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REFUGEES OR INFILTRATORS?

*The possibilities and limitations for the Darfuri diaspora in Israel
to engage in transnational activism.*

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ABSTRACT

This research examines whether Darfuri refugees in Israel engage in transnational activism to influence the ongoing conflict in their homeland, and to what extent their ability to do so is affected by Israel's migration and refugee policies. Since 2006, Israel has witnessed an influx of African refugees and asylum seekers. Due to a lack of adequate policies that address migration and asylum seekers however, the situation for refugees in Israel has become problematic. Not only has this led to tensions between the Israeli society and refugee community, it has also affected refugees' ability to effect change in Sudan. This study draws on interviews conducted with members of the Darfuri refugee in Israel, NGO's that work with refugees and written sources revolving around the influence of settlement policies on diaspora transnational activism. It finds evidence that refugees' ability to influence the situation in their homeland is heavily influenced by the conditions in their host-country. We see from the case of Darfuri refugees in Israel that they feel a need to focus on domestic political activism to address their rights in the host country first, before they can engage in substantial transnational activism.

Key words: Israel – Darfur – refugees – diaspora –transnational activism

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I. INTRODUCTION

The state of Israel is often in the news, most of the time because of its involvement in what is referred to as 'the Middle East conflict'. In December 2013 and early January 2014 however, the country caught worldwide media attention for something else than the 'usual' coverage on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Mass protests took place in the cities of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, at their peak drawing 25.000 people to Tel Aviv's Rabin Square. The group of protesters however consisted of actors that, to many, would seem to be unusual in this context: African refugees, mainly from Sudan and Eritrea. These people, carrying banners saying 'refugees, not infiltrators' and 'no more prison', were fed up with their situation in Israel, and demanded the Israeli government to do something about it.

Countries at Europe's borders, like Italy and Greece, have witnessed a significant increase of refugees from the African and Asian continent over the past few years. However, until recently, not much has been reported in Western media on the fact that Israel has been facing a similar problem, which is becoming more burdensome by the day. The ongoing armed conflict in Sudan's Darfur region and the repressive regime in Eritrea have caused many to flee their countries. Since 2006, an increasing number of refugees have tried to find protection in Israel, a country that one Darfuri refugee referred to as 'the closest democratic state that has Western standards'.

When the numbers of asylum seekers in Israel increased, though, the public and political debate regarding refugees has deteriorated. Over the past years many anti-immigration rallies have taken place in bigger Israeli cities and in May 2012, member of Knesset (the Israeli parliament) Miri Regev of Likud, a center-right party, caused great controversy. She spoke at an anti-immigration rally in HaTikva, an underprivileged neighborhood in the southeast of Tel Aviv, where she used words that translate to English as: *"The Sudanese are a cancer in our body. We will do everything we can to restore them back to their origin."* The last sentence immediately caused a stir both in Hebrew and English language media. In the wake of this, human rights organizations organized protests in front of Regev's house, asking her to resign. However, former IDF spokeswoman Regev responded with an apology: *"When I compared the migrant worker phenomenon to cancer, I was referring to the way the phenomenon had spread, and not anything else. [...] I apologize and I surely did not intend to hurt either Holocaust survivors or cancer patients"* (Haaretz, 27-05-2012). This action didn't have any further consequences for her political career, and according to polls carried out by the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) Peace Index for May 2012, fifty-two percent of Jewish Israeli's even agreed with her statement (Times of Israel, 07-06-2012).

From April until August 2013, I worked as an intern at Amnesty International Israel for its Refugee Campaign. This was a unique opportunity to learn about the situation of refugees in Israel, Israel's

refugee policies, and to work directly with both the Sudanese and Eritrean refugee communities themselves. Refugees in Israel find themselves in a difficult position. Since 2006, about 60.000 refugees from these countries have entered the country crossing the Egyptian border, but Israel has never developed efficient policies to deal with refugees in a way that conforms to the 1952 Refugee Convention. Also, refugees from Sudan and Eritrea are not eligible for refugee status, even though nationals of those countries globally have a high refugee status recognition rate. Instead, they are placed under a construction called 'group protection', a temporary status that grants them just a minimum of rights. Access to basic services like housing, health care and education are very limited, and they are not officially allowed to work. This leaves many of them in a situation of poverty and insecurity, and the only places they can turn to for help are their own communities or the few NGO's working with African refugees. The public opinion towards refugees is predominantly negative, influenced by the fact that the government's official denomination for refugees is 'infiltrators', a term also widely used by the Israeli media.

Working closely with refugees from the Darfur region, this group in particular struck me to be very politically active, and feels very connected to their homeland. Many of them fled their country as a direct result of the ongoing violent conflict in Darfur. In 2003, this western Sudanese region became the stage to a protracted armed conflict that the United Nations labeled as 'the world's worst humanitarian crisis', and the United States referred to as a 'genocide'. It started when in 2003 the rebel movements JEM (Justice and Equality Movement) and SLM/A (Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army) attacked the government army in 2003, accusing the Omar al-Bashir government of marginalizing the non-Arab population in the region. The government army, together with the Janjaweed Arab militias, responded to this by an extensive campaign of ethnic cleansing, and despite several peace agreements, the violence between government and rebel groups continues until today. Since the beginning of the conflict, approximately 300.000 people have died, and three million people fled the region, seeking safety in refugee camps that are scattered throughout the country. About 200.000 crossed the border to Chad, and smaller numbers found a place to stay in other countries abroad. Approximately 12.000 refugees from Darfur and other Sudanese regions suffering conflict, like Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile and Kordofan, have made their way to the state of Israel.

This research focuses on the situation of group of Darfuri refugees in Israel. Specifically, it aims to find an answer to the question whether they try to exert influence on their homeland conflict, and furthermore, if their ability to do so is influenced by Israel's refugee policies. We see that, over the past decades, conflicts in general have become more dispersed and delocalized. According to scholars like, Demmers (2002) for example, this is partly due to the increasing influence of diaspora communities. After the Cold War, a new type of organized violence has developed that Kaldor denominates as 'new wars', also mentioned by some as 'post-modern wars' (Kaldor, 1999). These new wars are characterized as localized internal or civil wars, but they include a myriad of

transnational connections that exert influence and might even protract the conflict. The field of conflict studies has increasingly paid attention to the influence diaspora groups have on conflicts, something that scholars like for example Demmers (2002), Zunzer (2004), Reis (2004) and Collier & Hoefler (2002) have conducted research on. Although reliable empirical evidence supporting these claims is still lacking, I believe it is very likely that it has become easier for dispersed groups to stay in touch with their homeland, given the developments in communication technology. This might also contribute to their ability to exert influence in their home countries. However, whether they are actually able to engage in transnational activism, targeting their homeland conflicts, also depends on the conditions they find themselves in in their host countries.

According to Wahlbeck (2002), Zunzer (2004) and Allerdice (2011), the settlement policies of a host country are an important factor influencing refugees' ability to participate in activism directed towards the homeland. In Israel, settlement policies for refugees and asylum seekers are largely absent. Over the past decades, refugee status has been granted to only 170 people, out of thousands of applications. Recent measures taken by Israel to halt the influx of refugees have proven to be effective, a border fence and the prospect of detention on arrival seem to have discouraged many Africans from trying to enter. Numbers of 'infiltrators' crossing the border have dropped dramatically compared to the years before. However, this does not alter the fact that there are still over fifty thousand African refugees within Israel's borders, of which most live under very difficult and insecure circumstances.

1.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Darfuri diaspora is a group known to be politically active and actively involved in their homeland struggle. However, the situation for refugees in Israel is a particularly complicated one, and might influence refugees' willingness and abilities to involve themselves in their homeland conflict. The aim of this research is to investigate if the Darfuri refugee community in Israel tries to exert influence on the ongoing conflict in Sudan, and if they are affected in doing so by the circumstances in their host country. Therefore, the main research question used will be:

'Does the Darfuri refugee diaspora community in Israel try to influence the conflict in their homeland, and if so, are they affected by Israel's policies regarding refugees?'

This will be investigated by using qualitative methods: literature study, interviews with Darfuri refugees in Israel and the NGO's that work with them, participant observation and observation of the political and public discourse on refugees in Israeli society and media. The focus will be on the ways through which the Israel based Darfuri diaspora community tries to exert influence on the conflict in Darfur. Questions that are related to the main research question are: What are their goals? What are their strategies? What are their capabilities? What connections do they have with

SLM/A or other rebel groups in Darfur? How do they experience being a refugee in Israel? Do they experience difficulties, and if so, are they influenced by this? The group of Darfuri refugees in Israel might not be completely homogenous, so it is important to take intergroup dynamics into account, focusing on different identities, interests and strategies.

The main research question *'Does the Darfuri refugee diaspora community in Israel try to influence the conflict in their homeland, and if so, are they affected by Israel's policies regarding refugees?'* can only be answered by looking at several sub questions. These questions do not only include the characteristics, degree of activism, ties and relations between Darfuri refugees Israel, but should also look at their connections with their home land, and take the context of Israels refugee policies into account. Three main sub questions, therefore, are: 1) *'What are the characteristics of the Darfuri diaspora community in Israel?'* This question should mainly look at characteristics like gender, age, level of education and their occupation in Israel. Furthermore, it focuses on whether they were engaged in the conflict back in Sudan, and if they still try to exert influence on this conflict from Israel. This will provide a better understanding of their motives to come to Israel and the way they relate to the conflict in Darfur. 2) *'Does the Darfuri diaspora community in Israel try to exert influence on the situation in Darfur?'* This question will provide insights in their strategies and capabilities, the way they are organized, how involved they are, and how big this group is. 3) *'What obstacles exist for the Sudanese diaspora community to influence the home situation?'* This question investigates if Israeli policies regarding refugees affect their participation in the conflict in their home country, and if so, how.

1.2. SCIENTIFIC AND SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

This explanatory research focuses on the Darfuri refugee diaspora community in Israel, a group that has been extensively written about in the Israeli media and that has been high on the Israeli political agenda. This group is often treated as a 'flat character' though, and its characteristics, background, political engagement and ambitions of the Darfuri community in Israel have not yet been studied in-depth. By providing a deeper understanding of this group and their willingness and ability to participate in their homeland conflict however, might prove to be very valuable for several reasons. Demmers states that the political weight of diaspora communities in intrastate conflict has increased, which is related to the rise of new patterns in conflict, the speed of mobility and communication and increased production of political and cultural boundaries. She states that group identities of ethnic groups in general are much less territorially bounded (Demmers, 2002). Zunzer acknowledges this increasing influence of diaspora communities, and recognizes the potential they might have in peacebuilding initiatives (Zunzer, 2004).

By focusing on the Darfuri community in Israel and the way in which they try to exert influence on the conflict in their homeland, this research hopes to offer insights in the conflict in Darfur from an angle that has been relatively underexposed, the diaspora dimension. When we take

the increasing influence of diaspora communities in conflict into account, enhancing the understanding of this diaspora dimension might contribute to a more stable solution to the conflict. Improving knowledge on possible constructive or destructive aspects of this diaspora involvement will be useful to better control, and possibly even employ, this phenomenon in the future. Also, not a large amount of research has yet been conducted that combines the fields of refugee diaspora transnational activism and the influence of settlement policies. Besides that, not many studies have focused on Israel as a case study in this broader context, and the influence Israeli refugee policies might have on refugees' willingness and abilities to engage in their homeland conflict. Understanding what effects the refugee and migration policies of a host country might indirectly have on international conflict could, in more extensive future research, be used to change or improve these policies. Anticipating on the findings of this research on Darfuri's in Israel, we see that difficult settlement conditions negatively impact refugees' abilities to engage in transnational activism. Zunzer (2004: 42) sees a lot of potential for diasporas to play the role of transnational peacebuilder. However, he mentions that 'the legal status and living conditions in the host country' are a determining factor for the extent to which a group is able to do so.

Furthermore, this research is also relevant because of the societal importance of the subject studied. The sudden presence of a large non-Jewish entity in the Jewish state of Israel is a relatively new phenomenon. As we see in this research, this does not only cause a lot of tension within both Israeli society and the refugee community, but also causes friction between those two groups. This has already lead to violent outbursts on several occasions. Politicians and media contribute to a fear of these unknown 'infiltrators' by structurally referring to them as an 'unwanted element' and a large part of Israeli's in general think that refugees have only come to Israel to work and make money. African refugees have increasingly become a 'scapegoat' to some, in poorer neighbourhoods in Tel Aviv for example, the original Israeli residents blame their new African neighbours for the poverty and unemployment. Several 'anti-immigration rallies' have already taken place, an opportunity some politicians have also engaged in, seemingly in order to win votes. This in turn leads to frustration among the refugee community, they live under harsh conditions, feel misunderstood and humiliated. As one interviewee stated:

"The government says refugees are a threat and against the character of the Jewish state. But refugees are just as passengers. There are all going, not even leaving their luggage behind. [...] When the time comes, when there's no threat to their lives anymore, they will move to where they came from. It's not true that refugees are threatening the national character of Israel as a Jewish state. This is just political, to inspire the citizens, to have their support for the decisions they're [politicians] making" (Interviewee #9, a 23-year old male refugee from Darfur).

Creating more understanding for the refugees' situation among the Israeli general public is necessary in order to alleviate the growing tensions, something this study hopes to contribute to.

Furthermore, as this research proves, developing some sort of system that allows refugees to

work so they can more easily sustain in their own living would very likely improve refugees' abilities to engage in transnational activism. Many interviewees have expressed a wish to be able to financially support their families in refugee camps, but this is practically impossible in Israel. Also, legally allowing refugees to work could possibly help to reduce criminality among refugees, something Israeli society would benefit from.

Also, we should take into account that the phenomenon of refugee influxes is not a new one, and in the future, this is something many countries will—again—be confronted with. Therefore, understanding both the factors that help these groups adjust and the obstacles that cause difficulties for refugees might prove to be very valuable. Lessons learned from the case of refugees in Israel can be used not only to improve the development of Israeli refugee policies, but might also be of use for countries that experience similar problems. This might not only serve the interests of those countries' original population, but also of the refugee communities.

1.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This research will be structured in the following manner. First, in chapter 2 the research methods used will be exemplified. Second, in chapter 3 a theoretical framework will be presented that will discuss important theories and concepts concerning transnational political activism in the diaspora and the influence of settlement policies. Available theories that combine these two separate phenomena will also be addressed for a more in-depth understanding of the case study used in this research. After this, chapter 4 will provide a study of Sudanese refugees in Israel, first giving a brief overview of the conflict in Darfur, followed by a focus on the interviewees' personal backgrounds and their experiences of being a refugee in Israel. Subsequently, chapter 5 will focus on Israel's refugee policies—and other actors that might be of influence, like NGO's—and how this affects refugees' willingness and abilities engage in political activities regarding their home country. Chapter 6 will provide an analysis of refugee activism in Israel and factors that limit or enable this. Finally, the conclusion of this research will be given in chapter 7.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Two different methods of qualitative research were used in order answer the main question and the sub questions. First, I used data obtained from interviews carried out with the people that this study is about: Darfuri refugees in Israel. Through my internship at Amnesty International Israel in Tel Aviv, I was able to get access to the network of Sudanese refugees, which enabled me to have meetings with them. My initial planning was to carry out 15 to 20 interviews with refugees. However, due to the uncertain security situation in Israel at the time of research, I decided to return to The Netherlands after carrying out only nine interviews with refugees. The people I selected for interviewing are all in a way involved in 'community activism', either through grassroots organizations or NGO's, and therefore were able to provide me with information about the dynamics within the community when it comes to involvement in the conflict.

Additionally, I carried out four expert interviews with spokespeople of the major NGO's in Israel that operate within the refugee sector to get a broader understanding of the context both NGO's and refugees find themselves in in the state of Israel.

The second approach to collect data was through the analysis of several written sources. Here, I have used academic texts, as well as texts from research institutes, media, and data provided by the Israeli government and NGO's to gain more insight in the matter of diaspora communities, transnational rebel groups and more specifically on how the Darfuri refugees in Israel relate to the conflict in their homeland.

2.1. INTERVIEWS

For this research, the choice was made to interview a number of refugees that are involved in community activism. About half of those interviewed play a more prominent role within this activism, and can be considered 'community leaders'. The reason that these activists were chosen for interviews, is that they in general have a good sense of the issues their community deals with. These community leaders were able to provide valuable data, not only regarding their own activism, but also that of the broader refugee community in Israel.

As mentioned before, over the past years, some research has been done on the situation of refugees in Israel. However, this is limited to the situation within the state of Israel itself, and does not take into account any forms of transnational activism. There is no available data yet on whether or not the Darfuri refugees in Israel try to influence the conflict in their homeland, and if so, how they exert this influence. Thus, in academic literature, there is a gap when it comes to a case specific study as this one. Although the number of interviews carried out is limited, hopefully this research will be able to provide the reader with a more in-depth understanding of the motivation of Darfuri activists in Israel.

For this research, I have carried out semi-structured one-hour interviews with nine activists from the refugee community in Israel. These were carried out in Tel Aviv and Ashdod, two cities with a substantial refugee community in which Amnesty International Israel is actively involved. These interviews were held in English, except for one interview that was carried out in Arabic. For this interview, a translator from within the community translated the questions and answers.

Broadly, the goal of these interviews was to gain information and data on 1) whether and how the refugees are involved in activism directed towards their homeland, 2) if they are involved in community initiatives in Israel that address this, 3) if they already supported these (or similar) initiatives back in Darfur, and how, and 4) if Israel's policies regarding refugees influence their ability to participate in activism.

The outcomes from these interviews provided useful data for this study, however, due to the limited number of interviews, this cannot be seen as representative for the entire Darfuri refugee community in Israel. It does, however, provide genuine insights in the situation the refugees in Israel find themselves in. Due to the fact all interviewees were very much in touch with the broader refugee community, these interviews also enabled me to gain a more general insight in the Darfuri and Sudanese refugee community.

Additionally, I have carried out semi-structured expert interviews with spokespeople of four main NGO's that work with refugees in Israel: the African Refugee Development Center (ARDC), Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), Hotline for Migrant Workers (usually referred to as 'Hotline') and Amnesty International Israel (All). These one-hour interviews provided me with a greater knowledge on how Israeli NGO's operate to help refugees. Discussing this topic also clarified which problems African asylum seekers in Israel encounter, and whether they are affected by the asylum- and migration related government policies. Furthermore, it provided me with some very valuable background information regarding the influx of refugees in Israel from 2006 on.

The initial interview questions for refugees were the same for every person, and were included in an interview protocol (attached to this research as appendix). The expert interviews were carried out using a different protocol with the same basic questions for each organization. However, the interviews were carried out in a flexible manner, which had as a result that not all conversations developed in the same way.

All interviews were recorded with an audio recorder. These audio files were transcribed using the transcription software F5 for Mac. Initially, I planned on using the computer programme Atlas.ti for coding. However, due to structural problems with this programme that led to data erasure I decided on manually coding the interviews and analyzing these on paper.

Results from the interviews with refugees were used anonymously, and interviewees were asked for consent. All interviewees, both refugees and experts, have stated they understand that they

were interviewed for personal research, and that this was not in any way related to the work of Amnesty International Israel.

2.2. LITERATURE

Due to the fact that I returned to the Netherlands before a representative number of interviews had been carried out, I turned to academic studies and media articles in order to supplement this gap in data. Added to my preliminary theoretical framework, I have conducted more literature research that enabled me to analyse the situation of refugee activist engagement in Israel. This literature consists of academic literature, texts from research institutes. While focusing on the situation of refugees in Israel, one of the contextual sub questions, I have also made use of reports issued by the Israeli government, NGO's that work with refugees, and written media like newspaper articles. Furthermore, I have studied academic articles that describe the mutual influence diaspora and conflict have on one another. In the theoretical chapter of this research, I have linked this to theories focusing on the influence of settlement policies on diaspora and refugee activism.

Finally, several online newspaper articles have been used to provide contextual information on the recent developments regarding refugees in Israel. This proved to be necessary, because government policies concerning refugees in Israel can literally change from week to week. Online newspaper articles proved to be the only source of information that could add some very up-to-date information to the framework that has not yet been included within published academic articles. For example, some of the academic literature written on African refugees in Israel that dates back from 2009 is now 'outdated', many more refugees have made their way to Israel and new government policies have been applied.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research focuses on Darfuri refugee involvement in their homeland struggle, and the way their ability to engage in activism directed towards the homeland is influenced by refugee and migration related policies of their host country Israel. Before analyzing this, there are a few concepts that need explanation. This chapter will deal with the theoretical concepts and theories about transnational diaspora, diaspora activism, and theories that explain the influence of settlement policies on this activism. These concepts will be discussed separately, however, their relationship should be kept in mind.

I have deliberately chosen to focus on the concept of diasporas instead of merely looking at theories explaining refugee activism and conflict engagement. Focusing on diaspora theory offers a bigger analytical framework, which allows for a more complete in-depth comprehension of the topic and my case study in particular. I am aware of the fact that diaspora is a broader phenomenon, and that refugees make up only a small part of its spectrum. However, when explaining phenomena in transnational political activism, it provides some very useful concepts.

First, we will focus on the concept of diaspora: its—multiple—definitions, origins, history and contemporary use. By doing so, the case of Darfuri refugees in Israel can be put in a broader context. After this, we will zoom out from the focus on diaspora groups in general and look at the phenomenon of diaspora conflict engagement. Demmers argues that due to globalization and 'deterritorialization' of conflict, diaspora groups have become increasingly important actors in intrastate conflicts. Finally, an overview will be given of theories that deal with the influence of settlement policies on diaspora (transnational) political activism. These theories will help us to understand the dynamics of the case study presented in this research, and might clarify how these policies affect refugees capability and motivation to be involved in their homeland struggle.

3.1. DIASPORA CONFLICT ENGAGEMENT

The first theoretical concept that should be elaborated on, conflict engagement by diaspora communities is something that has received an increase in scholarly attention over the years. To get to a more complete understanding of this, first, the concept of diaspora should be further explained. Results from recent ethnographic studies suggest that refugees sustain transnational social networks and have a diasporic consciousness (Wahlbeck, 2002: 234). According to Wahlbeck, this indicates that the concept of diaspora is a useful one for describing the specific refugee experience. He suggests this concept should be used as an analytical tool in the study of refugee communities, because it can simultaneously relate both to the country of settlement and the country of origin. This

transcends the more general concept of transnationalism, which he argues to be not precise enough to describe the specific refugee experience and which differs from 'ordinary' migration.

For researching the case of Darfuri refugees in Israel, not only the relationship with the home country, but also the influence of the country of settlement will play a crucial role in understanding refugees' transnational activism dynamics. Therefore, use of the concept of transnationalism alone would be too limited. Wahlbeck explains this: *"The social structure of a refugee community is largely a continuation of patterns in the society of origin, although these are clearly transformed in the new environment. In the case of refugees, political allegiances and relations in the society of origin have a special significance. It can be argued that the very strong political orientation towards the 'homeland' is different from the relations other migrants have towards their countries of origin."* Thus, when focusing on refugees, a conceptual framework that describes specific transnational social relations should be used. However, in this framework it is important to briefly explain that a combination of increased international migration and new technological developments enables migrants and refugees to sustain transnational social relations and networks more easily than previously was the case. This has contributed to the establishment of 'transnational social spaces' (Wahlbeck, 2002: 223). Transnational identities come into being when the everyday life of migrants still depends on—many and constant—interconnections that cross cultural and national borders (Schiller et al. 1995, in Svedjemo, 2002: 23). Refugees' and migrants' social relations are not confined within the borders of nation states anymore, and therefore, these relations can be seen as transnational.

This phenomenon of transnationalism, which is characteristic of refugee communities in general, should be placed within the wider framework of diaspora to get a better understanding of its implications (Wahlbeck 2002: 228). As Wahlbeck aptly puts it:

In the refugees' own experiences, their homeland and their country of exile, as well as the time before and the time after migration, constitute a continuous and coherent lived experience. The gap perceived between before and after migration, as well as the gap perceived between the country of origin and the country of exile, are largely superimposed on the refugees' experiences by the outside observer. The concept of diaspora can help the researcher to rethink these issues and to understand the transnational reality in which refugees are forced to live. Thus, the notion of diaspora can unify the artificial duality in which the refugee experience is too often conceptualized." (Wahlbeck, 2002: 235).

3.1.1. THE CONCEPT OF DIASPORA

Despite various interpretations of the word 'diaspora', this study will refer to the group of Darfuri refugees in Israel as a diaspora, although according to some scholars, this group does not fit all the criteria for the definition of this word. In this research, Håkan Wiberg's (2007) approach of diaspora will be adopted. Wiberg states that whether or not a group can be called a diaspora is a matter of identification, some migrants feel very strongly related to their homeland, even after decades of being 'dispersed', others *'...never think of themselves as diaspora, giving their loyalty entirely to the host country'*

(Wiberg, 2007: 42). The group of Darfuri refugees in Israel relate very strongly to Darfur and Sudan, and often do not feel a desire to integrate in Israeli society, since they share a desire to go back to Sudan one day (interviewee #9).

Baser & Swain (2008) explain the subjectivity of the concept: "*The concept of 'diaspora' itself is a controversial issue since there is no commonly accepted definition of what a diaspora is.*" However, some scholars attribute a very narrow definition to the term. To grasp a better comprehension of the definition of the term, we should look more in-depth at its origins and contemporary use. The word 'diaspora' was originally found in the Greek Bible, as an expression used to describe the colonization of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean in the Archaic period (800-600 BC) (Cohen, 1997: 507). In this context, it should be translated as 'to sow widely'. For a long time, the word was in particular used to describe the Jewish Diaspora, referring to the Babylonian exile in Biblical times (*ibid.*), thereby carrying with it a strong connotation of suffering, loss and return (Pirkkalainen, 2009: 7). This definition has gradually expanded, and the concept has also become used to describe other dispersed groups, and from the 1990s onwards it gained popularity in the social sciences, cultural studies, migration studies, and development and political studies (Pirkkalainen 2009: 7). Pirkkalainen mentions that the African Union considers diasporas to be the sixth region of Africa, illustrating that the concept has 'entered the realm of policy making', and the interest in diasporas as potential agents of development and peace building is growing. However, the contemporary use of this word however is still ambiguous, and scholars tend to differ in their definitions and criteria for its application.

Many NGO reports often describe diasporas as 'that segment of people living outside the homeland.' Demmers (2007) argues that this definition unintentionally essentializes concepts of diaspora, as it sees migrants as naturally rooted and belonging to places of origin. But, much like ethnic groups, Demmers sees diasporas as imagined (transnational) communities, and '*the product of interactive processes of identification and ascription*' (Demmers 2007: 8). The way people identify with them is dynamic and contextual, and happens for a variety of reasons.

Cohen distinguishes two opposing notions of the word diaspora: victim diaspora and diaspora of active colonization (Cohen 1997, 506). While the first refers to a group that seems to be forcibly displaced, the second one appoints more active and perhaps opportunistic characteristics to the group. Although the victim tradition is at the heart of any definition of the concept, Cohen argues, it is important to transcend this point. As the notion of diaspora comes to be more widely applied, the meaning of the term also expands and transcends the traditional explanation (*ibid.*: 514). Cohen's adaptation of Safran's (1991) work on the common features of diaspora groups therefore is quite extensive.

The concept of diaspora can be applied when members of an expatriate minority community share several of the following characteristics listed: (1) dispersed from a homeland to two or more regions, (2) expanded in pursuit of work, trade or colonial ambitions, (3) a shared collective memory

and myth about the homeland, (4) a shared idealization of the putative ancestral home and a commitment to its maintenance or creation, (5) the development of a return movement, (6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time, (7) a troubled relationship with host societies, (8) a shared sense of empathy with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement and (9) has a possibility of a distinctive yet creative and enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism (*ibid.*: 515). This list allows for the inclusion of cases that intuitively seem part of the diasporic phenomenon, but don't necessarily fit the narrow definition of 'victim diaspora'.

Adamson & Demetriou summarize these to two key points, defining a diaspora as "*a social collectivity that exists across state borders and that has succeeded over time to (1) sustain a collective national, cultural or religious identity through a sense of internal cohesion and sustained ties with a real or imagined homeland and (2) display an ability to address the collective interests of members of the social collectivity through a developed internal organizational framework and transnational links.*" However, they also note, the definition of the word has been hotly contested in literature, and still remains an unresolved debate. Others, like Demmers (2007) argue that these 'checklists' are too narrow, whereas defining diasporas as 'imagined communities' would be too broad (Demmers, 2007: 9).

Accordingly, meaning of the word 'diaspora' is far from static, like the characteristics of the groups it refers to. The meaning of the word has varied through time, different times in history defined different diasporas. Therefore, according to Reis (2004), it is also important to look at the time period the word was used in. Reis argues that the difference between 'classical' and 'contemporary' diaspora deserves clear distinction, and adds three timeframes to this, to classify three principal broad historical waves. First, she distinguishes a Classical Period, which is associated primarily with ancient diasporas, for example in ancient Greece. The second wave relates to the Modern Period, which revolves around historical facts of slavery and colonization. This second wave should be divided into three smaller timeframes: the expansion of European capital (1500-1814), the Industrial Revolution (1815-1914) and the Interwar Period (1914-1945). The final period of 'diasporization', as Reis calls it, can be considered a Contemporary or Late-modern phenomenon, in which she uses the case of Hispanic in the United States as an example (2004: 41). These different timeframes in general seem to correspond with different 'reasons' for diasporization, as mentioned by Cohen. For example, diaspora that stems from colonization is more likely to find its origins in the Modern Period.

The case of Darfuri refugees that this research will focus on falls in the category of contemporary diaspora.¹ Dislocation and fragmentation make this period a particularly complex one.

¹ The processes of dislocation and regeneration are often played out in the context of globalization, which causes contemporary diasporas to be more dynamic and unpredictable. Social sciences increasingly examine the concept in terms of potential for ethnic conflict and their global implications, however, Reis points out that their role in emerging global political economy should also not be left unexplored (Reis, 2004: 53). This research, however, will focus solely on the conflict aspect.

Nowadays, dispersal to overseas territories does not necessarily imply a decisive break with the homeland, nor is it considered permanent, like the classical diaspora who used to be associated with exile (Reis, 2004: 47). Modern techniques in communication play a crucial role in this, and in particular television and the internet have allowed for instantaneous interconnectedness between societies of origin and settlement (Demmers, 2007: 14). This new media, according to Demmers, also greatly influences the quantity and quality of diasporic political action, something that will be discussed in the next section.

So, when *does* someone qualify to call him- or herself a diaspora member? As shown above, scholars are widely divided about this. Wiberg answers this question quite simply, stating that this is not defined by the amount of time that a migrant has spent in a host country, but of identification. Some migrants never think of themselves as diaspora, giving their loyalty entirely to the host country, while other groups cultivate their diaspora identity for generations after the immigration (Wiberg, 2007: 42). The prerequisites he mentions are quite simple: there should be push factors in A, such as domestic war, autocratic rule, poverty and unemployment, or discrimination of some religious, ethnonational or other group the migrant belongs to. It may also be due to the presence of pull factors in B, like safety, a political system that promotes liberty and non-discrimination, wealth, employment opportunities, or an active immigration policy with easy residence permits and citizenships, benefits, or the presence in B. of more immigrants from A. Sometimes, these push and pull factors exist simultaneously (Wiberg, 2007: 42). Furthermore, the group should engage in some sort of collective action to call itself a diaspora, and this can be in the broadest sense possible. It may be mutual aid within the group, while some diasporas engage exclusively in collective action in their host country, others exclusively at their country of origin, and others again combine both types of actions (Wiberg, 2007: 42). The next section of this framework will focus on this element of collective action.

3.1.2. DIASPORA AND CONFLICT

As we see in the previous section, the definitions of the word diaspora are manifold. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that scholarly attitudes towards diaspora conflict involvement are also ambiguous. First, it is important to realize that the recognition of diaspora influence in conflict is something that only emerged over the past decade or so, and the body of scholarly research focusing on this is gradually expanding. According to scholars like for example Reis (2004), Adamson & Demetriou (2007), Demmers (2002, 2007) and Cohen (1997), the reason that academic interest in diasporas—and their possible influence of conflict—only emerged quite recently, is due to the fact that for a long time, the focus in international relations was limited to a state centric one (Reis, 2004: 42). Over the past decades, however, conflicts have become more dispersed and delocalized. Also, the number of war refugees has risen rapidly over the past decades, which produces diaspora on a

higher rate (Demmers, 2002: 86). After the Cold War, a new type of organized violence has emerged that Kaldor calls 'new wars'.² These new wars are characterized as localized internal or civil wars, but they include a myriad of transnational connections. From this perspective, this change in warfare is mostly related to the social relations of warfare, and not as much to the change in its technology. These new wars have to be understood in the context of globalization as an intensification of global interconnectedness. Support from diaspora (or other sympathizing) groups that reside outside of the troubled countries and regions causes intrastate violent conflicts to be no longer fought solely in the actual war territories. Identity groups often lack formal international representation such as membership of the United Nations, and therefore largely depend upon their dispersed members for external support (Demmers, 2002: 87). Also, technological innovations in communication and mobility make it easier for diaspora groups to participate in conflicts in their homelands. The internet has contributed to the organization of significant extremist networks pushing both homeland politics and the host country's foreign policy towards confrontation and conflict (Conversi, 2012: 1372). Another important factor Demmers mentions is that it has become harder to settle in host countries. According to Demmers, refugees have a harder time to find full incorporation in host countries because of an increased 'racist nationalism' that increases the production of cultural and political boundaries (Demmers, 2002: 88). The prevalence of this theory however remains unclear, since it is difficult to find empirical evidence supporting this claim.

The prevalence of diaspora in the current international system can be appointed to the changing nature of war and its consequences, and specifically the more prominent position of the identity group in contemporary conflict. Demmers mentions that, *'although there are a great variety of views on the causes and supposed 'newness' of contemporary conflict, most authors acknowledge the centrality of the identity group'* (2007: 6). Azar was among the first scholars to recognize this, and argued for a radical revision of state centric Clausewitzian ideas by claiming the identity group—ethnic, religious, cultural and other—that was at the core of most contemporary conflict, instead of the nation-state (Demmers, 2007: 6). Demmers shows this claim is still supported by evidence: between 1989 and 2004, 94 per cent of worldwide violent conflicts were intra-state wars revolving around inter-group or group-state disputes (*ibid.*: 7). Mohamoud (2006: 3) mentions that this trend did not only cause many conflicts in African countries to regionalize, but to internationalize at the same time. Mohamoud, focusing on domestic conflict in African countries, states that *"the connection between the diaspora's activities and the dynamics of conflict in their homelands is a dimension that has been largely*

² 'New wars' are by some scholars also referred to as 'post-modern wars'. This 'new/post-modern wars' theory, however, is not supported by all. Kalyvas (2001) is among scholars that dispute Kaldor's 'black-and-white' division between 'old' and 'new wars', in which the end of the Cold War functions as a demarcation between those two types. He stresses, for example, that the striking image of 'ideologically oriented' actors as presented in 'old' civil wars is often misrepresented. Ideology was not always inherent to 'old wars', whereas stating that 'new wars' are free of ideology also is an oversimplification. However, this debate is beyond the scope of this research. For this study, it is enough to keep in mind that the phenomenon of diasporas that retain strong and established links with their country of origin—and thus are able to participate in homeland conflicts—is a rather new one, whether one agrees with the 'new war' theory, or not.

overlooked in research and policy analysis, despite its critical significance." Adamson & Demetriou suggest that these communities, their resources, power and interests should be carefully analyzed. Not only does this provide a means of examining how identity constructs can be deployed to sustain collective identities across territorial borders, it might also be of use when we want to capitalize on potential advantages or mitigate risks.

The impact of diaspora communities can be ambiguous. In some cases they can plead for reconciliation and demobilization, in other cases diasporic voices feed and prolong the conflict (Demmers, 2002: 86). According to Collier & Hoeffler (2002), conflicts can actually be revived or protracted through the continuation of public grievances by diasporas, by their financing of violent organizations and by supplying knowledge and ideas. However, there is also evidence that diasporas exert a positive influence on the conflict, for example by the increase in remittances that diasporic communities send to the homeland. This impacts favorably on their home economies.³

Mohamoud mentions that, to better understand the effects of these remittances, we should distinguish between individual and collective remittances. Individual remittances are mainly sent to families and relatives to meet subsistence needs, health care, housing, paying school fees and other civic goals. These are usually not used to finance conflict efforts. Collective remittances, money that is collected from the diaspora for a particular purpose, may be used to finance both community welfare activities and conflict efforts. However, what proportion of those collective remittances is used to finance conflict remains unclear (Mohamoud, 2006: 5, Demmers, 2007: 10). Studies have, however, found that the behaviour of the diaspora is very much influenced by the domestic situation in the homeland. He explains that *'if the domestic situation in the homeland is stable, diaspora tend to invest in activities that ameliorate poverty and contribute to developments such as community welfare projects and business investment as well as civic-related initiatives. However, if the situation in the homeland is not stable, diaspora tend to invest in partisan and politically related activities that are destructive'* (Mohamoud, 2006, 8) Thus, according to his research, there is a direct correlation between the domestic situation in the homeland and the long-distance behaviour of the diaspora (*ibid.*).

However, diaspora involvement in homeland conflict is rather multidimensional, and apart from this economic dimension, we can also distinguish a civic and a political dimension. Civic oriented action refers to non-political activities, such as community development and business investments (Pirkkalainen, 2009: 29). Conflicts do not only occur for political reasons, but also because of factors like poverty, grievances and competition over scarce resources (Mohamoud, 2006: 10). Civil society members can play an important role in addressing some of these issues. Apart from this, Pirkkalainen

³ The effects of these remittances are beyond the scope of this research, but an increasing number of articles and research focuses on this phenomenon (Reis, 2004: 48). A few examples of scholars that have focused on this are Maingot (1991), Ferguson (1992), Graham and Hartlyn (1996), Gillespie et al. (1999), Bate (2001), and Orozco (2002, 2003).

(2009: 31) mentions that investments in, for example, development initiatives, have the potential to promote peace. The study of diasporas as an aspect of civil society however is still often unrecognized, and according to Pirkkalainen, it needs more research. The political dimension of home countries diasporas engage in is often better documented, and usually consists of lobbying, organizing peace meetings, promoting democracy and supporting political parties (Demmers, 2007: 10).

Zunzer (2004: 25) supports the assumption that persons in the diaspora communities can play a significant role for politics and development in their homeland. In his research, he explores the possibilities for diasporas to transform civil conflict. Conflict transformation, he states, relates to protracted civil war. Often these are asymmetrical, and violent phases influence or force citizens to leave their homeland. The role of civilian conflict transformation in this could be to support processes to overcome causes of conflict, and to establish conflict mediation and management mechanisms within society. Ideally, this is done by supporting and empowering conflicting parties while they try to achieve a negotiated settlement, and help them overcome conflict causes. However, Zunzer states activities like conflict prevention and conflict transformation should be independent of a government agenda, and therefore must involve both key state *and* civil society actors.

Zunzer (*ibid.*) mentions five factors that determine to what extent a diaspora can be empowered to play the role of pro-active peacebuilder, of which the first two seem to be particularly relevant for the case of Darfuri refugees in Israel: (1) geographical distribution and self-organization structures of diaspora communities in the host country, (2) legal status and living conditions in the host country, (3) political attitudes towards the conflict at home and shared identity: common ground vs. unbridgeable differences, (4) motivation and capabilities for constructive engagement in the home country and (5) access to key political actors and resources at home and abroad. (Zunzer, 2004: 42).

Reis also promotes the stance that diaspora can be of great importance to both host and home countries. A level of connectedness between homeland and diaspora might be beneficial for both parties, and therefore, she gives some policy implications. Countries of origin should be more proactive in channelling economic resources of overseas diaspora, and promote so-called 'diasporic tourism' of migrant communities to their homeland. Host countries should make special provisions, like facilitating banking and financial services to enhance investment opportunities. Also, the formulation of immigration policy and regulation of nationality and citizenship laws should be addressed (Reis, 2004: 54).

However, this well-meant advice ignores the fact that some diasporas are unwanted in both their host as their home countries, and therefore avoid anything that would have to do with their home government. They might rather choose to support rebel movements to exert influence on the political situation. Therefore, we should take note of Sheffer's (2003: 171) theory that distinguishes

state-linked from stateless diasporas, and claims that these two different groups adopt different strategies towards their involvement in the homeland: *"Stateless diasporas are more likely to choose rather radical approaches such as 'irredentist or separatist strategies', which seek 'to establish an independent state in a diaspora's former historical homeland [...]' Meanwhile, state-linked diasporas are more likely to adopt 'the communal strategy,' a more moderate approach using nonviolent means to 'achieve a secure and respected existence within host countries' (ibid., 172).* The former explanation fits the description of the group of Darfuri refugees in Israel, that can be seen as 'stateless'. However, although the group of interviewees shared a strong desire to establish a peaceful, inclusive and democratic 'new Sudan', none of them expressed to pursue separatist strategies.

Conversi (2002) doesn't make this distinction between stateless and state-linked, but states that diaspora politics have often entailed an above-average amount of radicalism. She explains that this is partly due to the relatively safe placement abroad of the diaspora's most successful members and elites. *"After having secured a living in the host society, socially mobile elites no longer face direct risks and can thus delegate the 'dirty jobs' either to their homeland's policing institutions or, in the case of stateless nations, to local radicals who then have to bear the brunt of the state repression"* (Conversi, 2002: 1372). This does imply, however, that a certain degree of 'successful' settlement (e.g., being able to make a living, having a certain amount of 'free time' that allows political activism) of diasporas is necessary, in order to engage in political activism. The next section will focus more in-depth on the effects settlement conditions have on diaspora activism, because this seems to be an undeniable factor influencing the activism of Darfuri refugees in Israel.

Surprisingly, many scholars focusing on—the effects of—diaspora conflict engagement do not focus on the mobilization factors that lead up to the actual active conflict participation.

So which factors contribute to the mobilization of diaspora? According to Pirkkalainen (2009: 18) and Collier (2000: 14), several factors have been identified as influencing the diaspora groups' contribution to conflict situations. The first point mentioned is that diasporas often maintain a rather romanticised view of their community and country of origin. This might contribute to the nursing of grievances, as a form of asserting continues belonging (Collier 2000, 14). Another factor might be that diasporas are wealthier than those that stayed behind, and when they engage in conflict, they do not have to face to consequences on the ground (*ibid.*). This corresponds with Conversi's point about diaspora elites delegating radical groups based in the homeland. Furthermore, Pirkkalainen mentions diaspora groups are sometimes 'alienated', which causes them to play out their own fantasies or frustrations without having a grasp of the situation on the ground. Finally, it has been claimed that those groups whose identities tend to be centred around statelessness and marginalisation, are often soft targets for mobilisation. This makes it more likely they choose to support national liberation movements in their communities of origin (Sheffer, 2007: 68). As we have seen in this section, in the current debate, scholars agree on the fact that diaspora groups are

extremely heterogenous, and therefore it is impossible to say in advance that diaspora groups—in general—promote peace or protract conflict. Each group is influenced by individual factors, and has their own ambitions, strategies and capacities. Therefore, there is no universal answer to the question whether the presence of diaspora groups has positive or negative impact on conflicts. Also, it is impossible to say whether a specific group exerts positive or negative influence, or maybe both at the same time. To quote Brinkerhoff (2011: 136): "*Diasporas are at once conflict entrepreneurs, competing interests and contributors to peace and development.*" Also, evidence suggests that diaspora does not only influence homeland conflict, but that it also works vice versa. Homeland conflicts directly affects the lives and well-being of the diaspora, despite the fact that they're far away from the conflict zones. This reality makes it imperative to address this international dimension of the conflict (Mohamoud 2006: 2). To gain a better understanding of this, specific cases should be studied in-depth.

3.2. SETTLEMENT POLICIES AND REFUGEE POLITICAL ACTIVISM

As mentioned in the previous section, in order to get a better comprehension of the role specific diaspora groups can play in homeland conflict, we need to focus not only on the capacities of the diaspora, but also on the broader political opportunity structures that might influence mobilization and engagement of diaspora groups, both within the country of origin and the country of settlement (Pirkkalainen 2009: 6). This study will primarily focus on whether the Darfuri refugee diaspora in Israel tries to exert influence on their homeland conflict, and how they are affected by the policies and conditions in their host country. The actual effects of the—possible—engagement in their home countries will not be investigated, since this would require a research that is far more extensive. Ideally, this would also include fieldwork in Sudan, something that limited time does not allow for this study. Therefore, political opportunity structures in the country of origin, as mentioned above, will not be included in the empirical part of this research, and this part of the theoretical framework will focus solely on the influence of host country settlement policy.

This research revolves around the conviction that settlement conditions of diaspora groups play an important role in whether they engage in activism. Wahlbeck explains the importance of understanding this context: "*An emphasis on the diaspora should not be connected with a disregard for the structural context of the society of settlement. Even if a refugee community exists in a transnational and/or global social reality, people do live in very concrete localities with their own social structure and inequalities*" (Wahlbeck, 2002: 32). Demmers mentions that diaspora is likely to continue their focus on the homeland, when it is increasingly hard to settle in host countries. When refugees have a harder time to find full incorporation in host countries because of an increased 'racist nationalism', they tend to maintain close relationships with their homeland, in order not to put everything at stake in one single nation where their future is unsure (Demmers, 2002: 88). However, although this shows a relation

between settlement conditions, this does not necessarily imply they actually engage in activism. Zunzer (2004: 42) mentions that 'the legal status and living conditions in the host country' are a determining factor for the extent to which a diaspora can be empowered to play the role of—transnational—peacebuilder.

An particularly interesting example of the influence refugee settlement policies in host countries can have on refugees' willingness and capability to engage in (transnational) political activism is given in Allerdice's (2011) research on political activism among South Sudanese refugees that have been resettled to the United States and Australia. She states that policy implementation factors influence the direction of refugee political activities. In the United States, with a decentralized, *laissez-faire* implementation of refugee settlement policy, South Sudanese refugees are more involved in transnational political activism. Whereas in Australia, where the implementation institutionalized and centralized, Sudanese refugees have concentrated primarily on domestic political and social integration (Allerdice, 2011: 2). Allerdice explains this difference:

Relative to the US, its program provides more comprehensive services that are funded predominately by the federal government. The laissez-faire styled US program provides less social services, leaving refugees more autonomous with regard to meeting their needs. These factors are significant because they determine with whom refugees are likely to interact—professional service providers or volunteers—and the extent to which they will be involved in certain settlement programs that provide material and social prerequisites for political activities (ibid., 2011: 3).

Allerdice (2011) also gives a clear overview of the five most distinct categories of institutions or contextual factors that scholars have found to influence migrant political activities. (1) Immigration and refugee policies have been found to have an enormous influence on migrant political activities. Rules, regulations and programs either encourage migrant access to the policy process, or bar it. Koopmans (2004) mentions that for example the possibility to achieve citizenship relatively easily eases engagement in any type of migrant political activities. On the other hand, newcomer legal status that places migrants in an insecure position, like a temporary protection status, cause migrants to feel less confident about engaging in political activities. (2) Host countries' social policies, and migrant access to it, also play an important role. However, scholars disagree on whether policies regarding education, housing, employment and social assistance diminishes homeland or functions as a prerequisite for transnational activities. Furthermore, (3) the reception of the host country is a significant factor. This is usually seen as either inclusive or exclusive, and in 'pro-minority contexts', migrants have greater opportunities to make political claims towards the host country. Less inclusive regimes, on the other hand, result in greater degrees of transnational activities. Or, as Allerdice puts it: "...the assumption [is] that migrants who are not included into the socio-political fabric of the host country will turn back to their origin country for political validation. Those that are included will be involved in domestic activities." Last, (4) national and (5) supranational political factors play a part. When leftists governments hold power, rhetoric addressing minorities is often more positive than with

conservative governments. On a supranational level, migrant claim-making and access to political activities is encouraged by international discourses that promote universal human rights (Allerdice, 2011: 23-26).

These examples illustrate that there is a relation between settlement policy and context, and the degree to which refugees engage in political activism. However, once again, how and whether this relation manifests itself is highly case-specific, and universal theories are not available. The interplay between policies and diaspora—refugee—groups is not uniform, whereas the migrants groups are not, either. To get to a more complete understanding of this, it would be interesting to see research that focuses on two different migrant minority groups within the same country, and compares their degree of activism. However, such a research was not available at the time of this study.

3.3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is important to mention that, although this theoretical framework does touch on the subject of the effects of refugee diaspora involvement on their countries of origin and host societies, this is beyond the scope of the presented case study of Darfuri diaspora activism in Israel. This case will focus solely on whether refugees are involved in this, and how they are affected in this by their host countries policies. Researching the effects of this transnational activism from Israel towards Darfur and Sudan would require another, more specific study. Furthermore, it is valuable to note that the influence of diaspora communities in the secession of states has increasingly become a point of focus in the field of diaspora studies, for example the cases of Somaliland (Kaplan, 2008: 19). Although literature on secession and self-determination provide some valuable additional insights in diaspora motivation, its focuses on a ultimate political goal that differs from the focal point of this research—diaspora conflict engagement and the influence of settlement conditions. Therefore, this theoretical framework does not touch on the topic of secession.

As we have seen in this chapter, there is a myriad of theories that deal with diaspora activism, of which the ones that take into account the influence of settlement policies prove to be most valuable for this research. Demmers (2002, 2007) argues that the influence of diaspora communities increasingly plays a role in violent conflict. Furthermore, according to Demmers, a non-inclusive host country leads to an increase in transnational activism. Zunzer (2004: 42) mentions that 'the legal status and living conditions in the host country' are a determining factor for the extent to which a diaspora can be empowered to play the role of—transnational—peacebuilder. This study will examine whether this is also true for the case of the conflict in Sudan, and more specifically focuses on the role Darfuri refugees in Israel play in this.

4. DARFURI REFUGEES IN ISRAEL

This chapter will focus both on providing a general overview of the violent conflict in Sudan, and on refugees' individual background stories of their experiences of the conflict in Darfur. It aims to answer the research question: *'What are the specific characteristics of the Darfuri diaspora community in Israel?'* First, the historical roots of the violent conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan will be summarized. By doing so, I aim to add a broader context and paint a more complete picture of the background of the Darfuri refugees that made their way to Israel. Second, I will focus on the characteristics of the group of Darfuri refugees in Israel. Who are they? How did they come to Israel? How do they experience being a refugee in Israel? Answering these questions, I will use the data I obtained from the interviews I carried out and findings from literature research.

4.1. CIVIL WAR IN SUDAN

4.1.1. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

Since 2003, the Darfur region—which has the size of the country of France—has seen a civil war escalate into genocide. The conflict started when the Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), an opposition group, initiated armed actions against the Sudanese government, led by Omar al-Bashir, who they accused of systematically disadvantaging the black African population. After early successes such as the capturing of the el-Fasher airport, the SLM/A was affected greatly by the large-scale government's army counter-offensive. According to Victor Tanner & Jérôme Tubiana (2007), in the many years of fighting that followed, the fact that there were several rebel movements that operated separately, and were divided by tribal lines, prove to be problematic. SLM/A was divided internally, which led to severe tensions. Its two leaders came from different tribes. Abdel-Wahid Mohammad al-Nur came from the Fur tribe and Minni Arku Minnawi from the Zaghawa tribe (Tanner & Tubiana, 2007: 11). These two leaders had different opinions on the goals of their struggle for Darfur. Only one of its two leaders, Minnawi, signed the May 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement in Abuja, Nigeria (*ibid.*), which caused the movement to split up into two separate fractions.

The other rebel movement opposing the government, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), was more developed and unified in a political way, but less military involved. Internal ethnic struggles undermined the party, when its narrow Zaghawa-Kobe ethnic base conflicted with the Islamist past of its leader, Dr. Khalil Ibrahim. Apart from these two main rebel groups, Tanner & Tubiana mention the involvement of a number of smaller 'unsigned' groups that operated on their own. On 23 February 2010, The Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) was founded. This is a rebel movement led by Dr. Tijani Sese, as an alliance of ten smaller Darfuri rebel organizations.

However, the conflict in Darfur was and is not only about rebels fighting the government and vice versa. In government counter-attacks, many civilians were killed. According to Ruth Messinger

(2007: 16), who wrote down the stories of survivors that are now in refugee camps in Chad, the Sudanese government used Antonov planes that were given to Sudan during the Cold War for air raids. They were painted white and had UN written on them, so that people would think they were bringing humanitarian aid. Instead, these planes were used to bomb the villages and *'they put anything you can imagine in these airplanes—old car chassis, broken air conditioners—and they shove them out the back, and it kills any person it hits, and it smashes down housing'*. All of her 40 interviewees mentioned that, right after the bombing, the Arab militias rode in. This, according to Ruth Messinger, proves these attacks were a closely orchestrated collaboration between government and Janjaweed (Messinger, 2007: 16). Between 2003 and 2009, it is believed that between 200,000 and 400,000 people have been killed in Darfur, and that about 2.5 million people have been displaced (Yacobi, 2009: 2).⁴

Many refugees made their way to Chad, neighboring Darfur in the west. In the Chad refugee camps, however, Darfuri refugees still face Janjaweed attacks. Assaf Uni (2007: 26) states that *'a combination of Arab tribes, who include the Janjaweed who perpetrated the crimes in Sudan, have come together with Arab tribes in Chad. Actually, these are the same tribes, as the border between Chad and Sudan is a fictitious line in the sand, drawn 150 years ago'* (Uni, 2007: 26).

As Tanner & Tubiana note, Darfur has a special place in Sudanese history. They describe it as a large, deeply rural and populous area, with vibrant tribal and Islamic identities and a strong warrior tradition. For the last 180 years, governments in Khartoum have repeatedly struggled to control this faraway and restive province (Tanner & Tubiana, 2007: 13), before, during and after British colonization. According to Francis M. Deng (2005: 44)⁵, the current Darfur crisis that emerged in 2003 is the latest in a series of conflicts that pit Sudan's Arab-dominated centre against the black African marginalized majority at the periphery. However, these racial labels oversimplify the issue. Deng states that Sudan suffers from an acute identity crisis, resulting from a long history of stratification and discrimination. Until far back in history, Sudanese that were Muslim, Arabic-speaking and culturally Arabised had a better status than those that were black, heathen and came from an area that was used as a 'hunting ground' for slaves (Deng, 2005: 44). The British ended slavery and offered the South protection from Northern exploitation, but also administered the two parts of the country separately. This resulted in the North being advanced and the South underdeveloped. When the country became independent in 1956, the Northern region took over from the British as rulers of the South (*ibid.*). This triggered a secessionist war by the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement and Army (SSLM/A) that was halted in 1972 when the South was granted

⁴ For the whole of Sudan, according to data by UNHCR from January 2012, there are over five million documented refugees and asylum seekers, as well as an additional 25 million people who were forced to flee their homes and are displaced within their own country.

(Noa Kaufman (2013) *'Refugees and Asylum Seekers and Employment'*, report issued by Worker's Hotline, 3).

⁵ Forced Migration Review 22

regional autonomy, but resumed again in 1983 by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army (SPLM/A). SPLM/A's objective was not secession of the Southern region, but the liberation of the whole country 'to be free of any discrimination on the ground of race, ethnicity, religion, culture or gender' (Deng, 2005: 44). SPLM/A, as Deng puts it, 'recasted' the war from secession to the liberation of the whole country. This appealed to the non-Arab regions of the North, and marginalized Black Muslims in the North began to assert themselves. The events that took (and take) place in Darfur, therefore, cannot be understood without relation to the historical developments in the country as a whole (Deng, 2005: 45).

4.1.2. THE 2011 DOHA AGREEMENT AND CURRENT SITUATION

After two and half years of negotiations, dialogue and consultations with the major parties to the Darfur conflict, its relevant stakeholders and international partners, the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) was finalized at the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference in May 2011, in Doha, Qatar. In June, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon welcomed the Doha Peace Document adopted by Darfur stakeholders as the basis to end the eight-year conflict in western Sudan. The framework is also supported by the African Union and Arab League. On 14 July 2011, the Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement signed a protocol agreement committing themselves to the Document, which is now the framework for the comprehensive peace process in Darfur. In accordance with the DDPD, among other points of attention, the Government of Sudan appointed a Darfur Regional Authority and a Darfuri as Second Vice President of the Republic of Sudan (UNAMID).

LJM's leader, Dr. Tijani Sese, stated that old agreements and the one which was concluded recently with a splinter faction of the Justice and Equality Movement would encourage the rest of the movements, calling on those who didn't sign to catch up. However, the Sudan Liberation Movement of Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM) and Abdel-Wahid Nur (SLM-AW) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) refused to sign the accord and remain at war with Khartoum until the moment of writing this research (Sudan Tribune, 2013).

Despite the signing of the DDPD, however, about a decade after the initial conflict broke out, the Darfur conflict still looks far from being resolved. In the first three months of 2013, new violence displaced nearly three hundred thousand people, more than in the whole of 2012 (Small Arms Survey, 24-07-2013).

According to the UN, in March 2013 the government reportedly continues to use air raids, despite agreeing not to (Save Darfur).

Most recently at the time of writing this research, on December 30, 2013, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon called on the Sudanese government to act against the growing number killings of UN peacekeepers in the strife-torn Darfur region. In the second half of 2013, at

least 14 UNAMID⁶ peacekeepers have been killed in a new upsurge of violence, mostly by unidentified assailants (UN News Centre, 30-12-2013). Reportedly, SLM/A militias (among others) still fight government forces, whom they claim still attack Darfuri citizens and rebels. Tanner & Tubiana argue that, as long as Darfur's rebel movements do not unite in their opposition against the government, there will be no sustainable peace in Darfur (Tanner & Tubiana, 2007: 11). A decade of fighting, failed peace agreements and widely divided rebel movements however does not give much hope for peace in the near future.

4.2. DARFURI REFUGEES IN ISRAEL: BACKGROUNDS AND EXPERIENCES

Prior to describing the Darfuri refugee population in Israel, it is important to give a brief overview of the relations between Israel and Sudan. This, to a certain extent, contributes to understanding how refugees from Sudan are viewed upon and treated by their host country.

4.2.1. ISRAEL AND SUDAN

Both Sudan and Palestine (prior to the establishment of the State of Israel) were under British rule until 1948. After Israel declared its independence in May 1948, and the following 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the Arab League⁷ refused to recognize the legitimacy of the new state, and declared a general boycott on all relations with Israel. Sudan, as an Anglo-Egyptian dependency, was not yet part of the Arab League, which consisted of independent states only. Therefore, it could continue the trade and commercial relations (Sudan exported cotton seed to Israel) that had existed between what had been mandatory Palestine and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan for a number of years (Warburg, 1992: 385-386). Egyptian pressure to suspend trade was rejected by the British authorities. Sudan joined the Arab League two days after its independence from the United Kingdom and Egypt in 1956.

At the beginning of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War (or Six Day War) Sudan declared war on Israel, when Israel launched the war as a preventive military effort to counter a feared impending attack by Arab nations that surrounded Israel. Since then, official inter-government relations between the two

⁶ The acronym UNAMID refers to the African Union/UN Hybrid operation in Darfur, established on 31 July, 2007. UNAMID has the protection of civilians as its core mandate, but is also tasked with contributing to security for humanitarian assistance, monitoring and verifying implementation of agreements, assisting an inclusive political process, contributing to the promotion of human rights and the rule of law, and monitoring and reporting on the situation along the borders with Chad and the Central African Republic (United Nations Peacekeeping).

⁷ The Arab League was formed in Cairo on March 22, 1945 by six founding members, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Transjordan (Jordan since 1949). Its goal is *"strengthening of the relations between the member-states, the coordination of their policies in order to achieve co-operation between them and to safeguard their independence and sovereignty; and a general concern with the affairs and interests of the Arab countries."* Its current 21 member states are Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The State of Palestine is also mentioned in this list, although it is not an actual state. There are four observer members, Brazil, Eritrea, India and Venezuela. Due to the recent uprising in Syria and their government's brutal way of dealing with political opponents, the league suspended this member state and now counts 21 members. The two countries in the Arab League that do maintain diplomatic relations with Israel are Egypt and Jordan. (<http://www.arableagueonline.org/hello-world/#more-1>, accessed on 21-12-2013).

countries have never improved.

However, according to Mahmoud Muhareb (2011), over the past decades, there also was room for cooperation between the two countries on elite level. The many divisions and power struggles in Sudan, primarily in the North, have opened the door to Israeli interference in Sudan (Muhareb, 2011: 12). Muhareb explains this by stating that at each stage of Israel's involvement in Sudan, its interference was used to serve strategic objectives. Often the North Sudanese elites that were prepared to do business with Israel were offered money or other bribes (*ibid.*). *"In the 1950s, Israel initiated its interference on the basis of opposition to Abdel Nasser's Egypt. In that period, the Sudanese Umma Party leaders went a long way in solidifying this alliance with Israel against Egypt before, during and after the Tripartite Aggression of 1956. In the late 1970s and in the first half of the 1980s, Israel built strong relations with Sudanese President Jaafar Numayri and his regime, to the extent that Numayri not only allowed Israel to relocate tens of thousands of Falasha Jews from Sudanese territory to Israel, but also allowed the establishment of a Mossad base in Khartoum as well" (ibid.).*

Nowadays, Israel's difference in attitude against—Muslim—Sudan and—predominantly Christian—South Sudan couldn't be more of a contrast. One day after its independence on July 9, 2011, Israel offered South Sudan economic help. Since July 28 of that year, the countries maintain full diplomatic relations, which might prove to be mutually beneficial from a strategic point of view. Muhareb (2011) notes that Israel's earlier support of pre-independence rebel movements in South Sudan were solely *"...designed to further Israeli strategic interests. For when support for the rebellion served its interests, as it did in the late 1960s and early 1970s or later in the 1990s, Israel generously gave its support; but when the rebellion did not serve Israeli interests, during the period when its servant held the reins of power in Khartoum, as was the case in the late 1970s and until the mid-1980s, Israel refused to provide support for the rebellion in southern Sudan" (Muhareb, 2011: 13).*

Subsequently, tense relations between South Sudan and Sudan turned for the worse when the Sudanese government declared war against the newly independent country on April 24, 2012. The diplomatic relations South Sudan has with Israel might also have had contributed to this, however, this border dispute is mainly fought because of disagreement on oil pipe lines. On a regular basis, Israel and Sudan accuse each other of spying and covert attacks. In 2009, Israel admitted to carrying out air strikes on Sudan in order to halt the smuggling of Iranian arms to Gaza, through Sudan (BBC, 26-03-2009). In November 2012, a Khartoum arms factory was bombed. Although Israel has not commented on this attack, al-Bashir has stated that: *"Israel will remain the number one enemy, and we will not call them anything except the Zionist enemy" (Reuters, 08-11-2012).*

4.2.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF DARFURI REFUGEES IN ISRAEL

The following observations are derived from the interviews conducted, and observations and conversations in the field. It is important to note that this data might not be fully representative,

however, these general assumptions regarding the characteristics of the Darfuri refugees in Israel are supported by experts in the field.

4.2.2.1. Gender

The overall number of refugees from Darfur is unclear, whereas the Israeli government does not provide statistics on this. However, there is reason to believe that a large part of the Sudanese refugees in Israel consists of Darfuris. The Israeli government returned many South Sudanese refugees following South Sudan's independence.

Furthermore, the group of Sudanese refugees mostly consists of men. In the city of Ashdod for example (population of 240 thousand), it is believed that among the 400-500 Sudanese refugees, there are very few women. Interviewee #2, a community leader that claims he knows the entire Darfuri refugee community in Ashdod, states: *"I know only one Sudanese Darfuri woman in Ashdod."* For Tel Aviv (population of 415 thousand), the community is larger, but it is difficult to find data on the number of Sudanese refugees in the city when the exact overall number of Sudanese refugees in Israel is unclear. Darfuri refugee organization B'nai Darfur states that there are about 1200 Darfuri's in Israel. Although some NGO's have produced numbers that state that overall, there are 12.000 Sudanese refugees (from Darfur, Blue Nile, Nuba Mountains and some from South Sudan) in Israel, refugees themselves claim otherwise. Interviewee #1, a community leader in Tel Aviv, says: *"For me, I think that there are now maybe 5000, because so many people have left because of the situation [increasing numbers of imprisonment and deportation]."* He recalls that on the last 'Darfur Day,' a commemoration event, significantly fewer visitors from the Sudanese refugee community showed up compared to the years before. However, since the government does not provide any reliable statistics on the exact number of refugees in Israel, or about the number of deportations and 'voluntary returns', it is difficult to give anything more than estimations. Regarding the number of women in Tel Aviv, estimations vary between 10 (interviewee #5, a community leader, claimed: *"If there were more, I would know them."*) and 'less than 200' (interviewee #1). Interviewee #7, the only female interviewed for this research, claims there was a counting two years ago, and that there were 185 Sudanese women that all arrived with their husbands or other family.

The reason for this disparity is that mostly men manage to escape the country, while women, children and elderly people stay behind in refugee camps. In Sudanese culture, it is not usual for women to travel alone, let alone flee the country. When they do so, it is often together with their husbands (interviewee #7 was an exception to this, which I will elaborate in section 4.2.2.). As interviewee #1 states: *"...cultural tradition, it's things like women in Sudan they tend to be less strong than men because they are not willing to sacrifice, that's why you can find only some of them here. Most women are in camps. [...] you need to run away from your village, and then to go to Khartoum, and then finding documents is another problem, and then finding money is another problem, and then running away there successfully is another problem."*

4.2.2.2. Age

Elderly people and children are more vulnerable and cannot endure the often dangerous trips to safer countries outside of Africa. They might rather stay in refugee camps that are in, or closer to, the homeland. As interviewee #5 explained: "...you only see women, children and old people [in refugee camps]. Because these people are unable to flee. You have to walk by foot. Going very long distances, crossing borders. You might be shot." This might be one of the factors that explain why the majority of the population of Sudanese refugees in Israel consists of relatively young people, between ages 18 and 40. Furthermore, some interviewees mentioned the Sudanese government often targets students, whereas many university students are involved in political activism. This might provide students with a more urgent reason to leave the country than the earlier mentioned groups of children and elderly people. However, from the data retrieved from interviews in this case, it is impossible to find a link explaining the relative young age of Darfuri refugees in Israel. Therefore, any possible explanations on this topic remain speculative.

4.2.2.3. Occupation in Israel

Furthermore, all interviewees were working, except for one, who managed to obtain a grant from and NGO to study at Tel Aviv University. The others were working as builders, as cleaners in hotels or as dishwashers in restaurants. It is believed the largest part of refugees in Israel—Sudanese, Eritreans and others—work in sectors of physical labour. This kind of labour is often hard to find Israeli workforce for, and although refugees are not officially allowed to work, the government has largely condoned this. Three of the interviewees were considered to have 'good' jobs for refugee standards, with wages matching Israeli standards and good working conditions. Two of the interviewees (#7 and #5) worked for a grassroots NGO that addressed the refugee community. Another (#2) worked as a personal driver for a sales company, and got housing paid for by his boss, as well as time and money to spend on vacation trips. However, when looking at the overall refugee population in Israel, conditions like these are rare. Explanations why some manage to find better jobs than others remain in the realm of speculation, but it is likely that this has to do with refugees' level of education and English. Interviewees #1, #2, #5, #7 and #9 all speak English at a high level, and all of them also managed to learn Hebrew with levels varying from sufficient to good.

4.2.2.4. Education in Sudan

It is believed that it often is the elite of a country that manages to escape and become refugees elsewhere. The majority of those interviewed (#1, #2, #5, #7 and #8) for this interview attended university in Khartoum. Interviewee #3 expressed he would have wanted to go to university, but was forced into army service first. To avoid being drafted, he fled the country. He shared a strong desire to study in Israel, however, because of financial limitations, this was not yet possible. Interviewee #4

left Sudan when he was a minor, and shares the same dream to study. Either in Israel, or in Canada, where some of his family members have been resettled. Interviewee #6 was a SLM/A fighter. Interviewee #8 was also a minor when he fled Sudan, but received education in church schools as a refugee in Ethiopia and Egypt.

4.2.2.5. Conflict involvement in Sudan

Interviewees #1, #2, #5 and #8 were all involved in the United People's Front, the political student's party of SLM/A. Their actions varied between organizing protest demonstrations, speeches and meetings. Interviewee #2 was also involved in military actions, and claimed he was a commander of a military unit. Interviewee #6 was actively fighting in the SLM/A, and #9 expressed he would have wanted to join the SLM/A military to fight, but was too young at the time. Of the other interviewees, #3, #4 and #7 expressed not to have been involved in direct government opposing actions.

4.2.3. EXPERIENCES IN SUDAN AND REASONS FOR LEAVING

Without exception, all of the interviewees explained they left Sudan because of the government, led by Al-Bashir. All interviewees belong to the Fur tribe, one of the tribes that is disadvantaged and even fought by the government, they felt unsafe and all except for one interviewee (#3) admitted to being subjected to direct physical threats like police interrogations and getting arrested.

Interviewee #7, a 29-year old female from Darfur, was unsafe because of her job. She worked as a translator for the French branch of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) next to her studies in microbiology. Together with one other employee, she was responsible for translations between Fur, English and Arabic. In March 2009, the Sudanese government expelled several foreign NGO's on grounds of 'war crimes against the president', and MSF was one of them. The interviewee mentioned that before this happened, she already felt generally unsafe and controlled by the Sudanese government, but after her employer was ordered to leave, this got worse. She recalls being harassed by the police, being followed, and threatening receiving telephone calls. Explaining that none of her activities at MSF were directed against the al-Bashir government did not make a difference, and when her co-translator was shot dead on the street by unidentified men her father urged her to leave.

Other interviewees (#1, 2, 5, 6, 8), all males between the ages of 26 and 31, explained they left Sudan of their support for the SLM/A, and being active in the United People's Front. All of them recalled facing harassment by the Sudanese government, being followed, imprisoned and interrogated. Two interviewees (#5 and #6) were tortured while imprisoned, added to the 'usual' beatings prisoners received.

An exception is interviewee #3, a 28-year old male. He is also a member of the Fur tribe, but explained he didn't originally come from Darfur, but grew up in Om'bada, in Khartoum State. However, he has a large number of relatives living in Darfur. When he finished high school, he was told he had to join the army, otherwise he wouldn't be allowed to go into university later on. This is

an obligatory national service that usually takes a year and a half, and tasks given vary from guarding government sites to actually joining the military forces that are involved in military actions. This interviewee participated in a 45-day military training, and upon finishing this, was told he had to go and fight in Darfur state. *"When I'm going to fight, I'm going to kill my own people. I'm going to kill my uncle, I'm going to kill my aunt. I'm going to kill my own family. And that's why I said: no. I don't want to go there."* According to this interviewee, choosing not to participate in this national service seriously limits your future options. Entering university is impossible, and the government makes working life tough by enforcing additional arbitrary taxes. Because this interviewee wanted to study, and was persuaded by a Sudanese friend living in Israel to join him. He told him *"...if you come here, you can go to complete your education, and the UN will help you with this."*

Of the refugees interviewed, two (#2 and #6) were directly involved in military actions against the government and were fighters in the Sudanese Liberation Army (part of the Sudanese Liberation Movement, therefore also abbreviated as SLM/A). Interviewee #6 got shot in the leg during a military action against the government army, and was taken to a hospital. After this, he was imprisoned and tortured. However, he never admitted to having fought in the SLM/A. Others (#1, #5, #8 and #9) were involved in the United People's Front (UPF), the political wing of SLM/A, and organized student protests and organized lectures, demonstrations and other actions directed against the government. All of these interviewees have been arrested and imprisoned at least once. As interviewee #1 recalls: *"During the crisis, young people criticized the government. That is how they decided that everybody from Darfur who's a student, they will arrest him. Even now, in 2013. They always arrest students."*

4.2.4. THE JOURNEY TO ISRAEL

Two refugees (#3 and #4) decided to go to Israel while they were still in Sudan, and were planning to ask for protection there. All others indicated their first priority when deciding on leaving the country, was to get away from what many described as the 'Sudanese government'.

From Khartoum, the next destination for all interviewees except one (#9, who has also been in a refugee camp in Ethiopia) was Egypt. All of those interviewed travelled from Khartoum to Cairo by airplane, encountering few difficulties since Sudan and Egypt now have friendly relations and are both in the Arab League. Two interviewees (#3 and #6) mentioned having problems at the airport, in the form of having their passports taken away for a short while and being interrogated about their motives to leave the country. Eventually, though, all reached Cairo relatively easy. Those planning beforehand to come to Israel spent one day up to one month in Cairo making arrangements for their trip to Israel. Experiences after coming to Cairo vary. While some mention staying in Cairo only for one to three days, others stayed there for a period up to three months, or even longer, eight months. The reason some of them stayed in Cairo for a longer time was because they felt relatively safe in Egypt, which didn't urge them to immediately look for another place to go to. Interviewee #7,

a female, stayed in Cairo for 8 months because her father had arranged she could stay with friends of the family that lived there for twelve years already. Meanwhile, her father was arrested and questioned about the whereabouts of his daughter, and eventually died in prison due to torture and the bad conditions of his captivity. The interviewee then had to find a different place to stay, whereas she couldn't provide her host family with financial support anymore. She then was persuaded to go to Israel by a Sudanese acquaintance. Because she was told it was easy to reach by bus, she decided to take this chance and was smuggled by Bedouins.

Others (#1 and #9) recalled feeling very unsafe in Cairo. This was largely due to the 2006 riots in which Sudanese refugees got killed by Egyptian military personnel/policemen. Also, the fact that Egypt and Sudan have diplomatic relations was a reason for some interviewees to quickly move on, for the fear of being deported back to Sudan. All refugees crossed the Israeli border between 2008 and 2011. None of them got hurt themselves while doing so, however, some recalled seeing dead bodies on the way, and four interviewees (#5, #6, #7 and #8) witnessed shooting by the Egyptian police. Upon arrival, all were detained for periods from a week up to four months.

The next chapter, '5. *Israel and Refugees*' will deal with Israel's refugee policies. Subsequently, '6. *Refugees and transnational activism in Israel*', will further elaborate on refugees personal experiences in Israel.

5. ISRAEL AND REFUGEES

"...all this suffering in Israel for the Sudanese, it's okay, compared to Sudan. We'll manage. We're living with the hope that we'll go home, once." (interviewee #9)

This chapter will focus on the circumstances Darfuri refugees find themselves in when living in Israel. It will further elaborate on Israel's policy regarding refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, as well as focus on the contextual setting of Israel's demographics and ethno-national identity. This chapter will also summarize the NGO's that work with and for refugees in Israel. In what way do they influence refugees' situation? Finally, the discourse on refugees in the media, politics and public opinion will be briefly addressed. Investigating these factors will result in a better general understanding of factors that might be of influence in refugees' ability to engage in transnational activism.

5.1. THE STATE OF ISRAEL: IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICIES

5.1.1. ISRAEL'S FOUR BASIC LAWS

When we take a closer look at Israel's history, its establishment as an ethno-national Jewish state and its migration laws, we see a tendency to discourage immigration of non-Jewish people. The State of Israel was founded in 1948, after the 1947 United Nations General Assembly resolution. After centuries of persecution of the Jewish people, reaching a terrible climax in the Second World War, they were granted '*the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State*' (Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, May 14 1948). According to Avi Perry (2010: 157), Israel now uses immigration policy intended to maintain 'a secure, Jewish majority state' to deter African asylum seekers that enter the country through Sinai. Whereas Israel does not have official immigration/asylum policies, it has a body of different laws, the so-called four Basic Laws of Israel. These laws deal with the formation and role of the principal state's institutions, coming from a moral obligation to provide a place of refuge for survivors of the Holocaust and contemporary Jews.

(1) The 1950 'Law of Return' states that every Jew in the world that has at least one Jewish grandparent has the right to come to Israel to settle and acquire citizenship. When someone chooses to immigrate to Israel, this person is called an '*oleh*'.⁸ Although this law includes everyone that shares the same Jewish national and religious identity, there are no procedures to become an Israeli citizen for non-Jews that are not '*eligible*' for citizenship this way (see footnote 1) (Yaron et al., 2013:

⁸ An '*oleh*' ('one who ascends', a Jewish newcomer to the land of Israel), plural '*olim*', is the term to refer to someone who goes through the process of making '*aliyah*' ('to ascend'), and chooses to settle in Israel, coming from another country. This is an assisted immigration and settlement procedure for Jews and eligible non-Jews. Children of a Jewish father are not Jewish, according to Talmudic law, since Judaism is matrilineal. However, 'the child whose father married out of his people can still claim his father's heritage'. (QUOTE?) Other eligible non-Jews can be the grandchild of a Jew, and the spouse of a Jew, or a child or grandchild of a Jew (Law of Return, supra note 5, art. 1, quoted in Kritzman-Amir, 2009: 607).

145).

(2) The Law of Return does not determine Israeli citizenship, this is done through the 'Nationality Law' (1952). Any Jew or eligible non-Jew who comes to Israel has the right to apply for an 'oleh' certificate, and become an Israeli citizen by return, residency, birth and naturalization. However, Palestinians are exempted from acquiring nationality. This *jus sanguinis* citizenship regime displays significant preference for Jews and their relatives and descendents in the acquisition of citizenship. With the exception of temporary migration for employment, which is very restricted by the government, Israel's immigration regime permits immigration almost exclusively to Jews and their relatives (Kritzman-Amir, 2009: 604).

(3) The 1952 'Law of Entry' is meant to regulate the right of non-nationals that are not 'oleh' to enter and reside in Israel. This consists of procedures for acquiring entry visas, and defines on what basis non-nationals can be deported. This law does not address citizenship.

(4) The 1954 'Prevention of Infiltration Law' was adopted after a statement by Moshe Dayan, then-lieutenant general in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), saying: *"No state is as vulnerable as Israel in the configuration of its frontiers, none has such memories of recent aggression, none is beset by the nerve-racking experience of hearing the renewal of aggression repeatedly threatened, none is assailed even now by every form of hostility short of regular warfare..."* (Moshe Dayan, 1955, quoted in Yaron et al., 2013: 145). This law defined the term 'infiltrator' (*mistanen* in Hebrew) to someone who 'entered Israel knowingly and unlawfully', and who was a citizen of Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Trans-Jordan or Yemen, or a resident, visitor or citizen of Palestine who was armed and 'sought to cause death or serious injury to a person'. If someone was considered an infiltrator, one would be tried by a military tribunal and could be imprisoned for five years (*ibid.*, 2013: 145). As we will see in this chapter, the word 'infiltrator' now also is used to address refugees/asylum seekers.

5.1.2. INTERNATIONAL LEGAL OBLIGATIONS VERSUS NATIONAL DISCOURSES

Around the same time the Basic Laws were established, Israel signed an additional series of international conventions and protocols. Israel, as a 'refugee state', was one of the first countries that acceded to the Geneva Convention (1951). According to this Convention, a refugee is described as *"a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."* After this, the Refugee Convention (1954) and the 1967 Protocol to the Refugee Convention were adopted by Israel. This means Israel remains bound by international law regarding Refugee Status Determination (RSD) processes and the treatment of refugees. However, according to Yaron et al., Israel has never incorporated the Refugee Convention into domestic law, and has not translated the Convention into Hebrew, meaning that

many officials remain ignorant of Israel's international obligations (Yaron et al., 2013: 145).

Furthermore, the Jewish refugees that came to Israel to build a home after the Second World War found themselves already protected by the Law of Return and the Nationality Law, so there never was a need for the Convention to be implemented for refugees with a Jewish background. Since its establishment, until 2009, Israel has only granted citizenship to 170 non-Jewish refugees that applied for asylum (Kritzman-Amir, 2009: p. 615). Data explaining on what grounds these applications were successful, however, is not available.

In this light, it is interesting to note that in 2007, PM Olmert granted approximately five hundred refugees temporary residence (Paz, 2011: 12). These refugees came from Darfur, Sudan, and fled their country because of the ongoing genocide. In Israeli newspaper Haaretz, Olmert was quoted saying: *"Israel cannot ignore the refugees' fate, because of the history of the Jewish people"* (Mualem, Haaretz, 05-07-2007). This underlines a claim made by Yonathan Paz (2011), stating the Holocaust is a fundamental social component of Israeli society, with a legacy that's deeply rooted in past and contemporary Israeli identity (Paz, 2011: 12). Humanitarian responses to the initial influx of refugees, therefore, were partially (and arguably) motivated by the shared 'intimacy' of the genocide experiences between Israeli's and Sudanese from Darfur (*ibid.*:13).

This 'holocaust/genocide discourse' is of the three discourses Paz mentions. According to Paz, three discourses are closely intertwined as key pillars of Israeli identity and society. These preoccupations, he states, 'discursively dress' the lives of refugees in Israel (*ibid.*: 7). Apart from this holocaust/genocide discourse, there's also the security discourse. Since its establishment in 1948, the state of Israel has fought eight wars, carried out countless military missions and has had to deal with many terrorist attacks and threats of destruction. Under these conditions, Paz explains, security in Israel cannot be merely dismissed as a social construct, *'but should rather be seen as a pivotal 'societal pillar' that has psychological and social elements, based in Israel's geo-political reality'* (*ibid.*: 8). Third, the ethno-national discourse plays a role. In Israel's 1948 Declaration of Independence, the country is referred to as 'the birthplace of the Jewish people' and their 'ancient homeland'. The 1950 Law of Return adds a distinctive migration regime to this. According to this law, every Jew is allowed to return to the homeland and become a citizen, based on ethno-religious ancestral ties. This legislation constructs a migration regime that defines the particularities of membership claims, and excludes those who do not meet these demands, resulting in structural governmental discrimination against non-Jews (*ibid.*: 10).

Until today, the decisions made regarding asylum—according to Yaron et al. (2013: 146), this policy arena remains undifferentiated from immigration—have had the underlying goal of *'preventing the entry of individuals who threaten Jewish identity and the Jewish character of the state'* (Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, 2012), and thus are strongly influenced by the ethnonational discourse. According to Hadas Yaron et al., the reason why immigration/asylum is handled as an autonomous policy domain in Israel stems from this uneasy juxtaposition and contradictory relationship between

Israeli policies aimed at establishing a Jewish majority state, and Israel's international legal obligations as a signatory in the Refugee Convention (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 144).

Over the past decades, the Israeli government took a series of *ad hoc* decisions on immigration issues, rather than set out a clear policy. Small numbers of refugees from Vietnam, Bosnia and Kosovo were accepted and granted refugee status, as well as a group of South Lebanese soldiers that collaborated with the IDF. An interesting case is that of the Ethiopian Falasha Jews that were brought to Israel in two airlift operations in 1980's and 1990's, to rescue them from the bad humanitarian situation and civil war in Ethiopia (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 144). These decisions, however, were not necessarily made out of altruism. An underlying motive for these operations that is often mentioned might be to counterbalance politically, culturally and demographically the Palestinian population. This is a reason also often mentioned for the post-Soviet influx of Russian Jews, which was highly encouraged by Israel, even though approximately 30 per cent were not Jews (Ben-Eliezer, 2004: 249).

From the early 1950's until 2001, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was responsible for registering and assessing asylum claims made in Israel, after which their recommendations were sent to Israeli officials that made a final decision. The small number of refugees that were recognized as such however, were not allowed to settle in Israel, but required to resettle in a third country. (TABLE?) (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 146).

After a hunger strike by refugees in 2002, this system changed. Israel issued an asylum policy that required UNHCR to register and process asylum applications, applicants were given a UNHCR protection letter and, in most cases, a B-I visa that permits the applicant to work. Furthermore, the UNHCR would send their recommendations on the claim to the National Status Granting Body (NSGB) to decide. When the NSGB approved of an application, individuals were entitled to receiving a temporary residence identity card. However, they were not granted a status of any kind. Also, individuals categorized as citizens of 'enemy states'—this was extended to include Sudan—were excluded from this asylum procedure altogether. Between 2002 and 2005, only 170 applicants were granted refugee status (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 146).

5.1.3. ISRAEL'S ASYLUM POLICY AND ITS CHALLENGES

Clearly, the government was unprepared for the arrival of asylum seekers in 2006, and '*continued to respond by adopting ad hoc, punitive measures, including the deployment of the IDF to prevent 'infiltrators' from entering the country*', and detaining them in detention centers built in the desert (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 149).

In 2006, a large number of Darfuris were pushed out of Egypt due to ongoing police violence towards black Africans, and threats of deportation (Yacobi, 2010: 52). Upon arrival in Israel, they were not treated as individuals in need of protection, but as 'infiltrators', dangerous citizens of an

enemy country who should be arrested, detained and deported under the 1954 Prevention of Infiltration Law. However, legal interventions by human rights organizations and the UNHCR caused the government to release early arrivals into the custody of various kibbutzim.⁹ Those that arrived later were detained for a shorter time and after that released without specific restrictions (Yaron et al., 2013: 148).

In 2007, five hundred Darfuri refugees were granted a temporary residence status, as a response of Minister of Interior Meir Sheetrit to a growing public support for Darfuri 'survivors of genocide' (Yaron et al., 2013: 148). The five hundred refugees were selected based on the date of their entry into Israel, which, according to Yaron et al. (2013: 148), contravenes Israel's obligations to establish procedures that assess individual asylum applications, as determined by the international conventions signed by the state. Refugees that entered after 2007 have not been granted this status, and furthermore, those who were given this temporary protection, had their asylum claims taken out of the RSD system. According to Paz, UNHCR stated that Israel is one of the states that have taken the most refugees from Darfur. However, he mentions, *'this gesture was coupled with a statement [by Prime Minister Olmert] that any further crossing of the border would be considered illegal and that all migrants would be sent back to Egypt under the terms of an agreement with Egyptian authorities'* (Yacobi, 2009: 5). Also, an unwelcome side effect of 'favouring' groups in this manner, is that it creates even more inequality. The South Sudanese, according to Yacobi (2009: 6) felt excluded because they were not granted a more stable status, and for those Darfuri refugees that were not included in this group it must have been especially poignant.

The second—and largest, estimated to be around forty thousand in 2013—group that entered in Israel, the Eritreans, were treated in a similar arbitrary manner. In 2007, an *ad hoc* decision was made to grant temporary work permits (BI visa) to 2000 people. This group was also defined based solely on the date they entered Israel. Also, the authorities refused to access their asylum claims (Yaron et al., 2013: 149).

From 2006 onwards, the UNHCR's role in assessing asylum claims has been diminished, whereas Israel claimed to be able to deal with the issue from a state level. From that year, the UNHCR was

⁹ A kibbutz is a voluntary democratic community where people live and work together on a non-competitive basis. Its aim is to generate an economically and socially independent society founded on principles of communal ownership of property, social justice, and equality. The first kibbutzim (plural of kibbutz) were organized by idealistic young Zionists who came to Palestine in the beginning of the 20th Century, to settle the land and build a new kind of Jewish society. This created a social system and a way of life that has played a crucial role in the development of the State of Israel both culturally and politically. In the early days of the kibbutz movement, all kibbutzim were based on a foundation of agriculture. These days, most kibbutzim have branched out into industry to increase their productivity. Kibbutz factories manufacture a wide variety of products from electronics, furniture, household appliances and plastics to farm machinery and irrigation systems. Today some 270 kibbutzim, varying in size from 80 to over 2,000 people, are scattered throughout Israel. With a total populace of around 120,000 they represent about 2.8 percent of Israel's population. (<http://www.kibbutzprogramcenter.org/about-kibbutz/>)

only allowed to issue a 'protection letter', which states that asylum applicants have been officially registered. The issuing of work permits from that moment got banned altogether, which makes it difficult for individuals to survive (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 149). However, until now, working in building and cleaning is often condoned for African asylum seekers, which places them in a vulnerable position that makes it easy to be exploited. Often they don't get paid a salary that meets official Israeli standards, or they have to work more hours a day than is legally allowed. Also, since they don't get officially hired by an employer, it's easy to 'fire' them without any prior notice (data retrieved from interviews with Darfuri refugees).

After the government assumed ownership of the RSD system in 2007, the Ministry of Interior issued 'conditional release' visas to Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers. These visas were valid for three months, while they waited for their claims to be assessed. However, in reality, it turns out that those with conditional release visa still have to renew this every three months, with nothing happening to their claims, and no status determination whatsoever (data retrieved from interviews with Darfuri refugees). Since 2010, these visas bear a stamp that says 'this is not a working permit'. This sends a message to prospective employers that hiring visa holders is not legal. Those that do hire asylum seekers risk having to pay a high fine, although, at the time, this was not checked often. However, asylum applicants struggle to support themselves by working illegal, irregular and low paid work, and rely on the support of friends, relatives and NGO's (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 149).

In 2008, the government established a new asylum registration unit, and transformed Ktzi'ot prison into a detention centre for 'infiltrators'. In the same year, a new 'Anti-Infiltration Bill' was issued, and passed into law in early 2012. This bill replaces the 1954 'Prevention of Infiltration Law', and includes harsher penalties, including detention without trial for three years¹⁰ (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 149). In the same year, the government developed a plan to restrict asylum seekers' movements within the state of Israel, and mark specified areas, such as Tel Aviv, as a 'no go area'. This violates Article 26 of the Refugee Convention on Freedom of Movement, which says that: *'Each Contracting State shall accord to refugees lawfully in its territory the right to choose their place of residence to move freely within its territory, subject to any regulations applicable to aliens generally in the same circumstances.'*¹¹ These plans, dubbed the 'north to Hadera, south to Gedera' policy (or 'Hadera-Gedera', as NGO's often refer to), would prohibit asylum seekers to enter the Gush Dan district, the central area of Israel in which Tel Aviv is also located. This would also prevent asylum seekers from accessing legal advice and assistance from NGO's, since most of their offices are located in the capital. In response to a court case filed by several human rights organizations in mid-2006, the Ministry withdrew this policy.

¹⁰ Three years is the time that Eritreans and other African 'infiltrators' face in detention centers, citizens of an 'enemy state' like Sudan are imprisoned indefinitely (data retrieved through internship at Amnesty International Israel).

¹¹ UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol relating to the status of refugees* (1951 & 1967), article 26.

In 2011, Tel Aviv University Law Clinic and Hotline for Migrant Workers challenged the practice of 'hot returns' in court, and Amnesty International Israel campaigned against this. Under the rubric of hot returns, the IDF denied African asylum seekers entry at the border, or when they did manage to cross, forced them back across the border. The Egyptian military has periodically shot, arrested and detained individuals attempting to cross the border, but refused to police it. On the Sinai peninsula, bordering Israel, Bedouin smugglers traffic African refugees, often kidnapping them and holding and torturing them for ransom. When pushing asylum seekers back, the IDF did not assess their asylum claims, and did not have assurances from the Egyptian government about their treatment. Clearly, this practice of hot returns violates Article 33 of the Refugee Convention against *refoulement*, saying: "*No Contracting State shall expel or return ('refouler') a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.*" However, the petition issued against these practices was denied in July 2011, because a state attorney said hot returns no longer occur (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 149). Yaron *et al.* state that, despite this claim, there is evidence hot returns still occur—although the scale on which this takes place remains unclear.

Furthermore, the fact that the government does not publish its decisions remains problematic. It does not provide reasons why individual asylum claims—with positive recommendations by UNHCR—are rejected. Which criteria are used to determine the identity of Africans held at registration units are also undisclosed. It was not until a legal petition put pressure on the government, before the Ministry of Interior revealed that in 2008-2009 only three individuals out of the 3000 cases it reviewed were granted asylum, and that during 2010-2011 the government approved one claim while rejecting 3692 other claims (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 150). Worldwide, however, the recognition rate of refugees from Eritrea is 84% and 64% for Sudanese refugees—in general, including Darfuri's. This shows that many of the applicants do have a valid claim for asylum. The RSD process, now entirely in hands of officials, is deeply flawed, and contravenes international law in many respects. It does not provide a fair assessment of asylum claims (*ibid.*:151).

Also, under a construction called 'voluntary returns', many refugees that are held in detention centers have been sent back to their home countries without having their asylum applications assessed, in violation of Article 33 of the Refugee Convention (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 150).

The choice the detained asylum seekers face is between being imprisoned for an undisclosed time, or receiving a big sum of money—for African standards—of 3500 dollar¹², which makes it hard to make an objective decision.

After they return, they are not monitored. A group of South Sudanese for example, was sent back after the independence of South Sudan in 2011. The then Interior Minister Eli Yishai initiated an operation called Chozrim HaBayita ('Going Home'), with the goal to send several planes with asylum

¹² This sum has recently been raised from 1500 to 3500 dollar, according to Bloemendaal in De Volkskrant (18-12-2013) and Peretz in Haaretz (12-01-2014).

seekers to Juba. Exact numbers are unclear, but NGO's believe at least thousand people were deported. However, the majority of them have not been in touch with NGO's, friends or relatives in Israel after they returned, and often their whereabouts are unknown. Ma'ariv newspaper reported in June 2013 that at least 22 of those deported died because of malaria, drinking contaminated water and inadequate medical attention (UNHCR, 05-06-2013).

On several occasions, the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) has publicly denounced these returns, claiming the 'voluntary departure' procedure cannot be applied to asylum seekers who are held in detention facilities (Efraim, 06-08-2013, Ynet News).

In line with the implementation of the Anti-Infiltration Law, Saharonim detention center—built in the Negev desert, close to Ktzi'ot prison in 2004—was expanded to be able to hold an increasing number of 'infiltrators'. Its initial capacity of a few hundred multiplied, and in September 2012 it was able to hold three thousand 'infiltrators'.

Apart from detention, deterrence also plays an important role in the way Israel deals with the influx of refugees. In January 2013, Israel finished the construction of a 214-kilometer long 'smart fence', equipped with cameras and motion detectors, along the border with Egypt. In contrast to the thousands of asylum seekers that entered in the previous years, in 2013, only approximately twenty made it across the border (interview D, Dijana Mujkanovic, Amnesty International Israel, 07-12-2013). Prime Minister Netanyahu's rationale for these measures reflect his desire 'to secure Israel's Jewish and democratic character' as Yaron *et al.* (2013: 149) quote his statements in *The Guardian* ('Israel to build surveillance fence along Egyptian border', 21-11-2010).

Several Israeli NGO's, including Amnesty International Israel and Hotline for Migrant Workers, started a court case in order to dismiss the Anti-Infiltration Law. In September of that year, the Supreme Court struck down the law, stating it was unconstitutional to detain refugees without assessing their asylum claims. Throughout the case, the Ministry of Interior claimed that Israel was busy making arrangements for refugees to be sent to a 'third country'—which in Israeli media was widely reported to be Uganda. Uganda was believed to take in a number of African refugees from Israel, in exchange for money. Ugandan politicians however have always denied the existence of such a deal (Pfeffer & Lior, Haaretz, 29-08-2013). The criminal protocol, that allowed for refugees to be put in administrative detention when they were suspected of a crime, got cancelled as well. The Supreme Court ordered for the state to release all detainees, about two thousand, within 90 days. This did not happen, and although the Supreme Court disapproved of the fact that the state violated this order, this did not have any consequences.

In December 2013, the Knesset approved an amendment to the Anti-Infiltration Law, it now allows for the detention of migrants who enter the country illegally for up to a year without trial,

instead of the initial three years that were written down in an earlier version of the law that the Supreme Court struck down.

Also, in the same month, five hundred refugees held in detention got transferred to a so-called 'open center' named Holot, meaning 'sands' in Hebrew. This new construction is built right next to Saharonim, and should be able to hold up to eight thousand male refugees in the future.¹³ In this center, the state will provide them with food, and they will have access to education and health care. Also, refugees will be able to move freely to and from the center. However, they will have to 'check in' three times a day, and will be sent back to Saharonim detention center when they fail to do so for 'violating the security rules'. Furthermore, according to Amnesty International Israel (AAI) spokesperson Dijana Mujkanovic, the centers are clearly not 'open', as they are built in the middle of the Negev desert with a fence around it, and there's no way refugees can really go anywhere. The open center is surrounded by unwelcoming settlements, no buses stop nearby, and by the time they reach the nearest city, they have to go back to check in again. Furthermore, in these centers, refugees can be held 'indefinitely', meaning there are no limits to the time they will have to spend there, without having their asylum claims assessed. When in December 2013 two hundred refugees walked from Holot to Jerusalem, 150 kilometers by foot in a protest march, they were arrested by the migration police and those that were outside of the center for longer than 48 were not sent back to Holot but imprisoned again in Saharonim. Prime Minister Netanyahu defended the policy, saying: *"We're determined to enforce the law. The infiltrators transferred to the special detainment facility can either stay there or go back to their home countries."*¹⁴

In a press release published in early 2014, the UNHCR said that in principle it supports establishing a residence facility for asylum seekers, but not in its current incarnation at Holot. *"I am particularly disquieted about the purpose of the so-called 'open' residence facility in Holot which, in its current form and despite its designation as 'open,' would appear to operate as a detention center from where there is no release. This means in effect indefinite detention,"* UNHCR representative Walpurga Englbrecht was quoted by Haaretz newspaper (Lior, Haaretz, 06-01-2014).

Mujkanovic mentions there's rumours spreading that after all detainees in Saharonim are transferred to Holot, the migration police will start to 'collect' the Sudanese to put them in the center as well. Their numbers are smaller, and therefore, this would make it easier for them to be sent back. Facing this despair, it's tempting to accept the 'voluntary return' agreement, and be sent back to Sudan with 3500 dollar. This sum was increased at the end of 2013, to encourage more returns (Peretz, 12-01-2014, Haaretz). According to Mujkanovic, planes with Sudanese leave every week, although there are no official statistics on this. The 'scare tactics' the government carries out seem to have the effect they hoped for. However, there is no initiative for 'monitoring' those that

¹³ Male refugees were the first that were told to report to the center. According to Haaretz newspaper, despite assurances given by the Interior Ministry that men with families would not be included in the summoned group, several men with wives and children said they had been ordered to show up (Lior, 31-12-2013, Haaretz).

¹⁴ Ad Bloemendaal in De Volkskrant, 18-12-2013, 'De woestijn ingestuurd door Israël'.

returned to their home country, so their fate is unknown.

Paz (2001, 5) warns that the government's incorporation of deterrence measures alongside some accommodating procedures should not just be seen as a result of Israel's inexperience dealing with asylum seekers: *"The tension between Israel's democratic structures, backed by its international commitments, and the state's attempts to shape technologies of power which control and limit entrance to its territory, is expressed in a response to asylum seekers that can be understood as 'ordered disorder'"* (ibid.). Paz argues that, behind this ostensible chaos or unruliness lies an 'ordering principle' which aims to deliver a clear message of 'no-entry' and deterrence.

5.2. ISRAELI ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESSING REFUGEES

Governmental policies that focus on providing humanitarian help have been very limited, especially after the massive influx of refugees after 2006 and the negative response to this by politicians and the Israeli public (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 148). Since the 1980's, the number of NGO's in Israel started to increase, but they were weak and closely aligned with the government. Migrants that arrived in the 1990's often were organized into churches, and since migrant community organizations were not assisted by civil society organizations they provided only limited support (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 147).

Yaron *et al.* (2013: 147) see a causal link between the influx of refugees, the development of a 'refugee sector' and the failure of the government to establish clear, consistent and publicly accountable asylum procedures and policies facilitating the integration of refugees (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 147). This causal link, according to Yaron *et al.*, implies that the absence of a system that takes care of the basic needs of asylum seekers/refugees in Israel led to the development of NGO's, who sought to provide practical support and services. These NGO's provide levels of support, varying between social services, legal advice, medical assistance, shelter, access to food and child care. However, there's inexperience, a structural absence of funding, and the xenophobic attitude of Israelis, who see Africans as a threat to the nation and/or as 'labour infiltrators' (Paz, 2011: 10-12). It is against this background, Yaron notes, that NGO efforts to assist asylum seekers must be assessed (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 147). This section will address a number of these NGO's.¹⁵

5.2.1. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ISRAEL

The Israeli branch of the worldwide human rights advocacy organization Amnesty International has a department called the Refugee Rights Campaign. For this campaign, AAI works together with other

¹⁵ Another organization that plays an active role in improving refugees' conditions is ASSAF. However, no interview was conducted, due to a lack of response to interview requests. ASSAF was founded in 2007, provides psychosocial support to refugees and promotes the rights of refugees in their encounters with the state authorities.

Apart from this, it should be mentioned that there is several smaller grass roots organizations in Israel that address their own community, like Bnei Darfur ('Sons of Darfur') and a number of other Sudanese and (Christian) Eritrean organizations. They operate on community level, and are less structured than organizations that seek international attention. Also, they are less consistent and organizations 'come and go'. For those reasons, these organizations have not been interviewed for this research.

branches of Amnesty International, for example in the S.O.S. Europe campaign, addressing the rights of refugees that try to reach Europe by boat. In Israel, this campaign focuses most on advocating refugee rights by activism and education. Since 2008, its main target group has been the increasing number of refugees from African countries. By improving refugees' knowledge of their own rights, AAI hopes to increase the level of 'refugee activism' in Israel.

Since 2011, AAI each year organizes several free Human Rights Course programmes in different Israeli cities. The programme consists of one workshop a week, for twelve weeks in a row. By focusing on a different theme every week, AAI aims to improve refugees' knowledge of their rights as a non-acknowledged refugee in the state of Israel. Topics that are addressed are, for example, the history and political system of Israel, health rights in Israel, education rights in Israel and the difference in gender roles between their countries of origin and Israel. The final two workshops in the Human Rights Course focus on activism, teaching refugees different methods to address their needs and their community's needs. For example, demonstrations are organized, demanding a government policy that grants refugee rights and a RSD system that meets general international standards. Furthermore, a group of female Eritrean participants expressed the need for a place where women can come together and organize language courses. This led to the founding of the Eritrean Women's Center, which doubles as a daycare center, allowing more women to work, leaving their children in their own community. Some of the refugees I spoke to expressed the desire for a center like this, because they share a wish to go back to their home country, and don't want their children to be estranged when they do so. In initiatives like these, AAI helps with (attracting) funding and logistics. Also, AAI is one of the organizations petitioning against the unjust government policies, and filing the court case against the Anti-Infiltration Law.

5.2.2. AFRICAN REFUGEE DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Annelie de Boer, spokesperson of the African Refugee Development Center (ARDC), explains that ARDC was founded by a refugee from Ethiopia, as a grassroots organization. When increasing numbers of refugees made their way to Israel, many of them did not know where to go, upon release from the detention centers. They ended up sleeping outside in Levinsky Park, in south Tel Aviv, an area with a lower socio-economic status than other parts of the city. All these refugees received was a bus ticket to Tel Aviv, but the government did not offer any further assistance. Those that were in the country a bit longer already, and thus more 'established', took it upon themselves to help the newcomers (interview A, Annelie de Boer, ARDC, 15-08-2013). ARDC hosts a shelter for vulnerable women refugees, but also helps refugees with filing asylum claims, access to (language) education and resettlement procedures to, for example, family in Canada. Apart from this, the organization issues reports on Israel's way of dealing with refugees, and receives funding from UNHCR and several other international (Jewish) organizations.

5.2.3. HOTLINE FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

The Hotline for Migrant Workers (Hotline) was established in 1998 by a group of likeminded Israelis that realized the human rights of migrant workers were often violated, and the state did not do anything to counter this. Sigal Rozen, one of Hotline's founders, explains that people were often detained without a process, for the sole reason they didn't have the right documents. Hotline would conduct prison visits, and make sure that they would at least receive their last salary, or make sure that husbands and wives could be deported together. Gradually, the organization also started to focus on policy change by meeting with parliament members, and starting a legal department. Over the years, the changing composition of the detainees the organization sees in detention centers mirrors the current migration influx. Rozen recalls first seeing predominantly migrant workers from African and Asian countries, then trafficking victims from the former Soviet Union out of the sex industry, after that Chinese workers, and since 2006 the population in the detention centers mainly consists of African refugees (interview B, Sigal Rozen, Hotline, 29-08-2013).

Hotline is one of several NGO's that played a major role in challenging the government's asylum policy by their engagement in strategic litigation against the state. Yaron *et al.* note that in 1999 and 2000, Hotline for Migrant Workers has provided para-legal support to 8.000 migrants, 800 trafficked persons and large numbers of refugees held in detention centers (Hotline report, 2009). The organisation has initiated hundreds of judicial reviews and legal petitions seeking the release of detained migrants and asylum seekers. By doing so, they advocate policy change (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 147). Also, there's the Tel Aviv University Law Clinic, established in 2002. This clinic focuses on providing legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers, and promotes research in order to advance the reform of Israeli law and policy (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 147). Law students volunteer in this clinic, and mainly help refugees/asylum seekers with conflicts related to work rights or health rights. However, Yaron *et al.* (2013: 147) note, there is only a handful of lawyers engaged in asylum/immigration litigation, of which most are relatively inexperienced. This, for a part, explains why litigation seeking to prevent the deportation of Africans seeking asylum has been unsuccessful (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 147). By expanding its litigation, the refugee sector has successfully challenged the decisions taken by officials on the cases of individual migrants/refugees. Their work is aimed at getting Israel to adopt policies which comply with her international legal obligations and has also been taken up in high level discussions between the Ministry of Interior, UNHCR and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (Yaron *et al.*, 2013: 147). As Rozen puts it: "*At first, Hotline was trying to promote good legislation. Now we're mainly focusing on preventing harmful legislation*" (interview B, Sigal Rozen, Hotline, 29-08-2013).

Moreover, Sigal Rozen illustrates how Hotline's work has been affected by government restrictions. Until 2008, when Hotline visited detention centers, they encountered few problems. They would be allowed to enter with a group of translators and usually got the chance to talk to every detainee that required attention. In 2008 however, Hotline filed a petition against the prison

authorities, concerning the conditions in which children are held in detention centers. As a result, Hotline was banned from visiting the detention centers and it took six months before their access was granted again. Since then, Hotline 's access to the prisons is very limited. They cannot visit a ward and see whomever they want, but need to submit a name and prison number beforehand, with a limit of 10 people. This person is brought to a special room to see the Hotline team, and the team doesn't get to see the conditions in the wards anymore. Rozen expresses her concern about this: people that need assistance might not know about Hotline, and/or might not be able to get in touch with the organization. Rozen adds that the criticism in the report was not even directed towards the prison authorities themselves: *'They are not the ones deciding to put children behind bars, that's the government. And also, as a result of the petition, the prison authorities received more budget from the government to improve the situation.'* (interview B, Sigal Rozen, Hotline, 29-08-2013).

De Boer also mentions the influence of the governments ever changing policies on ARDC's work: Refugees that have entered the country before the implementation of the Anti-Infiltration Law, in July 2012, were put under group protection, but those that came after were put in detention facilities. Those of the latter group that are released from the facilities on humanitarian or medical grounds are eligible for Refugee Status Determination. The same goes for those that came prior to July 2012, but were detained because they were suspected to engage in criminal activities and released. Even if they initially entered the country before July 2012, after imprisonment they fall under the Anti-Infiltration Law. Those groups cannot obtain a visa, De Boer states, and are deprived of the most basic human rights like access to health care (interview A, Annelie de Boer, ARDC, 15-08-2013).

5.2.4. PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ISRAEL

Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI) was initially founded in 1988 by a group of doctors, working mainly on Palestinian issues by running a mobile clinic that provided immediate treatment and humanitarian help in the Palestinian territories. Shahr Shoham, spokesperson of PHRI's Statusless Persons Department, explains that this was a response to a government that didn't take sufficient measures to provide medical care to the population of the Palestinian territories. Also, it was a response to human rights violations towards Palestinians in general, and a protest against the occupation Israel carried out. Today, PHRI still focuses on humanitarian work and advocacy with these principals at the core of their work. However, this organization also saw the target group of its mobile clinic change with the influx of refugees since 2006, when the influx of Sudanese refugees started. Shoham recalls: *"Circumstances for these people were dramatic, since living conditions for them were extremely poor. Some of them had to live in Levinsky Park, others moved into derelict shelters, improvised by refugees that came to the country earlier. This greatly affected the health of many refugees, diseases started to spread and the numbers of those requiring medical attention exceeded PHRI's capacities."* (interview C, Shahr Shoham, PHRI, 22-08-2013). In protest against the lack of government concern,

PHRI shut down its clinic for two months. Refugees showing up at the clinic were brought to general hospitals by bus, which put a lot of pressure on the hospitals, and in turn sent a signal to the government. Unfortunately, Shoham recalls, this didn't have the result PHRI wished for. PHRI was aiming for the government to give refugees access to the public health care system in a social residency construction—a status of residency for welfare and social services, but without full citizenship. However, the government ignored this, and started a clinic similar to the one PHRI operates to deal with the situation. The reason the government did this, according to Shoham, was only because they wanted to prevent people from going to the emergency rooms of regular hospitals, which costs more money (interview C, Shahar Shoham, PHRI, 22-08-2013).

De Boer also shares this experience of slow government adaptation to the changing situation, and fears that NGO's involvement might even have a negative effect on the governments willingness to deal with the issue on a state level. *"The fact that ARDC attended to a need for humanitarian support, rather than the government, might also have contributed to the fact that the government, until now, hardly has instituted any facilities for refugees"* (interview A, Annelie de Boer, ARDC, 15-08-2013).

ARDC's activities changed with the influx of refugees, and depend on the very changeable government policies. However, De Boer, who feels she's playing the devil's advocate for putting things in perspective, stresses that the 'refugee problem' is still very young. It is only since the last six years that refugees entered Israel *en masse*, she mentions, and therefore Israel's policy in this field still need to be adjusted and improved. In some cases, during the RSD process the responsible department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asks ARDC for advice. So even though there's no collaboration as equal partners, De Boer states, this is an improvement to the situation a few years earlier (interview A, Annelie de Boer, ARDC, 15-08-2013).

Both Rozen and Shoham express hope that the border fence that is built against migrants entering the country from the south will enable sort of discourse about the situation. *"When there's no new refugees arriving, hopefully the hysteria will die down. Hopefully, the public and politicians will realize that these people will be around for a little longer, and that they should make the best of it,"* Shoham states. Rozen mentions that seeing less to no new 'infiltrators' entering the country will likely calm down the current frenzy, with media speaking of 'million' infiltrators, and ease the public opinion on refugees. *'Hopefully'*, Rozen adds, *'this could even lead to legalization of the situation for refugees, and give them an actual refugee status. But I warn you, I'm the optimistic one in the gang'* (interview C, Shahar Shoham, PHRI, 22-08-2013 and B, Sigal Rozen, Hotline, 29-08-2013). However, the fact remains that, even if the situation for those already in Israel might improve, there's still many African refugees trying to get in, and getting denied at the border. Dijana Mujkanovic, Amnesty International Israel's Refugee Active Participation coordinator, mentions that AAI is not necessarily against the fence in itself, since it is allowed by international law. However, she states, *"you can not just refuse people at the fence when they claim they're asylum seekers. AAI campaigns against the way Israel refuses people. We don't know what*

happens to those that don't get in—we assume death rate in Sinai increased over the year, but there's no numbers on that" (interview D, Dijana Mujkanovic, AAI, 07-12-2013). With the unstable situation in Egypt, however, it is unlikely that this problem will be addressed any time soon.

5.2.5. 'OTHERING'

The long term solution PHRI is campaigning for is that the state of Israel develops a migration policy for non-Jews, including a transparent asylum system (interview C, Shahar Shoham, PHRI, 22-08-2013). However, Shoham mentions she feels PHRI increasingly is being judged on the fact that they work on Palestinian issues and with refugees: *"We are approached as part of the problem, and we often hear it's the human rights organizations fault that refugees come to Israel, because it's these organizations that give them services."* Also, she mentions, the public opinion has been influenced by the top-down government discourse regarding 'infiltrators'. The continuous repetition of the security discourse by the government has influenced the way people see refugees. The media plays an additional role in the shaping of this negative attitude, according to Shoham because newspapers in general have shifted to the right side of the political spectrum, and almost all media outlets have adopted the biased term 'mistananim', infiltrators (interview C, Shahar Shoham, PHRI, 22-08-2013).

Rozen acknowledges this problem, stating that it is a problem many decision makers keep on speaking of 'millions of black Africans', sometimes even referring to 'black Muslim Africans'—even though the vast majority of refugees are Christian. Language plays an important part, she says. Often strong military terms like 'conquer', 'take over' and 'occupy' are used in relation to the refugees entering the country. Rozen feels this is done on purpose, to scare the public, and gain support for radical policies (interview B, Sigal Rozen, Hotline, 29-08-2013).

This dialogue of public and government keeps reinforcing each other, and as we see in Paz's theory on the use of language: *"First, the language is shaped in inescapable but unpredictable terms as something which must be resisted. Second, it dehumanises its subjects while shaping their presence as a threat. Third, it relies on an 'us versus them' dichotomy"* (Paz, 2011: 14). Wodak's (2003: 133) studies of rhetoric of exclusion in political discourse also link to this. The use of political discourse and communication are fundamentally based on distinguishing between 'us' and 'them', which revolves around a positive self-presentation, and a negative presentation of the opponent. Wodak refers to this as 'rhetoric of exclusion'. This dichotomy allows for identification with the 'in-group', in the case of Israel, those who share a Jewish identity and shared historical narrative. The 'out-group' is characterized negatively, with refugees being called 'infiltrators'. It is common, according to Wodak, that this is used to blame the out-group for certain social phenomena, and to convince voters or listeners of 'necessary' political measures, such as restricting immigration and legitimizing such restrictions (Wodak, 2003: 133). Migrants, in this way, are constructed as scapegoats. They are blamed for unemployment, for causing general dissatisfaction, for abusing social welfare systems or are more generally perceived as a threat to 'our' culture (Wodak, 2011: 64).

Ironically, this often contradicts the democratic traditions and values of many nation states. Israel, as a refugee state that was one of the first to sign the 1952 Refugee Convention, now sees a new wave of non-Jewish refugees as a threat to the Jewish identity of the state.

6. REFUGEES AND TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM IN ISRAEL

This chapter aims to give an answer to the research question: *'Does the Darfuri diaspora community in Israel try to exert influence on the situation in Darfur?'* based on the interviews carried out with Darfuri refugees in Israel. On a daily basis, are they very occupied by the conflict in Darfur? Do they try to influence it? If so, how, and if not, why? And in what way do they feel they are influenced by the circumstances in Israel? Looking at this research question in relation to the previous chapter on Israeli policies, we will also be able to answer the question: *'What obstacles exist for the Sudanese diaspora community to influence the home situation?'*

6.1. REFUGEE POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN ISRAEL

Although this chapter focuses on refugees' transnational activism, we will first focus on political activism in Israel. Understanding political activism in the host country is a prerequisite for understanding how refugees can engage in transnational activism, since these two are closely intertwined. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the position of Darfuri refugees in Israel is problematic. That's why, in order to be able to engage in transnational activism directed towards their home country, it might be necessary to first improve their position in their host country. This section will highlight this. Interviewee #5 explains: *"Many people here are having a problem addressing the issue in Sudan because they need to fight for their rights [in Israel] first, because they need to live first, and then fight for others' rights. Because if you can't eat, than you can't help someone else. Many people are desperate and helpless."*

6.1.1. COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

Apart from the NGO's mentioned in chapter 5, it should be mentioned that Darfuri refugees themselves managed to start a grassroots NGO called B'nai Darfur (Sons of Darfur). The earlier mentioned African Refugee Development Center, originally founded by an Ethiopian refugee, is now for the largest part run by Israeli and international staff. B'nai Darfur was founded in 2007 by a group of imprisoned Darfuri's to advance their community (and communities from other African countries). The organization still is largely in the community's hands, although they receive help from Israeli's and internationals in coordinating, teaching and funding. B'nai Darfur provides food, helps to those searching for a job or housing, and runs a shelter for the homeless.

Interviewee #7 used to run the women's programme at this organization, which for example organized language courses in English and Hebrew for women, as well as computer courses. She was motivated to do so by her own experience of arriving to Israel. When she was released from the detention center, she got a bus ticket and arrived in Tel Aviv without a clue on where to go. Sudanese refugees she met in Levinsky Park soon helped her out, and that way, she became involved

in B'nai Darfur. However, she mentions, *"...most of them [women taking part in courses] are working a lot. Some of them, they say, we need to study, but we also need someone who can handle the children at home. But when the husband is working, and he is coming late, they're not having time. But like, women, they want to do this thing."*

Another organization that focuses on community activism is Youngster's Dreams, and is run entirely by Darfuri refugees. This organization provides language and computer courses for refugees in Tel Aviv and Eilat, and like B'nai Darfur, also runs 'help centers' that provide food and services. Youngster's Dreams cooperates with local and international NGO's, and also engages in transnational activism. The organization is active in four Darfuri refugee camps in Chad. Apart from teaching children in the camps, clothes and school supplies that are collected in Israel are shipped to Chad and distributed in the camps, in cooperation with the UNHCR.

Furthermore, the Israeli fraction of the SLM/A rebel movement reportedly has regular meetings to update the community on the current status of the conflict. According to interviewee #9, SLM/A's main goals and priorities are to turn Sudan into a democratic, liberal and inclusive secular state that separates religion from politics. He adds: *"Because Sudan, since it was independent, it was announced as an Arab Islamic state. This is the root cause of these problems."* Interviewees #1, #2, #5, #8, #9 are very active in this branch, and attend and organize meetings. Interviewee #1 explains SLM/A's activities in Israel: *"...the main goal is, first of all, we are organizing people to be in touch with the problem in their country. That's one thing. Second thing is, everybody feels like he has to do something. So we are the only ones that are in facilitation, in educational things, if they want to [...] understand what the problem is. Why is this happening [in Darfur], what will be the solution?"* According to interviewee #2, in Ashdod, weekly meetings are organized that often attract around 400 SLM/A members. During these meetings, they talk about the conflict, and how they can help. The numbers that attend SLM/A meetings in other cities are unknown, but according to the interviewees actively engaged in the movement, although not everyone attends the meetings, 'almost a 100 per cent' of the Darfuri refugees in Israel support the movement (interviewee #5).

Interviewee #1 describes the SLM/A branch in Israel as a network that covers all Israeli cities, and believes almost all Darfuri's in Israel are involved in SLM/A activities: *"It's very well organized, and I think almost everybody is involved. You have central offices, and in every city there's an independent office. They have meetings there, and then there's big meetings in the central office."* Interviewee #9 states that every town or city with more than 10 SLM/A members can start their own office. Also, the office is 'always open' and is a popular meeting point.

Although the active SLM/A members claim almost every Darfuri refugee is involved in the movement, not everyone is equally informed on the movement's actions. Interviewee #4, a 21-year old Darfuri, tells he is an SLM/A member, and is 'sometimes' involved in activities. He goes to major meetings, but knows that there are also smaller meetings that he is not invited to. He expresses that

there is a lot of things he doesn't know, because they are secret. However, he expressed that he thinks the SLM/A is the only organization that actually tries to help the people in the camps in Darfur.

6.1.2. ACTIVISM DIRECTED TOWARDS ISRAEL

Apart from activism that aims to directly improve the position of their own community, Darfuri refugees also engage in awareness-raising activism that addresses the Israeli public. Groups of Darfuri's that participated in Amnesty International Israel's Human Rights Course started to have their own weekly activist meetings, coordinated by AAI. Several campaigns were launched that addressed Israeli citizens, for example a poster campaign that showed Sudanese refugees, saying 'refugee, not infiltrator' in Hebrew. Another campaign that was carried out consisted of a declaration, written by Sudanese refugees themselves, explaining why they left Sudan, why they came to Israel, that they would leave after peace comes to Darfur, and that there was no need for Israeli citizens to be afraid. These letters were put in the mailboxes of all of their neighbours. Many refugees believe that first, the public opinion towards refugees should change, since they feel it is impossible to change the government's attitude. The government has allowed refugees to demonstrate for refugee rights on several occasions. However, it is hard to tell whether these actions had any effect. Some newspapers reported on it, but not all in a positive way.

Another initiative worth mentioning is the annual 'Darfur Day'. On April 25, 2013, Sudanese refugees in Israel organized the 10th edition on Rabin Square in Tel Aviv. This event commemorates the genocide in Darfur and combines musical performances, theatre and speeches by both community members and spokespeople of NGO's. By doing so, refugees hope to raise awareness of the Israeli public for the ongoing conflict—and thus, the reason they're in Israel. Apart from the Darfuri's living in Tel Aviv, buses with refugees also came from the cities of Ashdod and Jerusalem, arranged by the community itself.

Until recently, apart from short and ineffective hunger strikes in Saharonim detention center in June 2013, no large-scale protests took place within the African refugee community. At the time of writing this research however, events occurred that journalist Roy Arad in Haaretz newspaper referred to as 'the first large civil protest of its kind African migrants' (Arad, Haaretz, 16-12-2013). In December 2013, a group of about two hundred refugees that were transferred to the Holot open center started a two-day march by foot to Jerusalem to protest against their situation in front of the governmental buildings (*ibid.*). Upon arrival in Jerusalem, most were taken back to either Holot, or were detained in Saharonim. This action however sparked solidarity protests by the broader refugee community and sympathizing Israeli's. In early 2014, a week-long strike took place in the refugee community, during which, at its peak, 25.000 people took to the streets. After former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's death on the 11th of January 2014, the strike was briefly suspended, but continued

again after three days. According to Haaretz newspaper,

'the strikers demanded that the new addition to the Anti-Infiltration Law be nullified, that the police cease arresting migrants, that those being held under the new law be released, and that the government reexamine the requests for asylum filed by Eritreans and Sudanese. The strike drastically affected many businesses, primarily restaurants, cafes, hotels and cleaning services' (Lior, Haaretz, 13-01-2014).

However, Prime Minister Netanyahu quickly turned to the media and stated that protests and strikes won't help to change government policy: *"I would like to clarify that we aren't talking about refugees with whom we deal according to international treaties; we are discussing illegal migrant workers, who will be brought to justice,"* then adding *"During 2013, we deported 2,600 infiltrators, which is six times more than we did the previous year. Next year we will deport more – This is our commitment and we are acting according to it."* (Lior, Haaretz, 06-01-2013).

Protests and strikes are ongoing, and at the moment of writing it is still unclear whether this had any effect.

6.2. TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL ACTIVISM: OBSTACLES AND ENABLING FACTORS

As this quote from interviewee #5 illustrates, some are tired of fighting for their refugee rights, whereas it feels like nothing is changing. For some, this might lead to a lack of ambition to do anything, while for others, this increases the drive to address the problems in the home country: *"...after my five years of being in Israel, fighting for refugee rights without results, I'm not gonna fight anymore. What I'm doing now, is for my country. If I do something there, I'm not going to be a refugee anymore [because he hopes to go back to Sudan if there will be peace]. That's the main reason I have to fight for refugees."* Darfuri refugees engage in transnational political activism in several ways, which will be highlighted in this section.

6.2.1. EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

One of the ways in which refugees feel they can contribute to the situation in their homeland, is by the exchange of information. All interviewees state they think about the conflict constantly, and also, each one of them is in touch with friends or relatives that stayed in Darfur, or now are in refugee camps. However, this often proves to be problematic whereas phone networks are bad, and internet is only available in Khartoum (interviewee #1).

Interviewee #5, who is very active in the Israel-based SLM/A fraction, states: *"I don't call them [people in Sudan/Darfur] through straight phone, because it's risky for those that are there [in Sudan]. For example, my dad was in prison for two years and a half, just because I'm in Israel. So I can't call them by*

phone¹⁶ [...] ...another problem we have, we don't have internet access like in Israel, in displaced camps. So we can't call them through Skype. But there's a way to call them. You can buy credit by internet, and go on Skype, and call straight phone numbers from Skype. That's the way to do it."

When asked who he is still in touch with, he states he does not talk to relatives much, but mostly talks to fellow SLM/A members: "[...] I am in touch with them because I'm still doing my activities. Not with those in the camps, but those who are in the field. The fighters, rebels, separationists, I'm in touch with them." Other interviewees (#1, #2, #6, #8 and #9) more or less stated the same, however, they would not disclose what exactly was exchanged with those in the field, except for the general term 'information'. Interviewee #2 often receives phone calls from Sudan, and once hinted that these are updates on the advances of the SLM/A military. Interviewee #8 mentions that: "It's easier to change the situation when you are in Sudan, but we're here. We support them with the ideas as good as we can, and in different ways we provide information." He mentioned that the worldwide SLM/A fractions provided the military on the ground in Sudan with information that might be harder to come by for them, since internet access in Sudan is very limited, in contrast to many of the countries that host SLM/A fractions.

In the case of Darfuri refugees worldwide, we also see that the increase in accessible media and communication techniques greatly contributes to the exchange of information and the ability to stay in touch with the homeland. One media source mentioned by several interviewees, for example interviewee #2, is 'Radio Dabanga', a radio channel that reports on the situation in Darfur and the rest of Sudan multiple times a day. It is available everywhere through the internet, and broadcasts local Sudan news (via Hilversum in The Netherlands) by shortwave radio signal to Darfur, other regions in Sudan and refugee camps in Chad. By giving independent and up-to-date information, this channel aims to inform citizens that are cut off from most media on how the conflict develops.

6.2.2. TRANSFERRING MONEY AND GOODS

When asked whether they supported the conflict in Darfur with money, through SLM/A or individually, the interviewees could not provide clear answers. Interviewee #5 states: "...this question is very difficult for me to answer. There's some secret stuff, and I can't say that. Because according to international law, supporting any [rebel] movement in the country is supporting terrorism. Especially when that movement believes in making change by force." Interviewee #1 mentions that SLM/A in Israel mainly 'spreads knowledge about the conflict to the international community'. Also, he mentions, people pay money 'so our political organization can at least advance'. However, he does not know whether there is a funding structure. Apart from unclear financial support, SLM/A reportedly also tries to engage in sending goods like clothes and other basic supplies to refugee camps. According to interviewee #6,

¹⁶ Later on, this interviewee explained it is not uncommon for the Sudanese government to imprison relatives of activists that fled the country. In this case, the interviewee believed that through government phone taps, the authorities found out he was in Israel. His father in Sudan was imprisoned as a reprisal.

so far this has not succeeded yet. Youngster's Dreams, the organization mentioned under 6.1.1., did manage to do so. This might be because of the support they receive from UNHCR, support a rebel movement like SLM/A lacks.

On an individual basis, several interviewees (#1, #2, #3, #7) mentioned they tried to financially support the relatives and friends that stayed behind. For most, however, this was difficult, regarding the fact that they hardly make enough money to sustain themselves in Israel.

6.2.3. SUPPORT OF MILITARY ACTIONS

As mentioned in the previous section, it is unclear to what extent the Darfuri refugee community financially supports military actions of the rebel movement SLM/A in Darfur. However, interviewees #2 and #6 used to be involved the SLM/A military themselves. According to interviewee #2, the SLM/A military does not receive any outside support. He mentions that currently, the movement possesses arms, tanks and even helicopters that were 'stolen' from the Sudanese government's army. He adds that *"if people want to give money for this, they can"*. Interviewees #1, #2, #5, #6, #8 and #9 state they receive daily updates on battles the SLM/A military is winning, and share the hope that this might eventually overthrow the al-Bashir government. According to interviewee #9, *"that will be the only way to have peace and stability in Sudan"*.

6.2.4. LOBBYING

Interviewee #5, an ambitious and active community leader, states he does not necessarily believe in bringing about change by violence. He says: *"The goal of my activism here in Israel, is addressing the refugee situation at the moment. [...] but I'm also doing activities for my people in Darfur. I am involved in the SLM/A [both in Israel and] there, but [...] I'm having a focus on social issues and humanitarian issues."* This interviewee says he is also very involved in the Israeli organization Combat Genocide Association, the American Genocide Watch and the international Save Darfur. He believes that, through mobilizing organizations all around the world, and lobbying towards the international community, something can be done about the situation in Darfur.

6.3. THE INFLUENCE OF ISRAELI GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Without exception, all interviewees stated they were glad to be in Israel, because *"at least here nobody is trying to kill us"* (interviewee #1). However, the interviewees all claimed to be unhappy about the ever changing government policies. As interviewee #9 states: *"There is no real policy. These are just three years of bad planning. Planning how to make refugees' lives difficult. For those that are in, to run out. For those that are willing to come, to stop. That's what it is. Sometimes putting them in prison for six months, sometimes taking visas of conditional release. Sometimes announcing that it's not a work permit. While you are not giving any kind of support to these people. The only favor they got from the state is that sometimes they can work and manage to make a living."*

Fear and insecurity is a returning theme in refugees' lives. The Israeli government can detain anyone that is suspected of committing a criminal act, without proof or trial. When this happens, even if the person arrived before the implementation of the Anti-Infiltration Law, this person will lose the visa issued, and will not know how long he or she will spend in detention. If this person is released, he or she will not receive a new visa, and thus has lost even the most basic legal document. In July 2013, this is what happened a Darfuri actor 'Babi', who was accused of stealing a bike—a bike which he had bought himself. However, he couldn't hand over the receipt of his bike to the police in Tel Aviv, and subsequently was detained. This led to great commotion in Israel's leftist cultural sector, since he played a leading role in a well-received theatre play. Probably due to extensive media attention, he was released after a week and a half (which led some south Tel Aviv local residents to protest his release in front of the attorney general's home) (Lior, Haaretz, 29-07-2013). Babi was lucky, many others in this situation have chosen to rather sign a voluntary return agreement, instead of being detained for what may be years.

Fear of deportation is very real for most refugees interviewed. As one interviewee (#8) stated: *"So many people, they don't know about the problems in Sudan. Some refugees, because of the situation, they sign a voluntary return agreement [they receive money for doing this] and they go back to Khartoum. Here they are arrested, there they get killed. Whatever they get, it's bad, and that is why they decide to go back. We hope the Israeli government sees what's happening to us, and what happens when the people sign to go back to Sudan. When you have been political activism, and you run away, and you come to Israel, and then you're sent back—it's really dangerous. We hope that the government listens to our voice and listens to the voice of the NGO's."* Adding to this fear of deportation is that some interviewees (#2, #3 and #8) claimed they were afraid of Sudanese government spies in Israel. They worry that, if they get deported, the Sudanese government will be informed of where they have been. Interviewee #3 stated: *"There are spies from the Sudanese government in Israel. And everybody fears that, if you do something wrong, they will tell the government and hurt your family in Sudan."*

An example of how unclear and changeable government policies can influence refugees' lives is given by the case of interviewee #6. Judging from the interview conducted and other conversations, this former SLM/A fighter seemed to be suffering from war trauma. He is extremely cautious of the immigration police. He shared he would mostly stay at home if he didn't have anywhere to go to, explaining: *"...in the streets, the migration police sometimes, they used to get the refugees without any reason. So it's not possible that I would go to the seaside alone. Security there will ask me different kind of questions, like: 'What do you do here?'. They don't let us feel free in Israel, like other people. [...] If I meet the immigration police, seriously, they will deport me."*

Ever changing government policies contribute to a feeling of insecurity and fear. He explains that, because of this insecurity, it is very hard for him to live his life. *"I don't understand this government*

policy exactly. Because it changes every few months, and then there are new things. So if you went to renew the visa, they will give you an appointment. But [in the mean time] if your visa is expired, you cannot go to work. And you don't know what to do. I really want to go back. Because I cannot stay here, like this. I am trying to do anything, if there's some course sometimes [he refers to free courses offered by NGO's], I will go. I will concentrate when something is supposed to be done during the course. But then my body will be in the class, and my mind will be outside. I am thinking about myself, and my parents. It's really complicated, there's so many things. If you don't keep your heart strong, it will cause you psychological problems."

According to the interview conducted with Physicians for Human Rights Israel spokesperson Shahar Shoham, many refugees suffer from traumas, but psychological help is not something they often ask for. She states that: *"...most people don't want to even start with treating the trauma, they are in a constant survival mode and struggle. [...] we see that that [psychosocial help] is not the care they are looking for. Because they have other priorities, they are looking for work. But also, there is the gap of the fact that they maybe have to speak with a white Israeli woman and not someone of their own"* (interview C, Shahar Shoham, PHRI, 22-08-2013).

In the case of interviewee #6, we see that confusing government policies influence his ability to engage in activism. He did attend many courses and events organized by NGO's and the refugee community that addressed the refugee situation in Israel. However, he expressed that it was hard for him to really engage in transnational activism, for example weekly SLM/A meetings, because he had to work a lot, but made irregular work hours.

As interviewee #1 states: *"You can see that we have a big community here, 5000 people, but none of them is studying, none of them is doing future things. All of them are working, like, cleaning and stuff, not like a future job. It's just a job to survive. Which, for us, is very negative—especially for doing activities to be part of the solution for our country. You can't work eleven to thirteen hours, a very physical job, and then you come and have no place to go. You stay home and think of the consequences. How many years I'm going to be here? How it's gonna end? When will there be peace?"* This illustrates the frustration about refugees' position in Israel, and the inability to truly do something about the situation in their homeland. However, interviewee is one of the lucky ones that can study with a grant donated by an NGO. Despite the circumstances of many, he admits he is inspired by Israel as a western-oriented democratic country. *"[...] I think I might have a chance to participate in making peace. Because we have been here, we have seen how things can be different, especially for citizens, how people are advancing [...] so I think, practically, being here is a completely fantastic lesson for us. We can learn a lot. [...] To gain the knowledge from Israel, it's a big thing for me. So at least I have to use it [to participate in rebuilding the country, after he returns to Sudan]."*

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. CONCLUSION

The violent conflict in Sudan has been going on for over a decade and caused many Darfuri's to flee the country, of which several thousands ended up in Israel from 2006 onwards. In 2012, the number of refugees from Sudan and Eritrea combined reached a peak of 60.000. Since its establishment in 1948 however, the state of Israel has never developed efficient policies regarding non-Jewish refugees or asylum, but rather relied on ad-hoc solutions to specific cases over the past decades.

With this refugee influx, Israel's lack of policy structure proved to be problematic. The Israeli government has instituted a series of measures that revolve around deterrence and detention, which in several cases has violated the 1951 Refugee Convention, to which Israel was a signatory. Also, the Israeli government and media have chosen to address the refugee issue in a very 'exclusivist' rhetoric, creating a clear distinction between 'us', the Jewish Israeli's, and 'them', black African 'infiltrators' that pose a threat to the Jewish identity of Israel. This creates an overall situation of frustration, insecurity and fear among the refugee community, which at the beginning of January 2014 led to mass protests that at the moment of writing this conclusion have not yet ended.

This research focuses on whether the Darfuri refugee diaspora tries to exert influence on the conflict in the homeland. The extent to whether diaspora groups are able to engage in transnational activism is believed to be affected by the settlement conditions in the host country, and therefore, the situation for refugees in Israel is an important point of focus in this study.

In early 2014, the discontent among the African refugee community in Israel got to the point that mass protests broke out in the cities of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. These strikes and demonstrations in underpin one of the key findings from this research: the difficult situation for refugees in Israel in the first place leads to an urge to improve the situation in the host country, rather than to engage in transnational activism that targets—the conflict in—the homeland.

This finding contrasts Demmers point that the fact that it has become harder to settle in host countries contributes to the increase in transnational diaspora activism (Demmers, 2002: 88). For refugees in Israel, it seems to be the case that the difficult circumstances of refugees make it more difficult to engage in transnational activism. Dahre (2007) argues that diaspora communities can influence the conflict with financial and economic investments, political involvement, civic involvement and lobbying in their host country. In Israel, all of these means of influence are not easily to put to practice. The Israeli government complicates refugees participation on the labor market, has proposed laws that prevent refugees from sending money home, and in general has an active way of negatively influencing the public discourse on refugees (for example by making the official denomination for immigrants that claim to be refugees 'infiltrators'). Interviewees shared that having to work many hours to survive economically, makes it hard to focus on other things. Furthermore,

the fact that is hard to provide one's own livings costs makes it hard to also financially contribute to those left behind, or those fighting on the ground.

This research does not provide a clear answer however, to the question to which degree the Darfuri refugees in Israel can positively or negatively contribute to change in their homeland. As stated by Collier & Hoeffler (2002), conflicts can actually be revived or protracted through the continuation of public grievances by diasporas, by their financing of violent organizations and by supplying knowledge and ideas. However, there is also evidence that diasporas exert a positive influence on the conflict, for example by the increase in remittances that diasporic communities send to the homeland. This impacts favorably on their home economies (Reis, 2004: 48). In this case study, we see that some of the interviewees hint that the SLM/A fraction in Israel financially contributes to the SLM/A on the ground in Sudan. To what extent this happens, and the effects this has, remains unclear. Some refugee organizations try to contribute positively to homeland development by sending humanitarian goods to 'their people' in refugee camps. Also, some refugees try to transfer money to friends and relatives on an individual basis. Most interviewees however stated that they often do not have enough money to engage in these kinds of contributions.

Because of the small scale of data collection, it is not possible to say whether these findings go for the entire Darfuri community in Israel. What we do know, is that it is hard for—unrecognized—refugees in Israel to make enough money to sustain their own living, so it is plausible to assume that this decreases their chances of contributing financially to their homelands, in a positive or negative manner.

Mohamoud's study (2006) found evidence for the claim that, when the situation in a homeland is stable, diaspora is more involved in activities that ameliorate poverty and contribute to developments such as community welfare projects and business investment as well as civic-related initiatives. When the situation in the homeland is tense or in conflict, '*diaspora tend to invest in partisan and politically related activities*' (Mohamoud, 2006: 8). This, to some extent, also applies to the situation of Darfuri refugees in Israel. Most of the interviewees stated that the group of SLM/A activists in Israel finds great support among the Darfuri refugee community. This is possibly explained by the fact that almost all interviewees left the country because they were involved in activities that either were critical of the Sudanese government, or because of their active engagement this rebel movement.

In order to build lasting peace and stability, SLM/A and its adherents believe the al-Bashir government should be overthrown. The majority of interviewees for this research supported this vision. Should this revolution become reality, all interviewees that actively support SLM/A state that they want to contribute to rebuilding the homeland and engage in post-conflict peacebuilding activities. In order to get to this point, however, they believe violence is necessary. SLM/A in Israel, according to interviews, however mainly provides information on the conflict and its current status to the Darfuri communities in both the host- and home country. Whether and to what extent they

contribute financially to the rebel movement's army remains unclear.

Contrasting this support of bringing about change by force, we see that one of the interviewees is very engaged in international organizations and lobbying activities to bring about change through diplomacy and international pressure. This happens on a small scale, though, and it would be safe to say that most Darfuri refugees in Israel do not find themselves in the position that they can spend time and energy on similar activities. Furthermore, a helpful fact to the activities of this interviewee is that he speaks English at a very high level, something that certainly does not apply to all Darfuri refugees, whose first language is Arabic. If these lobbying activities would happen on a larger scale, this might support Zunzers (2004) statement that diaspora civilian conflict transformation contributes to processes that help overcome causes of conflict, and to establish conflict mediation and management mechanisms within society. However, judging from the data collected in the case of Darfuri refugees in Israel, engaging in peacebuilding activities seems to be something that is not a priority for most. This seems to be in accordance with Zunzers (2004) statement that 'the legal status and living conditions in the host country' are a determining factor for the extent to which a diaspora can be empowered to play the role of—transnational—peacebuilder.

7.2. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although this study has found evidence that Israeli settlement policy influences Darfuri refugees' ability to participate in transnational activism, the data collected by interviews remains limited. It would be interesting to see a similar research carried out that would include findings from a larger number of interviews. Furthermore, all interviewees originally came from Darfur, and are members of the Fur tribe. However, not all Darfuri refugees necessarily are Fur. Also, among the group of Sudanese refugees in Israel, there's also members from different tribes, from for example Kordofan, Nuba Mountains or the Blue Nile area. This study does not clarify whether they have a similar attitude towards—transnational—political activism.

Another point worth noting is that I met most of the interviewees through Amnesty International Israel or other NGO's, which means they are already engaged in a certain degree of political activism. Although Darfuri's and Sudanese in general are known to be very 'activist', this starting point might not be representative for the entire Sudanese refugee community.

A suggestion for further research that this study would like to give links to Reis' (2004) work. Reis is one of the scholars that states that improvements in transportations, telecommunications and media have facilitated the diasporic process, by allowing migrants to maintain closer and cheaper contact with their homeland. This has led to an increase in remittances that diasporic communities send to the homeland, and this impacts favourably on their home economies. A question this leaves us with, is whether diasporas would continue to contribute to sending remittances to the homeland

when it is unclear if and when they will return to it. If refugees find themselves in a position in which they can financially contribute to their homeland, would they do so when chances of ever returning are slim? Does the fact that they don't know for how long they will stay in their host countries, where they are not allowed to settle, influence their degree of transnational activism?

Lastly, this research looks at the situation in Israel, but does not take into account any hampering factors in the homeland that might influence the ability of diaspora to engage in activism. Future research would greatly benefit from an approach that includes both Sudan and Israel as contexts. The actual effects of the—possible—engagement in their home countries would, in that case, also provide a very interesting point of focus.

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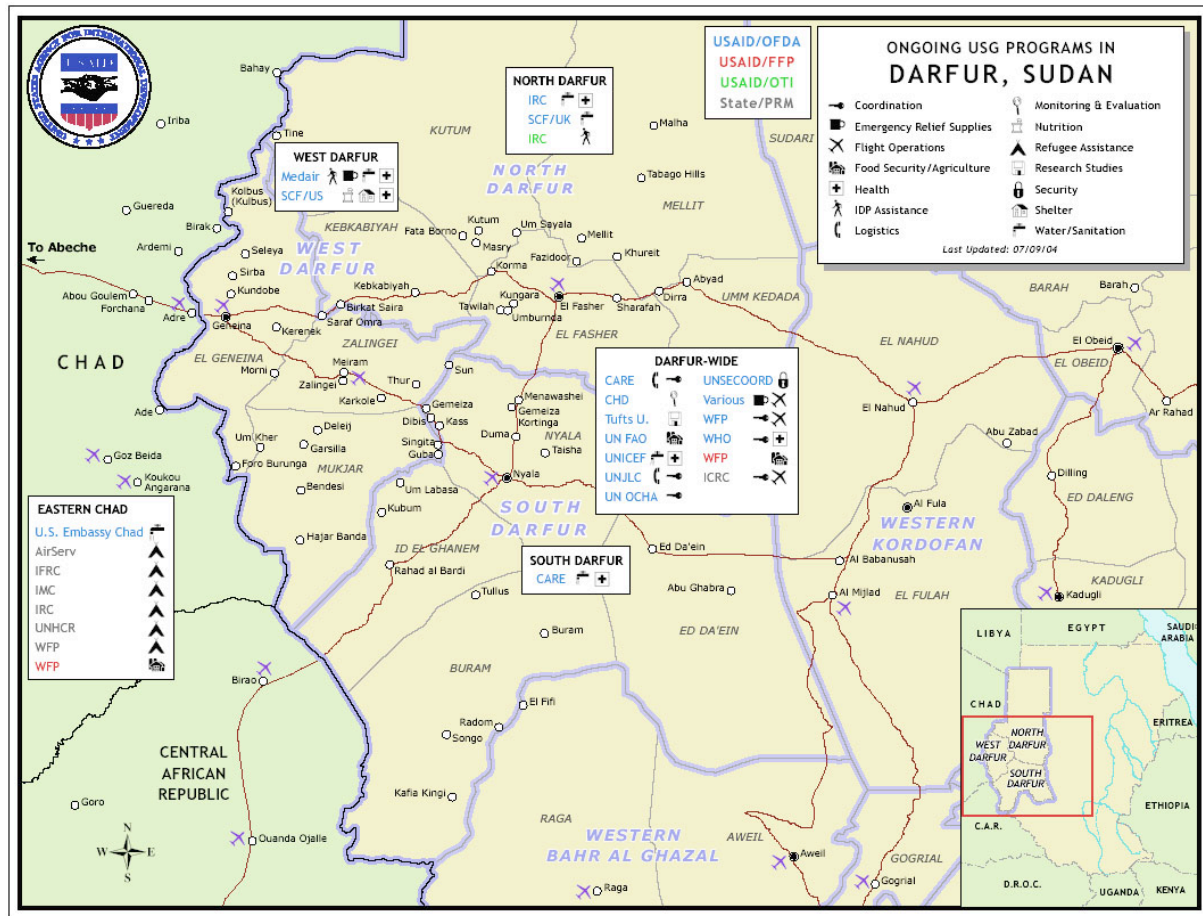
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APPENDIX A: MAPS



A.1. MAP OF DARFUR

(http://images.nationmaster.com/images/motw/africa/darfur_sudan_usg_704_2004.jpg, retrieved 02-01-2014)



A.2. MAP OF SUDAN

(<http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/sudan.htm>, retrieved 02-01-2014)



A.3. MAP OF ISRAEL

(http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/israel_map2.htm, retrieved 01-01-2014)

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

REFUGEE INTERVIEWS

- Interview #1 (12-08-2013)
- Interview #2 (13-08-2013)
- Interview #3 (17-08-2013)
- Interview #4 (20-08-2013)
- Interview #5 (22-08-2013)
- Interview #6 (23-08-2013)
- Interview #7 (23-08-2013)
- Interview #8 (26-08-2013)
- Interview #9 (29-08-2013)

EXPERT INTERVIEWS

- Interview A. (16-08-2013): Annelie de Boer, African Refugees Development Center (ARDC)
- Interview B. (22-08-2013): Shoham Shoham, Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI)
- Interview C. (29-08-2013): Sigal Rozen, Hotline for Migrant Workers (Hotline)
- Interview D. (07-12-2013): Dijana Mujkanovic, Amnesty International Israel (AAI)

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
ROSELYN FLACH
MASTER THESIS 2013 RESEARCH - DARFURI DIASPORA IN ISRAEL
(VERSION FOR REFUGEES)

Thank interviewee for coming. Explain about the purpose of the interview, and stress that it's a personal project, and not linked to Amnesty International's work.
Ask for consent, ask if it's okay that the interview is recorded with an audio recorder.

1. From Sudan to Israel

- 1.1 Why and when did you leave Sudan?
- 1.2 Why and when did you come to Israel?
- 1.3 Were you initially planning to go to Israel, or aiming for another country?
 - *When did you first hear of Israel?*
- 1.4 How did you go to Israel?

2. Conflict involvement in Darfur

- 2.1 What was your role in the conflict in Darfur before you left?
- 2.2 Did you participate in a rebel group?

3. Contacts with Darfuris in Darfur and elsewhere

- 3.1 Do you have contacts with people in Darfur?
 - *If so, who? How many people? Family, friends, others?*
- 3.2 Are these people involved in the struggle?
- 3.3 How do you stay in touch with these people?
- 3.4 In what other parts of the world do you have relatives and friends?
 - *Are you still in touch with them? How and how often?*

4. Links between Darfuri rebels in Israel and Sudan

- 4.1 Are you still involved in SLM, or know any people that are?
 - *What is SLM's goal?*
- 4.2 How big do you estimate the group of Darfuri refugees involved in this?
- 4.3 Can you tell me something about how the group is organized?
- 4.4 Can you tell me of some of the actions taken by this group of people?
 - *What means are used to influence the conflict? Do they involve sending money to Sudan, pressure on the government or international community, etc.?*
- 4.5 Do you think this has effect? How?
- 4.6 Do you know if SLM works together with other organizations?

5. Side questions

- 5.1 How big do you estimate the number of women refugees from Darfur?
 - *Why is this number so high/low?*
 - *Are they involved in the struggle?*
- 5.2 How do you feel about the way Israel treats refugees?
 - *Does this influence the way you are involved in the struggle in Darfur?*

6. Future aspirations

- 6.1 How do you see the future of Darfur?
- 6.2 Do you want to go back to Darfur, or would you rather go to a so-called 'third country'?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
ROSELYN FLACH
MASTER THESIS 2013 RESEARCH - DARFURI DIASPORA IN ISRAEL
(VERSION FOR EXPERT INTERVIEWS)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Thank interviewee for his/her time.
- 1.2 Briefly introduce myself and the research project I'm working on.
- 1.3 Explain about the purpose of the interview.
 - Purpose of interview: This interview is carried out not only to learn more about the NGO's mission and goals, but also how Israel's refugee/immigration policies affect the work of the NGO and the lives of refugees. Also, it intends to provide insight in the way the increased influx of refugees has affected the interaction between government politics and the situation of refugees.
- 1.4 Ask for consent, ask if it's okay that the interview is recorded with an audio recorder.

2. Background of the NGO

- 2.1. Can you tell me something about the way the NGO was founded? What lead up to its establishment?
 - Was the organisation founded because of a lack of similar initiatives?

3. The NGO and Israel's immigration/refugee policies

- 3.1 The NGO aims to (insert goals). How does the organization do this?
 - What are the means used to influence Israel's policies regarding refugees and asylum seekers?
- 3.2 The NGO was founded in AD????, Did this increase in the number of refugees influence the NGO's work? How?
- 3.3 How do the government policies influence the NGO's work? Has this changed over the years?

4. Refugee initiatives and the NGO

- 4.1 What can you tell me about the way refugees organize themselves in Israel (community activism)?
 - Is this activism mostly directed towards improving the situation of the community here, or does it aim at the homeland?
- 4.2 Do you feel this would have been different if the government would work more actively towards improving refugees' situations (through policies, public debate etc.)?
- 4.3 Does the NGO support community initiatives that are started by refugees?
 - If so, can you tell me something about which ones, and how the NGO does this?
- 4.4 Does the NGO ARDC groups that try to influence the situation in their homeland?
 - Why/why not?