

The Roles of Civil Society and International Humanitarian Organizations in Managing Refugees Crisis in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region

MEHARI FISSEHA

How to cite

Fisseha, M. (2018). The Roles of Civil Society and International Humanitarian Organizations in Managing Refugees Crisis in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region. *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge-JMK*, 3(1), 61-80. DOI: 10.26409/2018JMK3.1.04

Retrieved from

<http://www.mediterraneanknowledge.org/publications/index.php/journal/issue/archive>

1. Author's information

Ghent University, Belgium

2. Author's contact

mehari.fisseha@outlook.com

Article first published online: June 2018



- Peer Reviewed Journal

INDEXED IN
DOAJ

Additional information about [Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge-JMK](#) can be found at: [About the Journal-Board-On line submission](#)

The roles of the civil society and international humanitarian organizations in managing refugees crisis in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region

MEHARI FISSEHA
Ghent University, Belgium

Abstract

The Civil Society Organization (CSO) can be categorized into domestic and international. This paper will historically and critically analyze efforts and works of the both of them in managing the catastrophic Refugees crisis in this region; as well as the dynamics of the region's Refugees crisis. This paper would be segmented into: a). A thorough examination of the nature of the conflicts in this region since the Arab Spring as well as the ongoing challenges in leadership, governance; and economic hardships. b). This would be about an analysis of the general roles of the CSOs and International Humanitarian Organizations in managing MENA's Refugees crisis.

Keywords: Refugees, MENA, UNHCR, Civil Society Organizations, Arab Spring.

Introduction

Since the end of the World War II (WWII), the Middle East and later the Northern Africa have been one of the most unstable regions in the world. The Middle East has had series of conflicts from the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, 1967 Six-Day War, 1967 - 1970 War of Attrition, 1973 Yom Kippur War, 1975 - 1990 Lebanese Civil War, Yemenite War of 1979, 1982 Lebanon War, 1980 - 1988 Iran–Iraq War, the United States Invasion of Iraq in 2003 to the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring was the most intensified and continuous of conflicts in this region which started in the Northern Africa in 2010 and later spread to the Middle East. While products of the Arab Spring like the Yemeni Civil War, Second Libyan Civil War and Syrian Civil War are still ongoing, the Arab Spring has produced one of the most challenging, complicated and apocalyptic refugees' crisis, displacement of millions and migration crisis since the history of mankind.

The Civil Society (CS) is a combination of non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, trade unions, indigenous peoples' movements, faith-based organizations, foundations, groups and institutions that champion the interests and will of citizens. It includes the third sector of every society, different from government and mainstream for-profit business. Usually, the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are established by ordinary citizens, and may be funded by private persons, foundations, governments and businesses. Some may avoid formal funding to be run primarily by volunteers to establish independence and gain public trust. They champion several causes from protecting the environment, promoting and protecting human rights, improving healthcare, or engaging in development works. In democracies, they expose governmental recklessness, hold leaders to account on their promises, conduct public awareness and sensitization programs, campaign for the respect of the rule of law, work to guarantee accountability and transparency in public institutions and other imperatives that they engage in. They are also helpful in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peace building. They assist refugees through providing humanitarian assistance and advertising their unfavorable conditions. This paper would focus on the roles of some selected international and domestic CSOs in this region, in managing the present Refugees Crisis.

International Humanitarian Organizations (IHOs) are international organizations that are primarily into offering humanitarian aid during disasters and conflicts, and issues regarding hunger, human trafficking and so on. According to the Borgen Project, the top 5 IHOs are: World Food Program (WFP), an organization that is part of the United Nations System and is the largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide; Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), an organization dedicated to fighting global poverty; and improving basic education, preventing the spread of diseases, increasing access to clean water and sanitation, providing emergency aid for war and natural disasters; Oxfam International, an international confederation of 17 organizations working in approximately 90 countries worldwide to find solutions to poverty and related injustice around the world; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the world's largest humanitarian network, reaching 150 million people in 189 National Societies tackling issues in like

disaster response, disaster preparedness, health and community care and promotion of humanitarian values of social inclusion and peace; and Action Against Hunger (AAH), an IHO committed to ending world hunger, saving the lives of malnourished children while providing communities with access to safe water and sustainable solutions to hunger. For the purpose of specificity, this paper would focus on the works of this top 5 (excluding AAH), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and International Rescue Committee (IRC) in managing MENA's Refugees Crisis.

The CSOs and IHOs have provided immense assistance to Syrian, Libyan and Yemeni refugees that resettled in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Tunisia and Djibouti. They have been helpful in providing shelter, food, clothes, water; medical and psycho-social supports to these refugees as well as enrolling their children in schools. They have also assisted the UN's international response mechanisms in taking care of these refugees.

Critical analysis - Part one

This Part will be on the nature of MENA's conflicts from the Arab Spring. It will start with an overview of the Arab Spring and then narrow down to Libya, Syria and Yemen. This is very important as the current crises in these 3 countries are lasting products of the Arab Spring, leading to increasing leadership, governance and economic challenges. These challenges and the existing humanitarian crisis will be well highlighted to establish their necessitation into displacements and conversion of millions into refugees.

1. An examination of the nature of MENA's conflicts since the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring was a public-styled wave of revolution against several regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and a revolution towards democratization that started on 18 December 2010. It was a series of protests, demonstrations, riots and civil resistance in MENA. It began in Tunisia with the Jasmine Revolution, and spread throughout the countries of MENA.

By the end of February 2012, leaderslike Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia,Hosni Mubarakof Egypt,Colonel Muammar Gaddafi of Libya and Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen had been removed from power; civil uprisings had erupted in Bahrain and Syria; major protests had occurred in Sudan, Morocco, Kuwait, Jordan, Iraq and Algeria;and minor protests had broken out in Palestine, Western Sahara, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Mauritania.Techniques used in the Arab Spring included civil resistance in the form of strikes, marches, and rallies. The social media was also used in organizing, communicating, and raising awareness in the face of state attempts at repression and Internet censorship, most notably used by the youth members of the Arab population (Dainotti et al., 2011). Governments used violence as a response to many Arab Spring demonstrations (CBS News, 2011a), as well as pro-government militias and counter-demonstrators. A major slogan of the demonstrators is Ash-sha`byuridisqat an-nizam ["the people want to bring down the regime"] (Ahram Online, 2011).

The Arab Spring was caused by the public quest for democratization away from dictatorship or absolute monarchy, human rights abuses, political corruption (Cockburn, 2011), economic decline, unemployment, unequal wealth distribution, poverty, large percentage of educated but dissatisfied youth within the entire population (Radsch, 2013). The trigger factor for the escalation of protests was the self-immolation of Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi. Mohamed was unable to find work and started selling fruit at a roadside stand. On 17 December 2010, he had his wares confiscated by a municipal inspector. An hour later he soaked himself with gasoline and set himself on fire. His subsequent death on 4 January 2011 (BBC News, 2011) brought together various groups that weren't satisfied with the existing governance system, including many unemployed, political and human rights activists, lawyers,labor, professors,students, trade unionistsand others to begin the Tunisian Revolution). This Tunisian-styled revolution then spread to Egypt, Libya and other MENA countries with similar political and socio-economic circumstances.

Libya

On 15 February 2011, anti-government protests began in Libya. By 18 February, the most of Benghazi (Libya's second largest city) was controlled by the opposition. The government did its best to recapture it through

sending troops and militia, but they could not. By 20 February, protests had extended to Tripoli (Libya's capital). Reuters (2011) reported that the increasing death toll, numbering in the thousands, attracted international condemnation and resulted in the resignation of several Libyan diplomats, altogether with calls for the government's demolition. According to Liz (2011), the opposition then set up an interim government in Benghazi to oppose Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's rule. However, despite initial opposition success, government forces subsequently took back much of the Mediterranean coast. On 17 March, UN Security Council Resolution 1973 was adopted, authorising a no-fly zone over Libya, and "all necessary measures" to protect civilians. Two days after that, France, the US and the United Kingdom (UK) intervened in Libya with a bombing campaign against pro-Gaddafi forces. The coalition of the willing (a coalition of 27 states) from Europe and the Middle East soon joined the intervention. In late August of the same year, anti-Gaddafi fighters captured Tripoli, dismembering Gaddafi's government and marking the end of his 42 years of power. CNN (2011) further reported that many government institutions, including Gaddafi and several top government officials, regrouped in Sirte, which Gaddafi declared to be Libya's new capital. However, Sabha fell in late September (Hürriyet Daily News, 2011), BaniWalid was captured after a grueling siege weeks later, and on 20 October, fighters under the aegis of the National Transitional Council seized Sirte, killing Gaddafi in the process (CBS News, 2011b).

Conflict News reported that post-Gaddafi rule witnessed factional violence from 2011 to 2014 which then graduated into a Second Civil War in 2014. This Second Libyan Civil War is an ongoing conflict between four rival organizations seeking to control Libya. The organizations are: the 2014 democratically elected and internationally recognized government of the Council of Deputies; the Muslim Brotherhood led Islamist government of the new General National Congress (GNC) based in the capital Tripoli; the Islamist Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries; and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's Libyan provinces (Foreign Policy, 2015).

According to Mohamed (2013), at the beginning of 2014, Libya was still governed by the GNC after the election of 2012, and in June 2013, Nouri Abusahmain was elected as the president of the GNC. In a coup attempt on 14 February 2014, General Khalifa Haftar, who served under the

former regime of Muammar Gaddafi, called for the dissolution of the GNC and for the formation of a caretaker government committee to oversee new elections. Forces loyal to General Haftar launched a large scale air and ground offensive codenamed Operation Dignity in May 2014 against Islamist armed groups in Benghazi and against the GNC in Tripoli (Mohamed, 2014). In June, the GNC called for new elections to a Council of Deputies: Islamists were defeated, but rejected the results of the election, which saw only an 18% turnout (Libya Herald, 2014).

The conflict escalated on 13 July 2014, when Tripoli's Islamists and Misratan militias launched Operation Libya Dawn to seize Tripoli International Airport, capturing it from the Zintan militia on 23 August. This continued with other operations and counter operations, attacks and counter attacks, elections and rejections, and factional leaderships until 16 January 2015, when Operation Dignity and Libya Dawn factions agreed on a ceasefire (Reuters, 2015). Libya is now led by two separate governments, with Tripoli and Misrata controlled by forces loyal to Libya Dawn and the new GNC in Tripoli, while the international community recognizes Abdullah al-Thani's government and its parliament in Tobruk. Benghazi remains contested between pro-Haftar forces and radical Islamists (Aawsat, 2015).

Currently, thousands of Libyans have fled their homes to the neighbouring states of Tunisia, Egypt and Chad, as well as to European countries across the Mediterranean with majority being Arabs and Berbers. The total number of Libyan refugees were estimated at around one million as of June 2011 and most returned after the civil war ended. However, as of January 2013, according to UNHCR (2013), there were 5,252 refugees originating from Libya alongside 59,425 internally displaced persons registered by the UNHCR. According to a Le Monde article dated May 13, 2014, there were between 600,000 and 1,000,000 Libyan refugees in Tunisia (Isabelle, 2014). And according to journalist Barbara Slavin, reporting for Al Monitor on August 5, 2014, Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki commented that two million Libyans, or one third of the pre NATO intervention population of Libya, have taken refuge in Tunisia.

Syria

The Syrian Civil War is an ongoing, complicated armed conflict with international intervention taking place in Syria. The CBS News (2012)

reported that the crisis began in the early spring of 2011 within the context of Arab Spring protests, with nationwide protests against President Bashar al-Assad's government, whose forces responded with violent crackdowns. The conflict graduated from mass protests to an armed rebellion after months of military sieges (Oweis and Solomon, 2012). Due to foreign involvement, the conflict had been called a proxy war between the regional powers. In September 2015, Russia, Iraq, Iran and Syria set up a joint operation room (information centre) in Baghdad to coordinate their activity in Syria. On 30 September 2015, Russia started its own air campaign on the side and at the request of the government of Syria. The resultant proxy war between the U.S. and Russia (VOA, 2015) led some commentators to characterise the situation as "a proto-world war with nearly a dozen countries embroiled in two overlapping conflicts". In July 2013, the Syrian government was reportedly in control of approximately 30–40% of the country's territory and 60% of the Syrian population; in August 2015, the territory fully controlled by the Syrian Army was reported to have reduced to 16% of the country.

International organizations have accused the Syrian government, ISIL and other combatants of gross human rights abuses, with grave atrocities (United Nations, 2012). The conflict caused a considerable displacement of population. The US, the EU big four, Russia, China and several countries from the Middle East (including Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and, for the first time, Iran) have started peace talks in Vienna that are aimed at bringing an end to the conflict.

Plus four million refugees have left the country because of the war. Most of them fled to neighboring Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq, while thousands also ended up in more distant countries of the Caucasus, the Persian Gulf, North Africa and Europe. As of December 2015, Turkey was the world's biggest refugee hosting country with close to 2.5 million Syrian refugees; the nation had spent more than 8 billion Euros since 2011 on direct assistance to them according to estimates by Turkish Ministry of Education deputy secretary Yusuf Büyük (Anadolu Agency, 2015).

Yemen

The Yemeni Revolution followed the starting stages of the Tunisian Revolution and occurred concurrently with the Egyptian Revolution of

2011 and other Arab Spring protests in MENA. In its early phase, its protests were initially against unemployment, economic conditions and corruption, as well as against the government's proposals to modify Yemen's constitution. The protesters' demands then escalated to calls for the resignation of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. This was followed by mass demonstrations of over 16,000 protesters in Sana'a, Yemen's capital, "Friday of Anger" during which tens of thousands of Yemenis took part in anti-government demonstrations in Taiz, Sana'a and Aden, "Friday of No Return" during which protesters called for Saleh's ousting in Sana'a where three people were killed and several other coinages and protests. According to Daily Star (2011), on 23 November, Saleh signed a power-transfer agreement, under which he would transfer his power to his Vice-President, AbdRabbuh Mansur Hadi, within 30 days and leave his post as president by February 2012, in exchange for immunity from prosecution.

Orkaby (2015) stated that post-Saleh's rule, the Yemeni Civil War (an ongoing conflict) began in 2015 between two factions claiming to constitute the Yemeni government, along with their supporters. Southern separatists (by far the largest force) and forces loyal to the government of AbdRabbuh Mansur Hadi, based in Aden, have clashed with Houthi forces and forces loyal to the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh (New York Times, 2015). The Houthi-led Supreme Revolutionary Committee on 19 March, declared a general mobilization to overthrow Hadi and further their control by driving into southern provinces. The Houthi offensive, allied with military forces loyal to Saleh, began on the next day with fighting in Taiz Governorate. By 25 March, according to Toronto Star (2015), Lahij fell to the Houthis and they reached the outskirts of Aden, the seat of power for Hadi's government; Hadi fled the country the same day. By 2 May 2015, at least 400 civilians had died in Aden.

Elbagir (2015) noted that Djibouti has received an influx of refugees since the start of the war. Refugees also fled from Yemen to Somalia, arriving by sea in Somaliland and Puntland starting 28 March. Zawya, (2015) further reported that on 16 April 2015, 2,695 refugees of 48 nationalities were reported to have fled to Oman.

2. Challenges in leadership, governance; and economic hardships

The MENA countries have had relative political stabilities cum firm governance structures before the Arab Spring. Pre-Arab Spring, living standards were moderate and there were provision of basic necessities, regardless gross human rights abuses and occasional tensions. Countries like Libya had far reaching public housing and healthcare systems with the best Human Development Index (HDI) in Africa. However, the fast pace of revolutions in this area coupled with the unsustainable ways governments were overthrown radically, posed immediate leadership, institutional and governance challenges, destruction of public infrastructure, as well as increasing food, shelter, water shortages, and instabilities. Economic hardships manifesting through poverty and unemployment worsened. It took Egypt a long time with a lot of political instabilities to become relatively stable under its current President, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

In Libya for an example, the rapid and unsustainable way that Colonel Gaddafi was removed from power during the Libyan Revolution has been causing increasing instabilities and lack of coordination in leadership and governance. Since Gaddafi was overthrown, these organizations have been competing in controlling Libya: Government of the Council of Deputies, the Muslim Brotherhood, General National Congress, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's Libyan provinces (ISIL Libya). This competition has led to the current Libyan Civil War (2014–present). Since the current war, there have been often electric outages, minor business activity, and a 90% loss in revenues from oil (Anderson, 2015). Additionally, over 4,000 people have died from the war, and some nearly a third of Libya's population has fled to Tunisia as refugees (Anderson, 2015). The leadership and governance challenges led to the emergence of ISIL Libya, a terrorist organization and a branch of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). There have also been deep restrictions on women and girl's rights.

In Syria, there have been challenges of leadership and governance as the Assad led government and the opposition compete for the control of Syria. As a result of this and increased fighting, many Syrian children are ill, malnourished and abused; and millions of them have quit school. Diaa (2015) reported that the death toll had risen above 220,000 as of January 2015; and chemical weapons have been used during the

conflict. Additionally, tens of thousands of protesters have been imprisoned and tortured in state prisons. This war has led to the internal displacement of more than 7.6 million Syrians, and millions living in poor conditions with shortages of food and drinking water. With the bombings from different international quarters, and the despicable combatant guerilla activities, economic hardships and unfavorable social conditions, millions of Syrians have been converted into refugees.

In Yemen, since Saleh was overthrown during the Arab Spring, the country has been in deep instabilities leading to the current Yemeni Civil War which began in 2015. The war is a product of leadership and governance challenges, between two factions claiming to be the right Yemeni government. The factions are the Southern separatists (forces loyal to the government of AbdRabbuh Mansur Hadi), and Houthi forces and forces loyal to the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh.

According to the Cable News Network (CNN) on 8 April 2015, almost 10 million Yemenis were deprived of water, food, and electricity as a result of the conflict. And according to UNICEF officials in Yemen some 100,000 people across the country were dislocated, while Oxfam reported that more than 10 million Yemenis did not have enough food to eat, in addition to 850,000 half-starved children. Over 13 million Yemenis were without access to clean water (abi-habib, 2015). On 19th of April, the UN said that 7.5 million people had been affected by the conflict and many were in need of medical supplies, potable water, food, shelter, and other forms of support.

The Arab Spring led to terrible leadership and governance situations in most MENA countries, and the resultant clash of civilizations, the instabilities, harsh economic conditions, human security crisis, radicalization, terrorism, unstable governments, frequent change of governments etc. led to a catastrophic refugee's crisis.

Part two

This Part will be on the efforts of the CSOs and IHOs in managing MENA's Refugees crisis with emphasis on Syrian, Libyan and Yemeni refugees. Key emphasis will be on their works through providing humanitarian assistance and helping the refugees in building their lives in

their new locality by bringing their needs to public consciousness in Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon (where most of the Syrian refugees resettled), Tunisia (where most of the Libyan refugees resettled) and Djibouti (where most Yemeni refugees resettled). There would also be an examination of how they contribute to the international efforts propelled by the UN and their cooperation with other state and non-state actors in addressing the Refugees crisis. Emphasis will be on the works of few domestic Civil Society Organizations; and WFP, CARE, Oxfam International, IFRC, UNHCR and IRC in helping refugees in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Tunisia and Djibouti.

3. An analysis of the general roles of the CSOs and IHOs in managing MENA's Refugees crisis

Syrian Refugees

Currently, there are 2,500,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey, 1,185,241 in Lebanon, 1,400,000 in Jordan, 120,000 in Kuwait and 247,861 in Iraq as reported by UNHCR (2015). While Thousands also ended up in more farer countries of North Africa and Europe.

International humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees and their host communities in the countries bordering Syria is coordinated by the United Nations Resident Coordinator. Within these neighboring countries, the UNHCR has a mandate of protecting and supporting Syrian refugees in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country. The main framework for coordinating the refugee response is the 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP) which the UNHCR coordinates. Through the RRP, US\$ 4.2 billion was appealed to cover the needs of 4.1 million refugees fleeing Syria and 2.7 million people in host communities in the region from 1 January to 31 December 2014. The RRP covers refugees operations in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon on several concerns from Needs, vulnerabilities and capacities; Response strategy and priorities; Partnership and coordination; Protection; Livelihoods; Education; Health and Nutrition; Shelter; Core relief items; Food; Water Sanitation; and Hygiene. This robust plan also involves partnerships with domestic and international CSOs as well as other IHOs for its execution.

Currently, the UNHCR has registered 2.1 million Syrians in camps in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. UNHCR's job has been helping refugees to survive and recover: to provide aid and shelter, reunite families, and support people as they struggle to build new lives.

Jordan currently hosts (1,400,000) Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2015) and this would not have been possible without the help of mainly the domestic CSOs. The Jordanian domestic CSOs have played a great role in helping thousands of Syrian refugees pouring into their country. Initially, according to IRIN (2012a) their response had not been organized with refugees concurrently registering and getting assistance from various organizations. But they have been trying to coordinate their assistance as the first point of contact for many Syrian refugees arriving in Jordan. "CSOs are providing most of the assistance going to the Syrians," a senior international aid worker commented. "They shouldn't be underestimated. But the government has very serious concerns about some of the groups working there and about what some of their objectives may be," he added.

There was a reasonable Syrian community in Jordan before the war, and this has been a commencing point for many fleeing Syrians. They initially started staying with families and friends in extra bedrooms or living rooms. Some Jordanian landlords have also been very helpful and generous, allowing many Syrian refugees to stay for free. In the northern Jordanian border town of Remtha, a compound-turned transit facility donated by a Jordanian landlord temporarily houses Syrians who flee to Jordan illegally, until they can find a sponsor and a place to stay.

In 1982, many Syrians fled to Jordan after the Syrian government subdued a revolt by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in Hama (IRIN, 2012b). In 2006, some of the Syrians of that earlier influx of refugees formed the Syria Woman Organization to help Syrians in need in Jordan. While their children run around in their office in the capital Amman, women in niqab register new Syrian arrivals and provide them with furniture, baby food, medicine, supplies and cash with which to rent apartments.

Also is the Islamic Charity Centre Society, which has also been distributing aid in border regions and registering refugees. Al-KitabwalSunnah Association is another active player. These organizations appear to have the greatest reach, and certainly more than the UN as some

refugees fear registering with the UNHCR, because they believe identifying themselves as having fled Syria will put them in danger if they try to return. The Syrian diaspora has also played a large role, sending everything from cash to containers of clothes from as far as the USA and Australia. IRIN (2012b) further reported that Syrian activists in Jordan receive the items, but they are so busy smuggling aid into Syria that after the month-long shipping period, donations for refugees sometimes end up sitting in warehouses, waiting to be sorted and distributed.

The Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates has also donated 6,000 food parcels, 1,000 hygiene kits, 1,000 heaters and 10,000 blankets (IRIN, 2012b). Civil Societies from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait have also done assessments and are working to help. While Red Crescent aid has been coordinated through the Jordan Red Crescent and the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, other assistance from the Gulf has been less organized.

Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO) has also been charged by the government to coordinate the aid response to refugees, JHCO is increasingly getting involved in the response. JHCO created a master list of refugees registered with different organizations to avoid “double-dipping” and have the respect of international agencies. UNHCR is also working with JHCO to coordinate the community-based organizations. But the response has plans for projects ranging from cash assistance for vulnerable families to psychosocial support for children.

In Turkey, since 2012, the WFP commenced a partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent for a new food voucher program that will provide 13,000 Syrian refugees in Kilis camp with cash credit on electronic cards with which to buy their own food (IRIN, 2012c). It was later expanded to four camps hosting some 10,000 Syrians in Hatay Province. The food voucher program significantly reduces the high cost of feeding people through hot meals and food parcels, and is covered by WFP and its donors. It has also allowed Syrian families to buy the foods that they prefer and to cook for themselves. The first phase of the program targeted 25,000 Syrian Refugees for 2.5 months with 80 Turkish liras (US\$45) per person per month; but WFP has been able to expand and standardize the program across all the camps in close cooperation with the government authorities.

The UNHCR has been giving the Turkish government technical advice on how to register refugees. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN Children's Fund (UNCIEF) have been distributing supplies through the Turkish Red Crescent, which, according to IOM, has allowed the UN agency to be present in the camps to monitor its distributions.

The Turkish government has also asked Turkish NGO (Humanitarian Relief Foundation) IHH to top up some of the government-provided services with extras like fridges, fans and the Turkish sweet halva. IRIN (2012c) reported that IHH has also been running a mobile clinic and is helping install container houses. Most of the aid has been administered by the Turkish Red Crescent. But this is beginning to change, as the government opens up to other players.

The Saudi Relief Committees and Campaigns, a group which raises money from the Saudi public for relief work, has invested \$10 million in building a camp - complete with water, schools and other services - for 12,000 refugees in Turkey's border province of Gaziantep.

In 2014, Oxfam reached nearly half a million Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon with clean drinking water, cash and relief supplies, such as blankets and stoves and vouchers for hygiene supplies. Oxfam has helped families get the information they need about their legal and human rights and connecting them to medical, legal and support services. Oxfam has built shower and toilet blocks in refugee camps, informal settlements and on deserted routes used by people fleeing Syria and have installed or repaired toilets in communities hosting refugees. Piped water schemes are being developed for Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp and in host communities in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon. Oxfam has also been campaigning and advocating for a sustainable and inclusive political solution since the beginning of the conflict. Oxfam continues to ask for an immediate cease-fire and call for all parties to the conflict to stop any arms transfers and guarantee humanitarian access.

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent together with the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and partners have been doing so much with a response now reaching around 4 million people every month. In Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey, Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers are helping support thousands of people. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, has been providing

water, food, medical materials and other items to millions people affected by the fighting.

The IRC is currently providing support to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. In Jordan, the IRC has been providing reproductive health care, cash assistance, and social services to refugee families, as well as counseling and other support for survivors of sexual violence. They have been helping children who have crossed the border alone to reunite with their families. In Lebanon, the IRC operates women's centers that provide counseling, medical consultations, and group activities to refugees. They are also helping hundreds of refugee families and the Lebanese hosting them with cash assistance for rent, food, utilities and other essentials. The IRC is providing education for refugee children as well as job training for adults.

Libyan Refugees

On 10 May 2011, according to the Week, roughly 746,000 people have fled Libya since the war began. A temporal refugee camp was set up at RasAjdir on the Libyan-Tunisian border and had a capacity for 10,000, but was overwhelmed with an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 refugees. By 3 March 2011, the situation there was described as a logistical horror, with the World Health Organization warning of the risk of epidemics. To continue responding to the needs of the refugees staying at the RasAjdir, the WFP and Secours Islamique-France upgraded a kitchen that would provide breakfast for families. Separately, the ICRC advised it was handing over its operations at the Choucha Camp to the Tunisian Red Crescent. Since 24 March 2011, the WFP has supplied over 42,500 cooked meals for TCNs at the Sallum border. A total of 1,650 cartons of fortified date bars (equivalent of 13.2 metric tons) had also been provided to supplement these meals. On 1 October 2011, a Red Cross official Abdelhamid al-Mendi said that more than 50,000 Libyans had fled their homes in Benghazi since the war began in February (Al Arabiya News, 2011).

As of January 2013, there were 5,252 refugees in Tunisia originating from Libya. In 2014, the relapsed violence in Libya has significantly spilled over into Tunisia, where thousands of Libyans headed to escape the ongoing militia clashes. The Tunisian Red Crescent (TRC) has mobilised volunteers to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs resulting from the

influx of refugees since August. The Red Crescent established its operations base in the border crossing area to address refugees' well-being and needs, providing in particular food and psycho-social support. Activities carried out are in cooperation with the IFRC.

The Tunisian Red Crescent was able to get donation from the Japanese government which increased its ability to respond to the Libyan crisis and its resulting humanitarian disaster on the border. The Japanese government allocated 13,068 food portions to the displaced on the Libyan side of the border, 3,081 to those staying in the coastal town of Ben Gardane in south-east Tunisia, and 7,177 portions to the 10,780 Egyptians who were waiting at the Gabes airport before being evacuated between 6 and 18 August 2014. The TRC served meals and drinks on both sides of the Libyan-Tunisian border to thousands of foreigners whose departure was delayed due to security reasons or for logistical reasons before their repatriation.

Since August 2014, more than 6,000 people were crossing the border to Tunisia each day, most of whom were migrants who have been stranded on the Libyan side. The Tunisian Red Crescent volunteers were mobilised to support streaming families with food and water.

Yemeni Refugees

The UNHCR has said that more than 100,000 people have fled Yemen since the 2015 Yemeni Civil War. Of this number, only around 40,000 are Yemenis. The rest are foreign nationals, mostly from the Horn of Africa, who have returned home. Most of these refugees have fled to Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan and Ethiopia.

The case of Yemeni refugees is a worse one and different from Syria's and Libya's. Most of them have been resettled in Djibouti's Desert camp as Djibouti is relatively more stable than Somalia. Djibouti has been facing huge challenges in dealing with these refugees. Obock where the Desert camp is situated at is a very hostile terrain because of the harsh weather and terrible desert conditions; as well as sandstorms and 50C heat. Also, the camp lacks electricity and shortages of drinkable water with non-availability of surgeons.

Meanwhile on 5 October, 2015, Representatives from International Organization for Migration and UNHCR presented a Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RRMRP) to respond to the crisis in Yemen at a

donor meeting held in Nairobi. According to Reliefweb (2015), the RRMRP will cost \$36 million from October to December 2015 and may cost a further \$119 million in 2016. The RRMRP is the outcome of an inter-agency planning process coordinated by IOM, UNHCR and partner agencies in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. RRMRP aims to deliver protection and humanitarian assistance to an estimated 103,000 people fleeing the conflict in Yemen to neighboring countries by the end of 2015.

Conclusions

Though the CSOs and IHOs have done their utmost best in assisting refugees in Syria, Libya and Yemen, their challenges have been inadequate funding, supplies shortage and overwhelming number of refugees beyond their capacity to contain. Also is the challenge of inadequate number of volunteers to assist in their operations. Since the Syrian crisis began, 40 Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers have died, and 7 volunteers from the Palestinian Red Crescent. Every day CSOs and IHOs volunteers risk their lives to help others. The wars in Syria and Libya have led to migration crisis as refugees risk their lives on a daily basis trying to cross over to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea.

For decades, Syria and the Syrian people have humanitarily hosted thousands of refugees from the Arab World majorly. In 2012 for an example, Syria was the third largest asylum country in the world. This is the time for the international community to extend the same support to the Syrian people in their difficult times.

Since September 2013, international responses and assistance to the refugees have been encouraging. This was after the UNHCR got overwhelmed by hundreds of thousands in their camps, established in Syrian and Libyan neighboring countries. For Syrian Refugees, Sweden was the first EU-country to offer temporary residency to 8,000 Syrians (The Local, 2013). This was followed by the countries in South America (mainly Argentina and Brazil) deciding to offer refuge to thousands of displaced Syrians. Moreover, Brazil is the first country in the Americas region to offer humanitarian visas to Syrian refugees. In the first half of 2015, large numbers of Syrian refugees crossed into Europe, reaching 313,000 UNHCR

applications across Europe by early August 2015. James (2015) reported that currently, on 21 September 2015, the European Union approved a plan committing itself to taking in 120,000 refugees. As of November, largest numbers were recorded in Germany, Sweden, Netherlands and Austria. As of September, 2015, about \$10 billion worth of humanitarian aid has been given to Syrian refugees with the EU and US as main donors.

International solidarity must be deeply reinforced to help Syria, Libya and Yemen. By taking in thousands of new refugees, the neighboring countries are doing MENA and the world, a remarkable service. Helping them deal with the consequences of the refugee crisis is important. Yemen needs help most importantly as realities there are being sidelined by the Syrian Crisis and as most Yemenis do not have the means of fleeing from the war. Paradoxically, most of the refugees fleeing Yemen to Somalia and Sudan are those that became refugees in Yemen from same countries. Yemeni refugees' condition is so terrible that it needs assistance from IHOs especially in the Desert camp in Djibouti with shortages of medical supplies, water, food and electricity.

Though the international response has been encouraging especially in the case of Syrian refugees, highly industrialized and rich countries like the US, France and UK should assist by taking in more refugees. The Arab nations should also bring up their regional response. The United Nations Security Council should also end the differences within the major powers and finger pointing, and make clear, urgent and real commitments to help resolve the Syrian, Libyan and Yemeni Civil War through high-powered, pragmatic negotiations and commitments.

References

- Aawsat (2015). Haftar's troops recapture key stronghold in Libya's Benghazi, archived at: <http://english.aawsat.com/2015/02/article55341319/haftars-troops-recapture-key-stronghold-libyas-benghazi>.
- Abi-habib, M. (2015). The Wall Street Journal: Humanitarian Crisis Deepens in Embattled Yemen City, archived at: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/humanitarian-crisis-deepens-in-embattled-yemen-city-1428340706>.
- Ahram Online (2011). Syria clampdown on protests mirrors Egypt's as thugs join attacks. archived at: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/0/10315/World/0/Syria-clampdown-on-protests-mirrors-Egypt-as-thug.aspx>.

- Al Arabiya News - Sirte (2011). Snipers halt NTC's advance in Sirte; rebels deny capture of Qaddafi's spokesman. 1 October 2011, archived at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/10/01/169544.html>.
- Anadolu Agency (2015). Turkey provides education for 300,000 Syrian refugees, archived at <http://aa.com.tr/en/education/turkey-provides-education-for-300-000-syrian-refugees/495453>.
- Anderson, J. L. (2015). Letter from Libya.TheUnravelling". The New Yorker,archived at: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/23/unravelling>.
- BBC News (2011). Tunisia suicide protester Mohammed Bouazizidies, archived at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12120228>.
- CBS News (2011a). Bahrain troops lay siege to protesters' camp, archived at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/bahrain-troops-lay-siege-to-protesters-camp/>.
- CBS News (2011b). Qaddafi dead after Sirte battle, PM confirms, archived at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/qaddafi-dead-after-sirte-battle-pm-confirms>.
- CBS News (2012). Syria crackdown has killed 5,000 people, UN says. March 28, 2012, archived at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/syria-crackdown-has-killed-5000-people-un-says/>.
- Cockburn, A. (2011). The Tweet and Revolution, archived at: <http://www.counterpunch.org/cockburn02182011.html>.
- CNN (2011). From voice said to be Gadhafi, a defiant message to his foes, archived at: http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/09/01/libya.war/index.html?hpt=hp_t2
- Radsch (2013). Digital Dissidence and Political Change: Cyberactivism and Citizen Journalism in Egypt, archived at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2379913.
- Daily Star (2011). Yemen's Saleh signs deal to quit power, archived at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2011/Nov-23/154953-yemens-saleh-signs-deal-to-quit-power.ashx#axzz1eXuReO4L>.
- Dainotti et al. (2011). Analysis of Country-wide Internet Outages Caused by Censorship. ACM, archived at: http://www.caida.org/publications/papers/2011/outages_censorship/outages_censorship.pdf.
- Foreign Policy (2015). Why Picking Sides in Libya won't work, archived at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/06/libya-civil-war-tobruk-un-negotiations-morocco/Fox>
- Diaa, H. (2015). Huffington Post: Syrian rebels and government reach truce in besieged area, archived at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/15/syria-rebel-truce_n_6478226.html.
- IRIN (2012a). AID POLICY: A "new humanitarianism" at play in Syrian crisis, archived at: <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95209/aid-policy-a-new-humanitarianism-at-play-in-syrian-crisis>.
- IRIN (2012b). Civil society at heart of Syrian refugee response, archived at: <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95273/jordan-civil-society-at-heart-of-syrian-refugee-response>.
- IRIN (2012c). Turkey opens up to international aid in camps, archived at: <http://www.irinnews.org/report/96794/syria-turkey-opens-up-to-international-aid-in-camps>.

- Orkaby, A. (2015). Foreign Affairs: Houthi Who?, archived at: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/143295/asher-orkaby/houthi-who>.
- Reuters (2011). Rabat: HIGHLIGHTS – Libyan TV address by Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, archived at: <http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-55032320110221>.
- The Local (2013). Sweden offers residency to all Syrian refugees, archived at: <http://www.thelocal.se/20130903/50030>.
- New York Times (2015). Rebels Seize Key Parts of Yemen's Third-Largest City, Taiz, archived at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/23/world/middleeast/houthi-rebels-taiz-yemen.html?_r=1.
- Toronto Star (2015). Yemen's president flees Aden as rebels close in, archived at: <http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2015/03/25/yemen-president-hadi-flees-aden-palace-as-houthi-rebels-near-officials-say.html>.
- VOA (2015). The Russians have made a serious mistake: how Putin's Syria gambit will backfire, archived at: <http://www.vox.com/2015/10/1/9434365/putin-syria-russia-mistake>.
- UNCHR (2013). 2013 UNHCR country operations profile – Libya, archived at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e485f36.html>.
- UNHCR (2015). UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response/Turkey, archived at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>.
- United Nations (2012). UN human rights probe panel reports continuing 'gross' violations in Syria, archived at: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42079>.
- Zawya (2015). Oman receives 2,695 Yemen refugees in two weeks, archived at: http://www.zawya.com/story/Oman_receives_2695_Yemen_refugees_in_two_weeks-GN_16042015_170438.