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Environmental impacts of refugees and sustainable responses in middle east

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According to UNHCR, 65.5 million people have been forcibly displaced around the globe and 22.5 million of them have been considered refugees by the end of 2016. Along with the security issues caused by wars, the number of refugees grows every year as a result of political instabilities and climate change. The Middle East, in which these problems can be seen quite widely, is counted in the top of the list in terms of the number of refugees. Refugees carry over environmental issues to host countries along with economic and social problems. Environmental issues are generally neglected not only by the refugees who inherently focus on their essential needs including security, health, sheltering and nourishment but also by the hosted countries which mainly take economic and social problems into account in the first hand. Water resources contamination and depletion, erosion, air pollution, ecosystem breakdown of the watershed and river systems damage the sustainability of future construction of the hosted countries. They also cause serious health problems for refugees in the short term. It can be anticipated that the massive refugee movements are highly likely because of the possible tensions in the region as well as increased frequency and magnitudes of extreme weather conditions. In this study, the current and possible environmental problems caused by refugees are identified. Also, the resistance level of host countries to new movements are measured and classified. In the last part of the study, local, national and international sustainable solutions and precautionary steps are discussed.

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