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**Region: Worldwide**



As millions of Syrians refugees began to embark on the dangerous journey to Europe or died along the way, their stories have been dominating Arab newspapers, popular TV shows and social media platforms. Media coverage varied across outlets and great volume included condemnation of alleged Arab indifference, calls for internal reforms and criticism of the West.

Some media in the Arab countries expressed an outrage towards Gulf leaders, accusing them of being the 'elephants in the room' when it comes to their lack of support and responsibility for fleeing Syrian refugees. The [Gulf Times](#), an English daily in Qatar, compared welcoming signs greeting refugees in Austria and Germany with the silence of the Gulf. Muhammad Hussein, a columnist for the Egyptian daily Al-Ahram

, wrote that the viral

[photo](#)

of Aylan Kurdi encapsulates all the disasters that afflict the Arab world.

The story has further prompted some Arab social media users to ask why the oil-rich Arab monarchies avoid to get involved and offer their help for the refugees travelling mostly from Syria to Europe. The Arabic hashtag *#welcoming\_Syria's\_refugees\_is\_a\_Gulf\_duty* was

tweeted more than 40.000 times, according to the BBC. Some tweets also mocked the Saudi Arabia's offer to [build 200 mosques](#) in Germany for the Muslims asylum seekers there, while the European countries have pledged to embrace more than 4 millions refugees according to the [UNHCR](#).

Cartoons were also extensively used by some of the media in the Arab world. A Saudi cartoonist, Aiman Yanallah, drew a cartoon entitled [The Arab Response](#) of an Arabic man retweeting the image of Aylan, referring to the [slacktivism culture](#).

Another [cartoon](#) by Carlus Latuff portrayed a Gulf sheikh shaking his finger at a refugees boat while pointing the other with thumbs-up to a rebel fighter in Syria.



"We are hosting Syrian refugees, but only if they have Kuwaiti citizenship," the emir of Kuwait [says in one cartoon](#) by a Syrian cartoonist. The Saudi daily Makkah Newspaper published a [cartoon](#) that shows a man in traditional Gulf clothing hiding behind a door directing a refugee to another door with the EU flag.

On the other hand, some state-owned media outlets tried to justify the Gulf's position. Stating that their countries have generously funded humanitarian aid to Syrians, Abdel Khaleq Abdullah, a political science professor in UAE [wrote](#) that his country has taken more than 160 000 Syrians in the past 3 years and the accusation of doing nothing is not fair.

Other commentators have turned their ire to the United States and its Western allies, blaming them for not intervening forcefully against Al Assad, as they believe such intervention could have stopped the refugee crisis. For instance, Nasser Al Khalifa, a former Qatari diplomat, [lash ed out on Twitter](#) , accusing Western officials of “shedding crocodile tears” over the crisis and that they “watched Syrians being killed by Assad's chemical weapons and barrel bombs for 5 years”.

Political messages have also been indirectly used in several Arabic mainstream media outlets. An Egyptian popular broadcaster faced widespread criticism on social media after airing a [vide o](#) of Syrian refugees in her TV show on Al Nahar TV, a private Egyptian channel, while she was distributing food and clothing in a Lebanese camp. She called them “disrespectful, lost and ruined”, adding that “Egyptians should support the Army if they don't want to end up like people in Syria”. “Our military is at the borders stopping that from happening to us,” Saeed said in her TV show. Such comments enraged some within the Egyptian community prompting questions about usage of propaganda in the media.

Fewer Arabic news outlets have focused on lives of Syrian refugees in the adoptive countries. Al-Ahram state-owned newspaper, for instance, [questioned](#) the cultural challenges of the crisis.

Ahmed Esmat, Editor of Alex Agenda, a local private Egyptian magazine, told MDI: “Media coverage has been always focusing only on the crisis, no one is covering the Syrian refugees' successful stories of how they are socially and culturally coping with their new hosting countries, like the restaurants and shops they are opening or the projects they are managing, and the effect they have on the economy.”