



Editorial

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration (OxMo), the first student authored, edited, and managed journal dedicated to protecting and advancing the human rights of forced migrants. As an independent publication OxMo seeks to draw attention to the plight of displaced persons, to identify gaps within existing international and national protection regimes, and to engage intellectually with the many practical and conceptual factors which perpetuate dislocation. As such, we are committed to presenting critical yet balanced analyses of social, political and legal issues pertaining to displacement, asylum, and return, placing particular emphasis on monitoring the policies and actions of governments, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). At the same time, OxMo endeavours to give expression to innovative undertakings that move to counter and alleviate forced migration predicaments. We also provide a space for persons who have been or are currently displaced to present their unique insight.

Looking at the finished product, it is hard to imagine that less than a year ago OxMo was simply an aspiration. An offshoot of the MSc in Forced Migration programme at the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, OxMo's inception can be traced back to an International Refugee Law tutorial that took place last winter. During a spirited class discussion about governance, two things came to my mind that exposed a need for a novel initiative. Firstly, despite the maturity of the refugee protection regime, no monitoring body exists to appraise the impact of policies and practices of international organisations, national bodies and NGOs on the lives of forced migrants or the local communities in which they are situated. Secondly, students and forced migrants themselves have little opportunity to be part of the discourse that informs many of the projects and activities that these actors undertake. Few forums exist in which knowledgeable independent observers, such as research students, and those affected by displacement can meaningfully contribute to discussions about the effectiveness of projects, draw attention to pioneering developments emanating from grassroots initiatives, and debate values and ideals relating to assistance and protection. Fostering such input could greatly enrich academic scholarship, positively inform human rights advocacy, and contribute to furthering the protection of those forcibly displaced. Indeed, much can be gained by broadening the range of perspectives.

OxMo therefore strives to promote greater dialogue between students and practitioners, between ‘north’ and ‘south’, as well as between organisations and the individuals they move to serve. In doing so, OxMo aims to further our understanding of the experiences and difficulties that forced migrants face, thereby helping to ensure that the refugee protection regime continues to be attuned to needs and realities on the ground.

Joining me in bringing OxMo to fruition is a dynamic team of alumni from the MSc in Forced Migration programme who possess a wealth of knowledge, expertise and unwavering dedication. The making of this publication and the establishment of OxMo has been realized through the collective efforts of the editorial team: Ayla Bonfiglio, Amanda Craig, Denise Delaney, Nate Dunstan, Lara Finkbeiner, Anaïs Ressayé, Lucia Rozkopalova, Clara Straimer and Janna Wessels.

We are proud to present you an outstanding array of short essays and academic articles. Having received many excellent submissions from all over the world we have selected eleven from authors in Afghanistan, Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Ecuador, Hong Kong, the UK, and the USA. Our contributors have drawn from first hand experiences, their own academic research and knowledge gleaned from being in the field and working in human and refugee rights advocacy. Hannah Cooper examines the curbing of asylum support provisions in the UK as a result of an ever-increasing ‘politics of social exclusion’ bolstered by the 2009 Draft Immigration Bill. Brittan Heller traces the evolution of the term ‘refugee’ in relation to individuals fleeing North Korea and assesses the social and legal implications that have ensued from the use of specific terminology. Alice Taylor discusses the threat of persecution resulting from socio-political activism in Colombia and the ways in which it has critically affected the role of IDP women leaders, paying particular attention to the implications it has on policy and rights protection. Zeynep Isik-Ercan takes stock of the experiences of young Burmese refugees and their families in relation to early childhood elementary education in the Midwestern United States. Lucy Mayblin looks beyond the hostile state to explore the concept of ‘universities of sanctuary’, public sites of solidarity that may be harnessed to offer hospitality and support to refugees and asylum seekers. Sara Ramey critiques Australia’s asylum system in the context of International Human Rights Law. Tom Barratt analyses the rhetoric of the UK print media and the effects of populist pandering on public attitude towards asylum seekers. Alberto Grajales García shares his reflections on his personal journey towards obtaining a refugee visa. Keane Shum presents an ambitious framework for a revised Comprehensive Plan of Action for Southeast Asia. James Souter unpacks the parallel notions of ‘cultures of disbelief’ and ‘cultures of denial’ in the UK and the significant impact that such trends have had on reducing the opportunity for asylum seekers to secure protection. And Themba Lewis offers critical insight into the role that youth gangs have played in the lives and experiences of Sudanese refugee communities in Egypt. We hope you will find our first issue at once insightful and thought provoking.

On behalf of the team at OxMo, I would also like to take this occasion to say a few words of thanks. First of all, I’d like to express our deepest gratitude to Professor Roger Zetter for giving us the opportunity to pursue this undertaking and believing in OxMo from the very beginning. I would also like to extend our appreciation to the staff and faculty at the RSC for their advice and encouragement: Marion Couldrey, Maurice Herson, Paul Ryder, Dr Alexander Betts, Dr Dawn Chatty, Dr Alice Edwards, Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasbiyeh, Dr Richard Haavisto, Dr Matthew Gibney

and Professor Gil Loescher. Thanks go also to Olaf Kleist, who contributed many helpful suggestions and who offered unstinting support throughout. Finally, a special thank you to Bernd Bauerochse for his creative design work on this edition and on our website www.oxmofm.com.

We hope that you find OxMo thoroughly engaging, and that as well as debate, the thoughts and words of the authors presented here will inspire action to secure greater rights for forced migrants across the globe.

V. Tai Sayarath

Editor-in-Chief

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Bangkok, Thailand