

# Returning to the unknown

Thursday, 14 December 2017 [Harun Yahya](#)

**People's response to the suffering of refugees has been pitiful. It is our moral responsibility that we all do our bit to address this humanitarian problem even as we ensure our security**

As a majority of people in the world maintain their disturbing indifference towards the suffering of millions of refugees, who were once normal people with normal lives just like them, the situation continues to worsen. Ongoing conflicts and abysmal poverty in the four corners of the world have been turning more people into refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers, almost every day.

For instance, it might have escaped the notice of many people in the world, but in September this year, authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo opened fire on protesting Burundi refugees and killed 39 of them, including a 10-year-old girl. Ironically, the Burundis were protesting because they didn't want to be sent back to their countries, where they fear they might get killed. The world kept quiet.

Then Hungary, a country which is notorious for its hostile stance against refugees, introduced a new legislation that allowed for the systematic detention of the refugees. Ever since the new law came into effect, new asylum-seekers, including children, are forced to stay in shipping containers. Once again, most people seemed oblivious.

Then came the news of countless refugees from South Sudan, who sought safety in Uganda, but later felt forced to return home because of lack of food. Oliver Wani was one of the refugee who was killed in the South Sudan refugee camp. Mostly, this is what happens when refugees return back to the danger they tried to flee in the first place. This inevitably raises the question: What about those people who try to send these refugees back where they might be killed? Let your conscience be the judge to answer this.

Nowadays, the European Union is working with Libyan authorities to help Sub-Saharan African refugees return to Europe through Libya. But for the refugees, getting back will, at best mean being put in horrible Libyan prisons or, at worst, torture, rape, forced labour, slavery or being killed. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein warned about the practice: "The international community cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the unimaginable horrors endured by migrants in Libya and pretend that the situation can be remedied only by improving conditions in detention. The suffering of migrants detained in Libya is an outrage to the conscience of humanity (...) The European Union's policy of assisting the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept and return migrants in the Mediterranean (is) inhumane."

It is as clear as daylight from a few examples cited above that it is absolutely crucial to help people running away from the danger. Now let's try to see the situation from Europe's point of view, which is a little reluctant when it comes to welcoming the refugees.

Europe has a beautiful, deeply-rooted culture, a modern civilisation and high standards of living. It may be possible that this order and culture might get affected by incoming groups that have a very different culture and especially by people who are not very well-educated. Then there are also people who are worried about (not rightly so) sharing Europe's resources with millions of suffering people. Lastly, there is the concern of terrorists infiltrating through asylum-seeking crowds.

However, none of the above mentioned reasons, or any other reason for that matter, can justify abandoning millions of women, children and men to danger. Let's not forget; most of these people are facing imminent death, starvation, torture or sexual abuse if they don't get our help. It should also be noted that in the not-so-distant past, millions of Europeans were in the same condition and were desperately trying to find a sympathetic helping hand that would assist them in the aftermath of the destruction caused by World War II.

But how can Europe solve this dilemma and at the same time protect its civilisation? It is easy as long as necessary resources and management skills are put into effort. After all, this is a continent that managed to rebuild itself even better than before, despite the utter devastation caused by World War II.

Considering the economic power, management skills and experience of Europe, helping refugees can hardly be considered an issue. Indeed, as President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker explained in 2015, the root of the problem is "a matter of humanity and human dignity... We have to put it into perspective... This (asylum-seekers) still represents just 0.11 per cent of the European Union population. In Lebanon, refugees represent 25 per cent of the population."

Indeed, Lebanon and Turkey are incomparably poorer than Europe, with lands much smaller than the lands of European countries combined together. Nevertheless, Turkey houses more than 3.5 million Syrians while Lebanon hosts close to 1.5 million. Moreover, there are large areas of vacant land in Europe that could be used for the settlement of refugees, which is a strategy already successfully employed by many countries.

Take Uganda, for example, the country gives plots of agricultural lands and raw materials to refugees so that they can build their own home when they arrive. Research has shown that those families contributed to the local economy more than those who were not given plots of lands by an additional \$220 a year. Also, studies showed that for every refugee household that received cash from the World Food Programme, the contribution to the local economy was more than \$1,100 dollar a year. Beppe Severgnini, an Italian journalist, in an article published in the New York Times said, "There are abundant lands in Italy that could benefit from the arrival of the refugees."

We should also remember that diversity is a blessing to be cherished. Think about how dull life would be if there were only a single race or ethnicity in the world. Thankfully, this is not the case and our world is blessed with different cultures, civilisations, languages and colours that we share and enjoy.

Surely, these are not permanent solutions, but these are necessary steps that we must consider as a moral duty. The true solution is making the native lands of these poor people safe, comfortable and modern. Then no one will feel the desire to leave their land of birth to embark on unknown journeys to unknown places.

*(The writer is a Turkish author)*

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