

## MIDDLE EASTERN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Wzhar FAHRI SAADI

College of Law and International Relations, Bayan University, Erbil, Kurdistan, Iraq.

**Email:** wzhar.fahri@bnu.edu.iq

### ABSTRACT

*Middle Eastern humanitarian crisis is a new challenge for the international community. The uprising of people known as (Arab Spring) has brought a significant change to the Arab world. Arab Spring emerged in Tunisia when people asked their rights and changing political structure of the country, this became a chance for other Arab people in other Middle Eastern countries to rise and ask for their basic needs. Only Tunisian people won and reached their aim when they changed the country's political system and also new faces came on the power through a democratic process, the other countries are still in the fight with their governments to reach their will. Governments of Syria and Yemen responded to people by weapon and killed a big number of demonstrators, this led people to join radical militia groups, and this led many countries in the Middle East to civil war. The terminology of the Middle Eastern Humanitarian Crisis appeared when the war escalating in the war-torn countries. In 2015, when the fight escalated among rebel groups and government security forces, millions of Middle Eastern people became a refugee and tried to reach Europe to be saved. After nine years of civil war and destruction of cities, which made millions of people became homeless, still, the international community is struggling with the wave of refugees to Europe and also to find a common resolution for the Middle Eastern humanitarian crisis. It has been proved for the international community when the Middle East is suffering and has politic, economic, humanitarian crisis, other parts of the world especially Europe will suffer, because at that time people are seeking to find a safe place to live, and Europe is the main and favorable destination for them.*

**Keywords:** Arab spring; Middle Eastern humanitarian crisis; International Community; Civil war in Syria; European Union.

### INTRODUCTION

Arab spring, which emerged in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya inspired big demonstrations in Syria when Syrian people aimed to change the political structure of the country and ask their rights. Syrian military intervened by violence, which increased to significant military operations to suppress resistance. As a response to the Syrian government, opposition groups were established to face the government's military, this led Syria to face civil war and after the escalation of war between the two sides, the humanitarian crisis emerged. Middle Eastern humanitarian crisis, also known as a refugee crisis, started in 2015; a big number of people left their places to be saved from war. Conflict and tension have become a nightmare of the contemporary Middle East, forcing millions of people to leave their homes (Panara and Wilson, 2013).

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the Middle East is struggling with the crisis. The study will answer the following questions: when the Middle Eastern Humanitarian crisis emerged? What is the effectiveness of the civil war on Syria? What is the role of the Gulf Rich Countries? Why Middle Eastern refugees are seeking to reach Europe? And why the

humanitarian crisis still exists? In conclusion, the research will propose a roadmap for solving the current civil war in Syria (Middle East Development Journal, 2013; Panara and Wilson, 2013).

### *Origination of the Middle Eastern humanitarian crisis*

The uprising of the Arab world in 2011, known as (Arab Spring), appeared in Tunisia and spread to other Arab countries like Libya, Yemen, Egypt, and Syria. The demonstration started in response to the dictator regimes in the region. Undoubtedly the root of the crisis goes back to a long time ago as many factors led people to upraise against their government such as a low standard of living, and mismanagement in the region. Many factors made people ask for change regimes in the region like political corruption, dictatorship system, violation of human rights, and high rate of unemployment. Academics believe this movement is (Arab awareness). After the historical uprising, Middle East moved into a transformation period. The countries that faced demonstrations failed in protecting the harmony of their people with having different races and backgrounds. Tunisia is the only country among countries that its people achieved their dream and changed the political system and structure of their state (Salih, 2011).

The origination of the Middle Eastern humanitarian crisis goes back to 2015 after the escalation of civil war in Syria. This forced people to flee from their homes and this instability was the biggest reason for the emerging humanitarian crisis in the region. People were the power of the demonstration; they asked their basic needs in life. This event was a unique chance for people with having different backgrounds such as race, religion, and culture. Minorities who were away from their fundamental rights used this chance and joined anti-government demonstrations (Mekki, 2015; Salih, 2011).

Corruption was one of the reasons led people to rise against their government. Since the 1980s most of the Arab countries were under pressure from IMF and World Bank as their economies were close for foreign investors, and economic institutions were forcing Arab countries to do a significant reform in their economic sector. Countries that faced the movement of Arab spring had an autocracy and authoritarian political system, in which the power of the country was monopolized by a group of people and important positions were occupied by a leader's family members (Inbar, 2016).

People faced violation and the term of human rights was not very important by governments. People were lack of freedom, freedom of speech, no multiparty system, lack of non-governmental organizations and other kinds of liberty, which are vital for a civil society. Minorities were facing Ethnic and religious discrimination, like Kurds, in which they were absent for basic needs. With having a lot of limitations in their lives, people wanted to change their way of living through the Arab Spring (Tinnes, 2017; Inbar, 2016).

### *Civil war and its effectiveness on Syria*

On 15 March 2011, big disquiet began in Syrian when protests reached Damascus and Aleppo, wanted democratic reforms and releasing political prisoners, the government's security forces retaliated by starting a fire on the protestors. When the country is unstable, terrorist and radical groups can use it and enter into action. After the harsh response from the Syrian government, local people went to streets by guns, the conflict started between demonstrators



and security forces, and opposition parties joined people in the fight against the regime. The situation was out of control as conflict spread to all parts of the country and many militia groups declared their existence, each group captured a part of the country and implements their rules (Culbertson et al., 2016).

After the escalation of civil war between opposition groups and the government's security forces, foreign actors and forces intervened and made the Syrian situation the worst. Some foreign forces like Hezbollah, Iran, and Russia are still supporting Syrian current government, which leads by Bashar Al- Assad and some foreign countries like the US, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are against the remaining of Bashar Al- Assad on power. Different domestic and foreign forces became an ally based on their plan for the future of Syria.

The civil war in Syria has moved into a new level, in which there are no terrorist organizations anymore in frontlines and all groups are supported by different countries, which made the war a (Proxy war) among regional and global powers, what we are seeing in Syria is the war of hegemony, which is mainly between the USA and Russia (Weiner, 1990).

Syrian civil war caused major tragedies in Syria such as displacement of millions of people and significant wave of refugees to Europe, drought in many Syrian parts, humanitarian and food crisis, and destruction of the country, all of these effects appeared after starting the civil war. The consequence of the Syrian civil war will be with people for decades as they cannot recover soon. Children are the future of the country, millions of children are out of schools and not studying, in future, the rate of literacy in Syrian and other war-torn countries like Libya, Yemen will be very low and all of these happen because of civil war (Winckler, 1997).



### *The role of Gulf rich countries*

From the starting of instability in Syria, gulf rich countries decided to enter into war by funding militia groups to achieve their goals, some countries like Saudi Arabia was against Bashar Al-Assad and, they wanted to change the regime by any price. Since the beginning of the unrest in Syria, this question appeared why Gulf rich countries are not hosting Middle Eastern refugees generally and Syrian refugees especially? Meanwhile, Syrian refugees and Gulf rich countries share the same culture, language, and history, so the process of integration for refugees will be easier than in the European countries. Some countries like Turkey that is the transit country for refugees, Jordan, and Lebanon are hosting millions of refugees but other gulf countries are hosting no refugees (Doomen, 2013; Elisheva, 2014).

Gulf rich countries claim they have funded humanitarian organizations and gave millions of dollars to the United Nations for refugee's resettlement. United Nations and the international community encourage all countries to open their borders for refugees and also do their best to end the Middle Eastern humanitarian crisis. Gulf rich countries have an excuse, which they haven't signed the UN treaty on refugees in 1951, this is a document, which supports and defines the right of refugees and the obligations of the host countries.

Some of the refugees would like to go to neighboring countries because they want to be close to their homeland, but unfortunately for being a refugee in other Arab countries, they have to get a visa, which is impossible for them. Before the Arab Spring, Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) preferred to help the UN through financial donations. Critics blame Gulf rich countries and claim these countries are investing in the Syrian civil war as they fund militia groups to oust Bashar Al-Assad but not hosting refugees. Gulf Cooperation Countries see refugees as a

threat to their security as they claim, terrorist members will join refugees and enter to our countries (Elisheva, 2014).

Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq are the countries that hosted Syrian refugees and displacement people, but they are facing financial burdens as they don't have a big economic that could survive under the wave of the refugee crisis, especially Lebanon and Iraq, which are suffering from their domestic instability. Gulf rich countries have to open their borders and encourage all sides to negotiate about what is best for the future of the region because the instability in Syria undoubtedly will spread to other states (Lebanese Center H R, 2016; Elisheva, 2014).

### *Why refugees are tending to reach Europe?*

The terminology of immigration is not new to Europe, as during its history, European people have immigrated to other continentals. During the First and the Second World War, millions of people fled from Europe to the US. After the escalation of civil war in Syria and people's dreams dwindled, a significant wave of refugees tried to reach Europe. Local people lost their hope and desire in their countries future. Europe is the best destination for Middle Eastern refugees; people prefer to reach Europe instead of the US because of the geography and location of Europe which is closer to the Middle East. After the Gulf rich countries decided to not open their border for Syrian refugees, they preferred to go to Europe as they don't want to stay in neighbor countries, another reason they don't want to move to neighboring countries is that they have to stay in camps or rent a place, which is very hard for them. Most of the people are fleeing from the region not only from their countries (Kahl et al., 2017).

Many factors lead people to go to Europe, one of them is the security of the region, people are fleeing from their motherland because of lack of security and stability. European Union as a strong institution preserve and protect Europe from threats, which means European countries are supporting each other to be secured, that's why people feel safe there. Other reasons which we can mention are standard of living, high quality of education, and a bright future.

Job is an important reason for people when they are seeking to reach Europe, most of the refugees are young and they can work. In fact, unlike critics claim, they are not taking jobs from European citizens. Europe as an aging region needs people for work (labor force) for its development and market, low rate of fertility in Europe will be a disaster for the region's future, and in some countries, the rate of fertility is still declining, therefore, as much as refugees need Europe, Europe needs them as well.

Sometimes refugees are facing problems in Europe, as their biggest issue is integration with a new community and society. NGOs and other governmental organizations should try hard to integrate new arrivals with the new environment. Integration is hard for children rather than adults, as children want to learn new things and continue their education but sometimes they have to be without their families for hours, this a hamper for integration. The consensus among EU countries is a big issue as not all countries are welcoming refugees. Some countries like Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic are not hosting refugees, others like Sweden and Germany have opened their borders for refugees, and countries like Greece, and Italy as transit countries are struggling with the arrivals as refugees must pass through these two states to reach other European countries, therefore they need more support and help from other EU members (Gleick, 2014; Kahl et al., 2017).



### *Why the humanitarian crisis still exists in Syria?*

The humanitarian crisis erupted as a result of civil war in Syria, war is a root of all crisis, to explain why the humanitarian crisis still exists, the security and political situation should be analyzed. The ongoing battle in Syria is between those who support or against (Bashar Al-Assad), different groups, regional countries, and global powers, all with their own strategies are involved, they made the situation far more complex and prolonging the fighting. Current divisions have led both sides to have darkened the hope of peace; this tension and conflict among foreign powers have allowed the radical groups to flourish. With many different groups and external interests, getting all sides to the table is proving difficult (Gleick, 2014; Kahl et al., 2017).

All sides have their interests in Syria, at the beginning of the war, foreign forces had the same goal, which they wanted to eliminate ISIS fighters, even after the destroying ISIS still there is a civil war in Syria, but the current conflict is about the hegemon of the foreign powers, as some countries like Turkey wants to use this chance and show itself as a hegemon of the region, and others preventing it like Syria. Syrian Kurds want to establish their autonomous region, which is not acceptable by the Turkish government. The civil war in Syria has moved into a new level and it needs a real consensus among regional and global powers to reach an understanding.

Solving political tensions and conflict from two sides of the war is required to find a solution for the humanitarian crisis, no trust between sides will make the humanitarian crisis even worse. People want basic needs for their life, and they want to get out of camps. Because of the intensiveness of the civil war in Syria, the UN aids are not reaching to all parts of the country, helping people will help all parts to solve the political issue as well (Gleick, 2014).



### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The basic reason for the significant acceleration in the refugee crisis in 2015 was the chaos and conflict in Syria. Syria's neighbor countries cannot host more refugees as they cannot survive anymore. The current humanitarian crisis is the result of the Arab Spring and civil war in Middle Eastern countries, and now it becomes a global crisis. Not only regional countries but also big powers should find a resolution for the Syrian civil war, as long as there is conflict in Syria, refugees who are seeking to reach Europe, will not go back to their motherland, which means Europe is also feeling the instability in Syria and it hurts Europe, therefore, a consensus among EU members is essential for tackling this humanitarian crisis. Big powers can take some steps to end the political and humanitarian crisis. This study recommends three steps to bring back peace to Syria:

1. The returning of peace and security is vital for Syria to end the conflict among militia groups which are representing regional countries, which means stopping (proxy-war). The common agreement among key actors is needed for ending the conflict. The members of the Security Council should impose a ceasefire on all sides to open negotiation among different sides.
2. The root of the demonstrations in Syria is because of the structure of the government, the change of the system is crucial, in which political parties can join the fair elections and engage in the future of the country. The new government should be a pluralist one.

As a multicultural country, Syrian should implement the parliamentary-federalism system and share the central power with other people as well.

3. Syrian as a war-torn country needs to reconstruct its country, the country has been devastated because of the civil war and the new government cannot rebuild the whole of Syria, therefore, they need big support from the foreign direct investment of big countries. The infrastructure of Syria is destroyed and collapsed. Regional rich countries can take the role and fund Syria. Big global countries can support Syria as well; they can establish a new (Marshal Plan) for Syria just like the US did to the European countries after the Second World War.

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