Discourses on Refugees, Practices of Belonging: Refugee Regimes in the Making of the Middle East

Neuchâtel 11-12
October 2018

Venue: R.S.38
Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines - Institut d'histoire - Espace Louis-Agassiz 1 - CH-2000

UNIVERSITÉ DE NEUCHÂTEL

Université de Neuchâtel
Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
Institut d'histoire

Espace Louis-Agassiz 1 CH-2000,
Neuchâtel

Discourses on Refugees, Practices of Belonging: Refugee Regimes in the Making of the Middle East

The Middle East's encounter with refugees go back to the late 1850s when the Ottoman Empire was flooded by the influx of Muslim refugees running away from violence and warfare that ran havoc to the Caucasus. Thereafter, each successive cycle of warfare only repeated this pattern of displacement, as the Ottoman Empire not only continued to receive but only also began to generate refugees of its own. By the end of the First World War, displacement had already emerged as an urgent international problem with the flood of refugees that originated from the sites of collapsing empires, civil wars, and massacres. Against this backdrop the League of Nations—a new organization in and of itself—responded by establishing what one may call a "global refugee regime" by introducing standardized paperwork and procedures, complete with a range of relief programs designed for the accommodation of the displaced.

Through this workshop we are interested in exploring how this global episode came to unfold in the interwar Middle East. By the early 1920s, the postwar settlement introduced a precise territorial order to the region with a new set of international boundaries. The introduction of sovereign territoriality was accompanied by the efforts of the emerging ruling elites in the region to re-define who belonged to the nation and thereby what determined the criteria of citizenship. These terms of inclusion, however, also specified the terms of exclusion, as some groups were defined out of state, leading to their categorization as refugees and aliens. Both the League of Nations and local elites perceived refugeedom not only as an opportunity to minimize the prospects of ethno-religious conflict but also as a means of consolidating the nation-state. As such, creating refugees and welcoming them was a mutually constitutive process that reproduced discourses of governmentality and justified modern territorial state, while redefining the limits of belonging.

Organized within the framework of ERC Project titled "Towards a Decentred History of the Middle East: Transborder Spaces, Circulations, Frontier Effects and State Formation"
BORDER 725269

https://www.unine.ch/histoire/home/recherche/projet-erc-consolidator-grant.html

Convened by

Professor Jordi Tejel (Principal Investigator)
Dr. Ramazan Hakkı Öztan (Postdoc Fellow)
Victoria Abrahamyan (PhD Student)

For more information, please contact us
jordi.tejel@unine.ch

Participation is free but please register via
ramazan.oztan@unine.ch

Discourses on Refugees, Practices of Belonging

11 October

8h 30 Welcome

8h 45 Introduction to the Workshop

9h Panel 1: Refugee Regimes and Politics of Relief
Chair: Jordi Tejel (University of Neuchâtel)
Discussant: Maurus Reinkowski (University of Basel)

- Ella Fratantuono (University of North Carolina at Charlotte)
  "Looking Backward: State-Building and Failure in Ottoman Refugee Regimes"
- Davide Rodogno (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies)
  "Repatriation, Resettlement and the Meaning of Relief on behalf of Displaced Civilian Populations in ex- and post- Ottoman Territories (1918-1924)"

10h 30 Coffee Break

11h Panel 2: Practices of Belonging and Memories of Loss
Chair: Janine Dahinden (University of Neuchâtel)
Discussant: Alexander Balistreri (University of Basel)

- Chris Gratien (University of Virginia)
  "The Second Exchange: Ottoman-Born Greeks and the American Deportation State",
- Ayşenur Korkmaz (University of Amsterdam)
  "Longing for 'Yerkir': Territorial Belonging to Sasun in the Aftermath of the Armenian Genocide"

12h 30 Lunch

14h Panel 3: Refugees and the Making of Syrian Identity
Chair: Aline Schlaepfer (University of Geneva)
Discussant: Anne Clément-Vollenbroich (University of Bern)

- Seda Altuğ (Freie University of Berlin)
  "Religion, Violence, Land: Refugees, Locals and the State in Syria (1921-1939)"
- Victoria Abrahamyan (University of Neuchâtel)
  "Citizen Strangers: Identity Labelling and Discourse in the Mandatory Syria, 1920-1939"

15h 30 Coffee Break

Refugee Regimes in the Making of the Middle East

11 October

16h Panel 4: Displacement and Failure of Interwar Refugee Regimes
Chair: Alp Yenen (University of Basel)
Discussant: Christin Achermann (University of Neuchâtel)

- Vahé Tachjian (Houshamadyan Association in Berlin)
  "The New Transnation of the Middle East: Armenians in Syria and Lebanon in the 1920s and 1930s"
- Ramazan Hakkı Öztan (University of Neuchâtel)
  "Political Economy of Resettlement: Discourses and Practices of Immigration in Turkey, 1929-1939"

17h 30 End of the First Day
18h 30 Dinner

12 October

9h Panel 5: Practices of States, Notions of Statelessness
Chair: Francesco Garufo, University of Neuchâtel
Discussant: Marion Fresia, University of Neuchâtel

- Benjamin Thomas White (University of Glasgow)
  "Undisciplined bodies: governing refugees in the Middle East, 1918-1939"
- Laura Robson (Portland State University)
  "Proto-refugees? Palestinians and the concept of statelessness before 1948"

10h 30 Coffee Break

11h Keynote Address: Peter Gatrell (University of Manchester)

12h End of the Workshop

Sponsored by

GERDA HENKEL STIFTUNG

European Research Council
Established by the European Commission