Transcription of the Event: Launch of the Special Issue of the Journal of Humanitarian Affairs Hosted by the Southern Responses Project and its Principal Investigator, Professor Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh | Online Event, February 3, 2025

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh:

It is a real pleasure to welcome you to today's roundtable on Southern Responses to Displacement which we are convening to launch the Special Issue of the Journal of Humanitarian Affairs on this topic. The journal issue is itself both part of and also broadens the conversations developed throughout an European Research Council Funded Research Project, which has since 2017 been exploring: how, why and with what effect so-called Southern States, as well as civil societies, members of host communities, and different groups of refugees themselves, have been responding to support some of the more than 6.7 million displaced people from Syria who've been living in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey since 2011.

My name is Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and I am Professor of Migration and Refugee Studies at UCL, where I have been the Principal Investigator of the Southern Responses to Displacement project since 2017. It is a real pleasure to bring together the contributors of this special issue, which has been edited by myself and by Dr. Estella Carpi, who is Associate Professor in Humanitarian Studies, also at UCL, and who was formerly Research Fellow on the Southern Responses to Displacement project.

I will start with some words of welcome and a few words with regards to the special issue, and then each of our contributors will speak to their own contribution and the special issue in turn, and then we'll open up for discussion and conversation.

You will have noticed that we have pressed record to capture the transactions and conversations. Today, we're using that as a means to create a transcript of the event which will then, in edited version, be translated into Arabic, and both the English and Arabic versions will be posted on the Southern Responses to Displacement website, whose address is www.southernresponses.org. We will have lots of time for conversation, and also to take Q&A in the second part of the event, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts and your comments on our discussion, and the different contributions in the special issue.

Our contributors will be speaking briefly about their respective articles, and we are listing their names and the titles of their articles on the next slide. We'll be seeking to expand our discussion beyond the specific cases, as it were, explored in the special issue, to offer a broader reflection on the importance and the challenges of responses to displacement as led by actors from across the global South, as well as critical reflections on the broader politics of humanitarianism and also of knowledge production in context of displacement.

As you can see from the table of contents and will also hear from our contributors, the special issue reflects a multi-scalar approach, including international as well as national, regional and transregional responses to displacement as well as local responses by people labelled variously as refugees, citizens, or hosts on municipal neighbourhood and camp-based levels; the articles together explore forms of response

which are sometimes posited as alternatives to Northern-led humanitarianism. The special issue as a whole engages critically with the mobilisation and contestation of key concepts used both in academic and in policy, literatures, including concepts such as the South empowerment, solidarity, volunteer, refugee and host. Throughout the contributions centralised the perspectives and the conceptualizations of people who have personal and or family experiences of processes of displacement and dispossession, both in their capacities as responders, recipients, or non-recipients of such initiatives, but also as people who are engaging critically with the meanings and practices of humanitarianism, including as researchers and as scholars.

The Southern Responses to Displacement project has had a main focus on the role of Southern actors, including states such as Malaysia and Brazil, for example, as well as civil society groups and refugees themselves in responding in the context of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.

Southern responses to displacement, including those led by states such as Brazil, as well as by Syrian and Palestinian refugees, and Turkish and Jordanian citizens, amongst others, will be discussed at greater length in a number of the following presentations, as well as expanding our geographical focus by exploring responses in the case of Uganda, for example. And of course, we will return to responses to displacement from and within Syria, including following the overthrow of the Assad regime throughout the rest of the roundtable.

However, while Syrian refugees are at the heart of our Southern Responses to Displacement project, in the remainder of my short introduction, I will be drawing on our editorial to the special issue which also situates those papers in relation to Southern responses to the genocide in Gaza which has witnessed the displacement of well over 90% of all Palestinians across Gaza. And of course, we're seeing a continuation of this violence and displacement, if at a different pace and scale, in the West Bank as well as in Gaza itself.

So, at the same time as the USA has ceased the operations of USAID and its funding, as well as the UK and other European States cutting foreign or humanitarian aid and UN humanitarian agencies themselves being under attack, we have seen that Southern and post-colonial states have sought to hold and continue to seek to hold hegemonic states and institutions accountable for committing and or being complicit in the most serious of crimes under international law.

The case of Gaza shows this very clearly with headlines around the world, on the one hand, announcing the end of the Western-led World Order around the globe. Politicians, academics, directors of international, national and local human rights organizations as well as civil society networks have highlighted the underlying hypocrisy and violence of a rules-based order founded and led by Western States which perpetuates colonial systems of oppression and exploitation and systematically fails to uphold the rights of peoples affected by occupation, conflict, mass displacement, and dispossession. And yet, on the other hand, states from across the Global South have been highly visible and audible on a global stage.

As we all know, in December 2023, the South African Government brought a groundbreaking Genocide Case against Israel before the International Court of Justice, seeking and being granted provisional measures to uphold, I quote, "the right of the Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from acts of genocide." Since then, Southern actors and States in particular, have been recognised as diplomatic leaders at the UN and elsewhere, seeking a permanent ceasefire and compliance with the ICJ's interim Orders with resolutions passed by the Non-Aligned Movement the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League, and most recently, only last week, we have witnessed the launch of the Hague Group by countries, including Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Malaysia, Namibia, Senegal, and South Africa.

Such acts and actors have often been explicitly positioned as embodying powerful processes of anti-colonial and south-south solidarity and have very rightly been identified as enacting an explicit challenge to the hegemonic World Order and to the West or the global north in inverted commas. And yet it is really important, we argue throughout the special issue, to view these processes, and this moment not as an exception or a paradigm shift per se, but rather as a long history of so-called Southern responses to humanitarian crises, or rather to crises of protection.

And of course, it is increasingly recognised that there is a plurality of orders in our multipolar world, and that the normative Northern-led, so-called international humanitarian community is only one of a plurality of international communities of response, some of which work with and others explicitly against the hegemonic Northern-led humanitarian system. And it is in that regard that this special issue takes as its starting point a plurality of communities of response.

If we take Gaza again as a key embodiment of this long history of Southern-led international cooperation, we see this plurality demonstrated in the names of the hospitals which have been systematically attacked and destroyed as part of its attacks on Gaza's broader civilian infrastructure by the Israeli forces across the Gaza strip since October 2023. With 31 out of 36 hospitals across Gaza having been destroyed or damaged by May 2024. The names of some of these medical institutions [see Box 1 below] remind us of the long history of international cooperation, led by countries and communities from across the global South in support of occupied, displaced, and dispossessed Palestinians in Gaza:

- Al-Helal Emirati Maternity Hospital, Rafah (funded by UAE);
- two Jordanian military field hospitals (one inaugurated in 2009 and the second established in Khan Younis in late-November 2023);
- Indonesian Hospital Gaza City (funded by Indonesia's Medical Emergency Rescue Committee);
- the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital, Gaza City (built and equipped by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency);
- and the Dar Essalaam Hospital (funded inter alia by Qatar Red Crescent, Muslim Care-Malaysia Society, Al-Taawon, Partners International Medical Aid-South Africa, Palestine International Medical Aid (PIMA), Patient Helping Fund association–Kuwait, Human Appeal International-UAE, Zakat Committee for Islamic Advocacy for the Palestinian People, and The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development).

Box 1: Some of the hospitals in Gaza destroyed or damaged by May 2024; compiled by E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

These state and non-state actors have not been working in isolation from actors across the global north. So, on the one hand, building on a long-standing official tradition of support and solidarity between states that identify themselves or are identified by others as members of the global South. For example, members of the BRICS nations, or of the Non-Aligned Movement. South Africa's case at the ICJ was supported by Southern and post-colonial countries, but also by countries including Slovenia, Ireland, Belgium, and Spain. And even in cases where one State is the figurehead of a hospital whose name is borne following the establishment of this medical institution, this often takes place in partnership with major international organizations, with an intertwining of funding of institutional and programmatic approaches, such as that witnessed, for example, in the case of the Jordanian military field hospitals which were constructed and led by the Jordanian Royal Medical Services, being supported through donations from the IOM and Direct Relief, amongst others, to provide medical infrastructure and care to Palestinians in Gaza.

We only need look at the medical practitioners who have been caring for Palestinians, injured and killed by the Israeli forces across Gaza to witness this long history of refugee-led response to displacement, as well as the various intertwining, and both regional and transnational modes of solidarity which have underpinned responses to displacement in this context. First and foremost, the vast majority of clinicians have been multiply displaced. Gaza and Palestinian professionals themselves Palestinian refugees and IDPs who have been caring for other Palestinians who have been displaced, and many of those doctors have been educated in Gaza - in Gaza's universities which have been subjected to institutional destruction, systematic destruction amounting to scholasticide - but also in the broader region. For instance, Dr. Abdelrahman Abu Shawish graduated from Gaza's Azhar University and Dr. Alaa Kassab was educated in Cairo. they also include Palestinians such as Dr. Fayez Abed who graduated from Cuba's Latin American School of Medicine in 2020, as part of Cuba's historic medical scholarship programme for students from across the global South, and Dr. Musa Abdul Khaliq who graduated from medical school in Ukraine in 2023, as part of a longer history of Palestinian doctors educated in the countries of the former-USSR.

Palestinian doctors in Gaza have, in turn, been working alongside international medical humanitarian volunteers from around the world affiliated with the abovementioned institutions and organisations: these include three Indonesian MER-C medical humanitarian volunteers working at the Indonesian Hospital who were 'trapped' inside Gaza as it was hermetically sealed in October 2023 and who decided not to evacuate when 'the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs [helped to] evacuate Indonesian citizens from Gaza' but instead decided to remain (Llewellyn, 2023), to 'stay inside Gaza because we need them to take care of the humanitarian work' before new medical teams could gain access (People's Health Dispatch, 2023).

'Local responders' – Palestinians and non-Palestinians alike – who were already based in Gaza, have been joined by rotating medical teams as and when they have been permitted to cross the border, including members of the Palestinian diaspora, such as the British-Palestinian reconstructive surgeon Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sitta, as well as volunteer doctors from countries including (in alphabetical order) Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco, Jordan and Pakistan. At risk of bombardment and at times desperately awaiting their own evacuation as hospitals have come under attack – too often to become the sites of mass graves -, these doctors have typically been embedded within emergency medical teams which also demonstrate the intertwining of 'Southern' and 'Northern' institutions, such as Malaysian doctors working with Mercy Malaysia Emergency Medical Team under the auspices of the WHO, and Jordanian doctors not only working for the Jordanian field hospitals but also travelling, for instance, as part of medical teams established by International Rescue Committee and Medical Aid for Palestinians. Such teams have, of course, also included medics who hold European and North American nationalities and who have high profile personas in the public sphere, having often volunteered in Gaza, the West Bank and the Palestinian refugee camps across the region over the course of several decades (see Haj-Hassan et al., 2014; Algendy, 2024; Kossaify, 2024). Dozens of doctors travelling from countries of the global North to work in Gaza themselves have personal and familial histories which position them as members of minoritised communities in the North – such as Dr. Fozia Alvi, Dr. Yipeng Ge, Dr. Yasser Khan, Dr. Zaher Sahloul and Dr. Abdo Algendy - , echoing academic arguments that, while the term 'South' is itself contested, there are arguably multiple Souths in the world, including 'Souths' (and Southern voices) within powerful metropoles in the North, as well as multiple Souths within multiple peripheries. These are deeply intertwined histories and intertwined presents.

In turn, where possible, 'Northern' organisations like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) have established clinics within still-operational hospitals born as embodiments of South-South solidarity; for instance, an MSF clinic was established within the Indonesia Hospital in Rafah in mid-December 2023, illustrating the ways that Northern and Southern institutions have sought to work together to not only provide life-saving support but also actively challenge the status quo. Given the scale of destruction, some states have sought to find ways to provide new clinical infrastructure, although such initiatives have continued to be blocked by the Israeli state – for instance, in late-2023/early-2024, Indonesia sent a hospital ship with aid for Gaza in the hope that it would not only be able to deliver much needed medical supplies upon its arrival at the Egyptian port of Al-Arish via the Egyptian Red Crescent but also eventually be granted permission for the ship itself to operate as a field hospital off Gaza's coastline itself. As such initiatives continue to be blocked, it is clear that the humanitarian aid that has been prevented by the Israel forces from entering the Gaza Strip for months on end – in ongoing violation of the ICJ's Interim Orders – include medical and food supplies provided by not only the UN, EU and Northern-led INGOs, but also by states such as Indonesia, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar, Rwanda, Turkey, Tunisia and the UAE, as well as by NGOs, faith-based groups, local and transnational civil society networks and diaspora organisations established, funded and led by citizens, migrants and refugees from around the world. Indeed, where Gazan Palestinian doctors have been working in situ with the support of volunteer Palestinian doctors from the diaspora, it is equally the case that Palestinian refugees from camps such as Baddawi camp in North Lebanon have collected funds and supported aid drives in yet another iteration of what can variously be denominated 'diaspora

humanitarianism' or what I have elsewhere explored through the prism of 'refugee-refugee humanitarianism'.

At times differently positioned actors have been working to challenge hegemonic systems and other times they have been working in other capacities which are institutionalized, such as donors, as funders, as subcontractors, institutionalized partners, and colleagues. But as we've seen in Gaza and elsewhere in the world, including in responses to Syria beyond, precisely, perhaps, in light of this multiplicity of responders, there are also a plurality of official and unofficial motivations and principles underpinning responses to mass displacement, some of which officially and overtly challenge the status quo, whilst others seek to solidify existing systems and remain within the norm and the normative.

So, on the one hand, we have the principles of solidarity and a common political struggle for self-determination and decolonization as per the rhetoric and practice of South Africa, but also demands, as articulated by many international agencies and organizations and lawyers for the international humanitarian principles to be equally and consistently applied in Gaza to protect and uphold the system in the face of widespread accusations, of racialised double standards and of hypocrisy.

Now, in archiving some of the roles played by a plurality of actors across the globe in support of Palestinian rights in Gaza, we are doing so as a means of adding to the extensive work that Palestinians in Gaza and in the diaspora themselves have been undertaking in documenting the crimes to which they have been subjected, as well as their extensive work as first responders across critical domains. Here the aim is to highlight both the work that people themselves who have experienced conflict and displacement do as responders, but also as archivists, and as critics of the lives that they are experiencing and the lives that are being lost that they are witnessing. But it is also to highlight some of the many articulations and practices of Southern-led responses to displacement, whilst recognising precisely the extent to which these actors do not exist, or work in isolation from one another, but rather that Southern led. Responses are not necessarily enacted in an antagonistic manner, contra Northern-led initiatives. Instead, we need to explore the ways that histories and systems are intertwined, and in many regards mutually constitutive not merely existing in parallel or in contestation.

In essence, we need to explore how these history systems actors are intertwined in order to create a more radical paradigm shift: we argue in the editorial introduction that this is required for more just and equitable forms of responding to displacement writ large.

Beyond recognizing the financial, the material, and the personnel ties that lead to a more than institutional intertwining of Northern and Southern responses to displacement, which by now has been extensively documented, we argue that it is important to maintain a critical focus on not only who is responding, but also why, how, and with what effect, that is to say, to engage with the principles, with the power, dynamics, and with the potential outcomes and experiences of such responses; in addition to engaging critically with questions around whose analytical perspectives and critical insights are recognised and prioritised as forms of knowledge about these processes.

So, as our community of contributors discuss throughout the special issue, there is a plurality of international systems, and there are multiple modes and principles of responding to the needs and rights of displaced people. But it is equally the case that there are multiple risks and critiques of co-optation, of instrumentalisation and of the dilution of inherently political modes of action which are required to redress inherently political and ideological systems of oppression and exploitation. There is the risk of diluting those into metaphors and into bureaucratic tick box exercises. And these are some of the challenges, as well as some of the opportunities that we will be collectively exploring in the remainder of the roundtable.

We will be turning to each colleague in turn now, and I'll start by passing the floor to my colleague and co-editor of the special issue, Estella Carpi, who will be speaking about our article on Syrian Refugee resettlement in Brazil. Thank you.

Estella Carpi:

Thanks so much, Elena, for the introduction, and for this, amazing introduction to the whole issue. I'm very glad to see the special issue nearly out, and being able to present it with you and with colleagues today that contributed. Our article on Brazil discusses the response of this country to displacement from Syria, and it is based on our joint explorations of Southern-led responses to displacement. I'm going to contextualize a bit how these speak to the Southern-led response framework that Elena elaborated on.

Here we specifically focused on Syrian nationals who were applying for resettlement in Brazil at the Beirut Consulate in 2019. Normally, Brazil is largely discussed as a humanitarian actor but not as an actor that actually engages with direct ways of managing aid or responding to forced migration, but normally either finances and supports pre-existing programs. Responses to displacement through an eligibility system through a resettlement system is a less visible form of engagement on the ground. In the article we provide an historical review of how Brazil has promoted an open border policy by proposing the eligibility scheme as a material, but also a moral alternative to the provision of aid on the ground. Problematically, however, Brazil approaches relocation as a crossroads-based strategy: Like saying, we open the borders, but refugees eventually have no systematic support once they get to Brazil. We rebuild the strong links between Brazil, the diaspora in Brazil, Lebanon, and Syria, especially in the field of welfare, provision, and political relationships between these countries.

Among people's reasons to depart from Lebanon and reach Brazil there was mostly the desire to join Syrian-led businesses in Brazil, which are many, and the presence of networks of support, or the possibility to secure their livelihoods on arrival, things that they wouldn't have had like if they had chosen a different country to relocate to. Most of the people we interviewed were registered with the UNHCR, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and because they were considering UNHCR as sort of useless for resettlement, and because most of these people that we interviewed were from a middle-class background most of the time, they didn't really need basic forms of relief and support.

Those that were still living inside Syria were still coping with everyday hardships, and they were trying to rely on the help of neighbours or the assistance offered by churches, mosques, and other local providers.

But it was quite interesting to see how most of them were actually not necessarily aware about what the United Nations were doing and what other alternatives they would have accessed if they wanted.

In the article we consider the role of political geography in producing the imagination of these Syrian nationals about life in Brazil, after resettlement. For example, the way Brazil responded to displacement from Syria is based on its Southern identity as a member of BRICS and the South-South cooperation that also Elena mentioned, and also how this idea of heralding a Southern identity actually changes, evolves throughout different presidential mandates: for instance, with Lula, like in the first mandate, and also with Dilma Rousseff. There was a refusal to reintegrate Brazil into the North Atlantic centred World Order, and there was an ideological turn after that towards the far right with Bolsonaro that had pulled out of the Global Compact for Refugees in 2016. And that was quite telling, in terms of the political desire to deny refugeehood in refugee hospitality in Brazil.

In that sense, Brazil, through this eligibility scheme for Syrian nationals, was trying to integrate these new refugees from Syria in the same way it did with Arab migrants throughout the early 20th century, like in the case of Palestinians in Brazil. But of course, this was a way of ending an interventionist modality of providing aid or humanitarianism as a form of visible and tangible support on the ground. But eventually there was no systematic aid for these refugees once resettled in Brazil. So, in that sense, with Elena, in the article we explore the limitations of how refugeehood is not acknowledged when it is about vulnerabilities, and it is only approached as a de facto form of economic migration. This is not to suggest, in the light of what Brazil does, that it just does that rather than something else. Instead, we kind of try to navigate what happens in this space and especially the role of political imagination for people that aspire to resettle in other countries. The South here doesn't want to be a once-for-all terminology that we either embrace or not, and not even just like a paradigm shift in the way we should be providing aid or not. But it's really a way of exploring political imagination and relatedness of these aspiring Brazil residents with the country of resettlement in questioning the pre-established identity of the refugee that aspires to resettle in Brazil. So, Brazil is just one of the examples that we can propose to reason through different political and epistemological geographies of aid. And trying to emphasize the importance of these intertwined dimensions that Elena mentioned, and reasoning through what happens through different political geographies.

I'll be glad to answer your questions later, but I will now give the floor to my colleague Şule Can who will talk about her article on Refugees as Projects: humanitarian responses to displacement and refugee led organizations in Southern Turkey. So Şule, the floor is yours.

Şule Can:

Thank you very much, Estella. I'm Şule, I am an anthropologist, and currently I work at State University of New York, Binghamton, in the US. And I am the outreach coordinator of Centre for Middle East and North Africa studies and a lecturer in anthropology. I'm so happy to be with my fellow authors here. First of all, as we all meet for this very special issue, I would like to thank you for putting this together and bringing us together, especially to Elena and Estella, and for their guidance throughout the issue and the articles as well. And also, of course, thank you, Elena for the introduction that was great. I would like to take this

opportunity also to acknowledge the suffering right now in Palestine, still being inflicted upon Palestinians, and I extend my deepest solidarity to the people of Palestine and Lebanon.

I am happy to have contributed to this special issue because it is as a result of my early work that started as a dissertation project in Turkey. I have been working at the border of Turkey and Syria for quite some time. Now, I work closely with Syrian refugees, mostly in Turkey, and during my early research I noticed the existence and work of humanitarian organizations in the Southern cities of Turkey, including looking closely to Southern-led responses: I looked at certain organizations, national, international NGOs and refugee-led cooperatives, co-ops in Adana, Turkey. My research was based on that curiosity about how humanitarian organizations in Turkey respond to the displacement, and there were multiple things that caught my attention in terms of dwelling in the humanitarian system. One of them was, of course, that I should acknowledge at the very beginning is, is Turkey's position, right? Turkey's position can be debated in many ways as it's not necessarily considered as a post-colonial context; but nonetheless I situated it as part of the global South in its complexity, as Estella mentions, within these political and geographical terms. But it was interesting to see in my work how it made me think further about concepts of South-North and its colonial relations in the context of particular humanitarianism.

The second point in this research, that was important for me to look at, was the agency of Syrian refugees and their refugee-refugee relations or refugees' own responses to their own displacement and livelihoods in Turkey. My goal was to challenge the representation in Turkey of Syrian women, as dependents who needed empowerment. My critique, at the very beginning of the article also, you may see, was also how this livelihood project that still continues to be implemented by the international and national NGOs, situate women as the subjects of empowerment projects. In that sense, I was wondering how refugees see that, perceive that, and develop on it in the context of Turkey and its policies.

That is why I wanted to research further about refugee women-led organizations, and their efforts to respond to their displacement. I was excited to find out about Meryem, a women's co-op supported by the metropolitan municipality of Adana and I presented, in the article, that model which is refugee-led, and I sought to understand what horizontal relatedness would look like. I hope that my research demonstrates that an international humanitarian regime is based on delivering aid, and approaching refugees as project-based subjects and understanding displacement itself as a kind of project to be delivered indicates a colonial Northern or donor-based gaze. So, when I talk about coloniality in this article or Northern approaches to humanitarian system, I don't necessarily talk about a geographical reference; instead, I talk about this mentality, and philosophy and historical positioning of refugees and humanitarianism, as a kind of Northern-based approach, which is very much based on perpetuating a Western centric model.

That is why my critiques kind of speak to what Elena also mentioned at the very beginning: remaining with the norm is very much visible still within the humanitarian context, and in in that sense, my critique includes critiques of the representation of refugees and Syrian refugees in particular, in Turkey, as mere recipients of aid and not actually as agents building their own lives. They are representing their struggle, within the conceptualization of solidarity, instead of projects.

I try to also emphasize how this project-based approach, which means that designing certain projects in terms of livelihood projects, or what they what the professionals call “women’s empowerment projects” creates “a cycle of dependency.” I take this term from one of my interlocutors who talks about not only positioning of refugees, but also humanitarian actors, as building a hierarchy in terms of their dependency on each other at national and international levels, where their dependency on the donors become a very visible issue.

Instead of presenting an economic model where you can be in solidarity with refugees, it perpetuates this cycle where everybody tries to get donors and funding from the north, and that creates or reproduces some kind of precarity and vulnerability, among the humanitarian workers, actors, and also amongst refugees, particularly refugee women.

Then I, of course, try to situate that within refugee policies and migration policies in Turkey, that is still in a vulnerable place, where Syrian refugees are not necessarily officially refugees, but under temporary protection status; and also situated it in relation to Turkey within the last decade, Turkey's approach to civil society and crackdown on different NGOs and pressure on international community as well. This all contributes, unfortunately, to these kinds of vulnerabilities, as how governments regulate it becomes very problematic as well. I will end with a note, and I'm happy to answer any questions, but I think it is very important to understand these local responses, to understand not only South to South relations, but also how local responses themselves are very much related to this international understanding, to Northern led understanding of humanitarian system and mechanisms.

In that sense, and also within this special issue. Rawan Arar's article, also talks about “humanitarian fiction.” It’s a little bit different, in terms of how this humanitarian understanding perpetuates itself, but it speaks to what I wanted to achieve in my work as well. I really think that the whole special issue comes together to speak to these different perspectives: where we critique a very linear understanding of humanitarian actors and refugee responses themselves as well.

So, thank you so much for this opportunity again for me to speak to this research and to this issue, and I'm happy to answer any questions, and looking forward to further discussion with our attendees as well. Now I will leave it to Bianca and their collaborative work, which is on refugee volunteering and responses to displacement in Uganda: navigating service-delivery work and precarity. Bianca, the floor is yours.

Bianca Fadel:

Thank you very much, Şule. Thank you all for being here today. My huge thanks again to Elena and Estella for convening us and for leading such an important Special Issue that I'm sure will contribute to a much larger debate about Southern voices in the scholarship and in the ways we understand different types of responses to displacement and beyond. It is a pleasure to be here today. I am representing a much wider team of academic colleagues, but also professional services, and the Youth Advisory Board members that contributed to the work in our project called Refugee Youth Volunteering Uganda, or RYVU for short.

This was a project funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council through the Global Challenges Research Fund. The whole project involved collaborative work between two universities in the UK and two in Uganda. I am a Research Fellow based at Northumbria University in the UK, the leading institution in this project, working with Loughborough University, also in the UK, and Uganda Martyrs University and Mbarara University of Science and Technology, both in Uganda. This emphasises the point of view, also mentioned by Elena right at the start, about the importance of understanding ways of conducting research that can also take into account multiple voices.

We know that we are all here today navigating multiple layers of North and South in the type of work that we are doing as academics and practitioners, so this is just an introductory note about the importance of a collaborative approach from the start in our project and the engagement of our Youth Advisory Board members in Uganda. I am sure we might have time in the discussion to talk a bit more about this type of engagement. The whole idea of this paper is coming from our research data that discusses the notion of volunteering which is familiar to many - if not all - of us, as a practice amongst young refugees themselves. The context of the project is set in Uganda, which is one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the world, currently hosting more than 1.5 million refugees, and most of these refugees are under 24 years old, so it is a very youthful refugee population. The objective of this research was to understand the notion and the experiences of volunteering amongst young refugees in Uganda, and how volunteering affects their skills, employability, and the inequalities they experience.

As we all know, there is a lot of scholarship in this sector that speaks about international volunteering experiences, and the paper discusses this background in the review. We know that often international volunteer placements, or gap year experiences, can be much more acknowledged than local efforts. So, in this paper we are shifting the narrative to talk about the importance of understanding refugee-led responses, which connects with what Elena mentioned right at the start today and also the work of colleagues here in the call on refugee-refugee humanitarianism. We're really talking about understanding the practice of volunteering within a context that is very much marked by different hierarchies, and that very rarely acknowledges this type of agency that Şule has also just spoken about.

I think there are many connections here, and the whole point of this paper has also been to discuss the idea of volunteering in the context of displacement in Uganda because we have very Western-centric understandings and definitions of volunteering in the sector. We explain, in the paper's methodology, that the project has worked with youth groups in the four settings in Uganda where the research took place to be able to come up with a definition of volunteering that was recognised by the populations that we were working with. We are basically questioning the very understanding of how we frame who is considered a volunteer in this space. This definition is really important, and I think it doesn't apply exclusively to the context of Uganda but actually, broadly speaking, this is about revisiting the ways we speak about volunteering in emergency response and displacement in different contexts in the world.

The paper discusses how the focus on livelihoods and precarity is very important in this context. This connects to the ways that we see not only the young refugees, but the refugee population in general, navigating multiple layers of inequalities and challenges. The ways in which volunteering relates to all of

this is much more complex than simply the notion of altruism, that obviously is also part of it but does not tell the whole story. Here we are also talking about the ways that organisations in this space are also playing a role in determining the types of volunteer opportunities, for example, that might have some form of financial compensation or other forms of compensation, and how this also creates multiple layers of complexity.

I think that, again connecting a little bit with Şule's paper on the humanitarian industry and the ways of understanding humanitarian systems in different settings, our paper discusses the idea of volunteering in relation to service-delivery and self-reliance, which are concepts that are often connected to it, but it tries to problematise this precisely by bringing the notions of livelihoods, labour, income and other types of compensation into this context. These aspects were part of the key findings of this project more widely, and something that we tried to discuss more in-depth in this paper in relation to how these narratives of volunteering are shaped by the refugee experiences in this context. It is important to understand that the ways in which people are talking about volunteering will not necessarily reflect the Western understanding of volunteering. Very often we have this type of debate about the meanings of volunteering, and I will be very happy to continue this conversation as well in our roundtable discussion. The idea here has been really to bring forward the importance of destabilising the notion of volunteering, and who the agents of change are in the context of displacement, and how people who volunteer might also be exposed to multiple layers of vulnerability while they are responding to challenges and supporting each other.

I think there are many angles here that we could explore, and again just connecting to what Şule has just said, which I think is really powerful, this is about the idea that refugees should not just be seen as receivers or dependents of support, or people that need to be empowered, but actually reverting this narrative to understand refugee volunteering experiences as a very urgent topic to connect to the wider debates about humanitarian systems. We know that even within the humanitarian systems there is a lot more that is known about experiences of paid staff members than of volunteers who are often also more exposed to risks than many others, depending on the context as well. I'll just leave it at this point for now, and I will obviously be very happy to discuss anything else in more detail in our conversation, and I'll pass on to Rawan Arar, who will take us through an examination of the host in refugee-receiving contexts in her paper. Thank you so much.

Rawan Arar:

Thank you for passing it on Bianca, and I'd like to reiterate everyone's thanks: it's such a privilege to be a part of this special issue and thank you very much to Elena and Estella for ushering this piece for many years now, and in its many different forms. I'm struck by how different it is to be in conversation with folks who, from the outset, are interested in examining the global South, as opposed to addressing refugee issues more generally. So often, for folks who are working on the global South, we may contribute that one chapter in an anthology that provides a comparison to other contexts. There are fewer spaces where we are in conversation with one another, comparing across Southern contexts or conceptualizing the South more generally. In comparison, when people are studying the global North, they can avoid using

the vocabulary of “global North.” They can centre the global North without having to be in conversation with Southern states, so the juxtaposition is not needed to make certain claims. And so, I think that there's a real benefit to beginning this conversation with a Southern focus. This is not only because of the topics we address, but also because our shared focus leads to different kinds of questions that come up after the initial framing or argument of the research. The secondary and tertiary set of questions may differ in important ways.

Also, putting this observation within the context of the introduction of the Special Issue, which discusses Gaza, I'm struck by what we learn beyond the facts presented or the argument being made. The Southern focus is not only about the questions that we ask and the evidence that we present. A Southern focus can provide a different perspective about how the world works. There is so much to be gained from thinking about how states, and people, in the global South have been working to support one another, especially recognizing the long genealogy of this work and considering the trajectory it can take into the future. This historical context of South-South support for human rights and humanitarian outreach is especially important, as compared to a snapshot in time at this contemporary moment when we are witnessing many of the international institutions fail to protect human rights. Therefore, this kind of research does work beyond a bounded intellectual contribution, to inform a different imagining of the world.

The piece that I have shared for this special issue is entitled, “Humanitarian Fiction: Examining the ‘Host’ in Refugee Receiving Contexts.” This particular piece focuses on the host. It asks: What is the definition of a host? Who qualifies as a host? And, who has the power to count the hosts? The larger application of “humanitarian fiction” touches on other pieces in this Special Issue. Allow me to step back so that I may introduce the ideas in this piece. I would say that before going into the field, I had read lots of humanitarian texts, which became some of the primary documents to help me understand refugee reception in Jordan, because that’s where the empirical work about refugees in Jordan was coming from.

I was surprised by what I saw when conducting my fieldwork. It was so different from what I was reading in the humanitarian reports. Trying to make sense of these contradictions became a big part of my research agenda, making sense of those differences between what is observable on the ground and what we see represented in humanitarian knowledge production. This has informed much of the work I've done and is fore fronted in the article.

When considering how knowledge production about refugee issues works, we can first acknowledge humanitarian-centred knowledge production, much of which is informed by the role of global North states. We also need to consider how knowledge production is informed by practitioners, and the practice of providing refugees with aid. And so, this leads to the question, what happens when we shift from “categories of practice” to “categories of analysis” and what insights may come of that.

In concrete terms regarding my paper, I explore how this shift invites scholars to think critically about “hosts.” One outcome of this conceptual pivot allows us to consider different kinds of humanitarianism, whether this includes individuals helping others through volunteering, or even reinterpreting what has been traditionally understood as Northern-led humanitarianism.

This paper, and so much of my work, has been inspired by Elena's work. In this paper, I talk about "refugee-hosts," which is a research agenda Elena has set out in past works: Oftentimes, refugees are the hosts, and the binary between refugees and hosts is an example of a category of practice that helps some people, such as humanitarian actors, deliver aid. But this binary does not always reflect people's lived experiences. This piece is a multiscalar analysis of such "humanitarian fictions" that explores how "host" operates within refugee-related knowledge production: I systematically analyse "host" across different scales.

Another example I discuss includes the experiences of a Jordanian citizen who has a Palestinian background. He understands himself, and his family history, through the lens of refugeehood. He also works as an aid provider and so is officially labelled as a humanitarian. By some measures, this person is simultaneously a citizen, a refugee, and a humanitarian. I also examine examples of Jordanian residents from Iraq. These folks settled in Jordan, but don't like the refugee label. Their self-identities are overlooked when they are called refugees in humanitarian knowledge production and through our scholarship. Recognizing the limitations of the host label puts the impetus on us, as scholars, to think about what kind of work the "host" label takes on. What responsibility do we have to people in terms of how they want to identify and how they see themselves in these spaces. How does assuming the host label shape our research questions and analysis?

The paper also addresses the highest scale of analysis, at the supranational level. Who are the hosts in humanitarian reports that provide rankings of "host states"? What do the lists of "top hosts" account for? What states or territories do they include or exclude? How do they reinforce or highlight the experiences of some states, or populations, over others? For example, I discuss Gaza in this piece. Gaza is not recognized as a "top host" because it is not recognized as a state. Territories are not included in the rankings of "top hosts." In terms of knowledge production, this means that Gaza, a territory that hosts more than a million refugees, falls outside of our collective imagination if we rely on the UN's Global Trends reports to assess who the primary hosts are in the world. There are consequences to humanitarian knowledge production. Gaza may not have been at the forefront of our minds as a refugee host at the start of the war and throughout the genocide. And as a result, emphasizing the targeting of refugee camps in Gaza became a politicized issue. A leaked memo instructed New York Times writers not to use the words "refugee camps" to describe spaces that are classified by the UN as refugee camps in Gaza. This is just one example of how consequential it may be to recognize who the refugee hosts are.

Another example includes the erasure of Iraqi Kurdistan, which also hosts a large number of refugees. We should also consider the Kurdish host populations that receives refugees. If we avoid a recognition of Kurdistan as a territory, and instead, only give primacy to the state of Iraq, we miss the ways in which ethnic ties or family ties might shape, why and to where people migrate. There are notable ramifications to assuming that the ascribed label of host reflects empirical reality without taking into consideration what is actually happening on the ground.

I consider the host label within a larger vocabulary of displacement. There are many words that operate in this way, which we can understand as "humanitarian fiction." Building from Bianca's presentation and

paper, for example, on how “volunteer” operates within humanitarian frames in refugee receiving contexts. Volunteer in and of itself means a certain thing within the vocabulary of displacement, which may be different from how we use the word in other contexts. Other words, or terms, that I would include in the “vocabulary of displacement” are the distinctions between “refugees” and “migrants” as well as words like “resilience” or “refugee burden.” All of these terms operate in a certain way to support our understanding of refugee reception. And in another piece that just came out recently, I apply the humanitarian fiction idea to “integration.” What is “local integration” as a policy? How does it compare to what scholars have said about the process of refugee and immigrant integration? How does integration take place over time? What does it look like?

I hope that this notion of “humanitarian fiction” is something that many of us can relate to and build upon. I'm also indebted to other scholars, because I know that this work would not be possible without the work of others, including Elena's work on refugee-hosts. I'm just really grateful to be in conversation with you all and looking forward to more conversations to come.

And now I pass it to Elena.

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh:

Thank you so much, Rawan, and it's such a pleasure to be with you all. I'm afraid that we are missing the contributors of the two final pieces in our special issues. So, I will take the floor just for a few more minutes to represent their papers, and then we will move to the conversation - please get your questions ready as well for those of you attending who'd like to give us questions to discuss as well.

The first is a paper by Marwan Adinsa and Jess Oddy, and the second paper is by Yousif M. Qasmiyeh, and their papers speak very, very well to one another, but also to the broader questions that we explore throughout the rest of the special issue. As we've mentioned, in addition to offering empirical contributions to research in this field through the lens of Southern-led response to displacement, the special issue as a whole, also contributes to conceptual debates pertaining to meanings and practices of humanitarianism, and of cognate terms and processes and frames, and to ongoing debates pertaining to the politics of research in and about the so-called global South in ways which are attentive to, but also engage critically with, commitments to decolonizing aid or decolonizing research.

The two papers, one by Marwan and Jessica, and the other by Yousif, powerfully critique, and seek to go beyond the contemporary trend, and some would say, the fetishization of decolonizing humanitarianism and research, noting that the invocation of decolonization in these contexts is often tokenistic rather than offering meaningful engagement with the plurality of ways of knowing and being in and responding to the world.

And indeed, as international responses to the ongoing displacement of Palestinians across Gaza and the West Bank acutely show, decolonization is not, in fact, merely a metaphor, but is a matter of politics and practice across a multitude of domains and terrains.

The latter, as Marwan Adinsa and Jess Oddy note in their piece in the special issue, is literally the case since decolonization, and here I quote from Oddy and Adinsa, who are citing Tuck and Yang, “decolonisation as a political project is deeply connected to land repatriation for indigenous people in settler colonial contexts.”

As Adinza and Oddy explore in their contribution, while there is a reality and ongoing risk for the co-optation and instrumentalization of decolonial discourse by hegemonic institutions for example, through DEI [Diversity, Equality/Equity and Inclusion] initiatives and neoliberal projects, to decolonise the curriculum - noting that these are obviously under attack in a diversity of geopolitical contexts, one of which I will not name, by virtue of my desire not to recentre that particular State or that particular government - there is also significant potential for the meaningful application of this discourse and the implementation of what they refer to as “just methods” committed to social justice in current and future humanitarian practice and research alike.

They argue, in their piece, that this entails unpacking rather than further contributing to the entrenchment of North-South binaries and challenging inequalities both in payment - returning to the discussions that Bianca was just having – both in payment and in power relations between people who were being researched and those undertaking, the research, those volunteering and those who were commissioning and leading the programs, etc. So, in addition to rejecting Eurocentrism, this entails recognizing and learning from historically marginalized and oppressed groups, centralizing solidarity and reciprocity, and transcending tokenistic gestures in that process

These dynamics and concerns around research and displacement are also explored by Yousif M. Qasmiyeh in the final intervention in this special issue, which draws the issue to a close while holding the door open for future conversations.

Yousif brings together scholarly insights and poetry, writing from the dual position of the researched and the researcher as a scholar who was born and raised in Badawi refugee camp in North Lebanon. Qasmiyeh explores, I quote, “Who writes the archive, and what position and roles, refugees themselves or ourselves, embody in relation to processes of researching and documenting/archiving, displacement.”

Retaining and reinscribing many of the threads that run throughout the special issue, Qasmiyeh starts from the point, I quote, “that refugees are active participants in the archive, not merely a trace therein playing a pivotal role in determining what is deemed significant and worthy of inclusion, including as refugees, not only responding to their own situations and those of others in material terms, but who also revert their critical gazes upon the researcher, the journalist, the humanitarian worker.”

In so doing, “there's both a co-production of knowledge and a co-sharing as well.” These are Qasmiyeh’s terms, “where the refugee is not just the interviewee, or just the quotable, the person who features at times in transience, but is instead the analyst, the critical thinker, the theorist.”

And he argues that “far from a uni-writing, or the claim that only refugees or by extrapolation actors from across the global South have the right to write, archive or otherwise respond, such an approach recognises

the intertwined nature of different actors, responses to displacement across time and space and intertwining of narratives, of practices and politics, and the potential intertwining of solidarities and commitments for a better future."

So that very briefly brings all of our papers together, and once again it's wonderful to be able to share the screen with so many of the contributors, whilst obviously being very sorry that a number of our contributors aren't able to be with us today. But this does draw the presentations to a close and opens up the floor for our onward discussion and conversation. This is a conversation that we, as panellists, will have but we also welcome questions from yourselves as attendees. So please do post your questions as and when they arise, and we'll call upon the questions from the chat. But I've also asked our panelists to identify any questions or comments points of conversation that arise from reading one another's papers, and or from listening to one another's words. And we've already heard some of those synergies and connections and echoes in the presentation so far.

I'm going to start by asking if somebody would like to start us off with a reflection on how we can engage with or recognize refugees' agency without reinforcing systems of exploitation, and without reinforcing systems of exclusion, etc. in those processes. This touches upon a number of your presentations and your papers. So how do we recognize the work that people do in contexts of displacement, without either reproducing systems of exploitation, or, in so doing, without relegating the responsibilities, the responsibilities for reparations, that people are due for the conflicts that have led to their displacement, the responsibilities which donors, states, which have historical legacies which are influencing contemporary conflict and displacement situations. In essence, how do we recognize that agency without potentially perpetuating systems of exploitation, exclusion, or letting powerful States off the hook?

Bianca Fadel:

Maybe I can just kick us off with more of a comment. I think it's such an important question, Elena. Thank you for starting the discussion from that, because I think it really asks us to take a step back into what we're doing, to the how we're doing and what could be the potential consequences of that as well to participants, to people engaging in any kind of research work. So, I think my initial reflection or comment to that would be the importance of listening to the participants of a research project, or, more widely, of any kind of conversation we're having, in the first place, without coming with the assumption that we'll be dominant in most fields. And I think, speaking more specifically with the example of volunteering that I gave just earlier, I think from our experience in the research that informed the paper, it was really about taking this step back into what would be the very understanding of volunteering in the first place, and how the young refugees themselves, with whom we were then starting to work, would then see that. The risks of not taking that approach would probably precisely to reproduce the Western centric views of volunteering that could lead to their own experiences being excluded from that because a lot of what they were talking about as volunteering would not be necessarily recognized as such by certain definitions, for example, that exclude payment in every possible way. When actually, we see that income generation is very much part of the livelihoods that part of the volunteering experiences themselves. So, I feel that that would be an issue reflecting that, and I think it connects to Rawan's point that I took note of because I

thought it was so powerful. What you said about the difference between what happens on the ground and the way we speak about it, and this gap in between, which I feel applies to many of the papers especially, and more widely in the humanitarian system in general.

Rawan Arar:

I'm thinking about this as I'm speaking here, and my first thought was, I often assign Behrouz Boochani's book, No Friend But the Mountains, for my students, and I pair that with a Ted talk, and he says something like I would love to write about love and tell you about my insights about these big things in the world, but I have to write, or have to write and talk about these hardships, and the displacement and the experiences on Manus Island and in the prison, because that's what you all need to hear. And I started there in my own mind, and then thought about who we are, within the context of the conversations that are being had. I think that even though our intention is, for many of us, to uphold refugee agency and really listen to people, I also think that we go into the field having read all of this literature, having been in conversation with specific and certain kinds of knowledge producers... And I think we have to essentially be very critical of ourselves within this space, as we co-construct knowledge with other people. So, what is it that we're bringing from outside the space to then shape the conversation? I think there's a kind of decentring of oneself, to whatever extent we can do, that allows for other people to be able to express who they are and what matters to them. One thing that struck me a lot in my own field work is how much the questions that I was initially interested in were very state centric. Questions around movement. Why do people move? Where do they go? I think that those are still interesting and important questions, but that's a very different question when you're in conversation with someone who's trying to figure out what's best for their family, or what's best for themselves. And so what happens when these 2 things come together in a space? Well, I think that the impetus is on us to take a step back, and the analysis can happen in a different space, maybe in front of a computer or in conversation with colleagues who are trying to figure out answers to different things. But there is a kind of decentring of what one has, one's own preparation, in a way, to be able to learn from the people who are in front of you, and what their priorities are. Just to echo what Bianca was saying, I think listening is so important, and in some ways it's like the field work is often different than even how we present ourselves when we're in these spaces and saying: this is what I've learned. This is what the takeaway is. And there are all of these different dances that are taking place. And I think that's why even this question is really important because it reminds us: what are your values when it comes to knowledge production? What are you trying to say? What are you trying to highlight? I think a lot of that is essentially put on us, too.

Estella Carpi:

I would like to add something here. I just wanted to discuss the issue of romanticization, because, over the years when Elena and I working on the Southern-led responses project, this thing of researching the South or thinking through the South is often associated with the idea of idealizing what happens in the South. This also speaks to the special issue and the rationale and the epistemic effort that we're trying to do, especially in the case of my article with Elena on Brazil.

I think that my answer to your question Elena is going to be more of a theoretical answer rather than a practical one. But of course, I might have suggestions on the policy and practice side of things that Rawan and Bianca were also mentioning. So I think it should be about this: Pluralism needs to be continuously learned and relearned. It can be. It can be about questioning our own epistemic, professional authority as humanitarians. We've also been discussing wherever professional authorities is located, so it can be in the North, but it can also be in the South. The act of listening, as Bianca was saying, also the importance of continuously scrutinizing the epistemological lens that we use, our own categories of analysis. So it can be host and refugee relationships, building on Elena's work. So I think we need to smash this whole thing that talking about the South is proposing or presuming an idea about what happens in the South. But I see it as an epistemic opportunity to embrace all of that, and like not necessarily associating the global North with humanitarian, like bureaucracy and career managerialism, vis-a-vis, the South being about spontaneity of aid or responsiveness. In some cases, I think the issue does speak to that, and does show what happens on the ground and people's perceptions about this, but I really care about highlighting how we should also intellectually acknowledge not just morally value the local, or like the indigenous, as something that is antithetical to what happens outside. So it doesn't need to work in opposition to something else, but it's really about exploring the negotiations, and again, I think it's a perfect term to capture that, Elena: like as you said, the “intertwined” dimension of these.

I feel that we are in an era where the South, or the marginal, the de-centred, needs to be antithetical to what happens outside, or necessarily differently in order to be acknowledged and learned by the hegemonic actors. I believe this is the trap into which we fall when we think through the indigenous that way or the Southern that way, if we want to put it on a multi scale level. It's kind of theoretical, but I hope I made sense like to speak to your question Elena.

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh:

Absolutely. And I think here we can come back to this notion of the North and South, not being oppositions, but being mutually constitutive in unequal power dynamics, as it were. But if we look at the role that states are playing in the Hague Group, or the role that South Africa has played in holding the international system accountable, we can return to the longer standing literature on these issues, which actually argues that there is a mutual constitutiveness. So, Slaughter, for example, maintains that formerly colonized States played a key role in shaping human rights frameworks from the very birth of the Universal Declaration of Human rights.

And in another context, Achille Mbembe maintains that the Western Archive is, I quote, “neither monolithic nor the exclusive property of the West” since, he argues, “Africa and its diaspora decisively contributed to its making, and should legitimately make foundational claims on it.”

By extension rather than positioning formally colonized States as acting from the periphery or in an antagonistic manner, “the South,” however, it's conceptualized, not just demarcated, has a foundational role in all of these debates. It's not just that they are “new actors” or that they've suddenly appeared: it's that it is foundational. They have foundational claims upon international rights and legal frameworks and on international legal systems which they are protecting from other states.

Şule, over to you.

Şule Can:

Thank you. I just wanted to briefly add to what's already been said, which is the reason why we are here. Elena's question itself, in terms of refugee agency, and how can we recognize it without perpetrating exploitation, is in itself a difficult one. To answer, and even to raise it because of the global capitalistic approaches to the humanitarian system as well, I try to address this briefly in the research article because the neoliberal logic itself exactly speaks to this constitutive model, and the system itself always puts any questions about agency at risk. I would say, in that sense, that profit-centred perspectives and practices emphasize the beneficiary's needs, putting this within that vocabulary, as discussed by other authors as well, leaves no space for any type of imagination where we can relate to each other in a different way, and reflect on our own positionality and any other kinds of livelihoods that will be very mutual, and at a different, perhaps intimate space. That's why I think this acceptance of the way things are, just within the humanitarian work itself, is a problem to be addressed in many ways, and that will need resolution, for acknowledging and recognizing refugee agency and the way they build their own lives, and how they see these relations right within the Southern contexts.

Estella Carpi:

[In response to the question in the chat bar] about changes in the policy or the framing in the so-called field throughout the years. I don't think it's necessarily about [changes with regards to] the South or not South, but in general about how the humanitarian context is thought about, and represented by people themselves, and understood. I think this speaks back to Rawan's concept of humanitarian fiction, for instance, like the idea itself, of being the subjects of the crisis, did have an impact on the people I met over the years, like the political declaration of a crisis, the impact of the way the people I met were understanding what was going on, and were receiving or hosting people, or speaking about these things, speaking about how services were changing, and so on. And here I need to mention, my own work in Akkar and how some Lebanese nationals, literally started speaking about the place where they were living, and the resources and the space they were sharing with the Syrians in a different way once the humanitarian crisis started being written about in media commentaries and anywhere. It was really about how we verbally spoke about the crisis, how we constructed the crisis, the Syrian crisis in Lebanon here specifically, that did have an impact on the way the Lebanese citizen started seeing themselves as a host, and as such as the person that, ethically speaking, is entitled to the very space, more than someone else, or is entitled to resources, to permanency, and so on. So, of course, like, that is problematic on multiple levels. The way we talk about these things, the way the geopolitical system decides to phrase a particular historical moment, or even the way academics in turn start speaking about a crisis, do have an indirect impact on how people understand themselves and the place where they live and the people, they share life with.

Bianca Fadel:

If I could just add to that. Thank you, Estella. I think it's a really interesting perspective that we can see coming from your paper and from your work more widely, and I think I would just highlight the point about the privilege that we have in terms of becoming platforms as well for highlighting issues or perspectives that sometimes particular groups or communities or peoples wouldn't have. And I think that's a very challenging position to be in, of course, because again, we're talking here about agency and different ways of understanding people's experiences which will be different and complex. And there is no one size fits all or anything. Here, coming back to my own work with the team on the volunteering side itself, I feel that working with these groups to be able to come up with a definition that was recognized by them, and now, being able to disseminate this information by not only the academic outputs, but also spaces like this wonderful roundtable, and also more widely policy, focused pieces and trying to shape these narratives as well, as much as possible according to the perspectives of the groups we work with. I think it is a really important place to be, and recognizing obviously the dangers of that too, and being as truthful as possible to the communities that that we work with, especially in context, where there are so many layers of vulnerabilities. And the displacement context, as we all know, definitely is one of those. Your question is so powerful about the change in the policy levels: I think change happens in so many ways, and even small progress is still bringing up change, so I try to remain positive about it, although there are so many challenges as we know. I would just add that point about the spaces where we get to actually translate this information to and communicate and disseminate.

Rawan Arar:

You're all inspiring me to think through this question in a different way, which is also just to think, even the word Southern: why are we using this word? And I was thinking specifically, if I wanted to study how the framing of the South may have shaped conversations around grassroots movements, I was thinking about how Jordanians may talk about themselves as Arabs in order to connect with other displaced Arab groups, or just thinking about other constructions, and of course, building off Estella and Elena's paper, I also was reminded of Katie Jensen's work around asylum seekers in Brazil, and the ways in which people would frame themselves, take on the refugee label or not. It's different than your South question. But I think that how certain labels or framings become valuable because of existing institutions is the question at the core for me there.

Bianca Fadel:

Thank you so much [for the question in the chat about the definition of 'volunteering']. This will be part of the special issue, when it's launched, you will see that in the papers alongside the work of all the colleagues here. The definition that came out in this particular project about volunteering: we were working with refugees from 4 nationalities of the neighbouring countries in Uganda. The definition here brings elements from the western understanding of the time and expertise that you spend on behalf of community or of your community or others. But I think that the twist is really coming from the multiple types of voluntary action that can happen either in a way that is unpaid or for a per diem or other incentives. This is bringing the aspect of livelihoods and the ways that this context of displacement also asks us to rethink the types of labour and the types of work that are happening at the same time. Often

people would be talking about volunteering as work, and that brings in itself its own debate, and I know it connects again to the work of colleagues here in terms of the language that is used in humanitarian debates and development spaces, too, but in particular in the context of displacement. I think this would be another layer to add: bringing very much the aspect of livelihoods to the centre of the conversation. I would emphasize that.

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh:

I'll just come in here, because yes, the South is a contested term: it's a term that some states mobilise for particular political and geopolitical reasons. It's a term that is sometimes used by other actors to label states that wouldn't use that term themselves. But it has different meanings at different historical junctures, and depending on the interlocutor, with whom somebody is speaking as well. It is problematic in many regards that the project was originally, when I wrote and submitted the application for this project, the title was "Analysing South-South Humanitarian Responses to Displacement from Syria": so it had the term humanitarian in there rather than responses, which narrowed things down quite a bit, and it had South included, not just once, but twice. In part that was to capture the histories of South-South cooperation, and the debates and the politics of South-South solidarity as part of the anti-colonial and decolonial struggles which have that long history and that enable us to trace those genealogies of alternative approaches to being in and responding in the world and imagining a different future together. But the project ultimately is not defining the South, but is rather thinking through: what would a Southern approach mean? What would it mean to develop an approach that purposefully decentres the North, and approaches responses which may or may not fall under the official remit of humanitarianism. What does it mean for our different interlocutors, etc.

So part of what we've been doing in the project – and Estella was the Research Fellow on the project until a couple of years ago; now we have Nisha as our Research Fellow, and we have our colleagues, Amal and Sara, who are also on the call, who are based in Turkey - we've been doing interviews with practitioners and with people displaced from Syria, and, amongst other things, asking our interlocutors: What does the South mean to you? Is it a term that you identify with, or that you have any particular connotations with regards to what terms you use to refer to the responses from regional or trans regional actors from different geographies? What terms would be more useful to refer to local or national level responders, etc?

And one reason that we were using the entry point of "Southern" is that this is a way of ensuring that there is a multi-scalar analytical entry point that goes beyond the Localization of Aid agenda, where the localization of aid agenda does effectively mean "global South", but ultimately has historically tended to focus on the state, maximum going down to the municipal level. However, if we start from "Southern" rather than "the South," we're not requiring geopolitical borders or political structures to be clearly defined, but rather have that greater flexibility to think through some of the conceptual questions that arise. There are other articles and blog pieces [originally added in the chat bar, no added to the reference list below] that might be relevant as part of this ongoing conversation, and there will be many more publications coming out which really centralize the perspectives of our interlocutors, practitioners,

policymakers, people displaced from Syria and the different members of our research team who have personal and familial experiences of displacement in many cases, exploring these different concepts, and how they resonate or do not resonate. Indeed, for many people “South” is an insult: many of our interlocutors dismiss it, not just as being irrelevant, but also being an insult, so the power of language is very clear in these different processes.

Many thanks for the questions in the chat. The first two questions are as follows: “I'm looking forward to reading the work. I'd like to explore your perspective on two theoretical propositions, one, the migrant / refugee researcher, as not merely an academic investigator, but rather as the embodiment of geographical crossing and decolonization of many host / refugee definitions. And two, how might we reconceptualise, return and refuge beyond their geographical fixity, examining instead their temporal dimensions within geographical enclaves of varied temporal velocities and presence.”

Who would like to start us off in answering one of those 2 questions?

Rawan Arar:

I recently wrote a piece, essentially about being Palestinian, being the daughter of folks who found refuge in Jordan, going to see my family, some of whom are registered with UNRWA, while also doing research with Syrian refugees. My mother was an anthropologist so essentially talking, this piece is about what I learned about my own family from doing my field work, and also what I learned about my father relying on UNRWA for clothing growing up, or my mother's dissertation work when she was working with Palestinians in refugee camps, and then me, ending up decades later, working in the same country with other refugee groups, even wearing her clothing, and just these intersecting histories, how they shape my own interpretation, and then thinking about what it is to be in conversation with my family, with other folks, and with the literature, and just trying to patch these things up. I don't know that that speaks exactly to what you're talking about, but here is a researcher that is a migrant that also has this refugee history, that's also studying refugee issues, and my family are also hosts and refugees to other refugee groups. So maybe that will be of interest for you.

Şule Can:

It says something that we, or I have been thinking about, as researchers in displacement, working on displacement: we have been in and out of these temporal spaces and those enclaves in many, many ways. So I do think that the question itself has this criticism about geographical fixity. I think today, the kind of displacement itself and the kind of world humanitarian order and also global order in general mandates this fixity in many ways. And thinking about temporality in this sense, in a nonlinear way, would help a lot to talk about the different dimensions that you're suggesting. I think we are all, as researchers of the South, whatever it might entail, trying to challenge this researcher and researched, as Yousif M. Qasmiyeh put it, binaries in many ways, in displacement. In many ways this also recognizes this temporal dimension of being a subject of a research, being a survivor losing the spaces of safety in many ways can take us beyond this return and refuge: you can be in a place where you seek refuge, but also you can be a host, as we criticize here. So challenging these terms is about those crossings, and encounters within different

geographies and temporal dimensions as well. Given this complexity and finding ourselves being more vulnerable to position ourselves within our research as the agents of these transitional moments will be important. Acknowledging that would maybe help in this conceptualization. I think this kind of theoretical question would require a perspective from within, from intimate spaces where we recognize that this temporality is not linear, and it might find anyone at any moment. That is the way that we need to relate to our research agendas and people. We work with too.

Thank you.

Amal Istanbouli has been working on the Southern responses to displacement project, initially working with Estella and currently in Gaziantep, with Nisha as part of the final stages of the research. You can read some of her blog posts on the Southern response to displacement post website here.

Amal Istanbouli:

Thank you. This week we are doing the last part of the workshops in Gaziantep, and we did the same workshops 3 or 4 years ago in Antakya, so we are now exploring the differences that people, Syrians and the host community, are actually articulating in the workshops, after the earthquake, the pandemic, and also like the removal of the Syrian regime. So, I'm so glad that we were able to capture these differences and the power, dynamic change, and the evolution of the south-south cooperation. I think in the future, with the new transitional government in Syria, which is highly welcomed by Turkey and other Arab countries, I think there is more future for South-South cooperation, because the political climate is encouraging this, and this will also affect people's life, whether Syrians in Turkey, whether refugees, whether rebuilding Syria, or like in other countries. What I'm just trying to say is that it's still a new notion for us, for Syrians to have this kind of South-South cooperation, but it's going to be a huge discussion in the future. Thank you.

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh:

Thank you so much, Amal. We will now hear from Dr. Aminath Nisha Zadhy-Cepoglu, and then we will have another 10 min for conversation, to start drawing our event to a close: to do so, I'll ask each of our panellists to share, not a closing remark, but a remark about what we should think about as we move forward, as these conversations continue. So I'll ask each of us to think of something that we'd like to share with the group by means of leaving the door open for future conversations.

Bianca Fadel:

Thank you so much, Elena. I'm leaving this conversation really inspired by everyone, and also by the questions that were raised which are really thought provoking. I think my takeaway is really about the importance of the questions we ask actually more than the answers we give, and I think, questioning even the very understandings here, as we have discussed about the way as we talk about humanitarian responses, volunteering in that context and the agency of everyone in this context. I would really emphasize the importance of challenging the very inequalities that happen within these spaces as well. I

think it connects to the earlier point from Estella about not romanticizing things either when we're talking about these types of responses within contexts of displacement. I think the recognition of the different layers of inequality, vulnerability, and how people are navigating these contexts and providing these types of support and being also subject of other types of work at the same time. I think it's really about questioning the positionality of everyone involved in the space and bringing up these issues into this conversation from a very honest point of view. We won't have all the answers, but listening to the people we work with as a starting point is definitely going to get us to an interesting direction. Thanks all for the conversation and for facilitating this space for us to be here today.

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh:

Thank you, Bianca, who would like to join next?

Estella Carpi:

I just wanted like to support Bianca's comment: I'm very inspired and I always enjoy these conversations that in some respects also leave some of us that do not have, necessarily, a native origin in the so-called South, with some levels of discomfort. This is just my personal invitation, for people like myself that are not researching the place where they were born and raised necessarily, but seeing discomfort really as something positive, as something that we should share, not necessarily in the sense of parading self-flagellation, like as a white person in the South, but really like as an epistemic tool to continue the conversation. And this self-scrutinizing process, whatever "self" can ever mean contextually opens a Pandora box that I absolutely can't navigate right now. But my second invitation is thinking through relationality rather than structure, to really change the conversation around the South and the North. So the importance of relationality, rather than just like deciding again, what the terms of the conversation need to be, or l just limiting what we think to criticizing names and ways of calling countries.

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh:

Wonderful. Thank you. We have Nisha's comment, which I'll read out, which is, "I just wanted to add that the concept South is definitely taken increasingly seriously. This comes out through the workshops, but also the interviews with practitioners who've been responding to the Syrian displacement. An example is how Turkish responders to displacement from Syria, had to confront displacement in a more personal, intimate sense in the aftermath of the earthquake in Turkey and North Syria." Thank you, Nisha.

So, as Amal mentioned, the question of temporality and time is useful since this was meant to be a 5 year research project, but due to various extensions we have ended up doing research over 7 years. And this means that we've been able to benefit from Amal and Sara's insights as locally-based researchers in Turkey to be able to conduct the workshops and the interviews with people over different periods of time, and to be able to see how people's engagement with the concept, whether they're practitioners or people displaced from Syria or members of so-called hosting communities, has changed, or how the idea even of response changes over time, according to the stage of the conflict or of displacement, the impetus, or the policy and political rhetoric of return, the responses to the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, etc.

These understandings are revolving on individual, communal, national, and international levels in ways that sometimes go in opposite directions, with Brazil, refusing to acknowledge itself as member of the South at certain points, or invoking it in others. Practitioners, depending on which institution they're working, with which UN body, using or not using the terms South-South, cooperation, etc. And of course, the academic debates that are continuing in this field. So thank you, Nisha, for adding that comment there, and we'll turn to Şule and Rawan now, thank you.

Şule Can:

I just wanted to share one last comment and it's, I'm really happy to hear the comment by Amal and it's really nice to reconnect with her here. I've known her for a while, from Antakya and I learned a lot from her since 2011 since we met. So I appreciate the contribution. I just want to say that I agree on the volatile situation at the border and in Syria and Syrian refugees' position in Turkey as well. I'm curious to see, and that's only to prove how dynamic the situation is in in many ways with the kind of fall of regime, and also the status of Syrians in Turkey in general, it's daunting, shocking, but also you know, academic- wise, interesting to see the resilience in Antakya after the earthquake in relation to Syrians and earthquake survivors. As we see right now the positions that are interesting relationally, because Antakya has been situated as the host city, and today half of the city is in camps, right? So whether they are citizens of Turkey or not, they're in a very similar situation which creates a new form of understanding for everyone. I do think so. So Nisha's points is very important, and we will see how it will be unpacked in many ways, how things will be unfolded, you know, in near future in the border region in general. Thank you so much again, for this special issue, and for this great roundtable discussion. I'm grateful to hear this conversation, and I really enjoy being part of this conversation. It is going to leave me, you know, with a lot of questions about how we can continue with these conversations, to deepen the questions and challenges that we might take on right in responding in these the times and how entrenched the situation is. It's becoming more and more so with the Northern States' responses to current displacement, suffering, and genocide in many ways. So thank you so much. Again.

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh:

Thank you so much, and closing our roundtable is Rawan. So over to you. Thank you.

Rawan Arar:

Thank you. I'll just be brief, knowing that we're running out of time. This conversation has me trying to remember how I started graduate school knowing I wanted to work on refugee issues, but how and when did I adopt the global South framing. And how did that shape the networks that I then connected to, and the kinds of conversations that I had? I'm struck by thinking about the kinds of questions and the kinds of conversations we enter when we pivot in this way. So that's the first point like: what are those, and how do those change, especially if you're at a global north institution and the mainstream conversation is focused very much on what's happening in the state that you're in. So I think that that's very useful. And then, I'm looking at the panellists and including my student [in the audience] and I'm thinking about how I've been wondering just how much the world has changed and how the conversations that I might have

started around the global South with myself that I can't even take for granted my own thinking in terms of the framing. And so I'm so curious about where this will lead, especially as we take seriously some things that we might have taken for granted and question them again, including around human rights or liberal care, and I'm still chewing on Layla's question [in the chat] about return and time and thinking about how to decentre the geographic return, when displacement has lasted for decades. If return was something that happened within a year, maybe we wouldn't be asking the same questions around time, which I think just goes to show how what Elena said, thinking about the South conceptually and comparing that to a demarcation. Just these two things, where it's both a space and then a concept and the dance between the two, and how that shapes the questions that we bring and how that has changed over time. And just in the last few years I'm left thinking through all of these questions, and I'm made much richer by being in conversation with you all, and I thank you very much for today.

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh:

Thank you so much to all of our panellists and to all the contributors of the special issue. This is a conversation which is ongoing, and we look forward to you engaging with the special issue on different levels. It is an open door and there are more conversations to come. We look forward to taking this further in many different directions and look forward to staying in touch. Thank you again all so much for joining us today. Thank you. Goodbye.