

STANDPLAATS WERELD

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Discussing Yemen in the Netherlands:

Transnationalism and Peacebuilding

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By Ewa Strzelecka and Marina de Regt – This June will be remembered as a month of celebrating Yemeni studies and dialogue in the Netherlands. The so-called forgotten war of Yemen became a war to remember due to [a roundtable discussion on Rethinking peace-building in Yemen: war-induced migration, gender and transnational activism](#) held on June 6, 2023, at the University of Amsterdam. The event was organised by the Amsterdam Centre for Middle Eastern Studies (ACMES) and the [EU-funded Peace Women project](#). A day after, the University of Leiden welcomed internationally renowned scholars on the premodern history of Yemen to reflect on [the Future of Yemeni Studies](#). The academic discussion on the importance of connecting past to present prepared the ground for celebrating the Second Yemen International Forum (YIF) in The Hague on June 12-15.

The YIF is the largest international conference for Yemeni-Yemeni dialogue organized by [Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies](#). More than two hundred and fifty Yemeni and international delegates got together in the Hague to address numerous issues related to the ongoing conflict in Yemen and pathways to an inclusive, just, and sustainable peace. The YIF included a session, co-organized by the Peace Women Project, on the *Role of Yemeni Diasporas in Peacebuilding*. The session was linked to a research study that we launched at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam in October 2021 to address the questions related to [Rethinking Peace-building: women, revolution, exile and conflict resolution in Yemen](#).

The YIF roundtable discussion on diaspora and

peacebuilding created a space for Yemenis based inside and outside of Yemen to engage in transnational dialogue and critical reflection on the dynamics between gender, conflict-induced migration, peace-building and state reconstruction in Yemen and beyond. As a result of the ongoing war and political repression in Yemen, an estimated 4.5 million people have been internally displaced in the country and over 190000 Yemenis fled their homeland to seek safety and protection abroad. Including the previous migration waves, the Yemeni diaspora nowadays is estimated at 10 million people distributed among almost 40 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. Among them are activists, politicians, students, workers, businesspersons and highly educated professionals who fled the country after the war to pursue their goals, ideas and projects overseas. The Yemeni out-migration is mainly male-dominated, but the prominent participation of female leaders in peace-building activities, transitional justice, and transnational networks made women stand out.

During the roundtable discussion, the participants shared their trajectories and experiences that shed light on the ways refuge and other forcible displacement contributed to transnational flows of information, ideas, activism, as well as financial, social and political remittances. The stories of the Yemeni refugees and internally displaced activists allowed us to understand specific challenges, limitations and opportunities that the Yemeni diasporas and the Yemenis based in Yemen face in their efforts to create peace, stabilization and conflict resolution in and outside the country. It became clear that both communities are deeply connected and interdependent. For example, the flow of economic remittances transferred from abroad to Yemen has been seen as a critical economic stabilizer for the local economy. However, as one of the participants pointed out, remittances can also create dependency by undercutting recipients' incentives to work and slowing economic growth.

The speakers depicted how the Yemeni diasporas exercise significant influence at the social, economic, cultural and political levels in both their countries of origin and their countries of residency. Other voices reminded us that in the context of war-induced migration, diaspora communities are often divided in ways that mirror the conflicts in their homelands. We attempt to move beyond the dichotomous thinking about diasporas as “peace-makers” and “peace-wreckers” to open more meaningful conversations, consolidate knowledge, and discuss gender-sensitive diagnostic and prognostic frames about the multiple roles of the Yemeni diasporas and internally displaced people in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, transitional justice and state reconstruction in Yemen.

The Yemeni participants also highlighted that the unique set of circumstances and experiences of forced migration increased their risk of emotional distress but also helped them to build significant resilience and claim their agency to bring about peace. Their memories and strong emotions of anger, survivor's guilt, and feeling misunderstood or underrepresented empowered them to fight back against stereotypes about Yemen in a host society, build a Yemeni community and strengthen a sense of belonging despite the identity crisis. Emotionally engagement, community support and donor-driver projects play a significant role in getting motivation and continue working on Yemeni issues in and outside the country. The audience's enthusiastic participation brought back our memories to the beauty and simplicity of the Yemeni diwan where the stories are told and experiences unfold. Thus, we could learn about others and evoke empathy towards the complex situation of war-generated diasporas and forced migration. We could also appreciate the perception of peace as a dynamic, relational network of interconnection and communication that the Yemeni International Forum promotes.

Ewa Strzelecka is a postdoctoral researcher at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam and the project leader of the EU-funded PEACE WOMEN project focusing on female Yemeni

peace activists in the diaspora. The project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska -Curie grant agreement n° 101024992. Marina de Regt is an Associate Professor at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

CATEGORIES: [Engaged anthropology](#), [Oorlog & vrede](#), [Regio Midden-Oosten & Noord-Afrika](#), [Standplaats Wereld](#)

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3 Comments



AHMED ABDULRAHMAN ALSUFYANI

Dear Sirs,
Greetings,

Indeed Yemenis fled their homeland to seek safety and protection abroad. Including the previous migration waves, and this situation remains unresolved for many years, especially those from countries in the Horn of Africa, have suffered a lot of racism and discrimination in all directions after their arrival in their motherland. For example, but not

limited to, the local authorities do not recognize that their origins go back to Yemen, where they face complications and difficulties in obtaining a national identity. Therefore, they cannot integrate into society due to discrimination in treatment in the absence of government laws that guarantee them equal citizenship rights. The suffering is great and has been going on for many years, requiring persistent efforts to lift this injustice against citizens born outside their country, Yemen.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2023 REPLY



standplaatswereld (author)

Dear Ahmed, you are totally right! I am doing research about so-called muwalladeen. See the following link, for example:

<https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/18105>. Are you part of this group yourself?

Best, Marina

SEPTEMBER 9, 2023 REPLY



AHMED ALSUFYANI

Dear Marina,
Good day, Trust all is well with you

Thank you very much indeed for your kind words which is highly appreciated. Will work together with you and all interested team members in this racist topic against the Yemeni citizens born outside of their home country Yemen, being accumulated for long period, hopefully such valuable research made entirely guides to get this sort it out through the Global organizations, institutions of Human rights, due to permeant lack of any Governmental legal

steps or laws should be made by Yemen government.

Sincerely yours

SEPTEMBER 9, 2023 REPLY

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