

Mental health consequences of the Syrian crisis

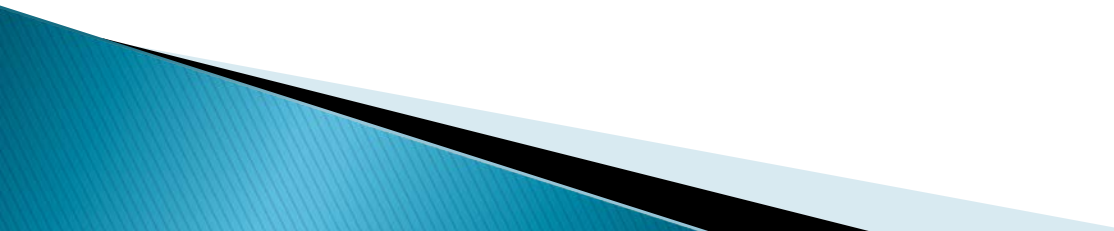
Dr Nadim Almoshmosh

Consultant Psychiatrist

Syrian Network Steering Group

RSM – 21/09/2015

Introduction

- ▶ What started as a dream for freedom has become a nightmare
 - ▶ Civil demonstration were faced with brutal regime response from day one
 - ▶ External interference with various agendas
 - ▶ Hesitation from international community to find a solution
 - ▶ Heavier indiscriminate bombardment continued
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Syrian refugees

- ▶ Millions displaced inside Syria & large exodus

UNHCR– Registered Syrian Refugees

- ▶ Last Updated 17 Sep 2015
- ▶ **4,086,760**
- ▶
 - 2.1 in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt*
 - 1.9 in Turkey*
 - 24,000 in North Africa.*

Demography

- ▶ **Male (49.5%) Female (50.5%)**
- ▶ **Age:** ≤ 17 – 51.2%
 >18 – 48.8%

Syrian Asylum applications in Europe

- ▶ The number of Syrians arriving to the Europe seeking international protection continues to increase
- ▶ Less than 10% of total

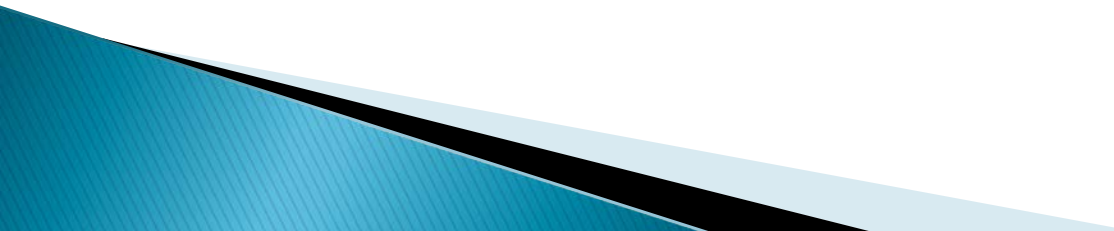
Total Syrian Asylum Applications in Europe

- ▶ 428,735 between Apr 2011 and Aug 2015
- ▶ 138,016 in 2014 only

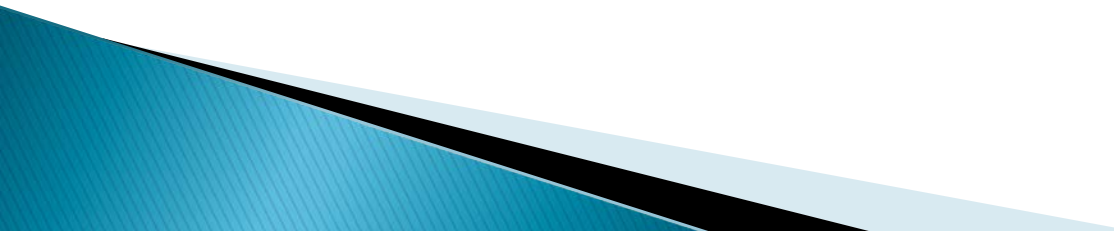
Top Countries

- ▶ Germany ,Sweden
- ▶ Spain, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Netherlands,

Effects of displacement

- ▶ Uprooting effects
 - ▶ Refugee status and homelessness
 - ▶ Limited shelter and food supplies
 - ▶ Vulnerability of children
 - ▶ Un-employment with little activities
 - ▶ Uncertainty about relatives and properties
 - ▶ Waiting to return to their homes
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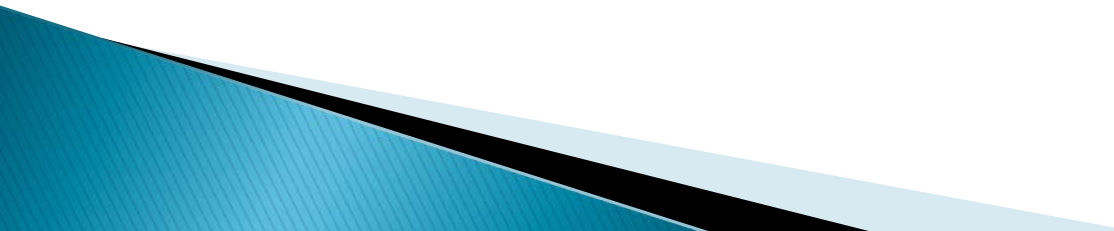
Witnessing trauma

- ▶ Losing family, friends and houses
 - ▶ Unprecedented level of destruction
 - ▶ Witnessing distressing traumatic events
 - ▶ Violent acts and killings
 - ▶ Seeing dead bodies or bombed buildings
 - ▶ Subjected to torture
 - ▶ Humiliating arrest
 - ▶ Sexual violence
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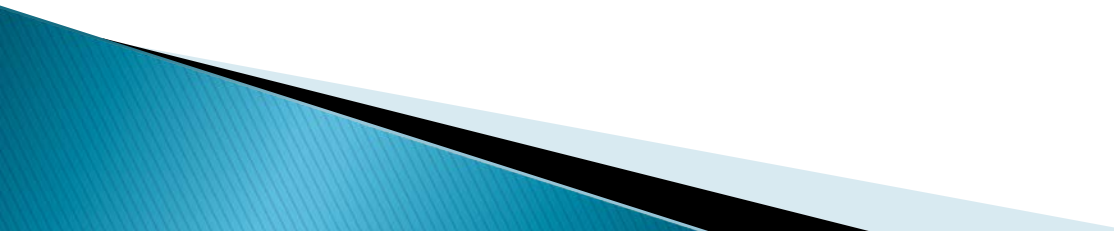
Psychological consequences

- ▶ The occurrence of a wide variety of psychological problem in populations in conflict situations is widely documented by available research
- ▶ The direct correlation between the degree of trauma and the amount of the psychological problems is consistent across a number of studies

Murthy *et al*



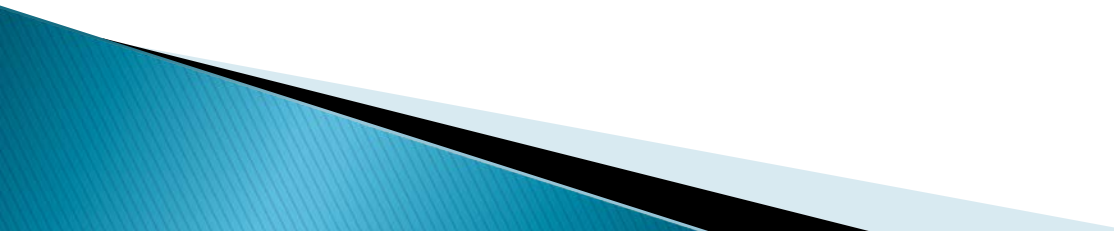
Psychological effects

- ▶ Disorders of PTSD, depression, anxiety, adjustment difficulties.
 - ▶ Worsening of existing problems
 - ▶ Feelings of entrapment and humiliation
 - ▶ Horrific histories
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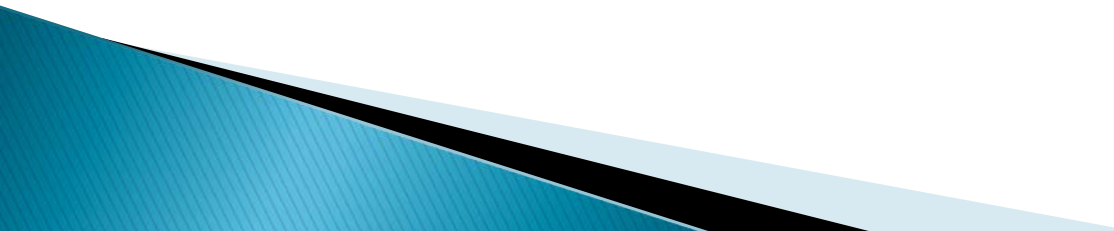
Effects on children

- ▶ Fear, clinginess, insomnia, nightmares,
- ▶ Bed wetting and behavioural changes
- ▶ Disrupted routine
- ▶ Schooling attendance/loss of education
- ▶ Exploitation i.e. labour, sexual violence

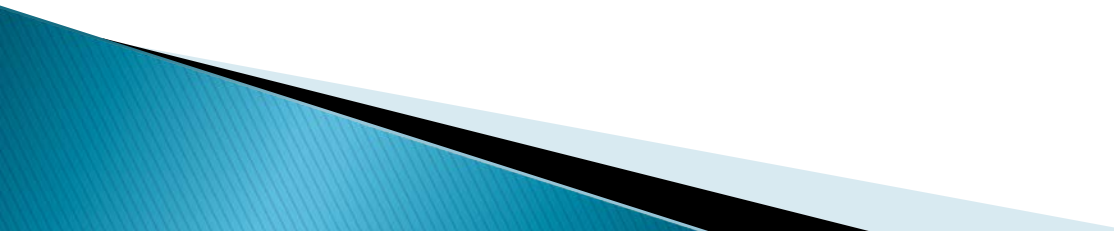
What needs to be done

- ▶ Screening /assessment of mental health needs
 - ▶ More involvement of primary health, WHO mhGAP training to develop more skilled volunteers.
 - ▶ Professional psychiatric/psychological help
 - ▶ Develop teams mental health volunteers on the ground
 - ▶ MHPSS, therapies and medications.
 - ▶ Supervision & mentoring, direct or via use of technology i.e. telemedicine
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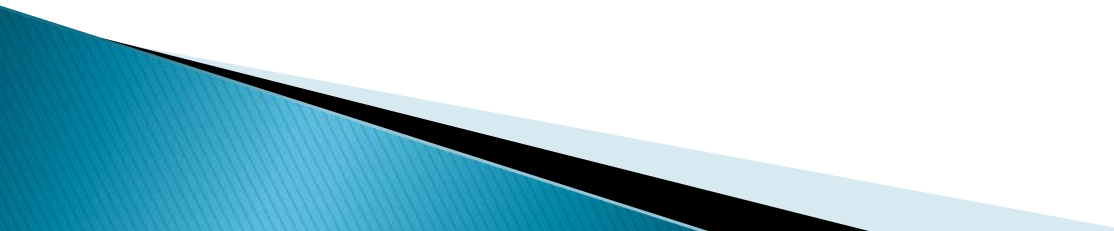
Studies

- ▶ Limited research of effects on Syrians
 - ▶ Challenging environment to complete studies
 - ▶ Tools used not always validated on samples
 - ▶ Overall gloom affects response
 - ▶ Difficulties obtaining representative samples
 - ▶ Misunderstanding of motives of studies
 - ▶ ? Overinflated rates
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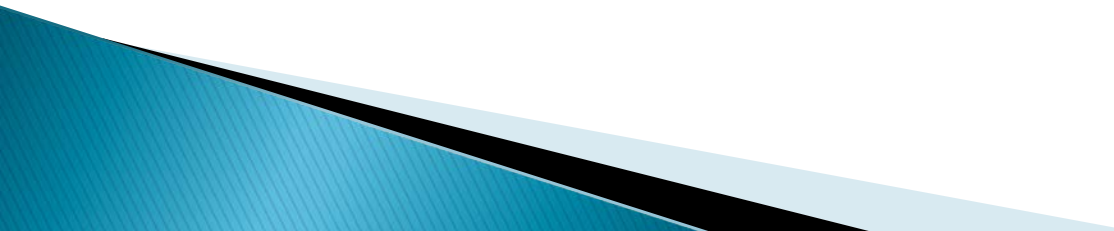
Syrian Association for Mental Health

- Group of Syrian expats
 - Psychiatrists, psychologists
 - To provide specialist mental health support
 - To provide training in MHPSS competencies at all levels
 - To conduct research
 - To establish strategic partnerships with other organizations
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Who is providing help

- ▶ Various humanitarian agencies
 - ▶ Varying emphasis on mental health
 - ▶ Issue of information sharing
 - ▶ Tend to be in certain areas
 - ▶ Need better coordination
 - ▶ Possible role for WHO in this
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Self help programs

- ▶ Individual's role and its importance
 - ▶ Promote family support
 - ▶ Encourage community initiatives
 - ▶ Leaflets of available help, directories
 - ▶ Ways to highlight positives & success stories
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Aid

- ▶ UNHCR Report

Culture, Context and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Syrians.

Important document

To inform mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) staff working with Syrians

Thank you