

Experiences of Displaced Scholars: Push and Pull Factors | World in 2030 | Text Transcript | GIDS

This is a transcript for the recorded webinar “Experiences of Displaced Scholars: Push and Pull Factors” presented by Guelph Institute of Developmental Studies (GIDS) at the University of Guelph. The event is part of the World in 2030 Speaker Series. The guest speakers were Dr. Ahmad Mohammadpour (from the University of Massachusetts Amherst), Dr. Halil Ibrahim Yenigün (from San Jose State University), Dr. Hamid Alawadhi (from Point Park University Pittsburgh), Dr. Basileus Zeno (from the Amherst College), Dr. Yar Taraky (from the University of Guelph), and Nasser Majidi. The event was moderated by Dr. Evren Altinkas.

[Start of Transcript]

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Okay, thank you very much Steffi. Hello everyone, this is Evran. Our panelist speakers today are all amazing scholars from different parts of the world, and we will be listening to their experiences. The reason/the idea to organize this event appeared when the Middle Eastern Studies Association Global Academy fellowship was awarded to me this year.

I was a fellow last year, as well. This year, I had an email exchange with them, with the global academy organizers. We said why don't we organize an event at Guelph and explain and give a chance to the scholars who are displaced to express themselves with their real-life experiences instead of their research. Because the research is shared everywhere by articles, by panels, by conferences, but there are other obstacles or issues displaced scholars are actually living or experiencing. So, then I approached Dr. Hamman and GIDS. Thanks to their wonderful support and of course, support of University of Guelph, we are here today.

I'm so pleased to welcome Dr. Zeno, Dr. Yar, Dr. Yenigün, and Dr. Alawadhi, and Dr. Mohammadpour. I just want to start without wasting a lot of time by trying to give you the background of the events that have been happening in the Middle East, and North Africa, and especially the Afghanistan crisis which forced more people to be displaced. Among these people, scholars are also included.

Scholars when they are displaced, faced with different circumstances, regarding their occupation, their experiences back in their home countries, because in a new country, the academic traditions or the academic experiences people have, must be renewed. Let's say in a better word, these people must always start over from scratch. As I said, I was one of them.

As Dr. Hamann said, I have been with Guelph since 2018, but I know that all my fellow displaced scholars face similar issues and problems. So, that's why this organization, this meeting today is important to give you this background; to show you a little bit more about the details, give you some inside information about these displaced scholars, what they are facing back in their

home country, and what they are facing in their host country under the name of push and pull factors.

So, if you have any questions to our speakers in the meantime, please do write them on the chat. You can also send them to me through the chat option, and I will compile them and try to ask these questions to our panelists in the final part of the event. So, if you don't mind, I would like to begin with a warm-up question.

It depends on our panelists to answer, or we really don't want to put any orders, or any kind of pressure on the panelists. So, I just want to ask the question and then, our panelists can answer one by one if they wish.

The first question I would like to ask is by way of introducing yourselves, can you tell us briefly about where you are from originally, and what were the main factors that caused you to leave? In other words, what were your push factors for migration?

So, let's begin with Dr. Zeno. I see him as the first face here. Let's begin with him!

Dr. Basileus Zeno:

Hi everyone, can you hear me? Okay, I will be brief. So, everyone had a starting point. What basically compelled us to leave our first country: when the Arab Spring took a place in Syria like Egypt, and every single other country. So, I was around that time, doing my teaching in Archaeology. Currently, I'm like a Karl Loewenstein visiting lecturer and [a] professor at Amherst College in Political Science.

Just to give you a hint about the shift in my career. Up until 2012, I was conducting my field work for my dissertation. I was a PhD candidate, so, I'm done with the prospectus of every single aspect of that, and I had an experience in archaeological excavations for over 10 years. Then, the Arab Spring happened; I was politically active in that movement and had regular meetings with activists around slogans around them. The really heady days of the revolution around that time 2011 and 12.

Then, there was a critical juncture (one of the many critical junctures) in Syria. In July 2012, there was a mysterious assassination of senior officers in the army. Then, that was a turning point in the uprising from actually mostly largely, peaceful protests to more, bloody, civil war. So, that was a turning point where I had to leave and join my wife who was stuck in Istanbul doing kind of summer school.

Around that time, we both had a visa to come to the United States. Because she had a scholarship to do [a] Master's degree in Communication at Ohio University, and I was a dependent. I was just coming with her to make sure everything is alright and going back to Syria to finish my visitation. So, then I left, and things became worse and worse. Anyone who was following the Syrian conflict knows things got more hellish than it started.

So, after a year in Ohio, I started to work at a restaurant, Chipotle, for almost six-seven months. Then, we ran out of everything; money, resources. I didn't have any support or any institution that actually tried to accommodate me and actually to continue my research as an archaeologist in the United States.

I didn't find it still like a mostly white structure, most of the excavations are done around the Mediterranean but you cannot actually be a part [of]. You are just a source of data. I saw that even in political science later. So then, I met with an amazing professor at Ohio University, and I was collecting my ethnographic observations in the context of rising. He said you have a trove of data; you have to apply for Political Science! Then you can make use of them; you need theories, you need training to make use of this and that. [That] was what I did; I applied for [a] Masters' Program there and I got the scholarship.

My whole career [has] now shifted to political science! Then, both my wife and I applied for UMass (University of Massachusetts Amherst); we both actually got admitted there and finished our PhD last year. So, that was the [gist] that I would comment on, [there are] other more complications that we faced in there, but this is just a background.

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Thank you very much Dr Zeno! Before we go and continue with Dr. Yar, I just want to let you know that this event looks like an all-male event as you can see all of us here. This is not an intended decision or choice; we have reached to several fellows and several displaced scholars, but [these are the] participants who wanted to join this event. So, I just wanted to raise that as another point in order to relieve all of you. So, thank you and doctor Yar...

Dr. Yar Taraky:

Say, it's possible if I go last?

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

You want me to ask the question again? Of course!

Dr. Yar Taraky:

No, no. I want to go last. Let other people go.

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Okay, thank you! But the question is, by way of introducing yourself, can you tell us briefly where you are from originally and what were the main factors that caused you to leave? In other words, what were your push factors for migration? Thank you!

Dr. Steffi Hamman:

I think Dr. Taraky would like to go after everybody else so why don't we continue with Dr. Alawadhi next.

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Yeah.

Dr. Hamid Alawadhi:

It's me, correct? Yes, thank you! So, my name is Hamid Alawadhi. I'm originally from Yemen. I got my PhD in [the] mid-1990s, so it's in the last century. I spent more than 25 years teaching Arabic and French because I have my PhD from the Sorbonne University, in Paris, in France. I published so far, more than 12 books in three languages, in Arabic, English, and French.

I also published more than 60 papers, studies, reports, and I was a Head of Commissions Committees especially when I was working in UNESCO as ambassador for five years. I worked within the International Institute of Education in Geneva as a Vice Head President at that time for a two-year session.

So, I'm in the domain of education for several years and I did research. Among my publications, is the most important cultural project of Yemen, which is the encyclopedia of Yemen. We achieved the second edition for Williams when I was a chief editor and then we were preparing the third edition in 10 volumes. Unfortunately, because of the war, everything was stopped. As you can see, I [left] Yemen because of two main reasons:

Of course, Yemen as you [all know], is witnessing a horrible, heinous war since 2015 and so, almost seven years where everything is destroyed. In the first place, the relation and connection between people. And of course, the infrastructure schools, museums, hospitals, everything is destroyed by bombardment and by internal conflict.

So, this is the case in Yemen, this is one of the reasons that pushed me to leave the country; to solve my family and myself from that situation. In fact, I lived in Yemen. In 2015, I was fortunate to get to the United States of America at that time. Since then, under what they call it TBS perhaps, I will have the time later on to explain a little bit about it so...

The second reason behind my departure from Yemen, which is very important, it's about education. Because I saw that the educational system in Yemen was interrupted and my son, I have a son. At that time, (it was ten years so), I [left] the country because I'm looking for an education for my son. And again, I'm for tonight to get with him and my wife to United States. Of course, my family is fragmented. This is another subject that maybe, I'll raise it later on.

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Dr. Alawadhi, thank you very much for your introduction! I would like to continue with Dr. Mohammadpour please.

Dr. Ahmad Mohammadpour:

Okay, thank you very much. Hello everyone! Thank you very much for organizing this wonderful panel! My name is Ahmad Muhammadpour. I am originally from Iran. I am Kurdish. I was born into a Kurdish and Sunni family.

As you know, in Iran, the courts are basically considered ethnic and religious community; basically, a minority [is] different in terms of religion, culture, and language with the dominant ethnic groups. So, the Kurdish people are subject to collective punishment. At the same time, we have those individual experience, people like me who have been displaced because of the basically ethnic and religious identity.

So, I got my PhD in 2007 from Shiraz University. I was graduated in Sociology. Right after that, I became Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Bu-Ali Sina in Hamadan [where] I spent around four years. In those years, I was experiencing moments and episodes of interrogation basically every day/every week.

I was always back and forth between those security institutions answering to their questions, making sure that I am loyal to the system, and I am committed to what they want. All those signatures, basically papers that they will force me to sign.

Anyways, for four years I have been monitored by the system. Before I [got] dismissed from Iranian academia in 2011 under the Ahmadinejad presidency, I had published 9 books and 67 articles in Persian, in Kurdish, and also in English.

In 2011, after four years of back and forth between me and the security authorities in the university, finally, I was approached by the IRGC (the Islamic Republic Guard Corps). They basically wanted me to collaborate with IRGC, share my research with them, and to work on Kurdish people. Basically, they wanted me to spy on people, specifically [the] Kurdish scholars in Iranian Kurdistan or Eastern Kurdistan which I absolutely refused. As a result, I was told that I have to pay the price.

In 2011, before I got persecuted by the system formally, I decided to leave Iran. I left Iran to Iraqi Kurdistan where I taught at Erbil University [in the] Department [of] Philosophy for two years. As you know, Iraq is so dangerous, specifically even now is considered a backyard of you know security, backyard for Iran and many other of those states in the region.

In 2014, I was fortunate to be able to come to the United States with the support of the Scholar Rescue Fund Institute (SRF). I was accepted at Vanderbilt University as a visiting scholar of Anthropology.

In 2016, of course, I came with my kids and my family. I had like a two-three years old son and my daughter was just one year old at that time. So, in 2016, when my fellowship expired, I knew that I can't go back [to] Iran. I have applied for asylum, and I know I know that there is no way back to Iran. So, I decided to get my second PhD because I wanted to avoid at least another form of discrimination in the western academia.

So, in 2016, I applied for PhD program, and I was accepted in 2017 to the University of Massachusetts where Basileus also studied. I am currently completing my PhD program. I am going to defend my dissertation in less than a month. That's a very short story about me over the last 10 years, thank you!

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Thank you very much Dr. Mohammadpour. Let's continue with Dr. Yenigün!

Dr. Halil Ibrahim Yenigün:

Hello everybody! Thank you so much for the invitation, for organizing this Steffi and Evran. Yes, I'm Halil and just like everyone, I'm from Turkey. One major embarrassment in a certain way but another way, like a curiosity for many people is what a person from Turkey would do, among, like in a crowd, where people are from one of the major war-torn countries that are going through civil wars.

Actually, this has even become a kind of a line in an attack piece against Turkish academics for peace. Recently, Turkey [was] depicted as a relatively peaceful and democratic or like stable country. But that is actually the point and also, unlike Ahmad, I'm not from the minority. I'm from the background, from the Turkey's all majority groups in all senses of the term. In terms of religious groups, sectarian groups, ethnic groups, and urban developers you know, etc.

What I am doing here—so, I got my PhD in 2013 [in] my college in Istanbul. I moved to the US for my PhD, and I got my PhD from Charlottesville, Virginia, University of Virginia. [It is a] kind of a myopia for many Political Scientists. At the time that I shared, I thought Turkey was getting better and we thought Turkey was getting more democratic in certain ways. Even though some signals are indicating that it is going to just get worse after it gets better.

So, I worked as a Political Scientist, as an Assistant Professor, at Istanbul Commerce University for three years in the tenure-track position. As a junior scholar, basically, we found ourselves, after giving protests in 2013, in activism, which some people despised around here as 'scholactivism' is what we were doing.

I was also part of human rights organization and doing some other volunteering work for some activist causes given that we were alarmed by Turkey's situation and the establishment, perpetuation, or consolidation of a dictatorship, basically.

From 2013 to 2016 which culminated in the mysterious, enigmatic, coup attempt in 2016. As some people like (indiscernible) which gave the perfect pretext to President Erdoğan to start a 'great purge' as some people call it.

Seven thousand academics in Turkey were dismissed. I was actually out of Turkey before that. The regime very much likes to portray the whole thing as a necessary response to such a huge existential crisis as a coup attempt.

I, myself, am a living proof of the mendacity of that kind of argumentation because I, myself was kicked out of my university for my position in February 2016 many months before the coup attempt. This was in response to what we did as a group of scholars.

11/28, in the first wave of signatures, and then 22/12, I think in the second wave during the final deterioration of the regime, the democratic situation when Erdoğan decided to stop/drop the peace process with the Kurds; and start a civil war that was marked with urban war zones, destruction, and mayhem. Also, most notoriously based on massacre; more than 200 people who were sheltered with basements were burned alive by certain gasses, which also run this way to UN human rights reports.

So, during the midst of those crises, before even that big basement massacre happened, we signed up a peace petition to take a stand, our basic last stance, before the democratic regime would break down for good. This last stand was "we won't be a part of this crime." So, immediately afterwards, the whole group of academics were targeted by the regime in so many different ways.

I can single out my case. Mine was a minor one. Although the chair of the board of trustees at my university targeted me in a major newspaper, giving my full name as he's going to do whatever is necessary to this support of imprisonment mandates who has no luck placed among the Turkish nation etc.

A few weeks after that a major newspaper attack doc, a mouthpiece of the government basically, ordered the university to check them out immediately by dedicating two columns to me personally: calling me PKK academics just for signing a petition. That was the end of my academic life in Turkey.

Since then, I've been in different places from Germany to Stanford University, living as a lecturer from being under a very heated political climate where we were targeted as the major types of any in the regime that would kill democracy, right media, and academia.

So, the early warning signals we had the greatest purge basically among many countries and this is also like evidence by the fact that even 2020-2021 academics from Turkey are among the top three, called a rescue fund application database. This is an official number that I've just seen doing an event the other week.

So, Afghanistan only made us third place, Yemen is [in] the second place now. We are among those nations not because of the war, but because of a direct attack on the academics by a regime dedicated to eradicating free speech from the country.

Right now, I'm struggling. I'm fighting another fight over here. It is shared by other factors that is the current corporate structure of the university which makes us increasingly obsolete as scholars.

Also, people with our backgrounds, people who have political positions, [and] political stance[s] are celebrated when they invite us for events and to acclaim our courage etc. but when it comes to finding a job, did all of these things become a hurdle, a package and also some kind of bad signal for the hiring committees? This is a fact that we should also talk about, not just speaking out of these events but also those kinds of things.

Sorry for the long introduction, but I think this just sums up my points for the speech, thank you!

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Thank you, thank you very much Dr. Yenigün! Just to add a very tiny thing to your experience because as you said I'm also from the same country. After Gazi protests in 2013, there has been another purge in Turkey which was not so much widespread on the media.

[It] was not a direct attack by the government, it was a purge to a group of academics who have actively participated in Gazi protests. Then, all the universities they worked at have used some very indirect mobbing methods to force those people to resign from their positions, I was one of them.

For instance, last time I checked, there was a total number of 800 scholars like this, but we were not an organized group back in those days. Now that I listened to you the lack of communication between academics like all of us has also caused the government to take a harder punch on all of us, actually.

That was a very good explanation, thank you very much!

Dr. Halil Ibrahim Yenigün:

Thanks to that peace petition, we've got a group now like other academics for people.

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Yeah, I know!

Dr. Halil Ibrahim Yenigün:

We may thank the government for that silver lining!

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Yeah, exactly thank you very much! Last but not least, Dr. Yar Taraky.

Dr. Yar Taraky:

Thank you Dr. Evran! As much as I don't want to talk about myself, I just want to talk about others; about people who are oppressed and living in bad conditions but because of the program agenda I have to speak about myself.

I belong to the generation who survived the first collapse of Afghanistan in 1992. There's one thing called purge or kicking you out from a room, from a building, or from a corridor. The other issue is that the building is collapsing. It's a very major thing.

So, in 1982, the Afghanistan statehood collapsed, and I had a Master's in Architecture and Planning, and another Master's in Arts and Art History. I struggled to take my family out of the misery in Kabul where the Jihadi warlords were fighting among themselves, they're looting people, looting people's belongings, and raping women.

So, I left, and I ended up in Canada in '98. I worked for a consulting firm, an architecture firm, and an engineering firm for almost a decade, producing lots of work. Then, in 2008, I returned to Afghanistan to just be part of the so-called development, which in reality, did not happen.

I was under the impression that the development was happening. When I went, I served as a Managing Director of Kabul New City. It is a master plan stage. So, I worked for a couple years and then I noticed that there is a lot of problems between the projects that are initiated by major international donors, like World Bank, Asian Development Bank, other (indiscernible) agencies.

Then, the realities on the ground in those poor countries, there was a total disconnect. This made me go back to academia and pursue my doctoral studies. I finished my doctoral studies at the University of Guelph in the area of Water Resources Development and International Development.

So, this knowledge informed me about how the developing discourse is working and where it is stagnating. I belong to the first generation of the collapse which happened in '92. Thanks to COVID I stayed home, and I was not in Afghanistan because I was there, teaching at the Kabul University, on a volunteer basis.

I was here that the second collapse from the Taliban, took over and the Americans, ran away and actually, the collapse was starting way before that. Currently, I would like to inform all the participants of today's event that it's not about one person. This is a system; it's a mass interrogation of scholars, people of knowledge.

The minister of higher education of Afghanistan, just a couple weeks ago, announced that they're not in need of modern traditional knowledge and scholarship. They don't like science, physics, and astrology—they don't need that—they say that we want religious studies, [and] religious scholars. Now, they are trying to assign or give us the scientists, names, professorships, to people who went to the religious schools. And all these scholars who are studying physics, mathematics, engineering, water resources, and literature, all of them are not needed apparently.

Over 12,000 of these scholars are now sitting, staying at home. Their salaries are not paid and a few thousand left. I'm so glad that I just found one of these scholars. The young scholars who approached me back in 2010. I don't know Mr. Majidi, correct me, maybe 2016, he approached me about developing a master's degree curriculum for the Herat University where he belonged. I was helping him, and he connected with me again. He is the one who just left Afghanistan. I know how much problems he must have gone through to get out of Afghanistan in this situation that everybody is aware of. So, I'm very happy that he's here.

I do not want to talk more about myself, and I'd rather give a chance to the audience to hear from Majidi who just left Afghanistan which is under the occupation of the Taliban forces. Thank you!

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Yes, thank you Dr. Yar. I just had a small chat with Mr. Majidi. He said that he is in a distant timeline. It's like a midnight there, so he wants to keep his talk short, but here he is. Mr. Majidi can we also listen to your experience?

Mr. Naser Majidi:

Thank you very much, thank you, my colleagues, everyone for giving me the chance to speak with them shortly about my experiences. It is great to bring such a platform and hear from these seniors; sharing their life experiences, and to fear that I'm not belong with this and others with experience, and make good impact out of it. Finally, they are at even better positions.

This is Naser. I am a civil engineer. I have studied at Herat University, and later on I have studied my master's degree in Vital Engineering in Delft (in the Netherlands). Upon graduation, I returned back to my country with [pride] to work in my country, and as Yar Taraky mentioned to even develop a curriculum for further studies at Herat Engineering faculty for which we did with the support of Mr. Yar Taraky. It was already supposed to start admitting [and] accepting students from the coming semester. Unfortunately, everything now is on the air.

In parallel to my academic work which I was doing with university, I was a volunteer, lecturer, and research associate at the Herat University. Also, I am an employee of the World Bank Group in Afghanistan for which we are working on developing projects in water supply and sanitation across the country.

Also, I had some social activities in Afghanistan for which I was in contact with foreigners, foreign people, and tourists. They were visiting Afghanistan, and as an interest for me, I was trying to show them around the country. For that, I was coming to the media I knew several times.

Then, all of these, my experiences with the international organizations, my extracurricular activities, being in the media, and also being in the faculty, all these made me feel very much unsafe upon [the] collapse of the government. Then, I was forced by my family to leave the country. I was alone because I was not able to take any of my family members with me.

I temporarily relocated to the chamber city of Tajikistan which was the only option I had at the time. I am [still here currently] and just now, despite the fact of being [very] worried about the future of my country, the works we have done—the projects we did—are not unknown. The future of them; most of them, are canceled [like] the department that we had.

The new departure in the faculty that we had developed, which is still not clear what will happen to it. The most important, of course, is my family who are feeling very much unsafe. I sometimes feel not good that they might be in direct trade because of me.

So, with all these concerns, I am now in a country that I cannot see anything clear in the horizon for myself. I'm here because I'm on a visa. I'm worried about my stay here, my future, career, my family, and everything. So, it's just in my mind; everything at the moment, to be honest, is so messy.

I'm not sure what will happen but I'm just trying to think properly, to see the options, opportunities, to save my career, to continue my passion which is research engineering, and studying. To that, at the end of the day, after a few years, I'm hopeful that the situation gets better, so that I could, like the other seniors that [mentioned about their experiences], I also, have a good impact at the end of the day.

I'm sorry if I talked longer. I didn't intend to but yes, it's like from my heart. I felt that someone is hearing, so, I just came. Thank you very much and all over from my side.

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Thank you, thank you, thank you very much Mr. Majidi! It was very interesting to hear, and also, I really appreciate you sharing your story with us. Thank you very much!

In the first round of questions, with our panelists, we had a chance to listen to the push factors, what happened to them in different contexts, and what is actually happening right now. In the case of Afghanistan, thanks to Dr. Yar, and also Mr. Majidi, we had the firsthand experience by listening to what's actually going on in a conflict-torn country. So, the second part that I intend to focus on, with my questions, is mostly about the experiences of our displaced scholars here, in North America.

Because after all, we are all either in Canada or in [the] United States, after we arrived here, we briefly had a chance to listen to Dr. Mohammadpour's experience, Dr. Yenigün 's reaction to the actual events that's actually happening in the job market, so, I want to direct more targeted questions to each one of the panelists in that case.

For instance, I want to start with Dr. Mohammadpour, ask him about the process of applying for asylum, and how was it for you and your family? What did you feel? I mean you had a PhD; you were an Assistant Professor back in your home country, but then you had to start over from the scratch, and you know you said you have a PhD to complete etc.

Also, you applied as a foreign asylum. How was it like for you and your family because obviously, you were not the only one who suffered throughout this process? So, can you share this with us?

Dr. Ahmad Mohammadpour:

Thank you so much, thank you, appreciate it. Well, of course, it was absolutely horrible. It was a very stressful procedure/process when I moved here in 2014. As we mentioned I had a PhD in my pocket, but there is such an unwritten rule in the western academia. Unfortunately, as long as you don't have a degree from here, I mean it's not written anywhere, but it's applicable.

You feel yourself powerless. You always feel that I am the same person after years of getting a second PhD. I am the same person. I know I have the same language skill, the only thing that has changed is that I have published more articles that I could publish without this second PhD. But at the same time, we had to convince everyone that 'hey we know what's going on in academia, we have been a teacher once upon a time', and all those things.

When I moved here, I applied for asylum, and in 2014 it took us 5 years to be able to get a 45-minute asylum interview. In all those years, my kids, my family, they didn't have any social security number. That means that they—we were always struggling with paperwork for medical, for insurance, for everything you know.

Because my kids did not officially exist in this country very specifically, I was listed as a single. When it came to the tax issues, my kids were not included [as] my dependent; they didn't exist officially, but they were with me here. I had to pay for them but at the same time they did not 'exist'.

So, after five years I faced many, many physical and mental issues to the extent that I got sick for months. I remember that one of my attorneys, he was a pro bono attorney, and I was fortunate that my attorney was introduced by the SRF.

He was a problem-[solver], he was a great guy, and he wrote to the USCIS that this guy is getting [sick]; he's losing his health and it's been five-six years that he lives in this situation in this state of anxiety and stress. So, even more than a year later, it was able to go to USCIS. You

know I don't want to go into details about this issue because I am uncomfortable talking about these issues, but I just want to take your time and share all those stories.

After six years, I was able to get my asylum and still, I don't have [a] green card. I have applied two-three years ago for [the] green card, so I have [to] start here. If there [are] any job opportunities in Canada, in Europe, I can't go. Also, in order to avoid this unwritten discrimination, I had to get a second PhD; I had to start from scratch at the age of 35/36 years.

Just imagine, it was a tough decision. At the end of the day, it was wise because you say 'hey, I am here. I am in. I got my PhD from here.' [It] is just about for when I applied for us for PhD, my current advisor, at UMass, said that 'I saw that you applied for a job, because you have such a long resume, with all those books, and articles, and I was wondering why such a guy should apply for a second PhD?'

God knows when I moved to Massachusetts again, with the kids and every time you know one thing that's very important, everyone is that when it comes to the asylee or to the displaced scholars, we take our family life for granted. We never address their issues. Basically, what we're concerned about is just our survival.

We don't care about the mental health of our children, of our wives, of our family, you know we don't care about that. We just need to stand on our feet. So, it's just a very short part of [an] episode of what I have been through during asylum. Even after that, it's been two years [since I've been in the] job market. I applied for hundreds of jobs.

One final point, if I'm allowed, is that I was forced. I was displaced from Iran because of the Islamic Republic Regime. When I came to the United States, we faced another layer of discrimination basically, from those academicians from Iran.

Believe it or not, when it comes to the application, when I apply for a job in Middle Eastern studies, I am always trying to hide it or to lower it down—I'm talking about my Kurdish background, talking about my ethnic background, because I know that there is another layer of the epistemic violence against us in the job market.

I received no help, no advising, no consulting, from the dominant elites—I mean the Iranian elites—who are here in the United States. I don't want to say that 'hey, they have to provide us with jobs', but they can help us; they can at least provide some sympathy which they really refuse. Thank you.

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Thank you very much Dr. Mohammadpour, and now I want to ask another question to Dr. Alawadhi. I remember that because as I said in the beginning, I was also unemployed between 2013 and 2018. I was just applying to any positions I could back then, and I remember Dr. Alawadhi you were the Dean of the College of Arts in Sana University right, because there was a job that I even applied for in Yemen for that university and I remember your name as a dean.

I then had a chance to check your biography and see your books, and your articles. Now, you are here. So, my question to you is not a personal one, so, I'm not saying why you did not pick me to that position back in 2014, but the question is this: how does your life as a scholar in your host country compare to your life as a scholar back home? What can you say about this; what kind of a comparison can you make to us in that sense? Thank you!

Dr. Hamid Alawadhi:

Thank you, thank you, for that question! Well, in comparing the two lives, there are of course differences, but I look to them from my own perspective. Personally, I mean I had a wonderful life in Yemen. I was a dean, socially I [was in a] good high-ranking positions with my family, doing my research what I would like to do, teaching my students, directing affairs in there.

So, I was in a good position, and suddenly I found myself cut from the world. I have no contact, I have no network, I have no possibility to work; I have nothing. So, when I am arriving here in the United States, it was very difficult moment to look for a job.

I go here, and there and in the beginning, I said my whole set, I know my achievement, a very detailed CV that I understand that is not working. So, I shorten my CVs; I put it in a few lines. This is just this someone who get his PhD, Master's Degree in France, who can teach French, who can teach Arabic, that's all. I don't mention any of my other position, my other competencies, my publications—nothing—just I need a job, to work, to make the two ends meet.

Fortunately, I got a first part-time job. As in any contingent job, you don't know what is your schedule, how many hours you will teach, how many? So, you're still always in the uncertainty. So, whatever. Of course, here in [the] United States, I learned a lot. I mean, in terms of professional development, a lot of things I learned here in [the] United States.

I say that, but in terms of stability, in term of psychology, in terms of humiliation, if you want so I'm to feel that the dignity that I have I can't feel it, because you go from the highest rank in academia as a full professor in 2012, to be a lecturer or an instructor. This is with my student. [I'm] the newest; I get it. So, it is really horrible.

This is something that people can't understand. It because it is not apparent in our face, but we feel the humiliation; we feel the discrimination; and we know it is not against us personally. This is the system—this is how the system work—not only against what they call us as aliens, but also, for those who are in the academia, is still under a contingent job. Thank you!

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Thank you, thank you very much Dr. Alawadhi! Thanks, that was a great speech. So, I want to direct a question to Dr. Zeno and ask about what he thinks about the career path he has been going through since he left Syria.

Dr. Zeno, what do you think about the career path after you left Syria, your career path, what do you think about it in general?

Dr. Basileus Zeno:

Yeah, thank you for this question. I think mostly now, there are two levels here. There are personal choices that we make in life as individuals, right—what we are passionate about, and we're going to do. Sometimes, you encounter questions and puzzles in life that you want to pursue; that was my passion in Political Science but at the same time as I am I'm still passionate about Archaeology which is/was concerned by structural violence.

The violence that I'm talking about in 2014, Damascus University, they must dismiss me from the program without notification, so, as a retaliation. Many of my colleagues went through the same thing. Not just in archaeology, but in many departments where basically, the state is controlling, the regime is controlling the narrative, and controlling institutions. So, they use/instrumentalize these institutions to retaliate against us, potentially threat to put it this way or this sense against us.

So, what does that entail? Two losses; individual losses that you have built, social, capital, and also experiences over a decade. Also, it's a loss for human capital for the country, right? Because instead of having a country that is investing in you, you invest, and they invest in you, and then after 10 years, they push you under the bus.

So, there are two damages here or double whammy. The second level here as I said like when I came here, I've tried very hard, but I found that's the irony. I found that even Political Science and Archaeology, where literary theory is coming from Global North, data is coming from Global South, the mobility of actors, and basically end here.

I'm not using that as shaming a process at all. It's just an acknowledgement of conditions that exist in place that is unfavorable for scholars, basically, with better citizenship. So, there is the racialized violent border on the other part.

Because when I shifted to political science, I remember the phone says in 2017 at the upheaval, the so-called refugee crisis in Europe, and others. I have many family members who went through the Mediterranean cross borders, got lost, ended up in Germany and other countries. So, I applied for a comparative study to conduct a cooperative study between the very same demographic: Syrians basically who are fleeing and why they are choosing Germany, Sweden, or the United States.

For instance, comparative study, so I was awarded the Open Society Foundation for that year, and then when I wanted to travel, because I was a pending asylum seeker since 2013, I was banned from traveling. So basically, I had to rewrite everything again, and focus on the US context. That happened also for my prospectus.

Also, happened for my methodology where you have, for instance, comparative study. I compared the experience of x, y in two countries. As political scientists, in my case, I was limited. I cannot move. Actually, the only equalizer in my life was COVID. For the first time COVID actually made white scholar. Anyone in the global note, sharing the very same precariousness, how when you have a research design and then there are structural conditions or exogenous factors that limit your accessibility.

So, that was my not just my life. I know the life of many other scholars who can conduct research. Let's say outside and then they will be banned from coming back to the United States. We have at UMass, for instance, scholars who went to Iran to conduct research and they got stranded for one or two years under Trump.

The second factor and the final factor that I want to comment on is similar to Ahmad. So, I applied, but earlier. I arrived here, in 2012, applied for asylum in July 2013. It took me four years to get an asylum interview. The first installment of interview was in 2017, and that was with the rise of Trump. Then, they dragged me for many years over and over. It took me like eight years experiencing legal violence that I can comment for the third question—how that manifests itself as a scholar and as a human here.

In May this year, a few months ago, my application was denied. So, now I'm about to face a second wave of displacement where, by the end of the year I will leave, potentially for Canada. I just want to problematize the assumption that once we are in a country in the Global North, like the United States or Canada, we are safe because we escape the immediate danger—the physical danger in our home country. So then, we are here so basically, we are safe.

In fact, there are two kinds of authoritarianism, the authoritarianism that we face our country but there is legal authoritarianism in the United States that we are facing, not just in academia, but also in our daily places like obtaining a work permit, obtaining a driving license, maintaining our bank account, because Syria is in the blacklist of sanctions. So, we kept receiving like a notification from the bank threatening us to freeze our account etc.

We deal on every daily basis with the question of stolen time. Scholars need time to conduct the research. We found ourselves in the US for 10 years actually just trying to avoid illegalization which was systematic especially after the rise of Trump.

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Thank you, thank you, thank you very much Dr. Zeno and especially Dr. (indiscernible) has also highlighted this in the chat to everyone, which is very important. I also wanted to highlight that and emphasize a little bit. It's like the Global South providing the data, but its use being determined by the Global North is a very important point, since we are here now in the Global North as scholars from Global South. I mean, we should concentrate more on that under global academy fellows as well so thank you very much, that's wonderful.

Now, I want to ask a question to Dr. Yenigün because in the final part of his introduction, he talked about the job market in the USA, and you know more and more the universities in North America emphasizes the importance of diversity in education system. Also, in the job market in some cases and what are your experiences what do you think about the diversity and academic job market in North America in general Dr. Yenigün?

Dr. Halil Ibrahim Yenigün:

Thank you so much Evran for that diversity point. Probably Ahmad, could have responded to that in a better way given our conversations last week amongst ourselves, yeah? We don't belong to that category of like the protected species as the American academic mind you know conceives it.

We are not yet to that point that they have to protect us because we are still in the primitive stage of being saved from certain oriental despots, right. Then, like given a safe haven over here so, there are like double, triple burdens. Also, damages and also violence as Basileus put it.

First, we are brought here, and the immediate assumption is 'okay, you were productive there come here and just continue your work here' as if there is not any mental baggage, psychological damage, and baggage. Also, like people you left back home and their struggles. So, you are your desire to be part of the struggle still.

Of course, my productivity got hit manifold over the years. How can you expect people to just come back here, and then continue with that? I have had so many friends from Turkey, especially, but elsewhere over here in this country who got through severe mental health problems.

We had to raise that with scholars at risk as well, that you can't just assume that people will continue where they left off. Then, like start publishing, and then science series. So, one thing is about diversity—actually when I was at Stanford and I was on the job market, actually I'm still on the job market, but I don't know like how it works now.

When I took my documents and my cover letter to the career center at Stanford, they had no answer to give me—what, how to frame my situation—it's going to affect you in a worse way or in a better way to know that for them. That you are in this situation.

Again, like from the last point, they celebrate you—you stand up against—and at this point over there, they have no place for you over here, because they have this quite structured system where it doesn't allow for any kind of gap years, any kind of unsmooth factors on your CV.

So, what happened here you have to explain that. Actually, I got into like in a scholar, at least workshop I was observing just like a provost and a dean just talking back and forth. Okay, so should he put it, or should he not put it, and who was basically sharing her experience that he actually like lots of donors would have lots of reservations about so many issues.

Let's talk about how many donors over here are not trying to hurt the interests of Turkey, right? Turkish money on these universities over here Turkish funds that is noted over here. All this donation structure over here is not any less pernicious than the political pressure of the university over there, overseas, that's one thing.

Also, we also know that once we got here the struggle never ended over here. So, let's talk about Nikola Jones; let's talk about universal professors who were not allowed to testify but for the suppression, and how is it different from what we were going through in the quote unquote 'good times' in Turkey.

The struggle here actually, this is a point also like I've been making whenever I'm interviewed, this poor guy who just escaped this dictatorship, and just found a safe haven over here. Okay, we have to stop the dictatorship over here like actually, you're at that point over here, because it starts with media and academia.

Once they're under attack, then, the rest will come. If you don't stop them there. Now, they all framed the whole thing as critical race theory, right? Like some republican shirt guy you know, was able to dub it in a very clever way as critical race theory.

A specific thing talks to our kids in high school. They stop it, so democrats just found themselves on the defensive and came up with the most absurd kind of defense. Then, they are paying the political cost for that, but the real thing is they're trying to put us also in this bipolar world of democrats and republicans. We know from the very beginning we don't belong there.

I want to also like pick up on like Ahmed's two points. One is the gatekeepers. So, the other problem is that that bipolar world they put us in, just like the republicans and democrats, the same way you are either for instance for Palestine, or for Zionist or like an Islamophobe or Islamophile.

The whole thing is basically divided that way in a bipolar way. The whole politics of our countries are mistranslated over here. For instance, you are criticizing Turkish government. They can easily invert it to make it look like you are an Islamophobe, because why you are criticizing a Muslim government?

This this has also like a lot of other ways to frame—like the whole abuse and misuse of the discourse from orientalism—again this is a continuation of Ahmad's point. We have to give credit to their important work on that. So, inciting the listeners association perhaps like the being silenced/being censored.

We also (me, myself and my colleague), we wrote a piece on Turkey's global artificial activities to frame itself as the patron of global Muslim solidarity. Immediately, we were attacked by people over here; like some of the top gatekeepers of Islamic studies, because once you criticize somebody except, apparently somebody from those causes that they celebrate because of their connection with the Turkish government and because of their voluntary work to further the Turkish regime's interests overseas and over there.

Then, that you are immediately are falling to the opposite ground further; you can't even locate these kinds of issues. It is again like this bipolar word and the gatekeepers of the let's say, for instance, Muslim academia, or Middle East Academia. Those gatekeepers are also exerting this kind of pressure and violence. You can't for instance, be at the same time for Kurdish and poor Palestinians, right? So, once you are pro-Palestinian, you have to love Erdoğan.

Then, you have to further Erdoğan's interests because if you go against that then, you are hurting interest of Palestinians because politicians are supported by Erdoğan. They logic costs as simple as this way; the moment you criticize Erdoğan, they got alarmed. This will hurt down the road because of our alliances—our logic alliances, our interests—so, let's stop that and list, attack them, unless call them 'Islamophobe'.

Let's call them, these people are pre-imperialist. So, you are attacked over that in your country for being pro-mandate, for imperialist, and when you come here then you are labeled as [an] Islamophobe, right? These guys they don't even know like whether you are a pious Muslim or not it doesn't matter because you are hurting that the way they frame global Muslim interests.

So, we are actually facing all these challenges. Where do we belong in that diverse scheme? Nowhere!

How can we raise these issues over here in this academia? So, we have to start with actual Middle Eastern Association, the association that has been supporting us for this cause. We have to basically make these nuances more known that if you are anti-imperialist over here, that doesn't mean that you have to be pro-Iranian Regime, right?

You have to support some of the causes that Iranian regime or Turkish regime or some like Arab regime over there in Qatar etc. Like those Qatar funded, think tanks in DC, right?

Or, in order to criticize Saudi Arabia, you don't have to be a pro-cutter for Turkey just like the majority of the people in those think tank and academic world are doing now. So, I have to say that. Thank you so much.

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Thank you very much Dr. Yenigün and that was a very important contribution.

Dr. Taraky, what do you think I mean I listened to what you said, and you said that you don't want to give talk about the personal experiences as the others, but I want to ask you this question, what types of initiatives do you deem the most helpful to provide a safe haven for scholars at risk, and what can other potential host institutions learn from them?

Dr. Yar Taraky:

Yeah, I would go from a little bit of a different perspective. I'd be a little bit of a devil's advocate. Number one, before we end up coming to the Global North of the United States of

America or Canada we lived in in our own countries. We were under pressure: physical, mental, all kinds of pressures.

We went away, and we ended up here. We came here to a country which is based on the fundamental principles of liberal economy, principles of profit. The bottom line in these societies is profit. The gatekeeping mentality is coming from the profit issues, and when we come here, we have to understand that this is the case.

In my experience, we have to lower our expectations. I lowered my expectations when I came here to the rock bottom. For the reasons that I knew the new liberal economy, the new liberal society, and the other reason was that I experienced my past experience was so bad that anything I would receive here was good for me, anything.

So, when you're having lower expectations and then you grow, there will be always sort of discrimination. Not for the color of your skin, maybe, possibly?

It is also for color of your skin, possibly for the look of you, possibly for the knowledge that you carry, and possibly for other reasons. But the bottom line is profit, and access to resources. I don't know why many scholars and many other immigrants are complaining that they're not getting the attention they're supposed to get. I do agree; I work, I serve the immigrant communities.

I know the pain and I feel the pain. I understand that, but it would be very difficult to solve all these problems right away. Until we have class societies, until we have profit-based societies, because if you go to a company, nobody wants to share their piece of pie with you.

In the universities now nobody gives you access to the bigger chunk of funding if you want to go and access from want to have access for that. Then, we should want to touch bases according to the studies and data that is available for you.

With a doctor, there is 10 people working: nurses, doctor's assistant, personal support workers; like for every doctor about eight to ten people are working. Basically, a doctor is an employer. For every lawyer, at least four people are working: these are clerics, these are assistants, legal assistants. For every engineer, there is at least three people working. I work in the engineering field. Three people, technologists, and two technicians or maybe more. My question is why we are having a PhD from the Global North institutions, basically breaking these big barriers?

Why we have to be complaining? We should be employers. We should be giving jobs to others. I don't understand. I never had this problem. I did well, and I was never unemployed. When I was not employed by a university, I went, and I created my own company.

When my company didn't well, I went to consult people. I started doing other things. Basically, I put bread on the table. My understanding is that people with scholarships and with degrees such as PhD should be able to find their own means of breadwinning and income protection;

not only for themselves, but they have also had the opportunity to employ other assistance— data mining students, graduate students, whatever.

So, this maybe is not a good, popular approach around the table but because I came from such a background that I left a collapse, almost a concrete roof along me. Almost, like just bullets were just maybe a few feet from me. So, I said whatever I get after this, I'll accept it.

I came here. I was also denied. I was also not giving the opportunity from the first shot, but I keep banging, keep knocking on the door. This is a market. We are real products. In this market, you have to understand. If you go to a mall, you will look for 10-50 items. Then you choose one. We are more items in this global neoliberal market. Until there is a market, we are the commodities, and we have to be accepting the rules of this market. Once the market is gone, then we have to be starting—talking about our issues like scholars.

So, just to wrap this up, I think there will be discrimination in the academic environment. There will be discrimination more in part, this discrimination may not be because of our religion, because of our affiliation to a party, our application to a country, it could be simply an income protection discrimination. They simply do not want to share a piece of the pie.

You got the university degrees; you got the PhDs! Then, once you have your degrees, your pieces, your licenses, but says, 'I cannot say that', 'oh, I don't have a job'. That is not good. We have to be employers for others, that's the issue. At the same time, when we are here, and some of us have immigration problems, some of us like our hearing issues, we always have to look at the bigger picture: where we came from, what is the situation in the place where we used to live and we used to teach, just compare it like them, compare the maskers, compare a bag that cheaply complete Kabul. It is not comfortable what kind of life these people have. We are way better off.

We should be dedicating, minimum half of our time how to change lives in those places, and how to bring changes into those places.

I don't know maybe I'm sounding too much of a you know enthusiast, but this is what I'm doing and I'm enjoying it. I was successful, and I never failed. I never said unemployed, and I've put bread on the table. We are putting more than 60% of our time serving the people: our classmates, our students, who stayed behind and who are now struggling with a piece of bread.

We are basically employing other people with something that they will survive, but the issues of discrimination and problem in the academic environment is also related to the access to resources. Yeah, if you if you agree with me, knowledge and scholarship are a commodity in the in the new liberal society.

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Yes.

Dr. Yar Taraky:

The moment it stops become a commodity, then you can start these complaints. Now you cannot confuse because it's a commodity. It's like oil crude oil, it's like a gold, it's like a copper, knowledge that's it. Thank you!

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Thank you! Thank you very much but I have I have a couple of points to add from a different perspective obviously. Because when I was listening to you, what came to my mind was an episode from Big Bang Theory, where Sheldon Cooper, one of the main protagonists was attempting in a knowledge competition.

He couldn't find any partners to run with him. Then, he had to take the janitor from the university, and the waitress from the university in his team. It became obvious that the janitor had a PhD in Nuclear Physics in the university from Moscow, and the other one from another place. That was always like a joke to me. When my friends were telling me there are people with PhD who are driving taxis in USA in Canada, I was like feeling okay, maybe, it's their mistake.

I had a similar approach as you had, but when you said research and funding something appeared to my mind as someone who lives in Canada for four years right now, if you are in Canada, I don't know if you are aware of this or not, if you want to apply for a research grant or a funding as a faculty member with knowledge and information, I'm using my quotation mark fingers, and I keep them here on the screen you have to have a permanent residence; you cannot apply for a grant with a work permit.

So, you need to wait to have a permanent residence to apply, you need to have this kind of privilege just like a Canadian citizen or a Canadian permanent resident in order to show the people, show the public that you have the knowledge, and you are ready to use that research funding.

I totally agree with what you said, but also adding to these specific points of years-long experience, back in our home countries, as PhDs, as Assistant Professors, as Deans of the faculties, and then ending up here as people with work permit, waiting for their permanent residence. Or in case of Dr. Mohammadpour, waiting for five years for an interview, nine years for an interview, then the things or in the in the competition, you are not in the same position or in the equal position with others. So, that by the land of opportunities does not always sound same to everyone and especially to scholars like us. In the essence, I just wanted to add this as a trying to be objective moderator here.

But I have a further question Dr. Mohammadpour raises his hand please go ahead.

Dr. Ahmad Mohammadpour:

Yeah, thank you, thank you! I just didn't want to miss this point in line with our previous conversation and the idea of diversity which is a sort of like a big lie in the applications. We are always asked in the application, there are questions about diversity, and I mean the minority affiliation but it's interesting that in all those the diversity and minority are always limited to Hispanic and blacks which is fine, of course, I am always advocating, but how about us, about those displaced people who can't be found under those categories?

This is another situation you know when it comes to me as a Kurdish scholar from Iran, even as a person who is affiliated with the ethnic minority, I don't know where to put my name in those applications this is the first issue the second issue is the job interviews, we are always asked "how do we address diversity"?

I am answering 'hey, I am the embodiment of diversity' and how do you address diversity in your faculty in your department. We have to mention that in our cover letter in our interview that we are kind of like aware of the LGBTQs, black people, Latinos, that's fine, that's fine, that's totally fine. But why should we always address those issue and we are not addressed in those applications, in those opportunities, this is another issue that has to be mentioned. Thank you.

Dr. Evran Altinkas:

Thank you, thank you very much Dr. Mohammadpour. Dr. Alawadhi Do you have anything to add to this conversation?

Dr. Hamid Alawadhi:

Yes, I think yes. I thank you. I thank you to give me the floor again. In fact, the question of diversity, this is a repetitive question. Every time they ask us to write about diversity, they ask us in the interview. When they ask me that question about diversity, I said, well, listen I participated into drafting an international convention about diversity when I was ambassador to UNESCO. One of the most difficult problem is to define what is diversity; how we can define diversity.

I said Ahmad, correctly. So, we need to talk about inclusiveness. This is the term that we supposed to talk about rather to say diversity and by diversity as said [by] Ahmad it is intended to include specific groups that represent a kind of minority was correct.

I agree with him completely. I need just to say that this is because, I think this will be my last wording and I leave because I have another appointment. I'm so sorry for that. So, I need to add, because I said in the beginning that I am under TPS so, I'm so far yeah, I mean under even Ahmad and Basileus, they are in advanced stage compared to me and my family.

So, when I'm thinking about TPS, this temporary protected status, this is a hybrid status that means no asylum, no residency, no path to citizenship, no way to go out, no way to have any

benefits. You only have two rights: to be legally in the States and to get a permit to work. This is only that.

Unemployment, you are not included. Benefit, you are not included. Healthcare, you are not included. So, you can compare how a scholar can live that. Not for himself, my future is behind me, for me. Personally, I'm talking frankly, my future is behind me, I'm talking about my child. So, he has the chance to travel to the other side of Niagara Falls, in Canada with his school.

He can't because he is under TPS. He's not the right to leave United States. I get many several invitations to the Middle East, I can't, because if I request what they call it advanced parole, this advancement will come back in one year after. So, this is impossible, and it is written that any employer can request you to not get [in] the plane.

Nothing you guarantee for the situation. So, you can see that even among us, other, this suffering, that we are talking about, there is more than just a financial, or social suffering. There is psychological; something that we hide it because we can't explain that. I don't know how many years I will arrive to the path when Ahmad gets the interview. I'm not.

I'm still here so I don't know what [my son will be] when he is in two years. Will get his high school degree? Can he get to the university? Because my mission from the beginning was to get to state for the education of my son. So, can I help my son to get to the university? This is a big question.

Okay, so I'm so sorry for that, but I would like in the end to thank Global Academy Program for giving us this opportunity to get together. I thank you for your program, Steffi, in your university, and everyone to get us and to raise that question because this is something that nobody already talked about.

We talk always about displacement, about immigration, about illegal immigration. Me, I'm not [a] migrant. I would like to be but I'm not [a] migrant. So, I have no status. I'm hopeless, stateless, how we say everything with less if you can imagine it. Plus, I'm still proud of my production. I published last year, the most extended bibliography in Arabic about translation studies, okay, 500 pages!

It's very famous. Of course, this is a personal endeavor, but I assure you that within this dark atmosphere there is some people who would like to help within academia, within institutions in United States, in Canada, and everywhere. We are lucky to be in North America. We will keep it ahead. Thank you so much.

Dr. Steffi Hamman:

Thank you so much for those powerful words at the end, Hamid. That takes us to the end of our time today, and I want to thank everyone who joined us tonight for their time.

To our audience who have stuck with us, thank you for coming to learn from our speakers about what forced migration looks like in real life. We may read in newspaper articles about ongoing civil wars and conflicts in seemingly faraway places like Afghanistan, like Yemen, like Syria, like Iran, like Turkey but we're very rarely confronted with what that real human fate looks like. The people who are affected by this and that is why I'm deeply grateful to our guests today Dr. Alawadhi, Dr. Mohammadpour, Dr. Yenigün, Dr. Zeno, Dr. Taraky, and also to Abdullah Zamajidi who joined us from his temporary exile.

On behalf of the Guelph Institute of Development Studies, thank you so much for volunteering your time today, and sharing your stories, your journeys, as displaced scholars are not feel-good stories; but they're stories that more people need to know about because your stories are representative of the struggles of hundreds of thousands and growing number of peoples. Thank you for sharing not just your stories, but your experiences, your feelings, your frustrations too because these are real too.

As we wrap up this evening's round table, I'm left to acknowledge that this event something like this is really just a drop in an ocean of need to give voice to those who are displaced by conflict and by persecution around the world. That is why it's important to give these kinds of platforms more often. Each single one of your stories could have easily failed the whole time.

Today, we wanted to involve as many stories as possible, and as many voices as possible, because of how many people are affected by this. So, while the world is paying its five minutes of attention to what's going on in Afghanistan right now you know, we need to learn that this is not a problem that has been solved in the past. These problems will persist, and we need to find sustainable solutions.

So, it's been a pleasure and a real honor to learn from you tonight, thank you! Thank you, thank you, for opening up. Thank you! Thank you, thank you everybody, thank you!

Dr. Basileus Zeno:

Thank you everyone, bye!

[End of Transcript]