

MIGRATION RESULTED FROM THE ATTACKS ON SINJAR AND KOBANE, AND TURKEY'S HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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ISIS's attacks in August and September towards the regions in Sinjar where majority of the population were Yazidis and Kobane where Syrian Kurds were living led thousands of peoples to leave their homelands to save their lives. Within this period, thousands of Yazidis and Syrian Kurds have taken refuge in Turkey. Turkey has continued to implement its open door policy regarding humanitarian crisis situations and has been delivering humanitarian assistance since the beginning of the attacks. This policy brief examines the ISIS operations to Sinjar and Kobane and the resulting mass migration of Yazidis and Syrian Kurds. The policy brief aims to show Turkey's humanitarian assistance to both of the regions and the refugees, as well as pointing out other significant issues deemed necessary in relation to the humanitarian crisis.

In 2014, ISIS had conducted attacks in many cities of Iraq and Syria. Iraq's Sinjar and Syria's Kobane were two of these. When ISIS attacked and took the control of Sinjar, the lives of the people changed significantly. ISIS killed hundreds of Yazidis and kidnapped many women as female slaves. The ones, who were lucky to run away, sheltered in the mountains nearby Sinjar almost without any supply. They struggled with hunger and thirst for days there. After days with starvation, some Yazidis tried to leave the mountains with the help of security corridor under difficult conditions. Those who were able to run away went to Turkey and some secure parts of Iraq and they settled in tents or their relatives' houses. Like Yazidis, Syrian Kurds also had to leave their homes and cities

and thus some of them went to Northern Iraq, while the others went to Turkey in order to secure their lives.

The Attacks of ISIS on Sinjar and Migration of Yazidis

By taking control of Mosul, ISIS acquired a great number of heavy weapons and armored vehicles which were left by the Iraqi army, which improved both its fire and maneuver capabilities. With the help of such supply, after two days of fight, ISIS was able to get control of Sinjar which is located 60 km northwest of Mosul. Those ongoing fights and threatening actions of ISIS made Yazidis, Turcomans who actually took refuge in Sinjar after running away from Tal Afar, Peshmerga



forces and, other groups to leave Sinjar. This means that more than 200,000 people left the region.¹

Due to the clashes, Yazidi people firstly moved towards Syrian border. However, 1,000 Yazidi people, the majority of whom were women and children, sheltered in mountains since they were not able to reach the road. On 9 August 2014, under the protection of Peshmerge and YPG forces, a safety corridor was opened to evacuate Yazidis who were stuck in the mountains. After two days of walk, Yazidis were carried with lorries, trucks, buses and taxis through the Rimelan region of Syria and provided emergency help in the reception center there. Later, Yazidis were taken to PYD's camp of Nevroz. After a short rests in this camp, they were transferred to Duhok and Zaho in Iraq.²

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Yazidis constitute 55% of the families living in Sulaymaniyah. While some of the Yazidis in Sulaymaniyah

live in schools, some others live in abandoned buildings. They are willing to go back to their homes if the security is maintained in the region.³ 2% of the displaced Iraqis in Erbil are Yazidis. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s report on Duhok, 67% of the families who migrated to Duhok are Yazidis who came from Sinjar. Yazidis who went to Duhok generally settled in Sümeyil and Zaho district. In Duhok, some of the Yazidis live in schools, while some others live in abandoned buildings.⁴ It is estimated that there are approximately more than 100,000 Yazidis in Duhok and Zaho and there are 30-40,000 Yazidis who migrated to Syria.⁵

Because of the ISIS threat, some of the Yazidis migrated to Turkey. Approximately 80 Yazidis took sanctuary in village GuvenI in, Midyat district of the city of Mardin. Some other Yazidis settled in Yazidi villages in Şırnak and Mardin. On 24 August 2014, 500 Yazidis arrived Şenoba district of Uludere in Şırnak and were

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placed in schools there. On 26 August 2014, 400 Yazidis entered into Turkey through Ortasu village and were dispatched by vehicles to Silopi, Şırnak, Beşiriye, Midyat and Cizre. The number of Yazidis who were sheltered in Mardin reached 6,000 on 3 September 2014. 2,000 Yazidis who were settled in guesthouses and community centers in Batman, were later settled in the tent city in Uğurca village of Beşiri district of Batman. 60 Yazidi families amounting to 350 people sheltered in Cizre and also 3,000 Yazidis took sanctuary in the tent city in Şanlıurfa. Besides, 29 families of 178 people migrated to Diyarbakır.

On 7 September 2014, 1,300 Yazidis, the majority of whom were women and children, arrived in Turkey via Uludere, Şırnak. Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmuş announced in his statement in Suruç district that 30,000 Yazidis were hosted within the borders of the Turkey.

The Attacks of ISIS on Kobane and Migration of Syrian Kurds

Kobane was controlled by YPG forces which took the control of the city on 19 July 2012. Kobane was exposed to ISIS attacks since August 2014, before the actual start of ISIS operations in September.

ISIS's operations for control over Kobane started on 17 September 2014, by capturing the bridge on Euphrates River. On September 18, ISIS militants started to counter fighting with heavy weapons and, within a day, they took over 21 Kurdish villages which enabled them to encircle Kobane. Afterwards, other 39 Kurdish villages were seized by ISIS.

Due to those attacks and the resulting human sufferings, many people ran away and found asylum in Turkey. At the beginning, approximately 5,000 Syrian Kurds came to Turkey via Dikmetaş village of Suruç, Şanlıurfa. According to Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmuş's statement on 20 September 2014, 45,000 Syrian Kurds entered into Turkey through 8 different gates with serious and careful control. Kurtulmuş also said that, while some of the Syrian Kurds were staying with their relatives, some were provided shelter in schools, public places and tent cities.⁶

On 21 September 2014, ISIS militants came 15 km close to

Kobane and took control of 64 villages. Numan Kurtulmuş declared that, since the events started on September 22, the total number of the Syrian Kurds arriving in Turkey were more than 130,000. On September 24, ISIS militants came 8 km close to Kobane. By this way, they were able to seize many villages in the south and north of the city. On September 25, ISIS militants came 2 km close to Kobane and, eventually, 75% of the city fell into the hands of ISIS. Therefore, the US and its coalition partners started air operations against ISIS in order to stop the expansion of ISIS in the region.

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 1,600 Syrian Kurds, the majority of whom were women and children, sheltered in Gawilan camp of Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Besides, some Syrian Kurd families migrated to the northern east region of Syria close to Qamışlı. Approximately 1,750 people sheltered in the houses of their relatives or acquaintances in Haseki region.⁷ By 7

Kobane was exposed to ISIS attacks since August 2014, before the actual start of ISIS operations in September.

November 2014, 192,043 Syrian Kurds became refugees in Turkey.

The Humanitarian Assistance of Turkey to Yazidis

After the ISIS offensive, Yazidis were stuck in Sinjar Mountain for a while. Since they left their home towns, they faced major problems. At this point, Turkey started providing aid to Yazidis immediately. After the conquest of Sinjar by ISIS militias, a large number of Yazidis took sanctuary in Sinjar Mountain. Yazidis had to struggle with hunger and lack of water since they were able to bring very few supplies and water, thereupon, Prime Ministry Disaster

and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) prepared large aid packages which were delivered by Iraqi helicopters for Yazidis trapped in the Sinjar Mountain.

Because of the ISIS threat, some Yazidi families came to the district of Midyat of Mardin. After health check and registration procedures, Yazidis were placed in the tents in the temporary accommodation facility. Mini fridge, pillow, quilt, kitchen supplies and fans were given to the families. Firstly, three hot meals a day were given to the Yazidis, but then authorities distributed cards to Yazidis so that they could buy their needs from the market in the tent city and to cook their own meal.⁸ Republican



People's Party (CHP) committee including Vice Presidents Veli Ağbaba and Sezgin Tanrikulu delivered aid materials to the Yazidis in Silopi on August 18. Çankaya Municipality sent aid trucks including dry food materials to the Yazidis in Şırnak province.

A workshop was established for Yazidi families' children in Diyarbakır Sümerpark common living areas and 80 children of 7-13 age groups received drama, mind games, picture, Kurdish and music education in these workshops. 50 NGOs in Siirt province organized an aid organization for Yazidis who stayed in Silopi. With the help of this aid organization, many cloth, food, blankets and emergency supplies were collected and sent to the Yazidis. Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) sent food, blankets and cloth to Yazidis in Batman and Silopi on 21 August 2014. Federation of Syriac Associations (SÜDEF) collected aid and delivered this aid to 200 Yazidis in Midyat district. AFAD announced that it started building camp for Yazidis

who took sanctuary in Zaho province in Northern Iraq. This camp has the capacity to host 16,000 people.

Yazidis who fled to Silopi was placed in tents by the authorities of municipality. The team of Turkish Red Crescent sent food and cloth aid to 250 Yazidi families who stayed in the tent city in the Cumhuriyet street of Silopi district and also The Turkish Red Crescent delivered food aid to the Yazidis in Silopi. The Turkish Red Crescent sent 10,000 beds, 10,000 blankets, water and biscuits to the Yazidis in Şırnak and this aid was distributed through AFAD coordination.

District governorship of Kızıltepe provided Yazidis who stayed in community centers of the municipality with clothes, air-conditioning, carpets and television. Mardin Local Health Authority and district governorship of Kızıltepe distributed 250 pieces of hygiene package and wheel chairs for sick refugees. The municipality of Viranşehir established 50 tents in 300 acres of land and these tents had electricity,

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water and toilets. 3 classes were built in this tent city and 5 instructors gave psychological support as well as music, theater lessons to 150 students in these classes.

The Humanitarian Assistance of Turkey to Syrian Kurds

As a result of ISIS's intensive attacks on Kobane on 19 September 2014 and ongoing clashes, a large number of Syrian Kurds took sanctuary in Turkey. From the first day of their arrival in Turkey, many government entities, civil society organizations and local authorities in the country

started providing aid to the Syrian Kurds who fled to Turkey and were in a difficult situation.

After the ISIS attacks on Kobane, in order to distribute humanitarian aid effectively to the Syrian Kurds who fled to Turkey, on 26 September 2014 AFAD established a reception center in the Yumurtalık region of Suruç district which is the zero point of the border. The temporal reception center consisted of three parts and functioned through 6 steps. The first part of the center is composed of the border unit of Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and Turkish Red Crescent whereas the second part is constituted by

the police. AFAD mobile coordination truck, National Medical Rescue Teams (UMKE) and hospital station are in the third part of the center. In the 6-step AFAD process management, first, border unit of TSK counts Syrians one by one at the border. After the counting process, according to international procedures Syrians are disarmed and taken into the country one by one. The Turkish Red Crescent distributes water and food to Syrian Kurds. Police make a detailed search in the third step. Later, refugees undergo medical screening. Staff of Migration Management Agency record Syrians who enter into Turkey and finally, at the end of recording process, if refugees have relatives in Turkey, service vehicles take Syrians to their relatives. If they do not have any relatives in Turkey, they are placed in Dostluk Parkı and Boarding Primary School (YİBO) where AFAD established 2 temporal collecting center and hotel tents.⁹ Approximately 6,022 Syrians have been staying in tents which were built by AFAD.

From 19 to 26 September, AFAD distributed 22,900 blankets, 10,000 sleeping-bags, 2,000 plastic tarps, 4,000 mats, 7,000 packages of hygiene materials, hot meal for 23,500 people, 37,092 packages of biscuits, 43,420 liters (0,5 lt.) of water and soup for 9,000 people. AFAD gives three meals a day to 50,000 Syrian Kurds every day. AFAD has so far distributed 75 wheel chairs to disabled Syrian Kurds who stayed in YİBO in Suruç district. AFAD started vaccination campaign for the children of Syrian Kurdish families and thanks to this campaign, 18,000 children under the age of 15 were vaccinated against measles and polio.

Alliance of International Doctors examined the children of Syrian Kurds who took sanctuary in Turkey. Contact person of the Alliance, Eyüp Hazar, explained that the staff of the Alliance served in Suruç Boarding School, health truck in the city center and near villages. The Alliance covered the expenses of medicine for patients.¹⁰ The Turkish Red

From the first day of the arrival in Turkey, many government entities, civil society organizations and local authorities in the country started providing Syrian Kurds who fled to Turkey and were in a difficult situation with aid.

Crescent prepared a daily meal for 20,000 Syrian Kurds and it has distributed diaper, milk, baby food in frontier villages. The Turkish Red Crescent informed that if the number of the refugees increases, the Turkish Red Crescent can increase its capacity up to 30,000 people to prepare a meal.

Ministry of Health sent 30 ambulances, 90 medical personnel and 7 UMKE teams to the region and 12 ambulances, 4 UMKE teams and 42 personnel worked actively in the region. There were 2 ambulances and 1 UMKE team in the border gate of Mürşitpinar, Yumurtalık, there were 1 UMKE team, 2 ambulances and 1 tent for response, there were 1 ambulance and UMKE team in Süleymanşah camp.¹¹ Children aged 0-9 years were vaccinated against polio, children aged 9-15 years were vaccinated against measles by the personnel of the Ministry of Health in Suruç. In this period, approximately 425 wounded people entered from the border and 212 patients were discharged from hospital.

AFAD sent 5,000 packages of milk and 1,000 bottles of water to Kobane on 10 October 2014. AFAD also sent 46 vehicles to Kobane region and these vehicles carried humanitarian aid materials. From 19 September, food and hygiene materials were distributed and sheltering opportunity was provided for 180,000 Syrian Kurds who fled to Turkey from Kobane. In addition to this, 125 vehicles from Şenyurt boundary point and 54 vehicles from Nusaybin boundary point brought humanitarian aid materials to Kobane and northern Syria.

İHH was deployed in Suruç center and Suruç YİBO and started to serve with two mobile soup kitchens, one mobile bakery and one mobile health truck since the first day of Syrian Kurds' entry into Turkey. İHH distributed hot meal to 10,000 people a day, baked 10,000 breads a day in mobile bakery for distribution. Also, İHH distributed diaper, baby food, hygiene package, blanket, bed to Syrian Kurds in villages, center of Suruç and in center of Urfa province. From

19 September to 9 October 2014, İHH's humanitarian aid was totaled to 2.046.364 TL.

Şanlıurfa Public Health provided Syrian Kurds with health service with 8 teams in border regions. In addition, Syrian Kurds received 24 hour free service in Suruç family center. According to AFAD some Syrian Kurds who fled to Turkey had relatives in Turkey and they stayed with their relatives. Thus, the team of AFAD went to villages and neighborhoods in order to find these people and the team distributed aid to these Syrian Kurds upon their signature. In this way, the team of AFAD reached 90 villages in Suruç region and distributed aid to Syrian Kurds. AFAD team provided the needs of Syrian Kurds who stayed in tents in 24 hour. Tent cities, which were built by AFAD for 12,000 people, were hosting 9,000 people.

Hatay Solidarity Association (HAYAD) gave health service to 160 Syrian Kurds in Kırıkhan district and doctors of HAYAD Rehabilitation Center examined the children who are

affected from bad weather condition. HAYAD also distributed blankets and warm clothes to the Syrian Kurd families. In addition, 160 tons of foods were sent by Mardin Organized Industrial Region to Syrian Kurds in Suruç district.

Many NGOs in Turkey helped Syrian Kurds who fled to Turkey from Kobane. Memur-Sen sent 7,100 blankets and 3,000 beds to Suruç initially and stated that in the coming days they would send additional 3,000 beds to the region. Şanlıurfa'lılar Association of Culture, Solidarity and Solidarity in Gaziantep sent food, blanket, water, cleaning materials, shoes for kids and baby food to Suruç. Mardin-Syria Solidarity Platform distributed food to 1,000 Syrian families who took sanctuary in Mardin. Türkiye Diyanet Foundation sent 10,000 blankets to Suruç, Beşir Association distributed food, clothes and blankets to Syrian Kurd who sheltered in Harran district.

In this process, local administrations also sent humanitarian aid to the Syrian Kurds in Turkey. Governor of Suruç

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district explained that a camp will be established in Suruç which will house 20,000 Syrian Kurds and the camp will be opened within 2 months.¹² District Governorship of Halfeti distributed aid packages to 400 Syrian families who stayed in Halfeti. Şanlıurfa Directorate of Family and Social Policies and UNICEF organized a training program for Syrian Kurds in Turkey and in this program, 11 specialists gave psycho-social training. Municipalities of Hilvan and Siverek sent 4 trucks of food materials to Syrian Kurds who stayed in old YİBO in Suruç. Mayorship of Şişli delivered 3 trucks of aid materials that included basic food materials to Suruç municipality. Municipality of Van put into service a fully equipped health truck at refugees'

disposal in Suruç and provided free medical and pharmaceutical assistance to the elderly and sick Syrian Kurds in 10 tents. Municipality of Çukurca sent 3 trucks of food and various aid materials.

Municipality of Karlıova sent food and materials that was worth 15,000 TL for kids to the Kobane. Municipality of Diyarbakır provided all daily needs of 2,000 people who stayed in Suruç while the municipality of Seyhan sent a truck of food and aid materials to the Suruç. On September 27, municipality of Ceylanpınar sent a truck of water, a truck of blankets, a truck of diapers and food to refugees in Suruç. Aldermen of Tuşba municipality started an aid campaign for Kobane.

General Assessment

Because of ISIS's attacks on Sinjar and Kobane, the fall of Sinjar and the siege of Kobane people who lived in that region left these cities. Within this period, many people also migrated to Turkey and approximately 30,000 Yazidis and 192,043 Syrian Kurds took refuge in Turkey. Since the very first day of events, Turkey has provided humanitarian assistance to the Yazidis and Syrian Kurds who fled to Turkey and living in Sinjar and Kobane. Numerous corporations, organizations, municipalities, NGOs and citizens have contributed in the humanitarian assistance. Thus, Turkey has provided the refugees with humanitarian assistance, various in kind and quantity.

Apart from the humanitarian assistance, there are issues that need to be considered in terms of the Yazidi and Syrian Kurd refugees. When Yazidis and Syrian Kurds fled to Turkey, the season was summer and the humanitarian aid met the requirements of summer season. However, because of the cold weather and winter

season, assistance of warm clothes, blankets and heaters should be sent to the refugees. The tents which will be set up should be winter tents.

Some Yazidis and Syrian Kurds stay in schools and public building in Turkey. Therefore, new camps should be built for refugees and the existing camps should be enhanced for their benefit. More mobile hospitals should be built in camps area in order to enable rapid response and ease the burden of hospitals in the region. Moreover, mobile schools and volunteer teachers are needed in order to provide children among the refugees with education in their native language.

New tent and container cities should be built in the safer regions of the countries to which Yazidis and Syrian Kurds mostly migrated in order to ease the return of refugees to their countries after the end of ISIS threat. The Turkish government should encourage the Yazidis and Syrian Kurds to return to their countries, villages and cities upon the elimination of the ISIS threat.

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