

Understanding the Syrian Civil War

(A quick summary of some of the major events based on Data Visualisation created)

Lluís Badia Planes



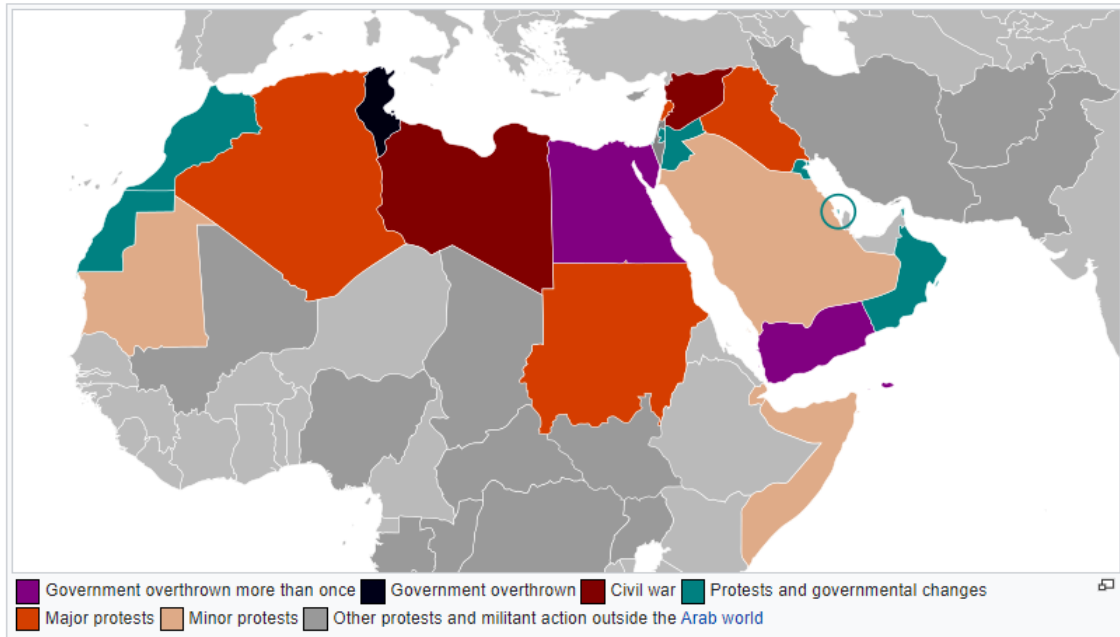
Index

1: Context (Arab Spring)	p. 2
2: IDP distribution per Syrian Governorates	p. 3
3: Refugee dispersion demographics based on gender and group ages	p. 5
4: Top Asylum-Seeker/ Asylum-applicant countries	p. 7

1. Context (Arab Spring)

During 2010 and 2012, in several countries of the Arab World, there was a rising in dissatisfaction and the need for change in those states tired of decades of authoritarianism, corruption, poverty and unemployment, among other factors. Therefore, the population started to march on the streets, demanding human rights, justice, employment and Regime changes.

Summary of conflicts by country [\[edit \]](#)



Source: Wikipedia¹

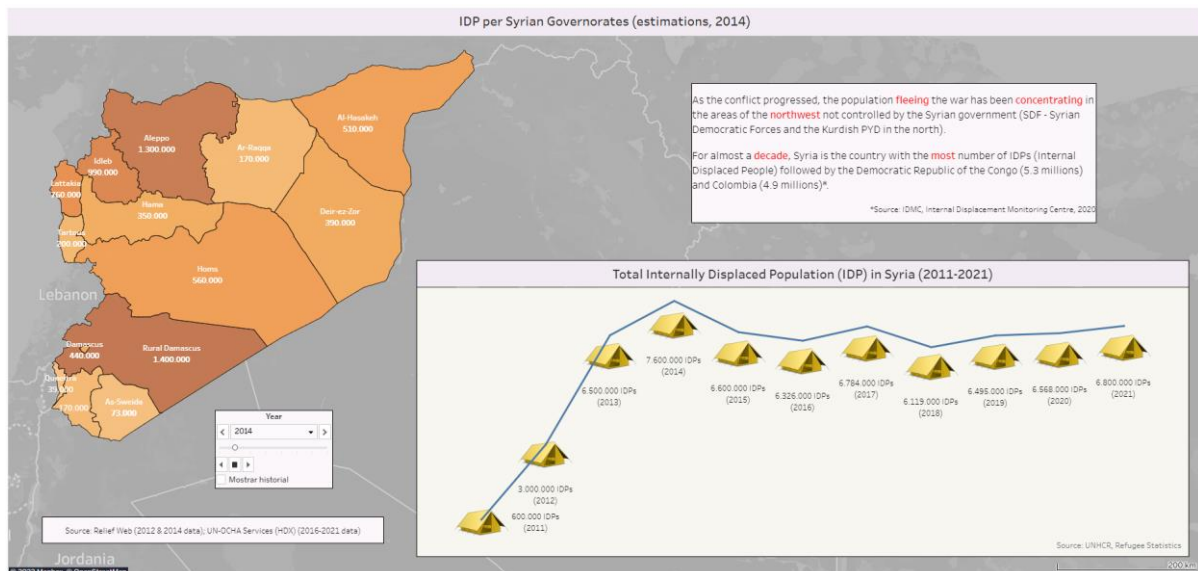
At the start of that period, the majority of the protests were peaceful and achieved their goals by overthrowing the regimes in some of those countries, such as Tunisia (posterior free elections); in other states, they achieved governmental changes such as Jordan or Oman. However, the regimes in Libya and Yemen were overthrown, but the protests escalated to violent conflicts causing the clash inside their borders until nowadays.

The case of the Syrian Arab Republic is similar to the later ones, although the regime was never deposed. Therefore, the situation changed and the peaceful protests turned violent because of the repressive response from the al-Assad regime. That is when the Syrian Civil War began until nowadays.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Spring#/media/File:Arab_Spring_and_Regional_Conflict_Map.svg

2. IDP distribution per Syrian Governorates (2011-2021)

At the first stages of the conflict, much of the IDPs were located in the central regions of the country. The number was low until the end of 2013 when Daesh (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) occupied the eastern-central regions (along the Euphrates River) and established Ar-Raqqa as its capital for four years (2013-2017) until the Western-backed rebel forces defeated ISIL forces.

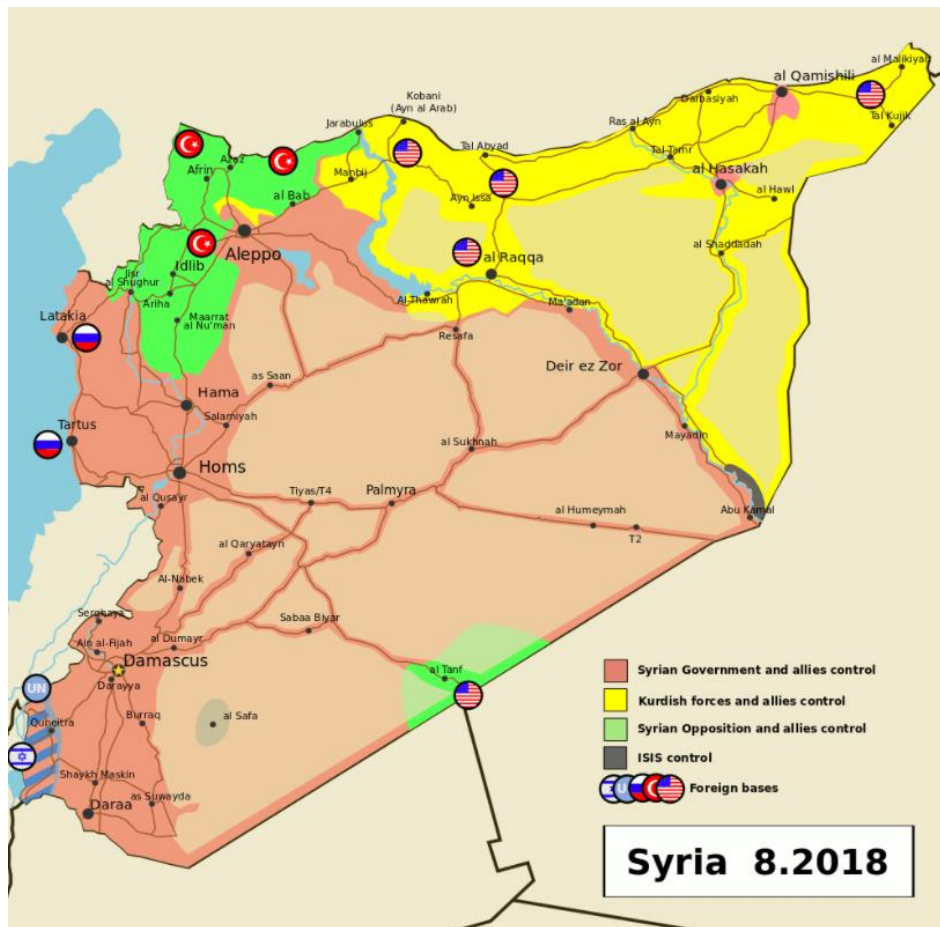


For that reason, the population who could flee from the reign of terror installed by the radicals moved to the West and NW of the country. It is also remarkable that there was an important amount of IDP in rural Damascus due to its capital's proximity.

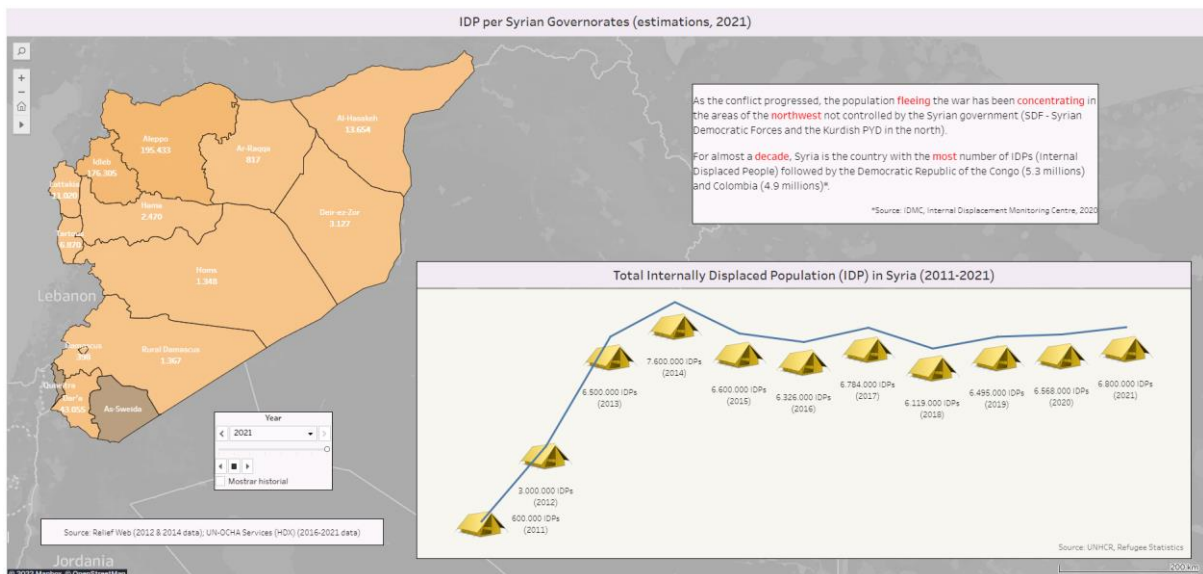
As the conflict went by, the IDP's exodus was located increasingly in the NW regions, especially Aleppo and Idleb. However, the Aleppo Governorate suffered important damage and territory losses by the anti-Government factions when Russia entered the scene in October 2015 to back the al-Assad forces as a crucial turning point for the path of confronting the rebel factions (and also Daesh).

After that, Government forces were retaking territory towards the north and east until reaching the Euphrates River (the northern side has been controlled by Kurdish forces after defeating ISIL since 2017).

Syrian Civil War in 2018



Source: Wikipedia²



² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_Syrian_civil_war#/media/File:SyrianWarAnimation2011-2019.gif

However, the Idleb region has been resisting and continues to remain the main rebel stronghold. Therefore, it has become the main location for the majority of displaced people who still refuse to follow authoritarian rules, fear repression after returning to their home or have lost everything back home.

For almost a decade, Syria has been the country with the most number of IDPs (Internal Displaced People), followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5.3 million) and Colombia (4.9 million)³.

3. Refugee dispersion demographics based on gender and group ages (2011-2021)

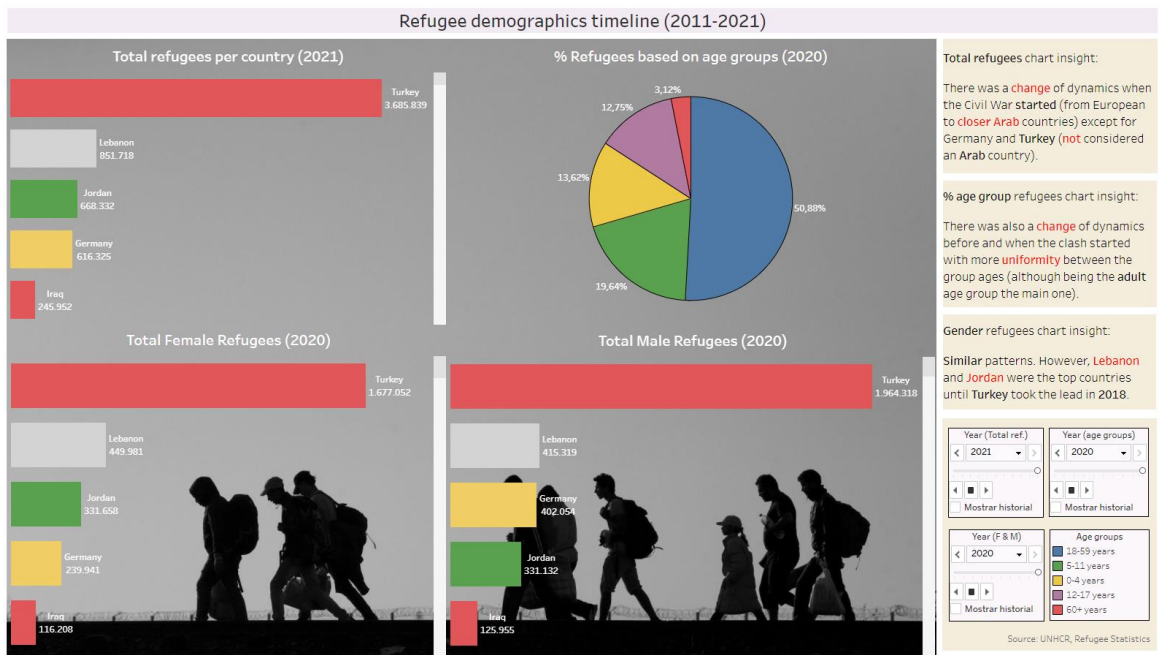
As the years went by, there was a change of dynamics when the Civil War started (from European to closer Arab countries) except for Germany and Turkey (not considered an Arab country).

It is important to remark that, in front of the increase of the refugee turnout at the gates of the European countries, the European Union had to elaborate a plan to solve that dramatic and complex situation. That is why they would distribute that population between the member States. However, some of them (especially from the eastern part) were reluctant to those policies, given that their governments were implementing anti-immigration measures.

Regarding the refugee distribution based on group ages and gender, there is a clear difference between 2011 (data before the events started or the very early stages) and the following years.

The first one, the majority of the people were families with small children (0-4 years), and the countries that were heading were from the West. Therefore, it seems that they were looking for stability and a more level of future opportunities.

³ Source: IDMC, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2020.



However, after the early stages, the distribution got more uniform between the groups, although the adult one has been the top one all the years. Regarding the countries in which they ended up, there was a clear change of tendency of western countries to closer countries with similar cultural and religious roots.

It seems that that change of tendency to change from those western countries with fewer similar roots and farther than the ones' closer would, at least, two explanations:

- On the one hand, after suffering more time of conflict, the resources to reach farther countries seemed fewer for those who had no choice to flee.
- On the other hand, Western countries were increasingly reluctant to give facilities for those people. That would explain the agreement reached between Turkey and the European Union to contain the major exodus that caused the conflict.

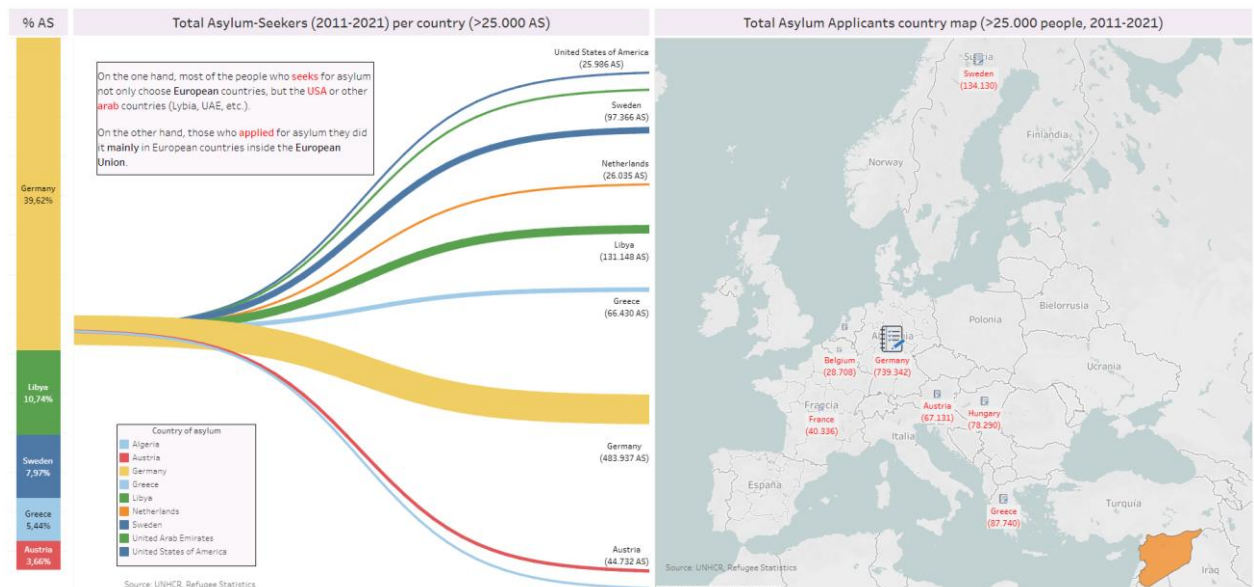
About the differences between gender, in general, the male population has been greater than the female. There are no major divergences between them, except that there is more presence of male refugees in Germany than in the female population, which reflects that it was more difficult for them to reach greater objectives for better prospects.

4. Top Asylum-Seeker/Asylum-Applicant countries (2011-2021)

First of all, it is important to understand the difference between a refugee and an asylum-seeker/applicant:

- A refugee is a person who is fleeing armed conflicts or persecution and its situation is perilous that cross national borders to seek safety and access to assistance from another country.
- Whereas an Asylum-Seeker is a person who claims to be a refugee but its application has not been evaluated yet. Until that person will not become a refugee, will be recognised as an Asylum-Seeker.
- On the other hand, the term Asylum-Applicant differs from Asylum-Seeker when the application has been already submitted. Therefore, the UNHCR distinguish the ones who are in process (Seeker) and the ones who have already a response (Applicant).

According to the UNHCR data, there are clear differences between the countries where the Syrian population wanted to apply (that does not mean they got accepted as a refugee) or were seeking asylum and the ones who ended up in closer countries as refugees.



Besides, there is a contrast between the Asylum-Seekers and the Asylum-Applicants. About the first ones, not only were seeking in European countries but countries such as the USA or Libya; whereas the latter ones were choosing

mostly European countries which are members of the European Union for the benefits and future prospects would get.

In summary, Germany is, by far, the country with more applications throughout the conflict (so far).