

Investigation of Neighborhoods Closed to Migration in Terms of Sociology of Law: The Case of Istanbul

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Abstract

Türkiye is a country established on lands that have been subject to migration throughout history due to its geographical characteristics. In recent years, due to the war in Syria and the withdrawal of military forces from Afghanistan, a new wave of immigration arrived through the eastern borders of Türkiye. In this study, the legal basis of the neighborhoods closed to migration is examined only with reference to the city of Istanbul, supported by a literature review method. Istanbul was chosen because it encompasses many identities in Türkiye and is one of the most cosmopolitan centres and it is the largest immigration-receiving city. The aim of the study is to reveal the sociological connection of the phenomenon of migration with the law in Türkiye by exploring past studies to explain to what extent the legal regulations affect regional migration and motivations behind.

Keywords: Migration; Istanbul; neighborhood; circular; demographic structure

Introduction

Migration brings many economic, cultural, social and political consequences (Sağlam, 2006:33). Over time, immigrants either integrated to the host societies or substantially change these societies by their own characteristics and norms. While many migrations were peaceful, there were also violent ones, so societies historically tried to protect themselves, first by building walls, then introducing passports and controlled borders (Fisher, 2022:14-15). This article discusses another security measure : neighborhoods closed to immigration.

Lessons are rarely learnt from the past, therefore wars don't end and new waves of migration unfold. In addition, migration is also brought about by globalization (Dedeoğlu, 2011; Ekiz Gökmen, 2011: 1). Those looking for better living and working conditions perceive Türkiye (Dedeoğlu, 2011; Ekiz Gökmen, 2011: 1), which has adopted a flexible visa system, as their first stop and aim to go to Europe. Although some of them manage to leave, we know that a

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significant part of them live within our borders and are used as a source of unqualified and cheap labor.

Many immigrants move to avoid insecurities in their home countries and yet these insecurities are not completely resolved in host countries (Aksu Kargin and Sirkeci, 2023). These migrants also face problems such as unemployment and an increase in the informal economy in Türkiye (Dedeoğlu, 2011; Ekiz Gökmen, 2011: 5). Türkiye is a country whose economy, compared to European Union countries, is not so strong in this regard. In addition to this, other serious problems have also emerged due to migration. Due to the withdrawal of the US and allied troops from Afghanistan and the seizure of the administration by the Taliban, a civil war in Syria and the invasion Ukraine by Russia, several mass immigrations emerged (Teke-Lloyd and Sirkeci, 2022; Aksu-Kargin and Sirkeci, 2023). Türkiye has taken a welcoming stance about these immigrations. However, it has been exposed to difficulties in economy, society and politics.

Istanbul is home to the largest immigrant population in the country. It is also the largest city in Türkiye, with a population that constitutes approximately twenty percent of Türkiye's total (REF). For this reason, migration studies on Istanbul from the perspective of the sociology of law are of importance in providing both an insight into migration in the country in general and inform lawyers and policymakers at local level.

This study aims to explore the connection between the neighborhood closure decisions taken in Istanbul as a legal measure and the social phenomena that led to the decisions.

The first part of the study focuses on Syrians and Afghans, who are at the center of the social response to migrants in the country, along with Ukrainians, who have recently experienced similar difficulties. The reasons why migrants from these three countries prefer Türkiye and especially Istanbul are explained. In the second part, the legal status of migrants from these countries is elaborated. The rights of immigrants in the country and their motivations for integration vary according to the different legal statuses they obtain. Residents of Istanbul react to the socio-cultural and economic changes allegedly caused by the position of immigrants in society. The third section discusses these reactions. Finally, the decisions to close down neighborhoods, which emerged as a legal measure as a response to social reactions, and their consequences are evaluated.

Migration Movements in Türkiye in Recent Years

In recent years, there has been an unprecedented intense immigration in Türkiye. Some of these recent migrations originate from the Middle East, and some from the North. First of all, Afghanistan, which is a major emigration source country, will be examined, then the immigration caused by the Syrian civil war will be discussed, and finally, the effect of the Ukraine-Russia War on migration will be examined.

Afghan Immigration to Istanbul

For many years, Afghanistan has served as a primary source country for migration, holding the highest global emigration rates prior to the Syrian crisis (Hamsici, 2021). Owing to its historical geographical location and internal conflicts stemming from political and economic factors, Afghanistan continues to experience migration trends. The country is home to diverse



ethnic groups, such as Pashtuns, Tajiks, Turks, and Hazaras, whose power struggles have inflicted both external and internal harm on the nation.

The wave of immigration, initiated with the Soviet Union's invasion in 1979 and gaining momentum after the USA's entry in response to the September 11 attacks in 2001, reached a critical juncture with the Taliban's resurgence in 2021 post-U.S. military withdrawal (Işığışok and Kariman, 2022: 456). Over the last three decades, Pakistan and Iran have been the primary destinations for Afghan immigrants due to their geographical and cultural proximity, with Turkey emerging as a destination for both settlement and transit (Geyik Yıldırım, 2018: 135).

The influx of Afghans to Turkey is primarily motivated by violence experienced in their home country and economic factors. The war's adverse effects on working conditions, particularly for young men, drive them to seek employment opportunities in Turkey. Comparative data indicate that Turkey, in contrast to Pakistan and Iran, offers a more favorable environment in terms of rights and freedoms (Mixed Migration Center, 2020:25).

Afghans, undertaking a migration journey through Pakistan and Iran, attempt to reach one of four border provinces – Ağrı, Van, Hakkari, and Iğdır – before reaching Istanbul (Işığışok and Kariman, 2022: 467). The journey, often facilitated by migrant smugglers, involves group travel with walks lasting up to 24 hours, resulting in reported cases of sickness, injuries, and fatalities, particularly among women and children (BBC News, 2023). Typically, young men arrive first, establishing businesses before bringing their families (BBC News, 2023). Jobs in informal sectors such as agriculture-livestock, construction, and textile workshops become the preferred choice, providing daily wages (Işığışok and Kariman, 2022: 472).

Istanbul is perceived as an ideal city for job opportunities, especially for Afghans who immigrated before 2000, having obtained residence permits and formed community networks (Karadağ, 2021:28-30). Those planning to come to Istanbul often coordinate with relatives, arranging jobs and accommodations in advance. Others secure employment upon arrival, leveraging the established community network, referred to as “muhaberat” (Karadağ, 2021:29).

Afghan communities in Istanbul are concentrated in Zeytinburnu, Esenyurt, and Beykoz, with the latter hosting the “Afghan Bazaar” or Afghan workers' market since the 2000s. The economic advantage Afghans present to employers has, however, led to tensions with Turkish job seekers (Erdem, 2020).

Illegally entering the country, Afghans often rent apartments through individuals with residence permits. Approximately 15-20 people share these apartments, transcending ethnic differences that separate them in their home country (Karadağ, 2021:30). Regardless of ethnic group, the unregistered status of most Afghans in Istanbul creates a pervasive fear of police reporting, limiting their sociability and contributing to a closed community structure.

Unaccompanied migrant children face heightened vulnerabilities, relying on the support network of shop owners in Istanbul (Bozok and Bozok, 2019: 128). The risk of falling victim to global terrorist organizations and exploitation mechanisms is particularly acute for this group, given their lack of family protection (Bozok and Bozok, 2019: 129).

Syrian Civil War and Migration to Türkiye

There were some tensions before the migration crisis between Syria and Türkiye. Sharing water in common rivers, the presence of terrorist organization members in Türkiye, and Syria's claims on Turkey's southernmost Hatay province had brought the two countries against each other in the past. Although relations improved after the civil war in 2011, the problems intensified. Türkiye has carried out military operations since 2015, as terrorist organizations in Syria threaten its own security (İnce, 2023).

The civil war in Syria started with the Arab Spring that started in Tunisia in 2010, showing its effect on Syrian territory. After the chaos that started in March 2011, the first migration took place when a group of 260 people entered Türkiye on April 29, 2011 (T.C. Başbakanlık Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı, 2017:11). At the very beginning of the crisis, Türkiye has established camps in Hatay by adopting an “open door” policy due to its decision to remove mutually obtained visas with Syria in 2009. Realizing that the crisis in Syria could not be resolved in a short time, Türkiye started to support the opposition in Syria. Türkiye's efforts to solve the problems in the short term have not found any results (İhlamur Öner, 2014: 43).

Migration can result from many conflict situations. Many reasons, such as conflicts between governments, family feuds, pressure on people with different beliefs and identities from the community, gender inequality, unemployment, poverty, and high house rents, can lead to migration. The conflicts in Syria and Iraq in the past, as extreme examples, have led to the mass migration of many people (Sirkeci and Cohen, 2016; Yazgan et al., 2015; Sirkeci, 2005).

In the civil war in Syria, more than 350 thousand people lost their lives and 14 million people were displaced (United Nations [UN], 2023). By 2023, more than 5 million people have sought asylum in other countries, Türkiye ranks first in countries hosting Syrians with a rate of approximately 60% (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2023). The incoming Syrians were initially defined as “guests” and then declared to be under the “temporary protection regime”. This status granted to Syrians relates to issues such as an open door policy, not forcing them to return, not determining individual status, sheltering in camps and providing other basic principles (İhlamur Öner, 2014:44). Since there are certain uncertainties within this temporary protection status, which is especially granted to Syrians, it forces those who immigrate to Türkiye from Syria. Syrians who are not recognized as refugees are forced to live in a more insecure status. According to the statistics published by the Directorate of Migration Management, the number of Syrians under temporary protection status on 22.06.2023 is 3344,092. 531,392 of these people are in Istanbul, 3.23% of Istanbul's population is Syrians under temporary protection status (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı [Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı], 2023b).

Most of these Syrians prefer to settle in cities because of the crowdedness of the camps and the strictness of the entrance and exit controls of the camps, and also because they plan to stay in Türkiye for a long time. However, since those living outside the camps have to afford their own accommodation, most of them live in bad conditions (Şimşek, 2017).

In interviews with Syrians, Syrians state that unemployment and poverty are high in Istanbul, communication with the public is not easy, especially because they do not know the language, they face labor exploitation and discrimination, and there are problems in accessing social services (Kaya, 2017:62). The existence of a language barrier for both students and parents negatively affects basic education, makes it difficult for immigrant children to attend school



and causes them to fail to adapt (Alparslan Kılıç and Toker Gökçe, 2019:120). In particular, Syrian girls are unable to access education due to their own family dynamics in addition to the language barrier (Demir and Aksu Kargın, 2023:446). Despite these, the fact that there are many job opportunities, family, relatives and acquaintances live in Istanbul, the possibility of being discriminated against because Istanbul is a metropolis is relatively low, and the diversity of the housing market makes Istanbul a preferable place for asylum seekers. In addition, Istanbul offers Syrians the opportunity to live in an area where they see themselves closer, historically, culturally and religiously (Kaya, 2017:61-62). Most of the Syrians living in Türkiye do not feel safe economically and socially, the uncertainty of their legal status negatively affects their future plans and integration motivations (Şimşek, 2017:22).

Ukraine-Russia War and Immigration to Türkiye

A new war has erupted in Türkiye's northern neighbors in recent years because humanity has not learned lessons from wars. There has been a conflict environment in Ukraine for a long time and Ukrainians had to resort to internal and external migration to get away from this situation that brought insecurity (Lloyd and Sirkeci, 2022:65). The existence of war and conflict environment in the last ten years has placed Ukraine among the top 10 countries that send the most refugees (Lloyd and Sirkeci, 2022:269).

The fact that Ukraine has a fragile democracy, the demographic and ethnic fragility created by the Russian minority, the absence of a strong liberal democracy that can manage differences, Russia's desire to use the Russian minority to influence strategic geographical and political processes were the reasons that triggered the war (Lloyd and Sirkeci, 2022:266). The war between Russia and Ukraine, which started on the 24th of February 2022, intensified the conflict environment. The war inflicted great losses on both sides, causing both countries to be negatively affected economically. Production in Ukraine has come to a standstill, and the sanctions imposed on Russia by many countries have worn out the country (İnce, 2022).

In addition, since it was the first international war that Europe has experienced since 1945, it has disturbed the European states in many ways (Moulier Boutang, 2023:9). Ukraine has lost important industrial centers, big cities, factories, infrastructure services, hospitals and social areas. As a result, a mass migration movement started: 12 million people had to move, and 4 million Ukrainians immigrated to different countries, mainly to European countries. Since ¼ of Ukraine's 44 million population had to emigrate, this caused psychological destruction for the people but also caused a significant cost for the countries accepting immigration (Başçılar et al., 2022: 794-805). It has been estimated that the migration wave created by this war will be the largest mass migration since World War II. Considering that the war continued at the time of writing, it would be correct to add that this prediction is correct (Barros, 2022).

Many vulnerable Ukrainians are under threat because Ukraine only allows women and children to immigrate. However, their level of education generally facilitates their integration into the society they host. There is no shortage of moral attitudes and language skills. For this reason, they did not have any difficulties migrating to neighbouring countries. In fact, European countries do not have a standard refugee policy, each country has its own procedures, and the rights of those who are accepted as refugees vary by country (Işığışok and Kariman, 2022:1589).

In this migration wave, temporary protection status was activated at a speed never seen in EU history ; the EU followed an open door policy (Işığçok and Kariman: 2022: 1582-1584) and ensured that safe exit routes were kept open (Lloyd and Sirkeci, 2022: 273). Ursula Von Leyen, President of the European Commission, said: “Ukraine belongs to Europe, they are one of us and we would be happy to have them among us” (Işığçok and Kariman, 2022:1591). However, when Africans and Asians living in Ukraine were thrown off trains as they tried to flee the conflict to reach other European countries, it was surprising that they opened their doors without any problems to the “blonde and blue-eyed” Ukrainians.

It is a well-known fact that Hungary, Greece, Slovakia and Poland, which have a hospitable attitude towards Ukrainians, are the countries that create the most difficulties when Syrian immigrants are remembered and implement strict and security-friendly border policies (Lloyd and Sirkeci, 2022: 273). The reason why these countries were chosen by Ukrainians is that they have immigrated to these countries before and they have relatives and acquaintances, so it is understood why not many Ukrainians immigrated to Türkiye. To say a few words about the attitude of the Europeans, what they had in common when considering the wars in Syria or Ukraine was that they sought shelter for people fleeing the war. In this case, it would not be wrong to make the following determination: The attitude of European countries towards immigration changes depending on who immigrates. From a security perspective, due to the “other” perception of Europe towards the Muslim identity, European countries carry out policies such as not accepting immigrants or trying to find solutions to the factors that create immigration for countries that send immigrants (Şahin, 2023:11).

Of course, cultural and religious affinity does not make economic problems invisible in the long run, but at least it works in the emergence of the initial hospitable attitude. However, as time passes, hospitable attitudes give way to words that express discomfort. Just as there is no mention of *Ansar* (Ensar), cultural affinity and neighborliness about Syrians in Turkish society today, and some stereotypes are seen to be expressed loudly, it is understood that similar uncomfortable expressions have begun to be used for Ukrainians (Dalaklı, 2022). European countries claim that they are unable to receive any more refugees. Food and energy prices have risen due to the war, and European countries are about to enter a recession (Köni, 2023:8).

The war did not only affect the emigration of Ukrainians, but also the anti-war Russians preferred to leave the country (Sözcü, 2022). The effect of this war on Türkiye in terms of migration was as follows: After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, 300 thousand until the middle of March of the same year, 500 thousand until the end of August, and in addition, 400 thousand at the beginning of October. It is estimated that 900 thousand Russian citizens and people living in Russia left Russia. It is also obvious that there is a migration from Russia to Türkiye due to the international relations with Russia and the presence of Russians who settled in some parts of Türkiye before.

Legal Status of Immigrants

Although the terms refugee, asylum seeker and migrant are used in the same sense, they correspond to different statuses in law. For this reason, the assessments of foreigners living in Türkiye and those seeking protection differ.

The Refugee Convention (UN, 1951: art.1) defines refugee as any person who, owing to events occurring before 1 January 1951, has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for



reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the country of his nationality because of the fear; or if he does not have nationality, is unable or unwilling to avail from the protection the country of his former habitual residence and being outside of this country. States may geographically limit the definition of refugee to events occurring in Europe (UN, 1951: art.1(B)-1). The 1967 Protocol (UN) abolished temporal limitation, but geographical limitation is still left to the State's will.

Due to Türkiye's regional reservation to the Refugee Convention, only those from Council of Europe member states are recognized as refugees. For this reason, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP, 2013/6458) includes the clause "due to events occurring in European countries..." while defining the term of refugee. Those from other regions are recognized as asylum seekers (Dedeoğlu and Gökmen, 2011: 69). The concept of asylum-seeker includes persons who seek international protection but are not officially under any protection status (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2009: 49).

There is no consensus on who is a migrant in the international arena. However, it is generally considered that the people who migrate to another country or region without any element of coercion, to increase their "personal comfort" are migrants. Migrants migrate to improve their material and social situation and to increase their own and their families' life and prospects (IOM, 2009: 22). In Türkiye, according to the Settlement Law (2006/5543) migrants are defined as people with Turkish ancestry and attached to Turkish culture, who come to Türkiye for the purpose of settlement, either individually or collectively. Those who are not related to Turkish ancestry and Turkish culture are not migrants according to the legislation. Being of Turkish ancestry and belonging to Turkish culture is determined by President (Settlement Law, 2006/5543: art. 7).

Although most of the asylum applications to Türkiye come from non-European countries, persons who are not Turkish descendants, who do not belong to Turkish culture, and who do not come from Europe cannot be granted refugee or migrant status. Even if they are subject to the same conditions as refugees, they are entitled to conditional refugee status until they are resettled in a third country (LFIP, 2013/6458: art. 62). An applicant who cannot be recognized as a refugee or conditional refugee, but would be subjected to the death penalty, torture, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment if returned to his/her country of nationality or country of residence, or if there is a serious threat due to war, is given subsidiary protection status (LFIP, 2013/6458: art. 63).

The number of applications for international protection in Türkiye was 29,256 in 2021 and 33,246 in 2022. Of the applicants for international protection, 19,400 were Afghans and 7,131 were Ukrainians (Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, 2023b).

In October 2022, the number of Ukrainians entering Türkiye reached 145,000. Bakır (2022: 54) reports that Ukrainians were recognized and registered as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention (UN) by the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMM) under the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM). Although it is estimated that they are mostly registered in western provinces, statistics on the number of Ukrainian refugees in each province are not shared by the Presidency of Migration Management (Bakır, 2022: 54).

Asylum applications of Afghans in Türkiye are evaluated on an individual basis. Afghan citizens seek asylum in Türkiye as they cannot have protection in their own countries because the events pushing them to seek asylum occurred outside Europe. Therefore, they may be granted conditional refugee status or subsidiary protection status. In order to qualify to be a conditional refugee, the fear of persecution must be linked to their religion, nationality, race, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The fear of persecution must be well-founded and demonstrable on the part of the applicant (Çörtoğlu Koca, 2022: 883). Afghans who are not recognized as conditional refugees may also be granted subsidiary protection status as they may be subjected to violence by the Taliban regime and widespread violence in their country. The international protection applications of Afghans arriving via Iran and Pakistan are inadmissible since these countries are considered safe third countries (Çörtoğlu Koca, 2022: 886). The General Directorate of Migration Management did not share any data on the status of Afghans. However, in Çörtoğlu Koca's article (2022: 884, 887), it is stated that Afghan citizens who are eligible are either given conditional refugee or subsidiary protection status according to the information obtained from the General Directorate of Migration Management in Turkey.

It is not possible to apply the above-mentioned statuses, which are subject to individual assessment, to the cases of sudden mass asylum flows. Moreover, countries may face some problems such as cost, security and border management at the face of such mass asylum demands. Therefore, as a more pragmatic tool, temporary protection is an alternative to address such humanitarian crises. Temporary protection is particularly relevant in areas that are not included in the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol, or in regions that do not recognize other protection statuses, or where, even if other statuses are recognized, they are too difficult to apply or cannot be applied due to the nature of the movements. The prohibition of non-refoulement and basic minimum standards also apply to people under temporary protection (UNHCR, 2014: 1,2).

In domestic law, temporary protection is regulated in Article 91 of the LFIP (2013/6458): “Temporary protection may be provided for foreigners who have been forced to leave their country, cannot return to the country that they have left, and have arrived at or crossed the borders of Türkiye in a mass influx situation seeking immediate and temporary protection.”. Provisions regarding temporary protection are determined by a regulation issued by the President of the Republic (ADD DATE AND SOURCE HERE).

According to the Temporary Protection Regulation (2014/6883) issued based on Article 91 of the LFIP (2013/6458), anyone who arrived in the Republic of Türkiye individually or masse as a result of the events that took place in the Syrian Arab Republic since 28/4/2011 is accepted under temporary protection even if they have applied for another international protection. Those who are under temporary protection will not be deemed to have acquired international protection status (Temporary Protection Regulation, 2014/6883: art. 7). The Council of Europe's Directive (2001) on temporary protection stipulates that temporary protection does not provide the status under the Refugee Convention, however, beneficiaries of temporary protection can apply for asylum, and applications that are not examined during the period of temporary protection will be evaluated at the end of the period (art. 17). Yet, it is regulated that individual applications will not be processed during the period of temporary protection in Türkiye (Temporary Protection Regulation, 2014/6883: Provisional Article 1). In addition, there is no time limit on temporary protection in Türkiye. Therefore, no matter



how much time passes, the status of people under temporary protection will not change (Özel, 2020: 723). The Council of Europe Directive (2001) has a different regulation on this subject. Temporary protection applies for one year and can be extended for one year in six-month periods. The maximum duration is 3 years (Council of Europe, 2001: art.4). Since the Temporary Protection Regulation was issued in 2014, there has been no change for 9 years in the status of Syrians who were given temporary protection in 2014.

Temporary protection status is ended by a Presidential decision. Upon the expiry of the status, it may be decided to allow individuals to return to their country, to provide them the status they qualify collectively or to evaluate the individual applications for international protection, and to permit them to stay under the conditions set out in the LFIP (2013/6458) (Temporary Protection Regulation, 2014/6883: art.11). In other words, Syrians can return to their country when their temporary protection expires, or they can apply for conditional refugee or subsidiary protection if they meet the conditions (Özel, 2020: 724). Today, it is also argued that temporary protection status is not enough for Syrians and therefore they should be naturalized.⁴

Social Reaction in Immigrant Neighborhoods and Reflections in the Press

It is known that some neighborhoods in Istanbul, which receives migration from many different countries, especially from the Middle East countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, are closed to the residence of foreigners. Every day, numerous news about the neighborhoods that have been closed, or even if they have not yet the neighborhoods known with their immigrant density, are reported in the press.

According to the latest statistics published by the Presidency of Migration Management under the Ministry of Interior on its official social media account, 54 neighborhoods in Istanbul have been closed to the residence of foreigners to reduce the migrant density. The Presidency of Migration Management emphasized that these data are accurate and up-to-date, and that the allegations in other news sources are unfounded. (Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, 2023c) Among the neighborhoods that were closed, especially Esenyurt, many stories of migrants can be followed in the newspapers. Bağlarçeşme Neighborhood is one of the areas with a high number of Syrians. Murat Pastırmacı, an artisan tailor and one of the Turkish citizens living there, states that Syrians run all the shops in that neighborhood except for one or two shops (Yılmaz, 2021). “It is reported that they established a bazaar called “Shahba Mall” where they have over 50 clothing shops (Yılmaz, 2021). As a result, Syrians shop from their own places and are becoming an increasingly closed community.

Apart from Bağlarçeşme, people from other countries such as Uganda, Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan also live in other neighborhoods. For example, the Koza neighborhood is a living space for Africans, and it is reported that Nigerians, who differ from Turks on religious grounds, have turned the wedding hall into a church (Yılmaz, 2022). The local headman of Koza Neighborhood shares the observation that fights, and prostitution have also increased in this area (Yılmaz, 2022).

Another region where the demographic structure has changed considerably is Fatih district. There are some differences between Fatih and Esenyurt in terms of migration dynamics. In

⁴ On the naturalization of Syrians as Turkish citizens is incompatible with both domestic and international law (Özel, 2020: 732-733); On the uncertain conditions for the naturalization of Syrians (Şimşek, 2022).

particular, it is indicated that Syrians are culturally and religiously harmonized with the religiously conservative Turkish citizens residing in Fatih district, and therefore they are widely accepted by the society (Suat, 2021). It is also observed that in Fatih, mostly middle-class Syrians live, while in Esenyurt the majority of Syrians are from the working class (Suat, 2021). Moreover, newspapers also mention that many illegal immigrants are caught every day in the Fatih region. Istanbul Security Directorate organizes operations against irregular migrants every day at different points in Istanbul. It was announced that 80 irregular migrants were caught during identity and passport checks in Fatih on 9 July 2023 and that these people were transferred to detention centers for irregular migrants (Yeni Mesaj, 2023).

One of the most striking news in the press in recent days is the migrants who were affected by the earthquake centered in Kahramanmaraş on 06.02.2023. Most of the migrants residing in and around the earthquake zone such as Kahramanmaraş, Hatay and Adana had to migrate to Istanbul. The Migration Research Association, which conducted research on this issue, found that earthquake-affected migrants who came to Istanbul could not access earthquake aid due to discrimination, and that there were also disruptions in aid services for migrants due to the election agenda in the country (Evrensel, 2023). For this reason, it is apparent that they are preparing to return from Istanbul. While many efforts are expected to be made for social integration, it is seen that political polarization has a negative impact on migrant integration, and this situation is frequently reported in newspaper headlines.

Living Places and Closure Decisions

People who have received international protection status in Türkiye are issued a temporary ID card, which replaces a residence permit (LFIP, 2013/6458: art.83). Individuals under temporary protection status (Temporary Protection Regulation, 2014/6883: art.25/1) and those who have applied for international protection (LFIP, 2013/6458: art.71), conditional refugees and those under subsidiary protection status (LFIP, 2013/6458: art.82/2) are obliged to register their address.

Since 2011, Syrian migration has taken place at a very rapid pace, and as everywhere else, it has certain effects on communities living in Istanbul. In Istanbul, according to February 2020 data, Esenyurt (127,210), Fatih (80,920), Bağcılar (79,305), Başakşehir (66,234), Sultangazi (63,331), Esenler (58,342), Küçükçekmece (49,749), Arnavutköy (44. 244), Beyoğlu (39,298), Gaziosmanpaşa (37,362), Kağıthane (36,640), Sultanbeyli (30,200), Avcılar (30,021), Bahçelievler (29,899), Zeytinburnu (24,503) are the districts where Syrians live the most (Kart Aktaş and Çınar, 2020: 39). As a matter of fact, 9 of these districts, particularly Fatih and Esenyurt, have been shut down for the residence of not only Syrians but all foreigners.

For example, according to research conducted in the Akşemsettin Neighborhood in Fatih, 68% of the local people stated that they were not satisfied with the settlement of Syrians in their neighborhood. The increase in house rents, the growth of workplaces for Syrians, the employment of Syrians in workplaces, the relocation of neighbors and/or relatives of local people due to Syrians, and the eviction of local people from houses and/or workplaces by landlords to rent them to Syrians constitute the basis of dissatisfaction (Kart Aktaş and Çınar, 2020: 41). It is observed that there has been a socio-cultural and physical change in Akşemsettin Neighborhood. It seems that local people and Syrians have been culturally displaced. The relocation of shopkeepers in the neighborhood due to high rent demands, the settlement of Syrians in empty workplaces and residences, and the difficulty of local people



in communicating with people who speak a different language in their own neighborhood have triggered the transformation. This situation leads to loss of identity and segregation. As a result of the transformation in settlement of Syrians, local people have become alienated from their own neighbourhoods and have lost their social relations and identities. It is important that Syrians who migrate due to fear for their safety of life and economic problems should be adapted to the places they migrate to (Kart Aktaş and Çınar, 2020: 43-44).

Due to migration in Istanbul, different measures were taken by the administration. These measures are mostly aimed at reducing the resettlement of foreigners. As a result of the increase in the foreign population, the registration of Syrians under temporary protection in Istanbul has been closed since July 2019 (Sözcü, 2019). According to the statement issued by the Presidency of Migration Management in January 2023, in addition to the non-registration of Syrians under temporary protection in Istanbul in 2019, Fatih and Esenyurt districts were closed to all foreigners from January 2021. After the closure of the two districts to foreigners, the number of foreigners legally residing in these districts has decreased. On October 20, 2022, in addition to Fatih and Esenyurt, Avcılar, Başakşehir, Bağcılar, Esenler, Bahçelievler, Sultangazi, Küçükçekmece, Küçükçekmece, Zeytinburnu were also closed to foreigners, bringing the total number of closed districts to 10. The Ministry of Interior ceased the registration of foreigners in neighborhoods where the foreign population reached 20% of the population of Turkish citizens. As a result, foreigners were banned from residing in 54 neighborhoods (T.C. İstanbul Valiliği İl Göç İdaresi Müdürlüğü [İl Göç İdaresi], 2023b). The closure of neighborhoods across Türkiye to residence permits first started on 16.05.2022 with 781 neighborhoods (35 for Istanbul) and then increased to 1169 (54 for Istanbul) (Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, 2022a; Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, 2022b). In the 10 closed districts in Istanbul, those can exceptionally obtain residence permits in closed neighborhoods, if their university/faculty/institute is located in one of the closed districts, if the investor has bought a house in that district, to ensure family integrity, or when health conditions require it (Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı, 2022c; Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İçişleri Bakanlığı, 2023).

As of December 31, 2022, there are 1,252,999 foreigners who have the legal right to stay in Istanbul. 705,133 of these people have a Residence Permit. 543,973 of them are Syrians under temporary protection status (İl Göç İdaresi, 2023a) On 18.06.2023, it was stated in the Press Release that the foreign population in Istanbul decreased by 46,846 persons from the end of 2022 to 18.06.2023 and fell to 1,206,153. Of this population, 670,988 are foreigners with residence permits, 531,381 are Syrians under temporary protection and 3,784 are international protection applicants (İl Göç İdaresi, 2023b). As a result of the measures taken, the number of Syrians under temporary protection, international protection applicants and residence permit holders living in Istanbul has decreased. The foreign population in Istanbul has been reduced, although slightly.

Conclusion

Those who live in peace and prosperity in their own country and see the guarantee that future generations will live in the same environment do not migrate, migration is in a sense a necessity. Those who experience this obligation are then likely to face difficulties with language barriers (Tuzluca, 2023: 48), social integration and social exclusion (Şirin, 2023: 40). Furthermore, language barriers are an important factor in health problems, children's lack of education and finding a job. Therefore, it is a natural outcome for speakers of the same

language to gather in the same place to support each other. However, over time, this causes conflict between immigrants and local people, and it becomes more difficult for people who do not speak the same language to develop tolerance towards each other, to establish relationships, and for immigrants to adapt to society. This also helps right-wing and nationalist policies to gain more support (Özdal and Argah, 2023: 18).

Turkish citizens have become more mobile as a result of the relative prosperity and stability in the country since the beginning of the 21st century, as well as established migration networks and existing migration culture. Türkiye is now officially the largest refugee host country in the world. This is not surprising given its geographical proximity to certain conflict areas in the world and to the European Union (Sirkeci, 2017: 130).

Migrants in Türkiye do not have a single profile. Ukrainians are a predominantly female and child group. Also, the education level and cultural development of migrants do not disturb the society they visit. However, the majority of Syrian, Afghan or Pakistani migrant groups consist of men in their twenties. In addition, their education levels and cultural development are lower. People migrating from these regions have lived in an environment of war for a long time and survived dictatorships. This makes them more difficult communities to integrate. They form closed communities in the countries they visit, so they can be described as a threat to peace and security in the host countries (İnce, 2023). The high number of foreigners coming to Istanbul for job opportunities and social networks can create tensions within Istanbul. In the political conjuncture, asylum-seekers - especially Syrians, who are a large group - have been a subject of debate. The main opposition party's main discourse in the second round was centered on Syrians (Euronews, 2023). This situation raises tensions in areas where refugees are concentrated.

In fact, in order to solve the problems created by the phenomenon of migration, which has gained a global dimension and has a transnational character, there is a need for dedicated institutions and an expert team to work in this institution (Parlak, 2023: 12). When a country receives migration, other countries ignore the problems because they see them as the problems of that country. It is possible to say that Türkiye stands alone in the problems arising from migration. In some settlements, the population density of migrants has started to disrupt the social balance. As a measure taken to prevent this, foreigners are no longer allowed to reside in some neighborhoods.

As a result of the tensions, the residence of foreigners in Istanbul and other provinces has been restricted. Although this has led to a decline in the foreign population, there is still no marginal change. Illegal immigrants also continue to exist. The lack of harmonization efforts leads to both the migration of local people from their neighborhoods and the loss of culture in them. The uncertainty in the legal status of asylum-seekers, especially Syrians since 2014, affects the adaptation motivation of foreigners trying to establish a life in Istanbul. Reducing the number of foreigners by preventing their residence is not enough to solve the problems; more serious social policies need to be put into effect to solve the problems in this area.

The policy of reducing the number of foreigners residing in Istanbul by deciding to close neighborhoods is not enough to solve the problems. Because there has not been a decrease in this number sufficient to reduce the social effects mentioned, the foreign population in the city is still quite dense. In addition, although these closure decisions were first taken specifically for Syrians in 2019, social reactions against Syrians continued. Restrictions are also



applied to other immigrants and similar reactions continue to exist. This situation shows us that the legal measures taken alone are not suitable for solving the problems. The mentioned issue is one of the most important implications of the study.

In order to solve the problems in the long term, different steps should be taken to facilitate the integration of local people with immigrants in the closed neighborhoods and others that have not yet been closed. The responsibility of institutions that facilitate peaceful coexistence in Istanbul is important. For example, in the case of Syrian immigrants, municipalities should take an active role in measures that will ensure women's inclusion in social life (Çopuroğlu, 2023:78). On the other hand, the housing crisis in Istanbul is one of the reasons for the conflicts between local people and immigrants. Especially after the Hatay earthquake, internal migration to Istanbul made access to housing difficult. It would be appropriate for public institutions to develop solutions for the housing needs of immigrants and local people who have difficulty accessing housing. There is no current official statement regarding the reopening of the neighborhoods closed after the earthquake to the residence of earthquake-affected immigrants.

As a result, every country adopts certain legal policies against the migration wave it experiences and takes appropriate legal measures. However, the measures taken must be able to respond to the social changes taking place. Closing decisions in Istanbul are also ineffective in solving the problems of different dimensions brought about by intense migration. It can be claimed that policymakers should do more work on this issue and take into account the suggestions given above.

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