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Suat Kolukirik; Hasan Hüseyn Aygül

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Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Turkey: Sociological Aspects of an International Migration Movement

SUAT KOLUKIRIK and HASAN HÜSEYİN AYGÜL

Abstract

Turkey, which is situated on the transit route to Europe for many refugees/asylum seekers from Asia and Africa, has recently been facing a gradually increasing refugee problem. In this study, a sociological analysis of refugees will be introduced through the example of the city of Isparta in Turkey which serves as a transit country for many international refugees. The study will attempt to discuss the demographic characteristics of refugees, such as their age, gender, education levels, occupations, marital status, number of children, job/occupation and employment status, social and economic status, survival ways, reasons why they became refugees, traumas they experienced, adaptation problems, expectations, and finally their points of view towards both themselves and the world. The source of data used in the study includes the refugees residing in Kafeler (Buğday) Street in the city centre, as well as the refugees residing in Yedişehitler district of Isparta. The study was carried out between October 2007 and January 2008 using in-depth interview technique.

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Introduction

Throughout history, people had to leave their homelands and countries behind and seek economic opportunities as well as more secure places due to the violence, persecution, coercion and torture they were subjected to, or as a consequence of hunger, poverty, battles and wars. Thus, to overcome these problems, humanity has produced limited solutions shaped in accordance with the conditions of the day, such as hospitality, religious tolerance and clemency, rather than a certain governmental policy. In the course of time, due to the increase in world population and mobility, the number of immigrants and asylum seekers[1] continued to increase, and the solution to this problem was again left to the initiative of governments which resulted in further disorganization. In the nineteenth century, as nation-state formations became worldwide; many ethnic communities, which had lived together for centuries, withdrew within certain boundaries and others were routed out of their homelands. These trends continued throughout the twentieth century, and the number of people who had to be confined within defined borders gradually increased.

Tragedies experienced especially between the two World Wars, which explicitly reveal the human aspect of this situation, justified the necessity of adopting an understanding that requires more than benignity and hospitality; so much so that this historical phenomenon seems to persist also in the future all around the world.[2] We can, indeed, mention Iraqis migrating to other countries as refugees as a result of the Iraq War, or illegal workers seeking ways to go to Europe due to famine and drought.[3] We also encounter people coming to foreign countries as refugees as a result of civil wars in

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Africa, and communities which had to migrate from island states (Bahamas, Papua New Guinea, etc.) and leave their own lands that submerged as a result of global warming. At this point, forced migration and asylum seeking populations, which pose a humanistic and social crisis, constitute one of the major problems faced by governments. In terms of human rights and international law, it seems impossible to be indifferent to what has been going on. "The foundation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and later the 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the Legal Status of Refugees which was signed by contracting countries became a turning point regarding the refugee problem".[4] Thereby, for the first time in history, standards were determined to protect refugees within the scope of an official body and international law addressing the needs of refugees.

Transiting Through Turkey

When we reconsider the case in terms of the geography of Anatolia, Turkey is observed to be a transit country, since it is located on a migration route leading from the south-east to the north-west and serves as a transit route for the mobility of migrating populations. On the other hand, Turkey becomes a final destination point on the migration route for some people who come from eastern European countries actually in search of jobs. Turkey is known to be a terrain longed for as a "country of destination" for the people of many Balkan, Caucasian and Central Asian countries, whose origins are Turkish and which used to be within the historical Ottoman hinterland, and even for the people of some Middle East countries. For a considerable segment of the refugee population in Europe, Turkey is perceived as a "source country". Undoubtedly, the refugees, who have been caught in Turkey and become subjects of news in the press, are only the visible part of the iceberg. Besides acknowledging the fact that some part of this moving population are migrants who immigrate due to economic reasons, the entire world knows that the other part constitutes refugees, who have fled from persecution and threats such as imprisonment, torture and death penalty because of ethnic, ideological, religious and similar pressures in countries located in the east and south of Turkey.[5]

Historically, it is observed that the geography of Turkey makes it an easy and friendly destination for asylum seekers. Without reckoning the Ottoman period, it is known that applications for asylum were made in different periods since the foundation of the Turkish Republic. In fact, the number of refugees, who have been given residence permit together with work permit in Turkey is 934,354 in total including 51,542 refugees during the Iran–Iraq war in 1988; 20,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992–1997); a total of 345,000 refugees (34,000 with a visa) from Bulgaria in 1989; 460,000 refugees from Iraq between August 1990 and April 1991 (excluding the previous 7489 refugees); 17,776 refugees after the 1990 Kosovo events; and 32,577 Ahiska Turks exiled from their countries. The children of these refugees, who were born in Turkey, were also given the same rights.[6] Besides, significant discussions are brought about due to the influx of refugees that is foreseen to continue in the coming periods, and the possibility of the removal of the "geographical restriction" regarding the condition that Turkey accepts only immigrants from Europe.

Legal Status of Refugees and Geographical Restriction

It is stated in the 14th article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—enunciated in 1948—that "everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from

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persecution"; therefore, the right of asylum was declared to be a fundamental human right.[7] In the "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees" the United Nations defined a refugee as follows:

> As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 (is referring to a migration period that began during the Second World War) and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. In the case of a person who has more than one nationality, the term "the country of his nationality" shall mean each of the countries of which he is a national, and a person shall not be deemed to be lacking the protection of the country of his nationality if, without any valid reason based on well-founded fear, he has not availed himself of the protection of one of the countries of which he is a national. (Article 1)[8]

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Furthermore, Article 33 of the "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees" includes the following statement: "No Contracting State shall expel or return 'refouler' a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion".[9] As it is seen, the definition established by the United Nations includes the statement that a refugee has "well-founded fear of being persecuted", which highlights the individuality of the problem. The Convention does not mention conditions such as natural disasters and famine.

Another point attracting attention in the above definition is the expression "As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 . . .". This situation also carries a meaning of "geographical restriction" as well as it brings forth "time restriction" regarding refugees. Therefore, the 1951 Refugee Convention of the United Nations is significant in two terms. Firstly, although it was initially limited to European refugees, it introduces a general definition for a refugee describing him/her as a person, who is outside the country of his/her nationality due to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group. Hence, people who are relocated within the borders of their own country are not included in the international legal definition of "refugees". Secondly, the Convention denotes that the people who fit in the definition of a refugee need to benefit from certain rights, and helping refugees does not only mean international benignity or political gain. The Convention imposes on contracting states some obligations based on the principle of "not returning" a refugee to territories bearing the risk of persecution. This concept also includes the obligation of asylum countries not to force people to return to territories which are the source of a well-founded fear of being persecuted.[10]

As it is known, Turkey signed the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees on 24 August 1951, and its reservation was approved on 29 August 1961. Ratification Act No. 359 was published in the Official Gazette No. 10898 of 5 September 1961.[11] Turkey's reservation is as follows: "None of the judgements of this article can be interpreted in the way that it provides a refugee with more rights than Turkish nationals in Turkey". Besides this reservation, Turkey has stated that it accepted the expression at the

beginning of the article as follows: "As a result of events occurring in Europe". Thus, Turkey recognized this article of the Convention upon a "geographical restriction".[12]

Although Turkey is one of the contracting states in the United Nations Convention and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, Turkey included a reservation to both conventions stating that only the people from Europe will be considered as refugees. In line with this reservation, people from countries outside Europe are not regarded as refugees, and they are provided with a temporary asylum to be transferred to other countries.[13] "Other countries" mentioned here include the United States, Canada[14] and Australia. On the other hand, Turkey's reservation of geographical restriction does not stem from its concern for protecting its own economic, social and cultural conditions. Being one of the countries, which is affected the most from mass movements of populations after 1980s that are likely to alter the world conjuncture, Turkey's attitude in this matter is comprehensible. In fact, considering the refugee movements that Turkey may face as a result of the removal of geographical restrictions, Financial Support Programmes are anticipated before Turkey's membership to the European Union. However, controversies continue about the concern that Turkey may turn into a paradise for refugees as a consequence of the possible removal of geographical restriction in 2012.

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Research Field and Method

The method of this study is framed with the principle of confidentiality of the shared information. Cultural and individual differences of the study field were approached with sensitivity, and the objectives of the study were maintained. The first research field of the study comprises of a region called Kafeler (Buğday) Street located at the city centre of Isparta. Kafeler Street is a social space where the students of Süleyman Demirel University frequently come together outside the campus. The street has the means of meeting the students' needs, such as food, clothing, entertainment and accommodation, and this region includes Gül Dormitory for Male Students, which is a special dormitory where students and single refugees stay together. The second research field is Yimbeşler Boarding House in Yedişehitler District, which accommodates married refugees.

After establishing the research fields, questions that would enable us to analyze the research question of the study were determined, and data were collected through in-depth interviews. The selected research field was first visited in May 2007 and individual contact with the interviewees was established and maintained in certain frequencies until the interviews between 3 November 2007 and 17 January 2007 were completed. In this time span, social interaction was provided through dormitory visits, street conversations and collective activities (sport activities). During the interviews, appropriate attitude was adopted in consideration with the gender, age, language problems of the refugees and the characteristics of the immigrant region, and ethical values were paid attention. Interview periods varied in accordance with time, location and interviewees.

A total of ten men and one woman were interviewed through half-structured interview forms. Sessions were determined, and the interviewees were supported, yet never manipulated nor questioned. Due to the sensitivities of the interviewees and the concern about their use of political language, the interviews were recorded through writing without using a sound recorder. Besides interviews with refugees, people and institutions in the social environment of refugees were also interviewed. Interviews were made also with the managers of dormitories where refugees stay, non-refugee university students, deputy governor responsible for refugees, the police unit responsible

for refugees, and director of the foundation of social aid and solidarity which covers the food and accommodation expenses of refugees. In addition, business enterprises and the owner of the shops where refugees work on daily basis were also interviewed.

"Categorical-Content Perspective Analysis Technique" was used in the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews. In this context, primarily the data collected from the research field were transformed into written texts and categorized. Later, categorized texts were contextually defined and the data within the defined categories were put into appropriate themes. Finally, the data were processed within the framework of the research problem, and the findings were analyzed.[15] Three measures were tried to be taken regarding the validity, reliability and generalization of the obtained data: (a) extending the observations and increasing the number of interviewees, (b) using "data triangulation" technique in collecting data, and presenting the collected data in a way to support and confirm one another, and (c) sharing the obtained information with the interviewees.[16]

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Evaluation of the Research Data

Demographic Characteristics of Refugees

When we consider the country distribution of the 85 refugees who stay at Gül Dormitory for Male Students and Yimbeşler Boarding House who constitute our research field, we find the following distribution: Somalia (61.2%), Sudan (16.5%), Afghanistan (9.4%), Eritrea (7.1%), Guinea (3.5%), and Mauritania and Ethiopia (1.2%). It is observed that most of the refugees are from Somalia and Sudan. Only 24 of 85 refugees are women, and five of these are female children. According to the demographic distribution of interviewed refugees, ten male and one female refugees were interviewed. The number of women interviewees was less due to the fact that the entire population of refugees included mostly men, and the women were the wives of the refugees, and thus as married couples the men wished to speak rather than their spouses. Demographic data of the interviewed refugees are presented in the table below (Table 1).

It should be noted that there were refugees who had previously settled in Isparta besides the interviewed refugees. According to the police records, there are a total of 226 refugees in Isparta, mostly Iraqis and Afghanis. The Iraqis did not fall in our study sample because of the choice of location i.e. students' dormitory. Most of the refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan were observed to have solved their job and residence

TABLE 1. Demographic characteristics of the interviewed refugees

Name-Surname	Gender	Age	Nationality	Occupation
S.S.G.	Male	29	Mauritania	Machine Technician
M.H.	Male	28	Sudan	Local Journalist
L.A.A.	Male	20	Somali	Construction Technician
R.M.	Male	19	Afghanistan	Unqualified
J.İ.C.	Male	25	Somali	Computer Admin.
M.C.İ.	Male	39	Somali	Footballer
H.S.O.H.	Male	26	Somali	Microbiologist
Y.M.H.	Male	21	Somali	Construction Technician
A.B.	Male	24	Guinea	Lawyer
E.E.	Female	29	Eritrea	Teacher
G.H.	Male	34	Afghanistan	Agricultural Labourer

problems to a great extent. Demographically, the fact that male refugees outnumber the female refugees indicates that men leave their countries in order to provide for their families with financial support.

Pull and Push Factors in Migration Stories

Refugees are people who migrate to avoid torture, arrest and above all death. In other words, refugees are in need of protection. This condition can be understood by looking at the factors causing refugees to migrate and at the stories of migration. Apart from that, undemocratic governments, civil wars, genocide and economic factors in the countries of origin may be evaluated as a reflection of the distribution of inequalities all around the world. The countries, which the interviewed refugees want to reach, are Italy and France. The determining factor in these choices is the former colonial connections, since they have relatives living in these countries. Nevertheless, most of the refugees fail to reach this goal and are dropped off on the way to coastal countries such as Turkey.

S.S.G. I stayed in prison for six years. My father was killed by the government forces. There is a governmental warrant for my arrest and execution. That is why I don't want to go back to my country.

M.H. There is dictatorship, mafia and armed conflict in my country. Darfur is an important problem. We arrived here crossing through Libya. Sea voyage is dangerous. Some of my fellow countrymen were carried away with the waves and drown in the sea. I indeed wanted to go to Italy, but they dropped me off in Turkey. I thought the country I arrived was Italy.

L.A.A. There is bribery, forgery and guerrilla fighting in Somali. I've been here for eight months. We arrived to Turkey by ship. The chaotic atmosphere we used to live in made us refugees. I heard that the ones who had left the country before us finally ended up in good conditions.

J.İ.C. I came from Somali seven months ago. I am a Muslim. I paid US$1000 for the ship. They dropped us off here. I ran away from tribal wars.

M.C.İ. There were social problems back in Somali.

H.S.O.H. I wanted to go to Italy because of colonial connections.

Y.M.H. I ran away from tribe wars. I left my country in order to live in better conditions.

G.H. I fled from war in Afghanistan. I used to be a combatant there.

A.B. My father was killed as a result of political conflicts and I had to leave my country due to fear of death. I went to Mali, Nigeria, and finally came to Turkey by ship.

As it is revealed in the expressions of the interviewees, the major factors causing refugees to leave their countries are undemocratic governments and economic inefficiencies. In this respect, considering refugees as people who are merely after adventure is an illusion created by prejudices. Lack of information about who the refugees are constitutes the most important problem in this context. On the other hand, there is a lot to deduce from the refugees' narratives. As a consequence of especially the failure in

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generalizing global welfare, it is evident that an inflow of refugees will continue in the future and many countries will have to spare more resources for national security or border control, in addition to providing repatriation or resettlement opportunities to the asylum seekers.

The City of Isparta as the Settlement Area for Refugees

Isparta is one of the 28 satellite cities assigned for refugees in Turkey. Refugees were first seen in the city back in 1991. This fact, which was not organized by city management in the beginning in a programmed manner, is now becoming a more institutional case due to the increasing number of refugees and through the medium of the United Nations and national aid and support organizations. Indeed the efforts of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, which organizes Refugee Monitoring Programmes, to form a common study field are significant. This assembly held its first and second meetings on 5–7 October 2007 and 10 November 2007, respectively, with the participation of the governorship, the university, non-governmental organizations and refugees. It is quite a positive development that at the end of these meetings a decision was made to take common action, form a refugee profile and provide support from a single centre. In this way, it will be easier to reach the victims of psychological trauma, torture and sexual violence, as well as unaccompanied children, people with physical disabilities and those fearful of their security, and parents with or without children. It was also recognized that providing local protection and involving refugees into the activities of non-governmental organizations will contribute significantly to the social capital of the city.

The third meeting of the Assembly aimed at taking common action was held on 28 December 2007 by the Isparta Police Department with the participation of the municipality; governorship; foundation of social aid; representatives of the Bar Council and researchers. Policies to produce solutions for migration and asylum seekers were discussed on a common platform. In this respect, the city of Isparta has made progress in producing a common institutional plan against possible refugee settlements. As stated in the interview with the directors of the foundation of social aid and support which works under Isparta governorship, the total amount spent for refugees in 2007 is approximately US$100,000. About 130 Iranian and Iraqi refugees, who came to the city earlier, are still provided with support for rent, fuel, food and health expenses. As of now, monthly cost of refugees to Isparta city management is around US$20,000.

Challenges of Adaptation and the Role of Philanthropy

The most important priority for refugees is undoubtedly their adaptation to the new social environment. Meeting the newcomers' needs is a different point of adjustment in terms of a small-scale city like Isparta which has very limited connection with the outside world. For example, the transfer of 100 Africans to Isparta in May 2007 by the United Nations Ankara High Commissioner caused both confusion and enthusiasm in the city management and among people. The black skin color of the newcomers was a determining factor in the recognition of these refugees by local people, and this unfamiliar racial feature added richness to the social fabric of the city. In addition, the fact that a majority of these refugees were Muslim and performed the ritual prayers of Islam in mosques facilitated their adaptation to the city. In the period between May 2007 and September 2007, shelter and food expenses of these new refugees were covered by

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philanthropists. After September 2007, necessary arrangements were made with the coordination of Isparta Governorship to meet the essential needs of this group of 100 people who needed shelter, food and medicine.

S.S.G. We don't have food and shelter problem, our basic problem is about the future.

M.H. I also belong to this country. Democratic rights are satisfactory. Turkey will enter the European Union.

L.A.A. Turkey is a peaceful country, there is democracy here. God knows what will become of us in the future.

J.İ.C. I can stay in Turkey. This is a free country.

M.C.İ. I am married. I had to leave my children in Somali, but I can't go back.

H.S.O.H. I can go back to my country if democratic conditions are established.

S.S.G. The basic problem here is being black. Women (female students) are friendlier, but male students seem to be protective.

S.S.G. I perform my morning prayers in the mosque.

M.H. Turkish people are very friendly. The time of the Ottoman Empire was also good. This is an Islamic country.

A. I first came to İstanbul, then to Isparta. I learned to speak Turkish in İstanbul. I have been in Turkey for six months now. I want to leave Turkey because of the indeterminacy here.

Philanthropy served as a buffering institution[17] against the refugee problem which unexpectedly knocked at the doors of the city management. Besides the official institutions' support in covering shelter, food and health expenses, philanthropists and private companies continue to help and support refugees and their families. This assistance usually includes small-scale financial support for clothing, the education of children and other needs. The sensitivity shown by the local people and authorities concerning the education of the refugee children is a significant point. These children's education is undertaken by a private high school, Altınbaşak College, where refugee children can receive education free of charge. The education of the parents is taken care of by official institutions. Turkish lessons are given to single refugees at Isparta Public Education Centre near-by the dormitory they stay in, while married refugees take lessons in a classroom at Yimbeşler Boarding House. The purpose of these Turkish language lessons is to minimize the possible communication problems that the refugees may experience during their stay in Turkey.

Refugees as Targets of Missionary Activities

It is known that international migration process involves several actors. Many helpless people, who are obliged to be refugees, come across various people and organizations in the migration process. In these relationships giving way to human abuse, people are generally expected to make concessions on their values. One of the interviewees, R.M., who used to be a Muslim, was offered easy access to one of the European (Christian)

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countries as a refugee if he accepted to be converted to Christianity; and is now receiving help from the Church.

> **R.M.** I am 19 years old. I was born in Afghanistan. My parents died when I was 8. My father was involved in Taliban movement. I have a brother, but I can't receive any news of him. I suppose he also participated in Taliban's movement. I used to be a Muslim. But I was converted to Christianity. A missionary helped me to come round with the facts. My father was a rich man. He was a farmer and planted hashish. He was also into smuggling. Indeed, I wanted to go to a Christian country. But I got caught. I stayed in prison in İzmir for three months. I would go to Greece. I applied to the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees. Now I am waiting for the result. They sent me to Isparta. There aren't any churches here. I have been in Turkey for seven months now. I don't want to be a Turkish citizen. They don't like Christians here. I receive help from the Church.

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As understood from the statements of the above interviewee who adopted a Christian name, his primary aim is to go to a Christian country. Besides such religious concessions, it is also possible to encounter examples of sexual abuse. For example, E.E. explained that she was sexually abused and raped during the voyage, and said "If I had known what would happen, I would never have set out on this voyage". It was a relief to learn from the interviewed refugees that they were never sexually abused after they arrived in Turkey; yet meeting the future expectations of these people trying to hold on to life constitutes one of the important problems. In this context, it is necessary to assure that refugees are not subjected to any inhuman treatment such as violence, sexual abuse or labor abuse during their stay in Turkey. This is only possible by developing policies to prevent possible social conflicts so as to prevent the current social structure from suffering damage and to ensure that refugees are received with tolerance in society.

Refugees at Work

Refugees have a legal right to work in Turkey. However, this right also imposes on the refugees an obligation to obtain residence permit of six months.[18] Besides the identification document given by the local police unit after their entry into Turkey, in order to be able to work, refugees have to get a six-month residence permit which costs approximately US$300. However, most of the refugees avoid getting residence permit due to financial reasons, and they are required to pay this money with interest when they are leaving Turkey for another country (generally the United States and Canada). This financial obligation is mostly settled with the support of philanthropists or official authorities.

On the other hand, it is observed that refugees usually work as illegal workers. This aspect has also been detected in other studies.[19] Despite legal restrictions, it is known by official authorities that refugees work illegally, and they are provided with employment opportunities by small business owners. Some refugees can find jobs as it is revealed in the following statement:

> **L.A.A.** I work as a welder in the Industry Zone. I earn 50 dollars a week.
>
> **G.H.** I work in the manufacture of fruit boxes.

S.S.G. I want to get residence and work permit. I work in the Industry Zone for a daily wage of 10–15 dollars without insurance.

A.B. I earn 350 dollars a month.

It can easily be affirmed that employers who provide refugees with jobs also benefit from this situation in many ways, since they find that foreign workers are more hard-working, their education levels are higher, they demand less money and they do not have much chance to complain. The interviewed owners of workplaces express their views as follows:

> We are pleased with A.B. We want to marry him with a Turkish woman. I will insure him and arrange a house for him. Yet, he doesn't want to stay here. He is very skillful at his work. We have job vacancy in the Industry, and no apprentices are brought up. Because of the 8-years education system,[20] we cannot find workers to employ. We try to help him as much as we can. Yesterday he had toothache, and we took him to a doctor. Refugees are very hard-working people. We never discriminate them from other workers. We don't have discrimination here; we shouldn't look down on these people.

Refugees fill a significant gap in sectors that need temporary workers. Yet, it was observed that employing refugees may be troublesome. The most important difficulty is the risk to be subjected to financial sanctions from the government for employing illegal workers.[21] Another problem is experienced between employers and refugee workers mostly concerning the wages. As some employers point out by expressing that "they are not satisfied with what we pay them", low wages are the most important handicap in the employment of refugees. At this point, it is evident that the refugees in Turkey are not satisfied with labor wages which tend to be very low.[22] Another problem observed in work life is that this situation leads to rivalry and creates unrest among other workers.

> They did not work efficiently. They worked only for one season. They are not able to stand pressure and difficulty. They receive support from the government, and still earn more money than Turkish workers. And then they are not satisfied with what they earn and leave. Their children attend private schools, while I can't afford it for my child. Their children go to school with private transportation. We live in the same neighborhood and I witness all these. Yet, they are good Muslims, they are religious and they never swear. They perform their prayers five times a day and they fast during Ramadan.

Another object at issue is related to sexual identity, which was revealed when two Iranian transvestites had a row with local transvestites. With the interference of the police, Iranian travesties were sent to another city. In the general sense, it should be noted that an environment of rivalry is the determining factor in the disputes between refugees and local people. However, the basic problematic is the dissatisfaction of refugees about working conditions. Therefore, refugees, who work in various fields as illegal labor, cannot enjoy any degree of security in work life. On the other hand, they fill an important gap in sectors which are in need of laborers.

Research Findings

Through an evaluation of the study results, the sociological aspect of the issue of refugees, which has become an international problem, was introduced in the example of the city of Isparta. According to the data obtained from the research field, Turkey is

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facing an inrush of refugees from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, and from Somalia, Sudan and other African countries. Although Turkey, as a transit country, encountered such problems in the past, the recently increasing number of refugees constitutes an important problematic. Internal debate continues as the government faces issues involving the accommodation of incoming refugees in the country, their adjustment and adaptation problems and future settlement, and assigning the newcomers, especially from countries outside Europe, the status of refugees. External debates usually focus on global inequalities. At this point, it should also be taken into account that the problems, which may emerge in case of not making the necessary legal arrangements against this migration wave, will grow in countries where refugees usually arrive in large numbers.

The point that should be emphasized in the context of the study results is that refugees coming to Turkey had in fact aimed to go to one of the European countries. Factors such as the old colonial connections, refugees' settled relatives in European countries, and better economic conditions offered by European countries play a significant role in this choice. In a sense, refugees in Turkey are dropped off in Turkey by international human smugglers, and many of them experience unwanted events and deaths on their voyage. It is evident that many things should be done and actions should be taken to ameliorate the structural factors that lead people to undertake the difficult and challenging journeys that refugees undertake.

On the other hand, the social and humane aspect of the refugee problem concerns not only the country which refugees or asylum seekers are obliged to leave, but also the country where they migrate to and take refuge in. As a matter of fact, the responsibility of protecting and aiding refugees belongs primarily to the governments of the countries where refugees seek asylum. In this respect, the role of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) in facilitating and controlling the countries' compliance with related conventions and the adequate protection of refugees in these countries must be emphasized as the UNHCR's mission is to provide international protection and solution for refugees. This solution can be pronounced in three ways: voluntary repatriation, local integration in the asylum country, and transfer to a third country other than the asylum country. Moreover, refugees should never be sent to a country where their lives and freedom may be at risk.

In the city of Isparta which constitutes the research field of the study, policies of philanthropy adopted for the refugee problem in the beginning have recently been institutionalized. The annual cost of handling the refugee problem allocated to the provincial budget of Isparta Governorship is approximately US$250,000. This corresponds to a large amount for a small city like Isparta. Hence, it is apparent that considerable financial strain will be felt by the city in case the refugee problem persists. Yet, on the other hand, the refugees have shown progress in the adaptation process and some of them work legally, and this contributes to a great extent in terms of benefiting also from the interaction of world cultures. Rather than imprisoning refugees within a certain space, providing them with an infrastructure to enable them to make use of their spare time until they leave the country will be of advantage to both Turkey and the refugees. Employment of young and skilled refugees will make significant contribution to the national economy. In this way, illegal labor force may be restrained and unrecorded economy will be prevented.

Conclusion

The rising number of refugees and asylum seekers worldwide and their choice of selected destinations and spots on the way signify a problem area which should be resolved on the

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basis of cooperation with international conventions. The refugee problem recognized by the United Nations is associated with the need for protection of refugees and for seeking ways to solve their problems. At the same time, the challenge of facilitating governments which shoulder the burden of hosting a heavy load of refugees must be recognized and governments assisted in their contribution to the reduction of international tension. The social and humanitarian dimensions of this issue come out as a process which aims to prevent the intolerance, marginalization and oppression in the existing society, as well as to save the refugees from pressure, torture and persecution under existing conditions in their respective countries. In brief, what we call the refugee and asylum seeker problem necessitates studies carried out to achieve solutions through international collaboration, to enable refugees and asylum seekers within the receiving country's own body to participate in social life as equal individuals. Yet, the issue is not limited to the above mentioned points; the essential problem lies in defining a refugee or asylum seeker, and deciding who will be recognized as a refugee. Indeed, the refugee problem will occupy the agenda in the near future with the arrival of individuals from the East or from African countries where global inequality has increased as a result of globalization, and aggravated due to the economic and political instability which is on the rise in countries on all continents.

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NOTES

1. The term "asylum seekers" is used to refer to a person who has a well-founded fear of persecution in his/her own country, or whose life is in danger because of armed attacks and acts of violence, and therefore demands refugee status from other countries. On the other hand, the term includes people who receive residency permits for different periods in a country where they may or may not be granted refugee status, and still seek asylum even though their refugee applications are rejected. See J. Crisp, *et al.*, *Dünya Mültecilerinin Durumu: Bir İnsanlık Sorunu* (The Case of World Refugees: A Problem of Humanity), Ankara: Turkish Representative Agency of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1997, p. 183. Generally the term refugee will be used throughout this study.
2. S. Castles and J.M. Miller, *Göçler Çağı: Modern Dünyada Uluslar arası Göç Hareketleri* (The Age of Migrations: International Migration Movements in the Modern World), Trans. Bülent Uğur Bal-İbrahim Akbulut, İstanbul: Bilgi University Publications, 2008, p. 144.
3. Muhteşem Kaynak, *et al.*, *Iraklı Sığınmacılar ve Türkiye (1998–1992)* (Iraqi Refugees and Turkey (1998–1992)), Ankara: Tanmak Publications, 1992, p. 17.
4. S. Loughna and F. Nicholson, *Dünya Mültecilerinin Durumu: İnsan Yardımının Eli* (The Case of World Refugees: The Hand of Human Philanthropy), Ankara: Turkish Representative Agency of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2001, p. 2.
5. V. Eşsiz and G. Günel, *Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları için Mülteci Destek El Kitabı* (A Refugee Support Guidebook for Non-Governmental Organizations), İstanbul: Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Publications, 2007, pp. 114–121.
6. Y. Acer, and M. Gümüş, "Türkiye'nin Mülteci Stratejisi ve Coğrafi Kısıtlama" (Turkey's Refugee Strategy and Geographical Restriction), *Journal of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2007, pp. 67–70.
7. E. Durdular and İ. Neziroğlu, *Uluslararası Temel İnsan Hakları Belgeleri* (International Fundamental Human Rights Documents), Ankara: The Turkish Grand National Assembly, Human Rights Commission Publications, Vol. 18, 2001, p. 205.
8. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees: It was accepted at the conference, as per resolution No. 429 of 14 December 1950 of the United Nations General Assembly, signed in Geneva on 28 July 1951, that went into force on 22 April 1954 in compliance with Article 43 (Durdular and Neziroğlu, *ibid.*, pp. 179–199).
9. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
10. Loughna and Nicholson, *Dünya Mültecilerinin Durumu* (The Case of World Refugees), *op. cit.*, p. 2.
11. Ay Kadir, *et al.*, *İltica ve Göç Mevzuatı* (Asylum and Migration Regulations), Ankara: Başkent Publications, 2005, pp. 7–9.

12. Durdular and Neziroğlu, *Uluslararası Temel İnsan Hakları Belgeleri* (International Fundamental Human Rights Documents), *op. cit.*, pp. 179–199.
13. Acer and Gümüş, "Türkiye'nin Mülteci Stratejisi" (Turkey's Refugee Strategy), *op. cit.*, pp. 67–70.
14. Due to the opportunities provided by the Canadian government, refugees prefer to migrate to this country. Canada is a favorable country for refugees also in terms of both economic and socio-cultural aspects. Canada provides the refugees with social and economic support such as health insurance, bank accounts, foreign language courses, and rental houses. Canadian authorities, who carry out studies for the adaptation of refugees to the social structure, focus especially on "social support". Because these people are individuals who were obliged to leave their own countries in order to flee from various social traumas like persecution, pressure and torture, therefore, in the asylum country, they need psychological support more than anything and they prefer to receive help from their own environment. So, refugees prefer to live among their relatives and friends, and choose areas of residence accordingly. Naturally, this situation creates several problems. Especially in countries that receive thousands of immigrants every year, such situations prevent immigrants from integrating into the existing social structure, and result in the emergence of "ghettos" of their own social and cultural formations. See Laura Simich, "Negotiating Boundaries of Refugee Resettlement: A Study of Settlement Patterns and Social Support", *Canadian Review of Sociology & Anthropology*, Vol. 40, No. 5, December 2003, p. 575.
15. A. Lieblich, R. Tuval-Mashiach, and T. Zilber, *Narrative Research, Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*, Applied Social Research Methods Series, Vol. 47, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998, pp. 112–114.
16. Ali Yıldırım and Hasan Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Qualitative Research Methods in Social Sciences), Ankara: Seçkin Yayınevi, 1999, p. 190.
17. It is one of the original concepts brought in the field of sociology by Mübeccel Belik Kıray. According to Kıray, buffering institutions and relations are those which are not observed in both structures, but emerge during formation and enable integration to occur relatively faster and to result in more comprehensive change. Buffering institutions prevent depression and crisis in the course of social change, and avert social disintegration. In terms of both structure and function, they connect various aspects of both the old and new social structure. Being parts of the whole, structures and functions that fail to integrate into the whole disappear over time, and they are replaced by buffering institutions. In this way, a balance is maintained in society during a change of medium pace. (Quoted in: Emre Kongar, *Türk Toplum Bilimcileri* (Turkish Sociologist), Ankara: Remzi Kitabevi, 4th edn, Vol. 1, 1999, p. 438.)
18. V. Eşsiz and G. Günel, *Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları için Mülteci Destek El Kitabı* (A Refugee Support Guidebook for Non-Governmental Organizations), İstanbul: Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Publications, 2007, p. 208.
19. Ahmet İçduygu, *Türkiye'de Kaçak Göç* (Illegal Migration in Turkey), İstanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Odası Yayınları, 2004, pp. 83–87.
20. The first paragraph of the sixth article in the "Primary Education Law" No. 222 of 5 January 1961 was changed in the first article of the "Primary Education Law" No. 4306, acceded in 1997 as follows: "Primary education institutions are schools that give eight years of education. These schools offer continuous education and graduates receive a primary school diploma". The statement "eight years of continuous primary school education" was replaced with the statement "eight years of continuous primary school and secondary school education" in the fifth article of the Law No. 4702 of 29 June 2001 and was accordingly included in the text. Available online at: (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, Mevzuat Bankası, İlköğretim ve Eğitim Kanunu) http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/html/126.html, accessed 30.01.2008.
21. In the law relating to the Work Permit of Foreigners, the applications in Western European countries were taken into consideration in the arrangements concerning penal sanctions intended to deter the employment of foreign illegal workers. Accordingly, a fine of 250 liras was charged for each foreigner; 500 liras for unauthorized dependent foreign workers; 2500 liras for each foreign worker to be paid by employers who employ unauthorized foreign workers; and a fine of 1000 liras and plant closing penalty for unauthorized independent foreign business owners were determined to be applied in case of default of notification. Moreover, administrative fines are declared to be twice as much in case of the repetition of the above mentioned acts. Besides administrative fines, employers and their representatives who employ unauthorized foreign workers are obliged to cover the foreigner's and his/her spouse's and children's (if any) accommodation and health care expenses, as well as their travel expenses necessary to return to their own country. Available online at: (Türkiye Cumhur-

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iyeti Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı, Yabancıların Çalışmaları Hakkında Kanun) http://www.calisma.gov.tr, accessed 30.01.2008.

22. The amount of minimum gross wages to be paid in 2008 in compliance with the decision of the Commission of Fixing the Minimum Wages No. 2007/1 of 27 December 2007 issued in the *Official Gazette* No. 26741 of 29 December 2007: Between 01.01.2008 and 30.06.2008, YTL 608.40 for workers over 16 years of age and YTL 515.40 for workers under 16 years of age; between 01.07.2008 and 31.12.2008, YTL 638.70 for workers over 16 years of age and YTL 540.60 for workers under 16 years of age. Available online at: (2008 Yılı Asgari Ücret Tespit Komisyonu Kararı) http://www.mufad.org, accessed 30.01.2008.

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