

NOWHERE TO TURN



**The Situation of Dom Refugees
From Syria in Turkey**

NOWHERE TO TURN:

The Situation of Dom Refugees From Syria in Turkey

By Yeşim Yaprak Yıldız

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was written by Yeşim Yaprak Yıldız, who worked as the researcher in the project. Kemal Vural Tarlan, the research consultant, made invaluable contributions to the report based on his years long work with the Dom people. Special thanks go to Kieran O'Reilly, who provided extensive feedback and editorial support throughout the writing process of this report. Stephan Müller, Sinan Gökçen, Sinem Hun and Bruno Herin made very helpful comments on the draft of the report. Geneviève Ryan proofread the initial draft of the report. The final report has been proofread by Ararat Gocmen.

This report is based on the findings of the fieldwork conducted between September and December in the southern and south-eastern provinces of Turkey with Dom refugees and similar groups from Syria. The substantial part of the fieldwork was undertaken with Kemal Vural Tarlan, who has been key in enabling access to Dom refugees in Turkey. A research team composed of Kieran O'Reilly, Stephan Müller and Sinan Gökçen also held a field trip to Turkey visiting the places in which the Dom refugees have been staying.

The research team would particularly like to thank Dom refugees in Turkey who were welcoming and willing to share their experiences. The support by the Dom community in Turkey, in particular Mehmet Demir (head of the Diyarbakir Dom Association), Ramazan Kaya, Ahmet Kormaz and Reyis Çeliktıp in accessing the refugees has been very helpful. The research team would like to thank them all for their time and support.

This research was supported by the ERRC as part of its wider project on Dom refugees from Syria in Turkey. The sole responsibility for the contents of the report lies with the author.

1 INTRODUCTION

Following the outbreak of the conflict in Syria in 2011, approximately four million Syrians have sought refuge in neighbouring countries and 7.6 million have been internally displaced.¹ According to the UNHCR, this is the largest recorded number of people fleeing their country since World War II.² While the UNHCR reports that there are 1,805,255 registered Syrian refugees in Turkey as of July 2015, the total number is estimated to have reached two million.³

Among the Syrian refugees are lesser-known groups, including the Dom⁴, an ethnic minority group in Syria and neighbouring countries. Research has established that Dom people form a distinct linguistic group originating from India, linked to Roma in Europe and Lom people in Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus.⁵ Mobile until the mid-20th century, the Dom are now predominantly sedentary living across the Middle East, including in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and the Palestinian Territories. Dom people have been subject to decades-long discrimination and marginalisation due to their ethnic identity and lifestyle, both in Syria and across the rest of the region. Having sought refuge in neighbouring countries following the conflict, Dom people face double discrimination due to their ethnic identity and their refugee status. There are no statistics disaggregated according to the ethnic background of the Syrian refugees, but it is estimated that there are thousands of Dom refugees from Syria in Turkey.

Although Turkey has taken positive steps to host Syrian refugees, the support and assistance provided are far from sufficient to meet the needs of refugees scattered across Turkey who are living in extremely difficult conditions. 85 per cent of Syrian refugees live outside the existing 25 government-run refugee camps. While the refugees staying in the official camps can access food, health, education, and social and psychological support services, those outside the camps are struggling to survive. The Temporary Protection Directive introduced in October 2014 guarantees the right to free health care and education for all Syrian refugees, in addition to protection from *non-refoulement*. However, Syrian refugees continue to face great challenges in accessing adequate shelter, food and employment.

These challenges are particularly acute for Dom refugees and related groups. Discrimination, political polarisation and ethnic and religious divisions often make it impossible for them to stay in official refugee camps. Strict entry and exit controls in official camps also reported to be particularly off-putting for the Dom in light of their semi-nomadic lifestyle in Syria prior to the conflict. They live in makeshift tents and informal camps, ruins or abandoned buildings or substandard rental accommodations that are often in the outskirts of the cities.

1 For the latest official figures please see United Nations Office for the Coordination of Affairs Syria Crisis at: <http://syria.unocha.org/>.

2 UNHCR Turkey Representative Ms. Carol Batchelor's Interview with Al Jazeera, 20 June 2014, available at: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/flash_read.php?ID=186.

3 Please see UNHCR's Syria Regional Refugee Response Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>. While it is estimated that there are around two million Syrian refugees in Turkey, it is not yet possible to know the exact number due to unofficial border crossings and the number of unregistered refugees.

4 In Syria, Dom and related groups are often referred as *Nawar* in Arabic, which is a pejorative word with degrading connotations.

5 Marsh, A. (2008), 'A Brief History of Gypsies in Turkey' in *We are Here: Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle for Rights of Roma in Turkey*, ERRRC, EDRROM, hCa.

Furthermore, field research shows that they face discrimination from the authorities. It has been reported that the police regularly raid and destroy informal Dom refugee camps and in some cases send the refugees back to Syria.⁶ There are cases of Dom refugees being sent from one city to another without being provided any alternative. Dom refugees in big cities such as Istanbul and Ankara are forcibly relocated to other cities. Due to the negative treatment they receive in the places they go, Dom refugees are constantly on the move in search for safer sites. They often try to keep a low profile and avoid any contact with the authorities. The majority of Dom refugees do not have identity cards, which prevents them from accessing basic services, including healthcare. Unable to continue their traditional occupations in pre-conflict Syria, Dom refugees work in the informal economy and are forced to depend on the charity of the host community.

The increasing number of Syrian refugees has radically transformed the social and economic structure of the host cities. The initial welcome by the host community has turned into resentment against Syrian refugees, leading to widespread discrimination and in some cases to violence against refugees.⁷ These negative attitudes have disproportionately affected Dom refugees and related groups in Turkey. The mainstream media often portrays Syrian refugees living and asking for help on the streets as “Syrian Gypsies” or “Syrian beggars”. Such reports distinguish them from the other refugee groups, arguing that begging on the streets is their lifestyle. These terms mainly target Dom and related groups, or those who are perceived to belong to such groups, due to prevailing prejudices against them in both Turkey and Syria.

This report seeks to shed light on the situation of Dom refugees and related groups in Turkey, examining their needs for assistance and the socio-economic, political and legal challenges facing them since their arrival. Acknowledging that the majority of Syrian refugees live in extremely challenging conditions, the report aims to highlight the factors further exacerbating the experiences of Dom refugees. While acknowledging the great diversity between various groups included in this report, for clarity and ease of reference, the term “Dom” is used as an umbrella term to include all sub-groups and related groups. Other groups with similar social and historical background who fled to Turkey from Syria include Abdal and Tanjirliyah.⁸ Their numbers are far fewer than Dom refugees. The report highlights specific groups such as the Abdal only when their situation is seen to be significantly different. The Abdal have a similar socio-economic and historical background but differ from the Dom in terms of religion and language. Abdal refugees often face the same prejudice and discrimination. Further information on the background of these groups will be provided in the following section.

6 For example please see Syrian refugees forced to leave unofficial camp in Istanbul, Hurriyet Daily News, 28 April 2014 available at: <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/syrian-refugees-forced-to-leave-unofficial-camp-in-istanbul.aspx?pageID=238&cnID=65668&NewsCatID=341>.

7 One such violent attack against Syrian refugees took place in the city of Gaziantep following the reports of a Syrian refugee killing his landlord. The attacks resulted with 10 refugees injured, their homes, cars and workplaces destroyed. The family involved in the case was relocated to another city and hundreds of refugees left Gaziantep to flee from rising hostilities. For the report please see Suriyeli kiracı ev sahibini bıçakladı, Antep karıştı: En az 10 Suriyeli yaralı, Diken, 13 August 2014, available at: <http://www.diken.com.tr/suriyeli-kiraci-ev-sahibini-bicakladi-antep-karisti-en-az-suriyeli-yarali/>.

8 Please see the chart of the ethnic minority groups that are referred as “Nawar” in Syria in page 5. Meyer, F., ‘Biography and Identity in Damascus: A Syrian *Nawar* Chief’ in Customary Strangers: New Perspectives on Peripatetic Peoples in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, edited by Joseph C. Berland and Apama Rao, (Praeger Publishers, 2004).

1.1. Project and Methodology

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) has been working with Dom people in Turkey as part of its wider project on the issues faced by Roma in Turkey in general. Following the conflict in Syria and arrival of thousands of Dom refugees in Turkey, the ERRC conducted a field trip to the southern and south-eastern parts of Turkey to gather first-hand information about their situation. The ERRC highlighted the human rights situation and needs of the Dom refugees from Syria in Turkey.⁹

This report provides a more comprehensive analysis of the challenges facing Dom refugees in Turkey. It is not a historical and sociological analysis of Dom people in Turkey and in Syria but rather aims to identify the main issues facing the Syrian Dom refugees in Turkey, in particular whether and to what extent they can access and enjoy their fundamental rights. This includes an examination of whether Dom refugees are protected by the domestic and international policy and legal framework on refugees in Turkey, and whether the Dom are treated differently from other refugee groups. The existing literature was reviewed to assess the wider social, economic and political context of the situation of Dom communities in Syria and Turkey. Following the analysis of articles and press reports on Dom refugees in Turkey, fieldwork was undertaken in urban and rural areas where Dom refugees have been living.

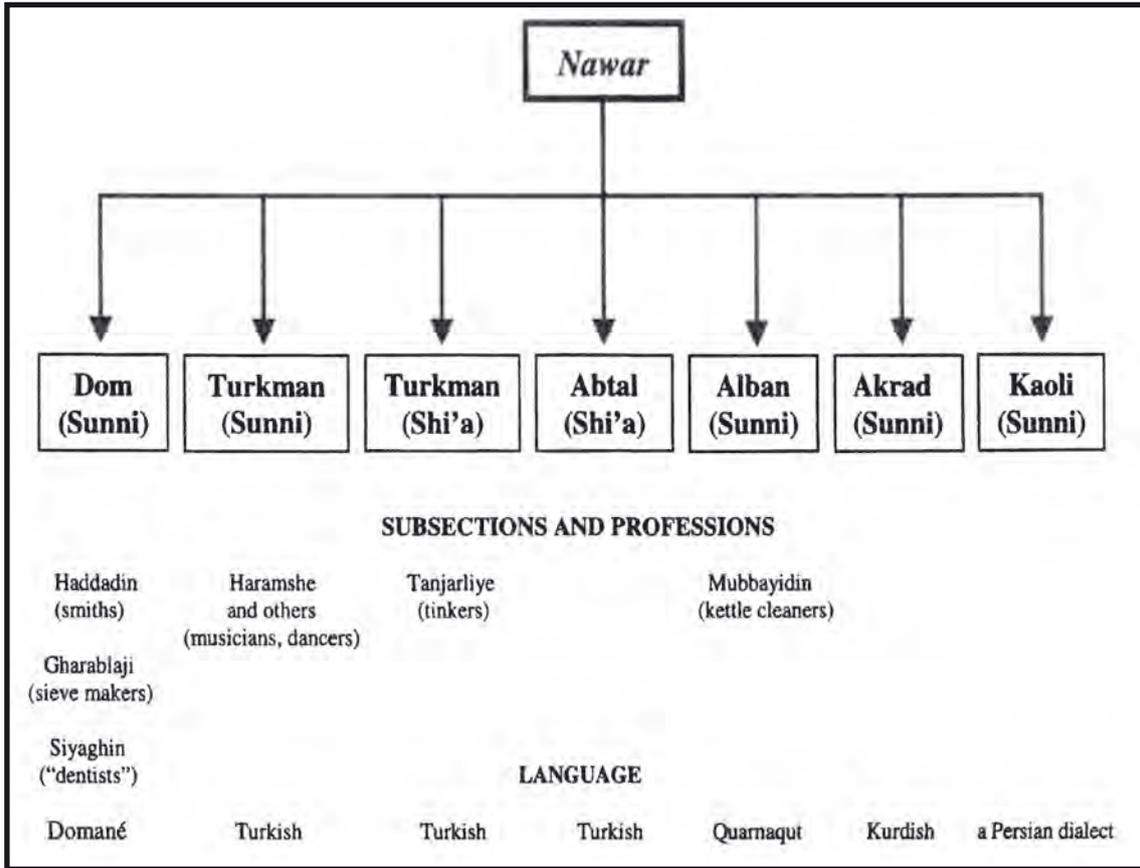
The fieldwork was undertaken between September 2014 and January 2015 in 12 provinces: Adana, Ankara, Antakya, Batman, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep (Islahiye and Nizip districts), Kilis, Osmaniye, Kahramanmaraş, Mardin (Kızıltepe district), Mersin and Şanlıurfa (Akçakale, Birecik and Viranşehir districts). Data was collected through qualitative research methods including interviews and direct observation. Interviews were conducted with representatives of national and international organisations including the Human Rights Association, the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants, the Humanitarian Relief Foundation İHH, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, the UNHCR and UNICEF. Attempts to meet the governors and AFAD representatives where fieldwork was conducted have been unsuccessful.

Taking into account the marginalisation and discrimination against Dom communities, which has led to trust issues with outsiders, mainly informal research methods have been employed. The research team conducted 14 one to one unstructured interviews, as well as 14 group interviews with around 150 Dom and Abdal men and women in Turkey. The interviews were conducted in Kurdish, Turkish and Arabic. The team also relied on observation and informal conversations with the refugees to identify the main issues.¹⁰ The fieldwork was undertaken in makeshift tents, informal tent camps and rented accommodation where the respondents were staying. The interviews and the conversations were not digitally recorded and the report relies on the handwritten notes of the research team. Anonymity has been ensured in order to protect the refugees who shared their experiences with the ERRC. The individuals who appear in the photos used in the report have given their permission.

9 "Invisible and Forgotten: Syrian Domari Refugees in Turkey", ERRC Blog, 13 October 2014 available at: <http://www.errc.org/blog/invisible-and-forgotten-syrian-domari-refugees-in-turkey/19>.

10 Please see the blog piece by Stephan Muller on the initial findings of the field trip to Kilis, Birecik and Nizip in November 2014: "Domari refugees in Turkey: 'Peace, bread and toilets', Stephan Müller, 11 December 2014, available at: <http://www.errc.org/blog/domari-refugees-in-turkey-peace-bread-and-toilets/44>.

Figure 1



Source: Meyer, E, 'Biography and Identity in Damascus: A Syrian Nawar Chief' in Customary Strangers: New Perspectives on Peripatetic Peoples in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, edited by Joseph C. Berland and Apama Rao, (Praeger Publishers, 2004)

2 THE DOM: A COMMUNITY LIVING ON THE EDGE

The term *Dom* is used to refer to an ethnic minority group in the Middle East who are linked to Roma (Romani) in Europe and Lom (Lomavren) in Eastern Anatolia, Armenia and the Caucasus. Dom people form a distinct linguistic group whose roots can be traced back to India.¹¹ Their language is called Domari.¹² Research suggests that there have been different migrations from India during different historical periods, pointing to linguistic and socio-cultural dissimilarities between Romani and Domari.¹³ According to the main narrative in Romani studies, the first wave of migration was in the 9th Century, due to the Gadznavid Islamification attacks on Punjab. The migration path went through today's Iraq, and down to the Sinai Peninsula until Palestine, Egypt and Cyprus. These communities, who still dwell or roam in the same territories, are called *Dom*.¹⁴

There are few studies on Dom communities in the Middle East, including Turkey and Syria. This is partly due to the lack of scholarly interest regarding Roma and related groups living in regions other than Europe, and also due to inadequate research on minorities in Turkey.¹⁵ Besides this scarcity of academic literature, the Dom also lack in-depth genealogical knowledge about their own origins.¹⁶ Apart from the Dom, it is known that there are similar related groups in the Middle East including Sunni Turkman, Shia Turkman, Abdal, Alban, Akrad and Kaoli, who can be differentiated according to self-designation, language, religion and economic activities (see Figure 1).

The Dom and related groups are found across neighbouring countries in the Middle East. They are known to live in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and the Palestinian Territories. There are also reports on Dom people being forced to flee Iraq during and after the war. While sharing a language and culture and continuing their deep-rooted traditions, each group has also adapted to the country in which they live. Therefore, in order to fully understand their needs, it is crucial to recognise their specific experiences in these different countries.

2.1. Dom People in Syria

It is not possible to determine the exact size of the Dom population in Syria, as most members of the community tend to hide their identity due to fear of discrimination and because population

11 Marsh, A., 'A Brief History of Gypsies in Turkey' in *We are Here: Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle for Rights of Roma in Turkey*, (ERRC, EDROM, hCa, 2008).

12 For more information on the history of Dom people please see Marsh, A., 'Ethnicity and Identity: Who are the Gypsies?' in *We are Here: Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle for Rights of Roma in Turkey*, (ERRC, EDROM, hCa, 2008); Meyer, F., 'Biography and Identity in Damascus: A Syrian Nawar Chief' in *Customary Strangers: New Perspectives on Peripatetic Peoples in the Middle East, Africa and Asia*, edited by Joseph C. Berland and Apama Rao, (Praeger Publishers, 2004).

13 For alternative approaches please see Hancock, I., "On the migration and affiliation of the Rom, Lom and Dom Gypsy," in *Romani in Contact*, edited by Yaron Matras, (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1995) pp. 25-51.

14 Please see Onder, O., *New Forms of Discrimination and Exclusion: Gadjfication of Romani Communities in Turkey*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, (Middle East Technical University, 2013); Marsh A. and Acton, T., *Erken Donem Roman Tarihi Uzerine Kisa Bir Arastirma*, in "*Roman*" *Olmak* edited by Remziye Umunc, (EdRom, 2007) p.2-12.

15 Karlidag, M. and Marsh, A. *A Study of Research Literature Regarding Turkish Gypsies and the Question of Gypsy Identity*, in *We are Here: Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle for Rights of Roma in Turkey*, (EdRom, ERRC, hCa, 2008).

16 Please see Meyer, F. 2004: 76; Williams, G. 2000.





statistics in Syria are not disaggregated by ethnicity. Dom, Roma and other similar groups are almost always underrepresented in national censuses, often by a huge margin. According to Joshua Project, the number of Dom people in Syria is 45,700.¹⁷ A report in a Syrian newspaper, *Kassioun*, dated 2012, states that the number of the Dom in Syria is more than 60,000.¹⁸

Dom people speak Domari, their own language, within their community. They have also adopted the language of the country they live in. Those in Syria speak Arabic and, depending on their region, may speak other languages such as Kurdish and a dialect of Turkish. As for religion, Dom people who live in Middle Eastern countries usually identify with Islam. As Williams argues, they also tend to incorporate spiritism into their beliefs.¹⁹ Abdal people speak a Turkish dialect and identify themselves as Alawites.

Dom people are well integrated in terms of religion, language and other cultural practices, but they still maintain a strong awareness of their separate ethnic identity. While this is partly related to tradition and collective memory, their isolation and marginalisation is another reason. In Syria, nonArab minorities are not recognised and the Dom are socially and economically stigmatised. They have been subject to various social and moral stereotypes, situating them as people of a lower social and moral status, and have also often been subjected to hostility and open aggression.²⁰ Due to discrimination and negative attitudes towards them, they tend to take on the identity of other recognised groups where possible.

Though the vast majority of the Dom in Syria is sedentary, their economic activities are still mostly linked with short-term spatial mobility. According to Meyer, the Dom in the Middle East used to move freely within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, but the formation of nation-states in the beginning of the 20th century changed their way of life significantly. Dom people in Syria have been increasingly confronted with state policies such as civil registration, land distribution, passports, military service and compulsory schooling since the 1950s. As part of the construction of Syrian national identity, Dom obtained citizenship starting from the 1950s but are not registered as Dom, since it is not recognised as a separate ethnicity.²¹

The Dom in Syria mostly lived in camps with shifting patterns of residence. Meyer states that the largest communities had been living in agglomerations in Aleppo and Damascus and there are settlements in Saraqib, Latakia, Hama and Homs. In Homs, the Dom lived mainly in a neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city. They either lived in houses made with cheap construction materials or in tents. Often entire extended families live together. There are still those who are mobile and living in tents, but their numbers are decreasing. Semi nomadic groups live in permanent tent villages.²²

17 Joshua Project is a missionary organization reporting on the ethnological data to support missionary activities. Please see: https://www.ethnologue.com/language/rmt/view/**EDITION**.

18 Syria: The Dom Syria's Invisible Refugees, *Asia News Monitor*, Bangkok, 25 Mar 2013.

19 Williams, G. A., *Dom of the Middle East: An Overview*, *Kuri Journal*, 2000, 1: 1.

20 For an ethnographic study on the Dom in Syria and Lebanon please see Bochi, G. (2007), *The production of difference: sociality, work and mobility in community of Syrian Dom between Lebanon and Syria*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science.

21 For more information please see Meyer, 2004: 7378; Bochi, 2007: 2940. As the UN Statistical Commission notes, the information that is collected in the registrar in Syria is the date of birth (of the child), religion, and parents' information. Religion is collected and stored in the system but not reflected on the ID card. Please see: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/vitalstatkb/Attachment197.aspx>.

22 Bochi, 2007: 39; Meyer, 2004; Williams, 2000.

The Dom are referred to by different names depending on the region and their occupation. For instance, in Aleppo and Idlib, they are called *Qurbat* and work as blacksmiths or informal dentists.²³ In general, Dom men mostly perform dentistry for the local population, while the younger ones usually work in agriculture. Dom men in Syria also specialise in making sieves for sifting grain for farmers, in wrought-iron work and in making silver jewellery. Sieve-making and metal-work has been rare among the Dom from the 1960s due to slowing demand. Thus production of dentures as well as of bridges and complete sets of false teeth has become more common. Women are engaged in trade of small goods, fortune-telling, tattooing and seasonal work in agriculture. Begging is also practiced among a small number of Dom communities, in particular by women and children. Some Dom groups strictly differentiate themselves from the groups who practice begging, an indication of the socio-cultural differences between the groups across different regions. There is also a substantial number of Dom working in paid employment, increasing with the young generation of the Dom who have relatively easier access to education.²⁴

2.2. Dom People in Turkey

The Dom may have arrived in Turkey in the early 11th century AD.²⁵ Due to the lack of research and non-recognition of Roma, Lom and Dom as separate ethnicities,²⁶ it is unclear exactly how many are in Turkey, but the current estimated population of Dom people in Turkey is around 500,000.²⁷ As Marsh states this figure cannot be confirmed as they tend to hide their identity due to fear of discrimination. There are subgroup identities among the Dom such as Çelgar, Mangostar, Gevende, Karaçi, Mitrip and Kurbat, all of whom speak Domari.



23 Please see the following link for different names used to refer Dom people in Syria: <http://www.domresearchcenter.com/journal/14/syria4.html>.

24 Bochi, 2007; Meyer, 2004; Williams, 2000.

25 For more information on Dom people in Turkey please see Marsh, A., 'Ethnicity and Identity: Who are the Gypsies?' in *We are Here: Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle for Rights of Roma in Turkey*, (ERRC, EDROM, hCa, 2008).

26 According to the Lausanne Treaty, there are officially only three minority groups in Turkey: Armenians, Jews and Greeks.

27 Please see Marsh, 2008 and Matras, 1999.

Dom people in Turkey are mainly found along the southeastern border by Syria up to Eastern Anatolia as far as the city of Van, and concentrated in Diyarbakır. There are large populations in Diyarbakır, Mardin, Urfa, Gaziantep, Hatay and Mersin.²⁸ According to Herin, while Domari is spoken from Mersin to Urfa, Dom people from Urfa to Diyarbakır speak Domani, which draws partly on Domari and has Kurdish grammar.²⁹ As they live in mostly Kurdish-populated cities, they also speak Kurdish and have cultural similarities with Kurds in terms of language, marriage patterns, *dengbejlik*³⁰ tradition and religion. Most Dom in Turkey identify as Sunni Muslim, while they tend to follow their own spiritual leaders or sheikhs. A small group of Dom who live in the northeast region close to Doğubeyazıt are Ezidis.³¹ They have extensive kinship networks and still follow traditional marriage practices. Polygamy³² is still practiced among some Dom groups and they mostly have large families.

Similar to the Dom in other Middle Eastern countries, Dom people in Turkey are traditionally engaged in music, and they play at weddings and festivals. A significant number of them are also engaged in peddling small household items and carrying out dentistry. They also work in seasonal agricultural work, hunting, trading small birds and in various manual labour jobs. As Onen and Ozatesler point out, the conflict in south-eastern Turkey has led to a decline in their traditional occupations such as travelling to perform music at weddings and circumcision ceremonies, and peddling small goods.³³ The move towards electronic *saz*³⁴ had also a negative impact on their job prospects in the field of music. While their Syrian counterparts still practice dentistry, it is declining in Turkey due to increasing health regulations. However a number of Dom men adapted their profession skills and received diplomas to work as dental technicians. Research shows that a substantial proportion of the Dom community in Turkey is not in formal employment.³⁵

Roma, Dom and Lom people in Turkey are hesitant to assume their ethnic identity for fear of discrimination or targeting and harassment by nationalists. Roma people are often treated as second-class citizens and face various difficulties in accessing their social, economic and political rights.³⁶ The Dom are further disadvantaged due to the fact that the majority live in the Kurdish region and speak Kurdish. Fear of exclusion and discrimination makes them reluctant

28 The Rom (Romani) communities, which have the largest population, are concentrated in Northern Aegean and Marmara regions and Lom community is settled by the Eastern Black Sea coast down to the cities of Erzurum and Erzincan. See Onder, 2013: 52.

29 Herin, B. Elements of Domari Dialectology, submitted to the Mediterranean Language Review (forthcoming).

30 Dengbej are Kurdish storytellers singing long epic songs without a musical instrument.

31 Marsh, (2008). Please also see Onen, S. (2013), Citizenship Rights of Gypsies in Turkey: Roma and Dom Communities, in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 49:4, 608-622; Ozatesler, G. (2013), 'The "Ethnic Identification" of Dom People in Diyarbakır', *Journal of Modern Turkish History Studies*, 27: 279-287; and Marsh, 2008. Yazidis are a Kurdish-speaking religious minority. They are neither Muslim, Christian nor Jewish. Yazidism has links with Zoroastrianism. For further info see Allison, C. (2001), *The Yazidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan*, London, Curzon Press.

32 Polygamy is banned in Turkey since 1926, however it is still practiced in conservative sections of the society.

33 See Onen, 2013; Ozatesler, 2013.

34 *Saz* is a stringed musical instrument.

35 Please see Villareal F. et al, *Understanding employment and decent work challenges in Turkey, the situation of Roma in Turkey*, (Fundación Secretariado Gitano, ERRC and EDRROM, 2010) available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=7332&langId=en>.

36 Please see ERRC, 'Unequal Citizenship: Human Rights Violations against Turkish Gypsies' and also Karlidag, M. and Marsh A. (2008), *A Study of Research Literature Regarding Turkish Gypsies and the Question of Gypsy Identity in We are Here: Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle for Rights of Roma in Turkey*, (ERRC, EDRROM, hCa, 2008).

to act against discrimination and injustice. Widespread prejudice against these communities in Turkey causes them to experience high rates of unemployment and poverty, poor housing conditions, and stereotyping and negative perceptions regarding their lifestyle and culture. Their high level of poverty also restricts their access to health services and education.³⁷

Apart from institutional discrimination, they also face arbitrary detention and ill-treatment by security officials.³⁸ Like Kurds, the Dom have also been victimised by the 30-year conflict between the Turkish army and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK – Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan). In particular during the 1990s, when the conflict was at its peak, a ban on travelling in or to certain areas in the Kurdish region, especially mountains and plateaus, as well as the forced evacuation of villages and hamlets, had a significant impact on socio-economic life. The Dom also had to settle and drop their semi-nomadic patterns due to the bans and forced displacement. But they still have a certain level of mobility, due to seasonal agricultural employment. The majority obtained their identity cards after settlement in the 1990s.³⁹ A lack of or delay in birth registration is still an issue especially for Dom women and their children. Ethnic awareness among Dom people in Turkey is arguably on the rise. Recently established associations in Diyarbakır and Hatay are also signs of this.

37 For more information please see Onen, 2013: 612; Karlidag and Marsh, 2008: 148

38 Please see ERRC, 'Unequal Citizenship: Human Rights Violations against Turkish Gypsies' in *We are Here: Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle for Rights of Roma in Turkey*, (ERRC, EDROM, hCa, 2008)

39 Please see Onen (2013) regarding the situation of Dom people in Turkey following the forced displacement the 1990s.

3 POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

Turkey has ratified both the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol lifting the temporal restrictions of the original Convention.⁴⁰ However, Turkey maintains the geographical restrictions, which means only refugees coming from Council of Europe member states can be granted refugee status. In effect this means that Turkey does not accept refugees coming from outside Europe even though a significant majority of the asylum seekers arriving in Turkey come from non-European countries. Until 2014, Turkey lacked a domestic asylum law and asylum procedures were regulated through piecemeal regulations including the 1934 Settlement Law (renewed in 1999 and 2006), the 1994 Asylum regulation and various directives and circulars.⁴¹ The circulars and directives were issued to respond to specific situations and needs, leading to a fragmented and inconsistent asylum policy. The European Court of Human Rights had found violations of the human rights of asylum seekers in Turkey on several occasions prior to the coming into force of the current law.⁴²

Turkey adopted the Law on Foreigners and International Protection no. 6458 in April 2013.⁴³ In addition to the pressure of human rights groups, the EU accession process has been determinative in the adoption of the new law, as bringing the asylum legislation in line with the EU standards was one of the priorities in Turkey's National Program on the Adoption of the EU *Acquis Communautaire*. The Law regulates the procedures for foreigners, refugees and people in need of international protection.⁴⁴ It also includes regulations on secondary protection for non-European asylum seekers, who is defined as conditional refugees. Setting up a new institution called the General Directorate on Migration Management (GDMM), the law aims to centralise the Turkish asylum system. The GDMM takes responsibility for dealing with all asylum applications in coordination with the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) and other government institutions, such as the Disaster and Emergency Management Directorate (AFAD).

According to the Law, a refugee is “any person who is outside their country of origin due to events occurred in Europe and who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion and is therefore unable or unwilling to return to that country”. Asylum seekers coming from non-European countries are

40 Before the adoption of the 1967 Protocol, the 1951 Convention provided the State Parties with the options of temporal and geographical limitations, i.e. they could restrict international protection to either “events occurring in Europe before 1 January 1951”; or “events occurring in Europe and elsewhere before 1 January 1951”. The 1967 protocol lifted the temporal limitation, however Turkey chose to maintain geographical limitation.

41 Among the examples of such circulars are, Circular specifying rules and procedures that should be followed in the return centers by the local police (Circular 2010/18, Doc. No. B.050.OKM.0000.11-12/632, 19.03.2010); Circular for the security forces so that they take into consideration the asylum applications of irregular migrants in detention if they wish to seek asylum before their deportation process is completed (Circular 2010/19 No: B.050.OKM.0000.11-12/631, 19.03.2010). For more details please see Soykan, C. (2012), New Draft Law on Foreigners and International Protection in Turkey, Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration, 38, 40, n. 13.

42 See, e.g., *Abdolkhani and Karimnia v Turkey*, judgment of 22 September 2009 (finding violations resulting from the impossibility for asylum seekers to challenge the decision to return them to their country of origin as well as violations resulting from their detention).

43 Law No. 6458, Official Gazette, No. 28615, April 11, 2013, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/04/20130411-2.htm>.

44 The section on the establishment of an Immigration Directorate came into force in 2013, earlier than the other sections.

defined as “conditional refugee” in Article 62 of the Law. Conditional refugees are allowed to stay in Turkey until they are resettled in a safe third country.

The Law on Foreigners and International Protection is a significant step forward in Turkey fulfilling its international obligations. In addition to regulating asylum procedures for all persons in need of international protection, judicial appeal processes and access to public services, it also clearly utters the principle of *non-refoulement*, i.e. the prohibition on returning a person to a country where he/she is at risk of persecution or serious human rights violations.

Syrian refugees who have sought refuge in Turkey after 2011 are not eligible to be granted conditional refugee status under the law due to their mass influx. According to the UNHCR’s definition, mass influx situations may arise with ‘(i) considerable numbers of people arriving over an international border; (ii) a rapid rate of arrival; (iii) inadequate absorption or response capacity in host States, particularly during the emergency; (iv) and individual asylum procedures, where they exist, which are unable to deal with the assessment of such large numbers’.⁴⁵ The clause that applies to the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey in the Law on Foreigners and International Protection is Article 91, which relates to temporary protection. According to that article “Temporary protection may be provided to foreign nationals who have been forced to leave their countries, are unable to return to their countries, who arrive at or cross our borders in large groups to seek emergency and temporary protection.” The second paragraph states that the rights and procedures concerning such individuals will be determined by a regulation to be issued by the Council of Ministers.⁴⁶ Thus the legal framework applying to the Syrian refugees who arrived in Turkey following the conflict are the legal regulations on temporary protection.

3.1. Temporary Protection Directive

Turkey has followed an *open door policy* for Syrian refugees seeking refuge in Turkey since 2011. Initially receiving them as “guests”, the government then applied the temporary protection policy in October 2011 to deal with the large influx following the intensification of the conflict. In March 2012 the government issued a regulation titled “Regulation on Reception and Accommodation of Syrian Arab Republic Nationals and Stateless Persons who reside in Syrian Arab Republic, who arrive to Turkish Borders in Mass Influx to Seek Asylum”.⁴⁷ The initial temporary protection policy of the government was based on the fourth section of the 1994 Directive concerning asylum seekers.⁴⁸ According to Article 10, individuals who seek refuge in Turkey shall be provided

45 UNCHR, Conclusion on International Cooperation and Burden and Responsibility Sharing in Mass Influx Situations (2004), No. 100, EXCOM Conclusions, para. (a), 15.05.2013 <http://www.unhcr.org/41751fd82.html>.

46 Law on Foreigners and International Protection Article 91 – (1) Temporary protection may be provided to foreign nationals who have been forced to leave their countries, are unable to return to their countries, who arrive at or cross our borders in large groups to seek emergency and temporary protection.

(2) The admission of such individuals and their stay in Turkey, their rights and obligations, the procedures to be followed when they leave Turkey, measures to be taken against mass movements, collaboration and coordination between national and international institutions and entities, and the duties and powers of the institutions and entities at the centre and in the provinces shall be determined by a regulation to be issued by the Council of Ministers.

47 General Directorate of Migration Management, The aspects of temporary protection, available at: http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik3/gecici-korumanin-unsurlari_409_558_1095.

48 Regulation on the Procedures and the Principles Related to Mass Influx and Foreigners Arriving in Turkey either as Individuals or in Groups Wishing to Seek Asylum from a Third Country, 1994.

protection by the government during the time they stay in Turkey. Extending the temporary protection policy for the Syrian refugees in line with this regulation provided them with the guarantee of *non-refoulement* and basic humanitarian services.⁴⁹ However, until 2014, the legal basis and the scope of the temporary protection regime remained unclear, as the 2012 regulation was not publicly accessible. This has been subject to intense criticisms by human rights organisations due to the confusions and problems it has caused.⁵⁰

Finally, in October 2014 the Council of Ministers adopted Regulation No. 29153 setting out the temporary protection regime as required by Article 91 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection. This step has enabled Syrian refugees to have a clear and secure legal status. The 2014 Regulation establishes the general procedures and the rights and the obligations of the refugees in need of temporary protection. In addition, according to Article 5, those who enter Turkey through irregular means or who are caught during irregular entry will not be punished if they register within a reasonable time period.

While acknowledging Turkey's efforts to deal with the refugee crisis and its open door policy, it must be noted that there have been restrictions in the application of this policy especially following large influxes and the worsening of the situation in Syria. The ERRC's interviews with Dom refugees show that those without passports were not allowed into Turkey, forcing them to use unofficial border crossings. International Crisis Group also states that while Syrians with valid passports can enter Turkey at the border crossings, the rest are accepted only in cases of humanitarian or medical emergencies, leading many to use unofficial routes or pay smugglers to get in.⁵¹ The number of makeshift camps on the Syrian side of the border and increasing number of Syrian refugees having to enter Turkey through unofficial ways also show that government's open door policy does not apply in every case.

Amnesty International reports that Syrian refugees who have not been allowed into Turkey had to stay in IDP camps in Syria, near the Turkish border.⁵² Most recently, with the Islamic State's attack on the Syrian Kurdish city Kobani, approximately 140,000 refugees, primarily Syrian Kurds but also including Dom and related groups, fled to the border to enter Turkey. However there have been clashes at the border, with the police and gendarmerie using tear gas against the refugees and the local Kurdish people protesting the government's policy against Syrian Kurds.⁵³ Amnesty International's recent report on Syrian refugees documents unlawful detention, ill-treatment and deportation of Syrian refugees, predominantly those entering Turkey from the Kurdish region in Syria.⁵⁴ The ERRC's interviews with Dom refugees coming from Kobani and Hasakah also

49 Dinçer, O. B. et al., *Turkey and Syrian Refugees: The Limits of Hospitality*, (Brookings Institution, 2013) p.5.

50 Please see the joint press release: "Suriyeli mültecilerin statüsünü belirleyecek mevzuat bir an evvel çıkarılmalı!", 21 August 2014, <http://www.hyd.org.tr/?pid=1022>.

51 International Crisis Group, *The Rising Costs of Turkey's Syrian Quagmire*, Europe Report, 2014, N°230, p.2.

52 Amnesty International (2013), *An International Failure: The Syrian Refugee Crisis*, Amnesty International Briefing, AI Index: ACT 34/001/2013, p. 11. Please also see Dincer et al. 2013:10.

53 Please see Turkish security forces fire tear gas on refugees after 60,000 Kurds flee Islamic State onslaught, *The Telegraph*, 21 September 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/11111630/Turkish-security-forces-fire-tear-gas-on-refugees-after-60000-Kurds-flee-Islamic-State-onslaught.html>.

54 Please see Amnesty International (2014), *Struggling to Survive: Refugees from Syria in Turkey* and Amnesty International (2013), *Turkey forces hundreds of Syrian refugees back across border*, available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/turkey-forces-hundreds-syrian-refugees-back-across-border-2013-03-28>.

confirm these accounts. While some reported that they have been subjected to ill treatment on the border, some reported that they have not been allowed to enter, and therefore had to cross the border unofficially through minefields.

According to the Temporary Protection Directive, refugees eligible for temporary protection are registered upon their arrival and provided with identity cards which guarantee their right to stay in Turkey and enable their access to basic services. Among other positive aspects of the regulation, Article 27 guarantees free emergency and primary healthcare. The regulation also provides for free translation services during access to the services outlined in the Regulation. Although the regulation includes clauses on the right to education, work and social assistance, the decisions and necessary regulations on these rights are delegated to the relevant ministries. The Directive states that access to primary and higher levels of education and other language and vocational training may be provided to the refugees under temporary protection, and the scope and the procedures relating to the right to education are regulated by the Ministry of Education. The Directive does not guarantee the right to work per se but gives the refugees under temporary protection the right to apply for work permits. Refugees under temporary protection may be provided with social assistance, but the decision on individual cases lies with the Ministry of Families and Social Assistance.

The main shortcoming of the 2014 Directive is its ambiguous language and the lack of clarity in relation to certain rights and entitlements including the right to education, employment and housing. Another problem is the widespread lack of awareness of Syrian refugees on their legal status and rights. Among the reasons for this are inadequate information and outreach activities, social isolation and exclusion and language barriers. The majority of the Dom refugees interviewed for this report were not aware of the protection and assistance provided by the Turkish government.

In a recent controversial move, Turkey brought restrictions on academic research on Syrian refugees in Turkey. According to the Ministry of Interior regulation dated April 10 sent to the universities across Turkey, researchers and academics must get permission from “relevant ministries” before conducting any survey or fieldwork of Syrian refugees. The regulation has been highly criticised both locally and internationally.⁵⁵

3.2. Refugee Camps

According to the temporary protection policy, Syrian refugees who entered Turkey with a valid passport have been allowed to settle wherever they want. Those without a passport were either admitted to the refugee camps or, if there is no space in the camps, they had to wait in the camps on the Syrian side of the border, at times for several months. This has forced many Syrian refugees to enter Turkey through unofficial border crossing points, taking huge risks due to minefields on the border and the excessive use of force by border guards trying to prevent unofficial crossings.

There are currently 25 official camps for Syrian refugees, in which approximately 250,000 people live.⁵⁶ While 16 of the camps are tent accommodation, six of them are container cities. The camps

⁵⁵ Turkey restricts academic research on Syrian refugees, Al Monitor, 27 May 2015, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/05/turkey-syria-government-restricts-academic-research.html>.

⁵⁶ ‘Suruç Çadır Kenti Açıldı’, 5 March 2015, AFAD Haberler, available at: <https://www.afad.gov.tr/TR/HaberDetay.aspx?IcerikID=3410&ID=5>.

are located along the southern and south-eastern border of Turkey, in the cities of Adana, Adıyaman, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Malatya, Mardin, Osmaniye and Şanlıurfa. With the new arrivals from Kobani and Hasakah following the Islamic State (IS) attacks in November 2014, new refugee camps have been built in Suruç district of Şanlıurfa. Non-camp refugees, who constitute 85 per cent of the total refugee population spread around Turkey, are mainly concentrated in the provinces near the border.

Turkish authorities take the lead in providing assistance to the refugees through Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (AFAD). UN agencies support these activities by providing aid, visiting the camps, and providing technical advice to the camp managements and local authorities. The refugee camps have been praised by many international organisations in terms of quality and quantity of assistance and services available. Syrian refugees accommodated in the camps have access to food, healthcare, education, and other services. There are 22 schools, 21 health centres, social and religious facilities such as mosques, parks and sports centres, laundry, kitchen facilities and shops where refugees can meet their needs with a payment card issued by AFAD. It is reported that hygiene conditions in the camps are also in line with the UNCHR standards.⁵⁷ While there are psychosocial services provided, there is an increasing need for such services especially considering the prolonged stay in the camps. Research has shown that boredom and the feeling of confinement in the camps are among the reasons leading to dissatisfaction among refugees.⁵⁸

However, there are also reports of insufficient nutrition, limited access to water, infectious diseases among children and insufficient medication in some camps.⁵⁹ Other issues reported are tight security controls, issues regarding privacy, and arbitrary and ill-treatment by the camp management. Another reported issue regarding the camps is that most of the refugee camps are close to the border, raising security issues due to on-going clashes near the border.⁶⁰ According to UNHCR standards, camps should not be located within 50 kilometres of a border as a fundamental security policy. Besides these problems, there have also been significant concerns about access to the camps for independent monitoring and research. While UNHCR has access to the camps, various international organisations have not been granted access to the camps or could only monitor camps selected by the authorities.

3.3. Sharing Responsibility

Considering the scale of the refugee crisis and the impact of the conflict on neighbouring countries, Turkey has done relatively well in hosting Syrian refugees and providing humanitarian aid. However, increasing numbers of refugees and their long-term needs have shown Turkey's limitations. Initially, Turkey did not take part in the UN Syrian Regional Response Plan partly due to expectations that the conflict would not last long, but also to maintain full control of the process.⁶¹ Its cooperation with the UNHCR was limited to supplying tents for camps and overseeing voluntary returns.

57 Please see: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cef.html> for the UNHCR's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene standards.

58 For more detailed information please see ORSAM (2014), *The Situation of Syrian Refugees in the Neighboring Countries: Findings, Conclusions And Recommendations*, p.12-13.

59 'Suriye'de kamplardaki 100 bin çocuk risk altında', Sabah, 16 August 2014, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/Dunya/2014/08/16/suriyede-kamplardaki-100-bin-cocuk-risk-altinda>.

60 See Dincer et al (2013), *Limits of Hospitality*, p.8.

61 Please see International Crisis Group (2014), p.15.

However as the number of Syrian refugees has grown, Turkey has intensified its cooperation with international agencies for provision of services and registration of refugees. Local NGOs are also working in cooperation with the government in providing aid for refugees. According to government officials, Turkish government spent 5 billion US dollars as part of its response to the Syrian refugee crisis.⁶² However the international aid that Turkey received is only 183 million US dollars.

The international community has failed to provide the necessary support required for the Syrian refugees scattered across the region. Only 20 per cent of the UN funding appeal was met by May 2015. The funding crisis had even led the UN World Food Programme to suspend its food assistance to Syrian refugees for a short period. Besides inadequate financial support, European countries have also been reluctant to offer protection for Syrian refugees by resettling them in their countries. The admission rate of Syrian refugees to European countries is shockingly low considering the scale of the refugee crisis. Since 2011, Europe has only received around 6 per cent of all Syrian refugees.⁶³

Western European governments have recently pledged to increase the number of Syrian refugees they are accepting through resettlement and other admissions mechanisms.⁶⁴ The European Union has also recently announced that it will increase its assistance to the Syria crisis by 136 million Euros in humanitarian funding, half of which will go to needs inside Syria, and the other half to Syrian refugees and host communities in neighbouring Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.⁶⁵ While Turkey is bound under its international obligations to ensure the fundamental rights of the Syrian refugees in Turkey, international support is crucial to address both the immediate and long-term needs of Syrian refugees.

62 Please see T24, Numan Kurtulmuş: Türkiye, Suriyeli mültecilere 5 milyar dolar harcadı, 17 January 2015, available at: <http://t24.com.tr/haber/numan-kurtulmus-turkiye-suriyeli-multecilere-5-milyar-dolar-harcadi,284103>.

63 Nils Muiznieks: Governments must “reset” Syrian refugee policies, 3 February 2015, available at: <http://www.humanrightseurope.org/2015/02/nils-muiznieks-governments-must-reset-syrias-refugee-policies/>.

64 Governments pledge to take in around 100,000 Syrian refugees, 9 December 2014, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=548736336&query=resettlement>.

65 European Commission Press release, EU steps up humanitarian assistance to Syria crisis, Brussels, 29 January 2015, available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-3883_en.htm.

4 UNWANTED 'GUESTS': DOM REFUGEES FROM SYRIA IN TURKEY

The lack of ethnically disaggregated statistics on Syrian refugees and the tendency of Dom and related groups to conceal their ethnicity make the exact number of Dom and related refugees in Turkey unclear. Dom refugees introduce themselves as Arab or Kurdish, depending on their language skills and where they come from, while Abdal refugees introduce themselves as Turkmen.⁶⁶ There are thousands of Dom refugees from Syria scattered across Turkey, with populations in big cities including Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir and in the southern provinces including Antakya, Kilis, Adana, Gaziantep, Batman, Mardin, Şanlıurfa and Diyarbakır. They mostly prefer to stay in regions with existing Dom and Abdal populations, mainly in southern and south-eastern Turkey. However, these groups are highly mobile depending on weather conditions and seeking work opportunities across Turkey. Besides, they frequently face forced relocation to other cities by law enforcement officials. Thus, many of the refugees interviewed by the ERRC had been to different cities since their arrival in Turkey.

Dom refugees have been largely invisible to the national authorities, the UN agencies working in the area and local and international NGOs. The NGOs that the ERRC spoke during the fieldwork had either no or very little information about Dom refugees in Turkey. Primary reasons for this include the tendency of these groups to conceal their ethnicity and a general lack of awareness of Dom and related groups in Turkey and Syria. Furthermore, the Turkish registration system only identifies basic information and humanitarian needs of refugees, with no vulnerability profiling based on ethnicity and religion. Dom refugees have also been largely invisible to the media. Aside from a handful of news reports focusing on their situation, media coverage has been predominantly negative and limited to the context of “Syrian Gypsies begging on the street”. As shown in the research findings below, while Dom refugees face similar challenges to other Syrian refugees in accessing social and economic rights, they face additional barriers due to their ethnicity and entrenched prejudices in the region. There are also widespread reports of intimidation and ill-treatment by the law enforcement officials.

Increasing number of Syrian refugees in host cities and accompanying social and economic problems have been fuelling local tensions. In the cities where there are big numbers of refugees, there have been protests and attacks against them.⁶⁷ Against the backdrop of rising tensions with the local population in Istanbul, state officials made statements saying that they will take measures to deal with the influx of tens of thousands of Syrian refugees into big cities like Istanbul, including forcibly sending them to camps in the southeast.⁶⁸ On 25 July 2014, the government sent an instruction note to the governorates which states that Syrian refugees who commit a crime or an act threatening public order and security, as well as those who continue to sleep and beg on the streets

⁶⁶ Turkmen people in Syria constitute an ethnic minority group which should not be confused with Turkish people of Turkey and Turkmen people of Turkmenistan. While they are mostly Sunni, there are also Shia Turkmens. They speak a Turkish dialect which has not yet been studied, so Meyer states that their origin in Turkish speaking areas cannot be localised (Meyer, 2004: 75).

⁶⁷ For example see, ‘Masked men attack shops run by Syrian refugees in southern Turkey’, Today’s Zaman, 15 July 2014, http://www.todayszaman.com/national_masked-men-attack-shops-run-by-syrian-refugees-in-southern-turkey_353052.html. Also see Suriyeli kiracı ev sahibini bıçakladı, Antep kargaşası: En az 10 Suriyeli yaralı, Diken, 13 August 2014, available at: <http://www.diken.com.tr/suriyeli-kiraci-ev-sahibini-bicakladi-antep-karisti-en-az-suriyeli-yarali/>.

⁶⁸ Please see Istanbul may place Syrian refugees in camps, Al Jazeera, 16 July 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middle-east/2014/07/istanbul-may-force-syrian-refugees-into-camps-20147161740029946.html>.

despite warnings, will be relocated to a refugee camp by law enforcement officials.⁶⁹ In many cities, there were reports of Syrian refugees working, living or begging on the streets being gathered by law enforcement officials and relocated to the camps or to the cities where there are camps.⁷⁰

Growing tensions and the response of the authorities have disproportionately affected Dom and related groups from Syria. Mainstream media reports have only exacerbated the situation with their portrayal of the “Gypsies of Syria” and claims that the Dom were also beggars in Syria before the conflict. One such news report in *Yeni Şafak* newspaper states that the Syrian refugees who had to sleep and beg on the streets for a short while due to their desperate situation are different from “Syrian beggars”. It states, “We cannot say the same thing for the Syrian beggars. Whatever you do, whatever you provide, they will not leave the streets. Their numbers do not decrease, and, on the contrary, they increase day by day”. The paper quotes the head of the Turkish Red Crescent and a Syrian refugee working for an aid organisation, both of whom argue that those who are begging on the streets are not doing so because they are in need but rather because begging is their lifestyle, and that they do not represent the Syrian refugees.⁷¹

This feature article is just one of many which portray the Syrian refugees sleeping, working or begging on the streets as “Syrian Gypsies” who used to live in a similar way in Syria before the conflict. Such reports stigmatise Dom refugees in particular and use them as scapegoats for the growing discrimination against Syrian refugees in Turkey. Considering that there is a significant lack of awareness about Dom groups in both Turkey and Syria, such stereotypical media reports contribute to the prejudices and discrimination against them, which in turn limits their access to their rights.

The following sections outline the key research findings on the situation of Dom refugees and related groups in Turkey. Following a discussion on their livelihoods in Syria before the conflict and their exodus from Syria, the barriers facing them in accessing their social and economic rights will be discussed.

4.1. Life in Syria Before the Conflict

Dom refugees and related groups interviewed by the ERRC came from cities including Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs, Latakia, Idlib, Raqqa, Minbij, Afrin and Cizire. A significant majority of the interviewees used to live in the Haydariyah and Ashrafiyah districts of Aleppo, where there are substantial Dom populations. There were also groups coming from the Kurdish region in Syria, in particular from Kobani and Hasakah following the IS attacks and ensuing conflict in these areas.

The socio-economic situation of Dom refugees coming from Syria varied. The occupations they held in Syria included informal dentistry, iron-smithing, tin-smithing, basket making, construction work, agriculture work, recycling work, peddling and music. There were also a number of Dom refugees who were engaged in trading. Two such families, living in an informal tent camp in

69 Instruction Note No 2014/429 dated 25/07/2014. For further information see GDMM, Geçici Koruma Kapsamında Suriyelilerle İlgili Çalışmalarımız, available at: http://goc.gov.tr/files/files/gecici_koruma_alan%C4%B1nda_yap%C4%B1lan_cal%C4%B1m%C5%9Fmalar%C4%B1m%C4%B1z_ek3%281%29.pdf.

70 Gaziantep'ten sonra Kilis'ten de Suriyeliler tahliye ediliyor, Diken, 15 August 2014, <http://www.diken.com.tr/gaziantep-ten-sonra-kiliste-de-suriyeliler-tahliye-ediliyor/>.

71 ‘İstanbul’daki Suriyeli dilenciler gerçeği’, Yeni Şafak, 4 April 2014, available at: <http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/aktuel/istanbul-daki-suriyeli-dilenciler-gercegi-633768>.

Adana, stated that they used to buy household goods and textile from neighbouring countries, in particular Jordan and Lebanon, and sell them in Syria. Abdal refugees interviewed in Osmaniye recounted that they used to work as national lottery ticket sellers. The groups who worked as peddlers stated that they would also collect aid from local people in the places they would visit.

Dom refugees who were working in informal dentistry and trading had relatively higher standards of living. Those who worked as informal dentists in Syria stated that they used to live in big houses, their wives would not work and their children used to go to school in Syria. In contrast, the groups who were in casual and informal employment had relatively lower standards of living. The employment status of Dom women also showed differences. While Dom women whose husbands worked as traders and dentists stated that they were not working in Syria, there were women who used to work as peddlers, selling small household items or clothing, and as seasonal agriculture workers. There were also a group of Dom women interviewed in Nizip who used to work as fortune-tellers.

While the majority of the refugees interviewed were sedentary and lived in rented accommodation or in their own houses, a small number of them stated that they used to live in tent accommodation in Syria on a permanent basis. Dom refugees who used to work as peddlers and those who had lower standards of living tended to live in tents. Those who worked in seasonal jobs such as seasonal agriculture work and those who performed traditional crafts such as basket-making and tinsmithing led a semi-nomadic life. While they used to live in rented houses during the winter or when they were not in employment, they would live in tents when they were travelling for seasonal work.

In addition to the Dom refugees from Syria, there was also a Dom group who had been displaced from Iraq in 2005, following the Iraq war. A group staying in makeshift tents in Akçakale district of Şanlıurfa told the ERRC that they used to live in Baghdad and had been forcibly displaced during the war due to their ethnic identity. In Syria, they led a semi-nomadic life for seven years. They told the ERRC that while they would settle in Aleppo during the winter, they would travel across Syria to work in agriculture and construction sectors at other times of the year, similar to other Dom people in Syria.

The majority of the children of the families interviewed by the ERRC did not go to school in Syria. This was the case particularly among the groups who led a semi-nomadic life due to their occupation. In particular, the families who worked in seasonal agriculture work could not send their children to schools since term times clashed with their travel time. In some cases the children continued to go to school, but they had to start the school year late and leave early depending on the start and the end of their jobs. Dom families who had relatively higher living standards, such as those who worked in dentistry and trading, used to send their children to schools in Syria.

4.2. Caught Between Two Fires

Dom refugees interviewed by the ERRC had all been directly affected by the conflict. All of them had one or more family member or relative killed by the regime or the opposition forces during the conflict. While some of the killings took place during the bombings of the rural and urban areas or during clashes, some killings were committed during house raids by both the Syrian army and armed opposition groups. Among the families visited by the ERRC, there were children who lost their parents and who were being looked after by their relatives. There were also families who lost their children as a result of the bombings during the conflict and due to lack of water and food during their exodus from Syria.

Dom refugees emphasised that they did not take sides in the conflict and that all they wanted was to live in peace. However they could not find peace either among the opposition groups or in the areas where the regime is strong. An elderly Dom woman said:

“Whenever there is a conflict, it is us who are suffering most. They first attacked our homes. They don’t want us. We are just trying to earn our bread. We did not do any harm to any of them. But the first group they don’t want is always us”.

They were particularly frightened of the radical Islamist groups in Syria either due to direct experiences of violence or because of the stories they have heard from others. A 53-year-old Dom man staying in a makeshift tent in Akçakale district of Şanlıurfa detailed his experiences as follows:

“The opposition took over the city, we call them DAEŞ (IS)... Those in the city either fled or remained silent, as they were frightened. But some joined them. They were saying that they established an Islamic State... Then they started attacking our homes. They made announcements from the mosque saying that everyone but Arabs should leave the city... They were calling us ‘heretic Nawars’... They threatened to behead us if we didn’t leave. They were saying that we are not Muslims, we are lower than animals and our women are loose... Even our Arab neighbours attacked us. They were saying that we don’t want Kurds, Nawars, heretics here. We left everything behind and fled”.

The rural areas and the outskirts of the cities, where the Dom and related groups mainly live, were among the first places taken over by the opposition groups. Caught between two fires, they initially fled to safer areas within the country. Some Dom groups told the ERRC that they went to Rojava, the Kurdish region in north-eastern Syria, as it was safer compared to other parts of the country. There is a substantial Dom community living in Rojava, in places such as Afrin. However those who went to Kobani and Hasakah were displaced once more following the attacks by the IS.

Some Abdal refugees stated that they initially moved to the areas controlled by the regime. However economic difficulties and scarcity of resources in these areas forced them to seek refuge somewhere else. An elderly Abdal man interviewed in Nizip, Gaziantep said,

“We first took shelter there as they were Alawites as well. But they said to us ‘We cannot find bread for ourselves, how can we give it to an Abdal?’”.

One Abdal group stated that they were not even allowed in to the cities where the regime is strong. Others told the ERRC that they faced discrimination in areas controlled by the “democratic opposition”, since they were perceived as supporters of the Assad regime due to the fact that they were also Alawites. One Abdal family interviewed in Osmaniye told the ERRC that they went to the Kessab Mountains, when the conflict in Aleppo intensified. They worked there as agriculture workers in the fields belonging to Turkmen and Armenian families. However, as the conflict spilled over to these areas, they had to flee again.

Dom groups have also moved to countries neighbouring Syria in search of security, shelter and food, including Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey. One Dom family in Nizip who had been to Lebanon told the ERRC that they stayed in a tent camp, which they set up on land they rented with other Dom refugees. They reported having basic facilities in their camp such as bathrooms and toilets and working in peddling and in other manual jobs such as construction and recycling.

However financial difficulties, discrimination, and hot weather coupled with scarcity of food and water forced them to seek refuge somewhere else such as Turkey, though substantial Dom communities remain in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.⁷² An elderly Dom man interviewed in Islahiye described his plight between the bordering countries with Syria as follows:

“When the clashes approached us, we first went to the Lebanon border. The Salafi groups there treated us very badly. We managed to enter Lebanon and stayed there for a month, but there were so many Syrian refugees there. The camps were full and very expensive. We then went to Jordan, but the conditions were even worse. The border guards deported us a few times. The dust and the heat... The kids were getting ill and we could hardly find clean drinking water. One of the children died on our way back from Jordan to Lebanon. We then went to Beirut and worked in construction for a while. After all that we wanted to go back to Syria, but we could not find anywhere safe and there were Salafi groups everywhere. We then decided to come to Turkey. We walked until we reached the border.”

4.3. Seeking Refuge in Turkey

The reasons that forced Dom refugees to flee to Turkey vary. Some had no other choice given their immediate security concerns and practical matters such as proximity and safe routes, while others were drawn by family ties and kinship networks. Marriage is an important binding factor between the Dom people in Syria and in Turkey. Many Dom refugees stated that they have relatives in the southern and south-eastern provinces of Turkey. Abdal refugees, who are Alawites, also stated that they used to visit Turkey to participate in *Hacı Bektaşî Veli* events.⁷³ Turkish language ability and familiarity with the culture, geography and potential work were also significant factors for Abdal refugees. Turkey’s outspoken stance on the conflict and its open-door policy for Syrian refugees have been influential as well. Those coming to Turkey from other neighbouring countries also thought that life conditions and work opportunities would be relatively better in Turkey.

Dom refugees interviewed by the ERRC arrived in Turkey at different times. While some groups came to Turkey shortly after the conflict in early 2012, some arrived later depending on the security situation in the cities they had been living in. There were also new arrivals from the cities of Kobani and Hasakah, following the conflict between the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG/J) and the IS.

4.3.1. Crossing the Turkey-Syria border

Despite its open-door policy, crossing the Turkish border has not been a straightforward process for all Syrian refugees. Those without Syrian identity cards or passports in particular have reported difficulties or even denial of access at the border.

Syrian Dom with valid passports, mainly dentists and traders who travelled for work prior to the conflict, told the ERRC they could enter at official border crossings without significant problems.

72 Please also see Syria: The Dom Syria’s Invisible Refugees Asia News Monitor [Bangkok] 25 Mar 2013.

73 Hacı Bektas Veli is a philosopher of the 13th century, the practitioner of Hoca Ahmed Yesevi’s doctrines in Anatolia and the eponym of the Bektashism, a religious order of Alevism. Hacı Bektasi Veli Complex was founded in the 14th century and it is located in the district of Hacibektas in central Kizilirmak region of Central Anatolia (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5735/>). Every year commemoration activities are organised in the Complex.









The majority, however, do not have Syrian documents or passports and were forced to use unofficial crossings, which were very dangerous due to the minefields on the border between Turkey and Syria. Some were told to go back to Syria by the Turkish soldiers at the border, while others managed to enter unofficially without being caught or in spite of soldiers being present. According to Dom refugees and other reports on the Syrian refugee crisis, soldiers often turn a blind eye to unofficial border crossings.

Entry into Turkey has been more difficult for refugees coming from Kobani and Hasakah regions of Syria. Dom groups who fled the region following clashes with the IS stated that they had to enter Turkey through unofficial crossing points. While some entered without encountering any problem, some said that they were caught by the soldiers and were subject to ill-treatment. One such Dom group who tried to enter Turkey from the border with Suruç stated that they were not allowed in Turkey at first, but later the soldiers allowed them to enter, though not from the official crossing points. The group had to cross the border through a minefield. Another Dom man interviewed in Birecik stated that soldiers opened fire after they noticed them approaching the border.

“No one got injured. But the children were very frightened; we could not calm them down. We then went back and entered Turkey from another route.”

There are also accounts of discrimination by border guards against the Dom groups. A Dom group in Batman told the ERRC that they were waiting together with a bigger refugee group at the border. Although other refugees were allowed to enter Turkey, they were not. While they were not given any reason, one Dom man among the group said, “They did not allow us in because we are Gypsies”. They later entered Turkey through an unofficial route.

The journey to the borders with Turkey has been extremely difficult for many Dom refugees. Interviewees reported that a number of children died on their way to Turkey due to lack of food and water. A group of Dom families who were fleeing from the areas that IS took over explained that they arrived in Turkey after travelling on foot for two months and only at night, as they were very frightened of IS.

4.3.2. Registration

Registration of Syrian refugees is done by the Turkish authorities in cooperation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Although registration or individual application to the authorities is not required for protection against *refoulement*, it is required to gain access to assistance and services.⁷⁴ Until recently, almost half of the non-camp refugees were not registered. Due to the problems caused by the slow registration process, the government intensified its efforts to register all Syrian refugees in Turkey. AFAD started a new electronic system to centralise the registration process using biometric data, which aims to prevent duplicate registrations and identify the needs of refugees outside the camps.⁷⁵ On 17 September 2014, Ministry of Interior sent a circular to the Security Directorates calling for further coordination centres to be established in 20 cities to carry out registration of refugees. The UNHCR also procured 23 mobile registration units to support AFAD with registration activities. According to official statistics, as of July 2015,

⁷⁴ UNHCR, Syrian Refugees in Europe: What Europe Can Do to Ensure Protection and solidarity, p.36.

⁷⁵ Bidinger, S. et al (2014), p.105, see also AFAD, Suriyeli Misafirlerimiz Kardes Topraklarinda, p. 116, available at: <https://www.afad.gov.tr/Dokuman/TR/98-2014061912629-suriyeli-misafirlerimiz.pdf>.

1,805,255 Syrian refugees in Turkey are registered. Following registration, Syrian refugees are issued identity cards, which enable them to access basic services like healthcare and education.

The majority of Dom refugees interviewed by the ERRC were not registered and did not have AFAD identification cards. Two of the main reasons for this were the fact that they entered Turkey through unofficial border crossings and their lack of awareness about the rules and procedures concerning registration. Dom refugees who entered Turkey from official border gates or those who had stayed in official refugee camps were registered and had identification cards. The only exception to this was newcomers from Kobani and Hasakah regions who had arrived following the IS attacks.

There was a significant lack of awareness of the legislation on Syrian refugees among the refugee community, including the benefits of registration. For example, one of the groups interviewed in Osmaniye told the ERRC that they do not want to get an AFAD identification card, as they would like to go back to Syria when the conflict ends. Another group stated that they did not want to register, as they feared being sent to the refugee camps.⁷⁶ There was also a widespread fear of being sent back to Syria or of identification by the Syrian regime if they register. This misinformation and previous negative experiences with state officials causes many Dom refugees to avoid contact with the authorities.

Dom refugees also avoided registration due to associated residence requirements. According to the Temporary Protection Directive, Syrian refugees have to reside in the cities where they registered and they may access free health services and medication only there. Registering in a particular city would prevent them traveling to other cities for work, which led some families not to register at all.

Dom refugees who wanted to register told the ERRC that they encountered various issues in the government's offices. According to the Temporary Protection Directive, Syrian refugees can be registered upon their application to the AFAD offices and relevant governorates. Mukhtars, who are the administrative heads in the neighbourhoods and villages, also facilitate their access to the registration procedures. Dom refugees interviewed in Kilis and Nizip stated that the Mukhtar told them that there is a long waiting list for registration. A young Dom woman in Nizip said,

“I want to register so I went to the Mukhtar. But he said ‘you have to wait, there is a long list. Come back again’. I will go back soon”.

Another common problem faced by Dom refugees who wanted to register in AFAD's offices was the requirement to bring residency documents. While some did not know how to obtain this document, some reported that the Mukhtar did not issue one although they had applied. In Kilis, some refugees could get a note from the Mukhtar which stated that they have been living in the informal tent camp. Although this solved the problem for some families, others, such as an Abdal group in Nizip, reported that they have been going back and forth in vain.

According to the circulars sent to the healthcare institutions, unregistered Syrian refugees in need of healthcare should be guided about registration procedures. This did not happen in the majority of cases, contributing to the general lack of awareness on regulations concerning Syrian refugees.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Dom and Abdal refugees and other related groups do not want to stay in the official refugee camps due to experiences of discrimination, camp conditions and feelings of confinement, which will be discussed below in the housing section.

⁷⁷ It must be noted that at the time of the fieldwork the new Directive was not published yet and the recent efforts to train state officials on the legislation was not in place yet.

4.4. Housing

According to the Temporary Protection Directive, the governorates⁷⁸ may (but are not obliged to) provide housing assistance for Syrian refugees in need. While minimum standards for temporary protection outlined in the UNHCR’s Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements and the European Council Directive on Temporary Protection (Article 13) include guarantees of shelter/housing and access to health care and other basic services, the majority of Syrian refugees in Turkey live in substandard, overcrowded and unsuitable accommodation in urban and rural areas outside the government-run refugee camps. Though the research findings showed that a small number of Dom refugees initially stayed in one of the 25 official refugee camps in Turkey, they generally did not want to remain there for reasons discussed in section 4.4.1 below. Apart from the fact that camps operate at full capacity and therefore it is hard to gain admission, the main reason expressed by the refugees interviewed by the ERRC is prejudices and discrimination against them in the camps.

The majority of refugees outside camps are concentrated near the border. At the time of the fieldwork, the substantial majority of Dom refugees were based in the southern provinces due to mild winter conditions. Among their settlement patterns are informal tent camps, makeshift tents, ruins and abandoned buildings and rented accommodation. There were also some groups who stated that they had to sleep rough on the streets or in public places such as parks and bus terminals for some time. A substantial majority of the Dom refugees visited by the ERRC lived in inadequate conditions without access to clean water, heating or sanitation facilities. In almost all cases, extended families lived together either in a single tent or in a small room. Furthermore, discrimination in the private housing sector and high rents lead many to live in non-residential places or on the outskirts of the city. Due to discrimination, Dom refugees often preferred to live in areas where the domestic Dom or Roma people live. Likewise, Abdal refugees preferred to stay near the Abdal and Alevi communities in Turkey.

Dom refugees are the most mobile group among the Syrian refugee community, as they have been moving around and are dependent on work opportunities in other cities. Besides, those staying in makeshift tents or in informal tent camps face forced evacuation by the law enforcement officials. There have been reports of their tents being destroyed by the municipality and provincial police without being provided any alternative (See Section 4.6). There were also families who initially rented a flat, but then started living in tents as they were unable to continue paying rent. Hence all of the groups interviewed had experiences of different types of accommodation at different times and in different places, which will be further discussed below.

4.4.1. Refugee Camps

“They don’t want us there” was a phrase frequently repeated by Dom refugees who were not staying in the official refugee camps. Prejudice and discrimination experienced in Syria have defined their views of the camps, where the majority of residents are Sunni Arab refugees. Those who stayed in the camps told the ERRC that they have been subjected to discrimination from both the camp management and other residents. There were also reports of ill-treatment by law enforcement officials in the camp. A 23-year-old Dom man interviewed in Diyarbakır explained his camp experience as follows:

⁷⁸ Provincial governorates are the main administrative units in the provinces.

“When we first arrived in Turkey we stayed in the camp. Some of our relatives did not want to stay, so they went. But we decided to stay there as it was winter and we did not want our children to be hungry in the cold. In the camp, they changed the location of our tent several times. The Arabs there did not want us. They were calling us thieves. They were beating our children and were not talking to our women. When I wanted to get out of the camp, the soldiers were harassing me, they were swearing at me just like the other Syrian refugees had done.”

A 26-year-old Dom woman living in a makeshift tent in Osmaniye stated that the Arab refugees in the camp would not talk to them. She said whenever there was an incident in the camp, they were targeted and held responsible first.

Ethnic, religious or political polarisation was another issue affecting refugees from minority groups in Syria.⁷⁹ For example, in the Öncüpınar camp in Kilis, one of the complaints of the camp population expressed during a protest against the camp management was that the Abdal refugees were staying in the camps.⁸⁰ Abdal refugees are Alawites and they stated that the Islamist groups within the camps treated them very badly. In particular, the situation for the Abdal refugees who stayed in government-controlled areas before they were forced to flee Syria was more difficult as they were accused of supporting the regime. A 35-year-old Abdal man living in a makeshift tent in Reyhanlı said,

“They don’t consider us as Muslims. They wanted our women to wear hijab. They were saying that we are helping Assad. We neither supported Assad nor the opposition. But they were still threatening us”.

For them, even going back to the regime controlled areas in Syria was a more viable option than staying in the camps. Dom refugees also complained about the sectarian and political divisions in the camps. One Dom refugee in Diyarbakır said,

“There were opposition groups in the camps. They were in charge of everything. They were training the young people in the camp so that they join the military forces of the opposition in Syria. We are not hostile towards anyone. We just want to live.”

Some Dom refugees also held the belief that staying in the camps could portray them as being against the regime and this could lead to potential difficulties in Syria when the conflict is over.

Strict entry and exit regulations, isolation and lack of work and social activities were also frequently cited by Dom refugees as reasons for not staying in the camps. The majority of them likened the camps to prisons. It was particularly expressed that children were bored and unhappy in the camps. Three families that the ERRC interviewed in Viranşehir stated that they stayed in the Ceylanpınar camp for 25 days, and then decided to leave.

“The Arabs in the camp did not want us there. They were beating our kids. We also got really bored in the camp. In the camps people are just lying around and sitting. There is nothing to do. Can a human being live in a prison? There was no work. It was like a prison”.

79 Please see 10 soruda ‘Suriyeli mülteciler’ meselesi, Agos, 28 July 2014, <http://www.agos.com.tr/10-soruda-suriyeli-multeciler-meselesi-7796.html>.

80 Mülteci kampları barut fıçısı, Taraf, 25 July 2012, <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber-multeci-kamplari-barut-ficisi-98126/>.

All of these issues combined made staying in camps impossible for Dom refugees. Though some had been in camps when they first arrived in Turkey, all of the groups interviewed during the fieldwork outside them.

4.4.2. *Tent Accommodation*

The majority of Dom refugees interviewed for this report lived in tent accommodation, often installed on unowned land where there is access to water. All sites visited by the ERRC were near a village or river, with some near construction sites or gas stations where water could be obtained. One Dom refugee group with four tents near a construction site told the ERRC that the construction company stopped giving them water, so they were considering moving somewhere else. It was observed that there were different refugee groups in the same area at different times. This was partly due to the fact that Dom refugees were already familiar with certain sites in Turkey, which had been historically visited by their ancestors. The other reason is relatively stronger communication networks among Dom refugees that help them to decide where to set up their tents.

While some groups stayed in makeshift tents made with unsuitable materials such as cardboard boxes, sheets, plastic and stones, some had larger tents made from appropriate materials. Among the main problems facing all of the groups was lack of sanitation facilities. Many complained about the weather conditions and their tents not being suitable for rain or cold weather. Those in such makeshift tents said that they have not received any assistance from the local authorities or aid organisations.

Some families had shifting patterns of residence due to their irregular income and unstable financial situation. The ERRC spoke to three families staying in makeshift tents in Viranşehir who had to move out from the flat they rented, as they were unable to pay the rent.

Some Dom refugees were staying in unofficial tent camps, which were composed of 10 to 50 tents. The unofficial tent camps visited by the research team also lacked sanitation, heating and cooking facilities, though two camps in Adana received assistance from the local authorities that set up mobile toilets. They also occasionally received aid from charities and international organisations in the region and, as they were both near Kurdish and Dom neighbourhoods, could also obtain water and food aid from their neighbours. However, Dom refugees have also experienced discrimination in informal camps. For example, Abdal residents of an unofficial camp in Kilis reported that, though an adjacent unofficial Syrian refugee camp was provided with toilet facilities,⁸¹ those in Kilis received access to no such facilities. They were also not allowed to use the provided toilets. One Abdal refugee man expressed his frustration about their situation, declaring his three wishes to the sky: “Bread, peace and toilets.”⁸² Though physical conditions in unofficial camps are similar to isolated tents, the camp atmosphere was seen to provide a stronger social support network, particularly for children, which helped them to cope with their difficult situation.

4.4.3. *Rented Accommodation*

Only a small minority of Dom refugees could afford to stay in rented accommodation. The types of properties they could rent include finished houses, unfinished or ruined houses and non-residential

81 It was not clear whether these toilets were set up by the local authorities or an aid organization and the current residents were unable to confirm who had installed them.

82 Please see Stephan Muller’s blog on the research team’s visit to the unofficial tent camp in Kilis. “Domari refugees in Turkey: ‘Peace, bread and toilets’”, available at: <http://www.errc.org/blog/domari-refugees-in-turkey-peace-bread-and-toilets/44>.

units such as shops. The rents vary from 100 to 400 Turkish Liras (40 – 150 Euros) per month depending on the size, location and the state of the property. A family staying in a very small ruined house in Birecik was paying 100 Turkish Liras (40 Euros), while another family in Batman was paying 200 Turkish Liras (80 Euros) for two small rooms in the basement of a house. As the refugee population continued to grow in host cities, the rental prices have also significantly increased. In addition to the financial barriers, Dom refugees also face discrimination and prejudices in accessing private housing. Thus, they mostly prefer to rent accommodation either on the outskirts of the cities or in areas where there are Dom, Abdal or Roma communities.

The condition of the properties rented by Dom refugees interviewed by the ERRC varied. While a few families were living in finished houses with a kitchen, bathroom, electricity and heating, some places were in uninhabitable state with no windows, electricity or heating. A group of Dom refugees in Kızıltepe were staying in adjacent shops in a Dom neighbourhood as they could not afford to rent houses. These shops were composed of only one big room where two to three families were staying together. While there were toilets inside, there was no bathroom or kitchen. Some families had stoves for heating, but some did not have any heating. These units lacked adequate ventilation and light. None of the places visited by the ERRC had furniture, except for rugs, sheets, blankets and cushions. The houses with bathrooms and toilets inside that were visited by the ERRC were not adequately hygienic. The ERRC visited four families living in a house in Diyarbakır city centre, whose owner was a Dom living in the same building. The families were sharing the bathroom and the toilet, which did not meet minimum hygiene standards. Overcrowding was an issue for all types of accommodation that Dom refugees were living in.

4.4.4. *Sleeping rough*

There were Dom refugee families who were staying either in public places, such as bus terminals, mosque gardens and parks, or in abandoned and ruined buildings. A Dom family that the ERRC interviewed was living in ruins in Gaziantep city centre. The four-storey building they were staying in was uninhabitable, with no doors, windows, heating or sanitary facilities. Another Dom family in Nizip told the ERRC that when they went to Istanbul they had to stay in parks before they could find a place to set up a tent. They said that they were using the bathroom of a nearby mosque. In another case, a Dom family of 17 people in Islahiye was staying in an olive grove under a stretched sheet between two olive trees. The accounts from Dom refugees show that they have all experienced staying in ruins, abandoned buildings or in public places such as parks in the early months of their arrival. In particular those who moved from city to city to work in seasonal agriculture jobs had to sleep rough in parks and bus terminals.

4.5. **Employment**

Dom refugees in Turkey mainly work in the informal economy, in particular in the construction, agriculture, service and recycling sectors and in other manual jobs such as loading and unloading. The refugees told the ERRC that they were able to find jobs only for a handful of days in a month and that they were unemployed for most of the time. Those who cannot find a job and newcomers could only survive on the charity of local people and aid organisations. There were a number of Dom refugees, in particular women and children, who were begging on the streets. Children as young as five were also working on the streets selling tissues or cleaning car windows.

Agricultural work is the key source of income for many Dom refugees during harvest times. The role of agriculture in the economy, in particular cotton, olives, citrus, wheat and maize production, is considerable in southern and south-eastern Turkey. Dom refugees living in these cities were mainly working in the fields as seasonal workers. They were also travelling to other regions in Turkey, such as the Black Sea Region, to work in hazelnut fields. However refugees told the ERRC that when the owners found out about their ethnicity, they often did not want to recruit them. They were recruited only when there was a shortage of workers.⁸³ Apart from working in the fields, Dom refugees were also renting the cotton fields when the harvest was over in order to pick up the remaining unopened cotton bolls. In a small tent camp that the ERRC visited in Kızıltepe, several families including children were separating the cotton fibres from the unopened bolls. Despite the considerable amount of work they spent on this job, they could only earn 35 Turkish Liras per 100kg (12 Euros) and one person could only finish 25kg in a day.

Syrian refugees in general work for significantly lower wages, for longer hours and with no social security. The situation is much harder for Dom refugees as it is more difficult for them to find a job. Dom refugees who were working as construction workers reported that they are getting 20 Turkish Liras (7.5 Euros) per day, which is just one third of the average daily income of local construction workers. Two other Dom refugees who were collecting garbage in Gaziantep reported that they were only getting 10-15 Turkish liras per day. Considering that the national minimum wage is 949.07 TL (308 Euros) per month⁸⁴, many cannot afford to meet their basic needs.

Some refugee families told that they had some savings when they first arrived in Turkey, but these were spent as the conflict dragged on. Some Dom who had a relatively comfortable life in Syria had to beg on the streets, not having found work despite relentless efforts. One Dom woman, a mother of four, whose husband used to work as an informal dentist in Syria told the ERRC in Nizip that she was not working when she was in Syria. When they had to flee to Lebanon shortly after the conflict, she started peddling and selling clothes. However, she stated that their life became much more difficult as they could not find any work in Turkey.

Language barriers have also prevented Dom refugees from finding jobs. Abdal groups found it easier to integrate as they speak Turkish. Dom refugees who could speak Kurdish preferred to stay in the eastern and south-eastern provinces where the majority of the population is Kurdish. However those who speak only Domari and Arabic experienced more difficulties. Some preferred to stay in cities where there is an Arabic speaking population, such as Hatay and Şanlıurfa, but many could either work in day to day jobs such as garbage collectors or as porters, or had to beg on the streets.

A decrease in wages due to the increasing number of Syrian refugees working longer for lower wages has led to resentment and occasionally to hate crime against Syrian refugees in the host community. The government pledged to address this problem by making necessary legal amendments.⁸⁵ According to the Temporary Protection Directive, registered refugees can now apply for work permits in certain sectors that will be determined by the Council of Ministers. While this is a step forward, the process of getting work permits in practice remains very difficult.

83 Mevsimlik tarım işçiliğinde en alttakiler: Dom Çingeneleri, Kemal Vural Tarlan, Radikal Blog, 5 June 2014, available at: <http://blog.radikal.com.tr/yasam/mevsimlik-tarim-isciliginde-en-alttakiler-dom-cingeneleri-62340>.

84 Please see Ministry of Employment and Social Security, <http://www.csqb.gov.tr/csqbPortal/cgm.portal?page=asgari>.

85 'Çalışma Bakanı: Suriyelilere kimlik verilecek', Radikal, 8 October 2014, http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/calisma_bakani_suriyelilere_kimlik_verilecek-1217583.

Although the government stated that the process would be made easier, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security has not yet issued a regulation on this, as required by the new Directive. In any case, the majority of Dom refugees engage in informal economic activity and manual labour since they cannot practice their traditional crafts. They also face further discrimination in access to employment due to their ethnic identity. Thus, the granting of a work permit would in itself not address their problems, and further integration policies are needed.

4.6. Intimidation by Law Enforcement Officials

Dom refugees in makeshift tents or working and begging on the streets in urban areas are often arbitrarily targeted by law enforcement officials. Following the government circular on Syrian refugees working, living and begging on the streets, it has been reported that many non-camp refugees have been forcibly sent to cities where there are camps. There were reports that some Dom refugees were sent back to Syria as they refused to go to the camps. A group of Abdal refugees in Birecik stated that their relatives who were living on the street were sent back to Syria. There are also cases in which Dom refugees in big cities such as Istanbul being pushed back and forth between two districts without being provided any alternative.⁸⁶

The circular, has also been used as an excuse by local authorities to remove Dom refugees from sight, as well as complaints from the local community or the Mukhtar. The refugees told the ERRC that the municipal or provincial police were threatening to send them to the camps or back to Syria if they do not remove their tents. Two groups of Dom refugees interviewed in Viranşehir reported that the Municipal Police told them to remove their tents and move somewhere else. Likewise, the families interviewed in Kızıltepe also stated that the Provincial Police told them to remove their tents and rent a place for themselves. Someone in the group said “We told them that we have nowhere to go, and no money to rent a place. Where can we go?”

Another case in Nizip is illustrative of continuous harassment of Dom refugees by law enforcement officials. There is a substantial Dom refugee community living in the Yunus Emre neighbourhood of Nizip, a district of Gaziantep. The ERRC met with a group of 15 families who fled from the city of Mumbuç in Syria and who have been living in makeshift tents on land near their relatives. They told the ERRC that they were warned by the municipal and provincial police several times either to move into a rented property or to leave Nizip. Their tents were demolished several times by the police. In January 2015, the ERRC was informed that their tents were once again demolished by the police and all of the families including the children had to stay in the cold all night. While three families decided to move to Urfa, the others stayed in Nizip as they had young children and they did not want to live far from their relatives.

Following the last incident, a representative of the ERRC in Gaziantep had meetings with the Mukhtar, Security Directorate and the City Governor and the remaining families were registered and given permission to stay in the area for a temporary period. However, there were many families who had to change their location several times due to continuous intimidation from law enforcement officials. An elderly Dom man in Akçakale told the ERRC that some groups staying in the tents were forced to go to the camps and those who refused were pushed back to the Syrian side of the border.

⁸⁶ For example please see Syrian refugees forced to leave unofficial camp in Istanbul, Hurriyet Daily News, 28 April 2014 available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/syrian-refugees-forced-to-leave-unofficial-camp-in-istanbul.aspx?pageID=238&nID=65668&NewsCatID=341>.

“We came here to save our lives. We found refuge here. But now the *zabıta* (municipal police) comes every day and asks us to either go to the camps or back to Syria. They burn or demolish our tents. Just yesterday they burnt some tents around here... Yesterday they sent some people who refused to go to the camps to the other side of the border. On the one hand there is war there, on the other hand they don’t want us here. We don’t know what to do”.

Dom refugees who have been to big cities including Van, Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir also told the ERRC that they were frequently being intimidated by law enforcement officials. A group staying in the ruined and abandoned houses in Dikmen Valley in Ankara were forcibly removed from the area. A local human rights activist helping the group told the ERRC that the families staying in that area were frequently being targeted by the police and their tents have been demolished several times. He reported that on one occasion several families among that group had been detained by the police and that men have been beaten in front of their families and children. Following his intervention and meetings with the police, those who had been detained were released without any further action. The majority of them had to move to other cities due to the permanent pressure by the provincial and municipal police. Media reports also show that Dom and Abdal refugees staying in tents in big cities including Istanbul, Ankara and Urfa had their tents demolished and in some cases burnt by the police. While in few cases they were sent to the camps, the majority were not shown any alternative.⁸⁷

There were consistent reports of provincial and municipal police confiscating the money and possessions of refugees working or begging on the streets in urban areas. Media reports also confirm that there have been operations against Syrian refugees sleeping in makeshift shelters in public areas and begging on the streets across Turkey.⁸⁸ A 46-year-old Dom woman in Nizip told the ERRC that she was caught by the police while she was selling small goods on the street in Van.

“We first arrived in Nizip, then moved to Van. The police destroyed our tents twice. We were trying to survive with the help of neighbours and by asking for help on the streets. The police once caught me on the street and took all my money. They wanted to send me to a camp. I cried and told them that I have got children, and then they released me. After all this, we decided to go to Istanbul. For the first few days, we slept in the park. We were using the bathroom in the mosque. We then found a place to set up our tent. After seven or eight months, we decided to go back to Nizip.”

In big cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, Dom and related groups either live in either Roma neighbourhoods or in poorer areas on the outskirts of the cities. While the ones who have been living with Dom, Abdal or Roma groups have not reported problems with the local community, those who have been living in other areas often stated that the local community did not want them. Due to such experiences of discrimination, they often avoid any contact with the host community apart from asking for help on the streets. Threats and intimidation by law enforcement officials also made them more reluctant and afraid to approach local officials, not only for aid but also regarding other matters such as registration or getting an identification card.

87 Please see the following reports: Suriyeli Mülteciler Ankara’dan Sürüldü, *Bianet*, 6 January 2015 available at: <http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/161327-suriyeli-multeciler-ankara-dan-suruldu>; Yardım bekliyorlardı, kampa gönderildiler, *Cumhuriyet*, 10 January 2015, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/182322/Yardim_bekliyorlardi_kampa_gonderildiler.html; Suriyelilerin ve Romanların çadırları yıkıldı, *Evensel*, 24 December 2013, available at: <http://www.evrensel.net/haber/74883/suriyelilerin-ve-romanlarin-cadirlari-yikildi>; ‘O mülteci kampı apar topar kaldırıldı’, *Radikal*, 28 April 2014, available at: http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/o_multeci_kampi_apar_topar_kaldirildi-1189032.

88 In addition to above please see: ‘Çadırlarda yaşayan Suriyeliler kampa gönderiliyor’, *Kızıltepe Ekspres*, 17 December 2013, available at: <http://www.kiziltepeekspres.com/haber/559/cadirlarda-yasayan-suriyeliler-kampa-gonderiliyor.html>.

4.7. Access to Food and Nutrition

Access to food and nutrition is a common problem for refugees outside the camps. While registered refugees occasionally benefit from food aid provided by local authorities, others are dependent on charity from locals and aid organisations. Dom refugees complained that they hardly received any aid from NGOs and authorities, with Abdal refugees also claiming discrimination in the provision of aid.⁸⁹ Only four families reported receiving aid from authorities or NGOs, including one Dom man in Elazığ who stated that the Mukhtar helped them to receive aid including food and coal, and three families in Viranşehir and Adana who stated that the Municipality and some aid organisations provided them with food aid.

The large families and precarious financial situation of Dom refugees result in the majority being unable to afford food, or only afford food low in nutritional value. A Dom refugee interviewed in Islahiye said;

“For the last three months, we haven’t had enough food. If we were full one day, we were hungry for the next two days. I don’t know how we survive. I don’t really know how these kids are still alive.”

Dom refugees who have recently arrived from Kobani and Hasakah were particularly weak, as they had walked for days to arrive in Turkey. One such family in Urfa told the ERRC that they had only eaten bread and the herbs they could find in the fields for days before arriving in Turkey. Dom refugee children visited by the ERRC were visibly weak and ill due to insufficient food and nutrition. Mothers who had new-born babies did not have enough milk to feed their babies. A young Dom woman, mother of twins in Nizip was so slim and weak that she could not feed her infants, who both appeared to be much smaller than healthy children at that age. The family stated that they could not afford to buy formula food. Although they went to hospital several times, they were not prescribed formula food and vitamins for the infants and the mother.

4.8. Health Status and Access to Healthcare

Though the Temporary Protection Directive and a circular issued by the government on 9 September 2013⁹⁰ guarantee the right to health and access to primary and emergency care for Syrian refugees, these are conditional on registration and possession of an AFAD card. According to the regulations, those who are not registered but in need of healthcare can register in a health centre in coordination with the provincial police authority. Secondary and tertiary healthcare services are not provided free of charge but Syrian refugees can benefit from the same rate applied to Turkish citizens.

Access to healthcare among Dom refugees and related groups has been limited to emergency healthcare, in particular birth services. While the majority of births took place in hospital, there were cases of births that took place in the informal tent camp in Adana with the help of a midwife in the community. One of the women had bleeding following the birth, and she was taken to hospital. Dom women who gave birth in hospital told the ERRC that they did not encounter significant problems in accessing healthcare. However they were all discharged from the hospital

⁸⁹ Similar issues facing Alevi refugees from Syria have been reported by the International Crisis Group as well. For the report please see International Crisis Groups (2014), *The Rising Costs of Turkey’s Syrian Quagmire*, Europe Report N°230.

⁹⁰ AFAD Circular, Suriyeli Misafirlerin Sağlık ve Diğer Hizmetleri Hakkında Genelge, No 59259163 dated 9 September 2013.

shortly after the birth. They were not provided with antenatal or postnatal healthcare and did not receive any information about breastfeeding and childcare. Furthermore, they were not informed about vaccination and contraception. Other emergency cases reported included poisoning. A 35-year-old Abdal woman in Reyhanlı told the ERRC that one of her children had food poisoning and they took him to hospital, where he received treatment without any problems.

Syrian refugees staying outside the camps are also at risk of infectious and communicative diseases due to the lack of preventive health services and vaccinations.⁹¹ None of the children of the families visited by the ERRC had received vaccinations in Turkey. Families reported that they have not had any visits from health workers and did not know what to do to receive such services. They also stated that new-borns have not been vaccinated in the hospitals. Parents reported that a substantial majority of refugee children had some kind of medical issues, such as ‘flu or colds’. Furthermore, they had skin conditions due to lack of vitamins and minerals as well as due to living in unhygienic situations. All members of a family visited by the ERRC in Akçakale, including the children, showed symptoms of leishmaniasis.⁹² The World Health Organisation states that it is mostly associated with malnutrition, population displacement, poor housing, a weak immune system and lack of resources. WHO also reports that hepatitis, typhoid, cholera, and leishmaniasis have increasingly spread largely unchecked inside Syria and among refugee populations.⁹³ Following the increased number of cases, a special leishmaniasis clinic was established in Gaziantep in 2013 for non-camp refugees. However, Dom refugees visited by the ERRC and who were showing symptoms of this disease did not have any information about health services provided free of charge, apart from emergency services in hospitals.

Some families stated that they were buying medication which was not covered by the hospitals themselves, but that the majority were not able to afford it. An elderly Abdal man in an informal camp in Kilis was paralysed due to the trauma he experienced during a bombing in Syria. His wife told the ERRC that he cannot sleep at night and suffers from constant pain. However, they cannot afford painkillers or other medication, or hygiene products.

While the majority of Dom refugees told the ERRC that they have not had problems in accessing emergency healthcare, some refugees have been denied treatment in local hospitals. In one such case in Kilis the stated reason was the lack of registration and identity cards. An unregistered young Dom man, who took his pregnant wife to hospital after she started having pain, was told that they needed to register first in an AFAD office. In another case an elderly Dom refugee told the ERRC that they were denied health services in an arbitrary way in central Şanlıurfa and that they had to go to a hospital in Akçakale where mostly Syrian refugees go. The Turkish Medical Association states that among the reasons preventing refugees from getting healthcare are lack of awareness about the health system and the procedures; lack of knowledge about free healthcare; lack of registration; language barriers; difficulty in getting medication; security concerns; conflict-linked psychological and physical trauma; and negative attitudes faced in

91 Türk Tabipler Birliği (2014), Suriyeli Sığınmacılar ve Sağlık Hizmetleri Raporu, TTB, available at: <http://www.ttb.org.tr/kutuphane/siginmacirpr.pdf>.

92 *Leishmaniasis* is a disease caused by a protozoa parasite from over 20 *Leishmania* species and is transmitted to humans by the bite of infected female phlebotomine sandflies. For further information please see World Health Organisation Factsheet N°375 at the following link: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs375/en/>.

93 ‘WHO warns of increased risk of disease epidemics in Syria and in neighbouring countries as summer approaches’ World Health Organisation Press Release, 3 June 2013, available at: <http://www.emro.who.int/press-releases/2013/disease-epidemics-syria.html>.

healthcare settings.⁹⁴ Because there are not enough translators in state institutions, language barriers continue to prevent refugees from accessing aid and other services.

Due to their experiences during the conflict, many Dom refugees were suffering from psychological trauma. Those who lost all their family members were in a visibly distressed state. There is no psychosocial support for refugees outside of camps. None of the Dom refugees visited by the ERRC received any social and psychological support from the authorities or from aid organisations.

4.9. Specific Challenges to Women

Syrian refugee women experience further difficulties due to their financial dependency, war trauma, including losing their husbands, the responsibility of having to look after large families and reproductive health problems including complications during pregnancy and after childbirth. They often live in isolation from the host community due to language barriers. There are reports of sexual exploitation of women and child marriages and of Syrian women entering local households as second or third wife.⁹⁵ While marriage was an option to have stability and protection for some Syrian women, their dependency and lack of awareness on their rights and existing services often make them vulnerable to sexual exploitation and domestic violence. Those who can find a job work in exploitative conditions and in some cases they face harassment from their employers. Access to sexual and reproductive health services is also problematic for all Syrian refugee women.

In Dom communities, marriage mostly takes place within the community and marriage between Dom and non-Dom is rare, though there are no strict rules against it.⁹⁶ Visits to Dom communities revealed cases of intermarriage between Dom refugee women and local Dom men from Turkey. Such marriages have increased since the influx of refugees to Turkey, particularly with local Dom men marrying Dom refugee women as second and third wives. Similar cases of marriages have also been reported for other Syrian refugee women.⁹⁷ The ERRC interviewed two women in this situation in Nizip, Gaziantep. One of them, a 25-year-old Dom woman from Syria, was the second wife of a Dom man. She told the ERRC that she had not known about her husband's first marriage.

“He told me that he is not married, I mean, that they are separate. When he took me home, she (the first wife) did not want me. Whenever he would leave home, she would start fighting with me. She beat me a few times. Once she even called the police and told them that I am Syrian and asked them to take me to the camps. Actually, I understand her. It is not nice to have a *kuma* (co-wife). But I could not put up with all that and in the end I left home. First I stayed with his other relatives. I told him to rent a place for me. I said “If you don't want to, you don't even have to visit me”.

At the time of the interview, she was living with her one-year-old baby in a small bedroom in a building belonging to relatives of her husband.

⁹⁴ Please see TTB, 2014: 47.

⁹⁵ Please also see TTB, 2014: 70; Kirişçi, 2014: 29 Institute, 2014: 29.

⁹⁶ For example see, Terre des Hommes (2011), Dom People and Their Children in Lebanon, Terre Des Homes available at <http://www.tdh.ch/en/documents/the-dom-people-and-their-children-in-lebanon>.

⁹⁷ For example see, Syria's refugees: fears of abuse grow as Turkish men snap up wives, The Guardian, 8 September 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/08/syrian-refugee-brides-turkish-husbands-marriage>.

In another case, a 20-year-old Dom refugee woman married a local Dom man, who already had two wives and eight children. She told the ERRC that her father died in Syria during the conflict and she did not know where the rest of her family is. She had nine-months-old twins who were suffering from stunted growth due to malnutrition. She told the ERRC that she did not have enough milk after the birth. She was physically weak and psychologically very distressed. Both of these women believed that marriage was the only option available to them to survive in Turkey.

Interviews with the families visited by the ERRC showed that women's access to health services was limited to emergency care and childbirth. None of them used sexual and reproductive health services. Access to hygiene products was particularly difficult for women due to finances. The conditions they live in often cause reproductive tract infections. A number of women told the ERRC that they had a difficult pregnancy period and childbirth. A young woman in Adana was hospitalised for bleeding after birth. Although she received care in the hospital for one night, the conditions she was staying were not suitable for a quick recovery.

The majority of Dom refugee women interviewed by the ERRC were working to support their families or begging on the streets. A 46-year-old Dom woman told the ERRC that she was selling small household items when they were in Lebanon, where they went first after the conflict, but she could not find a job in Turkey and was forced to beg on the streets. Language was one of the barriers she mentioned. Dom women who were working or begging on the streets told the ERRC that when the provincial or municipality police saw them on the streets, they told them to leave the area, occasionally intimidating them and threatening to take them to the camps. A number of women reported that they were ill-treated or had their belongings and money confiscated by police.

4.10. Specific Challenges to Children

Half of the Syrian refugees in Turkey are children. Research on Syrian refugee children shows that they suffer from persistent fear, anger, lack of interest in activities and hopelessness.⁹⁸ Those outside of official camps have no access to services provided to refugee children there. Many suffer from ill health and stunted growth due to malnutrition and poor living conditions, and the majority of children aged five and above work long hours in difficult conditions to support their families.

A significant majority of Dom refugee children in informal tent camps visited by the ERRC were malnourished, and all of the children staying in tents or unsuitable accommodations had symptoms of other illnesses (such as cold or 'flu symptoms). In particular, the refugee children who have recently fled to Turkey from Kobani and Hasakah regions of Syria felt very weak due to days of walking to flee from the IS attacks. All of the children of a family staying in a makeshift tent in Kızıltepe appeared to have *alopecia areata*, a disease causing hair loss and which is more common in refugee populations. Due to the irritation it causes and also the unhygienic conditions there were signs of infection in the affected areas.⁹⁹ The children visited by the ERRC in Akcakale were suffering from *leishmaniasis*, which is caused by malnutrition and poor hygiene.

98 Please see UNICEF (2014), Under Siege: The devastating impact on children of three years of conflict in Syria, Leah, J. et al, The mental health of Syrian refugee children and adolescents, available at: http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_72815.html. Also see Forced Migration Review No: 47, available at: <http://www.fmreview.org/en/syria/james-sovcik-garoff-abbasi.pdf>.

99 According to Alopecia UK, "there is circumstantial evidence of alopecia being more common in dangerous environments, and in refugee populations" Please see Alopecia UK, People with alopecia: Their experiences with dermatologists, available at: <http://www.alopeciaonline.org.uk/documentLibraryDownload.asp?documentID=2>.

None of the children were vaccinated against polio, measles or other contagious diseases. Parents, even those who had been to hospital for pregnancy checks or for births, have not been informed about vaccination. A number of children, particularly those who lost their parents during the conflict, showed signs of psychological trauma. Refugees told the ERRC that there have not been any health-monitoring activities in the areas where they have been living.

Dom refugee children often face labour and exploitation in the informal economy. According to official figures, almost 900,000 refugee children are estimated to be working in Turkey, around 300,000 of them between the ages of five and 14.¹⁰⁰ All of the children visited by the ERRC who were aged five or above were working together with their parents in jobs such as seasonal agriculture work, construction work, garbage collecting and other manual jobs. There were many children working on the streets selling goods such as water and tissues, or begging on the streets. The age of children working or begging on the streets was as young as five.

The majority of Dom refugee children visited by the ERRC were not attending school. There were only a handful of children in informal tent camps in Kilis and Adana who were going to nearby schools established for Syrian refugees. A Dom man who lives in Elazığ also told the ERRC in Nizip that his children are going to an informal Arabic language school in Elazığ. These families stated that their children used to go to school in Syria as well. The enrolment rate of children in Dom, Abdal and other related communities in Syria was already at low levels.¹⁰¹ However, a number of refugee families whose children were not attending in school in Syria stated that they were considering sending them to school if there was an opportunity to do so.

Access to education for Syrian refugee children is contingent on registration and AFAD cards, as with all refugee services. There are also increasing numbers of Arabic-language schools established in unofficial refugee camps or in cities where there is a significant refugee population, albeit far from enough. According to AFAD, the enrolment rate of children in the camps is around 80 per cent. However only 14 per cent of children outside the camps are attending school.¹⁰² This rate is estimated to be far lower for Dom refugees and related groups. Apart from the families who were staying in informal tent camps in Kilis and Adana, the refugee families visited by the ERRC did not have any information about existing schools for Syrian refugees or other education opportunities. One such family in Viranşehir said, “The children used to go to school in Syria. But we don’t know if they can go here. They cannot speak Turkish.”

Financial difficulties and child employment are among the main reasons preventing children from joining educational and other social activities. In addition, Dom children experience discrimination and prejudice from both the host community and other Syrian refugees. Dom refugees who stayed in the official camps told the ERRC that their children would often be beaten or humiliated by other children and their families in the camp. Those who live outside the camps and work on the streets experience ill treatment. A Dom family in Urfa reported to the ERRC that municipal police tried to send their children upon gathering them on the streets to the camps without their permission.

100 ‘Syrian refugees trigger child labour boom in Turkey’, Constanze Letsch, Guardian, 2 September 2014, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/law/2014/sep/02/syria-refugees-child-labour-turkey>.

101 There is no study focusing on schooling of the children in Dom and related communities in Syria, except the references in studies on Dom communities in general (see Williams, 2000). Another study on Dom children in Lebanon puts that 68% of school-age children in Dom communities in Beirut, Saida and Tyre have never been to school (Terre des Hommes, *The Dom People and their Children in Lebanon*, 2011).

102 Please see International Crisis Group, 2014: 9.

5 CONCLUSION

Dom and Abdal and other related refugee groups in Turkey are destitute, discriminated against by authorities, the host community and other Syrian refugees, and live in substandard and unsuitable accommodations. Irregular employment and low wages prevent them meeting basic needs such as food and nutrition. Their access to healthcare is difficult due to discrimination, language barriers, financial difficulties and lack of knowledge about the health system and their rights. While the majority of Syrian refugees face similar problems, the situation of Dom and Abdal groups is exacerbated by prejudice and discrimination. This has been reinforced by negative media reports on “Syrian beggars” and “Syrian Gypsies”, which allege that their desperate situation is the result of their lifestyle. Prejudice and violence force Dom refugees and related groups to constantly move from one place to another with nowhere safe to turn. One of their main survival mechanisms is their strong community bonds. Their forced evacuation and relocation threaten these bonds separating families and make them even more vulnerable to the existing challenges.

The social and economic cost of the refugee crisis is beyond the capacity of the Turkish government to effectively respond. To date the Turkish government has spent 5 billion dollars on aid to Syrian refugees. International support is crucial for an improved response to the crisis, but to date international financial support has been insufficient. Considering that there will not be a quick solution to the Syrian conflict, there is a need to go beyond meeting the basic needs of Syrian refugees and to respond to their longer-term needs.

As the number of Syrian refugees approaches two million, their concentration in certain cities and resulting social tensions and over-stretching of public services with no end to the conflict in sight mean means that the Turkish government needs to take measures to prevent further tensions and tackle discrimination against Syrian refugees. To avoid social, economic and political problems, the government, in cooperation with civil society organisations, needs to work to integrate the refugees, with the financial support and assistance of the international community. The particular vulnerabilities of Dom and related groups to discrimination point to a need to address them specifically and involve them in these integration processes. Increased awareness on Dom refugees in Turkey will help the authorities and NGOs to provide appropriate assistance taking into account their specific needs.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Turkish authorities:

Admission and registration

Continue to implement open border policy enabling all Syrian refugees' access to Turkey regardless of they have got passports or not and without discrimination against any ethnic group including Dom and related groups;

Respect the principle of *non-refoulement* and investigate the reports about Dom refugees and related groups being sent back to Syria when they refuse to go the camps after being gathered by the law enforcement officials under the Government circular on the Syrian refugees living and begging on the streets;

Effectively investigate all reports of ill-treatment at the border and reports of deportation and push-backs to Syria and bring those responsible into justice;

Complete the registration process for all Syrian refugees with a view to identify vulnerabilities of specific groups;

Develop and implement effective mechanisms to inform Syrian refugees, including Dom refugees and related groups, about the registration procedures with a view to eliminate existing myths and misconceptions about the registration;

Facilitate the registration processes for the Syrian refugees, including Dom refugees and related groups staying in the informal tent camps by enabling them to get residency addresses;

Develop appropriate policies to enable the Syrian refugees moving for seasonal employment to benefit from public services in the cities they work.

Information and awareness raising campaigns

Develop and implement effective mechanisms to inform the Syrian refugees of their rights and entitlements as set out in the new Temporary Protection Directive. Considering that Dom and related groups often avoid contact with the authorities due to their fears of discrimination, ensure that these groups equally and effectively benefit from such information and awareness raising campaigns;

Provide awareness raising trainings for the service providers on the rights and entitlements of Syrian refugees. Ensure that such trainings include modules on equality and diversity with a view to end discrimination against Syrian refugees in particular against Dom refugees and related groups;

Develop and promote information campaigns for the public to challenge the misconceptions about the Syrian refugees, including Dom refugees and other related groups;

Combat discriminatory language used by the media against Syrian refugees including Dom and related groups, which convey prejudices and incite hate crime and violence against refugees;

Develop integration and social cohesion policies for the Syrian refugees and the host society.

Social and economic rights

Fully implement the Temporary Protection Directive in cooperation with the UN agencies and NGOs;

Ensure that all Syrian refugees have access to appropriate accommodation with sanitation facilities and clean water. Give permission to Dom and related groups to set up tents or tent camps in suitable areas until more viable options are provided to them;

Grant work permits to all Syrian refugees and enhance employment opportunities;

Take measures to end discrimination against Syrian refugees in employment and ensure that there are effective complaint mechanisms;

Ensure that all Syrian refugees can access to healthcare. Guide the health personnel about the registration procedures for the refugees who are not registered and who do not have an AFAD identification card;

Step up the vaccination campaigns in all areas that the Syrian refugees are staying, in particular in the informal tent camps where Dom refugees are staying;

Ensure that all Syrian refugee women can benefit from sexual and reproductive health services;

Support the education activities by the Syrian service providers, including language-learning programmes and facilitate the Syrian refugee children to go to Turkish schools;

Take measures for preventing and combating stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against the ethnic minority groups among Syrian refugees including Dom refugee children;

Provide translation services for all Syrian refugees in the state institutions to facilitate their access to public services;

Ensure that Dom refugees and related groups can access to the services provided for Syrian refugees without encountering discrimination.

To the international community:

Increase funding for the UN's Regional Response Plan for Syria Crisis;

Provide financial and other forms of support for Turkey and other host countries to increase the assistance provided for the Syrian refugees and to increase the capacity of the local and national public services;

Increase the resettlement and humanitarian admission quotas for the Syrian refugees;

End the practice of collective expulsions and push backs at the borders;

Develop and implement comprehensive integration policies for the Syrian refugees.