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MINARET POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

These are policy recommendations from our **1st and 2nd Awareness-Raising Thematic Workshops** of the Migration Network for Asylum Seekers and Migrants in Europe and Turkey (Minaret) Project. Participants included civil society organizations, members from academia, refugee service providers and experts on migration and human rights. The views expressed herein are not the official positions of the Global Political Trends Center (GPoT) or other partners involved in the project such as ANCE, HRDF or ASAM.

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Approach to the Syrian Refugee Issue

Considering Syrians as a homogeneous group creates several problems since they have various ethnic, sectarian, and class differences. Pursuant to this, generalizations on Syrian refugee issues should be stopped. Furthermore, approaching the refugee influx as a "natural disaster" will not lead to the finding of a sustainable solution to the problem. People should hence refrain from equating the refugee issue to a natural disaster and also avoid the politicisation of the issue.

The Role of Media

The media should not promote discrimination and xenophobia against Syrians. The focus should not only be about negative effects associated with refugees, their positive aspects should be communicated in the public sphere too. For instance, Syrians operating jobs and making positive contributions to the economies of the respective countries of residence. Additionally, with regards to social media, since the users of social media are constituted of young people, talks and discussions on migrant and refugee issues should be organized in schools and universities to raise awareness and educate young people. Awareness-raising will allow people to be more acceptable of refugee plight through the help of media and publications. This will inextricably lead to introspection of how individuals are receptive to diversity and prejudices concerning issues pertaining to migrants and refugees.

Cooperation

Due to the fact that the refugee issue is not a one-sided problem, organizations such as UN, EU and neighbouring countries that host refugees should cooperate in the sharing of information in terms of best practices in addressing refugee concerns. There should also be more international cooperation and collaboration among NGOs; this will influence policy-making in dealing with refugees. Essentially, networking improvements alongside enhanced dialogue between government authorities and NGO/INGOs, and among refugee host countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. This will minimize the trust issues between government authorities and NGOs.

Alternative Actors

There is the need for the inclusion of alternative actors. Aside local and international NGOs who have been heavily involved in the refugee issue, local governments such as imams, mukhtars, are viable message carriers and resources in terms of addressing problems and facilitating verification exercises. They live and in some cases worship with them, hence they know and understand local refugee residents better.

Sustained Research

There should be continuous research activities especially more focused field research on refugee situations; this will help in understanding their issues from a broader perspective. Significantly, the gender dimension and gender-related issues, LGBTI as well as human trafficking and refugee smuggling should be key focal points for more sustained research.

