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# FROM THE ANTE-CHAMBER TO THE LIVING ROOM

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A Brief Assessment on NGO's Doing Work for Syrian Refugees

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Zümray Kutlu

**Anadolu Kültür** was founded as a not-for-profit cultural institution in 2002 when individuals from various fields of the art world, the business world and civil society came together to support the production and sharing of culture and art in cities across Turkey and abroad. Anadolu Kültür continues its activities with the belief that cultural and artistic exchange will help develop mutual understanding and dialogue and overcome regional differences and prejudices, and that a broader cultural life will elicit a discussion of concepts such as citizenship, identity and belonging. At the same time, Anadolu Kültür is trying to create spaces that would open up room for artistic cooperation and critical debates.

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## Abbreviations

AFAD	Disaster and Emergency Management Agency of the Republic of Turkey
ASAM	Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers
BİLGİ ÇOÇA	Istanbul Bilgi University Child Studies Unit
BİLGİ GÖÇ	Istanbul Bilgi University Center for Migration Research
ÇSGB	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
EU	European Union
ĞİGM	Directorate General of Migration Management
HCA	Helsinki Citizens Assembly
HRDF	Human Resources Development Foundation
IBC	International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation
ICMC	International Catholic Migration Commission
İHD	Human Rights Association of Turkey
IMC	International Medical Corps
MAZLUM-DER	Solidarity Association for Human Rights and Victims
MC	Mercy Corps
MEB	Ministry of National Education, Turkey
MSF	Médicins Sans Frontières
MÜLTECİ-DER	Association for Solidarity with Refugees
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SKYGD	Development of Social and Cultural Life Association
STGM	Civil Society Development Center
TESEV	Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation
THİV	Human Rights Foundation of Turkey
TOG	Foundation of Social Volunteers
TTB	Turkish Medical Association
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
YÖK	Higher Board of Education
YUKK	Aliens and International Protection Act

## 1 INTRODUCTION

When, in 2011, Turkey opened its doors to Syrian refugees,<sup>1</sup> no one, including the government, had imagined that the figures would reach millions.<sup>2</sup> Yet in four years, the number of Syrians who migrated to Turkey has attained the 2-million mark. The prediction is that in the course of 2015 this figure will reach 2.5 million.<sup>3</sup> With each passing day, it becomes clearer that Syrians dispersed among various countries of the Middle East, including Turkey, will remain there for an indefinite period of time, with some perhaps never going back.

*Although Turkey has made certain legal arrangements to provide for the access of Syrian refugees to basic rights, the current legislation still treats the question of Syrian refugees not as a long-term issue but as a temporary crisis or problem and does not display a rights-based approach.*

At the beginning of 2011 Turkey established many camps near border towns for Syrian refugees, who were donned the label “guests”. 256.000 refugees are staying in 24 camps across 10 provinces of Turkey.<sup>4</sup> Aid is provided to refugees staying in these camps under the coordination of AFAD, with a limited number of NGO’s working hand in hand with the latter and the UNHCR.<sup>5</sup> Syrians living outside of the camps, whose number is estimated by various organisations to

<sup>1</sup> In this report, Syrians living in Turkey have been taken up under the appellation “refugees” irrespective of what their official status in Turkey happens to be.

<sup>2</sup> The expenditure undertaken by Turkey from April 2011 to November 2014 amounts to 4.5 billion USD. The money that has come in from the UN and from European countries is cited as 246 million USD. For detailed information see Orhan, O. & Şenyücel, S. (2015) *Suriyeli Sığınmacıların Türkiye’ye Etkileri*, ORSAM & TESEV Raporu, İstanbul, p. 12

<sup>3</sup> According to UN estimates, the flow of refugees from Syria will continue in 2015 and the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey will attain the 2.5 million mark. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/28845005.asp>.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik3/gecici-korumamiz-altindaki-suriyeliler\\_409\\_558\\_560](http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik3/gecici-korumamiz-altindaki-suriyeliler_409_558_560).

<sup>5</sup> The conditions existing in camps that harbour Syrian refugees have been assessed in a positive light by many international organisations. [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/16/magazine/how-to-build-a-perfect-refugee-camp.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/16/magazine/how-to-build-a-perfect-refugee-camp.html?_r=0).

reach up to 1.8 million, continue to survive by their own means in different cities and towns of Turkey. While a great majority is concentrated in the border towns of Hatay, Antep, Kilis, Urfa and Mardin, some migrate to larger cities in the hope of finding jobs. It is known for a fact that the number of Syrians living in Istanbul has now reached 300.000 and that alongside Istanbul, cities such as Izmir, Mersin, and Adana have become poles of attraction for the refugees.<sup>6</sup>

What kind of life have these refugees, then, led throughout these four years and how have they survived and met their basic needs? On the basis of the research conducted and our own observations, we can say that the Syrian refugees barely manage to survive, without adequate access to housing, health care, and education, deprived of the right to work, and in poverty.

As the time span of their “visit” to Turkey *qua* “guests” prolongs, as the chances of returning to their country become slimmer, it becomes ever more important to provide them with better lives and rights. Although Turkey has made certain legal arrangements to provide for the access of Syrian refugees to basic rights, the current legislation still treats the question of Syrian refugees not as a long-term issue but as a temporary crisis or problem and does not display a rights-based approach. On the other hand, we know that from the beginning of the Syrian crisis, many municipalities and NGO’s have conducted work in different domains with the purpose of ameliorating the condition of Syrian refugees. This report aims to provide a modest survey of the NGO’s that extend support to Syrians living outside of camps and the work they have been doing.

<sup>6</sup> ULUSLARARASI AF ÖRGÜTÜ (2014) *Hayatta Kalma Mücadelesi: Türkiye’deki Suriye’den Gelen Mülteciler* - <http://amnesty.org.tr/uploads/Docs/hayatta-kalma-mucadelesi-turkiye'deki-suriye'den-gelen-multeciler720.pdf>, p. 6.; <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/975425-istanbulda-sariyer-nufusu-kadar-suriyeli-yasiyor>.

Outside the introductory and the concluding parts, the report consists of four sections. Part one presents information with respect to the legal status of Syrian refugees. Part two provides a general survey of the current situation regarding access to basic services such as accommodation, health care, and education, with reference to reports prepared on the state of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Having provided a breakdown of major NGO's that work with Syrians accord-

## On the method and the field work

This study was conducted by Zümray Kutlu between January and April 2015. Basically, the study aims to provide a survey of NGO's that extend support to Syrians living outside of camps in Istanbul and in border cities where there is a heavy concentration of refugees. Because of time limitations and the high number of NGO's doing work with Syrian refugees in the target regions, the report was conceived as an introductory study that provides a general assessment rather than an exhaustive survey of the entire gamut of NGO's working in this area. It would be useful to continue the research in this area, with a view to update the work done by the organisations in question and to reach out to NGO's working in the area not yet interviewed.

The first step in the study was to examine reports, books, news reports, and web sites relating to Syrian refugees. This was followed in March and April by interviews with NGO's on the basis of snowball sampling. Face to face interviews were held in Istanbul and Antep. The views of NGO's based in Hatay, İzmir, Urfa, and Ankara were consulted through telephone conversations and e-mail. A private Syrian school in Esenyurt, Istanbul was visited for observation purposes during the stage of preparation of the report.

ing to their domain of work and a summary of their activities in part three, we proceed to part four, which contains general observations concerning these NGO's and the experience gained during the interviews. In the concluding section we point out to the needs and priorities that come forth as a result of the observations made and the interviews carried out.

Due to difficulties of access to both international and Syrian NGO's, the focus of the study was shifted to NGO's based in Turkey.<sup>7</sup> A total of 49 NGO's were contacted. Of these, 29 provided information regarding their work while 17 either transmitted a limited amount of information or did not respond at all.<sup>8</sup> Three NGO's reported that they did not conduct work specifically geared to Syrian refugees. The entire list of organisations contacted and interviewed may be consulted at the end of this report.

For those NGO's that could not be interviewed for lack of time, their web sites were consulted and information has been provided in this report based on the İGAMDER report and the web sites of these NGO's.

<sup>7</sup> Work to be conducted by foreign NGO's in Turkey is subject to permission and İGAMDER says this kind of permission is not easy to obtain. In the same way, most of the international NGO's wished to refrain from giving interviews and hesitated to answer queries. Many international NGO's cooperate with NGO's based in Turkey in order to carry out work in this country.

<sup>8</sup> It was quite difficult to obtain appointments from NGO's based in Turkey due to their heavy work schedule. Problems arose because appointments were always being changed and teams were on the road.

# 2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK CONCERNING SYRIAN REFUGEES

The legislation and administrative measures preclude the recognition of Syrians entering Turkey as "refugees". In order to clarify this situation, we first have to see in what manner Turkey became a party to *the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*.

*Regarding the legislation related to Syrians, Turkey clings to its position of geographical reservation that establishes a clear distinction between Europeans and non-Europeans.*

While the Geneva Convention limited the definition of refugee to "events occurring in Europe before 1 January 1951", the 1967 Protocol removed this historical and geographical reservation. Having signed the Geneva Convention in 1961, Turkey signed the 1967 Protocol in terms that preserved the geographical reservation.<sup>9</sup> On the basis of this reservation, Turkey chose to admit only asylum-seekers originating from Europe as refugees and the discrimination between European and non-European has continued to hold sway to this day.<sup>10</sup> People who came from non-European countries have been defined as merely "asylum-seekers" and it has been made clear that they would not enjoy refugee status.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Turkey ratified the Geneva Convention on 29 August 1951, Law No. 359 and the 1967 Protocol supplementary to the 1951 Convention on the basis of the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 6/10266 approving the Protocol, published in the Official Gazette of 5 August 1968.

<sup>10</sup> We know that within the framework of Turkey-EU relations, some work was being done to eliminate the geographical reservation. In 2005, in its "National Action Plan of Turkey Regarding the Adoption of European Union Acquis in the Area of Asylum and Migration", Turkey, putting forth its demands regarding responsibility sharing expected from European countries, emitted signals to the effect that the geographical reservation could be eliminated in 2012. However, looking at the most recent legislation, it would be fair to say that at the moment no steps are being planned in that direction.

<sup>11</sup> The distinction in question is contained in the "Regulation Ruling the Principles and Procedures Relative to Foreigners Who Seek Asylum in Turkey or Isolated Cases of Foreigners Who Request A

Given the geographical position of Turkey, it would not be too difficult to predict that an overwhelming majority of asylum-seekers would come from outside Europe. People who come from Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, or even African countries are not entitled to the status of refugee because of this geographical reservation. Consequently, there exist tens of thousands of asylum-seekers in Turkey who cannot enjoy the status of refugee, who carry on their existence within the borders of the country without having acquired the legal status of refugee, who are awaiting admission from a third country or are seeking illicit methods of crossing into Europe. With the Syrians, this has now reached into the millions.

Regarding the legislation related to Syrians, Turkey clings to its position of geographical reservation that establishes a clear distinction between Europeans and non-Europeans. However, since it is becoming clear by the day that a majority of the Syrian refugees are here to stay, two important pieces of legislation were passed recently. The first is the Aliens and International Protection Act, Law No. 6468 of 2 February 2013 (YUKK). The gradual transfer of powers from the Directorate of Security, so far the authority that oversaw all legal transactions regarding aliens, to the newly established Directorate General of Migration Management is being assessed as a symptom of the fact that the issue of aliens is no longer considered to be merely a security matter. Another important change brought about by the YUKK is the substitution of the earlier concept of "asylum-seeker" by the new concepts of "conditional refugee", "secondary

Residence Permit from Turkey with the Purpose of Seeking Asylum in Other Countries and Foreigners Who Come to Our Borders en masse with the Aim of Seeking Asylum and the Ensuing Possible Population Movements". *Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey*, 30 November 1994/No. 22127 (Decision of the Council of Ministers, dated 4 September 1994, No. 94/6169).



protection”, or “temporary protection”. It is this shift that forms the basis of the most important current legislation concerning Syrians in the recent period, i.e. the Regulation on Temporary Protection.

This Regulation, issued on 22 October 2014 pursuant to article 91 of the YUKK, is applicable to stateless people and refugees that arrive from Syria as well as Syrian citizens. The Regulation defines temporary protection, of decisive significance for Syrians, in the following manner:

*“protection extended to aliens who have been forced to leave their country, who cannot return to the country they have left, who have arrived at our frontiers en masse or individually as part of this mass exodus and crossed those frontiers and whose request for protection cannot be assessed on an individual basis.”*

The Regulation has no provisions regarding the time period for temporary protection. The powers of determining the initiation and the cessation of temporary protection as well as which regions and for whom it is going to be in effect rests with the Council of Ministers. Article 22 of the Regulation stipulates the issuance of a temporary protection identity card to aliens that are granted temporary protection. But it is clearly stated that the status of temporary protection or the identity card issued will not serve as a residence permit, nor can either of these be considered as a pathway towards an application for naturalisation. It is stressed that

the identity card is provided simply for the conduct of legal and social matters in Turkey. The Regulation aims to arrange the access of Syrians living in or outside of camps to services such as health care, education and social assistance.

All in all, in the legislation concerning Syrian refugees, Turkey is adamant in preserving the existing geographical reservation. The YUKK and the Regulation on Temporary Protection are but a continuation of the attitude of regarding Syrian refugees as “guests”. The Regulation does stipulate the granting of an identity card to Syrian refugees and does allow them to stay in the country for a temporary period of time, but provides no sense of how long this period may last. Along with other refugees from non-European countries not regarded as permanent, Syrian refugees face a situation in which their status, the length of their stay in the country, and their access to basic rights are all dependent on the decisions of the government. The government can, at any moment, decide to put an end to their permission to stay in the country. Hence, it is of the utmost importance and a matter of urgency that the current legislation be changed so that the position of the Syrians in the country may be taken up on the basis of a clear, detailed and long-term arrangement that gives priority to a rights-based approach rather than one that is wholly dependent on the decisions of the government.

## 3 LEGISLATION CONCERNING THE ACCESS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES TO BASIC RIGHTS AND THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND

Since 2011 many reports have been prepared by various local and international organisations concerning Syrian refugees. While a great majority of these reports aim at providing information regarding access to basic rights and the conditions of life for Syrian refugees, some of the recent studies have taken up, in addition to the former, questions such as the perception by the local people of the Syrians in cities where they have settled down and how the relationship between the two sides is developing.

In this section, we intend to briefly dwell on the current arrangements regarding the provision of basic rights to Syrians living outside of camps, estimated to form some 85 per cent of the total population of Syrian refugees,<sup>12</sup> and move on to a depiction of the current picture in relation to access to basic rights on the ground. In providing information concerning the legal arrangements, we refer to current legislation, while in reporting on the actual situation on the ground, we make use of the information contained in research carried out and reports pre-

pared, in the course of 2013 and 2014, in the domains of education, accommodation, health care, and work, as well as relations with the local population.<sup>13</sup> Before going into the current situation with respect to basic rights, we briefly provide information on the system of registration, a precondition for enjoying access to all rights in such areas as health care, education and work.

The research done in this area shows that the situation on the ground is way behind even the limited rights provided by the legislation that exists. Neither the administrative entities that are charged with providing the basic services, nor the refugees themselves are informed about the situation on the ground or the rights that apply and there exist problems in accessing the rights that have been granted. In what follows, we present summary information on the issues of work, accommodation, education, and health care, as well as the perception of Syrians on the part of the people of Turkey.

<sup>12</sup> Orhan, O. & Şenyücel, S. (2015) *Suriyeli Sığınmacıların Türkiye'ye Etkileri*, ORSAM & TESEV Raporu, İstanbul, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> The list of reports prepared in this area, which we have consulted, can be seen in the bibliography provided at the end of this report.

### 3.1 Crossing the frontier and the procedure of registration

**Legislation:** Since April 2011, Turkey has been implementing an open-door policy to Syrian refugees holders of a passport. The fact that bilateral relations in the preceding period had made passage without visa possible has helped. However, Amnesty International states that those who do not possess a passport are routinely denied passage

at frontier posts.<sup>14</sup> Registration is carried out by AFAD in camps and by the Directorate

<sup>14</sup> Difficulties experienced during the crossing over of the frontier will not be taken up in this study. However, for detailed information, the report prepared by Amnesty International may be consulted. ULUSLARARASI AF ÖRGÜTÜ (2014) *Hayatta Kalma Mücadelesi: Türkiye'deki Suriye'den Gelen Mülteciler* - <http://amnesty.org.tr/uploads/Docs/hayatta-kalma-mucadelesi-turkiye'deki-suriye'den-gelen-multeciler720.pdf>, p. 4.

General of Migration Management outside of camps. Registration involving the taking of biometric photography and fingerprints is reported to have started on 10 April 2015 and, thanks to the support of the UNHCR, the number of refugees registered since then has reached the figure of 1,758,092.<sup>15</sup> Pursuant to the provisions of the regulation on Temporary Protection, no fees are charged for registration.

**Situation on the ground:** Despite an open-door policy to the Syrian refugees, the border entrance was closed since March. Irrespective of how the refugee has entered Turkey, the act of being registered is the paramount condition for Syrian refugees if they wish to enjoy the rights provided by the government. The massing of hundreds of thousands at frontier posts at one time, the incessant to and fro at the frontier, and the perception that the crisis will be speedily solved and the entrants will immediately return to their homes are the major reasons why refugees will not have themselves registered during their entry into Turkey. Some harbour the intention of saving money and then have recourse to human traffickers in order to cross over into Europe. Were they to register in Turkey, they mistakenly presume, they will be deported back to Turkey from whichever European country they happen to be in, on the basis of an agreement of readmission signed between Turkey and the EU. In sum, it is estimated that the number

<sup>15</sup> Erdoğan, M.M. (2015) *Türkiye'deki Suriyeliler: Toplumsal Kabul ve Uyum*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, p. 64.

## 3.2 Accommodation

**Legislation:** Refugees living outside of camps do not receive any assistance regarding accommodation. As Amnesty International also points out, the current legislation does permit governors to provide facilities to Syrians living outside of camps, but does not place any obligations on them.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> ULUSLARARASI AF ÖRGÜTÜ (2014) *Hayatta Kalma Mücadelesi:*

of refugees who refuse to register for different reasons is estimated to be high. Among the refugees interviewed in the course of the work carried out by ASAM and IMC in Antep, a majority found the process of registration very time-consuming or was not properly informed or waited for the approval of the community head (“muhtar”). Those who do not register are mostly men and the study notes that they fear that in case they register, information as to their whereabouts could be transmitted to Syria.<sup>16</sup>

The issue of registration makes the situation difficult and complicated both for government agents and NGO's in areas such as the counting of the number of refugees, especially those outside of camps, and the provision of services needed by the refugees.

It is reported that problems arise when registered refugees wish to exit or re-enter Turkey. Exit and re-entry require permission and this is reported to be close to impossible in most cases.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The information in question has been taken from the presentation made by ASAM and IMC. The report by ASAM and IMC was prepared in order to support the programming of the multi-purpose centres they run in Antep. Interviews were held with 178 households in 18 different neighbourhoods. The total number of people living in these households was cited as 1,025. There is no clear indication as to how much the sample represents the refugees living in Antep. Since some of the Syrian refugees are not registered, the exact number of refugees in Antep is not known, but various organisations have voiced the opinion that 400,000 Syrian refugees live in the city.

<sup>17</sup> This was voiced by Şenay Özden, a speaker at a session of the Çarşamba Seminerleri (Wednesday Seminars) organised by the Urban and Regional Planning Department of Mimar Sinan University. Özden cited the case of certain Syrian refugees who wish to travel to various countries to share the situation in Syria at conferences or panel discussions, but had great difficulty in exiting and re-entering Turkey.

**Situation on the ground:** Amnesty International, confirming AFAD's observation that 25 % of refugees living outside of camps find shelter in ruins and makeshift premises, stresses that in Akçakale, Urfa, Antep and Kilis a considerable number of refugees

*Türkiye'deki Suriye'den Gelen Mülteciler* - <http://amnesty.org.tr/uploads/Docs/hayatta-kalma-mucadelesi-turkiye'deki-suriye'den-gelen-multeciler720.pdf>, p. 22.

stay in tents or abandoned prison houses or buildings.<sup>19</sup> Research shows that several families huddle together in order to bring down the cost of rent and that the number of persons per room rises quite high. A majority of refugees live in inadequate and deplorable conditions. Landlords usually charge Syrians a higher rent than the average.

The standards of the premises change according to the income level of the family. However, it is pointed out that usually they will make do simply with a roof above their heads and that these premises are usually

<sup>19</sup> ULUSLARARASI AF ÖRGÜTÜ (2014) *Hayatta Kalma Mücadelesi: Türkiye'deki Suriye'den Gelen Mülteciler* - <http://amnesty.org.tr/uploads/Docs/hayatta-kalma-mucadelesi-turkiye'deki-suriye'den-gelen-multeciler720.pdf>, p. 28; AFAD, *Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Mülteciler: 2013 Saha Araştırması Sonuçları*, p. 9.

## 3.3 Right to Work and Terms of Employment

**Legislation:** For aliens working in Turkey is subject to the provisions of the Law on Work Permits for Aliens, Law No. 4817. However, obtaining a work permit through the procedure stipulated in this law, prepared in matter of fact for aliens who come to Turkey with the aim of working here, is a considerably bureaucratic and complicated process that can last three months from the first submission of an application. Furthermore, if one remembers that it is the employer who has to initiate the process and that this brings financial costs to the employer, it becomes quite obvious that this law does not correspond to the needs of Syrians in Turkey. In this context the Ministry of Labour and Social Security has started an expedited procedure that facilitates the access to work permits by Syrian refugees. And in the Regulation on Temporary Protection of November 2014, it was stipulated that refugees wielding temporary protection identity cards, in other words registered refugees, could submit an application for a permit to work in definite economic sectors, branches

not fit to live in.<sup>20</sup> The physical conditions of the homes of Syrians, usually located in the outskirts of cities, are patently inadequate with respect to the amenities for heating and hygiene, a kitchen or a bathroom rarely being available.<sup>21</sup> Especially in border regions, the increasing number of refugees combined with a dearth of housing has led to prohibitive rents. Both Amnesty International and the Turkish Medical Association (TTB) have reported that cases of epidemics have broken out due to inadequate standards and problems of access to water.

<sup>20</sup> İGAMDER (2013) *Sivil Toplum Örgütlerinin Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Mülteciler için Yaptıkları Çalışmalar ile İlgili Rapor* - <http://www.igamder.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Suriye-STK-Raporu.pdf>, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> TÜRK TABİBLERİ BİRLİĞİ (2014) *Suriyeli Sığınmacılar ve Sağlık Hizmetleri Raporu*, p. 40.

and geographical regions to be determined by the Council of Ministers.<sup>22</sup>

The latest development in this area occurred in February 2015. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security disclosed that it was planning to promote new legislation geared to Syrian refugees and that the newly planned Draft Law on the Employment of Aliens had entered its last phase. The draft law specifies the sectors in which Syrian refugees may be employed and the terms of such employment. For instance, news reports suggest that an enterprise can employ Syrian refugees only up to 10 per cent of its work force, although this restriction shall not apply to the farm sector and seasonal work.<sup>23</sup> Syrian refugees are barred from working in the tourism industry and

<sup>22</sup> In line with article 29 (titled “Services of Access to the Labour Market”) of the Regulation on Temporary Protection, the principles relating to the employment of Syrians are determined by the Council of Ministers upon the proposal made by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.dw.de/suriyelilere-calisma-izni-geliyor/a-18250816>



they are required to receive a permit from the ministry in order to be employed in areas such as engineering, health care, or education.

**Situation on the ground:** The issue of work is on the top of the list of the issues raised when the question of Syrian refugees is discussed. A great part of Syrians enter Turkey with very little money on them or in many cases without any, so that they have to earn money to make a living. The laws on employment, despite intentions to ameliorate them through certain arrangements, do not actually facilitate the employment of Syrians in the registered part of the economy. In an environment in which unemployment is on the rise and cheap labour abounds, what matters for the employer is low wages rather than whether or not the worker has a work permit.

There is a high number of Syrian refugees who look for jobs in the unregistered sector of the economy and who work in precarious jobs for low wages. Amnesty International state that throughout the research they have conducted, they have not come across one single Syrian refugee who has been able to receive a work permit and that they have received information to the same effect when they posed this question to NGOs.<sup>24</sup> Syrians work for low wages and much longer hours than the regular workday in many different sectors from textiles to construction and from agriculture to heavy industry.<sup>25</sup> These refugees do work that no one wants to do for extremely low wages.<sup>26</sup> The study conducted by Amnesty International has found that the wages received by Syrian refugees stand at 80 per cent of a worker from Tur-

key in Akçakale, between half and 80 per cent in Urfa, half in Hatay and Kilis, and only one third in Istanbul.<sup>27</sup> In addition to wage differentials, Syrians have to countenance problems such as not getting paid after the work is completed or rotten working conditions. In many cases Syrian refugees do not know what wages they are going to be paid when they take a job.<sup>28</sup> Since they work off the books, they cannot have recourse to legal procedures. Because wages are so low, all members of the family, including children, have to work, so that child labour is rampant.

Another issue to be taken into consideration in the area of work is the tension that arises between the local population and Syrian refugees in the context of cheap labour and unemployment. The entry of Syrians in the labour market as a supply of cheap labour leads a part of the rising jobless population in Turkey to see the Syrians as responsible for their plight and thus perceive Syrian refugees as a hostile group. This holds an important place in the perception of Syrians by the people of Turkey. In a study carried out by Erdoğan, to the question “Should Syrian refugees be accorded a work permit?”, 47 per cent of local people responded by saying “definitely not”.<sup>29</sup> In the mass assaults on Syrians in Antep, Maraş, and Adana carried out in the course of 2014, the discourse of “non tax-paying low wage worker that steals employment opportunities” to profile Syrians was prominent.<sup>30</sup>

It is of course employers who benefit from the predicament of low-wage worker in which Syrian refugees find themselves. The report jointly prepared by ORSAM and TESEV

concludes that Syrians have contributed to the investment environment in frontier provinces by making up for labour force shortage. In an interview she gave in February 2014, Fatma Şahin, mayor of Gaziantep, started a controversy by saying, “the 140.000 Syrians have been a blessing for the factories”.<sup>31</sup>

Erdoğan points out that in 2013, Antep, Kilis, and Adıyaman, three provinces where there

is a concentration of Syrian refugees, had both a growing labour market and a slower rise in unemployment than elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> Among the points stressed are the facts also that Syrian refugees have given economic life a boost in cities such as Antep and Kilis and that the cities in question are among those that enjoy a lower rate of unemployment than the average rate in Turkey.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Erdoğan, M.M. (2015) *Türkiye'deki Suriyeliler: Toplumsal Kabul ve Uyum*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, p. 80.

<sup>31</sup> Erdoğan, M.M. (2015) *Türkiye'deki Suriyeliler: Toplumsal Kabul ve Uyum*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, p. 80.

<sup>33</sup> Orhan, O. & Şenyücel, S. (2015) *Suriyeli Sığınmacıların Türkiye'ye Etkileri*, ORSAM & TESEV Raporu, İstanbul, p. 22.

## 3.4 Access to Education Services

**Legislation:** Turkey is a signatory to the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, which establishes education as a children's right irrespective of nationality. Alongside this, there exist two documents that regulate access to education services for Syrian refugees in Turkey. One is the *Regulation on Temporary Protection* dated November 2014, while the other is the *Circular on Education and Instruction for Aliens*. Article 28 of the Regulation on Temporary Protection, bearing the title “Education Services”, states that education activities organised for foreigners inside and outside the temporary accommodation centres shall be conducted under the supervision and responsibility of the Ministry of National Education (MEB). The Regulation also stipulates that procedures regarding the right to higher education shall be determined by the Higher Education Board (YÖK).

The Circular, for its part, provides more detailed information concerning educational services. There are provisions to the effect that registered Syrian children shall be provided educational services at schools affiliated to the MEB and at Temporary Education Centres formed to serve Syrians and that Education Commissions shall be set up at the Province and District levels for the placement of children to schools and their access

to their educational rights. However, neither in the Regulation, nor in the Circular is there any mention of the opening up of institutions that use the mother tongue as the language of instruction.

**Situation on the ground:** Going through studies carried out in the course of 2014, we see that very few Syrians have had access to education rights. The rate of schooling for Syrian refugees living outside of camps stands at 14 per cent and the UNHCR stresses the risk of the emergence of a lost generation since a great part of Syrian children have not been able to attend school for the last three years. Those Syrians that do attend school go predominantly to private schools established by municipalities or Syrian NGOs. A great many of these schools carry out their work in dilapidated buildings and suffer problems with respect to basic needs.<sup>34</sup> Very few and far between are private schools, such as the Alawael Syrian School in Istanbul, well-equipped and catering to the children

<sup>34</sup> A visit was paid to the Syrian Yasemin Schools in Esenyurt, İstanbul for observation purposes. Providing education extending from elementary school to the senior class of high school in a quite wornout and sombre apartment flat, the school worked in unenviable conditions. Another observation regarding the school was that classes opened saying prayers. When interviewed, the people in charge said that the funds that supported such schools came from Islamic organisations and institutions and therefore the schools accorded a greater weight than usual to Islamic instruction so as not to lose that support.

<sup>24</sup> ULUSLARARASI AF ÖRGÜTÜ (2014) *Hayatta Kalma Mücadelesi: Türkiye'deki Suriye'den Gelen Mülteciler* - <http://amnesty.org.tr/uploads/Docs/hayatta-kalma-mucadelesi-turkiye'deki-suriye'den-gelen-multeciler720.pdf>, p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> A book, titled “Mülteci İşçiler” (“Refugee Workers”) tells the life and work conditions of refugees from their own mouths, based on interviews made in İstanbul, Antep, Hatay, Adana, and İzmir with refugee workers. Akdeniz E. (2014) *Mülteci İşçiler*, Evrensel Yayınları, İstanbul.

<sup>26</sup> The ORSAM & TESEV report points out that the employment gap has closed in areas requiring unskilled labour where no one wishes to work.

<sup>27</sup> ULUSLARARASI AF ÖRGÜTÜ (2014) *Hayatta Kalma Mücadelesi: Türkiye'deki Suriye'den Gelen Mülteciler* - <http://amnesty.org.tr/uploads/Docs/hayatta-kalma-mucadelesi-turkiye'deki-suriye'den-gelen-multeciler720.pdf>, p. 25.

<sup>28</sup> İNSAN HAKLARI DERNEĞİ, *Yok Sayılanlar: Kamp Dışında Yaşayan Suriye'den Gelen Sığınmacılar İstanbul Örneği* - <http://www.ihd.org.tr/images/pdf/2013/YokSayılanlar.pdf>, p. 38.

<sup>29</sup> Erdoğan, M.M. (2015) *Türkiye'deki Suriyeliler: Toplumsal Kabul ve Uyum*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, p. 82.

<sup>30</sup> [http://tr.sputniknews.com/rsfmradio.com/2014\\_07\\_18/suriyeli-siginmacilara-yonelik-saldirilar-provokasyon-mu/](http://tr.sputniknews.com/rsfmradio.com/2014_07_18/suriyeli-siginmacilara-yonelik-saldirilar-provokasyon-mu/); <http://www.sendika.org/2014/07/marasta-suriyeli-multecilere-linc-girisimi/>

of high-income, well-off families.<sup>35</sup> The ratio of those that attend state schools affiliated to MEB is quite low. Private Syrian schools do not enjoy any support from MEB, but on the other hand are not shut down either. The Regulation makes no mention of schools that are not run by the state.<sup>36</sup>

Among reasons cited for not attending school, one finds economic difficulties, bureaucratic obstacles, and lack of information.<sup>37</sup> The bureaucratic barriers encountered by Mavi Kalem, one of the organisations interviewed, during the support they extended to two children proves that the process can act as a deterrent even to those who speak Turkish. Syrian refugees accord priority to meeting food and shelter expenses and, important as they may deem education, it is inevitably relegated to a secondary place. According to the study by BİLGİ ÇOÇA,

<sup>35</sup> A low level of schooling is not only true for Istanbul, but also for places like Antep with a heavy concentration of refugee population. For instance, the report prepared by ASAM in July 2014 for Antep together with IMC shows that whereas 78 per cent of the households interviewed had children at school age, only 16 per cent of these children attended school. Of the Syrian children who attended school, 80 per cent went to private Syrian schools and only 17 per cent attended state schools, with another 3 per cent going to private schools. The fees charged by Syrian schools is, on the average, around 150 TL per quarter, but transportation might go up to 50-100 TL. Costs vary from school to school.

<sup>36</sup> ULUSLARARASI AF ÖRGÜTÜ (2014) *Hayatta Kalma Mücadelesi: Türkiye'deki Suriye'den Gelen Mülteciler* - <http://amnesty.org.tr/uploads/Docs/hayatta-kalma-mucadelesi-turkiye'deki-suriye'den-gelen-multeciler720.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Another important source on education is Dorman, S. (2014) *Educational Needs Assessment for Urban Syrian Refugees in Turkey*, [http://yuva.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Needs-assessment-report-Final\\_YUVA.pdf](http://yuva.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Needs-assessment-report-Final_YUVA.pdf).

the families of children who wish to attend school more often than not do not have an idea as to how children are registered with schools. Families can also meet with obstacles when they go to have their children registered, such as a demand made for residence documentation, the reluctance of school administrators etc. Children who do attend school, on the other hand, experience other difficulties such as language or cultural adaptation; it is not infrequent that children should be met with discrimination on the part of both teachers and students. The study carried out by BİLGİ ÇOÇA points out that Syrian students are given low grades so as not to raise the ire of the local students and their parents or that Turkish students do not play with Syrian children and problems arise with respect to coexistence. In the same vein, Amnesty International stresses problems of language and cultural adaptation that children suffer at school. Informing and supporting both administrative staff and teachers at schools attended by Syrian students concerning legislation and procedure emerges as a serious need.

In Syrian schools, the same curriculum as that used in Syria is used, minus the part of the curriculum concerning the Assad government and the current situation in the country. Syrian children are taught as if they were going to go back to Syria and no effort is spent for their integration into life in Turkey.

cess of Syrian refugees to health care under article 27 of the Regulation. In order to enjoy health care services, Syrian refugees must be registered with AFAD. Thanks to the cooperation between AFAD and the Local Chamber of Pharmacists, Syrians can purchase their medicine at 20 per cent of total price, as do citizens of Turkey covered by social security.

**Situation on the ground:** Although legislation provides free access to health care services for Syrian refugees, the situation on the ground does not permit such easy access. TTB characterises the access of Syrian refugees to health care services as “chaotic”.<sup>38</sup> Both the TTB report and other reports prepared on the actual situation of Syrian refugees point out that Syrian refugees suffer health problems due to accommodation and nutrition conditions. Diseases that have disappeared from the medical scene, such as polio, are visible in the case of Syrian refugees. Women and children are the most vulnerable sections of the population. For instance Antep went on record as the province with the highest incidence of measles in 2013.<sup>39</sup>

Syrian refugees are not informed about their rights in the sphere of health care services. The fact that services are provided exclusively at health care institutions makes access more difficult and restricts the number of refugees that make a request for such services. When requests are made, the level of access varies according to hospital capacity or even at times on the attitude of hospital staff in different cities. The question of language, the lack of sufficient amount of staff in hospitals, the fact that staff working at health care institutions have not been

<sup>38</sup> TÜRK TABİBLERİ BİRLİĞİ (2014) *Suriyeli Sığınmacılar ve Sağlık Hizmetleri Raporu*, İstanbul.

<sup>39</sup> Orhan, O. & Şenyücel, S. (2015) *Suriyeli Sığınmacıların Türkiye'ye Etkileri*, ORSAM & TESEV Raporu, İstanbul, s. 20.

informed concerning the rights of Syrians regarding access to health care services all contribute to difficulties. In cases of chronic disease or where treatment is costly enjoying health care services becomes almost impossible. Other areas where services are inadequate include psychosocial support and support for the amputated.

The report prepared by ORSAM and TESEV points out that in border cities with a heavy concentration of Syrians, where the problem of capacity was already felt even before, with the advent of an extra number of patients the problem has become more visible and that hospitals have great difficulty in coping with both local patients and Syrian. Negative attitudes are on the rise in both health care staff, who have to look after an increased number of patients without any improvements in the number of personnel or in infrastructure, and the local population, who feel that they cannot receive an adequate health care service because of the Syrians.

Word is running that health care staff from among the Syrian refugees have started to tend to patients for wages as low as 30 Turkish lira. Newspapers have reported that Syrian doctors have started to receive patients for very low fees and are employed for very low wages by private hospitals.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.asistanhekim.org/2014/11/suriyeli-doktorlar-tehlike-saciyor/>

## 3.5 Access to Health Care Services

**Legislation:** Syrian refugees are better off with respect to access to health care services than other groups of refugees. The right to free access to health care, which covered in early 2013 only those who lived in the border provinces, was broadened to the entire population of Syrian refugees in September 2013. The Regulation on Temporary Protection preserves this right and takes up the ac-

## 3.6 Communicating with the Local Population

During an interview on our visit to Antep, we learned that the refugees living in the city renamed the various avenues of the city. For instance Republic Avenue is called Revolution Avenue. When Syrians wish to meet on that avenue and mention the name Revolution Avenue they know which avenue it is. They live with the local population in the same city, but they have a different life;

the same avenue has different names for the two groups. The worsening negative attitude towards them in the local population as they stay on results in their leading different lives from the natives.

There is, no doubt, a multiplicity of factors that determine the relationship between the local population and Syrian refugees:



differences of language, culture, lifestyle are those that first come to mind. However, the existence of tensions in the border regions where differences in lifestyle etc. are relatively less marked shows that cultural differences are not sufficient to explain the matter.

First of all, having to work off the books, Syrian refugees are seen as a threat by the locals as unemployment rises. The rise in rents as a result of the increase in population in cities where there is a heavy concentration of Syrians is of course seen as an opportunity by landlords, but makes life more difficult for the local population at large. Marriages with young Syrians, sometimes at ages where they would be considered as children or instances of polygamy are practices that draw the ire of the locals according to research done in cities like Kilis, Urfa, and Hatay.<sup>41</sup> The demand for the provision of services for a higher population without any supplementary support in terms of staff or infrastructure creates, particularly in cities with a heavy concentration of Syrian refugees, adverse feelings and thoughts in both the local population at large and in the ranks of the health care, education and local government administrations that cater to these additional needs.

One can multiply the causes at will. However, what is clear is that with the turning of what in 2011 was considered to be a temporary welcoming into a permanent problem, and at a rising level with the influx of ever newer refugees, the tensions between the local population and Syrian refugees rise more and more. Syrian refugees evaluate the attitude of the locals in the beginning as charitable, but point out that with the passage of time this attitude has changed.<sup>42</sup> The news received from city after city in July 2014 of attacks on Syrian refugees show us that solidarity is no longer in the air and

<sup>41</sup> Orhan, O. & Şenyücel, S. (2015) *Suriyeli Sığınmacıların Türkiye'ye Etkileri*, ORSAM & TESEV Raporu, İstanbul, s. 16.

<sup>42</sup> Orhan, O. & Şenyücel, S. (2015) *Suriyeli Sığınmacıların Türkiye'ye Etkileri*, ORSAM & TESEV Raporu, İstanbul, s. 22.

that denigration and disdain is on the rise, with locals becoming more and more negative in their attitude toward Syrian refugees. The fact that Syrian refugees shut up in their own lives because of their fears from the locals, in turn, restricts both their access to rights and their integration into society at large. To take one example, the ORSAM and TESEV report points out that the visibility of Syrians on the streets of Antep has declined in the aftermath of the July 2014 events. Although rumours abound to the effect that Syrians violate law and order, when one looks at the legal records, one can see that the grievances come from the Syrian refugees themselves. The recent case of arson committed on a house where Syrians live in Başakşehir Güvercintepe in Istanbul is an indicator of the rise in negative attitudes and tensions.<sup>43</sup>

It is also important to point out that there are different perceptions in border cities with a high concentration of Syrian refugees. In cities where there is no problem of linguistic communication and where relations of kinship exist between the two sides, cities such as Hatay and Urfa or in Kurdish provinces, solidarity is strong between the local population and Syrian refugees. However, in certain border cities, the number of Syrian refugees soars almost as high as half the population of the city. As time goes by, difficult as they already were, conditions of life are becoming ever more arduous and negative perceptions and attitudes vis-a-vis Syrian refugees are growing.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> [http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/basaksehirde\\_kavga\\_suriyelilerin\\_kaldigi\\_evi\\_atese\\_verdiler-1353506](http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/basaksehirde_kavga_suriyelilerin_kaldigi_evi_atese_verdiler-1353506)

<sup>44</sup> Recently, before the elections the attitude toward Syrians hardened further. Opposition parties displayed a negative attitude toward or at least ignored Syrians, who, the reasoning goes, were admitted by the AKP. The most positive attitude came from Selahattin Demirtaş, the leader of the HDP. In response to a question that was posed to him during his visit to Boğaziçi University, he said that Syrians who wish to stay on in Turkey should be granted all their rights, including the right to citizenship. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/28977074.asp>.

## 4 NGO'S THAT CONDUCT WORK WITH SYRIAN REFUGEES

Turkey is the country that harbours the highest number of Syrians outside of Syria.<sup>45</sup> Despite all the defects and shortcomings, it may be admitted that the open-door policy of the government and the steps taken concerning the access of Syrian refugees to health care services are positive. Various organisations assess the conditions provided by the 22 camps in 11 cities of Turkey that provide shelter to close to 250.000 Syrian refugees as considerably good, given the conditions in refugee camps around the world. Doubtless, it is not healthy to live in camps for over four years even if Syrian refugees were provided with the best conceivable conditions. However, the great majority of the Syrian population in Turkey live outside of camps, under much more difficult conditions. Those Syrians who live outside of camps, whose number is said to reach 1.8 million, are trying to cling to life with the support of the local population and NGO's, as well as through their own striving.

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In this section, we provide a brief survey of the work carried out by the major NGO's that support Syrian refugees who live outside of camps. Ever since 2011, when the influx of Syrian refugees started, many international and local NGO's have been doing work with Syrian refugees in different spheres ranging from humanitarian assistance to culture and art. Although the major NGO's that work in the field are aware of each other's activities, no coordination may

<sup>45</sup> ULUSLARARASI AF ÖRGÜTÜ (2014) *Hayatta Kalma Mücadelesi: Türkiye'deki Suriye'den Gelen Mülteciler* - <http://amnesty.org.tr/uploads/Docs/hayatta-kalma-mucadelesi-turkiye'deki-suriye'den-gelen-multeciler720.pdf>, p. 6.

be said to exist in this area. There is a general lack of information on the concerned NGO's, whose number is constantly on the increase, and the work they are accomplishing. No comprehensive survey exists unfortunately on basic issues such as in which areas these NGO's work, who they support, their capacity, the projects they run, the source of their funding, their partners, the difficulties they encounter, and their needs. The only study we came across in this sense was the IGAMDER study undertaken in 2012 in conjunction with 12 NGO's. The sheer fact that in Antep alone over 100 NGO's are said to be active in supporting Syrian refugees shows us the breadth of the area. Reaching out to the entire gamut of NGO's working in this field and providing an updated and full survey of such a dynamically developing area requires long-term teamwork. This report aims no more than to make a modest contribution to the area by assembling the work of the NGO's active in the area under certain headings.

The different areas of expertise of the NGO's active in this field, as well as the different priority needs of Syrian refugees, lead to a situation where a wide variety of activities is undertaken. In line with this, the work carried out by the NGO's interviewed was classified under the following headings: legal and social support and counselling, humanitarian assistance, health care, education, vocational training, multi-purpose centres, culture and art, and finally conferences/workshops/training courses. Brief information is provided for each. In this section also, general observations on NGO's contacted during the study will be shared.

## 4.1 Legal and Social Support and Counselling

It is important to inform Syrian refugees about their rights in Turkey and their access to these rights. In the actual situation we see that many Syrians are not soundly informed about their rights in Turkey and how they can access these rights. There are many organisations that both inform Syrians about their legal position and support them with respect to their access to basic rights such as health care and education.

**HCA** works to provide legal assistance together with the Urfa Bar Association. Refugee commissions are established in the bar associations of the region. It was pointed out that there were lawyers working in this area for quite a long time and that work was being carried out regarding legal support in the bar associations of Urfa, Batman, and Diyarbakır.

**LAW CLINIC OF ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY LAW FACULTY:** The Law Clinic was established to provide students of the Law Faculty with information and experience in the area of refugee law. At present, 67 students are involved with the very recently established clinic and the clinic does not have a special budget. Furthermore, a certificate programme under the title Refugee School has also started work within the Law Faculty. The programme aims to support the work of undergraduate and graduate students of law, international relations, and public administration in the area of refugee law.

**MÜLTECİ-DER** extends support and counselling services to all refugees in Turkey, not only Syrians. Their activities can be summed up as follows: individual legal support and counselling with respect to procedures; monitoring activities concerning border and repatriation centres, the determination of rights violations, counselling and support on forced deportation, violations of the repatriation ban and access to asylum; support for

access to basic rights; awareness raising and development regarding refugee and immigrant rights; advocacy and lobbying activities, and capacity building.

**HRDF** has been working with refugees for a long time in partnership with the UNHCR. It has accumulated considerable knowledge and experience in particular in the areas of psychosocial support and counselling on legal procedure. Through its Refugee Support Units established in seven cities, Istanbul and Ankara to begin with, it extends legal and psychosocial support to all refugees in Turkey. Syrian refugees can also benefit from the support of such units. In the multi-purpose centre it has established very recently in Esenler, Istanbul, HRDF continues to provide counselling services to Syrian refugees.

**ASAM** is supported by the UNHCR and has 24 offices in 19 cities. In these offices, Syrian refugees are offered psychosocial support and counselling services regarding their rights and obligations, as well as counselling services regarding access to basic rights such as health care and education. On the basis of the project named “Self-Counselling”, supported by the United Kingdom Embassy in Ankara, bilingual guidebooks are prepared geared to the needs of asylum-seekers and refugees living in Mersin, Adana, İzmir, Eskişehir, Çorum and Kırşehir. The brochures in question provide information on the rights of refugees, the instances where they can receive assistance when they are in trouble, information concerning NGO’s active in that province and other information for not only Syrian but all refugees in Turkey. There is also a web site prepared for the brochures: it is possible to access the brochures at the address [www.refugeinturkey.org](http://www.refugeinturkey.org). Alongside the field offices of ASAM, the multi-purpose support centres established in Istanbul, Sakarya, Izmir and Antep extend legal and social counselling services to refugees.

**SUPPORT TO LIFE** provides legal support, case management and orientation services, and psychosocial counselling services within the framework of its *Protection and Psychosocial Support Programme*. They make sure that they extend support not only to refugees but to the local people as well. In general, they focus on youth.

**ICMC** is involved with relocating refugees in Turkey to the USA. To be relocated in a third country, refugees have to be directed to ICMC through the UNHCR. Because the UNHCR does not admit individual applications as a result of the temporary protection extended in Turkey to Syrian refugees, it carries out no activity regarding Syrian refugees at this time. However, the ICMC believe that in the period ahead Syrians will be included in their activity of relocation.

**MALUMAT TOPLUM BİLGİLENDİRME MERKEZİ** plans to extend Syrian refugees information and counselling services under the title of Information Support Activities in the centre opened with the support of IMC in May 2015. A preliminary study was done to find out in what areas Syrian refugees needed information and areas were determined for which information kits were deemed to be necessary. The areas in question, in line with the findings of the study, were classified as health care, education, the legal status of Syrians, transportation and logistics, cultural and social life, income and employment, and daily life. Bilingual documents that will provide information in these areas are in preparation. *Malumat* believes that there exists a very strong network of communica-

tion between Syrian refugees and that what is important is to feed correct information into this network. *Malumat* has also formed, under the heading *Koruma Çalışmaları (Protection Work)*, a team of two that talks and provides orientation to Syrian refugees who need legal and psychosocial support. The team plans to work mainly with women.

**AKADEMİ LİSAN VE İLMİ ARAŞTIRMALAR DERNEĞİ** assists refugees in the areas of access to educational rights, interpreter support, or establishing associations, from its office in Fatih, Istanbul. The founding aim of the association is to spread the learning of Arabic, but because many refugees who live in the Fatih district have come to seek help, they started to orient refugees towards relevant instances. They do not wield any budget funds for this kind of work.

**GÖÇ-DER** do not carry out their work concerning Syrians in the framework of a special project. Since 2013, they have been directing Syrian refugees to instances such as hospitals or governors’ offices that the refugees need to contact.

**KAOS GL** explains that they have no special activities geared to Syrian refugees, but that since 2007 they have been supporting LGBT refugees. They characterise their support as legal and social counselling.

**TİHV** have not carried out special work concerning Syrian refugees, but Syrian refugees who are victims of torture are being directed to them and are being extended support.

## 4.2 Humanitarian Assistance

Humanitarian assistance is an issue of priority for many organisations. There exist organisations that work to cater to the basic needs of Syrian refugees, from basic foodstuffs and clothing to blankets and hygienic materials. However, this assistance can reach a limited number of refugees and it does not seem to

be possible to carry it out for an indefinite period.

**HCA** has sent 2,500 beds and 500 hygienic kits to the temporary admission centre in Nusaybin, Mardin reserved for Yazidis. In addition, they have delivered aid packages to Suruç for 700 persons.



**IBC** have been distributing since 2013 aid packages consisting of goods for basic needs, such as hygienic materials and foodstuffs in the so-called *Children Friendly Areas* it has established. In addition, in 2013 they served hot food and distributed food packages to more than 3.500 families. In Kilis, they gave out a 230 TL cash aid to 2.600 families as a one-off activity. In Urfa they carried out work to meet the hygiene needs of around 60.000 Syrians. Household goods, beds and linen were distributed to 8.000 families.<sup>46</sup>

**SUPPORT TO LIFE** regularly extends cash assistance to 4.300 families every month under their *Cash Assistance Programme*. In conducting this work, they use the so-called vulnerability criteria that they have developed and international organisations such as the WFP or the UNHCR have approved of. DKH (Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe), IOM, and the UNHCR are their strategic partners in the running of this programme. They state that every month a total of 25.000 people benefit from this cash assistance.

Through *the Community Centres and Field Offices* they have established, the association runs activities of humanitarian assistance not only in Urfa and Hatay, where these centres and offices happen to be, but in Batman and Suruç as well.<sup>47</sup> In Batman and Suruç, they deliver assistance in kind, cash assistance, and psychosocial support to those who come from Kobane and to the Yazidis. Within the framework of the cash assistance/emergency assistance, they distribute winter clothes, fresh fruits, kitchen utensils and food packages to refugee families. Among their activities one finds also such work as setting up kitchen and bathroom units and distributing heating materials. In Batman they have provided insulation and heating for tents and built two ground furnaces.

<sup>46</sup> The humanitarian assistance work of the International Blue Cross is conducted mainly in Iraq, with an emphasis on the Turkomans and the Yazidis. Hot food, food packages, and the reconstruction of schools are among the items.

<sup>47</sup> Support to Life have four Community Centres, three of them in Urfa and one in Hatay, and two field offices, one in Urfa and the other in Hatay.

3.700 Syrians benefited from the work carried out in Suruç and Batman.

**DOCTORS WORLDWIDE** distributed in 2013 the zakat fitrah collected during the month of Ramadan to 400 Syrian families in the Yayladağı and Reyhanlı districts of the province of Hatay and to 1.000 families in 2014. In these two districts as well, 5.000 blankets were distributed to Syrian families.

**TOG** carried out aid campaigns through its branches at Siirt, Mersin, Malatya, Mardin, Harran, Şırnak, Dicle, Avcılar in Istanbul, Mustafa Kemal University, Dokuz Eylül University, Muğla, and Ordu, collecting clothing and delivering these to Syrian refugees. They are planning to develop more durable projects in the future.

**STGM** stated during the interview that assistance- and faith-focussed associations based in cities with a high concentration of Syrian refugees centred their work on the latter.

A study carried out by **İGAMDER** in 2013 points out that around 60 NGO's joined hands under the name **ŞANLIURFA PLAT-FORMU** in order to extend food assistance to Syrian refugees. Associations such as **İHH**, **MAZLUM-DER**, **KİMSE YOK MU** have come together in this platform under the leadership of **DENİZ FENERİ DERNEĞİ**. However, they point out that the assistance is aimed for the population beyond the frontier, which would, they hope, put a stop to the influx of refugees. Organisations such as the Istanbul, Kayseri, and Ankara Metropolitan Municipalities, Eğitim-Bir Sen and the Medina Endowment in Nuremberg, Germany have supported the assistance. The **İGAMDER** study takes up another NGO that carries out work directed to Syrian refugees living outside of camps, **İHD**, the Human Rights Association. The Antep Branch is said to undertake the task of monitoring the fair distribution of the aid without any discrimination.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> İGAMDER (2013) *Sivil Toplum Örgütlerinin Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Mülteciler için Yaptıkları Çalışmalar ile İlgili Rapor* - <http://www.igamder.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Suriye-STK-Raporu.pdf>, p. 14.

## 4.3 Health Care

The existing legislation enshrines significant rights to Syrian refugees in the area of health care. However, when we look at the comprehensive reports prepared by organisations with expertise in health care, such as TTB or the Psychiatry Association of Turkey, we see that Syrian refugees have difficulties in accessing the right to health care, as a result of problems arising from lack of information, language, and discrimination.

**HCA** started its work oriented to Syrian refugees in Istanbul, upon the proposal of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). At the beginning the work was done in the areas of psychosocial support and medical care given in extreme emergency situations. Upon the publication of the circular of the Ministry of Health, an office was set up in Kilis to provide primary health care services. MSF extended financial and technical support to this office. It is pointed out that, since 2012, 60.000 refugees applied to this office to receive medical support, in addition to the psychological support that the office has extended to 35.000 to 40.000 people. In the Kilis office, 16 Turkish citizens work and additionally there are 24 Syrian volunteers. It was possible to obtain a work permit for only one physician and this single case owed to the fact that the physician in question was a graduate of a medical school in Istanbul (Cerrahpaşa) and so had no equivalence problems. For those physicians who have had their education in Syria, obtaining equivalence and a work permit is nearly impossible. That is why they work in the Kilis office as volunteers. There are a total of four physicians who work as volunteers in the office. In psychological support the services of an interpreter are needed, which reduces the quality of the work done.

**IBC** has a 52-bed hospital in Kilis, which had been set up temporarily with the help of Malteser International, but later became a permanent institution. The hospital provides medical aid and support to Syrian refugees

that have been harmed by the war. Serious cases can be treated at the hospital. In addition, it was pointed out that through intermittent campaigns, assistance regarding prostheses, wheel chairs, and clutches has been carried out.<sup>49</sup>

**SUPPORT TO LIFE** extends psychosocial support to refugees in the framework of their programme *Protection and Psychosocial Support*. They include within the concept psychosocial support, in addition to support given concerning mental health, social support, art therapy and game playing activities, vocational training, and language courses.

**DOCTORS WORLDWIDE** has *Health Care Stations* in Yayladağı, Hatay and in Suruç, Urfa. They explain that the health care station in Yayladağı works five days a week and the 11-person team, including two administrative staff, serve 150 patients on the average every day. The medicine prescribed is supplied free of charge at the pharmacy of Doctors Worldwide. As of December 2014, the number of patients served at the health care station had exceeded 30.000, cumulatively calculated. The health care station in Suruç, Urfa was opened relatively recently, in September 2014. Three doctors serve at this station. Approximately 10.000 patients have been served at this station since September and 600 persons received inoculations of measles and polio. What is more, 69 refugee children were circumcised in Yayladağı in 2013 and 22 in Halkalı, Istanbul. 800 Syrian children were brought within the compass of psychosocial support in collaboration with **HAYAT VAKFI**.

**HALKLARIN KÖPRÜSÜ DERNEĞİ**<sup>50</sup> con-

<sup>49</sup> The International Blue Cross have five health care centres in Northern Syria, active in camps that had been established previously.

<sup>50</sup> We were not able to interview Halkların Köprüsü Derneği. However, the association is extremely active, particularly in the area of health care, and that is why we included it in this report. The information here was obtained from their web site and their Facebook page.



ducts health scans for Syrian refugees in Izmir and the environs through community visits.

## 4.4 Education

The rate of schooling is very low for Syrian refugee children living outside of camps. Limited access to education rights, language, discrimination, as well as the fact that all family members have to work because of inadequate income, are among the factors that lead to this low level of schooling. The major topics for debate in the coming period are bound to be how to approach the schools opened by Syrians themselves and the issue of instruction in the mother tongue.

**BİLGİ ÇOÇA** has been doing work for Syrian refugees for a year now and is mainly focussed on education. Two projects have already been completed and there is an ongoing one. The first is the project *Nilüfer Children's Park*, run jointly with **BİLGİ GÖÇ**, Istanbul Bilgi University Faculty of Architecture, and the Psychology M.A. programme. This project encompassed the work done with children begging or being forced to beg on the streets around the Santal campus of Istanbul Bilgi University, in the form of work on literacy campaigns, art and psychosocial support for these children in May-October 2014. It was realised with a grant of 3,000 Turkish lira.

The second is a research project done by the organisation between December 2014 and February 2015. The target was to bring out into the open the needs of teachers at schools to which Syrian children go in the districts of Kağıthane, Beyoğlu, and Bağcılar in Istanbul. During the study, in response to the requests made, two-hour seminars were organised with the purpose of empowering teachers, seminars in which the topics were the position in which Syrian children find themselves, the rights they have, and the services they can access. In addition to these seminars, in Kağıthane

The newly established association is quite active in the area of health care.

and Beyoğlu, children were involved in focus group activity in which the aim was to see problems from their eyes. The whole project was conducted with the cooperation of **KAĞITHANE KAYMAKAMLIĞI** (District Governor's Office) and **BEYOĞLU BELEDİYESİ** (Municipality), with support from the Canadian Consulate. The policy document that was drawn through the compilation of the results of this research can be acquired from BİLGİ ÇOÇA.

The ongoing project is to translate into Arabic the animation film on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**MAVİ KALEM** offers Turkish courses to Syrian women living in the Fener-Balat area of Istanbul with the support of volunteers. The courses were attended by 8 children between the ages of 6 to 12 and 12 women between 19 and 45. In addition, the association has also supported the schooling procedure of two students, the acquisition of equivalence documentation from the Ministry of National Education (MEB), the acquisition of temporary identification cards and the registering of students at state schools.

**IBC** does work in the sphere of education that also includes extramural education. It is possible to summarise its work under three headings: *Children Friendly Areas*, cooperation with the MEB and vocational training at the *Kilis Community Centre*.

The Foundation has what it calls *Children Friendly Areas*, centres serving children that it has established with **UNHCR** partnership. Of these it has four in Kilis, two in Antep, five in Urfa, and two in Suruç. It was said that 1,650 children benefit from these centres in Kilis, 800 in Antep, 6,200 in Urfa, and 1,200 in Suruç. The age range of children

benefitting from the centres extends from 3 to 15. In these centres psychosocial support for post-war trauma is extended and Turkish courses taught.

*The MEB* has turned over seven schools in Kilis and eight in Antep to IBC. It is IBC that looks after the recruitment process of teachers at these schools. Six of the schools in Antep are still active, but two have shut down. The salaries of the teachers at these

## 4.5 Vocational Education

Because work in the area of formal education remains on the back burner as a result of the difficulties in the material well-being of the Syrians and also because it requires much more structural change, it may be said that NGO's predominantly focus on vocational training, which is expected to raise employment opportunities for Syrians.

Work related to vocational training is mostly carried out in multi-purpose centres opened by a variety of organisations in order to serve Syrian refugees. Among the organisations interviewed, those who offer vocational training at the multi-purpose centres they have opened are the following: **IBC**, **ASAM**, **MALUMAT**, **YUVA**, and **SUPPORT TO LIFE**. In the multi-purpose centres these organisations have opened, language courses (English, Turkish, Arabic) are offered, as well as courses in computing and other areas demanded by the refugees themselves, such as hairdressing.

Two NGO's do not own a multi-purpose centre, but offer limited vocational training and work on employment: **İZMİR MÜZİSYENLERİ DERNEĞİ** and **AKADEMİ LİSAN VE İLMİ ARAŞTIRMALAR DERNEĞİ**.

**İZMİR MÜZİSYENLERİ DERNEĞİ** has set up a production workshop in Suruç, with sewing machines and textiles materials collected in Izmir in order to be able to support production processes of refugee women.

schools, the cleaning and heating costs, the costs for clothing and stationery for the Syrian children are all met by IBC. They do not interfere with the curriculum. The main support goes to teachers' salaries and materials. The salaries of 163 Syrian teachers are being paid in Antep, the figure being 128 for Kilis, and 24 for Urfa. It was stated that the total of teachers' salaries paid amounts to approximately 500.000 Turkish lira.

This workshop was actively run for three and a half months.

**AKADEMİ LİSAN VE İLMİ ARAŞTIRMALAR DERNEĞİ**, originally set up to support and develop Arabic language courses, wishes to do a project in the domain of employment. Together with Suriye Eğitim Hizmetleri ve İstisare Derneği and the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation University Fine Arts Faculty they have prepared a project named "Arabic Design Arts Centre for Employment". However, the application they submitted to the İstanbul Kalkınma Ajansı was not accepted, so the search for funding is continuing.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> İstanbul Kalkınma Ajansı made an appeal for studies that would describe the existing situation and make recommendations with respect to Syrian refugees. However, later, when the Istanbul Governor's Office stated that public institutions under its authority were conducting this type of work and that it would not be right to carry out redundant work, the appeal was repealed.

## 4.6 Multi-purpose Centres

Multi-purpose community centres, as well as being spaces where vocational training is provided, also act to serve Syrian refugees by providing language courses, counselling centres and psychosocial support. The major organisations that own multi-purpose centres in cities with a high concentration of refugees are as follows: **IBC**, **ASAM**, **HRDF**, **YUVA**, **SUPPORT TO LIFE** and **MALUMAT**.

**IBC** provides training in a variety of areas, starting with Turkish, English and computers at the Community Centre in Kilis, opened in 2013 with the collaboration of Malteser, the German charitable organisation. They also teach French and German when there is request. It is said that the main purpose of the training is to enhance employment opportunities for Syrians and to develop their adaptation to life in Turkey. Over 3.000 Syrians have benefited from these courses since the opening. The centre also offers Arabic courses to Turks who wish to learn the language. It is said that around 100 persons have benefited from this training. In addition, the centre offers training and activities in areas such as handicrafts, music, painting, and children's pastime. Other areas for training include health care, first aid, cooking courses, graphic design etc.

Moreover, IBC also has *Children Friendly Areas*, centres that serve children. Of these it has four in Kilis, two in Antep, five in Urfa, and two in Suruç. In these centres established with UNHCR partnership, it was said that 1,650 children benefit from these centres in Kilis, 800 in Antep, 6,200 in Urfa, and 1,200 in Suruç. The age range of children benefitting from the centres extends from 3 to 15. In these centres psychosocial support for post-war trauma is extended and Turkish courses taught.

**YUVA** runs two community centres, one in Nizip, Antep and the other one in Kırıkhan, Hatay. In these community centres, training and psychosocial support are provided

to adolescents and adults. The association aims for a harmonious relationship between Syrians and local people and normalisation of the psychological state of Syrians by helping them to overcome the trauma they have gone through. Courses teaching vocational skills so as to assist the integration of Syrians in work life and to support capacity building on their part are organised as well. The community centres have selected a target audience of above-15 Syrian refugees and citizens of Turkey. In order to encourage women's participation in the activities, child friendly spaces have also been provided. Yuva has been active since 2013 and approximately 14.000 people benefit from its activities each year. While the number of people who attend the training sessions is cited as 5.000, the remaining 9.000 is said to follow psychosocial support programmes. The community centres are supported by the German Ministry of Development and Cooperation and the IMC.

**ASAM** has 24 field offices in 19 cities. Apart from these offices, they have one centre each in Istanbul and Antep named "Multi-pronged Support Centre for Syrian Refugees". Having opened its doors in June 2014, the Antep office provides services in a four-storey building and employs 43 people. They are now preparing, in response to increasing demand, to open a second centre in Antep. Psychosocial support, nurse and health care directing services, cash assistance, language courses, and vocational training are offered at the centre. The Multi-pronged Support Centre for Syrian Refugees in Istanbul, on the other hand, opened in January 2014 and, like the Antep office, it provides support for Syrian refugees in many areas ranging from legal and social counselling to vocational training.

**SUPPORT TO LIFE** has established four community centres, three in Hatay and one in Urfa. At this point it provides services at two community centres. *The Cash Assis-*

*tance Programme and Protection Activities*, through which psychosocial support is also extended, go in tandem with each other. A community centre is visited each year by 6.000 refugees, some for a one-off activity, others on a more continuous basis. In the course of 2015, they intend to open a community centre on the Asian side of Istanbul. They say they will provide protection services and carry out rights-based work at this centre. Offering legal assistance and informing refugees on their rights will be their priority areas.

**HRDF** offer psychological and social counselling services to refugees at the centre they opened in Esenler, Istanbul in December 2014. Four social workers as well as seven interpreters work at the centre. Being

of recent vintage, the centre is planning to diversify its activities.

**MALUMAT** started preparations in September 2014. The centre aims to develop the use by Syrians and locals of the services offered and to increase the quality of life of both Syrians and local people. Opened in May 2015, the centre provides services in two languages, Arabic and Turkish, and keep its doors open not only for Syrian refugees, but also for underprivileged residents of Antep. They intend to carry out the work under three headings: (a) information support activities; (b) protection activities; (c) youth activities. The centre will have more than 20 people working for it. It will be run on the basis of support to be received from **IMC**.

## 4.7 Culture and Art

In the work that they do with Syrian refugees, a great majority of the organisations that are active in the domain of culture and art take care to develop activities that are susceptible to bring locals and Syrians together in practice. The NGO's that state they do work in this area include **SKYGD**, **İZMİR MÜZİSYENLERİ DERNEĞİ**, **KIRKAYAK**, **BAŞAK CULTURE AND ART FOUNDATION** and **HAMISCH**

**SKYGD** has started art workshops for Syrian refugee children in the summer of 2015. This work goes hand in hand with a survey meant to comprehend the emotions, thoughts, and priorities of the children. The art workshops will comprise animation and stop motion films alongside painting and photography workshops, as well as exhibiting these works. SKYGD had earlier organised painting, sculpture and rap workshops with refugee children in Yeldeğirmeni, Istanbul. In this process, which started at the Helin Başak Festival, they worked not only with Syrians but with a mixed group of refugees. The workshop they will start this summer will be their first to be done exclusively with Syrians.

**İZMİR MÜZİSYENLERİ DERNEĞİ** conducts work particularly oriented to children. The most significant and the largest project that the association has developed for Syrian refugees is the campaign named the *Toy Bridge*, started in October 2014 for refugee children in Suruç. Within the framework of this campaign 10 thousand toys were collected and transmitted to the Syrian children living in Suruç. More than 20 mass organisations established toy manufacturing workshops in Izmir in order to draw attention to the refugee question. In these workshops, the people of Izmir manufactured toys or mended damaged ones. The toys collected were distributed to Syrian children at a children's festival that lasted for a whole week. All the costs of this work were met either from the pocket of the volunteers working for the association or through donations. In addition to the work in Suruç, they continue to organise workshops for children of ages 3 to 15 in Izmir, in areas such as face painting, balloon folding, music, or painting. This work was also supported by **HALKLARIN KÖPRÜSÜ DERNEĞİ**.



**BAŞAK CULTURE AND ART FOUNDATION** has run workshops on acting, drama, and toy making in Suruç since December 2014. Additionally, it conducts acting and toy making workshops in the Fidanlık camp in Diyarbakır. The participants are children and youth between the ages of 7 and 25. The activities are carried out on the basis of personal donations; no funding support has yet been received up until now. 250 children benefited from the work in Suruç, while 75 children and youth participated in the activities of the Fidanlık camp in Diyarbakır. The work was done with the collaboration of **SURUÇ AMARA KÜLTÜR MERKEZİ, DIYARBAKIR METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY, URFA EĞİTİM-SEN ŞUBESİ**.

**KIRKAYAK KÜLTÜR** hosted many different art and culture events at its centres in Antep. Photography, acting, and handicrafts workshops, exhibitions of Syrian photographers and painters, the showing of films by Syrian directors at the Zeugma Film Festival they organise are only some of these. Kırkayak also opens its doors to training courses in areas such as violence against women or hygiene.

**MALUMAT** aims to serve the age group 7-17 through activities to be carried out under the title Youth Activities in the centre they are going to open. Life skills activities, drama, photography, guitar and other training pro-

grammes are being planned, as well as language courses (Turkish, Arabic, and English) for all ages and literacy courses (in Turkish and Arabic). In addition, they are working towards film showings and building a library.

**HAMISCH** was established jointly by local people and Syrians. It is based in Istanbul. They define their aim as “questioning and rethinking concepts related to culture, art, politics, society, identity, territory, and exile and organising concerts, exhibitions, showings of documentary films, workshops, and conferences as well as putting out publications in order to encourage critical approaches”.<sup>52</sup> Hamisch cooperates with many organisations working in the area of culture and art such as **SALT, DOCUMENTARİST, and !F İSTANBUL**.

Among the events organised by Hamisch was a concert-dialogue titled “Syria calling out”, in partnership with Babylon and !f Müzik and the showing of a selection of Syrian films at !f İstanbul and Documentarist. Additionally, in December 2014 they organised dance, theatre, and film performances under the title “In Search of Traces”, in partnership with the **GOETHE INSTITUTE and DİYALOG DERNEĞİ**.

<sup>52</sup> <http://hamisch.org/?lang=tr>

A great majority of the organisations that were interviewed for the purposes of this study stated that they carried out some research, however modest that may be, on the field before they started the work they were planning to do. For instance, while **BİLGİ ÇOÇA** made investigations at schools attended by Syrian children in the districts of Kağıthane, Beyoğlu and Bağcılar, **BAŞAK CULTURE AND ARTS FOUNDATION** conducted a two-day investigation with the purpose of determining the physical and so-

cial conditions of existence of refugees and their urgent needs in September 2014 in the makeshift sheds set up in the Salıpazarı market place in Kadıköy, Istanbul. In the same manner, **MAVİ KALEM** carried out field research to grasp the needs of Syrian refugees. **BİLGİ GÖÇ** contributed to the report prepared by various NGO’s that came together in a *Platform for Monitoring Asylum-Seekers that Came from Syria to Istanbul*, a report that takes up the difficulties and rights violations faced by Syrian asylum-seekers who had settled in the Bayramtepe, Eminönü, Gaziosmanpaşa, Kanarya, and Küçükpazar neighbourhoods of Istanbul. **ASAM** conducts current situation analyses in order to grasp what the needs are, not only in Istanbul, but across all the cities it works in. On the other hand, organisations such as **AFAD** and the **UNHCR** publish the work they carry out in camps and the updated statistical data on their web site. The **UNHCR** shares updated information not only on Turkey, but also on other countries where Syrian refugees live. Most of the research can be accessed on the web sites of the respective organisations.

In the interviews, four organisations expressed the intention of conducting or the fact of having begun conducting research or were at the stage of seeking funds.

**SKYGD** will hold a survey in order to understand the needs of Syrian refugee children in the social and cultural domain for its project “A New Beginning”, which it is carrying out this summer. The work, to be conducted with 100 children/youth, will be done in partnership with **HRDF** in Esenler, Istanbul. The study being supported by Sivil Düşün and is planned to run parallel to cultural and artistic workshops.

**URFA BAR ASSOCIATION**, in the interview held, stated that research was being carried out for a list of NGO’s that were active in Urfa for Syrian refugees, with a view to produce a brochure on such NGO’s. The work is in progress and the aim is to complete it in the course of 2015.

**İGAMDER** said it started a study on the needs of the Yazidis on the basis of support from Sivil Düşün. The fieldwork of this study is being completed these days.

Finally, **AKADEMİ LİSAN VE İLMİ ARAŞTIRMALAR DERNEĞİ** said that together with the Marmara University Political Science Faculty and the Marmara Association of Municipalities they had prepared a research project on the “Socio-Economic Profile of the Syrians in Istanbul” and presented it to İstanbul Kalkınma Ajansı, but that the project had not been approved.

It is important to emphasize that among the organisations interviewed, two stand out in the area of research, since this is their major area of work: **İGAMDER** and **BAHÇEŞEHİR UNIVERSITY**.

Established in 2013, **İGAMDER** carried out a study, with support from Sivil Düşün, that same year on the breakdown of NGO’s that work with Syrian refugees. Alongside this study accessible on the Internet, it also undertook the responsibility for the Turkish leg of a study jointly conducted by Oxford University, Sydney University, and Care International. When need arises and the budget allows this, a team is set up, but the basic responsibility lies with the founding chairman and at the time the only official of the association, Metin Çorabatur.

**BAHÇEŞEHİR UNIVERSITY**, on the other hand, has started work on a Migration Centre. They explained that things would be clarified in the near future. Organising panel discussions that would inform the public and conducting studies would be among the priorities of the Migration Centre. They wish to conduct research on issues such as Syrian university students in Turkey, Syrian Circassians and Armenians who are now experiencing exile raised to a power, or the perception of Syrians in organisations that work with Syrian refugees in Turkey. They have not waited for the establishment of the Migration Centre in order to apply for funding from institutions such as **TÜBİTAK** (The

## 4.8 Research

**SUPPORT TO LIFE, ASAM, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, MAZLUM-DER, TTB** are some of the organisations that prepare reports based on interviews with refugees, reports that aim to bring to light the situation as it is and the needs. Some of these reports include detailed analyses concerning areas such as education or health care, depending on the area of expertise of the organisation in question. For instance, the TTB conducts research that lays bare the needs in the areas of health care and psychosocial support.



Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey).

Finally, for academics, international organisations and NGO's who wish to carry out field research concerning refugees, YÖK has now imposed the condition of obtaining

## 4.9 Conferences/Workshops/Training

Between January and May 2015, *COLUMBIA GLOBAL CENTERS ISTANBUL, İSTANBUL POLİTİKALAR MERKEZİ, KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY, MIMAR SINAN UNIVERSITY*, and *İSTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY* organised talks and conferences that dwelled on Syrian refugees. Among the organisations interviewed, the following are the ones that say they have organised workshops, training, and/or conferences:

**TOG “A Workshop on Support for Projects Oriented to Refugees”** was held on 5-7 December 2014 in Diyarbakır with the participation of 25 youth from 15 different TOG groups/volunteers from different cities. Instructors explained the meaning of the concepts refugee, asylum-seeker, immigrant and the place of these in international law, cited statistical data, and provided information concerning field experience and community centres. The participating officials of the municipality presented their predictions for the future and what they expected from NGO's, in particular on the basis of voluntary work. Karol Diker from Yuva and Ahmet Ertak, Secretary General of the Association of Municipalities supported the activity as instructors from outside TOG.

written permission from the Ministry of the Interior. This condition will surely make more difficult and slow down the research that academics and NGO's wish to conduct.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> [http://www.egitimsen.org.tr/ekler/fd0c64237ce41ab\\_ek.jpg](http://www.egitimsen.org.tr/ekler/fd0c64237ce41ab_ek.jpg)

**HCA Human Security Conference, Sessions on Refugees:** On 24-25 January 2015, during the Regional Conference on Human Security, sessions were held where the legal situation, the actual life and the basic rights of refugees were discussed.

**HCA Round Table Meetings for Legal Support:** Round table meetings were held in Urfa and Antakya with the support of the British Embassy. Representatives from local NGO's and the UNHCR took part in these meetings, as well as Syrians. Bar associations were also given a voice in these meetings, where the discussion was focussed on the Regulation on Temporary Protection. Brief talks were also held in Antep.

**BİLGİ GÖÇ “Civil Society in the Area of Syrian Refugees” Workshop:** The target audience of the workshop, held on 28 May 2014, was the representatives of those NGO's that work or plan to work in the area of Syrian refugees. The aim was said to be to discuss the work done by NGO's on Syrian refugees, the problems on the ground and proposal for solutions. 33 representatives from 22 NGO's participated in the workshop.

## 4.10 General Observations Regarding NGO's

We think it is important to convey some very basic observations regarding the NGO's contacted throughout the study:

- That the refugees face a dire situation with respect to basic needs is very clear and obvious, without there being any need for research. Basic needs such as shelter, food, hygiene packages, clothing stand out in all studies as the priorities of refugees living outside of camps. In the interviews held, organisations that provide humanitarian relief point out that the aid that flows in is decreasing by the day and that it is impossible to sustain life on the basis of the aid that is given. Moreover, NGO assistance is quite inadequate when compared to the number of those in need and there are problems of continuity particularly in the area of humanitarian aid. Faith-based NGO's are more active in the area of humanitarian assistance. They collect the donations of zakat fitrah and organise campaigns for aid in kind or cash assistance.
- NGO's that are rights-based or left-wing oriented mostly work on a voluntary basis or continue their work with paltry donations.
- In general, the work and the assistance are geared towards basic needs. Few NGO's work with an orientation toward groups with special needs, such as the handicapped or women.
- Human resources are usually inadequate in NGO's. In particular, the need for psychosocial support for NGO hands that work on the field with Syrian refugees on a one-to-one basis is an important need, although never raised as such.
- Although different organisations are aware of each other's activities, they

usually refrain from working together. The NGO's interviewed did not use a negative discourse on cooperation, but neither do they display any willingness. Although cooperation occasionally comes on the agenda between groups that are politically close to each other, there is no general coordination or no communication networks between NGO's.

- International NGO's are quite reluctant to impart information and usually refer the interlocutor to their central office for such information. The negative attitude of the state toward foreign NGO's continues, albeit not as intensely as before. International NGO's have to go through a challenging permission procedure in order to be able to do work in Turkey.

- The UNHCR, outside of the privileged partners it has in Turkey, ASAM and HRDF, is in contact with other UN organisations and international NGO's. On the visit we made to Antep, we had the possibility of observing this cooperation and participating in one of the periodic coordination meetings. However, no contact was observed between the UNHCR and other NGO's from Turkey.

- Those NGO's that work on the basis of donations and funding, in particular, voice grievances as to the gradual decline in the support and its instability.

- All of the organisations interviewed stressed the importance of approaching the work with the Syrian refugees from a long-term and comprehensive angle rather than in a short-term and piecemeal manner. They also pointed to the importance of the extension of this work to providing access for all non-European refugees to basic rights.

# 5 CONCLUSION

As opposed to other refugees, who are kept in the ante-chamber while waiting to pass over to third countries, the Syrians were characterised as “guests” from the moment of the first mass frontier crossings. That the situation was temporary and the “guests” would return to their country shortly on the first available occasion was an expectation harboured by both the government and public opinion. Contrary to expectations, the “visit” lasted very long. With four years left behind, there is still not a shred of hope for the Syrians to go back home. The civil war is raging and even if it were over in the near future the reconstruction of the country would take a long time. The situation requires that the Syrians, whose number is expected to rise to two and a half million by the end of 2015, be invited from the proverbial “guest room” of the Middle East to the living room. Durable solutions are needed.

Although the open-door policy and the legislation in the health care area are positive steps, it is no longer realistic to take up the two-million strong Syrian refugees question under the rubric “guests” and on the basis of a regime of temporary protection. The Syrians are now a part of this country and their access to basic rights should be viewed not separately from but in conjunction with the citizens of this country.

It is possible to foresee some of the problems that will arise merely by looking at the present situation, both with respect to the reservations that will come up when the legislation is being revamped and, even if the necessary revision is made in the legislation, the actual problems that will arise on the ground. The question of instruction in the mother tongue, impossible to conceive in abstraction of the Kurdish question, rising unemployment, precarious labour, and the tension that arises from all this will in all likelihood be laid at the door of the Syrians, with racism rising, with officials and refugees not even aware of the

existing legislation etc. It is obvious that the NGO’s working in this area cannot pose as a solution to this tremendous problem, calling forth for great, structural changes. However, the support extended by the NGO’s working on the field has great importance. The points to be placed on the agenda and the work that should in priority be supported with respect to NGO’s carrying out activities in this field can be summarised as follows:

- An advocacy group to be established in order to ameliorate access to basic needs such as education, health care, and work, the clarification of the priority demands by this group and its setting to work in order to take a place on the agenda of public opinion;
- Keeping the question of instruction in the mother tongue on the agenda and cooperating this work with those NGO’s that have been fighting for this right for a long time;
- There is need for work that monitors the current legislation and developments, that highlights the ambiguities in the legislation, that follows up research, best practices, and problems that arise on the ground so as to make these visible. A multilingual web site or platform containing all this information is needed;
- Periodic information dissemination on thematic topics in meetings where all organisations working on refugees can participate;
- The lack of information on the part of refugees is great concerning the legal situation and access to basic services. Platforms and multilingual documentation informing them of their rights are a priority need. The use of the documents

prepared by the SGD in updated versions and their dissemination by all the various groups may be a possible way out. Syrian refugees have a network of communication between themselves. The information and the documentation prepared may be widely distributed with the cooperation of the Syrians.

- On the question of education and health care, the need exists for activities and training to inform both Syrian refugees and the staff that works for the relevant institutions regarding the rights of Syrian refugees. In addition, teams need to be formed for Syrians to receive services in their mother tongue and for interpretation services for patient-doctor interaction;
- Support for NGO’s that do special work for the access of women, the disabled, and LGBTI individuals;
- Expanding and increasing vocational training in line with the demands made;
- Paying attention to measures established to fight child labour;
- Supporting training sessions, workshops, and other activities to bring together and enhance coexistence between local and Syrian children in order to fight discrimination at schools;
- Increasing the number of drama and art workshops for children and youth and in the process benefitting from the services not only of local artists but also Syrians as instructors for these workshops and taking care to involve Syrian organisations and persons as a part of these activities;
- There exist many reports that provide information about the general situation, but it may be said that detailed research is still needed. For instance, questions such

as what types of contagious diseases exist or what the rate of literacy is are waiting to be answered and research geared to answering such specific questions should be supported. Because the field is so dynamically changing, there is need for updated information. In particular, support for studies that truthfully reflect best practices, if any, and challenges faced would be useful for the work in the field.

- Conferences in this area have a limited and well-determined audience. Meetings targeting local people in locations with a heavy concentration of refugees could be held to take up questions such as the rights of refugees or the overall situation in Syria. Syrian refugees are usually brought on the order of the day as people in need within the context of humanitarian assistance. Meetings, on the other hand, on the political situation held with the participation of Syrians are too far and few between. Platforms and talks where experts specialising in different fields coming from Syria might be supported;
- Support may be extended to NGO’s willing to contribute to Syrian refugees to generate work in areas where they are experienced and have specialised;
- Activities that would bring together Syrians with locals in order to contribute to cultural adaptation, especially in culture and art can be prioritised.

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## Appendix 1 - NGOs That conduct Work Concerning Refugees and Their Area of Activities

	LEGAL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT AND COUNSELLING	HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE	HEALTH CARE	EDUCATION	VOCATIONAL TRAINING	MULTI-PURPOSE CENTERS	CULTURE AND ARTS	RESEARCH	CONFERENCE/ WORKSHOP/ TRAINING
AKADEMİ LİSAN VE İLMİ ARAŞTIRMALAR DERNEĞİ									
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL									
ASAM									
BAHÇEŞEHİR UNIVERSITY									
BAŞAK CULTURE & ARTS FOUNDATION									
BİLGİ ÇOÇA									
BİLGİ GÖÇ									
BROOKINGS INSTITUTE									
BÜLBÜLZADE EĞİTİM, SAĞLIK VER DAYANIŞMA VAKFI									
CANSUYU YARDIMLAŞMA VE DAYANIŞMA DERNEĞİ									
DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL									
DOCTORS WORLDWIDE									
GÖÇ-DER									
HALKLARIN KÖPRÜSÜ DERNEĞİ									
HAMISCH									
HCA									
HRDF									
IBC									

	LEGAL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT AND COUNSELLING	HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE	HEALTH CARE	EDUCATION	VOCATIONAL TRAINING	MULTI-PURPOSE CENTERS	CULTURE AND ARTS	RESEARCH	CONFERENCE/ WORKSHOP/ TRAINING
IHD									
IMC									
ICMC									
IGAMDER									
ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY LAW CLINIC									
İZMİR MÜZİSYENLERİ DERNEĞİ									
KIRKAVAK KÜLTÜR									
KAOS-GL									
MALUMAT									
MAVİ KALEM									
MAZLUM-DER									
MÜLTECİ-DER									
SKYGD									
STGM									
SUPPORT TO LIFE									
ŞANLIURFA PLATFORMU									
TESEV									
THİV									
TOG									
UMUT-DER									
UNCHR									
URFA BAR ASSOCIATION									
YUVA									

This table is based on those information gathered from our interviews with NGO's and their web sites. The table obviously does not cover all of the NGO's doing work for Syrian refugees and needs to be updated often. To provide new information please send email to [zumraykutlu@anadolukultur.org](mailto:zumraykutlu@anadolukultur.org).

## Appendix 2 - List of Organisations Interviewed

### Organisations Interviewed and Consulted for Information

ANKARA	KAOS GL İGAMDER
ANTEP	ASAM IMC Kırkayak Kültür Malumat Toplum Merkezi/Mercy Crops UNHCR
HATAY	Yuva
İSTANBUL	Akademi Lisan ve İlmi Araştırmalar Derneği Bahçeşehir University Başak Culture and Arts Foundation BİLGİ ÇOÇA BİLGİ GÖÇ Doctors Worldwide Göç-Der Support to Life HCA HRDF İstanbul University Law Clinic IBC ICMC ICM Mavi Kalem STGM SKYGD THİV TOG
İZMİR	Mülteci-Der İzmir Müzisyenleri Derneği

### Organisations Consulted That Said They Did No Work Regarding Syrian Refugees

İSTANBUL	İstanbul Kalkınma Ajansı Sosyal Hizmet Uzmanları Derneği Türkiye Üçüncü Sektör Vakfı (TÜSEV)
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### Organisations Contacted for an Interview from Which a Limited Amount of or No Information was Received

ANKARA	Gelecek için Gençlik Derneği IMC
ANTEP	Bülbülzade Vakfı Can Suyu Derneği Uşaki Vakfı Umut-Der
HATAY	International Rescue Committee
İSTANBUL	Danish Refugee Council Göçmen Dayanışma Mutfağı HAMISCH Kadınlarla Dayanışma Vakfı Mazlum-Der Mülteci Hakları Merkezi
İZMİR	Halkların Köprüsü Derneği
URFA	Amara Mülteci Destek Merkezi IMPR Humanitarian Urfa Bar Association

## Appendix 3 – Antep Governor’s Office Directorate of Provincial Disaster Emergency List of NGO’s That Are Active Concerning Syrian Refugees

1. Valilik (Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakfı Müdürlüğü)
2. Büyükşehir Belediye Başkanlığına
3. İl Jandarma Komutanlığı
4. İl Emniyet Müdürlüğü
5. Şahinbey Kaymakamlığı
6. Şehit Kamil Kaymakamlığı
7. İslahiye Kaymakamlığı
8. Nizip Kaymakamlığı
9. Karkamış Kaymakamlığı
10. Şahin Bey Belediye Başkanlığı
11. Şehit Kamil Belediye Başkanlığı
12. İl Müftülüğü
13. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar İl Müdürlüğü
14. İl Sağlık Müdürlüğü
15. Göç İdaresi İl Müdürlüğü
16. İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü
17. Kamu Hastaneleri Birliği Genel Sekreterliği
18. İl Halk Sağlığı Müdürlüğü
19. Türk Kızılayı Suriye İnsani Yardım Koordinatörlüğü
20. Ticaret Odası Başkanlığı
21. Sanayi Odası Başkanlığı
22. Esnaf ve Sanatkarlar Odası Birliği Başkanlığı
23. Organize Sanayi Oda Bölge Başkanlığı
24. Gaziantep Kent Konseyi Başkanlığı
25. 8. Bölge Eczacı Odası
26. Birleşmiş Milletler Temsilcisi (UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, UNDP, OCHA)
27. Can Suyu Derneği
28. Deniz Feneri Derneği
29. Verenel Derneği
30. İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı (İHH)
31. Beşir Temsilcisi
32. Bülbülzade Vakfı
33. Uşşaki Vakfı
34. Mazlumder Derneği
35. Vahdet Vakfı
36. Ayder Derneği
37. Memur-Sen Gaziantep Temsilciliği
38. Kamu-Sen Gaziantep Temsilciliği
39. KESK Gaziantep Temsilciliği
40. Saygınlı Hazı Hamza Eğitim, Kültür, Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği
41. Ortadoğu Sosyal Projeler Araştırma Genel Merkezi Derneği (OSPAM)
42. Sığınmacı ve Göçmenlerle Dayanışma Derneği (SGDD)
43. Vefa-Der Derneği
44. Mülteci-Der Derneği
45. IMC Derneği
46. Mavi Hilal Derneği
47. Mercy Corps Derneği
48. Suriye Halkı Eğitim, Kültür, Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği
49. Suriye Sivil Toplum ve Demokrasi Merkezi Derneği
50. Suriye Oğuzboyları Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği
51. Halep Derneği

52. Suriye Yardım Koordine Birimi Derneđi (ACU)
53. Suriye Ufuk Derneđi
54. Şafak Suriye Derneđi
55. Mercidabık Suriye Derneđi
56. Uluslararası Maveraünnehir Dayanışma Derneđi
57. Hayat Suriye Derneđi
58. Suriye Ekonomi Forumu Derneđi
59. Suriye Derya Derneđi
60. Suriye Seda Eğitim ve Kültür Derneđi
61. Şam Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneđi
62. Toplum Kalkınma Derneđi
63. Araştırma ve Yönetim Ekibi Yardımlaşma ve dayanışma Derneđi
64. Tek Ümmet Yardımlaşma Eğitim ve Kültür Derneđi
65. Yetimlere Bakım ve İnsani Yardım Derneđi
66. Akıllıca Yardımlaşma Ve Dayanışma Derneđi
67. Şam Suriye Yetimleri Yaşatma ve Koruma Derneđi
68. Emel Derneđi
69. Suriye Yardım Derneđi
70. Fecir Uluslararası İnsani Yardım Derneđi
71. Suriyenin Görkemli Geleneđi Derneđi
72. Kudra Derneđi
73. Sınırsız İhsan Derneđi
74. Zeytin Derneđi
75. Suriye Aşı Destekleme Derneđi
76. Suriye Yerel Koordinasyon Derneđi
77. Rahme Derneđi
78. Emel Yardımlaşma ve Kalkınma Derneđi
79. Çok Hayırsevenler Yardımlaşma Derneđi
80. Suriyeliler Derneđi
81. Suriye Yaralıları Destekleme derneđi
82. Suriyeliler Birlik ve Beraberlik Yardımlaşma Derneđi
83. Şam Evi Eğitim Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneđi
84. Vaat Derneđi
85. Bina İnsan Derneđi
86. Suriye Sivil Toplum Dayanışma ve Yardımlaşma Derneđi
87. Vatan Derneđi
88. Bahar Suriye Derneđi
89. Suriyeliler Deđişim Derneđi
90. Özgür Suriye Doktorlar Derneđi
91. Suriye Sultanül Ulema Eğitim ve İnsani Yardım Derneđi
92. Suriye Yol Derneđi
93. Suriyeliler Dayanışma Derneđi
94. Suriye Vatan Derneđi
95. Fidan Derneđi
96. Ayşe Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneđi
97. İnsani Yardım ve Kalkındırma Derneđi
98. Suriyeli Çocuklara Eğitim ve Yardımlaşma Derneđi
99. Süreyya Derneđi
100. Suriyeli Çocukları Koruma ve Dayanışma Derneđi
101. Beraber Yapabiliriz Derneđi
102. Suriyeliler İletişim ve Dayanışma Derneđi
103. Vefa Sosyal Derneđi
104. Elif Suriyeliler Yardımlaşma ve Eğitim Derneđi
105. Bağlar Çocuk Bakım ve Kalkındırma Derneđi
106. Kanada Uluslararası Tıbbi Yardımlaşma Derneđi
107. Erdemlikler Derneđi
108. Ufuk Derneđi



