

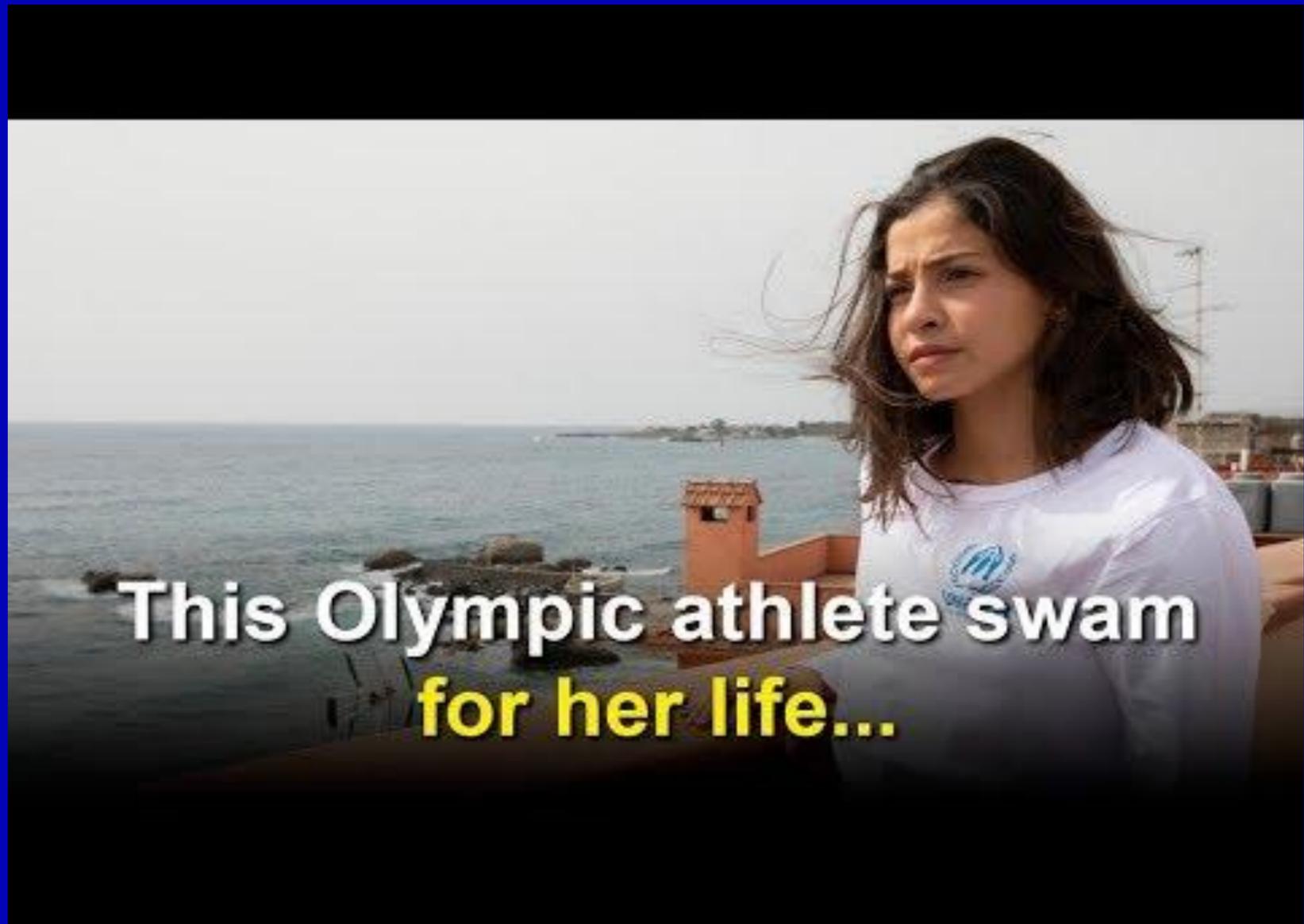
# The Swimmers

A Netflix Feature Film



**Yusra and Sara Mardini**





**This Olympic athlete swam  
for her life...**

**Based on the film, what  
compelled the Mardini sisters to  
eventually leave their home?  
What was going on in Syria at the  
time?**

## What was going on in Syria?

- In 2010, a series of anti-government uprisings known as the Arab Spring spread through the Middle East and North Africa.
- The uprisings began in Syria when a few youth were arrested and tortured after drawing anti-regime and pro-democracy graffiti.
- Protests initially called for the release of the children and eventually turned towards the regime of President Assad. In response, Assad used his military powers to strike down the uprisings.

## The Arab Spring

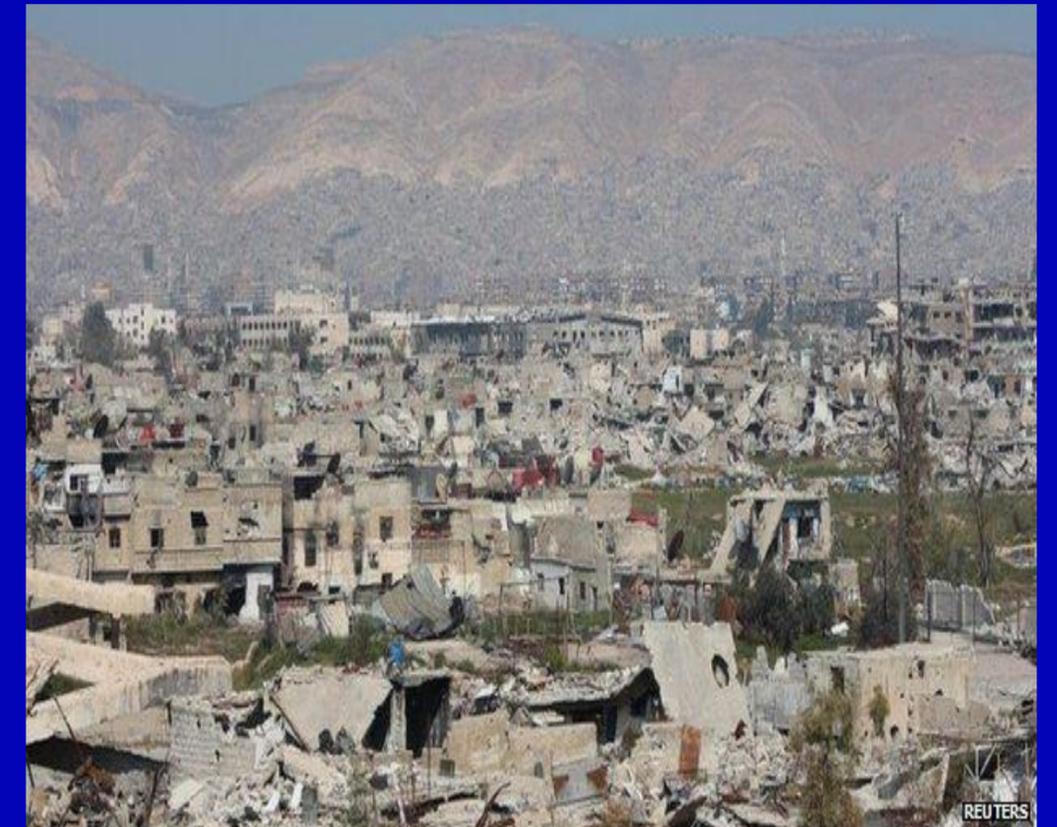
## What was going on in Syria?

- Rebel extremist groups, such as ISIS, were formed against the regime and began taking control over parts of Syrian territory.
- Both Rebel groups and Assad's military forces continued to attack and murder civilians outside of their direct control .
- By October 2015, over 100,000 civilians died at the hands of Assad's regime and extremist groups.
- Countless people began to flee for their survival.

## Extremist Groups

## The Conflict In Syria

- These pictures were taken of Syria.
- At the bottom is Damascus during the 2015 bombings.



**What was the route taken by the sisters in 2015?**

## The Sisters' Journey

- Below is a map of the journey taken by the Mardini sisters to Germany from Damascus through Turkey and Greece.
- This harrowing journey took 25 days to complete.



**What do you think helped Yusra  
and Sara survive the dangerous  
journey from their war torn home  
in Syria through the Aegean Sea  
to Germany?**

**What was the state of refugee policies throughout Europe during the Syrian Refugee Crisis?**

## Greece

- For many years, Greece has been the entry point for refugees seeking asylum from war and poverty.
- In 2015, Greece hosted over a million refugees who were fleeing violence in their home countries.
- In the years prior to the crisis, the Greek Parliament began to make efforts to reform the asylum procedure. It was a progressive step forward and sought to help better integrate refugees and asylum seekers into the country.

## Refugee Policies

## Greece

- During its election campaign in 2014, the new government claimed they would expedite the asylum process, close down detention centers, strengthen human rights, etc. Unfortunately, most of these claims weren't achieved.
- In 2016, the EU and Turkey reached an agreement to reduce the flow of refugees fleeing from Turkey to Europe. All new refugees fleeing from Turkey to Greece who have had their asylum applications denied would be returned to Turkey.

## Refugee Policies

## Germany

- Through the initial years of the Syrian Refugee Crisis, Germany kept its doors open to asylum seekers and migrants. Its policies can be summarized by the words of Chancellor Angela Merkel, “We can do this!”
- As per the Dublin Regulation, asylum seekers must be registered in the first safe EU country they arrive in. Rather than following this, Germany permitted asylum seekers to cross the border first and check their claims later.

## Refugee Policies

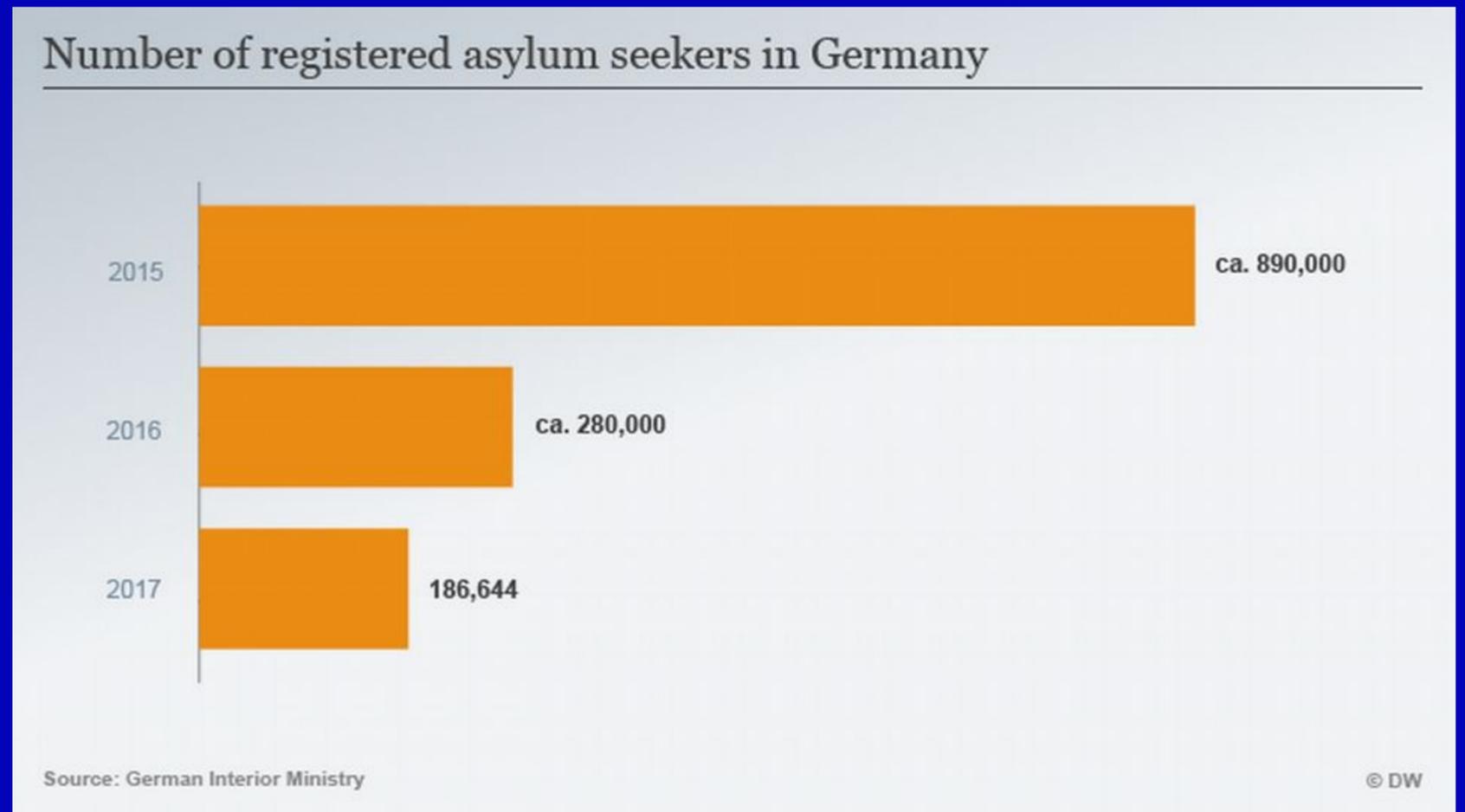
## Germany

- After a violent attack on women by migrants in early 2016, Germany decided to tighten its policies. This strengthened opposition to Merkel's open arms position as Germany was taking in more migrants than it could provide for.
- From 2016 and on, the number of people seeking asylum dropped significantly.
- This was not entirely because of its new policies but rather due to the closing of the Balkan and Mediterranean route by the EU in efforts to reduce the number of migrants fleeing to Europe.

## Refugee Policies

# Germany

- This chart depicts the drop in asylum seekers due to the closing of the crucial Balkan and Mediterranean Route.



# Germany

- This chart suggests that Germany took in the most Refugees during the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

## Germany Leads the Way in Syrian Refugee Resettlement

Number of places pledged to Syrian refugees as of January 2014\*



\* Resettlement, humanitarian admission or other forms of admission

@StatistaCharts Source: UNHCR

statista

**How does closing borders of migrant routes violate human rights?**

## UDHR

- Article 14 states that...  
“Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”

## SDGs

- Sustainable Development Goals 10 and 16 include protections for migrants.



**As a leader, how would you have handled the increase in migrants traveling to safe European countries?**



## The Sisters

- <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/oct/08/yusra-mardini-on-the-swimmers-the-netflix-drama-of-her-life>
- <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/team-refugees/how-yusra-mardini-survived-25-day-trek-syria-became-olympian-n601946>

## Syria

- <https://www.usip.org/syria-timeline-uprising-against-assad>

## Germany

- <https://www.dw.com/en/five-years-on-how-germanys-refugee-policy-has-fared/a-54660166>
- <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/REPS-03-2019-0024/full/html>

## Greece

- <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-towards-a-new-policy-on-migration/file-eu-turkey-statement-action-plan>
- <https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13031-018-0158-9>

# Links and Resources