

Forum in London on Forced Displacement and Migration

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London, UK - World Refugee Day, June 20, is promoted by the United Nations to discover and celebrate the contributions that refugees have made over the years. World Refugee Week was celebrated in London via a series of events, one of the first being Youth UPF's June 16 forum on the topic "Forced Displacement and Migration: Time to Rethink Human Dignity."

The Youth UPF event was made up of two sets of panelists. Panel 1 was focused upon refugees from North Korea and Syria, and panel 2 was focused on displacement and migration in Libya after the fall of Gaddafi. Each panelist was invited to share their own experiences, some speakers giving incredible insight into their personal struggles and others speaking highly of the organizations that seek to help refugees to make a new life

for themselves.

The first panel started with Mr. Keith Best. He provided a brief historical overview of migration, causing the audience to think about a world without passports and Virendra Sharma MP and Keith Best identity cards. In the 18th and early 19th century this was unbelievably the case, and, as he stated, freedom of migration was one of the ways that people achieved measurable progress in all fields, and has thus been responsible for shaping the world that we live in. Aside from the value that he sees historically, Mr Best also said, "I believe that the argument for migration in economic terms is irrefutable." And "Beyond the economic argument is the humanitarian aspect."



This argument was echoed by Dr. Hailu Hagos, who spoke about his organization WHEAT Mentor Support Trust (Welfare, Health, Employment and Access to further education and Training). His main argument was that the refugees from places such as Syria and North Korea have lots of skills, and for many people, all that they need is a place where they can build on these skills, or the language ready for the UK work environment. He went on to say that the people he comes into contact with often build up these skills extremely quickly,

as they want to work. By building on these skills and helping them to integrate he believes is good economically as they are already trained in trades and just need help applying these trades to the British work environment.

The drive to integrate refugees into everyday life was also picked up by Brian Quaife and Jennifer Dew, who spoke on behalf of IOM (International Organization for Migration) and who were extremely passionate about the work that they do. They spoke regarding the services that they offer such as vaccinations (both oral and intravenous), cultural orientation, travel services and help with visas. When Quaife spoke of the manner in which they helped the Syrian refugees to rebuild their lives in security without the fear of torture it was evident how important this work was, as well as how rewarding it must be for them both to be able to help people rebuild their entire life.



Sleman Shwaish was a Syrian refugee, and although projects like IOM are in place, it is evident that more needs to be done to UN Refugee Week Event IOM and WHEAT protect people's human rights. Instead of speaking about his personal experience too much, he spoke of the way in which many people although they want to flee Syria have to wait for their paperwork. During this time, they have to continue as normal, working and studying whilst fearing that they may die at any given moment. The frightening reality of this seems unimaginable, and the UK figures

for Syrian's seeking refuge seem comparably low with only 2100 arriving on British soil as of February 2014.

While Shwaish spoke in a very matter-of-fact way with regards to the state of affairs in Syria, Ms. Jihyun Park, a refugee from North Korea, spoke very personally about her own experiences as a refugee. Stating that she didn't even know what a refugee was until five years ago. She was separated from the world, her account of how she fled from hunger and was offered a job in China only to be sold into slavery before escaping was incredibly moving and was quite shocking.



The second panel started with an overview of the conflict now happening in Libya between the rebels and the Tawerghans by Sharon Ward, who primarily went out to Libya the first time to film the rebels (who were fighting against Gaddafi's dictatorship and human rights abuses), but the second time that she visited, she realized that another story needed to be told, that of the Tawerghans. She noted how Tawergha is now a

ghost town and all of the people from there have been scattered around Libya in refugee camps. Labelled as Gaddafi sympathizers, the Tawerghans are experiencing collective punishment and arbitrary justice at the hands of the rebels. One of the ladies' stories that she shared was of a mother who lived on her family farm. The rebels came and they took her son. She still does not know where he is. Sleman Shwaish This story seemed remarkably similar to another she shared of a lady who walks to a prison every day to ask if her son is there. She doesn't know if he is alive or dead. One Tawerghan was even quoted as saying, "I supported the revolution, but for what?"

The conflict between the Tawerghans and the rebels was also discussed by Dr. Fatima Hamroush, who explored the conflict in terms of humanity. It is clear from all accounts that in the refugee camps it is extremely hard for the Tawerghans to maintain their dignity and identity. Instead of there being a prevalence of human rights after the fall of Gaddafi, it has manifested itself into groups torturing and killing each other in acts of revenge.

Thankfully however, Ms. Huda El Khoja spoke not of the effect of the rebels fighting against the Tawerghans but of the prospect of hope. Her organization, 'Tripoli Good', helps to get people to think of others and to help them to reduce their suffering. Often, she pointed out, Mrs Jihyun Park the children of the internally displaced people do not know what is happening. They have essentially lost their freedom, dignity and human rights before understanding that they have them. Tripoli Good seeks to remind these children that they are part of society and aims to give them some type of education. Pertinently she ended by saying, "Home is not where you're born, home is where dignity is formed."

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