THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

Lindblom Math & Science Academy
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When you hear “Syria,” what do you think?
OVERVIEW

Arabic Vocabulary

Syrian Revolution/ Civil War

Refugees in the Middle East

Refugees in Europe & the United States

Where do we go from here?
ARABIC VOCABULARY

Syria
War
Revolution
Rebel
ISIS
Humanitarian aid
Refugee
Refugee Camp
United Nations

سوريا
حرب
ثورة
متمرد
الدولة الإسلامية في العراق و الشام
المساعدات الإنسانية
لاجئ/ اللا جزائرين
مخيم لاجئين
الامم المتحدة
SYRIAN REVOLUTION & CIVIL WAR
March 2011 – present

Causes:
Revolution inspired by the Arab Spring
Protests to overthrow a repressive authoritarian government
Colonialism: divided sects (Alawite, Sunni, Druze, Kurds)

Main actors: Bashar Al-Assad, Free Syrian Army, Kurds, ISIS
Other actors: Iran, Russia, Hezbollah (proxy war)
United States, Jordan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia
Jabhat al-Nusra, numerous armed militia groups
Syria's Ethnic Composition
Percentage share of each group, prior to the war

- 59.1% Sunnis
- 11.8% Alawites
- 8.9% Kurds
- 3.2% Druze
- 9.3% Levantines (Christians)
- 7.7% Others
The Islamic State (ISIS/ ISIL/ Daesh)

Radical Sunni terrorist organization, led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi
Carrying out “holy war” (jihad), want caliphate/ land/ governance
Violent, ruthless tactics: beheadings, rape, live burials, mass killings
Terror attacks abroad: Tunisia, Kuwait, Sinai, Paris + “lone wolves”
Richest terrorist organization in the world: $2b yearly budget

Origins: 2003 Iraq War to counter Shia government/ US invasion
Known as ISI, partnered with Al-Qaeda, funded by Saudi Arabia

2013: split from Al-Qaeda, expand to Syria, becoming ISIS
SYRIAN REVOLUTION & CIVIL WAR

Consequences of War:

Estimated Death Toll: 470,000, injured population unknown

Refugees and internally displaced people: 12 million

Cost of War: $255 billion, destruction of Syrian economy

Physical destruction of homes, buildings, ancient sites

Destabilization of region and the rise of extremism
- Pause -
What does it mean to be a refugee?
1951 United Nations Refugee Convention:

“Owing to well-founded fear and being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”
Syrian refugees are fleeing from...
Syrian refugees are fleeing from...

- State violence
- ISIS attacks
- Torture/ imprisonment
- Religious persecution
- Homelessness
- Famine // no access to food/ water
- No access to medical resources
- Violence against women
- Violence against LGBT persons/ other minorities
- Fear
GENERAL OVERVIEW

Number of refugees: 4,718,279 (registered with UNHCR)

Turkey: 2,620,553 (state)    Lebanon: 1,067,785 (urban)
Jordan: 637,859 (UN)         Iraq: 245,543 (urban)

80% of refugees live in urban areas, 20% live in refugee camps

Number of internally displaced persons (IDPs): 7,632,500

(Populations of Chicago: 2.7 million, New York: 8.4 million)
This is the WORST refugee crisis since WORLD WAR II

Total refugees worldwide: 60 million, 1/122 people
LIFE IN ZA’ATARI REFUGEE CAMP
ZA’ATARI Est. 2011

Population: 79,648 (50% women and children)

Services: 2 supermarkets  
       6 schools  
       3 hospitals  
       3000 informal shops  
       2 UN basecamps

2 food distribution sites  
2 soccer fields  
6 clinics  
2 women/ girls oases  
12+ children play areas

Extreme weather: 110s in summer, 20s in winter
Communal bathrooms, 3 hours of electricity per day
Crowded, unsafe, poverty, no employment, trauma, life in limbo

Camp management: United Nations, Jordanian military
UNITED NATIONS
LIFE IN URBAN COMMUNITIES

Legally prohibited from: working/ obtaining a work permit pursuing a pathway to citizenship

Reliant entirely on: humanitarian aid, remittance, illegal work

Crowded/ poor housing
Discrimination/ violence
Little/ no access to education, food, healthcare
No employment
Poverty
Trauma/ mental illness
Life in limbo
Resettlement in Europe & the United States
UNITED STATES & REFUGEES

History: nation of immigrants BUT resistant to refugees
1930s: 67% opposed taking Jewish refugees from Germany
Resistance to Vietnamese (70s), Cubans (80s), Latinos (00s)

Resettlement:
- Only 1% of global refugees are ultimately resettled
- U.S. accepts the most refugees globally, 6\textsuperscript{th} relatively
- Process takes on average 18-24 months
- Rigorous vetting by FBI, Homeland Security, State Dept.
- Currently only 2,000 Syrian refugees in the U.S.
- Proposed number of accepted Syrians is 10,000
BENEFITS of RESETTLEMENT

Economy

Innovation

Humanitarian/ Moral Responsibility

**Famous Refugees:** Albert Einstein (Germany), M.I.A. (Sri Lanka), Jackie Chan (Hong Kong), Rita Ora (Bosnia), Madeleine Albright (Czech Republic), Imam (Somalia)
Why haven’t we done more?
WHAT YOU CAN DO

Educate yourself

Contact your representative regarding resettling refugees

Fundraise for a refugee resettlement agency or center
Chicago: Syria Coalition Network, Refugee One, Heartland
Jordan: Collateral Repair Project, The Amal Foundation

Volunteer at a refugee resettlement agency
Teach English, complete administrative/ outreach work

Raise awareness
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Syria Deeply: http://www.syriadeeply.org/

Middle East Monitor: https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/

Al-Monitor: http://www.al-monitor.com/

Al-Jazeera: http://america.aljazeera.com

Al-Jazeera Life On Hold: http://lifeonhold.aljazeera.com/

Humans of New York (HONY)
Questions?
Exercise