SITUATION REPORT
Syrian Refugees in Turkey, 17 September 2012

BACKGROUND

Inspired by the change in the Arab Spring countries, the Syrian uprising started in March 2011 through peaceful protesting in the southern province of Deraa. When civilians were confronted with violent crackdown by the Syrian government, some people started to carry arms and fight back, resulting in defections from the Syrian army. Consequently, the Free Syrian Army (FSA), made up of a variety of groups with different ideologies, was created. As shelling and bombardment on civilians continued to increase, more defections took place from all state institutions, namely the military, security forces, Baath party, police force and the judicial system, which resulted in more Syrians volunteering in the Free Syrian Army. As of today, the uprising in Syria has degenerated into a civil war with sectarian overtones.

The Free Syrian Army continues to clash with Assad’s troops all over Syria. FSA gained control of the main air defense building in Albu Kamal on the Iraqi border, Bab al Hawa border gate (across from the Hatay Cilvegözü border gate in Turkey), and the Jerablus border gate (across Karkamis in Turkey). In addition to this, Azaz border crossing in Syria (across from Oncupinar border crossing in Kilis, Turkey) came under the control of FSA on 22 July 2012, after fierce clashes between regime forces and opposition members. Although this created safer ground for civilians who want to flee to Turkey from Azaz, Minakh military air base is still under the control of the regime forces and creates a huge threat for the shelling of neighboring areas. Given the need for humanitarian assistance, FSA has established its own relief networks all over the country.

In the beginning, Syrians were fleeing the violence in their villages and towns by moving to other safer areas inside the country. But with increasing violence, sectarian tensions and economic hardship due to reduced trade, international sanctions on the country, increasing food prices, businesses shutting down and loss of jobs, Syrians are being increasingly forced to flee to other countries, especially for women and children. As a result, the number of refugees in neighboring countries has been increasing rapidly, particularly in the last months.

Ongoing violence for 1.5 years in Syria has resulted in over 1.2 million IDPs in the country and over 260,000 refugees seeking shelter outside Syria. Undoubtedly, actual numbers are higher than what is officially reported, as there are a high number of Syrians who have not registered either out of fear, reluctance to settle in camps, or because they have no access to registration centers. Of those Syrian refugees registered, approximately 75% are women and children (CFC).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Refuge</th>
<th>Refugees Registered as of 3 Sept 2012</th>
<th>Refugees Registered as of 17 Sept 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>80,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>72,402</td>
<td>86,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>57,482</td>
<td>67,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>18,682</td>
<td>25,508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>228,566</td>
<td>260,585</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNHCR, 14 September 2012. Figures are based on estimates and may vary.
As seen in the table below, as of the second week of September 2012, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan has exceeded the numbers in Turkey, making it the country hosting the highest number of refugees that are officially registered.

SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

The Turkish government considers the political crisis in Syria to be highly sensitive. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, an old ally of Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan, stated that they now see Turkey as an enemy and a hostile country. Assad also accused Turkey of having a direct role in the continued violence and bloodshed in Syria.

On 30 April 2011, the Turkish government opened its doors to the conflict victims and since then escalating numbers of Syrians have found refuge in the country.

In the aftermath of the crisis in Syria, 3 different vulnerable groups of Syrian refugees are formed in Turkey. These are:

1. Syrian refugees who are settled in the camps inside Turkey
2. Syrian refugees who entered illegally and are not registered with the Turkish authorities. This group is settled in cities, towns or villages not too far from the border areas. They continue to survive with their own financial means as well as support from their relatives and neighbors in Turkey.
3. Potential refugee group waiting along the border area to enter Turkey.

1. Syrian refugees in camps

The group of Syrians who are settled in refugee camps are provided by the Turkish authorities with shelter, food, water, medical services, sanitation and washing facilities, and non-food items.

Due to limited access inside the refugee camps, Support to Life (STL) team conducted random interviews with camp residents in public areas like parks, city centers, tea gardens or in front of camps. In comparison with those living outside the camps or waiting along the border areas, the basic needs of this group of refugees are being fully met and they have good conditions in the camps. One of these interviews can be found in Annex I.

A typical profile of a Syrian refugee camp in Turkey can be found in Annex II.

2. Syrian families living outside the camps

Within the group of Syrian families living outside the camps in Turkey, some have better financial resources while others have illegally fled with very limited financial resources. Some Syrians outside the camps have either rented flats or are living with host families, often relatives and friends on the Turkish side. Among those that are not registered with the Turkish authorities are defected army officers or police officers. They are afraid of the reaction of the camp residents due to their former positions within the Syrian government. Even for those with relatively better financial conditions, the majority is unable to make a living without the support of their relatives and neighbors.

STL team interviewed several of these families in three different parts of Hatay and found out that they are desperately in need of humanitarian assistance in terms of food, non-food items and medical services. An interview with one such vulnerable Syrian family is provided in Annex III.
During talks with the locals as well as the Syrians, it became clear to STL team that Syrian refugees, particularly those living with relatives and friends, have been putting financial and psychological pressure on host families. Aware of this situation, a representative from the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) told STL team that the government is planning to identify those unregistered Syrian families and settle them into camps. If they refuse to settle in camps, they will be threatened with deportation.

Having obtained this information, unregistered Syrian refugees are in fear of being identified by the Turkish authorities. As a result, accessing these Syrian families for interviews was not easy for STL team. Having eventually met with some of them and spoken with them about their conditions and needs, STL team could clearly observe the vulnerability of these families.

3. Syrians at the border areas

Undoubtedly the most vulnerable group of Syrians are the ones stranded in Syria just over the Turkish border along Hatay and Kilis provinces waiting to be admitted into Turkey. The number of Syrians camping along the Turkish border area in Syria is estimated to be between 10,000 and 20,000, changing based on the fighting and subsequent mobility along the border. While small groups of Syrians are gradually being allowed to cross into Turkey and are transferred to refugee camps, significant delays in screening and registration have meant that thousands have remained stranded inside Syria since the end of August.

STL team crossed into Syria through the border gate in Reyhanli, Hatay and had the chance to observe the conditions of those waiting along the border inside Syria. A small number of Syrian families have set up makeshift shelters for themselves under the trees. TRC distributes meals to those along the border area every day at 14:00 pm. Despite some basic needs being met from across the border, there is a lack of clean and sufficient water.

While a relatively small number of Syrians are internally displaced to the border areas with Turkey, the UN estimates that about one million IDPs are living in public buildings, mostly schools, meaning that thousands of children inside Syria are denied access to education when the school year starts. Classes were scheduled to start next week, but are likely to be delayed. Amid rising food insecurity, bread queues are being targeted, according to IRIN News Agency. However, it is said that a large number of IDPs have moved to the Eastern part of the country where the Kurdish population lives. In case the conflict extends to this part of the country, Syrian IDPs risk becoming refugees in Turkey and Iraq.

ASSISTANCE IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS

Support to Life (STL) team has been conducting periodic field trips to the area to get an understanding of the number of refugees and the situation in the camps, Syrian families living outside the camps, to see the conditions at the border areas, and to refresh contacts with key local authorities.

There is high fluctuation in terms of capacities in the camps in Turkey, as authorities are moving refugee families from one camp to another. As of mid-September, Syrian refugees are settled in 11 tent camps, 1 temporary acceptance center, and 1 container camp along the border provinces of Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaras, Osmaniye and Sanliurfa in Southern Turkey. All Syrian refugees who had been temporarily hosted during the summer months in public buildings, hostels and schools in various provinces in Turkey have now been transferred to camp facilities.

Since the inception of the first refugee camp in Hatay in April 2011, the Turkish government has been covering all the needs of the Syrians in all the camps. Given that the current number of Syrian
Refugees living in camps in Turkey has exceeded 80,177, the Turkish government announced that it will be unable to meet the needs of the refugees with its own resources once this figure reaches 100,000. (AFAD)

1. Location and capacity of camps

The locations and current capacity of the camps are as follows:

1) Yayladağı 1 / Hatay / Tents / 2,562 population
2) Yayladaği 2 / Hatay / Tents / 2,850 population
3) Altınözü Tekel / Hatay / Tents / N.A.
4) Altınözü-Boynuyğun / Hatay / Tents / N.A.
5) Altınözü-Apaydın / Hatay / Tents / N.A.
6) İslahiye / Gaziantep / Tents / 8,423 population (Capacity full)
7) Karkamış / Gaziantep / Tents / 4,730 population (Capacity not yet full)
8) Kilis / Kilis / Containers (2,200) / 12,461 population
9) Osmaniye / Tents / 1,458 population
10) Akçakale / Şanlıurfa / Tents / 9,654 population
11) Ceylanpinar / Şanlıurfa / Tents / 16,211 population

2. Camp management

The main responsible for the management of the camps for Syrian refugees is the Province Governor who works closely with AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Authority) personnel at the province level and with Turkish Red Crescent (TRC). TRC is the responsible agency for logistical support. They set up campsites, erect tents, provide relief goods, make the logistical arrangements required at the campsites and cater to the needs of the camp residents. For each camp, the Turkish government through the Province Governorship appoints Camp Managers, while the security of the
camps is ensured by the Turkish gendarmerie. Camp Managers are mostly appointed from the Directorate of Education.

All camps for Syrian refugees are surrounded by fences and permission is required to enter the camps. Even for the UN agencies, there is very restricted and controlled access. Despite strict restrictions on entry into the camps, the refugees are allowed to leave the camps and roam around near the campsites.

3. Camp conditions

The information on camp conditions is gathered through informal meetings with Camp Managers and other relevant personnel. It is not allowed for third parties to access the camps to verify this information, however, interviews with camp residents have enabled STL to verify the collected data.

Overall, Syrians living in the camps have confirmed that all their needs are being covered by the Turkish authorities.

SHELTER
Except for Kilis container camp, all camps have been established using TRC tents that are not winterized. Approximately 5 people stay in each tent.

FOOD
In all camps in Hatay, camp management has shifted from daily hot meal delivery to the provision of dry food packages for each household, who are now cooking their own food. In camps in the other provinces, hot meals have been outsourced to a company and are being provided 3 times a day.

The only exception is in Kilis container camp, in which the refugees have been given a kind of credit card that allows them to buy goods from 3 different shops close to the camp in Kilis. The Turkish government deposits 20 TL (equivalent to less than 10 Euro) per week per person.

WASH
According to the TRC and camp management, latrines and shower units have been set up for every 25 people in each camp. It is also said that minimum standards for water supply is being met in each camp, while in Hatay TRC has distributed bottled water in the camps.

The authorities regularly supply personal hygiene materials to each household. Additionally, there are common areas where there are washing machines for the beneficiaries to use. Camp management stated that they have not felt the need for hygiene promotion in the camps.

NFI
In camps in Hatay and Kilis provinces, the authorities provided kitchen utensils, gas stoves and gas cylinders to enable refugees to cook themselves in or near their tents. In some camps there are common spaces for cooking.

There have been distributions of clothing items in some of the camps, as well as blankets having been provided during last winter.

HEALTH
There are health facilities inside the camps for regular check ups and routine controls. In case of a serious disease, there are ambulances ready to take the refugees to the public hospital at the city centers. All prescribed medication is being provided free of charge. There is no lack of health services or drugs for the refugees.
**EDUCATION**

Given the fact that Syrian refugees in Yayladağı 2 camp of Hatay are Turkmen and speak Turkish, authorities plan to start primary school education in this camp.

In additional to formal education services, some non-formal training activities are being conducted, including Turkish language courses, handicrafts, knitting and so on in some of the camps.

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**RELATIONS BETWEEN HOST COMMUNITY and SYRIAN REFUGEES**

There are two sides to the relations between the host communities and Syrian refugees. In camps located near the border area, where kinship relations with Syrians are the case, the host community is welcoming of Syrians that have found refuge in their hometowns. This is mainly the case in Hatay. Local families have been handing out cash and other goods to those stationed around and outside the camps. They have been very generous in supporting the Syrians wherever possible. However, it is observed by STL team that as local prices of goods started increasing, some host families have started voicing their discontent about the situation.

On the other had, in settlements where there are sectarian differences between refugee families and host communities (Turkish Alevis vs. Sunni Arabs vs. Sunni Turkmens), there are clear tensions. This is observed by STL team particularly among host communities in Kilis. At this stage, rumors are spreading among the host communities, which is negatively affecting tolerance towards the Syrian refugees.

Ethnic tensions between Syrian-Arabs and Turkmens caused a clash in Islahiye refugee camp in Gaziantep on 25 July 2012. The conflict escalated into a riot as hundreds of Syrians took Turkish police officers hostage and seized their guns. The Turkish flag at the camp entrance was taken down and refugees replaced it with their own. There was turmoil in Kilis container camp as well. Police
used tear gas to disperse a group of refugees angry about food and water shortages and who were throwing stones at the police. No serious injuries were reported as a result of this incident. (Reuters)

ASSISTANCE BEYOND THE TURKISH BORDER

In addition to those who have become refugees, there are a larger number of Syrians who have become internally displaced and are in need of humanitarian assistance. Some of them cannot leave their homes in Syria due to security related issues, while some others are unwilling to abandon their properties and livelihoods in Syria.

On 18 August 2012, AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) announced that donations for Syria will be accepted at 4 “Relief Reception Centers” established by the TRC on the border crossings in Oncupinar/Kilis, Karkamis/Gaziantep, Yayladagi and Altinozu in Hatay. International relief goods will be received at the center established at Gaziantep Airport. (AFAD)

Despite official announcement by the Turkish government, some local authorities are reluctant to facilitate the delivery of aid beyond Turkish borders, as they believe this will attract more Syrians to the border areas.

It was reported by a Turkish news agency on 27 August 2012 that 9,000 Syrian IDPs were waiting near the Turkish border for more camps to be set up to accommodate them. Over 6,000 refugees were waiting on the Syrian side of the Oncupinar border crossing in Kilis province, and 3,000 others at border crossings into Hatay province. As of mid-September, this number is estimated to have reached as many as 20,000 Syrians. According to the local officials, the group will be placed to the new refugees camps being set up in Karkamis, Osmaniye and Adiyaman within the upcoming days.

As it is not allowed and also extremely risky for Turkish citizens to enter into Syria, being present during any cross-border relief operation for Turkish aid workers is not an option. For this reason, the Turkish Red Crescent delivers its relief goods to a contact from beyond the border, who then distributes the aid through the local structures inside Syria.

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ANNEX I: STORY OF REFUGEE FAMILIES STAYING IN TENT CAMPS

Ali Abdullah (70) and Mohammad Ismael (33) are the residents of Yayladagi YIBO-1 tent camp. They are both from the Northeastern city of Lathakia in Syria, where Alawites are the majority (the population is 80% Alawite on the coastal areas and 20% Turkmen in the city center).

They had been sitting at a tea garden outside the camp when we asked to sit with them and listen to their story.

Being among the first arrivals in Turkey, it has been 19 months since Mohammad Ismael left his hometown of Lathakia. He was a fisherman back in his village. He has two bullet wounds on his right leg, which are a result of shootings by the Shabiha. He was treated in Hatay after crossing the border into Turkey, however complains about the mistreatment of some Turkish doctors (which he is convinced are Alevi) towards the Syrian refugees in Hatay. Mohammad said he heard of some patients whose legs were amputated by Turkish Alevi doctors for no good reason.

Ali Abdullah was a Customs Manager in Lathakia and the impression from the conversation with Ali is that he was a wealthy man with a prestigious job before the violence in Syria broke out. His 21 year old son was serving in the military and defected when he refused to kill civilians. Ali’s son was kidnapped, tortured and shot by the Shabiha, with three bullet wounds in his body. Ali’s son is still undergoing treatment at the Hatay Public Hospital. He also complained about the bad situation in the hospitals and claimed that Turkish doctors misdiagnose and generally pass off most cases by giving painkillers.

Ali Abdullah managed to cross the border illegally 10 months ago through the mountains. It took him three nights to cross the border. He said that most Syrians fleeing their country choose to cross the border illegally because they are afraid of getting caught by the informers or the Shabiha. Once he was on the Turkish side, Ali was brought by the police officers to Yayladagi camp and settled there with his family.

Ali is now living with 13 members of his family in three tents including his grandchildren between the ages of 7 months to 9 years. His wounded son’s wife will give birth in one month’s time.

Ali described the situation in his home country: “We ran from the cruelty and the torture. Regime forces have been killing children, women, everyone. Generally they cut one limb with a saw and leave the body there. There are lots of dead bodies without heads and are recognized by their family members from the cloths they are wearing. We are not afraid to die but we could not let our women and girls be raped in front of our eyes.”
Talking about the conditions at Yayladagi YIBO-1 tent camp, Ali and Mohammad stated that the officials provide all the basic goods and services from food to sanitary services. Their only need is money. “There are some local people who give money to the Syrians in front of the camp” Ali said, but I couldn’t take any because I was so ashamed”. In general, there are good relations with the local people in Yayladagi and they are grateful for the support of the locals. Overall, both Ali and Mohammad stated their contentment with the relief goods provided at the camp and the conditions there, as well as the treatment of the Turkish police and security officers.

Both Ali and Mohammad are afraid that they wouldn’t be able to return to their homelands because Lathakia is being taken over by the Alawite population. They believe that Lathakia (and Tarsus province) will be the concentration of the regime forces. They say this is also evident in the fact that all Sunni homes are being destroyed and non-Alawites being forced to evacuate.

However, they want to keep their hope. Mohammad talked about the opposition’s fight 4 days ago with an Alawite village just across the border from Yayladagi. He believes that Assad’s regime is slowly falling, as the Free Syrian Army gains control of the Kasap border gate. “There are also some Sunni soldiers in Assad’s troops who are afraid to defect. The opposition militant groups are provided guns and ammunition by some of these Syrian army officers who sell the guns of dead soldiers. But no government provides guns to the FSA” he added.

“We have been forced to live under military domination for 50 years. We were forced to not see, hear or speak. Now I’m glad that we are not afraid any longer. However we know by now that our homes are demolished and all our belongings are gone. We are ready and strong enough to rebuild our lives but we will need support once we are back home” Ali Abdullah says.

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ANNEX II: CAMP PROFILE

YAYLADAGI YIBO-1 CAMP, HATAY PROVINCE

This is the very first camp that was set up in Turkey for Syrian refugees when they started crossing the border in April 2011. Some residents have been living in this camp for over one year. Most camp residents are Sunni Arabs, with a minority of Sunni Turkmens. Most have crossed into Turkey from Arab and Turkmen villages just over the border.

Everyday the refugees have 2 hours permission to go to the city center.

SHELTER

A total of 2,562 Syrians are living at the camp. A boarding school (YIBO) building is being used as part of the camp along with 350 tents in the courtyard of the school. There are 22 divisions inside the school building. The camp is operational at full capacity.

HEALTH

There is a polyclinic inside the camp. In case of a medical emergency, authorities take the patient to the public hospital at Hatay city center with an ambulance. All the required drugs are provided by the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC).

FOOD

Hot meals used to be delivered 3 times a day, but camp residents noted their discontent with the food and so requested to cook their own food. For this reason, food is now being delivered in the form of dry foods including bulghur, rice, dried beans, sugar, and tea, among others. The family food packages have been put together considering the eating habits and demands of the refugees.

After the start of dried food delivery, each household has been supplied with kitchen utensils, a fridge and a gas stove to facilitate cooking. Sufficient gas is also being provided at different time periods. Even though common spaces for cooking have been set up inside the camp area, families choose to cook in their tents.

Camp residents are free to roam around so those families with money have the opportunity to shop outside for buying cooking ingredients.

NFI

In addition to cooking related NFIs, camp residents have sufficient bed sheets and blankets from the last winter.

They have enough washing tubs, jerry cans and hygiene items. Laundry is handled through washing machines set up in common wash areas.

There is free transportation service between the camp and the city center.

WASH

There are latrines and showers inside the school building as well as prefabricated latrines and shower units in the courtyard area. There is one latrine per 25 people and one shower unit per 23 people in the camp.
All required personal hygiene items, including sanitary pads and diapers, are being provided by the TRC.

Drinking water is supplied from the Municipality water network. Usage water comes from the dam nearby. Water collection points are close to the shelters so families don’t have to travel long distances to fetch their water.

Camp authority is responsible for the cleaning of the camp area. The Municipality collects the garbage on a daily basis.

**EDUCATION**

There are no education facilities in the camp.

**OTHER**

There was a riot one time at the camp between the residents and the Turkish gendarmerie. The source of the unrest was a conflict between Arabs and Turkmens living in the camp.

STL team interviewed some of the residents outside the camp area and they all stated that they were satisfied with the camp conditions and were very grateful about the hospitality of the authorities and the local people. “If I say I have a headache, they take care of me immediately” said an old man.
ANNEX III: A REFUGEE FAMILY OUTSIDE THE CAMPS

In addition to the 80,000 Syrians who are registered and settled in refugee camps in Turkey, there is a huge number of unregistered refugees who live either with relatives or in rented flats in the border cities and towns of Turkey. Contrary to the common perception that these families have the financial means to sustain themselves, we came to know that some of them have no support and are in grave need of humanitarian assistance like the family we met in Kirikhan, Hatay.

This family, consisting of 8 members including one pregnant woman and 2 toddlers, fled to Turkey from Idlib 12 days ago. They have chosen to take refuge in a rented flat in Kirikhan, which they arranged through their relatives in Hatay. The host family and neighbors have given them a few basic household items such as beds, kitchen utensils, soap, along with some food items, which are far from covering their full needs.

The father was a police officer back in Idlib and for that reason doesn’t feel secure enough to go into the camps in Hatay although he is a Sunni. He is afraid that opposition members might accuse and harass him due to his former position as part of Assad’s government. On the other hand, he felt the pressure to flee his hometown, as he had started becoming a target of the government forces due to his Sunni identity.

Given the threat to his security coupled with the scarcity of food and water in Syria, they entered Turkey illegally from a village near Yenisehir Lake in Reyhanli district of Hatay. Before they left Idlib, the family managed to sell some of their belongings so they could afford their basic needs and bribes for the people who arranged this illegal journey.

Their home in Idlib was destroyed like many of the Sunni homes in the city, even though they have relatives who have remained in Syria. They are sad about not getting any news from their family members as telephone coverage is currently disrupted in Idlib.

The daughter-in-law is 6 months pregnant. She said that she has to see a doctor but can’t as long as she is not registered as a refugee. The two sons, one only a teenager and the other in his mid-twenties, are desperately looking for jobs. Yet they are so afraid of being caught by the Turkish authorities and forced to settle in a camp or get deported that they have hardly left their flat in Kirikhan since they arrived in Kirikhan. All family members stay indoors most of the time to avoid getting caught and questioned by the Turkish police. At the moment, they are confused, scared and need some time to settle and plan their sustenance in a foreign land, away from their support system in Syria.

We could truly see the fear in their eyes so we didn’t ask their names (as it had taken us some time to convince them to talk to us). They made it very clear to us that they would not allow any of their photos being taken.

The trauma of their experiences in Idlib was visible in the eyes of all family members. We were told that the 12-year-old daughter has experienced hearing loss as a result of loud bombardments in the city. She is also suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, as she has nervous attacks after every loud noise she suddenly hears. Her dolls are the only things she brought along with her.

The family managed to bring only one luggage of belongings with them so they are in need of basic items. Taking us around their flat, they said that food, water, beds, clothing items, kitchen utensils, hygiene products and a fridge were urgently needed.

This machine was given to the family by their relatives to be used as a fridge but it is now out of order. They have nothing to cook or eat other than these food items in the broken fridge.
For washing, the family uses this bath, which is in the garden used by their neighbors as well. There is no running water but they manage their washing and bathing by heating and carrying the water to the bathroom.