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Social and Economic Aspects of the Exodus of Syrian Refugees to Jordan and Lebanon

Abstract. The article deals with the analysis of ethno-migration processes, which became the consequences of civil war in Syria, full of violent acts against humanity and civil rights, that has led to a mass exodus of Syrian peoples, its influence on the region of Middle East , its impact on the geopolitical policies. The Arab Spring dramatically affected all countries of the Middle East as well as their neighbors and allies, which completely shaped geopolitics of the region and caused the start of ethnic – migration processes.

We try to give an insight into the formation of the migration crisis in the region and define the role and significance of the actions of international community towards the provided problems.

Keywords: Syrian refugees, migration crisis, Jordan, Lebanon, economic, social tensions.

Introduction

The problems that persist in Middle East today, as never before, play a significant role in international community. The events of "Arab spring" of 2011 completely shaped balance of power in this region as well as changing geopolitical map. The series of civil wars in Libya, Syria, Yemen, Iraq and further consequence in the face of "migration crisis" caused international community to a sudden reaction because the migration and refugee crisis affected not only region of Middle East but moved towards developed countries of European Union. While each country has a different story to tell, Syria has stolen the modern spotlight and debate floor. Syria, a country many felt to be stable and secure under the Assad Regime has come toppling down in the past five years by a raging civil war. This civil war, full of violent acts against humanity and civil rights, has led to a mass exodus of Syrian peoples. Seeking refuge wherever will accept them; the refugee crisis has become a new focal point for political debate concerning the Middle East.

The war in Syria has been the single largest driver of refugees in the world, leaving over four million Syrians displaced outside of Syria. The majority of displaced Syrians have fled to neighboring countries such as Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.

The Syrian people are trapped between Assad's ruthless regime, various rebel groups, constant air strikes from Russia and a US-led military coalition, and religious extremists (such as the Islamic State). The human toll has been devastating, as both the Syrian regime and the opposition have arbitrarily targeted civilian areas [1]. So far, the war has claimed over 310,000 lives, and forcibly displaced over 4.5 million more - making Syria "the world's top source country of refugees, overtaking Afghanistan, which had held this position for more than three decades" [2].

Neighboring countries in the region like Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey have hosted the overwhelming majority of displaced Syrians. Nearly two million Syrian refugees live in Turkey, more than any other country. In Lebanon, where formal refugee camps for Syrians do not exist, there are over a million Syrians, making up a quarter of its total population. According to the UNHCR, about 70% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon live below the poverty line. Although fewer in number, more than 85% of Jordan's 629,245 Syrian refugees live below the national poverty line [3]. The majority of Syrian refugees displaced in the Middle East live outside of camps, and self-settle in urban areas

Methods

The main methods of a research in this work are the system analysis - consideration of the designated processes in internal and external communications and dependences, the comparative analysis. With the help of a descriptive method, we describe the studied phenomenon, processes, and systems through descriptors. Therefore, when studying the phenomenon of migration we use such descriptors: country, person, society, religious consciousness, and social relations.

The base of the actual and digital materials is brought together according to publications in the Arab and European press of "Aljazeera", "The Journal of Arabic Studies", and a big portion of information was taken from the reports of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Main body

The Syrian sectarian divide as it manifests today is rooted in an unbalanced distribution of power: Alawi associates of the president occupy most of the central positions in the army and security services. The regime's ties with Shiite Iran and the Lebanese Shiite as Hezbollah strengthen its sectarian outlook [4]. Moreover, earlier domestic conflicts in the late 1970s and early 1980s has positioned the regime as being opposed to political, Sunni, Islam.

In 2000 the second son of Hafez al-Assad, Bashar al-Assad succeeded his father. At first it seemed as though Bashar al-Assad was going to make important changes towards breaking way from the political course set by his father [5]. However, during his presidency, Bashar al-Assad lost control of the situation and in that lost his chance to build for a fruitful co-operation, particularly within regime's opposition, both secular and religious.

However, informally, religious affiliation played a role in institutions such as the security apparatus, stalling change and modernization. Sectarianism was not formally a strategy, but on an informal level, it caused Syrian institutions to behave differently. This caused dissatisfaction in Syrian society, especially in the well-educated group. Critique increased with an ultimate outburst during the civil war in 2011, also sparked by uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt.

Five years since the conflict began, more than 250,000 Syrians have been killed in the fighting, and almost 11 million Syrians - half the country's pre-war population - have been displaced from their homes [2].

The Syrian government, led by President Bashar al-Assad, responded to the protests by killing hundreds of demonstrators and imprisoning many more [6]. In July 2011, defectors from the military announced the formation of the Free Syrian Army, a rebel group aiming to overthrow the government, and Syria began to slide into civil war.

The Syrian conflict is seen as posing serious threats to the stability of the Jordanian government and the region. It is important to recognize that distances between Syria, Jordan and Lebanon are very short. Damascus is less than 200 kilometers from Amman. The sounds of the shelling in Syria can be heard from Jordanian border towns. The conflict in Syria is affecting Jordan's stability and security in a number of ways, most immediately in the dramatic and massive influx of refugees and the growing importance of the Jordanian-Syrian border.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Since it gained independence from Britain in 1946, Jordan has given refuge to waves of migrants fleeing regional conflicts: Palestinians, Iraqis and now Syrians. However, the country is struggling with increasingly difficult economic conditions, including a high unemployment rate, especially among women and young people. Officials say, Jordan is now home to more than 1.4 million Syrians, including over 600000 refugees, who have arrived since the beginning of the conflict in Syria in 2011 [7].

Syrian refugees began crossing into Jordan in significant numbers in the first half of 2012. Like refugees throughout the region, they initially moved in with family members or friends or rented accommodations in the towns and cities. However, as the number of arrivals began to increase dramatically, in July 2012, the Jordanian government established the Zaatari refugee camp, which by October 2012 housed 20,000 refugees. As of 2016, the camp's population stood at over 80000. [8]

Nongovernment organizations and international aid groups generally see to the needs of refugees placed in camps. However, in Jordan, most of the Syrians are scattered in cities and towns, straining the resources of schools, hospitals and other services and fueling a festering resentment among Jordanians. This is especially true in the northern border towns, like Mafraq, where Syrians now constitute a majority of the population.

Arriving Syrians are considered asylum-seekers, rather than formally recognized as refugees. When Syrians arrive at the border, they are transported to Zaatari refugee camp where they are registered by UN officials and given accommodation. Refugees can legally move out of the camp if they are sponsored - or 'bailed out' - by a Jordanian citizen,

which involves both a statement of responsibility on the part of the sponsor and a financial guarantee. But in fact, the borders between the camp and the community are porous and there is constant movement in and out of the camp. By late 2012, some 4,000 Syrians were crossing into Jordan every day, leading to pressures to restrict entry.

Moreover, the large numbers of Syrians living in Jordanian communities are triggering a backlash against the government's policies, and the refugees themselves. In parts of northern Jordan, Syrian refugees make up more than half of the local population [9]. Popular resentment against the Syrian refugees is growing as Jordanians blame the Syrians for shortages of goods, rising prices, increasing rental costs, and increasing unemployment [10]. There are particular concerns about shortages of water, which has long been an issue in the country.

In terms of the impact of the refugees on domestic political life in Jordan, the Palestinian refugee population that now constitutes a majority of Jordan's citizens has already long threatened the tribal Bedouin support base for the Hashemite kingdom. The arrival of large numbers of Syrian refugees raises concerns that Bedouin interests will become an even smaller minority in the future [11].

Like the situation of internally displaced Syrians, the situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan is not static. People are moving constantly, from the camp to the towns, sometimes returning to the camp when they cannot pay rent. Moreover, thousands of Syrian refugees have returned to Syria - some to fight, some to check their homes, some because they have heard it is now safer. To date, the Jordanian government has not sent refugees back to Syria.

While the Jordanian government's hospitality to the sudden arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees is admirable [12], if borders are to remain open, continued international support will be necessary.

At a conference in London to solicit support for Syrian refugees, donors pledged $2.1 billion to Jordan over the next three years, along with other assistance. Nevertheless, after the conference, Jordanian representatives made it clear that the money came with conditions [13].

The World Bank announced that it plans to offer $200 million in concessional financing to Jordan and Lebanon in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. According to the report, countries bordering conflict zones, many of which are already in fragile situations, are facing tremendous budgetary pressure. The World Bank said the Kingdom's estimates show that each refugee costs the Jordanian government $3,750 per year. "The influx of more than 630,000 Syrian refugees is thus estimated to have cost Jordan over $2.5 billion a year," the report said. "Under this situation, government debt is accumulating fast estimated at 90 per cent of GDP in 2015," the report added [14].

According to the latest population census conducted late last year, 1.26 million of Jordan's population are Syrians, but only 50 per cent is registered as refugees. The World Bank's QEB indicated that unemployment rates in Jordan increased to 12.5 per cent in the first half of 2015, compared to 11.4 per cent during the same period in 2014. It added that increased insecurity and uncertainty have lowered foreign and domestic investments in Jordan and Lebanon as well. In Jordan, it explained, investment as a share of the GDP declined to an estimated 27.4 per cent in 2015, from its peak of 28.1 per cent in 2013 [10].

"These factors are expected to keep growth in 2016 and 2017 for both countries Jordan and Lebanon, well below their potential." Remittances have also taken a hit in countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan that rely heavily on flows from Gulf Cooperation Council countries and others. "Jordan is in the same situation with growth in remittance inflows dropping from 4 per cent in 2013 to 2 per cent in 2014 and 2015," the report said [14].

The latest population census has revealed that the Kingdom's population has almost doubled over the past decade, according to official data.

Non-Jordanians now represent around one third of Jordan's population with an estimated number of 2.9 million and 1.26 million being Syrians, the figures show. Syrians constitute 46 per cent of non-Jordanians living in the Kingdom and 13.2 per cent of the overall population, preliminary results of the national census conducted in late November showed.

The report, released by the Department of Statistics, showed that the Kingdom's population in 2004 was 5.1 million, while by 2015, it increased by 4.4 million, making the total population 9.5 million. The figures also revealed that Jordan hosts 636,270 Egyptians, 634,182 Palestinians, 130,911 Iraqis, 31,163 Yemenis, 22,700 Libyans and 197,385 from other nationalities [14].

In another development, in late 2015, aid officials and refugees themselves said that Syrians, sensing that the war in their homeland will not end in the near future, are leaving Jordan for Europe in growing numbers encouraged friends and relatives who are already there, pushed out by cuts in UN food aid. Jordan says it hosts more than 1 million Syrians in total, but the numbers are starting to

fall. The UN's World Food Program, which feeds more than half a million refugees in Jordan, says the number of aid recipients fell by about 2,000 in September and 3,000 in October. In a random survey of refugees in October 2015 by the UNHCR, 25 per cent said they were actively planning to leave Jordan [15].

Lebanon

Since both countries gained independence from France in 1943, relations between the two countries had been strained, especially with the 29-year Syrian Occupation of Lebanon. Following the end of the twenty-nine years of Syrian occupation of Lebanon in 2005, and Syria officially recognizing Lebanon's sovereignty in 2008 many Syrians have been immigrating to Lebanon in search of work and a better life. These workers were treated with respect from both the Lebanese people and the country's government even though Syrian migrant workers taking jobs from the Lebanese workers. However, because of the civil war in Syria between the government of President Bashar al Assad and rebel groups, refugees have been entering Lebanon by the thousands. This influx of refugees has resulted in the overpopulation of the camps and cities and rising tensions between the Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees.

As of March 31, 2016, Lebanon hosted more than 1mln of registered refugees from Syria, 53% of them children. The Lebanese government chose not to establish camps for people fleeing the civil war in Lebanon, and thus they have settled throughout country. While most of them rent their accommodations in around 1,700 locations countrywide nearly a fifth (18%) live in non-formal settlements mostly concentrated in border governorates. Because the government of Lebanon has increasingly made it difficult for refugees from Syria to renew their residency permits, the number of households in which all members are legally in the country has dropped from 58% in 2014 to 29% in 2015. Refugee households living below the poverty line increased from 49% in 2014 to 70% in 2015. Despite their struggling status, the Lebanese political parties fear the country's sectarian-based political system is being undermined [16]. On October 22, 2014, Lebanon has closed off its borders to Syrian refugees, with the exception of special cases, in an attempt to deal with the issue of overcrowding.

The Lebanese government has historically maintained an open door policy towards Syrian refugees; however, the UNHCR states that the Lebanese government has never signed the 1951 Refugee Convention which secures a refugees who belongs "to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" [2].

Therefore, there exists no international laws which Lebanon must follow in dealing with the refugees this has included the government of Lebanon not building any refugee camps. The refugees who are capable of working must compete with the poor of Lebanon for the country's lowest paying jobs to get work and make money, which has resulted in damage to Lebanon's economic infrastructure. The children of Syrian refugees must attend schools, which are already crowded with Lebanese children.

As the numbers of Syrians in Lebanon have grown, so have tensions; according to one Syrian refugee "When I first arrived, Lebanese people were very hospitable to me. They treated me like a refugee, like someone who needed protection and had fled from the war. Now, they treat me as if I am a security threat" [2]. The influx of Syrians into Lebanon has resulted in economic, political, social and religious tensions in Lebanon. Religious Syrian extremist groups have put curfews into place in some cities and villages to ensure public safety following attacks on police and members of the military. Many Lebanese citizens fear that there is a possibility of massive spillover of the Syrian Civil War in Lebanon.

Fighting from the Syrian Civil War has spilled over into Lebanon as opponents and supporters of the Syrian rebels have travelled to Lebanon to fight and attack each other on Lebanese soil. The Syrian conflict has been described as having stoked a "resurgence of sectarian violence in Lebanon", with many of Lebanon's Sunni Muslims supporting the rebels in Syria, while many Shiites have supported Assad.

By 2012, the conflict spread to Tripoli and Beirut, and later to south and east Lebanon, while the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed in north Lebanon and Beirut. Among Lebanon's political blocs the anti-Syrian Saudi-backed March 14 Alliance supports the Syrian rebels, and the Iranian-backed pro-Syrian March 8 Alliance supports the Syrian government [17].

The Syrian Civil War and its domestic impact have furthered the polarization of Lebanese politics. The March 14 Alliance, dominated by Christian- and Sunni-based parties, is broadly sympathetic to the Syrian opposition to Bashar Al-Assad. In August, youth members of 14 March parties including Kataeb, Lebanese Forces, National Liberal Party, Future Movement and Islamic Group held a rally to demand the expulsion of the Syrian Ambassador.

8 March parties generally supported the continuation of the Assad government, but analysts believe some groups within the coalition may seek new alliances if the Assad government falls. More moderate members of the coalition in government have begun distancing themselves from the Assad government. The waves of Syrian refugees seeking a safety have further exacerbated the division among the political parties in Lebanon. On opposite sides of the issue are the Lebanese Forces Party and the Kataeb Party-both members of the March 14 Alliance-and the Free Patriotic Movement. The LFP and the Kataeb are united by their opposition to the Syrian regime and opposition to the presence of Hezbollah as an armed force outside state control; the FPM is part of the March 8 Alliance and views the Syrian regime as a sustainers of minority rights and also supports Hezbollah's role as a defense force against Israel [18].

The refugee question has evoked fear among a section of Lebanese Christians, specifically the FPM, in that their presence will resemble that of the Palestinians, who came to constitute a viable political force in Lebanon and upset the delicate balance of power in the country's sectarian based political system. The different stands toward the Syrian regime and the disagreements on how to address the issue of refugees have revealed the far-reaching and fundamental divisions among Lebanon's Christian parties [19].

Ex-President Michel Suleiman included who have called on the international community to help Lebanon cope with the increasing number of refugees. Additionally, thousands of Palestinians have fled Syria; most of these have taken refuge in Palestinian camps in Lebanon, like Ain al-Hilweh in Saida [20]. Among Christian Lebanese there is considerable anxiety regarding the consequences of the tide of refugees, and plays into deep division of Christian communities over Syria.

More than 80 per cent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, who live in around 1,700 locations countrywide, rent their accommodation and pay on average $200 a month. There are no formal refugee camps for Syrians [21].

Most refugees rent apartments, but as their vulnerability has deepened more and more have had to resort to living in unfinished buildings, garages, abandoned sheds, worksites and tents in informal settlements. Structural improvements are often only of a temporary nature due to the lack of authorization from the government or property owners for something more substantial.

Working with Lebanese municipalities, partners and refugee outreach volunteers, UNHCR"s five offices throughout Lebanon have also established inter-agency response teams as well as making contingency stocks of emergency supplies available countrywide.

The winter program prioritizes all those identified in advance as most in need, starting with families living in areas situated above 500 meters in altitude, those in very insecure shelters and those who are economically vulnerable. Hundreds of thousands of people, including poor Lebanese, are receiving some kind of winter assistance. This year's carefully planned inter-agency winter operation is providing at least US$75 million in aid for both refugees and needy Lebanese families. "Since the first Syrian refugees crossed the border into Lebanon almost five years ago, Lebanese communities have extended their hospitality on a truly impressive scale," said UNHCR Representative in Lebanon Ninette Kelley, after meeting the refugee families in Abbasieh. "Lebanon today faces an unprecedented challenge to manage both its own population and Syrian refugees. It has the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world and more global support, including for long-term development, is urgently needed" [21].

While all countries in the region have been affected by the influx of refugees, no country has been more impacted than Lebanon in addition to perhaps 500,000 Syrian migrants working in the country at the time of the crisis. Lebanese officials refer to the present number of Syrians as 1-1.2 million. Lebanon, a country with a population of 4 million people, has also hosted Palestine refugees for decades.

As of May 2015, there are more 1.2 million in Lebanon and 628,000 in Jordan. Another 9 million people are displaced inside Syria, representing a pipeline of potential refugees [2]. The refugee-to-citizen population ratio, especially in Lebanon, is a particular cause for concern, unprecedented even compared to previous waves of Palestinians, Iraqis and other refugees. Lowball estimates approximate that one in four people in Lebanon are Syrian refugees; the equivalent of 125 million additional people entering the European Union within four years. With the growing numbers of refugees and their actual and perceived negative impacts on the host countries, the initial warmth and generosity that locals had extended to refugees is declining. Public sympathy has fallen sharply. In August 2014, 79% of Jordanians were opposed to receiving further Syrian refugees [22]. The level of distrust among communities is particularly troubling. In the American University of Beirut-Save the Children's study

of intergroup tensions between Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities, over 90% of Lebanese nationals surveyed perceived refugees as threats to their economic livelihood and value system, and over two-thirds perceived them as existential threats [23]. A majority of refugees also perceived the Lebanese as a symbolic and economic threat. The view of the "other" as a threat not only to social and economic well-being, but also to the physical self should sound alarm bells for those concerned about peace and stability in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq.

While incidences are still isolated, they are increasing in frequency. Social tensions are also creating lasting, long-term negative impacts that drive future vulnerability. For example, in Turkey and Lebanon discrimination against Syrian refugees from local students and teachers creates hostile environments for refugee children who become discouraged from attending public schools. Tensions also increase the stress experienced by an already traumatized population. The "lost generation" is therefore losing opportunities to maintain their economic, social and physical health to rebuild Syria one day, if peace is achieved; they are also particularly vulnerable to radicalization. The risk of unrest in host nations poses a threat to the region. The sectarian nature of the fighting in Syria has ignited domestic political cleavages that were already present in the refugee host nations. 85% of Syrian refugees currently reside in urban, semi-urban and rural settings, often among the poorest host communities, and tensions are growing quickly [24]. Refugees live closely with host populations, thereby highlighting natural, social and cultural differences. In addition, host citizens tend to perceive the refugees not only as economic competition but also as an existential threat, because the largely Sunni Syrian presence intersects with underlying political cleavages. There are social and cultural differences between the communities.

The refugees have also economically affected host communities. Even though economic slowdown is an effect of the Syrian crisis, host citizens disproportionately blame refugees for the deterioration. The largest cause of discontent is competition for jobs (perceived or actual), although this affects different segments of the job market unequally. The World Bank estimated that the labour supply in Lebanon would increase by 30-50% in 2014, with the largest impact on women, youth and unskilled workers [25]. Refugees have also increased demand and prices for essential goods and services. Housing rents in northern Jordan increased from $55-70 per month before the crisis to an average of $420 in early 2014 [26]. The dramatic increase has severely reduced the availability of affordable housing for poor Jordanians. Syrian refugees are thus viewed as sources of economic competition. Most importantly, the presence of Syrian refugees is construed as an existential threat, jeopardizing previously delicate balances in host countries.

In Lebanon, historical sectarian rifts are exacerbated by the influx of Sunni Syrians into a country with a confessional political system. This triggers fears of Palestinian integration and memories associated with their alleged role in Lebanon's civil war. In Jordan, any indication of a long-term Syrian stay threatens tribal Jordanians who are already outnumbered by the Palestinians.

The polarization of the Syrian crisis has impeded the development of longer-term domestic and foreign policies on the Syrian refugee crisis. As a result, humanitarian organizations and local authorities can only provide short-term assistance. Many locals experience similar levels of vulnerability as the Syrian refugees, yet they benefit little from domestic or international aid; the disparity between assistance provided to equally vulnerable populations is a particular source of discontent. For example, the daily trucking of water to Jordan's Zaatari camp is expensive and wasteful (costing around $12,000 per day),[135] while Jordanians in surrounding communities, who experience water shortages, get piped water as little as once every 10 days during the height of summer [27]. While there are growing efforts to counter this problem, like rehabilitating the existing water infrastructure, programs have often addressed immediate humanitarian needs at the expense of community relations. There are a growing number of programmes aimed at building social cohesion, particularly through inclusive development. However, more needs to be done to target the drivers of social tensions. The refugee crisis, combined with the policy stalemate, has resulted in stressed services, overburdened communities, and rising disparities between and within populations. The problems are exacerbated by the tight international funding situation. Only $3.8 billion was pledged for the $8.4-billion regional appeal at the Kuwait III conference on 31 March 2015 for the Syria crisis. In light of the vast humanitarian need and political sensitivities, medium to long-term responses are receiving little attention and resources, endangering even the short-term stability of the host country.

Despite the growing urgency, there are significant obstacles to addressing social tensions between refugees and host communities. Host authorities

have been reluctant to engage in longer-term plans for water, sanitation, education, health, livelihoods etc. for many reasons; two are highlighted below.

Challenge 1: Weak International Obligations Protection is weak for refugees in the host countries. Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq are non-signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Turkey, although a signatory, has a geographical limitation that excludes any non-European refugees from its treaty obligations. While host countries have shown exceptional generosity to Syrian refugees, the states have also used their non-signatory status to limit the scope of provision. UNHCR has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with Jordan and Lebanon to provide some contractual basis for their interactions; yet these MOUs only cover the bare basics. Given the inherent reluctance to act, the lack of binding international law has offered a legal basis for limited assistance.

Challenge 2: Delicate Political Balance Struck for the Short Term Ruling elites in the host countries fear programs that could result in permanent national changes in demographics and in the political landscape. The status quo poses the greatest challenge to addressing social tensions; at present, an uneasy balance has been struck that schizophrenically appeases citizens" fears of refugee integration and provides just enough social support to silence refugees. Fears of integration paralyze the State's ability to make comprehensive crisis management policies, yet this is unsustainable as the crisis lengthens and the population grows. In addition to compromising the welfare of Syrian refugees and vulnerable host citizens, this balancing act ironically erodes the stability that leaders are so desperate to preserve.

The humanitarian system is unable to sustain a long-term response to a protracted refugee situation at the scale of the Syrian crisis. Greater long-term planning is necessary; Jordan's April 2015 announcement of a water distribution system at Zaatari by the Water Network Task Force is an example of steps in the right direction because it reduces water drawn from surrounding communities. However, humanitarian spending for the Syrian refugee crisis is unsustainable in the context of the sheer number of major emergencies occurring worldwide.

Host countries have largely borne the costs associated with higher demand for services; optimistic projections show that international donors funded only 63% of the annual appeal for refugees at the end of 2014; the percentage has declined yearly since the beginning of the crisis [28]. Instead, bureaucratic hurdles for the reallocation of development funding to middle-income countries must be overcome to finance conflict prevention and inclusive development efforts. The sectarian fighting in Syria as well as the protracted refugee presence has not only affected host communities but also inflamed pre-existing political cleavages in host countries.

Conclusion

The stability of the Middle East depends on the timely prevention of tensions escalating between refugees and host communities. Therefore, while there must be a parallel push to resolve the conflict in Syria to prevent spillover effects, immediate attention must also be paid to conflict de-escalation in fragile host communities. Community and national leaders should assert a calming, rather than polarizing, influence to prevent the widespread outbreak of violence. Concurrently, systematic efforts toward addressing the drivers of social tensions, particularly regarding underlying developmental and political problems that worsen the refugee situation, are needed. Political stakeholders need to develop a long-term view of the situation and work together to produce comprehensive policies in order to jointly address the needs of vulnerable refugee and host communities.

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