

Forced migration in and from Syria

In Syria, the repression of the ruling Assad regime and the emergence of the fundamentalist Islamic group Isis (also known as IS) have led to the displacement of over 10 million people. The Syrian conflict began as a civil war, but extended to include parts of Iraq when Isis declared Syria and Iraq an Islamic “caliphate”. Syrians near Damascus feared that government forces were being used on their own people, whereas in other parts of Syria, people feared they would be killed, captured or forced to live under a severe and harsh Islamic rule. The result has been a stream of refugees and displaced people into neighbouring countries and other parts of Syria.

There were over 4 million IDPs in Syria and 4.5 million Syrian refugees in just five other countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Jordan. The Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, just 8 km from the Syrian border, is the world’s second largest refugee camp (Dadaab in Kenya is the largest) and now the fourth largest city in Jordan. According to the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees, the burden of taking in refugees should not fall on a small number of countries, but should be shared out.

The impact of Syrian refugees on Lebanon

There are more than 1.4 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, about half of whom are children. This is around one-quarter of Lebanon’s population. Most of the refugees live in poverty and are dependent on aid for survival. Lebanon has the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. As a result, the country has suffered severe economic and environmental consequences. There has been strain on Lebanon’s health and education services, and its electricity, water and sanitation systems. The humanitarian appeal has only received around one-eighth of its target amount of funds.

The number of refugee schoolchildren is greater than the number of Lebanese children at school. Schools have been forced to provide places for up to 100,000 Syrian children, although most of them are not attending school.

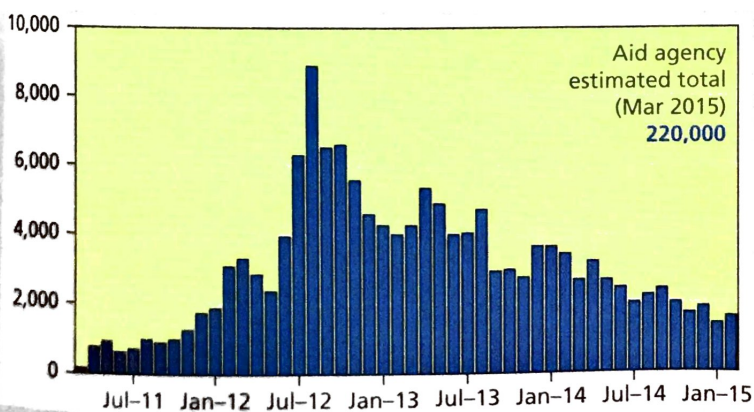


Figure 1.21: The Syrian conflict death toll, July 2011–January 2015

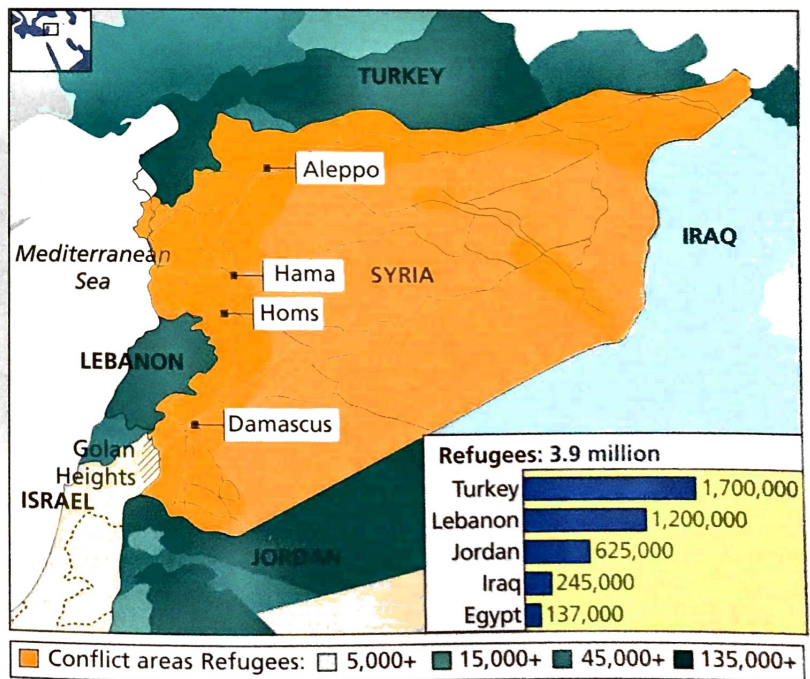


Figure 1.22: Numbers of Syrian refugees, March 2015

Source: UNHCR, Reliefweb (Figures up to 12 March 2015)