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# Unpacking the Stranger: Examining the Lives of Darfuris in Amman and Cairo



Elena Habersky

May 15, 2018

The American University in Cairo  
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

# **Unpacking the Stranger: Examining the Lives of Darfuris in Amman and Cairo**

A Thesis Submitted to the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A)  
in  
Migration and Refugee Studies

by Elena Habersky  
under the supervision of Dr. Martina Rieker

May, 2018

ii

The American University in Cairo  
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP)  
**Unpacking the Stranger: Examining the Lives of Darfuris in Amman and Cairo**

A Thesis Submitted by  
Elena Habersky

Submitted to the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies  
May 15, 2018

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
The degree of Master of Arts  
In Migration and Refugee Studies

Has been approved by

Dr. Martina Rieker  
Thesis Advisor  
Date:

Dr. Gerda Heck  
Thesis Reader One  
Date:

Dr. Ibrahim Elnur  
Thesis Reader Two  
Date:

Dr. Usha Natarajan  
Acting Department Chair  
Date:

Ambassador Nabil Fahmy  
Dean of the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy  
Date:

## **Abstract:**

An abstract for the thesis proposal of Elena Habersky for the M.A. in Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo.

Thesis adviser is Dr. Martina Rieker of the Gender and Women's Studies department.

Title: *Unpacking the Stranger: Examining the Lives of Darfuris in Amman and Cairo*

This thesis examines the lives of two categories of individuals in particular socials: The Darfuri Refugee in Amman and the Deported Darfuri in Cairo. This thesis will first examine how, in the first country of exile, the Darfuri Refugees in Amman are able to gain trust of one another and make sense of their past and present lives of fragmentation by re-constructing parts of their shared history. By doing this, it becomes easier for the Darfuri Refugee in Amman to assemble together in tight-knit community structures which support one another in navigating Amman as perceived strangers to the resident community while they all await a next step on their journeys.

This thesis will then examine how, by performing politically, namely, protesting outside of UNHCR, the Darfuri Refugee in Amman became the Deported and ultimately used transnational relationships and knowledge to cross the border from Sudan into Egypt to become the Deported Darfuri in Cairo. Once again, the Deported Darfuri in Cairo re-assembled their community structure to help them in navigating the social of Cairo as strangers who had undergone traumatic experiences.

Throughout these assemblages and re-assemblages, the Darfuri Refugees find themselves in communities of support in order to live their lives in exile as the perceived strangers within their two socials. From their entire migratory experiences, which consists of fragmented journeys, this thesis argues how the migratory experiences involves reconciling the simultaneous need for visibility from international organizations and invisibility from the resident communities in order to safely live their lives in exile.

Keywords: stranger, assembling, transnational migration, Darfur, deportation, fragmentation

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A special shout out to my roommate Claire; for finding the will to go on from our blanket burritos, making up our own verses to Christmas music to explain the thesis process, and editing our chapters in Dahab with the lovely Zerrin, I cannot imagine living with anyone else through this experience.

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## *Chapter One: “Life, really, is difficult”-The Migratory Experiences of the Darfuri Refugee in Amman and the Deported Darfuri in Cairo*

### *Prologue*

I was sitting on a bench in the cold Amman winter with my friend, Adam\*<sup>1</sup>, as he looked up from the bench, staring off into the cold winter sky. I remember his silence, his expressionless face in his winter hat and heavy coat. He sits in silence, and I sit with him for about a minute. He then speaks in Arabic, but only numbers. He later tells me they are dates and times. The date and times his village was attacked in Darfur, the dates when his fragmented migratory journey was about to commence.

Sitting out in the cold winter night of Amman is not normal, but there are few public meeting places in the city which do not cost money. As Adam is supporting a family, and his wife has her friends visiting this evening, he suggested meeting in a small roundabout in the neighborhood. I had lost contact with many of my Darfuri friends between 2014 and 2015. The English program at which I had taught closed, though the reasons why varied. Some said since the director of the program had changed and that the new director did not want any foreign teachers, he could not find Jordanians to fill the positions and the program closed. Others said the refugee students did not get along with the Jordanian teachers who were there and refused to show up for class. Many claimed that the locals in the affluent East Amman neighborhood of *Ashrefiyah* began to complain to the school that they did not want Africans in the neighborhood as it would give it a bad reputation. Whatever the true reason, these students had lost an important community gathering space and outlet from which to learn and tell their stories.

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<sup>1</sup> All names in the entirety of this thesis have been changed by the author for the safety and privacy of the interviewees



Adam goes on with his story and more numbers. He remembers the time which was carefully calculated by the militia to attack his village, right before *fajr*, the obligatory dawn prayer for Muslims, as the seven tanks rolled in. The village remained clothed in darkness while his fellow village men and women were rousing from their sleep to head to mosque and perform *wudu*, the ritual cleansing performed before prayer. Then gunfire, followed by mass confusion.

People began running in every direction, unsure of what was going on and where to go. The tanks did not fire directly into the people, rather firing above the houses. If the attackers believed that there was wealth amongst the residences they wanted to get the people away from their homes to steal and loot. Those who decided to stay and protect their properties were immediately killed. Once the village was looted, all of the huts were set on fire and burned to the ground so that no trace would remain of a once thriving community. Then the tanks went off to follow the people who fled on foot. It would not take long before they caught up.

Those who were able to escape ran into the neighboring mountains. Adam spent sixteen days in the mountainous caves near the border with Chad. The year was 2003, and it would take Adam ten years before he was able to come to Jordan in search of a better life. But life, according to him, is difficult.

This memory is still etched vividly in my mind of one of the oldest areas of Amman; the neighborhood of *Jabal L'Weibdeh*. It is a historical area, a once quiet home to a local Christian population. The Jabal is an upscale neighborhood for the foreign and the Jordanian elite. It is, in essence, the emerging cultural epicenter of a rather new capital city, much to the dismay of those who complain of the apparent gentrification. From the side facing *Jabal Amman*, the views of East Amman are gorgeous as the sun sets over the beige concrete buildings. The charm of the neighborhood is undeniable, as anyone who lives there or frequents it will tell you.

However, down near the bottom of this side of the hill, near to the historic downtown, is an area where many foreigners do not usually venture, as it is obviously less economically well-off than the ritzier parts of *L'Weibdeh*. This is where a small Darfuri population lives, invisible to most who visit the neighborhood, or even to those who reside in it. Many Darfuris in Amman were attracted to this neighborhood because of Darfuri networks which were already established in 2012 when more began to arrive and for its quietness and proximity to the downtown. In some of the rented apartments, more than twenty people share the rent costs to be able to afford a place to live. If a Darfuri newly arrives to Jordan, the Darfuris in Amman believe you need to help him. Even if the person leaves the apartment after three or four days due to job opportunities in other parts of the city or family connections that are found once settled, one cannot turn away one of your own. With rent prices hovering around 200 Jordanian dinar, approximately 286 USD, average Darfuri refugees in Amman cannot afford to have housing on their own, they need the support of a community. Here is where a newcomer will turn to what they already know, people from their home state of Darfur.

Our mutual friend, Ayman, joined us. He begins speaking about the 2003 conflict which has since shaped the course of his life. He, too, remembered the day his village was attacked by government militias, also before *fajr* Prayer. His village was caught off guard. However, unlike Adam, Ayman remained quiet on the details, they are too painful for him to retell. Ayman lost his family for over a year when they became separated in the madness of trying to flee; later finding them through information provided by international organizations in charge of organizing makeshift camps for those internally displaced. Only a teenager in 2003, he remembered people running in all directions, unsure of where to go and losing their way in mass hysteria. Some fled to Chad, others to the mountains, and some ran towards the area outside of

the capital, Khartoum. It was easy to lose family with the chaos and people literally running for their lives.

Once in the IDP camp in between the Darfur state in the west and Khartoum, Ayman felt trapped. He was unable to work and there were not many services available. Some tried to find work, even if the money was miniscule. One job available was to go out to forests near the camp to collect wood for cooking. While both men and women took advantage of this opportunity, the majority of those who partook were women, since this was familiar work they undertook in their agrarian lifestyles in Darfur. The job was dangerous as militias took advantage of the desperation of those who already escaped once with their lives. Women were raped and men were killed. Ayman knew he had to get out of the camp if he was to have a future.

To escape his situation, he headed to an area outside of Khartoum named Angola. The area was aptly named after an African nation, as the people living there wanted to showcase their ties to Africa. The situation in Angola, a sensitive area prone to conflict, proved to be very difficult. There was no electricity and no running water. Ayman remembered that people did not live in houses, or even sturdy tents. He told stories of how people would take big rice bags, cut holes open in the middle and put sticks inside so they could sleep. While the area was unstable due to violence and the constant movement of people, Ayman was able to work odd jobs in the nearby capital to save up money. By digging ditches to lay wires for communication companies, cleaning shoes, and working construction, Ayman was able to save up enough money to pay a government employee a bribe, allowing him to take a plane to Amman, Jordan. The government employee told Ayman what kind of clothes to wear, how to cut his hair, and how to look and act official in the airport so he would not arouse any unwanted suspicion. He was successful and entered Amman and later claimed asylum and received refugee status from UNHCR.

I was sitting with these two former students, now close friends, in the beginning of December 2015. I had seen in the news and through Facebook that many Darfuris were protesting outside of UNHCR and I wanted to know more information. Little did I know this meeting in the freezing winter weather would throw me back into a community I now feel at home with and consider close friends, and into an academic interest to find out exactly how the migratory experiences and fragmented journeys of the Darfuri refugee in Amman and the Deported Darfuri refugee in Cairo affect their assembling community structures.

### *Introduction*

Forced migration from the Global South is something that has been in the academic purview of the international community since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially so after the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. According to BS Chimni, this shift saw the academic field go from one of Refugee Studies to one of Forced Migration Studies. This shift has allowed for Forced Migration studies to form a new “humanitarian agenda”, one which works for the goals of the nation-state, namely, to “employ a political humanitarianism” to legitimize what has become the natural order of things.<sup>2</sup>

Chimni discusses the academic field of Refugee Studies in what he believes are its three stages. The first stage from 1914-1945 looked at the “professional refugee” under the auspices of the League of Nations up until the end of World War II. The “professional refugee”, according to the Chimni, were refugees who were doctors and scientists and those who held other white collar jobs. From 1945 until 1982, much of the academic scholarship focused on those displaced by the war, the creation of refugee camps, the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and

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<sup>2</sup> Chimni, B. S. 2009;2008;. The Birth of a 'Discipline': From Refugee to Forced Migration Studies. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22 (1): 11-29.

the 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, and the subsequent creation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). From 1982 until 2000, Refugee Studies expanded rapidly with the movement of asylum seekers and refugees from the Global South to the Global North, while the scholarship was both critical of the policies of the Global North, but also justified them in other aspects. With the decrease in the number of asylum applications in the Global North due to policies of containment, the study of Forced Migration was eventually born.<sup>3</sup>

The themes that Forced Migration Studies generally focus on are: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), the smuggling and trafficking of persons, armed humanitarian intervention, and how states are re-constructed post conflict.<sup>4</sup> As the knowledge production of Forced Migration Studies aims to know everything about displacement within a new international system that is under the control of the Global North, this thesis will attempt to look at the forced migration of refugees from Darfur who have undergone internal displacement, smuggling, and the asylum process, which have collectively resulted in their experiencing fragmented journeys from and within the Global South as they are unable to make their way to the Global North.

Academic work on migration expanded in the 1980's with the shift of migratory routes from the Global South to the Global North.<sup>5</sup> Many academics have raised new questions on migrant communities within and from the Global South and the links these communities possess across borders. Three influential texts include Liisa Malkki who has looked at Hutu Refugees from Burundi who sought refuge in Tanzania<sup>6</sup>, Peggy Levitt et al, who has researched migrants

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Malkki, Liisa H. 1995. *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

from the Dominican Republic in Boston, Massachusetts<sup>7</sup>, and John Arthur who looks at how different African diaspora communities negotiate culture across borders.<sup>8</sup> However, asylum seekers and refugees from the Global South who move within the Global South itself have not been as much a topic of concern as those who make their way to the Global North, whether regularly or irregularly, due to the interests of the Global North, which is where most knowledge production in the field begins. Being in constant contact with refugees from Darfur after living in the Middle East and North Africa for six years, both in Amman and Cairo, I always had a personal interest in how their migratory experiences, from their own words and stories, affected their communities in the cities of asylum they now called home. Questions also revolved around how their experiences with transnational networking affect this being in community on a daily basis as communication across borders has become easier today than it ever has before. Finally, I wanted to know how the trauma of fleeing genocide and the subsequent trauma of deportation from Amman to Khartoum, affected the experiences of what Michael Collyer termed fragmented journeys.<sup>9</sup> These inquiries will be the driving force behind my thesis as I place myself into two communities in different cities within a particular time and space.

I never imagined four years ago that my first time teaching English to refugees in Amman, Jordan, would involve a classroom full of refugees from Darfur, Sudan as Jordan and Sudan have no outward historical ties nor geographical borders, save the now expanding medical tourism industry which sees Sudanese individuals coming to Amman to access healthcare

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<sup>7</sup> Levitt, Peggy, and Deepak Lamba-Nieves. 2011. Social Remittances Revisited. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37 (1): 1-22.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur, John A. 2010. *African diaspora identities: Negotiating culture in transnational migration*. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books.

<sup>9</sup> Collyer, Michael. Stranded Migrants and the Fragmented Journey. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 23, Issue 3, 1 September 2010, Pages 273–293, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq026>

services.<sup>10</sup> The news from the Middle East was bleak in late 2013 when I moved back to the region following a year (2011-2012) of study in Cairo. Discussions now revolved around the ongoing conflict in Syria, which was finally being described as a civil war, and the lingering question if the United States would conduct airstrikes on Syrian soil.<sup>11</sup> Many Syrian asylum seekers were fleeing in droves across the neighboring border to Jordan<sup>12</sup>, which was already hosting tens of thousands of neighboring Iraqi refugees for the past two decades<sup>13</sup>, along with the numerous Palestinians who had resided in the country since 1948.<sup>14</sup> Having lived in Cairo after the Arab Uprising from 2011-2012, I was aware of large numbers of African refugees in Cairo,<sup>15</sup> which had a long history due to Egypt's geographical position as a crossroads between Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Given this experience, I did not imagine that refugees from Africa would also seek asylum in the small Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Those from Darfur who took evening English classes in the East Amman neighborhood of *Ashrefiyah* were very serious in their language study. At first, it was difficult to get them to open up about their lives, not only in Darfur but also in Amman. After teaching for over a year, stories began to flow a little more easily. Many felt forgotten by international agencies, yet targeted by local residents due to their status as African refugees in an Arab world. They

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<sup>10</sup> Al Emam, Dana. "Gov't Facilitates Entry of Yemenis, Sudanese for Medical Treatment." Jordan Times. March 02, 2017. Accessed March 31, 2018. <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/gov't-facilitates-entry-yemenis-sudanese-medical-treatment>.

<sup>11</sup> Influential GOP senator says US was ready for 'very brief' airstrikes inside Syria in 2013. 2014. *The Hill* 2014, sec 21.

<sup>12</sup> Syrian refugees in Jordan expected to hit 700,000 in 2013. 2013. *Xinhua News Agency* 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Gibson, Irene. 2015. An analysis of Jordan's 2013 policy regarding Iraqi refugees. *Social Identities* 21 (3): 199-210.

<sup>14</sup> Marshood, Nabil. 2010. *Voices from the camps: A people's history of Palestinian refugees in Jordan*, 2006. Lanham, Md: University Press of America.

<sup>15</sup> Karasapan, Omer. "Who are the 5 million refugees and immigrants in Egypt?" Brookings. October 05, 2016. Accessed February 11, 2018. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2016/10/04/who-are-the-5-million-refugees-and-immigrants-in-egypt/>.

normally kept to themselves in a show of solidarity and support in a tight-knit and very well assembled community structure. I was invited into their circle after teaching them for two years as someone they could trust due to my understanding of their situation in the greater Amman refugee community, from which they felt separated being seen as non-Arab.

Due to these experiences and increasing burdening belief that they were invisible to the international community and non-governmental organizations, these refugees from Darfur organized a protest in November 2015 outside the offices of UNHCR asking for equal treatment from international organizations. This month-long protest would ultimately lead to hundreds of individuals being deported back to Sudan in December 2015.<sup>16</sup> Scared for their lives after their prior traumatic experiences in Darfur, many of the deportees chose to be smuggled across the border into Egypt and now reside in Cairo, yet are still in constant contact with the community assembled in Amman. These individuals have now carried on the fragmented migratory experiences from Jordan to another location in the Global South.

### *Literature Review*

BS Chimni has worked extensively on the experiences of refugees from and in the Global South. In his work, *The Geopolitics of Refugee Studies: A View from the South*, Chimni discusses how the international community has historically addressed the refugee from the Global South.<sup>17</sup> There were many reasons why at first the refugee from the Global South was entirely neglected by the Global North. Policy did shift for some at the end of World War II with the creation of the

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<sup>16</sup> Sweis, Rana F. "Jordan Deports Sudanese Asylum Seekers, Spurring Outcry." *The New York Times*. December 18, 2015. Accessed February 11, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/19/world/middleeast/jordan-deports-sudanese-asylum-seekers-spurring-outcry.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Chimni, B. 1998. *The Geopolitics of Refugee Studies: A View from the South*. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 11 (4): 350-74.



1951 *Geneva Convention* and the 1967 *Protocol*. During the Cold War in particular, refugees from the Global South became pawns between Communist and non-Communist countries. However, the first conventional definition did not extend to everyone. The modern understanding of asylum seeker did not extend to those who qualified under the definition due to their experience under the colonization process. It was also the case that many potential asylum seekers were unable to “seek and enjoy asylum” due to the original geographical restriction in the 1951 *Convention*, which only applied to those who had been displaced as a result of World War II. Eventually, after the end of the Cold War, those refugees from the Global South who had political benefit were no longer viewed with inherent worth, as their containment in the Global South was called upon by the very states who used them for such benefit. Not only were the refugees themselves treated differently, but an entire new approach in the realm of migration was called for. States in the Global North believed that the state of origin should hold more responsibility to the asylum seeker. In essence, the state of origin alone should be responsible for ending the persecution which was forcing people to cross borders and claim asylum. States in the Global North also believed that the first country of asylum, which usually ended up being a country also in the Global South, should hold more responsibility for making sure asylum seekers and refugees stayed in their country and did not attempt onward journeys. Oftentimes, though, the first state of asylum is unable to offer the services guaranteed in the *Convention*, like education and healthcare, for example, all but forcing those under the *Convention* to seek these rights elsewhere, usually with eyes towards the Global North who sometimes possesses better social welfare programs.

The atrocities committed in Darfur had much international attention after the outbreak of the conflict in 2003, with the United States government for the first time calling an ongoing

conflict a genocide.<sup>18</sup> However, by blaming former colonized countries for their own inner conflicts, this allows countries in the Global North to allow for the restriction of refugees from this conflict, in particular, disallowing their further desired movements to the Global North. While Darfuri refugees have been able to make their way to the Global North following the outbreak of the conflict in the early 2000's, as the continuation of the conflict has not received the same international attention as in previous years, the refugees from Darfur have been all but contained in their movements to the Global South from which they began their journey. This thesis will focus on these individuals.

As these individuals have moved throughout the Global South, it is important to look at the refugee experience, in general. According to Alastair Alger in his work, "*Refugees: Perspectives on the experience of forced migration*", the refugee experience discusses the personal consequences of forced migration, whether they be political, social, economic, or cultural.<sup>19</sup> Alger shows that the pre-flight and flight stages are fraught with hardships in the form of the inability to make a living, disruptions to civil society, fragmentation of families, and physical violence and trauma. Then, during the eventual settlement stage in a country of asylum, detachment from a homeland can cause separation anxiety as forced migrants experience emotional and cognitive turmoil from being forced to flee their homes.<sup>20</sup>

The refugee experience is essential to examine for the refugees from Darfur to see how their overall experiences affects the way in which they become both refugee and Darfuri in exile and how they assemble their communities. While the refugee experience presented in this

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<sup>18</sup> Lanz, David. 2009. Save Darfur: A Movement and its Discontents. *African Affairs* 108 (433): 669-77.

<sup>19</sup> Ager, Alastair, and American University in Cairo. Library. 1998. *Refugees: Perspectives on the experience of forced migration*. New York: Cassell.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

academic work is linear, in this thesis the refugee experience will be presented as fragmented in stages; therefore, not a straight and linear process. With an increase in containment and restriction of movement come additional issues for refugees, including with states in the Global South where they seek asylum. One such issue is deportation, which causes a crack and break in the refugee experience and forces a refugee to go back to the violence and trauma experienced in the pre-flight and flight stages. What is more, is that for those refugees who suffer through deportation, the flight and resettlement stages may be repeated in order to reach safety away from the state to which they were deported, usually the country of birth in which they experienced a “well-founded fear of persecution.”

To better examine fragmented journeys, Michael Collyer has written in his academic work, *Stranded Migrants and the Fragmented Journey*, how such journeys are becoming more common for forced migrants as more groups are making overland journeys.<sup>21</sup> Collyer specifically looks at fragmented journeys in the Sahara; namely stranded migrants in Morocco trying to make it to the Spanish enclaves. Part of the reason for fragmented migration comes from the containment policies practiced by countries in the Global North, including effective immigration controls, which either forces asylum seekers and refugees from continuing their journeys from North Africa or forces them to take more dangerous journeys through smuggling and trafficking routes. However, countries in the Global South also buy into such restrictions through money received by countries in the Global North. Collyer also looks at how communication can have an additional impact on fragmented journeys, including social media, access to email, cheap mobile phones, and money transfers as they can increase the likelihood of

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<sup>21</sup> Collyer, Michael. Stranded Migrants and the Fragmented Journey. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 23, Issue 3, 1 September 2010, Pages 273–293, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq026>

lengthy overland migratory experiences. Access to such communication also means that migrants are not unaware of the dangers associated with fragmented journeys, but their situations oftentimes force them to migrate, regardless.

Access to increased communications is a large reason why the interviewees in this thesis have had increased fragmented journeys, prolonging what they assumed would be a quick transition to a country of resettlement. By knowing where it is safe or where it is not, asylum seekers are more likely to attempt to access countries of asylum which may not have any political or historical ties to their country from which they migrated. This is combined with the limited resettlement slots provided by countries in the Global North through UNHCR which institutionalizes the systemic containment policies. The exposure to fragmented journeys has forced the refugees to then be increasingly vulnerable to the dangers associated with such journeys and for them to justify why they either cannot go back to their countries of origin, or why they should go on to a country of resettlement as their entire refugee experience becomes prolonged. This thesis will argue that fragmented journeys can also be caused by states in the Global South who can no longer deal with the burden of increased refugees within their borders, especially for those who are viewed as refugees who enter political spaces. This affects how those refugees who experience fragmented journeys assemble their community structures.

It is through the refugee experience which consists of fragmented journeys that refugees can be placed into the space of the stranger in countries they viewed first as countries of transit, not countries of semi-permanent settlement, thereby occupying the category of refugee under a legal regime and the sociological category of the stranger. The sociological concept of the stranger was introduced by Georg Simmel in the early twentieth century in his essay entitled, *The*

*Stranger*.<sup>22</sup> For Simmel, the stranger is someone who, “comes today and stays tomorrow”, rather than a wanderer who “comes today and leaves tomorrow.” The stranger is also categorized not by their similarities, but by their differences, as that which is common pulls into focus that which is not. There exists always a difference between distance and closeness between the hosting community and those who are viewed as strangers.<sup>23</sup> However, the stranger is enveloped by the community and remains an essential segment of their new surroundings.

This articulation fits very well for refugees as being a registered refugee in the settlement phase of the refugee experience in today’s current political climate means that the chance to “leave tomorrow”, or to be resettled to a third country, is very low. By definition, refugees have also crossed an international border, and are therefore, not in their country of origin. The likelihood of having obvious differences to their hosting communities is larger, whether it be skin color, religion, language, or outward cultural differences. However, as they are part of the new communities, whether they want to be or not, this opens them up to a visibility which may be dangerous for them in this stage of the refugee experience and affects how they navigate the social of the city and their relationships to other people for their own safety.

To examine this century old text in a new light, in the more recent 2016 academic work *Strangers at our Door*, the late sociologist Zygmunt Bauman examines the current migration ‘crisis’ which has caused “moral panic in Europe” by looking at refugees as strangers to both Europe and the West.<sup>24</sup> Populist movements have achieved in both spreading mass panic amongst the general populace and influencing politicians and policies by playing off of the

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<sup>22</sup> Kurt Wolff (Trans.) *The Sociology of George Simmel*. New York: Free Press, 1950. pp. 402 - 408.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt. 2016. *Strangers at Our Door*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Polity Press.

differences of these so-called 'strangers' on the doorsteps of Europe, the very differences mentioned by Simmel which raises the tension between distance and closeness. As many countries in Europe are experiencing panic as the precarious lifestyle due to struggling economies and low unemployment rates take hold in certain countries, people become pitted against each other in a fight for resources, especially against the stranger from outside.

While this thesis is looking only at the refugee experience in the Global South, it can be argued that by looking at findings and research in Europe and the larger Global North, the experiences can also extend to the Global South itself. The average citizen can be afraid of the unknown, especially in countries which are experiencing fatigue towards refugees. This fear of those that are different causes the refugee to enter the category of the refugee in very particular ways for their own safety and mental stability. Communities in the Global South are also most definitely experiencing precarity in their day to day lives, as well-paying jobs are difficult to come by, resources are dwindling or non-existent, and the effects of such natural phenomenon like climate change mean that migratory patterns are going to increase internally, let alone the people attempting to come in from the outside to claim asylum, which they have a right to "seek and enjoy."<sup>25</sup>

However, by being in exile, the refugee has the opportunity to construct and assemble their communities in a new way that they would have been unable to in their country of origin, all problems aside. Perhaps no scholar is better known in describing this process than Liisa Malkki, whose work on Hutu refugees from Burundi was examined in her 1995 academic work, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in*

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<sup>25</sup> Edwards, A. 2005. Human Rights, Refugees, and the Right 'To Enjoy' Asylum. *International Journal of Refugee Law* 17 (2): 293-330.

*Tanzania*.<sup>26</sup> By using an ethnographic research methodology, Malkki is able to explain how in exile, refugees are able to construct a new national past, a history of a particular kind when they are both together, but apart from the large whole. She explains this using the theory of the mythico-history, which becomes a shared body of knowledge about the past among a particular community. This history, while not necessarily false, comes with a sense of purity about multiple histories which makes those on the outside as the enemy.

I draw on this theory in the beginning of this thesis as it explains how the stranger can adapt and reconstruct their past to better fit into their new categories and survive in their new and different situations. This will help to explain how strangers in exile can come together through shared histories, even if in the country of birth these connections may not have occurred naturally. What this thesis trace in a different light, however, is how refugees in an urban setting go through the process, where Malkki found this concept to feature more prominently in a camp setting, rather than an urban setting.

The refugee, as the stranger, also is able to question the very existence of the modern-nation state where they re-create themselves as both strangers and therefore, non-citizens. Therefore, the refugee is always in a process of becoming refugee in a city of transit or settlement as there may be no options for return or resettlement. Authors Jouni Hakli, Elisa Pasccui, and Kirsi Pauliina Kallio investigate how the refugee disrupts the very order of things by simply existing as a stranger, though they depend on the order of things to offer them protection. Therefore, in order to be helped, refugees must perform their newly given category. Within this category is the capacity to be attentive to such a position, the shared grievances they

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<sup>26</sup> Malkki, Liisa H. 1995. *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

have communally and to raise awareness of the inequalities and injustices they face so that they may mobilize either individually or collectively against these injustices.<sup>27</sup> This has been and continues to be seen amongst this community as they are extremely well organized in being attentive to their position within their host communities and as a member in the larger refugee community, as well as to their shared grievances. Through this organization, they raise awareness to the inequalities and injustices they face both through writing down their qualms and by protesting against said injustices. Through these modes of performing, the refugee can gain meaningful ways at “identity building and political agency” in countries where they can do little than live in the settlement stage of the refugee experience.<sup>28</sup>

This thesis will focus on this particular experience within the larger refugee experience as this political performativity can cause increased fragmented journeys due to how their performativity is viewed. For an example, by increasing their political performativity by protesting out front of UNHCR to air their grievances and believed injustices, the Darfuri refugees in Amman experienced increased trauma through deportation as their political performativity practiced was not accepted by the Jordanian states in which they found themselves as refugees, leading to their subsequent irregular migration to Egypt. Therefore, if the refugees who are already viewed as strange do not fit into their refugee category in which they have attempted to navigate in their new socials, they open themselves up to an increased visibility and vulnerability, the exact opposite goal of the overall refugee experience.

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<sup>27</sup> Hakli, Jouni; Pascucci, Elisa; and Kallio, Kirsi Pauliina. 2017. Becoming Refugee in Cairo: The political in performativity. *International Political Sociology*.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



## *Theoretical Framework*

By looking at two networks of individuals expanding from Jordan to Sudan to Cairo, and always in contact with one another through social media, this thesis traces the overall migratory experiences created by my interviewees through their own words, which have been fragmented journeys at their core. Therefore, the overarching concept used in this thesis will be on transnational migration. Transnational migration theory recognizes that refugees, and immigrants in general, are influenced by both their countries of origin and social networks across international borders.<sup>29</sup> This concept of transnational migration therefore calls for a reconstruction of the socials which these individuals inhabit. As the refugee occupies a space outside of the national order or sovereign states, their experiences should be understood outside these boundaries, as well. Not only are the Darfuri refugees in Amman and the Deported Darfuri in Cairo in contact with their family and friends back home in Darfur and those internally displaced within larger Sudan, but they are also in contact with those in other countries of asylum, like Chad, as well as with contacts and networks in their previous and current residing countries. The process of deportation from Jordan to Sudan added this additional layer to this transnational refugee experience, as those Deported Darfuris in Cairo after being smuggled from Sudan are in daily contact with the Darfuri Refugee in Amman, almost leading to a fear of missing out (also called FOMO) on the previous experiences of “transit” settlement which was originally of such complaint to them.

As these individuals exist both as strangers within the social and political contexts, they find themselves in a search for stability and safety. In this search they are in constant discussion

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<sup>29</sup> Levitt, Peggy, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2004. Conceptualizing simultaneity: A transnational social field perspective on society. *The International Migration Review* 38 (3): 1002-39.

between the invisibility and visibility as they navigate two superimposed categories, the refugee and the Darfuri. Within the first country of asylum, Bruno Latour's discussion on *Reassembling the Social*, can help us theorize how individuals who have similar, albeit different refugee experiences, can assemble together in communities.<sup>30</sup> For Latour, the social is never a fixed category, it is always in the process of assembling. Therefore, we need to look at how these heterogeneous elements are assembled anew in the becoming of the social. This is done by tracing new associations and looking at how they design their assemblages. I trace these assemblages of associations through my field work and interviews of refugees in Amman and Cairo. According to Latour, the social is a peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling. This describes how refugees in exile form their new communities, however, this does not happen in a vacuum. As with all individuals many objects, like houses, architects, mobile phones, the internet, and ideas can be seen as playing just as important role in creating social situations. Therefore, immigrations Immigration policies, the process of deportation, and the relationship to the government and UNHCR also play as big a role on how refugees in general assemble themselves, and is equally as important.

To go more in depth, Latour looks at ANT, or Actor-Network-Theory. This theory states that researchers need to look at the actors themselves, in this case the refugees being interviewed, to truly interpret what their collective existence has become as nothing can exist outside the relationships they have created. By being forced to establish connections and communities, one must "follow the actors themselves" in order to learn from their experiences and what methods they have used to fit together to bring them to the community structures they have assembled.

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<sup>30</sup> Latour, Bruno. 2005. *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. New York;Oxford:: Oxford University Press.

Using an ANT approach, this thesis traces the process of the actors themselves, as an analysis, will leave the defining and ordering of these categories up to the actors themselves, not the researcher, as the actors are always in process and not fixed. This is easy, according to Latour, as group formations leave many traces and are not silent but have spokespeople who speak for the existence of the group. This shows that migration itself is a social movement. These are the interviewees heard in this thesis.

As refugees cannot be viewed within the world of the nation-state, which gives them an irregularity as being outside the national order of things, it should be no surprise that the interviewees believed they were strangers in their new and ever-changing socials of Amman and Cairo. For many of the refugees interviewed, the idea that they were different was continuously brought up over and over again in the interviews conducted in both capital cities. The interviewees felt alienated by the surrounding host communities in both cities though they were very much a part of the communities, which sometimes manifested itself into dangerous visibility for themselves or their community members. This feeling of alienation is described by the theory of the stranger as introduced by Georg Simmel.<sup>31</sup> The stranger is someone who, “comes today and stays tomorrow” rather than an individual who wanders. As registered refugees with little chance at resettlement, their time in Amman or Cairo is not transitory, but rather stationary. While other demographic characteristics can alienate a person or group from the native population, like ethnicity, gender, or social class, the stranger is alienated from the native population due mainly to the country they migrate from. For those interviewed, there were indeed commonalities between them and their respective host communities, the main two being a shared language of Arabic and practicing the religion of Islam. These commonalities, though,

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<sup>31</sup> Kurt Wolff (Trans.) *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. New York: Free Press, 1950. pp. 402 - 408.

bring into focus what is not shared, namely, history and culture. It is the traces of their African histories which separates them from the native Arab population, where in all other differences follow.

This feeling of strangeness is both something internalized by the interviewees themselves and placed upon them by the resident population, due to their micro-level differences of first country of migration and their macro-level difference of being a refugee, a category outside the purview of the normal. This is due in part to the accepted normal state of things in the world of the modern nation-state, which is not without its criticism; which differentiates between citizens and non-citizens who are foreign. It should therefore come as no surprise that there exist different groupings of individuals as the normal order of things has categorized people into groups, namely, citizens and those who are not. As refugees, those interviewed are non-citizens with a dearth of rights which comes with such a title, even though they are privy to other rights under the international refugee regime. It is at this meeting point where it is made apparent that the refugee experience and fragmented journeys for the refugee from Darfur involves reconciling the simultaneous need for visibility and invisibility to survive in order to make themselves known to organizations to receive assistance to which they have a right, all the while protecting themselves from the outside sources who want to do them harm due to their perceived strangeness, as well as their refugee status, which is now viewed with suspicion.

Part of assembling of community structures in exile involves what Liisa Malkki describes by the concept of mythico-history.<sup>32</sup> This concept explains how those individuals, in this case refugees in exile, form a pure historical background in countries of asylum in the assembling of

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<sup>32</sup> Malkki, Liisa H. 1995. *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

their communities in exile. This concept looks at panels of narration for different topics, which are placed into different categories, like education or work. Malkki uses this concept as a tool by which to look at what her interviewees were saying, which could neither be entirely described as history or myth, but somehow both and neither, which she termed as mythico-history. Mythico-history is a “history of a particular kind”, which does not just depict or evaluate the past, but rather offers a, “recasting and reinterpretation of it in fundamentally moral terms.” The stories the Hutu refugees told to Malkki were likened to Bible stories and morality plays as they offered a “moral and cosmological ordering [of] stories” which would create a world in which stories and histories were classified to certain principles. These principles are important as they both help individuals make sense of the past and their current everyday lives by ordering and re-ordering social and political categories, as well as that which is good and evil.

This drawing upon Lisa Malkki understanding of mythico-history is important for this thesis as it fits in very well to the narrative of the refugees from Darfur who formed a “pure” Darfuri community in Amman in which it ordered certain principles to make sense of their traumatic past and their less than happy everyday lives in Amman. Those interviewed also discussed many principles of their past which were good, like culture and education, and those that were bad, like being forced to speak Arabic, even though this skill helps them in their lives of asylum. However, unlike Malkki’s findings that camp refugees form this purity rather than those “town refugees” who were able to assimilate within Tanzania, the social in which the Darfuri refugee in Amman enters makes it near impossible to assimilate. Therefore, the town social they find themselves in forces them to also create this purity in exile, much like the refugees who were in a Tanzanian refugee camp. This concept will be further explored in Chapter 2 when delving into the views of the Darfuri Refugee in Amman.

## *Methodology and Field Work*

This thesis traces the migratory experiences across borders of Darfuris in Amman, Jordan and Cairo, Egypt. In order to address the overarching research question, the entirety of the ethnographic interviews have been completed in the capital cities of Amman, Jordan and Cairo, Egypt where the groups reside. This thesis is based on field work and ethnographic interviews in Amman and Cairo in the Summer and Fall of 2017. For the in-depth interviews and participant observation, I looked at network of people I had met in Amman at the end of 2013.

In order to fully understand individuals from Darfur who occupy the socials of Amman and Cairo and who are predominantly asylum-seekers and refugees, information was gathered on how they view themselves as a community of individuals from Darfur who fled the collective trauma of genocide and how they interact with the other groups and the spaces within the same and always changing socials. In order to accomplish this, unstructured interviews were conducted for a few hours each time with interviewees who were already known to the researcher. Each conversation began with the question, “Who is a stranger” to understand where the interviewees place themselves and each other within the socials of Amman and Cairo. From there, other questions were deemed necessary to ask depending on the respondents’ answers. This form of interviewing was chosen due to its flexibility, which allowed the respondents room to talk freely about their personal beliefs and experiences in a one on one setting with the researcher. Interviews in Amman were conducted in the homes of the interviewees for reasons of comfort. In Cairo, interviews were conducted in the home of the researcher for safety considerations. By looking at the individuals’ answers to the initial question, which were not swayed by preconceived questions from the researcher forcing the interviews to go one way or

another, patterns and themes were deduced among the interviewees as a whole, in both socials of Amman and Cairo.

In addition to the one on one interviews, participant observation was carried out with the same interviewees, and with other interviewees who were a part of the same community networks. Such observation allowed for the possibility to witness how these individuals interacted with their environments around them, both in space and personal interaction. This room for observation allowed the researcher to see how the interviewees' beliefs were carried out in the way they lived their day to day lives. As both the Darfuris in Amman and Cairo find themselves in protracted situations with nowhere to go forward, and no way to return home as the targeted violence against their community continues, this participatory research looked at how the interviewees interacted with the assembled community members around them; how they navigated the complex and every-changing socials of Amman and Cairo; how they interacted within the communities they assembled themselves, and how their transnational fragmented journeys affect their overall experiences.

After the ethnographic fieldwork was completed, literature has been thoroughly analyzed to better understand the main theoretical frameworks being investigated in order to not force literature on the migrants' stories, but rather, letting the migrants' stories speak for themselves in the already pre-existing concepts and theories. The themes of embodying the persona of the stranger, refugee-hood, community, visibility and invisibility, trust and mistrust, and safety and survival were both heard and seen multiple times throughout the entirety of the ethnographic fieldwork and will be crucial in the upcoming chapters.

## *Structure of Thesis*

*Chapter Two: Memories of Darfur* explores in depth with the history of Darfur to understand a general background of the interviewees. Such information is included to show the complicated history amongst the tribal groups within the Western State, the history of Darfur within the state of Sudan, which has led to extreme mistrust between the interviewees and state, as well as how the Darfuri refugee in Amman has reconstructed their histories based off the known academic work published in English. It is important to note that history is assembled to events that matter to the states, in this case, that matter to Sudan. Therefore, the concept of the mythico-history will be introduced to show how the Darfuri Refugee in Amman was able to make sense of their past and present in order to assemble new community structures that support one another in exile.

*Chapter Three: Construction of a New Life- The Darfuri Refugee in Amman* explores how the Darfuri Refugee in Amman assembles community structures in the Amman social. Through this community, this chapter will examine how the Darfuri Refugee in Amman lives and navigates the city, what their relationships with themselves and others is like, and what their place is within the refugee category as seen by the international humanitarian community and the resident community members. When interviewed, the community had already undergone partial re-assemblage after the traumatic experience of losing almost half of their community members through the process of deportation. The deportation process will be introduced to show how the broken relationship towards Sudan and how the category of the Darfuri Refugee in Amman led those in exile in Amman to re-assemble anew for their own safety and survival.

*Chapter Four: The Deported Darfuri in Cairo* will discuss the trauma during and after deportation and how such experiences adds to the migratory journey by introducing a new



addition to their already fragmented journey. Once in Cairo, this chapter will explore how the community of the Deported Darfuri in Cairo underwent an additional re-assemblage due to additional fear and distrust of others in the new country of asylum. The deportation will also show the strength of the first community built in Amman and how this original community has led to a strong transnational network of friendships.

Finally, *Chapter Five: Inshallah, we will see you in Dafur*, will discuss the inherent worth of chronicling this group's story by asking the actors themselves how they assembled and re-assembled within their fragmented journeys. By using their words and their stories of "Darfuri Refugee in Amman" and "Deported Darfuri in Cairo", rather than only refugee, in the legal and political sense of the term, a visibility will be given to a group that now feels invisible to the international community and organizations who are the ones supposed to be supporting them on their fragmented, transnational migratory journey. This visibility, unlike that of the conflict in their country of birth or the process of deportation from Amman, will help give visibility to their stories without risk for further violence. This thesis will also allow for these individuals to have a space to practice the political agency they desire without having once again to take to the streets and risk themselves, again, in order to have their requests and demands heard.

## *Chapter Two: Memories of Darfur*

### *Introduction*

In order to examine how the Darfuri Refugee in Amman assembled such a strong community, it is imperative to first study the background of their multiple histories. It is important to note, though, that only English academic work was used in this thesis, and thereby missing information available in Arabic or local tribal languages is an unfortunate reality. At the end of the day, history is written by and for the victors, and in this case, by the state of Sudan, the elites, and the economically wealthy within Darfur. However, by using what is written and shared in multiple sources, this chapter argues that history has been reconstructed by the Darfuri Refugee in Amman in order to assemble a community in exile which is well-organized, supportive, and welcoming to all those who find themselves in a new stage of their migratory experience. The question of this chapter, then, is how does this *purity* happen in exile in order to assemble this community structure? In order to answer this question, the concept of the mythico-historical taken from the academic work of Lissa Malkki will be the guiding concept of this chapter.

### *Part One: Dar Fur, The House of Fur*

*Dar Fur*, the house of Fur in *Bilad al Sudan*, the land of the blacks. In order to understand where the Darfuri in Amman and the deported Darfuri in Cairo have come from during their extremely difficult and fragmented journeys is to understand where they began their journeys and how certain political and religious movements still influence their lives today. Occupying the most western part of Sudan, much of its history found in academic texts begins in the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when written recollections of memory and history were written down in English for the very first time. While some academics have attempted to go through the

previous oral history of the region, is it impossible to capture all of the memories that have been passed on organically from generation to generation. Examining history this way is also prone to a certain hierarchy, and is therefore, far from the perfect means to understand an old and long-standing region.

While the international community became acutely aware of Darfur after the start of the 2003 conflict which has been characterized as genocide, Darfur for most of its history lived in a complicated space, both unknown to most of the Global North in the past century, and sometimes overlooked within the state of Sudan, itself, for various economic and political reasons. It was not until violence began and was spread via the internet and media outlets that the Darfuris and their current history became known across the entire world.

While truly knowing its early history in the academic realm will be incomplete in this thesis, it is essential to examine some of the early histories to understand how it has continued in exile, while sometimes being re-constructed, as well. There is not a wide variety of English literature available on Darfur, thus this chapter relies heavily on the main books dealing with the subject that are available. What little academic English literature exists, that which does either discusses Sudan as an entire entity with a subsection on Darfur, regardless of the distinct Darfuri memory and experience, or focuses only on the conflict and violence the Darfuris have undergone throughout the past two decades, and not the everyday lived experiences of the individuals who together make up the western state.

### *Early Memory*

The early written memories of Darfur begins with the establishment of the Fur Sultanate by Sulayman Solong around the mid-seventeenth century. According to well-known academic Alex De Wall in his book, *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace*, before the establishment of

the Sultanate, the area which would eventually become Darfur was ruled by the Daju and Tunjur kingdoms, though the precise details of this time period is difficult to come across in written texts.<sup>33</sup> What has been transferred is that from the sixteenth century to present day, with the region boasting a mixture of many ethnic groups, with it being at time predominantly non-Fur.<sup>34</sup> In 1787, the Fur Sultanate expanded from its first boundaries eastward to the Nile River, which allowed those who lived in the region to open up from the commerce of Khartoum, namely from the merchants and traders who came to Sudan for trade for various reasons during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>35</sup>

Interestingly enough, Darfur, which now found itself on the crossroads between the Nile River and West Africa was home to many different migratory patterns, which was encouraged by the ruling class who believed migration was beneficial as the population was not large enough to fill the gap for needed manpower.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, early migratory patterns were essential to many people's way of life throughout the continent and the globe and were a natural aspect to many people's histories within the African continent. Darfur's new strategic position was also on the convergence of four major trade routes which opened up the region to a myriad of influences, including those of language and religion, namely Arabic and Islam, which had already been introduced to the region over the centuries.

Alex De Wall also speaks in his academic work of an agricultural and nomadic way of life, which adds to the influences of migration and trade, and helps in understanding the

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<sup>33</sup> De Waal, Alex. 2007. *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace*. London; Cambridge, MA;: Global Equity Initiative, Harvard University.

<sup>34</sup> Daly, M. W. 2010. *Darfur's Sorrow: The Forgotten History of a Humanitarian Disaster*. 2nd ed. Cambridge;New York;: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>35</sup> De Waal, Alex. 2007. *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace*. London; Cambridge, MA;: Global Equity Initiative, Harvard University.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

memories that many of the interviewees discussed. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example, Darfur saw the rise of Political Islamism and Arab Supremacism through migration. These two main influences have brought much hardship to the conflict that would define the interviewees' lives.<sup>37</sup> However, the beliefs of Arabization and Islam being unwelcomed to the region hold a more complicated nuance when stories are examined, and it is important to share a brief background of the influences migration had on the history of Darfur with regards to religion and culture, especially since those interviewed now find themselves as refugees in states that identify as Arab and Islamic.

### *Islam and Islamism in Darfur*

Alex De Wall discusses how Darfuris were known for their dedication to the Qur'an, often with many children memorizing it by heart, showing a love of the religion they were given over a long period of time.<sup>38</sup> Of course, it should be taken with a grain of salt that such dedication came from a pure place and not an economic one. If traders who supported your livelihood shared their religion, you would be likely to follow it for the economic benefits. In addition, the present-day dedication also speaks to an economic reality that is not known to all who reside in the region. Those who are able to send their children to religious school, or schools in general to learn Arabic, are more economically well-off than some tribes who are more nomadic and may be financially poorer. While my interviewees, who can all be considered middle to upper-middle class Darfuris due to their educational background, discuss an adhered to religion from Ethiopia that is as old as the religion itself, Islam was most likely spread throughout the state in a peaceful manner, overtime by those traders and migrants coming

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<sup>37</sup> Daly, M. W. 2010. *Darfur's Sorrow: The Forgotten History of a Humanitarian Disaster*. 2nd ed. Cambridge; New York;: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>38</sup> De Waal, Alex. 2007. *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace*. London; Cambridge, MA;: Global Equity Initiative, Harvard University.

through the region from Western Africa, rather than Arabia, though it is possible that some traders from North Africa and the Gulf played a small role in the influence and spread of Islam. It is interesting to note the memory of a connection with Ethiopia, as many of my interviewees have been questioned about their religious practices and their dedication to Islam by the Arabs they have encountered in Egypt and Jordan.

When Islam was beginning to spread more widely within Darfur, it was practiced in the expression of the Sufi orders, or *tariqas*, which is most generally associated by the outside world as the mystical and spiritual practice of Islam, rather than a strict and rigid interpretation. The main order brought by migrants to the Darfur state was firstly established in Fez, Morocco, by Sidi Ahmed al Tijani. Historians argue that by introducing Sufism to the Darfuri people, they were more willing to accept Islam, in general, as the spiritual practices associated with this manifestation of Islam, “suited the nature of Darfur peoples and its tribes, resulting in an amicable reception of the faith of Islam and increasing devotion to its tenants.”<sup>39</sup> Since many interviewees speak of the importance of the Darfuri culture which came to them before anything else, this argument holds weight. By adapting a religious tradition that more aligned with their culture, they would not lose the first gift from God, according to them, which is their culture. It is also most likely the case that they practiced Sufism in order to trade with the *tariqas* on their way to Saudi Arabia as it would be beneficial to practice the same religion as the traders to make the transactions easier.

Within the religious life in Darfur, one sees the history of migration as many pilgrims performing *Hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, made their way from West Africa through the region before heading eastwards to the Gulf. From the other side of the spectrum in the past century, if

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

someone from Darfur wanted to increase their knowledge of the religion past the Sufi practices given to them by the traders or the main tenants and Qur'anic teachings they learned in local religious schools, they would travel northward through bordering Egypt to attend Al Azhar University in Cairo, the leading center for advanced learning of Islamic study.<sup>40</sup> Naturally, this also was done by the wealthier Darfuris who had the financial means and infrastructure in place to send their children to school in Darfur, as well as Egypt to live and study.

While De Wall argues that Darfuris have had a fluid relationship with Islam in the past, with some even believing that drinking alcohol was an Islamic practice, there has in the more recent past been a rise of political Islamism.<sup>41</sup> However, by making it seem that fluidity was an anomaly instead of something practiced by different cultures who adapted a religion to their culture, I believe De Wall assumes that the norm for Islam is to practice only a strict, political interpretation, which is not necessarily the case, even by today's adherers even if governmental bodies portray a different story. De Wall also does not mention the economic background of those who practiced such fluidity, which also plays a part in how strict someone practices a religion. When discussing the political, political Islamism in Darfur has been written down starting in the 1940s and 1950s when students studying in Al Azhar University returned back to Sudan. This is the point within Egyptian Islamist history that the Brotherhood movement was being born out of its youth to a more substantial and established political movement in Egyptian society. It is from these returning students that the Brotherhood in Darfur was created, once again showing the influences of migration between Egypt and Sudan.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

From this creation in the 1940s throughout the 1960s, Darfur saw three general waves of political Islamism. As mentioned, the first wave began with returning Darfuris from Egypt who established the political parties. While this political reality was very much divorced from the Sufi practices well known to most of the region over centuries, as it adhered to a more strict interpretation of the Qur'an, it was able to gain a foothold. The second wave occurred when the established political parties began recruiting members in 1951, which then became loosely affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. This affiliation would later be dissolved in 1988. The third, and final wave, was when the Brotherhood held a successful election campaign in North Kutum, the first major political success for the party in Darfur.<sup>43</sup> The connection with Egypt, while extremely important, does little to shed light, though, on other more conservative countries, like Saudi Arabia, which also must have had small influence on Sudan due to their geographical location with trade and their importance in the Islam due to the location of Mecca and Medina. Therefore, it is important to see what has been discussed and researched, and what is not included in such literature. It was also beneficial for the Sudanese state to have Islam become politicized so they could use it as a tool for power, not necessarily something that was only spread organically for religious reasons by returning migrants.

The current Brotherhood, however, has also hastened the disenchantment of political Islamism amongst Darfuris due to its administration being ruled by the political and economic elites who returned from Egypt or those who came to the region from outside urban areas, also among the elites. While Darfur is on a cross-roads and has been privy to trade and commerce due to its geographic location, it is important to remember that vis-à-vis the modern Sudanese state it sometimes remains invisible to those in capital. Due to poor mismanagement and outright

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.



classism within the political movement, Darfur was left without proper development in most areas after the poor mismanagement from colonial rule, leading to large disparities within itself, regional disparities with other regions in Sudan, as well as marginalization from the central government in Khartoum, in addition to social and economic injustices, according to De Wall.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, with the rise of Arab supremacism and the current conflict inflicting unfathomable damage, many Darfuris have increased their already born disenchantment with political Islamism. Positively, this divorce has led some Darfuris to better organize for themselves, as well as shown the Darfuris how they were exploited, so as to not have it happen again. Such organization is difficult, though, as most form of protest is quickly quashed by government forces and its supporters, while advancement is difficult due to the ongoing conflicts and attacks in the region. Dr. Gibril Ibrahim Mohamed, the leader of the Justice and Equality Movement, has given a keen insight into the ways in which Darfuris have come to be wary of political Islamism and how they benefit from such wariness, even if the situation to do so may be extremely difficult.

Although the Muslim Brotherhood is the main group to advocate Islamism, all the other major parties claim allegiance to Islam and do rally followers under its banner. It is very important, however, that the Darfurians are not going any more to play the role of foot soldiers for any party, be it Islamist or not, internal or external. The degree of Darfurians' awareness of their fate and destiny is never as strong and clear as it is today. The armed struggle, with all its tragedies, has contributed to, and accelerated the level of awareness of deserved rights, as well as of the exploitation they have been subjected to for generations. They are not prepared to be fooled again.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

## *Arabism and Arab Supremacism in Darfur*

Sometimes coupled with a rise in Political Islamism is that of the rise of Arab Supremacism which has caused great pain for many Darfuris who ascribe themselves as having African roots, according to De Wall and Julie Flint.<sup>46</sup> There are somewhere between forty to ninety tribal groups that are known as they have emerged to play a role in the forming of the Darfur state beginning with the Sultanate, which for three centuries was independent and prosperous due to the infrastructure available for trade. However, this time was also marked by slavery, bloodshed, and violence due to many claims for ruling the region by brute force.<sup>47</sup> Independence came to an end in 1916 when Darfur was conquered by the British and later in 1917 it was absorbed into the British Empire which already dominated the rest of Sudan.

Arabs, as mentioned previously, had already a presence in Darfur due to migratory routes of traders, pilgrims, and scholars and had influenced the region through their economic structures. There was also a group of nomadic Arab Bedouin who came to live off of the land due to its lush grass and water reserves. Through intermarriage with natives, their numbers increased as did their tribal affiliations. At least four recognized Arab tribes were born out of these Bedouins, as they began to practice cattle herding and therefore gained political and economic power, giving them a say in the happenings of the region.<sup>48</sup> With many centuries of trade and migration, it would be hard pressed to find someone with pure African or Arab roots in Darfur. These beliefs stem more from multiple uses of history, rather than a genetic truth.

For the British, the main aim of having control over Darfur was to keep order in the larger scope of Sudan. To do this, the British formed a non-historical understanding of tribal

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<sup>46</sup> Flint, Julie, Alexander De Waal, International African Institute, and ProQuest (Firm). 2008. *Darfur: A New History of a Long War*. Rev. & updated. New York; London;; Zed Books.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

hierarchy and lineage, which ultimately placed the Arabs present in Darfur as superior to their African brethren, changing the hierarchical structures established by the people themselves. A 1922 book written by the intelligence secretary for the imperial British administration even discussed particular lineage histories which were not only inaccurate, but were thereby legitimized by the ruling British administration. By giving new rights to created tribes, land rights and the subsequent cutting up of land were introduced to Darfur on ethnic lines, causing issues amongst communities who had lived together for hundreds of years and had different economic and power structures.<sup>49</sup>

While relationships between individuals may have changed under the British, the invisibility of the Darfur state continued vis-a-vis the Sudanese state as it was often overlooked in terms of development. Not only were they invisible in the sense of the state, but their contribution to Sudanese civilization was often overlooked in favor of a Sudan/Khartoum-Egypt/Cairo historical narrative, which was one of increased Arabism, again due to economic power structures which could bring wealth and prestige to the economic and political elites. While the colonial British governor established an “Economic Development-Darfur Province” file in 1945, it did little to alleviate the isolation of the Darfur state, with only five entries appearing in the national archives from 1917-1950. Many Darfuris who were not given power and wealth by the British internally migrated in Sudan as there was no investment from the broken promises of development.<sup>50</sup>

Starting in 1917, the Darfuri population was assimilated into the larger scope of Sudan and Sudanese culture, which was not necessarily the same as their own, even if they were Arab. While some of the assimilation was indeed peaceful and unproblematic, problems did arise as

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

certain orthodox culture and religious practices were introduced, including the exclusion of some tribal women from public life, dressing in traditional Arab clothing, and the shunning of alcohol, which as previously mentioned, was seen by some Darfuris as an Islamic practice. For some, these differences not only introduced cultural issues, but economic as well, as many agricultural tribes relied on both men and women to equally work in the fields and once again affected those who held very little economic wealth and power.<sup>51</sup>

In the 1980s, the Darfuris facing these issues began to complain that this forceful way of life, be it defined as Arabism or Sudanization, was unsustainable as they were not granted equal political and economic rights. While the British were no longer there to assert their administrative rule, development was not much better than before for this group of people who held little power and now were faced with little to no services coming from Khartoum. The treatment by the government would only become worse over the coming decades for this group. An outright Arab supremacist political philosophy would take route during the same decade, with influences from Libya's former leader Muammar Gaddafi. In the late 1980s leaflets were distributed in Darfur from a group known as the "Arab Gathering" which claimed that the Africans had ruled Darfur long enough and it was time for Arabs to have a chance at ruling the state. This alarmed many Darfuris, as complementary audio cassettes also stated that Arabs held a majority of residents in Darfur, and if Arabs could not gain the control desired, they should take it by force and change the name of Darfur to something that showed Arab control, rather than being the "House of the Fur". While anti-African views had been held for some time in certain segments of Sudanese society, this was the first time Darfuris felt they were being called out by violence and outright inflammatory speech, according to De Wall and Flint.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Finally, with this rise of the Islamic governance in Khartoum, coupled with rising Arab supremacist views, an attack occurred in 1982 in Darfur when Arabs were told to leave their hostage situation freely, while Africans were killed on the spot, solidifying the power of the Arab Gathering and Arab supremacist views with little regard to some of the shared histories of the Arab and African Darfuris who relied on each other for centuries. This fearful time continued in 1987 with a letter from the Arab Gathering and certain elite Arab Darfuris, who later denied they gave permission for their names to be used, which once again called for political concessions from African Darfuris, as well as reasserting false narratives of the social make-up of Darfur to benefit a few.<sup>53</sup>

While Arab Supremacism started in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in Darfur, a prior complicated relationship with the Sudanese state will show that the African Darfuris, and non-elite Darfuris, always had a precarious relationship with the turbulent state, which was later exacerbated by neighboring wars, and especially by climate and development inaction and change, which finally culminated in the 2003 conflict which would further change the relationship to the Sudanese state for many Darfuris.

## *Part Two: Darfur and the Relationship to the Sudanese State*

### *Sudan under British Rule*

The relationship of the Darfur region within the context of the Sudanese state has always been a complicated story, even before the 2003 conflict began. According to journalist and historian Richard Cockett in his book, *Sudan: Darfur and the Failure of an African State*, Sudan is one of the “greatest humanitarian and political disasters of our age.”<sup>54</sup> While this chapter has already examined internal issues within Sudan, it is important to mention that many outside

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Cockett, Richard. 2010. *Sudan: Darfur and the Failure of an African State*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

forces have also played a role in Sudan's creation as "the turbulent state", one that has been embroiled in civil wars and other conflicts since its founding.

One facet of modern Sudanese history begins with the *Mahdi*, the spiritual founder, or guided one, of what would become Sudan, who established from 1885 to 1898 the Mahdiya, the precursor to Sudan. In 1898 the army of the Mahdi was routed by Imperial British forces, ushering in colonial rule. Perhaps the biggest colonial legacy of the British would be their supreme leadership imbalance between the administrative capital, Khartoum, and the rest of the country, particularly the Western State of Darfur, according to Crockett. The Sudanese Arabs who lived in Khartoum were therefore influenced to think of themselves as the elites over the other ethnically, religiously, and culturally different groups of people in the western and southern areas of Sudan who were difficult to reach due to there being no strong infrastructure built between the regions. This belief was enhanced through the relationship the British had with Egypt to the north, due to economic and trade benefits for the colonizers and the elites, entrenching the belief that Sudan should be seen as an Arab state to receive these benefits.<sup>55</sup>

As mentioned in previous sections, while Darfur was rich in certain areas due to trade and agricultural infrastructure, they needed to pay taxes to the central government in Khartoum, but many of the tribes received none of the rights or development that others areas did. While this is partially be contributed to geography as Darfur is a multi-day drive from Khartoum, it is also partially be contributed to a tension between the Arab and African populations within Sudan as the Arab tribes in Khartoum looked down on the African tribes in Darfur, regardless if they were fellows Muslims or not. It would also have been easy for the British to establish an infrastructure, as mentioned, so the distance between Khartoum and the region did not take a

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

multi-day journey. The British kept Darfur underdeveloped in many aspects, though, because they feared dissent to their rule if they educated the people, though they allowed some of the elites to educate their families.<sup>56</sup>

### *Post-Independence Sudan*

This way of governing did little to change post-independence in 1956. The famine in 1984 to 1985 illustrated just how far Darfur was from the minds of the elites in Khartoum, and some of the elites in Darfur who left, as the government attempted to suppress what happened on account of officials hoping information would take weeks, if not months, to arrive from Darfur. However, once people started arriving to the capital asking for assistance, the government announced the crisis, “The government hid it all (...) they did not even want to talk about the crisis, until people arrived in Kordofan or from Darfur, begging on the streets.”<sup>57</sup> One year later in 1986, the intelligentsia of Darfur who went to Khartoum to study published what would become to be known as the “Black Book”, a circulated publication which outlined the grievances of Darfuris against the central government, claiming that development money went only to Arab-Muslim tribes, with no development aid making its way west to Darfur.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to famine and gross oversight and mismanagement by the central government since independence, former Libyan leader Colonel Muamar Gaddafi had set his sights on Darfur in the early 1970s, wanting to unite the region with Libya in an “Islamic Pan African Region” which saw existing Arab-African tensions brought to the surface anew as different tribes fought for the best land and access to water. To the west, Chad, whose boundary with Darfur was always fluid, played into the tribal tensions and saw the rise of armed groups funded by Libya

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

which would facilitate what would become known as the *Janjaweed*. Finally, The National Islamic Front came to power in a *coup d'état* in 1989, with Omar Bashir becoming the new face of the government. This political change saw the intellectual class and the elites fleeing the country in droves, with the new government refusing any outside assistance or foreign aid for any internal problems. This became problematic once again for Darfur in the early 1990s as they faced a drought and famine once again, not even a decade after the 1984-5 famine. Islamitization and Arabization began swiftly throughout the educational system, leaving little room for ethnic, cultural, or religious differences as the government clamped down on their power. The new government also supported Gaddafi's dreams of an Arab expansion due to the economic and political benefits this would bring by placing people in power who suppressed the ethnic African tribes in Darfur through splitting Darfur into three administrative districts which made them minorities in their own lands, though some elites remained and those with the most land were still considered to hold the positions of power.<sup>59</sup> An attempted rebellion in 2002, coupled with the government-backed militias, in particular the *Janjaweed*, who would be given access to "light and medium weapons, communication, internal structure, and impunity", would feed into the start of the turbulence.<sup>60</sup> Finally, climate change needs to be noted as it has made a huge contribution to rising ethnic tensions between Arab and African tribes, which herded cattle and camels, respectively and now were moving to the agricultural land. For over three decades before the beginning of the conflict, environmental degradation led to the loss of arable land and the subsistence economy which propped so many Darfuris up, economically, leading to increased tensions due to loss of livelihood and internal migration which drew lines, ethnically. Climate

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Flint, Julie, Alexander De Waal, International African Institute, and ProQuest (Firm). 2008. *Darfur: A New History of a Long War*. Rev. & updated. New York; London;: Zed Books.



change also led to the elites of the capital and the north in exploiting natural resources away from the farmers and herders, causing more ethnic tensions.<sup>61</sup> All of these issues would set the stage for the conflict that would begin in 2003.

Many contributing factors have played into what would become the 2003 conflict in Darfur, a colonial legacy, neighboring and internal political shifts, purposeful oversight of areas outside of Khartoum, armed militias gaining a foothold within Darfur, and an attempted rebellion in 2002. For many of the interviewees of this thesis, the conflict is the defining moment of their lives and still affects their day to day lives in exile as they attempt to make sense of it. While many do not talk about the nights they had to flee their village as they say the memories are too painful and the stories unfathomable, the lead up to this violence characterized as genocide had been decades in the making. To date, over 300,000 people have died with a further 3 million displaced both internally and externally.<sup>62</sup>

It is therefore not surprising when one looks at past history to see why the relationship of the Darfur region to the Sudanese state is one of deep mistrust, especially for those who were not a part of the structural elite. Therefore, in exile, these Darfuri refugees band together to form a new history of their past, a type of “purity in exile”.

### *Part Three: The Mythico-Historical in Amman*

Throughout the entire duration of field work completed in Amman, Jordan, an interesting and curious issue emerged among the interviewees, that of re-constructing their history from its very beginnings. This re-constructing is used by the Darfuri Refugee in Amman for a few reasons. The first one being to make sense of what happened in their past lives in Darfur. While

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<sup>61</sup> Suliman, Mohammed. 1993. Civil War in the Sudan: From Ethnic to Ecological Conflict, *The Ecologist*, (23), 104-109.

<sup>62</sup> Cockett, Richard. 2010. *Sudan: Darfur and the Failure of an African State*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

talking about the past is still traumatic for many of the interviewees, with many apologizing that they could still not discuss the atrocities that occurred towards them, their loved ones, and their villages during the interviews, it becomes apparent through their discussions of the past that by focusing on certain panels of topics, like culture, life in the villages, and the multiple histories of Darfur as a whole, that they are working through what happened to them in Darfur. Another reason for re-constructing their history is to make sense of the present. For all of the interviewees, there is a sense of being stuck in Amman. As they await any news for UNHCR that resettlement may be possible, and in a miracle, that Darfur is safe for return, their dreamed of journeys have become fragmented. As they rely on one another for support during their halted migratory journeys, they also discuss certain topics which help them make sense of the way they are being treated by resident community members, like the spreading of Islam to Darfur or how they came to speak Arabic.

I used Liisa Malkki's use of panels, in which she categorized certain topics, or themes, which were brought up by multiple interviewees to better organize the multiple histories interlocutors were telling her. I personally focused on four panels for two reasons. The first reason is that these subjects were the ones most easily categorized when going over my field notes as interviewees brought up culture and the traditions in their past lives, how Darfur began and its importance in Africa and to the world, Islam, and Arabic multiple times, even in the span of shorter interviews or participant observation. While categorizing these panels in the field notes, it became apparent why these topics were so easily recognizable; they were the ones that were most important to making sense both their past and the present, which is an aim of the conceptual mythico-history. As these interviewees are survivors of attempted ethnic cleansing, their discussions on why it is so important to pass on a culture that they all agree on in exile

because extremely important for the next generation, especially for those who have given birth in exile. It is also important to remember traditions that were practiced before their migratory journey began and for them to pass on their historical traces in order for them to believe that those who wanted them gone, namely the militias and the government, did not succeed in killing them or their spirit.

In Amman, their treatment is less than welcoming by many resident community members. This is not to say that all Jordanians, for an example, treat all Darfuri Refugees in Amman poorly. However, the amount of harassment and racism experienced by them is too great to ignore. For the Darfuri Refugee in Amman, they focus greatly on what should bring them together with not only Jordanians, but the larger refugee communities of Syrians and Iraqis, as well. All of the interviewees practice Sunni Islam, as do the majority of the aforementioned groups. They also all speak Arabic, albeit with different dialects, but still easy to distinguish as a language that is accented to be better understood in their new social. These two topics, though, do not bring the Darfuri Refugee in Amman closer to the Jordanians, Syrians, or Iraqis. Rather, these two categories are questioned as being authentic, which in turn, makes the interviewees question what the beginning traces of them are within their own history.

It was easy to witness that across all interviewees a shared history from a believed consistent culture emerged that has contested what has been written in the previously mentioned academic works on Darfur. Yet by using the concept of the mythico-historical, one sees how it allows those living in Amman to assemble together in a community-setting which might not have existed in Darfur due to a myriad of reasons like economic differences, educational backgrounds, tribal backgrounds, and geographical proximity, to name a few. This new community, which is now a part of the Amman community, yet separate at the same time by the overarching belief

that they are strangers, gives a semblance of support and togetherness for the Darfuri refugee in Amman.

### *Beginnings*

After living in Jordan for three years before moving to Egypt, the Darfuri refugee in Amman always asks me what I think about living in Cairo. They know Egyptian history much better than Jordanian, which makes logical sense due to the geographical and historical intimacy shared by these two nations. Indeed, throughout history these two separate states used to be one with fluid boundaries. There is one interviewee in particular who knows a lot about history. Mahmoud is over 6 feet tall and incredibly thin. He's very smart and he asks me the questions on English grammar you do not want to be asked as a teacher because there is no explanation. He loves reading in both Arabic and English and is always quick to discuss Sudanese history, particularly because he does not believe any foreigner he meets knows anything about Africa, let alone Sudan. Every time I say something that he thinks is correct, he looks at me, shocked, though this happens more than a few times. "Ya Mahmoud", I say, "You know I studied history, I have told you before." "Yes", he replies, "But no one studies African history and you are always full of surprises", he says with the ever present glimmer in his eyes.

Mahmoud is good at trying to find parallels between things in order to help people fit his comments into a larger picture. He speaks a lot on this trip about Egypt since I live there and he believes it will make more sense to me if he uses comparisons. "Do you know, in Sudan, we have pyramids just like in Egypt? In fact, we have more pyramids than Egypt does. They're outside Khartoum, though, maybe a few hours' drive through the desert. You should go see them but not in the summer." I comment that it is a bit of a journey from Khartoum, much longer than going from Cairo to Giza. "Yes, everything is more difficult in Sudan", he says, laughing.

“You know when we would travel from Khartoum to our villages it would take us days, so really, a few hours in a jeep is not that bad.” Mahmoud, like many of the Darfuris in Amman, always attempts to find positives after first discussing the challenges. This, I believe, is the life of a refugee. Without looks for positives through all the challenges, people for sure would lose their minds.

More than one individual mentions the fact that Sudan has pyramids throughout my six weeks back in Amman to try and connect it to my living in Egypt. “Did you know, teacher, there are Africans in Egypt? The Nubians in Egypt are also in Sudan, they are a very old people.” This comment comes from Tajini, a man in his late thirties who walks up and down the steep and skinny staircases of his apartment and in Amman on crutches. When he was in Darfur, he was involved in a horrific motorcycle accident that broke most of the bones in his leg. He went to Khartoum to undergo surgery, but the surgery was botched and now one leg is shorter than the other. He went to the UN in Amman, but they said the corrective surgery would be too expensive so they did not want to pay for it. Every single day I come to visit he is always watching YouTube videos in English. He is shy when speaking, and is not as advanced as the others, but he is always trying to improve and is incredibly determined in absolutely everything he does to prove to himself that he can.

Of course, the information he shared comes to me as no surprise, historically. What did come as a surprise was the willingness, at first, to compare their country of birth to a country which considers itself to be Arab. Once I brought up the fact that Ancient Nubia was home to many of Africa’s earliest kingdoms, everyone in the small shared apartment chimed in that Nubian rulers had conquered and ruled Egypt for almost a century.<sup>63</sup> Mahmoud is very vocal on

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<sup>63</sup> "The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago." The History of Ancient Nubia | The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Accessed March 17, 2018. <https://oi.uchicago.edu/museum-exhibits/history-ancient-nubia>.

the subject. “Egypt has tried to wipe out any African history from its books. Look at the drawings they have now, why do the Ancient Egyptians look so white? They were African like us. Why are they trying to erase our history? They are not Arab. They only say they are Arab because they are getting money from the Gulf. If they were getting money from Africa, tomorrow they would change their name and everyone would say they were African.” Here we see the parallels with the research on British colonial rule enforcing the Khartoum-Cairo communication line as one that is Arab, while wiping out from the history books the contributions Darfur and other African areas in Sudan had on Sudanese civilization, and African history, in general. However, the interviewees are quick to claim their space in Africa where they believe they belong, not where they are strangers as they are in exile.

At once an agreement is made in the room that this is for sure the case, Egypt in collaboration with the central government in Khartoum has given preference to an Arab history, rather than an African one. Through their remembrance of Ancient Nubia, in particular the Kingdom of Kush who conquered Egypt, and the Sultanate of Darfur which was ruled by “strong men who fought for the Darfuri”, these individuals give credence to their African roots as a collective, though it may go against the more nuanced historical narrative. For these men in the room, they all share histories within Africa and these beginnings must be held onto as there is a collaborated effort to wipe it from the history books. They feel helpless because they believe no one will listen to their stories, “Please sister, please tell people what is happening.” These feelings relate to the invisibility that the Darfuri refugee in Amman and, subsequently, the deported Darfuri in Cairo feel internally. Through their collective experiences of migration, their constructed historical background in exile is built to show that in certain important instances they feel invisible.

“Did you see the photos”, Mahmoud asks me before English class one day, “Look at the photos.” Mahmoud proceeds to flip through a few photos on Facebook of Ancient Egyptian mummies. “Look at their hair, that’s African hair, you can see it so clearly. These people were African. You need to tell your friends in Egypt that they are in Africa and that what they are showing to tourists is African history. You can see it, right here!”

It is not just through the use of Egypt that they use as fact that they believe history has been re-written to wipe out African history from narratives that helps the Darfuri Refugee in Amman from making sense of their past experiences, but the fact that for some, the Darfur region is also the beginning of history itself. Ayman, my dear former student who is the first Darfuri Refugee in Amman that I met upon moving to Jordan in 2013 truly believes that Darfur is the birthplace of civilization. One of his What’s App photos shows a beautiful scenic view which I assume is from Darfur. I comment to him one evening at him and his wife’s house that I very much like the photo as it shows so much greenery, a rarity in Amman. “It is a picture from a part of *Jabal Marra*”, Ayman tells me. *Jabal Marra* is a part of dormant volcano peaks that hold much importance in Darfuri folklore and history. “Some studies have said that really this is the place for beginning of the human race.” I must have looked surprised, “I thought that was in Ethiopia”, I commented, “I remember when I visited Addis Abba that I saw Lucy [deemed the ‘grandmother of humanity’] in the museum.” “Yes”, Ayman commented, “Well it will need more research for sure. It’s not safe to go back and do research right now, but when we go back, someone should do so. I am trying to do something here, but it’s very hard to find sources, it’s Jordan, Elena! I am waiting to get from here. The situation is killing us mentally.” It is no surprise that when they individuals feel forgotten and invisible that they speak about their lives and histories with a storied importance, sometimes even with a story that would begin all stories.

Even when discussing histories and the past with an aim of explaining it, it is also usually in the context of going back to Darfur to find out more about where the Darfuri Refugee in Amman came from and how they disseminate their historical traces to others so they know its importance, and therefore, their importance as human beings when they are usually viewed as the outside and the stranger, only.

### *Culture*

Many of the Darfuris in both cities, Amman and Cairo, spoke of religion as a second-hand importance when it came to preserving their culture. For them, culture is defined as the languages they speak, the dances they perform and the songs they sing at wedding and birthdays, their ideas of a shared humanity where everyone is treated with respect, the baskets and cloth the woman make in the traditional ways, the food they eat and share with one another, and the ways of visiting one another in the evening after dinner time to converse and drink tea. In essence, culture for them is anything they pass on to the next generation, particularly the generation born in exile who has never known Darfur. Culture, as I understand it from the interviews, is important not only for the people speaking of it, but for their friends, spouses, children, and for those who are not yet born in order to trace the beautiful and important aspects that have been accomplished by this particular group of individuals over centuries.

While all of those interviewed identified as Muslim, they all believed that the traces of their cultural beginnings were more important than their religious traditions. A Darfuri refugee in Amman said, “Culture was given to us by God, every people has a culture, you do not find someone without a culture. Religion came after and it has divided us. While I am a practicing Muslim, my culture is the most important thing to me.” This was echoed by another refugee in his early 30s who now has a small daughter, “You can convert to different religions, but you can



never lose the culture you were given by God.” While not mentioned, these beliefs may have to do with the rise of political Islamism in Darfur which marginalized many people. No longer were traders of the same religion coming to bring economic benefit, but their practiced religion was being exploited by elites for power, which did not involve them.

Even for the people interviewed who were not of the Fur tribe, which is the predominant background of the interviewees, they spoke of a “Darfuri” culture which was of utmost importance to preserve, which may not have necessarily existed within the region prior to migration. “Of course there are other tribes in Darfur”, Suliman, a quiet man who does not speak much English and usually converses with me in Arabic. Suliman always comes back late from working long hours and looks tired whenever he sits down to the nightly dinners in his shared apartment. “The differences in tribes though were if you were a cattle tribe or a camel tribe. Really this is it. Our cultures are similar, though. I can’t speak Gasim’s language, but I can understand it and he can understand mine. That is important.” It is this mutual understanding, though often not spoken of directly, which makes the interviewees feel connected, supported, and cared for in a land they do not view as their own. Any connection, besides that of the land or their birth, now takes on a greater significance.

Darfur was an area of great diversity and continuous migratory patterns, giving a home to people who spoke different languages, practiced different livelihoods, and had their own customs and traditions. In Amman, as in Cairo, this diversity comes together in a shared constructed culture which allows for support during difficult times and in times of celebration. One Jordanian shopkeeper in *Jabal Amman* noted, “The Sudanese take care of one another better than anyone else in this city. If someone passes away, they all come together to grieve, and if someone

marries, they come together to celebrate. They also provide each other with financial assistance, no questions asked. This is how Amman used to be before we became a culture of individuality.”

My former student Idris speaks of how woman are important to keeping the cultural traditions alive for the next generation, as they have done for generations prior. “Women make the baskets, I can show you a video, but surely you have seen. Women cook the food back home and they help us farm. On certain days the women go to the markets to sell what they make for money. Really, it is women who do everything. Men are just silly. We try to do things now, like cooking for ourselves, but there are some things that are impossible. I can’t weave a basket or do the dances that women do. It’s important that we all work together to keep our culture alive.”

The idea that women carry on the culture is interesting in two aspects. The first being that women were becoming ostracized from certain places in the economic life of Darfur, disrupting the agricultural way of life and showing the important role women carried in the society before changes were forced upon some segments when everything was better and figured out and completed internally. There are also not very many women in Amman as those who are already there came married, came to marry a specific person, or are young. By speaking of their importance in this way, it is almost like these men are lamenting about the old ways of life that they know will never be the same, but can still be dreamed of in their multiple memories to have hope for the future that can still be conceived and birthed.

The main aspect of Darfuri culture that was brought up multiple times by many interviewees is how treating other people with respect was fundamental to Darfuri culture, as it was seemingly not fundamental to the cultures they now found themselves a part of as stranger stuck in limbo. Salim, a younger gentleman in his late 20s with a new baby boy discussed this the first time I met him. “The best way to keep our culture alive is to treat others with respect and

a shared sense of humanity. This is fundamental to our identity, we can't lose this." Ayman puts this comment into perspective in his current situation by being able to amend for the past. "One day we will return to Darfur. We will return to the land that was stolen from us and we will treat others like human beings. Imagine one day, the Jordanians will need to leave their country. We will welcome them into Darfur, even though they do not welcome us now. We will show them how human beings are supposed to be treated. How God wants us to treat one another. All people need to undergo a humanity training" Abu Fatima who also looks at his baby daughter when he speaks about humanity adds onto this point. "There is no concept of humanity here and there is not concept of humanity in Darfur. When we return, God willing, we will bring the concept of humanity back." Not only is their culture important, but it is superior to those they now live with because it inherently treats everyone equally. This is not something they see in their religion in exile, I believe, because they cannot fathom the way in which they are being treated in the mosques by fellow Muslims.

For the Darfuri refugees, culture is incredibly important to keep alive as it was almost taken from them back home in Darfur. By keeping it alive and being able to pass it down to generations, they will be able to deal with the past in which it was attempted to be forcibly removed from them. They also believe it will allow them, in the future, to help those who may end up in the same situation in which they find themselves to show they survived in order to show others how to live. Their culture treats themselves and others as equals, where their religion, in exile, treats them like the others and the stranger.

### *Darfur*

Ask the question, what is Darfur like to the Darfuri refugee in Amman, and you get seemingly similar answers from a group of approximately fifteen men in a cramped living room

on a hot summer evening. The fan is moving slowly from side to side, but the sweat is hard to get rid of. It should be noted that these fifteen men did not know each other before coming to Amman, nor are they all even from the same tribal background or speak the same tribal languages. They met each other through other contacts they first made when they arrived to Amman as they all came to the country around the same time in 2013. Yet, when they speak of Darfur, it is of a pure and happy place of bliss with perfect weather, abundant agricultural land, clean water and green mountains, fresh air, delicious fruits and vegetables, and shared community spaces where everyone would come together in the evenings to share their days of hard work farming in the fields and success.

“The weather is perfect all year long”, Mahmoud tells me. “It is never too hot or too cold, it is always warm. It is not like Amman. Other parts of Sudan get very hot, Khartoum can reach 50 [degrees Celsius], but Darfur can’t reach this high. It rains sometimes, and then everything is so green. I like the rain in Amman to be honest. I know the roads are blocked sometimes, but the feeling reminds me of Darfur. It’s the only part of the weather that reminds me of Darfur.”

“Everything [is] green”, Tajini tells me. “Not like Amman, everything [is] brown.” “My God”, Abu Bakr exclaims. Abu Bakr just got married and all friends tease him that marriage really has made him quite soft. “The fruits and vegetables in Darfur were delicious. I could go to a tree and get the fruit and eat it directly. Here, the fruits have no flavor at all. It’s not like Darfur at all. I wish I could live next to those trees again.” “In Darfur”, Ayman tells me, “The kids behaved in school, unlike here. You would never find a kid causing trouble. If they were and our parents found out, they would punish us. I have a friend here from Britain who teachers and she

hates it. If she were in Darfur, the kids would behave for her, no problem!” As a former English teacher, it sounds tempting, though I doubt this is the reality.

Perhaps, on a case by case basis these perfect memories are indeed the ones carried by these individuals and the experiences that they remember the most vividly. It is the part of their previous lives which they want to make known to an outsider, someone who has never been to Darfur, someone who could see the beauty of a long lost love. Yet these memories also leave out many difficult the issues that arose in the region; fighting over agricultural land, droughts, famine, orthodox customs which gained a foothold in certain areas and changed farming rituals, and inter-tribal conflicts which were sometimes settled through violence. I do not think not discussing these points is out of embarrassment of a complicated history, but rather the need to suppress traumatic events from a time they view overall as being much better than the exile they currently inhabit and to sweeten and color their difficult bitter and gray lives in exile.

### *Islam*

While the Darfuris interviewed do not speak of being forced to adhere to the tenants of Islam, as was shown historically in previous sections, many believe that the current culture of Islam has no room for non-Arabs and do not feel they receive equal treatment as other Arab Muslims who have found exile in Amman. For the Darfuri Refugee in Amman, they adhere to Sunni Islam and outwardly, to me at least, pray five times a day, fast during Ramadan, and name their children traditionally Islamic names, though many also have a traditional tribal name, as well. I did not, as mentioned in some of the academic texts, see any types of Sufi practices or former culture customs interwoven with their practice. Though their adherence is very similar to the other groups of Muslims who are present in Islam, they feel like they are not welcome in the greater Muslim community.

“The *Ummah* has no place for us. Where were the Muslims when we were being slaughtered in Darfur by other Muslims? Where are the other Muslims here in Jordan to help us? You know, I went to the mosque a few days ago and someone came up to me after prayers and asked me if I was Muslim. Can you believe it, right after I prayed next to him during Friday prayers!” This sentiment was also expressed by the deported Darfuri in Cairo, who had similar stories about being asked if they were Muslim in Cairene mosques. Through the discussions on Islam with various interviewees, it became apparent that the Darfuris in both cities believe they practice a truer version of Islam than the Arabs do, one that “cares for other people who need help.” However, the histories of Islam in Darfur came from many places and different people, taking influence from ancient cultural customs and traditions which were not necessarily in adherence with Qur’anic teaching. While many of the academic works discuss Islam coming to Darfur from Sufi *tariqas* and their traders from Morocco on their way to Mecca for pilgrimage, some Darfuri refugees believe their religious traditions are much older than any Arab they have come into contact with, making it closer to what they believe is true Islam. “Actually our Islam comes from Ethiopia”, Khamis says. Khamis is not of the Fur tribe, but gets along very well with the men in the *Jabal Amman* apartment, who are all of the Fur tribe. “You know, during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, there were people who had to flee Mecca to Ethiopia because people did not believe their religion was true. They found safety in Ethiopia and then many people in Ethiopia thought this was a sign and began to believe in Islam. Islam quickly went from Ethiopia to Sudan and Darfur after this very early on in the Islamic calendar. When the Moroccans came, or anyone from Western Africa, they already found us practicing Islam. They did not need to teach it to us, we already knew, and that’s why they

wanted to trade with us. We knew even before the people here. They say we can't be Muslims but we knew the truth of Islam before them.”

Their beliefs about practicing a more peaceful and welcoming version of Islam, coupled with the belief that their practice is older than the surrounding communities, shows a belief in purity which helps them navigate the spaces of their religion which they are no longer welcome. In particular, this can be applied to the mosques that some of them choose not to frequent unless it is a holiday.

### *Arabization*

Unlike when speaking of Islam or culture, the Darfuri refugee in Amman and the deported Darfuri in Cairo is quick to say that they were forcibly Arabized and that it has ruined their lives ever since, especially in their lives of exile. Usually the conversation begins when I, as a researcher, make a comment that it is good they speak the same language as the Jordanians and Egyptians, their resident communities. It is also a language that connects them to other refugee communities in these cities as well, which maybe gives a sense of solidarity. Everyone interviewed then scoffs, “Arabic is not our language, it was forced on us”, says Ayman. Abu Fatima agrees, “Arabic is not my language. You know, even in the streets people make fun of us and tell us they can't understand our Arabic. Well of course, the accent is different, just like your accent is different than the Syrians. But we are not treated as well as the Syrians. Look, I know the Syrians have problems with the Jordanians, but we are treated on a level they can't imagine.”

Abu Fatima looks down at his young daughter who is playing on the floor next to my legs when I visit their small basement apartment. “My daughter will grow up speaking Fur, that is her language, not Arabic. She will learn Arabic on the streets, I cannot deny this, but in our house, she will speak *her* language.” His wife, who has joined us from her bedroom nods her head in

agreement, “I speak to her in Fur. She needs to learn it from me, I am her mother.” Interestingly, though, when in large groups, all those interviewed speak Arabic as their language of communication, as they all understand it due to their religious and educational backgrounds, which speaks to their middle-class upbringings in which they were able to attend religious schooling. “The women in my RSD [Refugee Status Determination] interview told me I couldn’t speak Arabic because she didn’t understand me. I was speaking to her very clearly and not using many Sudanese slang words. Still she told me she didn’t understand me. They don’t even take our Arabic seriously, so, really, it doesn’t matter if we speak Arabic or not, it doesn’t help us”, Idris tells me one evening when remembering a visit to UNHCR.

The Arabs have also been categorized by the Darfuri refugees as the enemy, that which they have never been able to shake in their past, and now no longer get away from in their present lives of waiting for resettlement or to return to Darfur. They have attempted to erase their history, systematically kill them, and now do not provide them with proper support in their status as refugees even though they share certain similarities which most people would believe should bring them together. In tandem, they feel both extremely visible, and vulnerable to the Arabs, due to their differences, while at the same time, they feel highly invisible in their current status as refugees because they are viewed as the stranger no matter how many similarities they may share.

#### *Becoming the Darfuri Refugee in Amman*

Throughout the construction of a shared historical background on certain categories of topics, the refugee from Darfur in Amman becomes the Darfuri Refugee in Amman and is able to better assemble into a tight-knit community structure. They do this by re-writing a new chapter in Amman and by editing previous editions on their migratory experiences to better suit



their current circumstances. Indeed, this journey has not been linear but fragmented, and different situations could change it on a day to day basis for better or for worse. Their need to resort to such coping mechanisms, whether they are aware or not, comes from the previous experiences in Darfur and the need to stabilize their lives to some semblance of normalcy in exile in a city where they are not overtly welcome. As Malkki states, “the present is a catalyst of the mytho-historical.”<sup>64</sup> As will be examined in *Chapter Three*, this is truly seen within the assemblage of a community structure by the Darfuri Refugee in Amman, which, as will be shown in *Chapter Four*, will then be carried over by the Deported Darfuri in Cairo.

### *Conclusion*

By re-constructing a history through different categories, the Darfuri Refugee in Amman was able to both make sense of their past which was filled with complications, turbulence, and violence, while also attempting to make sense of their future, which is fragmented in wait for resettlement or eventual return to Darfur. This re-construction, in turn, has assisted the Darfuri Refugee in Amman, and the eventual Deported Darfuri in Cairo, in assembling strong community structures based on their own similarities of background, experience, and shared history, which helps them as a community to support and assist one another, all the while, helping them live lives in the safest way they can in their socials.

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<sup>64</sup> Malkki, Liisa H. 1995. *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## *Chapter Three: Construction of a New Life-The Darfuri Refugee in Amman*

### *Introduction*

Through the process of re-constructing multiple histories, namely through the concept of mythico-history, the Darfuri Refugees in Amman have reconstructed the known historical narratives of their past, vis-à-vis the Sudanese state. This chapter will ask how this community, which came together in this re-constructed shared background, is assembled and re-assembled by using the Actor-Network-Theory described by Bruno Latour in *Reassembling the Social* and why the concept of the stranger, introduced by Georg Simmel, is of importance to this assembling and re-assembling. In order to do this, a brief introduction to refugee status and the city of Amman will be highlighted to understand the social in which this community resides. After this is done, analyzed field work will let the actors, namely the interviewees, discuss how they first assembled in Amman upon arrival. They will then describe what life is like in their assembled community and how they are always in a simultaneous need to be invisible to the resident community and visible to the international organizations due to their status as the stranger, and how they support one another through this process. Finally, the interviewees will discuss what life is like after needing to re-assemble post-deportation.

### *Part One: The Refugee Experience in Amman*

As of June 19, 2017, 17.2 million individuals have refugee status under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) mandate, with an additional 5.3 million under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).<sup>65</sup> Out of this total number of refugees, approximately 84% of these individuals are

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<sup>65</sup> United Nations. "Figures at a Glance." UNHCR. June 19, 2017. Accessed March 20, 2018. <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

currently living in the Global South.<sup>66</sup> The UNHCR mandate reflects the legal definition of who constitutes a refugee stemming from the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*<sup>67</sup>, hereafter *Convention*, and the preceding 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*<sup>68</sup>, hereafter *Protocol*.

For the Darfuri refugee in Amman, the refugee status has been granted directly by UNHCR as Jordan is not signatory to the 1951 *Convention* or its subsequent *Protocol*, and has therefore abdicated its sovereign right to assign refugee status to UNHCR. In order to gain status, an applicant must fall under the legally accepted definition of, “Any individual owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it”<sup>69</sup>, during a series of refugee status determination interviews where they must perform their stories of trauma. For any individual who fits the ascribed criteria and gains status comes a host of rights. The main one is the principle of *non-refoulement*, or the right to not be sent back to the country you first migrated from, even under emergency status in the country of asylum.<sup>70</sup> Though the term *refugee* denotes

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<sup>66</sup> Edmond, Charlotte. "84% of Refugees Live in Developing Countries." World Economic Forum. June 20, 2017. Accessed March 20, 2018. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/eighty-four-percent-of-refugees-live-in-developing-countries/>.

<sup>67</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html> [accessed 20 March 2018]

<sup>68</sup> UN General Assembly, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 31 January 1967, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 606, p. 267, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3ae4.html> [accessed 20 March 2018]

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> UNHCR. "Refugee Definition." UNHCR|Emergency Handbook. Accessed March 20, 2018. <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/95331/refugee-definition>.

a legal status with an international legal regime behind it, it is also a powerful label which people presuppose values, ideals, and judgements on individuals who are each unique.<sup>71</sup>

After fleeing their country of birth, Sudan, which offered them no protection, on the contrary it assisted in instigating the 2003 conflict which still sees flare-ups to this day, and having seen the abhorrent treatment of Sudanese refugees in neighboring African countries, with at least 20 protestors dying outside the UNHCR offices in Cairo, Egypt in 2005, for an example,<sup>72</sup> the group of Darfuri refugees in Amman decided to board airplanes after months, and sometimes years of monetary saving and escaping violence, to head to the small Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. What they found awaiting them was a city of refugees in which they were not welcome.

#### *Amman: The City of Refugees*

Amman is a city of refugees. While ancient Rabbath Ammon and Philadelphia may date back centuries, modern day Amman is rather young, established as the capital of The Emirate of Transjordan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Denoted as the city of seven hills, which now encapsulates nineteen hills and its surrounding areas, this young capital has been in its infancy a place of refuge for people fleeing violence and conflict.

Before Amman became the capital of the Emirate of Transjordan it was a safe haven for two groups which still reside within the city limits today: the Circassians and Armenians. When Jordan was dominated by the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century, the Ottomans welcomed fleeing Circassians from the Russian Empire who were no longer welcomed by the

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<sup>71</sup> Zetter, Roger. 1991. Labelling refugees: Forming and transforming an identity. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4 (1): 39.

<sup>72</sup> Whitaker, Brian. "20 Killed as Egyptian Police Evict Sudanese Protesters." *The Guardian*. December 31, 2005. Accessed March 20, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/dec/31/sudan.brianwhitaker>.

Christian rulers on account of their Muslim heritage.<sup>73</sup> Armenians also are another group who migrated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These individuals were welcomed to the land as they were pushed out by the Ottoman Empire during what most scholars agree was a genocide.<sup>74</sup>

The largest contemporary migration flows can be looked at from the time when Palestinians who fled across the Jordan River after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 sought refuge in their neighboring state. Their decedents now have Jordanian citizenship and mainly reside in the capital of Amman, crediting themselves with building up the capital into the city it is today.

Truly, these Palestinian flows changed the power and economic structures within Jordan.

However, those Palestinians from the Gaza Strip who fled to Jordan after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War have not been granted Jordanian citizenship and reside in camps within Jordan, the largest being in the city of Jerash.

Since the late 1980's and early 1990's waves of other neighboring communities have been creating new lives in Amman. The foremost being Iraqis who have fled across the neighboring border in waves beginning heavily with the first Gulf War. Their flows are usually on account of their socio-economic status, with the richest moving first as their wealth allowed them to gain rights from the Jordanian government short of citizenship and gave them the original status of "guest". Preceding waves came during the Second Gulf War and in 2006 following the aftermath of the US invasion. Migrating in waves is also the case for some Syrians who fled before the Syrian Civil War and were able to gain residency and the right to employment, opening up popular restaurants within the capital of Amman, with the many waves coming after 2011 having to register as refugees under UNHCR in order to access needed

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<sup>73</sup> Shami, Seteney. *Displacement, Historical Memory, and Identity: The Circassians in Jordan*.

<sup>74</sup> Derderian-Aghajanian, Ani. 2009. Armenians' Dual Identity in Jordan. *International Education Studies* 2 (3).

survival assistance and the opportunities of possible durable solutions, which are resettlement, integration, and voluntary repatriation.<sup>75</sup>

Like the newer waves of Syrians and Iraqis, many migrant groups gaining refuge in Amman in the last fifteen years have been fleeing contemporary conflicts which show no signs of abating and which have disallowed them to gain as much assistance as certain groups, prior. These groups include African migrant communities of Darfuris and Somalis, with Darfuris constituting the largest, and most well-organized African migrant population in Jordan.

While the majority of Darfuris are displaced within Sudan, with others having fled to neighboring Chad and Egypt, a small proportion have entered Jordan via the Queen Alia Airport servicing Amman. These individuals apply for asylum through UNHCR immediately upon entry to gain access to assistance, medical care, and the slim possibility of resettlement to a third-country, which is their only hope in order to continue on their refugee experiences. Unlike the other refugee communities residing in Amman, the migration of Darfuris to Jordan is rare due to there being no longstanding historical or geographical ties binding the two states together. This has made their life in Amman extremely challenging. Being a refugee already puts individuals outside of the accepted norm of things as they are not citizens within a nation-state. Being a refugee from a country that has no relationship with the host state places the Darfuri refugee in Amman in a second category which affects their day to day lives equally, that of the stranger.

#### *Part Two: Assemblage and Invisibility and Visibility in Amman*

The Darfuri refugees in Amman have come together and assembled in community with other Darfuris in exile. They do this within the city of Amman, which is about connections and relationships both with each other and within the larger social Amman fabric.

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<sup>75</sup> United Nations. "Solutions." UNHCR. Accessed April 06, 2018. <http://www.unhcr.org/solutions.html>.

My journey to visit my friend Ayman two days after my arrival in Amman is much expected, as he is the first person I contacted after landing. He lives two hills over from me, and as I sit in the bright yellow taxi going up and down the well-known routes through the well-known numbered traffic circles, I wonder what he will have to say after more than a year apart. The taxi driver does not totally understand Ayman's directions on the phone and leaves me off at the bottom of the hill in the East Amman neighborhood of *Jabal al-Akhdar*. I am unsure to go left or right, as there is a fork in the road, but I am very much aware of my strangeness to all passerby who slow down their walking to stare. While other areas of Amman are now used to foreign residents and visitors, many still do not venture to East Amman and my clothes and Arabic accent are a dead giveaway that I am not from here. After going left past many pro-Palestinian banners and small shops when I was supposed to go right, I finally see my dear friend coming down the hill towards me with the huge smile on his face that could literally light up a room.

Well dressed in a blue button down t-shirt and slacks, Ayman has not changed one bit, in fact, I think he looks younger than I remember him. He is in his early 30's, but could easily pass for a decade younger, especially when he dresses down in jeans and a t-shirt. He is well educated, having studied previously at the University of Khartoum, the largest and oldest university in Sudan, and speaks excellent English. As we make our way up the steep hill, huffing and puffing just a bit, I am cognizant of the eyes on the two of us. No one says anything to us, and Ayman even greets a few of the shopkeepers, but I am very cautious of being overly friendly. It will be better if I am not memorable. As we finally get to Ayman's building we make our way down, down, down the circular staircase to the very bottom apartment. As we ring the doorbell and Aisha, Ayman's wife, checks to see that it is him before opening the door, we

slowly make our way inside to go through all the greetings. Ayman then sits down on a couch in his basement floor apartment, hands clasped as he usually does when he is ready to talk. His wife sits across from him on another couch, switching between watching Egyptian soap operas and making her way to the kitchen to cook a traditional Darfuri dinner of *Asida*, or porridge with flavorful dips served in beautiful and colorful baskets that were made by her grandmother. The art of basket weaving is important for certain areas of Darfur as women use colored dyes to make and sell baskets at the local markets, giving the baskets in exile a new meaning to something that might have been seen as a mundane object in their former huts of residence. I instantly remember all the photos my friends send me on Facebook Messenger. Usually when I speak to any of my Darfuri friends from Amman or Cairo they end their conversations by sending me photos of their villages, rivers, baskets, and fruits that are native to their area, items of their culture. I have always loved the baskets though, as their colors and patterns are stunning and their use, highly practical. Ayman jokes that he no longer has cooking rights after I tease him that he is not helping with dinner, as I know that he cooks. “You know, I was cooking a few weeks ago while I was studying for my English exam. I forgot something on the stove while I was doing my homework, and all of a sudden I smell smoke. The entire apartment was filled with smoke”, he tells me while he and Aisha laugh. “Yes”, Aisha says, “He cannot cook with me anymore after this, he can only make tea.”

I have known Ayman since I first arrived in Jordan in Fall 2013 when I met him and his friends on the bus to go to English classes in the nearby neighborhood of *Ashrefiyah*, but this is this first time I have met his lovely wife, whom he married remotely in the summer of 2016 right after I left to move to Egypt. Aisha came, like Ayman, from being internally displaced in Darfur during the conflict, making her way to Khartoum, and eventually onwards to Amman via an



airplane where she gained refugee and marriage status. They had met in college in Khartoum eight years prior, and since their cousins knew each other and put in a good word for one another, they knew it was possible to be married in the future within their cultural marriage customs, which often are also across socio-economic standing, apparent in their educational backgrounds. As they tell this story they keep giggling and smiling at one another from across the living room. In the midst of a difficult life, these two have found inner happiness. It makes me smile, too.

Ayman begins his conversation by talking about his new apartment, as I had previously met with him in his shared apartment in *Jabal al-L'Weibdeh*, a neighborhood we both called home. "I've moved apartments a few times since I left my old one as I needed to find the cheapest possible solution. Now I am married and I only make 280-300 JD [Jordanian Dinar, approximately 420 USD] a month as a day laborer, but work is not consistent. There are some days when I have no work." By law, it is illegal to work as a refugee in Jordan. However, many refugees of all nationalities work in the informal labor market, usually in construction or hospitality, as assistance from humanitarian agencies is either scarce or non-existent. "I try to save money in other ways. Sometimes I will buy cheap vegetables from near my work or we [Aisha] will try to not have the lights on in the apartment to save on electric bills. Life, really, is difficult" Aisha agrees with these sentiments. Her first winter in the country was miserable as she is not used to the biting cold which befalls the city, but she is trying her best to adapt. "Our apartment has no heat and there were days when I cried because it was so cold, but *Alhamdulillah*, we are surviving."

Housing in Amman is very strange for the refugee from Darfur as it is very different from what they are used to back home. "We are lucky", Ayman says to me on the couch, "We have

other Darfuri families in the building and there is another family in the building next door. If any of us cooks traditional food we all go over to that person's apartment. If there is a celebration, like a birthday or wedding and during the holidays, as well, we all go over to one apartment to spend time together. It reminds us of the way things used to be at home." This speaks to how the Darfuri refugees in Amman originally assembled their communities after arriving off the planes coming directly from Khartoum. For Ayman, assemblage into the community was very organic. "Right after I arrived off of the airplane, I went straight to *Wst al Balad* [the downtown area] as I knew I would be able to find other Sudanese there. Not every Sudanese in Amman is from Darfur, but I knew if I asked where there were other Dafuris, I would find them. So I asked, and I was able to find my first roommates. I knew I could trust these people because we had a shared background and shared experiences. I wasn't scared of them because I knew we were far away from Sudan. Sure, maybe there are bad people, but most people in Amman are just trying to come somewhere safe. For every person, it depends when they get here how they enter the community. Some people already have family and friends here, so they use those connections. Some, like Aisha, are coming for marriage [laughs], but for a lot of us we just asked." For Abu Fatima, the assemblage was the same, "Yea, I came here and just started asking around where there were other Darfuris. I knew there were some and not that many so I would be able to easily find them. They let me share an apartment with them until I married and moved out with my family." For Ayman, It is easy, once the Darfuris find one another to feel close, "We don't feel like we can be a part of this place [Amman]. The Jordanians treat us badly and the UN deals with us in a bad way. We all know each other's background and the way the life is now, so it is easy for us."

Very few of the Darfuris in Amman I spoke with knew each other in Darfur. While Darfur is a complex and nuanced place, I was very intrigued how the interviewees decided to live with who. For some of the first arrivals, like Ayman and Abu Fatima, they walked downtown asking where other Sudanese were staying, as downtown is a central meeting point with cheap rent and food and a noticeable informal labor market in the small tourist and clothing shops. This original group of people then spread out, though not far, to the surrounding mountains. For many, they live with people who came to Amman around the same time, as it was easier to find apartments with multiple people to drive down the cost of rent and all of them were single men with no attachments to family. For those who did come with their family, they live together, but in close proximity to other Darfuris. When asked Ayman said he was worried a bit about trusting other Darfuris, but the geographical distance between Sudan and Jordan diminished most of his fears. I would also hazard a guess that by buying a plane ticket to Amman, the socio-economic background of most individuals in the city are similar, thereby making it easier to form connections with others.

For my friend Mahmoud, who is desperately trying to win a scholarship to enter the German-Jordanian University, as he is also well-educated and attended university in Sudan and speaks and writes in excellent English, we meet in his shared apartment in *Jabal Amman*. Mahmoud grew up in a small village in Darfur in a wide hut which was low to the ground and built directly on the earth in order to attract a breeze, as the weather could become very hot and good ventilation was crucial. Now, he finds himself on the top floor of an apartment shared with eight other men which has little air ventilation and is hard pressed to find a draft during these hot summer days. He also found his roommates by asking around downtown to where other Darfuris were and found some of his closest friends downtown. “In the evenings in Darfur, we would go

outside and drink tea and coffee and socialize with one another, sometimes late into the night. The children would play games while the adults would sit in talk. Now, this is difficult as we [Darfuris in Amman] are spread out across the city and have no outside space to do so.” Many of the Darfuris in Amman either live on the top of apartment buildings or on the basement floors in order to keep the rents as cheap as possible. Mahmoud continues, “I don’t like how the houses are so close together, they are on top of each other, and so many in such a small area. I feel as if I am being suffocated!” The suffocation, for the interviewees seem to be both mental and physical. After my first conversation with Mahmoud, a former student who I had kept in touch with via Facebook during my year away, I held a small English session for him and his roommates as they miss going to community classes. However, they told me the next time I spent time at their apartment that the neighbors complained they were being too loud and laughing too much, to which a few of the men looked at me afterwards, rolled their eyes, and said, “Arabs”.

Not only do the Darfuris in Amman have to get used to different living situations, but different lifestyles, as well. One young man, Abdel Aziz, lamented that the Darfuris use a lot of sugar in their food. I asked when I took a bite of pasta and it was sweet, not what I was expecting. “We were farmers, we worked in the fields all day. The weather was so hot, so we needed a lot of energy. Now we’re not farmers and it is difficult to walk in the city, so we take public transport. I worry about our health because of this; because we still cook the same way. This is what we know.” Needless to say, their diets have not changed as food is extremely important to the Darfuri in Amman as it both reminds them of home and is a way to keep their culture and customs alive, as previously mentioned. Food is also the ultimate nourishment and brings a sense of calm when you have a home cooked meal that reminds you of better memories. For the eight men in the *Jabal Amman* apartment, a weekly cooking schedule is followed

routinely, as visits from friends occur almost every evening from across the neighboring hills. When together, most of the men, between 20 and 40 years old, go on their phones to talk to relatives or friends and family members in Cairo, go on Facebook, and watch English videos on YouTube. They are not necessarily always present for one another in the same room, though their shared presence always seems to be of comfort. They also love watching Hollywood action movies and the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) Raw. There were many evenings where I would be offered a meal, usually two dishes made of vegetables and one of rice or pasta with bread, always followed by tea, which I could not refuse. “But teacher, you must, it will cool you down as it is very hot outside.”

Even though it seems that these individuals are living normal lives in certain aspects; going food shopping, taking public transportation, working for some, complaints about Amman are numerous. “I can’t live here long-term”, says Ayman during our second interview. “My wife and I need to be resettled, life is too difficult and expensive.” He is also worried about Trump’s travel ban and his views on refugee resettlement. “I understand why people would be worried, there are bad people who do want to hurt others. But, this is not us, this is not what we want. I want to be resettled with my wife so we can move on with our lives. I feel like I am just stuck here, there is nowhere for me to go.”

Aisha spends her days at home when her husband is out. She is quite breathtaking, and in her mid-twenties is full of life. The gorgeous scarves she uses as her *hijab* really accentuate her natural beauty and her eyes glisten when she speaks, even if it is something of concern. “I hate spending my days at home, but what other option do I have?” When Ayman is at work or taking a community English class in *Jabal al-Hussein*, Aisha stays at home in the apartment, afraid to go outside by herself. “Outside is very dangerous.” During the day she cooks, watches television,

talks to friends on her phone, and does yoga, which she learned from foreign co-workers when she worked at an international agency back home in Sudan to give her comfort. “Since my father was an *omda* [a mayor, usually the wealthiest individual in a community with large land holdings] I was recruited by an organization to help my community. Really, I learned a lot.” Aisha is a well-educated woman having gone to college in the capital, but feels her options are now limited in many ways now as she is viewed as a stranger. “I fear for my physical safety when I leave my house. People have made racist comments to me before, I don’t want those to turn into something worse.” Ayman relates a story that is of concern and drives home Aisha’s point, “There was a Darfuri woman in East Amman whose neighbors threw her down the stairs and she was badly injured, now women are worried to go outside by themselves.” Aisha is also shy when she speaks English and will usually talk to me in Arabic peppered with English words, though her writing is much stronger. “She needs to practice with me and the women also need a safe space to have community English classes”, Ayman says. He then volunteers his own apartment for such an initiative as there are no official community classes for the Darfuri women in Amman. The women need to have safe space where they are able to not only better themselves through education, but also learn a skill that they can pass on to the future generations born in exile.

Navigating Amman both as a refugee and a stranger adds to the anxiety and stress already placed upon those who are outside their countries of birth. By restricting their own movements, the Darfuri in Amman hope to become, in certain ways, invisible to the host community. They are afraid if they do enter certain spaces, they will be subjected to harassment and violence as they are viewed as the stranger in the strange land they now occupy.

Um Mohamed, a friend of Aisha and Ayman, has recently come to Jordan with her family and has joined us one evening with her newborn son and husband, Salim. Little Mohamed is only a few months old but very alert for his young age and is passed around lovingly among everyone in attendance while all the adults sip on sugary tea. Um Mohamed spent years in a camp in Darfur for internally displaced persons (IDPs) after having to flee her village. “I lived in an IDP camp in Darfur and really, life was bad. Life in Amman, though, is difficult, too. I constantly worry about my husband when he goes out and for myself and my son when we are alone in the apartment. I have no freedom of movement. I just want to live a normal life again”, she speaks in her heavy Sudanese Arabic accent. Salim has only been in Amman for a few months with his family but has experienced hardship with regards to harassment and the treatment he faces for being a Darfuri. For him, the hardest navigation is when he goes to work, as he is irregular, “It is hard for the Sudanese to hide if the police come to do immigration raids [due to standing out as non-Arab]”, he says also in strong Sudanese Arabic, which shows that he and his wife have not yet adapted to changing their accent to a more Levantine dialect, which those who have been in Amman for a few years have done to attempt to win points of favor with the local resident community. This is arguably a part of their culture, whether they view it that way or not, which they are more than willing to change in order to adapt.

For Um Fatima, another friend of Ayman’s and Aisha’s in the same neighborhood, she also never leaves her house when her husband leaves to go to work. I visit their basement apartment which is also down many steep stairs, but welcoming once inside. Their infant daughter is trying to get her hands on everything she can touch, including the small candies and water given to me as their guest, while the television plays news shows from Sudan. Her mother and father both speak to her in Fur, their tribal language, and not in Arabic, even though she

cannot yet speak. I speak to her the few Fur words I have picked up from Ayman and this makes the parents happy. “I never truly feel safe, even when I am inside my house”, Um Fatima says in a more Levantine Arabic, “Who knows if anyone will try to come in?” Her husband also shares the exact same worry as he insists on speaking to me in his excellent English, “I worry about my wife and daughter when I am outside and I cannot protect them.” After the deportation of friends a year and a half prior, they also both have fears of being outside, in general, “I am scared that anyone can make up false charges if I am outside; that they can use to easily deport me”, says Abu Fatima, “I never feel safe after the deportation.” For both Abu and Um Fatima, they want to be anywhere else besides Amman, especially as they want a better life for their infant daughter. “I love my daughter because she keeps me company”, Um Fatima says, “and I love when I can host guests so I can practice the hospitality that is so important to our culture, but I want to live somewhere where my daughter will not be judged for her roots.”

Even though they do not live in refugee camps, as the camps in Jordan are only set up for Syrians, through their personal limitations the Darfuris in Amman have formed an almost urban camp setting where they police their own movement for safety reasons, so as not to expose themselves willingly to harassment and violence and to decrease their own stress and anxiety levels from fear and worry on top of the anxiety many of them carry from their fleeing Darfur and the subsequent challenges they faced afterwards. For them, the only way out of this situation is to leave. As repatriating back to Sudan is not an option, the dream of many is to be resettled to a third-country.

The Darfuris in Amman straddle a fine line between being invisible and visible to the host community that has enveloped them into its social fabric. Invisible in the sense that no one is aware of the violence and trauma they fled from back home and why they have great need to



seek refuge in a third-country. Visible in the sense that they are strangers to the community with no apparent ties or connections to the land and culture which exposes them sometimes to harassment and violence.

Besides the stories of harassment which were re-told by all interviewees multiple times, many national organizations do little to help the Darfuris in Amman. There is a humanitarian organization right next to our house”, Ayman tells me, “but every time I go and ask for assistance, they say they cannot help me.” For many of the organizations, their funding from large donors is unfortunately earmarked. As the situation in Darfur is no longer in the news, the money flowing in goes towards the Syrians, and maybe the Iraqis if something big occurs. This shows that donors and media heads do not always know the situation on the ground, but sometimes they do not care if they will receive publicity for helping the hottest trauma trend.

Many of the men I spoke with also said their bosses cheat them out of their wages because they are easily opened to exploitation. Salim told me, “Sometimes our bosses don’t pay us the amount we agreed upon. They blame the economic situation of the country and the precarity the local residents face, saying there is not even money for the Jordanians, so how can we be expected to pay you.” He then goes on to tell me a story that was well known immediately after the deportation. “You know the story of Bashir Hospital [after the deportation, all Darfuri staff were let go and were refused their wages as the management was scared they would get into trouble with authorities], this has become a regular occurrence for us, no one respects our work.”

The relationships with the host community for the Darfuri Refugee in Amman are complicated and interwoven. The Darfuris know they must cultivate a good relationship if they want to live peacefully in the community they now find themselves a part of. This is easily seen when Ayman walks me to the giant staircase down the small mountain so I can catch a taxi

home. “*As-salamu alaykum*”, he always greets the local shopkeepers as they respond with, “*Wa alaykumu as-salam.*” On the other hand, previous experiences have led the Darfuris to change their daily routines and have given them a real fear that no matter what they do, they will never be accepted into the city which has ultimately given them shelter. Abu Fatima is skeptical they can ever live in harmony with the local residents. The hours long conversation I had with him was fascinating. He insisted on speaking English, which was impeccable, as I do not understand Fur and he did not want to speak Arabic, as “this is not my language.” He also believed English would ultimately give him a chance at a new life through resettlement. “Do you know, on the surface people can be nice, but deep down these people [local residents] will do anything for money. We have lost the true meaning of humanity. There is no concept anymore of humanity. However for us, as Darfuris, the best way to keep our culture alive is to treat others with respect and a shared humanity. We cannot lose this, it is fundamental to who we are.” He is discussing a story he heard that a local shopkeeper was paid 100 JD to kill someone. “Did you hear about our friend, Abu Suleiman”, he asks, “He went to the local *dukan* [kiosk] and the shopkeeper beat him up. On certain days our friends go there with food vouchers from a local organization. However, the shopkeeper told him it was not the day for food vouchers, even though he wanted to pay for something in cash. The shopkeeper got angry when he said this and punched him before throwing him outside. This is how we are being treated here.” If you occupy the space of a refugee then you can only occupy certain spaces at certain times because you inherently do not belong in the normal way of life do to your status, or sometimes non-status.

Abu Fatima is not afraid to speak, and he speaks on many different topics. “You know, a Jordanian came up to me in the *masjid* [mosque] and told me there was no way I could be Muslim. He told me the prophet Mohamed was white, and therefore, no African could ever be

Muslim. This is the racism we experience. Really, racism is a worldwide problem, I understand this. When I think about what we experience here, though, when I die and ask God why he allowed this to happen to me, I really don't think he will have an answer. We Darfuris, though, we live in clusters. We take care of each other, it is really all we can do at this point.”

To the international community, namely international humanitarian organizations in charge of giving assistance, the Darfuris in Amman feel completely invisible and feel that they only have one another and the few individuals who care to provide for them. The protest out front of UNHCR is the ultimate demonstration against this feeling of marginalization, but this was not an event which did not have prior back story.

“I do not trust UNHCR after the deportation. They did nothing to help us”, says Abu Fatima. Ayman is also distrustful of UNHCR chiming in after Abu Fatima's claims, “They only mention the Syrians when asking for money. Maybe they will mention the Iraqis, but only if Iraq is in the news. They will never mention us or the Somalis. Maybe we will be put on one of their documents listed as the other, but that is as much recognition as we will ever get.” Salim believes that refugees are exploited by these large organizations and has always wondered why Jordan takes in refugees if it cannot support them. “I believe large organizations receive a lot of money from other countries so we don't go there. Look at Europe, it is doing nothing to stop people from drowning in the sea. Are they helping us to get there, no. So they give this money to countries like Jordan so we stay here. But, where does this money go? We [as refugees] never see this money. There is no assistance for us. There are no programs for us.” While many view refugees as uneducated and only concerned with their current situations, the many interviewees I spoke with are very aware of what is happening, or not happening, and why this might be the case on a global level due to their access to social media and information from back home.

Salim's wife, Um Mohamed recounts a story of a house visit from UNHCR representatives that was less than comfortable. "Can you believe UNHCR sent Jordanian workers to our house? There is so much tension, why would they do this? I offered them tea and water and you know what they did, they refused to drink it! This is unacceptable in both our cultures, it sends a message that I am dirty. They knew exactly the message they were sending to me and it is horrible."

Abu Fatima also believes that the trust lost after the deportation will never be won back from the Darfuri community in Amman, "Why would we ever trust them again? We have families now in two different countries, children in one country, parents in another, some of us have been killed in Darfur after they told us there was no violence there anymore, others tried to make it across the sea but didn't. Do they know how much damage they caused? Do they care?" Abu Fatima then describes a past visit to UNHCR and how he felt demoralized, "There is a hierarchy in UNHCR. Every time I go to visit I have to go around the back of the building with all the other refugees while the foreign staff goes in the front entrance. Not once am I able to speak with a foreign staff member, it's always a Jordanian. Do they do this because they can't look us in the eye after what happened? I don't know, I truly just believe that they don't care. They treat us like their slaves and monkeys" These stories show the inherent colonial mindset of the development world in which these individuals must perform to receive assistance.

There is a simultaneous struggle for the Darfuri refugee when it comes to interactions with international aid organizations. While UNHCR was always brought up in conversations due to the space they occupy for the refugee community in Amman, and their role in the deportation, few other international organizations serve the Darfuri and other African populations. In order to

receive the crucial assistance needed, these individuals must make themselves known in a space they no longer trust and in which they feel extremely vulnerable.

The Darfuris in Amman have very few safe spaces within the capital where they are able to congregate together, outside the confines of their homes, and be together in community with one another out in the open. Aisha talks about 7 Hills, a local skate park which has set up community classes for the Darfuri children and their families. “For Darfuri children in Amman, 7 Hills does a great job at developing programs for kids. These programs are very important because I can see a huge change in their behavior. I saw similar things in the programs I worked with in Darfur. These programs engage them and keep their minds busy from what has happened and what is still happening around them.” For Ayman, he credits local community English classes in *Jabal al-Hussein* with giving him the opportunity to enter a welcoming environment. “I applaud the community English classes for giving me the space to meet other foreign students and teachers. I get to expand my way of thinking and to learn new ideas.” For all those interviewed, though, the safest they feel is when they are together at one another’s houses, having dinner or celebrating a life milestone, away from the eyes of any outsider. Here they are able to be themselves and celebrate their culture and traditions, and pass these important aspects of their previous lives onto the new generation, many of whom have been born in exile. After living through seeing their friends and fellow community members deported, all they want is to feel safe, navigating their lives as the stranger and the refugee in Amman. “It will be difficult when we have a child”, Ayman says, “I want to give birth to a human being, not a victim.”

On one of my last nights in Amman, I held a small party on my roof and invited the Darfuri community members I had known, and their friends, to come. The night was filled with Sudanese music and dancing. As is custom, before the night ended, we all went around and

introduced ourselves and told everyone how thankful we all were for each other's friendships and company. My conversations throughout the interview process were deep as many people opened up to me as they never had before and the respect I have for these people runs deeper. As everyone said their goodbyes and promises to see each other soon, Ayman and Aisha came over to give me a gift. "You shouldn't have", I said. "Open it", they exclaimed. A small beautiful handwoven basket in my favorite color, the deepest purple. Something to remind me of Darfur.

### *Part Three: Deportation from Amman to Khartoum*

The deportation still holds a place of deep hurt and confusion as there are many scars remaining for the Darfuri Refugee in Amman, which was outwardly apparent in their interviews as it was mentioned many times. My memories of the deportation are also still vivid and etched in my memory. On the morning of December 16, 2015, I awoke to the news that approximately 950 Darfuris in Amman were rounded up in the early hours of the morning from in front of the UNHCR offices in *Khalda*, an affluent neighborhood in West Amman, and loaded onto buses to undergo a deportation process from Jordan. It was not the message I wanted to wake up to on my 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. It had been thirty days since the Darfuris in Amman had begun their peaceful protest outside the premises of the UN agency, their colorful patchwork tents of bright oranges and deep blues marking their territory and letting any employee or bystander know that they were not going anywhere until their demands were met.

For many months, even years for some of the protestors, the Darfuris in Amman believed they were being treated as second-class refugees within the larger Amman refugee community which mainly constituted fellow brother Arabs to the Jordanians, Syrians and Iraqis, though it is contested these communities are treated in an extremely welcoming manner.<sup>76</sup> The Darfuris in

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<sup>76</sup> Su, Alice. "How Do You Rank Refugees?" The Atlantic. November 22, 2013. Accessed March 20, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/11/how-do-you-rank-refugees/281771/>.

Amman were also very much aware of the harassment and violence that was sometimes perpetrated against them due to their strangeness in the host community.<sup>77</sup> Their demands addressed to, “those working in the humanitarian field”, which were written in English to bow down to the Western aid and embassy workers by one of the young community leaders who is my age and is now in Canada, began by stating, “We the Sudanese refugees still face discrimination, marginalization, and are being ignored by the UNHCR.”<sup>78</sup> Their demands as listed were as follows:

1. Provide urgent housing allowance for the Sudanese refugees due to the difficult living situations in Jordan
2. To do interviews for refugee status determination, resettlement, and immigration processing
3. Reopen the closed files by desolation
4. Provide comprehensive health care services for the Sudanese refugees in Jordan, this includes all the cases especially refugees with a chronic disease
5. Open resettlement opportunities for Sudanese refugees in more than one country. If the only country that’s available has a lower chance for resettlement we would only like the option for more countries to be available for us.

Directly after the demands, the document mentions, three times in the one and a half page document to be exact, that the Darfuri refugees in Amman are undergoing a peaceful protest outside the *Khaldia* office. The document also discusses the deplorable conditions facing the

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<sup>77</sup> Su, Alice. "Sudanese Refugees Are Being Attacked by Angry Mobs and Police in Jordan." VICE News. November 21, 2014. Accessed March 20, 2018. <https://news.vice.com/article/sudanese-refugees-are-being-attacked-by-angry-mobs-and-police-in-jordan>.

<sup>78</sup> “In the Name of Sudanese Refugee Community in Jordan” Document, in the author’s possession, 2015, 1-2.

protestors, including UNHCR closing off the outside usage of the toilets and the difficult winter weather conditions, which together led to, “Many of the refugees to experience psychosocial problems and are being effected mentally due to the difficulties and lack of any support from the UNHCR.” Throughout all of this, the Darfuris wanted acknowledgement from the media to show the world their plight in Jordan stating, “Also the media are not allowed to cover what’s happening and to report the truth to the world.” While there were articles written by smaller news agencies during the protest, such as *Middle East Eye*<sup>79</sup>, *The Jordan Times*<sup>80</sup>, and *Al Monitor*<sup>81</sup>, journalist friends with ties to the community were denied access to the protest by security forces patrolling the camp site. People were aware of the protests, but it was not on the forefront of most people’s minds.

Then, after one month of peacefully protesting outside UNHCR, the many Darfuri refugees in Amman were loaded onto buses, their hands visibly zip-tied shown in photographs quickly sent around to friends and contacts still waking up to the winter morning, and were told the debilitating news they were headed to the airport where they were to be deported back to Khartoum. What began as a calm and sunny morning quickly turned into widespread panic.

The deportation process, much like their already fragmented migratory journeys from inside Sudan to Jordan, would not be straightforward and linear. At first, friends and contacts still in Amman received messages from their friends protesting that they were being loaded onto

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<sup>79</sup> Staton, Bethan. "Sudanese Refugees in Jordan Pitch Tent City to Protest against 'discrimination'." *Middle East Eye*. December 11, 2015. Accessed March 20, 2018. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/sudanese-refugees-jordan-pitch-tent-city-protest-discrimination-21780425>.

<sup>80</sup> Malkawi, Khetam. "Sudanese Refugees' Protest near UNHCR Enters 17th Day." *Jordan Times*. December 08, 2015. Accessed March 20, 2018. <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/sudanese-refugees'-protest-near-unhcr-enters-17th-day>.

<sup>81</sup> Lucente, Adam. "Is UNHCR in Jordan discriminating against Sudanese refugees?" *Al Monitor*. December 2, 2015. Accessed March 20, 2018. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fr/contents/articles/originals/2015/12/sudan-refugees-jordan-unhcr-discrimination.html>.



buses as they were being resettled to Canada. A solution to their demands had finally been found! Some of the protestors even called and messaged their friends during the early hours of the morning that they should hurry to the UNHCR office as they did not want them to miss this amazing opportunity. This story was later supported by subsequent news reports.<sup>82</sup> Future deportees quickly became aware, though, that their dream was about to turn into a nightmare as the news of resettlement was not the reality they had been expecting. Their hands were quickly zip-tied by the security forces, as they were told the horrifying truth of where they were actually going; to an uncertain and terrifying fate in the country they tried so hard to leave. In total, the process would take two days and an abundance of misinformation that the process could actually be halted and those rounded up would be able to return to Amman.

Some individuals were able to escape their confines in the chaos of their final stop before the airplane, a shipping warehouse, where they were able to climb over barbed wired fences and escape in the night back to Amman, for some a multi-hour walk back with visible lacerations on their hands when they finally returned home to their worried friends. Others unable to escape barricaded the doors of the warehouse, leading to confrontations with security forces which resulted in beatings and the use of tear gas, which injured many, including small children. In all hours of the night I received photographs of tear gas canisters, injured individuals lying on the concrete floors, and live Facebook video messages of unleashed tear gas with people screaming and chanting in the background. For two nights I did not sleep as the messages did not stop. On the morning of December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015, much to the dismay of friends, colleagues, activists, and

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<sup>82</sup> Gibreel, Dana. "After the Deportation: How Jordan Left Sudanese Refugees to Death and Separation." 7iber | حبر. September 19, 2017. Accessed March 20, 2018. <https://www.7iber.com/politics-economics/after-the-deportation/>.

concerned individuals in Jordan and across the world, the deportation finally commenced for the remaining individuals in the warehouse.<sup>83</sup>

Through the traumatic act of forced deportation, the Darfuri refugee both now inside and outside Amman finally received the acknowledgement they desired by peacefully protesting outside UNHCR's office. Sadly, not only was the visibility too late, but it was once again a time for the Darfuri to be visible through the occurrence of a traumatic experience which would send them back to the place that made them flee in the first place.

As mentioned in the previous section on field work, any trust that was placed in UNHCR, which was slim to begin with, was all but lost after the deportation. Many Darfuri Refugees in Amman no longer trusted UNHCR or any other humanitarian organization. While UNHCR came out with statements and outrage after the deportation, many Darfuris in Amman wondered where they were during the process if they knew those being deported were refugees and asylum seekers, and why they did nothing to stop it. This has to do with the relationship Jordan has to the 1951 *Convention*.

Jordan has not signed the *Convention*, and therefore, is not obligated to use the same definition or afford the same rights and privileges to refugees as signatory countries. However, due to the numerous waves of refugees Jordan has admitted and its desire for international assistance, they have offered UNHCR considerable amount of power over the domestic governance of refugees and migrants. The complexity of Jordan giving up its sovereignty to UNHCR also means UNHCR relinquishes some of its authority to the Jordanian state. It is reliant on the hospitality of the Jordanian government to remain operational rather than operating

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<sup>83</sup> Sweis, Rana F. "Jordan Deports Sudanese Asylum Seekers, Spurring Outcry." The New York Times. December 18, 2015. Accessed March 20, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/19/world/middleeast/jordan-deports-sudanese-asylum-seekers-spurring-outcry.html>.

under an independent mandate. With the fragile situation Jordan is in, as it is not in the best neighborhood, not having UNHCR operate would be disastrous for the many Syrians who rely heavily on UNHCR who distribute goods and services in the camps.

However, any country of asylum is supposed to provide protection, including Jordan. Jordan is also signatory to other international conventions, including the 1984 *Convention against Torture* which stipulates in Article 3 that, “No State Party shall expel, return ("refouler") or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture.”<sup>84</sup> Jordan also has national laws, among them is Article 21 of the Jordanian Constitution which says that you cannot return political refugees to their countries of origin, and the Residency and Foreigner Affairs Law, which allows for an appeals process for any individual being deported.<sup>85</sup> None of these laws, international or national, were followed.

The Darfuri refugee in Amman had put their trust in the system, and therefore the institutions and state which were supposed to protect them. Once again in their lives, they were let down by the normal order of things to which they are on the outside looking in.

For the Darfuris waiting on the tarmac to be ushered onto the airplane, confusion and downright fear was palpable in their messages. While the Jordanian government claimed that those being deported were not asylum seekers, but rather, individuals who illegally entered the country seeking medical treatment<sup>86</sup>, the photographs being sent by my contacts told a very

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<sup>84</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, 10 December 1984, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1465, p. 85, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3a94.html> [accessed 22 March 2018]

<sup>85</sup> Gibreel, Dana. "After the Deportation: How Jordan Left Sudanese Refugees to Death and Separation." 7iber | حبر. September 19, 2017. Accessed March 20, 2018. <https://www.7iber.com/politics-economics/after-the-deportation/>.

<sup>86</sup> Staton, Bethan. "Jordan Cracks (down) under Refugee Pressure." IRIN. June 06, 2016. Accessed March 20, 2018. <http://www.irinnews.org/feature/2016/01/06/jordan-cracks-down-under-refugee-pressure>.

different story, that of given refugee status from UNHCR. This sentiment was echoed by both UNHCR and Human Rights Watch which claimed those deported were asylum seekers and registered refugees, and, reiterated the fact that it does not matter how these individuals entered the country, regularly, or irregularly, as it does not take away from their claims of a “well-founded fear of persecution.”<sup>87</sup> These individuals were under an international legal regime which was supposed to protect certain rights. Chief among these is the principle of *non-refoulement*, or, “the practice of not forcing refugees or asylum seekers to return to a country in which they are liable to be subjected to persecution.”<sup>88</sup> The legal system had abjectly failed these individuals, injuring and killing some in the process<sup>89</sup>, and destroying family and assembled community structures through separation.<sup>90</sup>

Now these deportees were being sent back to Sudan, their home country which had given them claims of extreme mistrust throughout half a century of certain inaction and violence, and to which they were sure only more trauma and violence would await them. While the Sudanese embassy in Amman claimed there was no more violence awaiting them as the situation in Darfur had stabilized,<sup>91</sup> the deportees had reason, historically, to believe otherwise. They were being sent back to a place where the truly believed death awaited them, as per their private messages. For some, this was the unfortunate case. For others, they would continue their fragmented journeys towards Cairo.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR Note on the Principle of Non-Refoulement*, November 1997, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/438c6d972.html> [accessed 20 March 2018]

<sup>89</sup> Gibreel, Dana. "After the Deportation: How Jordan Left Sudanese Refugees to Death and Separation." *7iber | حبر*. September 19, 2017. Accessed March 20, 2018. <https://www.7iber.com/politics-economics/after-the-deportation/>.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

For those left in Amman, the fear also reverberated through the community. I went to Ayman's old house the evening of the deportation, while he was still living with other male friends in *Jabal L'Weibdeh*. They were all afraid to go outside, fearful that if policemen saw them they would be rounded up and deported, as well. My roommate and I bought them a large chicken meal from a local restaurant and made our way down the hill to their apartment. There was an eerie silence in the apartment, not the warm chattering and hum of the television I was used to. The men all ate in silence, the weight of what had just occurred laying heavily on their shoulders. There were tears in some of their eyes. I asked if anyone had any contact with anyone as the plane must have landed hours ago, but no one had. Then Ayman looked at a shirt and pair of jeans hanging up and said they were his friends who was deported. He hung them up because he thought he was coming back home. Then, sobs enveloped Ayman as he could hold back his pain no longer.

During house visits in the winter of 2016, colleagues and I visited many single parents whose spouses were deported, sometimes with other children. It was obvious that these individuals were not in good states of mind and for some, they had lost the primary breadwinner and had no source of income to pay rent or buy food. However, they were afraid to contact UNHCR for assistance. While the day to day precarity that was visible during and right after the deportation has since disappeared, the memories of what happened, and the reality for some, is too hard to bear. For those now in Cairo, they truly miss their lives left behind in Amman and the relationships they had built, some over many years.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has found that community assemblage has occurred organically for the Darfuri Refugee in Amman, namely word of mouth for most, and through relationships across

borders, for some. It is clear that the Darfuri Refugee in Amman is already experiencing fragmented migratory journeys on account of being stuck in 'transit', no one interviewed wants to remain in Amman as they await news from UNHCR for their dreamed of resettlement to the Global North.

What is more, the community had to rely on one another to re-assemble after the fragmentation caused by deportation, in which family and friends were ripped out of the community. It is important to note that the process of deportation occurred after the Darfuri Refugees in Amman became political through the act of protest out front of UNHCR where they aired their grievances of the injustices they believed were befalling them. Through the process of re-assemblage, the Darfuri Refugees in Amman, who have always been and are still viewed as a stranger by the resident community, have become acutely aware of the invisibility and visibility they must occupy within certain spaces for safety and survival, while also being aware of the transnational networks they now have access to through their friends and family members deported and now residing in Cairo who are able to help make sense of what has occurred.

## *Chapter Four-The Deported Darfuri in Cairo*

### *Introduction*

This chapter will introduce the lives of those who are now the Deported Darfuri in Cairo, a category created by the Darfuri Refugee in Amman post-deportation once the border was crossed from Sudan into Egypt. Once again, Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory will be used to hear the experiences first-hand from the migrants, themselves, as will Georg Simmel's concept from his work, *The Stranger*, which will again tie into the process of re-assemblage discussed by Latour in *Reassembling the Social*. The questions being asked in this chapter are how is the Darfuri Refugee in Amman able to re-assemble the prior community structure from Amman within the new social of Cairo? How does the concept of the stranger tie into this re-assemblage in a new social? To what extent does transnational migration, as discussed by Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller in their work, *Conceptualizing simultaneity: A transnational social field perspective on society*, influence the lives and overall community of the Deported Darfuri in Cairo? Finally, how does an addition to their fragmented journey caused by the traumatic experience of deportation affect all of the aforementioned questions? In order to examine these questions, the interviewees own stories will be shared from which an analysis will occur.

### *Part One: Between Here and There: Life between Deportation and Cairo*

Between December 18<sup>th</sup> 2015 and December 20<sup>th</sup> 2015, I lost any contact with all my friends who were messaging me throughout the deportation process. As I was waiting on the tarmac about to take off for the winter holiday in Egypt to visit my friends, I received a message from my friend, Izzeldin.<sup>92</sup> Izzeldin is best friends with Ayman and also is now in his early 30's.

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<sup>92</sup> Permission was received to discuss all previous messages from the informants.

It was his clothes hung up so perfectly on the hangers that made Ayman break down and cry when he realized the magnitude of what had occurred, that his best friend who had prepared to return home would not be joining us for dinner that evening. Izzeldin, like Ayman, is also my former student and full of life, always dancing and making people laugh by being the class clown, his dreadlocks swaying with his movements of laughter. He speaks better English than he writes and signs up for English classes at any given opportunity to improve the skills he learned in Amman. When he messaged me, he said he was safe and in Khartoum, but not everyone was safe who was on the airplane with him. This was the first sign of life that anyone had seen after December 18<sup>th</sup> from any of the individuals who had been deported, including the Darfuri refugees in Amman. Izzeldin told me that he felt hopeless, but that there was nothing anyone could do, it was all in God's hands.

Izzeldin, like most of the deported, also knew he needed to travel immediately after landing, "I want to travel, but I can't go by the right way. There's no way open." Izzeldin knew if he wanted to move, if he wanted to leave, it would have to be irregularly. "Nothing is safe in Sudan. Me so sad for everything. Am trying to go to South Sudan, it is sav(f)er than Sudan." I had heard through his friends in Amman that eventually Izzeldin made it safely to Egypt. I messaged him again when I found out that I would be moving there the following August; he was very happy to not be in Sudan any longer, "Am in save [safety], I can't believe it, really! Am so happy!" However, Izzeldin missed all his friends and the community that he had formed in Amman, "I miss Amman so much. All my friends left them. Me so sad." He also discussed his friends who were taking boats to Libya, some of whom were our mutual contacts. "Some of friends are taking, yea, I can't forget. They are my friends." I had already heard the terrible news that some of those who had taken boats had not survived the journey, and again Izzeldin



reminded me that there was nothing we could do about this, “What can we do. This has come from our God, nothing in our hands.” The next time I would see Izzeldin would be the fall of 2016. With millions of people in Cairo, it only made sense that I would run into him in the Sadat metro station as he was on his way to an English class at AUC Tahrir. He said he was doing well and that there were now many Darfuris from Amman who were now in Cairo. I had known of a few, but did not realize how many had taken the overland route from Khartoum to Cairo as most of them feared for their safety in Sudan, which made sense due to their histories of the violence many of them were subject to.

Egypt and Sudan have a long and oftentimes complicated history, but also a long-standing history of migration due to the previous order of things when the border between the two countries was not an explicit line of demarcation. Modern day migratory movement between Egypt and Sudan, has a strong, albeit complicated history of fluidity due to the Wadi el Nil Agreement of 1976 and the Four Freedoms Agreement of 2004.<sup>93</sup> While many Sudanese were able to cross into Egypt under the terms of the agreements, such as the waiver of visas and easier access to residency and work permits under the Wadi el Nil Agreement, Sudanese asylum-seekers from various conflicts like the genocide in Darfur and South Sudanese fleeing conflict in their new nation-state have needed to register with UNHCR to gain refugee status and the rights that come with the status under international law. Currently, relations between the two neighbors sometimes become strained due to security concerns, with Sudan requiring visas for Egyptian males aged 18-49 in order to work as of April 2017.<sup>94</sup> While Sudanese who have lived in Egypt

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<sup>93</sup> Jacobsen, Karen., M. Ayoub, and A. Johnson. 2014. Sudanese refugees in Cairo: Remittances and livelihoods. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 27 (1): 145-59.

<sup>94</sup> El-Mahdawy, Hadeer. "Sudan to require visas for Egyptian men aged 18-49," Sudan to require visas for Egyptian men aged 18-49 - Politics - Egypt - Ahram Online, April 7, 2017, , accessed March 27, 2018, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/262493/Egypt/Politics-/Sudan-to-require-visas-for-Egyptian-men-aged-.aspx>

for decades may feel well-integrated into Cairene society, many new arrivals feel un-welcomed by the national residents, facing issues of discrimination and harassment, and in worst case scenarios, violence, in various aspects of their daily lives as they are viewed as the stranger, even with all the similarities present between the two countries. However, it made sense that Egypt would be the preferred destination for the Deported Darfuri due to the long-standing history between the two countries, the closeness in proximity, and the general safety situation in the country compared to other neighboring states to Sudan.

Another friend, Ishmael, also eventually made his way from Khartoum to Cairo on the overland route. Small in stature and in his early 20's, you cannot help but love him as he has the kindest words for anyone and everyone he meets and is always actively engaged in any conversation he partakes in. He messaged me a little after Izzeldin on December 20<sup>th</sup> saying that he was not safe in Sudan, "So right now I'm in Sudan and I have been sent to the security places and my passport has been sent to all securities station so I suffer so much for this I need your help by any way and if there's any friends who wants to help because I have no thing in my hands. Thanks so much." He asked me where I was and if I was still in Amman. When I told him I was visiting a friend in Cairo, he told me he also wanted to come to Cairo, "So I want to come to Cairo. I don't think that will be easy, but I will try." On January 5<sup>th</sup> 2016, Ishmael informed me he would be traveling to Cairo in five days, "But we shall meet one day if we still [have] a life." On January 12<sup>th</sup>, he arrived to Egypt and told me a few days after that, "It's so-so, there much traffic. But really, I think it's better than Jordan."

One month later, Ishmael and a few other Deported Darfuris were informing me that they were having issues getting their asylum-seeker and refugee status cards from UNHCR in Cairo. "We are now around 130 [people] and 90% of us has been recognized by UNHCR Jordan the

question is asking itself doesn't the UN in Cairo has a connection with other UN in the world? Doesn't the UN in the world believed that Jordan has deported 800 Sudanese refugees? If they were Syrian the world would stand with them and they are all refugees so UN in Cairo giving us new appointments [Refugee Status Determination interviews] as new arrivals but we are not as new arrivals in this time we need to reopen our files or to send to UNHCR Cairo, this is what we want dear." This story adequately shows how backlogged UNHCR is for all asylum-seeking populations and how this backlog assists in a prevailing precarity for those who do not yet have status.

Musa is another former student and friend who made his way to Cairo, but his route first took him through South Sudan. "I am in South Sudan. A fugitive from the Sudanese government." He informed me that after the plane had landed in Khartoum he immediately headed for South Sudan. I asked him if he was hiding, "Yea. I am very scared. I want to be in your country [the United States]. I want freedom." On January 15<sup>th</sup>, Musa also arrived to Egypt after going back through Sudan and across the border after the violence in his area of South Sudan grew worse. "Hi Elena, I arrived in Egypt. Smuggling." One day after his arrival, Musa believed Egypt was, "more good than Amman", however, one month later he said it, "Is not good. Because [it] is like Jordan. And you know what I want, immigration to Europe." Some of his friends had gone from Sudan through Egypt and straight onto Libya, and he wanted to try the same route. "I know it's risky, if I get money [it will be] easy. 2,500 dollars. It is last opportunity for me. I want [to] get a better life, because UNHCR here is like Jordan. Unfortunately, I'm not a lucky guy, but I working so hard I want [to] complete this money."

In May of 2016, I messaged Musa once again as there had been numerous boats sinking in the Mediterranean and that I was very concerned for his safety. He answered, "Right now I

don't have money, if I get money I will be there. I know it's risky. But this is all things in God's hands for this I don't care about what will happen anyway one day I will die. For me this is the last opportunity because UNHCR don't care about what happened to me and other refugees in Africa. We don't know why we are human. I have survived through. If I push 2,500 dollars, [I will pay] to trafficker. I have some friends in Paris right now, they live a better life. It's so easy if I get money." For many, Europe is a promised land which offered opportunities which cannot be granted by countries within the Global South. When I messaged Musa a happy birthday a few weeks before I moved back to Cairo, he told me he forgot it was his birthday, "I forgot before next time someone is remind me. Today is my birthday. Do you believe that [I forgot], because you know my situation. You know, I lost my best friends in Jordan."

For many of the Deported Darfuris now in Cairo, life was proving to be just as difficult as Amman. Musa messaged me during the fall of 2016 that some of his friends were arrested and forcibly returned back to Sudan and UNHCR was moving slow in getting people out of detention. "UNHCR here like UNHCR in Jordan, just words on paper. Forcible return here and there. Now the police are arrested a lot of refugees. For that some of them today came out and sit in front of UNHCR. Yeah...I saw some of arrested in front of my eyes. I'm lucky. Police officer said to them, where's your ID, and even though they got ID of UNHCR they were still arrested." However, in February 2017, Musa received good news, "I have good news for you my result is come out before couple weeks ago. Yesterday I had appointment with UNHCR. They gave me blue card [The Blue Card is given by UNHCR Egypt and denotes refugee status]. But resettlement is impossible with president's [President Trump's] decisions."

The given refugee status was not enough, though, to calm Musa's thoughts on going onwards in his migratory journey to Libya. In May, right after I left Cairo to go home for

summer break, Musa messaged me that he was going to try and take a boat. “Know [Now] I could tell you I’m getting ready to move to Libya. I don’t know if you know you are mean a lot to me.” I asked him if he was traveling alone or with any of our mutual friends, “No I’m lonely [alone]. *Inshallah* [God willing] I will be ok. Thank you for everything, of course I will text you.” Six days later, Musa informed me he was near the border, “Dear know [now] between Egypt and Libya. I wait the golden chance, *inshallah*.” That chance never arrived, and four days later Musa returned to Cairo, “Hi dear, I return back to Cairo cause the border guards shooting anyone if refugee or not. It’s very dangerous to be between Egypt and Libya. They put bomb in around everywhere. To be honest with you made me feel afraid. Before I’m unafraid. Maybe I will try next season.”

After I moved to Cairo I was able to meet with Izzeldin, Ishmael, Musa, and many others who were deported from Jordan, which is how I became aware of their hardships in experiencing a new life, missing their old lives in exile, particularly their friends and family members who supported them in Amman in their first country of asylum, and their dreams to journey on, either to resettlement or back to Darfur. While I had conversations with them during the academic year of 2016-2017, including some of the previously shared Facebook messages, I knew I needed to delve deeper into the conversations to see how they were experiencing life in Cairo and how the deportation and their fragmented migratory journey through many countries in the Global South affected them on both a personal and collective level in assembling their community. These conversations took place during the fall of 2017.

#### *Part Two: Re-assembling in Cairo*

The first thing my interviewees in Cairo said was that they knew Sudan was not a safe place for them to stay after they arrived post deportation. This did not come as surprising

information, they were very afraid to be deported to what they were certain would be a violent and chaotic arrival. “We knew we could not stay in Sudan”, my friend Idris informed me. Idris is a *de facto* community leader for the Deported Darfuris in Cairo. In his early 30’s, his English is impeccable and he is always reading the news and eager to learn whatever he can about linguistics, politics, history, and migration not only within Africa, but outside the continent, as well. He runs English classes for other friends in the neighborhood of *Ard el Lewa* on the weekends in a small shop that sells goods imported from Sudan. He has also given workshops on how to teach English to refugee communities. “I could not go back to Darfur, there is too much violence still happening, though one of our brothers went back. He was killed, did you see? When we landed at Khartoum Airport we all went through six hour interviews. Yea, from 12 to 6, six hour interviews! The security forces had files on all of us, they knew everything about our backgrounds, including our education levels, so I knew I couldn’t lie. They even had what major I studied in college. They asked us many questions. Where we were from in Darfur, where our families were now, who are contacts were in Sudan, what was our address, where we were planning on staying. They also wanted to know when we went to Amman, how we got to Amman and who did we pay to leave the country, to get the visa and the passport, how much money did we pay. They asked us where we lived in Amman, they even knew the neighborhoods, like *Abdoun* or *Jabal Amman*. What did we do in Amman, for example, did we work and where did you study. They wanted to know if we were affiliated with any political movements or if any of our family members were involved in any political movements that might be against the government. Really the interview was very difficult and very tiring. They told us at the end we could join them and if we did they would help us, and really I said, I don’t want to join you. And for those of us, especially those of us who went to university we were

loaded onto a bus to go to another police station to have two more days of interviews. Really it wasn't good. They took our fingerprints and told us we could not leave Sudan legally for an undefined period of time. I knew if I would leave, which I needed to, I would have to leave illegally. I only had 5 JD in my pocket as they took all my belongings during the deportation so I had to give the person [the smuggler] my Samsung phone that my cousin sent to me when I was in Amman. It was Cricket Wireless. I really miss that phone. We came to Egypt in waves. Izzeldin came first, before the start of the New Year [2016], and Ahmed and myself came next, then everyone else followed after us. Most of us are here. Some continued to Libya, as you know. Some are now in Europe; many of them are now in France. We are all over the place now. Now the way is not safe, though. The border [between Egypt and Sudan] is not safe. I have friends trying to work near the border and they are in detention. Some of the militias are shooting people. I would not go back to the border now, it is not safe.”

When I asked how the journey was from Khartoum to Cairo both Idris and Ahmed explained their journey. Idris discussed the particulars. “We were already in Khartoum, so we started from there. There were vans that took us over the border. We obviously had to pay the drivers with whatever we had. For those who didn't have any money, we gave the drivers our phones or other electronics. It was very dark as we usually drove at night. The van was full, it wasn't just us; there were other Sudanese who wanted to get to Egypt. Once we came to the mountains, the vans stopped and dropped us all. We had to cross the mountains by ourselves as there was no way to go with the vans. Really, it was very difficult, but we all made it. Once we got to Aswan, we took other transportation up until Cairo. Here, we had other contacts waiting for us, and we began waiting for others to arrive. It didn't take long until we were a few hundred in Cairo.”

Upon arrival, many of the Darfuri refugees from Amman began finding each other in order to find housing. Like Amman, it is cheaper in Cairo for different refugee communities to live together in apartments to lower the overall cost of rent. While Cairo is nowhere near as expensive as Amman, it is still difficult to afford rent when you are unable to legally work. For many of the now Deported Darfuris, they chose to live in the neighborhood of *Ard El Lewa* in the Giza Governorate. Built an informal settlement, *Ard El Lewa*, which means Land of the Commander, is now a distinct neighborhood home to many refugee populations and Egyptians of lower to lower middle-class individuals and families. For the Deported Darfuris, it was a good location to start their lives in Cairo as it offered them cheap accommodation and communities who would be aware of their situation, including other Darfuris, Sudanese, and South Sudanese migrants and refugees. “Now we live in a small place. I guess it is enough for 20 people. Because, as you know, we can’t afford a very big place. What I mean is, we can’t rent a very expensive place. The rent is 700 LE [approximately 40 USD] a month”, Idris tells me. Out of the 20 people living in the apartment all of them are Darfuri, except one, who is Ethiopian, “But, he used to live in Kenya, so he speaks very good English. When we came here, we contacted Ahmed’s sister who lived in *Ard El Lewa*, so it was easy for us to get set up. I stayed for a few days but realized it was a family house, so I tried to find my own place, even though she insisted I could stay. When other people started arriving that is when we all began to live together as we didn’t have enough money to live by ourselves. It became easy once we were all together again.”

For those who don’t live in the same apartment in *Ard El Lewa*, they all live very close in proximity to one another in the neighborhood, with other Deported Darfuris living in areas like *Ain Shams*, *Giza*, and *Nasr City*, which also offer cheap accommodation and access to the informal labor market. Ahmed is in his early 30’s and was awaiting a new baby with his wife,



whom he married after he came to Cairo in 2016. Always sharply dressed in a suit, he talks about his new neighborhood, “*Ard El Lewa* is ok, but there are problems sometimes. Two weeks ago someone was shot and they died. There are problems between rival gangs and sometimes between the refugees and Egyptians. We try to stay out of it because we don’t want any trouble, but we always hear when a problem becomes big. Usually the people don’t die though, I hope that does not happen again. I only want something that is cheap and safe for my wife and our new baby. I don’t want the baby to grow up in violence, I tried so hard to get away from that.”

However, the most interesting information that was relayed in the first interview is the difference between the Deported verses the Darfuri. For those deported from Amman, they very much operate as a collective, in the community structures that had been assembled so organically in Jordan. “We have to support each other and stay with one another. There are over 200 of us that were deported from Amman that are here now in Cairo. Deep down, we don’t trust other Darfuris. Of course, we can talk with them and can be friends, but never deep down. We just don’t know. Other Darfuris, they could be criminals or even spies for the Sudanese government. We always have to be careful what we say to someone we don’t know. Listen, there are four groups of Sudanese people in Cairo. You have the diplomats and they are working for the government. These people you cannot trust. You have the tourists who want to come and travel because Egypt is so close to Sudan. You have the workers who come here to make money and then send the money back home to their families, some of them have been here for a while. And then you have us, the refugees. But even amongst the refugees, you can’t trust everyone because you just don’t know. So we know these four groups exist and that we are a part of these groups, but still we are always careful. And of course we hang out with other African populations. We go out to cafes, we go to watch football matches together or we play in the fields in *Ard El Lewa*.

It's quite cheap, 200 LE for two hours split between 10 to 15 of us. But in our homes, it's usually just us, there is no big mixture. But, we do this for survival. We have a What's App group called "The Deported" and it has all the people who came here from Amman. We message each other every day. And we always talk to our friends in Amman every day, I miss my friends very much. But people usually stay to themselves and this is ok. It is to keep our identities alive at all costs. If you lose your identity, you are in the middle of nowhere, you are stranded."

The Deported Darfuri in Cairo distinguishes the four groups of Sudanese by many different factors. "We can tell if they work for the embassy by many different things", Idris tells me. "For example, they wear certain clothes, expensive clothes, so we know they are not refugees. They also travel in fancy cars, you know the diplomatic cars, they have the green license plate, so we know they work for the embassy. They also live in certain areas of Cairo, like *Mohandiseen*, as *Ard el Lewa* is not a great area, or parts of *Nasr City* where there are other Sudanese. They also have their own cafes that they go to, so we can tell by this that they work for the government and not to be trusted. As for tourism, it's usually when you see young couples, you know they are on their honeymoon as Egypt is close and it is cheap to travel to. To be honest, I haven't seen the people who come to buy things, but I know people come to buy furniture or refrigerators because the price is cheaper than it would be in Sudan. Everyone else are refugees. But even with the refugees, you have to be careful, because they could be lying about who they are or where they came from."

I ask Idris to expand upon his previous thought about being stranded in the middle of nowhere. It seemed *apropos* due to the current migratory experiences of the Deported Darfuri which has been fraught with fragmentation. "Listen, there are things that belong to you, I mean that you have, that no one can take away no matter how hard they try. There is your culture, this

is your language and the music and dances that you learn as a young child from your mother and father. These are different for other tribes, but are just important for every individual group because they came to each group directly from God. It is not like you can just wake up tomorrow and speak a whole new language fluently, this is just not how it works. There are also the customs and traditions, you have seen the photos I sent about how we build our houses and the baskets that the women make. These are also important as people are trained from a very young age to be able to do these crafts. Some people will argue that religion can also not be taken from you. While I believe that God cannot be taken from me, I think it is much easier to change your religion tomorrow than to learn a new language. You see, as you know, our culture and our way of life was under attack in Darfur, so we must protect this and it is important that we keep it alive when we are together.” Mubarak, another former student who traveled right after Idris and Ahmed, pushes back on this point a bit, “God is the most important thing in our lives right now. Everything is up to God and in God’s hands. While no one may see us and the pain we go through, God sees us. Our culture is also very important, but for me, religion is the most important thing in my life.”

These gentlemen will later discuss their lives in Cairo; their relationships with Egyptians, their views on life in Cairo, and how they still dream about a better future. Ahmed describes difficulties he and his friends face due to their background, “Obviously, we feel we are different every day we go outside. We see the looks we are given, but I try to ignore them. Of course, it’s not everyone, and I know life is hard here even for Egyptians. And it’s not just us who have problems with Egyptians. I’ve seen Nubians treated badly, but once they speak Egyptian, sometimes they are treated better. It’s just.....if we have a problem with someone cheating us, like on rent or even going to the store.if one of us has a problem then it’s like we all have a

problem. It's all the Egyptians against one of us." Idris interjects, "Maybe 10% of Egyptians are good. But where are they? I know in every country, for every people you have good and bad. It's impossible for every people to only be good or only be bad. But sometimes, it's hard for me to see the good here. I thought here would be better than Jordan, but there is a lawlessness here that didn't exist in Jordan. I don't feel as safe here on a day to day basis. Just recently, someone was killed in our neighborhood by a gun. I don't know who to blame. People are uneducated here and they're difficult to deal with, but who to blame for this?" Ahmed continues after Idris, "We are also not Muslims in the eyes of Egyptians. I stopped going to Friday prayers because I would receive stupid questions, like are you Muslim? Man, I just prayed right next to you, how could you ask that question? But, it just became easier to pray at home. Arabs think Islam is only for them, but they can't tell you why if you ask. Maybe because for them Arab Muslim is a cultural identity, where for us, there is a separation. In Africa, it's different, they are their own ideas. But what's funny is that we are all from Africa here, but to the Egyptians, we are just dirty black Africans. We are for sure strangers here. If one Egyptian has a problem with us, then all of Egypt will be against us."

In order to pass the days and make a living to survive, some of the gentlemen interviewed work irregularly, though most of them are not working as much as they were in Amman due to crazy schedules and the toll working is taking on their bodies. They try to live in groups to take care of each other, especially the older men taking care of the unaccompanied teens and young men in their early 20's. Usually one man in each apartment works and tries to support the others. "I work in a call center because my English is good, but the hours are very difficult. I work during the night and sleep during the day. I don't get to see my friends that much because I have to sleep during the day, so that is hard", Idris says. Idris also follows the news every day to pass

the time when he's at home and usually likes to discuss certain topics of interest with me, messaging me about what white supremacy actually is and why it's becoming popular in the United States or his wonderings of what Steven Bannon believes in and why. "Hi Elena, Good morning and how are things with you? I see on CNN there's something going on in the USA....what do you know about SUPREMICISTS?" My stomach drops as I explain the current political climate in the United States. For me, it makes sense why Idris would take an interest in such a topic. "Wow, this is too crazy now. I saw all this on CNN and Bloomberg, my two favorite channels since I was a student in college."

Always, these gentlemen ask about their friends in Amman and if I have been in contact with them. Vice-versa their friends in Amman always ask about them. For some, they keep in contact daily, carrying on the friendships they built in exile, a reprieve for most of them during the slow and drawn out days in Cairo. "We always try and speak to each other in our native languages on What's App, it is very important. Also here, we're not always from the same tribe, but in Amman, we all met at least one person who was from our tribe" While I was conducting field work in Amman, Idris and Musa always messaged me to see how everything was going, "How is Amman so far? What about my friends over there??? How are they?" My friends [in Amman] are very happy and they so proud of you. I talked to some of them last week. I miss Rainbow Street [a very popular street in *Jabal Amman* where people go to socialize in the evenings and especially on the weekends, filled with shops and cafes]. Did you go to Petra? Awesome, I like that place!"

My interviewees are also always quick to inform me of the news of what is happening back home in Sudan, which they also follow on a daily basis, particularly on Facebook. Idris messaged me in September saying he had sad news, "Two days ago I got some very bad news.

Sudanese security forces attacked Omdurman Islamic University accommodation. [This is] accommodation for Darfuri students in Khartoum. Two passed away and many are still in the hospital. The government is still targeting students from West Sudan (Darfur). The government thinks they are opponents and they say that they are rebels, which is not true. Do you remember a couple of days ago so many students resigned from their university because of the prejudice? This has been going on since the beginning of the conflict in the region. When I was at my university many students have been killed and one of them was very famous. There were almost 600 students arrested. I'm telling you!!! In 2015, the girl's accommodation has been attacked which belonged to Darfuri students and many have been raped. Believe me, too many things are going on there. So this is Sudan. I wish I could be able to take you there to see how beautiful it is, but don't go now, bad people are there! In Sudan, unfortunately, there are too many bad people.”

Even though Idris is always following the news and is acutely aware of the violence and danger, he still dreams of returning very soon. “I wana go back to see my hometown, but unfortunately, I can't. Maybe when it's safe. And I can take you there!! Very nice places. Specifically in winter, it's really a nice place to be. My hometown is cold and sometimes very humid and foggy. In some parts, it's not too cold nor too hot. I believe it's very warm. The best time to visit my hometown is September and October. Wow, it's unbelievably awesome.”

Like in Amman, the Deported Darfuris are very well organized, especially when it comes to speaking up for their rights and to set forth reasoning for how they have been wronged in the past. They are not afraid to ask for what they want, even after the repercussions of what happened during the protest in Amman. The following text, which was written by a group of community members, was sent to a non-governmental organization in Downtown Cairo, Saint

Andrew's Refugee Services, and was shared with me prior to sending: "Unfortunately, the crimes against humanity continue until this day. We fled from our country to Jordan in order to seek international protection granted by UNHCR through refugee status. In December 2015, we were *refouled* in violation of international law back to Sudan. Since this illegal forced deportation we have been subject to many issues of harassment, attacks, racial discrimination, and incrimination by the Sudanese security forces both back at home and in our countries of asylum. Due to these horrible circumstances, some of us have paid the price for seeking freedom with our very lives we tried so hard to change. Even through all these problems, we barely receive any attention or assistance from UNHCR and the broader international community. Through incorrect or absent actions, our psychosocial state has suffered greatly. Due to these myriad of issues we demand the following:

1. We demand psychological, moral and material compensations because we have been subjected to the worst forms of torture, psychological and physical humiliation. Also we lost all our properties due to forced deportation as well as prevented us from taking our luggage, so we demand such compensations.
2. We demand protection: Since our forcible deportation to Sudan until our arrival in Egypt we have not got any sufficient protection by the UNHCR so, we have been subjected to persecution and security attacks on a regular basis by the Sudanese government, security agencies and the local community in the form of racial discrimination. UNHCR knew this but doesn't move (keeps silent) that is why we demand protection.
3. We kindly ask to accelerate procedures and move files as quickly as possible. Since most of us (forcibly deported) have been recognized by the UNHCR in Jordan (have

already blue card) and some have been resettled to the third country. But since our arrival there has not been any action taken by the UNHCR. Even those who did not get the status (have been recognized)

We were recognized [as refugees] by the Jordan office, which had been conducting interviews after more than one year, almost as much time as a new registration. Still, most didn't receive the blue card. Therefore, we demand resettlement and the reconciliation for the ones who didn't get the blue card for their resettlement to a third country. We also demand this for separate families. We truly, hope to reunite those who have been separated, urgently.

Fourthly: We demand social services: Knowing that all of us who have been forcibly deported have lost baggage and properties, we came to Egypt with almost nothing. However, we haven't received any services or assistance provided from UNHCR, which means we are still suffering and have become completely homeless.

We have not been able to work because of the psychological pressures resulting from the forced deportation. Thus, we demand services and life supplies.”

When asked if they regretted their protests, especially after the deportation and subsequent struggles, they all replied with a resounding no. After hearing about their trials and tribulations, especially with regards to their aforementioned concerns in Egypt, this came as a bit of a surprise. “No of course we do not have any regrets, if we had to do it all over again, I would in a heartbeat. We were fighting for our rights. You can never not fight for your rights. So yea, if we were to do it again, I would go.”

Even if the interviewees think about the past and the traumatic experiences they went through, they also are very much thinking always of the future. For these gentlemen, they all feel that the life they are currently living cannot be all they will amount to. Many of them talked



about wanting to study and take jobs in fields where they will be able to help other individuals. These thoughts are very much tied into their past experiences. Idris has dreams of going into academia. “I want to be a doctor of linguistics. I want to go to university and get a degree to prove to people that we can get higher education and we can succeed and get jobs which have been restricted for us. The Sudanese government tried to kill our languages. But we never forgot them. They tried to get us to only speak in Arabic, but we did not forgot the languages our mothers taught us when we were small. They [the government] did not succeed in this. When I am together with other people of my tribe, we speak together in Fur. It is important for us that we speak together in our language. You know, I remember schools tried to teach in our tribal languages and not in Arabic and the leaders of these schools were jailed for opening up language schools! Some were even killed, but we were not all killed, and I believe I am meant to study this for my people. I hope other people who have also gone through similar things feel the same way. I want to bring back my language that the government tried so hard to suppress. We will show them that we cannot be suppressed, we are stronger than them. We will care for the people that no one else will care for.”

Mubarak believes the best way to help people is through the law. “I want to be a lawyer. I believe the law can be strong when it is followed. The law can help people, it can help my people. If I can study the law then I can help my people. Lawyers right now in Sudan are sometimes disappeared and other times killed. Maybe I can study law outside of Sudan so that way, I can help my people when we go back home, *Inshallah*. Then we can also bring the people who are against us to the courts and maybe they will have to pay for what they did to us. So yes, my dream would be to become a lawyer.

Mohamed, a young man in his early 20's wants to study medicine as he has seen firsthand what a lack of healthcare can do to a community. "I want to be a doctor. I saw so much violence in Darfur, so many people who lost their lives and even then I wanted to be a doctor. But even now, I see the problems that we have in Egypt and that we had in Jordan. People are sick and there is no one to help them. Our mothers are pregnant and sometimes they can't go to the hospital to have their babies. If we go to a doctor or hospital here they tell us they cannot help us. So who will help us? Even the children, sometimes they have nightmares or they don't eat right and the parents worry, but what to do? I can help these people, too. I need to help them, there is no other option."

For Ishmael, he has taken a job in a very unlikely place, UNHCR. "Honestly I wasn't doing anything during the days. I wanted to improve my English, so I took classes, but I wanted to work. I went to UNHCR because I thought they could give me work and I thought through this that I could improve myself. I really wanted to improve myself. They let me attend a training in Arabic and English at AUC Tahrir. There were 32 different interpreters from different organizations in Egypt. The training was on interpreter's law. It was difficult, because as we are interpreter's we didn't know that there is a special law for interpretation. It's international law. These courses are in five different countries including Egypt, which I am happy for. The training was in English and I made some new friends. Even in my new job, I make new friends, including lawyer friends. I like my job but it is far at the RSD building for UNHCR is in October 6<sup>th</sup>. But I learn about refugees from different countries, like Iraqi refugees who were in Syria and some Sudanese who were in Tunisia, and also Syrians who were in Turkey. And I learn from them. I learn about their experiences and that they want exactly what we want, to live a better life."

For the Deported Darfuri in Cairo, the end goal of the migratory experiences is the same for the Darfuri Refugee in Amman, to live a better life. While the preference would be in Darfur, the reality is this will not happen anytime soon. While this may not be discussed, it is known by the interviewees. Therefore, the next best option is resettlement, with the last option being to make the best out of what they have in Cairo in their re-assembled community.

### *Conclusion*

Once the messages started pouring in from my interviewees in Sudan post-deportation, it became inherently clear they were unable to stay in Khartoum for safety reasons. There once strong community built in exile on a foundation of reconstructing a past narrative, was broken, and the aftershock sent waves through both communities, which now had to re-assemble themselves post-deportation. For those still in Amman, they were in the process of learning how to re-navigate the city without their friends, roommates, husbands, wives, children, and fellow community members, viewing different subjects, such as policemen or resident community members, as threats to their safety, as discussed in *Chapter Three*. Both groups missed their friends and family members deeply.

Now, the Deported in Khartoum had to find ways to irregularly migrate to safety to save their lives, and to ultimately re-build. For many, the obvious choice was Egypt, a bordering country which shared great history due to geographical intimacy. What was already fragmented migratory experiences on account of being stuck in Jordan became even more fragmented, as movement within the Global South, particularly irregular movement, pushed those further and further away from their ultimate goal: resettlement. While some attempted an onwards journey to Libya from Sudan via Egypt with the ultimate goal of crossing the Mediterranean by boat, not all those who attempted succeeded. Some paid with their lives, a testament to the modern refugee

experience. Some did survive, however, and now reside in Europe with many having status in France.

Through the act of smuggling, a move of irregular migration, the Deported who migrated to Cairo would now build a new life and new community with one another to re-assemble as the Deported Darfuri in Cairo. In this new assemblage, the Deported Darfuri in Cairo had to learn how to navigate a new social, Cairo, once again while being viewed as strangers to the resident community members. Due to extreme mistrust of other Sudanese, including other Darfuris, and the need to be and feel protected as the stranger, those interviewed put their trust in what they knew: each other. The support they pulled from each other and their transnational relationships and networks in Amman allows them to survive in the day to day life of Cairo and also gives them a sounding board for their future goals, namely, to continue to help one another and those who also need assistance, namely, other refugee communities and those who are still struggling with the realities of violence back in their communities of birth.

## *Chapter Five, Inshallah, We Will See You in Darfur*

*When I was 7, she cradled bullets in the billows of her robes.*

*That same night, she taught me how to get gunpowder out of cotton with a bar of soap.*

*Years later when the soldiers held her at gunpoint and asked her who she was*

*She said, I am a daughter of Adam, I am a woman, who the hell are you?*

*The last time we went home, we watched our village burn,*

*Soldiers pouring blood from civilian skulls*

*As if they too could turn water into wine.*

*They stole the ground beneath our feet*

-Excerpt from "Mama" by Darfuri-US poet Emtithal Mahmoud

I could never have imagined that sitting on that bench on that cold, winter Amman evening; hearing stories of fleeing Darfur and the dreams of obtaining the demands wanted from the UNHCR protest, would bring me so near to a community that I now cherish as close friends. While I was first and foremost their teacher, someone whom they looked up to in order to learn a new skill that would help them in their lives in settlement and possible resettlement, it is I now who am the one learning about how experiences and journeys told by the interviewees, can truly shape almost everything in a world which focuses on laws and policies. Remembering the nights of December 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015, are still painful, and re-reading through the messages I received from interviewees brings it all back as if it happened just yesterday. I had not slept, even though I can barely function on little sleep, as I was routinely watching videos of people being attacked by teargas or chanting for their freedom. It pained me as I could not answer their cries for someone, anyone, to help them out of this dire and traumatic situation. There were

times, though brief, where my friends and I thought the process would not go through, though we were obviously all disappointed and at a loss for words that no one more powerful could do anything to stop such a painful experience. The articles on the deportation were numerous for a few days, shared incessantly by everyone who knew the community in Amman, but then everyone forgot about the people who were put on a plane to a land they greatly feared. The outsider also forgot about the people left behind in Amman; the friends, wives, husbands, siblings, and children taken from the community in the early morning of winter. It seems that early mornings are not meant for these Darfuri communities.

When you are a stranger within a community, it is sometimes difficult to find your footing. This is even truer when you are not only a stranger, but a stranger outside of the now expected norm of the way in which the world works. Namely, if you are a non-citizen in a world filled with citizens in the realm of the nation-state, nation-states which may be struggling themselves with different forms of precarity. While we should all be critical of this norm, this is the world in which the Darfuri Refugee in Amman and the Deported Darfuri find themselves, as every single person interviewed claimed they very much felt that they were strangers. It is not an easy world in which to navigate, and it makes sense by listening to their stories that assembling community structures occurs with what is already known; with people who have shared backgrounds, experiences, and history.

In Amman, their history was viewed in the lens of the mythico-historical, something that is between fact and myth. This has allowed the community to make sense of their past and their present, which on all accounts is not where they want to be. It has also allowed them to assemble a well-structured and tight-knit community structure which supports one another through the good times, like birthdays and weddings, and the bad, like deportation and death. While those in

community may not have known each other in Darfur, by keeping contact with their roots back home, showcasing a different type of transnational migratory experience, and by placing trust in one another which is easier due to distance from Sudan, this community was able to assemble and grow and re-assemble after the deportation when many community members were lost.

It was this strongly assembled community, coupled with mistrust of other Sudanese due to close proximity from Egypt that the Deported Darfuri carried with them from Khartoum over the border. As this community re-assembled in Cairo it chose to re-assemble with what it already knew and trusted for its own safety, therefore, becoming the Deported Darfuri in Cairo. Through both of these categories in Amman and Cairo, the overall migratory experiences of the refugee from Darfur involved reconciling the simultaneous need for visibility and invisibility towards the resident communities and international organizations in order to survive.

By listening to these communities' stories, their friendship, their selfless hospitality, and their unwavering faith in the universe, the Darfuri Refugees in Amman and the Deported Darfuri in Cairo have never given up on their own journeys and the journeys yet to come, no matter how traumatic and fragmented they have been in the past. While arguments can and have been made about the breaches of international law, the silence of UNHCR in such a situation, and the nonchalant attitude of the residential and international communities, arguments at the end of the day might affect laws and policy, but they can never change the journeys these individuals ultimately experienced. This teaches us why we should pause and engage in listening to the people in these stories, about how their lives and their experiences up until this point have brought them to the life they currently inhabit across borders, whether it be in Amman, Jordan or Cairo, Egypt.

The interviewees have never give up hope for themselves, the new community in Cairo, the first community assembled in Amman, and their families and friends back in Darfur and spread out across the world. This is not an easy task. There exists a lot of mistrust amongst Sudan, the state of birth and Jordan and Egypt, the states of asylum; the residential and international communities which are supposed to give them an acknowledgement that they are welcome, that they are and can be visible within their new socials and they will be safe within these spaces, even if they may be strangers.

It was a personal duty for me, as a researcher, to make sure that these stories were told with the utmost integrity and correctness, as to do their experiences justice. The Darfuri Refugee in Amman and the Deported Darfuri in Cairo are used to speaking out and letting their stories be heard, sometimes with terrible consequences, as have been described. They are also used to living and navigating lives where they must restrict themselves and their loved ones in order to feel safe and secure. By having their stories told in this setting, though, they can gain an audience they might not have reached before, and with that a visibility in a safe space that will not attempt to hurt them. This is the main goal of this thesis.

“Did you hear, I heard the situation in Jordan is change direct [changing regarding] Sudanese refugees”, Musa messages me in late March 2018, “Some of them have gotta [got] resettlement in US, UK, and Canada, maybe that means soon, we will also have good news.” The dream of resettlement, of starting a new life, of re-assembling yet again is always in the background for my interviewees, as is the reality that this might not occur anytime soon. “But here is in Egypt UNHCR is sleeping, don’t work don’t care about what happened to us”, Musa continues. Yet there is a space between dreams and reality that many of my interviewees occupy where they always believe, no matter what, that things cannot stay like this, they must become



better. “Yes, but change is gonna come, it will. Yeah, that is what I work for, even [if] I unable. Always remember when you doing good job, God will help you and still with you. I am grateful.”

Yet, the ultimate dream will always be to return to Darfur, their home. Ayman is always talking about his and his family’s future return, especially now that he has a child on the way, news which he excitedly shared with me in March 2018. “I read about the level of development of Sudan compared to Syria. Although the resources in Sudan do not have half of them in Syria. I hope, maybe, we can change a lot of ideas. God willing, after stability, I will host you in my village. At that time I will complete my studies and work in my organization, which works in rural development. That is my dream, one day! We need a place that will respect my humanity. One day.”

Those are my friends, the interviewees, always searching for improvement, always having hope in the face of trauma, fragmentation, and uncertainty. Ayman ends the conversation as so many of my interviewees end their conversations with me, “*Inshallah*, we will see you in Darfur.”

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