

# Refugee Crisis in Europe – a New Challenge of the XXI century

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*Abstract – The problem of refugees has been existed during centuries but nowadays it becomes more and more actual. It becomes one of the values that are of top priority for many developed countries. The paper depicts situation concerning the refugees crisis in Europe, gives statistics about amount of refugees in different European countries and also suggests ways of solution of this problem.*

Key words – refugees, migrants, crisis, Europe, Syria.

XXI century, period of great significance, has just opened a new era of hard challenges for people all over the globe. Technology development and a lot of new inventions gave to humanity, on the one hand, a chance to cooperate and unite their efforts in seeking for better life. However, on the other hand, rapid economic growth and technical development of rich South and slow progress of pure North caused the problem of global leadership. Developed countries are willing to influence smaller ones and to control the future destiny of Earth. The most powerful countries are now trying to become the most influential actors in the international community. Unfortunately, most of attempts to conquer position of "global governor", as a result led to cultural misunderstanding, economic crisis and, what is worth, military conflicts. Nowadays 1/3 of our planet is involved in different military actions, but the repercussions of these conflicts have already spread all over the world.

Europe has faced with such a phenomenon as refugees and the number of people seeking refugee status in Europe has increased over last 3 years. It is due, in large part, to war in Syria and Iraq, as well as conflict and instability in countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea and elsewhere. According to statistics, every minute 24 people leave everything behind to escape war, persecution or terror. In their desperate search for sanctuary, increasing numbers of refugees and migrants are crossing dangerous places, and as a result their journeys have cost thousands of lives. So now world community have a task not only to solve the conflicts in "hot spots", but also to save lives and give shelter to those people, who in attempt to survive left war area and moved to more safety one.

What does it mean 'to be a refugee'? Generally speaking, a refugee is a displaced person who has been forced to pass through national borders and who cannot return home safely. Such a person may be called an asylum seeker until granted refugee status by the contracting state or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR if they formally make a claim for asylum [5].

## I. Designated countries of origin

Speaking about roots of refugees we have to name such countries as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somali. Most refugees, who arrived to Greece in 2015 were Syrian or Afghan, at the same time Italy received

Political Science and International Relations Department, Lviv Polytechnic National University, UKRAINE, Lviv, S. Bandery street 12, E-mail: yuliakopey@ukr.net proportionally more people from Eritrea, Nigeria and Somalia. The largest exporter of refugees, with a total refugee population of 4.9 million, is The Syrian Arab Republic. Syrians are the main group of asylum-seekers worldwide, with 373,700 new asylum applications registered during 2015. Afghanistan (2.7 million) is the second-largest source country for refugees. The third largest source country worldwide and the largest refugee producing country in Sub-Saharan Africa become Somalia (1.1 million). South Sudan is the fourth-largest source country of refugees worldwide (800,000 by the end of 2015)[6].

## II. Gender statistics

In accordance with recent statistics gathered by the United Nations and updated Nov. 17, 2015 there are 4,289,792 registered Syrian refugees. In Europe the amount of officially registered refugees is 800,000. About 62% of all migrants that have traveled to Europe this year are men. A little under a quarter, 22 %, are children and only 16% are women [4].

## III. Where do they go?

Approximately 11 million Syrians have left their homes since the beginning of the civil war in March 2011. Now, after the sixth year of war, 13.5 million are in need of humanitarian aid within the country. Among those people, who are escaping the conflict, the majority have moved to neighboring countries or within Syria itself. According to the UNHCR, 4.8 million have fled to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, and 6.6 million are internally displaced within Syria [3]. While about one million have requested asylum to such European countries as Greece, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Hungary, France and Britain.

Despite not sharing a border with Syria, Greece, due to her relatively short sail from Turkey, is a prime destination for hundreds of thousands of migrants from Syria and other countries. Nearly 250,000 refugees have sailed up on Greek shores in 2015[2]. While a small number of refugees have been given temporary housing in Athens, most refugees aim to use Greece as a land bridge through the Balkans into Northern Europe. The second destination of most Mediterranean migrant voyages is Italy. More than 110,000 refugees have arrived there this year. As with Greece, many opt to use the country as a bridge to wealthier, northern countries. Germany is the main destination for many hopefuls. More than 1 million refugees arrived in Germany last year. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has stood firm on her open-arms refugee policy despite criticism by members of her own Christian Democratic Union party. Sweden is another coveted destination. Among European countries, Hungary has the highest, in proportion to its population, amount of refugees, despite of having closed its border with Croatia in an attempt to stop the flow in October. Nearly 1,800 refugees per 100,000 of Hungary's local

population claimed asylum in 2015. France said that it would take in 24,000 refugees under a European Union-wide quota system that some member states are likely to reject. Britain said it would take in 20,000 Syrian refugees by the end of the current Parliament's term in 2020 [2].

Although, this article is about refugee crisis in Europe, one more powerful and maybe the most influential country should be mentioned. It is The United States of America. This country has spent more than \$4.1 billion since 2012 on what it calls the Syria Humanitarian Response, supporting food programs and refugee operations in Jordan and Lebanon. However, the U.S. has taken in only about 1,500 refugees from Syria, prompting criticism from rights organizations and others.

#### IV. Do refugees return back home?

During 2015, only 201,400 refugees returned to their countries of origin with the majority (115,800 or 57%) receiving UNHCR assistance. This is a significant increase compared to 2014, when 126,000 refugees returned, but it is still below the number of returned refugees reported in 2013 (414,600). Afghanistan (61,400), Sudan (39,500), Somalia (32,300), the Central African Republic (21,600), and Côte d'Ivoire (12,200) - are five nationalities, combined accounted for 83% of the total number of refugees, who returned home during 2015[6].

But what to do with those refugees who do not returned? Refugees, who are now struggling for life and trying to survive in not very easy conditions? According to statistics a lot of refugees died on the way to "better life". The International Organization for Migration(IOM) reports that more than 3,770 migrants died trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2015. Most died on the crossing from north Africa to Italy, and more than 800 died in the Aegean crossing from Turkey to Greece. In this context, Amnesty International has suggested 8 ways to solve world refugee crisis. Here they are:

1. Opening up safe routes to sanctuary for refugees. That means governments should allow people to reunite with their relatives, and give refugees visas so they don't have to spend their life savings and risk drowning to reach safety.

2. Resettling all refugees who need it. Resettlement is a key step for the most vulnerable refugees – including torture survivors and people with serious medical problems. Right now, 1.15 million people urgently need this lifeline. But so far, the world's wealthiest nations are offering to resettle less than 10% every year. Amnesty estimates that 1.45 million refugees will need resettlement by the end of 2017.

3. Put saving lives first. No one should have to die crossing a border, and yet almost 7,000 people drowned in the Mediterranean alone in the two years since the first big shipwreck in October 2013. In May 2015, thousands of people fleeing persecution in Myanmar suffered for weeks onboard boats while Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia bickered over who should help them.

4. People fleeing persecution or wars should be allowed to cross borders, with or without travel documents. Pushing people back and putting up massive fences only forces them to take more dangerous routes to safety.

5. All countries should investigate and prosecute trafficking gangs who exploit refugees and migrants, and put people's safety above all else. Amnesty recently met survivors in Southeast Asia who said traffickers killed people on board boats when their families couldn't pay ransoms. Others were thrown overboard and left to drown, or died from because there was no food and water.

6. Stop blaming refugees and migrants for economic and social problems, and instead combat all kinds of xenophobia and racial discrimination.

7. "Financially broke" is how Antonio Guterres, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, described UN agencies in September 2015. Wealthy countries quite simply aren't keeping their high-profile promises to fund aid for refugees abroad. People are dying while governments spend billions on border control. They urgently need to guarantee full funding to alleviate refugee crises worldwide.

8. The world has a very short memory. In the aftermath of World War II, most countries agreed to protect refugees through the 1951 Refugee Convention, and through UN agencies like the UNHCR. Barbed wire fences and chronic underfunding have left that vision of a better world in tatters. By ignoring the warning signs, world leaders have allowed a huge, global humanitarian crisis to unfold. Ultimately, it will be resolved by ending the conflicts and persecution that forced people to flee in the first place. But no one knows when that will be. Meanwhile, we need radical solutions, visionary leadership and global co-operation on a scale not seen for 70 years. That involves setting up strong refugee systems: allowing people to apply for asylum, treating their refugee claims fairly, resettling the most vulnerable of all, and providing basics like education and healthcare [1].

In conclusion, lets take into consideration Ban Ki-moon's quote: "Our responses to refugees must be grounded in our shared values of responsibility sharing, non-discrimination, and human rights and in international refugee law, including the principle of non-refoulement." His words are call for action. We do not have any time to wait, because, maybe, future of all humanity now depends on decision of European governments.

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