

**Migration Research Center at Koç University  
Rice University's Baker Institute**

The **Women's Rights, Human Rights and Refugees Program** at Rice University's Baker Institute in collaboration with the Migration Research Center at Koç University (MiReKoc) is inviting paper proposals for the workshop, "**Addressing Protracted Displacement in the MENA Region.**" The workshop will be held at Koç University in Istanbul on October 16 and 17, 2025.

Around the world, refugee situations are increasingly protracted, with displacement lasting 20 years on average for refugees and more than 10 years for most internally displaced persons (IDPs). As displacement drags on and the prospect of returning to places of origin becomes unlikely, the needs of displaced populations evolve. Instead of immediate subsistence and shelter, people need long-term economic security and access to livelihoods, housing, education and healthcare, as well as different legal protections, areas in which humanitarian agencies are not always equipped to operate effectively. Additionally, humanitarian funding structures are not built to respond to protracted displacement, as global attention shifts and support diminishes. Academics and practitioners have identified and criticized the mismatch between the reality of long-term displacement and the provision of short-term assistance for decades, yet too little has changed on the ground.<sup>1</sup> And despite global attempts to address the persistent underfunding of aid and the hierarchical nature of humanitarianism such as the Grand Bargain in 2016, displaced peoples continued to suffer the effects of a broken system.<sup>2</sup>

Protracted displacement is acute in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). After more than a decade of civil war, millions of Syrians remain displaced both internally and across neighboring countries like Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, with ongoing uncertainty about whether individuals will return home after the fall of the Assad regime in late 2024. Continuing conflict in Yemen, which started in 2015, has resulted in 4.5 million people internally displaced and 21.6 million in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>3</sup> Following years of conflict with ISIS, Iraq still has a large internally displaced population of more than a million people, many of whom are unable to return home or fully integrate into new communities, requiring more than humanitarian aid. Since the outbreak of civil war in 2023, Sudan is experiencing the largest displacement crisis in the world, yet it struggles to attract sufficient global attention and resources.<sup>4</sup> And finally, Israel's ongoing bombardment of

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Crisp "Mind the Gap! UNHCR, Humanitarian Assistance and the Development Process," *The International Migration Review* 35, no. 1 (2001): 168–91, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2676057>.

<sup>2</sup> Irwin Loy, "Why the Grand Bargain's Future Hinges on Accountability" *The New Humanitarian*, 15 October 15, 2024, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2024/10/15/why-grand-bargain-future-hinges-accountability>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Yemen, "UNHCR: Displaced Yemenis Struggle Amidst Growing Needs in Prolonged Crisis," August 16, 2024, <https://yemen.un.org/en/277315-unhcr-displaced-yemenis-struggle-amidst-growing-needs-prolonged-crisis#:~:text=With%204.5%20million%20people%20displaced,have%20endured%20years%20of%20conflict>.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Sudan Situation Report," October 27, 2024, <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/>

Gaza and Lebanon has forced nearly 2 million Palestinians and one million Lebanese to flee their homes over the past year.

To address the issue of protracted displacement, we invite contributions that focus geographically on the MENA region and which pertain to one or more of the following questions:

- How can international, national, and local policies better facilitate the transition from short-term humanitarian aid to long-term development in protracted crises? What are the political or practical barriers to doing so, and what are the risks?
- What efforts have been made to implement the localization agenda, whereby smaller CSOs and refugee-led organizations receive aid directly and provide services? What challenges remain?
- Given that the majority of refugees do not receive international assistance, what are promises and pitfalls surrounding refugee self-reliance?
- How can we ensure that the differing needs of refugees, IDPs, and vulnerable host communities are addressed through aid?
- Are gender-specific vulnerabilities considered in the provision of humanitarian and development aid? How can financial assistance as well as self-reliance policies be more gender responsive?
- In light of the changes experienced in conflict zones and prolonged refugee situations—such as post-conflict conditions—how can we view refugees and their rights in terms of integration, prospects for returning home, or options for resettlement in a third country?

Researchers and practitioners based in the MENA working on protracted displacement are invited to submit a proposal for a policy brief that will be presented at a two-day workshop at Koç University in Istanbul on October 16 and 17, 2025. After receiving feedback from organizers, discussants and audience members at the workshop, the contributing authors will have the opportunity to revise their papers. The finalized briefs will be published in a collected series edited by Dr. Kelsey Norman and Ana Martín Gil of Rice University's Baker Institute and Dr. Ahmet İçduygu of Koç University's Migration Research Center (MiReKoc).

Applicants should submit a **title and abstract of no more than 250 words by March 1, 2025** to Ana Martín Gil (ana.martin@rice.edu). The organizers will notify authors about the results of the review process by April 15, 2025. Travel and accommodation for the workshop will be covered by the Baker Institute for Public Policy and MiReKoc can assist with letters of support for participants requiring a visa to travel to Turkey.