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The ÔRefugee CrisisÕ: A Case of Diverging Protection Regimes?

Before continuing, it is important to briefly explain the ways in which this author has found it useful think about sexual minority asylum through the lens of the ÔRefugee CrisisÕ. Since 2011, almos million refugees have arrived in Turkey in search of international protection. The unprecedent challenges involved in responding to such an influx, both on the part of local stakeholders a international organisations, have been enormous. One notable consequence of this situation ca seen in the growing tensions that exist between the universalist framework of human rights typic employed by international actors on the one hand, and the more particularist priorities of local polit which configure rights in relation to non-universal identity markers such as nationality, ethnicity ar crucially for this article, sexuality.

Consequently, securing recognition within the ÔRefugee CrisisÕ depends on the refugeeÕs ab position themselves in relation to these diverging regimes. This challenge becomes all the m difficult for sexual minority refugees, whose rights are often not recognised in, and even threatened different asylum contexts, especially when homophobic opinions inform governmental and socie attitudes.

This more particular, local-level issue has been simultaneously compounded by international organisations, stakeholders and practitioners, who tend to frame their arguments around a set of s cosmopolitan principles such as universal human rights and free movement (Miller 2016). When s a stance encompasses sexual minority rights, it often does so through the use of ÔLGBT r identitiesÕ (Altman and Symons 2016), a position that has been taken up with a growing degre urgency in light of the heightened persecution of sexual minority refugees from the region. In t context of the ÔRefugee CrisisÕ, this approach has arguably worked to underscore the assertio more particularist homophobic counter-discourse, particularly in Turkey, whose President Erdo criticised the EU in May 2016 for caring more about homosexuals than Syrian women and childre adding: Òthe West possesses a mind-set remnant of slavery and colonialismÓ (cited in The Gua 2016b). In this way, the approach taken by international actors in response to the ÔRefugee Crisis in fact be compounding the persecution faced by sexual minority refugees more generally, given still controversial nature of sexual minority rights in many parts of the world, a point that will be more fully considered throughout this article.

LGBT Asylum and Queer (Im)mobilities

According to queer theorists, the migration of sexual minorities tends to contest the bounds nationality, gender and citizenship in complex and contradictory ways (LuibhŽid and Cantœ 20 acting as a Ôporous frontierÕ (Rahman forthcoming

Given this, Giametta (2014) has argued that, in order for queer subjects to be recognised, t victimhood must correspond to the expectations of largely state-centric and homonormative asy systems. These systems stress the secular nature of LGBT rights, as well as the threats posed to peoples on the part of religious and/or ÔcommunitarianÕ (Rao 2010) societies. As a result situatedness of certain homonormative assumptions within a Ôsecular paradigmÕ (Giametta 2014 has had significant implications on queer refugee narratives, and the explanations given by diffe stakeholders to the form and nature of the persecution that they face. On this point, Akram has ar that asylum systems in the West, and their reliance on a secular framework, are reproduc ÔOrientalistÕ discourses, especially in relation to the Middle East, that Ôexplain every face persecution - in this instance homophobic or patriarchal oppression - Ôin light of the Muslim religi (2000: 8). The challenge for queer peoples fleeing from this part of the world is therefore to perfo their victimhood in such a way that clearly plays into this secular narrative, often silencing their fa in order to more plausibly deploy Ôwell-known stereotypes that demonstrate the dysfunction of t homelandsÕ (Jenicek et al. 2009: 647).

In light of the ÔRefugee CrisisÕ, which has seen massive displacement occur out of the M East, the importance of such discourses in framing responses to and engagements with queer as seekers cannot be overlooked. Fortunately, a number of queer and postcolonial theorists have beg deconstruct the processes that inform representations of queer peoples from the Middle East, dra in particular on PuarÕs (2007) concept of homonationalism (Murray 2014; 2015; Fiddian-Qasmi 2016a). Homonationalism identifies a Ôcollusion between homosexuality and [...] nationalism tha generated both by national rhetoric of patriotic inclusion, and by gay, lesbian and queer subje themselvesÕ (Puar 2007: 67-8). In relation to asylum, homonationalism lends predominantly Wes nation-states an ability to legitimise exclusionary and securitised border policies through the langu of inclusive human rights discourses, elevating their prestige as tolerant, forward thinking societies contrast to - and sometimes in conflict with - less tolerant nations.

For example, homonationalist narratives regularly correlate the suffering of queer subjects w the existence of intolerant regimes in ÔOtherÕ non-Western parts of the world. In this way, as policies that practice ÔtoleranceÕ toward LGBT refugees implicitly produce discursive frameworks work to Ôinclude a few and exclude manyÕ (Murray 2014: 23). This practice is evidenced by numerous uses of homonationalist rhetoric by political groups such as the Log Cabin Republican the USA, who courted conflict with Iraq as a means of ÔliberatingÕ Iraqi gays (Rao 2010). relevance of such critiques in the context of the ÔRefugee CrisisÕ, where policies of inclusion exclusion have been framed around protecting ÔidealÕ LGBT refugees from the ÔbarbaricÕ viol

international LGBT rights activists and humanitarians, stating that it is Ônot productive [to think
can] impose human rights protections or that we can be radical for other peopleÕ (2016: 3). T
critiques, though written about extensively in relation to Ôthird world activismÕ (Rao 2010), are ye
be applied to the work of local LGBT rights groups responding to displacement in Turkey. As su
they offer a useful framework in which to analyse different stakeholder responses to queer refug
and the discursive strategies that they deploy.

Finally, the formation of a clearly defined social group Ôon the moveÕ depends to some degr
the ability of that social group to ÔmobiliseÕ their identities in clearly identifiable ways (Sokef
2006). However, as a result of homonationalist discourses, queer identities are more typic
mobilised in homonormative ways, especially with regard to LGBT asylum, where differer
stakeholders are required to present a clearly identifiable Ôsocial groupÕ in order to trigger interna
protection under the auspices of the 1951 Refugee Convention.[2] This generates a paradox whereby the
narrative expectations of secular rights groups relating to sexual identity formation, particularly that
Ôcoming outÕ, presents queer asylum as a means of Ôcoming intoÕ sexual liberation (LuibhŽic
The implications of this on the queer subject presents challenges to self-narrative, forcing qu
refugees to represent themselves Ôin relation to socially available and hegemonic discoursesÕ (A
2002: 511), namely homonormativity, and the Ôimmediate broader contexts in which [their narrati
are a dialectic responseÕ (Sigona 2014: 370), for example, the ÔRefugee CrisisÕ, the thr
fundamentalist Islam, and the advent of homonationalist discourses.

Queers on the Frontline: LGBT Asylum and the ÔRefugee CrisisÕ

Building on this theoretical outline, MurrayÕs investigation into the Canadian asylum system highlig

minorities to appear ÔlegitimateÕ when they themselves are Muslim. Moreover, such observations an appreciation of the ways in which gender and faith intersect in the formation of queer identiti relying instead on Ôdangerous shortcutsÕ (Jansen, 2014: 2). in the representation of LGBT asylum seekers.

Of course, a distinction must be made between the assumptions outlined in different me narratives, and those deployed by asylum officials. Nevertheless, secular discourses have cert limited the capacity of different practitioners to engage with queer people's lives in queer ways. This outcome is well evidenced by Giametta (2014), who draws a comparison between the asy processes faced by two different Arab lesbians. The first asylum seeker, Amira, was able to se international protection relatively quickly because she framed her narrative in terms of escapin Ôhomophobic religious culturesÕ (Ibid: 591). By contrast, the second applicant, Sholah, a Muslim Pakistani woman, faced an 11 year process as a result of her reluctance to clearly reject her fai favour of the secular narratives that frame credible LGBT asylum claims (Ibid: 592). Sholah also

that exists towards LGBTs (Cragnolini 2013: 106). Reports that have focussed on this situation h thus described Turkey as an Ôunsafe havenÕ (ORAM 2009).

A lot of the problems that queer refugees encounter in pursuit of international protection can some degree be explained by the complexities of the Turkish asylum system itself. The Republi Turkey is party to both the Refugee Convention and the 1967 protocol whilst maintaining t ÔgeographicalÊlimitationÕ, meaning it only processes claims emanating from Ôevents in Europ such, UNHCR has established, by way of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), responsibility asylum claims made by applicants from Europe, making it a key complementary protection actor. However, in order to secure international protection, applicants must first register with the recer formed Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), which has been mandated to regul international protection applicants into satellite cities as part of a long-standing asylum disper policy. Once settled into satellite cities, asylum seekers are granted temporary protection status, w provides them with basic rights and access to various services. However, they will not be grar freedom of movement, and must remain in the satellite city whilst they wait for UNHCR to carry o RSD and/or adjudicate on their resettlement application. As such, TurkeyÕs parallel asylum sys have developed ÔsymptomaticÊcracksÕ in the eyes of legal scholars (Zieck 2010), which re problematic for those seeking protection in the country.

For queer refugees, this system means encountering a number of potentially homopho scenarios, especially in the satellite cities, where reports of abuse are modest but noteworthy (OR 2011). Moreover, insecurities about dealing with numerous bureaucratic institutions, such as police, often prevents or discourages asylum seekers from expressing their sexual identities in the place.

In response to these issues, LGBT rights groups, and queer refugees themselves, have begun the gaps left by the Turkish asylum system. This is especially apparent with regard to Iranian qu refugees, who have developed a fairly significant support network in Turkey over the years. Inde

Methods

This research was conducted as part of my MSc Global Migration dissertation at UCL, and as such data gathered is limited in nature. The data was gathered using five face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and two Skype interviews with representatives from a number of NGOs and stakeholders working in Turkey. I spoke with representatives from UNHCR, ASAM, Kaos GL, LambdaIstanbul and ICMC (International Catholic Migration Commission). I also spoke to an independent Turkish LGBT rights campaigner, and one international freelance journalist who has worked extensively with queer Syrian refugees. All the respondents have been entirely anonymised, in light of the precarious situation many CBOs and practitioners find themselves in following the coup of July 2016.

The interview sample was chosen in order to reflect the key actors in the field. However, they do not represent an exhaustive list. The organisations I had access to were initially contacted by email which I sent in my capacity as projects assistant at the Centre for Transnational Development

Indeed, the sense that Turkey was not a particularly safe place for queer refugees and asylum se was evident in the observations I made at an ASAM waiting room, where a bomb detector and armed guard acted as a constant reminder of the threats involved in securing international protecti the country.

However, when I asked interviewees to explain the reasons why Turkey may be an unsafe p for queer refugees and asylum seekers, their responses were largely more nuanced than explanations found in numerous media articles that simplify politics in Turkey as a battle between p Western secularists and anti-Western Islamists (Huffington Post 2016; BuzzFeed 2016). There also very little emphasis on Islam as an explanatory factor, in contrast to the homonationa assumptions underpinning certain asylum systems (Murray 2014; 2015; Giametta 2014) and m representations (Janicek et al. 2009; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016a) of queer victimhood. Rather explanations for the state of human rights protections reflected heavily on a number of key dome debates about Turkish national modernity, corresponding to the historical literature on Turkey t often emphasises the complicated and overlooked relationships that exist between Islam, secula and Turkish nationalism (Findley 2010).

LGBT rights activists I spoke to were openly critical of the Turkish state, with one campaigner stati
that:

Consequently, key organisations are throwing themselves into the debates surrounding queer ref
protection in Turkey, despite the fact that LGBT rights groups are often side-lined by the Turkish st
(Ò[DGMM] did not want to invite usÓ). Moreover, participants from another organisation informed
that, where LGBT rights groups had encountered lukewarm or even hostile responses from the Tur
government, civil society groups, particularly those critical of Erdo!

especially since the coup, which has lent the government a number of emergency powers many sa
undermined civil society organisations in Turkey (The Guardian 2017). As such, conclusions in t
direction may be premature.

place that both support refugees during their time in Turkey, and assist them in securing internati protection.

Finally, my research has identified how a number of local LGBT rights groups, in response to t failures of international humanitarian organisations, and the enhanced authoritarianism of the Turk government, are developing innovative responses to the ÔRefugee CrisisÕ. More precisely, my re has identified some of the ways in which Ôglobal processes are affecting local responsesÕ (Fi Qasmiyeh and Pacitto 2015), opening up the space for new political formations and new protec solutions that are otherwise lost Ôwithin the more powerful discursive fields [É] produced by t international humanitarian regime [and] national asylum [systems]Õ (Sigona 2014: 378). In this v local practitioners in Turkey are resisting the assumptions of homonationalist and homonormat frameworks which often Ôfoist a Western sexual ontologyÕ on activists in non-European or N American spaces (Rao 2010: 188). By contrast, an anti-statist politics is informing the engagement local LGBT rights groups, establishing a more progressive rights movement in lieu of the limits international and governmental responses to queer refugees (and refugees more generally). Of course, how far these conclusions can be maintained in light of the current political climate in Turkey debatable. Nevertheless, further research into this issue could firstly help to square criticisms of the Turkish Government with criticisms of international homonormativity and, secondly, enable a mo nuanced understanding of the processes underpinning responses to and engagements with s minority refugees displaced from/within the Middle East.[5]

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[1] Forthcoming research on this issue is being published by Routledge as part of an edited volume entitled *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis* (see in particular Zeynep KivilcimÕs chapter ÒLesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) Syrian Refugees in TurkeyÓ)

[2] Recognition of LGBT refugees is framed under the 1951 Refugee Convention in relation to Art. 1A(2) ÔMember of a Particular Social GroupÕ, although other forms of recognition are available, but often less used by sexual minority applicants.

[3] ÔWomen and childrenÕ refers to the tendency within humanitarian discourses to represent female victimhood (and that of their children) in relation to ÔMadonna and ChildÕ narratives (Del Zotto 2002). Interestingly, such representational discourses have been challenged by the context of the ÔRefugee CrisisÕ, which Jennifer Allsopp believes has given rise to ÔdemilitarisedÕ masculinities and the rendering of men as victims (2015), an outcome clearly visible in relation to gay male refugees.

[4] The Gezi Park protests of 28 May 2013 saw millions of Turkish people rise up against the government in an act of civil non-violent resistance. Protesters, who encompassed a broad umbrella of interests, from LGBT rights, to environmentalists to civil liberties activists and feminists, were involved, and continue to meet regularly as a result.

[5] This argument has also been informed by work with the <removed for anonymity purposes>. Our methodology is built around a belief that pluralism is essential in order to develop effective, grassroots-led development projects. These findings also aim to contribute to an AHRC-ESRC funded project investigating local community responses to displacement in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan (2016-2020), led by Dr. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, UCL (refugeehosts.org)