

**“Internalization and /or Externalization of Refugees in the  
Framework of Integration and Border Policies”**

**Meeting Notes**



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The right of access to asylum procedure involved in Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a fundamental right. Nowadays, we face largest forced migration movement after Second World War, despite the growing needs it appears to be states increasingly tend to narrow the boundaries of international protection and right of access to asylum.

In this context, it is made almost impossible for asylum seekers to cross borders through the strict visa policies, the obstacles to family unification and other legal entrances, wire fences, walls and the military measures. Those who enter the country somehow, are trying to be sent back through the readmission agreements signed with border states or countries of origin. Further away, many countries clearly declare that they do not want refugees. It seems that the embarrassing border policies are focused on stopping, keeping out, and sending refugees back, although it is an orderly/mandatory norm that states shall not prevent refugees from entering the country and not return those ones who were able to enter. In such an environment, even if a state allows the refugees who escape from the persecution or war to enter the country emerges as a praised, exemplary practice.

However, allowing entrance to the country is not the only and sufficient condition for refugee protection. Refugee protection includes the provision of effective access to the rights and services including the possibility of establishing a decent life for human dignity in the country of asylum. If bestowing citizenship rights upon the refugees is ultimately made possible this process which called "Local Integration" becomes a truly permanent solution.

For this respect, the local integration opportunities provided for the refugees by the countries also reflect their attitudes towards the refugee protection. Today, it is observed that local integration policies are moving away from internalization and bringing a permanent solution for the refugees.

For this meeting, which took place in Aydın between 24-25 December 2016 and focused on the question that to what extent the integration and border policies are open/are embracing the refugees and excluding them, we would like to thank to Dr. Neva Öztürk, Dr. Gülay Uğur Göksel, Sevim Özdemir, Zakira Hekmat, Esra Şimşir, Banu Şen, Pırıl Erçoban, Sıla Çınar, Berna Naldemirci and to Efi Latsoudi, who was not able to attend to meeting because of her illness however contributed with a video presentation, for their valuable presentations which have enriched our meeting and minds.

We would like to present our sincere gratitude to all participants who have accepted our invitation on short notice and attended to the meeting.

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**EDA BEKÇİ \*****“Opening Speech”**

The increasing security policies of countries on the issue of refugees have given rise to contentious debates about permanent solutions in Turkey and indeed in the world.

The increasing number of refugees and lack of solution 6 years after the April 2011 Syrian war has shown the need for a targeted and permanent solution for Syrians and other refugees in our country.

However, rising nationalism / racism in the world, and related to that, border protection policies, and closed nation states contrary to previous arguments that countries are globalising, and issues of citizenship for Syrians in Turkey have been a great source of sadness for those of us who wish to be in a civil society and who are working towards implementing a permanent solution.

We had thought of doing something particularly on the Syrian debate and the issue of giving citizenship to Syrians. The 15 July event and aftermath seemed to have suddenly paused the arguments. Is the problem solved? No, other issues are now merely at the forefront.

We have met many of you who have been devotedly working in the field of refugees. Refugees are the common focus of our debates, today they are amongst us with their representatives, your opinions, people who have been doing field research, are greatly valuable to us. And we would like to explore what we can do in terms of citizenship and finding permanent solutions. We are here today with the Danish Refugee Council and ECHO partnership and were to have participants from the Danish Refugee Council however they unfortunately could not make it due to Christmas. We are a smaller group today, but it should be easier to exchange and discuss ideas and thoughts due to both the number of people, and format of the meeting.

We have invaluable academicians here today with us, who are to enlighten us on subjects we want to know more about. I hope you will all find this useful and productive. Without further ado, I invite Neva to speak, see you all.”

**NEVA ÖZTÜRK \*****"The Acquisition of Citizenship on the Basis of General Legal Integration and the Legal Framework of Access to Citizenship for Syrian Refugees"**

Good Morning. I work as a teaching fellow in the International Law Department of the Law Faculty at Ankara University. Thank you very much for your kind invitation to the Association for Solidarity with Refugees. I am always happy to be invited. We academicians are unfortunately somewhat disconnected from the field and it is always very educational for me also to join you here. I would like to thank everyone.

The issue I shall focus on today will be the acquisition of citizenship on the basis of general legal integration and access to citizenship for Syrian refugees. One of the two main issues is the relationship between legal integration and citizenship, and the other is the perspective of Syrian refugees, looking at Turkish law. In examining these two main issues, even if superficially, I will touch upon issues such as what is legal integration, what kind of purpose does it have, what are its components, how does it work, how does citizenship fit into legal integration, and we can perhaps expand these with further questions. I will then touch on the Turkish law side in general and look at the access of Syrian refugees to legal status and citizenship.

When we look at legal integration, we are first faced with the question of what is legal integration. Legal integration may at first seem like a familiar term, and can be thought of as a concept that we all know about as it contains the word 'integration'. However the term legal integration is in fact not commonly talked about. Indeed, it is not a subject which has not been researched much, however we come across it in discussions of where the purpose of social integration is on the legal axis. This means that a state which aims to achieve social integration, shapes its legislation in accordance with this purpose, and always regards this purpose as a fundamental base, shaping migration law and regulations in accordance with this, and on this basis, shaping and regulating the rights and statutes of refugees and migrants in an appropriate manner.

When we look at what its function is, as I have already pointed out, what is essential here, in the context of legal integration, is to legally recognize and support the

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desire or need to connect with the country to which the individual has migrated. In terms of refugees, as these people are forced migrants, integration may be a necessity rather than a desire. This necessity can be a result of refugees not being able to voluntarily return, i.e., from its very nature, or from international laws. It can be a necessity arising from international law because it is an exceptional situation in international law, it is desired in international law for all individuals to belong to a state, and to be protected by that state through citizenship. An orderly view of the state is comprised of communities composed of citizens, and when each individual is a component of the community of a state regular appearance arises. At this point, it is unusual for some individuals to get out of this orderly view, that is to say, a lack of or weakened citizenship presents an abnormal view. Thus, a lack of citizenship is an exceptional case in international law.

Although on paper refugees are not stateless, they virtually are stateless due to their weakened citizenship. What is meant by citizenship is the political and legal relationship between individuals and their state. Through this bond, it is expected that the individual is protected by the state and that vice versa, the individual is loyal to the state. As refugees are not protected by the state, and in some cases are even persecuted by the state themselves, the fact that they are not stateless on paper is irrelevant, and they belong to groups of people whom we refer to as *de facto* stateless or stateless like. For this reason, it is necessary that these people have access to permanent solutions in terms of international law. Permanent solutions are necessary in order to eradicate this exceptional situation they are in, and to control it. One of the issues that we call permanent solution is local integration; this is the process where individuals seek to find a permanent solution in the country they are in, and seek access to citizenship

Although the Convention on the Status of Refugees of 1951, which is the main source of refugee protection in international law, is a term that is used as of the date of the Convention in this Regulation, together with the word 'assimilation' in line with the approach of that period, it contains a regulation providing that the state should ensure the integration of refugees and make it easier for them to obtain citizenship. This regulation does impose an obligation but encourages that the state makes it easier. Therefore when we look at the purpose of social integration from the perspective of refugees, it is necessary for individuals to form a connection to the country the individual is forced to migrate to, for this require-

ment to be recognised in the legal framework, and for regulations to be made in recognition of this. In this case, legal integration also constitutes both the first step of social integration, contributing to its efficient operation, and as a means of controlling it. The more developed the legal framework and the more so it has a structure apt for dealing with integration, the more the control of the development of social integration becomes determined by looking at these determinants. Legal integration is also considered as a driving force.

The reason for this is because when we say legal, the law is actually a field which requires foreseeability, specificity, and therefore if the legal framework is to emerge in a manner apt for integration, the individual will be of the view that he or she has access to a secure status, rights, and finally access to citizenship. They will be aware of their rights as they are enshrined in law, that a permanent status is a possibility, in what circumstance it is possible, and what rights they may utilise. This state of visibility will have an influence which speeds and accelerates social integration. Therefore, ensuring legal integration will also be a driving force in terms of social integration.

When we look at what constitutes legal integration, we can see that legal integration is comprised of two main components. The first is statuses and the second is rights. It is not surprising that statuses are an important component; it is possible for individuals without citizenship to be visible and recognisable to the state and therefore evaluated through these statuses. Statuses means that the foreign individual is recognized as a subject of rights and obligations by the state. Therefore, legal integration is in fact by its nature very much related to the status. We know from international law, that states have the authority to exercise discretion as to who can come to their country, who can stay in their country, and the right to exercise their sovereignty and evaluate non-citizens. Therefore, states have the freedom to decide which status they should grant in determining the status of residence in their country.

However, there are two exceptions in international law. Although governments can regulate statuses like they want, international human rights laws dictate that two statuses must be granted. One is a status that prescribes a family reunion, because the protection of the family as the reunification of the family is a fundamental right. The second category includes the status granted to individuals on the basis

of international protection, and refugee status and the subsequent complementary protection statuses are also within this group. Therefore, although states are free to grant statuses, they must maintain these two statuses. When we look at it through the context of legal integration, the status that is most critical to us is the permanent statuses. We can thus divide the statutes of foreigners and migrants, into two: temporary statuses and permanent statuses.

The temporary status is a specific purpose-oriented status for a prescribed period (such as a temporary student status). These are statutes that are valid for a certain period of time, when the individual is arriving or for the duration he or she is in the country. Permanent status is a status that has not been granted for a specific purpose, that gives the individual the right to stay in the country the individual has already settled in, and which does not have a time limitation, and which grants rights similar to that of a citizen. Therefore, a permanent status granted by a country which has adopted the goal of legal integration is of great importance. If a country aspires to have legal integration, it must have permanent status. Therefore, the transition from temporary statuses to permanent statuses must also be ensured. In this transition, it is necessary to act on the basis of equality. We may also include statuses relating to international protection between temporary statuses. We can consider this status as a temporary status because it is essentially a status that the individual must have until a permanent solution is found, and because they are inherently tied to the protective purpose.

But it is absolutely necessary to ensure the transition from these statutes to permanent statuses, including refugee status, within a country that is intended to be a legal integration. This is one of the most essential aspects. Legal integration requires equality between individuals on the sphere of social integration. Legal integration aims to increase the rights of the individual at an evolving momentum as the individual develops and develops bonds with the country, eventually bringing them into equal status as those with citizenship. When we look at legal integration, it is not possible for those with irregular entry to the country to be included in the integration process. Sometimes there might be exceptions. For example, the DACA program in the United States under an executive act can be shown as an exceptional practice. However, in the United States, irregular migrants aged 15-30, who have reached the country as a child, can benefit from temporary protection in relation to work permits and against deportation decision, provided they meet certain conditions. These individuals, can also get social insurance number in con-

junction with obtaining a work permit, and therefore easily go about with everyday life. However, this status that they have is not a full legal status, and carries the risk of being removed from the country.

For this reason, this example also does not allow irregular entry to be tie into a regular status. The most obvious exception to an irregular entry preventing legal integration is refugees. Due to the special circumstances refugees have, they can be admitted to the country even if they do not satisfy the legal requirements for entry into the country, and may be granted a legal status in any event. Indeed, the non-refoulement principle has become an international rule which is binding on states, even if it is not mentioned in a convention. The prohibition of deportation ensures not only that the individual is prevented from being sent to places where he or she may be subject to prohibited treatment, but also prevents individuals from being refused entry at the border, which could thereby result in the persons returning to places where they could be subjected to such treatment. Although the non-refoulement principle does not necessarily impose a legal obligation to admit persons to the country, it may in fact lead to situations where there is an obligation to admit the persons to the country, in other words when the person arrives to the country, the obligation to permit them entry is born if there is no possibility of directed them to a safe place elsewhere. Thus, in terms of individuals in such a situation, and indeed many of them are in search of asylum, it is possible to turn irregular entry into the country into a regular status via international protection, or temporary protection afforded to them, and thus, a resulting legal status.

I have already stated that the second fundamental component of legal integration is rights. When we look at rights, we see the need of rights that are specified to legal statuses must be formed. In the legal integration axis, and particularly in the framework of permanent statuses, these rights evolve and are move closer to those of citizens. Finally, the right of access to citizenship is also an issue that is necessary for legal integration. Indeed, the primary objective of legal integration is to ensure that the (forced) migrant has equal rights as the citizen does. This is the ultimate goal of legal integration. When we come to the question of how does this then work, we can see that predictability and certainty are issues of great importance. These three issues need to be taken into account for legal integration to be regarded as a driving force for social integration. Securities are also important because in order to ensure legal integration, certain guarantees must be provided

in terms of statuses and rights. It is important that it is possible to switch between statuses, that a switch from temporary status to permanent status is possible, that no groups such as refugees are excluded, and that the requirements of the changing statuses are clear and predetermined. As regards legal integration, there must be procedural safeguards regarding the end of the statuses to ensure that the individual is aware of when their status is to end and is not faced with arbitrarily defined situations. Observing the reunification of families and in particular, the principle of non-refoulement are important examples of status securities.

Indeed, in terms of permanent statuses, the non-refoulement principle, close to that of a citizen, is an issue which strengthens social integration. This security of course cannot be deemed of equal value to being a citizen, as the deportation of citizens is already prohibited in international law. However, having different provisions on deportation from other foreigners, and in particular having a more narrow and more difficult requirement to deport these persons will show very positive feature in order to provide assurance. In terms of rights, any limitations of rights must be proportional, predictable and legitimate. This issue constitutes a problem that is at the forefront of our laws on foreigners. This is because we have a tendency to introduce amendments in regulations and circulars. We can see particularly in respect of individuals under temporary protection due to the events of Syria that their statuses, rights and obligations are addressed in regulations and circulars which afford the administration wide discretion. It could be argued that given this mass influx, the administration is given a wide margin of appreciation to ensure the effective management of this influx can be achieved. However, that which seems reasonable in practice may not be lawful. Our Constitution clearly states that the fundamental rights and freedoms of foreigners can be restricted in accordance with domestic and international law. Thus even the reasoning may seem consistent; limitations to fundamental rights by regulation may lead to breach of the constitution. Another consequence of this situation is the limited predictability and uncertainty.

Uncertainty is the biggest enemy of legal integration. Another important issue is to bring access to rights and services for permanent statuses to an equal footing as that of the citizen. We are looking for something closer to equality in permanent statuses, because the transition to permanent statuses indicates the strengthening bond between the individual and country. And indeed establishing a bond with the

country is a sought after criteria in granting permanent statuses, and to do this the duration will be considered. This is the case in our laws, durations are prescribed in the laws of other countries also. For example, it is possible for persons who have stayed continuously for 8 years, or 5 years to switch to permanent statuses if they also satisfy other requirements. This is because these time periods are regarded as indications that the person has established a bond with the country and that there has been a social integration; that the longer they have been there, the stronger the bond they have. For this reason, it becomes a matter of being afforded rights close to that of a citizen. The second important reason is that for some people in acquiring the citizenship of another country, there is a risk of losing their existing citizenship. It is therefore important that permanent statuses grant rights similar to those of citizens. This is to help ensure that these people also have rights in the integration process, as they may not want citizenship, or rather the citizenship of the country that they are in. Another important issue is guaranteeing securities in particular to migrants and refugees regarding their access to rights and services. The fact that these individuals are not citizens or that they have some differences even if they are citizens will require measures to ensure access to these rights is efficient for them. Implementing measures which allow them to utilise their rights from a legal integration perspective is absolutely essential. In this regard, we have a disadvantage in terms of our laws; our laws on foreigners are shaped on the system of equality.

What is meant by the equality system is that in discussing fundamental rights and freedoms in Articles 10 and 12 of our Constitution, if there is no limitation prescribed in terms of rights, as a rule, the use of the expression "everyone" here is accepted to mean that this right is also valid in respect of foreigners. However, limitations are of course also possible, Article 16 of our Constitution outlines how to make this limitation. This provision stipulates that the fundamental rights and freedoms of foreigners can be made in accordance with the law and international laws. As is the case with us, there is a problem in countries which have adopted the equality system: in terms of legal integration, when making regulations, there is the mentality that as there is already an equality system, the only thing that we need to regulate is the necessary restrictions, as there already will be equality with the citizen without these. And in this case, taking necessary measures ensuring foreigners have access to their rights can be neglected. However, countries which have adopted the restraint system can sometimes produce surprisingly different

results. In contrast to the equality system, in the restraint system, as a rule, as foreigners do not have any rights, the rights that they do have are regulated in detail. For example, the UK is an example of a country using such regulations, and they have very detailed regulations. Although equality may seem much more positive, neglecting detailed regulations can sometimes result in ineffective access to rights. Of course, the solution to this is not to abolish the equality system, however more effort is needed to ensure effective access.

In addition to this, it is important to introduce new special regulations in respect of different races or disadvantaged groups within migrant groups or refugees in order to ensure effective access for such groups. The place of citizenship is the ultimate goal in legal integration; for this to be reflected legally, and for citizenship to be granted. Having citizenship visible at the end of the tunnel is a driving force for migrants and refugees, and can have an accelerating effect in terms of ensuring integration. However together with the possibility of citizenship, it is necessary for parallel provisions of anti-discrimination and xenophobia measures in the context of legal integration. The double-sided nature of social integration is clearer at this point in legal integration. Citizenship in the context of legal integration is the manifestation of trust and respect emerging from social integration, a legal reflection so to speak, and therefore this trust and respect is ensured with the possibility of access to citizenship.

When we look at Turkish law, there are tools for legal integration. For example, we have long-term residence permits, the possibility to switch between temporary statuses, and also the possibility to switch from temporary to permanent statuses. There is a regulation on obtaining citizenship with the decision of the competent authority. We have certain tools, but when we look closely, we cannot clearly see the integration policy. Secondly, these tools are not being used effectively to serve the purpose of integration. And this is in fact most interesting, as in particular our laws on foreigners and international protection have been shaped by the European Union harmonisation framework, and has therefore been greatly influenced by the European Union's secondary legislation, in particular, by the EU Qualifications Directive and Procedural Directive. Coming from a climate that has legal systems that are more prone to legal integration, it is also a matter of conflict. Upon a closer look at the law, it is clear that there are tools for legal integration, however there is no overarching purpose for legal integration, however there are some regulations in

which it appears to be a purpose. For example, in clause ç of Article 76 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, it is stated that it is possible for an individual to be granted a permanent solution in the country in line with the conditions of the first asylum country. This means that this requirement is sought, in order for an individual who is seeking asylum in Turkey to be sent to another country on the grounds that this the first asylum country. This means that if the person cannot find a permanent solution here, the person cannot be sent here.

However when we look at our own laws to see whether permanent solutions are offered to refugees in Turkey, that is to say, whether there are clear laws in Turkey on access to citizenship for foreigners as a result of social integration, we can see that there aren't. It is unclear whether these people will obtain citizenship, whether it is possible. It is clearly stated in the temporary protection regulation that the duration in which they stay in the country will not meet the time requirement to be admitted as a citizen. However for international protection status holders, the situation is unclear. Therefore while permanent solutions can't be afforded in Turkey in terms of local integration, we are looking for a requirement that shows that the country we are sending to enables local integration: there are some contradictions. The basis of this contradiction is that the regulations we have received through transplantations are influenced by various policies and legal climates. It would be prudent to develop our own policies as soon as possible and to draft appropriate regulations.

There are tools, but that there is no clear integration policy. The most important indicators of this inference is the uncertainty surrounding the citizenship status of those under international protection. As per the Citizenship Act of Turkey, to be granted citizenship with the decision of the competent authority, together with satisfying the requirements such as time periods, the individual must also confirm their intention to settle with their behaviour. When we look at the Regulation of the relevant law, we can see that asylum seekers fall within the group of people in which the intent to settle criteria is not sought. The people listed in the relevant regulation can be thought of as examples, and it is accepted in advance that they do not intend to settle. At this point a question arises that creates uncertainty: are we to include everyone seeking asylum within the group termed 'asylums'? In that case are we to suppose these persons do not intend to settle, or are we to interpret this term as stated in the 1994 dated regulation and asylum status of today corre-

sponding to the conditional refugee status. Or if this term merely refers to those who have applied to international protection, are we to assume that it does not fall within this scope? Whatever the answer may be, it is clear that the access of those with international protection applicant holders to citizenship is not clearly regulated.

In addition to this, the transition of international protection status holders to long-term residence permits is clearly prohibited in our law. This is a clear indication that the aforementioned persons are not within the scope of legal integration. However, as mentioned before, the inclusion of these individuals within the scope of legal integration is mandatory if local integration is to be regarded as a lasting solution. For example, when the European Union long-term residence directive was published, it was not possible for international protection status holders to switch to long-term residence permits. When international organizations later pointed out the influence of particularly the UNHCR, and to permanent solutions, the Directive was amended, and thus opened the way for these individuals to change to a long-term residence permit.

I also want to touch on an important issue regarding conditional refugees. Conditional refugees cannot be supportive in terms of family residence permits. However, family reunification is an important issue in the framework of the protection of the family unit. The reason as to why the conditional refugee cannot be supportive is not outlined in detail in the reasonings of the law. Nevertheless, it can be considered that there is a provision that these persons are “temporarily” in the country and that they can not be supportive because they are presumed to be settling in a third country. However, as we know, there are people who cannot be placed in a third country and often stay in Turkey for a very long time. These people may also stay in Turkey for such a long time and form a strong bond with the country, that they may not want to settle in a third country even when the opportunity presents itself. The European Court of Human Rights has rendered decisions of this nature in accordance with Article 8 in order to protect private life. These decisions include restrictions on the deportation of people who have formed strong ties with the country.

We can see that there are no clear and definitive measures or effective regulations in our law on discrimination and xenophobia in the frame of legal integration.

What are the risks of a lack of legal integration from the perspective of refugees? If resettlement and a safe return are not possible in respect of refugees, a lack of legal integration means that the only remaining permanent solution, local integration will also not be possible. This means that the mentioned refugees will become long-term refugees, that a permanent solution will never be attained, that social integration will suffer and the positive effects of the potential of refugees will not realise in the country; it will thus create a climate of uncertainty and insecurity. Indeed, this can create real mistrust in the future, and anxiety and insecurity about the future. This in turn leads to an increase in migrant smuggling; individuals may seek places where they can attain permanent solutions even if they have to go about this in irregular ways. Additionally, this situation may in the long-term result in social conflicts instead of social cohesion. Integration is essentially a sensitive issue in the legal sense. When discussing equality and citizenship, the integration phases need to be undertaken very sensitively, because granting comprehensive rights such as access to citizenship, without any progress in social integration can not only give rise to social conflict, it can also result in the delay of securing such rights. This is why it is important to develop and implement policies in a sensitive and robust way, taking into consideration our unique characteristics.

To address the situation with Syrian refugees, we know that these people are under temporary protection. Compared to international protection statuses, temporary protection affords a lower level of protection and a less secure status. The rationale for temporary protection is to provide a pragmatic solution where the state's capacity is inadequate in an emergency but where they do not want to deport the individuals. Temporary protection can be debated at length regarding its compatibility and relationship with international protection and international law, however it can be said that it at least has a positive quality of preventing deportation in the case of mass influx. However, the temporary protection must only be valid for a certain period of time because of the urgency, otherwise it may be that the individuals who might actually benefit from international protection may be subjected to lower and less secure statuses. Indeed, temporary protection is a pragmatic and urgent solution; as it is an intermediate protection, it cannot be regarded as a status under legal integration. When we look at the Temporary Protection Directive, we can see that that there is such a risk.

Firstly, there is no prescribed time limit for temporary protection. The Council of

Ministers were granted discretionary rights on this issue, however the Council of Ministers did not use any discretion in respect of the Syrians. In addition to this, during the period of temporary protection, the international protection applications of the individuals under this protection would not be processed. In fact even after the conclusion of the temporary protection in collective terms, that the Council of Ministers had discretion in the processing of international protection applications. It seems therefore that a lack of time limit may result in these individuals remaining in an uncertain status for a very long time. Temporary protection is an exceptional form of protection. It is provided in the case of mass influx, however it may also encapsulate individuals who may actually have international protection status. While these individuals may achieve more protective statuses when assessed, they are protected at a lower level due to intensity and urgency. If the situation continues open ended like this forever, there is a risk of turning this exceptional practice into a normal one.

If the state of refugee is ongoing, these individuals should be given statuses at levels of further rights, or gradually afforded international protection status collectively. In other words, they should either be passed on to a higher status and be included in the legal integration process.

There is a clear rule in our regulations that Syrian refugees can become citizens. The time period spent in the country under temporary protection cannot be used to satisfy the 5 year period before the competent authority to obtain citizenship. However, it is possible for these persons to obtain Turkish citizenship in other ways. It is possible to obtain Turkish citizenship through marriage, adoption or having been born in Turkey but not having citizenship on the principle of blood ties. However the most controversial manner of obtaining citizenship in respect of those under temporary protection is obtaining citizenship through exceptional means. Obtaining exceptional citizenship is regulated under Article 12 of the Citizenship Act. In accordance with this article, persons who bring industrial facilities to Turkey or who are considered to meet or likely to meet extraordinary services in the scientific, technological, economic, social, sports, cultural and artistic fields and those who have been provided reasoned offer by the relevant ministries, and who are considered as within the mandatory group of people to be granted citizenships, they may indeed be given citizenship. However, the mentioned provision regulates obtaining citizenship in "exceptional" forms.

It is therefore essential that individuals who are to obtain citizenship under this provision have a truly exceptional set of characteristics and skills to bring to the country. So, for example, it is not possible to grant the entire group of temporary protection holders citizenship, the administration must show how granting citizenship to a single occupational group at a certain level of education will serve the public good. In my opinion, this provision is difficult to enforce in a comprehensive manner in accordance with the law. Furthermore, granting citizenship to those who have not yet undergone the process of integration and who have not been subjected to legal integration poses the risk of causing social conflict. I am of the view that policies should be shaped in line with the purpose of legal integration, that further, a legal integration system which covers international protection statuses is implemented, and that those with temporary protection statuses are collectively afforded more secure statuses. For example, they could be admitted to secondary protective statuses and thereby included in the legal integration phase, with better access to ultimately procuring citizenship. Thank you very much.

### **GÜLAY UĞUR GÖKSEL \***

#### **"Politics of Integration: An Analysis on Concepts and Terminology"**

Hello everyone. There are some terms that we use when we talk about integration, and in fact, post-migration policies. I will provide an analysis of these terms, and will talk about how abstract and conceptual they are, and how prone to change they are depending on changing migration profiles, time and events. Generally speaking, the main theme of the talk is that we, as NGO representatives, as academicians who influence policy makers at different times, will try to show that these are concepts that need to be reassessed and interpreted carefully considering the democratic values in light of the different conditions and different groups of migrants. Today's subject is of course how to define integration, and this is what I want to start with. Integration which is the most used concept in this framework of migration discourse is in fact abstract and difficult to measure. Although the definition of this term shows differences from country to country and from time to time, this term can broadly be defined as the ideal situation that post-migration policies wish to create. More specifically, it is defined in academic literature as the integration or harmonization of a common identity of all individuals within a given community. Thus in this context, integration is not just about specific migration,

but also about different and diverse cultural values of modern society coexisting in harmony and trust. We can conclude that the ideal and aim of an integrated society is social harmony. If by integration we mean social harmony, how are we to define this?

When we look at general political discourses, we can see that this a concept that can be defined by its abstract and deprived nature, just like the concept of integration. Unemployment and crime rates are often referred to as example of lack of social cohesion, however what constitutes ideal social cohesion is not so much on the agenda. Some factors are at the forefront, such as social unemployment as well as multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has become one of the most important topics for academics and policy makers today. We come across the issue of multiculturalism a lot in early social structures. For example, in the Ottoman Empire, the multicultural society was governed by the nation system. Concepts of universal citizenship and identity emerged with the establishment of modern nation-states. Perhaps the greatest success of the modern state is the distinction between public and private spheres. It has only been possible to enrich the individual in social, cultural, civic, individual areas and carry them to a universal position by marking a distinction between public and private areas. Ensuring that individuals have equal access to economic and social rights is a prerequisite for democracy and justice. Although theoretically understood at a universal and egalitarian level, it always refers to a particular identity. It can be described as the seizure of the public domain by the dominant culture in society in practice. The ideal of social cohesion is that minority identities and cultures can be equally represented by being included in the public domain.

Migration academics have used various metaphors to describe social adjustment. Australia, Canada and the United States have done so in an effort to first define their own national identities. In such societies where it is impossible to identify groups, these metaphors have emerged in search for another reference society to unite with in which each individual can be accepted. It is this mosaic that comes to the fore in Canada and this melting pot that America stands for. As such, we have equated integration with social cohesion. How have the strategies influenced by policies of social cohesion, and policies striving to achieve this ideal emerged in historical development? When we look at the policies in the 1960s we can see that the term integration was used synonymously with assimilation policies. There

was a prevailing view that if they don't talk like us and don't live like us, the migrants have not integrated. However, after the 1960s various migrants and diverse ethnic groups sought to find their rights and to enter the public domain with their own identities, and with such struggles, the definition and strategy of multicultural integration emerged, particularly in Canada. What does multicultural integration mean? Assimilation is in fact the antithesis of this. Different migrant groups are no longer expected to speak and live their lives differently as though they do not belong to their ethnic groups, they are only considered to integrate and maintain social cohesion if they protect their own languages and culture.

What do we mean by multicultural politics? These multicultural policies are still being addressed on a liberal level. And in the liberal plane, the first thing that stands out is individual rights and human rights. The emergence of group rights is present in states that embrace these individual rights as well as multicultural policies. In the case of these group rights, they gain their cultural identity through their individual personal identities. When we protect individual rights, how can we put group rights in the forefront, and when we put the group rights in the forefront are we not in fact disregarding individual rights? However many academicians advocating multicultural politics have been able to present this as an important element based on individual rights.

Following this, the rights of many different groups have also entered the law. These group rights and state legislations in respect of their cultures and languages, which emerged in Canada in particular after the 1960s and up until 10 years ago, precipitated media-based discourse. We saw sayings of multiculturalism being dead emerge as a negative strategy, and the emergence of other discourse stating that we no longer wanted multiculturalism in our law or migrant integration, and that multiculturalism is dead.

So why is multiculturalism dead? It is said that the reason is that minority groups are isolated and marginalized. Those leaders of multicultural policies and their oppressive forces are at the forefront and individual integration is left in the background. In giving importance to cultural policies, it may be possible to discard economic inclusion policies to the background.

Social cohesion is understood neither as assimilation nor as multiculturalism, it is redefined as a culture of coexistence. I have a definition for integration. There

is a definition not only for migrants but also for individuals of different cultural identities within society. There is a need for the creation of political, social and economic conditions that enable an individual to participate equally and freely to society in a meaningful way in the context of his or her cultural identity. Based on this definition, legal policy recommendations and conditions for integration are as follows: Three layers of integration that must first be closely related to each other and approached differently as policy makers. The first of these is the integration of individuals and the individual layer. What is meant by individual layer here is the study and analysis of being psychologically prepared for integration. So then how we psychologically prepare an individual for integration, other things are exposed when we posit this question. It represents three important emotions for the individual, together with social cohesion, proving self-identity and motivating the individual. These are self-esteem, respect and social status. If an individual is unable to tap into these emotions through family, close friends, the state, and are on the contrary excluded from these dialogues, then it is impossible for this individual to integrate publicly and with the state or socially. Social cohesion in societies comprised of such individuals, or the culture of coexistence is merely imaginary.

What are the psychological conditions of successful integration? We can see that migrants are experiencing psychological stress and lack of culture. Volunteering is very important in providing self-confidence, pre-condition and pre-emotion. When we look at refugee integration in its core, feelings of cultural stress and inadequacy are very much at the forefront, this is because these people have not migrated voluntarily or out of free will. Another psychological requirement is, of course, the ability to communicate, ability to speak the language of the country, relationship networks, family and friends, are all very important components in ensuring cultural enrichment on an individual level. This both allows psychological trauma services to be given priority, and encourages the establishment of mutual friendship relations, not only through the efforts of migrants but also through the dual efforts of the citizens of the country and society taking in migrants. When we look at the relationship between migrants and the state, as we are dealing with the issue of citizenship, we refer to this a political scientists citizenship, and we refer to migrants who later acquire citizenship as naturalisation. What is the relationship between these two? There are in fact a lot of studies exploring how much individuals and migrants integrate. One is Mipex. According to Mipex data, the level of integration of migrants who pass citizenship is much higher than those who do not. There is

a problem of working with dependant variables here, which we refer to as *expost*. This is because migrants, who are already willing to integrate, tend to acquire citizenship. It is therefore to be expected that statistically those with citizenship are also those who have high-recorded integration. We can only establish a causal relationship because the data we have is only data available from individuals who want to be more integrated.

Stanford University has an IRISS study, in which they look at another form of natural experimentation in Switzerland. The study looked at acquiring different citizenship between the years the years 1970-2003. In Switzerland, when migrants individually want to obtain citizenship they enter the closed referendum process. Up until 2003, this was cause for great discrimination and so was abolished. For almost 33 years, Swiss citizens took a vote on each individual migrant who wanted citizenship. Voting Yes or No. This was a nice and natural experiment for political scientists because if you only 49 percent of votes for citizenship, you remain an migrant. And if you get 50-51 percent, you can be a citizen. Researchers at Stanford found these people after 15-20 years, and tried to measure integration levels between people who got between 49 and 51 percent of the votes. They compared the level of integration of individuals who only received 49 percent of the vote and therefore could not obtain citizenship with the sense of belonging to Switzerland in someone who obtained 50 percent of the vote and became a citizen. And indeed, it was seen that the individuals who were citizens of this state were more integrated than the ones who were not. We can almost state that the process of naturalisation is a very important step in integration. The final objective in legal integration is citizenship, however the migrants' relations with the state is also mentioned in the context of multiculturalism. Cultural protection and education are at the forefront of these group rights. In fact, some legal privileges can be made, such as the government supporting migrants provide education through their mother tongue or allocating a budget for cultural activities in order to prevent them from losing their languages, in order to increase recognizable integration. This is the second layer of factors which allow the individual to integrate more harmoniously with society, while also allowing the state and sense of respect to play at the forefront.

The third tier is one of the most talked-about and most important tier, due to the economic participation of migrants and the value they assign themselves, the val-

ue of their social reputation, and their economic participation, however it is also the tier that we can change very little about because it is shaped by the global neoliberal economic system. But it is also an effective layer for integration. Because it is very important in ensuring the individual is able to make a living economically, establishing his or her own values, own education, own knowledge and be a member of society with these skills. These skills are very important in being able to secure employment, however when we look at migrants including in Canada, we can see that unfortunately they represent the lower layers in employment participation. And there isn't a big modelisation within this lower layer. In the case of refugees in Turkey, they are often working without insurance, and their educational history is completely erased, it is in fact we are erasing their history. We are also therefore changing the way they define themselves. Society is very influential in making this change because society has certain criteria for success and often these criteria for success do not include migrants. Indeed the first thing we tend to do is scapegoat migrants, where nothing that migrants do is considered successful, while simultaneously viewing them as a threat despite the fact their workforce is in fact cheaper than the Turkish workforce. This is a process which destroys the individual's social reputation. It is a process which requires great change but this can only be done from the higher powers. Society must mutually adapt a new measurement of success so as to ensure that migrants can be recognised for their work, education, and reputation in that society, and thereby be able to define their own identity. This is why it is important for the individual to be appreciated by the society they are part of. The university system, irrespective of which university you graduate from, allows you to find a job, Turkey has this system. However we see that when one graduates from a number of universities there are associated lack of prestige from society, and Syrians from universities whose names have not even been heard of can be confined to the lowest layers of the workforce in a way that does not permit them to get out, hampering integration further.

Finally, a further small definition on the subject of integration of migrants, migration integration is based on providing individuals with the necessary preconditions to participate to society as a useful member (and by useful I mean in terms of social status) without shame or hesitation about their identity. Preconditions for individuals may also require psychological trauma services, and language training because you cannot force anyone to be friends with anyone. We have a very big economic and social obligation. Legally, of course, there are a lot of things the

state is obliged to do. However we can define this as transformative process for society too, in which individual rights and social justice is shaped, it is a process which requires a lot of time and patience.

I want to look at politics in Europe very briefly. I have a table showing what is being done in Europe on the topic of integration. This is from the UNHCR report dated 2003. In general, there are preconditions for citizenship, one of which is to attend language courses and the other is integration courses. When citizenship was argued before the events of July 15, Recep Tayyip Erdogan had stated that we could grant Syrian refugees in Turkey citizenship, but said that they had to fulfil some conditions of integration. And when we look at this statement, we can see that this was a reference to Europe, because Europe has such prerequisites. Germany wants both documents displaying language skills and migrants to participate in integration courses for citizenship. These integration courses are compulsory. Language is compulsory in most European countries.

Finally, how is integration in Turkey defined in terms of political discourse? We refer to this as integration in academic literature because integration is defined as an abstract concept, it was defined as assimilation before the 1960s, then as multiculturalism, and multiculturalism is dead now, so this too is now defined differently. A concept that changes depending on time and volume of migrants. We can see that the term integration is interpreted negatively in Turkey too, and is viewed synonymously with assimilation, and as is the case in the law the terms cohesion and harmony are preferred instead of integration. Most Turkish academics do not like the term integration because they view it as synonymous with assimilation I think. I also think that this discursive strategy is, in fact, what the Turkish government has done. We know that the Turkish government has taken the word 'cohesion' to the forefront in its quest for alignment with the European Union. That they are against the marginalisation of Muslim refugees. They want to demonstrate the just and democratic attitude of the Turkish government. When we look at the law, we can see that it is law based on human rights, but when we look at practice and the political discourse, we can see that most politicians compare compatibility with hospitality, religious fraternity and the generosity of the Turkish people. There is an excerpt here, for example, about how hospitable the Turks are and how refugees are harmonising. There is a saying that Atilla Toros defines the Turkish people as very generous and that they welcome migrants with a culture of acceptance.

Although human rights emerges as an issue in the law and discourse, and even in the strategic term, integration, other values emerge when discussing migration with the general Turkish people which are not at all related to human rights, and which require the mutual change of society for integration, and can therefore be values which hinder.

Finally, the MAIPEX 2015 index measures migrant integration values from around 38 countries. Turkey is currently in the 38th place, the index is comprised of enabling integration, legislation, events and activities, and Turkey features as the last country in Europe. I think there are 4-5 things that they look at. For example, they look at health care, and can see that migrants can equally from healthcare. They look at education, whether they have easy access to citizenship, whether they have been given some values, questions such as these, and finally whether they the pre-conditions for integration exist. The country with the highest score is the country which has best enabled the preconditions for integration.

### **SEVİM ÖZDEMİR \***

“The Need for Status : Why Citizenship?”

***(The research on which this speech is based is published by Mülteci-der in the form of a separate report titled, “...”).***

Citizenship is seen as the final step of legal integration in terms of providing a long-term and permanent protection for refugees. In early July, President Erdoğan had made a statement that Syrians would be granted citizenship. Following this announcement, a wave of racism rose on Twitter with the trending hashtag campaign, “IDontWantSyriansInMyCountry”, and newspaper headlines such as the “Are We Supposed to Give Citizenship to These”, this was followed by a series of statements from government officials. Statements were made that those beneficial to the Turkish economy, the educated ones and their families would be accepted to the citizenship and those affiliated with terrorism would not. These discussions of course did not take place in the scope of international agreement aiming to provide permanent solutions for refugees by imposing obligations on the state. Furthermore, as is the case with the oppressed ones in Turkey, everyone but the subject of the conversation, Syrians, is voicing their opinion on the matter, and so there isn't a complete picture. Therefore, we interviewed some Syrians in Izmir,

and wanted to at least make views of a sample of Syrian people visible.

With this purpose in mind, we prepared a report by interviewing 50 Syrians, respectively consisting of Arab Sunnis, Kurds, Turkmens and Ezidis, in different neighborhoods of Izmir. We interviewed 27 women and 23 men. Much of the sample was made up of people with low income levels.

The majority of the interviewees, 44 out of 50, stated that they wanted Turkish citizenship. We asked them why they wanted Turkish citizenship. The most interesting point was that the two most cited reasons were in relation to the rights already provided by temporary protection. These people are not able to enjoy their existing rights, and want citizenship as a way of getting rid of the temporary nature of the temporary protection they currently have. They are in search of a more concrete set of rights which they can benefit from. The most articulated reasons for willingness to obtain citizenship were work permit, employment with insurance. The vast majority of the people interviewed stated that they knew work permit was regulated by the regulation and that they had this right, however it existed only on paper and it was not implemented truly in real life. They stated they wanted work permit right to be able to seek justice if their wages are not paid or if they are fired unfairly and to be able to look for jobs more easily. Doctors and engineers who we call as white collar told us that they could do their own jobs if they obtained citizenship. The majority of those who articulated work permit as a reason for willingness to have Turkish citizenship were women in spite of that most of the women we interviewed were not working, and they stated they wanted permit right for their spouses and children.

One of the reasons they want citizenship is to access the right to education. Education is a right covered under temporary protection, however it is not possible to say that Syrian children benefit effectively from education due to reasons of poverty, high costs and discrimination in state schools. Interviewee often made reference to phrases such as "for my children" and "for the future of my children", in discussing the right to education indicating that they believe the right to education is necessary for securing their future. Some interviewees stated that they want citizenship to access right to education as they had left their education unfinished and wanted to continue their studies.

Another reason for willingness to obtain Turkish citizenship was the wish for equal treatment. It is an interesting point that this reason was articulated mostly by women. For other reasons also, there were expressions such as “I am going to be like the Turks”, but there were certain expressions referring especially to equal treatment, and I think the reason this is the case is that Syrians face many types of discrimination. At least of the people that we interviewed, women who took their children to the hospital, to the school, those who were faced with nurses, doctors, the structure of Turkish society, and therefore it is quite plausible that majority of the interviewees who articulated equal treatment were women. In relation to this demand for equality, they encountered expressions that “If we’re Turkish citizens they won’t say get lost you filthy Syrians”, and “If they are going to treat us like they treat Turks, then yes I want citizenship”. They also stated that they were faced with discrimination particularly in relation with housing right. When we asked a Turkmen woman interviewee why she wanted citizenship, she stated “we can look for rental houses without worries”. Another example given on being a Turkish citizen and not having to face discrimination was at the bus companies. An interviewee told us about discrimination he had experienced with coach companies. Once he was buying a bus ticket the coach company official said 40 Turkish Liras for the ticket first but then he realized that they are Syrians. Following this he changed his mind about the price and said a higher price and told that there is no room. This interviewee stated, “If I were a citizen of the Turkish Republic, I would not have faced such discrimination”. Although Turkmens experience less discrimination due to having a common language and same origin, a Turkmen interviewee shared this experience with us.

Another reason for willingness to have citizenship is freedom of travel. Freedom of travel is a constitutional right, but Syrians do not have such a right. In the fall of 2015, Syrians’ freedom of travel was de facto banned, and then officially prohibited as of March 2016. The restrictions on freedom of travel for Syrians were put gradually. There were individuals who wanted citizenship to travel from one city to another. There were also those wanted citizenship so that they could have a valid passport. Our interviewees particularly want a valid passport in order to be able to see their relatives in different countries; most of the members of their broken families and relatives are in different countries. For example, an interviewee stated that her mother was in Lebanon and that she wanted to see her.

Other reasons for willingness to obtain Turkish citizenship include being able to obtain a loan from the bank and right to property. There is no obstacle to obtain loans under temporary protection, however most Syrians are poor and mostly precarious workers. Ordinarily even if they are working without insurance, a Turkish citizen gets 50 TL on daily basis while a Syrian person gets 35 TL, thus obtaining a loan is difficult in reality however there is nothing that prevents it legally. However, they cannot acquire property in Turkey. So I think that these two demands are seen as a solution for poverty by Syrians. There is a perception that if they become citizens, they can obtain loans more easily.

Another reason, which is the less articulated reason, is the feeling belongingness. This is mostly articulated by women but in general also, among people in the sample there were a few people articulated sense of belonging and stated that they wanted citizenship because they want "Turkey to be their country." This is an important indicator for us. As far as other reasons are concerned, Syrians want citizenship as a formal affiliation to the state which provides them with rights and not as belongingness. When we look at the overall research findings, we have seen that the psychological and identity related aspects of citizenship were barely verbalized. Apart from one Palestinian interviewee, we can say that they seek for a sense of belongingness as a solution to the cold facts they are living in. Apart from that, there were statements such as "I am going to be a Turk too". These types of statements were articulated as mixed together with wish for equal treatment. An interviewee, a single woman and parent who has lost her husband in Syria stated "Turkey can be my country, even if I return to Syria everything I had once was destroyed, I am now used to live here, I want Turkey to be my homeland". Few male interviewees talked about the feeling of belongingness, but the interesting thing is that male interviewees who articulated this reason really meant it by stating "I like Turkey very much, I want to be a citizen." Therefore, we realized that there was a feeling of belongingness among male interviewees who stated this reason and this feeling was not existing in the women interviewees.

We asked women interviewees why they wanted citizenship regardless of the roles assigned to them but we received responses from only a small number of women. Some just said it would provide them with more rights without explaining further or without explaining what they meant by saying this. One interviewee stated that if she got citizenship she could get divorced in Turkey as she would then have the

right to divorce. Other significant reasons articulated by women were that they could walk in the street by feeling safe and that if something bad happened to them they could seek justice. I think this is an important point to highlight for us. Because there is an approach towards Syrians that assumes that Syrians cannot speak Turkish and the cannot seek for justice and this approach becomes a factor for the already increased violence against Syrian women. Because of this assumption people from Turkish society see Syrian women as more easy to abuse. Therefore, I think that it is very important for women to express this demand for justice.

We asked our interviewees whether there should be a criterion. We asked the interviewees whether there should be requirements to obtain citizenship, as expressed by the government officials during the citizenship debate, such as those providing economic benefits being able to obtain citizenship. The majority said “no”. Some interviewees even responded no at the beginning of the sentence before we were able to list what the criteria are. They were particularly opposed to the requirement that those who will be accepted to Turkish citizenship ought to be economically beneficial to Turkey, because as many have pointed out, those who need citizenship most are those living in poverty. They think that it is already easier for people with good financial or educational background to access their rights. In fact, one of our interviewees stated that the matter of imposing criteria was a test for Turkey’s sincerity towards Syrians. “If the Syrians are given citizenship, this will truly demonstrate that Turkey cares about the refugees,” said an interviewee. Apart from this, those who do believe there should be some form of criteria are also opposed to having criteria based on these economic objectives. Those who do agree that there should be a criteria argue that these should be as follows; not having been involved with terrorism, good moral character, not having being involved with crimes.

In the government’s statement when this research was being conducted there was an assumption that Syrian women are exempt from working life, and that if the men obtain citizenship, their wives could also obtain. However I believe that this is completely negative for Syrian women and does not respond to the needs. Many women have lost their husbands in Syria and these women either want to work or are unable to find work or they have young children and as there is no such thing as a free nursery and they are unable to leave the children with neighbors or friends, as they have not yet formed relationships of trust. Therefore, these women

cannot find jobs because they have small children. There are many women working in informal jobs among other Syrian women, and therefore excluding women from this context will make the life of women even more difficult.

If we are to give a general summary, speaking of citizenship as a solution to only the Syrians may result in discrimination against refugees. Beside this, there is a need for a robust integration process to be implemented in order to prevent racist reactions. Syrians view citizenship as a matter of rights, not as an identity. Indeed, referring to rights already provided under temporary protection signifies that they cannot fully enjoy their existing rights. Moreover, as mentioned before, Syrians have been coming to Turkey since the beginning of the war, however their rights are still regulated by regulations, and not by laws. The result to be seen here is that people need a stable and predictable life, and the temporary protection regime does not bestow this upon them due to its temporary and uncertain nature. Many people have stated, "there is no future here, we do not know what will happen to us". As mentioned earlier, equal treatment is one of the reasons for willingness to obtain citizenship and has been articulated mostly by women. I think it can also be read as a wish for equal status, because women are in contact with many people in society and want to be of an equal status with the people they are dealing with in their daily life. They need a legal ground for them to have a voice. They think that this demand for equal status will produce favorable results in terms of access to the justice mechanism and will further reduce their vulnerability to exploitation, particularly by homeowners and employers. Indeed, people live in a house for say 4 months, or for 1 month, as they constantly face the threat of eviction. Homeowners evict people from their homes by generating excuses such as "why do you have so many guests?" and complaining about things such as noise when there is in fact no noise or amplifying small things. We can also see that the feeling of belonging is expressed by a very small number of people. We can see that Syrians are opposed against having criteria which focuses on generating economic favor from Syrians.

There are a few other findings that I found interesting. The majority of our Turkmen interviewees said "no" when we asked them, "Should there be any privilege bestowed upon Turkmen in acceptance to Turkish citizenship?" A female interviewee even responded, "No, we are all victims of war." 25 of the interviewees said that if obtaining Turkish citizenship means they would lose their Syrian citizenship, they

would still prefer Turkish citizenship, 19 said that they would prefer their Syrian citizenship. I'd like to thank you all for your patience.

## **ZAKIRA HEKMAT \***

"Turkey's Integration Politics and Afghan Refugees"

Hello everyone, I am from Afghanistan. I came to Turkey as a student. I have been volunteering with refugees since 2009. We have a business alliance with Mülteci-Der since 2010, they are doing a great job and thank you for organizing this wonderful talk. Our invaluable academicians and speakers have already discussed integration this morning, especially about politics, laws etc. I would like to talk more about refugees can integrate on a practical level.

As you all know Turkey has a very important place geographically, and has been exposed to waves of immigration for many years for this reason. Turkey has been directly used as a gateway to Europe. In my view, Turkey had no infrastructure for integration until 2012, when Syrian refugees arrived and a change took place. A new law had been enacted, the Migration Management established its new infrastructure and is currently undertaking new activities related to asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants. The topic of integration came to the fore with the new regulations. New programs were undertaken by both NGOs and the state. However, before the arrival of Syrian refugees in 2012, there were also refugees from other countries in Turkey such as Iranian, African and Afghan refugees. For example; Afghan refugees have been living in Turkey since 2001. You know of Afghan refugees, I say refugees, but the terms refugees and asylum seekers are also very confusing. Those who have left their country and have sought asylum in Turkey for whatever reason are refugees if they came from Europe, that is they have all kinds of rights leading to citizenship. But like Afghans from non-European countries, people from eastern countries are regarded as asylum seekers in Turkey. The asylum seeker has no rights except for basic rights and they have access only to these basic rights. The situation for Afghans is also very bad in Turkey because the UNHCR has suspended the files of Afghan asylum seekers. Other than Syrians, those coming Turkey from other countries also have the issue of being resettled in a third country, there is a possibility that the UNHCR will send them to any other country. However since 2012, sending Afghan asylum seekers to a third country has been completely stopped. So for this reason no matter how long Afghans have

| \*Afghan Refugees Solidarity and Aid Association (Afgan-Der)

stayed in Turkey, there is no solution provided for them and it is not a possibility for them to return their country because the war in Afghanistan has been ongoing for 41 years. There is no permanent solution for them in Turkey, in some respect, they are living as having been forgotten in Turkey.

In 2010 we conducted a field research as Afgan-Der. We went to 10 cities. Afghans were not able to speak any foreign languages, they encountered with a new culture, a new country, how they came here, how they lived here, how the conditions of their homes were, we have observed these by ourselves. The situation in each city was very bad. I say this especially for Afghans, when they come to Turkey, they go directly to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, where they are sent to satellite cities upon registration, they are not sent to big cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir. After sending Afghans to satellite cities, UNHCR does not ask if they're living, if they're eating, they don't ask a thing. For example when we went, we talked with the women in the cities, they did not have any working life, even the educated women were at home because there are no language classes. NGOs were not very active in small cities anyway; they did not speak the language, and told us they were looking after their children at home. We conducted a research in August 2016 on young people; we undertook this research in 6 different cities, one in four children aged 14 and over were working in a job. They left school in order to contribute to living expenses, they do not have work permits, and they work illegally. Suicide attempts and suicide rates were very high among these young children in 2010. In fact, we had published a report; there were 14 cases of suicide attempts resulting in suicide. This is because psychologically they had escaped from the way and arrived to Turkey and received no psychological support, they do not go to school, they are fired from their jobs, the situation at home is also very bad, and as such suicide attempts were very high. They had to work when they came here otherwise they would have been preparing to go to university, and two young girls had committed suicide because they could not continue their education.

We founded the Afghan Refugees Association in 2014. What are we doing now as an association, and how are we contributing to this process of integration? Afghan asylum seekers currently live in 46 cities, and we have volunteers in these cities. Sometimes they even gather together and elect someone as a representative and inform us. We have constructed a network by this way. For example, if a new asy-

lum seeker goes to Kütahya, they will communicate directly with us and we will give the communication details of our volunteers working there. They are helping newcomers with things like finding and buying cheap furniture and homes.

I mentioned that since 2012, the UNHCR has halted resettlement for Afghan asylum seekers, but there is one exception: out of the 122,000 people, 300 are being resettled every year. These 300 people are people with specific needs, such as single women, unaccompanied children under 18 years old. We, as an association, find these people in critical situation and inform the UNHCR about them and request that at the least those who are in such a vulnerable position are to be resettled in a third country.

The prior speakers focused on political, social and economic structures which are really important. We as the non-refugee population have erased their past and are not contributing to their lives with new things. Because I know an architect among the refugees, I know an engineer, I know an Afghan asylum seeker who is a pharmacist, and they cannot practice their own profession and are instead working in construction sites here. People who have studied for 18 years and come here and they deal with such things - and I want you all to consider their situation from a psychological viewpoint - put yourself in their shoes, it's an incredibly difficult situation. Unfortunately, it is difficult to access basic rights in Turkey not only for Afghans but also for all groups of asylum seekers. Previously there were far more challenges, however after these new laws were enacted, these challenges lessened. We can state so because at least it is written in laws on paper. There isn't much difficulty with respect to education, everyone is able to study up to high school and register with a school, but we can face problems in some cities. Sometimes it changes from school to school. They are newcomers, and it is difficult for them to adapt to the school because of not speaking the language. If a Turkish language education were given before the school starts this would be very useful for both asylum speakers and Syrians. It is assumed that the children will have learnt the language in two or three years anyway. But they are unable to make friends at school, they do not understand the teacher. We had some cases that because of the language problem children could not understand the teachers and the teachers got them out of class assuming that the children had mental problems. Also children over the 14 years old are deemed mature and sent to work by their parents, not having an education is not deemed a problem; bringing money to home is

what is important. The economy is the base for everything, the whole world knows it, and nothing gets easier without a working permit.

Regarding the work permit, some ease was provided only for Syrians but it is still very difficult for other refugees. Not even one of the 122,000 Afghan asylum seekers have obtained work permit, although many people apply they are always rejected. Another problem for asylum seekers is that they are obliged to go to the office of Provincial Directorate of Migration Management twice a week for signature to show that they continue to live in that city. During the course of our research, the people we have talked to told us that they felt like they were in prison.

There was health insurance problem before so many people died because of this problem. However, after the arrival of Syrian refugees in 2012, health insurances were first issued for Syrians only, and later - when the insurgencies came - for all asylum-seekers. Now people can benefit from health insurance after paying their contribution.

Afghan asylum seekers work at the lowest levels because they do not have work permits. There are people who work for 13-14 hours each day doing very heavy work and receiving 600-800 TL. At present the minimum wage is around 1200-1300 TL, but they are getting much less. Sometimes they do not even get this 600 TL because they do not have the right to complain, and if they complain they are punished for working illegally anyway.

And in August 2016 we carried out a project on Afghan asylum seekers who left Turkey and fled to Europe. 83% of Afghans escaped from Turkey to Europe by boat in 2015. The result of our research was both painful and showed us a lot of truth. They told us they were fleeing to Europe to get rid of a life riddled with uncertainty. A mother expressed that "We have lived in Turkey for 9 years, our children were 1 years old when we came here and are now 9-10 years old. My children ask me that "mother how much longer are we to remain as asylum seekers, when do we get a passport to go to another country, aren't we humans, don't we deserve holidays?" I can say that all asylum seekers have psychological problems. However, they have informed us that they were not like this before coming to Turkey and that they suffer psychologically when they were faced with the difficulties in Turkey. These statements came from women in particular.

Citizenship is currently on the agenda in Turkey, and everyone is talking about

it, however other groups may not want citizenship. In general, Afghans want citizenship because it is unclear that how long this uncertainty will last. They have a white identity card right now and are unable to even purchase a phone line in their name. It is a society that is so worthless. Of course, not all everyone is uneducated, some of them cannot go to the school because they have bad a financial status or do not have permission to work, and remain uneducated for this reason. We had also researched how many students we have attending college. Only 8 people out of 122,000 attended college. We also research this very small sum of 8 people, whether they received a scholarship or they were privately educated; they were all educated privately, because there is no support for Afghan asylum seekers. However, there are scholars for Syrian refugees such as the DAFI scholarship and the scholarship of Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities.. We had applied for some Afghans however we were told that they could not be given a scholarship because they were living in Turkey. That means only 8 people are studying at university level. However, education is a basic right but they cannot enjoy this right.

Why the Afghan refugees went to Europe. I would like to finish my speech by explaining this issue. Most of them think that "it is an uncertain life anyway, we want to escape from uncertainty and also we want to have a new life in Europe." Ms. Neva mentioned about family reunification, it is very important. Some Afghans told us that their family in Afghanistan or for example one said "my father is in Canada but I am in Turkey. I would like to go up to him but I cannot do it one way or another." For asylum seekers, there is no assistance in Turkey regarding family reunification. They also say that they can go to Europe at least to continue their studies. We had a survey with 250 people and 180 people of 250 people said that they only went to study. They told us that "Europe is giving us money, and in return we go to school and learn the language, we continue our studies." Afghan asylum seekers have been cast aside since 2012. There is no solution in Turkey, the United Nations does not resettle them to a third country, the procedures have stopped, and they are not even giving dates for interviews. As Afghan-der we could have asked together with other NGOs working in refugee rights field to the UNHCR by sending them letters that why these people were not resettled, or how long their situation would last, but unfortunately this was not done. We could not come together as NGOs working in this area and get an answer form UN. I would like to finish my speech. I wish that you will not forget Afghans and give voice to their

problems in future. Thank you.

## **BANU ŞEN \***

### "Refugees in the Aegean Islands"

Hello. I have been following this region closely for 5 years, I will first start by telling you briefly what piqued my curiosity in the beginning. I send news about this region to the Hürriyet newspaper. Small tragedies have started in the region at the Aegean Sea. But thus far, as far as I know, the greatest disaster was that in September 2012, where a white boat called Sailor carrying 72 refugees, trying to cross the Greek island of Samos capsized. Just 10-15 km off Turkish coast, very near here, 64 people lost their lives there, mostly women and children. It was a huge disaster, a disaster I witnessed closely for the first time. I could not get over it psychologically for 6 months, because we had dived to get to that boat. And so I felt that I had to go to explore the issue further and, of course, I started being more sensitive and selective and was constantly preparing news on the refugees. The events on the boat were very tragic because they were so close to the shore but everyone lost their lives because they were locked in cabins. I explored many of these coasts at nights with the Coast Guard, and I followed up in this area, began to examine reports. There were Amnesty reports and pushbacks, then I got further into it area. As far as you can see, Izmir has been the centre of human smuggling and has become a transit point. I interviewed human smugglers, talked to Afghans who were about to flee, talked with the Syrians, and witnessed all those moments. I have had interviews with human smugglers, and I am still doing interviews with them. I started to investigate this subject thoroughly from every angle, but before the agreement between Turkey and the European Union in March this year, I started going to the Greek islands more frequently to keep track of the situation there. If we had more time I'd have like to have shared these stories with you. We hear and write a lot, but of course there are also very interesting stories that summarize the situation. If we go back to the island, I started going to the shore often after March 20th. The situation there had to be conveyed, the world press followed the situation very closely, but no one here did. I followed the time they had crossed the border, in particular. Most recently I went to the Greek island of Chios and Lesbos last month. The situation is really bad there currently, perhaps worse than our situation, because over 16,000 people are stuck there. You just said that Turkey was an open-air prison for us, but the islands really turned to prison, and people could not

move from there. There have been people waiting there for 8 months, since March, they can't be sent back either. They have run out of money, are hungry, maybe you've been following the news too; there are constant fires in the camps. Some fires are the result of arguments between Afghan, Syrian and Iranian immigrants not being able to agree with each other, so they just burn everything, they are at a point where they are emotionally drained. The last time a fire broke out in Chios, the people of the island of Chios set fire with Molotov cocktails and left several people wounded.

There are two official camps in Lesbos, one of them is the hotspot: Moria hotspot. Those who will be returned and those who are waiting for the decision of the authorities are kept there for a certain period of time. But the detention period should not exceed one month because these people are not prisoners. Because they can't be kept in closed or fenced places, or under police pressure, after a certain period of time of awaiting a response to their asylum request, they must be released.

There is the Karatepe camp which the number of refugees is extremely surpasses its capacity. The containers are a little better, but people are trying to live there in the mud and the cold. It is a more organized camp and the Lesbos municipality tries to support these people and gives NGOs a lot of opportunity. I saw a very interesting event there, and wrote about it in the news; People have had to spend the winter on the streets in the cold because a fire broke out at the Moria hotspot. Most people's lost their documents in the fire there, and therefore their procedures have halted. They were very desperate, they could not reach to the lawyers. They said the lawyers were not answering their calls because they were not able to do anything about the situation. Crowded groups were coming back every night to the ferry pier, nobody was knowing what to do. No one was understanding the language, there were only one or two interpreters.

One evening I came across five smartly dressed women at the pizzeria opposite the ferry. I was initially reluctant, there were 4-5 women, but when I had eye contact with them, I asked if I could come in, they told me to come in, I was very curious because I don't see refugees at a stylish restaurant when I go there. They're usually in bad shape. We started to talk. Two of them were from Aleppo, three of them were from Damascus, and came with the same boat. They have reached Lesbos safe and sound, but it had been 8 months. When I asked them how they had been

here for 8 months, whether they had been sent to Turkey; they told me they had not been sent to Turkey, that they have gone through two phases of asylum seeking, and that their third phase would be in Athens two days later. They said that they could not go anywhere as nobody understood them. I also had a friend, a Greek journalist with me, he is known journalist who follows up on news on the refugees, and we started to investigate. Every day 5 women get in a cab, the camp tells them "you can go, your documents are okay, you have an interview in Athens." Then they came to the ferry, but the ferry policeman said "you cannot go, your names are not on the list." These women were going in and out of the ferry pier every day, and they had three children, terrible situation. We started to investigate how this happened, my Greek friend Moria knew the official of the hotspot camp, and she called him, they were staying in Karatepe, and he told her we had to meet with him there. Following our research, I learned that these women had their documents burned and that they had then been forgotten, their documents disappeared. As their documents had been destroyed, the data on the computer was messed up, and there was no coordination between the police on the ferries and the police in the camps.

Eventually we were helped by the Greek authorities when we tried to make news of these women. The next day we bid the women farewell, they went to Athens and are currently in Athens. There are so many people like them who have been living like this for six to eight months. I recently made a news story at Karatepe camp about a child and this child's life is about to be saved too. The child's family was a family of 9 with 7 children, this child's face has burnt and was unrecognizable. The child use hair to hide his/her face and walks around with a hat and plays with the other children in the camp. He/she only goes to the violin course, as he/she plays the violin very well. But he/she lives there in the mud. The doctors gave him medicine only, and did nothing else. We wrote about his/her story and now he/she is waiting for plastic surgery on his/her face in Athens, interestingly he/she has been waiting for 6 months also. It is very rare that people say they are waiting there for a week. They have been all been waiting there since March and are stuck there.

The situation in Chios is much worse. When we see such camps in Turkey, we say that the conditions are inhumane, children are walking in the mud on bare feet. However, images of camps in Turkey are luxurious when compared to this camp. This camp is mostly comprised of tents but there are in fact very few tents and many disputes among refugees arise oftenly. The Chios people are very reaction-

ary but people of Lesbos are not so much reactionary. They certainly do not want refugees. The night I went, there was no electricity, and there was a storm. The waves hit the tents, no electricity, no heat, they were all freezing, and they all have a canned food in their hands. Greece is a European country too and they are calling this place as a camp. There are photographs of that camp too, and journalists have shared it on Twitter. The Suda camp is really inhumane, it can't even be described as a camp. It's in a pit, and becomes a lake when it rains, there are constant fires, people are constantly being stoned there. They are stoning people who are trying to live. For this reason I think that the situation in the islands is so much worse than in Turkey, and something absolutely must be done for the people who are stuck there. I looked at the figures when I last came here, there is an average of 66 people passing through the Greek islands in December. On some days depending on the weather conditions this number exceeds 170. Lesbos is a little more humane, but the situation in Chios is really bad. The refugees are started to be excluded in our country too and it is increasing, but they are completely excluded there. They are hungry, miserable, and abandoned and imprisoned on an island. They can neither work nor return to Turkey nor go to Europe. They watch the ferry going to Athens with tears in their eyes. That's the situation there.

While I was coming here, I had made news. It was a big news story on human trafficking. It was an international operation. My wish came true at the end because we are capturing 2-3 human smugglers here, and we think that it is over, but in fact it has an international scale and they all have connections. A huge operation involving 13 countries, including Turkey and Ukraine was carried out. The details will be published later, human smuggling is a different issue. Thank you.

## **PIRIL ERÇOBAN \***

“European Border Policies and Refugees”

I will touch briefly upon the border policies of the European Union and try to focus more on Turkey - EU Readmission Agreement and aftermath. The general heading of the meeting is “the internalization and externalization of refugees, refugees in the framework of integration and border policies”; we discussed the implications of integration in the morning sessions, and integration policies and citizenship, which is the last ring in the chain. This is a perspective from the viewpoint of in-

ternalizing refugees; but it seems that in practice, both in border policies and in the conditions of admissions stipulated by countries we do not come across much with an internalizing nature. In fact for a very long time, especially since last year, through border policies and other exclusionary practices, the narrow fit of the 1951 Geneva Convention has gotten even tighter. Indeed, general policies related to refugees and practices for border policies have become more like a litmus paper test for refugee law and human rights, which has attracted more attention since last year.

I will try to make my presentation through a table. The first column of this table shows what should have happened, and the second column contains what actually happened:

Policies and practices based on human rights, and respectful of human dignity	Policies and practices focusing on security and keeping refugees outside
Migration Management	Struggle against migration The impossibility of legal and secure channels (humanitarian visas, end of visa-entry including family reunification and of visa exemptions) Border control agencies, border walls, control of fenced borders and external boundaries
The Principle of Non-Refoulement (Including non-admissions at the border)	Deportation Pushbacks Voluntary (?) Return
Protection of refugees Minimum standards in conditions of admissions (admission conditions compatible with human dignity)	Detention (administrative surveillance) Transfer of asylum procedure to third countries Stricter asylum procedures Temporary protection / secondary protection as substitutes of international protection Rising racism
Solidarity & Responsibility sharing	- Putting responsibility on origin and transit countries (readmission agreements) - Responsibility placed on the first entry countries within the EU

We want and expect that the policies and practices of Europe, Turkey and all countries regarding border management should be respectful to human dignity and human rights-based. In the morning session the presentations underlined not only that what it should be but also that it was an obligation for the states, especially regarding the prohibition of refoulement and the admission of refugees. But there are more security-based refugee policies and practices aiming at keeping refugees outside out there. In this sense, I think that even if everyone is still referring to it, the 1951 Convention is practically coming to its demise. On June 20th, World Refugee Day, I had suggested that we should have the proverbial funeral of the 1951 Convention's. I think my friends are more optimistic than I am, they did not agree.

The policies of the states on regular migration and increasingly on irregular migration do not deal with the management of migration, rather they manifests themselves as the struggle against irregular migration. Indeed, this struggle has become almost a war. When we speak of a war on migration, we are not just using this as a mere metaphor; military methods have already been implemented at the borders to stop the refugees from entering. Recall that NATO, a military organization, began patrolling the Aegean Sea as of last year to stop irregular migration.

The legal and secure entry channels that must be provided to refugees have all but closed down for the sake of the fight against migration. It has become almost impossible to obtain a visa under the strict visa rules. We, the citizens of Turkey, will probably welcome the offered facilitation to getting visas into Europe offered in response to the Readmission Agreement, because we know what we go through to obtain visas. But our pleasure in achieving this will only be at the expense of the lives of vulnerable people.

Obtaining a tourist visa has become almost impossible, and we can see that humanitarian visa practices which can be utilized especially for refugees have completely disappeared particularly in respect of refugees. As Neva has mentioned, while family reunification as a fundamental right can be an especially important legal and security channel especially for refugees, policies of different countries have made family reunification extremely difficult. While there is no visa system at the internal borders of the Schengen zone, there are now talks of "Schengen visas valid in a limited number of countries". There are limits and controls introduced to Schengen areas. Last week, the Belgian government's rejection of a humanitar-

ian visa application of a family from Aleppo was in the headlines of the European press. Germany has also increasingly raised walls, making the reunification of the family almost impossible. In the latest practice, in Germany only first-degree relatives and children under the age of 18 were deemed within the scope of the family reunification. And they want these people to have valid passports from the areas controlled by the Syrian regime. Those who closely follow Syria know that such a condition is virtually impossible, or that it requires serious financial wealth. Temporary protection statuses are being granted to the Syrian refugees in Germany but their application for family reunification under temporary protection is being denied. Similarly, Turkey has given up on the visa regime it had applied in recent years. Turkey first started applying this to those who fled from the war and conflict. Syrians arriving from the third countries have been asked for a visa since January 2016, and visas were introduced for Iraqis also. According to our interviews with counselees, it is impossible for ordinary people to get a visa in Afghanistan, it is possible only for those who have a lot of money. It is said that agencies/middlemen charge 4-5 thousand dollars, or even more in some cases, for entrance to the consulates in Afghanistan.

Therefore, leaving touristic visas aside, humanitarian visas, family reunification visas or educational visas which can be easily granted to the refugees, and which are legal and safe ways have been made impossible. People have therefore as a final resort begun to turn to people smugglers and the states have targeted smugglers in fighting irregular migration. A perception has been created that the smugglers were the source of irregular migration. But smugglers are just an effect, not the cause. In this human mobility, as long as people are in a position where they need to escape from war, tyranny, and conflict, and where legal/ safe routes are closed; they are forced to seek solutions from smugglers. Therefore, methods such as closing a route, getting rid of smugglers at a particular place, even sinking and stopping the smugglers' boats in the Mediterranean sea, which the European Union has discussed and accepted last year will not stop irregular migration, it will only precipitate the rise of other routes being opened. We have been trying to say this for years now, and those new routes will always be more risky for human life, more dangerous, more expensive, and more open to exploitation. Just as there was an increase in using the Mediterranean as a channel after the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea were almost closed in 2016. The Mediterranean is a much harder, more deadly way, for those on the road to hope. Also, according to the reports of

the European Union, there is an increase in the number of boats going from Turkey to Italy. This means higher amounts to pay for smuggling, how many people have the means to pay this money? We can say that there is class discrimination here, too.

The border control agencies are trying to control the walls, fences and European borders. The European Border Agency, Frontex has been transformed into the European Border and Coast Guard Agency by expanding its capacity and mission. The agency began its first operation under its new name and mission on the border between Turkey and Bulgaria on October 6 this year. A lot of money has been spent and the borders are being 'protected' with high technology, and a lot of human resources, special border police are being developed. Greece is the first example in Europe, there were trenches dug, which were followed by wire mesh, then this was followed by Bulgaria, and Western Balkan countries. The borders are now closed. Even in Greece, people are unable to pass from the islands to mainland, from mainland to Europe, and as a result of the controls, people are trapped in the Aegean islands. They are forced to live under inhumane conditions.

The "stopping and refoulement" operations replaced the search and rescue missions at sea. After Italy's "Mare Nostrum" operation in 2014, deaths in the Mediterranean in 2015 increased tenfold. In 2016, the number of deaths in the Mediterranean is 5,011.

To prevent irregular migration, financial and technical agreements, readmission agreements were signed with third countries. "Migration Partnership" is on the agenda with Mali, Senegal, Niger, Nigeria and Ethiopia.

Is Turkey any better? Unfortunately not. It is said that the open door policy is ongoing, but this policy has not actually been implemented for a very long time. Tens of thousands of refugees struggle to survive in the camps at the Syrian border. We do not give it much attention, but in Turkey a 3-meter high of almost 900 kilometers is being drawn up on the Syrian border. Right now, crossing the border is almost impossible or very difficult, it only happens under very limited circumstances. The arrival of people from places without border gates was also easy in the first four years, but is now almost impossible. It is said that those who want to cross have to pay serious money to the smugglers. In addition, Amnesty International, the

Human Rights Watch, reported instances of injuries, and gunshot wounds. There was a very important allegation in a German magazine recently, that there are serious violations regarding those crossing the border in this way. We do not have full knowledge what is happening in the borders, we do not know much about what is happening as Mülteci-Der, but NGOs working in the border region may hear more detailed information and statement from their counselees on this issue.

Hungary is a country with unacceptable practices, policies, and violations regarding the closing of borders. Hungary now allows only ten people to enter the country on a day. But inhumane and unlawful practices of this nature are not only limited to Hungary, and have spread like a disease. In the following presentations my friends will discuss the borders of Greece and Bulgaria: in particular what is termed as pushback. Especially before 2010 and between 2013-2014, partly in 2015, there were common stories of coming across with masked people by the sea or in a speedboat emerging suddenly and supposedly unknown people stopping refugees, throw their documents into the sea, take all their money, then push bated the refugees to Turkey illegally. As far as we can see, there are no pushbacks at sea right now but the pushbacks in Greece and Bulgaria on the land border have never stopped, there are serious violations there.

Similarly, when we look back at the Turkish-Syrian border, we hear of people being pushed back from the border in the form of voluntary return, or without ever having been registered. They took hundreds of people from the streets of those who participated in the 2015 march in Edirne, or from Basmane in Izmir and sent them to the camps in Mardin and Osmaniye. They were neither officially under surveillance, neither were they allowed to come out, nor were visitors accepted. When we met with the authorities, we received a strange and meaningless answer which was legally vacant that "the deportation process will be implemented at the gate of the voluntary return program". Indeed the answer was reflecting the reality. We believe the protection of refugees is a fundamental obligation of the state, but 'hot spots' have been transformed into closed areas, and detention/removal centers, these have been used as deterrents for people who have international protections requests. The number and capacity of the removal/detention centers, in which administrative detentions take place, has nearly doubled in the last year and is expected to rise to over 17 thousand by 2017.

The basic principle of refugee law, individual assessment, is almost never done:

“Where are you from? -Pakistan; -Where are you from? -Algeria. You? - Morocco ... They automatically approach with a “you are not a refugee then” mentality. Instead of an individual evaluation, assessments are based on the country of origin. International protection, is trying to be replaced with temporary protection and secondary protection, and they are also lacking i the minimum standards provided by international protection, e.g. family reunification is not allowed. In the past few weeks we have seen in Germany a court approve the rejection of an application by a refugee for family reunification on the grounds that they were under temporary protection. Syrian refugees in Turkey are under temporary protection, non-Syrians are under international protection procedure, but because of geographical limitations, this too is in fact a temporary asylum issue, i.e. the entire asylum system is based on temporariness.

Europe is trying to transfer the asylum procedure onto third countries. The “One on One Formula” developed between the European Union and Turkey is a part of it. Resettlement in a third country can also be considered as part of it. The transfer of asylum procedures to a third country and the provision of safe and legal channels for those accepted there, while others are not even let into Europe. They are trying to sort this before people even step foot into Europe. Beside these mechanisms, responsibility is transferred to transit countries through the concepts such as ‘safe third country’ and ‘first asylum country’.

It is very important to protect vulnerable groups for example, regarding the minimum standards. The first thing that comes to mind are children who are unaccompanied and separated from their families, the reports mention at least 10,000 unaccompanied children lost in Europe. Many of the unaccompanied children were staying in tents at the dismantled camp of Calais. After the camp was dismantled, we were confronted with unaccompanied children who were abandoned and left under the responsibility of the NGOs. A decision was made related to the children who wanted to go to England from Calais: only the children from origin countries with admission rates above 75% would be admitted to the UK. This means that only Syrian and Sudanese children were allowed to cross. However, 40% of children waiting to go to the UK are from Afghanistan and Eritrea. As the Iraqis’ admission rate has fallen below 75%, Iraq has also been out of this list as of 8 July 2016, so unaccompanied Iraqi children are also not allowed to enter the United Kingdom.

Another recent issue is that many of the state's responsibilities, from shelter for refugees to education, to health, have been transferred to the NGOs. We know that there is an economic crisis in Greece, for the last two years, perhaps even more, almost every service in the islands and on the mainland have been covered by NGOs and the state seems to have no responsibility at all. This is also very common in the Western Balkans, it also spreads throughout Europe. And now it is the case with us. Although the control of the state in Turkey is very strong, responsibilities on the issues related to the refugees are frequently delegated to NGOs particularly in the areas of education and health where the state is primarily responsible, such as temporary education centers, migrant health centers, psycho-social support services.

There are discussions of solidarity and sharing of responsibility, however attempts are being made to transfer this responsibility to third, transit and origin countries through readmission agreements and Dublin regulations in the EU and now through migration partnership arrangements, especially with African countries. The Dublin Regulations adopted by the EU for member states prescribe that the asylum seeking procedure should be carried out in whichever country the asylum-seeker enters the EU. Many countries have suspended the implementation of the Dublin Regulations for Greece since 2011, as the conditions for admission in Greece were far below standards. In other words, an individual who has entered the EU from Greece and made an asylum application in Germany, for example, was not sent back to Greece. Although the conditions in Greece are now considered to be very bad, as of 15 March 2017 the EU Commission has adopted a Recommendation stating that asylum seekers can be sent back to Greece pursuant to Dublin Regulations.

The readmission agreements are also a means to impose responsibility on third countries. Readmission agreements are offered as a means of sending people regularly, quickly, safely to their country of origin in a manner that respects human dignity. It is thought to be a deterrent effect. It is promoted as a measure taken against irregular migration, however this turns into a carrot and stick situation. Commercial and financial facilities are provided to countries as carrots. Visa facilitation is offered as in the case of Turkey, but on the other hand there is also serious pressure mounted on these countries. Even the anti-democratic practices and human rights violations in the internal policies of those countries are ignored,

which means that the problems people are facing in these country are ignored. The Readmission Agreement signed between the EU and Turkey in December 2013 was actually intended to include only irregular migrants and Turkish citizens crossing through Turkey. However, it was decided that refugees would also be included in the agreement (or shall we call it reconciliation) on March 18, 2016, and it was decided that the refugees crossing through Turkey and Europe would also be subject to the readmission process. It was said that it would prevent irregular migration, and reduce death at sea. Was it successful? If we look at the situation from the side of Turkey, Greece and Aegean Region we can say that it was successful. Death rates in the Aegean have genuinely lowered. But when we look at it from a bigger window, people who did not in the Aegean sea but died while trying to cross the Mediterranean under much more vigorous conditions. More than 5,000 people died in the Mediterranean in 2016. This is the known figure, the actual figure is probably much higher.

After the March 2016 Reconciliation, the number of those caught later in Turkey had also declined considerably. Just over 34,000 have been caught in the Aegean region as of the beginning of the year, and the number of people who crossed to Greece was over 173,000, according to the UNHCR's figures. The majority of those were arrested and the majority of them are from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, which are the three main countries producing refugees.

April 4, 2016 is the day on which initial returns were made in pursuant to this reconciliation. On that day, there were three boats from Greece came to the port of Dikili. The national and international press showed an incredible interest. The Frontex officers in the boats carrying the refugees were covering their mouths with a mask, presumably to prevent the transmission of disease, or microbes. While the refugees were being sent down from the boats meanwhile they were curtain drawn to hide what is happening there. On the first day 220 people were sent back. The extraordinary interest of the national and international press which they showed on the first day was immediately discarded, like evaporating bubbles. What happened to these people after that, how many more were returned? How many people were returned from the border? No one was interested in. According to the figures of the Directorate General of Migration Management, a total of 776 people from the Aegean islands were re-admitted between 4 April and 22 December 2016. The distribution of the readmitted people according to their country of origin can be seen in the table below:

**IRREGULAR MIGRANTS TAKEN SINCE 4 APRIL 2016**

<b>NATIONALITY</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>776</b>
Pakistan	364
Syria	94
Algeria	78
Afghanistan	75
Bangladesh	46
Iran	27
Morocco	23
Iraq	20
Sri Lanka	16
Myanmar	9
Democratic Congo	5
India	3
Palestine	2
Lebanon	2
Egypt	2
Nepal	2
Nigeria	2
Dominic	1
Ivory Coast	1
Jordan	1
Yemen	1
Ghana	1
Mali	1

In its fourth progress report on the reconciliation published by the European Union on 8 December 2016, this number is 748. Since early 2016, a total of 1187 people have been returned from Greece to Turkey. This figure includes deportations from the land border, however those who were returned to Edirne by road were not even appeared in the press. The number was 1600 in the report. In other words, when the third report was published in September, 1,600 people have been returned since the beginning of the year, and somehow 2-3 months later this number has fallen to 1187 in December! It is stated that 957 of the 1187 people are Syrian.

Those who are returned via sea are sent to the Kırklareli Removal/Detention Centre after Dikili. Syrians are taken directly to Adana by airlift and then to the camp in Düziçi. When we look at what is happening with those who were returned, we are once again informed by the European Union report. According to this report, according to information supplied by Turkey, 10 of 95 Syrians have voluntarily returned to Syria. While others are reported to have pre-registered for temporary protection. However the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has stated that two Syrians returned to Turkey on the first day of reconciliation went to Lebanon on their own request. In the EU report, as of the date of publication of the report, 47 of the 748 persons who are non-Syrians were returned to Turkey via sea and they had requested international protection and were released for being transferred to satellite cities. It was stated that one got the conditional refugee status. It was also stated that 417 people who had not requested international protection were also sent back to their countries, that is, deported. No information was provided about the remaining 284 people in the report, however we know that there are still some detainees in the Kırklareli Removal/Detention Centre for 9 months since April 4, despite having asked for international protection.

According to the same EU report, nearly 22,000 people in Greece have made asylum requests after 20 March, however making requests is different from having them registered, 10,181 of them were registered for asylum application. According to Greek and EU law, it is not possible for people who make an asylum claim to return without an official rejection decision. However, it was claimed that, for example, in the returns made on October 20, those who had made asylum requests had been returned. Those who had contacted us also expressed that they really had made requests for asylum, and there were documents showing this in their hands. What about the assurance that one could be returned without having their asylum request been assessed? The application we had made to GiGM (DGMM) as Mülteci-Der, in order to be able to meet these

people who were sent to the center in Osmaniye, was not accepted. Their justification was that the UNHCR had already met with these people.

According to the figures of the Migration Management, within the scope of the "One on One Formula" which was accepted as a part of EU-Turkey reconciliation, the 2686 Syrian refugees were accepted by 13 EU countries, mainly Germany, until 22 December. In the fourth progress report of the European Union, Turkey offered a list of 12-13 thousand people to the EU under the "One on One Formula" It has also been stated that another list of 2 thousand people is expected before the end of December.

Thus, to conclude, although we talk continuously about the integration, all these policies show us that admission conditions are kept at a minimum standard, and that border policies are based on not allowing refugees to cross the borders. The reason why 16,000 people have been kept in the islands in an uncomfortable environment rather than being sent to Athens is a result of using this policy as a deterrent. This is far more important, much more deterrent than Frontex or coast guard and gendarmerie/police control. It is deterring people from going to Europe, because these people have been clearly living in a open prison for months in the islands, with several fires breaking out, rocks being thrown at them. Therefore, when we look at European border policies, we are faced with serious embarrassment. However, we cannot turn a blind eye to our shortfalls as we criticize others. I think that we need to struggle as the civil society and to document that there are the serious violation claims occurring at our borders even if it is not a general policy but seen in the practice. I also think that we need to talk about the admission conditions and integration policies in Turkey, or rather about that there is no policy on the issue.

Thank you all very much for your patience.

**ESRA ŞİMŞİR \*****“Irregular Migration and Refugee Mobility in the Aegean Sea”**

First of all, I will not go into much detail on the topic as we all work in this field, and know each other. I'll give you general information about what we're doing and share statistics with you. We are an association founded in 1995. The first records of non-Syrian refugees were delivered to us in our Ankara office from 2013. We have offices in 45 cities where we serve them. The presentation I do in particular will address migration in the Aegean Sea, and I will share some statistics on this. We have founded 17 offices to monitor border movement since September 2015. This was our project aiming to protect refugees. But our main goal in this project was to observe the captured, rescued, pushback cases in order to be able to track both entries from Syria and the entry to Europe from there.

We also have mobile teams, consultancy teams, emergency aid teams in the Aegean Region and Southeast Region. Whichever institution may need it, they will quickly assist in a manner appropriate to their findings. We present both our own reports and findings. I had mentioned registrations. In joint registration with the Directorate General of Migration Management and the UNHCR in 2017, we register on behalf of the UNHCR, however they are working on having one center for state registrations, this will come into force in 2017.

I will go through some figures in the Syrian crisis. The temporary protection regime is under the responsibility of the Directorate General of Migration Management. There are 23 camps in 81 cities. The number of officially registered Syrians is 2,783,617. The number of Syrians living in the camps is 257,818, 44% of these are children and 46,8% are women. It is said that 930,000 children are of school age, 509,000 of them have access to education. When we look at university students there are 10,000. To date, the UNHCR has registered 4,900,000 refugees globally.

I said before that we were at the centers taking registration; ordinarily we were working intensively with non-Syrian refugees before 2011. There are 36,512 records in 2013, then an explosion in number of refugees happened in 2015, and there are 133,000 records. The distribution according to nationalities; we had an influx of Afghan-heavy refugees in 2015, followed by Iraqis. As of October 31, 2016, there are a lot of Afghans in our case load, followed by Iranians, Iraqis, Somalis and others.

According to the UNHCR statistics, the number of people who crossed the border in 2015 is 1,015,078, and the number of persons crossed via sea in 2016 is 352,822. The number of deaths in the Mediterranean in the year 2015 is 3,771, and 4,742 in 2016.

According to mortality risk rates, and we do not know how to make this any more striking, but while the number of deaths was one in every 269 people in 2015, it decreased to 1 in 88 in 2016. The ratio of deaths in crossing between Libya and Italy is 1 in 47. Due to border policies, these crossings will never stop and everyone must accept this, the risk of death increases or decreases, but I don't think it will ever end. Crossing by land is directed towards the European Union borders, that are passing via Turkey and the Balkans or through Ukraine and Belarus. 27 per cent of those who come to the Mediterranean by sea are children, and 18 per cent are women and 55 per cent are men.

Access for NGOs is a bit problematic, however we can monitor of the Removal/Detention Centers. When we take a look at refugees that are in Removal/Detention Centers, we can see that about 50 percent are children. In fact I even saw it surpassed this rate in the last period; in real crisis situation. This figure is in fact an optimistic figure; this is why I wanted to clarify it. A monthly comparison rate of crossings via sea in the Mediterranean is as follows: When you look at comparisons with the countries of origin and crossing through Turkey, in the year 2015 Greece 850,000, Italy 153,000, Spain 3,592, Malta 105. In 2016 it is in the same order, with only Cyprus different which had a difference of 28 people. When we looked at the figures in December after the readmission period, there was a calm period of 4 months after the agreement, however the mobility started again. The number of asylum seekers in the islands is 16,000. The average daily number of people reaching the island is 40-45 persons. According to the information we receive from our offices in the Aegean coast, we encounter several pushback incidents. At this moment there is a decrease in the number of these cases, but we can see that mobility increases during crossing. We provide you with official figures given to us. We observe these movements and are informed that new materials are needed when the materials are finished. There is also a current decrease due to weather conditions. The number of people caught on land and sea is 50 on daily basis.

When we look at the transit points we can see that they go to: Lesbos via Ayvalık, Küçükkuşu, Behramkale; Chios via Çeşme, Bozburun, Seferihisar; Samos via Kuşadası, Sök; Kos via Bodrum; Simi via Datça; Rhodes via Fethiye, Dalaman, Marmaris.

These are the places in the Aegean regions most frequently used as transit points in the summer of 2015. If we look at the pushback and accident rates; 33 in Izmir, 67 in Kırklareli, and 29 pushback cases in Edirne. These numbers are from 2016, which we obtained after communicating with coast guards in Edirne, Canakkale and Kırklareli. In Aydın, Balıkesir and Bursa, we can see that number of pushback cases is zero. There is 1 recorded accident in Balıkesir. The number of irregular migrants deported by December 23, including the most recent deportations is listed in our records as 801. The readmission agreements signed by the EU with the countries Syria, Greece, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Ukraine, Pakistan, Russia, Moldova, Belarus and Montenegro, will at least provide us with a framework to discuss border policies.

The numbers that we are facing with are as follows: the number of displaced persons is 65 million, while 230 million people live outside the country of their birth. By the end of 2015, the total number of refugees was 21.3 million, and the number of stateless people in the world now stands at 10 million. The number of displaced persons inside a country is about 40.8 million. We also have other data, but I did not share these because I do not want to be digressive.

Delegates from the European Union often come to visit. They ask me what I think of the situation and how long it will go for. The world is out of control, I specifically want to say that.

There is a Syrian crisis, there is a war, it's very close to the border, but Afghanistan, Eritrea, Pakistan are also experiencing difficulties. These people do not come here for the purpose of going to Europe. And we need to explain this point very well, especially at these meetings, I think that the issue is not a Syrian issue, we need to do something on a global scale. Because the issue is not only about Turkey, Syria, or borders, Europe can do whatever they can, but it will not be successful because Europe too is a part of it. The number of migrant informal workers in European countries is very high. I think they also do not know what they are going to do about this. Thank you very much for listening.

**SILA ÇINAR and BERNA NALDEMİRÇİ \*****"Turkey-Bulgaria"**

We are not an NGO working in the border regions, thus today we would like to give you a presentation in which we will share with you only two cases of pushback we have seen. I will discuss one of them and I will also talk about my responsibilities at the institution. Firstly, as the Human Resources Development Foundation, we have three offices in Istanbul. One of them is our support office for Syrian refugees in Esenler, where we provide services, we have approximately 60-65 thousand counselees. The other offices are the Elmadağ office and Central office. We have two main areas of work in our office in Esenler: protection and community access / workshop activities. I work in protection. Firstly our social workers come together with our counselees. Our social workers who speak Arabic and Turkish listen to the stories of the counselees and, if there are any vulnerable situations, they work on identifying this. Later, as the protection unit, we personally conduct interviews in necessary, critical cases with sensitive situations, one of them is pushback cases. Apart from this, we also have a community access unit.

We have carried out many workshops. We have workshops which sometimes hit a weekly number of 100. We have women's solidarity workshops, we have workshops for children. We have to work with the Esenler municipality. We have psychosocial, legal counselling and support units, we have three psychologists. They help us in the relevant parts of our interviews and when we request their help. We have family support, clothing and toy distribution but we have decided to limit and end these support. Our office has started as a psychosocial support center, thus we decided to exhaust all our existing donations and then to no longer accept donations. We have advocacy activities, our lawyers and our protection teams are in touch with government agencies, and in this sense we are striving to work in both in the field and in various channels. Our events and activities in our community center also take place in this way.

## **BERNA NALDEMİRÇİ**

We are an NGO working in the city. Therefore, we work more on issues of child labour, early marriages, and do not encounter much with pushbacks. We were actually discussing the pushback cases when Pırıl called us, so we picked up on two cases.

## **SILA ÇINAR**

We had hesitated when looking at our own database system. When we look at how many pushback cases we have, we can see that we received very few pushback cases. There is a case I have anonymized and would like to share with you. Perhaps we will first start with a brief description of what pushback is. We discussed this today, we are often talking about limitations, readmission agreements, the rising walls of Europe, wire fences and human rights violations that arise as a result. Pushbacks are one of the least visible of these. It can be described as the act of pushing back to their country of origin those who attempted to cross the border either at that time or later by violating the law. Deportation is against the law where the right to appeal has not been respected. There are incredible illegal practices. These practices really include great violations of human rights, unfortunately. At one point In accordance with international law also, the being banned means being deported.

The case I want to share with you is the case one of our first counselee. Firstly, people tend to recount events that have happened to them in more details once they are in a safe environment. So if it is an issue of security and safety, our social workers notify our protection department. Our main task at this point is to have pushback interviews with those who come, and report this to the UNHCR. They then also conduct pushback interviews. In a case we have used as an example, we had a Syrian refugee woman who was receiving threats in Turkey in relation to her ethnic identity and wants to go to Europe through Turkey. So she and her husband, they go to Edirne together to go to Greece and they meet with a smuggler whom they are in contact with. They meet in Edirne and at around 8-9 in the evening and this person takes them to the Meriç River. They're see another couple there too.

They ride across to the other side in the boat. Later, of course they are subjected to very bad conditions, they get wet, they get cold, they start hearing gunshots and so they hide out in the woods where they spend the night, they then all walk to the train station together to get to Athens. At the train station they are noticed by the police

who stops them and asks them for their passports. One common thing we usually see in pushback cases is that people's telephones are taken away. The reason for this unlawful action is that this action against human dignity is not to be documented, for this reason phones are being confiscated. They take off their clothes and beat them.

We encounter very similar practices in the situations of those captured by officials at the border. They either rob people or take them to places they do not know or beat them. The security guards continue beating them even when they are told that the woman they are beating is pregnant. She later stated that she had suffered a miscarriage. They leave them at the Turkish border and go back. This is one of the cases that our counselees have shared. The main thing we do in a case like this is asking specific critical questions in detail, such as where did you go, who aided this, which border were you trying to cross, where did they take you? Most people do not know the answers to these questions, routes taken by smugglers are also not very clear, the weather is dark or their spatial ability is not alert throughout this process. For this reason, we interview with questions of critical importance in order to document the incidents that breach human dignity so severely. Then we report these to the UNHCR and they begin carrying out their own processes; they begin contacting with authorized bodies. This is my case, and it is unfortunately very saddening. Now Berna will talk to you about her case.

## **BERNA NALDEMİRCİ**

I think that we received around 4-5 cases in total, and we anonymized and shared these. This is a recent incident: a 20 year old Syrian male refugee is trying to cross Bulgaria from Turkey. Of course they start the journey from Istanbul and they do not know which route and vehicle they are going to take. They start the journey as a group of 5 people and the people they have paid dropped them off near the border. They told us it was a boat, but don't imagine something big, it's just enough to float on the water. At that point, the smugglers have done with their work. Then, they get out of the water, and get back on the land, and are later caught by the Bulgarian police, who asked for their passports, they were then taken to the police station. They do not keep a record at the police station at all, of course. They didn't have passports anyway, their phones were taken, their sim cards were taken so they could not be tracked. There's an extra treatment going on here, torture. Their clothes are removed, they are strip searched, they stay in prison for 10 days, they do not have food or water, and they are beaten.

Then they are deceived by being told that they will be taken to the camp, they are put in a car, and taken back to where they came from. At a point where there is no one on the Turkish border, their phones are put in plastic and throw to the opposite shore, and they throw the refugees into the water then they come to the Turkish border and walk for 5 hours.

## **SILA ÇINAR**

We wanted to give a brief presentation on these two cases only. Thank you so much.

## **PIRIL ERÇOBAN**

Last year, when there was an influx of around 10,000 people in Lesbos, as you know, this was noted in the world press. However, unlike as shown in the world press, Lesbos was a hotspot many years before that, and it seemed to be a stepping stone for people who wanted to go from Turkey to Greece to Europe, and all throughout these years, a handful of activists in Lesbos have tried to support those people I think in 2012, they set up “Picpa”, which means “Everyone’s Town”, it was an abandoned camp, they took the place and turned it into a place to live in, and the refugees who were forced to spend time on the island were guests there, they helped them with everything. Up until this year, those who stayed there generally stayed there for a few days and then went to the mainland. But since last year, people have been staying for longer terms at Picpa. Efi is one of the founders of Picpa. In 2008 we formed a group called Kayiki, which is part of the Aegean Refugee Support Program. She really wanted to be here, really, but she got ill in the midst of all the work. She has been very ill for a week, that’s why she couldn’t be here, she was hoping to come up until the last minute but couldn’t make it. She has instead sent us a video, a video of about 10 minutes long. Also another one of Efi’s group in Lesbos received the NANSSEN award this year at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2016. This is a very prestigious award for the ones who work within the field. In some sense the workload has increased even more, but the work they have done over the years, and their efforts have been vindicated. There genuinely wasn’t an end to the phone calls received around midnight, she didn’t have a personal life anymore, that why I think she really deserves it. We are now going to watch her message for us.

**EFI LATSOU DI (Video recording) \*****"Situation in Lesbos"**

Good Morning. This was a very important meeting for us, but I unfortunately could not attend due to my sickness. I want to say a few things about the current situation. As you know, 60,000 refugees have been trapped in the islands since the border closed. There are also a large number of refugees in Lesbos, where conditions are quite severe. You may have heard about the fires in Moria, there was a protest in the big camp there, and an old woman tried to cook a month ago in a tent that died of poisoning from the gas. We receive news every day. The asylum procedure takes far too long, people are being held here yet they do not know what is going to happen to them there, no one can provide them with answers, they do not know how much longer they are to stay. Protests are being held in both Greece and in the camps every day. Even if people are included in the asylum procedure, they have to stay here for months, but this procedure is now at a standstill. I had an asylum interview yesterday with a torture victim who has been waiting for several months and we went to Moria together and the Africans there were also protesting, they knew they had no future here. We waited for a while, but seeing these people waiting there requires you to also wait to be able to interview them. Then the procedures were stopped because the protesters went to the asylum office, this is something that constantly happens in Moria and the application window was closed. The office was empty because employees do not want to risk their safety. Everyone there has to go back again to have their application interview. People are in great uncertainty about the future, they have great anxiety, we come across those with psychological problems and psychiatric problems. It is very difficult to cope with these and we can see that people are really desperate. Even if the political decision is put into effect, we can see that the Geneva Convention and people's' individual right to asylum are being violated. It is very difficult in terms of human rights but they are still trying. Governments in the European Union are also trying to do something, and they believe that this will be a solution. This is a disaster for us because we are forgetting about human rights and it opens a very dark door for future for Europe, and this is very bad. What can we say about integration, it is very difficult in these circumstances because no one talks about the future of these people and it is very difficult for them to be integrated without knowing how long they are to stay there and where they will go after. The islands are therefore like an open prison for them, they cannot move, they are awaiting the legal process to work, and no one knows how long this will take, this is an unknown period.

Together with another group we had some events in our camp, within the scope of Picpa. We have set up an education and support center In Lesbos, we have language courses, art courses, music lessons, activities, workshops in the camp which we do with all refugees and we feel that we can give them something. We give them things aside from money, but we work in very difficult conditions. What we're trying to do actually is to work locally, and to provide local participation.

Another problem is that racist groups have increased a lot more. This is because we need to persuade people. Local people are increasingly angry at the refugees. In some cases there are small incidents but we can see that there is a rising anger in people. Because the economic crisis has already hit local people. They have security issues, they cannot find answers to their questions, so refugees become easy and open targets. We are in very difficult conditions and racism, anger, hostility are increasing. Beside the refugees, there is also a lot of backlash at the volunteers working for them. For example, they believe that these volunteers do not care about the local people, that they create problems, they think things like they are getting money. We therefore need to inform them, we have to work on this on a daily basis.

For the closing statement; there are still boats and ships coming for us, there have been push back operations, that is to say they are pushing people back from the Greek waters back to the waters of Turkey, but this is not approved. The biggest debate is that Erdogan will send more refugees to the islands. If the European Union is told that it will send more refugees to the islands if it cannot meet its demands. It is absolutely wrong for the refugees to be used as weapons and threats. We are not sure of the future and it is crucial to cooperate with the Turks. We must work together for our common future, and to protect human rights and solidarity. We need to take great steps in this direction but it is very important for us to remain together, that is, to cooperate with the Turks. I hope that we will come together again soon and discuss these matters again. Thank you so much.

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