

“Solidarity Rather than Charity” Reaching out Syrian Refugees in Izmir*

Elif GÖZLER ÇAMUR¹ & Adil ÇAMUR²



¹ PhD., Research Assistant; Yalova Üniversitesi- Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü



² M.A., Research Assistant; Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi- Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Abstract

Izmir as the third biggest city of Turkey and a transitional hub for crossing Europe attracts refugees for economic activity and migration networks. In such a city with a high number of vulnerable refugees, civil society organisations took the initiative in providing legal assistance and humanitarian aid, because local and central governments fall short to meet the needs of refugees due to the legal and structural problems.

“Society for Building Solidarity Bridge between Peoples” which is also known as “Peoples’ Bridge Association” is the main focus of this study within the context of charity and solidarity approaches. Peoples’ Bridge Association, which defines itself as a solidarity group, was founded to build peace between different cultures, yet, following the Syrian war, their activity has concentrated on refugees. Peoples’ Bridge Association became the most active organisation soon after and started to contact local and central authorities over refugees’ problems, organised medical screening and distributed humanitarian aid.

In this study, it was discussed the activities of Peoples’ Bridge within the concepts of ‘solidarity’ and ‘charity’. This study starts with the legal status of Syrian refugees in Turkey and their access to basic services. Following Turkey’s legal framework regarding refugees, the ways of dealing with refugees adopted by civil society organisations were discussed within the context of charity and solidarity. Next, general information and numbers regarding the conditions of Syrians in Izmir were shared. Finally, the solidaristic activities and discourse of the Peoples’ Bridge Association were examined.

Keywords: Syrian Refugees; Solidarity; Civil Society Organizations; Peoples’ Bridge Association.

“Yardım Yerine Dayanışma” İzmir’de Suriyeli Mültecilere Ulaşmak

Özet

Türkiye'nin üçüncü büyük kenti ve geleneksel bir mülteci geçiş noktası olan İzmir, iş olanakları nedeniyle ve mülteci kaçakçılığı gibi yerleşmiş göç ilişkileri bakımından mülteciler tarafından tercih edilmektedir. Çok sayıda savunmasız mülteci barındıran İzmir’de, yerel ve merkezi yönetimler hizmet sağlamada yetersiz kaldıklarından sivil toplum alanından organizasyonlara ihtiyaç duyulmuştur.

Sahadaki en görünür kuruluşlardan biri olan ve “Halkların Köprüsü” olarak da bilinen “Halklar Arası Köprü Derneği” çalışmamızın asıl odak noktasını oluşturmaktadır. Kendisini bir dayanışma grubu olarak tanımlayan ve kurulmasından itibaren, İzmir’de bulunan farklı kültürler arasında dayanışma ağları kurmak için çalışmalarda bulunan Halkların Köprüsü, Suriye krizinin yoğunlaşması sonucu odak noktasını Suriyeli mülteciler üzerine yoğunlaştırmıştır. Dernek, kısa zamanda mülteciler konusunda en kapsamlı çalışmaları yapan kuruluş olmuş ve yerel-merkezi otoritelerle temas kurmuş, tıbbi izleme ve insani yardım dağıtımı konusunda çalışmalar yapmıştır. Derneğin bu önemli konumu ve benimsediği dayanışma kültürü detaylı incelenmesi gereken bir konu haline gelmesini sağlamıştır.

Bu çalışmada, Halkların Köprüsü Derneği’nin çalışmaları ‘dayanışma’ ve ‘hayırseverlik’ kavramları çerçevesinde tartışılmıştır. Çalışma, Türkiye’deki Suriyeli mültecilerin yasal statüleri ve temel hizmetlere ulaşımı ile başlamaktadır. Türkiye’nin mültecilere ilişkin yasal çerçevesinde ilişkin genel bilgidan sonra, mültecilerle ilgili çalışma yapan sivil toplum kuruluşlarının mültecilere yaklaşımı yardımseverlik ve dayanışma kavramları bağlamında tartışılmıştır. Sonrasında, İzmir’deki Suriyelilerin koşullarına ilişkin genel bilgiler ve rakamlar paylaşılmıştır. Son olarak, Halkların Köprüsü Derneği’nin faaliyetleri ve söylemi dayanışma kavramı bağlamında incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Suriyeli Mülteciler; Dayanışma; Sivil Toplum Kuruluşu; Halkların Köprüsü Derneği.

Corresponding Author : Elif GÖZLER ÇAMUR
Yalova Üniversitesi- Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

E-mail : elifgozler1@gmail.com

Manuscript received : 25 September 2018

Revised manuscript accepted : 28 November 2018

*This paper is the revised edition of the presentation made in ASN World Convention 2016, Columbia University, New York.

“Solidarity Rather than Charity”

Reaching out Syrian Refugees in Izmir

I don't believe in charity. I believe in solidarity. Charity is so vertical. It goes from the top to the bottom. Solidarity is horizontal. It respects the other person. I have a lot to learn from other people.”

– Eduardo Galeano.

Introduction

When the clash between opposition and the government reached its harshest phase in March 2011, the uprising turned into a bloody civil war in Syria and affected the entire Middle East region including Turkey. As a result, 6.6 million people (UNHCR, 2018a) were internally displaced and 5.6 million (UNHCR, 2018b) fled to neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. The majority of Syrians fled to Turkey due to “open door policy” and Turkey’s geographical proximity as a transitional migration hub.

The Syrian refugee migration towards Turkey started on the 29th of April 2011. The first group of refugees were settled in the Yayladağ Refugee Camp in the border city of Hatay. Afterwards, more refugee camps were built as the number of Syrians fled to Turkey increased. While the number of Syrian refugees was 133,000 in September 2012, it reached 3,591,714 in November 2018. The majority of Syrians live in urban areas despite the existence of official refugee camps. By the 1st November 2018, there were only 157,515 Syrian refugees staying in Refugee camps in Turkey (General Directorate of Migration Management, 2018a).

Today, it is possible to see Syrians in almost all cities of Turkey, especially in major cities and the Southeast region. The population of the South-eastern border cities increased significantly due to the refugee influx (Orhan & Gündoğar, 2015). For instance, the population of the border city of Kilis increased dramatically by 90% and the number of Syrians exceeded the local population (General Directorate of Migration Management, 2018a). Syrians living in urban areas can be mainly divided into three groups. Firstly, those who have the objective to go to European countries, since traditionally Turkey is a transitional migration hub because of its geographical location (Kirişçi, 2007). Secondly, those who decided to stay in Turkey and to build their lives in this country. Finally, those waiting to return Syria when the war ends (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

In order to manage the massive migration flow from Syria, Turkey's migration policy was re-designed. To this end, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (General Directorate of Migration Management, 2018b) was drafted in 2013. The new legislation also established the Directorate General of Migration Management. According to this regulation, Syrians were identified under the "temporary protection" status. This status was designed in order to manage the temporariness of Syrians' stay and did not entitle refugee rights including international protection. In this respect, Syrian refugees had a limited access to the public services supplied for "official" refugees. As a result, civil society organisations assumed roles in issues related to refugees.

Civil society organisations regarding the Syrian refugees can be categorised as either Refugee-based organisations, or organisations that rearranged their activities for refugees following the Syrian flow towards Turkey. The activities of these organisations can be considered within context of solidarity and charity concepts which is a contested issue in refugee research (e.g., Ataç et al., Cantat, 2013; 2016; Millner 2011 & Rakopoulos, 2016). While some of these organisations refrain from politics and focus on humanitarian assistance, others became highly political, especially over issues regarding migration policies and providing solidarity.

The city of Izmir, as the focus of our study, is a major destination for Syrian refugees. As it is the third largest city of Turkey, its employment opportunities both in urban and rural areas attract refugees. It is also a transitional hub due to its close proximity to Greek islands. Refugees usually live in poverty and do precarious work in informal sectors. Moreover, the services provided by local administrations in Izmir are very limited when compared with the South-eastern border cities (Çamur, 2017). As the central and local administrations fall short in providing services for refugees, civil society organisations took the initiative in providing legal assistance and humanitarian aid. As a longstanding transitional hub, Izmir already had various organisations dealing with refugees before the Syrian influx. The number of organisations dealing with refugees increased as Izmir became a notable refugee destination following the Syrian war.

In this study, the refugee-related activities of "Society for Building Solidarity Bridge between Peoples", also known as "Peoples' Bridge Association (Halkların Köprüsü Derneği)" in short, is discussed within the context of the concepts of charity and solidarity. Peoples' Bridge Association (PBA) was established in 2014 to provide solidarity between different ethnic and

religious cultures in Izmir. In this sense, the activities of the PBA focused on refugees as soon as the Syrian flow to Izmir started. PBA identified itself as a solidarity group with its activities and discourse. PBA became a prominent organisation in Izmir in respect of refugee advocacy, raising awareness, humanitarian solidarity, reporting and medical screening. As expressed by PBA itself, these activities differ from other civil society organisations with respect to their actions and discourse. This aspect of PBA will be the main focus of this article as it explores the dichotomy between solidarity and charity in the areas of refugee research.

This study starts with the legal status of Syrian refugees in Turkey and their access to basic services. Following general information on the condition of Syrians in Turkey, charity and solidarity concepts will be discussed as ways of dealing with refugees adopted by civil society organisations. Later on, the conditions of refugees in Izmir will be explained. Finally, solidaristic activities and discourse of the Peoples' Bridge Association will be examined.

The study draws on an insider's view of the authors as volunteer members of PBA. It aims to critically evaluate this experience within the context of the relevant literature as well as an interview conducted with the founder and the president of PBA. The Reports and publications of PBA were extensively used in this paper as well.

The Legal Status of Syrian Refugees in Turkey and Access to the Services

Turkey does not entitle refugee status to Syrians. The regulations regarding the legal status of foreigners in Turkey are based on the 1951 Geneva Convention. Turkey approved the Convention in 1961 yet added a geographical limitation, which means that Turkey can only give refugee status to citizens of member states of the Council of Europe. Due to the geographical limitation, by 2017 Turkey had accepted only 90 people in total as refugees (Erdoğan, 2018, p. 10).

Following the Syrian influx, the government reviewed its migration policy. As a result of massive migration, Turkey implemented an "open door" policy and made new institutional and legal regulations to manage migration. Obviously, the regulations and limitations based on the 1951 Geneva Convention are out of touch with today's realities. In this respect, the 2013 Law on Foreigners and International Protection is the first comprehensive regulation.

The people coming outside of Europe whose applications to third countries are in progress are entitled to conditional refugee status in Turkey. Syrians refugees in Turkey are accepted under temporary protection. The Temporary protection system is an exceptional method

preferred during the massive asylum periods (Ergüven & Özturhanlı, 2013, p. 1038). Although it was not defined in Turkey's regulations until 2013, temporary protection status was used based on the non-refoulement principle of international law.

Through this new regulation, the General Directorate of Migration Management (Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü) was established. The Syrian influx coincided with the establishment of the General Directorate of Migration Management (Kirişçi, 2014, p. 8). The responsibilities of this institution were previously carried out by the Security General Directorate. The 2013 Regulation also introduced new definitions for the migration management. Along with the 2013 legislation, the 2014 Temporary Protection Regulation (General Directorate of Migration Management, 2018c) was drafted in order to define the details regarding the operational aspects of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The 2014 Regulation defined the guidelines for the access of Refugees to services such as education, health and shelter.

Nearly half of the refugees are children (UNCHR, 2018a). During the early days of refugee influx, the education rights of refugees were regulated by the Temporary Protection Regulation. The Syrian children who are residing in the refugee camps had a certain level of access to education in Syrian syllabus, through the help of Syrian refugee teachers who were also residing in the camp under the name of "Temporary education centres". However, as the refugee families started to settle permanently, the "Migration and State of Emergency Education Head of Department (Göç ve Acil Durum Eğitim Daire Başkanlığı)" was established by the Ministry of Education in 2016. Thus, temporary education centres were closed and the refugee students were directed to the state schools to receive education in Turkish syllabus (Erdoğan, 2018, p. 30). However, despite such improvements, many refugee children are deprived of proper education, because most of them work as seasonal workers, cannot speak Turkish or are forced to beg on the street instead of attending school. As for higher education, the Higher Education Council issued several decisions regarding the registration and attendance of Syrian refugees in Turkish Universities, especially in border cities (Sert & Yıldız, 2015, p. 35).

Over the years, since the Syrian migration started, there have been several regulations regarding the refugees' access to the health care. In this sense, Syrians have been granted a limited access to health care. These limitations include areas such as organ transplant, prosthesis and illness which require long-term treatment (Şimşek, 2017, p. 19). There are also serious health concerns in camping areas for rural workers where Syrian refugees live collectively.

Most of the Syrian refugees work in informal sectors. Syrian refugees are regarded as cheap labour and are heavily exploited by employers in Turkey (Bélanger & Saraçoğlu, 2018). The government issued a circular in January 2016 allowing refugee employment in particular sectors. Refugees providing a valid temporary protection identity card were entitled to this right. Accordingly, every refugee with a valid temporary protection identity card can apply for working permit after staying in Turkey for six months. In this respect, only 10% of the employees can be refugees, excluding the seasonal agricultural workers (General Directorate of Migration Management, 2018d).

Syrian refugees face problems to get access to services provided by local administrations. This originates from the status of Syrians. As Syrian refugees are not Turkish citizens, they are not entitled to access services provided by local administrations because the status of refugees is not specified in the legislations of local administrations. As a result, different local administrations adopt different approaches when providing services for refugees (Çamur, 2017; Erdoğan, 2017 & ŞPO İstanbul Şubesi, 2017).

The Temporary protection status, which allows governments to respond to massive migration flows, has been used for the past eight years, making refugees precarious and vulnerable. Its temporariness also makes it difficult for refugees to access public services. This makes Syrians depend on civil society organizations to sustain their lives. Civil Society organisations generally engage in humanitarian aid. Very few of them approach the matter as a solidaristic or right based issue. In the next section, the difference between charity and solidarity will be discussed.

Civil Society Organisations and Refugees: Dichotomy of Charity and Solidarity

As stated by Mackreath and Sağniç (2017, p. 29), the number of civil society organisations increased dramatically following the Syrian refugee influx to Turkey. This increase was related with the problems created by the refugee legal framework in Turkey. Since central and local governments are unable to meet the urgent needs of refugees, international and national civil society organisations appeared as important actors in the field.

The existing literature on refugees and the role of civil society organisations can be defined as multi-disciplinary, encompassing various areas such as refugee, social movements and citizenship studies. The majority of recent studies focus over the role of these organisations in the areas of integration (Sunata & Tosun, 2018), labour (Bélanger & Saraçoğlu, 2018),

humanitarian assistance (Aras & Duman, 2018), social cohesion (Çebi, 2017), refugee communities (De Elvira, 2018) and refugee solidarity activism (Ataç et al., Cantat, 2013; 2016; 2018; 2016; Millner, 2011; Rakopoulos, 2016 & Rygiel, 2011). The organisations dealing with refugees are mostly defined within NGO concept. However, other terms such as “migrant organization” (Sezgin & Dijkzeul, 2013), “NGO-R (non-governmental organizations-refugees)” (Sunata & Tosun, 2018), “third sector” (Garkisch et al, 2017) and “migrant non-profit organization” (Martin, 2012) were also used in order to identify those organisations. In this study, as distinct from the literature, we use the term “solidarity group” in order to identify the Peoples’ Bridge Association and evaluate their activities within the concept of solidarity.

Solidarity as a way of dealing with refugee problems arises as a critic of the charity concept. In this respect, charity based humanitarian assistance was criticised for providing temporary assistance and limited relief, along with depoliticising consequences (Cantat, 2018, p. 9). Charity is characterised by Durkheim as the encouragement of inequalities between the members of a society. Accordingly, while charity focuses on the relief of individuals’ problems, justice focuses on power relationships and inequalities in the society and seeks solutions to these inequalities (Schoenfeld & Mestrovic, 1989, p. 122).

The dichotomy between charity and solidarity was reflected in refugee and migration studies especially within the concept of “solidarity activism”. Gil Loescher (1993), in his piece on refugee crises in the Cold War era, stated the inadequacy of humanitarian solutions as a response to refugee crisis, and instead suggested a political action in order to change the existing situation. The distinction between charity and solidarity can be blurry due to the humanising character of solidarity (Rakopoulos, 2016, p. 146). For instance, delivering food or clothing can be both seen as an act of charity and solidarity. Therefore, departing from the “No Border” example, Millner (2011, pp. 325-326) focused on the method of aid distribution. Accordingly, systems of queuing or controlled operations preferred by the charity organisations create a sense of “we are helping you” and build a wall between the donors and refugees. Conversely, a more direct approach practiced by solidarity organisations creates a sense of sharing. In addition to the different ways preferred by these organisations, being politically active can also be a feature of a solidaristic approach. As observed within the activities of the migrant solidarity groups in Calais and Greece opposing racism and discrimination, holding demonstrations to change the immigrant policies is an important aspect of being a solidarity group (Cantat, 2013, p. 16).

Within its context and discourse, PBA appeared as a solidarity group in dealing with refugees. Before examining the activities of PBA within the solidarity approach, the general situation of refugees in Izmir will be shared for better understanding.

Refugees in Izmir

Currently, Izmir hosts 139,979 refugees under the temporary protection scheme (General Directorate of Migration Management, 2018a). Izmir is a gateway, frequently used by refugees in order to cross European countries for a safer and better future. As it is located in the west coast of Turkey, the close proximity to the Greek islands makes Izmir an easy, yet mostly dangerous choice for transits via the Aegean Sea. Izmir has been the traditional migration hub for the refugees who plan their transits to European countries. In this respect, networks related to human smuggling already existed, especially in the central Basmane district (İçduygu & Toktaş, 2002 & Wissink et al., 2013). Basmane has a lot to offer to refugees with its range of budget hotels, refugee equipment and experienced human smugglers to organise their transit to a nearby Greek island. Along with the massive Syrian migration, the network of refugee smuggling just became stronger and unfortunately more brutal.

The table below shows the number of Syrian refugees in the different districts of Izmir. Accordingly, Syrians mostly settled in areas where they can find affordable accommodations and informal jobs in urban slums, and in rural areas to be employed in the agricultural sector.

Syrians in urban areas of Izmir province can be classified in two groups. While transitional refugees live in temporary accommodations, waiting for their smugglers' calls, others try to start a new life and seek jobs. Generally, these two groups of refugees settle in poor neighbourhoods located in slum areas. Traditionally, these areas are the entry point for incoming migrants where they can find affordable housing and informal job opportunities (IOM, 2015, p. 45).

The massive flow of refugees to these areas also transformed basic urban amenities such as parks, markets and cafés. While parks and cafés simply became the new shelters and low-budget accommodations, markets started to sell refugee equipment like life jackets, tents and waterproof items. In the rural areas, Syrians work in agricultural sectors as seasonal workers after being collectively brought there by middlemen from the border cities of the South-East.

They have been settled in camps in the fields during the harvest periods without the necessary sanitation and electricity to reduce costs. These camping areas have never been adequately controlled by authorities; therefore, they are open to health problems and abuse.

In a city with such high numbers of vulnerable refugees, the need for civil society organisations is indispensable because local or central governments are unable to meet the needs of refugees due to the reasons explained above. Therefore, various civil society organisations take the initiative to provide humanitarian and legal assistance for refugees.

Peoples' Bridge Association

PBA was established in 2014 to create solidarity and connection between people on the basis of justice, equality and freedom (Halkların Köprüsü, 2017). PBA aims to carry out activities to build peace between different cultures. It organises activities to eliminate the prejudices between different cultures in Izmir and build networks of solidarity, respect and friendship to provide social peace. Originally, PBA was founded to provide solidarity for the vulnerable people from different cultures, yet, following the Syrian war, they started to work on refugees. This trend was widely observed throughout migration crises in Turkey. As argued by Mackreath and Sağnıç (2017, p. 32) various solidarity and aid organisations changed their existing activities to target refugee groups.

According to a research on the profile of the members of PBA, 149 of the 285 members are female and 136 are male. Half of the members are below 35 years of age and the majority of them are students, medics and academics (Şentürk et al., 2016, p. 509). Peoples' Bridge never accepts donations from national and international institutions or states and does not participate in any of the projects of such institutions. They only cooperate with these institutions in order to inform them about the situation of the refugees in the region. The financial resources of PBA are donations from individuals and membership fees and all the members work on a voluntary basis. The volunteers of PBA see themselves as a solidarity group

Table 1

Districts	Temporary Protection Registration*	Population **	Districts	Temporary Protection Registration	Population
Konak	32,718	363,181	Ödemiş	328	132.241
Karabağlar	28,131	480,790	Çeşme	315	41.278
Bornova	24,716	442,839	Aliağa	307	94.070
Buca	13,250	492,252	Karaburun	252	9.812
Torbali	9,314	172,359	Dikili	189	41.697
Bayraklı	7,754	314,402	Urla	151	64.895
Menemen	2,049	170,090	Bergama	143	102.961
Menderes	1,803	89,777	Selçuk	143	35.991
Gaziemir	1,555	136,273	Narlidere	140	66.269
Kemalpaşa	1,482	105,506	Kınık	72	28.271
Çiğli	1,344	190,607	Balçova	65	78.442
Karşıyaka	971	342,062	Kiraz	48	43.859
Bayındır	624	40,258	Beydağ	30	12.391
Seferihisar	616	40,785	Güzelbahçe	15	31.429
Foça	544	31,061	Unknown	9,228	
Tire	445	83,829	Izmir	138,742	4,279,677

*General Directorate of Migration Management, 2018e

**Governorship of Izmir, 2018

rather than a civil society organisation. This difference is expressed by the head of PBA: “There is a significant difference between solidarity groups and NGOs. We do not hold board meetings. The association works with open meetings and it is not necessary to be a member to attend those meetings. Everyone attending meetings, whether a member or not, can participate equally in decisions. The number of members of our association is 342, but the number of people participating in the field works is over one thousand.” (Bora, 2017, p. 64). PBA became the most active organisation soon after the migration influx and started to contact the local and central authorities for refugees’ problems, organised medical screening and distributed humanitarian aid.

PBA differentiated itself from other organisations by adopting the following principles: being distant from professionalism, being politically active, being a solidarity group instead of a charity organisation and finally not keeping permanent data of refugees. Being distant from professionalism means that the activities of the PBA are not project-oriented and voluntary-based. Being politically active means being visible in the political sphere with regard to general politics and specifically to migration policy. Being a solidarity group instead of a charity organisation means having horizontal relations rather than vertical and hierarchical ones. As expressed by the founder and the head of PBA, Dr. Terzi, “we believe in solidarity instead of charity. In fact, we see charity as a harmful action because it renders the poor dependent on the will of the rich and powerful. It can never replace the state’s role in providing common good. It can only be supplementary. We all know that, it is impossible to deal with 3.5 million refugees with charity. This can only be solved by the state action” (Bora, 2017, p. 64). Finally, the PBA avoids keeping personal data of refugees in order to prevent the use of personal information by others (interview with Dr. Cem Terzi, November 12, 2018). In this sense, their ultimate purpose is to inform and urge government departments to deal with refugee problems.

As argued by Sunata and Tosun (2018), civil society organisations are important for informing refugees about their rights and providing social and humanitarian aid when the governments’ support is inadequate. The activities of such organisations can be characterized as right-based and needs-based (Mackreath & Sağrıç, 2017) or charity- and solidarity-based as we suggested. As we discuss here, PBA is a solidarity group which intentionally refrained from the charity-based civil society organisation conception. Although there is a blur and contested distinction between the concepts of solidarity network and charity-based civil society

organisation, we believe that the activities of Peoples' Bridge Association below will clarify this distinction more accurately.

Beyond Charity: The Activities of Peoples' Bridge Association

Following the Syrian migration flow, studies related to the civil society organisations and refugees have increased. PBA as a refugee-related organisation was included in several studies with different aspects. Here, some the studies mentioning the activities of PBA will be referred. MA thesis by Denise Tan (2016), titled, "NGOs and Refugees in Izmir/Turkey: Reconsidering Civil Society Conceptions" chose PBA as a case study and examined five other organisations, including religious ones, which are active in Izmir. Organisations were examined within ideological concepts and PBA was defined as a liberal political civil society organisation. Another study titled "Minor Politics and its Promises: The Case of Turkey" by Onur Kara (2018) defined PBA as a "minor political institution" in respect of its activities and discourse within its effect of political activism in Izmir. Şentürk et al. (2016) evaluated the activities of PBA and suggested a new model for social movement organisation within the solidarity perspective of PBA. Besides theses and research papers, reports over the relation between refugees and civil society also referred to the activities of PBA. Zümray Kutlu (2015), in her report titled "From the Ante-Chamber to the Living Room: A Brief Assessment on NGO's Doing Work for Syrian Refugees" mentioned PBA as an active organisation in the field of health, culture and arts. Last but not least, Mackreath and Sağnıç (2017) authored an extensive report titled "Civil Society and Syrian Refugees in Turkey". In this report, civil society organisations were classified as rights-based and needs-based. In this context, the activities of PBA were defined as rights-based through different aspects such as discourse, relations with other organisations and state contacts. Here, we aim to make a contribution to the area of refugee research by examining PBA's activities within the context of solidarity.

The refugee-related activities of PBA are designed to be held "with" refugees, not "for" refugees (Mackreath & Sağnıç, 2017, p. 39). In this context, PBA concentrated on requesting action from public actors with the cooperation of refugees. Therefore, raising awareness and mobilising public actors to take action were priority activities. Like many other civil society organisations or charity organisations working on refugees, PBA provided humanitarian support to settled and transitional refugees in Izmir. Meeting the urgent needs of refugees was the basic principle of their work. As they tried to avoid being a charity-based organisation which

undertakes the state's role, they did not have a permanent storage space enabling regular aid distribution. In this context, PBA organised spontaneous campaigns to provide support in emergency cases. The way of delivering humanitarian support is also worth sharing. As argued by Millner, the system of queuing in the humanitarian food delivery of charity organisations can be characterised with victim identity and act generosity, thus creating a wall between "givers" and "receivers" through some sort of "us" and "them" environment. This attitude is associated with the professionalisation of the care culture (Millner, 2011, p. 325). From this point of view, the system used by the PBA reflects its solidaristic approach in humanitarian support delivery. Before the delivery visits, the volunteers are advised to make contact with refugees personally, whether in streets, camping areas or houses. As it is important to create a sincere relation between volunteers and refugees, an interpreter is always included in the delivery groups.

The PBA particularly focuses on activities related with health problems of refugees. In fact, first activities of PBA related to refugees started with a medical intervention to a new-born refugee baby (interview with Dr. Cem Terzi, November 12, 2018). The volunteer teams consisted of doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, psychologists and dentists who held frequent medical screening trips to the rural and urban slums where Syrian refugees live in Izmir. The PBA have various activities for children and pregnant women. During the medical screening and aid delivery, volunteers and psychologist take care of traumatised children and play with them. Pregnant women are also examined by the doctors and their pregnancy stages are monitored. The volunteer team also hold medicine donation campaigns to meet the needs of the refugees. For instance, the PBA provided free medicine for refugees by informing pharmacists of state reimbursements. In this case, the PBA worked as a mediator to establish trust between providers and the state.

As a solidarity group, keeping good communication with refugees is an important aspect of PBA. The participation of Syrian refugees in PBA's activities is always encouraged. They became volunteering for PBA as panellist, interpreters, and informants. Cultural events were organised in order to get artists from the refugee community and Turkey together. Football tournaments were also held with refugee players. The activities for children organised by PBA are usually fun and educative such as balloon festival, concerts and painting.

As argued by Cantat, while the concepts of charity and humanitarianism tend to have a de-politicising effects by providing limited relief, solidarity movements play an important role in

opposing racism, border controls and discrimination against refugees (Cantat, 2013, p. 16; 2018, p. 9;). In order to raise awareness and alarm the authorities over issues related to refugees and other vulnerable groups, PBA organises panels, workshops and symposiums in Izmir. The “Romas Standing Up” panel for the International Roma Day, the “Our Deads” symposium by Alevi and LGBT associations and the “Destruction of the War” meeting were some of the activities organised by PBA. Demonstrations and press conferences were also used by the PBA to reflect the problems of Syrian refugees in Izmir. When the Izmir municipality prohibited the entrance of Syrian refugees to the Kültür Park of Izmir in 2015, the PBA organised a demonstration to open the park to refugees. Moreover, international simultaneous demonstrations called “open the borders” were organised with other refugee organisations.

Since 2016, PBA organises the Alan Kurdi Refugee Workshop to share its experience in the field and gather related people such as activists, institutions and academics working on the refugee issues. These workshops enable PBA to find its own method in dealing with refugees. Syrian refugees also participated in workshops as panellist and audience. The first workshop, held in 2016, focused on issues such as refugee rights, accommodation, labour, economy, culture, art, education, children, women, media and health. The theme of the second workshop in 2017 was co-existence and citizenship. The last workshop was organised under the title of “Urban Refugees and Local Administrations” in 2018. The responsibility of local administrations over supplying services for refugees was the main concern of this workshop.

Reporting is an important activity to urge authorities over the problems faced by refugees. The PBA kept various contacts with the related official institutions about the problems of Syrian refugees in Izmir. For instance, the representatives of the PBA contacted the governorship, municipality and Health Department to provide clean water for the seasonal workers’ camping areas. The Chamber of Pharmacists was contacted to provide medicine for the refugees in need as well. Peoples’ Bridge keeps the record of all its activities and turns it into reports. Those reports are regularly published in the website and sent to the relevant institutions. The volunteers coordinated by the member academics conducted a study to identify housing conditions with 190 residences. As an outcome, the report concerning the housing conditions of 1,000 refugees was shared publicly. Moreover, a book was authored by the volunteers of the PBA called “Kıyıya Vuran İnsanlık: 2015 Mülteci Ölümleri Almanacağı (Humanity Washed Ashore: The Almanac of Refugee Deaths 2015)”. Information on refugee rights, the media

coverage of refugees, the 2015 Refugee Deaths report and fieldwork experiences were the main concerns of the book.

The activities of the PBA drew the attention of the international modern artist Ai WeiWei. He participated in the activities of the PBA and was informed about the conditions of refugees in Izmir. He covered the views of the president of the PBA on refugees living in Izmir in his documentary called ‘Human Flow’. After receiving the Adrienne Clarkson Prize for Global Citizenship, he donated it to the PBA in order to show solidarity. The representative of the EU and ambassadors also contacted the PBA to gather information about the conditions of refugees in Izmir.

Conclusion

Izmir, as a major transit city, has been hosting refugees continuously since the Syrian civil war started. The urban slums merely became the areas of refugee settlement. Despite such a massive refugee influx, Izmir has no official refugee camp within its boundaries. In a way, refugees are abandoned to their own fate and cannot meet their basic needs such as food, shelter and health. As a result, they cannot properly enjoy the rights that they are entitled to within the frame of the Temporary Protection Regulation.

Beside the limited aid campaigns of some local administrations, no serious effort was made by the governorship and the Izmir municipalities. In this respect, civil society organisations took the lead to take care of the Syrian refugees in Izmir. Various national and international civil society organisations carried out work in Izmir over refugee problems.

As the number of civil society organisations related to refugees increased significantly, PBA refrained from the area of a professional, project-oriented and internationally funded civil society organisation conception. As a voluntary-based organisation, PBA included thousands of people to its activities as volunteers. In this respect, they became visible in the national and international arena. The profiles of the PBA members shaped its activities. The consistency of medics, academics and students enabled to hold extensive medical activities, reporting and field operations. PBA also contributed to the area of migration research by enabling researchers to participate in field operations.

The problems faced by refugees cannot be solved with charitable actions. Large numbers of international and national civil society organisations provided humanitarian aid to meet the needs of the refugees in Turkey. PBA, which recognises itself as a solidarity group rather than

an aid organisation, carried out numerous activities for refugees. In this context, PBA adopted a rights-based solidaristic approach in its activities. Therefore, aid was regarded as supplementary and found a limited space in its activities. The PBA does not have any paid professionals and does not operate on the basis of working hours. All of its activities are held by volunteers at any time of the day, whenever it is needed.

The PBA sees the refugee problem as a human rights issue and its most important work is concentrated on pushing authorities to take action in refugee problems. Therefore, making contact with state department and providing a permanent relief for refugee problems differentiated the role of PBA as a solidarity organisation.

After nearly eight years since the migration flow started, the Syrian presence in Turkey has evolved from temporariness towards permanence. In this sense, Syrians will be a part of PBA's activities as new members of Turkey's multi-cultural society, in accordance with the founding principles of PBA.

ORCID ID

Elif GÖZLER ÇAMUR



<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2394-1447>

Adil ÇAMUR



<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3067-6899>

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared that there were no conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship or the publication of this article.

Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı

Yazar(lar) bu makalenin yazarlık veya yayımlanmasına ilişkin olarak hiçbir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmiş(ler)dir.

REFERENCES

- Aras B. & Duman, Y. (2018). I/NGOs' assistance to Syrian refugees in Turkey: Opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 1-14. doi: 10.1080/19448953.2018.1530382
- Ataç, I., Rygiel, K. & Stierl, M. (2016). Introduction: The contentious politics of refugee and migrant protest and solidarity movements: Remaking citizenship from the margins. *Citizenship Studies*, 20(5), 527-544. doi: 10.1080/13621025.2016.1182681
- Bélanger, D. & Saraçoğlu, C. (2018). The governance of Syrian refugees in Turkey: The state-capital nexus and its discontents. *Mediterranean Politics*, 1-20. doi: 10.1080/13629395.2018.1549785
- Bora, T. (2017). Halkların Köprüsü Derneği'nden Dr. Cem Terzi'yle Suriyeli göçmenler üzerine söyleşi: 'Yardımseverlik, hayırseverlik yerine dayanışma'. *Birikim Dergisi*, 335, 61-68.
- Cantat, C. (2013). Contesting Europeanism: Migrant solidarity activism in the European Union, In Ç. Esin, J. Johansen, C. Lake, P. Schwartz, M. Tamboukou & F. Rashid (Eds.), *Crossing Conceptual Boundaries V* (pp. 9-33). London: University of East London, School of Law and Social Sciences..
- Cantat, C. (2016). Rethinking mobilities: Solidarity and migrant struggles beyond narratives of crisis. *East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 2(4), 11-32. doi: 10.17356/ieejsp.v2i4.286
- Cantat, C. (2018). The Politics of refugee solidarity in Greece: Bordered identities and political mobilization, Working Paper Series, Migration Solidarity and the Acts of Citizenship Along the Balkan Route. *Centre for Policy Studies*. Retrieved from <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/publication/2986/cps-working-paper-migsol-d3.1-2018.pdf>
- Çamur, A. (2017). Suriyeli mülteciler ve belediyelerin sorumluluğu İzmir örneği. *Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 6 (2), 113-129.
- Çebi, E. (2017). The role of Turkish NGOs in social cohesion of Syrians. *Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 135-170. doi: 10.26513/tocd.312245
- De Elvira, L R. (2018). From local revolutionary action to exiled humanitarian work: Activism in local social networks and communities' formation in the Syrian post-2011 context. *Social Movement Studies*, 1-20. doi: 10.1080/14742837.2018.1540346

- Erdoğan, M. (2017). *'Kopuş'tan 'uyum'a kent mültecileri. Suriyeli mülteciler ve belediyelerin süreç yönetimi: İstanbul örneği*. İstanbul: Marmara Belediyeler Birliği Kültür Yayınları.
- Erdoğan, M. (2018). *Suriyeliler barometresi*. İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Ergüven, N S. & Özturhanlı, B. (2013). Uluslararası Mülteci Hukuku ve Türkiye. *Ankara Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi*, 62 (4), 1007-1061.
- General Directorate of Migration Management. (2018a). Temporary protection. Retrieved (2018, November 01) from http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik
- General Directorate of Migration Management. (2018b). Law on Foreigners and International Protection. Retrieved (2018, November 01) from <http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/ingilizce2.pdf>
- General Directorate of Migration Management. (2018c). Temporary Protection Regulation. Retrieved (2018, November 01) from <http://www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/temptemp.pdf>
- General Directorate of Migration Management. (2018d). Geçici Koruma Sağlanan Yabancıların Yabancıların Çalışma İzinlerine Dair Yönetmelik. Retrieved (2018, November 01) from <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/01/20160115-23.pdf>
- General Directorate of Migration Management. (2018e). The others provided this document from Directorate General of Migration Management Retrieved (2018, August 09).
- Garkisch, M., Heidingsfelder, J. & Beckmann, M. (2017). Third sector organizations and migration: A systematic Literature review on the contribution of third sector organizations in view of flight, migration and refugee crises, *International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations*, 28(5), 1839-1880. doi: 10.1007/s11266-017-9895-4
- Governorship of Izmir. (2018). İstatistiklerle Izmir. Retrieved (2018, August 18) from <http://www.izmir.gov.tr/istatistiklerle-izmir>
- Halkların Köprüsü Derneği. (2017). *Kıyıya vuran insanlık: 2015 mülteci ölümleri almanağı*. Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları.
- Human Rights Watch. (2015). *'When I picture my future, I see nothing' barriers to education for Syrian refugee children in Turkey*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/11/08/when-i-picture-my-future-i-see-nothing/-barriers-educationsyrian-refugee-children>

- International Organisation for Migration. (2015). *World migration report 2015: Migrants and cities: New partnerships to manage mobility*. Retrieved from http://publications.iom.int/system/files/wmr2015_en.pdf
- İçduygu, A. & Toktaş, Ş. (2002). How do smuggling and trafficking operate via irregular border crossings in the Middle East? *International Migration*, 40(6), 25-54. doi: 10.1111/1468-2435.00222
- Kara, O. (2018). *Minor politics and its promises the case of Turkey*. (Unpublished PhD Thesis) Middle East Technical University, Ankara.
- Kirişçi, K. (2007). Turkey: A country of transition from emigration to immigration. *Mediterranean Politics*, 12(1), 91-97. doi: 10.1080/13629390601136871
- Kirişçi, K. (2014). *Syrian refugees and Turkey's challenges: Going beyond hospitality*. Brookings.
- Kutlu, Z. (2015). From the ante-chamber to the living room: A brief assessment on ngo's doing work for Syrian refugees. *Open Society Foundation*. http://www.anadolukultur.org/images/UserFiles/Documents/Editor/From_The_Ante_Chamber_to_the_Living_Room.pdf.
- Loescher, G. (1993). *Beyond charity: International cooperation and the global refugee crisis*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mackreath, H. & Sağnıç S. G. (2017). *Civil society and Syrian refugees in Turkey*. Working paper. Istanbul: Helsinki Citizens Assembly.
- Martin, N. (2012). 'There is abuse everywhere': Migrant nonprofit organizations and the problem of precarious work. *Urban Affairs Review*, 48(3), 389-416. doi: 10.1177/1078087411428799
- Millner, N. (2011). From 'refugee' to 'migrant' in Calais solidarity activism: Re-staging undocumented migration for a future politics of asylum. *Political Geography*, 30(6), 320-328. doi: 10.1016/j.polgeo.2011.07.005
- Orhan, O., & Gündoğar, S. S. (2015). *Suriyeli sığınmacıların Türkiye'ye etkileri*. Ortadoğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi & TESEV Retrieved from http://tesev.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Suriyeli_Siginmacilarin_Turkiyeye_Etkileri.pdf
- Rakopoulos, T. (2016). Solidarity: The egalitarian tensions of a bridge-concept. *Social Anthropology*, 24(2), 142-151. doi: 10.1111/1469-8676.12298
- Rygiel, K. (2011). Bordering solidarities: Migrant activism and the politics of movement and camps at Calais. *Citizenship Studies*, 15(1), 1-19. doi: 10.1080/13621025.2011.534911

- Schoenfeld, E. & Mestrovic, S. (1989). Durkheim's concept of justice and its relationship to social solidarity. *Sociological Analysis*, 50(2), 111-127.
- Sert, D.Ş. & Yıldız, U. (2015). Kısıtlanan özgürlükler: Türkiye’de sığınmacı olmak. *Birikim Dergisi*, 320, 33-37.
- Sezgin, Z. & Dijkzeul, D. (2013). Migrant organisations in humanitarian action. *Int. Migration & Integration*, 15(2), 159-177. doi: 10.1007/s12134-013-0273-9
- Sunata U. & Tosun S. (2018). Assessing the civil society’s role in refugee integration in Turkey: NGO-R as a New Typology. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fey047>
- Şehir Plancıları Odası İstanbul Şubesi (2017). *Kent mülteciliği ve planlama açısından yerel sorumluluklar değerlendirme raporu*. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/-sehirplancilariodasiistanbul/docs/kent_multeciligi_planlama_acisindan
- Şentürk, B., Terzi, C. & Altın, Z. (2016). Projecilik ve sivil toplum kiskacında bir dayanışma ağı örneği: Halkların Köprüsü Derneği. *VIII. Ulusal Sosyoloji Kongresi Bildiri Özetleri Kitabı*, 506-512.
- Şimşek, D. (2017). Göç ve insan güvenliği: Türkiye’deki Suriyeliler örneği. *Toplum ve Bilim Dergisi*, 140, 11-26.
- Tan, D. (2016). *NGOs and refugees in Izmir/Turkey: Reconsidering civil society conceptions*. (Unpublished MA Thesis), University of Vienna, Vienna.
- UNHRC (2018a). Syria regional refugee response. Retrieved (2018, November 1) from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>
- UNHRC (2018b). Syria Emergency. Retrieved (2018, November 1) from <https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html>
- Wissink, M., Düvell, F. & van Eerdewijk, A. (2013) Dynamic migration intentions and the impact of socio-institutional environments: A transit migration hub in Turkey. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39(7), 1087-1105. doi: 10.1080/1369183X.2013.778026