

THE QUANDARY OF SYRIAN REFUGEES AND THE IMPASSE OF REPATRIATION

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Syrian crisis is of the most discussed issues in both popular and academic literature of recent years. International community has described this crisis as the most inordinate human crisis of the current century. The cataclysmic man made crisis began in 2011 and literary guzzled major part of Syria and spun-out protracted, indeterminate and multitudinous civil war signaling worst feature of barbarism, savagery and brutality. Till date the war has extirpated huge property and has killed millions of people. The remnants have been forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in other countries. The paper seeks to inquire the problem of Syrian refugees and the prospect of their repatriation and resettlement. This paper ventures to inquire and explore the problem of Syrian refugees who have migrated to foreign countries especially the European continent. The paper also ventures to discuss the process of repatriation and reintegration of the Syrian refugees who are now scattered in different territories of Europe.

Repatriation and Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees at international level is a vexing task encompassing within its ambit multiple ranges of issues and controversies. Rehabilitation is not an isolated concept it is generally associated with the term repatriation and reintegration. Repatriation can be discussed as a process of returning a person to their place of origin. This also includes the process of returning refugees or military personnel to their place of origin following a war. In a nutshell it is to send or bring someone, or sometimes money or other property, back to the country that he, she, or it came from. Reintegration denotes a process whereby a refugee is able to secure economic, social and political conditions

suitable for maintaining life, livelihood and dignity. Reintegration must enable socio-economic self-sufficiency, participation in community life, in addition to exercising citizenship rights.

In the past six years the Syrian crisis has entered the coliseum of western propelled conflict resulting in complete mayhem, social distress and political turmoil. The crisis is a fount of west inspired insurrection against the Syrian government headed by Bashar-Al-Assad. It has been almost six years that Syria is burning like a furnace victimizing and affecting the life of common citizens. This has forced the Syrians to flee their own country and seek refuge in neighboring countries. By 2014 almost five million Syrians have left their country and now live outside Syria. In the wake of increasing threat of terrorists strike in Europe the refugees are unwelcomed and are even bashed up on several occasions. The quailing response of the European citizens towards the Syrian refugees continues to be a cause for concerned.

The conflict in Syria between the government of Bashar al-Assad and various other forces, which started in the spring of 2011, continues to cause displacement within the country and across the region. Five years since the conflict began, more than 450,000 Syrians have been killed in the fighting, more than a million injured and over 12 million Syrians - half the country's prewar population - have been displaced from their homes. During 2014, more than one million Syrians were newly registered as refugees in neighboring countries, bringing the total number of registered refugees in the region to 3,688,402 by year-end. The numbers of refugees are multiplying day by day along with those who are stranded outside the boundaries of several countries to get asylum in various European

countries. A large number of newly registered refugees find it extremely difficult to get adjusted with and accommodated in the new territory.

More than 4.8 million Syrian refugees are in just five countries Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Turkey hosts 2.7 million Syrian refugees, more than any other country worldwide. Lebanon hosts approximately 1 million Syrian refugees which amount to around one in five people in the country. Jordan hosts approximately 655,675 Syrian refugees, which amounts to about 10% of the population. Iraq where 3.1 million people are already internally displaced hosts 228,894 Syrian refugees. Egypt hosts 115,204 Syrian refugees. In comparison, Iraq and Egypt accommodated a smaller yet substantial number of Syrians, hosting 228,484 and 137,812 registered refugees, respectively.

The primary axiom of the international refugee regime is the concept of burden-sharing. As defined by the UNHCR, burden-sharing. This refers to a division of international cooperation where States take on responsibility for refugees who would strictly fall under the protection of other states. Burden-sharing has its documented origins in the Preamble to the 1951 Refugee Convention. The Refugee Convention's preamble specifically requires the international community to cooperate, share burdens and aim to achieve durable solutions for refugees, who should be 'integrated in the economic system of the countries of asylum and will themselves provide for their own needs and for those of their families'.

Syrian refugee Crises and repatriation

It is argued that repatriation is the most likely solution to the Syrian refugee crisis. Repatriation may be defined as an act of voluntary returning of refugees, to their country of origin purely on the basis of willingness to such return. Repatriation is defined as a personal right under specific conditions described in various international instruments. In the case of host-country integration, or 'absorption,' Syrian refugees would remain in their countries of refuge and continue their lives and livelihoods there. In the case of resettlement, Syrian

refugees would be relocated to third countries in which they would obtain legal status to pursue education, seek employment, and access public services. In sustainable repatriation to Syria, refugees would ultimately return home once safe return is possible and Syria's infrastructure is rebuilt. In evaluating the likelihood of integration as a solution to the Syrian crisis, it is necessary to consider the domestic policies of regional states of refuge, and the stability and resources of host countries.

Jordan, Lebanon nor Iraq is signatories to the 1951 Convention; this means that the refugees in these countries may not be treated as per international standards. Although these countries have been since generations, welcoming the refugees from neighboring Arab states, the protracted nature of past refugee crises has also played its negative part in shaping a restrictive refugee policies. In terms of domestic policy, Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon resist offering full legal rights to Syrian refugees and, as a result, the refugees would likely struggle to obtain access to employment, healthcare, housing and education.

In addition to this, the public aid from the countries like Jordan and Lebanon have diminished gradually and this has resulted in the denial of access to citizenship for the majority of refugees. The restrictive practices remain to persist in these countries and discourage the integration of past refugee groups. Most Palestinian and Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Lebanon still are struggling to attain legal status.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is a matter of agonizing surprise that the developed countries have not contributed sufficiently toward sharing the burden of the Syrian refugee. Even though there are important variances between industrialized states, and some states have provided commendable support, neighboring countries still shoulder the vast majority of the burden in terms of financial impact and accommodation of the refugee population. It is difficult for Syrian refugees to attain protection outside Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and

Turkey. The small number of refugee resettlement and other forms of admission available leave asylum seeking as one of the only options for Syrians pursuing protection beyond the region.

In the wake of such problems it is argued that the international community should share the responsibility of accommodating the refugees since collectively, it has failed to meet the demands of the Syrian refugee crisis. To extenuate the enormous pressure placed on neighboring states, the international community should contribute heavily in financial and resettlement assistance.

There is serious disparity in the volume of burden sharing by developed countries, and the level is likely to spread more evenly. Countries like Germany and Sweden have provided a relatively high level of protection to Syrians while many others, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, have not offered much. Likewise, the United States has contributed an unreasonable share of financial support among industrialized states, and countries like France, Spain, and Russia have provided very little. Maximum states need to contribute, and share the burden to manage the problem Syrian refugees. The states ought to increase refugee resettlement places for Syrian refugees, especially those who are acutely vulnerable. A broader programme of family reunification may be given a serious thought at international level. Apart from this issuing of humanitarian visas, private sponsorship, academic scholarships, labor mobility schemes, and medical evacuation schemes can also be initiated on regular basis.

In the wake of such discussion it is important to note that India is not a signatory of the UN convention or the protocol which offers refugees to the displaced foreigners. India remains one of the few liberal democracies not to have signed, supported or ratified the international convention that governs how nations should treat distressed people who are forced to leave their homes under harsh conditions. India has signed neither the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention nor its

1967 Protocol, which has 140 signatories, an overwhelming majority of the world's 190-odd nations. However, India continues to host a large population of refugees. In the main, they are treated kindly. It is quite evident that India has employed a very broader policy while accepting refugees. It actually has provided refuge to a larger population in South Asia. Due to lack of any domestic law or regional South Asian framework, India has refrained from taking its rightful regional leadership role in this increasingly critical matter.

End Notes

1. Cambridge Advanced learners dictionary
2. <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html> . retrieved on 2.1.16
3. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/02/syrias-refugee-crisis-in-numbers/> retrieved on 20.11.2016
4. 11 UN General Assembly, Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137
5. Catherine Tyson, "The Syrian Displacement Crisis: Future Durable Solutions", "Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration Vol. 4, No. 2 23.