

The ÔRefugee CrisisÕ: A Case of Diverging Protection Regimes?

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

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

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

## LGBT Asylum and Queer (Im)mobilities

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

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

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

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

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

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

Queers on the Frontline: LGBT Asylum and the ÔRefugee CrisisÕ Building on this theoretical outline, MurrayÕs investigation into the Canadian asylum system highlic

minorities to appear ÔlegitimateÕ when they themselves are Muslim. Moreover, such observations an appreciation of the ways in which gender and faith intersect in the formation of queer identition relying instead on Ôdangerous shortcutsÕ (Janicel2@19).in the representation of LGBT asylum seekers.

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

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

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

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

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

## Methods

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> Forthcoming research on this issue is being published by Routledge as part of an edited volumAeGitHeddered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisi(see in particular Zeynep KivilcimÕs chapter ÒLesbian, Gay, Bisexual an Transsexual (LGBT) Syrian Refugees in TurkeyÓ)

<sup>2</sup> Recognition of LGBT refugees is framed under the 1951 Refugee Convention in relation to Art. 1A(2) **@Mprobe** Particular Social GroupÕ, although other forms of recognition are available, but often less used by sexual min-

applicants.

<sup>3</sup> ÖWomenand-childrenÕ refers to the tendency within humanitarian discourses to represent female victimhood (fand that their children) in relation to ÔMadonna and ChildÕ narratives (Del Zotto 2002). Interestingly, such representation discourses have been challenged by the context of the ÔRefugee CrisisÕ, which Jennifer Allsopp believes has given the ÔdemilitarischemasculinitiesÕ and the rendering of rassonictims (2015), an outcome clearly visible in relation to gay male refugees.

<sup>4</sup> The Gezi Park protests of 28 May 2013 saw millions of Turkish people rise up against the government in an act of conviolent resistance. Protesters, who encompassed a broad umbrella of interests, from LGBT rights, to environmental to civil liberties activists and feminists, were involved, and continue to meet regularly as a result.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> This argument has also been informed they work with the removed for anonymity purposes our methodology is built around a belief that pluralism is essential in order to develop effective, graser by disselby elopment projects. These findings also aim to contribute to an AHRESRC funded project investigating local community responses to displacemen in Turkey, Lebanon and Jord 2016-2020) led by Dr. Elena Fiddia Qasmiyeh, UCL (refugeehosts.org)