

Humanitarian Aid Efforts Of Turkey To The Syrian Refugees

Globally, it is a challenging time for humanitarian action. Natural disasters are occurring with greater frequency and intensity, often recurring before communities and countries can rebuild. Conflicts are creating immense humanitarian need and massive displacement. According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2014, as the World's third largest and in terms of percentage of national income, most generous donor country, Turkey is trying to do more than its share in alleviating the suffering of affected people.

AFAD, as the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Authority is known, is the humanitarian needs coordinating body for over 2.7 million biometrically registered Syrians, who have found protection in Turkey since the start of the Syria crisis. Currently, over 250 thousand Syrians are accommodated in 25 camps in Turkey. Hosting the largest refugee community, we determined Turkey's main role as a provider, of not only basic humanitarian needs but also humanitarian services, such as providing education for refugees, from kindergarten to college. We have granted all refugees health insurance cover, free of charge. As a member of the international community, Turkey feels a strong sense of obligation, and we are mobilizing all our resources and skills in order to provide for the needs of these people.

Humanitarian crises caused/triggered by conflicts bring about serious impacts not only in the country of origin, but also in its neighbors. Turkey in its humanitarian policy has certainly had experience in both cases. The major case in respect of the latter is the case of hosting millions of Syrians fleeing from the conflict in Syria. This is the biggest humanitarian crisis of a protracted nature in the present era which severely affects the neighboring countries as well, both financially and security-wise.

Firstly, confronted with an ever increasing influx of people in millions fleeing from the conflict in Syria, Turkey has built **temporary protection centers (TPCs)** in areas close to the Syrian border. Currently, 25 TPCs offer housing and protection to several hundreds of thousands of Syrians. The AFAD-developed "**Tent City and Container City Establishment and Management Standards**" ensure that these TPCs are held to the highest standards. Each TPC is equipped with health, information, education, social and shelter services. Affected communities fleeing the conflict in Syria have been able to recreate, to the maximum extent possible, the previous lives and livelihoods they had to leave behind, in a user-oriented atmosphere. In the TPCs, under the "**Camp Management Model of Turkey**", the following programmes "**Neighbourhood Representatives System**", "**Voluntary Services System**" and "**AFAD-Card system**" are implemented.

"AFAD Card" has been developed by AFAD to bring relief to those in need. This card not only provides monetary but also in kind relief. The AFAD Card system enables the recording of relief distribution, making it possible to see who has received aid. This way, duplication of relief is avoided and relief can be provided to the needy in a more efficient way. Relief by voluntary organizations can also be processed rapidly to the people in need by AFAD Cards. TPCs are being managed with a systematic approach, starting with biometric records of the individuals and emergency aid. For this purpose, the **Disaster Temporary City Management**

System (AFKEN) has been developed by AFAD. Through AFKEN, it is possible to monitor activities online, to access all the statistical data related to the refugees, and to compile reports based on this data from a single database.

The humanitarian response to the Syrians in Turkey covers *inter alia* free health services and schooling as well as vocational training, including to those in need outside the TPCs. In this framework, special programmes directed at assisting women, girls and children have also been initiated with the direct support of both local and governmental structures, in coordination with the relevant UN agencies.

In the face of the rapidly growing financial burden due to the overwhelming number of Syrians fleeing across the border into Turkey, the Turkish authorities made an appeal to the international community for a fair burden-sharing both financially and for accepting more Syrians within the resettlement programmes as early as in 2012. Turkey has been receiving and hosting Syrians in the name of international community in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. However, **to date the total contribution coming from the international donors through the UN agencies and bilaterally or via INGOs amounts approximately to only 7 or 8 percent of the total cost borne by Turkey.** UN programmes underway in Turkey for the Syrians, including the UNHCR's Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RPs, <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Turkey-2016-Regional-Refugee-Resilience-Plan.pdf>) lack enormous funding. Besides, the number of Syrians resettled in third countries remains very limited in comparison to the Syrians who fled to Turkey in millions, all of which are clearly testimony to the deficit of solidarity on the part of the international community on burden sharing with respect to the Syrian humanitarian crisis.

Secondly, **in order to help the Syrian IDPs in Syria**, the “**Zero-Point Assistance**” operations were developed in conformity with Turkey's international obligations and in support of the UN campaign. The first zero point delivery was conducted in August 2012. Through this innovative approach, with the coordination of AFAD, the Turkish Red Crescent facilitates the shipment of humanitarian assistance material provided by national authorities and INGOs for affected people inside Syria. In this context, the humanitarian assistance is trans-shipped into trucks coming from Syria at the zero-point of the border between Turkey and Syria. The zero-point assistance program has ensured that lifesaving relief items have continuously reached affected people on the Syrian side. Moreover, with the adoption of UN Security Council Resolutions 2139, 2165 and 2191, **UN cross-border operations** have been put into force which complement and reinforce Turkey's zero-point deliveries as well.

Currently, the risk of more and sudden influx of people fleeing the conflict areas in Syria escalates for Turkey as the situation is becoming even more unpredictable and serious. The root causes of the conflict must be addressed in order to bring stability to Syria while the humanitarian efforts are underway to alleviate the suffering of the affected populations. For this, efforts for a genuine political transition in Syria on the basis of the Geneva Communiqué should continue.

As the experiences of the conflict in Syria have shown once more, **narrow political considerations and the ongoing stalemate in the UN Security Council** often take precedence over the immediate need of reaching affected people in conflict. It was only in July 2014 with the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2165, three years after the start of the conflict in Syria, that the UN system was at last able to extend unimpeded cross-

border humanitarian access into Syria from neighboring countries. **Protection and ensuring humanitarian access** need to be put at the center of humanitarian action in conflict.

As regards humanitarian assistance policies directed to countries of origin stricken by humanitarian crises in conflict, Turkey's approach is to implement the joint use of humanitarian and development assistance programmes to the extent possible depending on the conditions in the field.

References

TURKEY Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2016 – 2017, <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Turkey-2016-Regional-Refugee-Resilience-Plan.pdf>

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