

Humanitarian and Demographic Consequences of the Syrian War for the Region: Türkiye, Lebanon and Jordan

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Abstract. *The Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, has caused extensive humanitarian and demographic changes across the Middle East region. As a result of the conflict, millions of Syrians were forced to flee their country and seek refuge primarily in Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan. This article examines the humanitarian challenges created by the Syrian conflict for these countries, the social and economic impacts of refugee influxes, and the demographic changes that have emerged within the region. The study demonstrates that the large-scale reception of refugees has placed significant pressure on healthcare systems, educational institutions, housing sectors, and labor markets, while simultaneously leading to substantial changes in population structures. The long-term settlement of refugees has necessitated the reformulation of social integration policies in host countries. Furthermore, additional financial burdens have been imposed on state budgets, increasing the importance of international aid programs. The article also evaluates the impact of refugees on local labor markets and their utilization of social services. It emphasizes that the demographic transformations caused by the conflict may influence the future political and economic development of the region. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of international cooperation and sustainable solutions in addressing the long-term consequences of the crisis. In conclusion, the effects of the Syrian crisis have extended beyond the humanitarian sphere and have significantly influenced the socio-economic development and demographic balance of the host countries in the region.*

Keywords: *Syrian Civil War, refugees, humanitarian crisis, demographic changes, Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, migration*

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Suriya müharibəsinin region üçün humanitar və demoqrafik nəticələri: Türkiyə, Livan və İordaniya

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Xülasə. *2011-ci ildə başlayan Suriya vətəndaş müharibəsi Yaxın Şərq regionunda genişmiqyaslı humanitar və demoqrafik dəyişikliklərə səbəb olmuşdur. Müharibə nəticəsində milyonlarla suriyalı öz ölkəsini tərk edərək əsasən Türkiyə, Livan və İordaniyaya sığınmışdır. Məqalədə Suriya müharibəsinin bu ölkələr üçün yaratdığı humanitar problemlər, qaçqın axınının sosial və iqtisadi təsirləri, eləcə də regionun demoqrafik strukturunda meydana gələn dəyişikliklər təhlil edilmişdir.*

Araşdırma göstərir ki, qaçqınların kütləvi şəkildə qəbul edilməsi səhiyyə, təhsil, mənzil və əmək bazarına ciddi təzyiq yaratmış, eyni zamanda, əhali strukturunda mühüm dəyişikliklərə səbəb olmuşdur. Qaçqınların uzunmüddətli məskunlaşması qəbul edən ölkələrin sosial integrasiya siyasətlərinin yenidən formalaşdırılmasını zəruri etmişdir. Bununla yanaşı, dövlət büdcələri üzərində əlavə maliyyə yükü yaranmış və beynəlxalq yardım proqramlarının əhəmiyyəti artmışdır. Məqalədə qaçqınların yerli əmək bazarına təsiri və sosial xidmətlərdən istifadə səviyyəsi də qiymətləndirilmişdir. Müharibənin yaratdığı demoqrafik dəyişikliklərin gələcəkdə regionun siyasi və iqtisadi inkişafına təsir göstərə biləcəyi vurğulanmışdır. Eyni zamanda, böhranın uzunmüddətli nəticələrinin aradan qaldırılması üçün beynəlxalq əməkdaşlığın və davamlı həll mexanizmlərinin vacibliyi qeyd edilmişdir. Nəticə etibarilə, Suriya böhranının təsirləri yalnız humanitar sahə ilə məhdudlaşmamış, region ölkələrinin sosial-iqtisadi inkişafına və demoqrafik balansına da əhəmiyyətli təsir göstərmişdir.

Açar sözlər: Suriya müharibəsi, qaçqınlar, humanitar böhran, demoqrafik dəyişikliklər, Türkiyə, Livan, İordaniya, miqrasiya

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Introduction

Among the regional conflicts that have occurred during the first decades of the twenty-first century, the Syrian Civil War occupies a distinctive place due to its scale and consequences. What began as a series of political protests in 2011 rapidly evolved into a large-scale armed conflict, plunging the country into a profound political, economic, and social crisis. As a result of the prolonged war, hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives, while millions were forced to leave their homes in search of safety and security. In addition, a substantial portion of the country's infrastructure was destroyed, and healthcare, education, and social welfare systems suffered severe damage.

The Syrian crisis has not remained merely a domestic issue but has developed into an international humanitarian concern affecting the entire Middle East region. The refugee flows generated by the conflict have created new social, economic, and demographic challenges for neighboring countries. In particular, Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan have been among the countries most affected by the crisis due to their acceptance of millions of Syrian refugees. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the vast majority of Syrians fleeing the conflict have settled in these countries.

The large-scale admission of refugees has had significant impacts on labor markets, healthcare and education systems, housing sectors, and social services in host countries. At the same time, rapid population growth and migration processes have led to notable demographic changes within these states. While these changes have, in some cases, created opportunities for economic expansion, they have also contributed to increased social tensions and resource shortages.

The purpose of this article is to examine the humanitarian and demographic consequences of the Syrian Civil War for Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan, to analyze the impact of refugee inflows on the socio-economic development of these countries, and to evaluate the new demographic realities that have emerged across the region.

Methods

The Syrian Civil War is considered one of the greatest humanitarian catastrophes of the 21st century. The armed conflict, which began in March 2011 and continued for many years, has profoundly transformed not only the political and military situation of the country but also the entire social, economic, and demographic structure of the Middle East region. As a result of the war, hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives, and millions have been forced to leave their homes. According to the United Nations, more than half of Syria's population has been displaced since the beginning of the conflict (UNHCR, 2024). Approximately more than 6 million people have become internally displaced, while over 5 million Syrians have sought refuge in neighboring countries and Europe (OCHA, 2023). This situation has created one of the largest refugee crises of the modern era. Experts argue that one of the largest waves of forced migration since World War II has emerged as a result of the Syrian conflict (Zetter, 2015).

Results

One of the main consequences of the humanitarian crisis has been the widespread violation of fundamental human rights. Thousands of schools, hospitals, residential buildings, and public infrastructure facilities have been destroyed during the war. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2023), millions of people have been deprived of access to clean drinking water, electricity, sanitation systems, and healthcare services for extended periods. In particular, intense military operations in cities such as Aleppo, Homs, Daraa, Idlib, and Raqqa have left large parts of these urban areas completely uninhabitable. According to World Bank estimates (World Bank, 2022), the destruction of housing stock, roads, energy systems, and industrial facilities in Syria has caused economic losses amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars. Several international experts argue that it may take at least several decades for Syria to return to its pre-war level of development.

The refugee crisis resulting from the war has created unprecedented social and economic challenges for neighboring countries. Countries such as Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan have shouldered a significant burden of the international humanitarian system by hosting millions of Syrians. In particular, Türkiye has become the largest refugee-hosting country in the world. At various times, the number of Syrians living in the country has exceeded 3.7 million (UNHCR, 2024). This figure is higher than the total population of many European countries. The Government of Türkiye has granted Syrians temporary protection status and has sought to ensure their access to healthcare, education, and social services (Kirişçi, 2014). However, the large-scale settlement of refugees in urban areas has led to rising housing prices, increased demand for public utilities, and rising unemployment in certain regions (World Bank, 2013).

In the southern and southeastern regions of Türkiye, including cities such as Gaziantep, Kilis, Sanliurfa, and Hatay, significant demographic changes have been observed. In the city of Kilis, at certain periods, the number of Syrians nearly equaled the local population. According to researcher Kemal Kirişçi (2014), while this situation has created challenges for social integration, it has also contributed to increased economic activity and the emergence of new business initiatives. In Turkey, thousands of Syrian entrepreneurs have established new businesses, and an expansion in economic turnover has been observed particularly in the service and trade sectors (World Bank, 2013).

Lebanon is one of the countries the most severely affected by the Syrian crisis. In a country with a population of approximately 5-6 million, the presence of nearly 1.5 million Syrians has placed significant pressure on the social and economic system. Reports from the World Bank (2013) indicate that the refugee influx has sharply increased demand for public services, raised poverty levels, and

slowed economic growth. Since Lebanon's education and healthcare systems already had limited capacity, the presence of additional millions of people has created a substantial burden on the state budget. In particular, social tensions have increased in settlements located in the Bekaa Valley and around Tripoli, and disputes have emerged between local communities and refugees regarding the distribution of scarce resources.

Jordan has also experienced the consequences of the refugee crisis in a profound way. Since the country already has limited natural resources, particularly water resources, the large-scale influx of Syrians has further exacerbated existing challenges. The Zaatari and Azraq refugee camps are among the largest refugee camps in the world (UNHCR, 2024). Over time, these camps have evolved into semi-permanent settlements, where schools, hospitals, commercial facilities, and social service centers have been established. However, the vast majority of refugees live outside the camps, placing additional pressure on urban infrastructure. According to World Bank assessments (World Bank, 2022), the refugee crisis has led to rising housing prices, increased water consumption, and a significant rise in public expenditure in Jordan.

One of the most important consequences of the Syrian war is the demographic transformation of the region. The fact that a large proportion of refugees are women and children has directly influenced the age structure and social policies of host countries. According to UNICEF data (UNICEF, 2023), more than 50 percent of Syrian refugees are children. This has led to a sharp increase in demand for schools, kindergartens, and social protection services. In many cases, educational institutions have been forced to operate on double or even triple-shift systems. Thousands of teachers have been recruited, and new educational programs have been funded by international organizations.

Discussion and Conclusion

The exclusion of children from education is considered one of the most severe social consequences of the war. Reports by UNICEF and Save the Children (2021) indicate that millions of Syrian children have been out of school for extended periods. As a result, the concept of a "lost generation" has emerged. Experts argue that children deprived of education may face greater challenges in future labor market integration and social adaptation, which could negatively affect the region's long-term development prospects.

The socio-economic impacts of the war have also been evident in the labor market. The entry of refugees into the workforce has contributed to the emergence of cheap labor in certain sectors. Syrians have increasingly been employed in agriculture, construction, textile, and service industries. Studies conducted by Del Carpio and Wagner (2015) suggest that wage levels for local workers have decreased in some regions, while informal employment has expanded. At the same time, the economic participation of refugees has also contributed to the expansion of consumer markets, the emergence of new businesses, and a certain increase in tax revenues (World Bank, 2013).

Problems in the healthcare sector have been one of the most critical aspects of the humanitarian crisis. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), a significant proportion of hospitals in Syria have been destroyed or have ceased to function. Thousands of doctors and medical workers have left the country. As a result, millions of people have been deprived of access to essential healthcare services. In neighboring countries, the provision of medical services to refugees has placed considerable strain on already limited healthcare systems. The spread of chronic diseases, psychological trauma, disability cases, and infectious diseases has become one of the main challenges facing humanitarian organizations.

In addition, the war has severely damaged Syria's social capital. The fragmentation of families, the dispersion of populations across different countries, the weakening of social ties, and the decline in trust within society are among the long-term consequences of the conflict. Social researchers note that the psychological trauma and social fragmentation caused by the war may persist even longer than the process of national reconstruction (Zetter, 2015).

In conclusion, the Syrian Civil War is not merely an internal conflict of one country but a global-scale crisis affecting international security, humanitarian assistance, migration, and regional development. Its consequences have impacted millions of lives and have led to profound changes in the demographic and socio-economic structures of the region. In the post-war period, issues such as refugee return, national reconstruction, social integration, and sustainable development remain strategic priorities for both Syria and the wider Middle East.

The Syrian Civil War has transformed not only Syria but also the social and demographic landscape of the entire Middle East region. Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan have played a significant humanitarian role by hosting millions of refugees; however, as a result, they have faced a range of economic, social, and demographic challenges. Although in recent years some return movements to Syria have been observed, the effects of the refugee crisis continue to influence the region's development.

The ongoing impact of the crisis highlights the necessity of identifying sustainable solutions. In this context, international cooperation and the implementation of long-term integration policies are of crucial importance for addressing the complex consequences of the Syrian conflict and supporting stability in the region.

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