

# Community and conflict: How Turks and Syrian refugees are learning to live together

Author:

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ANKARA: The latest UN-backed study into Syrian refugees living in Turkey and the thoughts of the two communities was released on Monday.

Supported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Syrians Barometer-2020: A Framework for Achieving Social Cohesion with Syrians in Turkey was released under the leadership of Prof. M. Murat Erdogan from Ankara University.

The survey is the third of its kind conducted since 2017. Its findings are based on face-to-face interviews with 2,259 Turkish citizens in 26 cities and 1,414 Syrian households in 15 cities.

The report showed that the level of social acceptance of Syrians is high despite some ongoing concerns.

“Turkish society’s acceptance of Syrians has largely been transformed into ‘toleration’ rather than an understanding of establishing a practice of living together,” it said.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

New study shows Turkish acceptance of migrants is rising, but problems remain.

80% of Turks say they provided cash or other assistance to Syrians during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Concerns about jobs losses and rising crime were lower than before, and the COVID-19 pandemic had boosted solidarity and neighborly ties between the two groups, it said.

“This can be explained by the normalization trend that created a habit among Turkish society regarding the presence of Syrians, while the pandemic also shifted social priorities toward making ends meet,” Erdogan told Arab News.

About 80 percent of Turks said they provided cash or other forms of assistance to Syrians during the pandemic.

But Turkish people living in border towns with a high density of Syrian refugees were less positive, saying they considered them an ongoing source of

problems.

There remains misunderstanding about how Syrians generate income, with most Turkish people claiming the refugees rely on assistance from the Turkish state. But those who are financially supported by an EU-funded assistance program account for only about 44 percent of the general Syrian population in Turkey.

While concerns remain about the deterioration of public services, loss of jobs, rise in criminality and corruption, the proportion of Turks who said they had experienced personal harm from Syrians in the past five years was 11 percent.

“When I conducted a field study in the southeastern province of Sanliurfa, Turkish residents said they were harmed by the presence of Syrians because they were speaking loudly at night and not sleeping at the right time,” Erdogan said.

“Turks are more inclined to perceive Syrians through the prism of identity concerns.”

According to the report, 55 percent of Turks are against Syrians opening their own businesses, saying it would generate unfair competition.

A total of 77 percent of Turks said they did not think Syrians had cultural similarities with the Turkish. But Syrians considered themselves socially very close to Turks, the report said.

Turkey is home to about 3.7 million Syrians under temporary protection, which represents about 5 percent of the Turkish population. Many of them said they were not settled in the country.

In the latest report, the proportion of refugees saying they did not plan to return to Syria was 77.8 percent, up from 51.8 percent in 2019 and 16.7 percent in 2017.

Similarly, 90 percent of the Turks surveyed said they thought that at least half of the Syrians would stay in Turkey.

Asked where the Syrians should live, 85 percent of Turkish respondents suggested they be housed in camps, secure zones or designated cities instead of integrating with local communities.

“Turks prefer an isolated lifestyle for Syrians in Turkey,” Erdogan said.

While Turkey’s Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu recently announced that the country had granted citizenship status to more than 193,000 Syrian refugees, 71 percent of the Turks polled said they were against giving citizenship to Syrians, while about 17 percent said Syrian children should not be given an education.

A total of 46 percent of Syrians said they had been integrated into Turkish society but would prefer the status of temporary protection rather than

citizenship so as not to lose their benefits under the EU support programs. The survey also showed that at least one member of each Syrian family could speak Turkish.

More than 88 percent of the Syrians polled said they had not faced any problems regarding access to health services during the pandemic, but 64 percent said it had negatively affected their financial situation.

The study also found that there had been an increase in the proportion of Syrians moving on to a third country to 49 percent in 2020, from 34 percent in 2019 and 23 percent in 2017.

Despite the high proportion of Turks saying they had extended a helping hand to Syrians during the pandemic, 67 percent of the Syrian respondents said society's perception of them had not changed since the health crisis.

In its recommendations, the report said that Turkey's policies on Syrians that are based on temporariness should be revised as establishing a peaceful Syria remained an unlikely prospect in the short and medium terms.

It said also that more needed to be done to find viable employment for Syrians.

"Agriculture, animal husbandry and the industrial sector all offer opportunities to create employment," it said.

It added that civil society should assume a greater role in aiding integration and that a financial support program needed to be developed to allow local authorities to help Syrians living within their jurisdictions.

It also said the international community should share the responsibility of providing financial support and resettlement options for Syrians.



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## [Abu Dhabi crown prince says UAE keen on energy security, global markets balance](#)

Tue, 2022-03-22 22:11

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince spoke with Azerbaijan's president about the global energy market in light of the Ukraine crisis, and stressed that the UAE is keen on energy security globally and the stability and balance of energy markets, Emirates News Agency reported on Tuesday.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan also discussed with Azerbaijan's president, Ilham Aliyev, bilateral relations, especially in fields of economy, trade, energy, in addition to a number of regional and international issues of common concern.

The Abu Dhabi crown prince also spoke with Japan's prime minister Fumio Kishida on Tuesday about the Ukraine crisis and also assured him that the UAE is keen to maintain energy security and keep global markets stable.

Sheikh Mohammed's comments come a day after he visited Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh to meet with Egypt's president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.



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## [Social media calls by Lebanese citizens for prosecution of central bank governor](#)

Author:

Tue, 2022-03-22 22:05

DUBAI: Growing numbers of people in Lebanon are taking to social media to call on the country's judiciary to prosecute Riad Salameh, the governor of the country's central bank, over his alleged involvement in financial irregularities and corruption.

The hashtag "Sa'at Al-Haqeeqa Riad Salameh," which translates as "Moment of Truth for Riad Salameh," began trending on Twitter, as hundreds of users called for him to be dismissed from his position, arrested and impeached. They demanded that he be punished for allegedly dispersing public funds and covering up for corrupt politicians involved in the misappropriation of depositors' funds and life savings.

Salameh denies the allegations of wrongdoing. He recently told Reuters: "I ordered an audit and it was proven that public money was not the source of my wealth."

Twitter users also urged the judiciary expand its efforts to investigate the criminal and financial activities that led to the current financial crisis in Lebanon, as a first step toward holding the politicians and others who are

responsible or it to account.

One Twitter user posted a photo of Salameh dancing during a Brazilian carnival and commented with just one word: "Wanted."

Someone else posted a message that asked the question: "What are you afraid of and who is behind you?"

Another read: "It's a shame how you all are protecting each other and neglecting people's basic rights. What kind of a country are you planning for?"

Many others social media users posted or retweeted photos of Salameh and asked him to provide information required for criminal investigations.

"Almost every single depositor who has lost his or her life savings and deposits wants Salameh behind bars," said an activist and pro-bono lawyer who spoke to Arab News on condition of anonymity.

"Set political affiliations or pressures aside; Salameh is involved and should be held accountable in his capacity as central bank governor. He should be questioned and it is up to the judiciary to decide whether or not he's corrupt or guilty."

On Monday, Mount Lebanon's attorney general, Judge Ghada Aoun, charged Salameh with illicit enrichment. He was charged in absentia after he failed to attend the hearing.

Judge Aoun had ordered the arrest of Salameh's brother, Raja Salameh, on Friday in connection with the same case. Raja's lawyer said any allegations of illicit enrichment and money laundering were unfounded, describing them as "media speculation without any evidence."

Meanwhile, a strike in Lebanon's banking sector that began on Monday continued on Tuesday in protest against judicial decisions issued against several leading banks. They condemned the rulings as arbitrary and noted that some lawsuits filed by groups of activists defending depositors are related to their requests to recover US dollar funds that have been withheld by the banks since 2019.

The Lebanese Banks' Association announced that the financial institutions would be open again on Wednesday.



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Lebanese judge charges central bank governor with illicit enrichment

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## [Modest turnout in Jordan's municipal, governorate elections](#)

Tue, 2022-03-22 21:15

AMMAN: Polling stations across Jordan closed on Tuesday for municipal and governorate councils elections, which saw a modest voter turnout of less than 30 percent.

The Independent Election Commission said that 1.356 million people had cast

their ballots by 7:00 p.m. local time, out of 4,602,135 eligible voters.

It added that voter turnout across the country reached 29.64 percent.

Jordan's capital Amman, which has a population of more than 4.5 million, saw the lowest voter turnout with around 15 percent, according to the IEC. The highest turnout was in the northern city of Ajloun, which has a population of around 195,000 people.

The IEC, the national body overseeing elections in Jordan, said it would study the reasons for the capital's apathy in elections.

Amman has always seen the lowest voter turnout in Jordanian parliamentary and municipal elections, with observers attributing it mainly to tribalism playing a less influential role in the capital and other metropolitan cities.

Arab News spoke to people in Amman who did not participate in the elections. They said their disinterest in the polls had to do with the failure of former representatives to bring about the desired changes whether in parliament or municipal councils.

Suha Faraj, 32, said candidates ran for elections "only to achieve some personal gains."

"They just want to be there in parliament or municipalities to serve themselves. They are not there to benefit the country but to secure a job and prestige for themselves," Faraj said.

The absence of fully-fledged partisan activity and programs in elections was the main reason for 42-year-old Adnan Abu Taha boycotting the polls.

"There is no encouraging atmosphere for participation," he said. "We before had 'so-called' representatives in parliament or municipalities, but they just benefited themselves. That is the result of the absence of fully-fledged political parties with a well-defined agenda."

"Why voter turnout is low in Amman and high in other cities is simply because there is still a strong influence outside the capital. People outside Amman just vote for their relatives regardless of their programs or agenda," political commentator Khaled Qudah said.

A total of 4,644 candidates, including 846 women, registered for the 2022 municipal and local council elections.

The IEC said that around 5,000 people, including 100 international figures, monitored the elections.







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## [UAE, Japan foreign ministers highlight bilateral strategic ties](#)

Tue, 2022-03-22 01:22

DUBAI: The UAE and Japan foreign ministers agreed to continue promoting cooperation in various fields under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Initiative and maintain energy-related relations with a stable supply of crude oil.

The agreement was reached on March 20 during a meeting in the UAE between Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the minister for foreign affairs and international cooperation.

Hayashi is visiting the UAE on the second and last leg of a short tour to the Middle East that started in Turkey a day earlier. Hayashi is scheduled to arrive back in Tokyo on Monday.

In the meeting, Hayashi congratulated the UAE on the successful hosting of the Dubai 2022 Expo and highlighted the importance of this year, which marks the 50th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Japan and the UAE.

According to the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo, Sheikh Abdullah thanked Japan for participating in the Dubai Expo and said that he was pleased that the relationship between the two countries advanced beyond the traditional energy fields, expanding to a wide range of fields, including renewable energy, infrastructure and space.

Both ministers exchanged frank opinions on this matter and confirmed that they would continue to cooperate closely in international efforts. They also agreed to work closely through the Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Initiative.

Minister Hayashi expressed his appreciation for the stable supply of crude oil from the UAE and the participation of Japanese companies in crude oil development projects in the UAE. He also expressed concern about soaring oil prices while asking the UAE to contribute to stabilizing the global oil market by further supplying crude oil and securing production capacity as a key member of OPEC Plus.

In response, Sheikh Abdullah said the UAE's relationship with Japan, a strategic partner, is unwavering and that he would like to continue working together.

In addition, Hayashi condemned the attack on Abu Dhabi by Yemen's Houthis militants and conveyed his condolences to the victims and their families.

The two sides also exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East, including Iran and Yemen, and the situation in east Asia, including China and North Korea, and confirmed that they would continue to work closely together.



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