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Migration as the Outcome of States' War against Nations

Sabah Mofidi

While immigration has [not only continued](#) but [also increased](#) in recent years, the strict stances of some politicians and policy makers of destination countries, especially European countries, brings to mind the question: Who should host states oppose: immigrants or their corrupt undemocratic states? Human rights issues have provided a ground for supporting immigrants. At the same time, host states have often had relations with the origin states, violators of human rights, in the name of international relations, or to put it better, inter-state relations. In this regard, [Norway's relationship with the Taliban regime](#) in Afghanistan, [Sweden](#) with [Turkey](#) and [Iran](#), etc. are examples. This contradiction allows us to ask why host states do not focus on positive changes in countries of origin instead of immigrants?

From a strategic point of view, and based on European democratic values and [normative power](#), trying to publicly judge corrupt totalitarian systems and encourage the creation of real democratic states seems to be a better solution to the immigration problem. In the following, as an aspect of the results of [my project](#) on the changing political identity of migrants, I show how political violence of the regimes led to the forced migration of their citizens to other countries. Accordingly, some policies are also recommended.

The Middle East, especially the countries that each include a part of Kurdistan, has long been the site of various ethno-religious conflicts and, consequently, the origin of political migration. The lack of security and political openness, as well as high corruption, have caused significant in- and out-migration. Between 2005 and 2015, [the migrant population of the Middle East](#) increased by about 120 percent. On the other hand, Europe has also been a key destination for immigrants.

In Syria, political intolerance contributed to the destruction of the country and the forced migration of millions. Similarly, the lack of democracy and high corruption in Iran have led to a high number of immigrants during the last four decades. This shows the role of the political regimes in increasing those numbers. If there was a democratic atmosphere in these relatively rich countries, most Syrians and Iranians who emigrated would likely have remained in their countries. Therefore, states receiving significant numbers of migrants should reconsider their foreign policies and relations with the ruling regimes in the origin countries.

My interviews with first generations of political migrants reveals how they were forced to leave their countries of origin. The interviewees stated that they didn't want to leave their home and "didn't come of [their] own accord." The "assassination of political activists by the regime[s]" led to their migration, with many still living in a permanent liminality, longing to return home after long periods of time, [sometimes 40 years](#). Talking about their own lives that were "frozen at that time" when leaving their home and having "the hope of returning home" shows the height of the hostility of regimes towards the people. Thus, these human rights fighters were deprived of their homes and lives.

After the establishment of undemocratic and totalitarian regimes, the next generations of immigrants were also forced to seek their human and fundamental rights in Western countries, which had become a utopia for them. Western governments, due to their role in [establishing such non-democratic regimes](#) and their [relationship with them](#), are themselves one of the major factors contributing to the migration of these people and the subsequent consequences in the host countries. Regardless of the main causes of migration, especially human rights violations, inefficient management systems and corruption, host states have relations with origin states in

the name of international relations. Therefore, they are not only complicit with corrupt undemocratic regimes but also against their own people by facilitating the transmission of political violence in origin countries to [the host societies](#).

A significant part of immigrants are people from [stateless nations](#) such as Kurds from Turkey and Iran, Baloch from Iran and Pakistan, Palestinians etc. who believe they are different nations and that their homelands are occupied by the states of the current countries of origin. They try to identify themselves with their own ethno-nation and homeland in the host societies. For example, according to my interviewees, some Kurdish immigrants have tried to remove the name of the countries of origin occupying Kurdistan on their documents.

Since Kurdistan has not achieved independence, host states recognize the Kurds as citizens of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, while their political refugees oppose these states and try to be recognized as [Kurdish](#) and [Kurdistanî](#). This shows that if they had their own state or regional government and ruled their own land, they would not have migrated. As one of my interviewees says: “If I was not forced, and if there was a Kurdish state, I would never have left Kurdistan.”

Therefore, reducing the immigration of stateless people requires changing the behaviour of fascist-chauvinist groups of dominant ethno-nations in the countries of origin. Ethnonational conflicts in some African countries and the Middle East and Southwestern Asia are examples of the negative outcomes of violating the rights of subordinate ethno-nations. The host states’ pressure on the origin states to encourage ethno-national equality and consider such rights can be effective in preventing migration.

According to research conducted on [return migration](#), first generation immigrants have a greater desire to return to their homeland or have transnational ties than the next generation due to their backgrounds, less integration and homeland ties, including emotional, economic, political factors, etc. According to some of my interviewees, they are ‘physically in the host countries, spiritually in their homeland.’ Many non-political migrants return home after years or live part of their lives there. However, political immigrants cannot return to their country because of the consequences, including execution, imprisonment, etc.

For example, Kurdish political migrants believe that they will return home if they “*can live in Kurdistan with respect as a human.*” Therefore, the contribution of host countries to the democratization process of origin countries can help not only prevent migration, but also return migration. In this regard, the experience of colonial relations of some host states as well as the ‘democratization’ of states by other states can be helpful in relation to internal colonial relations in the country of origin. For example, many immigrants [returned to Southern Kurdistan in Iraq](#) after its liberation in 1991 and the fall of Saddam’s regime in 2003, although the influence of totalitarian and undemocratic neighbouring countries, which fear their own democratization, still hinders the development of democracy in Iraq.

The lack of change in the policy of the host states towards the origin state will not only lead to the continuation of migration, but also strategically lead to a significant change in the social structure of the host societies. Many residents of some neighborhoods in European countries are now Muslim and Arab or Turkish! Finally, host societies may face the same fate as origin societies regarding conflicts, despite a more democratic and tolerant climate as well as integration policies. So, the solution to reducing immigration is to review the relations with the regimes responsible for migration of their citizens, support the democratization of origin countries, and officially recognize the rights of people against the non-democratic states and regimes.

It should be noted that during the past decades there have been political immigrants, in fact defenders of democracy and human rights fighters, such as Kurds and Balochs, who have faced difficulties in obtaining residency in their host countries influenced by the origin state, while they have had serious problems in their own countries of origin. This behavior of the host states contradicts their claims about democracy and human rights laws and in some way is complicity

with non-democratic regimes, which ultimately contributes to more immigration. This leads political migrants to raise questions about democracy, human rights and justice in host countries. A Kurdish political refugee says in a post on social media: “[...] I have been having problems with German security and administrative bodies for 5 years. Due to expressing my opinion and political activity against the regimes of Iran and Turkey and being active in social media, my right to residence, work and asylum has been withdrawn from me [...].”

In contrast, some irregular immigrants who have no serious problems in their home countries are granted permanent residency in host countries. Even some people who violate and oppose people’s rights in their countries by participating in the totalitarian political system receive the rights of asylum and [live freely in the host countries](#). [Some of them](#) continue to support the totalitarian regimes of origin countries. Instead, deportation policymakers should target those who themselves live in democratic countries but are opposed to democracy in their countries of origin and have no problem with the undemocratic totalitarian regime of their country of origin.

Finally, based on conversations with Kurdish political refugees in Western Europe and their real stories, I offer the following policy recommendations:

- 1. Human rights oriented diplomacy:** The economic interests of states should not be the only determinant of international relations. Based on the level of human rights and freedom in societies, host countries should reconsider their relations with refugee-sender states. States that violate human rights should not be allowed to participate in international human rights commissions or lead such bodies.
- 2. Recognizing the defenders of democracy:** The representatives of the regimes of countries of origin do not represent all the people, especially the oppressed and non-dominant ethno-national people. The so-called international legitimacy of states makes regimes not allow themselves to hear the voices of their opponents. At least in the framework of human rights intervention, the host states and the international society should in practice open a space for the opposition and recognize the democratic opponents of the regimes as representatives of a part of the people of those countries and establish a relationship with them. This pressures non-democratic governments to consider the rights of their people.
- 3. Serious anti-espionage and terrorist activity:** The states of countries of origin even exploit the open space of the host countries to harass and silence their opponents. It leads to the transfer of conflict to these societies and makes them unsafe for migrants. Host countries should not provide the ground for espionage and state terrorism activities of the countries of origin against immigrants.
- 4. Emphasis on resolving disputes in the country of origin:** A significant part of the conflict between people and political regimes, as well as totalitarian rulers and their opponents, and thus state terrorism, is transferred from origin to host countries. Pressure on states to create an open socio-political space for peaceful resolution of conflicts in countries of origin prevents the transmission of conflicts. If rich countries of origin, especially in the Middle East, are democratic with efficient and accountable systems, people will not look elsewhere for utopia.
- 5. Recognizing and supporting stateless nations:** Stateless people try to identify themselves with their ethno-national identity. When the state of countries of origin does not support them and they feel statelessness, host governments should recognize them independently of repressive states and support them to express themselves as they wish.