Syrian refugees ‘abandoned’ in Lebanon

Clearly, a “Syrian refugee crisis” has been triggered by the West and by its allies, Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. For years, all of these countries have been hard at work, destabilizing the secular and socially oriented government of Bashar al-Assad in Damascus.

For two years I have been covering the story, making documentary films and writing reports about the so-called “Syrian opposition” that has been recruited, trained and financed in ‘refugee’ and military camps in both Turkey and Jordan. That opposition, of course, included ill famed Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL) or Daesh, or whatever one wants to call them.

The West has reached perfection in destroying entire countries and in ruining millions of human lives. However, once a country is crushed, both the US and Europe are known to lose interest in the people left ‘under the debris’. The West is not interested in dealing with the human tragedies it triggers, be it in Iraq, Libya or in Syria.

It is winter now; deep winter and the mountains above Bekaa Valley in Lebanon are covered in snow. This year, winter has been unpredictable. One week it snows heavily and the temperature goes well below freezing point. Then, just a few days later, the sun begins to shine as if it is the middle of summer. Then the snow melts and there are inundations.

The United Nations is now occasionally running out of cash. It admits that it can hardly sustain those two million Syrian refugees who are now based on Lebanese territory. Lebanon is running out of cash too or, more precisely, it has no disposable cash whatsoever. Its government is partially paralyzed and it does not even have a president. Some Syrian refugees are living in the cities and towns, spread all over the country. The richest ones can rent posh condominiums in Beirut; the poorest ones dwell in shabby tents, living out in the open, defenseless, hungry and scared.

Bekaa Valley is the toughest place for those who escaped from war-torn Syria. It is rural and rough, and at least several times a year, it gets cut off from the coast due to heavy snowfalls.

Periodically, I drive to Bekaa Valley to talk to Syrian refugees. I do it simply because it appears that almost no one else does. The UN docks its battle ships at Beirut port and it pampers thousands of its staff members on the entire territory of Lebanon. But the refugees, the victims of the war, are often neglected, even abandoned.

These are no hard-core anti-al-Assad warriors. Most of them crossed the border into Lebanon because of the dire
hardship in their country, hardship provoked by the West, by its allies and by its offshoots – the most terrible terrorist organizations money can buy.

Unlike Turkey and Jordan, Lebanon is no enemy of Syria. Many Lebanese people and Hezbollah are now fighting an epic battle against ISIL, and even many members of the government are supporters of the Syrian government. The fact that around two million Syrian refugees can coexist, without any major incidents, with only 4.3 million inhabitants of this tiny country of Lebanon, is clear proof of great understanding between the two peoples.

But right now, Lebanon is not in a position to offer much more than its solidarity and its land to suffering Syrian neighbors. It is understood that help should come from those who are fueling the war and consequently turning millions of Syrian people into refugees, or internally displaced persons (IDPs). But it doesn’t, or it is not sufficient.

*Mochles Camp 009, between the cities of Baalbek and Zahle in Bekaa Valley, is one of the oldest refugee camps for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Here, at least 700 people are crammed into a few dozen old, often tattered tents. I am allowed to enter several of them and to see the misery with my own eyes.

People speak over each other: “The UN gave us their cash cards so we could buy at least some fuel and food. But the cards are either empty, with no credit or with only partial credit of US $18 per month, instead of US $30. However, the worst thing is that many of us never even made it to the refugee list; some of us are not registered at all.”

To stay warm, people are burning nylon instead of fuel. Everyone here agrees that conditions are deteriorating. Children from this camp are not getting any schooling. When people get sick, they have to go to a private doctor, as there is no UN medical post in the camp.

Recently, the snow here was one meter high. Then it melted and the tents got flooded. “We are scared”, shouts one of the ladies, a refugee. “We are afraid to leave the camp, to go near the road. It is because many of us are not even registered and we do not know what would happen to us if we were caught by security forces... We are refugees, so why are we not treated as such? And what about our children? How long are they going to sit idly in their tents? Shouldn’t they be given at least some basic education?”

*Just one week before my latest visit to Bekaa Valley, the US and Turkey signed a deal to train and equip Syrian rebels. They have been doing this for years, secretly. Now they will do it in the open. This ‘deal’ will certainly turn millions more Syrians into refugees.

Andre Vltchek is philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist, he’s a creator of Vltchek’s World an a dedicated Twitter user, especially for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.
