in refugee camps, such as poor living conditions. Syrian refugees also face many other problems. Apart from being confronted with problems, Syrian refugees have also created problems for their host countries.

Problems faced by Syrian refugees

Syrian refugees have faced numerous problems in the various destinations that they have fled to. They have been listed below.

**Poor living conditions**

Poor living conditions, a consequence of overcrowding, are ubiquitous amongst all the refugee camps that Syrian refugees live in. Refugee camps are characterized by shortage of electricity and water (in camps such as the Zaatari and Domeez Camps, refugees receive only 4 litres of water per person per day for all purposes, while humanitarian agencies state that 15-20 litres of water are needed per person per day for a person to maintain a healthy lifestyle) and poor sanitary conditions. Diseases such as mumps, rubella fever, and measles are prevalent amongst refugees in camps due to the poor sanitary conditions. It must be noted that measles is a major killer of Syrian infants in refugee camps. Diarrhea is also a widespread disease in refugee camps, as it a result of a shortage of clean and safe drinking water. There is also insufficient food to support all refugees adequately in all refugee camps.
Greece, however, is an exception. Yes, refugees do experience poor living conditions in Greece. But the cause is not overcrowding. The cause is Greece’s economic troubles, due to which there is little food, medicine or other aid left for refugees arriving in Greece. They are put up in detention camps, and those who stay longer hide in cramped, barren apartments, fearing anti-immigrant violence on the streets.

**Discrimination against Palestinians fleeing Syria in Jordan**

Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria have been discriminated against. They have been placed in a separate camp reserved solely for Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria, in Cyber City Compound. They have been prohibited from entering Jordanian cities. Jordanian government officials claim that these measures have been adopted to prevent a tilt in demographic balance even more towards Palestinians, who already comprise a large majority of the Jordanian population.

**Vulnerability to natural disasters**

Refugees staying in refugee camps are vulnerable to natural disasters, especially floods. In November 2012, the Zaatari camp had flooded, causing damage to 500 tents. Food supplies were also damaged by the floodwaters.

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Crime against women

Crime against women is rampant across refugee camps. Molestation is prevalent to such an extent, that women in refugee camps avoid venturing out in the night. Whenever they leave their tents, they go out in groups, or with a male partner.

Another grave concern is the so-called “sutra” or “misyar” marriages; these are essentially marriages for protection, i.e., families who feel that they are unable to safeguard their young teenage daughters, marry them off in exchange for money (thus, these marriages help them combat poverty). Unfortunately, many of these young girls have babies soon after being married, when still in their teens; doctors say that having children at such an early age is detrimental to their health, as their bodies are not fully developed. After having intercourse with these young teenage girls, the local men (who married them in the first place) divorce them off. Thus, this is a grave form of sexual exploitation. Recently, prepubescent marriages have been on the rise, i.e., an increasing number of girls aged under 13 are being married off in exchange for money.

Xenophobia from locals in host countries

Because of the problems created by Syrian refugees in host countries (see ‘Problems created by Syrian refugees in host countries’), they face xenophobia from locals of the host countries. They have to deal with anti-immigrant violence, and they are not accepted into society due to their negative impacts on their host country (see ‘Problems created by Syrian refugees in host countries’).

Worker exploitation

Many Syrian refugees choose to work illegally (they do not have legal rights to work in countries such as Turkey). Thus, they are subject to exploitation, with many of their employers refusing to pay them, or underpaying them.

Deportation

Syrian refugees have been deported from countries such as Greece, which cannot bear the financial burden of hosting Syrian refugees.
Problems created by Syrian refugees in host countries

Syrian refugees have also created various problems for their host countries. These have been listed below.

*Economic Problems*

The influx of Syrian refugees has created numerous economic problems for host nations.

Jordan’s debt has increased, as it has been unable to handle the financial burden posed by the prospect of providing healthcare, basic amenities such as water, electricity, and education to Syrian refugees, and has hence had to request $700 million worth of financial aid. Other host nations such as Lebanon have encountered budget deficits.

Inflation, especially food inflation has also increased in host countries as the presence in refugees means that an increased number of people are demanding food, i.e., demand has increased, while supplies have been unable to rise enough to meet the increased demand.

Moreover, as governments’ (of host nations) finances have been hit, the governments have lesser finance to invest in infrastructure and developing industries, as a result of which economic growth rate has fallen in host nations. In Lebanon, for example, growth rate has fallen drastically from 8% in FYs 2007-2010 to 2% in FY 2011.

*Loss of jobs for locals*

In host countries, the unemployment rate amongst locals has increased, as many Syrian refugees work at lower wages, thus taking away locals’ jobs. Locals also lose jobs when small businesses such as corner shops are forced to close down because they lose sales to Syrian-run shops which sell goods at lower prices.

*Burden on resources*

Syrian refugees are putting pressure on vital and basic resources such as water and electricity. Jordan has been worst hit. Jordan has always been short of water, but now, with the large influx of Syrian refugees, Jordan’s towns such as Mafraq town are experiencing a serious water shortage. Electricity cuts have also become more frequent in host countries since Syrians began leaving their country as refugees to evade the Syrian Civil War.

The presence of Syrian refugees has meant that there is an increase in demand for food, as a result of which food prices have also risen in host countries.
**Violence ensuing from protests by Syrian refugees**

Riots have broken out in refugee camps such as the Islahiye camp in Turkey, with Syrian refugees protesting poor living conditions. Due to the economic problems created by Syrian refugees, locals maintain xenophobic attitudes towards them, which has resulted in violent fights between locals and Syrian refugees in host countries such as Turkey.

**Other Issues**

**Insufficient funding hampering aid efforts**

In April 2013, the UNCHR claimed that Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon have received only $330 million of the requested $1 billion. In fact, the concerned UNOs and NGOs concerned have stated that aid has reached breaking point due to insufficient funding. The U.N World Food Program has threatened to stop supplying food to Syrian refugees if does not receive further monetary funding.

**Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

**Jordan**

In June 2013, Jordan officially claimed to be hosting more than 540,000 Syrian refugees. According to these claims, 150,000 of these refugees were hosted in the Zaatari camp, near the Jordan-Syria border.

These figures prove that Jordan (along with Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan) is one of the main recipients of Syrian refugees. The Jordanian government has been receptive towards Syrian refugees, and has provided accommodation to Syrian refugees in camps. It took action to provide accommodation to Syrian refugees only in late July 2012, when it built the Zaatari camp in northern Jordan to accommodate Syrian refugees.

Jordan has had to bear the severe economic burden of hosting Syrian refugees. The state-run Economic and Social Council claims that due to its electric and water subsidies, each Syrian refugee costs the Jordanian government approximately $3,000 annually. The health ministry says it spends half of its budget on medical care for Syrians alone and needs around $350m in emergency funding to sustain the country's public healthcare system beyond this month.

According to the labour ministry, about 160,000 Syrians are working illegally in Jordan at low wages. Thus, they take jobs previously held by locals, leading to a rise in unemployment amongst locals, which, as of April 2013, was 20%.

Due to the problems that Syrian refugees have created in Jordan, anti-Syrian refugee sentiments have begun to surface amongst the locals, who were earlier very receptive towards Syrian refugees.
Turkey
Till June 2013, Turkey had maintained an open door policy towards Syrian refugees. However, in June 2013, it succumbed to pressure from locals, who demanded that Turkey should draw curtains on it open door policy.

Egypt
Egypt does not operate any refugee camps. However, the cost of living in Egypt is so low, that Syrian refugees can easily obtain an apartment on rent. Despite facing political and social problems, Egyptians have given Syrian refugees a warm welcome. Syrian refugees are allowed to find jobs in Egypt.

Greece
Due to its economic troubles, Greece has been unable to help Syrian refugees. They have been put up in detention camps, and those who stay longer hide in cramped, barren apartments, fearing anti-immigrant violence on the streets. Fearing attacks from fascists, many Syrian women have had to do away with the jihab, a traditional piece of clothing in Syria. Many Syrians have also been attacked by the supporters of the anti-immigrant Golden Dawn neo-Nazi party.

Greece has also been accused of pushing Syrian refugees arriving in Greece by boat back into water. Many of those who do manage to land in Greece regularly arrested and detained in inappropriate conditions, particularly on islands of the North Eastern Aegean Sea and the Dodecanese, where detention facilities are overcrowded and detention conditions fall short of applicable international human rights standards.

In response to this attitude of Greece towards Syrian refugees, the UNHCR, in its report titled ‘Syrians in Greece: Protection Considerations and UNHCR Recommendations' urged the Greek government to be more receptive towards Syrian refugees and provide them with unhindered access to asylum procedures.

Iraq
There are currently about 70,000 Syrian refugees registered with the UNHCR in Iraq. Majority of Syrian refugees in Iraq are situated in the Domeez camp in the Kurdistan province on Duhok, in northern Iraq.

USA (United States of America)
The USA has been a strong supporter of the Syrian rebels and refugees. The USA has provided nonlethal food and medical aid to Syrian rebels. It has also provided $44 million worth of financial aid to humanitarian organisations helping Syrian refugees, out of the total $150 million of funding for aid of Syrian refugees.

More recently, the US government has considered resettling Syrian refugees into the US.
IOM (International Organization for Migration)

The IOM provided water filters, rechargeable lights, stoves, blankets and pillows in Lebanon and Iraq in June 2012, as well as winterization kits to Syrians in Iraq throughout the winter 2012-2013. The IOM also delivered aid to some 26,000 Syrian refugees, host communities and Lebanese returnee families in South Lebanon in an operation funded by the government of Japan. In the Sarafand area in Southern Lebanon and Bekaa Valley refugee camp, it also delivered NFI (Non-Food Relief) kits, which included LED lamps and personal hygiene kits, to 1,596 refugees.

The organization carries out health screening checks for refugees crossing the Syria-Jordan border in order to identify individuals with injuries or grave health conditions. It also provides refugees with transport from the border to the Zaatari camp, which is 40 km from the border.

EU (European Union)

The EU and it member states have provided over 400 million euros in humanitarian support to Syrian refugees.

Some EU countries provide Syrian refugees with protection, while others, such as Greece make it difficult for Syrian refugees to obtain asylum and put refugees into detention camps.

Unfortunately, the EU has been unable to formulate a common approach towards the issue of the acceptance of Syrian refugees.

The Arab League

The Arab League has imposed economic sanctions on Syria until solutions to the ongoing civil war are found. It has also suspended the Syria from the Arab League in November 2011 due to political turmoil in the country.

Russia

Russia has provided support to the Syrian government, by being its principal arms supplier. Russia has also provided humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.

China

China has provided financial aid to the IOM worth $200,000.

UNHCR

The UNHCR and its affiliated organizations have provided non-monetary aid to Syrian refugees in various countries. It has also been actively involved in seeking to help Syrian refugees register as asylum seekers through methods such as mobile registration.

Timeline of Events

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 15, 2011</td>
<td>Mass uprising against Syrian government begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1, 2011</td>
<td>Syrians begin to leave Syria as refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 6, 2011</td>
<td>Refugee flow intensifies into Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 12, 2011</td>
<td>Syrians find refuge in Jordan</td>
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November 14, 2011  Turkey assumes larger role in welcoming Syrian refugees

March 23, 2012  UNHCR launches appeal for $84 million worth of funding to aid refugees in Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan

April 4, 2012  Domeez camp opens in Iraq

July 3, 2012  Fighting flares up in Aleppo, many flee to Turkish border

July 18, 2012  Exodus into Lebanon following Damascus fighting

July 25, 2012  Turkey closes border crossings with Syria

July 29, 2012  UNHCR opens Zaatari camp in Northern Jordan

September 4, 2012  Syrian refugees reaches record levels

September 11, 2012  Angelina Jolie visits Zaatari camp in Jordan as a UNHCR Special Envoy

September 25, 2012  Riots in Zaatari camp

November 24, 2012  As winter sets in, worries that humanitarian aid not sufficient

December 17, 2012  Tuberculosis found among Syrian refugees in Lebanon

December 20, 2012  UN seeks $1 billion worth of financial aid

January 4, 2013  Lebanese government agrees to register refugees

January 12, 2013  Poor weather conditions affect refugees throughout the region

**Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

No UN resolution regarding Syrian refugees has been debated.

**Previous Attempts to solve the Issue**

UNOs (United Nation Organizations), NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and IGOs (Inter-Governmental Organizations) have been actively involved in helping Syrian refugees.

The most important NGO in this issue is the MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières), which has provided healthcare to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan. Its provisions comprise of pediatric hospitals, clean drinking water and vaccinations. It has also provided, general healthcare, mental healthcare and reproductive healthcare to refugees.

The most important IGO has been the IOM (details on how the IOM has helped Syrian refugees have been provided in ‘Major Countries and Parties Involved’ under sub-heading ‘IOM’).

The UNHCR has been actively involved in providing aid to Syrian refugees. Along with its affiliated organizations, it has provided non-monetary aid such as (but not limited to) blankets to Syrian refugees.

The U.N World Food Program has been supplying food for Syrian refugees.

In order to reduce overcrowding in refugee camps and consequently improve living conditions in refugee camps, the USA has offered to set up refugee camps to accommodate Syrian refugees.
Possible Solutions

In order to resolve water shortage issues, the UN should request countries such as UAE, Kuwait and USA with successful desalination plants to help create desalination plants in host nations to help solve the water crisis issue. This will allow seawater to be used to provide potable water, thus improving living conditions in refugee camps, while also reducing burden on water resources in host countries (as seawater will be rendered suitable for drinking). These desalination plants could be funded by MEDCs (More Economically Developed Countries) and NICs (Newly Industrialized Countries). (However, the practicality of this suggestion can potentially be questioned in debate).

Prevalence of diseases is a major problem in refugee camps. In order to resolve this issue, the WHO (World Health Organization), a UNO, should follow the footsteps of MSF and provide similar healthcare services in other host nations such as Egypt and Greece. The WHO could possibly work in conjunction with the MSF.

The EU should establish a RPP (Regional Protection Programme) in collaboration with the UNHCR. A RPP seeks to aid refugees through practical actions (which comprise of improving general protection in host country, establishing effective procedures for determining refugee status, etc.) using funding from the EU.

In order to reduce overcrowding in refugee camps, new refugee camps should be set up in different countries that are willing to take in refugees such as the USA. By reducing overcrowding in refugee camps, the main cause of poor living conditions will become less significant, so living conditions in refugee camps are expected to improve. Thus, Syrian refugees are less likely to protest poor living conditions in refugee camps, and hence, there is going to be less violence in refugee camps (protests by Syrian refugees have turned violent in the past).

Providing security at refugee camps would be a useful move to mitigate crime against women. Similarly, providing street lamps at refugee camps such as the Zaatari camp where they are not already present would help improve the safety of women. By ensuring the safety of women, ‘misyar’ marriages, which are conducted to ensure the safety of teenage girls, will be eliminated, or at least, reduced.

Member states should be encouraged to provide monetary funding to all UNOs, NGOs and IGOs that seek to provide non-monetary aid to Syrian refugees using the monetary aid that they receive.

Bibliography

<http://academia.edu/1937605/_Refugees_of_the_Arab_Spring_The_Syrian_Refugees_in_Lebanon_April_2011-April_2012_>


