Media framing of refugees and internally displaced people in the Middle East; problems or resources?

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ABSTRACT:

The issue of refugees and Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) is said to be one of the most complex humanitarian issues facing the Middle East today, with the region showing the highest increase in new displacements, alongside North Africa. Conflict and instability across large areas of the Middle East have caused millions of people to flee their homes or countries, with the UNHCR estimating there are currently 51 million persons of concern worldwide. While forced or conflict-induced displacement has plagued the Middle East since the end of World War II, the latest waves of refugees and IDPs can largely be traced to the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the subsequent civil war, which produced an estimated 6 million refugees and a similar number of internally displaced, and the ongoing conflict in Syria, where an estimated 6 million plus Syrians have fled the country, while another 10 million have been internally displaced. The size of the displacement of the Syrian population, both internally and beyond the country's borders, can distract from other parallel catastrophes. Indeed, the collapse of the Libyan state has produced a wave of Libyan refugees, while migrants from sub-Saharan Africa continue to transit through Libya and depart from there and other parts of the North African littoral en route to Europe. The war in Yemen has also produced massive internal displacement, even if a naval and land blockade has prevented most from fleeing the country. The situation of these (and other) refugee populations in the region will continue to have an impact, not only on regional

security, but also on the regional political economy and political development into the foreseeable future.

This lecture will focus on the role of media in the framing of Syrian refugees in Jordan and how these frames have helped construct them as a threat to resources and dynamics for growth. Furthermore, it will show how the frames used to describe human movements had been instrumentalized to support or legitimize political and geo-political interests and policies of countries directly or indirectly involved in the ongoing conflicts. It will argue that these frames, through their persistent use, can normalise conflict, and rather than educate, inform, correct misperceptions and offer options for resolution.

Readings:

Entman, R.M. (1993) *'Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm'*, Journal of Communication, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 51–58.

Gans, H.J. (1979) *Deciding What's News*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Philo, G. (2013) *'Our Hysterical Media Helped Create the Immigrant "go home" Van'*. The Guardian, 8 August. Available at: [http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/08/media-immigrant-go-home-van], accessed on 13 March 2015

Berry, M., Garcia-Blanco, I., & Moore, K. (2015*). Press coverage of the refugee and migrant crisis in the EU: A content analysis of five European countries. Report prepared for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, December 2015*. Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies: Wales. Available online

Bleich, E., Bloemraad, I., & de Graauw, E. (2015). *Migrants, minorities and the media: Information, representations and participation in the public sphere*. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 41(6), 857-873