



An International Failure: The Syrian Refugee Crisis

"Syria has become the great tragedy of this century – a disgraceful humanitarian calamity with suffering and displacement unparalleled in recent history."

António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on Syria, 3 September 2013.¹

Introduction

In the space of 12 months, 1.8 million people fled the armed conflict in Syria. By September 2013 the terrible milestone of two million refugees had been reached as men, women and children continued to pour out of the country. As of 9 December, the number stood at over 2.3 million registered refugees,² 52 per cent of whom are children.³ In addition, at least 4.25 million people are displaced inside the country.⁴ In total, more than 6.5 million people have been forced to leave their homes in Syria, nearly a third of the country's population.⁵ In July 2013, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that "We have not seen a refugee outflow escalate at such a frightening rate since the Rwandan genocide almost 20 years ago".⁶

Five countries neighbouring Syria - Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt - host 97% of the refugees.⁷ In Jordan and Lebanon refugees from Syria have added 9 per cent and 19 per cent to the countries' populations, respectively.⁸

Despite the enormous scale of the refugee crisis, the international community has failed miserably to support refugees from Syria or the main countries of refuge. The UN humanitarian appeal for refugees from Syria in the region – which represents 68% of the Syria humanitarian appeal, the largest such appeal in UN history⁹ - has remained less than 50% funded for most of 2013. At the time of publishing it was only 64% funded.¹⁰

The provision of resettlement and humanitarian admission places¹¹ – one of the principal means by which the international community can show solidarity with countries hosting large number of refugees and provide urgent safety and protection measures for the most vulnerable refugees - remains extremely limited. UNHCR has set a goal of securing 30,000 places for Syrian refugees on resettlement, humanitarian admission, or other forms of admission from 2013 to the end of 2014.¹² While UNHCR continues to receive pledges from countries in order to meet this goal, only 15,244 places for temporary or permanent relocation of refugees from Syria have been pledged so far.¹³ These pledges were made by fourteen countries in Europe (10 European Union (EU) countries and four non-EU countries), Australia and Canada.¹⁴ The US - which has the largest annual resettlement programme of any county by a wide margin – may offer additional places.¹⁵

Out of the 15,244 places offered by Europe, Australia and Canada, the EU, whose nearest capital is only 200 miles from Damascus,¹⁶ has pledged a total of 12,340.¹⁷ This represents just 0.54 per cent of the total number of refugees from Syria. It is roughly the number of refugees registered in Lebanon in the last five days of November.¹⁸

Among the places offered by EU countries, the vast majority - 10,000 places - were offered by Germany, in the form of a humanitarian admission programme. Excluding Germany, the remaining 27 EU countries have pledged a mere 2,340 places. Eighteen EU Member States, including the UK and Italy, have not made any resettlement or humanitarian admission pledges.

It is not just the EU that is failing to make resettlement places available. Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have not offered any resettlement or humanitarian admission places to refugees from Syria.

Some of the governments that have been the most prominent supporters of military action in Syria have also been the least forthcoming when it comes to making resettlement places available to refugees from Syria. The UK, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have not offered to take any refugees from Syria. France offered to take 500 refugees, or 0.02% of those in the main host countries.

Amnesty International is calling on the international community to ensure there is adequate and sustained funding for humanitarian appeals for Syria, and to support the main host countries to enable them to keep their borders open and provide adequate protection and assistance to refugees.

Amnesty International is also calling for an urgent and significant increase in the number of places available for resettlement and humanitarian admission to refugees from Syria, over and above existing resettlement quotas.

Furthermore, the organization calls on all states to keep their borders open to those fleeing the conflict in Syria – as well as to other refugees – and to ensure that those trying to reach their borders are treated with dignity.

Focus of this briefing and methodology

This briefing provides an overview of the conditions of refugees from Syria in the main host countries: Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt.¹⁹ It then focuses on the difficulties and human rights violations faced by refugees from Syria in their attempts to reach the EU and makes recommendations to the international community and EU Member States in particular.

While Amnesty International's calls for international solidarity in dealing with the Syria refugee crisis go beyond the EU, this briefing focuses on practices in some EU countries as well as the resettlement contribution of EU member states because of the block's proximity to Syria and the fact that many refugees from Syria are trying to reach the EU.

Thousands of people who have fled horrors in Syria have tried to reach the EU – often because they have faced further hardships in the country to which they fled, or because they are trying to reach family and friends and the hope of safety. In their desperation they have taken terrible risks – risks that the policies of the EU and its Member States have created or exacerbated.

The information in the briefing is based on desk and field research conducted by Amnesty International. Since July 2013, the organization has conducted field research missions looking at the situation of refugees in, among others, Bulgaria, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Jordan, the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Turkey.

Data about the number of refugees in the main host countries and in EU countries is taken from publicly available information provided by UNHCR and Eurostat, the statistical office of European Union. Data about resettlement pledges and humanitarian appeal funding is taken from publicly available information provided by UNHCR and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The figure for the number of refugees in the main host countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt) used in this briefing is 2.2 million.²⁰ The figure used for the total number of refugees from Syria globally is 2.3 million.²¹ However, this is only the number of those who have registered. The actual number of refugees from Syria is believed to be significantly higher, as hundreds of thousands are believed not to have registered with an asylum authority.

Background to the Syrian refugee crisis

The two-year conflict between the Syrian government and armed opposition groups has left more than 100,000 people dead²² and hundreds of thousands of civilians injured.²³ The conflict has also caused massive destruction of civilian property and the displacement of at least 4.25 million people internally.²⁴ More than 2.3 million people have fled the country.

The influx of refugees in Syria's neighbouring countries has put an immense strain on the limited resources available in those countries, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon, where many refugees are living in precarious conditions in overcrowded refugee camps or in host communities, including in informal settlements.

In order to provide adequate protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees from Syria and those in need within Syria, in July the UN made the largest humanitarian appeal in its history, calling for around \$3 billion in assistance to UN agencies and NGOs working with refugees, \$830 million for the governments of Lebanon and Jordan and \$1.4 billion for people inside Syria.²⁵ Only 64% of the \$3 billion had been committed as of 6 December 2013.²⁶ In September, the UN warned that funding shortfalls could result in a cutback in aid to refugees.²⁷

Due to the nature of the conflict in Syria, which includes widespread human rights violations, war crimes, and crimes against humanity being perpetrated, Amnesty International considers that all asylum-seekers from Syria should be considered to be in need of international protection. This is in line with UNHCR's statement on 22 October 2013 that

"most Syrians seeking international protection are likely to fulfil the requirements of the refugee definition contained in Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, since they will have a well-founded fear of persecution linked to one of the Convention grounds."²⁸

Forcing anyone to return to Syria would amount to a violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*, which prohibits the forcible return of anyone to a country where they risk serious human rights abuses. The principle of *non-refoulement* applies to situations of generalised violence due to armed conflict, such as in the case of Syria, and is binding on all states.

Overview of conditions in the main host countries

Among the five main host countries for refugees from Syria, **Lebanon and Jordan** host the largest number of refugees, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of their own populations.²⁹

Lebanon currently hosts over 835,735 refugees from Syria as of 5 December 2013³⁰ and Jordan hosts over 566,303 refugees from Syria as of 9 December.³¹ In March 2013, the Lebanese government had estimated the actual number of Syrians in the country to be one million.³²

In Jordan around one-third of the refugee population live in six refugee camps. Most of them live in Zaatari, the second largest refugee camp in the world with a population of 117,000 people.³³ The rest live in towns and cities, mostly in northern governorates bordering Syria and in the capital Amman. There are no official refugee camps in Lebanon except long-standing Palestinian refugee camps; refugees from Syria live in towns and cities, including in makeshift informal camps, throughout the country.³⁴

The infrastructure of Jordan – which has to import much of its energy, water and grain – is overstretched with much increased demand for water, electricity, housing, schools, health care, and food. It would reportedly cost Jordan USD \$706 million annually to meet this increased demand for water.³⁵ Some residential areas are struggling to accommodate particularly large

refugee populations and frustrations among many sectors of the population have grown, as rents increase and there is increased competition for jobs.

In Lebanon, the number of refugees has put a strain on already limited resources, including water and sewage facilities, public schools, hospitals and other utilities.³⁶ According to the World Bank, the growing refugee population is expected to increase poverty and unemployment in Lebanon and further stretch the budget situation in the country, which currently faces one of the highest debt ratios globally.³⁷ The conflict in Syria has a significant impact on the political and security environment in Lebanon, with upsurges in violence in areas of Lebanon bordering Syria, including Aarsal in northeast Lebanon in November 2013,³⁸ and in Tripoli in north Lebanon most recently in November and December 2013, the latter of which has resulted in at least 10 people dead and 49 injured.³⁹

Despite the challenges faced due to the large number of refugees in both countries, Jordan and Lebanon have broadly maintained an “open-border” policy, continuing to allow refugees from Syria to enter, and have generally demonstrated favourable policies towards refugees, which are appreciated and acknowledged by UNHCR and the wider international community.⁴⁰

However, both countries have reportedly prevented some categories of people fleeing from the conflict in Syria from entering their territories, which would constitute a violation of international law. In Lebanon, tighter border controls have been reported since August 2013 with Palestinian refugees living in Syria and seeking to flee the conflict being denied entry.⁴¹

In Jordan, several categories of individuals are generally being denied entry into the country, including Palestinian and Iraqi refugees from Syria - a policy that the Jordanian authorities confirmed to Amnesty International in June 2013.⁴² In addition, according to information received from national and international NGOs, people without identity documents and unaccompanied men who cannot prove they have family ties in Jordan are also generally denied entry; families with young children have also been denied entry.⁴³ There have been instances of Syrian and Palestinian refugees being forcibly returned from Jordan to Syria, in violation of international law.⁴⁴

Turkey is also hosting a large number of refugees from Syria, with 536,765 refugees registered as of 5 December 2013.⁴⁵ More than 200,000 of them are being accommodated in state-run refugee camps. The government estimates the total number of Syrian refugees residing in Turkey to be 700,000.⁴⁶

Turkey has received very little international support and has borne nearly all of the costs of its response to the refugee crisis, amounting to some US\$2 billion by September 2013.⁴⁷ In the second half of 2012, Turkey refused entry to thousands of refugees from Syria, particularly those without a passport or an urgent medical need; according to unofficial statements from Turkish officials, this was due to the fact that refugee camps were full.⁴⁸ Since that time Turkey has continued to deny entry at official border posts to many Syrian refugees who do not possess a passport or who do not have an urgent medical need, despite professing to continue an open door policy to Syrian refugees.⁴⁹ In March 2013, up to 600 Syrian refugees were reportedly returned from Turkey to Syria.⁵⁰ Since that time Amnesty International has received multiple reports of further, smaller scale forced returns of refugees to Syria as a punishment for criminal conduct or misdemeanours allegedly committed by them.

In **Iraq**, there were 207,053 refugees from Syria registered as of 4 December 2013,⁵¹ the vast majority of them in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. More than 60,000 arrived in mid-August 2013 via unofficial border crossings. However, according to agencies and NGOs operating in the region, the unofficial border has since been closed again and the official border with Syria at al-Qaim is also closed.⁵² The Kurdish Regional Government and the local population have maintained a generally positive policy and attitude towards the refugees, who are predominantly Kurdish, but in recent months there have been changes that restrict refugees'

access to residency permits and freedom of movement, which limit their ability to work and to access services.

Amnesty International received reports of some non-Kurdish Syrians being refused entry to Iraqi Kurdistan and of tens of individuals, including Arabs, being forcibly returned to Syria.⁵³ Several thousand refugees from Syria reside in al-Qaim camp, in Anbar province, where freedom of movement is very tightly controlled.

In **Egypt** there were 129,174 registered refugees as of 8 December 2013, but the government estimates the actual number at 300,000.⁵⁴ Egypt maintained an open door policy to refugees from Syria until mid 2013. However, on 8 July 2013, stricter entry requirements were imposed on Syrian nationals entering Egypt, requiring them to obtain entry visas prior to arrival. Due to these new rules, on 8 July 2013 some 259 individuals were reportedly sent back from Cairo to Syria, Lebanon, and other countries.⁵⁵

Since the summer of 2013, more than 1,500 Syrian and Palestinian refugees (from Syria) – including children, women and men – were arrested after attempting to reach Europe from Egypt by boat; they were arbitrarily detained in police stations across Egypt’s Mediterranean coast.⁵⁶ Hundreds of them are believed to have been deported, some of whom were reportedly returned to Syria.⁵⁷

In **Israel**, according to media reports, scores of Syrian nationals have received medical treatment inside the Israeli-occupied Golan or at hospitals inside Israel.⁵⁸ Reports indicate that after medical treatment members of the Israel Defense Forces have then escorted the individuals across the border to Syria.

In July 2012, the then Israeli Minister of Defence reportedly said “if we have to stop waves of refugees, we will stop them”.⁵⁹ Amnesty International wrote to the Minister of Defence urging him to ensure that anyone fleeing Syria be allowed to benefit from protection procedures and safeguards to prevent their forcible return to Syria.⁶⁰ Amnesty International did not receive a response to its letter.

Fortress Europe: Keeping Refugees Out

As the capacity of Syria’s neighbouring countries to host refugees becomes further strained and conditions for refugee populations worsen, increasing numbers of people are attempting to reach Europe in the hope of finding safety and a new life. In the two years to the end of October 2013, 55,000 people from Syria have directly sought asylum in the EU (see Appendix 1), amounting to 2.4% of refugees from Syria.

To make it to the EU, refugees from Syria have to breach “Fortress Europe”, the collective set of policies and practices that the EU and its member states employ to keep refugees, asylum-seekers and irregular migrants out of their territories.

It is nearly impossible for refugees or asylum-seekers to reach Europe lawfully. As a result, they are forced into arduous journeys, risking their lives on boats or across land, to seek safety and protection in Europe. Many have undertaken boat journeys from Libya or Egypt to Italy or from Turkey across the Aegean Sea to Greece. Others have tried to cross the land border from Turkey to the Evros region in Greece or to make it from Turkey to Bulgaria by land.

Research by Amnesty International has found that refugees attempting to enter the EU in these ways are met with alarming human rights violations. In two of the main gateways to the EU, Bulgaria and Greece, refugees from Syria are met with deplorable treatment, including detention for weeks in poor conditions in Bulgaria and life threatening push-back operations⁶¹ in the case of Greece.⁶²

Many refugees from Syria who have attempted dangerous boat journeys to reach Italy have died.

LIBYA

As of 30 November, some 15,898 Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR in Libya,⁶³ although the Syrian community in Libya estimates the actual number at 200,000.⁶⁴ Access into Libya for Syrians had been gradually restricted since the September 2012 attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi, following which single Syrian men without a visa were barred from entering Libya.⁶⁵ Restrictions were further tightened in January 2013, when visa requirements were imposed on all Syrians, forcing hundreds of refugees to seek entry into the country through unofficial routes, and exposing them to danger and exploitation by smugglers and various militias operating in the country.

Libya does not have a national asylum system; the majority of refugees from Syria who are in Libya are in an irregular migration status, despite a Ministry of Interior decision to issue residence permits for those that register with the Passport Office. While the move to regularise the status of refugees from Syria is positive, in practice refugees continue to face serious difficulties in Libya. According to Syrian refugees in Libya interviewed by Amnesty International in November 2013, residence permits are not always recognized by local authorities or the various militias which have operated in the country since the end of the 2011 armed conflict and in some cases Syrian refugees have been arbitrarily detained in immigration detention centres for irregular stay in Libya.

Syrian refugees, who have sought refuge in Libya in the hope of finding job opportunities and a better standard of living than in neighbouring countries such as Jordan and Lebanon, are now searching for ways to leave the country. Like other refugees,⁶⁶ they have been increasingly affected by the current lawlessness and the rise of criminality in Libya. Without proper documentation and in the absence of a functioning police and judiciary, Syrian refugees, like other foreign nationals, are vulnerable to abuse. Those interviewed by Amnesty International during its visit in November 2013 reported incidents of physical assaults by armed men, theft, verbal harassment, and, in some cases, abductions. Others alleged exploitation, saying they were forced to work for lower wages or were sometimes unpaid. Syrian women told Amnesty International that they rarely leave their homes after dark out of fear of abductions, harassment and the general sense of insecurity. Amnesty International has received reports of arrests of Syrians over their perceived allegiance to the Syrian government, but was not able to verify them independently.

As a result of these conditions, a growing number of refugees from Syrian refugees have started to cross the Mediterranean in recent months.

The journey to Italy

For years, refugees and asylum-seekers have made the dangerous journey from North Africa to Italy by sea, largely because there are virtually no legal routes for them to take in to enter Europe to seek asylum; hundreds die attempting to cross the Mediterranean every year. In the space of nine days in October, at least 395 - and possibly over 650 - refugees and migrants died when three boats sank attempting to reach Europe from North Africa.⁶⁷ From 1 January to 31 October 2013, an estimated 10,680 refugees from Syria are reported to have arrived along Italy's coast from ports in Egypt and Libya, as well as Turkey and Syria.⁶⁸

On 11 October 2013, a boat that, according to survivors, carried 450 to 500 people⁶⁹ - predominantly refugees from Syria - sank while on its way from Libya to Italy. According to reports, there may have also been scores of people locked at the bottom of the vessel.⁷⁰ According to survivors interviewed by Amnesty International, the boat was damaged while leaving Libyan waters when a Libyan vessel opened fire on it.⁷¹ The damaged boat began to take in water quickly and subsequently sank taking hundreds of men, women and children down with it. Those who survived reported that they had remained in the water for hours before Maltese and Italian vessels reached them.⁷²

Awad, a 17 year-old boy of Palestinian origin from Yarmouk camp in Damascus, described how he was pulled down with the boat but managed to swim through a window up to the surface. On the surface of the water he saw people clinging to dead bodies and boat wreckage to stay afloat, while others fought over life jackets. In the incident, Awad lost his mother as well as other family members. He still does not have any formal confirmation of whether they are dead or alive. He told Amnesty International

“I have no idea where my family are...I used to have ambition but now I have lost my mother, I don't want anything, I just want stability, everything else is second to that.”⁷³

Another boy from Syria, who lost both his father and nine year old brother in the boat disaster, told Amnesty International “My experience didn't just destroy my dreams; it destroyed my families' dreams. I am destroyed completely.”⁷⁴

According to media reports in Malta and Italy, based on numerous survivors' testimonies, over 250 people may have drowned in the incident.⁷⁵

Those lucky enough to survive the treacherous journey by boat, either arrive in, or are transferred by coast guards to, the Italian islands of Lampedusa or Sicily, where they are hosted in reception centers. For many, Italy is not intended to be their final destination and as soon as they can, many travel by train to Milan in order to continue their journey north. Many hope to go on to Sweden, Norway, Germany and other European countries where they have family and friends or where they believe the conditions for refugees will be better than in Italy.

Abuses at the EU's borders

The EU's border control policies are increasingly detrimental to the rights of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. Border control measures introduced over the recent years, including the externalization of immigration functions and the building of fences, have failed to take account of the impact on the rights of those seeking to enter the EU. While the EU has the right to control its borders, the manner in which it does so cannot result in human rights violations – yet that is exactly what is happening.

For example, in the last few years the EU has provided significant funding to Greece in order to strengthen the country's external borders. For the period of 2011 to 2013, the European Commission - under the Return Fund and the External Borders Fund - provided Greece with €227,576,503⁷⁶ to enhance border control measures and increase the capacity to detain people believed to have irregularly entered the country. In comparison, for the same time period, €12,220,969 was allocated to Greece under the European Refugee Fund, which supports efforts in receiving refugees.⁷⁷

Greece pushing back refugees

“They put all the men lying on the boat; they stepped on us and hit us with their weapons for three hours. Then at around 10 in the morning, after removing the motor, they put us back to our plastic boat and towed us back to the Turkish waters and left us in the middle of the sea.”
E. from Syria describes how he and his mother were pushed back to Turkey by the Greek coastguard on the morning of 6 October 2013. They were part of a group of 35 people, including young children.

Greece's efforts to seal off its borders to refugees and migrants have included the construction of a 10.5km fence along the 203 km long Greek-Turkish land border and the deployment of nearly 2,000 additional border guards since summer 2012; the Greek coast guard control the sea routes. According to Frontex, the EU agency tasked with coordinating and developing European border management, this resulted in the number of people entering Greece by land

and sea, dropping from 2,000 per week in early August 2012 to less than 10 per week at the end of October 2012.⁷⁸

The latest figures show a sharp decrease in the number of entries via the Greek-Turkish borders. During the first 10 months of 2012 a total of 32,288 people were apprehended along the Greece-Turkish borders (land and sea) while during the same period in 2013, 9,851 were apprehended.⁷⁹ For the same period the number of apprehensions in the land border dropped from 30,284 to 839.⁸⁰

These measures often mean that refugees are forced to try increasingly dangerous routes across the Aegan Sea. In their desperate attempts to reach safety in Europe, many refugees, including families with babies and young children, spend their last savings to pay smugglers in order to board small, unseaworthy and overcrowded boats. Many have drowned trying.

Since August 2012, at least 130 refugees, the majority of whom were Syrian and Afghan, lost their lives in at least eleven known incidents attempting to reach Greece by boat from Turkey.⁸¹

Unseaworthy vessels are not the only danger that refugees face when trying to reach EU territory. Refugees, including families and children, have told Amnesty International how Greek police or coastguards - in some cases pointing guns and wearing full face hoods - ill-treated them on board boats or at places of detention, stripped them of their belongings and eventually sent them back to Turkey.

"At around 1 or 1.30 o'clock in the morning we arrived to the river side and they [the Greek police] handed us over to people wearing black hoods and black or dark blue uniforms. They took our money and passports. Then, in groups, carried us with small boats over to the Turkish side with nothing but our clothes left on us."

J. and S. Syrian refugees, who claimed to have been pushed back by the Greek authorities to Turkey on 12 November 2013, interviewed by Amnesty International in Istanbul in 22 November 2013. They were part of the group of 150 people allegedly sent back to Turkey after they sought shelter in a church courtyard in the village of Praggi in Evros region, Greece.

The number of such cases, which result in unlawful collective expulsions⁸² from Greece, is not known. However, Amnesty International's research points to the continuous use of push-backs all along the Greek-Turkish border, which affect hundreds of people.

Almost everyone who claimed to have experienced push-back operations told Amnesty International that they have directly experienced or witnessed ill treatment by Greek authorities. This included being slapped and beaten, in addition to having their belongings confiscated without any due process.⁸³

"I was shouting to them that he is my son. They put me aside and I saw them beating my son for 2.5 to 3 hours. When I asked for water they gave me to drink water from the sea."

A 55 year old woman described to Amnesty International her son's ill-treatment on board a Greek Coast Guard vessel the morning of 6 October 2013.

Detention in Bulgaria

An estimated 8,000 refugees, including 5,000 refugees from Syria, have arrived in Bulgaria between January and November 2013.⁸⁴ The majority are living in government-run reception centres.⁸⁵ This is the largest influx of refugees to Bulgaria in recent years – over the last 10 years Bulgaria has received an annual average of 1,000 refugees.

Refugees from Syria and others claiming asylum are housed in emergency centres. The largest one is in the town of Harmanli, about 30 kilometres from the Turkish border. Amnesty International visited the centre in November 2013 and observed the living conditions. This closed centre, effectively a detention centre, accommodates asylum seekers, mainly from Syria

and Afghanistan, in tents, containers and a dilapidated building. Although there are four toilets in a building at the entrance of the centre, they are frequently blocked and hardly adequate for the hundreds of residents. The tents are unheated and the residents sleep either on thin mattresses or on old foldable beds. About 200 people accommodated in a disused building sleep in two large rooms filled with smoke from improvised stoves. Pregnant women, children, as well as men and women of various ages, have to cope with lack of beds and blankets; lack of access to medicine and food.

The centre in Harmanli hosts a large number of people in need of medical care, including women in advanced stages of their pregnancies, people injured in conflict, and individuals suffering chronic diseases and mental health problems. Despite this, there is no medical care provided – except for emergency services – and no access to psychological counseling.

Some of the refugees in Harmanli that Amnesty International spoke to in November 2013 had been detained there for weeks.

The authorities in Bulgaria acknowledge that the situation at Harmanli is very inadequate. In an interview with Amnesty International in November 2013, Bulgarian deputy Minister of Interior, Plamen Angelov stated; “Harmanli is the last resort but currently it’s the only solution we have.”⁸⁶

THE MUNICIPALITY OF MILAN: HELPING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In September and October of 2013 large numbers of refugees from Syria were converging on Italy’s northern city of Milan, attempting to take trains to northern Europe. At the beginning of October, numbers began to increase significantly; according to Community of Sant’Egidio, a local non-governmental organization working with refugees, in the following weeks approximately 150-200 refugees, including children, were sleeping on the floor of the central train station.⁸⁷ A spokesperson of the Milan Municipality told Amnesty International⁸⁸ that many of the refugees stranded at the central train station at that time were either waiting to go to northern Europe or had been stopped at or near the Austrian and German borders by police or other officials and sent back to Milan.

The city of Milan quickly mobilized. Volunteers and organizations began bringing blankets, food and clothes to the station. The local authorities responded by setting up two centres for refugees, run by local NGOs and with capacity for 240 people; Amnesty International visited one of the two centres in November 2013 (the second centre had closed). According to the Milan Municipality, almost 1,000 refugees from Syria have been hosted in the centres.⁸⁹ Once at a centre, refugees receive a bed, three meals a day, medical attention and a place to rest. To its credit, the Municipality of Milan has treated the influx of refugees from Syria as a humanitarian emergency rather than as an immigration or security issue.

However, for most, time in the shelters in Milan is a rare moment of respite and a brief one. For some, after only a matter of days, they attempt the journey north, sometimes using unscrupulous and expensive smugglers out of desperation. Amnesty International spoke with one family who said they had paid 1,600 Euros each to be taken by car to Austria. However, at the border they were stopped by the Italian police. Their fingerprints were taken and the smuggler was arrested. The family decided to go on to Austria, however they were caught again on a train in Austria and returned by car to a police station in Italy.⁹⁰

Syrian refugees: A shared responsibility

"It is very important that European countries all over the continent keep their borders open and [provide] adequate assistance."

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, 22 November 2013.⁹¹

As the numbers of refugees from Syria continues to grow, the EU and its Member States must do more to provide assistance and protection to those who arrive in Europe, and to share the responsibility for hosting refugees more equally. Refugees from Syria, including those seeking to join family members already in the EU, must be able to find safety by legally travelling to Europe.

The international community, including the EU and its Member States should increase support through the UN humanitarian appeals and bilaterally to countries hosting the largest numbers of refugees, particularly Jordan and Lebanon.

Resettlement places must be significantly increased, providing an important opportunity for those most in need to enable them to receive adequate support and restart their lives.

Recommendations

To the international community including the EU and its member states, the US, Australia, Canada, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and other countries able to provide support:

- Share responsibility for refugees from Syria more equally, in particular through significantly increasing the number of resettlement and humanitarian admission places, over and above annual resettlement quotas;
- Ensure that the UN humanitarian appeals for Syria are fully and sustainably funded;
- Support countries faced with large influxes of refugees from Syria to enable them to cope with the pressure on their infrastructure and provide essential services to refugees, including adequate health care, housing, and food.

To EU member states and the EU:

- Strengthen search and rescue capacity in the Mediterranean to identify boats in distress and assist those on board;
- Ensure that those rescued are treated with dignity and that their human rights – including the right to seek asylum – are fully respected;
- Ensure the end of unlawful push-back operations that deny refugees and migrants their rights, particularly on the Greece/Turkish border.

To all countries receiving refugees from Syria:

- Automatically provide all people fleeing Syria, including Palestinian refugees who were resident in Syria, with a status giving them international protection;
- Facilitate family reunification for refugees from Syria including by applying flexible criteria to take into account the nature and needs of different families.

To Syria's neighbouring countries (in particular Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt):

- Maintain open borders to all people fleeing the conflict in Syria, without discrimination;
- Ensure that all people fleeing Syria are not forcibly returned to Syria, in line with the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Appendix 1

New asylum applicants of Syrian citizenship from November 2011 to October 2012, source: Eurostat, online at <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>
Total for EU Member States between November 2011 and October 2013 = 55,000.

GEO/TIME	11M11	11M12	12M01	12M02	12M03	12M04	12M05	12M06	12M07	12M08	12M09	12M10
European Union (28 countries)	685	635	725	680	660	740	1,000	1,150	1,825	2,500	2,835	3,080
Belgium	35	55	50	40	25	30	45	60	60	80	70	110
Bulgaria	0	5	10	5	5	5	15	15	25	40	50	115
Czech Republic	0	0	0	5	5	0	5	0	5	5	5	20
Denmark	65	55	70	45	95	50	50	60	105	105	65	75
Germany	285	210	210	230	165	250	375	400	645	690	745	905
Estonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
Ireland	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
Greece	25	30	10	40	10	10	15	10	20	10	30	55
Spain	0	5	15	10	10	5	10	25	20	25	30	30
France	15	20	35	25	40	45	30	25	45	55	50	80
Croatia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Italy	25	30	15	10	15	10	15	15	40	25	50	35
Cyprus	25	15	30	10	5	50	50	30	50	70	75	50
Latvia	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
Lithuania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luxembourg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
Hungary	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Malta	25	10	10	5	10	10	10	0	5	0	15	25
Netherlands	25	15	20	25	15	10	30	25	15	30	55	75
Austria	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Poland	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	5	40
Portugal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	5	0
Romania	5	5	5	5	0	15	15	20	10	60	20	20
Slovenia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	0	10
Slovakia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Finland	:	:	20	5	20	5	10	15	15	15	30	25
Sweden	75	80	155	155	155	165	235	360	640	1,150	1,325	1,255
United Kingdom	70	90	70	50	70	65	85	65	125	130	200	155

New asylum applicants of Syrian citizenship from November 2012 to October 2013, source: Eurostat, online at <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

GEO/TIME	12M11	12M12	13M01	13M02	13M03	13M04	13M05	13M06	13M07	13M08	13M09	13M10
European Union (28 countries)	3,065	2,550	2,985	2,275	2,345	2,410	2,455	2,655	3,280	3,720	5,795	4,950
Belgium	115	130	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Bulgaria	50	95	85	40	180	100	115	200	110	505	670	:
Czech Republic	10	0	10	5	5	5	10	5	5	5	5	:
Denmark	95	65	110	70	80	95	85	120	165	150	190	250
Germany	1,000	590	1,060	710	550	690	730	735	1,000	1,020	1,275	1,630
Estonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Ireland	0	0	5	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	5	:
Greece	45	20	35	45	65	50	30	35	35	30	:	:
Spain	25	20	45	75	35	60	55	80	65	50	65	:
France	85	100	80	110	120	90	95	90	90	70	90	:
Croatia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Italy	90	40	70	50	85	40	45	60	70	45	65	:
Cyprus	55	30	30	45	25	25	40	:	20	60	:	:
Latvia	5	5	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	:
Lithuania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	:
Luxembourg	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5	5	0	5	:
Hungary	:	:	:	:	:	65	80	95	75	70	90	:
Malta	15	35	10	15	40	20	5	30	35	10	15	:
Netherlands	95	65	110	105	125	125	125	165	195	210	320	370
Austria	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Poland	30	20	50	15	20	10	15	35	35	10	25	15
Portugal	5	0	5	10	5	45	0	0	0	0	:	:
Romania	35	25	70	60	80	85	95	75	130	60	:	:
Slovenia	5	5	15	5	0	0	15	15	0	0	0	0
Slovakia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	:
Finland	10	10	5	10	5	15	5	5	10	20	25	:
Sweden	1,160	1,160	1,025	755	775	720	780	740	1,000	1,200	2,745	2,680
United Kingdom	140	135	160	135	125	160	125	170	225	200	205	:

Appendix 2

Pledges for resettlement, humanitarian admission and private sponsorship by country

Country	Pledge (persons)
Australia ^a	500 resettlement
Austria ^{EU a}	500 humanitarian admission
Canada ^a	1,300 (200 resettlement and 1,100 private sponsorship)
Finland ^{EU a}	500 resettlement
France ^{EU a}	500 humanitarian admission
Germany ^{EU b}	10,000 humanitarian admission
Hungary ^{EU a}	10 resettlement
Ireland ^{EU a}	90 resettlement
Lichtenstein ^c	4 resettlement
Luxembourg ^{EU a}	60 resettlement
Moldova ^a	50 resettlement
Netherlands ^{EU a}	250 resettlement
Norway ^a	1,000 resettlement
Spain ^{EU a}	30 resettlement
Sweden ^{EU a}	400 resettlement
Switzerland ^a	50 resettlement
USA ^a	Open-ended number on resettlement
EU total	12,340
EU total excluding Germany	2,340
Total	15,244 plus an additional number to the USA

^a source: UNHCR, *Finding solutions for Syrian refugees: Resettlement, Humanitarian Admission, and Family Reunification*, 18 October 2013, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/5249282c6.pdf>

^b including an additional 5,000 places announced in early December 2013. See: UNHCR, *Finding solutions for Syrian refugees: Resettlement, Humanitarian Admission, and Family Reunification*, 18 October 2013, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/5249282c6.pdf> and "Länder fordern mehr Solidarität und Einheit in der EU-Flüchtlingspolitik", online at http://www.imk2013.niedersachsen.de/portal/live.php?navigation_id=31932&article_id=120284&psma=1042

^c source: UNHCR, email from UNHCR to Amnesty International, 6 December 2013

¹ UNHCR, *UNHCR: Two million Syrians are refugees*, 3 September 2013, online at: <http://www.unhcr.org/522484fc9.html>.

² Based on UNHCR figures for refugees from Syria in neighboring countries and North Africa, which stood at 2,292,169 as of 9 December 2013, online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>. In addition, 55,000 Syrians have sought asylum in the EU between November 2011 and October 2013 (see appendix 2); smaller numbers have sought asylum elsewhere. The actual number of Syrian refugees is likely to be substantially higher as many have not registered with an asylum authority.

³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The Future of Syria: Refugee Children in Crisis*, November 2013, p.9, online at <http://unhcr.org/FutureOfSyria/>

⁴ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, online at <http://syria.unocha.org>.

⁵ The World Bank estimated Syria's population at 22.4 million for 2012, online at <http://data.worldbank.org/country/syrian-arab-republic> last visited 28 November 2013.

⁶ *UNHCR chief urges states to maintain open access for fleeing Syrians*, online at <http://www.unhcr.org/51e55cf96.html>.

⁷ *UNHCR and host countries to push for greater international help on Syrian refugees*, online at <http://www.unhcr.org/522756779.html>

⁸ For Jordan: based on a World Bank estimated population of 6.181 million in 2011 (source <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>), before the major refugee outflow from Syria started and a Syria refugee population of 563,706 as of 5 December 2013 (source <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>). For Lebanon: Based on a World Bank estimated population of 4,382,790 in 2011 (source <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>), before the major refugee outflow from Syria started and a Syria refugee population of 834,199 as of 4 December 2013 (source <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>).

⁹ Based on a figure of \$3 billion out of a total of \$4.4 billion. United Nations News Centre, *UN announces largest ever humanitarian appeal for conflict-torn Syria*, online at <http://bit.ly/1iFVtOX>.

¹⁰ The appeal is for \$2,981,640,112, of which \$1,911,978,517 were received. Funding data available online at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/pub?key=0AusGu5uwbttdEp0eHRzcWdVd2hBQmpBVWwxUHRjcUE&single=true&gid=0&output=html>, source United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Figures quoted on 6 December 2013.

¹¹ One of the most important methods by which states can contribute to refugee crises is resettlement, whereby a country offers residency and assistance to refugees from the main host countries. This helps refugees that have particular vulnerabilities to re-establish themselves in a country that is able to support them more comprehensively and also reduces the burden on host countries. A number of alternatives to resettlement exist and are being used, such as humanitarian admission, which offers shorter residency periods with limits of family reunification, and private sponsorship visas.

¹² UNHCR, *Finding solutions for Syrian refugees: Resettlement, Humanitarian Admission, and Family Reunification*, 18 October 2013, online at <http://www.unhcr.org/5249282c6.pdf>.

¹³ See appendix 1.

¹⁴ *Finding solutions for Syrian refugees: Resettlement, Humanitarian Admission, and Family Reunification*, UNHCR, 18 October 2013, online at <http://www.unhcr.org/5249282c6.pdf>.

¹⁵ The US has said that it will take an open-ended number of refugees from Syria for resettlement. *Finding solutions for Syrian refugees: Resettlement, Humanitarian Admission, and Family Reunification*, UNHCR, 18 October 2013, online at <http://www.unhcr.org/5249282c6.pdf>.

¹⁶ The distance between Damascus, Syria and Nicosia, Cyprus is 203.3 miles, source Wolfram Alpha, online at <http://www.wolframalpha.com/input/?i=damascus+nicosia+distance>.

¹⁷ These are: Austria (500 places), Finland (500), France (500), Germany (5,000), Hungary (10), Ireland (90), Luxembourg (60), Netherlands (250), Spain (30) and Sweden (400). In addition, the following pledges were made by three non-EU European countries: Norway (1,000), Moldova (50) and Switzerland (50).

¹⁸ According to UNHCR data 12,270 Syrian refugees were registered in Lebanon between 25 and 30 November online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>.

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- ¹⁹ Amnesty International has published a number of reports on human rights issues facing refugees from Syria in host countries, see Amnesty International, *Growing restrictions, tough conditions: The plight of those fleeing Syria to Jordan*, (MDE 16/003/2013), October 2013, online at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE16/003/2013/en>; Amnesty International, *'We cannot live here any more': Refugees from Syria in Egypt* (MDE 12/060/2013), October 2013, online at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE12/060/2013/en/a864e9fc-76c5-44ea-ab96-bd9e96843fc2/mde120602013en.pdf>; Amnesty International, *Turkey: National authorities and the international community must act in partnership to meet the needs of Syrian refugees*, (EUR 44/009/2013) April 2013, online at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR44/009/2013/en/25f4a914-0009-4dd1-822f-49cd2785df67/eur440092013en.pdf>.
- ²⁰ These figures were: Egypt: 129,174 (as of 8 December); Iraq: 207,053 (as of 4 December); Jordan: 566,303 (as of 9 December); Lebanon: 835,735 (as of 5 December); Turkey: 536,765 (as of 5 December). Data retrieved on 9 December 2013 from <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>
- ²¹ Based on UNHCR figures for refugees from Syria in neighboring countries and North Africa, which stood at 2,292,169 as of 9 December 2013, online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>. In addition, 55,000 Syrians have sought asylum in the EU between November 2011 and October 2013 (see appendix 2); smaller number have sought asylum elsewhere.
- ²² BBC, *Syria death toll now above 100,000, says UN Chief Ban*, 25 July 2013, online at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-23455760>
- ²³ See for example the following Amnesty International reports on the human rights situation in Syria: Amnesty International, *Deadly reprisals: Deliberate killings and other abuses by Syria's armed forces* (MDE 24/041/2012), June 2012; Amnesty International, *All-out repression: Purging dissent in Aleppo, Syria* (MDE 24/061/2012), August 2012; Amnesty International, *Government bombs rain on civilians*, (MDE 24/009/2013), March 2013; all online at <http://amnesty.org>
- ²⁴ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, online at <http://syria.unocha.org>.
- ²⁵ United Nations News Centre, *UN announces largest ever humanitarian appeal for conflict-torn Syria*, online at <http://bit.ly/1iFVtOX>
- ²⁶ The appeal is for \$2,981,640,112, of which \$1,911,978,517 were received. Funding data available online at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/pub?key=0AusGu5uwbttdEp0eHRzcWdVd2hBQmpBVWwxUHRjcUE&single=true&gid=0&output=html>, source United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Figures quoted on 6 December 2013.
- ²⁷ *UN appeals for funds to avert cut in food aid to Syrian refugees in Lebanon*, 17 September 2013, online at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45875&Cr=syria&Cr1=#.UqWb7r9IpWL>, last accessed on 9 December 2013.
- ²⁸ UNHCR, *International Protection Considerations with regard to people fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic, Update II*, 22 October 2013, online at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5265184f4.html>
- ²⁹ Based on UNHCR information, online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>
- ³⁰ According to UNHCR information, online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>
- ³¹ According to UNHCR information, online <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>
- ³² The government estimate includes Syrian workers and their families and other Syrians of means who have not registered with UNHCR, online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>
- ³³ There were 116,785 refugees in Zaatari as of 9 December 2013, online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/region.php?id=77&country=107>
- ³⁴ Palestinian refugees, including Palestinians who had until recently been residents of Syria (often referred to as Palestinian Syrians) of which there are an estimated 235,000 displaced within Syria and 60,000 outside of Syria, have their service and protection needs provided for by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). For more information see: <http://www.unrwa.org/activity/rss-syria>
- ³⁵ Al-Jazeera, *Refugee influx worsens Jordan's water woes*, May 2013 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/05/20135268026616381.html>

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- ³⁶ International Crisis Group, *Too Close for Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon*, 13 May 2013, p.6, online at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/egypt-syria-lebanon/lebanon/141-too-close-for-comfort-syrians-in-lebanon.aspx>
- ³⁷ The World Bank, *Lebanon Bears the Brunt of the Economic and Social Spillovers of the Syrian Conflict*, 24 September 2013, online at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/09/24/lebanon-bears-the-brunt-of-the-economic-and-social-spillovers-of-the-syrian-conflict>
- ³⁸ The Daily Star, *Syrian gunships raid outskirts of Lebanon's Aarsal: source*, 14 November 2013, online at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Nov-14/237873-syrian-gunship-fires-rockets-at-lebanons-aarsal-source.ashx#axzz2mL1CNOan>
- ³⁹ BBC, *Lebanon city of Tripoli hit by deadly clashes*, 1 December 2013, online at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25180159>
- ⁴⁰ UNHCR, *Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP 5)*, January to December 2013, online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#>
- ⁴¹ Amnesty International, *Growing restrictions, tough conditions: The plight of those fleeing Syria to Jordan*, (MDE 16/003/2013), October 2013, p. 24, available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE16/003/2013/en>
- ⁴² In a meeting with Amnesty International in June 2013, Jordanian Ministry of Interior officials said that Palestinian and Iraqi refugees were generally not allowed access and there were restrictions on single men and those without identity documents.
- ⁴³ Amnesty International, *Jordan: Children among Syrian refugees denied entry*, 19 August 2013, online at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/jordan-children-among-syrian-refugees-denied-entry-2013-08-19>
- ⁴⁴ *Growing restrictions, tough conditions: The plight of those fleeing Syria to Jordan*, Amnesty International (MDE 16/003/2013), October 2013, p 10, online at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE16/003/2013/en>
- ⁴⁵ According to UNHCR information, online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>
- ⁴⁶ According to UNHCR information, online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>
- ⁴⁷ UNHCR, *Countries Hosting Syrian Refugees: Solidarity and Burden-Sharing*, September 2013, p. 13, online at <http://www.unhcr.org/525fe3e59.pdf>
- ⁴⁸ See for example *Turkey's refugee camps full to capacity with Syrians fleeing bloodshed*, online at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9609821/Turkeys-refugee-camps-full-to-capacity-with-Syrians-fleeing-bloodshed.html>
- ⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Iraq/Jordan/Turkey: Syrians Blocked from Fleeing War*, 1 July 2013, online at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/01/iraqjordanturkey-syrians-blocked-fleeing-war>
- ⁵⁰ Amnesty International, *Turkey forces hundreds of Syrian refugees back across border*, 28 March 2013, online at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/turkey-forces-hundreds-syrian-refugees-back-across-border-2013-03-28>
- ⁵¹ According to UNHCR information, online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103>
- ⁵² Amnesty International conducted a research mission in the Kurdistan region of Iraq in November/December 2013.
- ⁵³ Interviews with refugees and NGOs, Iraqi Kurdistan, November/December 2013.
- ⁵⁴ According to UNHCR information, online at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=8>
- ⁵⁵ Amnesty International, *Egypt turns away Syrians*, 10 July 2013, online at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/egypt-turns-away-syrian-asylum-seekers-2013-07-10>
- ⁵⁶ See for example Amnesty International, *'We cannot live here any more': Refugees from Syria in Egypt*, (MDE 12/060/2013), October 2013, online at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/060/2013/en>; Human Rights Watch, *Egypt: Syria Refugees Detained, Coerced to Return*, November 2013, online at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/11/10/egypt-syria-refugees-detained-coerced-return>.
- ⁵⁷ Amnesty International, *'We cannot live here any more': Refugees from Syria in Egypt*, (MDE 12/060/2013), October 2013, online at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE12/060/2013/en>.

⁵⁸ For example: Walla, *From the beginning of the conflict, 300 Syrian injured have been treated in Israel* (in Hebrew), 30 September 2012 (<http://news.walla.co.il/?w=9/2681607>); and NPR, *An unlikely refuge: Some wounded Syrians treated in Israel*, 13 September 2013, online at (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2013/09/13/221991236/an-unlikely-refuge-some-wounded-syrians-get-treated-in-israel>).

⁵⁹ For example: *Israel will stop any flood of Syrian refugees: Barak*, 19 July 2012, online at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/19/us-israel-syria-idUSBRE8610MF20120719>

⁶⁰ Amnesty International, *Israel: Government urged to allow all from Syria seeking refuge to enter Golan Heights*, 20 July 2012, online at <http://www.amnesty.org/pt-br/library/info/MDE15/043/2012/en>

⁶¹ Push-back operations, or push-backs, refer to unlawfully pushing back an individual or a group of individuals while they are attempting to cross a border or soon afterwards, towards the country they came from. They are unlawful because they take place without procedural safeguards and without respecting the right of individuals to challenge their expulsion or apply for asylum. If they lead to people being returned to a country where they risk serious human rights abuses, then they also amount to *refoulement*, which is prohibited under international law.

⁶² See Amnesty International, *Bulgaria: 'Inhuman conditions' spark protest at refugee camp*, 19 November 2013 online at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/bulgaria-inhuman-conditions-spark-protest-refugee-camp-2013-11-19> and Amnesty International, *Frontier Europe: Human rights abuses on Greece's border with Turkey*, July 2013 (25/008/2013), online at: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR25/008/2013/en>

⁶³ UNHCR Libya, *External Update – November 2013*, online at <http://reliefweb.int/report/libya/unhcr-libya-external-update-november-2013>

⁶⁴ See <http://farawaysyria.org>.

⁶⁵ Amnesty International, *Scapegoats of Fear: Rights of Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants Abused in Libya* (Index MDE 19/007/2013), June 2013, online at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE19/007/2013/en>

⁶⁶ For more information on the situation of refugees and migrants in Libya, see Amnesty International, *Scapegoats of Fear: Rights of Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants Abused in Libya* (Index MDE 19/007/2013), June 2013, online at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE19/007/2013/en>

⁶⁷ In the first of these incidents, at least 350 people died when a boat from Libya carrying hundreds sank on 3 October. One incident on 11 October led to the deaths of at least 12 people off the coast of Alexandria (Egypt). One the same day another boat sank after it left Libya for Lampedusa (Italy); estimates vary considerably between official figures based on bodies retrieved and testimonies of survivors. Estimates of deaths for this particular incidents range between 33 and 268. Refugees who were on that boat said they were 450-500 people on the boat. For more information see for example: BBC News, *Migrant boat "shot at" as it left Libya*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-24514340> and BBC News, *Egypt boat capsizes: 12 migrants die off Alexandria*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24496737>.

⁶⁸ UNHCR, *Egypt Weekly Update, Syria Operation*, 4-10 November 2013, available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=3500>

⁶⁹ Amnesty International spoke to several refugees who survived this incident in Milan (Italy) in November 2013. See also Fabrizio Gatti, *Lampedusa, passing the buck of responsibilities: this is how they left Syrian children to drown*, 28 November 2013, Online at: <http://espresso.repubblica.it/internazionale/2013/11/28/news/lampedusa-buck-passing-on-the-massacre-so-they-left-syrians-children-drown-1.143363>

⁷⁰ Fabrizio Gatti, *Lampedusa, la strage senza fine, c'e' un altro barcone affondato*, 21 October 2013, online at: <http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2013/10/21/news/lampedusa-la-strage-senza-fine-c-e-un-altro-barcone-affondato-1.138324>

⁷¹ There are conflicting reports about who shot at the boat, with suggestions that it might have been either Libyan coastguard, militiamen or smugglers. The Libyan authorities have launched an investigation into the allegations made by survivors. The full results of the investigation have yet to be revealed, but according to the Libyan Prime Minister, the coastguard were not involved in the shooting.

⁷² Interview conducted by Amnesty International researchers in Milan, Italy, November 2013.

⁷³ Interview conducted by Amnesty International researchers in Milan, Italy, 27 November 2013.

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- ⁷⁴ Interview conducted by Amnesty International researchers in Milan, Italy, November 2013.
- ⁷⁵ See *Lampedusa, passing the buck of responsibilities: this is how they left Syrian children to drown*, 28 November 2013, online at: <http://espresso.repubblica.it/internazionale/2013/11/28/news/lampedusa-buck-passing-on-the-massacre-so-they-left-syrians-children-drown-1.143363>. See also related information in *UNHCR Chief expresses shock at new Mediterranean boat tragedy*, 12 October 2013, online at <http://www.unhcr.org/52594c6a6.html>
- ⁷⁶ European Commission, online at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/financing/fundings/mapping-funds/countries/greece/index_en.htm
- ⁷⁷ European Commission, online at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/financing/fundings/mapping-funds/countries/greece/index_en.htm
- ⁷⁸ Frontex, *Annual Risk Analysis 2013*, April 2013, pg. 20, online at [http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/FRAN_Q\\$ 2012.pdf](http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/FRAN_Q$ 2012.pdf)
- ⁷⁹ According to the Greek Police, online at http://www.astynomia.gr/images/stories//2013/statistics13/stat_allod/methorio.JPG
- ⁸⁰ According to the Greek Police, online at http://www.astynomia.gr/images/stories//2013/statistics13/stat_allod/methorio.JPG
- ⁸¹ In July 2013, Amnesty International estimated that 101 individuals had lost their lives crossing the Aegan Sea. See: Amnesty International, *Frontier Europe: Human rights abuses on Greece's border with Turkey*, July 2013 (EUR 25/008/2013), online at <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR25/008/2013/en> Since then reports have indicated that at least 30 more have lost their lives in several incidents between July and November 2013. See for example: Amnesty International, *Two boat tragedies leave migrants dead and missing off Europe's shores*, 25 July 2013, online at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/two-boat-tragedies-leave-migrants-dead-and-missing-europe-s-shores-2013-07-; Ege'de göçmen teknesi battı: 24 ölü>, 31 July 2013, online at <http://www.cnnturk.com/2013/turkiye/07/31/egede.gocmen.teknesi.batti.18.olu/717773.0/index.html>; and *Five dead as immigrant boat sinks off Turkey*, 29 November 2013, online at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/10484208/Five-dead-as-immigrant-boat-sinks-off-Turkey.html>
- ⁸² Collective expulsions where groups of people are deported without taking into consideration the individual circumstance of each person separately violate international national and EU law.
- ⁸³ Amnesty International, *Frontier Europe: Human rights abuses on Greece's border with Turkey*, July 2013 (25/008/2013), pg., 13, online at <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR25/008/2013/en>
- ⁸⁴ UNHCR, *UNHCR chief urges Europe to help Bulgaria cope with Syrian refugee influx*, 22 November 2013, online at <http://www.unhcr.org/528f88066.html>
- ⁸⁵ UNHCR, *UNHCR chief urges Europe to help Bulgaria cope with Syrian refugee influx*, 22 November 2013, online at <http://www.unhcr.org/528f88066.html>
- ⁸⁶ Interview with Amnesty International, 12 November 2013.
- ⁸⁷ Meeting with Amnesty International, Milan, 27 November 2013.
- ⁸⁸ Email sent to Amnesty International on 2 December 2013.
- ⁸⁹ Email sent to Amnesty International on 2 December 2013.
- ⁹⁰ Interview with the family, Milan, 27 November 2013.
- ⁹¹ UNHCR, *UNHCR chief urges Europe to help Bulgaria cope with Syrian refugee influx*, 22 November 2013, online at <http://www.unhcr.org/528f88066.html>