State Fragility and Humanitarian Crisis in Syria

Ewelie, C. Justice, Omenihu C. Nwaorgu

Department of Political and Administrative Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, P.M.B 5323 Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract: **The paper examined state fragility and humanitarian crisis in Syria. The main thesis of the paper is that the more the fragility of the Syrian state, given some extraneous and endogenous factors fuelling the humanitarian crisis in Syria. The paper relied on secondary sources of data and for the purpose of clarity and deeper understanding of the subject matter adopted the Dependency theory as its framework of analysis. One of the assumptions of the dependency theory is that events in one country is conditioned by the actions or inactions of a country in a relationship of unequal exchange. The paper observed that the crescendo of humanitarian crisis in Syria is a result of the adverse politics of state fragility as reinforced by negative external and internal objective conditions. It is recommended in the paper, inter alia, that democratic values should be upheld and good governance should be a sundry principle for the overall interest of Syrians.**

Keywords: **Interest, conflict, dependency, democratic, political.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The primacy of the state in a civilised society cannot be over-emphasised. Aside from being a precipice of the Aristotelian teleology, the state performs some basic functions such as protection of lives and property, harmonisation of the ever-conflicting interests of man, ensuring that the state's resources are fairly and evenly distributed, and the promotion of the welfare of the people. The ultimate effect of the efficacy of the state in performing the above basic functions is that it pulls society out of the Hobbesian state of nature and reorders society for a more salubrious state-society relation which can guarantee a just, peaceful and egalitarian society for self and collective actualisations of the people. However, it appears that the 'hands of some modern states like Syria are tied', and are therefore, incapacitated within the purview of the state-centric prism and force of reinventing society for national development.

An implication of the above is that the Syrian state is fragile. It should be noted that state fragility and weakness are often used interchangeably (Manuel, 2017). According to the World Bank (2009), a state is fragile if it: (a) is eligible for assistance (i.e., a grant) from the International Development Association (IDA); (b) has had a UN peacekeeping mission in the last three years, and (c) has received a 'governance' score of less than 3.2 (as per the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) index of the World Bank). It also explained that a more cohesive definition of the fragile state might also note a state's growing inability to maintain a monopoly on force in its declared territory. While a fragile state might still occasionally exercise military authority or sovereignty over its declared territory, its claim grows weaker as the logistical mechanisms through which it exercises power grows weaker.

The above conditions hold true in Syria as the state has been engulfed in a protracted and seemingly perennial political imbroglio which has degenerated to a civil war. The anti-democratic and reactionary forces in Syria, coupled with the imperialistic and ravenous power politics of some superpowers seem to have rendered the Syrian state fragile. State fragility in Syria, therefore, has inevitably translated to escalating humanitarian crisis. For instance, it has been reported that in the 10 years of the Syrian civil war, the Syrian refugee crisis remains the world's largest refugee and displacement crisis of our time. Since the Syrian civil war began March 15, 2011, families have suffered under brutal conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands of people, torn the nation apart, and set back the standard of living by decades. About 6.6 million Syrians are refugees, and another 6.2 million people are displaced within Syria. Nearly 11.1 million people in Syria need humanitarian assistance, and about half of the people affected by the Syrian refugee crisis are children (World Vision, 2021). In addition to these, healthcare centres and hospitals, schools, utilities, and water and sanitation systems are damaged or destroyed. Historic landmarks and once-busy marketplaces have been reduced to rubble. War severed the social and business ties that bound neighbours to their community. It is against this backdrop that the paper takes a critical look at state fragility and humanitarian crisis in Syria.

Conceptual Clarification

The two major concepts used in this study are state fragility and humanitarian crisis. As noted earlier, state fragility and state weakness are often used interchangeably. Rotberg (2003, p.3):

> weak states include a broad continuum of states that are: inherently weak because of geographical, physical, or fundamental economic constraints; basically strong, but temporarily or situationally weak because of internal antagonisms, management flaws, greed, despotism, or external attacks; and a mixture of the two…Urban crime rates tend to be higher and increasing. In weak states, the ability to provide adequate measures of other political goods is diminished or diminishing. Physical infrastructural networks have deteriorated. Schools and hospitals show signs of neglect, particularly outside the main cities… Weak states usually honor rule of law

precepts in the breach. They harass civil society. Weak states are often ruled by despots, elected or not.

To Albertson and Moran (2017), fragile states fail to fully meet key needs of their citizens. The shortcomings are termed gaps, with three core gaps: security gap, capacity gap, and legitimacy gap. The security gap means the state does not provide adequate protection to its citizens; the capacity gap means the state does not fully provide adequate services, while the legitimacy gap indicates that the citizens do not fully accept the authority of the government. These three core gaps define state fragility, as used in the paper. Every fragile state is inevitably susceptible to crisis. In the case of Syria, the decade-plus civil war is yet to end.

Humanitarian crisis, on the other hand, refers to one or a combination of events which threatens the safety, health, and even well-being of a group of people. Humanitarian crisis can be natural (tsunami, earthquakes, epidemics, for instance), or man-made (for example, terrorist attacks, war). Under such circumstances, access to the basic needs of life is jeopardized.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is anchored on Dependency Theory. This theory can be traced to the work of Raul Prebisch in the late 1950s. The theory was further popularised by scholars like Sunkel (1969), dos Santos (1971), Andre-Gunder (1972), among others. The major proposition of this theory is that the economic development of the state, especially those in the global south, are tied to external forces. This historical conditioning not only shapes the structure of the global economy, but also tends to favour some states to the detriment of others.

The self-augmenting, exploitative and expansionist nature of capital as a factor of production and by extension, capitalism as a mode of production has logically exported European capitalism to other parts of the world, particularly the third world social formations. The different phases of capitalism such as slave trade, the so-called legitimate trade, colonial, neo-colonialism and globalisation are phases of unequal exchange and imperialism. Lenin in one of his works, 'Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Capitalism', corroborated the exploitative and expansionary nature of capitalism. Thus, the incorporation or integration of the third world social formation into the international capitalist division of labour via imperialistic manipulation and exploitation has impoverished the third social world formation through massive unfettered capital flight. The implication is that the economy of the Third World social formation becomes dependent on the economy of imperialistic developed countries of the world. Ntete-Nna (2002) noted that dependency is conceived basically as a conditioning relationship between two or more economies in which one determines what obtains in the other, normally to its own benefit. Ntete-Nna (2004) also noted that, in this regard, dependent economy is one that is not in control of its affairs in

an interdependent relationship and so most often loses out economically. We make haste to add that such a dependent economy, as a consequence, also loses out politically, culturally and socially.

Ray (2003) sees dependency as a process through which peripheral countries have been integrated as well as assimilated into the international capitalist system, and the way the former had experienced structural distortions in their domestic societies because of such assimilation and penetration. In his view, Igwe (2005) avers that dependency is a systematically subordinated status in relations with other states or actors, usually starting economically but with implications in other spheres of activity. In his words, Igwe (2005, pp.111-112) noted that:

> Dependency defines a situation in which the policy or life of a state and its citizens are exploitatively determined by an outside power or powers, usually through the simultaneous application of unequal socioeconomic, political and cultural measures, and it often occurs either as a successor policy to past unequal (e.g. colonial) ties, or through the acquiescence of the local agents of the foreign power who for various reasons become willing tools of such a policy.

Igwe (2005) also noted that dependency means that developments (economic, political, socio-cultural, scientific etc.) in the former are helplessly contingent upon, even directly controlled by those in the latter, who have adequate internally self-sustaining mechanisms for development. Ibaba (2006) corroborated the above facts on dependency when he posited that dependency refers to a situation where one or several economies depend on another, and to that extent, the development of the dependent economy is conditioned by the one it depends on.

The relevance of the dependency theory on this subject-matter stems from systemic nature of the globe, the uneven endowment of resources coupled with the unbridled quest of states to protect their national interests as encapsulated in their foreign policies. Power, which is defined as that ability of a state to influence the course of events to her favour in the international system, is a veritable instrument of coercion, manipulation, exploitation, subjugation and undue influence. Thus, there is the need for balance of power as the international system is volatile. Power is a product of economic resources transformed into scientific, technological, political and military developments. The higher the power quotient of a state, given the level of its developments, the more powerful it becomes to favourably influence events in the global system. Given the uneven endowment and to 'even' what is uneven, states look out for predatory targets for manipulation, exploitation, and control, and this is the taproot of the realist power politics, Russia, U.S.A and their allies are unnecessarily fuelling the crisis in Syria because these have attained self-system level of development and can afford to

influence economic, political, scientific, military and other developments in Syria in a somewhat master-servant relationship.

A combination of the over-bearing influence of these external actors, weak economic base and authoritarian political leadership contributed to the present status of Syria as a fragile state. State fragility betrays a position of weakness. This weakness is what has translated into the inability of the state to protect human rights. Rather, the state appears to have become one that preys on its own citizens. Seen from such a scenario, the precarious status of human rights in Syria can be better understood.

Understanding the Politics of State Fragility in Syria

It is expedient at this moment to understand what a state ideally is. The state in simple terms, is a political organisation conferred with the authority to make laws, decision, formulate public policies and implement same in order to facilitate a mutually beneficial, peaceful, egalitarian and conducive society. For the internal democratic theory, the state is treated as a product of the will of society, an instrument of "conflict-resolution" and of securing the common interest. It authorizes society to constitute a government by free choice, and demands that the government should be responsible to the people, and should work with continuous consent of the people (Guaba, 1981). However, the Marxist theory of the state attributes any imperfection of government to the state itself. According to the Marxist theory of the state, so long as society is divided into dominant and dependent classes, any government is bound to serve as an instrument of the dominant class. Thus, Marxist theory of state regards the State itself as an instrument of class exploitation, and advocates transformation, and ultimate withering away of the state in order to restore 'authority' to a classless society (Guaba, 1981).

In his view, Pierson (1996) observed that what is most characteristic of the modern state is not just the greater weight given to legal authority to the state's embodiment of abstract legal principles enforced through an impartial bureaucratic and judicial apparatus – but above all, to the idea that the state embodies and expresses the sovereign will of the people. The state, therefore, becomes a veritable instrument through which the potentials of the individuals can be achieved. Indeed, it guarantees "the greatest good for the greatest number". Whereas, it is not the focus of this paper to dwell on the theoretical and epistemological persuasions of the concept of state, politics finds expression through the state and democratisation process is a function of politics in a polity (Wonah, 2019).

The more developed politics becomes in terms of performing the basic functions via the state, the more democratised the state and the political system become (Wonah, 2019). At the root of these basic functions of a state is the fair and equitable distribution of scarce resources, and politics is basically about how scarce resources are distributed

(Wonah, 2004). To corroborate this fact, Easton in (Nwaorgu, 2004) defined politics as the authoritative allocation of values. In the other hand, Lasswell defined politics as who gets what, when and how. Having established the background for the understanding of state and politics, it is important to note that fragile state implies that the state is not efficacious in carrying out its basic functions and that politics as such is deformed and not in tandem with democratic values and tenets.

The implication, as noted by (Keller, 2016), is that "whereas the state had previously been considered nothing more than an epiphenomenon, an arena of political competition and conflict, it is now being widely viewed as managed by a self-interested class that act not only on behalf of the common good, but also for self-preservation, self-aggrandisement, and hegemonic power. Weak, dead or failed, as fragile states are often times called; means that the state cannot satisfactorily perform its basic functions, and this questions the necessity of the state. The state-society relation in a fragile state becomes alarmingly severed becoming more susceptible to neo-colonial manipulation and exploitation by the superpower. Indeed, a fragile state has no "leg' of its own, and accordingly Khan (2017) noted that within the realistic notion of anarchy as the central organising concept of the international relations, one would expect the 'weak and fragile states 'to be natural 'predatory targets' which will eventually be conquered or annexed by stronger states.

The end of Second World War (WW II) led to the creation of sovereignty regime which placed much premium on self-determination through decolonisation process. The expectation is that many states would govern themselves better and function as independent entities with the equality status in the comity of nations. However, in what may be considered as the irony of equality, many of the states are remarkably unequal and lack authority. In his words, Khan (2017, p.8) corroborated the above fact when he said that "the international system is now populated by many to borrow from Jackson (1990), 'quasi-states' with negative sovereignty. Such quasi-states enjoy legal equality in the international system but have deep empirical inequality lacking the capacity to support themselves without outside assistance, or to contribute to the international order. Under the twin pillars of self-determination and the sovereignty regime guaranteed by the international system, "state weakness" has ceased to be a threat to sovereignty as states no longer fear 'death'. Instead, it has become a reason for relying on international assistance and in some cases serves as an incentive for the ruling regime to consolidate its power survivability and self-aggrandisement instead of the development of a strong state-society relationship. Thus, the fragile states are both the creation and responsibility of an egalitarian and benevolent international system". The vituperations of capitalism and the attendant imperialistic tendencies have historically and logically led to dependent and fragile states as they are yet to extricate themselves from the lethal clutches of neo-colonial manipulation and exploitation. To underscore the above fact,

Khan (2017) noted that the emergence of weak and fragile states can also be explained as a by-product of the not-so-"benevolent" dynamics of global dominance by the European colonizers. Khan (2017) also noted that the 'episodic history' of the colonial and post-colonial era was a march of 'commodity frontiers' often by coercive forces, the post-colonial era can be characterised as a 'march for expanding market frontier' – both underpinned by their relationship with wealth accumulation".

However, it should be noted that the degree of fragility of post-colonial states depends upon the extent to which colonial practice trickled down through the structures and agencies of the new state and its ability to selectively absorb colonial practices (Khan, 2017). Countries that are prudent and capable of selective absorption, and can incorporate the viable colonial practices, will successfully close the state-society gap and move away from being an inorganic polity to form a more stable state. The impact of the external influences, manipulation and exploitation of the fragile states is that it devastates the economy of the fragile state and makes it a hot bed for conflict. Poverty therefore becomes an identity of a fragile state. According to Besley and Persson (2009), weak states tend to be hopelessly poor, unable to maintain basic economic functions and raise the revenue required to deliver basic services to their citizens. They are also often plagued by civil disorder or outright conflict. It is crystal-clear from the foregoing that fragile states are created by colonial and neo-colonial manipulation and exploitation and makes their economy poor and dependent which undermines their sovereignty and also fuels conflict.

Consequently, the fragile states are continuously tied to the apron string of their erstwhile colonial power or any other super power that may be rendering assistance. The assistance from the super power, given the dependency perspective is not sincerely for the democratisation and development of the fragile state but to further impoverish them and unduly influence domestic politics for their (Superpowers) advantage at the peril of the fragile state. From another perspective, the domestic politics which is characterised by bad politics of corruption, ethnicity, religious intolerance, marginalisation and the primitive accumulation mentality of the political elites who see the state and its apparatuses as a means of amassing wealth. Hence, ascendancy to power becomes a do-or-die affair and politics becomes a zero-sum game (Ake 1996). Bad politics is antithetical to democracy and therefore negates good governance which reinforces conflict and politics instability in fragile states.

The above condition approximates the politics of state fragility in Syria. It is important to know that Syria has chequered political history characterised by pernicious politics instability. Eze and Agema (2018) supported this view when they noted that shortly after independence from France in 1946; Syria has battled with unstable government with series of military coup which resulted in change of leadership and rendered the political system in Syria volatile and precarious. According to Human Right watch, Oct 2007;8-13 as cited in Eze and Agena (2018, p.23) noted that "the regime of Hafez al-Assad did not however go well with the opposition especially with the January, 1973 implementation of a new constitution that did not require the president of Syria to be a Muslim unlike other constitution prompting a fierce demonstration organized by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ulama. Hafez al-Assad was labelled the "enemy of Allah. The government survived series of armed revolts by members of the Muslim Brotherhood from 1976 until 1982".

Alisa (2013), Ayse (2014), and Manfreda (2017) as cited in Eze and Agena (2018) noted that antidemocratic factors like political repression, bad economy, corruption, state violence, minority rule among others are responsible for the political instability in Syria. Democracy demands that the component units in a polity should be given a sense of belonging by participating in making and implementing decisions that affect their lives, and ensuring the fair and equitable distribution of states scarce resources. Ayse (2014) in Eze and Agena (2018) observed that the Alawites who are the minority with only 12% of the Syrian population have been in power since 1971 to date from Hafez al-Assad to Bashir al-Assad and the majority ethnic groups have been frustrated hence the and war targeted at regime change.

From the external perspective, the influence of the Arab spring which is violent protest against bad governance, insensitivity to the plight of the citizenry and the continued stay in power of the governing elites within the Middle East Countries was a boost to the Syrian crisis. However, while the Arab spring was successful in Tunisia with the ouster of president El Albadine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and also the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) forces operation in Libya that led to the death of president Gaddafi, that of Syria was met with a brick wall as President Assad regime in Syria killed several protesters and many more imprisoned (Eze and Agena 2017). This position was underscored by Manfreda (2017) in Eze and Agena (2018) when he noted that the "Syrian uprising began in March 2011 when security forces of president Bashar Assad opened fire on and killed several pro-democracy protesters in the southern Syrian city of Deraa, fuelling the uprising throughout the country demanding Assad's resignation and an end to his authoritarian leadership. Remarkably, the crisis only hardened Assad's resolve to hold on to power, and by July 2011, the Syrian uprising had developed into a full-blown civil war. Also, from the external point of view, the involvement of Russia and United State in the Syria war with their allies rather than quell the war, continues to deepen the crisis. While Russia is backing the Assad regime, USA is backing the predominantly Sunni Arab opposition forces. The lesson here is that the positions of Russia and USA are reminiscent of the age-long Cold War era in pursuit of ideological supremacy and global hegemony.

Politics of State Fragility and Humanitarian Crisis in Syria

It is axiomatic that no crisis would bring good fortune. The crisis in Syria had or is still having untold hardship on the people of Syria. The human rights of the people are brazenly abused for instance, according to United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour (2016), the Assad government and its supporters reportedly continued to use indiscriminate and deadly force against civilians, conducting air and ground-based military assault on cities, residential areas, and civilian infrastructure. Attacks against schools, hospitals, mosques, churches, synagogues, water stations, bakeries, markets and houses were common throughout the country.

In April, UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan di Mustura estimated that the fighting had resulted in the deaths of more than 400,000 persons since 2011. The humanitarian situation reached severe levels (USA, 2016). As of December 2015, there were more, than 4.8 million Syrian refugees registered with the office of the UN High Commission for the Refugees (UNHCR) in neighbouring countries and 6.1 million internally displaced persons as at August. The government frequently blocked access to humanitarian assistance and removed items such as medical supplies from convoys headed to civilian areas, particularly areas held by opposition groups. More disturbing human right violation is the state's widespread disregard for the safety and well-being of its citizen. This manifested itself in the complete denial of citizens' ability to choose their government peacefully, a breakdown in law enforcement's ability to protect the majority of citizens from state and non-state violence. The government continued the use of torture and rape, including forceful conscription of children as weapon against the citizenry. Government authorities detained without access to fair trial tens of thousands of individuals, including those associated with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), human rights activists, journalists, relief workers, religious figures, and medical providers. Government authorities rigorously denied citizens the right to a fair public trial and the ability to exercise civil liberties and freedoms of expression, movement, peaceful assembly, and association. These and other human rights abuses exacerbated humanitarian crisis in Syria. Rather than protect the rights of citizens of Syria, the Syrian state has abused and is abusing the rights of the citizens, thereby plunging Syria into the 'Hobbesian state of nature'.

III. CONCLUSION

It is evident from above analysis that the Syrian state is fragile as it possesses the attributes of a fragile state. The fragility of Syrian state is mostly as a result of external imperialistic forces predicated on aggressive power politics for global dominance, and domestic politics characterised by bad politics which encumbers democracy. It is lucid that the humanitarian crisis in Syria is alarming and infringes on the rights of Syrians. It is a fact that no state or society can develop in a crisis situation. The fragility of Syria state has plunged Syrian into monumental conflict, leading to worsening humanitarian crisis.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need for Syrian political elites and indeed the entire Syrians to imbibe, demonstrate and strengthen a state centric attitude. The different component units should be given a sense of belonging and the people should be allowed to exercise their political sovereignty by deciding who their leader should be in a free, fair and credible election. Consequently, to the democratic disposition of Syria is the fact that Syria should adopt endogenous development paradigm that can spur economic activities and increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and which can extricate then from the shackles of a dependent economy. There should be institutional establishment supported by independent judiciary that can fight corruption. Economic independence of Syrian would help in mitigating the neo-colonial manipulation and exploitation. The superpowers should exercise restraint in their unbridled quest for global hegemony, and UN invoke the spirit of collective security especially when super powers are unnecessarily meddling into domestic affairs of development countries, most which are fragile. Russian and USA should be sanctioned by UN, otherwise, the relevance and integrity of UN as an international body for global peace and development are under serious threat. Economic independence and democratic consolidation should be the watch word of not only the political elites of Syria but also all Syrians.

REFERENCES

[1] Ake, C. (1996). *Democracy and development in Africa*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
[2] Alisa, W. (2013). Syrian civil war: What you need to know. (www.abcnwes.go.com 31 August).
[3] Albertson, A. & Moran, A. (2017). *Untangling the complexity of fragile states*. Truman Centre.
[4] Andre-Gunder, F. (1972). The development of underdevelopment. In James D. Cockcroft, Andre Gunder Frank & D. Johnson (eds.), *Dependence and underdevelopment*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, p. 3.
[5] Ayse, B. B. (2014). Alawite and the fate of Syria. In Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspectives, a Publication of History, Ohio State University, U.S.A.
[6] Besley & Persson (2009). *State capacity, conflict and development*. London: Stockholm University.
[7] Campbell-Saferworld, I. (2015). *Rising powers in fragile and conflict-affected states*. London: The British Academy, Carlton House Terrace.
[8] Dos Santos, T. (1970). The structure of dependence. *The American Economic Review, 60:2, pp 231-236.*
[9] Eze, R. C. & Agena, J. E. (2018). Super powers conspiracy and the unending civil war in Syria: An analysis. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 56*(1), pp. 20-28.
[10] Guaba, O. P. (1981). *An introduction to political theory*. New Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd.
[11] Ibaba, S. I. (2006). *Imperialism and dependency: The dilemma of the Third World in modernisation and development in Africa*. Port Harcourt: Shapee Publishers.
[12] Igwe, O. (2005). *Politics and globe dictionary*. Aba: Eagle Publishers.
[13] Keller, E. J. (2016). *The state in contemporary Africa: A critical assessment of theory*. Doha: Princepts Press.

[14] Khan, M. I. (2017). The fallacy of state fragility indices: Is there a 'fragility trap'? *IOASS Working Paper, 034*.

[15] Manuel, M. (2017). Getting better results from assistance to fragile states. *ODI Briefing Papers*.

[16] Manfreda, P. (2017). Top Reasons for the Uprising in Syria (www.thoughtzo.com 18 August).

[17] Ntete-Nna, N. J. (2004). An Introduction to Political Analysis. Owerri, Springfield Publishers Limited.

[18] Nwaorgu, O.C. (2002). *Dimensions of political analysis*. Port Harcourt: Ameltyst & Colleagues Publishers.

[19] Ray, S.N. (2003). *Modern comparative politics, approaches, methods and issues*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Limited.

[20] Roberts, A. (2015). *Fragile states: A concept with history*. The British Academy, 10-11, Carlton House Terrace, London.

[21] Rotberg, R.I. (2003). Failed states, collapsed states, weak states: Causes and indicators. *World Peace Foundation and Harvard University's Program on Intrastate Conflict on all aspects of State Failure*.

[22] Sunkel, O. (1969. National development policy and external dependence in Latin America. *The Journal of Development Studies, 6* (1), pp. 18-29.

[23] United States of America, Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour (2016). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*.

[24] Wonah, E.I. (2019). Students' union and politics in Nigeria. *Quest Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science, 7* (7), pp 28-32.

[25] World Bank (2009). *Poverty analysis*. The World Bank.

[26] World Vision (2021). Syrian refugee crisis: Facts, FAQs, and how to help. *https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/syrian-refugee-crisis-facts#:~:text=Now%20in%20its%2011th%20year,displacement%20crisis%20of%20our%20time.&text=About%206.6%20million%20Syrians%20are,in%20Syria%20need%20humanitarian%20assistance*.