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Editorial

The civil war has been raging in Syria for over two years. The ongoing conflict is having dramatic consequences and has led to one of the world’s largest humanitarian crises. Over two million refugees have been registered in the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon. Estimates from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) put the costs of the humanitarian aid needed at around five billion US dollars – the highest amount ever required.

This huge influx of refugees is having an impact on the situation in the countries hosting them. The focus article highlights how current humanitarian aid for Syrian refugees in Lebanon is exacerbating conflict dynamics in that country. Also in this edition, governmental and non-governmental organisations write about their efforts in such a challenging environment as the Syrian crisis, focusing particularly on the effects on women, their role in conflict resolution and the situation of refugees.

Lukas Krienbuehl
Editor

KOFF – swisspeace

swisspeace Celebrates its Anniversary in Basel

On 10 September, the Swiss Peace Foundation swisspeace celebrated its 25th anniversary in Basel. At a two-day academic workshop, peace researchers from Switzerland and abroad tackled the challenges facing peace research today. They held discussions of both theoretical and methodological issues and of the difficulties of evaluating research. A look back at the last 25 years showed that the end of the Cold War drastically improved the possibilities for peacebuilding activities. Yet, peace research has certainly not lost any of its significance. On the contrary, peace research nowadays provides critical reflection of peacebuilding activities and allows for constant improvement of relevant peacebuilding tools. Extensive research results also highlight the importance of the local in peacebuilding because the preferences, values and needs of the people and institutions in conflict-affected regions must be included in peace solutions.

The public conference, held in the Aula of the University of Basel on 10 September, opened by giving the audience of 300 participants an insight into peacebuilding in Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These short presentations outlined the local view of a just peace. The subsequent debate between Jakob Kellenberger, the new President of swisspeace, and the professor of philosophy Francis Cheneval on the topic “What is a just peace?” highlighted the conflicting priorities of peace and justice. The discussion explored the prerequisites for a just peace using specific examples such as Libya, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Syria.

10.09.2013
Challenges and Potentials for Governance: The Current Situation in Sri Lanka

A number of political milestones have contributed to the emergence of grievances from different groups in Sri Lanka. Despite attempts at political solutions, those grievances have historically resulted in the outbreak of violence on the part of rebel groups such as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) but also on the part of the state that has often taken a military approach to problem-solving. Historically, there has been a trend towards majority, centralised rule that has not taken minority issues into account. Further, there has also been a lack of political will on the part of “minority groups” to stand up for constitutional changes that include a federalist solution and power-sharing.

Today, the country is faced with two worsening and inter-connected governance crises. On the one hand since the end of the civil war, there has been immense pressure on the judiciary and other democratic institutional checks. On the other hand, there is still a lack of power-sharing and civil rights for the minority groups. Despite surveys showing that a majority of the population support devolution, the governmental control of the media continues to be a factor which ensures that many people remain fearful of devolution, often because they fear that power-sharing could enable minority groups to take over the country. Constitutional amendments and open communication in the media hence remain key challenges in Sri Lanka. The KOFF roundtable on Sri Lanka in September provided a platform to discuss with two Sri Lankan experts how both the historical milestones as well as current trends shape the future potential of the country.

The roundtable showed that the international community can play an important role in not only supporting one group or the other, but by taking up issues that are common to all communities. It is important to raise awareness on sensitive issues, but it is also crucial to reflect on how the activities of international organisations can have both positive and negative impacts on the ground and for Sri Lankan people. The international community hence can put pressure on the government to change the current government system, address political solutions and support democratic processes.

End of the First and Start of the Second Postgraduate Course in Civilian Peacebuilding

On 30 August, the first group of students on the postgraduate course in civilian peacebuilding (Certificate of Advanced Studies – CAS) offered by swisspeace celebrated the successful completion of this one-year, part-time study programme at the University of Basel. The 20 graduates from the FDFA and other federal agencies, various Swiss NGOs, the Federal Administrative Court, as well as from research, business and journalism are now up to date with developments in various areas of civilian peacebuilding. They have received training in practical methods and skills and have acquired a wide professional network in Switzerland and abroad. swisspeace would like to congratulate the CAS graduates on successfully completing the course.

Further information:
KOFF Rina Alluri
Since 20 September, the second group of CAS students have been studying subjects such as the impact of civilian peacebuilding, conflict sensitivity in fragile contexts, gender stereotypes in war and peace, statebuilding, mediation and dealing with the past as well as the role of business actors in conflict and post-conflict situations. Over 25 course days, they examine ongoing debates and current peacebuilding practices, analyse conflict contexts and develop peacebuilding projects. Academics and practitioners from various countries pass on the latest findings, share their experiences and encourage the students to critically reflect on their own professional experiences. The application deadline for the next course is 31 May 2014.

24.09.2013

Further information:
swisspeace
Franziska Sigrist

Focus

Conflict Dimensions of International Aid to Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

Since the outbreak of the civil war in Syria, large numbers of refugees have sought protection in the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. This focus article addresses the conflict dimensions of international aid to Syrian refugees in Lebanon and discusses the implications for humanitarian aid in this fragile context.

The conflict in Syria has had an impact on bordering countries too. The international community has focused its attention on providing humanitarian support to Syrian refugees in these neighbouring countries, where access is easier. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some two million people have fled the violent conflict in Syria and around 700,000 of these refugees have registered in Lebanon. Despite substantial international humanitarian aid, the continuously rising number of refugees is stretching the capacity of aid organisations to their limits. The political instability in Lebanon and the vulnerability of the Syrian refugees in this country have reached alarming levels. To avoid jeopardising the stability of the Lebanese state any further, humanitarian aid must be specifically adapted to this fragile context. The Centre for Peacebuilding (KOFF) of swisspeace formulated proposals in this regard in a discussion paper published in April 2013. This focus article is based on this paper and picks up on the main points of the analysis.

Conflict Lines in Lebanon

The political system in Lebanon is based on ethno-religious belonging since the Lebanese civil war, with each group seeking financial and political support from external actors and vice versa. For example, the government that was in office until March was based on a coalition of political parties which sympathise with or actively support the Assad regime in Syria. However, the majority of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are Sunni Muslims and rather support the Syrian opposition. The minimal consensus achieved by the deeply divided Lebanese parties consists in preserving the country’s stability and distancing themselves from the Syrian conflict. This weak position and political fragmentation in the Lebanese government have both delayed and complicated the humanitarian response to the influx of refugees. Western donor countries and the Gulf states sympathising with opposition forces in Syria have criticised the Lebanese government for this passive handling of the
humanitarian crisis, officially citing concerns over corruption and governmental mismanagement. As a result, instead of being channelled through the Lebanese government, international humanitarian aid bypasses state structures. It also primarily benefits refugees aligned with the Syrian opposition.

The capacity of the Lebanese population to host refugees is impressive: most Syrian refugees are renting apartments without assistance or are being hosted in private homes. At the same time, these refugees are living in disadvantaged areas of Lebanon, alongside the poorest communities, who also receive support but from the Lebanese government and based on different modalities. These sections of the population feel increasingly threatened by refugees on the labour market of the construction industry and the agricultural sector.

**Key Problems of Humanitarian Aid and their Implications**

The key issues in regard with international support for Syrian refugees in Lebanon can be identified at different levels. On a political level, the Lebanese government has been sidelined when it comes to distributing international aid to refugees. International aid is provided in direct cooperation with non-governmental organisations. This cooperation is neither coordinated nor organised by the Lebanese government. However, this approach further undermines the legitimacy of the Lebanese state and strengthens negative tendencies in Lebanon’s political system, such as political clientelism. A political dialogue between the international donors and the Lebanese government as well as the proactive inclusion of “non-like-minded” actors, such as some Arab donors, are therefore needed to bridge existing differences and prevent the Lebanese government from becoming even weaker. This is the only way to make long-term aid and the harmonisation of international and local support programmes possible in Lebanon.

The communities which are hosting the Syrian refugees are themselves living in poverty. Aid for refugees thus increases the perception of economic injustice amongst these host communities. Cash payments made directly to Syrian refugees are proving a particularly sensitive issue, as the money is not being passed on to the host families. International support must therefore be structured in a way that is appropriate for the Lebanese context. To this end, integrated human security strategies also aimed at the Lebanese communities can be used.

It is important for institutions to understand that in Lebanon external aid is usually associated with political objectives. Although the activities of various organisations may be guided by the principles of impartiality and neutrality, the distinction between humanitarian and political action in the field is blurred. In addition, aid is also provided by a myriad of actors based on motives which are not primarily humanitarian in nature. Humanitarian impartiality and neutrality are values which must therefore be embedded at the institutional level and require conscious decisions. The political dimensions of providing aid should be considered systematically beforehand. It is also essential to specify ways of cooperating with political and religious actors on the ground.

The availability of capacities within the local communities in Lebanon is a key resource when it comes to providing long-term aid to refugees from Syria. Aid programmes must therefore aim to sustain the local population’s capacities to
Swiss Red Cross Helps Syrian Refugees

The war in Syria is bringing new suffering for the civilian population every day. Over two million people have already left their country and registered as refugees in neighbouring states, most of them in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. The humanitarian needs are enormous and gaining access to victims in the country itself is proving very difficult.

The Swiss Red Cross (SRC) is supporting the aid programmes run by the International Red Cross Movement while also being operationally active on the ground. Within Syria, where the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Syrian Red Crescent are providing most of the humanitarian aid, the SRC is supporting its partners financially. Through the aid projects of the Red Crescent in Turkey and the Red Cross in Lebanon, it is helping Syrian refugees who have fled to those two countries.

Half a million Syrian refugees have been registered in Jordan alone, most of whom are living with host families or in rented flats. Working closely with the Jordanian Red Crescent, SRC delegates on the ground help these refugee families so that they can look after themselves. Between now and spring 2014, 1,600 families in Ajloun and Jerash, two Jordanian towns near the Syrian border, will receive financial support to cover their most urgent needs such as accommodation or medication. The project is mainly intended for women with children, elderly people and large families. They receive a credit card with which they can withdraw an average of 200 Swiss francs each month. During the coldest winter months from November to February, the families receive an additional 150 francs on average to go towards winter clothing, heating costs or blankets.

Further information:
SRC Pascal Morf
16.09.2013

High Tech – No Rights

Laptops, smartphones and flatscreens make our lives easier and more enjoyable. It comes as no surprise that demand for them is increasing worldwide. However, the manufacturing process of such devices often involves severe abuses of human rights, particularly during the extraction of raw materials in crisis regions, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo. The joint campaign of Bread for All and the Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund entitled “High Tech – No Rights” tackles this problem. It also addresses the due diligence needed to ensure the fair production of electronic equipment. Bread for All and the Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund are aiming to achieve a supply chain in the IT industry that is free of human rights abuses: all too often, it is a case of “high tech – no rights”. The organisations are calling for transparency in the supply chain, conflict-free mining and fair working conditions
The 25th edition of International Summer University was held from 19 August to 6 September 2013 in Fribourg by the Institute of Federalism. The Summer University, which is co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), brought together 30 students from more than 20 countries.

The first three days of the course covered interdisciplinary approaches to the study of state organisation, federalism and decentralisation. In order to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Summer University, an international conference entitled “States Falling Apart? Secessionist and Autonomy Movements in Europe” with more than 80 participants was held at the end of the first week. Speakers at this conference included renowned experts in federalism such as Ronald Watts, Michael Burgess and John Kincaid as well as Helen Keller, judge at the European Court of Human Rights. Many academics, representatives of the federal administration and cantonal governments, students of the Summer University as well as other interested guests participated in the conference which examined the cases of Catalonia, Belgium, Greenland, the Basque Country, South Tyrol, Cyprus and Scotland. It also addressed general issues related to cultural and economic autonomy and the legal consequences of secessionist movements. The Summer University’s second week focused on dealing with ethnic, religious, linguistic and economic diversities and introduced case studies on India, China, Russia, Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The third and final week of the course was devoted to conflict management, looking into the cases of Sri Lanka and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

25th Summer University of the Institute of Federalism

Switzerland’s Participation in Side Event “Women in Conflict – a Close Look at Syria”

During the 23rd session of the UN Human Rights Council in June in Geneva, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) organised a side event entitled “Women in Conflict – a Close Look at Syria”. This side event was
supported by the Netherlands, Slovenia, the Maldives, Costa Rica and Switzerland.
The discussions firstly addressed the short-term and long-term gender-specific consequences of the civil war in Syria, and secondly the most urgent needs of women in Syria and of refugees in Lebanon and Jordan in terms of protection and humanitarian assistance. Discussions thirdly focused on the increased political participation of women in Syria and in future peace negotiations, and fourthly on the recommendations to the international community in this regard. Participating in the panel debate were Sabah Alhalak and Fardous Albahra, two women’s rights activists and members of the Syrian Women’s League, Anthony Keedi from the ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality, and Dana Abu Sham from the Arab Women Organization of Jordan (AWO). The many government representatives at the event showed great interest in the topic.

The interactions between protection, participation and prevention were a recurring theme. The huge need of women in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan for protection and humanitarian aid as well as the human rights abuses which they have suffered pose important challenges for societies as a whole. This means that women as well as men must be involved in tackling those issues. Women must also be increasingly recognised as agents of change. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and UN Security Council resolution 1325 including all follow-up resolutions must therefore underpin future negotiations on peace, security and reconstruction in Syria. The discussions thus highlighted that the substantial and long-term involvement of women and other actors from civil society in shaping Syria’s political and social post-war structures is absolutely essential.

11.09.2013

Swiss Peacebuilding Training Course 2013

The Swiss Peacebuilding Training Course 2013, run by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) in collaboration with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), swisspeace and SWISSINT, took place from 25 August to 6 September in Stans. This course, which teaches the basics of peacebuilding, was attended by 23 participants, 10 Swiss and 13 international experts working in places such as Syria, Sudan, Mali, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Myanmar and the DR Congo or at the headquarters of national (START, Canada) or international organisations in Brussels (NATO), Geneva (OHCHR) and New York (UN).

The aim of the course is to transmit peacebuilding skills and tools. Exchanges between the participants were particularly enriching thanks to the diverse backgrounds, including civilians as well as police, border guards and military personnel deployed in conflict zones, working with national authorities or the United Nations.

A good gender balance among the participants, including the lecturers, ensured that various gender issues were addressed. The participation of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative Michael Moller during the presentations of the participants’ action plans completed the course. The next edition is scheduled for 31 August to 12 September 2014.

13.09.2013
Publications

The New Deal and the Role of Civil Society

In collaboration with the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS), the swisspeace Centre for Peacebuilding (KOFF) has published another paper in its Critical Reflections series, analysing the current and future role of civil society in the New Deal process.

The 2011 New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States has become the new working paradigm of both local and international actors for development cooperation in so-called fragile states. Civil society was actively involved in the international dialogue that led to this policy declaration. Since then, actors from civil society have been exploring how they can and should play an active part in its implementation.

The New Deal recognises that open and constructive relations between state and society are key to successful statebuilding and peacebuilding. At the same time, the New Deal’s emphasis on engaging at the government level in fragile states may imply a shrinking space for civil society organisations. This Critical Reflection therefore highlights the positive role of civil society in implementing the New Deal and analyses the risks and fundamental questions relating to the involvement of civil society organisations in the implementation of the New Deal. 02.09.2013


Breaking the Links between Natural Resources and Conflict: the Case for EU Regulation

The position paper “Breaking the Links Between Natural Resources and Conflict” published recently by 59 European and global non-governmental organisations calls on the European Commission to create a regulatory framework compelling European companies to carry out due diligence along the whole of their supply chain. This is aimed to ensure that companies are neither using nor trading natural resources, which are funding armed violence, nor contribute to human rights violations.

In order to break the negative link between natural resources and conflicts, the paper makes a number of recommendations to the European Commission, calling for legally binding EU legislation that at least meets the international standards of the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).


16.09.2013
Web Tip

Info

- **Syria Deeply**

### Reporting on Syria in the New Digital Media Project

#### Syria Deeply

It is becoming very difficult to get independent reports on Syria: with Internet blocking and journalists’ safety at risk, news shared via social networks is becoming an increasingly important source of international reporting. The reliability of this news is debatable, however, as it is virtually impossible to verify the accuracy of posts on social networks.

Syria Deeply is a digital media project that is attempting to report on the Syrian crisis in a new way. The project aims to bring the reader closer to the events in Syria by putting reports and news items in the wider context of the conflict using the latest digital tools. On the website, you can find video channels, an interactive map and an easy-to-navigate timeline of the conflict as well as background information and up-to-date reports from various sources. This combination enables Syria Deeply to report extensively on the Syrian crisis. It attempts to meet demands for better information on Syria and for understanding the conflict dynamics. Even though there cannot currently be any independent reporting on Syria, this website is still worth a visit.

20.09.2013

### InternationalPartner Organisations

#### International Alert

- The NGO International Alert has recently published several blog posts on the crisis in Syria and the threat of military action by the Western powers. In particular, these analyses pose questions about the longer-term strategies in Syria.

- In addition, the organisation has published a new report on the successes and challenges of 20 years of civilian peacebuilding efforts in Nagorno-Karabakh. The publication includes analyses by five experts from the different sides of the conflict.

#### Conciliation Resources

- Various options are being discussed at the international level for preventing any future use of chemical weapons in Syria. With this in mind, Conciliation Resources discusses possible political solutions for the Syrian crisis in a commentary article. In particular, the organisation notes that the Syrian people must play a leading role in shaping the country’s future. This requires an inclusive and multi-faceted peace strategy.

#### forum ZFD

- The latest edition of “Fokus Westbalkan” focuses on transitional justice, analysing the current state of war crimes prosecution and related social processes in Serbia and Croatia. The publication also reports on projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and the FYR Macedonia.
Info
This section gives pointers to selected events related to civilian peacebuilding.

Events

- The Human Security Division of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs is dedicating its 2013 annual conference to the topic of protecting civilians in armed conflicts. On Thursday 17 October, personalities, experts and affected persons from Switzerland and abroad will gather at the Kursaal in Bern to discuss challenges and solutions. Everyone is welcome to take part in this conference. [Programme](#) and [registration](#).

- Peace Brigades International (PBI) Switzerland is organising an introductory weekend from 19 to 20 October in Fribourg for people interested in international human rights accompaniment. In addition to presentations from experts, practical exercises and experience sharing, previous volunteers will also be providing country-specific information. [Programme](#) and [registration](#).

- On 23 October the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is organising a discussion on the topic “Honduras and the Challenge of Human Security” with the Swedish expert on security sector reforms, Björn Holmberg. The event takes place from 12:15 to 13:45 at SDC’s main office at Freiburgstrasse 130 in Bern. Interested persons are invited to participate. [Further information](#) and [registration](#).

- [Peace Watch Switzerland](#) is running introductory training courses in Zofingen for international human rights accompaniment. The course on Latin America takes place from 27 October to 2 November 2013, the one on Palestine/Israel from 16 to 22 March 2014. [Further information and registration](#).

- KOFF is running a training course entitled “Preventing Natural Resource Conflicts” from 6 to 8 November. UNEP consultant Oli Brown will show how access to, the distribution and management of natural resources such as land often lead to conflicts, while responsible management of these resources can contribute to peacebuilding and reconstruction. [Further information](#) and [registration](#) by 16 October.

- Conjugal violence is the most common form of violence towards women. More than one in three women worldwide experience domestic or sexual violence during their lives. This issue will be the focus of this year’s campaign “16 days against violence towards women”, which runs from 25 November to 10 December. The programme includes speeches, activities and expert panel discussions. The campaign kicks off on 23 November on the Bundesplatz in Bern with the event “Wir setzen ein Zeichen gegen Gewalt an Frauen”. [Further information and programme](#).

- The Centre pour l’action non-violente (CENAC) has published its 2013/2014 training programme in non-violent conflict resolution. The nine modules, which are taught in French, can be taken as a study programme or individually. [Programme and registration](#).
The inmedio institute in Berlin is offering a part-time year-long training programme entitled “Conflict Management and Mediation in Organisations” in 2013 and 2014. It is possible to start in November. Further information and registration.

From January 2014, the Institute for Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding (ICP) will be running its CAS course in “The Art of Conflict Transformation” for the seventh time in collaboration with the Advanced Study Centre at the University of Basel. Course participants will learn in particular the integrative mediation model as a form of conflict transformation. Completing the course entitles students to use the title “Mediator SDM”. Further information and registration by 30 November.