



Being a Woman on the Migration Road

✍ Selim Vatandaş

Humanity continues to make its way to a better world, fleeing poverty, persecution, and wars. As underlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the forced migration is a human right. Article 13 manifests that everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own! But at borders surrounded by the nation-state's rigid walls, immigration is hampered by the strict attitudes of radical decision-makers and immigrants' opponents. Women and children suffer from immigration pains the most because they are more fragile groups on the paths than men.

At least 100 million people have been forced to leave their homes in the past 10 years. Three out of every four asylum seekers have difficulty finding accommodation. Global migration flows from southern countries to north, east to west, from periphery to the center, from exploited states to exploiter countries, from poor to rich... If one of the actors of this

challenging journey is men, the other is women. According to UN statistics, half of 244 million migrants and 19.6 million refugees are women.

In international crises, both on the camp routes, in the source countries, and the target countries, women are the first to show strength and respond first to crises.



Info

•According to UN statistics, half of 244 million migrants and 19.6 million refugees are women.

•According to UN reports, one in five refugee women are subjected to sexual violence!

Besides, women play a prominent role in the sustainability and rebuilding of family cohesion in the migration flow.

We Need the Human-Centric Policies

Especially in the migration movement to Europe in 2015, large numbers of women and children set off from the Mediterranean and Aegean on a challenging route that is dangerous and at risk of death. According to the UN, 60% of the migrants were women and children in the extensive migration flow, which exceeds 1 million people. But Europe read the migration movement as a crisis beyond its borders and a "security issue" for the European mainland.

However, we were expected to prioritize immigrant women and children's safety by the "European values". Unfortunately, more than 10,000 migrants have died in Mediterranean and Aegean waters since 2015. The vast majority of these immigrants are women and children.

Unfortunately, unstable geographies are central to the cause of forced migration. Unless violent and conflicts in source countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, and Somalia end off, the number of displaced people will continue to grow. As a vulnerable and fragile group, primarily women and children suffer migration pains within the higher death rates than men.

It should not be forgotten that migrant women and children trying to reach Europe are becoming increasingly dependent on migrant smugglers because of the borders' closure. This ragged edge could make some more open to abuse or sexual exploitation as the "price" of their transition. Indeed, women and young girls who could force to flee their homes face many risks, including exploitation, slavery, rape, and sexual violence.

The normative approach of the United Nations cannot go beyond rhetoric. UN Secretary-General António Guterres, while underlines the most significant human rights issue in the world is the injustice caused by gender, cannot stress that an effective human-centered attitude should be applied on the line of migration, where women face great challenges against institutional mechanisms such as the European Union.



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Info

- Only 22 countries were able to ratify the ILO Employment Contract for Domestic Household Worker which also protects the rights of all woman workers.
- Despite half of refugees are women, only a small fraction of migrant-related projects are women-oriented.



Any attempt to return Uyghur individuals to China will be against international conventions which guarantee human rights.

Danger in Camps

Women in refugee camps sometimes have to cover nearly 10 kilometers in the countryside around the camp to collect firewood. But this daily task can cause them to face risky situations. When a group of researchers visited an over-crowded refugee reception center in Greece in the summer of 2018 and discovered a wet sewage bottle filled with urine, they learn that women and girls, in particular, had to use water bottles as a makeshift toilet to avoid leaving the tent at night.



Sadly, Migrant women cannot leave tents in the camp at night due to the

danger of abuse and sexual violence. Besides, the unhealthy conditions and the increased risk of infectious diseases in the camps during the coronavirus period threaten migrant women and children's right to life. While education is one of the most important bases for women to build themselves and their children, migration turmoil make woman away from educational opportunities.

The Approach Must Change!

For making a safer migration path possible, the approach towards women affected by military conflicts particularly needs to change. First, women and children are not a cause of migration. The forced migration, on the contrary, is a result of war and catastrophes. Second, a militant response to the flow of migration –as Greece did– means ignoring children, the most innocent beings on earth, on the destination country's risky path.

In the past decade, we have witnessed that Europe has deepened what it calls the "fight" on immigration by strengthening the metaphor of "Fortress Europe". As Aiko Holvikivi stressed, European Union rhetoric on border control has been militarized by referring to a struggle "against regional invasion." However, those who had to emigrate were at first human...

It should be known that "no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land." Every person has an immigration story, or it is likely to happen.



This analysis call upon decision makers to show tenderness for a better migration path

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Whoever
saves a life,
it will be as if they
saved all of humanity.



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