

- ☐ Mark your confusion.
- ☐ Purposefully annotate the article (1-2 mature, thoughtful responses per page to what the author is saying)
- ☐ Write a 1+ page (250+ word) response to the article.

## **8 reasons Europe's refugee crisis is happening now** by Liz Sly for *The Washington Post* 9/18/2015

A complicated mix of war, weather and logistical considerations lies behind the extraordinary influx of refugees and migrants into Europe this summer. Here are eight of the reasons that the biggest migration of people to the continent since World War II is happening now. The most important is No. 1.

### **1. The war in Syria.**

Syria's war has ground on for four years without end in sight. There is no meaningful diplomacy to end it. At least 250,000 have died. It is no wonder people want to escape. Syrians represent half of this year's unprecedented surge, which is in turn double the number the year before. In other words, without Syrians, the influx of people seeking sanctuary in Europe would be roughly where it was last year.

That was a record year, too, as was the year before. An upsurge in conflicts worldwide has fueled record levels of displacement worldwide in recent years. People also are fleeing conflict in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia and Niger. But with Syrians accounting for the bulk of those, this is turning into the year when Syria's war washed up on the shores of Europe.

### **2. The route to Europe got a lot easier.**

Until recently, the sea crossing from Libya to Italy had been the preferred route for all the migrants and refugees fleeing to Europe. A far shorter and less dangerous sea route exists from Turkey to Greece. But the journey from Greece through the Balkans to the northern European destinations preferred by refugees was far more complicated than the one leading through Italy. After Macedonia lifted harsh measures aimed at preventing refugees from entering the country in June, the route through the Balkans opened up. Turkey is next door to Syria, and it is also more easily accessible for people coming from countries farther to the east, including refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan and economic migrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh.

### **3. The price dropped.**

This is linked to reason No. 2. The crossing to Greece from Turkey takes less than an hour and as little as 20 minutes, depending on which beach the boat sets out from. Not only does this make the sea crossing cheaper, but refugees no longer needed to pay smugglers to sneak them through the borders of the Balkan countries. People planning to make the journey say they now need to pay smugglers no more than \$2,000 to \$3,000 to complete the journey instead of the \$5,000 to \$6,000 required to reach Libya and take the boat to Italy.

That means more people – many of whom were saving for the trip anyway – can afford to take the journey now.

#### **4. The weather.**

It is normal for illegal migration into Europe to peak during the summer months, when the sea crossings are safer. One reason there is a big scramble now is that a lot of people are trying to make the journey before bad weather sets in.

Given all the other reasons people are trying reach Europe now, it is hard to predict whether the onset of winter will slow down the pace of arrivals. One thing is clear: there will be more fatalities. In the past week there have been more drownings due to capsized boats on the Greece-Turkey route than in the whole of the rest of the year – 56 this week compared to 55 through the end of last week.

#### **5. Germany's extension of welcome to refugees.**

Huge numbers were already on the march when German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that Germany would offer temporary residency to all the refugees arriving there. But there seems little doubt that the offer encouraged more people to set out. Iraqis have begun to join the exodus in bigger numbers, and many of those arriving recently in Turkey to make the trip say they were encouraged by the TV footage of Germans welcoming refugees. Whether the new border controls introduced by Germany, Hungary, Austria and Slovakia will deter people who have not yet set out remains to be seen.

#### **6. The Syrian government's conscription drive.**

Short of manpower to fight the rebellion against his rule, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government has embarked since late last year on a drive to enlist reservists to serve in the army. Many of the Syrians fleeing to Europe come from government-held areas and say they were escaping forced conscription, which affects all men who completed their compulsory military service in the past 10 years – or basically, all men under the age of about 30.

#### **7. The Syrian government has made it easier for Syrians to travel.**

This might seem to contradict No. 6. But there appears to be no attempt to prevent young men who want to avoid military service from leaving the country. On the contrary, the government has made it easier to acquire passports in recent months – both in Syria and at embassies abroad – and it is possible to defer the military service with a payment of \$300.

This has confirmed the suspicions of many Syria watchers that Assad has deliberately encouraged the refugee flow, both to neighboring countries and to Europe, as part of a strategy to empty the country of potential opponents. "The humanitarian catastrophe we are witnessing is an outcome of Assad's survival strategy," said Emile Hokayem of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies. "Assad has sought to shift the burden of dealing with those in Syria who are opposed to him onto other actors."

Assad, however, blames Europe and the United States for the exodus, saying most of the refugees are fleeing the "terrorism" that he accuses the West of fomenting by supporting elements of the opposition.

## **8. The shortcomings of the underfunded international aid effort.**

Before this massive influx of people to Europe, 4 million Syrians had already fled their country's war to neighboring countries, mostly to Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. There they are living miserable lives, denied the right to work, and most of the children are not in school. Many of the refugees headed for Europe who were already living as refugees cite their children's education as the main reason they are seeking to build new lives.

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### **Possible response options:**

- What should be done about the European refugee crisis? Explain.
- Should the United States offer to take some of refugees? Explain.