

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

The Human Rights Council is an Inter-Governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them. It has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. It meets at the UN Office at Geneva.

The Council is made up of 47 United Nations Member States that are elected by the UN General Assembly. The Human Rights Council replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Creation

The Council was created by the United Nations General Assembly on 15 March 2006 by resolution 60/251. Its first session took place from 19 to 30 June 2006. One year later, the Council adopted its "Institution Building Package" to guide its work and set up its procedures and mechanisms.

Among them were the Universal Periodic Review mechanism which serves to assess the human rights situations in all United Nations Member States, the Advisory Committee which serves as the Council's "think tank" providing it with expertise and advice on thematic human rights issues and the Complaint Procedure which allows individuals and organizations to bring human rights violations to the attention of the Council.

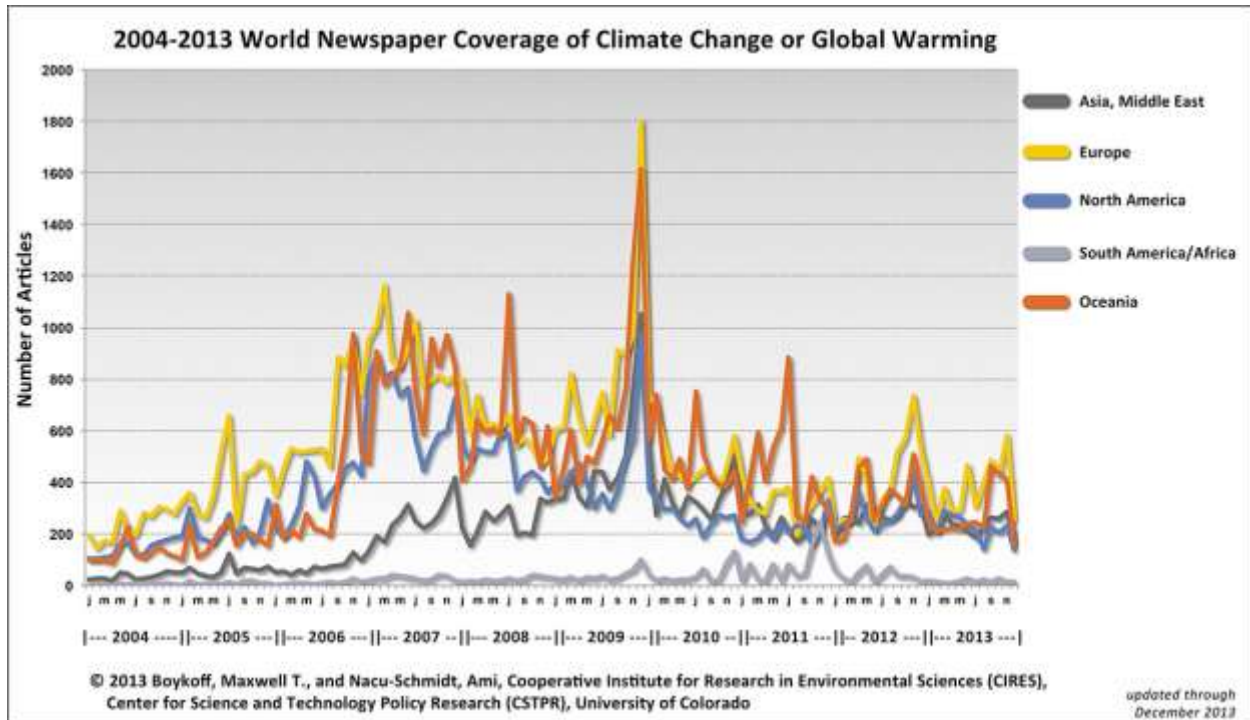
The Human Rights Council also works with the UN Special Procedures established by the former Commission on Human Rights and now assumed by the Council. These are made up of special rapporteurs, special representatives, independent experts and working groups that monitor, examine, advise and publicly report on thematic issues or human rights situations in specific countries.

AGENDA 1:

UPHOLDING AND GUARANTEEING RIGHTS TO REFUGEES AND PEOPLE DISPLACED DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

It has long been recognised that the effects of climate change will displace people and that most of this displacement will be within national borders. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's very first report from 1990 stated that the greatest single impact of climate change may be on human migration. The report estimated that by 2050, 150 million people could be displaced by desertification, water scarcity, floods, storms and other climate change-related disasters.



Displacement is already happening in some parts of the world. Almost 28 million people on average were displaced by environmental disasters every year between 2008 and 2013, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre — roughly three times as many as were forced from their homes by conflict and violence.

BACKGROUND

Global climate events in prehistoric as well as events in more recent times have also led to general migrations and population pressures. While climate variability has created disaster or near-disaster situations such as drought, disease, as well as other extreme events, these relatively short-lived events have a much lower capacity for disruption than the possibility of a climate regime change. Climate stress has also been linked to political unrest that has placed further pressure on vulnerable populations, often also resulting in mass migration.

Historians and policy researchers have speculated that past and current migrations have been induced by changes in climate. Migration incentives may be divided into two types: push and pull. On the one hand, pull factors include improved quality of life, as well as access to existing

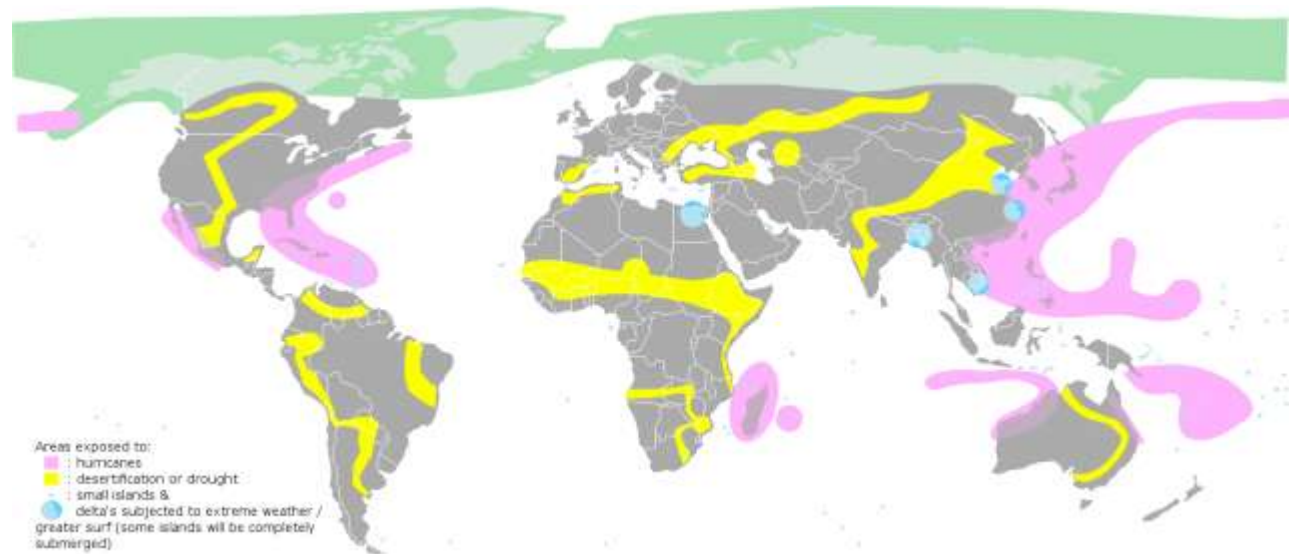
immigrant social networks within a country, and are more likely to induce middle-income migration which currently makes up a large proportion of migration to developed countries. On the other hand, push factors are the primary factors that involve climate-induced migrations.

Climate stress induced migrations have been theorised to result in violent conflict as migrants from less developed cultures have invaded more developed settled cultures, though whether the actual cause of migration and conflict are related to climate factors or more the result of political factors is in dispute. Contemporary research supports the idea that environmental degradation causes more internal conflict than international conflict.

In the past, highly developed and settled civilisations have been undermined by invading peoples who were very likely migrating in search of more productive lands after their native regions suffered from changes that decreased its carrying capacity.

When climate takes a change for the worse, the region where a developed civilisation resides is already supersaturated and has to cope with a falling carrying capacity. For a highly developed and adaptable civilisation, degrading environmental conditions may result in innovation. However, for less developed cultures, the pressures placed by a poor climate on crops may result in immigration. With climate change synchronised throughout large regions, internal and external pressures would lead to migrations as well as conflict and potential collapse of settled civilisations.

CURRENT SITUATION



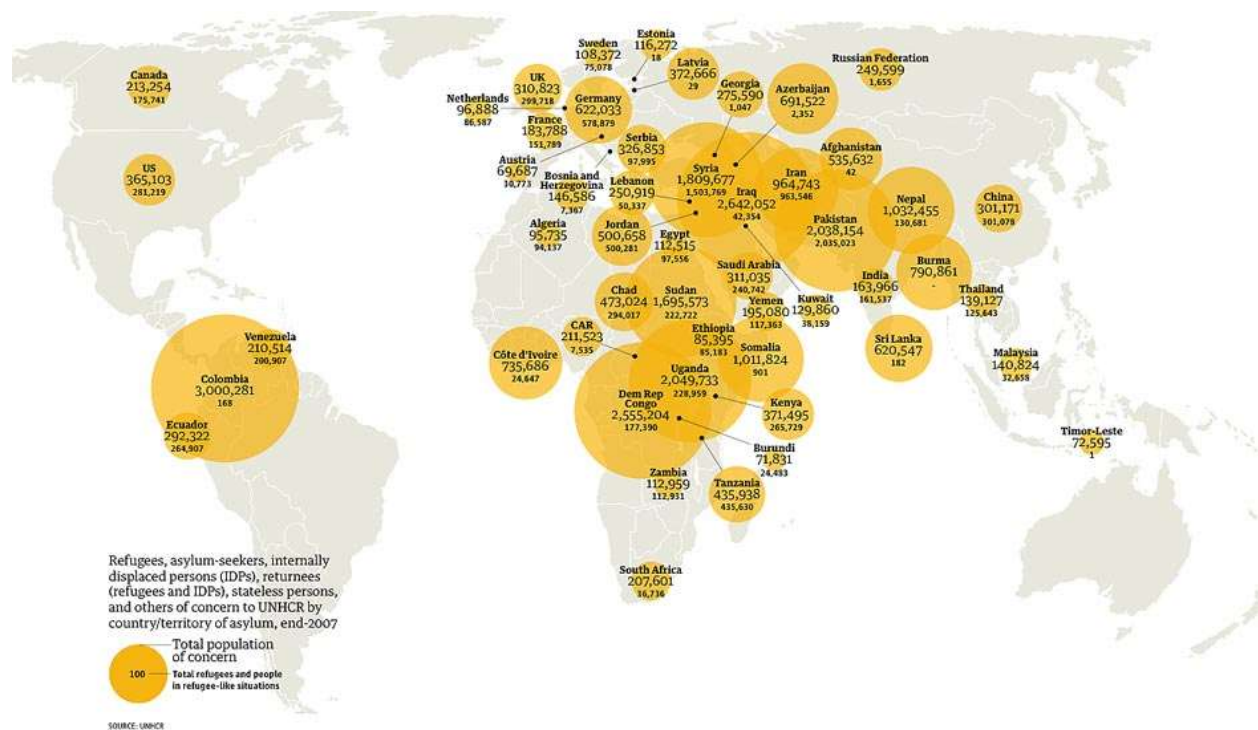
Despite the difficulty in determining exact numbers, the United Nations Environment Program concluded in a 2011 study on the Sahel, a semi-arid belt across northern Africa, that "migration occurs when livelihoods cannot be maintained, especially when agriculture or herding is severely affected by environmental degradation or extreme events."

Migrants and refugees across the world, driven by rapid-onset natural disasters or by a complex combination of the more slow-moving effects of a changing climate, are already putting immense strain on the countries and cities they end up in. A lot of the time locals aren't happy to see them, and many governments have been caught unprepared and unwilling to take them in.

The unfolding refugee crisis in Europe and the Middle East has left many people asking whether the situation is related to climate change somehow or no. **The Syrian refugee crisis now simply cannot be blamed on to the changes in the climate but the fact that the conflict which began due to political unrest in the country initially started from the drought, which hit most parts of the country, just before the 2011 uprising.** Now the sole reason for the crisis may not be the climate change itself but it did play an important role as far as shaping up today's picture is concerned.

CHALLENGES

Conflicts fuelled by climate change:



The climate change problem continues to flourish, and there is now no country exempt from registering and experiencing its effects. The economic, environmental, social, and political implications of climatic change are widely recognised and documented, providing a basis for the negotiation of national, regional, and global mitigation efforts

The notion of human displacement occurring as a result of climate change is a comparatively recent conceptualisation vis-à-vis the more traditional ideas associated with refugees, such as

persecution based on race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group or political opinion.¹ Nevertheless, the essence of the idea remains the same: the forced relocation of individuals due to external (and largely unmanageable) factors.

There are a number of different ways in which refugees can be created by climate change. First, and perhaps most conspicuous, is the displacement of persons due to changing sea levels. The changes in the climate not only pose a threat to the refugees and people who are displaced internally, but also poses an immediate threat to countries like the small island states threatened by rising seas. Small Island countries like Kiribati, Tuvalu (one of the smallest countries in the world, after the Vatican, Monaco, and Nauru) and Fiji in the remote south Pacific. As per the scientists, Kiribati will be among the first countries to vanish beneath the rising ocean, possibly as soon as the end of this century.

However, the predicted rise in sea level does not only threaten small island states: many countries with low-lying coastal areas are similarly under serious threat. More than thirteen million people across five European countries could be affected due to flooding as a result of a one meter rise in sea level. Especially vulnerable are coastal regions in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Romania, Poland, and Denmark.

However, climate change displacement is not restricted only to coastal environments. The melting of glaciers in mountain regions results in huge unstable lakes that threaten the existence of communities living in lower valleys. The recent increase in the frequency of glacial lake flooding, particularly in the Himalayan region, has been responsible for extensive fatalities, property damage, the destruction of forests, farms, and mountain infrastructure in downstream areas.

All of these factors are creating a new and increasingly prevalent refugee stream.

Based on a plausible range of emission scenario, current estimates suggest that anywhere between 50 million and 200 million people will be displaced by 2080, owing to the direct impacts of climate change (Nicholls 2004; but cf. Black 2001: 7–8). In this context, climate change displacement can be seen to represent a rapidly emerging problem for the international community.

CLAIMS BY MEDIA AND RESPONSE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

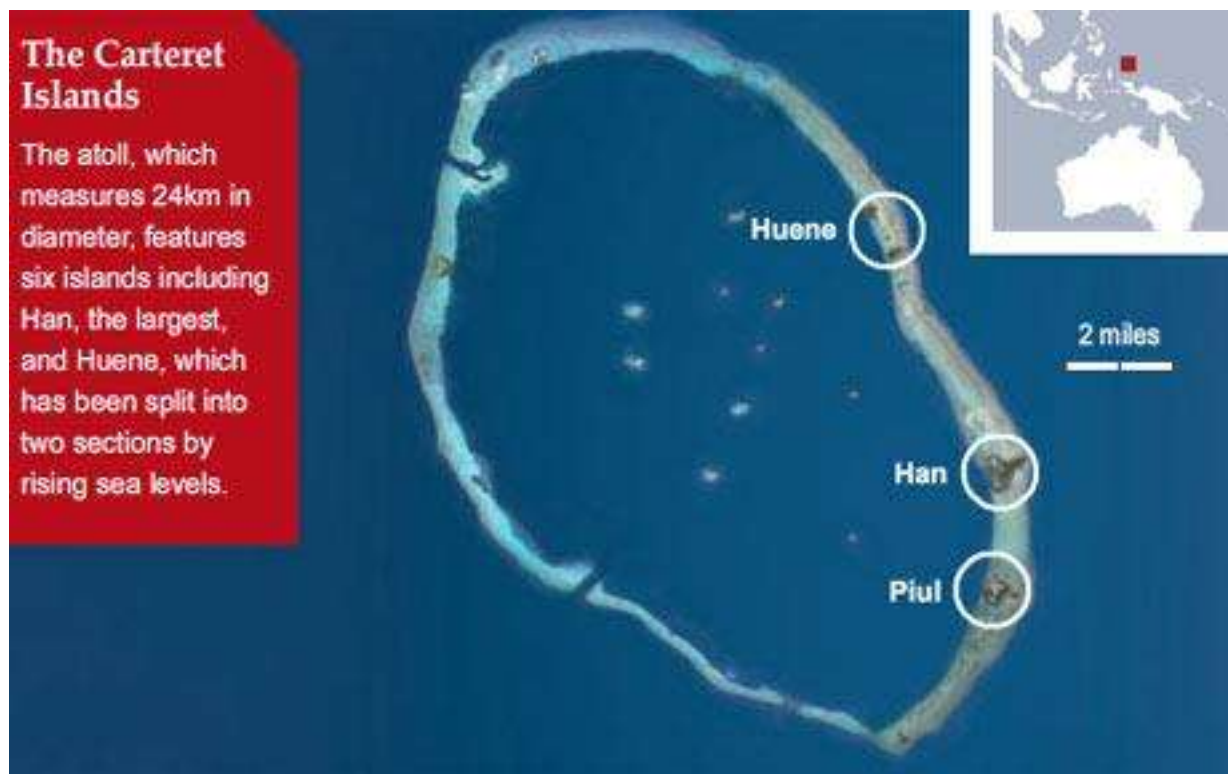
Germany and Brazil committed themselves to a joint stance on climate change, putting the largest economies in Europe and Latin America on the same page ahead of global climate talks in Paris in December.

"We agreed on common actions to deal with one of the most important challenges of the 21st Century," said Dilma Rousseff — Reuters.

Putting money behind its commitment, the German government announced 550 million euros (\$615.78 million) in financing for environmental and clean energy programs in Brazil. Germany's Development Ministry will provide Brazil 525 million euros (\$588 million) in loans to fund the development of renewable energy sources and to preserve tropical forests. — Reuters

Ioane Teitiota, a Kiribati national, lost his asylum appeal in New Zealand this past May in a case that would have made him the world's first-ever "climate change refugee." Mr. Teitiota moved there in 2007 with his family, claiming his island home was sinking and becoming too dangerous to live on. His lawyers argued that Mr. Teitiota was being "persecuted passively by the circumstances in which he's living, which the Kiribati Government has no ability to ameliorate." New Zealand's Court of Appeal ruled that while climate change is a major and growing concern for the international community, the phenomenon "and its effect on countries like Kiribati is not appropriately addressed under the Refugee Convention." — UN News Centre

The world's first climate change refugees:



INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The UN General Assembly's resolution 64/162 of December 2009 recognised natural disasters as a cause of internal displacement and raised concerns that climate change could exacerbate the impact of both sudden- and slow-onset disasters, such as flooding, mudslides, droughts, or violent storms.

In 2010, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change recognised that mobility – migration, displacement and planned relocations – is an important form of adaptation to climate change.

In its "Cancun Adaptation Framework," it invites all parties to go further in understanding, coordinating and cooperating on climate change-induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate, at national, regional and international levels.

ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE COUNCIL

The United Nations, being aware of the current situation pertaining to the refugee migration and the monumental task ahead of itself of ensuring the protection of people which have been forcibly uprooted, developed certain 'Guiding Principles on International Displacement'. The principles were developed over several years pursuant to the mandate in 1992 by the Commission on Human Rights and were reinforced by subsequent resolutions of both the commission and the General Assembly.

The UN also has a Non Binding Agreement on internal displacement from 1998 that includes provisions for people fleeing natural disasters, but it is not obligatory and includes no penalties for countries that ignore it. The portions addressing natural disasters focus on storms, not the more complex and slow-onset effects of climate change.

The consequences of climate change for the enjoyment of human rights have been considered and recognised by the UN on many occasions. The international community has also repeatedly called for human rights principles to be integrated into global climate change policy responses, in order to strengthen those responses and make them more reflective of, and accountable to, the needs of vulnerable people. Slowly but surely, and building on the Cancún Agreements, human rights are being mainstreamed into climate change negotiations, processes and policies.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

1. What attempts should be made by member nations to recognise and attribute legal status to the people displaced due to climate change 'environmental refugees' and secure their rights ?
2. What kind of new initiatives should be drafted which allow people to move legally and safely after disasters – including disasters that are linked to climate change.

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AGENDA 2:

MEASURES TO PROTECT RIGHTS OF MINORITIES, SUCH AS KURDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Introduction

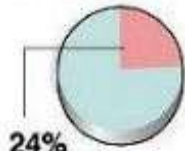
The regions of Middle East and North Africa are today home to numerous long established ethnic minorities including; Assyrians, Azeris, Crimean Tatars, Kurds, Berbers and Nubians, the inhabitants of which have been divided in a manner roughly corresponding to the principal geographic regions.

The rights and treatment of ethnic minorities are important cross cultural, moral, demographic and political issues. The presence of a large number of ethnic minorities in the post-colonial states in the regions of middle east and their status is an issue which is has been well addressed in recent years but continues to be the one with minimal solution at all.



Turkey

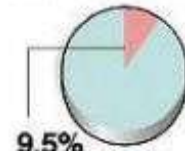
Kurds: 15.4 million



24%
of Turkey's pop.

Syria

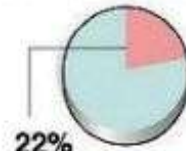
Kurds: 1.3 mil.



9.5%
of Syria's pop.

Iraq

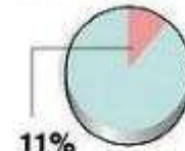
Kurds: 4.3 mil.



22%
of Iraq's pop.

Iran

Kurds: 6.8 mil.



11%
of Iran's pop.

SOURCE: M.R. Izedy, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*

www.AP.org

Background

The Kurds are one of the indigenous peoples of the Middle East and the region's fourth-largest ethnic group. They speak Kurdish, an Indo-European language, and are predominantly Sunni Muslims. Historians generally agree to consider them as belonging to the Iranian branch of the large family of Indo-European races. In prehistoric times, kingdoms called Mitanni, Kassites and Medes reigned these mountainous areas, situated between the Iranian plateau and the Euphrates. Having put up fierce resistance to the Arab-Muslim invasions, the Kurds ended up joining Islam, without, as a result, becoming Arabized. This resistance continued for about a century. The Kurdish tribes resisted the Arab tribes for social rather than religious reasons.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the 1920 Treaty of Sevres promised the Kurds an independent state. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne superseded that promise and the Kurdish people were divided between four countries without being legally incorporated.

Now the majority of the Kurds live in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria as dominated minorities. Statelessness and lack of recognition of Kurdish rights have caused domestic instability in all the mentioned states. The absence of political consensus has also led to conflicts in the region.

REGION AND ITS CURRENT SITUATION :

Geography :



Kurdistan ('Land of Kurds') is a strategically located region of the Middle East, comprising important parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. There has never been a state of that name. In the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdistan denoted only a part of the territory occupied by the Kurds (the province of Diyarbakir). Even Iran has a province called 'Kordestan' which is comprises of a third of it's Kurdish-Inhabited territories.

Geopolitical Situation and Relations:

The Ottoman and the Persian Empires were the two main empires that emerged around this region and have greatly influenced the people and the state of affairs in this region. Surprisingly, none of the above mentioned empires could maintain sovereignty in more than one part of Kurdistan that led to the political division of this region. These interstate boundaries cut Kurdistan into four major parts that can be referred to as Iranian, Syrian, Persian and Turkish Kurdistan.

Another border that does not cut the region but touches it is that of former USSR. The proximity of this border to the Soviet Union made Kurdistan an object of concern for the Soviet leaders and the capitalist world. A country, which does not have any shared border with this region but has obvious and great interest, is that of Israel, which was an ally during times of Kurdish-Arab confrontations.

Syrian crisis displacement

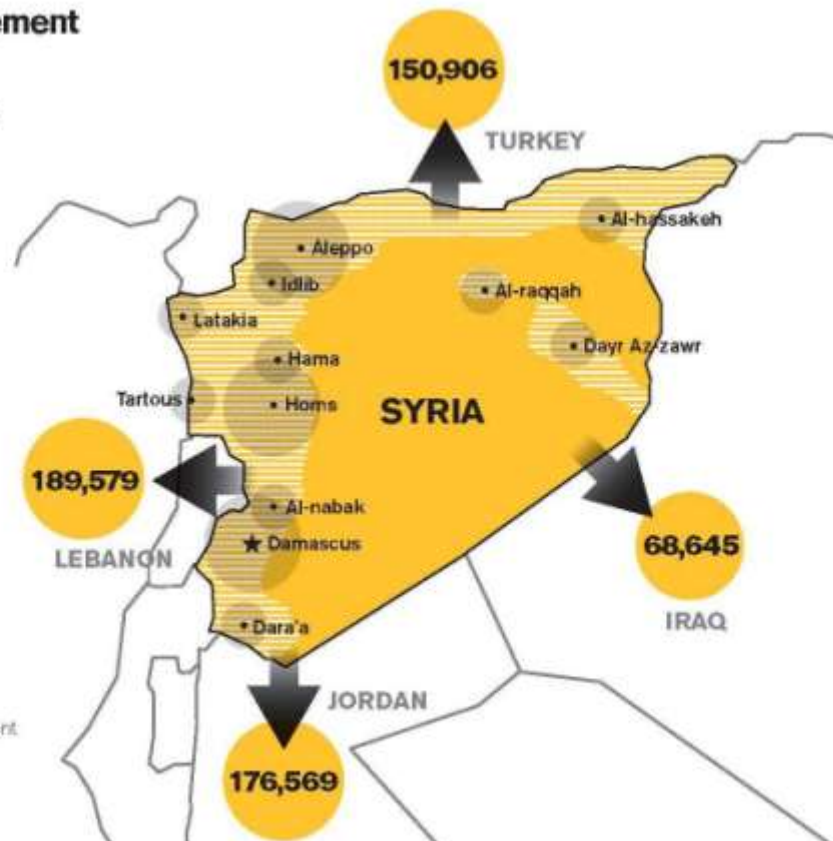
2,000,000+
INTERNALLY
DISPLACED

603,867+
REFUGEES*

*Map does not include 18,168 Syrian refugees who have fled to Egypt and north Africa.

CITIES WITH THE MOST DISPLACED

- 20,000–100,000 IDPs
- 100,000+ IDPs
- Size of Syrian refugee population, registered and awaiting registration
- ▨ Areas of conflict & displacement



Sources: Displaced, IDMC; Refugee Numbers, UNHCR; Conflict areas, HII. As of January 7, 2013.

Current Situation

As far as relations with Iraq are concerned, the Iraqi Govt. before the exponential growth of ISIS on their soil, deliberately stopped sending any kind of supplies, primarily oil, let alone help in the region of Kurdistan. The earlier promised supplies of a part of the Iraqi budget (as salaries to the Kurdish workers) was stopped long ago however the Iraqi Govt continues to send salaries to those parts of the country which have been taken over by ISIS. There is no mutual understanding on any issue between the Kurds and Baghdad. A full fledged war between Kurds and Shia militias supported by Baghdad and Tehran seems to be inevitable if the current state of affairs continue to exist. However now, with this huge growth of ISIS in the region , the Kurdish expectations are out of whack with the real dangers that the current crisis in Iraq poses for Kurdistan. The single most important asset that set Kurdistan apart from other parts of Iraq was not oil, but security. Kurdistan now faces a dangerous situation: ISIS has gained significant ground on two of its borders, with Iraq and with Syria and has targeted Kurdish populations in both countries.

Although ISIS has for now largely set its sights on Baghdad, where a bloody sectarian war with Arab Shiites looms, ISIS and its partners have targeted Kurds in the past. Indeed, a week before the takeover of Mosul, the group attacked a Kurdish political party office in Diyala, killing 18 people.

Relations with the Turkish Government and the PKK

Turkey's assaults on the PKK have so far been much heavier than its strikes against Islamic State, fuelling Kurdish suspicions that its real agenda is keeping Kurdish political and territorial ambitions in check, something the government denies.

On July 20, an ISIS suicide bomb ripped through the Turkish town of Suruç, killing 32 people. The victims were supporters of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the Kurdish separatist party based in Turkey and affiliated with the People's Protection Units (YPG), the Kurdish group currently battling ISIS in Syria. After the Suruç attack, some Turks blamed the AKP government for not protecting the country against terrorism, while Turkish Kurds have accused the government of being complicit in the attacks. The Kurds feel that Erdogan's Government tolerated the attack because ISIS militants threaten Syria's Bashar-Al-Assad, which is Turkey's enemy, and at the same time prevent Kurds from making any significant ground in Syria and eventually help them to create a larger homeland in the region.

CHALLENGES

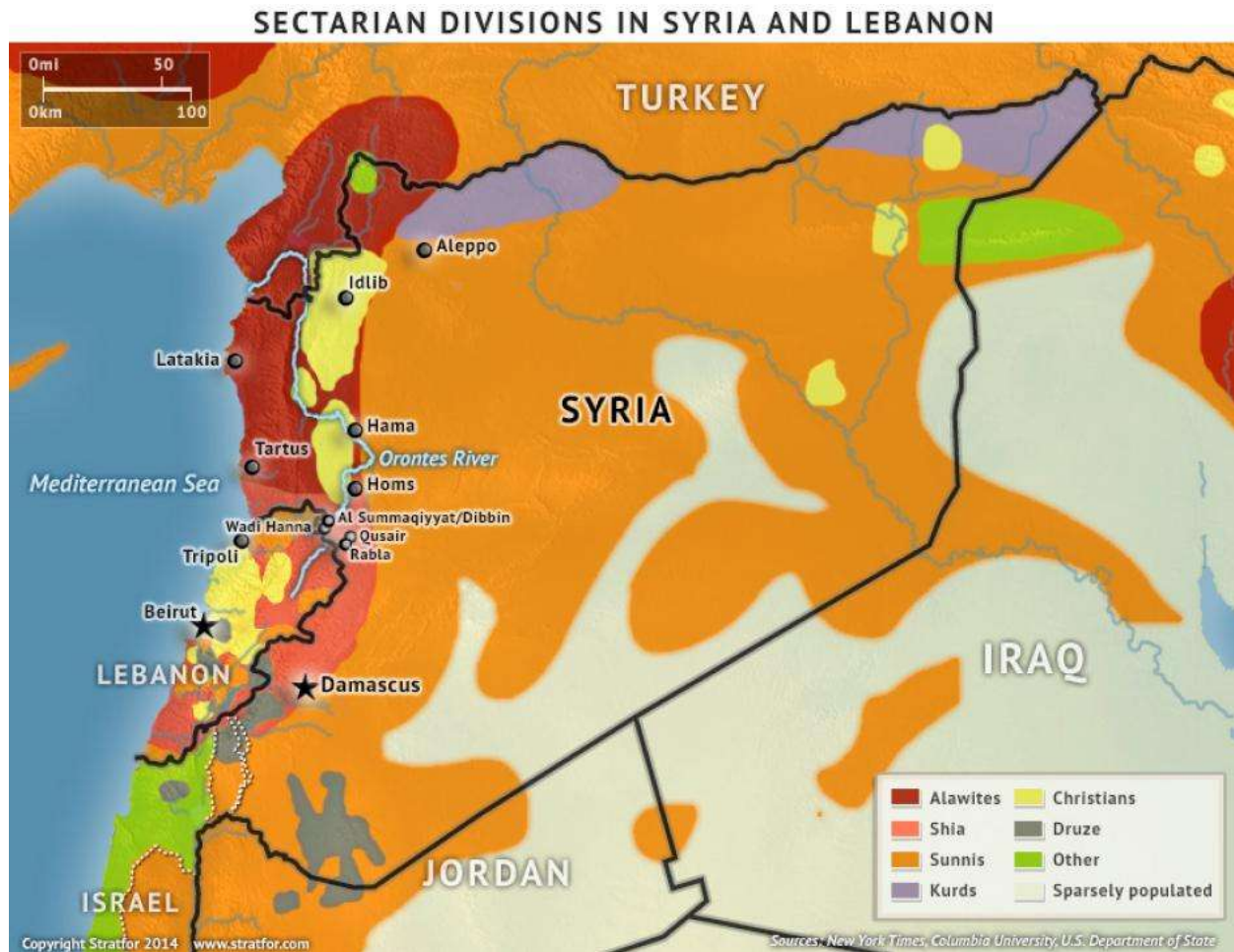
The idea that the Kurds benefit from an unstable Iraq doesn't hold water. Yes, the Kurds have long yearned for an independent state. But the reality is that Kurdish people would have stood more to gain from remaining part of a stable Iraq, within which they would enjoy a degree of political and economic autonomy and also earn a share of Iraq's national revenue, than forming their own state. The alternative – unstable neighbours overrun by a lawless, anti-liberal insurgency on two borders – threatens the region's hard-won successes.

Group Denial: Repression of Kurdish Political and Cultural rights in Syria:

In March 2004, Syria's Kurds held large-scale demonstrations, some violent, in a number of towns and villages throughout northern Syria, to protest their treatment by the Syrian authorities—the first time they had held such massive demonstrations in the country. Ever since then, the Kurdish people in Syria have been, on repeated occasions, denied of their rights including those of self-expression and cultural celebrations.

This repression has been a part of the Syrian government's broader suppression of any form of political dissent by any of the country's citizens, but it also presents certain distinguishing features such as the repression of cultural gatherings because the government perceives Kurdish identity as a threat, as well as the sheer number of Kurdish arrests.

There have been several cases where Kurdish political activists have been detained, without a warrant, just because they do not have the rights to express their views. While some of the activists were detained for a few hours, a large chunk of the one's detained were further prosecuted in front of military courts and sentenced to prison terms. It seems that there used to be a red line on detaining known Kurdish political leaders and those who wanted to rise and protest, but since 2004, there has been none.



Marginalisation under the name of the ‘Arab Belt’:

The exclusion of Kurds from the regions of Syria and parts of Turkey were started with the rise of the Ba’ath party and their ideology of the ‘Arab Belt’.

The Ba’ath party came to power in 1963 and continued the policy of denying Kurdish identity under the guise of promoting Arab nationalism. A key component of this policy was to encourage Arabs to resettle in areas where Kurds traditionally lived and to create an “Arab belt” that would separate Syria’s Kurds from the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq, who had started experiencing a national reawakening.

Denial of Identity to the Kurds till date :

In 1991, a 30-year-old woman was sworn in as a parliamentarian in Turkey's national assembly. After reciting the oath of allegiance, she added a sentence in her own language. As a result, she was removed from the building, stripped of her parliamentary immunity and sentenced to 15 years in prison. Her name was Leyla Zana, Turkey's first Kurdish female MP.

She served 10 years of her prison sentence and, last Saturday, Zana – now a diminutive 50-year-old woman – entered Turkey's grand national assembly as a Kurdish MP again. During the time she was in prison, not much had changed for those trying to represent Kurds in Turkey. Even today, teaching of the Kurdish language in primary and secondary schools is not allowed.

The current state of Kurds in Turkey is even worse than what it was when Leyla Zana took charge of the office. The Kurdish Peace and Democratic Party (BDP) produced an eight-point roadmap that centred around the democratic rights of Kurdish people, including the cultural, linguistic and civil and political rights that the Kurdish population of Turkey need to become equal citizens of the state. The

The denial of Kurdish identity through assimilation and continued repression of successive Turkish governments lies at the heart of the Kurdish question, which has gone unresolved for more than 90 years.

In parallel, successive governments focused on repressing Kurdish identity, through restricting the use of the Kurdish language in public, in schools, and in the workplace, banning Kurdish-language publications, and prohibiting celebrations of Kurdish festivities, such as Nowruz, the traditional Kurdish New Year.

Restrictions on the Kurdish language—which continue to this day—stand in contrast to Syria's treatment of its other non-Arab minorities, such as the Armenians and Assyrians, who are allowed to have private schools, clubs, and cultural associations, where their respective languages are taught.

CLAIMS BY MEDIA / RUMOURED INCIDENTS

A growing number of “*peshmerga*” soldiers have died in fighting with ISIS in northern Diyala and southern Kirkuk, where the territorial lines between ISIS and the *peshmerga* are yet to be decided. These deaths are a reminder that ISIS and groups that they cooperate with may turn their attention back on Kurds.

Although ISIS has for now largely set its sights on Baghdad, where a bloody sectarian war with Arab Shiites looms, ISIS and its partners have targeted Kurds in the past. Indeed, a week before the takeover of Mosul the group attacked a Kurdish political party office in Diyala, killing 18 people. Commentators have also claimed, preemptively, that Kirkuk has been “resolved overnight”. Yet Kirkuk is a complex problem, and its rival communities that claim historical rights to the province will not give it up without a fight. — The Wall Street Journal

The leader of Turkey's pro-Kurdish opposition accused President Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday of launching air strikes in Syria and Iraq to prevent Kurdish territorial and political gains, and of using the war against Islamic State as a cover.

Turkey launched near-simultaneous air strikes on Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) camps in northern Iraq and Islamic State fighters in Syria last Friday, in what Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has called a “synchronized fight against terror”. — Reuters

In an interview with Reuters, Selahattin Demirtas, leader of Turkey's pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), said the main aim of the campaign was not to combat Islamist jihadists but to prevent Kurds from unifying areas they control in Syria. — Reuters

Turkey's Case :

Ankara is alarmed by the progress Kurdish fighters in Syria are making against ISIS and Assad, which they fear will only stoke the independence dreams of Turkish Kurds. In response to the Suruç bombing, Turkish police launched security raids across the country, rounding up more than 1,300 suspects in a matter of days. But the number of PKK militants detained outnumber ISIS affiliates more than 6 to 1. Between July 23 and July 26, 75 Turkish jets flew 155 sorties against 400 or so PKK targets. Number of ISIS targets hit? Three.

Officially joining the war against ISIS will give Turkey the cover it needs to bomb the Kurdish separatists carving out territories along the Turkish border. And it seems Washington is willing to ignore attacks on Kurds in exchange for US access to the Incirlik airbase, useful for bombing ISIS inside Iraq.

ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE COUNCIL

The UN is supporting the Iraqi government and the KRG in delivering emergency aid and is scaling up its efforts to meet the needs of the displaced throughout Iraq.

Statement :

"This is a challenging operation and the United Nations, and its NGO partners, are fully committed to meeting that challenge. Thousands of tons of relief supplies have already been delivered and hundreds of staff deployed. The humanitarian response is difficult due to security concerns and the massive and rapid influx of displaced but our efforts have been greatly aided by the splendid cooperation and leadership of the KRG and the many residents who have taken in displaced families by the tens of thousands. This displaced crisis is as complex as the displacement that occurred in 1991 and it will require a sustained sense of urgency by all authorities and the international community to organize and deliver the large scale assistance that is needed," said Kevin Kennedy, the United Nations Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq.

CASE STUDY

The Kurdish town of Cizre, a settlement with a population of approximately 150 thousand souls in Southeastern Turkey, is now under siege by the Turkish armed forces and the so-called "special operation force" of the police for a second time, after a previous one-week long siege was lifted for an interlude of two days. Around-the-clock curfew is accompanied by power cuts and the interruption of all means of communication including mobile telephones and the Internet. The evidence that came out when the first round of siege was lifted attests to a terrible human drama.

Over 30 civilians are dead, ranging from a 35-day old infant to a 75-year old man. Before the siege was lifted, government sources claimed that security forces had killed more than a dozen

fighters of the Kurdistan's Workers Party (PKK), the Kurdish guerrilla army, denying any civilian deaths. How the baby and the old man could have contributed to the fight of the PKK remains a *mystery unexplored by government spokespeople after the facts have come to light*.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER :

1. What should be the concept behind setting up of a Kurdish Regional Government and how will it be able to survive and be supported in the international arena
2. How can we challenge the existing attitudes which promote ideas such as 'Pan-Arabism' and discourage the existence of people belonging to different ethnicities on the same soil.
3. What legislation has your country passed to protect the rights of people belonging to different ethnic groups and why or why not was it successful?

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