

Forced Displacement and Access to the Labour Market: The Case of Gaziantep

By

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Introduction

Gaziantep, bordering Syria, is an economic centre in the southeast Anatolia region of Turkey. The city plays an important role in the Turkish economy with its industrial and commercial infrastructure, and acts as a bridge between important regions due to its geographical location.¹ Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria, in that order, are the top three importers of goods from Gaziantep.² Gaziantep has the second highest number of displaced Syrians in Turkey and the city has, to some extent, recently developed an infrastructure with their arrival and the consequent increase in its economic relations with the Syrian city of Aleppo. One of the main reasons why Gaziantep has a large number of internationally displaced Syrians³ is the aspiration of this population to remain close to Syria and carry on the cross-border trade relationship. While many internally displaced Kurds—⁴ most of whom fled their ancestral villages during the conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in the mid-90s—settled in Gaziantep, over 445,000 internationally displaced Syrians live in Gaziantep and many of them have started their own businesses, even though 80% of these were unofficial in 2016.⁵ The Syrian Economic Forum (SEF), an organisation based in Gaziantep which aims to strengthen the Syrian economy to support democratic life and sustainable development among the Syrian population, has estimated the number of companies founded or co-founded by Syrians to be over 10,000 when the informal sector is included.⁶ According to the Deputy Executive Director of SEF, in Gaziantep alone, 1,250 Syrian companies are registered with the Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce (GCC).⁷

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Refugee Watch, 58, December 2021.

In Turkey, the presence of Syrians has not only contributed to the country's economic growth, but also has filled its labour needs although their labour is not officially recognised. The Syrian workforce has been in high demand in sectors facing labour shortages and, with the arrival of the displaced Syrian population, the number of informally employed workers have dramatically increased.⁸ This, of course, necessitates a scrutiny of the location of the labour of displaced people (in this paper, 'displaced people' refers to both internationally displaced Syrians and internally displaced Kurds) in interaction with class dynamics as well as the variegated legal regimes (carried out with actors of various scale) that shape this interaction. The fragmented legal geography of rights, and the local and international institutional actors that draw into the picture, are crucial components in this interplay.

The literature on the access of displaced people to the labour market is mostly studied in relation to the national framework, and focus on the labour-market integration of migrants and refugees as well as the impact of refugees on the host economy.⁹ For instance, Betts et al. introduce the concept of refugee economies which highlights the fact that refugees are a part of the distinct sub-economy of receiving countries, but do not mention refugee labour.¹⁰ Samaddar, rightfully, suggests that a refugee is seen as an economic actor, an informal trader, an entrepreneur, but not as labour and asks 'why economies are unable to function without the so-called refugee economies, which supply informal labour for the host economy.'¹¹ In order to understand how labour moves and the increase in casualisation, there is a need to focus on the relation between migration and capitalism. This paper takes this relation into account. More specifically, it takes into account the role of neoliberal migration policies on the access of displaced people to the labour market.

Exploring the settlement processes of migrants and their access to the labour market within the framework of the nation-state constructs hierarchies between migrants and natives by differentiating them. As stated by Çağlar and Glick-Schiller, methodological nationalism and its ethnic lens represent homogeneous national culture, and scholars who adopt this approach dwell on differences in national origin and view migrants as ethnic groups who are socially and culturally discrete.¹² This analysis makes inequalities that are created due to class, race, and gender differences seem less important. Taking cities as the unit of analysis to examine forced displacement, this paper focuses on class as an analytical concept in exploring the experiences of displaced people in accessing the labour market in Gaziantep.

The 'multiscalar global perspective' of Çağlar and Glick-Schiller offers a useful and comprehensive analysis in examining unequal power within multiple actors—regional, national, supranational, and global—in the process of remaking the city.¹³ Adopting this perspective, this paper aims to examine how, in the processes of building 'a resilient city for all in a time of crisis,' power relations within multiple actors of various scale—such as the European Union (EU), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs)—influence the access of displaced

people to the labour market. Drawing on in-depth interviews with displaced people and emphasising their experiences in accessing the labour market, it delves into the role of multiple actors in reconstructing the neoliberal model—supporting displaced people who are wealthy and professionally skilled, and celebrating entrepreneurship and co-modifiable skills—that reshapes class and power dynamics between displaced people. Following Harvey's definition,¹⁴ this paper uses the notion of neoliberalism as a political project carried out by the corporate capitalist class through constructing a free market that produces greater social inequality and competition between workers and favours wealthy people. The value structure of neoliberalism has defined the migration policies of many receiving states which make a clear distinction between 'good' and 'bad' migrants and refugees based on where they come from, their religion, ethnicity, migratory status and, most importantly, their class.¹⁵ In this paper class is understood as an analytical category that shapes one's position in society. More specifically, class is understood as a set of inequalities, power, exploitation, and differences in the way people are valued.¹⁶ In the case of Turkey, this division is visible through income levels that are supported by neoliberal policies.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section sets out an overview of Gaziantep in terms of its labour market. The second section introduces the ethnographic context. The third section explores, using empirical data, the experiences of displaced people in this labour market including their working conditions, social capital, class, entrepreneurial activities, and the role of the EU, NGOs, and INGOs in the settlement processes of Syrians in Gaziantep.

Gaziantep's Labour Market

According to a recent report published by the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), Syrians established 778 businesses in the first half of 2018, and 7,243 businesses in the last seven years.¹⁷ The report also indicates that 13% of newly-established companies in Turkey have a Syrian partner.¹⁸ Gaziantep's economic growth is likely related to informal market activities as approximately half of the labour force in the city had been already employed informally prior to the migration of Syrians.¹⁹ In Turkey, firms often rely on some form of undeclared labour which can take the form of wage labour, self-employment, 'paid favours' or family work.²⁰ According to the Turkish Statistical Institute,²¹ one in every three Turkish workers is employed informally, meaning that they are working under precarious conditions without social security. According to recent statistics released by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 34% of Turkish employees in Gaziantep were working informally as of June 2018.²² Between 2009 and 2017, the presence of Turkish citizens in the informal labour force clearly declined²³ and, with the outbreak of the conflict in Syria, the number of informally employed displaced people has increased. Syrians mostly access informal markets due to difficulty in receiving work permits, lack of language

skills, and low levels of education. A survey conducted by the Turkish Red Crescent in 2018 revealed that 20.7% of the Syrians working in the education sector, and 92% of the Syrians employed in the agricultural sector, do not have regular employment.²⁴ The International Crisis Group reported that, as of January 2018, between 750,000 and 950,000 Syrians work in the informal sector.²⁵ However, according to the Interior Minister of Turkey, only around 76,443 work permits have been issued till 2019.²⁶ As a result of being forced to work in the informal economy, Syrians experience exploitation; they are overworked, underpaid, and have no social security or pension rights.²⁷ The arrival of Syrians has allowed businesses in Gaziantep to employ them informally and reduce labour costs.

As of June 2021, 450,294 Syrians reside in Gaziantep and they amount to 21.6% of the city's population.²⁸ The city has adopted an economic integration model through businesses established by Syrians. Access to the labour market has been stated as a granted right for Syrians in the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (2014) and its implementation rests with the Ministry of Social Security and Work. In January 2016, Turkey issued a new regulation allowing registered Syrians to apply for work permits. However, accessing work permits is difficult and depends on employers' willingness to offer contracts of employment and on whether the applicants have held Turkish identification documents for at least six months. According to a study conducted by Building Markets, Syrian enterprises employ on average 9.4 Syrians, the majority of whom previously worked in the informal sector.²⁹ According to the International Crisis Group's recent report, as of December 2017, there were about 8,000 registered Syrian businesses in Turkey and about 10,000 unregistered enterprises.³⁰ These businesses are established in Istanbul, Ankara, Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, Mardin and Kilis, and numerous Syrian businesspeople contribute to the Turkish economy by investing their capital in Turkey.³¹ There are other fundamental rights for Syrians; however, especially regarding work permits, there are visible barriers to full participation within the formal economy. Yet, unlike in many European countries, the way to be an entrepreneur is not prevented in Turkey.³² In Europe, there are barriers for refugees trying to establish businesses. For instance, in Belgium, refugees suffer more barriers in establishing business than other immigrants.³³ Turkey, therefore, implements a self-sufficient model for refugees.³⁴ Syrian entrepreneurs have been visible in the manufacturing, textile, catering and service sectors, as well as in trading; their businesses have been supported by the Gaziantep municipality through easing procedures in the organised industry district called GATEM.³⁵

Gaziantep is also a city where NGOs and INGOs actively work around the settlement processes of Syrians.³⁶ Government bodies such as the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) provide basic services with the help of NGOs and INGOs. The services implemented for refugees by national NGOs includes financial assistance, outreach monitoring and 'integration' programs. The Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) delivers services including legal, social and

medical counseling, ‘social cohesion’³⁷ activities, psychosocial services, and protection programs.³⁸ Similar to ASAM, the Kamer Foundation fulfils the basic needs of refugee women, such as legal consultancy, health, and vocational courses. In addition to these national NGOs, a small number of local organisations have been taking an active role in raising social awareness regarding displaced people through the projects they implement. One of these local organisations is Kırkayak Kültür. Established in 2011, it conducts field research in and around Gaziantep and run social-cohesion projects, including social, cultural, and artistic activities to help empower socially and culturally disadvantaged groups such as the displaced Dom community. Apart from Kırkayak Kültür which has a rights-based approach, there are also value-based associations in Gaziantep, such as the Bülbülzade Foundation which provides educational facilities, language classes, vocational courses, financial support, as well as Arabic newspapers and radio broadcasts for Syrians.³⁹ Some of these local organisations receive grants from the EU and donations from international organisations such as Danske Diakonhjem (DEACON), GIZ (Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), and conduct joint projects with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).⁴⁰ These local NGOs have been cooperating with the Gaziantep municipality in providing services for refugees. The municipality has also been influential in responding to the needs of refugees through establishing centres in the refugee neighbourhoods.

Besides national NGOs, there are many INGOs operating in Turkey. They belong to European countries such as Germany, United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark, and are funded by their respective governments or the EU to run projects aiming the ‘integration’ of refugees and their retention in Turkey.⁴¹ At the beginning of the movement of displaced Syrians to Turkey, INGOs offered humanitarian aid such as shelter, food, and clothes inside Turkey. For instance, UK-based Care International provided humanitarian aid to the refugees in Gaziantep. As the number of Syrians in Turkey increased and their-long term requirements became evident, INGOs started to diversify their projects and focus more on sociocultural and psychosocial support.⁴² The main services INGOs implement cover registration, legal assistance, education, language, livelihood, and repatriation. However, some of these INGOs—such as International Medical Corps, Mercy Corps, and Dan Church Aid—were closed by the Turkish government because they provided humanitarian aid to Syrian Kurds, especially in and around Kobani.⁴³

The Ethnographic Context

As of June 2021, the number of registered Syrian nationals in Turkey reached 3.6 million.⁴⁴ 98% of this population prefer to reside in towns and cities—including the border cities and metropolitan areas—rather than in the camps where they experience limited access to accommodation, social services and job opportunities. The rising number of Syrians living in cities opens up,

for both the refugees and the wider society, discussions around permanency, economic stabilisation, political representation and accessibility of public services.⁴⁵ Syrians in Turkey are heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, religion, gender, generation, social class, etc. According to Erdoğan, who conducted research on the social acceptance of Syrians in Turkey, Syrians are represented as a burden on the country, and as criminals, murderers and rapists. This representation shapes public perception of them and increases the level of discrimination they face in Turkey. With the mass movement of Syrians from Turkey to Europe since the summer of 2015, the EU's response to Syrian migration has moved towards stopping the migration of refugees and irregular migrants. As part of the deal, the World Food Programme and the Turkish Red Crescent administer a cash payment programme to alleviate the worst cases of poverty, wherein refugee households have been receiving monthly payments of 120 Turkish liras. Even though daily crossings dropped 97% between 2015 and 2017, the EU-Turkey Statement has received criticism from human rights organisations and rights-based NGOs for regarding Turkey as a 'safe third country' and not ensuring the safety of refugees. Although Turkey does not provide refugee status to people coming from non-European countries—relying on the geographical limitation permitted by the 1951 Refugee Convention—and does not recognize the rights of refugees mentioned in that Convention, the presumption of Turkey as a 'safe third country' is mainly based on ensuring non-refoulement of refugees and their access to fundamental rights. The EU has also received criticism for not providing safe and legal ways for asylum seekers to reach other European countries for family reunification, relocation or humanitarian visas. On July 2, 2016, the Turkish President announced that millions of Syrians living in Turkey would be granted citizenship. According to Turkey's Directorate General of Migration, 93,000 Syrians have been granted citizenship.⁴⁶

In exploring how displaced people experience Gaziantep, particularly in accessing the labour market, and whether there are differences in the ways they experience the city, I conducted in-depth interviews with Kurdish and Syrian displaced people in Gaziantep in 2018. I interviewed a total of fifty displaced people—twenty-five Syrians and twenty-five Kurds—including those who established businesses and those working in the informal economy. 80% of them were men, aged between nineteen and fifty-four years. While some were in receipt of very low incomes, others were living in more affluent districts of Gaziantep. Those who own businesses stated that they brought investment capital with them when they were migrating and that they had owned restaurants, cafes and off-licences in Syria. Although many Syrian research participants were Sunni-Arabs, I also interviewed a few Syrians with Kurdish and Turkmen backgrounds. Pseudonyms are used when referring to all research participants. I contacted research participants through establishments run by Syrians, NGOs, and city districts. While some interviews were conducted in English and Turkish, others were conducted in Arabic and translated to English during the interviews by an interpreter. Once I had made some connections, I used a snowballing approach to identify

further interviewees. Interview questions were relatively open to enable respondents to tell their stories in their own words and focused on their experiences of living in Gaziantep, particularly in accessing the labour market. I used qualitative content analysis to identify a set of common themes from the narratives, and then employed a thematic coding system with NVivo, which helped to create analytical categories.

Experiences in Accessing the Labour Market

Gaziantep has undergone a massive transformation with the arrival of half a million Syrians since 2011. The city has even introduced its own migration model. According to Önder Yalçın, head of the city's migration office, the city remains a model of tolerance and has taken important steps in migration governance. In doing so, it has established a Municipal Migration Department to provide municipal services to migrants.⁴⁷ In constructing a comprehensive migration model, the Migration Department works with the United Nations (UN), development agencies, and NGOs and INGOs. Highlighting the fact that cities are at the forefront of managing the settlement of Syrians, Yalçın stated that 'Gaziantep experiences improved governance, increased social cohesion between our existing and new residents, enhanced inclusive identity, and sustained livelihoods for refugees and our entire community.'⁴⁸ In this section, I use in-depth interview data which is particularly based on the experiences of displaced people in accessing the labour market to understand how they experience the settlement processes in Gaziantep and whether there are differences in the ways they experience the city.

The struggle to enter the labour market and lack of economic resources prevent many Syrians living in Gaziantep from receiving affordable housing and education.⁴⁹ This can be illustrated by the quotation below:

I work in textile manufacturing. All workers here are Syrians, and we all work informally. Getting a work permit is very difficult, because employers are not keen on applying for work permit. We sometimes get our wages late and less than Turkish workers. Our working conditions are very hard. We work long hours and sometimes seven days a week (Mahdi, informal worker, Syrian).

Syrians primarily work in the largely informal agricultural and textile sectors, with few safety protections. According to figures from the Worker Health and Safety Council, 108 refugees lost their lives in work-related accidents in 2018. In turn, the low socio-economic status of Syrians leads to their relative exclusion from the wider Turkish society.⁵⁰ The Turkish labour market poses high exploitation risks not only for informal adult workers but also for children, given the widespread phenomenon of child labour in sectors such as agriculture, textile factories, and restaurants in various cities of Turkey.⁵¹ Kaya and Kıraç argue that at least one child works in almost every third Syrian household in Istanbul.⁵² According to a United Metal Workers Union report, the textile sector employs approximately 19% of underage

workers; 29% of these underage workers are Syrian children under the age of fifteen. In fact, the majority of school-aged Syrian children are working instead of attending school.⁵³ Kaya and Kırac convey that 'half of Syrians sending their children to work stated that their children work in textile sector (clothing, shoes, etc.) while the others work in service sector (small shops, catering, cafes, restaurants), construction sector and industrial sector (furniture factories, automobile factories, etc.).'⁵⁴ In Gaziantep, many Syrians are informally employed in small workshops that act as subcontractors for larger factories to produce shoes and clothes that are sold across Turkey, the Middle East, and Europe. Working conditions can be dangerous and pay is far below Turkey's minimum wage of 480 Turkish liras per week. Children in workshops say the rate for young adults is 160 Turkish liras per week, with the smallest children receiving just 50 Turkish liras.⁵⁵ The Turkish economy will hardly function without the informal labour of displaced people.

Syrians who work in the informal market face difficulties in building bridges with the Kurdish and Turkish working class, due to competition over employment opportunities. Hassan, who works in footwear manufacturing, said the following about the competitive labour market and its weakening of social bridges between Syrian workers and their Kurdish and Turkish counterparts:

I used to work in construction when I came to Gaziantep. The employer preferred to work with Syrians instead of Kurdish workers, because he paid Syrians less. This created a problem between Syrian and Kurdish workers. Kurdish workers blamed Syrians for job losses. (Hassan, informal worker, Syrian Turkmen).

The structuring of the labour market, which is based on the economic interests of employers, construct hierarchical categories between Syrian and Kurdish workers and make them even more vulnerable. It creates invisible boundaries between the displaced Kurds who have been involved in the labour market in Gaziantep for much longer than Syrians and have the right to work, and the displaced Syrians who have been working in Gaziantep for lesser duration than Kurds and who are mostly employed informally. As stated in the previous section, employers prefer to hire Syrians informally in order to pay them less than the minimum wage without social security. This practice produces greater social inequality and competition between low-waged workers. Syrians who work in the informal sector are seen as competitors by the low-waged Kurdish and Turkish workers. This increases the level of racism Syrians face in society. Turkey's settlement policy favours skilled contributors to the economy and refugees with access to financial capital. The policy does not equally support the settlement of all Syrians residing in Turkey but is class-based; only 'selected' Syrians are deemed worthy of state support. The Turkish government has pursued a neoliberal approach to the settlement of Syrians, where their economic utility has come to form the main entry point for accessing rights. Current settlement policies, therefore, undermine Syrian refugees' access to fundamental rights by making

such rights directly conditional to Turkey's economic gain. This informal labour of displaced people cannot be separated from global capitalism which relies mainly on informal labour.

While many Syrians experience difficulties in accessing certain rights that are crucial for settlement, those who are wealthier do not experience such difficulties. The settlement process of Syrians who engage in entrepreneurial activities in accessing the labour market are easier compared to the ones who are employed in the informal labour market. Ahmad, who runs his own restaurant in Gaziantep, stated the following about his experience in the labour market:

I have been living in Gaziantep since 2014. I brought my investment with me when I and my family had to leave Syria. The investment helped me to establish my own business and our settlement process was easier compared to other Syrians. The Turkish government supports entrepreneurs and enables them to establish their businesses easily. I am happy to be in Turkey as I had a similar life back in Syria.

Ahmad has established his life in Turkey more easily compared to other displaced Syrians. There is a visible distinction between the displaced people who are benefiting from the neoliberal policy through economic gains and those who are employed informally in the labour market, are contributing to the system, and are treated by the receiving society in a very different way. Syrians who establish businesses construct social bridges with members of the receiving society through their businesses and engage in sociocultural activities, thus making their settlement process smoother than those who do not have ready economic resources.⁵⁶ The social aspect of the settlement processes also reflects the role of class, as the Syrians who work longer hours and do not have access to employment construct fewer social connections with members of the receiving society due to being isolated.⁵⁷ Research shows that the experiences of refugees in accessing the labour market are highly affected by their class as a result of Turkey's neoliberal migration policy.⁵⁸ Although it has been highlighted that 'the government is becoming more likely to demographically instrumentalize Sunni-Muslim-Arabs to counter balance the ethno-nationalist and centrifugal claims of the Kurds,⁵⁹ ethnicity is not a striking dynamic in accessing the labour market among displaced people in Gaziantep.

Kurdish entrepreneurs also have positive experiences in the labour market in Gaziantep. Hüseyin, who owns a jewellery shop, emphasised the opportunities for running his business in the city. He said:

This is our family business. My father used to run this jewellery shop. After we lost him, I started running the family business. In this bazaar, businesses are old. Gaziantep went through an important economic growth driven by its business community's will to establish trading links with neighbouring countries. Gaziantep has strong economic ties with Syria and particularly Aleppo. The business owners with whom I established business links migrated to Gaziantep and started running their own

businesses here. With their arrival, Gaziantep's economy has grown even more as they brought resources and skills to our city.

Hüseyin links the success of Gaziantep's economy to its trading relationship with neighbouring countries. When he referred to Syrians, he only mentioned Syrian businesspeople rather than Syrians who are employed informally. This quotation also emphasises that as long as Syrians are contributing to the receiving society through creating job opportunities rather than requiring employment they are 'good' Syrians.⁶⁰ The settlement process of wealthier refugees is supported and the entrepreneurs among them are welcomed according to the Turkey's migration policy.⁶¹ However, the majority of Syrians who are predominantly employed in manual jobs, and do not possess any qualifications, contribute to the economy of the city through their labour which is not officially recognised. The transformation of the city with the arrival of Syrians is not only limited to economic aspects but also related to urban development. The presence of European institutions in the city, especially since the arrival of the Syrians, has played a major role in the producing the urban space. As argued by Yüksel, 'the new forms of entanglements between the local and the global has caused new forms of power to emerge in the global neoliberal context.'⁶² This has caused international competition between local, national, and international NGOs. In the case of Gaziantep, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has provided grant to help the municipality to meet the growing demand for services due to the sharp increase in population with the arrival of Syrians. However, Syrians have different experiences in receiving these services. For instance, Amena expressed her frustration at not receiving the services she needed:

When we arrived in Gaziantep, we had no resources; we did not speak Turkish. My husband had to find a job. We did not know anyone here, so my husband went to an organisation to ask for help and advice. It was very difficult to get help because there were a lot of people in need of help and the organisation was short staffed.

Although many local, national, and international NGOs provide humanitarian aid and protection programs, it is not easy to receive services. Main local actors such as the Gaziantep Municipality, ASAM, and Kamer Foundation work together with international donors such as UN Agencies and European institutions to provide protection-based services as well as basic needs of legal consultancy, health and vocational courses to refugees.⁶³ On the one hand, local NGOs such as the Kırkayak Cultural Centre aim to improve and extend cooperation between artisans, cultural activists and NGOs in Turkey, the Middle East, and Europe to empower disadvantaged groups and to integrate society through dialogue and solidarity to end prejudices and discrimination against these groups. On the other, the EBRD and the GCC have been supporting and encouraging entrepreneurship in Gaziantep and its surrounding region. These partners work together to

strengthen the ability of the GCC to deliver more and better services to private-sector companies in Turkey's southeast and build the economic resilience of the region which has been deeply affected by the movement of refugees from neighbouring Syria.⁶⁴ The EBRD has followed six transitional principles including resilience, competitiveness, green, governance, integration, and inclusion in its approach to the countries where it invests.⁶⁵ In identifying opportunities and barriers for the private sector in the region, including for enterprises led by Syrians, it aims to help entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises reach their full potential. While the economy of Gaziantep has strengthened with the arrival of displaced Syrians, this has been achieved through supporting businesses and the private sector rather than through implementing a rights-based approach to develop the access of displaced people to the labour market and improving their working conditions.

Conclusion

Gaziantep is an important case in understanding a broader view of the labour of displaced people in Turkey and the failure of Turkey's migration policy. Although there are various displaced groups in Gaziantep, this paper mainly focused on the experiences of displaced Syrians and Kurds in accessing the labour market due to lack of information and reliable data on the labour-market encounters of other displaced groups. In exploring how displaced people become part of labour and how different discursive and institutional sources—including European institutions—are pulled in, empirical data shows that Turkey's migration policy favours skilled contributors to the economy and those with access to financial capital. This policy reshapes class and power dynamics between displaced people. It also shows that the informal labour of displaced people plays a significant role in Turkey's economy but their labour is not as visible as entrepreneurial activities. This is, of course, related to Turkey's legal and policy arrangements on the access of displaced people to the labour market.

The Turkish government has pursued a neoliberal approach to the settlement of displaced Syrians, where their economic utility has come to form the main entry point for accessing rights, and this can clearly be seen in the case of Gaziantep. The current policies, therefore, undermine Syrians' access to fundamental rights by making such rights directly conditional to Turkey's economic gain. Data shows that displaced Syrians experience more vulnerability compared to displaced Kurds due to being employed informally as a result of visible barriers to full participation in the formal economy. It also indicates that class dynamics become more predominant than ethnic cleavages. The policy excludes Syrians who are 'unskilled' and have limited economic resources for investment in the receiving country. The dominant presence of displaced people in the informal economy has been reproduced in cooperation with international and national organisations, especially the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Notes

¹ Serap Gültekin, “Gaziantep: Executive Summary Economic Sectoral Review & Cluster Selection,” SME Networking Project, September 2011.

² Gültekin, “Gaziantep.”

³ In this paper, ‘internationally displaced Syrians’ refers to Kurdish, Turkmen, Arab, Shi, Dom, Abdal, Armenian, Yazidi, and Assyrian Syrian nationals; Palestinian and Iranian refugees coming from Syria; working-, middle-, and upper-class Syrians; and Syrians from diverse religious backgrounds, including Christians, and Muslim Alawites and Sunnis.

⁴ In this paper, ‘internally displaced Kurds’ refers to Lullubi, Guti, Cyrtians, Carduchi, Alewi and Sunni Kurds, and Kurds from different class backgrounds who are Turkish citizens and are displaced within Turkey.

⁵ Liz Maddock, “Syrian entrepreneurs strengthen economy of Turkey’s Gaziantep,” TRT World, last modified February 20, 2018, <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/syrian-entrepreneurs-strengthen-economy-of-turkey-s-gaziantep-15360>.

⁶ Luana Sarmini-Buonaccorsi, “Syrian entrepreneurs thrive in Turkey,” *Oman Daily Observer*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.omandailyobserver.com/syrian-entrepreneurs-thrive-in-turkey/>.

⁷ Sarmini-Buonaccorsi, “Syrian entrepreneurs thrive in Turkey.”

⁸ Gergerly Sebestyen, Bruno Dyjas, and İhsan Kuyumcu, “Establishing the Formal Economic Identity of Syrian Refugees in Turkey: The Case of Gaziantep,” *Journal of Turkish Social Sciences Research* 3, no. 2 (2018).

⁹ Steven Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (Hampshire, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003); Alexander Betts, Louise Bloom, Josiah Kaplan, and Naohiko Omata, *Refugee Economies: Forced Displacement and Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Naohiko Omata, “Refugees’ engagement with host economies in Uganda,” *Forced Migration Review* 58 (2018); Martin Ledstrup and Marie Larsen, “From refugee to employee: work integration in rural Denmark,” *Forced Migration Review* 58 (2018).

¹⁰ Betts, Bloom, Kaplan, and Omata, *Refugee Economies*.

¹¹ Ranabir Samaddar, *The Postcolonial Age of Migration* (London: Routledge, 2020).

¹² Ayşe Çağlar and Nina Glick-Schiller, *Migrants and City-Making: Dispossession, Displacement and Urban Regeneration* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018).

¹³ Çağlar and Glick-Schiller, *Migrants and City-Making*.

¹⁴ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁵ Doğu Şimşek, “‘Winners and losers of neoliberalism’: The intersection of class and race in the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44, no. 15 (2021), DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2020.1854812.

¹⁶ Andrew Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Beverly Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁷ Report of the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) on Syrian businesses, July 2, 2018.

¹⁸ TEPAV report on Syrian businesses.

¹⁹ Sebestyen, Dyjas, and Kuyumcu, “Establishing the Formal Economic Identity of Syrian Refugees in Turkey”; Semih Tumen, “The economic impact of Syrian Refugees

on host countries: Quasi-Experimental evidence from Turkey,” *American Economic Review* 106, no. 5 (2016).

²⁰Emre Eren Korkmaz, “How do Syrian refugee workers challenge supply chain management in the Turkish garment industry?” Working Paper 133 (2017), International Migration Institute, University of Oxford; Sebestyen, Dyjas, and Kuyumcu, “Establishing the Formal Economic Identity of Syrian Refugees in Turkey.”

²¹Turkish Statistical Institute, Labour Force Statistics, March 2019.

²²Reyhan Atasü Topçuoğlu, “Syrian Refugee Entrepreneurs in Turkey: Integration and the Use of Immigrant Capital in the Informal Economy,” *Social Inclusion* 7, no. 4 (2019).

²³Topçuoğlu, “Syrian Refugee Entrepreneurs in Turkey.”

²⁴Kemal Kirişçi and Gökçe Uysal, “Syrian refugees in Turkey need better access to formal jobs,” The Brookings Institution, July 18, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/07/18/syrian-refugees-in-turkey-need-better-access-to-formal-jobs/>.

²⁵“Turkey’s Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions,” International Crisis Group, report no. 248, January 29, 2018, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/248-turkey-s-syrian-refugees.pdf>.

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