

CHAPTER IV

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEE (UNHCR): INITIATING AND FACILITATING

Another role of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) in responding Syrian refugee crisis in Europe analyzed and described in this chapter. The roles are the effort of the UNHCR played as initiator and facilitator in handling the refugee crisis. To create well understanding, this chapter used the concept of international organization and the concept of refugee.

A. The Effort of the UNHCR

The ongoing conflict in Syria increased the number of people fled the country to the neighboring countries and across the sea to Europe. The influx of refugee in Europe caused the refugee crisis which attracted the international attention on how it should be solved. The determination of who are refugees became the main mark for the state parties and the international organization such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) to give the right solution and protection.

According to the concept of refugee which based on the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugee, refugees mean people who being forced to leave their country and full of fear of being persecuted, or reason of war and violence, so they seek for the international protection“ (Memorandum of Understanding”,

1997). One of the examples are the Syrian people who fled their country through many ways included the dangerous journey through the sea to Europe as the impact of the ongoing conflict situation in Syria. Through the determination of the refugee status, the UNHCR as the special unit of the United Nations (UN) towards refugee cases along with its coordination with the states parties made an effort to find the solution. On its effort, the UNHCR played as the initiator and facilitator to fill the roles capacity of actor and arena according to the concept of international organization.

1. UNHCR as initiator

An international organization can play as an actor capacity in which they can create such an order, recommendation, and decision besides their role to monitor the state's behavior towards a specific issue (Archer, 2001, p. 79). Played as an initiator is one of the UNHCR's efforts to propose the refugee issues in international society. Its aim is to find the best solution together. The influx of Syrian refugees urged the UNHCR to promote the issue became one of important agendas that should be discussed and found the solution together with the international society. The high number of Syrian refugees who tried to reach Europe than other regions also became the other reasons, it is because the dangerous route that the refugee took is having the high risk for their life.

As an international organization which has special mandates toward refugees, one of the UNHCR's efforts was played as an initiator through International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria which started from

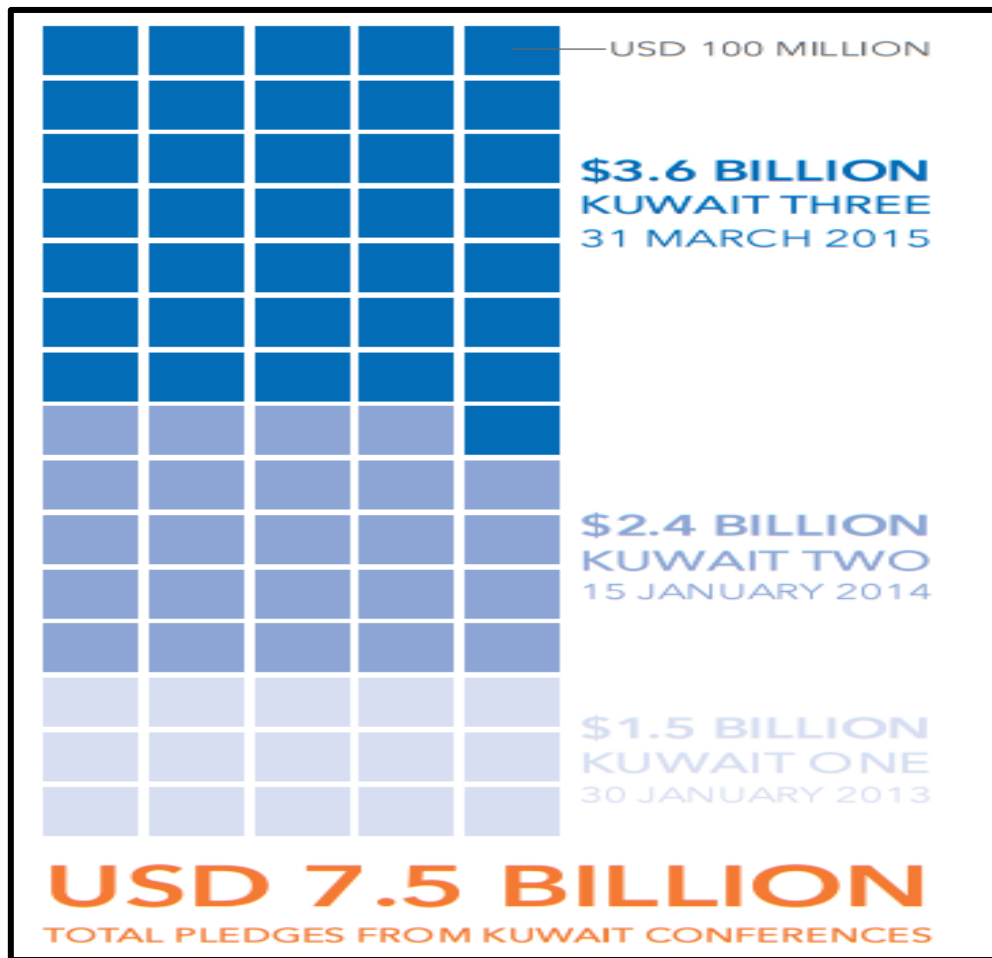
2013 (Allmeling, 2013). The UNHCR initiated the establishment of the conference to support the basic assistance for the Syrian refugee, especially in the host countries like Turkey and inside Syria. In 2015, as the first transit country for the refugee to reach Europe, Turkey considered as the largest refugees hosting country. Through the conference, the UNHCR provided the update information about the situation inside Syria and the regional impact of the conflict (“Conference Report”, 2015).

In playing its role as an initiator, the UNHCR also performed its function as international organization, which is the function of information. According to Archer, there are some functions of international organization, and one of those functions is information. The function of information means that the international organization can provide a forum for discussion and sharing for information. The international organization also can provide deeper information through statistic data. In addition, the international organization provides the general information which is needed by the international society. That information can help to prevent and find the solution to some problems that might occur (Archer, 2001).

The establishment of the conference became the basic needs for the UNHCR and the government to give assistance for refugees inside Syria and neighboring countries (“Conference Report”, 2015). The first conference was held in Kuwait city on 30 January, 2013, the second conference was on 15 January, 2014, and the third conference was on 31 March, 2015. From the conference the UNHCR and the participants succeeded to collect the financial support. Through these funds, the UNHCR and their partners can reach more refugees both inside

and outside Syria by saving lives and giving protection and assistance. The amount of the funds also increased each year (“Conference Report”, 2015).

Figure 4.1. Total Pledges from Kuwait Conferences



The first conference pledged USD 1.5 billion from international donors, increased in the second and third conference which reached USD 2.4 billion and USD 3.6 billion. The top 5 donors were the country of Kuwait, the United State, the European Commission, the United Kingdom, and the European Member States. The other donors were the member states of the UN, the regional organization, and the international partners (“Pledging Conference”, 2014).

The main objective of the conference was for the needs of Syrian refugee, the neighboring countries as the affected states, and the support for host communities. The budget was also for providing the basic needs of refugees inside Syria, such as the medical supplies, food, and shelter to education on responding to the impact of the ongoing conflict. Overall the donor was covering four main things. The first was for humanitarian and inside Syria, the second for humanitarian aid for the refugees who have fled, the third for supporting the host communities who are under the increasing pressure, and the last for supporting the health and education sectors in the host countries (“Conference Report”, 2015).

The host countries became the other concerned because the country should spend their national budget more for refugee’s assistance in their territory. Turkey as the main transit country for refugees to Europe had spent over USD 500 million in 2013 for hosting Syrian refugees, and it became their burden (“Pledging Conference”, 2013). The financial matter was also one of the reasons for the country to open their border for refugees besides the security concern. From this matter, it could be understand that if Turkey decreases their efforts in assisting the Syrian refugee, since it will increase the number of refugees who are struggle to reach Europe to get the international assistance. So, by maximizing the international donor which also focused for the neighboring countries such as Turkey, it can improve the assistance system for refugees and decrease the risk of the Syrian refugee’s life to reach Europe. In the end, through this conference, the UNHCR can work together with its international partners to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis.

2. UNHCR as facilitator

The role of initiator cannot be separated from the role of facilitator. When an international organization initiates to bring up an issue to international society, they need a forum for discussing and sharing information and solution (Pariera, 1999, p. 135). Here the roles of facilitator being played for facilitating the international actor to respond or to discuss some issues in international societies. Played as a facilitator is also part of international organization role of arena, which is according to Archer the role of arena means that the international organization provided or sometime became a place or forum for its members to discuss or talk over some issues to get international attention (Archer, 2001, p. 74).

The UNHCR provided a forum or facilitated its member states and international partners to talk over the Syrian refugee crisis, gather the financial aid, and find some solutions together through the International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria in Kuwait. The conference is also a forum for demonstrating how the humanitarian assistance should be carried on and urged the donor parties to show their solidarity (“Conference Report”, 2015). Some of the discussions included two main agendas of the UNHCR plans which are the financial aid for the Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP), and the Syrian Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) (“Pledging Conference”, 2013).

The Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) is a response's plan for refugee assistance that focused on the condition inside Syria, it included the basic services such as water, sanitation facility, and electricity. Whereas, the Syrian Regional Response Plan (RRP) is a response's plan for Syrian refugees in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, and Turkey ("Pledging Conference", 2014). With the financial support from the international community, it can help the host country like Turkey to keep giving protection and assistance for Syrian refugees. Without that support, the new waves of refugee caused by the ongoing conflict in Syria can create the financial and economic burden for the host countries, especially its neighboring countries as the most affected countries (Kanat & Ustun, 2015).

Besides facilitating the forum for donors conference, the UNHCR also worked together with the government of Turkey through The Turkish Disaster Response Agency or also known as AFAD to facilitate Syrian refugee in Turkey by building camps. About 25 camps in 10 cities in Turkey, mostly in the southern border of Turkey were running by the AFAD which met the standard of the United Nation (UN). The camps provided the refugee with the accommodation, education, religious, health, and social services. Although the AFAD worked together with the UNHCR but most of the resources in the camps actually still came from Turkish government (Kanat & Ustun, 2015).

The effort of building more camps in Turkey also done by the European Union (EU). The EU has pledged about 1 billion Euro or USD 1.14 billion for Syrian refugees mostly in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon (Tagaris, 2015). With that

fund EU tried to help the Syrian refugee to apply for asylum in Europe legally. This effort was also to decrease the flow of refugee to Europe, and to stop them risking their lives in the sea to Europe. According to UNHCR, more than 3,000 have died in 2015 trying to cross from Turkey to Europe. Thousand more also have drowned trying to reach Italy from North Africa in the Mediterranean Sea. The Greece also has rescued more than 70,000 people at sea. The UNHCR worked together with the government and the EU to increase the refugee resettlement in Turkey and to increase the number of opportunities for the refugee to come to Europe legally. The UNHCR and the EU might believe that the improvement of the resettlement and providing refugee with the right to work in the host countries can reduce the flow of refugees into Europe (Tagaris, 2015).

B. UNHCR's Budget and Expenditure in Europe

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) funding mostly depends on the voluntary contributions which is usually covered for about 98% of the revenue (Mueller & Ryan, 2013). The UNHCR funding also comes from the United Nations budget through the Executive Committee's approval in each year. The Executive Committee or also known as ExCom is a unit of the UN organ, that is the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The ExCom was established in 1958 but started to work on the first January 1959 with the mandates to review and approve the budget and programs of the UNHCR.

Besides that, the ExCom can give some advice on international protection and discuss the international issues with the UNHCR and its partners (Ferre, n.d).

The UNHCR can do any activities or programs as long as fund are available. There are four main pillars of the activities of the UNHCR based on the budget distribution. They are refugee program, stateless program, reintegration program, and Internally Displaced Person (IDPs) program. The ExCom budget is the financial's plan requirement by the UNHCR submitted in the end of the year for the following year. The UNHCR has to provide clear explanation and detailed information in the financial utilization which is formed on the report each year (Mueller & Ryan, 2013).

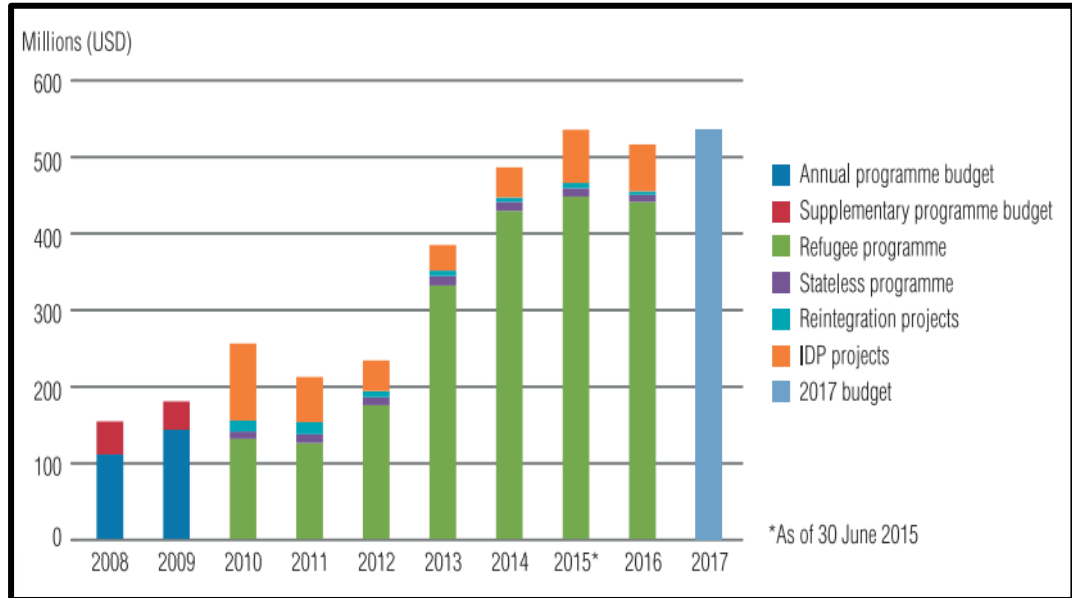
The ExCom approved the budget for Europe in 2013 which set at USD 385 million. On the other side, the voluntary contribution reached USD 88 million with three highest contributions from the United State of America (USA), the European Union (EU), and the Kuwait. The fund was mostly used for refugee program and asylum program which covered for 86%, and the rest was for the other pillar programs ("Europe Appeal", 2013). However, there was always been a funding gap between the budget and the expenditure by the UNHCR on the operations. The funding gap is mainly due to the shortfall of the income from its partnership and the funding spent by situation (Mueller & Ryan, 2013).

The expenditure in 2013 by the UNHCR in Europe operations was only set at USD 170.8 million. It was allocated mostly for the Syrian crisis in Turkey and several European Union (EU) members in Bulgaria, Germany, and Sweden,

included the asylum reform process in Greece (“Europe UNHCR”, 2012). Other than that states, the expenditure in the European region remained stable. From the USD 170.8 million, the expenditure of refugee program was about USD 144 million, which the highest allocation was in Turkey as response to the additional needs for Syrian in Turkey. Besides in Turkey, there was Italy Regional Office in the second place which included the activities in Albania, Cyprus, Greece, and Malta, and in the third place was Belgium Regional Office included the activities in Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Liaison Office in Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (“Europe Appeal”, 2013).

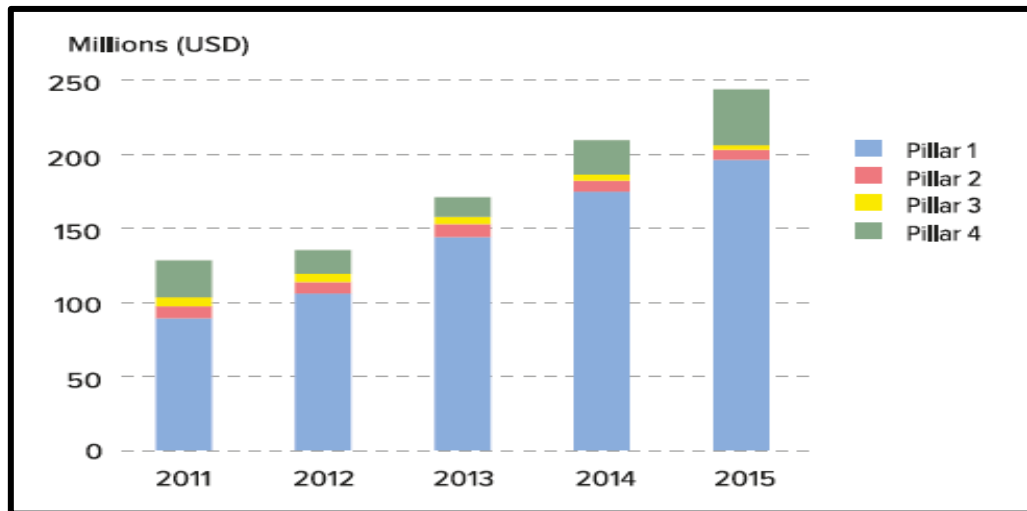
Compared to the budget and expenditure in 2013, the European operations in 2014 increased due to the additional requirement for Turkey as the impact of hosting a large number of refugees from Syria and Iraq. It was also as a response to the emergency needed in Bulgaria and Ukraine. The expenditure reached USD 209.3 million for all of the UNHCR programs, and included USD 174.7 million for the refugee program only. Meanwhile, the annual budget for 2014 operations approved by the ExCom was set at USD 486.9 million and the voluntary contribution contributed at USD 97.8 million for refugee program (“Europe UNHCR”, 2014).

Figure 4.2. The Executive Committee Budget for Europe



From the picture, the budget which was approved by the ExCom from 2013 until 2015 was increasing each year including the refugee program budget as the highest allocation. In 2015, the budget was set at USD 592 million till the end of the year. Not only the budget, which increased, but the voluntary contribution also raised at USD 234.5 million with the half of the allocation was for refugee program, that was at USD 147.5 million (“Europe UNHCR”, 2015). Respond to the growing number of refugees arrival in Europe in 2015 compared to 2014, the expenditure also increased than the other previous years.

Figure 4.3. The Expenditure in Europe 2011-2015



Between 2013 and 2015, the 2015 expenditure showed the highest amount. It reached USD 243.7 million for all UNHCR programs in Europe, and USD 196.3 million for the refugee program operations in 2015. Around 52% of funds were allocated for Syrian refugee support in Europe, 30% for other UNHCR programs, and 9% was for the emergency response to the crisis in Europe (“Europe UNHCR”, 2015).

During three years period, Turkey and Italy Regional Office became the highest fund allocation compared to the other countries in Europe for the refugee program. Turkey is known as the transit country for Syrian refugees to reach Europe, since it is one of neighboring countries of Syrian Arab Republic. That is why the growing number of Syrian refugees in Turkey remained high. However, Turkey welcomed the refugee by giving them temporary protection and accommodating them in camps (“Europe UNHCR”, 2012). In the other hand, the fund allocation in Italy also remained high for refugee program. It is because many refugees from Middle East try to reach Europe through Italy and also Greece. Besides that, Italy also bordered by the Mediterranean Sea in which the number of Mediterranean Sea arrival was increasing each year mainly in 2015.

C. The Achievement of the UNHCR and the European Countries

Many efforts have been made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) in cooperation with the European Countries, other international organization and United Nations agencies. The increasing number of refugee flew into Europe urged the UNHCR and its partners to find the long term solution to prevent the huge impact of the crisis. There were some achievements that achieved by the UNHCR and the European countries on responding to the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe.

1. The Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative (2013)

In 2013, the UNHCR engaged with the media with aims to increase the awareness of humanitarian agency toward the refugee crisis, advocate the European countries of giving protection, and promote the positive attitudes toward refugee and bring it up to be the main issues in international societies (“UNHCR Global”, 2013).

The main achievement in 2013 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) was its initiation of the proposal for the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative to the European Union (EU) or also known as the CMSI. The proposal was proposed in October 2013 as a response to the hundreds of lives lost at sea incidents (“UNHCR Central”, 2014).

In the 2013, several incidents of losing life at sea occurred with the estimation over 600 people died in the Mediterranean in which Syrian was among the highest victims. Many of them decided to take a dangerous journey to Europe because of in need of international protection. The other reasons could be because of lack of protection in the transit and first asylum countries and the desire to reunite with the family members. This situation at the EU’s sea borders urged the UNHCR and the European to take action (“UNHCR CMSI”, 2014). That became the main reason why the UNHCR proposed the CMSI proposal.

The CMSI was also for gaining support from the EU member states on refugee crisis and refugees needs of international protection. It also contained a strategy to prevent the lost lives at the sea by providing 12 concrete steps action in

three main areas. The first area is within the EU, the second is in countries of transit and first asylum, and the last is in the countries of origin (“UNHCR CMSI”, 2014).

Within the EU there were 7 steps action, mostly the steps related to the strengthening and establishing the more effective mechanism for facilitating and identifying refugee who need international protection, and also the search and rescue (SAR) capacity. In a country of transit and first asylum contained 4 steps collaborations which mainly about to increase the number of sharing information and data on movement in the Mediterranean Sea region, develop the capacity in the related countries, and create legal migration alternative. The last was in countries of origin with only one step that was to develop and support the country of origin to address more about human rights, humanitarian, and development needs (“UNHCR CMSI”, 2014).

2. The European Union Response Package for Protection at Sea (2014)

In 2014, the focuses of the UNHCR in Europe were to improve the asylum system and procedures, prevent loss of live at sea, secure durable solution, and strengthen its relations with international partners. In response to the Mediterranean situation, the UNHCR urged the European Union to prioritize the saving of lives at the sea, through the improvement of the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative (“UNHCR Global”, 2014).

The creation of the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative also initiated the UNHCR to create the proposal of the “European Union response package for

protection at sea” in 2014. Based on the solidarity, the purpose of this proposal was to offer joint activities framework including the sharing of resources and expertise as the continuing high number of sea arrivals. Through this package, the UNHCR suggested the full implementation of the Dublin Regulation (UNHCR, 2014). The Dublin Regulation is one of the European Union laws that determining the responsibility of their member states for examining an asylum application and ensuring the same common standard of protection on each state (“The Dublin Regulation”, n.d).

There were 6 main components in the package in cooperation with the EU member states in addressing the protection at sea. First, the rescue, disembarkation, and access to territory which the UNHCR proposed to address immediate humanitarian needs. Second, transfer to the first line reception with the aim to accommodate the basic needs of the new arrival. Third, application for international protection related to the Dublin regulation of the European Union. After the new arrivals applied for international protection, they would be transferred to the second line reception. Next is the status determination and the last is the recommendation for innovative approaches as the solution after the new arrival granted international protection (UNHCR, 2014).

Besides the proposal of “European Union response package for protection at sea”, the UNHCR also urged the European countries to do more about the Syrian refugee who seek for the safety in Europe in the name of solidarity. The UNHCR encouraged the European countries to improve their relations with the Syrian neighboring countries such as Turkey as their transit country to reach

Europe. The number of granted protection of the Syrian refugee was increasing if it is compared to the previous year. It was because the growth number of the European countries who accepted the refugee resettlement (“UNHCR Global”, 2014)

3. The Refugee Emergency Response in Europe (2015)

The UNHCR launched the emergency response operations in Croatia, the former of Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Greece, Slovenia, and Serbia in 2015. The activities included strengthening the coordination and partnership between the UNHCR and European countries, and ensuring the asylum system and protection implementation for people of concern (“UNHCR Global”, 2015). Several pressures on refugees capacity and asylum systems of the former of Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, and Serbia were escalating as the result of the increasing number of refugees arrival in Greek Island and moving to northern and western Europe through Western Balkans and Hungary (“Europe's Refugee”, 2015).

In response to that situation, UNHCR declared the most emergency for those three countries by increasing coordination with the local authorities, NGO, and civil society. There are three main priorities on the emergency response, the first is increasing the capacity of post-rescue reception in receiving countries, next is strengthening the protection systems and prevent *refoulement*, last is improving the advocacy capacity (“Europe's Refugee”, 2015). Besides that, the UNHCR was also developing their supervisory role to advocate the access to the territory and

protection system in the countries affected by the Syrian crisis in Europe, such as by safeguarding asylum space and reducing protection risks (“UNHCR Global”, 2015).