



REFUGEE HOSTS

Newsletter No. 2 Summer 2017

Researching Faith and Displacement

The sun sets over Baddawi camp, North Lebanon (c) E. Fiddian-Qasbiyeh

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Approaching Faith and Displacement

Refugee Hosts is an AHRC-ESRC funded research project investigating local community experiences of and responses to displacement in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. In particular, one of the key questions Refugee Hosts is exploring relates to the explicit and implicit ways in which *faith* and *spirituality* inform responses to refugees from Syria. Ahead of September 2017, when our fieldwork will begin in earnest, we have prioritised thinking about faith and spirituality in contexts of displacement: especially where challenges and opportunities exist for humanitarian policy, practice and research. Our conversations have so far centred around a blog series on faith and displacement, including pieces featured in this newsletter.

The aim of this series has been to capture faith as lived experience – as sets of ideas, practices and structures that shape a common (and contested) experience of the world – and also to challenge ‘secular’ assumptions that often frame humanitarian thinking.

The series draws on the research of diverse contributions, from members of our project partners, including the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, to artists and creatives who evoke faith as a way of responding to conflict and displacement. This rich conversation also demonstrates the value of adopting an interdisciplinary approach to questions of faith and displacement, something Refugee Hosts will continue to implement through creative writing and translation workshops in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

"We are conscious that theological and religious ideas and narratives operate as deep cultural and political forces, shaping our views of time and space, value and purpose. Nor is 'the secular' devoid of the influence or presence of theological ideas, despite 'secular' world-views remaining at times suspicious of the roles played by 'formal' religion in times of crisis. Theological traditions have proven themselves historically to be important containers for ideas that remain pertinent to public speech about migration: from notions of the suffering victim, ideas of soteriology (sin and salvation) to conceptions of sanctuary and hospitality; indeed arguably what we witness, despite claims to secularity, is the migration of such theological ideas towards the political. They have also at specific times and in specific places driven narratives of exclusion and violence that need to be wrestled with and understood. Whilst much public debate, public policy and indeed scholarship can tend to make strong distinctions between what is considered 'religious' and what is thought to be denoted as 'secular', we expect our research into the experience of displaced persons and local 'hosting' communities to blur, to problematise, and to reframe such seemingly clear distinctions."

Reflections on the series, by Dr Anna Rowlands, Lecturer in Catholic Studies, Durham University, and Refugee Hosts Co-I

Engaging with Faith Values to Reshape Responses to Forced Migration

By *Sadia Kidwai*, Islamic Relief

This piece is a re-posting from the [Berkeley Centre for Religion, Peace & World Affairs](#)

The pages of the Qur'an are filled with stories of refugees. Indeed, migration and escape from persecution were often central experiences of many of Islam's great prophets—whether it was Abraham seeking refuge in Canaan (Q29:26), Moses fleeing certain death in Egypt and finding shelter and employment in Midian (Q28:20-28), or the Prophet Muhammad himself being forced to leave his home of Mecca due to the persecution he and his followers suffered at the hands of former neighbours, friends, and relatives. All this means that there is a rich tradition of seeking and providing refuge within Islamic teachings. Both the Qur'an and the prophetic teachings provide a robust framework for the protection and provision of forced migrants.

Yet this heritage is rarely invoked, despite the modern global refugee crisis having a distinctly Islamic identity: more than [half of the world's refugees \(54 percent\) originate from just three Muslim-majority countries—Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia](#). Similarly, [five of the world's top six refugee-hosting countries are members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation—Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, and Jordan](#). The reasons for this disconnect require further research, but we can speculate that the answer may lie in the dominance of secular thinking within the international humanitarian and development sector. For many decades, and in many quarters still, [religious discourse has been regarded with suspicion, uncertainty, and outright disdain](#). Stereotypes perpetuate of religion being a *cause* of the persecution, discrimination, and violence that refugees are forced to escape from, rather than a solution.



Refugees wait in Izmir (c) H V Hilfswerk

However, in recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the role that faith actors do or could play in responding to the forced migration crisis. [UNHCR's Partnership Note on Faith-Based Organizations, Local Faith Communities and Faith Leaders](#) is one example of how the mainstream secular sector is seeking to deploy the financial, material, and social resources of faith actors in meeting their own objectives. However, the willingness to make space for faith organisations in formal, mainstream processes of refugee response seems to be dependent on the usefulness of faith actors to access or gain the trust of donor or beneficiary communities, generate resources, or steer public opinion.

Although such advances towards partnership and cooperation should be recognised and valued, there remains little serious interest in engaging with the actual *teachings, traditions, and principles* of faith when it comes to identifying solutions to forced migration. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the [New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants](#), adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 19, 2016, which makes just four references to engaging with faith-based organisations (as part of a broader list of civil society actors) and claims that the UN is "the birthplace and custodian" of values such as dignity and equality.

"There is a rich tradition of seeking and providing refuge within Islamic teachings. Both the Qur'an and the prophetic teachings provide a robust framework for the protection and provision of forced migrants."

In many respects, Islamic teachings on the rights of forced migrants differ little from secular frameworks. However, in some areas, Islamic and other faith traditions could inform more holistic and creative solutions to the challenges faced by forced migrants and their hosts. One example where faith-based traditions might allow for more holistic refugee protection is in the recognition of faith as an essential human need. Islamic traditions state that in order to promote the well-being of mankind and protect human dignity, it is essential to safeguard five things: our faith, our physical self, our intellect, our wealth, and our posterity. **Eighty-four percent of the global population identify as belonging to a faith group**, yet faith is rarely recognised as an essential need. This is despite the fact that faith can act as a powerful coping mechanism for forced migrant communities—as a source of spiritual solace, as a means by which to make sense of trauma or loss, and as a way to build connections and shared identity. Islamic Relief often receives requests from the refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) we work with to build mosques in camp settings, to enable forced migrants to resume a sense of normalcy and meet their spiritual needs.

Masjid al-Quds Mosque:
the geographical and
metaphorical core of
Baddawi camp, Lebanon
(c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh



Likewise, while secular international frameworks assign responsibility for the protection of forced migrants to states—which often manifests itself in camp-based approaches—Islamic traditions favour community-based approaches. When the Prophet Muhammad and his followers migrated to Medina to escape persecution in Mecca, each refugee of Mecca was adopted

by a local family in Medina who shared with the refugees their homes, wealth, and tribal protection. Such a system may better reflect the reality of refugee needs in contemporary times, where **over half of all refugees globally live in urban areas** and over 75 percent of Syrian refugees alone live outside of camps. Currently, the relative absence of organised and coordinated funding in non-camp settings means that host communities are ill-equipped to meet the needs of forced migrants living among them—often resulting in rising tensions between host and migrant communities as they are forced to compete for increasingly scarce resources, such as schooling, jobs, housing, and food. Greater investment in municipal resources and community-based mechanisms of protection would not only better meet the needs of refugees and IDPs, but could act as a powerful antidote to the strained communal relations and rising xenophobia that has spiked in the wake of the recent forced migration crises.

The needs of forced migrants must be at the centre of any response. Faith values and religious practices are not a panacea, and in some contexts may be inappropriate. However, despite a growing body of evidence regarding the importance

“Faith can act as a powerful coping mechanism for forced migrant communities – as a source of spiritual solace, as a means by which to make sense of trauma or loss, and as a way to build connections and shared identity”

of spirituality and faith in coping with adversity, the mainstream humanitarian response to the refugee crisis fails to formally recognise and meet the spiritual needs of forced migrants. Moreover, religious traditions and teachings on forced migrant protection are rarely appreciated, understood, or fully deployed in meeting contemporary challenges. As the international humanitarian and development sectors move towards developing a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the wake of the New York Declaration, greater engagement with both faith actors and faith values is a necessity.

A mosque in the Turkish-
Syrian border region
(c) C. Loris-Rodionoff



Gender, Religion and Humanitarian Responses to Refugees: Policy Brief

There is increasing interest in the roles played by faith-based organisations and local faith communities in providing assistance and protection to refugee and asylum seekers. However, this interest is often accompanied by negative assumptions about such groups’ ‘conservative’ and ‘patriarchal’ tendencies. On our website you can read a **policy note** reflecting on these assumptions and challenges. The note is edited by Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and draws on a workshop with academics and practitioners at UCL on 13 May 2016.

Sahrawi refugee women arriving at
the 4th NUSW conference in South
West Algeria
(c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh



Reflection and Connection: Religious Celebration in Times of Crisis

By *Olivia Wilkinson*, Trinity College Dublin

As I sit down to write this post, I have just finished preparing for our Passover meal. My husband was brought up Jewish and this is the first time that we have hosted Passover for a group of friends. In my preparations, I have spent time reflecting on the story of Passover. News that **West African migrants have been traded in slave markets in Libya** happened to come out on the first day of Passover; the suffering of the Israelites as slaves in Egypt has felt jarringly close to contemporary news of those enslaved in our modern world. Our Passover Seder brings us together to consider what we can learn from the Passover story, while also allowing us time for a community celebration. It provides a place for reflection and a place for connection.

This is also the period of Easter for Christians around the world – a time to come together with friends and family, but also **a time to reflect on Jesus' suffering on the cross and those suffering in the world now**. I was in the Philippines for Holy Week in 2015, towards the end of my PhD fieldwork. For many, the arrival of Holy Week meant holidays and an important time to gather together with family members for celebrations. From a sociological perspective, I am drawn to the role of religion in gathering people together, in bringing us into collective experiences, of giving us time away from the everyday to think, and of reconnecting family members and friends.



Festive decorations for sale in the Philippines (Wiki Commons)

“It is the idea of connection and reflection that underline the importance of religious celebration for people following trauma”

As Passover and Easter remind us, it is the idea of connection and reflection that underline the importance of religious celebration for people following trauma. Going back to my thoughts sparked by the story of Passover, we have a growing number of people in the world living through the traumatic experience of forced migration. Although my research in the Philippines was not on forced migration, but on the humanitarian response to Typhoon Haiyan, it also represents a traumatic experience for those affected from which we can gain insights about the place of festivals and ritual during and following crisis.

When speaking with those who had been affected by the typhoon, I heard the same thing time and again: their faith was important to them because a) it brought them personal, inner strength (their reflections on God's love for them and their trust in God) and b) it brought their community together and encouraged them to help each other. Yet, there were occasions when actors in the international humanitarian system failed to understand the importance of this religious reflection and connection in celebrations.

I remember one Filipino staff member from a large international organisation commenting on a misunderstanding about Christmas. The typhoon hit on 8 November 2013 and the run up to Christmas was still within the period of the emergency response. The staff member noted that while beneficiaries and Filipino staff were looking for different timelines that accommodated the Christmas period, some organisations tried to push through, operating as though Christmas was just an inconvenience to the emergency response.

This approach fails to take into account two points. Firstly, that many people affected by the typhoon started to recover immediately meaning that this continued sense of urgency, which couldn't even stop for Christmas, simply didn't make sense in some cases as organisations could scale back on emergency response and wait to engage in recovery. Secondly, that people do not lose their sense of place, culture, or, indeed, religious beliefs, because of a typhoon. Some may question their beliefs, but in all my focus groups (with 200+ people), I only met one person who said they felt abandoned by God entirely. In fact, most people said that their faith had intensified because they had relied on it so consistently for personal and community strength throughout the experience of the disaster.

This was not just any Christmas therefore. This was the Christmas after the typhoon. This is something of note for all organizations, not just the local or the faith-based. In a humanitarian system that places ever more emphasis on the “community”, “localisation” and the “resilience” of people following disaster, I offer these examples as snapshots of the place for religious celebrations in our responses and what they offer for people who have lived through traumatic experiences. It's time we support these celebrations of connection, reflection, and, ultimately, hope.

This piece has been shortened for inclusion in our Newsletter. Read the full piece on our [blog](http://www.refugeehosts.org/blog) (www.refugeehosts.org/blog)

Faith-Based Humanitarian Corridors to Italy: A Safe and Legal Route to Refuge

By *Susanna Trotta*, University College London

In late April 2017, 124 people were transferred to Italy through the humanitarian corridors programme. In times of ever more restrictive asylum policies and European states' renewed efforts to externalise control of forced migration, such faith-based humanitarian corridors mark an important step in the opposite direction: that of a more inclusive and dignified approach to securing refuge.

In December 2015, the Federation of Protestant Churches (FCEI), the **Waldensian Church** and the Catholic **Community of Sant'Egidio** signed an agreement with the Italian Ministries of Interior and of Foreign Affairs to issue 1,000 exceptional visas with limited territorial validity. Legally based on Article 25 of EC Regulation 810/2009, this type of visa allows for forced migrants based in third countries such as Lebanon, Morocco and Ethiopia to be transferred safely to Italy, where they can file an asylum application upon arrival. In fact, unlike resettlement programmes, there is no need for applicants to have been granted refugee status in order to access the programme. However, the Italian authorities do carry out security checks on potential beneficiaries during the early selection stages.

These three Italian faith-based organisations (FBOs) have committed to carrying out and funding the selection, transfer and reception processes for the programme using only their own resources, and their local and transnational networks. According to the programme's description on the **FBOs'** and **the government's** websites, the selection criteria identify people in 'vulnerable conditions' as the main target group. Interestingly, a certain degree of flexibility in the understanding of 'vulnerability' emerged from the interviews I conducted with different FBO members as part of fieldwork for my **MSc Global Migration dissertation at UCL**. Apart from health issues, some mentioned 'the family' (with children) as a vulnerable entity *per se*. Others emphasised the possibility that extreme poverty could be included as a condition of 'vulnerability'. Others still stressed an opportunity to engage with the host society's approach to marginalised groups and to foster mutual solidarity – an 'everyday humanitarian corridor', as described by one of my interviewees.



A view of the Sicilian coast (c) S. Trotta

This flexible understanding of 'vulnerability' certainly relates to the heterogeneous and multifaceted motivations behind FBO members' and the volunteers' engagement in the programme. For a start, not all of them consider themselves to be members of a Church. As is increasingly the case, commitment to organised faith-based humanitarianism is not necessarily a direct consequence of faith. Moreover, different sensitivities and previous experiences shaped my interviewees' expectations and aims. One of them explicitly mentioned to me that his personal aim was to challenge the distinction between 'the refugee' and 'the economic migrant' – or the so-called 'bogus refugee'.

Once in Italy, the refugees are hosted by non-state reception facilities run by the FBOs themselves, although some of them are later integrated into the state-run SPRAR system, after obtaining residency permits. As for other aspects of the programme, reception conditions vary considerably among the different FBOs. However, a common trait is the attention towards the refugees' non-material needs and the creation of links between the refugees and the local communities – both of faith and secular -, through diverse activities and gatherings.

Another important aspect of the initiative is its (potential) 'replicability'. The FBOs have lobbied at the European and UN level, as well as through their own networks, in an attempt to convince other actors within Italy and beyond to replicate the programme. France's outgoing **President Hollande has very recently signed an agreement with several associations – including the Community of Sant'Egidio** – enabling the arrival of 500 Syrians to France through humanitarian corridors. A separate humanitarian corridors programme is soon to open between Italy and Ethiopia following a **new agreement** signed by the Italian government, the Italian Bishops Conference (CEI), Caritas, Migrantes and Sant'Egidio.

Humanitarian corridors certainly represent a safe, legal and more dignified route to refuge, as opposed to perilous journeys across the Mediterranean, **which continue to claim the lives of thousands of people**. If access to these programmes is open to refugees from regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa, it would also be an important step to counter the increasingly restrictive trends in refugee status recognition and subsidiary protection, as well as diverging from recent resettlement programmes specifically directed at Syrians such as the **UK's 'Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme'** and the **German Humanitäre Aufnahmeprogramme für Syrische Flüchtlinge** (Humanitarian Reception Programme for Syrian Refugees). Moreover, it would challenge current policies aimed at deterring migrants from applying for asylum or even reaching European territories, such as the Italian readmission agreements and pushback operations on the high seas. These are some of the most arduous challenges ahead, for faith- and non-faith-based humanitarian engagements alike.

This piece has been shortened for inclusion in our Newsletter. Read the full piece on our [blog](http://www.refugeehosts.org/blog) (www.refugeehosts.org/blog)

Refugee-Refugee Solidarity in Death and Dying

By *Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh*, University College London, and *Yousif M. Qasmiyeh*, University of Oxford

Exhibited as part of the 2017 Venice Biennale, Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (Refugee Hosts' PI) and Yousif M. Qasmiyeh (Refugee Hosts' Writer in Residence) were commissioned to co-author this photo-essay for the Tunisian Pavillion's exhibition space, The Absence of Paths. This photo essay draws on the important role of everyday acts in responding to the challenges of displacement – in this instance, the ritual of burial and mourning.

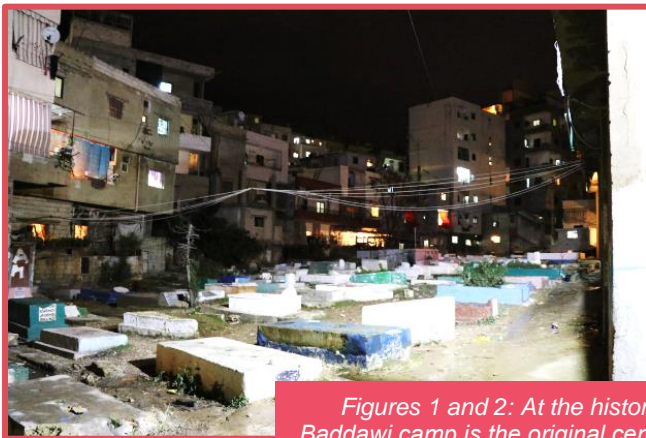
Baddawi is an urban Palestinian refugee camp on the outskirts of Tripoli in North Lebanon. Born in the 1950s, the camp has been home to 'established' Palestinians and their descendants since then, and to other refugees displaced within and beyond Lebanon. These include, most recently, refugees fleeing Syria: Syrians, Kurds, and Palestinian and Iraqi refugees formerly based in Syria.

In the context of an overwhelming focus on tensions and/or acts of hospitality between the living, here we shift our attention to solidarity in death and dying, with the cemetery taking centre stage for both the living and dead, becoming the camp's only fixity. Different refugees enter the camp, with the camp becoming both a gathering and a gatherer. The cemetery, too, echoes this duality.

*

Which is older: the camp or the cemetery?

At the core of Baddawi refugee camp, from its very birth, the cemetery has hosted the living and the dead. The arrival of the living to the camp, was traced by the arrival of the dead. From that core, the camp has grown, and so too have its residents. As time has passed, and as wars have led to new arrivals – Palestinians from other camps, Syrians, Kurds, Iraqis... – , the cemetery has outgrown its original space. The camp is denser, higher, narrower. And a second, a third,... now a fifth cemetery in Baddawi, for Baddawi and beyond.



Figures 1 and 2: At the historical, physical and metaphorical core of Baddawi camp is the original cemetery, which continues to host the camp's 'original' residents (c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

As he digs, the name digs with him. The shovel of noise is the name.

Abu Diab, the only grave-digger in the camp, works ceaselessly: two days to dig one grave.

Sensing the arrival of death, he enters the newest cemetery and starts the preparations. The graves are shallower now. Half as deep, for a population that doubles with each war. He speaks of the pragmatics of dying: "I dig for the living, and I dig for the dead." To live and maintain life, to keep the dignity of the dead and the solace of those who remain.



Figure 3: Abu Diab's hands at rest (c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

They die, they say, so they remain.

The place is never theirs. Nor is the name.

Determining a place consists in determining the death of its people at the same time.



Figure 4: The camp's thresholds continue to expand, blurring the beginning and the end of the cemetery and the houses surrounding it. (c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

Those refugees who left the camp in life return in death: a sense of belonging to that land, 'a' land that is 'theirs' even if 'their' land remains elsewhere. Those who live on the borders of the camp – whose citizenship does not afford them the riches to be buried in a citizen-grave – arrive in a space that is not theirs. Now, the shared spaces have become denser, with the camp and its cemeteries welcoming the living, dying, and the dead who originated elsewhere (at some time, always-already in the middle of time).

The tombstone, to a certain extent, to the extent of the farthest extent,

Is what the dead cannot see but sense.

The name is high, but whose name is it that is in the grave?

The tombstones of the newest cemetery – now full, now no longer the newest – now mark names, dates and places of origin that trace the longest journeys: "Born in Haifa in 1945... died in Baddawi in July 2016... Palestinian from Syria..." The words of – and over – the dead mark the multiple states of refugeeness, the past, and the place.



Figure 5 and 6: This tombstone, marking a grave in the camp's fifth cemetery, offers testament to the contours of a journey which has come to its end in this space. (c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

It is not a right to bury yourself amidst those people, in the graves that they own, but it is the right that has failed to become a right on its own, on its naked own, so it would self-dilapidate until all resurrects.

The tombstone is the concrete identifier of origins

From Syria, new arrivals have descended into Baddawi: Syrians, Palestinians, Iraqis and Kurds are all now sharing the same soil



*Figure 7: In Baddawi's fifth cemetery, graves continued to be marked by signs of life
(c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh*

*When he died, an orchard of dialects
grew on the tongue.*

As the newest cemetery is being born on the periphery of the camp, green as the buds emerging from the newly dug mounds, the original cemetery remains at the core.



*Figure 8: The cemetery is one of the only 'open spaces' in the camp, and is – and always has been – an important space for children to play
(c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh*

Since everything overlooks the cemetery,

*It is the cemetery that is a camp more than the camp
itself.*

The camp never dies. It is its own God.

On land, the cemetery is marked by concrete and children playing in its grounds, and from the sky, by the moon shining over *Masjid al-Quds*.



*Figure 9: Children playing in the original cemetery in Baddawi refugee camp
(c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh*

Visualising Faith, Trauma and Conflict through Art

Artwork and Words by Marcello Silvestri



War Cemetery: A condemned pride. Wood, turned wood, soil and sand board. Cm. 79x9

War Cemetery (Cimitero di Guerra)

War cemeteries are almost always fenced with laurel bushes elegantly trimmed in order to hide the nauseating ignominious stupidity of mankind. The gates, always made of wrought iron, are sometimes open. If you go in, alidity invades your skin and mind.

All is desert, aseptic, anonymous, in the apparent architectonic elegance. Only the silence shouts, bringing the youthful echo of lives offered, by the great, to the god of pride, as a sacrifice.

The colours of the painting, tepid, washed out, do not sing here.

The testimony of the tragedy is left to the natural chromatic modality of the wood and the ground.

We all seek **peace** and no one owns it, at least in its fullness, and yet, together with the word **love**, it is on everyone's lips. Both words, oversaturated, have lost their ontic value.

Here the necessity to re-read the word **peace** in its possible truth.

Blessed are the peacemakers...

Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness (James, 3,18)

The Arid Land (La Terra Arida)

It is not easy to enter into a dialogue with the colours of this work, as they are not the colours of flags, but rather chromatic tones, stolen from the earth and stone, when the sun puts its warmth to the test and turns everything almost into a mirror of the soul.

The psalm would say: 'I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water' (Psalm 63,1). All is fixed here, the sea too; not a crow, not a seagull.

Only silence lives, and the heartbeat in the sweltering heat of the stones, of the sand and of the arid land, at the hottest time of day.

Even the horizontal construction of this work seems to occlude every tension towards verticality.

And yet, in this global *aporia*, the words of prophet Isaiah arrive unexpected to awaken the soul and arouse the conscience about an event unheard of:

'The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it...' (Isaiah 35).

What a peculiar prophet! He does not announce the joy in a disco club, nor in a countryside festival, not at a birthday party or in a church or a synagogue. But in the arid land of the desert, where there does not seem to be life nor hope.

If one could do a free translation of contemporaneity in this prophetic text, it could sound like the prophet had a preference for the losers in life: for those who have known, with their deeds, the human fragility of being blood and flesh; for those who were not able to conform to the category of the so-called decent people; for those who, having lost everything, empty of any expectation, are the first to welcome the call for resurrection.

Blessed are the poor...!



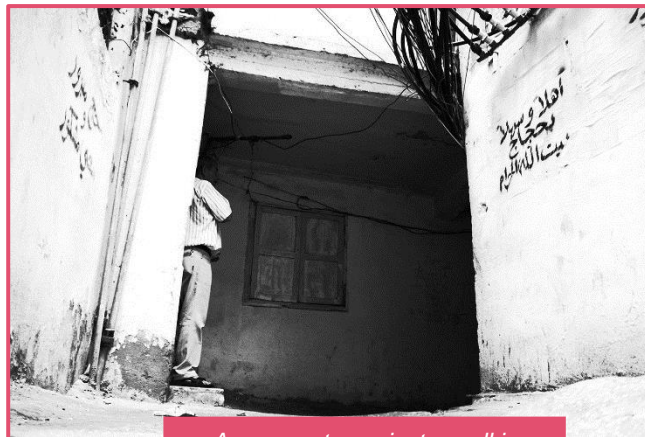
The Arid Land: Polymateric on Board Cm. 70x115

Text translated by Susanna Trotta and Sara Silvestri

Translating Displacement

Alongside our focus on faith and displacement, the Refugee Hosts blog has also recently featured a number of poems translated by Yousif M. Qasmiyeh, our writer in residence, in collaboration with English PEN's Oxford student group. We will be working with them, and PEN International, in the organising and running of a series of creative writing and translation workshops in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and the UK. These workshops aim to explore, through creative and participatory methods, how and why people affected by conflict-induced displacement navigate and reflect on their experiences.

The translated pieces featured on our blog explore themes of conflict, trauma, loss and displacement in a variety of geographic and political contexts, and offer an example of what it is we aim to achieve through our work with nine local communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey affected by conflict-induced displacement. You can read the full and on-going series on our [blog](#), but - in keeping with this newsletter's focus on questions related to faith - we have included one text in particular, Tammam Al-Tilawi's *Prayer*. Al-Tilawi is a Syrian writer whose poem, *Prayer*, is a meditation on death: on how conflict upends the everyday. It is written as a prayer, but to whom the prayer is directed is unclear.



A man rests against a wall in
Baq'qa Camp, Jordan
(c) S. Maqusi

Prayer

Let us thank our killer, O my friend,
For having missed us and hit that kid
Who always disrupted your afternoon nap.
He thought the bomb was a ball
So he blocked it with courage
The way he was always blocking balls
And shouting at the players.
Now he has won his game
Without screaming at the killers.
Now he has defeated you and me, and will sleep forever and ever

Tammam Al-Tilawi, translated by Yousif M. Qasmiyeh & Oxford Student PEN



In Baq'qa Camp, Jordan, a refugee has sprayed the following sentence on his shelter: "No to resettlement, this shelter is not for sale."
(c) Samar Maqusi. 2014

Poetic Solidarity: A message from the translators

"We hope that these poems all reflect the powerful bonds of communication between poets, readers and translators, enacting what Seamus Heaney found most creditable in poetry which, he said, can 'touch the base of our sympathetic nature while taking in at the same time the unsympathetic reality of the world to which that nature is constantly exposed'."

Yousif M. Qasmiyeh and Oxford Student PEN

For more on the approach taken by Yousif M. Qasmiyeh and PEN Student Groups in translating these poems, visit our [translation and displacement series page](#). Refugee Hosts aims to further consider the role of translation in responding to displacement through our creative writing and translation workshops, as well as on our blog.

Full List of Blog Articles Spring-Summer 2017

We would like to thank everyone who has featured their research and creative pieces on our blog. Below is a full list of published pieces since March 2017. To receive updates straight to your inbox subscribe to our website using the form on the [top right hand side of the page](#). Please also take a look at our [submissions page](#) on our website for information on how to write for our blog (www.refugeehosts.org/submissions)

Articles

- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2017) "Gender, Religion and Humanitarian Responses to Refugees"
- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. and Qasmiyeh, Y. M. (2017) "Refugee-Refugee Solidarity in Death and Dying"
- Fogliata, S. (2017) "Back to Metal: Palestinians from Syria in Nahr El-Bared Camp, Lebanon"
- Greatrick, A. (2017) "Refugee Livelihoods: Refugee Hosts in Conversation with ODI's Humanitarian Policy Group"
- Kidwai, S. (2017) "Engaging with Faith Values to Reshape Responses to Forced Migration"
- Kidwai, S. and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2017) "Seeking Evidence to Provide Protection: How Can Local Faith Communities Support Refugees?"
- Ramakrishnan, K. and Stavinoha, L. (2017) "Volunteers and Solidarity in Europe's Refugee Response"
- Saggar, S. A. (2017) "Space of Refuge Symposium: Report"
- Trotta, S. (2017) "Faith-Based Humanitarian Corridors to Italy: A Safe and Legal Route to Refuge"
- Wilkinson, O. (2017) "Reflection and Connection: Religious Celebration in Times of Crisis"
- Zaman, T. (2017) "Athens and the Struggle for a Mobile Commons"

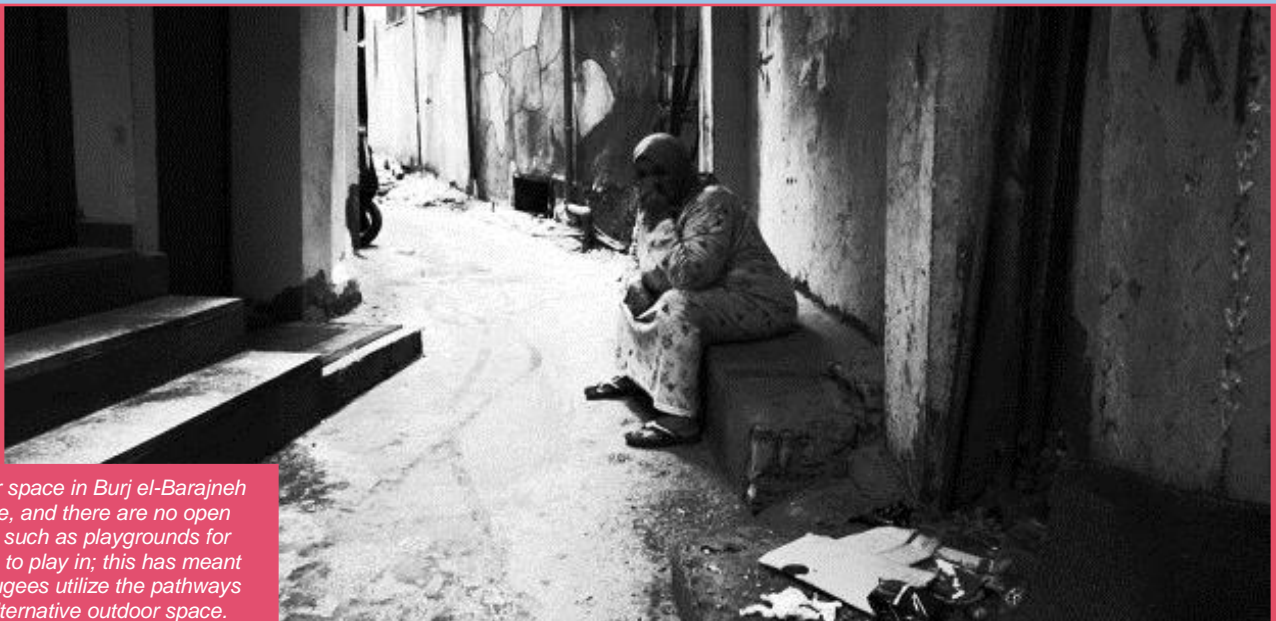
Creative Pieces

- Qasmiyeh, Y. M. (2017) "A Sudden Utterance is the Stranger"
- Qasmiyeh, Y. M. (2017) "In Arrival, Feet Flutter Like Dying Birds"
- Stonebridge, L. and Qasmiyeh, Y. M. (2017) "'The New Cavalry' Outside the Damascus Gate, From the Northern Wall: A Response"
- Silvestri, M. (2017) "Visualising Faith, Trauma and Conflict through Art"

Translation Series

You can read all the poems translated from Arabic and French on our blog page: [Translation and Displacement Series](#).

Panoramas of Death and Desolation by **Rasha Omran**, *Despair* by **Enoh Meyomesse**, *Prayer* by **Tammam Al-Tilawi**, *Nothing Stays on the Table Except the Trace of your Hand* by **Iskandar Habash**, *The Dead* by **Firas Sulaiman**



Outdoor space in Burj el-Barajneh is scarce, and there are no open spaces, such as playgrounds for children to play in; this has meant that refugees utilize the pathways as an alternative outdoor space. (c) Samar Maqusi, 2014

Project Updates: News and Events

In the first 6 months of the project, we have completed a wide range of public engagement and dissemination activities, ranging from an interactive Twitter Chat which reached over 25,000 people, to numerous workshops and symposiums. Below you can find a list of some of our recent engagement activities. For more information visit our news and events page (www.refugeehosts.org/category/news-and-events).

GMU Henry Luce Foundation Event on Religion and International Affairs, George Mason University, Washington DC: Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh introduced Refugee Hosts to a broad range of academics, practitioners, policy makers and journalists during this 2-day event.

Caritas Europa Directors Meeting, Brussels, April 2017: Dr Anna Rowlands addressed CARITAS directors as the key note speaker for this event. Dr Rowlands drew on the preliminary findings of the Refugee Hosts project to argue that more must be done to engage with faith communities and theologies of refuge and hosting.

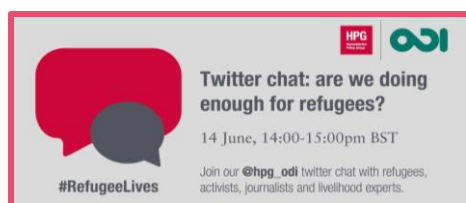


Thinking Theologically about Migration, Seedbed Event, Middlesbrough, 5 May 2017: Dr Anna Rowlands spoke about Refugee Hosts research, hospitality, and theological approaches to migration and displacement at an event organised by Seedbed, an online platform that aims to bring groups into conversations about faith.

Interview with Krista Tippet, *On Being*, 18 May 2017: As part of her interview with Krista Tippet on Arendt, Professor Lyndsey Stonebridge reflected on some of the preliminary findings that emerged through Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's pilot research in Baddawi Camp, Lebanon, and what it is that can be gleaned through Arendt's writing vis-a-vis local responses to displacement.

Grand Challenges Symposium, UEA, 6 June 2017: Prof Lyndsey Stonebridge and Aydan Greatrick reflected on interdisciplinary methods and 'creative ethnographies', sharing the approach taken by the Refugee Hosts project with PIs and Co-Is of other AHRC funded projects.

Grand Challenges Conference, British Library, 7 June 2017: Prof Lyndsey Stonebridge and Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh reflected further on questions of interdisciplinary research, with a focus on research into voice and conflict, a theme that will be explored further at an upcoming PaCCS symposium at UCL on 21 September.



Refugee Lives Twitter Chat, ODI Humanitarian Policy Group, 14 June 2017: The Refugee Hosts twitter account contributed to a live panel debate and Q+A relating to the challenges facing displaced peoples around the world. Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh responded to 8 questions by drawing on preliminary findings from the Refugee Hosts project. The debate was engaged with by over 25,000 people. You can read a comprehensive summary about this event on our [blog](#).

Engaging Refugee Narratives III: UCL Department of Anthropology, 16-17 June 2017: Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Yousif M. Qasmiyeh introduced the project's contribution to debates surrounding refugee narratives, in particular our use of creative methods that explore the explicit and implicit roles played by faith, history and narrative in framing experiences of and responses to displacement.

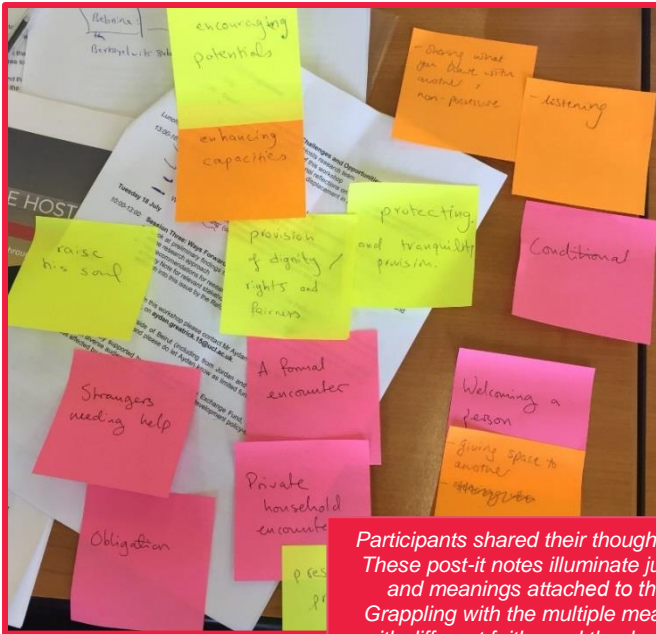
East of England Migration Research Network Research Showcase, Refugee Week, UEA, 23 June 2017: Prof. Lyndsey Stonebridge showcased Refugee Hosts research and introduced some of the interdisciplinary, creative and innovative approaches we will be taking in our work with nine local communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

Arabic Poetry in Action: A Bilingual Event: SOAS, 27 June 2017: Prof. Lyndsey Stonebridge and Yousif M. Qasmiyeh spoke at this event about Refugee Hosts engagement with poetry and creative writing. Yousif's recent pieces for Refugee Hosts were also shared with the audience as an example of our project's ongoing creative outputs.

Pictures Speak Louder than Words: The Impact of Photography on Perceptions of Refugees: Side Event of 69th UNHCR Standing Committee Meeting, UN Mission Geneva, 29 June 2017: Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh contributed to a panel debate organised by UNHCR exploring the ethics and impact of photography on perceptions of refugees. We look forward to continuing these discussions in our upcoming blog series *Representations of Displacement*, which you can read more about overleaf.

Knowledge Exchange Workshop on LFC Responses to Refugees

On July 17-18, the Refugee Hosts team hosted a workshop at the Department of Political Science, University of St. Joseph, Beirut. The workshop aimed to identify and improve our understanding of the challenges and opportunities that arise through local faith community (LFC) responses to displacement in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. In total, 25 practitioners and local researchers participated, enabling a rich discussion around the current nature of work with LFCs, as well as the various barriers that exist. Participants attended from a large number of NGOs and local organisations, including Oxfam, Christian Aid, Muslim Aid, UNHCR, ICRC and LSESD. The workshop was also an opportunity to examine the particularities of LFC responses to displacement from Syria in the specific context of Lebanon, and how this may affect our research approach, especially when exploring (explicitly and implicitly) questions of faith with refugee and hosting communities.



Participants shared their thoughts on what it meant to host and be hosted. These post-it notes illuminate just a handful of the various interpretations and meanings attached to the word, from 'encounter' to 'obligation'. Grappling with the multiple meanings of hosting – and their relationships with different faiths and theologies – will be a rich and challenging theme for our team to explore.

The workshop began with a series of context setting exercises that built on the existing work and experiences of those present in order to identify the various challenges and opportunities that face practitioners and local researchers in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. In particular, these focused on different political and religious/secular barriers, and whether or not these can or should be overcome by humanitarian actors. One key point here related to faith, secularism and gender, something which has **been explored at length in a workshop held by Refugee Hosts PI Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasbiyeh in 2016**. Importantly, far from 'mistrusting' faith groups and LFCs when it comes to gender, an argument was raised that greater religious literacy would help us to overcome secular assumptions in an evidence-led and constructive way. This may lead to an improvement in rights and humanitarian assistance for women and girls whilst resisting the temptation to frame faith as an enemy to gender and sexual rights. In general, the need for greater 'religious literacy' in humanitarian engagements with LFCs was clear, something we will be working towards through the publication of a Religious Literacy Handbook toward the end of the project in 2019-2020.

We would like to thank everyone for their input during the two day workshop, and for the engaging and informative conversation that was had. We would also like to thank the UCL Knowledge Exchange Fund for making this workshop possible. We will soon be publishing a report and subsequent policy note drawing on some of the key points raised, as well as recommendations for research, policy and practice which we hope will be useful to a diverse group of academics, practitioners and policy makers interested in local community responses to displacement. This report and policy note will be published in Arabic and Turkish. To receive an update on the report please sign up to our mailing list via our website.

Join our Conversation: Representations of Displacement

We invite individuals or groups to submit pieces, including art, photographs, creative writing and academic research findings, for inclusion in our upcoming series on Representations of Displacement, which will run from September 1 to November 30.

About the Series:

This series draws on Refugee Hosts' aim of disrupting mainstream humanitarian narratives, which all too often rely on representations of displaced peoples as singular, suffering victims or as passive receivers of aid. In order to do this, our new blog series will bring together insights, **creative pieces** and new research that goes beyond a focus on the exceptional victim of the humanitarian imagination, to explore ways of representing the diverse, everyday role(s) played by both refugees and local hosting communities in responding to the challenges of displacement.

This series aims to examine different ways that local communities, such as the ones we are working with in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, can be brought into representation. How can a focus on the **'spaces'** where refugees are living, and the communities that they have (or have not been) welcomed into, help us to better understand diverse experiences of and responses to displacement? How are both hosting and displaced communities represented and conceptualised in public and academic circles, and what impact does this representation have on policy and practice both locally and internationally?

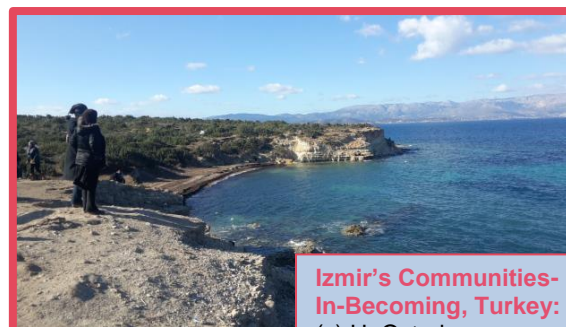
We hope that submissions will also engage in an intersectional analysis of representation, in particular examining how gender, faith, nationality and history (amongst others) may inform the ways in which experiences of displacement are represented by different groups, including the media, governments and local authorities, NGOs, civil society, academics, artists, displaced peoples and local communities.

We are also interested in moving beyond a focus on traditional, person-focused forms of photographic representation, in keeping with our project's 'spaces and places, not faces' approach. As such, we welcome pieces that offer alternative ways of representing displacement, including **soundscapes**, **poetry** and **creative writing**. What can these other methods offer in terms of representation that photographs cannot? What are the ethical implications of these and other methods and modes of representation?

Please contact Aydan Greatrick (aydan.greatrick.15@ucl.ac.uk), the Refugee Hosts Project and Communications Coordinator, if you have an idea for an article or creative piece that you would like to submit for publication as part of this exciting and important series.

Rethinking Representation: The Refugee Hosts Approach

In keeping with our emphasis on a 'spaces and places, not faces' approach to representation, our project aims to collect and disseminate a diverse range of images, creative pieces and soundscapes through our growing creative archive online. A key premise here is our desire to rethink 'refugee photography' by capturing 'spaces of refugee', and how it is that refugees inhabit these spaces through an emphasis on 'everyday acts'. Our photo galleries online, including those by Samar Maqusi, whose ideas around **'spaces of refuge'** and **'refugee architecture'** have been extremely helpful in framing our thinking, offer an example of this approach:



Izmir's Communities-In-Becoming, Turkey:
(c) U. Ozturk



Baddawi Refugee Camp, Lebanon:
(c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

Baqaa Camp, Jordan:
(c) S. Maqusi



Contact the Refugee Hosts Team



Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (PI)

Department of Geography, University College London

@: e.fiddian-qasmiyeh@ucl.ac.uk Twitter: @RefugeMvingWrld

PROJECT ROLE: Elena is the project's Principal Investigator. As an expert on the lived experiences of, and diverse responses to forced displacement in the Middle East, Elena brings both her regional and thematic expertise to Refugee Hosts. In addition to leading the project as a whole, Elena will in particular be overseeing the research taking place in Lebanon, and will be working closely with Alastair to develop the fieldwork in Turkey.



Prof Alastair Ager (Co-I)

Institute for Global Health and Development, Queen Margaret University Edinburgh

@: aager@qmu.ac.uk Twitter: @AlastairAger

PROJECT ROLE: Alastair (Co-I) is an expert on health, development and humanitarianism who has an established record of working in the Middle East. For Refugee Hosts he will be leading the research taking place in Jordan, and working closely with Elena to coordinate the research in Turkey. Together with Anna and our project partner the JLI on Refugees and Forced Migrants, Alastair will be exploring the roles that faith plays in local hosting practices and experiences.



Dr Anna Rowlands (Co-I)

Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University

@: anna.rowlands@durham.ac.uk Twitter: @AnnaRowlands1

PROJECT ROLE: Anna (Co-I) is a moral and political theologian with expertise in asylum and migration, and will offer the project a unique insight into questions related to faith-based and faith-inspired responses to displacement. Working closely with Alastair and with our project partner the JLI on Refugees and Forced Migration, she will lead on activities relating to the roles of faith in displacement and on the development of a Religious Literacy Handbook.



Prof Lyndsey Stonebridge (Co-I)

Department of History, University of East Anglia

@: l.stonebridge@uea.ac.uk Twitter: @LyndseyStonebri

PROJECT ROLE: Lyndsey (Co-I) is an expert on modern writing and history, and refugee studies, and will lead Refugee Hosts' innovative creative writing components - through convening both a series of writing workshops in the Middle East and a series of translation workshops in the UK, in collaboration with our partners PEN-International, English-PEN and Stories in Transit. With Anna, Lyndsey will be exploring the ways in which political philosophy and political theology bring particular insights into experiences of exile and hosting.

Aydan Greatrick Project and Communications Coordinator

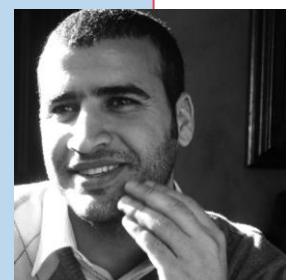


Aydan works closely with Elena, Alastair, Anna and Lyndsey to coordinate the different strands of the research project and ensure that the project's findings are widely disseminated, translated and accessible to the communities participating in this research project.

Contact him with any general enquiries on:
aydan.greatrick.15@ucl.ac.uk

Yousif M. Qasmiyeh: Writer in Residence

Yousif is a poet and translator who has regularly led literary translation workshops with student English-PEN groups. As our project's Writer in Residence, Yousif is writing creative contributions on our project's key themes, and will co-convene the creative writing workshops in the Middle East and the translation workshops in the UK with Lyndsey and our project partners, PEN-International, English-PEN and Stories in Transit.





REFUGEE HOSTS

"We think, sometimes, that they came from countless directions, from dim-coloured borders, from the raging fire that devoured them in the beginning, from absence... Here they come again, so invite them over to our death.

The refugee is the revenant of the face.

O refugee, feast upon the other to eat yourself.

In arrival, feet flutter like dying birds.

In the camp, time died so it could return home."

Yousif M. Qasmiyeh

Writer in Residence, Refugee Hosts

This poem. "In Arrival Feet Flutter like Dying Birds", was featured as part of the Tunisian Pavilion at the 2017 Venice Biennale.



Palestinian youth fly pigeons in Baddawi camp, North Lebanon
(c) E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

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