



THE JOURNAL OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Email Alerts/Reprints/Permission: jid@evresearch.ca

Subscription: JID is a Free Online Open Access Journal

Current Issues: <http://journalinternaldisplacement.webs.com>

ISSN: 1920-5805 (print)/1920-5813 (online)

Issue: (July 2012 Edition):

JID is produced and published by EV Research Inc. – www.evresearch.ca

EDITORIAL

Forced Migration and Displacement During the Arab Spring

SUMMARY

On 18 January 2012 the Journal of Internal Displacement (JID or the Journal) released its fourth call for paper (CFP) for the July 2012 edition of the Journal. To support credibility, authenticity and critique the JID resigned to solicit input from experts and scholars in the field. Two separate invitations to be guest editor for the JID were sent out. Unfortunately, due to untimely events these individuals were unable to accept our invitation. Albeit, encouraging authors to focus on selected topic areas of displacement as it relates to the Arab Spring, the CFP attracted a total of five (5) interesting submissions. Having endured rigorous peer-review, none of the submissions was recommended for publication. With nearly three weeks to publication date, I was left with two options: 1) to notify subscribers that there are no publications for the July 2012 edition; or 2) write an editorial. Since, my knowledge of forced displacement during the Arab Spring is nothing more than occasional text and electronic newswires; I had to put on my thinking cap. After mulling over several writing approaches, reading scores of journal articles, and searching numerous websites, I finally settled for this. Having observed the scarcity high quality publication on displacement during the Arab Spring, partly due to my incapacitation to speak, read or write Arabic language; I reasoned to randomly scan diverse information sources for the purpose of examining what is being produced on the topic at stake. Rather than resorting to the hyper-sensationalized propaganda dominated by Western pro-democratic media, the goal of this editorial is to review a select few publications (mostly academic), institutions, organizations and websites to assess the extent to which the topic of internal displacement during the Arab Spring is dealt with. The editorial ends with highlighting observed distribution and possible discrepancies seen within and across various information resources on displacement in the Arab Spring.

----Veronica P. Fynn
Founder/Editor-in-Chief

FORCED MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT DURING THE ARAB SPRING

Veronica P. Fynn¹

INTRODUCTION

A wave of resistance sprung up in the Arab world since 17 December 2010 when Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisia street vendor, burned himself to death in protest against municipal police's humiliation and mistreatment toward him. Ever since, some 20 countries in North Africa and the Middle East (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, and Yemen) have been experiencing violent protests in favour of regime change, with Syria front and centre today. It is unclear how the terminology "Arab Spring" emerges. However, Bassam Sabry, a writer on current affairs in Egypt and a blogger of "An Arab Citizen" presents a succinct overview of the origin of the term.² He credits the first usage of the term to Marc Lynch from his post on the Foreign Policy³ regarding Bouazizi's self-immolation and consequent death

Are we seeing the beginnings of the Obama administration equivalent of the 2005 "Arab Spring", when the protests in Beirut captured popular attention and driven in part by newly powerful satellite television images inspired popular mobilization across the region that some hoped might finally break through the stagnation of Arab autocracy? Will social media play the role of al-Jazeera this time? Will the outcome be any different?⁴

Although, there is limited statistical facts on the actual amount of forced displacement occurring as a direct result of the crises in these countries, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)⁵ estimates as at January 2011, zero (0) internally displaced persons in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Western Sahara, yet 1.3 million in Iraq; 1.6 million in Sudan; and 220,000 in Yemen. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)⁶ provides statistics for seven (7) of the seventeen (17) countries in the Middle East. For those countries that are part of the Arab Spring, IDMC estimates that; around 2.8 million in Iraq; 200,000 in Libya; 76,000 in Lebanon; 160,000 in Palestine; 4.2

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² Bassem Sabry, "The origin of the term 'Arab Spring'" An Arab Citizen (13 January 2013) online: <<http://anarabcitizen.blogspot.ca/2012/01/origin-of-term-arab-spring.html>>

³ Joshua Keating, "Who first used the term Arab Spring" Foreign Policy, (4 November 2011) online: <http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/04/who_first_used_the_term_arab_spring>

⁴ Sabry *supra* at note 2

⁵ UNHCR, "Global Trends 2011" (2011) online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4fd9a0676.html>>

⁶ IDMC, "Global statistics" (2011) online: <[http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpPages\)/22FB1D4E2B196DAA802570BB005E787C?OpenDocument](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpPages)/22FB1D4E2B196DAA802570BB005E787C?OpenDocument)>

million in Sudan; 433,000 in Syria; 250,000 in Yemen; and "undetermined" in Algeria.⁷ It is obvious that statistics do not seem to capture the true picture of the impact, enormity and severity of forced migration taking place within and across borders.

To this end, on 18 January 2012 the Journal of Internal Displacement (JID or the Journal) released its fourth call for paper (CFP) for the July 2012 edition of the Journal. To support credibility, authenticity and critique the JID resigned to solicit input from experts and scholars in the field. Two separate invitations to be a guest editor for the JID were sent out. Unfortunately, due to untimely events these individuals were unable to accept our invitation. Albeit, encouraging authors to focus on selected topic areas of displacement as it relates the Arab Spring, - including but not limited to conflict resolution, post-conflict peace building, ethnic/religious uprising, socio-political revolution, democratic reform, civil/media resistance, terrorism, war and violence international relations and diplomacy; gender disparity, power and control and humanitarian assistance - the CFP attracted a total of five (5) interesting submissions. Having endured rigorous peer-review, none of the submissions was recommended for publication by the editorial board.

With nearly three weeks to publication date, I was left with two options: 1) to notify subscribers that there are no publications for the July 2012 edition; or 2) write an editorial. Since, my knowledge of forced displacement during the Arab Spring is nothing more than occasional text and electronic newswires; I had to put on my thinking cap. After mulling over several writing approaches, reading scores of journal articles, and searching numerous websites, I finally settled for this. Having observed the scarcity of high quality publication on forced displacement during the Arab Spring, partly due to my incapacitation to speak, read or write the Arabic language, I reasoned to randomly scan diverse information sources for the purpose of examining what is being produced on the topic at stake. Rather than resorting to the lopsided view of hyper-sensationalized propaganda dominated by Western pro-democratic media; the goal of this editorial is to review a select few publications (mostly academic), institutions, organizations and websites to assess the extent to which the topic of internal displacement during the Arab Spring is dealt with. The editorial ends with highlighting observed distribution and possible discrepancies seen within and across various information resources on displacement in the Arab Spring.

REVIEW OF SELECTED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- *Forced Displacement Organizations*

BADIL Resource Center: established in January 1998 based on recommendations issued by a series of popular refugee conferences in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, BADIL is registered with the Palestinian Authority and legally owned by the refugee community represented by a General Assembly composed of activists in Palestinian national institutions and refugee community organizations. It is an independent, community-based non-profit organization mandated to defend and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees and IDPs as defined by Palestinian identity and the principles of international law in efforts to advance the individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people. BADIL has a section devoted to Refugees & IDPs rights, which covers the historical overview of Palestinian

⁷ *ibid*

refugees and IDPs as well as a surplus of documents on various aspects of Palestinians migration concerns. Albeit, there appeared to no information on other countries involved in the Arab Spring.⁸

Enough Project: Enough Project was conceived in 2006 by a small group of concerned policymakers and activists who wanted to transform their frustration about inaction into pragmatic solutions and hope. Its mission is to fight to end genocide and crimes against humanity, focused on areas where some of the world's worst atrocities occur. We get the facts on the ground, use rigorous analysis to determine the most sustainable solutions, influence political leaders to adopt our proposals, and mobilize the American public to demand change. Under the topic "displacement" some nine articles/reports surface, most of which is on Sudan published between 2011 and 2012.⁹ Although, the Enough Project mission is way bigger than east Africa, conflict areas included on the website is limited to: Sudan, South Sudan, eastern Congo, Lord Resistance Army, Somalia, Zimbabwe and eastern Chad.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre: the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring internal displacement worldwide. Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations. At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based IDMC runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries. In deed, IDMC is a leader on global displacement albeit constraints of not being able to provide data on all displaced communities (e.g., Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic or Western Sahara, UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Morocco, to name but a few). Notwithstanding, for the four Middle Eastern countries cover, there are at least three (3) reports specifically on the Arab Spring.¹⁰

International Organization for Migration: established in 1951, IOM is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. With 146 member states, a further 13 states holding observer status and offices in over 100 countries, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants. IOM's Middle East section provide in depth information including latest news, facts and statistics on 7 countries (Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Israel).¹¹

Médecins du Monde: (vis-à-vis) Doctors of the World grew out of the French doctors movement, consisting of a small group of physicians who were no longer able to stay silent

⁸ BADIL Resource Centre for Palestinians Residency and Refugee Rights, "Homepage" (2010) online: <<http://www.badil.org/>>

⁹ Enough Project, "Homepage" (2012) online: <<http://enoughproject.org>>

¹⁰ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Homepage" (2012) online: <<http://www.internal-displacement.org>>

¹¹ International Organization for Migration, "Homepage" (2012) online: <<http://www.iom.int>>

in the face of the human rights violations they were witnessing. Out of a desire to bring help to the victims of the Biafra (Nigerian province) war of independence, many doctors had joined the Red Cross. In 1971 a number of them opposed to maintaining the silence and neutrality required by the Red Cross created an association with more scope to speak up and to act. At the end of the seventies the crisis in Vietnam which forced people to flee in makeshift boats couple with the leadership of Doctors without Frontiers led to the formation of Doctors of the World in March 1980. In addition to providing medical assistance to troubled regions around the world, Mdm released “A Call to Syria” which “rejects the bombing and killing of civilians, including women and children.”¹²

Médecins Sans Frontières: a self-governed non-profit organization founded in Paris, France in 1971, MSF is an international, independent, medical humanitarian organization that delivers emergency aid to people affected by armed conflict, epidemics, natural disasters and exclusion from healthcare. MSF offers assistance to people based on need, irrespective of race, religion, gender or political affiliation. MSF works in eight (8) countries in the Middle East including, Yemen, Syria, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and Libya. Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Bahrain. MSF provides up-to-the-minute news, articles, interviews, updates and more on each Middle Eastern country it works in regarding a wide-range of migration concerns, particularly on health/medical status of civilians.¹³

Migration Policy Group: established in 1995, the MPG is an independent non-profit European organization committed to contributing to lasting and positive change resulting in open and inclusive societies in which all members have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities in developing the economic, social and civic life of Europe's diverse societies. Whilst MPG appears to contain and manage a large research database and publication, its focus does not appear to be on forced migration occurring in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁴

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: OCHA is the part of the United Nations Secretariat responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. OCHA also ensures there is a framework within which each actor can contribute to the overall response effort. “Displacement” is one of OCHA’s 19 themes. Like MSF, OCHA produces current news and information on humanitarian issues with Libya, South Sudan and Yemen topping the list of news updates.¹⁵

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly, mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Although, its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees, the UNHCR strives to ensure that everyone

¹² Médecins du Monde, “A call to Syria – We, Doctors of the World, Refuse” (2012) online: <<http://www.mdm-international.org/spip.php?article1128>>

¹³ Médecins Sans Frontières, “Homepage” (2012) online: <http://www.msf.org/msf/where-we-work/the-middle-east/en/the-middle-east_home.cfm>

¹⁴ Migration Policy Report, “Homepage” (2012) online: <<http://www.migpolgroup.com>>

¹⁵ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Homepage” (2012) online: <<http://www.unocha.org/top-stories>>

can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. UNHCR latest brief (Syria), Videos (Jordan), pictures (Mauritania) are all about countries involve in the Arab Spring with the most relevant one entitled, “Displaced Libyans return to rebuild Gaddafi’s hometown; face needs”.¹⁶

United Nations Relief and Works Agency: following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees. The Agency began operations on 1 May 1950. In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate, most recently extending it until 30 June 2014. UNRWA provides assistance, protection and advocacy for some 5 million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory, pending a solution to their plight. Although, UNRWA is dedicated to Palestine, it does provide support and service to other conflict-ridden areas in the Middle East. For example, news article published on 10 August 2012 highlights the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria resulting in continuous displacement of refugees in Syria and Palestine.¹⁷

- University Affiliated Centres

African Centre for Migration and Society: the ACMS, housed in the School of Social Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, is an interdisciplinary, internally engaged, and intellectually independent Africa-based centre of excellence for research and teaching that shapes global discourse on human mobility and social transformation. Started in 1993, ACMS is now a regional leader for migration on the continent, with partnership around the world. While ACMS claims to be a leading regional research institute, a scan of its reports, projects, briefs, and scholarly publications shows that, not only is ACMS heavily focused on South Africa and Zimbabwe, but also there appeared to be no publication on any of the countries involved in the Arab Spring.¹⁸

Brookings-LSE Project: the Project on Internal Displacement was established at the Brookings Institution in 1994 to support the mandate of the Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons (RSG) in order to increase its capacity to uphold the rights of millions of internally displaced persons around the world. Brookings-LSE Project maintains and produces commentaries, events, multimedia, testimonies, books and “in the news” information on twelve (12) of the 20 countries involve in the Arab Spring.¹⁹

¹⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Displaced Libyans return to rebuild Gaddafi’s hometown; face needs” (16 April 2012) online: <<http://www.unhcr.org/4f8c2e7b6.html>>

¹⁷ United Nations Relief Works and Agency, “Syria humanitarian response” (10 August 2012) online: <<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=1416>>

¹⁸ African Centre for Migration & Society, “homepage” (2012) online: <<http://www.migration.org.za>>

¹⁹ Brookings-LSE Project, “Middle East and North Africa” (2012) online: <<http://www.brookings.edu/research/topics/middle-east-and-north-africa>>

Center for Forced Migration Studies: the CFMS brings together an interdisciplinary group of faculty and students and fosters collaborative networks with organizations and practitioners to contribute an understanding of the condition of refugee movement across state borders to avoid the risk of harm, the underlying social disfranchisement, and the international community's response to refugee needs. In order to inform policy recommendations, the CFMS focuses on the personal predicaments, needs, challenges and rights of refugees themselves. As such, the connection of documentation and research, to policy and practice is central to the work. CFMS, couched within the Roberta Buffett Center for International and Comparative Studies of Northwestern University, does not appear to have resource information or publication on any of the countries affected by the Arab Spring.²⁰

Centre for Immigration Research: the Center for Immigration Research is comprised of researchers at the University of Houston, as well as other local institutions, whose research is focused on the examination of immigration trends and related international and national immigration policy. The Center serves as a resource for immigration data for local institutions, organizations and policy-makers involved with the settlement and incorporation of America's "new immigrants" into their communities. The Center's activities include sponsoring an annual speaker series at the University of Houston on immigration issues. It is not clear from the website how the Center serves as a resource for immigration, nevertheless, there appeared to be no publication or information presented on the Arab Spring conflict.²¹

Centre for Refugee Studies: CRS is engaged in research on refugee issues for the purpose of informing public discussion as well as policy development and practice innovation by international, governmental, advocacy and service organizations; and supporting teaching in refugee and migration studies. The Centre does not appear to engage in providing current news, events or updates on refugee issues; albeit, it houses the Andrew Forbes Library which contain a number of publications on global refugee issue. Add to that, list of publications by each of its research scholars some of whom have specialized interests in the Middle East and North Africa.²²

Center for the Study of Forced Migration: established by decision of Senate of the University of Dar es Salaam in early 1995 following recommendation by the Board of the Faculty of Law. The establishment of CSFM was partly influenced by the tragic events in neighbouring Rwanda in April 1994. CSFM was at the same time launched as a response to a UNESCO-UNITWIN initiative meant to set up a network of East African institutions involved with refugee studies. The top three objectives of CSFM are to: 1) offer University academic programmes; 2) provide short-term training to those working in the area of refugees and related fields; and 3) conduct research on forced migration with an emphasis

²⁰ Center for Forced Migration Studies, "Homepage" (26 June 2012) online: <<http://www.cics.northwestern.edu/programs/migration/>>

²¹ Center for Immigration Research, "Homepage" (2012) online: <<http://www.uh.edu/class/sociology/ctr-immigration-research/projects-sponsors/index.php>>

²² The Centre for Refugee Studies, "Homepage" (2012) online: <<http://crs.yorku.ca>>

on East Africa and the Great Lakes Region. The “Research and Publication” tab of CSFM shows no information on any of the countries involved in the Arab Spring, including Sudan.

Institute for the Study of International Migration: founded in 1998, ISIM is part of the Edmund. A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and affiliated with the Law Center at Georgetown University. ISIM focuses on all aspects of international migration, including the causes of and potential responses to population movements, immigration and refugee law and policy, comparative migration studies, the integration of immigrants into their host societies, and the effects of international migration on social, economic, demographic, foreign policy and national security concerns. ISIM also studies internal displacement, with particular attention to the forced movements of people for reasons that would make them refugees if they crossed an international border. ISIM appears to be comprehensive and critical by way of international migration studies. Nonetheless, (and I presumed because it is based on faculty research work – similar to the Centre for Refugee Studies) the most recent article published is dated in 2010. Although, several publications highlight refugee issues in Iraq, Syria and Jordan, they are all date no later than 2008. Noteworthy, a click on the “Events” tab pops up an upcoming talk “Defining Shariah: Between the Arab Spring and America” featuring Jasser Auda, Deputy Director and Associate Professor, Center of Islamic Legislation and Ethics, Qatar Foundation, scheduled for 4 September 2012.²³

Refugees, Displaced Persons & Forced Migration Studies Centre: in compliance with gracious directions of His Royal Highness, Al-Hassan bin Talal, the *Refugees, Displaced Persons and Forced Migration Studies Center* was established at Yarmouk University according to the Higher Education Council resolution No.(1396) dated on 28 July 1997. This Center represents a continuation of the Refugees and Displaced Persons Studies Program, which was established on 12/7/1997. The Centre website, though mostly Arabic (with a limited amount of English) seems to be outdated. For example, one of the four articles produced on Jordanian refugees, “the Humanitarian Aspects of Conflicts: The Case of Palestinian Refugees in Jordan” seems to have been published in 2000 – that is 12 years ago. The most recently held events are dated back to 2007 (5 years ago).²⁴

Scalabrini Migration Center: established in Manila, Philippines in 1987, the Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC) is dedicated to the promotion of the interdisciplinary study of international migration, with a specific focus on migration questions in the Asia-Pacific region. Aside from research, SMC maintains a resource center specializing in migration literature, publishes the academic quarterly, Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, organizes training programs, advocates for the promotion of the rights of migrants, and builds networks with academic institutions civil society, international organizations and governments. SMC is completely committed to international migration but only as it relates to the Asia-Pacific region, hence there is absolutely nothing on the uprising in the Arab Spring.²⁵

²³ Institute for the Study of International Migration, “Events” (2012) online: <<http://isim.georgetown.edu/events/>>

²⁴ Refugees, Displaced Persons & Forced Migration Studies Centre, “Homepage” (2007) online: <<http://rdfsdc.yu.edu.jo>>

²⁵ Scalabrini Migration Centre, “Homepage” (2008) online: <<http://www.smc.org.ph>>

Refugee Studies Centre: The Refugee Studies Centre was founded in 1982 as part of the Oxford Department of International Development (Queen Elizabeth House) at the University of Oxford. Its purpose is to build knowledge and understanding of the causes and effects of forced migration in order to help improve the lives of some of the world's most vulnerable people. RSC is truly an academic champion when it comes to the issue of forced migration. Within the space of less than two years, the Centre has already organized several workshops, conferences and seminars on the Arab Spring including (but not limited to) the "Arab Spring and Beyond" (March 2012); "Palestine Refugees and International Law" (March 2011); and "North Africa in Transition: Mobility, Forced Migration and Humanitarian Crises". Publication-wise, typing the keyword "Arab Spring" swells up 25 items ranging from reports, to conference papers and articles.²⁶

- Journal and Book Publishers

Forced Migration Review: FMR is the most widely read publication on forced migration – available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, and free of charge in print and online. It is published by the Refugee Studies Centre in the Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford. Through FMR, authors from around the world analyze the causes and impacts of displacement; debate policies and programmes; share research findings; reflect the lived experience of displacement; and present examples of good practice and recommendations for policy and action. Typing in the keyword "Arab Spring" surfaces seven (7) articles. On the other hand when the term "Middle East" is used, fifteen (15) hits come up most of which covers the issue of displacement in Palestine, Egypt, and Israel, amongst others.²⁷

HarperCollinsPublishers: HarperCollins Publishers is one of the world's leading English-language publishers. Headquartered in New York, the company is a subsidiary of News Corporation. The house of Mark Twain, the Brontë sisters, Thackeray, Dickens, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Maurice Sendak, Shel Silverstein, and Margaret Wise Brown, HarperCollins was founded in New York City in 1817 as J. and J. Harper, later Harper & Brothers, by James and John Harper. In 1987, as Harper & Row, it was acquired by News Corporation. The worldwide book group was formed following News Corporation's 1990 acquisition of the British publisher William Collins & Sons. Founded in 1819, William Collins & Sons published a range of Bibles, atlases, dictionaries, and reissued classics, expanding over the years to include legendary authors, such as H. G. Wells, Agatha Christie, J. R. R. Tolkien, and C. S. Lewis. HarperCollins has publishing groups in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia/New Zealand, and India. Entry of the search term "Arab Spring" yields one book "Showdown" in two formats (digital and print). A larger number (71 books) of publications hits surfaced when the phrase "Middle East" is used.²⁸

Oxford University Press: Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. OUP publishes in more than 40 languages, in many

²⁶ Refugee Studies Centre, "Homepage" (2012) online: <<http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk>>

²⁷ Forced Migration Review, "Homepage" (2012) online: <<http://www.fmreview.org>>

²⁸ HarperCollinsPublishers, "Homepage" (2012) online: <http://www.harpercollins.com>

countries and in a variety of format-prints and digital. Entry of the search term “Arab Spring” yields two (2) publications: 1) “After the Spring” by Magdi Amin and Ragui Assaad (2012); and 2) “Genomics and Health in the Developing World” by Dhavendra Kumar (2012). The use of the phrase “Middle East” surfaces fourteen (14) publications.²⁹

Routledge: Routledge *Contemporary Middle East Series* edited by Anoushiravan Ehteshami, employs an innovative common format which in each case study provides an easily-digestible analysis of the origins of the state, its contemporary politics, economics, and international relations. Some ten (10) books have been published covering various topics politics, international relations and forced migration in Lebanon, Tunisia, Syria, Morocco, and Jordan (to name a few).³⁰

Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd: Ta-Ha was established in 1980. Since then, over 250 publications, some 150 of which currently in print and distributed worldwide are being published. Titles range from recent translations of early classical works by Muslim scholars to more modern issues tackled by contemporary authors. In fact, there is something for Muslims and non-Muslims of every age. It has always been and continues to be the aim of Ta-Ha Publishers to assist in making the teachings of Islam more readily available and accessible for everyone. Entry of the search terms “Arab Spring” and “Middle East” on Ta-Ha website yield zero hit.³¹

- Media/Electronic

AlertNet: this is a free humanitarian news services covering crises worldwide. A click on AlertNet reveals the striking news “UN monitors quit, saying Syrians choose ‘path of war’”. Breaking stories presents three news articles and one video – all on heartbreaking stories, indeed, on Syria. Featured video covers dispute resolution between Sudan and South Sudan with Thabo Mbeki as mediator.³²

Forced Migration Online: FMO, with motto: “a world of information on human displacement”, provides online access to a diverse range of resources concerning the situation of forced migrants worldwide. By bringing together this collection of useful and time-saving resources, our primary aim is to support and facilitate research and policy making in the field. Interestingly, using keywords “Arab Spring” and “Middle East” in FMO’s digital library reveal zero hits. It just does not feel right.

France24: launched in December 2006, FRANCE 24 is a leading 24/7 international news channel. Its mission is to cover international current events from a French perspective and to convey French values throughout the world. FRANCE 24 is a true news hub that broadcasts its programmes over the airwaves and over the Internet in French, in English and in Arabic. Its top story includes “UN Observers quits, saying Syrians choose ‘path of war’”. Honing in on the Middle Eastern Region unravels at least 29 major stories 90 per cent of which is about Syria. Following convention, France24 new reports focus more on the

²⁹ Oxford University Press, “Homepage” (2012) online: <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com>

³⁰ Routledge, “Featured Series: The Contemporary Middle East” (2012) online: http://www.routledge.com/articles/featured_series_the_contemporary_middle_east/

³¹ Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., “Homepage” (2012) online: <http://www.tahapublishers.com>

³² AlertNet, “Homepage” (2012) online: <http://www.trust.org/alertnet/>

politics and international relations of these conflicts as oppose to the actual consequences and impact of it (e.g., forced displacement).³³

Integrated Regional Information Networks: IRIN is an award-winning humanitarian news and analysis service covering the parts of the world often under-reported, misunderstood or ignored. It delivers unique reporting from the frontlines of humanitarian action to over a million online readers. Like France24, IRIN website is splattered with news, videos, reports, analyses, and photos of crises. The Middle Eastern section covers news on Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Yemen. Interestingly, the “Most Read” portion shows readers are interested in other global crises other than what is happening in say Syria or any of the countries affected by the Arab Spring. IRIN also has an Arabic news service.³⁴

Naharnet: Naharnet is the first independent Lebanese Digital Media providing real-time news and information in English and Arabic about Lebanon, the Middle East and the World. Naharnet was founded in 1998 and launched in September 2000 as the first multilingual Lebanese portal still active today. Naharnet provided users a wide array of services to Lebanese worldwide spanning from news coverage, forums, mobile services, chat, and email amongst others. Naharnet “spotlight” news entitles “clashes erupt near Damascus Military Airport”. Top five (5) “Latest Stories” are “UN Security Council Orders End to Syria Observer Mission”; “Assad Appoints Three News Ministers”; “ Hamas PR Campaign Hits Roadblock after Sinai Attack”; “China urges Syria to Halt Violence, Accept Mediation”; and “Khamenei says Israel ‘Will Disappear’” – clearly a lack of information and emphasis on forced displacement of civilians.³⁵

Palestine News Network: this is are a group of independent Palestinian journalists and editors who work on a strictly professional level without favoring one political party over another or any religion over another. They report from a Palestinian perspective as they see that the media is rife with Israeli sources. PNN strives to empower the Palestinian people and their cause, particularly that of nonviolent resistance to occupation. PNN began in 2002. PNN has a radio and television station. Information is disseminated in several languages including English, Arabic, Deutsch, French and Spanish. Fulfilling their objective, PNN maintains and manages news information solely on Palestine.³⁶

ReliefWeb: Like IRIN and France24; ReliefWeb provides timely, reliable and relevant humanitarian information and analysis. Its goal is to make sense of humanitarian crises by scanning websites, research institutions, reports, news etc., for the most relevant content before disseminating. ReliefWeb is more country-specific, rather than regionalizing its news output. To this effect, it produces information on Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Mauritania, Syria and Yemen. Interestingly, the headline news did not include any news on Syria, although, return of IDPs in Yemen is highlighted.³⁷

³³ France24, “Middle East” (2012) online: <<http://www.france24.com/en/middle-east>>

³⁴ Integrated Regional Information Networks, “Middle East” (2012) online: <<http://www.irinnews.org/Middle-East>>

³⁵ Naharnet, “Homepage” (2012) online: <<http://www.naharnet.com>>

³⁶ Palestinian News Network, “Homepage” (2012) online: <<http://english.pnn.ps>>

³⁷ ReliefWeb, “Homepage” (2012) online: <<http://reliefweb.int>>

Tripoli Post: The Tripoli Post was first appeared in 1999. It is meant to be a newspaper of substance. Its objective is to communicate Libya's news and views to the rest of the world. As stated, Tripoli Post is mostly committed to news and information on Libya (and Africa). Even at that, a scan of the website indicates lack of information or news on forced displacement of Libyan civilians resulting from the recent crisis.³⁸

CONCLUSION: POSITIONING THE JID

This is a quick and easy review of randomly selected webpages with no systematic approach to critically assessing content or discourse. If anything at all, this process was less dialectic and more lax. That being said, noteworthy is the fact that Internet pages are not representative, suffice to say, provide very little reflection of the actual work an organization or institution does. Whilst it would be inconsiderate to perceive this lists as comprehensive, it is rational to suggest that, generally, there is a dearth of literature, publication and information resource on displacement during the Arab Spring. If publications or information were produced, they focused more on politics, international relations, broad statistics and the violent nature of the crisis with little or no content on the actual experiences of civilians especially women and children.

In spite of the aforementioned, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to visit JID newly revamped website with keen interest in considering how we could all contribute towards shaping the future trajectory of displaced populations. As advocates for persons displaced, whether by economic, social, political or environmental means, we are morally obligated to stimulate and provoke dialogue. Irrespective of our geographical positioning, we are a piece that fit uniquely in the global forced migration puzzle. Let's lend our talents, expertise and voice to help reduce the plight of vulnerable civilians caught up in violent attacks in the Middle East, North Africa and everywhere else.

FEW RECOMMENDED LINKS

Arabic Scholarly Journal

http://aymanbustanji.tripod.com/Jnls_arab.html

Academic Journals: Arab & Islamic Studies

<http://zu.libguides.com/content.php?pid=186109&sid=1562723>

Arab Spring University of Qatar

http://libguides.qu.edu.qa/arab_spring

Associations for the Study of Middle East

<http://www.asmeascholars.org>

Diwaniyya Dayan Center Podcast

<http://diwaniyya.blogspot.ca/2012/03/womens-rights-and-arab-spring.html>

Egypt Publishers Association

<http://www.egyptianpublishers.org/ar/>

Goodreads: Popular Syria Books

<http://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/syria>

Islamic Publishing House

<http://www.iphkerala.com>

³⁸ Tripoli Post, "Homepage" (2012) online: <http://www.tripolipost.com>

Kalimat

<http://www.kalimat.org>

Publishers Global

<http://www.publishersglobal.com>

Resources for Muslim Writers

<http://muslimwriters.blogspot.ca/2007/05/comprehensive-list-of-muslim-book.html>