IISA | INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC STRATEGIC AFFAIRS

IDENTIFYING AND ANALYSING STRATEGIC ISSUES OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD

THE REFUGEE CRISIS
BEYOND EUROPE'S BORDER

ROUND-TABLE REPORT

In tandem with IISA's Refugee/Border Control programme, we held a specialist round-table event on 20th January 2016 in the House of Lords to discuss the refugee crisis. The round was attended by several key people working on the crisis. Due to the nature of the event and attendees, Chatham House rules were applied to the meeting. Therefore, we will not be disclosing the identities of those in attendance. However, we can disclose that as the round-table was hosted by us, IISA Director Usama Butt chaired the meeting.

The meeting was titled 'Refugees Crisis: Beyond Europe's Border'. The meeting sought to highlight the issues at hand and to address alternative approaches which may be available.

Issues:

The meeting started with an attempt to identify the issues of the crisis.

The chair began the discussion by outlining some of the problems faced both as a result of the refugee crisis, and causative factors of the crisis. They stated that a common objective should be EU cohesion on the matter, however there appears to be division between EU states. He outlined four main issues contributing towards the refugee crisis:

➢ The Crisis is complex and multifaceted: the refugee crisis is a direct result of multiple issues such as sectarian & ethnic tensions, state/non-state actors overlapping interests, terrorism and tension between states in the Middle Eastern region.

➢ Global governance responses are outdated, structural reforms are therefore absolutely and urgently necessary.

➢ Lack of clear, holistic strategy by the West to address the aforementioned issues and conflicts

and on the refugee crisis itself.

➢ Isolated responses by the West to such holistic set of problems.

The chair then opened the discussion and invited other specialists to speak.

Speaker 1, a humanitarian specialist identified the problems as 4 P's: politics, policy, principles, and projects & programmes. He also pointed out the existence of misinformation that created policy challenges.

He identified the need to challenge the narrative that Europe is overwhelmed with refugees. They elaborated that other states such as Lebanon and Turkey have taken a much larger number of refugees with fewer resources and capacity then EU states, but have coped and are still coping with refugees. It was further noted that the burden on resources should not be overstated. Speaker one then said that the speed at which we integrate refugees is suboptimal.

Speaker 2, an official, attempted to address some questions raised by the previous speaker and also attempted to outline the problems presented by the crisis.

They started by outlining that there is no coherent policy across Europe; UK policy looks at causes not consequence of migration, they added. Speaker 2 stated that public opinion and perceptions are ultimately central in the EU, and asked a question: should the government lead or follow public opinion on the refugee issue? They implied that governments must listen to the public opinion, while acknowledging public opinion can change rapidly. It was pointed out that currently the EU governments seem to be responding to mass hysteria following the Paris Attacks.

Speaker 2 also raised the issue that European government continue to determine the 'pull factors' which caused the refugee influx to Europe: why has there been a sudden surge of refugees just in last year particularly from Syria, where the conflict has been ongoing for over 5 years? Speaker 2 indicated that there remains no general consensus within EU as to what the ultimate pull factor is.

Speaker 2 further outlined another issue regarding the status of refugees. They stated it was important to distinguish refugees fleeing wars and conflict from economic migrants.

Speaker suggested that the utility provisions in each country should perhaps be based on need rather than number.

Speaker 4, another expert on the issue and on the region, noted that both the symptom and causes are important to solve. They also opined that cross government (UK government) delivery of programmes and solutions needed to be improved.

The discussion then moved onto causative factors of the refugee crises.

Factors:

Different speakers then discussed the factors which may be responsible in the creation and complication of the refugee crises; a key factor being the issue of security concerns. It was also suggested by a speaker that one of the major factors behind the refugee crises was the 'business operation' spearheaded by smugglers and human traffickers. They said that the international criminal aspect of the crises requires addressing. However,

other speakers quickly pointed out that security and terrorism issues were being misused and the main threat of terrorism is generally internal. A speaker pointed out that no refugees to date have caused or has been linked to any terrorist related activities.

Humanitarian concerns and their deterioration were considered another factor. A speaker pointed out that access to identify education needs and other services is an essential part of integration strategy. Lack of integration therefore was another factor recognised by the participants.

Complication of bureaucratic practises and processes is another prominent factor, one speaker argued.

Actors:

The discussion then briefly looked at the actors behind the refugee crises. It was generally accepted that a much stronger role of the UN was crucially needed. It was also noted that the role of global governance has been unsatisfactory.

State actors also face multiple problems; one speaker noted that the framework of frontier states needs to be

redefined and the assessment of refugees by each state should be based on need and not by numbers.

It was also noted that organisations such as D.G. Home and D.G Echo needed better structure to act within the European Union, as opposed to at the Greek/Turkish borders.

Solutions:

The panel then looked at some alternative solutions that may be available. IISA's director emphasised on a need for innovative thinking on the refugee crises that is both mid to long-term and above all sustainable.

He outlined two approaches: one on local level (grassroots) and one on a larger level.

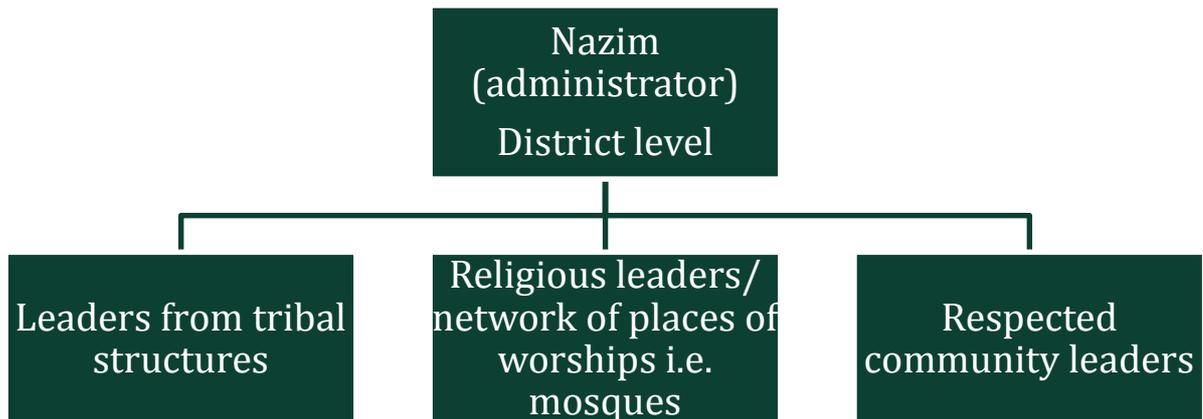## Transitional local governance: (TLG) Providing governance on a local level

TLG or a similar structure is crucial and necessary. A grassroots level of governance in some conflicts can pave a way of law and order, security and boosting economy; all issues which create refugees. However it may not work in protracted conflicts such as

Syria. TLG should then plug into some form of regional governance which in turn would plug into global governance. Such measures are necessary because global governance is under high intense pressure and is proving ineffective in some cases.

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        │   governance     │
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│   TLG   │             │    Global    │
│         │             │  governance  │
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Transitional Local Governance's structure could look something like this:

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              │       Nazim         │
              │   (administrator)   │
              │   District level    │
              └──────────┬──────────┘
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│ Leaders from │ │ Religious leaders/│ │  Respected   │
│    tribal    │ │ network of places│ │  community   │
│  structures  │ │  of worships i.e.│ │   leaders    │
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The general idea is to provide three elements of governance listed above on a grass-roots level using existing structures. In other words, TLG is a practical formula that can work with immediate effect in many conflicts, particularly in the Islamic world but also beyond.

The second aspect of IISA's approach was towards sustainable solution to the crises on more long term basis. The idea of Protected Refugee Zones was coined, explained below:

Protected Refugees Zones (PRZs):

PRZs are hotspots across the globe in suitable locations where refugees can

be protected. The central idea is to create an exclusive protected zone for refugees under the auspices of regional and global governance. It is however not a 'ghetto' for refugees, rather a protected developmental zone with industrial level investment and Marshall Plan-like funding for education and care.

Refugees in PRZs will be given job opportunities, free education and care. They will be processed in PRZs and will be free to stay or leave. Their children will be educated, fed and protected.

Instead of the current norm, where refugees have their 'lives on hold', PRZs will assure that their life goes on. Above all, as the current episode of refugees risking their lives and going through miserable conditions demonstrates, PRZs will have an orderly logistical procession of the refugees into PRZs.

Both ideas were received positively by other attendees. One speaker said that similar thought on PRZs is already developing which was called 'special economic zones'. Countries like Jordan could be one of the areas where such zones could be established.

Another speaker suggested that linking TLG to PRZs would be a good idea as it would cover both angles.

Reflecting on the negotiations on Syria, participants noted that reconciliation processes alone cannot fix the crisis in the short term. One speaker suggested that exploring investment in host nations and regions should be prioritised.

In countries where transition is or may be taking place, the transition should not be top down but built from below.

It was also argued that there was a great need for holistic solutions that provide mechanism within EU countries.

About the IISA's Refugee/Border Control Programme:

The Refugee/Border Control Programme at IISA aims to apply a strategic and holistic approach in formulating both theoretical and practical solutions to address human migration and the refugee crisis. While there are numerous studies examining how the refugee crisis and human migration affects civilisations such as the West, there is a desperate lacking in analysis of foreseeable potential effects on the Islamic-world. The Islamic-world has taken centre stage in the migration and refugee crises, and IISA is committed to the understanding that strategies aiming to address the global refugee crisis must also consider achieving short-term and long-term stability in the Islamic-world.

Please find more information at: http://iisa.org.uk/?page_id=1368

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC STRATEGIC AFFAIRS (IISA)

IISA is a think-tank and an intellectual forum for addressing the current and future dynamics of the Islamic-world and its interaction with Western civilisation. Based in London, IISA will create trans-Islamic and global reach. IISA seeks to establish a platform where Islamic-world's dynamics, trends, issue, problems or crises are analysed within the Islamic-world and by working on local models and realities and not against any external standards or perceptions. We will be one of the leading think-tank on the Islamic-world and its role in the contemporary global system. In a short span of time we have attracted great academic support and a reputation for both open and track-II dialogues. IISA is the only think tank initiative that goes beyond national and regional inclinations and addresses strategic and socio-political issues/crises of the Islamic world in its totality. For more information i.e. our mission statement, current programmes and our academic and regional expertise please visit the following links:

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