



**SEEKING REFUGE:
FAITH-BASED APPROACHES
TO FORCED MIGRATION**

Poverty and Peacemaking II
March 3–4, 2017 at Princeton University

The Media and Migration: A Workshop

Deb Amos, National Public Radio (NPR) (Moderator)
Thibault Chareton, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)
Naomi Hunt, International Dialogue Center (KAICIID)
Eldar Shafir, Princeton University
Iris Samuels, Princeton University (Student Rapporteur)

Since the elections, the media field has shifted significantly. Deborah Amos, NPR correspondent who led the Media and Migration Panel, said that she now has to be aware of the structure of the alt-right. She explained that these groups, once seen as well outside of the status quo, now serve as advisers to the administration. If you work in the refugee world, she said, you must familiarize yourself with these group. In a panel that brought together nongovernmental aid workers and media specialists, the discussion addressed the ways in which the media can adapt to this new world of extremist messages.

Thibault Chareton, Program Officer of Media and Migration at the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), explained that by working with journalists around the world, he works to equip the media with tools to report on complex topics. Among his activities, he produced a media-friendly glossary on migration. In a field fraught with legal terminology and minute differences, this glossary is aimed at ensuring that reporters differentiate between terms such as “refugee,” “migrant,” and “asylum-seeker.” Chareton explained that his work stems from the understanding that “words really matter,” and that sometimes journalist do not have the time or the knowledge to use them correctly. The media, he said, has a significant effect on the perception of refugees. Chareton concluded by offering numerous recommendations, including increasing diversity in the newsroom, providing safe spaces for journalists to come to terms with their biases, eliminating unnecessary references to gender and race, and providing refugees the opportunity to be interviewed and present their own story in the media.

Naomi Hunt, the Refugees in Europe Program Manager for the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), spoke about the effect of the far right on the perception of refugees in Europe. Based in Austria, she has noticed that a proliferation of images of refugees “flooding Europe,” coupled with terrorist attacks in Paris and elsewhere, have led the public further to the right. While Muslims and Migrants are separate but overlapping groups in society, she pointed out that the media often conflates the two, employing gross stereotyping. The terms “refugee,” “asylum seeker” and “migrant” are used to differentiate between those deserving of resources and those who are not. Many newspapers create a dichotomy between deserving “needy” refugees and “bad” economic migrants. While the more serious media outlets attempt to address the question of whether or not Austria has the ability to integrate refugees, the tabloid media questions whether they should have the *desire* to integrate refugees.



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The final panel member, Eldar Shafir, a professor of behavioral psychology at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, spoke about the way the media manipulates the public, and raised the question of whether the media can report about refugee issues in a way that is memorable, without being manipulative. Behavioral science, he explained, dictates that different forms of reporting could have different effects on perception of refugees.

Shafir pointed to the story of Aylan Kurdi, a young boy who washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015, as a catalyst for change in public opinion. The photo of Kurdi's body received immense public attention, and following its publication, British Prime Minister David Cameron changed his views and said he would allow refugees into the country. However, Amos pointed out that despite the immediate reactions by many European politicians, the political mobilization did not last long. "We all get tricked by these pictures. We think something has changed. But nothing has changed."

Panel participants agreed that mainstream reporting is not doing well, while extreme reporting is on the rise, because it feeds into the public's desire for sensationalism. Amos added that it is harder to tell positive stories, and editors are less interested in them. In her reporting, she has often tried to tell the stories of civilians caught in the middle – individuals with whom readers and listeners can relate.

However, Paloma Haschke-Joseph, Intercultural Engagement Project Management Specialist for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), pointed out that as Europe undergoes financial instability, it becomes increasingly difficult for the media to create empathy. "The average person is worried about their own identity," she said. "Only audiences who are wealthy and comfortable are susceptible to that message."

Hunt emphasized the need for increased media literacy to combat the tendency towards echo chambers, in which audiences only consume media that fits their individual biases. Emilia Casella, Deputy Director of Partnership & Advocacy Coordination Division in the World Food Programme, expressed concern over the shrinking number of foreign correspondents. In states where local media doesn't have an international contingent, the public doesn't have the much-needed "personal perception of the refugees who want to come to these town," Casella explained.

Shafir concluded that for every bad story, there is a good story. "For every pickpocket, there's a refugee who saved a puppy," he said. "What we need is more balanced stories," Chareton said. "Hero Stories" and "Crime Stories" must come together to tell a more holistic story of refugee integration.