

# Women's Empowerment of Syrian Refugees in Turkey on an Assessment Democratically

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Dil ad TÜRKMENO LU KÖSE\*\*

## ABSTRACT

*While being born as a "woman" and struggling to survive afterwards is a difficult process in itself, the efforts of women who have to leave their homeland and adapt to where they go are very important. Especially in societies where democracy is adopted as a form of government, it is ensured that women are facilitated to gain a place in social life through positive discrimination, etc policies. In this regard, the study, which is a specific example in nature, and Syrian women who have obtained the legal rights of the states and Turkey (as a state and society) will be placed on how they are supported.*

*In the study, current and historical data analysis will be made by studies and reports of the UNHRC, the Directorate General of Immigration Administration and the NGOs for women struggling in Turkey, making use of academic studies and news in the press. This data is analyzed in a systematic structure and then primarily in the international system will examine the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey women. Finally, the study will be included, along with examples of how they supported the Syrian refugee women in Turkey. It can be stated that the study, in which suggestions on the subject will be given together with the result, is very important in terms of being up-to-date and specific in international quality.*

**Key Words:** *Democracy, Syrian Women Refugees, Turkey, Empowerment.*

## INTRODUCTION

It is very difficult to struggle as a woman and to work on every conceivable subject in life. Famous thinker Hasan al-Banna said "Half of the world's population is women. The other half are raised by women." For both mother, dishwasher, cook, teacher, etc. and women who work in every conceivable field and who can have a profession, he made a very correct determination by saying this. This shows that societies that attach importance to women and especially their education in society actually ensure the development of their future generations in terms of quality, thus paving the way for being developed societies. The understanding of equality put forward by democratic governance approaches is an effective factor for women to have a place in every aspect of life. However, starting from the understanding that not every woman has equal conditions and opportunities, it is clear that women should be given more support. In this respect, it will be seen more in the society as a woman's power and value, and the settling of democracy in society will increase. Today, it is among the general acknowledgement that women, who are "fragile" as well as "strong" who direct social life, are the dominant factor in the international system. In this regard, especially women who had to migrate from their homeland as a result of the necessities should be taken into consideration. Order of society with democratic states such as Turkey, to support the refugees is an important step for democracy. However, it is seen as more important to support and empower women refugees in order to foster democracy in different societies.

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The main subject of the study, women, constitute a Syrian refugee situation in the world and Turkey, and in particular the support given to them in Turkey. In this context, based on established democratic values, the support and projects that should be done for Syrian women are trying to be evaluated. Again, in the study, projects regarding the integration and social adaptation of Syrian refugees and their existence in business lines that can provide their livelihood will be discussed. In this respect, democracy and its requirements have been included in the theoretical framework. Then, Syrian women's status in the integration process will be examined together both in the light of the data obtained in this context, both at the state level with Turkey's support for Syrian women socially. As a result of the need to ensure social cohesion of Syrian women in Turkey and the livelihoods of both Turkey and the Syrian refugee women in the profession to do the acquisition, it will be presented in the form of suggestions.

### **1. Democracy in a Theoretical Context and Functionality of Democracy for Syrian Women**

Demos, which is a Latin word by its origin, means "demos" people, and "Kratos" means sovereignty-power. With this state of mind, the place where democracy finds its first application is known as the ancient Greek city-states. In these city-states called Polis, the people gather in a square called the agora and directly participate in the administration in the process of making important decisions regarding the administration of the city (Gözler, 2016: 103-107). Although democracy in this form is expressed as the first form of direct democratic administration, it is known that in the ancient Greek city-states, not the whole population, but only men over a certain age who had citizen status were represented. It is seen that there are still debates on it, but the differences in the meaning and shaping of democracy, which is claimed to be the most ideal form of government for modern and post-modern societies, are actually due to the social, economic and political differences of societies.

The understanding of democracy in the 21st century has started to emphasize the democratic administration, which is preferred by the global political system, especially in the types of radical democracy and deliberative democracy. Therefore, the expectations of developed democratic governance systems from countries trying to internalize their democracies have been within the scope of radical democracy and deliberative democracy types. With the deliberative theory of democracy and radical democracy theory put forward under the leadership of Jürgen Habermas, it is aimed for the people to participate in the administration in the most effective way. It can be said that the priority in deliberative democracy understanding is to find a solution to the administrative dilemmas of liberal representative democracy, which is known as 21st-century democracy. In particular, with the deliberative understanding of democracy in which Habermas's "communicative action" theory is based (Habermas, 2001), the people's participation in the administration, not only in order to determine the political power in election periods, but also in the post-election periods with different democratic participation tools and the impasse of representative democracy it is thought to solve. Because negotiation, both provides the emergence of different views and thoughts as a process of discovery, and it appears as a process of convincing each other of conflicting views. As a long-running and rational process, it will make it compulsory to share the common values of those who participate in the negotiation process (Erdoğan, 2012: 2). Therefore, it is thought that the criticized aspects of liberal representative democracy, such as limiting the participation of citizens in the government with the election period, reinforcing the understanding of majority rather than pluralist administration, turning political parties into a bureaucratic apparatus of the state that only addresses citizens during the election period, can only be overcome with the understanding of deliberative democracy. As a matter of fact, in deliberative democracy, it is seen that the concepts of the public sphere, accountability and legitimacy come to the fore in proportion to the 21st century understanding of global politics.

When we try to evaluate this more participatory and more humane form of democracy in terms of Syrian Refugee Women, it is obvious that the result seems more gratifying. Because the principle of equality comes to the fore with the opportunities provided by democratic administrations. Again, as a step beyond this principle of equality, "positive discrimination" against women and refugees can be considered as one of the basic points for the solution of the problems.

Human beings are valuable creatures with a number of different characteristics in addition to the characteristics they share with other living things. This idea is stated in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), "Every human being is born free, equal in dignity and rights. Equipped with reason and conscience, he behaves towards each other with an understanding of brotherhood ". According to the 2nd article of the declaration, "Everyone; It has the right to live equally and freely without any discrimination such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or any other status " (www.un.org., 2021). From this point of view, the main expectation from humanity is to ensure equality in basic vital areas and to avoid discrimination. The emergence of discrimination as the equality opportunities offered by countries to their citizens based on the understanding of the social state is one of the most common definitions. But wars, extraordinary disasters... etc. It only requires countries to support their own citizens as well as citizens of other countries. At this point, expanding the scope of positive discrimination may also be important in preventing discrimination between societies.

Providing diversity can be defined as increasing the representation of groups defined as disadvantaged in all areas of life. In this respect, "positive discrimination" is sometimes used to define policies developed to serve the purpose of ensuring cultural diversity in multicultural societies, and it is also seen as a tool of multicultural policies (Özkazanç, 2001: 114). In this context, the understanding of democratic management can be presented as a solution proposal for both increasing the visibility of Syrian refugee women and their empowerment. It overlaps with the understanding of negotiating / participatory democracy so that Syrian refugee women can be supported positively and continue their lives as strong individuals. In this sense, democracy will exist not only for the citizens of the existing society but for everyone living in the society.

## **2. Syrian Women Refugees in Turkey and The World**

It is possible to see the effects of the civil war dated March 15, 2011, which is called the Arab Spring in Syria, mostly on women and children. In the report of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), it is known that gender-based violence is used as a weapon of war, rape cases have been documented in seven cities, including Damascus, and these rapes took place during anti-government demonstrations, at security points or places of detention (Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, 2015).

Similarly, in a statement made by the Syrian Human Rights Network (SNHR) in November 2013, it was stated that more than 10 thousand women lost their lives and more than 7 thousand women were subjected to sexual violence in the operations carried out by the security forces. In addition, SNHR states in its report in 2018 that 27,226 Syrian women and 28,394 Syrian women in the 2020 report have lost their lives since 2011 (SNHR, 2018; SNHR, 2020). This situation, which can be described as a shame for humanity, is especially expressed by democratic countries and international organizations. However, defining it as a shame for humanity is of course not enough to solve the problems of Syrian refugee women. Some countries such as Turkey seeks to provide facilities-based positive discrimination for this group.

Women who cannot bear the devastating effects of war find the remedy to migrate and bring the psychological and physical effects of the war to their places of migration. Therefore, when we look at the statistical data, it is noted that women migrate more and are affected more by the war (Demirbaş and Akyiğit, 2018: 125). This situation shows that, according to Castles and Miller (2008), immigration becomes feminized. What is meant by the feminization of migration is that women who participate in the migration process independently act more comfortably, making up half of the migrants (Barn, 2015: 22-35).

Syrians remaining in the international system, and most women are forced to migrate hosting Syrian refugees in Turkey states that constitute the next part of the study.

### **2.1. Syrian Women Refugees in The World**

Today, the Syrian immigrant population fleeing the Syrian War in 2011 constitutes 1/3 of the global refugees in the international system with 6.6 million. 3.6 million of them are shelters in Turkey. (EASO, 2020: 8). However, the vast majority of more than 80% of the residence of the Syrian refugees in Turkey is known that consists of women and children (Middle East Monitor, 2020), but their numbers in the world are not clearly available.

Looking at the general characteristics of migration in the international system, it is observed that it is from undeveloped countries to developed countries. In this context, the Syrian population in the international system, in order to increase their comfort level immediately after the war, generally targeted Western countries, Turkey's "transit country" is in the position can be expressed (Nurdoğan et. Al., 2016: 222-223). The socio-economic inadequacy of the countries can make the living conditions of Syrian women who are refugees more difficult. In this context, the Syrian neighbours of Turkey, although well-intentioned as a priority if the facilities offered in line with the door open "transit country" has come to that situation.

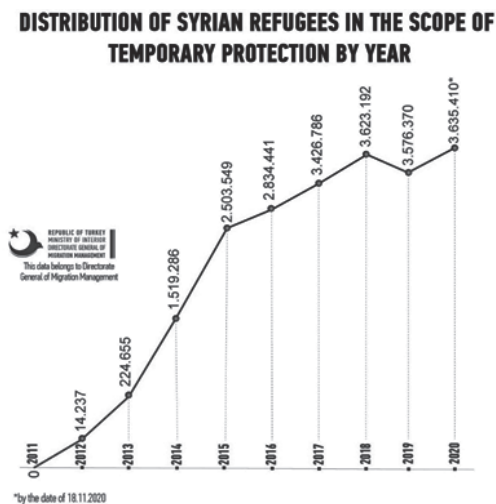
However, it can be understood from the policies and practices towards Syrian immigrants in recent years that developed Western states in the international system, especially European states, do not want immigrants and refugees. These policies are implemented in the form of more refugees in neighbouring countries such as Turkey in order to finance them not to provide them orientation. The main reason for this is that the refugees are perceived as a threat to the nation-states by the developed Europeans (Nyers, 2008: 56-59). The decisions taken and policies implemented in this direction actually reflect the European states' perspective on the refugee and immigrant problem (De Genova, 2002: 1; Hampshire, 2008: 14-20). The perspective of the developed Western societies towards refugees and immigrants triggers the exclusion of refugees from society and the increase of campaigns organized for the expulsion of refugees. (Bloch and Schuster, 2005: 491-512).

Considering that Syrian women refugees constitute the vast majority of the total Syrian refugee population, see that their duties as "women" are added to their duties such as combating migration, adaptation, gaining a profession and making a household, and meeting the needs of their children in difficult conditions such as education, health, accommodation, nutrition, etc. is possible (Genç, H. D. and Öztürk, D., 2016: 75-84). Considering their numerical majority and need, giving positive support to Syrian refugee women within the scope of the refugee law can be seen as an important suggestion in solving the problems. Within the scope of positive discrimination, especially the employment, accommodation and education opportunities to be offered to the refugee women population can solve most of the problems.

**2.2. Syrian Women Refugees in Turkey**

Turkey, known as a "hospitable country" in the international system, throughout history has hosted the immigrant population. Today, it shows this feature to the Syrian immigrants, whose number is increasing every year in the country, which is called the biggest migration influx of recent years. So much so that Turkey, more than half the world's population of 6.6 million immigrants (3.6 million) carries the hosting country property for 7 years (UNHCR, 2020).

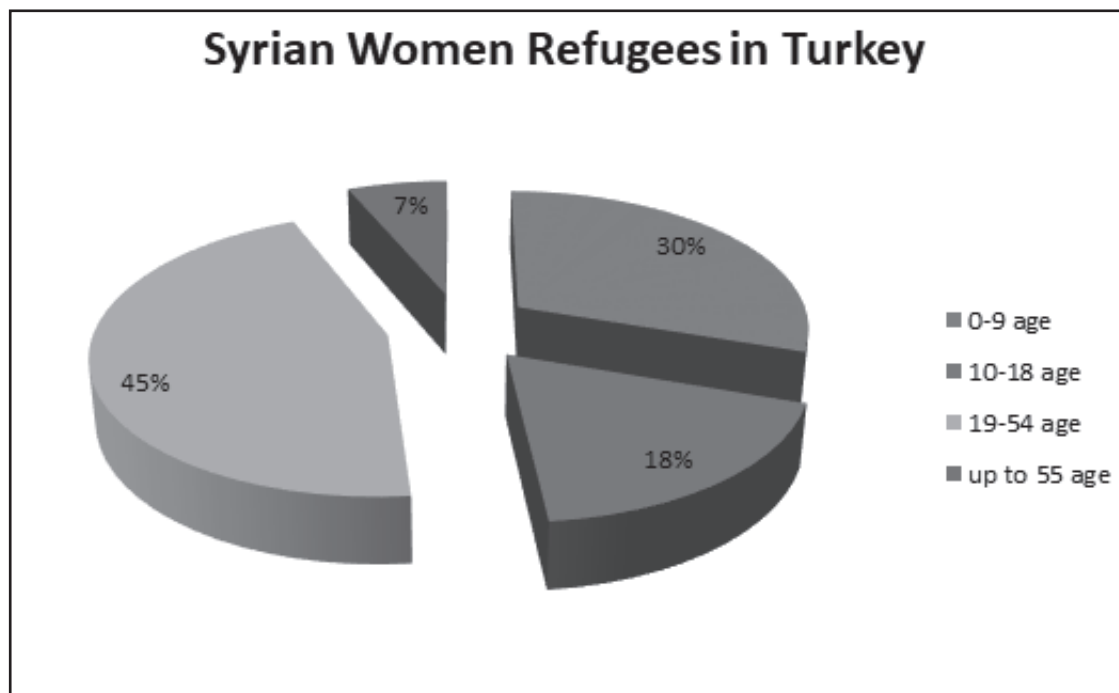
**Table 1. Syrians Under Temporary Protection in Turkey Per Year**



Search: The Directorate General of Migration Management, (2020).

After the Syrian War in 2011, the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey as of 2020, showing a rapid rise, 1,679,603 are women refugees. The most intense age group among these is the 19-54 age group (The Directorate General of Migration Management, 2020). This age group is often called the "prime" age group. It is also defined as the working-age population (AFAD, 2014: 21). Nearly half of the women with the Syrians in Turkey, note that the working-age and being in a position to be able to contribute to the workforce is attractive (Akpınar, 2017: 24). On the other hand, the high population of young Syrian women under the age of 19 (48%) indicates that the number of potentially working women will be higher in the coming years.

Table 2. Syrian Women Refugees in Turkey in 2020



Search: *The Directorate General of Migration Management, 2020*).

Recently, as a result of the unwillingness of European countries Syrian refugees in Turkey "transit country" perspective has changed direction and is now in Turkey "destination country" has begun to see it as. Therefore, to complete the adaptation of Syrian refugees who settled in Turkey is of paramount importance. Given the potential of female Syrian refugees in Turkey, "the woman" in the name to contribute to the country they live in and experience is very important for correct guidance and support. For example, potential Syrian women refugees; basic education and home economics, health, nutrition, etc., as well as entrepreneurship education, vocational training etc. in the field of education by Turkey to contribute to adaptation so that the country will also be accelerated. At this point, positive discrimination expressed in a theoretical framework can be seen as an extremely important problem-solving method for Syrian women refugees. The inclusion of refugee women and expanding the scope of positive discrimination is considered both in Turkey and refugees who were followed Adopt may relieve the refugee population.

### 3. Empowerment to Syrian Women Refugees in Turkey

After the civil war in Syria, Turkey, showing an increase in the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey Syrian women, international and at the national level in the process, it was found help and support in getting support. Syrian refugees who spent more than \$ 40 billion in all of Turkey, is the largest donor country providing financial support in this regard (Birgün, 2019). As for women refugees in Turkey, practices are made that

facilitate their adaptation as well as encourage them to enter and adapt to business life economically along with social life. It is possible to see the best example of these in Turkish and vocational courses provided by each municipality for Syrian refugee women to communicate effectively (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2019). Similarly, the International Labor Organization (ILO)'s "Increasing of the Syrian Women, Girls and Host Communities of Resistance In Turkey Project" (ILO, 2019), the Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education's "Ministry of Education Syrian children of Turkish Education System Integration Support Project" and "Conference on Entrepreneurial Women in Development and Social Interaction" (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Family and Social Policies, General Directorate on the Status of Women, 2016) organized by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies in cooperation with Ankara Development Agency and Syrian Friendship Association are promising.

For Syrian refugees in Turkey, outside of public institutions, many international/national organizations and NGOs also illustrate the importance of a structure that prioritizes women and women. These include the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM), the German International Cooperation Association (GIZ), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), The World Bank (WB), the Refugees' Association, the Association for Women and Democracy (KADEM), etc. Many examples such as.

On the other hand, it is stated in UN Women reports that more than 90% of Syrian women, most of whom struggle to survive on a low income due to the cultural structure they come from (Khattab and Myrntinen, 2018: 16), are not aware of work permit regulations (UN Women and ASAM, 2018).

However, Turkey makes an effort for Syrian women refugees, attaches great importance to the basic needs of these women: shelter, health and education. Turkey works for the Syrian refugee women, taking into consideration the relevant reports and manages over 9 years in a good way and opens the way for business and employment for these women. In this context, it primarily makes legal regulations.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After World War II, the second-largest migration wave is Syrian migration, that is the reason for the international arena's focus on Turkey last 9 years. In this context of Turkey, both international and national organizations, government agencies and NGOs are also included in the focus. The migration to Turkey, recognized as a "hospitable country", the most important difference from the others, is hosting a society that does not have the same ethnic origin, is located in the same geography but does not have a common cultural background.

In this process, to be examined within the scope of positive discrimination, both the "fragile" and "strong" women's place in the structure and location of migration in Turkey is the main starting point of the study. The net proportion of women in the Syrian refugee population, which is 6.6 million worldwide, is unknown. The rate of refugee women in 3.6 million Syrian refugees in Turkey has been 46.19%. When a section of them in the 45% considered to have the potential labor force, much more active policy in this regard and can be stated that Turkey should make legal arrangements.

In this respect within the scope of positive discrimination, in Turkey and all over the world, supporting the Syrian women's formal employment and a number of encouraging steps to be taken. These can be listed as; conducting vocational training or job placement programs for women, encouraging women in places where economic participation is low, developing gender-sensitive approaches across the country, funding programs to improve the skills of Syrian women and increase their employability, Encouraging practices and regulations that support gender equality, making more detailed funding and reporting for women (for the development of gender-sensitive indicators), developing confidential complaint mechanisms within companies and strengthening accountability mechanisms, increasing commitment to women-friendly workplaces, Increasing gender sensitivity will help Syrian women who have successfully set up their business or are hired by Turkish

companies. Creating “champions” by citing Syrian female employees and entrepreneurs like herself to mentor for building or career development (İGAM, 2019: 5-7).

It should not be forgotten that the participation of women in the labor market is the most important factor that will bring about social integration, as well as making important contributions in terms of overcoming barriers such as language and culture.

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