

# The Global Refugee Crisis

**ITUC Special Briefing  
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The world faces the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War. 86% of internally- and externally-displaced persons are in developing countries. Recent events have awakened governments in Europe, the Americas, and Asia to the crisis but not all have yet accepted responsibility for accepting refugees fleeing war, terror and abject poverty. The setting of this summit makes clear that countries like Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan need more assistance. In almost all nations the compassion of people is ahead of that of their governments.

The ITUC is petitioning the G20 to support the right to work for all migrants, to adopt a global, cooperative

resettlement strategy, and to build global funds vital for social protection.

The failure to demonstrate the solidarity that values human life is abhorrent and the growing xenophobia in the political realm is distressing. Fear-mongering about new arrivals threatening to take jobs without any serious plan to improve infrastructure, grow jobs and produce growth to build a better future and provide opportunities for all is short sighted.

Every democratic country can do better to ensure safe haven for people at risk, but so too must our leaders act to bring an end to conflict and displacement.

## **Hussein, Cemel Ranch Hand, Cappadocia, Turkey**

**Syrian Refugee, 14 years old**

I miss Aleppo. My mother says both side are to blame for the war. There is no one else to blame. But I'll go back when I can. I had horses in Syria, but my house was demolished. My father died but that was before the war.

I took a bus here with my mother, baby sister, my uncle and aunt and their baby. It took us a day.

That was a year ago. I went to school for five years in Aleppo, but I can't read or write. Before I left I was fixing washing machines and things.

Here on the ranch, I take care of the horses, feeding and cleaning them. I can ride the horses. I've learnt Turkish but I don't go to school. They tried to make me but I wanted to work with the horses.

I'm the only one working, my sister is only 10. I look after my family. I don't know if we get any help, maybe my mother knows, I'm only a boy.

We live in a house with four or five families. There are about 200 people from Syria around here.



# L20 Recommendations to Address the Refugee Crisis

Trade unions are appalled by the lack of collective action in response to the global refugee crisis.

G20 Heads of State and Governments meeting at the G20 2015 Summit in Antalya, Turkey must issue a G20 call for action on the refugee crisis with concrete policy actions to:

- Increase funding for refugee needs and social protections in host nations;
- Recognise the right of refugees to work in the formal economy with requisite labour, social, political and cultural rights, including the freedom to associate, and enact measures to make these rights reality.
- Contribute to global efforts and develop a common strategy to resettle the people who are forced to flee to neighbouring countries.
- Acknowledge the skills and incomes refugees can contribute to host nations and support investment that boosts economic growth and job creation to the benefit of refugees and host communities alike.
- Recognise that reasons for mass displacement often interrelated and can range from violence and armed conflict to lack of decent work and that effective response must address the root causes of forced migration in addition to meeting the resulting humanitarian, resettlement, and integration needs.
- Support an urgent global effort to stop the bombs and ensure democracy in Syria and neighbouring countries.
- G20 leaders meeting in Turkey have a responsibility to recognize the world's worst refugee crisis since World War II and use the opportunity of the leaders summit to reach a collective agreement on an action plan.

Humanity demands that the G20 leaders must commit to resettle refugees and offer full asylum to those arriving in their territories. This should include affording them the right to work in the formal economy and granting them full social, political and cultural rights and offer the necessary funding to deliver on these commitments.

## **Yusuf, Construction worker, Cappadocia, Turkey**

### **Syrian Refugee, Married, 26 years old**

The bombs made me leave. One year ago I left with my mother. My father and brother died in the war. I had a friend here who said I could get a job.

The job is good. The people are nice. People here work. In Syria there is no work because of the war. All Syrians are brothers but we are in a war.

Every day 200 – 300 people come to Turkey. Assad must go. He throws the bombs. He is not human.

The bombs are long 1 metre by 1.5 metres. There are small pieces of iron in them.



# ITUC Frontlines Poll 2015: Refugees in Turkey

More than three-quarters of the Turkish population consider it to be important that the G20 act to tackle the refugee crisis.

77% of the Turkish population stated that it was either somewhat or very important that the G20 develop a common response and concrete measures to tackle the refugee crisis.

A majority (53%) consider it to be very important, while 34% consider it to be somewhat important.

Women (81%) were more likely than men (74%) to consider it to be important that the G20 develop a common response and concrete measures to tackle the refugee crisis.

The ITUC 2015 Frontlines Poll covering six G20 Countries including China, Germany, India, Turkey, the UK and the USA found 63 per cent of people agree that their government should provide vulnerable people who have fled their own country with basic social protections and the right to work.

**Question:** *To what extent do you agree or disagree that the government should provide vulnerable people who have fled from their own country with basic social protections and the right to work?*

	TOTAL	China	Germany	India	Turkey	UK	USA
Agree	63%	72%	63%	80%	54%	53%	55%
Disagree	31 %	23%	31%	16%	43%	38%	34%
Don't know	6 %	5%	6%	5%	2%	9%	11%

TNS Opinion carried out the fieldwork between the 1st and the 8th of October, 2015.

# Facts about the refugee crisis in Turkey and beyond

## Syrian Refugees

EU officials say there are 270,000 Syrian refugees in camps inside Turkey, but 1.7 million outside camps. Since the start of violence in Syria 4 years ago, over 10 million Syrians have been driven from their homes. Of these, 7.6 million are internally displaced and over 4.1 million are refugees, largely hosted by neighbouring countries.

Turkey, which hosts over 1.9 million Syrian refugees, has become the top refugee hosting country in the world. Since 2014, Turkey has also witnessed an increase in asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Somalia: as of May 2015, Turkey was hosting 230,000 refugees from countries other than Syria.

Meanwhile, in addition to significant non-Syrian refugee populations, Syrians fleeing the conflict make up a majority – or 1.1 million – of the refugees in Lebanon; 629,000 Syrian refugees are hosted by Jordan; and 248,500 by Iraq.

Around 428,000 Syrian refugees arrived in Europe between April 2011 and August 2015, with 43% of this number hosted by Germany and Serbia, 40% by Sweden, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Hungary and Austria, and the remaining 17% divided between the other 27 countries in Europe.

More than 50% of Syria's refugees are children and many have now gone years without a formal school education. Syria thus faces the risk of losing an entire generation. The long-term impact of Syrian children never returning to school has been estimated at 5.4% of Syria's GDP, or £1.5bn, according to Save the Children <sup>1</sup>.

## The European refugee crisis

According to the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), 350,000 people (migrants and refugees) crossed the EU's borders in January – August 2015. Compared with 280,000 in the whole of 2014.

Between January and August 2015, 2373 people died attempting to reach Europe by sea.

Tragedies in 2015 are many, but we cannot forget:

- Two boats carrying about 500 migrants sank after leaving Zuwara in Libya on 27 August;
- The bodies of 71 people, believed to be Syrian migrants, were discovered in an abandoned lorry in Austria on 27 August;
- A shipwreck off Italy's Lampedusa island killed about 800 people on 19 April;
- At least 300 migrants are feared to have drowned after attempting to cross the Mediterranean in rough seas in early February

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/aug/19/syria-refugee-crisis-education-teaching-lost-generation-children>

## The global refugee crisis

86 percent of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries.

50 per cent of the world's refugees in 2014 were children.

New figures from the UNHCR show that nearly 60 million people were displaced from their homes by the end of 2014. Half of the displaced are children.

Nearly 14 million people were newly displaced in 2014. Turkey, Iran and Pakistan host the largest numbers of refugees.

One in four refugees are hosted in developing countries which are not their country of origin.

## The Syria Campaign - What Refugees Think

A survey of Syrian refugees across five German cities found:

70 per cent of refugees are fleeing Assad.

86 per cent of refugees feared kidnap or arrest.

Only 8 per cent of refugees want to stay in Europe.

The majority say they will not go back while Bashar al-Assad is still in power.

The majority say a no-fly zone in Syria would allow more people to stay in the country.

77 per cent say Assad's military response to the peaceful demonstrations in 2011 is the leading cause of the conflict today.

# Listen To Refugees



Only **8** of Syrian refugees want to stay in Europe

# Conclusion

Governments have failed to deal with waves of economic migration from Latin American, Asia and Africa, failed to deal with asylum seekers fleeing conflict and oppression and now a new wave of refugees from the war in Syria is exposing deep fault lines between nations.

Germany and Sweden stand out in their support for humanity, but right across Europe and indeed in other continents we witness a lack of generosity to increase intakes of migrants despite the economic evidence that asylum is a neutral cost over time and with employment migration is a net gain.

The reality is that it is no longer possible to distinguish or divide categories of migrants seeking safety and security in another nation. All people are entitled to equal rights.

Rights, with the right to work a priority, and social protection are vital guarantees for both individuals and the host communities to reap the benefits of economic advantage migrants bring and ensure the social stability that sustains development.

Solidarity and support for both safe haven and social protection must also be afforded to developing economies struggling to cope with millions of additional people in their nations. G20 nations must demonstrate leadership.

The value of human life must triumph over fear and xenophobia. Unions have a central role to play in fighting against walls, military borders and the callous response that ignores the deaths of migrants. Union belief in solidarity and the dignity of decent work is essential to shape an inclusive future for all people.