

# **Remedy for perpetual temporariness:**

What Syrian Refugees Think About Citizenship of Turkey



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

“Local integration” which is frequently mentioned in the asylum field, even if it is not clearly defined, is a process that has legal, economic and social dimensions. Economic dimension refers to that the persons become self-sufficient without being dependent on aid in the country of asylum. Socially it means that they keep living without being exposed to discrimination, exclusion and exploitation. And the legal dimension implies that the way which gradually lead to access to rights, permanent residence rights and ultimately gaining of citizenship rights is open. Local integration becomes a permanent solution on the condition that an actual permanent status is acquired and this status can be obtained only through citizenship.

In this regard, the citizenship as a legal status/right which must be provided to the refugees at the end of asylum process was brought to fore in Turkey in summer of the year 2016 through the statements putting that limited number of Syrians would be granted citizenship on the ground that they were regarded as beneficial to the country. In the discussions during this period, the issue was taken as a “favor” bestowed upon Syrians rather than as a right. In the process following the statements made about granting the citizenship to some of the Syrians, some reactions generally including xenophobia/hostility to the refugees and hate speech were reflected in the public opinion. However, during these heated discussions, Syrian refugees’ views were not given a place. Mülteci-Der has prepared this report by aiming at reflecting viewpoints of Syrian refugees, the core subjects of the issue, on the citizenship issue. The interviews on which this report is based were carried out with Syrians living in İzmir.

We owe all our Syrian friends who accepted Mülteci-Der team to conduct the interviews with them and who shared their views with us a debt of gratitude. Because of personal confidentiality we cannot write their names down. It was impossible to put such a study forth without their support. Sevim Özdemir undertook main responsibility of this study in the research and writing stages. Şiraz Baker provided a great contribution through her interpretation support. Cavidan Soykan made invaluable contributions and recommendations that enriched the content and Neva Öztürk’s comments in the stage of writing was guiding for us. Özge Biner gave advices which made the report more legible. İrem Somer made contributions. Nazlı Bilgekey completed the stages of editing, translation and printing by pursuing the whole process punctiliously and patiently. Onur Adsay made a final revision of the text carefully and he designed the graphics and cover. Kemal Davut pursued Arabic translation and printing stages of the report. We would like to express our sincere thanks to all of our friends who contributed.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The statement made by President Erdoğan about granting Turkish Citizenship to Syrians and the discussions surrounding this statement occupied the political agenda of Turkey during the first half of July 2016. Many criticisms, statements in support and numerous racist comments against Syrians were featured in the media. However, it was rare to see any comprehensive report, news feature or analysis about what Syrians thought about this issue; whether they were in support, and if they so, their reasons. In order to address this failing, the field research on which this report is based was conducted with 50 Syrian interviewees in different neighborhoods of Izmir, between the dates of 12th of July and 18th of August 2016. This process was designed by keeping in mind that the granting of citizenship rights to refugees is the result of a durable process of legal integration and that it is an obligation for states to establish durable solutions to refugees.

At the end of the field research, it has been found that most of the interviewees want to have Turkish citizenship. The most frequently articulated reasons for willingness to obtain Turkish citizenship were, respectively having a work permit, accessing the right to education and health and being treated equally by the local community. It was interesting to see that these rights in question were the rights which are already covered in Temporary Protection status and that many of the interviewees saw citizenship as a way of being equally treated. Additionally, among the women who stated their reasons specific to womanhood, most of them expressed that they will have more rights and freedoms as citizens. Moreover, the least expressed reason was a feeling of belongingness to Turkey. These results provide a base for the interpretation that the social integration of Syrians into Turkish society is not currently a functioning and durable process and that the interviewees do not want Turkish citizenship as a form of cultural identity and belonging.

Additionally, the results show that the interviewees are against any criteria that aims to generate economic favor from Syrians. This stance is contrary to the views and approach announced by governing authorities. However, this statement by the interviewees is in line with the reasons of their willingness to obtain Turkish citizenship; since, as stated above, the most frequently expressed reasons were having a work permit and having access to rights. Furthermore, many interviewees drew attention to the fact that the ones who need citizenship rights most are the poor. It should also be noted that majority of the interviewees have per capita income which is under hunger threshold.

Regarding the citizenship preferences in the case that they would have to forgo

one citizenship in order to obtain another; most of the interviewees stated that they would choose Turkish citizenship. The most commonly stated reason was the impossibility of returning Syria. However, a significant number of interviewees answered the question "if everything becomes good, where they would like to be in future" as stating that they would like to be in Syria.

**Some major findings of the research are as follows:**

- 88% of the interviewees want to have Turkish citizenship, with 54.5% of the interviewees being female and 45.5 % male.
- Only 5 (10%) of interviewees do not want Turkish citizenship, with 3 (60%) of them female and 2 (40%) of them male. One of them stated that it does not make any difference.

(The ratios stated below are based on data from the interviewees who want Turkish Citizenship)

- The most articulated reason for willingness to have Turkish citizenship is to have a work permit, the percentage of those giving this example is 63.6%. The second is right to education and access to health services.
- For 47.7% of the interviewees who want to have Turkish citizenship, the reason is being treated equally and this reason is articulated mostly by women.
- 65% of the interviewees are against the establishment of criteria to acquire Turkish Citizenship. 35% of them think that there should be criteria. Other than two interviewees, both groups are against criteria based on elements such as wealth and level of education. The majority of pro-criteria interviewees are male.
- The first three criteria to be accepted to Turkish citizenship as stated by the interviewees are respectively not being involved with terrorism, being of good character and having no criminal record.
- 83.3% of Turkmen interviewees are against providing any privilege to Turkmen regarding the issue of citizenship.
- 52.3% stated that they would prefer Turkish citizenship, while 43.1% would prefer Syrian citizenship. 58% of those who prefer Syrian citizenship are women.
- 94% think that dual citizenship is a better option rather than only choosing one.
- 45% of all interviewees stated that they would like to be in Syria in the future, while 21% said they want to be in Turkey in response to the question of where they would like to be in future.

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## Recommendations

Based on the results of this research:

- In the shortest term, necessary measures should be taken to remove the obstacles that prevent Syrians from fully enjoying the rights provided under Temporary Protection. These rights should be covered and protected by a stronger legal framework.
- Again in the short term, Syrians should be provided with a more solid status such as refugee status.
- Syrians' acquisitions of Turkish citizenship should be seen as an obligation regarding legal integration, not as a favor bestowed upon them, and necessary steps should be taken.
- These steps should include elimination of hate crime, hate speech and discrimination against Syrians.
- There should not be any criteria stemming from economic concerns to grant Turkish citizenship and there should not be any discrimination based on economic situation of Syrians and their educational level. If there will any priority or privilege, it should be in favor of the poor.
- There should not be any discrimination based on ethnicity, gender and social class.
- A transparent and clear road map for Syrians' acquisition of Turkish citizenship should be prepared and declared to the public.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

On 2nd of July 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of the Turkish Republic, made the statement that, "we will give citizenship right to our Syrian Brothers"<sup>1</sup>. This statement sparked many criticisms and to a large extent, it was not welcomed by different wings of the society such as nationalists, including supporters of the ruling party.<sup>2</sup> These opponents pointed to the "nobleness" of Turkish citizenship as an identity. Furthermore, the political parties who have human rights sensitive party programs stated that there should be a referendum about this issue.<sup>3</sup> These parties drew attention to the political and economic aspects of this situation.

Before the 15<sup>th</sup> of July coup attempt, this issue was first on the agenda of Turkey. However, after the coup attempt, President Erdoğan reinstated his position on this issue in his speech in UN Summit on 20<sup>th</sup> of September, 2016. Because of the po-

litical atmosphere in the country, it did not lead to as much discussion as before. However, it should be noted that after President Erdoğan's first statement, a wave of hate speech and racism against Syrians started to spread across the media and social media in Turkey. A hashtag titled #ÜlkemdeSuriyelilistemiyorum (I do not want Syrians in my country), including lots of racist comments, was started on Twitter on the day of Erdoğan's first statement and reached to the top of the list of tweeted hashtags very quickly. In addition to this, one of the most circulated newspapers in Turkey repeatedly featured headlines utilizing racist discourse against Syrians, such as "Will we make 'these' Turkish Citizens?" [Bunları mı Türk Vatandaşı Yapacağız?].

Mirroring this wave of racist expressions in the media, racially motivated incidents started to increase across the whole country. At least 3 cases including fighting between local and Syrian communities in the neighborhoods, injury, and murder were reported in the four days following the statement.<sup>4</sup> Many comments levelled blame against Syrians for prominent socio-economic problems, such as unemployment and violence in the country. In response to these developments, various statements from government authorities made to the press stated that there would be criteria introduced for Syrians to be accepted to Turkish citizenship, such as criteria based on education and wealth. It was stated that Syrians would be directed to the jobs which Turkish citizens do not prefer.<sup>5</sup> Even President Erdoğan himself said: "There are many very qualified people. If we don't take them, they will go to the UK or Canada."<sup>6</sup>

In this period, only human rights and refugee rights organizations and activists touched upon the fact that Syrian refugees did not prefer to be refugees and that they had to flee from one of most violent wars in history. Furthermore, these organizations highlighted that the Syrians are not the cause of serious socio-economic problems of Turkey, on the contrary, they are also victims suffering from those same problems. Additionally, other than these groups, nobody else made the argument that providing refugees with rights of citizenship is an affirmative step with regard to introducing durable solutions for protection of refugees; itself a part of

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/07/160703\\_erdogan\\_suriyeliler](http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/07/160703_erdogan_suriyeliler)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.diken.com.tr/akp-secmeninden-vatandaslik-yorumu-savastan-kacmis-millet-icin-dogru-degil/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/muhalefetten-suriyelilere-vatandaslik-tepkisi>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.multeci.org.tr/haberdetay.aspx?Id=146>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1265643-nurettin-canikliden-suriyelilere-vatandaslik-aciklamasi>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dw.com/en/syrian-refugees-express-mixed-feelings-over-turkish-citizenship-offer/a-19399783>



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obligations of States stemming from International Law, such as Article 34 of 1951 Refugee Convention.

However, because of the geographical limitation of Turkey on protection obligations originating from the 1951 Refugee Convention, Turkey does not accept refugees from non-member countries of European Council. Therefore, Syrians are provided protection through temporary protection and they cannot be granted refugee status. Nonetheless, although Syrians are not accepted officially as refugees, the need for long term solutions to their situation and their integration into local community still remains. As it is widely known, there are three long term solutions established by the international community for the protection of refugees, which are the voluntary repatriation/voluntary return, resettlement to a third country and local integration.<sup>1</sup> According to UNHCR's definition, local integration:

"...is the end product of a multi-faceted and on-going process, of which self-reliance is but one part. Integration requires a preparedness on the part of the refugees to adapt to the host society, without having to forego their own cultural identity. From the host society, it requires communities that are welcoming and responsive to refugees, and public institutions that are able to meet the needs of a diverse population. As a process leading to a durable solution for refugees in the country of asylum, local integration has three inter-related and quite specific dimensions." <sup>2</sup>

Local integration includes three dimensions, which are economical, socio-cultural and legal dimensions. Legal dimension is a process defined as follows:

"...whereby refugees are granted a progressively wider range of rights and entitlements by the host State that are broadly commensurate with those enjoyed by its citizens. These include freedom of movement, access to education and the labour market, access to public relief and assistance, including health facilities, the possibility of acquiring and disposing of property, and the capacity to travel with valid travel and identity documents. Realization of family unity is another important aspect of local integration." <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/solutions.html>

<sup>2</sup> Cited from Da Costa Rosa, "LEGAL AND PROTECTION POLICY RESEARCH SERIES Rights of Refugees in the Context of Integration: Legal Standards and Recommendations", UNHCR, (Geneva, 2006), p.8  
<http://www.unhcr.org/44bb90882.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [ibid.]

In addition, Rosa da Cosa states that the legal process is “a process which should lead to permanent residence rights and ultimately, the acquisition of citizenship.”<sup>1</sup>

At this point, in order to better explore the issue of citizenship, it may be useful to mention the inclusion of this concept. As Christian Joppke puts it, citizenship consists of three dimensions, which are status, rights and identity.<sup>2</sup> The status denotes a formal membership to a state. The rights mean civil, political and social rights which have economic repercussions and the identity refers to “behavioral aspects of individuals acting and conceiving themselves as a member of a collectivity.”<sup>3</sup> The identity dimension relates to “citizens’ sense of belonging” and is, on some occasions, referred to as “the psychological dimension of citizenship.”<sup>4</sup>

To conclude, despite the statements of President Erdoğan and government authorities and despite huge controversy that these statements have created in the society, it is still not clear what kind of a process will be operated, the form of legal process that will take place and what kind of a citizenship approach will be adopted. There is no any officially declared or published road map. Under the current Turkish Citizenship Law no 5901, a foreigner can apply for citizenship to Ministry of Interior in accordance with the conditions stated in Article 11 and as stated in Article 12 he or she can acquire citizenship exceptionally through a decision of Council of Ministers. There are also some conditions set out in Articles 15 and 16 of the Implementing Regulation of the Turkish Citizenship Law. Nevertheless, Article 25 of the Temporary Protection Regulation states that Temporary Protection ID does not provide its holder with the right of applying for Turkish Citizenship.

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<sup>1</sup> [ibid.],p.9 (emphasis added)

<sup>2</sup> Joppke, Christian, “Transformation of Citizenship: Status, Rights, Identity”, *Citizenship Studies*, 11:1, 37-48, p.37.

<sup>3</sup> [ibid.]

<sup>4</sup> Cited from “<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/citizenship/>”

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## 2. PURPOSE AND METHODS <sup>3</sup>

As mentioned above, the statements relating to Syrians' acquisition of Turkish citizenship created a huge controversy within Turkey. Many discussion programs on TV channels, news articles and hashtags which were mostly against granting Syrians to Turkish citizenship were devoted to this issue. However, the ideas of Syrians themselves about the issue did not get as much attention or airtime as the ideas of Turkish people and media actors. A few news articles and TV programs featuring interviews with Syrians were published.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, we think that as Syrians are the real subjects of these discussions on the acquisition of Turkish citizenship, it is important to make their ideas and views heard.

In line with this aim, between the dates of 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2016 and 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2016, a field research was conducted in different neighborhoods of Izmir in order to prepare this report. Qualitative research methods were used and semi-structured, one-to-one interviews with fifty Syrian people were carried out. During the interviews, in order to establish the interviewees' ideas and views about the issue, the following questions were asked:

- Do you want to acquire Turkish Citizenship?
- What are the reasons of that you want to have Turkish Citizenship?
- Do you think that there should be some criteria to be accepted to Turkish Citizenship?
- If yes, what these criteria should be?
- Which citizenship would you prefer if you had to choose one over the other; Turkish or Syrian?
- Do you think that dual citizenship is a better option?

The interview sample consists of 50 people. 27 of them are women (54%) and 23 of them (46%) are men and they belong to different ethnic groups. The majority of the interviewees are Arab Sunnis. Turkmens and Kurds come second and they have

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<sup>1</sup> Limitations of the research: At the beginning of the research the aim was reaching to female and male interviewees in equal numbers. However, because of the working hours of possible male interviewees the aim was not achieved. We tried to have a suitable environment for a one-to-one interview but because of the poor housing conditions we could not provide such an environment for every interview.

<sup>2</sup> See the links below:

<http://www.dw.com/en/syrian-refugees-express-mixed-feelings-over-turkish-citizenship-offer/a-19399783>

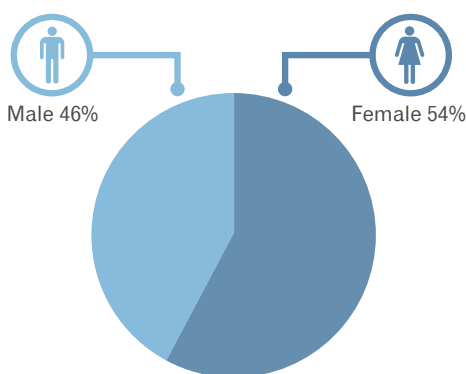
<http://www.ahaber.com.tr/gundem/2016/07/06/suriyeliler-vatandaslik-istiyor-mu>

<http://www.bbc.com/turkce/36802877>

<http://t24.com.tr/haber/oteki-suriyeliler-turkiye-vatandasi-olursak-askere-gideriz-akpye-oy-verir-miyim-bilmiyoruz,349206>

equal numbers in the sample. The third biggest group is Ezidis. Even though they are in very small numbers there are also Alawi, Palestinian and Christian people among the interviewees. By providing this diversity in the sample, it is aimed to reflect the views and ideas of all Syrian people from different ethnicities about the citizenship issue.

**Interviewees in terms of gender in %**



**Distribution in % in terms of ethnicity and/or religious belief**

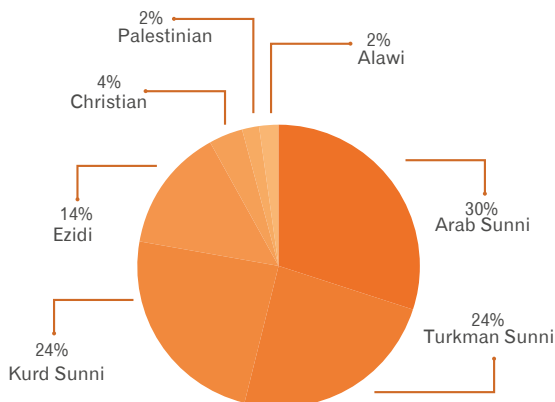


Figure 1: Distribution of interviewees in terms of gender and ethnicity and/or religious belief in %.

Majority of the people interviewed are under the age of 36 (60%). 38% of the interviewees are between the ages 26-35. The percentage of interviewees between 18-25 years of age is %22. 20% of people in the sample are between the ages 36 and 45. Just one of them is above the age 55. It can be said that the sample consists of relatively young and middle-age people.

**Distirbution of age groups in terms of gender**

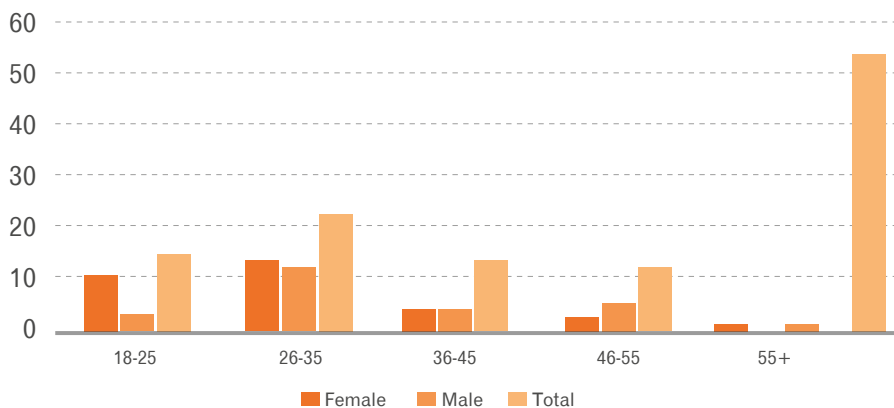


Figure 2: Distribution of interviewees in terms of age groups.

Regarding employment, while 58% of the interviewees are currently not working, 42% them are working in a regular or irregular job. Among the employed interviewees 23.8% of them are female and 76.1% of them are male. Only 3 (6%) of them have a regular formal job. In terms of educational level, the majority of the interviewees are primary school graduates (31%). The second largest group is graduates of elementary schools (19%). High school and university graduates share same percentages with 17%. The level of illiteracy in female interviewees is 14%, while none of the male interviewees are illiterate. Similarly, the percentage of the male interviewees who have a high school or vocational college or university degree is 43.4, while it is 29.6% for females.

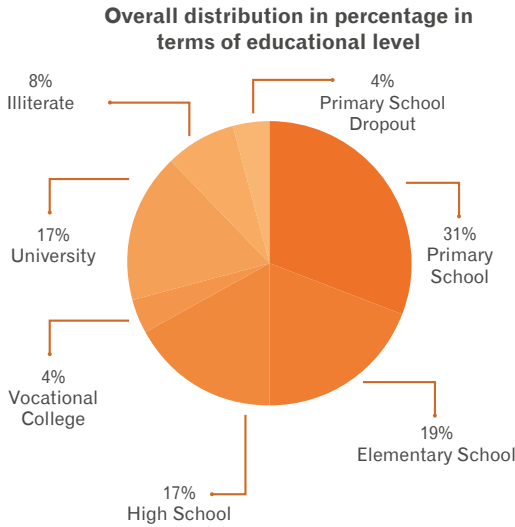


Figure 3: Distribution in percentages in terms of educational levels

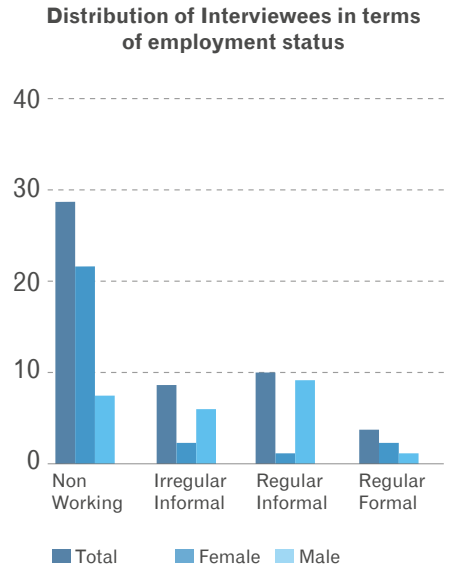


Figure 4: Distribution in terms of employment status (in#)

Regarding the income of interviewees, in order to have more quantitative values about income we have deduced the per capita income values by dividing household income stated by the interviewees into household population. Gender category is not used because the interviewees have only stated their household incomes. It must be noted that, given that the official average hunger threshold is approximately 350 Turkish Liras (TL), majority of the interviewees live either under or slightly above hunger threshold.<sup>1</sup> As seen in the figure in real numbers below,

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.turkis.org.tr/dosya/qqEA08H3p12C.pdf>.

According to the figures included Turk-iş July 2016 Hunger and Poverty Threshold Values, for a 4-member family poverty threshold is 1.369,76. For an adult person this value is approximately 351,30 TL.

Average value for per-capita hunger threshold is counted by averaging values regarding adults.

30% of the interviewees have a per capita income between 201 and 300 TL. The second largest group consists of the ones whose per capita income is between 100 and 200 TL. The percentage of these interviewees is 24% of the total sample group. The third group represents 14% of the research sample population and their per capita income level is between 401 and 500 TL. 10% of interviewees have a per capita income between 601 and 700 TL. 6% of them have a per capita income in the range of 301-400 TL. 4% of them have a per capita income level between 801 and 900 TL. %2 of them has a per capita income between 901-1000 TL. Lastly, 10% of Syrians interviewed have no income at all. According to their statements they make their living through humanitarian aids. It should also be noted that the higher per capita income levels do not mean higher wages or income values. Most of interviewees with higher per capita income levels are members of small families.

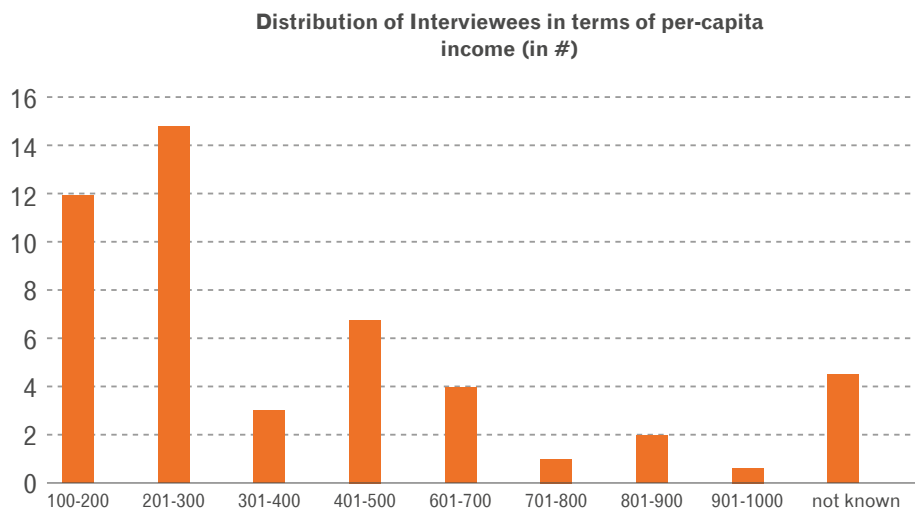


Figure 5: Distribution of Interviewees in terms of per-capita income (in #)

In addition, 40 of the interviewees (80%) have Temporary Protection ID, while 8 of them (16%) were in pre-registration process at the time of interviews. Other than these interviewees, 2 (4%) of them were neither Temporary Protection ID holders nor pre-registered applicants. These two people and those who were in pre-registration process were mostly new-comers, having entered Turkey in March or April 2016. Only one of the pre-registered interviewees came to Turkey before 2016, having arrived in 2013. Among the Temporary Protection ID holders 20 of them (50%) came to Turkey in 2013 or before and the other 20 (50%) entered in 2014 or after. Only for 3 of them is the entrance date 2016.

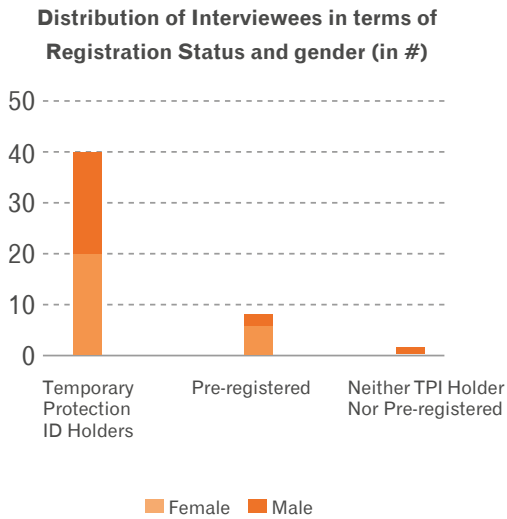


Figure 6: Distribution of Interviewees in terms of Registration Status and gender (in #)

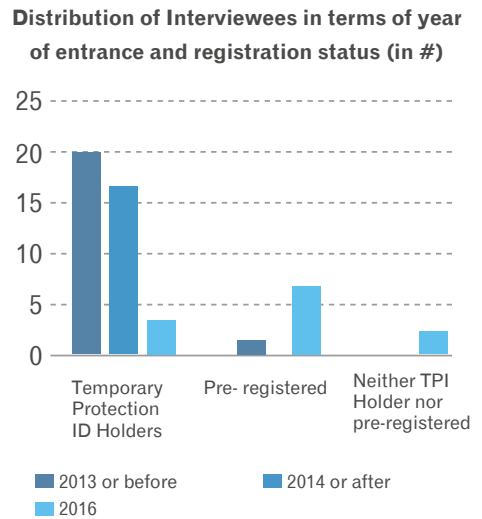


Figure 7: Distribution in terms of year of entrance and registration status (in #)

It should also be noted that most of the women entered Turkey at later dates than men. While 29.6% of female interviewees came to Turkey in 2013 or before, this percentage is 56.5% for male interviewees. This situation may be related to the fact that in some cases a male member of a family comes to a city first, finding a job and home and then the rest of the family follows him to this city. This male person sometimes is a male relative and the other family members hear from him about where to go. However, it is hard to generalize due to the size of the sample group.

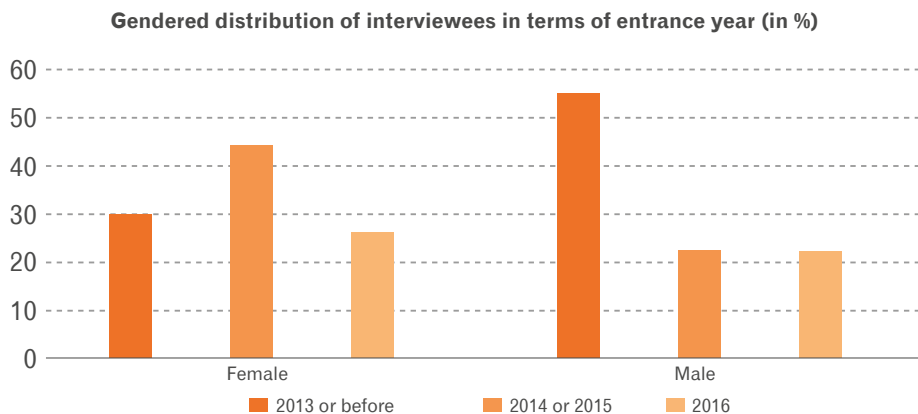


Figure 8: Gendered distribution of interviewees in terms of year of entrance (in %)

### 3. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

#### 3.1: Turkish Citizenship

It was asked the interviewees whether or not they would like to have a Turkish citizenship. As seen from the figure below, the majority of the interviewees (88% - 44 people) want to have Turkish citizenship. 54.5% (24) of those who responded in this way are female and 45,5% (20) are male. 10% (5) of them do not want Turkish citizenship, with 60% (3) of such respondents female and 40% (2) male. Only 2% (1) of the interviewees stated that it does not make any difference for them. One from the 44 interviewees who said “yes” to citizenship added that the important thing is job opportunities and that the country is not so important.<sup>1</sup>

Among the 5 interviewees (10%) who replied the question negatively, for 2 of them the reason is that they feel that they “belong to Syria”<sup>2</sup>. One of them expressed the reason why he does not want Turkish citizenship as saying “I am responsible to my country and to my people; I came here because I had to flee from ISIS. Here (in Turkey) our only concern is to survive, we do not have any other humanly existence other than survival, we do nothing in the intellectual level”<sup>3</sup>. Another interviewee who expressed that they have lands in Syria and Syria is their homeland also added that the life is very difficult in Turkey<sup>4</sup>. The other 2 people stated that they would like to leave Turkey and to go Western countries<sup>5</sup>. One of these respondents offered further explanation by saying that they (as a family) had applied to UN and that they were waiting for resettlement, adding that the conditions were harsh in Turkey<sup>6</sup>. One interviewee who is also waiting for resettlement answered the question by saying “it does not make any difference; it is not so important”<sup>7</sup>. These interviewees who replied negatively are either newcomers (at beginning of 2016) or the ones who have applied to UN for resettlement.

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<sup>1</sup> Male, age:27, date of interview: July 27, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female and male, ages: 20 and 27, date of interview: July 22, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Male, age: 27, date of interview: July 22, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Male, age: 46, date of interview: August 18, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Female, ages: 46 and 45, dates of interviews: July 12, 2016 and August 16, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Female, age:45, date of interview: August 16, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Male, age:49, date of interview: August 12, 2016.



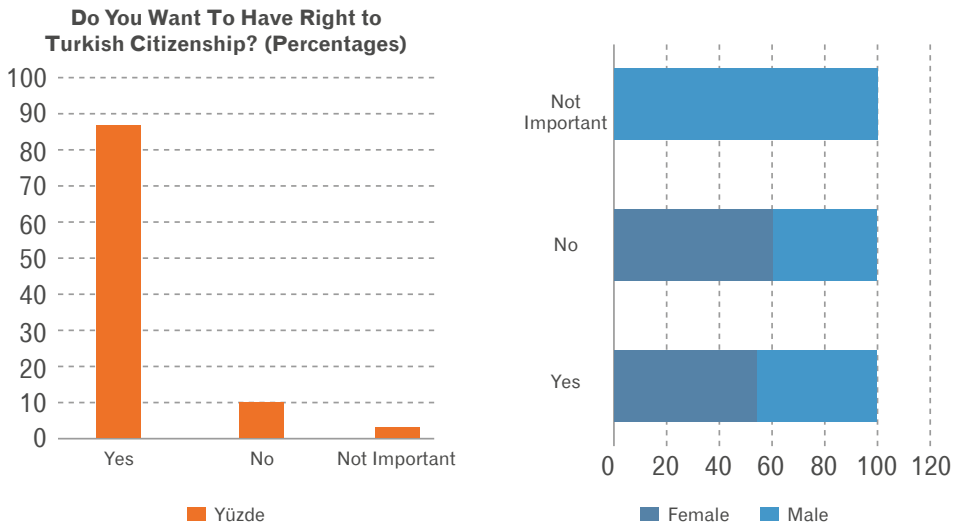


Figure 9: Willingness to have Turkish Citizenship in percentages and percentage distribution of answers in terms of gender.

Additionally, as an indicator of how important the integration period is, one of the interviewees especially highlighted that they are “guests here” and one of them raised his concerns about the unwillingness of Turkish people to accept Syrians as citizens. He stated that the issue of citizenship may pose a problem between local people and Syrians; and that therefore, the opinions of the Turkish people should be taken into account first.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, another interviewee said that “yes, I want Turkish citizenship but Turks do not want us, it may be a problem between Turkish and Syrian people.”<sup>2</sup> She suggested making the right of citizenship for Syrians temporary to prevent any possible conflict between local people and Syrians. It cannot be said that these kinds of perspectives indicate the common viewpoint of Syrians about having Turkish citizenship, however we have also come across the perspective of being guests in Turkey in their views about the citizenship criteria.

### ***Statelessness 1: A threat to Syrian Children's Future***

*As many news reports and INGO reports brought to the agenda, there is a growing number of stateless Syrian children and there will be huge generation of stateless people in the future. There are various rea-*

*sons for this problem. Firstly, Syrian nationality law does not allow a mother to confer her nationality to her child, so the father must be known and registered on the document taken after birth. Second-*

<sup>1</sup> Male, age: 31, date of interview: August 10, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female, age:47, date of interview: July 28, 2016.

ly, many countries have not adapted their obligations stemming from international conventions regarding the rights of a child to prevent statelessness into domestic law. Thirdly, the officials responsible for registration of new-born children are not aware that according to Syrian law, only the father can confer his nationality to his child and they do not place importance on registering the father's name to the document given for the child. Many parents are also not aware this fact.

According to UN reports there are a growing number of stateless Syrian children, particularly in the countries surrounding Syria.<sup>1</sup> EU countries are also not immune to this problem, as they do not grant citizenship to the children born in their territory. Syrian embassies are not willing to give passports to new-born children if the father is not present.<sup>2</sup> Turkey has some provisions in the law to prevent statelessness and actually these provisions can be regarded as very positive provisions. However, this does not mean that Turkey provides citizenship for children born inside of the country. Article 8 of Turkish Citizenship Law no 5901 put is as "(1) A child born in Turkey, but acquiring no citizenship of any state by birth through his/her alien mother or father is a Turkish citizen from the moment of birth. (2) A child found in Turkey is deemed born in Turkey unless otherwise proven." In addition, there are some provisions (e.g. Articles 50, 51) regarding statelessness in Law on Foreigners and International Protection.

As stated in Refugees International's report titled "Birth Registration In Turkey: Protecting The Future For Syrian Children"<sup>3</sup> because of the above mentioned Syrian nationality rule that only the father can pass his nation-

ality to his children, it is important to register father's name and child's date of birth in Syria correctly. It can be regarded as a positive development that Temporary Protection Status can be given to every new-born child and that there need not be a father's name on it. It is possible for many Syrian children that their father is missing, killed or a fighter or regarded as dead by Syrian authority because of the war. Furthermore, many Syrian refugees did not have a chance to bring their document together with them because of the harsh conditions of war. Therefore, it may be difficult for a mother to register her child with all required information to be able to get Syrian citizenship for her child in the future. Moreover, as a widely-known fact, many Syrian women do not have an official marriage certificate and sometimes the birth certificate given by hospitals do not include father's name. Therefore, it becomes much more difficult for women to obtain birth certificates from the Population Department. This document is important because it is an internationally valid document. However, it is possible that neither the officials nor the parents are aware of its importance.

Therefore, making the procedure and conditions to take birth certificate for a new-born easier and widely known would be a solution to prevent statelessness of children. Or providing these children with Turkish citizenship may be a good step to protect them from being stateless.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/27/refugee-crisis-creating-stateless-generation-children-experts-warn>

<sup>2</sup> [ibid.]

<sup>3</sup> [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/506c8ea1e4b01d9450dd53f5/t/56047ac6e4b0011f90282bec/1443134150677/150430\\_turkey\\_birth\\_registration.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/506c8ea1e4b01d9450dd53f5/t/56047ac6e4b0011f90282bec/1443134150677/150430_turkey_birth_registration.pdf)

### 3-2: Why do Syrians want to have Turkish citizenship?

During the field research, we have tried to find out what the expectations of Syrians are with regard to having Turkish citizenship. It must be noted that the majority of the interviewees stated that they want to have the rights which are already included in Temporary Protection status, even though they are already informed about those rights.

*Given that majority of the interviewees are Temporary Protection ID holders and there is a slight difference between the ones who came 2013 and before and 2014 and after among the ID holders, it can be stated that many Syrians in Turkey cannot effectively enjoy their rights within the scope of Temporary Protection.*

Furthermore, it may be interpreted that there are still many things to do so as to be able to achieve legal integration.

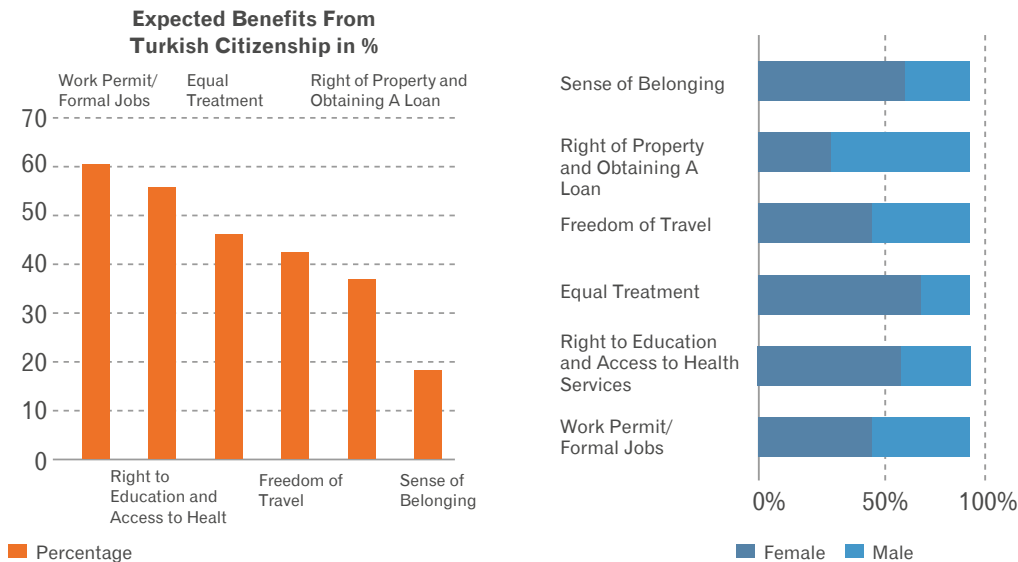


Figure 10: Distribution of interviewees in percentage in terms of their expectations from Turkish Citizenship and their distribution in terms of gender (Percentages based on the number of interviewees who said they want Turkish citizenship rights- 44 interviewees)

The rights in question are respectively, work permit, right to education and the right to access to health services. 63.6% (28) of the interviewees who want Turkish citizenship stated that they want to have a work permit to be able to have jobs

providing social security and to be able to seek justice if their wages are not paid or if they are fired unfairly. 59% of the interviewees think that citizenship right will provide them with a more effectively enjoyed right to education and right to access health services. The third expectation is being treated equally and not being viewed as a foreigner anymore in Turkish society. This reflects the expectation of 47.7% of the interviewees. The other expectations are respectively, freedom of travel (43.1%), economic rights like the right to property (29.5%) and sense of belonging to a country (18.8%).

### 3.2.1: Work permit/Formal Jobs

According to the research, only 3 (6.8%) of the interviewees (out of 44 interviewees) have a formal job. Most of them are working in informal and insecure jobs without any social security. Some others are working in completely different jobs than the jobs that they have qualifications for. Moreover, the work permit is the most articulated benefit expected to be enjoyed by having Turkish citizenship, with the percentage of interviewees articulated it being 63.6%.

*One of the interviewees explained why he wants to have work permit through citizenship by stating that currently they cannot have "even a private insurance." Another interviewee said that if they can get the citizenship rights they will be able to look for jobs more easily and to change the jobs in cases where the employers do not pay their wages .*

Two interviewees emphasized that they would like to do their own jobs respectively as an engineer and as a doctor.<sup>2</sup> One of the interviewees specified that the work permit exists only on paper and it is not implemented truly in real life because it is up to the employers.<sup>3</sup>

Although only 20.8% of female interviewees (5 out of 24) are employed, as seen in the figure above, the ratio of women and men who expect to enjoy the right of work permit is equal. This is because some of the women want this right for their children and husbands. One female interviewee said that she wants this right because her son "could not get his money from where he works for."<sup>4</sup> Another wom-

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<sup>1</sup> Female, age:25, July 25, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Male, age 29, July 22, 2016; male, age: 35, August 16, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Male, age:32, July 27, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Female, age:41, July 26, 2016.

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an expressed that the work permit will be good for her children.<sup>1</sup> One interviewee who was a geography teacher in Syria stated that if they get citizenship right, her husband can practice his own job as a doctor.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.2.2: Right to education and access to health services

Although the right to access educational and health services are covered under Temporary Protection, many interviewees do not see them as being implemented efficiently enough because of the problems like discrimination, language and lack of capacity in the schools. Therefore, they see citizenship as a path to enjoying these rights as efficiently as Turkish citizens do. Accessing education and health services more efficiently are the expectations which are mostly articulated by women. Under this heading, education also has a bigger share than health. 26 (59%) interviewees highlighted these issues and only 7 (27%) of them touched upon the issue of health.

*The majority of these interviewees stated that they want their children to have educational rights to be able to go to school for their future.*

Only 4 (15.3%) of them said that they want this right to be effectively used for their own sake. Therefore, it may be said that education is seen as a way of securing future and this expectation can be interpreted as a sign of a tendency to have a more stable and predictable life.

One of the female interviewees said that she wants the right of citizenship because she wants her children to be able to go to the school without facing any discrimination.<sup>3</sup> A male interviewee who has not received his Temporary Protection yet explained his concerns about future and added that he would like to have citizenship because he wants his daughter to be educated.<sup>4</sup> As mentioned above, a small minority among the interviewees stated that they want to enjoy educational rights for their own benefit. One young female interviewee who had to quit her university education because of the war said that she wanted citizenship because she will be able to complete her education without any problem.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Female, age:30, July 27, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female, age: 29, July 22, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Female, 31 years of age, July 22, 2016

<sup>4</sup> Male, 47, July 21, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Female, 23, August 4, 2016.

Another interviewee<sup>1</sup> emphasized that citizenship right would be good especially for the ones who could not complete their education.

### 3.2.3: Equal Treatment

47.7% of the interviewees (21 out of 44) emphasized their wish to be treated equally by local people in Turkish society. The majority of these interviewees consist of women. It should be noted that women from every ethnic and religious group included in this research expressed their wish for equal treatment. Women seek out and identify rental houses in the neighborhood they live in. They take their children to hospitals. They try to register their children for the schools. Therefore, it can be said that it is more probable for women as the caregivers and homemakers to encounter the social pattern and reactions of local people in daily life. It should also be noted that the right of citizenship is perceived as a way of being free from discrimination. As it has been documented, housing is one of the most common problems that Syrian and non-Syrian refugees are faced with, it is apparent that the discrimination that they are exposed to while seeking for rental houses has had an impact on their approach to citizenship. Many landlords do not want to rent their houses to Syrians. Therefore,

「*One of the women interviewees expressed that if they get citizenship right "we can look for rental houses without worries".*<sup>2</sup>」

Another woman said, "I will be like Turks here."<sup>3</sup> One said "they will not say "nasty Syrians, they should go" anymore".<sup>4</sup>

Male Syrians are also faced with discrimination and they also see citizenship as a way that will make their life more dignified. A male Turkmen<sup>5</sup> interviewee shared one of his experiences with coach companies. Once while they were trying to travel to another city, the coach company official said a proper price for the bus ticket first and when he was about to write the passenger info, he saw their identity and he realized that they are Syrians. Following this he changed his mind about the price and said a higher price. Therefore, the interviewee does not want to encounter such situations anymore and he thinks that the citizenship will provide this.

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<sup>1</sup> Male, 24, July 27, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female, 26 years of age. Interview date July 27, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Female, 32 years of age. Date: July 25, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Female, 59 years of age. Date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Male, 38 years of age. Date: July 27, 2016.

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### 3.2.4: Freedom of Travel

43.1% of the interviewees stated that they wanted the right to Turkish citizenship because they would like to be able to travel within the country or between the countries. Percentages of male and female interviewees are almost equal, with only a slight difference. It also should be emphasized that the percentage is not as high as the other percentages related to areas which directly affect daily life, such as equal treatment. Despite this, it is higher than the notion of the sense of belonging. There are different reasons for people to want to have this freedom. Most of them want it merely as a freedom to go to other cities, as under Temporary Protection Syrians are required to get permission to travel to another city, something which is in fact a breach of freedom of movement. Additionally, there are some interviewees who specifically want to have a valid passport to be able to go other countries, particularly those interviewees who yearn to reunite with their families or relatives in other countries.

As it is known, freedom of travel inside of the country is one of the constitutional rights that Turkish citizens can enjoy. Therefore, one of the male interviewees stated that “he wants to be able to move to another city”<sup>1</sup>. As stated above, having a valid passport and being able to go to other countries (including Syria) is another reason why the interviewees would like to have Turkish citizenship rights. One interviewee explained her concern regarding this issue as “I will not return to Syria but I would like to be able to go to Syria to visit our graves one day in future.”<sup>2</sup> Another interviewee<sup>3</sup> who was a Palestinian said that the passport issue was always problematic for her and because she was a Palestinian she faced discrimination in Arab countries. She stated that she had succeeded in getting a passport in Syria, but as she was not a citizen she could not benefit from it. Therefore, if she gets Turkish citizenship she wants to go to Germany with her Turkish passport because her sister lives there. A woman interviewee expressed her wish to visit her family in Lebanon once she has obtained a Turkish passport. She said that

*“We came back to Aleppo, and here we could take a Syrian passport but it was not valid, so we had to cross the Turkish border irregularly and now I want to see my mother, she is in Lebanon but I cannot go to Lebanon and return to here, but if I can have Turkish passport, it is possible.”<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Male, 44 years of age, date: July 26, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female, 50 years of age, date: July 25, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Female, 30 years of age, date: July 12, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Female, 20 years of age, date: August 17, 2016.

### 3.2.5: Right of Property and Obtaining a Loan

The Temporary Protection Regulation does not cover economic rights. However, a Syrian with Temporary Protection ID can go to a bank and apply for a loan; provided that they meet the loan conditions. In addition, according to Article 1 of Law no 1062 dated 28/5/1927, which is still in force, it is not possible for Syrians to acquire immovable property in Turkey.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, many interviewees (29,5%) articulated right to property and being able to obtain a loan from a bank as one of the reasons for their willingness to gain Turkish citizenship. Many of the interviewees providing this answer are male (69,2%). Except for one<sup>2</sup> of them, all the other have a per capita income less than 500 Turkish Liras. One interviewee stated that they did not have any income at all.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it may be deduced that some of the interviewees perceive obtaining a loan and starting to run a business as a means of getting out of poverty. Furthermore, it may be stated that Syrians think that obtaining a loan will be much easier when they are Turkish citizens.

### 3.2.6: Sense of Belonging

Feeling belongingness to any country is the reason least articulated by the interviewees. Only 18.1% of the interviewees (8 out of 44) stated that they want Turkish citizenship because they will feel a sense of belonging to Turkey. Most of such respondent interviewees were female. Except for one of the women, all others articulated this feeling as mixed together with the wish for equal treatment.

*Some women told us that they want to belong in Turkey, because it is impossible to return to Syria due to economic losses such as homes, fields etc.*

The other reason for this attachment in question can be put forth that they were not feeling as if they were in their homeland in Syria. For the male interviewees, they expressed their strong support and love for Turkey and that they wanted to be a citizen of Turkey.

The Palestinian interviewee expressed her exclusive situation as “I am a Palestinian, I do not have a homeland (meaning being in exile), Turkey will be my homeland.”<sup>4</sup> A Christian interviewee pointed out that nothing was left in Syria and said

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/12743.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Male, age: 24, July 27, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Female, 30, July 12, 2016

<sup>4</sup> Female, age: 30, date: July 12, 2016



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“I like Turkey...I become one with the people of this country.”<sup>1</sup> Another interviewee highlighted the impossibility of returning to Syria by pointing to her economic condition and that she cannot make a living in Syria, for example, she cannot buy a house and stated that if she gets the citizenship she “will be Turkish, too.”<sup>2</sup> A male interviewee expressed his state of mind as “I love Turkey, I want to be useful for Turkey. Even I want two countries to merge because I feel Turkey as if my homeland.”<sup>3</sup>

### **3.3: What do women expect to gain from Turkish citizenship, as women?**

Although it is hard to distinguish between what a woman is individually and what a woman is together with her social roles, we have tried to find out what it means for women individually to have Turkish citizenship. Very limited number of women gave answers independent of their roles as mothers, wives or sisters. Only 7 women out of 27 (26%) specified possible benefits directly related to themselves. 3 of these women emphasized having rights and freedoms as women. One of them stated that she will have more freedom as a woman,<sup>4</sup> while the other one only said that she will “have rights as a woman”<sup>5</sup>. Another one highlighted right to divorce by saying that “Women have more rights in Turkey, they can get a divorce.”<sup>6</sup>

3 of them drew attention to the fact that they would be able to seek justice as a citizen, and one of them touched upon feelings of safety. One of them stated that she can file a complaint if something bad happens to her.<sup>7</sup> The other woman said that she will feel stronger and if something bad happens she will be able to demand justice.<sup>8</sup> In line with this opinion, another woman mentioned about sexual harassment cases in the workplace and stressed she will become stronger and more empowered against others as she will be able to seek justice.<sup>9</sup> Other than these women, an interviewee said that she will feel safe.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Female, age: 59, date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female, age: 27, date: July 12, 2016

<sup>3</sup> Male, age: 40, date: August 17, 2016

<sup>4</sup> Female, age: 31, date: August 18, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Female, age: 24, date: August 18, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Female, age: 20, date: August 17, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Female, age: 23, date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Female, age: 50, date: July 25, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Female, age: 25, date: July 25, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Female, age: 40, date: August 4, 2016.

### ***Statelessness 1: A threat to Syrian Children's Future***

*"I am a Palestinian, I don't have a homeland, if I get Turkish Citizenship, Turkey will be my homeland...I could have a passport at the end in Syria but it's seen that I am a Palestinian, it hard to travel with this passport... I had to pay much more money than the others because I am a Palestinian in Lebanon...I was in Lebanon before I came here and they are treating us badly because we are Palestinians" said the Palestinian interviewee.*

*Her statement was a summary of the kinds of problems Palestinians encounter with in Arabic countries, as well as in the world as stateless people. As Abbas' Shiblak puts it, although the Arab League has lost its integrity and effectiveness, Arab-nation countries signed Casablanca Protocol in 1965 and according to this Protocol the contracting countries accepted that they would grant "Palestinian refugees citizenship rights but not naturalization" and that they would provide Palestinians with Refugee Travel Documents (not passports). However, the states such as Lebanon and Saudi Arabia did not implement the Protocol. Egypt has withdrawn from the Protocol. In time only Syria was left that honored these commitments. " Therefore, Palestinians who were living in Syria did not have right to have Syrian nationality. Although there were some special cases and exceptional practices they were not given Syrian passports but they were having travel documents.*

*After the Syrian War broke out Palestinians living inside Syria and the ones after December 2012 bombing on Yarmouk Camp had to flee from Syria just as the other Syrians.*

*Some of them entered the countries which have borders with Syria. However, firstly in January 2013 Jordan closed the borders and then in 2014 Lebanon decided to only accept Palestinians with documents stating that they will go to a third country ". Egypt also offers very poor conditions for Palestinians. In most of these countries, including Turkey, it is not possible for Syrian-born Palestinians to apply to the UNHCR for international protection because of their special situation. Due to all these reasons, many Palestinians join together with other refugees and choose the dangerous ways to Europe. However, in Europe things are also more difficult for Syrian-born Palestinians, because they do not have a Syrian passport. It is reported that German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees accept applications of Palestinians from Syria as it accepts Syrians ". Same goes for Swedish authorities, unless the Palestinians in question are under UNRWA protection". Nevertheless, according to the news report, the practice is different from law. This became apparent in the case of a family in Gunzburg in Germany. From this family mother who is a Syrian national and children took refugee status but the father could not because he was a Palestinian". Additionally, Greece has special rules that differ from the rest of Europe for Palestinians seeking for asylum. Therefore, it seems that statelessness and being displaced is an unchanging fate for Palestinians.*

*In Turkey, the registration process for the people who had to flee from Syria does not include steps such as proving nationality status or origin. There is no such a differen-*

*tiation for the ones who are under Temporary Protection. The Palestinians from Syria are subject to exact same rules as other Syrians and they can enjoy same rights and services if they have a Temporary Protection ID. In the statements of government authorities on citizenship criteria for Syrians there is nothing regarding origin, as most of the criteria focus*

*on economic conditions. Therefore, if the citizenship right is widely granted to all Syrians under Temporary Protection, many Syrian-born Palestinian or Palestinians from Syria can have Turkish citizenship and it may be that Turkey would be the first country which brought a concrete and ultimate solution to Palestinians' statelessness problem.*

<sup>1</sup> Shiblak Abbas, "Stateless Palestinians", <http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/FMRpdfs/FMR26/FMR2603.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> In Jordan although Palestinians have Jordanian nationality but it is refused to provide naturalization. They do not enjoy every right such as political participation equally.[*ibid.*]

<sup>iii</sup> <http://blog.palestine-studies.org/2015/12/10/stateless-refugees-palestinians-fleeing-syria/>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/palestinian-syrians-refugees-160321055107834.html>

<sup>v</sup> [*ibid.*]

<sup>vi</sup> [*ibid.*]

\*It must also be noted being stateless is a serious problem for Syrian Kurds, too. Until the Legislative Decree 49 in 2011, Syrians Kurds were not seen eligible for having Syrian nationality. This decree allowed the ones who registered in Hassaka governorate as ajanib (foreigners) to have Syrian Arab nationality, but the ones who were in the category of maktumeen (concealed) were excluded. For a more concrete picture of the situation of Syrian Kurds the following evaluation is worth adding: "their lack of regular identity papers can mean that the authorities struggle to classify stateless Kurds by nationality when filtering asylum seekers, resulting in arrest, denial of further access and restriction of mobility." (Thomas McGee, Statelessness Working Paper Series No. 2016/02).

For whole of the Working Paper and detailed information about this issue see. [http://www.institutesi.org/WP2016\\_02.pdf](http://www.institutesi.org/WP2016_02.pdf)

### 3-4: What Syrian Refugees Think about Criteria for Turkish Citizenship?

It is not clear whether the criteria established by current laws and regulations will be applied or whether there will be amendments if Syrians are started to be accepted to Turkish citizenship. Under the current Turkish Citizenship Law no 5901 <sup>1</sup> the main criteria for the foreigners who can acquire citizenship through the decision of competent authority (Ministry of Interior) is listed in Article 11 as follows:

- "a) be in the age of majority and have the capacity to act either according to his/her own national law or, if he/she is stateless, according to Turkish law,
- b) have been resident in Turkey without interruption for five years preceding the date of his/her application,
- c) verify his/her determination to settle down in Turkey with his/her manners,
- ç) have no disease constituting an obstacle in respect of public health,
- d) be of good moral character,
- e) be able to speak a sufficient level of Turkish,
- f) have income or profession to provide for maintenance for himself/herself and his/her dependants in Turkey

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.5901.pdf>

g) have no quality constituting an obstacle in respect of national security and public order.”

Additionally, Article 12 of the Turkish Citizenship Law describes exceptional cases that Council of Ministers can decide for some people's acquisition of Turkish citizenship upon the proposal of Ministry of Interior. The article defines the persons in question as;

“ ...who have no quality constituting an obstacle in respect of national security and public order”... and “who have brought industrial plants into Turkey or have rendered or are being considered to render in future outstanding services in the scientific, technological, economic, social, sporting, cultural and artistic fields and about whom a reasoned offer has been made by the ministries relevant.”<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these provisions when discussions on the citizenship right for Syrians were sparked by the statement of President Erdoğan in the beginning of July 2016, some explanations by government authorities regarding possible new criteria to acquire Turkish citizenship took place in the press. Some of them were in parallel with the conditions listed in the Law. Prime Minister Yıldırım stated that the ones who disturb the public peace of Turkey and who have been involved in terrorism would not be given Turkish citizenship.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Economy Minister Zeybekçi said there would be criteria such as not being involved in terrorism and being morally suitable to Turkish citizenship and Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs Eroğlu stated that “of course there will be criteria and there will be investigations”.<sup>3</sup> A more precise explanation was given by Deputy Prime Minister Veysi Kaynak when he said: “Citizenship will be granted initially based on criteria such as employment, education level, wealth, and urgency of one's situation.”<sup>4</sup>

In addition, some criteria were articulated in the press without referring to any definite source or name. According to the news,<sup>5</sup> 300000 Syrians will be accepted to Turkish citizenship in total. The process will be gradual. Initially, 30-40 thousand Syrians will take citizenship rights. White-collar workers like doctors, engineers

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Translated version downloaded from:

[http://eudo-citizenship.eu/NationalDB/docs/TUR%20Turkish%20citizenship%20law%202009%20\(English\).pdf](http://eudo-citizenship.eu/NationalDB/docs/TUR%20Turkish%20citizenship%20law%202009%20(English).pdf)

<sup>1</sup> [ibid.]

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/07/09/kac-suriyeli-vatandaslik-alacak-iste-detaylar>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/07/09/kac-suriyeli-vatandaslik-alacak-iste-detaylar>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.dw.com/en/syrian-refugees-express-mixed-feelings-over-turkish-citizenship-offer/a-19399783>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1264243-ilk-etapta-30-40-bin-toplamda-300-bin-kisi-vatandasliga-alinacak>

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will be given priority. It is important to note that these persons are mostly men, as women are assumed to be out of employment. It is stated that “women are generally out of working life” although many Syrian women work in different sectors such as seasonal agricultural work and textile and many of them want to have a job. Other than the aforementioned professions, vocational school graduates like technicians will be accepted to Turkish citizenship. Additionally, as stated by the government authorities, the aim will be utilizing Syrians for the economic wellbeing of Turkey and Syrians will be directed to the jobs that Turkish citizens do not prefer.<sup>1</sup>

Another aim of this policy is to make things easier for Syrians who have money but encounter difficulties when making investments.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it may be deduced that the underlying aim of the Turkish government is economical and at the first stage, the Government is motivated to pave the way for the economical utilization of Syrians. The other criteria articulated by government authorities at the beginning of the debates, such as “being morally suitable” have not been explored further by any authority or official.

Based on these discussions and statements, we have thought that Syrians themselves should also be expressing their standpoint on this issue. Therefore, during the research, the interviewees have been asked as to whether or not there should be any criteria to be accepted to Turkish citizenship, and if yes what kinds of criteria they should be.

Other than the interviewees who already said no to citizenship, 65% of the interviewees who would like to have Turkish citizenship do not want any criteria to be accepted to Turkish citizenship. It should be stressed that they are especially against the criteria introduced based on economic aims. Because of this reason, many of the interviewees immediately said “no” at the very moment the word criteria was mentioned, without letting us explain further.

The interviewees who are against criteria were especially reactive about the possible discrimination in the citizenship against the poor and after saying “no”, many of them emphasized that “it should be given to everybody.” For example, one of the interviewees said that “the rich ones already have money, life is easier for them.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1265643-nurettin-canikliden-suriyelilere-vatandaslik-aciklamasi>  
<http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/07/14/hukumetten-suriyelilere-vatandaslik-aciklamasi>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/07/09/kac-suriyeli-vatandaslik-alacak-iste-detaylar>

The ones who actually need citizenship rights are the poor ones.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, another interviewee stated that as far as she knows “the rich ones already have rights like freedom of travel” and citizenship rights are more important for the poor.<sup>2</sup> Another one emphasized that the criteria issue is akin to a sincerity test for Turkish Government about its approach to Syrians. This interviewee expanded upon this statement by saying

“*No, it should be provided for everybody if there is a discrimination this would be an abuse of Syrians’ situation. In this case, this right will be given to only to the ones who are useful for Turkey. If they give this right to all Syrians then it will be understood that Turkey really cares about refugees.*”<sup>3</sup>

In line with this notion, another interviewee said that these kinds of criteria are useful for Turkish Government, though not for Syrians and added: “it is not right”.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned views, two interviewees highlighted that the criteria will also be discriminatory towards the ones who had to leave their education unfinished. One of them said “I have a son who had to leave his school, what will he do?”<sup>5</sup> and another one stressed that if this is the case, “the ones who had to leave their education incomplete because of war will not be able to get citizenship rights, what about them?”.<sup>6</sup>

As seen in the figure below, 63.3% of the interviewees who are against the criteria are female and 36.6% of them are male. However, it should be emphasized that the above-mentioned news which was supposedly composed of views of the Turkish government generally takes women as out of the workforce and they are not seen as potential candidates for Turkish citizenship unless they are part of male candidates’ families. Besides, given that 65% of the interviewees said yes to citizenship but were opposed to the criteria for citizenship, it may be stated that Turkish Government and most of the Syrian refugees we have interviewed with have opposite views about the issue of citizenship criteria.

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<sup>1</sup> Male, age:44, July 26 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female, age:31, July 22, 2016.

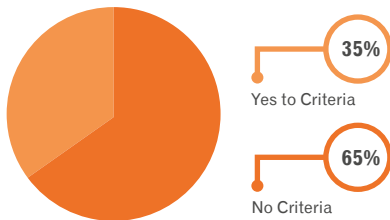
<sup>3</sup> Male, age:53, July 26, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Male, age:42, July 25, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Female, age:50, July 25, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Female, age: 43, August 16, 2016.

**Percentage distribution of interviewees who want to have Turkish citizenship in terms of their view on criteria issue**



**Gender percentages of Interviewees in terms of their views on the criteria**

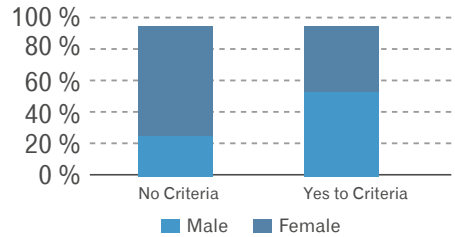
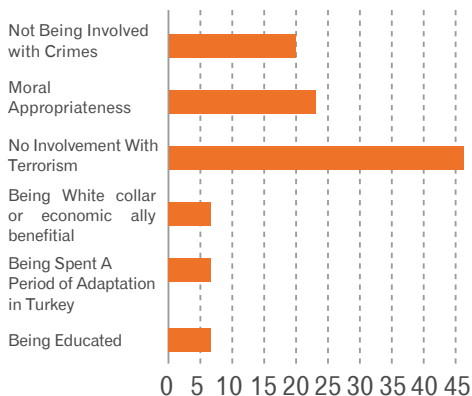


Figure 11: Percentage distribution of interviewees who want to have Turkish citizenship in terms of their view on criteria issue and gender percentages of Interviewees in terms of their views on the criteria

Moreover, regarding the interviewees who said “yes” to the criteria, it is possible to say that being economically useful is the least articulated criterion. Only two (15%) of the interviewees’ views were in line with the order of the criteria listed by Turkish government. As stated above, this order presented by the government has a distinct economic focus. One of interviewees said that there should be criteria and they should be as the Government says.<sup>1</sup> The other one said that one of the criteria must be based on education level.<sup>2</sup> The other criteria listed by most of the interviewees are either the ones placed in lower ranks in the statements of government authorities or the ones in the current citizenship law of Turkey.

**Percentages of interviewees in terms of criterion which they articulated**



**Gender percentages in terms of criterion articulated**

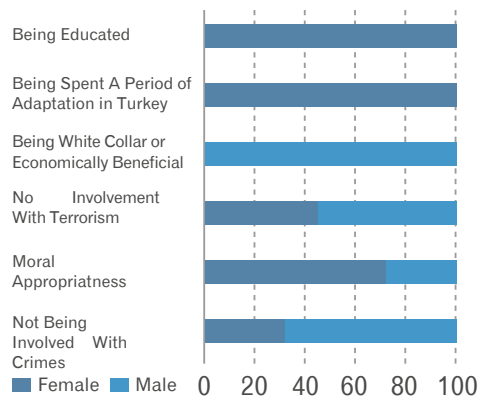


Figure 12: Percentage distribution in terms of criterion articulated and gender percentages of Interviewees in terms of criterion.

<sup>1</sup> Male, age: 35, August 16, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female, age: 59, August 4, 2016.

As seen in the figure, 50% (7 people) of the pro-criteria interviewees think that the condition to be accepted to Turkish citizenship should be “not being involved with any terrorist organization or action”. The second most articulated criteria (28.5% - 4 people) is “being morally appropriate for Turkish Citizenship” and the third one (21.4% - 3 people) is “not being involved with crimes” ), such as not being charged with robbery, drug use or similar kinds of crimes. The other three criteria, which are being qualified (such as being doctor or engineer and economically beneficial to Turkey, having spent a period of adaptation (and learning the language) and being educated were verbalized by only 7.1% (only one person for each item) of the interviewees. Other than that, 14.2 % (2 people) of the interviewees merely said “yes, there should be criteria” but they did not state or clarify any particular one.

It should be noted that most of the interviewees who are pro-criteria, highlighted that there should not be discrimination between the rich and the poor. 64% of the pro-criteria interviewees expressed their concerns about this issue by saying, either “there should not be any discrimination between high and low” or by adding that “... other than those it should be given to everybody.” For example, one interviewee emphasized that there should not be any discrimination between rich and poor or between educated and non-educated when giving citizenship rights. The same person stated that these rights should not be given to the ones who “killed people, bombers and who gave harm to other people.”<sup>1</sup> Another interviewee said that “there should not be any discrimination between rich and poor. The citizenship should not be given to bad people like terrorists and smugglers.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, another one emphasized it should be provided for “everybody other than those involved with terrorism.”<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, a 31-year-old male interviewee pointed out that

“*There are people who had to leave their education incomplete and there are some who are still students, so there should not be discrimination between rich and poor or educated and non-educated. The poor need citizenship more than others. But the people who are given citizenship rights should not be trouble makers, we are guests here.*”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Female, age: 31, August 18, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Male, age:48, August 4, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Male, age:18, July 27, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> August 10, 2016.



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The same point of view was also articulated by another interviewee. She said that citizenship should not be given to those who have committed crimes such as robbery and added: “we are guests here.”<sup>1</sup> It could be said that these two interviewees think that because Syrians are viewed as guests in Turkey, they should not be involved with any crime and if they have been, they should be excluded from citizenship as they cause misrepresentation of Syrians and thus may pose a danger to all Syrians. This may be interpreted as a manifestation of the feeling of not being at home and feeling the necessity to be mindful of your moves at all times. Furthermore, another interviewee drew attention to the fact that the criterion about not being involved with terrorist organizations is useful for Turkey and he added “it is not good for Turkish citizens that the ones who participate in ISIS may get citizenship rights” but “for me, it does not make any difference”.<sup>2</sup>

### **3-5: Privilege to Turkmens: What Do Turkmens Think About It?**

Statistically, a significant number of Syrian Refugees in Turkey consist of Turkmens and most of them fluently speak Turkish. Although their situation did occupy the political agenda due to reasons such as their position in the Syrian war and their relations with the Turkish Republic; when it came to the issue of citizenship, there were not any specific discussions addressing Syrian Turkmens. However, it is likely that questions will arise as to whether there should be a priority granted to Syrian Turkmens for Turkish citizenship. There were a few articles mentioning the situation of Turkmens in the citizenship discussions; however these articles did not say anything specific about whether or not they should be accepted to Turkish citizenship. One such article included the author’s views against giving citizenship rights to Syrians and mentioned about the discrimination which Turkmens had suffered in Syria.<sup>3</sup> Another article was defending the position that providing Syrians with citizenship would be a very wrong decision and stated the possible implications of it in Turkey. In this article, the author was addressing the President and asking “if you give citizenship rights why don’t you give it to Turkmens, Uygur Turks?”<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, this article did not also touch upon the situation of the Syrian Turkmens.

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<sup>1</sup> Female, age: 32, July 21, 2016.

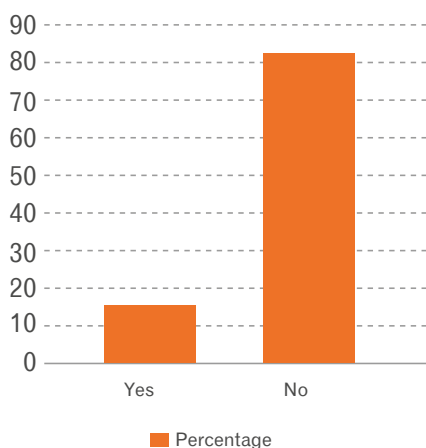
<sup>2</sup> Male, age:26, July 27, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ortadogugazetesi.net/makale.php?id=22447>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.turkishnews.com/content/2016/07/08/sirada-misir-ve-suriye-eger-vatandaslik-vereceksen-turkmenlere-uygur-turklerine-neden-vermiy-orsun/>

In line with the overall aim of this report, the 12 Turkmen interviewees were asked about what their views would be if they were given privilege in acceptance to Turkish citizenship. A clear majority of them (83.3%) said “no” to the privilege with regard to Turkish citizenship and the rest (16.6%) stated that “yes there should be a privilege because we are grandsons of Ottomans.”<sup>1</sup> One of them added “Turkmens should have been given this right way before; we are Turks, grandsons of Ottomans. Some people were given citizenship even though they are not Turks.”<sup>2</sup>

**What Syrian Turkmen Interviewees Think About Privilege to Turkmen in Citizenship Issue?**



**Percentages in terms of gender**

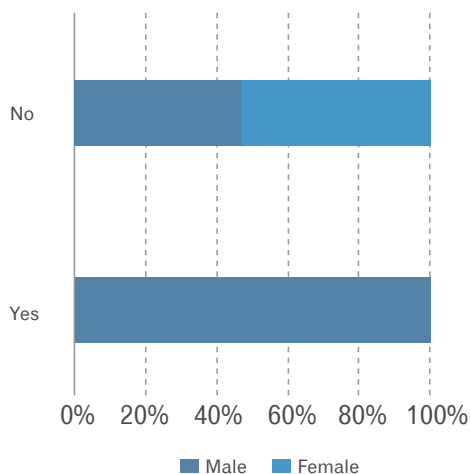


Figure 13: Turkmen's views on privilege to them in acceptance to citizenship and distribution in terms of gender regarding their answers.

There are different views articulated by the interviewees who are against privilege about why there should not be any privilege granted to the Turkmen. Two of them stated that Turkish citizenship should have been given at the very beginning of Syrian war when they first came to Turkey, “not now.”<sup>3</sup> One of them stated that there should not be any privilege and added: “Turkmens are already treated better than other Syrian refugees.”<sup>4</sup> Another female interviewee highlighted that all Syrian refugees in Turkey are “victims of war” so there should not be any privilege for any of them.<sup>5</sup> Another two interviewees pointed that as Syrians from different ethnicities had lived together in Syria, with one of the two saying that it would be

<sup>1</sup> Male, age:24, July 27, 2016; Male, age: 26, July 27, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Male, age:24, July 27, 2016

<sup>3</sup> Female interviewees, ages: 20 and 23, July 27, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Female, age:30, July 27, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Female, age:23, July 27, 2016.

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“discrimination against others” if there is a privilege granted to Turkmens and the other stated that this would be racism.<sup>1</sup>

### **3-6: Citizenship of Preference: Which One Would Syrian Interviewees Choose In the Situation That They Would Lost Syrian Citizenship If They Got Turkish Citizenship?**

Because of the ongoing war situation in Syria, it is difficult to have exact knowledge of legal regulations and current implementations of laws of the country. This is also the case for citizenship regulations. According to a note published on the European Country of Origin Information Network website (ecoi.net) in 1990, the Syrian government did not recognize the renunciation of Syrian citizenship or the acquisition of another nationality. However, it should be noted that subsequent countries of origin information reports do not mention this. The note further refers to External Affairs Canada, stating that the government does not take away Syrian citizenship; one must formally renounce one's Syrian citizenship.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Syrian Nationality Law<sup>3</sup> Article 10 states that “A Syrian Arab forfeits nationality if he acquired a foreign nationality” and it requires the citizen to apply to the Minister of Interior to be allowed to abandon his nationality. Paragraph 2 of the Article continues with the provision:

“Every Syrian Arab national who has acquired a foreign nationality upon his request prior to being allowed to give up his nationality shall continue to enjoy that nationality from all respects and in all situations unless he has been deprived thereof in the implementation of Paragraph (A), Article 21. He shall also be penalized by imprisonment of 1-3 months in addition to fine from 500-2000 Syrian Pounds or by any of these two punishments.” (emphasis added).

The Article 21 referred above states that a Syrian citizen “may be deprived of the nationality” if he acted “contrary to paragraph 1 of Article 10, [and] acquired a foreign nationality.” Additionally, in Paragraph G of this Article the provision states that “if a person has left the country indefinitely to settle in a non-Arab country and has been away for three years and has been notified to return” but he did not respond or provided “unconvincing reasons” within three months after notification the person in question will be deprived of his/her nationality.

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<sup>1</sup> Male interviewees, ages: 38 and 26, July 27, 2016.

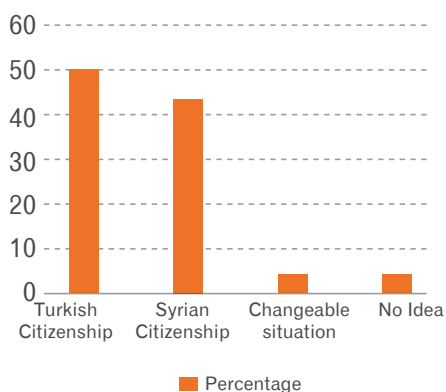
<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ecoi.net/local\\_link/196213/314876\\_de.html](https://www.ecoi.net/local_link/196213/314876_de.html)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4d81e7b12.pdf>

Turkish Citizenship Law no 5901 Article 11 states that “Aliens who wish to acquire Turkish citizenship may be required, in addition to the conditions aforementioned, to relinquish previous citizenship. The Council of Ministers shall be competent to determine the principles regarding the exercise of this discretion.”

Therefore, under the current Syrian Nationality Law and in accordance with Article 11 of Turkish Citizenship Law it is probable for Syrians to lose their Syrian nationality if they obtain nationality of another country. With respect to this possibility, the interviewees have been asked which citizenship they would choose if they were to lose Syrian nationality upon acquiring Turkish nationality. Among 44 interviewees who said “yes” to Turkish citizenship, 52.3% (23) of them stated that they would prefer Turkish citizenship, with 47.8% (11) female and the rest (52.2%) (12) male. 43.1% (19) of them said they would prefer Syrian citizenship. 58% (11) of these respondents were female and 42% (8) were male. Additionally, two of the interviewees (4.5%) did not choose any of them and one said that the situation might change it is hard to say anything right now.<sup>1</sup> The other said “she did not have an idea” about it.<sup>2</sup>

**Distribution of interviewees in terms of their citizenship preference**



**Preference distribution in percentages in terms of gender**

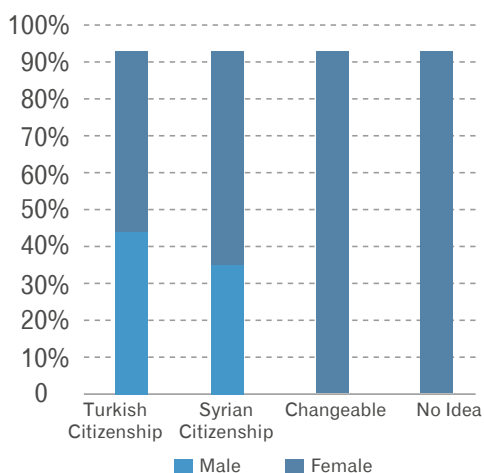


Figure 14: Distribution of interviewees in percentages in terms of their citizenship preference and gender percentages in terms of preference

<sup>1</sup> Female, age:31, July 22, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female, age: 41, July 26, 2016.

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Among those who said they would prefer Turkish citizenship, 15 interviewees further explained the reason for this choice. 80% (12) of these interviewees think that they would choose Turkish Citizenship because it is not possible to return Syria. Moreover, an interviewee who is a single mother stated that she would like to return her country, but due to economic reasons, such as not being able to afford a house and having to start all over again, it is difficult for her to do that.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, another interviewee stressed that

“*It is impossible to return right now. Even if the war ends we cannot return immediately, we can return after the situation is fully settled. We were leaseholder in Syria too, so there would be economic difficulties for us there also.*”<sup>2</sup>

Another interviewee highlighted the uncertainty of the future in Syria and said that “we will not be able to return maybe even after 30 or 40 years.”<sup>3</sup> In line with this view, a female interviewee said that if the war continues for a long time and if there will not be a peace in a reasonable time, she will not return because the children will adjust to the life in Turkey. This interviewee added that she also feels comfortable in Turkey.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to these views, one of the interviewees said that she does not want to return.<sup>5</sup> Two female Christian interviewees expressed that there is no place for them, nothing left in Syria for Christians so they would prefer to stay here and be Turkish citizens.<sup>6</sup> The Palestinian interviewee stated that if she gets citizenship, she will be a Turkish citizen and she will have a homeland.<sup>7</sup> As it will be mentioned below again, three of these interviewees also stated that they do not want dual citizenship because of same reasons listed here.

11 of the interviewees who stated that they would choose Syrian citizenship explained their reasons. 3 of them said they prefer Syrian citizenship because “they want to return Syria if the war ends.”<sup>8</sup> 5 of the interviewees stated their Syria is

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<sup>1</sup> Female, age:27, July 12, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Male, age:42, July 25, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Male, age:44, July 26, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Female, age:31, August 18, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Female, age:43, August 16, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Female, ages: 59 and 23, August 4, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Female, age:30, July 12, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Female, ages:32, 29 and 40, dates: July 21, July 22 and August 4, 2016.

their homeland.<sup>1</sup> One interviewee said that her family lives in Syria.<sup>2</sup> Another one said that “he is a retiree in Syria and he does not have a future in Turkey.”<sup>3</sup> A female interviewee stated her reason as “I live here because I have to.”<sup>4</sup> Another female interviewee who defends the idea that the Turkish citizenship rights should be given temporarily until the war ends, defined her reason as

“*At the end, I want to return Syria and I want Turkish citizenship only for the rights provided through citizenship.*”<sup>5</sup>

It may be worth to note that 2 female interviewees stated that they would choose Syrian citizenship contrary to their husband's preference of Turkish citizenship.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, it should be noted that majority of the interviewees whose preference is Syrian citizenship are Turkmen. Only one of Turkmen interviewees stated that he would choose Turkish citizenship and that this was because the war continues and they must stay in Turkey.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.7: What About Dual Citizenship?

Even though it is not easy to obtain up-to-date information about the dual citizenship regulation in Syria because of the ongoing war, according to country of origin information provided by several countries, Syria allows dual citizenship. However, if a person's original citizenship is Syrian, they are liable under the Syrian laws.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the interviewees were asked whether they think that dual citizenship would be a better option than choosing one citizenship over another.

Majority of the interviewees - 94% (41) - who want to have Turkish citizenship stated that they would prefer dual citizenship, while 4.5% (2) of them said that they do not want both Turkish and Syrian citizenship. 2.2% (1) of the interviewees stated that having dual citizenship does not make any difference for her. Although not all of the interviewees defined their rationale for their preferences, some made very

<sup>1</sup> Male, ages: 27,24, 26 and 38; Female, age: 26, date: July 27, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female, age:23, July 27, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Male, age: 53, July 26, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Female, age: 24, August 18, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Female, age: 47, July 28, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Female, ages: 32 and 40, dates: July 21 and August 4, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Male, age: 26, July 27, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> [http://syrianembassy.org.au/forms/english\\_forms/Dual\\_Citizenship\\_en.pdf](http://syrianembassy.org.au/forms/english_forms/Dual_Citizenship_en.pdf)

[https://www.ecoi.net/local\\_link/196213/314876\\_de.html](https://www.ecoi.net/local_link/196213/314876_de.html)

important points. For example, one interviewee said that he wants to be able to return Syria in future because his father and brothers were taken hostages by a group fighting in the war and his mother died in an air strike.<sup>1</sup> Another interviewee stated that she would like to enter to Syria and return with ease or if the war ends completely she wants to go back to Syria as the graves of her lost ones are in Syria.<sup>2</sup>

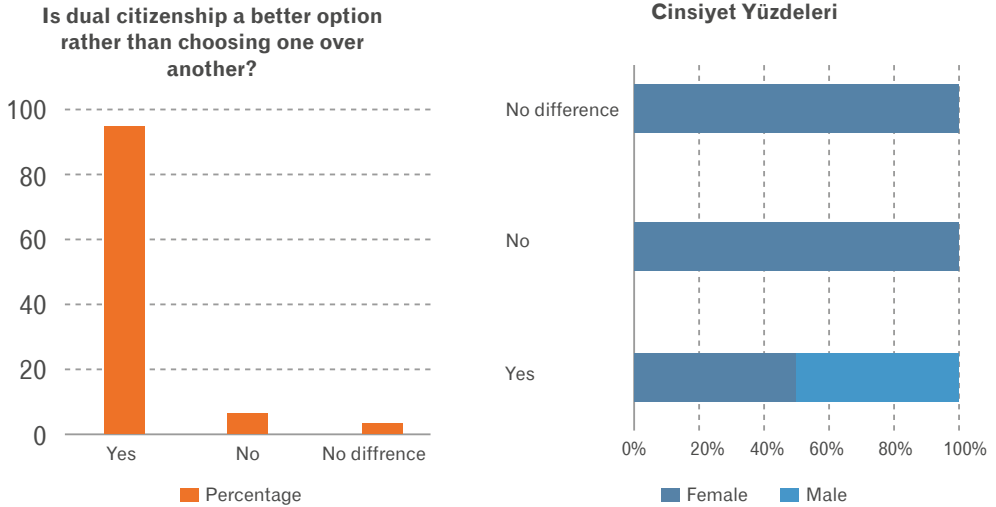


Figure 15: Distribution in percentages in terms of answers. Gender percentages in terms of answers

All the interviewees who stated they would prefer Syrian citizenship think that dual citizenship is a better option. Additionally, it is an interesting point that most of the ones who stated both that they prefer Turkish citizenship and that they want dual citizenship think that it is impossible to return Syria. Those who want both are 20 interviewees (45%) and 12 of them believe so. This may be interpreted as their wish for maintaining hope to return their country or to be able to see it alive.

It may be important to add that one of the six interviewees who said they do not want Turkish citizenship or that it does not make any difference stated that she would prefer dual citizenship because if she must stay in Turkey she would like to continue with her education.<sup>3</sup> The others said they do not want to have dual citizenship as well as Turkish citizenship.

<sup>1</sup> Male, age:40, August 17, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female, age:50, July 25, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Female, age: 20, July 22, 2016.

### 3.8: Where Would They Like To Be In Future?

At the very end of the interviews, the question was put forth to the interviewees about country they would like to be in future. Most of them stated that they would like to be in Syria. The second most preferred country is Turkey. In the third rank, the countries are Australia and Germany or other EU countries or the US. Other than these options, the interviewees expressed optional choices like Turkey or Syria, Syria or Germany and Turkey or Germany. Moreover, some of them did not mention any specific country and made definitions like “any country where I will be in peace”<sup>1</sup>, “any country where there are humanitarian conditions”<sup>2</sup>, “any country where my children will have access to services and be happy”<sup>3</sup> or “any country where I found a job.”<sup>4</sup>

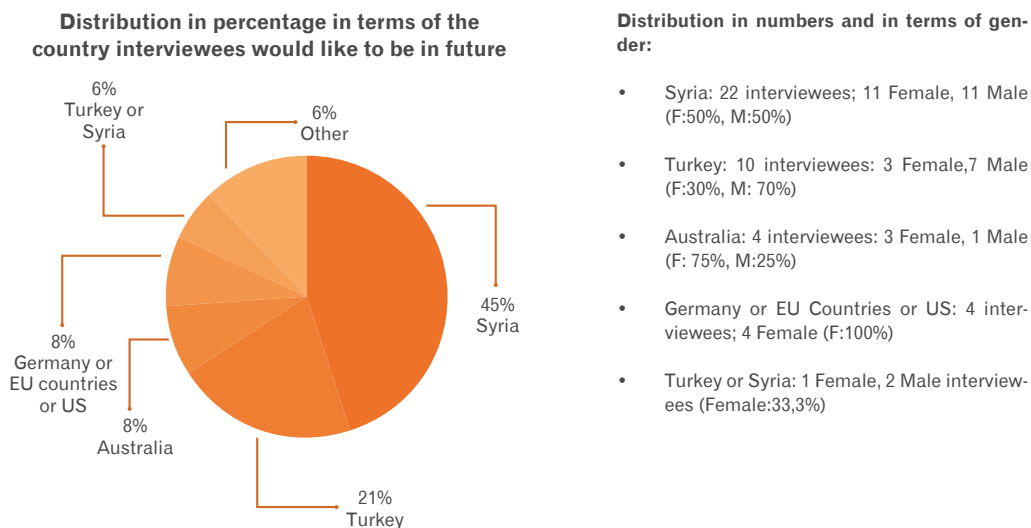


Figure 16: Distribution of Interviewees in terms the country they would like to be in future

From the ones who listed the countries other than Syria or Turkey or did not state any specific country, it is seen that all of them are from the non-Arab ethnicities. These interviewees represent 26% of the sample and majority of them are Ezidis (53%). All the Ezidi interviewees would like to be in a country other than Syria or Turkey in future. The second majority in this group is Kurdish interviewees and they represent 30.7% of this group. The other two are respectively Turkmen and

<sup>1</sup> Female, age: 32, date: July 25, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Male, age:49, date: August 12, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Female, ages:30 and 24, date: August 18, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Male, age:27, date: July 27, 2016.



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Christian. Only the Turkmen interviewee in this group touched upon employment issues.

The majority of these interviewees (77%) are women. Additionally, 6 of them came to Turkey in 2013 or 2012 and 7 of them entered in 2014 or in 2015. There is not a great difference in a year-range so it is hard to say that their adaptation period is a variable in this matter. It may be deduced that for the interviewees in this group the important factors are the conditions of living and rights and freedoms. One of the Ezidi interviewees stated as the reason why he would like to be in Australia is that "There is an Ezidi community in Australia and they have temples specific to Ezidi community."<sup>1</sup> A woman interviewee emphasized that she wants to be in a country where violence against women is very rare.<sup>2</sup> One female interviewee expressed that she would like to live in any country where she will be in peace.<sup>3</sup> Two other female interviewees stressed that they want to be in a country where their children will be happy and they will benefit from rights and services.<sup>4</sup> A male interviewee pointed to humanitarian conditions.<sup>5</sup>

Two interviewees who stated their two optional countries as Syria or Germany and Turkey or Germany stated that their brothers and sisters live in Germany.<sup>6</sup> While one of them wants to stay in Turkey, the other one told us that she wants to return Syria. Other than one who said he may have to live in Turkey because of his family, those who said Turkey or Syria did not specify any reason.

For some of the interviewees who said they would like to be in Turkey, there are also some specific reasons that they stated. As mentioned above in the section relating to the issue of citizenship preference, some interviewees stated that they would prefer Turkish citizenship because they believe that it is impossible to return Syria. Here as well, 40% (4) of the interviewees want to be in Turkey in future because of the same reason. Other than these interviewees, one interviewee stressed that even though he wants to go back to his country, it is impossible and as Turkey is a Muslim country too, it is a good option.<sup>7</sup> Another interviewee pointed to possible political solutions and said that "both options in Syria (meaning the opposition

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<sup>1</sup> Male, age:42, date: July 25, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Female, age:23, date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Female, age:32, date: July 25, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Female, ages:30 and 24, date: August 18, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Male, age: 49, date: August 12, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Female, ages: 30 and 29, dates: July 12 and 22, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Male, age: 53, date: July 26, 2016.

and Assad regime) are bad" and he would like to be in Turkey in the future also.<sup>1</sup>

Almost half of the interviewees who would like to be in Syria in future are the ones who stated that they would prefer Syrian citizenship if they would have to choose one over another. They represent 59% (13 out of 22) of this group. 9% (2 out of 22) of these interviewees are the ones who do not want Turkish citizenship. Therefore, the reasons mentioned under the citizenship preference section are also applicable here. Major reasons were stated that Syria is their homeland and their families and lands are in Syria.

It could be posited that for the other interviewees who stated that they would prefer Turkish citizenship but they would like to be in Syria in future, more emotional reasons are at stake. Their share in the group is 27.2% (6 out of 22). 2 of them stated they would choose Turkish citizenship, even though they would like to return their country "it is impossible to return."<sup>2</sup> One of them even stressed that "everybody misses his homeland but we have to stay here, it is not possible to go back."<sup>3</sup> Another interviewee who also emphasized that he does not want to lose his Syrian citizenship, even though he would choose Turkish citizenship mentioned about their situation in Lebanon. He said that Syrians were treated very badly in Lebanon. They could not even access health services and added that "there were discrimination against Syrians in Lebanon but in Turkey, there is not."<sup>4</sup> Additionally, another interviewee gave an emotional answer about her wish to be in Syria in the future and defined her dream: "we will all return Syria as whole family, all of our relatives; we will all come together in mom's house like we were doing in the old days like days of Eid."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Male, age: 48, date: August 4, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Male, ages: 24 and 40, date: August 17, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Male, age:40, August 17, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Male, age: 29, date: July 22, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Female, age:31, date: August 18, 2016.

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#### **4- CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS**

President Erdoğan's statement at the beginning of July 2016, regarding granting Turkish citizenship to Syrians sparked a huge controversy in Turkey. However, such controversy was not just limited to opposing arguments being presented in the media. In addition to such opposing arguments, a very clear trend of hate speech and racism also dominated the agenda of the country. This discourse was followed by a series of racist attacks and physical conflicts between local community and Syrians. The statement was an affirmative step regarding durable solutions for the protection of refugees. Nevertheless, the aforementioned reactions could be viewed as an indication that the integration process - including granting refugee status and citizenship rights or status to all Syrians - should be solid, durable and gradual.

As detailed above, most of the interviewees want to have the right of Turkish citizenship. However, regarding the percentages for each reason stated during the course of the interviews, it should be highlighted that the interviewees want to have Turkish citizenship as a form of formal affiliation to the state. This means that they mostly need citizenship in terms of the rights such a status will provide them. The most prominent rights in question are, right to obtain work permits and the right to education.

It is interesting to note that these rights are already covered under Temporary Protection. This could be viewed as a sign that Syrians cannot fully enjoy the rights that are provided under Temporary Protection. It is possible to present the argument that this insufficiency of the Temporary Protection stems from the very nature of the protection; in that it is temporary.

While the Syrians have been entering Turkey since the beginning of the war in Syria, their rights in Turkey are still only regulated by a regulation, rather than a law. The lack of durability poses a contrast with the needs of Syrians, as wanting to have a work permit represents the need for more sustainable and stable life and - as also stated by the interviewees - the right to education allows for the securing of the future by securing future of their children. Thus, the implication can be extrapolated that citizenship has a socio-economic meaning in Syrians' lives. The other most frequently articulated reason for wanting to have Turkish citizenship was equal treatment by local society. This may be interpreted as a need for a

status in Turkey. The interviewees stated that they would like to have citizenship because they encounter regular discrimination by local people in their daily life and that they want to have an equal status to Turkish citizens. It is important to note that most of these interviewees were female and this notion may be due to the fact that women, because of their socially imposed roles as the caregivers and homeworkers, encounter the social patterns in daily life. The underlying cause for this demand may also be gaining equal legal status so as to be able to seek for justice against the unfairness of local community as individuals on equal footing.

It should be noted that the least articulated reason was the sense of belonging. As mentioned above, citizenship has a dimension of identity, implying a sense of belonging to a political community or a collective identity.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, when we consider above mentioned reasons for wanting to have Turkish citizenship, it can be said that the Syrian interviewees do not seek a political affiliation with the state. Instead, it is more apparent that they rather they seek a formal affiliation which will provide them with the rights that they view as fundamental to their lives in Turkey. This situation can also be interpreted as a result of Syrians being unable to fully enjoy their existing rights due to the problems originating from the Temporary Protection system.

As mentioned before, a significant majority of the interviewees think that there should not be any discrimination between rich and poor when granting citizenship because they believe that the poor need citizenship rights much urgently than the rich. Many of them are also opposed to providing any privilege to educated Syrians. Legal integration, including an eventual permanent solution, is an obligation of states for protection of refugees and it should ultimately extend to acquisition of citizenship. However, the statements made by governing authorities regarding granting citizenship rights to Syrians do not include any reference to this obligation and to the permanent solutions in questions. Instead of this, they focus on the criteria; some of which have economic repercussions. These statements and proposals mainly explore the aim of gaining economic favor from Syrians by granting citizenship to ones such as doctors, engineers and the Syrians who are wealthy. Nevertheless, as seen in the results of this research this approach is almost contrary to the views of Syrians.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/citizenship/>

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Therefore, based on the results of this research;

- In the shortest term, necessary measures should be taken to remove the obstacles that prevent Syrians from fully enjoying the rights provided under Temporary Protection. These rights should be covered and protected by a stronger legal framework.
- Again in the short term, Syrians should be provided with a more solid status such as refugee status.
- Syrians' acquisitions of Turkish citizenship should be seen as an obligation regarding legal integration, not as a favor bestowed upon them, and necessary steps should be taken.
- These steps should include elimination of hate crime, hate speech and discrimination against Syrians.
- There should not be any criteria stemming from economic concerns to grant Turkish citizenship and there should not be any discrimination based on economic situation of Syrians and their educational level. If there will any priority or privilege, it should be in favor of the poor.
- There should not be any discrimination based on ethnicity, gender and social class.
- A transparent and clear road map for Syrians' acquisition of Turkish citizenship should be prepared and declared to the public.





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