

Alternative (In)Security: Using Photovoice Research Methodology to Explore Refugee Anxieties in Lebanon

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Abstract : For more than half a century, international norms related to refugee security and protection have proliferated, yet their role in alleviating war's negative impacts on human life remains limited. The impact of refugee-security processes often manifests asymmetrically within populations. Many issues and people get silenced due to narrow security policies that focus either on abstract threat containment and refugee control or refugee protection and humanitarian aid. (In)security practices are gendered and experienced. Examining the case study of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, this study explores the gendered impact of refugee security mechanisms on local realities. A transnational feminist approach will be used to position this research in relation to existing studies in the field of security and the refugee-protection regime, highlighting the social, cultural, legal, and political barriers to gender equality in the areas of violence, rights, and social inclusion. Through Photovoice methodology, the Syrian refugees' (in)securities in Lebanon were given visibility by enabling local volunteers to record and reflect their realities through pictures, at the same time voice the participants' anxieties and recommendations to reach normative policy change. This Participatory Action Research approach helped participants observe the structural barriers and lack of culturally inclusive refugee services that hinder security, increase discrimination, stigma, and poverty. The findings have implications for a shift of the refugee protection mechanisms to a community-based approach in ways that extend beyond narrow security policies that hinder women empowerment and raise vulnerabilities such as gendered exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

Keywords : gender, (in)security, Lebanon, refugee, Syrian refugees, women

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