

Seminar Report:

Beyond Encampment: Mass Migration in an Age of Urbanization

University of Oslo, 10 April 2018



An international seminar, organized by Human Rights Research League (HRRL) as part of the World Seminar series, in collaboration with SAIH.



On 10 April 2018, **Human Rights Research League** successfully held a seminar at the University of Oslo on the challenges posed by mass migration regarding urban areas, refugee camps, and potential future conflicts and humanitarian crises. The seminar, co-sponsored by **SAIH** (the Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund), formed part of the university's annual **World Seminar** series and attracted an active audience consisting of researchers from the University of Oslo, NUPI (the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs), the HL-center (Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities), members of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation), and several foreign government representatives, including the ambassadors of Poland, Hungary, and the Canadian consul in Norway.

Matching the international composition of the audience, the seminar's panel consisted of:

- **Sabrina Greco**, Researcher, National Research Council of Italy (CNR) – Institute for Research on Innovation and Services for Development (IRISS)
- **Pål Nesse**, Senior Adviser, Norwegian Refugee Council
- **Tom Syring**, Chairman, Human Rights Research League (HRRL); Co-Chair, European Society of International Law, Interest Group on Migration and Refugee Law
- **Bård Ludvig Thorheim**, Political Adviser, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



(From left): Tom Syring; Sabrina Greco; Pål Nesse; Bård Ludvig Thorheim; Iva Gavanski.

Iva Gavanski, Regional Point of Contact - North America (HRRL) who also moderated the panel, and **Marius Haga**, Member of the Board (HRRL), thanked the organizers, briefly explained Human Rights Research League's genesis and mission, before presenting an outline of the program and introducing the speakers.



In his opening presentation, **Tom Syring**, Chairman of the Human Rights Research League and Co-Chair of the European Society of International Law's Interest Group on Migration & Refugee Law, depicted the broader context of the challenges of mass migration in today's world, including the drivers of mass migration (push and pull factors), having a particular focus on the Great Lakes region on Sub-Saharan Africa. Violent conflicts and harsh living-conditions will continue to exist and force people to leave. Irrespective of the label we attach in a given situation (IDPs, refugees, forced migrants), the vast majority of those uprooted had to leave their homes, often fleeing to and staying in neighboring countries or areas. And even if we were to reduce the number of new, uprooted people to zero, there would still be many millions who already are in need of support. Hence, in order to cope with today's refugee and humanitarian crises, a two-pronged approach is needed: fighting the (underlying) root causes and helping those already negatively affected and living in a state of refuge. While both push factors, such as political violence, protracted armed conflict, economic factors, and pull factors, such as the urge to seek physical protection, political freedoms and opportunities abroad constitute drivers (and are sometimes – superficially - called 'root causes') of migration, the real, underlying root causes of those drivers may have to be found elsewhere, in 'bad governance' and the lack of alternation, leading to the repression of (negative) Human Rights (ICCPR) and the non-provision of (positive) Human Rights (cf. ICESCR). These

underlying root causes need to be focused on, if we are to avoid or alleviate future global migratory and humanitarian crises.

As to helping those already negatively affected, the majority of people does not live in camps, but in urban settings, and any discussion needs to include increasing urbanization as a factor.

Syring, who currently leads a research project on *Beyond Encampment: Managing Mass Migration in an Age of Urbanization* (on which this seminar was based), collaborating also with colleagues at the University of Kinshasa, DRC (including Prof. Lututala), concluded by sharing a few preliminary observations from the DRC study. There are significant differences regarding co-habitation and integration challenges in host communities between geographical areas (e.g. DRC East vs. West), between IDPs and refugees in their respective host communities, and between Congolese migrants in neighboring countries vs. (foreign) migrants in the DRC. Local peculiarities matter and need to be taken into account when trying to integrate people uprooted by flight and conflict with host communities, who often also already lack basic resources.

Sabrina Greco, researcher at the National Research Council of Italy – Institute for Research on Innovation and Services Development, with particular experience in migration and development and specializing in Mediterranean countries and Sub-Saharan Africa, followed up by detailing some insights from a current research project on *Innovation in Society: Training Paths and Human Capital Enhancement in Sudan (INSO)*, where she is the Principal Investigator. The project is financed by the Italian Ministry of the Interior as part of the Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa (RDDP NA). The RDPP NA is funded by the European Union under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI), the North of Africa window of the EU Trust Fund for Africa, and by those states participating in an ad hoc consortium and willing to contribute. The RDPP NA country leader is Italy, who has also secured co-funding together with the Czech Republic and Norway. The INSO project aims at enhancing economic and equal opportunities for migrants and host communities and strengthening social cohesion between migrants and host communities by improving service provision and expanding a culture of rights through improved dialogue, advocacy and communication. A practical output of the project is to contribute to socio-economic development in Sudan by improving knowledge and skills development of university students, which may empower them to create small companies and innovative projects, thus turning them into agents of change and generating job opportunities for other people. The project's ultimate goal is to reduce the level of poverty and inequality and hence contribute to reducing the level of migration out of Sudan.



Pål Nesse, senior adviser at the Norwegian Refugee Council with deployments to Mozambique, Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina (as country director), and Switzerland (as the NRC representative in Geneva), started by reminding the audience of the origins of migration and the current extent of the migratory crisis. Migrations are not a new phenomenon. Indeed, from the second century (AD) on, major movements of people have taken place, also in and between what now is known as Europe and Northern Africa. But never have so many people been in a state of flight. As of today, more than 65 million people had to leave their homes, fleeing war and persecution, more than 24 million crossed a boarder on their flight, almost 41 million are IDPs. Providing solution to them is an enormous task, but there are also some positive developments. While many people leave their homes and try to integrate into cities, where, to some, anonymity may contribute to safety, in the main, losing all one's belongings, including one's identity, represents the greatest obstacle to receiving basic services or to being able to start anew. Among the positive contributions to alleviating the plight of those uprooted are housing projects, where e.g. host families in cities receive support to build an extra room, in exchange for housing refugees there; educational projects, where extra efforts are made to enroll refugee children and in particular girls into school; advocacy projects that help refugees and IDPs to (re)gain identity papers; and technology projects, including distributing mobile phones to increase access to information, as well as smart solutions to energy efficiency, e.g. promoting solar power, biogas, and clean, potable water.



Bård Ludvig Thorheim, political adviser to the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, focused in his initial remarks on the currently ongoing negotiations regarding the Global Compacts for Refugees and Migrants, respectively, and Norway's participation in the negotiations and position with a view to underlining the human rights dimension of humanitarian aid. We need to look at the record-high numbers of migrants also in connection with the general population growth in the world. Never have there been more people living on the planet, and they all are in need of resources, development, including jobs. In order to better recognize these connected challenges, Norway now had a Minister of Development working alongside the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Thorheim, who prior to starting in his current position in 2016 was assistant director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and head of the MFA's operative center, also pointed to Norwegian Foreign Minister Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide's recent remarks at the latest session of the Human Rights Council, announcing an increase in Norway's contributions to the OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) humanitarian response work as an indication of Norway's commitment to a

human rights based foreign policy, which includes contributing to achieving the 2030 UN SDG (Sustainable Development Goals).

The opening presentations were followed by a comment-and-challenge session among the panelists, before the panel discussion was concluded with Q&As and comments from the audience.



(From left): Tom Syring; Sabrina Greco; Pål Nesse; Bård Ludvig Thorheim; Iva Gavanski.