



# MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN TURKEY



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## RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given its geopolitical location as a transition country, migration has always been on the agenda of Turkey. In 2011, following the Syrian civil war, migration gained even more prominence as Turkey became the country hosting the largest refugee population in the world. Nevertheless, Turkey's transformation from a transition country to a host country has not always been easy. Over the years, with the lack of effective policies in the face of the rising refugee and migrant population, a crisis atmosphere has come into existence, with the effect of increasing opposition, discrimination and hate speech in Turkish society.

Considering its fundamental function as a primary source of information, the media has also played a critical role in the formation of this anti-refugee and migrant perspective among the local population. In the context of Turkey, it is well-known that the media landscape is under the influence of increasing political polarization in the country; thus, the reporting of migration is also impacted by this current climate. Therefore, the representation of refugees and migrants in migration reporting embodies biased discourses that form a basis for the development of disinformation and discrimination in many various aspects. However, the impact of these discourses has not, and does not, only stay limited to the formation of public perception. Over the last years, Turkey has experienced many incidents in which the prominent anti-refugee and migrant discourse in the media has triggered hate attacks, lynch attempts, and violent uprisings targeting refugees and migrants in various regions.

For this reason, we believe that examination of the main discourses in migration reporting is a key to understanding the rising anti-refugee and migrant statements at the societal level in Turkey. Hence, this research aims to provide a general framework illustrating the main representation trends in the reporting of migration-related topics by various media organizations in Turkey.



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



## MULTILAYERED MEDIA CONTENT MONITORING

As the first step of monitoring, a special keyword list (see Appendix 1) has been developed to detect the specific representation trends adopted by media organizations during the reporting of migration-related topics. Since MMA is a civil society organization conducting daily monitoring of migration reporting by diverse mediums in the Turkish media landscape, the institutional monitoring database of the organization has been used as the main reference source.

Given that this research aims to provide a general framework illustrating the main representation trends in migration reporting by Turkish media organizations, a specific methodology has been developed to serve this purpose. Firstly, a timeline of major occurrences in the context of migration has been formed. In line with this timeline, a unique monitoring framework combining quantitative and qualitative media content analysis methods has been designed and implemented as follows:





Under this approach, a quantitative analysis has been conducted on all collected media content in the database up to the present. As a result of this analysis, the frequently used words and phrases to represent refugees and migrants in media content (such as ethnic definitions, adjectives, phrases, lexical expressions and topics) have been detected. Subsequently, an exhaustive keyword list has been formed with these results.

In the second step of monitoring, the keyword list has been applied via detailed web searches based on the timeline of major occurrences. During these web searches, each word or phrase in the keyword list has been searched via Google by applying specific time filters based on the dates in the timeline of major occurrences. Subsequently, the listed results under the news section have been examined and suitable content has been selected and added to the research sample. During the monitoring process, approximately 200 pieces of news content have been monitored and 77 of these have been included in the research sampling.





## DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA CONTENTS

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During the discourse analysis of the monitored news content, a combined discourse analysis method was also preferred considering that the aim of the report is to provide a general framework on the topic of research. For this, the methods mentioned below have been implemented with regard to the collected sample and the results are reported under descriptive titles as prominent representation trends of refugees and migrants in the migration reporting by Turkish media organizations:

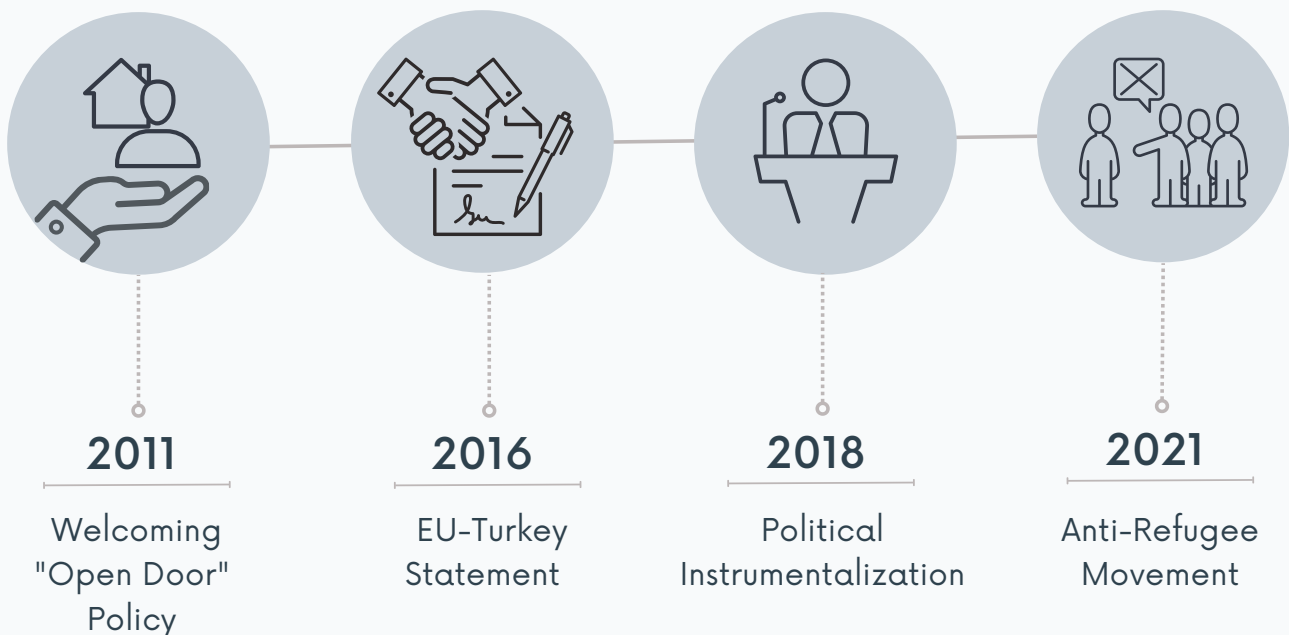
*Thematic analysis of the media content:* by implementing the thematic analysis method, the main themes (e.g. crime, economic crisis, demographic threat, border security, etc.) and their usage in the collected news content have been coded and reported under each descriptive title.

*Lexical analysis of the media content:* by implementing the overlexicalisation method within the framework of critical discourse analysis, the frequently used combination of words and phrases to describe refugees and migrants (e.g. illegal, unauthorized, irregular, criminal, perverted, Syrian, Afghan, African, etc.) and the context of their usage in the collected media content have been coded and reported under each descriptive title.

*Conceptual analysis of the media content:* by implementing the ideological square method within the framework of critical discourse analysis, we examined how the subjects (e.g. refugees/migrants, local citizens, police, doctors, other public officials, etc.) are positioned in the discourse of the news content (e.g. good/bad, criminal/victim, etc.) with the adaption of certain biases (e.g. generalization, manipulation, wilful targeting and marginalization). The outcomes of this analysis have been reported under each descriptive title.

# THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON MIGRATION IN TURKEY

Since 2011, following the Syrian civil war, Turkey has become the country in the world with the highest number of refugees and migrants. In the last couple of years, Turkey has experienced a crisis atmosphere due to increasing opposition, discrimination and hate speech caused by the lack of effective policies in the face of this rising refugee population. In order to understand this atmosphere, it is necessary to look at the political discourse on migration, which has been passing through changes with different dynamics in the last 11 years. In this study, the public and political context of migration will be examined under four phases, which are also influential in the construction of media discourse on migration.





## The beginning of the Syrian Civil war and Turkey's open door policy

After the protests, and their violent crackdown by the Syrian regime, started in Syria in 2011, quickly transforming into a civil war, Syrians started to flee their country. Since Syria is Turkey's longest bordering neighbour, both authorities and the public had expected that refugees would come to Turkey from the very beginning. Priorly, the governmental authorities had also made statements about the preparations for the incoming refugees. After 3,000 Syrians entered Turkey on 23 April 2011, news began to appear in the media reporting that one million refugees are expected to come. Subsequently, Turkey officially launched the "open door" policy by saying that the border for those coming from Syria would be open. In the following months, the primary route of Syrians continued to be towards Turkey and then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that the incoming Syrians are "**our guests**", and that Turkey would not have a problem with the Syrian people, so the open door policy would continue. However, the guest discourse created an expectation in Turkish society that those refugees would stay only temporarily and eventually leave. In this context, discrimination and hate speech was not on the agenda much in the first period of migration compared to today.

Given Turkey declared that it would only grant refugee status to people migrating from European countries in the 1951 Geneva Convention, Syrian refugees were not provided with official refugee status by Turkey during this period. Therefore, Turkey became the transit country where most of the incoming Syrians would attempt to cross the western border to European countries. The open border policy implemented by Turkey on the Syrian border was also applied to its western sea and land borders, which were held open for irregular crossings. In 2015, in particular, with more than one million people reaching the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea and moving further to other EU Member States, Turkey became an even more frequented migration route. Refugees from various countries, such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Somalia, also started to cross from Turkey to the EU border. With the dramatically increasing number of refugees passing into Europe, especially after 2015, the European Union decided to follow a different strategy with Turkey to stop the migration flow and came up with the EU-Turkey Statement.





## **EU-Turkey Statement from 18 March 2016 and the situation of refugees in Turkey**

After the statement, the EU promised to give Turkey a six billion euro support package and, in return, demanded that Turkey would stop refugees from crossing its western border into the EU. Turkey's attempts to strengthen border security, as well as the active presence of the EU border security organization Frontex in the Aegean Sea, prevented refugees from being able to use the migration routes they had used in the past years.

With this statement, refugees who came to Turkey with the hope of crossing to Europe had to stay in Turkey. Although some still tried to move on, most of them faced the impossibility of transition and started to search for ways to survive in Turkey. Given that the *Temporary Protection Regulation* was expanded in 2014, Syrians were already legally entitled to temporary protection status and provided with the right of long-term residence in Turkey. Nevertheless, instead of following a policy focused on long-term integration, Turkey chose to only provide emergency services to refugees in basic areas such as health and education, with financial support from the EU. Although some services were provided in basic areas, a sufficient infrastructure could not be established for refugees to sustain their own lives in Turkey. Under these circumstances, refugees were pushed to create their living conditions themselves, especially in terms of housing and employment. With the statement and expanded temporary protection status, the general discourse emphasizing that “refugees are our guests and will leave one day” stopped being realistic in Turkish society. Refugees, who were forced to work illicitly, without equal pay and in insecure conditions, became the preferred workforce as cheap labourers. On the other side, the financial benefits provided by the European Union directly for refugees had turned into a reason for hatred on the pretext that the Turkish government helps refugees a lot while national poverty has been a problem for many years. In the face of all this, with neither the EU nor Turkey taking effective measures, discrimination and hate speech against refugees increased day by day, damaging the social harmony and the grounds for peaceful co-existence in the country.



## Instrumentalization of refugees and migrants in political discourses

Migration is now framed as one of Turkey's main “problems” due to the uncertainty of the government's policy towards refugees and migrants, the lack of coherent policy, and the European Union's indifference towards Turkey regarding refugees. President Erdoğan, who promised to keep the border closed into the European Union after the *EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement*, has used refugees and migrants as a political instrument against the EU, with the “opening the gates” threat whenever European institutions give Turkey a warning about human rights or when he gets stuck in domestic policy. In this context, refugees are seen as monolithic communities that could be sent to any place, whenever and however wanted. As one significant example, the Turkish government decided to open the land border to Greece in 2020, causing the flocking of many refugees to the border and resulting in a humanitarian crisis.

After the government used refugees as a political “instrument”, leaders of opposition parties and many leading political actors started to release discriminatory hate speech statements. In that period, a dramatic increase in the use of anti-refugee discourses as political arguments can be observed, especially after Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the leader of the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party, said in a video released in 2021 that he will send back Syrians to Syria within two years.

The leader of the Zafer Party, Ümit Özdağ, who has largely based his party policy on anti-refugee statements and has not yet gained large support from the public, also said that refugees and migrants undermine the rights of Turkish citizens and that they should be sent back, voluntarily or involuntarily, as soon as possible. His similar tweets are shared tens of thousands of times by social media users. The increase in support for Ümit Özdağ has started to normalize the perception among the general public that people can easily engage in hate speech, and even hate attacks, against refugees.



## The Current Situation

According to official statistics, Turkey hosts 3,622,486 Syrians and 29,256 refugees from different countries. These figures are estimated to be higher considering the people who are not registered by official institutions. Currently, Turkey is experiencing one of the biggest economic crises in its history, and those who claim that refugees have a significant role in it are in the majority. While the ruling AKP government does not take a clear stance towards migration, the opposition's approach of defining refugees and migrants as threats to the economy, demography and security fuels the anti-refugee perception in Turkish society.

Those who do not immediately demand the return of refugees while the war continues in Syria still favour refugees to return after the end of the conflict in their country. The view that Turkey cannot bear the “burden” of all “problematic” countries in the world has now become the dominant discourse, especially with the refugees from Afghanistan who came after the Taliban seizure of Afghanistan in 2021. In the public surveys, it is revealed that 82% of the people surveyed demand that Syrians should return to their own country. Although none of the parties has concrete plans for mass repatriation, the expectation in Turkish society is rising, especially given that the “guest-discourse” has been ongoing for 11 years now. Consequently, this creates a base for greater social chaos while refugees and migrants continue to stay, as they have built a life in Turkey and no longer wish to return.

Overall, refugees and migrants suffer the most from policies and dominant discourses in the current political sphere. Due to the excessive increase in discrimination and hate speech, which are also widespread in the media, many experience fear and insecurity during their daily lives in Turkey. As a result, the current climate of the country encourages refugees and migrants, especially those who are hesitant to build a future in Turkey, to try harder to find ways to migrate to EU countries.

# THE MEDIA STRUCTURE IN TURKEY



## Mainstream media

The mainstream media in Turkey has always experienced strong internal and external pressures due to monopolized ownership structures and increasing political interventions on the freedom of the press. In the current situation, the vast majority of the mainstream media (national newspapers, radio, and TV channels) are owned by cross-media groups which have monopolistic configurations in other sectors such as construction, energy, tourism, and finance. Due to the heavy involvement of these groups in public tenders and their mutual business interests with bureaucrats and political actors, pro-government and nationalist discourse has gained more power in the current mainstream media structure that which has resulted in selective coverage, censoring editorial pressures, unjust dismissals, and widespread self-censorship of journalists.



## Alternative (independent) media

In the last couple of years, the rapid reconfiguration of Turkey's mainstream media structure triggered a flourishing in the alternative media landscape. Subsequently, many new independent media organizations have been established which become prominent with their digital outreach. Moreover, many of the dissident media organizations have transferred to digital platforms, especially with the declining trust of the general audience in traditional media. Although this change in the media landscape has provided space for the representation of diverse views and rights-based perspectives, the alternative media sphere is also impacted by rising political polarization in the country which is demonstrated by politically motivated journalistic coverage and discourses in the news content.





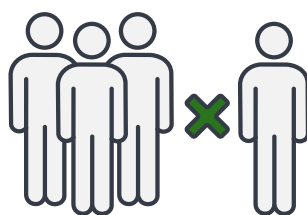
## Local media

Although it is overshadowed by the mainstream media, the local media in Turkey actually has a large outreach capacity since the majority of the print media in Turkey (91.3%) consists of media outlets operating locally. While most of the local media outlets perform as print newspapers, there is a significant number of TV and radio channels, and digital news platforms that provide local journalistic coverage. Nevertheless, under the increasing financial and political pressures, there has been a drastic decrease in the number of local media outlets due to bankruptcy or publication bans by the government while many others try to survive under these pressures. Similar to the mainstream and alternative media, the journalistic coverage of local media organizations is also influenced by their political affiliations, depending on the context in their region.



## Digital citizen media

In parallel with digitalization, the media landscape in Turkey has also gained new actors in the form of citizen journalists and digital media content producers. The increasing press censorship and silencing of leading media organizations especially during nationwide protests, has encouraged ordinary locals and activists to become citizen journalists. Benefitting from the relatively freer atmosphere and convenient instruments of digital media, many citizen journalists have gathered under initiatives and news platforms publishing via social media channels. Despite the contributions of this media diversification to freedom of expression and access to information, the unregulated and nonaccountable nature of citizen journalism platforms frequently feeds political bias and disinformation into social media platforms.



# REPRESENTATION OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS BY THE MEDIA IN TURKEY





## DEPRIVED AND IN NEED

The representation of refugees and migrants as deprived and in need is a widespread trend in migration reporting by the Turkish media, similar to reporting in many other countries. However, the differentiating characteristic of this representation in Turkey is its close connection with the political context. Especially during the first period of the Syrian crisis, when a large population of refugees started to seek asylum in Turkey from 2012, the mainstream political discourse of the Turkish government put emphasis on “the guest policy”. Within this discourse, refugees were defined as temporary “guests” who are in need of support and assistance from their trustworthy neighbour, Turkey. Thus, not only governmental authorities but also local citizens are positioned to provide this necessary support in line with the traditional hospitality codes of Turkishness as welcoming and kind hosts to whoever is in need. Given the circumstances of this first period, the “guest” discourse was successful in creating a positive and considerate perspective among society for incoming refugees and reflected a realistic depiction of the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Nevertheless, over time, the discourse emphasising the refugees’ need for support and the temporariness of asylum-seeking has conflicted with the long-term residence and changing living conditions of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

In the same era, the dominant discourse in migration reporting by Turkish media outlets reflected similar characteristics with the political discourse. The monitoring results show that the majority of the news content focused on the vulnerable state and poor living conditions of Syrian refugees. In this news content, refugees were mainly portrayed as “miserable”, “deprived”, “poor”, “homeless” and “starving” people. Especially in the news examples published between 2012–2016, it was frequently observed that the living conditions of refugees were defined in headlines as “heart-wrenching” “drama” and the “misery” of Syrian families. While such news was mainly based on interviews with selected refugees at their place of residence, the included photographs in the news highlighted the suffering of Syrian families, specifically children, and exposed the poor living conditions in their homes.

## DEPRIVED AND IN NEED

Although the content in the news reflects the common challenges of Syrian refugees during their residence in Turkey, the over-sensationalization, dramatization and generalization of these challenges in the news discourse hinder the realistic representation of the diverse refugee population and their different living standards. The mass production of such content forms a stereotype reducing refugees to individuals who are generally uneducated, members of a low economic class and incapable of sustaining a normal living like local citizens. Therefore, in the eye of the audience, this stereotype normalizes the refugees' lack of basic needs and legitimizes their “underdog” position in society. For this reason, the generalization of the “deprived and in need” stereotype in mainstream news builds a base for systematic discrimination and the exclusion of refugees as “the others”, as well as discouraging the perception of refugees as current and active members of public life in Turkey.

### Kilis'te sefalet

SINIRDAKİ HAYATLAR-1 / Fehim Genç - Fotoğraflar: Bünyamin Aygün

25.10.2012 - 02:30 | Son Güncellenme: 25.10.2012 - 02:30



**İnşaatlarda kalıyorlar**  
Suriye'den gelenler inşaatlarda hayatta kalma mücadelesi veriyor.  
Bir kilim, bir döşek bulanlar kendini şanslı hissediyor. Bazılarıysa sıvası yapılmamış, kapısı olmadığı için çarşaf asılarak kapatılmış, elektriksiz, susuz yerlerde barınmaya çalışıyor.

“  
The misery  
in Kilis

2012  
”



## DEPRIVED AND IN NEED

### Soğuklar en çok onları vurdu



*The cold hit them the most*

2013

27.06.2016 00:02:19 MARDİN

### Metruk evde yaşayan Suriyeli ailenin dramı



*The drama of Syrian family living in a derelict house*

2016



## CRIMINALS

The representation of refugees and migrants as criminals stands out as a prominent trend in migration reporting by Turkish media organizations. Along with the increasing number of refugees and migrants who sustain long-term residency in Turkey, conflicts between local citizens and the refugee and migrant communities have started to increase. Especially after 2019, monitoring results show that criminal incidents involving refugees and migrants have started to become extensive news topics in the context of migration reporting.

The common characteristic in the monitored news is the generalization and attribution of illegal activities to all members of refugee and migrant communities. By the frequent usage of phrases addressing race and ethnic identity (such as “Syrians”, “Afghans”, “Arabs” and “Africans”) in the headlines, the crimes or illegal activities committed by certain individuals are reflected as collective actions involving all the community members. This tendency towards criminalization in news discourses also shows itself through terminology used for criminal acts or the subjects of the crimes, such as “crime machines”, “perverts”, “Syrian/Afghan terror”, ferocity” or “horror”. Other patterns observed in the monitored examples were limited reporting of background information and details of the incidents or lack of fact-checking and verification by the related actors and public authorities. In this context, discourse in the news content frequently tended to frame refugees and migrants as convicted criminals, regardless of ongoing legal investigations or imposed sanctions related to reported incidents. Consequently, this significant tendency for ethnic profiling and general attribution of illegal activities leads to the labelling of refugee and migrant communities as criminal groups dangerous to public safety by triggering widespread discrimination, bias and distrust towards refugees and migrants.



## CRIMINALS

### Misafirler (!) suç makinesi gibi

Ülkelerindeki iç savaştan dolayı Türkiye'ye sığınan mülteciler suç makinesi çıktı.



ALİ EKBER ERTÜRK

YAYINLANMA: 12:45 - 15 Mayıs 2016 | GÜNCELLENME: 12:46 - 15 Mayıs 2016



Aa



The guests (!)  
are like  
crime machines

2016



Syrian terror  
in the heart of  
Istanbul

2018



The Afghan perverts  
on duty again

2020



## VICTIMS

Similar to criminalization, victimization is another common trend in the migration reporting of Turkey. The examination of monitored content indicates that refugees and migrants become newsworthy in Turkey's media landscape whether they are the criminals or the victims in an incident. This dynamic is specifically demonstrated in the reporting of irregular border crossings or crimes committed against refugees and migrants.

In the reporting of irregular border crossings, the majority of the monitored content put a specific emphasis on the number of lost lives and stories of the most vulnerable, which are women and children. The dominant discourse in the news defined the incidents as “tragedy” or “upsetting”, “bitter”, “heart wrenching”, “blood-chilling” and “disaster” using the graphic portrayal of the details. In many examples, it was observed that this over-sensationalization and dramatization of the incidents overshadowed the significance of irregular crossings and standardized the mortality of refugees and migrants. On the other hand, the mass portrayal of refugees and migrants solely related to irregular border crossings also gets ahead of their realistic representation in the media landscape as current residents of the local community in Turkey.

### Cesedi kıyıya vuran çocuğun acı hikayesi



Giriş: 03.09.2015 - 11:02  
Güncelleme: 03.09.2015 - 17:48

2 kardeş 50 metre ara ile kıyıya vurdu



*The heart wrenching story of the child whose corpse came ashore*

2015





## VICTIMS

### Akdeniz'de göçmen dramı: Hayatta kalmak için birbirlerini ezdiler

Güncelleme Tarihi: Mayıs 06, 2015 09:49



*The migrant drama  
in the Mediterranean:  
they stomp on each  
other to survive*

2015

In the reporting of crimes committed against refugees and migrants, similar tendencies are also prominent. The majority of the monitored content covered the sexual harassment and murders of refugee women and children. It attracts attention that the discourse of the news provided explicit descriptions of the violence and emphasized the identifiable information about the attacked individuals, such as age, gender, ethnicity, place of residence, civil status and personal pictures. In this context, the portrayal of refugee women and children as unpreventable victims prevails in the media coverage and forms a stereotype of them being the most vulnerable. While over-sensationalization and dramatization of the incidents indirectly normalize the violence and human rights violations, the objectifying victimization in the news discourse prevents the representation of refugee women and children as human beings sustaining lives in Turkey.



## VICTIMS

### Muhtardan kan donduran ifadeler



**SURİYELİ ÇOCUKLARI  
DEFALARCA BURAYA  
GETİRİP...**

13:41

24 Ağustos 2016

**Gebze'de 13 yaşındaki Suriyeli çocuğa  
tecavüz iddiası**

“

*The allegation about  
a 13-years-old  
Syrian child that has  
been raped at Gebze*

2016

”

### Suriyeli hamile kadına tecavüz edildi, başı taşla ezilerek oğluyla beraber öldürüldü

07/07/2017 08:28



“

*A pregnant Syrian woman  
has been raped and killed,  
with her son by her trampled  
on with a rock*

2017

”

### Suriyeli kadın elleri kelepçelenip, boğazı kesilerek öldürüldü



“

*A Syrian woman  
in handcuffs  
has been killed by the  
slice of her throat*

2021

”



## HEROES & ROLE MODELS

As opposed to widespread negative stereotypes, “the hero and role model” frame occasionally comes to the forefront as a positive portrayal in the journalistic coverage of refugees and migrants in Turkey. In this portrayal, refugees with diverse profiles (e.g. athletes, doctors, young students, factory workers, civil society volunteers, etc.) are highlighted by their outstanding contributions to Turkish society. The discourse in the news mainly defines these individuals as “heroes”, “savers” and “ideal examples”, while their contributions are evaluated as a “duty of loyalty/redemption”, “paying back the debt” or “returning the favour of Turkey”. In this perspective, these contributions are justified as the compulsory acts and responsibilities of refugees and migrants in return for the provided support and residential rights by the Turkish government. Despite its positive attribution, this idealised stereotype in media discourse imposes specific social roles and behavioural codes expected from refugees and migrants by redefining the “right to seek asylum” as a privilege or favour provided by the legal authorities.

### Vefa nöbeti! Suriyeli doktorlar Gaziantep'te sahaya indi!



*The duty of redemption:  
Syrian doctors support  
field checks for coronavirus  
in Gaziantep*

2020



## HEROES & ROLE MODELS

### Suriyeli Kahraman'a Vatandaşlık Verilecek



**Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın vatandaşlık verileceğini açıkladığı Suriyeli Mahmut duygularını anlattı**

**'Bunu yaparken ödül almayı düşünmedim'**

The Syrian hero will acquire citizenship

2020

### Türkiye adına yarışarak vefa borcunu ödemek istiyor

Suriye'de devam eden iç savaş nedeniyle hayalini kurduğu millî formayı giyme şansını bulamadan Türkiye'ye sığınan vücut geliştirme sporcusu Mehir Recep, ay-yıldızlı formayla hayalini gerçeğe dönüştürmek istiyor.

Müslüm Eteği | 08.02.2019



He wants to pay loyalty debt by competing for Turkey

2019



## ECONOMIC THREATS

The representation of refugees and migrants as a threat to the country's economic prosperity is one of the most common discourses encountered in the media landscape. The basis of the discourse has become more widespread with the effect of the increasing economic crisis, and is based on the claim that the participation of refugees and immigrants in the labour force hinders the employment opportunities of local citizens. Although the origin of the discourse cannot be detected exactly, it is observed that the discourse has been promoted by many different media organizations since 2013. This was especially the case in 2016, when the World Bank report results were portrayed as "10 Syrians cause 6 Turkish citizens to be unemployed" which played a critical role in the spread of the discourse. From this point on, the instrumentalization of similar research results, official statistics and expert opinions as sources legitimizing the discourse has continued systematically in published news content. Nevertheless, reporting of these sources generally includes selective distortion and falsification that consequently creates disinformation regarding the negative impact of refugees and migrants on Turkey's economy. Therefore, by emphasising the "refugees stealing our jobs" discourse, the media generally positions refugees and migrants as the root cause of the increasing unemployment and economic crisis in Turkey.

### 10 Suriyeli 6 Türk vatandaşını işsiz bırakıyor!



10 Syrians cause  
6 Turkish citizens  
to be unemployed

2016



## ECONOMIC THREATS

Suriyeli işi kaptı, #direnAntep



“ Syrians took the jobs,  
#resistAntep  
2013 ”

Suriyeli işçiler tekstili de vurdu



“ Syrian workers also hit  
the textile industry  
2020 ”

**HER 10 SURİYELİ  
6 TÜRK'Ü İŞSİZ BIRAKTI!**  
**KALABALIK OLDUKLARI ŞEHİRLERDE  
HAYAT PAHALILIĞI DAHA YÜKSEK!**

“ Research on Syrians:  
unemployment,  
inflation and cost of  
living are higher in  
the cities they are  
most situated  
2021 ”



## DEMOGRAPHIC SECURITY THREAT

The representation of refugees and migrants as a demographic security threat in monitored news content is mainly associated with irregular border crossings and increasing refugee and migrant populations in various regions. In the vast majority of the content reporting irregular border crossings, it was observed that the numbers of incoming migrants were defined as “hundreds” and “thousands”, which are unclear and not based on confirmed sources. While discourse in the content emphasized the “threat” in border security through exaggerated expressions, such as “refugees flooding” or “they are coming in droves”, various images and videos recorded during border crossings or interviews with local citizens were included as sources verifying mentioned numbers. Likewise, in the prominent discourse, irregular border crossings were frequently described as “occupation”, in which incoming migrants were identified with various adjectives like “illegal”, “fugitive” and “occupier”. Consequently, these framings, which lead to the perception that there is a deliberate attack on the security of the country, cause a high level of manipulation and targeting against refugees and migrants. Similarly, the content reporting the refugee and migrant populations in various regions generally adopts the “invasion” discourse. In many monitored examples, the refugee and migrant population in certain regions, or their usage of public spaces (e.g. hospitals, public transportation vehicles, parks, beaches, etc.) were described in terms such as “Syrians/Afghans/Arabs/Africans”, “invaded”, “raided” or “captured”. By reinforcing the perception that the demographic structure of the country is under threat, these terms frame the residence of refugees and migrants, or their inclusion into society, as a detrimental development for Turkey.



## DEMOGRAPHIC SECURITY THREAT



“ They are coming in droves: Arab invasion in Black Sea Region

2019 ”



“ Thousands of Afghans head over to Turkey: they are coming in droves like an army

2022 ”



“ Syrians captured Taksim

2019 ”

Given its fundamental function as a main source of information, the media plays a critical role in the formation of socio-political contexts in society. As such, the media representation of refugees and migrants defines how they are perceived by members of society. In the context of Turkey, it is well-known that the media landscape is under the influence of increasing political polarization in the country; thus, the reporting of migration is also impacted by this current climate. As the results of this study demonstrate, the representation of refugees and migrants in migration reporting embodies biased and discriminative discourses that form a basis for the development of disinformation in many various aspects. However, the impact of these discourses have not, and do not, only stay limited to the formation of public perception. Over the last years, Turkey has experienced many incidents\* in which the prominent anti-refugee and migrant discourse in the media has triggered hate attacks, lynch attempts and violent uprisings targeting refugees and migrants in various regions. Therefore, all these current developments highlight the urgent need for an objective, fact-based, multi-vocal, inclusive and rights-based media perspective in the context of migration.

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\*The lynch attacks to Somalian restaurants and shops in Ankara, following the news of Sözcü Newspaper  
(<https://haber.sol.org.tr/haber/ankarada-somalililere-saldiri-30405>)

\*Hate attack to old Syrian woman in Gaziantep related with the “Syrian organ mafia kidnapping children” allegations spread by news in media  
<https://tevit.org/dosya-buyutec-korkulari-korukleyen-cocuk-kaciran-organ-mafyasi-iddialarinin-asli-ne>

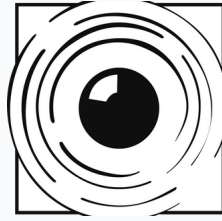
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# RECOMMENDATIONS

For the formation of this perspective, we strongly believe that the inclusion of refugees and migrants into media content production as active and competent decision-makers is an unequivocal necessity. Through this inclusion, the provision of first-hand information and experiences by refugees and migrants can counteract the widespread disinformation, as well as the one-sided, discriminative stereotypes, while opening a space for the representation of the multifaceted and diverse reality of migration. Nevertheless, ensuring inclusion and diversity is not the only component for the formation of a rights-based media perspective in Turkey. In particular, the lack of sectoral regulations and checking mechanisms in the context of migration reporting allows disinformation and hate speech to flourish in the media landscape. To remedy this in the field of migration reporting, sectoral supervisory committees, regulatory codes and ethics, and complaint and support mechanisms should be introduced to prevent such violations by media content producers. Moreover, given it is a newly developing area of expertise in journalism, the number of reporters who specialize in the rights-based coverage of migration remains limited. This deficiency is also related to the absence of informative guidelines, academic curriculums and vocational training in the field of media and communication. In order to increase the number of qualified media experts in migration reporting, a cooperative approach by academic institutions, journalistic associations and unions, and civil society organizations in the field of media and communication should be adopted to develop the necessary literature and the empowerment of rights-based specialization in journalism.





# Media and Migration Association

The Media and Migration Association (MMA) was founded with the aim of developing a more objective, pluralist, inclusive, participatory and rights-based media perspective in the context of migration. In line with this perspective, MMA conducts monitoring and research projects, awareness campaigns and trainings by building interdisciplinary collaborations to support media content producers and their representation in every sphere of the media.

## RESEARCH TEAM

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## APPENDIX: KEYWORD LIST

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Akdeniz’de mülteci / göçmen faciası, dramı, can pazarı  
(Refugee/migrant tragedy, drama, disaster in the Mediterranean sea)

Ege’de mülteci/göçmen faciası, dramı, can pazarı  
(Refugee/migrant tragedy, drama, disaster in the Aegean sea)

Mülteci / göçmen teknesi, botu battı  
(Refugee/migrant boat, ship sinking, sank)

Mülteci/ Göçmen/ Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı acı hikaye  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani bitter, heartbreaking, devastating story)

Mülteci/ Göçmen/ Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı dramı  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani drama)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı ailenin dramı  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani family drama)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı fakirlik  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani poverty)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı sefalet  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani misery)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı yoksul  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani poor)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı muhtaç  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani deprived)

Mülteci / Göçmen Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı ekonomik kriz  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani economic crisis)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan/ Afrikalı / Pakistanlı işsizlik  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani unemployment)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı İşsizlik Arttı  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani increasing unemployment)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı işsizliğe neden oluyor  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani caused unemployment)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı işi çalıyor  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani stealing jobs)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı işi elinden aldı  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani takes jobs away)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı suç  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani crime)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı suçlu  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani criminal)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı saldırgan  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani attacker)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı sapık  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani pervert)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı taciz  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani sexual assault)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı tecavüz  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani rape)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / tehdit  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani threat)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı kavga  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani fight)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı saldırı  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani assault, attack)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı dehşet  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani terror)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı vahşet  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani ferocity)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı cinayet  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani murder)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı öldürdü  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani killing, killed,murdered)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı öldürüldü  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani being killed,murdered)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı katledildi  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani being killed,murdered)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı ele geçirdi yakalandı  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani being slaughtered)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı vefa borcu  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani redemption duty)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı kahraman  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani hero)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı istila  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani invasion)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı demografik, güvenlik, tehdit  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani demographic,security,threat)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı işgal etti  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani invaded)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı sınırı geçti  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani passing,passed the border)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı ele geçirdi  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani captured)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı sınırda yakalandı  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani arrested at the border)

Mülteci/ Göçmen / Suriyeli / Afgan / Afrikalı / Pakistanlı demografi, demografiyi bozuyor  
(Refugee/Migrant/Syrian/Afghan/African/Pakistani demography, ruining the demography)

## **Imprint**

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