

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	237
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Flygtningenævnets Sekretariat
Titel:	Notat af 2. september 2011 udarbejdet af Flygtningenævnets Sekretariat vedrørende besvarelse fra landene repræsenteret i Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC) i anledning af en høring iværksat af Danmark om forholdene i Syrien
Udgivet:	2. september 2011
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	2. september 2011

Dato: 2. september 2011
J. nr.:
Sags- AUC
beh.:

Notat udarbejdet af Flygtningenævnets Sekretariat vedrørende besvarelser fra landene repræsenteret i intergovernmental consultations on migration, asylum and refugees (IGC) i anledning af en høring iværksat af Danmark om forholdene i Syrien

1. Baggrund

Flygtningenævnets koordinationsudvalg besluttede på et møde den 15. juni 2011, at nævnet i samarbejde med Udlændingesservice ville søge at indhente yderligere oplysninger om forholdene i Syrien via de lande, der er repræsenteret i IGC, forud for koordinationsudvalgets drøftelser om Syrien på det næste ordinære møde i udvalget den 31. august 2011.

Flygtningenævnets Sekretariat har i den anledning i samarbejde med Udlændingesservices Dokumentationskontor stillet de pågældende lande en række spørgsmål.

Den 26. august 2011 modtog sekretariatet de indkomne besvarelser fra IGC.

Flygtningenævnets Sekretariat har nedenfor samlet de besvarelser, som ikke er undergivet fortrolighed, med henblik på optagelse og offentliggørelse på nævnets baggrundsmateriale vedrørende Syrien. Der er tale om besvarelserne fra Finland, Tyskland, Irland, Norge, New Zealand og UK.

Da besvarelserne fra Australien, Belgien, Canada, Sverige, Schweiz og USA ifølge landene er fortrolige, vil disse besvarelser ikke blive optaget på Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale. De pågældende oplysninger vil således heller ikke indgå i grundlaget for Flygtningenævnets behandling af konkrete asylsager vedrørende syriske statsborgere.

2. Spørgsmålene og de ikke-fortrolige besvarelser er affattet således:

**“Request for Information
The Situation of Syrians Returning to Syria
Request from Denmark**

July 2011

Request

- Date of request:

1 July 2011

- Deadline for answers:

22 July 2011

- Focal point: (Mr/Ms, name, job title, institution, and e-mail) Ms Mia Fenat (mif@us.dk)

Questions

Denmark is seeking information on measures Syrian authorities might have taken with regard to the return of Syrian citizens, including Syrian Kurds, since the start of recent unrest in Syria.

1. Have the Syrian authorities taken any measures with regard to the entry of Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds who returning voluntarily in Syria? If any, please provide a detailed description of the measures taken and their consequences. Please specify whether Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds are treated equally by the Syrian authorities.
2. Have the Syrian authorities taken any measures towards Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds who have been involuntarily returned to Syria? If any, please provide a detailed description of the measures taken and the consequences hereof. In this regard, please specify whether Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds are treated alike by the Syrian authorities.
3. To your knowledge, have new approaches and procedures been introduced in the airports of Damascus and Aleppo by the Syrian authorities with regard to the entry of Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds in Syria?
4. Please provide information on whether and how Syrian Kurds are demonstrating for their specific rights since the beginning of the unrest and whether the Syrian authorities have specifically taken any actions against them?
5. Please provide information on the actual situation in the Kurdish areas in Syria, including whether the Syrian authorities have taken any specific action directed against low-profile and/or high-profile Syrian Kurds during the recent unrest?
6. Are Syrian Kurds seeking refuge in the border areas between Syria and Turkey? If the answer is affirmative, please specify whether Syrian Kurds are equally treated as other Syrian citizens.
7. Is it possible for Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds to (re-)enter the Kurdish areas in Syria from Turkey by crossing the land border and is there any contact with the Syrian authorities in this connection?

Use of information

Users of this compilation are requested to take into account the respective national restrictions with regard to confidentiality and information-exchange. With regard to the information contained in this compilation, the following Participating States have requested their answers to be considered for restricted use only: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland and the

United States. Their answers cannot be publicly used, quoted, or published. The answers from Finland, Germany, Ireland, Norway, New Zealand and the United Kingdom are public.

Answers to question 1

Have the Syrian authorities taken any measures with regard to the entry of Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds who returning voluntarily in Syria? If any, please provide a detailed description of the measures taken and their consequences. Please specify whether Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds are treated equally by the Syrian authorities.

...

Finland

Reports on the return of Syrian refugees to Syria are somewhat haphazard due to restrictions on reporting in the country and the widespread nature of protests and the crackdown. As Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre notes,

The [Syrian] government's limited ability to control the whole of the country has forced its forces to move between areas allowing some to seek safety in displacement temporarily, with IDPs and refugees returning home after the security forces loyal to the government have left.¹

Syrian refugees were first reported to have returned to Syria from Lebanon amid allegations that Lebanese security forces were apprehending them.² More recently, the head of the Syrian Red Crescent, Abdul Rahman Attar, has called for Syrian refugees to return home from Turkey after meeting with the head of the Turkish Red Crescent.³ According to Al-Jazeera's report on the 11th of July, the Turkish officials had estimated there to be 8,500 Syrian refugees in the Turkish camps when at its peak the number was around 12,000.⁴

According to AFP reports on the 5th of July, a Turkish diplomat notes that Turkey does not encourage return but brings people who volunteer to leave the refugee camps to the place where they crossed the border.⁵ In the same report, it was noted that some are returning voluntarily "just to escape from life in the camp and to live under better conditions in the houses of relatives in Hatay [in Turkey]". There are also various speculations on the condition at the camps and the reasons for the refugees' return among different commentators.⁶

The official Syrian news agency SANA reports that 8,000 people have returned to Jisr al-Shughour but the number remains unconfirmed. The same report gave reasons for return, includ-

¹ Reliefweb / Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 15.7.2011 IDP News Alert <http://reliefweb.int/node/426015> [Accessed 20.7.2011]

² Human Rights Watch 20.5.2011 "Lebanon: Stop detaining Syrian refugees" <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/05/20/lebanon-stop-detaining-syrian-refugees> [Accessed 19.7.2011]

³ Anadolu Agency 5.7.2011 "Syria calls for return of its nationals in Turkey" <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/syria-calls-for-return-of-its-nationals-from-turkey.html> [Accessed 15.7.2011]

⁴ Al-Jazeera 11.7.2011 "Liveblog: Refugees" <http://blogs.aljazeera.net/liveblog/global/refugees> [Accessed 18.7.2011]

⁵ Factiva / AFP 5.7.2011 "More Syrian refugees leave Turkey, some sneak back"

⁶ SE Times 16.7.2011 "Turkey-Syria: why are the refugees going home?" http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/blogreview/2011/07/16/blog-03 [Accessed 20.7.2011]

ing “succumbing to rumours and lies propagated by some satellite channels” and “misjudging the situation after the army took over the city”.⁷

However, according to reports from the refugee camps, people have fled Syria not only because of the clashes between demonstrators and security forces but mainly because of the fear of what happens when security forces split and members of the army defect,⁸ contradicting Syrian official news agency reports. Citizens have also moved within Syria from cities and villages closer to border areas in order to flee across the border if the situation at the border deteriorates. Similar contradictions have appeared before, when Syria also called for the return while the situation was reportedly violent and government forces continued with the crackdown.⁹

The army has also been reported to have attacked a makeshift refugee camp on the Syrian side of the border in Khirbet al-Jouz, prompting more people to flee to Turkey.¹⁰ According to the Guardian, Syrian opposition members are also increasingly turning to Turkey for safety:

“Turkey's growing diplomatic anger at Syria has made Istanbul an attractive hub for the Syrian opposition movement, which has received scores of defectors in recent weeks.”¹¹

In general, it would seem that the situation in Syria is still on-going. There is so far no confirmed information on cases of voluntary or involuntary return to the country.

Germany

To the information available here, no specific measures have been undertaken by the Syrian authorities regarding the voluntary return of Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds to Syria. Also no cases of Syrian citizens (i.e. Syrian Arabs) and Syrian Kurds being treated differently when returning voluntarily to Syria are known.

Ireland

The following number of Syrian citizens have successfully been voluntarily returned to Syria from Ireland.

2003 - 8 Syrian citizens
2007 - 1 Syrian citizens
2008 - 2 Syrian citizens
2010 - 1 Syrian citizen

⁷ SANA 13.7.2011 “206 People return from Turkish camps to Jisr al-Shughour area within past two days” <http://www.sana.sy/eng/337/2011/07/13/358230.htm> [Accessed 15.7.2011]

⁸ Al-Jazeera 10.6.2011 “Syrian army starts crackdown in northern town”

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/06/201161064328691559.html> [Accessed 15.7.2011]

⁹ Refworld / Radio Free Europe 15.6.2011 “Syria urges refugees to return amid reports of continuing crackdown” <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,...SYR,,4e142b4f0.0.html> [Accessed 15.7.2011]

¹⁰ BBC 23.6.2011 “Syria: Refugees flee border camps as troops deploy” <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13886598>, Global Post 24.6.2011 “Thousands of refugees from Syria, including soldiers, flee to Turkey” <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/110624/syria-turkey-refugees-news-protests-assad> [Accessed 18.7.2011]

¹¹ The Guardian 25.6.2011 “Syria reinforces northern border as Turkey loses patience with Assad” <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/25/syria-border-turkey-president-assad> [Accessed 18.7.2011]

We have not received any details of whether they have had any measures taken against them but if there had been measures taken against them, we presume that the International Organisation for Migration (who run our voluntary return programme) would inform us of any difficulty. We do not differentiate statistically between different ethnicities in Syria so we have no specific information in regard to Syrian Kurds.

New Zealand

/

Norway

We are not aware of any changes regarding the treatment of Syrian citizens who return to Syria from Europe. I have forwarded this question to the Norwegian Embassy in Damascus. According to their knowledge, no new procedures have been introduced at the official border crossings. Syrian citizens who enter Syria seem to be treated in the same way as always, i.e. passports are checked, last exit is checked in a central database and the new entry is recorded in the same database. Syrian Kurds with valid passports are generally speaking treated in the same way as other Syrian citizens (Arab citizens of Syria).

...

United Kingdom

Syria has not and does not really figure in Assisted Voluntary Return stats – no returns this year. However, there is no bar as such if people wish to return to their own country, and this would include travel overland when we could only forcibly remove by air.

I would stress that AVR is entirely voluntary – there is no coercion to apply or insistence to leave once an application is received – the person leaves as an ordinary passenger.

...

Answers to question 2

Have the Syrian authorities taken any measures towards Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds who have been involuntarily returned to Syria? If any, please provide a detailed description of the measures taken and the consequences hereof. In this regard, please specify whether Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds are treated alike by the Syrian authorities.

...

Finland

See answer to question no. 1.

Germany

As far as we could observe, the Syrian authorities did not undertake specific measures for Syrian citizens (respectively to Syrian Arabs) and Syrian Kurds with regard to forced return. It is not

known either that persons who were forced to return to Syria were treated differently merely due to their ethnic origin or religion.

Ireland

In 2004, 2 Syrian citizens were successfully deported to Syria from Ireland. There have been no other forced removals to Syria since that time. We have not received any details of whether they have had any measures taken against them. We do not differentiate statistically between different ethnicities in Syria so we have no specific information in regard to Syrian Kurds.

New Zealand

/

Norway

The Norwegian embassy in Damascus was not aware of any European country forcibly returning failed asylum seekers to Syria since the last uprising began. Consequently, we are not aware of any concrete examples of involuntary returns to Syria since mid-March, and are therefore not able to answer this question.

...

United Kingdom

I have not seen any reports of changing entry requirements for enforced/voluntary cases. It is worth noting that (since 13/5/11) we have deferred removals to Syria and therefore this is likely to impact on recent experiences of returns. The deferral is largely due to practical reasons (not policy) – our lines on this have been “The temporary suspension is due to the prevailing situation in Syria, particularly logistical considerations at the airport which affect UK escorts. We seek updates from relevant departments including the FCO and are closely monitoring the situation.”

...

Answers to question 3

To your knowledge, have new approaches and procedures been introduced in the airports of Damascus and Aleppo by the Syrian authorities with regard to the entry of Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds in Syria?

...

Finland

No information on new approaches or procedures at Syrian airports was found.

Germany

Currently no changes in the entry procedure and the border police check procedure could be observed, neither at Damaskus airport, nor at Aleppo airport.

When entering Syria there is still an identity and passport check by the so called Syrian Immigration Authority. The Immigration Authority does not belong to the Syrian intelligence agencies and is doing exclusively border police checks. Within this border police check a database request is done inter alia to check whether the respective person is charged with something in Syria.

If the person is not charged, entry is granted.

This entry procedure is valid for any persons entering Syria voluntarily, regardless of citizenship, nationality or ethnic group.

For persons who were forced to return from foreign countries to Syria, however, there may have been a change in the entry procedure.

Regardless of being Syrian Arabs or Syrian Kurds, the entry procedure and border police check described in the answer to question 1) takes place.

After the border police check, an detailed inquiry by the Immigration Authority - in most cases followed directly by an inquiry by the so called Political Security (secret police) – took place.

Returned persons were partly released after the inquiry by the Immigration Authority, but they were summoned to appear at the Political Security.

By now, the procedure given above has apparently changed in so far, as the Political Security stopped these automatic detailed inquiries and also the summoning to the Political Security. According to the information available here, the change in the procedure mentioned above is apparently due to the repeal of the emergency laws.

However, for the time being, there is no proof whether this is consistent with the facts or whether the changes in the procedure really have come to action, as in fact there are no forced returns to Syria for the moment.

Ireland

On 7 December 2010, a Syrian citizen was returned to Syria voluntarily as outlined above. We have had no applications for voluntary return since December 2010, therefore have no knowledge of new approaches and procedures at the airports of Damascus and Aleppo.

New Zealand

/

Norway

No new procedures are introduced at the airports of Damascus and Aleppo according to our knowledge (see answer to question 1).

...

United Kingdom

There have been no significant changes for Syrian Kurds in general.

...

Answers to question 4

Please provide information on whether and how Syrian Kurds are demonstrating for their specific rights since the beginning of the unrest and whether the Syrian authorities have specifically taken any actions against them?

...

Finland

Syrian Kurds have taken part in and organised demonstrations during the recent uprising in north and northeast; in Aleppo, al-Raqqa and al-Hasakah as well as in Damascus. As Zambelis notes in *Terrorism Monitor* (published by the Jamestown Foundation), Syrian Kurds appeared initially to “be venting their ire against the state as Syrians, not Kurds” but there has also been instances where “grievances were articulated though a Kurdish nationalist discourse”, particularly in March during the celebrations for Persian New Year (Nowruz).¹² It has also been reported that the various Kurdish parties are in somewhat disagreement on the organisation of protests and their aims:

“The parties cannot control the situation and the people cannot separate themselves from the parties,” he [Syrian Kurdish leader Fawzi Shingar] said. “Those who are active work haphazardly and without any planning, and the government’s policy so far has been to make the Kurdish areas neutral so they won’t have to attack them.”

Some military outposts that the Syrian regime stationed in the Kurdish areas after the 2004 uprising were withdrawn at the outset of the protests. According to Shingar, the area is now mainly controlled by the police and intelligence services, and could easily be taken over.

“The Kurds could take control of their region in 24 hours, including Hassaka which means the Jezirie region,” he said. “Efren and Kobanie are separated from those regions. They could rise up as well. For now though, freedom and economic opportunities are more important.”¹³

In early July the demonstrations got bigger and Syrian crackdown intensified,¹⁴ with Syrian forces reported to have killed several protesters in Hama where approximately half a million people protested.¹⁵ Thousands of people protested also in Kurdish areas in the northeastern cities of Amouda and Qamishli, prompting plans for a new opposition conference which, according to a statement signed by 50 opposition figures, including Kurdish leader Mishaal al-Tammo,

¹² Zambelis, Chris 2.6.2011 “Unrest in Syria inspires New Wave of Kurdish Activism” *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. IX, No 22, pp.7-10

¹³ Rudaw 28.6.2011 “Kurdish leader: Syrian kurds split on protests, don’t want independence” <http://www.rudaw.net/english/news/syria/3784.html> [Accessed 15.7.2011]

¹⁴ Reliefweb / AFP 3.7.2011 “Syrian troops sweep for dissidents in northwest” <http://reliefweb.int/node/423619> [Accessed 18.7.2011]

¹⁵ Reliefweb / AFP 8.7.2011 “More Syria deaths as half a million flood Hama” <http://reliefweb.int/node/424737> [Accessed 15.7.2011]

would broaden the basis of protests that demand Bashar al-Assad's resignation, a new constitution and free elections.¹⁶

Many protests have also ended in arrests by Syrian security forces (multiple reports available on Kurdwatch¹⁷ "News 2011"-section, <http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?cid=232>). According to Support Kurds in Syria, five Kurds were killed in a Friday demonstration in Damascus on the 15th of July.¹⁸

According to a Kurdish activist interviewed by Kurdwatch, the Kurdish protests are coordinated with other demonstrators in Syria:

"A few weeks ago we decided that the Friday demonstrations will take place under the name »Azadî« (Freedom). By doing this we wanted to show that the Kurds and the Kurdish language are a part of Syria. ... In the days before the demonstration, we alert the population to the protests, both through flyers and also through word of mouth and on Facebook. The demonstration lasts half an hour. It usually ends with various speeches by parties and other organizations. The banners are immediately destroyed. ... Most of the time there are more bystanders than demonstrators. Many are sympathetic to our demonstrations, but don't take part. They are still undecided as far as participating in dissident demonstrations. One reason for their reluctance is the absence of Arabs and Christians at the demonstrations in al-Qamishli."

On the response from the Syrian authorities, he says:

"They observe the demonstrations and film them. Actually, they have orders not to attack the demonstrators. After the demonstrations, some activists are consistently arrested and later released from custody. They are then charged for participating in an unauthorized demonstration."¹⁹

A more tangible response from the government came on the 7th of April when Syrian authorities granted citizenship to a part of its Kurdish minority.²⁰ According to a recent report however, only 9,000 of over 37,000 who applied for nationality in the Northeast of Syria have received their papers.²¹ Some commentators see the recent protests on behalf of the Kurdish activists as a significant act of support for anti-Assad protests:

"... Bashar al-Assad deliberately wooed the Kurdish population in the beginning of the 2011 protests by offering a token amount of Kurds citizenship rights, and attempting to meet with Kurdish officials. Mainstream Kurdish opinion was unwilling to completely back protesters with unestablished political demands and tactics, even against such a repressive regime. Thus, actions such as the formation of the Kurdish

¹⁶ RTE 4.7.2011 "29 dead after latest Syrian protests" <http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0702/syria.html> [Accessed 18.7.2011]

¹⁷ Independent Internet portal that reports on the human rights abuses against the Kurdish population in Syria, www.kurdwatch.org

¹⁸ Support Kurds in Syria 16.7.2011 "Five Kurds killed in Damascus demonstrations 15.7.2011" <http://supportkurds.org/news/five-kurds-killed-in-damascus-demonstrations-15-july-2011/> [Accessed 18.7.2011]

¹⁹ Kurdwatch.org 29.6.2011 "Interviews: Jan Qamishloki, Kurdish activist" <http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?cid=240> [Accessed 15.7.2011]

²⁰ Associated Press / ABC 7.4.2011: "Syria's Assad Makes Gesture to Kurds Amid Protests" <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=13316482> [Accessed 19.7.2011]

²¹ Factiva / The Wall Street Journal 24.7.2011 "World news: Syrians flood to Turkey as troops enter village"

Parties Front and public statements against Assad from Syrian Kurdish officials represent a huge shift towards the protesters as the mood of the country changes.”²²

Germany

As far as we could observe, the Kurds put their demonstrations in the Kurdish areas of Syria since the beginning of the riots exclusively under the national Syrian agenda, i.e. they joined the overall Syrian oppositional movement's postulations and did not claim any specific Kurdish rights. The Kurdish side consciously wants to prevent the oppositional movement from splitting up.

Ireland

/

New Zealand

“AI: Kurdish political activist at risk of torture”, Amnesty International, 17 June 2011
<http://www.shril-sy.info/enshril/modules/news/article.php?storyid=782>

“Syrian city of Deraa hit by deadly clashes”, BBC News Middle East, 25 April 2011
<http://bbc.co.uk/news/world-13016843>

Notes “In northern cities with Kurdish majorities, protesters reportedly chanted “we are calling for freedom and not only for citizenship” in response to President Assad granting citizenship for Kurds in Syria’s eastern Hasaka region on Thursday.”

“Syrian protesters clash with security forces” New York Times, 1 April 2011
http://nytimes.com/2011/04/01/world/middleeast/02/syria.html?_r=1&partner=rs..

“Jailed Kurds on hunger strike; rights group” AFP, 10 March 2011 <http://www.shril-sy.info/enshril/modules/news/article.php?storyid=713>

Norway

Demonstrations began in the Kurdish areas in the north-east at the end of March after the initial unrest broke out in Daraa. The Syrian security forces have generally taken a lighter stance towards demonstrations in the Kurdish areas than in other parts of the country. When we visited Damascus in April, we were told by human rights activists, Kurdish opposition politicians and western embassies that the security forces had not confronted the demonstrators in Qamishli, Hassaka and Amuda, and that no arrests had been taken place in these areas. Later on, we learned from human rights activists that some arrests have taken place in Kurdish areas from late April onwards, mainly of activists and people who have organized demonstrations. People we spoke to in Damascus interpreted the government’s relatively “light” approach towards the Kurds as a way of upholding a divide between the Kurds and the Arabs, and as a way to try to prevent the Kurds from being united with the Arab population in the revolt against the regime. In

²² Alliance for Kurdish Rights 4.7.2011 “Syrian Kurdish politicians slowly lean towards stronger stance against Assad”
<http://kurdishrights.org/2011/07/04/syrian-kurdish-politicians-strong-support-for-protesters/> [Accessed 18.7.2011]

an unprecedented move, the government allowed Kurdish new-year celebrations to take place in Damascus this year (March 21st). The event was even covered by official Syrian news agencies for the first time.

...

United Kingdom

Our contacts thought the protests in Rukn Ad Din (a Kurdish area of Damascus where four Kurds were allegedly killed at the weekend and a police station was reportedly attacked) were significant and would continue to grow. The Kurdish areas of north east Syria, including the town of Qamishli, have seen protests dispersed violently by the Syrian security forces (though this is the norm across the country).

...

Answers to question 5

Please provide information on the actual situation in the Kurdish areas in Syria, including whether the Syrian authorities have taken any specific action directed against low-profile and/or high-profile Syrian Kurds during the recent unrest?

...

Finland

Main Kurdish areas in Syria are Afrin, a city north of Aleppo; the city of Ain al-Arab along the Turkish border in the north and the northeastern province al-Hasakah.²³ According to an interview with the deputy chairman of external affairs for Turkey's AK Party, there has been "some indiscriminate violence against villagers and people who live in Northern Syria in some sort of reprisal: tanks rolling in and firing at citizens".²⁴ The transcription of the interview did not specify if any violence was specifically targeted towards Kurds.

In a report by Kurdwatch, the secretary of the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria was prevented from leaving the country at Aleppo airport on 13.7.2011.²⁵

Human Rights Watch has previously reported Syrian government as having targeted and detained prominent Kurds and other political activists for "inciting strife" and weakening national sentiment".²⁶

Germany

²³ Stratfor Global Intelligence "A Sectarian look at Syria's unrest" http://web.stratfor.com/images/middleeast/map/4-4-11-Syria_Unrest.jpg [Accessed 15.7.2011]

²⁴ The World 13.6.2011 "Syria refugee crisis" <http://www.theworld.org/2011/06/syria-refugee-crisis/> [Accessed 15.7.2011]

²⁵ Kurdwach.org 15.7.2011 "Aleppo: Party leader not permitted to leave Syria" <http://www.kurdwatch.org/index?aid=1791> [Accessed 15.7.2011]

²⁶ Human Rights Watch 16.7.2010 "A Wasted decade: Human Rights in Syria during Bashar al-Asad's first ten years in power" <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/91580/section/6> [Accessed 15.7.2011]

Since the beginning of the riots there has been a wave of arrests in the Kurdish areas of Syria as well. However, demonstrators have not been attacked with firearms in the Kurdish areas so far.

Ireland

/

New Zealand

/

Norway

See answer to question 4. According to a Kurdish activist I spoke to last week, the security forces are mainly targeting organizers and activists amongst the Kurds, not the ordinary participants in demonstrations.

...

United Kingdom

We are not aware that Kurds were specifically targeted in a different way from other protesters; our interlocutors did not raise this as a specific issue of concern. When protests began they were centred around local grievances, but we are now seeing more unity among protesters across the country in calls for regime change. In our understanding, Kurdish community leaders are not inciting Kurds to protest en masse at this time.

...

Answers to question 6

Are Syrian Kurds seeking refuge in the border areas between Syria and Turkey? If the answer is affirmative, please specify whether Syrian Kurds are equally treated as other Syrian citizens.

...

Finland

There are 5 refugee camps in Turkey's Hatay province, along the Turkey-Syria border: Yayladağı 1, Yayladağı 2, Altınözü, Boynuyoğun and Reyhanlı.²⁷ It has been estimated that around 10,000 refugees from Syria reside in these camps (some sources have put the number even higher at 30,000)²⁸.

²⁷ Turkish Red Crescent 23.6.2011 "Turkish Red Crescent stand by Syrian refugees" <http://www.kizilay.org.tr/english/haber.php?t=-News-Turkish.Red.Crescent.Stand.By.Syrian.Refugees> [Accessed 18.7.2011]

²⁸ Washington Post 20.6.2011 "Syrian refugees test ties with Turkey" <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/jun/20/surge-of-syrian-refugees-tests-ties-with-turkey/?page=1> [Accessed 20.7.2011]

Information on the conditions at the border areas is slim but according to ICRC spokesperson there is a lack of sanitary facilities, water and other resources and that people are sleeping under tarpaulins.²⁹ No reports regarding specifically the treatment of Syrian Kurds were available.

Unlike in Iraq, Turkey has so far not taken any specific action in terms of protecting the Kurdish minority in Syria.³⁰ According to some reports, Turkey is concerned on how its own Kurdish population and especially PKK will react to the events in Syria, thus making Turkey uneasy to support any military intervention or change of government in Syria, even if it has condemned its actions.³¹ Since no action has been taken by Turkey on the Syrian side of the border, it is possible that Syrian Kurds are among the refugees crossing the border to Turkey.

Germany

There is currently no information available on this issue.

Ireland

/

New Zealand

Reportedly so and many Syrians have fled to Lebanon. Articles do not necessarily specify whether they are Kurds.

“Syrian refugees tell their stories” BBC News, 23 June 2011 <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/> (Interviews conducted in Wadi Khaled on the Lebanon-Syria border on 16-17th June 2011. BBC cannot verify authenticity of the testimonies)

“Turkey’s dilemma over Syrian unrest” BBC News Europe, 11 June 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13737946?>

Turkey allowed a meeting of hundreds of Syrian dissidents in the resort city of Antalya and says it will allow anyone fleeing violence in Syria to cross its border.

“Syria: Jisr al-Shughour refugees too afraid to go home”, BBC News Middle East, 14 June 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13765494?>

The above refers to a refugee who went back to Syria to retrieve possessions being shot by a sniper.

“Lebanon: Alkarama commends Lebanon release of wrongfully-detained Syrian refugees” Syrian Human Rights Information Link, 24 June 2011 <http://www.shril-sy.info/enshril/modules/newsarticle.php?storyid=784>

Norway

We are under the impression that those who fled to Turkey and Lebanon originate from specific Arab villages in the border areas. We do not know whether there are any Kurds amongst them.

²⁹ Reliefweb / IRIN News 4.7.2011 “Tough conditions for Syrians in Lebanon, Turkey” <http://reliefweb.int/node/423673> [Accessed 18.7.2011]

³⁰ SE Times 22.6.2011 “Worry over PKK, Kurds shape Turkey’s Syria policy” http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2011/06/22/feature-03 [Accessed 20.7.2011]

³¹ Public Service Europe 11.7.2011 “Turkey’s Syrian dilemma” <http://www.publicserviceeurope.com/article/593/turkeys-syrian-dilemma>, Anadolu Agency 11.7.2011 “Turkey against any external intervention” <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey-against-any-external-intervention.html> [Accessed 15.7.2011]

...

United Kingdom

We are not aware of any Syrians of Kurdish origin crossing into Turkey. However they tend not to have proper documentation so might not use official crossing points. If any Kurds did try to cross they would be treated like any other Syrian citizens.

...

Answers to question 7

Is it possible for Syrian citizens and Syrian Kurds to (re-)enter the Kurdish areas in Syria from Turkey by crossing the land border and is there any contact with the Syrian authorities in this connection?

...

Finland

Officially, Syrian Kurds have different statuses which determine their ability to travel to and from Syria. Most of the two million or so Kurds have full citizenship but around 300,000 have a status of either *ajanib* ("foreigner") or *maktoumin* ("not registered"),³² meaning they carry different citizenship or identity documents or lack them altogether, in which case their right of travel is restricted. The presidential decree given on April 7th grants Syrian citizenship to Kurds registered as *ajanib* in al-Hasakah province, allowing them to acquire nationality and with that, identity documents that can be used for travel. Before the decree, *ajanib* were able to apply for a travel document which enabled them to re-enter into the country whereas *maktoumin*, lacking any identity documents, were not and thus could not travel legally.³³ In 2007, it was reported that

"... re-entry can lead to problems for human rights activists and political activists, including Kurds who are politically active, if the concerned persons are already known by the Syrian authorities."

*"Kurds from Syria who return to the country may face arrest due to illegal exit from Syria. According to the source the risk of arrest upon return depends on how much the authorities know about the activities of the returning person."*³⁴

According to scarce reports, the border between Syria and Turkey has been open during the recent unrest, enabling people to hide in or visit Turkey in order to take supplies back to Syria, or to monitor the situation with the possibility of taking refuge in one of the refugee camps.³⁵ There

³² UN High Commissioner for Refugees May 2011: "Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report. Universal Periodic Review: Syria" <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4dcb716f2.html> [Accessed 19.7.2011]

³³ Refworld / Danish Immigration Service April 2007: Syria: Kurds, Honour-killings and Illegal Departure <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/46dd2a5e2.html> [Accessed 19.7.2011]

³⁴ Refworld / Danish Immigration Service April 2007: Syria: Kurds, Honour-killings and Illegal Departure <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/46dd2a5e2.html> [Accessed 19.7.2011]

³⁵ Reuters 12.6.2011 "Syria-Turkey border trip now a matter of survival" <http://in.reuters.com/article/2011/06/12/idINIndia-57652920110612> [Accessed 19.7.2011]

are also reports on Syrian authorities closing parts of the border, resulting in people crossing the border at the mountains.³⁶ It is so far unclear how the recent situation has affected the official stand or statuses regulating return since some border crossings have taken place in illegal areas.

Germany

According to eyewitness accounts, cross-border traffic between Turkey and Syria in the Kurdish areas of Syria is still possible.

We do not know about Syrian Arabs and Syrian Kurds being treated differently in cross-border traffic.

Ireland

/

New Zealand

/

Norway

To our knowledge, official border crossings are open, and Syrian citizens with valid passports, Kurds as well as Arabs, can use them. There is also smuggling of goods and people going on across the border. This has been going on at all times and is not directly linked to the present unrest. According to a news report from IRIN today (<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=93129>), many of those who have fled the unrest in the border areas to Turkey have made trips back to their home villages to look after property and cattle, but are reluctant to return permanently because of fear of further unrest and violence. We do not know if the return trips across the border are made through official border crossings or in any way officially sanctioned by the Syrian regime.

...

United Kingdom

The MFA also said they had not seen any Iraqis from Syria in Turkey either.

...”

³⁶ Global Post 24.6.2011 “Thousands of refugees from Syria, including soldiers, flee to Turkey”
<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/110624/syria-turkey-refugees-news-protests-assad> [Accessed 19.7.2011]