Activism, Communication Technologies, and Syrian Refugees Women's Issues

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ABSTRACT

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Activism, Communication Technologies, and Syrian Refugee Women's Issues

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This thesis explores ways in which online activism regarding Syrian refugee women is translated to the offline sphere; what the experiences, issues and concerns of refugee women are; and whether this online activism reflects the real concerns of the refugee women. Methodologically, this paper is based on fieldwork in Jordan for six weeks during the summer of 2013. The fieldwork was conducted in three main regions: the Za'atri Refugee Camp, Amman City, and the outskirts of Amman. Data collection took place through thirty-three in-depth, semi-structured interviews, approximately 100 hours of participant observation, and discourse analysis of online spaces. Analysis of the findings indicates that: 1) social networking websites, such as Facebook, function as channels for promoting stereotypical and/or hegemonic representations of Syrian refugee women's issues; 2) offline activism of activist organizations in Jordan has in many cases a feminist component; however, online activism of these organizations is mainly for humanitarian purposes with no visibility of the diversity of refugee women's experiences; 3) because activists' usage of ICTs has advantages and disadvantages, ICTs are still resources that can be used both for and against social change activism, and thus offline activism remains the major indicator for actual success of any social change movement; 4) through the process of becoming refugees, Syrian women have heterogeneous experiences, which refute the dominant global and social media representations that

minimized Syrian women's stories to not only passive victims of war but also subjects of

forced marriage in exchange for money by their families.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to social change activists and refugees in Syria and around the

world.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the so-called "Arab Spring" was in late 2010. Peaceful

demonstrations aimed to overthrow the dictatorships in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain,

Libya, and Syria. The political transformation in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen were

relatively peaceful shifts of power. Bahrain still occasionally has protests. Libya had an

international intervention with NATO troops that led to the end of Muammar Gaddafi's

regime. Unlike its nearby countries, however, Syria has been drawn into a bloody armed

conflict known now as the "Syrian Civil war."[1] This war resulted in more than 191,000

deaths (U.N., 2014); over 2.8 million refugees have fled Syria and were residing

primarily in neighboring Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraqi Kurdistan, and Egypt; and more

than 6.5 million people have been internally displaced in Syria (United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). These numbers represent approximately half of

Syria's population.

Immediately, when the "Arab Spring" revolutions occurred, mainstream

international media credited the activist movements to Western technology. For example,

BBC (2011) aired a two-part series about the Arab Spring titled "How Facebook

Changed the World." Roger Cohen, a well-known columnist for *The New York Times*,

described the Tunisian Revolution as "perhaps the world's first revolution without a

leader. Or rather, its leader was far away: Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook"

(Cohen, 2011, para. 3-4). This was not the first time that mainstream Western media

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[1] In the 2014 Global Peace Index, Syria is ranked at the bottom of the Index due the deterioration in four indicators: terrorist activity, number of internal and external conflicts fought, deaths from internal conflicts, and number of displaced persons as a percentage of population (Global Peace Index, 2014).

credited social movements in the Global South, especially in the Middle East, to Western innovations. For instance, the 2009 Iran student protests not only have become famous as the "Twitter revolution," but also Mark Pfeifle, a former U.S national security adviser, called for the nomination of Twitter, not Iranian students, for the Nobel Peace Prize (2009).

In this context of contemporary discussions in academia and elsewhere about the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in social change, my research began with following a Facebook campaign called "Refugees not Captives" (RNC). RNC has 23,247 likes and identifies itself as a non-governmental organization that aims to raise awareness about the issue of forced marriages in the Syrian refugee camps in Jordan. When I was searching Google and YouTube for content about Syrian refugee women, the most popular articles focused on forced marriage and depicted stories of Syrian refugees selling their daughters for money. This online research inspired me to do further investigation for my Master's thesis fieldwork. I traveled to Jordan for six weeks during the summer of 2013 to document how online activism of informal and NGOs organizations dealing with Syrian refugee women is translated to the offline sphere, and if the online activism reflects the real concerns of the refugee women. What are the refugee women's experiences, needs and stories? I had two key informants from the Syrian activists community in Jordan who I knew from my previous work in the region. These key informants helped me to identify the main Syrian activist groups in Jordan. Then I started networking with other persons and groups. Through these efforts, I was able to work with seven activist organizations on the ground in Jordan and to get

access to the Zaatari refugee camp, the largest refugee camp for Syrians fleeing the

ongoing war. Overall, I conducted thirty-three interviews, and I engaged in

approximately 100 hours of participant observation.[2]

Drawing on the work of scholars in communication, technology, and social

change who emphasize the necessity to integrate the study of communication technology

and the historical, cultural, and political context of social movements (Costanza-Chock,

2008; Downing, 2010; Lim, 2012; Lim, 2013; Martin Barbero, 2006; Qiu, 2009;

Rodríguez, 2011) this thesis aims to provide an understanding of the historical and

contemporary context of activism and social movement in Syria in order to contextualize

the seven activist organizations that I worked with in Jordan within the broader activist

movement that arose in Syria. Furthermore, this thesis challenges an optimistic trend in

the ICTs and social change field, especially in relation to women's empowerment,

especially as read through the lens of theories and transnational feminist academic

literature that deal with social movements, gender, and representation (Basu, 1995;

Enloe, 1990; Mankekar, 1999; Melucci, 1989; Ong, 1999; Scott, 1988; Yural-Davis,

1997). This paper acknowledges the role of ICTs, especially social networking websites

such as Facebook and YouTube, as resources that help in mobilizing people and diffusing

demonstrations such in the Arab Spring and Syrian Uprising. However, this research

focuses on examining the following issues: first, investigate and question social

networking websites role as channels for promoting stereotypical and/or hegemonic

representations of Syrian refugee women issues; second, analyze how different formal

and informal organizations translate their online activism to the offline sphere and what

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[2] Please see (APPENDIX 2) for a full List of Interviewee Names.

are their strategies to meet the needs of Syrian refugee women and families; third,

examine how activists use ICTs in their work generally and in relation to refugee

women's issues specifically and the advantages and disadvantages of ICTs in this regard.

Forth, this research intends to make visible some of the untold stories of Syrian women

fighting for freedom and surviving the war, prison, and displacement.

The remainder of this introductory chapter discusses the modern historical context

of Syrian activism, in which I demonstrate the importance of two main activist

movements under the al-Assad regime rule (the 1979–1982 events, and the 2000–2001

Spring of Damascus). In the second chapter, I provide an understanding of the start of the

2011 Syrian Uprising, through the lens of social movement theories, and what role ICTs,

especially social networking websites, played both in the uprising and, subsequently, in

the continuing activism that took the form of humanitarian assistance for refugees in

Jordan. This helps contextualize the seven activist organizations that I worked with in

Jordan within the broader activist movement that arose in Syria. I proceed to show the

complexity of the rise and the fall of the Syrian Uprising and what roles ICTs have

played in the Syrian conflict. I then examine literature on ICTs and social change, where

I examine issues such as how in some circumstances ICTs play a role in enhancing

patriarchy and hierarchy. In that chapter I also review the scholarship of transnational

feminists in regards to questions of representation, power, voice, privilege, and

marginalization within social movements, and discuss how these literatures are relevant

to answering my research questions. Chapter three will provide an overview of the

methodological basis and considerations for this research, followed by Chapter 4 and 5, which are the results and conclusion sections of this thesis, respectively.

Historical Context of Syrian Activism

Syria is a country in the eastern Mediterranean region, south of Turkey and west of Iraq. In 1918, after four centuries of Ottoman domination, and with the support of the French and British governments, Syria gained its independence after the decisive defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. In April 1920, the victorious Allies gathered in San Remo Conference to realize their secret agreement, the Sykes–Picot Agreement, which was completed in 1916. This agreement divided the Fertile Crescent (which now includes the following countries: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Egypt, Palestine/Israel, in addition to the Western fringe of Iran and the southeastern fringe of Turkey) between the French and the British mandates into several areas.

Figure 1: A map of the Fertile Crescent, which is colored in green. Source: Iowa State University (http://www.public.iastate.edu/~cfford/342worldhistoryearly.html).

Under the French mandate/colonialism (1920-1946), the political boundaries of Syria were smaller in geographic extent than were the historical lands more commonly associated with Syria. For example, the port of Beirut became part of Lebanon, while the establishment of Israel affected not only Syria, but much of the region. This creation of

the 'new Middle East' became the basis of various ongoing tensions, which amongst

other things included an area of strategic importance for the U.S. and the Soviets during

the Cold War, and hence a major focal point of related tensions. In 1949, three years after

Syria's independence, under the excuse of liberating Palestine and the corruption of the

ex-government, the weak newly-born country started to face many military coups d'état,

which would be the first episodes of economic and political instability that lasted from

1949 to 1970 (Torrey, 1964).

In 1963, after 18 months of turmoil that followed the coup d'état against the

unionist marriage between Syria and Egypt under the leadership of President Jamal

Abdul Nasser who ruled both countries between 1958-1961, the Ba'ath Party seized

power just a month after the success of the Ba'athists in neighboring Iraq (Bar-Siman-

Tov, 1983). Between 1963-1970, a series of intra-party coups occurred, leading to

fundamental and deep changes in Syrian society and the structure of economic-political

power, with officers from Muslim minorities (Alawites, Ismailis, and Druze) reaching the

top of leadership for the first time in contemporary Syrian history (Bar-Siman-Tov,

1983). It is important here to mention that according to the World Directory of Minorities

the main religious group in Syria is Sunni Islam, which constitutes 74% of the

population, while the Alawites are 11% and other Muslim minorities such as Ismailis and

Druze are 5%, and Christians are 10% (2011). In the June 1967 War (known also as the

Six-Day War), Syria, Egypt, and Jordan were defeated by Israel, which occupied Syrian

Golan Heights (BBC, n.d).

In response to Western mainstream media and some academic scholars' claims
that the main factor in the occurrence of the Arab Spring is Western technology and not
the people's activism and acts of resistance in the Arab region, I will identify and
demonstrate the importance of two main activist movements under al-Assad regime rule.
The first movement, which was more complicated, occurred early 1980s. The second
activist movement happened in the first two years of the 21st-century. To understand the
current Syrian conflict, I will begin with the early 1980s' movement. This research
particularly refers to the 1979–1982 events in Syrian modern history when Syrian
people's acts of activism publicly challenged the Ba'ath/ Hafez al-Assad regime for the
first time. This story actually begins in 1970 when Defense Minister Hafez al-Assad had
just taken over power. Hafez al-Assad developed a very controversial authoritarian
administration. On the one hand, he worked to achieve stability and economic
growth based on social market principles. He supported women's and minority's rights.
He made Syria a political leading power in the Arab region. On the other hand, Hafez al-
Assad strengthened the domination of his political party, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party,
and empowered his sect, the "Alawites," within military and security intelligence,
without any real economic development in his sect region (Ziser, 2001). His regime also
was known as one of the most repressive regimes in the history of the modern world, and
he and his regime were accused of many human rights violations. So how did Syrian
people react to Hafez al-Assad's controversial administration?

According to Lund (2011), early in the 1970s Hafez al-Assad was considered a
relative hero after his leadership in the October Arab-Israeli War of 1973 (known also as

Yom Kippur War or Ramadan War). But, in late 1970s the positive attitudes of Syrian

people toward the regime started to change. There was anti-regime activism and protests

led mainly by three categories of activists: Sunni Islamism, leftist-nationalist opposition,

and civilian protest (Lund, 2011). The main reasons for these anti-regime activities can

be attributed to three main causes: the economy, the monopoly of power, and the military

intervention in Lebanon. The economy was suffering because of "corruption and

mismanagement, escalating military expenditures, and a withdrawal of foreign

sponsorship" (Lund, 2011 p. 8). Hafez al-Assad depended on Alawites especially for

recruitment in the security forces and Baathist support to control the country. The Syrian

military intervention in Lebanon in 1976 was negatively perceived by both Sunni

Islamism and leftist-nationalist opposition (Lund, 2011). Under the pretext that the

regime was fighting an armed fundamentalist threat (as represented by the Fighting

Vanguard, an armed offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood), the regime committed

different massacres nationwide, the most horrific of which was in February 1982 in Hama

city (many of the Syrian activists who I interviewed in Jordan "descended" from this city,

which means that their families lived in Hama for generations). The exact number of the

victims is still unknown, but the Syrian Human Rights Committee estimated that at least

25,000 were murdered, most of them women, children and elderly civilians (SHRC,

2006). The SHRC report (in memory of the 24th anniversary of the February 1982

Massacre of Hama) describes the Hama massacre as "Genocide and a Crime against

Humanity." However, there was no media coverage to document the atrocities of Hama

massacre because the Syrian regime banned international and local media from covering

the events, and there were no communication technologies that citizens can use to record the violations and mass violence that they suffer from. Following the Ba'ath/ Hafez al-Assad regime's success in repressing the 1980s uprising by killing or jailing the opponents, the regime ruled Syria for the next decades with an iron fist.

After the death of Hafez al-Assad on June 10, 2000, his son Bashar Al-Assad inherited Syria in July 2000 and was presented as an intellectual and a prominent young president. Bashar Al-Assad promised to start a policy of opening to international interaction after decades of blocking most communication with the West under his father's rule. During 2000–2001 Bashar Al-Assad tried to convince the international society and Syrian people that his rule was different, but he failed immediately when the local activist movement represented by "Spring of Damascus" demanded fundamental democratic reforms, such as abolition of the emergency law (Zisser, 2003). The old guard who held the real power in Syria after Hafez Al-Assad's death considered civic activism a threat to the totalitarian nature of the regime, and they made a final decision to stop similar activities (Zisser, 2003). The security forces arrested most of the activists and imprisoned them for many years. Their charge was "attempting to change the constitution by illegal means" (Carnegie-mec, 2012, para. 6). The new-old regime made many economic mistakes in the attempt to transfer the country's economic system from a social economy to a neoliberal economy, which expanded the gaps between the classes in Syria and contributed to the emergence of a new corrupted class around Bashar Al- Assad (George, 2003).

To provide further understanding of the historical and contemporary context of activism and social movement in Syria, in the next chapter, I will provide an understanding of the start of the 2011 Syrian Uprising. Through the lens of social movement theories I will provide an understanding of the start of the 2011 Syrian Uprising and what role ICTs, especially social networking websites, played both in the uprising and, subsequently, in the continuing activism that took the form of humanitarian assistance for refugees in Jordan. Such frame will help to contextualize the seven activist organizations that I worked with in Jordan within the broader activist movement that arose in Syria.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of this research, I will discuss three different theories that can help contextualize the emergence and fallouts of the Arab Spring and the Syrian Uprising, particularly as they relate to the overall nature of this thesis. This chapter begins with a review of social movements theories and media activism, followed by a brief discussion of the role of ICTs in social movements of the Arab Spring and Syrian Uprising. I then review research that has examined ICTs and social change regarding women's issues, followed by a review of key concepts emanating from work on transnational feminism. The scholarship of transnational feminists in particular is important for contextualizing the results of this thesis, particularly in relation to questions of representation, power, voice, privilege, and marginalization within social movements.

Social Movements Theories and Media Activism

The question of how social change happens is central to Social Movement theories. These theories investigate how social movements begin and grow. While what can be understood as conventional Social Movement Theory (SMT) asserts that change is associated with movements against the state (McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1994; Tilly, 1978), the New Social Movement Theory (NSMT) focus more on culture and society (Cohen, 1985; Habermas, 1987; Melucci, 1989; Touraine, 1981). SMT defines a social movement as "an organized, sustained, self- conscious challenge to existing authorities" (Tilly, 1984, p. 304). SMT mainly explicates the emergence of social movements in the

nineteenth century. Resource mobilization is a crucial approach in SMT. This approach is

represented in the work of scholars such as Olson, Zald, and Tilly. These scholars argue

that social actors have resources or are without resources, and the political system is ruled

by inclusion and exclusion politics. Collective action exists when social actors try to

infiltrate the political system, and the action's success in accessing the political system

depends on the movement's efficiency in mobilizing resources for its cause. Resource

mobilization depends on two variables that define the success or failure of a collective

action in meeting the movement's goals: the cost of acting and the availability of

resources (Olson, 1965; Tilly, 1986). Participants in a collective action are understood to

act rationally and join the movement if they will receive gains or benefits through this

process.

The NSMT critiqued SMT's tendency to neglect the context and environment of

social change. In particular, SMT is criticized for ignoring three main factors: the roles of

individual actors and agency, time, and place. The NSMT thrived in the 1980s with the

rise of the constructivism school in social sciences. The NSMT uses the concept

"collective action" to define a social movement. The collective action is a process

through which actors choose to communicate and participate with other persons in

activities in order to construct their identities (Melucci, 1989). Some of the core concepts

in NSMT are a multipolar action system and collective identity. The multipolar action

system is "a system in which individuals who act collectively try to form a more or less

stable 'we' by negotiating on goals, means, and the environment within which their

actions take place" (Klandermans, 1990, p. 222). The concept of collective identity was

introduced by social researchers such as Cohen (1985), Pizzorno (1978), and Touraine (1983), but Melucci (1989) has developed the concept by defining collective identity as a process toward constructing an action system. Melucci explicates this process in the light of the relationships, interactions and negotiations between the actors themselves from one side and with the actors and the environment from the other side.

Melluci describes collective action as "a process in which actors produce the common cognitive frameworks that enable them to assess their environment and to calculate the costs and benefits of their action. The definitions which they formulate are in part the fruit of emotional recognition" (1989, p. 35). So, Melucci believes that the participants in the new social movements are searching in what he calls "complex society" for both collective and individual identity more than searching for power and gain, as SMT argues. He takes into consideration the participants' cognitive and emotional investments. He also thinks that participants in the collective action have existential needs more than simply resources, and this point is one of the basic differences between SMT and NSMT. In other words, Melucci (1989) emphasizes the "need of self-realization in everyday life" (p. 23) as a main motive for the contemporary social movements. Melucci applies his theoretical approach to the Italian movements of the 1980s. In these movements networks of youth, feminists, and workers, who are disperse in daily life, challenged together the dominant codes. Through the groups' participation and self-realization, their shared meaning constructed their collective action.

Recently, scholars advocate a more comprehensive approach to tackle conflicts and social movements. For example, in Tuğal's (2009) analysis of the Islamist movement

in Turkey, he states that this movement has achieved social change goals through daily life activities and interactions. However, these short-term achievements are part of the long-term political struggle between secularist and Islamist movements in Turkey over political power. As a result, Tuğal suggests that theoretical separations between SMT and NSMT are not applicable to his study of the Islamist movement because this movement is working on culture and society (for which NSMT is used) in the short run, but its ultimate goal is to take over power and control the state (for which SMT is used).

Tuğal's work is indicative of new trends in studying social movements that incorporate ideas and concepts from SMT and NSMT. For instance, Altaweel, Sallach, and Macal, (2012) as well as Rowley and Moldoveanu (2003) argue that the success of a social mobilization can be achieved efficiently when the movement has the resources and is identity-oriented. However, if a movement has strength in one of the aforementioned attributes, that strength can help the movement to defeat its weakness in the other attributes. Altaweel, Sallach, and Macal (2012) integrate different theoretical approaches to analyze three case studies of armed conflicts in Central Asia (the Tajik Civil War 1992, Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution 2005, and the Andijan Events in Uzbekistan 2005). Their study results suggest that "receiving outside resources could help a relatively weak group, with limited mobilization, overcome opposition that is initially better mobilized, while shared identity and sufficient risk taking are shown to be potentially strong factors in producing successful mobilization" (p. 143). To summarize, these new research trends incorporate the SMT concept of resources mobilization and the NSMT concept of collective identity.

In the context of media and social movements, Carroll and Hackett (2006) examine what they call Democratic Media Activism (DMA) and the new possibilities that DMA can add to social movement theories. They outline four predominant approaches within the field of DMA. The first two approaches focus on activism directed at the hegemonic institutions: "influencing content and practices of mainstream media," and "advocating reform of government policy/ regulation of media in order to change the structure and politics of media themselves" (Carroll & Hackett, 2006, p. 88). The third and forth approaches focus on activism directed at civil society, and they are: "building independent, democratic and participatory media," and "changing the relationship between audiences and media" (Carroll & Hackett, 2006, p. 88-89). Carroll and Hackett build on the work of RMT and NSMT to study media activism. The writers indicate, "the boundaries between media activism and other forms of activism that it often facilitates are constantly blurring" (Carroll & Hackett, 2006, p. 92). This sort of research suggests studying media activism as a social "movement in itself, not (consciously) for itself" (Carroll & Hackett, 2006, p. 100). The research also anticipates that the new information technologies will play a more significant role in the future in mobilizing and diffusing global protests, and I will further explain such argument in the next sections that will deal more explicitly with the role of ICTs in social movements.

The Role of ICTs in the Social Movements of the Arab Spring and Syrian Uprising

Late in 2010, in an act of protest against a police officer, Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vender, conducted a self-immolation after the officer slapped him in the

face. In solidarity with Bouazizi, the peaceful revolution in Tunisia was initiated. Then, the Tunisian Revolution was followed by originally peaceful uprisings in Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria. My thesis suggests that the Arab Spring revolutions as social movements can be studied and analyzed in the light of SMT and NSMT. These revolutions' goals aimed to change the state and the economy, and they were based on individual and collective identity-formation.

Mobilization of collective actions for social and political change is extremely difficult to accomplish under authoritarian regimes. In the Arab Spring the roles of individual actors and their agency, time, and place (the main factors in NSMT literature) were crucial elements in the development of the movements. Additionally, the availability of resources (the main factors in SMT literature), especially Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), were important elements to facilitate the mobilization and diffusion of the movements. However, as Kienle (2012) argues ICTs have "always remained means or resources that must not be confused with causes" (p. 545). This explanation stands in contrast to those subscribed by Cohen (2011) and the BBC (2011) that see the use of social media as the main cause of these uprisings.

Kienle (2012) discusses how authoritarianism stops collective actions by restricting the protesters' access to resources that help them mobilize and organize their activist efforts. Kienle (2012) says that social movement thinking tends to consider "organizational capacity" as a main element toward gaining more resources for change. Furthermore, the strength of this capacity depends on the "existences of formally established organizations" (p. 544). However, Kienle (2012) argues that the case of the

Arab Spring was sudden and unexpected, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, because the collective actions have been developed far from the "formally established organizations and other easily identifiable forms of organizations" (p. 544). So, what happened in the Arab Spring? Beinin (2011) and Kienle (2012) argue that collective action in the Egyptian Revolution was driven by two factors: interactions and collective excitement that occurred with fluctuations as people gathered in different and changing public places as well as the decrease in fear of barriers. Kienle (2012) confirms that the social movements of the Arab Spring emphasize the agency of people in the Arab region in contrast to other previous essentialized studies that view Arabs and Muslims as an exception to pursuing democracy based on the nature of their cultural and religious beliefs.

The Syrian Uprising began in mid-March 2011 as part of the Arab Spring. The uprising started in Dar'a Governorate, which is a southwestern agricultural, rural region of Syria. Dar'a is located south of Damascus, and north of Jordan on the Damascus-Amman highway (this geographical proximity from Jordan led to the fact that many of the Syrian refugees in Zaatari refugee camp were from Dar'a Governorate). The collective action in Dar'a consisted of social networks including dispersed categories of clans, tribes, laborers, and students who have challenged together the authoritarianism of Syria (Leenders & Heydemann, 2012). The impetus of the Syrian uprising was the revolution in Tunisia and Egypt. However, the primary cause of the Syrian uprising was the specific social and political environment of Dar'a Governorate. Leenders and Heydemann (2012) analyze the early stages of the Syrian uprising (the first six months)

in regard to the conditions of "opportunity" and "threat." The main reasons for the ignition of the uprising in Dar'a were the Syrian security violence against a medical doctor who had expressed anti-al-Assad sentiments and against a group of fifteen schoolboys who were accused of painting anti-regime graffiti on their school walls. The above minors were imprisoned and were severely tortured (International Crisis Group, 2011).

The people of Dar'a mobilized themselves in response to the threat that happened to their children. Two main opportunities assisted them: one was that Dar'a was known as a loyal region to the Ba'ath regime, so the regime (and even the official opposition organizations) did not predict an uprising there. The second opportunity for the Syrian Uprising occurred because of the Arab Spring events, which caused the Syrian authorities to focus their attention in other regions of Syria that were famous for opposition such as Hama City (Leenders, 2012; Leenders, R., & Heydemann, 2012). This left Dar'a people with marginal freedom to assess their environment as well as negotiate and calculate the benefits and costs of their action (Leenders, 2012). Next, the people of Dar'a started their leaderless grassroots movement. In all of these opportunities, negotiations, and following actions, we can see Melucci's concepts of a multipolar action system and collective identity as introduced earlier in this thesis. According to Leenders and Heydemann (2012) the "mobilization in Dar'a affected opportunity structures perceived by protestors elsewhere in the country" (p.150). In solidarity with Dar'a, demonstrations began in Banias, Idlib, Homs, Dir-Az-Zor, Damascus, and Hama. These collective actions in these

cities and towns share all or some of the key characteristics that allow the uprising to occur in Dar'a, such as the dense social networks.

The reactions of the Ba'ath/al-Assad regime to the uprising in the above-mentioned cities and towns were a mirror to the1979-1982 events when the regime, under the pretext of fighting an armed fundamentalist threat, committed different massacres nationwide, the most horrific of which was in February 1982 in Hama city. There are only one or two pictures that depicted the destruction of the1979-1982 events because the international media was banned from entering the country and there was no communication technologies such as mobile phones or Internet that provided citizens with tools to document the regime's abuses. Thus one of the main differences between the 2011 uprising and the1979-1982 events is that nowadays because of people's access to resources such as mobile phones and internet, they had the chance to document the Syrian regime's atrocities and violations and share it with the world through social media. However, that did not bring any change in favor of protecting civilians' lives.

One reason among others that the Syrian conflict shifted from peaceful to an armed conflict is the Syrian regime's martial reaction to the demonstrations. A broader reason is the ways in which national, regional, and international powers hijacked the people's uprising. Then Syria has now become a location in the Middle East for a new cold war (Salloukh, 2013). To explain the previous situation, Salloukh's (2013) analyzes the geopolitical battles in the Middle East between Iran and Saudi Arabia since the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. On the one hand, Iran is an ally of the anti-Western/US axis that includes Syria, and it is a "Shia- dominated" country. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia is

an ally of the Western/US axis, and it is a "Sunni- dominated" country. Salloukh argues

that the sectarianisation of the Middle East's geopolitical battles systematically started

with the US invasion of Iraq. Later, when the Arab Spring started, regional powers such

as Saudi Arabia saw in the Syrian Uprising an opportunity to overthrow a "Shia /Alawite-

ruled Syria" and control the future Sunni dominated country, which would compensate

for the Saudi loss of the "Sunni-ruled Iraq" to Iran (Salloukh, 2013). In the context of this

complex geopolitical battle, Iran and its allies supported and funded the Syrian regime to

oppress the uprising. In contrast, Arabian Gulf's countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and

Qatar, supported and funded Syrian opposition group fighters. Within these groups, Qatar

focused more on supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and its proponents, and Saudi

Arabia aided Free Syrian Army groups with a tolerance to Salafi calls that mobilize

Salafi-jihadi fighters into Syria. Such Salafi calls were mainly broadcasted through

Saudi-based Salafi TV satellite channels such as al-Safa station[3]. These geopolitical

battles that involved national, regional, and international political actors highlight how

the Syrian Uprising was hijacked from the people who demanded freedom, social justice,

and human rights in March 2011. The above-mentioned powers systematically

militarized and sectarianized the conflict and pushed toward a civil war instead of

peaceful secular human rights-oriented uprising.

After unfolding the complexity of the rise and fall of the Syrian Uprising as a

social movement, I will highlight here the role of ICTs in the Syrian conflict.

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[3] The al-Safa station (http://safatv.net/) is a Saudi-based Salafi TV satellite that is known for broadcasting programs of Sheikh Adnan Aroor a well-known Syrian Sunni scholar who fled Syria after the 1982 Massacre of Hama. At that time, Aroor was with the Fighting Vanguard, an armed offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. But, after he arrived in Saudi Arabia he joined the Salfi movement.

Understanding the role of ICTs as resources means that they serve both conflict sides in

Syria. On the one hand, for the Syrian protesters ICTs, especially social media, were tools

for mobilizing collective action. In addition, they provided spaces for activists' voices to

be heard, to fight authorities, and to document human rights violations. For example,

YouTube was a crucial platform in the Syrian uprising because the regime banned the

professional journalists from entering Syria in order to report the events. As a result,

citizen journalists' videos that documented the violence of the security forces in

repressing the uprising were vital evidence to support the protestors' narratives

(Youmans & York, 2012). On the other hand, for the Syrian regime, ICTs made the

Syrian activists traceable for authorities. For example, the Syrian regime unblocked

Facebook after the uprising in order to easily track the activists (Aljazeera, 2011).

Furthermore, the Syrian regime has the Syrian Electronic Army, which attacks and

defaces the protesters, opponents, and western media websites and Facebook accounts

(Noman, 2011). These facts regarding the Syrian conflict and the role of ICTs, as

resources in the hands of both conflict parties, urge a critical examination of the role ICTs

in social change.

ICTs and Social Change regarding Women's Issues

In the previous sections, I have first reviewed social movements theories and then

analyzed the Arab Spring and Syrian Uprising in the light of these theories. I proceed to

show the complexity of the rise and the fall of the Syrian Uprising and what roles ICTs

have played in the Syrian conflict. In this section, I focus more on reviewing literature on

ICTs and social change regarding women's issues because my research deals specifically

with the role ICTs played, especially on social networking websites, in representing and

promoting Syrian refugee women's issues. While this section focuses on ICTs and social

change for women, the following section will deal more explicitly with the question of

representation of women in the Middle East, especially Syrian refugee women.

In the field of ICTs and social change, many scholars view ICTs as resources for

women's rights activists and citizens to use for women's emancipation because ICTs are

used as a democratic medium that provides space for people and particularly women's

voices to be heard as they fight discriminatory laws and governmental and religious

authorities as well as practice their right of freedom of expression regarding public

discourse (Abbott, 2011; Farid, 2012; Haider, 2009; Simon, 2011). For example, social

networking websites such as You Tube are seen as challenging the monopoly of

education and knowledge by institutions and elites and brought grassroots democracy.

You Tube provides new forms of learning, which has been called "transformative

pedagogy" (Kellner & Kim, 2010). On the contrary, other studies suggest that ICTs, in

some circumstances, may enhance the hierarchical power relations between the two

genders in society (Garcia, 2011). Critics such as Newsom, Cassara and Lengel (2011)

and Shirazi (2012) have concluded that Gender mainstreaming (GM) in the ICTs field

has little impact because ICTs are still related to patriarchal rules, and just the educated,

elite women in urban areas benefit from ICTs. Furthermore, the work of Newsom and

Lengel (2012) shows that even if ICTs helped in achieving what they call "online

empowerment" of women and young people, this form of empowerment may not be

translated to the offline sphere (Newsom, & Lengel, 2012). Thus, ICTs advantages and limitations continue to be a space for scrutiny and analysis.

The main discussions about ICTs and women's issues link ICTs to women's empowerment. Connell (2010) suggests that ICTs lead to collective empowerment. Other studies limit ICTs effects to individual empowerment cases. But what does empowerment mean in the first place? According to Kabeer (1999) the definition of women's empowerment is "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability." This definition sees empowerment as "a process of change", in which for a person to be empowered he/she must first be disempowered. Then a person can gain the "ability to exercise choice" through three dimensions: "resources", "agency", and "achievements" (p.437). Based on Kabeer's understanding of empowerment as a process that begins within the women themselves, Choudhury (2009) conducted a study to learn if the Internet is an empowering tool for Bangladeshi women. She interviewed women who use the Internet and who are not associated with technology through their academic or professional lives. Her study shows that the women think using the Internet brought positive changes in their daily lives. However, these changes are limited to family networking and expanding business, and they do not necessarily reflect a progress in the power relations in the women lives. In other words, the Internet is not an empowering tool according to Kabeer's definition of empowerment because it is limited to bringing positive changes more than shifting power relations in favor of women.

For the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) after the Arab spring the arguments about women's rights and gender issues have emerged as a crucial key to both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary processes and democratic transformation (Al-Ali, 2012). Alqudsi-ghabra (2012) argues that without ICT tools, the revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya may not have happened sequentially and in a short time. Other work suggested that while promoting women's rights in the MENA region may not guarantee political stability in the short term, the degree of women's rights achievement is the guarantee for the long-term stability (Sutherlin, 2012).

The main concern regarding women issues and the Arab Spring is that despite the wide participation of women in the uprisings from Egypt and Tunisia to Syria, Bahrain and Yemen, there was no gender-based social change (Newsom, & Lengel, 2012). Moss (2012) optimistically says that young Arab women were successful in bringing their online activism to the streets, and they will continue their demonstrations until they are heard. Similar to Moss, Zlitni and Touati (2012) claim that Facebook empowered Tunisian feminist organizations voices to be visible and to mobilize public opinion in their favor. On the other hand, Khamis (2011) presents a more comprehensive view about the future possibilities of gender revolutions in the Arab region. In her article, she states that young women activists see the feminist spring in the context of the struggle for human rights, and older activists insist that without a distinct feminist movement the gender revolution will never happen and all the previous women achievement will be lost. But, for Khamis the "Arab feminist spring is under way" regardless of how it is portrayed. In this section, I reviewed literature on ICTs and social change regarding

women's issues and I highlighted how ICTs are used as resources for advocating and promoting women's rights. However, I showed how in some circumstances ICTs played a role in enhancing patriarchy and hierarchy. In next section, I will review transnational feminists scholarship in relation to the Global South women representations and I will show how this thesis will use transnational feminist lens in answering my research questions.

Transnational Feminism, Representation, and ICTs

The scholarship of transnational feminists helps in answering questions of representations, power, voice, privilege, and marginalization within social movements. This work deconstructs the dominant discourse of history and knowledge, and takes seriously the concept of agency of women in different cultures and geographical locations. According to transnational feminists, Western literature, including Western feminist literature, about women in developing countries is located in historical and colonial contexts of Western hegemony (McEwan, 2001; Mohanty, 2003). Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984) plays a pioneering role as a transnational feminist in analyzing and problematizing the dominant representations of non-Western women in Western literature. Specifically, Mohanty criticizes the "production of the 'Third World woman' as a singular monolithic subject" (p.333). Many Western feminists represent the issues and concerns of non-western women from a simplistic dichotomous understanding. In this view, non-Western societies are seen as groups of repressive men and victimized women (Mohanty, 2003). Such a view led to ignorance concerning the complexity of the

intersection between class, race, nationality, and sexuality, and also the effects of the

unequal global economy and colonial power relations between the Global North and the

Global South. Mohanty (2003) also points out that the dominant discourse regarding

women in the Global South is not only produced by Western intellectuals but also by

scholars from developing countries who adopt the Western dominant discourse.

To counter the dominant representations about women from marginalized groups,

transnational feminists promote alternative ways of knowledge production. Such

alternative ways aim to make visible the stories of women from marginalized groups by

writing and incorporating the struggles and experiences of those women in the academic

work. Transnational feminists challenge the dominant representations about women,

especially in the Global South, as a singular powerless victim. Mohanty (2003) invites us

to take seriously the concept of the agency of women in different cultures and

geographical locations. Representing non-Western women as a homogeneous group "robs

them of their historical and political agency" (Mohanty, 2003, p.39). These

representations objectify women in the Global South, and exclude as well as distort their

long history of different resistant experiences against power hierarchies. Mohanty further

highlights the continuous domination of the singular, monolithic representation of women

from the Global South in discourse about globalization. Mohanty admits that there is an

emerging image of active women from the Global South, such as images of female

"human rights" activists and advocates, yet she invites feminists to critically examine the

new binary representations of victimized/empowered Global South women. In this sense,

Mohanty raises the question of what systems of power and privilege among Global South

women make a few voices seen as empowered and a majority of voices represented as victimized.

Times of conflict are a repeated example of a situation where women are represented as faceless, nameless, and powerless victims. For example, Nordstrom (2005) discusses that despite the participation of women in the 1983 riots against the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the media representation of these women was limited to an iconic image of a nameless pregnant woman disemboweled by terrorists. Nordstrom (2005) argues "the use of this image as an icon effectively obscures all the many women and girls who die and fight without recognition" (p.400). Similar to Nordstrom, Bhattacharyya (2008) assures that emphasizing the diverse and complex experiences and roles of women in war complicates and reveals the propaganda of the political powers in the West in claiming to rescue women in the Global South. Drawing on transnational feminist perspective, in this thesis, I will, investigate and question social networking websites role as channels for promoting stereotypical and/or hegemonic representations of Syrian refugee women issues through analyzing global and social media dominant representations of Syrian refugee women's issues in Jordan. Additionally, this thesis will examine how different formal and informal organizations translate their online activism to the offline sphere and what are their strategies to meet the needs of Syrian refugee women and families; and examine how activists use ICTs in their work generally and in relation to refugee women's issues specifically and the advantages and disadvantages of ICTs in this regard. Finally, this thesis intends to make visible some of the untold stories of Syrian women fighting for freedom and surviving the war, prison, and displacement.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The previous chapters have discussed a modern historical context of Syrian

activism in which I demonstrate the importance of two main activist movements under al-

Assad regime rule (the 1979–1982 events, and the 2000–2001 Spring of Damascus). I

also provided an understanding of the start of the 2011 Syrian Uprising, through the lens

of social movement theories, and what role ICTs, especially social networking websites,

played both in the uprising and, subsequently, in the continuing activism that took the

form of humanitarian assistance for refugees in Jordan. This background has served to

contextualize the seven activist organizations that I worked with in Jordan within the

broader activist movement that arose in Syria. I proceed to show the complexity of the

rise and the fall of the Syrian Uprising and what roles ICTs have played in the Syrian

conflict. Following that, I examined literature on ICTs and social change regarding

women's issues and I have showed how in some circumstances ICTs played a role in

enhancing patriarchy and hierarchy. Then I have reviewed scholarship of transnational

feminists regarding answering questions of representations, power, voice, privilege, and

marginalization within social movements, and showed how these literatures are relevant

to answering my research questions.

This chapter provides an overview of the qualitative methods, sampling

techniques, and data collection strategies that I have used to conduct this research. I will

also highlight how I gained access to the Za'atari Refugee Camp, and reflect on how my

own positionality as a Syrian woman and human rights activist affected my relationships

with my interviewees and the types of limitations and challenges that I faced through the

process of writing this thesis. My data collection took place through interviews, observation, and discourse analysis of online spaces. The data collection for this research primarily based upon semi-structured interviews that I had conducted, with women refuges, as well as with activists and human rights workers who have been involved with the Refugee not Captives campaign or with similar activist campaigns and activities.

Interviews

In my research, in-depth semi-structured interviews were my main data collection method. Interviews give power to my research participants to tell their stories and to share their motivations, opinions, and experiences of participating in the Syrian Uprising as well as of surviving the war and starting new lives in Jordan (Dunn, 2005). I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews, which "combine the flexibility of the unstructured, open-ended interview with the directionality and agenda of the survey instrument to produce focused, qualitative, textual data at the factor level" (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 149). Before travelling to Jordan I designed my interview protocol (appendix 1) and also started my interviewing process via Skybe with two pilot interviews with key informants to acquire basic knowledge about the field before conducting in-depth interviews once I arrived.

In asking my questions I employed techniques that are used in interviewing such as probing, which mean to repeat or rephrase the question, and prompting, which means to ask follow-up questions in order to get more complete answers (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). Interviews were based on open-ended questions that encouraged participants to

provide spontaneous answers about their underlying ideas, feelings, actions and worldviews and, in their own language and wording, to reflect on the themes of my questions (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed me to avoid redundancy. In some cases, I skipped questions when the research participants adequately addressed them while answering other questions.

My primary goal in conducting interviews was to sample people of two main groups: the activist community and the refugee women's community. This division came from my major research question, which is how the online activism regarding Syrian refugee women is translated to the offline sphere and if the online activism reflects the real concerns of the refugee women. As a result, I designed two sets of questions: one for the activist community and one for the refugee women's community.

The first group of interviewees were selected based on their involvement with grassroots campaigns and activities. Any person who participated in campaigns or activities focused on Syrian refugee women issues felt within the criteria for selection of subjects. The second group of interviewees were selected from the refugee women population in the Za'atri refugee camp and in the outskirts of Amman. In the activist group my aim was to interview male and female activists because I was mainly interested in activist work with Syrian refugee women in Jordan. As a result, 5 out of the 19 activists that I interviewed were male and the other 14 were female. In the refugee group, my goal was to learn about the women's stories, challenges, concerns, and realities in Jordan; therefore, I just included female refugees. Within this criteria for selection of research subjects, I aimed at interviewing a sample of people who represented different

classes, ages, education levels, family status, and place of origin backgrounds because I intended to study the effects of the intersection of these factors on women's lives. The age of my participants ranged from 21 to 60 years old. All my interviewees were Syrian except three: one male Jordanian Palestinian activist, and two female activists, one is Jordanian and the other is Jordanian Palestinian. I interviewed these three non-Syrian activists because they felt within the research criteria for selection of subjects since they participated in significant campaigns or activities focused on Syrian refugee women issues. The place of origin of my 30 Syrian participants included 8 governorates: (Daraa, Hama, Damascus, As-Suwayda, Latakia, Homs, Rif Dimashq, and Idlib). Many Syrian refugees in Jordan are from Daraa governorate for two reasons, which I highlighted in my Literature Review chapter: 1) the Syrian Uprising started in Daraa Governorate and thus the Daraa region was largely affected by the regime attack; and 2) Daraa is located north of Jordan, and this geographical proximity led to the fact that many Syrian refugees fled from Daraa to Jordan. I also interviewed two Syrian activists whose ancestors descendants of Hama City and their families came to Jordan as refugees during the 1980s after the Hama massacre that I discussed in chapter 2 (Historical Context of Syrian Activism).

In the selection process for interviewees, I employed two sampling techniques: purposeful sampling and network sampling. Both sampling techniques guided my focus on in-depth inquiries regarding a specific context that my research investigated. Purposive sampling and network sampling were utilized to identify participants. In a purposive sampling approach, the researcher identifies the characteristics of the people

that he/she is interested in learning about, and then he/she asks people with these characteristics to participate in the research. The process of identifying the sample's characteristics depends on the researcher's knowledge of his/her research question and the target group (Johnson, Burke, &Christensen, 2004). Using purposeful sampling, I recruited Syrian activists and human rights workers who are now based in Jordan, work with Syrian refugees, and promote refugee women's rights using ICTs.

The network sampling technique is similar to "snowball sampling". It is a process in which the researcher recruits additional participants with the help of previous participants. Each participant identifies additional persons with the characteristics that the research requires (Trotter, Schensul, Compte, Cromley, & Singer, 1999). I implemented network sampling, by having the recruited activists and refugee women recommend additional participants. This was helpful particularly in recruiting participants from hard-to-reach populations, such as refugees and activists who are skeptical about participating due to security reasons. Network sampling allowed me to establish trust with my research interviewees. I had two key informants from the Syrian activists community in Jordan who I knew from my previous work in the region. The first key informant is "Heba" a high-profile figure in the Syrian opposition who served, then, as director of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces' office in Jordan. I know "Heba" from her activist years in the Syrian women's rights movement before she became known as one of the leaders in the Syrian opposition. This connection allowed key activists to trust me and helped me gain access to the Zaatari Refugee Camp through the Qatar Red Crescent. The second key informant is "Sarah," a journalist and worker at

one of the international humanitarian organization inside the Za'atari Refugee Camp. I also know "Sarah" from her work in media and human rights in Syria and both of us were active volunteer members with the Syrian Women's Observatory. "Sarah" assisted me, especially before travelling to Jordan, to acquire basic knowledge about the field. These two key informants helped me identify the first couple of Syrian activist organizations in Jordan. Then I started networking with other persons and groups. I was searching for activist and NGO groups in cafes, theaters, restaurants, and in any other public place because I wanted to understand the political, social, and economic environment for Syrian activists. For example, I learned that Jadal, which serves as an Internet cafe, art gallery, and bookstore, is one of the main Jordanian destinations for all the Syrian young activist community inside Amman to meet and share experiences. Thus, through purposeful and network sampling efforts, I was able to work with seven activist organizations on the ground in Jordan.

Another purposeful and network sampling outcome was, as I mentioned above, through the Qatar Red Crescent, I got access to the Zaatari refugee camp, the largest refugee camp for Syrians fleeing the ongoing war. Because of this opportunity, I interviewed six women refugees residing inside the camp. Before travelling to Jordan, I was planning to interview only Syrian women in the Za'atari refugee camp as well as activists involved in the online campaigns. However, while I was interviewing activists and refugee women in the camp, I became aware of a more invisible refugee women category: those who have escaped Zaatari camp and are living in the outskirts of Amman and other Jordanian cities, sometimes without UNHCR documents and without any aid.

Therefor, I decided to include these women in my research and conducted 14 additional

interviews with Syrian refugee women. By the time I left Jordan, I had collected over

thirty hours of data generated from interviews with activists and refugee women.

For both the activist community and the refugee women's community my

interview protocol started with demographic questions as a way for warming up into the

interview process and also to help me classified my research participants according to

their gender, age, marital status, education, work, place of origin, and place of current

residence. After these demographic questions, I asked participants about their stories and

what brought them to Jordan. Then, my questions started to differentiate. With the

activist community, I was interested to learn about their motivations for involvement with

activism in general and women's rights activism in particular. My aim was to learn about

their opinions of the main women's rights violations in Syria before and after the uprising

as well as the main challenges that face Syrian refugee women in Jordan. I also asked the

activist about their knowledge regarding other activist organizations in the field of

women's issues inside Syria and in Jordan. My questions also included one about what

these activists think are the successful campaigns that address Syrian refugee women's

issues in Jordan to see if any one would name Refugees not Captives. Here, many

activists mentioned in their answers Refugees not Captives but not as a successful

example; they mentioned it with criticism. My concluding questions for the activist

community tackled the use of ICTs in their work and ended with their recommendations.

With the Syrian refugee women's community, I was interested to learn about

what they think are the main challenges that they faced in their lives based on their

gender as well as the challenges that they experienced during the process of becoming a refugee in Jordan. My questions aimed at discussing the women's relationship with the activist community. I also included questions about early marriage and forced marriage inside the Za'atri camp. My concluding question for the Syrian refugee women's community opened a space for them to identify the best ways in which activism campaigns can help them.

All thirty-three interviews were conducted in the Arabic language and in person. Thirty-two interviews were audio recorded because the consent of the informants was provided. Only one interview was not audio recorded because the participant felt uncomfortable with recording and instead asked me to write the answers. Although all participants are native speakers of Arabic, the thirty Syrian participants used different Syrian dialects depending on their place of origin, which included eight Syrian governorates, and the three non-Syrian participants used Jordanian dialects. I was able to understand all the different dialects for two reasons. First, my life interactions equipped me to understand different Syrian dialects: I grew up in a coastal small city (western Syria) and I used to spend every summer in my maternal grandparent's village in Idlib (northwestern Syria), then I studied and worked in Damascus where I lived with roommates from Daraa, As-Suwayda, Homs, and Rif Dimashq (Central and Southern Syria). Second, several factors allowed me to understand Jordanian dialects: I used to work with different Jordanian colleagues during my work years in the Middle East, and Jordanian dialects are similar to Southern Syrian dialects.

The place where the interviews occurred played a significant role in the quality,

transcribal ability, and length of all the interviews. The participants were the ones who

chose the place for interviewing. For the activist community, most activists asked me to

interview them at their work places or at their homes where they felt safe. Two activists

preferred to be interviewed at my apartment. I also interviewed two activists at Al-Balad

Radio[4]. Additionally two activists' interviews occurred at public cafes. For the refugee

women's community, interviews with women inside the Za'atri refugee camp occurred

inside the Qatar Red Crescent building. Interviews with women in the outskirts of

Amman occurred either at the Syrian Women Association in Jordan building or at the

refugee women's houses where I was accompanied by members of activist groups who

worked with these women. Generally, the interviews that occurred at houses or at Al-

Balad Radio station were longer than the interviews in public cafes and workplaces.

When interviews occurred at houses or at Al-Balad Radio station, the participants were

relaxed and, felt secure, and, therefore, they talked freely and longer. Thus, transcribing

such interviews was easiest. However, some of the interviews that took place in public

cafes and workplaces were more challenging for both the participants and me. The

interviews were accompanied by noise and disruption. The participants were less

comfortable, and in some cases they were distracted by the noisy surrounding

environment and the length of the interviews was shorter. Such interviews required extra

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[4] Al-Balad Radio (http://ar.ammannet.net/about-us) is a community radio station and independent media network. It is known for tackling human rights issues and supporting citizen journalism in Jordan. This radio station also used to broadcast a program called "Syrians Between Us," which was a cooperative effort between Jordanian journalists and Syrian citizen journalists to report about the challenges that Syrian refugees face in Jordan. A friend was working at this radio station, and through her I was welcomed to contact and interview two activists at Al-Balad Radio building in Amman.

efforts to accurately transcribe. Overall, interviews lasted between 25 minutes to three hours.

In order to analyze interview data, I first transcribed interviews using this online website (transcribe.wreally.com). Then, I coded them manually using office programs because I was not able to use qualitative research methods software such NVivo2® and ATLAS.ti. Such software is, according to my knowledge, not available in Arabic because Arabic follows Abjad script that is written from right to left, and most qualitative methods software are designed for languages that follows Latin script which is written from left to right. In coding my data, I used both focused coding and open coding (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). I used focused coding to sort my data according to the themes that I discussed in my literature review and my research questions. At the same time, I used open coding to include the themes that emerged from specific experiences of my interviewees that were not addressed in my literature review. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews as my main data collection method was rewarding in that it allowed me to have meaningful dialogue with my research participants. Most importantly, this method gave power to the interviewees to share their motivations, opinions, and experiences surrounding the Syrian conflict consequences in offline realities and representations in online spaces.

Ethnography: Participant Observation

Ethnography is "a scientific approach to discovering and investigating social and cultural patterns and meaning in communities, institutions, and other social settings"

(Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 1). Using an ethnographic approach helped

me to develop an understanding of the natural settings of the refugee women and

activists' lives in Amman city and in the Za'atari camp. With the understanding that an

ethnographic approach is "an active enterprise, and its activity incorporates dual

impulses" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 18), I used participant observation as a

technique during my data collection process in Jordan. I entered new settings as well as I

interacted and established "critical dialogical relations" with both the activist and the

refugee women's communities (Wind, 2008, p. 87). At the same time, I learned to

represent these experiences in written field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

Participant observation deepens the researcher's understanding of issues under study that

s/he might not acquire using other data collection methods such as interviews (Dowler,

2001). Thus, I conducted participant observation separately or along with interviews.

　　　　Upon my arrival in Jordan I became involved in participant observation activities.

Over my stay, I engaged in approximately 100 hours of participant observation. Before

visiting Za'atri camp or interviewing any person, an activist invited me to accompany

him to visit a refugee family from Dara'a that lives in a place close to the house in which

I was living. The refugee family was an extended family that included around 15

members, and they were able to leave Za'atri under the pretext that the grandmother was

blind and needed medical care in a hospital in Amman. They lived in an old two

bedrooms apartment.

　　　　Similar types of visits to other refugee families occurred several times. On the one

hand, the refugee families were always excited to host me and to share their stories

because of my own position as a Syrian citizen and human rights activist who opposes

the Syrian regime and currently resides in the United States to complete graduate studies.

On the other hand, the activists were thus encouraged to invite me and/or facilitate my

visits to other refugee families that they work with to show me their daily work routines,

ever-changing challenges, and life complications. During my first four days in Jordan, I

only used participant observation to get introduced to my research settings. I

accompanied activists who work with the Qatar Red Crescent to the Za'atari refugee

camp. My first impression was simply shock. The camp looked like a big city in the

middle of the desert. I met some women and children while attending some of he Qatar

Red Crescent activities such as handicraft workshops for refugee women and

psychological therapy through play/games sessions for children. Then, I learned about

and visited Za'atri market, which is market-like structures located on the camp's main

street where some refugees (who have money and connections) sell goods like

vegetables, meat, clothes, and cleaning equipment, among other things. After this first

visit to Za'atari camp, I became a volunteer with the Qatar Red Crescent. Through this

opportunity, I conducted all my interviews with refugee women inside Za'atari camp in

the safety of the Qatar Red Crescent building where I had the chance to observe some

aspects of daily work and life inside the camp. Additionally, through the help of two

female activists I had the chance to visit the Za'atari reception tent (later, in Mona's story,

she will describe her experience when she arrived at the reception tent). The reception

tent is a huge tent that all arriving refugees stay at once they arrive in Jordan. The

refugees might stay in the reception tent one, several, or many days until they can register as refugees and have been provided with their own tents.

The places where I conducted participant observation included workplaces, homes, public cafes, and also buses and cars when as a volunteer I accompanied organizations to the Za'atri refugee camp. In the outskirts of Amman, while guided by two activist informal organizations Molham Volunteering Team and Relief Syrian Refugees in Jordan, I visited three additional families. While interviewing a refugee woman in one of the poorest areas in Amman, I met two women from an Islamic feminist organization (Syrian Women Association in Jordan) who let me join them later for one of their field trips, and I used this opportunity for observation and not interviewing purposes. Through this field trip with the Syrian Women Association in Jordan's social research team, I visited seven houses.

My research questions guided my observation in relations to how different formal and informal organizations translate their online activism to the offline sphere and what are their strategies to meet the needs of Syrian refugee women and families. I also intended to observe and understand the daily life challenges of the refugee women. For example, many women and activists reported in their interviews how the lack of private kitchens and toilets is one of their main concerns inside the camps and/or one of the main reasons that drove them to leave the camp and not wish to go back. Many interviewees also reported about exploitation of street leaders who were men chosen by international organizations inside Za'atari to be in charge of each street of the camp. The mission of these leaders would be to help organizations to distribute daily food aid and materials

such as clothing, tents, caravans, and cleaning supplies. On my last day in Jordan, my networking efforts with one of my informants proved successful to guarantee me a visit into the camp as a volunteer with the first aid training team at Action Aid. Through this opportunity, I was able to observe an aspect of street leaders work as well as different styles of toilets and washrooms that are implemented in the camp.

I wrote field notes about my observation experiences and typed them, into my computer on a daily basis. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) emphasized that ethnographic writing goes beyond descriptive writing to become an interpretive process as the first act of textualizing. As a constructive process, ethnographic writing "always functions more as a filter than a mirror reflecting the 'reality' of events" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 46) because it is an intersubjective process through the lens of the researcher. Through ethnographic writing, I intended to transfer my experiences in the field study into text by making choices about how and what to write.

Using participant observation as a data collection method was worthwhile in that it allowed me to have deep understanding of my research participants' lives and work challenges and to document non-verbal information such as the participants' body language and tone of voices. This method allowed me to build genuine relationships and interactions with the research participants and to sharpen and develop my research skills. However, there were several limitations in using participant observation. One of the major limitations of participant observation stems from its time-consuming nature and from "its in-depth quality" (Dowler, 2001, p. 158) that make it difficult for the researcher to document everything s/he experienced or observed. Another limitation is "one of

danger to the group one is studying, by the revelation of intimate details of their lives that could be used against them, and of danger to oneself" (Dowler, 2001, p. 158). I will discuss further limitations in a following section about the research "Limitations, Challenges, and Reflexivity." Overall, the outcomes of using participant observation were extremely valuable as they granted me comprehension of aspects of participants' life and work that were neither gained through interviews nor through discourse analysis of online spaces.

Discourse Analysis

In my research, I used discourse analysis to examine how images and texts "construct specific views of the social world" (Rose, 2012, p. 195). I based my analysis on the understanding that discourses are "socially produced rather than created by individuals;" thus I was "concerned with the social modality of the image site" (Rose, 2012, p. 196). By social modality I refer to "range of economic, social, and political relations, institutions and practices that surround an image and through which it is seen and used" (Rose, 2012, p. 17). I employed discourse analysis to examine images and texts of the RNC campaign and of the global media. My concern was to analyze how these images and texts socially construct specific views of Syrian refugee women's issues in Jordan. For the RNC campaign, I analyzed official Facebook page, in particular the section "about" when an organization describe its mission and goals. I also analyzed an image that accompanied the organization's "statement number 2," which explains the organization decision in choosing "Refugee Not Captives" as a name for the campaign.

For the global media, I conducted a general Google search for the words "Syrian refugee women" in late May 2013, before travelling to Jordan to conduct my fieldwork. Most results, in English and Arabic, were about forced marriages and how Syrian people sell their daughters off for money (Anderson, 2013, May 28; BBC News, 2013, May 29; CBS News Online, 2013, May 14; Mark, 2013, May 22; McLeod, 2013, May 10; Ward, 2013, May 15). From these aforementioned citations I only include examples of articles from the mainstream global media websites such as the BBC, CBS, ABC, and The Atlantic. However, the results of this Google search in late May 2013 included articles ranging from mainstream Western media to regional and local Arabic websites and online journals. I chose three representative articles and one documentary of dominant representations of Syrian refugee women's issues and I analyze their visual and textual materials.

Challenges, and Reflexivity

In this section, I aim to uncover and reflect on the ways in which I influenced my research and vice versa. According to (Mohammad, 2001) reflexivity "must take the form of a particular spatiality, a Janus-like vision that looks inwards at the researcher and outwards toward the researcher's relationship with the researched in the field" (p. 104). Through the research process, I recognize that my own positionality as a Syrian woman and human rights activist affected my relationships with my interviewees and the types of limitations and challenges that I faced in comparison with a situation where a researcher from a different nationality and gender could have conducted this exact research. In the

following paragraphs, I will outline and reflect on the main challenges that confronted me and on my own positionality as a Syrian woman researcher.

The scope of this thesis pertains to the temporal and spatial context of conducting my fieldwork and analyzing media content. Thus my research covers issues connected to the period between the beginning of the Syrian Uprising in 2011 and the summer of 2013, and it is restricted to the spatial context of Jordan where my fieldwork and my media analysis centered around refugee women and activists who fled to or were residents in Jordan. Thus I acknowledge that my research primarily included issues related to Syrian refugee women who are victims and survivors of the Syrian regime atrocities as well as the activism and media coverage around this group's issues. I also acknowledge that the issues of the Syrian refugee women and internally displaced women from the regime side who are victims and survivors of the violations of the opposition armed fighters and Islamist Jihadist groups, like Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and al-Nusra Front (al-Qaeda's branch in Syria), are not covered and are invisible in this research. Similarly, this research does not tackle the issues of Syrian refugee women and activists in other neighboring countries of Syria such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq. A related limitation is that my thesis does not tackle directly Syrian refugee men's representations in online spaces and the challenges that they face in diaspora. However, refugee men's and women's representations overlap, and I point, on some occasions throughout the thesis, to dominant representations about Syrian refugee men and mention examples that illustrate how once in Jordan many of them become subject to shadow work exploitation.

The major challenges that I faced through the course of conducting and writing my thesis are the effects of the Syrian war on my family, friends, and people I know. Between 2011 and 2014, I lost many friends and family members. I lost some of these people literally because of killings, forced disappearance, or prison, but I lost others figuratively due to dissimilarities in political views of the conflict and militarization. From the start of the conflict, at first I supported a political solution through large political and economic reforms and then through fair peace negotiations between both sides. However, several friends, who support either the Syrian regime or the opposition, supported a military solution. Thus, they decided to discontinue their friendship with me. Furthermore, some of these "friends" sent me threats via social media or by commenting on some of my Arabic online articles, and this resulted in my decision to shutdown my original Facebook account that I have with my official name, and then I opened a new account using a fake name to be able to follow the online campaigns that I am studying and to communicate with activists and friends.

Another major challenge relates to my family's safety in Syria. When I decided to travel to Jordan, my parents felt very concerned not only for my safety but for their safety too. Through my interviewing process, my mother refused to speak to me for most of my stay in Jordan because she did not approve and agree with my views of the causes and consequences of the conflict. My extended family from my mother's side reside in North-West Syria, and their villages were occupied by then rising Islamist groups who evicted most of my mother's relatives from their houses and kidnapped many people including my aunt's husband because they were accused of supporting the Syrian regime. My aunt

herself became an internal displaced person with her four children after they were forced

under armed threat to leave their house without any possessions. Additionally, my

parents' residence in a tense neighborhood that borders the pro-regime part of the city

and the opposite-regime part of the city and the neighborhood were a scene of different

violence acts including a massacre of many people in May 2013. (There is no confirmed

number of total deaths, but the UN and the HRW estimate between 77 to 145 victims.)

Thus my parents requested that I not disclose detailed information about my identity in

Jordan that could affect them back in Syria, and I stayed mostly committed to this

promise during my fieldwork.

An additional challenge was to gain and establish trust with my research

interviewees. I mentioned in the previous section about "Interview" method that two key

informants from the Syrian activists community in Jordan helped me to found such trust

among the activists community, and then other activists helped me to create trust with the

Syrian refugee women community. Another person that helped me to earn my

interviewees' trust was my Jordanian roommate who work at Al-Balad Radio, and who is

famous among the Syrian activist community for her human rights activism and support

of the Syrian Uprising. In my pursue to preserve my research interviewees' trust, I made

myself ethically committed to not take photographs of them or of the places where they

live; in fact, I decided before travelling to Jordan to not even take my camera with me.

Moreover, through the process of interviewing and communicating with refugee women,

my own positionality as a Syrian woman and human rights activist, who left Syria in the

summer of 2012 and currently resides in the United States to complete graduate studies,

played a significant role in building trust to share mutual stories about surviving the conflict and fear of loved ones who still are in Syria.

I also should mention two further challenges. The first challenge is about the increasing hate speech against Syrians in Jordan. The second challenge is about the restrictions on travel for Syrians into and out of Jordan. The pro-Jordanian government media were dominated by media representations that promote hate speech against Syrians and blame the refugee community for the country's economic difficulties. These media channels portray Syrian refugees as criminals, rapists, or prostitutes. On many occasions, when I was taking a taxi, the taxi driver was listening to radio stations that broadcast programs that promote hate speech against Syrians. Such situations made me feel uncomfortable and concerned.

With a Syrian passport, my travels did not go smoothly. In Amman's airport, without my Ohio ID that proves my residence in the U.S, entering Jordan might have been impossible due to a Jordanian policy that restricts Syrians entrance to the country to entering through the refugee camps if Syrian citizens were not residents of foreign countries. On my way back to the U.S, my plane route was long with several stops (Amman-Cairo-Frankfurt) before arriving in the U.S. When I arrived in Cairo to transfer to the plane for Frankfurt, the Egyptian security officer held me and kept me out of the plane, and took my bags out of the plane because he claimed that there was a new resolution that ban Syrians entrance to Germany's airports without a visa. I showed the Egyptian security officer my U.S visa and other documents that prove my status as a graduate student in an American university. Then he called the German embassy in Cairo

inquiring about my situation. I was not allowed to enter the plane, until the embassy approved my situation.

Insider/outsider "refers to the boundary making an inside from the outside, a boundary that is seen to circumscribe identity, social position and belonging and as such marks those who do not belong and hence are excluded" (Mohammad, 2001, p. 101). During my fieldwork, I was perceived as an "insider," as a Syrian person who is part of the Syrian community in diaspora. Although I was also an "outsider" in some ways because I live and study in the U.S, the Syrian community did not judge me as "outsider" because they perceived my connection to the U.S is similar to their connection to Jordan, a transitional place until the hopeful return to Syria. For instance, when she agreed to be interviewed, Maimona (33, refugee woman resident in Amman's outskirts, mother of 7 children) told me: "When I know that you are a Syrian like me I feel secure and more encouraged to communicate with you. I felt more secure when the humanitarian workers inside the camp were Syrians like me." To maintain an insider status, I attempted to dress appropriately in a way that does not disturb the more religious people within the Syrian community in Jordan. However, sometimes the boundaries of the insider/outsider status were blurred. For example, during my interview with Ola (social worker at an NGO in the al--Hussein Camp), I felt that Ola, despite her Jordanian nationality, is an insider, and I, with my Syrian nationality, am an outsider. Ola's passion and commitment to serve the Syrian refugee community in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Amman, her modest office that always is open to the refugees, and the friendly equal relationships that she

builds with them, all that gave the impression that she is an "insider" more than many other Syrians by birth.

This research has impacted not only the activists and women who I worked with, but it has also impacted me as a researcher and as an activist. Many women were eager to share their stories and the details of their suffering as a way of healing. For example, in two of the six stories that I will be presenting in the section "Syrian Women's Stories, Concerns, and Surviving Strategies in Exile," Maha and Hala are the ones who invited me to interview them and listen to their stories. Many refugee women and activists expressed the desire to have their stories be documented and shared with a wider audience. In the course of conducting this research, the main lessons that I learned concern the suffering and courage of female heads of households and to question my own thinking and stereotypes even if they do not match media representations. Before conducting my interviews, as an educated and married woman, I imagined refugee women's suffering in two ways: either as political prisoners and activists who escaped the regime violations (such as the stories of Rim and Hala in a later section) or as refugee women from lower class and education levels who cross borders with their larger families (such as the story of Mona in a later section). However, while finalizing my fieldwork, I was struck by the invisibility of the stories of female heads of households (like Karima and Maha stories in a later section). Thus I was motivated to share stories that provide complex understanding of the diversity of refugee women's experiences in not only my thesis but in more accessible public websites such as the Women Rising Radio blog[5].

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[5] Please see this link http://www.womenrisingradio.com/explore/featured-essay/media-distort-the-reality-of-syrian-women-by-katty-alhayek/

This article was published in the summer of 2014 while I was an intern with the UN WOMEN in New York City and was read by UN colleagues who worked on the Syrian women's file. The article generated discussions within the UN WOMEN not only about media dominant representations of Syrian refugee women but also about similar representations by the UN. After that, I was invited to help the UN WOMEN Arab States team to develop recommendations regarding Syrian refugee women. My recommendations emphasized the importance of addressing and prioritizing the needs of Syrian refugee female heads of households.

      As a researcher, I feel honored that I had the chance to work in Jordan with activists and refugee women and to report their perspectives and stories. I also feel an academic ethical obligation to not portray women in this research as passive victims of circumstances. Whether women who I met did or did not fit, in some ways, with my expectations of the victim/survivor stereotype, I found in many of these women (and activists) a yearning for life to move out of passivity and with courage and honesty to empower themselves to enjoy life again. Such a desire for life motivated me to complete my thesis in a way that reflects the diversity of my interviewees' experiences in contrast to the media objectifying and dehumanizing representations.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND RELATED DISCUSSIONS

The Dominant Representations of the Syrian Refugee Women in Global Media

In this section, I will analyze four examples of global media's dominant representations of Syrian refugee women's issues in Jordan based on my late May 2013 Google search. The first article was published by BBC (McLeod, 2013, May 10) under the title "Syrian Refugees Sold for Marriage in Jordan," the second article was published by CBS (Ward, 2013, May 15) under the title "Syrian Refugees Sell Daughters in Bid to Survive," and the third article was published by ABC (Mark, 2013, May 22) under the title "Syrian Refugees Selling Daughters as Brides," and finally, I will examine a short documentary "Rape and sham marriages: the fears of Syria's women refugees" that was produced by the British Channel 4 News and broadcast on Mar 28, 2013.

The previous titles explicitly identify that Syrian families are selling/marrying their daughters off for money. These headlines tell the readers that, on the one hand, Syrian refugees are a backward people who sell their daughters at the first hardship they face, and on the other hand, Syrian refugee women are powerless victims of their uncivilized/barbaric society.

The BBC article "Syrian Refugees Sold for Marriage in Jordan" is divided to three sections. The first section tells the story of Kazal, a young Syrian refugee woman who had been sold for marriage: "Kazal says she is 18 but looks much younger. She has just got divorced from a 50-year-old man from Saudi Arabia who paid her family about US $3,100 (UK £2,000) to marry her. The marriage lasted one week" (McLeod, 2013, May 10, para. 2). The article illustrate that Kazal's eyes are blue to emphasize her

Caucasian race: "Her huge, blue eyes fill with tears when she talks about the marriage"

(McLeod, 2013, May 10, para.4). The second section of the BBC article is an interview

with Andrew Harper, the Representative of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Jordan

who expresses his feelings of disgust for people who are engaged in marriage for money

"I can't think of anything more disgusting than people targeting refugee women…You

can call it rape, you can call it prostitution, you can call it what you want but it's preying

on the weakest" (McLeod, 2013, May 10, para.10). The third section of the BBC article is

an interview with Um Mazed, a matchmaker who earns income by arranging marriages

between Arab men and Syrian refugee girls.

Figure 2: The BBC image of Kazal.

The CBS article "Syrian Refugees Sell Daughters in Bid to Survive" is divided

into two sections. The first section tells the story of Um Ma*j*ed, a matchmaker who

exactly can be identified as Um Mazed from the BBC article. Actually the article's writer

just changed one letter in the woman's name (z instead of j). The CBS article starts with

"Um Majed's cell phone rarely stops ringing these days. She calls herself a marriage

broker; in reality, she sells Syrian girls to men looking for brides at bargain prices"

(Ward, 2013, May 15, para.1). According to the article, Um Majed does not take any

responsibility for her actions, and she blame the girls' families for selling their daughters. The second section of the CBS article, tells the story of "Seventeen-year-old Aya fled Syria with her family just under a year ago. She was sold to a 70-year-old man from Saudi Arabia for $3,500. He left her after a month" (Ward, 2013, May 15, para.7). This description is exactly like the BBC article's description of Kazal except Aya is 17, not 18; was married off to a 70-year-old man, not a 50-year-old man; for $3,500, not $3,100; and the marriage lasted one month not one week. The woman in the image that is posted in the CBS article of Aya (Figure 4) matches the woman in the image of Kazal (Figure 3) that was posted in the BBC article, a niqabi blue-eyed young woman with exactly the same make-up on her eyes.

Figure 3: The CBS image of Aya.

The ABC article "Syrian Refugees Selling Daughters as Brides" is an interview with Andrew Harper, the UNHCR's representative to the Kingdom of Jordan, who was interviewed for the aforementioned BBC article. The article starts with an opening about how Syrian women are being sold in Jordan: "Reports are emerging in Jordan that some of the Syrian women and girls in refugee camps there are being sold as brides. In some cases it seems, it's their families who are selling girls aged 16 and younger for just a few

thousand dollars to men from Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States" (Mark, 2013, May 22, para.1). Later in the article when the writer asked Mr. Harper, "And now we're hearing stories that some women and young children indeed are being sold, they're ending up in arranged marriages, how is it working? What's happening?" Mr. Harper, the UNHCR's representative in Jordan, clarified that

> Sold is probably a very strong term. There is situations of dowry which is fairly traditional in many parts of the world and there can be agreements between families. But it is a situation where often the families will, due to their dire circumstances, see that they're not in a position to continue to care for the girl and they do get offers from other families or men who come along who sort of say 'look we wish to marry your daughter (Mark, 2013, May 22, para. 6).

What is described by Mr. Harper is a form of early marriage that commonly happens in rural communities in Syria, an issue that I will discuss later in this chapter in relation to the RNC campaign and refugee women's stories. However, the ABC article ignored the information that was provided by Mr. Harper and echoed, in its title and in its opening, the same dominant discourse that was manifested in the BBC and the CBS articles.

To illustrate the production process of similar dominant/stereotypical media materials, I will highlight the experience of Hadia, one of my interviewees, with the production of a short documentary by the British Channel 4 News. In March 28, 2013, the British Channel 4 News broadcasted a short documentary titled "Rape and sham marriages: the fears of Syria's women refugees." This documentary was one of the first international media materials that tackled the challenges those Syrian refugee women faced in Jordan. The Channel 4 News short documentary (10:26 min) starts with a close up of an elderly woman covered in black and crying. She is weeping in Arabic "I cry to god about Bashar" (the president of Syria). The voice of man who seems to be the

woman's son is heard asking in Arabic "please do not put this voice in the movie" (Long, 2013, Mar 28, 0:07 min); however, the producers ignored his request and started the documentary with the woman's weeping and provided no subtitles for the English viewer. At 00:08, the viewer starts to hear the female English narrator saying, "women of Syria weep for lost sons, but now they weep for themselves and their daughters too." Then, the movie shows images of the Za'atari refugee camp with a few narrating sentences about the location of the camp, the number of refugees in it, and how women face daily fear. At the 2:30 time frame in the video, the viewer sees an interview with a Syrian man who complains about how Arab men came asking for women to marry, and he expresses his anger, "What do they see us as? A market place for selling – liking selling sheep?!" (Long, 2013, Mar 28, min 2:40). At 3:03, we see a hijabi-closed woman in her 30s or 40s whose face is blurred saying: "The Saudi man said to me: 'I'll treat you like a princess' But I refused." The narrator confirms that the reason why this woman fled Za'atri and lives now in Amman is that her tent was burned after she refused several marriage proposals.

At 04:02 we hear mysterious Oriental music, and we see make-up products and wedding dresses in a shop market inside the Za'atri camp with the narrator saying that marriage is an "emerging business, especially pleasure marriage, where women are effectively bought for sex, but the wedding provides a religious seal of approval." Here, the camera focuses on a scene of an approximately one-year-old girl sleeping in the shop market among wedding products. At 4:30 the documentary interviews Um Majed, a marriage broker "who makes money offering up Syrian girls for sells" (and who can be

identified as Um Majed from the CBS article and as Um Mazed from the BBC article).

The dancing mysterious oriental music continues underneath an interview with a Suadi

man who expresses the economic benefits of marrying a Syrian woman with a small

dowry. At 5:54 we see an interview with Sheikh Abo Hamad, an imam (i.e. a worship

leader) of a mosque inside Za'atari camp who expresses his awareness of and refusal of

forced marriage for money between Syrian women and Arabian men. Then at 6:43 the

narrator in the documentary describes how people in Za'atari camp established watch

committees to protect women and interviews a young man who is a member of a watch

committee and he talks about the problem of Syrian women from the camp being

kidnapped for sexual purposes. At 7:19 the documentary shows a UNICEF school in

Za'atari camp focusing on how girls are dropping out of school. The documentary

concludes with brief description of forms of male refugee riots and states the need for the

UN and the Jordanian government to implement a security initiative in the camp. The

narrator also states that Syrian women feel forsaken by the world but especially by fellow

Arabs and raises a warning question about the future of "the women of the revolution."

An example that illustrates the production process of this documentary and

similar media materials is Hadia's (Director of an NGO) experience with the above

British Channel 4 News documentary. Hadia is a high profile women's rights activist in

Jordan, and the British Channel 4 team was in contact with her before they arrived in

Jordan to film their documentary. Once the British Channel 4 team arrived in Jordan, they

immediately came to Hadia's office and asked her to give them access to Syrian women

who are victims of forced and early marriages that are staying at Hadia's organization's

shelter in order to interview them. Both Hadia and the Syrian women at the refused such

interviews. Hadia said:

> The thing is that they said they want to investigate the challenges that face Syrian
> refugee women in Jordan, but in fact all their questions were about early and
> forced marriages and prostitution. They went to the Za'atari camp and filmed
> there. Then they came again to interview me. I talked for more than one hour
> about what I believe are the main challenges of Syrian refugees in Jordan.
> However, when they broadcasted the film my perspective and interview was
> excluded from the final film. I was very shocked not only because they excluded
> my entire interview but also because they reduced the documentary time from one
> hour to just 10 minutes in order to serve their purpose to focus on forced marriage
> for money. But even in those 10 minutes, they did not success in their goals
> because most people who they interviewed expressed their refusal of forced
> marriage for money. The issue is that the film just focused on how individual
> Syrians marry their daughters off for money and how Syrian women find
> themselves victims of trafficking. But there is no mention of transnational human
> trafficking criminal organizations that are involved in trafficking in refugee
> women in Syria, Jordan, and other parts of the world.

Hadia further explained her point of view:

> I'm against any report or interview that did not serve the refugees. I wish that the
> British Channel 4 team had produced their documentary in a way that put
> pressures on the British government and the international community to send
> more aid! Or in a way that demonstrated the suffering of Syrian refugees from
> extreme cold in the winter for example. They tackled early and forced marriage
> for money out of context! This phenomenon exited before the war and it will
> continue after it because it relates to poverty! The problem is extreme poverty not
> refugee families!

Hadia's experience with the British Channel 4 News documentary and how her

perspective and interview was excluded from the final material shows how media

producers filter any materials that challenge the stereotypical content that they aim to

deliver to the Western audience.

In the above four media materials, the suffering of Syrian refugee women is

reduced to involuntary marriage in exchange for money, and the causes of this suffering

are blamed on both the women's backward greedy families and on the Arabian men who are sexually obsessed with buying Syrian women. In these media materials Syrian refugees were portrayed as a homogeneous group of powerless, victimized women and oppressive men who sell their daughters as commodities for rich men. These dominant dichotomous representations focus on the individual level of action and on blaming the Muslim culture for forced marriages. This stereotyping not only differentiates Syrians from other societies but also ignores the structural violence that refugees face in both Syria and Jordan and the power relations that rule their lives. In the next sections, I will show that, similar to global media, the RNC campaign team used dominant, stereotypical representation to generalize about Syrian women and Arab men. I will also demonstrate according to my interviewees that there are a few cases of forced marriage in exchange for money between Syrian women and Arab men; however, Syrian activist informal organizations are developing ways to overcome such challenge especially that many refugee families become more protective of their daughters after arriving in Jordan.

The Refugees not Captives Campaign Representations

Using Facebook, YouTube, and other communication technologies, in September 2012, a group of young Syrian activists launched a campaign called Refugees not Captives (RNC). The campaign introduces itself as a "campaign to protect Syrian women" (Lajiaat Lasabaya, 2012a, para. 1). According to the RNC official Facebook page, they have three main goals. First, raise awareness among the girls' families about the risks of forced marriage in exchange for money, even though Syrians generally refuse

such marriage offers. Second, communicate with those Arab and Arabian Gulf youth who may have good intentions and could be mobilized to legally criminalize and socially shame such marriages. Third, communicate with women's and human rights organizations in all Arab countries, with intellectual elites around the world, and also with businessmen to encourage them to carry out their humanitarian and ethical role by establishing funds to support marriages only between Syrian men and Syrian women (Lajiaat Lasabaya, 2012a, para. 7 - 9). These three goals indicate that the campaign members not only minimize Syrian women's problems into forced marriage in exchange for money but also they perceive forced marriage as a communication problem that can be solved by raising awareness among Syrian families and by communicating with elitist Arab youth, human rights workers, intellectuals, and businessmen.

Activists who launched the campaign emphasized their secular depoliticized identity and justified their efforts as a "call for the humanitarian and national cause that concerns us" (Lajiaat Lasabaya, 2012a, para. 3). The cause is, according to the campaign, to speak up against forced marriages in exchange for money between Syrian women in Jordan's refugee camps and Arab men from Jordan and Arabian Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia. The campaign is explicitly othering Arabian Gulf people and describing them as "sexist sick teenagers who are obsessed with sex" (Lajiaat Lasabaya, 2012a, para. 5). Furthermore, the campaign generalized to accuse Arab men who call for marriage to Syrian women of racism because they use cultural and religious discourse to encourage marriage of Syrian women (Caucasian by race) as a solution to help refugee Syrian families affected by war. However, the campaign indicates that such discourse is

racist because there were no similar conversations about marriage between Arab men and Somali and Sudanese women (African by race) during the times of the Somali and Sudanese wars. The campaign contextualizes itself within the Syrian Uprising by connecting their own campaign's cause with the Syrian Uprising's logo "Since the beginning [of the rise of the revolution] our slogan was 'The Syrian people will not be humiliated,' the current situation will not force us to accept a position in which we and our women and daughters become subjects of dirty and cheap conversations that violate the woman's value [*sic*]" (Lajiaat Lasabaya, 2012a, para. 6). The above-mentioned description of the RNC campaign discourse demonstrates that the campaign's team misrepresented, on the one hand, Syrian women as a homogeneous group of victimized powerless women, and on the other hand, Syrian men as oppressive men who sell their daughters as commodities for rich Arabian men.

Figure 4: The image that accompanied "statement number 2."

The RNC stereotypical representations of Syrian women and Arab men are also manifested through the visual images that the RNC's mangers utilized in the campaign. For example, on September 2, 2012, the campaign management team posted "statement number 2" explaining why they chose "Refugee Not Captives" as a name for the campaign (Lajiaat Lasabaya, 2012b). The image (Figure 2) that accompanied the text portrayed a faceless profile of a woman and under the woman's head there are just two words "Refugees/ Lajiaat in Arabic" and "Not Captives/ Lasabaya." The faceless profile space of the woman and the words "Not Captives/ Lasabaya" are in red to emphasize the powerless victim status of the Syrian woman. The abstract image of the woman's hair and the word "Refugees/ Lajiaat in Arabic" are in black to symbolize the flowing passivity and the femininity of the weak state of being a refugee. The text of "statement number 2" defended and explained why the RNC team chose "Captives/ Sabaya" in the campaign's title. Here it is useful to mention that the Arabic language, like the French language, includes gender for all nouns and most pronouns. Sabaya "Captives" is a noun that was used in ancient Arab history to describe the female spoils of war who, based on their gender, were enslaved by the winners of any conflict. Sabaya "Captives" have historical sexual connotations that the women were enslaved in a war context for sexual purposes. This word is not used in contemporary Arabic language similar to how words such as "Negro" are not acceptably used in the American context after the success of the civil rights movement. In "statement number 2", the RNC campaign management team explained that they chose the word Sabaya "Captives" to, first, "cause shock for all people who feel empathy with the Syrian people", second, "to fight those who want to

marry Syrian women in exchange for money" under the pretext of rescuing them from being refugees. In fact, the RNC team stated that these marriages are enslaving women in the same way as if they were spoils of war. I recognize the good intentions in the RNC campaign discourse when the RNC team claims to defend the Syrian women's rights in marriage, and when they ask Arab men to donate money to build schools for young girls instead of marrying them off. However, the above analysis of the camping's discourse demonstrated how the RNC team used dominant/stereotypical representation to generalize about Syrian women and Arab men. Syrian refugee women were robbed of their agency and constricted to a representation of a single faceless victim/woman. More importantly Syrian women's concerns and stories were not only minimized to forced marriage in exchange for money, but also there was exaggeration of the volume of the forced marriage phenomenon and ignoring of the power relations that rule refugee families.

Activist Community Against the Refugees not Captives Campaign

The Syrian activist community I worked with in Jordan is generally aware of each other's work, and, in some cases, they network and cooperate with each other in implementing humanitarian activities such as distributing aid, relocating people outside the Za'atri camp, and collecting aid money for the most urgent medical cases. In short, many of these activists have more awareness of, affiliation with, or directly work with different activist organizations both formally and informally at the same time.

When I asked the activists about the most famous campaign regarding Syrian refugee women in Jordan, they named Refugees not Captives and expressed negative attitudes toward this campaign. The five main reasons for these attitudes were: first, the campaign is limited to online activism with relatively no offline presence in Jordan; second, the campaign misrepresented, on the one hand, Syrian women's realities and needs, and on the other hand Jordanian people; third, the campaign distorted the original meaning of the Syrian Revolution; fourth, the campaign participated in supporting the Syrian regime's propaganda; and fifth, the campaign, similar to global media, invisibilized the diverse roles and stories of Syrian refugee women minimized Syrian women's concerns and suffering to only forced marriages and other similar issues.

Disconnection between Online/Offline Activism

The disconnection between online activism and offline activism in relation to Syrian refugee women's issues in Jordan is significant. The Refugees Not Captives campaign's main activity is in the online sphere where their website discusses and claims to deal with Syrian refugee women's issues; however, the campaign's work is generally not translated to the offline sphere. In contrast, informal organizations such as the Molham Volunteering Team and Relief Syrian Refugees in Jordan deal directly with refugee women's needs, concerns, and realities in their offline activities, and in their online activism do not publicly discuss refugee women's issues, even though they have Facebook public group pages. [6] The following activists' quotes not only criticized the

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[6] Even in Syria there is no feminist organization similar to what is known in the west, activist groups who deal with women and gender issues identify themselves as women's rights activists.

Refugees not Captives campaign's disconnection from offline activism, but also some

of them suggested possible ways to help Syrian refugee women:

> There were no campaigns offline or online regarding Syrian refugee women. I do not like to talk about the Refugees not Captives campaign because it's meaningless and it had received a lot of attention by people criticizing it. There were no other campaigns! The Syrian woman did not receive the actual media attention that she deserves; there is no coverage or attention on what she wants and how she should deal with her children! As a young Syrian woman who went through a lot of things- my work in the revolution, my escape from the security forces after a demonstration, my defending of my male friend while he was being arrested- when I arrived in Jordan's camp, I was psychologically devastated and I did not find the support that I was in need of, and now this is what other Syrian women go through! (Rim, 26, Syrian activist and volunteer in different humanitarian organizations).

> The Refugees not Captives campaign did not base their work on either gender perspective or on legal, social or psychological perspectives. They talked about a problem and tried to solve it through Facebook! They did not work on the ground to solve the problem! For example, what I think would stop refugee women from engaging in real prostitution or masked prostitution, such as marriage with Arabian men for money, is to secure a job for them. I suggested the Syrian kitchen project to help women make money while they are at home taking care of their children (Shadia, 30, Syrian activist group leader of Syrian activist informal organization).

> The main campaign about Syrian refugee women is Refugees not Captives. This campaign was launched to coincide with news about marriages for money between Syrian women and Arab men. However, this campaign does not have any presence on the ground, like in the Za'atri camp. It is just a hypothetical campaign. Maybe it has a role in raising awareness about forced and early marriages, but I prefer to support campaigns that participate in social change. So I do not support this campaign because it is only hypothetical (Sarah, 28, a Syrian female activist and worker at international humanitarian organization that operate inside the Za'atri camp).

> I was in Syria when I first heard about forced marriages for money inside the Za'atri Camp and that there is a campaign called Refugees not Captives working against that! I feel like the campaign participated in increasing not decreasing the problem because they put it in the spotlight without working on the ground to solve it (Riham, 24, a Syrian female activist, a former detainee in Syrian prisons).

> Refugees Not Captives campaign is the reason for all this media fuss. When it was launched, many people called me and were panicking that Syrian women are being sold in Jordan…For me, the role of social media is in helping people; exposing corruption and stealing aid; calling for the closing of Za'atri; advocating for refugee Syrians' rights of free movement, work, and education inside Jordan. These are the issues that I believe we should use social media for. Other issues like the theme of Refugees Not Captives campaign is not for serving people but for bringing fame for its organizers. I wish to see the Refugees Not Captives campaign organizers in Jordan, and I want them to come and see our work and services for the refugees. Most of the organizers are based in Arab Gulf countries; I don't understand how someone is in the Gulf and knows what is happening in Jordan (Hadia, 56, Director of an NGO).

Rami (47, an independent activist) who is the only representative of the Refugees not Captives campaign in Jordan admitted that the RNC campaign is a "theoretical not practical campaign." He saw the campaign on Facebook, and the campaign's organizer communicated with him to request that he be a representative of their work in Jordan. Rami disclosed:

> Since I became the representative of this campaign we just implemented one activity. We had distributed gifts for the girls who are about to get married. The girls get introduced to the Refugees not Captives campaign through brochures placed in the gifts, and this brochure introduces women to marriage, gives the 'right' age to get married, explains marriage under Islam, and states women's rights and duties in marriage. This brochure was amazing! The guys design it in Saudi Arabia and send it here where we print it and distribute it!

Rami's comments confirm RNC online activism's messages and goals that I have mentioned previously. The campaign minimizes Syrian women's problems into forced marriage in exchange for money. They perceived Syrian women's suffering as a communication problem that can be solved by raising awareness among Syrian families.

While the campaign's activism is generally limited to the online sphere, their single offline activity in Jordan was compatible with their online activism. In their

single offline activity in Jordan, the RNC distributed gifts for some girls who are about
to get married to introduce them to the RNC campaign and other marriage-related issues
such as women's rights and duties. This offline activity does not even aim to raise
awareness about forced marriage, but instead is just limited to theoretical "raising
awareness" about marriage in general. The aforementioned comments and the previous
analysis of the RNC campaign confirm that this campaign perceived Syrian women's
concerns and suffering as caused by just cultural reasons that can be "fixed" through
communication. Such stance ignores the political and economical relational issues and
the intersectionality of class, gender, education, and region of origin as causes of
structural inequalities and suffering for Syrian refugees in Jordan. I will analyze and
explain these structural inequalities and how they impacted the ways Syrian women
experienced the process of becoming a refugee in Jordan later in a section devoted to
my interviews with Syrian refugees and their resulting stories.

Misrepresentation of the People, Distortion of the Revolution, and a Service for the Regime

Even though, the Refugees Not Captives Campaign claims a position in the
context of the Syrian Uprising, they ignored the complexity of the social movement of
the Syrian Uprising and how in fact women and men participated in this movement
searching for both collective and individual identity as well as aiming for social and
political change. The "Refugees not Captives" campaign discourse essentialze Arab
cultural and invisiblize forms of solidarity that emerged, especially, at the beginning of

the refugee crisis between Jordanian people and Syrian refugees. The activists who I

interviewed criticized the campaign starting with its discourse and ending with its

implications on the ground. The following comments illustrate activists' views in this

regard. The first activist's view about the RNC campaign is:

> The revolution in Syria is a civil revolution in which all Syrians men and women participated. When they use just these words "refugee women" without advocating for refugee men, they deny the meaning of the Syrian Revolution. The mistake of this campaign is their negative language. When you say Refugees not Captives (Lajiaat La sabaya in Arabic), the word "not" (La) will be forgotten in your unconscious and what will remain is the word "captive" (sabaya) a powerless cuffed woman. This representation was not accurate and it caused for us, as a Syrian community within Jordan, tensions in our relationships with Jordanians. At the beginning, the Jordanian people opened their houses for Syrians for free in solidarity with our revolution; however, members of Refugees not Captives campaign ignored such stories and made a mistake by launching the campaign. And who are these campaign's people? They are not in Jordan; they are talking about Jordan from outside Jordan! I believe that the Syrian regime is taking advantage of this campaign. From the beginning of the revolution the regime accused us of being terrorists and Jihadists. The regime said that women's role in the revolution is Jihad Al-Nikah[7]. RNC support of such propaganda and the regime's media used the campaign as an example of how the revolution violated women's rights (Rahem, 34, a male activist and expert at an international organization).

The second activist's perspective about the RNC campaign is:

> Refugees not Captives campaign participated in promoting the problem that they claimed to tackle! Now everyone thinks that a Syrian woman is a prostitute! We participated in the revolution seeking for freedom and dignity including my personal freedom as a woman. These were the reasons of our revolution! (Hala, 21, a female Syrian activist and former detainee in Syrian prisons).

The third and forth activists' perspectives about the RNC campaign are:

> I am honestly against the Refugees not Captives campaign; because maybe there are 10 or 20 cases of what might be described as 'Sabaya/ Captives.' This

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[7] Jihad Al-Nikah (in Arabic) is Sexual Jihad, which refers to a type of Jihad that Sunni women participate in by temporarily marrying male fighters to provide sexual comfort roles to them while the male fighters work toward establishing the Islamic rule. However, there is no conforming evidence that this type of marriage occurs in the context of the Syrian conflict.

campaign exaggerated the problem and presented a negative image of Syrian refugee women. Now most people think that all Syrian refugee women are 'Sabaya/ Captives.' Instead of this media fuss, in our team, we have a group of young female activists who work on psychological support of refugee women who were victims of violence (Hatem, 22, Syrian activist and founder of a Syrian activist informal organization).

We had early marriages, prostitution, and similar problems back in Syria for decades! But media did not talk about such issues that much! Now all media talk is about these issues. Why? Because both the Syrian regime and the Jordanian government take advantage of campaigns like Refugees Not Captives and similar media coverage. The Jordanian government encourages the media to cover and disseminate such stories about Syrian women because the government wants to oppress demonstrations in Jordan by scaring Jordanians with the idea that if they had an uprising, the destiny of Jordanian women would be prostitution and marriages for money with Arab Gulf men! The Syrian regime's media disseminates such news about refugee women to show that women enjoyed their rights under the Syrian regime protection but now as refugees they are very humiliated and being sold in neighboring countries… (Sarah, 28, a Syrian female activist and worker at international humanitarian organization that operate inside the Za'atri camp).

These comments illustrate fundamental critiques from the Syrian activist community in Jordan of the RNC discourse.

My interviewees shared an emancipatory meaning of the revolution for both Syrian men and women, and this meaning constructed their collective action first in Syria and then in Jordan. Thus, they perceived the RNC campaign as a service for the Syrian regime's propaganda that distorted and denied any emancipatory nature of the Syrian Revolution and instead claimed that it is a masculine terrorist movement that aimed at the destruction of Syrian state and society and endangered women's and monitories' rights. The interviewees emphasized the agency of both Syrian women and men in participating in the revolution that aimed at equality for all citizens regardless of their gender. The interviewees criticized misrepresentation of Syrian women in the

RNC campaign and use of "negative language" that depicted Syrian refugee women as powerless "cuffed" victims and as just subjects of sexual exploitation by men. They also criticized the misrepresentation of Jordanian people who practiced different forms of solidarity with Syrian refugees and invisibility of such forms of solidarity. In contrast, Jordanian families, especially Jordanian men, were portrayed as "predators" looking for cheap marriages. The discursive implications of RNC's discourse is illustrated in Rahem's comment that explicitly tied the RNC's messages with Syrian regime propaganda about Jihad Al-Nikah, and in Hala's comments about the emergence of a stereotype that portrayed Syrian women as prostitutes.

The interviewees did not deny that there are limited cases of forced marriage for money among the Syrian refugees in Jordan; however, they connected such cases to preexisting conditions in Syrian society, especially in the rural communities, where early marriages and/or forced marriages are common for different social, economical, and cultural conditions. The following comments explain this idea from the perspectives of Syrian activists who were directly working on the ground to fight against such early marriages and/or forced marriages phenomenon in Syria and then in Jordan. The first comment is:

> In the Refugees Not Captives campaign, our problems and concerns as people who were forced to be displaced in and out of their country have been reduced to forced marriage for money in the Zaatari refugee camp! We had in some communities in Syria few cases of forced and early marriages before the Syrian Revolution. We were working with these communities to end these marriages and support girls' education as an alternative choice (Sarah, 28, a Syrian female activist and worker at international humanitarian organization that operate inside the Za'atri camp).

The second and third comments reinforce this view:

> When Refugees not Captives was launched, it was unfair to the respect for Syrian women, men, and families. The problem is with generalizations. If a family marries their daughter off for money, this does not mean that all refugee families do that. I worked with activist groups to follow and document similar cases. We documented around 10 cases in Za'atri camp and we started to communicate with the families to help them solve their economic hardship. Now there are almost no forced marriage cases in exchange for money. The Jordanian government also helped us and put many legal restrictions on Syrian women's marriage in order to legalize the process as much as possible (Rula, 33 years old, a Syrian media activist resident in Amman).

> Some people's activism is just on Facebook! How does Refugees Not Captives campaign work to alleviate early and forced marriages? Through Facebook, which most refugees have no access to? I'll tell you how we work to alleviate early and forced marriages! We attract adolescent refugee girls and register them in schools and follow up with them. This is what protects girls! If a girl's family wants to marry her off, we go and talk with the family and convince them that it is better for their daughter's future to go to school instead of get married early… (Hadia, 56, Director of an NGO).

The above comments illustrated the context and volume of the forced marriage phenomenon among Syrian communities, especially the economic conditions among poor communities.

The interviewees also showed how the generalized representations of the RNC campaign ignored the preexisting conditions of forced marriage, which had existed in Syria prior to the Syrian Revolution. The following comments further show that forced marriage in exchange for money as was depicted in RNC is limited, but the practice of early marriage was common in Syrian rural and/or conservative communities before the Syrian Revolution, and it continues to be common among the lower class of Syrian refugee communities in Jordan:

> Early marriage is a problem that we originally had in Syria, and we were working to alleviate it before the Syrian Revolution. Many Syrian families practice early marriage not because they want to sell their daughter, but because

it has been an old tradition, especially in rural communities. We did several campaigns to raise awareness about the riskiness of early marriage among refugees. But, with increasing poverty and hardship, some families are continuing to marry their daughters early because they cannot afford to feed them. Generally such marriages occur among the Syrian refugee communities (Heba, 38, a Syrian women's rights activist).

Back in Syria, women in rural areas suffered more than their counterparts in the cities; rural women were more likely to drop out of school and get married early. Early marriage was a problem before the uprising and it is still a problem along with related issues such as early pregnancy and childbearing as well as low birth spacing (Rim, 26, Syrian activist and volunteer in different humanitarian organizations).

Early marriage is a phenomenon that existed in Syria before the uprising including marriages for money to Arab men. Inside the Za'atri Camp, I noticed that the early marriage age of girls dropped from 15 to 13. I talked with many refugee mothers about why they are marrying their daughters too early! They answered that the majority of such marriages happened among Syrians who are tied by family or tribal relations. The reasons are to protect the family honor and/or to receive more aid. For example, if a family consisting of 5 members marry off two girls over 13; then, this family will start to receive aid as three separate families instead of just one (Sarah, 28, a Syrian female activist and worker at international humanitarian organization that operates inside the Za'atri camp).

Furthermore, the interviewees reported that the campaign, similar to global media, invisibilized the diverse roles and stories of Syrian refugee women, and minimized Syrian women's concerns and suffering to only forced marriages for money and other similar issues such prostitution:

Global media published many exaggerations about Syrian refugee women in Jordan. Most news stories talked about forced marriage for money. Some news stories even claimed that there is a brothel market inside the Za'atri Camp. Of course there might be some cases of brothels inside the camp. The camp includes more than 130,000 persons. It is an entire community and like any other community you can find all types of people. Some people who were working inside Syria in prostitution-related professions moved to Za'atri and Jordan. So when global media and campaigns like Refugees not Captives focused only on forced marriage and prostitution, I do not just consider that unfair, I consider that lying. I did my own investigation, and I discovered that

the global media stories and the campaign -all of that- connects to one person who helps in facilitating journalists and connecting them with the same woman who tells them all the exact same story (Heba, 38, a Syrian women's rights activist).

The media always [sic] disseminates stories such as forced marriage and rape of women among refugees; in contrast, stories about women's political participation and their role in the Arab revolutionary movement are total invisible (Ola, 55, social worker at an NGO in the al-Hussein Camp).

Honestly, I believe that human rights and women's rights become lies and games in the hands of media. Media exaggerate by focusing on some issues of minorities or human rights for sensationalism! Many things on the ground are absent! For Syrian women's rights, all media outlets are talking about forced marriages stories! But no one is talking about other problems that refugee women face. For example, in the Za'atri Camp there are more than 6,000 pregnant women; however, no one is talking about their suffering and their daily challenges (Mohammad, 24, Syrian activist, resident in Jordan before the Syrian uprising).

I believe that all this media focus on forced marriages is to cover the failure of the international community and the regional governments to protect the lives of the Syrian people. This media focus makes both the Syrian people (who marry off) and the Jordanian people (who marry to) look like they are responsible for the Syrian misery. I am not denying that there are cases of marriages between young Syrian women and Jordanian men and that there is some Islamist propaganda to promote such marriages. But personally, most Syrian refugee families I worked with are very skeptical about marrying their daughters off to non-Syrian men (Hadia, 56, Director of an NGO)

I wish that the media report what is really happening! It always reports and exaggerates individual cases out of context! They just talk about rape and forced marriages and everything that makes women look weak! Syrian women were active participants in the Syrian Revolution and many women were leaders in the peaceful demonstrations… (Rudina, 30, an Islamic feminist activist and project manger at Syrian activist informal organization)

In this section, I analyzed the dominant discourse of the RNC campaign and I examined how the campaign is limited to online activism with relatively no offline presence in Jordan. I also showed how the campaign misrepresented, on the one hand, Syrian women's concerns and needs, and on the other hand, Arab men responses to the

Syrian crisis. I demonstrated how the RNC's campaign distorted the original emancipatory meaning of the Syrian Revolution and participated in supporting the Syrian regime's propaganda. Finally, I highlighted the preexisting conditions of early and/or forced marriage among Syrian refugees and how activists worked to help end such a phenomenon through education, law reform, and helping lower class communities to improve their economic situation. In the next chapter, I will analyze global media representations of Syrian refugee women in Jordan, and I will show how the RNC campaign mirrors the same elements of the Western hegemonic essentialzing discourse about Eastern culture in representing Syrian women and Arab men.

Syrian Women's Stories, Concerns, and Surviving Strategies in Exile

In the previous section, I have analyzed how the RNC campaign and global media minimized Syrian women's concerns and suffering to forced marriages in exchange for money between Syrian women in Jordan's refugee camps and Arab men from Jordan and Arabian Gulf countries. Such representations invisibilized the political and economical relational issues as well as structural inequalities that impacted the ways Syrian women experienced the process of becoming a refugee in Jordan.

This section aims to make visible untold stories of Syrian women fighting for freedom and surviving the war. In this section, I argue that there is no singular category that fit all "Syrian refugee women" in contrast to the dominant representations of global and social media. I narrate and analyze six stories of Syrian refugee women who represent different marginalized groups, based on the intersection of their class, age,

education, family statue, and place of origin. The six stories of Syrian refugee women

include: Rim (26) an activist who descended from a middle class Sunni Damascene

family; Karima (40) is a housewife from a lower class Sunni Homsi family; Mona (30) is

a warrior from a small village in Dara'a Governorate; Sima (52) is a fashion and crafts

designer and trainer from a small city in Rif Dimashq Governorate; Hala (21)is an

activist and citizen journalist from a Damascene upper middle class family; and Maha

(40) is a housewife from a poor small village in Dara'a Governorate. The analysis of

these stories highlights what does it mean to be a refugee women in Jordan, and how

online media representations are disconnected from the offline realities of refugee

women.

Rim's Story

Rim (26) is a representative of students and young people who participated in the

social movements of the Arab Spring. When the Syrian Uprising arose, Rim was

completing her post-graduate studies at Damascus University. She immediately engaged

in organizing peaceful demonstrations, citizen media activism, and humanitarian aid

activities to regions under attack and siege by the Syrian regime forces. Her middle class

Sunni Damascene family knew about her activism, and they supported her choices

regardless of the fact that none of her parents are politically active. Rim is a middle child

in a family consisting of five children, two boys and three girls. In April 2012, Rim and

her activist friends were about to drive back to their homes after a successful

demonstration in Damascus City. While Rim and her male friend entered the car, Rim

looked back toward her two female friends to check why they did not get into the car yet.

She saw her two friends dragged away by their hair by a police officer. It was a decision

of life or death. Helping the two girls meant not only to endanger themselves but also

their families and networks. Rim's friend drove away. During that month most of Rim's

network who worked in media and humanitarian activism were arrested. The security

forces twice broke into her parents' house, where she lived, searching for her. At that

time Rim lived with the daily challenge of communicating with her friends' families to

inform them that their children were arrested or died under torture. Rim's last day in

Syria was May 8, 2012. She left Syria irregularly:

> I could not stay any longer! I considered staying inside Syria a selfish decision
> that put my whole family under great danger. My family was very worried when I
> was living my every day hiding in different places. They tried to check whether I
> can leave the country regularly, but my name was publicized on the border
> checkpoints in the Syrian regime wanted-people lists. Two days before the day I
> escaped Syria an activist friend of mine was arrested while she was trying to
> regularly leave Syria to go to Lebanon. I contacted some activists in Dara'a and
> went there through side-roads to avoid the regime's checkpoints alongside the
> main roads.

> Rim stayed in Dara'a for four hours. She was alone. She did not know any one.

The group she escaped with included mostly families, with many single mothers and their

children. Rim said, "the mothers tried to look strong and relaxed; they did not want their

children to feel fear and insecurity." The group started their trip in the dark guided by

moonlight. There were a few men from the Syrian Free Army walking with them for

protection. It was Rim's first trip outside Syria. Rim described her feelings:

> It was a nightmare! I wished I could wake up and see myself in my house among
> my mother and siblings! Or in my bedroom looking at Qasioun Mountain! We
> were walking in orchards not knowing on what we were stepping. The Jordanian
> Army was at the border to help us cross into Jordan. There was a small hill that

we had to climb, and a Jordanian soldier held out his hand to help us up it. When the soldier extended his hand, I wanted to pull my hand back! I wanted to go back! But I did nothing! I knew I must save my life and not risk my family's safety!

Similar to all other refugees, when Rim entered Jordan, she submitted her Syrian ID card but she kept her passport because she was planning to leave Jordan to go to Bahrain with her elder brother who works there and would come to Jordan to meet her. At 4 a.m Rim arrived at Al-Bashabsha Camp[8]. She was "psychologically devastated." She bought a mobile phone card and called her brother. He had come from Bahrain, but could not come immediately and pick her up. Her brother did not know when she would arrive, and now asked her to spend the night at the camp and said that he would come to meet her in the morning.

Rim was both the only Damascene person in the refugee camp and the only single young woman. The other refugees were either from Dar'a or from Homs. To make Rim feel secure, a woman from Homs invited her to join her and her children in their room. Rim slept in the Homsi woman's room, "I slept very deeply! I do not think I have slept so deeply since that night! I was so tired and sad wishing to go back to Damascus." The rest of Rim's family, her parents and siblings, followed her to Jordan. Now, all of them live in a rented apartment in the suburbs of Amman. When I interviewed Rim in June 2013, she had been in Jordan for one year:

> One year goes so fast! I surpassed my psychological devastation through volunteer work! I feel that volunteer work filtered my soul! When I help someone

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[8] This camp is the first refugee camp for Syrians in Jordan. A family called Al-Bashabsha donated buildings they own for Syrian refugees. With the increasing flow of Syrian refugees, the UN took over operation of the small camp. Then, the UN established the Za'atari camp to accommodate the continuing influx.

to smile, I feel positive energy and that I am continuing my activism for the Syrian Revolution! I feel that I am participating in building Syria's future!

Rim's strategy to survive the Syrian War and to cope with everyday life in her refugee destination was to actively volunteer in different humanitarian activist organizations which work in the Za'atri Refugee Camp and Amman region. Her work is mainly focused on psychological support for women and children. She sought training in this area with one of the international organizations in Jordan, and she also developed psychological support expertise through her work with her colleagues in an informal Syrian activist organization in Jordan. As a young, educated woman who descended from a middle class Damascene family, Rim's privilege continue to benefit her in Jordan. Such privileges make media coverage of Syrian refugee women's stories invisiblize Rim as a refugee woman because she does not fit dominant representations about refugee women as powerless poor victims. However, stories such as Rim's story have relative visibility in media coverage about Syrian activism; nevertheless one should keep in mind that such visibility is generally introduced to the audience out of the context of the refugee crisis.

Karima's Story

Karima (40) is not the type of Syrian heroine that the mainstream media would like to interview. She did not participate in the Syrian Uprising. She did not lead a demonstration. In fact, she did not have anti-government sentiments in the first place. Karima is a Syrian woman from Homs City who lived a "simple life." She got married early in her life, around age 15, as many of the girls in her poor, conservative neighborhood would face as a destiny. Therefore, she did not finish her education.

Karima had five children include two girls: Soha (20) who is married, Lama (15) who Karima indicated proudly in several occasions that she is extremely smart and good at school and three boys: Mahmmod (18), Raheem (11), and Kamal (5).

On Mach 12, 2012, Karima's life would change forever. Around noon she heard that a mission from the Syrian Army is searching the houses in her neighborhood for armed men. She prayed that they would not take her boys and husband because they were not involved in any military activities. Around 2.00 p.m. the mission entered their apartment asking them to surrender their weapons. Her husband declared that they had no weapons. The officer ordered his fellows to take her husband out. Another officer took her eldest son Mahmmod (18) and he forced him to prostrate himself to Bashar al-Assad photograph in front of his mother and siblings[9]. Then, they commanded Karima and her smaller children (a girl and two boys) to stay inside while they took the father and the son Mahmmod with them. In few minutes, Karima and her children heard gunshots. Karima held herself together because she was worry about the safety of her younger children.

Her husband's dead body was left next to their flat door, and her son was left dying on the stairs after they shot him in the head. Karima remembered how his flesh and blood had dispersed and adhered to the walls around him. Her daughter Lama (15) tried to give Mahmmod water before he died because he was muttering "water," but he could not drink it. Karima told me this with a big sigh that even her son last wishes did not come true: "My daughter came back inside, her hands were covered with Mahmmod's blood. I kissed her hands and I smelled my son scent." When the army mission finished

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[9] This is a practice that the regime soldiers force people to do to humiliate them.

investigating the building, they came again to Karima's apartment. She locked the door.

They unlocked it by shooting it. Karima described her feelings at that movement:

> I thought that our lives have come to an end. They were confused and shouting what they will do with the women. Thanks be to god they did not touch my daughter or me. I tried to strength my young boys. They were shaking and traumatized. The soldiers kept us for a half hour and after that wandered in the building. When they finally exited our building, they shot Mahmmod in the heart. He passed away then. I decided to leave my house under cover of the dark.

Karima described her daughter Lama actions proudly: "Lama was so brave. She pulled the bodies of her brother and father into the house and covered them with white sheets. Around 5:30 p.m. we left our house forever. We left the door open hoping that good people would find the bodies and bury them."

It was winter and dark, and Karima, who has no experience in public spaces, felt scared and decided to stay the night at one of her neighbor's houses. When they entered her neighbor's house, they saw another dead body of a stranger. Karima learned that the regime forces killed all men in her neighborhood, and they randomly threw all the dead bodies into neighbor's houses. They do so to ensure that the rest of the families are terrorized and humiliated and other anti-regime regions would look at this example of consequences for rebelling against the regime. Once again Lama covered the dead body with a sheet, so the small children would stop looking at the body exploded by bullets. Karima continued her story:

> At 6:30 in the morning we left the neighbor's houses, the regime forces were shooting toward our feet and screaming at us to go back. I gestured with my hand that it is impossible to go back. We kept running through the shooting, and sometimes we hid in some buildings, but there were dead bodies in every building. When we passed our neighborhood, we met armed rebels. I expressed my disappointment with the rebels because they did not confront and fight the regime troops. But the rebel leader told me to thank my god because no one

touched my daughter or me and we had escaped with our honor. He said in the nearby neighborhood most women were raped.

From that point Karima's displacement journey went through many stops.

In Homs Governorate, Karima and her children went first to Safsafeh village, but she did not feel safe there. Thus, they moved to Khaldiahe where there were mortar shells falling in the area. So they moved to Baiiada and then to KafrAya where Karima's family live. Karima stayed at her parents' house for 40 days, but the daily sounds of shooting made her more nerves. She psychologically broke down. She informed her parents that she is leaving Homs Governorate and moving to Set Zaynab in Rif Dimashq Governorate where her sister-in-law has an available empty house where Karima and her children can stay. Karima stayed there for a few weeks and finally was able to sleep at night without shooting sounds. However, Karima said that in the summer of 2012 around the second week in the month of Ramadan[10], Syrian regime missiles started falling in Set Zaynab, and 300 people died. She was displaced again with her children to khan Alshe[11], where they stayed for 17 days at a school. Many schools in Syria were transformed from their original mission to be a refuge for the displaced people who have no place else to sleep. The living conditions were so frustrating that Karima decided to go back to Homs Governorate. For two and half months she stayed in Eastern Al Jadidah in Homs, an area that was under the Syrian regime control. Soon, a checkpoint for the Syrian regime troops was build right next to her house. From this checkpoint the soldiers launched missiles

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[10]Ramadan: is the holy month for Muslims where they believe the Quran was revealed. Muslims fast during Ramadan's days from dawn to sunset. According to the Islamic calendar, which is a lunar calendar, Ramdan is the 9th month. In 2012 when Karima was at Set Zaynab, Ramadan occurred between July20 - August 18.

[11] Khan Alshe: is a historically Palestinian refugee camp.

into the opposition neighborhoods. Despite these obstacles Karime and her children

stayed for a little bit until an additional challenge faced them.

Karima's described the day when her life destabilized again. She smiled slightly

as she reported to me that her daughter Lama was watching Addounia TV[12]:

> I was walking with my two little boys in the public garden next to my home. My
> daughter Lama was alone at home watching Addounia's series "Sabaia"[13], when I
> saw soldiers entering our house. I was terrified that they will do something to my
> daughter. I ran to the house to see that they are interrogating my other daughter
> Soha who had just arrived with her husband for a visit. I whispered in Lama's ears
> to delete all the TV channels and turn the T.V off[14].

Karima clarified to me that now she can tell these stories and she is fine thanks to the

love and support of the Molham Volunteering Team[15], but at that time when Lieutenant

"Samer" investigated her, her eyes were always red and her face was extremely tired.

Lieutenant Samer asked Karima where her husband is, she replied that he was working in

Lebanon[16]. Samer accused Karima of being a lier, a killer, and a terrorist, and he told her

to appear for an in-depth investigation at his office in two hours. Karima said good-bye to

her children thinking that she is going to her death. She went to Samer's office with her

son-in-law. Karima felt terrified and shy at the same time while she was entering Samer's

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[12] Addounia TV is a private television station that is famous for promoting the Syrian regime's propaganda. I believe Addounia TV 's role in the Syrian conflict is similar, to some extent, to the role of RTLM Radio in the Rwanda Genocide. Thus, when Karima mentioned that her daughter was watching Addounia. My reaction was: "Really?". Karima said that she don't mind, because she loves her daughter to watch and do the things that make her relaxed and happy after all the suffering that they went through.

[13] "Sabaia": is a popular Syrian TV series that was produced before the start of the Syrian conflict. It is similar to the American HBO series "Girls" and even the translation of "Sabaia" from Arabic to English would mean girls.

[14] These spontaneous reactions reflect the fear from the media censorship of the regime who consider TV channels such as Al-jazeera and Al-arabiya conspiracy tools against Syria's security.

[15] Molham Volunteering Team: is an informal activist organization of young Syrian volunteers who fled Syria after the Uprising and now work with Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey and inside Syria.

[16] The reason for Karima's lying is the fear that if Lieutenant Samer knew that Karima's husband is dead so he will think that he was a rebel and that will endanger her family.

office and the soldiers were looking at her with judgmental eyes. Karima described her

experience with Samer:

> He was feeling bored and wanted to mock someone for fun and he found me. He
> kept accusing me of being a killer and a terrorist. I kept silent first. I am not used
> to speaking with men! In my community women do not generally communicate
> with men or confront them. But later, I negotiated with Samer. I told him 'okay, if
> I am a killer, why do you not let me go back to my home and keep an eye on me
> until you confirm that I am a killer'. He agreed with my suggestion, but then tried
> to start interrogating my son-in-law who was so afraid that he did not say a word.
> To rescue him, I interfered and claimed that he is deaf. Samer believed me, and
> we went back home alive.

With tears in her eyes, Karima said that she kneeled to god half an hour to thank

him for surviving again[17]. After this incident Karima decided to leave Syria and go to

Jordan's refugee camp. She did not change her mind even when the next day First Lt.

Zaidon called to try to make up with her because of Samer's annoying behavior (Karima

clarified that he is Samer's boss and that he, like Samer, is Alawite by sect) Karima

described her meeting with First Lt. Zaidon the next day:

> First Lt. Zaidon asked me to forgive them. He had his six-year-old son with him,
> and he asked me to pray for his son. First Lt. Zaidon is a good man not like
> Samer. But, I could not trust him and I did not open my heart. When he kept
> asking me to tell him my wishes and he will try to make them come true. I told
> him my only wish right now is to leave Homs and go to Damascus. He said that I
> can leave and that he wishes me to meet good people on my way for the sake of
> my orphaned children.

Karima did not wait until the next morning to leave. In the afternoon of that same

day she left Homs City and headed to Jordan with her children. Their trip lasted a few

weeks from Homs to Kazaz in Damascus to Jordan. In Damascus, they waited for 12

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[17] During my interview with Karima, she did not cry, with one exception, when she told her story about
Samer. This reflects the humiliating effects that have stayed deep in her heart.
 Karima generally tried to sound strong while I interviewed her, especially because two members of
Molham Volunteering Team accompanied me during the interview, and they tried to maintain a friendly
environment that kept Karima comfortable.

days because the road was closed due to explosions. Then they continued heading south

toward Dara'a Governorate where they traversed Tafas, Al-Ajameh, and Tiba where on

November 5, 2012 they crossed the border into Za'atri Refugee Camp in Jordan. Karima

who had grown up in a city described her experience in the Za'atri Refugee Camp in the

desert:

> It was a shocking experience! I stayed in Za'atri for three months and ten days. There I met the Molham Volunteering Team, who used to visit me and help me financially. They are like my children! After three months and ten days, my tent crashed from rain and we could not live in it anymore. I escaped from Za'atri irregularly with the help of another Syrian family. My refugee tent was my life tragedy!

In comparison with other Syrian refugee women, Karima's story had a happy

ending. Later, the Molham Volunteering Team contacted her and helped her to rebuild

her life in Amman. They matched her with a Palestinian-Jordanian family who officially

sponsored her, gave her an available apartment that they owned, and helped her to

register her children in school. Additionally, the Molham Volunteering Team found a

Qatari woman who provided monthly financial support for Karima's family.

Karima's strategy to survive the Syrian War and to cope with everyday life in her

refugee destination was to challenge her traditional gender role and lack of experience in

public spaces and resist long stages of injustice and internal and external displacement.

As an uneducated mother from a poor urban region, Karima went through a significant,

mostly depressing transformation when she became a female head of a household[18].

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[18] The UNHCR registration data shows that numerous Syrian refugee women head their household: more than 145,000 Syrian refugee women now run their households alone, and most of these women expressed to the UNHCR that this situation has been a devastating experience. This data also indicates that over 16,000 people are living in female-headed refugee households within the host countries Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt have serious medical conditions, and 1,800 are disabled (United Nations High

Thus, Karima represents one of the categories of Syrian refugee women most in need of help and support from organizations that provide financial and psychological resources. One should note that in comparison with the other five Syrian refugee women stories that are presented here, the place of origin plays a huge role in Karima's suffering and in her long internal and external displacement journey. Coming from an urban poor conservative Homsi environment, Karima's life experiences were limited to the border of her house. Although women, like Mona[19], also came from a poor, conservative environment, their rural origins equip them with experiences in the public space through mainly working in farming. Additional challenges related to the place of origin are the geographical proximity of Jordan's borders. Travelling from Dara'a, Rif Dimashq, or Damascus governorates was relatively more manageable than travelling from Homs Governorate especially because, depending on the time and place of departing, the sectarian tension and armed confrontation in Homs were comparatively higher than in Dara'a, Rif Dimashq, or Damascus.

Mona's Story

Mona is a warrior (both figuratively and literally) who does not match the mainstream media and Refugee Not Campaign's representations of Syrian refugee women's as passive powerless victims in the ongoing conflict. Mona (30) is from a small village in Dara'a Governorate. She studied just until the sixth grade, and she got married

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Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). The Human Right Watch (2014) stats that the reasons of many refugee women becoming de facto household heads are the death, detention, or disappearance of male family members or because of the injury and the conflict-inflicted disabilities of their male family members.

[19] Please see Mona's story in the following section.

at age 15 as did most of the girls in her village. She has an 11-year-old daughter who has

growth hormone deficiency disorder and thus physically appears to be 7. When I

interviewed Mona, she resided with many members from her close and extended family

in a small modest apartment in Amman's outskirt. Unlike many other women and

activists who I interviewed, Mona actively participated in the armed rather than peaceful

phase of the Syrian Uprising. She used to work smuggling defected soldiers from the Al-

Assad regime's army and helped many of them join the Free Syrian Army (FSA). She

was also an informant for the FSA and had a satellite phone in order to communicate with

them and inform them about the Syrian regime's military locations that they should

target. When most of her female relatives and friends left her village seeking a refuge in

Jordan, Mona was one of very few women who stayed in the village working alongside

the male fighters in the FSA. Mona confessed that Al-Assad regime's army was tolerant,

at the beginning, with women, and the soldiers did not investigate or suspect women.

Therefore she and another woman used to hide weapons and ammunition under their

clothes and thus passed the regimes' checkpoints without inspections to smuggle the arms

to the FSA. However, Mona's actions were uncovered by the regime, and her name,

among other women's names, was placed on the wanted people lists. At that time,

Mona's father, who supported his daughter engagement with the revolution begged her to

leave Syria. Realizing the increased dangerous, Mona escaped Syria with her 11-year-old

daughter before the regime had the chance to arrest her.

Mona did not tell me an exact timeframe for her story because of different

security issues such as that her husband and father are still fighting in Syria with the FSA.

She left Dara'a Governorate with approximately 1500 persons heading to Jordan during a night when the regime launched an intensive bombing to her region. They walked for four hours under the bombing to reach the Jordanian borders. A group of Free Syrian Army soldiers accompanied them, and they gave the children sleep-inducing drugs to prevent them from crying and thus disclosing their location to the Al-Assad regime troops. Mona stayed in the Za'atri Refugee Camp for 12 days, and then she fled from the camp with her extended family who were already in the camp. She described her experience at the camp:

> The Jordanian army welcomed us at the border and took us via buses to the camp. When I saw the reception tent and that we'll sleep on the bare ground, I was shocked. I wanted to go back to Syria. We were given a slim sleeping mattress, a pillow, a blanket, and a meal for each individual. It was so freezing cold, and the blanket did not warm us! I gathered all the young children in my family around me and tried to put all our blankets together as layers to warm us a little more!

The direct reason for Mona and her family to escape the camp was, similar to Karima's reason, the snowstorm that hit Za'atri Camp in the winter of 2013. The storm crushed their tents. Mona and her extended family slept in one of the camps' school buildings for three days. When they went back to their tent locations, the tents had been stolen[20]. The family escaped Za'atri with the help of an activist group.

In Jordan, Mona had to face daily economic insecurity that take away her time and quality of life. It was true that Mona and her family escaped Za'atri but this did not mean that they survived the frustrating housing conditions. Mona and her daughter shared a one-bedroom apartment with several members from Mona's extended family, which includes Mona's mother, Mona's mother-in-law, Mona's two brothers with their wives

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[20] Although Mona accused the regimes' agents inside the camp of stealing the tents, this idea was based more on ideological beliefs than facts.

and children. The apartment rent was140 JD (about $200) per month and the monthly
bills such as electricity and water exceeded 135 JD. In Jordan, a Syrian legal work permit
in Jordan is extremely difficult and expensive to obtain. So people such as Mona's
brothers were subject to shadow work exploitation (they worked illegally in construction
jobs). The UN aid plus what Mona's brothers earn was very far from giving the family
enough for survival. Despite this challenging housing condition, Mona and her family do
not wish to go back to the Za'atri camp ever.

A few months before I interviewed Mona, she was with her mother-in-law who
had a diabetes medical check at Akilah Hospital[21]. In the hospital corridor, Mona was
waiting with her daughter when a man called Amr approached them to say that he helps
Syrian women without a male provider. Amr told Mona that he has available apartments
for such women that were donated through a philanthropist. Mona was attracted to the
idea but before going with the man to see the apartments, she covertly called her brother
to inform him about the situation. Once Mona left the hospital with Amr, 11 other women
also in the hospital did the exact same thing. The man grouped them based on their
Syrian region of origin. Mona and her daughter were grouped in a taxi with three other
women from Dar'a. In the other two taxies were 4 women from Homs and 4 from
Damascus' outskirts. The promised place was in Al-Zarqa Al-jadidah[22].

When Mona got into to the taxi, Amr was in the same car as she was. He called
the apartments' donator to inform him that he "has good news" and that he "brought

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[21] Akilah Hospital is a Jordanian private hospital that provides free medical services for Syrian refugees
based on donations from private businessmen.
[22] Al-Zarqa Al-jadidah (New Zarqa): is one of the new suburbs of Zarqa city, which is located 25 km
northeast of Amman.

women from Dar'a." Mona felt insecure about this call, and she felt that the man's accent

and tone had changed when he talked on the phone. She whispered in her daughter's ear

to pretend to play with their mobile phone and to take a photo of Amr. Mona's daughter

did that, and they had the photo. Amr told the women in the taxi that he just has checks

and no cash and asked them to pay now for the taxi and he would reimburse them once

they arrive. Mona paid her only 5 JD (about $7) and was left without money. The car

took different long side roads, so Mona was not able to memorize the travel route. When

they arrived to the promised apartments, Mona and the other women discovered that they

were brought to a house for prostitution. An old man was running the place and he was

angry with Amr when he discovered that Amr brought older married women with him not

young virgin women. Mona was furious. She urged the other women to not eat or drink

anything[23]. She threatened Amr and the old man with actions by Free Syrian Army. The

old man said that they do not force women to prostitution and they are free to go. Mona

and the other women left without any money. They walked a few blocks until they saw a

shop where the owner felt solidarity with the women and gave them money to pay for a

taxi to take them back to Amman. Mona told her story to a Jordanian Palestinian male

activist, who is known to be connected to international media, asking him to publish the

mobile photo of Amr and warn other women and the authorities about him. The male

activist took Mona's mobile phone, transferred the photo to his mobile phone, and then

deleted it from Mona's phone. Mona was left without evidence and she was not able to

continue her attempts to investigate the case of Amr and the prostitution house.

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[23] Mona was afraid that food or drinks would be drugged.

Mona's strategy to survive the Syrian War was manifested in different forms of resisting political and patriarchal oppression in both Syria and Jordan. In Syria, she did not only challenge her traditional gender role by smuggling both small arms and defected soldiers but also she was active participant in the armed conflict by working as an informant for the FSA and engaging in military planning. As an uneducated mother from a poor rural region, Mona already had experiences in public spaces inside Syria through working in farming for almost her whole life and later through working with the FSA. Thus, when she arrived in Jordan, it was more likely that she would embrace her new role and life easily and quickly in comparison with women who were from her same class but from urban regions and thus may have lacked experiences in public spaces. Such experiences empowered Mona to act appropriately and immediately when she was trapped in the prostitution network. However, similar to all other refugees from lower classes, Mona continued to suffer from severe daily economic insecurity in Jordan and increasing hostility from the hosting community.

Sima's Sotry

Sima (52) is an example of skilled refugee women who moved to Jordan with proficient expertise but they were marginalized from Syrian mainstream activist organizations because of their place of origin and age. Sima is a widow from a small city in Rif Dimashq Governorate. Sima got married to a male cousin at age 17. It was a first-cousin marriage, thus two of Sima's six children have mental and physical disabilities. Once Sima got married she moved with her husband to Saudi Arabia where her husband

was working. She got her Baccalaureate certificate (high school) few months after marriage, and then she fulfilled her passion in pursuing courses in fashion design. A few years before the Syrian Uprising had started, Sima and her family went back to Syria where she established a fashion and crafts design training institute in her hometown Al-Tall. Sima's children have professions in the medical, engineering, and teaching fields. When the Syrian Uprising began, all Sima's children were involved with it.

One of Sima's children, Nizar had "an identity crisis for many years," and he joined contradictory extremist groups. Nizar joined a Satanism extremist religion group while he was attending medical school for surgery in Jordan. Because of this, his family transferred him to a university in Bahrain where this time he joined a branch of Al-Qaeda and through them got involved in terrorist bombings in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government imprisoned him, and later he was transferred to a Syrian prison in Damascus. Thus, in mid of March when the Syrian Uprising started, Nizar's name was immediately placed on the wanted peoples lists regardless of the fact that he had abandoned his affiliation with Al-Qaeda. However, Nizar along with 15 other persons from Al-Tall participated in one of the Umayyad Mosque early demonstrations in Old Damascus. Sima accused Nizar's uncle of reporting him to the intelligence. Nizar was imprisoned again and severely tortured. March 25, 2011 was the first time Sima was requested for interrogation. On the one hand, the Syrian intelligence aimed at terrorizing Sima to disclose any information about her son's activities, and on the other hand, to put pressure on her son to cooperate with them. Nizar was released early in June 2011 after Bashar al-Assad issued a general amnesty that covered political prisoners. Though such harassment

of Sima by Syrian intelligence did not stop. All Sima's children (males and females)

stayed involved in the Syrian Uprising, and they joined the Free Syrian Army groups in

Damascus suburbs where they all held tasks of fighting and/or securing medical

assistance in field hospitals. Thus, Sima was continuously a subject of security

harassment and interrogation.

On September 2012, Sima's and son Nizar's houses had fallen under retaliation

from Syrian regime troops. The Syrian security invaded Sima's house, stole everything,

and destroyed what they could not take. Her son Nizar's house was burned. Sima showed

me pictures of her house and family. She was sad where she referred to a handmade

carpet that she made in 1987 and which was stolen on that day. Late in September 2012,

Sima permanently left Syria and regularly moved to Jordan to stay at a female cousin's

house. Sima explained her moving to Jordan:

> I wanted to travel to stay with my foster daughter by breastfeeding[24] in Saudi
> Arabia. While I was waiting for the visa, I sought activities that I can do to serve
> the revolution and the refugees. I was excited that a group of women learned
> about my work and they wanted me to find a place and be an operator of a
> workshop similar to the fashion and crafts design training institute that I ran in
> Syria. The aim was to train refugee women to produce handcrafts and then make
> income by selling it. I found this a great work opportunity. I had no money. We
> are not a poor family, but we invested all our money in serving the revolution.

Sima's excitement turned to frustration very soon. Her female cousin was not happy with

what seemed like professional success that Sima was achieving. At the beginning, she

stole Sima's money, and then suddenly she threw Sima out of her house in the middle of

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[24] A foster child by breastfeeding (Radaa'ah in Arabic) is the only allowed form of an adoption relationship under Islamic Sharia'a law. It is not necessary that the parents of the foster child by breastfeeding are dead. In fact, when any woman has breastfed any child under the age of two years five times, this child is considered her child. However, this child would not usually live with the breastfeeding mother. Thus, this is an adoptive relationship and not a literal adoption. But, under Islamic Sharia'a law this situation affect legal issues such as marriage. For example, Sima's birth son is considered a brother to Sima's breastfeeding daughter and they cannot get married.

the night. With so little money, Sima walked through Amman's streets until she reached

the Al-Ammer building where there are rooms for cheap rent. The building had no rooms

that were available. The Egyptian concierge who was working through the night told

Sima she could safely stay at his room until the morning. The next day, Sima met a

woman from Dara'a who told her that she can move into her apartment with her. Sima's

visa to Suadi Arabia was on hold as were all other Syrian citizens' visas for the Arabian

gulf countries, and the fact that Sima had lived there for more than 20 years and has a

foster daughter there did not help her.

Inside the Syrian women's organization that Sima worked with, she became

frustrated and felt marginalized. She was underpaid, and the employers did not put her in

charge of the crafts project as they had promised. The director of the organization was a

young Syrian woman who was raised and educated in the United Kingdom, and she was

descended from an upper middle class Damascene family. Although Sima had supervised

selection of furniture and other equipments for their workshop space, the director hired

project mangers who were western-educated Syrian women who had no experience in

working inside Syria with lower class women. Sima expressed her opinion: "We started

the Syrian Revolution because we wanted to get rid of classicism and for all of us to

become equals. They underestimated me, ignored my experiences and treated me as if I

am nobody." Furthermore, Sima had a dispute with her flatmate over the prices of rent.

Her flatmate wanted her to pay the entire rent for both of them because Sima was

working. As a result, Sima moved to Raghadan Complex in Amman where many Syrian

refugee families reside. When Sima worked with refugee women in both Amman and

Za'atri Refugee Camp, that give her fulfillment. However, Sima's poor living conditions in a small room without basic appliances such as a refrigerator as well as the marginalization at work made her make plans to travel to Egypt before the beginning of 2013 Ramadan month. I interviewed Sima two days before her scheduled flight to Cairo.

Sima's strategy to survive the Syrian War was her attempt to recruit her own skills and talents in Jordan to make a living, on the one hand, and to serve other refugee women and the broader cause of the "Syrian Revolution," on the other hand. However, because of her age, rural origin, and lack of proper education, Sima's attempt was restricted and marginalized by the Syrian women's organizations that she tried to work with. As a Syrian woman from a rural upper-middle class family, Sima's family wealth was embodied in owning properties and lands rather than having money in cash or in bank accounts. Therefore, in Jordan, she lacked money to live fairly and thus depended on relatives and other people close to her to secure housing. However, later even relatives and people who were close to her rejected her. Such rejections highlight the ways in which host communities' attitudes change from welcoming refugees at the beginning of the crisis to more rejection and hostility later. In Sima's case when her situation became significantly depressing, her privilege enabled her to move to Egypt to stay at a house owned by her family.

Hala's Story

Hala's story is like one of many Syrian citizen journalists' stories who were detained[25] and tortured[26] in prisons during the Syrian Uprising[27]. Hala is 21 years old. She is from a political family. Her father was one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Hama City during the 1980s, and since then he lives in exile in Saudi Arabia. Hala did not seem committed to her father's political Islamic heritage. She is secular and does not wear any religious symbols. Hala lived in Damascus with her two brothers and mother. They had a Damascene upper middle class life. However, Hala's family life changed sharply after the Syrian Uprising. Her two brothers were detained early in the uprising. One of them died under torture and the other one still is in prison.

Since the beginning of the revolution Hala worked as a citizen journalist. She filmed news reports covering the peaceful phase of the revolution and the activism of youth and college students. She sent her video reports to Arabic news channels such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya. She also organized demonstrations and delivered humanitarian aid. In July 2012, many of the activists and citizen journalists in Hala's circle were arrested. She left her house and lived in hiding for seven months in a female cousin's house. Hala's cousin was married to a high-profile Syrian government employee and lived in a fancy pro-regime neighbored. Hala's cousin-in-law did not know about her

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[25] As of May 2014, the Violations Documentation Center (VDC), a Syrian monitoring group, had documented 52,674 detentions since the beginning of the conflict, including 1,477 women and 55 girls. According to VDC data, over 40,400 of these detainees are still awaiting release (Violations Documentation Center, 2014).

[26] The systematic torture by the Syrian regime against detainees gains international media visibility especially after the report that the CNN exclusively published at the beginning of 2014. The report showed thousands of photographs which were leaked by a Syrian government defector. The photographs document the killing and torturing of detainees in Syrian regime prisons (Krever and Elwazer, 2014).

revolutionary activism, just his wife did. On February 2013, one of Hala's last activist colleagues who had not flee Syria, been killed, or been imprisoned called Hala from a "fake number[28]." He told her that he is in great danger and asked her if he can come and hide in her mother's house. Hala agreed. When they arrived at Hala's family house, Hala's friend made a long call (more than 16 minutes) from his "fake number." This long call was the reason that the security forces were able to locate Hala's friend location. The intelligence agents came searching the building for him. Hala helped him escaped through the roof of her building, but the security forces captured him. He immediately confessed about Hala. The security forces invaded Hala's house. They broke every thing and they stole all the money (around $10,000) and valuable possessions including Hala's cameras and videotapes that she used in her citizen media activism. The security forces arrested Hala along with her friend. They accused them of being armed terrorists. They took Hala in one car and her friend in another. As soon as they put Hala in the car, the verbal and physical harassment started. When they arrived to the Forty Intelligence Center in the White Bridge neighborhood, an agent gave her a dagger and ordered her to stab her friend to prove loyalty to the regime. Hala refused, and she denied that she knew "her friend." The agent took the dagger and stabbed Hala's friend in the back. They severely beat Hala and then took her to a separate room. There, Hala was a subject of a technique of tortured called Strappado. Her wrists were tied with a rope behind her back and then she was suspended in the air for six hours. After one and half hour, she lost consciousness. When they let her down, they threw her body over flour bags and four

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[28] A fake number (Khat Madrob in Arabic): is an appellation that Syrian activists use to refer to a phone that they operate it through a SIM card phone that they take it from a dead security agent or any equivalent person whose SIM card would not be monitoring by the regime forces.

men hit her small body extremely hard with rifle shoulder stocks. After that they put her in a tiny single cell (Monfareda in Arabic)[29]. Hala was tortured with various interrogation techniques such as electric shock, sexual assault, threat of rape and shaming, and food deprivation. Hala described her experience in a low and shy voice:

> They severely hit me and harassed me. They said they would rape me! It is so difficult for a girl's psyche to be subject to all of that. They made me feel that they knew everything about my most personal life details. They threaten that they will inform my family that I am not a virgin and that I am a slut who slept with the Free Syrian Army's soldiers.

Hala stayed in the Forty Intelligence Center for two nights in which she did not sleep due to the unbearable conditions of the single cell but also because of the sounds of torturing of other detainees around her. Yet what was most difficult was that the intelligence agents put her friend in the facing cell where they tortured him day and night. From the Forty Intelligence Center Hala and her friend were transferred to Al-Khatib Intelligence Branch. Hala emphasized that Al-Khatib Branch was "a horrible place that there are no words to describe." The intelligence agents forced Hala on her knees to climb down seven floors of stairs located underground until they reached the single cell where they imprisoned her again. Hala was then subject to three days of interrogation and torture to force her to name and locate all the networks of activists and citizen journalists that she knew. Hala was born with heart disease. The methods of torture that the intelligence agents tried on Hala and her friend were significantly harsh. For example, they were subject to the Chair of Torture, where their wrists, neck, and feet were tied to a chair and then water and electricity were thrown on their bodies to be electrocuted. Hala

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[29] The Syrian regime is known for using this technique of tortured in which the regime agents put a prisoner in a very tiny, dirty single cell where there is no sunlight. The tiny space of the cell allows the prisoner to just sit in a squatting position.

was able to smell the burning nails and hair. She temporally lost her sight for 24 hours, and she started bleeding from her nose. Furthermore, Hala was food and water deprived for four successive days. On the fourth day in the middle of the night, she cried loudly for any food or water. A patrol of two persons came. One gave her a little water. So she asked for little food too. The other person caught one of the cockroaches that were running around in her cell and put it in her mouth forcing her to eat it as food. After three hours Hala was still muttering "food." A watchman came with a steel can of rotten food that cannot be open without a can opener. Hala complained asking how she was supposed to open it. Her nails were long. The watchman mocked her asking to open it with her fingernails. When she answered that it is "impossible," he called his fellow guards to came and watch. He ripped off her first two fingernails. She lost consciousness while he ripped off the rest[30]. The psychological and physical torture, especially the beating on her lower abdomen, caused Hala to have a gynecological hemorrhage for a month and 18 days. After 8 days of torture, the head of the Al-Khatib Intelligence Branch was checking the detainees when he saw Hala bleeding and about to die. He ordered her to be transferred to a civilian prison. In the process, Hala was asked to confess on the Syrian national news channel that she was a terrorist and that she regretted her deeds, but she refused. Then, she was transferred to the Terrorism Court. There, one of the employees recognized her and called her well-connected cousin. Hala's family came in one hour after the call, they paid 150,000 Syrian pounds (around $3,000), and Hala was released.

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[30]   In the middle of my interview with Hala, I noticed her fingernails' damage. She realized that I had seen her fingernails when she explained to me what happened. She also showed me other effects of torture on her body.

Hala went to stay in a cousin's house in Qudsaya, a town close to Damascus. Hala

mentioned:

> The neighborhood was mostly Alawite and pro-government inhabitants. They
> knew that I was an activist and a political detainee. They threaten my family with
> kidnapping me. This had already happened many times in that town. There are
> civil militias (Ligan Sha'abiah in Arabic) that kidnaped pro-revolution people,
> most kidnapped people are women and girls who will be held, tortured, and
> maybe raped in civilian prisons. Many of these prisons are the kidnappers'
> houses.

Because of these threating circumstances and fearing a new arrest, Hala decided to flee

Syria. She escaped through Lebanon's border, and from Beirut she flew to Amman. At

the end of my interview with Hala, I asked her what helped her to stay brave and strong.

She answered, "I have hope that I will go back to Syria and that our cause will win."

Hala's strategy to survive the Syrian War and to cope with everyday life in her

refugee destination was to continue her activism by volunteering with different

humanitarian activist organizations in Jordan and, at the same time, she was looking for a

job. When I interviewed Hala, she had recently arrived in Jordan, and she expressed to

me her interest in wanting to be interviewed for my research. While she was telling me

her story, Hala mentioned that no one, not even her mother, knows about various details

in her story. Hala's effort to share her story underlines her endeavor to survive passivity

and empower herself. Such an endeavor was strengthened by Hala's background as an

educated young Damascene woman from an upper middle class family. One should note

that Hala had completed her higher education in Damascus; however, due to her political

activism she was denied her degree certificate or transcript when she asked for them

before leaving Syria. Therefore, her efforts to find a job in Jordan were restricted by both

Jordanian strict employment regulations of Syrians and the Syrian regime's "revenge" tactic of depriving opposing activists from their education certificates.

Maha's Story

Maha (40) is from a village in Dara'a Governorate. She is a mother of seven children (3-16), four boys and three girls. Maha who got married early in her life has no experience in the public sphere. Her life centered on serving her family in the private sphere. Maha's husband was an English language teacher in a local governmental school. He provided the only family income, which was 20,000 Syrian Pounds per month (around $400). Maha and her husband had no political opinions supporting the revolution whatsoever. In fact, they preferred the safety under Syrian regime rule to the chaos after the revolution. However, these previous pro-regime sentiments did not protect their children and them from being victims of the Syrian regime's hostility. On February 16, 2013, Maha escaped from Dara'a with her seven children. On that day, one of the fragmentation bombs hit their village, and a piece of metal that dropped from the sky fell next to her son while he was in the kitchen. For Maha and her husband, this incident was the final signal from a series of signs that seemed to indicate that Maha and the children should leave as soon as possible. Before that and for many months, Maha's children had suffered from various psychological impacts from the armed conflict that lasted through the time when I interviewed Maha during June 2013. The psychological impacts of war on Maha's children had manifested in different forms. For example, one of her sons had sudden bouts of crying and screaming in the middle of the night, and one of her daughters

had a reaction to any loud voice that reminded her of bombing sounds and caused her to

run and hide her head under several layers of sheets and pillows or crawl under tables and

begin crying loudly.

When she and the children arrived in Jordan, Maha's suffering with economic and

food insecurity began. The humanitarian aid was not only far from enough for Maha's

family to survive on. But, also Maha complained that the UN food aid was generally

"rotten." This situation severely affected Maha's and her children's physical and

psychological health. The food aid included canned foods, bulgur, rice, and lentils. There

were no fruits, vegetables, eggs, or meats. This diet caused Maha's children to have

constant bouts of diarrhea and vomiting. Both Maha and her children had Anemia and

sever loss of weight. In four months, Maha's weight dropped from 134 pounds (60 kg) to

90 pounds (40 kg). To combat malnutrition, Maha, as did many other women in the

Za'atri camp, developed a strategy of surviving by selling food aid at low prices in the

Za'atri market[31] and instead buying "eatable items." Maha complained about the

corruption of the street leader[32] in the camp's section where she lived. She revealed that

her street leader did not distribute the non-food aid on her street, such as caravans and

cleaning supplies, which generally came through individual and non-UN donors. Instead

he sold these for money. Maha said that she could not buy a caravan from him because

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[31] Za'atri market: some refugees (who have money and connections) established market-like structures on the camp's main street where they sell goods like vegetables, meat, clothes, and cleaning equipment, among other things. Many families go to the market shops' owners to sell their food aid and, in exchange, buy goods that they need.

[32] The street leaders were men who were chosen by international organizations inside Za'atari to be in charge of each street of the camp. The mission of these leaders would be to help organizations to distribute daily food aid and materials such as clothing, tents, caravans, and cleaning supplies.

she did not have enough money. However, she bought soap from him several times because her family was so much in need of materials that would keep them clean.

Maha refused charity as a solution for her situation[33]. She said "I want to work and make my living honestly. I do not beg. I want to eat bread by the sweat of my brow." Maha confirmed: "I wish to die instead of being humiliated." Thus, she went to Nour Al-Hussain center asking for a job cleaning public rest rooms. The manger agreed to Maha's request after she listened to her story. Maha signed a contract to work for a monthly salary of 150 JD (around $210). However, her contract was ripped up when another manger came and hired a woman he knew.

Maha's husband did not accompany them at the beginning because he wanted to keep his income as a teacher inside Syria. However, after he knew about their hardship and misery at the Za'atri camp, Maha's husband wanted to join his wife and children. He left Syria and reached Jordan's border. However, he could not pass the border because single men are not allowed to enter Za'atri camp. Maha's husband confirmed with the Jordanian officials that his family was inside Za'atri camp, but they did not cooperate with his case. For three days, Maha waited in front of the Za'atri camp's manger office until she could meet him. She told the camp manger her husband's story, and later she knew that for her husband to pass the border, he needed to pay 200 JD (around $282). Maha and her husband could not afford such an amount. Nevertheless, Maha was still hoping that her husband who she occasionally communicated with via mobile phone would join her soon. At the same time, she hoped that the products of an embroidery

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[33] When Maha told me about her situation, I wanted to connect her to some humanitarian activist groups that I know in Jordan but she refused and said that what she needs is to work not to depend on charity.

workshop that she joined might be sold in the future and that would bring her some income.

Maha's strategy to survive the Syrian War and to cope with everyday life in her refugee destination was twofold: to sell her food aid and instead buy what she needed and also to register in an embroidery training program at an international organization in the Za'atari camp. As an uneducated mother from a poor rural region who suddenly became a displaced female head of a household, Maha went into severe depression and psychological distress that was reflected in increasing violence by her against her children. Thus, she expressed that spending her free time in a productive way at the embroidery training and talking to a Syrian psychological counselor at the organization made her forget her troubles. Maha's story highlights the daily suffering of female heads of household inside the Za'atari refugee camp, and the importance of providing cash assistance for them, in the short term, and professional training, in the long term, to achieve their economic empowerment and independence. Additionally, Maha's story calls attention to the obstacles for family reunions when an individual adult Syrian male needs to cross the borders into the Za'atari camp.

This section highlighted the ways in which online media representations (that was discussed in the sections The Dominant Representations of the Syrian Refugee Women in Global Media and The Refugees not Captives Campaign Representations) robbed Syrian refugee women of their agency and invisiblize the complexity and variety of such stories of struggling for freedom, suffering from violence and war, and resisting inequality and injustice. Stories similar to the examples of Maha, Sima, Mona, Rim, Hala, and Karima's

are invisible in global and social media representations. The stories of Maha, Sima, Mona, Rim, Hala, and Karima show how Syrian women have heterogeneous experiences through the process of becoming refugees, and refute the dominant global and social media representations that minimized Syrian women experiences to passive victims of war and subject of forced marriage in exchange for money by their families. While all these women faced forms of structural violence by the Syrian regime, the intersectional relations of their class, age, education, family status, and place of origin made their experiences significantly different. Each one --Maha, Sima, Mona, Rim, Hala, and Karima-- finds her own way to survive the Syrian War and to cope with everyday life in her refugee destination. Women like Rim and Hala, who are both educated, young, and from upper/middle class families, find a purpose in continuing activism in Jordan to help bringing justice and positive change to refugee women's lives. Women like Karima, who is a mother, uneducated, and from a lower class family, find a purpose in protecting their children and securing the best future that they can afford based on their circumstances. In Karima's case this means escaping Syria as well as the Jordanian refugee camp and, in Amman, sending her children again to school. The individual experiences of each one of these women tell us multiple aspects about the main challenges that Syrian refugee women undergo and highlight women's historical and political agency in coping with these challenges.

The dominant social and global representations of Syrian refugee women invisibilize the political and economical relational issues as well as structural inequalities that impacted the ways Syrian women experience the process of becoming a refugee.

Syrian refugee women's lives are impacted by systems of power and privilege that make their voices and stories largely marginalized both in media and reality. Syrian refugee women's representations in the media are limited to only victims of forms of oppression by their "backward men" with no visibility of forms of exploitation that blame for examples international organizations policies and corruption as was highlighted in Maha's story. Syrian refugee women's political and historical agency is manifested in different forms of resisting political and social injustice in both Syria and Jordan. However, there are systems of privilege and power that silence and marginalize some women's voices more than others. For example, women such as Rim and Hala who have the education and class privileges have more visibility in comparison with women such as Maha and Karima who lack such privileges. Additionally, women such as Sima are - because of their class, place of origin, and age- marginalized among Syrian mainstream activist organizations in comparison with young Damascene women such as Rim and Hala.

Invisible Humanitarian Activism Strategies to Meet Refugee Women's Needs

The activist informal and non-governmental organizations that I worked with in Jordan tackle refugee women's issues from three main approaches: a charitable approach, an Islamic feminist approach, or a secular feminist approach. Most organizations that I worked with whether they have a charitable approach or feminist approach, prioritize the needs of female heads of households. In this section, I will provide three examples of three different types of activist and non-governmental organizations that represent the

above three approaches, and I will outline their strategies to meet refugee women's needs as well as some of the challenges that these activists face in their work. The first example is the Molham Volunteering Team, which represents a charitable approach for undertaking refugee women's issues. The second example is the Syrian Women Association in Jordan, which represents an Islamic feminist approach of confronting refugee women's issues. The third example is the Jordanian Women's Union, which represents a secular feminist approach for dealing with refugee women's issues.

The Molham Volunteering Team

The Molham Volunteering Team represents a type of Syrian informal organization that was formed in Jordan after the Syrian Uprising by Syrian activists (mainly from the upper/middle class) who fled Syria and came to Jordan to find refuge. This type of organization is based on a charitable approach for undertaking refugee women's issues and its purpose is to response to the Syrian refugee crisis. The Molham Volunteering Team was founded on November 20, 2012. Hatem (22, Syrian activist and founder of the Molham Volunteering Team) founded the team 10 days after he fled from his hometown in Syria to Jordan due to an aggressive mission from the Syrian regime to arrest all activists that are involved with any aspect, peaceful or armed, of the Syrian Uprising. According to Hatem, Molham, who was Hatem's best friend, is a "martyr" (Shahid in Arabic) who, previous to his death, joined the Syrian Free Army and then had been killed/martyred on November 6, 2012. In contrast to his best friend, Hatem did not join any armed aspect of the Syrian Uprising. From the beginning, he was only involved

in peaceful and humanitarian activism. Hatem, who wanted to continue his peaceful and

humanitarian activism in the diaspora, met with around 10 other Syrian young activists in

Jordan to found a new humanitarian activist informal organization. Grieving the death of

his friend, Hatem suggested to his new activists fellows to name the new team in honor of

the memory of his friend Molham. The first few weeks, the team was self-funded by its

members who mostly were descendants of upper-middle class Syrian families. In these

weeks, the team worked on psychological support for Syrian refugee children through

organizing day-long, festivity-like entertainment activities. The team rose to fame among

communities interested in helping Syrian refugees because of three main factors:

establishing a Facebook page, running their work and funding with transparency, and

symbolizing, because of the team members' young ages, the spirit of the original Arab

Spring movements.

  With increasing transnational donations, the team was able to expand its activities

to aid refugees with needed items like blankets and clothes. Such aid was extremely

important when a renowned snowstorm hit Jordan in the winter of 2013 and caused

significant damage to refugees who lived in tents inside the Za'atri Camp. Through its

Facebook page, the team was able to network with 150 other activist Facebook pages to

disseminate their contact information with descriptions of the negative effects of the

snowstorm on the Za'atri refugees' lives. The team started to receive approximately 500

telephone calls per day from people interested in helping. The donations allowed the

team's members to expand their work outside Za'atri camp. They started to open

goodwill market days where they rented a large hall and filled it with different size

clothes and blankets. Each goodwill market day, they invited around 230 needy refugee families to come and got what they needed. The team took such activities to cover different Jordanian cities and regions such as Amman, Jerash, Ajloun, and Al-Karak in Southern Jordan. The team conducted field visits twice a week to needy refugee households to evaluate their situations, and then another two days a week they distribute aid accordingly. Inside the Za'atri camp, the team prioritized helping households that were headed by women whose husbands were martyred/killed by the Syrian regime (such as Karima). The team members generally filmed or photographed stories of needy refugees as proof of their situations, and then shared the visuals and stories online to reach more than 20 thousand followers. Hatem confirmed that, in most cases, shortly after posting the stories they found additional support for the refugee needs.

While the Molham Volunteering Team prioritizes the needs of female heads of households, Rim (a Syrian female activist) highlighted some challenges that she faced in her work with female heads of households. These challenges related to the shyness of many women to ask for help and their lack of fundamental courage to name what they need. According to Rim, generally, women identified their children's needs but not their own needs. Thus Rim and her female colleagues decided that their mission should be to find alternative ways to investigate the needs of female heads of households. Rim said that she and some of her female colleagues registered in probably 4 different psychological support trainings in Jordan. Their purpose was to learn more about strategies to communicate better with refugee women and children and politely encourage women to express their feelings and needs. Rim also highlighted that the

Molham Volunteering Team was studying how they can develop a project for cooking, where they can provide female heads of households with raw materials such as vegetables and oil, and then help women get access to the market to sell products they make through cooking.

Syrian Women Association in Jordan

The Syrian Women Association in Jordan (SWA) represents a type of Syrian informal organization that was formed in Jordan before the Syrian Uprising by Syrian women who are descendants of Hama City, and their families came to Jordan as refugees during the 1980s after the Hama massacre that I discussed in Chapter 1. This type of organization is based on an Islamic feminist approach of confronting refugee women's issues. The organization was founded in 2006 to serve the Syrian community in Jordan, but it is an informal organization because Jordanian regulations do not issue a permit for organizations that do not have Jordanian citizens among its board members. After the Syrian Uprising, the SWA was among the first organizations to work with Syrian refugees in northern Jordanian cities such as Mafraq, and Ar-Ramtha, where the SWA sent teams on missions to search for Syrian refugees and offer them aid services. With the increasing refugee crisis and the influx of Syrians to Jordan, the SWA opened new offices in Amman to offer aid to the new incoming refugees.

Currently, the SWA operates a housing center for wives of martyrs, where they host women who lost their husbands in the war. Rudina (an Islamic feminist activist) indicated that many of these women are minors who got married early and brought

children with them. In the summer of 2013, the center for wives of martyrs had 30

families, and the SWA trained 10 out of 30 female heads of households in literacy. The

SWA also operates a center for war-injured people, a center for Quran memorization, and

a center for children's education and entertainment that works with 500 children.

Additionally, the SWA has a workshop center for professional trainings for both women

and young people. The training programs include educational courses on literacy,

computer use, foreign language acquisition, and graphics editing software. It also

includes applied training for women in traditional female occupations like sewing,

hairdressing, knitting, and embroidery.

The SWA has five social research teams. Each one of these five teams consists of

two women and one man. The mission of these teams is to investigate the status of

families who register for help at the association center. Then, the social research team

visits the registered families and investigates their financial, psychological, and health

situations. Based on this analysis and investigation, they decide which families are most

in need of help and the quantity and quality of needed help. By June 2013, there were

more than 10,000 Syrian refugee families that registered for aid at the SWA.

The SWA values and pays attention to education and encourages refugee families

to send their children to schools, especially since the Jordanian government opened

Jordan's public schools for Syrian children free of charge and offered many facilities and

services. However, the SWA conducted a survey with 370 refugee families measuring

children school enrollment ratios. The results show that 72.5% of children dropped out

school; one reason for this situation is that many families thought that their stay in Jordan

is for few months and then they will go back to Syria. The SWA also works for psychological support for women and girls, and they reported that many adolescent girls go through depression.

Both Rudina (an Islamic feminist activist) and Lin (an activist) hoped that the SWA will be an example of an Islamic feminist organization that represent Muslim women as leaders. They shared their concerns about the misrepresentations of Islam not just by media but also by Islamist groups in the region. While politically there is association between Muslim Brotherhood and the SWA, Rudina and Lin wished that women will have the same equal participation and representation as men in the future of Syria.

The Jordanian Women's Union

The Jordanian Women's Union (JWU) represents a type of Jordanian non-governmental organization that was formed, decades ago, in Jordan. This type of organization is based on a secular feminist approach for dealing with Jordanian women's issues and responds to regional refugee crises such as the Palestinian, Iraqi, and Syrian crises. The JWU is an independent civil society organization that started in 1945. Twice in 1957 and in 1981, under Jordanian emergency law, the union was suspended. In 1990 after the abolition of the emergency law, the union started working again and went through a long and major restructuring process.

Currently, the JWU has 11 district branches across Jordan and 3 operational centers (Al-Hussein Refugee Camp, Wehdat Refugee Camp, and Hitten Refugee Camp).

Since 1999, the JWU also runs a women's shelter for those escaping abusive situations and a hosting house for children whose parents are divorcing where visitation occurs by court order or by parental agreement. Many of the JWU founders and current workers are Jordanian Palestinian feminists. Some of them came to Jordan as Palestinian refugees and lived in refugee camps. The JWU work has a feminist and progressive political agenda and has worked with Palestinian and Iraqi refugee women for years. After the Syrian refugee crisis, the JWU started working with Syrian women and also launched a project with UNICEF for Syrian children. While the union mainly aims to target Syrian women, they also welcome Syrian men and children who need psychological, social and legal consultation. The union focuses on working with female heads of households, especially those without provider or income resources and who have no place to stay. The JWU offers training programs for women in traditional female businesses like sewing, knitting, and embroidery. This union also offers free courses for women in computer use and English language acquisition. Every Monday from 11 a.m to 1 p.m, the JWU in the al-Hussein Camp organizes entertainment activities for Syrian refugee children as a way of offering psychological support. Depending on available funds and resources, the JWU offers various free-of-charge medical services, and when they lack resources, the union transfers patients to other public hospitals or charity centers. Both Hadia (Executive Director) and Ola (social worker) assured that they use their personal networks whenever they face a case where traditional organizational channels are insufficient to help address a specific situation for a refugee person.

The JWU advocates for Syrians' right of free movement and work inside Jordan. Executive Director Hadia stated that the JWU is against the opening of the Za'atri refugee camp in Jordan, and instead, the union advocates for the entrance of the refugees into the country as free people who have the right to work and live within the Jordanian community. They launched an online campaign, via Facebook, called "Yes for the closing of the Za'atri," and the JWU's members shared media statements about this campaign. The JWU also built their campaign on Arab nationalism because both Syrians and Jordanians are Arabs, and thus Syrians should have the right of free movement and work inside Jordan.

The JWU helps Syrian refugee women, especially female heads of households, to understand their new roles by conducting psychological support sessions and field visits to the women's houses. Hadia confirmed that there are negative and positive sides of the new roles of Syrian refugee women. Many Syrian refugee women that the JWU work with come from a poor background where women used to live according to gender traditional roles: women are responsible for domestic tasks and men are responsible for economic security and earning income. Thus, after becoming refugees, many women suddenly, and in most cases shockingly, found themselves responsible for family economic security in addition to their traditional domestic tasks. According to JWU Executive Director Hadia and JWU social worker Ola, refugee women, even those who came to Jordan with their husbands, are the ones who go to humanitarian organizations to secure aid or to find paid jobs. The negative side of such new roles is that women's new roles cause imbalance in power relations between women and men inside the family, and

that might raise domestic violence and increase depression in men. The positive side is that many women start to question their traditional roles and to explore new roles for themselves. Beside psychological support, the JWU helps refugee women to cope with their new roles by organizing professional trainings based on women's needs and wishes.

Activists Use of ICTs: Advantages and Disadvantages

At the time of conducting the fieldwork for this thesis, the Refugees not Captives campaign was the major and most famous campaign regarding Syrian refugee women in Jordan. As was described in the above sections, this campaign is limited to online activism with relatively no offline presence in Jordan. Also through social media, the campaign plays a similar role to conventional media in promoting stereotypical and hegemonic understanding of Syrian refugee women's issues. The other seven activist informal and non-governmental organizations that I worked with prioritize humanitarian activism in their online and offline work. While their offline activism has in many cases a feminist component, the online activism of these seven organizations is mainly for humanitarian purposes with no visibility of the diversity of refugee women's experiences. The previous section provided three detailed examples of three different types of activist and non-governmental organizations that outline further the ways in which online and offline activism overlap and diverge. In this section I will provide an understanding of how the activists I interviewed used ICTs in their work in Syria and then in Jordan and what were the advantages and disadvantages of ICTs for the

activists. Then I will conclude with some recommendations that the activists I

interviewed suggested to develop activism in regard to refugee women.

The Syrian activists that I interviewed confirmed that ICTs, during the peaceful

phase of the Syrian Uprising, were tools that helped them to film and photograph the

Syrian regime's abuses, to share this documentation with the world through social

media, and to diffuse the protests. For instance Kamilia (a female Syrian humanitarian

activist) explained:

> …during the Syrian Revolution communication technologies helped us a lot in
> filming and photographing our protests as well as the Syrian regime violations.
> We used to film and photograph what was happening and then send that
> information through our emails to media outlets and activists outside Syria.
> These technologies helped us to let the world know what was happening in
> Syria. For me, I used Facebook for disseminating news and YouTube for
> circulating videos.

Similar to Kamilia, most activist I interviewed acknowledge ICTs positive role as

resources to document atrocities and violations as well as for mobilizing collective

action; however, many of these activists expressed deep concerns about the negative

role of ICTs, which were also resources in the Syrian regime hands to surveil, attack,

and trace activists. The following comments further explain these risks:

> In Syria, I avoided using my mobile phone and my Facebook account for my
> activism. Internet and phones were under the Syrian regime surveillance. If I used
> Facebook for any activism activity, I would immediately delete all the messages
> and posts. I used to use Skype more than other platforms because it used to be
> more secure and was harder to trace. I used to utilize Facebook via proxy
> programs that protected my identity and location. However, the Syrian regime
> agents and supporters were so active online that they used various social media
> channels to trace opposition activists and report their activities (Rim, 26, Syrian
> activist and volunteer with different humanitarian organizations).
>
> …When the security officers arrested me, they told me that they know everything
> about me. They ordered me to report to them about all my activities! They

threatened that they will arrest my father! They showed me transcriptions of all my mobile phone calls, and they started reading passages from these transcriptions including my calls with my father! (Riham, 24, a Syrian female activist, a former detainee in Syrian prisons).

…The negative side of communication technologies is that they made us very traceable to the Syrian regime. One could not only endanger oneself for detention but also the entire network and community. I feel how I use communication technologies changed between Syria and here in Jordan. In Syria I was more brave and enthusiastic that my activism and writing can achieve a change… I used Twitter back then to report about all the news that happened around me including bombing and arrests… Since the day I arrived in Jordan, I do not use Twitter that much. I feel everything I write is meaningless! (Sarah, 28, a Syrian female activist and worker at international humanitarian organization that operates inside the Za'atri camp).

Rim's, Riham's, and Sarah's statements underlined the ways in which the Syrian regime took advantage of ICTs by violating the privacy and security of the activists in order to silence them and intimidate them to flee Syria.

Ola's (55, social worker at the Jordanian Women's Union in the al-Hussein Camp) perspective highlights differences between the ways in which activist informal Syrian organizations in Jordan and activist formal Jordanian organizations implement their projects and secure their funding. In her interview, Ola clarified that ICTs do not play any significant role at the tasks her organization regularly performs: "Communication technologies do not offer that much potential in our organizational work because we are an institutional organization. Maybe communication technologies help the young independent activists more." Unlike institutional organizations such as the Jordanian Women's Union (JWU), informal Syrian organizations that I met in Jordan such as the Molham Volunteering Team and the Relief Syrian Refugees in Jordan group were formed by activists and volunteers who gained mainly organizational experience by their

participation in the Syrian Uprising. Such informal organizations cannot apply for

funding from international organizations because they do not have a license. Thus they

secure funding through individual and unofficial donations. Here ICTs offer these

independent activists significant opportunities to network and secure funding and

support. The following comments highlight ICTs advantages in informal Syrian

humanitarian activism in Jordan:

> Our online and offline work is complementary. Frankly, the work of the social
> media activists is as important as the work of the field activists. For those of us
> who are field activists, the Facebook activists help us a lot because we report
> about an urgent case by disseminating the story online and networking between us
> and the possible donors. The online and offline activism are interconnected and
> complement each other. 90% of the donations that we receive come to us via
> Facebook through communicating with our followers. As field activists, when we
> conduct research about a situation of people in need, the Internet is our tool to
> help these people. If we do not publish the news about such people's situations on
> our Internet page, we would not receive any support (Hatem, 22, Syrian activist
> and founder of the Molham Volunteering Team).

> Communication technologies help me in doing my work in a more fast and
> efficient way, and they assist me in networking with many people. In my work,
> Skype is the most practical and productive communication application. Twitter
> helps me promote large campaigns to collect donations. Facebook helps me to
> establish interactive communication with many people and to share with them
> photos and posts about the needy cases. Skype is better for individual and
> personal communication with donors (Mohammad, 24, Syrian activist).

> After the revolution, I co-founded an activist group with other Damascene young
> women, and we were working on the ground in humanitarian activism and in
> psychological support. We were doing very good work, work on a large scale!
> But we didn't have any support or funding! We were self-funded, and that was
> not enough! So we created a Facebook page for our group, and through that we
> started to receive further donations and funding, especially from Syrian and Arab
> women in Saudi Arabia (Riham, 24, a Syrian female activist, a former detainee in
> Syrian prisons).

> Social media facilitates my humanitarian activism work. Communication with
> people became easier especially through Facebook which allowed me to be in
> contact with high profile people and thus secure funding and support for our

humanitarian projects. Sometimes I feel that Facebook is like a psychiatric therapy channel. Once when I was in the Za'atari refugee camp and witnessed some challenges and problems, I went back home and used Facebook to talk about these problems and that comforted me. For example, one time through my organization I was helping the UNHCR in distributing aid inside the camp. Thousands of families were lining up in extremely cold weather to get their aid boxes. The distributing process was so slow- a couple of families every hour! While people were freezing, the UNHCR employees were wasting time chatting. I was so upset and frustrated that I wrote a Facebook post criticizing the UNHCR's work and that initiated long discussions and comments by other humanitarian activists not only in Jordan but also in Egypt. That day, I learned a lot about the UN work in Egypt and the difficulties of humanitarian activism there (Ahmad, 23, activist and manager at an international organization).

Hatem's, Mohammad's, Riham's, and Ahmad's comments demonstrate the crucial role of ICTs as resources to network and secure funding and support. An important issue that was raised in Mohammad's and Hatem's comments were that these activists built trust and reliable relationships with their donors through sharing via ICTs posts about--and also sometimes photographs and videos of--those people needing assistance and/or receipts of, for example, payments for housing and medicines. Shadia (30, a Syrian female activist resident in Amman) shared her organization experience in building trust with donors through ICTs:

In my group, communication technologies help us to establish reliable personal communication with different individuals and organizations. For instance, an organization based in the UK twice sent us 1000 Euros. Through the Internet and Facebook in return we send donors photos of the people that we helped and the places where we distributed aid, if these people agreed to let us take such photos. We also write receipts when we give aid and ask the people needing aid to sign them, and then we send photos of the receipts to the donors.

While the above statements of activists and leaders of informal organizations such as Hatem, Mohammad, Riham, Ahmad, and Shadia confirm the advantages of ICTs in building trust with donors, activists such Kamilia (29, a female Syrian humanitarian

activist) in her following comment warns that the situation is not "rosy" and that ICTs

are, on the one hand, resources for networking and building reliable relationships with

donors, but, on the other hand, many scams and inaccurate humanitarian help request

come through these technologies:

> You cannot trust all help requests that come through the Internet. Sometimes
> people publish stories of some cases that seem very urgent, but, in fact, they are
> not! Once someone published that there is an urgent case in Irbid where a Syrian
> blind woman is out in the street and is homeless. We went to the described
> location on a field visit to investigate the situation. We discovered that what is on
> the ground is very different from what is described on the Internet. The woman
> was with her husband and many other people, and their situation was not an
> urgent one.

Kamilia's comment is similar to the critiques that were raised earlier by Rim, Riham, and

Sarah regarding the disadvantage of ICTs as resources that can be used both for and

against social change activism. Thus the offline activism remains the major indicator for

the actual success of any social change movement. Heba's (38, a Syrian women's rights

activist) perspective supports the previous point:

> Social media is a good resource to promote issues like human rights and women's
> rights, but it is not enough because in the end it is just a virtual reality. It is not
> enough in a humanitarian crisis like the current Syrian situation to just talk and do
> media campaigns, we need to do work on the ground. We need to provide people
> with protection and for their basic needs! We need to provide people with
> psychological support! We need to provide assistance to war rape victims! In
> addition to the topics that had been discussed through communication
> technologies, there are many things that need to be done on the ground!

After discussing in the preceding paragraphs the ways in which online and offline

activism overlap and diverge and the advantages and disadvantages of ICTs for the

activists, I will share in the next paragraphs the main recommendations that the activists I

interviewed suggested to continue to develop activism in regard to Syrian refugee

women.

The Syrian activists' recommendations prioritize investing in refugee women's

skills and talents to avoid a situation where women depend only on charity. Their

recommendations advocate creating more projects to help women to continue their

education and/or to support themselves financially. The following comments represent

such recommendations:

> It is important for women to be involved in professional development projects such as learning handicrafts and literacy. Many refugee women find themselves in a new situation where they have a lot of free time. They need to be involved in productive projects to use this free time (Rula, 33, a Syrian media activist resident in Amman).

> We should not leave refugee women standing on the doorsteps of the charity organizations, we should work to provide them with training and work opportunities. Refugee women should be trained to be productive workers and economically independent. Women should not depend on charity organizations because these organizations' funds can stop at any moment and because many of these organizations lack respect for women's human dignity. Also, there are sometimes special calculations in distributing aid, and I learned that inside the Za'atri camp there are specific families that form a type of mafia that controls aid (Ola, 55, social worker at an NGO in the al--Hussein Camp).

> In the Za'atri camp, refugee women have much free time. Many of them used to work back in Syria and now they just stay in their homes. Some of them were continuing their higher education! But now in Jordan they cannot work or study because Jordanian regulations restrict such options. I recommend projects to help women to continue their education and to support themselves financially (Sarah, 28, a Syrian female activist and worker at international humanitarian organization that operates inside the Za'atri camp).

Additional recommendations for the future concern developing the work of the activist

informal organizations. Mohammad (24, Syrian activist, resident in Jordan before the

Syrian uprising) compared the efficiency of activist informal organizations with more

institutional international humanitarian organizations: "Honestly, Syrian activists are the spine of humanitarian work in Jordan. It is true that the big humanitarian organizations have money and resources, but Syrian activists are more efficient in reaching out to the most needy cases of refugees." Hatem (22, Syrian activist and founder of the Molham Volunteering Team) provided more detailed recommendations for how activist informal organizations can increase their efficiency:

> Unite efforts between all the humanitarian aid groups in Jordan so we can divide the geographic regions in a way that each group will cover a particular swath. This will prevent a situation where one family would get five times the allotted support and another family would get nothing. By support I do not only mean financial support but also psychological support. Many refugee families have no friends or relatives here, and just visiting them is a form of psychological support that they are in much need of… We need to encourage people, from all around the globe, to donate more by reporting to them the reality of the situation without exaggeration or minimizing… We need to develop a sponsorship program where a family from the Arab Gulf, Europe, or the U.S can guarantee support of a refugee family by sponsoring such a family in Jordan through sending regular donations as monthly stipends. This is better than sending random donations.

The activists further provided recommendations related to encouraging the visibility of women as demonstrated through Ahmad's comment: "I encourage work toward more visibility of women in the media and their huge role in the revolution. Women like Rima Fliehan are continuing to work with refugees in exile and they significantly help people to overthrow their hardship" (Ahmad, 23, activist and manager at Qatar Red Crescent). The activists also referred to the invisibility of other marginalized groups such as the Syrian Palestinian refugees[34] mentioned, for example, in Mohammad's comment:

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[34] Prior to the conflict the Palestine refugee community in Syria consisted of 529,000 people. Currently, two-thirds of this population is displaced within the region. Of the current Palestine refugee population in

> No one is talking about Syrian Palestinian refugees! Palestinians who were refugees in Syria are banned from registering once again as refugees in Jordan. This situation makes Syrian Palestinian refugees victims of a double violence. Their situation is worse than Syrian refugees because even inside Syria Palestinian refugees' mobility is restricted and they cannot move within the country as if they were Syrians (Mohammad, 24, Syrian activist, resident in Jordan before the Syrian uprising).

Finally, some activists such as Heba (38, a Syrian women's rights activist) in her following comments referred in their recommendations to the essential cause of most refugees' issues and problems, which is finding a prompt, fair peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis:

> I recommend: launching campaigns to improve the work of international organizations especially the UNHCR; working to meet the people's needs; solving the Syrian crisis because if the conflict lasts longer the effects of it on women, Syrian families, and hosted communities would be worse; advocating for international pressure to end the Syrian conflict and encourage the returning of the Syrian refugees to their country; and finally, creating specialized and wide-spread psychological support projects of refugees that recruit huge numbers of volunteers.

In this section I provided an understanding of how the activists I interviewed used ICTs in their work in Syria and then in Jordan, what were the advantages and disadvantages of ICTs for the activists, and the main recommendations that the activists I interviewed suggested to develop future activism in regard to refugee women.

Syria, approximately half are women, including 24,333 female headed-households. Please see UNRWA (2013, Jul 8) at http://ops.unocha.org/Reports/daily/CAPProjectSheet_1007_201499.pdf.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I will summarize main points that were explored in the previous

chapters of this thesis and the four major research questions that were proposed in the

introductory chapter. Then, I will discuss three issues that have arisen from my research

and analysis process. These three issues deal with the applicability of social movement

theories to humanitarian activism; the usage of the ICTs for funding and gender

representations messages; and the relationship between gender and transitional justice.

This thesis intended to document how the online activism regarding Syrian

refugee women is translated to the offline sphere; what the experiences, issues and

concerns of refugee women are; and whether this online activism reflects the real

concerns of the refugee women. In the beginning of my thesis, I provided an

understanding of the historical and contemporary context of activism and social

movements in Syria in order to contextualize the seven activist organizations that I

worked with in Jordan in 2013 within the broader activist movement that arose in Syria. I

showed that, for example, there was no media coverage to document the atrocities of the

February 1982 Hama massacre because the Syrian regime banned international and local

media from covering the events, and there were no communication technologies that

citizens could use to record the violations and mass violence that they suffered. I also

showed that one of the main differences between the 2011 Syrian Uprising and the 1979-

1982 events is that nowadays because of people's access to resources such as mobile

phones and internet, citizens had the chance to document the Syrian regime's atrocities

and violations and share it with the world through social media. However, that did not

bring any change in favor of protecting civilians' lives because of the complexity of the broader geopolitical battles and calculations in the Middle East.

This research focused on examining four main questions. The first question concerned the role of social networking websites, such as Facebook, as channels for promoting stereotypical and/or hegemonic representations of Syrian refugee women's issues. To answer this question, I analyzed the dominant representations of Syrian refugee women in global media based on a general Google search for the words "Syrian refugee women" in late May 2013. Then I analyzed the representations of Syrian refugee women in the Arabic Facebook Refugees not Captives Campaign (RNC). I demonstrated through the analysis of the RNC campaign and global media discourse the similarities between Arabic social media campaigns and English global media in promoting stereotypical and/or hegemonic understanding of Syrian refugee women's issues. Drawing on my fieldwork in Jordan that included thirty-three in-depth, semi-structured interviews and approximately 100 hours of participant observation, I highlighted the critiques of the activist community in Jordan regarding the RNC campaign and global media representations. These critiques demonstrated that: first, the RNC campaign is limited to online activism with relatively no offline presence in Jordan; second, the campaign misrepresented on the one hand Syrian women's realities and needs and on the other hand Jordanian people; third, the campaign distorted the original meaning of the Syrian Uprising; fourth, the campaign participated in supporting the Syrian regime's propaganda; and fifth, the campaign, similar to global media, invisibilized the diverse

roles and stories of Syrian refugee women and minimized Syrian women's concerns and suffering to only forced marriages and other similar issues.

The second question was about the ways in which different formal and informal organizations translate their online activism to the offline sphere and what their strategies are to meet the needs of Syrian refugee women and families. I demonstrated that the activist informal and non-governmental organizations that I worked with prioritize humanitarian activism in their online and offline work. I provided three detailed examples of three different types of activist and non-governmental organizations that outline further the ways in which online and offline activism overlap and diverge. I showed that the activist informal and non-governmental organizations that I worked with in Jordan tackle refugee women's issues from three main approaches: a charitable approach, an Islamic feminist approach, or a secular feminist approach.

I concluded that while these organizations' offline activism has in many cases a feminist component, the online activism of these seven organizations is mainly for humanitarian purposes with no visibility of the diversity of refugee women's experiences.

The third question was about how activists use ICTs in their work generally and in relation to refugee women's issues specifically and the advantages and disadvantages of ICTs in this regard. I demonstrated that during the peaceful phase of the Syrian Uprising, ICTs played a positive role as resources in the hands of the Syrian activists to document atrocities and violations as well as for mobilizing collective action; however, many of these activists expressed deep concerns about the negative role of ICTs, which were also resources for the Syrian regime to surveil, attack, and trace activists in order to

silence them and/or intimidate them to flee Syria. I elucidated the differences between the ways in which activist informal Syrian organizations in Jordan and activist formal Jordanian organizations implement their projects and secure their funding. I concluded that while ICTs offer independent informal Syrian activists organizations significant opportunities to network and secure funding and support, they are still resources that can be used both for and against social change activism. Thus the offline activism remains the major indicator for the actual success of any social change movement. Additionally, I outlined the main recommendations that the activists I interviewed suggested to continue to develop activism in regard to Syrian refugee women. These recommendations prioritized investing in refugee women's skills and talents to avoid a situation where women depend only on charity, and thus the activists advocated to create more projects to help women to continue their education and/or to support themselves financially. Further recommendations for the future concern: developing the work of the activist informal organizations, encouraging the visibility of refugee women and other marginalized groups such as the Syrian Palestinian refugees, and advocating for a fair, peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis.

The fourth question aimed to make visible some of the untold stories of Syrian women fighting for freedom and surviving the war, prison, and displacement. I argued that there is no singular category that fits all "Syrian refugee women" in contrast to the dominant representations of global and social media, and I narrated and analyzed six stories of Syrian refugee women who represent different marginalized groups, based on the intersections of their class, age, education, family statue, and place of origin. I

demonstrated that stories similar to the examples of Maha, Sima, Mona, Rim, Hala, and Karima are invisible in global and social media representations. I showed how, through the process of becoming refugees, Syrian women have heterogeneous experiences, which refute the dominant global and social media representations that minimized Syrian women's stories to not only passive victims of war but also subjects of forced marriage in exchange for money by their families.

In this section I will discuss three issues that arise from my research and analysis process. These three issues deal with the applicability of social movement theories to humanitarian activism; the usage of the ICTs for funding and gender representations messages; and the relationship between gender and transitional justice. The first issue relates to applying Social Movement Theory (SMT) and New Social Movement Theory (NSMT) to humanitarian activism. As it was demonstrated in the Literature Review, the SMT and the NSMT generally apply to social movements with direct or indirect political goals. This thesis suggests that these two theories are applicable not only to political activism but also to humanitarian activism in conflict-related settings. Thus the SMT and the NSMT are applicable to the continuing activism that took the form of humanitarian assistance for refugees in Jordan because within this activism there are manifestations of the NSMT concept of collective identity and the SMT concept of resources mobilization.

Most activists who were interviewed for this research, Syrians or non-Syrians, support implicitly or explicitly the Syrian Uprising. This support shapes a collective identity as a part of a process toward constructing a multipolar action system "in which individuals who act collectively try to form a more or less stable 'we' by negotiating on

goals, means, and the environment within which their actions take place" (Klandermans, 1990, p. 222). Such a collective identity was demonstrated in the ways in which the interviewees shared an emancipatory meaning of the Syrian Uprising for both Syrian men and women, and for them this meaning formed a collective identity in which 'we' means the people of the Syrian Revolution. This collective identity constructed the activists' collective action first in Syria and then in Jordan. In the cases where the activists were non-Syrian, 'we' means the people of the Arab Uprisings. Therefore, it is understood that both secular and Islamist activists perceived the RNC campaign as a service for the Syrian regime's propaganda because the RNC campaign's message distorts the underpinnings of the collective identity of these activists, which is the emancipatory nature of the Syrian Revolution. Additionally, by participating in humanitarian activism, most of the activists that were interviewed for this thesis search for their individual identities and invest cognitively and emotionally in pursuing social change for Syrian refugees in Jordan but ultimately hope for political change against the Al-Assad regime to take place in Syria. Such a shared meaning of political and social change constructed the Syrian activists' collective action in Jordan.

The availability of resources, as was explained in the SMT concept of resources mobilization, especially Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), were extremely crucial elements to facilitate the establishment, mobilization, and diffusion of informal Syrian activist organizations such as the Molham Volunteering Team and the Relief Syrian Refugees in Jordan. For the formally established organizations in Jordan such as the Jordanian Women's Union and the Syrian Women Association in Jordan,

ICTs do not play any significant role at the tasks that the organizations regularly or strategically perform. In contrast, for the emerging informal Syrian activist organizations such as the Molham Volunteering Team and the Relief Syrian Refugees in Jordan, ICTs play a significant role at both the organizations daily and strategic tasks including networking, building trust and reliable relationships, and securing funding and support. Therefore, the success and the continuity of the emerging informal Syrian activist organizations depended largely on the activists' access to the ICTs and their efficiency in using such resources for mobilizing efforts for their cause.

The second issue that arises from my research and analysis process relates to the usage of the ICTs for funding and gender representations messages. While most activists I interviewed have similar critiques of the dominant representations of women in global media and in social media such as the Refugees not Captives (RNC), none of the formal or informal organizations that I worked with in Jordan use counter dominant representations in their website and social media pages. For the formally established organizations such as the Jordanian Women's Union and the Syrian Women Association in Jordan, their online pages are mainly devoted to communicate the organizations' messages and activities in a way that attract regional and international funding. For the emerging informal Syrian activist organizations such as the Molham Volunteering Team and the Relief Syrian Refugees in Jordan, these organizations' online pages are not devoted in any way to gender-based social change. This is the main difference between, on the one hand, the Refugees not Captives (RNC) campaign, and on the other hand, organizations such as the Molham Volunteering Team and the Relief Syrian Refugees in

Jordan. While all these organizations emerged in the context of the Syrian Uprising and the subsequent refugee crisis, the RNC is the only organizational campaign that claimed a gender-based social change message. Other organizations such as the Molham Volunteering Team and the Relief Syrian Refugees in Jordan have a gender component in their offline activities by, for example, prioritizing the needs of female heads of households. However such a gender component does not reflect, claim, or represent a gender-based social change message. Therefore further research should be conducted to analyze and examine the ways in which Syrian activist organizations promote and/or challenge, via social networking websites, dominant representations of Syrian refugee women. In this thesis I intended to share Syrian refugee women's stories in a way that make visible the complexity and variety of refugee women's stories hoping that activist organizations which work with refugee women will follow such a model in their future work and fundraising.

The third issue that arises from my research and analysis process relates to gender and transitional justice. Transitional justice is a "response to systematic or widespread violations of human rights. It seeks recognition for victims and promotion of possibilities for peace, reconciliation and democracy" (International Center for Transitional Justice, n.d, para. 1). In this context, gender justice seeks to address gender-based human rights violations and to insure women's participation and representations in the peace-building processes. Documenting, analyzing, and making visible the stories of Syrian women's activism, suffering, and struggle in the Syrian conflict is extremely crucial to achieve gender justice in post-conflict Syria.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Questions for Activists:

Tell me a little bit about yourself? (Family status, work, education, age?)
Tell me your story what brought you to Jordan?

When and how did you start getting involved in women's rights activism?

What do you think are the main women's rights violations in Syria before the revolution?

What do you think are the main women's rights violations in Syria since the beginning of the revolution?

What do you think are the main women's rights violations in Za'atari camp?

What do you think are the main activism groups that work on women's rights in Syria?

What do you think are the successful campaigns that address Syrian refugee women's issues in Jordan?

How can you describe your participation in defending Syrian refugee women's rights?

What do you think is the differences between online and offline activism regarding Syrian refugee women's issues in Jordan?

What do you think are the main issues and challenges that refugee women have?

How ICTs facilitate your work in advocating Syrian refugee women's rights?

What do you think are the main stereotypes about Syrian refugee women?

What are your recommendations to develop the activism work that focus on Syrian refugee women's issues?

Questions for refugee women:

Tell me a little bit about yourself? (Family status, work, education, age?)

Tell me your story what brought you to Jordan?

What are the main challenges that you have faced as a woman in your life?

What are the main challenges that you face as a refugee woman since you came to Jordan?

What does it mean for you to be a refugee woman?

What are the main concerns and difficulties that you face daily as a refugee person?

Do you think the activism work address your needs?

How do you think activism work and the media can help you?

Do you know about any women stories that fled Syria because they were victims of violence?

Do you know any story about women that were victim of violence inside the camp?

Do you know any marriage stories since you first came to the camp?

What is the main change that happened in your life after you became a refugee woman?

What are the best ways in which activism campaigns can help you?

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF INTERVIEWEE NAMES

	Interviewee Name
1	Rahem (34, a male activist and expert at an international organization)
2	Rim (26, Syrian activist and volunteer with different humanitarian organizations)
3	Hatem (22, a Syrian male activist, a leader of Molham Volunteering Team)
4	Shadia (30, Syrian activist group leader of Syrian activist informal organization)
5	Sarah (28, a Syrian female activist and worker at international humanitarian organization that operate inside the Za'atri camp)
6	Hadia (56, Director of an NGO)
7	Rami (47, an independent activist)
8	Hala (21, a female Syrian activist and former detainee in Syrian prisons)
9	Rula (33 years old, a Syrian media activist resident in Amman)
10	Reem (33, psychic counselor for refugee women at international humanitarian organization that operate inside the Za'atri camp)
11	Ahmad (23, activist and manager at an international organization)
12	Ola (55, social worker at an NGO in the al--Hussein Camp)
13	Mohammad (24, Syrian activist, resident in Jordan before the Syrian uprising)
14	Heba (38, a Syrian women's rights activist)
15	Kamilia (29, a female Syrian humanitarian activist)
16	Riham (24, a Syrian female activist, a former detainee in Syrian prisons)

17	Lin (27, Islamic feminist activist)
18	Rudina (30, originally from Hama city, a refugee woman in Jordan due to the 1980s events, Islamic feminist activist)
19	Maha (40, refugee woman resident in Za'atri camp, mother of 7 children)
20	Shima (26, refugee woman resident Amman's outskirt, mother of 5 children)
21	Karima (40, refugee woman resident in Amman's outskirt, mother of 5 children)
22	Raghad (45, refugee woman resident in Amman's outskirt, mother of 4 children)
23	Hiam (29, refugee woman resident in Amman's outskirt, mother of 1 girl)
24	Lina (27, refugee woman resident in Amman's outskirt, mother of 4 children)
25	Maimona (33, refugee woman resident in Amman's outskirt, mother of 7 children)
26	Ranim (30, refugee woman resident in Amman's outskirt, mother of 3 children)
27	Mona (30, refugee woman resident in Amman's outskirt, mother of a 11 years-old girl)
28	Um Omar (49, refugee woman resident in Za'atri camp, mother of a disabled boy)
29	Dina (29, refugee woman resident in Za'atri camp)
30	Madiha (60, refugee woman resident in Za'atri camp, mother of two daughters, widow)

31	Sima (52, refugee woman, handcrafts trainer, mother of six)
31	Um Ahmad (50, refugee woman resident in Amman outskirts, mother of 5)
32	Nada (29, refugee woman resident in Za'atri camp, mother of 4)
33	Lubna (48, refugee woman resident in Amman's outskirt, mother of 3 children)