

Fostering Global Consciousness in Times of Crisis



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Keynote
**Her Majesty Queen
Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan**

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Director General and Chairman of TRT
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President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Børge Brende
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Commissioner-General of UNRWA

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PUBLISHER

TRT WORLD RESEARCH CENTRE
DECEMBER 2018

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CONFERENCE REPORT

Fostering Global Consciousness in Times of Crisis

This is a report on a public session titled “**Fostering Global Consciousness in Times of Crisis**”, held as part of the TRT World Forum 2018. The views, themes and discussion points expressed in this conference report are those of speakers and participants present at the TRT World Forum 2018, and do not reflect the official view of TRT World Research Centre.

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Francesco Rocca

*President of the International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*

İbrahim Eren

Director General and Chairman of TRT

Børge Brende

President of World Economic Forum

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Commissioner - General of UNRWA



- 1** *What role do states and political leaders play in promoting global consciousness in a fragmented world?*
- 2** *How do media networks construct new media language centered around human beings in times of crisis?*
- 3** *What are the major threats to world security and how can the world overcome these challenges?*
- 4** *How can we solve the refugee crisis without it becoming over-politicised?*

Summary

The session “Fostering Global Consciousness in Times of Crisis” dealt with the increasing collective mobilisation to find permanent solutions for the global refugee crisis, which is one of the most significant challenges of today’s world. The panelists emphasised the common point that placing human security at the heart of conflicts and international cooperation is required.

The session opened with a keynote speech given by Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan, singling out the brutality of the Syrian civil war and global refugee crisis. She emphasised that all too often, people are treated as mere statistics thereby neglecting their humanity and creating a barrier to empathy. Her Majesty, however, ended on a hopeful note by stating her optimism for the future. Despite the tragedies we are currently facing, historical experience tells us that they are not insurmountable. In this regard, she called for collective action to address the needs of the innocent and vulnerable throughout the world.

Director General and Chairman of TRT, Ibrahim Eren, spoke about the beginnings of TRT World, and how the channel was aimed at creating a new media language putting human beings at the top of the agenda. He noted that, first and foremost, we are all human beings, regardless of our professions. In this regard, he pointed out that media networks should strive to produce news in a way that moves leaders to take action. He pointed to the fact that TRT World’s news coverage strives to prioritise coverage that places the lives of people in the forefront, rather than focusing exclusively on political calculations.

Francesco Rocca, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, criticised the current discourse of mainstream Western media in its depiction of refugees, arguing that much of mainstream media coverage neglects the fact that these are people dealing with dire circumstances. Moreover, Rocca criticised the securitisation of refugees, which leads to their dehumanisation.

The president of World Economic Forum, Børge Brende, emphasised the centrality of the UN Security Council’s role in finding long-term solutions to the various crises facing our world. In order for this to become a reality however, the Security Council needs significant reform in order to foster a more cooperative approach, which is currently lacking, among the Council’s members. He also addressed proxy wars, poverty, and illiteracy as root causes which should be seen as global problems. Brende stated that the world is moving from capitalism to talentism in a multi-conceptual world, and also mentioned increasing consciousness in the private sector working for sustainability and development. As the severity of conflicts and suffering increases, the need for humanitarian aid also become more crucial. Pierre Krahenbühl, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, underscored that the politicisation of humanitarian aid should be prevented. He stressed that Palestinian refugees have been refugees since the end of World War II, and noted one of the most important tasks of the international community is to take the lead in resolving the long-standing issue of Palestine.



Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan, singling out the brutality of the Syrian civil war and global refugee crisis.

Introduction

The ongoing refugee crisis represents the most significant humanitarian tragedy since World War II. Ongoing conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan, along with difficult security and economic environments throughout significant portions of the Middle East, Africa and parts of Asia have led millions of people to leave their homelands in search of refuge and a better life. Unfortunately, the world has become accustomed to seeing dead bodies washing ashore, missing children, broken families, and ruined cities. Human lives are treated as mere statistics and refugees are treated as potential security threats, furthering their already heavy burden of indignities. All in all, the international community has failed to effectively deal with this humanitarian disaster. Countries such as Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon have shouldered, and continue to bear the bulk of responsibility. The conflicts that have created this crisis remain unresolved, leading to more displacement and loss of life.

Preventing future crises, like the ones we are witnessing today, requires human security be placed at the forefront of approaches to conflict resolution. The mechanisms available today have shown themselves to be insufficient in finding lasting solutions to the roots of the various conflicts around the world. By taking potential solutions into account, the esteemed speakers, representing different point of views, all firstly paid attention to the concept of 'humanity'. In addition to this, the responsibility of media was one of the subjects touched upon by the speakers.

‘Human Being’ at the Heart of Conflicts

The plight of refugees is not a new phenomenon, however the extraordinary influx of refugees in the last few years endowed the issue with a new sense of urgency, moving it to the top of the international agenda. The number of displaced people around the world is growing every day, with 85 percent of world’s displaced people coming from developing countries. Because the refugee issue has been dealt with by governments primarily in a security framework, this session focused on re-emphasising the dignity of refugees and prioritising human security as a means of dealing with the issues underlying the crisis and its ripples.

Francesco Rocca, criticised the current discourse of mainstream Western media in their depiction of refugees. Much of mainstream media discourse has neglected and ignored, intentionally or otherwise, the dire conditions that caused refugees to flee their homelands in the first place. He emphasised that treating the refugee issue primarily as a security problem leads to increased dehumanisation and fails to acknowledge the root causes of the issue. If we continue approaching the refugee issue solely through the lens of security or as an ‘emergency’, issues at the core of what caused people to flee their homes in the first place will continue to be ignored. Effectively dealing with the issue requires a focus on root causes and crafting policy approaches that provide long-term and permanent solutions. As an illustration of the failure of the international community vis-à-vis refugees and migrants, Mr. Rocca pointed out that 30 years ago people were fleeing from Sub-Saharan Africa, seeking shelter in Europe. Today, the demographics of the migrants and refugees may be different, but the issue remains the same.

On the subject of long-entrenched circumstances facing refugee populations, Pierre Krahenbühl emphasised the status of Palestinian refugees and how they are affected by the political dynamics of conflict. He re-iterated that human beings stand at the centre of



Francesco Rocca, President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, criticising the current discourse of mainstream Western media in their depiction of refugees.

conflicts, and ultimately it is regular people who suffer the most. Reducing victims to statistics without paying heed to their individuality is unacceptable and ultimately counter-productive. Over time, this type of sanitised approach leads to greater inaction, as exemplified in the case of the now multi-generational issue of Palestinian refugees.

Unfortunately, many people today have been de-sensitized to the suffering of others. As Queen Rania pointed out, this kind of apathy is the most significant barrier to meaningful action.

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The Role of the Media

In today's world, media represents a powerful source for defining narratives and pushing leaders to take action on global issues. The media also represents the potential for manipulation and distortion. The framing of stories and language used by media outlets impacts what people come to view as the core elements of a given issue. İbrahim Eren emphasised how one of the main purposes of TRT World is to put the human being at the center of media coverage without differentiation based on ethnicity, religion or gender. He stated that TRT World was created as a response to the lack of human-centered discourses in international news media. In this context, for instance, TRT World's Syria coverage has centered mostly on the stories of refugees, underlining their challenges regardless of political calculations. He noted that TRT World seeks balance rather than an ultimately unattainable 'objectivity' concerning news coverage and editorial language.

In addition to this, he pointed to today's situation saying that the need to develop a collective response to our shared issues is becoming increasingly apparent. With this in mind, fostering global consciousness is a very important step in placing the notion of human security at the top of the agenda. He emphasised how TRT World and all media networks have a large share of responsibility for this.



İbrahim Eren, Director General and Chairman of TRT, emphasising how one of the main purposes of TRT World is to put the human being at the center of media coverage without differentiation based on ethnicity, religion or gender.

Call for Collective Action



The world has experienced many tragedies, costing millions of human lives. From Rwanda to Bosnia, to today's ongoing suffering in Myanmar, Yemen and Syria, individual states as well as the international community have failed in their duty to protect lives.

In this regard, international cooperation has become even more crucial to overcoming the results of these and other crises. On the other hand, there are powers that consistently undermine cooperation, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of root causes. Krahenbühl criticised the US decision to cut funding to UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) as one instance of the politicisation of humanitarian aid. He said that such moves are exactly what should be prevented. States should not pursue political objectives with humanitarian funding. UNRWA was given a mandate by the UN General Assembly (UNGA), expressing the collective will of the international community.

Børge Brende also underlined the importance of collaboration in addressing today's challenges. He argued that the only way to achieve the objectives of the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, is through working together without consideration for political competition. In this sense, Francesco Rocca stated that political leaders also have responsibility to take decisive action.

Humanitarian organisations constitute key mechanism to assist people in need throughout the world, however, they face a particular set of challenges in carrying out their respective missions. As head of the largest humanitarian organisation in the world, Francesco Rocca emphasised the importance of accountability for humanitarian organisations towards their donors and people who they serve.



Børge Brende, President of World Economic Forum, arguing that the only way to achieve the objectives of the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, is through working together without consideration for political competition.

Major Challenges and Solutions

The world is more interconnected than ever before. In addition to the refugee crisis, the world faces a number of collective threats, such as climate change, the potential of nuclear war and corruption that require global action. These issues transcend national and regional borders and have the potential to affect every corner of the globe.

Pierre Krahenbühl stated that states rally against the notion that wars are inevitable. The international community should focus more on conflict resolution rather than conflict management. He emphasised the importance of cooperation by saying that, at the end of the day, conflicts are solved by talking to one other.

Despite increasing awareness and initiatives for education, today, there are still 17 million children who do not go to school. Brende noted that education is prerequisite for development and to increase the level of welfare in society, emphasising that the world cannot afford to lose whole generations to strife and conflict.

The nature of today's conflicts complicates the process of peacemaking. Proxy wars fueled by external actors add a layer of complexity to already complicated civil conflicts. According to Brende, one of the first things to be done is that external actors have to be held accountable. As long as root causes are ignored, political solutions will be difficult.

Conclusion

The importance of state participation and international cooperation in times of crisis were highlighted in this session. The media's role in shaping perceptions was also emphasised. In conclusion, they drew a more hopeful picture for the future, recalling the past trials that humanity has collectively overcome. Collective mobilisation was emphasised as the most important first step in finding solutions to the problems the world is currently facing. The fact that innocent human beings are unwillingly caught up in the heart of conflicts was reiterated by all of the speakers. Finally, the panellists concurred on the point that, ultimately, the solution to the world's ills rests on the prioritisation of human security ahead of short-term political goals.

