Proje Tanıtımı / Project Presentation

Removal Infrastructures for Syrians in Lebanon and Turkey (REMOVED) Project

Zeynep Kaşlı[1]

While three out of four refugees are hosted in low- or middle-income countries,[2] European countries' externalization of their protection responsibilities to neighbouring countries, such as Lebanon and Turkey, which face stark economic and political challenges, pave the way for legally and morally contested practices, from clientelism (Spijkerboer, 2021, pp. 2892–2907) to increasing informality in migration and mobility governance (Koinova, 2024, pp.1-22).

REMOVED takes the principle of non-refoulement, a human rights concept designed to protect refugees from inhumane and degrading treatment after return, as a starting point to study the removal practices that Syrians experience in Lebanon and Turkey, the ways in which they navigate and resist different practices of removal and, more concretely, the human, social and political consequences of these removals. Resisting binary distinctions between voluntary and forced returns, the project conceptualizes pushbacks, deportations, obliged returns and repatriations jointly as removals. It enquires into the emergence, patterns and consequences of removals by approaching removal infrastructures as multi-scalar entanglements of authorities, institutions and norms through which the demographic composition of the territory is controlled, negotiated and resisted by people in everyday practices. REMOVED research team uses ethnographic methods, such as mapping and informal interviews with professionals, such as Syrians in Turkey and Lebanon; professionals and advocacy actors who work on the Syrian displacement crisis in Turkey and Lebanon; and actors of mobility and migration control at different spatial and temporal points of the removal trajectories. The team also actively seeks and puts into place partnerships with refugee rights advocacy organizations in Lebanon and Turkey.

By connecting the legal principle of non-refoulement with anthropological theories on mobility control (De Genova, 2002, pp. 419–447) and mobility infrastructures (Lin *et al.,* 2017, pp. 167–174.), this project contributes to forced migration studies in at least three ways. First, the project integrates into the study of forced migration infrastructures the topic of removals and contributes to the growing body of literature highlighting that deportations (Gibney, 2013, pp. 116–129) and coerced returns (Sahin-Mencutek & Triandafyllidou, 2024, pp.1-18) are also forms of forced migration. Second, the project highlights multiple displacements, including people's decision-making and South-South(im)mobility trajectories after removal (attempts). Analyzing removals

[1] International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, kasli@iss.nl, ORCID NO: 0000-0002-6886-5890

through the lens of infrastructures allows us to conceive of displacement not as a single, linear crossing of a line separating two places and focus on the multi-faceted mediated space of im/mobilities and their historical, spatial and capitalist entanglements (İşleyen & El Qadim, 2023, pp.3-13; Kaşlı, 2023, pp. 14–32; Walters, 2002, pp. 265–292). Just like the original flight trajectory, removals are processes that result in a series of potentially temporary stays, non-permanent returns, recurring displacement, and structural and physical insecurities, which all have repercussions on family structures and social networks (Alpes *et al.,* 2023, pp. 383- 408). Third, the project feeds scales (Baud & Schendel, 1997, pp. 211–242; Xiang, 2013, pp. 282–299) as an alternative approach to aggregation levels into discussions on (supra)state influences on displacement processes as it generates empirical data on multi-scalar encounters between Syrians and actors with affiliations to different countries and institutions.

The escalation of Israel's attacks on Palestine and Lebanon and its subsequent war on Lebanon recently required a series of reconsiderations on both the research design and our ethical and academic responsibilities for the safety and security of team members and research participants. Yet, the rationale and objectives of the project are even more relevant today as we recently learned that the European Commission plans to increase voluntary returns to Syria through the "appointment of a special envoy for Syria." In the meantime, it is recorded that approximately 560,000 Syrians and Lebanese have so far fled from Lebanon to Syria[3] , and Turkey opens its doors for Lebanese people.[4]

This project is funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation and runs through September 2024- to March 2026. Led by Dr. Jill Alpes (Sciences Po Paris, Lebanese American University) and Dr. Zeynep Kaşlı (Erasmus University Rotterdam), the project team includes five senior and junior researchers with different backgrounds based in Turkey and Lebanon. Supported by established migration scholars, the results will be shared with the wider public through academic and non-academic outputs, including newspaper articles, blog posts and podcast content, and with the policy field through collaborations with other ongoing projects on return in the respective countries.

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[3] https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/60935/new-eu-commission-plan-for-voluntary-repatriation-of-syrians (Last Accessed 6 November 2024)

[4] https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/10/19/president-erdogan-says-turkeys-doors-are-open-to-refugees-from-lebanon   (Last Accessed 6 November 2024)

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