

CARNEGIE COUNCIL *for Ethics in International Affairs*

Refugees on Turkey's Borders: Consequences of Chaos in Syria

Public Affairs, Global Ethics Forum TV Series

Kemal Kirişci, Joanne J. Myers

Transcript

Introduction

JOANNE MYERS: Good morning, everyone. I'm Joanne Myers, and on behalf of the Carnegie Council, I would like to thank you all for joining us.

We are very pleased to welcome Dr. Kemal Kirişci, who is currently the TÜSIAD senior fellow and director of the [Center on the United States and Europe's Turkey Project](#) at [Brookings Institution](#). He will be talking to us today about the [Syrian refugee crisis](#) and its impact on Turkey. This is the second in a series of programs on refugees and migration that the Carnegie Council will be embarking on during this year. *(Editor's note: The first was a talk by the UN's Peter Sutherland.)*

As the [Syrian conflict](#) enters into its sixth year, more than half of its population is displaced. While more than a million have crossed into Europe, more than 5 million refugees are now in neighboring countries of Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Turkey alone is caring for more than half of them, and the presence of over 2.7 million refugees has not been an easy task, even for a country with significant administrative and economic capacity. While most of the refugees are in camps, many still come to Turkey, but they are there staying only until they can make their way to Europe. This has created a crisis of epic proportions.

In order to stem this flow of migrants, on March 7 an [agreement](#) was hammered out between Germany and Turkey, which was later endorsed by EU leaders. The basics of the deal would create a framework in which Turkey would receive financial aid and political accommodation in exchange for taking back any refugees turned away from Greece. For every Syrian refugee sent back, another Syrian would be settled in the European Union directly from refugee camps in Turkey.

This agreement has been met with some practical, legal, and ethical concerns. For example, human rights organizations and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are worried that the deal will not provide asylum seekers smuggled into the European Union through Turkey with the protection due to them under EU and international law. Some also see the deal as an ironic signal of the European Union's readiness to cozy up to Turkey's deeply flawed democracy to safeguard the European Union's own liberal order.

Ultimately, the solution to the Syrian displacement crisis is a political one, demanding the settlement of the violent conflict in Syria. Unfortunately, the international community is far from arriving at such a settlement.

As Kemal has recently returned from Istanbul, I am confident that we will benefit from his insights into these recent developments and how they impact the Syrian refugee crisis and the EU-Turkey relationship. Please join me in giving him a very warm welcome, as he just came up from Washington to be with us today.

Thank you so much, Kemal.

Remarks

KEMAL KIRIŞCI: Good morning to you all. I'm honored that you should make your way here on a gray, wet New York City morning.

The topic is a very difficult one, an issue that has been on the agenda of the media here in the United States, but also on the agenda of many actors around the world.

Joanne, in her introduction, briefly highlighted the nature of the [displacement crisis](#) from Syria. What I should underline with respect to the displacement crisis is that, right in this month, we are entering the sixth year of the [Syrian crisis](#). The early waves of displacement—and let me mention that just about half of the Syrian population has been internally or externally displaced. According to UNHCR statistics, 4.8 million—and we should assume that the real figures are larger than 4.8 million—have become refugees, mostly and overwhelmingly in the neighboring countries.

Turkey gets frequently mentioned, but we must not forget that there are also 1.1 million refugees in Lebanon. In Lebanon one out of every four persons is a refugee, and Lebanon is a fragile state at best. In Jordan there are about 630,000 refugees, but the Jordanian authorities regularly and incessantly mention that there are 1.2–1.3 million Syrian refugees, taking into account those who were already there before the Syrian refugee crisis erupted. On top of it, there are about 6.5–7 million internally displaced Syrians. Little attention is given to them, as the focus is more on refugees, particularly refugees who have tried to make their way to Europe.

This displacement crisis initially was driven by the [regime's](#) attempts to repress the rebellion against the regime and the demands for reform and transformation. But over the years the conflict in Syria has become very complicated, involving the emergence of radical extremist groups who have fought partly the regime but also partly other opposition groups and have provoked displacement within Syria, and beyond it as well. Most recently, as I am sure you have followed since last fall, the [Russian intervention](#) in the Syrian conflict has, in turn, also provoked additional displacement.

I'm beginning to ease into the topics of ethics and legality issues. Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon, right from the beginning, followed what they called an open-door policy. They opened their borders and allowed the Syrian refugees to stream into their countries. However, Jordan and Lebanon, by late 2014, were becoming nervous—the governments—about the impact that these refugees were having on politics, economics, the social aspects of their respective countries, and have effectively closed their borders. On the other hand, the Turkish government has continued to pursue the open-door policy since 2011. There have also been frequent references to the notion of creating safe zones within Syria.

Now, what I am going to do this morning is refer to four areas that I think are deeply impacted by issues to do with ethics, if not legality:

- One of them is an issue that is not frequently raised in the media: that the Syrian crisis is not the only crisis of displacement around the world. That needs to be borne in mind.

- I will also say a few words about burden-sharing, derived from the notion that protecting refugees is an international responsibility and not solely that of the one who is hosting it.
- Thirdly, very quickly, a few words about the issue of safe zone and the ethical issues that are tied up in there.
- Lastly—I know this is the topic that you may well be most interested in—is this famous EU-Turkey deal that has attracted, by and large, considerable criticism. I belong to a tiny little minority that thinks there is a silver lining to this deal. Time allowing, we can go into a little bit more details of it.

The first topic: I'm not really sure how to word it, but Western attention is very hierarchical. The Syrian crisis has attracted considerable attention and has sucked a lot of resources that the international community has tried to mobilize to address the broader issue, what we call protracted situations of displacement. In 2014, the UNHCR announced that there were almost 60 million people who had been displaced, either internally or as refugees across the border. Again in 2014, the United Nations appealed for about \$17 billion to be spent on these roughly 60 million displaced people.

We, with my colleague [Elizabeth Ferris](#)—and we have been working on this issue of Syrian displacement since roughly the summer of 2013 —published a series of reports that are available at the [website of Brookings](#), and we have a book that is about to come out, *Consequences of Chaos: The Syrian Displacement Crisis and the Failure to Protect*. For that book, we calculated that the international community or the United Nations has appealed—not realized, has appealed—roughly \$1,125 for each displaced Syrian, whereas the rest of the displaced persons finding themselves in protracted situations receive \$210 in appeal.

The realization of those budgets is another issue. The United Nations has two budgets for Syria, one for refugees in the neighboring countries and one for the internally displaced. Those budgets, with the exception of the very early years, 2011–2012, have consistently been under-realized, and in 2015 the realization rate is just around 50 percent. We have to recognize that the realization of those budgets increased as the crisis impacted Europe from mid-2015.

So to recap, one ethical issue here, I think, is not to forget that there are many more displaced persons around the world. We can mention the Afghans, the Somalis, the Yemenis. We mustn't forget also the Ukrainians that have been displaced as a result of the Russian intervention in [Crimea](#), as well as in [Eastern parts of Ukraine](#).

One last point in that context is that what is happening is that, as the Syrian crisis deepens, many countries are channeling their development assistance budget into that area. What that means is that there are fewer resources available for developmental projects around the world because humanitarian issues and humanitarian relief issues are taking over the agenda.

The second issue I want to address is the fact that protection of refugees is an international responsibility. I will spare you the details of the international refugee regime, but maybe briefly highlight the 1951 [Convention on the Status of Refugees](#). The host countries have to extend protection to refugees, which these three countries that hold the bulk of the refugees in the region do the best they can, given the limited resources. What is expected from the rest of the international community is to give the major hosting countries a hand in what is known as burden-sharing.

Burden-sharing, you could argue, has two legs to it. One leg is resettlement, resettlement of especially vulnerable refugees. Women along with their children, people who have long-term health issues, are considered as the vulnerable ones. There the international community has fallen well

short of what would be expected from them in minimum terms. Just to give you an idea, the European Union opened up 22,000 positions for the resettlement of refugees after having been bombarded on numerous accounts by the former head of the UNHCR.

The high commissioner for refugees, [António Guterres](#), frequently appealed to the international community. Most recently, last year, the figure he had in mind was 160,000 places. But the international community was only able to offer about 120,000, 125,000 places. But offering places is one thing and then filling them up is another. The European Union, out of those 22,000 places, had resettled only 4,500 as of the end of the year last year.

The case of the United States, dare I say, is much sadder. I suspect you are following it from the media as well. Since 2011—that is, when the crisis began—only 2,500 Syrians have been resettled in the United States. But from the kinds of statements that are coming from some politicians and officials around the United States, you would think that the United States is actually being invaded by Syrian refugees. This is sad. I'm not going to address the ethical side of it. But I feel it's sad because the United States has had a very long record, a highly regarded and respected record, of receiving refugees through resettlement. Each year it has a quota of 70,000 places distributed across the world.

The current [U.S. administration](#)—after that unfortunate [incident](#) occurred on the coast of Turkey and this young little Syrian refugee lost his life, there was a very positive chemistry in the United States, but also in Europe, to help with resettlement. That is the context in which the U.S. administration took the decision to increase the numbers from 70,000 to 85,000, allowing a much larger number for the resettlement of Syrians for 2016. For 2017 the numbers would go up to, in the fiscal year, 100,000. However, right now everything is frozen and not much is happening, given the political context in the United States and [upcoming elections](#).

The second leg of burden-sharing has to do with the earlier point I made about extending financial support to hosting countries. The United States has contributed close to \$5 billion to mostly UN agencies and civil society groups, NGOs, operating in an attempt to assist refugees, but also internally displaced persons. The European Union as a whole has contributed figures close to the one in the case of the United States.

However, that has not been enough. As I pointed out, the UN budgets have not been realized. One manifestation of that has been that last year, towards the summer, the World Food Programme had to cut down its contributions to Syrian refugees, especially in Lebanon and Jordan. Many experts believe that the [sudden snowballing of refugees into Europe](#) was a function of this limited burden-sharing from a resettlement, as well as financial aspects of it.

A third point that I would like to raise is the issue of safe zone. The Turkish government, particularly, frequently brings up the idea of establishing a safe zone into which Syrian refugees or to-become-refugees can be brought and can be housed. However, the key element here is protection. Again, experts in the area, particularly human rights groups, are concerned that the international community may not provide the type of protection that would be necessary to prevent another [Srebrenica](#) from occurring. You will recall that last year was the 20th commemoration of what happened in the former Yugoslavia in Srebrenica. The issue, of course, there is that you have to have, to use an American expression, boots on the ground, and not just as was the case with the Dutch in Srebrenica, but boots that would actually enforce the safe haven against any intrusions or attacks.

The second point about safe havens is that it would require a United Nations Security Council

decision. And that's where the problem lies, that in the Security Council there is at least one country that has made it very clear that it would object to and veto the decision. Without the agreement of the United Nations Security Council, an attempt to create a safe haven would be a violation of international law.

However, I am not an expert on ethics issues. I would like to think that I appreciate its importance. But here would be a good case of how international law and ethical issues would conflict with each other. You have, on the one hand, international law insisting that there must be a UN Security Council decision before such a safe haven can be created, because you would be intervening within the territory of a Member State of the United Nations; but, on the other hand, the absence of a safe haven is exacerbating the situation, the humanitarian situation and human rights situation, in Syria.

What is often given as an example is [Resolution 688](#) from 1991 that had created the [safe zone](#) in Northern Iraq which enabled many Kurdish refugees who had fled to Iran and Turkey as well to be returned to the safety of the area north of the 36th parallel. But this was very exceptional because at the time it was still the Soviet Union, and it was [Gorbachev's](#) Soviet Union, who was prepared to cooperate with the international community. At the time China had chosen to abstain. Two countries had objected to it—interestingly, Yemen, as well as Cuba. However, they were not able to prevent that decision from taking place, and, at least as far as international law, the intervention there and the creation of a safe haven was in line with the law itself.

A third and rarely studied aspect of a safe haven is the politics of it, the risk that the safe haven, rather than being a safe haven for refugees, might become an area from which attempts would be made to overthrow the regime in Damascus and, hence, becoming a kind of area from where subversive efforts are made, in return exposing the refugees there to the dangers of retaliation, not to mention the dangers of competition and conflict amongst the opposing groups.

I have about seven, eight minutes left, so I will address the EU-Turkey deal as best as I can. But I am assuming that in the questions-and-answers section we can come to the details of it.

It was already mentioned that the deal was formally adopted on the 19th of March 2016. From my point of view, the logic behind this deal is to try to bring control over the flows of Syrian refugees into Greece and, subsequently, the rest of the European Union. The focus of control there is the smugglers, the unscrupulous manner in which the smugglers will throw the lives of refugees themselves into danger. I need not go into the details of it.

The second aspect of control is the controlling or checking or balancing the manner in which the extreme right in the European Union has been rising and threatening the liberal values of the European Union.

Finally, there is growing debate and concern that the crisis itself could unravel the European Union, the kind of debate that also came along with the euro crisis a couple of years ago. The unraveling dynamics would be driven by individual Member States beginning to close down their borders and undermining what I call a jewel of European integration, the [Schengen regime](#), the regime that allows free movement of people and goods within the European Union. We have seen elements of that taking place over the last couple of months.

Very, very briefly, what are the elements of the EU-Turkey deal?

There is the part which concerns stemming the flow of refugees, based on this one-to-one formula. Here the people that would be returned to Turkey are those whose asylum applications would be

rejected, Syrian refugees. But amongst the 1 million people who have entered the European Union illegally in the course of 2015, only half of them are Syrians. The other half belong to a group of nationalities—to start with, Afghans, Iraqis, and others. Afghans, Iraqis, and the others would most probably not be recognized as refugees, but irregular migrants. It is the bulk of them who would be returned to Turkey. The critical date there was the 20th of March.

The one-to-one deal entails the notion that for each returned refugee or irregular migrant—rejected refugee or irregular migrant—Turkey would be able to send for resettlement one Syrian refugee that had been registered in Turkey.

The deal also involves, up to 2018, the sending of €6 billion to Turkey. Here there has been some controversy, whereby the media has even published cartoons that have depicted the [president of Turkey](#) as a bouncer at the entrance of a club—the European nightclub, if you wish. I frankly think that there is an ethical issue there, because the €6 billion is not protection payment to such a bouncer, but actually it is funds that would be used towards improving the situation of refugees. If there is interest, we can go into the details of it. The challenge here, rather than being ethical, is a practical challenge: How is that amount of money going to be channeled into Turkey and into constructive use to the benefit of refugees?

Resettlement is another leg of it that goes beyond the one-to-one deal that I mentioned earlier on.

Now, the part of the deal that has received considerable criticism—and also ethical issues have been raised in that respect—is that the deal is tied to the application of an earlier agreement that was reached between Turkey and the European Union considering the Readmission Agreement. The European Union and Turkey, after very, very long and difficult negotiations, in 2013 had signed such an agreement, in which was also embedded the idea of offering visa liberalization to Turkish nationals, which would allow them to travel to the European Union and within the European Union visa-free. These have very important economic consequences.

That has been—dare I use the term?—weaved into the agreement. Just as the issue of countering the rise of the right wing through this deal, especially for the chancellor of Germany, [Angela Merkel](#), was domestically important, this issue, the visa liberalization, is also domestically important in Turkey. The visa liberalization issue was accompanied with the idea of revitalizing Turkey's accession process, meaning opening up chapters for negotiations, and then an eventual—in the long run—conclusion of those accession negotiations for Turkey to become a member of the European Union.

Just in brackets, Croatia and Turkey started the accession process in October 2005. Croatia completed negotiations over 35 chapters and became a member in 2013, whereas in the case of Turkey, only 14 chapters have been opened so far. There will be another one being opened, and others will follow subsequently. However, I will not go into the details over why this is the case. But we may come back to it.

As I approach the end of my presentation here, what are some of the ethically problematic issues in that deal from my point of view? One is that the deal does come across to the public and many observers as a very crude deal, a deal based on a very crude form of bargaining. The fact that the [Turkish prime minister](#), on the heels of the deal being sealed, made references to a town in Turkey that is very much associated with the ability to bargain, in the business sense of the word, did not help matters. It gave the impression as if this deal is to benefit the European Union and Turkey, leaving Syrian refugees in the background.

My perspective on this is that there is a lot to be said about this image. However, if this deal is actually implemented, I believe that it would be a case of win-win for all the parties involved—the European Union, by bringing the flow under control and weakening the negative political consequences of an uncontrolled movement of people. I also believe—and this is the silver lining to the deal—that if both the Turkish and the EU side can actually make this deal work and implement it, I believe that the mood, the chemistry between the two sides, may transform itself towards a more positive direction and have a constructive impact on Turkey's domestic politics and recent image of a land where liberal democratic values are undermined.

There is also the issue of violation of law. The human rights organizations and UNHCR commissioner, the new one, [Filippo Grandi](#), did highlight the fact that, on the basis of the [Geneva Conventions](#) and EU internal law, the *acquis*, each Syrian refugee or family will have its application attended to individually and an attempt to deport en masse refugees or irregular migrants would be a violation of law. The deal incorporates elements that are, at least on paper, supposed to address this challenge there.

One final area that has attracted a lot of criticism, an area that is very technical—Turkey has signed the UN Convention on Refugees with a geographical limitation. Many people tend to use the term "reservation." It is not a reservation. It is something that comes from within the Convention. According to the geographical limitation, Turkey grants refugee status only to refugees coming from events in Europe, Europe being defined as membership in the Council of Europe. But this does not mean that Turkey is not under obligation to protect refugees coming from outside Europe. That protection is ensured by a regulation that was adopted in October 2014 that lays down the terms of that protection, which extends to provision of health services, education, and, very recently, access to the labor market.

Let me close by saying that the key here, the crux of the issue here, is going to be the actual implementation of this deal. Time will tell whether it is human rights organizations that will turn out to be right or whether the positive aspects of the deal will actually prevail and culminate in a situation where the lot of the Syrian refugees will improve.

Thank you.

Questions

QUESTION: I'm John Hirsch, from the International Peace Institute.

First of all, thank you very much. I thought it was a masterly presentation. I have, that said, three questions.

One is the question of what over the decade has been a kind of underlying, at least partial, EU animosity to Turkey. President [Sarkozy](#) was the main example I can think of. It's not as if the issue of accession of Turkey to the European Union is new. I want you to comment on that if you would.

The second is the question you have not discussed, about whether there is any prospect at all for a [Syrian peace agreement](#). All this, of course, that you are describing is a function of the total inability to reach a peace agreement. Do you foresee any possibility whatsoever in the next two to three years of a peace agreement?

My third question is about the total malfunction of the appeals process that the United Nations runs. I think this whole system is totally broken. I think there needs to be kind of a study. In other words,

every day, every third day, there is a new appeal from someone, UNHCR or one or another NGO. It's just endless. How does that work? Of course, you used the term "international community," but 85 or 90 percent of the international community has no resources to respond to any appeal. All the developing countries or poor countries are out of it. They just don't have the money. Vanuatu, Fiji—they are not going to put money into this, or most of the Africans.

When it boils down, in your thinking, how many countries are really part of this story? You made the point that the United States has put in the \$5 billion, or whatever you mentioned there. Do you have any thought about how the appeals process can be reconceptualized so it's not this endless ad hoc approach?

KEMAL KIRIŞCI: Thank you.

Very quickly, the EU animosity to Turkey, I have to confess, is also reciprocated. [Laughter] It is not reciprocated so much by the public, because when you look at public opinion surveys, the Turkish public has consistently supported the idea of membership to the European Union. But at the same time, it is also suspicious about whether Turkey would ever be allowed to become a member of the European Union. That element of suspicion, I have to confess, is partly a function of the former French president Nicolas Sarkozy's position, which is a position that is widely shared by the European public, but especially by the Christian democrats and now, increasingly, right-wing nationalist political movements in the European Union.

Having said that, there has always also been a strong but minority group within the European Union, often within the social democrats—not the social democrats as a whole in Europe, but a group within it—that has, I think, been truly loyal to what I believe to be the European Union's mission, the mission of reconciling these—I don't like using this term—millennium-old cleavages within Europe. The most successful, of course, was Germany-France, but then, with the accession of Greece to the European Union, but also Bulgaria and Romania, the reconciliation of the Eastern and Western churches. I believe *the* one remaining reconciliation exercise is the one between Europeans and Turks, and maybe between Muslims and Europe.

The European Union—Turkey's membership ambitions and project, I think, was to become such an exercise. It failed. I don't want to proportionally distribute the blame, but I think the blame goes in both directions and I think the blame is a function of domestic politics. Politicians on both sides have found it convenient to use anti-Turkish and anti-EU rhetoric for their objectives.

This is the best I can do under the circumstances, but I would love to go on discussing this issue forever.

Secondly, the Syrian peace agreement. At the heart of this crisis clearly lies the conflict, the civil war, in Syria. I need not underline how complex a conflict it is. However, it seems like the efforts—and I think there credit ought to go to the secretary of state in the United States, [John Kerry](#), that against all odds, he appears to have succeeded in covering some ground, ensuring a degree of truce on the ground that has slowed down at least the pain and the displacement in Syria. Will an agreement or a political solution emerge from these efforts? Very difficult to tell at this point.

However, during our research trips to Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, we were struck with two observations. One, a very widely, frequently made observation that the situation in Syria is not about to improve in the coming five to ten years, and that these refugees in Turkey, in Jordan, and in Lebanon are there to stay. This is what we were hearing in 2013, 2014, and 2015. It is only in 2015 that, finally, the international community, the Turkish government, and the other governments began

to make an effort towards translating that into politics.

The second observation—a very interesting one—that has emerged in the course of the last year or so is that all wars one day come to an end and the focus should be already on the reconstruction challenge.

Which brings me to the third question you raised. António Guterres made a very interesting and I think a very telling remark. He said that the UN system is not broken but it is broke. I think a lot has to be said about it. At the end of the day, when you go to a city like Gaziantep in Turkey, which is a little bit the hub of all the NGOs and international agencies that are trying to help refugees in the area, in Turkey, but also the internally displaced in Syria, if you also go to Beirut and if you also go to Amman, I think you will see how various UN agencies—from UNHCR, from OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), UNICEF (UN Children's Emergency Fund), World Food Organization, etc.—are there. Are they being efficient? You could debate it, raise questions.

But I am tempted to say, after having been a professor of international relations for 30 years—one thing I can observe pretty much decisively is I think the scene would be much, much worse if those agencies were not there. So some credit goes to them.

Here is another ethical issue. In our book we have a whole chapter where we try to do exactly what you mentioned, develop a scheme we call "the new global approach to Syria." We underline very classic issues—burden-sharing, resettlement as an important element of addressing such crises, and recalling how the [Vietnamese boat people](#) challenge was addressed and how the United States played a leadership role there. We also recall the Central American deal from the 1990s, which led to an important number of refugees being resettled there.

We also call that the burden should not be solely on the shoulders of classic traditional donor countries—meaning Western countries like the United States, the European Union, Australia, Canada, etc.—but that the new emerging countries should also come forward, like Brazil, not to mention China. The idea is just beginning to be addressed. Especially the Brazilians seem to have taken an interest in the issue of resettlement. But we have to recognize that Brazil is going through a [difficult political period](#) right now, too.

QUESTION: Thank you very much for this very thorough presentation. My name is [Catherine Boura](#). I'm the permanent representative of Greece to the United Nations.

I come, as you all know, from a country that is very heavily inflicted by a humanitarian refugee crisis. We definitely agree—and thank you very much for mentioning—that this is a problem that does not involve only one or two or three countries, but this is an issue, the refugee crisis, that needs a collective approach and a collective effort by the international community.

There are, as you mentioned, a lot of questions about the Turkey-EU agreement. But in any case, this was a necessity because it gives everyone in Europe and the region a hope that the issue of uncontrolled movement of refugees will be decreased and be controlled. Of course, as you said, the implementation is very important. We know that governments have the best of intentions of implementing it.

But there is another aspect with this movement of the refugees and migrants, the traffickers and the smugglers of people. We had that in Northern Africa and we have it now in the East Mediterranean. Do you think that this will be possible to be dealt with? This poses a real danger that can undermine any agreement. And, of course, it might pose other challenges in the future for the European Union,

for Turkey, and for the whole East Mediterranean.

KEMAL KIRIŞCI: Many thanks, Ambassador. I'm glad you brought up the trafficker/smuggler issue and an ethical aspect of it.

The Turkish president back in the fall made a remark, a critical remark, towards the European Union on how the Europeans were insensitive towards the deaths of Muslim children and women as they attempted to cross the Mediterranean. At the time, the issue was the Mediterranean Sea. He was quite angry about it. I think he had a point there, even though the way in which it was packaged may be challenged and questioned.

Having heard that remark, I personally could not help but think about the situation in the Aegean Sea. It is only recently that the Turkish media has begun to refer to how a huge business, in billions of dollars, has emerged as a result of these smuggling operations, which has also involved the manufacturing and the sale of lifejackets that don't work. One ethical aspect of this is to address this issue. Thanks to the good old days when the European Union was engaging Turkey constructively, Turkey adopted a penal code that makes trafficking and smuggling of human beings a very serious crime in Turkey. I'm happy to say that the Turkish authorities have begun to take this issue seriously, but I cannot help but wonder, if the issue was taken seriously much earlier on, whether this problem would have reached these proportions and whether this many refugees and children would have perished in the Aegean Sea.

I would like to make one concrete observation about an aspect of the silver lining that I made references to earlier on. There are a lot of problems with the deal. I appreciate the position that, I would like to underline, human rights organizations and others are taking, the critical one. But now that the Greek ambassador has taken the floor, I would like to give you a concrete example of this silver lining.

Last Monday I was in Ankara. I spoke to a number of high-level officials—not politicians, bureaucrats working on this topic. What I was impressed by is how committed they are to making this deal work. In previous weeks, I was in Berlin and in Copenhagen, and then also in DC. I had an opportunity to interact with people who would be roughly their counterparts in Europe. I detected a similar will.

One concrete manifestation of that will was shared with me by the head of the migration agency in Ankara, who had just come from negotiations with his Greek counterparts, which has put into place the exchange of Greek and Turkish officials across the Aegean. There will be 25 Turkish officials from his agency located in five of the critical islands and vice versa, Greek officials. One of the 25 officials in his passport had a stamp of [Northern Cyprus](#). The practice of Greece is not to allow people to enter Greece if they have such a stamp in their passport. On this occasion this official was allowed in.

To me, that is a tiny little, but very important, manifestation of that silver lining. This is why I hope and expect that this deal, if well implemented, will help to bring about a better chemistry in EU-Turkish relations.

QUESTION: David Musher.

Rescue and relief are exceedingly important, but ultimately it's resettlement and assimilation into society.

My question is: Of the millions of refugees that we have been talking about, do you have any figures

as to how many of them have been resettled in the neighboring Arab countries? I would also include perhaps Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other countries.

KEMAL KIRIŞCI: Very good. Thank you. I think there are two aspects to the question you raised.

I would like to first say a few words about what you called assimilation, but what many people call these days integration or accommodation. I think in the neighboring countries there is a recognition, as I said earlier on, that these refugees are there to stay for a long time. I think it took too long a time for the governments to recognize this reality and begin to adjust to it.

Two areas are very critical to that adjustment. One is education. A good proportion of the Syrian refugees are children. There is a fear that there is already a lost generation there, and that lost generation can have very important implications in terms of security as well, without going into the details of it. But the international community, NGOs, and now the Turkish government, have also recognized that something needs to be done on education. The €6 billion—I suspect an important proportion of it will go into education.

I wish there was time to go into the details of it. It's not an easy exercise. The ones in Turkey would have to learn Turkish. What does that mean in terms of the long run? Does it mean they become Turks or does it mean that they acquire fluency in Turkish and Arabic, and when the day comes, they go back to Syria to help with reconstruction? These are very difficult issues to deal with.

Hand in hand with education comes access to livelihood, they call it—basically, to the labor market—which the Turkish side has accepted, but we have yet to see the implementation of it. I think part of that sum is going to go into that area. I personally am hoping that this will also give an opportunity, for example, for the Turkish and German sides to work together to define some best practices in the incorporation of Syrian refugees into the labor market.

The two are very related to each other, because when you don't have access to livelihood, it's children who end up working, working illegally and getting exploited, instead of going to school. There is an ethical issue for you. Worse is that girls at an early age are wedded away as second, third wives to families in return for a dowry. There is also the problem of, of course, prostitution that comes into the picture there. Access to livelihood is a hope that will address these issues.

But hand in hand comes the issue of what you called assimilation or integration of refugees. Debate is just opening on that.

Coming to the Arab countries, I am well aware that Arab countries have been extensively criticized for not admitting refugees for resettlement. However, one has to recognize that there are already a large number of Syrians that are working in these countries. Here often the term "Arab countries" is used for Gulf countries, for Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, etc. I think everybody has the right to criticize them on it, but one must also recognize that they have unique political and social circumstances that need to be borne in mind, just as is the case with Lebanon. There is some difficult justification for Lebanon to close its borders to further refugee flows because of the fragility of the balances between different groupings within Lebanon.

I think these countries that we tend to be very critical of in the Gulf have also generously contributed to humanitarian and relief assistance. The ethical problem there, I suspect, is that these governments have also contributed to different rebel groups that, in turn, have aggravated the humanitarian assistance. But dare I say that that is a problem that every actor that has been involved in the Syrian conflict faces?

JOANNE MYERS: I think you have spoken a lot about silver linings, but I think it was really a golden lining having you come and talk to us about these issues. Thank you very much.

Audio

Over 4.8 million Syrians have become refugees, mostly in neighboring countries, and this is not the only displacement crisis around the globe, says Kirişci, an expert in Turkish foreign policy and migration studies. This troubling and informative talk raises both practical and ethical issues, not only for Turkey and its neighbors but for the entire world.

Video Clips

Over 4.8 million Syrians have become refugees, mostly in neighboring countries, and this is not the only displacement crisis around the globe, says Kirişci, an expert in Turkish foreign policy and migration studies. This troubling and informative talk raises both practical and ethical issues, not only for Turkey and its neighbors but for the entire world.

TV Show

Over 4.8 million Syrians have become refugees, mostly in neighboring countries, and this is not the only displacement crisis around the globe, says Kirişci, an expert in Turkish foreign policy and migration studies. This troubling and informative talk raises both practical and ethical issues, not only for Turkey and its neighbors but for the entire world.

Read More: [Aid](#), [Security](#), [Warfare](#), [Armed Conflict](#), [Global Governance](#), [Human Rights](#), [International Law](#), [International Relations](#), [Migration](#), [United Nations](#), [Europe](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#), [Greece](#), [Jordan](#), [Lebanon](#), [Syria](#), [Turkey](#)