

CHAPTER II

SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE

This chapter discussed about the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe, which started from the description of the Syrian conflict history and its implication. Moreover, according to the UN report, the conflict in Syria country is the biggest humanitarian crisis in times. The flow of Syrian refugee fled from conflict also keep increasing each year, especially in Europe region as now became the main destination for Syrian refugee. So this chapter analyzed and discussed about the influx of Syrian refugee in Europe and its impact.

A. Syrian Conflict and Its Implication

1. Geography of Syria

The country of Syrian is located on the east cost of the Mediterranean Sea in southwestern Asia with the population reached 22,685,000 people in 2015. The country is bounded by Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel with the capital city is Damascus (Hamide, 2016).

Figure 2.1. The Location of Syria Country



Syria got its independence in 1946, but then was occupied by Israel in 1967. However, after its independence, in 1970 Hafiz Al-Assad started to rule Syria through authoritarian system. He came up with the goals to achieve national security, domestic stability, and rebuild the Syrian territory which lost to Israel in 1967. In achieving his goal, he used the national budget for arms Improvement which caused the declined of country development (Hamide, 2016).

Since its independence, the unstable situation of Syrian society and political life keep going on even until today. Hafiz Al-Assad died in the year of 2000, and the country continued under his son Bashar Al-Assad. Bashar Al-Assad continued with the authoritarian system in ruling Syria, he also used military power and security service for political dissent (Hamide, 2016).

2. Syrian civil war

A year after Bashar Al-Assad ruled the country of Syria, in March 2011 emerged nationwide protest demanding president Bashar Al-Assad resignation. A pro-democracy demanded the end of an authoritarian system in Syria practices by Assad government (Britannica, 2015, p. 1). That incident became the starting point of civil war in Syria until today.

In March 18, 2011 the protest increased in response to the arrest of several children for writing anti-government graffiti and several people also were killed. However, the Assad's government denied to be responsible for the incident and announced that they still considering the political reform, decreasing the restriction in the political party, and lifting the Syrian emergency law but it was dismissed by Syrian opposition. After some incident happened in the cities, in March 29 the government announced the resignation of the cabinet and led to call for immediate reform (Britannica, 2015, p. 4).

Response to the call for immediate reform, president Bashar Al-Assad made his first public appearance during the unrest. He claimed that the protest that happened had been instigated by foreign conspiracy and sectarian tension, so he opposed to the immediate reform (Rodgers, Gritten, Offer, & Asare, 2016). That situation pushed up the protest intensified and spread through cities, the use of violence on stopping the protest by Syrian security forces also increased with the reason for public safety. As the government used force to resolve the protest, the opposing forces formed the rebel brigades to battle against the government.

Figure 2.2.Syria War Timeline



In April 22, 2011 Syrian government launched a new operation to silence the protest by sending tanks and armored personnel carriers to three centers of anti-government protest. Those were cities of Dara, Baniyas, and Homs. In May, the protest reached the capital city of Syria, Damascus. The protest increased and attracted the international call for immediate end of violence. In May 9, 2011 the European Union imposed sanctions on Syria country included travel bans and asset freeze, they also launched the arms embargo as the response to Syrian government actions against the protesters. As violence condition increased in the country, Syria also became isolated from its regional allies (Britannica, 2015, p. 4).

In June 6, 2011 about 120 Syrian soldiers had been killed in the city of Jisr Al-Shughur. The Syrian army launched a heavy assault on the town in response to the incident which caused thousands of the city resident fled across the Turkish

border. The Assad regime continued to use violence and resulted to call for global condemnation for Assad resignation (Britannica, 2015, p. 4).

To end the violence situation in Syria, the Arab League came with the initiative to make an agreement with the Syrian government. In November 2011, the Syrian government reportedly agreed to the Arab League's initiative to stop violence against protesters, remove tanks and armored vehicle from cities, and release political prisoners. This agreement led to the permission for delegation of Arab League in monitoring and observing the implementation of the initiative, then the result was positive. However, as time passed, the monitoring activities declined as the Syrian government increased the restriction for their movement. Therefore, the monitoring delegates were withdrawn for the reason of safety (Britannica, 2015, p. 2).

The violence seemed to increase intensively after the failure of the Arab League. Some action were also taken by United Nation to initiate the end of the violence but it also failed. The battle between Assad government and opposing forces continued to cause more victims and people fled the country. The situation turned to the civil war of Syria in which it also called for the foreign intervention. The rebel brigades supported by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar in term of fund and arm, while the government receiving weapons from Iran and Lebanese militant (Noah Tesch, 2015). In 2014, the emergence of Jihadist group Islamic state (IS) added further dimension of the conflict.

3. The impact of the Syrian conflict

While the Assad government was busy to silence the protest and the opposing forces which fought back to topple the president Bashar Al-Assad from his position, the situation turned to civil war and caused the unstable situation of Syrian country. Over 4.8 million people have fled the country of Syria, and some 6.8 million people in Syria have become internally displaced. This made the population of Syria decreased by 15% of previous number affected by war (“New UN-backed”, 2015).

The insecurity and sectarian violence were affected by the war also depleted the capital and wealth of the nation, and now Syria considered as a country faced huge poverty with almost all their people are poor. Besides that, the social disintegration and economic degradation resulted in the collapse of education, health, and social welfare system. Many children and women became the most affecting victims by the conflict, with almost half of all school-age children no longer attending school. Homes, schools, offices, and many other buildings were destroyed because of the ongoing armed conflict (“New UN-backed”, 2015).

The main effect of the conflict is violence. In June 2013, reported about 90,000 people had been killed in the conflict and climbed to 250,000 in August 2015. The number of victims keeps increasing each year as the foreign power joined the conflict (Rodgers, Gritten, Offer, & Asare, 2016). Syrian people have

been forced to flee their homes because of violence, intimidation, and fear. Moreover, it reduced the life expectation of the Syrian people.

Not only resulted in the unstable situation in the nation, but Syrian conflict also affected the regional and global concern. It is because many Syrian people fled the country to neighboring countries and other across the sea, especially to Europe, they also have to get through the dangerous journey. It affected the neighboring countries because they have to provide basic needs and feed the Syrian people who come and seek for protection. That means the countries have to use more their national budget, it became a new problem, especially for them who was experiencing economic problems (“The Syrian Civil”, n.d).

Globally, the conflict that happened in Syria also drew the attention of another country outside the region. Some foreign countries gave deep attention and support in the name of international assistance and human right, some of them even joined the conflict (“The Syrian Civil”, n.d). Besides that, it created fear and threat to the emerging of any terrorist organization that can harm the entire world, because the terrorist movement also had been involved in Syrian conflict such as IS. Moreover, there were a lot of notion that the conflict effected in humanitarian crisis and potentially led to wars that can turn the world to the chaos situation.

B. Syrian Refugee in Europe

1. Geography of Europe

Europe is one of the seven continents with high population and diverse landscape. Europe is bordered in the north by the Arctic Ocean, west by the Atlantic Ocean, and south by the Mediterranean Sea. Europe considered as the third most populated continent with accounted around 11% of world population (“Europe”, n.d).

Europe consists of 50 countries and six partial countries. There is an intergovernmental organization called the European Union (EU), which consist of 27 member states. Even some countries are not part of the EU, but they are still in good or close relations, especially in facing or solving common problems in Europe. When one European country got a problem or crisis, there will be a high possibility of affecting other European countries.

Europe considered as a region that has a better place to live in with the higher paid jobs, better housing, better health care, more service available, and a better lifestyle and education (“European Population”, n.d). The existence of the European Union also made free movement of people between its member states, that caused the increased of migration. However, Europe is now facing a refugee crisis because many refugees struggle to reach Europe for better life and safety. Besides that, many European countries also have the ageing population such as Germany, Italy, Spain, France, and UK that led to the different view toward the refugee arrival in Europe. Some European countries, rejected the arrival of

refugee, but the other seemed to achieve the refugee to cover up their ageing population and national income with job availability (“European Population”, n.d).

Europe was considered as the top destination for refugee because the high chance for rebuilding their lives. Compared to the other region, the number of refugees arrival in Europe was pretty significant. The number increased alongside with the ongoing unstable situation in Middle East, especially in 2015.

Figure 2.3. Refugee populations by UNHCR regions in 2015

UNHCR regions	Start-2015			End-2015			Change (total)	
	Refugees	People in refugee-like situations	Total refugees	Refugees	People in refugee-like situations	Total refugees	Absolute	%
- Central Africa and Great Lakes	625,000	37,600	662,600	1,173,400	15,900	1,189,300	526,700	79
- East and Horn of Africa	2,568,000	33,400	2,601,400	2,739,400	-	2,739,400	138,000	5
- Southern Africa	177,700	-	177,700	189,800	-	189,800	12,100	7
- West Africa	243,300	-	243,300	295,000	-	295,000	51,700	21
Total Africa*	3,614,000	71,000	3,685,000	4,397,600	15,900	4,413,500	728,500	20
Americas	509,300	259,700	769,000	496,400	250,400	746,800	-22,200	-3
Asia and Pacific	3,615,200	280,100	3,895,300	3,551,900	278,300	3,830,200	-65,100	-2
Europe	3,057,000	18,200	3,075,200	4,362,600	28,800	4,391,400	1,316,200	43
Middle East and North Africa	2,898,500	65,400	2,963,900	2,675,400	64,100	2,739,500	-224,400	-8
Total	13,694,000	694,400	14,388,400	15,483,900	637,500	16,121,400	1,733,000	12

* Excluding North Africa.

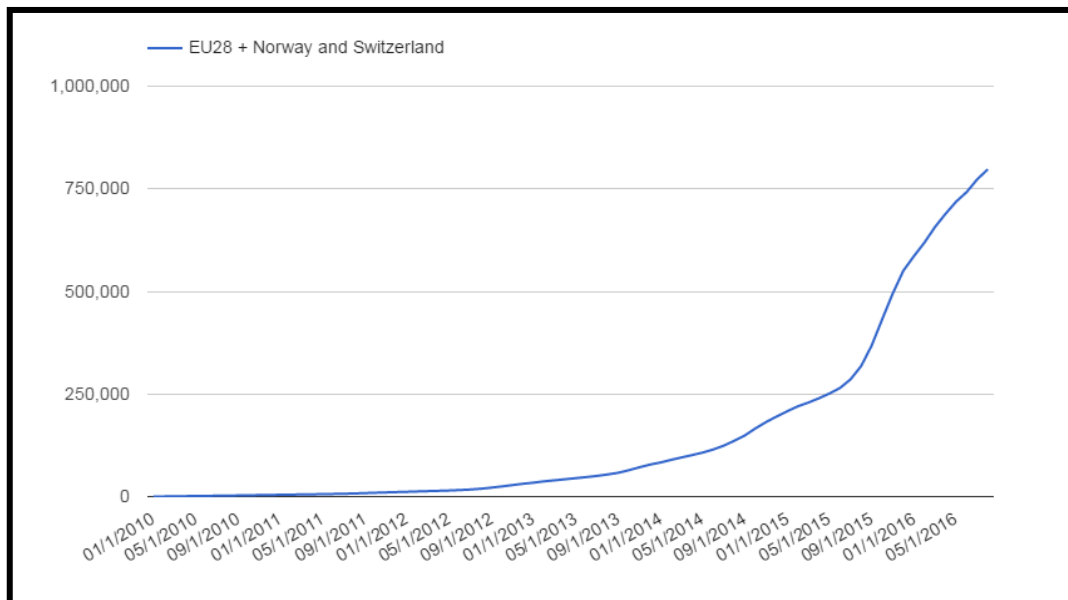
2. The influx of Syrian refugee in Europe

In history, Europe is known as the greatest sources of displaced people in the world in the period of World War II, but now Europe became the top destination for refugees and asylum seekers. In 2015, the number of refugees in Europe was surge to 1.3 million with about 29% of them were Syrian. Along with

the instability situation in the Middle East, Syria considered as the largest world's source of refugees until today (DePillis, Saluja, & Lu, 2015).

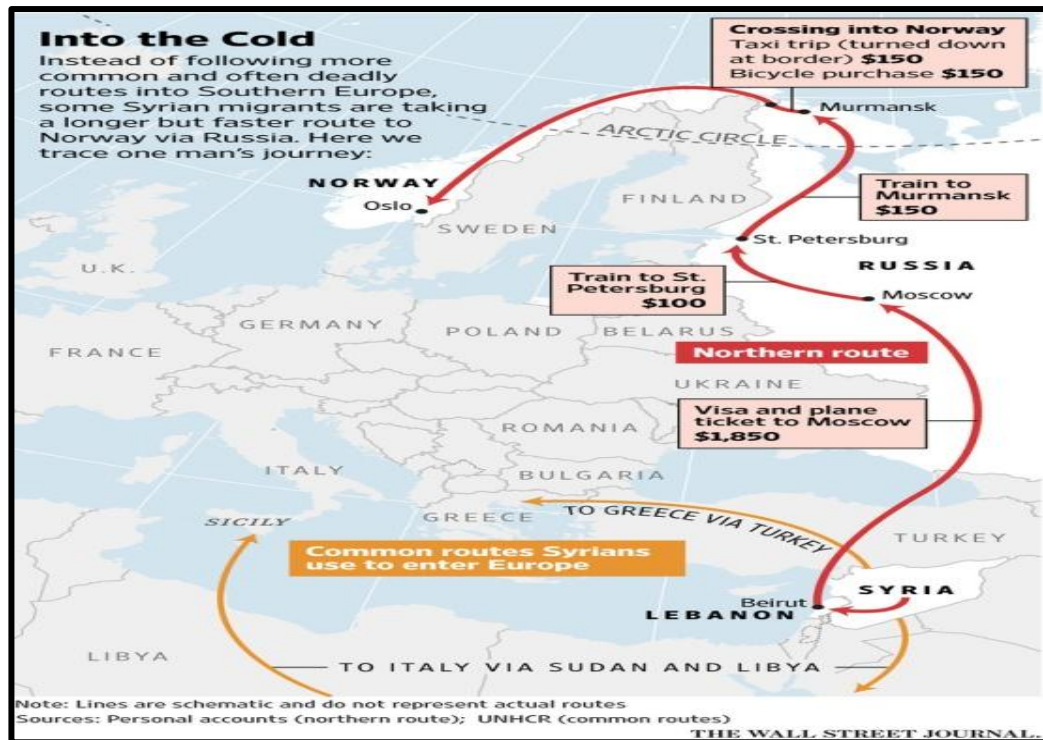
The number of Syrian refugees in Europe is increasing monthly, from the highest number of 2013 was about 50,000 refugees increased to around 150,000 refugee in 2014, and about 500,000 refugee in 2015 (Malafrasca, n.d).

Figure 2.4. The Registered Syrian Refugee in Europe



There are two common routes taken by Syrian refugee to reach Europe, according to UNHCR report. The first route is via Turkey to Greece by road, plane, or boat in which turkey considered as the main transit country to Europe, and the second route is via Sudan and Libya to Italy. Besides that, some of the Syrian refugees also took the farthest northern route via Russia to reach Norway (Hovland, 2015, p. 3).

Figure 2.5. The Syrian Refugee Route to Europe



As more European countries intensify their border control measures, it forced the refugees and asylum seekers to find other irregular ways to reach Europe for safety. The Arctic's route is found as the other option to reach Europe region through 2,300 miles north of Syria. The route provides a direct gateway to the Schengen area of Europe in which there is no border control. Norway is not a member of the European Union, but part of the visa-free zone. The new route is known as one of the fastest and cheapest route compared to the difficult and high risk of regular route such as Mediterranean route (Hovland, 2015, p. 3).

In 2015, 970,000 refugees arrived from the Mediterranean sea in Europe, and other about 4,000 arrived in Greece through Western Balkans routes with about 64% were Syrian. The number of Syrian refugees in Europe keeps

increasing each year. However, not all of the Syrian refugees seek for refugee status or asylum seekers alongside with the illegal entry (Rossen, 2016, p. 29).

The arrival of Syrian refugee will continue to rise as there is no end of the conflict. Some European countries even put their own border fence to prevent the refugee influx. In other side, some countries such as Germany, Italy, Hungary, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Bulgaria share the major concern with the regard toward the influx of refugee in Europe (Poushter, 2016, p. 34).

Germany and Sweden are the countries who received the largest number of Asylum seeker by Syrian refugee. They are known as the safe countries, giving opportunities for jobs, and settlement for a long time term. The differences of asylum seeker number of European countries are mainly due to the family ties, location, and administrative procedures. The welcome of the majority of the population of the host countries also became the other reason for refugees to reach their destination (Rossen, 2016, p. 31).

3. The impact of the refugee arrival in Europe

The influx of refugee in Europe, especially from Syrian turned out the different view toward the impact of refugee arrival. Moreover, Syria is the country in which majorities of the population are muslims. It is not only created the negative reaction toward refugee arrival, but some of the European countries also give the positive reaction to it.

According to a research that was held in some European countries, there seemed to be a rejection from the European majorities toward refugee. Many

European are concerned that the influx of refugee will lead to the increase of terrorism threat, economic burden, and may take away jobs and social benefit in the region. Anti refugee population also has increased in Europe as there is an opinion from some European countries that the existence of the European Union still far from satisfying the public on how they handle the refugee crisis in the region (Connor, 2016, p. 7)

For Germany and Sweden as the two largest receivers of Syrian refugee believe that refugee can help their economic performance. As the productive age of the population in Germany keep decreasing, they believe that the working skill and talent of the refugee in Germany can fill in the job availability and help the income of the nation (Poushter, 2016). Although not all of the countries majority truly welcome the refugee, but the government keep open their door for the refugee application.

However, Europe is now facing a specific problem of integrating the muslim population because of the increase number of refugees in Europe especially from muslim countries such as Syria. European countries have to deal with how to manage a full social and cultural integration of the refugee and provide the same opportunities (Rossen, 2016, p. 34). That's why the help from another international organization such as UNHCR is also being important to handle the refugee crisis in cooperated with European countries.