The background image shows a weathered, light-colored building facade. On the left, there is a window with black metal bars. Below it, a black bicycle is parked against a similar barred window. The wall features graffiti: 'NOSYRIA' in large, dark letters and a smaller sign that says 'NE SYRIA'. To the right, there is a wooden door with a decorative glass panel. The overall scene suggests an urban environment in a region affected by conflict.

# Integration Concerns of Parents about Syrian Children

A Case Study of Refugees in Towns  
Çarşamba, Bursa, Turkey

Zahed Mukayed and  
Ezgi Irgil

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Cover photo: Graffiti in Çarşamba. Photo by Ezgi Irgil.

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# Location



Figure 1. Location of Bursa in Turkey. Map by Ezgi Irgil.

In the late 20th century, Turkey was mainly an emigration country, sending guest workers to Germany and the Netherlands in the 1970s and '80s. During the 1990s, Turkey became a migration receiving country with many arriving from post-Soviet states. Turkey became a transit country in the same period, as migrants made their way between Europe and Asia.

Bursa, the focus of our report, is located in the northwestern part of Turkey very close to Istanbul (see Figure 1). An industrial city, Bursa has always attracted migration. Job opportunities abound in various manufacturing sectors ranging from the automotive industry to canned goods, from textiles to furniture. Historically, Bursa's immigrant population has mainly consisted of ethnic Turkic groups, mostly from the Balkans. The latest significant incoming population of Bulgarian Turks came to the city in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Bursa is accustomed to migration, but the arrival of Syrians is different. Comparatively, the pace of Syrian migration is accelerated, and these newcomers do not share an ethnic background with the city's natives. The city is now adapting to demographic changes in many areas which are most prevalent in the area of Çarşamba (see Figure 2).

Çarşamba is near the city center and consists of eight neighborhoods, but unofficially acts as one big neighborhood. It has experienced various demographic shifts in the last 40 years beginning in the 1980s when apartment owners left the neighborhood in search of bigger apartments elsewhere in the city. Students began to rent the available apartments in the mid-1980s to be closer to Uludağ University but

left in the late 1990s when the university moved to the outskirts of the city. The next residents were Roma, and many sex workers also started renting in the neighborhood. Çarşamba became known as the sex workers' area. With the construction of more affordable housing options elsewhere in Bursa around 2010, most of Çarşamba's tenants left, and the neighborhood's apartments and stores were once again available for rent.

This coincided with the arrival of Syrians to Turkey, and to Bursa. When Syrians first arrived, a lack of government housing policy enabled Syrians to settle wherever they could, and the area's many empty apartments led many to settle in Çarşamba. Syrians started renting apartments and stores in the neighborhood, which soon came to be known as "Little Syria." While many native residents believe the area was better before Syrians came, the Syrians we spoke to overwhelmingly stated that they have improved the area.

## Mapping Refugees in Bursa

### Map of Bursa

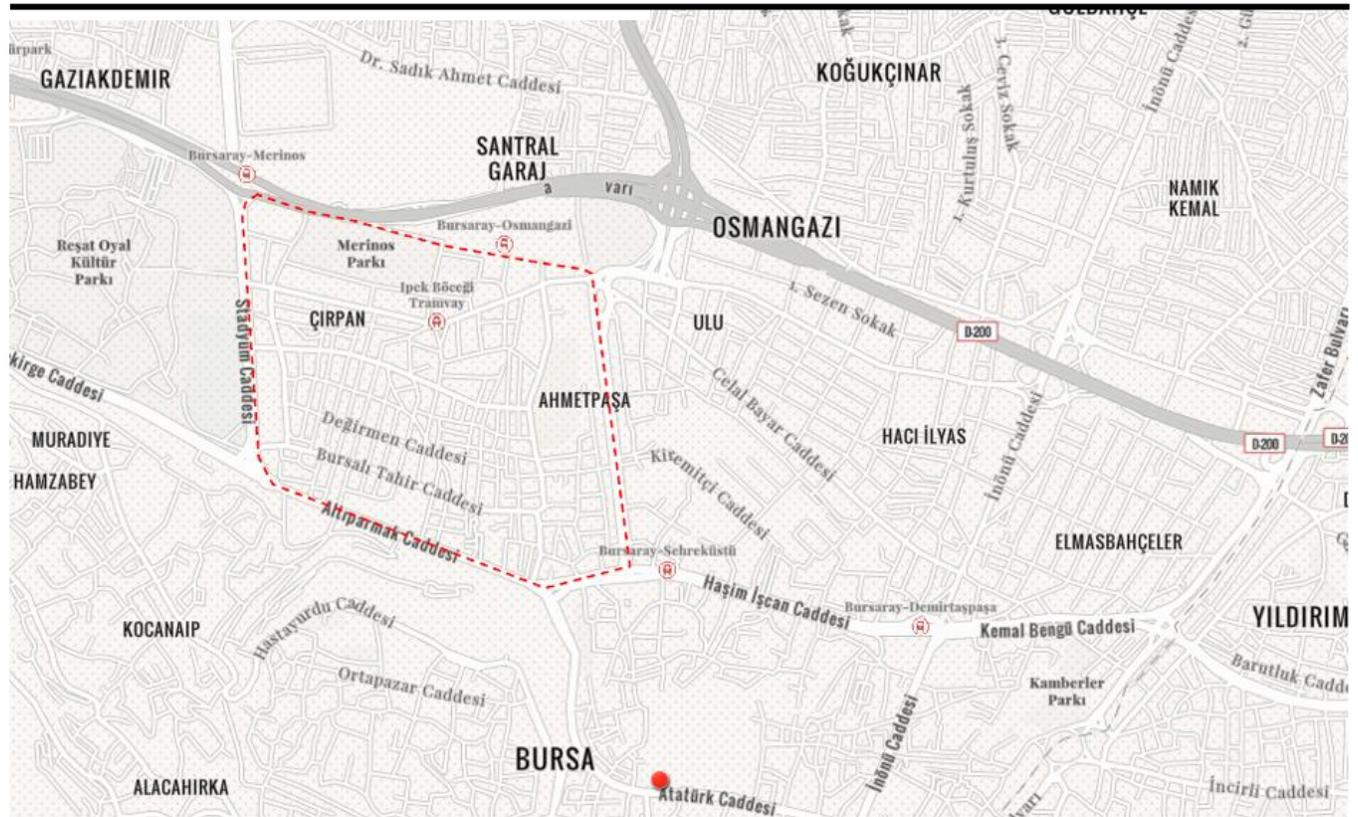


Figure 2. The area in red outline is Çarşamba, visibly close to the red dot marking the city center. Yıldırım and Osmangazi are also visible. Emek is slightly outside of the map area, to the northwest. Map by Ezgi Irgil.

There are no concrete data on refugee populations at the district level in Turkey, but based on news articles and talk around town, Syrians are clustered in two areas in Bursa: Yıldırım, followed by Osmangazi (see Figure 2). These are central districts in Bursa: Osmangazi hosts the city government

offices, and Yıldırım has the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management of Bursa. Within Osmangazi, the Emek and Çarşamba areas are most heavily populated by Syrians. Many lower-income Syrians reside in Yıldırım and Emek, while more middle-income Syrians live in Çarşamba. Bursa is not a border city and it has many work opportunities; therefore, we made the assumption that Syrians who settle in Bursa have deliberately chosen it as their destination city.

# Introduction

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Syrian refugees have been a hot topic in Turkey since 2011, but integration has not yet made its way onto the government’s agenda. For a very long time, authorities have treated Syrians as "guests" who will return to Syria, and whose stay in Turkey is only temporary. After almost a decade, integration (officially termed “harmonization”) has recently been acknowledged as a potential solution to the presence of Syrians because the likelihood that Syrians will be able to return home has diminished, and authorities realize that they must develop the relevant policies before it is too late.<sup>1</sup> Inaction is the authorities' way of demonstrating their intentions, but its consequences affect the lives of Syrians. The lack of a firm and consistent policy creates distrust and uncertainty, and Syrian parents worry about the future of their children should they remain in Turkey, but also if they return to Syria. This report focuses on three main concerns for Syrian children: potential statelessness, loss of the Arabic language, and racism.

## Turkey’s Policy Towards Syrians

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Syrians have access to basic rights and public services if they are registered with Turkey’s Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM). This system is city-based, so if a Syrian wants to have access to these services and rights, they must register in their city of residence and can access these services only in that city. It is very difficult to change registration from one city to another. Legitimate reasons—like having family in another city or finding a job somewhere else—must be submitted to the Provincial Migration Management (PMM) of the destination city; but, despite the rules, the decision is often arbitrary. While in theory TPS status should offer access to services, in practice, Syrians face discrimination both at government offices and in their everyday lives.

For more on Turkish policy towards migrants and refugees continue to Appendix A.

## A Note on Terminology

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**Natives:** We use the word “natives” to refer to residents of Çarşamba who have lived or worked in the area for the last ten years. We use “natives” rather than “Turkish” because the local population is not all Turkish. Many people with different ethnicities and backgrounds like Kurds and Bulgarian-Turkish people, have lived or worked for a long time in Çarşamba.

<sup>1</sup> Ombudsman Institution of the Republic of Turkey. (2018). Syrians in Turkey: Special Report. Ankara: The Ombudsman Institution. Retrieved from [https://www.ombudsman.gov.tr/suriyeliler/ozel\\_rapor.pdf](https://www.ombudsman.gov.tr/suriyeliler/ozel_rapor.pdf).

**Refugees:** Although Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and ratified the 1967 Protocol, it imposes geographical restrictions on people it considers refugees, only providing refugee status to Europeans. Anyone from outside Europe like Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan is technically not a refugee according to Turkey. Syrians have Temporary Protection Status (TPS) in Turkey, which is similar to refugee status but TPS does not count towards the five years required to apply for citizenship, and the government can revoke Syrians' ability to apply at any time. Despite this, in this report we refer to Syrians in Turkey as refugees.

## **A Note on Methodology**

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We collected our data during the field study we conducted in September and October 2019. Due to our limited time in the field, Ezgi contacted the local residents that she had interviewed before and asked whether they knew any Syrians. Afterwards, Ezgi met with a Syrian who came to Bursa to study at the university before the war, who later became a lead person Syrians contacted when they came to Bursa after the war started. He became our gatekeeper and connected us with a number of Syrian store owners.

In total, we talked with 40 Syrians, of whom 33 were male and 7 were female. They were between 16 and 57 years old. The majority of the interviewees had a secondary school education and most of them came from Aleppo. All except one were either store owners or worked in stores owned by Syrians. As we mentioned above, our interviews coincided with increased control of Syrians by the national government. People did not want to refer other people to us, so we started walking through Çarşamba, entering stores, and asking if they would be willing to have an interview with us. We were in Çarşamba five days a week, whether we had interviews or not. This allowed us to spend time in cafes and restaurants belonging to both Syrians and natives, spend time in parks observing people, and talk casually to people whenever we had the chance.

# The Authors' Positions in Çarşamba and Experiences Researching this Case

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Zahed Mukayed

I came to Turkey from Aleppo in 2015. As a Syrian immigrant in Turkey, my first few years here were like most other Syrians: hustling to make a living and pay rent until I was able to bring the rest of my family from Aleppo. I started a job as a salesperson in a shop, learning the Turkish language through live interaction with customers. After reuniting with my family, I started to feel as safe as I used to in my home country, even though I still had to move between jobs, looking for opportunities for a better income while speaking a foreign language. I always wondered how other families outside of my neighborhood and my new city of Istanbul were coping with our new reality, how they were dealing with the dynamics of finding jobs, integrating, and communicating with this new society we live in.

When Ezgi first offered me a job as her research assistant interviewing the Syrians who live in Bursa/Çarşamba about life in the neighborhood, I was very excited. I knew it would fulfill my desire for knowledge and professional experience and would open my eyes to different perspectives about how Syrians are living there. Before that, I knew the area and the reputation it has for having a large number of Syrians who live and work in it, but not much more.

When I translated the questions that were to be asked, I felt tense and worried. I knew it was not going to be an easy job, especially since I am one of the migrants affected by the issues that concern everyone in this community. However, this also meant I was familiar with the lifestyle they adapted to in Turkey. I knew there were lots of unheard stories of daily struggles that people are willing to share, but there is no one interested in hearing them.

The first day we arrived in the neighborhood I felt anxious about how I could make sure people trusted me enough to share their different stories and problems with me. By good fortune, Ezgi knew a Syrian guy who has his own shop in the area. He was a very kind person and was willing to help us by putting us in touch with Syrians who work and live in Çarşamba. It is always good to be introduced to the “new locals” by someone they know and trust—they feel more comfortable, connected, and willing to share their life details with me and the shopkeeper who already knew the majority of them.

During our interviews, I noticed that people were concerned about our motives. They wanted to know if we were going to try to solve some of the problems, they were telling us about, or if we were just going to collect their stories and disappear. Some even mentioned they were suspicious of our purpose and stopped the interview out of fear of being mocked for their accent on social media or on TV, a fear based on their past experiences. I was mainly interviewing people from my hometown, and noticing our differences taught me to have a lot of patience: even if I didn't agree with all of their opinions, I had to listen closely and carefully to what they were saying. People had so many reasons not to talk to us; I

couldn't add another by being disrespectful. This also made me feel more responsible to listen carefully and without judgment, and it encouraged me to continue doing the research. I wanted to prove to them that we are indeed willing to help, that we want to share their daily struggles to people who can do something to help them.

I introduced myself as I am, a research assistant working on this study with Ezgi, and I said that we were trying to learn about the daily life of Syrian migrants who live and work in Bursa. I told them that we wanted to learn about any life struggles they were facing. One of the interviewees once asked me, as a fellow Syrian, if I was getting paid to do this job. I said yes, I am, and he started to laugh. He said that my life was amazing, that he would love to do such an easy job and get paid. This made me feel uncomfortable and I wanted to argue with him about it, but instead I just smiled and went back to asking him the remaining questions. We are all Syrians after all, and we come from the same culture, but we still have many differences in our lifestyles and a lot of stories and experiences which reflect the way we deal with the issues that life brings.

### **Ezgi Irgil**

I am writing my dissertation on Çarşamba and the relationships between local residents and Syrians. I grew up in Bursa, though not in Çarşamba, and it was interesting for me to go back to my home city to do fieldwork. My ties to the city and my work there during the previous year helped with rapport-building and made it easier to make relationships with natives who know Syrians. Before beginning this study, I had made many earlier field visits in which I interviewed residents. For that earlier work, I interviewed locals about their attitudes and behaviors towards Syrians, and how the arrival of Syrians influenced the area.

My previous work meant that I was already very familiar with the area. The big difference this time was that I worked with a research assistant, Zahed, who conducted the interviews in Arabic. This was a new experience for me, and it was my first-time conducting fieldwork in a language I didn't speak. I connected with Zahed through friends and could tell quickly that we would work well together. I had done a lot of research about how to train a research assistant, and luckily, we had plenty of time to get to know each other, understand how we each work, and talk about the interview questions and the area we would be studying.

I consciously made the decision to hire a male research assistant. I only had the budget for one person, and I thought Zahed's presence would make it easier to speak with men. His maleness eased our contact with Syrian store owners our initial contact with male Syrians. Unfortunately, it also limited our ability to interview Syrian females, who sometimes declined to be interviewed by Zahed even though we told them that I would be there as well.

# Integration of Syrian Children through Syrian Adults' Perspectives

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We focus this report on the concerns voiced by Syrian adults about the integration, or lack thereof, of Syrian children in Turkish society. We initially thought this would be a secondary concern when urgent matters such as work and shelter are taken into account. However, during our conversations with Syrians, it became clear that for many parents, their children's integration is one of their most highly ranked concerns.

Many parents were happy that their children were learning Turkish since they could then help them with paperwork and other official tasks, but worried about what would happen if their Turkish-speaking children were to be sent back to Syria.

Many expressed concerns about their children's lack of official ID, a status which could lead to statelessness, and many worried about the effects of racism and xenophobia on their children.

A Street View from Çarşamba



Figure 3. Street signs in Turkish and Arabic. Photo by Ezgi Irgil.

## Lack of ID and Potential Statelessness

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The biggest concern parents raised had to do with the potential for statelessness faced by many Syrian children. Since citizenship in Turkey is based on ethnicity, a child born in Turkey is not immediately granted citizenship. Children of Syrian refugees are eligible for Temporary Protection Status, but because residence in Turkey under TPS does not count towards citizenship, removal of TPS would also remove a child's ability to receive services of any kind in Turkey. Unless Syrian families register their children with the Syrian embassy, that child has no formal ties to either country, and for political reasons, parents are reluctant to contact the Syrian embassy. This issue was one of the most difficult for us to discuss with Syrians, as we could offer no concrete solutions or advice. We could only listen.

Without identification, Syrian children are excluded from access to public services. If Syrians are not registered under TPS, they don't have access to hospitals or schools. In the last two years, there have been reports about cities in Turkey which have stopped registering incoming Syrians under TPS.<sup>2</sup> Authorities claim this does not affect newborns, but what happens to young children varies. Some parents

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2018). Turkey Stops Registering Syrian Asylum Seekers. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/16/turkey-stops-registering-syrian-asylum-seekers>.

told us that while both parents were registered, authorities did not register their children to Bursa, and without registration, children could not enroll in school and have fallen behind in their education.

Because TPS does not count as “residence” in Turkey for the purposes of qualifying for citizenship, many parents are concerned for their children’s future outside of the country, particularly if they were to be deported. There has been increased scrutiny of Syrians since July 2019, and reports that Syrians are being deported.<sup>3</sup> Policies are changing abruptly, and parents are very concerned about their children’s future.

This highly precarious situation jeopardizes children’s lives in Turkey and creates potential problems should the family move to another country or return to Syria. The child would only have their Temporary Protection ID from Turkey as proof of their identity. One Syrian male parent we spoke with summarized the situation:

We want to have citizenship or residency so if we have a child, they will have rights. My daughter is studying at a Turkish school and you must give her a temporary ID, there is no way that she can go back to Syria, my children are not registered in Turkey or Syria. What will happen to them? If they solve this problem, no one will think about smuggling to Europe.

Parents’ concern for their children is not only about returning to Syria versus staying in Turkey. It also affects how they make decisions about leaving for other countries and the migration routes they consider in order to seize the promising yet dangerous opportunity for a more secure future.

## **Children Learning Turkish but Lacking Arabic**

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Another concern that adults raised about Syrian children is language. Children pick up Turkish at school and when they are outside the home. Since they are at school all day during the week and their homework is in Turkish, there is very little time left for them to learn Arabic. Our interviewees told us they try their best to teach their kids Arabic, or to help them not to forget, but between work and other responsibilities, time is very limited.

We conducted one interview at an interviewee’s apartment, where her nine-year-old son was also present. While Zahed interviewed the mother, Ezgi talked with the child. It stood out to us that the son spoke Turkish with a Turkish accent. He responded in Turkish regardless of whether the question was asked in Arabic or Turkish. Ezgi asked him about his knowledge of and comfort in Arabic, and he responded, “Well, not so good...” At one point, his mother told Zahed in Arabic that the two of them have difficulty communicating with each other and then laughed. Her son just looked at her, and it was unclear if he understood her statement.

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2019). Turkey: Syrians Being Deported to Danger. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/24/turkey-syrians-being-deported-danger#>.

We didn't ask parents directly about their children and children's relationship with the Turkish language, but because parents mentioned it several times, it was clear they were concerned that their children were struggling with Arabic. One parent told us that he worried his daughter would forget Arabic, so had hired a tutor for her during the summer, but she struggled and didn't want to learn. He worried that if they needed to go back to Syria or were sent back, his daughter would have a hard time adjusting to Syria without a firm grasp of Arabic. Issues surrounding identification and the Arabic language are a major concern for parents. Uncertainty about the future adds to their worries about everything else they have to navigate on a daily basis. Many parents seemed frustrated, sad, tired, and hopeless.

## **Parents' Concerns of Racism Toward Their Children**

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Another concern Syrians have for their children is the racism they face in their daily lives which Syrians confront everywhere. The stories we heard from people in Bursa show that there is no escape from it. Racism can manifest as the widespread view that the Syrian refugees left their homeland to escape war and did not fight to defend their country. This view is fueled by the perception that the Turkish army was sent to fight in Syria, while Syrians in Turkey are getting jobs, renting apartments, and "enjoying" life. This sentiment is widespread, but it of course fails to take into consideration what Syrians went through before coming to Turkey.

Our interviews revealed how much Syrians are disturbed by these views, and how afraid they are of natives. Our interviewees told us they are anxious and scared of interacting with natives for fear of backlash. They hold the same concerns for their own and other Syrian children, and don't want their children to go to parks or places where there are many natives. One Syrian mother said:

My daughters are being harassed by the Turkish people a lot. [...] I never take my son with us to the parks to avoid problems. My daughters have a private bus to their school that brings them back in front of our house. [...] I send them to schools outside of Çarşamba so nobody would disturb them and I hired a bus for them. At İncirli, they separated the Turkish students in one class and Syrians in other classes, and they didn't teach them half of the school subjects. We found out when my daughter had her exams and there was a subject she didn't know about.

Another parent told us how scared he is:

It's not your homeland, and the people are uncomfortable with your presence here and unhappy, you feel like an outcast, isolated. There are some good areas, where I feel comfortable: classy areas where there are not a lot of Syrians and the Turkish people have a positive image about Syrians. At the park, next to the bazaar, we never feel comfortable, the Turks treat us in a dirty way. Even my kid...He is 9 years old; he was playing there and the Turkish kids attacked him with razors and knives, they wanted to kill him. If his grandmother wasn't with him, they would've killed him, and this is a repeated situation with a lot of Syrian families.

A Syrian barbershop owner told us about his fourteen-year-old Syrian clerk:

The boy who works at my shop... He went to the mosque and the Turkish kids there beat him up, and when I went to ask them why they hit the kid, they replied "This is our neighborhood." So, I told [my clerk] not to go to that mosque anymore but to go to another one.

# Conclusion

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Syrians want to provide a better future for themselves and their kids, and they want to carry on no matter how bad the situation. For them, they feel there is no going back. Going back means losing, and they've had too many losses already. They have no intention of letting racism get in their way. They know their children's futures will be more affected than their own, and they hope to develop solutions for their children without directly confronting natives. But they worry for their youth.

## Appendix A: Refugees in Turkey

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Allan Cooper Dell

Turkey hosts the highest number of Syrian refugees. According to the Refugees' Association,<sup>4</sup> the number of Syrian refugees under temporary protection in Turkey was 3,600,710 people as of July 2020. The same report found that 98% of registered Syrian refugees were living in cities. When the refugees originally began coming to Turkey, they settled in the southeast of the country in cities close to Syria. Still today, the majority of Syrian refugees live in cities close to the border with Syria (Hatay, Gaziantep, and Sanliurfa), as well as in Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara, and Bursa.<sup>5</sup> One aspect of the refugee situation in Turkey that has been largely overlooked up until now is the large number of refugees who are not Syrian. As of September 2018, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has the total number of non-Syrian asylum seekers at 367,000 and as of August 2019, the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) of Turkey estimated the total who had applied for international protection between 2010–2018 to be 478,309.<sup>6</sup> According to UNHCR, the top three nationalities of refugees who had applied for international protection by September 2018 were Afghans (170,000), Iraqis (142,000), and Iranians (39,000).<sup>7</sup> According to the DGMM, in 2019 the nationalities with the highest numbers given short-term residence permits were: Iraqis (132,262), Turkmens (110,553), Syrians (101,742), and Iranians (55,745). Turkey has become a center for the migration of refugees from many countries and is not solely a route for Syrian refugee migration.

One significant obstacle to refugees in Turkey coming from countries outside of Europe have faced is their lack of legal status as refugees. The Turkish government has ratified the Geneva Convention but with a geographic limitation, meaning that only European refugees are able to attain full refugee status, and non-Europeans are only allowed to stay in the country with temporary protection status.<sup>8</sup> Based on this highly uncertain status, many if not most refugees who have some kind of marketable skillset have moved on to Europe in search of better work conditions, better pay, and a more stable status. Erdoğan

<sup>4</sup> Mülteciler Derneği. (2020). Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Sayısı Temmuz 2020. Retrieved from <https://Mülteciler.org.tr/turkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi/>

<sup>5</sup> Saraçoğlu, C., and Bélanger, D. (2019). Loss and Xenophobia in the City: Contextualizing Anti-Syrian Sentiments in Izmir, Turkey. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 363–383.

<sup>6</sup> Erdoğan, M. (2019). Syrian Refugees in Turkey. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Report, September 2019 Issue, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Erdoğan, M. (2019). Syrian Refugees in Turkey. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Report, September 2019 Issue, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Baban, F., Ilcan, S., and Rygiel, K. (2017). Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Pathways to Precarity, Differential Inclusion, and Negotiated Citizenship Rights. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43(1): 41–57, 41.

Erdoğan, M. (2019). Syrian Refugees in Turkey. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Report, September 2019 Issue, 4.

observed that the approximately 700,000 Syrians who went to Europe between 2014–2016 were those with the highest education levels, leaving behind in Turkey those from rural and traditional regions of Northern Syria who had had very limited access to education.<sup>9</sup>

As has been noted by İçduygu and Nimer, regardless of any stated desire to return to the northeastern part of Syria, the likelihood of refugees being able to or wanting to return is quite slim.<sup>10</sup> As observed by both İçduygu and Millet and myself, the majority of the refugees see their existence in Turkey as long or medium term, with little hope of being able to return to Syria in the near future. Refugees from other countries have expressed to me the growing instability in their home countries as well (Iraq and Iran), making the possibility of their stay becoming long or medium term also likely. According to Erdoğan, the total number of those under some kind of protection in Turkey has grown to more than 5.02% of the total population of the country.<sup>11</sup> Many of these refugees no longer have a house, a livelihood, or a safe place to return to. When asked if he would return, one 29-year-old Syrian refugee responded, “To where? My house was totally destroyed. Where will I be going to?” The refugee presence in Turkey is a phenomenon that can no longer be relegated to the realm of temporary inconvenience.

<sup>9</sup> Erdoğan, M. (2019). Syrian Refugees in Turkey. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Report, September 2019 Issue, 8.

<sup>10</sup> İçduygu, A., and Nimer, M. (2020). The Politics of Return: Exploring the Future of Syrian Refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. *Third World Quarterly* 41(3): 415–433.

<sup>11</sup> Erdoğan, M. (2019). Syrian Refugees in Turkey. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Report, September 2019 Issue, 3.

# About the RIT Project

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The **Refugees in Towns (RIT)** project promotes understanding of the migrant/refugee experience in urban settings. Our goal is to understand and promote refugee integration by drawing on the knowledge and perspective of refugees and locals to develop deeper understanding of the towns in which they live. The project was conceived and is led by Karen Jacobsen. It is based at the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University and funded by the Henry J. Leir Foundation.

## Our goals are twofold

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Our first long-term goal is to build a theory of integration from the ground up by compiling a global database of case studies and reports to help us analyze and understand the process of immigrant/refugee integration. These cases provide a range of local insights about the many different factors that enable or obstruct integration, and the ways in which migrants and hosts co-exist, adapt, and struggle in urban spaces. We draw our cases from towns in resettlement countries, transit countries, and countries of first asylum around the world.

Our second more immediate goal is to support community leaders, aid organizations, and local governments in shaping policy, practice, and interventions. We engage policymakers and community leaders through town visits, workshops, conferences, and participatory research that identifies needs in their communities, encourages dialogue on integration, and shares good practices and lessons learned.

## Why now?

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The United States—among many other refugee-hosting countries—is undergoing a shift in its refugee policy through travel bans and the suspension of parts of its refugee program. Towns across the U.S. are responding in different ways: some resist national policy changes by declaring themselves “sanctuary cities,” while others support travel bans and exclusionary policies. In this period of social and political change, we seek to deepen our understanding of integration and the ways in which refugees, migrants, and their hosts interact. Our RIT project draws on and gives voice to both refugees and hosts in their experiences with integration around the world.

## For more on RIT

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On our website, there are many more case studies and reports from other towns and urban neighborhoods around the world, and we regularly release more reports as our project develops.

[www.refugeesintowns.org](http://www.refugeesintowns.org)

# About the Authors

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**Ezgi Irgil** is a PhD candidate in Political Science at the University of Gothenburg. Her research focuses on the relation between natives, refugees, and local authorities at the city level. Prior to pursuing her PhD, she was working as a Research Assistant at the Migration Research Center at Koç University.

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Refugees in Towns is a project of the Feinstein International Center. More information on the project, including more case study reports, is available at <https://www.refugeesintowns.org/>

The Feinstein International Center is a research and teaching center based at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. Our mission is to promote the use of evidence and learning in operational and policy responses to protect and strengthen the lives, livelihoods, and dignity of people affected by or at risk of humanitarian crises.

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