

Importance of multilateral cooperation in sustainable social integration of refugees: A case study of massive Syrian refugee influx in -2015.

D.A.E. Malavipathirana

*Canada Border Service Agency Liaisons Officer Assistant,
High Commission of Canada for Sri Lanka and Maldives*

Abstract: “Refugee crisis” is one of the front line discussion topics in modern day international system due to massive Syrian refugee influx in Europe. Islamic state group’s terror attacks compelled Syrians to risk their lives to cross European borders, for a safe and better life. European countries agreed to host number of refugees as a fruit of multilateral cooperation in European region. Integration of Syrian refugees to the European community has become one of the main challenges thereof; in terms of reducing inequalities and achieving the global security. That it needs to be sort under multilateral cooperation. This research mainly attempt to find the answers for the research question of why international community should understand the importance of multilateral cooperation in social integration of Syrian refugees to Europe? Objective of the research was to recognize the importance of multilateral cooperation in Europe to omit non -traditional security threats created by Syrian Refugees. Hypothesis of the research was that sustainable social integration process under multilateral cooperation strengthened Syrian refugees to ensure their legitimacy in international system. Author mainly based on secondary and qualitative sources when acquiring data in data collection. When analyzing the data, author found that the social integration of Syrian refugees through multilateral cooperation in sustainable social integration replies the concerns of western and pacific countries on social integration of refugees

Key words: multilateral cooperation, integration, Refugee crisis.

I. Problem Define

Massive influx of refugees in Europe and other countries due to an extremist ideology, religious and ethnic persecution, massive human rights violation along with an intolerable violation in political, economic and socio-cultural sectors; forced nearly 10 million civilians to flee their countries only in 2015.¹ Refugees have risked their lives by choosing sea roots through Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. Most of the Syrian refugees expected to reach countries such as Germany, Austria, Hungary, France, Italy, Sweden and Norway which have high human development index.² However many of the European countries reject to accommodate refugees as it would cause a downfall of political, economic and socio-cultural stability of the European region. Moreover; many political leaders and socialists have criticized the involvement of the European nations in middle-east conflicts. From the beginning of cold war; middle-east have lost their sovereignty due to external interference that made many changes to the system. Considering the historical background; facts for Persian Gulf War rooted in the conflicts between western and eastern blockade. Western countries involve in the formation of a mediator aiming peace building and problem solving, but their mediation increased the refugee influx of the region rather than decreasing. Iraqi invasion of Iran and Kuwait provide ample of examples to prove the effect of western mediation in middle-east region.

Refugee crisis has viewed many of the challenges to the community, especially to the European community where most of the refugees tend to flee. Therefore this paper will discuss the importance of multilateral cooperation in sustainable social integration of refugees. A paper aim to discuss one of the main international concerns towards the refugee integration is that the European society dislikes the refugee integration in to their community.

Syrian Refugee Crisis

Syria named as one of the largest refugee generating countries in 2015. “The largest groups are Syrians, followed by Afghans. They mainly include men, families with children, and minors accompanied by close

¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2015) *IOM Regional response to the Syria crisis - 2015*,: IOM.

² BBC (28th January 2016) *Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe explained in graphics*,: BBC News.

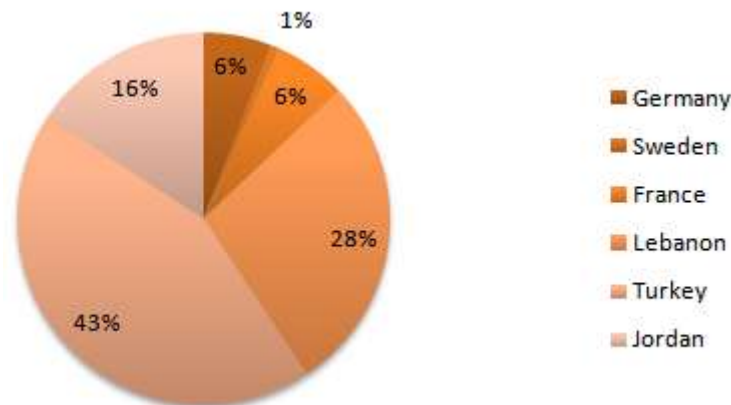
relatives”³ It is calculated that there could be 4.7 million of Syrian refugees under United Nation mandate which is a worse number than the Rwandan refugees from Rwandan genocide.

As a continuation of Arab spring; anti-government conflicts started in 2011. Along the Jihadi extremists activities it has turned out intolerable to live in Syria. Russia, US and aligned powers started bombing Syria to control the violent non-state actor but still the situation worsen. Most of the Syrians flee their country to neighboring countries such as Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq.

Key pushing facts to choose European region as refugee host.

- Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan could not manage the massive refugee influx of 4.5 million of Syrians.
- Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Bahrain did not offer any resettlement positions for Syrian refugees.
- High income countries such as Russia, Singapore, South Korea and Japan did not offer any of the resettlement refugee places.
- Germany has offered 35,000 of refugee places to Syrian refugees, which is 75% of the total EU refugee places.
- Refugees expect a safer and a better life in Europe than in middle-east region.⁴

Figure 01: Main host nations of Syrian refugees and their percentages.



Reasons That Europeans Dislike Refugee Integration In Their Community.

Syrian refugees do not feel warm welcome from the European society. It proves through the ideas shown by European regional politicians during their international speeches. As per U.S President Barack Obama; their region welcome refugees “Nearly four centuries after the Mayflower set sail, the world is still full of pilgrims – men and women who want nothing more than the chance for a safer, better future for themselves and their families,”⁵ cooperation of the countries towards the refugee challenge seemed interesting and exiting at the beginning whereas some of the countries decided to send back the refugee population due to lack of proper integration of the refugees to the European community. Due to economic political and socio-cultural views and aspects European nations dislike welcoming refugees to their lands. French prime minister Manuel Valls mentions their concerns directly at the economic forum held in Davos “Europe needs to take an urgent action to control its external borders, otherwise our societies will be totally destabilized”⁶ Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutt mentioned that “Europe was close to breaking point and need to come up with a common response or run the risk that one of the European union’s founding principle’s would start to unrevealed.”⁷ It further proves that European nation’s view towards the social integration of refugees to their societies.

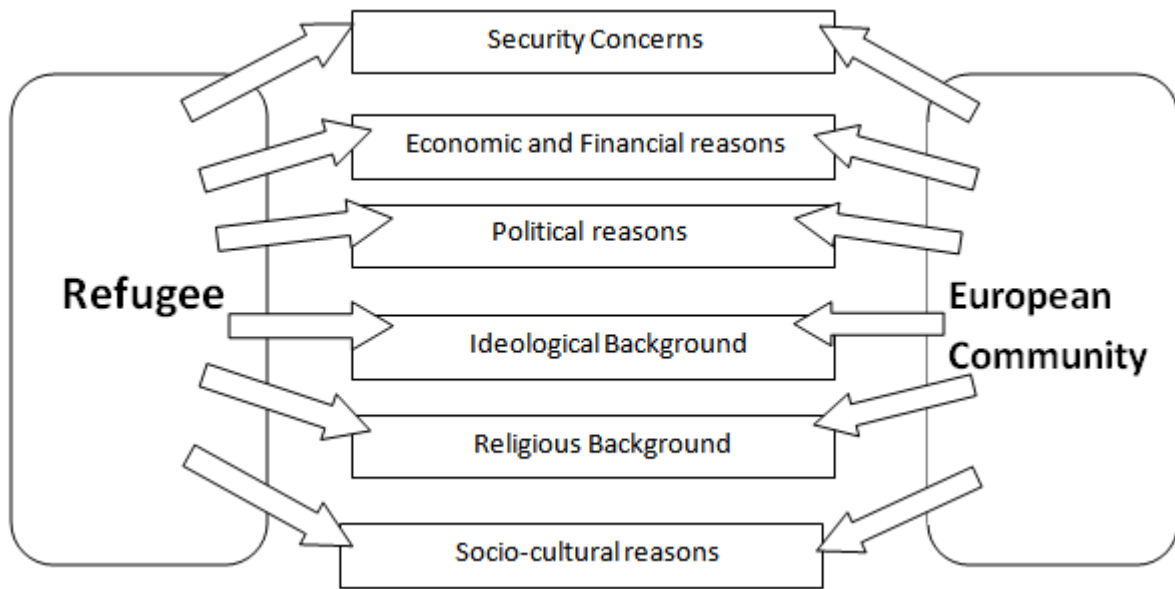
³ IOM Press release, “Refugees continues to stream into Greece, Italy” 04 September 2015.

⁴ Amnesty International “Syria’s refugee crisis in numbers” 4 September 2015

⁶ Speech: French prime minister Manuel Valls

⁷ Address: Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutt

Figure 02: Conflicting points that does not allow refugees to integrate in to European community



Security concerns

Security has become a major concern of the European community. Due to ISIL (Islamic State and Iraq and the Levant) terror attacks and their threats; Europe focuses to strengthen their border security. ISIL; the violent non-state actor has produced videos through the social media by showing their extremist terror activities to aim threatening the European community. “Revenge has started and the blood will flow, France was the beginning tomorrow will be Washington. It will be New York and it will be Moscow.”⁸ In addition; European community has to think over supporting the Syrian refugee community since they are also from the region where ISIL operates to expand their power. Therefore; their main concern is to ensure they are offering the refugee status to the right person who has been persecuted and flee his/her homeland due to intolerable situation. It is true that identifying the true refugee at the border cross; is hard whereas ISIL terrorists try hard to mingle with the refugee community to get in to Europe. It has made European community to be strict and pessimist about the Syrian refugee integration. “People should remember that no refugee can enter our borders until they undergo the highest security checks of anyone traveling to the United States,”⁹

Economic and Financial concerns

Europe is over coming from the economic crisis where they struggled with high unemployment rates, debt crisis and with the down fall of industrial and service sectors. Moreover Greece is still trying to overcome from their debt crisis. “Puerto Rico is trapped in a “vicious cycle of contraction, emigration, austerity and taxes”¹⁰ Europe has to face host a massive influx of Syrian refugees at this unexpected moment where the Europe itself need to stabilize their regional economy.

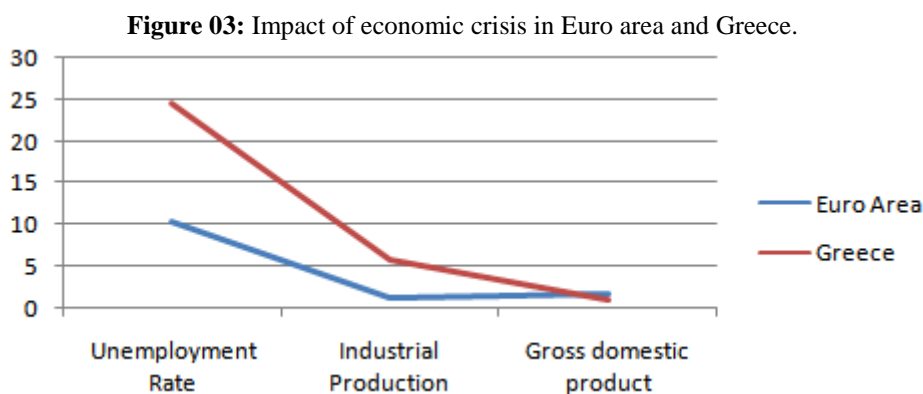
Furthermore; providing accommodation, basic human needs, social welfare materials, sanitary and health services as a refugee host country during a period where the region faces an economic crisis cause them to refuse hosting Syrian refugees. Many of the Europeans refer to the tax they pay for the development of their country and that is for them to be benefited from their hard earned money, not to host refugees fleeing countries.

⁸ Bond A., “ISIL release chilling video in English threatening new attacks in major US and European cities”

Mirror, 3rd Dec 2015

⁹ Address: Barack Obama, 2015 November

¹⁰ Speech: Garcia Padilla, 2015, 30th June.



Political reasons

European region is politically competitive and concerned than in other regions. In order to govern and establish democracy they do not prefer to accommodate Syrian refugees. If the Europe agreed to assume refugee status to a massive number of Syrian refugees their democratic political system will also allow refugees to be nominated to the parliament after ten years period of stay.

Ideological, Religious and Socio-cultural background

European society has raised various concerns on social integration of Syrian refugees due to religious and socio-cultural background. Paper recognizes few concerns as the suspicious view over Islamic religion and Muslims. Many of the Europeans do not prefer an increase of Muslim community in their Christian communities whereas they believe it will be a threat to their religion and to their livelihood. Due to the language differences, Europe is not able to employ its Syrian refugees, that simply creates another distant community which does not cooperate with the main European community in the European region. Europe has experienced in this when Indian and Chinese community established in names as “China Town” or “Bombay Town” in many of the European lands. Therefore Europeans believe that the social integration of Syrian refugees would not create any difference. Clothing patterns, habits, festival celebrations and cultures are completely different therefore they will take another ten to fifteen years to adopt according to the European culture and society.

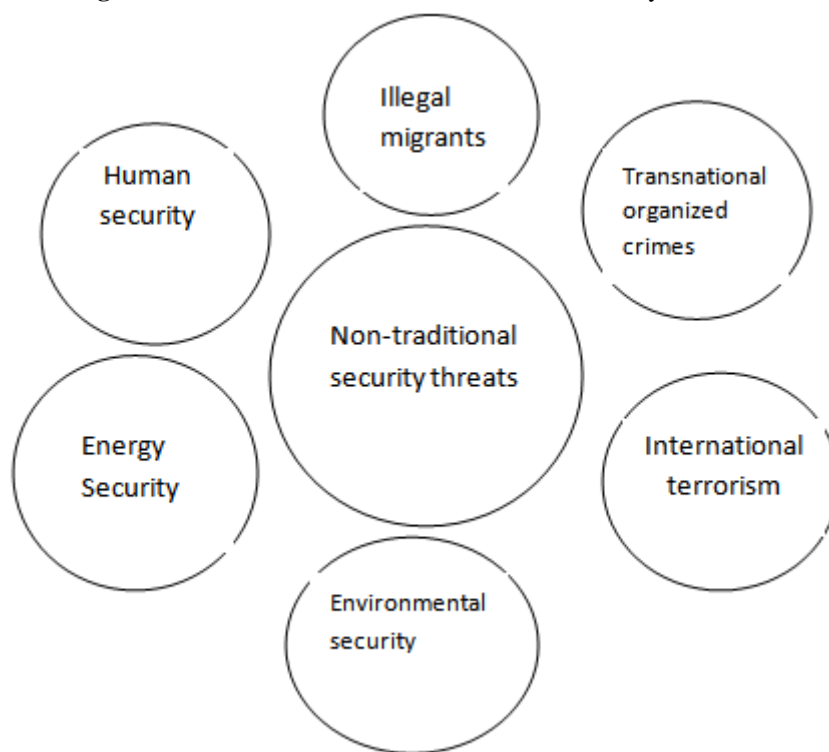
Refugee Influx In Europe, Has Created New Dimensions Of Non-Traditional Security Threats

Given this understanding there is a core inquiry which become significant; why international community should understand the importance of multilateral cooperation in social integration of Syrian refugees in to Europe? Syrian refugees flee their country due to an intolerable massive human rights violation, lack of resources that fulfill basic human requirements and lack of security. That could compel civilians to ensure their stability in the society in anti-social movements. “when poverty is added to ethnic or regional inequalities, the grievances that stock civil violence, are compounded. While it may not reach the level of war, the combination of a surging youth population, poverty, urbanization and unemployment has resulted in increasing gang violence in many cities of the developing countries”¹¹

Jihadi Islamic fighters have occupied in the middle-east, west Asian regions and they are intending to expand their extremist ideology over the world. At this position; if western and pacific countries refuse to give refugee positions, refugees will be compelled to join and support the ISIL terror activities and the extremist group, since they are left with zero option to protect their lives. It will further draw an outline of non-traditional security threats as the core international theory to explicate the research problem.

¹¹ United Nations (2004) *A more secure world: Our shared responsibility*, United Nation department of Public Information: United Nation Foundation.

Figure 04: New dimensions of non-traditional security threats.



Violent activities of ISIL; have mainly caused the illegal migration and transnational organized crimes. Syrian refugees have chosen the Mediterranean Sea over their life security to get through to the Europe. Since Europe did not allow refugees to cross the European land borders; refugees expected to cross the European Sea border for better and safe lives. Many of them were children and women. "...the incident would bring the total number of deaths in the Mediterranean this year to over 2,500 – a figure higher even than last year’s record-breaking toll.”¹² Furthermore; Europe concerned on transnational organized crimes which immerged due to illegal migration and refugees in European region. Many Europeans argue that; two third of criminals who are engaged in human smuggling, drug and weapon trafficking, cyber crimes, money laundering, credit card swap and who are entertain from the black market, are from the migrant and refugee communities, which has become a threat to the security of the European community.

In addition; Human security, energy security and environmental security were affected by the Syrian refugee crisis. It decreased European’s financial, political and environmental status as well as the health, dietary and personal standards. As the European nations have to contribute in fair refugee positions; European’s life standards have decreased. “France has over 10% unemployment – double that of Germany – but it also previously had a record of being slow to process asylum claims.”¹³

In contrast; it is important to recognize the objective; that to integrate Syrian refugees to western society for a sustainable social stability. By underestimating and cornering the Syrian refugee community, situation would develop to threaten the world in new dimensions of non- traditional security threats. Moreover; two-way social integration process is an ideal solution for a sustainable social integration. As humans; everyone has their own views, attitudes, habits and likes-dislikes. Not only the Syrian refugees but also host country’s society should be flexible to respect and integrate in to the other party’s socio-cultural, economic and political procedures, ideologies and behaviors. It does not support the argument that the two-way integration would affect European community and society neither it would support the idea that the parties should lose their religious and national ethics, values and believes, but to be flexible within their outline to support the sustainable social integration. The unity of societies would assist to prevent extremist ideologies and violation of human rights in the international system.

¹² The Guardian, “Migrant Crisis: up to 200 dead after boat carrying refugees sinks off Lybia” 28 August 2015

¹³ The Guardian, “French PM Manuel Valls says refugee crisis is destabilizing Europe” 22 January 2016

Projects To Assist Syrian Refugee Integration

European nations have cooperated for the resettlement of massive number of Syrian refugees, by understanding the relevance to the society. These resettlement and humanitarian programs have been designed according to UNHCR resettlement steps, follows...

- 3rd country resettlement
- Local integration
- Returning Home

Due to the Syrian refugee crisis; world population has been centralized to a particular region. To support the crisis countries participated in refugee pledge since 2013.¹⁴

Figure 05: Selected countries and their participation on Resettlement and Humanitarian programs

| Country | Official pledge in 2013 |
|----------------|--|
| Canada | 36,300 Resettlements |
| France | 1,000 Humanitarian Admission/ Resettlement |
| Germany | 20,000 Humanitarian Admission 18,500 Individual Sponsorship |
| United Kingdom | Vulnerable persons resettlement schemes |
| Norway | 9,000 Resettlements |
| Switzerland | 2,000 Humanitarian and Resettlement Visas |
| Australia | 5,800 Resettlement and special humanitarian programs |
| New Zealand | 850 Resettlements |

Through this program, resettlement and local integration sections have been addressed. As a core challenge in resettlement and social integration; Europe finds that most Syrian refugees are not competitive enough in the job market. Therefore they fear that even after the resettlement; refugees will remain as a sub community of the Europe without integrating with the native European community. In addition; World Bank has launched several projects for Jordan to support the Syrian community. With the massive Syrian refugee influx in Jordan, World Bank observed the Jordan struggles to provide food, sanitation, health, water and education to Syrian refugees. They expect that by the end of 2016; the Syrian population in Jordan will grow as One to Six of Jordan nationals. Therefore USD 50 million of World Bank funding goes for vaccination and medicines for the growing population. USD 80 million to ensure Jordanians has affordable access to basic commodities such as bread and cooking gas.¹⁵ Moreover; UNHCR involved with countries to facilitate and welcome Syrian refugees by having access to European nation's asylum procedures and including de facto moratorium in return of Syrians. UNHCR focused more in family reunification, including for extended family members of Syrians who have already gained any of the status in a 3rd country for resettlement. They also wants other countries to look in to all the options such as issuing employment visas, educational visas/ scholarships, resettlement and humanitarian visa schemes to support Syrian refugee population.¹⁶ Even though there is humanitarian assistance for Syrian refugees; yet there are many Syrians who want to claim refugee status in a 3rd country for a better and a safe life. Further; it is true that there is a limited amount of refugees could be access to Europe in that point.

Similarly; It assumes that the sustainable social integration process under multilateral cooperation strengthen the Syrian refugees to ensure their legitimacy in international context. With the support of many international bodies and powerful nations, Syrian refugees could see the sun rise of regaining their legitimacy which they have lost due to violent activities of extremist terror group. They gain the strength to entertain their democracy, sovereignty and freedom in the international community, who used to look at them as Jihadists and extremist members of violent non-state actor ISIL. In conclusion; there are countries and international bodies who insist to assist refugees for resettlement and to provide humanitarian assistance. Multi-lateral cooperation is important to establish sustainable social integration for refugees. Also it is necessary to recognize the importance of collective security at this very point to ensure peace and security in the world. As an important factor two-way social integration requires the flexibility from both parties to adjust as per the other society and

¹⁴ European resettlement Network, "Focus on Syria" European Refugee Fund - 2010

¹⁵ The World Bank – Press Release, "Emergency assistance for Jordan to cope with impacts of Syrian crisis" 18 July 2013

¹⁶ UNHCR, "UNHCR urges Europe to do more to help Syrian refugees" 11 July 2014

culture to become an actual part; which provides the true emotion of resettlement and rehabilitation within refugee community.

Acknowledgment

“...the refugees who were regarded as an intolerable burden would comprise a rich asset...”

Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930)

It is not only a modern day issue. In ancient world; countries did not have exact boundaries that could cross anytime without any document. Conflicts and wars then began to mark their territorial boundaries in order to ensure their territorial integrity. Therefore people needed a travel document and a visa from the relevant country to cross borders. Under these circumstances civilians who face intolerable and impossible situations in their own homeland fleeing to other countries for protection, identified as “refugees” in the international system form whom nations are unable to expect any identification document either visa. As per UNHCR there were 16.7 million registered refugees and 51.2 million displaced population in the world by June 2014.

Reference

Books

- [1]. Hassan A El-Najjar (2001) 'Western interest and the Gulf war', in (ed.) *The Gulf War: Overreaction and Excursiveness* . : Amazone Press.
- [2]. Bercovitch J. (2011) *Theory and practice of international mediation, Selected essays*, 1st Edition edn., 2 Park square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxton, OX14 4RN: Routledge
- [3]. R. Schofield “*Arabian Boundary Disputes*” Cambridge University Press, 1992
- [4]. Zachary Lockman “*Contending visions of the middle-east – the history and politics of Orientalism*” Cambridge University Press, 2009
- [5]. David Spencer and Micheal Brogan” *Mediation law and practice*” Cambridge University press, 2016
- [6]. David Miller, “*Strangers in our Midst – The political Philosophy of Immigration*” *Harvard University Press, 2016*
- [7]. Claire L. Adida, David D. Laitin and Marie-Ann Valfort “*Why Muslim integration Fails in Christian-Heritage Societies*” *Harvard University Press, 2016*
- [8]. Robert, Jackson and George, Sorensen, “*Introduction to international Relation theories and Approaches*” Oxford University Press, 3rd Edition, 2006
- [9]. Vass, Dave Elder. “*The Reality of Social Construction*” Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- [10]. Afzal, S., Iqbal, H., Dr. Inayay, M. (2012) 'Terrorism and Extremism as a Non-Traditional Security Threat Post 9/11: Implications for Pakistan's Security', *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, Vol. 3 No. 24(No. 24), pp. 195-198, 200

Journal Articles

- [11]. European Union, “On certain aspects of mediation in civil and commercial matters” Directives 2008/52/EC of the European Parliament and of the council, L 136/3, 2008
- [12]. Avant, Deborah and Hereau, Jill Schmitter, “*Journal of Global Security Studies*” Oxford University Press, 2016
- [13]. Oxford Journals, “*Journal of International Dispute Settlement*” Oxford University Press, Vol-6, 2015
- [14]. Alexander Wendt, Anarchy is what States make of it: The Social construction of Power Politics” Oxford University Press, Vol-46, 1992
- [15]. Caitlin Sturridge (March 2011) 'New Issues in Refugee Research', *Mobility and Durable Solutions: a case study of Afghan and Somali Refugees*, Research Paper No: 2040), pp. 04-06, 15-19, .

Reports/ Working Papers

- [16]. IOM (2014) *Migrant and refugee integration in global cities, the role of cities and businesses*, Keizer Karelpline 19, 6211 TC Maastricht, The Netherlands: Maastricht Graduate School of Governance .
- [17]. Philippe Fargues and Sara Bonfanti, Migration Policy Centre “When best option is a leaky boat: why migrants risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean and what Europe is doing about it” Working paper, 05, 2014
- [18]. IOM, “IOM Regional response to the Syrian crisis – Situation Report” 2013
- [19]. United Nation Security Council Reports, “UN Documents for Syria” S/RES/2258, 2015
- [20]. United Nation Security Council Reports, What’s in Blue “Syria: Ministerial meeting and possible adoption of a resolution on a political solution” 2015

Electronic Sources

- [21]. Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International court of justice - <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CTC/uncharter.pdf>
- [22]. The Universal declaration of Human Rights - <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>
- [23]. US. Department of State - <http://www.state.gov/j/prm/policyissues/issues>
- [24]. UNHCR - <http://www.unhcr.org>
- [25]. The World Bank - <http://www.worldbank.org>
- [26]. The Guardian - <http://www.theguardian.com>