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ACS Statement on Situation in Türkiye

WASHINGTON D.C. July 3, 2024

The American Coalition for Syria (ACS) is deeply concerned by the escalation of violence against Syrian refugees in Türkiye. On June 30, racist mobs went on a rampage in the city of Kayseri and collectively attacked Syrian homes, vandalized Syrian-owned vehicles, and torched Syrian-run shops. The spate of anti-Syrian violence quickly spread to other cities including Istanbul, Bursa, Konya, Adana, Gaziantep, Kilis, and Reyhanli. ACS condemns the racist riots against vulnerable refugees, which has put the entire Syrian community in Türkiye in a deep state of fear. Syrians are not leaving their homes and are being warned of potentially worse waves of violence. These incidents come amidst the backdrop of intensified police checkpoints, arbitrary arrests, and recent deportation campaigns to northwest Syria, as well as rising xenophobia and hostility against Syrian refugees and Arabs in Türkiye over the past few years.

Over 3.5 million Syrian refugees have been hosted by Türkiye since 2011, and ACS is grateful to Türkiye for the hospitality and support they have shown. ACS commends the Turkish government for its positive response to the Kayseri riots, but urges it to take stronger measures to reign in ongoing lawlessness, stop the vandalism and destruction of property, and ensure peace, safety, and security for all individuals. It is also imperative that the Turkish government provide Syrian victims fair compensation for their losses. ACS further condemns the constant scapegoating of Syrians in local and national politics, which has led to an increase in violence targeting Syrian refugees and Arab nationals. Türkiye must take stronger action against the racist rhetoric and manipulative media that have fuelled this xenophobia. Additionally, local and national authorities should immediately stop all unlawful deportations to Syria and review police conduct during ID checkpoints and conditions at deportation holding centers, where allegations of torture have surfaced. The forced repatriation of Syrian refugees constitutes refoulement and falls short of Türkiye's commitments to human rights and international law.

The situation in Türkiye and elsewhere, especially in Lebanon, is further proof that the root causes of the Syrian refugees crisis must still be addressed. This can only be done by reenergizing global engagement in support of an equitable political solution in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. Refugees will never be able to return safely to Syria absent political change that meaningfully guarantees their safety and human rights.