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СОВРЕМЕНА МАКЕДОНСКА ОДБРАНА

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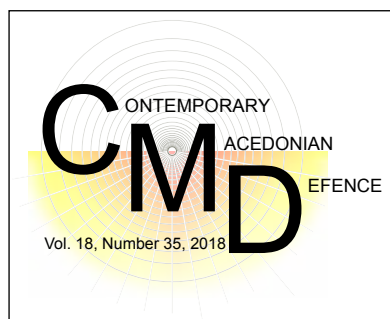
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СОВРЕМЕНА МАКЕДОНСКА ОДБРАНА
CONTEMPORARY MACEDONIAN DEFENCE

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CONTENTS:

THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA AND THE MIGRANT CRISIS: HISTORY AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract*: Europe and the world today are facing the worst migrant crisis since the Second World War. The reasons that led to this are diametrically different: fleeing from war sufferings, seeking a better life, leaving non-functional states to escape from various types of extremism and terrorism. The escalation of the migrant crisis began with subsequent changes and revolutions in the Arab world known as the "Arab Spring" and the Middle East wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. As a result of the escalation of the migrant crisis, European Union and Southeast Europe have faced a number of challenges that require immediate action for protection of their security.*

The migrant wave moves towards Western Europe as their ultimate destination for securing their lives and finding the basic economic conditions to survive, they pass through a great number of countries of South Eastern Europe. On this migrant journey, the Republic of Macedonia is one of the main transit countries on the Balkan Route. The migrant crisis with its characteristics has immediate negative effects on the economies of the countries, affecting the demographic structure and containing the capacity to jeopardize the security in the countries of the European Union and Southeast Europe.

The war in Syria began in 2011, and even then, a large number of Syrian people moved to nearby states in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt. As a consequence of the geopolitical turmoil in the Middle East and the intervention of the Islamic State the situation in Syria, in the spring of 2013, escalated in a civil war which become more brutal, and the wave of refugees became more intense.

As a consequence of the migrant crisis, the security problem has come to the fore, which reflects the real picture that the European Union is not sufficiently prepared to organize and oppose the emerging problems. On the contrary, disadvantaged states themselves and individuals were organized, each in their own way, which also created difficulties for mutual relations between certain neighbouring countries, as is in the case with the Republic of Macedonia.

From the summer of 2015 till today, the Republic of Macedonia, including all state institutions and organizations, intensively undertook, and still undertakes, a number of measures and activities for preventing the threats and consequences from the migrant crisis. All this actions are in the line with maintaining the security of the state and the security of all its citizens which live in the Republic of Macedonia.

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Introduction

The migrant crisis is a consequence of many years of transition processes in the Middle East and North Africa within the so-called "Arab Spring". These processes in Syria and Libya resulted in civil war, but also caused instability and humanitarian crises in neighbouring countries, especially in Turkey and Libya, where the largest migrants centre.

The Middle East is the region with the highest number and fiercest conflicts in the last few decades[3]. As a result of these conflicts, the great number of people which left the region for economic reasons is negligible in terms of the number of people who escaped from war,destruction, repression, persecution, terror and other violations of human rights and international humanitarian law[4].

From the many crises and conflicts in the Middle East that have resulted in the emergence of large groups of migrants and internally displaced persons in the last few decades, the crises and wars on the territories of Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria can be separated as the most critical. Several successive and prolonged wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria brought the Middle East into a situation that could be defined as a humanitarian disaster.

During the war in Iraq there were no precise data on the number of migrants, but it was estimated that about 2 million Iraqis fled to neighbouring countries and about 2.5 million remained internally displaced persons in Iraq. Of those who fled to neighbouring countries, about 1 million people went to Syria and about 500,000 in Jordan. The rest went to Lebanon, Egypt, Iran, Turkey and other Gulf countries. In this refugee crisis, around 137,000 people left for Europe from March 2008. The inflow of 2 million Iraqi migrants created socio-economic pressure in Syria and Jordan resulting in public discontent and demographic changes that could impair the security of these countries over a longer period of time[5]. Additionally, the poor conditions in which refugees live make them vulnerable to light influence and mobilization from various radical Islamic groups.

Prior to the war in Syria, the migrant crisis in the Middle East characterized the poor socio-economic conditions of parts of the population and the great instability of the region. This instability has been fuelled by a large number of conflicts that arise for various social, cultural and economic reasons all the time.

For example, different religious affiliation and nationalism were an inexhaustible source of Israeli-Palestinian conflicts and inside Muslim conflicts - wars between the Shias and the Sunnis. The rivalry between these two Muslim groups has appeared as early as the seventh century after the emergence of Islam, and this rivalry is the cause of the vast majority

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[3] A Bonine, M. E., Amanat, A., & Gasper, M. E. (Eds.). (2012). Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 342.

[4] Kamrava, M. (2013). The Modern Middle East: A Political History since the First World War (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.572-5900)

[5] Wehrey, F., Kaye, D. D., Watkins, J., Martini, J., & Guffey, R. A. (2010). The Iraq Effect: The Middle East after the Iraq War. Santa Monica, CA: Rand. Pg.95-97.

of casualties in a large number of conflicts in the Middle East, but also for the displacement of a large number of people[6].

Such a complex security situation in the Middle East was further complicated during 2011 when a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions emerged and spread not only in the Middle East, but also in North Africa. Such events are known as the Arab Spring[7]. The violence in these events caused the occurrence of casualties and the displacement of a larger number of people and they were felt in a growing number of countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Sudan, Syria, Libya and Morocco[8]. The overthrow or weakening of the existing, mostly totalitarian regimes on the one hand, and the weak security systems of newly-formed governments, on the other hand, led to the conditions for the expansion of terrorist and radical militant Islamic groups in most of the region. These terrorist groups, most commonly linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, pose a threat to the security of the entire region and are responsible for the vast number of victims, suffering and displacement of people.

All of the previously mentioned organizations and events in their own way influenced the creation of a situation in which a huge number of people became concerned about their lives and sought a safe place of residence to ensure their survival and basic economic conditions for survival. However, until the war in Syria, the displacement of the population was largely regional and dominated by internally displaced persons[9]. The admission of the largest exporter of migration to Europe before the war in Syria was held by the African continent.

In the early spring of 2011, after the rise of the "Arab Spring" in Tunisia and Egypt, as well as Syria, where there were similar socio-economic conditions such as high unemployment, dissatisfaction with the country's economic situation in the majority of the population, poverty, as well as dissatisfaction with the ruling elite's rule of very high level of corruption, encouraged the majority of the population to launch protests against the current state and government.

Syrian opposition in this period was divided and uncoordinated, without a general and effectively recognized leadership. On the other hand, the Syrian regime began to receive support from significant regional and world powers, such as Iran and Russia. Syrian President Basher al-Assad made only some formal changes in order to win the favour of the Kurdish population and the moderate Islamists in Syria, but did not accept any essential demands of the protesters and responded with massive operations, torture and murders of those who did not agree with him[10]. This situation made the protesters form groups and start arming themselves with the goal of overthrowing the regime with armed rebellion[11]. In a short time, a full civil war broke out with the participation of thousands of rebel groups with different agendas.

The conflict began in March 2011, and the first exodus of the population from Syria began immediately after the start of the conflict. By the beginning of 2012, the conflict in Syria

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[6] Christofer M. Blanchard. (January 28,2009).Islam: Sunnis and Shiites.CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service. pp.1-6

[7] Gelvin, J. L. (2012). The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know? New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 5-10.

[8] Philippe Fargues. Christine Fandrich. (09.2012). Migration after the Arab Spring. European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. 22.

[9] The global refugee crisis. (June 2015). A conspiracy of neglect. Amnesty International. pp.1-34.

[10] Haas, M. L., & Lesch, D. W. (Eds.). (2012). the Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Pg.81-95.

[11] Gelvin, J. L. (2012). The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know? New York: Oxford University Press. Pp.93-119.

intensified, and the displacement had also rapidly increased. Strong artillery rocketing increased both the number of refugees and the number of internally displaced persons[12]. Since mid-2012, the Syrian refugee crisis had steadily increased, rising 10 times in the next 12 months. According to UN estimates by October 2012, around 30,000 people were killed; nearly 400,000 Syrians fled to neighbouring countries and about 1.2 million had been internally displaced people[13]. According to the UNHCR estimates given in early September 2013, about one million refugees left Syria during the first two years of the crisis, and another one million left the country in the last six months[14].

People were massively displaced due to war crimes that took place on the ground, severe violations of international humanitarian law that included liquidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, unlawful attacks on civilians, raids, attacks on protected objects, robberies, destruction of property and other monstrous affairs. Military actions destroyed the economy and ravaged the basic living conditions, so the demand for basic living and living conditions became one of the reasons for population displacement[15].

Although a large dispersion of various rebel and terrorist groups in the country, Sunni groups linked to al-Qaeda, such as Al-Nusra and the radical Sunni Islamic State group, which occupied much of the territory of Syria were founded and expanded to great extent[16]. In the spectrum of diversity and intolerance, there are also Kurds who have suffered great traumas in the fighting of Kurdish rebels with ISIS, especially in the surroundings of the city and in the city of Cowbane in northern Syria. It was this sectarian nature of the conflict that gave it its specific cruelty and uncompromising nature with traits of monstrosity. Neighbouring countries and countries in the region have been supporting different parties in the conflict, depending on their religious affiliations, and large powers such as Russia, China and the United States have found favourable geopolitical interests on the territory of Syria.

The bulk of these migrants have been found in Turkey, the smaller part in other neighbouring countries, and a huge number are heading to EU countries daily to find a safe place to live and favourable conditions for economic survival. On the road to the EU, the most important route for their movement is the so-called "Balkan Route" on which the territory of the Republic of Macedonia is located. The large number of people who are moving, fleeing and migrating for any reason poses a threat to the security of the countries they transit and the countries that represent their final destination. This type of threat should be understood as a broader framework that can include humanitarian disasters, economic challenges, phenomena of resource and energy shortages, social and cultural misunderstandings and problems, inability to integrate migrants into new societies and their non-acceptance from the environment, to the inability to physically provide the space where there is so much that can lead to conflict and instability.

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[12] Dr.Simon Adams. (March 2015). Failure to Protect: Syria and the UN Security Council. Occasional Paper Series No.5.Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. Pp.1-32.

[13] Roland Popp.(November 2012). The Syrian Civil War: Between escalation and intervention. CSS Analysis in Security Policy.No124. Centre for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich. Pp.1-4.

[14] Elizabeth Ferris. Kemal Kirisci. Salman Shaikh. (18.September 2013). Syrian Crisis: Massive Displacement, Dire Needs and Shortage of Solutions. pp.65-70.

[15] Gucturk, Y. (2015). War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity in Syria. Insight Turkey, 17(1), p.27.

[16] Refuge&Hope in Time of ISIS: The Urgent Need for Protection, Humanitarian Support, and Durable Solutions in Turkey, Bulgaria, and Greece. (January 2015). A Report of the Migration and Refugee Services of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. pp.1-40 (http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/upload/Refuge-and-Hope-in-the-Time-of-ISIS.pdf)

1. Impact of the migrant crisis on the Republic of Macedonia

The current refugee crisis that began several years ago and has reached its peak in 2015 has a major impact, affecting countries that are the final destination, but also countries that are considered as transit countries, here we can include the countries from where migrants themselves come from. In this migrant crisis, two types of migrants were included, some were forced out of the Middle Eastern areas and the other group represented economic migrants, mostly coming from the African region.[17] In addition to occupying more space, a characteristic of the migrant crisis is that it covers a wide range of exercising its influence that extends from the impact on personal safety of people, through an impact on social security and an impact on the national security of the states. At the same time, this has indisputable influence on the economy of the countries and the demographic image of the spaces.

In 2015 and in the first months of 2016, the Republic of Macedonia faced a large number of refugees and migrants who transited through its territory on the way to the northern and western European countries. The influx of migrants had at least two important dimensions that ordered taking emergency measures - the humanitarian dimension and the security dimension of the problem[18]. From a humanitarian point of view, there is an urgent need to ensure safe passage through the territory of Republic of Macedonia for migrants determined to reach selected countries in North and West Europe, as well as to provide clear and simple procedures for granting asylum for migrants wanting to seek asylum in the Republic of Macedonia.

From the viewpoint of national security, it was necessary to establish control over the entry and exit points of migrants (mainly entering and leaving the territory outside the legal international border crossing points) by applying appropriate registration procedures. Except for the purposes of border control (as one of the essential aspects of national security), application of such registration procedures was also necessary for the purpose of providing humanitarian assistance, as well as for reducing the risk of exploitation of migrants by regional networks for human trafficking - consequently, due to the safety of migrants themselves.

The effects of the migrants crisis on the Republic of Macedonia have been statistically processed in the Survey Study of the Parliamentary Institute in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, published in July 2016[19]. This investigation

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[17] Elizabeth Collett, Camille Le Coz. After the storm - Learning from the EU response to the migrant crisis, June 2018, Migration policy institute, Brussels, pp.3-7.

[18] Martina Smilevska, Emerging Challenges in Response to the Refugee Crisis The state of the Macedonian asylum system, MYLA, February 2015. Available at: http://myla.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2015-Emerging-Challenges-in-Response-to-theRefugee-Crisis-2015-1.pdf, pp. 3-5.

[19] Алдијана Ахметовиќ. Ефектите на мигрантската криза во земјите од Југоисточна Европа - студија, Парламентарен институт, Скопје, 2016, 12-15. The document was prepared in the frames of the project "Establishment and Development of the Parliamentary Institute" of the Assembly of the

covers the period between 19 June 2015 (the starting date for the application of the amended asylum legislation) and 7 March 2016 (the date of closure of the so-called "Balkan Route" for refugees and migrants). Also, with the Operational UN portal, we gave the exact number of total transits of migrants trough the territory of Macedonia from 2015 to 2018.

The total number of migrants which entered the Republic of Macedonia in the period between 2015 and 2018 and were registered according to the procedures determined in the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection[20] is 707,873 persons[21]. The vast majority of migrants originated from the Middle East and Central Asian countries that are engaged in wars or are facing serious security problems - Syria (275.312), Afghanistan (133.847) and Iraq (83.734 persons)[22]. Apart from them, there were also significant numbers of migrants and refugees from other Middle Eastern, Asian and African countries and territories. Detailed data on the number of migrants by countries and territories of origin are given in Table 123.

Table 1: Total number of migrants who entered the Republic of Macedonia between 2015 and 2018, by countries of origin:[24]

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Syria	216,157	44,734	7578	6843	275 312
Afghanistan	95,691	26,546	6155	5455	133 847
Iraq	54,944	18,337	5853	4600	83 734
Iran	6,231	N/A	N/A	416	6647

Republic of Macedonia, co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation with advisory support of the National Democratic Institute. https://www.sobranie.mk/content/%D0%9F%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BD%20%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%82%D1%83%D1%82/Efektite%20na%20migratskata%20kriza%20vo%20zemjite%20na%20JIE%20-%20MK.pdf

[20] Published in the "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 and 71/2016.

[21] UN Operational portal for Refugee situation (https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179), data closed with 30.10.2018 year, accessed on 02.11.2018 year

[22] Source: daily briefings published on the official website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia. http://www.mvr.gov.mk/granichni-premini (Flow of passengers in the period 2010-2017 year - migration)

[23] Survey Study of the Parliamentary Institute of the Assembly on Republic of Macedonia, July 2016.

[24] UN Operational portal for Refugee situation (https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179), data closed with 30.10.2018 year, accessed on 02.11.2018 year

The vast majority of migrants that entered the Republic of Macedonia continued their journey through the so-called "Balkan Route" to the selected countries in North and West Europe. Of the total number of 707,833 registered migrants found on its territory between 2015-2018, only 126 persons decided to apply for asylum in the Republic of Macedonia. More detailed data for these applicants, according to their countries and territories of origin are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Total number of migrants who applied for asylum in the Republic of Macedonia between 2015 and 2018, by countries of origin:[25]

State	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Syria	56	22	3	2	83
Afghanistan	13	7	2	2	24
Palestine	4	0	1	0	5
Iraq	3	0	1	0	4
Pakistan	3	0	0	0	3
Algeria	2	0	0	0	2
Lebanon	2	0	0	0	2
Morocco	2	0	0	0	2
Egypt	1	0	0	0	1
Total	**86**	**29**	**7**	**4**	**126**

The migrant crisis is a threat for many aspects of social life and already has an impact on the economic and social security, as well as internal security in countries through which migrants transit or remain, including the Republic of Macedonia, via the Balkan route used to arrive in the Schengen zone, especially in Germany, Sweden and other Western and Nordic states.

Economic stability, which is a key for social stability and also for internal security would be affected by the use of additional resources and facilities (housing, health, communal services, transport and education) of the countries concerned, including the Republic of Macedonia[26]. Our country has ratified many international conventions and instruments such as the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees (1951) and its Protocol (1967) in January 1994. An important legal document is the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection that guarantees the right to social protection of migrants, as well as the conditions and procedures according to which a foreigner in the Republic

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[25] UN Operational portal for Refugee situation (https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179), data closed with 30.10.2018 year, accessed on 02.11.2018 year

[26] David E.Bloom, David Canning, and Günther Fink.(January 2011).Implications of Population Aging for Economic Growth. PGDA Working Paper No.64. pp.1-39

of Macedonia has the right to apply for asylum. The Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection[27] was enacted in 2003 and since then several amendments have been made. The Sector for Asylum and Migration at the Ministry of Interior is the responsible body for the implementation of this law, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is responsible for the social protection and accommodation of asylum seekers.

This law stipulates that a successful application for asylum can be approved only if the person is recognized in the refugee category. Furthermore, before the final decision is made in the procedure for recognition of their legal status, asylum seekers have access to "free legal aid, accommodation, residence, basic health care in accordance with the health insurance regulation, the right to social protection under Law on Social Protection, the right to education according to national legislation for primary and secondary education".

Also, at national level, the protection of migrants is guaranteed by the Family Law and the Law on Social Protection and other relevant regulations and legal documents. After the large number of refugees who have passed through the country since June 2015, the Macedonian government has brought new legislation in response to the refugee crisis. Among the first legally adopted documents during this situation were the Standard Operating Procedures for dealing with unaccompanied and separated children adopted in November 2015. The SOPs goal is to protect unaccompanied children in the receiving and transit centres by taking steps to identify, refer and protect their rights as a particularly vulnerable category.[28]

Some of the refugees use only Macedonia as a transit route on their way to European countries. But the number of those who decide to stay and seek asylum in Macedonia is increasing. For starters, the refugee problem will be an additional burden for the economy of our country. Next, it will cause general discomfort in society, which will create a moment of growing xenophobia. Growing tensions would also include fear of crime. Thefts of food, clothing and other essentials for life products could not be avoided. In such times, organized crime cannot be excluded, such as trafficking in human beings. If we follow the example of Syrian migrants in Lebanon that produce hashish in order to survive, drug trafficking would not be excluded[29].

Looking further into the aftermath, we can add to the Syrian epidemic of polio. Infantile paralysis is transmitted by contaminated food or water, and in October the epidemic among children in Syria after 14 years of eradication has been confirmed[30].

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[27] Published in the http://www.pravdiko.mk/zakon-za-azil-i-privremena-zashtita/

[28] Survey Study of the Parliamentary Institute of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, July 2016.

[29] Hala Kerbage, Ramzi Haddad. Lebanon drug situation and policy, Council of Europe, Brussels, 2014, pp.12-15. https://rm.coe.int/drug-situation-and-policy-by-hala-kerbage-psychiatrist-at-hotel-dieu-d/168075f2a9

[30] Silvana ONCHEVA, Margarita SPASENOVSKA, Scientific Labour, HEALTH ASPECTS OF THE CRISIS WITH MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES, IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, Skopje, 2016

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), disease is likely to spread from Pakistan, one of the three countries in the world where it is considered an endemic. They also warn that Syrian epidemics can become a threat to millions of children in the Middle East[31]. Infantile paralysis is easily transferred from person to person and spreads rapidly among children, especially in non-hygienic conditions where millions of people live in Syria, a war-torn country in the past 4 years, as well as in migrant camps in neighbouring countries.

2. Response of the Republic of Macedonia in acordance with the challenges of the migrant crisis

"The Republic of Macedonia has done a lot when it comes to dealing with the challenges posed by the refugee crisis, even more than some European Union member states". This was pointed out by the President of the Czech Republic, Milos Zeman, in front of the media in Ohrid, after the meeting with his host, President of Macedonia Gjorgje Ivanov.

In order to provide adequate responses to all these dimensions of the refugee and migrant crisis, the Republic of Macedonia has taken a number of measures - by amending the legislation and by applying appropriate mechanisms of migration policy, relying on its own resources and cooperation with a large number of countries within and outside the region of Southeast Europe.

In 2015, the Republic of Macedonia faced a large number of migrants which transited through its territory on the way to the northern and western European countries. The limited capacities of the institutions involved, the state faced a situation where it could hardly adequately respond and on 18 September 2015, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a Decision declaring a crisis situation on the territory of the southern and northern state border[32], due to the increased volume of entry and transit of migrants across the territory of the Republic of Macedonia[33].

Upon adopting such a decision, a 25-kilometer cable rail was installed on the southern border, which was later reinforced with another additional line, and at the very border, after 10 years of reform and the introduction of the border police, members of the military were deployed as well as police officers from some European countries such as Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia.

Presently, the situation in the Republic of Macedonia is secure. Border crossings with Greece and the Republic of Serbia are open and waiting to cross the border is

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[31] The public health dimension of the European migrant crisis. (January 2016). Briefing. European Parliament. pp.1-8. www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573908/EPRS_ BRI%282016%29573908_EN.pdf

[32] Government of the Republic of Macedonia: Decision on the existence of a crisis situation due to increased volume of entry and transit of migrants across the territory of the Republic of Macedonia (Published in the "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 141/2015)

[33] Stenographic notes from the 70th meeting of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, held on 18 September 2015, p.2-7.

no longer than usual. The parts of the border line where migrant transited have been spotted and are under enhanced control of the security forces, allowing an optimum and uninterrupted passage in accordance with our national and international legislation and human rights protection declarations.

In coordination with the national bodies, the Macedonian Red Cross, UNHCR and other numerous organizations, the Republic of Macedonia, within its capacities, provides a humane treatment of refugees. The control of the border line with Greece and the Republic of Serbia has been stepped up, and as a result of the decision of the Government on Republic of Macedonia to declare a crisis situation among these border lines due to the increased influx of migrants and the need for maintaining peace and stability on a national basis.

So far, the Republic of Macedonia has taken a number of steps and measures in solving this global problem. It implemented amendments to the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, enabling migrants to decide whether to apply for asylum or leave the territory of the Republic of Macedonia within a period of 72 hours. This resulted in creating two temporary shelters in Gevgelija and Tabanovce for assistance on migrants.[34]

The most important change in legislation whose sole aim was to mitigate the impact of the refugee and migrant crisis is the amendment of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection of 18 June 2015[35]. This amendment allowed the "legalization" of the status of refugees and migrants that transit through Republic of Macedonia, providing a legal basis for their presence on its territory, as well as the use of public transport and humanitarian aid. Namely, before the entry into force of this change in the legal framework, the refugees and migrants entering the territory on Republic of Macedonia (especially those who did it outside the legal international border crossings) have only one legal opportunity to apply for asylum in Republic of Macedonia.

Given their clear intentions to reach the countries of North and West Europe as their preferred destination, it is obvious why only a small number of them have chosen this option.[36] Especially in circumstances when entering the Republic of Macedonia from the territory of Greece - a member state of the European Union and a signatory to the Schengen Agreement. Instead of applying for asylum, they choose to cross illegally through the territory of Republic of Macedonia. As a direct consequence of their illegal status in Republic of Macedonia, they were unable to use any kind of public transport, forcing them to transit through the Macedonian territory on foot, away from the main

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[34] Prof. Dr. Jove Kekenovski, Scientific Paper entitled "The Republic of Macedonia - Collateral Damage to the Inconsistent Policy and EU Unpreparedness to Address a Refugee Migrant or Victim of Not Having a Strategy to Tackle Such Challenges", March 21, 2016, Skopje

[35] Published in the "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 101/2015.

[36] Olga Koshevaliska, Borka Tushevska Gavrilovikj, Ana Nikodinovska Krstevska. (March 2016). Migration Crisis: Macedonia on crossroads. Migration at sea, International Law perspectives and regional approaches. ed. Ana Nikodinovska Krstevska, Borka Tushevska Gavrilovikj. Giannini Editore. Napoli. pp 75

roads and using mainly the Thessaloniki-Skopje railway line as an orientation vehicle. In the harder parts of the route (narrow gorges, bridges and tunnels), migrants and refugees used the railway line not only as an orientation tool, but as the only possible path that led to a number of unfortunate on the railway line with fatal consequences. Moreover, illegal status of migrants has made them easier prey for thieves and trafficking groups.

The amendment to the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection of June 18, 2015 provides an adequate response to these observed problems. Provide additional legal opportunities for migrants and refugees who transit through the territory of the Republic of Macedonia - except for the possibility to apply for asylum, migrants now have the opportunity to declare their intentions to seek the right to asylum. Such a statement may be submitted to the appropriate border authorities or elsewhere on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. Following such a statement, refugees and migrants receive a certificate that allows them to stay legally on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia within 72 hours. Within that period, they can either submit a real asylum request on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia or continue the journey along the western Balkan route, using all available public transport types.

Apart from the described legal changes, the Republic of Macedonia has adopted a number of policy measures provided for by the existing legislation, mainly in the context of the crisis management mechanisms. In this sense, on August 19, 2015, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a decision on the existence of a crisis situation[37] along the southern and northern border of the Republic of Macedonia. In accordance with this decision, the Crisis Management Centre activated its headquarters and adopted an Action Plan for Prevention and Management of the Entry and Transit of Migrants across the territory on Republic of Macedonia. Moreover, this decision enabled the army to provide adequate assistance to the police forces in their efforts to secure the borders and control the entry of refugees and migrants on the territory on Republic of Macedonia.

This decision of the Government was later approved by the Assembly, in accordance with the procedure laid down in the crisis management legislation. According to the decision of the Parliament, the duration of the crisis situation was extended until 15 June 2016[38]. Later, it was further extended to 31 December 2017[39]. In addition to providing the basis for granting military assistance to the police in the process of securing borders, declaring the crisis has made it possible to mobilize additional human and technical resources in the effort to manage the transit of refugees. Such mobilization enabled the establishment of transit migrant camps along the southern and northern border, where migrants were provided with the necessary humanitarian

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[37] Government of the Republic of Macedonia: Decision on the existence of a crisis situation due to the increased volume of entry and transit of migrants across the territory of the Republic of Macedonia ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 141/2015)

[38] Published in the "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 162/2015.

[39] Published in the "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 59/2016.

assistance. In addition, the construction of a temporary physical barrier (two-layered fence) along the southern border, which significantly reduced the possibilities for uncontrolled and unregistered crossing of the border between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Greece, was made possible.

During the efforts to ensure effective management of the refugee and migrant crisis from 2015/2016, the Republic of Macedonia has established close cooperation with a number of countries of Southeast Europe, especially those located along the so-called "Balkan Route" (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia), with the Visegrad Group countries (Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland) as well as with the EU External Border Management Agency (FRONTEX)[40].

The most important aspect of this cooperation was the close cooperation between the police forces of these countries, which included not only sharing information regarding the transit of refugees and migrants, but also providing assistance from the police force of most of these countries to the national police of the Republic of Macedonia in its efforts to secure its southern border. The police assistance included technical assistance (including various donations of necessary equipment) and staff assistance (providing personnel for the establishment of joint patrols along the southern border of the Republic of Macedonia).

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia is currently submitting a Proposal for a Strategy for the Integration of Refugees and Foreigners in the Republic of Macedonia from 2017 to 2027[41]. The new strategy also takes into account global migration trends and their impact on the possible needs and expectations regarding local integration capacity. The comprehensive policy for integration into the strategy is formulated in a way in order to act at the entry point, at the very beginning of the asylum procedure, without delay and without wasting valuable time, which can be better invested in the preparation for integration, such as attending classes in Macedonian language or Preparatory instruction for enrolment in a regular school. The initial phase for the development of individual integration plans is already in the reception centre for asylum, where early integration measures should be implemented.

Local integration is one of the three possible "durable solutions" for refugees envisaged in the new strategy. Other durable solutions include voluntary return to the country of origin and resettlement in a third country. Local integration is important for people who cannot return to the country of origin in the foreseeable future. It is based on the assumption that refugees will remain in the country of asylum and will find a lasting solution to their situation in that country. It is a way to enable refugees to restore their lives, enable them to become self-sustaining and create a new life as members contributing to the host society.

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[40] Frontex at Glance. (2015). FRONTEX, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union. pp.1-18

[41] http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/predlog-zakoni-2017.nspx

Local integration is a complex and gradual process that consists of separate but related legal, economic, social and cultural aspects and imposes considerable demands on the individual and the host society (UNHCR)[42]. It is important to realize that integration requires a long-term commitment, both by refugees and by the host society. The strategy is aimed at the integration of persons who, in accordance with the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, have the status of belonging to any of the following groups:

- Persons with recognized refugee status;
- Persons under subsidiary protection[43];
- Asylum seekers, as beneficiaries of early integration measures, and
- Foreigners with regulated residence in the Republic of Macedonia.

The strategy takes into account that the time before the end of the asylum procedure can be used as a productive time when, at this early stage, the asylum seeker can participate in certain educational and professional training programs that will assist them in the later stages of the integration process . In accordance with the Law on Employment of Foreigners[44], asylum seekers also have access to the formal labour market and can apply for obtaining work permits. The new strategy builds on the results achieved by 2016, where important lessons have been learned about providing support to refugees in order for them to become independent members of the Macedonian society. In order to further improve the integration system and address the remaining strategic shortcomings, the new ten-year strategy focuses on the following objective:

1. Strengthening the integration system through capacity-building measures and partnerships that encourage local participation and interactive communication;
2. Development of sustainable early integration measures;
3. Realizing sustainable and long-term housing solutions that promote integration into society and avoid ghettoization;
4. Achieving educational goals in order to strengthen integration in the society and promote sustainable employment;
5. Providing employment opportunities for the purpose of strengthening the independence of

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[42] Marilyn Achiron. Nationality and Statelessness. A handbook for Parliamentarians, UNHCR, 2005, pp.17-24.

[43] http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/zakon_azil_izmeni.pdf: "A person under subsidiary protection is a foreigner who does not qualify as a recognized refugee, to which the Republic of Macedonia will recognize the right to asylum and will allow them to remain within its territory because there are strong reasons to believe that if they are returning to the country of which they are citizens or if they a stateless person in their country of previous usual residence they will face the real risk of suffering serious injuries ".

[44] Law on Employment and Work of Foreigners, OP on RM, No 217 from 11.12.2015, pp.3-4. http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/zakoni/Zakon_vrabotuvanje_stranci_21715.pdf

the target group and avoiding its dependence on social protection;

6. Achieving optimum results by linking integration measures and acquiring citizenship;

7. Introducing innovative models for optimizing the results of local integration in all sectors.

In order to develop the measures and steps for the implementation of the new strategy for integration of refugees and foreigners in the Republic of Macedonia, the following key issues of integration have been set as an integral part of the strategy:

• Early integration,

• Housing and accommodation,

• Education,

• Employment and training on vocational skills,

• Prospects for naturalization and integration (obtaining citizenship, family reunification).

In the Republic of Macedonia, a general and public debate is underway on the draft strategy for integration of refugees and foreigners, and it is necessary to adopt it in the Assembly on the Republic of Macedonia.

Conclusion

From the many crises and conflicts in the Middle East that have resulted in the emergence of large groups of migrants and internally displaced persons in the last few decades, the crises and wars of the territories of Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria can be separated as the most critical. Several successive and prolonged wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria brought the Middle East into a situation that could be defined as a humanitarian disaster.

Due to the increasing number of migrants coming primarily from Syria and Afghanistan, the EU member states, as well as the candidate countries for EU membership from the Western Balkans, primarily the Republic of Macedonia, have faced the biggest crisis in the recent history of Europe. The intensification of the migrant wave towards the EU in 2015 initiated more serious challenges, especially in terms of its institutional and operational functionality. In addition, the crisis has triggered serious dilemmas and internal divisions between member states, both in terms of the integration approach towards already arrived migrants, as well as the necessary instruments for closing the active transit routes and for preventing new mass migrations and asylum claims on the territory of the EU, the SEE countries including our country.

This is why, at the beginning of the crisis, the EU and the Republic of Macedonia did not demonstrate a quick, clear and efficient response. On the contrary, they were mainly based on the national activities and measures of Member States that ran from the open door policy (German Chancellor Angela Merkel's approach), to the closing of borders and building wiretaps for their protection (the approach of Hungary, which was then applied by the Balkan countries). None of the listed approaches could totally eliminate the crisis. In March 2016, the EU presented a concrete and more dimensional response.

The effects of wire fences were seen after their installation. The number of migrants who transited through the Republic of Macedonia in 2015 was 477,876 persons, 173,450 in 2016, 29,718 in 2017 and 26,789 persons in 2018. The numerical indicators have given these results: the number of migrants in 2015 in relation with 2016 decreased by 2.76 times, 2016 compared

to 2017 by 5.84 times, 2016 compared to 2018 by 6.48 times. Comparing 2015 year with 2018 year the number of migrants which have transited through Macedonia decreased by 17.84 times.

With this we can absolutely confirm the hypothesis of this paper that the wire fences and international assistance and support in resolving conflicts and crises in the Middle and Middle East are the key dependent variables and indicators for overcoming the migrant crisis and creating a possibility for the returning of migrants in their native countries.

Turkey is the initial and main transit base for the largest number of migrants, whose implementation should ensure effective resolution of the crisis. The agreement is important from several aspects: the determination of the EU to provide adequate protection in accordance with the international legal norms for refugees; making a distinction between people with refugee status and migrant status; the determination of simultaneous action in the direction of closing migrant routes, the integration of the refugees arriving, the return of those who are not subject to protection in accordance with the refugee and migrant status principles or which pose a security risk; the dislocation of refugees and migrants from Greece to Turkey and the prevention of a new wave of migrants. Parallel to this, in order to eliminate causes of the crisis, the EU and Turkey have committed themselves to a common approach to security stabilization and post-conflict peace-building in Syria. In this way, the EU manifested its determination to seriously respond to the most serious crisis which they faced in the last 25 years.

Negative phenomena such as: increasing criminality "among migrants", "by migrants" and "towards migrants" and the increasing number of incidents of migrants involving the police and the local population, should be prevented by increasing the number of physically present military-police forces in the area where migrants are moving and staying, especially larger groups and waves of migrants, in order to ensure the sense of security in both, migrants and the local population. The occurrence of infiltration of various terrorist and radical groups in migrant populations in order to abuse and jeopardize the overall security of countries that represent transit countries for migrants, can only be prevented by strengthened action by the intelligence and security services of the transit countries and countries where migrants are staying and by intensifying the cooperation between them for the purpose of timely exchange of information on possible threats.

In the Republic of Macedonia, the migrant crisis could cause a serious security crisis, although the humanitarian and religious political implications are felt on a daily basis. In this situation, the Republic of Macedonia must be responsible and control its own borders, precisely register migrants in accordance with the national and European regulations and maintain good foreign policy and diplomatic relations with its neighbours.

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