Humanitarian narratives and interventions from the contemporary Middle East

16-17 March 2023

Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

Deadline extension for submission of papers until 15th October

Our world is facing diverse and intersecting disasters, conflicts and crises. In the current scenario of the Russo-Ukrainian war, the debate on human rights violations of people on the move - frequently described as 'refugees' and sometimes as 'victims of trafficking' - has attracted the attention of global media, governments and civil societies.

Since the earliest days of the Russian attack in early 2022, exceptional measures to provide protection to displaced persons coming from Ukraine have been quickly adopted and solidarity emerged across Europe. In contrast to previous restrictive immigration policies, European governments and citizens have shown an unprecedented openness to the arrival of people from Ukraine. This unprecedented mobilization has started a debate regarding double standards of European states and humanitarian responses, calling for a critical scholarly debate.

Realizing the importance of dealing with such controversial issues and interrogating their most relevant effects - including the increase in the disparity between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' groups, this conference seeks to recenter the contemporary Middle East at the core of the academic debate. In doing so, we focus on one of the regions that has seen the most intense floods of migration both in the past and at present. Decades of wars, occupations, repressions and socio-economic destabilization have generated an increasing number of displaced people living in desperate conditions and with limited access to basic services. In the last ten years, from Syria to Yemen, Libya to Iraq, Palestine to Afghanistan, and Lebanon to Turkey just to mention a few, political upheaval has characterized the entire region and created new ongoing crises, as well as barriers. At present, international organizations, NGOs and scholars have been calling attention to the fact that the Russo-Ukrainian and its humanitarian impacts have increased the vulnerability of the Middle East region, in sectors such as food security and livelihoods.

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Across different realities in the region, we aim to extensively investigate the current meaning of humanitarian intervention, while discussing the prevalence of both state sovereignty and international law, as well as the alleged progressive role of international norms relating to human rights. The intersection of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other factors in shaping humanitarian narratives and the underlying humanitarian aid will be at the basis of this discussion.

By recognising the need to gather people's experiences from the Middle East based on a range of intersecting identities and overlapping power structures, this conference intends to address crucial questions on current scenarios focused on - but not limited to - the following set of themes:

- arguments, claims, and evidence from humanitarian discourse and its mobilization to justify intervention or non-intervention;
- critical reflections on humanitarian aid and feasible bottom-up alternatives;
- construction of knowledge, humanitarian needs and interventions;
- depoliticization and reification of humanitarian aid;
- critical reflections on border control and violence;
- asymmetric humanitarian responses and forms of solidarity;
- media and the double standard framework.

We invite interdisciplinary submissions that go beyond strict mainstream divisions among disciplinary and methodological approaches, as we propose discussing cross-cut analyses and perspectives on the above-mentioned themes.

The conference is organized by the Centre for International Studies (CEI-Iscte) and the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES-Iscte), with support from the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT).

Conveners:

Giulia Daniele (CEI–Iscte)
Joana Azevedo (CIES–Iscte)
Mara Clemente (CIES-Iscte)

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Scientific Committee:

Annelien Groten (independent researcher)

Giulia Daniele (CEI–Iscte)

Joana Azevedo (CIES–Iscte)

Manuel João Ramos (CEI–Iscte)

Mara Clemente (CIES–Iscte)

Miguel Vale de Almeida (CRIA–Iscte)

Reyhan Atasü-Topçuoğlu (Hacettepe Üniversitesi)

Shaireen Rasheed (Long Island University)

Keynote Speakers

Jasmin Lilian Diab (Lebanese American University)

Sara Farris (Goldsmiths, University of London)

Deadline for submission

Paper proposals should be written in English and include the author's name and affiliation, short bio (max. 100 words), title, abstract (max. 300 words), and three keywords.

Proposals are due on **October 15th 2022**, and should be emailed to: **humeast@iscte-iul.pt**

Applicants will be informed of the conference's scientific committee's decision by the end of October 2022. Extended abstracts (1500 words) are to be submitted by January 30th 2023.

We expect all speakers to participate in person at Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.

Registration fees

A small fee is requested from speakers to help cover the conference's costs and will be:

30 € - professors, researchers and other professionals

20 € - students or unaffiliated

Participants with affiliation in, or coming from, countries not considered by the World Bank as High Income economies will be exempted from paying any fee.

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