

An ACRPS opinion poll of Syrian refugees and displaced persons in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and within Syria along the Syrian-Turkish border found that 78% of respondents view the June 3 presidential elections planned by the Syrian regime to be illegitimate. In contrast, only 17% of the respondents accepted the legitimacy of the poll, with a further 5% of the respondents declining to give an opinion. The ACRPS survey is unprecedented in both scope and scale.

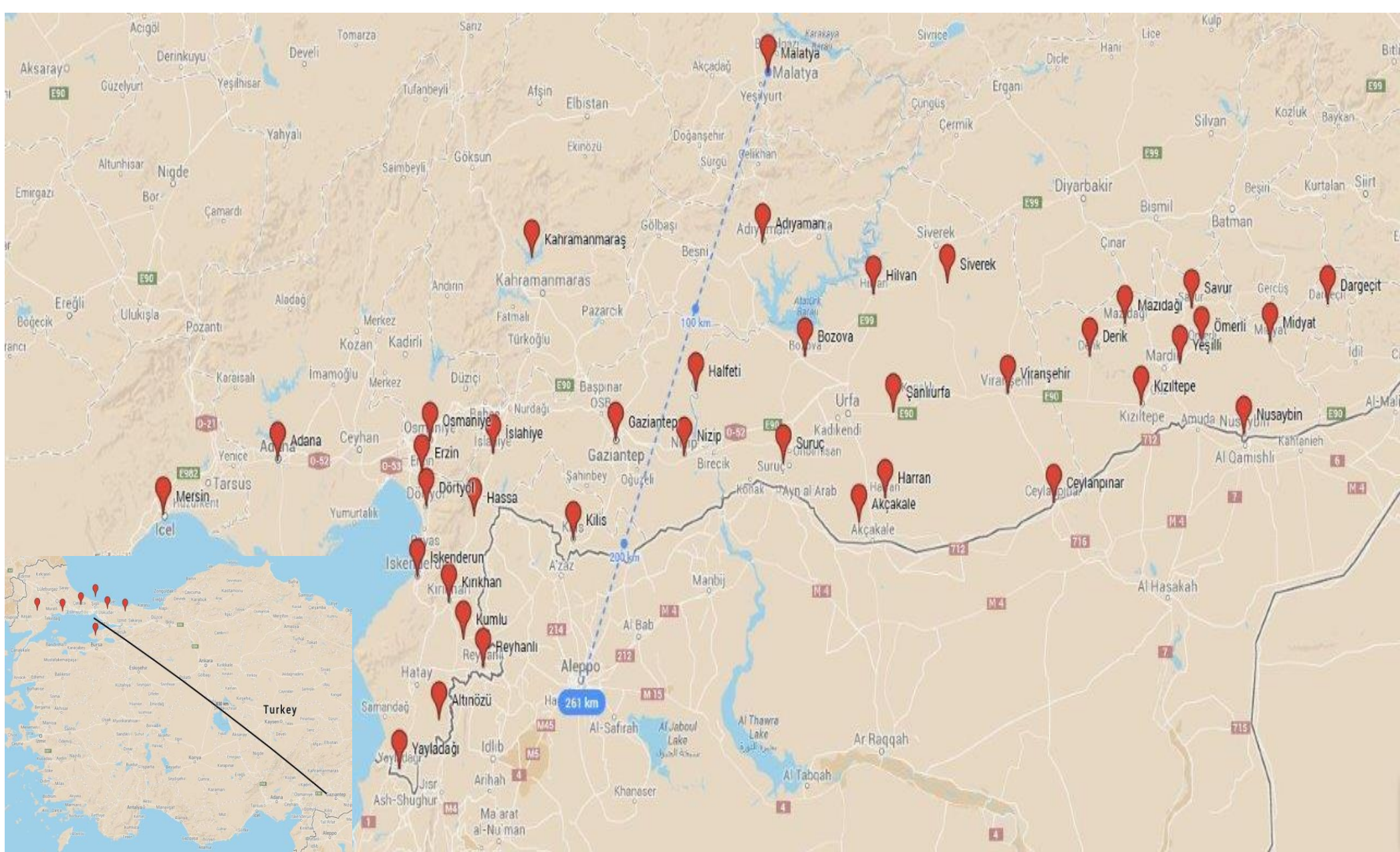
A total of 5,267 respondents, coming from 377 population centers inside and outside official refugee camps registered by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), took part in the survey. The sampling procedure adopted a multi-staged clustered approach to allow for a proportional distribution of surveys as per geographic distribution. The final margin of error for the survey findings is an estimated $\pm 2\%$.

Table 1 Refugee and displaced persons population centers, by country.

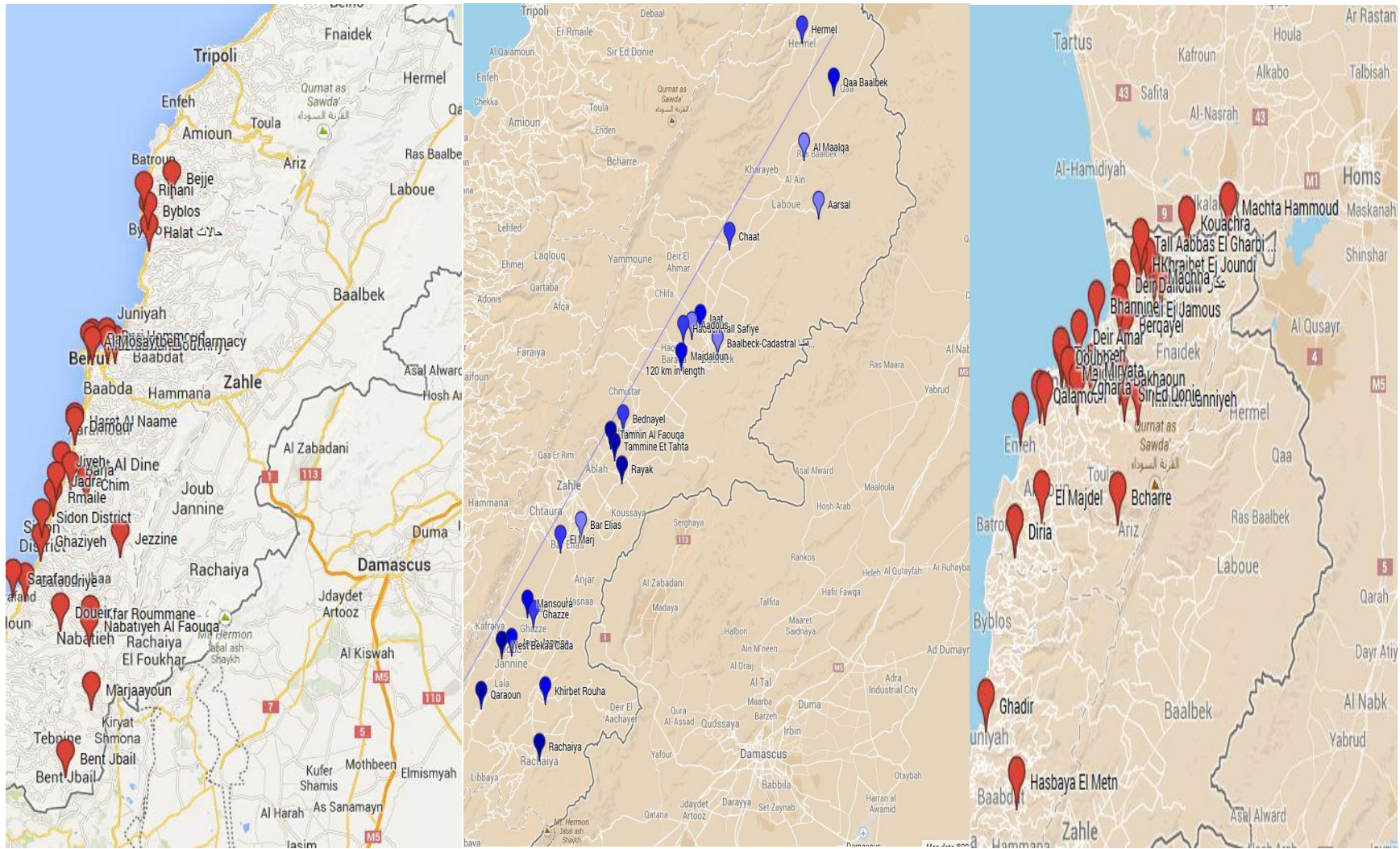
Country	No. of refugee population centers
Turkey	151
Lebanon	101
Jordan	102
Adjacent to the Syrian-Turksih border (Internally displaced persons)	23
Total	377

In order to carry out the survey, the ACRPS worked with a number of partner organizations in the countries hosting Syrian refugees. These include Statistics Lebanon in Lebanon for Syrian refugee population centers throughout Lebanon, where there are no recognized camps, and the Center for Strategic Studies based at the University of Jordan in Amman for Syrian refugees living outside of UNHCR-registered refugee camps. Within Jordan's officially recognized camps and all Syrian refugee population centers in Turkey and on the Syrian-Turkish border, the ACRPS took direct responsibility for the conduct of the survey. Overall, more than 400 fieldworkers contributed to this survey, all of whom had taken part in 10 individual training workshops convened by the ACRPS in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.

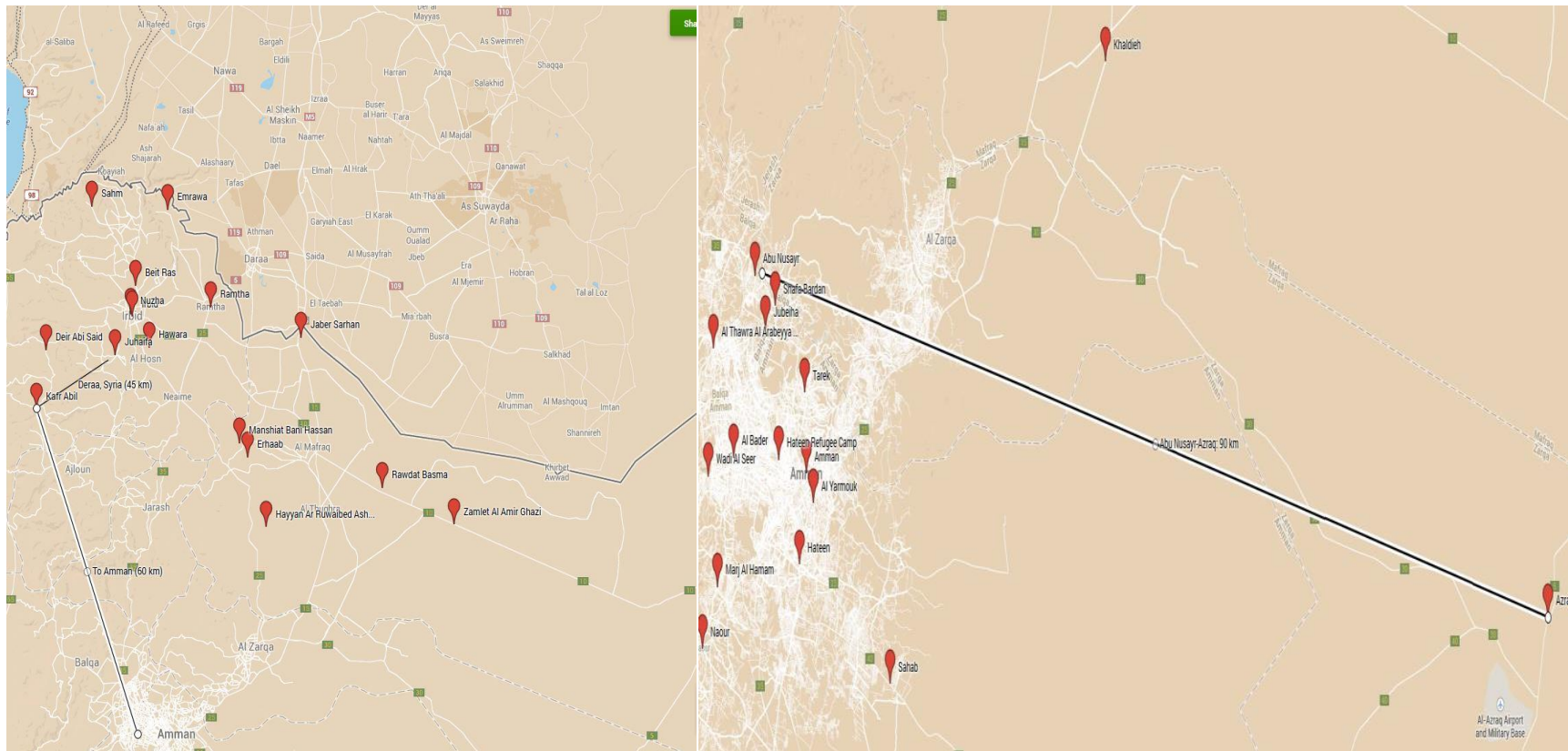
The findings presented below provide a breakdown of Syrian refugees' attitudes toward the presidential elections held by the Syrian regime on June 3, 2014, the best possible resolution to the Syrian crisis more broadly, and the fate of Bashar al-Assad and his term in office.



Map1 Spread of refugee population centers in Turkey. Inset: Istanbul in comparison to other major centers in Turkey.



Map2 Refugee population centers, distributed (l-r): Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Lebanon; the Bekaa; North Lebanon.



Map3 Refugee population centers in Jordan (l-r): within the Amman and Zarqa Governorates; across Jordan.

The findings indicate that the overwhelming majority of Syrians abroad, at a level of greater than 75%, view the June 3 elections as unrepresentative of the Syrian people, particularly since only regime supporters will take part in the elections, suggesting that the results of any such elections are a foregone conclusion. Further, the results show a widely held view among the respondents that the regime's determination to hold the elections implies an increased mandate for it to continue killing the Syrian people and inflicting violence on them, prolonging and intensifying the crisis. A near-consensus of 75% of the respondents indicated their lack of confidence in the main institutions of the Syrian regime: the military, the People's Assembly (Parliament), the police, the judiciary, the cabinet of ministers, regional governors, and Bashar al-Assad.

Respondents to the survey cited a multitude of reasons for leaving their homes and relocating to host countries, or, in the case of the internally displaced, to camps within Syrian territory. Most respondents reported that they left because they were targeted by the regime, or because they lived in areas that were bombed and raided by the regime and its allies. Other groups of respondents reported leaving due to violence that had broken out in their areas of residence, in search of safety, out of fear of being called into military service, or a deterioration of their living conditions. Other respondents, however, fled from areas and neighborhoods that were safe and where their livelihoods were not seriously threatened. They also believed that they were not particularly vulnerable to be targeted by the regime. As a result, the survey sample is an accurate snapshot of the Syrian population that left their country in the aftermath of the revolution, and reflects the diverse reasons for which they left.

Analyzing the results based on the original governorates and cities the refugees were originally displaced from reveals a similarly diverse set of geographic origins; importantly, all of the governorates in Syria were covered in the survey sample. However, a majority of the respondents were drawn from a limited number of provinces in Syria: Aleppo (18%), Daraa (17%), Idlib (16%), Homs (14%), and Damascus (13%). The breakdown is provided in Table 1.

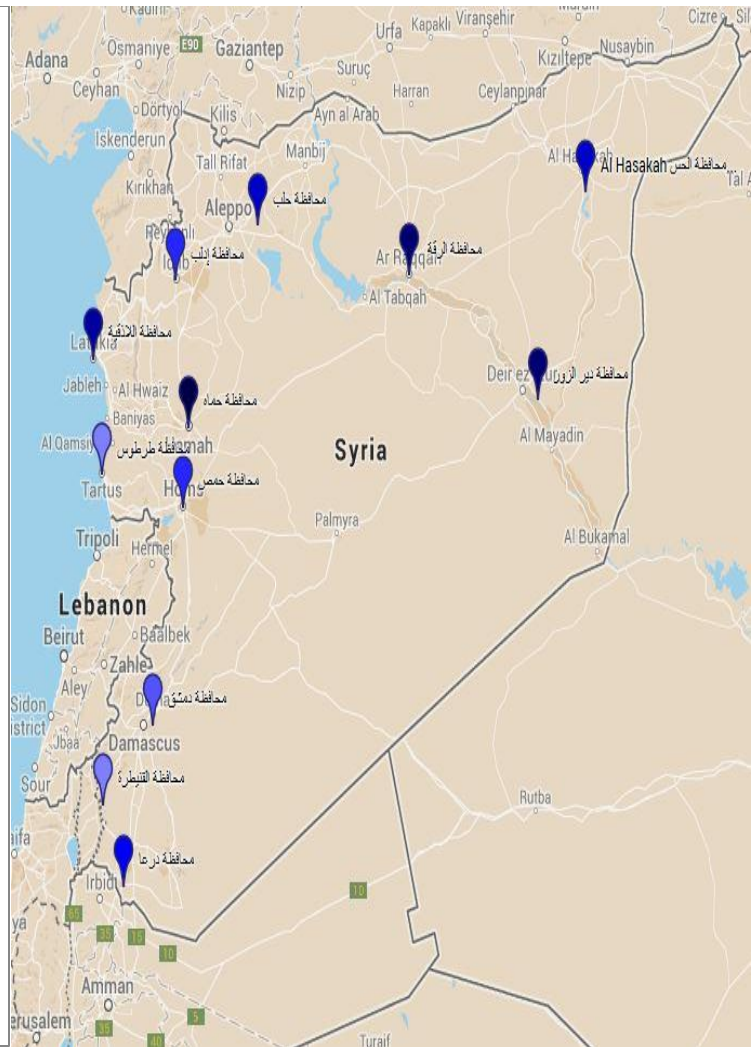
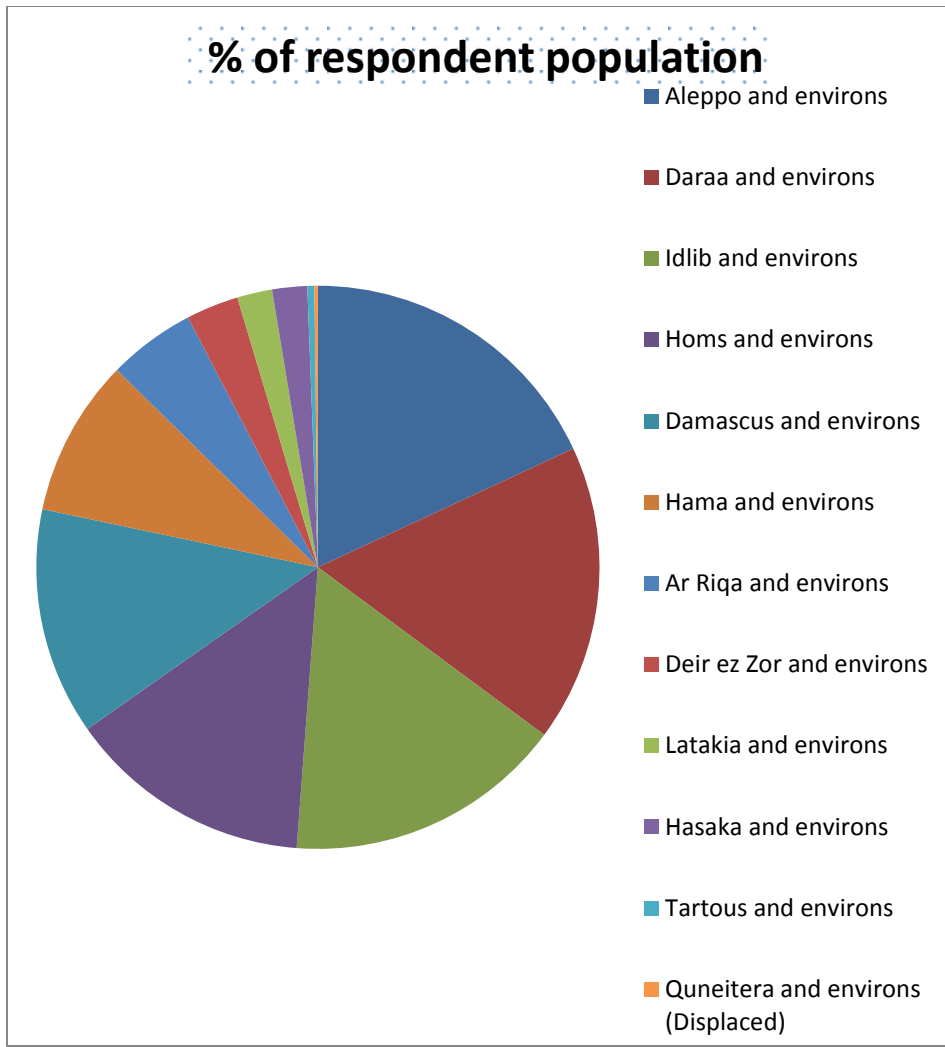


Figure1 Syrian refugee population broken down by governorate of original residence. Map 4 Syrian Refugees: Governorates of original residence. Darker points indicate a greater proportion of the refugee population.

Syrian Public Attitudes toward the June 3 Presidential Elections

The Syrian regime's call for elections to be held on Tuesday, June 3 was met with a wide degree of controversy among Syrians over the legitimacy of these elections given the development of events since the outbreak of the Syrian Revolution in March 2011. The opinion poll reported here provides a more detailed attempt to understand Syrian refugees' and displaced persons' opinions toward those elections.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents to the survey, 78%, reported the view that the elections were illegitimate, compared to 17% of respondents who felt the elections were legitimate. Only 4.7% of the respondents either declined to or could not answer the question. Respondents were also asked to describe their level of agreement with a set of statements on the nature of these elections. The results offer a more in depth explanation of this opinion.

Most of those refugees who believed in the election's legitimacy were concentrated in Lebanon. The proportion of those in Lebanon who accepted the legitimacy of the June 3 elections was six times higher than similar proportions for the Syrian refugees surveyed in Turkey, Jordan or those displaced within Syrian territory.

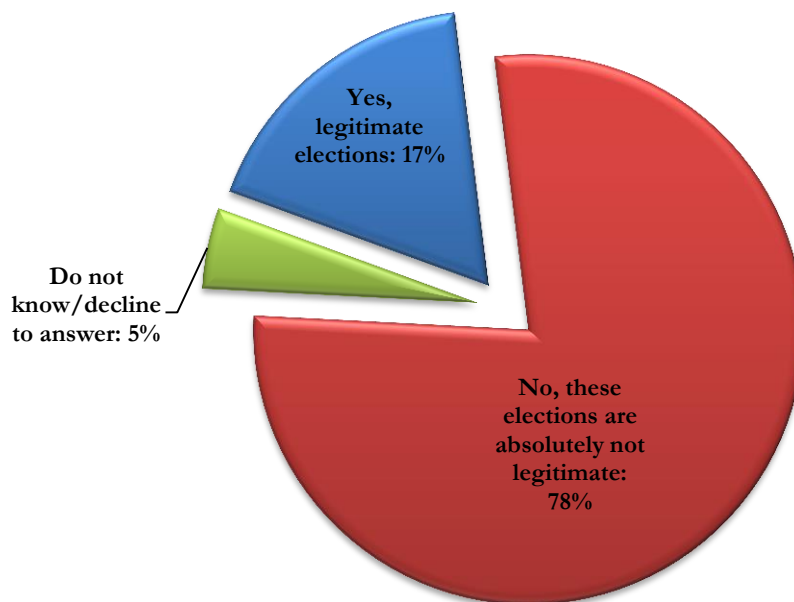


Figure 2 Respondents' views on the legitimacy of the June 3 presidential elections.

Significantly, 77% of the respondents expressed the view that the June 3 elections would not be representative of the Syrian people because a majority of Syrians—within the country's borders and abroad—would not participate. Only 18% of respondents believed that a majority of Syrians would participate. These findings match closely with answers to other questions. A case in point is where 77% of Syrian refugees believed that the elections convened by the Syrian regime were illegitimate on the grounds that only the regime's proponents would take part, while 70% of respondents held the view that the elections were illegitimate because of the fact that only candidates vetted by the regime would be allowed to run. In the same vein, 76% of the respondents held the view that the elections could not be deemed elections since the results were known in advance.

Respondents also expressed their belief in a connection between the scheduling of the elections and the prolonging and intensification of the crisis: 73% believe that holding the elections would imply the increased intensity and prolonging of the present crisis. This same percentage of refugees, 73%, also agreed with the statement that holding the elections on the day for which they were planned would result in increased regime violence against the Syrian people and an expanded mandate for the regime to kill the Syrian people. In conclusion, the proportion of Syrians who expect the presidential elections to impact Syria positively varies between 16% and 18%, while the proportion who believe that it will impact their country negatively varies between 73% and 78%.

Syrian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons' Attitudes toward Regime Institutions

A clear majority of respondents view the June 3 elections as illegitimate. The results show also how similar majorities believe the results of the elections to be predetermined; that they are unrepresentative of the Syrian people, believing that a majority of the people will not take part; and that candidacy in the elections will be limited to persons approved and vetted by the regime. Ultimately, a clear majority of respondents hold the view that the holding of the elections will deepen and extend the life of the present conflict in Syria. Delving deeper into the Syrian refugees' and displaced persons' attitudes toward the regime and its institutions, a number of questions determining respondents' attitudes toward and confidence in a specific set of institutions was asked. These institutions include the army (the regime's forces); the People's Assembly (Syria's parliament); the police and the intelligence services; the judiciary; the cabinet of ministers; Governors of Syria's 14 administrative governorates; and Bashar al-Assad.

The results show that a majority of Syrians have no confidence in any of their country's state institutions. The two institutions that enjoyed the greatest level of public

confidence were the judiciary and police services in Syria, with 22% of respondents expressing confidence in each of these two institutions. The institution with the least level of public support was the Syrian intelligence services, which only 16% of respondents expressed some level of confidence in. Views toward the regime’s military were similar, with 20% of respondents expressing confidence in the army, compared to 78% who reported not having any confidence in the military. In short, approximately three-quarters can be said to have no confidence in any of the Syrian state’s institutions.

Table 2 State institutions by confidence of respondents in them.

	Percentage of Respondents showing confidence in specific state institutions		Do not know/declined to answer
	High level of confidence/limited confidence	Complete of confidence/lack of confidence to some extent	
The Syrian judiciary	22	76	3
The police service	22	76	2
The regime’s military	20	78	2
Governors	19	77	3
Bashar al Assad	19	78	4
The Syrian People’s Assembly	18	79	3
The Government/Cabinet of Ministers	18	79	3
The Syrian Intelligence Services	16	81	3

The survey also asked respondents to identify two parties/states that they believed to have the greatest level of control on decision-making in Syria. This question was asked in an effort to elucidate respondents' understanding of the present situation in their country and to determine whom they held accountable. While the results show no unambiguous consensus, three separate entities and state players were identified more frequently than any others: 28% of respondents named Iran as one of the two most influential parties with a say in Syrian decision-making and policy formation; 22% cite Bashar al-Assad and his family; and 16% identify Russia. Notably, only 4% of respondents identified the Syrian regime's military as one of the two most influential players for policy formation in their home country.

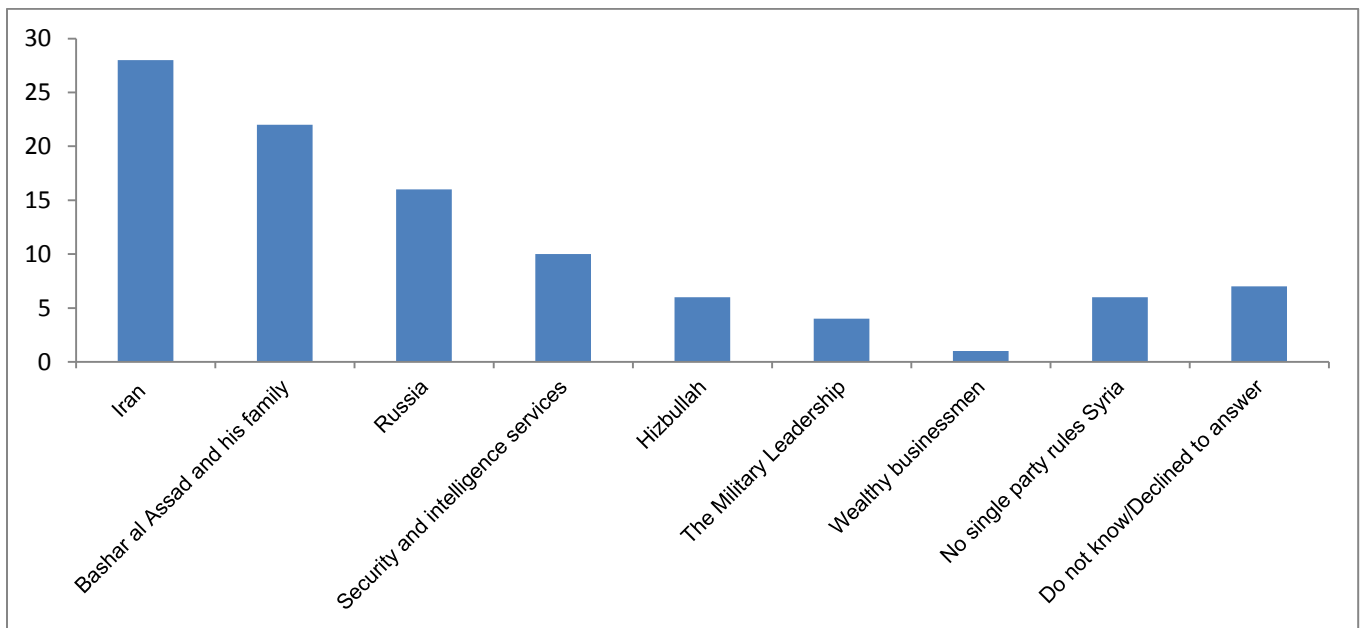


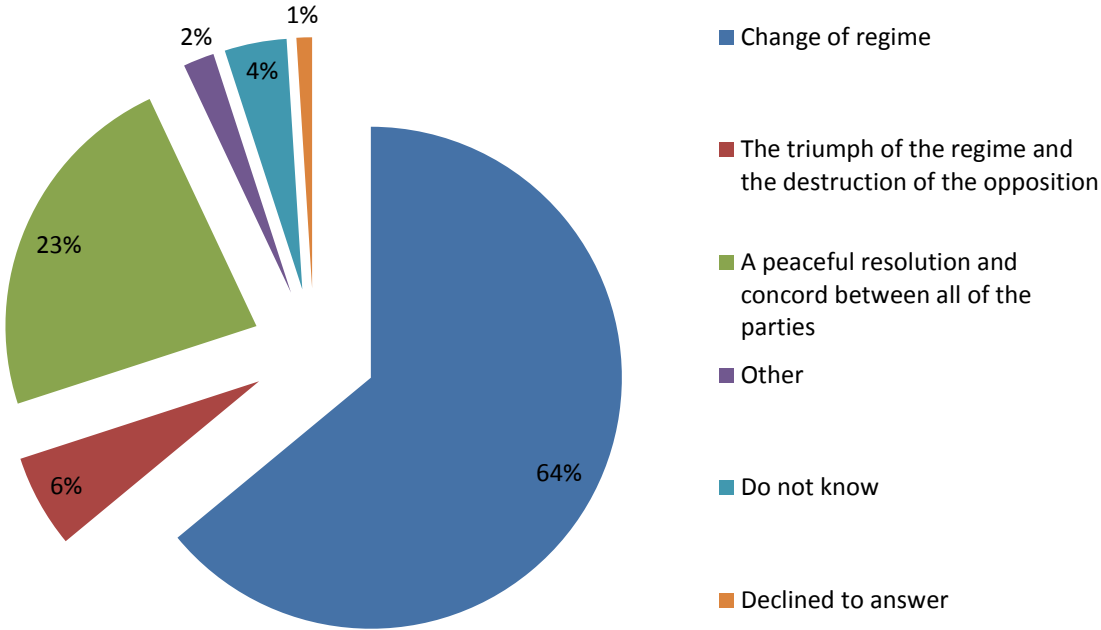
Figure 3 Parties identified by respondents as being one of the two most important in decision-making in Syria.

Proposals From Syrian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons to end the Crisis

Respondents to this survey were asked what they thought would be the ideal solution to the Syrian crisis in the form of an open-ended question: "In your opinion, what is the ideal solution to the Syrian crisis?" While the respondents' written answers were varied, they were grouped into three main categories. The first category of responses, accounting for 64% of the respondents, centered on the "change of regime". A second category of responses demonstrated a belief that the ideal solution to the Syrian crisis would come through the "continuation of the regime's pummeling of the opposition until victory," though this only accounted for 6% of responses to this open-ended question. Meanwhile, 23% of the respondents provided answers that proposed "a peaceful

solution based on conciliation between all of the parties to the conflict”. A further 5% of respondents did not express any preference for the ideal solution to the Syrian crisis, and 1% declined to provide an answer.

Table3 Proposed solutions to the Syrian crisis: respondents' answers.



A more detailed breakdown of the responses which fit into each category can be found in Appendix I.

Support For and Opposition to the Abdication of Bashar al-Assad

Simultaneously with the outbreak of protests in Syria, in March 2011, the idea of Bashar al-Assad’s abdication from power was increasingly broached as a possible exit strategy that would allow Syria to move to a new political phase. Based on this, respondents in the areas covered by the ACRPS survey of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “It would be better for Syria today if President Bashar al-Assad abdicated power.” The results were very clear, with 78% of respondents being in agreement, compared to 17% who disagreed with it. A total of 5% of respondents either declined to respond to the statement, or expressed no view on that statement.

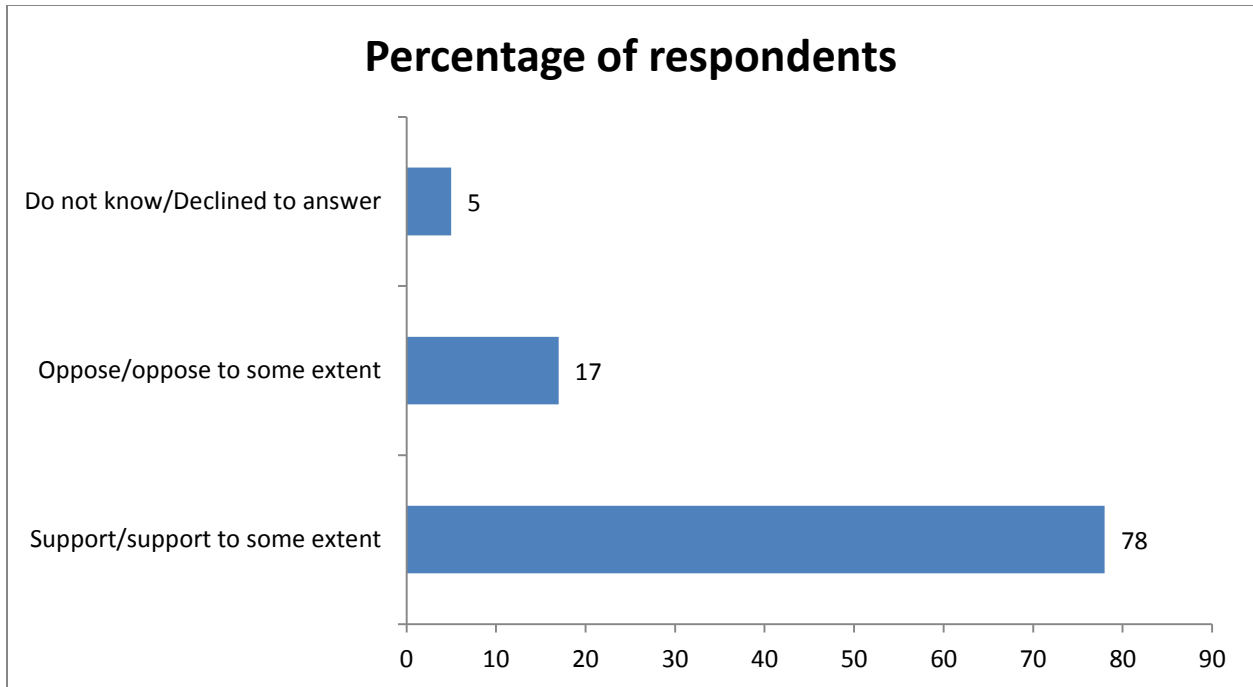


Figure 4 Respondents support for/opposition to the abdication of Bashar al Assad.

Comparing the respondents’ answers to their geographical locations makes it clear that the only break in the near-consensus is found among refugees in Lebanon. Unlike those in Jordan, Turkey, or along the Syrian-Turkish frontier, only 51% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon favored the Bashar al-Assad’s abdication outright, in comparison to 40% who were opposed to al-Assad leaving power. This increased support for al-Assad’s regime among Syrian refugees in Lebanon is arguably related to the fact that many regime supporters relocated to Lebanon together with their families. A summary and breakdown of the reasons cited by respondents for their attitudes toward al-Assad’s abdication can be found in Appendix II.

Public Opinion towards the Syrian Revolution

This section is dedicated to respondents’ attitudes toward a number of issues related to the revolution.

Support for the Revolution: Have things changed?

Respondents were asked to compare their attitudes toward the protests and upheaval during the first six months of the revolution—between March and September 2011—to those they held in May 2014, at the time of the survey. Specifically, respondents were asked to explain whether they were sympathetic to either of the two sides, al-Assad’s regime and the protestors, or if they had no preference during each of the time frames. The results demonstrate a hardening of opinion against the Syrian regime over the three-year lifespan of the revolution.

When asked about their opinions during the first six months of the rebellion, 52% of respondents reported that they had been closer to the opposition and opposed to the al-Assad regime at that time, compared to 19% who reported that they had identified more closely with the regime at that time. A full 28% of respondents report that they had been neutral during that period.

When asked to describe their views at the time of the survey, three years into the revolution in Syria, a 60% majority of respondents reported that their views are now more closely aligned with the Syrian opposition and against those of the regime. In contrast, only 13% of the respondents reported that their views were more aligned with the regime at the time of the polling. Such results reflect unambiguously how attitudes towards the regime have hardened over the past three years of the Syrian Revolution. Support for the opposition has grown in tandem with this, and is now higher than it was in the first six months of the revolution, marked by peaceful protests. These statistically significant shifts in support for the regime or the opposition indicate that the policies employed by the regime since March 2011 have not served to increase its popular base.

Table 4 Support for the regime vs. the opposition at different points in the conflict.

	During the first six months of the revolution	After three years of the revolution (at time of survey)
Closer to (“more sympathetic”) the protestors and opposed to the regime	52%	60%
Closer to (“more sympathetic”) the regime and opposed to the protestors	19%	13%
Opposed to both sides	(Not asked)	11%
Do not have/did not have a firm opinion (neutral)	28%	15%
Do not know/declined to answer	1%	1%

The Militarization of the Revolution

In an effort to understand attitudes within the Syrian refugee community toward the Syrian Revolution, and its transformation from a peaceful rebellion based on protests into a rebellion characterized by the militarization of some of the factions, respondents were asked to select one of two statements that best described their points of view. The

aim of this choice was to determine which explanations, if any, the respondents could provide, for the transformation described above.

The two options were:

Statement one: “The regime’s use of violence and murder drove the people to take up arms in self-defense.”

Statement two: “Protestors in Syria came to the conclusion that it would be impossible to remove the regime except through the armed struggle.”

Statement one was selected by 67% of respondents as being a reflection of their own opinions more closely, with only 20% of respondents choosing statement two. A further 10% of respondents indicated that neither of these two statements described their opinion toward the conflict, or how it transformed from a peaceful revolution into a militarized confrontation.

A Civil or a Religious State?

The survey also sought to determine respondents’ attitudes on the preferred nature of a post-conflict state in Syria, and whether they preferred it to be a religious or civil state. Results show that a clear 50% of Syrians would prefer that a future, post-conflict state in Syria be a “civil” state, while 30% of the respondents expressed a preference for a religiously based state. A third group, 18% of the respondents, indicated that they had no preference either way on this particular point. Only 2% of respondents either declined to answer the question or indicated that they did not know how to answer the question.

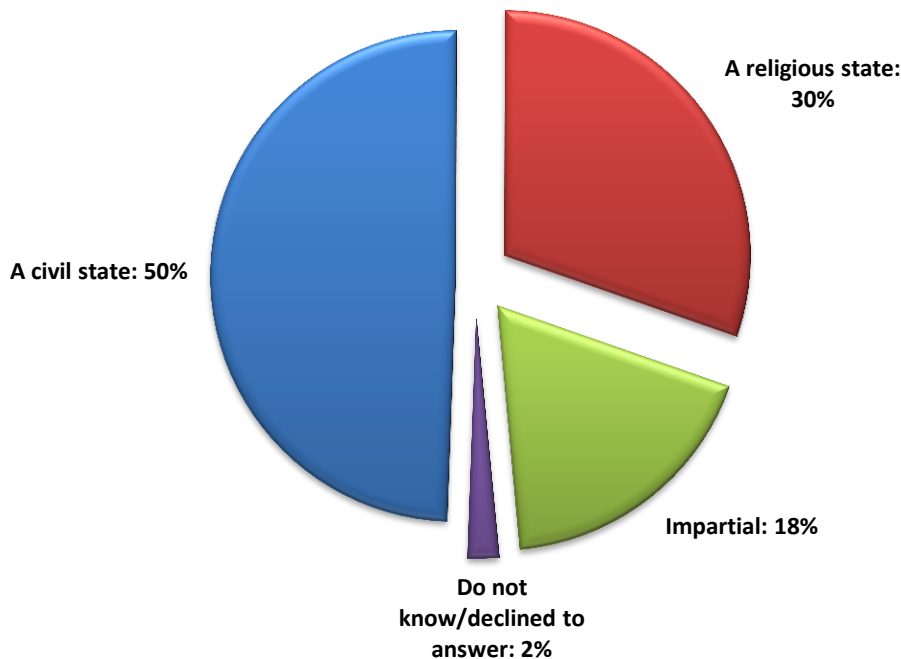


Figure 5 Respondents' preferences for the nature of a post-conflict state in Syria.

Conclusion

The results of this survey show how a majority of Syrian refugees living in three host countries—Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon—as well as internally displaced Syrians living in camps adjacent to the Syrian-Turkish border, believe the June 3, 2014 presidential elections in Syria were illegitimate. Respondents' expressed the belief that the results of the elections were pre-determined and unrepresentative of the Syrian people who, according to respondents' opinions, did not participate in the elections. Respondents felt that the conduct of the elections was tantamount to allowing al-Assad's regime to increase its use of violence against the Syrian people.

This unambiguously partisan trend also fits well with the respondents' wider lack of confidence in Syria's state (regime) institutions, including the military, police and intelligence services, the judiciary, and the People's Assembly (the Syrian legislature). A majority of respondents also have a lack of confidence in Bashar al-Assad. Remarkably, al-Assad, along with his family, are one of three parties most frequently identified by the respondents as one of two parties with influence on/control over affairs in Syria: the other two being Iran and Russia.

Additionally, there is an indisputable majority of respondents who believe that the ideal solution to the crisis in Syria will come through a change of regime. Respondents' ideas on how such a change of regime could occur varied, including Bashar al-Assad's

abdication or a military solution. What is beyond doubt, however, is that most of the respondents would support al-Assad's abdication. Multiple justifications were given by this majority for their support of Bashar Assad's departure from power, including: "his commissioning of massacres and murder against the Syrian people"; "his culpability as the primary party responsible for the present situation in Syria"; and "his abdication will lead to a resolution of the crisis in Syria". This was consistent with the explanation provided by most of the respondents as to the militarization of the conflict after months of unarmed, peaceful protests; their explanation was that the protestors were forced to take up arms in order to defend their peaceful protests in the face of the regime's armed ruthlessness.

The survey's results indicate that opposition to the regime, and support for the Syrian opposition, have grown in inverse proportion to each other. They also show that a majority of Syrians today, three years into the revolution, are more likely to be opposed to the regime and supportive of the revolution than during the first months of the protest movement. This clearly spells out that the regime's policies over the past three years, and the prolonging of the crisis, have served to eat away at the al-Assad regime's popular support base and conversely bolster the opposition.

Finally, when given a choice about the nature of a post-conflict state in Syria, 50% of respondents expressed a preference for a civil state, compared to 30% who expressed their preference for a religious state. Nearly 20% of the respondents expressed no preference for either of these choices.

Appendix I

The below presents a breakdown of the types of answers the respondents provided, as well as which answers were grouped with a main category described in the main body of this report. These are, in short, responses that emphasized a “change of regime” in trying to find a solution to the Syrian crisis; responses that emphasized “the triumph of the Syrian regime over the opposition”; and responses that emphasized “a negotiated, peaceful solution based on conciliation between all sides concerned”.

Category One: A Change of the Syrian Regime

This category accounts for the largest number of respondents, making up 64% of the total for the answers to this open-ended question. These answers demonstrate their belief that the ideal solution to the Syrian crisis would stem from a change of regime. Answers that make up this category tend to emphasize one of the following:

- the abdication of Bashar al-Assad/fall of the regime
- a political resolution predicated on the abdication of Bashar al-Assad, bringing him to trial, and the formation of a transitional government
- the continuation of military operations against the regime until it is brought down
- the cessation of Iranian and Russian support for the regime and the withdrawal of Iranian and Hezbollah forces from Syria
- bringing Bashar al-Assad and his associates to trial and the formation of a transitional government
- arming and supporting the Free Syrian Army
- aerial bombardment of the regime and its forces
- the will/determination among Arab and Western states to assist the Syrian people in liberating themselves from the regime
- unity and cooperation within the opposition to bring down the regime

While there is some diversity of opinion recorded in the first category described above, they all note a preference for an end to the present regime. In other words, this is a category of responses from those who are favorable to the revolution and opposed to the present ruling regime.

Category Two: The Triumph of the Regime

Six percent of answers to the open-ended question fit into this category, with responses emphasizing one of the following points:

- crushing the opposition
- ending foreign intervention against the regime/support for the opposition
- disarming the opposition and evacuating of the foreign opposition fighters

It is abundantly clear that respondents whose answers fit into this category are the core supporters for the present regime.

Category Three: A peaceful resolution based on conciliation between the parties to the conflict

Twenty-three percent of the respondents provided responses that fit into this category. The answers reflect the view that an ideal solution to the Syrian crisis will come through a genuine dialogue between the regime, other political forces, and all groups within the opposition. Such would allow for a consensus to form around the means to end the crisis. Responses in this category highlight phrases such as:

- a ceasefire and a peaceful agreement binding all parties to the conflict and
- the disarmament of all sides and the convening of a reconciliation process.

Appendix II

Respondents were asked an open-ended question about their attitudes toward the abdication of Bashar al-Assad, and were asked in a subsequent question to justify their opinions on this point.

Respondents who reported support for the abdication of Bashar al-Assad provided answers that emphasized the following as reasons behind their support for al-Assad's abdication:

- They support al-Assad's abdication because of the massacres he is guilty of and because of his killing, oppression, and displacement of the Syrian people (32% of respondents).
- They support al-Assad's abdication because he is the primary factor contributing to the development of events in Syria today (15%).
- They support al-Assad's abdication because his departure would lead to an end of the crisis in Syria (14%).
- They support al-Assad's abdication because his rule has been tyrannical and unjust (9%).
- They support al-Assad's abdication because his departure would satisfy a demand of the Syrian people (4%).
- They support al-Assad's abdication on the grounds that he is an agent/proxy of foreign powers (1% of respondents; countries named include Russia, Iran, the United States, and Israel)

Respondents who were opposed to al-Assad's abdication justified their beliefs on the following grounds:

- They oppose al-Assad's abdication because he is the "strongest" and "best" possible leader for Syria (11% of respondents).
- They oppose al-Assad's abdication because they want to preserve the unity/territorial integrity of Syria (3%).
- They oppose al-Assad's abdication because of the security and stability that were evident during his rule (3%).
- They oppose al-Assad's abdication because the foreign powers are against al-Assad (0.2%).