

# TOPIC- SYRIAN CRISIS AND PROBLEMS OF REFUGEES

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## INTRODUCTION

World's biggest humanitarian disasters are the result of the Syrian conflict.

Half of Syria's pre-war population of 22 million people had been forced to evacuate their land and home in search of safety and opportunity since 2011, many of them many times. Many families in Syria are battling to meet their basic needs: 13.4 million people, including 6.7 million internally displaced individuals, require humanitarian aid.

Millions of Syrians continue to suffer as the conflict enters its tenth year with no resolution in sight, and now they are also dealing with the prospect of COVID-19. Every day, millions of people's lives are jeopardized due to insufficiency of food and water, as well as they have poor health facilities.

Basic essentials have grown particularly scarce in Northwest Syria, one of the country's most unstable regions, and delivering critical relief across borders has become increasingly difficult. Meanwhile, harsh winter circumstances and an increase in COVID-19 cases pose a threat to Syrian families and children who have already suffered so much.

As complex as the crisis has become, one fact remains simple: millions of Syrians need our help. According to the U.N., \$3.8 billion was required to meet the immediate needs of the most vulnerable Syrians in 2020 — but just half of that has been received.

Many Syrians were already grumbling about high unemployment, corruption, and the absence of political freedom under President Bashar al-Assad, who took over after his father, Hafez, died in 2000.

### **The Syrian crisis begins, How and When?**

When pro-democracy protests erupted across Syria in March 2011, Syria's government, led by President Bashar al-Assad, faced an unprecedented threat to its power. Protesters called for an end to the Assad regime's authoritarian tactics, which have taken place since Assad's father, Afiz al-Assad, became president in 1971. The Syrian government utilised police, military, and paramilitary troops to put down protesters. In 2011, opposition militias formed, and by 2012, the conflict had escalated into a full-blown civil war.

In a January 2011 interaction with The Wall Street Journal, the President of Syria was asked if he expected the wave of public protests spreading in the Arab world at the time— which had previously deposed authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt—to reach Syria. Assad acknowledged that many Syrians had suffered economic hardships and that political transformation had been slow and halting, but he was confident that Syria would be spared because his administration's anti-US and anti-Israel stance aligned with the Syrian people's beliefs, whereas the fallen leaders had pursued a pro-Western foreign policy in defiance of their people's feelings.

Only a few weeks after the interview, anti-regime rallies broke out, revealing that Assad's status was far more perilous than he was willing to concede. In truth, the country was being pushed toward instability by a number of long-standing political and economic issues. When Assad took over the presidency from his father in 2000, he had a reputation as a modernizer and reformer. However, the expectations aroused by Assad's presidency were mostly unmet. In politics, a small shift toward wider participation was rapidly reversed, and Assad reverted to his late father's authoritarian techniques, which included widespread censorship and surveillance as well as horrific brutality against suspected regime opponents. In addition, Assad oversaw major reform of Syria's state-run economy.

Syria's rebellion was also influenced by the environmental disaster. Syria endured the worst drought in its recent history between 2006 and 2010. The people who are engaged in farming work and their families were forced into poverty, resulting in a major movement of people from rural areas to urban slums.

The first large protests took place in March 2011 in the impoverished, drought-stricken rural province of Dara in southern Syria. Authorities had imprisoned and tortured a group of minors for drawing anti-regime graffiti; outraged residents took to the streets to demand political and economic reforms. Security forces retaliated forcefully, making mass arrests and shooting demonstrators. The regime's retaliation was harsh, but it gave the protestors' cause more prominence and momentum, and similar nonviolent protests began to occur in cities across the country within weeks. Security officers were beaten and fired upon by protesters in videos caught by witnesses on their cellphones, which were spread all over the country and smuggled out to foreign media outlets.

Rebellion, and the regime's response to it, had a sectarian flavor from the start. Many of the protesters were Sunnis, while the governing Assad family belonged to the Alawite minority. Alawites also dominated the security forces and irregular militias, which perpetrated some of the heinous acts of violence against demonstrators and suspected government opponents. Although many middle- and working-class Alawites did not benefit from belonging to the same community as the Assad family and may have shared some of the protesters' socioeconomic grievances, sectarian divisions were not initially as rigid as is sometimes assumed. The political and economic elite with ties to the regime included members of all of Syria's confessional groups—not just Alawites—and many middle- and working-class Alawites did not benefit from belonging to the same community as the Assad family.

The regime retaliated with greater force as the protests grew in power and size. In some cases, this meant using tanks, artillery, and attack helicopters to encircle cities or neighborhoods that had become hotbeds of unrest, such as Bniyas or Homs, and cutting off utilities and communications. As a result, some demonstrators have taken up arms against the security forces. Syrian army and tanks entered the northern town of Jisr al Shugr in June, forcing thousands of people to flee to Turkey.

Syria's regional neighbors and global powers have begun to split into pro- and anti-Assad groups by the summer of 2011. As Assad's crackdown proceeded, the US and the EU became increasingly critical of him, and in August 2011, the US President and numerous European heads of state urged for his resignation. Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia formed an anti-Assad group in the last half of 2011. Sanctions against top members of the Assad regime were quickly imposed by the US, the EU, and the Arab League.

## How long has the crisis been going on?

Syria's civil war has already entered its second decade. The last ten years have been the most murderous and devastating decade in recent memory for any country, and may be defined by a lot of major moments and milestones:

- March 2011: As part of the Arab Spring, anti-government protests begin. • As violence spreads, the conflict is declared a civil war in July 2011.
- In July 2012, Jordan's Zaatari Refugee Camp opens, housing 120,000 refugees in its first year.
- Syrian refugees registered hit one million in March 2013.
- July 2014: The UNSC (United Nations Security Council) approves a resolution allowing cross-border aid into Syria.
- September 2015: As more outside parties become engaged, the conflict becomes more intense. The war for Aleppo, Syria's largest city, begins in July and lasts until August, displacing thousands of people.
- July 2017: Syrian refugees registered has surpassed 5 million.
- December 2019: In Northwest Syria, renewed airstrikes and bombs commence, forcing 961,000 people to escape in three months - the greatest displacement since the conflict began.
- July 2020: The cross-border resolution is tightened even more, culminating in the closure of one of the two remaining official humanitarian border crossings.
- The first case of COVID-19 is discovered in Northern Syria in July 2020.

## WAR IMPACT ON SYRIANS?

As the violence in Syria makes headlines and officials in Washington, D.C., the United Nations, and across the world debate the country's future, people caught in the crossfire are often ignored or overlooked: millions of innocent individuals and families who are suffering in unthinkable ways. Years of violence, displacement, and loss have been experienced by the Syrian people.

In the ten years since it began, the war has killed many people. Cities have been devastated due to overcrowding, and horrendous human rights violations are common. In the quest for safety or opportunity, millions of families have been compelled to depart their homes.

Within Syria, an estimated 6.7 million people are internally displaced. When refugees are factored in, more than half of the country's pre-war population of 22 million people require immediate humanitarian aid, whether they stay in the country or have fled across borders.

COVID-19 restrictions, the decline of the Syrian pound, and the resulting displacement of millions of people have resulted in an unprecedented number of Syrian households being unable to put food on the table or earn enough money to get basic needs. Eight out of ten Syrians live in poverty, with limited access to education and work prospects, and a record 12.4 million people — over 60% of the population — go to bed hungry every night.



## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SYRIA?

Every country in the world has faced several issues of the pandemic. The depth of these issues may only be beginning to be felt in Syria.

In July 2020, the first instances of COVID-19 were found in the northwest. Idlib and northern Aleppo governorates, which are home to more than 4 million people, many of whom have been uprooted several times, are now confronting the devastating effects of the virus. Many families live in filthy, congested temporary camps or sleep in the open. The health and civilian infrastructures have been destroyed, and water is scarce.

The first cases of COVID-19 were verified in the northeast in April 2020, raising concerns about a lack of preparedness. The everyday reality was to be a lack of COVID-19 testing capacity, chronically understocked health facilities, and inadequate water services. Stopping the spread of the coronavirus is especially challenging in the region's many overcrowded camps and informal settlements, as it is in the northwest.

Syrians in government-controlled areas, as well as refugees in neighboring countries, are facing the fact that the threat of COVID-19, the inability to work, and the region's spiraling economic downfall are making their condition worse than ever.

### Decreased Foreign aid

Global economic difficulties have resulted in decreases in international aid budgets all around the world. The United Nations asked countries to donate \$10 billion during a donor meeting in Brussels in March 2021 to help ease the effects of the Syrian civil conflict, which the pandemic has exacerbated. Only \$6.4 billion in help has been committed by the international communities to Syria. World Food Programme's humanitarian relief initiatives provide a vivid example of the effects of decreasing help. In order to "extend existing finances," the organization had to lower food apportionments to Syrians by 30%.

To add to assistance concerns, the United Kingdom, which is generally a world leader in international aid, plans to donate about half as much in 2021 as it did in 2020. The cut has been met with much domestic and international backlash. However, other countries have dramatically increased aid. Germany's 2021 pledge is its largest in four years, promising more than \$2 billion worth of aid to Syria.

### Organizations aiding Syria

Various organizations are seeking to mitigate the consequences of COVID-19 on poverty in Syria, with funding from national governments and private contributors. In 2020, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the World Food Programme (WFP), which supplies food to roughly five million of Syria's most needy people every month.

WHO and UNICEF have begun coordinating and planning for the vaccines promised through COVAX, which will cover the priority 20% of Syrians. Increasing Syria's low vaccination rate will surely assist in mitigating the effect of COVID-19 on poverty in the country.

In addition, the Syria Cross-Border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF) is critical in humanitarian coordination. The SCHF has sought to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance in the country since it was established by the UN in 2014. It allocates funds to the nongovernmental organizations and assistance organizations best suited to respond to changing needs, ensuring that financing reaches the broadest possible audience and is used most effectively for the greatest benefit.

The SCHF has already outlined its first "standard allocation" strategy for 2021, allocating funds to initiatives that would improve living circumstances, deliver life-saving humanitarian help, and develop long-term resilience by creating livelihood prospects. Its "reserve allocation" sets aside money to deal with any unexpected problems that may develop.

## **SYRIAN REFUGEES**

Since 2011, more than 13.3 million Syrians have been evacuated from their homes, enough to fill 245 Yankee Stadiums. 6.6 million Syrian refugees globally, and roughly 5.6 million have been forced to seek safety in neighboring countries, accounting for more than one-fourth of the world's total refugee population.

Since the crisis began, the number of refugees has risen at an exponential rate every year. In July 2012, there were 100,000 refugees. A year later, there were 1.5 million individuals. It has more than tripled by the end of 2015.

Today, there are 5.6 million Syrian refugees spread around the region, making them the world's largest refugee population under UN authority. It's the largest migration since the slaughter in Rwanda 27 years ago.

More than 6.7 million Syrians have left their homes and are still displaced. They live in makeshift villages, crammed in with extended family or taking refuge in crumbling or abandoned structures. Some people escaped the horrors of many displacements, besiegement, famine, and sickness by fleeing to locations they thought were safe, only to be caught in the crossfire once more. Over the last decade, nearly 40% of internally displaced households have been moved three times or more.

Around 6.6 million Syrians have completely fled the nation, the bulk seeking safety in neighboring countries. Jordan and Lebanon are home to about 1.5 million Syrian refugees.

Nearly 3.7 million Syrian migrants have crossed into Turkey, overwhelming host towns and causing new cultural problems.

Most Syrian refugee families are trying to adjust to new metropolitan environments or have been forced to live in squalid rural settings. They seek refuge in unfinished buildings, which may lack suitable kitchens and facilities, or in public buildings such as schools or mosques. Others stay with relatives or strangers who warmly welcome them into their homes.

Only approximately 8% of Syrian refugees are housed in camps. Because it is the destination for newly arrived migrants, Jordan's Zaatari, the first official refugee camp, which opened in July 2012, receives the most media attention. It is also the most densely populated refugee camp: Zaatari has a population of 78,400 Syrians, making it one of the country's major cities.

## Is it true that all refugees reside in camps?

No, in a nutshell. Most Syrian refugee families are trying to adjust to new metropolitan environments or are forced to live in squalid rural settings. They seek refuge in unfinished buildings, which may lack suitable kitchens and facilities, or in public buildings such as schools or mosques. Others stay with relatives or strangers who warmly welcome them into their homes.

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Iraq has built up a few camps to accommodate the surge of migrants who arrived in 2013, but the bulk of families are still living in cities. In Lebanon, the government does not have any recognized refugee camps, so families set up improvised camps or seek sanctuary in decrepit, abandoned buildings. Despite the language barrier, most refugees in Turkey are attempting to survive and find jobs in urban areas.

- What are the living circumstances for Syrian refugees outside of camps?

Some Syrians have contacts in adjacent countries who can help them find a place to stay. However, many host families are already trying to help in whatever manner they can.

Wherever they can, refugees seek refuge. Families have been found living in rooms without heat or running water, abandoned chicken coops, and storage sheds by our teams.

Refugees frequently arrive in host nations without all of their identity, which has been lost or destroyed. Without the proper documentation, refugees may be evicted from their houses, unable to receive medical treatment or education, or just terrified to leave their homes. Many refugees resort to poor coping techniques because they don't have the documents such as child labor, early marriage, and risky job.

In dense, improvised settlements, the lack of clean water and sanitation is a major concern. Diseases like COVID-19 are easy to spread, and frigid weather, strong winds, rain, and flooding threaten the lives of families who have already suffered so much.

The future of the youngest refugees is gloomy. Some institutions have been able to split the school day into two shifts, allowing more Syrian kids to enroll.

## Problems faced by Syrian children

According to UNICEF, 8.4 million children are affected by the violence in Syria, either as refugees or Syrian citizens. Furthermore, six million Syrian children require humanitarian assistance, with over 2 million unable to get it due to their location in difficult-to-reach.

## War

Children are frequently targeted or inadequately protected in armed conflict – or both. The crisis has had a significant impact on the lives of Syrian children. Many violations of children's rights occur on a daily



basis in areas such as health, education, and protection. Syrian children are subjected to growing violence and explosive weapon strikes on a regular basis. Some are compelled to join the army as children, while others are forced to labor to support their families. Thousands have lost family members and been forced to escape their homes, only to become internally displaced or displaced in neighboring nations. Others have attempted the perilous trek across the Mediterranean, often alone, to reach Europe.

Several million Syrians have fallen into poverty as a result of the crisis, which has curtailed their livelihood options. Syrian youngsters have been compelled to become breadwinners in their families in both Syria and its neighboring nations. In Syria, education systems have been targeted by armed groups who regard targeting schools, pupils, and teachers as a military strategy. Furthermore, sexual assault against civilians has been a recurring theme in the Syrian conflict. The fear of such violence, which grows when perpetrators are not held accountable, has a crippling effect on vulnerable groups. It can limit girls' and women's mobility, causing them to stay at home and avoid going to school.

United Nations Children's Fund conducts a survey of certain violations of children's rights in Syria in 2015, with over 60% of cases it is found that including murder and maiming as a result of the deployment of explosive weapons in populated civilian areas. Furthermore, children are victims of the regime's repression. The UN reported in 2014 that the Syrian regime had kidnapped and tortured children.

### **Education**

Syria had a good education system in place prior to the civil war, with nearly 100 percent of pupils enrolled in elementary school and 70 percent attending high school. The literacy rate of Syria was 79.6% in 2004, according to the census, with 86 percent of men and 73.6 percent of women being literate. From grades 1 to 9, schooling became obligatory and free in 2002. According to UNICEF, 2.1 million Syrian children and 700,000 Syrian refugee children do not have access to school in 2016. In 2016, there were 80,000 out-of-school children in Jordan's refugee population (HRW).

Armed warfare has a long history of deliberately destroying educational buildings. Non-state actors consider schools as viable military targets because they are seen as representing state power. Education has been severely harmed in Syria, with attacks on students, teachers, and buildings, as well as targeted executions and kidnappings. Over a quarter of Syrian schools have been damaged, destroyed, or are being utilized as shelters. Children and education suffer greatly as a result of such targeted attacks. Even a single attack can result in forced school closures and population displacement.

Even if schools are open, children may be unwilling to attend because they are afraid of attacks, kidnappings, or other threats. Furthermore, instructors who have fled the conflict have had an impact on the educational system. With no end in sight to the bloodshed, there are fears that the children do not get basic necessities and have no access to education.

### **Poverty**

According to a survey by UNICEF, there are around seven million Syrian children living in poverty. Since the anti-regime protests began in March 2011, international trade restrictions have had a considerable negative impact on the civilian population. The sanctions have reduced the state's earnings, limiting the

resources available to pay public sector salaries. As a result, numerous families have seen major income reductions.

Furthermore, these penalties are accountable for a portion of the rise in the price of basic commodities. This has exacerbated the strains on families who spend the majority of their income on basic necessities. Food insecurity affected 9,8 million Syrians in 2015, according to Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Program.

### **Child Labour**

It is unlawful to employ children before they have completed their basic education or turned 15 years old, whichever comes first, according to Syrian legislation. Child labor was a problem in Syria before the war, but the humanitarian crisis that followed has made it worse. Children are increasingly being compelled to work in intellectually, physically, and socially hazardous circumstances, whether in Syria or in neighboring countries.

To earn revenue, prevent being recruited, or escape being injured in the fighting, children in Syria may be transferred away from their families to different parts of the country or neighboring countries. Families that are unable to meet their basic requirements may be forced to put their children to work, marry their girls too young, or allow their youngsters to be recruited by armed groups. Children work in agriculture, metalwork, construction, and restaurants, as well as selling products on the street, washing cars, picking up trash, and even begging.

Adult refugees are compelled to rely on the informal sector because they are unable to work in the regular labor market in neighboring countries, putting them at risk of being imprisoned, fined, or deported back to Syria. They are obliged to resort to their children for assistance in such a desperate scenario. It's difficult to quantify how many Syrian refugee children work because, among other things, families and employers hide the problem out of fear of the consequences.

### **Right to Healthcare**

According to the WHO, in 2015, about lakhs of people have been injured at the start of the war. The survival numbers of Syria's children were comparable to those of other middle-income nations prior to the crisis; nevertheless, unrelenting bloodshed has resulted in a wrecked healthcare system, leaving millions of children suffering. Children in Syria are dying not only as a result of indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets but also due to poor medical care.

According to the WHO, more than half of hospitals and public health centers were either partially operational or closed down in 2015 owing to a lack of staff, medicines, or structural damage. According to Physicians for Human Rights, more than 15,000 of Syria's 30,000 doctors have departed the nation. Limited access to basic healthcare facilities has driven residents to turn their houses into makeshift hospitals. Medical staff and patients, including children, are often attacked both route and inside hospitals.

### **Sexual violence**

Children are protected from all forms of sexual abuse under Article 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).



The Syrian civil war has been marked by sexual assault against men, women, boys, and girls. Sexualized gender violence has been recorded in Syria in the context of detention, checkpoints, and house searches, according to the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC). Fear of rape has been cited by female refugees in neighboring countries as a major factor in their choice to flee Syria.

Since 2014, the number of recorded incidences of sexual violence perpetrated by terrorist groups, particularly ISIL, has increased. ISIL kidnapped hundreds of Yazidi women and girls from Sinjar in northern Iraq in August 2014. Some of these women and girls were sold into sexual slavery in Syria.

### **Child Marriage –**

Before the war, child marriage was common in Syria, although at a far lower rate than it is now. Since the beginning of the war, it has risen substantially; in certain situations, such as in Syrian refugee camps in Jordan, the rate of child marriage has doubled since 2011. Syria's Personal Status Code (1957) stipulates that boys must be 18 years old and girls must be 17 years old to marry.

Unfortunately, a considerable percentage of minor marriages are arranged by families against the will of the girls. Young girls — often married off to much older men — can suffer serious health effects as a result of these weddings because they are unaware of the risks involved, which range from sexual exploitation to reproductive and sexual health difficulties. Polygamy is permitted in Syria and under Islamic law; it is popular in rural Syria and has expanded in some areas since the crisis began.

There are various reasons why Syrian families in refugee and IDP settlements resort to underage marriage for their daughters. IDPs in Syria and refugees in Arab neighboring countries confront ongoing food and economic insecurity, as well as a lack of employment prospects. Sexual violence is more likely to affect girls and women in these communities. Female migrants in the Za'atari camp have expressed concern about being forced into false marriages. Refugee women and children are allegedly being exploited by gangs in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Families may turn to child marriage to protect their female children and relieve the strain on family finances. Furthermore, a rapist may evade punishment by marrying his victim because marital rape is not specifically criminalized under Syrian law.

### **Right to nondiscrimination –**

Syrian children's civic, economic, and social rights have been severely harmed by the Syrian Nationality Act, which denies Syrian women the right to pass on their nationality to their offspring. Children born to Syrian women who marry foreigners are denied free education, do not inherit property, and have limited access to health care. They also do not get other privileges offered to the citizens of Syria.

The Kurd ethnic minority, which is Syria's second largest ethnic group after Syrian Arabs, is functionally stateless. They are unable to access resources and services provided to Syrians, including food subsidies, entrance to public hospitals, and government employment. Marriages between Syrian citizens and Kurds are also illegal, and the children born from these unions are stateless. Kurds with foreign status are not issued passports and are, therefore, unable to leave or enter the country lawfully. This has a negative impact on Syrian Kurdish refugee families who have migrated to northern Iraq's Kurdistan.

Stateless children in Syria lack civil documentation, making it impossible for them to access state services such as health care, education, and legal assistance. As a result, these youngsters are highly vulnerable to hunger, marginalization, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, forced marriages, and labor.

### **Common Problems Faced by Refugees.**

#### **• Difficulties in obtaining legal documents and recognition**

The difficulties, complications, and delays of acquiring asylum and related legal documents from UNHCR and/or local authorities, as well as the significant consequences of not having them, are highlighted by refugee adolescents.

#### **• Problems in getting a quality education**

The difficulty of securing recognition for existing qualifications is often identified by young refugees as a significant problem. Access to high-quality learning, formal education, and opportunity for skill development are other common issues.

#### **• Discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and culture clash**

They feel isolated as a result of prejudice, racism, and xenophobia in all regions.

#### **• Limited Employment and Opportunities**

They would rather work than rely on humanitarian aid, and they are frustrated by the limited job and income alternatives accessible to them.

#### **• Secure Housing**

We all know that safe, affordable housing is so much more expensive. So think about the refugees who get low salaries and have no legal documents to take loans from banking institutions.

#### **• Accessing services**

the undocumented refugees are afraid if they visit the doctor or any other place to take any facilities, then they have to show documents, and the refugees think that if they fail to provide documents, they would be deported or detained.

#### **• Poor Healthcare**

The biggest problem faced by refugees is poor healthcare facilities, they do not have options to visit or meet with superior Doctors, and neither they have money to visit good hospitals.

### **Some solutions to the problems that could work-**

#### **• Give them Their Rights**

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol have been signed by most governments. In addition to other human rights agreements, these provide essential rights and protections for refugees.

Many countries, however, have misgivings about crucial sections, have not implemented the agreements, or simply fail to meet their international commitments. Others refuse to grant these rights to persons who do not have legal status, such as refugees.

• **Share the responsibility**

The UN Global Compact on Refugees was signed by 181 countries in December 2018. The following are the goals of the document: lessening the burden on host nations assisting refugees in becoming self-sufficient, broadening access to third-country resettlement possibilities, and improving conditions in refugees' home countries to aid their safe return.

• **Refugees are also Human beings**

Detention, according to the UNHCR, should be considered a last resort for governments dealing with refugee influxes. Despite this, refugee detention has grown commonplace.

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