Consequences of Chaos: Syria's humanitarian crisis and the failure to protect

Kemal Kirişci

Three (and a half) issues:

1. Syrian displacement : context, timeline & numbers
2. Drawing connections between humanitarian need & politics: IDPs, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Europe
3. Challenges to international humanitarian governance
3 1/2. What in the world is going to happen?

Displacement

For individuals: a protection strategy
A consequence of conflict
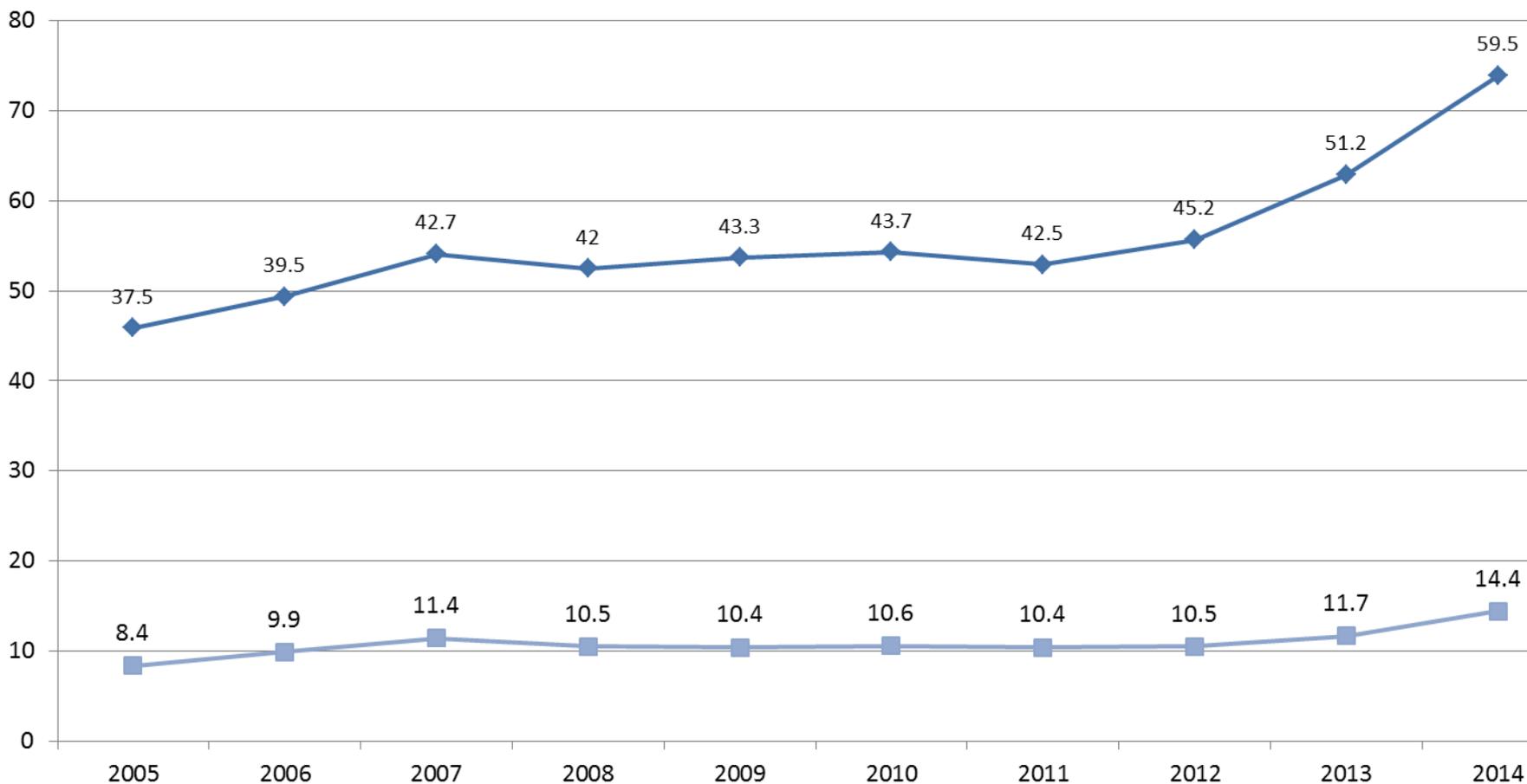But displacement itself has political consequences

Relationship of internal displacement to refugee movements
IDPs: out of sight, out of mind
Refugees: A call to action

Humanitarian problems do not have humanitarian solutions

Number of People Displaced by War and Refugees under UNHCR's mandate, 2005-2014

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Global Trend Reports 2005-2014.

Syrian Displacement

The world's largest humanitarian crisis, but a time of unprecedented mega-crises: 38 million IDPs, 20 million refugees

<u>Too many crises</u>: Iraq, Yemen, Ukraine, Sudan (South Sudan & Darfur), Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan, CAR, Northern Triangle – Central America, Myanmar, Afghanistan…

Syrian Displacement

Rapid, massive, dynamic

7.8 million IDPs (but difficulties in estimates)

4 million+ refugees

Half of Syria's population displaced

Why do people leave their homes?

>Conflict (regime violence [80%+] , non-state armed actors, conscription, sectarian/ethnic conflict)

>But also economic & social factors

80% of Syrians living in poverty (UNDP), in 2014 Syria's GDP was half of what it was in 2011, life expectancy dropped by 20 years, 50% of children out of school in 2014-2015, 57% of hospitals damaged/destroyed (2013), attacks on health facilities, 35% of water treatment plants damaged, unemployment 50%+…

"Even if the conflict were to end tomorrow, it would take 30 years for Syria to recover the standard of living it had before the war." (UN)

Troubling questions: internal displacement

- Estimating needs & numbers
- Access to assistance: government-controlled areas
- Access to assistance: rebel-controlled & contested areas & besieged communities
- Challenges of cross-border aid
- Safe areas, humanitarian corridors, no-fly zones?

Graph I: IDPs, 2013-2015
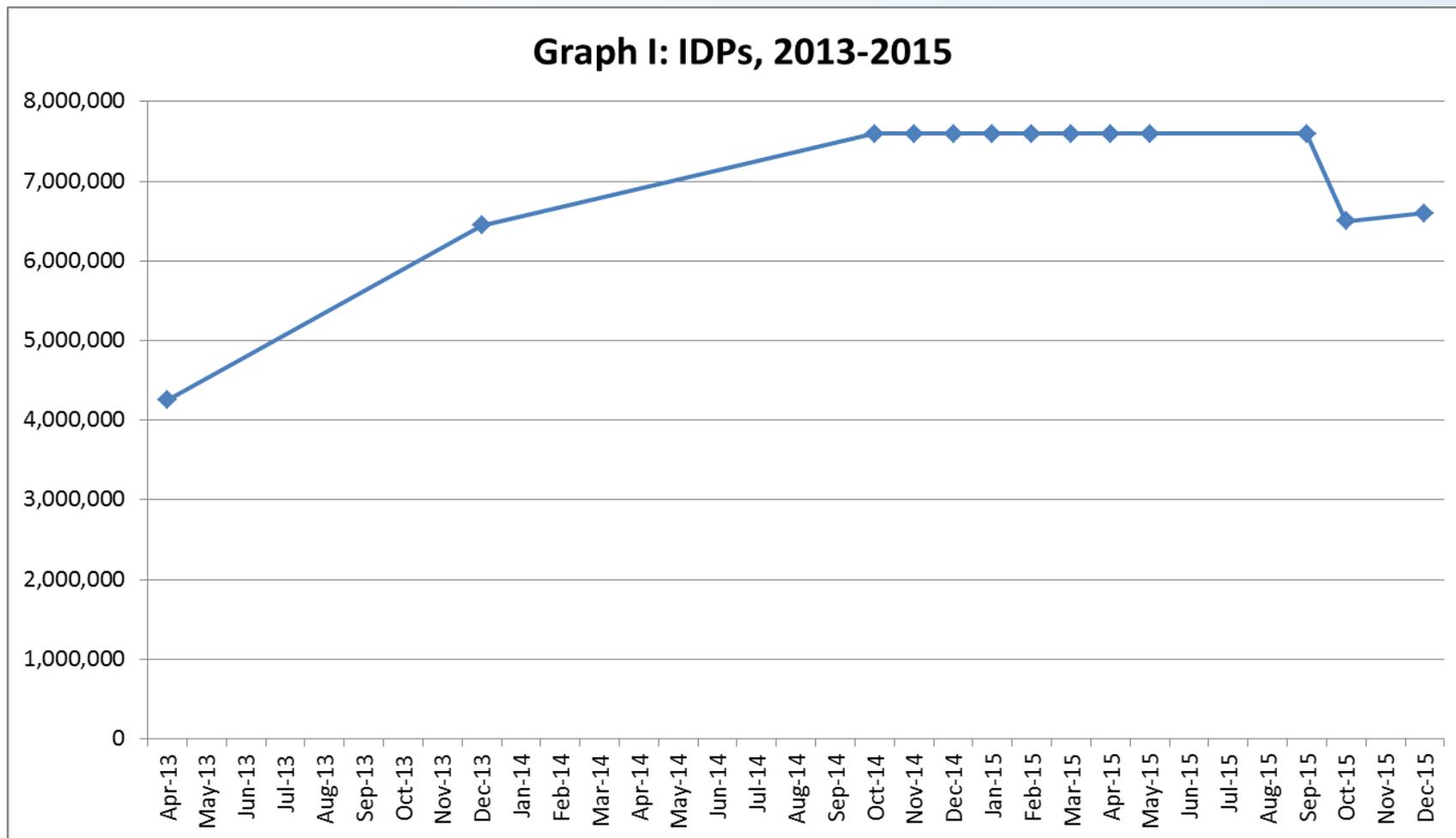
Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Comparing and contrasting Oct 2013 and June 2015

1. Number of refugees doubled from 2 to more than 4 million refugees
2. No immediate solution to the refugee crisis recognized replacing expectation of quick return
3. Open door policy initially adopted by Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey increasingly constrained
4. Initial inclination to build refugee camps in Jordan and Turkey by and large abandoned
5. Growth in urban refugees increases challenges as public support falls
6. While in Jordan and Lebanon refugees remain mostly Sunni Arabs, in Turkey greater ethnic diversity
7. Weakened burden-sharing donor fatigue across three countries, negligible resettlement
8. Spill-over into Europe
9. Safe-zones debates become more intense in the north compared to the south
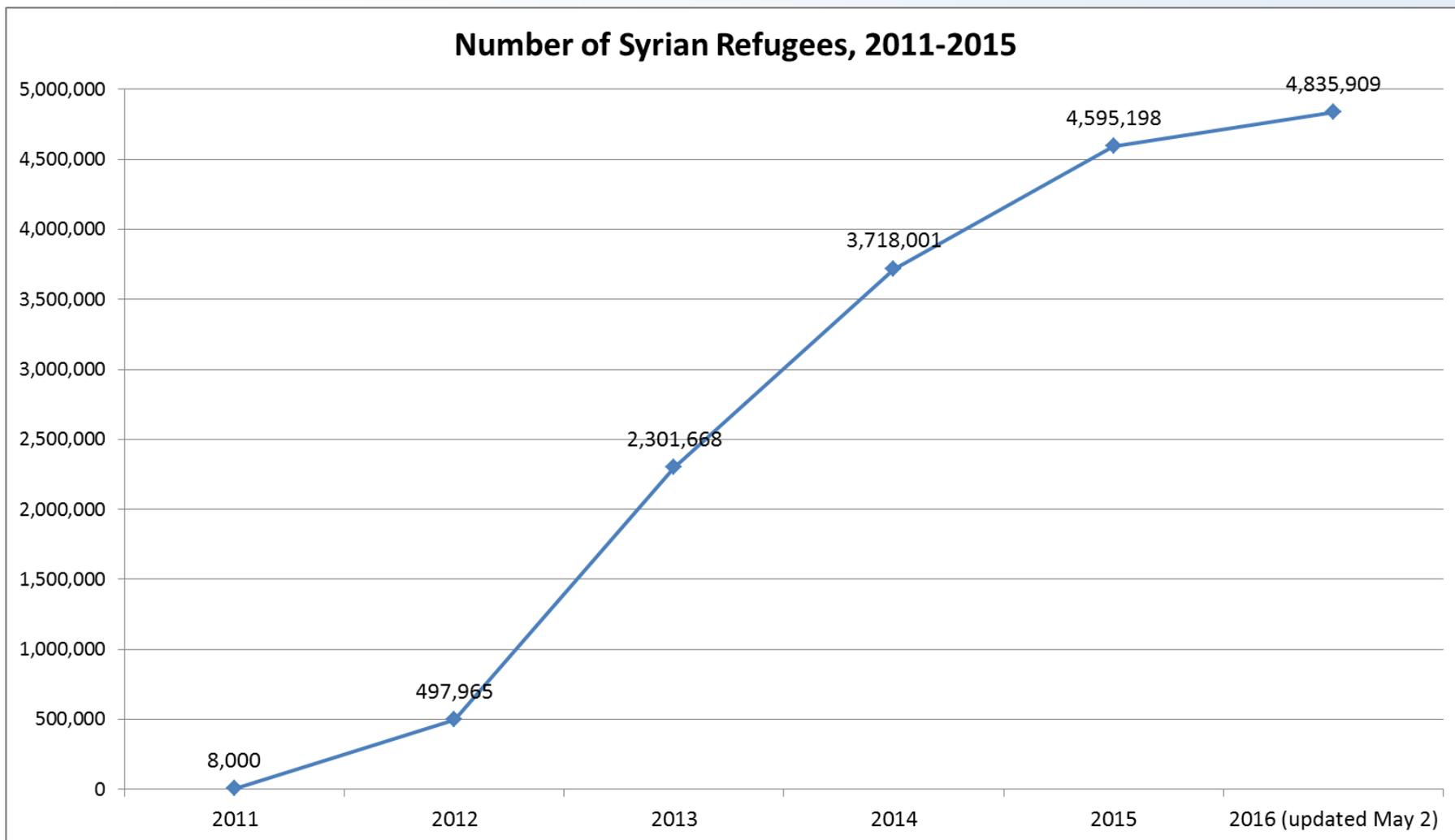
Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan.

# Host governments: Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq

- Jordan & Lebanon: Legacy of Palestinians
- Jordan: Iraqi refugees
- Lebanon: sectarian politics

--No Refugee Convention, No camps*, popular backlash, identity issues

- Turkey – Kurdish question, politics/public opinion, major humanitarian actor, $7.6 billion in expenditure
- Economic, political, social, cultural impact of refugees. Popular backlash vs access to livelihood for refugees.

Humanitarian aid – but they're not going home anytime soon.
- Challenge of education: kids out of school, certification, curriculum, language of instruction, secondary displacement, registration of births

Refugee Population, 2011-May 2016
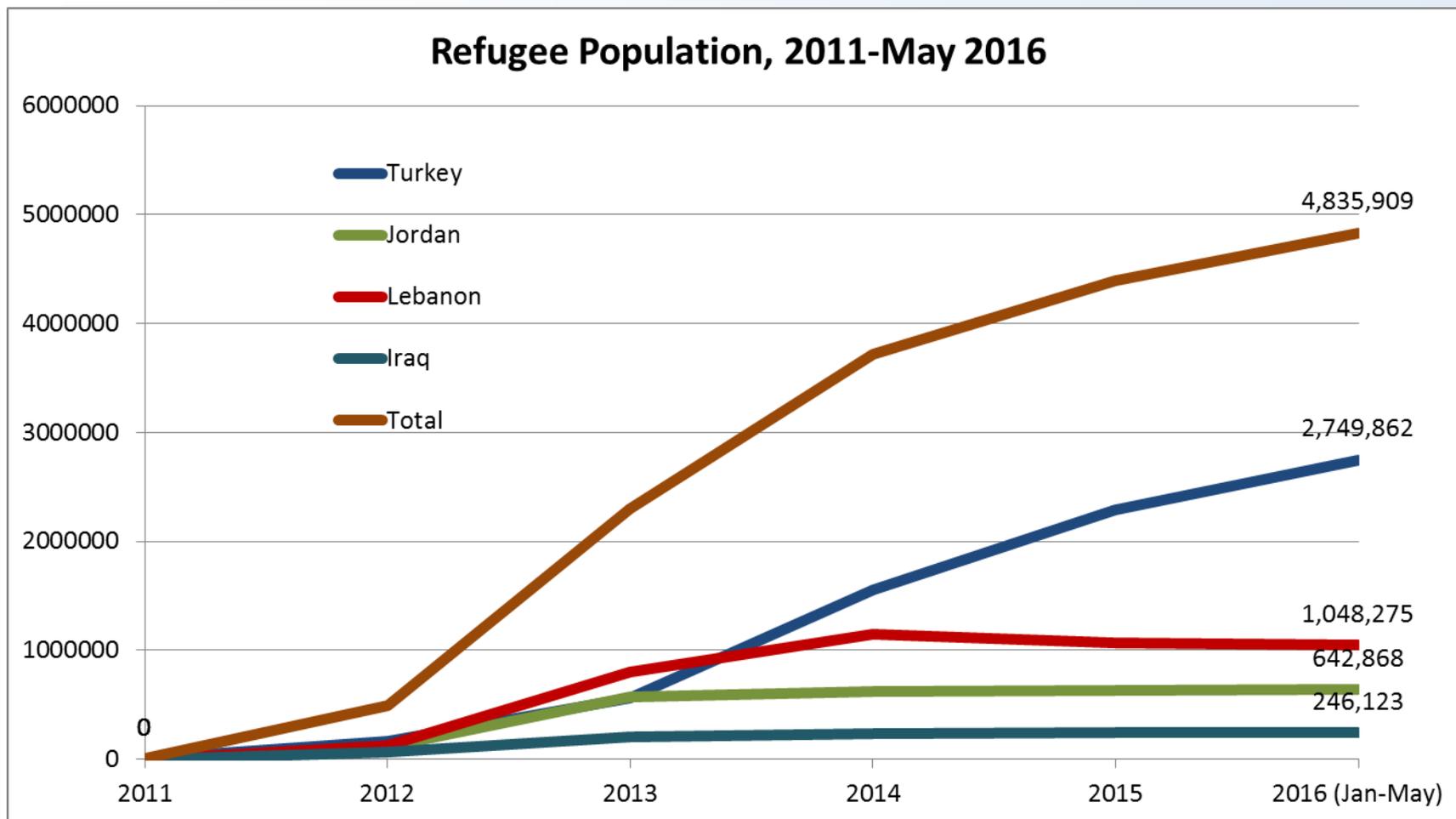
Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Syrian Refugee Response.

Impact of Syrian refugees on host countries

1. Most visible and most highlighted is the economic impact: falling wages, rising prices/rent vs increasing pressure on access to livelihood
2. Governments rarely emphasize contribution to local economies but push international agencies to build "resilience"
3. Wide social impact ranging from child labor/early marriages, prostitution, polygamy
4. Political impact extensive in all countries but varied across them:
    1. Jordan dampens taste for reform with emphasis on stability and protection of national identity,
    2. Lebanon maintaining inter-faith balances and aggravates already weak government structures,
    3. Turkey inter-faith balances, Kurdish question.

Political impacts

- National liability
- Demographic balances
- Violence
- Broader geopolitics
- Rise of the right
- Repercussions for the future of Syria

Economic impacts

- Employment
- Fluctuating prices
- Expenditures
- What is happening with the middle classes?
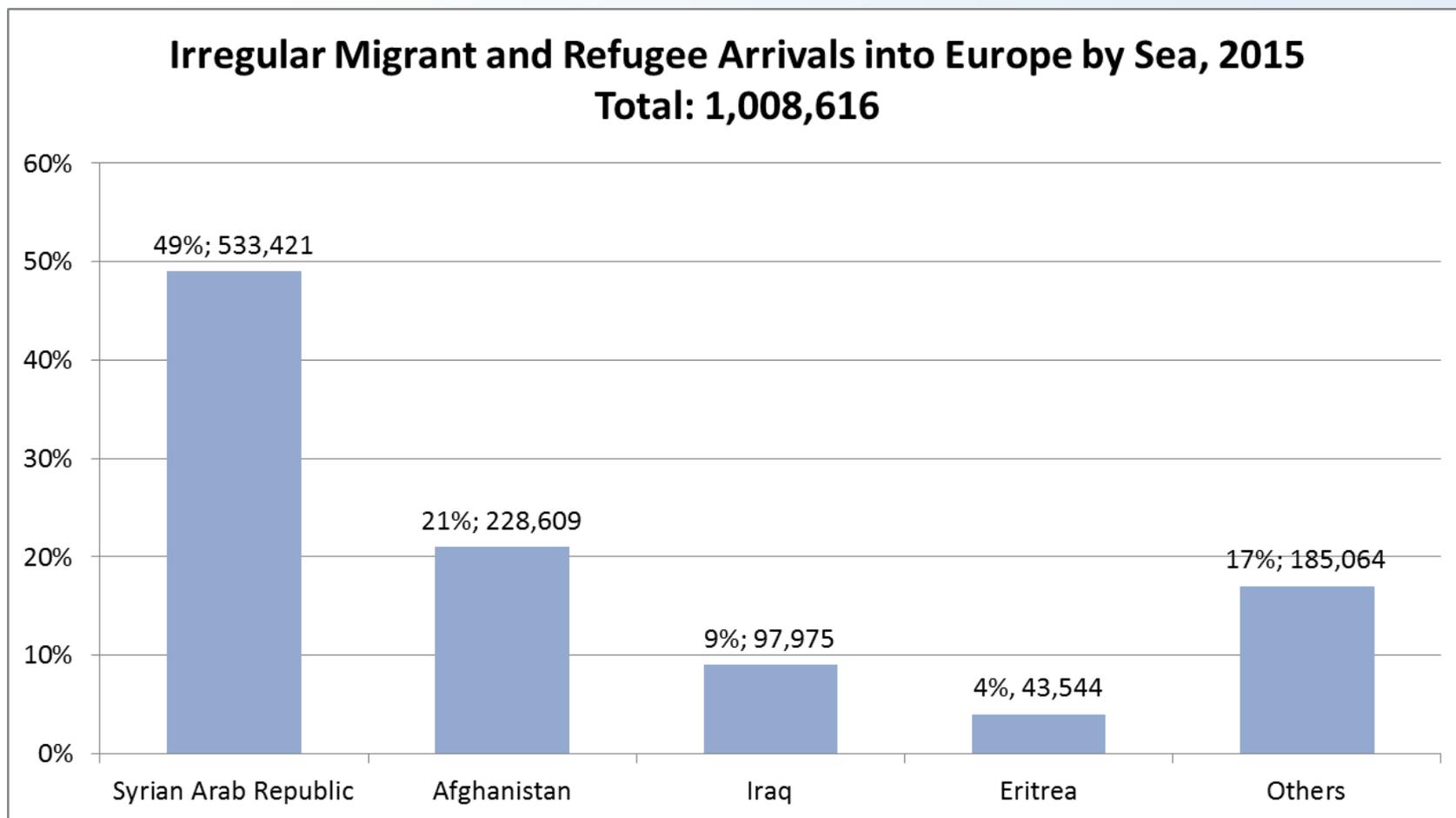
Social impacts

- Culture
- Linguistic/educational
- Ethnically/religiously more homogenous communities
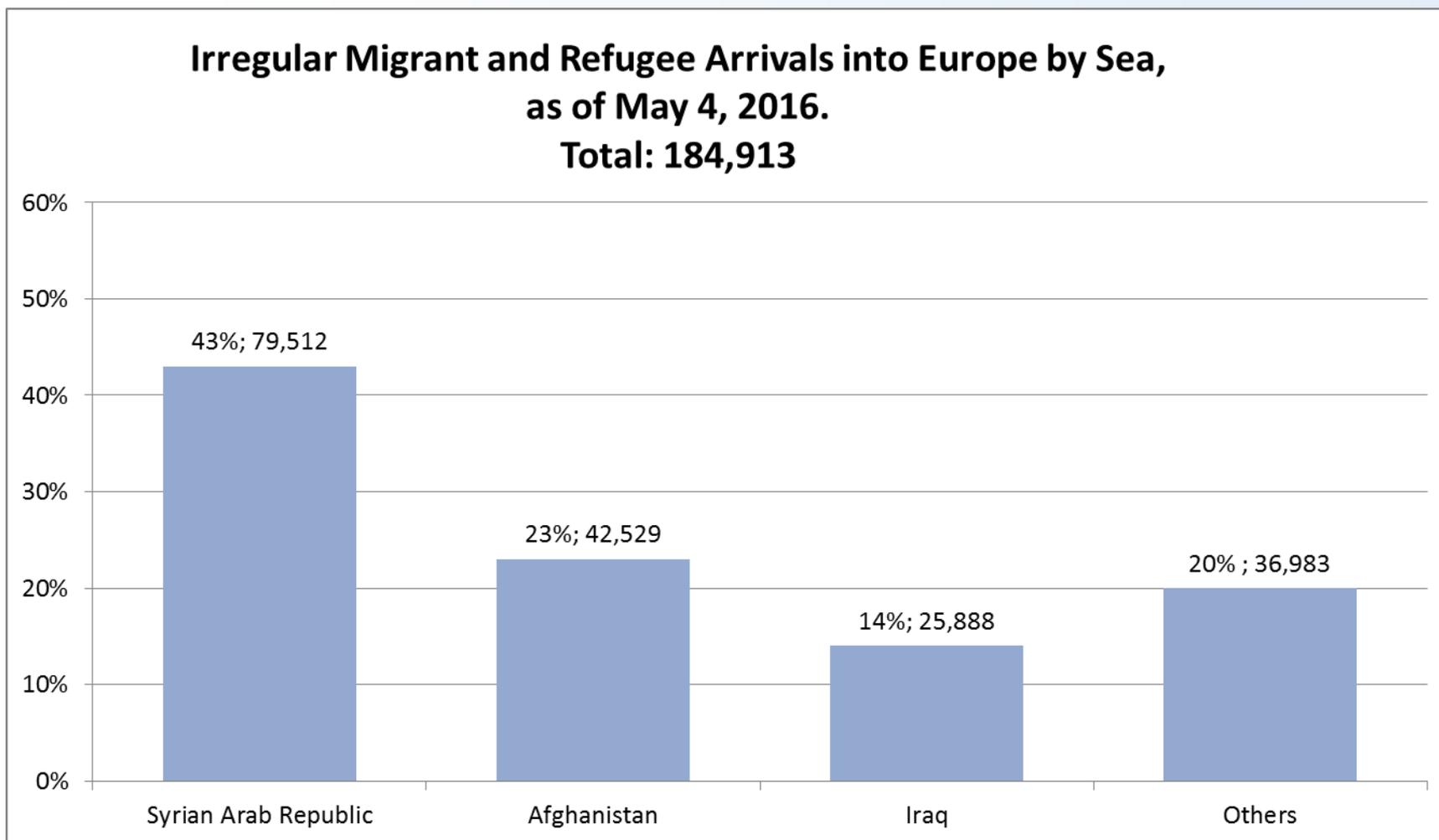
Policy challenges

1. How to aid refugees who aren't in camps? How to balance with host community needs?
2. Labor Integration: increasingly recognized in Turkey/Jordan but denied in Lebanon
3. Education recognized as critical but implications in terms of "integration" plus infrastructure and curriculum challenges
4. Security: Jordan and Lebanon increasingly tighten borders and encourage "return"
5. Security in the broader sense as it relates to national identity acutely felt, especially Jordan and Lebanon
6. Cooperation with the international community: Jordan pragmatism, Turkey confrontational, Lebanon laissez faire
7. Striking a balance between national vs. international responsibilities
8. Mistrust towards the international community
9. Disjuncture between traditional donor/humanitarian agencies and emerging ones

Troubling questions: Europe

- Questions about capacity, security and identity
- Implications for EU, for Germany, for Greece
- What will happen when door closes?
- How can Europe stop the refugee flow & maintain international commitments?
- How can UNHCR balance standing up for refugee rights & need for European money?
- Implications of European policies on Middle East? Other regions?

Irregular Migrant and Refugee Arrivals into Europe by Sea, 2015
Total: 1,008,616

- Syrian Arab Republic: 49%; 533,421
- Afghanistan: 21%; 228,609
- Iraq: 9%; 97,975
- Eritrea: 4%, 43,544
- Others: 17%; 185,064

Source: United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees, "Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response Plan."

Irregular Migrant and Refugee Arrivals into Europe by Sea, as of May 4, 2016. Total: 184,913

Source: United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees, "Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response Plan – Mediterranean," http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php.

Failed resettlement

1. UN High Commissioner Antonio Guterres pleaded for 130,000 places 100,000 were eventually promised by mostly Western countries,
2. As off October the US had taken less than 1900 since beginning of the Syrian crisis, promise to take on 10,000 by end of 2015 out of 18,000 UNHCR referrals increase yearly over all quota from 70 to 100,000,
3. By the time the European refugee crisis erupted the EU had resettled less than 7,000, since then further to a painful political process the EU will resettle 160,000 Syrian refugees from among those who are already in the EU,
4. The EU-Turkey envisages up to 72,000 resettlements out of Turkey. Australia, Britain, Canada and others have pledged 185,000 places at the UNHCR Geneva conference in March.
5. Safe-zones debates become more intense in the north compared to the south.

Failed resettlement

- In 2015, only 12% of those refugees that needed to be resettled were eventually resettled.

- According to UNHCR, 10% of the 4.8 million refugees in countries neighboring Syria will either have to be resettled or be moved elsewhere for safety. This 10% includes "the acutely vulnerable, survivors of torture, refugees with serious medical conditions and women with several children."

- As of March 2016, a total of 185,000 resettlement places have been made available.

- According to the EC, 103 refugees have been resettled from Turkey to Europe after the EU-Turkey Agreement went into effect, and 325 migrants (without asylum applications) were sent back to Turkey from Greek islands.

- In the three weeks prior to the deal, 26,878 persons arrived in Greece; 3 weeks after, this number had dropped down to 5,874.

Why burden-sharing critical?

1. Protection of refugees considered to be an international responsibility, not just that of host countries
2. Expression of solidarity and burden sharing critical in terms of local governmental and civil society motivation, sense of "we're not alone"
3. Absence of "burden sharing" good fodder for populist politics and anti-Western rhetoric
4. Burden sharing also makes good sense in terms of human and broader security consideration reducing vulnerabilities towards exploitation, abuse and extremist recruitment
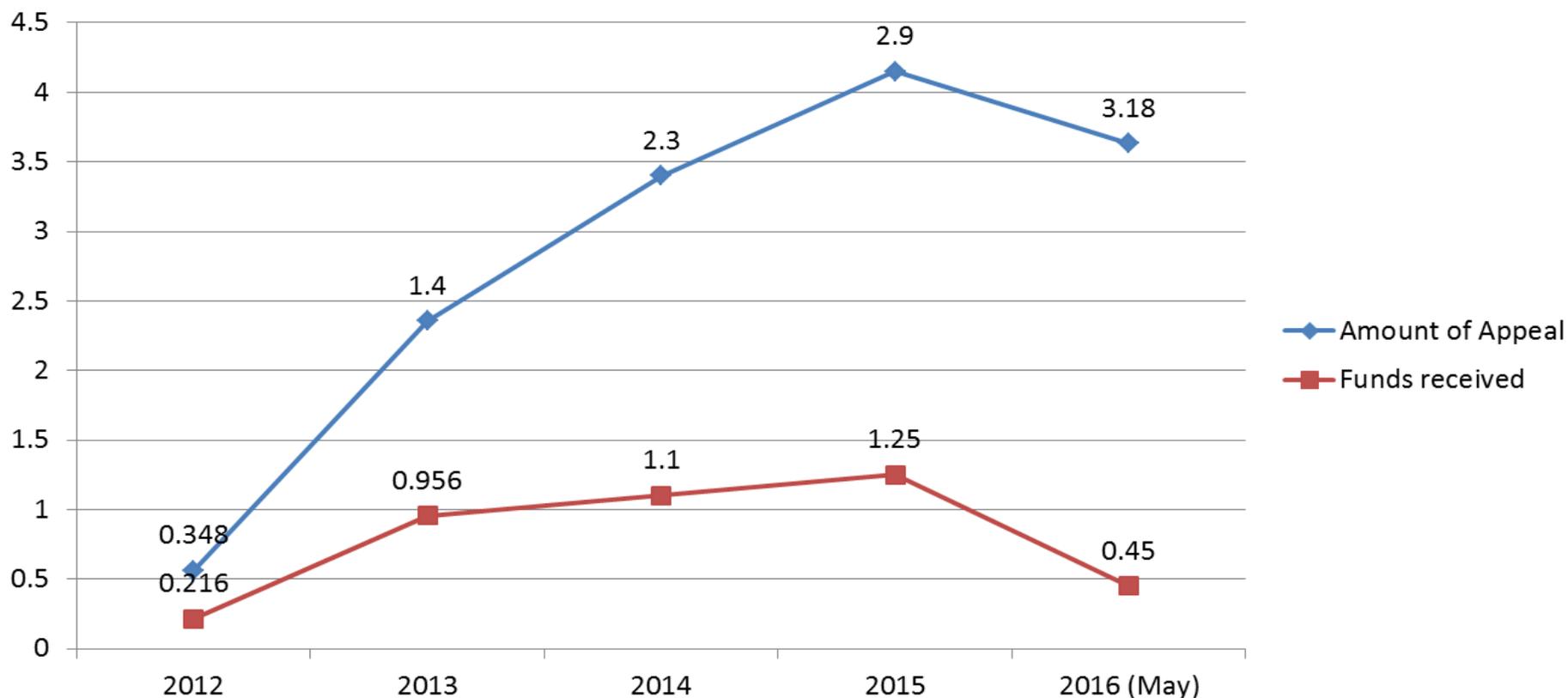
Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan (Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan in 2015) (in billion USD)
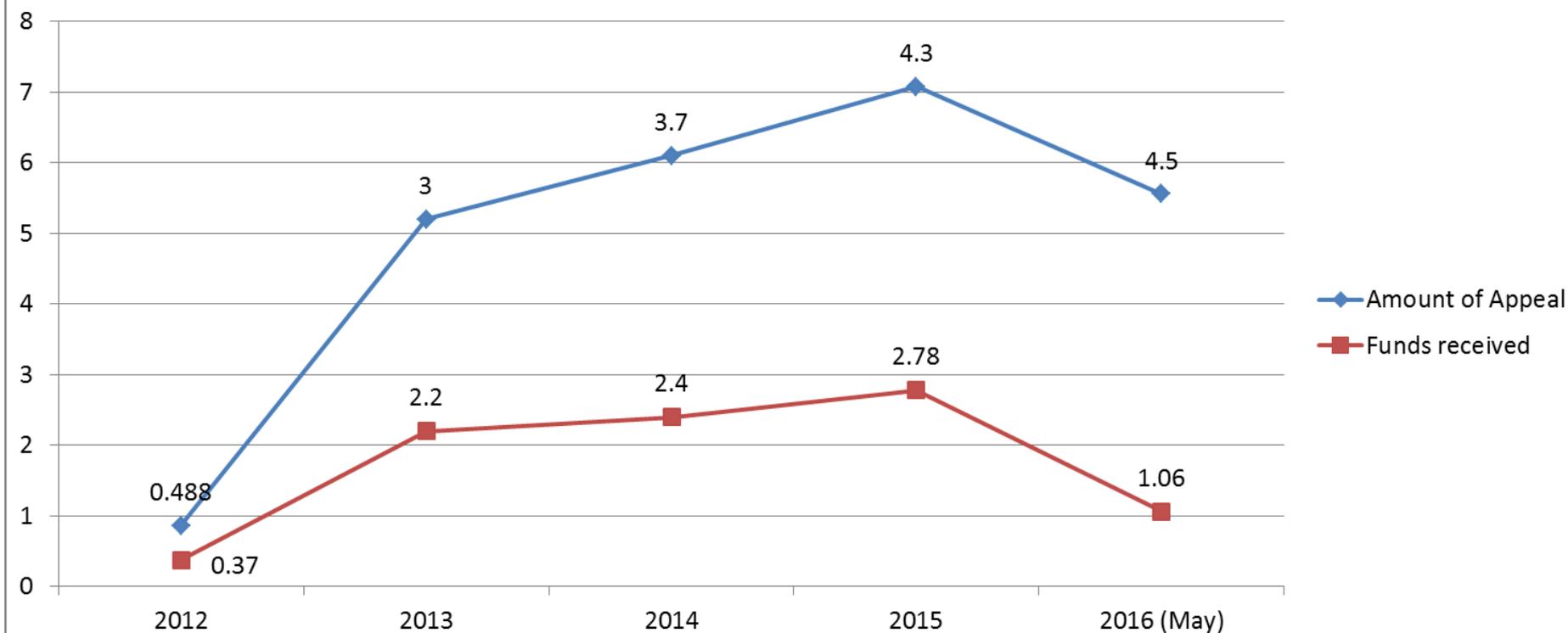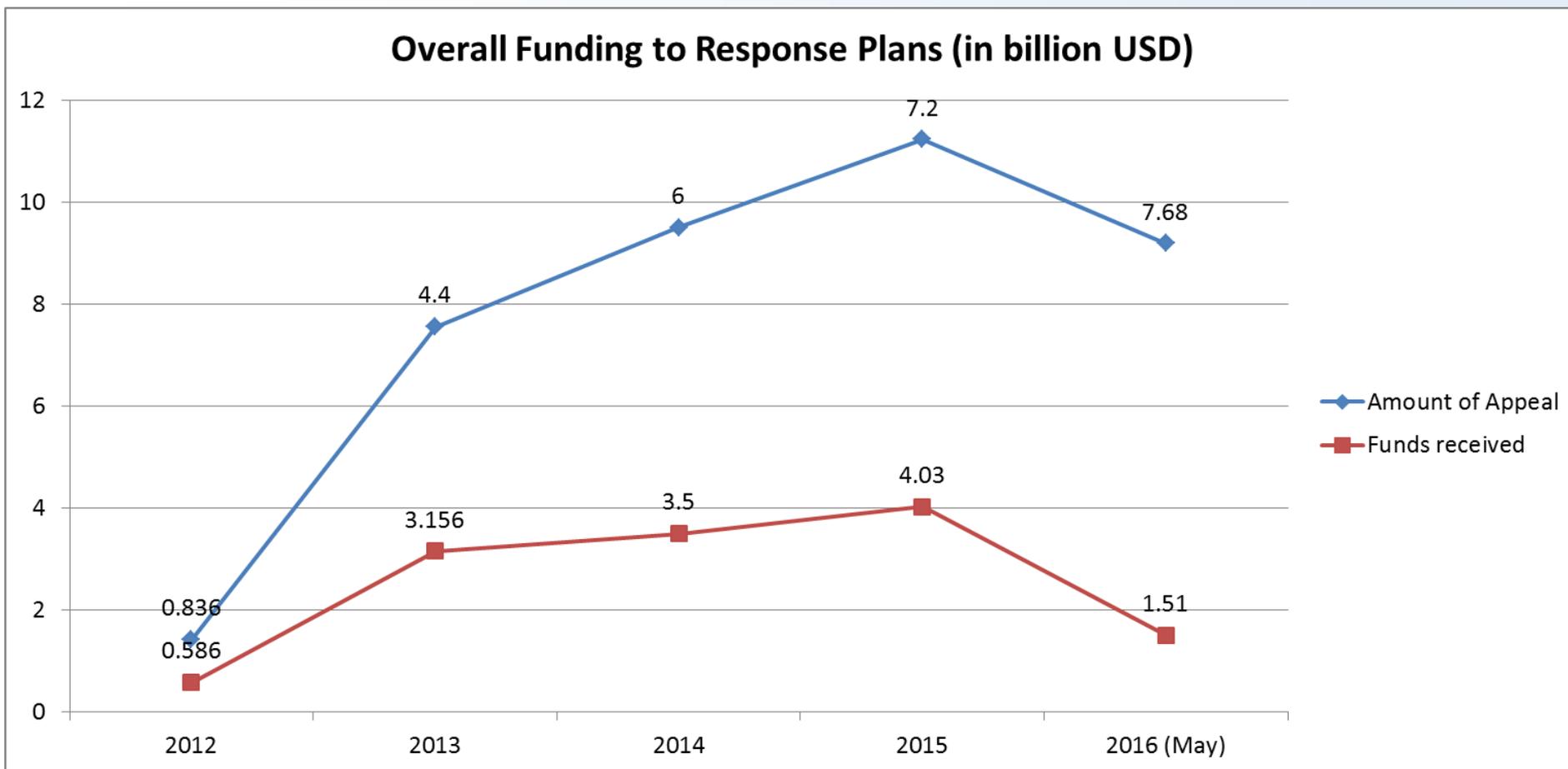
Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Financial Tracking Service, "Syrian Arab Republic – Funding Received," updated on May 10, 2016, https://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emerg-emergencyCountryDetails&cc=syr.
Note that SHARP (followed by the SRP in 2015) refers to assistance inside Syria, while the Regional Refugee Response Plan (3RP in 2015) targets refugees in neighboring countries.

Syrian Humanitarian Response Plan (Syria Strategic Response Plan in 2015) (in billion USD)
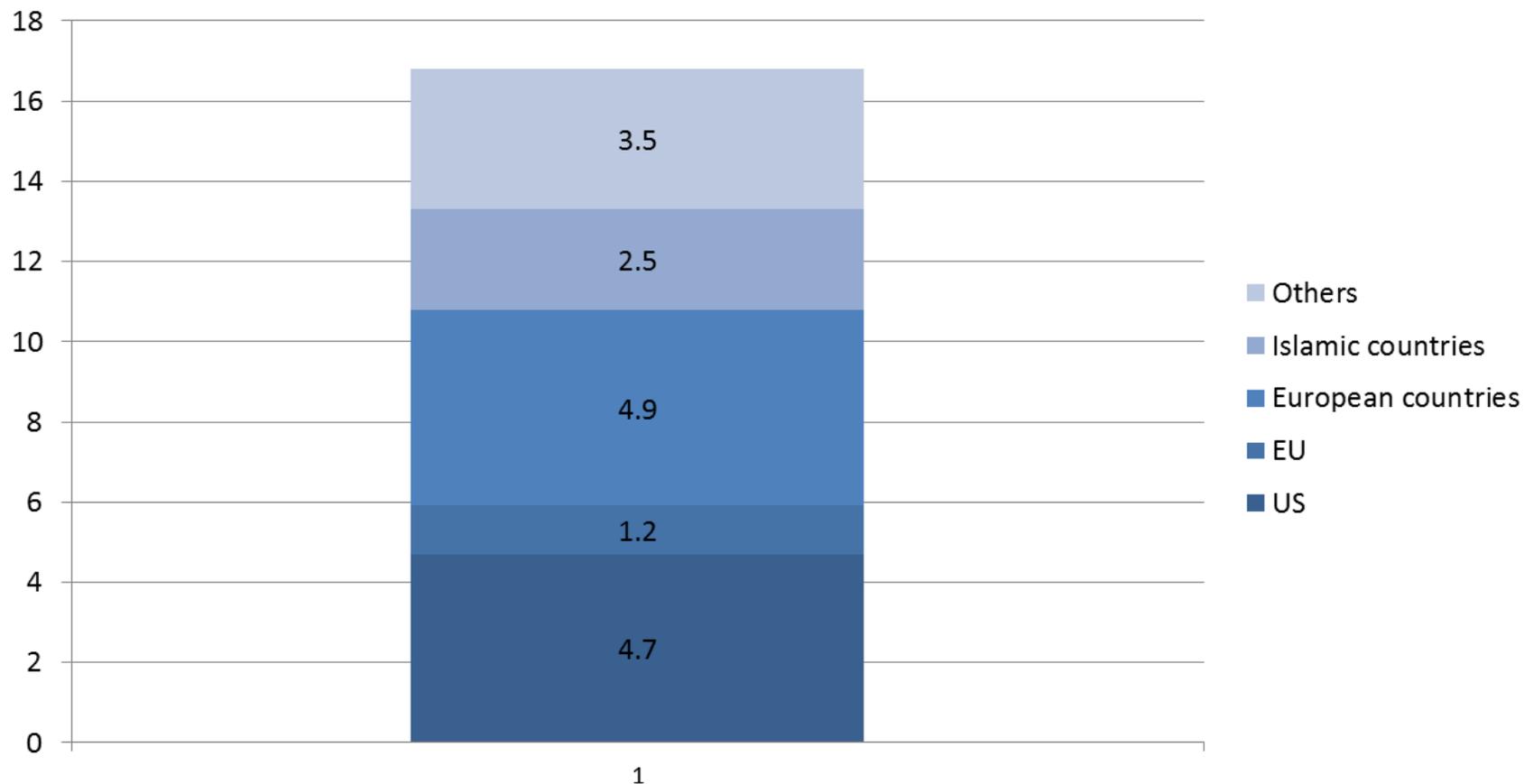
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Overall Funding to Response Plans (in billion USD)

Amount of Appeal (blue): 2012: 0.836; 2013: 4.4; 2014: 6; 2015: 7.2; 2016 (May): 7.68

Funds received (red): 2012: 0.586; 2013: 3.156; 2014: 3.5; 2015: 4.03; 2016 (May): 1.51

Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Financial Tracking Service, "Syrian Arab Republic – Funding Received," updated on May 10, 2016, https://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emerg-emergencyCountryDetails&cc=syr.
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Financial contributions to the UNOCHA Emergency "Syrian Arab Republic - Civil Unrest" 2012-2015 (in billion USD)

More troubling questions:

- What does Russian involvement mean for the conflict?
- Why does world react more to 400K arrivals in Europe over a few months than to 4 million refugees in region?
- What is proper US response?

What happens next?

- Refugees continue to leave? Short-term humanitarian aid until the world's attention moves on?
- A new 'deal' with host countries? Engagement of development actors?
- Returns to a safe zone?
- Are we seeing the breakdown of the nation-state in the Middle East?

BROOKINGS

A breakdown in the humanitarian governance system?

- Failure of the UNSC to stop the conflict
- Flagrant disregard of international humanitarian law
- Failure of burden-sharing: both financial support & resettlement (though both are very high)
- Politicization of humanitarian assistance

- What can be done?
- How can local actors be empowered?
- Safe areas: Jordanian pragmatism vs. Turkish "principled" approach vs. Lebanese laissez faire

New Global Approach to Syria

— Reaffirming the principle that protection of refugees is an international responsibility;

—Supporting common legal and policy approaches to Syrian refugees in the region that includes access to livelihood opportunities;

—Reaffirming resettlement as a core component of refugee protection and assistance and re-tooling elements of resettlement policy to meet the needs of especially the most vulnerable of refugees;

New Global Approach to Syria

—Providing a forum for creative thinking on solutions for internally displaced people;

—Establishing a new relationship between humanitarian and development actors;

—Engaging development actors such as the World Bank more effectively;

—Laying the groundwork for longer-term reconstruction and recovery efforts in Syria.

EU-Turkey Migration Agreement:

- Negotiations since October 2015, concluded in March 18-19 European Council meeting.

- Complicated agreement weaving the challenge of bringing flow of Syrian refugees and irregular migrants under control in return for burden sharing with Turkey, granting visa liberalization for Turkish nationals and re-vitalizing Turkey's accession process.

- Burden sharing involves transfer of funds (6 bn Euros end of 2018) and resettlement of 72,000 Syrians from Turkey in return of readmissions flowed by a voluntary one.

BROOKINGS

Challenges:

- Ensuring proper processing of asylum applications before sending back irregulars to Turkey;
- Logistical aspects of the implementation of "one to one" scheme on the ground;
- Mechanism for transferring funds;
- Visa liberalization, Turkey meeting "72 criteria" and the EU (Council and EP) signing on to it;
- Obstacles in the way of speeding accession process, opening of chapters.

Thank you.