

Foreign Minister Steinmeier at the opening of the Syrian Refugee Conference in Berlin

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28.10.2014 - Press release 

Speaking at the opening of the Syrian Refugee Conference at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin today (28 October), Federal Foreign Minister Steinmeier said:

I believe this is an important day for the refugees who have had to leave Syria, but also and in particular for the countries in Syria's neighbourhood that have taken in refugees. The idea for this conference in Berlin took shape in Lebanon during my last visit. We saw with our own eyes the efforts of countries like Lebanon, as well as Jordan and Turkey, to at least offer protection and shelter to the people who have fled the bloodshed in Syria.

This conference in Berlin today is taking place for a very specific reason. We may not need to change our perspective, but we do need to broaden it. Our aim cannot solely and exclusively be to provide humanitarian assistance to the refugees. We must also give special priority to ensuring the stability of the host countries. Anyone who has seen the extent to which the 1.5 million refugees in Lebanon are drawing on the public health system, the schools, the water supply and many other services will be aware or have some inkling of the potential threat this could actually pose to the social structures of a country such as Lebanon.

Unfortunately, the fact remains that the civil war in Syria is not yet over and people are still fleeing the country.

For this reason this conference today in Berlin is intended to be an expression of solidarity – an expression of our solidarity with the refugees, but also an expression of our solidarity with the host countries, especially with Lebanon. Together with all the representatives of more than 35 countries who have gathered here, we want to give our assurance today that our concern is also to ensure the stability of countries such as Lebanon and that we want to help the country, and above all the host communities, to safeguard their structures for the future and thus help ease the burden on the host countries.

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