

# Syrian and Iraqi refugees and the trauma of war

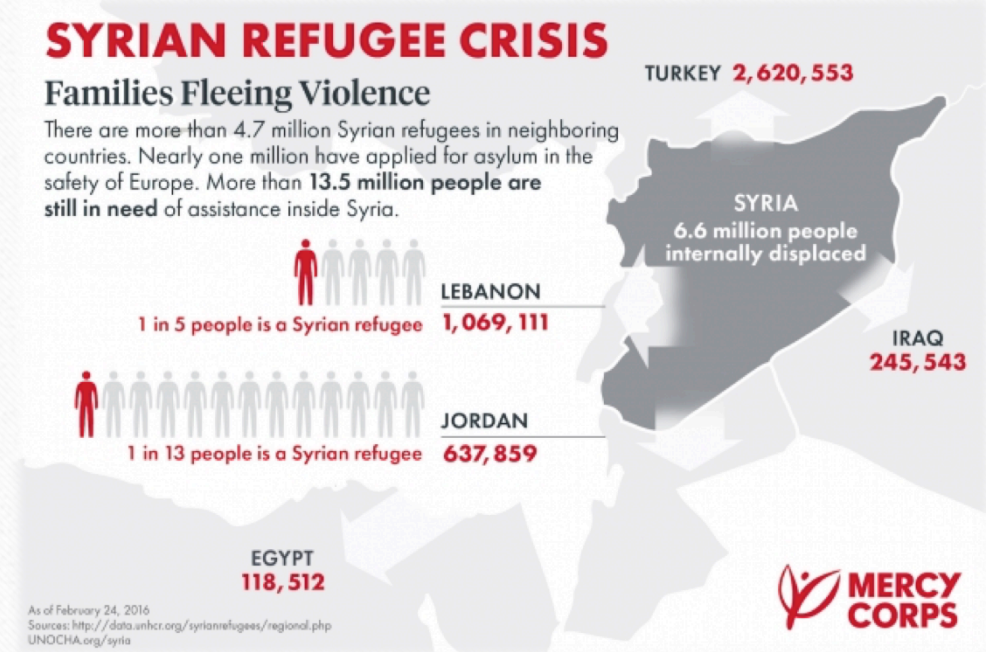
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*Brenda Stoter, research journalist*



# The Syrian refugee crisis

- 80-90% of the refugees in Jordan and Turkey live outside the camps.
- Turkish authorities: 55% of the Syrian refugees need psychological services.
- Nearly half of all Syrian families think that they or their families need psychological support.
- Only 5% of the needed psychotherapy for refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey is provided.





# Traumatic events and gender-based violence

- Domestic violence, sexual violence, increasing incidences of early marriages (34% in Jordan), harassment and isolation, exploitation, and survival sex.
- *In Syria:* Bombings, shootings and the loss of family members.
- *In Syria:* Some Syrian women have been raped and tortured in regime or rebel prisons.
- Women often suffer from emotional disorders, such as depression, prolonged grief disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder and various forms of anxiety disorders.
- *In host countries:* There are lots of practical programs for women, but there hardly are any when it comes to psychological help.





# Syrian and Iraqi children

Mohammed (6) from Mosul, Iraq



Amal (4) from Daraa, Syria





# Traumatized Syrian and Iraqi children

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## *Some facts:*

- Reports: up to 50 % of the Syrian and Iraqi children are suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder or depression.
- They often suffer from nightmares, flashbacks and anxiety attacks.
- Many children have never known peace – they were born during the war.

## *What kind of help do they get?*

- Psychosocial programs for children like role playing, drawing, singing & dancing, which helps most of them to deal with war trauma.
- Save the Children: 'Some children kind of forget what they have been through. Others, however, need specialist help from a psychiatrist, and they may even need medication.'



# Genocide and kidnapping of Yezidis

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- August, 2014: The Islamic State (ISIS) took over large parts of Iraq and attacked the Yezidi community.
- Men were shot dead and dumped in dozens of mass graves. Boys were kidnapped and sent to training camps of IS, where they were brainwashed and learned how to fight.
- Thousands of women and children were kidnapped by ISIS. Girls and women were sold on slave markets, some as young as 9 years-old, after ISIS had put their names on special slave lists.
- Around 2,600 abducted Yazidis returned home by a network of smugglers. More than 3,000 Yazidis remain captive.



# Who are the Yezidis and what kind of help to they get?

- The Yezidis are one of the oldest ethnic-religious groups in the region, with a current population of around 600,000 in Iraq.
- The community believes in the purity of their lineage; Yezidi can't marry outside of their community and praise chastity and honour above all.
- Leader of the community Baba Sheik: 'The survivors are still pure Yezidis. It's not their fault. We call for everyone to support the victims, so that they can live normally again and integrate into society.'
- Iraqi Kurdistan has too few psychologists and psychiatrists and there are few long-term therapy options.