

Earth is Home International Solidarity Association Field Observation Report on Address Inquiry Regulation

Introduction

This report contains the details of the interviews held by the Earth is Home International Solidarity Association (Earth is Home) between 7-25 March 2022 regarding the problems faced by Syrian refugees living in the districts of Altındağ, Mamak and Keçiören in Ankara following the Dilution Policy announced by the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Turkey.

The fact that the interviewees applied to Earth is Home to solve their emerging or deepening problems related to the process and the gradual increase of these applications constitutes the background of this operation.

The Association has carried out the mentioned based on the principle of "referring disadvantaged groups to the state authorities in terms of access to rights and services, social responsibility and social cohesion", which it has adopted as its main function since its establishment. In all interviews, refugees were first referred to the state authorities, legal and social counseling was given to them in this direction, and the necessary legal steps were explained to them.

In this report, the reason for emphasizing the vulnerabilities and loss of rights determined in the light of the interviews is that this situation has a disruptive effect on the social cohesion of the refugee population and the purpose of peaceful co-existence in our country. Observations, presented at the last part of this report, hold a crucial significance in demonstrating the outcomes and the possible outcomes of the policy. Unfortunately, the observations made point out that in the tenth year of mass migration, the social acceptance of the refugees was damaged despite some of the achievements, in which the Directorate of Migration Management was the main actor and many positive steps were taken to achieve good results.

The report consists of four parts, which are the organizational section showing how the operation started, the data and analysis section that classifies and analyzes the findings, the issues section that emerges from these data and is categorized, and 6the parts where observations and general evaluation as result.

In the following section, firstly, the organization of the operation will be explained, and the basic lines of the operation will be presented. This section is important for understanding the remaining parts of the report.

1. Organization

The operation emerged as a product of a collective effort with the interview of Field Operationer Cihan Çiçek and Case Operationer Yaren Sude Korkmaz, the arrangement of the data obtained from these interviews by Case Operationer Umitcan Öngören and the assistance of the association volunteers Özden Kocabaş and Cansu Kaya in the whole process under the coordination of Burçak Sel, one of the employees of our World House.

In the operation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with **114 Syrian families consisting of a total of 438 people**. Before the interviews were conducted, the written consent of the individuals was obtained.

The interviews were conducted within the frameoperation of the Interview Standard Application Procedure of Earth is Home. In case of detected vulnerabilities, Vulnerable Interview Standard Application Procedure has been applied.

Each interview was accompanied by 1 Case Operationer and 1 Interpreter.

In the following section, the data from the interviews, the classification and analysis of these data with a table will be presented. The data and analysis section is the part where the essence of the operation is presented. In this section, where more quantitative data are in question, the Standard Application Procedure of Monitoring and Evaluation of Earth is Home is taken as a basis.

2. Data and Analysis

The data stated in this report correspond to the number of identified vulnerabilities rather than the number of interviewees.

During the operation, 196 people were observed to suffer from at least one of the vulnerabilities because of the policy. In this context, it was determined that these 196 people had a total of 378 sensitivities.

The identified headings are as follows and each one shows the main problems that arise as a result of the examination of all available data and related to the refugee protection area.

2.1. Table

In the table below, the vulnerabilities **directly related** to the address registration issues are classified and explained what each corresponds to.

Vulnerabilities	Number of Persons Affected	Number of Families Affected
Unregistered Persons and Cancelled IDs	113	35
Issues Regarding Access to Health Services and Right to Health	57	19
Issues Regarding Access to Education Services and the Right to Education	45	18
Persons Referred to Address Change	91	17
Persons Who Cannot Make Address Change Due to Financial Inabilities	55	12
Bureaucratic Obstacles	6	4
Issues Related to Family Unity	11	11

In the table above:

“Unregistered Persons and Cancelled IDs” refers to the persons who are not registered, whose registrations are not renewed and whose registrations were deactivated due to address registration problems,

“Issues Regarding Access to Health Services and Right to Health” refers to the problems regarding access to the health services and right to health and the persons whose issues cannot be resolved through Migrant Health Centers or UNHCR’s Çankaya Polyclinic etc. due to address registration problems,

“Issues Regarding Access to Education Services and the Right to Education” refers to the children whose schooling is disrupted due to address registration problems,

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“Persons Who Cannot Make Address Change Due to Financial Inabilities” refers to the persons who are willing to move to a new location but unable realize it due to the cost of moving and/or cost of living in the areas available for address registration.

“Referred to Change of Address” refers to the persons who have been informed by Ankara PDMM that their relevant processes will be carried out if the address of the persons whose registrations have been canceled due to their current residence addresses, whose registrations have not been renewed, whose health insurance has been deactivated and/or whose cash benefits (ESSN, disability allowance, etc.) have been interrupted.

“Issues Related to Family Unity” refers to the problems arising from the failure to make address registration due to the inability of the families with incorrect marital status (on IDs) and/or religious marriages in Syria or Turkey to perform official marriages.

With **“Bureaucratic Obstacles”**, although the documents related to the change of address are complete, the problems experienced by people whose registration is not realized due to bureaucratic obstacles (slow progress of the system, delay of the appointment date, etc.) are represented.

The headings listed above and the aggrievements they create are intertwined. For this very reason, each given example can fall within the scope of more than one category.

2.2. Other Vulnerabilities

In addition to the vulnerabilities that arise directly related to the address registration, it was also determined that some vulnerabilities were existant before the process in question.

Accordingly, it was determined that **17 of the people who were found to have problems with address registration during the interviews were disabled, 5 were over 65 years old, 98 were children, 7 were pregnant and 13 were women who gave birth within 1 year.**

Refugees, whose sensitivities were identified, were prioritized and referred to the relevant authorities because the process experienced with the dilution policy deepened these sensitivities.

In the following section, the details, and examples of the problems that the vulnerabilities caused by the evacuation/relocation process correspond to are given.

3. Problems

This section consists of Unregistered Persons and Cancelled IDs, Issues Regarding Access to Health Services and Right to Health, Issues Regarding Access to Right to Education and Services, persons Referred to Change of Address, Bureaucratic Problems, Issues Related to Civil Law and Problems related to Access to Working Rights and Services.

a. Unregistered Persons and Cancelled IDs

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During the operation, **113 persons** were found to be unregistered due to problems with their address registrations or their IDs were temporarily canceled. Among the 113 persons, **43 children** were identified who were also **deprived of their right to receive education**.

113 persons in a state of being unregistered also have the following sensitivities:

- Persons Referred to Address Change: 29 persons
- Persons who cannot change their address due to financial incompetence: 16 persons
- Deprived of the Right to Education: 43 persons
- Issues with Access to Health Services and Right to Health: 52 persons

Due to the inability to register the address of the interviewees in the study, their health insurance was temporarily deactivated, and the newborn children were not registered in this process. Persons cannot benefit from rights and services due to the cessation of identities or health insurances or the fact that they are unregistered.

For example;

K., who came to Turkey in 2018, stated that he and his wife were married in Turkey, that they had documents related to their marriage, but since his wife was registered in Istanbul and was not registered in Ankara, his child, V., could not be registered and therefore could not benefit from health services.

b. Issues Regarding Access to Health Services and Right to Health

During the operation, it was determined that 63 people were deprived of health services due to problems with address registrations. During the operation, it was determined that **63 people were deprived of right to health** due to problems with address registrations. Of the 63 people, **45 are children and 1 is over 65 years of age**. Among the **23 children, 2 children with chronic health problems and 1 child with disabilities were identified**.

63 people who do not have access to health services also have the following sensitivities:

- Unregistered Persons and Cancelled IDs: 43 persons
- Persons Referred to Address Change: 30 persons
- Persons who cannot change their address due to financial incompetence: 18 persons
- Deprived of the Right to Education: 43 persons

The issues of access to health services and right to health refers to the situations where the treatment processes are interrupted due to the inability of individuals to register their addresses, the treatment process cannot be started at all, or the cost incurred at the end of the treatment process cannot be met due to the interruption of the health insurance.

For example;

C. stated that they had to leave Önder Neighborhood, which is their old residence address, due to house demolition. They found a house in Başak Neighborhood in Mamak District immediately after the demolition, that Başak Neighborhood was not forbidden to reside at that time. However, Başak Neighborhood was also closed to residence in the period until their address registration appointment period came and they went to the Ankara PDMM after borrowing 5000 TL to keep the house they found. Person C. stated that their son A. (7) had tonsillitis and lymphoma, and that when they went to the hospital for the ÇÖZGER report (Special Needs Report for Children), they were told that their insurance was deactivated and that they applied to the PDMM for the insurance to be reactivated. C., stated that the insurance of the children of the PDMM could not be reactivated because the address was not changed.

c. Issues Regarding Access to Education Right and Services

During the operation, it was determined that 45 children's education was interrupted due to problems with their address registration. Among these children, **1 child is a child with specific needs.**

45 children who are unable to access educational rights and services also have the following vulnerabilities:

- Unregistered Persons and Cancelled IDs: 44 persons
- Issues Regarding Access to Health Services and Right to Health: 41 persons
- Persons who cannot change their address due to financial incompetence: 12 persons
- Persons Referred to Address Change: 23 persons

It has been observed that the education of refugee children has been interrupted due to the late appointment dates of the Ankara PDMM for the address declaration to the new places they have moved, the inability of refugee children to go to school due to the inability to transfer them to new schools until these appointment periods, and the inability of families who moved to another district during the school period to access schools from the districts they moved to.

For example;

F., states that he was living in Altındağ district Önder neighborhood. Ankara PDMM informed him that he had to change his address, so he found an apartment in Çubuk district and moved. F. stated that an address declaration should be made for the new house they moved to, and that he made an appointment with the PDMM for this procedure, but the appointment periods were between 45-60 days. F. stated that two school-aged children could not be transferred to the schools in the new district during the address registration process, which was prolonged due to appointment periods, and that

they could not go to the old schools in Altındağ district due to transportation difficulties, and therefore their education were interrupted.

d. Persons Referred to Address Change

It was determined that **91 people** were referred to the address change during the study for various reasons.

These **91 people referred** to the change of address also have the following vulnerabilities:

- Unregistered Persons and Cancelled IDs: 29 persons
- Issues with Access to Health Services and Right to Health: 30 persons
- Problems with Access to Education Right and Services: 23 persons
- Persons who cannot change their address due to financial incompetence: 24 persons

In this section, it is stated that the transactions of the people who currently reside in these regions are not carried out even if their documents are complete when they apply to the PDMM to update the address records since all of the Altındağ and Mamak districts are closed to the address registration. The PDMM accepts the notarized rental agreements of the persons and the electricity or natural gas invoices on behalf of the person in order to make the address declaration in the place of residence. It is known that even if people submit these documents to the PDMM, they are asked for a work permit and the procedures are extended.

For example;

A., in his application to the PDMM regarding his family's address registration, stated that his wife and child was registered at the address they lived but he was not registered to that address. A., who has been working in Sıtleler District for 2 years and has a work permit, stated that even if he submits all the documents requested by the PDMM, the address registration procedures have not been performed and therefore he has been referred to the address change.

e. Bureaucratic Issues

During the operation, as a result of the document requests made by the PDMM, it was determined that **6 people** became unregistered due to the problems related to these documents and the late appointment periods and/or experienced the vulnerabilities specified under the heading of problems in the report.

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The interviewees stated that their grievance was aggravated due to the appointments made 30-60 days after their application and they had problems due to insolvency.

It is stated that requests with legal backing are not accepted due to address registration regulations and this causes loss of rights.

For instance;

G. (33), who came to Turkey in 2018, is registered in Osmaniye. In 2019, his wife and children came to Turkey and were identified in Ankara and reside in Ankara. There is an invoice stating that they reside at home on behalf of his wife M., who resides in Ekin Neighborhood. G. stated that he received a travel permit for family reunification from Osmaniye PDMM, but this permit was not accepted by Ankara PDMM as proof for change of province of registration.

f. Issues Related to the Civil Law

f.1. Issues Related to Family Unity

During the operation, it was determined that **11** persons had incorrect information about their marital status on their Temporary Protection Identity document, the registration province was different, and/or the address registrations were not granted due to the incompatibility of religious marriages in Syria or Turkey to be considered official marriages.

For example;

S., who came to Turkey in 2021 and is registered in Mersin, stated that his wife N., who has a residence permit, and his son B., who has Temporary Protection status, resided in Ankara. He stated that he was a mechanical engineer, his wife N. was a civil engineer and his son B. was a student at Ankara University Faculty of Medicine. S. stated that there was a valid travel permit for family reunification between 31.03.2022 and 14.04.2022, and that he was told to apply with one of the following documents of work permit, student certificate, health report in his application to the PDMM, but he could not receive these documents due to his age (68).

f.2. Issues Related to Family Reunification

During the operation, vulnerabilities arose due to the miswriting of the marital status of the individuals in line with the information received when they entered Turkey. Some of the refugees who were registered as married when they were single cannot make an official marriage. Similarly, to be legally

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single, PDMM expects a divorce decision from the court which requires existence of a spouse. Since the spouse is non-existent, the divorce cases cannot go through. People who marry people registered in different provinces have to live in Ankara unregistered because there is no official marriage.

For example;

O. (30) has been residing at the same address with his wife E. (26) and children Z. (2) since 2021. O. stated that they married E. in 2019, that their child Z. was unregistered and that his child was not given an identity because his wife was registered in Mersin. O. stated that when they went to the PDMM, they were asked for a family record booklet, the process was prolonged due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but then they applied again with the family record booklet, but the Immigration Administration said that the application could not be evaluated because Ankara was closed to registration.

g. Inability to Access the Right to Work and Related Problems

In the interviews with refugees, it is observed that many of the clients living in Altındağ and Mamak districts work in the Sıtleler District and people prefer to live near the workplace due to travel expenses. Persons moved to other districts due to the inability to register their addresses and the fact that many neighbourhoods are closed to address registration, and they cannot access the workplace from these districts. Among the refugees interviewed, there are also people who could not register their addresses even though they had a work permit.

For example;

Y, who is registered in Ankara, stated that he has a work permit. In his application to the PDMM for address registration, he was told that his wife and children were not registered at this address. Although there are documents as proof of residence and work permits related to the address, the family has not been registered to the address. He declared that he had difficulty in going to and from the workplace due to moving to another district.

Results

With this operation conducted between 7-25 March 2022, it was concluded that the procedures applied with the Address Inquiry Regulation resulted in issues for the refugees, that all of these

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problems were intertwined with each other, and that these intertwined issues deepened the disadvantage of refugees and harmed their social cohesion in our country and the goal of peaceful coexistence in general.

Evacuation decisions known to be effect since August 2021 have started to be carried out more intensively with the announcement of the Dilution Plan to the public.

It was concluded that the Evacuation Decisions negatively affected the refugee community, especially the Syrians, in many respects and harmed their social standing. As mentioned before, the process caused the refugee community to transition to irregular immigrant status the most, that is, in a sense, to experience their refugee experience from the beginning and to deprive them of many rights and services. In correlation, the process causes a backset in social cohesion, which is one of the major expectations, consequently.

It was witnessed that either the emergence of new problems or the deepening of the existing problems following the evacuation decisions were experienced by the refugees.

Accordingly, the administrative decision in question raised a serious ID/registration issue and hence an forced a pseudo-illegal status on the persons. In this context, the deactivation of the IDs of the refugees who have been living in Altındağ and Mamak region for a long time has caused them to become irregular migrants. On the other hand, there is also an illicit status for those who are not registered at all due to many issues arising from this process.

Irregular migrant status, on the other hand, emerges as the main cause of all the problems experienced by the refugees. As a matter of fact, the increase in irregular immigration due to the cancellation, suspension of IDs or non-registration of persons prevents refugees from enjoying the essential rights and services.

The fact that the landlords are not willing to rent houses to the refugees in the newly moved places and/or landlords' requesting exorbitant rents was one of the other problems faced by the refugees and brought up the problem they had regarding the right to shelter. In addition, the fact that families who were not evacuated reporting that they were discriminated against more than before and therefore had to live more isolated, strengthened the belief that this decision increased the tension.

In the process of address changes, refugees have had to move from their places of residence for many years and have entered a new process of social cohesion. Although this mobilization is limited within the country and even within Ankara, it is observed that the asylum seeking process has started again for most of them. Re-experiencing the asylum process has occurred as a new burden for both the service provider and the refugee.

Since the deactivation of the identities means the dactivation of the health insurance of the refugees, there has been an obstacle to access to the right to health. In this context, there has been an increase

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in vulnerabilities, especially in vulnerable persons (such as pregnant women, elderly, children, persons with chronic health issues, persons with specific needs, etc.).

Among the refugee children whose schooling rate had been already low, this rate was found to decrease even more as a result of the evacuation process. It has been concluded that the social cohesion of children, who are deprived of the right to education, will be damaged and the rate of involvement in crime may increase due to their exclusion from education.

It has been observed that people who are employed cannot continue their employment or have difficulty continue their employment due to the fact that their new addresses are far from their workplaces, and this situation restricts the right and freedom to labor. In addition, it is predicted that being unregistered, which is the result of the evacuation process, will increase illegal employment and this may lead to a decrease in wages in the labor market and a deterioration of peace in the business environment by increasing competition with the domestic worker.

As one of the results of the address inquiry process, it was observed that the discontinuation of social benefits also harmed refugees in terms of social rights and access to the services. While the socio-economic assistances to the refugees as a disadvantaged group is beneficial for the social cohesion in general; the address inquiry process disrupted these assistances in such a way to deepen their disadvantage and to increase illegality (in terms of ID/registration, labor and address registration).

On the other hand, it has been observed that the prioritization requirements of people with certain vulnerabilities are ignored, and these vulnerabilities are multiplied since such cases have not received due intervention in time.

As can be seen, all these results, which are highly related to each other and damage the categories of rights such as the right to legal status of refugees and the right to shelter, health, education, social assistance, and the right to labor, which are compulsory extensions of this right, have regressed their social lives in the midst of the increasing racist discourses and practices and the deepening economic crisis following the Altındağ incident.

Refugee communities, a disadvantaged part of society in terms of fundamental rights and freedoms, have become a more fragile group with the address inquiry process. This result has weakened their social adaptation as well as their motivation to fulfill their social responsibilities.

In the tenth year of mass migration, many actors took part in the field, especially the Directorate General of Migration Management, and it was concluded that the process of social cohesion of refugees, where very important and valuable steps were taken, was damaged in line with the results of the Dilution Plan. It is feared that the material and moral labor put forward for the realization of this goal from the beginning will have to be redirected to the field of humanitarian aid and put under a social burden, as indicated by the above-mentioned re-migration experience.

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It is considered that it is important for the Administration to include structured and long-term solutions, taking into account the rights and freedoms of the refugees more, in the processes that the Directorate has put into effect in order to prevent ghettoization and to establish public order in the first place, which can be considered reasonable within the Dilution Plan.

End of Report

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