



# Mitigating Risks for Syrian Refugee Youth in Turkey's Şanlıurfa

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# Principal Findings

**What's new?** A generation of young Syrians in Turkey is not receiving the support it needs to integrate successfully into Turkish society. Exposure to discrimination and exploitation, unaddressed psycho-social trauma, and lagging support for skill acquisition and job training further increase this group's vulnerability.

**Why does it matter?** The lack of support makes the substantial Syrian refugee youth population susceptible to exploitation by criminals and militant groups. Left unaddressed, this exploitation can feed tension and heighten insecurity for both Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens.

**What should be done?** Better policies can help ensure that young Syrian refugees become productive members of society, be it in Turkey or (one day) in Syria. Ankara and outside donors should redouble efforts to keep refugee youth in school, treat their traumas, help them build durable livelihoods and protect them from predatory elements.

## *Executive Summary*

Turkey has taken important steps toward integrating more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees. But the youth population – which represents at least half of that number – presents special challenges that have received insufficient attention. Syrian youth displaced to Turkey face enormous difficulties. Too many are not in school. Most are coping with anger, trauma and loss. Vast numbers are or will be in need of jobs. These factors increase young Syrian refugees' susceptibility to exploitation by criminal networks and militant groups that view them as potential recruits. Young women and girls are at additional risk of being forced into exploitative marriages and sex work. Because the numbers of Syrian youth are so large, failure to meet the needs of this population today could feed tensions for years to come. Along with its international partners, Turkey should adopt measures to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable youth, enhance their future prospects and promote their integration into the communities where they live.

Şanlıurfa, the province in south-eastern Turkey with the longest border with Syria, presents a graphic illustration. Even before the influx of Syrians, this socially conservative, ethnically diverse province of two million faced high levels of poverty, wide educational gaps and severe underemployment. Now with over 450,000 Syrians, most of them young and traumatised, Şanlıurfa is grappling ever more with insufficient jobs, inadequate school capacity, early marriages and public administration deficiencies, as well as an increase in crime. Inter-communal strains are emerging in Şanlıurfa that could lead to clashes and presage similar tensions elsewhere.

The Turkish government and its international partners can lay the ground-work for a more secure future for Şanlıurfa, and Turkey as a whole, by taking steps now to better protect and integrate young Syrian refugees. Such steps would address the underlying factors that feed young Syrians' vulnerability as well as more direct threats to them and their Turkish citizen hosts.

Priority attention should focus on broadening registration of refugees; increasing school enrolment through to graduation and beyond; raising awareness among (and offering resources to) those at risk of exploitative marriage; and improving access to sustainable livelihoods through training programs, voluntary relocation to areas with labour shortages, and targeted grants to support agricultural initiatives and cooperatives. In addition, Ankara could strengthen its fight against illicit networks that exploit Syrian youth and threaten Turkish citizens through more robust anti-bribery measures at borders, enhanced mechanisms for preventing jihadist and other militant indoctrination, and better access to law enforcement and safe haven for victims. Donors should also take care, as always, to ensure that their support is aligned with Turkey-wide and local development strategies.

**Istanbul/Brussels, 11 February 2019**

# Mitigating Risks for Syrian Refugee Youth in Turkey's Şanlıurfa

## I. Introduction

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Turkey hosts the highest number of refugees from Syria's war, having since 2011 registered more than 3.6 million under a status it calls "temporary protection".<sup>1</sup> As Crisis Group has highlighted elsewhere, social tensions are rising as Syrians, most of whom do not speak Turkish, strain the already burdened capacity of Turkey's schools and labour market.<sup>2</sup>

Many Syrians among the first refugee waves travelled onward to Europe, but today that door is closed. In March 2016, Turkey and the EU struck a bargain by which Ankara pledged to stanch the westward refugee flow in exchange for funding to support Syrians in Turkey. Thus far, Brussels has dispersed €1.94 billion and contracted €1.06 billion through the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey; it has promised a second tranche in the same amount (€3 billion).<sup>3</sup> The aid has helped meet the refugees' emergency needs and given a particular boost to health and education programs. But the needs of Syrian refugees in Turkey – and particularly those of the young population – are already outstripping the resources that have been allocated to meet them.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the needs of young Syrian refugees will continue to grow. Approximately 50 per cent of all Syrians in Turkey are under the age of eighteen, and Syrian refugee birth rates are high.<sup>5</sup> According to an October 2018 Atlantic Council study, citing Turkish foreign ministry figures from August, some 345,000 Syrians have been born in Turkey since 2011.<sup>6</sup> Turkish authorities project that by 2028 there will be around five million Syrians in Turkey, most of them under eighteen.<sup>7</sup> Though the border is now closed, refugee numbers could grow again if the September 2018 deal between Ankara and Moscow that forestalled an expected Syrian government offensive in Idlib unravels, and even more Syrians flee. To be sure, some Syrians will return home. According to the Interior Ministry, as of 31 December 2018, 294,480 Syrians

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<sup>1</sup> Temporary protection status grants access to free health care, public education and welfare benefits, on the same terms as for Turkish citizens, as well as the right to apply for work permits. Depending on need, Syrians under temporary protection have access to additional benefits supported by EU aid, such as vocational training and monthly cash stipends to buy staples.

<sup>2</sup> Crisis Group Europe Report N°248, *Turkey's Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*, 29 January 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Of the second tranche, as of early February the EU had contracted €500 million to the Turkish Ministry of Education for education-related needs. Crisis Group interview, European official, Istanbul, February 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this report, the term "youth" refers to the 15–24 age bracket. "School-aged" refers to ages 6–18, and "juvenile" to 12–18.

<sup>5</sup> Figures from the Directorate General of Migration Management, as of December 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Laura Batalla and Juliette Tolay, "Toward Long-Term Solidarity with Syrian Refugees? Turkey's Policy Response and Challenges", Atlantic Council, 20 September 2018.

<sup>7</sup> This projection takes into consideration the birth rate, and does not factor in returns or inflows. "Syrian refugees in Turkey to exceed 5 million in 2028", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 24 August 2018.

have already done so.<sup>8</sup> But the government knows that this relative trickle is likely not a harbinger of mass returns. Most Syrians – if they wish to return at all – say they will not go back until the war is over, Bashar al-Assad is gone and reconstruction is well under way.<sup>9</sup> Ankara is right to anticipate that vast numbers of Syrians will be in Turkey for the long term.

As Turkey and its partners consider how to help young Syrian refugees succeed and integrate into Turkish society, there is much to learn from the challenges faced by Syrian refugee youth in Turkey's Şanlıurfa province. Şanlıurfa, which lies between the large cities of Gaziantep to the west and Diyarbakır to the east, has the longest border with Syria of any Turkish province. As of December 2018, there were 453,083 Syrians registered in Şanlıurfa, out of a total native population of slightly over two million.<sup>10</sup> The province is largely rural, socially conservative and ethnically diverse.<sup>11</sup> At first, Şanlıurfa was relatively hospitable toward Syrians, particularly toward the 20-25 per cent who came from locales directly across the border in 2014 when Kurdish militants battled the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Many of these arrivals had Turkish citizen relatives who could help with bureaucratic hurdles, housing and jobs.<sup>12</sup> Others came from further away: Raqqa, Deir al-Zour and Aleppo. By 2016, Şanlıurfa's already weak economy and its social fabric was showing worrying new strains.<sup>13</sup>

This report examines those strains, their causes and ideas about how they might be addressed, with an emphasis on refugee youth, looking at both their impact on Turkey and the risks they face there. It is based on interviews conducted by Crisis

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<sup>8</sup> “294 bin 480 Suriyeli ülkesine döndü” [“294,480 Syrians returned to their countries”], Anadolu Ajansı, 5 January 2019. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees' office says it can confirm the return of around 37,000 Syrians in 2018. “250,000 Syrian refugees could return home next year: UNHCR”, Reuters, 11 December 2018. Turkish municipalities offer relocation support to those willing to voluntarily return. An observer whom Crisis Group interviewed complained of unregulated returns, such that some youth who were provided with relocation support ended up joining armed militants in Syria. Crisis Group interview, Istanbul, January 2019.

<sup>9</sup> “Suriyeliler Barometresi: Suriyelilerle Uyum İçinde Yaşamın Çerçevesi” [“Syrian Barometer: A Framework for Achieving Social Cohesion with Syrians in Turkey”], Istanbul Bilgi University Publications, April 2018.

<sup>10</sup> This figure, based on Migration Directorate data, may or may not be accurate, for reasons described in section III.A below. Around 10 per cent of Syrians are estimated to be unregistered. Moreover, some Syrians registered in Şanlıurfa have moved to other provinces. Thus the true number of Syrians in Şanlıurfa may be higher or lower than the number registered.

<sup>11</sup> Census data does not record ethnicity, but local academics estimate that 60 per cent of Şanlıurfa's inhabitants are Kurdish, 30 per cent Arab and 10 per cent Turkmen or Turkish. The rural population, which constitutes 45 per cent of the total (as of 2017), is organised around Kurdish and Arab kinship networks (*aşiret*), of which there are around 70. Figures available on the Şanlıurfa Metropolitan Municipality's website.

<sup>12</sup> Crisis Group interviews, academics, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>13</sup> According to Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) data, unemployment in Şanlıurfa was around 16 per cent in 2017, and around 20 per cent among youth aged between 15-24. GDP per capita figures are taken from the Central Anatolia Development Agency report; Şanlıurfa production figures come from the March 2018 report of the Turkish Chamber of Mechanical Engineers. Other socio-economic indicators are also low: taking into account only its two million Turkish citizens, the province ranks near the bottom in education levels, average income and female literacy. TÜİK data for 2016 and 2017. Crisis Group interview, academic, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

Group during the period April 2018-February 2019 in border provinces of Turkey, as well as Ankara and Istanbul, with Turkish state officials from the Ministries of Education, Interior, and Family, Labour and Social Policy, from other institutions working on the integration of Syrian refugees and from the religious directorate (Diyanet); Turkish local politicians and neighbourhood heads; lawyers; Syrian and Turkish school teachers; Syrian refugee women and men, including students, parents, journalists, businesspeople and NGO practitioners; Syrian and Turkish smugglers; Islamic aid organisation and international NGO workers; and EU and other donor representatives.

It also builds on previous Crisis Group reporting, which examined the demographic and political consequences for Turkey of the Syrian refugee influx and offered recommendations for how to defuse the sometimes violent tensions that are emerging between Syrian refugees and native residents in Turkey's major cities.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Crisis Group Report, *Turkey's Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*, op. cit.

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## II. Risks Facing Syrian Refugee Youth in Şanlıurfa

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With Turkey now home to more than 1.8 million Syrian refugees aged eighteen or younger, the Syrian refugee youth bulge has led to persistent worries among native Turkish citizens about a “lost generation” prone to crime, susceptible to recruitment by jihadists and other militants and disruptive of social norms.<sup>15</sup> Government officials and government-aligned media outlets, anxious to reassure the citizenry about the Syrians’ presence, downplay these concerns. They are right to counter alarmism. But real risks exist. Most immediately, the threats are to Syrian youth themselves, who are highly vulnerable to criminal networks’ predation, need protection from efforts to mobilise them to join the fight in Syria and/or indoctrinate them with violent ideologies or sectarian hatred, and are at heightened risk of sexual exploitation. Left unaddressed, today’s risks to Syrian youth will become tomorrow’s problems not just for them, but for the people among whom the young refugees live.

The importance of meeting these challenges appears in stark relief in Turkey’s Şanlıurfa province. Stretched along the Turkey-Syria border, the province’s refugee population is disproportionately young: almost half are under the age of fourteen and another quarter are between fifteen and 24 years old.<sup>16</sup> And too few of these young people are receiving the support they need to overcome the risks they are facing.

### A. *Crime and Criminal Networks*

Crisis Group’s field research strongly suggests that Syrian youth in Şanlıurfa are being targeted for exploitation by criminal networks and require better support and protection to prevent and ameliorate this problem.

Though statistics paint a murky picture, crime rates appear to have increased dramatically in Şanlıurfa since the refugee influx, with officials reporting a four-fold rise in convictions (from 577 to 2,463) between 2010 and 2016.<sup>17</sup> Official figures for juveniles arrested for crimes in southern and eastern Turkey more than doubled in the last decade, and provinces with more refugees per capita saw higher increases.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Turkish officials and citizens, border provinces, April and June 2018; and Ankara, September 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Roughly 30 per cent (some 130,000) of Syrians in the province are under five years old, 28 per cent (some 120,000) are between six and fourteen, and roughly 26 per cent (some 120,000) are between fifteen and 24. Crisis Group estimates using Turkish government data, corroborated by sources in Şanlıurfa, including the Education Ministry’s local branch. Crisis Group interviews, Şanlıurfa, June 2018. The province’s overall population is also trending young: in 2017, Şanlıurfa had the youngest median age, 19.6, and the highest birth rate (4.29 per 1,000 women, excluding Syrians) in Turkey. TÜİK data.

<sup>17</sup> TÜİK prison conviction figures (2009-2016). It is unclear from the data how many of the sex-linked crimes are related to assaults as opposed to sex work.

<sup>18</sup> A quantitative analysis conducted by an external Crisis Group consultant (using TÜİK and Migration Directorate data) found that the difference between the juvenile crime rates in “refugee-dense” and “refugee-scarce” provinces increased by about 20.8 per cent when comparing the three-year period before the refugee influx (2008-2011) to the first two years of large-scale arrivals (2012-2013). When restricted to juvenile males, this rate increase stood at 23 per cent, rising further to 32 per cent for drug-related crime. It is important to register certain caveats about this analysis: first, it is difficult to judge how many of these arrests were of young Syrians as opposed to Turkish citi-

That convictions and arrests would increase over this period is not necessarily surprising – the addition of a large number of people to a community is likely to bring an increase in crime under many conditions – and there are no reliable figures for how much of the increases are specifically attributable to Syrians.<sup>19</sup> But the magnitude of the apparent crime spike is nevertheless striking, and signals the presence of growing risks for Syrian youth vulnerable to exploitation by illicit networks.

Crisis Group's fieldwork suggests that criminal networks target Syrian youth in particular for smuggling, sexual exploitation and drug running. Some challenges are particularly acute among the province's large population of refugees living in camps.

#### 1. A triple threat: smuggling, sexual exploitation and drugs

One of the primary drivers of criminal activity in Şanlıurfa is the province's 911km border with Syria, which makes it a hub for illicit trade. In June 2015, the Kurdish-led People's Protection Units (YPG) seized the Syrian town of Tal Abyad, the main crossing point between Şanlıurfa and Syria's Raqqa governorate. The YPG is the Syrian manifestation of the Kurdistan People's Party (PKK), which Turkey, the U.S. and the EU have designated a terrorist organisation. Turkey subsequently closed the official crossing and tightened its control over the border along Şanlıurfa's southern edge. Still, according to police data, the province was among the top three for smuggling of weapons, ammunition, fuel oil and cigarettes in 2016.<sup>20</sup>

Turkey has since made substantial progress in securing the length of its Syrian border and cracked down on smuggling networks, but illegal crossings continue to take place, including to and from Şanlıurfa, with fixers using ladders to clamber over the wall or bribing border guards.<sup>21</sup> One Syrian working with border officials told

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zens or juveniles of other nationalities. Official crime tallies often describe perpetrators as "nationality unknown" – leaving open the possibility that the person arrested is of Turkish, Syrian or another third origin. Secondly, data about Syrian youth and crime are murky because difficulties abound in tracking and investigating Syrian youth. Many are unregistered, and thus have no name or address on record. Moreover, few police speak Arabic, hampering investigation of crimes in which Syrians are suspects and/or victims. Crisis Group interviews, lawyers and state officials, Şanlıurfa, June 2018. For details of the study, see Appendix B.

<sup>19</sup> In October 2018 the Interior Ministry announced that in the first nine months of 2018, Syrians perpetrated only 1.46 per cent of the crimes committed in the country. This number represented a drop from 1.53 per cent in the first nine months of 2017. "Suriyelilerin karıştığı suç oranı yüzde 1,46'ya düştü" ["Crimes committed by Syrians dropped to 1.46 per cent"], Anadolu Ajansı, 22 October 2018.

<sup>20</sup> "Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, Türkiye'nin detaylı suç haritasını çıkardı" ["The directorate general of security published a detailed mapping of crimes in Turkey"], *Habertürk*, 21 November 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Crisis Group interviews, individuals involved in border smuggling, Şanlıurfa, June 2018. Turkey built a wall, new border police stations and observation towers, and it also installed 360-degree thermal cameras and lighting systems. "Suriye sınırı 'akıllı' sistemle daha güvenli" ["Syria border more secure with 'smart' system"], *Hürriyet*, 5 January 2019; "Turkey finishes construction of 764km security wall on Syria border", *Daily Sabah*, 9 June 2018. These measures have increased the difficulty of crossing, and authorities are also apprehending more of those trying to cross. According to a database privately shared with Crisis Group, in 2018 alone, the Turkish armed forces apprehended at least 224,358 individuals trying to illegally cross from Syria into Turkey (database based on Turkish Armed Forces' daily reports compiled by Omar Kadkoy, research associate at the Economic Policy Foundation of Turkey). There are also reports of border guards shooting at people trying to

Crisis Group that the new security measures mostly mean that the price one needs to pay fixers and guards has increased.<sup>22</sup>

Young Syrian refugees who are unregistered with the Turkish authorities are particularly attractive recruits for Syrian and Turkish smuggling rings. Being native Arabic speakers, and sometimes having knowledge of the terrain, helps them operate on the Syrian side of the border. Being unregistered makes it harder for the authorities to trace them on the Turkish side. Criminal networks accordingly will promise them up to \$200 per day to transport goods and people illegally across the border.<sup>23</sup>

Theft rings also make use of Syrian juveniles, since it is easier for them to fit through narrow windows, their fingerprints are less likely to be on record and they have already lost so much that they are less deterred by the risk of being apprehended, said one criminal lawyer in Şanlıurfa.<sup>24</sup> Those under eighteen also receive lower sentences.

Criminal networks also target Syrian youth in Şanlıurfa for sexual exploitation, with young women and girls especially at risk. According to locals and Syrian NGO field workers, these networks coerce and pressure Syrian young women who have few other ways of generating income into sex work. This widespread exploitation is especially acute among adolescent girls (and widows) and is often organised by mafia-like groups, which take a cut of earnings.<sup>25</sup> One local manager at a youth centre suggested that widows are “seen as most exploitable because they are desperate and have no one to protect them”.<sup>26</sup> Many of the young Syrian widows’ husbands had settled them in Turkey for safety, before themselves going back to Syria to fight. These women can be quite young, due to the widespread practice of early marriage (discussed below), and many have lost their parents as well as their husbands, rendering them particularly vulnerable.

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illegally cross into Turkey. “Turkey/Syria: Border Guards Shoot, Block Fleeing Syrians”, Human Rights Watch, 3 February 2018. (Note also that Turkey allows Syrian refugees to pay short visits to Syria – and then return to Turkey – during religious holidays. Refugees who go back to Syria at other times lose their temporary protection status and cannot re-cross the border. Turkey permits only sanctioned aid workers, along with those affiliated with the militias it supports, to cross back and forth regularly.)

<sup>22</sup> Crisis Group interviews, facilitators of cross-border activity, Hatay, April 2018 and Şanlıurfa, June 2018. Since September 2017, Turkish media has reported five operations resulting in the arrest of nearly 100 customs officials and businesspeople on charges of offering or accepting bribes at the gates. “Beton duvarlar Suriye sınırındaki kaçak geçişi önleyemedi; yeni yöntem merdiven!” [“Concrete walls were not able to stop illegal crossings at Syria border: the new method is using ladders!”], T24, 5 August 2017. But sources in Şanlıurfa confirm that the bribes continue: the price of crossing is between \$1,500 and \$2,000.

<sup>23</sup> Crisis Group field research, border provinces, April–June 2018. “Türkiye’de insan kaçakçılığı Suriyelilerin elinde” [“Human trafficking in Turkey is in the hands of Syrians”], *EnSonHaber*, 1 November 2017. “Syrian migrant children in Turkey quit schools for smuggling”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 7 February 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Crisis Group interview, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Syrian NGO workers in Şanlıurfa who have witnessed such incidents during their work, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>26</sup> The cost of sexual services can be as low as 20 Turkish lira (about \$3.50), according to locals. Crisis Group interviews, Şanlıurfa, June 2018. “Urfa has always been a province ridden with socio-economic problems. Now with a new demographic added, many of those problems which nobody wanted to talk about (such as men taking more than one wife, ethnic tensions or drug use) have been brought to light.” Crisis Group interview, youth centre manager, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

Finally, drug networks, which usually consist of Syrian and Turkish gangs that join forces, prey on Syrian youth both by hooking them on drugs and recruiting them into narcotics trafficking. During its field research Crisis Group came across accounts of young Syrian boys with few prospects, no jobs and unaddressed traumas slipping into the gravity of drug mafias. “They need to let go somehow. Since alcohol is expensive and forbidden by their religion, they prefer drugs, mostly synthetic, cheap ones”, a psycho-social support officer working for an NGO observed.<sup>27</sup> Such narcotics normally do not cost more than 15-20 Turkish lira (\$3-4) per dose. Officials confirm that drug abuse among Syrian and local youth in Şanlıurfa has spiked in recent years.<sup>28</sup> The state is aware of these problems.<sup>29</sup> Hard security measures include deporting Syrian youth (and sometimes their families) who are identified as committing crimes. Preventive policies to protect Syrian youth from getting lured into crime are lagging, however.

## 2. Criminal exploitation in the camps

Syrian youth (both female and male) in the province’s three remaining refugee camps – Ceylanpınar, Harran and Suruç – are especially vulnerable to criminal exploitation. As of December 2018, Şanlıurfa had the largest camp population of any Turkish province, at 44,352.<sup>30</sup> Human trafficking and sexual exploitation are the biggest concerns. There are widespread accounts of camp authorities acting as brokers for local men in Şanlıurfa to “hire” for sex Syrian women staying in the camps.

The scale of the problem is difficult to quantify given the absence of records, but officials whom Crisis Group talked to acknowledged that it exists. A local official of the Migration Directorate said the agency dismissed two camp officials in Şanlıurfa in April 2018 due to allegations that they had been working with prostitution rings.<sup>31</sup> Lawyers from Şanlıurfa’s bar association who provide pro bono services to those who cannot pay – including Syrian refugees – criticise authorities for barring them from

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<sup>27</sup> Crisis Group interview, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Crisis Group interviews, officials, border provinces, April and June 2018. “Their bad guys and Turkey’s bad guys found each other and joined forces”, said a former translator who aided border guards in Reyhanlı. Crisis Group interview, Reyhanlı, April 2018.

<sup>29</sup> A local state representative in Şanlıurfa said the leading problem in the province is drugs. Crisis Group interview, Şanlıurfa, April 2018. In a press statement on 8 February 2018, Bülent Yüçetürk, then a public prosecutor working in the area of juvenile crime in Ankara said, “Syrian and Afghan children constitute an important pool for drug traffickers. They are high in numbers and do this type of work for much less pay. The work that Turks do for 500 lira [some \$90], a Syrian would do for 100 lira [some \$19], and an Afghan would do for 50 lira [some \$9]. These children veer into this path because they do not know what they are doing or how they could be punished. ... It is impossible to find Syrian or Afghan children again after we let them free. When an investigation is launched, they leave the city and move elsewhere. This makes it impossible ... to impose a penal sanction”. “Cumhuriyet Savcısı Yüçetürk: Uyuşturucu satıcıları Suriyeli ve Afgan çocukları kullanıyor” [“Public Prosecutor Yüçetürk: Drug traffickers are using Syrian and Afghan children”], Anadolu Ajansı, 8 February 2018.

<sup>30</sup> The vast majority of the country’s 3.6 million Syrian refugees live outside camps. Including Şanlıurfa, the total number in camps is 143,452. Figures published by the Migration Directorate, as of 25 October 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Crisis Group interview, Migration Directorate official, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

camps. “When we are allowed to enter, they only let us speak to people they select before. They don’t show us the problematic aspects”, one experienced attorney said.<sup>32</sup>

One element of the response to criminal targeting of Syrian youth and other refugees in Şanlıurfa might therefore be to shut down the camps – and, indeed, authorities are already moving in that direction – while also cracking down on illicit activities inside them. In March 2018 the Migration Directorate began offering cash incentives (in the form of a few months’ rent) to those camp residents who wish to move to cities. “People can’t stay there forever. We are working on a formula to allow the most vulnerable to stay in camps [since they would be completely lost in the cities], and support others who wish to voluntarily move into cities”, a Turkish official explained.<sup>33</sup>

### B. *Jihadist and Other Militant Groups*

Jihadist militancy among Syrian refugee youth in Şanlıurfa presents a complicated challenge, just as it does with Syrians and non-Syrians elsewhere in Turkey. Many Syrians in Şanlıurfa originally hail from Raqqa or Syria’s eastern provinces, all of which ISIS controlled for several years over the course of Syria’s war. Some fled ISIS and its violence, while others remained under the group’s control and fled when Syrian Kurdish fighters captured their hometowns. Some Şanlıurfa residents suspect that Syrians who lived under ISIS rule may harbour sympathies for the group and its thinking.

Crisis Group met no Syrians who voiced sympathy for ISIS, though interviewees may not have felt comfortable expressing such views. Interior Ministry representatives said they encounter very few Syrian nationals (compared to Turkish or other nationals) in the course of their operations against ISIS cells, however.<sup>34</sup> In some instances, refugees in Şanlıurfa and elsewhere have helped Turkish authorities identify ISIS operatives.<sup>35</sup>

Yet the problem of jihadist militancy is larger than ISIS, whose reputation is complicated but mostly negative among Syrians. Other armed groups in Syria’s war that are more closely aligned with the Syrian opposition cause and its resistance to the Syrian regime have also espoused versions of jihadist militancy or promoted sectarian intolerance and violence. In Şanlıurfa and other Turkish border provinces, a number of Syrians whom Crisis Group interviewed indicated sympathy with Hei’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), believing that the group is fighting for a legitimate cause in Syria.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Crisis Group interview, lawyer, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Şanlıurfa, May and June 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Syrians in border provinces, April-June 2018 and Turkish officials, Ankara, May and September 2018. Turkey began cracking down on ISIS cells in 2015, when the group began conducting terrorist attacks on Turkish soil. Between then and 2017 some 80 terrorist attacks in the country (including no-casualty cross-border rocket attacks and high-casualty suicide bombings) were attributed to ISIS. These attacks killed more than 200 people. According to open-source tracking by Crisis Group, in 2018, Turkish security forces briefly detained 379 and arrested 248 individuals for suspected links to ISIS.

<sup>35</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Gaziantep, April 2018; and Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>36</sup> HTS is the most recent iteration of Jabhat al-Nusra, Syria’s former al-Qaeda affiliate. A renamed Jabhat al-Nusra joined with several smaller armed groups to form HTS in January 2017. HTS remains explicitly committed to armed “jihad” against the Syrian regime and the imposition of Islam-

Şanlıurfa's social character and its refugees' geographic origins make it unique. At the same time, Şanlıurfa's Syrians are also part of a community of refugees across Turkey who are grappling with the damaging effects of war, and some of whom sympathise with or have embraced militancy.

Prior to 2016, Syrian militants seemed to have a free hand in districts of Şanlıurfa and other border provinces, from which they would travel back and forth into Syria. Today, locals say they see no armed militants on the streets (though small arms may be concealed). Still, in border provinces other than Şanlıurfa that neighbour opposition-held parts of Syria, residents say local authorities continue to be lenient with non-ISIS operatives. In Şanlıurfa, Crisis Group interlocutors expressed confidence that Turkish authorities were diligently targeting ISIS, but did not think that the state should also crack down on HTS-linked networks. Indeed, at the time, HTS-linked networks were largely free to operate.<sup>37</sup>

In Urfa and elsewhere in Turkey, some individuals with organisational, ideological or personal ties to Syrian armed groups maintain networks (often broadly referred to as "extensions" in interviews) and run charities which provide logistical support and recruit for armed groups in Syria. Since 2017, Turkey has mandated that only state bodies can provide formal education. Registered NGOs sanctioned by the state can provide non-formal education. Some unregistered civil society groups also do so, under the radar. Independent groups offer Quran courses, and other forms of training ranging from lessons in "good morals" to athletics for Syrian children and youth.<sup>38</sup> Most of these activities are innocent, particularly in Şanlıurfa, a conservative province with a tradition of peaceful religious gatherings. Some organisations, however, use Quranic education and morals instruction as cover to propagate jihadist ideology or recruit fighters. The state has consistently shut down courses it deems ISIS-linked, when it has managed to identify them.<sup>39</sup> Educational programs linked to other armed groups have received less scrutiny.

To be sure, enforcement has ticked up of late. For example, on 13 January 2019 security forces conducted the first crackdown against "civilian" HTS cells in Turkey, briefly detaining thirteen people in Adana, Istanbul and Ankara, one was the direc-

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ic rule (as the group understands it), but it has also taken steps to distance itself from al-Qaeda and transnational militancy.

<sup>37</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>38</sup> If they are registered, Quran courses are subject to inspection by the religious authority (Diyanet) and NGOs (foundations, associations) by the Interior Ministry. Many courses are not registered, however, and simply gather in rented houses. Diyanet personnel who are assigned to inspect Syrian Quran courses say they do not understand what is being taught because, while they know the Quran by heart, they cannot necessarily follow daily spoken Arabic, let alone the Syrian dialect. Because centres set up by illicit organisations rarely register, they are not formally inspected, but rather followed by intelligence personnel.

<sup>39</sup> As recently as 5 February 2019, 22 people were detained in Istanbul for organising gatherings and courses propagating ISIS, recruiting, arranging logistics and travel to Syria, collecting funds for ISIS. "İstanbul'da DEAŞ operasyonu: 22 gözaltı" ["ISIS operation in Istanbul: 22 detained"], *Hürriyet*, 5 February 2019. Many news reports have also told of religious training centres in Şanlıurfa that were recruiting members and providing logistics for ISIS. One such centre in January 2016 was reportedly caught while preparing a young man with psychological problems to carry out a suicide attack in Raqqa. "Şanlıurfa'da IŞİD'li canlı bomba yakalandı" ["ISIS-linked suicide bomber caught in Şanlıurfa"], T24, 13 January 2016.

tor of an Islamist charity in Adana that was allegedly providing money, spare parts, clothing and food to HTS militants in Syria. But it remains to be seen whether enforcement will meaningfully curtail civil activities linked to armed groups in Syria that put Syrian youth at risk.<sup>40</sup>

For the time being, the civilian activities linked with Syrian armed groups continue in Şanlıurfa and other parts of Turkey. These include religious courses run by charities with ties to militants. Staff of civil society organisations and school teachers in the formal state system told Crisis Group that such courses aim to “keep the passion for another Syria alive” among young Syrians.<sup>41</sup> Syrian parents who send their children to these courses say they do so to ensure that youth maintain a Syrian identity and continue to hone their Arabic language skills. Some are unaware of more ideological instruction.

Yet the line between support for the Syrian opposition cause and promotion of militant ideologies may sometimes be unclear. The same Crisis Group interviewees said these courses often highlight the importance of armed struggle to bring down the Assad regime and replace it with one that strictly enforces Islamic law in Syria. Field workers in Şanlıurfa and elsewhere told Crisis Group that some centres that gather Syrian children and youth for extracurricular learning propagate hatred of “communist Kurds” and heterodox Muslim sects such as Alawites and Shia.<sup>42</sup>

In Şanlıurfa, where the drug problem has swelled, militant groups are also said to prey upon youth who have been involved in crime and drug use. They run “rehabilitation” programs that take in these young men and, under the guise of “curing” them, indoctrinate them with militant ideologies.<sup>43</sup>

Militant indoctrination and recruitment of Syrian refugee youth present a long-term danger to Turkey’s security and social cohesion. Many Syrian youths’ personal histories of trauma could make them susceptible to hostility toward groups that they are told are the cause of their loss and displacement. Though many of these organisations do not have an explicitly anti-Turkish message, the intolerance and militancy they propagate may undermine their young pupils’ chances of effective integration in diverse, multi-ethnic settings, whether in Turkey or Syria.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, some who embrace these messages could turn against Ankara if Turkey changes its policies in Syria. Syrians sympathetic to HTS in other Turkish border areas told Crisis Group

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<sup>40</sup> Cases like the HTS crackdown may lead other groups to go deeper underground, according to locals. Still, some, such as those affiliated with Ahrar al-Sham, part of the Turkish-backed Syrian rebel front, continue to operate openly.

<sup>41</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Istanbul, May 2018; Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>42</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Hatay and Şanlıurfa, April 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Şanlıurfa, April and June 2018.

<sup>44</sup> A Syrian aid worker operating in the territories of Syria controlled by Turkey and its allies justified the inflammation among Syrian youth in Turkey of hostility toward Alawites and Kurds by saying that the Assad regime and YPG are inciting their children and youth against supporters of the Sunni opposition. “If we do not do the same”, he said, “we will be giving Syria away to them for good”. Kurdish Syrians in Şanlıurfa and Turkish citizen Alawites in Hatay told Crisis Group they often feel the need to conceal their roots when interacting with Syrians who support the opposition rebels.

that Turkey could arouse their antipathy if its government reconciles with the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad or distances Turkey from Syria's opposition.<sup>45</sup>

### C. *Exploitative Marriages*

When they arrived in Turkey, often destitute and without immediate prospects, many Syrian families saw advantages to marrying their young daughters to Turkish men, even if the latter were already married. The Syrians saw these marriages, performed by an imam but not sanctioned by the state (and thus called *imam nikahı* unions), as offering their daughters status, protection and material well-being. Yet such unions have often proved detrimental to the emotional health of young Syrian women, while failing to provide the financial and even legal security many families sought. Such transactional intermarriages have also opened fissures in the dislocated communities where young women live.

Syrian families who arrange for their daughters to marry “feed one fewer mouth”, and, in some cases, also receive bride wealth of up to 15,000 lira (about \$2,700).<sup>46</sup> By 2015, some 30,000 Syrian women and girls in Şanlıurfa had married Turkish men in this fashion.<sup>47</sup> Syrian women and girls who fall victim to this practice face long-term repercussions. If not complemented by a registered civil union, *imam nikahı* unions do not grant women the same rights they would have in a legal marriage in the event of separation. Usually underage, Syrian girls and women in these marriages are more vulnerable to maltreatment and abuse. Crisis Group was told that men often will register children born of *imam nikahı* unions under their legal wife's name, so that the child does not appear to be illegitimate – and thus cut off the mother's parental rights.

Moreover, polygamous *imam nikahı* unions are socially disruptive and cause tension between Syrians and Turkish citizens. Polygamy was once common in Şanlıurfa, as in other rural areas of south-eastern Turkey. Ankara banned the practice country-wide in 1926, and though it persisted, it fell off greatly in subsequent decades due in part to campaigns advocating state-sanctioned unions. (In Syria, it is legal for a man to have up to four wives.) Its return has caused schisms and anger.<sup>48</sup> Turkish citizen women blame young Syrian women and girls for such marriages, as well as for a reported rise in prostitution. They often view both as threats to their husbands' fidelity and their families' integrity.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Hatay, April 2018; Şanlıurfa, June 2018. Most precisely, one Syrian involved with the Syrian opposition in Hatay said, “If Erdoğan shakes Assad's hand ... Turkey will become a legitimate target”. Crisis Group interview, Reyhanlı, April 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Crisis Group interviews, border provinces, April and June 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Mithat Arman Karasu, “Integration Problem of the Syrian Asylum Seekers Living in the City of Şanlıurfa”, *Journal of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences* (Süleyman Demirel University), vol. 21, no. 3 (2016), pp. 995-1014.

<sup>48</sup> Under Article 230 of the Turkish penal code, polygamy is a criminal offence. Fighting it therefore serves not only to protect Syrian women and girls, but also to enforce the law in Turkey.

<sup>49</sup> Crisis Group interview, prominent academic in Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

### III. What Makes Youth Vulnerable

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A number of factors increase the vulnerability of Syrian youth in Şanlıurfa and elsewhere to the exploitation described above. Some are not formally registered with the Turkish government, which precludes access to services, and can make them invisible to security services (a plus in the eyes of criminal networks that seek to recruit them). Large numbers of older school-aged Syrians, particularly, are not in school. Refugee youth as a whole receive insufficient psycho-social support. Of course, poverty underlies and compounds other vulnerabilities, closing off options for youth and their families. Moreover, in an environment such as Şanlıurfa's, where many households are under severe economic strain, competition for jobs and livelihoods with newly arrived refugees increases the risk of social tension.

The linkages between trauma, poverty and political violence are hotly debated in the academic and policy literature.<sup>50</sup> Certainly, the vast majority of traumatised and poor people do not embrace militancy, and different factors matter in different cultures and societies. What does seem clear is that in the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey, jihadist and militant groups regard refugee youth as a pool of potential recruits, or at least sympathisers. They believe they can gain the youth's loyalty in part due to refugees' poverty, trauma and accessibility (which is facilitated by youth not attending school), which they may well perceive as rendering the youth more vulnerable. In most cases, their efforts will fail, but the targeting itself, as discussed above, threatens youth and communities.

#### A. *An Incomplete Register*

An unknown number of Syrians are not registered for "temporary protection" status or are registered in a locality different from where they reside.<sup>51</sup> Being unregistered not only deprives Syrian youth of access to basic services and aid, but it also makes it more difficult for security services and state agencies to protect them from exploitation by militant or criminal groups. These groups, in turn, are more likely to use an unregistered Syrian for illegal activities (including cross-border smuggling, for instance) since it will be more difficult for security forces to trace someone without legal status and records.

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, "Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment", UN Development Program, 2017; Kamaldeep Bhui, Nasir Warfa and Edgar Jones, "Is Violent Radicalisation Associated with Poverty, Migration, Poor Self-Reported Health and Mental Disorders?", *Public Library of Science One*, 5 March 2014; and Barbara Sude, David Stebbins and Sarah Weiland, "Lessening the Risk of Refugee Radicalization: Lessons for the Middle East from Past Crises", RAND Corporation, 2015.

<sup>51</sup> In the heat of war, registration at the border was inevitably chaotic and incomplete, based largely on the refugees' oral statements about their origins. Some Syrians entered illegally and never registered. Others registered but then moved to towns in western Turkey or onward to Europe without obtaining the requisite documents. Still others have since returned to Syria, without removing their names from Migration Directorate records. Crisis Group interviews, Syrians in Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa and Kilis, April and June 2018.

A mid-2017 poll suggested that there were approximately 300,000-400,000 unregistered Syrians in Turkey.<sup>52</sup> Ongoing efforts to improve registration through an EU-supported “verification exercise” have likely reduced this number.<sup>53</sup>

Authorities admit that they are having a particularly hard time reaching youth between 15-24. “Syrians usually get registered when they need schooling, medical care or aid. If a young Syrian is working in the informal sector and doesn’t need to access such services, they can continue to live off the radar”, a Turkish official commented.<sup>54</sup> To address this problem, the Migration Directorate has ramped up the capacity of its registration branches (there are four in Şanlıurfa). Many Syrians in Şanlıurfa, however, complain about insulting attitudes of civil servants and slow processing. Bureaucratic bottleneck also still appears to be a problem.<sup>55</sup> The presence of unregistered Syrians adds to locals’ sense of insecurity.<sup>56</sup>

### B. School-related Challenges

Syrian children are more vulnerable to exploitation if they do not attend school (either state-run or Arabic-teaching temporary education centres) or have bad experiences there.<sup>57</sup> Those not in school tend not to learn Turkish or other basic skills, are more likely to be recruited into criminal networks, work under precarious conditions in the informal market or marry into exploitative arrangements. Some also assess them to be more prone to enlistment in Syrian armed groups.<sup>58</sup> They may loiter in streets or parks, feeding local tension. The school experience, however, can also be a source of frustration or marginalisation if children are not protected from bullying or cannot catch up with the curriculum, especially following the at times abrupt closure of Arabic-teaching temporary education centres.<sup>59</sup>

The capacity of Turkey’s school system remains inadequate to the challenges created by the refugee influx. In places with high concentrations of Syrian refugees,

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<sup>52</sup> Crisis Group Report, *Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*, op. cit., p.1. Some 150,000 additional Syrians have registered in the last three years – when the border to Syria was more or less sealed – showing the impact of bureaucratic delays but also the positive result of efforts to encourage Syrians to sign up to gain eligibility for aid and access to services.

<sup>53</sup> “The Facility for Refugees in Turkey: Helpful Support, but Improvements Needed to Deliver More Value for Money”, European Court of Auditors, Special Report N°27, n.d.

<sup>54</sup> Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, October 2018.

<sup>55</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Turkish officials and Syrians, border provinces, April and June 2018.

<sup>56</sup> “I am especially concerned about those who walk around unregistered”, a Turkish Islamic aid NGO worker in Şanlıurfa said, representing a broader sentiment among locals. Crisis Group interview, Şanlıurfa, April 2018.

<sup>57</sup> See, for instance, “Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism”, Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2018; “Prevention of Violent Radicalisation in Schools and Educational Institutions”, Finnish National Agency for Education, February 2018.; “Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation That Lead to Terrorism: Ideas, Recommendations and Good Practices from the OSCE Region”, OSCE, 28 September 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid; Crisis Group field observations and interviews, border provinces, April, May and June 2018.

<sup>59</sup> Crisis Group field observations and interviews, border provinces, April and June 2018. E. Ebru Özbey, “Turkey’s Fight against Youth Radicalisation: Small Steps on A Long Path”, EuroMesco Policy Brief, 10 January 2018.

public schools are overstretched in terms of both physical space and human resources. With 600,000 Turkish citizens and 150,000 Syrians of school age, Şanlıurfa alone needs an additional 4,000 classrooms (some 200 schools) and roughly 5,000 more teachers to meet existing demand. The Ministry of Education, along with international donors, including the Qatar Foundation, Kuwaiti individuals, the German government and the EU, are investing in school construction in Şanlıurfa. By the end of 2019, the ministry plans to have built 150-170 schools, and EU money is financing construction of another 22.<sup>60</sup> But this new capacity will fall short of needs, even as the school-age population continues to rise.

Dropout rates are another problem, especially among older students. Primary school enrolment for Syrians in Turkey today stands at a laudable 96.3 per cent. But this figure drops significantly to about 57.1 per cent at the lower secondary (middle school) and 24.6 per cent at the upper secondary level (high school).<sup>61</sup> Provincial-level enrolment data is not publicly available, but an official from the local branch of the Ministry of Education in Şanlıurfa told Crisis Group that as many as 80,000 school-aged Syrians out of a total of 150,000 were not attending school in the province. Most of those were adolescents who dropped out after primary school.<sup>62</sup>

Older school-aged Syrians drop out because of both economic and social pressures. Often, families pressure boys and girls to work to supplement the family income.<sup>63</sup> In Şanlıurfa, sons working off the books in the fields or in small businesses can usually bring 200 to 300 Turkish lira (\$36-55) per month home to their parents. An international organisation representative said, "After primary school, many Syrian families want their children to work and prefer sending them to Quran courses. They usually don't expect more from keeping their children in education facilities".<sup>64</sup>

Girls also face pressure to marry early. Sometimes early marriage takes the form of *imam nikahı* unions, as described above. In all cases, it is closely tied to dropping out of school. But marriage of underage girls is also an ingrained cultural practice for many Syrians as well as for Turkish citizens in Şanlıurfa.<sup>65</sup>

Some NGOs have paid cash to Syrian families to make up for the monthly income they lose when they send their children to school instead of having them work. But

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<sup>60</sup> Crisis Group interview, Education Ministry official, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Education figures as of 15 October 2018.

<sup>62</sup> Of the 150,000 Syrian school-age children there, around 70,000 attend a school facility, 40,000 temporary education centres and 30,000 public schools. Around 20 per cent of the total Syrian school-aged population not attending school in Turkey (some 450,00 nationwide) lives in Şanlıurfa. Crisis Group interviews, Education Ministry official, Şanlıurfa, June 2018; UNICEF representative, Ankara, September 2018. Ministry of National Education figures as of 15 October 2018.

<sup>63</sup> In a nationwide study of 7,591 Syrians aged 12-17, 33 per cent of male and 10 per cent of female respondents said they were working; 45 per cent of males and 47 per cent of females said they were going to school; and 20 per cent of males and 32 per cent of females said they were "unemployed". Meanwhile, 10 per cent of female and 1 per cent of male respondents in the same age group said they were "married". Data collected in mid-2017 for Istanbul Bilgi University's study, "Syrian Barometer: A Framework for Achieving Social Coherence with Syrians", shared by Prof. Dr Murat Erdoğan and analysed by Crisis Group consultant.

<sup>64</sup> Crisis Group interview, Ankara, September 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Crisis Group interview, Ankara, September 2018.

resource constraints render such efforts unsustainable: when the NGO funding runs out, families feel compelled to take their children out of school again.<sup>66</sup>

Yet another challenge is the school experience itself, which may leave Syrians attending feeling ostracised. Many Syrians whom Crisis Group talked to in Şanlıurfa complained of discrimination by their peers or teachers.<sup>67</sup> In some cases, local children appear to be parroting negative rhetoric about Syrians heard at home and in family settings. Some teachers label their Syrian pupils as “ill-behaved”, reinforcing prejudices in their classmates’ minds. Syrian parents said they felt reluctant to report such incidents to school directors or the local branch of the Education Ministry, fearing reprisal.<sup>68</sup> The ministry’s province-level representatives said they try to defuse such tensions when they hear of them, sending their staff to schools where mistreatment is reported.<sup>69</sup> In the last year, however, they had identified only one such incident in the province, indicating a gap between refugee and official accounts. While in some cases well-informed directors and teachers take their own measures to calm tensions, usually such incidents go unresolved, magnifying the alienation some Syrian students feel in school.

Compounding this problem may be the new policy, since 2016, of integrating Syrians into Turkish public schools, phasing out the Arabic-language temporary education centres it established early in the refugee crisis.<sup>70</sup> Though, as explained in Crisis Group’s January 2018 report, it is the right approach in the long run to prevent a parallel education system from emerging and to foster integration, the transition away from Arabic schooling commenced without necessary preparation. Many youngsters, particularly teenagers, some of whom had been learning in Arabic for years in Turkey, were frustrated by the challenges of adapting to the new Turkish curriculum. In some places, the hasty switch made young Syrians unwilling to go to school.<sup>71</sup>

### C. *Inadequate Psycho-social Support*

Another weakness in meeting Syrians’ needs is the inadequacy of psycho-social support for youngsters in and out of school. Most young Syrians lived through gruesome war experiences in their childhood or early teenage years. Many have endured bombing and witnessed brutal deaths, including of relatives. Children born in camps are constantly exposed to stories of suffering, sorrow, bloodshed and loss that magnify the trauma of living in a closed environment. In tent camps (as opposed to container

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<sup>66</sup> Crisis Group interviews, NGO representatives, Şanlıurfa, June 2018. Two mostly EU-funded programs have successfully boosted primary school enrolment.

<sup>67</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Syrian students and parents in Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>68</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Syrian parents in Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Crisis Group interview, Education Ministry official, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>70</sup> For detailed discussion, see Crisis Group Report, *Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*, op cit. Temporary education centres were established by the Turkish government in the early years of the refugee influx with the assumption that Syrians who would soon return should not be deprived of school education. They teach an adapted Syrian curriculum in Arabic and offer up to fifteen hours of Turkish language training. With Syrians’ return prospects diminishing, the government decided in 2016 to phase out these centres in three years to prevent a parallel education system from emerging and help Syrians integrate into the Turkish public school system.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.; Crisis Group interviews, Syrian parents and youth, Şanlıurfa, April and June 2018.

camps), sexual abuse perpetrated by children against other children is also widespread.<sup>72</sup>

Neither Turkish authorities nor international donors have moved quickly enough to reach Syrian youth in need of psycho-social support.<sup>73</sup> In Şanlıurfa, young Syrians can get psycho-social support from counsellors in Turkish public schools and counselling research centres tied to the Ministry of Education, as well as state hospitals and branches of the Ministry for Family, Labour and Social Policy. Some NGO-run community centres also have psychologists on site or can refer Syrians to state institutions. State services in this area, however, are usually poorly staffed in terms of both numbers and qualifications. “Currently, there are 2,000 students for one counsellor, whereas according to international standards it should be 250 for one”, said a counsellor working in a Şanlıurfa camp.<sup>74</sup> There are few Arabic speakers, meaning that most counsellors cannot communicate well with Syrians enrolled in schools or their parents.

Left unaddressed, “these traumas can be a main source of swelling frustration with the host country”, said a psycho-social support officer working for an international NGO in Istanbul.<sup>75</sup> Trauma can also make it difficult for Syrians aged 12-24 in particular to stay in school or hold down jobs, forcing them into illicit or exploitative work and life situations.

#### D. *Poverty*

Nearly 50 per cent of Syrians in Turkey live under the poverty line.<sup>76</sup> Around 20 per cent of Syrian households have no working members.<sup>77</sup> For their daily bread, these households rely solely on cash and in-kind support from international donors or the state’s social assistance mechanism.<sup>78</sup> An estimated 65 per cent of Syrian households

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<sup>72</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Şanlıurfa, May 2018.

<sup>73</sup> In August 2017, the EU began funding a project called SIHHAT that would set up 178 health clinics for Syrians across the country. The project aims to establish ten community mental health centres and is scheduled to run through the end of 2019. Some vocational training to help Turkish teachers better identify and deal with Syrian students with psychological problems exists (UNICEF launched a course in September 2017 for 65,000 teachers), but such courses can impart only superficial knowledge and cannot account for situations where the classroom environment itself is a source of trauma. Crisis Group observations, Şanlıurfa, April-June 2018; interviews, international organisation representatives, Ankara, September 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Crisis Group interview, Şanlıurfa, June 2018.

<sup>75</sup> Crisis Group interview, Istanbul, October 2018.

<sup>76</sup> Support to Public Institutions in the Turkey Refugee and Resilience Response Plan (3RP) 2017-2018, 16 July 2018. Based on international poverty line calculation standards (\$1.90 a day per person).

<sup>77</sup> 3RP Livelihoods and Employment Data Analysis, “2017 Progress and Way Forward for 2018-2019”.

<sup>78</sup> The European Social Safety Net (ESSN), the world’s largest humanitarian cash program (according to value and total number of beneficiaries), is funded by the EU’s Refugee Facility for Turkey and has around 1.5 million Syrian beneficiaries who receive a monthly allowance of 120 Turkish lira (roughly \$22) through a debit card commonly referred to as a “Kızılay card.”

rely on work in the informal economy.<sup>79</sup> As of December 2018, only around 65,000 Syrians held work permits allowing them to get paid legally.<sup>80</sup>

The poverty of Syrian refugees feeds tension with local communities, which are also struggling. With unemployment a longstanding problem, local Şanlıurfa men complained of losing their jobs to Syrians who were willing to work for less pay.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, according to surveys, the chief grievances against Syrians in Turkey are job competition and security concerns.<sup>82</sup> While these problems are not specific to youth, their impact on youth is undeniable and lasting.

Addressing poverty is particularly difficult at a time of economic slowdown in the country.<sup>83</sup> Around one million Turkish citizens enter the labour force each year.<sup>84</sup> Add around two million working-age (15-65) Syrians and it becomes hard to see how the country can create enough jobs. In Şanlıurfa, the challenge is more daunting still. But to reduce the risks faced by refugee youth and the communities in which they live, refugee families should be helped out of poverty.

Moreover, short-term fixes cannot be the answer. Turkish officials are rightly concerned about what they call the refugees' "dependency" on humanitarian aid. "What will we do after all this funding for humanitarian aid comes to an end?", one high-level official commented. "With the current economic outlook we could potentially cater to the needs of the most vulnerable 250,000, but definitely not all [currently around 1.5 million international aid] beneficiaries".<sup>85</sup> International donors and Turkish authorities have yet to agree on an exit strategy from the EU-funded program

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<sup>79</sup> 3RP Livelihoods and Employment Data Analysis, "2017 Progress and Way Forward for 2018-2019."

<sup>80</sup> This figure includes those who established legal businesses in Turkey, but excludes seasonal agricultural workers, who are exempt from the work permit requirement. Only around half of the Syrians holding permits were registered under temporary protection, the other half were non-refugee Syrians holding legal residence in Turkey. 3RP Livelihoods and Employment Data Analysis, "2017 Progress and Way Forward for 2018-2019"; "Süleyman Soylu: Bu güne kadar 76 bin 443 Suriyeliye vatandaşlık verdik" ["Süleyman Soylu: So far we have granted citizenship to 76,443 Syrians"], T24, 7 January 2019.

<sup>81</sup> A World Bank study estimated that every ten Syrian refugees who take jobs for lower wages displace six local workers. Three of every six displaced locals can find other jobs in the formal sector, but the other three remain unemployed. Ximena V. Del Carpio and Mathis Wagner, "The Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Turkish Labor Market", World Bank Group, August 2015.

<sup>82</sup> A survey of Turkish citizens toward the end of 2017 found that 67.4 per cent believe Syrians are driving higher crime rates, while 58.1 per cent think Syrians are behind an increase in terrorist attacks in the country. The same survey found that 71.4 per cent believe Syrians are taking jobs away from Turkish citizens. Emre Erdoğan and Pınar Uyan Semerci, "Attitudes Toward Syrians in Turkey, 2017", Istanbul Bilgi University, February 2018. In three separate online surveys conducted by the World Food Programme between July 2017 and January 2018, more than two in five Turkish citizens perceived that crime had risen in their neighbourhoods because of Syrians. World Food Programme, "Social Cohesion in Turkey: Refugee and Host Community Online Survey, Rounds 1-2-3", July 2018.

<sup>83</sup> "The World Bank has estimated that even assuming economic growth of over 4 per cent for the next few years, the net job creation of formal firms is now down to zero, meaning that the economy is currently destroying as many jobs as it creates". 3RP Livelihoods and Employment Data Analysis, "2017 Progress and Way Forward for 2018-2019."

<sup>84</sup> "İş gücüne katılım oranı 10 yılda 5,8 puan arttı" ["The workforce participation rate increased by 5.8 points in 10 years"], Bloomberg HT, 28 March 2017.

<sup>85</sup> Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, September 2018.

offering cash payments to Syrians. “If we do not prepare for exit, with less funding down the line, we will probably have to choose between the very and very, very vulnerable in the end”, a UN official said.<sup>86</sup> Solving the problem of poverty for refugees in Şanlıurfa requires attention to the problem of poverty in the province as a whole, in ways that are sustainable for all of its residents.

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<sup>86</sup> Crisis Group interview, Ankara, September 2018.

## IV. Measures to Protect At-risk Youth

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More work is needed to address the risks faced by vulnerable Syrian refugees in Şanlıurfa and elsewhere in Turkey. Along with international partners, Turkey should strengthen measures aimed at long-term integration and support, encouraging Syrians to register for temporary protection status, enrol those Syrian youths who are not in school, help young women and girls steer clear of exploitative marriages, care for those coping with anger, trauma and loss, and create opportunities to those in need of jobs. Security measures that will curb the manoeuvring space of dangerous actors geared at exploiting youth vulnerability are equally important.

All this requires support from international donors as well as coordination among state agencies involved in making social policies, schools, organisations running extracurricular facilities, psychologists and religious authorities, as well as international organisations, all of whom should more directly work toward the goal of mitigating vulnerabilities through integration.

### A. Complete the Register

With estimates suggesting that a significant number of Syrians remain unregistered, it is critical that Turkish authorities pour additional effort into achieving full registration. There are a number of steps that it might take in order to make its efforts more effective.

First, the Migration Directorate needs to better train its staff in language and cultural mores, so that Syrians' first contact with state authority is less frustrating and thus less likely to deter further contact. This step will help keep records accurately updated.<sup>87</sup> Another way to build Syrians' trust in institutions and help overcome the language barrier at local registration offices would be to hire Syrians (such as those who have become Turkish citizens). Hiring Syrians would also help generate durable employment for refugees in the public sector, even if only for a few.

Finally, NGOs with strong local presence and local branches of ministries should carry out more targeted outreach activities by collaborating with neighbourhood heads (*muhtars*) who are usually informed of the registration status of Syrians living in their localities. Once identified, NGOs and ministry officials should inform Syrians of the benefits of registering. Allowing those who relocated mostly for employment reasons (even if in the informal sector) to re-register in their new place of residence would also help to this end.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Syrians whom Crisis Group interviewed generally complained of negative attitudes toward them on Migration Directorate officials' part. Crisis Group interviews, border provinces, April and June 2018.

<sup>88</sup> Once a Syrian registers in one province, he/she can only move to another after obtaining a permit from the provincial migration directorate. Getting a permit usually takes a long time. Hence many Syrians move to another province without obtaining this document and are then not allowed to re-register in their new place of residence.

## B. *Counter Illicit Networks, Indoctrination, and Exploitation of Women and Girls*

### 1. Illicit networks

In order to crack down on smuggling networks that exploit Syrian youth, Ankara should make it harder for them to manipulate gaps in border security. One way to do this is by strengthening anti-bribery measures. Authorities can better identify smugglers and bribe takers by conducting interviews with people who are caught trying to cross illegally and engaging in more frequent random inspections of border officials. A corruption complaint and reward mechanism could also help. With support from EU countries, Turkey has already invested in efforts to ramp up its border security.<sup>89</sup> Cooperation in this direction should continue.

### 2. Indoctrination

Key to countering attempts to indoctrinate young refugees will be identifying “training” centres where jihadist or other militant groups aim to win recruits or to incite sectarian hatred and violence. The state should either give Turkish religious directorate staff in charge of inspecting registered facilities proper Arabic training or hire other Turkish citizen inspectors who already speak the Syrian dialect of Arabic. Another option would be to hire new inspectors from among qualified and vetted Syrians. To create an alternative for Syrian families that wish to provide their children with religious instruction, the Diyanet should offer incentives to Turkish foundations it supervises to extend their Quran courses and other religious training to include Syrian youth and support these foundations in hiring Arabic-speaking teachers.<sup>90</sup>

As Turkey’s religious authority, the Diyanet also needs to pay more attention to training staff that can properly inspect centres of religious teaching that Syrian youth attend. Clerics can play an important role in dispelling misconceptions that Islamic precepts advocate violence. They need to be trained, however, to effectively reach at-risk youth. Where possible, state institutions should hire Syrian imams, counsellors and social workers who can more quickly form close, trusting relationships with young refugees.

### 3. Exploitation and coercion of women and girls

The range of coercive situations Syrian women can face, from exploitative marriage to survival sex and predation by criminal networks, makes it essential that young women and their parents be informed of potential risks and also their rights and recourse. The Turkish authorities should work to educate parents who contemplate early and/or transactional marriages for their daughters as a form of protection or survival, and make them aware of the precarious legal status that a non-state union will entail, for both their daughters and potential children. Special attention should

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<sup>89</sup> Reportedly, European support was provided for military and surveillance technology valued at more than €80 million. “EU money helped fortify Turkey’s border”, *Spiegel Online*, 29 March 2018.

<sup>90</sup> There are numerous state-run and private foundation courses taught by Turkish citizens certified by the Diyanet. Any graduate of an *imam hatip* school – a government-run secondary school that trains Muslim clerics – is qualified to teach these courses. The teachers usually do not speak Arabic, however, at least not the Syrian dialect.

be paid to widows. Young widows are often socially isolated and more susceptible to abuse, and camp officials or local authorities should combine rights sensitisation with other types of programming, to ensure that the message will reach women already facing exploitation.

Demand exists for this information, but resources are scarce. “When we organise information sessions here on their rights, Syrian women are usually very interested. But with limited resources we can only reach a handful”, a lawyer working for Şanlıurfa’s bar association said.<sup>91</sup>

To deter abuse of women and girls who remain in camps, the state should recruit women police and camp officials and allow lawyers unrestricted access to the camps. Both within and outside of camps, recruiting more women security personnel will also improve the reliability of mechanisms for reporting abuse, insofar as the mostly male composition of police at present discourages women from so doing. The government should ensure that female translators are also available.

To support women who need immediate help, authorities should increase the capacity – both in terms of human resources and space – of the shelters for women in Şanlıurfa and wherever there is need. The state’s protective social services, such as women’s shelters run by the local branches of Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, and local NGOs need to be resourced to expand both qualified staff and space. International donors could contribute more to funding long-term efforts in this direction.

Funding alone may have limited impact, however, unless there is an uptick in political will on Ankara decision-makers’ part. “This issue requires state authorities to explicitly acknowledge the problem and politicians to show clear political will to address it, which is currently lacking”, a representative of an international organisation lamented.<sup>92</sup>

The government should also ensure public accountability for those found guilty of abuse and exploitation, whether they be civil servants, camp officials or brokers of underage marriages. It is especially important that prison sentences for abuse by security officials be publicised, to counter the sense of impunity and create a deterrent effect. Authorities should establish a hotline for victims to report sexual advances or exploitation by civil servants.

### C. *Enrol Students and Deter Dropouts*

The demographic reality of a growing refugee youth population requires a plan for continuous investment to build and staff schools over the long term.<sup>93</sup> Turkey must also do better at addressing the high secondary-school dropout rate. As Crisis Group

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<sup>91</sup> Crisis Group interview, lawyer, Şanlıurfa, June 2018. Between January and June 2016, the UNHCR distributed over 100,000 leaflets (in Arabic, Turkish and English) about early and forced marriage, as well as domestic violence, to partner offices and local stakeholders in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Gaziantep, Malatya, Osmaniye, Kilis, Kahramanmaraş, Hatay, Adana, Şanlıurfa, Adıyaman and Mardin. “UNHCR Operational Update January – June 2016.”

<sup>92</sup> Crisis Group interview, Ankara, September 2018.

<sup>93</sup> Around 700,000 of Şanlıurfa’s two million Turkish citizens are between the ages of six and fifteen. “Türkiye’nin en genç ili hangisi?” [“Which is Turkey’s youngest province?”], *Timetürk*, 16 February 2016.

has argued before, the government should hire more Syrian teachers at Turkish public schools as “intercultural mediators” or support teachers to facilitate the transition from Arabic to Turkish language instruction.<sup>94</sup> In locations where public schools are few or short-staffed, the government should keep temporary education centres open until the public schools have the space and the teachers to absorb school-aged Syrians, to lower the risk of them dropping out.

Local branches of the Education Ministry should monitor school administrators to ensure they hold teachers accountable for discrimination against Syrians at public schools. Specific measures should include zero tolerance of discriminatory behaviour, enforcement of sanctions and creation of a ministry-run hotline staffed by Syrian teachers to field complaints.<sup>95</sup> Turkish teachers and counsellors should be trained to encourage cohesion between Syrian and Turkish children and to engage Syrian as well as Turkish parents. Other refugee-receiving countries, such as Lebanon, have used schools as platforms for “parent engagement groups”, which could help foster intercommunal ties and prevent classroom tensions.<sup>96</sup>

NGOs with strong local outreach, in collaboration with state institutions, could select role models from among around 20,000 Syrian university students in Turkey and employ them to help raise awareness of future prospects among adolescents and parents, giving them a better idea about what Syrians can achieve in Turkey if they finish school.<sup>97</sup>

Families and girls need both information about early marriages and incentives to avoid them. To prevent early and exploitative marriages, which often lead to girls leaving school, school administrators could organise information sessions within schools targeting parents and their daughters. But unless families have less economic incentive to marry off daughters early, such consciousness-raising will likely have little impact. Families also need to feel that education for their daughters, including through the university level, brings with it more opportunity and advantage (and can be an alternative to early marriage, legal or otherwise). The stipend already available since May 2017 for Syrian families that send their daughters to attend school through 12th grade (40–60 Turkish lira, or \$7–11 per month) should be increased, and extended to university-level education.

#### D. *Offer Adequate Psycho-social Support*

Addressing the psycho-social needs of Syrian youth is key both to foster long-term integration and prevent hostile actors from exploiting this vulnerability. Some psycho-social support can be offered through schools. The Education Ministry must hire

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<sup>94</sup> See Crisis Group Report, *Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>95</sup> UNICEF has an SMS-based complaint system for Syrian temporary education centre teachers that could be used as a model. Crisis Group interview, UNICEF representative, Ankara, September 2018.

<sup>96</sup> In other places, culture nights have given parents from different backgrounds opportunities to interact. A “parent twinning” project, undertaken by the Ministry of Education and supported by NGOs, could help orient Syrian families. Those who are more educated could be matched with less educated parents. This project could help keep children in schools and soothe tensions when they arise.

<sup>97</sup> NGOs could distribute information sheets to prospective role models in university seminars. They should select a group of students (diversified by ethnic background and Syrian hometown) to serve in this capacity.

more counsellors at schools with large numbers of Syrian pupils. Employing Syrian temporary education centre teachers as “assistant counsellors” at schools (ideally one man and one woman) could strengthen these services.<sup>98</sup> In the short run, the government could train those Arabic speakers who have learned Turkish to translate for Turkish counsellors. NGO-run community centres, usually funded by Western donors, also offer counselling services. Since they receive project funding, the safety net they offer can only be temporary. At present, these NGOs are helping fill the state’s service gap, but the number of Syrians reached is still considerably below demand.

Reaching youth who are out of school is more difficult but possibly even more important given the added risks that they face as dropouts. The local branches of the Education and Family, Labour and Social Policy Ministries have limited budgets and personnel. More investment is needed in neighbourhood-level outreach, for instance, increasing the number and improving the qualifications of mobile teams of social workers. Training Syrians (possibly those who have become Turkish citizens) could help bridge the language gap. International funding could also help, but eventually, the government should allocate adequate funds to each local branch of the relevant ministries, as well as to municipalities, by counting the number of Syrians each is tasked with serving.<sup>99</sup>

Representatives of international organisations, as well as NGO workers, note that gathering Syrian and local youth in informal social settings can be more helpful than structured counselling sessions. Sports and arts, as well as peer-to-peer support groups, are activities that could help not only Syrians, but also other local youth.<sup>100</sup> One way to encourage these activities is to support state and NGO-run youth community centres to scale up Turkish language courses, accelerated learning programs, literacy and numeracy training, or community-building activities.<sup>101</sup> These programs usually target school-aged Syrians, leaving out those older than eighteen. To ensure that vulnerable Syrians who are no longer school-aged also benefit, such programs should incorporate those up to age 25. Given that the state falls short of meeting demand, Ankara should be more forthcoming in enabling NGOs to work in this area. NGO representatives whom Crisis Group interviewed in Şanlıurfa and Istanbul complained of the lack of support from state authorities.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Additional training in counselling could be offered before these teachers assume duty. Three specialties are particularly relevant for dealing with Syrian youth in Turkey: rape, substance abuse and trauma counselling. Effective counselling can prevent youth from falling vulnerable to the risks discussed in this report. See “UNHCR’s Engagement with Displaced Youth”; and Mehmet A. Karaman and Richard J. Ricard, “Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Syrian Refugees in Turkey”, *The Professional Counselor*, vol. 6, no. 4 (2016).

<sup>99</sup> Similarly, the state should channel funds proportionate to the number of Syrians hosted to local Health Ministry branches, as well as the social assistance and solidarity foundations under district governorates that are tasked with distributing social assistance to the needy. As the Turkish government is cutting public spending, the EU could offer to support these budgets for a set period.

<sup>100</sup> There are examples of such activities run by international organisations and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, but the number of individuals reached so far is low.

<sup>101</sup> UNICEF in Turkey is investing effort in designing and running such programs.

<sup>102</sup> “In those few cases where state authorities identified problems and worked in close cooperation with NGOs/INGOs to address those, the results were much more positive”. Crisis Group interview, international NGO representative, Istanbul, October 2018. For detailed discussion, see Crisis Group Report, *Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

### E. *Help Refugees Make a Living*

Global and local experience provides some ideas on how to begin to improve livelihoods for Syrian refugees and Şanlıurfa as a whole. First, and as already noted, sustainability is critical. To enable Syrians to generate durable incomes, Crisis Group in the past advocated for a transition from humanitarian aid to sustainable livelihoods, a process that is now beginning.<sup>103</sup> Turkish institutions and international organisations have been working to enhance Syrians' employability and labour market integration, albeit with limited results to date.<sup>104</sup> The shift should be gradual, and particularly so in Şanlıurfa, where a significant number of Syrians receive aid and around 20 per cent of Turkish citizens aged 15-24 are jobless.<sup>105</sup> Transfer of management responsibility for these programs (even if EU countries continue to fund them) to Turkish state institutions is one way to make them more sustainable.

Turkey's Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy has helpfully sought to match employers in one province searching for workers with Syrians in another province looking for jobs, subsidising the voluntary relocation of families, and paying their social security contributions for a certain period.<sup>106</sup> If successful, such initiatives should be expanded with donor support.

Over the next two years, the UN plans to direct aid beneficiaries to agencies that can help them find jobs. It can do even more: the UN says 22.6 per cent of aid beneficiaries in Turkey are "close enough to the labour market that they could be transitioned gradually toward self-reliance through employment".<sup>107</sup> The UN could use aid payments as an incentive for these people, for example by offering continued assistance only to those who enrol in Turkish language courses or vocational training, excepting the especially vulnerable like the sick, disabled or elderly.<sup>108</sup> Job training in two areas – skilled trades and agriculture – could be particularly beneficial for young manual labourers and unemployed dropouts. Training can both help youth find formal employment and empower them to demand better conditions from employers in the informal economy.

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<sup>103</sup> European officials are considering the allocation of roughly two thirds of the second €3 billion tranche to development-related funding, with only one third allocated to humanitarian support. Crisis Group interview, European official, Istanbul, February 2019. Also see Crisis Group Report, *Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*, op. cit.

<sup>104</sup> The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy is taking steps to ease the work permit process. In early 2018, it reduced the permit fee for Syrians from 615.2 Turkish lira (about \$112) to 228.9 lira (about \$42). It also established one-stop permit shops offering services in Arabic and Turkish in five locations in 2017-2018. As Crisis Group has noted previously, international donors are now working to design vocational training programs aimed at better matching skills taught with market needs. See Crisis Group Report, *Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*, op. cit., pp. 15-18.

<sup>105</sup> As of December 2018, in Şanlıurfa 149,163 Syrians (around 33 per cent of the total registered in the province) received aid under the ESSN. Beneficiary figures for Şanlıurfa shared with Crisis Group by a World Food Programme representative via email on 11 January 2018; employment figures from TÜİK. On paper, Syrians have access to the same vocational training programs that Turkish citizens do.

<sup>106</sup> At present, the Ministry of Labour offers subsidies for up to eighteen months. Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, January 2019.

<sup>107</sup> World Food Programme presentation at the ESSN Future workshop, 20 June 2018, cited in 3RP Livelihoods and Employment Data Analysis, "2017 Progress and Way Forward for 2018-2019."

<sup>108</sup> Crisis Group advocated for this step in *Defusing Metropolitan Tensions*, op. cit.

To supply this training, the state could scale up apprenticeship programs, particularly for Syrians under eighteen, including those who dropped out after primary school or never attended school in Turkey. Today, around 15,000 Syrians benefit from such programs nationwide. Syrians under temporary protection who either hold a basic Turkish language certificate or prove that they can read and write in Turkish are eligible.<sup>109</sup> Each apprentice gets 480 lira (about \$87) monthly, of which the employer is responsible for 160 Turkish lira (about \$29). The rest is subsidised by the state for a maximum of four years. More international funding would allow the state to offer more subsidies. In Şanlıurfa, the state could expand apprenticeships in trades such as shoemaking, furniture or textiles.<sup>110</sup>

Agriculture also bears considerable potential, given Turkey's labour shortage in this sector and the rural origins and farming skills of many of Şanlıurfa's Syrians.<sup>111</sup> Şanlıurfa is Turkey's third largest province by area under cultivation.<sup>112</sup> It also is home to about 11 per cent of Turkey's irrigable land.<sup>113</sup> "We need more investments in agriculture. We have been pushing for this for a long time, but international donors supporting refugees have been reluctant to support projects in the field of agriculture, maybe because they look at funding more from an immediate than a long-term benefit perspective", said a UN agency representative.<sup>114</sup>

Scaling up support for small agribusiness likewise could benefit the economy and help Syrians become more self-reliant. Syrians could learn how to operate greenhouses, cultivate crops or manage livestock. Both the UNHCR and the Food and Agriculture Organisation offer such agricultural training programs to Syrians and vulnerable Turkish citizens.<sup>115</sup> Thus far, however, the number of subsidies that would enable graduates to start their own farming operations has remained very low. An approach combining training with small grants to establish agricultural enterprises would help.<sup>116</sup> So would offering special subsidies to joint Turkish-Syrian agricultural ventures.

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<sup>109</sup> An apprentice earns one third of the minimum wage, equivalent to 480 Turkish lira in 2018, or \$87, per month. The employer pays 33 per cent of that amount, and the state makes up the rest (320 lira, or \$58, per month), plus social security contributions, for three to four years. At the end the apprentice receives an accreditation certificate.

<sup>110</sup> Crisis Group interviews and observations, Şanlıurfa, April and June 2018.

<sup>111</sup> Despite Turkey's steadily growing population, its area of cultivated agricultural land is shrinking and young people are leaving farm work. According to TÜİK data, in 2018, 5.7 million people worked in agriculture, a number down from some 10 million in 1994.

<sup>112</sup> As of 2017, the province's cultivated land totalled 1,107,114 hectares, valued at 6.9 billion Turkish lira (roughly \$1.25 billion). See the Ministry of Agriculture booklet (in English) on agricultural production in Şanlıurfa, February 2018.

<sup>113</sup> As of 2017, 390,000 hectares of land are irrigated. *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Crisis Group Skype interview, UN agency consultant, October 2018.

<sup>115</sup> Some 500 people in five cities took training courses in fruit and vegetable production, using micro-gardens or greenhouses. Other training areas include livestock care and herd management, irrigation management, farm management and food hygiene. "Syrian refugees, host communities acquire work skills in agriculture", Food and Agriculture Organisation press release, 17 August 2017.

<sup>116</sup> The government is also undertaking land consolidation (parcelling and selling state-owned land to individuals), including in Şanlıurfa. Officials admit, however, that they often face resistance from the big clans that control swaths of the province's land. Crisis Group interview, Turkish official, Ankara, September 2018.

Ensuring women's self-sufficiency also would be important in addressing the problem of exploitative marriage. Additional projects to establish women's cooperatives in which Syrian and Turkish women could jointly produce and sell such items as handicrafts could help.<sup>117</sup> To the extent feasible, livelihood schemes can also be designed and targeted to victims of abuse, including women, so they are not compelled to return to abusive homes and have alternatives to exploitation.

Alongside offering training programs, it also would be important to tap the know-how of skilled and educated Syrians who can establish enterprises, create jobs and serve as role models. A UN agency consultant said:

Rather than constant focus on the most vulnerable we also need to support those people who have advanced skills, are educated and could become multipliers. There are at least 125 university-trained agronomists in Şanlıurfa that we identified. Most of them are unemployed or they work in unskilled jobs. Capitalising on their knowledge and skills should also be in the focus of our work in the area of agricultural livelihoods.<sup>118</sup>

Finally, in helping Syrian refugees make a living, the state and its international partners should not forget the many Turkish citizens in Şanlıurfa who are also disadvantaged. UN agencies and NGOs should design and implement training programs in coordination with relevant central and local institutions, particularly those tied to labour authorities. All relevant actors should ensure that refugee assistance is aligned with broader development strategies and labour market needs assessments. To foster social cohesion, new investments into job training and apprenticeship programs should be geared toward qualified Turkish citizens. Otherwise, assistance risks exacerbating tensions between and within communities.

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<sup>117</sup> The International Labour Organisation supervised establishment of a women's cooperative in 2018. "Turkey's First Women's Cooperative Consisting of Both Syrian and Host Community Women is Established", ILO, 21 February 2018.

<sup>118</sup> Crisis Group Skype interview, UN agency consultant, October 2018.

## V. Conclusion

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By taking in over 3.6 million Syrians, Ankara has shouldered a large burden. At a time of slowing economic growth, Turkey now wrestles with often contradictory demands from Turkish citizens, the EU and other stakeholders. Often lost in the shuffle are the pressing needs of the war-weary refugees themselves. But failure to address those needs can undermine the security of not only the refugees, but the communities in which they live.

Particularly vulnerable are Syrian youth, who contend with discrimination and bullying at school, unaddressed traumas, exploitative marriages, lack of durable income, local authorities' hostility and precarious future prospects. Greater focus is needed to reduce the risk that dangerous elements will entice them into lives of criminality or militancy, or otherwise limit their chances of successful integration, all with repercussions for Turkey and Turkish citizens. This need is all the more pressing in refugee-dense provinces on the border with Syria where economic opportunities are dim, such as Şanlıurfa. Besides taking measures that foster integration, it is important to fight crime and enhance border security. Mitigation of related risks will help Ankara forestall new social rifts and lessen the backlash as Turkish citizens come to realise that the Syrians who stay in Turkey will be woven into the country's social fabric.

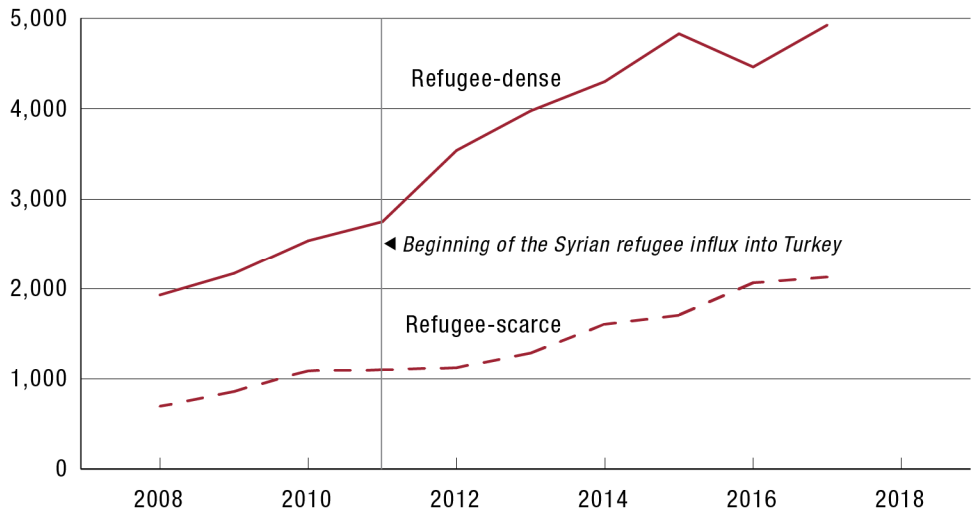
International donors will need to think beyond the second €3 billion tranche to be allocated as part of the EU's refugee integration support for Turkey and adopt a longer-term outlook. Investing in young Syrians' skills and education will help build their resilience to exploitation by illicit actors, close social schisms and promote Turkey's economic development. It will also help build the capacity of a new generation of Syrians who, when the time is right, can contribute to their home country's future.

**Istanbul/Brussels, 11 February 2019**



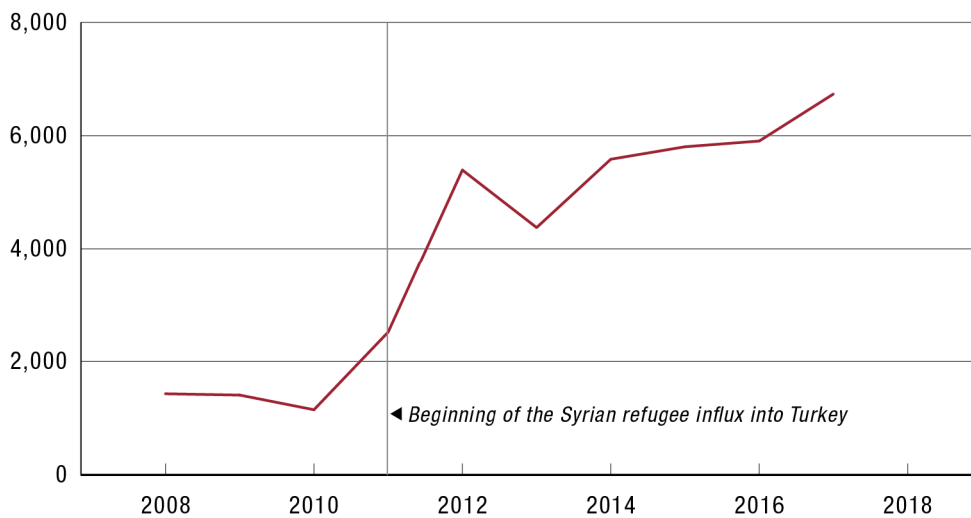
### Appendix B: Juvenile Delinquency in “Refugee-dense” and “Refugee-scarce” Provinces

**Total Number of Juvenile Delinquents (2008-2017)**



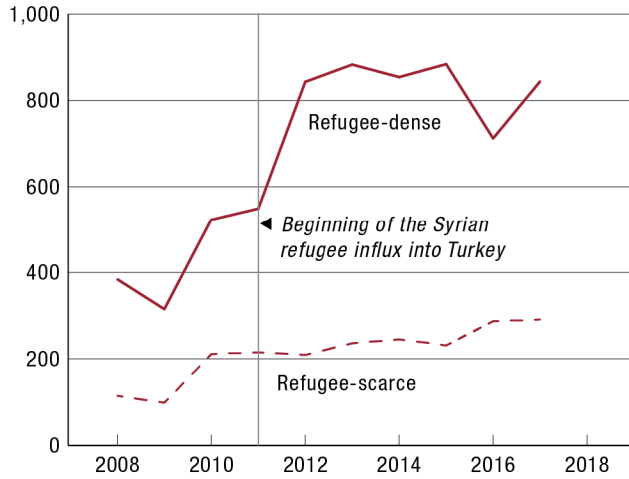
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK)

**Total Number of Juvenile Delinquents in Şanlıurfa (2008-2017)**



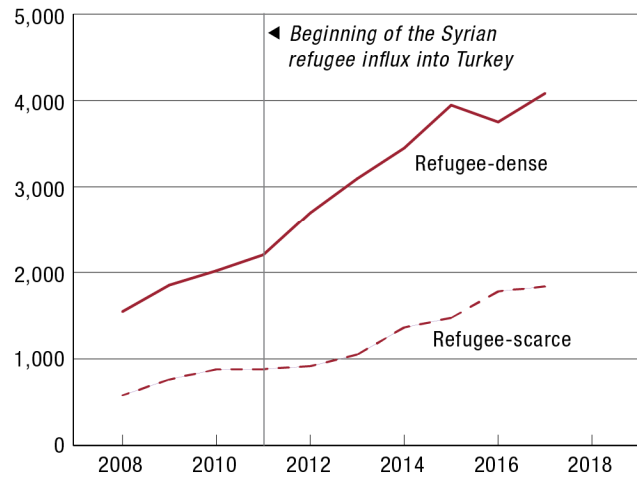
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK)

**Total Number of Juvenile Delinquents for Drug Related Crime (2008-2017)**



Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK)

**Total Number of Juvenile Delinquents for Non-Drug Related Crime (2008-2017)**



Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK)

**Notes**

\*The selection of the time periods and provinces for the analysis follows Semih Tumen, "The Economic Impact of Syrian Refugees on Host Countries: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Turkey", American Economic Review, vol. 106, no. 5 (2016). The analysis took as its reference point fourteen "refugee-dense" eastern and southern provinces (those in which Syrians compose more than 2 percent of the population in 2012-2013) and fifteen "refugee-scarce" eastern and southern provinces (those with less than 2 percent Syrian population in 2012-2013). The "refugee-dense" provinces were: Şırnak, Şanlıurfa, Adıyaman, Adana, Batman, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Mardin, Mersin, Osmaniye and Siirt. The "refugee-scarce" provinces were: Ağrı, Ardahan, Bayburt, Bingöl, Bitlis, Elazığ, Erzincan, Erzurum, Hakkari, Iğdır, Kars, Malatya, Muş, Tunceli and Van. This statistical analysis also incorporated province characteristics such as population, education levels, sex ratio and urban-rural ratio.

\*\*These numbers have a degree of statistical uncertainty. But the results for male juveniles are statistically significant while, drug-related crime results are close to statistical significance. However, when the refugee population increase is factored in the difference between juvenile crime rates in refugee-dense and refugee-scarce provinces becomes statistically uncertain.

## Appendix C: About the International Crisis Group

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The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a monthly early-warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 70 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on its website, [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org). Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board of Trustees – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policymakers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lord (Mark) Malloch-Brown.

Crisis Group's President & CEO, Robert Malley, took up the post on 1 January 2018. Malley was formerly Crisis Group's Middle East and North Africa Program Director and most recently was a Special Assistant to former U.S. President Barack Obama as well as Senior Adviser to the President for the Counter-ISIL Campaign, and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region. Previously, he served as President Bill Clinton's Special Assistant for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices in seven other locations: Bogotá, Dakar, Istanbul, Nairobi, London, New York, and Washington, DC. It has presences in the following locations: Abuja, Algiers, Bangkok, Beirut, Caracas, Gaza City, Guatemala City, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Juba, Mexico City, New Delhi, Rabat, Tbilisi, Toronto, Tripoli, Tunis, and Yangon.

Crisis Group receives financial support from a wide range of governments, foundations, and private sources. Currently Crisis Group holds relationships with the following governmental departments and agencies: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrian Development Agency, Global Affairs Canada, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, French Development Agency, French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid, Japanese International Cooperation Agency, Liechtenstein Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Emirati Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Crisis Group also holds relationships with the following foundations: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Elders Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Korea Foundation, Oak Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Ploughshares Fund, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, UniKorea Foundation and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

**February 2019**

## Appendix D: Reports and Briefings on Europe and Central Asia since 2016

### Special Reports

*Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State*, Special Report N°1, 14 March 2016 (also available in Arabic and French).

*Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action*, Special Report N°2, 22 June 2016.

*Counter-terrorism Pitfalls: What the U.S. Fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda Should Avoid*, Special Report N°3, 22 March 2017.

### Russia/North Caucasus

*The North Caucasus Insurgency and Syria: An Exported Jihad?*, Europe Report N°238, 16 March 2016 (also available in Russian).

*Patriotic Mobilisation in Russia*, Europe Report N°251, 4 July 2018.

### South Caucasus

*Nagorno-Karabakh's Gathering War Clouds*, Europe Report N°244, 1 June 2017.

*Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Time to Talk Trade*, Europe Report N°249, 24 May 2018 (also available in Russian).

### Ukraine

*Russia and the Separatists in Eastern Ukraine*, Europe Briefing N°79, 5 February 2016.

*Ukraine: The Line*, Europe Briefing N°81, 18 July 2016.

*Ukraine: Military Deadlock, Political Crisis*, Europe Briefing N°85, 19 December 2016.

*Can Peacekeepers Break the Deadlock in Ukraine?*, Europe Report N°246, 15 December 2017.

*Ukraine: Will the Centre Hold?*, Europe Report N°247, 21 December 2017.

*"Nobody Wants Us": The Alienated Civilians of Eastern Ukraine*, Europe Report N°252, 1 October 2018 (also available in Ukrainian).

### Turkey

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