



THIS IS NOT A GAME: The Life and Death Obstacle Course to Europe

Syria has been consumed by war since 2011. At more than 4 million, Syrians today are the world's second largest refugee community. To escape death, detention, and misery, they have to risk their lives on a long and dangerous path to safety and asylum. It is the ultimate life and death obstacle course.

This is not a game.

MSF runs medical activities in Syria, its neighboring countries, and Europe providing health services and assistance to vulnerable communities. MSF works in health, relief and reception centers in and along the borders of Tunisia, Italy, Greece, Serbia, and others. MSF-operated search-and-rescue boats in the Mediterranean and Aegean seas have rescued more than 20,000 people. Thousands more make the journey for safety every day.



War: Air strikes, barrel bombs, hell canons, car bombs, chemical attacks, shelling.



Checkpoint: Military or security checkpoint, where one waits to pass, stay, or retreat.



Violence: Any acts of violence committed by authorities, rebels, smugglers, bandits.



Detention: Due to lack of documentation or as a form of exploitation.



Transportation: Planes, trains, buses, cars, boats and feet can all be used to reach asylum.



Assistance: Food, medical, and financial aid provided by international and local organizations, host communities, and other support networks.



Closed border: In countries neighboring Syria or in Europe, official borders are increasingly being closed, restricting the movement of people and forcing many to find alternative routes.



Fake documents: Fake documents are illegal but they can be obtained with the right connection and capital, allowing the user to continue the journey.



Refugee camps: Located in Syria's neighboring countries of Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and informal tented settlements in Lebanon.



No opportunities: Cultural, linguistic, political, social, financial, legal barriers that limit a person's ability to nurture a future in a new place.



Smugglers: Increasingly becoming more organized in bringing migrants and refugees to Europe. Sometimes they charge thousands of dollars, other times they resort to exploitation, violence or blackmail.



Drowning: Thousands have drowned in the Mediterranean and Aegean seas as they attempt to reach Europe. The boats either capsize from the weight, massive waves, or simply sunk by smugglers.



Rescued: Rescue by coastguards, fishermen, or MSF and other NGO search-and-rescue operations. Some modest aid is provided before the journey continues.



Bandits: Thieves or pirates who target refugees during the odyssey across sea and land, commonly demanding money before allowing the journey to continue.



Harsh weather: From frost bites to heat strokes, harsh weather conditions are a major obstacle to overcome for migrants and refugees as they move through medley of geographic environments.



Asylum: Safe-zones in which the migrants and refugees finally receive official documents and are allowed shelter, proper aid and relief services, and are provided with ways to start a new life.