Human Security, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and Vulnerable People:
Rhetoric, Solidarity, and Silences in International Human Rights Discourses on Syrian Women
Refugees

By

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Abstract

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325, a policy constructed to address and alleviate particular vulnerabilities of women in conflict zones, was adopted over fifteen years ago. However, one does not need to look far to see that Syrian women refugees continue to face extreme and debilitating forms of suffering as they have been forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries. So, why does this gap between policy rhetoric and lived experience persist for women in conflict zones? I argue that such systematic perpetuation of violence and suffering is attributed to specific and narrow discourses about women in conflict zones from which the Resolution is built. Due to the policy's limited discursive scope on human security and vulnerability, UNSC Resolution 1325 informs representations of Syrian women in conflict zones that fail to grasp a just, comprehensive assessment of the suffering population's context. Through discourse analysis of reports published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), particular representations of Syrian women will be identified and analyzed in terms of how and to what degree they allow structural suffering and violence to continue. In addition to what framings are explicitly represented, attention will also be paid to representations that are more implicit or silenced by the Resolution's policy discourse, and how these silences simultaneously feed into persistent suffering of the widespread Syrian refugee population. Overall, naming these discursive representations will aim to shed light on a presence/absence paradigm that is structurally created in international human rights policy. The conclusions will be essential for activists and justice leaders to later engage in a genuine, collaborative, and dialogic process that privileges the complex, authentic lived human experience in order to inform more cognizant and mindful community aid, individual support, and international policy.

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Introduction

As described by Tim Dunne, the United Nations (UN) is a "multi-purpose agency dedicated to specific goals including collective security, peacekeeping, health, environmental, and human rights concerns."[1] One subset of these goals is a focus on protecting and promoting the security of women who have experienced armed conflict. The vulnerability and insecurity of women in armed conflict zones is a concern that has garnered much attention in the UN in recent decades. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 are just some UN sources that express concern for women's vulnerability and suffering in conflict zones and in post-conflict rehabilitation. The documents outline practices, goals, and benchmarks that encourage implementation of programs to explicitly address women's specific protections and needs in post-conflict humanitarian and refugee resettlement efforts. UN agencies, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and international nongovernmental organizations, such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), have dedicated considerable efforts toward translating these policy commitments into action. Together, these organizations have devoted resources to report on the plight of women in conflict zones and implement programs inspired by policy frameworks put forth by the UN. However, despite such extensive rhetorical commitments and policy frameworks, women in conflict zones continue to experience considerable suffering.

Therefore, a fundamental discrepancy appears between the policies and reporting performed by these organizations as a collective, and their practical ability to alleviate suffering. In order to locate the source of this discrepancy, this thesis asks: how has UNSC Resolution 1325 informed

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[1] Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, (2007) *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 103.

representations of women in conflict zones that have allowed their suffering to continue? I argue that UNSC Resolution 1325 was built on a narrow discursive scope on human security and vulnerability about women in conflict zones that fail to grasp a just, comprehensive assessment of the suffering population's context which, ultimately, leaves the policy to be mal-equipped to uproot systemic suffering post-conflict.

Chapter 1 will outline the initial development of human security and vulnerability discourses within the UN body. In doing so, I will apply discourse development theory in an integrated way to the fundamental policy documents that have established the UN's human security and vulnerability discourses. By applying this theory, I will invoke policy analysis on critical UN policies that have shaped the narrow way in which human security and vulnerability discourses have been constructed for women in conflict, namely, UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 1261 and 1265, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and UNSC Resolution 1325.

Chapter 2 will establish background on the case study in which my analysis of representations of women in armed conflict zones will take place. The ongoing Syrian conflict will serve as the location for a single case-study analysis due to the conflict's immense humanitarian crisis and a geo-political interest in the conflict from many international actors. A single-case study approach has both theoretical and methodological limitations, including that the method is not rigorous enough to produce more than descriptive results. Due to this limitation, generalizations in trends, behaviors, and ideas outside of the specific population or context cannot be drawn.[2] Therefore, in this stage, I can only draw conclusions about how this discursive approach affects Syrian women refugees. However, an in-depth case study approach is

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[2] Andrew Schrank, (2006) "Essentials for the Case Study Method," in *A Handbook for the Case Study Method*, ed. Ellen Perecman and Sara Curran (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications), 171.

helpful for an initial policy analysis because the approach provides a strong foundation where

budding and nascent consequences and implications can most clearly be illuminated.[3]

Chapters 3 and 4 will fuse the the two foundations established in Chapters 1 and 2 to

critically explore how UNSC Resolution 1325's narrow human security and vulnerability

discourse is applied to representations of Syrian women refugees. This examination will be done

through discourse analysis of reports produced by UNHCR, UN Women, and IRC on the

experiences of Syrian women refugees. A discourse analysis examines the processes and

language mechanisms that create certain depictions, which ultimately lead to particular outcomes

and implications. Its methodological aim is to search for the "causes of effects" of a particular

condition.[4] In this case, I am searching for the "causes" of continued hardship among Syrian

women refugees. Chapter 3 will identify explicit representations of Syrian women refugees

across the reports that arise from Resolution 1325, and analyze the representations for their

consequences to what extent they contribute to suffering and continued vulnerability. In addition

to communicate what is being explicitly articulated in the reports, a discourse analysis must also

deconstruct what, or who, is silenced and absent. Chapter 4 will address misrepresentations and

silences that UNSC Resolution 1325's narrow discourse fails to address. Exposing these silences

will prove to be critical in demonstrating why post-conflict suffering persists for Syrian women

refugees, as well as the larger Syrian refugee population.

Finally, Chapter 5 will conclude with a discussion on recommendations for moving forward

carefully and dialogically with these discursive representations and their implications in mind. I

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[3] Giovanni Sartori, (1991) "Comparing and Miscomparing" *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 3(3): 244.

[4] Donnatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, ed., (2008) *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 222.

will speak to forms of discourse development due to the way they are able to more equally and justly speak to a diverse range of lived experiences.

I have three distinct objectives to in pursuing this thesis. I am motivated socially to challenge criticisms of the UN and its policies as inefficient, unproductive, and incompetent. Rather than simply accepting this classification, which simply discounts and discredits the policies and activity that come out of the UN and its agencies, the nexus in which policy rhetoric and implementation diverge must be critically searched for, identified, and named. That way, future policies can be fully implemented in a way that effectively addresses justice concerns for suffering and vulnerable populations. By searching for the source that obstructs policies and programs for healing, the ways in which violence and oppression can continue to exist systemically can be identified, despite international policies and rhetoric that call for human dignity, justice recognition, and social change.

My second objective in writing this thesis is political. Syria has served as the stage for one of the most prominent international conflicts occurring in recent years, and likely for years to come, due to a resulting immense humanitarian crisis and diverse military involvement by international powers. While I do not expect the following analysis to miraculously solve the many crises that have evolved out of its civil war, I do hope for my writing to bring an alternative narrative to the Syrian conflict that exposes international responsibility with the current state of suffering. In apprehending the international community's complicity with existing discourses, I hope to highlight how true reconciliation and more effective aid programs are being stalled.

My final objective is moral. By exposing the narrowing tendencies of international policies and discourses on vulnerable communities, I hope to speak to patterns of structural silencing imposed on these communities. International policies and discourses construct boundaries

around specifically defined victim communities.[5] In doing so, the policies and discourses simultaneously overshadow, silence, and manipulate the lived experiences of those who fall outside of these constructed boundaries. Without naming and recognizing the imposition of these labels and boundaries, the international community is failing to sufficiently recognize brutal realities experienced universally, by human beings, as opposed to a specific victim class. This silencing is impeding full implementation of change that could more holistically address human suffering.

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[5] Jill Bennett, (2003) "Tenebrae After September 11: Art, Empathy, and the Global Politics of Belonging," in *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*, ed. Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 178.

Chapter 1

Development of Human Security and Vulnerability Discourses by the UN

1.1 Overview of Discourse Development Theory

Language is arguably one of the most powerful tools in world politics today. The words one chooses, the tone one takes, and the arena in which one speaks all constitute important decisions with often lasting political implications. Essentially, how one frames an issue matters greatly.[6] The process in which discussions on international political issues are constructed, framed, understood, and remembered can be explained as discourse. The way discourse within the UN context is produced and developed is a multi-layered process, with each layer having its own specific consequence.

Discourse development can be explained through three main layers. In the first layer are initial discussions and debates of a topic. In these discussions, a specific language is created that informs how the topic comes to be understood and spoken about.[7] Through these conversations, the established language becomes the primary way in which that topic is understood.[8] However, as this language is presented as the primary mode that informs a public and widespread understanding of that topic, the language is streamlined to be presented in a simplified way. This trend happens in order to explain the topic to consuming publics in a palatable and commonly understood manner.[9] In the second layer of discourse development, the simplified language from the first layer that informed nascent understandings of a topic is then used to inform, produce,

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[6] Bob, Clifford, (2005) *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 7.

[7] Natalie Florea Hudson. (2010) *Gender, Human Security, and the United Nations* (New York: Routledge), 2.

[8] Ibid, 18.

[9] Fionnuala N. Aoláin, (2011) "Women, Vulnerability, and Humanitarian Emergencies," *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law* 18 (1): 5.

and justify policy in relation to the topic being discussed.[10] The third layer of discourse construction is the application of its particular policy language as the primary framework to inform and construct representations of populations in individual conflict cases.[11] As a process, discourse construction is a powerful concept that dictates a particular way in which an issue is discussed and understood through a streamlined and generalized language. This discourse development theory, and its multitude of consequences and implications, will be explained further as it is applied to trace how human security and vulnerability discourses for women in conflict zones have been established by the UN body.

1.2 UN Discussion to Define Human Security

In the UN context, the first layer of discourse development is represented by initial agency discussions that construct language and concepts around a particular political issue. For human security and vulnerability discourses, this was demonstrated through the organization's evolving definition and conception of security.

Classical approaches to security are traced back to the Westphalian system consolidated in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, where major continental European states agreed to respect one another's territorial integrity and gave the state ethical claims to its primacy in security.[12] This ideal continued through the 20th century, as state security focused on the effort to sustain and promote core values of sovereignty and territoriality in their relations with one another. The state came to be understood as a site that needed to be secured and placed the military as the

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[10] Ruth Wodak, (2011) "Us and Them: Inclusion and Exclusion - Discrimination via Discourse," in *Identity, Belonging, and Migration*. ed. Gerard Delanty, Ruth Wodak, and Paul Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), 75.
[11] Sandra Whitworth. (2004) *Men, Militarism, and Peacekeeping* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers), 28.
[12] Neil MacFarlane and Yuen Foong Khong, (2006) *Human Security and the UN: A Critical History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 6.

institution that was best positioned to provide security against external threat. Thus, security became synonymous with military preparedness, as preservation of state independence and autonomy became paramount due to the onset of both World Wars.[13]

However, the post-Cold War era initiated discussions that would alter the meaning of security. Following the Cold War, the nature of conflict shifted from threats of armed conflict between nation-states, to a higher prevalence of intra-state wars of aggression, colonial occupation, civil war, systemic human rights abuses, and terrorism. In this world system, the state's credibility as the primary protector and provider of security began to be challenged.[14] The UN recognized this shift and initiated discussions to alter security language that would reflect and encompass such a shift. In 1994, the UN Development Program (UNDP) released a Human Development Report that affirmed a need for a concept and language that would encompass the changing nature of security. The report states:

> The concept of security has of too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests, or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation-states than to people…Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives. For them, security can symbolize protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression, and environmental hazards. With the dark shadows of the Cold War receding, one can now see that many conflicts are within nations rather than between nations.[15]

The report articulates a broader understanding of security, as well as the actors who may experience threats to security. UN discourse on security, at this point in time, ranges from individual and local concerns for food and economic security, to structural notions of security

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[13] Ibid, 9.
[14] Ibid, 213.
[15] United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 1994*, New York, 22. Available online: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/255/hdr_1994_en_complete_nostats.pdf

coming from political or governmental sources. By noting the diverse sources that insecurity can come from, this report affirms discussions on security to shift toward a focus that would recognize the security of civilian's lives.

Out of this report came the term "human security," as a novel concept and language to encompass this shift. Human security seeks to place the individual civilian as the principal referent of security, rather than a nation's borders. The concept privileges the claims of civilians by advocating for greater consideration to their protections, rights, and welfare in order to establish a sustainable peace.[16] This development of human security as a distinct concept and a language represents the first layer in how the UN has developed human security and vulnerability discourses. In context, the use of human security characterizes a distinct method of speaking about, understanding, and advocating for civilian protection in the face of multidimensional threats ranging from global to local.

As the UN invoked and disseminated human security as a concept more and more, discussions around human security became increasingly streamlined as a leveraging point for more specific advocacy causes. From its initial construction that advocated for general civilian security from a wide range of threats, human security increasingly became utilized as the primary language from which to express a need to protect particular demographic groups in armed conflict zones. This trend is present in the first layer of theoretical discourse development where it is explained that when the first layer's discussions enter and are repeatedly utilized in the public sphere, the concept begins to lose the multifaceted meanings behind it.[17] As a consequence, critical concepts relating to the topics, lived experiences, and debates that human

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[16] Lloyd Axworthy, (2001) "Human Security and Global Governance: Putting People First," *Global Governance* 7 (1): 20.

[17] Aoláin, "Women, Vulnerability, and Humanitarian Emergencies," 8.

security originally represented are sidelined. As a result, the language meant to portray these intricacies and complexities of the lived experience are simplified. In the context of UN human security discourses, this pattern is demonstrated by the ways in which UNSC Resolutions 1261 and 1265 limited human security language to equate and narrowly apply to the experiences of women and children in armed conflict zones.

UNSC Resolution 1261 was adopted by the UN Security Council in 1999 and expressed concern for physical and human security of children during and after armed conflict. The Resolution recognizes the harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on children and strongly condemns the targeting of children in situations of armed conflict.[18] Sections of the Resolution speak specifically to the particular needs of the girl child that arise throughout and after armed conflict. The Resolution demonstrates a narrowing of original UN human security discourses because it narrows the scope of civilian protection to one that solely recognizes a need to maintain security for children, and expresses the female experience as particularly worthy of attention. By making note of the female experience in relation to discussions on human security, the UN is effectively limiting human security language from a discourse that originally focused on the broad "citizen" to a discourse that is focused to particular cohorts. In doing so, the Resolution simplifies the original issue of all citizen security that comes under threat in conflict, to one that affects just certain populations, namely the child and female child subject.

UNSC Resolution 1265 engages in a similar process of simplifying original UN human security discourses into a narrative that encompasses insecurity and vulnerability experienced by a specific group of civilians. Also adopted in 1999, Resolution 1265 expresses concern for the increasingly high numbers of civilian casualties, presence of civilian targeting, and significant

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[18] UN Security Council Resolution 1261 (1999), *Children and Armed Conflict*, S/Res/1261: 1. Available online: https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/1261

hardships borne by civilians during armed conflict. Rather than maintaining an approach throughout its text to encompass the, presumed, multitude of civilians who may be experiencing hardships due to armed conflict, the text of the Resolution instead expresses grave concern narrowly to, "women, children, and other vulnerable groups."[19] The Resolution states that armed conflict has a direct and particular impact on women and calls for operations that provide special protection and assistance provision for women, as a group that requires particular attention.[20] Through this Resolution, it is seen how language informing human security discussions has become increasingly narrowed to specific subjects and locations of vulnerability in the UN context. The two preceding Resolutions have narrowed human security language into a rhetorical framework that focuses on the experiences, needs, and vulnerabilities of a particular demographic group, namely women and girls, who are experiencing threats to their security from a particular source, namely armed conflict.

Initial UN discussions that first invoked human security constructed the concept within a broad framework that did not establish boundaries around who specifically constituted as a vulnerable citizen and to what external force created their insecurity. However, as discourses on human security and vulnerability have developed within the UN, the organization has adopted language that has narrowed the framework of human security into one that is focused on protecting women in armed conflict zones. This pattern represents the first layer of human security discourse development on women in conflict zones by the UN. In this layer, human security has been manipulated into a simplified term that narrowly recognizes the security and

[19] UN Security Council Resolution 1265 (1999). *The Protections of Civilians in Armed Conflict*. S/Res/1265: 2. Available online: https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/1265
[20] Ibid, 1.

suffering of women in conflict zones, rather than addressing the potential vulnerability of civilians as a whole that may arise inside or outside of armed conflict areas.

A broader implication that arises from manipulating and limiting the rhetorical scope of human security discourses that speak to the experiences of vulnerable populations is that such a narrow discursive scope limits the possible narratives of vulnerability that are recognized and made visible by the UN. This layer initiates discussions that escalate into powerful tools that can rewrite, silence, and discredit experiences and arguments that are dissonant to its narrowly constructed framework. Consequently, when narratives or experiences of an individual fall outside of the UN's narrowly defined boundary of vulnerability, in this case it is women in armed conflict zones, they are largely discredited.[21] By constructing this boundary around vulnerability, discourse actively includes certain groups by legitimating and voicing their experiences, while excluding others. Therefore, the opinion, narrative, or experience of an individual that diverges from this dominant discourse subsequently finds his voice, dignity, and integrity discredited, minimized, and silenced.

1.3 UN Development of Policies on Gendered Vulnerability

Referring back to the broad abstraction of discourse development theory introduced at the beginning of this chapter, the second layer of development is described as when the narrowed language and simplified contexts that were constructed to understand and inform the particular topic are explicitly applied and established as policy. In terms of UN human security and vulnerability discourses on women in conflict zones, this second layer is reflected through the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and UN Resolution 1325. These policies draw on the previously explained particular understanding of human security and

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[21] Wodak, "Us and Them," 56.

vulnerability as applicable to advocate for protection of specific demographic groups through related policies.

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing strengthened the discursive construction of human security as a concept limited to speaking about the experiences of vulnerability felt by women in armed conflict zones through a Declaration and a Platform for Action. The Beijing Declaration, similar to the aforementioned UNSC Resolutions, narrows the conception of human security in armed conflict by speaking about conflicts' specific consequences in terms of its particular effects on women. The Declaration states, "While entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex...The impact of violence against women and violation of the human rights of women in such situations [armed conflict situations] is experienced by women who suffer displacement, loss of home and property, loss or disappearance of close relatives, poverty, and family separation and disintegration, and who are victims of acts of murder, terrorism, torture, involuntary disappearance, sexual slavery, rape, sexual abuse, and forced pregnancy."[22] The Declaration invokes UN human security discourses by discussing the effects of armed conflict in terms of various human rights abuses and traumatic acts inflicted on civilians that would harm the civilian's internal primary of security and dignity. However, the Declaration invokes a narrow framing toward the population of civilians exposed to such insecurity.

Then, this narrowed form of human security and vulnerability discourses is applied and established into concrete policy through the Beijing Platform for Action. The Platform is a policy agenda for women's empowerment that targets a number of strategic objectives and proposes

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[22] Beijing Declaration (1995), Beijing, 15 September 1995: 57. Available online: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/official.htm

concrete actions to work toward these objectives. There is a specific section within the Platform that recognizes and proposes strategies to address vulnerabilities experienced by women in armed conflict zones. The chapter states, "Women and girls are particularly affected [by armed conflict] because of their status in society and their sex…During times of armed conflict and the collapse of communities, consideration for the livelihoods of women is crucial."[23] Then, informed by a narrow rhetoric that recognizes human security as women's vulnerabilities in conflict zones, the Platform calls for governments, NGOs, and other relevant institutions to provide protection, assistance, and training specifically to displaced women in need of international protection post-conflict. Specifically, the Platform calls upon these actors to take steps to find durable solutions to women's displacement, protect the safety and integrity of women during displacement, and provide women who have been determined refugees with access to professional training programs, language training, small-scale enterprise development, and counseling.[24] The Platform for Action utilizes the UN's language relating to the concept of human security because it narrowly addresses the particular effects and vulnerabilities experienced by women in conflict zones. It takes this rhetoric further, though, by using that language as a source of inspiration to justify policy and responsive action among international actors.

The second layer of discourse development in the context of human security and vulnerability discourses in the UN context is also manifested as policy through UNSC Resolution 1325. Unanimously adopted in 2000, Resolution 1325 speaks to the particular vulnerabilities experienced by women who have been affected by violent and armed conflict, and

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[23] Beijing Platform for Action (1995), Beijing, 15 September 1995: 56. Available online: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/official.htm
[24] Ibid, 63.

advocates for increased awareness and aid on their behalf. The language of the Resolution

utilizes the same conceptual understanding of human security and vulnerability that was noted

previously, by narrowly presenting insecurity as the vulnerability experienced by women in

armed conflict zones. The document utilizes rhetoric that places women as the "vast majority of

those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced

persons."[25]

Informed by limited conceptual developments on human security and vulnerability, the

Resolution, as a policy, works to establish concrete procedures that focus on protecting women

in conflict settings and encourages their participation in conflict resolution activities. The

Resolution utilizes this framework to inform practices, goals, and benchmarks laid out in the

policy. The Resolution outlines 18 acts that identify ways governments, the UN, and NGOs can

address the needs of women and girls that arise in armed conflict. Some of these policies include

recognizing the specific needs of women during resettlement, rehabilitation, and post-conflict

reconstruction, protecting women from all forms of violence in settings of armed conflict and

post-conflict, and taking into account the needs of women in humanitarian programs and refugee

settlements.[26] By establishing these policy goals and practices solely in terms of women in armed

conflict zones, the Resolution demonstrates how the UN has applied its narrow discursive

development of human security and vulnerability that expresses human security concerns in

terms of women's vulnerability to inform related policy. The adoption of UNSC Resolution 1325

illustrates how the UN has established binding policies and formulated concrete calls for action

for a particular population based off of narrow and limiting discourse. UNSC Resolution 1325 is

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[25] UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), *Women, Peace and Security*, S/Res/1325: 1.
Available online: http://www.undocs.org/S/RES/1325
[26] Ibid, 3.

built on specific discourses on human security and vulnerability that are concerned with how these concepts apply to women, and therefore, its substantive calls for change are only applicable within such a narrowed and limited context.

The broader implication that arises within this layer is significant, as it sheds light on power dynamics in international politics. As the central governing node of international political structures, UN policies, documents, and statements come to hold a distinct power. With this understanding, the UN has the power to disseminate its discourses in a way that construct, define, and portray certain identities and groups to larger international audiences.[27] In doing so, the UN disseminates information and narratives to wider publics that inform beliefs, opinions, and ideologies. This dissemination is dangerous, though, because the UN Resolution 1325's specific policy discourse on human security and vulnerability have been developed from narrow and simplified contexts, as seen across the first two layers of discourse development. Therefore, these simplified contexts and narrow policy discourse is what becomes disseminated as unquestionably accurate information to consuming publics. In the process of disseminating limited understandings on the experiences of vulnerable populations to wider audiences, the UN is subsequently speaking on behalf of disadvantaged populations and rendering them voiceless.[28] In practice, this multilayered and complex development of discourse falsely interprets, generalizes, and simplifies the authentic lived experiences of these populations by clouding their voices under a dangerous assumption that they are already being spoken for.

Moreover, the construction of UNSC Resolution 1325, a policy that utilizes the organization's own limited human security and vulnerability discourses, further entrenches a limited perspective that is capable of recognizing comprehensive contexts of suffering. However,

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[27] Whitworth, *Men, Militarism*, 27.
[28] Ibid, 29.

I argue that this is why the international community continues to see the UN's language and rhetoric of solidarity dedicated to alleviating human suffering, but only sees its partial implementation which, ultimately, leaves a significant amount of suffering in place and unacknowledged without the appropriate means to redress it. UNSC Resolution 1325 policy discourse is informed by simplified contexts and perspectives that do not broadly recognize the full, lived experience of human suffering. Rather, UNSC Resolution 1325 policy discourse focuses narrowly on particular, constructed experiences of suffering, leading the Resolution to be unequipped in truly making a difference that would effectively change the existing structure of suffering.

1.4 Application of Gendered Vulnerability to Inform Representations of Women in Conflict Zones

In the third layer of discourse development, the policy and its language that has been established in the previous two layers, is applied as a general framework to explain and describe individual cases of human suffering in reporting done on a conflict. In doing so, the experiences, narratives, and needs of women within the examined conflict's context are altered into representations that align with Resolution 1325 and the policy's discourse. In practice, this third layer is reflected in reporting done by UN agencies and international NGOs on specific international conflicts. Within these reports, the experiences and narratives of those living in or affected by the conflict are discussed through representations that fit within the framework of human security and vulnerability discourse as utilized in UNSC Resolution 1325. As such, the scope in which the particular conflict and its devastating effects are reported on, are framed narrowly to speak to the hardships experienced by women.

The broader implication in this level of discourse development is that the policy and its discursive scope is used in practice to inform programs and aid meant to alleviate suffering. However, they do so within a limited context of security and vulnerability. Therefore, I argue that these narrow representations, informed by UNSC Resolution 1325, allow suffering for women to continue because they manipulate experiences of women to fit within prescribed frameworks that simplify their scope of suffering. When applying this process in the context of a specific conflict case, there are several important consequences and implications for those who find themselves both within and silenced by the Resolution's discourse. In order to examine this process more thoroughly, a specific international conflict will be chosen as the location for study.

Chapter 2

Location of the Representations

In order to demonstrate the third layer of discourse development that applies and imposes the established human security and vulnerability rhetoric, language, and policies into representations of women within individual cases of conflict zones, it is necessary to locate a conflict for analysis. What began as a populist uprising in 2011 against a longstanding military regime, Syria has since transformed into a complicated civil war that has affected millions of lives through violent conflict, displacement, and political instability. The context of the current civil war will be explained through humanitarian and geo-political lenses. However, a brief overview of the state's historical narrative is needed first in order to position the conflict's current state with respect to the country's own political history and its role in international history.

2.1 Political History of Syria

Following World War I and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the modern Syrian state was established under a French mandate in accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The Agreement between the United Kingdom, France, and the Russian Empire, should their alliance succeed in defeating the Ottoman Empire in World War I defined their proposed spheres of influence and control in Southwestern Asia.[29] The agreement shaped the region by defining the borders of Syria, Iraq, and a number of other states on Western terms. Syria came under control of the French, who carried out administration of the region. The state gained independence as a

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[29] Raymond A. Hinnebusch, (2002) *Syria: Revolution from Above* (London: Routledge), 17.

parliamentary republic on 24 October 1945 when Syria joined the United Nations, an act that

legally ended the French occupation.[30]

    The post-independence period was tumultuous with a large number of military coups that

shook the country from 1949-1970. In 1958, Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli and Egyptian

President Gamal Abdel Nasser announced a merging of Egypt and Syria to create the United

Arab Republic (UAR) in an attempt to solidify Pan-Arab nationalism in the region.[31] Under this

union, all Syrian political parties were required to dissolve all action, including Syrian nationalist

groups and minorities who had been actively demanding socialist reforms. Western powers

supported, and even diplomatically encouraged, this unification due to a series of institutional

changes in the Syrian government that generated suspicion of a communist takeover in Syria.[32]

For example, Syrian President al-Quwatli appointed a new chief-of-staff in the Syrian Army who

alleged to be a Soviet sympathizer by Western governments.[33] His appointment increased tension

between the Soviet Union and the United States, who were already at odds on geopolitical,

ideological, and economical terms. However, a Syrian union with Egypt that called for cessation

of all Syrian political parties, including the communists therein, quelled Western worry.

    International pressure led to a quick merger between the two states, which gave Nasser the

opportunity to impose decisive and non-negotiable terms. In addition to the dissolution of all

public political life in Syria, Nasser established a new provisional constitution that proclaimed a

600-member National Assembly composed of 400 members from Egypt and 200 from Syria.[34]

While this structure made room for some former Syrian Ba'ath Party members to hold prominent

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[30] Ibid, 22.
[31] Al-Jazeera World, (2013) *Syria: The Reckoning*, Documentary.
[32] James P. Jankowski, (2002) *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers), 97.
[33] Ibid, 110.
[34] Ibid, 117.

political positions, they never reached positions as high in the government as the Egyptian officials. The Syrian Ba'ath Party also favored Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism ideologies, but resented being subordinate to Egyptian officers and Nasser. Worried and alarmed by the Syrian Ba'athist party's poor position, a group of Syrian Ba'athist officers decided to form a secret Military Committee. Its initial members included Muhammad Umran, Salah Jadid, and Hafez al-Assad.[35]

In 1961, this disgruntled Military Committee organized a coup that resulted in the break-up of the UAR and the restoration of an independent Syrian Republic.[36] While the country became independent from Egypt, the resulting state was fragile and chaotic as many internal political parties struggled to influence government policy. In 1963, the Syrian Ba'ath Party successfully organized a coup and seized power. However, in 1966, the Military Committee carried out an intra-party overthrow and established Salah Jadid as ruler from 1966 to 1970 with Hafez al-Assad (herein referred to as Hafez) his defense minister.[37]

1970 marked an important year for this new regime. In September, conflict erupted in Jordan between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Jordanian Hashemite monarchy. In response, Jadid sent Syrian troops to aid the PLO efforts, but this action was not supported by Hafez, and he ordered the troops to withdraw.[38] Hafez did not support aiding the PLO at this time because Israel threatened military intervention if the Syrians did aid the PLO. Hafez wanted to avoid conflict with Israelis because he did not want take any actions that would rupture the general fragility of their new regime. However, Israel made these threats at the behest of the U.S.

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[35] Al-Jazeera World, (2013) *Syria: The Reckoning*, Documentary.
[36] Hinnebusch, 47.
[37] Ibid, 58.
[38] Ibid, 63.

under President Nixon and then-National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger.[39] These threats, though, were convincing enough to stop Hafez from entering battle, resulting in a dispute between Jadid and Hafez with momentous consequences. This discrepancy in action ignited conflict between their respective wings of the Ba'ath Party, and, in November, Hafez launched an intra-party coup against Jadid. Hafez succeeded in taking power, where he would remain until his death in 2000.[40]

Domestically, Hafez instituted one-man rule and organized state services along sectarian lines while he was in power. The Sunni population were established as the formal heads of political institutions while the Alawites, Hafez's Islamic sect, were given control over the military, intelligence, and security apparatuses.[41] The formerly shared powers of Ba'athist decision-making were curtailed, and transferred to solely to the presidency. The government ceased to be a one-party, Ba'athist system, and was turned into a one-party state with a strong presidency. Internationally, Hafez worked to strengthen the country's foreign relations. When Hafez assumed power, he sought allies, thereby prompting a visit to the Soviet Union.[42] Hafez sought to make Syria the defender of Arab interest against Israel, and believed the Soviet Union would be a powerful ally in this mission. While the Soviet relationship with the Syrian government would never be as deep as the United States' relationship with Israel, the relationship prospered nonetheless. Assad was willing to give the Soviets a stable presence in the Middle East through Syria, access to Syrian naval bases, and help in curtailing American

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[39] Joel S. Migdal, (2014) *Shifting Sands: The United States in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press), 77.
[40] Hinnebusch, *Revolution from Above*, 65.
[41] Ibid, 74.
[42] Ibid, 75.

influence in the region.[43] This positive ally ship continued through the Cold War where Hafez sided with the Soviet Union, who promised support against Israel in return.[44] These close ties between the Syrian and, now, Russian governments continue as an important aspect of the present conflict.

The purpose of this history of Syria has been to demonstrate how the state has had historical experience with socio-political uneasiness, and how the state has historically been a location of interest within international relations and among international powers, such as the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia. These international ties become especially significant when Syria spiraled into civil war in 2011.

2.2 Syrian Conflict: Geo-Political Context (2011-present)

When Hafez died in 2000, he was succeeded by his son, Bashar al-Assad (herein referred to Bashar), who structured his regime along similar power lines to his father. His regime continued to exploit ethnic and sectarian divisions in the country to retain strong political power. He also maintained his party's power through potentially manipulated elections. In both the 2000 and 2007 Syrian presidential elections, other candidates were not permitted to run against him and Bashar received votes in the upper 90th percentile in uncontested elections.[45]

Civil unrest in Syria began in the early spring of 2011 within the context of the Arab Spring protests, a wave of both violent and nonviolent demonstrations, protests, and riots across the wider Arab World. Nationwide protests rallied against Bashar's government, whose forces

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[43] Ibid, 77.
[44] Ibid, 89.
[45] "Syria's Assad Wins Another Term," *BBC News*, 29 May 2009. Accessed online: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6700021.stm

responded with violent crackdowns.[46] The conflict gradually morphed from mass protests to an armed rebellion after months of military sieges. Fighting reached the country's capital Damascus and second major city Aleppo in 2012, and by July 2013, the UN estimated that 90,000 combatants and non-combatants had been killed in the conflict.[47]

What began as another Arab Spring uprising against an autocratic ruler has since spiraled into a brutal proxy war that has drawn in regional and world powers. From the early stages, Bashar's Shi'a Alawite sect government received technical, financial, military, and political support from Russia, Iran, Iraq, and Shi'a Hezbollah groups.[48] Support from Russia has been most prominent, and is not surprising considering the two countries' longstanding historical relationship from when Hafez held power. Russia has provided weapons to the Syrian government, launched air strikes against Bashar's opponents and, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has repeatedly vetoed draft resolutions that would have left open the possibility of UN sanctions or military intervention against Bashar's government.[49] Meanwhile, the Sunni-dominated opposition has attracted support from international backers such as the United States, Turkey, and Jordan. This coalition is primarily U.S.-led, with funding for arms

[46] "In Syria, Crackdown After Protests," *New York Times*, 18 March 2011. Accessed online: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/19/world/middleeast/19syria.html?
[47] UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, (2013) *Updated Statistical Analysis of Documentation of Killings in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 1. Accessed online: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SY/HRDAG-Updated-SY-report.pdf
[48] Parisa Hafezi and Jonathan Saul, "Iran Boosts Military Support in Syria to Bolster Assad," *Reuters*, 21 February 2013 Accessed online: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-iran-idUSBREA1K09U20140221
[49] Steve Gutterman, "Russia Won't Back UN Call for Syria's Assad to Go," *Reuters,* 27 January 2012. Accessed online: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-russia-idUSTRE80Q0I620120127

provision and military training to rebel groups coming from the U.S. and being carried out on the Turkish-Syrian border, as well as in Jordan.[50]

While the number of international actors involved and each one's level of involvement in the Syrian civil war is difficult to parse, majority of the international involvement has been organized by Russia and the U.S. Leaders from the two countries have blamed the other in allowing the conflict to persist. U.S. President Barack Obama has accused Russia as the outlier in a, "global coalition organized against the Assad Regime," and that Russia's failure to cooperate in this coalition has hindered a resolution for the civil war in Syria.[51] The resulting proxy-war between the U.S. and Russia has led commentators to characterize the situation in Syria as a "proto-world war with nearly a dozen countries embroiled in overlapping conflicts."[52] With such undisputed permission for Syria to serve as geographic battleground of intense discord between two major international power players, the resulting effects of the original 2011 uprisings have spiraled into chaos, displacement, and insecurity for the people of Syria.

2.3 Syrian Conflict: Humanitarian Context (2011-present)

As the conflict has continued and transformed from a civil uprising to a full-fledged civil war with heavy international intervention, the conflict's effects on the Syrian population, as well as populations in surrounding countries, have become increasingly detrimental. A number of

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[50] "CIA Begins Weapons Delivery to Syrian Rebels," *Washington Post*, 11 September 2013. Accessed online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-begins-weapons-delivery-to-syrian-rebels/2013/09/11/9fcf2ed8-1b0c-11e3-a628-7e6dde8f889d_story.html

[51] White House Office of the Press Secretary, (2015) *Remarks by President Obama and President Hollande of France in Joint Press Conference* [Press Release]. Available online: https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/24/remarks-president-obama-and-president-hollande-france-joint-press

[52] Sergio Pecanha, Sarah Almukhtar, and K.K. Rebecca Lai, "Untangling the Overlapping Conflicts in the Syrian War," *New York Times*, 18 October 2015. Accessed online: http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/10/16/world/middleeast/untangling-the-overlapping-conflicts-in-the-syrian-war.html

political leaders, international organizations, and media outlets have named the Syrian conflict as the most significant humanitarian crisis since World War II.[53] Estimates of death, both combat deaths and civilian deaths, vary widely with figures ranging from 250,000 to 470,000. Further, the violence has caused millions to flee their homes, with an estimated 45% of the Syrian population displaced.[54]

For those inside of the country, the UN estimated there were 6.8 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance in 2013, with 4.25 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 2013 within the country.[55] An emergency to this extent led the UN to estimate that 4 million Syrians were in need of food assistance that year. In the past three years, though, these estimates have skyrocketed. As of March 2016, the UN estimates that there are 13.5 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance, with 6.5 million IDPs.[56] While there have been many efforts by the UN, international NGOs, and direct funding from other states to provide humanitarian assistance internally, many obstacles to delivery have arisen due to restricted access, attacks on humanitarian workers, and lack of response coordination between agencies.

While the conflict has had immense effects on civilians who have remained in the country, much attention has been paid to the Syrian population have been made refugees and have been

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[53] Charlotte Alfred, "What History Can Teach Us About the Worst Refugee Crisis Since WWII," Huffington Post, 12 September 2015. Available online: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/alexander-betts-refugees-wwii_us_55f30f7ce4b077ca094edaec

[54] Syrian Center for Policy Research, (2014) *Alienation and Violence: Impact of Syria Crisis Report*, March 2015: 3. Available online: http://scpr-syria.org/publications/policy-reports/scpr-alienation-and-violence-report-2014-2/

[55] United Nations System, (2013) *Revised Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP)*, 2013: 5. Available online: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Revised%20SHARP%2006June2013.pdf

[56] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (2016) *Humanitarian Needs Overview for the Syrian Arab Republic*, October 2015: 6. Available online: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/2016_hno_syrian_arab_republic.pdf

forced to flee their homes for another country. In 2014, the UN estimated around 2.5 million

Syrians had fled the country. As of March 2016, this figure has nearly doubled to 4.8 million.

With such high numbers of individuals estimated to be in need of assistance, the UN has

requested $3.18 billion of aid funding in order to provide sufficient humanitarian assistance and

protection to the Syrian refugee population.[57] Majority of Syrian refugees have fled to

neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt. A discourse analysis on

the reporting of experiences and adoption of aid programs that UN agencies and the International

Rescue Committee (IRC), a global humanitarian aid and development NGO that provides

immediate aid and development assistance to refugees and those displaced by war, persecution,

or natural disaster, have enacted for this specific subset of those affected by the Syrian conflict

form the basis for the following two chapters.

Although this section largely commodified the impact and suffering caused by the Syrian

conflict through numbers and statistics, its purpose was not only to demonstrate the immense

repercussions that have arisen out of this conflict. Its purpose was also to demonstrate that

despite the high level of visibility and attention received by this conflict and attempts to provide

humanitarian aid by a variety of organizations, these numbers have continued to rise.

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[57] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2015) *Humanitarian Response Plan for the Syrian Arab Republic*, December 2015: 4. Available online: https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Syria/2016_hrp_syrian_arab_republic.pdf

Chapter 3

Discursively Informed Representations of Syrian women refugees

The central puzzle that focuses this thesis is that there are discussions and policies at the UN level, whose development was traced in the first chapter, that recognize the hardship and trauma experienced by women in armed conflict zones. However, suffering amongst women in conflict zones continues. This chapter will focus on how the narrow scope of UNSC Resolution 1325 and its discourse on human security and vulnerability have encouraged similarly narrow representations of Syrian women refugees through reporting done by the UNHCR, UN Women, and the IRC. This chapter will name three of these tropes about Syrian women refugees and analyze how the tropes manifest from UNSC Resolution 1325 discourse to inform subsequent humanitarian intervention and aid programs. Finally, the programs and responses will be evaluated in terms of the potential level to which they address persistent suffering or continue to leave a significant amount of suffering experienced by Syrian women refugees in place and insufficiently acknowledged.

3.1 Suffering Yet Empowered Paradigm

One of the representations that USC Resolution 1325 discourse invokes about women in armed conflict zones is a trope that women are negatively affected by armed conflict in a multitude of traumatizing ways, but emerge as resilient and critical peacebuilding tools post-conflict. The Resolution speaks to the number of traumatic experiences faced by women in armed conflict, including gender-based and sexual violence, targeting from armed combatants due to their sex, and increased likelihood of women to become refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs).[58] Yet, despite all of these debilitating circumstances, the Resolution pinpoints

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[58] UNSC Resolution 1325, 3.

women as necessary peacebuilding resources. In its text, the Resolution affirms women as having an important role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building and calls for, "effective institutional arrangements to guarantee [women's] protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security."[59] As such, the Resolution calls for women's empowerment, recognition, and participation to be critically necessary in post-conflict reconstruction activities. This suffering yet empowered paradigm encouraged by Resolution 1325 feeds into reporting done on the livelihoods of Syrian female refugees.

A duality of vulnerable yet resilient women in armed conflict emerges in UN agencies and the IRC publications on Syrian women refugees. Largely, these women are portrayed as isolated, anxious, and alone. Yet, in spite of this hardship, the women remain strong, resilient, and committed to building a better future for themselves and their families. Throughout the UNHCR and IRC sources, this trope is evident. The UNHCR report, "Woman Alone: The Fight for Survival by Syria's Refugee Women," describes how women are isolated and left without a network of support due to the ways in which war and fleeing from war has broken apart their families and communities. The report states the women are left to navigate their new environment without a typical support network of friends and family that used to surround them.[60] However, in the face of such adversity, the report states that some women still strive to find support from other refugees in their new communities that provide solidarity, material support, and an avenue to share information.[61] The IRC publication, "Are We Listening? Acting

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[59] Ibid, 2.
[60] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Woman Alone: The Fight for Survival by Syria's Refugee Women*, 8 July 2014: 46. Available online: http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/53be84aa4.pdf
[61] Ibid, 47.

on Our Commitments to Women and Girls Affected by the Syrian Conflict," also depicts this image by describing Syrian women refugees as "isolated and imprisoned" within their own homes. In a survey, the report found that half of the female refugees interviewed in Jordan, Lebanon, or Egypt left their residence in their host community less than when they were living in Syria, which is main a factor contributing to feelings of isolation. The language in the report positions majority of these women as "too scared and overwhelmed" to leave their residences.[62] Despite this image of isolation, however, the report reaffirms Syrian women's strength by stating that they, "demonstrate resilience and courage every day, yet the risks they face continue to worsen."[63] Mirroring UNSC Resolution 1325's discursive construction of women in armed conflict zones is a representation of Syrian women refugees as similarly isolated yet resilient.

This representation has subsequent implications that directly affect the lives of Syrian women refugees because, in this third level of discourse development, UNSC Resolution 1325 discourse and the representations that the Resolution informs are used to form the basis for subsequent aid programs that are supported and carried out by UN agencies and the IRC. Programs that respond to feelings of isolation felt by refugee women emphasize building community-based support in spaces where they can simultaneously express their hardships and promote their communal resilience with other refugee women. The UNHCR has partnered with local organizations in neighboring countries to start or sustain women's centers and vocational schools where women can come together in a safe space to socialize, talk through shared experiences, and provide support for one another.[64] These centers are portrayed as spaces where women can obtain access

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[62] International Rescue Committee, *Are We Listening? Acting on Our Commitments to Women and Girls Affected by the Syrian Conflict*, New York, September 2014: 8. Available online: https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/IRC_WomenInSyria_Report_WEB.pdf
[63] Ibid, 5.
[64] UNHCR, *Woman Alone*, 50.

to economic opportunities or job training programs while also engaging with other women. A center in Lebanon started a knitting group for women to overcome their sense of isolation and gather together in a support group-like setting.[65] A center in Jordan provides cash for work programs where women work in tailoring, clothing production, or hairdressing to receive economic assistance and work as part of a group to build community.[66] The IRC has opened and funded similar centers that provide community-based education for women ranging from safety training, to counseling needs, to guided group discussions. These centers aim to provide emotional, community-based support in a safe, confidential space for women refugees. The programs and opportunities these centers provide are framed as an opportunity for Syrian women refugees to break the chain of isolation, build confidence, and establish a network in which these women can turn to one another for support and advice.

A discursive representation of Syrian women refugees as resilient yet empowered appears to be both effective and limiting at addressing continued suffering experienced by these women. Building a trusting and supportive community is an effective response generated out of a framework that largely portrays refugee women as alone, isolated, and overwhelmed. In these spaces, women are encouraged and have the internal efficacy to seek collective support, regain emotional and psychological strength, and access the tools they need to participate actively in their new life and plan for the future. This representation, at the same time, however, can be limiting for Syrian women refugees who have experienced trauma because it provides just one predetermined method of coping. A representation of Syrian women refugees as both suffering and asserting resilience encourages aid programs designed for women to quickly adjust and rejoin society. However, such a representation simplifies the path of dealing with and

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[65] Ibid, 57.
[66] Ibid, 47.

overcoming trauma. Then, subsequent aid responses, that are informed by this simplified

representation, do not make room for alternative modes of healing. After witnessing and living

devastating effects of a civil war, an ideal and monolithic path to empowerment through

community cannot be as simply or universally applied as the publications and UNSC Resolution

1325's discourse make it out to be. Therefore, a representation of women as vulnerable yet

resilient does contribute, partially at least, to persistent suffering of Syrian women refugees

because it fails to approach the healing process of trauma in a multifaceted and comprehensive

way.

3.2 Pervasive Prevalence of Sexual Violence

The second representation of women in armed conflict that is inspired by UNSC Resolution

1325 human security and vulnerability discourse raises awareness on women's increased

vulnerability to gender-based violence, particularly sexual assault and harassment. As a part of

this representation, women in armed conflict zones are portrayed as victims to a devastating form

of violence that is constantly present, and that they cannot control of combat. An ability to raise

awareness about sexual violence and harassment, a globally taboo and stigmatized subject, is

permitted and established in UNSC Resolution 1325. The Resolution calls on all parties in armed

conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence,

particularly from rape and other forms of sexual abuse. It also emphasizes a responsibility for all

states to put an end to impunity of this violence and to prosecute those responsible for crimes

relating to sexual violence against women.[67] Not only does the rhetoric of the Resolution

promote awareness toward instances of sexual violence in post-conflict environments, it also

calls for the perpetrator to be publically named and punished appropriately. Policy permission to

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[67] UNSC Resolution 1325, 3.

address sexual crimes in such an open manner feeds into how UN agencies and the IRC address instances of sexual violence in their reporting on the experiences of Syrian women refugees.

The three reports examined engage in a careful discussion of sexual and gender-based violence as omnipresent for Syrian women refugees, and the UN Woman source, "We Just Keep Silent: Gender-Based Violence Amongst Syrian Refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq," was solely dedicated to this topic. The UNHCR report uses language that openly describes sexual violence as a pervasive threat for Syrian women refugees because it can be threatened from a multitude of sources, such as from male refugees, males from the host community, or from service providers. As such, women are left to, "live in constant and paralyzing fear."[68] The UN Women report depicts similar scenes of persistent sexual harassment faced by Syrian women refugees. The report describes how female refugees are often approached in public places by local men who make unwanted comments, propose inappropriate relationships, or demand sexual favors. Experiences of harassment, such as these, are attributed to perceptions that these women refugees are either unwanted or resented in this new environment, or that they are seen as "cheap and vulnerable" and therefore are easily targeted.[69]

The IRC report reinforces similar discourse about fear and vulnerability toward occurrences of sexual harassment and violence. In its reporting, the IRC identified these vulnerabilities as pervasive due to the ways they occur both outside and inside the woman's residing space. The report covers the similar issue of harassment in public places that the UN agency reports do, but also discusses their physical place of residence as a space where domestic violence can occur.

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[68] UNHCR, *Woman Alone*, 46.
[69] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *We Just Keep Silent: Gender-Based Violence Amongst Syrian Refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, April 2014: 42. Available online: http://uniraq.org/images/documents/We%20Just%20Keep%20Silent%20final%20English.pdf

The report depicts their living space not as a place of refuge from the stresses of the outside environment, but a place in which women can become victim to intimate partner violence and domestic abuse. According to the IRC, increased physical and emotional violence from husbands who have fled Syria is rationalized as men's way of coping with the stress of a new environment, the psychological trauma of war, and economic or employment frustration.[70] The implications of a framing where the livelihoods of Syrian women refugees are consistently threated by potential instances of sexual violence can be evaluated by how UN agencies and the IRC utilize this framework to inform their aid programs for sexual violence survivors.

Aid programs informed by UNSC Resolution 1325 discourse that are meant to raise awareness and visibility to devastating threat of sexual harassment and violence faced by refugee women implement a holistic approaches meant to emotionally, psychologically, medically, legally, and economically assist female victims. The UNHCR report highlights a need for safe spaces to create a sense of community and trust among Syrian women refugees, and discusses how the women's centers they have created and supported encourage guided discussions and psychosocial assistance to deal with the aftermath of trauma.[71] These spaces hope to build a sense of trust and internal strength for women to speak out and support one another, despite the possible stigma associated with experiencing sexual violence. The UN Women report has implemented programs for sexual violence survivors that include education and job training to build potential economic viability for women in work as tailors, cooks, or hairdressers. That way, the hope is for Syrian women refugees to not feel a need to rely on extreme measures to obtain money, food, and other resources.[72] The IRC also highlights a desire to provide safety to Syrian

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[70] IRC, *Are We Listening*, 9.
[71] UNHCR, *Woman Alone*, 58.
[72] UN Women, *We Just Keep Silent*, 14.

women refugees from gender-based violence by providing safety and counseling services in appropriate learning and community-centered spaces. In these spaces, the IRC aims to provide appropriate and timely medical, emotional, and psychological care for survivors. The IRC also advocates for an important legal change for refugees in foreign countries. Some host countries that house many Syrian refugees, such as Lebanon, do not allow women to register individually without a male companion, thus limiting her ability to access local services and resources. However, if this requirement were to be abolished, and thereby provide women access to individual registration, the female refugees would be able to operate independently and gain access to important services without needing outside consent or companionship. That way, female refugees experiencing domestic violence would no longer feel bound to their potential aggressor.[73]

A discursive representation of Syrian women as consistently vulnerable to pervasive threats of sexual violence appears to, again, be both effective and limiting in contributing to continued suffering experienced by Syrian women refugees. The responses and programs informed by this framing appear to be providing necessary support for Syrian female refugees who have been victim to these sources of violence. The support appears to be effective because it recognizes multifaceted aspects of recovery for victims of trauma, including psychological assistance, medical care, and economic support programs. By representing vulnerability to sexual violence as a particular insecurity for women that can come from a number of actors and arise in a number of spaces, UN agencies and the IRC have been led to establish spaces in which Syrian women refugees can seek safe and holistic sources of assistance. However, a representation of sexual violence as an omnipresent threat to violence simultaneously permits widespread suffering of

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[73] IRC, *Are We Listening*, 3.

Syrian women refugees to continue. By perceiving sexual violence as a type of insecurity whose presence cannot be combated by women due to its pervasiveness, sexual violence becomes constructed as a norm for women in conflict zones. Therefore, discussions on how to combat the structural conditions that allow a norm of sexual violence to persist are left out in policy discourse and aid programs meant to alleviate suffering. These conditions could arise from legal, social, and political forces including domestic violence law, safety of refugee populated neighborhoods, or social attitudes held about the female Syrian refugee population. However, Resolution 1325 encourages representations of sexual violence that are only critical of its existence. By failing to fully acknowledge the context in which sexual violence exists, particularly with regard to the structural sources that can contribute to the existence of sexual violence, widespread suffering of Syrian women refugees will persist in spite of policy discourse meant to alleviate it.

3.3 Hierarchy of Vulnerability

A framing that classifies female Syrian refugees as the "most vulnerable" among the general refugee population is also justified and informed by politically legitimized human security and vulnerability discourse. UNSC Resolution 1325 iterated this distinctly heightened burden for women by expressing concern that women and children account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict. Additionally, the adoption of this Resolution in general by the UN further solidifies women's categorization of vulnerability at the highest level. The sheer creation and adoption of a policy to recognize women in armed conflict zones as a distinctly vulnerable demographic group provides political legitimacy to the construction of an imagined hierarchy of vulnerability in which these women are placed at the top. Therefore, the discourse of vulnerability found in UNSC Resolution 1325 have informed a framework that allows UN

agency and IRC reports to position refugees within a hierarchy that discusses refugee women as the most vulnerable.

The UNHCR organizes its dispersal of resettlement aid based on who the report titles the "most vulnerable refugees." In Jordan, 40% of UNHCR financial assistance goes to households that are classified as the "most vulnerable."[74] UN Women makes similar distinctions by recognizing that life is tough for refugees, but women and girls in particular are severely and adversely affected by the effects of conflict. The report states women and girls are more reticent to admit problems, leaving them to, "suffer silently in suffocating tents and experience the worst kinds of exploitation."[75] The IRC paints a similar picture of female Syrian refugees as the distinct group who experiences the most burden from fleeing conflict. As refugees, the report states, Syrian women have fled all they have known for a stark new reality where the burdens they face have significantly increased.[76] The implications of this gendered representation of a vulnerability hierarchy are evident in the UN agencies' and IRC's aid programming structure, and impose potentially debilitating implications on the livelihoods of Syrian women refugees, and the Syrian refugee population as a whole.

This constructed hierarchy is then applied in practice as the organization utilize their won hierarchy to distribute resources from their aid programs. The UNHCR report implements this hierarchy in terms of the economic assistance it provides Syrian refugees. The report states that the organization offers its direct economic assistance to "the most vulnerable" Syrian female refugee headed-households. In Jordan, for example, UNHCR cash assistance programs are

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[74] UNHCR, *Woman Alone*, 68.
[75] UN Women, *We Just Keep Silent*, 6.
[76] IRC, *Are We Listening*, 5.

directed to the ⅓ of female headed-households that were "the most vulnerable."[77] In Lebanon, the report states the UNHCR financial assistance program, "focuses on cash for rent or other short-term needs, targeting those most vulnerable."[78] However, the report provides no insight or explanation into how the organization procedurally and fairly defines a household in this bottom category. The UN Women report attributes the Syrian female refugee experience as the most vulnerable due to their lack of economic stability and employment prospects. Therefore, UN Women programs for Syrian women refugees are focused on providing increased work and employment prospects for women through education and job training programs, so that they may find diversified employment opportunities.[79] However, a focus on providing increased employment prospects for refugees would be greatly beneficial if directed at all refugees, as economic insecurity is likely not solely a gendered experience. The IRC also has focused their aid programs for Syrian refugees based on a discursively constructed hierarchy of vulnerability with women at the top. For Syrian refugees in Turkey, the IRC provides cash assistance to "vulnerable female headed-households" with payments of up to $150 per month. The organization also provides these chosen females with an opportunity to participate in a group discussion curriculum on how to to make financial decisions.[80] However, similar to the UNHCR report, the IRC report provides no technical definition to how they define certain households as "vulnerable," and therefore more deserving of assistance, over others. The absence of a technical definition is significant because it allows for provision of aid to individuals whom the organizations deem worthy, without a wider context or view of trauma and vulnerability based on particular experiences. Therefore, vulnerable population groups other than Syrian women

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[77] UNHCR, *Woman Alone*, 41.
[78] Ibid, 40.
[79] UN Women, *We Just Keep Silent*, 14.
[80] IRC, *Are We Listening*, 18.

refugees, are easily forgotten silenced, and left out of structural support provision due to this imposed hierarchy of vulnerability.

I argue a narrow representation of human security and vulnerability discourse in Resolution 1325 that classifies vulnerability into a rigid, hierarchical structure contributes to why suffering of Syrian refugee populations continue for two reasons. One reason is that this hierarchy of vulnerability structures aid provision and assistance to be distributed in a correspondingly controlled and gendered way that disregards concern for alternate suffering contexts and populations. By discursively placing Syrian women refugees as the most vulnerable among those affected by the Syrian conflict, the aid and support that follows is thereby justifiably narrowed to focus specifically on alleviating the suffering of women. This practice continues systemic suffering among the general Syrian refugee population because it permits and implements a limited scope of aid provision that disregards broader contexts of vulnerability and suffering. Therefore, significant numbers of the refugee population are deprived of sufficient aid that would improve their livelihoods. Without a broader concern for the context of suffering, or recognizing the existence of suffering in a more egalitarian way, suffering among Syrian refugee populations continues to exist and is exacerbated.

Another reason why policy representations that frame vulnerability as a gendered hierarchy contribute to incomplete acknowledgements of suffering in a way that allows such suffering to confine because classifying women as the "most vulnerable" cohort decontextualizes vulnerability to a singular sensation that can be compared across populations and contexts. However, simplifying vulnerability in a way that permits its comparison among and across demographic groups is morally and ethically inappropriate. Experiences of vulnerability and trauma are highly individualized, so, it is unfair to prioritize and discuss certain populations of

refugees as experiencing heightened vulnerability when, in reality, all are experiencing personal and unique vulnerabilities, trauma, and stresses. Therefore, vulnerability is a personalized sensation that should not be measured in comparison to the decontextualized, broadly applied understanding of vulnerability and insecurity that the Resolution's discourse and framings encourage. This framing of vulnerability continues widespread suffering of Syrian refugee populations because it refuses to recognize the complexities of insecurity that arise among all demographic groups of Syrian refugees and the variety of contexts in which these insecurities can arise. Therefore, it is both morally and practically problematic to place certain vulnerabilities and experiences as "more vulnerable" over others, when these vulnerabilities would likely be better off constructed as *different*. Constructing them as different would create the space needed to adequately and justly recognize the complex and myriad of vulnerabilities experienced by the Syrian refugee population beyond the gendered hierarchy that is currently present.

Chapter 4

Structural Silencing Outside of UN Discourses on the Syrian Conflict

In addition to identifying explicit representations of human security and vulnerability tied to UNSC Resolution 1325 discourse found in publications to characterize narratives of Syrian women refugees, discourse analysis also requires examination into what representations are implicitly suggested, ignored, and silenced that still contribute to the context of suffering. While human security and vulnerability discourse from UNSC Resolution 1325 invoke explicit representations that raise awareness to the debilitating circumstances and challenges faced by Syrian women refugees, there are also frameworks discursively constructed by the Resolution that manipulate understandings or outright overshadow awareness to the experiences of Syrian refugee men or the responsibility of international powers in the conflict. Shedding light on these silenced frameworks encouraged by UNSC Resolution 1325 through its human security and vulnerability discourse is necessary because it grapples with explaining how the policy leaves a significant amount of civilian suffering and persistent violence in the face of USC Resolution 1325.

4.1 Violent Refugee and Host Community Men

Informed by UN human security and vulnerability discourses, a framing that constructs refugee and host community men as generally aggressive, violent, and dominating in opposition to vulnerable and defenseless female refugees is permitted and justified. As examined earlier, UNSC Resolution 1325 was established out of approaches to security and vulnerability that adopted a gendered focus. As a whole, UNSC Resolution 1325 calls specifically for aid responses to recognize the particular trauma and vulnerabilities faced by women post-conflict.[81]

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[81] UNSC Resolution 1325, 1.

The Resolution makes no reference to any particular trauma or distresses from armed conflict that may harmfully affect the wellbeing of men, thereby promoting an implicit converse assumption that men either do not experience these vulnerabilities, or that they experience trauma significantly less than women. The Resolution's human security and vulnerability discourse implies an assumption that women are solely victims in conflict zones, and subsequently allows for representations to implicitly arise about men that suggest a binary opposite: that men are the perpetrators of violence who contribute to women's insecurity. The Resolution and its related gendered discourse encourages a representation of men in the examined reports as the perpetrators of violence and harassment who contribute primarily to women's sense of insecurity.

Across the three reports, references to Syrian refugee men were made in terms of their presupposition to inflict violence, harassment, or sexual assault toward refugee women. The UNHCR report tells the stories of Syrian women refugees who were abused by their husbands, but "accepted it only because [they] did not know where else to go."[82] The UN Women report also describes the source of female vulnerability to violence arising from men. The report discusses instances of violence toward women solely in terms of physical domestic violence at the hands of husbands, brothers, and other male figures.[83] The IRC report follows similar framing, and attempts to contextualize male violence as a symptom of stress, frustration, and instability in moving and adapting to a new environment. The report attributes physical and emotional violence from husbands as coping with the trauma of conflict, inability to fulfill their traditional role as the family provider, frustrated by lack of privacy to engage in sexual relations

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[82] UNHCR, *Woman Alone*, 67.
[83] UN Women, *We Just Keep Silent*, 5.

with their wives, or a constant concern over meeting basic needs for the household.[84] Overall, when Syrian male refugees were referenced in the examined reports on the experiences of Syrian female refugees, they were largely constructed as violent, aggressive, and hostile beings who escalated women's senses of insecurity and vulnerability.

Aggressive representations of men in these reports are not solely limited to Syrian refugee men. The reports also construct host community men as equally violent and manipulative by describing ways that host community men are perceived to take advantage of Syrian women refugees and girls. The UNHCR report tells stories of girls who are persuaded to enter into marriages very young with older partners out of perceived economic necessity. The partners in this case refer to host country men who are described as wanting to "take advantage of cheap and easy" Syrian refugees.[85] However, the report states that marriages created on the principal of an unequal power relationship subsequently increases a possibility for domestic violence inflicted on the female.[86] The UN Women report tells similar stories of Syrian teenage girl refugees persuaded into marriage with older host community men in exchange for financial income. In doing so, the report describes cases of non-Syrian men coming into camps to "shop for brides."[87] In these representations, the men initiating these marriages are portrayed as wanting to take advantage of vulnerable refugee women in authoritative, emotionless, and violent ways. Therefore, similar to Syrian refugee men, host community men are discursively framed in an aggressive and violence way that construct them as another source for Syrian women refugees's vulnerabilities.

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[84] IRC, *Are We Listening*, 9.
[85] UNHCR, *Woman Alone*, 42.
[86] Ibid, 43.
[87] UN Women, *We Just Keep Silent*, 15.

By constructing gender groups in opposition to one another, men are constructed as the central origin and reason for why female refugees are experiencing their particular vulnerabilities and insecurity. This framing is problematic because it dismisses men as inherently violent and aggressive toward women, and, therefore, as undeserving of international support and aid. The UNHCR report specifically calls for a need to expand opportunities for women's economic growth and social participation.[88] The IRC similarly focuses their programs to value the perspectives of women.[89] However, recommendations such as these limit and exclude opportunities that could be created to support all refugees, especially if there were programs that could alleviate the previously described violent coping strategies used by husbands who feel heightened stress when trying to provide for their family in their new setting.

A narrow representation of Syrian refugee men reduces them to violent and aggressive beings contributes in two ways to why widespread suffering of Syrian refugee populations, both men and women, continue. The first is that UNSC Resolution 1325's limited discourse on human security and vulnerability construct a limited, violent representation of men in such a way that any possibility of additional, complex hardships being faced by Syrian refugee males or host country populations is ignored. For example, it is likely that there are deeper reasons behind why some of these men turn to violence as an outlet for frustration and stress, and it is necessary to consider what those may be rather than unfairly villainizing men as agents of gender violence, and subsequently as undeserving of assistance. However, by ignoring Syrian refugee men in aid and support programs that would address their psychological needs, any potential to comprehensively address suffering and violence against women, which is the Resolution's ultimate substantive goal, will be consistently curtailed. Secondly, and on a broader scale, a

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[88] UNHCR, *Woman Alone*, 72.
[89] IRC, *Are We Listening*, 15.

discursive disregard to approach suffering in conflict zones comprehensively, regardless of gender, limits the potential to recognize and understand widespread suffering that exists among all citizens in post-conflict contexts. Therefore, due to a lack of critical recognition into the full context of suffering and suffering, UNSC Resolution 1325's narrow discourse leaves a significant amount of suffering in place by failing to acknowledge its existence amount Syrian refugee male populations and host community men.

4.2 Silenced Refugee Men

Another representation of men that the UN's gendered human security and vulnerability discourses allow is an overshadowing of Syrian refugee men's particular experiences and vulnerabilities. This silencing is a direct consequence of UNSC 1325's policy discourse that puts particular weight, visibility, and credibility on the experiences of women in conflict zones, thus rendering any experiences outside of this frame of reference as secondary, irrelevant, or nonexistent. In its text, UNSC Resolution 1325 makes no explicit statements about vulnerabilities incurred by men during or post armed conflict. Additionally, there are no UN Resolutions or other UN policies that give as much visibility, weight, or specificity to insecurities that arise for men who have experienced armed conflict, when compared to those for women. Without political recognition of this particular population of civilians, Syrian refugee men's experiences and need for support in conflict zones are largely disregarded and silenced in reporting done by UN agencies and the IRC. Therefore, aid programming and assistance that is informed by UNSC Resolution 1325's discourse on human security and vulnerability fails to address a comprehensive view of suffering excludes the plight of Syrian refugee males, which ultimately allows suffering to continue structurally for the widespread Syrian refugee population.

Representations of Syrian refugee men outside of the previously examined frame that constructs refugee men as violent aggressors toward Syrian female refugees are nonexistent across the three reports. Recently, however, the IRC has attempted to uproot and challenge this silencing by publishing a groundbreaking report in January 2016. Titled, "Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugee Men in Lebanon," the report illuminates how aid agencies have forgotten and overlooked single Syrian refugee men and sheds light on experiences and narratives that speak to their, otherwise not documented, hardships by looking, particularly, at the livelihoods of Syrian male refugees living in Lebanon. The report challenges the previously examined monolithic representation that constructs Syrian male refugees as violent actors by providing alterative representations of Syrian male refugees who are in need of psychological support, who face threats to their personal safety, and who are subjected to discrimination in their host community. By explicitly discussing these hardships, the report demonstrates how UN human security and vulnerability discourses have structurally overlooked and ignored the plight of Syrian refugee men.

One of the structurally silenced representations exposed by the IRC in their reporting on the experiences of insecurity felt by Syrian refugee men notes males' lack of access to necessary psychological and emotional support after fleeing the conflict. The report recognizes that refugee men are widely presumed as the group best able to self-protect, self-sustain, and negotiate the complexities of displacement unaided.[90] However, this misconception arises simply because male refugee experiences are just not addressed in UN policy informed representations of Syrian refugee vulnerability. Therefore, necessary aid and support for these men is subsequently forgotten. A perception of being less vulnerable ignores the importance for single Syrian refugee

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[90] IRC, *Vulnerability Assessment*, 2.

men to still have access to emotional and psychological support, as they also face immense

hardship in coping with displacement and the trauma of conflict. However, due to being

overlooked and disregarded by aid agencies, these men appear to not have access to critical

spaces where they would receive necessary support to feel safe in their new community.[91]

A disregard for isolated Syrian male refugees by UN human security and vulnerability

discourses has detrimental implications that can easily continue on as ignored. Without access to

emotional and psychosocial support, these males' sense of agency, self-empowerment, and

capacity to feel personal self-efficacy is severely hindered. It is necessary to recognize that such

stressful and traumatic environments that are universally taxing, both emotionally and

physically, regardless of any status-based categorization. Yes, the particular difficulties and

challenges faced by each individual vary. However, it is important to simultaneously

acknowledge an overall need for support arises for the entire Syrian refugee population in

general.

Another structurally silenced representation of Syrian male refugees' experiences within

UNSC Resolution 1325's narrow and gendered human security discourse is their particular

susceptibility to violence and instances of crime in a host country setting. Due to this lack of

recognition, Syrian refugee men are commonly perceived as security or criminal risks by host

country communities. The IRC report found that refugee men face disproportionate and

aggressive targeting by governments and host community members. Two out of every three

refugee men in that the IRC surveyed reported experiencing threats to their personal safety, with

more than half of that group identifying the threats as constant or frequent.[92] The range of threats

include raids, arrests, arbitrary checkpoints, and instances of verbal or physical aggression. These

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[91] Ibid, 13.
[92] Ibid, 8.

threats were reported as appearing predominantly from Lebanese authorities, with majority of the remainder reporting host community members also as frequent sources of threats, violence, and crime.[93] UNSC Resolution 1325 structurally silences possible instances of violence and vulnerability faced by Syrian male refugees due to the policy's limited approach to human security and vulnerability.

The implication of this silencing allows perceptions of Syrian refugee men as security and criminal risks in host communities to flourish without question. Without discursive policy recognition from the UN, these refugee men subsequently find themselves within a climate where discrimination, exploitation, and limited livelihood opportunities for them are justified with impunity. Since the primary source of their insecurity was reported as coming from the authorities, Syrian refugee men subsequently do not report instances of discrimination or crimes committed against them because they lack confidence that they will be treated fairly.[94] The frequency of threats to personal security create an omnipresent cloud of insecurity for these refugee men that UNSC Resolution 1325's human security and vulnerability discourse fails to recognize. Without recognition toward violence and particular experiences of Syrian refugee males, adequate measures to support their protection and rehabilitation are silenced, forgotten, and ignored.

These two framings of Syrian refugee males invoked by the IRC raise awareness about significant silences invoked by UNSC Resolution 1325's discourse on human security and vulnerability. It is evident that this policy and its discourse fails to recognize the experiences and vulnerabilities of refugee men. A failure to construct policy discourse around comprehensive assessments of civilian experiences and suffering is a structural decision that explains why

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[93] Ibid, 8.
[94] Ibid, 15.

widespread suffering continues to persist for Syrian civilians after they have fled the physical, geographic location of violence. The existing policy discourse on human security and vulnerability for those in conflict zones is insufficient because its documents and policies manipulate, silence, and disregard the needs of entire cohorts of suffering individuals. Furthermore, the combination of violent representations of Syrian refugee men and the structural silencing of their alternative, humanizing experiences can justify sentiments that permit active exclusion of the Syrian male refugee population from any form of international aid and support. Together, these silenced representations have the potential to villainize the Syrian male population into a dangerous representation where the population is indisputably dehumanized. This is why we, as an international audience who care about populations made vulnerable by armed conflict, continue to see civilian suffering post-conflict, despite the existence of discourses and policies that rhetorically promise to address it.

4.3 Neutralized International Complicity

A final framework that is absent, but structurally important in order to fully recognize the experiences and vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees, is a critical discussion about core conditions that created the context of the Syrian conflict as it is seen today. A disregard within these reports to openly discuss and examine the spiral of violence that led up to the conditions of displacement, poverty, and insecurity that the reports examine is a direct consequence of UN human security and vulnerability discourses. The content of UNSC Resolution 1325 does not call for examination into what root causes led to the conflict that created insecurities and vulnerabilities for women in the first place. Rather, its discourse and policy focus is directed to the women themselves that are within that specific conflict. By not making space in the Resolution's discourse to recognize or address the core context of a conflict, resulting

frameworks that utilize this policy discourse do not take a critical approach to consider the multitude of forces that led the conflict to spiral and create such the extreme insecurity and vulnerability for civilian populations. The frameworks fail to ask why does the violence that preceded and caused these conditions of trauma exist. By avoiding this critical rhetoric, the resulting reports, instead, portray a sense of normalcy and acceptance toward the existence of conflict.

The reports solely serve to document what life is like for Syrian female refugees and discuss the ways in which they are responding and navigating their new environments, stresses, and responsibilities. While discussions that work to illustrate the lived, daily struggles of refugee women to a wider, international audience are important for raising awareness, they also support a context that ignores what initial, violent conditions brought about these severe circumstances. The reports, informed by UNSC Resolution 1325 policy discourse, adopt a framework that simply portrays a sense of the lifestyles and struggles felt by Syrian female refugees without a critique of why such horrific lived experiences such as sexual violence, harassment, and insufficient aid occur in the first place. The UNHCR report provides worrying snapshots into Syrian women refugees's new lives living in tents, collective shelters, or apartments that are in poor condition, tells stories of girls forced into early marriages, and recounts scenes of violence directed at these at women.[95] The UN Women report takes a similar approach that is narrowly focused on the narrative of being a female refugee. The report focus primarily on threats of sexual violence, insecurity, and human rights abuses that Syrian female refugees experience.[96] The IRC report takes an explicit approach and classifies feelings of insecurity, threats of sexual

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[95] UNHCR, *Woman Alone*, 66.
[96] UN Women, *We Just Keep Silent*, 2.

violence, and economic instability as these women's "new normal" and their new "day-to-day."[97] However, absent from these reports is any critical discussion of the Syrian civil war that engages with or recognizes any of the international activity that has expanded the civil war into the life-alternating conflict it has become.

The implication of UNSC Resolution 1325's permission to not critically address the context that has brought such debilitating lived conditions for Syrian refugees unfairly decontextualizes the multitude of intersecting sources that has exacerbated and permitted of their suffering. Chapter 2 described the complex involvement that various international actors have had in transforming the original 2011 uprising into a gruesome civil war. However, UN human security and vulnerability discourses are constructed to solely focus on conditions created by armed conflict and their implications on civilian populations. In doing so, the organization strategically bypass uncomfortable conversations about international complicity in allowing this deadly, debilitating conflict to continue. Without adequate concern for the contexts and structural forces that have contributed to the Syrian civil war, any productive attempts to reach a stable, long-term peace for Syria are actively hindered. While it is important to discuss strategies that provide aid and support for those whose lives have becomes permanently altered, with a hope that they will thrive in life once again, it is equally important to keep sight and be critical of the structural conditions that brought about this situation of war and suffering in the first place.

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[97] IRC, *Are We Listening*, 2.

Chapter 5

Moving Forward in Solidarity

5.1 Brief Summary and Future Possibilities

Overall, this thesis was concerned with the problem that despite UN policy documents that propose commitment and action to end female suffering imposed by armed conflict, suffering continues to occur for the Syrian refugee population. I argue this persistence of suffering can be contributed to the ways in which the UN has constructed, established, and disseminated human security and vulnerability discourses about civilians in conflict zones, with a particular policy focus on UNSC Resolution 1325. This policy's discourse has informed representations of civilian experiences in conflict zones within a narrow, gendered framework. Through examining both explicit framings and implicit silences, I observed a multitude of representations constructed about the Syrian refugee population that were informed by the Resolution's human security and vulnerability discourse. While some of the representations of Syrian women refugees were argued to have dual effective and limiting implications in their attempts to alleviate suffering for women, I argue UNSC Resolution 1325's limited discourse is, in fact, perpetuating Syrian refugee suffering. Therefore, I argue, a true needs-based prioritization and targeting of responses must be based on a comprehensive assessment of the protection context, rather than equating vulnerability with particular groups or demographic categories.

It was noted in the introduction that a methodological limitation of a single case-study approach was that its conclusions could not be applied outside of the context of the particular being examined. Therefore, my analysis and conclusions as they stand are only applicable to the Syrian refugee population residing in neighboring Arab World countries. However, in the future, it would be worthwhile to apply a similar theoretical approach regarding UN human security and

vulnerability discourses to other conflict-affected populations in order to examine and analyze what explicit representations arise and what structural silences go unacknowledged. With this analysis, the representations and silences could be used to make comparisons across multiple conflict contexts in order to see if trends on policy-invoked representations or silencing emerge. Additionally, it could be worthwhile to apply this analytical approach to conflicts that have not garnered as much public or media attention as the Syrian conflict has. Policy silencing in lesser known contexts could look different and have different implications than in more highly visible conflicts. Overall, the framework for analysis used in this thesis could be applicable to disentangling structural and systemic conditions of suffering imposed on civilian populations in armed conflict zones.

5.2 Recommendations for Dialogue

Studying discursively informed representations, as this thesis has done, has illuminated a critical need for international policies to be constructed in a way that goes beyond a limited or narrow focus, and recognize the broader relationship of people in the world and with the world. When considering how a more interpersonal and comprehensive assessment can be performed for international policies to more fully acknowledge the structural and systemic complexities of civilian suffering post-conflict, the potential for praxis arises as an alternative. Praxis is a dual method of action and reflection that transforms thinking about a problem from a basic and naive state, to a higher level that allows leaders to perceive the causes of that reality. In its process, two forms of knowledge come together: the critical and theoretical knowledge of leads, with the empirical and reality knowledge of the people.[98] Together, these forms of knowledge are synthesized and brought about in productive dialogue in which leaders and the people, together

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[98] Paulo Freire, (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder), 110.

as individuals, can identify with one another's narratives, experiences, and needs in a space where they can also pose the existence of their demand as a meaningful problem. In this dialogic setting, discussion of realities faced combined with specific objectives to alter that reality are engaged in a humanizing way with the goal of permanent liberation from suffering.

This theory of dialogic necessity is relevant to how improvements can be made in UNSC Resolution 1325 discourse moving forward and future UN policy discourses on vulnerable or suffering populations. A space that constructs, develops, and disseminates policies meant to address civilian suffering must do so in a humanistic way that can transcend pre-existing boundaries or hierarchies of vulnerability and human needs. I am not arguing for the UN to completely do away with gender-focused, or age-specific policies. Focused policies are key to recognizing the differences and specific needs of different demographic groups. However, a problem arises when the UN's discourses and policies are narrowly framed without any recognition toward the larger context of the problem. Dialogic processes can help remedy this by broadening the scope in which suffering is assessed and informing better individualized needs targeting. That way, the policies and needs assessments that come out of these dialogues are more comprehensive and justly mindful.

5.3 Reflections on Solidarity

The process of analyzing policy discourse promotes new possibilities in the way of disentangling how populations are perceived to the international community through policy and the implications that arise from such imaging. However, the process can also lead to frustrations at the risk of dehumanizing the individuals in which it is speaking about. In addition to applying the generalized experience of one to many, discourse gives whoever is using it the privilege to organize the life of another. Discourse on human rights and the experiences of those affected by

conflict puts their stories in the public domain, where they can readily be consumed by third-party audiences. Such dissemination takes the personal experience of an individual further and further from its corporeal center, leaving the emotional significance behind one's story easier to leave behind. The act of rendering and categorizing the lived experiences of individuals as discourse, which has been done throughout this thesis, has the potential to, unfortunately, lose the emotional and moralistic side of attempting to understand and support the narratives of a particular population in order to support, empathize, and stand in solidarity for justice.

This uncomfortable dissonance of writing in a way that analytically analyzes and categorizes the experiences of another, but with the intention calling for improved advocacy and social justice for that population requires careful reflection on how activists build a true, and strong sense of solidarity. Discourse construction and dissemination can easily create a dichotomy of leaders with power on one side and suffering individuals on the other. However, a more productive form of discourse development can happen through praxis where, as described previously, such boundaries of identity can be crossed and the people's empirical knowledge of reality fuses with leaders' critical knowledge. A process such as this, where genuine communication and dialogue on a diverse range of lived experiences can be identified equally, fairly, and with empowerment, has the potential to lead the international community into effective solidarity where advocacy is motivated by a desire to act together and in recognition of one another as human beings.

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