Un-Settling Middle Eastern Refugees

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Un-Settling Middle Eastern Refugees

REGIMES OF EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, EUROPE, AND NORTH AMERICA

Edited by
Marcia C. Inhorn and Lucia Volk

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Acknowledgments

In a book devoted to the Middle Eastern refugee crisis, we must begin by thanking the many refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and Syria who made this book possible by sharing their lives and stories with us. Many of them have faced incredible hardships and unmitigated human suffering. We dedicate this book to them—hoping that they achieve the safety and settled futures to which they ardently aspire.

This book emerged from a meeting that took place at Yale University in September 2019. The meeting brought together for the first time anthropologists studying Middle Eastern refugee populations in various Middle Eastern, European, and North American settings. Here, anthropologists were able to discuss the ways in which war has led to refugee flight from the Middle East, and how resettlement in various host countries has unfolded. Their work, now published in this volume, speaks to the cultural, political, and legal challenges that lead to regimes of exclusion in some settings, and regimes of inclusion in others. We are proud of and grateful to these dedicated anthropologists, who are seeking to humanize the vitriolic discourses and political debates surrounding Middle Eastern refugee resettlement in Europe and North America.

At Yale University, our gathering was hosted by the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, the Council on Middle East Studies (CMES), and the Department of Anthropology. Generous support was received from the Edward J. and Dorothy Clark Kempf Memorial Fund, the Yale Program on Refugees, Forced Displacement, and Humanitarian Responses, and the U.S. Department of Education Title VI National Resource Center, which supports Yale CMES's activities. At CMES, we are particularly grateful for the tireless organizational support of the CMES staff, including Cristin Siebert, CMES program director, and Marwa Khaboor, CMES program coordinator, who organized every detail of the meeting, from posters to travel to sound equipment and delicious halal meals. We also appreciate the support provided by the Yale Department of Anthropology, which, among other things, provided us with a beautiful weekend seminar

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Alf alf shukran–a million thanks!

–Marcia C. Inhorn and Lucia Volk
New Haven and San Francisco, January 2021

Introduction

Un-Settling Middle Eastern Refugees

Lucia Volk and Marcia C. Inhorn

The first-ever Global Refugee Forum convened in Geneva on 16–18 December 2019, on the invitation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nation's main refugee agency ("UN Urges 'Reboot'" 2019). Heads of state and international aid organizations, as well as business leaders, representatives of civil society organizations, and refugees met in Switzerland to discuss how to meet the needs of increasing numbers of forcibly displaced persons. All of the attendees agreed on the severity of the problem, but there was no agreement on the amount of aid needed and who was going to pay for and deliver it. While the Global Refugee Forum was in session, the Syrian government launched a renewed offensive on its civilians in the country's northern Idlib province, a military operation that would lead to the displacement of more than 235,000 people by Christmas, most of them refugees from prior violence (British Broadcasting Corporation 2019).

At the end of what UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi called this "decade of displacement" (UNHCR 2019), the world continues to struggle to find ways to respond adequately to the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, in a world where there are now more refugees than at any time in modern history, including during World War II. It was in the aftermath of that horrifying war–which saw unprecedented numbers of displaced persons–that world leaders first gathered in Geneva, Switzer-

land, to define the status of refugees. The goal of that convention–called the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, or the 1951 Refugee Convention for short–was to establish protections for persons "outside the country of their nationality" if they could provide evidence for a "well-founded fear of being persecuted on grounds of race, religion, nationality, [or] membership of a particular social group of political opinion" (Gatrell 2013: 6). Not every member state of the United Nations signed the resulting document. But those that did "agreed to the principle of non-refoulement whereby no refugee could be returned to any country where he or she faced the threat of persecution or torture" (Gatrell 2013: 6).

By international law, then, individuals who have crossed international borders as refugees have a right to protection from host states if returning to their own states would harm them. However, the 1951 Refugee Convention left outside its mandate a very large group of forcibly displaced persons– namely, internally displaced persons (IDPs)–who fled their homes but did not make it across any international borders. It also left unspecified what forms of protection host states must provide to refugees. This lack of clarity has generated a patchwork of largely inadequate refugee and asylum policies and practices in nation-states around the world.

Furthermore, it is important to distinguish clearly between two terms that are often used interchangeably in public debate: "refugees" versus "asylum seekers." Every asylum seeker is a refugee, but not all refugees become asylum seekers (Gibney 2004: 5–11). For asylum to be claimed, a person must be near or inside the border of the country where an asylum petition will be lodged. Most of the world's refugees remain in countries close to the ones they left, waiting to return to their homes once the conditions that forced them to flee cease to exist. But more and more persons now travel from their home countries to Europe and North America to ask for asylum there, and "it is the growth in asylum seekers that has, over the last thirty years, made refugees such a burning political issue" (Gibney 2004: 9). Put differently, asylum seekers are refugees at Europe's and North America's doorstep.

Middle Eastern Refugees

This book focuses specifically on Middle Eastern refugees. "Middle Eastern" here refers to individuals residing in the geographical area from Egypt in the west to Afghanistan in the east.[1] While aware of the problematic colonial legacy of the term "Middle East" and the existence of other maps of the region that also feature, for example, the countries of North Africa (Volk 2015: 13–16), we use "Middle Eastern" here as an umbrella term that comprises the region's countries most affected by war and forced displacement.

Unfortunately, the Middle East is a region with a well-documented history of forced displacement from the time of the Ottoman Empire until today (Chatty 2010; Gelvin 2015). In that sense, the topic of Middle Eastern refugees is not new. Looking at the historical record, it becomes clear that Middle Eastern refugees do not come out of nowhere: they have been produced by wars in the Middle East (Inhorn 2018), which have led to death and destruction, various forms of physical and structural violence, precarious economic and social conditions, and dysfunctional and highly volatile political environments.

Indeed, no other region of the world has suffered so much war, turmoil, and population disruption due to protracted conflict than the Middle East (Mowafi 2011). Conflicts dating back to the end of World War II can be traced to six critical forces. First was the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, which resulted in an ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, as well as a series of wars between Israel and neighboring Arab nations. The second cause was colonial independence movements, especially against the French but also the British, which led to wars of independence. Third were sectarian-inflected battles, such as the civil war in Lebanon and the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, launched by Saddam Hussein and his secular Baath regime against the Shia theocracy that came to power in Iran in 1979. A fourth factor was thus the rise of Islamist movements in the region, which led to wars between the more secular and Islamist forces. Fifth was the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, which has played out in the Middle East in ways that continue to haunt the region, particularly in Afghanistan. Finally, the 2011 Arab uprisings—which began as peaceful protest movements to gain greater political freedom, economic prosperity, and human dignity—descended into military repression and turmoil in several countries and erupted into the most bloody war in the country of Syria.

These various wars have created the Middle Eastern refugees who are the focus of this book—namely, Afghans, Iraqis, Palestinians, and Syrians. Over the past decade, they have been the nationalities with the dubious distinction of rising to the top of the UNHCR charts. Chronologically speaking, Palestinians are the nationality with the longest history of displacement, beginning in 1948 with the founding of the state of Israel. Approximately 750,000 Palestinians became refugees as a result of the 1948 war, and none were allowed to return to the homes or communities from which they were displaced. Thus, today, more than 7 million Palestinian refugees live scattered around the world, with more than 1.5 million of them in refugee camps within the Middle East.

Afghans began leaving their homeland in large numbers with the beginning of the Soviet invasion in 1979. Due to subsequent wars—including the United States' war in Afghanistan, which began in 2001 after the September 11 terrorist attacks, and has continued for two decades—Afghans have been

forced to flee, primarily to neighboring Iran or Pakistan, in search of safety and stability. Iraqis, too, have experienced two US military interventions: the first Gulf War in 1991, which lasted seven months, and the second Iraq War in 2003, which officially ended nine years later in December 2011, but which has lasted well beyond in terms of violence and troops on the ground. Both of these Iraq wars have produced large numbers of refugees and IDPs.

In 2011, in response to popular protests, the Syrian government began attacking its own citizens, leading to a decade-long war that has been fueled by support from foreign governments, including those of Iran, Russia, Turkey, the Arab Gulf states, and the United States. The many front lines in Syria have been shifting over the past decade, also spilling over into the Kurdish sections of southern Turkey. Moreover, in parts of eastern Syria, Islamist militias used the resultant power vacuum to attempt to establish their idea of an Islamic State. Targeted by Syrian government, militia, Islamist, and external military forces, more than half of Syria's population has become displaced. Half of these forcibly displaced persons have fled the country as refugees, while the other half remain as IDPs inside Syria's borders.

Today, Middle Easterners make up the majority of the nearly 80 million forcibly displaced persons. This is double the number seen twenty years ago (UNHCR 2020). Of the world's 26 million refugees–20.4 million of them registered with the United Nations–the largest population consists of Palestinians, 5.6 million of whom have lived since 1948 under the mandate of the second largest UN refugee agency, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Syrians now comprise the largest newly created refugee population, with nearly 6.6 million refugees, and 6.2 million IDPs in need of humanitarian assistance (UNHCR 2020). Afghanistan currently places third on the UNHCR's list of globally displaced persons, with 2.7 million Afghans registered with the United Nations despite not having formal refugee status in the neighboring host countries of Iran and Pakistan (UNHCR 2020). Iraq has among the highest number of new IDPs, more than 3 million since 2014, and 6.5 million in need of humanitarian assistance (UNHCR 2020). Adding up these numbers, Middle Eastern refugees currently make up more than half of the world's total refugee population. As a region, the Middle East has more IDPs than any other.

Regimes of Exclusion and Inclusion

It is important to remember that refugees do not choose to be uprooted; somebody with control over deadly force displaces them. Historically, Germany created the largest number of refugees during World War II. As a result, Germany today sees refugee resettlement as a moral and political responsibility. Even though Germany did not cause any of the deadly conflicts

that have led to their displacement, the country has taken in more Middle Eastern refugees than any other European country (Bock and Macdonald 2019: 13; Volk, this volume). Germany and Finland—both strong European welfare states—grant foreign nationals rights in their respective constitutions (Bock and Macdonald 2019; Gifford, this volume). While it can be debated whether Germany and Finland live up to the actual spirit or just the letter of their laws, granting a certain set of rights to noncitizens via a national constitution has been an important step for these states in promoting a more inclusive national community. It is important to remember that the United Nations may be the source of most human rights legislation, but it is nation-states that must implement and enforce them, thereby creating viable and welcoming regimes of refugee inclusion.

Unfortunately, as of 2018, less than 5 percent of refugees identified by UNHCR were resettled—or a mere 0.2 percent of the global refugee population (Baldoumas, van Roemburg, and Truscott 2019). Although some European states, such as France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, have taken in considerable numbers of Middle Eastern refugees, they have still been criticized for failing to take in their "fair share" (Baldoumas, van Roemburg, and Truscott 2019), while the underresourced Mediterranean nation of Greece continues to be overwhelmed with boatloads of newly arriving refugees (Grewal, this volume; Ingvars, this volume), many of them housed in deplorable conditions on the Greek islands. Unfortunately, Greece's appeal to share the refugee burden with other EU states has fallen on deaf ears. Indeed, many of the wealthier European states, such as Denmark and Norway in Scandinavia, have chosen to turn away Middle Eastern refugees at their doorsteps (Bune, this volume; Gifford, this volume). Increasingly, right-wing governments have come to power in many Western European nations by promulgating anti-immigrant rhetoric grounded in Islamophobia and rationalized by threats of terrorism.

Unfortunately, the United States—a country once known for its refugee inclusion, particularly in the aftermath of its twenty-year military intervention in Vietnam—has become one of the most profoundly exclusionary regimes in the world. On 1 November 2019, U.S. president Donald Trump capped the number of Iraqis eligible for priority admission, even though most had served with U.S. troops in Iraq. Despite an estimated 110,000 applications at various stages of the approval process (Jakes 2019), only 4,000 special immigrant visas (SIVs) were granted for Iraqi men who had served as aids and interpreters for U.S. forces and faced a "well-founded fear of being persecuted" in their home country. The United States is a signatory to the 1967 UN Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees—which universalized the 1951 Refugee Convention by dropping references to "European refugees" in the context of World War II. But during the Trump presidency, the United States no longer lived up to its moral obligations to protect those

who had been displaced, particularly through America's own wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Inhorn, this volume).

At the same time, countries that did not sign the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol now host some of the largest numbers of refugees. For instance, the relatively small Middle Eastern nation-states of Jordan and Lebanon have received large numbers of Palestinian refugees over many years (Barbosa, this volume; Pérez, this volume). In recent years, both countries have also taken in millions of Iraqis and Syrians. Turkey is currently number one on the UNHCR refugee host country list, with more than 3.6 million Syrian nationals now living on Turkish soil. Ironically, Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Convention, but it never signed the 1967 Protocol, which means that it officially grants refugee protections "only to Europeans" (Chatty 2018: 230).

Turkey, a non-Arab Middle Eastern nation, has taken in the largest number of Arab refugees from Syria, throwing into question the moral and political responsibility of the wealthy Arab Gulf states to aid in Syrian resettlement. As of this writing, it is also important to note that the Arab Gulf is witnessing the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with Saudi Arabia leading a nine-state coalition in a devastating war against Yemen. The UNHCR (2019) estimates that 24 million Yemenis, or 80 percent of the total population, are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. Two out of three Yemenis are unable to afford food, and half of the country is on the brink of starvation. One million cholera cases have occurred in Yemen since 2018, 25 percent among children, making this the largest cholera epidemic in the world. Yet the military and public health crisis in Yemen has received little media or scholarly attention, prompting the question, Does anyone care about this new population of forcibly displaced Middle Easterners?

Scholarly Perspectives on Un-Settling Refugees

Although the UNHCR continues to report record-breaking numbers of forcibly displaced Middle Eastern people, global media attention to the refugee crisis has waned. Such attention was at its peak in 2015, when boatloads of Middle Eastern refugees began washing up, both dead and alive, on Europe's shores. It was at that point that scholarly attention to Middle East refugees began to gain significant traction, with researchers entering the host communities to which vulnerable populations had fled.

Two disciplines in particular took interest in the Middle Eastern refugee crisis. The first is the discipline of international relations (IR), one of the subfields of political science. Since refugees cross nation-state borders, and therefore subvert, undermine, or challenge state sovereignty—a core principle of the international order established by the Treaty of Westphalia in

1648–refugees, by default, become a security threat to that order. Moreover, since international governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as the United Nations, the International Red Cross, or the International Organization for Migration, handle many of the bureaucratic and logistical responsibilities for individuals who find themselves displaced, most IR classes that deal with the role of international political bodies in addressing global crises cover the issue of refugees.

International relations scholars often work with an implicit or explicit bias toward a stable international order, as well as a bias toward the state and its rights. However, as some scholars have pointed out, a critique of the state and state agencies becomes necessary when these institutions fail to see what human beings must endure as a result of the policies they enforce (Fassin 2011: 222). States can be actors that erect physical or legal barriers to entry, pushing refugees to undertake ever riskier sea passages or clandestine (refrigerated) truck rides in order to find their entry. Yet states are also actors that grant residency rights and dispense aid to refugees, especially in welfare states with high tax burdens on their citizenry. Because of their state-centered point of departure, IR scholars tend to aggregate their findings, resulting in what anthropologist Liisa H. Malkki (1995: 504) calls "a view from above."

In contrast, a "view from below" has been the main focus of anthropology, the other discipline that has engaged in research on refugees over several decades (Malkki 1995). Anthropologists tend to emphasize the day-to-day experiences of refugees in circumscribed contexts, as they attempt to make new lives in trying circumstances. Anthropologists gain their "on-the-ground" perspectives of refugee life from fieldwork conducted over a period of time in sites such as refugee or detention camps, refugee housing centers, waiting rooms in health clinics or asylum offices, public meetings, or protests, as well as by analyzing representations of refugees in various media. Anthropologists often work with an explicit or implicit bias toward individuals or small communities and the promotion of their human rights.

Both anthropology and IR start their analyses with the same premise: namely, that all human life should offer some measure of order and stability, even in situations of ongoing movement (Malkki 1995: 508). Additionally, both anthropologists and IR scholars work with or toward the notion of "citizenship" as a category that needs defending or obtaining. In that sense, neither knowledge domain questions the fundamental global order of states with boundaries that require passports and permits. States, by definition, include citizens and exclude noncitizens. But in reality, states exercise their regimes of inclusion and exclusion in different ways at different times. For instance, France granted 95 percent of asylum seekers refugee status in 1976, but in 2006 that number had fallen to 6 percent (Fassin 2011: 220). Between 1946 and 1994, the United States granted protection to almost 3 million

refugees (Gibney 2004: 132). But in 2019, the Trump administration slashed the refugee cap to 18,000, curtailing the United States' role as a safe haven.

Clearly, informed discussions about the ways refugees are–or are not–being admitted and resettled in the wealthiest nations in Europe and North America are still critical and need to be continued by IR scholars, anthropologists, and other concerned scholar-activists. What anthropology can offer, perhaps more than any other discipline, is the breaking down of stereotypes, or those generalized perceptions of entire populations that are based on the actions of just a few. In the context of Middle Eastern refugees, we frequently encounter stereotypical representations, including masses of hapless victims streaming into Western countries to burden their welfare systems, or, more troublingly, Muslim refugees threatening to attack societies in pursuit of fundamentalist religious goals. The first stereotype often accompanies images of the elderly, women, and children, while the second invariably pictures young men, at times featuring their mug shots after arrest. Because of the resentment and fear elicited by the overreporting of isolated violent incidents, constructive debates about refugees and their rights to find new homes have become very difficult in both Europe and North America. It is impossible to build trust among people when stereotypes remain such a prominent part of ongoing discussions. While it is important to acknowledge the existence of fear and distrust, it is urgent to overcome both.

Five Themes

To that end, this is the first volume that focuses exclusively on Middle Eastern refugees through an ethnographic lens. All of the contributors are anthropologists who have conducted recent research with displaced Middle Eastern populations, including Afghans, Iraqis, Palestinians, and Syrians. Some of these anthropologists have worked with refugee populations still living in the Middle East (i.e., in the Gaza Strip, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon). Others focus on Middle Eastern refugees who have made their way to Europe (i.e., Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, and Greece) and North America (i.e., Canada and the United States).

Taken together, their research shows that Middle Eastern refugees experience both regimes of exclusion *and* inclusion as they confront the challenges of involuntary displacement. Refugees face legal, financial, and cultural barriers that restrict their ability to move about, enroll in school, access health care, or find housing in the countries that host them. Refugees have to confront existing stereotypes and prejudices. Yet, refugees can also find spaces where they can make themselves heard, obtain rights from host states, and receive support from local communities. Refugees undoubtedly experience

asymmetrical power relationships—states police their legal status; aid organizations control their financial support; and some citizens in host countries create unwelcoming discourses. But (state) power is never absolute. Power can be wielded by forcibly displaced persons themselves in particular ways at particular times, often in concert with host-society supporters.

The chapters of this volume are grouped together around five major themes that highlight the ways in which exclusion and inclusion can occur simultaneously. While some chapters highlight more forcefully the exclusionary aspects of state power, others provide nuanced examples of human agency, resilience, and resistance as Middle Eastern refugees respond to exclusion by demanding their welcome.

Part I. (Dis)Counting Refugees

The first section of the book begins, quite appropriately, in the Middle East—reminding us that Middle Eastern nations have done much more than the West to shoulder the contemporary refugee burden. The chapters in this section also show that Middle Eastern host nations have not been entirely or uniformly magnanimous. Middle Eastern refugees have been discounted *as refugees* in several Middle Eastern settings, and even forced to return to their home countries amid ongoing war. Within host countries, governments and government agencies can turn refugees into second-class citizens who need to be watched and whose rights need to be curtailed. Commonly, a nation-state will seek to restrict refugees' movements by placing them in camps or in other sites of surveillance. If states grants temporary residency permits, they often come with restrictions. In situations of precarity, refugees may need to continue to move and seek out economic opportunities, thereby violating state rules. Refugees may move out of camps into urban dwellings, while other impoverished persons who are not refugees may move into refugee camps as a form of available, precarious housing.

Who then exactly "counts" as a refugee? This issue can be contentious. The different labels applied to forcibly displaced persons may lead to dramatically different outcomes. For example, are displaced Iraqi Arabs who flee from Anbar Province in western Iraq to the semiautonomous northern region of Iraqi Kurdistan internally displaced persons or refugees? The Iraqi government in Baghdad considers Arabs from Anbar Province who flee north to the Kurdish city of Erbil as IDPs, but the government of semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan may consider them refugees, as long as they do not pose a threat to Kurdish security (Rubaii, this volume). Similarly, are forcibly displaced Afghans living in Iran refugees according to the 1951 Refugee Convention? Or are they mostly economic migrants looking for better opportunities, while their own country languishes under four decades of perpetual war? The Iranian government has given different answers to this

question at different points in its history, leading to significantly different treatment of displaced Afghans in their country (Adlparvar, this volume). For Palestinians living in Lebanon, the "refugee" label may prevent us from seeing important similarities between refugee populations and other disenfranchised communities living in proximity (Barbosa, this volume). While this book deals with the lives of forcibly displaced persons, and the contributors use the labels introduced above, it is important to acknowledge that these terms have frayed edges.

The three chapters in this section discuss how Middle Eastern host countries label and deal with refugees from neighboring countries. These refugees are viewed as anonymous numbers to be managed, as economic burdens on the state, or as potential security threats to be ousted. Indeed, new regimes of exclusion are in some cases leading to forcible deportation of Middle Eastern refugees back to war zones.

Kali Rubaii explains in chapter 1, "When States Need Refugees: Iraqi Kurdistan and the Security Alibi," that refugees allow governments to build up security states to surveil and control their populations, thereby turning on its head the conventional wisdom that refugees threaten nation-states. Conducting her fieldwork among Iraqi farmers from Anbar Province who had fled repeated outbreaks of violence to the safer Iraqi Kurdistan region in the north, Rubaii was told about Kurdish policing of refugee movements. Anbaris were the target of night raids, interrogation, and deportation, even as they were provided with refugee status and aid in the city of Erbil. Claiming that "good refugees don't move around," Kurdish security forces disregarded farmers' need to check up on their fields. Furthermore, by 2015, Anbari people seeking refuge in semiautonomous Iraqi Kurdistan were suspected of being ISIS supporters because of their regional origin. By including some displaced people as "refugees" and excluding others as "terrorists," Kurdish counterinsurgency regimes carefully policed the movement of displaced people to strengthen claims to statehood. In the name of protecting refugees, Kurdistan received not only international humanitarian support, but also a major thrust of military expertise and supplies by which to enforce its borders. Thus, defining and policing refugee movement became a core alibi in the construction of a security state.

In chapter 2, "Navigating Precarity, Prejudice and 'Return': The (Un) Settlement of Displaced Afghans in Iran and Afghanistan," Naysan Adlparvar takes a close look at the long-term displacement of Afghan Hazaras who—in 1979 and 1998—went to live, and whose children were born, in Iran. A Shia minority group inside Afghanistan who were specifically targeted by the Taliban, the early Hazara refugees obtained "blue cards" from the Iranian government, granting them limited work and residency rights. But post-1990, with Iran's economy in shambles, rights and benefits were rescinded, leaving newly arriving Afghan refugees and their descendants in

a more precarious position. Furthermore, Adlparvar shows that by 2018, difficult economic conditions in Iran made it necessary for refugees to move back "home"–a place they may have never seen before–looking for ways to make a living. Indeed, 773,000 Afghans "returned" from Iran due to a declining economy and coercion by Iranian authorities. They arrived to a resurgent Taliban and massive internal displacement. Most of them experienced exclusion based on ascribed ethnicities and identities as outsiders. This chapter draws heavily on the migration experiences of two Afghans, Hekmat and Sayid Basir, both born in Iran but later relocated to Afghanistan. Adlparvar concludes that the challenges experienced by Afghans in Iran, compounded by the circumstances and effects of relocation to Afghanistan, contribute to deepening states of precarity, and, for many Afghans, extended states of unsettlement.

Chapter 3, "Unsettling 'Refugees' as a Category: Labeling, Imagined Populations, and Statistics in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in Beirut," by Gustavo Barbosa, examines the "refugee" label as a category. Barbosa argues that by focusing on a person's legal exclusion in a host state, refugee debates often sideline much more significant regimes of social and economic exclusion, which are shared by other disenfranchised communities inside the country. Barbosa presents three nuanced family biographies. The interlocutors all live inside or in close proximity to the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon, imagined as a uniformly Palestinian community. Yet, as Barbosa reveals, these lower-class families are not all Palestinian. This chapter thus shows the problematic nature of some of the abstractions–or "imagined populations"–statisticians and policymakers work with in their refugee studies. Indeed, Barbosa asks, what do generalizing labels such as "Palestinians," "refugees," and "refugee camps," which show up so habitually in statistical studies and policy reports, effectively mean? When manufacturing such generalizations, what is excluded? While there is no doubt that Palestinians face barriers for legal inclusion in Lebanon, they share much in common with other poverty-stricken communities in the country. Employing a Marxist lens that privileges class solidarity over other forms of ethnic or national solidarity, Barbosa speculates whether class might enable "Arab encounters" of a different kind and serve as a basis for political mobilization.

Part II. Protesting Exclusion

This section of the volume moves to Europe, showing how welfare states may or may not welcome Middle Eastern refugees and extend their largesse to these newcomers. These chapters present powerful examples of the ways in which refugees are assigned a second-class status and disavowed as citizens, even in the most humanitarian regimes in Europe. But refugees do

not simply accept the conditions of their displacement. These chapters also show quite vividly how refugees advocate for their rights. Indeed, this section of the book demonstrates the highly creative and often effective strategies that have allowed some Middle Eastern refugees to forge networks of solidarity with supporting actors in different host societies–whether they be refugee advocacy groups, activists, social workers, or anthropologists themselves–who unite with refugees to overcome the barriers they face.

These chapters highlight the differences that can prevail within host communities and countries. Within some European countries, pro-refugee activists have vociferously advocated for refugees and asylum seekers, welcoming them into their communities through their support and helping to direct political debates. Yet, these chapters also show that anti-refugee groups in many Western European countries may seek to intimidate refugees and asylum seekers and try to hijack political debates by instilling fear. Within any receiving community or country, different refugees may have vastly different experiences–for example, Syrian families versus young solo Afghan and Iraqi men. At the same time that the number of refugees has reached alarming heights in many European countries, public attention to the topic, as well as rates of admission, are dropping precipitously. This is particularly true in the resource-rich Western European countries such as in Scandinavia, which would otherwise be expected to host them.

In chapter 4, Lindsay A. Gifford explores "Middle Eastern Refugeehood in the Happiest Place on Earth: Syrians and Iraqis Entering Finland's Welfare State Bureaucracy." Finland is ranked the world's happiest country and is admired for its equality and high per capita GDP. Yet within this environment of strong state capacity, Middle Eastern refugees in Helsinki do not evenly experience or perceive welfare state beneficence. The Finnish state's record in dealing with refugees is mixed: it can be humanitarian or inhumane, depending upon the individual case under review. Gifford particularly juxtaposes the experiences of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Finland. Syrians, who generally arrived in Finland as family units, were welcomed despite expressions of racism, while many Iraqi men were rejected for asylum because they arrived in Finland alone. This differential treatment led Iraqis to organize a 141-day-long protest in a public plaza despite freezing weather conditions. Finnish locals supported the Iraqi protestors, arguing for social inclusion amid otherwise exclusionary state policies. As Gifford concludes, it is important to treat legal policies and bureaucratic methods of state exclusion and inclusion as flexible and changing in response to refugee and community activism.

Chapter 5, titled "'I Live Here; I Have a Right to Be Here': An Afghan Refugee's Disorientations and Insistence on Inclusion through Theater," by Julie Nynne Bune, illustrates a different form of agency–that of a young

Afghan woman, Aliah, who speaks her mind on stage in a theater workshop. Young Afghan refugees in Denmark face uncertain futures. A recent change in Danish immigration policy from "integration" to "deportation" means that residence permits for refugees are currently issued for only one to two years, with the imminent risk of deportation. Young refugees like Aliah must navigate this uncertainty while at the same time negotiating their position in Danish society and within their own families. Aliah's story demonstrates how theater workshops produce spaces for Afghans to articulate themselves in bold and critical ways. "I live here; I have a right to be here" is Aliah's creative response to being silenced by a Danish official who visits her school. Through acting out possibilities, Aliah is able to overcome the disorientation and rejection she feels, not only by Danish society, but by her own family as well. Bune is both ethnographer and activist, leading theater workshops following Augusto Boal's work on the Theater of the Oppressed. Using the scripts that refugees produce in the workshops in addition to ethnographic interviews and participant observation, Bune deepens our understanding of refugees claiming their rightful place in the Danish welfare state.

In chapter 6, "Demanding Their Welcome: Agency-in-Waiting at a Protest Camp in Dortmund, Germany," Lucia Volk examines the situation in Germany in 2015, when the country received close to one million asylum petitions, a record-breaking number, with most applicants from Syria. Germany's asylum bureaucracy, cumbersome in a normal year, came close to a standstill. German politicians across the spectrum struggled to find a unified response, as did the European Union. Syrian refugees, for their part, engaged in their own struggles to obtain humanitarian asylum and protection from war and political persecution. In the city of Dortmund in northwest Germany, the extended waiting time imposed on refugees during the asylum application process generated a 53-day-long public protest of Syrian refugees, which was supported by local immigrant rights groups, such as Refugees Welcome Dortmund, and members of left-leaning parties and community organizations. Protected by Dortmund police against neo-Nazi attacks, the Syrian refugees in the protest camp demanded that their asylum applications be approved faster so that they could bring their families to Germany legally. As long as the men waited in Dortmund, their families awaited death in Syria, linking the asylum process to the loss of Syrian lives. At the end of the protest, German authorities reviewed and approved the asylum applications of the protesters, who brought their families to safety. By organizing and executing their public protest in Dortmund, Syrian refugees exercised "agency-in-waiting," demanding their rights from the German public, politicians, and ultimately the asylum bureaucrats who adjudicated their applications.

Part III. Making Lives in Exile

In situations with little hope of legal resolution to their displacement, refugees must find ways to make do with limited opportunities. Protracted displacement requires endurance. Sometimes refugees have to invent new life trajectories for themselves that might not correspond to their ideal imagined futures but that still enable them to live meaningful lives. Refugees may need to seek out work or education outside of state-sanctioned and supported channels, relying on each other and on refugee solidarity networks. In particular, young refugee men may need to adjust their culturally informed expectations of becoming autonomous financial providers to what is feasible in the absence of job opportunities or steady income, while still living up to cultural expectations of caregiving and reciprocity.

Indeed, meeting normative masculine expectations—including that a Middle Eastern man should receive an education, establish a household, marry and have children, then assume the "provider role" for his nuclear family and his aging parents—becomes nearly impossible for most refugee men, whether remaining in the region or resettling elsewhere. Making lives in exile may entail a refashioning of masculinity, as dreams and aspirations become curtailed. In this section of the volume, we see young men trying to move ahead with their lives, despite profound structural and legal constraints that marginalize and unsettle them.

In chapter 7, "Living as Enduring: The Struggle for Life against the Limits of Refuge among Gaza Refugees in Jordan," Michael Vicente Pérez looks at the ways in which Palestinian refugees from Gaza, who came to reside in Jordan in 1967, make their life in exile both dignified and livable. The Gaza camp is one of ten official UN refugee camps in Jordan. But unlike other Palestinian camps in the kingdom, its inhabitants are de jure stateless. Denied Jordanian citizenship, they have lived for more than fifty years as a stateless community excluded from some of the most basic rights. Gaza refugees cannot vote, work for the government, or own property. These limits and others have resulted in a chronic condition of vulnerability that reveals the limits of refuge in protracted situations. Specifically, the chapter argues that refuge is grounded in acts of endurance that challenge Gazans' exclusion as noncitizens and that seek to establish forms of living they can claim as their own—an effort that Pérez characterizes as "living as enduring." Based on interviews with twenty Gazan refugees in the Jarash refugee camp in Jordan, Pérez zooms in on the story of two young Gazan refugee men: Shadi, who struggled in the informal economy but eventually landed a job with an international company; and Rami, who succeeded in winning an international educational scholarship to the United States. In emphasizing living as enduring, Pérez emphasizes that these ex-Gazan refugees work hard to make their exile bearable, exercising a form of

agency characterized by striving, experimentation, and "active waiting" in limbo.

Chapter 8, "Reimagining 'the Arab Way' in Exile: Futures 'Off Line' among Syrian Men in Amman," by Emilie Lund Mortensen, examines "the Arab way," defined in collective terms as a linear life course from childhood to marriage to the position of family breadwinner, which is expected among contemporary urban middle-class men in Syria. This chapter demonstrates how the Arab way has been profoundly disrupted for young Syrian refugee men in Jordan, excluding traditional futures for them, but also opening other paths. Introducing the story of a young Syrian refugee named Hani, Mortensen shows how his circumstances made a desired marriage difficult to pursue, but still allowed him to provide daily care for his sick refugee mother. Brought "off line" in such ways, experiences of exile force young Syrian men such as Hani away from expected masculine trajectories, but reposition them as caring moral agents nonetheless.

This theme of masculinity and care is also found in chapter 9, "Proactive Reciprocity: Educational Trajectories Reclaimed through Patterns of Care among Refugee Men in Greece." Árdís K. Ingvars explains how many refugee men in Greece imagine education as a pathway to decent employment, active citizenship, and modern masculinity. Yet forcibly displaced single men in Athens face limited access to government services and no access to higher education or job training. In this case, many of these young refugee men seek free language lessons offered by Greek solidarity initiatives to increase their prospects. Within solidarity spaces, where their uncertain legal status is approached with reciprocity and autonomy by existing solidarity members, the men can begin to reconfigure knowledge production by teaching their own classes, highlighting the diversity of their home communities and sharing their expertise with newly arriving refugees and volunteers. As a result, through inclusive practices and care across ethnicities, ages, genders, and sexualities, young Middle Eastern refugee men in Greece increase their opportunities for the future and perform what Ingvars describes as a new kind of "proactive reciprocity."

Part IV. Seeking Health

Many refugees arrive in their host societies needing medical care, especially after surviving war-related violence causing physical injuries and disabilities, toxic exposures, and mental health stresses and traumas. Indeed, refugees who are admitted to host countries are often selected out of a large pool of applicants for resettlement because of their medical vulnerabilities (Ticktin 2011). Yet, depending on the site of resettlement, refugees may or may not receive adequate medical attention, particularly in societies with-

out access to universal health coverage. Furthermore, once inside doctors' offices, exclusionary practices may occur when refugees ask for help.

This section of the volume focuses on North America, where the United States and Canada provide contrasting regimes of care. In the United States, with its fee-for-service medical system, Middle Eastern refugees can face major obstacles in accessing the care that they need. Not only are medical centers sometimes understaffed and underfunded, but American medical providers may operate with significant prejudices toward the refugee populations they serve. Western medical practitioners may be ignorant of Middle Eastern cultural sensitivities, and much doctor-patient communication may be lost in translation. Furthermore, medical services in the United States are the most costly in the world, meaning that affordable care can become an impossibility. In Canada, on the other hand, where refugees have been welcomed by the Canadian government, access to state healthcare services has been far greater, helping refugees to settle into their new surroundings. Still, as this section highlights, offering culturally sensitive care can be a challenge, even in refugee-friendly medical clinics in Canada. Furthermore, refugees may come with significant reproductive and sexual health challenges, which are difficult to discuss even under the best of clinical circumstances. In this section, we see how issues of virginity and hymen repair, fertility and infertility, and pregnancy and cesarean section are handled in North American reproductive healthcare settings—sometimes quite sensitively, and at other times with callous disregard.

In chapter 10, "America's Wars and Iraqis' Lives: Toxic Legacies, Refugee Vulnerabilities, and Regimes of Exclusion in the United States," Marcia C. Inhorn reminds readers that American wars in the Middle East have long-lasting consequences, not only for populations in the region, but also for those who flee. As a medical anthropologist, Inhorn analyzes health hazards, many of them chronic and irreversible, which plague Iraqis who were exposed to U.S. radioactive weaponry. During her ethnographic research among Iraqi refugees in America's poorest big city, Detroit, Michigan, Inhorn listened to many stories of serious male infertility among Iraqi men who had been exposed to wartime toxins. Yet these men found themselves in a state of "reproductive exile," unable to return to their home country with its shattered healthcare system, but also unable to access costly assisted reproductive technologies in the private U.S. healthcare system. This chapter thus examines Iraqis' overall structural and reproductive vulnerability in the U.S. setting, where most Iraqi Muslims live well below the federal poverty line. Iraqi refugees have had to face ten major resettlement challenges over the past two decades, even though many Iraqi men previously risked their lives assisting U.S. forces. This chapter concludes by describing new regimes of refugee exclusion in the United States under President Donald Trump's "Muslim ban" and cap on refugee admissions. Ultimately,

the chapter questions America's commitment to Iraqi lives amid America's responsibility for their displacement.

Chapter 11, "Regimes of Exclusion in the Reproductive Healthcare Setting: Exploring Experiences of Syrian Refugees in San Diego, California," by Morgen Chalmiers, illustrates the many structural barriers and stereotypes that Syrian refugee patients face when making and attending prenatal care appointments in San Diego, California. Both a medical student and an anthropologist, Chalmiers displays keen sensibilities on both sides of the medical encounter. In the contemporary political climate of xenophobia and anti-refugee sentiment, biases and stereotypes may shape healthcare providers' ideas about their pregnant Syrian patients and influence the kind of care they provide or withhold. Syrian refugee women are blamed for "low health literacy" and "noncompliance" when they are unable to navigate a healthcare system that many U.S. citizens struggle to understand. Furthermore, this chapter illustrates how pregnant Syrian refugee women's encounters with the U.S. reproductive healthcare system are deeply shaped by providers' Islamophobic assumptions, as well as American gender norms that define "responsible" versus "irresponsible" reproduction. Nevertheless, Syrian women do not uncritically submit to patronizing regimes of exclusion that characterize them as uneducated and irresponsible. Rather, Syrian women adopt innovative strategies to negotiate their inclusion and ensure their access to high-quality, respectful prenatal care that "good" patients should receive.

In chapter 12, "Valuing Health, Negotiating Paradoxes: Medicalization of the Hymen, Hymenoplasty, and Women's Healthcare in Ontario," Verena E. Kozmann analyzes how Middle Eastern refugee women negotiate culturally sensitive healthcare in Toronto, Canada. While the Canadian universal healthcare system is meant to reflect a regime of inclusion, healthcare professionals working with refugees often operate at its margin. In this case study, Middle Eastern refugee patients requesting female genitalia procedures–namely, hymen repair surgery (hymenoplasty) and female virginity testing–embody highly charged discourses concerning women's rights and self-determined sexuality. A topic that is either regarded as taboo, or severely judged by Westerners as evidence of oppressive patriarchal structures in Middle Eastern communities, female genitalia procedures put female refugee patients in a particularly difficult position when seeking healthcare in their new home. Canadian medical practitioners, for their part, are also placed in a morally and ethically challenging position when asked to participate in a secretive procedure leading to potential "virginity fraud" and the perpetuation of gender-based sexual discrimination. This chapter thus focuses on the everyday interactions of healthcare professionals in a Toronto refugee clinic with their patients, who are mainly Syrian and Iraqi refugee women. The chapter shares both patients' and providers' perspectives, in-

cluding what hymens and hymen repairs mean for young women of Middle Eastern background. Seeking to make informed choices about their bodies, these refugee women may experience a form of inclusion if met by culturally competent medical practitioners at one of the most intimate moments of their reproductive and sexual lives.

Part V. Reshaping Humanitarianism

In the final section of this book, the authors investigate specific encounters and relationships between humanitarian organizations and refugees. International humanitarian institutions have been criticized for leading refugees into situations of dependency by allocating funds for the perpetuation of their refugee status. Yet, the face of humanitarianism has been changing, not only because neoliberal logics have decreased the overall aid budget, shifting much of the burden of self-sufficiency onto refugees, but also because refugees take part in shaping the aid they receive. Whether it is through project partnerships between aid givers, host country agencies, and refugees, or negotiations in individual refugee–aid worker encounters, "helping refugees" is not a simple, direct path. Moreover, refugees in prolonged exile have had to learn to help themselves in light of fluctuating funding levels from international institutions.

For instance, in chapter 13, "A Death Sentence? UNRWA in the Trump Era," Khaldun Bshara responds to the 2018 decision by the U.S. government to cut off all of its funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the UN institution created in 1948 specifically to respond to the Palestinian refugee crisis. Although UNRWA today obtains its funding from a variety of international donor countries, the United States had been prominent among them. Thus, in the aftermath of the 2018 Trump administration announcement, alarmed UNRWA officials, EU representatives, and regimes of host countries issued statements detailing the cataclysmic consequences of the funding cut for both Palestinian refugees and regional stability. In this chapter, Bshara disentangles the politics of the Palestinian question—specifically their right to return to Palestine—from the humanitarian question of providing food, education, and healthcare for forcibly displaced Palestinians. Bshara shows that the U.S. political calculus to force Palestinian refugees to stop demanding their right of return will not succeed. During previous reductions of UNRWA's aid budget, Palestinian refugees built more homes in camps and began to commemorate their homeland with more frequency. Yet, Bshara also shows that a possible "death sentence" will be felt by camp-based refugees, who will suffer from further austerity measures including food insecurity if significant funding cuts are made. This chapter thus forces us to see beyond humanitarian politics or speculations about the future of refugees. Instead, it care-

fully interrogates the human ramifications of changing refugee funding landscapes.

In chapter 14, "Race, Religion, and Afghan Refugees' Practices of Care in Greece," Zareena A. Grewal considers the changing role of faith-based organizations in the (often failed) humanitarian efforts of Greece's bloated NGO ecosystem, as well as the role of religion in the humanitarian responses initiated by Afghan refugees themselves in Athens. Beyond the purview of states and NGOs, Muslim Afghans in Greece have developed networks of support in their own communities and with other Muslim communities in Greece as they deal with the pressures of pervasive anti-Muslim racism, which sometimes makes them the targets of white supremacist violence. Despite the illegibility of Islamic relief work and the racialized stigma attached to Islam, refugee activists serve the needs of refugee communities in Athens and, through their practices of care, expand the category of basic needs to include their religious needs around funerary rights, prayer services, Islamic charity (zakat), and dignity. Some Afghan refugees who have converted to Christianity also engage with U.S.-based evangelical Christian international NGOs (iNGOs). Because of these privileged relationships with iNGOs, born-again Afghan Christians tend to receive more resources for both their basic and religious needs from their religious brethren abroad. Yet, as shown in this chapter, Afghan Muslims manage to care for the living and dead amid both structural and physical violence.

Chapter 15, "Blurred Lines and Syrian Tea: Negotiations of Humanitarian-Refugee Relationships in France," by Rachel J. Farell, turns our attention to the micropolitics of interactions between Syrian refugees and French social workers who are employed by humanitarian aid agencies. Basing her research in a humanitarian housing center providing temporary shelter for Syrian refugees in a Parisian suburb, Farell examines the ways in which Syrian refugees in France have advantageously navigated relationships with humanitarians and renegotiated the norms of humanitarian engagement in their own lives. Her research is situated during a tense time in France, where far-right politics, national unrest and protest, anti-migration sentiment, and rising rates of Islamophobia have created a socially tenuous mélange. Despite these social factors, this chapter argues that the power dynamics between humanitarians and refugees can be shifted and negotiated in ways that promote social inclusion. The chapter offers three powerful vignettes of everyday social interactions: first, of Syrian refugee families extending their tea hospitality to humanitarian workers during home visits, thereby forging more personal relationships and obtaining better services; second, of humanitarian workers defending the rights of Syrian teenagers to take shortcuts by fence-jumping, even protecting them against the complaints of hostile French neighbors; and third, a French crêpe-making lesson turned into an Arabic sweets production, when Syrian women concerned about the

French baker's cleanliness invited her to learn from them instead. Clearly, Syrian refugees in France are neither inherently helpless nor automatically victimized while living in a refugee housing center and depending on government aid.

In the final chapter 16, "Inclusive Partnerships: Building Resilience Humanitarianism with Syrian Refugee Youth in Jordan," Catherine Panter-Brick asks, how do we come together to influence narratives of exclusion and inclusion in systems of humanitarian assistance? Her chapter argues for the need to build and sustain "inclusive partnerships" in humanitarian spaces as a pathway to improve the life chances of war-affected people and social cohesion in their communities. Panter-Brick draws on her own experience leading a research consortium—involving scholars, practitioners, policymakers, funders, media, refugees, and host communities—to evaluate youth-focused humanitarian programming with Syrian refugees in Jordan. She illustrates the regional tensions that threaten acts of hospitality and solidarity, and the contested notions of "rights," "dignity," and "social inclusion" in the lived experiences of refugees and citizens. Her chapter employs visual ethnography to provide specific examples of how young refugees intersect with humanitarian work, illustrating narratives of courage, dignity, and resilience. This "vertical slice" ethnography of the humanitarian ecosystem in Jordan helps to connect refugees' personal lives to policy interventions designed to address the emotional, social, economic, and political issues of forced displacement and resettlement. As this chapter concludes, inclusive partnerships lay the foundations for local, regional, and international actors to move from refugee crisis management to what Panter-Brick calls "structural resilience" in humanitarian action.

Conclusion: Ethnographies for a More Settled Future

Ultimately, this ethnographic collection of timely research on Middle Eastern refugees unsettles many of the dominant media narratives, cultural assumptions, and racist stereotypes that have accompanied these refugees as they have fled from danger to what they hope will be places of safety. As many of these chapters show, new homes are not necessarily "safe," nor is resettlement necessarily a "refuge." However, the case studies in this volume also offer ample hope for social inclusion in host societies, based on the goodwill of refugees and their allies. In this regard, anthropologists can play a crucial role in documenting refugee encounters and alliances, humanizing the sometimes vitriolic discourses about Middle Eastern refugees, and, in doing so, work toward a better, more tolerant, inclusive, and just social world.

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Note

1. We define this geographical area according to the United Nations' mapping project: https://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/mideastr.pdf.

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Part I

(Dis)Counting Refugees

1

When States Need Refugees

Iraqi Kurdistan and the Security Alibi

Kali Rubaii

Introduction

While nation-states often claim that refugees threaten their political and territorial integrity, this chapter shows how the opposite can be true: sometimes states need refugees. In late 2014 and early 2015, when parts of Iraq and Syria were overtaken by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), people seeking refuge in semiautonomous Iraqi Kurdistan became central to the public story told about Kurdish sovereignty. Their ethnic or regional group affiliation determined their integration or rejection by the Kurdish authorities. For example, on the one hand, Anbari people were suspected of being ISIS supporters because of their regional origin. They found themselves the target of suspicion, even as they were provided with refugee status and aid. On the other hand, minorities such as Yazidi and Kurds were brought into camps that looked more like planned cities.

Ultimately, refugee presence in Kurdistan reinforced a garrisoned security state. In the name of protecting refugees, Kurdistan received international humanitarian support, but also a major thrust of military expertise and supplies by which to enforce its borders. By 2017, the Pentagon signed an agreement to give the Kurdish army, known as the Peshmerga, US$415 million (Al Jazeera 2016), along with part of the US$13 billion it was spending in the fight against ISIS. Defining and placing refugees became a core alibi to the construction of

a security state that held the potential of becoming a U.S.-backed independent Kurdistan. This was ultimately not the case, and the United States quickly withdrew its support for Kurdistan after ISIS was officially defeated. Nevertheless, the centrality of refugees in the story of a weak nation-state reveals insights about the political role of refugees more broadly, even for states whose status is less tenuous or less obviously linked to refugee protection.

Methods

I was living and conducting ethnographic dissertation research in both Iraqi Kurdistan and Anbar Province in 2014 and 2015. While many journalists were on the ground in Iraq at the time, only a handful of anthropologists were conducting longer-term ethnographic studies. It was important for me to be physically present on the changing social and physical landscape of northern Iraq, so my research included traveling to and from Anbar Province with displaced Anbari farmers, crossing the Kurdish border with them, and doing some farming in Anbar amid geopolitical struggle. While the majority of my fieldwork focused on mainland Iraq, the fascinating position of Kurdistan in the "ISIS-era" struggle for geopolitical control enfolded many of the displaced Anbari farmers with whom I conducted the bulk of my research.

Like others working in the region, I dropped my primary research for a brief time in order to respond to the immediate needs of displaced Yazidi and Anbari people arriving in droves to Iraqi Kurdistan after ISIS had captured territory from Sinjar to Ramadi to Mosul. I was involved in minor emergency relief to displaced people in multiple camps and noncamp settings, accompanied doctors on medical visits to camps, visited refugee camps with local directors, and conducted interviews with displaced families. I also organized crowdsourced emergency support through the Islah Reparations Project, a nonprofit of which I am a cofounder. It was through this organization that I engaged in some truth and reconciliation dialogues among Kurds and Arabs, and learned how many Kurds felt that supporting displaced families was an act of forgiveness for violence by Iraqi Arabs upon Iraqi Kurds at the behest of Saddam Hussein. The variable treatment of the displaced—from the integration of Yazidis and Kurds to distrust and ill treatment of Anbari Arabs—by the semiautonomous Kurdish government, secret police, military, and charitable foundations inspired the insights in this chapter.

Kurdistan in Iraq

The semiautonomous Iraqi Kurdistan was utterly packed with people in 2015. In every hotel room, every hotel lobby, every construction site, and

every square meter of every highway underpass, people languished after arduous escapes from violent encounters with ISIS, Shia militias, or government bombings in Iraq or Syria. From all parts they had fled: Yazidi and Kurds from the north, Anbari Arabs from the west, and others from cities that were divided into Kurdish and Arab parts, such as Kirkuk. The sheer number of people compounded an already dense influx of displaced people living in camps and hotels from earlier in the year. Nearly two million displaced people resided in the small region of Iraqi Kurdistan (UNHCR 2018).

The moment posed geopolitical opportunities and dilemmas for Kurdistan, as an influx of refugees might for any nation-state that shares its cartographic edges with war. Kurdistan is situated at the four corners of Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran, and Kurds on each side of these national boundaries face different degrees of integration, expulsion, and confrontation. When displaced people from Iraq and Syria fled to Iraqi Kurdistan, and when the possibility of ISIS expansion was headlining in international news, it opened space for the whole of a Kurdish national entity to amplify its call for independence.

Since the 2003 U.S. and coalition invasion of Iraq, a series of legal, political, social, and economic unravelings fragmented Iraq's territory into three parts. An ad hoc system of tripartheid formed, sometimes nicknamed Sunnistan, Shia-stan, and Kurdistan (Rubaii 2019). Tripartheid has been devastating for the people and regions for whom Iraqi nationalism was a boon. Many Anbari people experienced relative favor under Saddam Hussein's rule. For them the dismantlement of Iraqi sovereignty posed major hardship, an opening up of Anbari territory to outside militias, and a new, negatively viewed government (Bassam 2017). For Iraqi Kurdistan, however, some geopolitical ruptures made dreams of sovereignty feel more possible. When, in 2015, the presence of ISIS in Syria and northern Iraq peaked, Iraqi Kurdistan found itself experiencing some of its greatest territorial autonomy.

Iraqi Kurds were active in resisting persecution by Saddam Hussein, who cracked down on their insurgency with genocide, or what Kurds call "the Anfal." The regime used chemical weapons, Arabized the region with settler Arab villages, banned Kurdish language in schools, and disaggregated Kurdish villages by forced displacement (Chatty 2010; Kelly 2008; Talabany 2001). The then-rebel Peshmerga forces hid in the mountains and fought guerilla style against Iraqi armies for decades (Lortz 2005). Some of the rebel militias in other parts of Kurdistan, such as the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey, remain on the U.S. Department of State (2019) list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations, in spite of suggestions to remove them because they were instrumental as allies in the region. Others, such as the People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria, formed more recently in 2004. In Iraq today, the Peshmerga is a national army, operating with international

legitimacy. It operates its own checkpoints, alongside the Kurdish police, and the Asaish (Kurdish secret police).

Iraqi Kurdistan has transformed its militias into an army and operates like a state in many ways, but it relies on the central Iraqi government in Baghdad for the distribution of currency, medical supplies, and other resources. Once evading checkpoints, the Kurdish Peshmerga now operates them, an irony not lost on the Kurdish public. At some checkpoints in Kurdistan, there is a popular image of Masoud Barzani, president of Kurdistan from 2005–17, going through a checkpoint while smiling and laughing (see figure 1.1). Part of building statehood is performing security as a state ap-

Figure 1.1. Picture of Kurdish President Masoud Barzani
Passing through a Checkpoint. Photo by the author.

paratus: independence includes operating the systems that once oppressed them (Ladwig and Roque 2018).

The mass movement of refugees justifies and excites security regimes, and it did in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2015. The security alibi enables states to perpetuate violence and repression in the name of security for the public. The logic of a contemporary security state is that certain repressive military interventions are necessary to protect the vulnerable from the strong (Schirmer 1998), and that such illiberal measures ultimately serve liberal ideals. From a spatial perspective, the security state might best be defined as one that manages the comings and goings of human beings with a fascination for their propensity to conspire against the state (Goldstein 2010). It is from this perspective that both security apparatuses and Western cultural norms modulate the significance of certain types of refugee movement and operationalize security campaigns against those who move in problematic ways (Lancaster 2008).

The Role of Refugees in the Security Alibi

Performing security by and through refugees generated stronger conditions for a weak, semiautonomous state to leverage international liberal, feminist discourse to expand its militarization. The genealogy of refugees as a legal category is not humanitarian, but rather rooted in military security. In Europe, concern about displaced people repatriating themselves in a postwar context was perceived as a threat to military stability, particularly that of states (Malkki 1985). This genealogy partly explains why refugees can serve as central characters in the stories states tell about protecting the weak from the strong, sometimes by terrorizing, containing, and oppressing those it claims to protect (Ticktin 2006). Historically, because refugees inspired military intervention, the basic model for a military camp was appropriated ad hoc in the construction of refugee camps, with military barracks serving as an architectural model and spaces arranged according to Foucauldian surveillance and discipline.

It was not until 1951, with the establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), that refugee management became a humanitarian, rather than a military, concern. This did not occur before certain militarized apparatuses had become a generalized standard (Wyman 1989). Policies of military-style confinement have become a global standard for managing refugees and potential insurgents alike (González 2009; Khalili 2012). The project to contain refugees, not only for their protection but also and equally for the protection of states from them, is one that legitimizes contemporary security states. Other forms of coercive control—the detainment of political dissidents or journalists; the internment or imprisonment

of the poor, racial minorities, or those deemed "insane"; or the militia-style policing of such groups on the streets—are less palatable to liberal democracies and therefore less convincing alibis for further militarization. Refugees, who are explicitly not citizens and therefore the subjects of both mistrust and public concern, work to bolster states' legitimacy when they are publicly and properly cared for and when they are appropriately policed. Thus, Iraqi Kurdistan carefully cultivated a simultaneous international narrative about the refugee crisis that supported its need to enforce and expand its territorial borders, framed its military interventions as part of a free-world campaign against a morally corrupt enemy, and physically positioned refugee camps in particular arrangements that helped to fashion a territorial vision of the future Kurdish state.

"Refugees Are Not IDPs!"

In order to be legally considered a refugee, a person must cross an international border. If they do not cross an international border, they are considered internally displaced persons (IDPs). Thus, identifying a person as a refugee, rather than as an IDP, is crucial for a state that seeks to legitimize itself by establishing a border. Throughout my fieldwork and volunteer work in Iraqi Kurdistan, Kurdish aid workers used the term "refugee" (in English), and sometimes corrected one another, as well as international colleagues, when the term "IDP" was used. At a camp outside of Dohuk, I overheard a senior camp administrator scold a junior administrator in English, saying emphatically, "Refugees are not IDPs!" Similarly engaged in the confusion of categories, a local aid worker in Shaqlawa said of Anbaris who frequently crossed the Kurdish border, "On this side of the border they are refugees. When they go home, they stop being refugees. So, what are they, half-refugees? And when half the family is there and some stay here, are the people who stay really refugees?" The movement of Anbari people, already flagged as potential terrorists because of their affiliation with a region of Iraq reputed for militia-based dissidence, undermined the strength of Kurdistan's border. Their movement also muddled their representation as refugees, which was central to creating a sense that the Kurdish-Iraqi border was official. When one family I knew was rejected by the UNHCR for a resettlement appeal, they said that a United Nations worker told them they had to go to Turkey to be resettled officially through the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In spite of its claim to independence, Kurdistan was not an official international boundary, so their United Nations files would not count them as refugees but instead as IDPs. Other United Nations employees had advised them differently. The UNHCR website on Kurdistan noted in 2018 that Erbil hosts 12,000 "refugees" (from Syria, who

crossed the Iraq-Syria border) and 600,000 "displaced Iraqis," drawing a careful distinction between the categories (UNHCR 2018). Confusion at the local level about whether Iraqis in Kurdish territory were actually refugees, or refugees just in name, had everything to do with international diplomatic politics regarding Kurdish statehood.

Iraqis from Anbar with whom I worked closely were as eager to be counted as refugees as Kurdish aid workers were to name them as such: to them, refugee status felt like a greater layer of protection, even as it also meant they were treated negatively as outsiders of a Kurdistan they had easily visited in earlier times. A crackdown on Anbari movement, even within Kurdish territory, became part of the Anbari experience in seeking relief in Kurdish towns. For Arab refugees from Anbar Province, their protection was inflected with being "secured" in highly undesirable ways. The security state directly policed refugee movement in more targeted ways, such as night raids and threats of forced repatriation, in the name of protecting the weak from the strong.

The logic of protection is always imbued with a logic of control, and refugee protection is no exception. Suad, an Anbari woman who had recently received a three-month card for food aid, described how her allotment of flour and oil came from one central location in Mirawa Valley. "The place where we get food told us to stay nearby. They said that good refugees don't move around." She mentioned that some of her family was in Suleymania, further south, and that she would not be allowed to travel there to visit them for Eid (holiday celebration). "We are very restricted, as if we do not have homes to go to, or family that we need to visit." As Arabs and Iraqi others, Anbari people were carefully talked about and managed as refugees, not IDPs: there was nothing "internal" about them to a Kurdish public or a Kurdish state. Policing the movement of refugees from Anbar and holding them at bay as outsiders helped to internationalize the border between Iraqi Kurdistan and mainland Iraq. It also served as a rhetorical and legal move to instantiate statehood.

Refugees as Spatial Objects

The securitization of national boundaries worked alongside a parallel cartographic seizure of territory. Even as the border of Iraqi Kurdistan was made more real, it was also made more flexible. The security side of the refugee-security state dyad was visible in Kurdish expansion, especially around places like Kirkuk, where oil reserves on the border could be accessed and captured from ISIS, but also from mainland Iraq. Kurdistan embarked on a spatial project of setting up refugee camps strategically, near factories for extractive industries and military units along the Kurdish "borders" with

mainland Iraq. A simple Google search of maps depicting refugee camps in Kurdistan shows the strategic placement of Kurdistan's forty to sixty camps to expand Kurdish territory.

The camp I visited near Kirkuk had been set up as far toward the Iraqi interior as possible, like an outpost holding ground. Residents of the camp complained that they felt unsafe so close to ISIS and had asked to be moved further inside Kurdish territory. At the time of my visit, I could hear the noises of gunfire and see rising smoke just over the hills, and I empathized with refugees' desire to distance themselves from the ongoing battle between the Kurdish Peshmerga and ISIS. It felt as if they were being kept outside of Kurdistan as untrusted Others and simultaneously being kept in a brand new "inside" made real by the military capture of oil-rich land only a few weeks earlier. Camps in Kirkuk hosted families that the Kurdish government did not plan to integrate long-term into its ethnonational state.

Not only were human beings securitized with geopolitical interest in mind, so too were mineral resources. Oil moved inward in long lines of large trucks; Anbari people did not. Upon visiting the camp in Kirkuk, I traveled by car from Suleymania to the Kurdish side of Kirkuk, and from there to the Arab side of Kirkuk. Along this road I witnessed endless oil trucks rapidly extracting as much resource as possible from the formerly "Arab side." Limestone and other mineral resources were also rapidly trucked out of the area and back toward more central Kurdish processing facilities. At the time, Kurdistan made a deal with Israel to sell the sudden windfall globally (Zhdannikov 2015).

Policing the movement of displaced people through checkpoints and camps is not only a question of securing borders from potential militant or terrorist infiltration—a story often told in the management of displaced people (Wilson 2005)—but a critical step toward articulating nationalism. A politics of ethnonationalist exclusion was made visible through the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others. In contrast to the camps hosting Anbari Arabs, refugee camps in the north near Duhok hosting Yazidi and Kurdish families were better equipped for planned inclusion. The camp I visited in Domiz was already being turned into a permanent city with urban plans and a major investment of resources designed to integrate Yazidi communities more fully into Kurdish citizenry. My walk through the camp included a visit to the trenches, where pipes were beginning to be laid for a permanent sewage and water system. Thus, the Kurdish state activated the long genealogy of refugee camps functioning as military instruments by leveraging increasing spatial control as it was able to establish increasing autonomy.

Military attempts to establish elusive control of Iraqi landscape have generated territorial approaches to security and therefore a spatial understanding of what it means to be an enemy or ally of the security state (Graham 2011; Khoury 2008). Bad refugees (in this case, Anbaris) and good

refugees (in this case, Yazidis and Kurds) serve similar functions as spatial military objects, depending on their territorial placement by the security state.

Liberal Feminism and the Free World's Gaze

Establishing clearly defined (but also expanding) Kurdish national borders in a semiautonomous geographic context was partly mechanical and partly discursive. Hosting refugees meant that Iraqi Kurdistan received international support and recognition through aid organizations, but also that it was able to position itself as an ally of the free world in the fight against Islamic extremism. In doing so, Kurdistan confronted global Orientalism by leaning into it, de-exotifying its women and centering them at the heart of public discourse (Jacoby 2017; Said 1978). Aligning itself with liberal democracy in juxtaposition with so-called backward Islamism facilitated the flow of military resources toward a political enterprise by the "free world." In much the same way Israel positions itself as a minority nation-state in the Arab world, so too Kurdistan represented minority struggle against Arab/Islamic repression, carefully tucking the fact that its population is majority Sunni Muslim out of transnational public discourse (Mamdani 2005). Many of the Yazidi refugees I interviewed, however, felt ambivalent about receiving visibly Muslim Kurdish solidarity. For example, some families I met under a highway overpass relied heavily on a local mosque for water. The women expressed concerns about relying on the mosque because they had been so brutalized by Muslim persecution in Sinjar that they felt the mosque here might try to force conversion in exchange for water. For those religious minorities being "saved" by a "less-Islamic" Peshmerga from a "more-Islamic" ISIS, dominant religious orientations still governed refugees' tenuous sense of wellbeing and safety.

Kurdistan's alignment with the free world also required a demonstration of feminism in popular global discourse. Media campaigns featured women Peshmerga liberating Yazidi prisoners from Mt. Sinjar. Such stories were consumed with great interest in English language media alongside stories of the kidnapping, sale, and rape of Yazidi women by ISIS. The stories embedded neatly, and deeply, into public discourse in the United States. For example, on the 2019 anniversary of September 11, Fox News published a short piece titled, "Yazidi Sex Slaves Set Fire to Their Burqas after Being Freed from ISIS" (McKay 2019). It was on this popular discourse that Kurdistan sought to capitalize in seeking support for independence in 2015: in the name of protecting minorities and women, Kurdistan received humanitarian support (World Bank Group 2015), but also a major thrust of military expertise and supplies by which to crush Islamic extremism.

The militarization of feminism, quite popular as a trope for women's equality in many security states, articulates itself here as an implied un-Islamic quality of Kurdish society: women, whose bodies often stand in as symbols of the nation, are bearing lethal force (Enloe 1988). They therefore become symbols of national independence, secular feminism, and vulnerability all at once (Hirschkind and Mahmood 2002). Often depicted with free flowing, sometimes blonde hair, women Peshmerga were all over the news, and in graphic design like the one featured here (see figure 1.2). They were often quoted as speaking against the sexism and oppression of the Islamic State upon other women, as "white" women saving brown women from

Figure 1.2. Feminist Kurdistan against ISIS. This photo was found 22 December 2019 at https://linkezeitung.de/2017/09/22/der-mythos-moderater-kurdischer-rebellen/comment-page-1/. Every effort was made to identify the artist.

brown men (Spivak 1988). In reality, Kurdish women made up a very small minority of the fighting forces.

While Kurdish women were featured as leaders in a military campaign, refugee women were represented as downtrodden victims of abuse or as dangerous women who could not be trusted. The tale of Yazidi women being kidnapped and trafficked as sex slaves or forced brides of ISIS tapped into deep-seated voyeuristic fantasies about the colonial harem (Alloula 1986), and worked to galvanize international public opinion about the value of sending military support to Kurdistan to save refugees. Media coverage of Yazidi women rarely featured the proud, straight-backed elderly women I met, with traditional white and purple dress, but instead young women looking dejected and abused. The dignified representation of refugees, especially those who have just undergone extreme turmoil, was foregone for the more strategic juxtaposition of proud, strong Kurds and abused refugees who needed saving. Saving refugees not only offered the opportunity to partner directly with nongovernmental organizations and internal organizations like the United Nations; it further enhanced international relations otherwise regulated through the Iraqi capital in Baghdad.

Meanwhile, an internal security state worked very differently to harass other refugees in the name of protecting them. Displaced Anbari women were targeted as suspicious allies in a terrorist network. Widows faced interrogations, night raids, and extensive surveillance by the Asaish because their men were imagined to be still alive, fighting with ISIS in Anbar. The terrorism burden, by which I mean the burden of personally explaining and accounting for the existence of Islamic terrorism in the world in daily interactions, fell upon Anbari women who were suspected by the Kurdish security state of aiding and abetting terrorism if their husbands, sons, or siblings were missing. Some of the women I interviewed and lived with were even threatened with deportation to mainland Iraq. Were Kurdistan an official state, keeping refugees just outside of national territory would be illegal, as was the case with Palestinian-Iraqi double refugees on the Syrian border in 2007–10. But in this case, semiautonomy generated ambiguity that prevented any claims to this practice being illegal.

While Muslim Kurdish women were presented as nearly-Western feminists, non-Muslim Yazidi women were presented as downtrodden victims in need of saving, and Muslim Anbari women were treated as manipulative allies of a backwards Islam: all were caricatures of refugees and their protectors. International media leaned into Orientalist discourse about Islam in order to flip the script about Kurdistan. Thus, refugees–both the menace they could be (in this case, Anbari women collaborating with ISIS husbands), and the menace they run from (in this case, Yazidi women raped and kidnapped by ISIS)–serve as vectors for military support for those who fight the menace (in this case, Kurdish women soldiers).

Kurdistan's Military-Displacement Complex

On 10 February 2015 in an NBC News (2015) interview titled, "Kurdish Fighters Need Guns," Masrour Barzani, head of the Kurdish Security Council, expressed gratitude for the U.S. airstrikes against ISIS but called for weapons, tanks, and other supplies to help garrison the Kurdish state in the fight against Islamic extremism. It was no secret that such weapons would not only be used to preserve U.S. and Kurdish joint interests in regional stability, but also for Kurdish independence.

The Kurdish relationship with both refugees and international military support forms a military-displacement complex, by which I mean a political economy predicated on the simultaneous protection and violation of refugees as a rhetorical and pragmatic catalyst toward geospatial control. Beyond humanitarianism, military control of the region was enabled by mutual opportunism: the United States, which had previously portrayed Kurdish militias as terrorist groups, was now actively engaged in training and partnering with Kurdish militias and the Kurdish Peshmerga. While short-lived and paltry compared to other cases of U.S. military backing, millions of dollars in military aid went into reinforcing Kurdish territorial control. Kurdish national freedom was not something the United States or any other geopolitical power planned to fully support, but it was promised as a way of garnering regional military advantage against ISIS.

On the other hand, the threat of ISIS incursion was actively exaggerated by Kurdistan in an effort to gain military and economic support in both hosting refugees and garrisoning–if not expanding–its borders. Capitalizing on international fears of ISIS, Kurdistan–posing as a beacon of light and liberalism–procured a major influx of military capital, including training in counterterrorism to secure border areas and their natural resources. Security states often practice repressive tactics in the name of liberal values, like protecting minorities and women, in order to make military strides for spatial control of territory (Foucault 2009). Refugees and their protection worked to establish a publicly acceptable reason to explain why Kurdish secret police and the Kurdish military might be busting into refugee hotel rooms to do periodic sweeps in the name of counterterrorism.

Conclusion

The politics of who counts as a refugee and who does not is fraught not only for those who stand to be (dis)counted but also for the regimes doing the counting. It is widely accepted that countries hosting refugees are burdened by them and that displaced people can threaten a host country's sense of sovereignty. However, this is not always true, and never evenly

so. For Kurdistan, and perhaps other semiautonomous states and historically persecuted communities, refugees can sit at the heart of sovereignty movements.

Between 2010 and 2020, Kurdistan leveraged refugees and their salvation as a central alibi for securing its own national boundaries and its displaced populations, leaning heavily on international stereotypes and discourse to advance its security apparatus. The uneven treatment and identification of displaced people, from Yazidi and Kurds as integrated and welcomed to Anbari Arabs as excluded and distrusted, highlights the powerful role of refugees in forming and amplifying Kurdish ethnic nationalism. Furthermore, Kurdistan's alignment with the "free world" against Islamic extremism was solidified in international discourse through emphasis on variable caricatures of women, from downtrodden victims to ISIS accomplices to gallant fighters, even as Kurdish security policed certain displaced women in the name of protection. Spatially, the geographic placement camps and the careful classification of refugees versus IDPs helped Kurdistan both define and make flexible its physical borders in service of territorial expansion. The result of these measures was that, in the name of feminism, refugee protection, and freedom from Islamic extremism, Kurdistan received an influx of tanks, weapons, and training to reinforce an increasingly garrisoned security state.

Refugees–their camps, bodies, and social status–served as moral, spatial, and legal objects around which a national call for security and sovereignty could be amplified. Their actual treatment, however, depended upon their functional use value in the project of building a deeper security state via a military-displacement complex.

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<p style="text-align:center">2</p>

Navigating Precarity, Prejudice, and "Return"

The (Un)Settlement of Displaced Afghans in Iran and Afghanistan

Naysan Adlparvar

Introduction

Afghans have been in Iran in large numbers since the 1978 communist coup in Afghanistan. Since then, and indeed before, Afghans have been traveling back and forth between Iran and Afghanistan as conflicts, governments, economies, and refugee policies change. At the height of Afghan displacement to Iran, in 1991, an estimated three million Afghans resided in Iran in various states of legality (Adelkhah and Olszewska 2007: 141). Since 1991 the number of Afghans in Iran has varied, contracting most notably in 2018, when 773,125 Afghans relocated to Afghanistan (IOM-UNHCR 2019: 8). Given the high levels of cyclical migration that mark the context, an estimated 2.5 to 3 million Afghans remain in Iran today.

This chapter investigates the impacts of sociocultural, political, and legal regimes of inclusion/exclusion experienced not only by Afghans in Iran, but also by those Afghans who later relocate to Afghanistan. This analysis is undertaken for three reasons: to take stock of the impacts of long-term displacement upon Afghans in Iran, while also outlining ways they express agency, resilience, and resistance; to highlight the differential impacts of this extended displacement upon Afghans relocating to Afghanistan; and to illuminate new regimes of inclusion/exclusion encountered on arrival.

There is a fourth rationale for this analytical approach. By examining the life stories of relocated Afghans as they navigate regimes of inclusion/exclusion, this chapter complicates existing narratives of Afghan refugees. It challenges portrayals of Afghans in Iran as unintelligent or incompetent, drawing attention to the structural challenges they face. It counters narratives of those who relocate to Afghanistan as privileged and undeserving of assistance. It also contests the notion that Afghan refugees are passive victims of protracted displacement.

Given the chapter's focus on long-term displacement and relocation, the ensuing analysis deals with Afghan refugees who have spent extended periods of time in Iran. It does not explicitly deal with Afghan migrants who have traveled to Iran. The focus on long-term migration requires two caveats. First, the misnomer "returnee" is commonly applied to Afghans who were born and raised in Iran before relocating to Afghanistan. Although they may associate with Afghan identity and cultural forms, they may have never been on Afghan soil. It is, therefore, incorrect to label them as "returning" to Afghanistan. The social dislocation this term masks often becomes evident on relocation to their imagined homeland. Second, given the history of Afghan migration to/from Iran, the distinction between "refugee" and "migrant" is fluid. Many migrants became refugees, and many refugees became migrants.

To explore the regimes of inclusion/exclusion experienced by Afghans living in Iran and later Afghanistan, this chapter utilizes the concept of "precarity" as discussed by Judith Butler (2009). Butler argues that all humans experience a precarious life due to its interdependent nature. Additionally, social and political arrangements, often embodied within the nation-state, regulate how precarious lives are. "Precarity," however, designates a specific condition: "that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. Such populations are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and of exposure to violence without protection" (Butler 2009: ii).

Central to Butler's (2009: ii) notion is the politically induced nature of precarity, which can result in "maximized vulnerability" through exposure to violence perpetrated by the state or other actors, or through inadequate state protections. This chapter extends Butler's concept to the experiences of Afghans in Iran, including those who later relocate to Afghanistan. In doing so, it illuminates how precarity operates and the manner in which Afghans navigate the condition in Iran and Afghanistan. The chapter also highlights the variable nature of precarity, with Afghans each experiencing differing states of the condition. Lastly, it outlines the temporality of precarity, describing how the condition deepens or diminishes in Afghan lives over time.

Methods and Interlocutors

This chapter draws on interviews conducted with two Afghans born in Iran who now live in Bamyan, Afghanistan. Interviews were conducted in August 2019 in Persian and translated for the purposes of this chapter. The first interlocutor is Hekmat, a 31-year-old male who was born and grew up in Esfahan, Iran. He relocated to Bamyan Center (where his parents were born) in 2003. He is educated and employed with a well-paid job at a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Bamyan. Hekmat also identifies as Hazara. Hazaras are members of a historically marginalized ethnic category in Afghanistan. They are commonly viewed as originating from the Hazarajat (the Hazara homeland), speaking Hazaragi (the Hazara dialect of Persian), being Shi'i, having a recognizable Mongol phenotype, and being of low social status.

Sayid Basir, a nineteen-year-old male, is the second interlocutor. He was born in Zahedan, Iran, spending much of his youth in Esfahan (fourteen years) and Qazvin (five years) in Iran before relocating, in mid-2019, to Band-e-Amir (where his parents were born) in Bamyan, Afghanistan. At the time of the research, he had spent only six weeks in Afghanistan and had recently moved with his brother to Bamyan Center. He has a low level of education and works as a cook's assistant. Sayid Basir identifies as Sayid (Saadat [pl.]). Saadat are commonly viewed as members of an endogamous religious "caste" (based on their claimed descent from the Prophet Mohammad) within broader ethnic communities in Afghanistan. However, there is growing disagreement on whether Shi'i Saadat can be considered Hazara. A growing schism has developed between Hazaras and Shi'i Saadat—given changing political relations—since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. This has resulted in deepening interethnic tensions, with Shi'i Saadat increasingly identifying as members of a distinct ethnic category.

The research presented in this chapter is part of a larger and ongoing ethnographic project being undertaken by the author in Afghanistan. Initial research for this broader project was conducted from 2010 to 2012 in Bamyan and Kabul provinces. Analysis focused on post-Taliban political reconstruction in Afghanistan and its impacts upon interethnic relations in the Bamyan Valley.

Afghans in Iran: A History of Migration and Refugee Policy in Iran

> Hekmat: My parents left Afghanistan when Hafizullah Amin came to power (1979). He was very bad for Afghanistan. The government under Amin was communist and they were arresting and killing many people. Political insta-

bility and the fear of being killed led my parents to escape to Iran . . . . My parents went to Herat, and they crossed the border legally.

Sayid Basir: My parents went to Zahedan (in 1998), two years before I was born. The Taliban had taken over Bamyan Center and were coming to Band-e-Amir. My parents escaped. They went to Iran because it's a Shia country. There was war in Afghanistan. They had no choice but to escape to Iran . . . . They went illegally as it was difficult for Afghans to get a visa. They paid to be taken secretly across the border into Iran.

Hekmat and Sayid Basir's accounts of their parents' journeys help illustrate the major flows of Afghans into Iran since the 1978 communist coup and subsequent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Most Afghans fled to Iran in either the 1980s, the period in which the Soviets occupied Afghanistan, or in the 1990s, due to the Afghan Civil War and the emergence of the Taliban. Yet, Afghans had been migrating to Iran for many years. They traveled as nomads seeking pastureland, as migrants seeking employment, as pilgrims visiting the Shi'i Imam Reza Shrine in Mashhad, and as soldiers and refugees embracing or escaping war (Monsutti 2008: 167, 170). See figure 2.1 for numbers of documented Afghans in Iran from 1979 to 2019.

At the time of the coup, a few hundred thousand Afghan migrants were working in Iran (Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2008: 4). Following the Soviet invasion in 1979, conflict between the government and *mujahidin*, or Islamic resistance, resulted in large numbers of Afghans seeking asylum in Iran. This was the case with Hekmat's parents. At the same time, those Afghan migrants already in Iran declared themselves refugees and sought sanctuary.

Figure 2.1. Number of Documented Afghan Refugees in Iran (1979–2019). The sources of data for this figure are Humanitarian Data Exchange (n.d.) and Abbasi-Shavazi et al. (2008).

Many refugees flowing into Iran were Hazaras who sought refuge with their coreligionists. In 2005, the ethnic breakdown of Afghans in Iran was estimated at 47 percent Hazara, 30 percent Tajik, 13 percent Pashtun, and 10 percent Baluch, Turkmen, Uzbek, and other (Adelkhah and Olszewska 2007: 143). The Iranian authorities labeled its Afghan visitors as *mohajerin* (involuntary migrants). Framing the refugee population as migrants fleeing religious persecution, Iran did not afford Afghans legal status as refugees (as per the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, ratified by Iran in 1976). Instead, Iran offered shelter to the Afghan *mohajerin* as a religious duty, rather than as a legal obligation (Safri 2011: 589).

The vast majority of Afghans in Iran were issued "blue cards," extending them benefits such as the right to residence, food rations, the ability to apply for work permits (for manual labor only), discounted health services, and free schooling (Safri 2011: 589). Iran also rejected support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), maintaining direct control over the refugees (Ashrafi and Moghissi 2002: 91).

In the 1980s, the number of Afghans in Iran soared, surpassing three million by 1991. The following year saw the communist government in Afghanistan collapse, with the *mujahidin* taking control of Kabul. This, in addition to growing unemployment in Iran, led to a sea change in Iranian policy. The Iranian government stopped issuing "blue cards" and, for a fee, issued temporary permits. This move shifted Afghans' status from that of *mohajerin* to *panahandegan* (refugees), a word with a pejorative connotation of impoverishment (Safri 2011: 592).

The new refugee policy focused on restriction of illegal entry to Iran, repatriation of registered refugees, and deportation of those who were unregistered. An unofficial policy of refugee harassment commenced. Many "blue cards" were confiscated and replaced by temporary permits. Employment for refugees was restricted, and social benefits (including subsidized health care, food rations, and free schooling) were withdrawn. The latter led to unofficial schools being established by the Afghan refugee community (see Hoodfar 2010). The mobility of refugees was also restricted (with travel permits being required for travel outside one's designated area), and refugees were prevented from owning businesses and assets.

The Iranian government also collaborated with the UNHCR to begin repatriation. In 1993, more than 300,000 Afghans were repatriated and another 300,000 left voluntarily (Adelkhah and Olszewska 2007: 143). Many departing Afghans were unaccompanied males, heading to join the various *mujahidin* groups fighting for control of Afghanistan. This initiated a bidirectional refugee flow with combatants traveling to Afghanistan in the spring to fight and returning to Iran in the fall to work. A circular migratory pattern was established, which not only served to further blur the categories "refugee" and "migrant" but also made it almost impossible to track refugee numbers.

With the 1992–96 Civil War in Afghanistan and rise of the Taliban, hundreds of thousands of Afghans flowed into Iran. This continued until the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. In response to this influx of Afghans, the Iranian authorities took action in 2000. The Parliament issued Article 48, stating that all foreigners (the majority being Afghan) without documentation should leave by March 2001. This became the main framework for Afghan repatriation. Heavy fines and imprisonment were administered to employers of illegal workers. The government also initiated a new registration exercise called Amayesh to register all foreigners and facilitate repatriation. New Amayesh cards were issued that supplanted all previous documentation. The Amayesh exercise estimated the number of documented Afghans in Iran at just under 1.5 million, which, adding an estimated number of undocumented Afghans, placed the total between 2 and 2.5 million refugees. In the six months following the fall of the Taliban, an estimated 400,000 Afghans relocated to Afghanistan, driven by a combination of increasing Iranian pressure and the draw of new possibilities in Afghanistan (Turton and Marsden 2002: 19–20).

In 2003, articles were approved under the Iranian Constitution that further discriminated against Afghans. The articles targeted legal action at businesses that employed undocumented Afghans and limited access to banking and lodging for Afghans without documentation. The authorities also introduced a second round of the Amayesh registration process, establishing the system as the main tool for tracking Afghans in the country. Amayesh registration has since been carried out on an annual to biannual basis. Yet, in reality, only a small number of Afghan refugees arriving after 2003 have been able to register and obtain Amayesh cards (Human Rights Watch 2013: 32).

Since 2004, the Iranian regime has repatriated a minimum of 200,000 Afghans each year. To encourage repatriation from 2006 to 2008, many of the unofficial Afghan-run schools were targeted and closed by the Iranian authorities (Safri 2011: 592). Further steps were taken in 2012 to promote deportation. Iran's Council of Ministers passed a new regulation stating that the 1.6 million undocumented foreigners were to be expelled by the end of 2015. In addition, voluntary repatriation of documented foreigners was to be actioned alongside the termination of 700,000 Amayesh cards (Human Rights Watch 2013: 20–21). This regulation followed the failure of the 2010 Comprehensive Regularization Plan (CRP), which aimed to facilitate registration for undocumented Afghans. However, due to prohibitive costs and problematic criteria, the CRP ended in 2012 (Human Rights Watch 2013: 49).

The Iranian government made concessions in 2015. All documented refugee children were permitted to enroll in school. In 2016, the government also allowed registered Afghans to access its national health insurance scheme. However, in both cases, only those holding Amayesh cards were eligible, and access is far from assured (European Commission 2017: 1).

Despite these promising steps, government coercion and harassment were stepped up in recent years to further encourage "voluntary" Afghan repatriation. In 2018, there were numerous reports of Afghans facing arbitrary detentions, torture, forced labor, and deportations from hospitals. There has also been an increase in the deportation of unaccompanied minors from Iran (BAAG 2018: 2). In addition, young Afghan men (mostly Hazaras) are being offered Iranian residency in exchange for fighting alongside Iranian-backed forces in Syria (Pro Asyl 2017: 42).

This systematic coercion of Afghans to vacate Iran is coupled with a new incentive to leave: Iran's weakening economy. While Iran has suffered from economic challenges since the 1980s, the last few years have delivered a significant economic downturn, with a rapidly devaluing currency. The US sanctions reintroduced in 2018 have further compounded this decline (World Bank 2019). These factors have led to record numbers of undocumented Afghans, some 773,125, relocating from Iran in 2018. In 2019, 451,073 undocumented Afghans relocated from Iran (IOM 2019: 1). The years 2016 and 2017 also saw high levels of relocation, with almost 445,000 and 465,000 mainly undocumented Afghans relocating, respectively. With refugee flows back into Iran bolstering numbers, it remains challenging to estimate the size of the Afghan refugee population in the country. Official figures place 2.5 to 3 million Afghans in Iran; 951,100 documented and 1.5 to 2 million undocumented (IOM-UNHCR 2019: 4). Yet, recent trends indicate these numbers may be lower and declining.

Hyndman and Giles (2017: 59) describe refugee management in Iran as "a seemingly paradoxical combination of careful control and unpredictable exclusion from mainstream life." Monsutti (2005: 129) frames this constantly changing context of Iranian tolerance and repression toward Afghans in their country as a game of cat-and-mouse, one that allows Iran to access much-needed Afghan labor while discouraging long-term residence in the country.

"We Became Tired of Iran": Regimes of Inclusion/Exclusion and Afghan Agency in Iran

> Sayid Basir: We were in Zahedan for two years. My father worked as an agricultural laborer. He told me it was difficult to make money. My father knew some people in Esfahan, so we went there for fourteen years. Life was better. But then drought came. There was not enough grass to feed our sheep. So, we moved to Qazvin, which is very good for livestock. We even found jobs, laboring on farms. If we did other jobs the police would deport us. Masonry was not allowed, so they put me in a camp to deport me. But I managed to escape by paying the police . . . . Moving to Qazvin was difficult. The Iranian police

have many checkpoints. They check the buses and if they find any Afghans without a valid document, they take you off the bus and deport you . . . . My father bought a house in Qazvin. He couldn't use his own name as he had no documents. Instead, he registered these things using his Iranian friend's identity. Afghans can't own houses or cars, open bank accounts or even register mobile phones without documents. Then there's the lack of work. All you can do is manual labor. All of my friends work long hours. Their bodies ache and they have health problems . . . . Afghans are harassed on a regular basis. Whenever we walked anywhere, Iranians would block our way and insult us. We usually fought. Once I was in the park with my friends. An Iranian boy threw his ice cream wrapper at me. When I asked him why, he said it was because Afghans are like garbage! We started fighting and my friend was stabbed in the back. We took him to the hospital. When the police came, he was arrested. He showed them his Amayesh card, but they took it, didn't return it, and made him wash the police station toilets before letting him go. This is how Afghans are treated every day in Iran. All of this made me tired of Iran.

Hekmat: When my parents arrived in Iran they went straight to Mashhad, where my uncle lived. But, they couldn't get a "blue card." So, they went to Qom and stayed for eight years. Again, in Qom they couldn't get documentation. They ended up in Esfahan, where I was born, and they managed to get a "blue card." They stayed in Esfahan; that's where they were registered . . . . During this period, my parents had many jobs. When I was a child, my father was a metalworker. Later, he was a carpenter. Before we left Iran, he was a mason. He was just a simple worker, because he wasn't allowed to own a business. My mother was at home caring for us, but she was often busy weaving scarves or de-shelling pistachios to sell . . . . Our biggest challenge was our identity as Afghans. It was hard to open a bank account, to buy a motorcycle, or a house. There were work opportunities, but tasks like digging a well or working in a quarry were reserved for Afghans. It was challenging, but Afghans accepted this situation–there was no alternative! It's obvious to me that all the obstacles Afghans faced had a bad impact. When you see you are not treated as a citizen, it makes you very tired . . . . The police behaved badly with Afghans. Once my brother and I were riding on a motorcycle. A policeman stopped us and immediately slapped my brother. I asked him, "Why?" He replied, "You are an Afghan, shut up!" He went on to say our motorbike had no license plate. And, he told us an Afghan shouldn't be driving a motorbike anyway. At that time, it was common for Iranians not to have license plates. They may have had to pay a small fine. But, for Afghans, the story was very different.

Sayid Basir and Hekmat's commentary indicates the challenges Afghans face in Iran and the highly precarious lives they lead (Olszewska 2015a: 44). They are constantly seeking employment, yet they are restricted to manual labor, typically working long hours in tiring and dangerous fields of employment. They are consistently subject to the possibility of detention

and deportation. Yet Afghans face this precarity with great resilience. One approach, implied by Hekmat, is "through [Afghans] adopting a strategy of quiet assent to the indignities of their position, working hard in the available occupations and gradually accumulating economic capital" (Olszewska 2015a: 27). Sayid Basir's description of his family's movement from Zahedan to Esfahan and, ultimately, Qazvin hints at not only this ongoing search for capital accumulation, but also the importance of social networks for employment, information, and associated forms of social and economic support (Monsutti 2008: 65).

Sayid Basir's father's purchase of a house in Qazvin indicates that social networks also encompass Iranians (Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2008: 29). In interviews, both Sayid Basir and Hekmat spoke of maintaining good relationships with Iranians who provided companionship, opportunities, and support. Sayid Basir's father's utilization of his friendship with an Iranian to navigate government restrictions on his ownership of assets, albeit a small act, stands as a mode of resistance to the exclusionary legal regime that constrains him.

My interlocutors' descriptions of life in Iran also highlight the social denigration that many Afghans suffer. Ashrafi and Moghissi (2002) point out that racism and prejudice targeted at Afghans in Iran emerged in the 1980s as Iran went to war with Iraq. According to Ashrafi and Moghissi (2002: 95), "Economic scarcity and the political and social crisis of the period made Afghans scapegoats for the problems faced by ordinary citizens." Contributing to this phenomenon, they argue, is the Iranian media, which mainly publicizes sensationalized stories of violent crimes and sexual assault by Afghans with impunity and without corroboration (Ashrafi and Moghissi 2002: 95).

One major difference between Sayid Basir and Hekmat's lives in Iran was their legal status. Hekmat's family received a "blue card," whereas Sayid Basir's family lived illegally in Iran. While both Hekmat and Sayid Basir experienced harassment and legal and socioeconomic constraints, Sayid Basir was subject to severe restrictions on his movement, was detained and subject to detention, and attended a clandestine, informal school run by other Afghans. It was only in the last few years of Sayid Basir's time in Iran that government education again became available to Afghans. Hekmat, on the other hand, had fewer constraints on his movement, was less likely to suffer detention or deportation, and attended Iranian schools. It should be noted that while the Afghan-run schools generally delivered schooling inferior to Iranian institutions, they are credited with creating a space for Afghans to reflect on their shared experience of exclusion, while cultivating a shared sense of both Afghan and Muslim identity (Hoodfar 2010: 175).

Another space of resilience, in which a communal sense of Afghan identity is negotiated, is found in Afghan poetry sessions in Iran. Olszewska

(2015b) contends that the production and recitation of Persian poetry among Afghan refugees in Iran both reframes and communicates issues of identity and social change in the context of exile. Furthermore, mastery of such poetry stands as one of the "few forms of cultural capital available through which young Afghans, who can legally work only in menial professions in Iran, might improve their lives" (Olszewska 2015b: 6).

Another expression of agency, which is not reflected in either Hekmat or Sayid Basir's interviews given their one-time migration to Afghanistan, is the "normality of movement" that Monsutti (2008: 58) ascribes to many Afghans. He points out that, for Afghans, going back and forth to Iran has been a constant endeavor. Crucially, he argues that the development of transnational networks and ongoing mobility in the face of chronic instability is at the core of social and economic strategies developed by many Afghans. He is in essence arguing that ongoing migration, in the context of Afghan displacement to and from Iran, is itself an expression of agency (Monsutti 2008: 59).

The "Burnt Generation": Regimes of Inclusion/Exclusion on Relocation to Afghanistan

> Hekmat: My older brother was always saying he didn't like Iran. And, that our country was peaceful. He said we could go back and live without any problems. He encouraged us to return. We came in 2003. Three families came together. This made it much easier . . . . I went to Bamyan University. I could do that because of the education I received in Iran. Afterward, I got a good job with an NGO in Bamyan. I got that job through my university qualifications and because I learned English in Iran. Now I have a senior job with the organization. This is what allowed me to get married and build a house . . . . When I returned to Afghanistan, I realized there were different ethnicities and that there were tensions between them. For many years, my mind was busy with this, thinking that Hazaras are superior and that Sayids [*sic*] had stolen our rights.

> Sayid Basir: My parents came to Afghanistan two months before us. It was the first time they had visited in twenty years. My parents called us and said it was better in Afghanistan. You could earn more. Iran does not have a good economy these days. So, we sold our house and belongings and came to Bamyan . . . . I know many people who went back to Iran, but I am staying because of the freedom. I'm a free man here. My mind works better here and psychologically I'm feeling good. There is no one here to stop me and ask me where my documents are . . . . I searched for a job and after some time found one in a restaurant. My brother has a food stall, but he has few customers. I use all my salary to pay the rent. I'm not sure what else we can do. I don't want to go back to Iran. After all, we are the "Burnt Generation."

Both Hekmat and Sayid Basir relocated to Afghanistan after being born and living in Iran. Hekmat arrived in Bamyan in 2003, and Sayid Basir only recently; both intend to remain permanently. The excerpts of their interviews above outline the motivations, opportunities, and constraints associated with their relocation to Afghanistan. Their decision to relocate to and stay in Afghanistan, like that of more than 450,000 other Afghans in 2019, and the possibility of their return to Iran, is determined by a shifting calculus that impacts integration and the possibility of onward migration.

One of the most striking sentiments expressed by Sayid Basir upon relocating was a feeling of freedom (defined in terms of mobility and a removal of restrictions) and an associated improvement in mental health. Such perceptions are common among Afghans leaving prolonged displacement in Iran. Yet Sayid Basir also refers to financial difficulties and, through reference to the "Burnt Generation," future uncertainty (see Kamal 2010). The moniker "Burnt Generation" refers to those born in Iran between 1963 and 1980 (although it is often applied to those born later), who have experienced significant social and political upheavals and ostensibly lack optimism for the future.

For Afghans who experience financial difficulties relocating to Afghanistan, remigration to Iran, as a survival strategy, becomes a possibility (Saito 2007: 2). Sayid Basir was initially motivated by financial survival to leave Iran. He explains that his family was escaping precarity and prejudice, but also a worsening economy in Iran, a factor of growing importance in contemporary migratory calculations (BAAG 2018: 1). Hekmat (and his family) also describe an escape from marginality and social denigration in Iran, while also seeking new possibilities in Afghanistan. His superior education and English language abilities allowed Hekmat to link his education (afforded to him in part by possession of a "blue card") with his ability to hold a good job, get married, and establish a household—all steps toward successful integration.

Other important factors that impact successful resettlement, illustrated in both Sayid Basir and Hekmat's accounts, are the planned and collective nature of relocation. Schuster and Majidi (2013: 224) remind us that "returnee preparedness" is important for successful relocation: "People are most likely to be able to settle if they have been able to prepare their return, to convert assets and send them home, or to set up opportunities or support structures." Those deported from Iran, unable to suitably prepare themselves, have significantly higher chances of onward migration. Schuster and Majidi (2013: 226) found that in the context of Afghans deported from Iran, at least three factors lead to onward migration: "loss of economic and educational opportunities and the impossibility of repaying debts incurred from earlier attempts to migrate; transnational and local ties in the countries of destination, exile and return; and a sociocultural feeling of shame and perceptions

of 'contamination.'" "Contamination" refers to stigma associated with "failing" in a host country and being deported, often in a state of indebtedness (Schuster and Majidi 2015: 642).

The forms of discrimination and social rejection experienced by Afghans relocating to Afghanistan can directly impact social integration and the likelihood of further migration (Saito 2007: 46). Abbasi (forthcoming) highlights the exclusionary nature of ethnic identities and her identity as "Iranigak," both ascribed to her upon reaching Afghanistan. Iranigak, literally meaning "little Iranian," is a derogatory term applied to Afghans who were born and raised in Iran. Abbasi describes the manner in which she became cognizant of her Hazara ethnicity before being discriminated against by non-Hazaras. She also found she was excluded (by Afghans who never left Afghanistan) on the basis of being Iranigak. These experiences contributed to her onward migration from Afghanistan.

Hekmat reflected on this ethnicization:

> In Iran, I didn't know there were ethnicities. I thought Hazara was another word for Afghan. In Iran we were outsiders, we were all Afghans. Iranians didn't know about our ethnicity. It wasn't important for them, and it wasn't important for us. When I returned to Afghanistan I learned about the different ethnicities. I started reading history books. I realized Pashtuns had dominated Afghanistan and had killed many Hazaras. This is what changed my mind. At the University of Bamyan I met many Sayids [*sic*] who thought they were superior to Hazaras. I turned against them. This had a major impact on my behavior. Now, I think it's useless. It's just a way of dividing people.

Hekmat's case illustrates how Afghans in Iran define their identity primarily in relation to Iranians, viewing themselves (and being viewed) as "outsiders" (Saito 2007: 43). Ethnic identity formation developed in Afghanistan, for Hekmat, through digestion of accounts of collective trauma (in pro-Hazara history books) and through interaction with Afghans deploying ethnic identity in relation to him. Although Hekmat has now come to terms with the functioning of ethnicity, he has passed through a profound reconsideration of his social location in Afghanistan.

As indicated above, two distinct sets of challenges were frequently articulated by Hekmat and Sayid Basir during interviews. Sayid Basir was concerned with securing the means to survive, whereas Hekmat would often mention his experience of ethnicization. This is more than just a reflection of the length of time they have spent in Afghanistan. Saito (2007: 2) explains that "the problems faced by less educated and low income respondents tend to be in relation to material survival and physical security, while more educated respondents, particularly women, tend to face greater social and emotional contradictions during the reintegration process." These are challenges with which Hekmat and Sayid Basir, to differing degrees, will continue to

grapple. These concerns will inform their social and economic strategies moving forward.

Conclusion: "Return," (Un)Settlement, and Onward Migration

Hekmat and Sayid Basir experienced "extended exile" in Iran (Hyndman and Giles 2017: 1). They (and their families) faced continuously evolving, yet mainly restrictive regimes of legal, social, and economic inclusion/exclusion. They lived in politically induced conditions of sustained precarity and prejudice, states of "maximized vulnerability" to borrow Butler's (2009) term. These experiences shaped their lives, regulating their mobility, crafting their identities, restricting employment and educational opportunities, and impacting their physical and mental wellbeing. Yet, within these structural constraints, Hekmat and Sayid Basir demonstrated resistance and resilience through leveraging relationships with Iranians, participating in Afghan-run schools, and utilizing migration as an expression of agency.

Their engagements with these regimes were, of course, not homogenous. Hekmat's family received a "blue card" as a result of the timing of their journey to Iran, whereas Sayid Basir's family remained undocumented. Among other divergences, this affected their educational opportunities: Hekmat gained access to high-quality Iranian education, and Sayid Basir attended an informal Afghan-run school of inferior quality. This variance in experiences of protracted displacement and precarity in Iran contributed to the employment opportunities secured post-relocation to Afghanistan. The ability to access quality educational opportunities in Iran (albeit not without its challenges) importantly translated into upward class mobility for Hekmat (Hugo, Abbasi-Shavazi, and Sadeghi 2012: 276; Olszewska 2015a).

Relocation to Afghanistan was no panacea for either of the interlocutors. This "return" is, in effect, another displacement, characterized by ongoing exclusion and, if unsustainable, onward migration. While Sayid Basir, Hekmat, and their families benefited from preparation prior to departure from Iran and social networks of support in Afghanistan, they were faced with fresh challenges and new regimes of inclusion/exclusion upon arrival. Sayid Basir continues to live with the effects of previous exclusion and strives to secure employment that will allow him and his brother to survive financially. Hekmat has struggled with social discrimination and adjustment to new social realities.

Hekmat and Sayid Basir are some of the more fortunate Afghans to relocate to Afghanistan. In the first ten months of 2018, for example, 20 percent of Afghans relocating to Afghanistan required humanitarian assistance, and 72 percent were displaced upon arrival, unable to settle in their or their

parent's place of origin (BAAG 2018: 3). They effectively become internally displaced and unable to obtain sustainable sources of income, without which "food insecurity looms and negative coping mechanisms range from unsustainable debt to child labor" (Norwegian Refugee Council 2018: 3).

Moreover, the context into which they are arriving is deteriorating. COVID-19 has driven the poverty rate to an estimated 72 percent, with Afghans facing shrinking access to food, shelter, healthcare, and education (World Bank 2020). The Taliban is resurgent and continues to make territorial and political gains. Conflict is widespread across Afghanistan, with consistently high levels of civilian casualties (Council on Foreign Relations 2019). Displacement in Afghanistan is also worsening: "Afghanistan has experienced unprecedented levels of return in recent years and, compounded by exponential rises in internal displacement, the situation now constitutes a major humanitarian crisis" (BAAG 2018: 1). This humanitarian crisis is driven by deteriorating security and resurgent natural hazards. In 2019, natural hazards internally displaced 295,900 Afghans, and conflict drove 417,400 people from their homes (OCHA 2019: 1).

Taken alongside Iran's declining economy and the Iranian government's growing use of coercion, the deteriorating state of affairs in Afghanistan is also harming coping strategies and migration options. While it appears that both Hekmat and (to a lesser extent) Sayid Basir are managing to build lives in Afghanistan, the ability of many Afghans to successfully resettle in Afghanistan and break the momentum of displacement is far from guaranteed.

Caught between the carryover effects of long-term precarity in Iran and the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, it seems likely that many Afghans relocating to Afghanistan will remain trapped in protracted states of displacement. Relocating to one's homeland may not change the state of marginality experienced by many Afghans in Iran; indeed, a state of (un)settlement may be experienced upon relocation. This ongoing (un)settlement will, for many Afghans, be defined by continuing precarity and enduring prejudice. In such circumstances, it is likely that onward migration will be the primary coping strategy. Yet, with Iran exhibiting declining economic opportunities and increasing government harassment, and Afghanistan providing limited alternatives, the space for Afghans to navigate precarity, prejudice, and "return" is diminishing. Sayid Basir's lament at being a member of the "Burnt Generation," and the pessimistic view of the future this implies, may not be too far from the truth.

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3

Unsettling "Refugees" as a Category

Labeling, Imagined Populations, and Statistics in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in Beirut

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Introduction: Contextualizing Paper and Camp

What do generalizing labels, such as "Palestinians," "refugees," and "refugee camps," which appear so habitually in statistical studies (Tiltnes 2005, 2007; Ugland 2003), policy papers (UNRWA 2007, 2010), and the "state-of-exception" literature (Hanafi 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Hanafi and Long 2010), effectively mean? This chapter illustrates the problematic nature and consequences of some of these abstractions–"imagined populations," as I call them–employed by statisticians and policymakers. While Palestinians undoubtedly face barriers for legal inclusion in Lebanon (Al-Natour 1993; Al-Natour and Yassine 2007), I argue that, together with other sectors of the population, Lebanese or otherwise, they also face barriers to social and economic inclusion. Despite efforts of Palestinian nationalism to make Palestinians a singular case, there appears to be much in common between Shatila, a Palestinian refugee camp in the outskirts of Beirut, where I conducted fieldwork for two years, and other poverty-stricken districts of Beirut. By accepting the terms of Palestinian nationalism and emphasizing Palestinians' "Palestinianness," researchers may have contributed to the Othering of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, simultaneously downplaying other categories of belonging, such as class. Can class enable "Arab encounters" of a different kind and serve as a basis for political mobilization?

I tackle most of these questions through data collected from three families, whose biographies are portrayed in the next section of this study. To contextualize these biographies, I now present a brief history of Shatila and of the Palestinian saga in Lebanon.

Shatila

Located in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila, today a sprawling and increasingly vertical shantytown, was home to an estimated population of 13,000 people at the time of my fieldwork (2008–10). Several residents, though, were not Palestinian, but poor Lebanese and Syrians, Iraqi refugees, and Dom, among others. The camp's history reflects the saga of the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon. Prior to the recent influx of some 1.5 million refugees, including Palestinians (Meier 2016), due to the civil war ravaging Syria, Lebanon was a country of some four million inhabitants, belonging to eighteen different sects. Often placed at the intersection of various local, regional, and international interests, Lebanon has been historically prone to conflicts (Picard 1996; Salibi 2005; Trabulsi 2007). To safeguard their interests, the Lebanese sects seek support from powerful foreign allies. Since 1948, Palestinians have also played a role in Lebanese sectarian politics.

Shatila's bare two square kilometers have played host to several episodes marking Lebanese-Palestinian relations (R. Sayigh 1979, 1993). The establishment of the camp dates back to 1949, when the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) leased the area for the first refugees. In the 1970s, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) established its headquarters in the vicinity of the camp, and Shatila became a cradle for the *fidā 'iyyīn*, or freedom fighters. Thus began the so-called *'ayyām al-thawra* (the days of the revolution), the heyday of the Palestinian resistance in its military form in Lebanon and other diasporas (Y. Sayigh 1997).

The year 1982 marks a turning point in this history. In 1982, upon the PLO's expulsion from Lebanon, Shatila was left vulnerable, and the infamous Sabra and Shatila massacre took place (Nuwayhed al-Hout 2004). In 1985, Amal, a Shia militia, kept Shatila under siege for two years. In 1987, the camp wars broke out in Shatila, opposing Palestinian factions backed by Damascus and their anti-Syrian enemies. After 1990, in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War, Shatila fell under Syrian control, which was to last until 2005, when the Syrian army and intelligence were forced to leave Lebanon. Since 1982, laws depriving Palestinians from civil, social, and economic rights–including the rights to work and to acquire real estate–have been enforced more consistently, hitting Shatilans hard.

Methods

This chapter is based on two years of participant observation in Shatila between 2008 and 2010, during which I lived in the camp for one year. Fieldwork, conducted mainly in Arabic, consisted of informal interactions, workshops to discuss nationalistic songs and present-day rap with older and younger camp residents, interviews with fathers and sons (and sometimes daughters and mothers), and a household survey. With the help of research assistants from Shatila, I performed the translations from Arabic to English for this chapter. The household survey yielded the stories of the three families who are the focus of this chapter. While they appear similar in terms of socioeconomic standing, they are fundamentally different in one specific way.

The More It Changes, the More It Remains the Same: A Biography of Three Families

The Abu Sahar Family

Forty-one-year-old Um Sahar struggled with the remote control of the recently purchased air conditioner. Regardless of the fact that summer had not yet begun, the thermometer was already over 30°C. Remittances sent back to Lebanon by 47-year-old Abu Sahar enabled the purchase of the device. Abu Sahar had moved to Dubai just three months before my interview with his family. Unemployed in his native Lebanon, Abu Sahar had secured a position as a construction worker in the United Arab Emirates. The couple decided that he should travel alone: as life is cheaper in Lebanon, it made sense for Um Sahar to stay in the country with their three children–ages eight, thirteen, and sixteen–to help the family save money. "But he calls us all the time because he worries with us here. You know, Lebanon is not a safe country," Um Sahar was telling me when the phone rang. It was her husband.

Um Sahar has always dedicated herself to housework. She performed well enough in high school to study chemistry at the university, as she wished. Originally from the Tal Al-Zaatar camp, she left it upon its destruction in 1976 and moved to Libya. It was there that she met Abu Sahar, whom she married at the age of twenty. Shortly thereafter, the birth of a mentally challenged daughter forced her to relinquish her academic pursuits. While the child died young, other pregnancies ensued, and Um Sahar had to stay home and care for the children. "Having to take care of three kids is a lot of work," she noted, laughing. But she made a point of adding, "Mind you: I have no difficulty with the idea of women working outside the home to help their families. For example, it wouldn't be a problem for me if my daughters

got jobs outside of Shatila. But it would have to be respectful (*muḥtaram*) work, suitable for women."

Um Sahar left Libya in 1994. It was becoming increasingly difficult for Palestinians to find work in that country, so the Abu Sahar family returned to Lebanon and settled in Shatila. "I didn't expect the situation for refugees here would be even worse," she lamented and was about to continue when we heard a knock at the door. Her future son-in-law, nineteen-year-old Mahmud, and his mother had arrived for a visit.

In Mahmud, Sahar, sixteen years old, has a partner who supports her in her academic and professional projects: once she has completed her intermediate cycle at school, Sahar wants to enroll in an institute (*ma'had*) and then find a job, keeping it after the wedding. "But of course women can work outside, if they want, to help their families," Mahmud defended. The marriage will take place in two or three years—the time Mahmud needs to raise money to pay the brideprice (*muqaddam*) and finish building their home.

"Our house is almost done," he celebrated. "But I still need to buy the furniture," he added. To earn money faster, Mahmud dropped out of his vocational training course in hospitality and was working double shifts as a delivery boy. He is also counting on money that his brother, who had emigrated to Germany, sends to the family. In fact, Mahmud would like to take the same course as his brother, but he knows how difficult it is to get the appropriate visas. His mother has tried three times but has not obtained the visa that would allow her to see how her eldest son is living in his new country with his newly acquired German nationality. Despite his mother's negative experience, Mahmud has not given up hope: "I will try anyway, because life in Germany is easier than here. And Europe is a better destination than the [Persian] Gulf . . . . If we, Sahar and I, can emigrate, life will be easier. If we stay here, we will face poverty. But we'll deal with it."

Once the interview ended, Mahmud accompanied me on my way out of Abu Sahar's house. He confided to me, "Sahar and I, you know we're not relatives, don't you? We met as volunteers during relief efforts in the 2006 war. We fell in love immediately. We're getting married out of love."

The Abu Ubaida Family

A strong, sweet smell of mutton came from Um Ubaida's kitchen. Once again, my interview with a Palestinian family would turn into a banquet, and my tentative plans to become a vegetarian would have to be postponed one more time. Often my Palestinian hosts chose to ignore my predilection for *mujaddara*—a combination of rice, lentils, and caramelized onions, delicious to my taste but considered to be of lower status. Guests must be treated properly, which requires a lavish menu, with meat invariably served as the

main course. I had no way to decline the Abu Ubaida family's generous offer of hospitality: meat is a relatively expensive item, reaching 20,000 Lebanese pounds (about US$14 at the time of fieldwork) per kilo at a butcher's shop in the popular Sabra market, and my hosts' family budget was tight. In this, as in other features, the Abu Ubaida family seemed like the Abu Sahar family, but, as this chapter will show, they were different in one important way.

"My monthly income varies a lot. Sometimes I make 600 dollars a month; sometimes I don't make anything," Abu Ubaida, a 56-year-old carpenter, said. His professional life began very early when, at the age of nine, he worked as a helper in a hair salon and, over summer vacation, in a juice store. He dropped out of school prematurely, halfway through middle school, claiming that his teachers beat him. At fourteen, Abu Ubaida was working full time, following the career of one of his brothers, a talented carpenter. On another front as well, the brother served as a role model for Abu Ubaida: he was a Palestinian fighter, a *fidā'ī*. "I also raised weapons, because we were being attacked and we had to defend ourselves," said Abu Abaida. My roused expectations at the prospect of an account punctuated by daring guerrilla activities in the Palestinian Territories were thwarted by the no less heroic and far more dramatic outcome of his military career: "I served time in an Israeli jail in Eilat for a year and a half. From there I was transported to Algeria." He was back in Lebanon in 1984.

Abu Ubaida's sister had a decisive influence on another of Abu Ubaida's decisions, with long-term repercussions. She was the first to set eyes on Um Ubaida, eighteen years younger than her future husband, and thought she would be a good match for her brother. Belonging to a family originally from Kfar Shuba, in southern Lebanon, Um Ubaida is Lebanese and was born in the Fakhani area, in the vicinity of Shatila. She spent most of her youth in Fakhani, except for the periods when wars forced brief relocations. She and Abu Ubaida met only two or three times before marriage. "There was no love or anything like that," Um Ubaida recalled and added, "It made no difference in my family's eyes that my husband was Palestinian. My brothers and sister got married the same way. Lebanese, Palestinians– there's not so much difference between us." At the time, Abu Ubaida was earning enough money to start a family. It was from his salary that he saved the US$800 for the *muqaddam*.

Um Ubaida stopped working only briefly after marriage. Her professional life also began early, when she was fifteen years old. Teenage Um Ubaida divided her time between work and school. She has had a number of short-term jobs: junior clerk in a company, nursery school teacher, junior hairdresser, and accountant. Her academic experience superseded that of her partner: she studied until the final years of middle school and only stopped because her family could no longer afford tuition.

Just three months before our interview, and the ensuing mutton banquet, Um Ubaida began working at a Palestinian nongovernmental organization (NGO), tutoring underperforming students from the UNRWA schools. She has substantial experience with NGOs: she received her hairdressing and accountancy training through vocational courses offered by such institutions and worked in a day care center belonging to one. Her new job provides the family with 400,000 Lebanese pounds (around US$270) a month, much-needed added income at a time when Abu Ubaida's earnings are so erratic. With three children–aged five, thirteen, and sixteen–to provide for, Um Ubaida was almost shocked by my question about whether women should work outside the household: "*Lāzim* (it's necessary)! You know, we don't exactly lead easy lives around here."

Still, and despite having relatives in Denmark, Canada, and Saudi Arabia, the Abu Ubaida family has no plans to emigrate, even though they have considered it. Um Ubaida was very realistic about the family's slim chances of leaving Lebanon: "To begin with, we would have to show embassies bank statements with large sums of money, and we have none. So what's the point of getting passports and applying for visas when we know in advance that we have no chance? We have never even tried."

Abu Ubaida's assessment of his family's prospects was even darker: "We have no future here," he remarked. The most striking comment about the situation of the Abu Ubaida family, nonetheless, came unexpectedly from thirteen-year-old Ubaida. Toward the end of the interview, I decided to check which appliances existed in Abu Ubaida's residence. The family has all the basic appliances, but none of the luxurious ones, with the notable exceptions of a battered car and an obsolete computer. When I asked if the family had air conditioning or *chauffage* (heating), Ubaida expressed shock, exclaiming, "*Chauffage*? But what is that?!" as if my question was somewhat absurd.

The Abu Walid Family

Abu Walid's children–aged seven, nine, and eleven–were well dressed, waiting for "the researcher." In what was probably an unbearably boring experience for them, they remained quiet and well behaved for the two hours I talked to their parents. It was my friend Ahmad who made arrangements for me to visit Abu Walid's house. His eldest daughter is one of Ahmad's private students: he helps her with the rather demanding homework of the relatively expensive school she attends. Abu Walid has already considered sending his children to study in Syria, where education is free. "Every once in a while, my boss pays the school fees, because if my salary lasts until the tenth day of the month, that's a feat!" Abu Walid, thirty-six, complained. Working with aluminum, he does not earn enough to cover his family's ex-

penses: in addition to the children's school fees, he pays US$200 as rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Shatila. He moved to the camp in 1997, shortly after his marriage to 32-year-old Um Walid.

Abu and Um Walid are cousins–marriage with cousins being a favored, if waning, pattern in the region–and come from the same village, which facilitated the negotiations that led to the wedding. Um Walid completed high school, but, for now, with her husband's approval, she prefers not to work. "I am not against women working, but, you know, we have three children for her to take care of," Abu Walid remarked. She nodded.

Um Walid expresses herself in Palestinian Arabic. As a result of his wider exposure to society outside of Shatila, Abu Walid shifts, speaking Lebanese Arabic with the Lebanese, Palestinian with the Palestinians, and Syrian with the Syrians. Despite the adaptability revealed by his language skills, he confessed to me that he was not completely comfortable in the camp:

> I like the building where our apartment is. I have known my neighbors for a long time . . . . They are all from the same extended family (*'ā'ila*). After all these years, they think of us as members of the *'ā'ila* as well. For example, if something happens here with my family while I'm at work, I can count on my neighbors to help. But it is not so throughout the camp. Shatila has changed a lot over the years. Before, it was a respectable (*muḥtaram*) place to live in. It is no longer so, with all these loose (*falsānīn*) lads (*shabāb*), carrying guns in the alleys.

Abu Walid had a chance to move out of Shatila. He chose to remain because of his supportive neighbors and his short commute to work. He has been working with the same aluminum company since 1997: "I used to carry my boss's son on my shoulders, and now the son has become my boss!" he said, laughing. Previously, Abu Walid was in the army for three years, between 1994 and 1997. In 1989, having failed halfway through middle school, he dropped out and worked as a janitor until 1994.

He has such confidence in his neighbors and they in him that he has associated himself with his building's *jam'iyyāt*, a joint pooling of resources to be used by participants when and if the need arises. This is precisely why he does not seriously consider moving out–from Shatila or Lebanon: "I feel like a fish out of water when I travel, even for short trips," he told me. Without any money in the bank, the Abu Walid family believes that if they have to meet emergency expenses, such as a hospital bill, they can count on their cousins' help in addition to the *jam'iyyāt* funds. He clarified: "As you can imagine, I don't have any health insurance."

At about 10:00 PM, the children's eyes showed clear signs of exhaustion, and I realized it was time to leave. It was already cold by then: I interviewed the family in winter and there were no luxury amenities–computers, air conditioners, or *chauffage*–at Abu Walid's house.

Inclusion/Exclusion in a Palestinian Camp in Lebanon

"Be careful when you are collecting those figures, Gustavo," Abu Mujahed warned me. I had come to him early in my field research, hoping to gather some data on the size, composition, and wage levels of Shatila's residential units to satisfy my scientifically trained obsession with numbers. Abu Mujahed knew exactly what he was talking about: before becoming the director of a local NGO, he had studied social sciences during his exile in Cuba and written precisely about the Palestinian housing situation in Lebanon, under the name he shares with the Palestinian politician Mahmoud Abbas (Abbas et al. 1997). He explained to me the reasons for his distrust of numbers: "You might find, for example, that on average 3.5 people live in a room in refugee camp homes. But that says absolutely nothing about the condition of the rooms or the way the inhabitants interact." The solution was clear: visit the rooms in question and meet the residents. I followed Abu Mujahed's advice, which launched a household survey that I conducted with thirty families, recording their living conditions and collecting their work biographies. In the end, I was left with a fair amount of quantitative data, along with a sharp discomfort with the numbers collected and a pronounced awareness of the limits of the story they revealed.

At first glance, the biographies of the three families above tell the same story: of economic hardship, interrupted education, inadequate housing, and attempts at immigration in search of a brighter future. However, there is something fundamentally different between the three families in question, despite similarities in terms of socioeconomic indicators. Of the three, only Abu Sahar's is Palestinian and lives in Shatila. While Abu Ubaida's family is Palestinian (although Um Ubaida is Lebanese), they live in Sports City, just outside the camp, and while Abu Walid's family members live in Shatila, they have Syrian nationality. This serves as an indicator of the problematic nature of some of the abstractions that statisticians work with: "imagined populations," I call them. In the process of constructing such "imagined populations," generalizations, and bureaucratic stereotyping (Zetter 1991), what is omitted and what remains unspoken? To what extent do numbers demonstrate the "reality" and convey the experience of the residents of Shatila? What realities and alternative stories do the numbers silence, as Abu Mujahed warned? What are the methodological and epistemological foundations of these stories based on numbers, and what are their limitations?

Indeed, scholars often portray families like Abu Sahar's, but rarely visit those similar to Abu Ubaida's and Abu Walid's: mine was their first interview with a researcher. While Palestinians in Lebanon undoubtedly face barriers to legal inclusion–free access to the labor and real estate markets are banned to them (Barbosa 2013)–they, along with other sectors of the population, Lebanese or otherwise, also face obstacles to social and eco-

nomic inclusion. In this respect, and despite the effort of Palestinian nationalism to singularize the situation of the Palestinians, there seems to be more in common between Shatila and other poverty-stricken districts of Beirut than initially assumed. By bending to the terms of Palestinian nationalism and emphasizing the Palestinians' "Palestinianness," researchers may be contributing to the exoticization of refugees in Lebanon, minimizing other forms of belonging, such as class (Allan 2018). Indeed researchers and activists often fail to recognize the political violence implied by thinking, proposing, and eventually dictating that there is a univocal Palestinian identity and history (Allan 2014). The supposed unity of the Palestinian people is probably more a requirement of the state-making project than of the people themselves. In a conversation with Salman Rushdie, Edward Said (1986) argues for the multiplicity of Palestinian experiences and histories. Investigating "Palestinianness" at the lived level will indeed reveal its depth and diversity.

What if my own and other surveyors' research questions are designed i n such a way that the very framework of what counts as "the economy" is of limited scope for understanding the economy of the refugee camp? What difference would it make if analysts invited research participants to discuss forms of brideprice as mechanisms for making money circulate in the camp; bracelets and gold rings, often collected by women, as forms of savings; and *jam'iyyāt* as instruments of social security, rather than inquiring about salary levels, bank savings, and access to formal social security programs? What would happen if researchers simply asked how respondents spent their days, rather than inquiring about formal and informal work biographies? Would this type of investigation yield a more accurate portrayal of an economy such as Shatila's, which functions otherwise? While I had started my household survey in Shatila searching for statistical certainties, my final results were marked by heuristic doubts about the distances between numbers and realities, figures and life, words and things.

Conclusion: The Limits of Labels

The label "refugee" is obviously inadequate to reflect the complex lives of the Abu Sahar and Abu Ubaida families. In fact, the labels I was using on my statistical graphs and quantitative analyses—such as "Palestinians," "refugee camps," and "Lebanon"—are crude and overly generalizing. If "Lebanon" includes the Hariris, one of the wealthiest families in the Arab East, with commercial ties to the Saudi royal dynasty, it is not surprising that "Lebanon" is sharply distinct from "camps." However, the analytical démarche in this direction not only ignores the similarities between the Shatila camp and its immediate vicinity—also part of "Lebanon"—but also overlooks

similarities in the lives of Um Sahar and Um Ubaida, although the former is Palestinian and a resident of the camp, while the latter is Lebanese and lives outside of Shatila.

Statistical studies and the "state-of-exception" literature lump together in an overarching unit–"camps"–socioeconomic realities that are simultaneously very similar and very different. Taken individually, each camp tends to be similar to its immediate surroundings and different from other camps, according to its history, its integration within the neighborhood, the origin of its residents, and the denominational composition of its surroundings. The very generalizing units, through producing "imagined populations" such as "Palestinians," "camps," and "Lebanon," render both these similarities and differences invisible. The biographies of the three families presented above function as counterevidence for such discourse.

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Part II

Protesting Exclusion

4

Middle Eastern Refugeehood in the Happiest Place on Earth

Syrians and Iraqis Entering Finland's Welfare State Bureaucracy

Lindsay A. Gifford

Introduction

Finland annually resettles between 750 and 1,000 refugees, while receiving thousands more asylum applicants, many of whom hail from the Middle East (Finnish Immigration Service 2019a). Although southern and central European states are frequently portrayed as the hotspots of a refugee reception "crisis," less is known about smaller asylum and refugee resettlement programs in northern European countries such as Finland (Degni, Koivusilta, and Ojanlatva 2006; Goda-Savolainen 2017; Keskinen 2016; Laine and Salmi-Niklander 2017; Liebkind 1996; Lillrank 2015; Puumala, Ylikomi, and Ristimäki 2017; Skirbutaite 2010; Valtonen 1998). This knowledge will become increasingly critical as international burden-sharing of refugee and asylum needs becomes more pressing, and as migrants adapt to new border security policies along established migrant routes through eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. How are refuge and asylum understood discursively and experientially in Finland, and how does this contribute to a broader understanding of Middle Eastern refugee resettlement in the Global North? More specifically, how do Syrian refugees and Iraqi asylum seekers experience and engage with the welfare state as newcomers, and do those experiences substantively differ even as both groups are fleeing persecution from war, sectarian violence, and militia activity?

Local discourses around refugee resettlement and asylum seeking tend toward binaries; as Benhabib (2007: 7) notes, "Cultures are formed through binaries because human beings live in an evaluative universe." In this chapter, I identify the salient binary discourses related to refuge and asylum in Finland, and the ways these binaries are actually lived in a more fluid way than such stark dichotomies would suggest. Specifically, I examine local Finnish discourses about refugees and asylum seekers, as well as those of Syrian and Iraqi interlocutors, to better understand how experiences of the welfare state are highly variable and incumbent upon the specific ways that the politics of exclusion and inclusion in Finland structurally affect both individuals and groups. I argue that in Finland, Middle Eastern refugee inclusion and exclusion are not based simply around Othering practices toward Middle Easterners or Muslims in relation to a majority-Christian European state, or by the welfare state's potential efficacy and beneficent values. Rather, they are organized by the specific relationship of various Middle Eastern refugee populations to bureaucratic rationality in the welfare state. Max Weber (1978: 223) classically identified bureaucracy as "the most rational known means of exercising authority over human beings" and therefore the most efficient. In Finland, some persecuted groups become acceptable through these rational bureaucratic relations, while others remain beyond the pale.

Background

Finland was ranked the world's happiest country of 2020 according to the World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al. 2020: 20), and regularly ranks among the top five. This ranking is determined based on measures of GDP per capita, social support, life expectancy, freedom of choice, generosity, and perceived corruption. These measures relate well to the Nordic welfare state model, which favors "extensive state intervention to achieve full employment and social redistribution" in the interest of achieving "social equality and fairness" through the universal provision of welfare and social security services to the population (Veggeland 2016: 1). The Nordic welfare model broadly describes state policies in Finland as well as in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland (Veggeland 2016: 3–4).

The Constitution of Finland (1999: 4–5) guarantees rights to all who fall within Finnish jurisdiction, not only citizens, so that resettled refugees as well as migrants and asylum seekers have access to welfare through "basic subsistence," "adequate social, health and medical services," housing, and obstetric care. Thus, despite the legal distinctions between resettled refugees and asylum seekers, the package of rights pertaining to both groups is similar under the constitution. Refugees have had their status determined abroad

by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and immediately begin integration processes in Finland, while asylum seekers apply upon arrival and await a legal decision. Refugees receive assistance with social, health, housing, and language services. Asylum seekers are placed in reception centers that provide accommodation, financial support, healthcare, and legal aid, plus a monthly reception allowance, and have the right to work.

From 2014 to 2017, nearly all of the quota refugees resettled in Finland were Syrian, and over half were Syrian by 2019 (Finnish Immigration Service 2019b). The country witnessed a large increase in asylum seekers in 2015, more than 30,000 up from 3,600 the previous year (Finnish Immigration Service 2019c). Twenty thousand of these were young adults between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four, 20,000 were Iraqis, and 27,000 were men, with only about 6,000 women. In the wake of this large-scale migration, the Finnish Immigration Service (2020) reported that 1,614 Syrians were granted asylum out of 1,759 applicants, a 92 percent acceptance rate. In contrast, 5,138 out of 19,010 Iraqis were granted asylum, an acceptance rate of only 27 percent.

While the material conditions of resettlement in Finland appear superb, the sociopolitical environment in which refugees integrate is complex and sometimes hostile. Finland is one of many European countries experiencing rising ethnonationalist sentiment and xenophobic politics. The anti-immigration Finn's Party has been ascendant (Kauranen and Virki 2019), and vigilante groups have formed to "protect" Finns from immigrants (Faiola 2016). In 2016, the Finnish Immigration Service declared that Iraq was "safe" for return (Lewis 2016), only to reverse this policy by 2018. Racist epithets and tirades against immigrants and refugees, and their Finnish supporters, are widely shared online. While refugees and asylum seekers may be expected to quietly accept generous material state provisions, the data presented here unsettle idyllic technocratic representations of resettlement in the "happiest place on Earth," while also demonstrating that Middle Eastern refugee resettlement in Finland is not simply shaped by universal welfare expectations, or by xenophobia, Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism (Grewal, this volume), as one may expect under these sociopolitical currents, but instead is broadly shaped by notions of bureaucratic rationality in the welfare state.

Methods

This chapter is based on six weeks of field research in the greater Helsinki metropolitan area in the summer of 2017. During this period, I conducted interviews with dozens of Syrian resettled refugees, Iraqi asylum seekers and immigrants, refugee service providers, nonprofit workers, Finnish Lutheran priests (the majority national church), asylum lawyers, Finnish and Middle

Eastern asylum activists, government officials, and refugee and migration researchers and academics. Interviews were conducted in Arabic and English, and all names used here are pseudonyms. Field research was conducted at the asylum seeker protest (the Demo) in Helsinki Central Railway Square, and I visited resettled refugees at home and in temporary reception centers.

Theoretical Framework

Refugees and asylum seekers who are granted entry into the welfare state system are likely to view it through a "humanitarian state" lens, while those rejected are likely to view it as "inhumane." But the landscape of Middle Eastern refuge in Finland is far more complex than acceptance or rejection, nor are these binaries mutually exclusive. Those who have been legally accepted can face forms of rejection such as racism or discrimination, while those who have been legally rejected may encounter forms of inclusion such as social relationships or activism. Right-wing activists touting a politics of exclusion are included in asylum seekers' afternoon tea. Leftist activists sometimes express concerns about the ability of Middle Easterners to integrate into Finnish society. Thus, asylum in Finland is not a simple question of inclusion or exclusion but is experienced in a fluid way by both resettled Syrian refugees and rejected Iraqi asylum seekers.

Keskinen (2016) distinguishes between welfare chauvinism and welfare exclusion in Finland. "Welfare chauvinism frames welfare provision as reserved only 'for our own'" in a racialized sense, while welfare exclusionism refers to "discourses and ideologies in which welfare provision is reserved only for a part of those who live and work in the country, not for all with a residence permit" in tension with the Finnish Constitution (Keskinen 2016: 355). The concept of welfare exclusionism can be extended here to apply to Syrians, whose refugee pathways fit well within a rational bureaucratic model, and Iraqis, whose pathways mostly do not.

The binaries raised about the Finnish state range from idyllic, rational, fair, and equal versus inhumane, irrational, unfair, and unequal. The local binary of *rasisti/suvakki* (racist/hypertolerant idiot) maps onto this larger dichotomy as both conservatives and liberals claim that Finland should approximate the idyllic state, but fails to do so because of current circumstances surrounding Middle Eastern migration. Such migration raises the specter of various threats to essentialized Finnish lifeways: to white secular-Christian Finland from Middle Easterners and Muslims, and to liberal, egalitarian Finland from right-wing racist groups. Lévi-Strauss (1963) classically identified binary oppositions like us/them as formative of society and concepts of identity, but more recently Žižek (2017) has argued that the binary politics dominating immigration debates are unproductive and that Europe

should embark instead on a reimagining of the continental project. As large "waves" of refugees (Luu 2015) increasingly make their way to the "green zones" of the Global North (Klein 2007: 519), such a reconceptualization will only become more imperative to redefine the nation-state's imagined community (Anderson 1983).

In the Finnish case, the bureaucratic state has more easily integrated the smaller numbers of controlled Syrian family units migrating through official refugee resettlement channels, in contrast to the large numbers of Iraqi and other asylum seekers who migrated through irregular channels and are most often single men. Syrians–most of whom are Sunni Muslim but may also be Shi'i, Druze, Alawi, Yazidi, or Christian–embody the "good refugees" of family units processed and controlled by the international refugee regime bureaucracy in the Weberian sense (Swedberg and Agevall 2016). "Bad refugees" are exemplified by young Iraqi men–most of whom are Sunni Muslim but may also be Shi'i, Christian, or Yazidi–who act agentically and autonomously to travel to Finland and apply for asylum outside of official international migration and refugee processing channels (Mamdani 2002; Topolski 2017), which is often viewed as "queue-jumping" despite its legality. Small numbers of organized quota refugees–even when they are Middle Eastern or Muslim–do not threaten the efficacy or purity (Douglas 1966) of the welfare state and its universal bureaucratic system. But large numbers of asylum seekers threaten the welfare state's perceived capacity, and the Nordic welfare state model of a universal basic subsistence and life of dignity. Thus, it is not necessarily Middle Easterners or Muslims broadly who are perceived as potentially threatening the Finnish sociopolitical fabric, but rather those who fall outside of rational bureaucratic practices, such as refugee status determination procedures conducted by the international humanitarian regime; regular, controlled migration routes; and immediate legal residency with a pathway toward citizenship, in contrast to asylum seekers who occupy a liminal space outside the bureaucracy and may become undocumented in a state where such a legal status should theoretically be nonexistent.

Humanitarian Reward and Discipline: Syrian Refugees in Finland

Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Finland generally express hope and gratitude due to the near guarantee that they will be integrated into the Finnish state and system. A Syrian refugee family who resettled in Finland in 2015 described their situation. Jamal, a 35-year-old divorced father with two children explained, "We get the same benefits as Finns. I get about 900 Euro per month for my family of three. The welfare pays the rent, water, electricity, and there is free schooling. But there is no work here, and if I did

take a job, I would make less than on welfare . . . . If there was an opportunity, the best thing to do is open a restaurant." Jamal's mother, Wafaa, in her mid-fifties, reflected. "Some people complain about Finland, but we get everything here!" she said. "We have to do for ourselves. We cannot complain." Zayn, Jamal's father, in his mid-sixties, continued: "We escaped the war. We escaped destruction. What else can we want?"

Jamal went on to say, "There are good people in Finland, very welcoming." To buttress his point, he added, "There are many Somalis here for many years, and they are *mahboub* [beloved]. They wear Somali clothes, and no one says anything." Yet when I asked if he had ever experienced racism in Finland, he said, "Of course. Like when I go to the grocery store, and the security guard follows me around."

For those who are accepted into the national community, there are ongoing active efforts to (re)fashion Finland as a multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural state (Saukkonen 2013; Wahlbeck 2013). Finland has its own diversity as it recognizes Finnish and Swedish as official languages, is home to ethnic minorities such as Roma and Tatars (Koivukangas 2002: 3), and began receiving contemporary refugee communities of Vietnamese and Somalis in the 1980s and 1990s. I attended a Cultural Day at an elder care home with a group of Syrian refugee friends, where the attendees were encouraged to wear their "traditional" national dress. Lined up in the auditorium, the Finnish host in skirt and bonnet spoke about each individual's costume in minute detail for two hours in an attempt to recognize and respect each participant's sartorial practices.

In another example, the public transportation authority and the Finnish Human Rights Association posted large advertisements to stop harassment and discrimination on public transit, displaying photos of different Finnish phenotypes and migrants in the community. Despite such efforts, I witnessed several incidents of racially charged behavior. One time, my Iraqi interlocutor and I, a mixed-race woman, were on a Helsinki train, when two inebriated Finnish men drinking beer and slamming the cans against the walls yelled in our faces; they received no consequences for their actions. Another time, Finnish police officers confronted boisterous Somali teenagers for squabbling over a cell phone.

I interviewed a number of Syrian refugees temporarily housed in the Helsinki Reception Center. Most of these individuals had only recently arrived in Finland, although their flight out of Syria may have spanned years. All expressed hope and a positive outlook for their futures (see figure 4.1). A single Syrian refugee man in his mid-thirties reflected on his impressions:

> Finland is nice. Its manners, its people are nice and good. There are no problems here such as in Germany or France, like assault. We'll take residency, a house, everything is better in time. If I don't find a Kurdish woman, I'll take

Figure 4.1. Syrian Refugees Organize a Picnic at a Finnish Lakeside Park. Photo by the author.

a Finnish woman [to marry]. [Services are] not so good, but what can we do? Whatever they are giving us we are eating, we thank God. We came from war, so we'll do OK. The food sometimes is good, sometimes not . . . . Even now I love Christians; there are no problems between Christians and Muslims. Religion is one . . . . I love cold; I do not love the sun . . . . Here they care about families a lot. If you have a wife and kids, they make procedures easier for you. Finnish people are good.

According to one 28-year-old Syrian refugee man, married with children,

> [Finland] is a really nice country. Everything is good but the food. I have a daughter, and she has bone weakness, she needs surgery. God willing, [the government] will pay for everything. The Finnish people are good. I do not have any problems. Finnish, Syrian, we are all together no problems. Everyone has their own religion; it is their own. We will try to learn the language and intermingle with the Finnish people.

Indeed, I returned to the reception center the following week, and their infant daughter had returned from surgery. Her tiny pelvis and legs were splayed open in a cast, all paid for by the welfare system.

But not all refugees and migrants in Finland integrate easily, despite the many benefits of the welfare system. A young Syrian man who goes by the name Mariano escaped Syria after being beaten by regime agents. He made his way through Europe and changed his name, since he identifies as secular and did not want the association of "Assalamu alaykom" of his Arab-Muslim name. He claims, "I am ashamed that Arabic is my mother tongue," even though he has worked as a translator. Mariano came to Finland as an exchange student about five years prior, obtained residency, and hopes to legally change his name. He avoids socializing with Arabs, and when he invited me to his birthday party, I saw that he had only invited Finns and other non-Arabs, including people he had just met (like myself). Reinventing himself as Mediterranean with an Italian name and ethnic European social network is one way to attempt to avoid the negative stereotypes of Muslims held by some in Finland.

Aisha, a Muslim university activist who wears a hijab, described having been spat on, yelled at, and followed while in Finland due to her head covering and foreign phenotype. She related an incident when she visited the government offices to obtain her social security card, to which she was entitled as an employed international student, but was denied by the receiving officer:

> But I said, "You don't know anything about me." He said, "It doesn't matter; you can't have it." So, I called my accountant, and I said, "Here, you talk to her." So, she spoke to him over the phone. I don't know if it was just that he didn't want to look wrong in front of me, but he said I still couldn't have it. So, I went home and applied online.

A Lutheran female priest named Eliisa described her thoughts on racism in Finland during brunch at her apartment, along with Iraqi Demo activist Ahmed, with whom she worked closely. She critiqued racism in Finland with biting sarcasm, a social current which she knows well since she herself has been subject to threats of rape and murder due to her work with asylum seekers. Eliisa offered her impression of Finnish racism:

> Our country has everything, everything is perfect, everything works. But we are also the most racist country on earth. The gays, it looks good for us if we

say we like the gays, but really, we say there is something wrong with them in their heads. They are not normal. The Arabs, all they do is rape. Rape, rape, rape, rape, rape! The Iraqis, have you seen how they touch babies? They are pedophiles. The Roma, ooh, they steal everything. The Russians! We hate them because of the war. The Swedes! They are rich, and we want them here, but they can't take over even though they want to. The Saami, the indigenous people, thank God we pushed them north, that is where we want them to stay. They want to take the country back, but we can't let them. [The Somalis], ooh, they are the worst. All they do is take. Don't give anything back. They didn't pay taxes, but they came here and took.

In their many interactions with Finnish state and civil society, refugees and asylum seekers are socialized and disciplined by the state into more acceptable residents and potential citizens. Public signage indicates the ways that Finns attempt to mold newcomers into integratable subjects. A Football for Refugee Women Festival was organized by a local nonprofit–although refugee women may not be much interested in playing football, the Finnish state and nonprofits receiving government funding have determined that this is a laudable goal, with or without demand from the migrant community. Such efforts implicitly critique the presumed gender norms of Middle Easterners. Signs posted around the reception center indicate that parents need to monitor their children at all times in order to be "responsible." This injunction comes up against some Middle Eastern practices where children are allowed to run freely outside (as are many Finnish children), but foreign parents are vilified if their children play independently. A sign posted in the courtyard of the reception center juxtaposes pavement littered with cigarette butts and refuse against a clean Finnish street, instructing newcomers how to properly dispose of their cigarettes as responsible residents. Instructional images on how to use a flush toilet are displayed around Helsinki bathrooms, explained by government officials and reception center staff, who stated that numerous toilets had been damaged by squatting–a curious claim given that upright toilets are widely used throughout the Middle East. Aisha, the Muslim student activist, argued that Finnish service providers need not be so patronizing to Middle Easterners, who know how to use toilets. For the relatively small numbers of quota refugees who have been selected to legally integrate into the welfare state, strong currents of socialization and discipline are evident in refugee experiences.

The Inhumane State: Iraqi Asylum Seekers and Local Asylum Activists

Iraqi asylum seekers in Finland live in a state of precarity. To protest rejected asylum claims, forced deportation, and falling into undocumented status, Iraqi asylum seekers and their allies initiated a protest at Helsinki

Railway Station in early 2017. The Demo, as they call it, is a utopian community uniting asylum seekers from Iraq and Afghanistan and their Finnish supporters. The Demo began in February under freezing conditions, garnering media attention and public support with locals bringing tents, blankets, and sleeping bags to ensure that demonstrators did not freeze. It continued for 141 days until July 2017, when the police ordered its closure. The protest demanded for asylum seekers the rights to live, to access legal rights, to appeal negative asylum decisions, to cease deportations until appeals are complete, and to remain protected from eviction from reception centers until alternative accommodations are found. Finnish locals visited the Demo to show support for asylum seekers, bringing food, supplies, books, artwork, and potted plants. Demonstrators claimed that the state is not in fact benevolent despite its welfare orientation. The tent was decorated with images showing what the demonstrators view as the reality of Iraq: one of death, destruction, danger, and persecution. After each Iraqi bombing or attack, new images appeared in the tent and prayers for peace on the exterior. The asylum seekers asked, are these images of a safe country, as deemed by the Finnish Immigration Service?

The Demo was situated across the square from a counterdemonstration by Finland First, an anti-immigrant right-wing group, whose members attempt, often inebriated, to agitate asylum seekers by recording them closely on their phones or by verbally accosting demonstrators, all the while drinking asylum seekers' tea. The Finland First tent displayed signs declaring "Jihadists Out" and "Stop Taqiyya"–an obscure reference to Middle Eastern minority practices of hiding one's identity when life or religion is endangered. Finnish social divisions become apparent through the practices and discourses surrounding the Demo and asylum seekers. The "*rasisti*" versus "*suvakki*" binary describes those with anti-immigration views (*rasisti*) and those who are "hypertolerant idiots" (*suvakki*) toward migrants and asylum seekers. Both groups are essentialized, with anyone expressing fear or anxiety about migrants and asylum seekers suspected of harboring neo-Nazi affinities, while those who are tolerant are caricatured as delicate, effeminate, naïve "flower hat ladies," including men (Pyrhönen 2015: 149). Finnish women who support migrants and asylum seekers are ridiculed as "tolerant whores" online and accused of desiring the phallus of the exotic Other. Death threats and online harassment are commonly experienced by asylum seeker supporters, although elderly Finnish World War II adoptees attempt to remind their conationals that Finland was once in a similar situation (Virkki 2007: 132). A nonprofit Lutheran Church organization director working with asylum seekers shared how she went to the government registry to close the file on her personal information in an attempt to avoid being harassed and threatened.

Through this essentializing discourse, moderate Finns harboring concerns over large-scale migration while also protecting asylum seekers' rights

are largely drowned out. Trust in the system is threatened by asylum-related phenomena, where trust has been a pillar of Finnish society (Martela et al. 2020: 133). Undocumented persons on the street show that the welfare state is not providing. Questionable deportations challenge the humanitarian nature of the state, and police and migration agents tasked with carrying out arrests and deportations worry that politicians make decisions that compel them to break their oaths to protect peoples' rights.

In June of 2017, a young man named Lateef died of liver failure in a Finnish Reception Center. For weeks, his death was a source of shock and outrage among the Arabic-speaking community in Finland; when I visited or interviewed Middle Easterners, his case was invariably mentioned. Inspired by his death, Iraqi asylum seekers coined the Arabic hashtag "*Finlanda_bilaa_Insaniyya*" [Finland without humanity] on social media to commemorate and protest Lateef's fate.

Friends described his demise on social media. According to one Facebook post, "For more than a year Lateef suffered from liver failure. Day after day his health deteriorated. We appealed to the Finnish government for him, but no one heard us. And they didn't allow him to return to Iraq [to seek care] and they didn't help him. Today he lost his life in Lahti camp." Iraqis were convinced that Lateef had been deliberately neglected by the Finnish state, effectively left to die.

Two days after Lateef's death, I had a prescheduled interview with the Finnish Red Cross, which administers reception centers. I mentioned the controversy surrounding the death among the Arabic-speaking community, and the administrator responded that she was fully debriefed on the situation. She was adamant that the center had operated appropriately, and that death was an unfortunate possibility for anyone in medical need.

> Red Cross (RC): No, no, we actually looked into that case, and one of our staff, the health adviser, she called the center and checked what is the issue, and we have not seen anything that was not done how it should've been done.
>
> LG: So, he received the care he should have?
>
> RC: Yes, yes, and of course there is a long queue because he needed a new liver basically. I mean there are more Finnish people. It is not like you would get it immediately, and for me, it seems that he received all the services he would've needed and just unfortunately did not get the transplant early enough.
>
> LG: So, he was in the same line as Finnish people?
>
> RC: Correct.

In addition to this testimony, the Finnish Immigration Service (2017) also posted a press release on its website titled "No Errors in the Reception Centre's Handling of the Situation." The statement bemoans the "rumors" circulating on social media, arguing that there is "no particular cause to criticize

its operations" (Finnish Immigration Service 2017). Finnish administrators involved in the case continued to view the state as functional, rational, trustworthy, and fair. In their view, it was *despite* the efforts of the Finnish state to provide medical care, not *because of* those efforts, that he had perished. Finns argued that anyone needing an organ transplant, Finnish or foreigner, could die during the waiting period. But for Iraqis, it was suspicious, and it strained credulity that an asylum seeker fell to this fate under the strong welfare state, renowned for its universal access to high-quality healthcare.

An Iraqi man in his early thirties shared his thoughts on the long, difficult process of seeking asylum and the bureaucratic roadblocks to establishing a successful asylum claim, such as an accurate and thorough medical exam:

> I have spent two years here and still no decision. I don't understand why. Either give me an *iqama* [residency] or reject me! After eleven months they called me back into immigration to ask more questions. They say I can go back to Iraq; I am from Diyala. But there are gangs asking about me. If I go back, I am dead. I am Sunni, but now the country is influenced by Iran and controlled by the Shia. Sunni Arabs are imprisoned, killed, kidnapped, tortured. There is safety in the south for the Shia. There is safety in Kurdistan for the Kurds. But there is no safety anymore for the Sunni. If Iraq was safe, why doesn't Finland send their citizens there?
>
> My brother was kidnapped a year ago. He disappeared. Until today, we don't know if he is alive or dead. I don't know where my father is either. He is still in Iraq, but I lost contact with him. I was tortured, they beat me and electrocuted me. I have pain all the time. When I saw the nurse, she didn't have any information in my file. The doctor said there was nothing wrong with me.

The issue of Sunni asylum was raised by many interviewees. One Iraqi woman in her fifties stated, "The majority of Sunni are leaving [Iraq] and the majority of Sunni are rejected," noting the contradictory realities that Sunni Muslims feel that they face after the fall of Saddam Hussein and the ascendance of Shi'i political power and militias in the country, supported by the US coalition. The man mentioned above also critiqued the Finnish state's asylum application procedure:

> They give a small income (*ratib*), and we get housing at the Reception Center. I was there with 1,000 other men. Everyone who was there, except me and five others, has been rejected. There is a guy in our center who was tortured, and it shows; he has scars and injuries all over his body. But he was rejected . . . . The situation in Iraq is killing, kidnapping, torture. It is obvious. It is all a lie, all contradictions. They may reject you based on your mood; if you are laughing, they will reject you; if you are angry, they will reject you.

Giorgio Agamben (1998) characterized his concept of "bare life" as the human body reduced to its natural physicality, living in a state of exception

excluded from political life. Human beings in a state of bare life have no access to political rights or protections and therefore are exposed to political violence (Agamben 1998: 4). Amjad, a 28-year-old Iraqi Sunni man, who lost an eye in Iraq's sectarian violence, hauntingly alludes to this state of bare life continuing from Iraq to Finland:

> The [government] lawyers say that you, the Iraqis, are not humans. What is humanity? We took it off, we only look at you as material. All the decisions are negative for Iraqis. The lawyer says they know what I'm saying is true, but you can still live there [Iraq]. A parliament [member], he's from the same tribe [as me]. Some members of his family were assassinated and his brothers. He accused us of the incident, but this is completely wrong and there is no evidence. [The government] sent the army toward us, they prosecuted us, my dad and my uncles. It was terrorists who killed his relatives. My uncle died during the torture by the Iraqi army. I even have pictures of my uncle, how he was killed.
>
> [Finland's] policies do not differ from those of Iraq. There's no human rights. In the [Finnish asylum] camp I was subject to abuse by one of the gangs. This person was granted residency. In the beginning, Finland's policy was very good. Settlement was faster. I heard that [Finland] was a leading country in research and education and it is a beautiful country in everything. A year and a half waiting, and they rejected my [asylum] request.
>
> I expected [humanitarianism] but the policies are harsh and shocking. The Finnish government instilled no confidence on refugees in its people. They completely isolated us from the people. The problem is if an Iraqi made some trouble, they say all the Iraqis generally are [bad].

Many Iraqi asylum seekers see the application procedure as arbitrary and biased toward certain groups. Consistent rumors circulated among asylum seekers that asylum was more likely to be granted based on sexuality, gender identity, or Christian conversion, but these statistics are not recorded by Immigration. Asylum seekers reported that immigration lawyers advised clients whose applications were rejected to try reapplying as gay people or Christian converts. Eliisa, the Lutheran priest, said she was considering marrying a female asylum seeker to spare her from deportation, declaring loudly in the hallway of her apartment how much she loved her "fiancée" in case the neighbors were listening. A Finnish social researcher argued it was unfortunate that most Iraqi asylum seekers would not be "superstars" like the acclaimed Finnish-Iraqi filmmaker and author Hassan Blasim, implying that only if Iraqis were meritorious would their asylum claims be viewed more favorably, despite the fact that asylum is based on persecution, not merit or skill, and Syrian quota refugees by contrast are not required or expected to be "superstars." Iraqis who do not belong to these minority groups question why such lives are considered more valued or vulnerable. One interlocutor told me,

> I will not lie. I applied, and it was the truth. My case is my case. I am not Christian, I am not gay, I am not third gender (*al-jins al-thalith*). Here is a picture of my town, Diyala [a mangled suicide bomber on his cell phone]. Where is the security? Even if I converted to Christianity, they would ask why I converted and would not believe it. I know someone who was third gender and they gave him an *iqama* (residency). Why? Why are they different? Where is the justice?

Although anti-immigrant groups in Finland often express fear over Islamic fundamentalism, Demo activists did not express much in the way of public religiosity. I conducted fieldwork during the Islamic month of Ramadan, which passed with little notice. Aisha, the Muslim student activist, organized one small *iftaar* dinner to support the protestors, for which they were grateful, but Demo participants did not take concerted action to highlight Islam or religion in their protest. When I asked participants if they were fasting for Ramadan, most stated that they were not for reasons such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiac issues, or work demands. Participants also mentioned that if they were to fast, they could follow the Hijazi clock of Mecca and Medina, rather than a strictly *halal* fast in the Arctic summer when the sun sets late into the night. There were no communal prayers at the Demo, and Iraqis stated that they were not in favor of the idea circulating to build a mosque to augment the many Islamic centers around Helsinki, since its construction was proposed to be funded by Saudi Arabia and would not reflect their values. Participants did not wear marked Islamic dress, such as a skullcap (*taqiyah*) or robe (*dishdasha* or *thawb*). In contrast, Iraqi men became well-known as skilled barbers in Finland for their stylish pompadour coiffure (Greig 2017; "Iraqi Brothers' Mobile Barber Very Popular" 2020), which was sometimes targeted by extremists in Iraq (Worth 2005). In short, organizers and participants were most concerned with asylum seeker's rights rather than with religious practice or Muslim solidarity, and they did not fit the anti-immigrant stereotype of Muslims as hyper-religious or fundamentalist and out of step with the largely secular Finnish society. On the contrary, many Muslims arriving in Finland consider themselves secular, Muslim "by name," or from a Muslim family, but not particularly devout, having escaped the brutality of sectarian violence.

As they consider their options or lack of them, some asylum seekers convert, commit suicide, or opt to avoid documentation. The Finnish news source *YLE* reported hundreds of asylum seekers converting to Christianity from Islam in 2017 ("Hundreds of Asylum Seekers" 2017). Some of these individuals, like Mariano, feel a desire to distance themselves from Islam, while others are self-consciously seeking ways to be included in the Finnish nation. The greatest indication of asylum seeker desperation is through suicide or attempted suicide. In 2015, the Finnish Immigration Service reported between fifteen and twenty suicide attempts, with five resulting in

death; another source reports fifty-eight attempts in 2016 (Mirchandani 2017). In September 2017, two asylum seekers stabbed themselves in front of Finnish parliament ("Double Stabbing on Parliament Steps" 2017). Still others go undocumented trying to avoid forced deportation, a new phenomenon that contradicts the universal welfare state. Homeless rejected asylum seekers remind Finns of welfare gaps, since "Denmark, Finland, Germany and Sweden have tight registration systems with identity requirements operating in their homelessness sectors, making these services difficult for undocumented former asylum seekers to use" (Baptista et al. 2016: 56).

Despite their widespread bureaucratic rejection, Iraqi asylum seekers also forge strong social relationships with Finnish allies. The Lutheran priests who visited and supported the Demo are one example; they also express feeling Othered by the largely secular population. Priest Eliisa worked closely with Demo organizer and asylum activist Ahmed to ensure that the protest remained open in Helsinki Railway Square through summer by negotiating directly with police, although some city officials preferred to remove the Demo to make space for summer concerts and festivals. Finnish visitors to the Demo tried to ensure that protestors had donations of food and tea, chairs, tarps, and supplies. A pregnant Finnish woman visiting the Demo stated that she was "very concerned about what will happen to the demonstration. It is legal here, to demonstrate. I have friends who have even slept here." Some Finns house asylum seekers in their own apartments, and the Lutheran Church provides sanctuary. Many Finnish asylum lawyers work hard to fight for their clients' rights, to release them from detention, and to fight deportation (Puumala, Ylikomi, and Ristimäki 2017). Nonprofit professionals work to fill gaps they perceive in the universal welfare state–gaps that, in their view, should not exist. A local soccer league was formed so that Finns could meet their new neighbors, and romances are forged between asylum seekers and Finns as the communities interact in everyday life.

Conclusion

Finland poses an important case study to better understand the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of Middle Eastern refugees in the Global North. As one of the "happiest countries on Earth," where citizens and residents alike enjoy the benefits of the welfare state, Finland is well-placed to successfully receive and integrate refugees and asylum seekers. At the same time, xenophobic politics targeting brown, black, and Muslim immigrants complicate the universal welfare vision of basic subsistence and a life of dignity for all. While there is a strain of anti-Muslim racism evident in Finland, not all Muslim refugees and asylum seekers are viewed as a threat to state or society. Those who make their way through official refugee processing controls as

family units are acceptable in the state's rational bureaucracy, even if they are Othered as Muslims and Middle Easterners. Those who seek asylum autonomously and outside of the international refugee regime are viewed as suspect, as "queue jumpers," and as potential threats due to their identities as mostly young, single Muslim men, even though these men are also embedded within transnational family structures and hope for reunification in resettlement. Middle Eastern refugees and asylum seekers in Finland raise new questions about the polity's foundations of welfare for all within state jurisdiction. The imagined community of Finns is one of dynamic and contested sociopolitical debates in a state where the population has been viewed as relatively homogeneous but also de facto and de jure multiethnic, multilingual, and multireligious.

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<center>*5*</center>

"I Live Here; I Have a Right to Be Here"

An Afghan Refugee's Disorientations and Insistence on Inclusion through Theater

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Introduction

The principal of the language school exclaims in a loud voice:

> Dear students, we are very excited about the debate with our local politicians. Our very democratic politicians are coming here, and we are so pleased that they have agreed to talk to you. Please remember that we want a respectful debate with our democratically chosen politicians, so don't be too critical, angry, or inappropriate in any way.

He looks directly at Aliah and adds, "Especially you Aliah, we know you, so please do not say anything and don't be critical." Aliah smiles in discomfort.

After the debate, the principal thanks the politicians for coming and asks for questions from the audience. Aliah immediately raises her hand, as the principal looks at her discontented, and asks one of the politicians a question:

> Is it not possible to change the "*integrationsydelse*" [a benefit that refugees receive from the state] to 'SU' [a state-financed grant given to students above the age of eighteen] instead? Because it is very difficult for us with children and school and internships on the side; it is too hard for us, both physically and mentally, and we don't have time for our children. Is it not possible to have only the student grant and then remove the internships?

The politician responds:

> You come here to Denmark and get everything for free! Food, a place to live, education. Everything is for free! And you get the taxpayers' money. We give it to you so you can live in peace and everything; you should really be grateful. I don't understand what the problem is. You should work for it, work for us and everything that you get for free.

The principal exclaims, "We have a few minutes left for the last couple of questions." Aliah raises her hand and stands up. The principal gently pushes her down and says: "Not you, Aliah." She tries to protest, but he hushes her.

Aliah enacted this scene at a theater workshop in Copenhagen, Denmark, to focus on the difficulties involved in creating the future she hopes for in the Danish welfare state. In this chapter, I will explain how Aliah critically engages on stage with the idea that politicians depict refugees as welfare exploiters, with her enactment reflecting her insistence on being included as an equal. Aliah is a twenty-year-old woman from Afghanistan who arrived in Denmark four years ago with her parents and two younger siblings. They applied for asylum just before the so-called "refugee crisis" in 2015, when unprecedented numbers of refugees were seen walking along Danish highways—scenes displayed on television screens, radio, and social media across the country. Aliah became a cog in the wheel of the Danish asylum and integration system during a period that was hugely affected by restrictions on family reunification, cuts in social benefits, and (perhaps most significantly) the granting of more temporary forms of protection with fewer rights (Gammeltoft-Hansen 2017: 106). The temporary nature of this protection means that refugees who flee from war, but are not individually persecuted, are granted temporary protection for only one to two years at a time—with their cases being reviewed for possible extensions at the end of each period (Verdasco 2018: 1444). At the same time, the public and political debate focuses on who should be regarded as a Dane, and who should not. Aliah and other young Afghan refugees in Denmark face very uncertain futures. In 2019, Danish immigration policy changed its focus from integration to deportation, further exacerbating this insecurity. Young refugees must navigate this uncertainty while negotiating their positions not only in Danish society, but also within their own families.

In this chapter, I argue that futuremaking can be a disorientating process that happens in a temporal friction shaped by ideas of self-determination and obligations toward the family and the Danish welfare state. In constructing my argument, I draw on Sara Ahmed's (2006) work on orientations/disorientations as outlined in her book, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others.* According to Ahmed (2006: 1, 158), orientation is about how we find our way in the world, which is never casual but organized along certain lifelines. Ahmed (2006: 20) writes that a sense of disorientation can

arise when we lose our aim or purpose, thereby losing a sense of who we are. Disorientation is a condition that can be shattering, but also contains the potential to open up new futures (Ahmed 2006). When Aliah goes on stage to fight exclusion, I argue that she is attempting to open a path toward a new future. The notion of disorientation/orientation must be understood as a temporal condition in the sense that lives get directed toward certain points rather than others along a life course. Whether we succeed in pointing toward the future is conditioned on our history (Ahmed 2006: 21, 159). In the second half of the chapter, I focus on the temporal dimension of disorientation and argue that Aliah's battle is not limited to the systems governing refugees, but also involves a continual struggle to orient herself anew in relation to her past, her family, and society.

I met Aliah in April 2019 after she responded to a Facebook invitation to join my research project by participating in theater workshops with other Afghan refugees. When researching imaginaries of the future, it is necessary to venture beyond conventional methods in order to grasp people's inner experiences, which are in constant flux and exist outside the ordinary linear structure of time (Dalsgaard and Frederiksen 2013; D'Onofrio 2017a; Irving 2011: 25). Within the current polarized political climate relating to refugees, I want to challenge the idea of what it means to tell your story as a refugee and add nuance to the stereotypical pictures of refugees' lives portrayed in the media. I agree with Alexandra D'Onofrio (2017a: 75) that "through the words, dilemmas and visions which emerge from protagonists during theatre improvisation and storytelling, anthropologists have the opportunity to unpack and critically contest some overarching terms and concepts on migration common in public and political discourse that tend to objectify people's experiences." Broadly speaking, the objectification of the stories of refugees tends to portray them as either victims or criminals (Plambech 2014). Stories matter in the sense that they give access to resources (Bune and Lykke 2014; Danneskiold-Samsøe 2011; Zetter 1991), whether this means a residence permit (Whyte 2011a, 2011b) or (on a more existential note) a feeling of empowerment in disempowering circumstances (Jackson 2002). In line with Joel Robbins (2013: 457), I attempt to move beyond the notion of the suffering subject and explanations of people's misery. Instead, I focus on their dreams and longings, using theater methods to facilitate articulations of how Afghan refugees imagine things could be or should be.

Afghan Refugees in Denmark

Following decades of war, more than five million Afghans currently live outside Afghanistan. Approximately 19,200 of them live in Denmark, many of whom have lived there for decades. They fled the civil war in the late

1980s and 1990s when mujahidin groups took over the state administration from the Communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. With backgrounds as Tajiks, Uzbeks, or Pashtuns, they were part of what can be described as an intellectual elite. The second cohort of refugees from Afghanistan fled the Taliban regime that seized power in 1996 and the so-called war on terror initiated in 2001, and are predominantly young minors and families with a Hazara background (Rytter and Ghandchi 2019; Rytter and Nielsen 2019). During the period between 2015 and 2017, more than 420,000 Afghans applied for asylum in Europe. The rate of recognition granted to Afghan asylum seekers varies widely among the European countries. With the lowest recognition rate in Europe, Denmark granted asylum to 16 percent of its Afghan asylum seekers in 2017—whereas Italy in comparison granted permission status to more than 90 percent of its asylum seekers in the same year (NOAS 2018: 11). Afghan asylum seekers constitute one of the largest groups of asylum seekers in Denmark, but their numbers declined after 2015 due to the increasingly restrictive asylum policy implemented by Denmark's newly elected liberal-conservative government and the growing influence of the nationalist Danish People's Party (Verdasco 2019: 555). In 2015, a total of 2,331 Afghans applied for asylum in Denmark. In 2016, this number was halved to 1,127. And in 2017 there was another significant decline—there were only 188 Afghan asylum seekers in that year (NOAS 2018).

Using Forum Theater as a Method

This chapter is based on twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork among twenty refugees from Afghanistan living in or around Copenhagen, Denmark. The fieldwork ran on and off from April 2019 to October 2020. I conducted life history interviews with my Afghan interlocutors, as well as participant observation: visiting them in their homes and following them during a day at language school and so forth. As a central element of my fieldwork, I conducted five theater workshops. The principal method used in these workshops was forum theater. Forum theater was developed by the Brazilian theater practitioner and activist Augusto Boal in the 1970s as a part of what is known as the Theater of the Oppressed and as a tool for collective empowerment and emancipation (Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008). The method challenges the idea of audience members as passive spectators and engages them as what he terms "spect-actors." Breaking down the boundary between the actors and the audience, Boal intended to create a space for liberation and social change by inviting people to rehearse how to challenge social injustice, power inequalities, and oppression (Erel, Kaptani, and Reynolds. 2017: 307; Österlind 2008: 72). Boal's fundamental hypothesis

was that if someone performs an action in theatrical fiction, they will be able to perform it in real life as well (Österlind 2008: 72). As a research method, forum theater aims to engage participants in sharing stories of conflict and oppression through performance. Participants construct scenes in small groups, which they perform for the rest of the group. Other participants can then step in and act out different strategies for action. In this way, forum theater challenges the given. I regard the theater space as political in the sense that my interlocutors and I, the anthropologist, could collaboratively address and explore sensitive political issues.

During the workshops I played the role of facilitator. At the same time, I was an anthropologist at work, collaborating with my interlocutors about developing shared knowledge. Because I use theater as an ethnographic method, I do not aim to empower the participants, as Boal intended. Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari (2001: 7) have critiqued what they frame as the "tyranny" of participation, referring not to the techniques or the methodology but the discourse of participation. They interpret tyranny as the illegitimate and unjust exercise of power by nongovernmental organizations, who often end up replicating the power differences they want to change (Cooke and Kothari 2001: 4). It is vital to discuss the power structures inherent in any scene and contextualize the conflicts in order to understand the many levels within which the power relations relating to refugees operate (Dwyer 2008; Erel, Kaptani, and Reynolds 2017: 309). I position myself in line with Erel, Kaptani, and Reynolds (2017), who have done extensive research among migrants using participatory theater. In other words, I approach the method in terms of its usefulness for social research in exploring questions about lived experiences, as well as hopes and longings that can be difficult to verbalize, in this case, questions relating to the future.

On Stage: Protesting Exclusion

In what follows, I return to Aliah's stage enactment to show that she is protesting feeling excluded from the Danish welfare state. I draw on Sara Ahmed's (2006) notion of disorientation and argue that what Aliah is fighting against is a certain kind of future made available to her as a refugee.

After the scene has played out, Aliah smiles and looks around as if eager to hear the comments of the other participants. She looks casual in her tight sweatpants, sneakers, and black tank top. Her dark brown, almost black hair hangs loose as usual, reaching just below her shoulders. I realize it has grown since I originally met her. Aliah's story is a dramatization of an experience she had shortly after having arrived in Denmark. She told her story to portray the obstacles she faces in creating the future she wants. For

Aliah, this story is about her past, her present, and her future, in the sense that it represents the power structures within the political system that governs future opportunities for refugees. At the same time, the attitude of the politicians toward refugees is also reflected in the social spaces that refugees encounter, affecting their opportunities to create good futures in Denmark.

The six participants in this workshop comprise a diverse group of both men and women originating from different regions in Afghanistan. The majority of them are in their twenties or early thirties. A few of the young participants have lived in Denmark since they were a few years old, while the rest of them arrived in the country between four and twenty years ago. Precisely because of their differences in terms of ethnicity, religion, language, social and educational background, and time spent in Denmark, this group constitutes a small cross-section of the fragmented Afghan diaspora in Denmark (Khosravi 2018; Rytter and Ghandchi 2019).

The participants agree that the story is about refugees being treated differently than Danes on many levels. As shown above, the principal singles Aliah out and asks her to refrain from entering into a dialogue with the visiting politician. Although the principal wants to teach values such as democracy to newly arrived refugees in language schools, he excludes one of them from the democratic process. Moreover, the politician does not understand the needs of refugees, but categorizes them as welfare exploiters, who should show gratitude for what they get. One participant joins the scene to try to argue with the politician, stating that it is in Denmark's interest to give refugees the best possible opportunities for integration to make them equal members of society. Another participant says that politicians only portray negative images of refugees, and that, even though she has lived in Denmark for twenty years, she is still treated as different. Indeed, scholars have concluded that immigrants in Denmark are often described as different and are therefore seen as outsiders (Hervik 2004; Larsen 2011: 344; Rytter 2010). With a small population of about 5.7 million inhabitants, Denmark is often seen as a monocultural nation-state based on homogeneity in relation to ethnicity, religion, and language, and with a narrow definition of who belongs (Hedetoft 2006). Homogeneity is a norm in Scandinavian countries, where differences can be perceived as a threat to society (Gullestad 2002). The Danish welfare state is based on the universalist Nordic model, with national agencies providing welfare services that are part of the public sector and funded by taxation (Olwig 2012: 2). In exchange, the welfare system, which the population views generally positively, provides free education, free medical aid, and so forth (Olwig 2012). All accepted refugees in Denmark are enrolled in a three-year comprehensive state program called the self-care and repatriation program (*selvforsørgelses- og hjemrejseprogrammet*), under which they are allocated to local communities throughout the coun-

try. The main goal of the program is to make them self-sufficient as soon as possible through employment. While they enroll in language schools or internships, refugees receive a monthly integration benefit (Ministry of Immigration and Integration 2019), which is what Aliah refers to in the introductory paragraph.

Aliah's representation of the attitude of the politician points to what Mikkel Rytter (2019) describes as an imaginary of Danish nationalism. Rytter critiques the concept of integration, which is widely used in Danish political discourse when addressing issues related to migrants, because it is imprecise and used uncritically in both academic analysis and public discourse. He suggests that the notion of integration seen as a social imaginary rests on three scenarios of contemporary Danish nationalism (Rytter 2019). I want to suggest that one of these scenarios, welfare reciprocity, resonates with what Aliah describes as being treated differently. Welfare reciprocity is the idea of a lifelong generalized reciprocity within the Danish welfare state, with citizens being given free education, medical aid, and so forth in return for the payment of high taxes (Rytter 2019: 686). Refugees who have arrived recently have not contributed by paying taxes and should therefore not benefit from the Danish system; as such, they are often regarded as freeloaders suspected of receiving resources to which they are not entitled (Rytter 2019: 687).

Having presented the notion of refugees as exploiters of welfare, I want to point to the exercise of power on which this notion is founded. Sara Ahmed (2006: 10) states that migration can be a process of disorientation in which it is necessary to reinhabit space in order to become reoriented. Feeling at home is about becoming part of a space and saturating that space with bodily matter; thus doing the work of inhabitance takes time (Ahmed 2006: 11). Drawing on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Ahmed (2006: 159) writes, "What do we do, if disorientation itself becomes worldly or becomes what is given? . . . The 'upright' body is involved in the world and acts on the world, or even 'can act' insofar as it is already involved. The weakening of this involvement is what causes the body to collapse, and to become an object alongside other objects."

Ahmed (2006) continues by arguing that, since the world is more involved in some people than others, disorientation is unevenly distributed. Our life course is directed in some ways rather than others according to what is given to us. From this perspective, exclusion is a condition of not being able to act since some people are given less opportunity to be involved. I argue that Aliah is protesting against the idea of a certain life course being made available to her as a *refugee*. By enacting her story, Aliah objects to a future in which she is not involved in the world as an equal and does not receive the opportunities to realize her potential.

Concerns over the Future

Like many other refugees and several of my interlocutors, Aliah feels a constant uncertainty and anxiety about the future. This uncertainty sometimes inspires her to work hard to secure her future. On other occasions she lies in her bedroom, battling insomnia for days or weeks. In 2019, the government introduced new legislation that was intended to mark a so-called paradigm shift in the immigration policy. The decision to frame the new austerity measures in the law as a paradigm shift was a political move designed to signal an entirely new way of understanding Danish immigration policy. According to the paradigm shift, the state no longer aims to integrate refugees and immigrants; rather, it aims to deport them. Current political debate discusses whether this actually represents a groundbreaking change or is merely symbolic (Ingvorsen 2019). Notwithstanding this debate, refugees are already feeling the effects of this shift and remain uncertain about what it portends in the long term. Some days Aliah just shrugs her shoulders and tells me that this is what it is like to be a refugee. Other days she admits that she is very afraid about what will happen if they decide to deport her to Afghanistan. I have heard similar concerns from Afghans in Denmark who have lived here almost their entire lives but who do not have Danish citizenship. They argue that, even with a permanent residence permit, they cannot be sure of staying in Denmark, because they can never know what laws might change tomorrow, which could turn their world upside down. Mikkel Rytter and Narges Ghandchi (2019: 14) argue that Afghan refugees in Denmark live in a state of extended uncertainty that reaches beyond the time spent in an asylum center and into their lives, with many of them working in temporary internships with residence permits of limited duration. The threat of deportation is always present because the Danish government has reached a bilateral agreement with the Afghan government about accepting rejected asylum seekers in return for development aid (Rytter and Ghandchi 2019). Denmark has already declared several areas of Afghanistan safe and has started to deport rejected asylum seekers.

Caught Up by the Past

The idea of refugees as passive recipients of aid stands in sharp contrast to Aliah's own experience as a refugee and her self-image of being a strong woman who helps her family. In the following, I show that the struggle to be involved in society and avoid a sense of disorientation relates not only to dealing with the immigration system but to coming to terms with the past and negotiating social relations.

When Aliah addresses the politician on stage, she enacts the role of a young woman who is part of a larger family unit. Indeed, Aliah's story about fleeing Afghanistan is closely intertwined with that of her family. Aliah's brother, who was a soldier in Afghanistan, was killed by the Taliban just before the family fled the country. He was the fourth child her parents lost, and when a Taliban leader wanted to marry Aliah, the family fled. After the family was granted a temporary residence permit in Denmark, they moved to Copenhagen. The municipality started to use Aliah as an interpreter for her parents and siblings during visits to the doctor or hospital and meetings at the municipality. She describes this task as very stressful, and it prevented her from going to school on those days. Eventually she had had enough and confronted the caseworker, refusing to perform the task any more. The death of her brother, the family's experiences fleeing Afghanistan, and Aliah's growing depression alienated her from the rest of her family, and at the age of eighteen, she decided to leave her family and live on her own. She still visits her family, but she does not feel a part of it—instead she feels like a stranger. Aliah's parents are ashamed that she does not live with them because their tradition dictates that daughters should live with their parents until they are married. Relations between the young generation of Afghans and their parents have to be renegotiated in a dramatic context of violence and forced displacement (Abbassi and Monsutti 2017). It seems impossible to identify the main reason why Aliah feels estranged from her family, but perhaps her situation is simply a part of her process of becoming a young woman within a context marked by significant ruptures.

It is not only her family from whom Aliah feels distanced. She also feels socially distanced from young Danes her own age, due to the profound differences between them. She explained:

> I still feel alone. I feel like the new society does not understand me, and I cannot match it. When I am with young Danes my own age, they are very childish. When they talk about their problems, I am shocked that they see choosing destinations for vacations or not being understood by their parents as problems. My life is like a movie for them; they cannot understand. So I don't tell them anything.

Her sense of not being understood by the new society thus not only touches upon encounters with the political system, but also influences her social life and family relations.

Aliah was diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder and has frequent flashbacks to her flight from Afghanistan. The experience of her flight is inscribed in Aliah's body, sporadically invading her everyday life. When she talks about her flashbacks, she does so in a quiet voice: "When we arrived in Denmark our body and thoughts were still fleeing. Sometimes when I was about to fall asleep in the bed and tried to open my eyes, they were already

open. And now, when I begin to feel calm, the flashbacks come." Aliah and her family lived in three different asylum centers for a total of one and a half years. While they were waiting for their asylum application to be processed, Aliah felt she was still fleeing every time they moved from one asylum center to the next. When they moved to their own place after they obtained a residence permit, she began to feel calmer, but then the flashbacks came—like something she needed to remember. The feeling of having to flee is stuck in her, she explains. She describes it as a time she cannot escape.

Returning to Ahmed (2006), I highlight the temporal aspect of disorientation. Ahmed (2006: 158, 160) describes moments of disorientation as bodily experiences—feelings of being shattered, in which the body moves out of the world and one moment does not follow another. Instead, the present moment is experienced as a sense of loss, with something being absent that was once present. According to Ahmed (2006: 160), it can be a violent feeling to have a failed sense of orientation and to have the experience that the lifelines you follow are blocked and cause stress rather than enable action. If we understand Aliah's flashbacks as moments of disorientation, we can say she is brought back in time to re-experience painful moments that disrupt her sense of time in the present and prevent her body from feeling safe. Instead, she is constantly reminded of a past that becomes painfully present.

Social conflict can often be caused by disagreements about how we measure time and space and may therefore result in an experience of being out of time or place with others (Ahmed 2006: 13). Even though Aliah inhabits the same social space as Danes—she is a student and works full time for a grocery chain—she often says that she needs to cope with her past experiences before moving forward in life and finding a boyfriend, making Danish friends, and so forth. Trying to navigate an uncertain future, she is caught up by her past to a degree that makes her feel lonely and incompatible with her new society. We often imagine our life in terms of having a direction, with the future being based on the present (Ahmed 2006: 20). At this point in life, Aliah's present seems to be temporally entangled with her past despite her efforts to forge her own future.

Conclusion: Future Potential

"Do Muslim women really need saving?" asks Lila Abu-Lughod (2002) in her seminal article, which critiques the discourse used in the United States and Europe to justify entering the war in Afghanistan. I hope that my single case study of Aliah has enabled me to portray one of many young, strong women from Afghanistan with refugee backgrounds, who are fighting structures of power at various levels and insisting on defining their own directions in life.

Aliah's enactment on stage is not a story of submission or oppression. At the end of the workshop, she insists on showing us what happened after the debate, when she approached the politician. She starts to act out the scene, stands up, leans over the politician, and scolds her in a sharp voice: "What do you mean when you say we get the taxpayer's money? We pay full taxes here in Denmark. What do you mean when you say we are not a part of Denmark? I live here; I have a right to be here." Aliah breaks off and laughs: "I guess I am a rebel. I was really angry, but I am happy I did it; it was my right." Aliah has shared numerous stories with me about fighting for her right to live her own life, such as the time at the asylum school when she was bullied by young Afghan men and took up the fight, or when her father was reprimanded by an older Afghan man because she was not wearing a hijab, and she spoke up for herself. Aliah believes she has inherited her rebellious nature from her family. She smiles proudly when she talks about how her father always defended women's rights in Afghanistan in front of the other men in the village.

On stage, Aliah plays the part of herself, albeit a version of herself that is four years younger. When enacting her own story, various temporalities seem to merge, as she acts out her present and creates a bridge into her future. On stage in front of an audience, Aliah turns the power balance between the politician and herself upside down and shows that she is a fighter. Theater work is emotive and relies on an active embodiment of the experiences of the participants within a space of potentiality and possibility (D'Onofrio 2017a; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008: 6). In this space of potentiality, I suggest that Aliah draws on her past experience to portray a glimpse of a future that she regards as good. In this future, she is not subjected passively to the insecurity of the political system and treated as a refugee; instead she bases her actions on important moral values of her own, such as strength, agency, and independence. Moments of disorientation are vital, and the feeling of being shattered might become a permanent crisis—or the body might reorient itself again (Ahmed 2006: 157–58). The question is what we do with these moments. In Ahmed's words, Aliah insists on being an upright body that acts and is involved in the world. By insisting on her right to be included as an equal in the Danish welfare state, she tries to overcome a sense of being objectified and to redirect her lifeline toward the future.

In general, this chapter points to the difficult conditions for futuremaking in Denmark as a consequence of the increasingly restrictive immigration policy aimed toward deportation. The temporary and insecure residence permits render Afghan refugees temporally excluded and continuously reproduce refugees as Others (Tuckett 2018: 149).

Aliah's case illustrates the many challenges that young refugees face when performing the difficult existential task of anchoring themselves (Verdasco

2018) in new ways and working to build their futures in a new society. It is not for me to determine Aliah's future or to assess her prospects in Denmark (Dalsgaard and Frederiksen 2013). Instead, I focus on the potential of disorientation in the process of opening up new futures.

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6

Demanding Their Welcome

Agency-in-Waiting at a Refugee Protest Camp in Dortmund, Germany

Lucia Volk

> I did not leave everything behind in Syria to come here and be silent.
> —Sakher Al-Mohamad in an interview, 2018

Introduction

On Tuesday, 9 June 2015, on Huckarder Street in a quiet suburban neighborhood of Dortmund, Germany, more than one hundred Syrian refugees gathered for a public protest outside the local branch of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bandermann and Bornemann 2015; Refugees Welcome Dortmund 2015). Holding up handwritten signs, the protesters demanded that Germany stop sending Syrians back to countries that did not want them, such as Italy, Greece, or Hungary, and that their asylum applications be reviewed more quickly. With every passing day, refugees' family members in Syria were exposed to attacks and bombings. The protesters wanted residency permits in Germany so they could bring those family members to safety via the legal route of family reunification. The officials working at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees—most commonly referred to by its German acronym BAMF (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge)—rejected the demands made by the protesters. Confronted with BAMF's dismissive posture, the protesters decided to turn their Tuesday

demonstration into a sit-in and a few days later, to move the protest to a downtown plaza near the city's main train station, until their demands were met. Despite neo-Nazi attacks, heavy rains, extreme heat, limited access to running water and other amenities, and the discomfort of sleeping under tarps on mats on the pavement, the protesters remained in the public eye for fifty-three days. It was the longest continuous protest (*Dauerprotest*) the city of Dortmund had ever seen (Bandermann and Thiel 2015).

This extraordinary refugee-organized protest has not yet been the subject of academic inquiry, which is surprising. Its duration, as well as the way it was organized and the diversity of persons that sustained it, make it worthy of attention. In what follows, I explain what made the Dortmund protest in the summer of 2015 possible logistically and show what strategies made it successful. I treat the Dortmund protest as a "diagnostic event" in order to reflect on the issue of refugees taking political action to negotiate regimes of exclusion in Germany (Moore 1987: 730). I use Moore's somewhat dated term because it explicitly asks ethnographers to look for events on the local level that are outside the ordinary and explain them in connection to ongoing larger political and economic changes. In 2015, the larger changes that triggered the protest in Dortmund comprised millions of ordinary people leaving their war-torn and poverty-stricken home countries in the Middle East and (North) Africa to find safety and opportunity, leading to social and political upheavals in the Global North (Bock and Macdonald 2019: 3). That year, Germany allowed close to one million asylum seekers into the country (Rosenhagen 2017: 134). The single largest group among them was comprised of Syrian civilians, fleeing the violent expansion of Islamist militants throughout Syria, as well as a brutal war waged by their government in response to citizens' demand for more democracy and justice.

While refugees spend a lot of their time, energy, and resources moving away from danger to areas of safety, they also frequently find themselves stuck in place. As scholars have noted, refugees, as well as marginalized citizens, are often forced into waiting patterns by border regimes and bureaucratic processes (e.g., Andersson 2014; Olson 2015; Pearlman 2017; Sanyal 2018). The Syrian refugees who had made it to Dortmund in 2015 were stuck in lengthy asylum proceedings, but they refused to sit around and simply wait. Drawing on Catherine Brun's work, I argue that the Syrian refugees in Dortmund exercised "agency-in-waiting" (2015: 23). Brun studied the case of ethnic Georgians who fled Abkhazia after it declared its independence from Georgia in 1992. Stuck inside Georgia with no discernible option of return, these refugees continued to anticipate their personal futures in Abkhazia in daily conversations and rituals, something Brun (2015: 24) calls "active waiting," because these actions helped refugees make the uncertainty they experienced meaningful. Similarly, the Syrian refugees who gathered in the protest camp in Dortmund faced uncertain futures, while waiting for the

outcomes of their asylum petitions. Planning and running a protest camp provided the Syrians with agency in that they forcefully demanded that the German public pay attention to them *while they were waiting*. But more than that, their public protest cast waiting for an asylum decision itself as a dangerous activity that threatened the lives of family members left behind in Syria. The Dortmund protesters, in other words, in order to obtain faster asylum decisions, strategically deployed messages about the risks incurred *because of their waiting*. The Dortmund protest camp therefore illustrates two kinds of "agency-in-waiting": political agency through public protesting and moral agency by pointing out the dire consequences of bureaucratic delays.

Methods

The research for this chapter was conducted between June 2018 and August 2019. It is based on a review of the German news coverage of the Dortmund protest, in addition to my reading of related Facebook, Twitter, and blog pages, as well as Instagram postings. I conducted four in-depth interviews with protest co-organizer Sakher Al-Mohamad in Cologne, Germany, where he is currently pursuing a master's degree in international media studies, as well as several hour-long Skype interviews with Sakher after I had returned to California. With Sakher's help, I contacted six more Dortmund protest participants via email and telephone. Four of the interviewed protest participants were German: Robert, a musician; Sigrid, a retired teacher of German as a second language; Jonas, a university student at the time of the protest; and Maria, a high school student at the time. I also conducted interviews with Majd and Mohamadali, both from Syria originally, currently enrolled in computer and international business classes in Dortmund and Cologne, respectively. The interviews were conducted in English or in German. Unless I received their permission to use their first names, I employ pseudonyms for my interlocutors.

Situating Dortmund within the Larger Refugee Context in Germany

In 2015, Dortmund was the fourth largest city in the state of North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) and home to about half a million residents of whom 30 percent had a migrant background, and 13 percent did not carry a German passport (Council of Europe 2012: 4). In the 1960s and early 1970s, Dortmund became a destination for so-called guest workers from Turkey, Poland, Greece, Italy, and Morocco, who filled vacant jobs in coal mining and steel production plants; descendants of these workers still live in Dortmund

(Stadtportal Dortmund 2019a). Dortmund is, by all accounts, a multicultural city known for its ethnic restaurants, and it is featured in the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Index (Council of Europe 2012).

The federal government assigns newly arriving refugees to the sixteen states following a quota system based on each state's population numbers and tax revenues. The assigned quotas of refugees are recalculated every year but have remained relatively stable over time. In 2015, the states that were required to take the most refugees were NRW (21 percent), Bavaria (15.5 percent), Baden Württemberg (13 percent), Lower Saxony (9 percent), and Hessen (7 percent); all other eleven states divided up the remaining refugees, taking between 1 and 5 percent each (BAMF 2016). In other words, NRW is a state with a substantial pre-existing migrant population that has also been receiving the largest "share" of refugees in Germany. In 2015, Dortmund was asked to accommodate 215 refugees per week–whereas in 2012, they were allotted 333 for the entire year (Stadtportal Dortmund 2019b).

For most of the state's post–World War II history, NRW has been governed by the center-left party, the Social Democrats (SPD). Hannelore Kraft was the SPD state minister in 2015, heading the state parliament in a coalition with the Green Party on a pro-environment, pro-immigrant platform. In 2015, Dortmund's mayor also belonged to the SPD. Yet Dortmund has also been a hub of right-wing extremism for decades (Smale 2014). According to Dortmund's police chief, five murders, including three murders of police officers, have been linked to neo-Nazis in Dortmund since 2000, and neo-Nazi attacks notably increased after 2012 (Cottrell 2012; Deutsche Welle 2015). The neo-Nazi party Die Rechte had a representative elected to Dortmund's city council in 2014 and to six other city councils in other parts of NRW (Smale 2014). In February 2015, neo-Nazis rallied outside a Dortmund refugee center, chanting anti-foreigner slogans with burning torches in hand (Deutsche Welle 2015). Journalists and bloggers covering Dortmund's neo-Nazi scene received death threats (Borrud 2015). Germany's World War II history and culpability in mass murder and mass displacement make the early twenty-first-century manifestation of right-wing populism particularly troubling for many contemporary Germans. Some of them cite this contemporary extremism as the reason behind their political activism in support of refugees (Karakayalı 2019: 204–8; Pearlman 2017: 316).

How a Tuesday Demonstration Became a Fifty-Three-Day Protest Camp

In order for one hundred protesters to gather outside BAMF on 9 June 2015, and for about fifty protesters to continue protesting at any given time for

fifty-three days subsequently, groundwork had to be laid, and most of it was done via social media, especially Facebook and Twitter (#protestBAMFdo). Syrian refugees who had submitted their asylum applications in Dortmund had been assigned to shared living spaces, such as former military barracks or schools, in order to wait for their asylum notification from BAMF. One young man, Fadi Khatib, who had escaped escalating violence in Aleppo, and whose wife was living in exile in Turkey, became impatient with waiting (Bandermann and Bornemann 2015). He kept hearing from friends in other states in Germany that they had obtained their residency notifications though they had submitted their paperwork after his. Via Facebook, he reached out to Syrians in and around Dortmund, many similarly anxious and frustrated, and collected their names on a petition that urged a quicker review of their files. He sent the petition to the BAMF headquarters in Nürnberg and received no response. So he went a step further and applied for a protest permit with the Dortmund police to hold a demonstration outside Dortmund's BAMF office on 9 June. Once his protest was logged, Fadi posted an invitation to all refugees worried about their applications pending with BAMF to join him. Sakher Al-Mohamad, originally from Homs, who had fled after Syrian authorities arrested and questioned him for his political activities at Damascus University, responded to Fadi's invitation as soon as he saw it on 1 June. With his background in political activism at Damascus University, Sakher quickly became a co-organizer.

Both Fadi and Sakher are university-educated, fluent in English, and social media savvy. Sakher had participated in demonstrations in Syria and understood that it was important to formulate clear, comprehensible demands: the timely processing of asylum petitions was the main concern, so that refugees with families could petition to bring them to Germany via legal channels. Moreover, a pressing issue for some was the real possibility of being sent back to the country where they had crossed into the European Union. Designed to prevent "asylum shopping," the so-called Dublin Regulation stipulates that an asylum claim be processed by the state of first entry into the European Union (Angeloni and Spano 2018: 477). If any fingerprints had been taken in Hungary or Italy, the asylum applicant was told to return to the country to apply for asylum there. The reality was that these countries were unable to process and provide for the large numbers of refugees who kept arriving every day. Nobody who had made it to Germany wanted to return to Hungary or Italy.

When BAMF officials showed no willingness to yield to the refugees' demands, the protesters decided to move from their geographically isolated suburban location across the street from the BAMF offices to a central plaza near the main train station in downtown Dortmund on 12 June (Bandermann 2015b). Fadi, Sakher, and a member of the left-wing Die Linke party who had offered her support went to the police station to file the required

paperwork to continue the protest in the new location. With their extended permit, the protesters installed sleeping bags under tarps affixed to trees in the plaza. The Dortmund police protected the camp around the clock against expected neo-Nazi attacks (Bandermann 2015b). Already on the evening of the first day, they made five arrests among a group of twenty neo-Nazis who showed up to disrupt the camp (Bandermann and Bornemann 2015). Subsequent attempts of neo-Nazi sympathizers to approach the protest camp were spotted and thwarted by the police before violence could erupt. Throughout June and July, increasing numbers of asylum approvals reached Syrian applicants waiting in Dortmund, whether or not they were part of the public protest. Via social networks, they shared the good news with each other, which further bolstered the resolve of those still waiting. Initially all those who did not have their fingerprints taken in other countries received temporary residency permits for three years; those with fingerprints elsewhere had to keep waiting.

The protest ended on 31 July because the police were no longer willing to protect them around the clock, insisting that they protest weekly and during daytime hours instead. Meanwhile the protest organizers had decided to increase the visibility of their activism by setting up a new camp in the capital, Berlin. On their last day in Dortmund, the participants organized a march from the center of Dortmund back to the BAMF office, where the action had started, to submit the nearly 5,000 signatures of support that had been collected by that time. BAMF officials met the protesters outside their office, and they announced that they would review once more fifty already denied asylum petitions from protest participants who had their fingerprints taken in Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, or Spain. The officials contacted Sakher by phone several days later to ask him to collect proof of extenuating circumstances pertinent to their review. With the help of Majed, who was able to write German fluently, Sakher collected, translated, and submitted the requested paperwork while both were on their way to Berlin. Within a few months after the protest had ended, the last Syrian protesters obtained their residency permits, and all were eventually able to bring their families to Germany (Bandermann and Thiel 2015).

Refugee Protesters between Inclusion and Exclusion

In what follows, I argue that the Dortmund protest camp was a space of inclusion for Syrian refugees within state and national structures of exclusion. Together with their local supporters, the Syrian refugees engaged in the "bone-hard work" (*knochenharte Arbeit*, according to Robert) of camping out in a public square exposed to the elements for nearly eight weeks. They organized and kept unified a group of diverse refugees and German

supporters. That work deserves to be recognized, as well as analyzed. Refugees need to be recognized as persons exerting great efforts while living through times of great uncertainty. Forced to wait for notification by BAMF, the federal agency adjudicating German asylum law, the refugees became agents on the local level, leaving their assigned refugee reception centers to pursue public activism in downtown Dortmund. They exercised agency by setting up and running a protest camp with the approval of the police and the support of local pro-refugee networks. They exercised agency by reshaping the discourse about refugees, pointing out the dangers as well as the moral hazard of waiting for asylum approval. Finally, the protest camp generated a community of solidarity and common purpose among the Syrian and German protesters who waited together for fifty-three days in a public plaza. Through their protest work, the refugees, who were excluded from German society by virtue of their refugee status, were nevertheless included in an actual protest community alongside members of German society who supported their right to remain. More than that, the protest resulted in temporary residency permits for the Syrian protesters, who thereby obtained legal inclusion in Germany.

Setting Up and Running the Camp

A protest camp does not simply emerge; it must be planned and built, no matter how basic the equipment and supplies. Also, any protest community must follow certain rules that make living together for an extended period of time possible, including both rules they make and agree on and those imposed by society at large. While the 2015 protest camp in Dortmund was a grassroots phenomenon, it benefited from institutional protection and support. Initiated by a diverse group of Syrian and German volunteers, the movement had the approval of local police authorities and the support of local political actors. Fadi and Sakher created an informal camp council including Syrian refugees and German supporters who met to discuss issues and make decisions about day-to-day meal plans, water supplies, cleanup, and public outreach. Members of the committee were in regular contact with the dispatched members of the police force who protected them around the clock. The German volunteers who joined the political action helped mediate interactions with the Dortmund police. They also reached out to store owners in the square to obtain their support and provided the necessary personal connections to local refugee support organizations. Importantly, they agreed among themselves that they would not become decision-makers during the protest and that no German political group should be allowed to instrumentalize the protest to advance its own agenda.

Not surprisingly, the police wanted order in the protest camp and stipulated the number of people who were allowed to sleep outside every night,

as well as the sleeping arrangements: no more than fifty people under open tarps rather than inside closed tents. They had to adhere to a permitted level of noise and maintain sanitary conditions, including trash disposal and a toilet. The police were adamant that without the latter, nobody was allowed to spend the night outside the BAMF offices. It took several calls and pleas, and in the evening, Refugees Welcome Dortmund drove up with a truck and a portable toilet, thereby saving the first day. The police officers stayed on hand and responded effectively when individuals or groups hostile to refugees approached the camp, as happened repeatedly during the fifty-three days. The refugees decided that they wanted to follow the rules imposed by the German police, thereby demonstrating that they wanted to become citizens of Germany who obeyed the law. The German supporters confirmed the cordial relationship between police and protesters—as well as occasional friendly soccer matches on the plaza between some members of the police force and the refugees.

The protesters needed access to water to wash, drink, and cook; they needed electricity to charge their cell phones; and they needed food to eat. They needed blankets, tarps, and sleeping bags. In the absence of storage options, these basic life necessities needed to arrive at the camp at the time they were needed. The supply chain was organized via Facebook and Twitter #protestBAMFdo, with Sakher in charge of the former and Robert and Jonas in charge of the latter. Refugee rights groups across Dortmund, high school and university students, as well as individual, concerned citizens responded to posts by the protesters (Semenova 2015). Within an hour of a posting on #protestBAMFdo that the camp needed an item, it was dropped off at the camp. This efficiency was only possible because the protesters could tap into a long-established network of progressive, left-leaning groups who had experience organizing protests and counterprotests in Dortmund. Examples of mundane but important local support for the protest include a nearby flower shop that provided buckets of water for morning hygiene, an individual with a diesel generator who stopped by at night to allow protesters to recharge their phones, and Dortmund residents who offered their cars to run errands. A cooperatively run event space called Nordpol offered their kitchen facility to cook lunches, and the Abu Baker Mosque in northern Dortmund coordinated and provided most of the meals during the Muslim month of Ramadan. For the fifty-three days of the protest, at least fifty protesters a day received the provisions they needed. Sakher explained that they had so many offers for food that they could have kept the protest running for a year.

Anthropologists who have looked at refugee camps have argued that while camp spaces separate refugees from citizens in host countries, thereby perpetuating their exclusion, they additionally contain "zones of indistinction between exclusion and inclusion" (Oesch 2017: 110). Oesch (2017), in

his work on Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, remarked how neoliberal logic seeks to incorporate refugees as consumers and autonomous, productive subjects within Jordanian society at large. Other scholars have shown that even noncamp, urban spaces impose significant limitations on refugees (Peteet 2016: 217; Sanyal 2018: 74). A protest camp of the kind organized in Dortmund further complicates our understanding of a "refugee camp," since it was organized and run by refugees, officially allowed and protected by the Dortmund police, and provisioned by Dortmund citizens in solidarity with the refugees. The protesters who stayed in the camp had rooms and beds in refugee centers where they could have slept, but they chose to sleep in sleeping bags on the pavement. Their objective was to be in plain sight in the center of a German city. By increasing the visibility of their ongoing, uncertain condition–their waiting–they highlighted the urgency of their demands.

Shaping the Protest Message

Organizing camp logistics was one thing, but organizing how the protest would be communicated to the public was another. Finding consensus among the participants was difficult because protesters came from different backgrounds: not only did the Syrian men belong to different generations, but a minority was Kurdish, the majority Arab; most men were Muslims, both Sunni and Shia, but of varying degrees of piety and daily practice; two individuals had Yazidi and Assyrian Christian backgrounds, respectively; almost half of the men had completed some level of higher education, but the other half were shopkeepers, tradespersons, or peasants. They came from every region of Syria, from Daraa in the south to Kurdish border towns in the north. Some of them had arrived in Germany without getting fingerprinted along the way, while others had submitted asylum paperwork in another EU country. Some were still waiting for answers to their initial asylum applications; others had already received rejections and had gone into appeal; and some had obtained notifications of extradition. Both Fadi and Sakher obtained their residency early on, yet they remained with the protest camp until the end out of a feeling of solidarity. What unified the group was their opposition to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and the constant worry about family members left behind. The families became the focus of their protest message: they were dying in Syria while the protesters were waiting for asylum adjudication in Dortmund.

This focus on family remaining in Syria was the outcome of extended discussions and disagreements among the protesters. For instance, while still outside the BAMF offices, one participant, Majed Morshed, a Syrian journalist who had been imprisoned four times for his critical writings about the regime, advocated that the refugees should go on a hunger strike to be

Figure 6.1. Dortmund Protest Banner: "We Are Waiting to Be Granted the Right to Stay, While Our Families in Syria Are Waiting for Death," 2015. Photo by Robert Rutkowski, used with permission.[1]

sure of media attention. Sakher and others disagreed, saying they would antagonize the public and create health emergencies in Dortmund that would detract from the war in Syria. So Majed later explained to the press that this approach was "too negative" and that the protesters "did not want to create any problems" (Bandermann 2015a). By focusing on the need for speedier asylum decisions and the risks their families faced in Syria, the protest message shifted away from the Syrian refugees themselves, who maintained that they were already in a safe place, and brought their parents, wives, and children who remained in danger in Syria front and center. The asylum they asked for was not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of others. Once in their downtown Dortmund protest location, this message was communicated via large, simple, but compelling banners that were aimed at passersby. Three of the largest read, "Please help us save our families from dying," "Our future is in your hands," and "We are waiting to be granted the right to stay, while our families in Syria are waiting for death" (see figure 6.1).

Waiting creates urgency. For the protesters waiting in Dortmund, this situation was literally a matter of life and death. Making that connection visible allowed the Syrian refugees and their German supporters to place a moral burden on those institutions that made them wait. In other words, their protest action started "a debate about what really cannot wait" (Olson 2015: 523). By formulating their demand for residency in such compelling language, they also rejected being seen as second-class citizens waiting "for

the mercy of a residency permit [*die Gnade eines Aufenthaltstitles*]" (Refugee Welcome Dortmund 2015). Instead, they cast themselves as individuals with rights to make legitimate demands. Finally, by making German bureaucracy the target of their protest, they could also be assured of sympathy from German citizens at large, many of whom had their own experiences of being stuck in cumbersome bureaucratic processes.

Building Solidarity through Active Waiting

For fifty-three days inside the camp, Syrians and Germans mingled in the plaza and shared stories, laughter, and tears. They suffered through extreme heat and torrential rains. Together, protesters did physical exercises in the mornings and played soccer and volleyball, at times with the police. They broke the fast together during the Muslim month of Ramadan. The protest created new bonds of solidarity, enabled by cell phone technology, which rallied the people behind their screens to show up in person at the protest camp, drop off food or water, help cook or clean, or share a meal with them. The protesters established close relationships with local communities who supported them: for instance, Nordpol, a cooperative event space that hosted Refugees Welcome fundraisers, Antifa cafés, queer pub nights, and punk concerts, and the Abu Baker Mosque in a northern Dortmund neighborhood, which serves a predominantly Moroccan community. On two particularly hot days in July, the Dortmund fire department sent a truck that hosed the protesters down, providing much needed cooling relief. Dortmund's existing communities dedicated to pro-refugee activism helped significantly, but so did many curious passersby on their way to the train station. Once the protest camp was in place in Dortmund, it engendered a broad range of practices of solidarity among diverse Germans and Syrians and among the refugees themselves.

Syrian protesters told me that they remembered the strong feeling of solidarity among Syrians from different regions, ethnicities, and faiths, which in itself was a powerful outcome of the protest. No matter where in Syria they were from, Mohamadali told me, "in Dortmund we were brothers." Some of the Muslim refugees prayed together daily and fasted during Ramadan; others did not partake in religious rituals, although they identified as Muslim. All broke the fast together in the evenings, inviting passersby to join them (Kolle 2015). Kurdish and Arab refugees discussed their diverging views on a future Syria with each other until the early morning hours, and often disagreed. The more religious protesters disagreed with the more secular ones about the role of religion in postwar Syria. All of that difference was an open and accepted part of daily life in the camp. At times conversations were heated, and Sakher said that a few protesters left the camp and

never returned, presumably over disagreements. Given the many points of disagreement, it is therefore even more remarkable that the protest camp lasted as long as it did.

Germans learned about Ramadan during the month-long Muslim holiday, and some of them learned to cook Middle Eastern food. They learned from those Syrian refugees who spoke English or German about the uprising against the Syrian government and the experience of being a refugee. Some Syrians put together a short film about the origins of the Syrian uprising and the beginning of the refugee crises and screened it twice weekly at 10:00 pm to educate the public about why they were there. Since their cell phones allowed them contact with relatives in Syria in real time, protesters in Dortmund's train station plaza shared with their German supporters how much they missed their families. One day, all the protesters witnessed as one refugee's house was bombed in Aleppo. Another protester learned in Dortmund's plaza that his wife and daughter had been killed in an attack. The protesters rallied around the man with all the empathy they could muster and shared his grief. It is these intense emotional moments, some of the German supporters told me, that they will never forget.

As has been observed in other solidarity actions with war refugees across Germany, the Dortmund protest in 2015 elicited German responses that followed a less hierarchical, more empowering script for humanitarian activism (Schiffauer 2019: 299). This idea of working alongside refugees, rather than exposing and exploiting their positions of dependence, differs markedly from the more legalistic humanitarianism practiced in Germany three decades earlier, when asylum officers faced a different group of Arab war refugees: Palestinians escaping refugee camps that had become targets during Lebanon's 1975–90 civil war (Volk 2016). In Dortmund, a new form of intentional egalitarian engagement between those with cultural and financial capital and those without was implemented in daily camp interactions. Especially the Syrian refugees, who at that time had little control over the direction of their lives, said that the protest camp gave them a sense of real belonging in Germany.

Conclusion

All Syrian interlocutors emphasized that they could never have done this protest without German support, and that they felt overwhelmed at times by the extent and sincerity of the positive responses they received. Jonas, one of the German supporters who was part of the camp for its entirety, said his main regret–five years later–was that the protesters did not push harder to obtain even more rights for refugees at a time when German citizens demonstrated so much solidarity and German politicians could be swayed

to open Germany's borders. Much has happened since the summer of 2015: the "welcome culture" that defined that year has become muted, while right-wing parties have entered national and state parliaments on anti-immigrant platforms (e.g., Langenbacher 2018; Triadafilopoulos 2019). For instance, in North Rhine Westphalia, the anti-immigrant party Alternative for Germany (AfD) was able to obtain seats in the state's parliament after the 2017 elections, when the Christian Democrats (CDU) replaced the Social Democrats (SPD) at the helm of state power. Meanwhile, conservative media outlets contributed to a climate of fear by overreporting incidences of violence, such as the New Year's Eve attacks in Cologne (e.g., Lalami 2016; Kosnick 2019; Weber 2016). A "welcome culture" in a host country, in other words, needs to be built by engaged citizens, and it requires sustained effort to keep it active (Schiffauer et al. 2017). In light of the successful outcomes of the Dortmund protest, such as the residency permits obtained and families unified, the cost of the disappearance of such a culture is high.

A discussion of Syrian refugees' agency-in-waiting should not lead us to conclude that refugees possess unlimited agency to determine their fates. They do not. BAMF officials determine whether refugees can stay or must leave the country. Refugees cannot vote and cannot influence German elections. The stereotyping of refugees continues in some parts of German society. Yet none of these sobering facts mean that restrictive asylum measures are the inevitable response of a nation-state faced with a significant influx of refugees. Politicians, just as citizens and refugees, have options of political engagement inside the host country, as demonstrated by Gifford (this volume) and Bune (this volume). Refugees can be agents within the limitations that have been constructed around them. Sherry Ortner (1994: 403) famously proclaimed that "history is not simply something that happens to people, but something they make–within, of course, the very powerful constraints of the system within which they are operating." This chapter is, at the most basic level, about history-making refugees and their supporters, who successfully challenged limits and barriers put before them through sustained and inclusive political action.

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Note

1. This picture, and many others, can be found on Robert Rutkowski's blog: https://robert-rutkowski.de/das-protestcamp-von-refugees-dortmund/.

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Part III
Making Lives in Exile

7

Living as Enduring

The Struggle for Life against the Limits of Refuge among Gaza Refugees in Jordan

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Michael Vicente Pérez

Introduction

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is currently home to three million refugees. While Syrians make up almost one-third of that population, the vast majority of the Kingdom's refugees are Palestinian. Forced from their homes in Palestine in 1948 and 1967, Palestinian refugees now number over two million. About 160,000 of those refugees are known as ex-Gazans. Although they hold the same refugee status as other Palestinians in the country–they are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)– ex-Gazans are nonetheless a unique community. Displaced from the Gaza Strip in 1967, they arrived in Jordan as de jure stateless and were never offered Jordanian citizenship. Instead, ex-Gazans were categorized as Arab foreign residents and thus excluded from the socioeconomic and political rights enjoyed by Palestinian citizens of Jordan. For most ex-Gazans, their exclusion has been the central challenge of life in refuge. Without full access to the opportunities granted to Palestinian refugee-citizens of Jordan, they have been forced to struggle against the limits of a status that complicates their efforts to establish the most basic livelihoods.

   This chapter argues that the legal inclusion of ex-Gazan refugees as foreign residents in Jordan has failed to provide the necessary conditions for establishing a viable and meaningful life in exile. To do so, it examines the

restrictions of their status and considers some of the ways ex-Gazan refugees struggle to endure life on the margins and constitute their own refuge. In my approach, I do not frame refuge as the realization of any particular rights. The Palestinians with whom I worked did not describe their struggles in such terms. They neither demanded citizenship nor did they mobilize against state policies of exclusion. For them, the effort to carve out a meaningful existence in the context of prolonged displacement was described simply as the effort to "make a living." Following my interlocutors' lead, I provide an analysis that reframes refuge according to the struggles of ex-Gazan refugees to establish what, in the context of interminable exile and marginalization (Pérez 2020), can be a viable and dignifying act of living. I see refuge, in other words, through what ex-Gazan refugees seek to create: a living adequate for overcoming their exclusion and enduring exile. I thus look at the efforts taken by refugees within the limits of their legal status and argue that refuge is grounded in acts of endurance that challenge ex-Gazans' exclusion as noncitizens and establish forms of living they can claim as their own—an effort I call "living as enduring." Drawing on the insights of existential anthropology, I suggest that living as enduring represents a form of agency characterized by endurance, striving, and refusal (McGranahan 2016). It encompasses what Allan (2018: 94) has described as a micropolitics of survival in which refugees challenge social and economic exclusions through an ephemeral, interactive politics of everyday practice.

Methods

This chapter is based on ethnographic research I conducted between June and December 2016 in the Gaza refugee camp in Jarash. It reflects sustained participation in daily life among multiple families in the camp along with in-depth formal and informal interviews with seventeen participants. Concerned with the possibility of ordinary life in a context of significant deprivation, much of my research practice involved repeated interactions with specific ex-Gazan individuals and families. This included daily visits to homes and work sites along with several overnight stays with families. Participants included both ex-Gazan women and men and fell within the ages of eighteen and seventy-five. Interviews for this research focused on a number of thematic areas, including work, social relationships, education, and health. To situate these themes within the participants' life trajectories, I also conducted several oral history interviews. The effort to understand the routines of daily life in the camp led me to collaborate with a photo journalist on a visual ethnographic essay in the camp (Pérez and Boffetta 2018). Some of the research in this essay draws on the engagements produced through this specific approach to the question of statelessness and everyday

life. All of the participants in this research have been assigned pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity.

Ex-Gazan Refugees in Jordan

The majority of Palestinian refugees in Jordan arrived during the Palestine War of 1948. Known by Palestinians as *Al-Nakba* or "the tragedy," the conflict with Zionist forces drove approximately 700,000 Palestinians from their homes to neighboring states, including Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. The majority of Palestinians displaced during the war found shelter on the East Bank of Jordan and in areas of central Palestine. After the war, which resulted in the conquest of almost 80 percent of historic Palestine by the newly established Israeli state, the Hashemite monarch, King Abdullah I, sought to expand the Kingdom by appropriating the areas of Palestine held by Jordanian forces. To do so, King Abdullah officially annexed central Palestine and issued an addendum to the 1928 Law of Nationality, which extended Jordanian citizenship to all Palestinians including refugees and residents on both the West and East Banks (Massad 2001: 39).

While the majority of Palestinians displaced in 1948 fled to Jordan, about 250,000 made their way to the Gaza Strip. For these Palestinians, the postwar context provided a different set of circumstances. Defended by the Egyptian military, the Gaza Strip was the only western area of historic Palestine unconquered by Zionist armies. This left the coastal strip under Egyptian administration after the war. Yet whereas King Abdullah moved to claim Palestinian territory and its inhabitants as part of Jordan, the Egyptian government never attempted to bring Gaza under its sovereignty. Instead, it maintained an administrative role that, while influencing political, economic, and legal structures in Gaza, did not seek to permanently transform the territory into Egyptian territory, or its population into Egyptian subjects (Feldman 2008: 7).

Jordanian control over the West Bank and Egyptian rule in the Gaza Strip continued until the 1967 war. During this conflict, the Israeli army seized large swaths of territory, including the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, the Syrian Golan Heights, the Jordanian-controlled West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. In addition to the Israeli occupation of Arab lands, the war produced a new wave of Palestinian refugees, many of whom were already displaced in 1948. Fearing the Israeli assault on Gaza, several thousand Palestinians made their way to the East Bank of Jordan, joining over 200,000 Palestinian refugees fleeing the West Bank. Together, the new arrival of refugees constituted a significant expansion of the East Bank Palestinian population and led to the creation of six new UNRWA refugee camps. Yet the displacements of 1967 did not simply add more refugees to the Palestinian community in

the Kingdom. The arrival of West Bank and Gaza Palestinians also created two distinct groups of refugees defined by their geopolitical origins and national status. For Palestinians fleeing the West Bank, their migration to the East Bank did not affect their legal status. Already Jordanian citizens under the 1954 Law of Nationality, they were classified as internally displaced refugees or *naziheen*. Gaza refugees, however, entered the Kingdom with a different status. Because Gaza was ruled by Egypt until 1967, the Jordanians treated them as Egyptian subjects temporarily residing in the Kingdom. The fact that Egypt never extended its citizenship to Palestinians in Gaza did not matter. Nor did the fact that all Gazans, refugees and residents, were stateless. For the Jordanians, Palestinians fleeing Gaza were Egypt's responsibility and thus had no path toward Jordanian citizenship. Instead, they were granted legal refuge under foreign resident status and permitted to remain in Jordan until they could return to Gaza.

The Included Excluded: Ex-Gazan Refugees as Stateless Foreign Residents

Ex-Gazan refugees are legally categorized as foreign residents in Jordan. As a form of limited inclusion, their status allows them to reside legally in the Kingdom and provides access to both public services and some economic opportunities. For example, the Jordanian state has granted ex-Gazans special residency cards and five-year renewable passports to ease daily interactions with government agencies and facilitate travel abroad (Kvittingen et al. 2019: 19). The government has also allowed all ex-Gazan children to enroll in national primary schools without cost and has permitted ex-Gazan children under six years of age to access free health care services in public hospitals. As foreign residents, ex-Gazans are also allowed to work in certain areas of the private sector and to join the public sector on a contractual basis (Kvittingen et al. 2019: 22). Through these opportunities and others, the Jordanian state *includes* ex-Gazan refugees as foreign residents within the country. It renders them legible through a category that precludes their total exclusion and affords them legal refuge in exile.

The opportunities extended to ex-Gazan refugees as foreign residents are not without limit. Although they provide particular forms of social and economic mobility, they also entail several constraints that prevent ex-Gazans' full inclusion into Jordanian society and result in critical limits on their livelihoods. For example, ex-Gazans are excluded from education subsidies at public and private universities. This means that any ex-Gazan seeking postsecondary education must pay foreign tuition rates, which are considerably higher than national rates. While provided healthcare support at government hospitals through the Civil Insurance Program, ex-Gazans

must cover between 50 and 60 percent of the costs and are fully responsible for major treatments, including surgeries (Kvittingen et al. 2019: 22). Given the low income of ex-Gazans and lack of access to health insurance through employment, healthcare expenses can be prohibitively expensive. Although ex-Gazans are permitted to work in the private sector, as noncitizens they cannot apply for Jordanian practicing licenses or join professional syndicates, which effectively excludes them from several areas of the labor market, including journalism, pharmacy, dentistry, accounting, and teaching (Kvittingen et al. 2019: 22). In addition, the fact that ex-Gazans need annual security clearances to work in hotels, banks, and other sectors of the service industry makes these positions rare opportunities. It is also worth noting that ex-Gazans are prohibited from several civil and political rights, including the right to join unions and, more critically, the right to vote. Given the duration of their exile in Jordan, the denial of these rights constitutes an important form of exclusion that precludes their ability to shape and contest policies that continue to impact their lives.

Today, more than fifty years after their arrival, the restrictions ex-Gazans face as foreign residents continue to complicate the possibility of refuge in Jordan. As a legal form of exclusion, their status constitutes the basis of a shared experience of immobility or "stuckedness" that has transformed temporary refuge into a condition to be overcome rather than enjoyed. According to Hage (2009: 100), "stuckedness" is the experience that life is no longer moving, the feeling that one is caught in a situation in which one "suffers from both the absence of choices or alternatives to the situation they are in and an inability to grab such alternatives even if they present themselves." To be stuck, to feel routinely immobilized by legal restrictions, is what many ex-Gazan refugees must confront as noncitizens in Jordan. Faced with the limits of their status and the politics of prolonged containment, the context of refuge has not provided the opportunities they seek in life. On the contrary, ex-Gazan refugees must struggle to make their own refuge in a situation where nothingness often prevails (Dunn 2018).

To see how ex-Gazan refugees constitute their own refuge, it is necessary to consider how they struggle against obstacles in an effort to endure exile through particular forms of living. Thus, in the following section, I provide an analysis that reframes refuge according to the struggles to establish what, in the context of marginalization (Pérez 2020), can be a viable act of living. In this discussion, I locate refuge in the lives ex-Gazan refugees seek to create: lives adequate for enduring exile. I thus look at the efforts taken by refugees within the limits of foreign resident status as a form of living that they seek to define. This is not a singular conception of life shared by all. It is, rather, an ongoing social project (Povinelli 2011) launched from restrictive conditions but meant to establish a life one can claim as one's own. Refuge here can be understood as an existential practice (Jackson 2005) that I call

"living as enduring," which does not deny but instead reformulates exile. It is an agential struggle to establish forms of living capable of enduring marginalization and the effects of prolonged displacement.

In this framing, agency exceeds the binary of resistance and acquiescence. Instead, I see agency in the very capacity to endure the hardships of exclusion and to strive toward possibilities beyond given obstacles. Such an approach reflects an interest in understanding the relationship between effort and limit in precarious situations. It is a matter of what Jackson has called "well-being" and invites us to think about the kinds of lives people seek to achieve and the contingencies and constraints that make that effort such a challenge. More specifically, it asks us to think about how people act in the world and what its structures and possibilities demand of them. As Jackson (2005: xv) suggests, "human well-being involves far more than simple adjustment to a given environment, natural or cultural; it involves endless experimentation in how the given world can be lived decisively, on one's own terms."

In the following section, I discuss the struggles of two ex-Gazan refugees, Shadi and Rami, with whom I spent considerable time during my research in the Gaza camp. Coming from distinct backgrounds and struggling against different circumstances, they both confronted various restrictions on their efforts. For Shadi, his exclusion as a noncitizen was experienced in the perpetual effort to find stable work and escape the trappings of poverty. For Rami, it was the barriers to education that led him to realize the immobilizing effects of his status. Yet, in their struggle to work against the limits of their exclusion, both Shadi and Rami saw the ability to endure as an act of agency necessary for establishing a life in exile they could call their own. Through endurance and striving, they asserted their capacity to act within a world of constraints and make a living that would carry them through the hardships of indefinite exile.

Enduring Exile, Making Refuge

When ex-Gazan refugees discuss the challenges of nonnational status, they often speak in terms of living. Whether reflecting on the barriers to education, employment, or healthcare, they frame their exclusion as the inability to make a living. For this reason, many ex-Gazans use the expression "*bidna nai'sh*," or, "we want to live," to address their predicament. On its own, the phrase says nothing about the particular life ex-Gazans seek in Jordan. In expressing their demand to live, in other words, ex-Gazans do not offer a shared vision of the kind of life they are trying to establish. Instead, the refrain underscores the desire to engage in the very act of living, the efforts that constitute a life in terms they can call their own while in exile. Living,

in this sense, is about the capacity to act in such a way that both intent and outcome align. It is also about the ability to live beyond survival and endure the *long durée* of their exile (Feldman 2018).

In my research with ex-Gazans, I found the refrain "we want to live" useful for thinking critically about the struggle to live in the precarious context of exile. It drew my attention to the relationship between effort and limit in the narratives ex-Gazans offered about their struggles. It also revealed the significance of endurance and struggle in the meaning of agency.

Shadi

Shadi was an ex-Gazan refugee I met while working in the Gaza camp. Throughout our interviews and interactions, he stressed both the efforts made in the pursuit of a better life and the hardships he endured in the process. Born in the Zarqa camp, Shadi knew poverty at an early age. It took the combined efforts of his father, uncles, and male siblings to keep the family afloat. When Shadi entered the first grade, he took his first job collecting stale bread from neighborhood bakeries and homes. He would sell the bread to local meat and dairy producers as feed for their animals. The job was Shadi's first foray into the informal economy and came with the pressure of contributing to the family's income. The work was not easy. It required digging through scraps of bread to find pieces to sell. It also demanded long hours on the streets in the heat and cold. Despite the difficulty, Shadi endured. From bread collecting, Shadi moved on to working several odd jobs, including carpentry and managing his own food cart. But Shadi's extensive work trajectory took a critical turn when his family moved to the Gaza camp. In the camp, he began working for his father's falafel shop and found that the effort to earn money and support his family were incompatible with the demands of an education. Shadi thus quit school and eventually returned to Zarqa to work with his uncles and earn more money. As a full-time laborer searching for more promising work, he had to confront the limits of his nonnational status. "Along the way," Shadi explained, "I realized how my identity as a Gazan worked against me. If employers asked, as they often did, for a national number or a college degree, I knew I wouldn't get the job." The restrictions forced Shadi to take whatever job he could find. His options were few.

During our conversations about his struggles to earn an income, Shadi offered a complex narrative. On the one hand, he acknowledged that life without citizenship was a difficult and frustrating experience. It often led him to take jobs he did not want simply because his options were limited. Thus, the limitations on work taught him not only about the restrictions of his status but also about the difficulties he would have to accept in the quest for a decent living. On the other hand, the hardships of his labor allowed

him to develop a distinct sense of agency through endurance. His capacity to endure the hard work of selling bread as a child, of working alongside a carpenter, and of managing his own food cart with his brother, for example, was evidence of his ability to struggle and, ultimately, thrive. Indeed, for Shadi, it was his ceaseless efforts to make a living that allowed him to find his current job. When we met, Shadi was working for an international company that paid a steady and decent salary. It was the best job he had ever held. With good income, Shadi told me he could finally imagine the possibility of a more promising future. It was the first time that employment offered a chance to pursue new opportunities unconstrained by his status and to form a life capable of enduring his exile.

As Shadi spoke about his new job, he emphasized the significance of his earlier struggles with work. For him, those challenges were critical for developing a distinct capacity to endure his exclusions and "struggle along." According to Desjarlais (1997: 19), to "struggle along" is to proceed with great difficulty and implies strenuous efforts against opposition, hitting up against a world filled with challenges. In Shadi's work narrative, he struggled and, along the way, developed a capacity to take on further hardships even when the future remained uncertain. This, in my view, demonstrates a unique agential capacity. It underscores how the limits of statelessness and the struggles to endure them reflect an agentive engagement with the world. Agency here is not necessarily a form of resistance. Shadi does not seek to contest the limits he faces through organized political actions against the state. Nor does he situate his claims against the state in terms of rights or citizenship. Instead, he refuses those limits through enduring the constraints of exile and achieving his own refuge. Refusal, in this sense, is an "insistence on the possible over the probable and is aligned with hope" (McGranahan 2016: 323).

Shadi's efforts to achieve stable and adequate work in a context of significant restrictions and uncertainty underscore the fact that certain structures are insufficient for determining agency. Engaged in what Jackson (2005: x) describes as the existential struggle to "strike a balance between being an actor and being acted upon, between doing whatever will make life worth living and succumbing to forces that render life difficult to live," ex-Gazans sometimes refuse the structures of the world and seek more than it has afforded them.

Rami

Such a struggle was apparent in the lives of many ex-Gazans like Rami, who confronted, yet endured, these constraints. Striving against the debilitating restrictions of his status, he maintained a creative flexibility that allowed him to make a living in exile. Rami was born in Saudi Arabia while his

father worked in the oil economy. Eventually, his family returned to Jordan and purchased a home on the border of the Gaza camp. Like other ex-Gazan refugees, he enrolled in the UNRWA school and developed most of his social ties in the camp. As a student, Rami performed well: "It was easy for me. It was *very* easy for me. I would discuss physics [in secondary school] with the physics professor casually, for example. It was something that came extremely easy to me." Rami eventually graduated from secondary school with a high GPA and very high scores on the national educational exam, the *tawjihi*. He then began preparing for college. Rami wanted to pursue a higher education. Like his older brothers and sisters, he saw education as the next step in his life and had the ambition to pursue it. But the circumstances were different for him. Now that his family was in Jordan, his father did not have enough money to pay for college education. Perhaps more importantly, because Rami was a nonnational, he did not qualify for government scholarships and could not afford the tuition rates he would have to pay as a foreign resident. Rami had reached a limit and was uncertain how to proceed.

The possibility of paying for his education seemed untenable for Rami. There were few work opportunities capable of paying him enough to afford the costs of tuition. Unwilling to give up on his education, Rami made the difficult decision to enroll in the UNRWA university program. Rami wanted to study engineering, and the UNRWA university offered degrees only in the educational sciences. But the idea of abandoning his education seemed worse than abandoning his dreams of becoming an engineer. Rami applied, was accepted, and began his education.

Rami struggled during his first year at the university. The degree program was not what he desired, and it affected his plans for the future. Rami reflected, "I could easily say that it was the worst year of my life. I was extremely sad. I was studying something I didn't want to [study]. In the first semester, every weekend that I came back home, I told my parents that I was not going to return on Sunday." After the first year, Rami said he adjusted. The shift in his education was challenging, and it complicated his ability to envision where it might take him. Nonetheless, Rami endured. He worked hard in his classes and decided to pursue a degree in educational psychology, an uncertain move that did not fit into life as he imagined it but might bring him closer to a better future.

Rami eventually graduated from the UNRWA university. He then found a job working with a youth empowerment organization in Amman. Every day, Rami would take a combination of taxis and buses to reach the Jordanian capital for work. Then, after a long day, he would return to his family's home near the Gaza camp. It was a decent job, but Rami found it stifling. Despite the pay and opportunity to interact with foreigners, there was no upward mobility, and the work was unchallenging. For almost two years, Rami

again endured his new reality. It was not a final step for him, but he was unsure what he might do next. Without citizenship, he knew his work options were limited and that stable employment would not come easy. Most ex-Gazans work in the camp or temporarily in the cities. Rami wanted neither. After much deliberation, he decided to pursue a new path. In the camp, Rami met several foreigners working on youth programs. From them, he learned about a US organization that helps students apply for scholarships to attend American universities. Rami visited the organization and learned about the highly competitive Soros Foundation Scholarship. Although he believed his chances were slim, the potential outcome was worth the effort. Rami applied and, to his surprise, passed the first round of admissions. Encouraged by his success, Rami felt a glimmer of hope. Now more than ever, he thought his future could be better and, indeed, it got better. One night, while sitting with his friends in the Gaza camp, the email arrived: he was awarded the scholarship and would soon attend Washington University in St. Louis for a master's degree in social work.

The news of his award was a major transformation for Rami. It reinforced the idea that his hardships were not without significance. More specifically, it confirmed his belief that making a living from the position of the excluded requires effort, endurance, and experimentation. Faced with the limits of his status, Rami's success with the scholarship showed him that any opportunity was an opportunity worth taking. It might not be the one he desired. It might demand more from him than he was prepared to give. But, in the end, it was the struggle necessary for a people trapped in exile.

Conclusion

The conditions of refuge for ex-Gazan refugees are far from adequate for enduring exile. Legally included as foreign residents in Jordan, their status also presents a host of restrictions that make the possibility of life an extraordinary task. Denied the right to their homeland in Palestine and marginalized as noncitizens in Jordan, ex-Gazan refugees thus remain a liminal population (Kits 2005) living the experience of indefinite exile. While the hardships of their lives cannot be minimized, it is also not enough to characterize their situation as without possibilities. Ex-Gazan refugees throughout Jordan make diverse efforts to live while in exile. More specifically, ex-Gazan refugees demonstrate a significant capacity to endure their exclusion and constitute their own refuge in exile. This was visible in Shadi and Rami's accounts. Both struggled against their exclusions from work and education, and both described their struggles as evidence of their own capacity to endure and act. Through their endurance and striving, in other words, they

demonstrated their agential engagement with an exclusionary world and established a sense of living that could carry them through the difficulties of exile.

Much work in refugee studies has been done to highlight the agency of refugees (Allan 2013; Dunn 2018; Feldman 2018; Gabiam 2016; Malkki 1995; Peteet 2005; Ong 2003; Tang 2015). These are important contributions that challenge the depoliticized representation of refugees (Malkki 1996) and broaden our understandings of the meaning of refugee agency and politics. Whether in the "burdened agency" of Georgian refugees (Dunn 2018) or the "politics of living" among Palestinians under humanitarianism (Feldman 2018), the focus on what refugee communities do to endure and overcome marginalization and deprivation demonstrates the significance of a politics of survival. These are not practices formulated in the extraordinary conditions of widespread protest or mobilizations. They are, rather, the subtle workings of everyday efforts that refuse the limits of an exclusionary world and thus entail a political stance–that is, an effort to redefine or redirect certain outcomes or expectations (McGranahan 2016: 334). Operating within the everyday, these responses, however un/successful, reveal forms of agency grounded in survival that often exceed conventional frameworks for thinking about politics and constitute what Allan (2018: 100) has called the "minor politics" of the mundane.

Attentive to the politics of survival, my analysis demonstrates that the agency of ex-Gazan refugees inheres within the daily struggles to get by and, in some cases, thrive. While not dismissing the importance of organized resistance among refugees, I have tried to reveal how ex-Gazans can be agential in other ways. Indeed, in the context of fifty years of exclusion in Jordan, the very ability to endure conditions of deprivation and strive toward outcomes that exceed the limits of noncitizenship constitutes a critical form of refusal and thus agency. In this chapter, I have therefore taken ex-Gazans' assertion "we want to live" and used it to frame what I call "living as enduring." As a form of agency, this conception represents a way of thinking about how acts of living can secure a meaningful experience of refuge in the context of prolonged displacement. It offers an opportunity to consider what it takes–the demands, the efforts–for refugees suffering conditions of long-term displacement to endure their exclusion and achieve some measure of control over their lives.

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8

Reimagining "the Arab Way" in Exile

Futures "Off Line" among Syrian Men in Amman

Emilie Lund Mortensen

Introduction

The young Syrian men with whom I worked in the Jordanian capital of Amman imagined, dreamed of, and worked toward a safe return to the lives and places they used to inhabit, although this would be an impossible feat for most. For some, the houses they called home in Syria had been erased from the earth, leaving nothing and no one to return to. For others, the country they left had been transformed by ongoing warfare in ways that rendered it inaccessible and hostile. For all, their places of origin remained a reference point and haunted their present lives in Amman. But during the course of three years, from early 2016 to late 2018, new lives took shape among these young men in Amman. In this chapter, I attend to their gradual process of recognizing the contours of new lives and futures in exile.

Sara Ahmed (2006: 14) thinks of "lifelines" or simply "lines" as directing us and helping us find our way. A lifeline symbolizes a way of life and an expression of who we are (Ahmed 2006: 19). Hence, being "in line" is dwelling in the present while orienting oneself toward a particular and available future. Among my interlocutors, this way of inhabiting life was described as "normal," as "simple," and as "the Arab way." Importantly, to Ahmed (2006: 160), being forced off a particular lifeline may be disconcerting. Such "enforced unfollowing"–excluding one from a future that used to

be a given—may, however, reorient one toward other ways of leading a life. That which is "off line" thus holds the potential of opening up new worlds (Ahmed 2006: 19).

In the everyday of exile, the young men with whom I worked were struggling to "catch up with" life, as they put it, and to get back in line by means of particular "chances" appearing in the everyday. As this chapter explores, such "chances" were imagined to enable the "normal" lives to which they aspired to live, but "chances" also presented them with new perspectives and paths. Thus quite unexpectedly, in their daily yearnings for the "normal," I argue, they increasingly found themselves included in and reoriented toward other ways of living.

This argument has three parts. Following a brief outline of the situation among Syrian refugees in Jordan and my work in this particular context, I introduce the story of Hani as an ethnographic starting point for an initial exploration of the young Syrian men's notion of "the Arab way." Engaging further in Ahmed's (2006) theory on the lines that direct us, I propose to think of "the Arab way" as a particular lifeline shaped by social, historical, and political circumstances of Syrian society, and I demonstrate how "the Arab way" oriented Hani and the others in certain directions—for example, toward the masculine position as the family's breadwinner. In the second part of the chapter, I attend to the experience of being excluded from the masculine trajectories these young men used to take for granted and to their struggles to meet local social expectations related to proper manhood. In the third and final part of the chapter, I demonstrate how Hani and the others engaged in daily attempts to "catch chances," as they put it, to "catch up with life" and get "back in line." Such "chances," however, made it possible to engage in other ways of imagining a good life in the context of exile. For Hani, I argue, one such unexpected "chance" was to care for his mother in Amman.

Syrian Refugees in Jordan

Since 2011, the conflict in Syria has displaced the largest number of people in recent history. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), approximately 6.6 million people are currently internally displaced, while 5.6 million are estimated to have fled the country. A large number of these people now live in Jordan. In response, the Za'tari refugee camp was established in July 2012. As of November 2019, it hosts 76,143 registered refugees. In total, 654,681 Syrians have been registered as refugees in Jordan; along with large numbers of Palestinian, Yemini, and Iraqi refugees, this number makes Jordan the country with the second highest share of refugees per capita in the world (UNHCR 2019). This number is,

however, likely to be much higher, as Jordan is host to displaced Syrians who have not been officially registered as refugees by the UNHCR. Only an estimated 16 percent of the refugees in Jordan reside in camps such as Za'tari. The majority of refugees have settled in Jordan's rural areas close to the Syrian border or in and around the capital of Amman. Despite large numbers of refugees, Jordan does not have domestic legislation targeting refugees and has not signed the UN 1951 Convention on Refugees. Instead, the legal framework for the treatment of refugees is a 1998 Memorandum of Understanding signed between Jordan and the UNHCR, allowing the UNHCR to provide international protection to persons falling within its mandate. Displaced people registered as refugees by the UNHCR in Jordan receive cash assistance to help meet essential needs such as shelter and food. The memorandum provides that Jordan accept the definition of "refugee" contained in the 1951 Convention and, further, that Jordan accept that asylum seekers and refugees should receive treatment according to internationally accepted standards.

Methods and Interlocutors

During 2011 and 2012, the uprisings in Syria intensified, and life became increasingly dangerous for young men in Syria. At that time, many faced mandatory military service in the Syrian army, while others were under surveillance for being active in demonstrations in Syria's urban centers. Consequently, they were forced to flee their homeland and to seek refuge in the neighboring country of Jordan. For these reasons and many more, the names appearing in this chapter are pseudonyms.

Initially, Hani and the other young men with whom I worked assumed that they would have to stay in Jordan for just a short time, believing that the situation in Syria would soon improve. Weeks, however, turned into months, which turned into years, and with time Hani and my twenty-one other interlocutors began to think through a future in Amman. I found that these young men shared a particular imaginary of their futures, and this imaginary, they explained, was experienced in stark contrast to prospects of life in exile. In Syria, Hani and the others were parts of resourceful middle- or upper-middle-class families who expected them to become good and responsible young people with educations, jobs, and families. In the everyday of exile in Amman, however, it was difficult, if not impossible, to meet these expectations.

I spent a total of twelve months in Amman, during which I conducted ethnographic fieldwork for my PhD dissertation. In the spring of 2016, 2017, and 2018, I sought to understand how the experience of war and exile shapes possible ways of being in the world with others. In exploring this question,

I engaged in participant observation and semistructured interviews: I talked with the young men about their everyday lives, about the challenges they faced in Amman, and about the futures for which they persistently strived. The vast majority of the many interviews and conversations I conducted were recorded in English. As university students, eager to develop their chances of finding a job or a scholarship, these young people would often insist on speaking English with me as a way to practice their spoken language. As my spoken Arabic developed, our conversations would include a combination of English and Arabic expressions and phrases in order to nuance my understanding of their experiences, their lifeworlds, and their struggles in exile.

During my stays in Amman, I observed the young men's daily struggles to reimagine and enact futures as good men. In order to get a better sense of their experiences of, and struggles in, exile, I sometimes asked them to illustrate the future as they used to imagine it in Syria, as well as life as they experienced it in Amman. "Draw your future for me" or "draw a good life," I would ask sometimes, while at other times I asked them to illustrate the difference between life "before and after" the war. Illustrations of their lifelines in exile (for example, see figure 8.1) took shape and became the analytical starting point for considering exile as an enforced unfollowing, bringing one out of line with particular ways of life while making space for new ways of imagining a future.

Hani

During a conversation in Amman in early 2018, Hani reflected on his future prospects. Although his story is unique, it resonates with other stories I collected during fieldwork in Amman. "Ah, Emilia," Hani said, as he sighed and reached out for another cigarette. "We broke up yesterday. It's OK. Me and her decided together." We were silent, and I took a moment to observe people grocery shopping in the street below us. "You know, Emilia," Hani continued, "my heart is very weak. If my situation gets better, I will go to engage her. But in my situation, I can't, I really can't. Don't ask me how it feels. Please. It's hard. I cried yesterday. I don't want to cry again." He looked down. "If I am alone in Amman without my mother, my situation would be very different, you know," he mumbled, "If I was married now and I had a good job, I would start to think forward. I would have a plan for that. Not like my friend Firaz. I feel very sad for him. But what can I do, Emilia?" Hani rhetorically asked me.

I hardly said a word that entire evening. Hani spoke, only interrupted by brief moments of silence. Most of the time, he spoke about the girl he loved, about the circumstances surrounding their secret relationship, and about

the fact that it had now come to an end. The girl, whose name Hani never shared with me, had approached him the previous day and asked him when he was thinking about getting engaged. According to Hani, she wanted to take their relationship to the next level and involve their families. Caught off guard, Hani had no good answer: "I really don't know. I don't have anything," he had said, and, to Hani, it was the truth. At least he needed a better job—"so I can afford to have a wife," he explained through the smoke from his cigarette. "In my job now, I really can't. For instance, if we go walking, and she sees something in a shop or something, maybe I cannot buy it." He pointed to a window of a shop across the street and turned to talk about his friend, Firaz, who recently had a baby. Around the time of Firaz's engagement, Hani had advised his friend to keep his job, despite a ruthless boss, in order to take good care of his new family as a responsible husband. Compared to local standards, Firaz's salary was good. "I told him, 'Firaz, don't change your job. Keep your job. It's stable!'" Hani recounted. But Firaz quit and was unemployed for almost eighteen months. Hani shook his head and continued: "He sometimes calls me saying, 'Hani, I need money.' I give him money. Sometimes it's like two or three days before I have my salary, and I have maybe 25 Jordanian dinars [approximately US$35] left with me. I give him the half. But after that I tell him 'Firaz, find a job!'" Hani was far too familiar with his friend's situation to refuse such a request. "The guy is alone here; his family is in Syria. He married a Syrian girl here, but no one from his family could attend the wedding. They were present via WhatsApp and Skype. I know his situation," Hani explained and added, "He has no one."

As an only child, Hani was responsible for his mother in Amman. Upon their flight in 2013, it was not possible for an entire family to cross the border between Syria and Jordan. Consequently, Hani's father stayed behind in Hama and was meant to join soon after. But then the border closed, and Hani's father fell ill. He died in Hama in 2017. To support his mother and himself, Hani worked in a dental clinic twelve hours a day, six days a week. But the money was never enough, and Hani rarely had time or energy for any social activities after work. Worrying was tiring. Usually, he would watch a movie and smoke cigarettes as a way to empty his mind and ease his worries, he told me. That was why it was so nice to have a girlfriend. The two had met through Hani's mother when they were still new to Amman. For two years, they texted each other secretly, meeting in the staircase behind the houses. Although their respective families spent many hours together every day, none of the young people's family members knew of their love for each other. To me, it was clear that Hani cared about the girl, and he had often shared his worries about their future with me. The biggest frustration was that he did not have "any of the basics," as he put it—no savings, no education, no salary—in order to marry and care for his girlfriend or, for that matter, any other girl. Hani often talked about the need to "catch a chance,"

as he put it in English, in order to improve his situation and comfortably inhabit life "the Arab way." In the spring of 2018, however, Hani doubted that his situation would ever change and that he would ever be able to marry. "I don't have a future," he would say; "I don't have a good job to help me build my future. Here, I can't do anything."

Hani's situation resembled the situations of most of the Syrian men with whom I worked in Amman. Just like Hani, they struggled to thrive in exile and to support their families with what they could. Importantly, however, they were largely on their own in Amman. Their families were spread across the world: throughout Syria, Saudi Arabia, Germany, and Sudan, to mention just a few of the countries to which they had fled. But Hani was responsible for the wellbeing of his mother, who had fallen ill after the loss of her husband, and, in Amman, his everyday life was primarily structured around his responsibility to care for her. They lived together in a small apartment, and Hani did his best to spend time with his mother when he was not working. Her health made it difficult for her to leave the house; he made sure to do the grocery shopping and buy the things his mother needed. On Fridays, they usually had lunch together when Hani returned home from the Friday prayer at the local mosque.

"The Arab Way"

To Hani, "the Arab way" described what he perceived as a "normal" and fairly "simple" life. It was "simple" because it was not grandiose, and yet he was aware that it might not be accessible to all. It was, however, in his words, what "any young guy in Syria" expected from life, and what the majority of them had already planned for themselves. To Omar, another good friend and interlocutor of mine, "a house, a car, and a wife" comprised his own and "any other Syrian guy's biggest dream." Among these young men, "the Arab way" thus described the given, expected, and predictable lifeline among contemporary urban middle-class men in both Syria and the region at large, a well-trodden path, and a perceived temporally linear forward motion from childhood through different stages, to marriage, and to providing for a family. In their reflections on "the Arab way," these young men perceived themselves as belonging to both an imagined community of young Arab men and to a smaller community of Syrian male youth. They thus identified as simultaneously Arab and Syrian, collectively striving for a form of life that they described as "middle-class" or simply "normal" and that they found represented in local variations among peers across the region.

To Hani, a "normal" life was made up of stages leading him to the position as a father and head of a family (see Suerbaum 2018). A good job and

a stable income was a precondition for this. In order to reach such a necessary basis of, and for, a family, he had planned to become a nurse after the mandatory military service. He had also considered going abroad, maybe to the Gulf, in order to earn more money. But that was not a necessity; Syria would also suffice, and Hani in fact preferred to start a family with wife and children in Hama in close proximity to his parents. He was, after all, an only child and therefore socially obliged and expected to take good care of his parents (see Joseph 1993).

Exactly because of its inevitability, "the Arab way" was not of much concern to the young men in Syria. In fact, it was not until they arrived in exile in Jordan that they came to appreciate the "normal" lives they had previously taken for granted. As argued by Ahmed (2006), particular lifelines give one a certain direction and make some kinds of lives rather than others appear possible and desirable. She writes, "The direction we take excludes things for us, before we even get there" (Ahmed 2006: 15). Thus, when following certain lifelines, we are included in particular perspectives and excluded from others. I take "the Arab way" to be such a lifeline, followed by many and invested in by those who go along. With certain points of orientation, "the Arab way" directs attention and shapes the perspectives, bodies, and lives of its followers. Among the young men with whom I worked, following "the Arab way" was a way to live a "normal" life and thus to be comfortably in line with, and included in, particular social communities.

The Background: Lives Left Behind

Importantly, lifelines, as well as the points of orientation appearing on these, such as family and the masculine position as breadwinner, are shaped by particular political, social, and historical circumstances. Together, these can be thought of as the background on which something arrives and appears as given in the present (Ahmed 2006: 30). To Ahmed (2006: 37–8), a background is, in a sense, what explains the conditions of the emergence or arrival of something as the thing that it appears to be in the present: "The background would be understood as that which must take place in order for something to appear." Hence, in order to fully understand "the Arab way" as a particular imaginary of a "normal" and good life among contemporary middle-class youth from Syria, as described by my interlocutors, it should be located in the historical, political, and social context of Syrian society and the secular Arab socialist Baath Party, led by President Bashar al-Assad, who inherited the position after the passing of his father, Hafez al-Assad, in 2000.

As a result of educational policies undertaken by the regime in the 1960s, prewar Syria had a relatively well-educated labor force. Formulated as a "so-

cial contract," the population was guaranteed low food prices and a better educational system in return for loyalty and political disengagement (Sparre 2008: 6). Over time and during Hafez al-Assad's rule from 1970, the Baath Party developed into an instrument of political control and indoctrination, and all levels of the educational system were tightly controlled by the government, which used the classrooms as spaces of and for Baathist indoctrination (Cleveland and Bunton 2009: 401–403). As described by William Cleveland and Martin Bunton (2009), for all its restrictions on intellectual and political freedom, the Assad regime continued with social transformation through reform toward secular nationalism. Gender equality and equal access to education and employment were important ideological platforms for the Baath Party, and women were used as a symbol of the nation's development and modernization (Sparre 2008). However, as demonstrated by Sara Lei Sparre (2008), as a result of socioeconomic changes and the influence of an Islamic discourse in both public and private sectors of Syrian society, from the 1990s the official discourse on gender roles changed. Now, women were portrayed in the roles as mothers and housewives with references to an Islamic moral code (Sparre 2008: 8–9). During this period of time, Islam thus became an important social and ideological discourse in Syria, shaping local notions of gender roles.

To Hani and his peers, "responsibility" in English, or "*mas'ūliyya*" in Arabic, was an important and defining aspect of manhood. Responsibility was understood as the ability to take care of themselves by not relying financially on their families, but more importantly by the capabilities, emotionally as well as financially, of taking care of a wife and a family. To them, one was only really a man when one was a "responsible" provider. A proper man was thus defined not in terms of independence but in terms of the ability to respond to social expectations and to provide for loved ones (see Ghannam 2013; Naguib 2015). Hani, as well as the other young men with whom I worked, grew up in Syria during the 1990s and early 2000s, and their notions of a good life and of proper manhood have been shaped by, among other things, the Islamic discourse positioning women in the homes and men as providers. Exemplified with Hani's reflections in the ethnographic vignette above, their gendered notion of "the Arab way" reflects this orientation toward the position of responsible family breadwinner.

The imaginary of a masculine trajectory is, as suggested above, found in local variations among people in the Middle East, where young men are expected to become responsible, serious, and productive in their mid-twenties (Ghannam 2013, 71). In the context of recent war, political unrest, and financial downfall, others describe how young men across the region are struggling to meet social expectations to marry and to create stable lives with families of their own (see, e.g., Schielke 2015).

Off Line

Hani's experience demonstrates the specific emotional, financial, and social struggles of being excluded from a previously accessible and given lifeline. For Hani and others, this experience of exile also existed in relation to the formation of the masculine self. To Hani, a "normal" life now belonged to a different time and place. In the everyday of exile, he expressed his frustrations from being forced off "the Arab way" in temporal terms as being "delayed in life," in spatial terms as being "out of place," and in existential terms as "not having a future." Ahmed (2006: 21) writes, "For a life to count as a good life, then it must return the debt of its life by taking on the direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one's futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course." For Hani and other young men I met, failing to inhabit local social norms and expectations related to proper manhood, such as responsibility, breadwinning, and fatherhood, constitutes a threat to their standing as good men. As demonstrated above, Hani knew that he was incapable of providing a future wife with a good level of material comfort and wellbeing in exile, as it was otherwise expected. Such failure to inhabit the masculine role of breadwinner would be judged negatively by others as a sign of irresponsibility. Hani was well aware of this–he had seen how his friend Firaz had suffered–and, for those reasons, Hani declined to pursue his relationship with his girlfriend. In Amman, love was not enough to make him a proper man. As long as he could not provide for both his mother and a wife, a romantic relationship could, if anything, only remain a "nice" but futureless secret between the two.

"Chances"

However, in attempts to "catch up with life" and once again follow the direction promised as a social good, Hani worked hard to "catch chances." Such "chances," he imagined, could eventually bring him back in line. As perceived openings toward a specific imaginary of the future, "chances" simultaneously pointed backward in time to what existed and forward to what was desired. In the everyday, "chances" sometimes appeared in unanticipated and unexpected forms, while at other times came about as the result of hard work. The kinds of "chances" Hani was drawn to took various forms, but perceived "good chances" often came in the shape of a potential job, a scholarship, or a meeting with a Danish anthropologist. In and of itself, however, a new job did not bring the individual young man back in line but was imagined to be a "step on the way" toward "the Arab way." In either form, "chances" needed attuned presence and awareness in order to be "caught," and although "chances" were imagined to direct the

young men back into line, the outcome of "taking a chance" could not be predicted.

Exactly because the outcome of particular "chances" could not be predicted, a "chance" sometimes brought the young men to an unexpected end. It was as if individual "chances" disclosed a range of potential futures to Hani and the others. Whenever Hani was engaged in an attempt to "catch" a particular chance, he was also engaged in imagining a particular future, a future that was not always akin to "the Arab way." Recently, he had engaged in the idea of applying for resettlement for him and his mother in Germany. He thought that a fresh start in a new place might bring about a better future. In exile, life thus took on an open-ended form, and, with time and by "chance," other ways of leading a life slowly took shape in Amman.

Care

In Hani's daily life, the care that he provided for his mother and that he at times experienced as an obstacle to life "the Arab way" in fact constituted another "chance" for him to position himself as a responsible young man. The experience of exile had taught Hani that life does not unfold in stages or along a straight line, at least not any longer. Instead, it includes detours, unpredictability, and "options." The life that brought Hani "out of Syria" and toward "building a life" in Amman led to an undefined future.

"Depending on which way one turns," Ahmed (2006: 15) writes, "different worlds might even come into view." Being off the line in exile had provided Hani with a different perspective on life. But despite the fact that particular lives were lost in Syria, exile was, perhaps surprisingly, related to important personal gain for Hani. Exile had forced him to explore himself in different ways and to "adapt" to his new life in Amman. As he illustrated in his sketch (see figure 8.1), his life in exile was comprised of untrodden paths and open endings, but, most importantly, it was structured around his mother. Here, he had, in his own words, become "mature" and "grown-up" in unexpected ways, and Hani thus experienced becoming more responsible after all. Although his future looked vastly uncertain in the spring of 2018, he considered himself a better and stronger young man who managed to take good care of his mother. In exile, Hani and his mother shared an everyday life. Hani worked in order to secure money for rent, groceries, and his mother's medicine. But he provided much more for his mother than financial stability. He kept her company, took her to the hospital, and shared her worries. Hani was well aware that he was the only person left to care for his mother and that she was part of any future he engaged in.

In her work on care and masculinity, Farha Ghannam (2013: 86) demonstrates the powerful role of women in the making of a proper man. From a
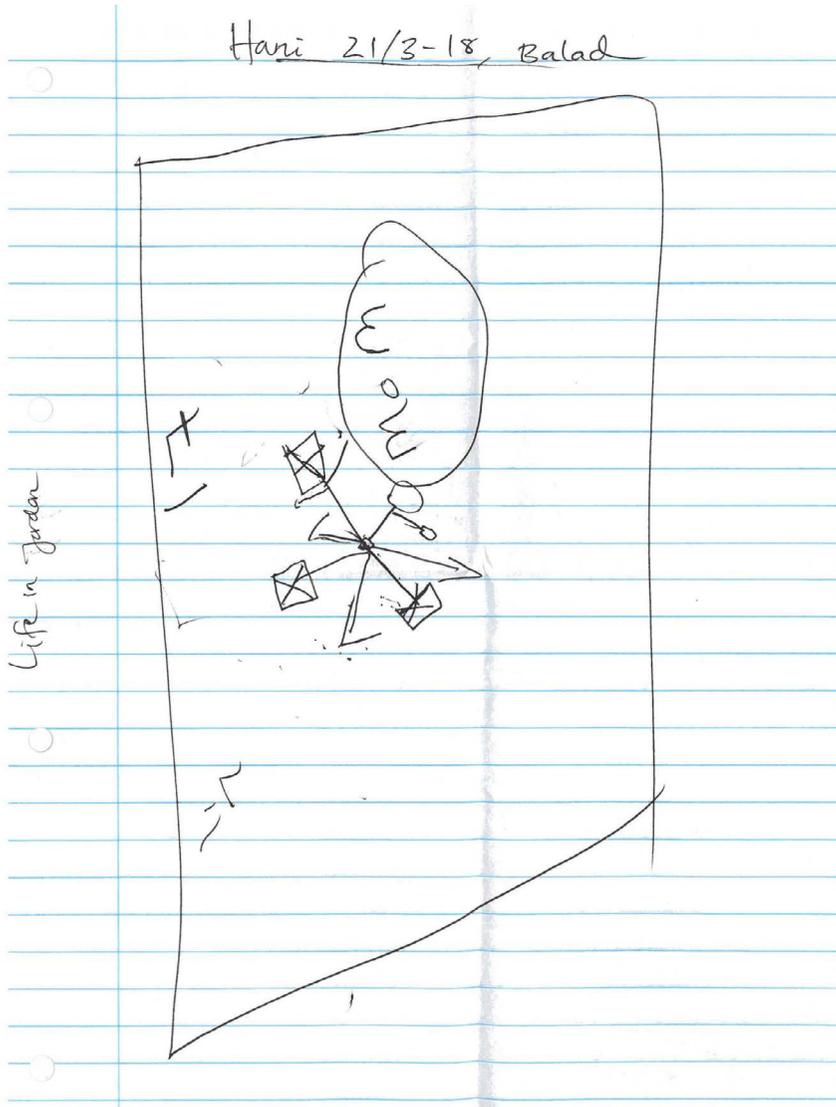
Figure 8.1. Hani's Drawing of His Life in Jordan, March 2018, Amman.
Reproduced with permission.

young age, boys and young men are supported to materialize the norms that
define masculine identifications by their mothers. Running daily errands
outside the home is just one way young boys are taught to act as providers
for their families (Ghannam 2013: 130). Thus extending the notion of care
to include men's labor and work outside the home, Ghannam (2013: 133)

argues that labor is a gendered form of care, as work often is motivated by a desire or a burden to provide for loved ones. I suggest that the daily care Hani provided for his mother in the everyday of exile enabled him to inhabit the role of provider, ultimately positioning him as a good and responsible man. In his everyday life, specific forms of care labor stood in the way of engaging in a romantic future with his then girlfriend and for becoming a good man according to "the Arab way," but care simultaneously made the formation of a responsible masculine self possible in exile. Although Hani's future was still unknown, his mother certainly belonged to it; in fact, Hani was no one without her.

Conclusion

Focusing particularly on forced displacement among a group of young Syrian middle-class refugee men living in Amman, this chapter provides an ethnographically grounded perspective on the experience of being excluded from a certain way of life, locally referred to as "the Arab way." In exile, Hani felt "off line," an experience that caused both great frustration as well as daily attempts to get back "in line" by "catching chances." Hani was, as he put it, "looking for all options." But being engaged in attempts to catching various "chances" did not direct Hani back in line. Rather, encountering a number of different "chances" in the everyday of exile gave life an unsettled and open character, offering a range of potential new directions (see also Suerbaum 2017, 2018). Exactly because the experience of exile constitutes an enforced unfollowing, in a spatial, existential, and temporal sense, unexpectedly excluding people from a particular lifeline, it provided Hani with a different perspective on the future and made him sensitive to other ways of living. Off line, I argue, there is thus space for imagining and including oneself in alternative masculine futures.

One such future was provided by an obligation to care. In the everyday of exile in Amman, the responsibility Hani had to care for his mother was an obstacle to, and in a sense excluded him from, living according to "the Arab way." Care thus offered Hani an opportunity to become a good and responsible young man after all. He did not have a wife in exile, but he had a mother to whom he was the responsible breadwinner. In the context of their household in Amman, he was thus the caretaker, practicing the masculine role of provider. But life was difficult in exile, and Hani was continuously looking out for "chances" to improve the situation for himself and his mother. In the fall of 2019, a "chance" to resettle in Europe emerged, and his life took yet another unexpected turn. With his mother, he moved to Germany, where they once more faced the difficult task of having to reimagine the future.

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9

Proactive Reciprocity

Educational Trajectories Reclaimed through Patterns of Care among Refugee Men in Greece

Árdís K. Ingvars

Introduction

Abdul and I sat together on a bench, struggling to make sense of our teacher, Demetra. "Do you understand what she is saying?" Abdul whispered. I shook my head and replied, "Not really." Abdul looked around the class and then leaned toward me again: "I don't think the others do, either." Demetra was relying on her native tongue and pedagogical expertise to teach Modern Greek to students of various ages, ethnicities, genders, and educational backgrounds. Despite her efforts, she faced a difficult task. "Teacher, can you explain in English?" Abdul spoke up. He was in his forties and, before the Syrian war, had obtained a degree in English literature. "*Mathaínoume Elliniká, opóte miláme Elliniká* [We are learning Greek, so we speak Greek]" Demetra replied. "I don't mean to be disrespectful, but I don't understand," Abdul continued, "and neither do the other students." Demetra sighed, then went on: "Not all students here speak English. I am sorry, but I also don't speak much English. Maybe Nikki can help." Nikki, a young Greek-Kenyan woman, was volunteering with Demetra. She sat down next to us and some students transferred to our spot. "*Entáxei, paidiá as páme* [Okay, kids let's go on]," Demetra affectionately continued.

This scene is rewritten from my field notes transcribed in November 2014 to capture the negotiation of reciprocity and autonomy within the multilingual encounters that commonly occurred in the solidarity center, Kentro, in

Athens, where I was anchored during my fieldwork. Kentro (a pseudonym) was a grassroots initiative founded in the 1990s by activists to create solidarity between workers, immigrants, and refugees. Its ideology was based on anti-capitalism and anti-authoritarianism and was grounded in respect and empathy for each human being. This was not without some friction and bridging dialogues, as the vignette depicts, but the horizontal practices were a continuous endeavor. Since the initiative's founding, members have offered free Greek language lessons. With the increase of refugees and other migrants in Greece, and after the economic crisis began in 2009, the irregular students began to request other European language classes, as they aspired toward social and economic mobility elsewhere.

In 2015 and 2016, when close to one million refugees traveled through Greece, education became one of the prevailing themes in refugees' struggles (Rezaian, Daskalaki, and Apostolidou 2019). The focus of government programs and refugees themselves was on children's education, but as access to higher education was limited to people with local citizenship or official refugee status, young men stuck within the limbo of acquiring legitimacy as refugees through state approval sought unconventional routes to advance themselves. Therefore, some sought free education among solidarity activists, which by that time included volunteers from all over the world. However, as the men in this study interacted with the activists, they encountered an absence of knowledge about their own languages, politics, history, and habits. By becoming proactive in the ideology of reciprocity that prevailed within the initiative, the men began to reconfigure knowledge production by teaching their own classes, highlighting the diversity of their home communities, and sharing their expertise with arriving refugees and volunteers. As a result, they engaged in transnational solidarity networks and increased their opportunities for the future.

In this chapter, "proactive reciprocity" is introduced as a term to illustrate how the men engaged with their own subalteration in an inclusive social setting. It is important to bear in mind that male refugeeness is a fractured and morphed existence (Peteet 2005), impacted by class position, securitization, and humanitarian engagement (Amar 2011; Griffiths 2015; Suerbaum 2018; Turner 2019). Thus, refugees' masculinities are formed through various interactive patterns. By proactively claiming their masculine autonomy by means of a reciprocity that disseminates individual authority, the men in this study reinstate themselves, not simply as men, but as reciprocal and autonomous human beings.

Methods

The findings presented in this chapter are based on ethnographic research conducted in Greece over twenty-two months between 2012 and 2015, and

during ongoing visits until 2018. Alongside field notes, I documented conversations with 103 men between the ages of eighteen and fifty from Middle Eastern, South Asian, and sub-Saharan countries, including thirty-two in-depth interviews. The conversations tended to oscillate between English and Greek. However, few interviews included a translator, occasionally provided by the men using mobile technologies (see Ingvars 2019a: 44–45). Most chose their own pseudonyms, based on role models or heroic figures from childhood. My interlocutors' religious alignments varied, with most being Muslims. Few were devout, most were religiously skeptical, and several were atheists. They had experienced diverse persecutions–economic segregation, xenophobia, homophobia, gang violence, and civil and international wars–dire enough to seek refuge in another country. Many of them aligned with a resistant refugee identity but also struggled with the restriction of movement enlaced within the asylum procedure and refugee status, which inhibited them from visiting their family members but offered other trajectories. As such, they negotiated their identities and modified the legal categories that the Greek state assigned them–for example, by enhancing the image of autonomous wanderer. I apply the term "(im)mobile men" (Ingvars 2019b) to capture their desires for mobility and struggles against the restrictions applied by European states. As part of my fieldwork, I studied Greek and taught English at Kentro. Thus, to many of my interlocutors, I was both a teacher and their fellow classmate. This created a bond through which we assisted each other with languages, shared humorous thoughts, and exchanged knowledge and criticism about our cultural habits, economics, and politics. The findings presented here are drawn from those conversations, as well as from the interviews.

The Terms of Autonomy among (Im)mobile Men

Several studies have shown that men in refugee trajectories are stigmatized and shamed through images of terrorism, hypersexuality, immorality, and laziness (see Griffiths 2015). Personnel within state policymaking, border control, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been prone to dispute or disdain the men's vulnerability (Ticktin 2006; Turner 2019). Therefore, (im)mobile men tend to be in a contradictory situation because voicing their grievances or fighting marginalization can increase their stigmatization either way. That said, men in migration have the propensity to mold a cultural blending of masculinities, by which they negotiate their desires for success in a new environment, the stereotypes of themselves that they encounter in that environment, and expectations from their home communities (Howson 2014). In a similar manner, (im)mobile men assess their vulnerability and empowerment strategies in relation to temporal, geo-

graphical, technical, and economic changes occurring in the world (Ingvars and Gíslason 2018). In other words, to cite the theories of Arjun Appadurai (1996), they reconcile aspirational desires in relation to the terms of recognition available to them.

The men in this study described how ascendant structures, such as educational routes, in their home countries had collapsed, been rescinded, or been barred, apart from the military. Thus, they expressed the desire to improve or retain their economic situation by networking, expanding their language skills, and gaining access to higher education or vocational training. In doing so, they hoped to improve their own positions as well as the prospects of their family members by sending remittances, and to use their acquired knowledge to improve the situations of other refugees. In this, they reflected studies that indicate that inclusive pedagogy, family care, and resistance to educational segregation are influential among men from Muslim societies (Crea 2016; Grewal and Coolidge 2013; Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 2018). Moreover, they exemplified a caring masculinity, which scholars, following Marcia Inhorn's (2012) theory of emergent masculinities, have demonstrated is rising among Muslim men (Naguib 2015; Palivos 2018). One of the aspects defining emergent masculinity is transgressing formerly restrictive masculine roles by nurturing interdependent relationships. As such, whatever their religious or political alignment, the men in this study demonstrated the desire to control their own futures, but without a moral code of caring, empathizing, and understanding the human dignity of others. To follow the Kantian understanding of autonomy (Kamm 2008), they used knowledge to be critical of authority, while embracing the core value of care. This became the pathway of an active manhood in a life of precarity in Greece.

Julie Peteet (2005) demonstrated that refugee manhood, as a social construct, is impacted by the men's fractured and locational experiences of statelessness. Her work, furthermore, shows that the ideal manhood, which can be morphed as subjectification, becomes valorized through moral distinctions and gendered support in the men's social surroundings. Calling out such interactive patterns, Paul Amar (2011) appealed to Middle Eastern scholars to focus on how masculinities are formed in nuanced relation to the neoliberal human security states, where the practice of a gendered shame is shaped to maintain the postcolonial civilized/uncivilized binary. Therefore, refugee men's masculinities must be deconstructed in a way that refrains from reproducing the crisis/savior mode.

Studies conducted in the last decade tend to highlight Syrian men's experiences of sudden statelessness, loss of class status, and masculine transformations in relation to local settings and shifting global politics (Ingvars and Gíslason 2018; Suerbaum 2018; Turner 2019). However, studies have also emerged that show how refugee men may carry with them other forms of

fractured identities due to factors such as disabilities (Muhanna-Matar 2020), queerness (Tschalaer 2020), or ethnic duality (Farahani and Thapar-Björkert 2020). Collectively, these studies draw attention to the multiple ways fractured refugee masculinity is negotiated in nuanced relation to locational and temporal settings.

It has been documented that refugees in the Global North are expected to comply with images of a childlike being, compliant with local regulations and not engaging with civil rights movements (Cabot 2014; Fassin 2010; Ticktin 2006). Katerina Rozakou (2012) has shown how this occurs in Greece through the rhetoric of hospitality. Greek citizens have faced their own stigmatization, most recently as the blame for the "refugee crisis" was diverted to the "incurability" of the Greek people (Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris 2018). However, the Greek state and NGOs located in Greece are instructed through financial assistance from members of other European states to restrict and accommodate the refugee population, and thus the benevolent factor is contingent. Rozakou (2012: 568–71) has demonstrated that this hierarchical structure has been both resisted and assimilated, as grassroots members refused conditional aid, and members of local NGOs referred to refugees as "worthy guests," thus invoking local rules of conduct toward guests. Reflecting the discourse all over Europe, worthier guests tend to be the ones perceived as eligible refugees. For example, more effort has been expended by the Greek state to provide credited education to people with refugee status than to those still waiting in camps or on the streets. Access for NGOs to provide education to children in camps has even been restricted (Rezaian, Daskalaki, and Apostolidou 2019: 6). Men in this study generally referred to camps as prisons, and some had even been detained as asylum seekers in penal institutions. However, since the European Court of Human Rights ruled the situation for asylum seekers in Greece unacceptable in 2013, some amendments have been made. Therefore, facilities for refugees have included open and closed structures, and some refugees have lived in occupied houses with considerable freedom of movement (Tsavdaroglou 2018). Whether in closed-off camps or occupied spaces, women tend to have less freedom to seek education outside of their locations due to restrictions from their families and harassment from other refugee men (Rezaian, Daskalaki, and Apostolidou 2019: 165). Some men in this study acknowledged this gendered privilege and therefore designated their remittances for their sisters to attend school and offered female fellow students protection on their way home. Yet, the men were in severe danger as they moved on the city streets due to violent harassment from the police officers, mafia members, and supporters of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party. As such, they would put themselves at considerable risk just to show up for classes, particularly at Kentro, which was located within Exarchia, an area often associated with anarchism and heavily surveilled by the police.

Understanding the irregular students' dilemma, as well as their economic precarity and unreliable working hours, Kentro aimed the language classes toward different levels of competency and designed the structure to accommodate fluctuating attendance. In this way, the autonomy of the student was at the forefront of the teaching methods, even if this meant slowing the overall progress. Measured against Marcel Mauss's ([1924] 1990) theories of the gift, the teaching was presented as unconditional, so that each person could contribute to the movement on their own terms. That said, there was subtle encouragement for the students to comply with the norms of the initiative and even with larger cultural norms. For example, in the opening vignette, Abdul's suggestions are sidelined in favor of the teacher-student hierarchy and the dominance of the local language.

By drawing out the classroom as an example, I emphasize the deconstruction of hierarchy within refugees' environments, as underlying structures can either restrict or support refugees' negotiations of autonomy. Furthermore, it is relevant to comprehend the previous negotiations refugees have faced on their trajectories as these inform their paths of reclaimed autonomy, skills, and practices of care. Therefore, I start by examining the men's work environments prior to entering Kentro.

"I Speak Them All": The Purpose of Languages within Refugee Trajectories

After the economic crisis hit Greece in 2009–10, it was difficult for (im)mobile men to find work, and, even if they did, it was mostly seasonal, in either agriculture or tourism. Therefore, knowing many languages was perceived as an asset. Evraz, an Iraqi-Kurd, said, "After one year I speak Arabic, another year Farsi, another year Greek! I know many languages. And Kurdish! Sometimes I am speaking four languages at the same time, with different customers. No problem, whatever you want!"

Evraz was describing how he learned many languages as a refugee en route to Greece and used them in his current employment. Then he went on to say, "No matter how many languages you speak, it is not enough. It is not enough." Thus, Evraz's words portray a theme prevalent in this study, where the men emphasized their capabilities regarding languages, while recognizing that the locals would continually perceive them as strangers under scrutiny (or *xenos*, to use the Greek term). Therefore, knowledge alone was not able to provide them a sense of safety. Much as Heath Cabot (2014: 69–70) previously demonstrated, the men in this study had to negotiate the meaning of their legal documents, as they tended to be met with skepticism and variable interpretation of their papers by the public and personnel of the

state. As Evraz recounts, for example, they needed both an AMKA (social security number) and an AFM (tax number) to sign a work contract. These same documents were also needed to establish a legally recognized address. However, to get these identification documents, they needed to provide a proof of address, and citizen services' personnel sometimes refused to accept the documents they provided. As such, the men were highly reliant on their employers' lax enforcement of these rules while the papers were inserted in the bureaucratic roundabout. This black-market environment increased the men's anxieties, and they often described working under extremely harsh conditions (Ingvars 2019b). Such experiences were not limited to Greece, as most of the men in this study had resided temporarily in other countries, where they described minimal opportunities and structural discrimination. Situated within such precarities, the men stated that they had to rely on their learning skills while developing relationships with their employers, some of whom were violent. Within such working conditions, the men elaborated on performing their knowledge, much as Magdalena Suerbaum (2018) showed Syrian refugee men in Egypt stating their economic value. As such, while the men in this study sought to impress their employers, they were also demonstrating a desire for autonomy over their precarious existence.

Despite their resilience, the men described this precarity as wearing them down. They also illustrated how everyday routes in Athens were riddled with demeaning encounters. For example, Moses from Togo described being confronted with people making the sign of the cross and/or changing seats when seeing him on public transit. Then he went on to say, "Some Greek people just think: 'Those people are from a poor country, or maybe they are from Africa; they are from Asia, and they are not educated.'" Recalling such encounters, the men reflected that racism arose from lack of education and fear of the unknown. Thus, they would depict racist people as stuck within the prisons of their minds, while relating that such environments made them feel trapped in their own bodies and minds. Countering such mental prisons, however, they believed that people who sought to keep an open mind, to seek knowledge even if they were not formally educated, were good human beings. As such, besides learning more languages, there were several reasons for the men to seek refuge at Kentro.

Language schools providing evening seminars are common in Athens. Alongside private lessons, these schools offer additional opportunities for locals to increase their prospects for employment or higher education abroad (Tsikalaki and Kokkinou 2016). Such seminars were too costly for the men in this study, and thus they discussed finding lessons within humanitarian NGOs and grassroots initiatives. Participation in several different communities was not uncommon, and reasons for attending social centers were various. Jung Fan, a Hazara-Afghan, explained:

People come to know what Kentro is, or they need some help, or like to stay here. 'Cause there are people who have been here a long time, and they just know it is a good place, that they can have fun here. Then they find something to do also. There are people that don't do the work [demonstrations and acts of solidarity] we do here, but I think it is a kind of being in the imprisonment of own self-importance. So, I don't know, for everyone the reason is different . . . . I can say that people are coming to find a girlfriend, why not!

Men sought out social spaces of solidarity for diverse reasons. Some needed a place to relax, meet people, and network toward employment. Those who experienced Kentro as a sanctuary would describe it as a place where they felt free from surveillance, where the demands of docility were lifted, and as a place with caring and open-minded people. Abdul, the literature scholar, shared his impressions:

I am open-minded. I have talked so far to three young men in this community. They are all like angels . . . . They are so polite, so helpful, so educated, so rich in personality, and they are good people to be with . . . . Religion tells you how to be a good person, but education can do the same. Knowledge teaches you to be good, that it matters how you treat other people.

Abdul's words emphasize kindness as one of the fundamental attributes in a moral person. Thus, while education was important, caring was a central compass for evaluating morality. In this way, limited access to educational routes could be complemented by caring and respect. Kindness, laced with the desire to learn, was a way out of the madness of the mind. Moreover, the men were provided the freedom to contribute to the initiative on their own terms. Activism entwined with the discourse of human rights became one of the trajectories for performing a locally respectable masculinity (Rozakou 2016). Kentro provided an environment where the men could more easily assert their autonomy and renegotiate the value of knowledge as a gift of reciprocity.

Reconstructed Knowledge and Inclusive Pedagogy

Inclusive activism gained respect as a trajectory for refugee men in Greece after thirteen Syrian men instigated a peaceful sit-in in the winter of 2014. This occurred at a time when the Greek population was rallying against the austerity measures imposed on the country by the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, and the two struggles often merged in their chanting outside the parliament. The Syrian organizers, furthermore, used their educations to familiarize themselves with the political landscape and allied with Kentro members in emphasizing practices of care, dignity, and democracy (Ingvars and Gíslason 2018). This resulted,

for a while, in more empathy toward and knowledge of refugee struggles among the local population.

After the Syrians' "fast-track" procedures for refugee status recognition on humanitarian grounds were accepted by the Greek government, some resentment arose among other ethnic men, as most of them had been waiting over a decade for that same recognition. However, the Syrians aimed to show solidarity with other (im)mobile men as well. For example, in February 2015, a memorial walk was organized by refugee solidarians in honor of Luqman Shahzad, a Pakistani man who was killed by Golden Dawn members in 2014. Presented in the memorial walk were several banners displaying the refugees' demands in Greek, English, Farsi, and Arabic. This marked a trend of displaying multiple languages on banners as the refugees sought to reach wider audiences. Moreover, this elicited a shift in the hierarchies of knowledge production; when the numbers of refugees and volunteers increased in Greece, the previously arrived men assumed the roles of teachers in grassroots-oriented spaces. In this way there was a merging of activism and inclusive pedagogy toward the newcomers. For instance, participants in the classrooms could use multiple languages and experiences to contribute to the lessons in Kentro while aligning with the solidarity ideology.

For example, Mohmmad (without an "a") was one of the organizers of the sit-in, and he and I jointly taught an English class in 2015. Before the war in Syria, Mohmmad had been learning to become a medical doctor, and during his undergraduate studies he became involved in activism, which led him to become a refugee. He was well versed in human rights law but deeply disappointed in human rights for refugees in Europe. We often discussed and exchanged articles on the issue. Inspired by our discussion, we made human rights the topic for our class one night in March. The English rhetoric, however, proved problematic for one student, Panos, an elderly Greek poet. "*Den katalavaíno, eínai polý dýskolo* [I don't understand. This is very difficult]," Panos claimed. Lee, a classmate from Afghanistan, stood up and sat next to Panos, saying, "I will help," and began to explain to Panos in Greek. Lee had spent some time in Britain before his deportation to Greece, so he already knew some English, and while he struggled to return to London, he had become fluent in Greek. Thus, he could use his knowledge to assist us and Panos. "*Eucharistó file mou, eucharistó polý* [Thank you, my friend, thank you very much]" Panos said. "*Na 'ste kalá*" Lee replied, using an old Greek saying that means "May everything be good for you/in your life," but was often understood by the men in this study as "this is the right and good thing to do." As such, Lee merged cultural morality, both Greek and Afghan (Palivos 2018), with Kentro's horizontal practices, as caring for a fellow human being was the right thing to do.

In this way, the men displayed an inclusive pedagogy that corresponded with the horizontal ideology prevalent within the social center. Furthermore,

they exhibited being moral men who, while seeking aspiration through knowledge, also engaged in reciprocity, giving back and forth their acquired knowledge. Thus, they defied their former terms of recognition (Appadurai 1996) in Greece and, by merging activism with solidarity practices, were able to assert more autonomy in their everyday existence. They transformed their lives so that their sufferings would lead to an existence of significant kindness (Fassin 2010; Naguib 2015). They would also go on to transform the value of the knowledge by instigating new classes, schools, and informational programs, not only for recently arrived refugees but for the volunteers as well.

Proactive Reciprocity

The increase of volunteers in Athens, such as students, activists and other NGO members, was both appreciated and resisted among the locals. On the one hand, volunteers could transmit awareness of refugee struggles to other parts of Europe, as noted before. On the other hand, local activists resisted some of the power dynamics brought in by new volunteers, such as aligning humanitarian practices with capitalist measures and requiring English to be set within communication channels. Among the (im)mobile men, however, the concern about volunteers, both local and foreign, was their inadequate knowledge about refugees' cultural, political, and social backgrounds, much as Tom, an Iraqi-Kurd, pointed out:

> There was the man who wanted to help the Afghans, but he brought pork. They do not eat pork. People who want to help refugees must be prepared. To know what they carry, and slowly explain to them what we do here. But suddenly, a lot of people are coming from a country where they have not been informed what is happening. It will be big mess. (Translated from Greek)

While other (im)mobile men pointed out that some refugees did eat pork, as not all of them were Muslim, Tom's words reflected the previous concern about the lack of knowledge creating fear in the minds of locals. Moreover, there was concern that people of various nationalities, influenced by different sets of exotic Othering and political agendas would recreate negative images of refugees due to misunderstandings. However, within the initiative, the (im)mobile men had the space to become proactive.

Therefore, in due course, many of the men purveyed their roles as activists into employment of sorts. Some, such as Lee, became cultural mediators between newly arrived refugees and NGO volunteers/academics. Others began to teach Arabic in various settlements. A few, like Jun-fan, started solidarity education elsewhere; currently, there are several such schools in Athens supported through transnational networks (Giovanopoulos, Athanasiadi, and Dalakoglou 2019). One or two, such as Fred, delved

into knowledge of the body by becoming dance instructors or actors. Lastly, some of the men organized events that provoked the acquired or absent knowledge of volunteers. For instance, four gay men—two volunteers and two refugees—collectively initiated screenings of films they considered informative for group members, and hosted discussions afterward. Thus, on a warm summer night in 2016, I listened to Marco, a Syrian-Palestinian queer refugee, outlining the important scenes of an old film about Al Nakba, the catastrophe that occurred in 1948 when the first Palestinians were forced to become refugees. Afterward, he expressed how he thought it was important to bring forth this knowledge, so the solidarians could better comprehend stories of resistance retold within many Middle Eastern families against the occupation by Israel and Western allies. Thus, Marco responded to the absence of knowledge by filling the void and speaking his own truth.

Marco's actions also speak of intertwining a fractured refugee masculinity with a collective resistance to benevolent management (Turner 2019) and gendered shaming of Middle Eastern men as inherently violent (Amir 2011; Muhanna-Matar 2020). As such, sharing knowledge was an effort to reframe the perceptions of the "benevolent" volunteers so that they felt a more nuanced solidarity with Middle Eastern activists. Therefore, I believe that implementing new knowledge, alongside the use of the solidarity space to form a caring occupation, speaks less of resubjugating hierarchies (Suerbaum 2018), and more of morphing masculinities in ways that mitigate gendered, ethnic, and class hierarchies.

Conclusion

The practices illustrated in this chapter indicate that the (im)mobile men at Kentro became proactive agents in two ways. First, they resisted the state definitions and confinement of refugees. Second, they renegotiated their positions within the solidarity as they disrupted the classroom hierarchies by inserting their own experiences, knowledge, and languages into the activist environment. Moreover, they were reciprocal within knowledge production through practices of care. This they did by teaching and learning through inclusive pedagogical approaches and by contributing knowledge to the local culture. This rewrites the narrative of undeserving or pitiful refugees and demonstrates how refugees can contribute as equal members of their communities.

In this way, the men in this study also forged new futures for themselves. Though not applicable to all, many aligned the trajectories unfolding within activists' spaces to create respectable roles for exiled men, whether or not they were recognized as refugees by the state. These trajectories included open resistance to confinement and poverty; central practices of care across

ethnicities, ages, genders, and sexual orientations; and employment directed toward building an equal society. Thus, (im)mobile men could assert their autonomy by anchoring the value of care while becoming proactive within the ideological spaces of reciprocity.

Proactive reciprocity should be understood as men forming masculinities that claim recognition as informative and interactive citizens, with a nuanced power interplay embedded within masculine autonomy, at the same time resisting benevolence in order to highlight the voices of the diversified subaltern. Proactive reciprocity must, however, be deconstructed in relation to specific locations, temporal moments in geographical history, and the fluidity of political landscapes. The proactive measures these men were able to assert were in many ways conditional on the ideology prevalent within the grassroots communities and the welcoming atmosphere for refugees at the time. These landscapes change swiftly; therefore, we must continue to explore how refugees enact their agency of knowledge over time, refusing to let discriminating structures or benevolent forces determine their fate.

Acknowledgments

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Part IV

Seeking Health

10

America's Wars and Iraqis' Lives

Toxic Legacies, Refugee Vulnerabilities, and Regimes of Exclusion in the United States

Marcia C. Inhorn

Introduction

I begin this chapter with an argument–namely, that America has failed in its moral duty to assist those whose lives it has destroyed through its own wars in the Middle East.[1] Focusing on Iraq, this chapter shows how America's two wars there have had a shattering effect not only for Iraqis who remain in the country, but also for those who have fled. In America today, few people connect the current Middle Eastern refugee crisis to the United States' military interventions in Iraq. In the United States, memories of war have faded, and the refugee crisis seems distant. Thus, my main goal in this chapter is to rekindle this moribund history of these American wars and to link them directly to Iraqi refugee flight.

As a medical anthropologist, I am particularly concerned about the health costs of war in Iraq–not only for Iraqis who have remained in the country, but also for those who have left. As I will show, the health costs of conflict in Iraq include massive loss of life and a toxic legacy of radioactive contamination. Wars' health effects also extend well beyond Iraq's borders, literally carried in the exposed bodies of Iraqi refugees. In this chapter, I illuminate the embodied dimensions of human suffering through the story of one Iraqi man, who attributes his own male infertility problems to the consequences of living through a toxic war.

Another major goal of this chapter is to expose the "structural vulnerability" (Bourgois et al. 2017) of Iraqi refugees who have been resettled in the United States. Based on a five-year ethnographic study carried out in metropolitan Detroit, Michigan (i.e., America's poorest big city), I describe the various physical and economic hardships faced by Iraqi refugees, including precarious employment, deep-seated poverty, lack of social safety nets, and lack of access to affordable (reproductive) healthcare.

Structural vulnerability is, in part, the outcome of poorly planned and inadequately crafted resettlement programs. I detail the ten major systemic flaws in U.S. refugee resettlement policy—a policy that became increasingly restrictive under the presidency of Donald Trump. Indeed, although the United States has never been a particularly welcoming home for refugees from the Middle East, Iraqi refugees have been faced with additional regimes of exclusion—even for those Iraqis who assisted the U.S. military and were scheduled for U.S. resettlement. Unprecedented in the history of U.S. refugee admissions, such regimes of exclusion make crystal clear the lack of U.S. commitment to the lives of those Iraqis whose country it has destroyed.

America's Middle East Wars

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Middle East has suffered a disproportionate number of wars and protracted conflicts that have led to population disruption and turmoil. Even before the fateful 2011 Arab uprisings that led to the Syrian government's war against its own people, fifteen of twenty-two Arab League nations—comprising 85 percent of the region's overall population—had suffered from complex emergencies (Mowafi 2011), including the country of Iraq.

Indeed, it is fair to say that Iraq has lived through forty years of perpetual war and human suffering. Saddam Hussein came to power in 1979 and soon plunged his country into a crippling eight-year war with neighboring Iran. The Iran-Iraq war led to the death of as many as one million soldiers and civilians. In 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded another neighboring country, Kuwait, which led to Operation Desert Storm, the United States' first military intervention in that country. Lasting only seven months, the first Gulf War in Iraq nonetheless led to as many as 120,000 casualties, followed by thirteen years of UN-imposed sanctions. In 1996, the United Nations implemented an oil-for-food program to prevent massive starvation in the country. But, the sanctions continued to cripple the Iraqi economy until they were removed at the start of the second U.S.-led war in Iraq in 2003.

Responding to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001 and driven by a determination to eliminate Middle Eastern terrorism, the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom

(OEF), its military campaign in Afghanistan. Less than two years later, in 2003, the United States launched Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), which we now know was based on false intelligence purporting Saddam Hussein's links to September 11 and his threats to U.S. national security through weapons of mass destruction.

In retrospect, the second U.S. war in Iraq is widely condemned as a U.S. military and foreign policy failure of massive proportions–perhaps the worst in modern U.S. and Middle Eastern history (Hanson 2013; Katz 2010). The U.S. military intervention in Iraq increased political instability in the country, leading to a power vacuum that was partly filled by Islamic insurgent groups, most notably ISIS. Furthermore, the U.S. invasion of Iraq served as a crucial "tipping point" in an unstable sectarian balance of power, unleashing deep-seated sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shia Muslim factions in the country–with consequences that have been truly profound not only for Iraq, but for the increasing sectarian divisions that are devastating the region as a whole (Nasr 2006).

This brings us to the present moment. The United States is still at war in Afghanistan–at twenty years, it is the longest declared war in modern U.S. history. And although an end to the Iraq war has been declared twice–first by President George W. Bush in his "mission accomplished" speech on 1 May 2003, and then on 19 December 2011 by President Barack Obama–the truth is that the U.S. military presence in Iraq has never ended. In 2016 alone, the United States dropped a total of 12,095 bombs on Iraq in its battle against ISIS (Zenko and Wilson 2017). At the beginning of 2020, nearly 1,000 additional U.S. troops joined the 5,200 troops already on the ground in Iraq in response to Iraqi protestors who stormed the U.S. embassy in Baghdad. In the Middle East as a whole, approximately 60,000 U.S. soldiers were deployed across the region by 2021. Indeed, the inconvenient truth– but one that few Americans seem to ponder these days–is that the United States has done more to produce and sustain deadly wars in the Middle East than to relieve them.

The Health Costs of War in Iraq

How has this ceaseless violence impacted the Iraqi people? The costs of war in Iraq have been acute, involving "syndemics," or simultaneous, synergistic epidemics of human suffering (Ostrach and Singer 2013). In Iraq, war-related syndemics have involved civilian casualties and injuries, demographic and reproductive health effects, mental health disorders, and environmental illnesses due to war-related contamination. Here, I want to focus on two of these–namely, the "body count," or the number of Iraqi dead, and the toxic legacies of war in Iraq, particularly the use of depleted uranium (DU), a

radioactive toxin that has been linked to a number of adverse health effects, including reproductive impairments. The health costs of war have real, long-lasting effects, as I will show in the story of one man, Kamal (a pseudonym), who fled Iraq and eventually made his way to the United States.

The Body Count

The most important impact of war in Iraq has been the high death toll. According to human rights observers, long-term U.S. wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan have been among the world's most fatal, with annual civilian casualties often exceeding 10,000. However, the "body count"–or the number of war-related casualties–has been, and continues to be, a highly controversial subject. In Iraq, no one can precisely say how many Iraqis have been killed, because estimates vary greatly and the accuracy of information coming out of Iraq is uncertain. However, another problem surrounds the U.S. military's total refusal to engage in Iraqi death toll estimates. Early on, U.S. general Tommy Franks, who led the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, famously stated, "We don't do body counts."

As a result of U.S. coalition indifference to the Iraqi death toll, a number of academic research groups and human rights organizations began tallying estimates of wartime casualties in Iraq. Perhaps the best estimates come from an international monitoring project called the Iraq Body Count, or IBC, which has updated and cross-checked reports of death ever since the beginning of the 2003 U.S. invasion.[2] The IBC reports that approximately one-quarter million deaths have occurred in Iraq due to direct war-related violence among both civilians and combatants. Of these, more than half are of Iraqi civilians. By 2015, in the midst of the ISIS siege, IBC was calling the massive death toll in Iraq "a catastrophic normal." Compared to the 4,500 cumulative deaths of U.S. military personnel between 2003 and 2015, the Iraq body count is at least 55 to 110 times higher than American casualties, depending on which death toll estimate is used. In other words, the United States started a war in Iraq that has been deadly for American soldiers, but *truly* deadly for Iraqis.

Depleted Uranium

Of all the destruction set in motion by the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the one with the longest-term health consequences may have to do with contamination of the environment. The United States has used multiple chemical toxicants in warfare–the most famous examples being the use of the defoliant Agent Orange and napalm bombs in Vietnam (Gammeltoft 2014). However, in Iraq, depleted uranium, or DU, which was used by U.S. forces in both the first and second Gulf Wars, may have the longest-lasting adverse effects.

Depleted uranium is the waste product of the uranium enrichment process and is about 60 percent more radioactive than natural uranium. Like lead, nickel, and other heavy metals, DU is chemically toxic to humans. It has been used since 1959 in the U.S. munitions industry because it is 65 percent denser than lead, has a high melting point, has a tensile strength comparable to most steels, and ignites when it fragments. The U.S. military has called DU the "silver bullet" for destroying enemy tanks and the "silver shield" for armoring U.S. tanks against enemy fire. However, when DU explodes, it creates "a fine, respirable size dust that contaminates an impact site and presents a hazard to combat troops and civilians" (Fahey 2004: 4). This DU dust in the environment has a radioactive decay chain lasting 4.5 billion years, thereby posing *very long-term* health risks to exposed populations. Thus, DU activists began to accuse the U.S. Department of Defense of gross negligence in using a weapon in Iraq "that distributes large quantities of toxic waste in areas where people live, work, grow food, or draw water" (Fahey 2004: 24).

The potential dangers of DU emerged as a social, political, and scientific issue after the first Gulf War. It is estimated that nearly 900,000 DU rounds were fired in Iraq by U.S. and British troops in that war, with Gulf War veterans eventually attempting to link DU contamination to so-called "Gulf War syndrome"–a cluster of health problems including, among other things, both reproductive and sexual health impairments (Kilshaw 2008). In a ten-year follow-up study of American veterans who were hit by "friendly fire" and thus had DU shrapnel embedded in their bodies, researchers showed that higher-than-normal levels of uranium were associated with perturbations in reproductive hormones, causing male infertility and erectile dysfunction (Maconochie, Doyle, and Carson 2004). Some evidence of neurological and genetic damage was also evident.

With the ongoing use of DU in the 2003 Iraqi invasion, the World Health Organization (2003) released a report titled *Potential Impact of Conflict on Health in Iraq*, which suggested that DU might be related to reports of increased cancers, birth defects, reproductive health problems, and renal diseases in the Iraqi population. A series of studies later carried out in the heavily bombarded city of Fallujah, which sustained some of the worst damage by U.S. forces, show a syndemic of health-related problems, including high rates of congenital malformations (15 percent of all births); higher than expected rates of cancer, especially leukemia and lymphoma in children; higher than expected rates of infant death, when compared to infant mortality rates across the region; and an anomalous sex ratio in children under age five, suggesting that genetic damage was sustained in the zero to age four cohort. Hair samples taken from the parents of so-called "Fallujah babies"–or Iraqi neonates with severe congenital malformations–show the statistically significant presence of DU in their mothers' bodies (Alaani et

al. 2010, 2011). Additional studies of DU exposure in Iraq demonstrate the substance's genotoxicity, or ability to cause genetic damage even "greater than previously considered" (Durakovic 2016). The chemical's carcinogenic (i.e., cancer-causing) effects have led to an overall increase in breast, lung, thyroid, and blood cancers in Iraq, doubling or even tripling in incidence in some regions of the country (Fathi et al. 2013). Of importance to U.S. troops, inhalation and internalization of DU into the body has been shown to cause multiple health risks, especially among "crews of damaged tanks and rescue teams" (Jiang and Aschner 2015). Thus, the health costs of DU have affected soldiers and civilians alike.

Kamal—An Iraqi Refugee's Story

The synergism of these health-related effects can be seen in the story of Kamal, an Iraqi refugee I met in a reproductive health clinic in the state of Michigan.[3] As I was to learn from Kamal, he had been conscripted into Saddam's army as a telecommunications specialist. "I was in a tank, *always* in a tank," he said, and continued:

> I saw *everything*! The smells, the dead people. Sometimes we were sleeping with people who were dead in the tanks, injured people, with blood all around. We saw *everything*! So when we see [that] someone is dead, we don't even care. We saw *so many* dead people, *so much* blood. Sometimes, we had to eat with people who were dead beside us.

Eventually, Kamal joined the Iraqi resistance and made his way out of the country. But he was concerned about his relatives left behind in Iraq. He explained:

> We heard that there is uranium everywhere. You know, Marcia? Cancer. *A lot* of people in Iraq got cancer. If you ask anybody here, "You got the flu?," the question there would be, "You got cancer?" Before, it was not easy to use the term *saratan* [cancer]. But now, it's easy to say, "I got cancer." My sister, she had a sixteen-year-old daughter. She died after two months from cancer, liver cancer. She found out, and then she died.

By the time I met him in Detroit, Michigan, Kamal had a happy story to tell. In the ten years since he had arrived in America, Kamal was able to accomplish many of the things in life that other Iraqi refugees could only dream of. These included a happy marriage to his Iraqi sweetheart, whom he had met in a refugee camp; American citizenship by way of naturalization; an economically stable life as the proprietor of two small barbershops; ownership of two "fixer-upper" homes that he and his two Iraqi refugee brothers had remodeled; and the joys of parenthood through the birth of a

baby. Pulling a photo from his wallet, Kamal smiled widely when he showed me the picture of little Haydar, his thirteen-month-old son. As he pointed out proudly, Haydar was an American citizen by birth–not born in exile–in a land that they now called home.

However, as Kamal also confessed, Haydar's birth was exceptional, in that Kamal suffered from a serious male infertility problem that could only be overcome through costly assisted reproductive technologies. Male infertility, he explained, was common in Iraq and among his refugee community in Michigan–a situation that he linked to war-related environmental exposure:

> Marcia, I want to tell you something about me. I have no problem with sex, no problem with my body. I don't smoke, no drinking. I do exercise every day, and I'm healthy. But I know a lot of [Iraqi] men like me. They don't have kids, and they take a long time to get a baby. I know about fifteen to twenty people like that, here in Michigan. Some are friends of mine. We are all refugees. All of us Iraqi refugees, the same life we lived. The same war. The same camp. The same thing. And we began talking about the subject of [not getting] babies. I always tell them, "We don't want to be shy [about this] because we *need* a baby! Don't be shy! Go to the doctor. Don't stay at home. Tell him [the doctor], 'I'm sick, and I need to take medicine.'" I know somebody [with male infertility], and he was ready to make a divorce with his wife, and he's young! But I tell him, "Please don't do that! Go to the doctor. Do something!" In Iraq, we lost all our good doctors. But here in America, everything is good. The doctor is good. Technology is good. Medicine is good. But some men, they're embarrassed to say, "I have this problem." It's the *rujula*, the "manhood." But this is wrong.

As Kamal explained, many Iraqi refugee men feared their reproductive health problems were somehow due to irremediable war-related exposures and traumas. Not surprisingly, *al harb*, "the war," figured prominently in Iraqi refugee men's narratives, given that some men had been combatants, while others had suffered war, torture, and imprisonment in their home country. To that end, they felt grateful to have escaped alive, although life in America was not easy, as their stories reveal.

Narratives of Reproductive Exile

I collected such narratives of suffering and reproductive disruption over a five-year period between 2003 and 2008 through ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Arabic, English, or a mixture of both, with nearly 100 resettled Arab refugees in metropolitan Detroit, Michigan. I made my way on a weekly basis to Dearborn, Michigan, an ethnic enclave on the margins of Detroit and the so-called "capital of Arab America" (Abraham and Shryock

2000). My study began two years after September 11, 2001, continued throughout the first four years of the U.S.-led war in Iraq, and ended with the beginning of the U.S. financial crisis in 2008. By the time of the 2011 Arab uprisings and Detroit's own Chapter 9 bankruptcy hearings in 2013, my study had ended. However, through five years of nearly continuous ethnographic research in the heart of Arab America, I was able to meet nearly one hundred Arab men and women, most of them poor Shia Muslim refugees from Iraq or southern Lebanon.

As a medical anthropologist, I was interested in these refugees' reproductive health. Thus I located my study at IVF Michigan, the Midwest's largest infertility treatment and assisted reproduction center. Virtually all of the men and women in my study—some of whom came to the clinic together as couples, while others arrived alone—suffered from problems of infertility, with male infertility, of the kind faced by Kamal, the most frequent diagnosis. Like Kamal, all of the men and women in my study were dreaming of becoming parents, not only to achieve cultural mandates of adult personhood, but to make new lives and new families after all that had been lost. However, unlike Kamal, few of these men and women could afford the $150 office visit, let alone a $12,000 cycle of in vitro fertilization (IVF). Indeed, Kamal was the only person in my study who was able to self-finance three costly rounds of intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), a variant of IVF designed specifically to overcome male infertility. Kamal was thus one of only two men in my study who were able to father an ICSI or IVF child.

By the end of my study, I came to think of these poor, struggling, infertile refugees as "reproductive exiles" (Inhorn 2018). Banished from their home country by war, most remained in a kind of double exile—unable to return to Iraq because of ongoing violence and a shattered healthcare system, but unable to access infertility services in the most expensive country in the world in which to make an IVF baby. Every time I drove away from IVF Michigan—passing the gray facade of the Ford Rouge factory with its billowing smokestacks—I felt deep pangs of sympathy for these men and women. Living constrained lives on the polluted margins of Detroit, there was little that they could do to change their situations. They were stranded—impoverished, immobile, and barren.

By the time I returned to IVF Michigan in the summer of 2015 to undertake a follow-up visit, the world had fallen victim to the worst refugee crisis in modern history. Syrians—but also Iraqis and Afghans—were fleeing to Europe to escape the unrelenting violence in their home countries. However, Iraqis were also flowing into the United States in substantial numbers. Many of these Iraqi refugees landed in Arab Detroit. Yet, as we shall see, this crumbling "motor city" could ill afford any new refugee resettlement, given its inability to sustain the refugees in its midst.

Iraqi Resettlement in Arab Detroit

The arrival of a new wave of Iraqi refugees to Arab Detroit is not surprising, given that the Detroit metro area has been one of North America's largest refugee receiving grounds (Abraham and Shryock 2000; Schopmeyer 2011). Beginning in the 1950s, exiled Palestinians started resettling in the Detroit suburbs, a pattern that continued among Palestinians over the five ensuing decades. By the 1970s, Palestinians were joined by Lebanese, whose numbers swelled with each passing year of the Lebanese civil war. By the mid-1990s, Lebanese and Palestinians were joined by Iraqis, tens of thousands of whom came as refugees in the aftermath of the first Gulf War. Thus, over half a century, metropolitan Detroit absorbed three major populations of fleeing Arabs–Palestinians, then Lebanese, then Iraqis. By 2000, Michigan scholars dubbed the city's new ethnic enclave "Arab Detroit," highlighting the importance of a quarter million people of Arab descent now living in the area (Abraham and Shryock 2000).

However, in 2008–the same year as the Great Recession–the Iraqi population of Arab Detroit began to swell again as the second wave of refugees began to receive admission into the United States. As shown in table 10.1, Iraqi refugee admissions that year increased eight-fold (Svab 2015). By 2009, fully one-quarter of all refugees entering the United States were Iraqis, and Arab Detroit absorbed nearly as many as the cities of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles combined. By 2014, Iraqis represented 28 percent of the refugees entering the United States, the single largest group. Indeed, from 2007 to 2015, 126,000 Iraqi refugees entered the United States. This was fully one-fifth of all refugees admitted, but less than one-half of the Iraqis seeking U.S. refugee admissions. As seen in table 10.2, Iraqis were settled in every U.S. state except Wyoming.

As shown in table 10.2, the state of Michigan was second only to California, taking in a disproportionate share of Iraqi refugees (Svab 2015). Yet, the local Michigan economy is poorly suited for such large-scale Iraqi refugee resettlement–

Table 10.1. Iraqi Refugees Admitted to the United States (2007–15).

Fiscal Year	Number Admitted
2007	1,608
2008	13,823
2009	18,838
2010	18,016
2011	9,388
2012	12,163
2013	19,488
2014	19,769
2015	12,676
Total from 2007–2015	**Total Number 125,769**

Source: Based on data from www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum/refugees/iraqi-refugee-processing-fact-sheet and Zong and Batalova 2015.

Table 10.2. U.S. States of Iraqi Resettlement (2006–15).

Level	Number of Refugees	States (in Alphabetical Order)
1	10,000–25,000	California, Michigan, Texas
2	1,000–9,999	Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington
3	100–999	Alabama, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Wisconsin
4	1–99	Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, Mississippi, Montana, West Virginia

Source: Based on data from the U.S. Department of State, as reported in Svab 2015.

particularly the city of Detroit, where most of these refugees were placed. Detroit is America's poorest big city, with 38 percent of its population, or roughly two-fifths, living below the federal poverty line (Kneebone and Holmes 2016). Two-thirds of all Detroiters live in a state of ALICE–"asset limited, income-constrained, employed" (United Ways of Michigan 2014). These poverty figures are replicated in Arab Detroit's refugee community. Fully four-fifths, or 82 percent, of all Iraqi Muslim refugee families live on household incomes of less than $30,000 per year. And nearly half, 42 percent, live well below the U.S. federal poverty line, on household incomes of less than $10,000 per year (Detroit Arab American Study Team 2009).

Given these poverty statistics, it is not surprising that most of the Iraqi refugees I met in Arab Detroit were precariously employed and often desperately poor. Many of the men did not speak English fluently, nor did their wives, as few of them had attended school in the United States, and few had gone beyond high school in their home country. Without strong English skills or advanced educations, most of the Iraqi refugee men in my study were employable only in low-wage, blue-collar, or service-sector occupations, mainly as gas station attendants, dishwashers and busboys in Middle Eastern restaurants, truck drivers, construction workers, auto mechanics, or factory workers. Salaries and wages were generally low, with many men and their wives living in small apartments and generally eking out subsistence lives below the poverty line.

Without regular employment, most did not have private health insurance to cover the costs of their medical care. Most did not own credit cards. As a

result, virtually all of their financial transactions, including visits to medical clinics, were handled in cash. In cases of medical emergency, social safety nets were generally missing, forcing some participants in my study to rely on local Islamic charities for relief. In terms of their overall health, my interlocutors spoke to me of war traumas and deaths in the family, various health impairments and physical disabilities, separations from family members still back in Iraq, and feelings of loneliness, depression, and chronic stress.

The Iraqi refugees in my study were living in a state of "structural vulnerability"—a term put forward by medical anthropologists to describe "a positionality [within society] that imposes physical and emotional suffering on specific population groups and individuals in patterned ways" (Quesada, Hart, and Bourgois 2011: 340). Domains of structural vulnerability include one's financial status, legal status, educational level, language ability, residence, food access, and social network, as well as considerations of whether the environment in which one lives exposes a person to risks or discrimination (Bourgois et al. 2017). Structural vulnerability is also about access to healthcare—or lack thereof—and how ill health is thus a product of one's social location, especially exclusion from affordable public services and basic legal rights. Structural vulnerability also encompasses notions of "worthiness," or whether individuals are deemed deserving of respect and quality care (Ticktin 2011).

Iraqis' Resettlement Challenges

Unfortunately, structural vulnerability and reproductive exile are common elements of the Iraqi refugee experience in America. Resettled in the very country that caused their displacement and suffering, Iraqi refugees have been inadequately supported in the resettlement process—a process, as we shall see, that is deeply flawed. In 2009, at the height of the new wave of Iraqi refugee admissions, Georgetown University's Human Rights Institute (2009) issued an alarming report, which documented ten major "systemic flaws" in Iraqi refugee resettlement policy. As outlined in the report, resettlement challenges include the following:

1. *Poor planning and coordination:* Many states, including Michigan, have received inadequate refugee funding, meaning that state agencies are constantly underfunded, with their caseworkers constantly pressured to deliver more assistance with limited means.
2. *Inadequate cash assistance:* Unlike Vietnamese refugees, who arrived in America in the 1980s and were fed and housed and given up to thirty-six months of cash assistance and other forms of support, Iraqi

refugees today receive only eight months of cash assistance, the maximum allowable, after which they are left to fend for themselves.

3. *Lack of sustainable employment opportunities:* Given this time pressure, refugees are pressured to quickly enter low-paying jobs, which thrust most refugees into permanent states of chronic poverty and underemployment.

4. *Lack of recertification and vocational training:* Educated refugees who worked as professionals in their home country rarely receive recertification and vocational training in order to re-enter their fields, such as engineering or medicine.

5. *Inadequate English language training:* Learning English is often hampered by long waitlists for ESL courses, which are often of poor quality.

6. *Unreasonable transportation options:* Many refugees are being resettled in communities with poor public transportation services, making it difficult to reach job interviews and access employment opportunities.

7. *Inadequate medical care:* As with cash assistance, adult refugees are cut off from medical assistance after eight months, even though as many as 40 percent of Iraqi refugees come to the United States with pre-existing medical conditions.

8. *Inadequate treatment of mental health issues:* As many as 75 percent of Iraqis are thought to suffer from mental health problems, primarily depression and anxiety. But these go unreported and untreated because the only mandatory mental health assessment occurs at the refugee's initial health screening.

9. *Inadequate tracking of secondary migration:* Not surprisingly, Iraqi refugees may not thrive in their initial placements and choose to relocate. But these "secondary migrants" become "lost in the system," with no transfer of their case information from one state agency to another. When the Centers for Disease Control attempted to assess the health and wellbeing of the Iraqi refugee population through a survey conducted in the three most populous resettlement states of Michigan, California, and Texas, one of the major limitations noted by the CDC was an inability to locate Iraqis who were no longer contactable by state agencies (Taylor et al. 2014).

10. *Failure to promote long-term self-sufficiency:* Although the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has a legal obligation to "extend protection to the most vulnerable refugees, promote their long-term self-sufficiency, and support their integration" (Human Rights Institute 2009: 1), a decade worth of data suggests that U.S. efforts, modeled on domestic antipoverty programs, have failed to work in the best interest of Iraqi refugees and to promote their long-term self-sufficiency.

New Regimes of Iraqi Refugee Exclusion

Given these challenges, it can be said that America has never been a particularly welcoming home for Iraqi refugee resettlement. However, with the presidency of Donald Trump, America entered into an unprecedented period of anti-immigrant/anti-refugee sentiment, leading to new regimes of refugee exclusion. Indeed, in President Trump's America, Middle Eastern refugees were vilified as potential "terrorists," even though no act of terrorism has ever been committed by a refugee on U.S. soil, and even though many of the Arab refugees currently living in the United States fought valiantly alongside the U.S. military in Iraq.

To wit, only days after his January 2017 inauguration, President Trump kept his campaign pledge by issuing Executive Order 13769, officially titled "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," and based on the justification that the "United States must be vigilant during the visa-issuance process to ensure that those approved for admission do not intend to harm Americans and that they have no ties to terrorism." Executive Order 13769–soon known as the "Muslim ban" or "travel ban"–included seven countries, all Muslim, mostly in the Middle East, and initially including Iraq (i.e., Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen). At the time of its issuance, the Executive Order also suspended the U.S. refugee admissions program for 120 days, banned Syrian refugees from entering the United States, prioritized refugee claims on the basis of religious persecution, and lowered the total number of refugees in 2017 to 50,000, or less than half the number of 110,000 admitted annually under President Barack Obama's administration.

Yet the Executive Order excluded countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which were the nations of origin of the majority of the September 11 hijackers. The issuance of Executive Order 13769 thus sheds light on the motive behind the policy, which appears to be less of a means of combating terrorism than a way to stop Muslim refugees from entering the country. Immediately challenged and blocked by various U.S. courts, the Executive Order was nonetheless upheld in the U.S. Supreme Court, allowing the Muslim ban to proceed in full, even though the legal challenges against it continued.

Furthermore, by 2018, President Trump had dramatically reduced the number of refugee admissions to the United States overall by 75 percent–to the lowest level since 1980. In July 2019, he further pledged to reduce refugee admissions to *zero* in 2020, a threat that was eventually modified to an admissions cap of 18,000 refugees in total. Under the Trump administration, the only "silver lining" was for Iraqi and Afghan men who had served with U.S. forces and were granted SIVs, or "special immigrant visas," to the

United States in repayment for their service. However, with the extremely restrictive new admissions cap, the SIV program also came under threat. Many Iraqis and Afghans who had already been approved for resettlement were still waiting to be reunited with their families, or were still living in harm's way. Many were uncertain whether they would gain entry to the United States, even though many had risked their lives assisting U.S. forces.

On 26 September 2019, in an ever more restrictive environment, President Trump issued Executive Order 13888, which took into account "the preferences of state governments, and to provide a pathway for refugees to become self-sufficient." The new order gave states such as Michigan the ability to refuse refugee admissions if they believed that they lacked the resources to do so. In effect, this new Executive Order further reduced the number of refugees resettled in the United States by shifting the focus of refugee responsibility from the federal government to individual states. As shown in this chapter, states vary dramatically in their levels of refugee support, based on their size, wealth, and commitment to refugee resettlement. Furthermore, states are subject to the political whims of changing leadership, which may significantly alter the wherewithal for resettlement.

Conclusion: The Beginnings of Re-inclusion

The U.S. president who openly declared his desire to end refugee admissions altogether was voted out of office at the end of 2020. Under a new presidential administration, the U.S. refugee admissions program has the potential to be reset from a regime of exclusion to one of inclusion. Indeed, on 20 January 2021, his first day in office, President Joe Biden repealed the Trump-era "Muslim ban," which, by the end of Trump's presidency, had restricted travel to the U.S. from thirteen predominantly Muslim Middle Eastern and African countries. In addition, President Biden directed the U.S. State Department to develop ways to address the harm that had been done to those, including refugees, who were prevented from coming to the United States under the travel ban. In this new beginning, President Biden effectively reconfirmed America's moral commitment to Muslim immigrants and refugees, including those whose lives in their home countries were destroyed by America's own wars in the Middle East.

In thinking about Iraqis who were put in harm's way, it seems appropriate to conclude this chapter with a very moving quote from journalist Robert Guttersohn, a U.S. veteran of the Iraq War. In his article on "Michigan's Iraqi Refugee Crisis," Guttersohn (2014: 2) opined:

> For the refugee, Iraq will always be home. But knowing he can never return to his native land, he must instead seek refuge in the country whose very military

invasion set off the domino effect leading to his displacement . . . . The refugee had the unfortunate luck of living there when the bombs began to fall. Taking in refugees is only half the job. Ensuring they have a fair opportunity to be active participants in the economy is another. An improved refugee program, whether run by the state or the federal government, would be expensive. So is war, though, and a country that starts one should feel the weight of those whose lives are uprooted by it–both its soldiers and the refugees.

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Notes

1. My use of the term "America" here is intentional. It reflects contemporary political discourses surrounding "American exceptionalism," as well as President Donald Trump's nationalistic campaign rhetoric of "Make American Great Again" (MAGA). I use the term "America" at various points throughout the chapter to reinforce these political dimensions.
2. See http://www.iraqbodycount.org/ for more information.
3. Kamal's story and others like it can be found in my book, *America's Arab Refugees: Vulnerability and Health on the Margins* (Inhorn 2018), from which parts of this chapter are adapted.

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<p style="text-align:center">11</p>

Regimes of Exclusion in the Reproductive Healthcare Setting

Exploring the Experiences of Syrian Refugees in San Diego, California

Morgen Chalmiers

Introduction

"If she was going to make special requests, she should have arrived on time." I stood in the waiting room with Rima, who was both excited and nervous for the day's appointment. Though she had received ultrasounds during her previous pregnancies in Syria, she was still eager to meet the newest addition to her growing family. Since the earliest stage of this much-anticipated pregnancy, Rima had kept careful track of her appointments–from her initial visit to the OB/GYN who had removed her IUD, up until that moment when we stood together in the clinic awaiting her first trimester ultrasound. In her hand, she clutched the appointment reminder card provided to her at her last visit, where the time of the appointment was clearly printed, 2:45 pm. Taken aback by the receptionist's reprimand, I looked down at my phone to check the time. It was 2:41.

The "special request" she referred to had, in fact, been made several days prior to the appointment. Rima had gone to great lengths to call the clinic and remained on hold for thirty minutes before being connected to the phone interpretation service in order to express her preference for a female ultrasound technician. It was unclear if this preference had ever been recorded or communicated to the office staff, who emphasized that her request could, perhaps, have been accommodated if she had arrived fifteen

minutes prior to her appointment time, as required by clinic policy. By the time we checked in, the female tech had already begun to examine another patient and the only tech available was male. Since Rima had failed to comply with the clinic's policy by arriving "late," her only options were to allow the male technician to perform the ultrasound or attempt to make an appointment for another day within the three-week window in which her insurance would cover a first trimester ultrasound. Although Rima was willing to wait until the last patient of the day had been seen if necessary, the staff remained firmly insistent that the day's schedule could not accommodate her unless she was willing to see a male technician.

I first came to know Rima in June 2018, while conducting ethnographic research in San Diego to investigate the challenges faced by resettled Syrian refugees in accessing reproductive healthcare. Over an eighteen-month period, I accompanied Rima and others like her to their medical appointments, leveraging my own privilege and insider status as a medical student to assist them in navigating the intricacies of the American healthcare system. In this chapter, I discuss some of the challenges Rima encountered during her pregnancy to illustrate how this system excludes refugee women, perpetuates social inequities, and produces health disparities. Drawing on long-term fieldwork in San Diego, I illustrate how structural vulnerabilities interact with contextually specific discourses surrounding Muslim Syrian refugees to create regimes of exclusion in which refugee women struggle to obtain respectful, high-quality care in the clinic even after overcoming substantial access barriers. After describing my own research methods, I offer a brief summary of Syrian refugee resettlement in the United States and review recent interdisciplinary literature relating to refugee women's reproductive health. I provide some background information about Rima (a pseudonym) before delving into an analysis of my ethnographic observations.

This analysis is necessarily informed by dual positionality as both an ethnographer and a medical student undergoing training in many of the same clinics and hospitals that provided care for the refugee women I came to know through my research. For example, I am confident that the staff could probably have found a way to integrate Rima's brief ultrasound into the female technician's schedule if they had been less invested in teaching her a lesson about being on time and more interested in ensuring her access to culturally sensitive healthcare. Even if obliging Rima's request would disrupt clinic flow and cause them to run fifteen to twenty minutes behind schedule—during my rotations at clinics throughout San Diego as a medical student, I saw similar accommodations made on an almost-daily basis for much less significant reasons: patients running late, techs wanting to see their favorite patients, or any number of exigencies. The staff's refusal to accommodate Rima's request was, of course, linked to her characterization as a particular type of patient who was "late" and made "special requests,"

a process which, I argue, began from the moment she entered the clinic dressed in a black abaya and hijab.

Methods

This study draws on fourteen months of clinical ethnography, participant observation, and person-centered interviews (Levy and Hollan 1998) with twenty Syrian refugee women recruited through chain-referral sampling in San Diego, California. Person-centered interviewing takes place with a number of key informants over a sustained period of time and oscillates between treating the interviewee as an "informant" and "respondent" (Levy and Hollan 1998). Informant-style questions implicitly frame the interviewee as an expert of sorts; for example, one might ask, "Where do women in your community go when seeking family planning services?" Conversely, questions that treat the interviewee as a respondent ask about an individual's emotions and engage participants in reflection about their personal experiences. Person-centered interviews reveal the ways in which large-scale social transformations are embedded in the fabric of everyday lives (Desjarlais 2003) and allow for close analysis of the interpretive schemas (Strauss 2018) employed by interlocutors in describing their reproductive experiences. Person-centered interviews provide an immersive opportunity to explore explanatory models (Kleinman, Eisenberg, and Good 1978) and experiences of reproductive healthcare services among refugee populations, with an emphasis on "how the individual's psychology and subjective experience both shape and are shaped by social and cultural processes" (Hollan 2005: 219). Interviews were conducted in Arabic, transcribed, and imported in NVivo for iterative coding and qualitative analysis.

Context and Background of the Study

Since the conflict began in 2011, more than half of Syria's initial population of twenty-two million has been displaced. Among the 5.5 million Syrians who fled the country, the majority remain in the neighboring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, while only a small fraction (approximately 275,000) have been resettled through the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR 2018). Despite the clear and dire need, the United States has been reluctant to facilitate Syrian refugees' resettlement, citing concerns related to national security and the potential threat of terrorism. This response has been vehemently critiqued domestically and abroad, especially following Trump's enactment of Executive Order 13769–popularly known as the Muslim ban. Though the order has faced multiple legal challenges

and undergone subsequent revisions, the original clause explicitly banning the resettlement of Syrian refugees has achieved its intended effect; in 2018, a mere forty-one Syrians were resettled through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (RAP), compared to the nearly fifteen thousand resettled in 2016 (Refugee Processing Center 2019).

While many critics have denounced the travel ban as contrary to the American values that the Refugee Admissions Program supposedly exemplifies (Bresnahan, Chen, and Fedewa 2018; Vega 2018), scholars have illustrated how humanitarian rhetoric obscures the reality that U.S. refugee policy originated as, and remains, a critical tool to advance the country's foreign policy interests and ambitions across the globe (Benson 2016; Espiritu 2014). Similarly, domestic resettlement policies reflect the nation-state's efforts to cultivate–at the level of the individual–particular types of citizen-subjects and–at the level of the population–to shape the demographic composition of the nation, a form of governance Foucault classically termed biopower. These policies specifically endeavor to mold resettled refugees into self-sufficient subjects by promoting early employment and limiting their eligibility for state assistance programs.

Originally, the 1980 Refugee Act provided refugees with thirty-six months of cash assistance and health coverage to support them as they studied English as a Second Language (ESL), adapted to life in the United States, learned to drive, and dealt with the bureaucratic hurdles skilled professionals must overcome to work in their field of specialty, such as additional formal training and recertification (Brown and Scribner 2014: 108). Over the years that followed, the United States adopted increasingly neoliberal policies that reduced government subsidies and funding for social services in response to conservative anxieties surrounding the "overdependence" of the poor on the welfare state. The promotion of neoliberal ideology led similarly to amendments of the 1980 Refugee Act, first reducing the original period of assistance from thirty-six to eighteen months in 1982 and then again, in 1991, from eighteen to a mere eight months of cash assistance and state-subsidized health insurance (Brown and Scribner 2014: 108). Furthermore, the original 1980 Refugee Act stipulates that local resettlement agencies will manage the design and implementation of programs to support refugees' adaptation to life in the United States. These agencies are then reimbursed by the state government which receives, in turn, federal funding through the national Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). According to the 1980 Refugee Act, this federal funding must be used "primarily for employability services designed to enable refugees to obtain jobs within one year of becoming enrolled in services in order to achieve economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible" (45 CFR § 400). To further this aim, the Act requires each agency to create a "Self-Sufficiency Plan" for each refugee or refugee family that they serve. These plans are intended "to lead to the earliest possible

employment and not be structured in such a way as to discourage or delay employment or job-seeking" and must propose a "definite employment goal, attainable in the shortest time period consistent with the employability of the refugee in relation to job openings in the area" (45 CFR § 400). Additional federal funding is available for programs that promote employment within the first 120–180 days immediately following resettlement (Brick et al. 2010). Evidence suggests that prioritizing refugees' immediate employment at the expense of long-term investments in skill development through programs such as English as a Second Language or vocational training has had detrimental impacts on long-term financial and employment outcomes (Capps and Newland 2015; Steimel 2017). Nevertheless, current policies effectively force resettlement agencies to prioritize funding for programs that are narrowly focused on promoting employment within the first year after arrival. Given that few individuals are able to develop sufficient fluency in English to function in a professional setting within this strict timeline, they are almost inevitably forced to accept positions as minimum-wage, unskilled laborers, regardless of their level of education or prior qualifications.

Even if we were to accept the questionable neoliberal premise that promoting refugees' integration into American capitalism via full-time employment should be the first priority of resettlement organizations, it seems glaringly obvious that the current policies are ultimately counterproductive to achieving this goal. Specifically, the minimal level of support provided to resettled refugees and the coupling of cash assistance with an employment requirement creates an environment in which they are all but forced to work long hours at minimum-wage jobs in order to survive. This leaves little time for them to invest in improving their English language proficiency, an ability that would ultimately allow them to transfer skills acquired prior to resettlement in medicine, accounting, business, and many other fields to the U.S. context and secure jobs that are both fulfilling and more financially stable than minimum wage labor in the long term. Nevertheless, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program continues to prioritize policies designed to promote self-sufficiency in the short term in the context of widespread racialized fears about immigrants' alleged overdependence on the welfare state.

In addition, scholars have pointed out the irony of the United States' Refugee Admissions Program's rhetorical commitment to resettling the most vulnerable of all refugees in light of punitive practical policies that then require individuals who have been selected *because* of their exceptional vulnerability to immediately and efficiently demonstrate financial independence mere months after resettlement. The Refugee Admissions Program intentionally seeks out candidates for resettlement who are especially vulnerable—a classification that in practice means prioritizing individuals who have been injured in conflict zones, tortured by military regimes, and exposed to other forms of extreme trauma—and then asks why, several months after

resettlement, these individuals have not succeeded in meeting federal goals for employment (Brown and Scribner 2014; Kerwin 2012). Refugees are thus selected for resettlement in the United States *because* of traits that will more than likely impair their ability to achieve immediate self-sufficiency as it is defined by the Refugee Assistance Program. These paradoxical policies select refugees who have the greatest need for social support as they tackle the challenges of resettlement in an unfamiliar country while, at the same time, eliminating federal fiscal support for programs that provide these services to resettled refugees (Brown and Scribner 2014).

This context informs my conceptualization of the health system as part of a larger regime of exclusion in which refugees are effectively denied access to services such as respectful, high-quality healthcare–enshrined in Article 12 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as one of the most fundamental of human rights (United Nations General Assembly 1948). I employ the concept of exclusion to theorize what are more commonly referred to as barriers to reproductive healthcare access. While references to "access barriers" remain ambiguous in identifying the part(ies) responsible for their alleviation, describing them as regimes of exclusion draws attention to the neoliberal policy structures discussed above that intentionally prioritize programs designed to lead to immediate employment in minimum-wage jobs over those that might more holistically support refugees' long-term well-being. For example, the extreme difficulties Rima experienced in navigating the healthcare system are often described as an aspect of "low health literacy" (Henry, Beruf, and Fischer 2019), a term that blames Rima for her lack of familiarity with the structure of the American healthcare system. In contrast, to analyze Rima's experience as a result of *exclusionary* policies and practices is to argue, as I do, that the state has failed to meet its ethical responsibility of ensuring access to healthcare not only for resettled refugees but for the American population at large.

Responsibility, Rationality, and Regimes of Exclusion in the Reproductive Healthcare Setting

In addition, a grasp of the fundamental principles that have informed refugee resettlement policy in the United States since 1980 is essential for understanding the larger cultural discourses that contribute to refugees' experiences of discrimination and disrespect in healthcare settings. In the U.S. context, where neoliberal policies render healthcare a commodity rather than a right and place the responsibility for maintaining one's health on an individual's ability to make "good choices," low-income individuals who receive government-subsidized healthcare must demonstrate their "deservingness" of support by complying with physicians' instructions and, in do-

ing so, affirming their moral status as responsible individuals (Bridges 2011; Gálvez 2011, 2019). Similarly, refugees are expected to express appropriate gratitude for the "gift" (Nguyen 2012) of resettlement and the services provided to them through the generosity of the American people (Robinson and Cort 2014). A crucial means of demonstrating one's gratitude is striving toward self-sufficiency by pursuing productive activities such as employment and English language training. In this context, becoming pregnant acquires the opposite moral valence as a supposedly irresponsible act that will ultimately prolong the family's dependence on the welfare state (Feder 2007; Kandaswamy 2012).

It is within this larger context that refugee women are frequently labeled as "noncompliant" by reproductive healthcare providers (Balaam et al. 2013; Heslehurst et al. 2018; Higginbottom et al. 2014, 2015; Tobin, Di Napoli, and Beck 2018; Wikberg and Bondas 2010; Wittkowski, Patel, and Fox 2017; Winn, Hetherington, and Tough 2017). As Niner et al. (2013) and Robinson and Cort (2014) suggest, perceptions of refugee women as ungrateful, undeserving, or noncompliant contribute significantly to their experiences in healthcare settings, where they often are subject to "openly racist and discriminatory care, cultural stigma, disrespect, hostility, stereotyping, and being treated as 'primitive' people" (Heslehurst et al. 2018, citing Balaam et al. 2013; Mengesha, Dune, and Perz 2016; Small et al. 2014; Wikberg and Bondas 2010). For Muslim refugees, these experiences are deeply shaped by a nationwide climate of Islamophobia (Inhorn and Serour 2011; Samari, Alcalá, and Sharif 2018), which, as I will argue, has particular implications in the reproductive healthcare setting.

Islamophobia has been defined as a "social stigma toward Islam and Muslims" as well as a distinct form of "racism towards Muslims or those perceived to be Muslim" (Samari, Alcalá, and Sharif 2018) and thus must be understood as a form of discrimination that is both religious and racialized. In the contemporary United States, the racialization (and conflation) of Arabs and Muslims must be understood in relation to its critical role in justifying American military imperialism in the Middle East, including the 2003 invasion of Iraq. This process—referred to as "race thinking"—is described in detail by Shereen Razack:

> Although race thinking varies, for Muslims and Arabs, it is under-pinned by the idea that modern enlightened, secular peoples must protect themselves from premodern, religious peoples whose loyalty to tribe and community reigns over their commitment to the rule of law. *The marking of a group as belonging to the realm of culture and religion, as opposed to the realm of law and reason, has devastating consequences.* There is a disturbing spatializing of morality that occurs in the story of modern versus premodern peoples. We have reason; they do not. We are located in modernity; they are not. Significantly, because *they* have not advanced as we have, *it is our moral obligation to correct, discipline, and keep them in*

line and to defend ourselves against their irrational excesses . . . . Evicted from the universal, and thus from civilization and progress, the non-West occupies a zone outside the law. Violence may be directed at it with impunity. (Razack 2012: 221–22, emphasis my own)

Critical theorists have persuasively shown how the gendered body represents a central vehicle through which race is produced (Kandaswamy 2012; Martinot 2007). The trope of the oppressed Muslim woman remained central to discourses that rationalized America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as means of promoting worldwide gender equality (Abu-Lughod 2002, 2013). These transnational discourses construct Muslim women as victims of patriarchy who must be taught–often by Western feminists–to exercise their right to freedom, equality, and individual autonomy. In the context of reproductive healthcare, clinical interactions may be subtly structured by Islamophobic stereotypes that portray Muslim refugee women specifically as "premodern, unruly" subjects who "must be taught responsibility" and gender equality by healthcare providers (Ong 2003). In practice, these lessons emphasize that "responsibility" entails spacing or limiting one's pregnancies and that modern rationality requires abandoning the traditional religious principles of modesty in favor of clinical efficiency.

As I began to discuss the focus of my research with community stakeholders, healthcare providers, and friends in medical school or residency, I was struck by the overwhelming similarity of their responses, which lamented what they viewed as the inappropriately high birth rates among newly arrived refugees. One resident expressed frustration with the "irresponsibility" of refugee women who "can't afford to properly care for the kids they already have" yet "still go on having more." While most providers did not directly discuss religion, their opinions were clearly shaped by Islamophobic discourses that portray Muslim women as victims of male oppression and cast doubt upon their ability to exercise agency and autonomy, particularly in the realm of reproductive decision-making. Although providers emphasized their ethical commitment to providing culturally respectful care, I sensed throughout some of our conversations that many who espoused this commitment nevertheless clearly viewed particular "cultures" as inferior to their own.

Assessments of Muslim women's reproductive decisions were at times informed by the tacit assumption that those wearing the hijab might be forced to do so by their husbands, who could have similarly pressured or coerced them into having "so many" children. Such assessments were additionally informed by stereotypes about Islam. For example, health disparities among Muslim populations are often explained as a result of a "fatalistic" orientation that is supposedly inherent to Islam and thus antithetical to the biomedical ideal of rational action and the secularism such rationality demands

(Hamdy 2009). In this way, the stigma already associated with high fertility is further compounded by its representation as yet another unfortunate consequence of Islamic theology (Johnson-Hanks 2006).

As the means through which communities expand or decrease in size and labor power, reproduction has long been a central site for the exercise, establishment, and contestation of power. Since the colonial period, the norms distinguishing socially desirable from deviant reproduction have been shaped by hierarchical ideologies of racial inferiority that justified Euro-American imperialism. In the 1960s, when most postcolonial nations had been nominally granted independence, the fields of population health and demography became increasingly more prominent in response to international, neo-Malthusian anxieties surrounding the growing world population. Malthusian logic suggested that the "unfettered fertility" (Sanger 1920) of women of color, particularly in the Global South, threatened not only the economic growth of the newly independent, ostensibly "developing" nations but the human race as a whole, in the context of increasingly scarce natural resources. Racialized fears of overpopulation prompted massive coordinated efforts to curb the reproduction of women of color across the globe: from the forcible sterilizations of Latina women in Los Angeles county hospitals that continued throughout the 1970s to the coercive IUD camps funded by USAID and other humanitarian actors in the developing world, to the most recent, nonconsensual tubal ligations performed on more than 150 incarcerated women in California between 2006 and 2010 (Castro 2004; Gomez, Fuentes, and Allina 2014; Oparah and Bonaparte 2015; Van Hollen 2003).

During my fieldwork, several community stakeholders expressed their suspicion that Syrian refugees in particular pursued pregnancy for the purpose of increasing their welfare benefits, preferring to maintain a perpetual state of dependence on state aid rather than earn an honest living through wage labor. These accusations were often, puzzlingly, followed by explanations that framed these pregnancies as the result of a "village mentality" and an inability to plan ahead, despite the fact that a significant number of families had been born and raised in the cosmopolitan centers of Damascus and Aleppo. Paradoxically, these narratives simultaneously portray Syrian refugee women both as incapable of the forethought required to rationally plan and space one's pregnancies and, at the same time, cunning enough to intentionally pursue pregnancy for their own self-interest–an action which, by definition, presumes a rationally acting subject. The logical incongruences inherent in these representations illustrate Kandaswamy's (2012: 42) observation that hegemony is constituted through "complicated and *often contradictory* articulations of race, gender, sexuality, and class" (emphasis my own).

In their everyday interactions with refugees, clinicians, their staff, and stakeholders in the field of refugee resettlement repeatedly attempt to ed-

ucate Syrians about the moral importance of self-sufficiency through hard work and formal employment, thus shaping them into productive capitalist subjects. For example, Rima had asked her obstetrician to sign a form attesting to her temporary disability so that she could be excused from ESL classes and qualify for subsidized childcare during her third trimester of pregnancy. The obstetrician, whose misunderstanding, I suspect, was largely feigned, cheerfully reassured her: "No, no, you don't need to worry about that; you can actually keep on going to school up until the day you give birth! Don't worry about that at all!"

Since her arrival to the United States, Rima had learned the importance of showing up to appointments on time, participating in job training, and attending classes—skills that assured her continued access to resources provided by resettlement and service provision agencies. These skills enabled her to enact the role of a good, compliant patient despite frustrations that she expressed in private: "In Syria, if you are healthy [during pregnancy], you go only three times [to the doctor]. Here they give you paper after paper and ask you to go constantly." Although Rima attended a clinic that served a large Arabic-speaking population of several thousand Iraqi and Syrian immigrants, none of the papers she referred to were translated into Arabic. As we drove to the clinic, she showed me how she had used Google translate on her cell phone to try to decipher an intimidating legal document, which requested her participation in a statewide genetic screening program. She carried with her additional documents that explained the purpose of her upcoming glucose tolerance test, the risks of gestational diabetes, and brochures about the importance of a proper diet during pregnancy. All were written in English and of limited use to her, yet she kept careful track of the files and diligently brought them to every appointment, including the reminder card for her 2:45 PM ultrasound. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, she was reprimanded for her "late" arrival by office staff, who forced her to choose between violating her religious commitment (not to mention her own sense of personal comfort) and rescheduling the ultrasound for a later date with no guarantee that her preference would be accommodated. The at-times-contradictory assumptions that shape perceptions of Syrian refugee women contribute to their experiences of disrespect and discrimination within a larger regime of exclusion and stigmatization in healthcare settings.

While this analysis has focused on the ways in which refugee women experience multiple forms of exclusion and stigmatization in reproductive healthcare settings, we also see how refugee women—albeit with varying levels of success—take advantage of the resources available to them to challenge, negotiate with, or appropriate the disciplinary norms of biomedicine. Morgan and Roberts (2012: 241) have shown how some women's reproduction is perceived as "responsible" and "rational"—that is, as aligning with the demographic ambitions of the state, while other women's reproduction is

stigmatized as "irrational" and viewed as a threat to the progress of the nation. These discursive regimes of "reproductive governance" (Morgan and Roberts 2012: 241) presuppose and valorize particular types of modern, calculating subjects who seek to plan and space their pregnancies (Baker 2009; Fordyce 2012; Hirsch 2008; Johnson-Hanks 2006; Ong 2003). By the same logic, populations viewed as hyperfertile are denigrated as irresponsible citizens who have, in the case of refugees, failed to properly internalize the "American" values of rationality, forethought, and self-sufficiency.

Conclusion

As I listened to the obstetrician's cheerful reassurance that Rima could, thankfully, continue to fulfill her responsibilities as a productive and responsible future citizen by attending ESL until the moment she entered labor, I recalled the many times I had heard analogous sentiments expressed during my medical training. I had observed similar situations, in which pregnant patients would request an obstetrician's support in qualifying for reduced hours or exemption from work and were dismayed when their requests were received with the same cheerful reassurance that they could absolutely keep working throughout pregnancy, often accompanied by a personal anecdote: "When I was pregnant, I delivered my patients' babies up until the day I gave birth myself!" Refugee women, clearly, are not the only patients subject to disciplinary governance in clinical settings.

In this sense, I view my own research on refugee women's experiences as contributing to the field of critical refugee studies, which, as Espiritu (2014: 10, quoting Agamben 2002) has argued, attends to "'the refugee' not as an object of investigation but rather as a *paradigm* 'whose function [is] to establish and make intelligible a wider set of problems.'" The disciplinary gendered norms that structure the experiences of my research participants remain pervasive in contemporary sociopolitical discourses and define the hegemonic models of "responsible motherhood" toward which all women are expected to aspire. These models are, in turn, shaped by regimes of exclusion based on race, class, and immigration status that pervade past and present discussions of reproduction in the U.S. context. In this way, the practice of critical refugee studies (Espiritu 2014) provides a lens through which to identify and articulate the more widespread neoliberal ideologies that inform contemporary practices of biomedicine as well as U.S. policies related to immigration and healthcare. As such, the findings presented here not only illustrate several of the systemic injustices faced by refugees resettled in the United States but also illuminate the ways in which these injustices more generally reflect the larger morally laden principles that structure the American socioeconomic and healthcare systems.

Anthropologists Willen (2012), Ticktin (2011), and Giordano (2008) have shown how race, religion, and gender impact perceptions of which migrants "deserve" to be classified as refugees, showing how the imperative to enact proper modes of victimhood is undergirded by the gendered logic of racialization. Bridges (2011) and (Gálvez 2011) have illustrated how race and immigration status inform healthcare providers' moral evaluations of patients as "responsible" mothers, and demonstrate patient responsibility and deservingness as intertwined in the reproductive healthcare setting. The study discussed here advances critical anthropological inquiry into the discursive construction of "deservingness" by considering how recently resettled refugee women experience the double burden of enacting their responsibility and deservingness as both racialized Muslim refugees and future mothers. This chapter illuminates inequities experienced by refugee women seeking reproductive healthcare and points to the ways in which the ultimate root causes of such inequities are intertwined with the classist logics and racist assumptions that structure American welfare policy.

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12

Valuing Health, Negotiating Paradoxes
Medicalization of Hymen, Hymenoplasty, and Women's Healthcare in Ontario

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Verena E. Kozmann

Introduction

Female sexual abstinence until marriage still plays a crucial role in diverse sociocultural contexts worldwide–for instance, in Asian countries, the Middle East, African and South American countries, and their respective diaspora communities. Unmarried women affected by the virginity imperative and suspected of having "lost" their hymen may face bullying, verbal and physical violence, death threats, and femicide. By reconstructing the hymen through hymenoplasty, a woman may be able to avoid such negative sociocultural sanctions. Yet the medical procedure of repairing a hymen places medical practitioners in an ethical bind: on the one hand, hymen medicalization and the participation in a secretive procedure may lead to charges of "virginity fraud" and thereby perpetuate gender-based discrimination; on the other hand, hymen repair may be a deliberate decision and an act of sexual self-determination, which are considered human rights.

In the Canadian universal healthcare system, neither virginity testing nor hymen examinations and related services are regulated by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC), nor are there published procedural recommendations from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. Hymen repair requests are neither paid for by Medicare nor criminalized, as is the case with female genital mutilation or cutting. Hymeno-

plasty, also known as hymen repair or hymenorrhaphy, is considered an elective cosmetic surgery, offered by plastic surgeons in private practice, hence available only to those who can pay the steep surgery costs.

During my field research in Toronto exploring hymenoplasty practices related to virginity imperative pressures, I was in contact with many healthcare providers. The engagement with these interlocutors, combined with the realization of the lack of attention to women who proactively request help, led me to ask a series of questions: How is the value of women's health negotiated by medical practitioners confronted with a patient whose requests were hitherto unknown to the health system as a whole, and which appear to be in opposition to prevailing values? How do practitioners inside Toronto's fast-paced healthcare system respond to possibly controversial requests of hymen repair and related virginity examinations? In what follows, I address these questions in three sections: First, through relaying the refugee journey of Hala, I briefly introduce how the hymen may transform from an inconspicuous membrane into a sociomedical issue. Second, I contextualize refugee healthcare services within the Canadian universal healthcare system in Toronto. Third, I detail the work of two medical professionals who treat uninsured refugees in the Greater Toronto Area and are regularly confronted with patients requesting hymenoplasty and hymen-related virginity examinations.

In doing so, I investigate principles of everyday healthcare decision-making and thereby complicate the narrative of the well-resettled refugee and the immigrant body within Canada's universal healthcare system. Exploring regimes of exclusion and inclusion within refugee healthcare, I seek to give voice to women whose stories would otherwise not be heard: women like the young refugee Hala and dedicated medical practitioners like Sandra and Samira, who work with and advocate for refugees.

Methods

Research for this chapter was conducted in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area between February 2017 and December 2018. During these months, I conducted forty-four formal in-depth interviews and informal conversations in English. I interviewed plastic surgeons, gynecologists, general practitioners, counselors, a practical nurse, and a physician's assistant, all of whom have had experience with virginity imperative patients. In addition, I interviewed young women between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, who shared their refugee and immigration stories concerning their sexuality and related body perceptions. I collected additional data through limited participant observations in two clinics serving refugees and uninsured residents in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. Research participants were found

mainly through snowballing and personal recommendations within medical practitioners' circles, and poster advertisements to recruit young women as interviewees outside clinics. For institutional support and legitimation during the research, I was affiliated with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. In order to fulfill local North American standards of ethically responsible research, I sought the approval of the University of Toronto's Research Ethics Board (REB) for the duration of the entire project. Participant observations were limited to medical practitioners and administrators, since the REB protocol did not allow for patient contact inside clinics. The names of all participants have been changed and anonymized.

In light of the fractured manifestations of the phenomena studied and their secretive, intimate, and intimidating character, I opted for a multisited (Falzon 2009; Marcus 1998), glocalization research approach (Gingrich 2002: 228). My research strategy and decision-making embraced an inclusivist approach that informed my way of thinking about the phenomena I studied and how I made research decisions (Lock and Nguyen 2010).

Within this context, I define the hospital/clinic as a site of complex and multifaceted relationships, a place of ultimate concern, a "condensation of everyday life" (Long, Hunter, and van der Geest 2008: 73), and a site of everyday routine interactions between doctors, patients, and staff (Van der Geest and Finkler 2004). In doing so, this research aims to shed light on the (re)constructiveness of biomedical technology occurring every day. I take Lock and Nguyen's stance that

> biomedical technologies are not autonomous entities, the effects of which are essentially uniform whenever they are put into operation. Professional choices about the use of specific technologies–when exactly to put them into practice, and how to interpret the results and effects that they bring about–are combined with broader societal variables including culturally informed values and constraints, specific local and global objectives, economic disparities, and inconsistent or non-existent regulations. (Lock and Nguyen 2010: 5)

Despite a growing body of literature on hymenoplasty and an array of general research on asymmetric doctor/patient interaction (e.g., Pilnick and Dingwall 2011), little is known about the everyday experiences and perceptions of medical practitioners confronted with hymenoplasty demands. How are such patient requests handled during relevant doctor/patient interactions–in other words, how are related ethical and moral values enacted?

After conducting research on hymenoplasty practices in Beirut (Kozmann 2013), I was interested in continuing to explore the related ethical challenges of the hymen and female virginity issues in a Western, metropolitan context. The city of Toronto, with its growing Middle Eastern and Muslim communities, had not yet been the subject of published empirical research on hymenoplasty and related virginity issue patients.

Transformation: Self-Determined Sexuality and the Social Hymen

When Hala and I met for the first time, she was in her mid-twenties and had just arrived in Toronto a few months before as a legal, state-sponsored Syrian refugee. The third child of a Palestinian couple forced to leave their home country more than twenty years ago, Hala had lived most of her life in Syria when she became a displaced person during the Syrian war, a conflict that forced millions of people out of their homes. Leaving Syria on her own, she was separated from family and friends and from her religious community at just twenty-one years old. Before arriving in Toronto, Hala had lived for a few years in two neighboring Arab countries in North Africa. Along the way, she learned English and French, and received training and worked as an accountant, translator, and tourist guide. Nonetheless, she remained without many future prospects.

As Hala shared her refugee journey, it became apparent that she saw both challenges and opportunities as plentiful. "Toronto is the place to be," she gushed. Toronto offers more than mere asylum–as a state-sponsored refugee, Hala is a welcomed newcomer; she has been allowed to work, study, and move freely since the day of her arrival. Toronto is also her adopted new home, far away from Syria, where she lived a life embedded and sheltered among her family and friends, her school, and her religious community. Between then and now, she has been exposed to a multitude of new and different lifestyles. This exposure has fostered the development of a sense of independence and individualism in her. She had decided to explore these new lifestyles in all directions, including premarital sexuality–acting in diametrical opposition to the values of her upbringing. "Virginity is [a] sacred thing," she explained. "It's like, without it, you are dead, right?" The "virginity thing" she was referring to is commonly known as the "membrane of virginity" or, by its biomedical name, the hymen. When deemed proof of female virginity, the hymen gains its sociomedical importance from the combination of the "right" physical state *and* its sociocultural significance. This is the case in diverse sociocultural contexts worldwide, including various communities now resident within Western societies. Thus, the hymen is transformed from an inconspicuous membrane to a body part heavily charged with meaning and a potentially efficacious, gendering category: the "social hymen," as the Egyptian gynecologist and feminist Nawal El Saadawi (1980) termed this phenomenon in her writings in the late 1970s.

For Hala, preserving her virginity was synonymous with maintaining the intact state of the hymen. To her, as to her Syrian friends and family, this was not a private matter, nor an individual choice, but part of what was expected from her, part of her upbringing and part of her everyday life as a girl in Syria:

Well, I've been raised on [this] since the first day of my period. I was only twelve . . . . I've been exposed to this world so early. So, the first thing first: you got your period, you become a woman. And mom didn't have to talk a lot because, in Syria, all the media, all the TV series, like any culture came from the regime. It would be about [the] bad girl who loses her virginity, [and the] good girl is who kept it, right? So, it's not just a family [matter]. It's a culture. It's a political thing. It's like through the TV shows, the drama, the books, the stories, the concepts. So, it's the most important thing. Like you find many, many [movie] scenes [where] an actor [is] holding a knife and [is] going to kill his sister because she slept with someone. So that's very scary for a little kid. But that was in my head.

For Hala, virginity is not a theoretical concept, but a reality, a sociocultural factor of her upbringing, one she is expected to embrace and embody, even living abroad. Thus, deciding to explore sexuality in all aspects means not only giving up the "sacred" hymen but also distancing herself, both from this internalized sociocultural expectation and from her family. And she risks being shunned, bullied, and even physically attacked. Were she ever to need hymenal proof of her virginity, as is common when getting married, she is aware that she would not be able to provide it. Additionally, she knows about the option of reconstructing the hymen through hymenoplasty, having heard about young women who took advantage of this surgery. She explained that it would not be something she personally would opt for at this point of her life, but she might in the future. Asked about her sources of information concerning the physicality of women's genitalia, female virginity in general, and the hymen in particular, she replied that she would prefer to consult with a medical professional but had so far failed to find one. This left her somewhat isolated on her journey, attempting to navigate between two very different worlds.

Hala's story is one of many refugee and immigration stories I had the privilege to hear during my field research. It encapsulates many of the themes this chapter and my research overall touch on. By telling the story of her struggle and journey, I aim not only to humanize this intimate and polarizing topic but also to highlight the importance of taking patients' requests seriously. I argue in the following that refugees like Hala are in need of confidential medical advice to help them overcome uncertainties related to these secretive, intimate, intimidating, and potentially shame-generating subjects. I argue further that medical practitioners may be well suited to inform and accompany women throughout this process.

Hymenoplasty: A Global Phenomenon in Toronto

Spread by migration, the internet, and medical tourism, hymenoplasty is considered transregional, making the issue of the virtue of female virginity a

global one (Franklin, Lury, and Stacey 2000; Lindisfarne 1994). The metropolitan area of Toronto is home to about 5.9 million residents, and Toronto is the biggest city in Canada with about 2.7 million residents, 75 percent of whom are immigrants and their children. The province of Ontario is said to host 29 percent first-generation immigrants, and Canada prides itself on being made up of more than 250 ethnic groups. Canada is also proud to be a shelter and new home for refugees and immigrants (Statistics Canada 2013). Currently, Syrians represent the most prominent Middle Eastern refugee group, with more than 50,000 admissions since 2015–a trend that will likely continue in the coming years. Although virginity imperative requests are commonly presumed to be linked to the presence of Arab, Muslim, and North African immigrants and refugees, physicians shared with me that hymenoplasty requests are by no means limited to Muslim women, but include requests of women with diverse backgrounds, including Korean, Chinese, and South American. In its last published national household survey of 2011, Canada showed a total population of 1,053,945 Muslims (out of a national total population of 33,476,688). The province of Ontario is home to 581,950 Muslims (total population 12,651,795), mainly of Indian, Pakistani, Iranian, and Egyptian/Arab background. Greater Toronto's overall female population is 1,336,805 (total population 2,576,025), and its female Muslim population is 105,920 (total Muslim population 212,345). The growing Muslim population is currently the third largest religious community in Canada (after Christians and nonreligious residents), a trend that is expected to continue due to political upheaval in the Middle East (Statistics Canada 2013).

The Canadian universal healthcare system is designed to serve all legal residents. Established under premier Pierre Trudeau in the 1970s, its five principles were detailed in the Canadian Health Care Act of 1984: first, accessibility–the reasonable access to health services; second, the public administration of publicly funded and privately delivered healthcare; third, the portability of services within Canada; fourth, the comprehensiveness of necessary health services; and fifth, universality–all insured residents are entitled to the same level of healthcare.

Officially, refugees are entitled to medical insurance starting at the time of arrival. However, as I learned through limited participant observation in two clinics for refugees and the uninsured over a period of seven months, not all newcomers receive publicly funded health insurance immediately. Numerous administrative and non-administrative barriers can get in the way, such as document completion, language unfamiliarity, healthcare system navigation, disruptions to routines, availability of transportation, lack of trust in the new order, recurrent trauma, and worries about loved ones left behind. At best, newcomers may wait ninety days after arrival to start using regular healthcare services, but waiting times can be as long as two years.

To shorten the wait time, teams of health workers and physicians have taken the initiative to create refugee and uninsured clinics inside Toronto

and around the Greater Toronto Area. These clinics are often run on a shoe-string, staffed by volunteers, and reliant on private donors or small grants directly from the city of Toronto. One of the two clinics I visited regularly accepts patient requests related to hymenoplasty and the virginity impera-tive. Sandra and Samira are two dedicated medical practitioners who work in these clinics. In their everyday work, they prove how a healthcare regime of inclusiveness may be enacted as they manage patient requests such as virginity examinations and hymenoplasty.

Medical Practitioners: Enacting Inclusion

Sandra, a practical nurse, closes the door behind us for one of our con-versations, and the sounds of the bustling refugee clinic–children, parents, and families waiting for appointments, the multiprofessional medical team, administrators, and translators attending to patients speaking in English, French, Arabic, and Turkish–melt into the background. We sit in her office, next to the office of the clinic's founder and only doctor. The atmosphere is professional, as expected, but also strikingly positive, friendly, and familial. There is a lot of laughter, patients are greeted on a first-name basis, and children run around playing. More than once, I witnessed a child storm-ing straight through the corridor to hug Sandra's legs, followed by proud mothers or by both parents. Sandra started working in this refugee clinic two years ago and now attends to everything related to women's and re-productive health. The doctor thought it would be better to have a woman attending to these issues, as he felt his female patients were not entirely comfortable with him. A few years ago, he started the clinic with fewer than ten patients. Now they are reaching 4,000 patients, while continuously expanding. Sandra explains that one reason for the rapidly growing patient numbers is the way that access to Canadian healthcare is organized. To enter the universal healthcare system, you must have access to a general practitioner, who then refers you to specialists as needed. Most of Sandra's patients traveled straight from the Middle East to Canada, and the last new-comer wave included mainly Syrians.

Asked about it directly, Sandra shares with me her introduction to vir-ginity and hymen testing. She says that this is her first job as a practical nurse and that it took some time to earn her patients' trust. Once she had established her authority next to the doctor, she started to see more and more female patients. Now she is the authority on everything related to women's and reproductive health in the clinic. Clearly, Sandra is a young professional passionate about her job. While she talks, my gaze wanders from the children's drawings pinned on the walls, past the examination ta-ble near the window, to two trees moving peacefully in the wind, and back

onto her desk, which is dominated by a large computer screen. The digital calendar organizing her patient visits is open, showing the appointments of the day; next to it another tab is open, showing the webpage SexandU.ca. Created by the SOGC, this webpage is the tool she relies on to illustrate information about women's bodies when her patients ask about their genitals, sexuality, reproductive health, and healthy relationships. "Hymen" or "virginity" are unfortunately not searchable keywords, a circumstance she did not even recognize until about six months ago, when patients started to request consultations regarding the state of the hymen, female virginity, and hymen reconstruction.

In comparison, she says, female genital mutilation is something she sees almost daily. It was an issue with which she was familiar, almost expecting, but requests related to female virginity and hymen examinations took time to arise during consultations. In comparison to genital mutilation or cutting, this was not a topic during her years of studying, and it is not visible during gynecological examinations or addressed directly during routine consultations. It took many months of working in her position before the first woman approached her asking to see her teenage daughter for a checkup, which turned out to mean to examine the state of her hymen and to make a statement about possible related sexual activity. Since then, a growing number of patients have requested her professional opinion on female virginity, hymen examinations, and hymenoplasty, which she refers to as hymen repair. She concludes from these encounters that her patients first had to build trust. Now they do not ask for the doctor anymore; they ask for her. She narrates the story of a patient she perceives as a model of integration, highly informed but still needing trusted consultations on this sensitive topic:

> She was in her late thirties. But she had never been married, had never been sexually active. She was considering an engagement, and she was very, very sort of Canadianized, had been here for quite some time. Excellent language capacity, excellent system navigation. And so really like a model of how we'd love all of our patients to be when they've been here for several years, right? And very well informed and educated. But not regarding this specific issue of virginity and sex and healthy relationships in a marriage. And so, she came to me, and she said, "I've decided to not listen to my aunties and not do random searches on the internet. I want to have a discussion with a healthcare provider who can give me an informed perspective on this."

Sandra is convinced that she gets to see a side of her patients that colleagues in other clinics might not get to experience, since this is an intimate and potentially shameful topic. She sees the difference she can make in building sustainable, trusting relationships with individual patients. This is not the rule in the fast-paced public healthcare system, which pays clinics according to their number of consultations. Within the system, she explains

that patients usually have about ten minutes or so to talk to their clinicians. Sandra's work schedule is different: "You won't find a poster on this wall encouraging patients to make separate appointments for different health concerns." She has the time resources to keep the door closed and continue a consultation, even if it takes longer than scheduled. Here she does not need to rush through patients. If the door is closed longer than expected, nobody will come, knock, and interrupt. Instead, a colleague will take on the next patient for her. This approach is part of the clinic's mission to acknowledge refugees as being an especially vulnerable group of patients, potentially suffering from flight-related traumas, which can be triggered at any moment. When they are, adequate time should be taken to address them. She concludes that this is also the kind of flexibility that is needed by patients who request hymen and virginity examinations during an appointment, because women would never declare the real reason for their appointments at the time of booking.

Sandra's clinic is not representative of how healthcare is provided in Toronto, operating at the margins in various ways and filling in some of the universal healthcare system gaps. As noted earlier, in the Canadian universal healthcare system, the costs of virginity testing, hymen examinations, and hymen repair services are not covered, and the procedures not taught as part of professional training or regulated by the SOGC. Officially, hymenoplasty, virginity testing, and hymen examinations do not exist as healthcare concerns. Hymenoplasty is considered an elective cosmetic surgery offered by plastic surgeons, to be paid for privately. This, I argue, reflects a particular biomedical approach.

The Hymen: A Biomedical Approach vs. Medicalization Requests

Current biomedicine has little to say about the hymen's physical properties. To take just one example, *Stedman's Medical Dictionary* describes it as "a thin membranous fold highly variable in appearance which partly occludes the ostium of the vagina prior to its rupture (which may occur for a variety of reasons). It is frequently absent (even in virgins) although remnants are commonly present as hymenal caruncle tags" (Stedman 1995: 821). What Stedman's (1995) dictionary kept in parentheses curiously reflects what biomedicine still claims not to do–grant a sociomedical meaning to bodies and body parts. Against long-prevailing beliefs that the hymen must "tear and bleed" during the first penetration, this membrane is described neither as containing blood vessels nor as necessarily tearing as expected. Instead, medical dictionaries categorize several different hymen forms–that is, various forms of permeability (see figure 12.1).
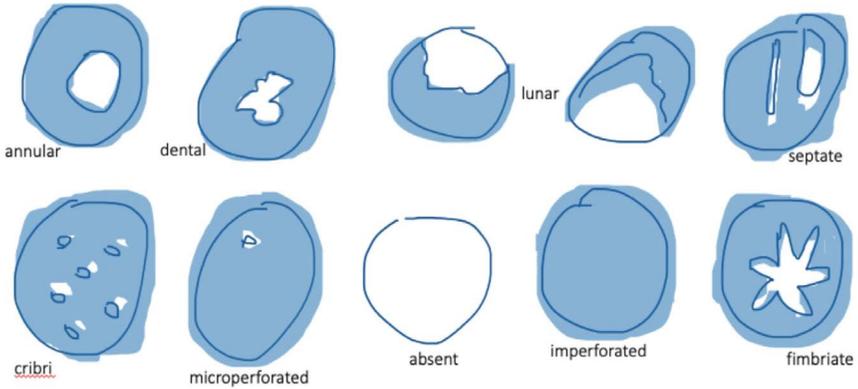
Figure 12.1. Different Forms of Biomedical Hymen Permeability Categories. Figure drawn by the author.

In addition, the hymen also exhibits a broad spectrum of elasticity: it may tear easily or may be flexible enough to be found intact until the first childbirth. Also, there might be some bleeding, or there might be no blood at all, as the hymen itself is not considered to have any blood vessels (e.g., Emans et al. 1994; Dickens and Shaw 2015). From a biomedical perspective, there is generally no indication for treating this body part. However, women who approach medical professionals concerning virginity imperative–related pressures seek to overcome not a biomedical issue, but a sociomedical one–they are requesting medicalization. As Peter Conrad explained the term, medicalization means

> a problem [is] defined in medical terms, described using medical language, understood through the adoption of a medical framework, or treated with a medical intervention . . . . It is important to remember that medicalization describes a process . . . . Thus, we can examine the medicalization of . . . menopause or erectile dysfunction . . . . Active agents are necessary for most problems to become medicalized. Social movements, patient organizations, and individual patients have also been important advocates for medicalization. (Conrad 2007: 5–6)

Medicalization enables biomedicine to answer patient requests. A successful hymenoplasty surgery makes any rupture invisible. Thus, it is impossible to tell the difference between an originally intact and a surgically manipulated hymen. Therefore, the procedure may adequately conceal premarital intercourse. Paradoxically, it is the physician's triple role of being part of the biomedicine community, a trusted authority by the society/community, and secret ally to individual women that evokes ethical considerations of medical professionals (e.g., Juth et al. 2013). This seems especially

true in Western contexts such as Toronto, where a gynecologist working in a mainstream hospital shared with me that, yes, he and his colleagues are approached in this respect but are relieved not to be required to make decisions on their own, as the service would not be paid for anyway and is thus categorically denied. In light of this, how do Sandra and her colleague Samira relate to this paradox?

Practicing Inclusiveness: A (Neo)Liberal Concern

Sandra was introduced to hymen examinations only due to her work with Middle Eastern refugees. Her colleague Samira, who works as a refugee counselor in the same clinic, has a different story to tell. Born in the Middle East, she became a refugee herself as a young girl, first migrating with her family to a neighboring country, then to Northern Europe before she found her long-term home in Ontario. As a Middle Eastern woman personally affected by the female virginity imperative, she overheard her mother and her aunt, a doctor, talk about hymenoplasty. Now, as a counselor, Samira is regularly asked to mediate between parents and daughters, and encourages individual women to think through the consequences of having their hymen repaired. If they decide to undergo the surgery, she helps them find the right plastic surgeon in downtown Toronto who otherwise, she says, would not want to have anything to do with the refugee clinic. However, the surgeon accepts patients who can pay the steep price of CAD 3,000–5,000. Another recommendation is using an artificial hymen tissue and inserting it just before the wedding night act. "It all depends on the nerves of the woman," she commented dryly. While Samira's recommendations are manifold, she emphasizes that her counseling always aims at helping the individual woman find the best way to handle her specific situation, which varies between cases and families.

Sandra's and Samira's perceptions on how to medicalize the hymen differ not only in how they were personally introduced to the issue. Their experiences with embodied female virginity also vary given their medical training and position in the medical profession. Presented with the same bioethical issue, they represent two sides of the same approach in finding suitable solutions and bridging sociocultural differences. They employ the often (neo)liberal-labeled "informed choice" option (Jeffreys 2005: 37) as a silver bullet, though somewhat differently from the World Health Organization's recent recommendation. In October 2018, the World Health Organization (2018) categorically condemned hymen testing in relation to female virginity testing as a practice constituting violence against women.

The need to increase international awareness is generally recognized. Sandra and Samira's everyday work experiences demonstrate that the simple refusal to work with women seeking medical advice is not enough. The

categorical condemnation of all hymenoplasty practices and virginity examinations may not lead to the elimination of the issue as desired. Instead it may further marginalize individual women who find themselves in need of urgent help. Their inclusive approach–categorizing requests for surgery, and related examinations as symptoms of an underlying problem and not as its source–allows for much-needed differentiation and a broader range of strategies for responding to individual patient needs, which are not decided on the patient's behalf but together with her.

Conclusion

Medical professionals can choose to conceptualize hymen repair as an individual woman's deliberate decision. Denying this decision has the potential to (re)construct female refugees and immigrants as mere subordinated and passive victims of a culturized, static rule. Writing about hymen repair means working with two separate but interlocking categories: hymen repair practices–that is, medicalization processes–and notions about embodiments of virginity or the hymen. In line with this, I suggest reframing hymenoplasty and virginity imperative–related requests as a symptom of, not as the origin of, potential discrimination against self-determined sexuality. Perceptions concerning (re)creating the social hymen by the factual reconstruction of the physical hymen may be understood as meaningful and empowering (re)integrations of the individual into the social and political body. The categorical refusal to grant the surgery would not change the status quo of virginity imperatives but potentially discriminate twice against the woman asking for it, forcing her to find other solutions to her intimate and intimidating problem. While the medicalization of the hymen may empower and aid some women (Purdy 2001), this practice also has the potential to feed into the continuation of discrimination against women. Yet, as the perceptions, experiences, and daily practices of medical practitioners such as Sandra and Samira show, there might be a productive way to frame these requests. Perceiving virginity testing, hymen examinations, and hymenoplasty consultations as opportunities to provide female patients with the information needed to make informed choices may forge a path where female refugees and immigrants can build bridges of trust, fostering not only their transitions into a new healthcare system but facilitating the transformation of the healthcare system itself.

Acknowledgments

tate a complex, controversial and often polarizing topic, in need of further unpacking.

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Part V

Reshaping Humanitarianism

13

A Death Sentence?

UNRWA in the Trump Era

Khaldun Bshara

> I work part time in construction, but that is not enough to cover all my expenses. Any reduction of aid would be a death sentence for refugees in Gaza. The work is almost nonexistent. There are not enough jobs. Those who work for the Palestinian Authority receive only a stipend, and Hamas employees get a quarter of their salary.
>
> —Ahmed al Assar from the Nuseirat Refugee Camp in Gaza

Introduction

With a family of eight who has been receiving aid from UNRWA for almost twelve years, the 42-year-old Ahmed al-Assar from the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza describes the U.S. withdrawal of UNRWA funding as "a death sentence" (Balousha and Eglas 2018).[1] As refugees, al-Assar's family is subject to multiple forces: the state, nonstate actors, and international organizations. As an international organization, the United Nations has been the most influential body in the lives of the Palestine refugees. In 1949, the United Nations established the *United Nations Relief and Works Agency* for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as the international body solely responsible for dealing with the Palestinian refugees' problems in their transition to "repatriation" as laid down by the UN Resolution 194.[2] UNRWA

has obtained its funding from a variety of international donor countries, the United States prominently among them.

Since its establishment in 1949, UNRWA has been providing shelter, medicine, education, fresh water, and food rations to all those who live in its five fields of operation (West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon), meet the operational definition of who is a refugee, register with the agency, and require assistance. The descendants of the original Palestinian refugees are also eligible to register and receive services (Yahya 2006: 41–2).

On 31 August 2018, U.S. Department of State spokesperson Heather Nauert issued a statement titled "On U.S. Assistance to UNRWA," declaring that "the United States will not make additional contributions to UNRWA" (U.S. Department of State 2018). In light of the U.S. withdrawal of support from UNRWA, which had been providing approximately 30 percent of the organization's budget, UNRWA officials (UNRWA 2019b), EU representatives (Multimedia Centre European Parliament 2018), and regimes of host countries (Al-Khalidi 2018) were alarmed and issued statements detailing the cataclysmic impact of this decision on not only the welfare of the Palestinian refugees, but also on the stability of the region, as a result of the possible radicalization of a population with nothing to lose or nothing to live for.

I want to explore the consequences of the possible collapse of UNRWA from the perspective of acting bodies on the ground: UNRWA officials, Popular Committees, UNRWA employees, and UNRWA's humanitarian aid subjects–the refugees themselves. Instead of concentrating on the political consequences, which have been the focus of EU and host countries and, to a lesser extent, UNRWA's rhetoric, I examine what the refugees consider a "death sentence" in terms of the everyday life of refugees and refugee camps. This will reveal the situation beyond humanitarian politics and allow us to speculate about the future of the refugees amid changing funding landscapes.

Methods

The research for this chapter was conducted between June 2018 and December 2019. It is based on formal and informal interviews, as well as on observations of the refugee scene in Palestine. It also relies on exhaustive reading of news, documents, and figures related to the U.S. budget cuts to UNRWA. I juxtaposed my fieldwork and "armchair" ethnography to fill in gaps and reread what are purported to be "the facts." In addition to several one-on-one short formal and informal interviews with laborers, refugee camps' Popular Committee members, and administrators from the Jalazone and Dair Ammar refugee camps of the West Bank and the Al Shati (Beach) refugee camp of Gaza Strip, I interviewed university students in two groups of approximately fifteen students each. One group was from the Islamic

University in Gaza, and the other was from Al Quds University in the West Bank. My questions were identical: In light of recent U.S. budget cuts, what is the role of UNRWA in the refugees' everyday life? What is the political mandate of UNRWA vis-à-vis the refugees' right of return? Under what circumstances might UNRWA collapse, and what are the potential consequences of this collapse? I conducted these interviews and conversations in Arabic and later translated excerpts from my notes to English. The names of the informants and interviewees in this chapter are pseudonyms.

The Politics of Aid

In the early afternoon of 2 January 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted,

> It's not only Pakistan that we pay billions of dollars to for nothing, but also many other countries, and others. As an example, we pay the Palestinians HUNDRED OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS a year and get no appreciation or respect. They don't even want to negotiate a long overdue . . .

> . . . peace treaty with Israel. We have taken Jerusalem, the toughest part of the negotiation, off the table, but Israel, for that, would have had to pay more. But with the Palestinians no longer willing to talk peace, why should we make any of these massive future payments to them? (Trump 2018)

These tweets illustrated the condescension and fury with which his administration treated aid-receiving countries. The U.S. government believed that UNRWA's services had suspended the normalization process of Palestinian refugee lives and hindered the possibility of treating them as active agents in planning their own future. The U.S. administration under Trump claimed that "Palestinians, wherever they live, deserve better than an endlessly crisis-driven service provision model. They deserve to be able to plan for the future" (U.S. Department of State 2018). U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley went further, saying that Palestinian refugees' "right of return . . . ought to be off the table" ("The Guardian View on Trump's Palestinian Policy" 2018). The politics of aid were unmistakable in Haley's statement concerning the peace process and the expected output: "We still very much want to have a peace process. Nothing changes with that. The Palestinians now have to show they want to come to the table . . . . As of now, they're not coming to the table, but they ask for aid. We're not giving the aid. We're going to make sure that they come to the table" (Beaumont 2018).

On the one hand, the United States believes that UNRWA, through its aid, has perpetuated the conditions that make Palestinian refugees demand their return to their places of origin, thereby preventing the normalization of refugees into citizens in their respective host countries. On the other hand, the ar-

gument has been made that the provision of shelter, food rations, healthcare, education, and social services has turned the slummy refugee camps into attractive habitats and hindered the possibility of normalizing their "diasporic" condition, a claim that the Israeli government and Israeli researchers (see Ben-Porath and Marx 1971) have long endorsed. The refugees, however, have persistently made the opposite claim, namely that the resources and the services UNRWA provides support the refugees' desire to stay together and create a sense of community that had been shattered by displacement.

UNRWA's Aid and the Refugees' Right of Return

There is only weak correlation between the aid UNRWA provides and the refugees' relentless demands for their right of return, thus negating the recent U.S. claims about UNRWA as an obstacle to the "normalization" of refugees into citizens in the host countries.

According to UNRWA, approximately 25 percent of more than five million Palestinian refugees are still living in fifty-eight recognized refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.[3] The percentage of the refugees remaining in the camps versus those who left or settled in the host countries varies according to the geopolitical consideration of the host country (see table 13.1).

Palestinian refugees have been living in refugee camps for several reasons, one of which, though not the most important, is economic. Nonmonetary considerations include the presence of preferred communal and societal values. This explains the voluntarily "territorialization" of refugees from the same village of origin to the same camp or even to the same neighborhood in a certain camp. It is worth mentioning that many refugees never

Table 13.1. Distribution of Palestinian Refugees around the Middle East (2014–18).

The UNRWA's Field of Operations	Number of Official Camps	Registered Refugees in Camps	Registered Refugees	Refugee Percentage Still Living in Camps
Jordan (as of 2016)	10	397,000	2,206,736	18
Lebanon (as of 2014)	12	249,000	469,555	53
Syria (as of 2018)	9	158,000	552,000	30
West Bank (as of 2016)	19	207,000	828,328	25
Gaza Strip (as of 2018)	8	600,000	1,386,455	45
Total	**58**	**1,611,000**	**5,443,074**	

Source: Based on data available on the UNRWA website: www.unrwa.org.

agreed to live in refugee camps, which they consider humiliating and socially inadequate. In other words, the economic calculations that result from UNRWA's aid, on the one hand, and the living on or off refugee camps and upholding refugee status, on the other hand, are not dependent variables. Contrary to the U.S. government's claims, the collapse of UNRWA does not automatically mean the end of the right of return or the weakening of the refugees' relationship to their home of origin.

While most of the refugees I interviewed were adamant about the weak, if any, correlation between UNRWA's aid and their demand to return, few believe that the collapse of UNRWA would end the right of return. For them, UNRWA is an official international body whose existence symbolizes the continuity of the Palestinian tragedy, as my informants Safi (a refugee and political activist), Ihdoush (a camp's Popular Committee member), and Qattawi (current UNRWA employee) insist. For them, UNRWA has kept the memory of Palestinian displacement alive, sometimes explicitly (e.g., with its frequent appeals and reports to the United Nations), and at other times implicitly (e.g., with its work toward making younger refugee generations aware of their displacement through education, awareness campaigns, and testimonials). The slogans on banners distributed by the Refugee Affairs Department of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) on Palestine Independence Day in Ramallah in November 2019 emphasized the importance of UNRWA as "a living testimony of our people's catastrophe and displacement in 1948" (see figure 13.1) and demanded that the United

Figure 13.1. Banner in Ramallah: "UNRWA Remains a Living Testimony for the Catastrophe and Displacement of Our People in 1948." November 2019. Photo by the author.

Figure 13.2. Banner in Ramallah: "We Call upon the UN to Extend the Mandate to Support and Protect UNRWA." November 2019. Photo by the author.

Nations "extend the mandate, the support, and the protection for UNRWA" (see figure 13.2). Palestinian artists who participated in the "Freedom for Movement" marathon in Bethlehem in April 2019 depicted the U.S. budget cuts to UNRWA as "a crime against humanity" (figure 13.3).

Palestinian Refugees and UNRWA's Possible Collapse

On an early morning in July 2019, I sat with a few refugees around the coffee peddler at Al Shati (Beach) camp, the largest camp in the Gaza Strip. They faced the congested and graffitied structures with their backs to the Mediterranean Sea. As we talked about the fate of the refugees and refugee camps in light of UNRWA's struggles, Abu Khamis, a retired UNRWA educator in his late sixties, was indifferent to the idea of UNRWA's collapse. Abu Khamis reflected on the future of UNRWA, an organization that earned him a living for more than four decades:

> UNRWA comes with a political agenda that is dictated by its donors. It fulfilled its mission, and it is about time to leave . . . . They made us docile until Israel has become strong enough, and we have become pathetic enough. If there were no UNRWA after the Nakba era, we would have fought and re-

Figure 13.3. Street Artwork in Bethlehem Depicting the U.S. Withdrawal of Funds from UNRWA as a Crime against Humanity. April 2019. Photo by the author.

turned to our homeland . . . . Their role was to calm us down and made our life possible in the diaspora. Now, Palestinians are dispersed politically and spatially; if UNRWA collapses, nothing would change.

One may understand an old refugee's indifference to the collapse of UNRWA as a result of its weakening over the last few decades. The organization experienced a decline in aid and relief provision and the adoption of new developmental paradigms, such as the microfinance and microentrepreneur programs (MMPs) in 1991. The MMPs would later become the UNRWA's Microfinance Department. This department grew exponentially over the next two decades, and in 2008 it became the largest microfinance service provider in Palestine and the second largest in Syria. Further, UNRWA launched loan products specifically targeting home-based women entrepreneurs in 2010 and young people in 2012.[4] The bleak reality of Palestinian political division and the generally frustrating outcomes of the Arab Spring explain much of the apparent indifference. The fresh drama of the Arab Spring in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya overshadowed the Palestinian issue, specifically its refugee problem.

Although my informants Safi, Ihdoush, and Qattawi witnessed firsthand the reduction of UNRWA services, especially in the 1970s, they still considered the collapse of UNRWA to be impossible and hard to imagine. They

saw UNRWA as an international organization not solely dependent on U.S. support. They believed that the world would not allow for the collapse of UNRWA and all the chaos that might ensue.

Younger refugee generations, university students in particular, whom I interviewed in groups of around fifteen about the UNRWA's possible collapse in light of the U.S. withdrawal of its support, have mixed feelings. The Gaza Strip university students approached the issue pragmatically, inquiring about what would replace UNRWA as service provider. They were mostly indifferent to the collapse, so long as another entity would take up the UNRWA's everyday duties and responsibilities (education, healthcare, and waste management). Although most of those I interviewed believed that the UNRWA's aid to refugees had been reduced a great deal (in relief services, education, and healthcare), still, the little aid UNRWA provided was crucial for the wellbeing of the UNRWA's employees and their families and for many needy families in Gaza Strip.

Ethical and pragmatic considerations were recurring themes when I interviewed refugees from the West Bank, who were university students, laborers, and private sector employees. Some thought UNRWA's collapse would not make a difference in relation to services or right of return; others could not think of this possibility, as it was "just impossible." The majority believed that it would be catastrophic unless another body, such as the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), or even the State of Israel (in classic occupation model), would take over and compensate for the services UNRWA was providing.

My informants, young and old alike, believed that UNRWA had lost much of its credibility, as the organization could not fulfill its "ultimate purpose"–that is, repatriation. For example, Qattawi suggested that UNRWA had become "a company Ltd." Safi believed that the establishment of UNRWA for the Palestinian case was "a remedy for deportation rather than repatriation. If Palestine refugees were the responsibility of the UNHCR (not UNRWA), the refugees would have gone home like millions of refugees in post–World War II." Ihdoush thought of UNRWA as "a non-autonomous organization that has been mostly reliant on U.S. funds and hence its vulnerability."

U.S. Aid Cuts and the "Death" of UNRWA

Throughout its seven decades of work, UNRWA reformed and responded to the changing political and economic concurrent paradigms. For example, by the late 1970s, UNRWA cut its food rations program, limiting it to needy families known as the Special Hardship Cases (SHC). UNRWA introduced the SHC program in 1978, and, upon its implementation, the new program

increased the amount of assistance to needy families among the refugee population. In 1982, UNRWA totally abolished the mass distribution of food rations, leaving the SHC as the only program that has been providing food rations for needy refugees (United Nations General Assembly 2006).

Before UNRWA abolished the food program, rations and employment had been used as an apparatus to govern camps' spaces and refugees' bodies. Refugees who wished to maintain their UNRWA rations, employment, and other services had to keep clean records with UNRWA and comply with UNRWA's regulations, including the licensing of any construction activity. It is worth mentioning that UNRWA, around this era, constituted a major employer in Palestine such that by 1985, it employed 6.4 percent of the labor force of the West Bank and 11.3 percent of that of the Gaza Strip (Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute 2014).

When the food distribution program was limited to the SHC, the majority of refugees were no longer recipients and therefore no longer governed by the food-rations technology. The refugees, ironically, had become "free" and started an intensive wave of camp construction. The reduction of aid did not encourage refugees to leave camps or disregard their right of return.

The Oslo Accords of 1993 brought about conditions similar to those of late 1970. The agreement, signed between the state of Israel and the PLO, did not address the issue of Palestinian refugees, leaving it for the final status negotiation (planned to commence in 1998, after five years from the signing of the interim agreement). The Camp David and later Taba rounds of negotiations (both in 2000) reached a deadlock, mainly because of the problematic issue of the refugees' right of return. The Palestine/Israel differences deepened and accelerated toward full confrontation in 2002, putting an end to the peace process. In this era, the Palestinian refugees' demand for return got a boost. Refugee camps evolved into urban spaces, and refugees into productive subjects (both politically and economically). New paradigms related to the Palestinian right to return emerged; these included Nakba events, commemorations, memorials, oral history projects, websites, and media projects. The establishment of the PNA enabled a whole set of practices that had been infusing the imaginary of refugees' younger generations with dreams of return. In short, UNRWA's cuts of the late 1970s and the similar conditions created in the Oslo and post-Oslo eras resulted in rather unexpected outputs in relation to the normalization of refugee camps and the naturalizing of refugees into subjects.

An examination of the impact of U.S. aid withdrawal on Palestinian governmental and nongovernmental organizations sheds light on the effects of a possible UNRWA collapse. For almost three decades, the U.S. government and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) were major contributors to the PNA budget, as part of the U.S. commitment to the peace process that it helped bring about in 1993. The

U.S. government and USAID, for example, contributed around US$1 billion to the West Bank and Gaza Strip between 2009 and 2013. In contrast, contributions over the last ten years averaged around US$0.5 billion (USAID 2019). While the U.S. government constituted a major donor to the PNA budget, USAID supported huge infrastructural projects, including health and education facilities, as well as sewage, water, electricity, and road networks. The U.S. government believed that easing economic pressure on Palestinian communities would foster an environment conducive to peace (see figure 13.4).

U.S. aid to Palestine was withdrawn more than once. For example, the United States withdrew its support when Hamas gained control of the Palestinian legislative council (parliament) after the 2006 elections. More recently, in 2018, after Trump's election to the presidency, the United States announced aid cuts to the Palestinian Authority. The withdrawal of U.S. aid resulted in the discontinuity of projects and the dismissing of hundreds, if not thousands, of direct and indirect employees from well-paying jobs. U.S. aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip was dedicated mainly to three budget lines: (1) Economic Support Fund/Security Support Assistance (dispensed through USAID); (2) Narcotics Control (dispensed through the U.S. Department of State); and (3) Refugee and Migration (dispensed through the U.S. Department of State).

Job markets were disrupted. Some employees became self-employed, bolstered by experience and capital they had gained through their USAID jobs; others relocated into new jobs in the private or public sector, albeit
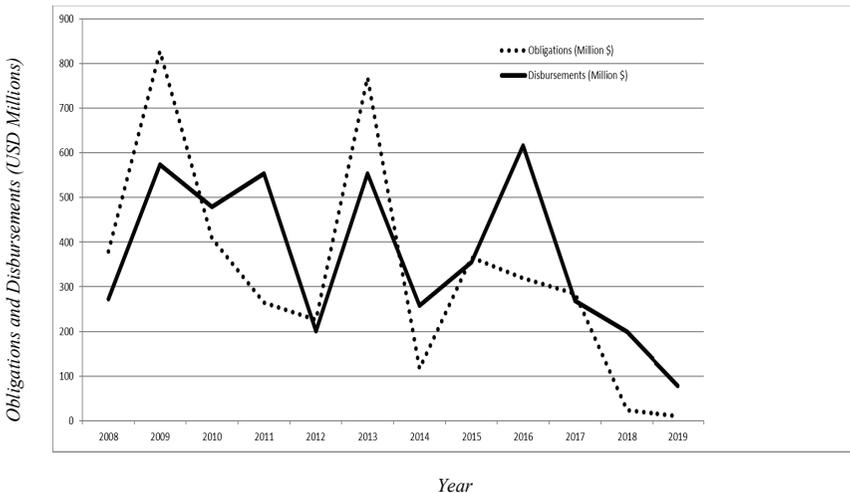
Figure 13.4. U.S. Aid (in USD) to the West Bank and Gaza Strip (2008–19). Figure created by the author based on data from USAID (2019).

with reduced salaries; others fled to the Arab oil-rich countries empowered with their acquired experiences; a minority joined the unemployed crowds in Palestine. Contractors who benefited from the USAID infrastructural projects either downsized their teams or diverted their labor surpluses to private and public sector projects with fierce competition and much lower returns.

Although the U.S. and the USAID contributions to the PNA general budget and the infrastructural projects constituted a substantial part of the Palestinian budget, the Palestinians showed resilience and flexibility in adapting to the new conditions. Of course, these major funding cuts did not transpire unnoticed; on the contrary, future plans were interrupted, individual and collective dreams evaporated, projects were postponed, budgets were cut, and salaries went unpaid. Yet the economy did not collapse; the PNA continued to govern the West Bank and paid the salaries and covered the electricity and healthcare bills of the Gaza Strip. Hamas has governed Gaza Strip since 2006, and it continues to pay reduced salaries to its employees and manages to raise funds for infrastructural works in between wars on Gaza.

UNRWA's Funding as a Zero Sum Game

Ultimately, when U.S. aid was reduced, the Palestinians relied on other resources (Arab League support, for example), activated austerity measures (reducing salaries and halting projects or employment), and relied on their own resources (such as higher taxes). In other words, Palestinians, as a quasi-autonomous state or civil society, managed to compensate for the cuts until aid was restored. Moreover, as figure 13.4 shows, U.S. disbursements to the West Bank and Gaza substantially exceeded the obligations in 2018 and 2019. In other words, the U.S. government was and still is reluctant to fully cease all U.S. aid to Palestine. In this regard, the U.S. disbursed US$200 million and US$78 million for 2018 and 2019, respectively, as opposed to the obligations of US$23 million and US$10 million (see table 13.2).

For decades, the United States provided around 28 percent of UNRWA's budget, citing the need to promote stability in the Levant. The U.S. contribution for 2018 was reduced from US$365 million to US$65 million, in addition to the termination of US$200 million in funding for humanitarian aid and development assistance in the West Bank and Gaza.

UNRWA has been the major source of income for 30,000 employees in its five fields of operation. Of UNRWA's total budget allocation, education comprises 54 percent, healthcare 17 percent, and welfare, relief programs, and camp infrastructure 29 percent (Jansen 2018). This sheds light on the fate of the Palestinians in case of a potential UNRWA collapse.

Table 13.2. U.S. Aid to Palestine (2008–19)

Year	Obligations (Million $)	Disbursements (Million $)	Year	Obligations (Million $)	Disbursements (Million $)
2008	379	273	2014	117	258
2009	828	573	2015	366	355
2010	409	479	2016	319	616
2011	264	553	2017	285	268
2012	226	201	2018	**23**	**200**
2013	769	554	2019	**10**	**78**

Source: Based on data from USAID (2019).

Table 13.3, compiled and organized by the author through examining UNRWA annual budgets, available on the organization's official website (www.unrwa.org), shows the pattern of U.S. support in relation to UNRWA's total budget for the last ten years (2009–18). Table 13.3 indicates that, throughout this period, the United States contributed 26 percent, the European Union contributed 16 percent, and the remaining donors, including

Table 13.3. Donations (USD) by Country and Percentage of UNRWA's Total Budget (2009–18). Note: black background indicates percentages that were well below the average; white background indicates contributions around the average; and gray background indicates contributions well above the average.

Year	Source and Percentage						Total (USD)
	United States	%	EU* & ECHO**	%	Others	%	
2018	60,429,282	5%	178,989,326	14%	1,037,000,339	81%	1,276,418,947
2017	364,267,603	32%	142,515,744	13%	614,447,046	55%	1,121,230,393
2016	368,429,712	30%	159,765,906	13%	714,719,149	58%	1,242,914,767
2015	380,593,116	31%	136,751,943	11%	729,457,556	59%	1,246,802,615
2014	408,751,396	31%	139,402,221	11%	775,701,566	59%	1,323,855,183
2013	294,023,401	24%	216,386,867	18%	708,603,948	58%	1,219,014,216
2012	233,328,550	26%	204,098,161	22%	470,480,660	52%	907,907,371
2011	239,440,945	25%	175,450,364	18%	557,792,209	57%	972,683,518
2010	247,872,993	29%	165,244,161	20%	427,625,338	51%	840,742,492
2009	267,959,631	26%	228,011,786	23%	516,245,020	51%	1,012,216,437
Total USD	2,865,096,629	26%	1,746,616,479	16%	6,552,072,831	59%	11,163,785,939

*EU: European Union, **ECHO: European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office.
Source: Based on data available on the UNRWA website: www.unrwa.org.

the Arab countries, contributed 59 percent of the total budget of UNRWA. U.S. aid fluctuated between 24 to 32 percent, and only in 2018 did it drop to 5 percent in light of the recent cut decision. European Union contributions fluctuated substantially between 11 and 23 percent. Other contributions also varied between 51 and 59 percent, with the exception of 2018, when they contributed the vast majority of the budget (81 percent). Contribution percentages, excluding 2018, were 28 percent, 16 percent, and 56 percent, respectively.

This analysis indicates that UNRWA managed to raise the funds necessary to implement its work and programs. To illustrate this, a black background indicates percentages that were well below the average; white indicates contributions around the average; and gray indicates contributions well above the average. The color code makes it easier to note that whenever there were deficits (black) in a group of donors, there were extra funds (gray) made available by other groups. This division of labor, or the "zero sum game," among donors was almost systematic in the last ten years and shows that the international community steps in to compensate for any deficits. It also indicates that fluctuations occurred and were subject to the donor's ability and willingness to give at that particular moment.

Politics of Aid and the Humanitarian Paradox

If table 13.3 reveals anything, it is that the international community is not ready for a "death sentence" for UNRWA. These donors were driven by their moral commitments to the Palestinian cause in general and to the refugees in particular, by their fear of the collapse of weak states in the region, or by their uncompromising belief in the peace process. On 13 December 2019, the United Nations General Assembly voted to extend the mandate of UNRWA until 2023 (UNRWA 2019d) instead of the habitual extension of one year, which some of my informants regarded as a direct challenge to U.S. cuts to UNRWA.

However, the U.S. government exhibited similar behavior. According to figure 13.4, the United States disbursed more than its obligations to Palestine during the years 2018 and 2019. As a matter of fact, almost two years after President Trump's withdrawal of funds, he signed a "foreign aid spending legislation" that provided US$75 million in humanitarian and economic aid for the West Bank and Gaza and another US$75 million for security aid to support the Palestinian Authority. Moreover, to prevent the Trump administration from entirely eliminating Palestinian aid, as he did in 2018, the bill included a provision that prohibits it from diverting more than 10 percent of aid allocated to any other country (Harris 2019).

Table 13.3 also shows that UNRWA's budget for the five fields of operation in the Middle East is so small that it does not constitute a burden on

any of the donors. The U.S. government contribution in particular is a negligible percentage of its annual budget and incomparable to U.S. support for Israel, which amounts to US\$4 billion annually (Green 2016). If U.S. aid is not restored, and UNRWA does not manage to raise the difference, services and programs would likely be cut by approximately 28 percent (the U.S. average giving over the last ten years), bringing UNRWA's budgets closer to those of 2010–12. Such cuts would activate austerity measures resulting in further expense rationalizing, service cuts (as all my informants suggested), and budgetary reforms.

The human price of aid cuts would mean further downsizing services that would affect the less fortunate refugees, the ordinary people. Camp resident Zahia Mekdad describes UNRWA's aid cut as "a purely political decision that would hurt only ordinary people . . . . There has already been a reduction of aid in recent years. If it is reduced more, it is the women, children, and young people who will suffer, not the politicians" (Balousha and Eglas 2018). Moreover, since around 70 percent of UNRWA's (2019c) budget is directed toward education and healthcare, we may also expect that these two budgetary lines would suffer the most from any future cuts. These two sectors have already been subject to cuts and have suffered greatly in the last few years. Refugee complaints about the quality of education and the moderate healthcare system have been the subject of demonstrations and strikes. We also know that while well-off refugees purchase private health insurance and enroll their children in public or private schools in nearby villages and towns, less fortunate refugees rely largely on the UNRWA's education and healthcare services. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the UNRWA's 30,000 employees are employed in these two sectors, and any cuts would be "a massacre against the employees," according to Amal al-Batsh, deputy chairman of the UNRWA's staff union (Humaid 2018).

The 2019 UNRWA Emergency Appeal addresses the most important humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in Gaza and the West Bank. These are the main strategic priorities:

> Strategic Priority 1: Crisis-affected Palestine refugee households facing acute shocks have increased economic *access to food* through food aid, Cash for Work, and e-cards targeting the most vulnerable households.

> Strategic Priority 2: Palestine refugees maintain their *access to critical services and assistance*, including education; health; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and are protected from the most severe impacts of hostilities and violence through the *provision of mental health and psychosocial assistance and monitoring, reporting and advocacy.* (UNRWA 2019b, emphasis added)

The political consequences of the collapse of UNRWA have been acknowledged. Defunding UNRWA could have serious consequences for the region and for the world. The economies of the Occupied Palestinian Ter-

ritories (Gaza in particular), Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria could disintegrate as they depend on UNRWA's foreign currency injections and service provision (Jansen 2018).

Humanitarianism, the NGOization of misery, and neoliberal developmental discourses have been widely critiqued (Haddad 2016; Hanieh 2008a, 2008b; Feldman 2007a, 2007b; Ferris 2003; Le More 2005; Redfield 2005, 2006; Rieff 2002; Ticktin 2006; Walker 1997). The possibility of the collapse of UNRWA—because of U.S. cuts or for any other reason—unmasks deficiencies in political and humanitarian discourse. While the collapse of the humanitarian industry may lead to political unrest, the success of UNRWA to pull itself together and mitigate U.S. aid cuts, as the organization has managed to do throughout its history, would further normalize and prolong the refugees' misery—hence the humanitarian paradox. My informant Safi argues that there is a straightforward causal relationship between the national struggle momentum and UNRWA's strength and resilience to cope with increasing responsibility. For him, as Palestinian activism declines, the ability of UNRWA to cope with the blows of time, such as the one in which Palestinians are living, would be limited and ineffective. As such, the collapse of UNRWA is practically a symptom of the failures of the current Palestinian political struggle.

Mohsen Abu Ramadan, an economic analyst from Gaza, believes that UNRWA has launched a new policy that only entrenches the worsening situation in Gaza Strip, including the eleven-year siege, extreme poverty, and high unemployment. He says,

> UNRWA and many international organizations, especially those funded by the U.S. in Gaza, are moving towards one direction, which is to replace the Palestinian cause—an end to the Israeli occupation and siege and the right of return for refugees—with a humanitarian agenda . . . . It is an attempt to apply the "economic peace" theory instead of the Palestinian national solutions. (Humaid 2018)

Conclusion

UNRWA's ability to absorb financial shocks and to mobilize funds appears to contradict the possibility of collapse as a result of the U.S. withdrawal of aid. So far, UNRWA has survived because it managed to mobilize funds from other resources, rationalized these resources, and deployed austerity measures to reduce services. In addition, since the early 1990s, UNRWA has been shifting toward development paradigms, such as microfinance programs.

My research rejects the idea that U.S. aid reduction would impose a "death sentence" on UNRWA by challenging the U.S. and other governments' claim that UNRWA's aid perpetuates the refugee problem. This

chapter shows that the reduction of UNRWA programs in late 1970s, and similar conditions post-Oslo, resulted in renewed commemorative and spatial practices. Still, a "death sentence" appears to be directed at less fortunate refugees, who are forced to endure harsh living conditions and the constant reduction of UNRWA support.

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Notes

1. The epigraph is from an interview quoted in Balousha and Eglas (2018).
2. Article 11 of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 (III), on 11 December 1948,

    resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible; Instructs the Conciliation Commission to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation, and to maintain close relations with the Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and, through him, with the appropriate organs and agencies of the United Nations. (http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/043/65/IMG/NR004365.pdf)

3. These data are available on the UNRWA website: https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work.
4. These data are available on the UNRWA website: https://www.unrwa.org/content/microfinance-department.

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14

Race, Religion, and Afghan Refugees' Practices of Care in Greece

Zareena A. Grewal

Introduction: Muslims and the Politics of Recognition in Greece

On 7 June 2019, Greek Education and Religious Affairs minister Costas Gavroglou addressed a crowd of about one hundred Muslims, journalists, and state officials at the "inauguration" of the government's partially constructed, purpose-built mosque in Athens: "Athens now has a dignified place of worship for Muslims whether they are citizens or migrants, refugees, or visitors. The right to pray to the god you believe in, like the right of a child to go to school, does not depend on the circumstances under which someone arrived here. Everyone has these rights. They are non-negotiable human rights" (Speed 2019). By 2019, there were nearly 300,000 Muslims in Athens, yet it remained the only European capital without an operational mosque. After the offer of Saudi Arabia's King Fahd to build an exquisite mosque in Athens was refused, a 2006 presidential decree committed the Greek government to build the first mosque in the city since Ottoman rule ended in 1821. Numerous delays halted construction, including in 2014 when contractors refused to take on the project out of fear of violent attacks from members of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party; Muslims are the most frequent targets of their racist attacks (Palivos 2018: 272). With the leftist SYRIZA party's electoral success in 2015, plans for building a mosque re-

sumed as the population of Muslims in Greece skyrocketed, with more than one million refugees arriving that year alone—the majority fleeing wars in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. A vote in Parliament to accelerate the mosque's construction was passed in 2016, despite publicly voiced opposition from the powerful Eastern Orthodox Church and the white supremacist-fascist Golden Dawn party's leader, Nikolaos Michaloliakos, who denounced Parliament as traitors building a "shrine to slavery" (Speed 2019). "Are we returning to Turkish occupation?" he continued; "Because the Parthenon too was a mosque. We cannot rule out that they demand it becomes a mosque once again."

While Golden Dawn represents an extremist, populist far-right fringe within Greece (constituting its third largest political party although they were voted out of Parliament in 2019), Greece has seen a marked rise in xenophobia and anti-Muslim racism alongside a severe economic crisis and pervasive unemployment since 2010. In 2017, a national survey found only 36.3 percent of Greeks had positive associations with the word "Muslim," and another survey found 76 percent of Greeks believe being an Orthodox Christian is essential to being "truly Greek" (Georgakopoulos 2017; Pew Research Center 2017). Like its drab structure, the long delays in the building of the mosque in Athens reflect the contested place of Muslims in Greece. Lacking a loudspeaker for calls to prayer, domes, minarets, or any kind of aesthetic detail at all save a simple sign, the small rectangular building in the capital's Votanikos district resembles a military office, situated within a navy compound surrounded by a high wall topped with barbed wire, surveillance cameras, and a twenty-four-hour security detail. Critics of the leftist SYRIZA party government, which was in majority at the time, dismissed the inauguration of the partially constructed mosque a few weeks before an election as a political stunt to attract minority votes (SYRIZA ultimately lost the 2019 election). Rather than celebratory, the tone of the government officials at the inauguration was cautious. The Muslims in attendance were visibly pleased, but one Pakistani activist, whom I first encountered in Athens in 2018, expressed more frustration than relief over what he described as a "small, half-victory."

Muslims' long-standing political organizing to establish an official mosque in Athens and to be recognized by the state is a form of resisting the oppressive conditions and real damage they suffer as a result of political, legal, and social exclusion (Cabot 2014). Charles Taylor (1994) names this form of identity politics a "politics of recognition" particular to modern liberal-democratic polities whereby marginalized groups claim rights from the state ultimately on the basis of an equal right to difference. Although 90 percent of Greeks identify as Eastern Orthodox Christians, Greece's eastern land and sea borders have long been the primary point of entry to the European Union for all "mixed migrants," an umbrella term used by the United

Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR 2018) and defined as "complex population movements including refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants . . . environmental migrants, smuggled persons, victims of trafficking and stranded migrants," and most of these migrants are Muslims. The process by which states determine whom among the "mixed migrants" are morally legitimate suffering bodies who deserve asylum or immigration status produces what Miriam Ticktin (2011: 5) calls a "new humanity": refugees are considered second-class, disabled, and disadvantaged, but welcome such that their arrival simultaneously produces new forms of state "policing or surveillance–harsher security measures [are] pushed through under humanitarian pretexts, and victims [are] moved all too easily from endangered to dangerous, innocent to delinquent." Refugees are typically (and simultaneously) represented as pitiful charity cases and as national security threats. Michaloliakos's vitriolic diatribe against the mosque extended the racial logic to its most extreme: the refugees running for their lives from war and desperate circumstances are recast not only as potential terrorists but as threatening conquerors, a latent Islamic imperial force.

The opaque process and slow bureaucratic drag around the government's construction of the mosque mirrors the highly traumatizing bureaucratic processes millions of migrants endure as they wait to be granted asylum in Europe. While the Greek government struggles to meet the overwhelming needs of displaced people stuck in the country as a result of the 2016 EU-Turkey deal, glossing the rise in bigotry as a simple reaction to the "refugee crisis" erases Europe's role in the deep histories and geopolitical contexts that create refugees. A "carceral humanitarianism," as Kelly Oliver (2017) terms it, in which refugees are "rescued" but then sorted, contained within fences and checkpoints, commodified and surveilled, has replaced actual political solutions to the so-called refugee crisis. Although the UNHCR's mandate is humanitarian and claims to be nonpartisan and apolitical, Oliver (2017) argues that humanitarian aid and human rights discourses are always political, often co-opted by states, and operate according to a logic of exclusion that values some lives over others, rendering some "collateral damage." This carceral humanitarianism creates classes of refugees and upholds rather than challenges racism, xenophobia, disaster capitalism, and state violence. Of course, Oliver's (2017: 6) critique of the European Union's carceral humanitarianism and her attention to "the uneasy alliance between humanitarian aid, human rights, and military operations," which produces refugees as criminals, a societal burden, or "collateral damage," is not simply a call to dispense with humanitarian aid and human rights. Rather, she critiques the calculating machine and lesser-of-evils utilitarian approach of states and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to refugees in light of Hannah Arendt's ([1964] 2003: 36) reminder that "those who choose the lesser evil forget very quickly that they chose evil."

Numerous critics have demonstrated that the militarized internment and the inhumane conditions of the Greek camps are by design, a determent strategy, which the European Union has hailed as a success since the overall numbers of refugees reaching Greece have gone down since 2016, despite the grim, alarming fact that the ratio of deaths to the number of arrivals has dramatically increased (IOM 2018). Clearly, discrimination and the restriction of people's rights do not end after refugees have left their countries of origin; rather, cycles of violence, insecurity, marginalization, and discrimination often continue or emerge in the country of asylum, including forms of violence that are linked to religion in different ways.

For their part, Muslims in Greece are not waiting to be recognized or embraced by the state or society in order to perform their weekly congregational prayers on Fridays (*juma*); in camps such as Moria in Lesvos, refugees have created provisional prayer spaces behind the barbed wire fences, and Muslims in Athens have established more than 120 makeshift mosques scattered in neighborhoods throughout the city in converted and carpeted garages, warehouses, factories, and basements (Speed 2019). Ethnic community centers and NGO offices run by Muslim immigrants and refugees who also serve refugee populations such as the Afghan Community Center near Omonia Square in central Athens, which I visited, also offer spaces for communal prayer. Although this Afghan organization is inclusive and secular in orientation, serving both Muslim and Christian Afghans in Athens, it is also an important node in refugees' transnational Islamic charitable networks, which operate on the fringes of the NGO ecosystem, providing important, and often invisible, relief to and, importantly, often from, refugees. In what follows, I examine how Afghan Muslim refugees articulate a collectivist politics of care that expands narrow, secular conceptions of "basic rights" and social obligations through invocations of the *umma,* the global Muslim community, and *baraka,* the concentration of blessings in particular practices or spaces.

Examining refugee-initiated Islamic aid in the Greek borderlands illuminates the operations and exclusions engendered by anti-Muslim racism and carceral humanitarianism that reduce refugees to security risks or moochers. Such an examination also captures the richness and complexity of refugees' everyday religious practices and lives in community as those of an "unsettled" racial minority. Eric Tang's (2015) term captures the ways refugees figure in existing racial hierarchies and recurring, life-long cycles of displacement and captivity beyond a linear redemption story of being uprooted, displaced, and, finally, resettled. My findings on the religious dimensions of encounters between service providers (who are usually Muslim refugees themselves) and refugees receiving services parallel the Islamic networks of charitable giving and care that Amira Mittermaier (2019) tracked in Cairene slums, in which Muslims operate from an ethical refusal to locate justice in

the future. Mittermaier (2019: 4) argues that this Islamic ethical thinking and praxis is often politically illegible within liberal conceptions of charity and neoliberal discourses of development.

My inquiry into the religious dimensions of refugees' mutual care is not to give religion exaggerated primacy but to show religion as one of several factors that nurture obligational ties between refugees. Even those refugees who self-identify primarily in ethnic, national, and regional terms find themselves increasingly identified and apprehended as Muslims in Greece by the state and by ordinary Greeks regardless of their individual religious commitments due to the dominance of Islam as a racial super-category in discourses about refugees. In fact, several of the refugees I interviewed who had been raised in Muslim families identified as atheists, agnostics, nothing in particular, and newly converted, born-again Protestant Christians. Scholars understand the racialization of Islam not as something "done to" Muslims and those whose bodies are "read" as Muslims but as a process that weaves through all of our political, social, and economic lives. Rather than fall back on the term Islamophobia, which individualizes the phenomenon, I refer to it as anti-Muslim racism to signal that it is a form of racism with a legacy connected to the history of race, racism, and white supremacy, which affects many minorities and not only Muslim refugees in the Greek borderlands (Rana et al. 2020). Attention to the everyday lives of refugees reveals that their experiences of displacement are framed by a range of intersecting and overlapping identity markers (including race and ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and age) and also by a range of oppressive structures (such as racism, including anti-Muslim racism, xenophobia, patriarchy, and homophobia). Despite the fetishization of refugees as Muslims, when it comes to Muslim refugees' care for one another, the religious dimensions of it are often made invisible. At the same time, the profoundly Christian genealogy of secular humanitarianism is unacknowledged, which is its own form of epistemic violence (Oliver 2017).

Methods

This chapter is based on a pilot study—part of a larger multisite study—on the role of religion in refugee-centered social justice organizations in Greece (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2020). The material presented is based on two short research trips to Athens and Lesvos, Greece, in October 2017 and March 2018, during which I conducted fifty-two structured and semistructured, recorded interviews with Afghan, Pakistani, Syrian, Iraqi, and Iranian refugees/migrants and their "solidarians" who live in communities and provide and/or receive aid. I was accompanied by research assistants; however, I conducted the interviews myself in English or in the refugees' native

language, and translations are my own except for those conducted in Dari/ Farsi by a professional translator. Through 2019, I conducted follow-up interviews with research participants after I (and sometimes they) left Greece by WhatsApp.

Anthropologist Heath Cabot (2019: 292) critiques the ways "ambulance-chasing" has implicated anthropology as a discipline in the violence and apartheid-like regimes of the "refugee crisis" in Europe, raising troubling questions about disciplinary relevance, funding structures, and lack of nuanced analysis. Although my time in Greece was short, I see the work as a form of the kind of "patchwork ethnographic processes and protocols" feminist anthropologists have designed around short-term field visits and enduring relationships. According to Günel, Varma, and Wantanabe (2020), "Patchwork ethnography refers not to one-time, short, instrumental trips and relationships à la consultants, but rather, to research efforts that maintain the long-term commitments, language proficiency, contextual knowledge, and slow thinking." In that sense, my research in Greek borderlands is part of a larger research project in my primary field sites in the United States, where I also work with Muslim Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan refugees. Furthermore, my research in Greece would not have been possible without the support and guidance of colleagues who have done years of research in Greek borderlands, particularly Loubna Qutami's (2018) work on transnational Palestinian networks. I hope that the findings, however preliminary, shared here reflect what Cabot (2019: 263) names as the best of what anthropology can offer: "an attention to deep, locally specific, contextualized knowledge that exceeds the anthropologist's own ways of knowing."

Islamic Care in Life and Death

Ali (a pseudonym), a friendly Afghan man and a leading refugee activist in his Afghan Athens community, arrived in Greece in 2006 as a fourteen-year-old unaccompanied minor, yet he considers himself blessed and lucky because he was already fluent in English. His language skills afforded him semiregular work as a translator and an opportunity to go to school in Greece. His close work with the international NGOs (iNGOs) over the years has given him a cynical view of how money moves from hand to hand in Greece without aiding refugees, reproducing the carceral humanitarianism that criminalizes and punishes them. In an interview, Ali reflected:

> Sixty thousand refugees in a country with twenty million, and they are keeping them in cages to make a business, profits for the NGOs and governments. If I had the money, all of these refugees would have food and shelter, be living in hotels, but groups like ours [the Afghan Community Center] don't have access to this NGO money. I didn't come to Greece to start an NGO; I

came because I was in danger. Then I was in danger here for criticizing the government.

A devout Muslim, Ali sarcastically reassured my white American research assistant Patrick that he was Buddhist. From time to time, he would jokingly ask Patrick if he was also Buddhist or liked yoga, jabs at the ways Islam is constructed as a threat while other "Eastern religions" are perceived by Westerners to be benign and exotic. Ali affirmed his strong belief that life is a series of accidents, explaining that he experienced what God has willed as a series of events that happened to him rather than choices, including making a tight-knit group of friends in Athens. He explained that his arrival in Greece from Afghanistan (via Pakistan and Iran) was more akin to floating in a directionless hot air balloon than to traveling by airplane or ship with concrete points of departure and destination, yet Afghans struggle to be officially recognized as refugees rather than immigrants. Ali recounted his own frightening, bewildering arrival and life in a refugee camp in Athens in a time when most Greeks, he claimed, had never heard of Afghanistan. Contrasting the longer histories of Afghan refugees in Athens with the spectacle of crisis focused primarily on Syrian refugees since 2012, Ali added, "We were the old refugees, under the old system. They ignored us then and even though everyone is talking about the new refugees, they ignore us old refugees even now. We're not eligible for family reunification. They see us and they say, 'No, you don't look like a refugee.'"

Ali explained how, with little support from the state and from NGOs, Afghans in Athens organized and relied on one another for help and support:

> We have never gotten a penny from anyone *because* we are refugees. We don't have documents so no one will give us money. Most of our budget [for the organization] is from my personal savings and [my] network of volunteers. A lot of people have benefitted from our suffering. If you cannot support a woman or a child or a man in their time of extreme need, then what is the purpose of your NGO, your democracy?

A few weeks before I interviewed Ali in his Athens apartment, which doubles as the headquarters for another Afghan community group, the tragic news of the sudden death of a small Afghan boy accompanied only by his father in a refugee camp had reached him and sprung him and his Muslim charitable network in Athens into action. The boy's father was beside himself with grief, and as a show of support Ali and his friends had reached out to other Muslim Pakistanis and Afghans to collect money for a proper Muslim burial in a Muslim cemetery more than two hundred miles north of Athens. Ali and his friends pooled the community's resources and oversaw the proper Islamic washing and shrouding of the boy's body. They also navigated the paperwork and bureaucracy in order to arrange the Muslim burial and a hearse to drive the long distance. Ali and his friends accompa-

nied the grieving Afghan father to northern Greece, attended the funeral, and then returned in a caravan of cars to Athens the next day.

Ali, a Shi'i Hazara, a persecuted religious and ethnic minority in Afghanistan, described the Afghan funerary details. He described in detail the adorning of the gravesite according to practices he characterized as traditional and syncretic, combining both Islamic and Buddhist elements that might be unfamiliar to non-Afghan, non-Hazara, Sunni Muslims such as myself and the local Sunni Muslim population that runs the cemetery in northern Greece. Deeply saddened by the case, Ali took some solace in the fact that he and his Afghan community had given this boy a proper Afghan Muslim burial: "I pray to the one God. It is my personal belief that there has been a lot of *baraka* (blessings) in my work because of God. He's judging everything, seeing everything. I think that God gives a heavy box to the people who can move it. He doesn't give it to everybody, and I've been given a heavy burden." Pointing to himself and shrugging, Ali laments, "I wish there had been an Ali waiting for me here when I was fourteen and scared. What I have been for the new Afghan refugees, I gave them things, support, and opportunities I could not give myself and which no one gave me. But this is my duty as a Muslim."

Like the political controversy and drawn-out bureaucratic process over the Athens mosque, Muslims in Athens have long been agitating for a Muslim cemetery to no avail. In 2009, the Greek Orthodox Church offered plots of land outside of Athens, near the port city of Piraeus, to Muslim communities, but either the plots were deemed not up to code, or complications surrounded the transfer of the deed, or zoning excluded individuals from other districts. While many faith communities prefer to be buried among their own families and religious brethren, Muslims have concerns about the particularities of Greek funerary practices, which include disinterring human remains from temporary, shallow graves to permanent, deeper graves after a few years once bones are removed and collected in a communal ossuary. As anthropologist Tina Palivos (2018) has shown, this has led some Muslim communities in Athens to spend precious resources on repatriating human remains to their countries of origin, such as Pakistan and Nigeria, or to the Muslim cemetery in Thrace, where local Greek Muslims (i.e., not immigrants) form a majority in the region, near the Greek-Turkish border. Deaths among displaced populations ignite existential and political questions about "home, community building, grief and mourning, the symbolic significance of the material body, and the state management of religious pluralism" (Palivos 2018: 276).

I am particularly interested in how the culturally loaded concept of "basic needs" in humanitarian situations is often intimately related to the religious identities and belief systems of refugees, with local (and sometimes religious) conceptualizations of "basic needs" transcending secular organi-

zations' definitions, as well as the Greek government's recognition of non-negotiable human rights. Basic needs and dignity must also be viewed in relation to the importance that displaced people may give to celebrating key rituals pertaining both to life and to death; indeed, being able to bury a loved one with dignity can be as, if not more, important than what the "international community" often assumes to be the "immediate" emergency needs for food and shelter. Deeper histories of the region, including Afghan refugees' history of processes of migration and displacement that precede 2015, not only challenge the periodization of the "refugee crisis," but also contextualize new and unexpected formations of solidarity and political organizing. The Athens Afghan community's relationships with the "old" Sunni Muslims in Thrace, who are not immigrants but a local Greek population officially recognized as a Muslim minority under the Treaty of Lausanne, ties them to a population the government recognizes as having rights to educational, linguistic, and religious freedom. At the same time, the urgency of "crisis" (even when manufactured) may produce political pressures and opportunities for rights claims on the state that did not exist before. In Lesvos in 2016, Khazer Hussein, a British-Pakistani expatriate and representative of the British Muslim charity All4Humanity, secured a small plot of land, donated by the municipality after a legal dispute over discovered remains of drowned refugees, in order to establish the island's first Muslim cemetery, where Islamic funerary rites were instituted a few miles from the refugee camps.

Muslim refugees' Islamic care and their expansive understandings of "basic rights," which accord religious rights to those living and mourning as well as to those who have passed away, demonstrate that intense suffering, violence, and exclusion are not inevitable for displaced populations. Such a view builds on the pervasive false assumption that refugees will be rejected by local populations of citizens and residents of their arrival countries and, equally, the false assumption that heterogeneous groups of refugees sharing a particular space will be hostile toward one another on the basis, for instance, of nationality, religion, or ethnicity.

Can Muslim Students Be Greek?

It is ironic that at the Athens mosque inauguration, Minister of Education Gavroglou made the case for Muslims' nonnegotiable rights to have a place of worship through the analogy of Muslim children's rights to an education because Greek public schools, like mosques and Islamic cemeteries, are another highly contentious battleground for Greek religious pluralism. In the most extreme cases of harassment of refugee students, Golden Dawn members have padlocked public schools to prevent migrant children from

entering. During my fieldwork, a racist attack on an eleven-year-old Afghan boy, Amir, made international headlines. Through Ali and the other volunteers at the Afghan Community Center who were supporting Amir, I came to know him and his family and saw firsthand how profoundly the Greek state failed them and how tightly the Afghan community joined together to protect them.

The controversy began over a school assembly memorializing Greece's role in World War II on 28 October 2017, Ochi Day, which was to be held at a neighborhood church in the Athens suburb, Dafni. The assembly included speeches and presentations of schoolwork by the children and involved a formal march of the children in celebratory formation, led by a student carrying the Greek flag. Names for the leader were drawn at random and Amir's name was selected in the lottery, much to his excitement. Arzoo, his mother, recalled his joy over being chosen when he returned from school that day until that evening when they received a call from Amir's principal. The principal explained that some felt a Muslim boy could not lead a procession in a church and should not be carrying the Greek flag. Amir and his mother conveyed their bewilderment to the principal over the phone, insisting that as Muslims they recognized churches as houses of worship of the same God worshipped in mosques, but the principal was not persuaded. She begrudgingly let Amir keep his role as line leader but told him he would carry a sign with the school's name on it rather than a Greek flag.

The night of the assembly, Amir's apartment was attacked in the middle of the night. White supremacists threw rocks and smoke bombs made of beer bottles through the window of the bedroom Amir shared with his younger brother and sister. The glass shattered over Amir's younger brother's sleeping body, an event that deeply traumatized him. The assailants left a cardboard sign which read in Greek, "Go back to your village. Leave." Amir's mother, Arzoo, awakened by the attack and her screaming children did not call the authorities initially but other members of the Afghan community, such as Ali and Masud (a pseudonym). It was only after Afghan leaders arrived at her apartment that the police were called, and an investigation began. Masud explained why the community sees the police as more of a threat than a source of support with a personal example: Golden Dawn members also attacked Masud in the street, nearly breaking several of his bones. When Masud reported the incident to police at the Agios Panteleimonas station, they taunted him. "They said, 'What kind of man are you? Fight back if they fight you; don't come running to us.'"

Crypteia, a reference to a group of ancient Spartans infamous for attacking slaves, is a neo-Nazi vigilante organization and breakaway group from Golden Dawn that claimed responsibility for the attack on Amir's apartment and threatened refugee organizations with more vigilante violence. While little is known about Crypteia, as the group benefits from being shrouded

in mystique, the religious dimensions of their ideology were detailed by the founder, a professor indicted on multiple charges in 2019, and reflect a global trend of white supremacist movements embracing paganism and claiming pre-Christian roots (Pew Research Center 2018; Vrakopoulos and Halikiopoulou 2019). A focus on the ways religion inflects global racist ideologies sheds light on the particularly local and global dimensions of their thought but also dislodges the assumption that religion belongs "naturally" to the poor, to people of color, to foreigners, to refugees, and not to white Europeans (Orsi 2005: 188). Ultimately, Ali, Masud, and the other Afghan leaders decided not to tell Arzoo about Crypteia and Golden Dawn, though they did bring Amir's father in Germany into the loop. When I expressed surprise at this paternalistic decision, they explained it was made collectively to try to protect her and the children, that it was best to assuage her fears over an isolated attack by a few individuals rather than to talk to her about a concerted movement that viewed her son, her family, and her entire community as ready targets.

The violent attack led to a media storm and scrutiny over the mishandling of the assembly by the school officials. The principal and teachers were publicly reprimanded by the mayor of Athens, Yiorgos Kaminis, and the prime minister, who apologized to Amir at an official event; the prime minister gifted him a Greek flag. Amir was transferred to a different school, though he was too terrified to attend for several weeks, and his family was moved from the apartment where they were attacked to another across town, provided by an iNGO.

It is the Afghan Community Center that bears the burden of providing Arzoo and her children with daily emotional and material support. The gifted flag hangs above Arzoo's small bed in the living room of their new, spare apartment, but Arzoo wanted only one thing: to leave Greece with her children and be reunited with her husband in Germany who was irate over the attack. The refusal to expedite her case made the gifted flag seem like an empty public relations gesture on the part of the government, although Arzoo and the children did ultimately receive formal asylum in Greece. In the interim, the stresses on the marriage grew and Amir's father divorced Arzoo. Although Amir was at the center of the media controversy, it is his younger brother who struggled the most to recover from the trauma. He spoke little and slept fitfully even six months later, Arzoo explained to me, when I visited them on Amir's twelfth birthday. Amir cut the cake Arzoo baked, celebrating with his family and his best friend and neighbor, another Afghan boy his age also named Amir. The next day, on 23 March 2018, the Afghan community offices were set ablaze and their computers smashed, with almost everything in the office destroyed. Naim Elghandour, president of the Muslim Association of Greece, received one of several threatening phone calls earlier in the year from Crypteia in which a man said, "We

are the ones who kill refugees and Muslims, who burn mosques and who attacked Emir's [*sic*] home" (Strickland 2018).

It is important to note that in interviews, Afghan refugees stressed that they knew nothing about white supremacist movements in Greece before arrival; refugees who, like Ali, had come before 2015 often wanted to recount much older stories of racist harassment and violence, challenging the temporality of the crisis and the narrative of the recent rise of Golden Dawn and its splintered groups. They also expressed frustration that they found the police were racist too.

Christian Conversion and Care

In Athens, I encountered, in addition to Muslim Afghan communities, a group of predominantly Afghan refugees who had converted to evangelical Christianity and formed a secret church in Athens because they fear for their lives due to their conversions. The Afghan Community Center, though secular in orientation, was run by a volunteer staff of Muslim Afghans who provided various forms of aid and public health education to the church group, particularly around sexual health and the prevention of STDs. The staff and the church members enjoyed an amicable relationship despite the new converts' missionary zeal and disdain for Islam.

Jibril (a pseudonym), the Afghan minister originally from Parwan, where the U.S.'s Bagram Airbase is located, proudly showed me a painting of a map of Afghanistan with a cross planted in it, symbolizing a future in which Afghanistan would be a fully Christian country (see figure 14.1). I did not ask him outright if he imagined such a goal would be reached militarily, but I did make note that, in contrast to all the other refugees with whom I spoke who drew direct parallels between U.S. war-making and their own circumstances as refugees, no one in the church whom I interviewed offered any critique of the U.S. proxy wars in Afghanistan or beyond. Instead, they focused on the brutalities of the Taliban and the hatefulness and violence of their previous religion, Islam, which did not seem to bother the Muslim Afghans listening in who also fled Afghanistan and the Taliban. (I found they occasionally offered mild protestations to negative representations of Islam on Jibril's Facebook page, typically in the form of calls for tolerance and respect.) I asked several Afghan church members why they abstained from the protests on the anniversary of the EU-Turkey deal, protests that filled the streets of Athens and eleven other major cities in Europe with millions, and again they were evasive. I surmised that the Afghan church is funded by American evangelical groups, such as Franklin Graham's Samaritan's Purse, whose tote bags and other paraphernalia were scattered throughout the Afghan church. The Iranian and Afghan refugees in the church were

Figure 14.1. Painting of the Flag and Map of Afghanistan Foregrounded by a Cross. This large painting is the most prominent piece of artwork displayed in the central chamber of the church. Photo by the author.

also the only refugees I encountered who expressed a desire to settle in the United States rather than in northern European countries (the church offers classes only in English, not in Greek or German). When I asked Jibril if they received any money from NGOs he answered after an awkward pause: "Only Jesus helps us." I smiled and answered, "Well, Jesus is not an NGO!" Everyone standing around the church listening burst out laughing, some a bit nervously, and that line of questioning was closed.

Religion, like race, usually corresponds to power and resources in the humanitarian industrial complex. In the context of the war on terror, humanitarian work is an important site of power, of claiming that Westerners are humanitarians and good people in a world filled with violence, suffering, and endless war (Grewal 2017). The very term "humanitarianism" centers the giver rather than the receiver, fusing the work of self-help with the work of "helping others." In 2015, Forbes' list of the twenty-five largest U.S. charities included nine Christian charities; four are evangelical charities with a significant footprint in Greece: World Vision, Compassion International, Cru (formerly Campus Crusade), and Samaritan's Purse. In

the United States, after 2001, President George W. Bush built on many of President Bill Clinton's neoliberal policies supporting the role of Christian and Jewish faith-based organizations in providing welfare, while reducing welfare as a right for many others in the United States. As development and humanitarian assistance shifted from governments to NGOs and carceral humanitarianism, Christian nonprofits benefited the most. The evangelical charity World Vision was already the largest privately funded development organization in the world by the 1990s, and by 2008 it had an annual budget of $2.6 billion. As American Muslim charities endured a crackdown after September 11, Christian groups internationalized and flourished with U.S. government support (McAlister 2018). Samaritan's Purse was a small nonprofit in the 1990s, and by 2015 its budget was $520 million; it follows in a long-standing imperial tradition of delivering aid while trailing behind the tanks (or fighter jets) that created refugees in Afghanistan and Iraq, what Oliver (2017) calls humanitarian warfare, the flip side of carceral humanitarianism.

Conclusion

A focus on refugee-led, religiously motivated practices of care forces us to rethink the assumptions widely held in practitioner and policy circles that refugees are passive recipients of aid, or that international practitioners always know best about what the refugees' most urgent needs are. In documenting the ways in which different groups of refugees support other refugees in Greece, I do not mean to suggest that all refugees support each other or have the same politics. For example, the refugee church members exhibited the most remarkably conservative politics compared to any other refugee community I encountered in Athens; many of them described Islam as a violent, hateful religion in contrast to the loving nature of Christianity. Their scathing characterizations of Islam might echo global elements of anti-Islamic rhetoric, but they also must be contextualized in terms of their real suffering at the hands of violent religious extremists in Afghanistan, whether the Taliban, ISIS, or other groups, as well as the stigma they live with being racialized as Muslims in Greece. Given their traumatic experiences in Afghanistan, Iran, and Greece it is understandable why they would demonize Islam and idealize Christianity (and I am in no position to question their religious sincerity as Christians). It is also interesting to note that Afghan Hazara Shi'i Muslims' and Christian converts' shared suffering at the hands of the Taliban and/or in Greece may be more important than their religious differences. The kinds of connectivity and mutual care religion might create or foreclose among refugees in the Greek borderlands deserves further study.

My focus in this chapter has been on small local acts of Islamic care between refugees in the Greek borderlands in order to shed light on the range of refugees' activism, practices of care, and religious commitments, which thus far lack sufficient scholarly attention. The same kinds of structural exclusions apply to the cases of Islamic iNGOs operating in Greek borderlands. Like the exclusion of local, refugee-led initiatives, I encountered representatives from Islamic iNGOs Charity Right and Islamic Relief, based in the United States and the United Kingdom, who struggled with access to the refugees in camps in order to offer aid, while evangelical NGOs such as Eurorelief (which has U.S. funding through the evangelical Hellenic Ministries) enjoyed full access to the camps and considerable power, despite headline-grabbing reports in which missionaries withheld food and internet access to refugees who did not express an interest in converting to Christianity. Understanding refugees' religious lives is all the more important under these circumstances of intense religious and racial discrimination, contexts in which refugees rely increasingly on one another within and across religious communal lines.

Acknowledgments

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15

Blurred Lines and Syrian Tea

Negotiations of Humanitarian-Refugee Relationships in France

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Rachel J. Farell

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Introduction

Akram sat across from me, shoulders slumped, words stilted and tangled in emotion. His throat caught. He recounted a botched foot surgery in Turkey that forced his underaged daughters to earn a meager wage to support their family as he lay home, unable to walk. The shame consumed him; this, coupled with the anger he felt over the abuse his two daughters endured under the cruel tactics of their boss in the textile factory where they worked, cast him into bouts of depression and insomnia. Now in France with his family under refugee status, Akram still suffers from high levels of stress and anxiety, not knowing how or when he will be able to seek employment. His limited grasp of French and residual health problems worry him.

Refugees of the war in Syria, like Akram, face uncertain futures upon arrival in a destination country and additional obstacles in navigating a new web of realities. Across Europe, many Syrian refugees have experienced xenophobia, Islamophobia, violence, and discrimination–particularly as immigration remains the primary anxiety of Europeans (Buchowski 2017: 520; European Commission 2018a: 76–9). For these reasons and more, Syrian refugees remain a "structurally vulnerable" population in Europe, caught within and dependent on a "government of the precarious" in which their

lives, health, hopes, and realm of possibilities are determined by a mix of external actors and policies (Bourgois et al. 2017: 299; Fassin 2011: 3).

However, as I argue, Syrian refugees are also remarkably "structurally resilient," working within and beyond the limitations of their situations to achieve desired goals—even when the permutation of possibilities is relatively narrow (Panter-Brick and Eggerman 2012: 369). This chapter examines the social interactions between Syrian refugees in France and a team of French humanitarian social workers who provide housing and psychosocial support to them in Montévrain, a commune outside of Paris. Based on six months of fieldwork in France, this chapter explores the interactions between a humanitarian team and twenty-four refugee families (where interviews were conducted with adults) as they negotiate relationships together, sometimes harmoniously and sometimes tensely. It seeks to illuminate how Syrian refugees navigate humanitarian support schemes in France, and how their agency works to challenge narratives in refugee and humanitarian studies that they are a helpless population at the mercy of the schematics of humanitarian governmentality. The chapter focuses not on the violence of humanitarianism (e.g., see Feldman 2007; Ticktin 2006); rather, it suggests that refugees find ways to rewrite the norms of the humanitarian-refugee relationship, at times persuading humanitarians to be instrumental in achieving their individual and collective desires.

Three ethnographic vignettes indicate how the refugees achieved their goals, claimed their dignity, and redefined the meanings and outcomes of particular events. These vignettes, woven together with many others that I have encountered thus far, suggest how refugees are blurring the lines of the humanitarian-victim complex by seeking to renegotiate the relationship. Instead of "humanitarian governmentality" presiding over and disciplining a "disadvantaged" refugee population, the process of subjectification between humanitarian and refugee is nuanced, complex, and mutually constitutive.

Background: Being a Syrian Refugee in France

In 2018, France ranked fourth in the world for the highest number of new asylum claims, receiving 114,500 claims (UNHCR 2018: 3). Since 2015, France has taken in approximately 30,000 Syrian refugees and asylum seekers (Pew Research Center 2018). Like much of Europe, France has tightened its borders since 2015, when the continent received its highest numbers of migrants in a single year since World War II (UNHCR 2018). It has also made stringent modifications to its asylum process in recent years—halving the time allotted to make an asylum claim once a migrant has entered France, offering fewer rights of appeal if an asylum claim has been

denied, doubling the time for maximum detention of asylum seekers from forty-five to ninety days, and cracking down on deportation for unsuccessful asylum seekers (Human Rights Watch 2018). Current French president Emmanuel Macron announced during his presidential campaign in 2017 that he wanted refugees "off the streets, out of the woods," pledging to find a solution for the thousands of refugees surviving without housing (Wilkins 2018). He has approached this in controversial ways, however—most notably by forcibly clearing refugee camps. Human Rights Watch (2017) reported that in France, "the treatment of refugees and displaced people is characterized by excessive use of police force, a chronic lack of available information about asylum laws, substandard living conditions and an inadequate response to the safeguarding needs of unaccompanied minors in displacement."

Since late 2018, France has grappled with weekly protests by the Gilets Jaunes, or the Yellow Vest movement, a grassroots economic campaign launched by members of the French working class against rising energy costs and high costs of living. While this movement (and the violence that has often accompanied its protests) has received global media attention, a parallel movement comprised and organized by migrants, displaced persons, and refugees—the Gilets Noirs, or Black Vests—has also made a mark on the French political landscape. On 12 July 2019, hundreds of Black Vest protesters, many of African origin, occupied the Panthéon in the Latin Quarter of Paris ("France Arrests 21" 2019). Though the movement began to organize in 2017, the peaceful occupation of the famous mausoleum of French citizens, including Victor Hugo, was the first event to gain widespread media attention across the country. The Black Vest demonstrations highlight an increased boldness among disenfranchised migrants to air their grievances alongside French citizens, while providing an interesting paradox. According to the November 2018 Eurobarometer report of European public opinions, immigration remains the most pressing concern among citizens (European Commission 2018b: 12). But while public sentiment is largely against immigration, the lack of public backlash against the Gilets Noirs movement simultaneously emboldens and silences it.

Methods: An Ethnography in the Making

The research for this chapter took place in a transit housing center for Syrian refugee families in Montévrain, France, a commune to the east of Paris. The center is operated by the French organization Habitat et Humanisme, which typically provides housing in France to French citizens with unstable employment, unstable family situations, or inadequate salaries to support long-term housing for their families. However, in 2017, the organization created a separate mandate to provide limited housing for migrants to France

with refugee or protected statuses, and others for asylum seekers with uncertain legal prospects. For refugees and protected migrants, these housing assignments last until more permanent housing suited to the specific needs of the family (including medical or disability accommodations) is found in France through other housing *opérateurs*, and are often scattered throughout the country. The center in Montévrain houses only Syrian refugee families, of which there are at least fourteen at any given time residing in fourteen houses rented by the organization in a small, gated neighborhood. A fifteenth, two-story, house was converted into an office.

The entire team of humanitarian actors working in the center—referred to here using pseudonyms—consists of six people, four of whom are full-time, permanent workers and two of whom are young professionals on temporary contracts to teach refugee children supplementary school lessons. Of the four, one serves as the director (Jean-Luc); one is an assistant director, *accompagnateur*, and translator for Syrian Arabic (Pierre); and two are social *intervenants*, or social workers (Layla and Marie). Layla also speaks limited Arabic and often does ad-hoc translations. The fact that none of the refugee residents speaks French produces an interesting dynamic, explored below.

Over a six-month period, I conducted interviews with all the humanitarian workers and with the adults of twenty-four families, whose members ranged from one (a single woman) to nine (a nuclear family with six adult and teenage children and the mother of the couple's father). In a single session, interviews (conducted in Arabic and translated to English for this chapter) lasted between half an hour minimum to three hours maximum. I was drawn to this fieldsite to explore the daily activities that occurred within this center, how the Habitat et Humanisme staff interacted with the residents, and the experiences, challenges, and hopes of the Syrian migrants. But while I expected a verticality to dictate the relationships between humanitarian and refugee, I discovered that these relationships were much more nuanced. The refugees I encountered were unsurprisingly quite skilled at understanding and shaping situations, events, and relationships. This chapter explores the ways in which the refugees employed these skills to tip the verticality of the relationships between them and the Habitat et Humanisme staff to create more complex and advantageous dynamics.

The Push and Pull of the Refugee-Humanitarian Relationship: Three Ethnographic Vignettes

How do refugees negotiate a humanitarian-refugee relationship with providers of humanitarian aid that is advantageous to their needs, challenging humanitarianism as a practice that subdues and subjectifies the "disadvantaged" refugee? These vignettes portray the complexities and nuances of

subjectivity through three different lenses: time, space, and role-switching. These lenses provide multidimensional illuminations of how refugees negotiate being and becoming subjects in France and how they navigate individual and collective social engagements in new contexts. The first vignette uses the practice of "tea hospitality" to illustrate how Syrian refugees invite members of the humanitarian team into their homes and seize the opportunity of a captive audience to amplify their voices–who they are, what they want, and what is important for them. By taking ownership of their temporary homes and extending invitations to French humanitarians to enter, they are reversing the role of "guest" and "host" on a microscale and subverting French idioms of time. The second vignette recounts the recurring event of a group of Syrian boys jumping fences in the neighborhood where the center is located to catch the bus, avoiding taking the long way around but aggravating French neighbors by entering private property. Because it was not possible to identify the boys specifically and because the boys all refused to identify who the culprits actually were, the incident recurred, leaving the director, the neighbors, and the municipality to sort responsibility and pass blame among themselves. Here, the rules of the game are being rewritten, and the literal "field" is being both geographically and authoritatively redefined by a collective act of rebellion underwritten by group solidarity (Bourdieu 1998). The final vignette tells of a weekend event when a French volunteer came to the center to make crêpes for the Syrian families. However, because she did not properly wash her hands or prepare her work station, according to several Syrian women, they refused to eat what she provided and instead seized the opportunity to show her how to make a Syrian sweet. Because their disapproval transpired in Arabic, the French volunteer did not realize why the shift had occurred. This snapshot also highlights the power, and simultaneous lack thereof, that the two Arabic-speaking humanitarian workers wielded, and how the refugees often took advantage of the language disconnect.

Vignette One: An Invitation for Tea

When Nahla saw me coming toward her house through her half-open kitchen window, she waved enthusiastically. She disappeared from view for a moment before flinging open the door and shouting an exaggerated "*Bonjour*!" that echoed through the courtyard, serving as both a warm welcome and proof that she was working on her French. Small Syrian children from the neighborhood rode tricycles through the cul-de-sac where Nahla's house sat. As I approached the front door, with Pierre right behind me, Nahla warmly yet forcefully grabbed my arms and leaned in for three air kisses on the cheeks. We chatted pleasantries in a slightly clumsy mix of French and Arabic as she ushered us inside and bid us to sit down in the small, naturally lit living room. It smelled of cloves. She had prepared a fresh pot of tea.

I met Nahla during my first week at the center. She was initially shy, deferring to her husband to speak, and almost never looked me in the eye. But this began to change the more she would see me, the more I would smile, and the more we would chatter about small bits of gossip from around the neighborhood and the families with whom we had both become acquainted. It helped that I spoke Arabic. She seemed to find my mistakes as I spoke endearing, even funny, and I suspect it made me seem unintimidating. I was operating in a linguistic space in which she held the dominant hand, and she would gently correct me with a sense of poise and confidence that was missing during our first encounters.

As Pierre and I got comfortable on one of the living room couches, Nahla's husband, Hamza, burst through the front door, greeting us in the same enthusiastic manner that Nahla had. Before we had time to react, Hamza doused us both in a Syrian perfume and piled pillows behind us on the couch to make us more comfortable. Nahla brought in cups of tea, placing them on a makeshift table fashioned out of two chairs pushed next to each other, with a bowl of sugar. "*Sukar*?" She asked me, in Arabic. "*Non, merci*," I responded. But she added two spoonfuls to my cup anyway and placed it, warm, into my hands. "*Ahlan wa-Sahlan*! Welcome to our home!" Hamza exclaimed, radiant with pride.

While I was thrilled at this over-the-top reception, relieved that my presence sparked enthusiasm rather than unease, Pierre was much more standoffish. There was a micropolitical game being played of which I was not immediately aware, but of which I became so nearly three hours later. More than claiming dignity (Arabic: *karama*), more than "revitalizing their collective selves" (Vandevoordt 2017: 605), and more than a display of high quality of character—although it was likely a mélange of all of these things—this gregarious act of hospitality (*karam,* a word related in Arabic to dignity) was also a play of sovereignty (Shryock 2012: 20). The guest becomes a "prisoner" of the host in space and, perhaps more critically, in time. It also places a mantle of responsibility upon the guest to behave according to the rules of the game, as being a "bad guest" runs not only into superficial questions of etiquette, but into consequential ones of morals (Shryock 2012: 27). While I was temporarily oblivious, Pierre was keenly aware of these implications from the moment he stepped inside the door, having previously engaged in skirmishes over time sovereignty many times before in this small neighborhood of Montévrain.

"How would you describe your life in Syria, before the war?" I asked. As I drank my last sip of tea, Nahla jumped up to replenish my cup. "Syria before the war was *helwa, helwa jidan* [sweet and beautiful]," Hamza waxed, spreading his arms in grand gestures as he talked. Before the war, Hamza had been an engineer of farm equipment. As he described the beautiful two-story house where the family had lived in Aleppo before fleeing the war in

2013, Nahla broke down in tears. "Should we take a break?" I asked. "*La, la.* No. I want to keep talking," she responded, her voice cracking. Her daughters crowded around her. "It's OK, mama. Don't cry," they comforted. I watched the glow in her eyes while listening to her husband describe their home in Syria darken to bitter pain as the nostalgia hardened to feelings of loss.

We sat in silence for a moment. I contemplated whether to reschedule the rest of the interview, but Nahla said through muffled sobs that she wanted to continue. Pierre looked at his watch, and then to me. It appeared he was thinking the same thing, though with an additional reason; he had work to do, and the long answers of the family had kept him, at this point, an hour longer than we had anticipated. "Humanitarian time" was being subjected to a parallel idiom of time; our nonverbal communication through glances and shrugs was interrupted when Hamza brought in a tray of coffee. "No, no," Pierre insisted, "you're too kind, but we can't stay too much longer." Hamza dismissed his polite pleas with a wave of the hand as he added sugar to both our coffee cups. Pierre looked at me helplessly as we both reached for our cups, and Hamza asked his daughter Fatima to say something about her life and friends in Syria.

As Pierre continued to cast intermittent, furtive glances at his watch, Fatima told us that she wanted to become an airplane engineer when she grew up. "Why?" I asked, slightly taken aback by the specificity and conviction. "Because then I can build the planes that will fight Bashar al-Assad," she said proudly. I glanced at Hamza, with surprise. "This was her idea!" he exclaimed. However, he took advantage of the opportunity to launch into a long discussion of his views of Syrian politics and American and French intervention in Syria, a tirade against Turkey, and a plan he would promote to resolve the brouhaha in Syria. As his guests, Pierre and I listened to his grand theories; Hamza had merged his identities as refugee and host to two non-Syrians to become an expert of Syria. As Pierre once again stared at his watch, his only act of rebellion, Fatima brought in another tray of tea.

This event was repeated throughout many of my interviews at the center. The Syrian residents extended warm hospitality to me even before getting to know me, which I had not expected, inviting me into their homes for tea, meals, musical performances, and parties, and even to stay the night with them so that I would not have to make the long trip back to Paris. But as an anthropologist, I was there to listen to them, to experience life with them. The humanitarian workers, however, were not; yet they all recounted many incidents of the same. Layla often told me how she had become attached to many of the families and, when she first started working in the center, spent more time in the homes of the refugees over tea or shisha than she did in her office. These seemingly innocuous invitations for tea presented a true conundrum—consistently declining invitations proved "rude"

and delayed the development of rapport between the families and humanitarians that would ultimately aid in placing them in permanent housing. But consistently accepting invitations drew attention away from attending to other needs. More often than not, the humanitarian team acquiesced to tea. Through these experiences, they developed relationships with the refugees that extended beyond the work day—taking them to the hospital after working hours, attending events on weekends, or even helping them to secure jobs through an extensive understanding of their skills, thanks to many conversations over tea.

Vignette Two: The Elusive Fence Jumpers

When I knocked on Jean-Luc's office one chilly March morning, he barked from the other side to enter. I gingerly opened the door and stuck my head in, not sure whether the stern tone was intended for me or not. "Come in, Rachel," he gestured. "What's wrong?" I asked, concerned. With a sour face, Jean-Luc told me how his entire morning thus far had been occupied by fielding complaints from French neighbors who lived in the housing complex adjacent to the center, and subsequently from the managers of the actual refugee neighborhood where the humanitarian organization was renting its houses and office. As he recounted it, several Syrian teenage boys had made it a habit to jump the fence between their neighborhood and the adjacent one in order to catch the bus rather than take the long way around both neighborhoods to the bus stop. Dressed in black and difficult to identify due to their stealthy behavior, the boys had so far escaped recrimination because there was no one in particular to hold accountable.

"Why not meet with all the boys and have a talk about what is off limits?" I suggested, trying to be helpful. "I did that last night," Jean-Luc replied, defeated. He had stayed late, after his working day had ended, to try to resolve the issue. But to no avail—the next morning, it happened again. When he tried to offer a reward for the one who "turned in" the boys who were committing the nuisance, they all refrained, seemingly protecting each other. I was confused by the necessity of the fence jumping. Walking to the bus took perhaps three minutes, and there was considerable risk involved in getting caught. As if reading my thoughts, Jean-Luc said, "Apparently this happens in Syria; property is not thought of in the same way, and shortcuts are taken through the yards of others without repercussion." In essence, he argued, the boys were doing what they knew. And despite the stern talkings-to on the part of the director, the fence hopping did not stop. As bewildered as I was about the motivation for this behavior, it was equally as noteworthy that Jean-Luc was so quick to Orientalize the boys, shrugging off the "why" with the explanation that Syrian boys are just linked to such behavior.

The issue persisted. Frequent discussions took place between the director of the center, the manager of the housing complex, the French neighbors, and the *mairie*, or representatives from the municipality. No one could discern where the exact blame fell and whom to hold responsible. However, Jean-Luc was consistently warned by the others that there could be repercussions for the center if he did not act. But as exasperated as he was behind the scenes with me and the humanitarian team, to the outside, he defended the boys.

The boys involved in these recurring incidents were all young, likely oblivious to the larger issues their thrill-seeking exploits evoked. They were not privy to the discussions among the tired and bewildered Jean-Luc, the exasperated neighbors, or the stern *mairie*. But their episodes of rebellion had a double effect. While they were expanding their realm of possibilities, surreptitiously pushing the limits, they were reconfiguring their options and undoubtedly enjoying the power they conjured in collectively evading discipline. The combination of forging an otherwise inadmissible path and getting away with it were seductive enough to repeat the action. An implicit goal of the boys, perhaps, was to consolidate this power by normalizing the behavior; but once normalized, would it even be fun anymore? The second effect, however, of which the boys were unlikely aware, is the power they ineluctably exerted over Jean-Luc. It was both unfair and impractical to punish all the boys of the neighborhood, as it was undetermined which of them took part, and the boys were often the ones who ran errands for the whole neighborhood, such as the quotidian task of buying and distributing bread to all the families. Unable to contain the issue within the confines of the gated community, Jean-Luc bore the discipline for the boys in the form of stern warnings and admonishment from the aggrieved external parties. When disciplining the boys failed internally, Jean-Luc was forced to advocate for them externally.

Eventually, as the fence jumping continued into April, all parties involved—except for the boys—began to lose energy. The nameless, faceless culprits continued in their revelry. The boys, likely without even knowing it, had found an accountability loophole and had taken advantage of it for their own interests. Not only did they continue to bend the rules of the possible within their immediate spatial geography, their unwillingness to turn each other in to the director left Jean-Luc with little choice but to give in, and to save face with the neighbors, the manager, and the *mairie* by advocating for the boys instead of turning on them and therefore presenting himself as weakened and unable to keep his own house in order. Thus, more than a "boys will be boys" scenario, these repeated incidents illustrate a microscale example of how these boys turned the tables of authority through spatial subjectivity—expanding the field both literally and figuratively—to reach a desired goal.

Vignette Three: When Crêpes Become "Helwat"

On a breezy Saturday afternoon, giddy children chased each other through the parking lot as their mothers scolded them in hushed tones to slow down. The families had gathered for a much-anticipated monthly event: a cooking session with *une femme bénévole*, or a female volunteer, from Paris, who had come to teach them how to make French crêpes. After a demonstration, the woman, Camille, planned to cook large batches of crêpes for all the families who had come to participate in order to share a lunch together. As the women in particular began to gather, Reima whispered something to Rania. Soon enough, several of the Syrian women were chattering among themselves in Arabic, inaccessible to Camille and to most of the team gathered. While Layla was not there that day, Marie and Jean-Luc stood by and glanced back and forth to each other, certain something was wrong but unsure what.

Reima finally approached Pierre and, in delicate and soft Arabic, whispered several sentences to him before stepping back. Pierre looked uncomfortable. Jean-Luc asked him to translate, but Pierre would not. As Camille began her demonstration, Pierre translated for her into Arabic as Jean-Luc agitatedly asked him again and again to translate what Reima had said. I had only seen Pierre as poised and professional during my time there, but for the first time he appeared flustered, presumably both by what Reima had shared and by the added pressure of Jean-Luc to translate, when he clearly felt uncomfortable doing so.

Finally, Pierre pulled Jean-Luc aside and huddled with Marie. Apparently, the Syrian women had noticed that Camille had not washed her hands in a way they deemed clean enough to handle food. Furthermore, Reima had remarked that the equipment she was using appeared dirty. She refused to eat. Camille was unaware. But as she prepared to move from demonstrating to cooking crêpes for lunch, Rania, a more socially aggressive woman than Reima seemed to be, dragged Pierre by the sleeve to translate for her to Camille. "They want to teach you how to make *helwat*," Pierre said to her, somewhat sheepishly, referring to a sticky, honey-infused Syrian treat. Jean-Luc, Pierre, and Marie exchanged somewhat nervous glances. Pierre explained to a residually frustrated Jean-Luc that he was hesitant to translate initially because he felt it was a betrayal of the women's trust—an interesting revelation that illuminated to whom his sense of obligation lay—and because he did not want them to seem ungrateful. Camille, however, was delighted, oblivious to the underlying rationale.

The role-switching in this vignette represents two interesting avenues for analysis. First, despite the Saturday crêpe lesson being considered an act of kindness by the humanitarian team, the Syrian women were aghast that Camille was not adhering to their standards of culinary cleanliness; not only

did they refuse to eat and therefore remained faithful to their own cultural standards of what is acceptable and what is not in the kitchen, but they involved the humanitarian team in enacting their decision. However, in part because of the delicacy with which they handled the situation and in part because of Pierre, Jean-Luc, and Marie's refusal to make a scene of it, what had originally been a lesson in French culture turned into a lesson in Syrian culture without the majority of the attendees fully knowing exactly how this transition occurred. The agency of the women to push back and change the situation was both clever and effective. And by using Pierre to deliver the message, the women implicated him—and the rest of the humanitarian team by default—in their mission to subvert the day's plans after they deemed them inappropriate. The women reversed the roles of guest to host, knowledge-receiver to knowledge-transmitter, novice to expert, all through the deft commandeering voice and authority of Pierre.

Also noteworthy—and indicative of much broader, similar incidents—is the language barrier between Camille and half of the humanitarian team and the refugee women. While not being able to speak French is a huge impediment to the refugees in many ways, they have learned how to catalyze it in others. The women were able to reach a consensus about what they wanted by speaking among themselves without drawing negative attention from Camille or seeming ungrateful to her. And because they were not able to speak for themselves, they elicited the help of Pierre—who had little choice in such a delicate social setting but to translate what they asked him to—to shift the situation. By involving him as their default spokesman, the women invoked the authority of the humanitarian team to advocate for what they wanted. This authority was unquestioned by Camille, who presumably did not suspect that something was amiss and agreed to the change in plans without knowing the real reason underwriting it.

Conclusion

Akram and I sat on flimsy plastic lawn chairs, huddled around cups of tea as we basked in the day's last rays of sunlight. Pale clouds of smoke from his cigarette lingered in the chilly air, as did a somberness from our earlier conversation. As he stared out into nothing with a heavy look in his eye, I leaned in, as if to probe his thoughts. He suddenly turned to me and let out a hearty laugh. I was startled; with a simple laugh, he had pierced my gloomy interpretation of the moment and replaced it with delight. My look of shock seemed to delight him even more. He had brought me to Turkey with him, and I had felt a glimpse of the agony he had endured there; now, he brought me back to a sun-soaked patch of green April grass and a warm cup of spice-infused tea.

For the humanitarians working in Montévrain, moments like this are similarly unexpected, but powerful. The "unexpected" is only so, however, because the negotiations of subjectivity among Montévrain's refugee population are, through microscale iterations, redefining the normal. Though seemingly innocuous and minute, operating on planes of morality through hospitable offerings, youthful tenacity through crossing prohibited boundaries, and dignity through rescripting social interaction, the events described in these vignettes are significant in reshaping humanitarian engagement with refugees. They work to loosen the fabrics of a tight-knit humanitarian governmentality with its complex and bureaucratic dynamics of power and control, in which refugees and other disenfranchised populations are uncharitably tangled.

While we are right to consider the ways in which refugee lives are precarious and vulnerable, it is time to move beyond envisaging them purely as "victims" (Ticktin 2016: 255). Rather than a linear relationship between humanitarian and refugee, where power operates in a vertical fashion, such a relationship is more aptly viewed as a negotiation. The rigidity of humanitarian policy is often challenged on the ground as small but powerful acts of refugee resilience and resourcefulness reshape the nature of humanitarian engagement.

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16

Inclusive Partnerships

Building Resilience Humanitarianism with Syrian Refugee Youth in Jordan

Catherine Panter-Brick

Introduction

This chapter strives to answer an important question: how do we come together to influence narratives of inclusion and exclusion in systems of humanitarian assistance? I argue for the need to build inclusive and diverse partnerships in humanitarian spaces as pathways to improve the life chances of war-affected people and social cohesion in their communities. I draw on insights gained through leading a research consortium–involving scholars, practitioners, policymakers, funders, the media, refugees, and host communities–to evaluate humanitarian programming with Syrian refugee youth in Jordan. I illustrate policy innovations in global regimes of humanitarian assistance, regional tensions that threaten acts of hospitality and solidarity, and contested notions of rights, dignity, and social inclusion affecting lived experiences. This chapter demonstrates how to more explicitly connect ethnographic research to humanitarian practice and policy, in support of efforts to improve refugee lives, build social cohesion, and address issues of structural resilience in humanitarian action.

Methods

I analyze the humanitarian ecosystem using a vertical slice ethnography, a methodology that calls for multilevel analysis of diverse data to connect lived experiences with macrolevel processes pertaining to social history, political economy, and global policy. For example, Holmes (2013) drew upon vertical slice ethnography to analyze the immense risks of cross-border migration in the context of structural vulnerability, global economic markets, and U.S. border policy. The method is useful to examine the multiple, constituent parts of a phenomenon, akin to taking vertical slices of a cake to appraise its constituent parts. I apply this approach to humanitarian systems to analyze how personal lives connect to social goals and policy interventions and to address the emotional, social, economic, and political issues of forced displacement and resettlement. I also draw upon visual ethnography to provide specific examples of how young refugees intersect with humanitarian work, illustrating narratives of courage, dignity, and resilience. These two approaches combined reveal the importance of a whole-of-society approach to humanitarian governance, one that focuses on people as well as policies.

Inclusive Partnerships

Effective, sustained, and diverse partnerships are needed to establish productive dialogue and to generate, in conflict settings, useful and relevant research, practice, and policy. Between 2014 and 2018, Elrha's Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises (R2HC) Programme issued competitive calls to fund academic-practitioner partnerships in humanitarian crises. Aiming to strengthen the evidence base for public health interventions, R2HC funded eighteen research projects focused on mental health and psychosocial support, nine of which focused on refugees (Tol et al. 2020). The international nongovernmental organization (NGO) Mercy Corps invited me to evaluate one of their humanitarian programs, Advancing Adolescents (in Arabic, Nubader), implemented in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, potentially reaching some 400,000 war-affected children and adolescents. To this end, I built a research consortium and applied for R2HC funding for an eighteen-month research project (2015–17) called "Measuring the Health and Wellbeing Impacts of a Scalable Psychosocial Intervention for Refugee Youth" (Elrha, n.d.).

This consortium was built around the needs for robust science and cultural engagement. It brought together scientific collaborators from different disciplines (anthropology, biology, education, global health, medicine, Middle Eastern studies, and psychology) to study the psychosocial, biological, and cognitive signatures of youth stress, resilience, and mental health before

and after participation in Advancing Adolescents (Panter-Brick et al. 2020). Dr. Rana Dajani, professor at Hashemite University in Jordan, anchored the research locally, given her extensive advocacy experience in disadvantaged communities and her links to civil society organizations engaged in media, education, science, and advocacy. Mercy Corps, our humanitarian partner, also had partnerships with local community-based organizations identifying youth as a priority for health, education, and social development. We held meetings with local communities to foster engagement with the research process and discuss findings. We spoke at regional events that gathered stakeholders of the No Lost Generation initiative, a platform of humanitarian programming to meet the needs of youth affected by the Iraq and Syria crises. We presented our take-away messages at Elrha, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the United Nations, and the United States Institute of Peace. It is that vertical slice of the humanitarian ecosystem—at local, regional, and global levels—that helps one understand which scientific findings find their way into humanitarian practice and policy, as well as sense how inclusive partnerships—across sectors, with multiple actors—really shape knowledge dissemination.

It is often difficult to work with multiple actors, as they follow distinct mandates, and to build inclusive partnerships beyond serviceable collaboration. There is a well-known disconnect, for example, between academics and humanitarians: academics tend to value scholarly excellence, while humanitarians need practical relevance (Abramowitz and Panter-Brick 2015; Tol et al. 2020). As Levine (2016) wryly noted, these two groups might as well hail from different planets—academics from Mars, humanitarians from Venus—with the former characterized as "theoretical," "intellectual," "unrealistic," and "tricky," and the latter as "missionaries," "mercenaries," "passionate," and also "tricky." But they are both important actors in the solar system of humanitarian spaces. I will extend the planet analogy: state and funding institutions hold Jupiterian power as they grant access and disburse money essential to sustain research partnerships, while the Mercurial media are swift in the pursuit of newsworthy stories. Refugee and host communities move through the system, wanting their needs met and concerns recognized. Diverse and inclusive partnerships are difficult to build and sustain: they require an ethos of building trust, cultural engagement, and respect for human dignity (Panter-Brick, Kurtz, and Dajani 2018).

Global Policy Innovations

The United Nations stated that we are now witnessing the highest levels of global refugee displacement: there are presently 70.8 million forcibly displaced people, over half of whom are under the age of eighteen (Edwards

2019). This is twice as many people as twenty years ago, and the highest number the UN Refugee Agency has seen in its seventy years of existence. Global data show that one person is forcibly displaced every two seconds as a result of conflict or persecution, and that 80 percent of refugees live in countries neighboring their place of origin (UNHCR 2019a). Specifically, the Syrian war has created the world's largest refugee crisis since World War II, forcing nearly 5.7 million people to flee the country since the inception of armed conflict in 2011. Some 671,000 Syrians have taken refuge in neighboring Jordan, 81 percent of whom live as urban refugees outside demarcated camps (UNHCR 2019b), in Amman and the northern governorates. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, called for ways to "redouble our solidarity" with refugees and for better ways to mobilize the world to help them:

> While language around refugees and migrants is often divisive, we are also witnessing an outpouring of generosity and solidarity, especially by communities who are themselves hosting large numbers of refugees. We are also seeing unprecedented engagement by new actors including development actors, private businesses, and individuals . . . . We must build on these positive examples and redouble our solidarity with the many thousands of innocent people who are forced to flee their homes each day. (Edwards 2019)

Within global policy circles, we have arrived at moments of great tension, but also at moments of innovation. Tense and painful moments come from the realization that the humanitarian system is financially broke, as well as politically and conceptually broken (Spiegel 2017). Hopeful moments come from critical thinking for ways to innovate on regimes of humanitarian assistance. For example, the Humanitarian Policy Group, a think tank at the Overseas Development Institute in the United Kingdom, has forcefully argued that "the international humanitarian system needed a rethink, a modernisation, an upgrade"–to make itself "a more adaptable, accountable system that recognises people affected by crisis as agents of change in their own lives" (Bennett 2018: 7). It launched a two-year research project, called Constructive Deconstruction (Bennett 2018: 1; DuBois 2018), to reimagine "what a more effective humanitarian system would look and act like if we truly 'put people at the centre' and designed the system from the perspective of its users up and down the humanitarian value chain" (Bennett 2018: 1).

At the United Nations, in 2016, we saw a landmark declaration: UN member states unanimously adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (GA Resolution 71/1), recognizing the need to address migrant and refugee governance in concert, the need to share more equitably the responsibility for supporting refugees, and the need to involve a "whole-of-society" approach; the latter features partnerships with national/local authorities, international organizations, and civil society partners in-

cluding academia, the private sector, the media, and refugee communities. Endorsed at the General Assembly two years later, the *Global Compact on Refugees* (United Nations 2018) aimed to strengthen international responses and increase the sharing of responsibilities in protracted refugee situations. Although not legally binding for member states, this global compact demonstrated ambition and political will to change the regime of global humanitarian governance and international responses.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2018) portrayed Jordan in a very positive light, as one of two "model countries" working "towards a new global compact on refugees"–mobilizing investments with a view to provide resettlement for refugees in the host country, not just basic food and shelter. Indeed, UNHCR (2018) praised Jordan for its willingness to espouse the new compact, noting that the "Jordanian government is very forward-looking, the Jordanian people very patient, and that Jordan espouses an innovative way of helping refugees"–a way that is "good for refugees and good for the host countries." Syrian refugees now constitute about 7 percent of Jordan's population, a far higher percentage than any Western country accepting Middle Eastern refugees: this means that, in Jordan, one person out of fifteen is a Syrian refugee.

Tensions between Refugees, Citizens, and Institutions

Politically, the state of Jordan has been strategic in channeling humanitarian funding. For example, all international funds to help Syrian refugees in Jordan have to be equally distributed to serve the needs of both Syrian refugee and Jordanian host communities, with a 50-50 split, rather than earmarked solely for refugees. Culturally, the challenges of refugee resettlement have been eased by the fact that Syrians and Jordanians speak the same language, follow the same faiths, have intermarried, and share common historical, cultural, and tribal roots.

On the ground, however, there often is palpable friction. As argued in a comprehensive report by Alshoubaki and Harris (2018: 155), the impact of a massive refugee influx into Jordan has created "one of the most complicated and dynamic humanitarian issues in the world today," as substantial political, social, economic, and environmental tensions challenge notions of solidarity and hospitality and pose threats to balancing the needs of citizens with those of refugees.

Politically, the hosting of Syrian refugees in Jordan has instigated tension with the Assad government in Syria, a spillover of radicalism and violence, a vulnerability to domestic terrorist attacks, and the use of military action to protect the border (Alshoubaki and Harris 2018). Border issues and the political inclusion and exclusion of refugees are points of intense friction. For

example, in 2013, a poll of 1,200 Jordanian citizens showed that "70 [percent] believed the government should stop the flow of Syrian refugees into the Kingdom" (Mercy Corps 2013: 7). In 2018, the Kingdom closed the border, taking the position that the country was shouldering a heavy burden by helping Syrian refugees, without adequate assistance from the international community (Alrababa'h and Williamson 2018). In response, however, many Jordanians went to social media to call that decision shameful, expressing solidarity with refugees: #OpenTheBorders became a top-trending hashtag on Twitter in Jordan (Alrababa'h and Williamson 2018).

Socially and economically, the presence of refugees has caused competition over limited resources and placed a huge burden on the quality of public services (Mercy Corps 2013), creating tensions between refugees, citizens, and institutions over questions of identity, territory, security, and perceptions of unfair aid distribution. In the northern city of Mafraq, such tensions have erupted over housing issues. In 2013, Jordanians in Mafraq were evicted from their homes by landlords who pushed rents up to six times the original level (from 50 JOD up to 300 JOD per month) and leased to incoming Syrians. Evicted citizens protested by pitching twenty UNHCR tents along a main street, labeling their tents "Camp of the Displaced Jordanians, Number 1." One man despaired: "There is no dignity, ownership, or honesty left for us Jordanians." Another said, "Jordan has become the Middle East's depository for all refugees–Palestinians, Iraqis, and now the Syrians. We are just one big refugee camp. Ten years from now, will we even have a Jordan left to call home?" (Mercy Corps 2013: 14).

The cost of responding to the Syrian refugee crisis was so high that Jordan's public debt increased drastically, leading to heavy external borrowing, while GDP growth declined to its lowest level since 2005 (Alshoubaki and Harris 2018). Economically, employment issues became contentious, despite the narrative of a social compact for refugees and outpourings of solidarity. For example, in 2018, external investments helped Jordan issue a record 88,000 work permits to refugees. But bureaucratic red tape created a Catch-22: refugees could work if they had a work permit, but they needed an official employment offer to be issued said work permit. This was tricky: nongovernmental organizations that held interviews for positions of employment and made offer letters to refugees could be accused of breaking the law, for they would be offering jobs to people without work permits.

Many Jordanians have considered the humanitarian programs unfair, improving the refugees' living conditions at the expense of host communities. Following the Syria crisis, they experienced increased inflation, rising food prices, decreased government subsidies, and declines in regional investment and tourism (Alshoubaki and Harris 2018). Jordanian women accused Syrian women of interfering with marriage prospects, as Syrian families would accept smaller dowries, while Jordanian men felt they had to postpone get-

ting married because of increased housing prices. Furthermore, communities in northern governorates exhibited resentment, noting that Syrians were less religiously conservative and disregarded the importance of careful water consumption in the face of mounting water shortages (Alshoubaki and Harris 2018).

Narratives of Exclusion and Inclusion

Such tensions between refugee and host communities, centering on competition over scarce resources, variations in customs, and deterioration of living conditions and public services, have sharpened feelings of political, social, and economic exclusion. This has been extensively documented in research on Syrian-Jordanian relations: while refugees experience political exclusion and socioeconomic marginalization, host communities believe that, in the wake of international support for the Syria crisis, the needs of the poorest Jordanians go unnoticed (Reach 2014). Feelings of resentment and exclusion are illustrated by interviews conducted by Seeley (2015) for the Generations for Peace Institute. One Syrian mother in Amman expressed her frustration:

> They caught my son because he was working. We need to live. The rents are very expensive, everything is expensive. How would we pay the rents if we did not work, where can I find JOD 120 to pay the rent of the house? We were receiving cash assistance but it is stopped now. We were receiving JOD 27 per person, then it became JOD 13, then JOD 10. We are seven people at home, what do we do with JOD 70? (Seeley 2015: 50)

In Irbid, a Jordanian head of household reflected: "The authorities have to compare our situation with the Syrians and treat us equally, then we can live in peace together, but as long as the Syrians are receiving everything and we are in need nothing will change. How can I accept the Syrians while they are taking my rights!" (Seeley 2015: 50).

Over time, the Kingdom of Jordan has taken in people from Palestine, Iraq, and Syria, identifying refugees and displaced people from these neighboring countries as "guests" in reference to a deeply rooted culture of hospitality. Seeley (2015) noted that

> acceptance of refugees into the Kingdom has frequently been represented in ethical terms, particularly in the absence of domestic legislation granting official legal status to refugees and forced migrants. Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and thus the protection of refugees within Jordanian territory is often framed domestically as an expression of Jordanians' generosity, piety and goodwill, with corresponding expectations of gratitude and cooperation from Syrian "guests" in return . . . . In contrast, from a human rights-based perspective, Syrians are understood as entitled to certain protec-

tions and benefits as an expression of their human rights. A host country's provision of these benefits is framed less in terms of national generosity and more as fulfilment of a host country's duty to respect the human rights of its inhabitants. Hospitality- and rights-based discourses thus differ in the expectations they carry of the refugee-host community relationship. (Seeley 2015: 51)

As Seeley (2015) argued, it is these divergent perspectives on whether Syrians are "guests" or "refugees" that drive narratives of hospitality versus human rights, ultimately influencing the ways Syrians and Jordanians interact in everyday life. For example, one Syrian boy told the Generations for Peace Institute research team, "We do not know why they cannot deal with us. The other day I was asking a Jordanian boy, 'Why are you talking to me in this way? I am a Syrian refugee, and I had to flee into Jordan. I am a guest here. Why are you treating me in this way? What did I do to you?' He kept silent then asked me to stop talking, and he did not know what to say" (Seeley 2015: 52). This example illustrates the fact that tensions in refugee-host communities spill over to affect young people's social interactions in overcrowded schools, adding the challenges of education to those of housing and employment as drivers of friction. These issues are not unique to Jordan: discourses of inclusion and exclusion that structure refugee-host encounters are enmeshed in identity politics, discourses of hospitality, and strategies of sociospatial control in response to a sense of crisis in Lebanon and Turkey also (Carpi and Şenoğuz 2019; Tobin 2018).

Narratives of Dignity

While facing ongoing resettlement challenges, many Syrian refugees have nonetheless portrayed themselves as having the courage and agency to realize their dreams and ambitions, the human right to migrate to another country, and the desire to be successful and respected. To illustrate such narratives of dignity, I turn to visual ethnography to show three specific examples of refugee self-representations. Visual artistic expressions are well-suited to capture the diverse ways refugees experience challenges and hope for the future as they intersect with humanitarian organizations.

Another Kind of Girl

My first example is a short documentary by Khaldiya Jibawi, a young Syrian who fled her home in the city of Daraa with her family in 2012 and came to live in Za'tari refugee camp in Jordan, alongside 80,000 other refugees. Seventeen-year-old Khaldiya joined a three-month-long media workshop that was funded by the NGO WomenOne, in collaboration with Save the Children. The nine-minute documentary, titled *Another Kind of Girl* (available for

view at https://www.sundance.org/projects/another-kind-of-girl) won international awards and was screened at the Cannes, Sundance, and Los Angeles Film Festivals. This is what she says of the documentary and her life:

> I used to be shy, but when I started learning how to film, and also realized that the image of a refugee camp can be distorted by portrayals by outsiders, I knew that I needed to overcome this shyness–to speak not only to the community around me, but to people in the rest of the world. I walk through my days with my camera always in my hand, and . . . film it–life as it is . . . . I live in the camp, I am within the camp, and I know the camp. An outsider will miss a lot of the deeper meanings because they haven't felt what it's like to live here . . . . Now I am trying to pass on what I've learned about filmmaking to younger girls in this camp. I want to show the rest of the world that, even though we live in a refugee camp, and have different lives from others, we still have dreams and ambitions. We are creative. We strive to rise above our limitations and work toward our dreams. I feel it's my responsibility not just to tell the world that truth, but to let people see it for themselves. (Khaldiya 2016)

Another Kind of Girl portrays a "courageous girl"–a phrase Khaldiya uses to describe herself, after she filmed her everyday life. Filming gave her a new sense of courage and agency: she was able to combat the feeling that refugee life remains suspended in material and political limbo. Through producing the documentary, she gained a sense of personal growth and social responsibility, rooted in individual dignity and social resilience: this provided a turning point to move forward with her life and speak with courage to the outside world about the "deeper meanings" of life in a refugee camp. These insights resonate with writings that see refugee camps as places of soul-searching and spaces that house subjectivities of hope and agency (Feldman 2015; Oesch 2017), especially for youth.

Do the Birds Need Passports?

My second example is drawn from a children's book called *Questions in a Suitcase*, produced in 2018 by two women: author Maya Abu Alhayat (2018) is a Beirut-born poet who directs the Palestine Writing Workshop in Jerusalem to encourage creative writing projects and storytelling, and illustrator (Ishraq Othman) is from a Chechnyan family and lives in Jordan. The pages of this book are beautifully illustrated, each focusing on questions pertinent to refugees. On one page is a question, which, translated into English, reads, "Do the birds need passports to enter Hungary?" (figure 16.1).

This picture depicts a flock of birds, each bird representing a young refugee. The birds are carrying all their possessions in little backpacks and have passports in their beaks. Like birds, refugee children aspire to the rights that birds seem to have, the freedom to fly across borders; if birds can cross borders, why not humans? In this image, the young refugees arrive in Hungary
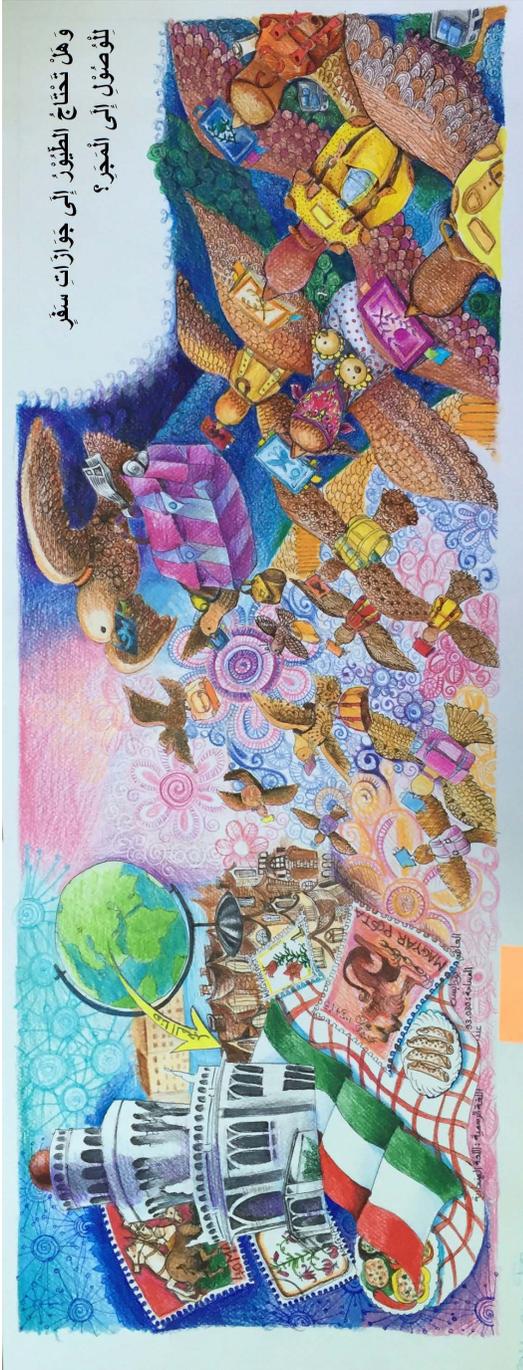
Figure 16.1. "Do the Birds Need Passports to Enter Hungary?" Drawing from the Children's Book *Questions in a Suitcase* by Abu Alhayat (Taghyeer/We Love Reading). Used with permission.

and are given a place to sleep under the national flag. Here is a tacit political message from the author, given that at this time Hungary refused entry to refugees, taking a strong anti-immigration stance. Another page of the book portrays refugees crossing the ocean as giraffes who are stretching their long necks to look back toward their homeland, waving a handkerchief to kin who stayed behind in Syria, looking over the waters to discern a possible future (figure 16.2). The refugees are in precarious air balloons, buffeted by the winds, barely escaping the dangers that lurk in fast-moving water. The caption, translated to English, reads, "Where do the refugee-giraffes store their memories?" as moments of their past life, captured on rolls of film and photographs, fall away. This picture captures the unsettling character of a refugee's journey: migrants hold on to memories of the past, are vigilant about challenges in the present, and look with uncertainty toward the future.

This book is part of a series produced, in collaboration with local writers and local artists, by Taghyeer (English: Change), a foundation whose vision is to encourage children around the world to read for fun. Taghyeer runs a flagship We Love Reading program, training local adult volunteers to read to children in their native language on a regular basis in public spaces (such as at mosques, in railway stations, or under trees). We Love Reading won the UNESCO International Literacy prize in 2017, as well as the best education program for refugees from Amplify, IDEO's open innovation program, in 2015. Its series of thirty-two books (designed for four- to ten-year-old children) was developed through a project funded by USAID and UNICEF to cover the themes of environmental awareness, empathy and social cohesion, nonviolence, refugees, gender, and disabilities–themes locally chosen with children and their families to drive change in their communities. Dr. Rana Dajani, of Syrian, Palestinian, and Jordanian heritage, founded this program to take local action in Jordan, and over time grew a local solution into a foundation with worldwide reach.[1] This initiative provides a good example of taking a "whole-society approach" to advocate for communities in need, showing how civil society works in humanitarian spaces.

Advancing Adolescents

My third example is a six-foot-high mural, drawn by a Syrian refugee on the wall of a youth center in one of the northern governorates close to the Syrian-Jordanian border. The mural shows a young man who will have the wings to fly once he is able to understand his emotions, formulate his goals, and connect his heart with his brain (figure 16.3). It reflects an emic understanding of what it takes to be able to deal with one's emotions in order to move forward, even fly, rather than stumble under the weight of adversity. The image captures how youth, struggling with social and emotional challenges, strive for a brighter future.

Figure 16.2. "Where Do the Refugee-Giraffes Store Their Memories?" Drawing from the Children's Book *Questions in a Suitcase* by Abu Alhayat (Taghyeer/We Love Reading). Used with permission.

Figure 16.3. Mural on the Wall of a Youth Center Hosting the Advancing Adolescents Program. Photo by the author.

During the R2HC-funded project, our local research assistants—six Syrian and Jordanian women with university or professional degrees—interviewed youth who both participated and did not participate in the Advancing Adolescents program. They recorded some of the key ways young people portrayed their lives and experiences as they navigated school, work, family, and humanitarian spaces. The following exemplar illustrates how one sixteen-year-old Syrian boy grew in voice and confidence as a result of the support provided by the humanitarian program in the community center, as recounted by the research assistants and recorded in field notes (translated from Arabic to English):

> His story started from the first day he visited the center . . . . It was obvious that Ahmad was nervous and shy and did not want to enter the center . . . . Ahmad's mother had died, he had lost his brother in Syria as well, and he witnessed his sister getting attacked in the crisis, after which she lost her ability to move. Ahmad was hopeless after all the situations that he has been through in Syria, and did not really want to be a part of any activity with any other youth. But after his participation in the program, Ahmad became one of the youth who regularly came to the youth center to hang out and to participate in drop-in activities. He decided to take part in a community event: with two new friends whom he met at the center, he created a rap band, naming it "ATM." On stage, at the community event, Ahmad performed the rap song, and felt compelled to tell his audience: "Before Advancing Adolescents, I did not have a goal and was hopeless, but now I have a strong personality and I am willing to become a successful man in my life. My dream will start now." Ahmad and his band went on to performances at larger community events taking place in Jerash.

The program was specifically conceived to teach skills of stress alleviation and to build social cohesion in local communities (Mercy Corps 2014; Panter-Brick et al. 2020). We interviewed 817 young people across four cities (Irbid, Jarash, Mafraq, and Zarqa) to examine the extent to which participation in Advancing Adolescents alleviated stress, improved mental health, and promoted resilience in personal and social lives. Energized by the project, our Syrian and Jordanian research assistants took ownership of its main goals: to bear witness to the lives of war-affected youth and to provide evidence of what works in humanitarian programming. The six women began to write about their research experiences, hoping to collate them in a book (in Arabic), transforming their roles from dutiful fieldworkers to creative research partners. We worked so that research partnerships included the voices of the local field team, as well as the voices of refugees and host communities. The project took unexpected turns: for example, one Syrian research assistant obtained a visa to visit partner institutions in the United States, despite the "travel ban" implemented by the Trump administration; two research assistants were filmed in an award-winning documentary that specifically drew

on our research to showcase the science of resilience in Syrian refugees (Bourke 2020).

Resilience Humanitarianism

What comes through these examples are heart-felt expressions of human dignity and community-based actions of solidarity. We see how civil society actors are stepping into humanitarian spaces to document the everyday lives, hopes, and aspirations of people living in difficult circumstances. Civil society is often a catalyst for change, acting in solidarity with refugees to better their conditions and move public opinion toward social justice, without necessarily waiting for the backing of the United Nations or the government to take decisive action. It takes political will and social activism to build bridges across differences within migrant and host communities, to sustain dignity and the hope of living a flourishing life (Willen 2019). Importantly, we see that a "whole-of-society approach" helps to advocate new forms of humanitarian action.

Addressing issues of inclusion and exclusion is part of the central goal of recent initiatives in the fields of humanitarianism and peacebuilding—to build foundations for more resilient systems in response to protracted crises. In policy circles, the term "resilience humanitarianism" now refers to approaches that move beyond the short-term goals of humanitarian action to address the larger political and humanitarian goals for building social cohesion and resilience in the region. Hilhorst (2018), for example, argued that refugees soon become indistinguishable from the urban poor, with no "linkages to the formal parts of society—nor as wage earners, nor as consumers and not as politically significant members of an electorate." For their part, the urban poor clamor for the right to have national and international regimes meet their needs, as citizens, while they bear the burden of living in areas hosting a massive population displacement. The tensions between citizens and refugees pose a grave challenge to the classic humanitarian mandate (Hilhorst 2018), focused on saving lives and alleviating suffering.

I would argue that addressing issues of social, economic, and political inclusion—regarding education, work, and citizenship—requires a careful understanding of the political economy of resilience. This lens on resilience privileges social and structural, rather than individual, domains: it gives analytic attention to power dynamics and to the structural contexts governing personal lives, social goals, and policy interventions (Panter-Brick 2014). Resilience humanitarianism tackles "systems"—addressing, in structural terms, the protracted issues of citizenship, resettlement, jobs, housing, education, mental health, social cohesion, and peacebuilding (Panter-Brick 2021). For

example, the government of Jordan developed a National Resilience Plan to manage conflict, reduce tensions, and strengthen the social compact between communities and local government (Reach 2014). Humanitarian organizations coordinated their initiatives, launching community-based and school-based programs to promote peacebuilding skills, dialogue, advocacy (Seeley 2015), and social cohesion (Guay 2015).

Conclusion

What does a complex humanitarian crisis, such as the one that has unfolded in Jordan and the wider Middle East region, teach us about regimes of humanitarian assistance, notions of solidarity, feelings of social exclusion, and inclusive partnerships? This chapter highlights the need to address both refugee and citizen concerns and connect these to global policy, state rhetoric, and civil society initiatives. This can be achieved with the methodology of vertical slice ethnography. I underscored a need to be attentive to local tensions, as well as acts of solidarity, as people navigate scarce resources—social, economic, and political—in complex humanitarian spaces. Finally, I outlined efforts by the media, funders, scholars, and practitioners to change humanitarian landscapes, to move from crisis to resilience humanitarianism, and to improve not only the life chances of individuals, but also social cohesion in their communities.

Conflicts such as the Syrian crisis present enormous challenges. Many humanitarian agencies have stressed that an entire generation of young Syrians is deemed at-risk of the developmental consequences of exposure to trauma, loss, and toxic stress (Save The Children 2017). Others have presented a counternarrative of refugee resilience and agency, in moving life forward with hope and dignity (Underwood 2018). This is a moment of tension and opportunity—a moment when we strategically rethink regimes of humanitarian assistance, with a whole-of-society approach, a moment when we need careful documentation of what happens on the ground, with an analytical lens on the political economy of suffering and resilience. This lens on resilience focuses attention on diverse aspects of society: social aspirations, perceived competition, economic opportunities, educational challenges, changes in public opinion, larger political goals, relevant knowledge, effective action, and social advocacy. To return to the question that opened this chapter: how do we come together to influence narratives of inclusion and exclusion in systems of humanitarian assistance? We do this, with a constructive edge, by building inclusive partnerships to influence narratives of inclusion and exclusion. In the context of humanitarian crises, inclusive partnerships are those that involve a wide range of social actors—in the me-

dia, arts, research, and policy, as well as in refugee and host communities—to help broker critical conversations on humanitarian action, hospitality, solidarity, dignity, and resilience.

Acknowledgments

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Note

1. For more information, visit Taghyeer's "About the Organization" page at https://welovereading.org/about/.

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Conclusion

Rethinking Exclusion and Inclusion
in Refugee Resettlement

Marcia C. Inhorn and Lucia Volk

In concluding a book on Middle Eastern refugees, it is important to reiterate some sobering facts. According to the United Nations, 80 million people have now been forcibly displaced from their homes, including 26 million refugees. Two Middle Eastern countries, Afghanistan and Syria, are currently home to the longest wars, the largest numbers of casualties, and the highest rates of forced displacement, thus accounting for the largest number of refugees in the world today. But of the 45.7 million people around the world who are internally displaced, Iraq and Yemen have among the world's highest percentages. Moreover, Palestine has the longest history of forced displacement in the Middle East—now spanning more than seventy years—and some Palestinians have been doubly or triply displaced as a result of the ongoing wars in Middle Eastern countries.

This book has sought to shed light on the experiences of recent and long-term refugee displacement across and beyond the Middle East in order to understand how war has affected refugees' lives and how resettlement in other countries has unfolded. Facing risky and arduous journeys, Middle Eastern refugees have not always been well received by countries unprepared to take them. Even in presumably "safe" havens, refugees have often found themselves trapped in confusing and contradictory webs of immigration policies and asylum laws. Cumbersome bureaucracies and exclusionary politics have forced refugees into waiting patterns that have prevented them

from beginning new lives in host settings. Underfunded and understaffed aid agencies often provide only temporary and inadequate support. And increasingly conservative political regimes in many countries have fueled anti-refugee xenophobia, Islamophobia, and outright exclusion. As a result, many Middle Eastern refugees have found themselves abandoned and in limbo—facing life in squalid detention centers and refugee camps and succumbing to food insecurity, physical and mental health problems, discrimination, xenophobic violence, and many forms of structural vulnerability.

The goal of this volume, then, is to bring together for the first time anthropologists from around the world who have conducted ethnographic fieldwork with Middle Eastern refugee populations in order to examine cultural, political, and legal regimes of refugee exclusion and inclusion, particularly in Europe and North America, but also in the Middle Eastern countries where the majority of refugees have fled. Contesting the notion that Middle Eastern refugees constitute a uniform, bounded category, this book demonstrates that specific historical and political contexts matter when explaining whether refugee resettlement is inclusive or exclusionary, life-promoting or oppressive. Through ethnographic studies undertaken with refugee communities in the Middle East, Europe, and North America, the anthropologists in this volume have emphasized the many contingencies and uncertainties that make up day-to-day life for Middle Eastern refugees, but also the ways in which restrictions are being overcome. Indeed, case studies from multiple refugee settings truly highlight the manifold ways in which refugees experience and respond to these challenges.

By presenting a "view from below" and focusing on individual refugees and their experiences, anthropologists bring home a subject matter that can appear abstract and distant. Importantly, anthropologists register everyday situations that are traditionally not seen or heard because mainstream media focus on the catastrophic or criminal, neither of which represents what the majority of refugees experience in their daily lives. Equally importantly, anthropologists register encounters between themselves and refugees, between refugees and local citizens, and between refugees and representatives of the state. It is these specific encounters that enable us to turn the discussion of refugees away from generalizing "us versus them" debates and toward an exploration that emphasizes the interrelationship and interdependence of people in today's world. Refugees are people who want similar things as most nonrefugees but, because of their situations, must work much harder to obtain them.

Moreover, anthropologists can contribute to a more nuanced "view from above" by breaking down "the state" into the actual agencies and agents that comprise it and by observing their actions in specific contexts. In the case of refugees, that means studying the speeches, decisions, and behaviors of politicians and community leaders, city councils, lawyers, and members of

police and security forces. Anthropologists can illustrate the precise road-blocks that confront refugees in any given context, and ask how they came to be placed. Agents of the state—politicians, bureaucrats, or members of the police—may enact regimes of exclusion or inclusion. Thus, it is important to interrogate the factors that produce different kinds of policy outcomes. Ever since James C. Scott's (1998) now classic book *Seeing Like a State*, we understand that states may fail to impose certain society-building or organizing visions on their citizens. States in today's neoliberal order may also experience uncertainty and precarity—some more than others—which is something to consider in the analysis of refugee resettlement.

At a fundamental level, this book asks what it means to be unsettled or settled, uprooted or rooted, unwelcomed or welcomed in the world today. Overall, the main answer to this question is that modes of exclusion and inclusion coexist and are activated in actual encounters. While considering these regimes of exclusion and inclusion, a number of salient questions have emerged.

Regimes of Exclusion

It is important to ask how exclusion is manufactured because, like inclusion, it is neither a natural nor inevitable condition in social affairs. Regimes of exclusion have specific political, legal, economic, and cultural contexts that may make exclusion appear to be a logical response to a crisis. Agents of nation-states, such as police officers, border guards, bureaucrats, social workers, or humanitarians, are working to impose various kinds of order, which may have deleterious effects on refugees themselves. These regimes of exclusion need to be studied, not only to be mitigated, but to be dismantled.

Who Counts as a Refugee? Several of the chapters in this volume focus on the definitional problems posed by the "refugee" label and what refugees have in common with other forcibly displaced persons and impoverished local populations. It is important that we do not let the refugee label hide important realities, such as the causes that turned regular persons into refugees in the first place. It is equally important to acknowledge the suffering of local populations in host countries that predate the arrival of refugees. Furthermore, the "counting" of refugees is troubled by problems of registration and monitoring, leading to the "discounting" of some refugees but not others. "Keeping count" of refugees will always be problematic, despite the efforts by UNHCR and other international agencies to monitor the ever-changing global dynamics of refugee flight and resettlement. For those agencies, the ever-increasing numbers of refugees may be overwhelming. For the concerned public as well, the surge in refugees may lead to feelings of paralysis.

What Are the Legal and Bureaucratic Challenges in Host Countries? Middle Eastern refugees face numerous challenges upon arriving in host countries, some of which are legal or bureaucratic hurdles. The bureaucracy of refugee resettlement, especially in disparate European nations, can be complex, and refugees can become entangled in complicated legalities not of their own making. Several of the chapters in this volume question regimes of refugee exclusion put in place either purposefully or through institutional negligence, even in some of the most humanitarian nations in the world. Refugees are often forced to wait for bureaucratic decisions, which is not merely a coincidental state that comes with seeking refuge; it is, as some of the authors in this volume have argued, something that is actively imposed by governmental bureaucracies to act as a deterrent to refugees and asylum seekers. As several chapters show, host states' services to refugees are often far from adequate. Yet when looking at individual encounters between state providers of assistance and refugees, it is also important to ask under what conditions and in what ways refugees respond.

What Are the Limits on Refugee Mobility? Refugees are defined as people on the move, as they leave war-torn homes to seek safety elsewhere in the country or abroad. Instead of speaking about unidirectional refugee movements "away from danger" and "toward safety," we must not lose sight of more complicated trajectories, including those that may force refugees to move "back and forth," or to "return" back home, sometimes forcibly. Refugee mobility today may include the threat or actual implementation of repatriation or deportation. The reality for many refugees is that their daily lives include "being stuck" in situations of prolonged or protracted displacement—situations they are forced to endure. In protracted displacement, refugees might find themselves moving out of a refugee camp, but are likely to find themselves among other marginalized communities, sharing similar class barriers to upward mobility with them. In a legal sense, temporary residency permits that are issued to a large number of asylum seekers contain within them the threat of future movement, or forced expulsion, because temporary residency rights can be revoked. Many refugees must fear continuously that they will be forced to keep moving.

What Are the Long-Term Costs of War? In all cases, Middle Eastern refugees have fled war and political violence in their home countries, the legacies of which are often embodied by individual refugees. Those who cause the displacement are rarely held to account. The responsibility to care for the displaced then falls on individuals, communities, and nation-states that willingly or forcibly become hosts. War and displacement take a great toll on human health. The long-term wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria have been no exception (Mazzarino and Lutz 2019). Our book examines the human health costs of Middle Eastern war, and whether medical problems are being resolved, or not, in host country settings. What do foreign gov-

ernments owe sick refugees in terms of healthcare (Ticktin 2011)? This is an especially important question in the American case, given that U.S. military intervention has been the cause of great human suffering in both Afghanistan and Iraq. What do individuals or communities in host countries owe to the sick and displaced? If questions about responsibility for the causes of displacement are not clearly raised, it can lead to refugees shouldering the responsibility for both their illnesses and displacement.

Regimes of Inclusion

Many of the chapters of this volume are hopeful, pointing to the ways in which Middle Eastern refugees are increasingly being accepted, accommodated, and integrated into host societies, especially in Europe. Furthermore, Middle Eastern refugee populations have shown remarkable resilience, often amid profound adversity.

Do Alliances and Activism Matter? In numerous host communities around the world, Middle Eastern refugees are overcoming resettlement challenges, sometimes partaking in forms of local activism and alliance building with local populations. In some cases, resettlement in host societies is successful, marking the end of suffering and the beginning of new lives. Several chapters in this volume highlight the agency, proactivity, and solidarity between refugees and local activists, who have succeeded in bringing about positive change and legal resolutions in favor of refugee admission. According to these case studies, local alliances and activism matter. Indeed, several of the chapters of this volume feature public protests, which have garnered widespread community support, even from local police. As refugees raise their voices and demand to be heard, sites of refugee activism and resistance are reshaping existing power dynamics.

Who Enacts Care? Several of the chapters in this volume examine issues of care and caregiving for refugees, not only on the part of local volunteers, but among refugee men and women themselves. Even in their darkest hours of need, refugees are enacting regimes of care for each other, including parents and children, husbands and wives, and nonrelated individuals. Several chapters in this volume show that young refugee men are often helping each other to achieve masculine adulthood far from home. New regimes of care are emerging as well in resettlement communities, as seen in refugee shelters, community centers, and refugee clinics. Several of the chapters in this volume encourage readers to think about who cares about and for refugees. Just as refugees care about each other and their families, local communities can extend their welcome, letting Middle Eastern refugees know that they have new friends ready to help them on their arrival.

Who Provides (Access to) Healthcare? The focus on the clinical world is important in refugee studies because refugee health is often gravely impacted by war, flight, and the stresses of resettlement. As shown in this volume, increasing focus is being placed on refugee health, particularly in specialized clinics in countries with subsidized healthcare. Furthermore, programs are being put in place by international agencies and consortiums to address the physical, mental, and reproductive healthcare needs of refugee populations. In this volume in particular, we focus on refugee reproductive health, highlighting the physical and social challenges that refugees face, but also the willingness of some healthcare providers to make common cause with refugees in their struggles.

How Is Refugee Humanitarianism Being Reshaped? After much criticism of the way humanitarian aid is being delivered, we have seen improved refugee policies in host countries. Multiple stakeholders are reshaping debates on refugee resettlement in the Middle East, Europe, and North America. Today, the presumably unidirectional trajectory of humanitarian assistance—of "us" helping "them"—is being reevaluated and recast in multidirectional terms. Not only are UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations attempting to meet the needs of Middle Eastern refugee populations, but so are local humanitarian actors, from agency social workers to ordinary citizen volunteers. Refugees themselves organize to be part of decisions about the allocation and delivery of humanitarian aid. In particular, this volume highlights new forms of "inclusive partnerships" that involve multiple stakeholders coming together to reshape the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

New Directions

The ethnographic studies presented in this volume paint a much more nuanced picture of Middle Eastern refugees than has previously been available. Furthermore, the studies suggest some important new directions for research. Clearly, this volume is only a beginning; much more anthropological work still needs to be done. Here, we suggest several new directions for future anthropological investigation.

Linking Causes to Outcomes. While providing nuanced and site-specific understanding of refugees' experiences in different locations, anthropologists must draw clear connections between the *causes* and the *outcomes* of the Middle Eastern refugee crisis. This means that scholarship on refugees must move beyond harrowing stories of dislocation and trauma—and the accompanying trope of "White saviorism"—to shift attention toward the actors and actions that have actually caused refugees' dislocation and suffering. As demonstrated by Inhorn (2018), Iraqi refugees bring with them medical conditions caused by U.S. weapons. Similarly, the United States is believed

to have sent nearly $1 billion in arms, ammunition, and training to Syrian rebel groups, weapons that often ended up in the hands of Islamist fighters (Dick 2019). Thus, the answer to the question of how we "settle" refugee issues needs to remain closely tied to the agents and conditions that "unsettled" them in the first place. In the case of Middle Eastern refugees, much more scholarship must be devoted to understanding the effects of war and political violence as the main cause of refugee flight.

Refugees from Libya and Yemen. This book focuses on the effects of wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, as well as on ongoing Palestinian displacement. But it largely overlooks two other brutal wars in the Middle Eastern region—namely, the civil war in Libya, which emerged in the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings, and the current Arab Gulf war in Yemen, which also emerged post-2011 and was instigated by the much stronger state of Saudi Arabia. As noted above, Yemen is in the midst of the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with 24.1 million people (or 80 percent of the Yemeni population) in need of humanitarian assistance, according to the UNHCR. Although the crisis in Libya is of much smaller scale, the UNHCR still estimates that 1.3 million Libyans are in need of humanitarian assistance in a country presenting a "complex displacement" scenario. Relatively few, if any, anthropologists are working with these vulnerable Yemeni and Libyan populations. Many Yemenis have fled to countries in the Horn of Africa (e.g., Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia). Thus, future anthropological work must trace these refugee displacements.

Resettlement Communities in Other Parts of the Middle East. This book explores the experiences of Middle Eastern refugees living in the neighboring countries of Iran, Jordan, and Lebanon, but not in Turkey, which is a large non-Arab country that has taken in the majority of Syrian refugees. New studies of Syrian refugees in Turkey are clearly needed. Similarly, both Iraqis and Syrians have fled to Egypt over the past two decades, seeking refuge in a country that also suffered political violence in the aftermath of the so-called "Arab Spring." The Arab Gulf states, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, have not done their fair share to resettle Middle Eastern refugees on their territories. Still, some Afghans, Iraqis, and Syrians have fled to the Arab Gulf. Thus, it will be important for future anthropologists to study experiences of refugee displacement in parts of the Middle East that are not yet well represented.

Resettlement of Minority Communities. In this volume, only one chapter focuses on the flight and resettlement of a Middle Eastern ethnic minority community (i.e., the movement of Afghan Hazaras to Iran). Yet, over the past two decades, Middle Eastern ethnic minority populations have suffered tremendously and have had urgent needs for humanitarian assistance. This is especially true of the minority Yezidi community in Iraq and Syria. Under ISIS, Yezidi men were killed, women were forced into sexual slavery, and

children were turned into child soldiers. Although the plight of Yezidis has been captured by the news media, this minority refugee community has not yet been well studied by anthropologists. Similarly, minority Kurds in Syria are being crushed between two opposing regimes–the government of Bashar Al-Assad in Syria and the government of Recep Erdogan in Turkey. The future of the Kurdish population is uncertain and requires ongoing study by anthropologists. In addition, sexual minorities are at a heightened risk of discrimination at "normal" times in the Middle East, but in times of war, sexual minority persons are at grave risk of persecution, torture, and loss of life. Anthropologists must shed light on their experiences. In general, minority communities in the Middle East must be a future anthropological priority. Where have these communities fled? Who has provided their care and shelter? These are urgent questions.

Studies of Internally Displaced Persons. Finally, we also urge our fellow anthropologists to respond to another immediate call to action: namely, to enter Middle Eastern war zones themselves to understand the dynamics and consequences of conflict for internally displaced persons. Virtually all anthropological research conducted to date has taken place in the relative safety of host country communities. But internally displaced persons (IDPs) do not have the luxury of such safety. As shown in Kali Rubaii's courageous chapter–based on her own risk-filled fieldwork in Iraq–life for the internally displaced is precarious. In the future, we must study the lives of Middle Eastern IDPs in their home countries, in addition to the Middle Eastern refugees who have fled across international borders. Clearly, this move from host to home country is risky and requires ingenuity. But only then will anthropologists be able to reveal the devastating costs of Middle Eastern war.

The fact that most of the mainstream media have moved on from refugee stories to the coronavirus pandemic and various political machinations in Europe and North America makes it more important than ever for scholars to fill in the gaps of the public debate. Anthropologists have the special ability–and responsibility–to describe the ongoing gravity of the Middle Eastern humanitarian crisis while also preserving the dignity, individuality, and preciousness of all those who have been forcibly displaced in the Middle East and beyond.

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