

Joint statement: Stop the violence against Syrian refugees!

17 civil society organizations condemn the recent escalations against Syrians in Turkey and call for protection

10 July 2024

Since the night of 30 June 2024, Turkey has witnessed yet another wave of mass violent attacks against Syrian refugees, including the tragic murder of a 17-year-old Syrian^[1] and assaults on properties, homes, and shops belonging to refugees. The violence^[2] began in the central Anatolian city of Kayseri, where refugees' homes were set on fire, vehicles were vandalised and burned, and shops were looted and damaged, all amidst anti-refugee and racist slogans. Over the last few days, these attacks have spread to other cities.

This is yet another example in a series of anti-refugee discontent and violence. Turkey has previously experienced waves of lynching and attacks against refugees in 2014^[3], 2017^[4], and 2019^[5], alongside individual offences that often go unpunished due to a pervasive culture of impunity.

Turkey hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees in the world, who live in extremely precarious conditions as the country lacks a sustainable integration strategy and transparent policies specifically aimed at Syrian refugees, who are statistically likely to build their futures in Turkey. The absence of well-established adaptation and socio-economic integration policies, the lack of fact-based information shared with the public, and the deliberate channelling of public anger towards refugees and migrants maintain high tension between different communities in the country. Last year, Syrian and Afghan refugees have been central to rising anti-refugee rhetoric during the electoral campaign, where deportations -or so-called "voluntary returns"- were key slogans. This is accompanied by the years-long restriction of access to fundamental rights like access to legal status, social protection, education, livelihoods, and health care and plans to forcibly return hundreds of thousands of Syrians. With this public propaganda, refugees from Syria and other nationalities are being scapegoated for the country's socio-economic and political crises, rising inflation, cost of living, and lack of access to basic services.

In reaction to the recent violence against Syrians, we, the undersigned local and international organisations, express our deep concern and solidarity with refugees in Turkey and the organisations working to defend their rights. We call on the Turkish government to introduce necessary regulations for short-term and long-term adaptation and socio-economic integration policies to ensure the secure and peaceful coexistence of different communities. We further stress that conditions in Syria remain alarming and unstable, and that any attempt to declare parts of Syria safe for returns should be avoided. It is therefore crucial to favour the local integration and increase access to resettlement opportunities for Syrians abroad to prevent similar incidents in the future and ensure justice and accountability for the victims of these recent xenophobic attacks.

SIGNATURES:

1. Access Centre for Human Rights – ACHR
2. Association Marocaine des Droits Humains – L’AMDH
3. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies – CIHRS
4. Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS)
5. Center for Legal Aid – Voice in Bulgaria
6. Centre for Peace Studies – CPS
7. Centre Libanais des Droits de l’Homme – CLDH
8. Citizens’ Assembly – [h]Yd
9. EuroMed Rights
10. Greek Council for Refugees – GCR
11. Human Rights Association – İHD
12. Irídia – Center for the Defense of Human Rights
13. KISA
14. Ligue des droits de l’Homme – LDH
15. NoPhotoZone
16. Voix des Prisonniers
17. Women Now for Development – Lebanon

[1] <https://stockholmcf.org/teenage-syrian-refugee-killed-amid-wave-of-racist-attacks-in-turkey/>

[2] <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/2/protests-and-arrests-as-anti-syrian-riots-rock-turkey>

[3] <https://tihv.org.tr/basin-aciklamalari/suriyelilere-saldirilar-kaygi-verici/>

[4] <https://www.diken.com.tr/izmirde-suriyelilere-saldiri-500-multeci-mahalleyi-terk-etmek-zorunda-kaldi/>

[5] <https://www.ihd.org.tr/adanada-suriyeli-siginmacilara-yonelik-19-eylul-2019-tarihli-saldiri-ile-ilgili-gozlem-ve-tespit-raporu/>