



Natural
Hazards

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Refugees in Crisis



**Why Labels Matter in
Human Migration**

By Jolie Breeden

**A Counter Narrative of the
Refugee Crisis**

Magdalena Schwarz & Elke Weesjes

**Dispatches from a Calais
Refugee Camp**

By Elise Sandri

**Muslim Americans, Bigotry,
and the Enduring Backlash**

By Lori Peek & Elke Weesjes

THE MISSION OF THE NATURAL HAZARDS CENTER is to advance and communicate knowledge on hazards mitigation and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Using an all-hazards and interdisciplinary framework, the Center fosters information sharing and integration of activities among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers from around the world; supports and conducts research; and provides educational opportunities for the next generation of hazards scholars and professionals. The Natural Hazards Center is funded through a National Science Foundation grant and supplemented by contributions from a consortium of federal agencies and nonprofit organizations dedicated to reducing vulnerability to disasters.

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Contents

From the Editor.....3

One Size Won't Fit All.....4
 Why Labels Matter in Human Migration
 By Jolie Breeden

Timeline Refugee Crisis6
 By: Elke Weesjes

Faces Behind Figures.....10
 A Counter Narrative of the Refugee Crisis
 By Magdalena Schwarz and Elke Weesjes

Welcome to the Jungle.....18
 Dispatches from a Calais Refugee Camp
 By Elisa Sandri

Are Muslims the New Jews?.....22
 The 1930s Refugee Crisis Revisited
 By Elke Weesjes

Still Under Attack.....28
 Muslim Americans, Bigotry, and the Enduring
 Backlash
 By Lori Peek and Elke Weesjes

Conferences and Training.....33

Contracts and Grants.....34

Announcements.....35



On the Cover

Two Muslim women hug after arriving on the Greek Island of Lesbos. For the first time since the start of the refugee crisis, there are more children and women on the move than adult males. Today, children and women now make up nearly 60 percent of refugees according to UNICEF.

November 14, 2015 © Fotomovimiento

WELCOME to the February issue of the *Observer*.

This month we focus on the ongoing and rapidly escalating refugee crisis. This incredibly complex issue is no longer—and never really was—a Middle Eastern or a European problem. It is a global crisis that concerns everyone, especially those who work in the disaster field. After all, crises such as civil conflicts, natural disasters, and climate change overlap and don't recognize national boundaries.

The interconnected nature of these three issues is especially visible in the Fertile Crescent and Horn of Africa, the two regions that have generated the majority of refugees currently seeking asylum in Europe.

In Syria, the immediate cause of the conflict, which began in 2011 and eventually spilled into neighboring countries, was a regime change, however, religious, sociopolitical, and environmental factors also served as a trigger. For instance, a devastating 2006 drought that affected the Fertile Crescent and lasted for five years was a driver of civil unrest in Syria. Affecting 60 percent of the country, it caused widespread famine and water scarcity, gave rise to increased unemployment, and forced about 1.5 million people to move from Syrian farming regions to urban centers where, in 2011, the revolution was fought hardest. The extensive loss of livelihood created a fertile ground for civil unrest, observed Aaron Wolf, an Oregon State University water management expert who frequently visits the Middle East.

"You had a lot of angry, unemployed men helping to trigger a revolution," Wolf told *Smithsonian*.

As with most recent droughts, the 2006-2011 Fertile Crescent Drought was intensified by climate change, according to a study published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (Kelley et al 2014). Due to global warming, temperatures have risen and soil in the region—once known as the land of milk and honey—has gotten dryer, wrote Colin P. Kelley, a researcher at the University of California, Santa Barbara and lead author of the study.

Because of this lack of moisture, the drought was hotter and therefore drier. Its impact on agriculture was disastrous, especially in Syria. By 2011, more than one million Syrians were without sufficient food. After first being internally displaced by the drought, many Syrians from rural areas have since left the country, joining millions of their countrymen who were forced to flee the brutal civil conflict that has raged for five years.

Similarly, in the Horn of Africa another drought had equally devastating consequences. This yearlong drought, which began in 2011, came on top of successive poor rains and rising inflation. It had a huge impact on crop and livestock production, food prices, and water availability. The situation was further compounded by armed conflict across the region. The future of the Horn of Africa is also bleak, according to a new study by researchers at the Center for Climate and Life at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. That study found that the

region will continue to get dryer with rising carbon emissions (Tierney, Ummenhofer and deMenocal, 2015).

Climate-induced natural disasters haven't only triggered the current refugee crisis; they also plague those in refugee camps and on their way to safer destinations. Last August, temperatures in Jordan and Iraq reached record-breaking highs. The heat wave brought even harsher conditions to the nearly one million Syrians and internally displaced Iraqis who live in basic tents in refugee camps in Jordan and Iraq.

In September, a heat wave hit Lesvos, the Greek Island that saw the arrival of half a million refugees in 2015 alone. Overwhelmed island authorities have consistently lacked the manpower and resources—such as water, food, and medicine—to respond adequately to the needs of such large numbers. The extreme temperatures in the summer of 2015 added insult to injury and, consequently, many refugees suffered from heat strokes, dehydration, and heat exhaustion.

Winter weather and cold temperatures have had an equally devastating effect on refugees, especially on those who live in makeshift encampments in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, but also in Northern France. Additionally, winter storms at sea have made the already perilous journey to Europe even more dangerous. Despite the dangers and hardships of this journey, deteriorating living conditions in refugee camps in Syria and neighboring countries continues to push men, women, and children to make this trip. In January alone, 244 people have died at sea.

Despite such strong connections between climate, war, and other hazards, it's unfortunate that more U.S.-based disaster researchers have not lent their voice to the discussion of the refugee crisis. Unlike Europe, U.S. disaster researchers and emergency practitioners have a chance to get ahead of the coming storm—that's one of the reasons why we put together this issue of the *Observer*.

Contributors examine the challenges refugees face from a number of different angles and discuss shortcomings and successes in local and national responses to the crisis. Rather than focusing on the refugee crisis in general terms, articles shine a light on the experiences of refugees who are in crisis. By doing so, readers are encouraged to pause and realize that refugees are not just numbers, they are human beings who happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. They deserve a better future, just like everybody else.

Elke Weesjes Editor

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ONE SIZE WON'T FIT ALL

*Why Labels Matter
in Human Migration*

By Jolie Breedon

LAST YEAR, throngs of migrants coursed through Europe seeking escape from war-torn countries in the Middle East. Or some might say scores of refugees. Or hordes of asylum seekers. Whatever the “masses” are called, what they’re not often referred to as is people—more than a million individual men, women, and children who are struggling to find safety and escape unlivable conditions in places that were once their homes.

The issue of generalization in this case is significant—while reporters and politicians have a need to communicate the overarching impacts of mass migration, it’s difficult to apply appropriate terminology to a group of people who are very different. They hail from different countries for different reasons, and often times those reasons do not fit neatly into legal or semantic categories.

What follows, then, is a series of broad brush terms that are at best inaccurate, but at worst derogatory and demeaning. Labeling these people with words such as migrant, refugee, and asylum seeker, while simultaneously referencing them with dehumanizing language (for instance, flood wording is popular—migrants are said to “stream” over borders, they come in “waves,” or “pour in” from other countries), is not just a matter of poor word choice. At a fundamental level, it strips individuals of their humanity.

Not that there hasn’t been any thought given to what these individuals should be called—in fact, quite the opposite. World leaders often find it politically expedient to use one term rather than another. News agencies have debated which terminology is best used in accurate reporting. Humanitarian agencies have urged the public to be cognizant of how labeling newcomers can impact community integration.

But in the end, regardless of the vocabulary used and how well meaning (or self-serving) it is, what is most important is to realize that the words that are being applied

to these crisis victims—and the way they’ve been generalized—have huge political, social, and individual impacts.

What’s in a Name?

The terms most commonly applied to those embroiled in the current crisis are migrant (or economic migrant), asylum seeker, and refugee. For much of the public following the conversation, these words are interchangeable. But since they have very distinct—and in some cases, legal—meanings, it’s useful to start with a clear understanding of their import.

MIGRANT. By dictionary definition, any one who migrates from one location to another, especially for employment purposes, is a migrant. But it would be disingenuous to pretend that the populace uses the term this way. For instance, no one is likely to call a person moving to a nearby city for a new job a migrant. And that speaks to the current connotation of the word, which is indicative of a person who comes from another country to seek a better lifestyle or more lucrative employment. Often times, there is a certain amount of judgment associated with the term—migrants are seen as usurpers or nuisances who threaten to take resources from existing residents.

In connection with the current crisis, a level of politics has also been added. Nations do not have the same legal responsibilities for migrants—sometimes called economic migrants to underscore that they don’t seek safety, but monetary gain—as they do for asylum seekers or refugees. Where the treatment of refugees is defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention Protocol and associated documents (UNHCR 2011), migrants come under individual countries’ immigration rules. It’s convenient then to term individuals fleeing across the Mediterranean as migrants when giving them citizenship is unpopular or feared, because nations have more leeway in deciding if they can stay or go.

ASYLUM SEEKER. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), an asylum seeker is an individual who claims to be a refugee, but has not formally been given refugee status. In the strictest sense, this would mean a person who has applied for refugee status under the auspices of the 1951 protocol and is waiting for their application to be approved (a process that is handled through national asylum systems).

Like the term migrant, however, asylum seeker isn't an absolute, especially when applied generally. Rarely is it possible to know that each individual in a group has formally applied for asylum. To further confuse the issue, the cases where it's most likely to apply—for instance, when referring to a group coming from what the UN would call a "refugee-producing" area, such as Syria or Afghanistan—there is a mechanism in place that would more accurately define those people as *prima facie* refugees.

REFUGEE. Of all the terms being bandied about, refugee is the one least open to interpretation. Refugee indicates a legal status granted to people fleeing from war or persecution across international boundaries. There is the understanding that returning such people to their homeland could result in death or loss of freedom. As mentioned before, the determination of refugee status is largely guided by the 1951 protocol.

Unfortunately, while refugee might be the clearest term available, it's not much better than migrant or asylum seeker for communicating general ideas about current migration. For instance, many people have argued that the media should refer to the current crisis as a refugee, rather than a migrant, crisis. Although the aim is to more accurately characterize the direness of the situation for those entering Europe, most of them are not yet refugees or even asylum seekers in a true sense. Even if a *prima facie* designation had been made, recent migration is made up of both migrants and soon-to-be refugees and asylum seekers traveling side by side.

Does a Rose Truly Smell as Sweet?

It might seem niggling to make such distinctions, but the wording used is important. In real ways, choosing to label those now migrating can impact both how the public perceives them and how they see themselves.

UNHCR Spokesman Adrian Edwards recently made this point in an article about why the agency chooses to use the phrase "refugees and migrants," over other options (Edwards, 2015).

"Blurring the two terms takes attention away from the specific legal protections refugees require," Edwards wrote. "It can undermine public support for refugees and the institution of asylum at a time when more refugees need such protection than ever before.... So, at UNHCR we say 'refugees and migrants' when referring to movements of people by sea or in other circumstances where we think both groups may be present – boat movements in Southeast Asia are another example.... We hope that others will give thought to doing the same. Choices about words do matter."

Others have indeed given thought to the matter. *Al Jazeera*, notably, made a strong statement about their decision to stop referring to the current situation as a migrant crisis and begin calling it a refugee crisis.

Although the latter might not be as accurate, it's clear that the news agency is cognizant of how their portrayal normalizes the crisis in the minds of the public, and they want the impression to adequately express the seriousness of the situation. In a blog post that explains the thinking that went into their decision, *Al Jazeera* Online Editor Barry Malone paints a picture of the risks taken by Mediterranean immigrants and calls out world leaders and anyone else who would downplay the dangers by using the term migrant (2015).

"The umbrella term migrant is no longer fit for purpose when it comes to describing the horror unfolding in the Mediterranean," he wrote. "It has evolved from its dictionary definitions into a tool that dehumanizes and distances, a blunt pejorative."

It's not unusual for a previously innocuous word to take on disparaging or deprecatory meanings. And in such cases, there is often a definitional lag where the negative usage is propagated because it hasn't yet been incorporated in the definition, writes Charlotte Taylor, a linguist at the University of Sussex (2015).

"This kind of semantic degrading is common for words relating to controversial topics. We need only think of the endless cycle of terms used to describe people with disabilities, which often develop into insults and are eventually replaced," she wrote. "In the early stages of a meaning change there is a tendency for people to resist the new interpretation, by claiming that they are using the dictionary definition. But dictionaries do not merely define words – they also describe how they are used. If a negative meaning develops this will be listed."

So while some proponents strive for more accuracy in naming, there is perhaps some benefit in using terminology that is less precise, but also less inflammatory. In doing so, it's possible that news organizations and others communicating about human migration can limit the negative impact these terms have on new arrivals.

Sticks and Stones—and Yes, Words—Can Really Hurt You

As Taylor points out, "naming is a choice which reflects not just a process, but a view of that process and the people involved." As such, the words used to describe those migrating to Europe are telling both in terms of how the community receives them, and in how they perceive themselves.

On an individual level, Paula Madrid, a New York-based psychologist who works with asylum seekers and displaced people, has seen firsthand how people unconsciously take on the labels that society places on them.

"You'll meet them and they'll say, 'I'm an immigrant,' or 'My parents were immigrants,'" she said. "I'll say 'Wait, tell me about yourself. What do you like to do?' That sort of thing. Anytime you label someone, you're really impacting



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the way they think about the world, but also the way they think about themselves.”

Madrid, a former director of the psychosocial preparedness division of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University, has a long history of working with people made vulnerable by conflict and crisis. Her clients sometimes report being seen as a threat or not being readily accepting into a community. Wording, especially in the media, does contribute to that dynamic, she said.

“Media representations are so negative,” she said. “It’s one of the ways these categories have been transformed in people’s minds. When you think of an immigrant or a refugee, the associations aren’t of someone who would bring about a change or do some great thing in the community. It’s always associated with a need.”

In that sense, at least, the problem lies less in the words used as in the weight they are given. If those in the throes of crisis are represented as shiftless, a threat to jobs, ignorant of cultural norms, and dangerous, then whatever word is applied to them will take on that meaning, too.

“I think that the terms refugee versus migrant are not the defining ones, but rather the portrayal of people coming to us,” Magdalena Schwartz, who has worked with refugees in Austria and Hungary, said in an e-mail. “So, if someone is treated like a criminal with bad intentions, it does not really matter if they are called migrant or refugee.”

“We need to have more empathy. Nobody who is a refugee decided to come to this country as an adventure”

That is true to the extent of how people navigate these labels as individuals. But where it begins to matter more is when those labels—negative connotations intact—are applied to large groups of people. Then the dangers of making sweeping generalizations are apparent. It’s harder to have compassion and concern for “a migrant,” or “a refugee,” than it would be for a fellow human being. And this only gets exponentially more difficult when contemptuous

TIMELINE REFUGEE CRISIS

MAY 2011

THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS BEGINS

In May, people—mostly women and children—flee harsh fighting in the town of Talkalakh, in northwestern Syria. Many cross into Lebanon.

JUNE, 2011

FIRST REFUGEES ENTER TURKEY

The military siege of Jisr al-Shughour, a city in northwestern Syria, sparks a major flow of refugees into neighboring Turkey.

JULY, 2011

SYRIANS FIND REFUGE IN JORDAN

Jordan sees an increase in refugees, with the majority coming from the Syrian border town of Deraa.

NOVEMBER 15, 2011

TURKEY SETS UP CAMPS FOR REFUGEES.

By the end of 2011, Turkey has spent up to \$15 million to set up six camps for thousands of refugees and military defectors.

MARCH, 2012

BEKAA VALLEY MAJOR DESTINATION OF REFUGEES.

Starting around March 2012, the Bekaa valley, a poor and mostly agricultural region, becomes the principle destination in Lebanon for Syrian refugees who are fleeing fierce fighting in nearby Homs, Quseir, Zabadani and Hama. Most refugees settle in towns with friends and relatives or in squatter communities in the hills.

APRIL 4, 2012

DOMIZ CAMP OPENS IN IRAQ

Many Syrian refugees of Kurdish origin head for the Iraqi Kurdistan region in northern Iraq. The Domiz refugee camp officially opens on April 4, 2012, near the city of Dahuk in the Kurdistan region.

JULY 3, 2012

FIGHTING FLARES UP IN ALEPPO

Aleppo is only 30 miles from the Turkish border. Intense warfare causes up to 200,000 to flee, with thousands crossing over to Turkey. In response, Greece beefs up border guards in case of an influx of Syrian refugees. Situation in Turkish camps deteriorate rapidly and tensions between Turks and Syrians begin to rise.

JULY 18, 2012

EXODUS INTO LEBANON FOLLOWING DAMASCUS FIGHTING

On July 18, 2012, a bomb explodes in Damascus, killing President Bashar al-Assad’s brother-in-law and other high-ranking security officials. Anywhere from 18,000 to 40,000 refugees cross the Masnaa border post into Lebanon in the next few days.

JULY 29, 2012

UNHCR OPENS ZA’ATARI CAMP IN NORTHERN JORDAN

Located in a windswept desert, UNHCR claims the Za’atari camp in northern Jordan can eventually host up to 113,000 refugees.

AUGUST 22, 2012 — DECEMBER 12, 2012

FIGHTING IN TRIPOLI, LEBANON MIRRORS SYRIA CONFLICT

Gunfights and clashes between members of Tripoli’s Sunni and Alawite communities in Lebanon’s second-largest city.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2012

UP TO 11,000 PEOPLE FLEE SYRIA IN 24-HOUR PERIOD

UNHCR reports that more than 11,000 Syrians flee into Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon in a day’s time.

Continues on page 7

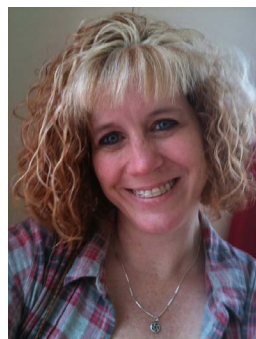
or disapproving overtones are applied to the meaning.

In the end, the words we choose do matter, but we can't be such slaves to semantics that we allow unhealthy stereotypes to perpetuate. It is useful to have umbrella terms when communicating about the complex situation of those migrating into Europe. But officials, news organizations, and others who work in the realms of human migration must remember that they set a precedent for how these people are treated and how they see themselves. In that sense, it's helpful to think on an individual scale and not reduce a human to a designation that only describes one aspect of their lives.

"Sometimes we need to look at the larger picture, but sometimes we need to look at the individual," Madrid said. "We need to have more empathy. Nobody who is a refugee decided to come to this country as an adventure. It's never that easy and there is so much more than we're able to see at first glance. A label can't fit their situations."

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Response Research Program. Jolie graduated summa cum laude from the University of Colorado at Boulder with a bachelor's degree in journalism. Before joining the Natural Hazards Center, she was as a reporter for various Front Range newspapers, including the *Broomfield Enterprise*, the *Longmont Daily Times-Call*, the *Boulder Daily Camera* and the *Rocky Mountain News*. She has also administered news Web sites for Clear Channel Denver. Jolie is interested in how people use the Internet and Web communication to create authentic social groups outside real-time interactions and how these groups function in opposition to hegemonic institutions.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2012

RIOTS IN ZA'ATARI CAMP

At least one person has been reported killed and dozens hurt in a riot at Jordan's Zaatari camp, home to some 106,000 refugees from Syria's war. The sprawling camp has seen several protests since opening two years ago, mainly over poor living conditions.

DECEMBER 17, 2012

TB FOUND AMONG SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

According to the Lebanese Ministry of Health, multiple cases of tuberculosis (TB) were discovered among Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

DECEMBER 20, 2012

UN SEEKS US\$ 1 BILLION IN SUPPORT

The UN refugee agency and its partners appeal to international donors for US\$1 billion to support the hundreds of thousands of refugees that fled Syria to Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt.

JANUARY 12, 2013

POOR WEATHER CONDITIONS AFFECT REFUGEES

The worst storms in a decade in the region affects Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. Although humanitarian agencies had prepared for cold weather conditions in advance, refugees suffer, both in official camps and in temporary housing and shelters.

JANUARY 22, 2013

LAUNCH OF #CHILDRENOFSYRIA

UNICEF launches Children of Syria Campaign to raise awareness about the plight of Syrian refugee children on social media. By end-2013, half the 2 million refugees who have fled the country are children.

MARCH 6, 2013

NUMBER OF SYRIAN REFUGEES REACHES ONE MILLION

The UNHCR announces that the number of Syrians either registered as refugees or being assisted as such has reached the one million mark.

APRIL 4, 2013

ZA'ATARI CONTINUES TO GROW

Za'atari camp on its way to becoming one of the largest cities in Jordan. Of the 300,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan, 73,000 refugees live in Zaatari camp

JULY 2, 2013

DOMIZ CAMP STRETCHED TO CAPACITY

Domiz camp, designed to host about 2,000 families, has become the largest Syrian refugee camp in Iraq and is stretched to capacity housing almost 8,000 families. An additional 90,000 refugees are scattered around nearby towns. Securing food, water and adequate sanitation becomes an ever-increasing problem in and around the camp.

JULY 9, 2013

WAR IS SPREADING INTO LEBANON

A string of bombings in Lebanon's capital are widely seen as proof that the conflict in Syria has spread across the border.

JULY 16, 2013

LARGEST REFUGEE OUTFLOW SINCE RWANDAN GENOCIDE

With an average 6,000 people a day fleeing conflict in Syria by summer 2013, UN says such a rate has not been seen since the mid-1990s.

AUGUST 18, 2013

THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES FLEE TO IRAQ

Almost 20,000 refugees cross into Kurdistan in the space of a few days.

SEPTEMBER 1, 2013

NUMBER OF SYRIAN REFUGEES REACHES TWO MILLION

Continues on page 9



Lesvos © Maaiké

Faces Behind Figures

A COUNTER NARRATIVE OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS

By Magdalena Schwarz & Elke Weesjes¹

LAST SEPTEMBER, after the images of a drowned Syrian toddler named Alan Kurdi made global headlines, it seemed that the humanity of refugees was finally recognized, especially in Europe and the United States. The devastating photograph of Alan, his lifeless body on a beach in Turkey, incited public shock, sympathy and outrage.

Unfortunately, this widespread compassion was short lived. The Paris attacks in November set off a new round of fear-mongering based on false claims that one of the terrorists had a Syrian passport. Anti-refugee and dehumanizing rhetoric came back with a vengeance, both inside and beyond Europe.

Today, refugees have again been reduced to nameless and faceless numbers. When discussing the crisis, politicians, journalists, and experts tend to use pejorative words that reduce the struggle of a large number of individuals to a compressed and oversimplified event: “influx,” “occupation,” “flow,” or even “horde” or “swarm.” These words can make it easy to forget that refugees are not a single parasitic organism vexing Europe, but rather individual human beings trying to escape violence, persecution, as well as economic, political and social instability of war-torn countries.

Although we are constantly given information about the “refugee crisis,” we actually know very little about the refugees themselves who are in crisis—the challenges they face along the way, in transit camps, and even once permanently or temporarily settled in a host country.

A counter-narrative is sorely needed. With this intention, we spoke to 24 refugees and grassroots volunteers to gather informal and anecdotal knowledge.² This evidence, combined with official primary sources (such as UNHCR statistics) newspaper articles, and other secondary sources, forms the basis of this article, which will correct crisis representations often seen in the media. We also want to highlight how refugees can be an asset to countries, not a burden.

On the move

In 2015 an astonishing 1,000,575 refugees arrived on European shores by boat. These refugees—men, women, and children—faced many dangers on their way to a safer

¹ Magdalena Schwarz and Elke Weesjes contributed equally to this article.

² We spoke with 16 refugees (all male), including one refugee who also volunteered as an interpreter, and seven volunteers (two males and five females) who have worked for a variety of grass roots organizations over the course of 2015, the year the refugee problem became a full-blown global crisis. Although much of the challenges discussed are ongoing, the focus of this article will be on the events of this past year. At the time of the interviews (conducted between October and December 2015 in Dutch, German, and in English), the majority of refugees were living in an asylum center near Fuerstenfeld, a small town in Southern Austria. This asylum center is home to some 50 male refugees from Syria and Iraq. Although our interview project was not meant to be a systematic or large-scale study—we set out to gather preliminary evidence to help understand some of the challenges refugees faced—we acknowledge that our evidence is limited because we couldn’t speak to female refugees. We do not want to reinforce the idea that all refugees are able-bodied men. According to the latest figures, released by the UNHCR, 45 percent of refugees who make the sea crossing into Europe from Turkey are male adults, 21 percent are female adults, and the remaining 34 percent are children. (Robinson, 2016)



Lesvos © Maaiké



Tovarnik Border Serbia/Croatia © Fotomovimiento

destination. They arrived on old and overloaded inflatable boats, often driven by fellow refugees who lacked boating experience.³ Even in the depths of winter, desperate refugees continued to make this dangerous journey. The human toll was enormous. According to UNHCR statistics, 3,735 people perished at sea in 2015.

While photographs of refugees in overcrowded rubber dinghies have become ubiquitous in coverage of the refugee crisis, we shouldn't forget that not everyone arrived via sea; in 2015, 34,000 refugees traveled through the Balkans and Central Europe to the European Union. They too, were exposed to danger, brutality, bad weather conditions and many other obstacles along the way.

During her missions in Central Europe and the Balkans, Aude, a volunteer with Migration Aid⁴ witnessed brutality against refugees firsthand.

"[At the train station of Tovarnik on the Croatian-Serbian border], a large group of a few thousand people, mostly Syrians,

³ One of our respondents, Maaiké, explained that Turkish smugglers tend to pretend to accompany refugees on their journey, but jump off after a few meters, leaving inexperienced refugees in charge of driving the boat to the Greek coast.

⁴ Migration Aid is a civil initiative that helps refugees arriving in Central Europe reach their assigned refugee camps or travel onwards.

The UNHCR announces that the number of Syrians either registered as refugees or being assisted as such has reached the two million mark, including one million children.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2013

GERMANY ANNOUNCES PLAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Germany agrees to resettle 5,000 Syrian refugees - the largest program yet. Refugees can stay for two years.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2013

SWEDEN OFFERS PERMANENT RESIDENCY TO REFUGEES

The Swedish Migration Board announces that all asylum seekers from Syria who have been granted temporary residency in Sweden can receive permanent permits.

OCTOBER 7, 2013

TURKEY BUILDS WALL ON SYRIAN BORDER

Turkey builds a two-meter wall in the district of Nusaybin, site of frequent clashes between rebels, Kurds and Arab tribes. Protests break out during the wall's construction.

OCTOBER 18, 2013

16 COUNTRIES MAKE CONFIRMED PLEDGES

UNHCR encourages countries to offer resettlement opportunities. The UN agency proposes that the international community admits up to 30,00 by end-2014.

NOVEMBER 11, 2013

BULGARIA TO BUILD FENCE ON TURKISH BORDER

In response to a spike in Syrian asylum seekers, Bulgaria begins construction of an 18 mile border fence south of the town Elhovo. UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres urges European countries to "keep their borders open" during a visit to Bulgaria. "Refugees are not terrorists. They are the first victims of terror, the ones who suffered," he said.

DECEMBER 16, 2013

UN LAUNCHES \$6.5 BILLION APPEAL

The UN estimates nearly three-quarters of Syria's 22.4 million population will need humanitarian aid in 2014. About \$4.2 billion would be destined to assist refugees in neighboring countries.

JANUARY 29, 2014

UK ANNOUNCES IT WILL TAKE UP TO 500 SYRIAN REFUGEES

In an agreement with the UN high commissioner for refugees (UNHCR), the British government decided to provide refuge for some of those most traumatized by the crisis in Syria.

FEBRUARY 25, 2014

SYRIAN REFUGEES AT RISK OF DYING FROM MALNUTRITION

Some 10,000 Syrian children are suffering from acute malnutrition in Lebanon says UNICEF.

MARCH 2, 2014

VIRAL PHOTO RAISES PUBLIC AWARENESS

A photograph taken inside of Yarmouk, a Palestinian refugee camp in Syria, showing thousands of refugees queuing for aid goes viral around the world, exposing the shocking conditions endured by 20,000 people trapped inside the camp.

MARCH 11, 2014

A GENERATION AT RISK

UNICEF releases a report about the 5.5 million Syrian children living in Syria and in neighboring countries. 1.2 million children are now living as refugees in host countries and 37,000 refugee children were born since the conflict began, according to UNICEF. Malnutrition, lack of education, poor healthcare and emotional distress are just a few of the many factors that are creating this "lost generation."

Continues on page 10



Keleti Station Budapest © Michael Gubi

Iraqis and Afghans were waiting for a train to take them to Hungary. The train came and a wave of people rushed into the train to get a chance to move on. People were crushed, babies handed out of the windows. Croatian police attempted to contain overcrowding but was not prepared to face such circumstances. Some started to get violent and beat up some of the people at the train cars' doors. The train did not move the whole night. After a while these people in overcrowded rail cars were in poor shape. Some women fainted and were taken out of the train at the crying sound of their family members. I spent most of the night distributing water and food through the windows and ensuring most got fed, especially the children" (Aude 2015).

On their long and treacherous journeys over land, refugees were shot, robbed, attacked by dogs, beaten and threatened by local authorities, gangs, and human trafficking rings (Dahlia 2015).

Our respondents reported similar abuses. Elisa, a volunteer with a British grassroots organization that provides medical aid in refugee camps in northern France, spoke to camp residents who had been physically attacked by angry local residents (Elisa 2015). Rawad, a volunteer interpreter in Vienna, met several refugees who had been beaten with truncheons by Hungarian police (Rawad 2015).

Even the most vulnerable weren't spared from this kind of violent behavior. One night, while transporting refugees from the Serbian border to a UNHCR camp, Aude, the volunteer with Migration Aid, met a father from Afghanistan.

"He was carrying his daughter in his arms; she was about ten and had cerebral palsy. [After sitting in the backseat of the car] he started to tell me about his journey from Afghanistan three weeks before. I was trying to get him to share his story without pushing. But at some point, he stopped talking and I could hear him sobbing in the back. After a while, he told me that they were beaten up by the police in Serbia two days earlier, for no reason, just for the sake of order and control at the border" (Aude 2015).

That night Aude drove more than 125 miles, back and forth between the border and the camp, bringing people like this man and his disabled daughter to safety. She

MARCH 30, 2014

FIRST POLIO CASE IN IRAQ CONFIRMED

The WHO announced that Iraq's first polio case in 14 years was confirmed by the Iraqi Ministry of Health.

APRIL 3, 2014

ALMOST 1 IN 5 PEOPLE IN LEBANON A SYRIAN REFUGEE

The UN announces that almost 1 in 5 people in Lebanon is a Syrian Refugee.

JUNE 29, 2014

ISIS ANNOUNCES "CALIPHATE" IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

The group claims that the state will erase all state borders. The next day the UN declares that an estimated 1.2 million Iraqis have fled their homes.

JULY 7, 2014

EUROPE SHOULD DO MORE TO RESETTLE REFUGEES

EU Home Affairs Minister Cecilia Malmström says Syria's neighbors have accepted over three million refugees, while Europe has only absorbed 100,000. Malmström urges other EU countries to follow Sweden and Germany's example.

AUGUST 11, 2014

ISIS TAKES CONTROL

By mid-August, ISIS is the most successful rebel group in Syria, controlling the main Syrian oil and gas fields.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2014

ISIS ATTACKS CAUSES REFUGEES TO FLEE TO TURKEY

ISIS fighters begin attacking Kurdish villages along the Syrian-Turkey border. The Turkish government says more than 130,000 Syrian refugees, many of them Kurds, have crossed the border over the last three days, fleeing from ISIS militants.

OCTOBER 14, 2014

SIEGE OF KOBANI

The Turkish border city of Suruc doubles in population as almost 400,000 Syrian Kurds flee across the border from the besieged city of Kobani and surrounding villages. Refugees arriving in Turkey tell of civilian executions.

OCTOBER 21, 2014

RISE IN INFECTIOUS DISEASES BEKAA VALLEY

A study carried out by the American University of Beirut in the Bekaa region of Lebanon found that poor living conditions have led to an outbreak of Cutaneous Leishmaniasis among refugees in Lebanon. Transmitted by a sand fly, this disease is not life-threatening but causes disfiguring lesions of the face.

MARCH 9, 2015

MILLIONS OF CHILDREN IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE

In a report timed to coincide with the start of the fourth year of the conflict in Syria, Save the Children, argues that the effects of untreated illnesses on Syrian children were only partly reflected in the documented statistics. They show that at least 1.2 million children have fled to neighboring countries, that 4.3 million in Syria need humanitarian assistance and that more than 10,000 have died in the violence.

MARCH 29, 2015

TURKEY CLOSES ALL GATES AT BORDER WITH SYRIA

After maintaining an open-door policy throughout the four-year conflict in neighboring Syria, Turkey has moved this month to close the two remaining border gates between the countries, shutting out displaced Syrian refugees amid fears of a potential terrorist attack.

MAY 2015

RECORD NUMBER OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS

The European Union says it has received 626,000 applications for asylum in 2014, the highest number for asylum applications since

Continues on page 11

explained that, at the border, refugees were told that the UNHCR camp was a couple of miles up the road. In fact, the camp was more than 12 miles away. After watching exhausted refugees, including pregnant women, the elderly, disabled individuals, and small children, walk for hours in the night, she felt compelled to help.

Magdalena witnessed similar circumstances in Hungary, close to the Austrian border where transportation was interrupted for several miles on the route between Budapest and Vienna. Refugees had to walk towards the Austrian border as trains were overcrowded and timetables weren't available.

"We drove by in our car full of goods and clothing as well as baby carriers. We handed out as much as we could (we had prepared ready-to-use packages of food and crayons and coloring books for children) and gave families warm jackets and shoes. I particularly remember Wallad, a not even 1-year-old Syrian boy, who was being carried by his mom. My sister gave them a baby carrier and they were just so happy to have a little remedy that would relieve their pain from walking for miles and miles" (Magdalena 2015).

Respondents who volunteered on the Greek island of Lesbos reported a shortage of buses between border crossings, registration centers, and transit camps. Upon arrival, the majority of refugees—already exhausted and soaking wet from their arduous crossing—were forced to walk 44 miles from the shoreline to the nearest registration center. Until the end of January, when the Red Cross set up a transit center and minibus service, there were only four buses operating between the shore and the center (Amnesty, 2015; Haga, 2016).

Besides the irregular transportation and missing timetables, several other key problems affected refugees' transit conditions. In the past year, borders along the land route have suddenly closed, leaving refugees stranded.⁵ The absence of clear communication between refugees, border authorities, and aid agencies has further worsened these bottlenecks. As a result, local authorities, who often lack the ability and experience to deal with the consequent chaotic situations, have regularly resorted to violence.

International aid organizations have also fallen short. For instance, Aude felt disappointed with the UNHCR and the Red Cross for not responding adequately or efficiently. She is hardly alone. Other respondents reported a lack of international NGO and UNHCR presence in the camps and at the borders. Maaïke, a volunteer with a Dutch grassroots organization on Lesbos, accused officials from large aid organizations of using the situation in the refugee camp where she worked as a photo-op. She described how representatives would come in with a selfie-stick, take some photographs, but leave most of the work to volunteers like her.

⁵ Some temporary or permanent border closings have occurred in years prior to 2015 but the number of countries that tightened their border security or shut their frontiers altogether increased significantly in the past year.

1991. Germany fielded about 203,000 of these applications, per Eurostat. Syria is, by far, the top country of origin for refugees (at 19.5 percent of the total share), followed by Afghanistan (6.6 percent) and Eritrea (5.9 percent).

APRIL 19, 2015

TRAGEDY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

More than 800 refugees are killed when their boat capsizes in the Mediterranean, 70 miles from the Libyan coast. Only 28 people survive the tragedy. The disaster marks the largest loss of life involving migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean, according to the UNHCR.

APRIL 20, 2015

NEW EU PLAN DEEMED TOO VAGUE

Following increased international criticism of the EU's inaction in solving the migrant crisis, member countries agree on a ten-point plan to increase financial resources for addressing the problem and expanding the search area for naval missions. NGOs say the plan fails to truly address the scale of the migrant crisis or to target its causes.

APRIL 28, 2015

APRIL DEADLIEST MONTH ON RECORD

The International Organization for Migration reveals that April was the deadliest month on record for migrants and refugees lost at sea in the Mediterranean. Nearly 1250 men, women, and children drowned.

MAY 30, 2015

LESVOS CALLS FOR HELP

The mayor of the Greek island of Lesbos calls on the Greek government for immediate support as the number of refugees reaching the island each day rises to 600. Lesbos is one of several Greek islands overwhelmed by the daily arrival of hundreds of people crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey and local authorities struggle to accommodate and register the newcomers.

JUNE 2015

UNHCR RECEIVES QUARTER OF HUMANITARIAN FUNDS

As of late June, only around a quarter of the humanitarian funds (\$4.3 billion) requested have been received, says UNHCR.

JULY 1, 2015

MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS PRIMARILY REFUGEE CRISIS

The UNHCR announces that one third of the men, women and children who arrived by sea in Italy or Greece were from Syria, whose nationals are almost universally deemed to qualify for refugee status or other forms of protection. The second and third most common countries of origin are Afghanistan and Eritrea, whose nationals are also mostly considered to qualify for refugee status.

JULY 9, 2015

NUMBER OF SYRIAN REFUGEES EXCEEDS FOUR MILLION

The number of refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria to neighboring countries has now passed four million, confirming the crisis as the world's single largest refugee crisis for almost a quarter of a century under UNHCR mandate.

JULY 13, 2015

HUNGARY ERECTS A FENCE

Hungary starts to erect a razor-wire fence along its border with Serbia, to halt an unprecedented number of refugees seeking entry to the EU.

JULY 20, 2015

EU COUNTRIES PLEDGE TO ACCEPT 30,000 REFUGEES

EU leaders agree to accept 32,256 refugees from Italy and Greece; this is just short of the 40,000 proposed in May by EC president Jean-Claude Juncker.

Continues on page 12

Maaiké also was concerned that donations made to large aid organization often did not reach those who most need the aid.

Although we could not confirm her suspicions, we do know that humanitarian aid that is spent on refugees is often distributed unevenly among nationalities. Last November, Dutch volunteer Kaatje worked for Because We Carry, an organization that hands out baby carriers, clothes, blankets, and food to refugees who arrive by boat in Greece. The first thing she noticed when she arrived in Camp Moria—Lesvos' main refugee camp—was the division between Syrian and Afghan refugees. While aid organizations were active on the Syrian side, the Afghan side of the camp received virtually no support. This motivated Kaatje and her fellow volunteers to focus primarily on Afghan refugees who are increasingly labeled as economic migrants.⁶

"I met a family from Afghanistan. A father, mother, and their four children. They arrived at Camp Moria at night; their clothes and shoes were soaking wet. The mother had a large wound on her shin and the father had a two-month-old baby wrapped in a heat blanket. [...] I wanted to send them to a medical post, but at that time there was only a medical post on the Syrian side and they didn't treat this family. It was dark and I didn't know what to do, so I ran to [our] bus and tried to find dry clothes for all of them. This family really got to me. If it was up to me I would have taken them home. Offer them a hot shower, a good bed, and a warm blanket" (Kaatje 2015).

Both the volunteers and the refugees we interviewed said they had witnessed or experienced similar examples of unequal treatment. This stemmed from a number of factors: ethnicity, gender and age (women and children are seen as less threatening and more vulnerable than single males), and the perceived status of "economic migrant" versus "war refugee."

For example, Schero, a 23-year-old Kurd from Kobane, Syria, explained to us that Kurds in his home country and in neighboring countries historically have been subjected to systematic discrimination and harassment by the government. In Turkey, where tens of thousands of Syrian Kurds from Kobane found refuge⁷, Kurds have been the victims of persistent assaults on their ethnic, cultural, religious identity and economic and political status by successive governments. The prevalence of this deep-rooted

⁶ Even though Afghans, who represent the second largest group of refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea, also escaped a country torn by fighting, they have received a different welcome than their Syrian counterparts. Germany for example has labeled them as economic migrants because fighting in Afghanistan is not widespread and the country has received large amounts of development aid. Human right groups have expressed concerns that countries such as Germany, but also other European countries, are moving towards a double standard asylum system that is based on nationality and not on an individual's right to asylum. Because of this shift there is also less financial aid for Afghan refugees. (<http://qz.com/568717/afghan-refugees-receive-a-cold-welcome-in-europe/>)

⁷ In July 2015, the UNHCR reported that 25,000 Kurds were living in Suruc (a camp in Turkey) alone.

JULY 28, 2015,

BRITAIN BOLSTERS SECURITY CHANNEL TUNNEL

Britain pledges an extra seven million pound (10.8 million dollars) to bolster channel security as the crisis in a makeshift refugee camp in Calais deepens. The camp has existed since November 2002 but gains international attention as the number of people trying to reach Britain skyrockets over the summer, with the French and British governments facing increasing political pressure to manage the refugee crisis. Separately, a growing number of volunteers travel to Calais to provide books, water and sanitation facilities to camp residents.

JULY 31, 2015

UN World Food Programme forced to cut food aid for refugees

The WFP says it has been forced to halve its assistance to almost 1.3 million Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon because of a US\$341 million funding shortfall.

AUGUST 7, 2015

50,000 ARRIVALS IN JULY ALONE

The UNHCR notes that 50,000 migrants and refugees had arrived in Greece by sea in July 2015 alone—70 percent more than the number of arrivals the previous month—and calls for an "urgent Greek and European response."

AUGUST 7, 2015

CHAOS ON GREEK ISLANDS

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras says his cash-strapped country can't accommodate the thousands of arriving migrants and refugees. Tsipras asks the EU for financial aid, arguing that the crisis is not just a Greek problem, but a European one. The UNHCR calls on Greece to take control of the "total chaos" on its islands calling the situation totally shameful.

AUGUST 10, 2015

EU PLEDGES US\$2.4 BILLION

The EU Commission approves 2.6 billion dollars of aid over six years to countries dealing with large numbers of refugees, such as Italy and Greece.

AUGUST 20-22, 2015

STATE OF EMERGENCY IN MACEDONIA

Macedonia allows thousands of refugees coming from Greece to enter the country so that they can continue north through Serbia and Hungary into Western Europe. Macedonia declares a state of emergency after almost 39,000 refugees pass through its territory in August alone.

AUGUST 26, 2015

BORDERS BALKAN COUNTRIES OVERWHELMED

Large numbers of refugees, many from Syria and Afghanistan have been overwhelming border authorities in several Balkan countries as they try to reach Western Europe.

AUGUST 27, 2015

BODIES FOUND IN REFRIGERATED TRUCK

In Austria, the bodies of 71 Syrians, including four children, are found in an abandoned refrigerated truck on a highway from Budapest Hungary, to Vienna, Austria. Europol, the EU's policing body, notes it has opened 1,400 new human smuggling cases and identified almost 30,000 suspected human smugglers in 2015 alone.

SEPTEMBER 1, 2015

REFUGEES OUTNUMBER RESIDENTS IN LESVOS

The number of refugees arriving in Lesbos from Turkey officially exceeds the island's resident population, Lesbos Mayor Spyros Galinos announces. Separately, the UNHCR notes that 300,000 people have crossed the Mediterranean so far, with 200,000 going to Greece and 110,000 to Italy.

Continues on page 13



Volunteer labeling and organizing donations near the Westbahnhof train station, Vienna, Austria, October 2015 © Magdalena Schwarz

This donation and distribution site in Vienna welcomed volunteers of any age and background, such as this retired woman who spent most of her Saturday labeling and organizing donations (e.g. clothes, jackets, shoes and food) near the Westbahnhof train station in Vienna.



Informative posters for arriving refugees at the Westbahnhof train station in Vienna, Austria, October 2015 © Magdalena Schwarz

A few days after large groups of refugees had started coming into the Westbahnhof train station—most of them on their way to Germany—the City of Vienna put up guiding posters in several languages to provide orientation (e.g. maps and signs), information about free wifi for refugees and where to get further detailed schedules, drinking water, care packages or a safe place to sleep. Furthermore, there were several tools to help arriving people around the station, such as “safe to drink” signs on the water tabs in English, Arabic and Farsi.

aversion against the Kurds, an aversion that hasn’t seized since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria, formed an added obstacle for Kurdish refugees in Turkey. For example, Schero was treated disrespectfully by Turkish police after they saw his ethnicity on his passport. The attitude of border officials and locals towards refugees varied along Schero’s route from Kobane to southern Austria, he said. While he had negative experiences in Turkey and Macedonia, he was warmly welcomed in Austria.

Welcoming environments such as the one Schero described in Austria are often created by numerous volunteers, among them many ex-refugees, who try to help and assist in different ways. They distribute food and warm clothing, provide medical care, and act as translators. In Lesbos a group of lifeguards from Spain has been working around the clock to save refugees whose boats have capsized. And in Calais, France, a large group of medical professionals have been volunteering their time and resources

SEPT 1-2, 2015

HUNGARIAN POLICE CRACKS DOWN ON REFUGEES

Hungarian police close the Keleti train station in Budapest, Hungary, preventing hundreds of people from boarding trains headed for Germany and Austria and leaving them to camp outside the station. Hundreds of refugees are transported to temporary refugee camps where conditions are abysmal, Human Rights Watch says.

SEPTEMBER 2, 2015

PHOTOGRAPH ALAN KURDI GOES VIRAL

Pictures of three-year-old Alan Kurdi from Kobani, drowned in his family’s attempt to reach Greece from Turkey, provoke a wave of public sympathy for refugees. Alan’s brother and mother, along with at least nine other people, also perished in the tragedy.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2015

PUBLIC PRESSURE TO WELCOME REFUGEES RISES

The slogan ‘refugees welcome’ goes viral; 250,000 people in 48 hours back an “Independent” petition calling for Britain to take its fair share of refugees. Mr. Cameron says Britain will fulfill its ‘moral responsibilities’.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2015

Budapest reopens train station

Budapest reopens its main station after a two-day closure. Hundreds board trains for the Austrian border; others set off for Germany on foot.

SEPTEMBER 4, 2015

REFUGEES MARCH FROM BUDAPEST TO VIENNA

An estimated 1,200 refugees embark on a 150 mile march on foot from Budapest, Hungary, to Vienna Austria, after being blocked from taking westbound trains. Austria and Germany announce that they will allow the refugees past their borders in a one-off emergency measure.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2015

POPE FRANCIS: TAKE IN REFUGEES

Pope Francis announces that the Vatican’s two parishes will be welcoming refugees and urges each Catholic parish and religious community to take in a refugee family.

SEPTEMBER 7, 2015

NEW PLEDGES

Cameron says Britain will take in an extra 20,000 refugees over five years. France agrees to take 24,000. Germany earmarks 6 billion euros to help an expected 800,000 extra refugees.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2015

EU MEMBER STATES HAVE TO DO MORE

Mr Juncker urges EU member states to take in an additional 120,000 refugees (bringing the total to 160,000), to be distributed on a quota basis. German Chancellor Angela Merkel calls the move “an important first step” but warns that the plan to take in 160,000 refugees may not be enough.

SEPTEMBER 13, 2015

EMERGENCY BORDER CONTROL GERMANY

Germany introduces emergency controls on its borders with Austria, temporarily suspending its Schengen obligations; officials say 63,000 refugees have arrived since the end of August.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2015

BORDERS TIGHTEN

Austria, Slovakia, and the Netherlands say they too are reintroducing border controls. Hungary declares a state of emergency and threatens those who enter the country illegally with jail.

Continues on page 14



Messages and paintings by refugees for Austrians at the Westbahnhof station in Vienna, Austria.

This poster was made by refugees as a “thank you” to all the volunteers and professional responders who have been working at the train station in Vienna. It contains messages, hand prints, names of the children, and some statements about children’s aspirations and feelings. For example, Maha Kasha later wants to study architecture, Bayan wants to become a painter and 12-year-old Nur who arrived without her parents, completely on her own, loves and misses her mother a lot. October 2015 © Magdalena Schwarz

to help refugees in desperate need of medical attention. These volunteers would not be able to do their jobs without all the donations made by ordinary citizens. In Austria, for example, the first distribution centers for food and clothes sprung up as soon as the first trains with refugees came in from Hungary. Within days, a vibrant network of shelters and services for refugees was operating, and Austrians from all walks of life were donating their time and goods.

These people, an army of unsung heroes, have filled a void in humanitarian aid. Financed by charities, crowd-funding platforms, and personal savings, Grassroots organizations and small NGOs have proven to be especially effective. Where big humanitarian aid organizations and local authorities have been mired in red tape and shirking responsibility, small organizations and individual volunteers have been flexible and efficient. They have adapted adequately to the quickly changing nature of the refugee crisis, and have successfully raised awareness about the plight of refugees. In some cases they have influenced or inspired local governments (see fig. 1).

Final destination?

Schero, the young Kurd from Kobane, described how relieved he felt when, in February 2015, he was able to move into an asylum home in Fuerstenfeld, a small town in southern Austria. The psychological trauma of suffering violence and harassment in Syria and while en route to Austria eased for a brief moment when he settled into his new home, his first stable accommodation since leaving his homeland. However, Schero soon realized that the asylum process posed new uncertainties and challenges.

Schero and thousands of other refugees have been living in limbo as they are waiting for their asylum claims to be processed. With the crisis deepening, more refugees have been applying for asylum. Years can go by before an ap-

SEPTEMBER 14, 2015

THE EU FALLS SHORT

The European Council agrees, in principle to relocate 160,000 refugees across EU member states, but Slovakia and the Czech Republic still vehemently oppose the deal. Discussions about quotas for each country are not finished and details for relocation have not yet been worked out.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2015

ONE MILLION REFUGEES GERMANY

German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel says Germany is expecting one million asylum seekers in 2015.

SEPTEMBER 20 2015

U.S. VOWS TO TAKE IN 100,000 REFUGEES

US Secretary of State John Kerry announces that the US will take in 100,000 refugees (worldwide) by 2017. Kerry says the US can’t take in more refugees because of a lack of funding from Congress and the need to retain high levels of post Sept. 11 security checks on people entering the country.

SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

\$1.1 BILLION MORE EU FUNDING

EU leaders agree to give at least one billion euros in new funding to agencies aiding refugees, such as UNHCR and the World Food Program

OCTOBER 16, 2015

HUNGARY CLOSES BORDER WITH CROATIA

Hungary has closed its border with Croatia to refugees in a bid to divert their route to northern Europe.

NOVEMBER 5, 2015

EU THREE MILLION MORE PEOPLE TO ARRIVE BY 2017

The EU’s executive commission predicts that three million more refugees could arrive on the continent by the end of 2016.

NOVEMBER 11, 2015

MORE FENCES ERECTED ON EUROPEAN BORDERS

Slovenia starts building a razor wire fence along parts of its border with Croatia to clamp down on the number of refugees entering the country.

NOVEMBER 13, 2015

AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT DECIDES TO BUILD FENCE

Austrian officials announce that it will build a 2.5 mile long fence along its busiest border crossing with Slovenia to enable a more “orderly entry” and sorting refugees per nationalities.

NOVEMBER 19, 2015

BORDERS CLOSED TO MOST NATIONALITIES

Countries including Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia shut borders to people coming from countries that aren’t tormented by war. As a result, thousands of people are stuck in no man’s land outside of countries’ borders.

DECEMBER 22, 2015

MORE THAN 1 MILLION REFUGEES

Out of 1,005,504 refugees that arrived by 21 December, 816,752 arrived by sea in Greece, says the International Organization for Migration. 3,771 people died trying to cross the Mediterranean.

JANUARY 10, 2016

Syrians starving in Madaya

Médecins Sans Frontières says that at least 28 people, including six babies have died from hunger-related causes in their clinic in Madaya, a town near the Lebanese border. About 400,000 Syrians, who are trapped behind front lines, are denied access to food and medicine.

Continues on page 15

plicant knows if he or she can stay or has to return. Schero, eager to start planning for his future, has returned to the application bureau four times in the past six months, hoping to learn more about his status, but at the time of our interview he was still in the dark. He said he finds it is especially difficult to sit around all day, day in day out, with nothing to do.

In her 2010 study of children in Danish asylum centers sociologist Kathrine Vitus links the open-ended waiting time—characterized by boredom, powerlessness, restlessness, fatigue and despair—to desubjectification of these children, who are living without a home, and without an identity (Vitus 2010). Based on our interviews, the same rings true for adolescent and adult refugees, who also feel they live neither in the present nor in the future.

Loneliness makes matters worse. Many refugees have been separated from their families. Hamza, a father of four in his mid-forties, fled from his birthplace, Kobane, via Turkey to Austria. His wife and children are still in Istanbul. Hamza told us that he hasn't seen them in 18 months. Since his arrival in Austria, he has worked hard to get all the paperwork in order, but he isn't sure when he will be reunited with his family. For refugee families, like Hamza's, torn apart by war and persecution, the heartache of separation is a daily pain, exacerbated by toughening immigration policies and increasing hostility towards refugees in host countries.

Bert, a volunteer with Vluchtenlingenwerk Oost-Nederland (Refugee Work East Netherlands) in Ulft, works with people who have obtained temporary asylum. He has witnessed firsthand how loneliness and waiting in limbo affect former refugees' mental health.

"[Refugees with temporary asylum] need psychological support. For example, a man from Syria has been living in Ulft [town in East Netherlands] for the past six months. He has been trying to get his wife and four children to the Netherlands, but unfortunately he has failed to do so—his paper work isn't in order. He is so disappointed. He smokes more than a pack of cigarettes a day and doesn't leave the house. In the meantime, a second attempt to reunite with his family has also failed. The house coach [a social worker] is helping him deal with these setbacks and tries to get him to go outside and do things" (Bert 2015).

Fortunately, this Syrian's house coach monitored his behavior and helped him deal with these setbacks. Other refugees, however, have not been as fortunate. They have to endure family separation, social isolation, post-traumatic stress, and existential fears, such as loss of job and home, without any professional support or guidance.

Uncertain future

It is easy to forget that refugees once had jobs, careers and aspirations for the future. Many of them lived regular lives not so different from most of us—whether in Austria, Germany, or the United States. While war abruptly ended their normal lives, their desire to work and make a living has not stopped.

JANUARY 12, 2016

GERMANY SENDS REFUGEES BACK TO AUSTRIA

Germany has been refusing an increasing number of migrants at its southern border, Austrian authorities say. Hundreds of migrants have been sent back to Austria, from where many are trying to find new routes to Germany.

JANUARY 15, 2016

AUSTRIA JOINS GERMANY IN SENDING BACK REFUGEES

Austria announces that it will begin to refuse entry to refugees who seek to pass through to Scandinavia. Following Germany's lead, Vienna plans to send as many refugees as possible back to its southern border.

JANUARY 29, 2016

52000 REFUGEES ARRIVED IN JANUARY 2015

According to IOM (International Organization for Migration) 52000 refugees arrived on Greek Islands since beginning of the new year and more than 240 died.

JANUARY 30, 2016

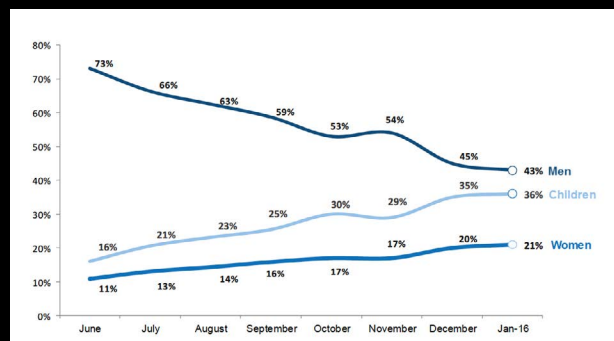
AUSTRIA INTRODUCES CAPS

Austrian officials have announced that – like in other countries – caps will be introduced to control the maximum number of incoming refugees per month. Additionally, tens of thousands of refugees should be sent back to their countries of origin until 2019.

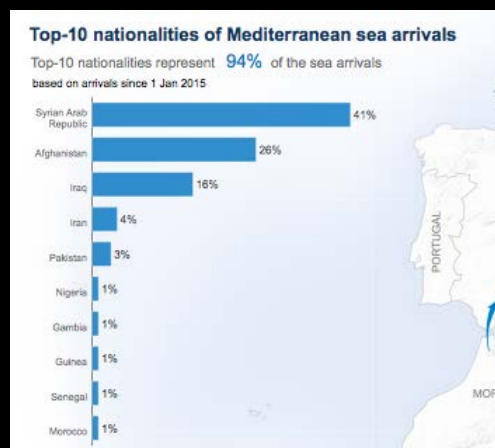
FEBRUARY 2, 2016

WOMEN AND CHILDREN NOW MAJORITY

The number of women and children seeking safety in Europe has overtaken the number of men for the first time since the refugee crisis began, says Unicef.



Breakdown of men, children, women among sea arrivals in Greece for the period June 2015–January 2016, based on partial data as communicated by authorities. Source: UNCHR



Source: UNCHR



People Dancing November 29, 2015 © Magdalena Schwarz

In Fuerstenfeld (Austria), locals and refugees spent an afternoon learning each other's traditional dances, while sharing thoughts and experiences. A group of local volunteers organize afternoons and excursions like these to welcome refugees from nearby asylum centers/homes.

Still, many have to downgrade their career and their expectations. For instance, Khaled, a 50-year-old Palestinian lawyer, spent most of his adult life in Damascus where he lived with his wife and children. When their house was bombed during the war, the family decided that they couldn't stay in Syria. Khaled couldn't afford to bring his whole family, so he painfully resigned to come alone. He hoped to find a job, start a new life and arrange for his family to join him in the nearby future. Even though he loved his work, Khaled said that he already has accepted that he'll probably never work as a lawyer again.

Sarah, who has worked as a volunteer with Afghan refugees in Afghanistan and Pakistan, was involved in a research project that looked at the experiences of long-term refugee youth. She explained that adult refugees, like Khaled, tend to focus on the next generation.

"In my research, while there were hopes and aspirations, there was also a clear trend that refugee life involved a large economic downturn and lowered quality of life (not knowing the language, no way of having a livelihood using the skills and networks they have back home), and that adults would essentially be a 'burnt generation' that would pave the way for the generation afterwards. So for example a famous politically-minded journalist would hope at best to be a taxi driver or cook, working essentially at the bottom and eschewing their chosen career path, in order to support their families" (Sarah 2015).

Younger refugees appear to have greater confidence in the future, especially when they find themselves in a country where people actively try to help refugees integrate. Khaled, a 23-year old Syrian student, fled Damascus three years ago after his university was bombed by the army. His journey led him via the United States to Germany where he now studies computer engineering a university in Berlin. He was reunited with part of his family in Berlin, but unfortunately his father, as well as some other relatives, remain in Syria.

When Khaled arrived, he couldn't speak a word of German, but he learned quickly. He obtained his German language certificate (foreign students can't enroll in university without this certificate) and he now takes classes taught in German. He said professors and fellow students have been very welcoming, but he still feels apart from them, in that they, understandingly, don't really grasp how difficult it is to be a foreigner and a former refugee.

"Not many people understand [that I come from a war torn country]...I have difficulties with the language and it is not so easy. I also have problems with my family and they cannot understand that. This is why it is harder for me. But now I am okay with this situation, I am in the second semester now. The first semester was harder but now I have finished the exams with 2.2 grades and I passed all modules and courses. There are a lot of colleagues at my university that were born here and they did not pass those modules and I passed them. This was very good for me, this was positive for me and it is much easier now" (Khaled 2015)

His success story doesn't end there. Khaled proudly told us he also secured his first job as a junior web developer, with help from a recently launched website that helps refugees find jobs in Germany.

In fact, eager to return the generosity others have expressed towards him, Khaled has been volunteering as an interpreter for a nonprofit in Berlin. In addition, with a team of developers he has created an online platform for refugees where refugees can find landlords who are willing or even eager to rent to refugees.

These landlords may not fully grasp the significance of providing safe, affordable homes to people whose journeys to safety are characterized by hunger, dehydration, exhaustion, hypothermia, heat stroke, violence and hostility. Through our respondents, we have learned that many of these life-threatening challenges are caused by a lack of real-time information, overarching coordinated response, and clear communication between border authorities, aid organizations and refugees themselves.

Uncertainty caused by red tape and a lack of information continue to plague refugees upon arrival in host countries. Many suffer from post-traumatic stress, which is exacerbated by open-ended waiting periods, constantly changing asylum policies, social isolation caused by family separation, a loss of identity and social roles, and increasing hostility towards refugees.

Local and national governments and international humanitarian aid agencies have been preoccupied with numbers, caps on these numbers and questions of who is responsible for refugees' wellbeing (i.e. passing the buck), there are thousands of passionate people who have stepped up and filled the void in international response by volunteering their time and expertise. They have raised money, resources and awareness about the plight of the refugees. In fact, while politicians have tended to dehumanize the refugee crisis, these volunteers have given the crisis a human face.

The fact that many of these volunteers include former

refugees who are eager to help in any way possible underscores the notion that refugees are not just vulnerable or needy people; they are also proud, resilient and capable. With a little bit of assistance, as we've seen in the case of 23-year-old Khaled, refugees can be assets to a country instead of a burden.

We would like to thank all of the men and women who participated in this project. We are grateful for their willingness to share their experiences with us.

For donations and further information:

Because We Carry: <http://becausewecarry.org>

Hummingbird Project: <https://www.facebook.com/Hummingbirduk/> and <https://chuffed.org/project/thehummingbirdproject-brighton>

Migration Aid: <http://www.migrationaid.net/english/>

Vluchtelingenwerk: <https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/doneren/geef-voor-vluchtelingen>

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Call for Submissions

The *Observer* invites readers to submit items of interest for publication in upcoming issues. The *Observer* is undergoing a makeover and many more exciting changes are in the pipeline. Throughout this process we would love to hear from you. All comments and suggestions are welcome.

Our mission is to close the gap between scientists, policy makers, and practitioners by providing coverage of disaster issues, recent disaster management and education programs, hazards research, political and policy developments, resources and Web sites, upcoming conferences, and recent publications. We are looking for papers and field reports that help narrow the aforementioned divide. In addition we are looking for book reviews that contribute to the debates and discussions in the field of disaster research.

The deadline for the next issue of the *Observer* is April 1, 2016.

Please send items of interest to
Elke Weesjes
elke.weesjes@colorado.edu.



Hummingbird Medical Clinic, Calais 2015 © Elisa Sandri

CALAIS, A DORMANT TOWN in the northwest of France, overlooks the Strait of Dover, the narrowest point of the English Channel. It is not exactly what may come to mind when you think of the French seaside; it is grey and industrial and besides a port, the tunnel under the Channel, some big roads and a few small houses, there isn't much there.

When you drive just beyond the edge of town, an unexpected sight emerges: a makeshift refugee camp, dubbed the Jungle. In this sprawling shantytown, refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries have been pitching their tents, waiting to cross the French border into the United Kingdom. Six thousand people are estimated to be living in this camp (BBC, 2015). With little to no access to basic hygiene such as showers and running water, minimal healthcare, inadequate shelter and clothing, the overall situation is dire. Winter-weather conditions—cold temperatures, heavy rain, and strong winds—are adding insult to injury. The atmosphere at the camp is rapidly deteriorating, although there are some examples of resilience and resourcefulness among the residents.

Feeling moved and shocked by the plight of these refugees, I started volunteering in September 2015 for the Hummingbird Project – Calais Aid and Solidarity. It's a British grassroots organization that provides medical aid to refugees stuck in French refugee camps on the final leg of their journey. I am not a medic, so I usually work outside the medical clinic, making coffee and tea for people waiting to be seen by our doctors and nurses. It might sound like a trivial activity, but only when you start pouring hot water from the huge kitchen kettles do you begin to realize the importance of a hot drink. Refugees have nothing. They spend their days in the cold. But when they are offered some tea or coffee their faces light up, and they break into a smile. For many refugees, it is a reminder of home, of afternoons spent sitting down with friends and

Welcome to the Jungle

Dispatches from a
Calais Refugee Camp

By *Elisa Sandri*

family before they were forced to flee. For me, serving in the camp is also a reminder of how much more European governments need to do to ensure that these desperate and deserving refugees have a real home, both physical shelter and psychic wellbeing.

Manageable situation turns into civil emergency

With the completion of the Channel Tunnel—a tunnel between France and Britain that carries high-speed Eurostar passenger trains and international freight trains—in 1994, large numbers of refugees began to assemble in the area around Calais, hoping to enter Britain through the tunnel. To do so, they¹ hide inside trucks just before these get onto the freight trains, jump on moving trains, or, in some cases, walk the full length (30 miles) of the tunnel (Bilefski 2015). Besides not guaranteeing a successful crossing, as the refugees are often detected and sent back to France, these illegal means to enter Britain are also extremely dangerous, and sometimes fatal.²

To be sure, not all refugees in Calais are trying to cross illegally. Some refugees have all the proper documents to enter Britain. But as a result of complicated immigration policies and other red tape they are forced to wait in France.

Five years after the opening of the Channel tunnel, in response to the growing number of refugees in and around Calais, the French interior ministry asked the French Red

¹ It's usually men and young boys try to cross in the tunnel, while women and children tend to stay in the camps but without a real option to leave as they don't have the appropriate documents.

² In 2015, according to Hummingbird estimates, 22 people reportedly died trying to cross the border, while in the previous year, the authorities reported 14 deaths (see: <https://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com/deaths-at-the-calais-border/>)

Cross to open a refugee center in Sangatte, a town near the entrance of the tunnel. In the next few years the center, intended to house 600 people, was inhabited by up to 1,500 refugees, many of them living in cramped and unsanitary conditions (Guardian 2002; Fassin, 2005). The center in Sangatte was eventually closed in 2002. Since its closure, refugees have been sleeping rough in self-made slums built on derelict land. However, in the past few years conditions have radically worsened, and 2015 has been the most challenging year so far (BBC 2015). Throughout Europe, according to United Nation (UN) estimates, more than 1 million refugees arrived by boat and land last year (UNHCR 2015).

Many of these refugees seek asylum in Britain. Sadly, they are faced with strict British border control and migration policies that have only toughened since the deadly ISIS attacks in Paris last November. Consequently, fewer people are allowed entry, leaving large concentrations of refugees stranded in and around Calais. There are currently another eight camps besides the Jungle, which is the biggest of all refugee camps. The populations of these camps are growing so rapidly that the UN, which initially stated that the situation was “manageable,” now refers to it as a “civil emergency” (The Local 2015). Even so, neither the UN nor the Red Cross have a presence in any of these makeshift camps, nor is anyone in charge. International organizations, such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Médecines Sans Frontières (MSF), and Doctors of the World, are pressing the British and French governments to provide at least minimal support for the refugees. However, so far very little has been done, apparently at least partly because France and Britain are scared that this area will become a “magnet” for refugees (The Local 2015).

How much longer can French and English authorities close their eyes to this humanitarian disaster that is rapidly unfolding right in the heart of Western Europe?

The UNHCR, together with other big charities that normally operate in disaster situations, such as Oxfam and Save the Children, do not want to intervene directly, apparently because they believe that France has the financial means to manage this humanitarian disaster (Freedland 2015). The UNHCR, however, has adopted a more indirect strategy to support refugees stranded in Europe. The strategy includes influencing European Union (EU) policy makers, encouraging European governments to build a fair asylum protection system, and finding durable solutions for unaccompanied and separated children (UNHCR 2015).

However, while the UNHCR is asking the EU to respond to this situation with “access to protection, solidarity and responsibility-sharing,” municipal governments have

toughened up on migration and are increasingly intolerant of migrant camps outside of the Jungle (Clayton 2015). Last year, on several occasions, local French police used tear gas and bulldozers to evict refugees who set up camp on the edges or just outside of the Jungle (Calais Migrant Solidarity 2015; Paton 2015).³ How much longer can French and English authorities close their eyes to this humanitarian disaster that is rapidly unfolding right in the heart of Western Europe?

A hell fit for Dante

The first thing you notice when you arrive in Calais from Britain are the tall fences that were built last year to prevent refugees from hopping on trucks and trains on their way to England. When I first saw these fences, I immediately turned to my friend, breaking a solemn silence that had fallen upon us at the sight, and said, “Doesn’t it remind you of the West Bank wall?” As I said those words, we began to see ripped pieces of clothing trapped in the barbed wire, abandoned shoes on the side of the road, and an increasing number of armed police patrolling the motorway.

As soon as you enter the Jungle, you realize that this refugee camp has a distinct European flavor. People are sleeping in camping tents donated by British holidaymakers. They wear shoes previously owned by German trekkers. And some wear hats sponsoring the British tabloid newspaper *The Sun*—unaware of its anti-refugee coverage. The camp has naturally divided into different sections based on the nationality of the refugees. For example, Sudanese, Eritreans, Syrians, Afghani, Pakistani, Kurds, Iranians all live in different sections of the same muddy field.

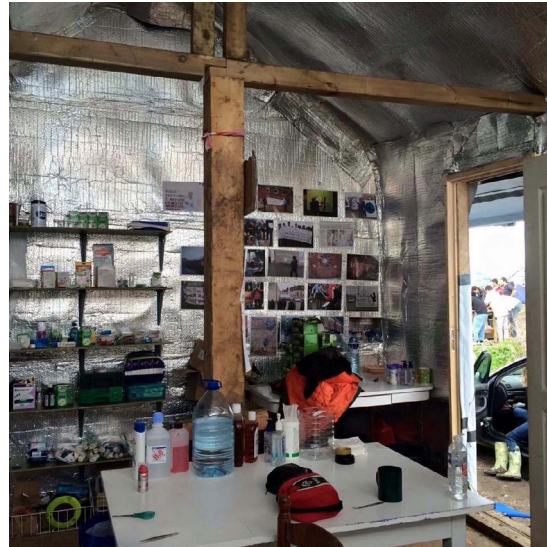
You can find pockets of pure squalor in all sections of the camp, a modern day Dante’s Hell: tents destroyed by fire, piles of rubbish, partial foundations of shelters destroyed by the wind, people limping in the mud, people begging for help. Suffering is everywhere.

If these living conditions weren’t appalling enough already, now winter has engulfed the camps, imposing the most critical threats—hypothermia and pneumonia.

The tents and the improvised shelters are not made to resist fierce Channel winds or temperatures that frequently drop below freezing at night. Resident refugees are getting severe colds and chest infections. Sometimes they refuse to be seen by doctors because fixing a rickety tent to ensure shelter for the night has become a higher priority than obtaining medical care. “The daily routine for those in the camps is spent trying to get their most basic requirement for survival,” said Sarah one of the Hummingbird Project nurses. “This continuous stress, along with poor nutrition, weakens the immune response and the ability to recover properly. A common cold can potentially result in pneumonia and death”.

Responding to these quickly deteriorating circumstances

³ Despite freezing temperatures, French authorities are currently creating a buffer zone between the camp and an adjacent highway. To do so 1,500 refugees were evicted from their shelters (Cupolo 2016).



(L & M) Hummingbird Medical Clinic, Calais 2015 ©Elisa Sandri (R) Church in the Jungle @ Malachybrowne January 2016

es, MSF recently has stepped in to provide medical aid, a service that runs from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. It is a good start, but with at least 6,000 people in the camp and more flooding in each day, an “office hours” clinic is simply not enough. Since refugees can only access local French hospitals in an emergency, chronic illnesses go untreated. The volunteer doctors I work with in the camp have a limited amount of resources and medicines to distribute. Because of these shortages, it is difficult to ensure that patients with chronic illnesses such as asthma, diabetes, or heartburn, receive regular refills of their medications.

Another main concern in the camp is hygiene. MSF has installed 45 toilets, but many more are needed, as well as showers. The overall lack of hygiene has caused a surge in dermatitis and scabies. Besides that, rubbish has been piling up everywhere in the camp. It wasn't until November last year that the French local government, under pressure by the French Council of State, installed a few water taps and began to collect rubbish around the camp. The situation has improved somewhat, although hardly enough to ensure sanitary living. Other than these minimal services, the wellbeing of refugees is in the hands of individual volunteers and a few international organizations, including the Hummingbird Project. Volunteers are trying to deal with a humanitarian emergency far bigger than what they can handle, both financially and logistically.

Volunteers, united in their compassion for the plight of the refugees, offer a diverse mix of professions and expertise: builders, medics, teachers, firefighters, university students, cooks and others. Unfortunately, not everybody shares the volunteers' compassion. In the clinic, we've treated refugees who told us disconcerting stories about being physically attacked by Calais local residents.

The future of the Jungle

In the aftermath of the Paris terrorist attacks, refugees

have been increasingly worried about repercussions from this tragic event. A few of our volunteers have witnessed refugees suffering from panic attacks and extreme states of anxiety at the thought that ISIS is attacking France too. Some of them are suffering from paranoia; they believe that terrorists will come after them in the camps.

Given that some of the refugees had experienced the brutality of ISIS in their homelands, most of them feel a strong sense of solidarity towards the French people. Two days after the massacre roughly 200 refugees gathered to pay respect and tribute to the victims in Paris. The growing tensions around the refugee crisis have contributed to the astronomical success of the France's far-right National Front in the first round of the regional elections in December. Nothing tangible has changed inside the Jungle, but outside, in Calais, local residents are fed up. Local militant groups such have formed and it is frightening to see that these groups get a lot of support on social media. Other locals feel that large concentrations of refugees might attract attention from terrorists and discourage volunteers to come over to help because, they figure, more volunteers means more refugees.

Fortunately, volunteers are not intimidated and continue their work at the camp. Their efforts are vital. Refugees in Calais are stuck; the majority will probably not reach the UK, and will have nowhere else to go. Some countries have opened their doors to Syrian refugees, but other refugees are increasingly kept out. They live in an impasse that, especially after the attacks in Paris, will not be resolved quickly.

Resilience and hope

Despite the overall appalling circumstances in and beyond the Calais camp, its resident refugees appear calm, friendly and respectful. They say “hello” when I walk by their tents, and everyone seems immensely grateful for the work volunteers do for them. Besides saying “thank you,” they also express this gratitude by making me tea and in-

viting me into their shelters to meet the rest of the family. When I am on a break from my duties at the clinic I really like sitting down and chatting with refugees. Sometimes we share jokes. I am Italian, so refugees who fled through Italy love to throw in a few words of Italian, like “Buongiorno!”, “Grazie” (and sometimes even a few swear words!). It is incredible to see how their sense of humor has not been lost, even in such a desperate situation.

It became very clear to me through my experiences in the camp that refugees are not just hopeless and helpless victims. Because they have received virtually no help from outside, the camp residents are forced to rely on their own resourcefulness. To create some kind of normalcy, for instance, they’ve built shops, restaurants, hairdressers, bars, art centers, and a Mosque and an Orthodox church that run regular services. Behind the label of “refugee” are businessmen, hairdressers, doctors, artists, husbands, wives, and religious devotees. What has touched me the most is people’s capacity to react and adapt—to build a church with a few pieces of wood, to find ways of feeling at home when ‘home’ is no longer there, to show volunteers pictures of their journeys with them posing in front of the Eiffel Tower as if they’re on a holiday, or to smile with a thumbs-up gesture just after arriving in Lesbos on a boat, still wearing a life jacket. And, like everyone else, they enjoy the small things in life, such as eating out in a restaurant or playing a game of dominos in a bar drinking cups of sweet tea.

Because they have received virtually no help from outside, the camp residents are forced to rely on their own resourcefulness

Many of the refugees I’ve met have not lost hope. They are making plans for their future while trying to cope with their unspeakably cruel past in their homelands and their present uncertainty. If I were in their shoes, I would have lost hope a long time ago. Living in these conditions in an unknown country would be enough to dishearten many of us. On top of this, the public have increasingly turned against accepting more refugees in Europe, even without understanding that both the general public and the refugees are all fighting the same enemy, i.e. ISIS (Savage 2015). Nevertheless, refugees remain positive that their lives and their children’s lives will improve now that they have reached safety.

Moral imperative

European governments have the moral responsibility to give refugees evidence for hope. National officials must step in and work towards setting up a camp that at least follows minimum UNHCR standards, which Calais does not. Some people have lived in broken tents for as long as six months. Babies are now being born in the Jungle. What future can you have when you’re born in a place like

this? Unfortunately, the future I wish for them is not the future I foresee coming in Europe. France and Britain need to stop this escalating humanitarian disaster right in the heart of Europe, and do it immediately. Only under international public pressure will governments likely take sufficient action. As ordinary citizens it is crucial that we raise awareness about what is happening in Calais. In addition, we should support volunteer organizations, such as the Hummingbird. Until then, refugees’ health and safety are largely in the hands of volunteers, who will need all the help they can get to make sure refugees survive the cold winter months.

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If you’d like to know more about this project, you can find it on Facebook or you can donate through this website: <https://chuffed.org/project/thehummingbirdproject-brighton>. If you’d like to contact Elisa directly you can do so at: elisa.sandri@gmail.com



1936



2016

Are Muslims the New Jews?

The 1930s Refugee Crisis Revisited

By Elke Weesjes

LAST NOVEMBER, Peter Shulman, a Case Western Reserve University history professor and curator of the popular Historical Opinion Twitter account, tweeted the results from two different *Fortune* magazine polls that surveyed trends in American feelings towards refugees escaping Nazism in Europe. The first survey, published in July 1938, asked “What’s your attitude towards allowing German, Austrian, and other political refugees to come into the United States?” Almost 70 percent of those surveyed felt that refugees, the majority of whom were Jewish, should be kept out (Historical Opinion 2015).

The second survey, published in April 1939, revealed that roughly 85 percent of respondents opposed accepting any more refugees than existing immigration quotas permitted. The outcome of the latter was especially surprising because the survey was conducted only five months after Kristallnacht, the widely reported incident in which civilians and Nazi forces brutally attacked Jews, destroyed their property and burned their books during a night of terror across Germany and Austria. Even this violent, well-coordinated, pogrom apparently did not change public opinion (Historical Opinion 2015).

Shulman’s tweets suggested to many people a parallel between attitudes toward Jewish refugees in the 1930s and Muslim refugees today. The tweets quickly went viral, were picked up by news agencies, and caused an uproar. Some people were appalled by the comparisons and pointed out that, unlike modern day Muslims from the Middle East, German Jews were in fact genuine refugees.

This tension begs the question: What makes a refugee “genuine”? According to historian Tony Kushner, people tend to feel that their country should offer asylum for

genuine refugees. But they often think in these terms only in hindsight, many years later, while in the present they don’t view them as “genuine” refugees (Karpf 2002). In his book *Refugees in an Age of Genocide* (1999), Kushner and co-author Katharine Knox observe that, “Of all groups in the twentieth century, Jews who escaped Nazism are now widely perceived as “genuine,” but at the time, they were often treated with ambivalence and outright hostility” (Kushner and Knox 1999).

As the current refugee crisis deepens and extreme right-wing, anti-immigrant, politicians gain traction in Europe and the United States, the parallels between Jewish refugees and their current Middle Eastern counterparts are worth contemplating.¹ During the 1930s and 1940s the world did not recognize the moral imperative of Jewish immigration. We all know the consequences of this failure. Many Jewish lives could have been saved if nations had just opened their borders and relaxed their immigration policies. So rather than debating the differences, we must recognize the similarities between the two crises in order to prevent the same mistake from happening again.

The beginning of an exodus

The displacement of Jews from Germany began as soon as Hitler came to power in 1933. The first exiles were mostly political personalities, artists and intellectuals. They took

¹ Both the refugee crisis of the 1930s and the current crisis pertained to a wide range of nationalities, ethnicities, political, and religious minorities, however, this article takes a more narrow focus in discussing the challenges faced by the Jewish and Middle Eastern Muslim segment of these respective crises.



Arrival of Jewish refugee children, port of London, February 1939 © Bundesarchiv

up residence abroad, where they intended to wait until they could return to their homeland. The elderly, women, and children began to follow during the next two years when it became clear that Hitler's regime wasn't as short-lived as anticipated (Marrus 2001: 126). Initially, this first wave of refugees, still hoping to return to Germany in the near future, settled in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Austria and other countries on the European mainland. As Nazism expanded into neighboring countries, the refugees abandoned hopes of returning promptly. Staying close to their family and friends became less important. Instead, they chose to go overseas to Britain, Palestine, the United States, and Central and South America (Friedländer 2009)

Similarly, the current refugee crisis has been percolating for years. But because the problem had been contained in the Middle East, it went largely unnoticed by the Western world. Since the Syrian conflict started in 2011, millions of Syrians have taken refuge in nearby Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq. Syrian refugees began to seek refuge further afield when it became clear that these countries are falling short in four ways.

First, these countries do not have enough resources and public services to meet the needs of some four million refugees. Healthcare is inadequate. Water and sanitation systems are overwhelmed, there isn't enough room in schools and hospitals, rents have been driven up, and the social tensions between refugees and natives have been rising. In Lebanon malnutrition among Syrian refugees is pervasive, and outbreaks of infectious diseases have occurred in Iraq and Lebanon. Second, the countries do not receive enough humanitarian aid to resolve the problems. Third, the violence and destruction in Syria that spilled over into neighboring countries, such as Iraq and Lebanon, rendered those countries unsafe. Fourth, Syrians are considered guests and are not granted refugee status in these neighboring countries.² As such, they are either not

² Turkey signed the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees but with a geographical limitation. Those coming from the east are not recognized as refugees. Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq never signed.



Polish Jews expelled from Germany in late October 1938 © Bundesarchiv

allowed to work or can only find low-paying jobs because of high unemployment rates.

Just like their Jewish counterparts, Syrians also have lost faith that the conflict in their home country will soon end, so staying in or near Syria is no longer a priority.

Poverty-stricken refugees

Not all Syrians, however, have the option to seek refuge further afield. Many have spent all their savings, either while staying in Syria where the economy has ground to a halt, or in neighboring countries that lack economic opportunities for refugees. They can't escape their predicament because they simply can't afford the expensive journey³ to the European Union.

In the 1930s, Jewish refugees similarly found themselves financially destitute (or "desperate"). During this period, German Jews (a population of 525,000) were being relentlessly worn down by economic oppression. They were stripped of their jobs, civil rights, and, adding insult to injury, they were not allowed to emigrate with their assets. Since most potential host countries wanted some kind of proof of employment or guaranteed financial support from a sponsor, leaving Germany was only an option for people with a financially sound social network abroad. Consequently, only about 65,000 refugees were able to migrate from areas held by the Third Reich between 1933 and 1938 (Marrus 2001: 129)

At that time, emigrating to the United States was particularly difficult because the country, which already had had a strict quota system in place since the 1920s, introduced a long list of restrictive visa regulations in the 1930s. According to these new regulations, compiled and enforced by the State Department, consular officials were expected to assess whether migrants were likely to become so-called

³ Smugglers charge anything between 2000 and 5000 dollars to help refugees cross into the European Union.



Refugees sleep in a central square in Athens where hundreds of mainly Afghani refugees have found temporary shelter, Sept. 10, 2015. © Freedom House



Refugees clamber onto a train at Gevgelija train station in Macedonia, close to the border with Greece July 30, 2015. © Freedom House

public charges.⁴ Because State Department standards were so strict, anyone who was not independently wealthy was considered likely to become a public charge and was rejected. Other requirements included obtaining a certificate of good conduct from police authorities (USHMM 2016). Needless to say, it was almost impossible for German Jews, who were stripped of their assets and violently persecuted by German police, to meet these criteria.

As a result of its stringent policies, the United States continually failed to fill the annual quota of immigrants from Germany, which were set in the 1920s at 26,000. Responding to pressure from Jewish leaders, in 1935 President Roosevelt eased procedures somewhat and allowed greater numbers of refugees to immigrate. However, under pressure from Congress and the State Department, which strongly opposed liberalization of immigration, the fundamental policies of restriction remained in force. Further, the numbers never exceeded the original annual quotas: 4,392 in 1933, 5,201 in 1934, and 6,346 in 1935. Between 80 and 85 percent of these were Jews (Marrus 2001: 138).

Today, President Obama, like Roosevelt, is also committed to welcoming more Syrian refugees, although he, too, has been met with much resistance, mainly by Republicans. Just after Obama pledged to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees in 2016, Congress approved legislation making entry even more difficult for refugees (Dinan and Richardson 2015). (That number—10,000, is tiny, compared with, for example, Canada, which plans to take in 25,000, but it is still a huge increase from the 2,000 Syrian refugees who were accepted in the United States last year.)

From problem to crisis

While the number of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany was small in the first five years after Hitler came to power, that changed dramatically in 1938, the year when the Jewish refugee problem reach crisis proportions. In response to Nazi expansionism and escalating persecution of Jew-

and others, desperate refugees began spilling out of Germany into a Europe that was either unable or unwilling to receive them. In 1938 Germany absorbed Austria and incorporated the Sudetenland—northern, southwest, and western areas of Czechoslovakia inhabited by German speakers. While making these bold strategic moves, the Nazis intensified their crackdown on Jews. Jewish passports were invalidated, Jewish property was confiscated, and Nazi Storm Troopers beat, arrested, and murdered Jews at will (Marrus 2001: 166).

Meanwhile, an even bigger threat to the Jews had occurred further east in Poland, Hungary, and Romania. These countries, with a combined Jewish population of 4.2 million, officially had said that they also wanted to “get rid of their Jews” (Simpson 1938: 618). Following in Nazi-Germany’s footsteps, in order to encourage this process, they implemented anti-Semitic laws that were intended to remove Jews from industrial, commercial, and professional spheres of activity. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Eastern European Jews fled, desperately looking for a host country that was willing to take them. Intimidated by their large numbers and concerned about the impact massive immigration might have on their respective economies, western countries hardly welcomed these poverty-stricken Jews with open arms. Quite the contrary; most European countries admitted only small numbers of refugees and tightened security at their borders to prevent refugees from entering illegally. Meanwhile, the United States continued to pursue highly selective individualized admission (Adams 1939).

Closing borders

Over the past few years we’ve seen a similar chain of events. As ISIS militants created a self-proclaimed Caliphate across large areas of Syria and Iraq (as they also spread into other countries), the refugee crisis has deepened and widened. Hundreds of thousands Iraqi refugees, who are fleeing religious and political persecution, have put even more pressure on already stretched refugee camps within their own country and in neighboring countries. Refugees with enough money have joined the exodus to Europe.

⁴ Public charge: likely to become primarily dependent on the government for subsistence.



Members of the Hungarian Defence Force install barbed wire on the Hungarian-Serbian border, Aug. 17, 2015, to prevent people from entering the country near Kelenbárcyászföld village in Hungary. © Freedom House

But rather than liberalizing immigration policies, many countries, especially in Central Europe and the Balkans, have responded by tightening border controls and building fences.

Already in 2012 Greece built a razor-wire fence to block a short stretch of its border with Turkey—a popular land crossing for refugees—and increased security along the Evros River, which forms the remainder of the border. Because of these barriers refugees were forced to reach more hospitable countries such as Germany, and Sweden, via sea or via Bulgaria. In response to the rising number of refugees attempting to cross the border from Turkey, Bulgaria also constructed a large fence, which was completed in 2014. In the meantime, Hungary began to erect a fence along its border with Croatia and Serbia, diverting the refugee trail farther west into Slovenia. Within the first two months after Hungary closed its borders with Croatia and Serbia, 170,000 refugees crossed Slovenia, a tiny alpine country. By now, even Slovenia has built its own fence, although it hasn't sealed off its border. Such policies force people to take more dangerous routes, by sea, which effectively put them in the hands of smugglers and subject them to further violence and extortion (Almukhtar, Keller & Watkins 2015).

Status quo

As these new groups of refugees have joined their Syrian contemporaries in fleeing to Europe, the refugee crisis in many places has also turned into a humanitarian disaster. Europe and the U.S. seem paralyzed, just like in the 1930s. There is a lot of talk but a lack of decisive, unified and, above all, timely action. The European Union is divided between east and west, a division embodied by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orbán. Merkel has championed liberal open-door policies, while Orbán, a self-anointed protector of European Christianity, has pushed hardline nationalist policies. Throughout 2015, Germany, Italy and France demanded more concerted policies and more equitable distribution of refugees. But summit after summit dissolved into acrimony, without agreement.



An Afghan mother comforts her crying child moments after a dinghy carrying Afghan migrants arrived on the island of Lesbos, Greece. Aug. 23, 2015. © Freedom House

Central European countries such as Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, and the Czech Republic emerged as the main opponents accepting more refugees. While Europe's leaders still can't decide on a unified policy, European nationalism is gaining traction, especially in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic. Fences are sprouting up, border controls are getting tighter, and Germany, France, Denmark and even Sweden have re-established border controls. Throughout Europe, those favoring closed national societies are gaining ground against proponents of liberal open regimes. The refugees are the victims of all this indecisiveness.

It is remarkable to see that the same countries that refused to accept Jewish refugees—and later actively expelled them—now join the countries that reject EU proposals for a fair-quota system. Hungary's Orbán is calling for the refugees to be kept out in order to “keep Europe Christian,” and Czech police ink numbers on the arms of refugees (Mackey 2015; Cameron 2015). The political atmosphere eerily echoes Nazi practices of the 1930s and 1940s. Until recently these countries had been the source of migrants rather than a destination for them. As such, these countries' populations have remained relatively homogenous (i.e. white and Catholic) and they lack established organizations to help refugees integrate and advocate on their behalf. In fact, Slovakia doesn't even have a single mosque. In addition, as argued by Bulgarian commentator Ivan Krastev, “many Eastern Europeans feel betrayed by their hope that joining the European Union would mean the beginning of prosperity and an end to crisis, while many government leaders fear that the only way to regain political support is by showing that you care for your own, and not a whit for the aliens” (Krastev 2015).

Meanwhile, more than half of U.S. governors have declared they will not accept new Syrian refugees into their states, arguing that they pose too great a risk to national security. One of them, New Jersey governor and Republican presidential candidate Chris Christie, proclaimed that his state would not take in any refugees—“not even orphans under the age of five” (Krieg 2015). Presidential hopefuls Jeb Bush and Ted Cruz have suggested that the U.S. government prioritize Christian refugees, while Don-



Refugee is holding a boy as they are stuck between Macedonian riot police officers and refugees during a clash near the border train station of Idomeni, northern Greece, as they wait to be allowed by the Macedonian police to cross the border from Greece to Macedonia, Friday, Aug. 21, 2015. (AP Photo/Darko Vojinovic) (Darko Vojinovic) Public Domain, Freedom House

ald Trump has called for a total and complete ban on Muslims entering the United States (Gambino, Kingsley and Nardelli 2015).

Public opinion and the rise of xenophobia

This lack of a compassionate public response to the plight of refugees is unfortunately nothing new. In the 1930s people were, by and large, equally unwilling to help refugees in need, even when it became clear that the refugees were in danger, not just economically oppressed and legally marginalized. In Germany the anti-Jewish measures of 1938 coalesced in Kristallnacht, during which 91 Jews were murdered, more than 1,400 synagogues across Germany were torched, and Jewish-owned businesses were looted and destroyed. In addition, 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps (Yad Vashem 2015).

These brutal events were widely reported in the Western media. In the U.S. alone, nearly 1,000 editorials were published on the topic. Yet despite media outrage, basic attitudes and immigration policies, did not change. U.S. politicians, largely reflecting European attitudes and supported by the general public, remained unwilling to welcome more refugees—not even children. Seven months after Kristallnacht, the so-called Wagner-Rogers bill came before Congress. This bill authorized the admission of 20,000 German refugee children under the age of 14 for a period of two years—above and beyond the quota of 26,000 refugees. It stipulated that the newcomers must be supported and properly cared for by organizations or individuals so that they would not become public charges. Despite endorsement by prominent political and religious figures and by leading newspapers across the country, the Wagner-Rogers bill encountered formidable opposition in Congress. It never passed (Friedlander 2009: 128).

Opposition to Jewish refugees in the 1930s should not

be understood as timeless bigotry, according to Shulman, the Case Western historian. “With today’s talk of ‘Judeo-Christian values,’ it is easy to forget the genuine alienness and threat to national security these refugees represented,” he wrote in *Fortune* (Shulman 2015).

These feelings came to light in a number of surveys conducted by Elmo Roper, who examined American public opinion about Jews during the Nazi period. In 1938, for example, 46 percent of the respondents thought that Jews were partly to blame for their own persecution in Europe. A year later, one-third of respondents agreed with the statement that Jews have different business methods and therefore some measures should be taken to prevent them from getting too much power in the business world. Ten percent felt that Jews should be deported from the United States to a new homeland (Welch 2014).

Fast-forward to the latest polls, conducted by the Arab American Institute and released last December, which tracked American attitudes towards Arabs and Muslims. With most respondents holding unfavorable opinions about Arabs and American Muslims, the poll shows that the persistent negative attitudes toward these two communities continue. According to the same poll, a similar percentage of respondents oppose accepting any Syrian refugees.

Polls in Great Britain, which also has accepted only a tiny percentage of refugees, show similar results. Public support for allowing Syrian refugees to settle in Britain has slumped after the Paris attacks last November. Forty-nine percent of people believe Britain should be accepting fewer or no refugees (Savage and Horne 2015). Only 20 percent feel it should accept more refugees. And it can always get worse. A recent opinion poll in Czech revealed that 94 percent of respondents believe the European Union should deport all refugees (Britskelisty 2015).

The enemy within

Paradoxically, hostility towards Jews in the United States intensified during WWII. When asked which national, religious, or social groups in the United States were a threat to the country—Jews, Negroes, Catholics, Germans, or Japanese—17 percent of respondents regarded Jews as a menace in 1940. That number increased to 24 percent by 1944. In both these years, respondents felt that Jews were more of a menace than Germans.

What can explain these increasingly large numbers? “A toxic fear for Jewish subversion,” according to Schulman. He wrote: “For decades, Jews had been linked to various strains of un-American threats: socialism, communism, and anarchism, of course, but also (paradoxically) a kind of hyper-capitalism. Many believed that the real threat to the United States lay not from abroad, but within.” In addition, the U.S. government feared that German spies would pose as refugees. With the growing influx of refugees all of these fears became more widespread (Shulman 2015).

This attitude towards Jewish refugees wasn’t contained to the New World. In fact, all of the above charges could

also be heard throughout the Old World. Already in 1938, British politician John Hope Simpson⁵ recognized that this widespread antagonism toward refugees was primarily rooted in anti-Semitism and xenophobia. By October 1941, the refugee question had become moot: Germany decided to refuse any further Jewish emigration (Simpson 1938).

A hideous rhyme

When U.S. soldiers entered the German concentration camp Dachau in 1945, they found thousands of emaciated and sick prisoners and piles of dead bodies. In their state of shock and anger, they rounded up inhabitants of the nearby town and brought them to the camp. The soldiers forced them to confront the horrors that had taken place just a few miles away from their homes. Townspeople reportedly responded by repeating the infamous phrase that has been linked to the Holocaust ever since: “Wir haben es nicht gewusst” (“We didn’t know”).

No one wanted to admit that they knew what was happening to the Jews during WWII, not inside nor outside of Germany. Because admitting that you knew meant admitting that you didn’t do anything to prevent the atrocities. And, as we all should know, there is not such thing as an innocent bystander.

The mass extinction of European Jews did not happen overnight. On the contrary, the legal marginalization, economic oppression, and the subsequent physical persecution of the Jews was integrated in a slowly escalating process that took place in plain sight. In fact, as we’ve seen, the Nazis’ first coordinated attack on the Jews— Kristallnacht—made global headlines. Yet, countries were unwilling to open their borders, even after it was clear that Jews’ lives were in danger. Everybody understood the position of Jews in Nazi Germany, but European governments as well as the U.S. government chose to ignore their plight.

Since the end of the war, historians have carefully examined if countries that weren’t occupied by Nazi-Germany, such as the U.S. and Britain, could have saved more Jews. The answer is yes. They could have saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jews. But it is always easy to draw conclusions like these in hindsight. The real lesson here shouldn’t be that European and U.S. leaders didn’t do enough to help Jewish refugees. Rather, the lesson is that we all should ensure that the same thing doesn’t happen again.

Mark Twain said that history doesn’t repeat itself, but it does rhyme. To be sure, there are some fundamental differences between the Jewish refugee crisis of the 1930s and the refugee crisis today. But one can’t deny that the anti-refugee sentiments and the inability of the West to respond to the crisis today effectively are a hideous rhyme of the plight of Jewish refugees in the years leading up to the Holocaust. We will never be able to redeem ourselves for what happened to the Jews in WWII, but now we have

the opportunity to show the world that we’ve learned our lesson.

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⁵ John Hope Simpson authored several important reports on the refugee crisis of the 1930s, including *Refugees: preliminary report of a survey* (1938), *The Refugee Problem* (1939).



(L) © David Shankbone/ Wikimedia Commons (R) © War Times

STILL UNDER ATTACK

Muslim Americans, Bigotry, and the Enduring Backlash

By Lori Peek and Elke Weesjes

IMAM SIRAJ WAHHAJ, the religious leader of the Masjid at-Taqwa in Brooklyn, said in his first sermon after the Paris attacks—which killed 130 people and injured many hundreds more—that such horrific events: “must be condemned not only with your tongue but even with your heart. You have to say: ‘Man, this is not anything to do with Islam! There is no justification—period!’” He then warned of an impending backlash: “Muslims all around the world will pay a price for what happened in France. We had nothing to do with it. We hate it. But we still pay the price” (Semple 2015).

Wahhaj was right. As the events in Paris unfolded, and as it became clear that jihadists affiliated with ISIS were responsible, Muslim Americans¹ once again became the target of a shocked and angry public. Soon after the coordinated assaults in Paris, vandals spray painted an image of the Eiffel Tower inside a peace symbol on the side of a mosque in Omaha, Nebraska. Angry protesters stood outside a mosque in an affluent suburb near Kansas City, Kansas, chanting anti-Islamic slogans and encouraging their Muslim neighbors to go home. An unidentified gunman fired shots into the home of a Muslim family in Orlando, Florida. In Pflugerville, Texas, someone left a torn, feces-covered copy of the Qur’an in front of the local mosque. Four bullets were fired into the walls of the Baitul Aman mosque in Meriden, Connecticut.

As the anti-Muslim incidents continued unabated, yet

another unspeakable act of collective violence was perpetrated. Just over two weeks after the tragedies in Paris, a radicalized Muslim couple carried out a mass shooting in San Bernardino, California. They killed 14 innocent people and seriously injured 22 others before they were killed by authorities. The FBI labeled the pair “homegrown violent extremists,” and President Obama declared the mass shooting a terrorist attack.

In terms of a backlash, the mass shooting was like pouring gasoline on an already raging fire. After the Paris attacks, Americans were scared, angry, and repulsed. The San Bernardino tragedy, however, was different. It was an attack, committed on U.S. soil, against U.S. citizens. This was personal.

The media soon began comparing the most recent wave of backlash violence that began after Paris and San Bernardino and the dramatic surge in anti-Islamic hostility that followed the 9/11 attacks. Journalists wanted to know which was “worse” in terms of the severity and scope. We argue, however, that rather than thinking about these moments of backlash as somehow separate, that it is more meaningful to conceptualize them as continual waves of discriminatory actions, violent incidents, and publically inflammatory statements that have ebbed and flowed in the post-9/11 period, but have certainly never receded. In fact, if we were to take a much longer view, it is important to recognize that the pre-9/11 social and political context was characterized by excessive levels of hostility, prejudice, and mistrust directed toward Muslims and Islam. The 9/11 attacks then solidified the pre-existing image of Muslims as dangerous and threatening outsiders. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and various attacks in

¹ About three-quarters of all Muslims in the U.S. are native-born or naturalized citizens. We refer to “Muslim Americans” and “Muslims” throughout the article; our primary focus, regardless of citizenship status, is Muslims living in the United States.



(L) American Protester. Public Domain (R) Mr Donald Trump New Hampshire Town Hall on August 19th, 2015 at Pinkerton Academy, Derry, NH © by Michael Vadon

countries around the world committed by armed Islamic insurgents have escalated many Americans' sense of fear and bigotry.

We think it is important to put bigotry against Muslims in historical and social context because treating each incident as somehow discrete serves to ignore the compounded and cumulative nature of the attacks against this particular religious minority group. Anti-Islamic incidents surged after 9/11 and have remained elevated over pre-9/11 levels (see Peek and Meyer 2016). This indicates a "new normal" of risk for Muslim Americans. Moreover, Muslims around the world have repeatedly spoken out, have apologized after events that are not of their own making, and have ultimately suffered many emotional and physical ramifications of prior waves of backlash violence. Each time a new event occurs on a national or global scale, Muslims brace for what is coming next.

Preparing for the worst

It is not news to Muslim Americans that anti-Islamic sentiment has never fully dissipated in the post-9/11 era. In fact, Muslim American advocacy and civil rights groups, as well as Islamic religious and community leaders across the nation, have become adept at responding to the backlash that inevitably follows egregious acts of violence committed in the name of Islam. Now, more than a decade after 9/11, Muslims also have more tools and technologies available to them than ever before to try to stem the tides of anti-Islamic rhetoric and action.

Within days of the Paris attacks, for instance, Muslim

leaders took to websites and to social media to condemn the attacks through the #notinmyname social media campaign (Pratt 2015).² These same leaders also offered tips for Muslim women and men, including: be aware of your surroundings, travel in groups, change the route you normally travel by, wear a hoodie or a beanie to cover up your hijab, stand away from the subway platforms and hold on to pillars if necessary, lock your car door while driving, and always keep your phone charged.

Muslims were also concerned about attacks on their places of worship. Immediately after the Paris assaults, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) distributed a pamphlet with guidance for how to protect a mosque. What to do in the event of a fire bomb being thrown at a mosque? The pamphlet notes: "Thick wire screens do offer some protection." What if an armed gunman approaches your place of worship? "It is also recommended that at least one, possibly two, strong sliding bolts that can be closed from the inside be installed at the main entrances for use during services if an usher spots a possible armed intruder approaching the building" (Semple 2015). The advice in this pamphlet is as startling in its content as in its matter-of-fact tone. This is just one more indicator of how Muslim Americans' responses to backlash have become patterned, largely because waves of violence and bigotry have also become routine, even normalized, in the post-9/11 sphere (also see Orsborn 2015).

² This #notinmyname hashtag emerged in response to the widely shared verse from the Qu'ran: "Whoever kills an innocent person, it is as though he has killed all of mankind."



(L) & (R) Masjid At-Taqwa Bedford-Stuyvesant Brooklyn 2011 © Elke Weesjes

A resurgence of Islamophobia

In addition to the post-Paris and post-San Bernardino retaliatory attacks on mosques and Islamic households, Muslims were discriminated against in their places of work, on public transportation, and in other public spaces. Sometimes this hostility took the form of angry shouts; other times it escalated to physical acts of violence. Reports of verbal and physical assaults on Muslim children and youth have been reported across the nation as well. For example, a seventh grader in Vandalia, Ohio, threatened to shoot a Muslim boy on the bus ride home from school, calling him a “towel head,” a “terrorist,” and “the son of ISIS” while a sixth-grade girl wearing a hijab in the Bronx was reportedly punched by three boys who called her “ISIS” (Mathias 2015).

The above represent a few examples of the 38 hate crimes against Muslim Americans that were reported by news media in the one-month period after the Paris attacks.³ Prior to the attacks, there was an average of 12.6 such crimes each month, according to the FBI, the government entity tasked with compiling and publishing data on hate crimes.

³ These numbers were compiled and analyzed by a hate-crimes research group at California State University, San Bernardino. This group drew on news reports and documented a surge in assaults on hijab-wearing women; arsons and vandalism at mosques; and shootings and death threats at Islamic-owned businesses (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/18/us/politics/crimes-against-muslim-americans-and-mosques-rise-sharply.html?smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur&_r=2).

These early reports after Paris and San Bernardino indicate that the number has tripled; however, only time will tell, as these figures are based on analyses of media coverage rather than official crime report data.⁴

To contextualize what we know so far about the post-Paris and post-San Bernardino surge in hate crime, consider what happened after 9/11. According to the FBI, there were 350 recorded hate crimes in the one-month period from September 11, 2001 to October 11, 2001. The total number of hate crimes targeted at Muslims in the month following 9/11 was 58 times the number reported in the month leading up to the disaster (see Peek and Meyer 2016 for a full discussion of this data). This elevation in hate crime continued for the remainder of 2001 and through the first anniversary of the attacks with 14 times as many anti-Islamic hate crimes in the year following 9/11 compared to the year before (Peek 2011).

If one were only to compare what we know so far about the month following San Bernardino (38 recorded acts of backlash violence, as according to media sources) and the month after 9/11 (350 hate crimes, according to the FBI database), it seems clear that 9/11 backlash was much worse

⁴ Although FBI hate crime data is considered the most reliable source for counting incidents, it is worth pausing to note that a special report by the U.S. Department of Justice, which analyzed National Crime Victimization surveys, found that the actual level of hate crime activity in the U.S. is probably 20 to 30 times higher than the numbers reported each year by the FBI. Underreporting is obviously a substantial problem, and this is especially true for immigrant and other heavily marginalized communities (Peek 2011).

in terms of its ferocity. But as we note above, comparing only these numbers may obscure the *cumulative impact* of marginalization. It also certainly does not fully capture the ratcheting up of anti-Islamic rhetoric in the public sphere over these past several months.

Political backlash, the refugee crisis, and public sentiment

Political leaders have contributed to the latest surge in Islamophobia. Donald J. Trump, one of the Republican front-runners for President, has been particularly incendiary. Just five days after the San Bernardino shootings, he called for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on” (Trump 2015). Trump has also said that were he to become commander-in-chief, he would institute a database to track all Muslims and would consider shutting down U.S. mosques in response to the threat posed by ISIS.

Although Trump has been one of the loudest voices, he is certainly not singing alone. Another Republican front-runner for president, Ted Cruz, joined the chorus in his repeated call for carpet bombing of Muslim-majority countries. GOP presidential hopeful Ben Carson said that he believes Islam is inconsistent with the Constitution and therefore that he would not support a Muslim candidate for president (DelReal 2015). Bobby Jindal, the Republican Governor of Louisiana took a slightly different approach when he said he could only support a Muslim candidate “who will respect the Judeo-Christian heritage of America” (Farias, 2015).

These and other politicians use national security concerns to excuse and validate anti-Muslim sentiment. Nowhere is this more apparent than in their vocal opposition to accepting Muslim refugees from Syria. On November 17, 2015, Eric Crawford (R-AR) initiated a vote in the House of Representatives to halt the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the United States. The vote was 289-137, with 242 Republicans and 47 Democrats voting in favor of the bill. In addition, more than half of the country’s governors (29 Republicans and 1 Democrat) opposed President Obama’s plan to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees into the United States in 2016. Even though the final decision falls on the federal government, individual states can make the acceptance process difficult. In fact, most of the governors who do not agree with the President’s plans have pledged to actively prevent Syrian refugees from entering their respective states.

Even when ignoring the extreme bigotry involved with demonizing entire groups of people, the assertion that refugees, who undergo a more rigorous screening than anyone else who enters the United States, pose a threat to national security is unfounded. In fact, a State Department spokesperson recently confirmed that the number of refugees suspected of or charged with terrorism is negligible: “Of the nearly 785,000 refugees admitted through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program since 9/11 only about a dozen—a tiny fraction of one percent of admitted refu-

gees—have been arrested or removed from the U.S. due to terrorism concerns that existed prior to their resettlement in the U.S. None of them were Syrian” (Ye Hee Lee 2015).

Regardless of the actual levels of violence perpetrated by Syrian refugees – or by Muslims, for that matter – “terrorism” and “Islam” have become intimately interlinked in the American imagination (Peek 2011). And that interlinkage has real consequences in terms of public opinion. A December 2015 poll by the Pew Research Center found that 46% of Americans say that Islam is more likely than other religious faiths to encourage violence among its believers (PEW Research Center 2015). A YouGov poll that was carried out in March 2015 found that 55 percent of surveyed Americans had an unfavorable opinion of Islam. Yet, the majority of respondents to that survey also stated that they do not understand the religion, do not work with anyone who is Muslim, and do not have any Muslim friends (YouGov 2015).

Conclusion

The lines that divide Muslim and non-Muslim Americans are sharp, and the gulf between the groups seems to be growing larger by the day. So what is the answer to this issue?

More public education regarding the origins and tenets of Islam and the diversity of its followers is often put forth as one possible solution to the growing problem of Islamophobia in the U.S. and abroad. But as Orsborn (2015) argues convincingly elsewhere, education is simply not enough. Interfaith leaders have engaged in many efforts to educate the public regarding Islam and Muslims, especially in the post-9/11 era. But even as there are more campaigns, facts, and evidence available than ever before, intolerance continues to rise. We do not mean to suggest that education does not matter – of course it does – but it alone cannot solve this crisis.

“Islam has always been part of America. Starting in colonial times, many of the slaves brought here from Africa were Muslim. And even in their bondage, some kept their faith alive”

Public leadership and powerful voices also have an important role to play in closing the divide. President Obama, in his address to the nation on December 6, 2015, said in reference to overcoming the threat from terrorism: “Our success won’t depend on tough talk, or abandoning our values, or giving in to fear.” On February 3, 2016, the president visited a mosque in Baltimore where he spoke out again: “You’ve seen too often people conflating the horrific acts of terrorism with the beliefs of an entire faith. Of course recently we’ve heard inexcusable political rhetoric against Muslim Americans that has no place in our country. No surprise then that threats and harassment of

Muslim Americans have surged.” He also said: “Here’s another fact: Islam has always been part of America. Starting in colonial times, many of the slaves brought here from Africa were Muslim. And even in their bondage, some kept their faith alive. A few even won their freedom and became known to many Americans. And when enshrining the freedom of religion in our Constitution and our Bill of Rights, our Founders meant what they said when they said it applied to all religions” (The White House 2016).

Muslims themselves have also been active in their response to these latest terrorist atrocities. Every leading Islamic advocacy group in the United States spoke out after Paris and San Bernardino to condemn the attacks and apologize to the victims of those horrific acts. American Muslims also raised \$215,515 for families of the victims of the San Bernardino shootings.

Moments of goodness and kindness always follow even the most horrific acts. The question, as we move forward and think carefully about the nature of the backlash and bigotry that Muslims continue to endure, is how else can we combat these trends and turn the tide toward justice and equality for all?

Acknowledgement

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Muslim Americans after 9/11, co-editor of *Displaced: Life in the Katrina Diaspora*, and co-author of *Children of Katrina*. In addition to her post-9/11 and post-Hurricane Katrina studies, she has also conducted research on disaster preparedness among child-care providers in Colorado; youth recovery after the 2011 Joplin tornado; the potential physical and mental health effects of the 2010 BP/Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the effects of Superstorm Sandy on children and youth; risk perception and evacuation behavior among residents of the U.S. Gulf and Atlantic Coasts; disaster preparedness for persons with disabilities; and earthquake risk reduction practices in seven countries. Peek teaches classes on contemporary race and ethnic relations, the sociology of disasters, and qualitative research methods.

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<http://ibs.colorado.edu/hazards/subscribe>

Below are some recent announcements received by the Natural Hazards Center. For a comprehensive list of upcoming hazards-related meetings and conferences, visit our Web site at www.colorado.edu/hazards/resources/conferences.html.

March 1-2, 2016

National Tornado Summit

University of Central Oklahoma

Cost and Registration: \$279 before January 29, open until filled

This summit will look at disaster response, mitigation, preparedness and recovery in the context of tornadoes. Topics include engineering perspectives of disaster management, tornado losses then and now, dealing with chronic flooding, El Niño's effect on tornadoes, legislative impacts on insurance, business resilience, tornado shelters, and communicating weather threats.

March 1-3, 2016

RES/CON New Orleans

RES/CON

New Orleans, Louisiana

Cost and Registration: \$375 before January 15, open until filled

This conference, previously known as the International Disaster and Conference Expo, will focus on disaster and resiliency in a global environment. Topics include economic resilience, emergency management, coastal restoration and water management, homeland security, and business continuity.

March 2-3, 2016

**Critical Infrastructure Protection and Resilience Europe
The Hague Security Delta, International Association of
CIP Professionals, and others**

The Hague, Netherlands

Cost and Registration: \$480 before February 4, open until filled

This conference will focus on physical and cyberthreats to critical infrastructure, infrastructure system preparedness, and Europe's ability to withstand and collaborate during critical infrastructure attacks. Topics include infrastructure resilience in the transport industry, threat detection and management, using modeling to enhance preparedness and response, and cybersecurity standards, laws, and analysis.

March 2-4, 2016

Global Climate Observation Conference

Global Climate Observing System, United Nations Environment Program, and others

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Cost and Registration: No cost, register before February 15

This conference will support the work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by de-

fining essential climate variables and working toward a fully implemented, sustainable, global observing system for climate. Topics include the performance and adequacy of current climate observations, plans for future global observations, communicating climate science, and diverse user needs.

March 8-10, 2016

Wildland Urban Interface Conference

International Association of Fire Chiefs

Reno, Nevada

Cost and Registration: \$425 before February 8, open until filled

This conference will assist professionals in protecting and educating the public about wildland fire safety. Topics include preparing the community for wildfire resilience, assessing fire hazards in the ignition zone, updates on wildland urban interface research, applying broadband technology to wildland firefighting, implementing codes to support mitigation, and the connection between landscape management and resilience.

March 8-10, 2016

Climate Leadership Conference

C2RES, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and others

Seattle, Washington

Cost and Registration: \$895 before December 31, open until filled

This conference will examine issues of climate change, sustainability, and energy through the perspective of business and policy. Topics include transportation and climate change; drought, floods, and sea level rise; incorporating climate change into infrastructure design, resilience financing for businesses, creating low-carbon supply chains, and mitigation programs for cities.

March 21-23, 2016

Power Grid Resilience Summit

IQ Energy and Utilities

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Cost and Registration: \$600 before January 8, open until filled

This summit will provide guidance on conducting vulnerability assessments, planning anti-terrorism strategies, and making power grids less susceptible to disruption. Topics include physical security technology, mitigating risk for electric power industries, protecting infrastructure, balancing preparedness and resiliency, navigating regulatory environments, and modernizing electric grids.

Below are descriptions of some recently awarded contracts and grants related to hazards and disasters. Please see <http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/> for more information.

The Geopolitics of Trauma: The Role of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Admission and Resettlement of Iraqi Refugees in the U.S.

Award Number: 1461615. Principal Investigator: Patricia Ehrkamp; Co-Principal Investigator: Anna Secor, Jenna Loyd. Organization: University of Kentucky. Research Foundation; NSF Organization: BCS
Start Date: 05/01/2015.
Award Amount: \$469,624.00.

Rapid proposal: Fires and floods: Acquisition and analysis of perishable data on the sustainability of reservoirs following wildfires

Award Number: 1600016. Principal Investigator: Desiree Tullos. Co-Principal Investigator: Kevin Bladon. Organization: Oregon State University. NSF Organization: CBET
Start Date: 11/01/2015.
Award Amount: \$83,117.00.

SBIR Phase I: Novel chemistry for enhancing drought tolerance in field crops

Award Number: 1549182. Principal Investigator: Eric Davidson. Organization: Asilomar Bio, Inc. NSF Organization: IIP
Start Date: 01/01/2016.
Award Amount: \$150,000.00.

Facility Support: Continued capture of postseismic deformation using GPS instrumentation on the Andaman Islands due to the great 2004 and 2012 earthquakes

Award Number: 1531682; Principal Investigator: John Puchakayala. Organization: University of Memphis. NSF Organization: EAR
Start Date: 01/01/2016.
Award Amount: \$52,298.00.

Natural Hazards Engineering Research Infrastructure: Experimental Facility with Large Wave Flume and Directional Wave Basin

Award Number: 1519679. Principal Investigator: Daniel Cox. Co-Principal Investigator: Christopher Higgins, Pedro Lomonaco. Organization: Oregon State University. NSF Organization: CMMI
Start Date: 01/01/2016.
Award Amount: \$711,079.00.

Natural Hazards Engineering Research Infrastructure: Experimental Facility with Twelve-Fan Wall of Wind

Award Number: 1520853. Principal Investigator: Arindam Chowdhury. Co-Principal Investigator: Peter Irwin, Ioannis Zisis. Organization: Florida International University. NSF Organization: CMMI Start Date: 01/01/2016. Award

Amount: \$863,835.00.

Doctoral Dissertation Research: Community-Based Aid Responses to Refugee Crises

Award Number: 1558871. Principal Investigator: Catherine Lutz. Co-Principal Investigator: Malay Arora; Organization: Brown University. NSF Organization: BCS Start Date: 02/01/2016. Award Amount: \$25,181.00.

Collaborative Research: Towards Further Understanding of Aerosol Pollution Impacts on Tropical Cyclones

Award Number: 1547903. Principal Investigator: Robert Walko. Organization: University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine & Atmospheric Sci. NSF Organization: AGS Start Date: 02/15/2016.
Award Amount: \$59,536.00.

CAREER: Information Accuracy and the Use of Social Data in Planning for Disaster Response

Award Number: 1554412; Principal Investigator: Ashlea Milburn. Organization: University of Arkansas. NSF Organization: CMMI Start Date: 02/01/2016. Award Amount: \$500,000.00.

Collaborative Research: How Do U.S. Immigration Courts Decide Gender-based Asylum Cases?

Award Number: 1556131; Principal Investigator: Karen Musalo. Organization: University of California, Hastings College of the Law; NSF Organization: SES
Start Date: 02/15/2016.
Award Amount: \$60,000.00.

CAREER: Understanding the Mechanisms of Wildland Fire Spread

Award Number: 1554026. Principal Investigator: Michael Gollner. Organization: University of Maryland College Park. NSF Organization: CBET
Start Date: 04/01/2016.
Award Amount: \$500,000.00.

CAREER: Forest-atmosphere interactions in an era of fire and drought

Award Number: 1553049. Principal Investigator: Tara Hudiburg. Organization: University of Idaho. NSF Organization: DEB. Start Date: 04/01/2016. Award Amount: \$189,077.00.

PIRE: Taming Water in Ethiopia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Improve Human Security in a Water-Dependent Emerging Region

Award Number: 1545874. Principal Investigator: Emmanouil Anagnostou. Co-Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Holzer, Liangzhi You, Yang Hong, Paul Block. Organization: University of Connecticut. NSF Organization: OISE
Start Date: 04/01/2016.
Award Amount: \$648,250.00.

Call for Papers

Special Issue: Caring for Older Adults in Disaster
Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness
Deadline: May 20, 2016

The journal *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, in collaboration with the National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health, is accepting papers for a special issue of the journal on caring for older adults in disasters. Submissions from a wide variety of disciplines are encouraged. For more information on suggested topics and submission guidelines, visit the journal Web site.

Call for Authors

Scholars and experienced leader practitioners are invited to submit proposals of approximately 1,000 words for an Elsevier book series of cases on disaster and emergency management (DEM). This series is comprised of five volumes aligned with the traditional disaster life cycle—mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery, and prevention—and is designed to develop an understanding of the characteristics of expert practice in the DEM field, including the ability to proactively and reactively adapt and innovate in response to needs in the operating environment.

Submit proposals by March 1, 2016. For additional information contact series editors, Jean Slick, jean.slick@royalroads.ca and Jane Kushma, jkushma@jsu.edu.

Call for Proposals: Weigh In at the Natural Hazards Workshop

While Thanksgiving might mark the beginning of the holiday season for many of you, for us at the Natural Hazards Center it's the kickoff to Workshop season—and we want your help!

The foundation of every great Natural Hazards Workshop is built from the knowledge and expertise of our colleagues in the hazards and disaster community, and we're hoping you'll share yours. We're looking for proposals from people who'd like to serve as panelists at the 41st Annual Natural Hazards Workshop in Broomfield, Colorado, from July 10-13, 2016.

The Workshop isn't your typical event. We bring a wide range of professionals, academics, and other disaster experts from multiple disciplines together on interactive panels that result in lively discussions that help bridge the gap between research and practice. We hope you'll lend your voice to the conversation.

To submit a successful proposal, read a little more about our program structure and panelist responsibilities. You'll

also find lots of tips on our Proposal Submission Form when you're ready to submit. We can't wait to hear from you! For more information, visit: <http://www.colorado.edu/hazards/workshop/>

Farewell and Welcome: NSF Hazards Program Changes Leadership

The Natural Hazards Center sends congratulations and warm wishes to Dennis Wenger on the occasion of his retirement from the National Science Foundation. Throughout his distinguished career, Wenger has helped build and support the hazards and disasters research community—first at the University of Delaware and its Disaster Research Center, then later at Texas A&M University's Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center, and finally as a program officer in the NSF Hazards Program. Wenger continues to make contributions to the field through the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and in many other ways.

We'd also like to extend a warm welcome also to Wenger's successor, David Mendonça, who is Center's new program officer and head of the Hazards Program at NSF.

—Kathleen Tierney, Director

Ready, Set, Search! The New Natural Hazards Library Catalog Is Online

The Natural Hazards Library is happy to announce the launch of HazLib, our new online library catalog. Library users can now explore the entirely revamped, modern interface, which offers robust search options and easy navigation to quickly and conveniently access our extensive library holdings and resources.

Features such as improved search options—including multifaceted searching that allows users to customize results based on author, topic, and other elements—provide just the right resources, while the ability to virtually browse the library's shelves will expand the breadth of your research.

Other new features include access to full-text copies of certain documents, helpful search tips, and a streamlined ability to save, cite, and export search results. If you still can't find what you're looking for, no problem—with one click you can effortlessly connect with our library staff and get help with research questions, catalog searches, resource suggestions, and connecting with disaster experts.

We are constantly adding new holdings, so visit us often and send any suggestions, questions, or comments to hazctr@colorado.edu.

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Support Center Operations—Provide support for core Center activities such as the DR e-newsletter, Annual Workshop, library, and the Natural Hazards Observer.

Build the Center Endowment—Leave a charitable legacy for future generations.

Help the Gilbert F. White Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship in Hazards Mitigation—Ensure that mitigation remains a central concern of academic scholarship.

Boost the Mary Fran Myers Scholarship Fund—Enable representatives from all sectors of the hazards community to attend the Center's Annual Workshop.

To find out more about these and other opportunities for giving, visit:

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