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CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

# REFUGEE

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## SPECIAL ISSUE ON INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

### International Intervention in Refugee Crises

Kurt Mills

In 1978, there were 4.6 million refugees worldwide. Just fifteen years later, at the end of 1993, that figure climbed to 19.7 million. That same year, there were also 24 million internally displaced persons scattered among many conflict zones. That is, one out of every 130 people in the world was displaced as a result of persecution, violence, or natural disaster.<sup>1</sup> In the following two years, the number of refugees declined somewhat as refugees repatriated as conflicts in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, and Mozambique came to a close. At the same time, the numbers of the internally displaced rose.<sup>2</sup> The displaced have fled human rights abuses, ethnic conflict, and generalized violence. In addition, there are many others who have left their home voluntarily in search of work or basic subsistence.<sup>3</sup> Taking into account documented and undocumented labour immigrants, there are about 80-100 million people living outside of their countries of origin, or perhaps 1.5 percent of the entire population of the world.<sup>4</sup> There has been increased attention on the effects refugees, the in-

ternally displaced, and other migrants are having on host countries, both economically and from a security perspective.<sup>5</sup> Governments have felt increasing pressure, as a result of public backlash against immigration, to curb the influx of people.

Concurrent with these developments, there has been a resurgence of international interest in varying humanitarian crises and communal conflicts and a renewed focus on collective security, made possible by the end of the cold war. In fact, since 1989 there

**CONTENTS:**

<b>International Intervention in Refugee Crises</b> Kurt Mills .....	1
<b>International Responses to Human Displacement: Neo-liberalism and Post-Cold War Geopolitics</b> Jennifer Hyndman .....	5
<b>Refugee Flows and Humanitarian Intervention: Problems of Selectivity and Politicization</b> Michael Barutciski .....	10
<b>Refugees as an Impetus for Intervention: The Case of Haiti</b> Kurt Mills .....	15
<b>Security for States vs. Refugees: Operation Provide Comfort and the April 1991 Mass Influx of Refugees from Northern Iraq into Turkey</b> Kemal Kirisci .....	18
<b>Humanitarian Interventions as Practices of Statecraft: Re-Crafting State Sovereignty in Refugee Crises</b> Nevzat Soguk ...	23
<i>Special Topic:</i>	
<b>The Role of Informal Organizations in Resettlement Adjustment Process: A Case Study of Iqubs, Idirs and Mahabers in the Ethiopian Community in Toronto</b> Getachew Mequanent .....	30

have been a number of instances where the international community has intervened in some manner in ostensibly internal conflicts. In cases where the United Nations has been involved, the justification has invariably been that the conflict poses a threat to "international peace and security." Indeed, this is the language found in the UN Charter with respect to Chapter VII enforcement action. Yet, these have been, to a large extent, "internal" conflicts in that the fighting has been contained within particular state borders. However, they have had implications and effects beyond their borders. One of the most noticeable and urgent results has been the creation of large refugee flows which, in turn, have put significant strains on receiving countries or have had otherwise unwanted and destabilizing consequences.

This issue of *Refuge* focuses on this confluence of international developments—the increasing international salience of the movement of the displaced, domestic pressure to curb migration, and the increasing, albeit still ambiguous, abilities and propensity of the international community to respond in a variety of ways to humanitarian crises, including intervention. The term intervention is used here to denote a multifaceted phenomenon involving transborder forceful efforts to influence a government or the outcome of an internationally-relevant situation. It can include activities such as overthrowing a government or annexing territory by force. However, it can also include more ambiguous forceful action which may involve government acquiescence or resistance, may include the acquiescence or resistance of a rebel group, and is done by a state or international governmental organization, to address a security or humanitarian problem in a particular territory (recognizing, of course, that the two frequently cannot be separated).

*Humanitarian* intervention involves a situation where humanitarian aspects are the primary factors in the decision to intervene and are the main focus of the action.

The following articles examine the issues raised by international intervention in refugee crises from several perspectives and within a number of contexts. Jennifer Hyndman's article, "Neo-Liberalism and Post-Cold War Geopolitics: International Responses to Human Displacement," examines how domestic politics and neo-liberal social/economic policies drive international policies focused on preventive protection and assisting displaced persons in conflict zones, rather than as refugees in countries of asylum in the West. She looks at the specific case of Canada, providing examples of a turn toward neo-liberal policies, including cuts in social programs, which, as she points out, "will adversely affect government-sponsored refugees selected for resettlement in Canada." She then argues that this shift in domestic public attitudes and policy has occurred alongside an international shift from an imperfect humanism with respect to development, refugees, etc. toward a neo-humanism where "human development [is] qualified by the economic viability of it's subjects' pursuits." Even further, however, the emerging domestic realities have imposed a new international reality—less support for social spending at home (in Canada as well as much of the rest of the West) means that new ways must be found to ensure that those who might make claims for scarce social welfare funds, such as refugees, must be prevented from having the opportunity to do so. That is, the focus has shifted from taking in refugees to protecting potential refugees in their country of origin, thus keeping the problem "out there" somewhere.

Michael Barutciski, in his article "Refugee Flows and Humanitarian Intervention: Problems of Selectivity and Politicization," addresses two significant issues with respect to intervention—selectivity and politicization. That is, why are some humanitarian crises focused on and addressed in some manner, while others are virtually ignored by the media and the political elites, and how does the politicization of a situation affect the

reaction to that situation? He uses the international response to the conflict and humanitarian crisis in the former Yugoslavia, and particularly the role of UNHCR, as a case study, noting the disproportionate amount of resources expended on that country with respect to other countries which were experiencing similar or even more severe humanitarian crises. He argues that public opinion and the so-called "CNN effect" cannot be reliably counted on to generate the necessary response to a grave humanitarian crisis, particularly in light of how the media was manipulated, and at times consciously chose, to sway public opinion with regard to the former Yugoslavia.

"Refugees as an Impetus for Intervention: The Case of Haiti," by Kurt Mills looks at a case which "is one of the clearest cases to date of refugee flows leading to eventual intervention." He examines the resolutions emanating from the UN Security Council and the interests of the United States, which ultimately intervened to restore Jean Bertrand Aristide to power. He argues that because of the constellation of interests which lay behind the US intervention, as well as the timing of the action, the intervention had little to do with humanitarianism and everything to do with a perception of refugees as a security threat. However, the intervention may, nonetheless, prove to be precedential in providing legitimacy for future humanitarian interventions.

The last two articles both focus on the case of displaced Iraqi Kurds after the Gulf War. Kemal Kirişçi's article, "Security for States vs. Refugees: Operation Provide Comfort and the April 1991 Mass Influx of Refugees from Northern Iraq into Turkey," examines the response of Turkey and the international community to the flow of Iraqi Kurdish refugees to the border with Turkey and the extent to which humanitarianism and security concerns were responsible for the eventual creation of safe havens. He looks, particularly, at the interests of Turkey in keeping the 400,000 Kurds out, and how these interests affected Operation

Provide Comfort which created the safe havens in northern Iraq.

The final article, "Humanitarian Intervention as Practices of Statecraft: Re-Crafting State Sovereignty in Refugee Crises" by Nevzat Soguk, argues that "humanitarian interventions are not undertaken merely to alleviate the sufferings of people under duress such as refugees." Rather, as Kirişçi also argues, state security interests frequently intrude. Beyond this, however, such interventions are used to shore up state sovereignty, rather than undermine it as humanitarian intervention is frequently portrayed. That is, by intervening in northern Iraq, the allies appropriated the refugees in such a way as to reinforce the hierarchy of citizen/nation/state found in traditional articulations of sovereignty. Humanitarian action does not, then, signify humanitarianism but rather basic statist activities.

What is to be concluded? Refugees have become a significant international phenomenon in recent years, and this has not been lost on the international community. Yet, the responses to this crisis frequently have had little to do with humanitarianism. A backlash against immigration, cuts in social spending, and a perception of refugees as security threats, have combined with a newly interventionist international community to create situations where forceful military action has been taken in the midst of refugee crises. However, it is not necessarily concern for refugees as persons-in-need which has been at the heart of such intervention and refugees have not necessarily been the main beneficiaries of such actions. Rather, humanitarianism has frequently taken a back seat to traditional security concerns. ■

## Notes

1. Gil Loescher, *Refugee Movements and International Security*, (London: Brassey's for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1992): 9; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The State of the World's Refugees: The Challenge of Protection*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1993): 1-2; Refugee Crisis Worsening, UN Says, *The*

*Gazette (Montreal)*, [Online], (November 10, 1993): F8, Available: Nexis. When the UNHCR book was completed it recognized 18.2 million as refugees. However, by the time it was released a couple of months later, in early November, the number had increased by 1.7 million, half of which occurred almost overnight as a result of the attempted coup in Burundi in late October.

2. According to UNHCR, there were 14.4 million refugees and approximately 30 million internally displaced persons at the end of 1994. UNHCR, *The State of The World's Refugees: In Search of Solutions*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 40, 248.
3. However, if one needs to leave one's home just to survive, it is hard to see how this is "voluntary."
4. UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees: The Challenge of Protection*, p. 40.
5. As Weiner notes, the increased movement of people across borders is forcing a reconceptualization of what security entails. See Myron Weiner, "Security, Stability and International Migration," in Myron Weiner, ed., *International Migration and Security*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993): 1-35. On the relationship between refugees and security see Loescher, and Reg Whitaker, "Refugees: The Security Dimension," prepared for the conference *Organizing Diversity—Migration Policy and Practice: Canada and Europe*, (Berg en Dal, Netherlands, November 8-12, 1995). □

*Continued from page 9/*

## International Responses to Human ...

- grams on Women in Managua, Nicaragua," unpublished Master's thesis, Dept. of Geography, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, 1993.
15. M. Hayes, 1994, op. cit. p. 31.
16. C. Mouffe, "For a politics of nomadic identity" in *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement* (eds) G. Robertson, M. Mash, L. Tickner, J. Bird, B. Curtis & T. Putnam, NY/London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 105-13.
17. UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees: In Search of Solutions*, Oxford/NY, Oxford University Press, 1995, and K. Prager, "The Limits of Peacekeeping", *Time*, October 23, 1995.
18. UNHCR, 1995, op. cit.
19. *Ibid.* p117.
20. It is worth noting that immigrants to Canada draw on fewer financial supports from government than the native born population. "Using the native born as a bench mark, we find no evidence that im-

migrants pose an excess burden on Canada's transfer programs. They are less likely than natives to participate in the UI [unemployment insurance] and SA [social assistance] programs upon entry to the country ..."; cited from "The Receipt of Transfer Payments by Immigrants to Canada," working paper, M. Baker & D. Benjamin, Department of Economics, University of Toronto, April 1994.

21. Bill Frelick, 1993, op. cit.
22. Head Of Fundraising Services, UNHCR, Geneva, interview, October 24, 1994.
23. *Ibid.* On the Former Yugoslavia: "you may have had generally recognized borders ...and a lot of people crossing those borders with a fear of war or persecution; there were a lot of people displaced within these borders, and then persons displaced across borders that nobody recognized; and then you had persons displaced within borders that nobody recognized; and then you had persons who weren't displaced at all, but were sitting being shelled to death in Sarajevo, and all of these people fell under the action of UNHCR, and nobody really cared. It's a big change from the years of the 1980s."
24. B. S. Chimni, "The Meaning of Words and the Role of UNHCR in Voluntary Repatriation," *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1993, pp. 442-59. p. 459.
25. Excerpts from a statement by High Commissioner Sadako Ogata, UNHCR, at the Roundtable on "Refugees: Challenge to Solidarity," New York, 9 March 1993.
26. James Hathaway, "Introduction to the Law of Refugee Status," lecture presented at Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, June 23, 1994.
27. Bill Frelick, 1993, op. cit. p. 7.
28. H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Cleveland/New York, Meridian, 1958.
29. C. Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, Concord, Ontario, Anansi Press, 1991.
30. Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Cotton and Iron" in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, (eds) R. Ferguson, M. Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, & C. West, New York, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1991, pp. 327-36, and N. Fraser, "Women, Welfare and Politics" in *Unruly Practices*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
31. L. Abu-Lughod, "Writing Against Culture" in *Recapturing Anthropology* (ed.) R.G. Fox, Santa Fe, School for American Research, 1991, pp.137-62.
32. M. Weiner cited in UNHCR, 1995, op. cit. p. 188.
33. UNHCR, 1995, op. cit., p. 162. Emphasis added.
34. UNHCR, 1995, op. cit., pp. 154, 255. □

# International Responses to Human Displacement: Neo-liberalism and Post-Cold War Geopolitics

Jennifer Hyndman

## Abstract

This paper explores conditions which shape current international interventions to assist displaced persons. In particular, the intersection of neo-liberal politics at the national level with international geopolitics after the Cold War, and subsequent strategies of managing human displacement are examined. First, a trend in domestic politics and policies in Canada is illustrated through a series of current examples. From these vignettes, a pattern of neo-liberalism emerges. Second, a trend is noted towards increased peacekeeping operations and the deployment of 'preventive protection'—a strategy which emphasizes assistance to displaced persons within their country of origin, often within a conflict zone—since the end of the Cold War. The possibility of a connection between neo-liberalism at home and peacekeeping and preventive protection abroad is explored. The imperfect humanism of the international refugee regime is being superseded, it is argued, by a dangerous 'neo-humanism' maintained through pervasive neo-liberal policies at national and international levels.

## Précis

Les conditions qui forment les interventions internationales contemporaines ayant pour but la sécurité des personnes déplacées sont l'objet de cet exposé. On examine surtout l'intersection de la politique néo-libérale au palier national et la politique après-guerre froide au palier international d'une part, et d'autre part des stratégies de gérer le déplacement humain. D'abord, on illumine par

*une série des exemples contemporains la tendance de la politique canadienne domestique vers un modèle de plus en plus néo-libéral. Ensuite, on distingue depuis la fin de la guerre froide une tendance vers l'augmentation des opérations pour le maintien de paix ("peacekeeping") et le déploiement de "protection préventive" — une stratégie qui appuie un régime de secours aux personnes déplacées à l'intérieur d'un pays d'origine, souvent une zone de conflit elle-même. On explore, donc, la corrélation entre le néo-libéralisme domestique et les opérations pour le maintien de paix ainsi que le déploiement de "protection préventive" à l'étranger. On constate que l'esprit humaniste, malgré souvent défectueux, du régime réfugié international devient démodé en faveur de ce néo-libéralisme, pistonné à la fois chez deux paliers nationaux et internationaux.*

The end of superpower rivalry has signalled a transformation in the global geopolitical landscape. While barely six years old, the post-Cold War era is characterized by innovations in peacekeeping and in managing displaced populations. This paper initiates a preliminary analysis of these changes and explores some of the conditions which warrant international interventions pertaining to refugees and displaced persons; it suggests connections between politics at a national level and humanitarian interventions on an international scale. I present evidence that points to an association between neo-liberal policies at home and new patterns of humanitarian involvement and international interventions abroad. While the conclusions of the analysis are tentative, a number of distinct trends in managing displacement can be identified.

I focus first on a number of recent policy developments at the federal and provincial levels within the Canadian context which are expressions of neo-liberalism. Although many of the policy initiatives under scrutiny are likely not intended to have adverse effects on refugees and immigrants, some do. In some of the cases cited, the motivation or perceived need for a particular policy may give rise to unintended outcomes. I attempt to draw connections between domestic and international policy, and map salient strategies for managing human displacement in the post-Cold War period. The individual examples presented are not necessarily a coherent whole, but I establish an identifiable pattern later in the essay, and propose a link between neo-liberal trends in domestic politics and distinct patterns of international intervention.

## The Domestic Scene: Currents in Canadian Policy and Legislation

In February 1995, the Federal Government announced a new 'landing fee' of \$975 per adult refugee and immigrant arriving in Canada, the cost for each child being half of the adult amount. The fee comes in addition to existing processing and health-related fees which immigrants must pay. While immigrants selected as entrepreneurs and investors can meet this requirement easily, others are more likely to take loans if they come from countries where earning power is a fraction of that in Canada or if they come as sponsored refugees with few resources (see Table 1).

While some other nation-states charge immigrants a landing fee, Canada is the only country in the world to impose a landing fee on refugees. Advocates for immigrant groups, in particular Filipino domestic work-

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ers, have argued that the fee is regressive in nature and creates exclusionary barriers for those from 'Third World' locations.

Whether intentional or not, the Federal Government has deepened the divide between North and South by implementing the landing fee. It may preclude the possibility of immigration for some, extend family separation for others, and inadvertently promote usurious lending practices by loan sharks who prey on those who have to borrow money and require years of debt servitude in return.

In addition, former Citizen and Immigration Minister Sergio Marchi announced cuts of 20 percent to his department's total operating budget.

Following the lead of premier Ralph Klein's Progressive Conservative government in Alberta, Premier Mike Harris announced cuts of more than 21 percent to Ontario's social assistance program in the autumn of 1995. Alberta and Ontario are not alone in their social sector reductions; the Federal Government plans to reduce transfer payments by \$2.5 billion from health and welfare spending in 1996 and \$4.5 billion in 1997.<sup>4</sup>

In view of the recent cuts to welfare rates in Alberta and Ontario, and of a federal 'capping' of transfer payments to the three 'have' provinces for social assistance in the late 1980s, the New Democrat government of British Columbia announced in November 1995

Klein and Harris governments are much less humanitarian than a mere residency stipulation and that Alberta and Ontario violate international human rights instruments. Fiscal austerity prevails despite its human impact. The paring down of the welfare state is well under way. For immigrants eligible to apply under the family reunification category, the Federal Government announced in December 1995 that it will tighten the application rules by increasing the family income required to sponsor relatives.<sup>5</sup> Although fewer than 15 percent of sponsors default on their pledge to support immigrating relatives, Citizenship and Immigration Minister Sergio Marchi explained that the problem of defaulting sponsors had to be addressed: "That is why we are tightening eligibility. That is why we are tightening the abuse to social programs. That is why we are enforcing the enforcement side of the procedures."<sup>6</sup> The increase in minimum family income, however, affects all potential sponsors—not simply those who have broken their sponsorship agreements—and poses a new obstacle for many Canadians intent on reuniting family members abroad.

On November 27, 1995 the United States and Canada issued a draft agreement to return refugees who have passed through one of the two countries and sought asylum in the other.<sup>7</sup> The memorandum of understanding would ensure that refugee claimants coming to Canada from the U.S. would be returned to the U.S. and vice-versa. This initiative may decrease the burden on the Canadian system by creating a geographical buffer zone between Canada and Mexico/Central America, but it may also preclude asylum for bona fide refugees. Having forged this agreement with Canada, the U.S. is likely to seek similar memoranda with European countries from or through which many of its refugee claimants pass en route to the U.S.

In February 1995, the Federal Government announced that the cost of a Canadian passport would rise this year from \$35 to \$60; the rationale given for the increase was that the ad-

**Table 1: Years Required to Earn the Canadian Landing Fees**

(in local currency for CDN \$3,150 for a family of four<sup>2</sup>)

Country	Local Currency (A)	Per Capita GDP (B)	Years to Earn (A/B)
U.K.	1484 pounds	10,166 pounds	2 months
Philippines	59,818 pesos	22,171 pesos	2.7 years
China	19,278 renminbi	2,980 renminbi	6.5 years
India	73,086 rupees	8,480 rupees	8.6 years

Source: Adapted from the network for immigrants and refugee rights educational leaflet, 1995

In 1996, 850 to 1,000 jobs are scheduled to be shed. By 1997, a reduction of \$24 million is to be made from the department's national headquarters alone. This move on the part of the Liberal government has already resulted in fewer staff and a trend towards computerized voice-mail telephone services for immigrants, refugees, and advocacy organizations. The current "Info Immigration Direct Access" service was initiated by an immigration lawyer in response to the needs of these client groups after the 1994 cut-backs in the Immigration Department. The service offers legal advice and is accessible through a 1-900 number for which clients pay \$4.75 for the first three minutes and thereafter \$3.90 per minute.<sup>3</sup> Despite an estimated \$100 million in increased revenue from the landing fee, immigrants and refugees face the prospect of further cuts to government administration and processing services.

that it would invoke a three month residency requirement on everyone applying for social assistance in B.C., including refugee claimants. Instead of cutting rates, the Province of B.C. made a politically popular move to look after its own, an arguably provincial approach but one which the B.C. government maintains is more humane than those of Ontario and Alberta. B.C. Social Services Minister, Joy McPhail, has said that her office would be willing to assist people from 'outside' as long as the Federal Government helped finance the extra responsibility. Federal Minister of Human Resources Development, Lloyd Axworthy, has refused to negotiate any such arrangement and has withheld \$47 million in transfer payments to B.C. until the residency requirement is lifted, maintaining that B.C.'s decision contravenes the mobility rights of Canadians under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. McPhail retorts that the draconian cuts of the

ditional revenue would be used to pay for the provision of consular services abroad. Fee-for-service strategies replace tax-based spending in a number of sectors.

In the 1996 federal budget, Finance Minister Paul Martin tabled a plan to decrease spending on foreign aid by \$150 million in 1998–99. When this cut takes effect, Canada's spending on aid will have fallen to 0.25 percent of the country's total economic output, from a peak of 0.53 in the mid-1970s.<sup>8</sup> Between 1988 and 1995, contributions to foreign aid have declined by 33 percent, taking in to account inflation. During the same period, defence spending fell by 22 percent, while overall program spending was cut by 5 percent. Down-sizing of the welfare state is occurring at both domestic and international levels. On December 12, 1995, an announcement was made that Radio Canada International (RCI), Canada's short-wave voice which broadcasts to 126 countries, would discontinue service in 1996. The annual \$16.5 million cost of RCI is now shared evenly between the CBC and the Department of Foreign Affairs. As *The Globe & Mail* notes, "RCI used to be funded by the CBC ... It was moved to the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1991, and has been jointly funded since 1994. Now the CBC wants to return the service to the Department, and the Department wants to return it to the CBC."<sup>9</sup> *The Globe* noted that virtually all industrialized countries that offer similar broadcasting services spend far more than Canada on an annual basis: Radio Australia (\$27 million); BBC World Service (\$286 million); Voice of America (\$359 million). The December 1995 announcement was offset in March 1996 by Heritage Minister Sheila Copps' announcement that CBC and a combination of federal government departments would provide \$8 million each for one year to maintain RCI operations.<sup>10</sup>

### Neo-liberalism, Neo-conservatism, and the New Right

These current Canadian vignettes point to a pervasive, if not persuasive,

political direction—namely neo-liberalism. Many of the cuts will adversely affect government-sponsored refugees selected for resettlement in Canada, many of whom receive social assistance upon arrival until they acquire the necessary language skills to secure work. Neo-liberalism is arguably a politics of liberal policy with conservative outcomes. Neo-liberal politics fall under the broad umbrella of New Right politics, which encompass both neo-conservative and neo-liberal trends. Harrison and Laxer, authors of *The Trojan Horse: Alberta and the Future of Canada*, argue that the Klein, or 'common sense,' revolution in the 1990s is part of the 'second wave' of New Right politics.<sup>11</sup> Neo-conservative policies are expressions of the social authoritarian strand of the New Right.<sup>12</sup> Securing order is part of neo-conservative philosophy, and its legitimating factors include particular constructions of nationalism ("who belongs"), culture or 'race,' tradition, and religious values.

While the two often occur together, neo-liberalism can be distinguished from neo-conservatism by its emphasis on fiscal responsibility rather than moral authority.<sup>13</sup> During the late 1970s and early 1980s, structural adjustment programs (SAPS) in the Third World emerged as vivid expressions of neo-liberal policies which were initiated and financed principally by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Development programs were put on hold where they were not in line with fiscal 'realities', and so began neo-humanism: human development qualified by the economic viability of its subjects' pursuits. Poorer countries requiring loans were forced to meet the stringent SAP formulas of the these lending institutions, and borrower governments were required in most cases to make significant reductions in public sector spending.<sup>14</sup> Neo-liberalism calls for the defense of free markets and the maintenance of a minimal state apparatus, often contrary to the historical legacies of the welfare state in industrialized countries like Canada. It em-

bodies a narrower concept of the public good—limited to the state, law, and money—and it generally subordinates the social realm to the regulation of capital. Whereas a neo-conservative argument against immigration or refugee resettlement might code newcomers as 'foreigners' who simply fail to understand or fit into 'our' culture, a neo-liberal argument might use an econometric assessment of the average contribution of such a person as the basis for deciding whether such immigration is a good investment. The trends are related but identifiably separate, representing "two analytically distinct social images, contained within a unified but flexible ideological canopy", namely the New Right.<sup>15</sup>

### The Global Scene: Managing Human Displacement after the Cold War

"Like the fall of communism, decolonization made our world a multipolar world" — Vaclav Havel

At a global level, French political theorist Chantal Mouffe argues that communism and the opposition between democratic and totalitarian governments ordered international politics during the Cold War, distinguishing friend from enemy since the Second World War.<sup>16</sup> Where the fight against communism has waned, multiple identities based on regional, ethnic, and religious affiliation have come to the foreground. The ideology-based identities of the democratic 'us' and communist or totalitarian 'them' were relational and, as history attests, negotiable and often fluid. In contrast, ethnic nationalism and the identities it can generate tend to be based on purportedly 'natural' membership criteria, giving rise to a problematic and potentially dangerous essentialism bordering on xenophobia. Mouffe notes that these increasingly essentialist identities create antagonism which present serious challenges to the formation of pluralist democratic systems wherever they occur. The demise of the Cold War together with the debut of 'second wave' New Right politics—particularly neo-liberalism—in coun-

tries like Canada have contributed to significant changes in geopolitical strategy affecting displaced populations.

Peacekeeping in the 1990s has taken place in failed or failing states in which conflict creates human displacement and sometimes tragedy, and public pressure to act is great. In addition to peacekeeping in the strictest sense—as the monitoring of peace agreements—peacekeeping missions are now charged with additional responsibilities such as the safe delivery of humanitarian relief supplies, the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons, the disarmament of local militias, and sometimes nation-building in the absence of a government. But more important than the extended duties of peacekeepers is the change in the kind and frequency of intervention, especially in cases requiring assistance to displaced persons, since the Cold War. Increasingly, international interventions aim to prevent people from becoming refugees by assisting them within the borders of a nation-state and often within a conflict zone.

In the first four decades of its operations, the United Nations launched thirteen peacekeeping missions; since 1988 it has authorized twenty-five. From 1945 to 1989, US\$3.6 billion was spent on UN peacekeeping operations; between 1990 and 1995 the cost was US\$12 billion.<sup>17</sup> Late in 1995, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began sending the 60,000 troops pledged to replace UN peacekeepers in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to oversee the peace accord signed in Paris in December 1995.

The multilateral contributions to such operations by member states are far greater than ever before and are matched by exponential growth in the budget of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). From an annual expenditure of US\$34.8 million in 1970, UNHCR has grown rapidly over the past two decades; in 1984 the organization spent US\$444.2 million, and in 1994 US\$1.2 billion, to assist refugees

and other 'persons of concern.' A startling statistic is the number of people who are neither refugees nor internally displaced persons, but are considered 'persons of concern' to UNHCR. In 1995 this number was greater than 3.5 million, the vast majority of whom were assisted in Europe.<sup>18</sup> Together, these trends point to an expansion of both UNHCR's mandate and the responsibilities of UN peacekeepers. Not surprisingly, these expansions are related: increasingly UNHCR works together with peacekeepers in locations such as Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Iraq: "the humanitarian, political, and military elements of the UN system have been brought into a new and very intensive relationship."<sup>19</sup>

Having outlined earlier some salient neo-liberal policies of the Federal Government in Canada, the active deployment of Canadian peacekeeping troops can be viewed as both a 'good cause' and a rationale for continuing defense spending in a climate of cost cutting. But peacekeeping missions are also, I contend, an expression of what I call 'the politics of over there.' Given pressure to reduce welfare recipient rolls and expensive refugee determination procedures, why would a government espousing neo-liberalist policies harbour refugees in Canada when the plight of displaced people can be managed 'over there' in their own countries before they become refugees?<sup>20</sup>

Since the end of the Cold War, a new strategy of 'preventive protection' has become prevalent; it describes a recent trend in managing transnational displacement. 'Preventive protection' can be considered part of a paradigm shift in refugee policy which occurred in the early 1990s.<sup>21</sup> It belongs to a discourse which emphasizes the 'right to remain' in one's home country over the former dominant discourse of the 'right to leave.' 'Safe havens' for Iraqi Kurds, 'zones of tranquillity' for returning Afghan refugees, 'open relief centres' for would-be Sri Lankan refugees, and 'safe corridors' to Muslim enclaves in Bosnia are all examples of this current trend in a post-Cold War landscape.

Prior to 1991, the beleaguered Kurds in Northern Iraq would not have been UNHCR's responsibility, but the agency was called upon because of its 'response ability.' According to one official, "the Iraqi Kurds were internally displaced but not refugees; UNHCR could do the job so we were given the go ahead."<sup>22</sup> This new development of mandate has continued within UNHCR with respect to its role in the Former Yugoslavia: "look at the mix of people ... nobody really sat down to say 'refugees', 'displaced persons', 'war victims'; it doesn't matter ... they need protection and assistance. UNHCR is there; they're equipped to do it."<sup>23</sup>

'Safe havens' and 'preventive zones' are endorsed by Western governments which fund UNHCR and UN peacekeeping in order to execute the necessary emergency relief operations *in situ*. "In general, the concern today is less with the refugee community, or for that matter with the host countries, which in the case of 90 percent of the world's refugees is the developing world, but with the need to ensure that refugees do not disturb the peace of the developed world, or invite financial allocations which, we are told, they can ill afford."<sup>24</sup> UNHCR is revising its own traditional category of 'refugee', recasting its protection mandate, and extending its reach inside the borders of countries at war where displaced people require assistance and safekeeping. In so doing, it prevents, precludes, or at least decreases the likelihood of displaced civilians fleeing violence from entering adjacent countries as asylum seekers.

In the early 1990s, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees endorsed the strategy of preventive protection, calling it "the right to remain":

today displacement is as much a problem within borders as across them ... the political and strategic value of granting asylum diminishes ... The cost of processing asylum applications has skyrocketed, while public acceptance of refugees has plummeted ... At the heart of ... a preventive and solution-oriented

strategy must be the clear recognition of the right of people to remain in safety in their homes ... 'the right to remain' ... the basic right of the individual not to be forced into exile ... I am convinced that preventive activities can help to contain the dimensions of human catastrophe by creating time and space for the political process.<sup>25</sup>

While political solutions to prevent displacement are important, containment of the problem on the basis of asylum processing costs and public sentiment is likely to be only a costly temporary solution. One Canadian law professor has called the 'right to remain' "the right to be toast."<sup>26</sup> A US refugee advocate adds that this shift in managing displacement may curb forced migration, but its solutions are more likely suited to the needs of governments than to the protection of displaced people.<sup>27</sup> The significant number of civilian deaths due to Serbian attacks on UN designated 'safe havens' in Srebrenica during July 1995 supports this claim. Sympathy for displaced peoples and the popularity of their cause on the part of Western governments lies partly in their location, 'over there.' As they approach 'our' borders, they become 'refugees,' 'immigrants' and 'foreigners' who face a less enthusiastic reception.

### Old Rights versus the New Right: Neo-humanism

In legal terms, human rights are as old as the French and American constitutions which spawned them.<sup>28</sup> In the Twentieth Century they have become coded in human rights instruments, humanitarian and refugee law as integral to the security of persons throughout the world. Humanist discourse of rights and freedoms is not unproblematic, as communitarians,<sup>29</sup> poststructuralist, postcolonial, and feminist theorists have argued for a variety of reasons.<sup>30</sup> The humanist approach which includes enforcement of human rights as outlined in international covenants and other legal protocols is, however, a better option than the offerings of neo-liberalism and the 'neo-humanism' it implies. While critical of

alleged universal unities and humanist conventions, Lila Abu-Lughod has argued for a "tactical humanism" which is attentive to particular contexts: "[b]ecause humanism continues to be, in the West, the language of human equality with the most moral force, we cannot abandon it yet ... To have an effect on people, perhaps we still need to speak it, but to speak it knowing its limitations."<sup>31</sup>

Increased efforts to manage international conflict and the human displacement it generates 'over there' are at once an expression of neo-liberal politics on the domestic front and of post-Cold War geopolitics on a global scale. "Citizens have become fearful that they are now being invaded, not by armies and tanks, but by migrants who speak other languages, worship other gods and belong to other cultures, and who, they fear, will take their jobs, occupy their land, live off the welfare system and threaten their way of life."<sup>32</sup> Whether or not these fears have a legitimate basis is irrelevant. The donor countries in which many of these citizens live have responded; "[t]heir aim, in simple terms, was to reduce the number of refugees on the international community's books. They certainly did not want to invest very large sums of money in refugee populations which were going to remain dependent on external assistance for an indefinite period."<sup>33</sup> While levels overseas development aid begin to fall, funds to support UNHCR in dealing with humanitarian crises have doubled between 1989 and 1994.<sup>34</sup> While the welfare state is dismantled within Canada, multilateral transfers to pay for short-term peacekeeping missions and humanitarian assistance to aid displaced persons internationally seem relatively abundant. But, given the neo-liberal program to employ sustained strategies which would reduce existing or potential social costs at home, temporary humanitarian practices which maintain displaced persons 'over there' make political sense as policy in countries like Canada. Unfortunately, they make little sense as political solutions for those

people seeking refuge in unsafe 'safe havens' or ineffective 'preventive zones'. While these strategies sometimes succeed, the human cost is too great when they do not. Transposed to the global realm after the Cold War, elements of New Right politics combined with both peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions within the borders of countries at war are ushering in a new, if precarious, era of managing human displacement that supersedes earlier traditions of humanitarian practices. ■

### Notes

1. The author would like to thank Nadine Schuurman and Daniel Hiebert for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper, as well as Susan Jeffords for her encouragement to develop further the links between domestic and international politics. This paper and related research would not have been possible without financial support from the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University, the International Development Research Centre, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, as well as the generous cooperation of UNHCR.
2. Adapted from the Network for Immigrants' and Refugees' Rights Educational Leaflet, 1995.
3. L. Sarick, "Skirting the Immigration Department," *Globe & Mail*, January 5, 1996.
4. Editorial, *Globe & Mail*, Dec. 18, 1995.
5. L. Sarick, "Ottawa tightening rules for family reunification," *Globe & Mail*, December 15, 1995.
6. Ibid.
7. James Hathaway, "Deflecting refugees from Canada," *The Globe & Mail*, December 5, 1995.
8. M. Gee, "The unkindest cut," *The Globe & Mail*, March 13, 1996.
9. Editorial, *Globe & Mail*, December 13, 1995.
10. The announcement was made March 21, 1996 and reported by H. Windsor, "Copps finds money for RCI," *The Globe & Mail*, March 22, 1996.
11. T. Harrison, & G. Laxer (eds), *The Trojan Horse: Alberta and the Future of Canada*, Toronto, Black Rose, 1995.
12. M. Hayes, *The New Right in Britain*, London, Boulder: Pluto Press, 1994.
13. Ibid.
14. A. Cartwright, "Unmaking Progress: The Impact of Structural Adjustment Pro-

Continued on page 4/International



# Refugee Flows and Humanitarian Intervention: Problems of Selectivity and Politicization

Michael Barutciski

## Abstract

*This article examines some of the problems related to humanitarian intervention in situations of mass displacement. Comparisons between the significant resources spent on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and the lesser resources spent on other less-publicized conflicts are used to illustrate the basic unfairness regarding the selective nature of international interventions. Examples of local manipulation resulting from the politicization of the intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina are used to further illustrate the complications that may arise when intervention replaces asylum in response to humanitarian tragedies.*

## Précis

*Cet article examine quelques problèmes liés aux interventions humanitaires dans des situations de déplacements massifs. Les ressources considérables qui ont été consacrées à l'intervention dans l'ancienne Yougoslavie sont comparées aux ressources limitées qui sont réservées pour d'autres conflits moins médiatisés. Des exemples de manipulations de la part des belligérants en Bosnie-Herzégovine sont également présentés pour illustrer les complications qui peuvent se développer quand des solutions interventionnistes sont proposées pour remplacer l'asile en cas de crise humanitaire.*

This article focuses on two issues that have characterized humanitarian intervention in recent years: selectivity and politicization. Although problems related to selectivity and politicization

are inherent to much of the United Nations' activities, the extent to which they have manifested themselves in recent years is troublesome. The example of the UN involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina is used to demonstrate the basic unfairness in the way limited resources are spent worldwide and the complications that can arise when the international community attempts to lead an impartial humanitarian operation in a region torn by internal armed conflict.

It is important to note that recent examples of humanitarian intervention have occurred in a period when states are coordinating their efforts in order to close their borders to potential asylum seekers. Along with facilitating the containment of refugee flows, humanitarian intervention and the accompanying principal relief aid role reserved for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees can be advantageous for many states in that it relegates refugee protection to the weaker aspect of the 1951 Refugee Convention's protection regime: institutional emergency assistance by UNHCR. This form of assistance is less threatening to states since it avoids the legal obligations associated with the granting of asylum. The *ad hoc* and discretionary nature of UNHCR's emergency assistance are particularly attractive in a period characterized by diminishing commitments to asylum and a new emphasis on addressing the "root causes" of refugee flows.

## Selectivity of Interventions in Cases of Refugee Outflow

There are cases when the violence and humanitarian crisis surrounding displacement achieve so much visibility that the international community is forced to intervene militarily. The mass displacement of Kurds in Iraq

following the Gulf War was such a case. With the brutal application of non-admission measures at the Turkish border, the international news media's coverage of the Kurds' plight compelled Western states to provide a form of in-country protection that was designed to avoid further regional destabilization. The fact that the government of Iraq had just been defeated militarily made it possible for the West to bypass strict state sovereignty in order to protect the Kurds. These victims of displacement thus benefited from the establishment of a "safe haven" which was intended to eliminate their reasons for fleeing. It is important to note that the UN Security Council declared that the threat to international peace and security resulted from the regionally destabilizing refugee flow and not the human rights violations which prompted victims to flee.<sup>1</sup> Several months after the slaughter and mass displacement had begun in Rwanda during the Spring of 1994, the Security Council's declaration that the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis constituted a threat to peace and security in the region allowed a military intervention by France in order to create a "safe haven" in the southwestern part of the country.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the Security Council's declaration that the situation in Haiti constituted a threat to peace and security in the region was followed by an authorization to have a multinational military force led by the United States intervene while asylum seekers were effectively prevented from escaping to the US.<sup>3</sup>

Since these interventions were all intimately linked to refugee flows, it may seem understandable that UNHCR was given an important (although varying) role in each of them. However, it should be remembered that UNHCR's original role regarding

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international refugee protection did not comprise an interventionist aspect since the agency was supposed to defend the asylum conditions of refugees in host states. The interest in humanitarian intervention following the end of the Cold War has changed this traditional approach to refugee protection. Most importantly, the discretionary nature of UNHCR's in-country emergency assistance has always resulted in the differentiated treatment of the world's refugees. The practice of earmarking contributions to UNHCR has led to situations where certain humanitarian operations that attract sufficient attention have been well funded while others go unnoticed and remain short of funds.<sup>4</sup> Whether the attention is accorded because of international sympathy generated by the news media or more direct state interests, the selectivity inherent to earmarked voluntary contributions assures UNHCR's dependence and vulnerability in relation to the financing states.

In the present context of limited and selective interventions, it is not surprising that the former Yugoslavia's geographic location makes it pertinent to the interests of the states that control UNHCR. Reports of widespread human rights violations in Bosnia-Herzegovina have also assured that the victimized civilian populations remain the object of considerable international sympathy. Consequently, UNHCR has received substantial funding for this particular intervention. In fact, expenditures in the former Yugoslavia have been greatly disproportionate in comparison to expenditures for the entire African continent. In 1992, the funds allocated to the operation in the former Yugoslavia (US\$296,518,600) were almost as much as the funds spent on all the programs for the African continent (US\$298,169,900). In 1993, expenditures in the former Yugoslavia (US\$532,640,000) were greater than expenditures for Africa (US\$325,141,000), and East Asia and Oceania (US\$144,397,600) combined.<sup>5</sup> Unfairness resulting from the selectivity of UNHCR's emergency assistance has meant that once again

European human rights victims receive more attention than a much larger group of African victims. At the end of 1993, 5,825,000 refugees and asylum seekers were in need of protection or assistance in Africa. A further 16,890,000 individuals were displaced within their African states. The former Yugoslavia, on the other hand, had generated approximately 1,319,650 refugees and 1,650,000 internally displaced civilians.<sup>6</sup> The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has quite appropriately warned that the legitimacy of UN operations suffers as a result of this kind of differentiated treatment:

I must express my strong preoccupation at a refugee situation which is draining precious financial and human resources desperately needed in other parts of the world, mainly Africa and Asia. It would be remiss of me not to point out the crying needs in poorer parts of the world which are being overshadowed by the refugees from ex-Yugoslavia.<sup>7</sup>

Non-UN agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross provide a good example of a more balanced approach to various global operational requirements: in 1992, ICRC activities in Africa were evaluated at 393,600,000CHF while activities in Europe (former Yugoslavia and ex-Soviet Union) were evaluated at 120,600,000CHF.<sup>8</sup> It was only after several years of operations in the former Yugoslavia that UNHCR established a more reasonable balance in relation to the limited resources available worldwide. In 1994, UNHCR expenditures in the former Yugoslavia amounted to US\$226,524,800 while its expenditures in Africa amounted to US\$506,090,900.<sup>9</sup>

The recent interest in promoting humanitarian interventions and the accompanying principal humanitarian aid role reserved for UNHCR will likely result in greater unfairness due to the selectivity of these operations. As refugees around the world increasingly lose the ability to seek asylum autonomously, the *ad hoc* and discretionary nature of institutional re-

sponses to displacement increase the risk that groups of coerced migrants will be left abandoned by the international community in situations where both asylum and intervention are not forthcoming. This tendency can only be avoided in the unlikely event that states increase their commitment to humanitarian interventions.

It is also unlikely that the selective concerns and interests of states can be reliably balanced by public pressure which will encourage interventions that are motivated by truly "humanitarian" concerns in remote parts of the world. While public opinion can react strongly when informed of humanitarian tragedies, well-informed and unbiased public with charitable intentions are not easy to find. Technological improvements in communication systems do not assure an evenhanded and comprehensive flow of information.

The influence of the international news media and the distorted sense of public awareness it has created can be illustrated by comparing statistics on recent international conflicts. The estimated total number of war-related deaths in Bosnia-Herzegovina is identical to the estimate regarding the conflict in Tajikistan (20,000–50,000).<sup>10</sup> It is also comparable to various less-publicized conflicts around the world: Algeria since 1992 (10,000–25,000), Sri Lanka since 1983 (>27,000), Liberia (20,000), Peru since 1981 (>28,000), Philippines since 1986 (21,000–25,000). Even the prolonged conflict in Guatemala has produced comparable statistics on total deaths (<46,300). Yet these other conflicts have received limited or minimal international attention, while conflicts with considerably more casualties (e.g. Sudan, Angola) are unable to attract significant international concern. It should be noted that journalists and politicians regularly used inflated figures for total war-related deaths in Bosnia-Herzegovina (200,000–250,000). Statistics for 1994 are particularly revealing: although the year saw more war-related deaths in Afghanistan (4,000–10,000), Yemen (1,500–7,000) and Turkey (>3,000), it is the relentless image of suffering in

Bosnia-Herzegovina (>1,500 deaths) that characterized much of the year's journalistic coverage of international conflict.

The portrayal of suffering in Bosnia-Herzegovina remains accurate particularly to the extent that it depicts the human rights violations that were associated with the brutal program of orchestrated expulsions and deportations. Indeed, the statistics cited above regarding displacement in the former Yugoslavia indicate the extent to which ethnic cleansing has been practiced over the last few years. For example, in northern Bosnia-Herzegovina approximately 469,549 Muslims and Croats have been driven from territory controlled by the Serbs (out of a population of Muslims and Croats that included 536,549 before the war). In eastern Bosnia and southern Herzegovina, approximately 297,641 Muslims and Croats have been forced to flee their homes (there were 301,641 Muslims and Croats before the war).<sup>11</sup>

Yet mass displacement on more distant continents unfortunately has not received a proportionate amount of media coverage.<sup>12</sup> Considerable populations of internally displaced persons are found in Sudan (4,000,000), Angola (2,000,000), Afghanistan (1,000,000) Liberia (1,100,000), Sri Lanka (525,000), Turkey (2,000,000) and Peru (600,000). The number of refugees who have fled their war-affected regions is equally staggering: Afghanistan (2,835,000), Liberia (784,000) and Sudan (510,000) are but some of the examples. Since many of the lesser known conflicts barely get any coverage by the international news media, Western government leaders have not had to react to public outrage regarding these humanitarian tragedies as they have been doing in relation to Bosnia-Herzegovina since 1992.

### **Politicization of Interventions within Refugee Producing Countries**

While selectivity can result in certain humanitarian tragedies being ignored, politicization continues to complicate those tragedies that manage to attract a

forceful international response. Indeed, relief aid delivered in the midst of an internal armed conflict can often be perceived as a political gesture. It should come as no surprise that it may be contested by enemies of the beneficiaries: "Increasingly, the UNHCR and aid agencies must operate in the midst of ongoing conflicts where even the most humanitarian activities are perceived by one or even all parties as a factor affecting the outcome of the confrontation."<sup>13</sup> This is why recent examples of intervention have been challenged by local belligerents who want to prevent international aid from reaching their enemies. It is often difficult for external actors to maintain the fiction of impartiality in these situations of intervention.

The UN involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina further highlights the

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### ***Perhaps the most outrageous attempts to influence international public opinion involved orchestrated massacres of friendly civilians who were sacrificed in order to blame the opposing side.***

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cruel consequences of the politicization of interventions in that it has been confronted with numerous incidents which involve sacrificing civilian populations for political goals. Early in the conflict, UNPROFOR commanders had remarked that some of the actors were intentionally trying to internationalize the conflict in order to obtain a direct military intervention from which they expected to benefit.<sup>14</sup> In relation to this effort to internationalize the conflict, UNPROFOR and UNHCR officials have correctly noted that the "CNN front" played an important role during the war.<sup>15</sup> The international news media was used in order to generate public sympathy for some of the actors in the conflict. Although using the media to influence events is not necessarily objectionable, it can become problematic when genuinely objective information is replaced by propaganda emanating from one side in a civil war.

As reported by the UN Secretary General on several occasions, military provocations which resulted in dispropor-

tionate responses were a frequent tactic throughout the war. In fact, the actual siege of Sarajevo only began after Yugoslav Army (JNA) barracks in the city were blockaded. When a supposedly negotiated evacuation of one of these barracks was interrupted by an ambush in which several JNA officers were shot dead and 200 JNA soldiers were taken prisoner, the canons positioned around the city were used to retaliate and begin the long campaign of terror which was intended to subdue the local population.<sup>17</sup> The CNN effect and the international public outrage resulting from artillery shells exploding in an urban centre proved to be too attractive to the city's political leaders who had promised before the outbreak of hostilities that JNA barracks would not be blockaded as they were in Croatia and Slovenia.<sup>18</sup>

The bombardments of Bosnia-Herzegovina's capital city that followed assured that television teams could broadcast startling war images around the world.

Perhaps the most outrageous attempts to influence international public opinion involved orchestrated massacres of friendly civilians who were sacrificed in order to blame the opposing side. These incidents are particularly troublesome because they appear to have been effective in achieving the desired result: mobilizing public opinion into pressuring governments to take action against one of the parties to the conflict.

One of the most publicized events occurred in May 1992 when two mortar shells killed seventeen people who were waiting outside a bakery located in a Muslim-controlled part of Sarajevo:

The pressure for some form of action to stop the fighting in BiH was growing among the international public, not just in the West but in Islamic countries as well. One of the turning

points was the shelling of a bread queue in Sarajevo in the middle of May. The resulting carnage was recorded on possibly the most nauseating television footage of the war. In London at the time, I observed how entire news rooms stopped what they were doing and stared in deep shock at the pictures coming over the satellite feed ... [T]his war has confirmed that the influence of print or radio journalism is negligible when compared with the impact that a few minutes of video can have. The Serb forces around Sarajevo denied more vigorously than usual that they were responsible for the outrage. Instead, they insisted that Bosnian government forces had slaughtered their own people precisely in order to generate the effect which the incident provoked around the world.<sup>19</sup>

While the Serbs were effectively blamed by the international news media for the attack, information was eventually revealed indicating that the Muslims had organized the massacre in order to attribute responsibility to the Serbs.<sup>20</sup> Three days after the incident, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions against Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). There are also serious allegations that the Muslims were responsible for the Markale market massacre in Sarajevo in February 1994 that was attributed to the Serbs and led to a NATO ultimatum.<sup>21</sup> This, of course, does not exculpate the Serbs (or other belligerents) who deliberately and openly bombarded civilian targets: for example, when NATO aircraft bombarded two Serb ammunition depots on May 25, 1995, the Serbs retaliated with their canons and killed seventy-one civilians in Tuzla.<sup>22</sup> It does, however, indicate the complexities involved in having an international news media using its influence to openly encourage armed intervention in internal conflicts where civilians are being sacrificed by all sides.<sup>23</sup>

It should not be forgotten that an UNPROFOR commander could not complete his mandate because of death threats he received after trying to denounce these types of manipulation by the warring parties.<sup>24</sup> The silence of the media regarding this manipulation of

public opinion is particularly noteworthy if one considers that it was impossible to travel in the region without hearing rumours from UN personnel concerning massacres staged for television. Whether one considers the examples of snipers shooting at their own civilians in downtown Sarajevo<sup>25</sup> or bombardments of the Sarajevo airport staged by the city's authorities,<sup>26</sup> it should be understood that forming an accurate and nuanced picture of a distant conflict is hard to do from journalistic sources.

The fact that there have also been a considerable number of Serb victims in Bosnia-Herzegovina is striking if we consider that until the summer of 1995, the Muslims (and occasionally the Croats) were generally presented by the international news media as the only victims of ethnic cleansing.<sup>27</sup> This perception persisted despite the fact that since mid-1993 most of the offensives in Bosnia-Herzegovina had been mounted by the Muslim forces (who, according to some American politicians, did not even have the weapons to defend themselves).<sup>28</sup> Even if the Serbs were not able to militarily defeat the Muslim forces in certain key areas (Sarajevo, Bihac, Tuzla, Gorazde, Brcko) it is the Serb terror inflicted on besieged civilian populations that caught the attention of the international community. The ensuing journalistic encouragement for a military solution was so effective that the public debate in the US focused on lifting the UN arms embargo imposed on the former Yugoslavia. Although the embargo was not being respected by several UN member states and the Muslims were obtaining impressive quantities of armaments,<sup>29</sup> the proposal circulating in journalistic and academic circles included a partial lifting of the embargo that would benefit the warring party that was generally perceived as the main victim. Eventually, American politicians were no longer hiding that they wanted to openly finance and arm the Muslims.<sup>30</sup> The manipulation and international encouragement for a military solution to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina

reached a point where the emboldened Muslim forces decided it was not in their interest to allow the complete deployment of a more robust UN force (Rapid Reaction Force) that was supposed to protect their own civilian populations.<sup>31</sup>

It is useful to keep in mind that internal armed conflicts are rarely less complicated than the one in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In these highly politicized scenarios within countries of origin, affluent states are financing a supposedly "non-political" UNHCR<sup>32</sup> so that it may engage in interventionist activities. Supported by UN military personnel with vaguely defined humanitarian roles, refugee protection is consequently reduced to emergency relief in war zones where manipulations and discredit can often be expected. In a sense, refugee law's contribution to international law is replaced by protection concerns that are part of humanitarian law. Yet for most victims of displacement, even the forceful interventions remain illusory in a system characterized by selective concern. The many problems associated with humanitarian intervention suggest that its use in relation to refugee outflows cannot be a reliable protection alternative to asylum. ■

## Notes

1. Resolution 688 (April 5, 1991).
2. Resolution 929 (June 22, 1994).
3. Resolution 940 (July 31, 1994).
4. "Contributions can be earmarked for particular countries. As a result, donations for a cause such as repatriation in Cambodia, where the suffering under the Pol Pot regime touched a sympathetic chord around the world, ends up being oversubscribed. And repatriation in Mozambique, where a long-fought war is winding down in obscurity, does not raise enough money." John Darnton, "UN Faces Refugee Crisis that Never Ends," *The New York Times*, August 8, 1994, p. A6.
5. UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees*, New York: Penguin Books, 1993, p. 176 and UN Economic and Social Council, *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, UN Doc. E/1994/41, May 6, 1994, p. 44.
6. See US Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 1994*, pp. 40-42.

7. Sadako Ogata, *Statement to the International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia*, Geneva, July 29, 1992, p. 5.
8. See International Committee of the Red Cross, *Annual Report 1992*, Geneva: ICRC Publications, 1993, p. 189.
9. UN Economic and Social Council, *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, UN Doc. E/1995/52 (April 25, 1995), p. 44.
10. The following statistics on war-related deaths (up to and including 1994) are from the prestigious Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 1995*, London: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 26-33.
11. Statistics on displacement are from UNHCR, *Information Notes on former Yugoslavia*, no. 8/95, August 1995, p. 9.
12. The following statistics on displacement are from US Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 1995*, p. 44.
13. Gil Loescher, *Beyond Charity: International Cooperation and the Global Refugee Crisis*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 28.
14. See generally Philippe Morillon, *Croire et oser: Chroniques de Sarajevo*, Paris: Éditions Grasset, 1993 and Lewis MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper—The Road to Sarajevo*, Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993.
15. *Ibid.* Also see Karin Landgren, "Safety Zones and International Protection: A Dark Grey Area," *7 International Journal of Refugee Law* 436 (1995).
16. *Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 900 (1994)*, UN Doc. S/1994/291 (March 11, 1994) and *Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 982 (1995) and 987 (1995)*, UN Doc. S/1995/444 (May 30, 1995).
17. See Morillon, pp. 40-41 and MacKenzie, pp. 164-77.
18. "[President Izetbegovic] saw as the only alternative a repetition of the strategy that had earlier yielded results in both Slovenia and Croatia. He was, of course, aware that the result would be costly in terms of human lives, but that seemed to him an acceptable price to pay for sovereignty." Mihailo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1994, p. 179.
19. Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin, 1994, p. 210.
20. The UNPROFOR report regarding the massacre remains inaccessible to the public. However, its contents can be deduced from the diary of the highest ranking officer in Sarajevo at the time:
  - Disaster in Sarajevo. People lined up for bread were attacked, and at least seventeen killed. Presidency claims it was a Serb mortar attack, Serbs claim it was a setup using explosives. Our people tell us there were a number of things that didn't fit. The street had been blocked off just before the incident. Once the crowd was let in and had lined up, the media appeared but kept their distance. The attack took place, and the media were immediately on the scene. (Lewis MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper—The Road to Sarajevo*, Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993, p. 194. See also Daniel Vernet & Jean-Marc Gonin, *Le rêve sacrifié: Chroniques des guerres yougoslaves*, Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 1994, pp. 106-7.)
21. David Binder, "Anatomy of a Massacre," *Foreign Policy*, no. 97, Winter 1994-1995, pp. 70-78.
22. UNHCR, *Information Notes on former Yugoslavia*, no. 6/95, June 1995, p. i and *UN Peace Forces News*, no. 19, June 1995, p. 15.
23. Western journalists generally did not present a nuanced interpretation of the conflict. Some of the journalists who presented a Manichean view of the conflict have admitted that they were trying to influence events and help the Muslims by mobilizing public opinion). See, for example, Roy Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide*, New York: Macmillan, 1993, p. xii and the interview of Roy Gutman (Pulitzer Prize winner in 1993) in the *American Journalism Review*, July 1993.
24. General MacKenzie had to leave Bosnia-Herzegovina before the expiration of his mandate largely because of the death threats against himself and his assistants. The following excerpt of a message sent to General Nambiar (UNPROFOR Commander in Chief) summarizes the Muslim strategy:
 

You are aware of the desires of the Presidency to achieve international intervention in order to regain their country and capital. They are in fact perpetuating the current conflict, while the Serbs are showing considerable restraint (I can only speak for Sarajevo). Obviously, the Presidency does not like to hear me describe the facts as I know them, as this weakens their case with the international media. So far I have not gone public ... I can live with all the above [seven death threats]; after all I am a soldier; however, over the past few days, some of my personnel have been targeted due to their association with me ... This I cannot tolerate, as I am putting my personnel in needless danger. (MacKenzie, pp. 294-95.)
25. "French peacekeeping troops in the United Nations unit trying to curtail Bosnian Serb sniping at civilians in Sarajevo have concluded that until mid-June [1995] some gunfire also came from Government soldiers deliberately shooting at their own civilians—French officers who conducted the investigation adamantly defend their findings ... One benefit of not making the matter official—thereby risking that it would become public—is to avoid a dispute between the Bosnian Government and the United Nations when the role and even the future of peacekeeping here are under intense review. (Mike O'Conner, "Investigation Concludes Bosnian Government Snipers Shot at Civilians," *The New York Times*, August 1, 1995, p. A6.)
26. "Some of the city's suffering has actually been imposed on it by actions of the Sarajevo government ... Government soldiers, for example, have shelled the Sarajevo airport, the city's primary lifeline for relief supplies. The press and some governments, including that of the United States, usually attribute all such fire to the Serbs, but no seasoned observer in Sarajevo doubts for a moment that Muslim forces have found it in their interest to shell friendly targets. In this case, the shelling usually closes the airport for a time, driving up the price of black-market goods that enter the city via routes controlled by Bosnian army commanders and government officials. Similarly, during the winter of 1993-94, the municipal government helped deny water to the city's population. An American foundation had implemented an innovative scheme to pump water into the city's empty lines, only to be denied permission by the government for health reasons. The denial had less to do with water purity than with the opposition of some of Sarajevo officials who were reselling U.N. fuel donated to help distribute water. And, of course, the sight of Sarajevans lining up at water distribution points, sometimes under mortar and sniper fire, was a poignant image." Charles G. Boyd, "Making Peace with the Guilty: The Truth about Bosnia," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 74, no. 5, September-October 1995, p. 28.
27. The fate of Serb civilians in Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina has not received much sympathy from journalists or public opinion despite the fact that UNHCR had warned several months into the conflict that the dozens of thousands of inhabitants fleeing Sarajevo were mostly Serbs. In fact, the international news media has rarely considered the forced displacement of Serbs. Yet UN documents reveal that a significant portion of the displacement victims are of

*Continued on page 22/Refugee Flows*

# Refugees as an Impetus for Intervention: The Case of Haiti<sup>1</sup>

Kurt Mills

## Abstract

*The 1991-94 Haitian refugee crisis, and the resulting intervention, brings together a number of different issues, including refugee flows, human rights concerns, UN Security Council action, and the domestic politics and other direct interests of one of the great powers. This article examines these factors and the role they played in the eventual US-led intervention. It concludes that the perceived security aspects of the Haitian refugees were the primary impetus for the US action. However, human rights and other humanitarian concerns also played a significant, although ambiguous, role, and the reaction on the part of other states to the intervention may prove to be precedential in legitimating future intervention for humanitarian purposes.*

## Précis

*La crise des réfugiés haïtiens et l'intervention suivante mélangent une série des influences internationales: des mouvements des réfugiés, des droits de la personne, des actions du Conseil de Sécurité, tout en reflétant la politique interne et d'autres intérêts du plus grand pouvoir mondial. Cet article suit les traces de ces facteurs dans l'enjeu aboutissant à l'intervention dont les É.-U. à la tête. On conclut que la perception des haïtiens comme risque sécuritaire par-dessus tout incitait l'action interventionniste. Les droits de la personne et d'autres concernes humanitaires, cependant, ont joué un rôle significatif bien que ambigu. Il est probable que les réactions des autres états face à une telle intervention dans l'avenir peuvent servir comme préalable dans le processus de légitimation d'une intervention à titre humanitaire.*

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The case of Haiti is particularly relevant to the issue of refugees and intervention because of the combination of factors which brought together dramatic flows of refugees, human rights concerns, Chapter VII action by the Security Council, and the direct interest of one of the great powers. The reaction in the region to the way the final outcome was achieved is also possibly precedential.

On September 30, 1991, Jean Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected president, was overthrown in a military *coup*. The following three years saw the spectacle of boat loads of refugees trying to make it to the United States and uneven and ineffective reaction by the OAS and UN, including the imposition of sanctions. The OAS was the first international body to take action in the wake of the *coup*. The OAS called on Aristide to be returned to power, declared that the military government would not be recognized, and recommended sanctions. Less than two weeks after the *coup*, the UN General Assembly passed resolution 46/7 condemning the military takeover. Throughout 1992, the OAS continued to be the focus of international activity aimed at returning Aristide to power.<sup>2</sup>

However, on December 11, 1992, the UN Secretary-General appointed a special representative to deal with the situation in Haiti. From that point on, the UN became the focal point for dealing with Haiti. As Acevedo argues, the "shift to the UN forum was prompted, at least in part, by the prospect of a massive influx of refugees, which drew high-level attention to Haiti's crisis in early January 1993, both from the outgoing Bush administration and from President-elect Bill Clinton."<sup>3</sup> In fact, the flow of refugees from Haiti had become a significant policy issue earlier in 1992. Haitians had been at-

tempting to reach the US by boat for many years, and the US Coast Guard routinely interdicted them. Between 1981 and 1990, 24,000 Haitians were interdicted, while only six were allowed to make asylum claims in the US. Following the *coup*, the Coast Guard began taking Haitians to the US naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where they were "screened in" to make claims. Soon there were as many as 12,000 Haitians at the base. In May 1992, President Bush ordered the Coast Guard to return Haitians to Haiti without evaluating their asylum claims. By the end of 1992, more than 40,000 Haitian had been interdicted, and during that year 29,500 had been forcibly returned.<sup>4</sup> Only 54 Haitians were admitted to the US as refugees.<sup>5</sup> Thus, by the time the UN became involved in a significant way in December 1992, Haiti was a major policy priority for one of the biggest players in the UN.

During the presidential campaign Bill Clinton had stated that he would reverse the policy of forced repatriation. However, just before he was inaugurated, he announced that he would continue the policy of forced return, and that only asylum claims made in Haiti would be evaluated.<sup>6</sup> The policy seemed to have its intended effect—discouraging Haitians from leaving Haiti and attempting to reach the US—and only 2,329 Haitian were interdicted and returned in 1993.<sup>7</sup> However, the conditions which prompted the refugee exodus in the first place were still in place. On April 4, 1994 exiled President Aristide gave six month notice ending the 1981 accord between Haiti and the US that had allowed the repatriations. One month later, President Clinton announced that asylum claims would be processed on ships. A hunger strike by Randall Robinson, Director of TransAfrica, may have been partially

responsible for Clinton's change of policy.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the Haitian military began to make it harder for Haitians to leave the country. However, many *were* able to leave, such that 24,917 Haitians were interdicted in 1994. At the same time, the US began using Guantánamo Bay to process the refugees. It also tried to get countries in the region to allow processing and to take in some of the refugees, at least temporarily.<sup>10</sup>

The Security Council passed its first resolution on Haiti on June 16, 1993, a year and a half after the *coup*. Resolution 841 "noted with concern the incidence of humanitarian crises, including mass displacement of population, becoming or aggravating threats to international peace and security," and stated that it was:

Concerned that the persistence of this situation contributed to a climate of fear and persecution and economic dislocation which could increase the number of Haitians seeking refuge in neighbouring Member States and convinced that a reversal of this situation is needed to prevent its negative repercussions on the region ...

It found that the Haitian crisis "defines a unique and exceptional situation warranting extraordinary measures by the Security Council ... [and] the continuation of this situation threatens international peace and security." And, it implemented sanctions against Haiti under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. On August 27, resolution 861 suspended the sanctions when it seemed that the coup leaders were implementing the Governor's Island agreement which was to restore Aristide to power. After a recently authorized peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), was prevented from arriving in Haiti by the military and it was clear that the *de facto* authorities were not implementing the agreement in good faith, resolution 872 of October 13, 1993 reinstated sanctions. On May 6, 1994, just two days before President Clinton announced the policy of ship-board processing of refugee claims, the

Security Council tightened sanctions with resolution 917. Resolution 933 of June 30 noted "the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Haiti" and "that the situation in Haiti continues to constitute a threat to peace and security in the region ..."

It was not until resolution 940 of July 31 which authorized military action to reinstall Aristide that refugees were mentioned specifically again. Resolution 940 stated that the Security Council was:

Gravely concerned by the significant further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Haiti, in particular the continuing escalation by the illegal *de facto* regime of systematic violations of civil liberties, the desperate plight of Haitian refugees...

It determined that "the situation in Haiti continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region ..." The US heightened its

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***Haiti is one of the clearest cases to date of refugee flows leading to eventual intervention. ... placing resolution 940 within the context of the previous three years makes it very clear that it was the perception of refugees as direct threats to international peace and security that was behind the eventual US-led intervention.***

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rhetoric regarding its will to intervene over the ensuing month and a half and US military ships were moved into position off Haitian coast. Finally, a settlement was reached with US representatives on September 18 after the military leadership found out that a US invasion force was on its way and paratroopers would land in a few hours.<sup>11</sup> Aristide returned to Haiti on October 15, 1994.<sup>12</sup>

Haiti is one of the clearest cases to date of refugee flows leading to eventual intervention. Michael J. Glennon argues that in resolution 940 the "Security Council dealt with the refugee problem not as a potential cross-border threat but, rather, in the context of humanitarian considerations."<sup>13</sup> It is true that the resolution talked about "the desperate plight of Haitian refugees," whereas resolution 688 regarding Iraq mentioned the "massive flow

of refugee towards and across international frontiers and ... cross-border incursions, which threaten international peace and security in the region ..." Even in their role as helpless victims rather than a national security threat, the very fact of the existence of the refugees can be seen as constituting a basis for intervention. However, placing resolution 940 within the context of the previous three years makes it very clear that it was the perception of refugees as direct threats to international peace and security that was behind the eventual US-led intervention. Certainly resolution 841 made the direct connection between refugees and security.

In addition, it was the US which ultimately undertook the intervention, so it is its motives which are particularly relevant. Between the September 1991 coup and August 1994, 67,493 Haitians were interdicted at sea, most

of these were forcibly repatriated. In August, there were also approximately 14,000 Haitians at Guantánamo Bay.<sup>14</sup> The US obviously had little concern for them as refugees. Rather, they were seen as a security threat, a mass of humanity to be kept out of the country. This feeling must have been reinforced by the fact that by that time, a vigorous debate had been going in the US about immigration and significant anti-immigration sentiment was being expressed, particularly in Florida where the Haitians would have landed if they made it to the mainland.<sup>15</sup> Further, it is noteworthy that the intervention came only weeks before the agreement allowing for the repatriation of Haitians was to have expired. That this new situation would have opened the interdictions and repatriations up to more challenge and would have made them seem even more illegitimate must have

been on the minds of the US administration. That the US continued to return Haitian refugees to a dangerous situation, in violation of its international commitments, and the fact that it took so long to finally undertake its intervention<sup>16</sup> lead to the conclusion that it was only the fact that it was receiving increasing international criticism for its policies and that the refugee crisis was intensifying and heading for a new phase which led to the activities on September 18, 1994. However, beyond the US, some Latin American countries, which were not affected by the refugee crisis, supported forceful action to return Aristide to power. This was by no means a consensus view.<sup>17</sup> However, given previous attitudes in the region which were adamantly opposed to any kind of intervention, the Haitian crisis may prove to be precedential in increasing support for humanitarian intervention:

But a precedent is being created that could well rescue some future democratic government in Nicaragua or Trinidad or even Paraguay from the hands of its own soldiers—and, more importantly, will deter the soldiers from seizing power in many more countries. It is not just an American initiative, and it is not just business as usual.<sup>18</sup>

Michael Glennon argues, however, that whatever precedent was set, it is an ambiguous one at best:

In Haiti ... sovereignty lost. But sovereignty's loss was not an unarguable gain for the community of nations, because the community has not adequately considered either the rationale for continued ad hoc opportunism or the impact of its precedents on future attempts to avoid the piecemeal and move toward principle.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, Haiti represents a case where the perceived security aspects of refugee flows were the main impetus behind intervention, but where humanitarian aspects may also play a significant, but still ambiguous, role in creating a legitimate basis for intervention in humanitarian crises. ■

## Notes

1. This article is an excerpt from: "United Nations Intervention in Refugee Crises in the Post-Cold War World," *Centre for Refugee Studies, Working Paper Series 1996: 1*, York University, March 1996.
2. Domingo E. Acevedo, "The Haitian Crisis and the OAS Response: A Test of Effectiveness in Protecting Democracy," in Lori Fisler Damrosch, ed., *Enforcing Restraint: Collective Intervention in Internal Conflicts*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993): 132-34.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-35.
4. Juan P. Osuna and Christine M. Hanson, "U.S. Refugee Policy: Where We've Been, Where We're Going," in *World Refugee Survey 1993*, p. 42; *World Refugee Survey 1993*, p. 53.
5. "New Haitian Refugee Initiative Continues Long-Term Double Standard," said Amnesty International USA, [Online], press release posted by Hilary Naylor, (July 6, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: soc.rights.human. During the same period, over 61,000 refugees were admitted from the former Soviet Union and more than 44,000 from Vietnam.
6. Osuna and Hanson, "U.S. Refugee Policy," p. 43.
7. US Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 1994*, (Washington, DC: US Committee for Refugees, 1994): 163.
8. Thomas David Jones, "A Human Rights Tragedy: The Cuban and Haitian Refugee Crises Revisited," *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal*, 9 (Summer 1995): 489.
9. US Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 1995*, (Washington, DC: US Committee for Refugees, 1995): 180.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 188; Jones, "A Human Rights Tragedy," p. 488; "Haitians Interviewed at Sea," *The Associated Press* [Online], (June 16, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: clari.news.immigration; "USA Has Haiti Refugee Facility," *The Associated Press* [Online], (June 18, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: clari.news.immigration; "Honduras Would Take Haitian Refugees in Return for Aid," *Reuters* [Online], (July 27, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: clari.news.immigration.
11. Jones, "A Human Rights Tragedy," p. 490; Douglas Jehl, "Troops in Today," *The New York Times*, (September 19, 1994): 1, 8.
12. "UN Welcomes Aristide, Lifts Trade Embargo," *Reuters* [Online], (October 15, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: clari.world.organizations.
13. Michael J. Glennon, "Sovereignty and Community after Haiti: Rethinking the Collective Use of Force," *American Journal of International Law*, 89 (1995): 72.
14. *World Refugee Survey 1995*, p. 180.
15. Further, several states, including Florida, California, and Texas sued the federal government for reimbursement of costs such as medical care and incarceration they claim were incurred as a result of illegal immigration. "Florida Fears Haitian Boat Exodus, Leaders Say," *Reuters* [Online], (May 9, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: clari.news.immigration; "Illegal Immigration Becomes Hot Political Issue," *Reuters* [Online], (July 25, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: clari.news.immigration; "Immigration becomes Vote Issue," *The Associated Press* [Online], (September 18, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: clari.news.immigration; "Poll Finds Anti-Immigrant Bias," *The Associated Press* [Online], (May 23, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: clari.news.immigration; "Backlash Fuels Support for Anti-Immigrant Measure," *Reuters* [Online], (September 29, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: clari.news.immigration; "Campaigns Eye Immigration," *The Associated Press* [Online], (October 8, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: clari.news.immigration.
16. It seems likely that if the US had wanted to get UN approval sooner it could have done so. One reason that it did not intervene sooner seems to be that the US government did not want Aristide to return to power, seeing him as a revolutionary who might not keep US interests at the top of his agenda. He was accused of being undemocratic and the CIA launched a smear campaign against him. "Aristide—Haiti's First Freely Elected Leader," *Reuters* [Online], (September 18, 1994), Available: USENET Newsgroup: clari.world.organizations.
17. "Caribbean: Caricom Countries Pledge Support for Invasion of Haiti," *Inter Press Service*, [Online], (August 30, 1994), Available: Nexis; "Rio Group: Presidents Call for Haitian Regime to Step Down," *Inter Press Service* [Online], (September 10, 1994), Available: Nexis; "Haiti Accord Greeted with Relief in Latin America," *Reuters North America Wire Service* [Online], (September 19, 1994), Available: Nexis; "Haiti: Latin America Leaders Breathe Sigh of Relief," *Inter Press Service* [Online], (September 19, 1994), Available: Nexis.
18. Gwynne Dyer, "Beyond Haiti; Armies in the Western Hemisphere Take Note: Coups Will Not Be Tolerated," *The Gazette (Montreal)* [Online], (September 20, 1994): B3, Available: Nexis.
19. Glennon, p. 74. □



# Security for States Versus Refugees: “Operation Provide Comfort” and the April 1991 Mass Influx of Refugees from Northern Iraq into Turkey<sup>1</sup>

Kemal Kirişçi

## Abstract

*In April 1991, the massive influx of Iraqi refugees into Turkey precipitated a political process that led to one of the rare examples of humanitarian intervention. Under pressure from the Turkish government and world public opinion, Western allies declared a safe zone above the 36th parallel in northern Iraq and launched “Operation Provide Comfort.” This Operation enabled the extension of relief assistance to almost half a million refugees and their repatriation to northern Iraq within a relatively short period of time. The article tries to establish whether “Operation Provide Comfort” served state security interests or the security of the refugees from Iraq.*

## Précis

*L'afflux massif des réfugiés irakiens en Turquie d'avril 1991 suscite un processus aboutissant à un exemple rare de l'intervention humanitaire. Sous pression du gouvernement turc ainsi que du grand public mondial, les alliés occidentaux déclarèrent une zone de sécurité en Irak septentrional au-dessus du 36e parallèle, tout en lançant l'Opération “Provide Comfort”. Cette Opération facilitait du secours aux quelques centaines de milles de réfugiés qui regagnaient leur rapatriement dans un délai relativement court. Cet article essaie à déterminer ou l'Opération “Provide Comfort” a desservi les intérêts de sécurité de l'état ou plutôt a-t-elle favorisé ceux des réfugiés irakiens.*

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## Introduction

With the end of the Cold War, the international community has paid growing attention to humanitarian intervention as a potentially effective way of providing protection for refugees. However, in practice, mobilizing international support for humanitarian intervention has been fraught with political problems. Often governments have failed to show the necessary political will to support such operations. Furthermore, governments have tended to give priority to respecting principles of state sovereignty over supporting policies aimed at preventing or stopping massive human rights violations. One exception to this reluctance of the international community to commit itself to humanitarian intervention was the launching of “Operation Provide Comfort” (OPC) in April 1991.

The defeat of the Iraqi military by the Allied coalition forces created an environment conducive to rebellion by the Shia in southern Iraq and Kurds in the north. The Kurdish nationalist uprising seemed to be successful until the Iraqi military turned all its might against the Kurds after having crushed the Shia rebellion in the south. Towards the end of March 1991, it was becoming quite clear that the Kurdish uprising was soon going to collapse. The Kurds had expected that the United States would enforce an earlier ban on Iraqi helicopters and gunships in addition to fixed wing aircrafts. When this did not occur and President Bush instead declared that he did “not want one single soldier or airman shoved into a civil war in Iraq that’s been going on for ages” and that the “Iraqi people must decide their own political future,” the Iraqi authorities

took this as a green light to suppress the Kurdish uprising.<sup>2</sup>

Until that point there had been considerable optimism among the Kurdish leadership that they would soon be able to enjoy autonomy.<sup>3</sup> It is probably this sense of optimism that caught the Kurds by surprise. The euphoria turned very quickly into a massive uprootment as thousands of Iraqi Kurds fled their homes ahead of the advancing Iraqi army and sought refuge in the mountainous region where the frontiers of Iraq, Iran and Turkey meet. According to a US expert on refugee problems this was

a worst-case refugee disaster. In days, more than a million people have gathered on steep, cold mountain sides without any infrastructure. To get food and supplies to them is a challenge which exceeds that of the Berlin Airlift; instead of one city, we must feed people scattered through some of the least accessible, most remote points on earth.<sup>4</sup>

It was in the face of such a humanitarian crisis that the western governments decided to intervene. A safe haven in northern Iraq was created and OPC began. By early summer, most refugees had been repatriated to northern Iraq.

The main aim of this article is to explore whether this rare post-Cold War example of humanitarian intervention to resolve a refugee crisis served the interests of refugees or states. With this question in mind, the article is divided into three sections. The first section examines the decision making process that paved the way for the launching of OPC. The second one looks at the repatriation and resettlement processes of the refugees from Turkey. In the conclusion, I will argue that OPC was launched only partly with the security

and interests of refugees in mind. Instead, the Operation was also aimed at meeting the national security needs of Turkey, a long-standing ally of the western world and member of NATO.

### **Launching Operation Provide Comfort**

Early in April 1991, the Turkish government received with great alarm reports of a growing number of refugees climbing up the mountains on the Iraqi border. The fact that the regions of Turkey bordering Iraq are populated by Kurds and that a Kurdish separatist group, the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK), had been waging war on the government in the same region since 1984 was an additional concern. The salience of the escalating refugee crisis to Turkish national security was very much reflected in the government's decision to call for an emergency meeting of the National Security Council (NSC).<sup>5</sup> A senior Foreign Ministry offi-

cial argued that "Iraqi refugees (were) forcibly directed toward the Turkish border and that constituted a threat to our security."<sup>6</sup>

moved on to other problems."<sup>8</sup> The Turkish government's initial emphasis was on securing Turkish national interests rather than the interests of the refugees. Hence, the government decided to keep the border closed until a reaction could be solicited from the United Nations Security Council. A letter was immediately sent to the Security Council calling for a meeting and noting that a situation threatening to peace and security had emerged.<sup>9</sup>

The military, which had been instructed to keep the refugees out of Turkey at all cost short of firing at them, failed to implement the decision and a growing number of refugees continued to pour into Turkey. The fact that the area along the Iraqi frontier is "inhabited by a population that through ethnic and family ties was strongly sympathetic to the plight of the refugees" created mounting domestic pressure on the government to change its policy.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the

often governments have failed to show the necessary political will to support such [humanitarian intervention] operations. They have tended to give priority to respecting principles of state sovereignty over supporting policies aimed at preventing or stopping massive human rights violations.

From the Turkish government's point of view, this Resolution was important for two reasons. First, the situation resulting from the refugee crisis was defined as a threat to international peace and security. This was to open the way, for the Turkish government and allies, to argue that a need had arisen to establish a safe haven and create a military force to protect it. The second reason was that the Resolution insisted that Iraq allow immediate access to humanitarian assistance for those in need. This enabled the Turkish government to argue its case for bringing the refugees from the mountaintops down to the Iraqi side of the border, which was topographically more suitable for extending relief assistance to the refugees.

As the tragedy of this refugee exodus unfolded on television screens, the late Turgut Özal, the President of Turkey at the time, started to advocate the idea of creating a "safe zone." Adopting a pragmatic approach, he argued

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that it was necessary for the refugees to be brought down from the snow covered mountaintops to the plains on the Iraqi side of the border. He was also aware that in order to extend assistance to the refugees and ensure their return, there was an immediate need to stop Iraqi aggression and create a secure environment. In a critical conversation with US President George Bush, he made it very clear that Turkey was being overwhelmed, and that he expected to see the United States come to the support of a NATO ally that had proved its loyalty during the Gulf War.<sup>15</sup>

The 8th of April marked a turning point. President Bush, under intense public opinion pressure, heeded Özal's call and ordered US humanitarian airdrops for the displaced on the mountaintops. At the same time he also dispatched the Secretary of State, James Baker, to Turkey. The visit of Baker to the border area on the 8th of April lasted only 7 minutes. But what he observed was more than enough to convince him that something urgent and out of the ordinary had to be done.<sup>16</sup> In the meantime, the idea for a safe zone was taken by the British Prime Minister, John Major, to a European Community meeting in Brussels, specially convened to discuss this crisis. Özal's initial idea of a safe zone along the border to provide easier delivery of humanitarian aid was found to be somewhat problematic. Western governmental officials feared that this might create a "Gaza Strip-like" situation. Instead, Major pushed for an "enclave" (later changed to a "safe haven") large enough to ensure the return of the refugees to their villages and towns from where they had been uprooted.<sup>17</sup>

The European Community's idea of a safe haven coupled with Baker's report, led President Bush to announce his new policy in which he warned Iraq not to operate any aircraft or engage in any military operation above the 36th parallel. At the same time, on April 16, he announced that US troops would enter northern Iraq to create a safe area in the flat lands around Zakhu.<sup>18</sup> In this

way OPC was thus officially launched. Its mission was defined as the conduct of "multinational humanitarian operations to provide immediate relief to displaced Iraqi civilians until international relief agencies and private voluntary organizations can assume overall supervision."<sup>19</sup> By the end of May 1991, the military wing of Provide Comfort had grown to more than 21,000 troops from 11 countries.<sup>20</sup> The Operation was also strengthened by an air attachment deployed in Turkey near the Iraqi border to deter Iraq from violating the no-fly ban north of the 36th parallel. OPC, with the accompanying safe haven, generated a strong sense of security that was needed to ensure repatriation of the refugees.

### Repatriation, Rehabilitation and Resettlement of the Refugees

A repatriation program was developed and put into place by late April.<sup>21</sup> The 460,000 refugees were first brought down from the mountains to approximately 20 transit camps along the Turkish-Iraqi frontier.<sup>22</sup> As can be seen from Table 1, the repatriation of the refugees to northern Iraq was then completed at an unusually fast speed:

The first wave of voluntary repatriation to Iraq from Turkey started in the last week of April 1991 ... Within five weeks, 95 per cent of Dohuk's more than 400,000 former residents had returned, as had another 60,000 persons who lived beyond its borders in (Iraqi) government controlled territory, but who were unwilling to proceed there."<sup>23</sup>

By early June, the last of the border camps was closed and the remaining 13,000 refugees in Turkey were moved

to a camp normally used to house Haj pilgrims near the border with Iraq.<sup>24</sup> The repatriation process from Turkey also enabled most of the approximately 1.4 million Kurdish refugees who had fled to Iran to return to northern Iraq.<sup>25</sup>

**Table 1: Repatriation of Refugees from the 1991 Exodus between April 14-June 1, 1991<sup>26</sup>**

Date	Number
April 14	460,000
April 29	439,504
May 10	328,023
May 21	125,658
June 1	12,838

Although the 1991 refugee influx was mainly characterized as a Kurdish exodus, there were also many Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Turcomans among the Kurdish refugees. However, there are no separate statistics on these groups, and some were moved to a number of separate camps in Turkey while others received residence permits after posting a bond or finding a relative to sponsor them. Eventually, all those in camps were moved to one refugee camp in Eastern Anatolia. By late 1991, there were 1,345 refugees, from five different ethnic groups in this camp.<sup>27</sup> They basically did not want to go back to Iraq, and together with the refugees in Silopi, expected to be resettled in third countries.

Most of these refugees have in the meantime been resettled in many Western countries, including Australia and New Zealand. Table 2 shows the breakdown of resettled refugees by regions within the Western world. By the end of 1994, there were 6,156 such

**Table 2: Number of Refugees from the 1991 Mass Exodus by Region of Resettlement<sup>28</sup>**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
European Community	6	237	96	12	—
North America	1	682	2,680	478	59
Oceania	—	654	88	221	74
Scandinavia	55	23	40	4	11
Others	—	19	6	—	—
Total	62	2,315	2,910	725	144 =6,156

refugees resettled out of Turkey. However, these statistics only include resettlement cases that UNHCR has been either involved in or informed about. There are also cases where countries have taken refugees without the knowledge of UNHCR. A good case in point is Australia which took 2,000 refugees in 1992 in addition to the ones reported in Table 2.

There were factors other than the creation of a safe haven above the 36th parallel and the launching of OPC that facilitated the return of refugees. The involvement and presence of the UN on the ground in northern Iraq was also critical to the success of the repatriation program. The political will

but also assisted the reconstruction of more than 1,200 villages.<sup>29</sup>

The cost of the relief assistance brought to the refugees, together with the cost of their repatriation and reintegration to Iraq, made this operation one of the most expensive of its kind. The figure offered by the European Union for the cost of international assistance provided for the various programs by the end of the summer of 1991, stood at more than one billion dollars.<sup>30</sup> The cost of the assistance provided by the US government and the UNHCR for the refugees during the Fiscal Year 1991, was US\$583 and US\$152 million, respectively.<sup>31</sup> The Turkish government for its part spent

lic solidarity with the plight of the Kurdish refugees were important factors that bore heavily on the eventual decision to declare a safe haven and launch OPC. However, the diplomatic efforts of Turkish officials (especially Turkish President, Turgut Özal, who had supported UN decisions against Iraq and had developed a close relationship with George Bush during the course of the Gulf crisis) to convince their Western counterparts to help Turkey appears to have also played a critical, if not determining, role. The importance that Western government officials gave to solidarity with the security needs of a NATO ally is demonstrated by the fact that there was little or no assistance extended to Iran which faced a much bigger refugee influx. As Frelick notes, "[i]n effect, the refugees for whom Iran was the nearest border were penalized for their hosts' poor relations with the US."<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the choice of the 36th parallel, north of which Iraq was effectively banned from any military activity, appears to have been influenced, at least to some extent, by the fact that most of the refugees that had fled to Turkey came from areas above the 36th parallel. Therefore, the special circumstances that surround the launching of OPC seems to suggest that it may have been a unique humanitarian intervention that came about "as much to shore up political alliances with friendly governments as to assist the refugees."<sup>34</sup> ■

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***Clearly, Western public opinion pressure and a powerful sense of public solidarity with the plight of the Kurdish refugees were important factors that bore heavily on the eventual decision to declare a safe haven and launch Operation Provide Comfort.***

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demonstrated particularly by the US and the French governments to intervene in support of the refugees in turn enabled the United Nations to negotiate a critical deal with the Iraqi authorities, to bring assistance to returning refugees as well as to internally displaced persons within Iraq. On 18 April 1991, the UN signed a Memorandum of Understanding authorizing the United Nations to run humanitarian assistance and relief programs in Iraq. In May, an additional agreement was signed enabling the UN to deploy up to 500 guards to protect its humanitarian centres.

These agreements greatly enhanced the ability of the UN and other international agencies to operate in Iraq. The growing presence of personnel from international governmental and non-governmental agencies provided a psychologically important additional sense of security for returning refugees. More importantly, the UN introduced programs to rebuild and rehabilitate villages destroyed by the Iraqi military. UNHCR, as the UN lead agency in northern Iraq, not only managed the repatriation of the refugees

another US\$257 million on relief and assistance operations.<sup>32</sup> These figures do not include the cost of the military portion of OPC.

#### **Conclusion**

OPC can be considered a successful example of a rare occasion of humanitarian intervention. Once it became operational it effectively facilitated the provision of humanitarian relief assistance to almost half a million refugees. It provided a protective shield for not only the refugees but also the internally displaced in northern Iraq, by constituting a credible military deterrent against the Iraqi military. Lastly, it created a conducive environment for the repatriation of refugees in an exceptionally short period of time. Yet, was it an overwhelming concern to ensure the security of the refugees, or was it Western governmental solidarity to assist a political and military ally, which paved the way to this almost unprecedented case of humanitarian intervention? This is a difficult question to answer.

Clearly, Western public opinion pressure and a powerful sense of pub-

#### **Notes**

1. The research for this article was made possible by a grant from the Bogaziçi University Research Fund.
2. J. Yang, "Bush Defends Non-Intervention," *Guardian Weekly*, April 21, 1991.
3. *Time*, April 15, 1991, p.17. Similar views can also be seen in "Kurds Gaining, US Says," *International Herald Tribune*, March 19, 1991.
4. L. Rosenblatt, Executive Director of Refugees International, testifying before the Immigration and Refugee Affairs Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, US Senate, April 15, 1991.
5. The Turkish National Security Council, in which the military is strongly represented, was originally set up in 1961 to

- improve coordination between civilian authorities and the military on issues concerning Turkish security. Although its decisions are only meant to be *recommendatory*, the Council is recognized to have growing influence on issues directly concerning security issues.
6. *Turkish Daily News*, April 6/7, 1991.
  7. The opposition leader at that time of the True Path Party, Süleyman Demirel, and various Kurdish deputies from the Turkish Parliament called for the opening of the borders, *Milliyet*, April 4, 1991.
  8. W. Hale, "Turkey's time: Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis," *International Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (1992), p. 688.
  9. *United Nations Security Council Document S/22435*, April 3, 1991.
  10. *Asylum Under Attack*, (A Report of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, April 1992), p. 36.
  11. *The Economist*, April 13, 1991, p. 53.
  12. *Time*, April 15, 1991, p. 22.
  13. *Turkish Daily News*, April 6/7, 1991. A draft copy of the Resolution leaked to the newspaper is very similar to Resolution 688 except for some minor changes.
  14. *S/RES/688(1991)*, April 5, 1991.
  15. *Newsweek*, April 29, 1991.
  16. *Ibid.*
  17. *Time*, April 22, 1991; *The Economist*, April 13, 1991, p. 14, and *Newsweek*, April 29, 1991, p. 11.
  18. "Update on Iraqi Refugees and Displaced Persons," statement by N. Lyman, Director of the Bureau for Refugee Programs *US Department of State Dispatch*, May 27, 1991, p. 379.
  19. Quoted in J. Finkel, *Liberation, Occupation, and Rescue: War Termination and Desert Storm* (Carlisle Barracks PE: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, August 1992), p. 55.
  20. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
  21. For details on the humanitarian assistance and the repatriation program in its early stages see *Refugees*, No. 86, June 1991.
  22. *US Department of State Dispatch*, May 27, 1991, p. 380.
  23. *UNHCR Report on Northern Iraq: April 1991–May 1992*, (Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1992), p. 5.
  24. *Keesings Archives*, 38308. At the end of June, the numbers were down to 6,600, and eventually down to 4,000 by the end of the year. Figures were obtained from Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UNHCR Office in Ankara.
  25. *World Refugee Survey 1992*, (Washington DC: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1992), pp. 96–97.
  26. This table was compiled from figures in M. Kaynak (ed.) *The Iraqi Asylum Seekers and Türkiye*, (Ankara: Tanmak Publications, 1992), p. 70.
  27. These figures were obtained from the UNHCR Office in Ankara.
  28. The figures were obtained from the UNHCR Office in Ankara. The European Community includes Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland and Spain. North America includes Canada and the United States. Oceania includes Australia and New Zealand. Scandinavia includes Finland and Sweden. Others include Austria and Switzerland.
  29. *UNHCR Report on Northern Iraq: April 1991–May 1992*, op. cit., p. 4.
  30. *EC News*, September 28, 1991.
  31. *OFDA Annual Report FY 1991*, p. 125.
  32. Kaynak M. (ed.), op. cit., p. 121.
  33. B. Frelick, "Troubled Waters in the Middle East: 1990–91." in *World Refugee Survey 1991*, (Washington DC: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1991), p. 93.
  34. B. Frelick, "Closing Ranks to Deny Access to Asylum," *Immigration Newsletter*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1991), p. 6.

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- Serb origin. For example, approximately 15,000 Serbs remain in the Tuzla region from a prewar population of 82,235 Serbs. For the Zenica region, UNHCR estimates that 16,000 Serbs remain from a prewar population of 79,355 Serbs. Around Bihac, 28,300 Serbs have been forced to flee while 1,600 Serbs remain. Together with the Serbs who have fled their homes during the Croat and Muslim offensives of mid 1995 and the Serbs presently evacuating Serb sectors of Sarajevo which have been given to the Muslims according to the Dayton peace plan, we see that the forced displacement of all sides is comparable in this latest Balkan war which was fought in order to create "ethnically pure" territories. See Office of the Special Envoy for former Yugoslavia (UNHCR), *Briefing Kit*, December 1992, p. 3 and UNHCR, *Information Notes on former Yugoslavia*, no. 8/95, August 1995, p. 9.
28. "It is a remarkable achievement of Bosnian diplomacy, and one reinforced by the government's rhetoric after the fall of Srebrenica, that the Muslims have been able to gain significant military parity with the Serbs, while nonetheless maintaining the image of hapless victims in the eyes of much of the world community. It is all the more remarkable since, before the Srebrenica attack, the Muslims had been on the strategic offensive for more than a year." Boyd, p. 31. Information on military matters in Bosnia-Herzegovina was communicated during a conference featuring former UNPROFOR General Lewis MacKenzie (Toronto, September 1993).
  29. *The Economist*, "The covert arms trade," February 12, 1994, p. 21.
  30. Adam Clymer, "Dole-Helms Bill Asks \$100 Million in Arms for Bosnia," *The New York Times*, August 11, 1995, p. A3.
  31. "More than two months after it was unveiled as the answer to more fully enforce United Nations resolutions in Bosnia, the Rapid Reaction Force remains substantially crippled by restrictions imposed by the Bosnian Government ... A United Nations official said the Bosnian Government wants final authority on how the Rapid Reaction Force is used on its territory. That would, said the official, make the international force essentially an adjunct to the Bosnian Army." Mike O'Conner, "Bosnian Government Said to Hamper New, Stronger U.N. Force," *The New York Times*, August 17, 1995, p. A11.
  32. Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UN General Assembly (December 14, 1950), art. 2. □

# Humanitarian Interventions as Practices of Statecraft: Re-Crafting State Sovereignty in Refugee Crises

Nevzat Soguk

## Abstract

*This study argues that humanitarian interventions are not undertaken merely to alleviate the sufferings of people under duress such as refugees. Beyond humanitarianism, they are activities of statist governance—practices of statecraft oriented to re-articulate and re-craft state sovereignty and the hierarchy it signifies, that is, the hierarchy of citizen/nation/state, not only as natural but also as necessary to the peaceful, stable, and secure organization of local and global politics. Inasmuch as humanitarian interventions target refugees as objects of intervention, they appropriate refugees to the task of statecraft; refugees become not only the manifestation of the difficulties for the sovereign state, but also the site of statist practices, which, attendant upon refugees, endeavour continuously to re-articulate the state-centric imagination of life possibilities in local and global interactions. In the process, humanitarianism is typically subordinated to the contingencies of statism in the late 20th Century.*

## Précis

*Cet article avance l'hypothèse que l'on ne poursuit pas d'intervention humanitaire pour alléger la souffrance des peuples sous détresse, comme les réfugiés; plutôt, une telle intervention reflète l'action étatique, destinée à ré-articuler et ré-monter la souveraineté. Elle signifie la hiérarchie du citoyen/État-nation comme naturelle et intégrale à l'organisation paisible, stable et sûre à la fois au plan local et au global. En tant que l'intervention humanitaire choisit les réfugiés comme cible de l'action, les réfugiés*

*deviennent eux-mêmes l'objet des ruses de politique. Ils représentent donc non seulement une difficulté pour l'état souverain mais aussi l'objet continu de la pratique étatique. L'état tient à ré-articuler l'imagination état-centrique du possible au plan local ainsi que global. Sur ces entrefaites, l'action humanitaire devient assujettie typiquement aux fortunes étatiques du fin-de-20e siècle.*

*"The subject of refugees and displaced persons is at the cutting edge of international concern today not only because of its humanitarian significance, but also because of its impact on peace, security, and stability."*

*Sadako Ogata, UN. High Commissioner for Refugees, 1994*

## Of Practical Interfaces: Humanitarian Intervention, Statecraft, and Refugees

In recent years, the study of humanitarian interventions has proliferated.<sup>1</sup> This proliferation has come on the heels of a number of catastrophic developments which, in response, triggered "humanitarian interventions," purportedly undertaken to stop or alleviate massive human sufferings resulting from these catastrophic developments. Intervention in Iraqi Kurdistan, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Rwanda, are the most conspicuous, precedent setting examples of humanitarian interventions.

While the recent proliferation of interventions has revived the discussions around such issues as the legality, efficacy, and ethics of humanitarian intervention, it is fair to say that of all the issues under consideration, the studies on humanitarian interventions concentrate most on the perennial issue of state sovereignty, regarding sovereignty as the generative and operative principle underlying

ing the organization of global politics in the contemporary world. Specifically, they focus on and examine the implications of humanitarian interventions for the principle and practices of state sovereignty.

Studying humanitarian interventions in the junctures of worldwide economic and geopolitical shifts, a considerable number of these studies construe humanitarian interventions as markers of an historic erosion of state sovereignty as a principle and practice of political organization in life across the globe. This construal is positioned in the larger globalizing and transnationalizing landscape of life where historically peculiar relations and institutions of state sovereignty, under pressure from globalizing developments, are seen to melt into a "transnational air." "A number of developments," writes Arnison, for instance:

*are chipping away at sovereignty. National borders have become increasingly porous as trade, mass communications, and environmental degradation hasten global interdependence. The growth of international human rights law during the last four decades has made important inroads into sovereignty ... The citadel of sovereignty is beginning to crack*<sup>2</sup>

"The world community," Lewis adds, "has broken new ground in international law, slowly laying the foundations of a new right of outside intervention in the formerly sacrosanct internal affairs of sovereign states."<sup>3</sup> Concurring with the general observation,<sup>4</sup> Weiss and Minear state that:

*as the world moves from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era, sovereignty as traditionally understood is no longer sacrosanct. The age-old balance between state assertions of sovereignty and international ex-*

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pressions of solidarity with those who suffer has begun to shift perceptibly in favour of those who are in need.<sup>5</sup>

In sum, in the larger global landscape, to many observers humanitarian interventions signify yet another dimension of the “erosion” of state sovereignty.

While these commentaries surely represent a forceful and even an authoritative line of thinking about the implications of interventions for state sovereignty, it is possible to argue that, perhaps, this forceful line of thinking does not fully represent the polymorphic implications of interventions for state sovereignty. In fact, contrary to the foregoing reading, I want to argue that the so-called humanitarian interventions could be seen to work less to undermine and more to foster state sovereignty and the hierarchy it signifies—the hierarchy of citizen/nation/state not only as natural but also as necessary to the peaceful, stable, and secure organization of local and global politics. In the globalizing crucible of the late 20th Century, humanitarian interventions could indeed be seen as one of many kinds of strategies employed to re-articulate and to re-fashion the statist governance.

In other words, it is possible to see humanitarian interventions as inter-governmentally orchestrated sets of practices that do more than attend to the problem of humanitarian crises. It is possible to see them, to use Foucauldian terminology, as activities of *problematizations*<sup>6</sup> that work to recover or recuperate state sovereignty in the face of specific historical challenges that call into question the very viability of state sovereignty as the operative principle in national and international governance.

This is not to suggest that “humanitarian interventions” are not “humanitarian” at all.<sup>7</sup> Rather, it is to suggest that in the so-called humanitarian interventions, humanitarianism is subordinated to the exigencies of statism. Beyond humanitarianism are inter-governmentally orchestrated practices of statecraft which, while purportedly

oriented to alleviate human suffering in the hands of maverick states, work also to re-articulate the peculiar images, identities, relations, and institutions that signify the citizen/nation/state hierarchy as the necessary foundational hierarchy underlying the modern territorial state system.

Admittedly, it is rare that one would encounter an account of humanitarian interventions in precisely these terms. However, it might be possible to glimpse such recuperative, state-oriented dynamics of humanitarian interventions by looking into the inter-governmental discourse on humanitarian interventions, particularly in those instances of interventions triggered in response to massive refugee events. The interventions in Northern Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia are such instances at which the interventions

meanings of the citizen/nation/state hierarchy?

I believe that, together, these questions help point to the linkages between humanitarian interventions in refugee crisis and the artifice of statecraft in the late 20th Century. To illustrate, I turn to a specific intervention case that has fuelled the humanitarian intervention discourse in an unprecedented fashion. It is the intervention in Iraq in April 1991 in the aftermath of the Gulf War.

### **Humanitarian Interventions, Refugees, and Statecraft: Kurdish Refugee Crisis in Point**

**Humanitarian Crisis Scene:** The drama which struck northern Iraq in early April will always mark refugee history. The unforeseen consequences of the [Gulf war], the violent events

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*In the globalizing crucible of the late 20th Century, humanitarian interventions could indeed be seen as one of many kinds of strategies employed to re-articulate and to re-fashion the statist governance.*

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came on the heels of massive internal and international human displacement. Here, I argue that examination of the discourse of interventionist humanitarianism in such massive refugee events evinces the practical underpinnings that link humanitarian intervention, state sovereignty, and statecraft. Such an examination is guided by a number of questions:

How, in those instances, was the problem of crisis articulated in terms of refugee event? What was posited, included and what was questioned and excluded in the articulation of the problem? What was pronounced and what was obscured? How were the refugee events problematized in a Foucauldian sense as events of humanitarian crisis demanding response, thus to enable the undertaking of humanitarian interventions? How, in other words, does the refugee get constituted as an *object* of humanitarian interventions? And what does the *object*, once problematized, represent/signify relative to the posited relations, institution, and

which broke out in the provinces of Iraqi Kurdistan, followed by the desperate flights of hundreds of thousands of people, deeply shocked public opinion. A succession of bewildering figures flashed over the teletexts: 10,000 displaced persons, then 30,000, 50,000, 500,000, one million, perhaps more, moving in hordes toward neighbouring countries. (*Refugees*, 12 June 1991)

**Humanitarian Intervention Scene:** On April 5, 1991, the UN Security Council, in an unprecedented fashion, overrode the Iraqi government’s assertion of sovereignty, which had been used to deny humanitarian access to Kurdish refugees. Viewing mass upheaval as a threat to international security, the Security Council in Resolution 688 insisted “that Iraq allow immediate access by international humanitarian organizations to all those in need of assistance in all parts of Iraq. The subsequent creation by American, British, French, and Dutch Marines of safe havens for the Iraqi Kurds within north-

ern Iraq may prove to have been the a turning point in the evolution of global humanitarian ethics. Certainly, it suggests what an aroused global community can do when denied access to civilians imperilled within a country. (Minear and Weiss 1992, 1-2, emphasis added.)

It is generally accepted that UN Security Council Resolution 688 of April 5, 1991, paved the way for and justified the allied intervention in Iraq to save the Kurds, for it was oriented to provide humanitarian assistance to Kurdish refugees in the face of Iraqi defiance. Many in policy-making and academic circles, as well as in the popular media, argued that the intervention was indeed a humanitarian intervention.<sup>8</sup>

The President of the United States, George Bush, echoed a similar logic, arguing that in the face of humanitarian crisis manifest in excessive human suffering, as in northern Iraq, victims must be helped even, if necessary, without the consent of the sovereign. "Some, he said, might argue that this is an intervention into the internal affairs of Iraq, but I think the humanitarian concern, the refugee concern is so overwhelming that there will be a lot of understanding about this."<sup>9</sup> In the US Congress, the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee said: "We are intervening in the sovereignty of Iraq, I think for good reason here, to help these Kurdish people ..."<sup>10</sup> The French Ambassador to the UN, Jean-Bernard Marimee offered a concurring reason for the humanitarian intervention in Iraq: "Definitely, the idea is beginning to prevail that sovereignty is not a sufficient reason for a sovereign state to kill without any limitation its citizens, and that the international community has a sort of moral right to intervene."<sup>11</sup>

The Security Council Resolution 688 is worth quoting at length because it is representative of the specific vocabularies, significations, and classifications through which humanitarian interventions are written, talked about, circulated, and assigned contingent referentiality in wider fields of

activity. It is through similar vocabularies that humanitarian interventions are attributed specific cultural, political, and legal meanings and identities which enable many naturally and effortlessly to say, "what took place was an humanitarian intervention."

THE SECURITY COUNCIL, MINDFUL of its duties and its responsibilities under the charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security ...

GRAVELY CONCERNED by the repression of the Iraqi civilian population in many parts of Iraq, including most recently in Kurdish populated areas which led to a massive flow of refugees towards and across international frontiers and to cross border incursions, which threaten international peace and security in the region,

DEEPLY Disturbed by the magnitude of human suffering involved ...

REAFFIRMING the commitment of all member states to the sovereign, territorial integrity and political independence of Iraq and of all states in the area ...

CONDEMNNS the repression of the Iraqi civilian population in many parts of Iraq, including most recently in Kurdish populated areas, the consequences of which threaten international peace and security in the region;

DEMANDS that Iraq, as a contribution to removing the threat to international peace and security in the region, immediately end this repression and expressing the hope in the same context that an open dialogue will take place to ensure that the human and political rights of all Iraqi citizens are respected;

INSIST that Iraq allow immediate access by international humanitarian organizations to all those in need of assistance in all parts of Iraq, and to make available all necessary facilities for their operations ...

While in the most political and popular accounts, we are left with the impression that humanitarian interventions take place in order to put an end to human suffering when, in the words of the French Ambassador, "a state

[starts] killing without limitations," the opening paragraph of the resolution articulates a different reason for the intervention. This is significant, for the that paragraph frames the normative policy context, pointing to the larger issues at stake—"the maintenance of international peace and security." The maintenance of international peace and security, not human suffering, we are thus instructed, is the prevailing concern in the minds of the council members.

Clearly, the opening paragraph of the resolution betrays the efforts to otherwise frame the intervention primarily, if not exclusively, in terms of human rights. Although we are repeatedly and patiently instructed, say, by George Bush or the French Ambassador, to believe that the intervention was driven merely by a desire to save lives, the official justificatory discourse suggests a different concern animating the intervention efforts.

The *object* of the intervention, in this discourse, is not human-beings as *victims* of a *state gone aberrant*. Rather, the *object* of intervention, the resolution instructs us, is human-beings as *refugees*, namely, *citizens gone aberrant* to become *refugees*. The *object* is not refugees as human-beings, but human-beings as refugees, in the words of the resolution, "flowing towards and across international borders and [effecting] cross-borders incursions, which threaten international peace and security in the region." The *object* of intervention is, in most simple terms, *refugees* problematized as threats to international peace and security. It is the threat to international peace and security of refugee movements that the Council is "gravely concerned" about, especially considering the transborder/transversal implications of refugee movements in the region.

The problem—the humanitarian crisis—is defined not so much in terms of human beings in need of relief and comfort as in terms of refugees as constituting a problematic category of people—those who lack the qualities of the proper subjectivity of the state,



the citizen-subjects. Similarly, one could suggest, the problem is defined not so much in terms of a state gone aberrant, but in terms of the product of state activities, namely, in terms of refugees as an aberrant category of people that must be dealt with.

Frelick offers a corroborating interpretation.<sup>12</sup> Frelick's analysis is instructive as intimated in the title of his article, "The False Promise of Operation Provide Comfort." "The resolution," Frelick writes, referring to resolution 688, "is important both for what it says and for what it does not say. It frames its condemnation of Saddam Hussein's repression not in terms of human rights violations committed against Iraqi citizens inside Iraq, but rather in terms of the massive flow of refugees toward and across international frontiers caused by the repression."<sup>13</sup> The influential Turkish columnist Ali Sirmen also zeroes in on the Kurdish refugee bodies, suggesting that they constitute a security problem for the whole region. He wrote:

There is another issue to which more attention needs to be given. The problem of the refugees, who were uprooted and driven to the borders by the pressures from the government of Saddam, is no more the internal affairs of Iraq exclusively, but has become an international problem that bears on the internal stability of many regional countries and, by implication, on the stability of the whole region. Turkey has successfully defended this position in the United Nations and, with support from France, facilitated the adoption of Resolution 688.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, it is the citizens that go aberrant, becoming refugees, as a result of events and occurrences beyond their control, not the state. Although the state violates the compact, it still remains a state, as it were, already there, already established with and through prevailing relations and institutions, and already empowered to speak and be heard. This construction of agency is demonstrable in the language of Resolution 688. What the resolution calls for, or, in this case, asks from Iraq, "as a contribution to removing the

threat to international peace and security, is [simply] to end the repression, open dialogue," and recognize that its activities of statecraft to effect its sovereign power in the territorial locale Iraq have to be carefully regimented lest they endanger, as they do now, the activities of statecraft in other locales and threaten international peace and security.

In fact, Iraq was an integral part of the regimentation of the problem pragmatically, symbolically, and rhetorically in terms of the conventional territorializing discourse of international relations. The United Nations and individual governments, including the permanent members of the UN Security Council, as well as Turkey, went to great lengths to incorporate Iraq into the process of dealing with refugees. While the parties expressed outrage towards one another publicly through diplomatic and military channels, they have collaborated extensively to smooth out the refugee problem. On April 18, 1991, for example, the UN, with the explicit support of and even prodding from the allied powers, signed a 21 point "Memorandum of Understanding"<sup>15</sup> with the Iraqi government, which affirmed Iraqi sovereignty over all humanitarian activities in all of Iraq (which also included the Allied operations in the so called "Safe Haven" in northern Iraq without making any specific reference to them). In a minimal sense, the Memorandum had a symbolic as well as rhetorical utility for projecting (imagining) Iraqi sovereignty as the principle regulating life activities in the country (when that was clearly not the case) and Iraq as a territorially bound, exclusive sovereign space for the habitation of the Iraqi citizens—a sovereign space separate from Turkey and Iran.<sup>16</sup>

In essence, the problem of humanitarian crisis in the Kurdish episode is defined in terms of a figure of aberrance—the refugee—recognized across the world negatively relative to the positive, constitutive hierarchy of the citizen/nation/state as the hierarchy underlying the modern territorial state system. Refugees,

conceptualized negatively as figures of lack relative to the posited qualities of the citizen, stand at the heart of the construction of the problem of this humanitarian crisis.

In the resolution, as in other instances of dealing with the refugee problem, the prescribed solutions lie in the recovery of the potential citizen in the refugee by re-entering the refugee into the citizen/nation/state hierarchy. In real terms, that means the establishment of not just the refugee's territorial ties with the national community or the country of origin from which the refugee comes, but, more importantly the refugee's ties with the state which is the legal representative and protector of the national community. Accordingly, writing in the Turkish daily, *Cumhuriyet*, Kirisci, an academic with close ties to the Turkish foreign ministry, identified "repatriation" as the best solution to the Kurdish refugee problem. "The best solution to the problem," Kirisci wrote:

is to create the environment which would be conducive to returning the refugees to Iraq on their own cognizance, an objective for which Turkey needs urgently to work through diplomatic channels. This objective may yet necessitate a pragmatic approach towards the Iraqi government. If a political solution that will facilitate the refugees' return to their homes is not found soon, Kurdish refugees may find themselves in the same circumstances as the Palestinians who have been living in refugee camps for the last 43 years.<sup>17</sup>

Then the USSR's Ambassador to Turkey, Albert Cernisev, argued similarly in an interview with a *Cumhuriyet* reporter:

There is no alternative for the Kurdish refugees but to return to their homes. What is of crucial importance is the question of confidence and trust between those who left their homes and Baghdad. This confidence could be rebuilt in time.<sup>18</sup>

To exist again, the ambassador asserted, the refugees must return "home"; they must have their territorial ties re-established with the community of citizens represented and

protected by the Iraqi state. What is clear here is that specific problematizations of the refugee in humanitarian crises affirm not just the primacy and normalcy of the subjectivity of the citizen, but also its absolute necessity for the possibility of living at “home” in peace. It is only the citizen-subject that can exist properly, but in a community of citizens made possible only within the spatial borders of the sovereign state. Therefore, refugee problematizations in humanitarian crises work to affirm not just the primacy and normalcy but also the absolute necessity of a specific form of political community, the domestic community of citizens represented and protected by the

identities. They are lent to the task of statecraft in precisely those times when the perennial projects of statecraft—borders, citizen, domestic community, sovereign territory, etc.—are called increasingly into question in the crucible of transversal political and economic occurrences.<sup>20</sup>

Huysmans<sup>21</sup> writes instructively, speaking of “securitization of migration” in general as a “stabilizing strategy” of the state: “In the contemporary [world], the nation-state is no longer taken for granted. In the struggle for the nation-state, a highly securitized migration could well be a strategy for reaffirming the identity of the state.” Hoffman concurs while also introduc-

nologies of violence, its administrative resources and its international regimentation of economic, environmental [and political] policies as means by which the problems and dangers of ‘anarchy’ might be solved or brought under control in the name of ‘man.’<sup>23</sup>

Refugees, securitized in/through humanitarian interventions, stand as objects of statecraft. They stand as objects of intervention useful to the task of statecraft. They stand, in other words, as objects of humanitarian interventions as practices of statecraft. These practices are oriented not so much to care for the needy, the displaced, the one in crisis, the refugee, as to produce and privilege the practical/representational sources of the state’s claim to territorial sovereignty, namely the citizen to which the state owes its *raison d’être*.

In this sense, refugees manifest the difficulties of the sovereign state, or state sovereignty. Paradoxically, however, attendant through humanitarian interventions, refugee bodies also work as resources for statecraft. Actual refugee bodies (i.e., the Kurdish refugees who straddled the borders of Turkey, Iran, and Iraq in April of 1991) work as concrete, material, and indeed, as corporeal links between the principle—the claim—of state sovereignty articulated to the citizen/nation/state hierarchy and practices of statecraft that strive to effect the contingent realities of the hierarchy in time and space and present them as normal and necessary to peace and security in life.

## Conclusion

Curiously, the general argument about intergovernmental statecraft finds supportive evidence in the shifting context of an institutionalized site of intergovernmentality—the United Nations. In a speech on the role of the UN in a changing world, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Ghali spoke of “Enlightened multilateralism as the guarantor, not the enemy, of state sovereignty and the integrity of state,” and identified the

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***In essence, the problem of humanitarian crisis in the Kurdish episode is defined in terms of a figure of aberrance—the refugee—recognized across the world negatively relative to the positive, constitutive hierarchy of the citizen/nation/state as the hierarchy underlying the modern territorial state system.***

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sovereign state. As Ambassador Cernisev intimates, one must not even think that there could be an alternative to territorially bound homes.

The Kurdish refugee crisis is uniquely enabling in allowing one to focus on the linkages between refugees and the security issues in constructing humanitarian interventions. Huysman calls this ever-intensifying strategy of “writing” the refugee through the semiotics of security images and identities the “securitization”<sup>19</sup> of the refugee whereby the refugee images and identities are encoded and re-coded through the extant lexicon of security notions and concerns, and the re-coded refugee images and identities work in turn to re-conceptualize the security images, identities, and subjectivities, in this case the images, identities, and subjectivities centered around the sovereign state.

The crucial effect here is not just that the refugee images are encoded through the locutions of security concerns, but that these images, once encoded with specific statist security images and identities, are lent to the reconstitution of statist images and

ing the notion of intervention into the debate. It might be possible, he suggests, to see the acts of intervention (or nonintervention) as the affirmation of existing boundaries and their constitution.”<sup>22</sup> Ashley argues that all those activities have to be subsumed under the sign of modern statecraft by which the identities and subjectivities of the modern state are produced and stabilized at any particular time in history, including times of uncertainties and crises. “Modern statecraft,” Ashley writes,

works to fabricate and institutionalize a new problematization that incites and conditions people’s attention to those emergent uncertainties, ambiguities and indeterminacies that put in doubt the identity of ‘man in domestic society.’ In the same stroke, it fashions, exemplifies, and offers patient instruction in an aesthetics of existence whose values and criteria dispose people both (a) to understand these uncertainties as problems and dangers that occupy some region of ‘anarchy’ external to the domestic time and place of the sovereign ‘man’ and (b) to willingly support a state, its law, its tech-

United Nations, "an instrument of its member states," as the agent of "Enlightened Multilateralism."<sup>24</sup> "Member states," he further maintained, "must take on a new responsibility. They should see the United Nations as the protection of their will, not as something separate and apart." To do otherwise, Ghali cautioned, "would mean a descent into ever-deepening troubles and ultimately, chaos" at a time of unprecedented global interactions.

I want to suggest that humanitarian interventions do in fact represent activities of statist multilateralism oriented more to strategically regiment difficulties of statecraft in power politics and less to serve the needs of those who are under duress. They surely do not represent an enlightenment, a qualitative shift in ethics of governance in terms of human rights in the so called "international community" if understood as consisting of states. To paraphrase Michel Foucault, if anything, humanitarian interventions represent a dimension of a statist regime of governmentality by which men govern men.<sup>25</sup> ■

## Notes

1. From April 1991, which marks the date of the Kurdish refugee crisis in northern Iraq, to early 1995 tens of scholarly as well as policy-oriented studies have been produced. A representative sample used in this study as cited in the paper includes: (Lewy 1992; Nanda 1992; Nafziger, 1991; Adelman, 1992; Arnison, 1993; Jackson, 1993; Fisher 1994; Rodley, 1992; Donnelly, 1993; Minear and Weiss, 1992, 1993a and 1993b; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1993, Frelick, 1992a, 1992b, and 1993). See also Philippe Garigue. 1993. "Intervention-Sanction and 'droit d'ingérence' International Law." *International Journal*, Vol. XLVIII. Ellen O'Connell. 1992. "Commentary on International Law: Continuing Limits on UN Intervention in Civil War." *Indiana Law Journal*, Vol. 67. Jim Whitman. 1994. "A Cautionary Note on Humanitarian Intervention." *GeoJournal*, Vol. 34, No. 2. Adam Roberts. 1993a. "Humanitarian War: Military Intervention and Human Rights." *International Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 3. Adam Roberts. 1993b. The Road to Hell: Humanitarian Intervention." *Current*, Vol. 363. Jack Donnelly. 1993. "Human Rights, Humanitarian Crisis, and Intervention." *International Journal*, Vol. XLVIII. David Fisher. 1994. "The Ethics of Intervention." *Survival*, Vol. 36, No. 1.
2. Nancy D. Arnison 1993. "International Law and Non-Intervention: When Do Humanitarian Concerns Supersede Sovereignty." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 2., pp. 199-203.
3. Paul Lewis. 1992. "The Right To Intervene for a Human Cause." *The New York Times*, July 12, 1992, Section 4., p. 22.
4. In much the same vein, others such as Jackson (1993), Lewy (1993), an Dunn (1994) line up to articulate the negative implications of humanitarian interventions for state sovereignty. Jackson, for instance, writes that "humanitarian intervention thus seems to repudiate the norm of nonintervention itself and the international foundation of state sovereignty upon which that norm rests" (Jackson 1993, 584). See Robert H. Jackson 1993. "Armed Humanitarianism." *International Journal*, Vol. XLVIII. Guenter Lewy. 1993. "The Case for Humanitarian Intervention." *Orbis* Fall. John Dunn. 1994. "The Dilemma of Humanitarian Intervention: The Executive Power of the Law of Nature, After God." *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 29, No. 2.
5. L. Minear and T. G. Weiss. 1993a. *Humanitarianism Across Borders: Sustaining Civilians in Times of War*. Boulder and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, p. 60. See also, Minear and Weiss. 1993b. *Humanitarian Action In Times of War: A Handbook for Practitioners*. Boulder and London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, p. 38-39.
6. Michel Foucault understands problematization as an art of responding to contingent difficulties and challenges of a specific practice by reconstituting these difficulties (that is, by inscribing/re-inscribing their meanings and practical/legal content) into specific recognizable/knowable problems which could then be acted upon within the posited framework of the practice itself. Understood as such problematizations are also productive practices, generating representational resources useful to enframing specific normality images, identities, relations, and institutions. See Michel Foucault. 1984. *The Foucault Reader*. Paul Rabinow (ed.) New York: Pantheon Books.
7. It is true, for example, that the intervention—the "Operation Provide Comfort"—in northern Iraq in the waning hours of the Gulf War in 1991 provided much comfort to millions, helping to save hundreds of thousand of human lives. It is also true that the intervention in Bosnia has saved and continues to save hundreds of thousands of lives. Similarly, the intervention in Somalia eased the conditions of massive starvation, which, were it not for the intervention, would have probably killed millions.
8. See L. Minear and T.G. Weiss. 1992. Groping and Coping in the Gulf Crisis: Discerning the Shape of a Humanitarian Order. *World Policy Journal*, Vol. IX, No. 4. Howard Adelman. 1992. "Humanitarian Intervention: the Case of the Kurds." *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Vol. 4, No. 1. Ved P. Nanda. 1992. "Tragedies in Northern Iraq, Liberia, Yugoslavia, and Haiti—Revisiting the Validity of Humanitarian Intervention Under International Law—Part I." *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 2.
9. Quoted in Lawrence Freedman and David Boren. 1992. "Safe Havens for Kurds in postwar Iraq." In Nigel Rodley (ed.). *To Loose the Bands of Wickedness: International Intervention in Defense of Human Rights*. Brassey's (UK): London, p. 55.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
11. National Public Radio, May 11, 1992.
12. Bill Frelick. 1992b. "The False Promise of Operation Provide Comfort: Protecting Refugees or Protecting State Power." *Middle East Report*, May-June. See also, Bill Frelick. 1993. "Closing Ranks: The North Locks Arms Against Refugees." In Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck (eds.) *Altered States: A Reader in the New World Order*. New York: Olive Branch Press. For a similar view on former Yugoslavia, see Bill Frelick. 1992a. *Yugoslavia Torn Asunder: Lessons For Protecting Refugees From Civil War*. Washington, D.C.: USCR (U. S. Committee For Refugees).
13. Frelick. 1992b., p. 4. In a similar fashion, Nigel Rodley speaks of "transboundary implications" as a possible "necessary" condition for undertaking humanitarian intervention. Rodley, op. cit. p. 34.
14. Ali Sirmen. "Dünyada Bugün (Today In the World)" *Cumhuriyet*, 14 April 1991, my translation.
15. For the full text of the memorandum, see "United Nations-Republic of Iraq Memorandum of Understanding," *International Journal of Refugee Law* (1992) 4 (1): 113-16.
16. This imagery conjured through the memorandum and other practices run in the face of the realities "on the ground." As a Turkish columnist put it, "The border between Turkey and Iraq looks as though it disappeared. Although the border is officially closed, unofficially, it is open, as several hundred thousand people took refuge on the Turkish side already (Hasan Cemal. "Insan Bunlar Insan

(They are Human Beings)," *vCumhuriyet*, April 7, 1991, my translation). The Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet* also reported the almost daily ministerial and ambassadorial level consultations between Turkish and Iraqi representatives. The reports indicated how the government of Iraq was an integral part of the policies devised at the time. See April 9, 10, 11, of *Cumhuriyet* for such reports. For an extensive analysis of how the allied countries placated Iraq through the United Nations, see Rodley (1992) and Freedman and Boren (1992).

17. Kemal Kirisci. "Kürt Mülteciler ve Türkiye (Kurdish Refugees and Turkey) *Cumhuriyet*, 15 April 1991, my translation.
18. Yasemin Congar. "BM Derhal Irak'a Gitmeli (UN. Must Immediately Go to Iraq)" *Cumhuriyet*, April 24, 1991, my translation.
19. Jeff Huysmans. 1995. "Migrants as Security Problem: Dangers of 'Securitizing' Societal Issues." In Robert Miles and Dietrich Thranhart (eds.) *Migration and European Integration: The Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*. Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
20. Richard K. Ashley. 1993. *Statecraft As Mancraft*. Unpublished Manuscript, p. 5-10. Jeff Huysmans, *Ibid.*, p. 63. Hoffman, Mark. 1993. Agency, Identity and Intervention." In Ian Forbes and Mark Hoffman (eds.) *Political Theory, International Relations and the Ethics of Intervention*. New York: St. Martin Press, p. 202.
21. Huysmans, op. cit. p. 63.
22. Hoffman, op. cit. p. 202.
23. Ashley, op. cit. p. 9.
24. Boutros B. Ghali. "Gabriel Silver Memorial Lecture at Columbia University." SG/SM/5220, February 7, 1994.
25. Michel Foucault. 1991. "Why the Prison?" In Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds.) *Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

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## The Role of Informal Organizations in Resettlement Adjustment Process: A Case Study of *Iqubs*, *Idirs* and *Mahabers* in the Ethiopian Community in Toronto

Getachew Mequanent

### Précis

Cette étude examine le rôle des trois genres d'organisation sociale informelle dans le processus d'adaptation des réfugiés éthiopiens insérés à Toronto et à Ottawa. Ce sont l'*iqub* (caisse populaire), le *mahaber* (réseau social) et l'*idir* (assurance), dont la plupart rétablit l'héritage chrétien du pays d'origine. Pour pistonner l'entrée de leurs compatriotes dans des petites entreprises, l'*iqub* regroupe de huit à dix membres qui circulent mensuellement l'ensemble de leurs contributions d'argent l'un à l'autre jusqu'au dernier gagnant. Entre-temps, les membres développent une solidarité qui les englobe et qui projette au delà du but originel. Quant au second, douze membres assemblent pour la *mahaber*, comme commémoration des apôtres, pour renforcer le sens d'ensemble et d'assistance mutuelle et financière. Chaque membre a tour de rôle invite ses camarades chez lui/elle pour célébrer une occasion religieuse. À travers quelques années le réseau continu fait accroître cette solidarité sociale. Troisièmement, quelques vingt membres de l'*idir* contribuent une somme comme placement commun. Pendant d'une cérémonie funéraire ou autre rite de passage, le comité exécutif de l'*idir* assigne un montant au contribuable-impliqué pour défrayer les coûts élevés. Ces occasions renforcent l'interdépendance des membres ainsi que la structure organisationnelle. En somme, par l'activité socio-émotionnelle, ces trois formes avancent l'intégration sociale des membres dans le pays d'accueil.

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This study assesses the role of informal organizations in the immigrant/refugee adjustment process—those organizations that exist outside of mainstream institutions and structures. The study is based on the case study of *iqubs* ("credit union"), *idirs* ("insurance"), and *mahabers* ("social network") in the Ethiopian communities in Toronto and Ottawa, more specifically that in the Christian religious background. As recent arrivals, Ethiopians face social, occupational and cultural barriers to obtaining the means of sustaining life in Canada. Examples include being unable to have secured sources of livelihoods, a "roof over the head," insurance policy, access to institutions and facilities and possession of assets which guarantee independence and dignity in life. The introduction of cultural practices such as *iqubs*, *idirs*, and *mahabers* therefore, has become necessary to pull individual Ethiopians' efforts together: *iqubs* help mobilize financial resources; *idirs* help cover costs incurred during a funeral and other emergency situations, and as such, are insurance organizations; *mahabers* bring Ethiopians together each month and satisfy the spiritual and social aspects of life.

Despite variations in their functions, *idirs*, *mahabers* and *iqubs* have a similar social, philosophical or moral foundation. This foundation is the Ethiopian *mahaber* tradition. A *mahaber* might be a religious association, but it has also philosophical and moral core value that denotes the idea of solidarity or mutual support. In the countryside, for example, farmers use a system (of *debo* or *webera*) to work together on crop fields during ploughing and harvesting season. Through such a system farmers also help those who fall sick during a planting or harvesting sea-

son. Sentiments like "sharing experiences in times of joy and sadness" constitute the most important aspect in Ethiopian culture.

This study examines how *mahabers*, *idirs* and *iqubs* help Ethiopians to adjust to the Canadian society. It also examines whether they are flexible and adaptable organizations, in light of the fact that immigrant/refugee adaptation and integration is a process of change and continuity in individual behaviour and values.

### Crafting "Safety Net" Strategies?

#### The Role of *Iqubs*, *Mahabers*, and *Idirs*

Experience shows that if the process of learning and adapting to "living" in a new environment becomes difficult, immigrants/refugees turn to families, friends and group networks for support. For instance, mutual associations were instrumental in the provision of support for Southeast Asian refugees in Canada, France and the United States in their early "resocializing process" (Lanphier 1984). Thomas and Znaniecki's (1958) comprehensive study of Polish immigrants in America in the 1950s shows how self-help parish associations came to flourish in settlement areas, and how these associations later became transformed into larger institutions encompassing many settler communities. Traditional support systems have also gained popularity among the Somali community due to enduring poverty (Opoku-Dapaah 1993). For instance, "group-tenancy" among the Somalis became an option not so much for the desire to live together as for their lack of adequate income to find affordable housing. However, this led to the revival of Somali traditions such as the revitalizing of family values, strengthening

kinship ties, and strict observation of Islamic rules.

Inadequate attention is paid to informal networks of resource exchange among immigrants and refugees. From a conventional point of view, informal organizations such as those found in the Ethiopian community in Toronto are said to be "backward" and unproductive, for no other reason than the lack of mechanical (top-down) command structure and systematic management of organizations. Perception and attitudes such as this have always led decision makers to overlook the viability of grassroot-based organizations as an effective support system in times of difficult social and economic conditions.

Informal social organizations often consist of people who share the same sentiments and perspectives on the

made in the event setting and are action oriented (Levy 1969). Their organizational structure is simple and less complex, making management of affairs compatible with the social and occupational requirements of members.

In his classical work of *The Division of Labour in Society*, Emile Durkheim had called this type of social organization a "mechanical solidarity," a process motored by the willingness of "similar" individuals to engage in a spirit of cooperation. In Canada, however, social organizations of such nature are understood to be intermingled with an "ethnic identity," a concept which refers to a group of people who are from a specific geographical area and who have racial roots and religious/cultural belief systems and practices different than the main-

For example, Chinese and West Indians would retain their identity more than the Germans and Ukrainians, for obvious reason that the latter, because of the similarity of their ethnic backgrounds, encounter no serious problems of integrating into the wider Canadian society (Isajiw 1990).

Therefore, by identifying with their own "ethnic groups," newcomers such as Ethiopians not only attain a sense of belonging, but are also able to craft social and economic safety nets that provide alternative support systems. Yet, this by no means be viewed as a regressive change in individual attitude and perceptions. In fact, individuals who enter another "human ecology" are more likely to get acquainted with new values and often to critically question the viability of their old values and assumption (Hawley 1950). The tendency to criticize the "self" emanates from the individuals' struggle to adapt new attitudes and practices, so as to establish a "viable relationship" with the new environment. For example, new attitudes and patterns of interaction are needed to participate in the labour market and to "fit" into the technological and institutional environment. Hence, regardless of the intensity and magnitude of problems encountered during the adjustment process, immigrants/refugees would retain and nurture useful values and nullify unwanted ones.

The purposes driving the formation of organizations may vary within each ethnic group as well as from one group of individuals to another. For example, ethnic social clubs strive to aggregate leisure, while a mutual aid organization's formation is driven by desperate situations. In particular, desperate situations are an important aspect in many immigrant's/refugee's lives. Such newcomers leave their country because of the circumstances beyond their control and they attempt to adjust to the Canadian society without any material and social basis. Organizational goals and objectives, therefore, aim at responding to adjustment needs. The following section provides case studies to show how informal or-

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***Despite variations in their functions, idirs, mahabers and iqubs have a similar social, philosophical or moral foundation. This foundation is the Ethiopian mahaber tradition. A mahaber might be a religious association, but it has also philosophical and moral core value that denotes the idea of solidarity or mutual support.***

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basis of common national origin, philosophical and religious beliefs, friendship and family ties. They differ in size, capacity and in their purpose of existence. For example, some organizations can have as many as forty members while others only consist of five people. Moreover, there are organizations that serve the purpose of mutual aid or organizations that serve the individual best with the purpose of re-asserting his or her identity. Their existence can be temporary, ceasing to exist when the purpose that led to their formation declines in importance, or permanent if the importance of their purpose increases overtime. Furthermore, in the informal organizational setting face-to-face interaction is the normal routine of communication. As a result, members are able to influence each other and to have increased knowledge of conditions in the group. The organizational environment is more participatory. Decisions are

stream society. Thus, according to Isajiw (1990), an "ethnic identity" by itself helps individuals to act together as a cohesive social unit and overcome difficulties. For example, when a person identifies with a certain ethnic group individual problems are transformed into collective concern, thereby paving the way for organized action. Secondly, identity is a subjective phenomenon and as such "gives individuals a sense of belonging and to the community a sense of oneness and historical meaning" (Isajiw 1990, p. 35), thereby providing a framework to construct a meaning out of past and present experiences and develop a collective vision of what life at present is and what it should be in the future. Be that as it may, the role of ethnic identity as an objective instrument to stimulate a process for organized action depends on the kind of relationship exhibited between a certain ethnic group and the wider Canadian society.

ganizations in the Ethiopian community in Toronto are helping Ethiopians to adjust to the Canadian socio-economic and cultural environment.

Naturally, there are many informal organizations in the Ethiopian community, ranging from unorganized groups such as friendship and family circles to the ones that are well organized. For the purpose of this study three *iqubs* (two of which are in Ottawa), two *mahabers* and an *idir* will be discussed. In referring to *iqubs* in Ottawa, the name of a member (the first contact person) will be used to distinguish them from each other; hence, they have been labelled as Adamu's *iqub* and Tadesse's *iqub*. In the same manner, the name of the *mahabers* are Wegayehu's *mahaber* and Desta's *mahaber*, and the name of the *idir* is the Wello *idir*.

### Background

*Iqubs*, *idirs*, and *mahabers* in the Ethiopian community in Toronto are grassroots organizations created in response to the need for a social and economic "safety net" in Canadian society. To better understand how Ethiopian culture is being transplanted in the Canadian society and sustains these organization formations, it is helpful to look at them in the Ethiopian socioeconomic context.

### *Iqubs* 'Credit Union'

In a country such as Ethiopia most people do not rely on banks for loans to start entrepreneurial activity or to buy a house. Because of high interest rates and the problem of meeting banks' collateral requirements many Ethiopians are not eligible for loans. For this reason people opt to form their own group, an *iqub*, and try to pull their financial resources together. Each member pays a fixed sum of money to the *iqub* every week or month, which is then allocated to members on rotating basis.

According to Donald Levine (1965) *iqubs* were first started by the Guraghe people, one of the many nationalities in Ethiopia, in the 1930s. *Iqubs* are most suited to business people, who wish to

start a new enterprise, overcome cash flow shortages in their business, or import capital goods. Although contractual agreements regarding the method of payment and the amount of contributions are common, mutual trust is central to all forms of transactions.

The initiative to establish an *iqub* is often undertaken by two or three individuals. They meet and discuss rules and regulations, the amount of contributions which are affordable to would-be members and the frequency of payment. These individuals share their proposed idea with others. A *dagna* or president is elected. A date and time is set. On the first gathering each member is asked to present a *wase*, guarantor, who would be responsible for repaying the debt should a member default. After each member pays the money, the sum is given to a person who wins the *ita* or lottery. A member who receives the *ita* will not compete in another round in future but continues to pay his or her obligations. In situations where a person has an emergency need, he/she can buy the *ita* from another members. There is no fixed purchase rate but it could amount to one to three percent of the *ita* money. Again, a member who sells the *ita* is not eligible for future *ita* competition. After the last person receives the *ita*, another round resumes or the group get dissolved.

Three important elements of *iqub* that hold members together are membership criteria, mutual obligation and trust.

**Membership Criteria:** Membership in *iqubs* has two distinctive features. The first feature is that people must be at the same income level. For example, there are *iqubs* of rich merchants, those of government employees and petty-traders in the informal sector. Hence, merchants hold an *ita* of up to Birr 100,000 (US\$ 25,000), while petty-traders may arrange an *ita* of up to Birr 10,000. The second characteristic is that *iqubs* require a voluntary association. This form of association is induced by a desire to gain benefits (loans) by becoming an *iqub* member; to participate

in *iqubs* not so much due to encountering financial difficulties as for the sake of helping others; and to remain within a social circle, thereby to maintain such social relationships as family ties or friendship.

**Mutual obligation and trust:** In traditional a setting, lending money to a friend or a family member is quite common, but the rate of default for such arrangement is often higher. Part of this is that a borrower is often unable to repay. Another reason is that there are insufficient pressures for the borrower to accumulate enough savings, particularly if one takes account of the social stigma attached to taking a member of a family or a friend to court to force him/her to pay. By contrast, *iqub* agreements dictate that all dues be paid on time and that even those who arrive late when *itas* are held pay fines. Such mutually agreed sanctions ensure that each member saves enough for the *ita* both to repay one's debt and to contribute towards keeping the *ita* balance steady. The presence of commonly agreed sanctions also increases members confidence to put their money in the rotating scheme of *ita*. The principle of trust brings the socio-cultural aspect of *iqub* organizations into light.

**Case Studies:** Hassen's *iqub* has 15 members. The weekly *ita* is \$1,650, with each member contributing \$110. Hirut's *iqub* has 12 members and contribute \$600 each month to the *ita* which is worth \$4 800. Each of the two *iqubs* in Ottawa consist of 20 members. The monthly *ita* in Tadesse's *iqub* amounts to \$20,000, with member contribution of \$1,000 each month. Adamu's *iqub*, however, has two kinds of *itas*. One *ita* is called a full-*ita* and requires members to pay \$400 every month or \$200 every two weeks. The second *ita* is called half-*ita*, for those members who can not afford to pay \$400 every month, and they pay \$200 every month or \$100 every two weeks. Both *itas* are drawn once a month and amounts to \$4000 for full-*ita* and \$2000 for half-*ita*.

In many cases *iqubs* dissolve following the end of the *ita* round. For exam-

ple, the Toronto *iqub* finished its round in May. When the chairman tried to arrange a new round many of the members were not interested; as a result the *iqub* dissolved. Although the *ita* money is very helpful to overcome financial problems, uncertainties about the ability to repay and the social pressure not to default payments can create a tremendous degree of anxiety for members, particularly for those who have no secured source of income. On this basis *iqubs* can be said to be a short term phenomenon. Yet, in other cases a new round of *ita* is arranged. For instance, Adamu and Tadesse's *iqubs* in Ottawa have already begun a new round.

Because rules and regulations are not made in due formal legal process and because *iqubs* cannot resolve dis-

Members of *iqubs* often attempt to save part of their wage earnings by becoming an *iqub* member. In particular, this is very important for those who run their own taxi business and who get paid cash for their services. Members like Ambachew have been able to buy a "license plate" and run their own taxi business. Ambachew himself used the *ita* cash money to buy a vehicle at an auction for almost fifty-percent less than the price from the car dealers. An *iqub* has also helped Tadesse to start a taxi and a restaurant business. Some members in his *iqub* had also been able to use the *ita* money for down payment of a mortgaged house. At the later stage these mortgage holder would use the *ita* money to renegotiate mortgage payments with banks by reducing the outstanding balance by a lump

ington had been admitted to hospital. He then immediately phoned his former *iqub* members and was able to raise \$2,000; this incident reactivated the *iqub* and a new *ita* round then began. If a member does not have money at hand during such emergency situations he/she can always borrow from one of his or her fellow members.

Finally, *iqubs* play a crucial role in the social life of individual members. For instance, members highly value the sense of belonging to this form of social group and getting together each week or month to engage with friends. *Iqubs* also intervene to resolve family disputes and disputes among members.

### ***Mahabers* ("Social Network")**

*Mahabers* are religious associations devoted to honouring a Saint for whom the group is named. The two *mahabers* are hosted on the 29th of each month (21st in Julian or Ethiopian calendar) to honour *Kidist Mariam* (St. Mary). *Mahabers* are associations organized around people who live in the same area. Hence, a religious *mahaber* is devoted to honouring a saint. The former Marxist-Leninist military regime created the *Geberie mahabers* (Peasants Association) to help implement the land reform and to perform administrative and policing tasks in the area. There were also *meredaja mahabers* organized for the purpose of helping each other, or to raise funds and support development project in rural areas. For the purpose of this study, however, attention is only directed to religious *mahabers*.

Religious belief systems have an immense influence in Ethiopian society, particularly in the Northern region. Christianity became Ethiopian official religion in the 4th century. The Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church is one of the oldest religious institutions in the world. The tradition of *mahabers* is inherited from the Acts of Apostles.<sup>1</sup> The twelve Apostles in Jerusalem gathered together to eat and drink in honour of saints. By doing so, the Apostles were also teaching religious ideas about the importance of

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### ***Iqubs, idirs, and mahabers in the Ethiopian community in Toronto are grassroots organizations created in response to the need for a social and economic "safety net" in Canadian society.***

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putes through court procedures, members always stress the importance of mutual trust and friendship. The centrality of trust in *iqubs* then gives rise to the need to screen out new members. New members are first introduced by an *iqub* member and their admission requires unanimous consent. The most important task is studying the background of a person such as sources of income and present and past social relations with others. Should members feel that the person is not trustworthy he/she will be told to take the *ita* only in the last round.

Yet, there is no evidence of defaulting let alone disappearing without repaying. In a situation where a person defaults due to circumstances beyond his or her control (layoffs, bankruptcy, for example), he/she will not be pressured to repay. For instance, one of the a member in Adamu's *iqub* in Ottawa used to own a restaurant business. When he declared bankruptcy members were left with no choice but to understand his critical situation. They used *iqub's* "reserve money" i.e., income derived from fines, etc., to pay for all his *ita* obligations.

sum. For other members the *iqub* helped them to pay for car insurance, meet familial obligations—such as sending money home, buy furniture, prepare wedding, and travel.

Even though many perceive that *iqubs* are a short term phenomena, many more also attach a long term importance to the continuity of their functions. First, *iqub* provide individuals, particularly those who own a business and who are in debt (mortgaged house, for example), with a financial safety net. For example, if a taxi breaks down, the owner can always go to the *iqub* and request for the *ita* to help cover the cost of repair; it will cost him nothing except a \$50 charge for the privilege of getting the money without waiting for his turn. Another example is wanting to fly to Ethiopia or somewhere else in emergency situations. If this happens the chairman of the *iqub* can phone people and raise at least half of the *ita* money within twenty-four hours. In Hassen Osman's case, for example, *iqub* had finished its round in May and was then dissolved. But in October Hassen heard some bad news: one of his friends who lives in Wash-



"togetherness" and mutual assistance in the organization of community life. Hence the name of a *mahaber* is normally inherited from the church in the vicinity. For example, if the name of the church in the vicinity is St. George the group will be named after it.

A *mahaber* often consists of twelve members and one *Muse* (Moses) who acts as chairman. As the name implies, the title of *Muse* is derived from the biblical story about Moses, who organized his people to lead them out of misery from Egypt to Israel. In the same manner, the *Muse* is expected to think, feel and act like Moses. The functions are limited to prayers, eating and drinking, expression of primordial sentiments, social and political discussion and resolving disputes among members. There are no written rules that govern a *mahaber* organizations.

The event is hosted on a Saint's day, and there are about ten religious days in each month in Ethiopia. Each member hosts the *mahaber* at their homes on rotating basis. Members arrive in late afternoon. A priest opens the occasion with blessing; indeed, no ceremony takes place without his blessing. A loaf of bread is then cut and served, followed by food and drink. Members either depart late in the evening or stay the night; it depends on how elaborate a meal the person can afford.

*Mahaber* members visit each other in times of birth, christening, death and sickness. In rural areas members work together on each other's farm fields on rotating basis. If a member falls sick during planting or harvesting season, they help to plough or harvest the fields. In the cities, *mahaber* members contribute money if a fellow-member experiences difficulties. The social bond is so strong that a member cannot associate with the opponent of another member. Members of the same *mahaber* are not supposed to marry a widow or a divorcee of a fellow member.

**Case Studies:** Wegayehu's *mahaber* was created two years ago and has twelve members, four men and eight women. They came from Addis Ababa, and among them are people who were administrative staff at Ad-

dis Ababa University, government officials, an ambassador and a retired Colonel in the Ethiopian army. The *mahaber* has a constitution that outlines the rules governing the conduct of members, the role and function of the organization. It gives the *mahaber* a life span of one year and as such is subject to revision each year. There is an elected chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, and a social committee devoted to preparing events for special occasions.

Desta's *mahaber* was established three years ago. It consists of six families and represents a typical traditional social setting. For instance, it does not

penses in times of death or sickness of members, their families and close relatives. Members are also expected to contribute extra money for social functions in such times. Desta's *mahaber* rather holds an *ita* in conjunction with monthly gatherings on permanent basis. Decisions in relation to the *ita* or money aspect are totally controlled by men, while women control the organization of the *mahaber's* functions. In both *mahabers'* case, however, there are no rules or a *wase* (guarantor) requirement for a member who receives the *ita* money.

Newcomers to these *mahabers* are first introduced by a member. These

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***In sum, mahabers constitute not only the religious aspects of Ethiopian culture but they are also an alternative means to create a traditional safety net in Canadian society that substitutes for broken family ties.***

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have written rules whereby members only rely on such Ethiopian values and traditions as mutual trust, mutual aid, honesty and integrity. Members knew each other in Gondar, Ethiopia. Shared concerns about their children and their own social existence as a family unit constitute the most important aspects in their association. Members believe that the *mahabers* setting is an ideal social environment: it brings them together every month to exchange news and share ideas; children also go with their parents and "have fun." From the parents' point of view, the *mahaber* even represents a socializing agent for children about Ethiopian values and traditions.

*Mahaber* events are hosted on rotating basis among members but where to host it is left to the individual. For instance, on some occasions functions are held in restaurants. Members begin arriving in the afternoon. The ceremony in Admasu's *mahaber* opens with prayers; a loaf of bread is cut and served. Socializing, eating and drinking as well as the exchange of information and views follow.

Each member in both *mahabers* contributes \$20 to a common fund each month, which is used to cover ex-

monthly events are highly regarded by every member as the only "moment" during which individuals are able to have an emotional and spiritual contact with the home country. Therefore, the screening process is important to select "like-minded" people, thereby avoiding controversies in later courses. In Desta's *mahaber*, members often remind each other of the social impact would have on their children. Perhaps that why these groups of families prefer married couples than single Ethiopians for association. Decisions regarding the organization of functions or any other issues related to membership concerns are made in the event setting. *Mahabers* create an ideal environment for direct member participation.

Both *mahabers* experience difficulty in maintaining a stable membership. Some people have left Desta's *mahaber*. Some people, particularly single men, find it difficult to host the event, that is understandable given the social pressure not to cancel an event devoted to honouring a Saint. One of the members who failed to show up on previous occasions had a hard time to explain how inconvenient it was for him to attend the *mahaber*; neverthe-

less, after pressure by members he became willing to continue his membership. The *mahaber* had encountered similar difficulties before and almost dissolved following the absence of some members.

In sum, *mahabers* constitute not only the religious aspects of Ethiopian culture but they are also an alternative means to create a traditional safety net in Canadian society that substitutes for broken family ties. For instance, members visit each other in times of birth, christening, stress and sickness, including preparation of picnics and other special events. Getting together once a month and their common sentiments to share resources in times of "joy and sadness" gives social aspects of *mahabers* a legitimacy as equal as the aspect of religious devotion.

### ***Idirs* 'Insurance'**

Membership in *idir* involves making money contributions to a common fund. According to Levine (1965) *idirs* originated from the Guraghe society in the 1930s and soon gained widespread popularity: "They are organized on a territorial basis, in villages, towns and city quarters; on an ethnic basis ... and even on an institutional basis as among employees of some government ministries" (p. 277). Other scholars like, Hoben (1973) and Messing (1985), consider *idir* as an Amharic tradition that was later adopted by other ethnic groups.

*Idir* money is dispensed to members in times of sickness, and loss of property due to accidents (fire and theft, for example). However, the central purpose of *idir* is to cover funeral expenses since it is regarded by Ethiopians as more important than a wedding or other life experience. In urban Ethiopia, in particular, where only a few can afford to make prior arrangements for funeral expenses, and especially when there is no extended family, *idir* organizations provide an alternative support system.

At the time of a death of a member or his or her family or a relative all *idir* members are immediately informed. A cash payment is quickly made to the

affected family, and members soon take command of the organization of functions (a member who fails to show up will be fined). A tent is erected and tables and chairs set at the home of the mourning member to receive those who come to pay their last respects. Food and drink is prepared. This function may last for few days.

**Case Studies:** This *idir* is organized around people who came from the Wello province for the purpose of helping each other through resource sharing and mutual emotional support. It consists of 20 members, with an almost equal number of men and women. Like *iqubs* and *mahabers*, the *idir* has a leadership composed of a chairman, secretary and a treasurer. It has also a guideline which outlines such rules and regulations as requiring members to attend all meetings, the amount of payments for the common fund and methods of payment, and ways of dispensing financial assistance to members in times of need. It prohibits members from bringing any agenda that relates to politics, religion and ethnicity (a member could have his or her own political leanings but cannot exercise it in the *idir* domain).

Members start gathering in the afternoon. Food and drink is served immediately. The rest of the time is devoted to social engagements. Near the end of the program formal discussions would resume, mainly devoted to presenting a financial report and making arrangements for the next meeting. There is a contribution of \$20 to a common fund. The money will be dispensed to members in such times of financial need as wedding, sickness, or death of a member's relative. There is also a subgroup within the *idir* that holds an *ita* every month. It amounts to \$2000, with each of the ten members contributing \$200. Low income and unemployed people are also encouraged to get involved. For example, four people can contribute \$50 each to own the *ita*; hence, both the *ita* money and the debt will be divided among them. There are no rules nor a guarantor or a signature. *Ita* allocation is based on need rather than a lottery system.

Most of the members had left their country when young and share common difficult experiences of life here in Canada and in other asylum countries. For this reason, there is a strong emotional attachment towards each other. Older people in the *idir* provide a role model for young members. Those elders identify themselves socially and psychologically with others, and therefore, are highly respected by young people like Tekola. Tekola feels how comforting it is to ask advice and support from those members. He goes as far as to say that role models are needed in the community to help young people like him organize social life and develop a new identity.

Like *iqubs* and *mahabers*, a member first introduces the prospective member. The member promises to take responsibility should the would-be member fail to conform to the organization's norms and values. The would-be member will be given the *idir's* guideline. A committee composed of the chairman, secretary and treasurer, then screens the individual. If it is unable to reach a decision, the matter is referred to the general discussion. According to the chairman, this procedure is needed to screen out people who do not conform to the *idir's* values and principles. No doubt these sentiments are developed in response to widely prevalent perception that the Ethiopian community in Toronto has been politicized along ethnic/political lines.

### **Implications for Adjustment**

*Idirs*, *mahabers* and *iqubs* create a social world for Ethiopians, one that exhibits who they are and enable them to express themselves. Ethiopian shared values and traditions, as well as shared experiences, such as discrimination in the host society, generate sentiments and perspectives that serve to hold individual Ethiopians together, and as a framework for social re-organization. Leadership roles, decision-making structures, communication or interaction patterns, and social control systems are defined to be compatible with their expressive behaviour. An exam-

ple is the nature of *idir*, *mahaber* and *iqub* leadership, which is defined to play a social counselling and mediating role among its members and between a member and an outsider.

The *idirs*, *mahabers* and *iqubs* studied here have not been in existence for more than three years. Their members are drawn together more by friendship, shared experiences and concerns but less so by common origins of ethnicity; in fact, as far as I know none of the organizations is ethnically homogeneous. The *Kidist Mariam mahaber* consists of people with a middle class background. *Idir* and *iqub* members lived together as refugees in asylum countries. *Desta's mahaber* consists of families with children. There is one *mahaber* that has seven young women members, two of whom are single. The *Meskel<sup>2</sup> Flower Cooperative Association* was formed by the people who had lived in Greece as refugees.

*Iqubs*, *mahabers* and *idirs* by no means are to be viewed as sectarian organizations. The fact that their membership is composed of "like-minded" Ethiopians, and the fact that they are detached from the Ethiopian Association or other immigrant/refugee service agencies should not imply that they are a means to aggrandize self-serving purposes. Rather, such social organization formations would generate the dynamism that works towards creating an organic link between the individual Ethiopian and his or her Toronto community by encouraging the idea of solidarity and helping to develop a new vision of what life in Canada is and how it should be organized in the future.

The cultural linkage of *iqubs*, *mahabers* and *idirs* to those organizations that exist in Ethiopian societal environment is obvious, as evidenced by the similarity of how ceremonies proceed, the language of communication, mutual respect, recognition of elders, and the subordination of individual priorities to collective concerns in relation to organizational goals and objectives. It is also such cognitive orientation and common sentiments which constitute an important element of social solidar-

ity and pave the way for the creation of those informal organizations.

Of importance is how *iqubs*, *mahabers* and *idirs* are suited to Ethiopian immigrants/refugees' capacity to direct and manage problems which would surface there in domains. Face-to-face interaction enables them to make decisions in the event setting, whereby every member then attempts to influence outcomes. The elected leadership have more responsibility than members, not more power. The strong emphasis on conforming to group values enables members to respond to each individual's behaviour. For example, a member who was involved in an altercation during an entertainment night might have to give an explanation about the incident and how he/she got implicated in it. While that person would likely be given the necessary support, but one cannot also rule out the chance of being subjected to a serious criticism about his or her behaviour.

Likewise, *idirs*, *mahabers* and *iqubs*' to proactively intervene in family disputes. It is common for an *idir* or *mahaber* to summon the spouses to the gatherings, and attempt to reconcile them. First there is a disapproval of both parties for quarrelling—implying that both have indeed violated family values and traditions; and then analysing the cause of the problems in the wider context. More often than not, the root cause is directed to the external environment: the acts of other people, the wider community, the wider society, etc., which enables the spouses to free from feeling shame and apprehension. Moreover, in the course of that event both the husband and wife will become active participants, not passive listeners, unlike a social worker advising the client.

*Iqubs* provide a means to mobilize financial resources within the Ethiopian community and to overcome economic problems. The rotating scheme of receiving the *ita* money, coupled with the absence of interest payments and collateral requirements, ensures accessibility for an average person. The social pressure not to default on

payments when *itas* are held imposes saving discipline. *Idirs* and *mahabers*, on the other hand, are welfare organizations, more geared to addressing social problems. They provide a means for Ethiopians to come together and create a mutual support system: resolving domestic disputes, providing role models, preparing functions for new arrivals (a family or relative of a member), giving moral and financial support for sick and distressed individuals, etc. "Let us stay together in times of joy and sadness" is a common sentiment among members. Had the social aspect not been significant, there would be no purpose for the existence of *idirs* and *mahabers*, considering that Ethiopian immigrants and refugees have been able to access government social safety nets such as welfare and unemployment insurance. However, there is a difference between *idirs* and *mahabers*, precisely because the latter remains to identify itself with religion. Ethiopians regard participation in *mahabers* as a religious as well as a social obligation. Nevertheless, religious values serve as social fabric to promote unity among Ethiopians; particularly, at a time when the psychology of many people in Toronto community is tainted by the perception of enduring political and ethnic differences.

*Idirs*, *mahabers* and *iqubs* strengthen Ethiopians' aspiration for self-sufficiency. Experience has taught Ethiopians that continued dependency on outside (government and nongovernmental) sources of assistance does not provide a secure command over the necessities of life in Canada. While many Ethiopians continue to depend on welfare and government housing programs, this dependency in turn brings about frustration and has a demoralizing impact. Thus, pulling social and economic resources together helps attain self-reliance. In this light, *idirs*, *mahabers* and *iqubs* facilitate the process of reconstructing broken relationships or creating new ones, whereby such relationships lead to arrangements that complement the efforts of one individual against another, in order to act together as a cohesive

social unit. Finally, *idirs*, *mahabers* and *iqubs* share common characteristics such as:

- Members define what their needs are and self-finance their own activities;
- Values and norms encourage solidarity
- Competition or intrigue for power are absent.

### Conclusion

As recent arrivals in Canada, Ethiopians encounter a host of social and economic problems. The formation of *iqubs*, *idirs* and *mahabers* in the Ethiopian community in Toronto and Ottawa, signifies a response to these harsh social and economic realities. These organizations help mobilize social and economic resources within the Ethiopian community to overcome difficulties associated with settlement. Ethiopians shared experience of, for example, displacement, helplessness, dependency, loss of dignity and emotional deprivation, all are threads that hold individual Ethiopians together and sustain those social organizations.

The continued existence of *iqubs*, *mahabers* and *idirs* depends not only on the potency of Ethiopian values and traditions, but also on their long-term viability to provide support for members to attain their economic and spiritual and psychological and cultural needs. Hence, *iqubs* are viewed by members as a temporary self-help organization, that could be no longer needed once a member overcomes his or her financial difficulties. However, there is a strong social significance attached to *mahabers* and *idirs*. As people who came to Canada in their youth grow older, the meaning of social life becomes of paramount importance. The social environment in *mahaber* and *idir* settings enables parents and children to gather once a month where household conflicts and frustrations are resolved through the mediation of the members. This becomes imperative, for Ethiopian culture does not encourage an open discussion of family disputes, nor do Ethiopians rely on professional counsellors. In one Ethio-

pian community workshop a woman denounced social workers for pushing spouses into adversarial positions and encourage separations, instead of reconciliation. More importantly, members visit each other in times of birth, christening, sickness and the death of a family of a member and this creates almost an extended family environment.

Finally, through engagement in a social setting Ethiopians construct a meaning out of their past and present experiences and develop a new vision of life in the host society. This is viewed as a positive trend for the Ethiopian community. Two interdependent and interrelated factors shape the relationship between individuals and their community: a community environment should help individuals fulfil their social and economic needs, spiritual/psychological satisfaction, and cultural entertainment; and secondly, there must be, among other things, respect for social opinions and compliance with commonly accepted standards.

Moreover, attitudes and patterns of interaction should be appropriate for social and economic exchange in a wider society (Thomas and Znaniecki 1958). It is at this point that one comes to appreciate the informal organizations in the Ethiopian community for their role as catalysts to re-organize the dispersed Ethiopian population, and to create the social and economic resources necessary for the formation of an "Ethiopian" community in the Canadian multicultural environment. In light of immigrant and refugee adjustment as a process of change and continuity in individual values and behaviour, the degree to which *idirs*, *mahabers* and *iqubs* are innovative and adaptive to Canadian socioeconomic and cultural environment will determine their long term viability as alternative support systems. A conventional view might attach a stigma to informal organizations as "backward" and view them as passive. Dynamic organizations, by contrast, have the capacity to continuously grow. Growth in turn leads to expan-

sion—enlargement of the sphere of the organization, and necessitates a systematic management.

Before assessing whether *mahabers*, *idirs* and *iqubs* are dynamic, let us first understand why change in the organization is needed. At one point individuals' normal routine of behaviour and relationships could be affected by economic and social changes. For example, a new routine of work could affect the frequency of contact among individuals. The new arrangement, therefore, might force members of an organization to move away from direct participation and hand over task functions to elected individuals. For informal social organizations with a culture of non-hierarchical structure, "formalizing" the group occurs through the codification of rules and regulations to outline decision procedure and the terms and conditions for members to abide by such decisions.

In conclusion, informal social interaction and resource exchanges provide immigrants and refugees with an important support mechanism in their adjustment process. Adjustment is viewed as an incremental process of "getting used to living in Canadian society," which requires not only the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in Canadian economy, but also the existence of social organizations that provide a medium of cultural and spiritual expression. ■

### Notes

1. Personal communication with LiqaeKahan Mesale Engda, Ethiopian Tewehado Orthodox Church in Toronto.
2. *Meskel* literally means the foundation of the Holy Cross, one of the many religious holidays in Ethiopia. It is celebrated on the 24th of September each year.

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## Refugee Rights Report on a Comparative Survey

by  
**James C. Hathaway  
and John A. Dent**

Toronto: York Lanes Press, 1995,  
pp. 82. \$11.95 • ISBN 1-55014-266-6  
Are visa controls intended to keep  
refugees from reaching an asylum  
country legal? Can asylum-seekers  
legitimately contest conditions of  
detention? At what point do refugees  
have the right to work, or to claim social  
assistance?

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refugees around the world. Working in  
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legal experts from Europe, Africa, Asia,  
Oceania, North America, and Latin  
America, Professor James Hathaway,  
Osgoode Hall Law School, York  
University, and John Dent, Refugee  
Law Unit, Centre for Refugee Studies,  
York University, analyze the  
international legal instruments that set  
the human rights of refugees. By  
grounding their analysis in real-life  
challenges facing refugees today,  
Hathaway and Dent have produced a  
book as valuable to activists as to  
scholars.

*Refugee Rights* will provoke debate on  
the adequacy of the international  
refugee rights regime. It is essential  
reading for everyone concerned to  
counter threats to the human dignity of  
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## A Summary of Claims Processed by Immigration and Refugee Board

### Processing Period: January–December, 1995

<b>By Processing Regions</b>										
Region	Claims Referred	Heard to Completion	Other Claims Finalized	Decisions		Percent Accepted	Pending Decisions		Claims as % of Referred	Decision as % of Decided
				Positive	Negative		Cusum	Cusum		
1 Ottawa/Atlantic	978	698	109	585	115	83.6	53	912	93.3	7.6
2 Quebec	12,689	5,340	1,300	3,482	1,545	69.3	545	13,186	103.9	10.8
3 Ontario I	5,397	3,553	761	2,276	992	69.6	653	5,812	107.7	20.0
4 Ontario II	5,160	3,483	826	2,287	1,197	65.6	434	4,189	81.2	12.5
5 Prairies	431	386	46	322	60	84.3	18	331	76.8	4.7
6 Vancouver	1,417	935	437	662	187	78.0	209	1,964	138.6	24.6
<b>National Total</b>	<b>26,072</b>	<b>14,395</b>	<b>3,479</b>	<b>9,614</b>	<b>4,096</b>	<b>70.1</b>	<b>1,912</b>	<b>26,394</b>	<b>101.2</b>	<b>13.9</b>

  

<b>By Major Source Countries</b>										
Nationality	Claims Referred	Heard to Completion	Other Claims Finalized	Decisions		Percent Accepted	Pending Decisions		Claims as % of Referred	Decision as % of Decided
				Positive	Negative		Cusum	Cusum		
1 Sri Lanka	2,392	1,762	101	1,537	251	86.0	85	1,716	71.7	4.8
2 Iran	1,901	1,113	143	882	202	81.4	116	1,925	101.3	10.7
3 Somalia	1,655	1,370	125	1,210	29	97.7	122	1,570	94.9	9.8
4 Chile	1,483	52	52	24	19	55.8	12	1,476	99.5	27.9
5 India	1,259	815	311	492	263	65.2	149	1,489	118.3	19.7
6 Israel	1,226	569	119	121	319	27.5	178	1,745	142.3	40.5
7 Venezuela	1,071	252	85	142	69	67.3	46	1,217	113.6	21.8
8 Pakistan	1,011	460	188	337	109	75.6	36	956	94.6	8.1
9 Bangladesh	900	599	82	458	93	83.1	58	984	109.3	10.5
10 Algeria	801	566	67	442	105	80.8	30	717	89.5	5.5
11 China	777	309	239	141	167	45.8	72	729	93.8	23.4
12 Kazakhstan	730	125	18	91	13	87.5	20	720	98.6	19.2
13 Zaire	592	288	30	210	53	79.8	38	518	87.5	14.4
14 Romania	575	380	104	120	260	31.6	57	602	104.7	15.0
15 Mexico	548	102	102	40	65	38.1	15	568	103.6	14.3
16 Guatemala	496	308	89	171	130	56.8	45	493	99.4	15.0
17 Afghanistan	473	448	36	370	53	87.5	35	376	79.5	8.3
18 Russia	445	236	77	176	59	74.9	33	507	113.9	14.0
19 El Salvador	444	256	106	94	160	37.0	64	555	125.0	25.2
20 Lebanon	434	235	69	112	106	51.4	56	549	126.5	25.7
21 Sudan	429	276	39	251	14	94.7	16	303	70.6	6.0
22 Peru	342	246	31	154	88	63.6	28	425	124.3	11.6
23 Iraq	324	205	32	183	11	94.3	12	274	84.6	6.2
24 Nigeria	322	196	46	113	76	59.8	30	297	92.2	15.9
25 Ukraine	272	202	55	129	65	66.5	32	323	118.8	16.5
<b>Top25 countries total</b>	<b>20,902</b>	<b>11,370</b>	<b>2,346</b>	<b>8,000</b>	<b>2,779</b>	<b>74.2</b>	<b>1,385</b>	<b>21,034</b>	<b>100.6</b>	<b>12.8</b>
Other countries	5,170	3,025	1,133	1,614	1,317	55.1	527	5,360	103.7	18.0
<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>26,072</b>	<b>14,395</b>	<b>3,479</b>	<b>9,614</b>	<b>4,096</b>	<b>70.1</b>	<b>1,912</b>	<b>26,394</b>	<b>101.2</b>	<b>13.9</b>

**Claims Referred** are adjusted to take into account claims transferred out;

**Decisions Pending** include all claim heard to completion since January 1, 1989 for which no decision had been rendered by the end of the reporting period (cumulative sum total); Decided means that a decision has been made on the claim.

**Total Claims Pending** include all claim referred to the CRDD, that have not yet been finalized as of the end of the reporting period.

*Computed from Immigration and Refugee Board Statistical Summary, April 1996. ASA*

*Refuge*

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- Refugee children in the school system
- Exemplary local programs for refugee children and families
- Effect of Canadian regionalism on refugee resettlement

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*Refuge* is dedicated to the encouragement of assistance to refugees by providing a forum for sharing information and opinion on Canadian and international issues pertaining to refugees. *Refuge* was founded in 1981.

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## In Memoriam

### **Lisa Gilad**

Lisa Gilad became of blessed memory to us on May 28, 1996 when she lost her life in a road accident. Since that day her friends and colleagues have met privately and publicly to articulate their feelings of loss and to memorialize Lisa in a worthy manner. This is my effort.

It is not overstatement to say that everyone who came into contact with Lisa Gilad will forever be affected by her. This is the case in all her social and professional circles. It is because Lisa dealt with nothing lightly. Such intensity in some might be seen as unbecoming, a sign of absence of humour, a reason to be avoided. In Lisa this intensity inspired quite the opposite. Her Talmudic approach to all aspects of life reflected the depth of her soul not only her intellect. When one finds such a person, one wants to be around her. This is why we miss her so.

I first met Lisa about ten years ago at a conference sponsored by the Refugee Documentation Centre, the predecessor of York University's Centre for Refugee Studies. At one session I made a flippant remark with which Lisa heartily took issue. We became instant friends and I followed her career with great interest and concern.

The appointment of Lisa Gilad to the Immigration and Refugee Board was a stroke of brilliance. For in Lisa, there was the perfect combination of qualities to do such a job. I am not only thinking of objective characteristics, such as good analytical and writing skills, but rather of those which come from an almost perfect love of humanity: the ability to be serious yet compassionate, to suffer neither fools nor liars yet treat all with respect. When Lisa determined that the person before her was a Convention Refugee, she saw it not as a case of good fortune on the part of the claimant. Instead, Lisa was invigorated by the good fortune of Canada to be in a position to offer such protection. She would leave her chair, shake hands with those refugees and tell them so!

As a Jew, I have been taught that lives are measured by deeds. The deeds of Lisa Gilad measure much longer than her 39 years of life. Everything Lisa accomplished in her private and public arenas was important and significant. She loved to teach and did so by her actions. Lisa Gilad taught us to take nothing for granted, to invest significant energy into everything good. In death Lisa will continue to teach that lesson. We should understand more than ever the extreme fragility of life itself, and the necessity to contribute generously to the betterment of this place while we are able.

May the memory of Lisa Gilad be a comfort to all who mourn her.

*Susan Davis*

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*Susan Davis is a Special Advisor to Assistant Deputy Minister-Partnerships, Citizenship and Immigration Canada.*