



End wars of aggression, Respect human rights of refugees!

IBON International Statement on the Refugee Crisis in Europe

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It took a photo of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, a Syrian refugee whose body was washed up dead on the shores of Turkey, for the world to notice the biggest humanitarian crisis in the world today. Driven by poverty and war, the mass exodus of refugees arriving in the European region is considered as the biggest refugee crisis since the end of the Second World War. Many are now wondering how this situation worsened. Why did the United Nations (UN) and powerful Northern countries allow such crisis to intensify?

Syria's civil war has become one of the most alarming humanitarian disasters in the world. Since the beginning of the Arab Spring protests in 2011, the estimated number of recorded deaths reached 250,000, many of them believed to be civilians. According to the UN, half of the Syrian population has been displaced, while more than four million became refugees in neighboring countries to flee from war and strife.

Roots of the Syrian Arab refugee crisis go back to the relentless plunder by industrial countries, headed by the United States, in the Middle East, Central Asia, North Africa, and in other regions. In previous years, the Syrian region has been the target of horrendous proxy wars funded by the US and its NATO allies, with powerful Arab monarchies and Zionists. Since 2011, alleged "military aid" to Syria amounted to USD 16 billion. The US alone has been spending an estimated USD 1 billion a year since 2011 to provide covert military aid for rebel groups.

Since the involvement of ISIS forces in 2013, casualties of the Syrian civil war continue to increase in huge numbers. Counterrevolutionary wars and jihadists operations involving suicide bombings, missile attacks, and other advanced weaponries are being used on civilians and causing more horrendous violence. The US purportedly launched 2,400 airstrikes against ISIS forces. Aside from funding weaponries, there are reports that the US government is now arming 5,000 "moderate" rebels to take on ISIS rebels within Syria.

In August 2013, hundreds of people died after rockets filled with sarin, one of the world's most lethal chemical weapons, were fired at several agricultural districts in Damascus. Western powers blamed the Syrian government for the attack, while the latter and its Russian allies pointed towards the rebels.

Horrific human rights violations continue to haunt the grounds of Syria. With government and pro-government militias escalating their attacks against the opposition forces, civilian areas are being bombed and destroyed. Non-state armed opposition parties are also doing serious abuses like kidnapping, torture and detention, indiscriminate firing on civilians, and the use of child soldiers. These conditions fueled the mass displacement and forced migration of Syrians to what they believed are safer grounds.

As the crisis intensifies throughout the region, many refugees staying in neighboring countries continue to suffer from acute poverty. They are forced to engage in cheap labor, theft, begging, human trafficking and other illegal means in order to survive. Young refugees are forced into teenage marriages, child labor, and petty crimes. Several others are attempting the perilous voyage across the Mediterranean to escape the conflict.

Host communities in nearby regions in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon are also experiencing difficulty in supporting Syrian refugees due to competition for basic needs, land, housing, water, energy, and employment. Other nations are refusing the entry of refugees by building wired fences to keep them away.

The international community must immediately address the continuing attacks and human rights violations against Syrians. IBON International calls for international solidarity and cooperation to address the aggravating situation in Syria. We urge civil society organizations, humanitarian agencies, and governments to provide assistance to our Syrian brothers and sisters.

States should stand by their obligations under the international refugee law and other international treaties protecting refugees and asylum-seekers (e.g. Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and the 1951 Refugee Convention). We emphasize that no country can refuse its individual and collective responsibility towards refugees. We thus strongly call on European states to responsibly and humanely respond to the needs of arriving refugees and asylum-seekers in their region. We urge the governments of developed countries in Europe and North America to respect the human rights of Syrians, including their rights to asylum and protection.

Lastly, we condemn the ongoing human rights violations against innocent people who suffer from the continuing wars of aggression and interference of powerful countries, which have created the conditions causing mass displacements and forced migration of refugees. #