

# The United Nations and the Refugee Crisis

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Model UN at CMU

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# The Refugee Crisis

- UN High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR)
  - Set up in 1951 to help 1 million refugees from WWII
  - Nobel Peace Prize, 1954 and 1981
- Today:
  - 20.2 million refugees worldwide.
  - 38 million internally displaced persons



# The Refugee Crisis

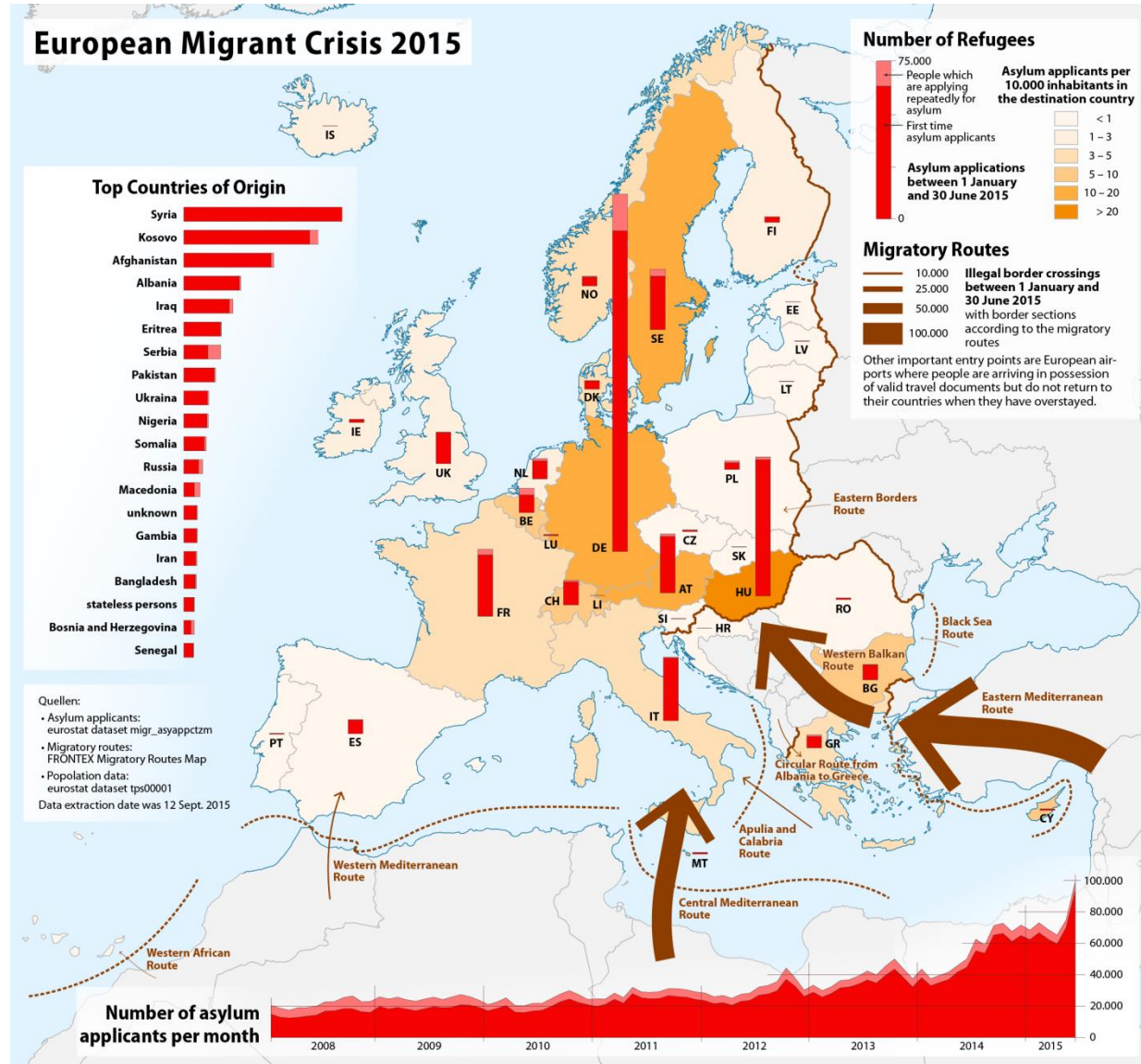
- Flood of refugees into Greece, destination Europe.
  - 752 arrived January 2015.
  - 60,000 arrived January 2016, 200+ deaths
  - [Graphic](#)

*Refugees  
arriving on  
Greek island  
of Lesbos.*

*Island is  
running out of  
burial grounds.*



# The Refugee Crisis





# The Refugee Crisis



# The Refugee Crisis



*Hungary/Serbia border closed, Oct 2015*



# The Refugee Crisis



*Macedonia/Greece border closed, Feb 27*

# Beyond Europe

- About 1 million Syrian refugees in Jordan
  - out of 4.7 million Syrian refugees altogether
  - 20% in (UN) camps
  - Many find jobs.



*Zataari refugee camp, Jordan, about 80,000 inhabitants*



# Beyond Europe

- World's largest refugee camp is in Kenya
  - 20 years old.
  - About 600,000 inhabitants



*Dadaab refugee camp, northern Kenya*

# Beyond Europe

- Refuge for Somalis fleeing war and famine.
  - Somalia has had no government for 20 years.
  - Camp is ruled by gangs.



*In Dadaab refugee camp,  
“City of Thorns”*



# Beyond Europe

- 2.4 million Yemenis displaced by civil war since 2015
  - 6000 killed, half civilians



*Refugee camp in Yemen,  
bombed by Saudis*

# Reactions in Europe

- Outpouring of sympathy from individuals
  - Governments less so
  - Except Germany & Scandinavia, until recently



*Body of Aylan Kurdi, drowned when refugee boat capsized  
Carried by police officer, Bodrum, Turkey*



# Reactions in Europe

- A boost to right-wing anti-immigrant groups



*PEGIDA = Patriotische Europäer gegen Islamisierung des Abendlandes  
(Patriotic Europeans against the Islamicization of the West)*

# Reactions in Europe

- Immigrant-led attacks in Germany contributed to backlash, borders of Schengen countries began to close.



*In Köln after New Year's Eve attacks on women*



# Case Study of a Refugee Camp

- Calais, gateway to UK from France.
  - Near entrance of channel tunnel
  - 6000 inhabitants



*The Jungle, Calais*

# Case Study of a Refugee Camp

- Much of the camp was bulldozed March 1.
  - 3500 left without shelter





# Case Study of a Refugee Camp

- Camp is not administered by UNHCR
  - France has not declared it a refugee camp, to avoid international standards.
  - UNHCR normally responds to requests from affected countries.



# Broader Context: Syrian Civil War

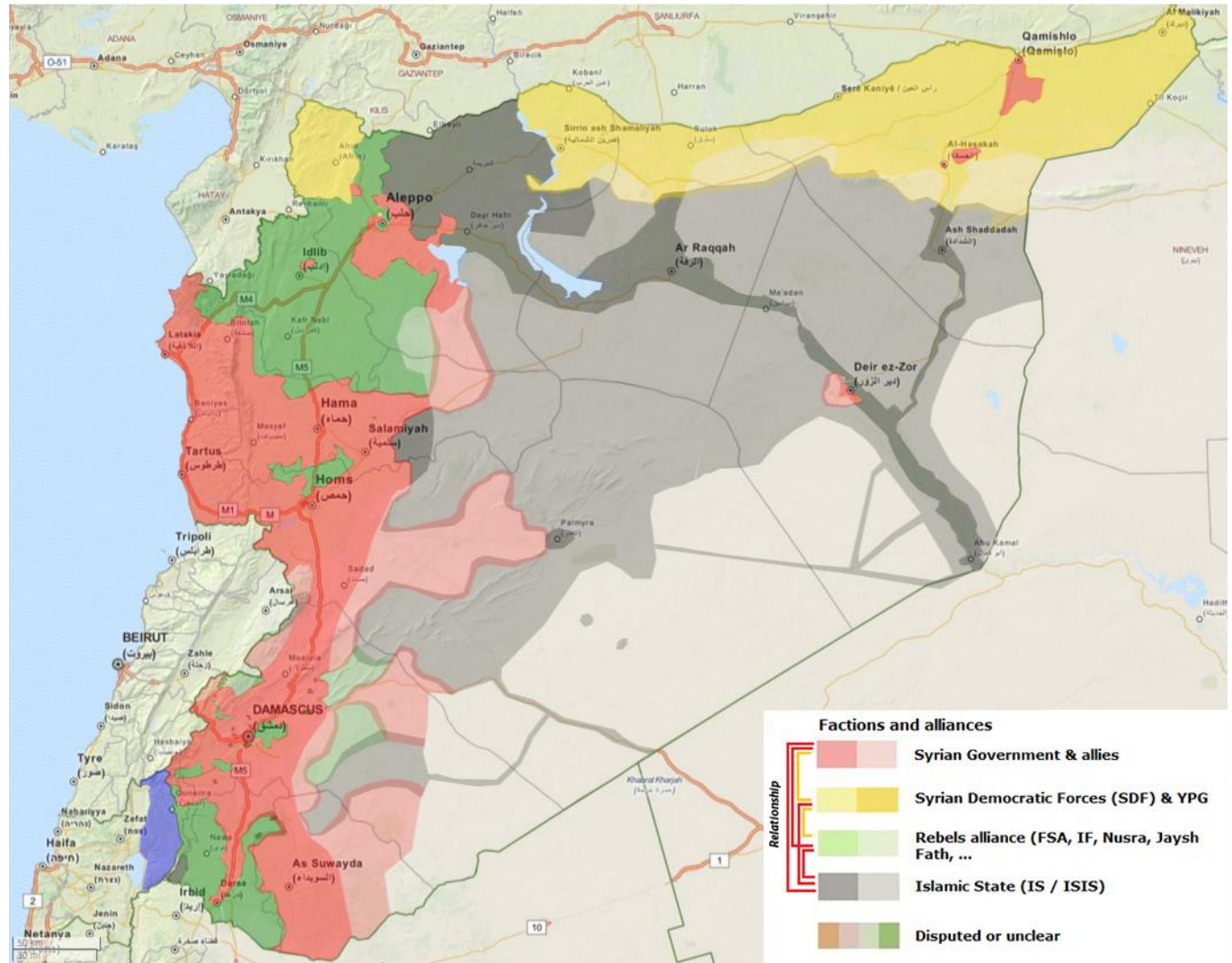
- Uprising against Ba'ath regime of Bashar al-Assad.
- Death toll 470,000+
  - As of Feb
  - Mostly civilians
- Chemical weapons used.



# Syrian Civil War

*Situation  
on the ground*

*January  
2016*





# Syrian Civil War

- Sunni majority
- Alawite Shia minority is politically dominant
  - A formula for trouble?

*Bashar al-Assad*  
*President of Syria*  
*Member of Alawite sect*



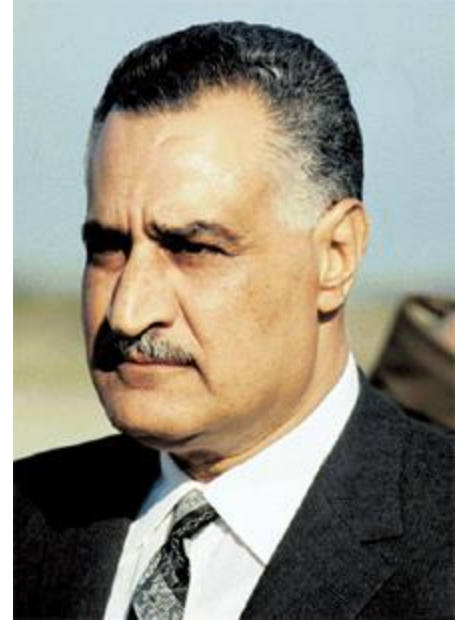
# Syrian Civil War

- Alawite sect
  - Twelver Shia Muslims
    - Alawite = Ali - ite
  - More ethnic identity than religious doctrine
    - As is common in Middle East



# Syrian Civil War

- United Arab Republic
  - 1958-1961
  - Egypt + Syria
  - Ruled by Ba'ath party



*Gamal Abdel Nasser  
President of Egypt 1956-1970  
and UAR 1958-1961*



# Syrian Civil War

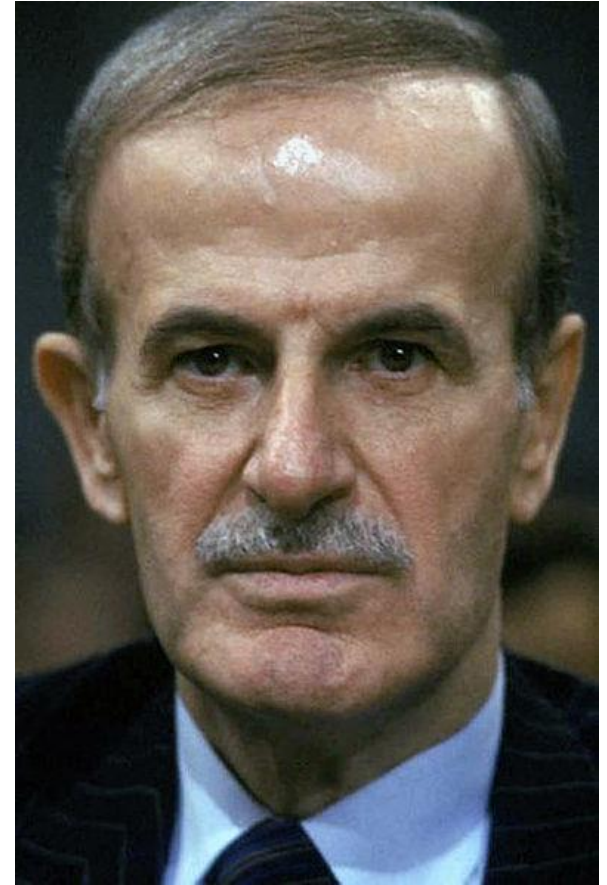
- United Arab Republic
  - 1958-1961
  - Egypt + Syria
  - Ruled by Ba'ath party
  - Ba'ath party = pan-Arabist
  - Al Qaeda = pan-Islamist
  - Saddam Hussein of Iraq was Ba'athist.



*Saddam Hussein*  
*President of Iraq 1979-2003*  
*Executed 2006*

# Syrian Civil War

- Instability 1961-1970
- Hafez al-Assad
  - Took power 1970
  - Hama Massacre, 1982
    - Suppressed rebellion of Muslim Brotherhood (Sunni)
      - 10,000-40,000 killed, mostly civilians
  - Resentment toward his son helps fuel civil war today



*Hafez al-Assad*  
1930-2000

# Dilemmas for UNHCR

- Refugees often result from internal conflicts.
  - Beyond UN mandate.
- Resettlement involves cross-cultural issues.
  - UN was conceived in a Western, universalizing mold.

