Report of the Conference on Displacement and Reconciliation

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Introduction

Experiences in places from Bosnia, Rwanda and Cambodia to Colombia, Iraq, Israel and the Palestinian Territories have raised important, under-examined questions about the relationship between reconciliation and the experience and resolution of displacement. The concept of reconciliation touches all phases of the displacement cycle. A lack of reconciliation between members of divided communities can be an important, although rarely acknowledged, cause of forced migration. Unreconciled tensions between displaced populations and the members of host communities can result in xenophobic violence, while the challenge of reconciling displaced persons with their former neighbours and with their states of origin represents a critical factor affecting the success of return and reintegration processes involving millions of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Drawing on a wide range of disciplinary perspectives, the Conference on Displacement and Reconciliation examined the relationship between reconciliation and displacement, in theory and in practice. Convened in at the Conflict Research Centre at Saint Paul University in Ottawa from 9-10 June 2012, conference participants explored what displacement reveals about the reconciliation process and, on the other hand, how the concept of reconciliation can enhance understandings of the nature and experience of displacement. The conference took a cross-sectoral approach to exploring these challenges, drawing on the contributions of researchers, policymakers and practitioners, and insights from past experience that may inform efforts to resolve current displacement crises.

Particular questions explored at the conference included:

- What are the particular conceptual, logistical, strategic and inter-personal challenges associated with pursuing reconciliation in the aftermath of conflicts involving large-scale displacement?
- How do displaced persons and other actors conceptualize, contribute to or hinder the pursuit of reconciliation? What factors support the active engagement of displaced populations in reconciliation activities?
- How do states, humanitarian organizations, host communities, and members of displaced persons’ home communities figure in reconciliation processes involving uprooted populations?
- In what ways and in what contexts may reconciliation initiatives contribute to improving relations between displaced populations and host communities?
- What do past experiences in countries such as Rwanda, Bosnia and Lebanon tell us about the links between reconciliation and displacement? What insights do these cases hold for humanitarians, policymakers and human rights advocates?
- What are the contemporary challenges facing countries such as Colombia, and critical regions such as Africa and the Middle East?

Please see the conference program (following) for more detailed information on the composition of the conference panels that addressed these questions. This report offers a brief
overview of the discussions that unfolded in the seven conference panels. In addition to this report, the conference discussions also informed a policy brief entitled ‘Displacement, transitional justice and reconciliation: Assumptions, challenges and lessons’, published as part of the University of Oxford’s Refugee Studies Centre Policy Briefing Series (2012). Selected conference papers will be published in a forthcoming edited collection.

Panel 1: Displacement, transitional justice and reconciliation: Conceptual links and theoretical insights

Papers:
- *Refugees, peacebuilding and reconciliation: Lessons from policy and research*, James Milner (Carleton University, Ottawa)
- *Displacement as the locus for deep-rooted conflict and reconciliation*, Vern Neufeld Redekop (Saint Paul University, Ottawa)
- *Transitional justice and the reintegration of displaced persons*, Roger Duthie (International Center for Transitional Justice, New York)
- *Displacement, reconciliation and property restitution*, Anneke Smit (University of Windsor)

The papers in this panel examined the nature of and links between displacement, transitional justice processes, reconciliation and peacebuilding.

Transitional justice, broadly drawn, refers to a set of measures developed with the aim of addressing the legacy of massive human rights violations stemming from armed conflict and authoritarian rule. Measures such as prosecutions, reparations, restitution, truth-telling, and security-sector reform, though each designed to address specific challenges, are conceived with this broader goal in mind. Displacement may be an outcome of human rights violations or a violation in itself, and is therefore of direct concern to transitional justice. The potential of transitional justice measures to support reconciliation in communities affected by large-scale displacement, and the possible links between transitional justice, reconciliation and the reintegration and resettlement of displaced populations is increasingly noted by both researchers and practitioners. Indeed, transitional justice’s commitment to both a past and future-oriented rights-based approach is well-suited to addressing the many political, social, economic, and security-related challenges to the reintegration of displaced populations. Redress in the form of compensation or property restitution can support reintegration by helping to address the socio-economic challenges facing the displaced—for example, these remedies can help increase access to shelter and livelihoods by providing refugees and IDPs with crucial resources. The careful use of transitional justice mechanisms to reform the state’s security sector can also significantly impact reintegration efforts. Whether by removing known perpetrators from the state apparatus or by seeking retribution through international courts, states can use transitional justice to indicate to returnees that their justice claims are legitimate in the new post-conflict state.

Panelists addressed the idea that transitional justice programs and reconciliation initiatives should involve both the displaced and non-displaced in an equitable manner. For example, truth-telling processes may provide a forum for both the displaced and those who remained to see their stories acknowledged in a shared narrative. Critically however, as one
participant noted, transitional justice processes alone cannot achieve reconciliation or durable solutions. Rather, long-term coordination and collaboration with development and peacebuilding actors is required to maximize its contribution towards such goals.

This panel noted that there are significant gaps in both research and practice regarding the links between peacebuilding and displacement. This gap can be described as two-fold: first, the international community has adopted a shortsighted emphasis on the return of refugees, revealing limited understanding of how protracted displacement can undermine or support peace. Second, peacebuilding efforts have demonstrated limited understanding of the regional character of many displacement situations, and the influence displacement may have on the stability of regions in which one or more interlinked conflicts may be unfolding and moving towards resolution. Closer analysis suggests that displaced populations can have both positive and negative effects on peacebuilding processes. Skills-training and peace education programs that are offered to refugees while in neighbouring states can have important economic and social benefits upon return. Similarly, increased participation of displaced persons in peacebuilding activities such as negotiations and electoral politics may strengthen the sustainability and legitimacy of those projects. Yet, just as peacebuilding actors should aim to maximize the positive links between refugee movements and the pursuit of peace, they should also be cognizant of the potential negative impacts of displaced groups on peace processes. For example, ‘spoilers’ may be present amongst refugee populations; early and unsustainable mass repatriation movements may increase pressure on political, social, and physical infrastructure in fragile states; and the possible political radicalization of displaced populations while in exile may disrupt tenuous peace and reconciliation processes in countries of origin.

While these examples demonstrate complex, practical links between displacement and reconciliation, one participant noted that such links have unfortunately so far been greatly underestimated by the international community. Recognizing the close relationship between displacement, reconciliation, and peacebuilding could help promote more sustainable approaches to root causes of conflict.

This panel also raised the question of how to define the concept of reconciliation, one of the conference’s major themes. Does reconciliation deserve different definitions at various stages in a conflict cycle? Should distinctions be made when discussing the need to reconcile people as opposed to ideas or narratives? One participant offered potential definitional parameters for reconciliation, outlining the differences between instrumental and psycho-social definitions of reconciliation; between symbolic and material reconciliatory acts; and between local and international levels of reconciliation. The need for a multi-dimensional conception of reconciliation is linked to the complex ways in which individuals experience displacement. It was suggested that reconciliation involves a transformation of relationships and reconstruction of identities, rather than a return to the status quo.
Panel 2: Reconciliation, transitional justice, and durable solutions to displacement

Papers:
- *Return in Divided Societies: Restoring Coexistence and Promoting Reintegration in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Huma Haider (University of Birmingham)
- *Prospects and challenges for sustainable peace and ethnic reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, Vellaithamby Ameerdeen (University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka)

Displacement crises are typically resolved through the pursuit of one of three “durable solutions” to displacement—return, local integration or resettlement. This panel noted that although research on the intersection of reconciliation, transitional justice and durable solutions to displacement is limited, in practice a range of projects and initiatives have been developed to explore and strengthen the links between these processes. These initiatives have met with varying degrees of success. For example, the truth-telling process initiated by Timor Leste’s Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation’s (CAVR) attempted to support the resolution of displacement by helping to construct a shared narrative of the conflict, recognizing victims’ suffering, and drawing on community-based conflict resolution practices to support the return and reintegration of displaced persons who had committed relatively minor offences in the context of the conflict. Though substantial, these accomplishments did not prevent an outbreak of conflict and a displacement crisis only one year after the Commission’s close in 2006. Though some have claimed that such violence demonstrated the CAVR’s failure in terms of generating deep and sustainable reconciliation, the violent outbreak was explained by one participant as the product of the international community’s flawed analysis of the conflict and inadequate engagement in supporting the CAVR process and the implementation of its recommendations.

Indeed, many participants stressed the need for long-term engagement in peacebuilding, transitional justice and reconciliation activities, particularly if they are to support the sustainable resolution of displacement. The need for coordination and cooperation were emphasized, with several participants noting that actors engaged in a wide range of sectors such as peacebuilding, governance, development, and business are far more likely to see their sector-specific goals furthered through collective efforts than through separate initiatives alone.

In that regard, one participant noted that although Sri Lanka has developed a four-pronged strategy to deal with the political, economic, and social ramifications of its decades-long civil war, the central task of normalizing life for all Sri Lankans remains seriously underserved. While the government has encouraged long-term IDPs to return, such movements have occurred in the absence of a much-needed comprehensive resettlement and reintegration program, thus doing little to combat pervasive ethnic segregation. In the absence of post-settlement assistance and social integration initiatives, it has been difficult for the displaced to find sustainable solutions to their uprooting. In a climate in which social integration has received little attention from officials, poverty and psychological trauma represent significant challenges to the prospect of rebuilding a shared sense of community. Moreover, Tamils have been largely excluded from
many of the post-conflict processes undertaken by government officials. This exclusion has done little to counteract the pervasive sense of fear and mistrust between groups in the country. While international pressure has been effective in pushing the Sri Lankan government towards a more collaborative approach to engaging Tamils in the political sphere, weak social and political institutions, severely diminished rule of law, and unaddressed justice claims remain major impediments to the successful and sustainable reintegration displaced persons.

The notion that a return home represents a straightforward step towards achieving a \textit{durable} solution to displacement was also contested, with several participants questioning the nature of individual and collective notions of “home”. Though some property restitution programs have been hailed as essential contributions to the reintegration of displaced persons, one participant noted that in the case of Bosnia Herzegovina, impressive statistics on the “success” of property restitution obscure a reality whereby most properties have either been re-sold or remain as sites of deep division within the community. In this sense, a durable solution founded on principles of reconciliation clearly remains elusive in the region. As one participant explained, this case demonstrates how \textit{home} is much more than the physical space which one inhabits, but rather is the site of shared cultural and social realities, of opportunities to earn livelihoods, and most importantly, of active trust and cooperation. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, such conditions have been supplanted by poverty, segregation, and an enduring sense of fear and mistrust between groups, deeply diminishing any sense of “home” that displaced persons may have towards their former properties.

In this sense, though property restitution programs may serve as important remedies to forced displacement, their outcomes may not be immediately conducive to reintegration or reconciliation. Calling for a shift towards a more right-based approach to displacement, one participant noted that many other more realistic alternatives to property restitution could serve the needs of displaced persons. Whether by offering compensation or housing vouchers, partitioning property, developing new settlements, or granting land in areas of origin, many options exist that could help to address displaced persons’ justice claims, promote reconciliation, and in turn support durable solutions to displacement.

\textbf{Panel 3: Reconciliation, Peacebuilding and the Resolution of Displacement: Insights From Africa}

\textbf{Papers:}

- \textit{Reconciling the displaced with the disaffected: The dilemma of the Great Lakes Region of Africa}, Odomaro Mubangizi (Arrupe College, Harare)
- \textit{A review of transitional justice mechanisms and the resettlement of the survivors of Kenya’s 2008 post-election violence}, Paige Morrow (Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights)
- \textit{The impact of returnees’ dilemmas on reconciliation: The case of Northern Uganda}, Pius Ojara (Refugee Law Project, Kampala)

This panel explored the intersection of displacement, justice and reconciliation in Africa, with a particular focus on the Great Lakes Region. With the greatest number of displaced persons
and refugees in the world, the Great Lakes region provides a paradigmatic case study of the politics of displacement and the need for durable solutions. Mass displacement linked to the region’s interconnected conflicts has exacerbated ethnic divisions, in turn increasing the difficulties associated with resettling or reintegrating the displaced.

As many participants noted, this reality underscores the importance of reconciliation processes unfolding alongside processes of political reform. In this connection, the Northern Ugandan experience powerfully illustrates how post-conflict reconciliation is troubled and complicated by displacement and a weak political system. At the peak of its crisis, approximately two million people were displaced in Northern Uganda, prompting the UN in 2003 to acknowledge Uganda as the most neglected humanitarian emergency in the world. Consequently supported by a large influx of international aid, the Ugandan government embarked on an aggressive strategy of supporting economic development as a foundation for peace. Unfortunately, as one participant noted, the government’s development plan has instead disrupted families, communities, and economic conditions, and thus undermined processes of reconciliation involving displaced and returning populations. Conditions for returnees are further complicated by problems surrounding access to justice, and conflicts over land ownership and land use. As one participant noted, notions of bounded land ownership is a predominantly Western concept, and the new discourse of land ownership in the region has had adverse effects on returnees’ group identities and sense of belonging. Moreover, the Ugandan government has so far practiced a policy of decentralization that has been defined by patronage at the expense of service delivery, thus exacerbating social exclusion and further alienating returnees. Security, judicial and legal structures remain weak, and of limited use to returnees’ seeking to have their grievances addressed.

Participants argued that a regional strategy that addresses the cycle of alienation and conflict is crucial to addressing the needs of displaced populations. Alienation has had particularly significant repercussions for citizenship rights in the Great Lakes, where ethnicity is the key determinant of citizenship, and without which groups cannot gain access to land or participate in the political sphere. One participant noted that mitigating the region’s crisis may entail a three pronged approach. First, an established and clear strategy of truth-telling coordinated by states, civil society, the international community and scholars is needed. Second, a clear reconciliation process that draws upon traditional conflict resolution methods must be theoretically and coherently systematized in a way that does not undermine justice and peacebuilding. Third, reconciliation must unfold alongside a program of political reform that enhances rule of law and democratization. Constitutional changes that extract legislative and judicial control from political power holders are also essential to any program of reform. In order for this model to succeed, international and domestic policy makers need to embrace a paradigm shift such that humanitarian interventions are undertaken alongside the provision of support for processes of political reform. Though crisis response is mandatory, humanitarian action must be paired with political reform in order to address the roots of conflict.

Looking beyond the Great Lakes Region, the ICC’s work in Kenya in the aftermath of its 2007-2008 post election violence offers an example of transitional justice in progress, with significant implications for the ways in which displacement is conceptualized and reconciliation is pursued. Displacement is viewed by the ICC as a crime against humanity when the forced
transfer or deportation of a population is part of a systematic attack purposely directed against civilians. Following a successful power-sharing agreement brokered by Kofi Annan in 2008, in 2009 the ICC released indictments for charges of murder, forcible transfer, rape, persecution, and other inhumane acts. The ICC’s work in Kenya suggests ways in which international trials may support reconciliation processes. Whether through truth-seeking, publicly denouncing perpetrators, or providing recognition to victims by enabling their participation as witnesses and by providing financial reparations through the Victim Trust Fund, the ICC’s work has arguably strengthened Kenya’s reconciliation efforts. Furthermore, the ICC has been able to draw attention to the issue of IDPs within Kenya’s transitional government by demanding that domestic political processes aimed towards dealing with displacement adhere to international standards. While the court’s role in Northern Uganda has been highly controversial, its work in Kenya suggests that the court has the capacity to contribute to transitional justice by promoting inclusive political and socioeconomic approaches through collaboration with policy makers, community members and civil society, by directly addressing the question of complementarity between international and domestic processes, and finally by balancing the need to address human rights grievances along with wider political transformation.

Panel 4: Reconciliation and exile: Diaspora and host community experiences

**Papers:**

- *Community development for reconciliation: Experiences in Hyderabad*, Andreas D’Souza (Henry Martyn Institute, Hyderabad)
- “*Mary, our beloved Vietnamese Mother*”: Reconciliation, religion and reconnections among *Vietnamese Catholics in three countries*, Thien-Huong Ninh (University of Southern California, Los Angeles)
- *Reconciling past, future and place: Inter-generational dialogue in Montreal’s Rwandan-Canadian community*, Lisa Ndejuru (Concordia University, Montreal)
- *Integration of North Korean refugees in South Korea: The persistence of divisions in identity representations*, Anne-Marie Morin-Dion (University of Montreal)

Conflict and exile impact displaced persons and host communities in different ways, but these groups also face many shared challenges. The struggle to assert, create, and/or rebuild identity is one such challenge. Through examination of a variety of case studies in this session, participants underscored the fundamental importance of identity as a critical factor affecting the success of reconciliation processes and the wellbeing of diaspora and host communities.

In the case of exiled North Koreans, identity conflicts represent significant challenges to resettlement and reconciliation within South Korea. Cultural differences and identity markers, such as appearances and speaking manners, have been used to stigmatize exiled North Koreans in South Korea, leading to a pervasive sense of exclusion. In addition to the psychological ramifications on individuals and communities, stigmatization and isolation have significant economic effects. Alienated from the economic networks that structure South Korean society, North Korean migrants suffer structural exclusion and struggle to find employment. Consequently, many individuals of North Korean origin have sought to minimize their identifiable ties to their birth place, adjusting their accent, changing their habits, and ultimately
seeking to distance themselves from their cultural identities. The challenges faced by North Korean migrants in South Korea illustrate the difficulty of reconciling identities which have long been placed in opposition to one another. Entrenched in such a way, identities are unlikely to shift in the near future. Rather, as one participant concluded, a generational shift may be necessary before attitudes towards integration becoming more accepting.

In some instances, diaspora and exile communities may build connections between one another, and with communities in their country of origin, which deepen new conceptions of identity and belonging. The case of the large Vietnamese diaspora in Southern California and Cambodia reveals how productive identity construction can be activated outside physical boundaries with surprising levels of cross-border mutability. In the United States, although Vietnamese refugees were encouraged to assimilate within American culture and society, this pressure has had opposite effects over time, leading rather to a closer alignment with aspects of Vietnamese religious and cultural practices. The Vietnamese diaspora has become a powerful engine for the development of new aspects of Vietnamese identity, strengthening ties between communities in the diaspora and in Vietnam. As one participant suggested, such connectedness between various segments of Vietnamese society, whether migrants, refugees, or individuals still on their ancestral lands, is indicative of an emerging cross-border relationship that may serves as an engine and/or outcome of reconciliation.

Panel 5: Displacement, Justice and Reconciliation in Colombia

Papers:
- IDPs and peace in Colombia: The challenges of durable solutions in an ongoing armed conflict, Roberto Vidal Lopez (Pontifica Universidad Javeriana, Bogota)
- Building bridges for the resolving of displacement in the departamento of Magdalena, Colombia: A balance of reconciliation efforts, Friedarike Santner (University of Vienna) and William Renan Rodriguez (University of Magdalena)
- Let there be justice, an integral justice, then we can talk of reconciliation: The agency and recognition of the displaced in Northeast Colombia, Elizabeth Kerr (University of Bradford)
- Reconciliation: A step towards emplacement, Mateja Celestina (University of Manchester)

Colombia faces the world’s largest internal displacement crisis. At the same time as conflict, violence and mining and agricultural projects displace thousands from their homes, the country is engaged in national processes of peacebuilding, “transitional” justice and reconciliation. The complexity of the Colombian situation is reflected in contestations over the state of the country’s peace process, and the meaning of concepts such as justice and reconciliation. While civil society organizations (CSOs) struggle to deal with the consequences of ongoing armed conflict and displacement, the Colombian state and many of its international backers refute the very existence of such conflict, suggesting that the war and drugs has been a success, and that Colombia is now on the road to peace. Despite the Colombian state’s insistence that it respects international humanitarian law, several participants noted that it is well-known within the country that not only paramilitary forces but also the state has been responsible for massive human rights violations against civilian populations. The state has taken valuable steps to redress certain injustices inflicted upon displaced Colombians, but important categories of
displaced persons have been excluded from the justice process; indeed, the discourse of “transitional” justice has been used to marginalize the displaced, for whom the transition from conflict has yet to materialize.

The National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR) currently acts as the national entity responsible for country-wide reconciliation in Colombia. CNRR, in alliance with other institutions, assists in the development of truth-telling mechanisms, victims’ access to justice, plans for integral reparation, non-repetition of violations, and recommendations for public policies on reconciliation. In contrast to the official discourse, the CNRR has stressed that the conflict in Colombia is not yet over, and reconciliation must be seen as a vehicle for social and political transformation.

Amongst CSOs, victims’ organizations have served as key outlets through which the public has been able to contest the state discourse. CSOs have drawn attention to the fact that displaced populations are not only caused by conflict between armed parties, but also by state-supported mining and agricultural practices. As one participant stressed, reconciliation is a political struggle that needs to be based on social justice and democratic politics. Given the government’s current development plans, it was suggested that neither the restitution of land nor the administration of compensation will ensure reconciliation. While the Colombian state has approached reconciliation as an end state achieved through forgetting the past and concentrating on the future, human rights organizations and other CSOs have sought justice in tandem with reconciliation. CSOs have critiqued the government’s state-centric approach; its insensitivity to gender, ethnicity, and racial differences; and its consistent refusal to acknowledge the political dimensions of reconciliation. CSOs have instead advanced a counter discourse that demands a more substantive form of peace and reconciliation centered on justice. CSOs have adopted a range of approaches to justice and reconciliation that reflect the country’s regionally diverse experiences of conflict and forced displacement. Thus while some CSOs’ agendas have been driven by displaced persons’ interest in forming victim movements, CSOs in other regions have been led by displaced people disinterested in claiming victimhood and instead preoccupied with meeting basic needs.

The task of resolving displacement in Colombia continues to be challenged by a series of challenges. Weak institutional capacity, lack of political will, budget constraints, inadequate financial assistance, corruption, a centralist bureaucratic control system, and limited sensitivity among decision-makers and the wider population to the many challenges associated with displacement are just a few of the factors impeding the search for durable solutions and reconciliation in Colombia. The coordination of efforts across local, regional, and national districts can however serve to enhance existing resources and political will for reconciliation, as was demonstrated by one participant in the case of Colombia’s department of Magdalena. Remote and deeply affected by paramilitary action and displacement, since 2009 the region has seen significant reconciliation activities undertaken in its communities, ranging from the organization of seminars and workshops, to more concerted efforts to foster closer cooperation with international development actors.

The resolution of displacement in Colombia is challenged not only by difficult structural conditions, but also by the complex relationship between displacement and notions of home.
Participants in this panel explored the concept of “emplacement” as a home-making process in which home constitutes a place through which communal relationships and a space to imagine the future can flourish. As one participant noted, reconciliation should support emplacement as a home-making process. As another participant noted, senses of displacement and emplacement are also highly relevant for host communities, which can be dramatically changed and challenged by the arrival of large groups of people from different backgrounds. Conceptions of displacement and emplacement are fluid and multi-faceted, and in order to understand the links between these phenomena and processes of reconciliation, we must be willing to question our assumptions about their meaning.

Panel 6: Displacement and Reconciliation in the Middle East: Insights from Key Cases

Papers:

- Claims programs for victims of large-scale displacements: Only relief, or also reconciliation?, Norbert Wuehler (International Organization for Migration)
- Can reconciliation mechanisms in post-conflict settings further divide communities? The case of Lebanon, Nancy Maroun (Buffalo State College)
- ‘Do You Represent My Voice?’ Linking Non-Governmental and International Organizations to Peace and Reconciliation in Turkey’s Conflict-Induced Displacement, Ayşe Betül Çelik (Sabanci University, Istanbul)

This panel explored the some of the challenges associated with advancing justice and reconciliation in communities and countries affected by large-scale displacement, drawing on insights from key cases in the Middle East and the experience of actors such as the International Organization for Migration.

As many participants noted, good will and collaboration amongst individual states, the international community, NGOs and civil society is an important component of a sustainable and effective approach to displacement. Examination of responses to Turkey’s internal displacement situation brought into focus some of the obstacles to such a coordinated, unified response. The majority of the displaced in Turkey are of Kurdish origin, a population whose rights have never been fully recognized by the Turkish state, and whose marginalization has only increased as a result of internal displacement. Though advocates of both Kurdish rights and policy issues are present in Turkey, the state has adopted an intensely politicized approach to Kurdish displacement and as such has largely relegated NGOs to simple service providers, diminishing their potential advocacy role regarding IDPs’ justice claims. The highly politicized relationship between the Turkish state and the Kurdish population remains extremely tense. A near inflammatory word, “reconciliation” remains a deeply challenging issue in the country. As one participant nevertheless stressed, Turkish citizens may exert important influence on the state’s approach to the problem of Kurdish displacement. Reconciliation and effective responses to displaced persons’ justice claims will require the reconceptualization of displacement as a shared problem. The mobilization of bystanders into active members of civil society may be an important element of increased advocacy for open dialogue between the state and the Kurdish population.
Though increased state involvement in justice and reconciliation is often seen as desirable in post-conflict regions affected by large-scale displacement, the implementation of state-led reconciliation programs can also have adverse consequences on inter-group reconciliation. Following the end of the civil war, the Lebanese government established a national strategy for addressing the needs of displaced persons through a program of physical reconstruction and financial compensation. Significantly, the government’s strategy entailed an official reconciliation process premised on traditional rituals and ceremony. Despite its promise, affected populations did not feel that they were represented in the reconciliation process. The official reconciliation strategy primarily consisted of a process of dialogue and ritual; the strategy implemented a process of identifying problems and solutions through dialogue, working towards a consensus on adequate monetary settlements, and conducting official ceremonies in which reconciliation agreement were signed and traditional customs were observed. However, the positive effects of this process were minimal: return has been limited, and reconciliation has not been noticeably furthered, in part because the reconciliation process was simply imposed in a top-down manner, denying the majority of displaced persons the opportunity to participate. Indeed, it could be argued that Lebanon’s reconciliation strategy has actually deepened both inter-group and intra-group fragmentation.

Panelists noted that experiences across the Middle East and around the world make clear that there is not one single model for claims or reparations programs. A survey of claims programs involving displaced persons underlines that the implementation of reparations programs does not necessarily lead to reconciliation. Despite the obvious need for financial compensation for many displaced persons, non-monetary reparations programs may also hold great value for victims as a crucial form of recognition for the injustices that they suffered. Symbolic reparations initiatives have proven effective when used by populations in tandem with local customs. At their best, reparations programs in the Middle East and elsewhere have supported durable solutions for displaced populations, and have ensured a degree of accountability for forced migration as a human rights violation. However, these efforts also entail a level of risk: past experiences demonstrate that the provision of redress can create divisions and new grievances, including by generating competition between different groups of “victims”. These experiences underline the important of ensuring that justice and reconciliation initiatives are implemented in a consultative and even-handed manner, particularly when they involve the distribution of material benefits.

Panel 7: Advancing Peace, Reconciliation and the Resolution of Displacement in the Middle East: Challenges Posed by the Palestinian Case

Papers:
- Civil Society Initiatives in Lebanon: Towards Palestinian-Lebanese Dialogue and Reconciliation, Jaber Suleiman (Independent researcher, Beirut)
- Unto the fourth generation? Refugee entitlement, obsolescence and the Palestinian search for redress, Mick Dumper (University of Exeter)
- The Palestinian Refugee question: Intangible barriers to resolution and reconciliation, Michael Molloy (Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa)
This panel explored the complexities of the Palestinian refugee situation, where lack of reconciliation and unresolved justice claims stymie not only the resolution of the refugees’ displacement and the broader conflict, but also the creation of decent living conditions for Palestinian refugees in host countries.

Throughout the years, there have been several state-led initiatives aimed at bringing about reconciliatory dialogue between Palestinian and Lebanese populations. Although some initiatives have been promising, such dialogues have consistently suffered from a top-down approach and the marginalization of civil society initiatives. As noted in the many case studies explored throughout the conference, the failure to incorporate civil society in state-led reconciliation processes has persisted despite the fact that progress towards the goal of reconciliation in post-conflict and divided communities is often linked to civil society leadership. Pointing to narrow donor agendas and misguided political priorities, one participant noted that state-led initiatives have in some cases proven to be detrimental to the success of civil society initiatives. Yet despite these challenges, civil society initiatives have met with some success in establishing a cooperative relationship with the PLO and Lebanese governments, and a Palestinian committee for employment. More substantial progress will however necessitate a clear conceptual shift with regards to security in the Palestinian-Lebanese context. As one participant stressed, a shift from a state-security paradigm to one centered on human security would greatly enhance the potential for reconciliation and dialogue.

The Palestinian refugees are the largest and most longstanding refugee population in the world. How does longstanding displacement affect refugees’ justice claims, particularly regarding the restitution of their lost lands? Jeremy Waldron’s “supersession thesis” provides insight into this challenge, suggesting that legitimacy of justice claims may be sensitive to changing circumstances. This argument has potentially significant implications for the resolution of the Palestinian refugee situation, which were explored in the panel presentation and ensuing discussion. Speakers stressed that although the circumstances in the region have changed dramatically since the refugees were initially displaced in 1948, historic ties to the land have remained strong amongst the displaced, suggesting the continued salience of the refugees’ justice claims. Ultimately, applying Waldron's thesis to protracted refugee situations such as the case of the Palestinian refugees helps to problematize justice claims and the pursuit of reconciliation. By acknowledging the role that changed circumstances may have on our evaluation of justice claims, we may develop more sensitive responses to the deep-rooted power imbalances and injustices that generally characterize protracted refugee situations.

Indeed, as one of the most well-known protracted refugee situations, the Palestinian refugee question has been met by countless, largely ineffective initiatives. Looking beyond the conventional parameters of the search for solutions to the conflict and the Palestinian refugee situation in particular, one participant pointed to the significance of the many intangible needs found on both sides of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The process of identifying intangible needs requires shared understanding of each party’s narrative, and an understanding of the interplay between acknowledgement and the provision of material forms of redress. In general, the provision of only acknowledgement or material redress tends to be unsatisfactory, whereas there is greater potential for acceptable solutions when acknowledgement and material forms of redress are offered in tandem.
Conclusion

Although a body of research on the intersection of displacement, transitional justice and reconciliation is only beginning to emerge, it is clear that in practice these issues have long been connected. The conference clearly demonstrated that the interplay between these issues represents a highly fruitful avenue for further study, particularly with a view to strengthening practice.

Although it is difficult to draw broad recommendations from the diverse, context-specific cases explored over the course of the Conference on Displacement and Reconciliation, the discussion underlined the importance of questioning assumptions about the conceptualization of and relationship between transitional justice and reconciliation; the value of long-term approaches to supporting reconciliation and the pursuit of justice in communities affected the large-scale displacement; the need to look beyond attempts to restore the “status quo ante” when endeavouring to address displaced persons’ claims; and the importance of directly engaging displaced persons and other stakeholders such as host community members in justice and reconciliation processes. Other recommendations to emerge from the conference discussions are presented in the policy brief ‘Displacement, transitional justice and reconciliation: Assumptions, challenges and lessons’.
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Thursday, 9 June
Location: Guigues Hall, Room 102

9:00-10:00 AM  Registration

10:00-10:30 AM  Welcome and introductions

10:30-12:00 PM  Displacement, transitional justice and reconciliation: Conceptual links and theoretical insights (Chair: Megan Bradley, Saint Paul University)

Refugees, peacebuilding and reconciliation: Lessons from policy and research
James Milner (Carleton University, Ottawa)

Displacement as the locus for deep-rooted conflict and reconciliation
Vern Neufeld Redekop (Saint Paul University, Ottawa)

Transitional justice and the reintegration of displaced persons
Roger Duthie (International Center for Transitional Justice, New York)

Displacement, reconciliation and property restitution
Anneke Smit (University of Windsor)

12:00-1:00 PM  Lunch (Atrium, Guigues Hall)

1:00-2:30 PM  Reconciliation, transitional justice and durable solutions to displacement (Chair: Patricia Atkinson, Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Response Group, DFAIT)

Return in Divided Societies: Restoring Coexistence and Promoting Reintegration in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Huma Haider (University of Birmingham)

Prospects and challenges for sustainable peace and ethnic reconciliation in Sri Lanka
Vellaithamby Ameerdeen (University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka)

The Timor Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) and the 2006 Displacement Crisis: Reflections on truth-telling, reconciliation and durable solutions
Luiz Vieira (International Organization for Migration)

2:30-3:00 PM  Coffee break (Atrium, Guigues Hall)
3:00-4:30 PM  Reconciliation, peacebuilding and the resolution of displacement: Insights from Africa (Chair: James Milner, Carleton University)

Reconciling the displaced with the disaffected: The dilemma of the Great Lakes Region of Africa
Odomaro Mubangizi (Arrupe College, Harare)

A review of transitional justice mechanisms and the resettlement of the survivors of Kenya’s 2008 post-election violence
Paige Morrow (Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights)

The impact of returnees’ dilemmas on reconciliation: The case of Northern Uganda
Pius Ojara (Refugee Law Project, Kampala)

7:00-9:00 PM  Conference dinner for speakers and chairs (Café Spiga, 271 Dalhousie Street, ByWard Market)

Friday, 10 June
Location: Guigues Hall, Room 102

8:30-10:00 AM  Reconciliation and exile: Diaspora and host community experiences
(Chair: Anna Sheftel, University of Oxford/Concordia University)

Community development for reconciliation: Experiences in Hyderabad
Andreas D’Souza (Henry Martyn Institute, Hyderabad)

“Mary, our beloved Vietnamese Mother”: Reconciliation, religion and reconnections among Vietnamese Catholics in three countries
Thien-Huong Ninh (University of Southern California, Los Angeles)

Reconciling past, future and place: Inter-generational dialogue in Montreal’s Rwandan-Canadian community
Lisa Ndejuru (Concordia University, Montreal)

Integration of North Korean refugees in South Korea: The persistence of divisions in identity representations
Anne-Marie Morin-Dion (University of Montreal)

10:00-10:30 AM  Coffee break (Atrium, Guigues Hall)

10:30-12:00 PM  Displacement, justice and reconciliation in Colombia (Chair: Daniel Bland, Conflict Research Centre, Saint Paul University)

IDPs and peace in Colombia: The challenges of durable solutions in an ongoing armed conflict
Roberto Vidal Lopez (Pontifica Universidad Javeriana, Bogota)
Building bridges for the resolving of displacement in the departamento of Magdalena, Colombia: A balance of reconciliation efforts
Friedarike Santner (University of Vienna) and William Renan Rodriguez (University of Magdalena)

Let there be justice, an integral justice, then we can talk of reconciliation: The agency and recognition of the displaced in Northeast Colombia
Elizabeth Kerr (University of Bradford)

Reconciliation: A step towards emplacement
Mateja Celestina (University of Manchester)

12:00-1:00 PM Lunch (Atrium, Guigues Hall)

1:00-2:30 PM Displacement and reconciliation in the Middle East: Insights from key cases (Chair and discussant: Roula El-Rifai, International Development Research Centre, Ottawa)

Claims programs for victims of large-scale displacements: Only relief, or also reconciliation? Norbert Wuehler (International Organization for Migration)

Can reconciliation mechanisms in post-conflict settings further divide communities? The case of Lebanon
Nancy Maroun (Buffalo State College)

‘Do You Represent My Voice?’ Linking Non-Governmental and International Organizations to Peace and Reconciliation in Turkey’s Conflict-Induced Displacement
Ayşe Betül Çelik (Sabancı University, Istanbul)

2:30-3:00 PM Coffee break (Café Paolo, Guigues Hall)

3:00-4:30 PM Advancing peace, reconciliation and the resolution of displacement in the Middle East: Challenges posed by the Palestinian case (Chair and discussant: Rex Brynen, McGill University, Montreal)

Civil Society Initiatives in Lebanon: Towards Palestinian-Lebanese Dialogue and Reconciliation
Jaber Suleiman (Independent researcher, Beirut)

Unto the fourth generation? Refugee entitlement, obsolescence and the Palestinian search for redress
Mick Dumper (University of Exeter)

The Palestinian Refugee question: Intangible barriers to resolution and reconciliation
Michael Molloy (Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa)

4:30-5:00 PM Concluding comments
# Participants in Conference on Displacement and Reconciliation

**9-10 June 2011**  
Saint Paul University

## Speakers and Chairs

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