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THE SITUATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES JOURNALISTS IN THE HOST SOCIETIES AND ASYLUM COUNTRIES

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Abstract:

With the continuation of the war, the bombing in my country, Syria, and the displacement crises that the Syrians have been subjected for ten years, these bad conditions directly reflected on the Syrian journalists, who in turn were forced to flee Syria to save their lives. Therefore, the article aimed to identify the conditions and situation of the Syrian refugees' journalists who are scattered and present in the host communities in which they reside or the countries of asylum to which they were displaced, by using the questionnaire form and distributing it to a purposive sample of Syrian refugee journalists residing in the countries of asylum in Türkiye, Germany, France and a number of other countries, the number of the respondents were (20) journalists, (11) males and (9) females. And the results refer that most Syrian journalists are unwilling to return to Syria, especially in light of the insecurity and lack of basic life necessities there, in addition to the presence of other challenges related to racism and hatred by some members of the host community and the difficulty of finding job opportunities or even pay for home renting or medical treatment.

Keywords: Refugee, Syrian journalist, Revolution, Civil war, Asylum challenges, Integration, Host communities

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1. Introduction

Journalists and their profession have been marginalized in my country Syria. They were organized within the framework of a bureaucratic organization in the name of the Union of Journalists in the mid-seventies whose main goal was to control media workers and subject them to the control and service of the ruling power. Since the "Arab Socialist Baath" party seized power in 1963, the Syrian media was almost completely absent, as most newspapers and magazines were suspended and their property confiscated, and Syrians were denied the right to information and knowledge in addition to that, the infliction of severe harm on Syrian journalists and media professionals who were placed in one of three tracks, as some of them abandoned the profession, some were excluded from it, and others were domesticated and absorbed in the mobilizing media institutions of the new regime, represented by some mobilization newspapers, in addition to the official radio and television.

What distinguishes the revolution in Syria is that those who did it were youth and secular activists, religious men, leaders of the local communities, political activists (De Angelis, 2011) and all social, cultural and religious classes. With the beginning of these demonstrations and the beginning of the peaceful movement and then the shift to the use of force and violence against the demonstrators, there has become an urgent need to transmit facts and news, especially in light of the media

blackout practiced by the ruling power, and then the foreign armed groups fighting in Syria. Pages for following up on news of arrests and inspecting neighborhoods and people sympathetic to the demonstrations spread with force, and then documenting the number of martyrs who died in the demonstration or in prisons under torture. The noose was tightened on everyone who wrote in these pages and was pursued, until most activists and journalists had to leave Syria to preserve the safety of their lives and to ensure follow-up media coverage of the accelerating events.

Improvised independent media began to appear. However, not all of its employees were professionals. Rather, most of them said that they are citizens pushed by the call of freedom and fighting injustice to do this work, or they are revolutionaries who play the role of collecting news as a contribution to political change in Syria. They call themselves "citizen journalists" "media workers" or "media activists". Of course, many media journalists inside and outside my country sided with the right to demonstrate peacefully and express opinion, joined its ranks and activities, and covered and analyzed the data and developments surrounding the demonstrations.

These informal alliances, also known as "coordination committees" "media centers" "press centers" or "media unions", continued to operate in parts of Syria. Journalists working with media centers publish



information on social media, or send press materials to internet radio stations or independent Syrian blogs. Some media centers operating in areas controlled by the armed opposition are able to publish dedicated areas containing brief information about the conflict, economic and social issues, and general news. Many of people don't know that before the revolution (the civil war - crises), there was only one newspaper story: the one that the ruling regime and political decision-makers, wanted to publish. Syria ranked 174 out of 180 according to the 2019 World Press Freedom Ranking published by Reporters without Borders (RSF, 2020).

Now, although not all the media are professional, at least other stories have begun to appear. In the beginning and up to now, protests and demonstrations were filmed, and clips were uploaded to YouTube. In 2012 The Syrian Journalists Association "SJA" is established, it's a free membership association open to all Syrian journalists inside Syria and in diaspora countries, and the association is a professional and trade union organization, headquartered in Damascus, the association was officially registered according to the French Associations Law 2013. It is a union, affiliated with the other side of the conflict and they are the opposition. According to the last statistics, there were 695 journalists and media workers have been killed in Syria since March 2011 until today (The National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, 2019). And about 1136 media workers were arrested, at least 421 of them are still under arrest or forcibly disappeared (SNHR, 2020).

The article aims to; to know their opinions of the role played by the journalists during the war and revolution years in Syria. Identify the conditions of Syrian refugee journalists who are in countries of asylum and host communities. Discussing their situation and the possibilities of practicing journalistic profession as media work in the new society. The journalist is the spokesperson for the Syrian refugees and the carrier of their news and their cases, so the article seeks to explore the most important challenges facing the Syrian refugee journalists. Determining the future of their presences in the countries of asylum and host communities, and the possibilities of their return to Syria, their home country.

2. Material and Methods

The article falls within the quantitative research using the descriptive approach, relying on the questionnaire tool (survey form) which is defined as questions formulated by the researcher to obtain information and data related to the article main problem and distributing it to Syrian refugee journalists in the host societies, based on the purposive sample that had been passed around to 20 Syrian refugee journalists in numbers of Arab and Western countries. The survey link, <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1tXgeNKYj0r3B3gDc5dWxemDHwJ58Ha6JK4xGT4iMVJI/edit>. The researcher wrote the survey in two languages (Arabic and English).

2.2. Statistical Analysis

The statistical program SPSS was used to extract the results, proportions and numbers. Its name originally stood for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, later changed to Statistical Product and Service Solutions, this program was software for editing and analyzing all sorts of data (Ruben Geert). Using the arithmetic mean (SMA) to calculate the frequencies and find out the percentage for each category from the survey.

3. Results and Discussion

After coding the twenty forms of Syrian journalists and extracting and analyzing data, there were many important numbers and results, and unexpected and explicit answers. The beginning will be with the demographic information of the respondents, by which I mean the respondents' place of birth, average ages, educational and professional specializations.

REFUGEE'S/ RESIDENT'S CITY IN SYRIA

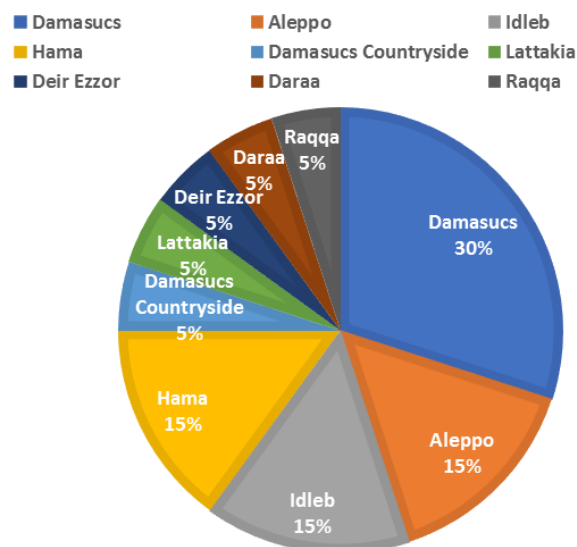


Figure 1. The place of birth of the respondents.

First of all, I have to differentiate between a number of similar terms and concepts. We need to know about the differences between refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants and when and how each term is used. The conditions, goals, and Circumstances that drove these people to leave their homes and go to other countries safer than theirs, to live in new countries and societies differed from their countries from which they came. An unprecedented 70.8 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 25.9 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2019). The emergence of the concepts of asylum and refugee dates back to the year 2000 BC (Ergüven and Özturanlı, 2013). It had seen that these concepts were important even in these early periods when the boundaries weren't determined with definite and clear lines. Since the wars and other events took place in a historical process, the refugee law was

developed over time. Wars, oppression and violence caused displacement of the communities and this situation required international regulations to protect those communities. As a result, some institutions and organizations have emerged, it's assumed that they organize the asylum and migration process. In general, refuging status isn't easy, in a trip of asylum "refugee person" is exposed and faced a lot of difficulties and adventures and obstacles in order to save their souls from death or murder. The 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees provided broader codification for refugee rights internationally rather than for specific groups. The concept of refugee in this Convention emphasizes the protection of individuals from political and other types of persecution. The Convention involves both status and rights- based approach while supporting refugees with fundamental principles such as "non-discrimination, non-penalization and non-refoulement. Refugees have a right to be protected by the country in which they see asylum and can't be forced to return home. The most important of these protections is something called "non-refoulement." This means that refugees have a right to be protected by the country in which they seek asylum and can't be forced to return home. But that isn't all the 1951 Refugee Convention outlines many other rights, such as the right to education, employment, healthcare, freedom of movement, and liberty, among others (Concern Worldwide U.S., 2019)

The logic of the Convention framework is that, with the passing of time, refugees should be able to enjoy a wider range of rights as their association and ties with the host state grow stronger. In this sense, the 1951 Convention gives refugees a solid basis on which they can progressively restore the social and economic independence needed to get on with their lives. In this regard, ExCom Conclusion No. 104 (UNHCR 2013) calls on states to facilitate, as appropriate, the integration of refugees and recalls that special efforts may be necessary to facilitate their integration. The framework for integration of refugees has also been developed in relation to resettlement (UNHCR 2013). So, a refugee is any person who has been forced to flee their country due to war, persecution, or because their home government can't or won't protect them. When a refugee flees, they are registered with an official agency, such as a government or the United Nations, which allows them to gain access to state and international aid and assistance. Refugees have legal protections guaranteed by the United Nations Refugee Agency, or UNHCR, including economic and social rights, and the ability to bring immediate family with them. Every refugee is initially an asylum seeker, although not every asylum seeker becomes a refugee (Mack 2018). However, as public and political support for refugees begins to wane in many parts of the world, some asylum seekers reach safety only to face discrimination and a struggle to find work and housing. Many are forced to move again to find employment or better access to services, such as education and health

care. "Refugees don't always settle in the country in which they first sought asylum," explains Abby Bruell, Concern's Senior Policy Officer. "Often, they leave the first country because of economic hardships and have to head elsewhere" (Concern Worldwide U.S., 2019).

But if we talk about the world's position on refugees, they differ from one country to another and may differ from one neighborhood to another, but in general there are a lot of citizens of the host communities who view the refugees with a racist, hate and lack of acceptance. On the other hand, we note that many countries have absolutely refused to open their doors to refugees, regardless of their circumstances, that compelled them to leave their countries and their memories in them. This is due to several reasons, maybe the state's unwillingness to bear the costs and pressures of the refugees 'presence on its soil, and for fear of widespread violence and chaos. Or the state's unwillingness to have a dispute with the other country to which these refugees belong, to preserve its interests, ignoring the humanitarian side. The state's unwillingness to have a dispute with the other country to which these refugees belong, to preserve its interests, ignoring the humanitarian side. And that is what faced Syrian refugees in their asylum trip to especially Arab countries of asylum. Many Arab countries didn't welcome the presence of Syrian refugees from several sides: They are countries that are basically living in economic crises. Some Arab countries still support the head of the Syrian regime and don't sympathize with the refugees and look at them as if they are saboteurs and poor people.

As we can see in the graph (Figure 1) above related to the place of birth of the respondents, the results were shown, there were 6 respondents from Damascus governorate (30%), 3 from Aleppo governorate (15%), 3 from Idlib governorate (15%), 3 from Hama Governorate (15%), 1 from the Damascus countryside governorate (5%), 1 from Daraa governorate (5%), 1 from Lattakia governorate (5%), 1 from Raqqa governorate (5%), 1 respondent from Deir Ezzor governorate (5%). One of the readers of this article may ask what is the reason for the presence of a large number of journalists who are from Damascus, the capital, at a time when the capital wasn't subjected to bombing and the systematic destruction of the infrastructure as is the case in the rest of the Syrian governorates, but the answer can be as follows: the faculty of media doesn't exist except in the capital, Damascus, and that normally makes the students of the capital the most fortunate and numerous, compared to the rest of the students who will have to leave their cities and come to the capital Damascus to study journalism and media at the university. But this doesn't mean that all students of the faculty of Media are Damascenes. Rather, the sample was as well, due to the small number of journalists in general which approximately hundreds and the lack of time available for hand out forms to more journalists. The ages of the respondents ranged between 36 years and 26 years, about (25%) of the respondents their ages were 34 years

old, the same of 33 ages, while there were (20%) of respondents their ages 36 years old (figure 2). The vast majority of the sample had studied journalism and media (75%), but about (25%) of Syrian journalists who didn't study media, they had practiced journalism career as a journalist or media activist since the beginning of the revolution.

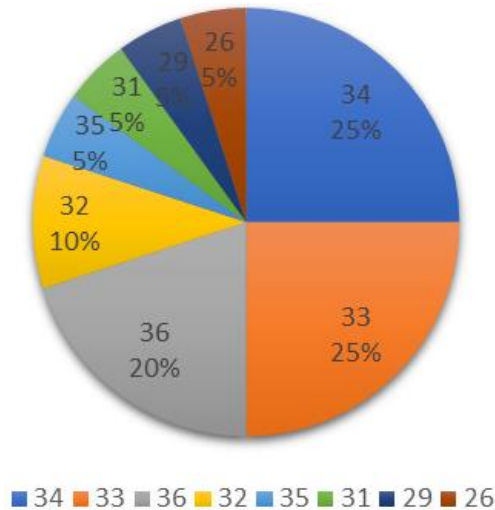


Figure 2. The age of the respondents.

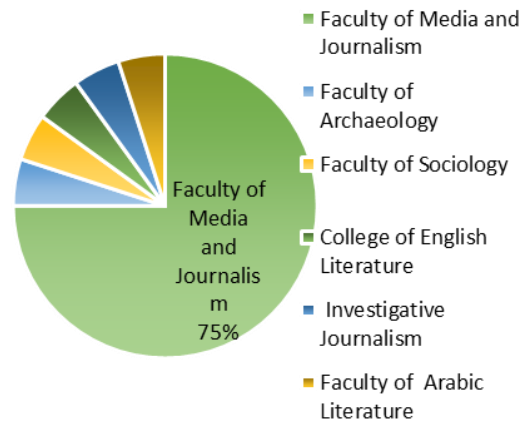


Figure 3. The university major of the respondents.

3.1. Asylum Information

When I tried to search about the Syrian journalists all over the world, I found that most of them live in Türkiye, and this was reflected in the number of journalist refugee's respondents that the form was distributed to, from Türkiye (8 respondents from 20), followed by Germany (6 interviewees). The rest is divided between France/2, Britain/1, Sweden/1, Egypt/1 and Lebanon/1 (Figure 4).

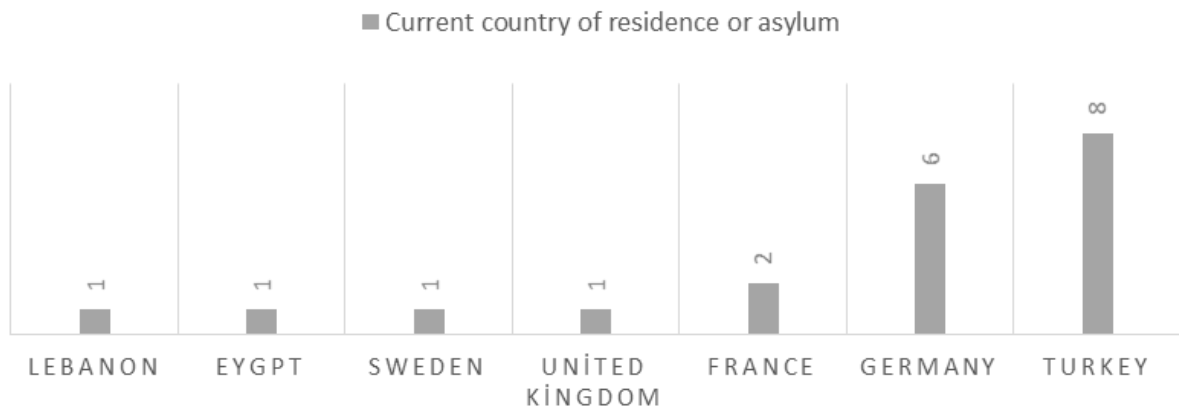


Figure 4. The current country of reside or asylum.

And what distinguished the respondents, is that all possess official papers and documents which prove the legality of their presence in the host country or the country of asylum. I noticed something important from the replies of the respondents, that 2015 was the peak year, of the influx and forced exodus of Syrians from their country to asylum countries (more than 6 respondents), and others arrived to host countries between 2012 - 2020 years. But the type of this permeation different from country to country, by relying on agreements and laws that the state is committed to with regard to immigrants and refugees who will receive them and reside in their lands. The matter differs between the residence card and the temporary protection card which gave by the Directorate General of Migration Management like (Türkiye e.g.), or the humanitarian

protection card, and each of them has certain conditions and considerations for receiving the refugee or resident to it (Figure 5).

Most of the respondents obtained permission to asylum or residence, about (75%) had a residence, other had humanitarian asylum permission (5%). It should be mentioned that Türkiye is the only country that relies on temporary protection agreements for those it calls "guests" who have entered its territory, and carrying temporary protection card (10%). The long years of asylum in some countries allow the refugee the right to obtain a citizenship of the country in which he resides.

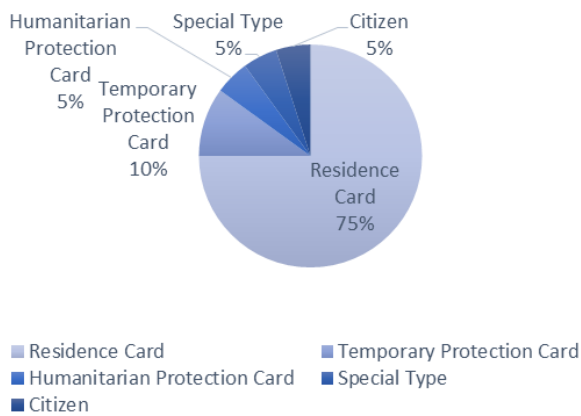


Figure 5. The type of asylum.

3.2. Journalistic Environment

In this part of survey, I tried to make the questions more specific and monitoring the situation of the journalists, I asked them whether they work in media organizations according to regular work contracts or freelancers. More than half (55%) worked as freelancers, while the others (45%) had the presence of the media organization that protects their rights through a contract (Figure 6).

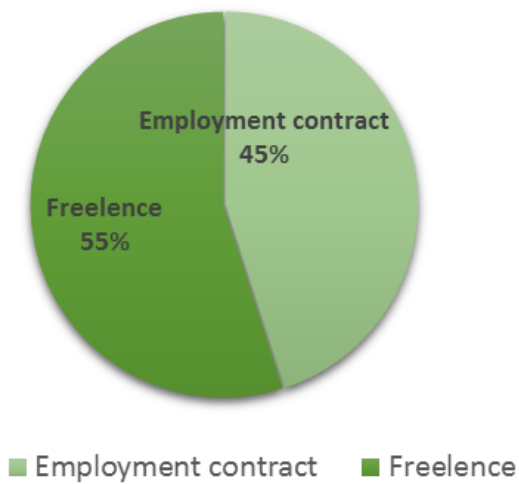


Figure 6. Practicing media.

In both cases, there were many problems and challenges that the Syrian journalist faces in the diaspora. I noticed also from the respondents, about (45%) of their answers, related to the question: if the salaries are considered proportional and suitable to the efforts and working hours, they emphasized that the salaries are commensurate with the nature of their work, while about (25%) said that the salaries didn't suitable with the long working hours, but the rest (30%) mentioned that sometimes salaries are suitable and other time not, it depends on who you're working for. The instability of funding for this institution, will negatively affect the performance of the media institution and maintain the services of journalists and its employees. It's really a big problem and challenge that troubles many Syrian journalists, especially those working in Syrian media institutions in Türkiye, which may lead in many cases to

the closure of the media institution and dispensing with the services of its employees, due to the inability to pay salaries and financial dues to employees.

In some cases, (50%) of the respondents mentioned that they didn't obtain any facilities and privileges in the country in which they reside related to their journalistic works, while only (35%) of the sample answered that they obtain advantages to practice their journalistic works, but (15%) mentioned that sometimes get facilities from the media institutions. This maybe happened due to the host country's lack of interest in the capabilities of foreign refugee journalists residing in its lands, and consequently, they are forced to work with external parts characterized by instability and sudden closure.

I asked the journalists, whether they were disturbed by the activists 'role media professionals, after ten years of the war in Syria, and the militia of the Syrian regime, regained more than (90%) of the lands that were under the control of the armed opposition, by support from fighters from Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah, as well as Russian support, in particular, the Russian warplanes that were launching their raids on civilians in all the conflict areas, thus all of that was reduced the role of the opposition media's activist, and limited their coverages only to the events in Idlib, which is still being bombed by the regime's militia and its allies. About (60%) of the respondents emphasized that the practice of the "journalism" in the countries of asylum by Syrian activists, who weren't studying journalism, don't bother journalists, who graduated from the faculties of journalism and media, and the rest (40%) of the respondents bothered from the practice of the "journalism" in the countries of asylum by Syrian activists, who weren't studying journalism. In addition to that, they have emphasized that (80%) of those who occupy important positions in media institutions in countries of asylum and host societies aren't holders of "university degrees in media" and they aren't deserving and qualified for that, while (20%) hold important positions in the media institutions and had university degrees in media studying, according to the opinion of the respondents.

I intentionally meant that some questions in the survey should be open, so that the pollster would be able to answer it comfortably. Some of the respondents didn't want to reveal their surnames, but just wrote their names, other didn't want to declare their place of work. Ammar, for example (36 years old, from Idleb, freelance journalist in Türkiye) wrote in the survey:

"Those activists used to photograph and broadcast the demonstrations to Arab News Channels, documenting security violations, and during the years of the revolution they possessed most of the skills of journalism and had practical experience comparable to those who studied journalism. The problem is that many of them claim that they have worked for years in Syria "in journalism" and in fact they only photographed or wrote one report or took a course in the media and then got a job opportunity

from the one who should deserve it”.

Mustafa Abbas (34 years old, from Damascus, freelance journalist in France) shared Ammar’s opinion, but he added another idea, that the activists’ role has ended, which was rejected by them, they wanted to continue their roles.

Raed (34 years old, from Raqqa, editor in Orient TV) said: “Large group of activists doesn’t know journalistic standards or dealing with red lines and editorial policies. I think these group offended the journalism and created great confusion in it”.

Alaa (36 years old, Aleppo, freelance journalist, reporter) and Khawla Rihan (26 years old, Damascus Countryside, media activist) ensured the idea that activists need to develop their skills.

Rama (34 years old, from Damascus) rather, she went further, and was more expressive by saying: “The media activist isn’t a journalist, but rather an eyewitness, so he can’t be relied upon as a source, nor is he aware of the basics of journalism”.

And because it is important for us to seek out and know the opinion of the media activists themselves with this question, Beshar Kanakry (33 years old, from Daraa, activist-reporter) who was forcibly displaced towards northern Syria after the military campaign on Daraa in 2018, answered as follows:

“I’m one of them, I already started working as a media activist, it’s true that a large number of activists aren’t qualified to continue working, but denying them and attacking them constantly is unjustified, as I believe the activist who didn’t develop his capabilities and rise to the required level of work will automatically disappear once he leaves the local geography in which he was working with it, I saw this matter directly. On the other hand, there are those who started an activist and honed his skills until he became an experienced journalist comparable with his experiences to experienced journalists, I know a lot of academic journalists who aren’t good at editing news! It is a matter of competence, not certification (despite its importance).”

Ali Al-Ibrahim (31 years old, from Idlib, investigative journalist) agreed with Beshar and mentioned that activists were able to pass their messages on the coverage of various international media on the Syrian issue with professionalism and skill.

While Saddam Hussain (32 years old, from Damascus, editorial officer, and radio presenter) had an opposed opinion, he considered that in the beginning, the role of the media activist was spontaneous, noble and sublime, currently, most of them are supported and funded by foreign countries, and he used the word "instigators" in reference to the media activists.

Table 1. Most popular challenges facing journalists' refugees

Most Popular Challenges	Grade	Frequency	Percentage
Learning a new language	1	14	70%
The instability and stability of the work	2	9	45%
Lack of job opportunities	3	8	40%
Obtaining rights to journalistic work; health insurance; transportation facilities; Work Permit	4	7	35%
The spread of favoritism when searching for a job	4	7	35%
Host people’s view of racism	5	5	25%
Employers exploit the journalist	5	5	25%
Pay the house rent	5	5	25%
Lack of wages and salaries	6	3	15%
High cost of living	7	2	10%
Practicing a job that doesn't match university degree	7	2	10%
Reunion	8	1	5%
Difficulties of integrating	8	1	5%
Working in a competitive environment	8	1	5%

According to the Table 1 above we can observe that the first popular challenge as the (70%) of the journalist respondents’ choice were learning a new language of the host country, it’s a natural result of the fact that the large proportion of the sample are located in Türkiye and Germany. Therefore, there was an urgent need to learn the language of the country of residence in order to facilitate the process of integration with the host community. It’s noticeable that less than half of the sample (45%), thought that the second challenge and obstacle may face during his/her stay in the country of

asylum, was the issue of instability of work. Followed instantly by the lack of available job opportunities to practice the profession of journalism in the country of residence of the journalists (40%), even if they worked, they didn’t receive transportation and travel facilities, health insurance, or work permits (35%). But there was something attracts attention, about a quarter of the sample (25%) suffered from the problem of racist view that may appear by the host community towards the refugee and displaced Syrian journalist, and the exploitation of some employers for the efforts of these

refugee journalists. Of note is that, there were many challenges, which differ from one country to another faced journalist 'refugees. In some Arab societies in which the Syrian refugee lives, the intensity of the racist discourse increases or decreases. For example, Lebanon was witnessing an increase in the tone of racist speeches by Lebanese sects and parties, compared to Egypt, which almost no racist view of the Syrian refugees from the Egyptian public. The same thing was repeated in foreign countries such as Türkiye and Germany, where it's noticed that racist rhetoric is seriously increasing towards Syrian refugees, especially in the period of municipal, parliamentary, party and even presidential elections. When I asked the respondents whether they had been threatened or persecuted by security agencies affiliated with the Syrian regime or the fighting factions in Syria, (73%) of them answered that he had never been exposed to any of the threats, while approximately (27%) of the respondents said that he may have been threatened, from Facebook comments or calling for many reasons maybe related military, security reasons or to family disagreements which in itself has become divided between those who support the Syrian regime and who

oppose it, this division may develop into conflict and fighting between members of the same family. From the table below (Table 2), I tried to measure the limit of the freedom expression in the asylum country which the Syrian journalist work in, (60%) of the sample confirmed that there is a medium average freedom to express their opinions regarding special events in Syria, in their journalist workplaces in the media institutions in countries of asylum or host societies. While (35%) of the sample had a high freedom limit to express their opinions regarding the events taking place in Syria, in terms of the conflicting parties and the political and social impacts of this war on Syrians at home and abroad, through discussion with their colleagues in their workplaces in institutions information in the host countries or countries of asylum. If this indicates anything, it indicates the high level of freedoms available to the Syrians present in the host societies to express their views and their views on what is happening in Syria, which they were missing and deprived of in their country, because of the censorship and the tight security grip on everyone who talks about the situation in Syria's social, economic, political or presidential affairs, etc.

Table 2. The level of freedom expression

Sentences	High	Medium	Zero
The freedom to express your personal opinion regarding events that happen in Syria in your workplace.	35%	60%	5%
The freedom to express your personal opinion about events happen in Syria in the country which you reside (with friends - neighbors - officials	50%	50%	-
The freedom to express your opinion on the dealings of the country, the refugee / or resident therein, regarding the files and issues of asylum in workplaces.	50%	50%	-
The freedom to express your opinion on the decisions of the refugee / or resident country regarding the Syrian file outside the frame of work	50%	50%	-
The extent that adhering to the manners, customs and laws of the host country.	80%	20%	-

I had asked the respondents, if they had the freedom to express their opinions regarding the events in Syria, but this time not with co-workers but with friends, neighbors or ordinary people in the host community, and the answers were equally between the high level and between the middle level of freedom available to them to express their opinions with these friends, and this is indicative of the same idea that we mentioned above, which confirms the availability of high freedom for a person to express his opinion in particular with regard to what is happening in Syria, and discuss this with individuals within the host community such as people who are in Türkiye, Germany and France, countries which are witnessing a heavy presence of Syrian refugees 'journalists.

With regard to the decisions of the country in which the Syrian journalist resides, the level of freedom to express an opinion on the decisions and laws issued by the governments of the host countries regarding the file of

the Syrian refugees was from medium to high the level of expression freedom, during discussions of these decisions among colleagues in press institutions or even with his friends, neighbors and whom he meets in these host societies and countries of asylum. Frankly, this gives comfort to the Syrian journalist in terms of the ability to speak on any topic related to his case or even the Syrian asylum file, which has become an international file that is discussed globally in all international forums and conferences and meetings of the U.N United Nations and the S.C Security Council. Especially since the Syrian journalist isn't accustomed to the idea of expressing his opinion frankly and transparently without any external pressure or dictates, whether by employers or even from officials and the government that punishes and prosecutes everyone who expresses his opinion on any topic, whether it's economic, cultural, educational, political, etc.

I wanted to know the extent to which the Syrian

journalists adheres to the laws, customs, traditions and morals of the society in which they reside or in which they are refugee, and the answers were that (80%) of these journalists abide and respect very highly the customs, traditions and morals of the country in which they reside, and that (20%) of journalists adhere to or respect these morals and these manners, traditions and customs on medium rate. If this indicates anything, it assures everyone that the Syrians in general, and the journalists in particular, never think about harm or breach any tradition or morals of the country that opened its door for them and protected them from the inevitable death that have been facing them in Syria. But some countries have limited the treaties' applicability to refugees from Europe only; Syrians have generally been subject to the laws and regulations governing foreign nationals or Syrians in particular, whether they are refugees or not. The lack of clarity regarding legal status has two implications. First, it means that what Syrians are legally entitled to and receive in terms of services is often opaque, varies from country to country, and is dependent on the local context. Many refugees are also unaware of their rights. Second, it implies that the de facto treatment of refugees is vulnerable to political changes (Dahi 2014).

3.3. Why the Journalists Left Syria?

In this question inside the survey, I tried to push journalists to express their opinions and convey their experiences in Syria and perhaps it had been pushed them to leave Syria. Sumaya Taha (33, Lattakia, volunteer, media activist) participated in the demonstrations in the countryside of Damascus, and she was called to the "Political Security Branch" and after the investigation with her, Sumaya said: "The officer said only because you are from Lattakia (The birthplace of the President) I will let you go, and he told me that your friend who lives with you, she wrote a report about you that you participated in demonstrations against the regime, and on the same day my brother was summoned to the Political Security branch in Lattakia and my uncle was arrested, so my family decided to seek refuge in Türkiye for a short period until the situation calmed down, and my father said one or two months, the regime falls and we return, but months and years have passed and we have completed our eighth year outside Syria".

As for Noor Al Ayoubi (36 years old, from Damascus, news anchor of orient TV), she wrote: "At the beginning of the Syrian revolution, I lost my job with one of the largest Internet and informational services companies due to its closure and the departure of its owners outside Syria, due to the deterioration of the security and political conditions. I accepted the offer to work journalism in institutions affiliated with the Syrian revolution and traveled to Gaziantep".

Not only this, but also here other reasons like participated in the demonstrations against the regime and fearing of arrest. Ammar expressed that he left Syria, because was wanted for military service and added:

"Because I participated in the demonstrations against the regime that was killing protesters. I was fear of arrest".

The same for Mustafa al Dabbas (33 years old, from Hama, video producer-news anchor). He was afraid to die or get arrested because of his political opinions, he was working with an opposition political party. Certainly, there were a number of journalists who were actually arrested, as is the case with Ali Alibrhaim, he left Syria because of the regime had arrested him in 2012 and ISIS in 2013, and after he released, her mother and sister were martyred in 2015, which prompted him to leave the country. While Riham Alkousa (29 years old, Palestinian Syrian, journalist for Reuter's office in Germany) was arrested for her journalistic work in Syria and she had to leave at the first opportunity to find a free journalistic work environment, as she mentioned.

Displacement is the reason for leaving Syria, as what happened with Khaled and Khawla. Khaled Khalaf (33 years old, from Idleb, freelance journalist) had lived in Idleb he said:

"Financially, I had had a work and had a very good income in Idleb, but I went out for a better future for my children, there was some danger to us, whether in terms of bombing or repeated displacement, for example; I changed 5 homes in less than two years because the home had been destroyed after bombing it". But some journalists didn't leave their homes in Syria voluntarily, Khawla Rihan was exposed to forced displacement after 6 years of siege in Eastern Ghouta. And when I asked the journalists whether they would return to their homeland, Syria, under one condition, it's the stable in security in it, completely half of the sample (50%) doesn't want to return to Syria even if the security situation stabilizes and the war in it has ended, while (30%) of the journalists would like to return to Syria when it becomes stable in security and politics, but (20%) of them didn't provide a definitive answer with regard to return to Syria, even if there is stability. In the survey, I insisted on knowing what the solutions and conditions suggested by the journalists in order to return to Syria, I could summarize it like:

1. A new political system governs Syria.
2. Ensure that there is no security pursuit.
3. The provision of safety and a decent life.
4. Getting rid of injustice.
5. The high level of freedoms and the provision of appropriate conditions for practicing journalistic work.

While the remaining half of the journalists didn't think of returning to Syria, as many of them left their homes and lands after it was completely bombed and destroyed by the regime and its allied forces supporting and some of them feared for themselves of arrest because of their opinion and position against the regime in Syria. Non-return due to reasons including their stability in the host country, their psychological and financial comfort, and their security for the future of their children, given the difficulty of starting over from scratch in the devastated

country of Syria, so that some of them acquired the nationality of the host country such as Noor and Ammar had got the Turkish nationality after residency of almost 7 years, and Muhammad (36 years old, from Idleb, journalist in BBC World-data scientist) had got Britain nationality after 9 years residency, and a good number of the respondents obtained permanent residency, as Khaled Khalaf who had been lived in France. Therefore, it's unthinkable for Syrian journalists residing in host communities to return to Syria, because they were sure that there is no minimum of basic necessities to live. Although I asked the respondents whether they had chosen the country of asylum or imposed their transfer on it, the answers clarified that (65%) of the sample had chosen the country in which they left and moved to live in, while (40%) of the respondents didn't have the ability to choose the country in which they took refuge in it due to the conditions of displacement. Some of them indicated that they moved from Syria to Lebanon legally and then moved to Türkiye and then European countries, through a work contract, student or tourist visa, some of them had faced many difficulties during moving or fleeing Syria due to bombing, killing and arrest. Other tried repeatedly to enter Türkiye in an illegal way, settled there or moved to Greece and then to European countries.

Here in this part of topic related to return to Syria, it was necessary not only to present the results in numbers. However, it was necessary to explain the situation that occurred with the Syrian refugees' journalists during their asylum journeys. Khawla Rihan wrote:

"We decided to embark on the smuggling adventure after we were shocked by the terrifying reality and the continuous bombings in Idleb, we arrived in Türkiye after we cut down forests at night and were exposed to many dangers that almost led to our death, Türkiye was our only way".

On the other hand, the reasons for a number of respondents preferred certain asylum countries differed. Ammar expressed:

"I didn't choose Türkiye as a final country, but it could be said that it was a fait accompli, due to its proximity to Syria, and my work was based in Istanbul, so I stayed there".

One of the journalists, Saddam, chose Lebanon because it isn't considered a country of asylum, and his preference is due to its geographical proximity to Syria, and it doesn't require an entry visa.

Mustafa Abbas and Khaled mentioned that France was the only country to accept asylum applications for Syrians through its embassies compared to Germany and other European countries.

While Mustafa Al-Dabbas had another way to asylum, it was by UNHCR office, he said: "when anyone applied to UNHCR office, they would send application to different embassies, which embassy accepts the require, it is the country of asylum, it had been German".

3.4. The Residence in Host Communities

In another case, I discussed with the respondents the question related to the things that worry them while they were residing in the host countries, the answers and responds differed and should be summarized by:

1. Lack of job opportunities.
2. Job instability.
3. Racism.
4. Alienation.
5. Belonging and identity.
6. Difficulty extracting documents and official papers.
7. The change of governments policies.
8. Deportation for any reason and impose sudden decisions on refugees.
9. Learning the new language.
10. Reunion or anxiety for the family residing remaining in Syria.
11. Non-permanent housing.
12. Health insurance.

And because (80%) of the sample applied the rules and respected the customs, manners and laws of the asylum and host countries, the responds focused that by: Aghyad Shekho (32 years old, from Aleppo, translator- TV anchor) expressed more about this point:

"It is imperative to integrate into the host societies, and respect the customs and traditions of the country in which we reside, while preserving the privacy of our Syrian customs and traditions".

Khawla wrote: "It should be applied (the rules), because we are guests in this country and we have to respect it".

Khaled said: "I follow what is logical and moral, and I sometimes disagree with what contradicts my belief or religion".

I asked the respondents what are the wishes that they hope to be fulfilled as journalists while they are in the host countries. The answers varied between the desire to change the stereotypical image of Syrians in the host countries, and some of them wishing to obtain more psychological stability away from partisan political fluctuations in the new societies. Khaled wrote:

"I hope that I shell contribute to changing false stereotypes that have been conveyed about us, whether from the regime and its progeny, or from the opposition parties. I hope that the Europeans will really understand what is happening in Syria, far from the propaganda of their media and politicians". While the hope of Noor is very simple, she mentioned that hopes obtaining a work residency not a tourist, working for a professional media organization that appreciates journalistic and media capabilities, the same opinion for Alaa, she wrote: "I hope to have work permit, press card and Turkish citizenship".

Rama al-Abbosh (34 years old, from Deir Ezzor, news anchor in orient TV) hope to having good opportunities as a journalist to develop her career and resume it. Mustafa Abbas and Haya (34 years old, from Hama) hope a classical wish or maybe it is like a right of the refugee in

the new society, they hope to get a steady job opportunity with a good salary in the host country. Likewise, Saddam wrote confidently: "Currently, expectations are different. I hope to increase the salary first and get more opportunities for professional development in my place of residence in Lebanon".

3.5. The Future of Syria

Regarding the opinions of the journalists about the future of Syria, there were varied views and opinions, including the following:

Mustafa al-Dabbas expressed that Syria need at least years to recover from the damage caused by war, the damage in different levels, politically, economically, human rights, infrastructure, education. Mustafa said: "An entire generation of children is traumatized by war inside and outside Syrian need

a lot of time to recover. I don't see any bright side"

Riham insisted this idea and added: "There is no hope for a promising future in Syria, the Iraq scenario at best".

Mukhtar Al-Ibrahim (35 years old, from Hama, investigative journalist) expressed: "An unknown and ambiguous future to Syria, in the absence of an international desire to resolve matters".

While Alaa, Aghyad and Khaled thought that the partition is coming, as a solution of the future of Syria, as Noor asserted that a federal Syria within a new political transition situation, this is the future of Syria. But Rama had a different view, she wrote with all heartbreak:

"The current situation of Syria is from bad to worse, Assad remains, there is no place for freedoms, the situation is like hell, and frankly now I want to get back the rest of my family and I want them to come to Germany and Syria will no longer concern me".

Hence, we can make sure that many Syrian journalists existing in the host countries and societies have aspirations and wishes that they hope to achieve because they reside in these countries and it isn't clear what is the future of Syria in light of the continuing war and insecurity in it, and the lack of infrastructure, basic living services in Syria. Therefore, I noticed that the Syrians afraid to be expelled or abruptly deported to Syria by officials and host governments.

4. Conclusion

To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first paper to directly assess and sheds light on the reality of the Syrian refugee journalists who are scattered and dispersed in all of the world, whether they are in host societies or even in countries of asylum. I used the questionnaire tool (survey form) and distributing it to Syrian refugee journalists in the host societies, based on the purposive sample that had been passed around to 20 Syrian refugee journalists in numbers of Arab and Western countries. I noticed through this paper that most Syrian journalists are unwilling to return to Syria, especially in light of the insecurity and lack of basic life necessities there, and our results suggest that a large percentage of Syrian journalists face many challenges in the countries of

asylum, the most difficult of which is the challenge of learning the new language (The language of the country in which they reside), in addition to the presence of other challenges related to racism and hatred by some members of the host community and the difficulty of finding job opportunities or even pay for home renting or medical treatment. But what caught my attention was the result had shown that the difficulty of integration was ranked eighth rate and last challenges compared to others. As I mentioned above, the first challenges were the difficulty in learning a new language and the instability of work, followed by the lack of journalist rights from health insurance and travel facilities for media coverage of events. It's important to note that our results differ from other papers that dealt with the issue of Syrian refugees in general without focusing on the topic of Syrian refugee journalists in the countries of asylum, nor their challenges they face, so this paper will be a gateway to other researches and continuing studies that highlight on the reality of Syrian journalists and their future.

Author Contributions

All task made by M.Y. (100%) data acquisition and analysis, writing up, submission and revision. The author reviewed and approved final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

This study was carried out with the permission of Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences (approval number 3/2022 and date 23.02.2022), and all attenders provided written informed consent to participate in all procedures associated with the study.

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