

THE SYRIAN REFUGEE REFERENDUM

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INTRODUCTION.

Syria has faced a lot of disturbances over the past few years. Refugees of the Syrian civil war often referred to as the Syrian refugees. They had left and fled from their country during the Syrian civil war. An estimated number of 9 million Syrian nationals had left their country and taken shelter in the neighbouring countries in and around Syria in March 2011 when the civil war had broken out. The neighbouring countries where the influx of Syrian refugees has been the most are Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. A good number also went to distant lands in Northern Africa, Caucasus and the Persian Gulf. The most pertinent and obvious reason behind the influx of refugees particularly to the above mentioned countries is the geographical situation. The fact that these nations are closest to Syria made it most obvious for refugees to go there. An understanding of the map of Syria and its neighbouring countries would give us a better understanding of the matter. Syria with Turkey to its north, Iraq to its southeast and Jordan to its south. Among the few mentioned nations the statistics till February 2015 tells us that Turkey has become the largest home for refugees with around 2.1 million refugees in Turkey and they had spent more than US\$ 6 billion on direct assistance to refugees. In the year 2011 thousands of Syrian border into Lebanon and Turkey. Rehandi district of Hatay Province near Turkey had about 1500 Syrian citizens taking shelter in tent cities. Later in 2011 Lebanon had around 10,000 refugees.

A BACK DROP ON THE HISTORY OF THE REFUGEE INFLUX.

In 2011, the Arab Springs upspring in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya inspired the people of Syria to come on the roads and start peaceful demonstrations against the regime of Assad where there was lack of political progress and extreme Responses to anti-government graffiti. The government used extreme methods of combat against its own people, fiercely torturing, killing and shooting at the protesters. The situation slowly escalated into a civil war. The situation in Syria became worse, it became divided into territory occupied by the regime of Assad, the Islamic extremist. Further analysis will show the increasing trend of influx of refugees from Syria to its neighbouring countries.

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In 2011, about 300 refugees from Syria had influxed to its neighbouring countries specially Turkey. But the Turkish president had given full support and set up small camp for refugees in the Hatay Province. The number of refugees from Syria fleeing to other nations was increasing drastically. Villages of Mkatel had become home to hundreds of Syrians. The UNHCR had estimated the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon to reach 5238, with around 1000 families registered as refugees. Meanwhile nations like Jordan had provided the Syrian refugees with tremendous amount of help by means of accepting them in the state schools. The then U.N Secretary General Kofi Anan had also visited the refugee camps in Turkey. In all the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan reached 90,000. In 2013 there was increasing fears over the exploitation of refugees, especially children and ladies. European countries like Bulgaria, Sweden and Italy how became a destination for Syrian, refugees. Bulgaria which shares a border with Turkey became home for 10,000 Syrians by year end. So they approached the U.N.O and Red Cross for help as all their refugee centres were full. In Italy Sea was the route for the Syrian refugees' entry into the country. UNHCR's estimates tell us that there were more than 4000 refugees in Italy. Sweden became the first European country to grant permanent residency to roughly 8000 Syrians who had temporary residency in Sweden. Later that year Latin American nations like Argentina and Brazil provided refugee to thousands of displaced refugees. There were about 350 Syrians already residing in Argentina and Brazil became the first nation from America to issue humanitarian visas to the people wanting to go to Brazil from Syria. Slowly but steadily the Syrian war developed into a proxy war. Lead by Bashar – al-Assad it left over 100,000 civilians dead and over 1.2 million Syrian refugees displaced all over the Middle East. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Gutierrez said that the Syria crisis is the toughest hurdle in terms of humanitarian grounds faced by this era. Yet the rising demand of the refugees were not being met by the world. By the middle of August 2014, the UN estimated 6.5 million people have been displaced from over Syria while 35000 were still waiting for registration. In a report by the BBC it was mentioned that even though the neighbouring countries of Syria had taken in a large number of refugees and even nations in different continents had helped in by permitting refugees to live. The wealthy Gulf Countries of the Middle East like Saudi Arabia did not give shelter to any displaced refugee. But Saudi Arabia in its reports have responded to these allegations over the Syrian crisis by complete denial. But the fact that no gulf country has signed the UN Convention on Refugees which provides the frame work and guidelines for the treatment of those fleeing to different nations. The rapid across the Islamic Republics of Iraq and Syria has certainly added to the effect that has led to the influx of refugees. These have thrown the country into chaos and has played a

part for the rise and growth of civil war in countries like Syria. The idea of a country with the predominance of only one religion i.e. an Islamic republic and the rise and development of a caliphate state has been a catalyst into the disturbances in the Middle East. The refugee crisis in Syria has probably been the toughest challenge to humanity in the modern era. Nations who have provide shelter to the refugees have shown the rest of the world that the idea of humanity still exists. The controversies erupted when the rich gulf countries of the Middle East like Saudi Arabia alleged not to provide any kind of assistance to the refugees. The fact that among the countries where the refugees have landed up the Gulf Countries are the richest and it is easy and rational to think that these nations would be able to provide greater benefits and aid to the refugees because the amount of wealth at their disposal is way more than nations like Jordan and Lebanon. The fact that these Gulf Nations are geographically much closer to Syria than Northern Africa and some other parts of the world where the refugees have taken shelter, it is even more illogical and irrational to think and come to a justified conclusion as to why the refugees weren't allowed to take shelter in the gulf. As mentioned before the countries of the Middle East have also not ratified the UN's Convention on refugees. But it is high time that when the nations of the world come together hold hands and take combined initiatives and start operating in a more co-ordinated manner so that the crisis, which the innocent people of Syria are facing comes to an end and Syria becomes the place it used to be and humanity and normalcy is restored back in the middle east.



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