
**THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA DURING THE
CRISIS OF MIGRANTS 2015/2016**

Argëtim Saliu

Faculty of Social Sciences, “Mother Teresa” University – Skopje, argtim.saliu@unt.edu.mk

Muaz Agushi

Islamic Religious Community in the Republic of Macedonia, muaz_agushi@hotmail.com

Abstract: During 2015 and at the beginning of 2016 the Republic of Macedonia faced the issue of the large number of refugees and emigrants from the Middle East, especially from Syria, who used the territory of the Republic of Macedonia as a bridge between the Balkans and the European Union.

The Republic of Macedonia was the first country to offer medical assistance to the refugees; moreover, it registered the refugees and later on shared the recorded data with other countries.

Furthermore, in order to help this important process except state institutions other non-governmental organizations were involved.

With the usage of the descriptive, statistical and historical methods, this project aims to offer readers the wide range of activities that the state institutions of the Republic of Macedonia undertook regarding the noted issue.

Keywords: Macedonia, Syria, European union, institutions, administration, emigrants.

INTRODUCTION

European leaders and policymakers were presented with the greatest challenge since the debt crisis by the migrants from Africa, the Middle East and South Asia streaming into Europe.

The International Organization for Migration calls Europe the most dangerous destination for irregular migration in the world, and the noted organization calls the Mediterranean the world's most dangerous border crossing. Yet, despite the escalating human toll, the European Union's collective response to its current migrant influx has been ad hoc and, critics charge, more focused on securing the bloc's borders than on protecting the rights of migrants and refugees.⁴⁹⁷

The conflict in Syria continues to be by far the biggest driver of migration. But the ongoing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq, abuses in Eritrea, are also leading people to look for new lives elsewhere. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that more than 1,011,700 migrants arrived by sea in 2015, and almost 34,900 by land. This compares with 280,000 arrivals by land and sea for the whole of 2014. The figures do not include those who got in undetected. The EU's external border force, Frontex, monitors the different routes migrants use and numbers arriving at Europe's borders and put the figure crossing into Europe in 2015 at more than 1,800,000. Most of those heading for Greece take the relatively short voyage from Turkey to the islands of Kos, Chios, Lesbos and Samos - often in flimsy rubber dinghies or small wooden boats.

An estimated 11 million Syrians have fled their homes since the outbreak of the civil war in March 2011. Now, in the sixth year of the war, 13.5 million are in need of humanitarian assistance within the country. Among those escaping the conflict, the majority have sought refuge in neighbouring countries or within Syria itself. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 4.8 million have fled to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, and 6.6 million are internally displaced within Syria. More than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015, sparking a crisis as countries struggled to cope with the influx, and creating division in the EU over how best to deal with resettling people.⁴⁹⁸ Germany, with more than 300,000 cumulated applications, and Sweden with 100,000, are EU's top receiving countries.⁴⁹⁹

THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA DURING THE MIGRATION CRISIS 2015-2016

During 2015 and in the first months of 2016, the Republic of Macedonia faced a great number of refugees and migrants entering the state in order to travel toward North- Western European Countries. The Migrant's and refugee's flow had at least two important proportions that will prompt the institutions of the system to initiate instant provisions regarding this issue. There were the humanitarian and security dimensions.

⁴⁹⁷<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/europes-migration-crisis>.

⁴⁹⁸<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>.

⁴⁹⁹<http://syrianrefugees.eu/> (Updated September 2016).

From the humanitarian point of view, the state institutions found it necessary to ensure a secure crossing throughout all the territory of the Republic of Macedonia for the emigrants and refugees who are determined to enter North-Western Countries, as well as providing simple and clear instructions for asylum procedures for those seeking it in Macedonia.

On the other hand, regarding national security, it was required to supervise the entries and exits of migrants and refugees within the territory of the Republic of Macedonia (beyond the legal international border check points) using certain adequate methods and procedures for the registration of the emigrants and refugees.⁵⁰⁰

Except the intentions for observing the border check points (as one of the elementary aspects for national security), the application such registration procedures were intentionally required to provide humanitarian assistance and to enlender the risk of trafficking human beings, consequently because of migrants and refugees self safety.

In order to ensure a convenient response for all the dimensions regarding migrant and refugee crisis, the Republic of Macedonia is going to take some important measures, as changing the legislation and applying suitable migration mechanisms, always based on domestic resources and in permanent cooperation with many countries within and out of the European Southeast region.

One of the most important changes in legislation was the Law for Asylum and Temporary Protection on June 18th, 2015 aiming to make the administration of the migration process easier.⁵⁰¹ This change made the “legalisation” of the status of the refugees and emigrants crossing Republic of Macedonia possible, allowing their presence in its territory on legal bases as well as using public transport and humanitarian assistance.

Except the legal changes, the Republic of Macedonia is going to take political measures foreseen by the actual legislation, mainly in the contest of crisis management. Therefore, on August 19th, 2015 the government of the Republic of Macedonia was going to approve the decree for crisis existence throughout the north and south border of the state.⁵⁰² Consistent to this decree the Center for Crisis Management was activated which approved an Action Plan for Prevention and Management during the entry and transition of the migrants all over the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. This decree will allow the army of the state to offer sufficient help for the police during their attempt of border observance and security.

This Government decree will later be approved by the Assembly, in accordance with the assigned procedure for crisis management. According to the Assembly decretal, crisis situation duration was until June 15th, 2016 and will.⁵⁰³ Later be prolonged until 31 December 2016.⁵⁰⁴

STATISTICAL DATA REGARDING REFUGEE AND MIGRANT TRANSITION THROUGHOUT ALL THE TERRITORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The overall number of registered refugees and migrants entering the Republic of Macedonia since June 19th, 2015 until March 7th, 2016 is 477,876⁵⁰⁵ based on the foreseen procedures by the Law for Asylum and Temporary Protection⁵⁰⁶.

Most of the refugees and emigrants have their origin from the Middle East and Central Asia, places with active war and serious security problems, like: Syria (260,891), Afghanistan (122,237) and Iraq (73,281).⁵⁰⁷

Except these, there was a considerable number of emigrants coming from other territories of the Middle East, as Asian and African states. For more detailed information regarding the number of refugees and emigrants entering the state, please refer to the following table 1.

⁵⁰⁰for more information regarding registration methods and procedures for emigrants and refugees see: Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia), no. 49/2003, 66/2007, 142/2008, 19/2009, 146/2009, 166/2012, 54/2013, 101/2015, 152/2015, 55/2016, 71/2016).

⁵⁰¹Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, no. 101/2015.

⁵⁰²Government of the Republic of Macedonia: Decision on the existence of a crisis situation due to the increased volume of entry migrants across the territory of the Republic of Macedonia ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" no. 141/2015).

⁵⁰³Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, no.. 162/2015.

⁵⁰⁴Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, no.. 59/2016.

⁵⁰⁵Migration crisis effects on SouthEastern Europe countries- Study of the Parliamentary Institution of the Republic of Macedonia Assembly. Skopje, 2016, page 27.

⁵⁰⁶Law on asylum and Temporary Protection (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, no.. 49/2003, 66/2007, 142/2008, 19/2009, 146/2009, 166/2012, 54/2013, 101/2015, 152/2015, 55/2016, 71/2016).

⁵⁰⁷Ibid.

Table1: The overall number of refugees entering Macedonia in the period of 19.06.2015 – 07.03.2016 from their country of origin.⁵⁰⁸

States	2015	2016	Total
Syria	216,157	44,734	260,891
Afghanistan	95,691	26,546	122,237
Iraq	54,944	18,337	73,281
Iran	6,231	N/A	6,231
Pakistan	5,416	N/A	5,416
Palestine	2,158	N/A	2,158
Somalia	1,276	N/A	1,276
Bangladeshi	1,253	N/A	1,253
Morocco	1,317	N/A	1,317
Kongo	514	N/A	514
Algeria	453	N/A	453
Lebanon	434	N/A	434
Nigeria	279	N/A	279
Others	2,110	6	2,116
Total	388,233	89,623	477,856

Regarding their demographic characteristics (gender and age) most of the refugees and migrants were men (244, 295) followed by children (148, 051) and women (85, 510) .⁵⁰⁹

A great number of migrants and refugees from Macedonia continued their journey toward the so-called “ Western Balkan Road “ in certain countries in North and Western Europe. From the overall number of refugees only 115 people decided to ask for asylyum in the Republic of Macedonia. For further information follow table 2. The overall number of refugees and emigranta applying for asylyum in Republic of Macedonia from 19.06.2015 – 07.03. 2016 according to the country of origin:⁵¹⁰

States	2015	2016	Total
Syria	56	22	78
Afghanistan	13	7	20
Palestine	4	0	4
Iraq	3	0	3
Pakistan	3	0	3
Algeria	2	0	2
Lebanon	2	0	2
Morocco	2	0	2
Egypt	1	0	1
Total	86	29	115

⁵⁰⁸Daily information published on the official page of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia(<http://mvr.gov.mk/vesti>.)

⁵⁰⁹Ibid.

⁵¹⁰Ibid, page 29.

CONCLUSION

The intention of the output was to set the relevant factors that initiated the emigration crisis during 2015 and 2016. As well as to evaluate the politics and practices of the competent institutions dealing with this issue. Even though this was not the first time that Macedonia confronted the great afflux of emigrants (since Kosovo refugees of 1999 stayed in refugee camps in Bllace and Tabanovce) we can say that institutional engagement with the process of migration during 2015/ 2016 was of the highest level.

Taking into account that in order to administrate this process there were involved many state institutions, non-governmental organizations, the international factor, the Islamic religious Community in the RM, indicating a serious approach for this issue.

The state institutions involved in this procedure are: the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of foreign affairs, Ministry of health, Ministry of defense, Ministry of social politics and affairs.

While in the frame of NGOs, international factors were involved such as: OSCE, UNHCR, IOM- international migration organization, NGO Legis- Skopje etc.

Based on the statistical references from the above charts, we can state that in the last years illegal migration from North Western Africa, southcentral west Asia and the Middle East was on the increase.

Most of the emigrants are Afghan citizens, however there are people coming from Syria, Pakistan, Somalia, Bangladesh and Tunisia for the following reasons: social, economical, poverty, political and security instability. However, Macedonia is not considered as their final destination but serves only as a transit place of their Balkan Route.

LITERATURE

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