

## From Syria to Brazil

Marília Calegari and Rosana Baeninger

**Precisely because of the difficulties Syrians face in entering the EU, Brazil has opened up to them.**

Fewer than half of Syrians seeking asylum in the European Union (EU) manage to get refugee status. In contrast, in 2014 Brazil recognised all of the 1,405 Syrians who applied to Brazil for refugee status. In August 2015, Brazil had 2,077 Syrian refugees in the country. The speedy recognition of refugee status, the eligibility rate of 100% and the minimal bureaucracy for Syrians to obtain a visa to apply for refuge in Brazil are made possible by Normative Resolution No 17 passed on 20th September 2013 by the Brazilian government:

“Article 1: the appropriate visa may be granted, on humanitarian grounds ... to the individuals affected by the armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic who wish to seek refuge in Brazil. ... For the purposes of this Resolution, humanitarian reasons are considered to be those resulting from the deterioration of people’s living conditions on Syrian territory or in the border regions as a result of the armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.”

Brazil’s involvement in refugee issues has grown in recent years.<sup>2</sup> The country is party to the main international instruments in relation to refugees and it has a specific law which guarantees international protection.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Brazil has an inter-ministerial body to address the issue, the National Council for Refugees (CONARE).<sup>4</sup>

Syrian refugees living in the city of São Paulo said that Brazil is the only country granting visas to Syrians currently:

*“I did not choose Brazil, Brazil chose me.”*  
(male Syrian refugee, aged 27)

*“Brazil was the only one which said ‘welcome’; everyone else said ‘out, out, out!’”*  
(female Syrian refugee, 33)

One Syrian refugee, aged 28, said:

*“Going to Europe or to America, the First World, is very hard and very expensive. In my situation, I don’t have that much money. And at this time Brazil is open for Syrians to fly to Brazil.”*

And he added that:

*“In the Brazilian embassy in Jordan they said to me, ‘If you go to Brazil, the Brazilian government will just give you the documents, they will not give you work, they will not give you a house, or money like Europe, they will just give you legal status. If you want to go, go’. So I came here. ... People just want a place to be safe, away from the war, they just want a feeling of safety.”*

In September 2015, Brazil agreed to extend the duration of Normative Resolution No 17 for two more years.

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1. Resolução Normativa No17 de 20 de Setembro de 2013.  
[www.jusbrasil.com.br/diarios/59458269/dou-secaco-1-24-09-2013-pg-29](http://www.jusbrasil.com.br/diarios/59458269/dou-secaco-1-24-09-2013-pg-29) (unofficial translation)

2. See mini-feature on Brazil in *Forced Migration Review* issue 35  
[www.fmreview.org/disability](http://www.fmreview.org/disability)

3. Law No 9474/1997

4. [www.justica.gov.br/seus-direitos/estrangeiros/refugio/conare](http://www.justica.gov.br/seus-direitos/estrangeiros/refugio/conare)

