

## Refugees and Asylum seekers in the Middle East

Sciences Po-CERI  
56,rue Jacob 75006 Paris  
Salle de conférences  
9h - 18h

Forced migrations have usually been described as "spontaneous" migrations and analysed in terms of political and security constraints. But even refugee movements resulting from conflicts are often fashioned by previous migration flows and correlated network structures that are re-mobilised during the humanitarian crisis. Therefore, tracing a genealogy of mobilities in the Middle East will help better understand current forced migration processes and their connections with other forms of social organisation built over time in a regional area (commercial mobility, family strategies, pilgrimage, etc.)

The distinction commonly made between forced migration and voluntary migration in the Middle East and elsewhere has already been criticised by a growing number of authors (Long: 2013, Richmond: 1994). In the case of "refugee" category, a huge diversity of social, legal and economic statuses and personal backgrounds coexist within such a category (Malkki: 1995, Marx: 1990). Early attempts to build a general theoretical model of refugee issues have focused mainly on *push* factors to explain refugee movements (Kunz, 1973). Studies have also emphasised the role of international relations in the production of refugee flows (Loescher, 1990). If *push* factors as well as international politics are key issues for the understanding of refugee movements, little attention has so far been paid to dynamics generated by the refugees themselves. Seteney Shami (1993) suggests that "*displacement often leads to labour migration as a coping strategy*". But conversely, as will also be shown, labour migration may also mould and structure forced displacement patterns of dispersion and settlement.

The questioning of the dichotomy between forced and voluntary migrations is even more interesting in the Middle East as neither Jordan, Lebanon Iraq nor Syria, are not signatories of the Geneva Convention on Refugees. The refugee category (with the exception of Palestinians who are recognised as refugees in the state where they have their permanent residency) does not exist as such. There is often a confusion in the field of forced migration between legal categories (refugees, asylum seekers, etc.) and those relating to the analysis of migration (Zetter, 2007). This project aims to re-examine the production categories of asylum in an area outside the Convention (Jordan, Lebanon) and one signatory (Turkey) from three unusual situations, the Syrians, the Iraqis and the Palestinians from Syria.

Scientific organisation:

Hélène Thiollet (Sciences Po-CERI, CNRS)

Céline Cantat (MIGRINTER, CNRS, Université de Poitiers)

Kamel Dorai (IFPO, Amman & MIGRINTER, CNRS, Université de Poitiers)

## PROGRAM

Foreword: Alain Dieckhoff, Sciences Po-CERI, CNRS

### 9:30 - Introduction

Céline Cantat, University of East London & MIGRINTER, CNRS, Université de Poitiers

Kamel Doraï, IFPO, Amman & MIGRINTER, CNRS, Université de Poitiers

Hélène Thiollet, Sciences Po-CERI, CNRS

### 10:00 - Panel 1: Refugees, a regional perspective

*The Syrian humanitarian Crisis: Understanding Perceptions and Aspirations among Hosts, Practitioners, and Guests in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan*

Dawn Chatty, University of Oxford

*Refugees and the state: the importance of Iraq*

Philip Marfleet, University of East London

### 12:00 - Lunch break

### 14:00 - Panel 2, part 1: Some national experiences

*Mass Migration Flows and Border Management in Turkey*

Didem Danış, Galatasaray University

*From Mostapha Mahmoud to Levinsky Park: Comparative political ethnography of Sudanese circulation in Egypt and Israel*

Pauline Brücker, CERI-Sciences Po - CEDEJ

### 15:30 - Break: Screening of two short-films on Yarmouk by Syrian Palestinian directors

*MiG*, by Thaer Alshali

*Blue*, by Abo Gabi

### 16:15 – Panel 2, part 2

*Palestinians from Syria in Lebanon: from refugees to asylum seekers?*

Kamel Doraï, IFPO - Migrinter

*Reflections On Belonging: The Abandoned Yarmouk As Seen From Exile*

Salim Salameh,

### 17:45 – Conclusions

## Biographies and abstracts

**Pauline Brücker** is a PhD student at CERI/Sciences Po and the CEDEJ (Cairo/Khartoum). She graduated in Political Sociology (2013) and International Public Law (2011) from Sciences Po, and currently researches on asylum systems of governance and contentious politics in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa in a perspective of sociology of migration. Her PhD addresses the process of shaping « refugeeness » as a legal, social and political feature, based on the case of Sudanese migrants in Egypt and Israel.

**Title:** *From Mostapha Mahmoud to Levinsky Park: Comparative political ethnography of Sudanese circulation in Egypt and Israel*

**Abstract:** I will present the main features of Egypt and Israel's asylum systems allowing for an analysis of their respective tradition and rationale for hosting (or not) and how refugees. The ethnographic research based on the situation of Sudanese, with long-standing migration, with families scattered across Soudan/Egypt/Israel borders, and with a wide diaspora, allows for a deep and transnational approach to mobility. On the hand, I will approach the construction of "refugeeness" through an analysis of asylum policies, and especially refugee status determination processes. On the other hand, I will analysis how collective and individual actions shape particular features of "refugeeness". In that regard, the events that occurred in Mostapha Mahmoud (Cairo, Egypt) and Levinsky Park (Tel Aviv, Israel) and the responses brought to those movements will be used to focus on refugees' struggles and forms of politicisation, in a down-top approach to the politics of asylum, often left aside.

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**Dawn Chatty** is University Professor in Anthropology and Forced Migration and former Director of the Refugee Studies Centre, Department of International Development (Queen Elizabeth House), University of Oxford, UK. Her research interests include displacement and dispossession, nomadic pastoralism and conservation, gender and development, and coping strategies of refugee youth. Among her most recent books are: *Children of Palestine: Experiencing Forced Migration in the Middle East* (eds. with Gillian Lewando-Hundt), Berghahn Press, 2005; *Handbook on Nomads in the Middle East and North Africa* (ed.) Brill, 2006; and *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East*, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

**Title:** *The Syrian humanitarian Crisis: Understanding Perceptions and Aspirations among Hosts, Practitioners, and Guests in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan*

**Abstract:** The speed with which Syria's peaceful demonstrations for greater freedoms and disintegrated into extreme violence and armed conflict shocked the world and left the humanitarian aid regime in turmoil as agencies struggled to respond to the growing displacement crisis on Syria's borders. It also left the neighbouring states of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan in a quandary as to how to effectively provide for these people seeking refuge. None have granted the displaced 'refugee' status; each has established temporary measures to deal with this crisis. In many cases the displaced and the host communities have not been consulted and thus tensions have quickly emerged among host communities, displaced Syrians and humanitarian policy-makers and practitioners. In this presentation I will focus on the historical precedent for dealing with mass influx in the eastern and southern Mediterranean Rim. I will endeavour to show that providing refuge, and integration without assimilation has a long historical trajectory and is

an important element in understanding the preference for ‘hosting’ the displaced as ‘guests’ rather than adopting Western concepts of asylum and refugee status.

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**Didem Daniş** is Associate Professor at Galatasaray University, Sociology Department, in Istanbul. She holds BA degrees from Boğaziçi University (Istanbul, 1997) and MA in Sociology from METU (Ankara, 2001). She stayed at International Migration and Ethnic Relations Program in Malmö University, Sweden as a visiting Ph.D. in 2002-2003. She completed her doctoral thesis at EHESS (Paris, 2008) where she analysed social networks of Iraqi transit migrants in Istanbul. Recently she co-edited a book in Turkish called *Borders and Expulsion: Interdisciplinary perspectives on migration, migrants and state in Turkey* (Notabene, Istanbul, 2014). She has several publications on migration, refugee and urban issues.

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**Title:** *Mass Migration Flows and Border Management in Turkey*

**Abstract:** Turkey has been hosting near two million refugees from Syria since 2011. This last mass movement from Syria marks unquestionably an extraordinary moment in Turkish migration history both in terms of size and content. I previously conducted my PhD research on the post-1991 Iraqi transit migrants and refugees in Turkey and I analysed the construction and transformation of social networks that migrants mobilize in a situation of uncertainty and vulnerability. In this presentation, I will focus on the same topics (the formation, de-formation and trans-formation of the migrant networks and the role of the state) for the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey. I will consider the relation of these networks with so-called “hospitable” or “hostile” reception policies towards refugees, with a focus on changing policies towards migrants and refugees throughout the last decades. Lastly, I will talk about the role of the EU in shaping Turkish asylum, migration and border management regime.

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**Kamel Doraï** is a researcher at the CNRS currently based at the French Institute for the Near East – IFPO in Amman (Jordan). His work focuses mainly on asylum and refugees in the Middle East, new migrations and geopolitical reorganisation in the Middle East, and migration and transnational practices within the Palestinian Diaspora. Dr Doraï is currently conducting research on the Iraqis in Syria as well as on the urbanisation process of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. He is conducting fieldwork in Lebanon and Jordan on different refugee groups, collecting biographies, migration trajectories, and urban mobility. The comparative study between refugees residing in and out of camps as well as the analysis of their migratory experience and spatial practices provide an account of the refugees’ socio-spatial dynamics in exile and of relations between the camp and their urban environment.

**Title:** Palestinians from Syria in Lebanon: from refugees to asylum seekers?

**Abstract:** The Syrian conflict has profound consequences for the Palestinian population in Syria. The conflict that began in 2011 rejected the Palestinians in Syria to their stateless status and forced more than 70,000 of them to seek asylum in neighboring countries, mainly Lebanon. The current forced migration of Palestinian refugees, largely overshadowed by the magnitude of the Syrian refugee crisis, raises many questions regarding the status of refugees forced to leave their countries of first asylum to seek refuge in a third country out of any framework for international protection. The role of Diasporic networks as a coping strategy will be analysed, with a focus on Palestinian settled in South Lebanon both inside and outside already existing refugee camps.

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**Philip Marfleet** is Professor in the School of Social Sciences at the University of East London. His research interests include globalisation, refugee history, urban refugees, and social movements in the modern Middle East. Among recent books are: *Refugees in a Global Era* (Palgrave, 2006), *Egypt: the Moment of Change* (Zed Press, 2009) and *Egypt in Revolution* (Pluto Press, forthcoming 2016).

**Title:** *Refugees and the state: the importance of Iraq*

**Abstract:** Why is the modern nation-state so closely associated with processes of mass displacement? Examining the case of Iraq, this paper considers the importance of repeated refugee movements of the colonial and post-colonial eras. It considers the impact of external military intervention in 2003, the reconstruction of the state and the unprecedented refugee movements that followed. It also addresses the latest phase of forced migration – the recent movement of millions of people to Kurdish regions – arguing that their fate may reveal much about mass movements and processes of state construction in the Middle East.

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**Salim Salameh** is a Palestinian Syrian writer and commentator on the Palestinian question in Syria. He is the co-director of the Palestinian League for Human Rights-Syria. He studied at Damascus Law School and is currently studying at the Department of Global Political Studies at Malmö University in Sweden.

**Title:** *Reflections On Belonging: The Abandoned Yarmouk As Seen From Exile*

**Abstract:** The dust did not settle yet in Syria. Palestinians, as far as experience informed us, are and will be among the most vulnerable groups in this tragedy. As the product of the Palestinian community of Syria I lived my entire life in Damascus's Yarmouk Camp until my departure end of 2012. Like many of my generation, I thought of Syria as a permanent homeland. However, the unfolding events of 2011 and onward proved the opposite and the permanent had collapsed turning the distant homeland, Palestine, even more distant. This short paper is an exploration of my own episodic memory about that collapse, which gravely affected Yarmouk. Admittedly, episodic memories are "critical in the way humans define themselves and assign meaning to the world" (Bietti et al, 2014). The world that once felt stable and permanent, yet eventually was packed in two middle-size bags. Such memories as per Bietti et al (2014) "allow us to reconstruct and re-encounter autobiographical experiences which have occurred throughout the course of our lives" the experience of a once-static and stable relationship with the camp, a geography that interpreted itself as both: a piece and extension of Palestine but also as an 'intensification of exile' (Alsahli, 2013) a permanent and secure exile though. Moreover, the choice to revisit the episodic memory comes from the fact that it "allow humans to project themselves into the future by making predictions and inferences that allow them to anticipate possible, future outcomes (e.g. Schacter and Addis, 2007)" (Bietti et al, 2014). In that sense, this is an attempt to shed light on how Syria events in general and Yarmouk events in particular, as I observe and experience them, led to a process of alteration of my very own identity as well as my relationship to: the camp, Palestine and Syria, even Sweden, my current permanent home.

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