

## **Gender, Violence, Refugees, by Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ulrike Krause (Eds.)**

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Volume 34, numéro 2, 2018

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1055588ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1055588ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Centre for Refugee Studies, York University

ISSN

0229-5113 (imprimé)

1920-7336 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Torres, M. (2018). Compte rendu de [Gender, Violence, Refugees, by Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ulrike Krause (Eds.)]. *Refuge*, 34(2), 154–155.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1055588ar>

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national and international obligations vis-à-vis migrants. The South African narratives provide a window into the Muslim brotherhood by unpacking a fraternity that unites the Somalis with South African Indian Muslims. Although the South African government's commitment to meet its obligation to Somali refugees surpasses all its regional neighbours, the country remains a liminal space; a stepping stone to the United States, the imagined *Jannah*. The word *Jannah* appears several times in the text to capture Somalis' imaginaries of an anticipated paradisiacal destination. This optimistic view of South Africa is complicated by incidences of xenophobia and insecurity, and, in some cases, violence, perpetrated by poor black members of the neighbourhoods in which Somalis earn their livelihoods.

The final part of the book focuses on Somalis in the United States. Here Abdi juxtaposes the imagined glorified portrayals of day-to-day North America with Somalis' challenging encounters with U.S. immigration policy. The U.S. accounts are fraught with contradictions and deviations from what is imagined to be the reality that awaits the Somali diaspora, or what Abdi calls *Elusive Jannah* or elusive paradise. The U.S. chapter highlights both the culture shock and incompatibility between American and Somali culture. Here Abdi's objective to bring to the fore issues of settlement

and integration is most illuminated, and she makes a case for the need for more efficient and inclusive strategy-designing methods to meet the humanitarian obligation to provide home to Somalis in distress.

Overall this book is a poignant compilation of narratives collected between 2008 and 2012; however, the book's time frame misses a key shift in the global construction of Somali identity in the wake of Al-Shabaab's meteoric rise as an international terrorist group in East Africa. Evidenced from 2013 onwards, a study that incorporates this development would add a textured layer to an already insightful piece of work.

Taken as a whole, this book provides a humanized account of what is generally abstracted in foreign policy and international law debates on refugees, security vetting, repatriation, visa restrictions, welfare benefits, and related issues that fall under the migration regime. In the book, each of these issues is punctuated by real human experiences, anxieties, and insecurities and brings to the fore the possibility of migration policy formulation through analysis of non-reductive refugees' voices.

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## *Gender, Violence, Refugees*



Edited by Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ulrike Krause  
New York: Berghahn, 2017, 292 pp.

**T**he institutional conditions and socio-cultural dynamics that give rise to sexual and gender-based violence are analyzed in *Gender, Violence, Refugees* by focusing on a global set of case studies. Drawing from the experiences of refugees fleeing conflicts and persecution in Burundi, Congo, Syria, Sudan, and Western Burma, among others, the authors in this edited collection explore conceptual frameworks for understanding violence as it is differentially experienced by refugees; the role of "host" nations in determining experiences of refuge; and the ways that gender understood by both refugees and "host" societies shapes experiences of violence, settlement, and post-conflict return.

One of the most important contributions of the volume is the challenge to understandings of the relationship between refugee processes and sexual violence. This challenge is presented in numerous chapters throughout the volume but most notably in those by Turner and Olivius. Turner takes issue with the "orientalist" assumptions used to justify moral

panic vis-à-vis migrants in public discourse. He challenges an un-interrogated, unsubstantiated claim in some refugee studies scholarship that "displacement causes social and moral chaos" where male sexuality runs "amok" (54). Olivius similarly points to the problems in scholarship and international community interventions that locate violence against women in the cultural fabric of refugee communities. Her work suggests that, in practice, the lack of culturally sensitive approaches to the problem of violence against women "denies refugees a role as agents in the transformation of their own communities" (73). Krause's own chapter in the volume calls for focused attention on the problem of sexual violence and refuge that takes into account the sites of its occurrence in "conflict, flight and protected encampment" (181) but also understands that violence in refuge takes place in a broader continuum of violence.

A number of chapters focused on the recent European response to forced migration carefully examine the ways that

refugee reception institutions and national imaginaries define how gender and violence come to be understood in refugee populations. For example, McCluskey's work outlines how Sweden's national self-conception as a socially progressive, gender-equal, and morally exceptional society hides opposition to Syrian refugees. As Swedes embrace isolationism and fear faced with difference in the flesh, McCluskey's ethnographic research demonstrates that these are not incompatible with the imaginary of a progressive society of superior moral standing. Hartman's work shares McCluskey's implicit claim that understanding the dynamics of where and how refugees are housed gives insight into how national ideals shape violence and gender. Applying Le Febvre's toolkit for understanding the power of place-making, Hartman focuses our attention on the role that spatial arrangements play in making violence possible and difficult to address when it occurs in German refugee reception centres.

Contributors to the collection demonstrate that gender mediates experiences of violence and refuge. Gender, according to the authors, is shaped not only by cultural heritage but importantly transformed and mediated by the culture of service providers in refugee camps, the refugee management plans of international organizations, economic opportunities in exile, and particular migration trajectories.

On the impacts of refugee management plans, Krause's chapter demonstrates that protective encampment where continued co-existence with perpetrators is inevitable and where reporting fees are charged enables particular forms of vulnerability to sexual violence. These vulnerabilities set up in protective encampment are layered onto histories of violence in conflict and flight as well as structural gender inequalities in cultural practice such as forced marriage and the acceptance of forced sex in marriage. Janmyr's chapter similarly focuses on the ways that UNHCR's material assistance emphasis put together with the location of settlements in unstable border regions of Uganda enables continuing violence. The chronic insecurity, including the continuation of forced recruitment of Sudanese men under UNHCR "protection," results in large part from the institutional set-up of protective encampment in Uganda, as Janmyr's ethnography documents.

A number of chapters in the collection also account for how changing economic opportunities in migration

trajectories shape refugees' vulnerabilities to violence. Betts's collection of life stories used in tandem with an analysis of the archives of Médecins sans frontières demonstrates how the forced deportations of primarily female migrant workers from Angola back to post-conflict and economically decimated regions of the DRC resulted in a sharp increase of horrific violence. Such increased forms of violence against women during their return were closely tied to their economic insecurity. For Betts, it was the "structures within the international system that enabled these patterns of sexual violence to occur, to be globally recognized, and yet to be largely ignored" (260). Buscher also shows that the possibilities for livelihoods in refuge differ according to gender and that this in turn predisposes certain vulnerabilities to violence. He suggests policy interventions that support the protection of particularly vulnerable displaced women, pre-established gender roles that mitigate against marginalized masculinities, and the development of market-driven opportunities that enable self-supporting independent economic units in exile.

In a final example, changing economic opportunities in migration trajectories are also shown to shape refugees' gender roles. Returning Burundian refugees who had become heads of household in exile faced active discrimination and limited access to economic sustenance opportunities upon return. According to Lukumka, the experience of exile put together with the particular forms of discrimination experienced upon return changed gender dynamics and incited new forms of women's agency.

As a collection, *Gender, Violence, Refugees* provide a crucial perspective from which to analyze and develop policy to address the challenge of forced migration now facing much of our world. With its emphasis on how gender affects the experience of refugees, the authors urgently point our attention to the often understudied and overlooked challenges of gender on migrant status, protection, economic stability, and continued vulnerability to violence for refugees and returnees.

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