

# THE DOM

## The “OTHER” Asylum Seekers from Syria

Discrimination, Isolation and Social Exclusion:  
Syrian Dom Asylum Seekers in the Crossfire



“The Rights of Dom and Other Related Minorities from Syria Seeking Asylum  
in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey Project” Preliminary Report



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## Middle East Gypsies

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# Abbreviations

AFAD	Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency
BM	United Nations
BMEHS	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
BMMYK	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
BMSS	Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
ÇHS	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ERTF	Council of Europe Roma and Travelers' Fund
ESKHS	UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
GİGM	Directorate Generals of Migration Management
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HYD	Helsinki Citizens' Association
IAOKS	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ILO	International Labour Organization
STK	Non-Governmental Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

# Contents

1	INTRODUCTION .....	6
2	THE METHOD AND FIELD OF RESEARCH .....	10
3	DOM SOCIETY in MIDDLE EAST: A HISTORICAL EVALUATION .....	15
	Dom Society in Syria .....	18
	Nawar (Gypsy) Communities in Syria .....	20
	Dom Society in Turkey .....	22
	Dom Society in Lebanon.....	25
	Dom Society in Jordan.....	26
4	SYRIAN DOM REFUGEES.....	28
	Current Situation in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey .....	29
5	GENERAL PROBLEMS OF DOM REFUGEES .....	36
6	FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS .....	58
Annex-1	Interview Questions .....	61

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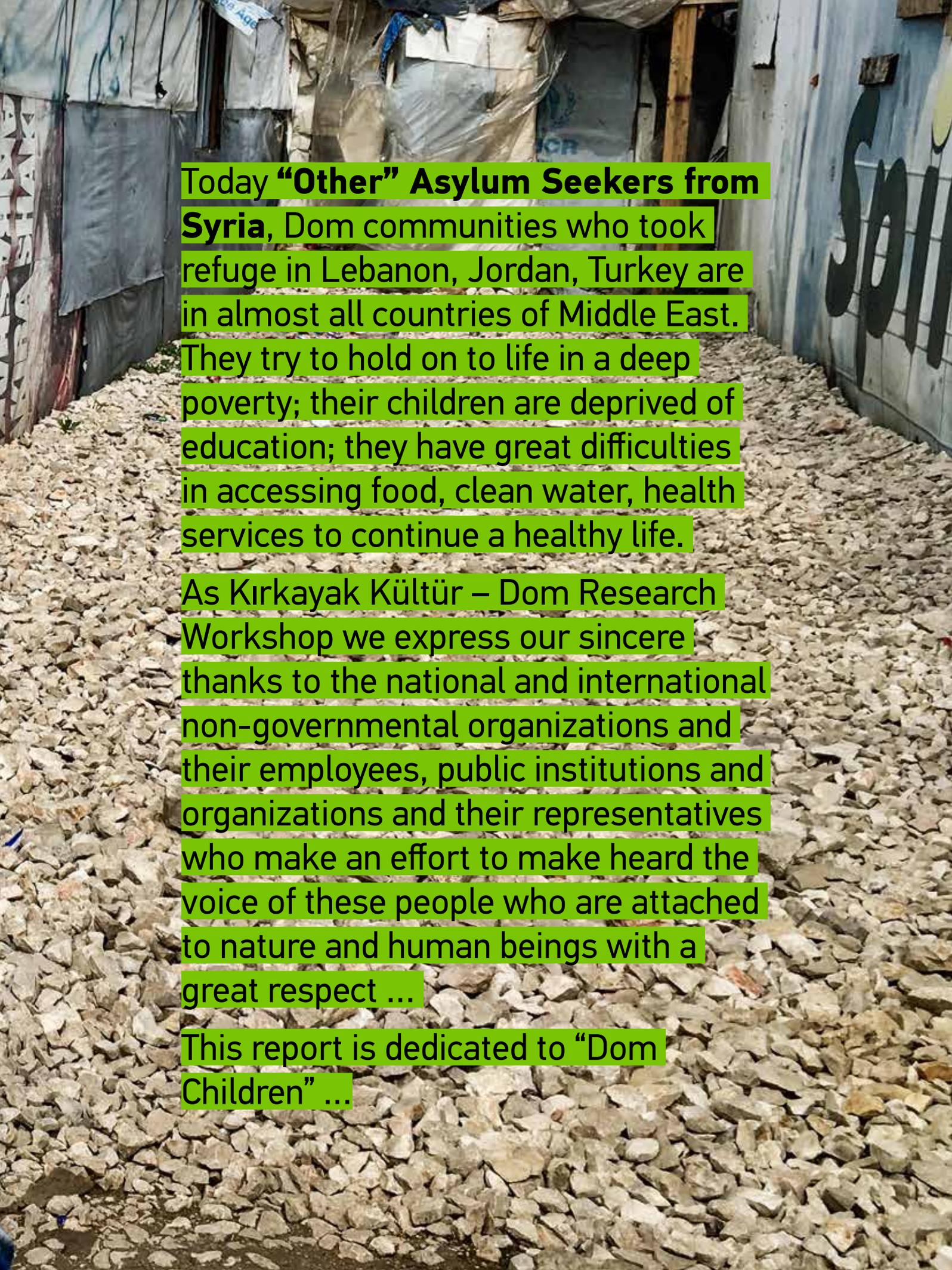
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A narrow alleyway in a makeshift settlement. The ground is covered in light-colored gravel. On the left, there are shanty buildings made of plastic and fabric. On the right, there is a blue corrugated metal wall with some graffiti. The text is overlaid on the image in a green box.

Today **“Other” Asylum Seekers from Syria**, Dom communities who took refuge in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey are in almost all countries of Middle East. They try to hold on to life in a deep poverty; their children are deprived of education; they have great difficulties in accessing food, clean water, health services to continue a healthy life.

As Kırkayak Kültür – Dom Research Workshop we express our sincere thanks to the national and international non-governmental organizations and their employees, public institutions and organizations and their representatives who make an effort to make heard the voice of these people who are attached to nature and human beings with a great respect ...

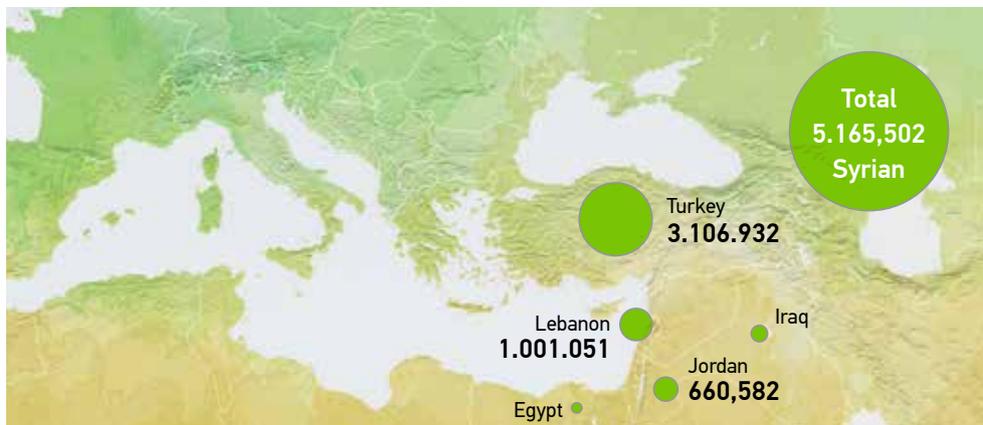
This report is dedicated to **“Dom Children” ...**

# INTRODUCTION ➔

1



The civil war and processes of conflict in Syria entered its 6th year during which almost 12 million Syrians had to leave their home while 5.165.502 people took refuge in nearby countries, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.<sup>1</sup> The number of Syrians took refuge in European countries exceeded 1 million. Day by day the political, economic and social impacts of Syrian civil war are getting intensified not only in Middle East but, Europe being in the first place, in many regions of the world. Especially the neighboring countries of Syria were confronted an intensive flow of refugees taking refuge in them by escaping from war.



Source: [data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#\\_ga=1.150812086.1634584225.1465540161](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#_ga=1.150812086.1634584225.1465540161)

According to the data of Migration Management and AFAD<sup>2</sup> in Turkey (21 July 2017) there are approximately 3 million Syrian refugees in Turkey. There are in total 234.967 refugees 227.999 of whom are Syrians and 6968 of whom are citizens of Iraq in 22 accommodation centers, namely the camps, established in 10 cities. In this case approximately the 8% of refugees living in Turkey reside in camps whereas the remaining 92% spread across in all cities.



<sup>1</sup> Syria Regional Refugee Response, UNHCR [data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#\\_ga=1.150812086.1634584225.1465540161](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#_ga=1.150812086.1634584225.1465540161)

<sup>2</sup> AFAD Disaster Report | Syria [www.afad.gov.tr/upload/Node/2374/files/Barinma\\_Merkezlerindeki\\_Son\\_Durum+5.pdf](http://www.afad.gov.tr/upload/Node/2374/files/Barinma_Merkezlerindeki_Son_Durum+5.pdf)  
[www.afad.gov.tr/upload/Node/2373/files/Suriyeli\\_Siginmacilara\\_Yapilan\\_Yardimlar+6.pdf](http://www.afad.gov.tr/upload/Node/2373/files/Suriyeli_Siginmacilara_Yapilan_Yardimlar+6.pdf)



Al-Qweismeh  
Amman / Jordan

The UNHCR data displays that the number of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon is 1.001.051. UNHCR suspended temporarily the new registration procedures as of 6 May 2015 in accordance with the instructions of Lebanon. Accordingly, the number of people in the waiting list of registration is not counted in this particular number.<sup>3</sup> According to some observers this number exceeds 1.5 million people by the arrivals after the mentioned date.

Especially when Lebanon is considered, the ratio of refugees to the population of the country of destination is considerably high. For instance in Lebanon Syrian refugees compose 25 per cent of the total population. As for Jordan, according to the data of UNHCR 660.582 Syrian refugees were registered.<sup>4</sup> The Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan has turned into a city where approximately 80 thousand refugees reside.

During the six year period, the main body of the Syrian refugees were spread across almost everywhere in the geography of the countries they live in. Despite the many lacks in legal status and rights, these people started to build new lives for themselves. The refugees extend the contact points with local populations they live together with.

<sup>3</sup> [data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122)

<sup>4</sup> [data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107)



Gypsies<sup>5</sup> have lived together with the other people in the long-established Middle Eastern geography. As a peri-patetic community they produced tools for the people they live together and became the bearer of their culture; they worked as traditional doctors and dentists, and offered various other services to them. They were excluded from people living in this geography, as they were in all over the world, and they were regarded as others. Despite all this exclusion Gypsies started to settle in Middle East during the last 50 years. They built humble houses in the margins of the cities they reside for centuries where they started to perform their craft and became semi-nomadic. However when the production was developed and transformed and mass production started, their products lost their value. Their crafts as local dentists, circumcisers and doctors were banned. This community whose crafts became valueless tried other professions however they were excluded from education and labor market since they are Gypsies and publicly ashamed and accused jobs were left for them. These communities started work in jobs such as waste collecting, refuse collecting and seasonal work. Especially for the last 20 years, after the invasion of Iraq by USA, the process of conflict that the Middle East entered started to force these communities to nomadic life once again.

All ethnic groups and religious minorities living in Syria are having "hard times" during the civil war. In Syria people who were subjected to the deadly violence of the regime and the jihadist groups had to take refuge in other countries with the hope of saving their lives. Even though they did not take a part in the conflict the Dom communities living in this country were especially exposed to violence and exclusion.

This unsteady process devastated especially the small ethnic groups, the others. These groups tried to stay neutral and remain distanced to conflicts so that they could avoid and refrain from the uncertainty of war, however the conflict and chaos became so escalated that even in the smallest conflict these groups became in the object of the common target. They had to abandon their homes and country because famine started and accommodation conditions of any kind were ruined, and their life safety could not be granted. The only way was to move and they started doing the best thing they know, being nomads. As the other hundreds of thousands of people, they crossed the border. Their worn out tents and a couple of pots and pans were enough for them to maintain their life. By collecting waste and refuse from garbage, by daily and seasonal work they try to provide for their children. They started wandering from city to city with the hope of earning their bread.

The present report is prepared as "Dom Refugees Situation Analysis Preliminary Report" written in the scope of the project "The Rights of Dom and Other Related Minorities from Syria Seeking Asylum in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey" conducted by Kırkayak Kültür. The purpose of the report is to identify the living conditions, types of their being exposed to exclusion and discrimination and other problems confronted by **The "Other" Asylum Seekers from Syria: The Dom.**

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<sup>5</sup> In this report the word "Gypsy" covers all the groups named Rom/ Roman, Lom, Dom, Abdal and others.

# THE METHOD AND FIELD OF RESEARCH ➔

2





The **"Dom Refugees Situation Analysis Preliminary Report"** is written to identify the living conditions, types of their being exposed to exclusion and discrimination and other problems confronted by Dom communities coming from Syria and taking shelter in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey in the scope of the project **"The Rights of Dom and Other Related Minorities from Syria Seeking Asylum in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey "** conducted by Kirkayak Kültür.

It is estimated that approximately 50 thousand Dom members have taken refuge in Turkey during the civil war and period of conflict in Syria. This community is exposed to the discrimination of public authorities, local population and other Syrian refugees due to their ethnic roots and life-style in addition to the general difficulties confronted and experienced by refugees coming from Syria. Since there are few studies on Dom migrants, displaying the difficulties confronted by these people and finding a solution becomes complicated. This research aims to fill the gap in this subject and to identify the current problems of these communities.

The object of this work is to make a current situation analysis involving a regional mapping at the end of the project through determining the living areas in the provinces where these communities reside in addition to identify the profile and basic needs of Dom society in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. During the field research the areas where Dom groups live in high numbers in these countries were determined according to the former researches.

The field was made in Turkey, in the provinces and districts of Gaziantep, Nurdağı, İslâhiye, Nizip, Kilis, Şanlıurfa, Birecik, İstanbul, Balat, Cibali, Tarlabası, Sultançiftliği, İzmir, Kadifekale, Basmahane, Adana, Ceyhan, Tufanbeyli, Mersin between the months of February and July. The interviews included face to face individual and focus group interviews with approximately 250 Syrian Dom community members. The interviews were made mainly with women, young people and children from the Dom community and the ideas of male adults were also given a place.

The field research made in Lebanon during March is composed of interviews with the target groups in the settlements in Beqaa Valley and in Deir Zanoun and Al Marj as the camp areas of Dom groups. Additionally in the Sabra-Hay el Gharbeh neighborhood house visits were made to the members of Dom groups and interviews were made. In Lebanon interviews were made especially with Syrian women and children both individually and through focus groups. During March approximately 200 members of Dom Society from Syria who took shelter in Lebanon were interviewed.

As for Jordan the project experts made interviews during April. In settlements such as Al-Qweismeh, Amman - Al Kweismeh, Mustanada, Dleel, Al Taliah, Irbid, Jarash, Mustanada, Mafraq, Al Zaqra, Dleel (Adduleyl) interviews were made Syrian Dom Groups. Individual and focus group interviews were made with approximately 250 people.

Throughout the field research approximately 700 women, girls, children and men from Dom society were interviewed individually and through 35 group interviews. (Appendix 1 Interview Questions). The interviews were made in Arabic, Kurdish and Turkish. The interviews were made by the research team composed of Kemal Vural Tarlan, an expert on Dom Studies and Hacer Foggo, an expert on Roma studies. The interviews were made by basing on the mentioned questionnaire, observation and in depth interviews and the background of the study is formed by these two researchers' previous experiences in this field, the interviews they made and their entire body of work made in this field throughout seven years. The relationship of researchers with Roma and Dom communities for over 15 years became an especially important factor to build trust during the research. Throughout the research the neighborhoods, spaces



Mafraq / Jordan

of migration, camp settlements of individuals from Dom society have been visited and interviews were made in houses and tents.

In this report the current situation analysis of Dom and related groups who were named also Dom, Gypsy, Nawar, Gajar, Zot, Abdal, Qurbat, Karaçi, Tanjirliyah, Haddadin etc. who took refuge in neighboring countries during the civil war started in Syria in 2011. Considering the interwoven relations of groups, that they live together and have lines of descent between each other, these groups are all named under the umbrella category of Dom. Abdal community called as Per-Dom (signifying a lower status) in spite of differences in language, religious beliefs and historical background is taken as well under the Dom umbrella since they are named as Nawar by both local public and people in Syria.

Even though this study is not the analysis of historical background, ethnic roots, language and socio-economic condition of Dom groups which is to be dealt within the scope of the principles of sociology, anthropology and history; a brief historical evaluation has been made basing on the fact that there are deeply rooted prejudices against Gypsy/Dom society in Middle Eastern societies. During the field research it is observed in the interviews made with individuals from non-governmental organizations that in addition to the anthropological and sociological researches there is also a need for studies related with the culture, history and art of Dom.

The problems confronted by Dom refugees/asylum seekers in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, the impact of inconveniences in accessing the rights, discrimination done by local society and public authorities, and the "Legislation on Migration" on the lives of these communities were examined and their current situation was analyzed.

# Definitions

*In this report all of the groups named as Nawar, Zott, Ghajar, Bareke, Gaodari, Krismal, Qarabana, Karaçi, Abdal, Aşiret, Qurbet, Mitrip, Gewende, Çingene/Gypsy, Dom, Tanjirliyah, Haddadin, Hacıye, Albanian, Halebi, Haramshe, Kaoli were described by the use of Dom Society considering that they all lived together in interwoven relations with line of descents. Abdal community (Abdals) called as Per-Dom (signifying a lower status) in spite of differences in language, religious beliefs and historical background is taken as well under the scope of Dom Community since they are named as Çingene/Gypsy, Nawar, Ghajar, Mitrip by local public. As for the concept of Gypsy, it is used as the extent in which Dom, Rom and Lom communities all remain under.*

*\*In this report Kirkayak Kültür due to its belief that all Syrians prima facie have the right to refugee protection (refugee from arrival) according to the international law and therefore define the Syrians in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, without considering their status in the related country's law, as refugee and asylum seeker as in the definitions in the international literature.*

## **Who is considered as a refugee?**

The concept of "refugee" in the international law refers to individuals who since they have "a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group" cannot return or do not want to return to their countries of citizenship.

## **Who is considered as an asylum seeker?**

Asylum seeker refers to individuals who seek international protection however whose status has not been officially determined yet. This term is usually refers to individuals who wait for the decision of the government or United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for their application regarding taking the status of refugee. Even though their status has not been

recognized yet, asylum seekers cannot be sent back to their countries by force and their rights are to be protected.

## **Who is considered as a migrant?**

Migrant includes individuals and their family members who migrate to a country both to improve their economic and social condition and to raise their and their families' expectations from future. Essentially, they can be described as individuals who leave their country due to reasons such as education and employment rather than reasons for a well-founded fear of persecution implemented by their country. Migrants start this journey of their own will to reach better living standards while they also continue to benefit from the protection of the country of their citizenship. Some of these journeys are regular by the use of legal documents such as passport and visa however some of them are made irregularly by inconsistent ways with the countries' legal systems.

Turkey accepted the 1951 Geneva Convention with "Geographical Limitation" by using the right of choice provided in terms of space in the 1st article. According to this, the right of being a "refugee" is given to foreigners who come from countries of Council of Europe and apply for the international protection of Turkey.

Individuals who due to events occurring outside of Europe with the claim of having the conditions in the definition of refugee apply for the international protection of Turkey to be resettled to a third country are called "conditional refugee".

For individuals who were forced to leave their country and cannot return back, who to find immediate and temporary protection arrived to the borders of the country or crossed the borders in masses whose individual international protection status determination procedure cannot be done the type of protection status provided is described as "temporary protection". Syrians living in Turkey are under the "temporary protection".\*

\* Migration Management International Protection Types / [www.goc.gov.tr/icerik/uluslararasi-koruma\\_409\\_546](http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik/uluslararasi-koruma_409_546)

# DOM SOCIETY in MIDDLE EAST: A Historical Evaluation ➔

3





The word “Çingene/Gypsy” is used all over the world to define a societal group. In different countries, geographies and languages this society is called as: Nawar, Zott, Ghajar, Bareke, Beni Murra, Gaodari, Krismal, Qarabana, Karaçi, Abdal, Aşiret, Qurbet, Mitrip, Gewende Çingene/Gypsy, Dom, Rom/Roma, Lom/Poşa, Abdal, Tanjirliyah, Haddadin, Hacıye, Albanian, Halebi, Haramshe and Kaoli. Even the names vary, Gypsy usually covers all of them. These names were often rooted in “tribal and professional names”, however some of them are used in a more general way. Generally these terms refer to a derogatory meaning. For instance the term “Nawar” is widespread in the Arab world.<sup>1</sup> This word is used as an insult. The word “Çingene” is a term used in Turkish as an insult. Persians use the work Koli in the same manner. Gypsy is by being beyond a name defining a society, is an “adjective” to devalue and marginalize this society.

The name Gypsy is used today for communities named also as Roma/Rom in Europe, “Dom” in Middle East and North Africa; and “Lom” in Armenia, Caucasus and Northern Anatolia.

It is thought in accordance with the assumptions recognized to a great extent that Gypsy is the name given by other nations to Dom communities (Indian migrants) meaning “human” in their home-country India, namely today’s India and Pakistan, who started the “great march” between 7th and 10th centuries due to various reasons (war, famine, etc.) and spread to the world for centuries.

**The Dom communities in our day** live in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates. Dom define themselves as citizens rather than being of Dom identity (therefore as Lebanese, Jordanian, Irani etc.) Even though their actual number is unknown it is estimated that there are approximately 5 million Dom populations in Middle Eastern countries.

The Dom community is a community speaking two-three different languages due to their migration to different countries. In addition to the language of the host country, they speak Domari, their Indian rooted language inside the family and community. Domari language still continues in a strong way through oral traditions. The term “Nawari” in Arab society in Middle East is used as the synonym of Domari. In addition to the Middle Eastern and North African countries, Domari is spoken also in Afghanistan, Russia and Uzbekistan.

The communities defined as gypsy are described as “peri-patetic” in anthropology. The term Peri-patetic refers to communities with a high level of spatial mobility who are confronted by rural, urban and pastoral societies during certain periods of time. These communities are known as nomadic craftsmen. They are usually described as “non-food-producing nomads” known as crafts such as musicians, basket makers, whitesmiths, hammersmiths, weavers, magicians, fortune tellers and animal tamers. They are defined as communities with a high level of spatial mobility having various ethnic origins, speaking different languages, having in-group marriages, producing-selling various products and earning their livelihood from providing different services. Communities who, producing tools by being in the first place, provide services to other hunter-gatherer, stock farmer or agricultural communities have always existed throughout the history of humanity. The relation between peri-patetic communities and the greater society they provide services for is described as a relation between two mutually dependent actors.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Williams, G. A., Dom of the Middle East  
www.domresearchcenter.com/journal/11/dom.html#Eleven

<sup>2</sup> Yılmaz, E., 2016. “Roman Tütün İşçileri” [Romani Tobacco Workers], *Ayrıntı Publications*.



Peri-patetic communities had to change their livelihood strategies with the development of capitalist relations and industry. The devaluation of traditional crafts directed the communities to different works. Dom can be seen among the workers who harvest the plants in the Jordan Valley as well as they are among the workers harvesting tobacco in the north of Jordan. In Turkey they work as seasonal agricultural workers and waste- refuse collectors. In the Beqaa Valley in Lebanon they work as agricultural workers In Middle Eastern countries they are musicians and dancers in the entertainment industry. In Syria they serve as whitesmiths. In some countries such as Iraq they maintain a nomadic life as musicians, jugglers and acrobats travelling from one village to another with donkeys and camel trains. There are also the ones quitting nomadism and settled to cities as well as the ones living in a semi-nomadic way. In Beirut, in the region known as Sabra and Shatila and Dom communities live together with Palestinians and other migrants. Here is a world made of houses built by rubbles, garbage heaps, ruined and damp cottages and thousands of electric cables covering the sky where only people at the bottom hold on to life without accessing employment, education and health services!..

A part of the community still maintains a nomadic life in Middle East. They spend some part of the year in the "Gypsy" neighborhoods and live the rest of the year in tents. On the streets of villages, towns and cities they name themselves as craftsmen, sellers, fortune tellers, dentists, cutlery, whitesmiths and dancers.

Some among who pass to settled life has the opportunity for a better education and steadier working conditions. However most of the Dom public cannot find a job because of their ethnic identity. Their children cannot benefit from education. Most of the time children try to provide economic support to their families by gathering donation on the streets and doing street trading.

In Middle- Eastern cultures the Dom society was deprived of political representation, access to employment opportunities and even access to citizenship rights in the countries they live because of their nomadic life style, Indo-Aryan ethnic origin and Domari language.

Especially the processes of conflict during the last 30 years, the environment political and social turmoil and violence after the political and physical destruction of Syria and Iraq led to a process of fraction in the Dom society.

Kilis / Turkey





Al Marj  
Bekaa / Lebanon

The Dom society living in the Middle East is composed of sub-tribes and divided into groups made of large families living together. These groups made of 5-15 families live a communal life. Even though they seem to live in independent tents or houses in the first sight, the tradition of co-habitation and sharing continues to a great extent. The leaders governing and directing the group are also responsible from the contacts with the external world. This communal life also protects this withdrawn society against external dangers. The ancient tradition is maintained by this way. The reason why there is almost no sense of private property, the in-group compensation of individual-familial lack and absence, the protection of especially women and children, the resistance to difficult living conditions, therefore briefly existing despite the social, economic system created by *gadjos*<sup>3</sup> and the resistance to assimilation throughout centuries results from this communal life.<sup>4</sup>

The disintegration of this unity during times of turmoil such as war and conflict leave these families and individuals who do not have the ability to live individually in the middle of a world that they do not know. Together with the disintegrated groups wound are opened in the community body and the individuals who to avoid unemployment, lack of shelter and famine have to integrate into a system they do not know remain face to face with risks and threats. Children selling things on streets, women gathering donation, men claiming “I’ll do any work” rapidly involve in crime or they are force to be involved. Dom communities, groups falling apart and divided families, all become defenseless against dangers.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Gadjo (Gaco); Not Gypsy; foreigner; outsider; used by Gypsies for the ones who are not from their community.*

<sup>4</sup> On the Road amid Poverty and Discrimination. Living at the Bottom. Dom Migrants From Syria [www.kalkinmaatolyesi.org/v2/en/publications/syrian-migrant-seasonal-agricultural-workers/dom-migrants-from-syria/](http://www.kalkinmaatolyesi.org/v2/en/publications/syrian-migrant-seasonal-agricultural-workers/dom-migrants-from-syria/)

<sup>5</sup> **Tarlan, K.V., 2016;** Deportation, *Isolation*, and Destruction: The Syrian Dom in The Crossfire, (Yayımlanmamış makale)



Deir Zanoun  
Bekaa /Lebanon

## Dom Society in Syria

The Dom society in Syria lived together with other people for centuries. The community composed of groups living a peri-patetic life provided services for the communities they live together with their traditional crafts such as musicianship, ironwork, traditional dentistry, woodworking, strainer making, basketry, metalwork, peddling and street selling. By the change and development in the production system these communities were directed to new professions such as seasonal agricultural work, waste and refuse collection or they changed and renew their traditional crafts. For example hammersmiths started to forge cold iron and produce doors, windows, arrows and construction forging. Musician groups started to take part in the entertainment industry and to take stage in wedding ceremonies and night clubs. Traditional dentists from Syria moved to the other countries of Middle East and continued their profession there. Peddler and hawker Dom community members used to carry on an important amount of trade by doing commercial travels between Gulf countries and Syria before the war.

A great part of the Dom society living in Syria had documents as Syrian citizens. The interviews made on this issue reveal that especially the communities who passed to settled life did not have problems regarding citizenship certificates and the children could receive primary education.

Part of the communities who live a nomadic or semi-nomadic life, especially for not to serve in the compulsory military service, led a life without certificates for years including lack of documents for individual identity information, passports and even birth certificates. Another reason for not being registered is the senselessness of borders in the Middle East for them where they live for centuries. The Dom live in the centuries-old Middle Eastern geography without borders and migrate from Iran to Egypt, from Anatolia to Gulf for centuries. They continued to migrate over borders of the states established during the last century. That

is why, during the fieldwork we met people who have all three of the Jordan, Lebanon and Syria identity cards. There were also individuals who were citizens of Syria but also have dual citizenship by having Lebanese or Jordanian passport or identity card. This situation is among the reasons preventing Dom from benefiting the aid distributions of local and international relief agencies. Together with the intensification of conflict in Syria these people and thousands of undocumented people were prevented from registering to international relief agencies with bureaucratic preclusions for reasons of not being "refugee" in the countries they took refuge. Today these people cannot benefit from the voucher and other distributions of relief agencies. Non-governmental organization workers do not see these people as "refugee or asylum seeker".

All ethnic groups and religious minorities living in Syria are having "hard times" during the civil war. In Syria people who were subjected to the deadly violence of the regime and the jihadist groups had to take refuge in other countries with the hope of saving their lives. Even though they did not take a part in the conflict the Dom communities living in this country were especially exposed to violence and exclusion. This ethnic group on the one hand ignored and excluded by the Baath regime and a great part of them were not given identity cards. On the other radical jihadist groups usurped their houses and goods and posed threats and from time to time implemented violence at the level of massacre claiming that "they are not Muslims enough". Therefore during the difficult conditions of the civil war they were sacrificed to avoid sharing the limited sources with an ethnic group who has never been considered as an essential part of the country.

The regime bombarded heavily many areas where this community settles on the grounds that the opponents take shelter there. For example places like Haydariye, a district in Aleppo where Gypsies historically live for centuries, were evacuated completely.

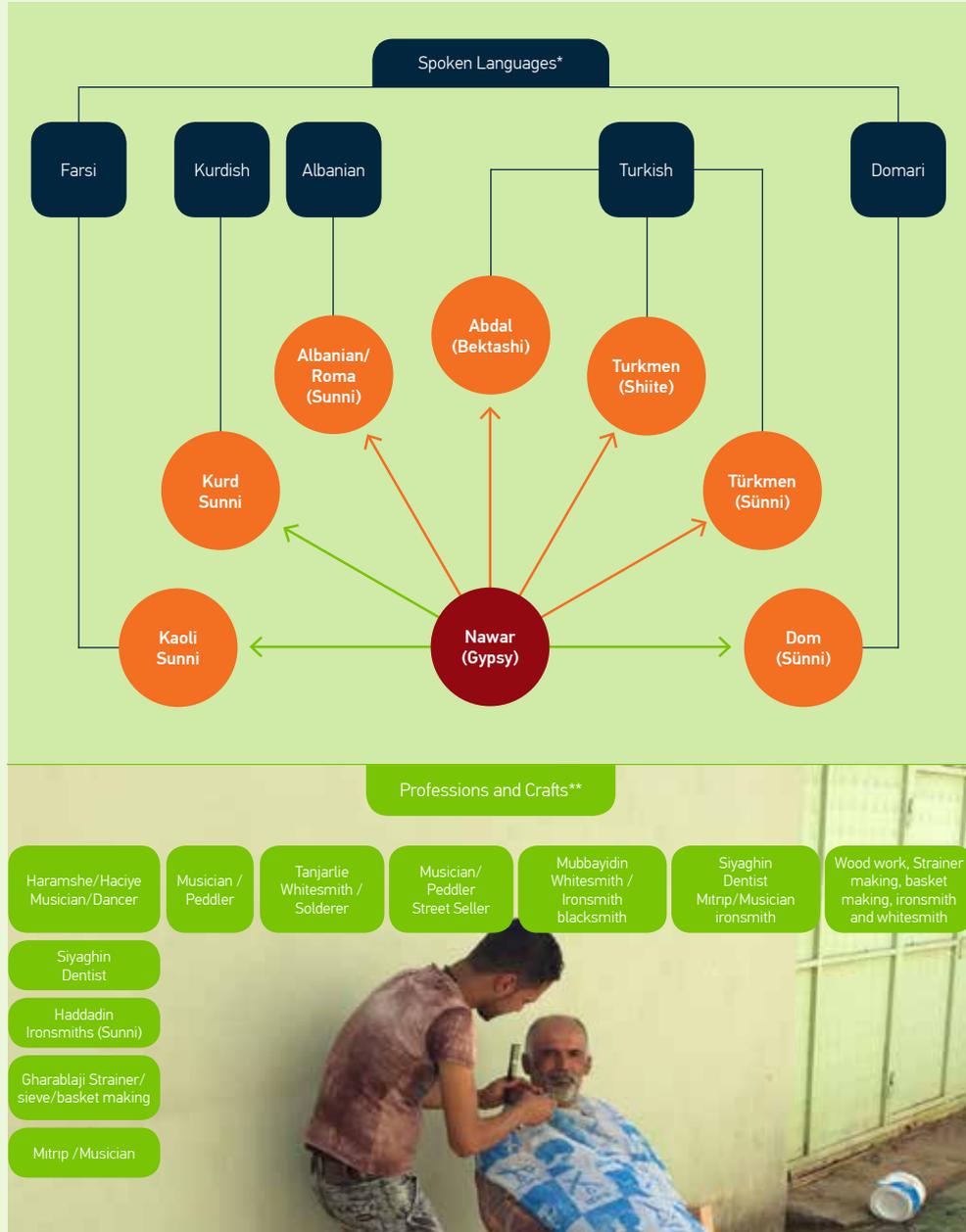
This unsteady process devastated especially the small ethnic groups, the others. These groups tried to stay neutral and remain distanced to conflicts so that they could avoid and refrain from the uncertainty of war, however the conflict and chaos became so escalated that even in the smallest conflict these groups became in the object of the common target. They had to abandon their homes and country because famine started and accommodation conditions of any kind were ruined, and their life safety could not be granted. The only way was to move and they started doing the best thing they know, being nomads. As the other hundreds of thousands of people, they crossed the border. Their worn out tents and a couple of pots and pans were enough for them to maintain their life. By collecting waste and refuse from garbage, by daily and seasonal work they try to provide for their children. They started wandering from city to city with the hope of earning their bread.

As for militia at war, they agree on one subject despite individual and political differences between them: There is no need for the Dom community in Iraq or in Syria. Dom communities in Iraq or in Syria are replaced on top of the list of "non-believers" by ISIS.<sup>6</sup> During the last 7 years Syrian Dom managed to take shelter in neighboring countries by overcoming radical militia and Syrian army. According to the leaders of Syrian Dom society and experts working on this subject and experts doing this research about 150 thousand Syrian Dom were spread to Turkey (50 thousand), Jordan (30 thousand), Lebanon (20 thousand), Iraq (20 thousand), in total to Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Palestine and European countries.

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<sup>6</sup> As conflict rages in Iraq and Syria, the 'hidden people' suffer in silence  
[www.thenational.ae/opinion/as-conflict-rages-in-iraq-and-syria-the-hidden-people-suffer-in-silence-1.278218](http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/as-conflict-rages-in-iraq-and-syria-the-hidden-people-suffer-in-silence-1.278218)

## Nawar (Gypsy) Communities in Syria



\* In Syria the Gypsy (Nawar) society is among the multi-lingual communities who speak the language of the people they live together (Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish, Farsi).

In the Table the spoken languages part indicate the third language these communities speak accept Arabic and their own language.

\*\* Some of the traditional professions and crafts of the communities are noted.

*This Table is the revised version of the table take place in the article under the title of "The Verious Components the Nawar People by Frank Meyer published in 'Biography and Identity in Damascus: A Syrian Nawar Chief' ( Customary Strangers: New Perspectives on Peripatetic People in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, edited by Joseph C. Berland and Apama Rao, Praeger Publishers, 2004)". The table is revised by Kemal Vural Tarlan in accordance with the interviews made with Syrian Gypsy community members and opinion leaders.*



Adana / Turkey

**Kaoli:** Kowli, In Iran, Gypsies are named as Kāboli (from Kabil) on the grounds that they come from Kabil, the capital of Afghanistan. The community is named as Abdal, Karachi, Gorbati as well in contemporary Iran. Gypsy communities in Iran Koli, Kowli) were spread over Iraq and Syria as well. While Kowli Gypsies generally speak Farsi and Arabic, they speak a second language called Darviši, Lutiuna between each other which is interwoven with Farsi. These communities make some tools such as strainer, metalwork, basket and comb by ironwork and woodwork. They also deal with performance arts such as musicians, acrobats, comedians.

Source: *Gypsies of Persia – Encyclopaedia Iranica* <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gypsy-i>

**Albanian / Roman:** One of the rare Rom, Roman Communities living in the Middle East. After the Balkan War, a part of the Romani groups who withdrew from the remaining lands of the Ottoman Empire may have migrated to Adana (There are still Albanian speaking Romani groups in Adana.) and Gaziantep. They remained in the Syria territory with the new borders of Turkey. Today, they identify themselves as Albanians. This society is among the peri-patetic Gypsy communities practicing ironwork, metalwork, blacksmithing, teapots and copper coffee pots.

**Turkmen/ Abdal Society:** There are three separate Abdal Societies living in Syria, speaking Turkish and identify themselves as Turkmen. The difference between them is religious. These communities belonging to Sunni, Shiite and Alevi/Bektashi religious groups are mostly musicians however they also work as peddler, carter, basket maker, hawker and street seller. Today they do mostly seasonal work, daily work and musicianship in weddings and parties. There is an Abdal community called Tanjarlie who deal with repair of kitchenware such as metalwork and tin solder, living in Syria as the Abdal group. The Teber language spoken by community is nearly forgotten.

Source: *Sarıkaya, M., Seyfili M., (2004). Kırşehir Abdal / Teber Dili ve Anadolu, Azerbaycan, Özbekistan Gizli Dilleriyle İlgisi. Türklük Bilimi Araştırmaları [Kırşehir Abdal/ Teber Language and Its Relation to Secret Languages of Anatolian Languages, Azeri and Uzbek], 15, 243 - 278.*

*Yıldırım, Faruk (2008). Teber Dili. Kültür Tarihimizde Gizli Diller ve Şifreler. [Teber Language. Secret Languages and Codes in our Cultural History] İstanbul: Picus. pp. 52-74.*

**Dom Communities:** The group who identify themselves as Dom is the most crowded Gypsy group. They speak commonly Domari language together with the languages of the other people they live with (Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish, Farsi) and since they have lived for long years with Kurdish society they call themselves as Kurd in some regions. Dom name the other Gypsy communities (Abdal/Albanian/Roman) as “Per--Dom”. This identification refers to a lower status than that of themselves but also signifies other groups as Gypsy as well. Dom also have caste classifications inside. Since in the tribal structure of Arabic, Turkmen, Kurd and Irani communities they live together performing entertainment music and playing musical instruments are disapproved, in Dom communities as well musicians have a lower status while dentists and local doctors have a higher status; in between there are craftsmen (metalsmith, ironsmith, basket maker etc.).





## Dom Society in Turkey

Due to the lack of official statistics and reliable estimated numbers country-wide, the total number of Gypsies (Dom, Lom and Rom or sub-groups such as Abdals) are not known. According to the Council of Europe the estimated numbers vary between 500.000 and 5 million.<sup>7</sup>

A great part of Gypsies live in the Western regions of Turkey whereas Dom and Lom groups mostly live in South-Eastern and Eastern regions. The Dom form a different linguistic group of Indian origin who speak Domari.<sup>8</sup> Today Dom societies mainly live in Middle East and North Africa. In Turkey Dom groups generally live in the South-East of the country. They are mostly composed of semi-nomadic or nomadic groups even though some of them passed to the settled life and their number exceeds 500 thousand. They are a multi-lingual community who in addition to their native language speaks the languages of people living in the areas they live (Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish). The Dom who dealt with crafts such as ironworking, metal-work, leather-work, basketry, dentistry, circumcision practice, musicianship, fortune telling for centuries today lost these professions since the lost their validity and they led to different professions. These communities who live a nomadic life to practice these professions passed to semi-nomadic life in the recent 50 years. This public who work for providing people with whom they live together their needs such as work tools or kitchenware could not maintain their crafts due to the increase in the population and development of industry and mass production. Today, they do seasonal agricultural work, waste-refuse collection and daily work in almost every region of Turkey.

Lom groups also differ from Rom and Dom from Turkey in terms of language but they are more close to Roma. It is also believed for Lom that they originate in India. These groups are seen in Eastern Black Sea region, Eastern and North Eastern Anatolia and Caucasus. Lom speak Lomavren language.<sup>9</sup>

Gypsies are considered as the lowest among the ethnic groups in Turkey and become subjected to discrimination as they are in the entire world. The life of this community gets more difficult day by day due to reasons of losing the crafts, discrimination against finding a job in modern enterprises, discrimination towards their children in education and exclusion. Together with the Turkey's process of candidacy to European Union it is aimed to strengthen Romani non-governmental organizations and create a Roma Rights policies. Relatedly, in spite of its lacks "Strategy Document for Roman Citizens"<sup>10</sup> has been published. The strategy document gathers all Gypsy communities (Dom, Lom, Rom) under the name Roma and does not include any strategy regarding Lom communities.

<sup>7</sup> You can consult the web page of Council of Europe for estimations regarding Romani population:<http://hub.coe.int/web/coe-portal/roma>.

<sup>8</sup> Adrian Marsh, "Türkiye Çingenelerinin Tarihi Hakkında" [A Brief History of Gypsies in Turkey], Biz Buradayız! Türkiye'de Romanlar, Ayrımcı Uygulamalar ve Hak Mücadelesi, [We Are Here! Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle for Rights of Roma in Turkey] compiled by Savelina Danova in (Istanbul: ERRC/hYd/EDROM, 2008); Check the web page of "Romani Project" for Domari language: [romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/atmanchester/projects/domari.shtml](http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/atmanchester/projects/domari.shtml).

<sup>9</sup> Türkiye'de Roman Toplumunu, Ali Mezarcioglu ile söyleşi, Ekopolitik içinde. Bkz. [www.ekopolitik.org/en/news.aspx?id=5859&pid=1850](http://www.ekopolitik.org/en/news.aspx?id=5859&pid=1850)

<sup>10</sup> "Roman Vatandaşlara Yönelik Strateji Belgesi" Resmî Gazete [www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/04/20160430-11.htm](http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/04/20160430-11.htm)



İzmir / Turkey



*The projects carried out under the name of "Urban Transformation" determine their primary goal in the new urbanization model as leading the societal groups regarded as marginal and other to the outskirts of the city. Gypsy neighborhoods which were previously in the urban fringe remained in the center with the urban growth and they became great urban rent areas. These projects lead to the destruction of Gypsy neighborhoods and forced displacement of neighborhood population. Some of the groups from these forcefully displaced communities start to return back to semi-nomadic life.*







Deir Zanoun  
Bekaa / Lebanon

## Dom Society in Lebanon

Dom communities are not homogenous even though they share a common history in Middle East. As they do in other countries, the communities in Lebanon display differences in terms of language and living conditions. Even though Dom communities in Lebanon live intensively in Sidon, Beirut, Tyre, Jubayl, Tripoli and Beqaa Valley, a lot of families spread to the entire country.

Lebanon is a central point or junction for Syria and other countries of Middle East. Even today Dom communities migrate to Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Palestine and other Gulf countries, there are still modern nomadic Dom groups who travel the “trade routes” without considering the national borders.

They live together with Palestinian refugees and Lebanese people who are living in poverty in tents and cottages in Beqaa Valley and in squatter areas in Beirut and other cities. To conceal their real identity they introduce themselves as Turkmens, Syrians and Arab-Bedouins. They struggle in the places they live with fundamental problems such as access to healthy accommodation, clean water, drain system, electricity, school and health services.

Even though there are Dom having a profession and working among the ones living in the city, most of them work as gathering donation on streets, playing drums, flute or other instruments in weddings and parties; telling fortune. Therefore they work in semi-daily labor. Dom children work to support their families economically by selling candies, nuts, chewing gums instead of going to schools. Despite the existence of non-governmental organizations making an effort for the education of these children, the government does not have an education program.<sup>11</sup>

Some Dom maintain their crafts by adjusting their profession to the requirements of our day.

Some men from the community produce a string instrument called Rababa composed of one string. Additionally producers of the wooden plates used to crush coffee beans, hammersmiths producing traditional Arabic daggers and traditional dentists still work actively. Musician groups still perform their art and while men play musical instruments women sing and dance. Some of them travel for commercial reasons to Gulf countries.

<sup>11</sup> CHILDREN LIVING AND WORKING ON THE STREETS IN LEBANON: PROFILE AND MAGNITUDE  
[www.unicef.org/lebanon/Final\\_Study\\_SBC\\_En.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/lebanon/Final_Study_SBC_En.pdf)  
The Dom People and their Children in Lebanon  
[www.insanassociation.org/en/images/The\\_Dom\\_People\\_and\\_their\\_Children\\_in\\_lebanon.pdf](http://www.insanassociation.org/en/images/The_Dom_People_and_their_Children_in_lebanon.pdf)



## Dom Society in Jordan

Studies regarding the Dom society in Jordan<sup>12</sup> reveal that the Dom society living here is composed of five large families among which Tamarzeh tribe is the biggest who categorize themselves as Jordanian Dom since they were living in the country before the establishment of the country. Other four tribes are Kaʿakov, Gaʿagreh, Balahayeh and Nawasfeh. Other communities forming Gypsy population are composed of the communities coming from Palestine (Western Bank and Gaza) and mainly communities from Iraq and Syria. Dom communities living in Jordan name themselves as Bani Murrah. Additionally Abdal communities migrate between countries such as Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq for hundreds of years. After the Syrian civil war tens of Abdal communities took shelter in Jordan. Jordan has previously received intense Dom migration flux just before the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Dom population in Jordan continues to be mobile since Jordan is the most stable country in the Region. While some of them move within the country borders through the Jordan Valley, some groups follow a longer migration route towards Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries.

Most of the nomadic or semi-nomadic families live in tents under very primitive living conditions without access to water or electricity. The society has major problems especially in accessing clean water. Rents given to the camp area, daily prices for drinking water, gas, electricity, health services and education of children become prominent as the basic problems of Dom Society.

As it is in the other Middle Eastern countries, in Jordan as well Gypsies are not accepted by Jordanian society because of reasons such as racist prejudices and lack of communication. The inefficacy of the programs developed by Jordanian government and civil society reinforce the racist prejudices that the Dom society is subjected to and lead them to hide their identities. Negative images overshadow the countless constructive contributions of the Dom society to the Jordanian society. The effects of societal isolation continue to be seen in hiding ethnic identities.

<sup>12</sup> Williams, G. A., The Current Situation of the Dom in Jordan  
[www.domresearchcenter.com/journal/18/jordan8.html](http://www.domresearchcenter.com/journal/18/jordan8.html)

Jarash / Jordan





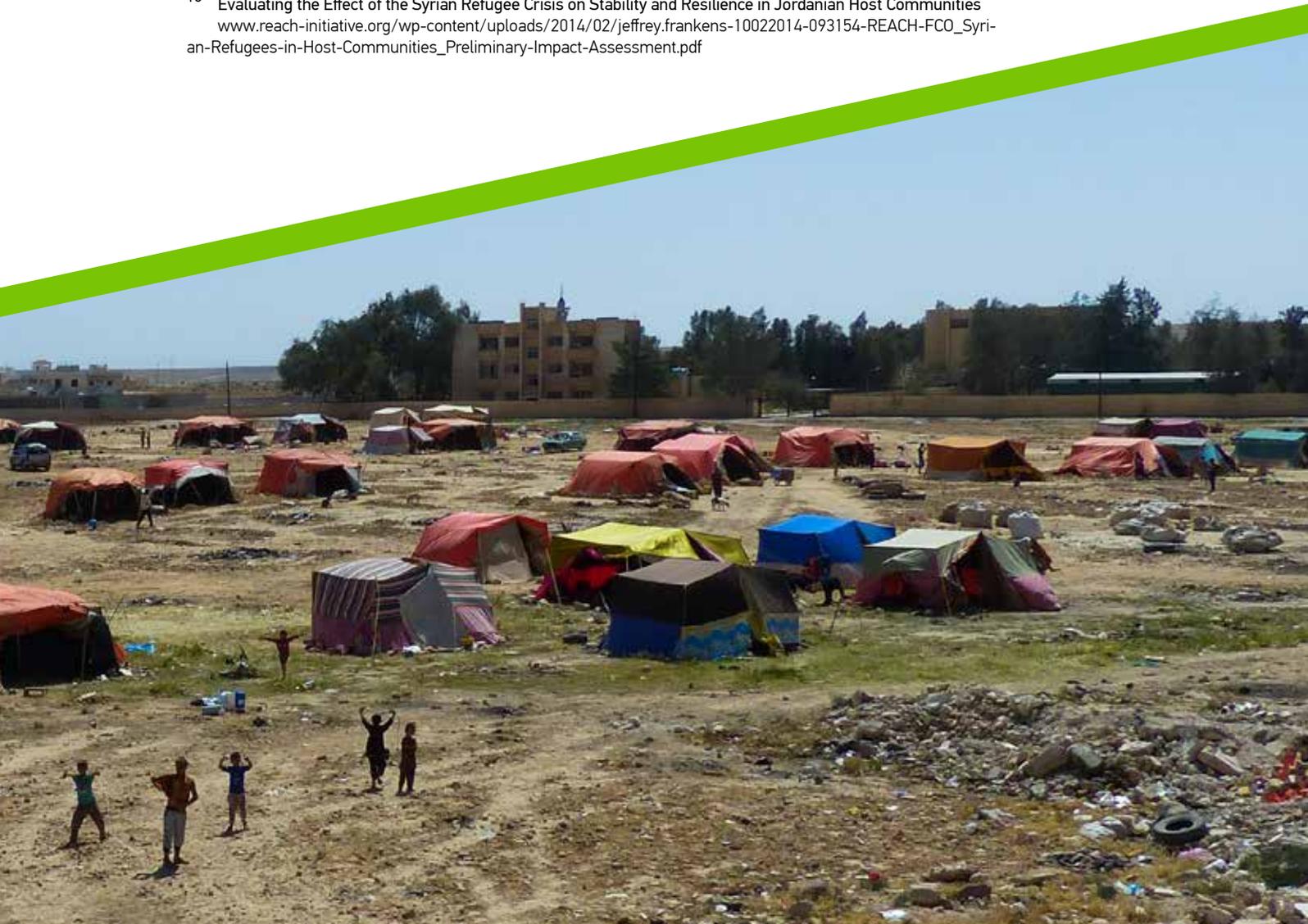
Despite all these negativities, it is seen that Dom started to proceed in employment market and in social relations. There are a lot of Dom working in educational institution, medical professions, journalism, attorneyship and a lot of other professions.

Problems related with Dom children's participation to education and continuity of their education still continues. Most of the boys keep on working in carpentry, repair and textile industry as apprentices. Girls get married in a young age (around the age of 15).

The ongoing crisis in Syria since December 2013 resulted with a migration flow of a great refugee body of over 567.000 people corresponding to 9% of the Jordanian population. Hundreds of thousands of refugees were directed to the camps in Jordan governed by UN in Amman and Jordan Valley in places composed of slums in desert suburbs. There are tens of temporary camps in this area.

Among these hundreds of thousands taking shelter in Jordan there are thousands of members of Syrian Dom society. They tell that they remained "unseen" by hiding their real identity and introducing themselves as Kurd, Turkmen or Sunni Bedouins. As told by Fathi Moussa, a Jordanian Dom leader,, Dom communities "suffer silently", the weeks and days of this society which one of the oldest communities in Syria and Iraq is coming to an end silently.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Evaluating the Effect of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Stability and Resilience in Jordanian Host Communities [www.reach-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/jeffrey.frankens-10022014-093154-REACH-FCO\\_Syrian-Refugees-in-Host-Communities\\_Preliminary-Impact-Assessment.pdf](http://www.reach-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/jeffrey.frankens-10022014-093154-REACH-FCO_Syrian-Refugees-in-Host-Communities_Preliminary-Impact-Assessment.pdf)



# SYRIAN DOM REFUGEES →

4





## Current Situation in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey

Today approximately 50 thousand Dom who took refuge in Turkey try to live in many cities of the country. Among the Syrian asylum seekers whose number exceeds 3 million they represent a very small ratio. This community does not want to live in camps. The "Circular on Beggars" dated 25 July 2014 issued by Turkish Government on the Syrian refugees results with discrimination and mal-treatment against Gypsy communities (Dom refugees). Since 3 years a lot of people sent to camps by being separated from their families in accordance with this circular. Dom refugees do not stay in refugee camps and they do not want to stay there.

The main reasons for that can be counted as follows: their being subjected to prejudiced behavior and discrimination by camp residents and authorities because of their ethnic roots; ethnic, religious or political polarizations in the camps; limitation of the freedom of movement of this mostly semi-nomadic community; strict control in entrance and exit; isolation and sense of confinement. For these reasons camps are out of a place of habitation for these communities who lived close to the nature throughout history.

As a result Dom refugees live in tent camps established by them, in humble tents, ruins and abandoned buildings. The ones who do not have a place to stay, sleep on the streets and parks yet a very small group live in houses rented by a couple of families united to live together. These houses are mostly in the neighborhoods of Gypsy communities. To meet the provisions of the mentioned circular tents are frequently taken down and burned. These groups who can hardly earn a living by daily work move a lot since they do not have money for paying rent. Because they are more exposed to pressure in smaller cities they tend to move to big cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir to get lost in the crowd.

The life-style of Dom refugees prevents a majority of them to be registered. GiGM who registers Syrian refugees in Turkey either cannot reach these communities or due to prejudices become reluctant for their registration. A lot of community members do not have the identification card given by registration centers. The community members explain this situation with unauthorized border crossings; lack of information or misinformation related with registration and avoidance of contact with authorities. On the other hand community members living in tents and ruins cannot take the required certificate of residence for registration. Even though some provide all these requirements they are still kept waiting without explaining the reason and some of them cannot even get the documents. Additionally since the identification documents are only valid in the cities of registration, they cannot be mobile again to find a job in another city and therefore they do not want to take the foreigner identification card. The ones who do not have this card cannot benefit from health services and aid distributions.

The request for help coming from NGO's and relief organizations are prevented by related authorities on the grounds that it encourages living on the streets.

Dom refugees living in broken-down tents, gathering donation on the streets or work remain face to face with arbitrary interventions of law enforcement forces and they become a target. Dom refugees who took refuge in Turkey experience major problems in finding a job. With the hope of finding a daily work they wander all they on the streets and they find mainly jobs like waste and refuse gathering and recycling which has long working hours and very



Al Kweismeh, Amman/Jordan





Bekaa, Lebanon



32

low wages. They are forced to work under conditions of exploitation. Women and children do either street trade (tissue papers, lighters etc.) or gather food or aid from streets.

Dom communities living in Syria, after the civil war, crossed the border and spread to many regions of Lebanon over Beqaa Valley. The regions they were settled are the areas where Dom communities live in Lebanon. For Syrian Dom communities, Lebanese land is a centuries old junction in the migration route. That is why they continued their relation with their relatives there all the time. Many of them continuously migrated between the two countries. During the interviews we met a lot of Dom who have the identity of both countries. It is observed that there are a lot of marriages especially between Syrian and Lebanese Dom and therefore there are transivities in terms of citizenship.

The Abdal communities<sup>1</sup> from Syria speaking Turkish and Arabic live in many regions of Lebanon. Even though they speak their language 'Teber' within the group, they introduce themselves as Turkmen to hide their Gypsy identity. They are very sensitive about their identity and they choose to hide both their ethnic identity and their religious belief (they belong to Alevi belief). They believe that they are excluded because of their identity. They all come from places around Sayyidah Zaynab shrine in Damascus. They were spread to Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon because of the war while some remained in Syria. Some of them who went to Turkey come to Lebanon over Syria to their relatives. During this journey they say that they lost people and 3 people who died 3 days before the interview in the bombed attack to market area in Damascus were their relatives. They also said that they have relatives in Tripoli and Beirut and they used to come to Lebanon frequently before the war as well. In Lebanon many of the Dom men work in constructions. They come illegally to Lebanon over the mountains. They took the tents they live from UNHCR and they pay rent for the places of the rents, besides they pay almost 50 dollars rent for electric and water. They are not registered to UNHCR and they mentioned that they did not receive any services related with health.

There are also Dom communities in Lebanon who come from Syria beside the Abdal communities, introducing themselves as Dom and speaking both Domari and Arabic. A male interviewee who mentioned that some of his relatives who come from Homs two years ago took refuge in Turkey and a family from the group took refuge in France: [“ Our home in Syr-](#)

<sup>1</sup> Abdal Community (Abdals); even though they differ in terms of language, religious beliefs and historical background, they are taken under the category of Dom since they are named as Gypsy, Nawar, Ghajar, Mitrip by local communities.

ia demolished. My grandfathers were practicing dentistry and circumcision between Lebanon and Syria. Now we work any job we find in Lebanon, generally we can find jobs in construction and agriculture but the wages are very low. Ⓜ Family sent their boy and girl to a school but because the teacher beat the children they sent them to another school. The teacher says that the child does not behave but the father says this would not disappear by beating, the teacher should have lead the child. In the second school the principal did not want to register the children, later only the girl was registered.

A woman with whom we made interview said she is Ⓜ seven months pregnant and went to a hospital which has an agreement with UNHCR yet UNHCR pays the 85% of the examination fee and she could not buy the prescription because they were expensive. Ⓜ

Another woman stated that Ⓜ her husband is lost in Syria and she lives in a tent with her two children and she needs fuel, clothes, medicine, food and children need stationery and toys. Ⓜ

Interviews were made with two separate Dom groups in the Al Marj region of Beqaa Valley in a Dom settlement with approximately 30 tents. Both of the groups came from Sayyidah Zaynab neighborhood of Damascus 4 years ago. The traditional profession of one of the groups is carpentry (strainer making, Girbal, Munkhul) and the other group (Haciyye) produces musical instruments (Rababa) and performs music and dance. Both groups introduce themselves as "Turkmeni" but they name the language they speak as Domai, Asfour i Nawari.

These Dom groups have lived in Lebanon before but after the civil war in Lebanon they migrated to Syria. That is why they still have relatives in Beirut. Even though they took their citizenship in 1993, they continue to live in Syria. In their Lebanese identities it writes Turk-



Bekaa, Lebanon





meni, their surname is Turkmeni too. Because of this citizenship they are not registered to UNHCR. They said that their home in Damascus was ruined.

In an interview with a Dom women's group a mother and her daughters who are citizens of Lebanon and speaking Domari and Arabic; mother (60) said that her husband was a carpenter in Syria, that they used to sell hummus but now they work in agriculture. After working in the field the woman took a part of her wage as olives and so she had soap, olive oil and fuel for stove for her family. She has 8 girls and 3 boys. One of her daughters live in Sabra in Beirut. She said that her relatives in Sabra do not have a good command of Domari language. One of her daughters in the tent during the interview was mentally disabled. She said that her daughter is a "darwish" and has seizures from time to time. They stated that they do not receive support for their daughter.

Dom groups whom we made interviews during field research pay a yearly rent for the areas they set up their tents or built their barracks. Besides they pay monthly for electricity and water. Tents are made off the tarpaulins of UNHCR but they were not distributed, Dom bought them from other refugees. They meet their need for water from a nearby stream, construction areas and neighbors. They stated that paying rent especially becomes difficult for them. They mostly pay their own health service fees. For birth the clinics in the area give services for a fee. They do not receive medicine aid for chronic diseases.

Various Dom communities from different regions of Jordan were interviewed for this research. During the interviews made in the region Al Qweismeh members from three professions were met composed of dentists, people producing knives and daggers (Shebriyeh, Khanjar, Jambiya) and musician Hacıye groups.

The family introduces themselves as Jordanian and Bani Murra. They speak Domari and called their language Asfourı. They told that their grandfathers used to do dentistry and produce pans and knives but there is no one doing the profession now that they work in the constructions for the Municipality and that they have relatives in Idlib and Jerash. They used to travel with donkeys and visit villages once in every month to sell their products and services. They said "in the group there are still people who sell". Among them there are people coming from Syria. They told that they used to travel to Syria before. They have marital bonds with Syrian Dom. After the war they had relatives coming from Syria. The ones coming from Homs continued to Gulf to do trade. They went to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, it is also said that some of them even went to Libya.

A large part of the Syrian Abdal community lives in houses in the outskirts of Amman. Many of them were registered to UNHCR, some of them have Jordanian identities. They come from Aleppo and Sheikh Maqsood. Their grandfathers used to do ironwork. Now young people deal with carpentry, women go to cleaning. They have problems in paying the rent.

Doms in Jordan





A woman told in the interviews that; ⚡ One of my sons were shot in Syria, now he got better. We slept 10 days on the border. While coming from Jordan one of my daughters got lost, she got lost in Jordan, I don't know whether she escaped or she was kidnapped. ⚡

The woman said that some of their relatives stayed in Syria and some went to Iran and Turkey. She continued; ⚡ The condition of the ones in Iran is not well, they are not like us so they cannot find rice, we have rice here, they cannot find it there. ⚡

She says they are comfortable in Syria, she wants to go back: ⚡ We want to go back, even it becomes ruined and become a desert, we still want to go back to Syria. There are a lot of bearded here". She adds "They curse us. ⚡

The Abdal group interviewed near Mustana is composed of 300 people and most of them are children.

They come from Aleppo/Haydariye and Damascus/Sayyidah Zaynab in Syria. They have crossed to Turkey before. Women sew clothes and old women drink tea. Women read fortune. None of the children goes to school. Children used to go to school in Syria so two of them studied until 9th grade. They started working in Jordan.

A man we met in the group in Mafraq has just arrived from Turkey, Istanbul/Fikirtepe. His brought hairpins and candies as presents to children. Parents of some of the children live in Turkey, they sent children to their relatives.



# GENERAL PROBLEMS OF DOM REFUGEES ➔

5



## Discrimination

All the interviewees stated that they were living in much better conditions in Syria. They say that now they live under very harsh circumstances and that they are being called as beggar, gypsy and when they get out of their house they were subjected to prejudices. They state that they confront these prejudices generally when women's work at houses as day-lab-orer and men's work either in construction or in paper gathering.

During the interviews made with the employees of Non-Governmental Organizations from three countries; it is seen that employees in non-governmental sector do not have enough information on Dom society on whose culture, language and sociological structure they lack basic information and that when they define Dom, they describe them with adjectives such as Gypsy, Nawar, beggar, fighter, thief. The fact that these prejudices are common in employees of institutions supporting refugees lead to problems in bringing service to these groups. During an interview an NGO worker said: "They are not refugees, they are Nawar (Gypsy), that is why we do not offer services to them".



While community centers accept the children of other Syrian refugees in the places where Dom communities reside, they close their doors on Dom children. Arab, Kurd and Turkmen refugee families often expressed that they do not want "Gypsy" children in the schools their children attend.

It is stated in the recommendation of Directorate General of Migration Management dated July 25th 2014 and no. 48952707/205/000 and the 46th Circular of Directorate General of Security dated July 25th 2014 and no. 313111769.4976(91244) that <sup>1</sup>:

*"(The hereby circular regulates that) those among Syrian foreigners who have become involved in crime or have otherwise disturbed public order or pose a risk to public safety, and those who continue to beg, live on the street etc. despite warnings shall be sent by the order of Governorates and accompanied with police forces to accommodation centers functioning under the Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency."*

This circular known publicly as Syrian Beggar Circular results with discrimination and ill treatment towards Dom communities coming from Syria (Tarlan, K.V., 2014).

<sup>1</sup> Tarlan, K.V., 2014; Yabancı düşmanlığının yeni hedefi: Suriyeli Çingene sığınmacılar blog.radikal.com.tr/insan-haklari/yabanci-dusmanliginin-yeni-hedefi-suriyeli-cingene-siginmacilar-68623



## Employment and Unemployment

Dom are peri-patetic communities producing services for the other people whom they live together in Middle Eastern Countries for centuries. These groups who do not produce food, practice traditional professions such as dentistry, musicianship, peddling, blacksmithing, ironworking, metal working, strainer making, basketry, rifle maintenance, knife-dagger making, harness-making for draught animals, wild bird hunting. They used to sell their products to people they live together by taking food they produce or taking money from them. Most of these professions lost their validity with the development of the industry leading decrease in the work fields for Dom. Even though many communities led to the developed versions of these professions, crafts such as musicianship and basketry in Turkey and ironworking, knife-dagger and sword making in Jordan and Lebanon are still practiced. While practicing professions in the health sector requiring hygiene and expertise such as dentistry is banned in Turkey, traditional dental masters still provide services especially to poor people in Jordan and Lebanon.

In all these three countries musician Dom group still practice their job in entertainment sector. In addition to the traditional instruments they started to play orchestra instruments and percussion and rhythm instruments as well and they continued to display their skills in weddings, night clubs and pubs.

However, today most of the Dom community cannot practice their traditional professions. The part of the community living in rural areas perform daily or seasonal agricultural work and the ones living in the city do waste and refuse collection, portage, construction work and street selling. During the research it is seen that in all three countries the majority of Dom interviewees in the rural areas do seasonal agricultural work, portage, field and garden cleaning and proning while the ones in the cities work as paper gatherers, water sellers, construction workers and some work in textile workshops with very low wages and even though they deal with a specific wage finally they take "whatever given" by the boss gives. It is seen especially in Jordan and Lebanon that women do domestic works and cleaning taking a lower wage that other workers doing the same job.

Nizip, Gaziantep / Turkey



## Child Labor

Refugee children, being the real victims of the war in Syria share the struggle for life with their families since they are deprived of right to education. Children are forced to work in fields, gardens in the rural areas while they are forced to work in workshops and on streets in cities.

Many reasons including the difficulties seen in the inclusion of children by the national education system, poverty of families, Syrian Dom children who live a settled life as well become laborers as other Syrian refugees. Unemployment of adults leads children to work. In sectors where informal sector has reached its highest point child labor gets widespread. Syrian child laborers work in flat knitting workshops, textile factories, dried fruit factories, shoe manufacturing workshops and car repair workshops, and street work such as tissue paper and water selling. Children have to work in jobs which are considered dangerous even for adults. The addition of heavy workload to civil war conditions in Syria leaves negative physical and psychological traces on children. Syrian migrants and Syrian children have become a part of the informal economy and they are exposed to the heaviest condition in this field.

Uncontrolled informal areas are an outcome of continuity of work permit problems of Syrian refugees and lack of implementation of national legislation, and employers hire child laborers in those uncontrolled fields. Child laborers mainly work in the heavy line of businesses such as plastic, shoe, flat knitting. Child laborers who work together with adult workers work in isolated workshops for 12-14 hours and they are paid half the wage of an adult. Occupational illnesses are seen earlier in children who were exposed to chemicals and heavy work conditions from early ages.

Children from Dom families living a nomadic life mainly do seasonal agricultural work, daily work, selling water, tissue papers and small items on streets and they gather donations.





THE DOM / The "Other" Asylum Seekers from Syria

Islahiye, Gaziantep / Turkey





## Problem Of Accomodation

Syrian Dom communities appear as nomads living in tents, groups living in the slums of the city, people who rent houses or live in tents in Roma or Dom neighborhoods in cities, groups living in their own unregistered tent camps and the ones who live in the emptied or ruined houses in the areas of urban transformation.

The places where Dom communities live were visited in each of the three countries. Places where Dom families reside are very neglected, ruined houses and some of them are about to be demolished. Families generally live in those buildings together. In the houses where we made interviews the size of rooms was 9-10 m<sup>2</sup> and they were in a bad condition. Rooms are barely furnished. In these houses where they have a couple of sponge beds, a couple of blankets and some kitchenware; unhealthy, humid conditions and insects were observed. In houses where only a few furniture were used it was seen that very basic furniture such as beds and quilts lack. Rents generally vary between 150-350 dollars. The rooms they live are used as multipurpose rooms, it was seen in some houses that windows are covered with nylon. The interviews made display that the biggest problem is to pay the rent.

Besides some families are faced with the danger of collapse of the houses because they are very old. Additionally, some families were observed to live in unhealthy conditions not appropriate for hygiene conditions.

During the field work in three countries all the interviewee families who are not nomads and live in houses they rent in cities stated that their major problem is "paying the rent". "One month we pay the rent the other month we can't, the landlord is always at our door."

Additionally, in the interviews made with nomadic groups it is stated that in Syria they were not nomads the entire year and since they could not do their traditional crafts such as basketry, strainer making, metal work and ironwork they used to migrate for seasonal work and they used to spend the rest of the year in the Dom neighborhoods in the city where they own houses.

The nomad communities in Jordan and Lebanon pay rent per tent for accommodation which leads their frequent mobility.

In all three countries it is frequent that as a result of the complaints of local public and public institutions the temporary tent camps are taken down.



*In recent months, Jordan Madaba Municipality demolished tents justifying the act with "the conditions of public safety and security". It was stated that the tents where the Dom communities live create a problem in terms of health and hygiene and replacement is done for protecting the health and security of citizens.*



Source: [www.sarayanews.com/index.php?page=article&id=428242](http://www.sarayanews.com/index.php?page=article&id=428242)



Bekaa / Lebanon

## Health

The health condition of women, babies and children should be monitored. The interviews show that fees are demanded from the consultants in the hospitals and therefore they cannot go to doctor. Excessive lack of nutrition was observed especially in children. The interviewees stated that they have serious health problems but since they do not have identification cards it is impossible for them to access these services for free and therefore a lot of patients cannot receive treatment. The health of pregnant women should be checked regularly and the health condition of babies and children should be monitored and medical care should be covered. Besides, it has also been heard that some women who lack these possibilities "had miscarriages" with some unhealthy methods.

It was indicated that the community members face the risk of epidemic related with the conditions of accommodation. Among the members of the interviewee families a young woman had typhoid and in other families respiratory disorder, asthma, bronchitis and Koah were common.

It was detected that recently contagious diseases such as tuberculosis and leishmaniasis became widespread in the community.



## Access To Clean Water And Hygiene

According to the newly published United Nations report every 3 out of 10 people in the world lacks access to clean water and tap water at home and almost 6 of every person lives in poor sanitary conditions. In the Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Report published by World Health Organization (WHO) and UN a lot of house, health institution and school lack soap and water for washing hands and this situation puts especially children at risk of catching terminal illnesses.<sup>2</sup>

*During the recent years the increasing urban transformation and the urban periphery's opening to new housing areas results with the rapid disappearance of migration spaces where Dom groups stop over for centuries. This situation leads to the destruction of Dom neighborhoods with urban transformation and transition of the groups who settled to these neighborhoods in the last twenty years to semi-nomadic or nomadic life. On the other hand, groups who leave their homes and pass to their traditional migration spaces due to various reasons when spring comes cannot find a place to stop over since these areas were zoned for construction. That is why these groups are gradually moving away from the peripheries of the cities. This situation creates a problem to access to consumer goods water coming in the first place.*



Bekaa / Lebanon

<sup>2</sup> Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and Sustainable Development Goal [www.who.int/entity/mediacentre/news/releases/2017/launch-version-report-jmp-water-sanitation-hygiene.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/entity/mediacentre/news/releases/2017/launch-version-report-jmp-water-sanitation-hygiene.pdf?ua=1)



Dom communities who take refuge in neighboring countries have great difficulty in access to clean water in where they reside.

In the neighborhoods they live in Turkey the houses they took shelter are so old and ruined that they generally do not involve healthy public water system. They cannot access to water because public water is a paid-service and they cannot afford to pay the bills. For groups living in tents and living a nomadic life access to water becomes even more difficult. Mobile groups stop over the urban periphery, nearby villages, in their historical "spaces of migration". In these places they meet their need for water in unhealthy water resources such as streams and rivers. These resources close to agricultural areas, industrial facilities and sewerage systems due to recent widespread use of agricultural pesticide involve chemical waste. Community members who meet their drinking and cleaning water needs face with contagious diseases and health problems.

As for Jordan and Lebanon the lack of enough drinking water and the high prices of water create a difficult situation for community members. People having economic difficulties lead to cheap water from unknown resources. Finding clean water for cleaning and bath is extremely difficult.

Bekaa / Lebanon





Mustana  
Amman/Jordan

## Dom Children and Education

In the countries where Syrian refugees reside the education of children remains as a principal problem over the last six years. According to the UNHCR data 38.1% of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon (approximately 380 thousand) are composed of children between the ages 5-17. This number is 35.6% (approximately 235 thousand) for Jordan and it is 31% (approximately 960 thousand) for Turkey, therefore this number approaches 2 million with the unregistered children in three countries in total.

Families started to worry that their children who cannot access to education since 6 years are losing their future. Children who cannot access to education are sent to workshops, streets or fields to have a profession at least. In each of the three countries this situation intensifies day by day the child labor problem which has already existed. People working on the issue published important reports on the problem of "Syrian refugee children's labor". Syrian child labor frequently appears in the news in the national and international press.<sup>3</sup>

Dom communities who had to take refuge in nearby countries were exposed to discrimination of local public and refugees due to their life style and ethnic differences.

Children are affected negatively in the countries they live and cannot benefit from basic human rights to access education, health and nutrition. Today nearly all of the Syrian Dom children living in the neighboring countries of Syria; Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, are not enrolled to the formal education institutions of Syria. Children who were enrolled to schools for education leave soon because of discrimination and exclusion. Even though civil society shows an effort on the issue, there are not but a few community centers who add dealing with this issue in their services.

<sup>3</sup> Child Labour Report 2016  
[reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/TDH-Child\\_Labour\\_Report-2016-ENGLISH\\_FINAL\\_0.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/TDH-Child_Labour_Report-2016-ENGLISH_FINAL_0.pdf)  
From war to sweatshop for Syria's child refugees  
[www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/06/war-to-sweatshop-for-child-refugees](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/06/war-to-sweatshop-for-child-refugees)  
Refugee crisis: Child Labour in agriculture on the rise in Lebanon;  
[www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/fs/WCMS\\_496725/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/fs/WCMS_496725/lang--en/index.htm)



In Dom families living in the countries where the interviews are made for the research it is seen that the average number of children in families is very high. Children spend their time on the streets where their house is located or nearby tent camps built close to the settlements; some of them sell tissue papers or receive donations. It was found out that most of the interviewee children cannot benefit from education life at all. Living a mobile life, frequently changing living places of children especially and prejudices targeting them are the basic reason.

Families think that their children would be exposed to “**discrimination**” by the refugee children of other Syrian groups as well because of their identity.

It was seen that some of the children in Turkey learn Turkish by going to mosques a couple of days in the week. Families stated that children do not go to any school. As a matter of fact these children have to be directed to public schools in their places of accommodation without considering their identity and accommodation place. According to the circular of Ministry of National Education numbered 2014/21 it is made possible for Syrian children to register any public school with the foreigner identification card given to them. (MEB, 2014).<sup>4</sup>

During the interviews in Istanbul, according to the narrations of the families no public officer has asked any information from them regarding the children's problem of access to education. It was observed that children were eager to learn Turkish. Due to malnutrition children were seemed to be thin and weak. In the Bulutev center, established by Roman Rights Association in Istanbul/Cibali, approximately 30 children received education for 4 months.

In Cibali which is an old Neighborhood in Istanbul there are few places where children can play. The fact that there is only one park in the neighborhood results with local public's not welcoming Syrian children in that park. It is observed that children are not enrolled to any school and that “they do not have hygienic environments at their home, children's access to basic life requirements is limited and children feel themselves under insecure conditions”.

Contrary to the prejudices claiming that children from Dom society are reluctant to receive education the statement of non-governmental organizations and volunteers and teachers working in education institutions is on the fast adaptation to education because of their multi-lingual identity.

A teacher interviewed on this issue says that **the reason why these children learn the languages of the host countries and especially Turkish very quickly is that they are 'multi-lingual' and since they speak Arabic or Kurdish or other languages together with Domari, their learning Turkish becomes easier.**

The interviews made with volunteer teachers of Bulutev organizing culture and art workshops in the Cibali neighborhood of Istanbul it was stated that **children do not have hygienic environments at their home, children's access to basic life requirements is limited and children feel themselves under insecure conditions.**

In education workshops done with children the educators note that especially due to the circumstances of war children show a tendency towards violence:

<sup>4</sup> *Education and Training Services for Foreigners.*  
[http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/html/yabyonegiogr\\_1/yabyonegiogr\\_1.html](http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/html/yabyonegiogr_1/yabyonegiogr_1.html)

⌚ During the games we play and activities we do we noticed that children are inclined to show physical and verbal violence towards each other. Children's not being considered as individuals whose opinions were not being asked led to their resorting violence at times when they could not express themselves. In the workshops we made and in the games the motive of war was facing us remarkably. For example during the icebreaker game of 'using an item differently than its own use' we used to play with a maroon scarf which is used as something else than itself. Children made life swords and guns with that scarf and adopted roles as warrior, soldier by covering their faces. ⌚

⌚ They were very excited and willing to participate to the workshops. In comparison with the other groups we work with we saw that the interest and to the activities is much more than the other groups. Children who felt very excited for the yoga workshop which was new to them and other various art workshops and games were also very open to learn. In the relation between us the adults they were very friendly and self-confident. They were building relation with the new volunteers in short time and they were developing these relations. Their relation with adults, contrary to their relation to each other, was away from violence, much more peaceful and respectful. Their interest in physical activities such as dance, yoga and simple sports were more in comparison with working on the desk. They enjoyed very much to produce art products by their own hands. We observed the positive impacts of art, physical activities and group work on children. ⌚

A teacher working in a community center in Lebanon and Beqaa providing services for refugee children the expressed as such the efforts of Dom children to come to school as: ⌚ They were so willing that before the opening of the school every morning they used to wait in front of the school for hours. ⌚ The same teacher told that ⌚ A very successful male student was excluded by the others because of speaking in Domari language and he had to leave the school even though he wanted very much to study. ⌚





## Main problems experienced by Dom children;

*During the field work face to face interviews were made with local and Syrian children. Especially in the interviews made with children between the ages of 5-18 it was mentioned and observed that almost 90% of children do not go to school and spend their time as helping their families and playing with other Dom children in where they live. Due to the different life style brought by the Dom culture, Dom children start to learn the adult roles in early ages. This situation leads children to act and behave like adults from early ages. Additionally Dom children cannot benefit from child protection activities offered by community centers due to the poverty they live, the identity they have and their fear of discrimination. That is why they are deprived of programs and activities which would have a positive effect on the self-esteem and emotional and physical development of children.*

*The problems are;*

- *Absence in school and low level of participation to education life,*
- *Right to play, (One of children's most basic rights)*
- *Malnutrition,*
- *Child labor,*
- *Early marriage,*
- *Access to clean water.*

### *Child labor*

During the field research conducted in three countries it was mentioned and observed that the children of Dom families between the ages of 15-17 work in various sectors. The prominent jobs are observed as refuse collection, donation gathering and working summers as cheap laborers in the fields, industry and various service sectors. In the three countries where the project is carried out the high level of the child labor problem and the lack of enough number of programs resulted with important and serious problems such as different abuses children were exposed to in the work spaces, long working hours, adverse effects of these jobs on children's physical and mental development and lack of participation to education life.

Additionally Dom families stated that due to the ethnic identity of their children they are facing discrimination and sometimes violence.





### Child Abuse

According to the World Health Organization "knowingly or unknowingly performed acts of an adult, society or country which affect the health, physical development of a child" are accepted as child abuse. That children are to be protected from "all forms of physical and psychological violence" when they are under the care of their parents or a third party is written in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

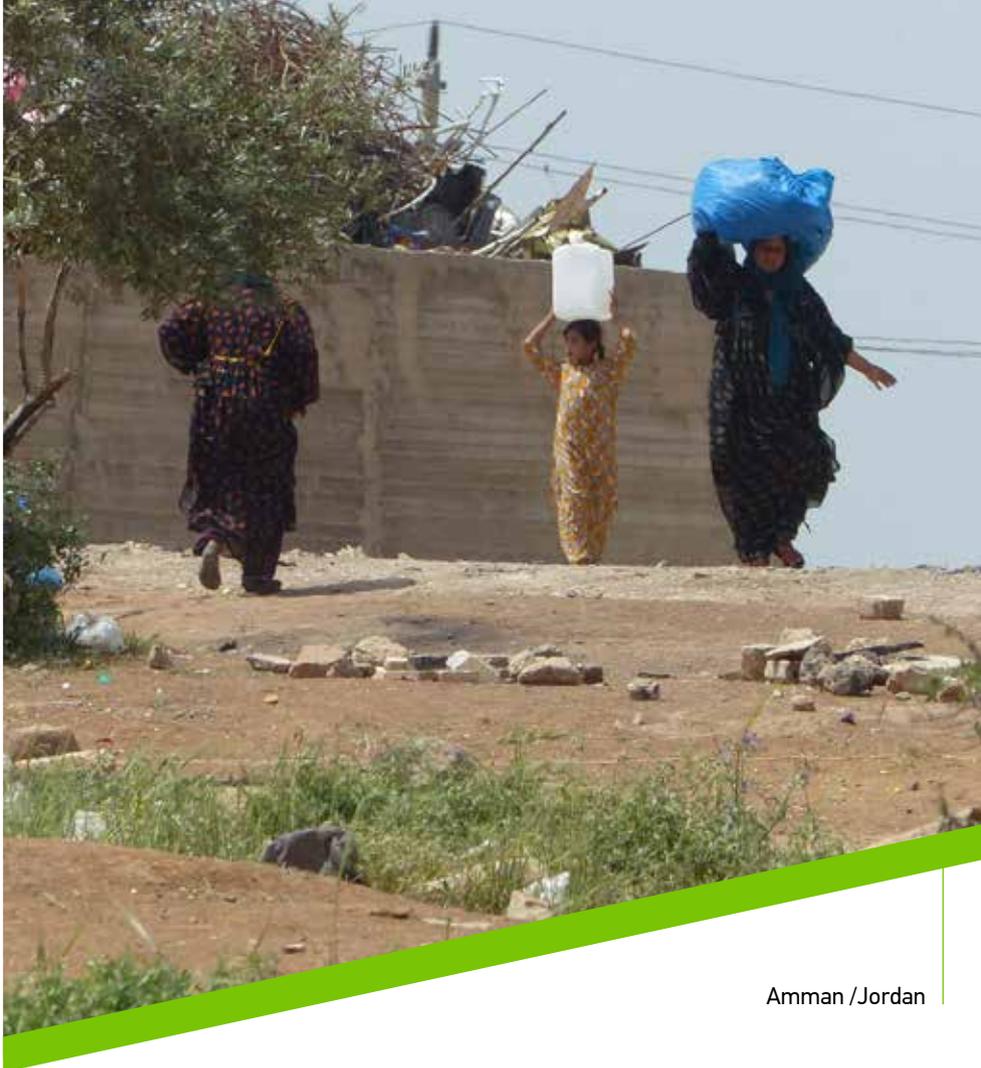
During the fieldwork carried on in three countries it was observed that Dom children were subjected to abuse at different levels. Especially the insecure condition of the accommodation places and environment, the child laborers' working until late and children's working with their parents to collect donations were seen among the reasons for children's being victims of child abuse.

Dom families and children who have to continue their life in neighborhoods of the urban centers where the crime and drug use rates are high are observed to be possible victims of various types abuses in different levels due to the weak child protection mechanism or lack of it.



### Lack of Data

There are no data on the population of Syrian Dom groups taking refuge in neighboring countries (Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon) who are both settled and continuously mobile. Tangible and realistic indicators which are to be updated according to the needs are required on the socio-economic profile of these groups, their access to public services and basic rights, their expectations and needs. Via the studies to be done basing on the data and through indicators these groups can be continuously monitored even though they are mobile.



Amman /Jordan

## Migration and Women

The studies made display that the times of mass migration are the periods in which women are most unprotected.

The prejudiced approach of local society towards women is reflected on the daily lives of women. Refugee women experience abuse both on the street and in their daily life.

Historically, the nomadic life of Dom communities led women to take active part in work life and public sphere. Nomadic life brought women to the public sphere and gave them right to speak in the group however it cannot prevent women from being excluded. In addition to the burden of housework women did both domestic work and both gathering and traditional crafts with men.

The interviews made show that the perception of the society on Syrian refugee women becomes more biased when it comes to Dom women due to their ethnic roots, identities and gender. In most of the Syrian Gypsy and Syrian Beggar news published photographs and visuals of women are being used. Women who have to go out and gather donation becomes open to any kind of abuse, sexual violence and harassment. There are cases detected and submitted to the court in which especially girls were subjected to sexual violence during gathering donation on the streets.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Dom Migrants From Syria Living at the Bottom On the Road amid Poverty and Discrimination PRESENT SITUATION ANALYSIS REPORT  
[www.kalkinmaatolyesi.org/v2/en/publications/syrian-migrant-seasonal-agricultural-workers/dom-migrants-from-syria/](http://www.kalkinmaatolyesi.org/v2/en/publications/syrian-migrant-seasonal-agricultural-workers/dom-migrants-from-syria/)

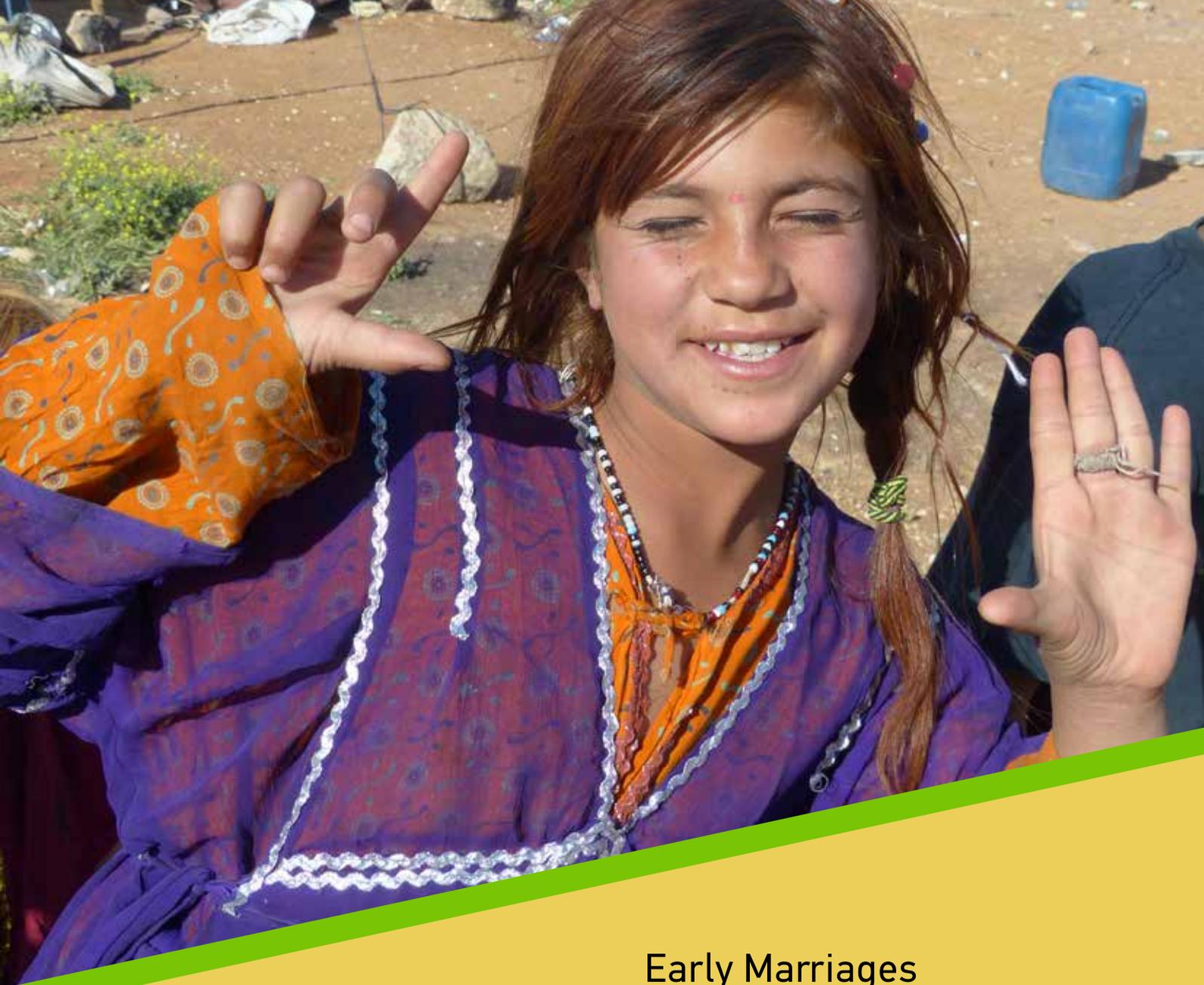


Al Kweismeh Jordan

## Dom Groups and Women's Health

*It was observed during the face to face interviews made in three countries with women that women do not have enough knowledge on contraception and their rights regarding health and information gap remains as a lack. Besides, women stated that due to economic reasons they cannot access to hygiene material.*

*That is why the national and international authorities should include Dom groups in the activities regarding family planning and on the subject of women's health they should develop information spreading activities.*



## Early Marriages

*During the fieldwork done in three countries face to face interviews were made with young women. During the interviews women indicated that they married in early ages of their own will.*

*Additionally in the interviews made with young girls they stated that the people they married were of the same age with them and they are Dom, so in their words they did not get married with foreigners. It was observed that young women are not married with elder people. The reason of widespread early marriages is the low schooling rate, the impact of the life style and children's learning the adult roles from earlier ages.*

*It was also stated in the interviews that even before the war when living in Syria the schooling rate of Dom children were low and the number of early marriages was high.*

## Don Groups and Disability

*In the face to face interviews it was stated that there are disabled people inside the Dom groups who had to move to neighboring countries after the war in Syria. These people are disabled either because of the war or by birth. It is also observed that there are people whose disability became permanent after migrating to neighboring countries and disabled children who were born in these places.*

*Additionally, in the fieldwork the research group also met physically and mentally disabled children and adults. The interviewees stated that the disabled Dom community members cannot benefit from health and rehabilitation services and programs in the places where they live and non-governmental organizations do not visit them.*

*It is also observed that disabled Dom people are more disadvantaged in comparison with Dom groups who are already disadvantaged.*

*In the fieldwork it is revealed that a mapping activity is required to determine mentally and physically disabled people and the disabled Dom people should be directed to appropriate institutions and treatments in accordance with their needs. After the mapping activity, for disabled Dom individuals to benefit from the services entirely, monitoring activities should be developed and a thrust relation should be built with Dom groups.*

Şanlıurfa / Turkey



## Dom Groups and Elderliness

*The contested processes in Syria made the country unlivable for elderly people. These people who had to leave the country try to continue their life with their families or unaccompanied in the countries they took refuge in.*

*During the fieldwork few elderly Dom individuals have been confronted. It was mentioned in the interviews that elderly people have health problems and due to the legal status they cannot benefit from health services.*

*Physical, psychological and social changes brought by old age and the refugee psychology have important impact on old Syrians.*

*Holistic works should be developed especially by taking health, poverty, accommodation, loneliness, fear from death and war trauma into consideration.*

Mardin/ Turkey





## Public Visibility And Access To Services

In the countries of research the majority of Dom refugees stated that they experience difficulties in accessing public services such as health, education, clean water and social support. It was observed that they do not have information related with the basic rights of refugees and they stated that they did not receive any support from public institutions on this regard. The ones living in Turkey experience difficulties in accessing public services in Turkey since they do not speak Turkish. On the other hand Syrian Dom communities in Jordan and Lebanon are not considered as refugee. One of the main reasons of this situation is the lack of the legislation and implementation related with asylum seeking and migration. Generally in each three countries there is a deep rooted discrimination and prejudice against Gypsy groups. Failures in these communities' access to rights are resulted from the lack of information and societal prejudices of employees in public institutions and non-governmental organizations on the cultural and sociological features of Dom society.

Information centers related with refugees cannot reach these communities. The community members should be informed especially to prevent deportation and forced accommodation in camps.



Al Zaqra / Jordan



Al Taliah/ Jordan

### *Monitoring Mechanism*

*Even though the majority of the Dom communities in three countries live in historical Dom neighborhoods in cities and towns, there are groups mobile for certain reasons who lack any kind of basic needs. To ease the access of these groups to these basic services namely access to education, accommodation, employment, health and social support a monitoring mechanism should be constructed. For this mechanism to function healthily public institutions and non-governmental organizations should work in coordination and cooperation.*

# FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS ➔

6





- There is an urgent need for basic services such as accommodation, food, education and health,
- The employees of public institutions should spread the perception that they give support services rather than posing "threat" to Dom groups,
- Possibilities should be developed to allow public institutions to work in collaboration with national and international non-governmental organizations on the subject of Dom,
- Urgent action is necessary in terms of health and medicine such as health screenings etc,
- Dom families should be registered by promising that they would not be taken in the camps they do not want to settle and international protection should be granted to them,
- Dom people should not be sent to camps unless voluntary,
- Local authorities are suggested to distribute warm meals by opening food bank in neighborhoods,
- Access to basic services should be granted immediately such as identification cards and health screenings,
- In the literature the relation between age and being a refugee does not take place. Local and international non-governmental organization should give priority to projects on this subject,
- For nomadic Dom societies a monitoring mechanism should be developed. A network should be created that would embody the education of children, women's health, elderly people and disabled people,
- The impact of physical and social changes brought by old age and that of the refugee psychology on elderly people should be eased through rehabilitation support,
- To prevent early marriages training activities on gender should be implemented, programs on education and professional education and employment of young women should be formed,
- Education activities should be implemented for women's gathering information on contraception and rights on health,
- For women to access hygiene material joint studies between non-governmental organizations and health institutions should be made,
- Measures to be taken to prevent community members from epidemic diseases and health screenings' frequency should be increased.

## Children and Education

- Dom children who are subjected to discrimination due to their lifestyle and ethnic identities have a low schooling rate. That is why education methods should be implemented specifically. For schooling of children who live a nomadic life different education models, syllabi, language programs should be developed by professionals. Additionally, countries who receive refugees should include the target of pluralism in education in their development programs,
- Child protection mechanisms should be strengthened and measures to be taken to add children to the child protection mechanisms of each three countries,



- Non-governmental organizations should be allowed to develop areas for children's education and children should be directed to formal trainings in these centers,
- Children in need of special education should be involved in education,
- Counseling services of schools should be supported from which Dom children should be benefited,
- School social services (school social work system) should be established in each of the three countries and monitoring the cases such as absence and abuse and the visits to refugee and Dom families should be more active in the triad of child-school-family to establish the integration between child and school.
- To increase in the participation to school and to help the homeworks, child friendly spaces should be opened in the areas where Dom children live and the participation of Dom children should be provided.

## Disability and Dom Groups

- Mapping activities should be developed for Dom and refugees to benefit from services regarding disabled individuals,
- For disabled Dom individuals to benefit fully from disability services monitoring activities should be developed and thrust building activities with Dom groups should be made for them to receive services,
- Rehabilitation services should be free for disabled refugees,
- Local authorities should play a role in the access to rehabilitation services,
- Mobile system should be established and local authorities should work more active to provide services for the urgent needs of disabled people,
- National and international institutions should play more role in rehabilitation centers' becoming accessible for people who are in need of special education and rehabilitation services,
- Academicians and non-governmental organization should prepare and share more written material on the subject,
- New employment policies should be developed for Dom communities regarding their life style and cultural differences,
- Considering that Dom work especially in temporary works such as agriculture and construction their working as cheap labor should be prevented by offering vocational education to the group.



# Annex-1

## Interview Questions

### Interview Questions for Research on Dom Groups Coming from Syria (Jordan-Lebanon-Turkey)

Location	:
Date	:
Interviewer	:
Data Number	:
Demographic questions	:
Gender	:
Age	:
Place of Birth	:
Marital Status	:
Number of Children	:
Number of People in the Family	:
Spoken Languages	:
How does s/he identify herself/himself (ethnic)	:
Education Level	:

#### Life in Syria

- In which city they were living in Syria before coming to Turkey?
- What was your occupation?

#### REGISTRATION SITUATION (The question to be asked in the fieldwork in Turkey)

- For Jordan-Lebanon, how is the situation of registration to non-governmental organization or public institutions?
- Why don't they want to register?
- Are they registered? Do they have Identification Cards?
- After coming from Syria which cities did you go? Have you seen other cities, city centers of the country you live in?

#### ACCOMODATION

- How many people do they live together?
- Do they live in tents or in a house?
- If s/he lives in a tent, does s/he pay rent? (Jordan –Lebanon)
- If s/he lives in a tent from where does s/he obtain the tent?





### If s/he lives in a house;

- Do you pay rent to the house you live in? If yes Monthly:

#### Observation

- The condition of the tent/ the material it was made of
- Is it a formal camp? Is it one that they set?
- Conditions of the house
- Electric, heating condition
- How much do the house expenditures cost?

### FOOD AND NUTRITION

- How do they obtain their food?
- Do they receive any food support? From whom? For how long?
- What the problems they experience about food and nutrition?
- How do they meet the need for water and where?

#### Observation

- The tools they use in the house or in tent
- Access to food
- On water and Hygiene (Is the water brought clean?)
- How do they meet their toilet need?
- How do they find hot and cold water during the summer? (Special attention on the subject is needed in Lebanon.)

### ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

- Do they benefit from any health institution?
  - Do they pay fees for health services?
  - What are the problems they face during in urgent cases such as birth?
  - Are children being vaccinated?
  - Do pregnant women have health controls?
  - Where do pregnant women give birth?
  - Did any woman die at birth in the place you live, have you ever heard something like this?
  - Are there women who lost her baby during having a birth?
  - Are there disabled people or people with chronic diseases in the family? (Diabetes, blood pressure, kidney, asthma etc.)
- \* A specific place shall be opened for maternal–infant mortality.

#### Observation

- The condition of elderly people and children in need of medication
- The condition of disabled people in need of medication
- The ages of women having birth



## EMPLOYMENT

- What are their Professional experiences?
- What are the problems they face when they are working?
- What kind of difficulties they experience in finding a job?
- Are they exposed to discrimination because of their identity while working or seeking a job?

## PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

- Do they have problems related with language gap?

## EDUCATION

- Do they have children at the school age? (OBSERVATION)
- Were they going to school back in Syria?
- Do they go to school now?
- How do they obtain school materials? (Bag, Pencil)
- Do they benefit from education support, courses etc. from public institutions or non-governmental organizations?
- Do you want to send your children to school? Why?

## WOMEN

- How are their experiences after the war?
- What are the problems they experience related with hygiene?
- Are there women who were exposed to violence in where they live?
- Do they know where to consult if they are exposed to violence?
- Were you working in Syria?
- Would you like to enroll to the vocational training or literacy courses?
- Where are the safest places for your children in where you life?
- Where are the most dangerous places in where you live?

## CHILDREN

- Did you go to school in Syria?
- If yes, what was the last grade you studies?
- Did you have siblings going to school in Syria?
- Did you like your school, teacher, friends?
- Do you go to school now?
- If not, are you enrolled to any education program? (Community center)
- Where do you play?

### Observation

Yaşadıkları alan, çocuklar için güvenli alanlar mı?



## ADULTS

### Child Labor

- How many children are working in your family? Where do they work?
- Are your house and the place your children work far away from each other?
- When does your children go to work?
- Did your children use to work in Syria?
- How old are your children?
- If the workplace is far away, how do they go where they work?
- Do you observe your children while they go to work?
- How many hours do they work?
- Are you worried when your children are at work?
- Have your children ever have an accident at work?

### Questions to working children

- If you quit working, how would this affect your family?
- If your children do not work, how do they spend their time?
- Where do the children play?

### Questions on VIOLENCE

- Have your children ever faced security forces? Why? (Police, Soldier, Security Forces, Municipal Police)
- What type of problems your children faced with then they come from Syria? (Deportation threat, physical, sexual abuse, physical injury, kidnapping, being taken under custody)
- When you were living in Syria (after the war) what type of assaults you have received? (From whom? To be asked especially to community leaders too?)
- Why did you have to leave Syria?
- What types of discriminations do they face in where they live?

*\*This report deals with the problems the Dom asylum seekers/refugees face in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, the problems in accessing the basic rights, discrimination by local people and public authorities and the impact of the present "migration legislation" of these three countries on the life of these groups; and analyzes their present condition over the answers given these interview questions asked to women, men, girls, boys and children from Dom society in 35 face to face and group interviews.*



The present report is written as the “Dom Refugees Situation Analysis Preliminary Report” prepared in the scope of “The Rights of Dom and Other Related Minorities from Syria Seeking Asylum in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey Project” conducted by Kırkayak Kültür. It is prepared to determine the living conditions, types of discrimination and exclusion and other problems faced by The “Other” Asylum Seekers from Syria: The Dom

Kırkayak Kültür

