



INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

**The Arab Spring and Beyond:
Human Mobility, Forced Migration and Institutional Responses**

Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, 20 March 2012

Migration in its various forms has been a key part of the popular uprisings that spread across North Africa and the Levant in 2011. The columns of vehicles escaping from cities and villages under siege in Libya, the boats crammed with Tunisians crossing the Mediterranean Sea and landing on the island of Lampedusa, and the numerous Egyptian émigrés and university students returning to Cairo to join the protests in Tahrir Square are a few examples of the ways in which human mobility intersects current events in North Africa and the Levant.

The 'North Africa in Transition: Mobility, Forced Migration and Humanitarian Crises' workshop organised by the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) and the International Migration Institute (IMI) at the University of Oxford on 6 May 2011 offered a platform to begin exploring how these events have impacted existing patterns of mobility in the region and generated new 'mixed' migration flows. Panelists observed that the regional crises had prompted some economic migrants to become forced migrants; pushed forced migrants into irregular migration channels; and made multiple migrant groups, including seasonal and long established migrants, 'involuntarily immobile'. Panelists also observed that apart from large-scale displacement within and from Libya, migration patterns from most other countries, such as Tunisia and Egypt, seemed to have remained remarkably unaffected by the political turmoil, in stark contrast with predictions made by some politicians, journalists and researchers about mass displacement.

To build on this event and take stock of further political and economic developments in the region, the RSC, IMI and the Oxford Diasporas Programme are organising a second international symposium on migration and forced migration in North Africa and the Levant on 20 March 2012 with the participation of international scholars, practitioners and policy makers. This second workshop will examine the extent to which the Arab Spring has shifted migration dynamics and migration and refugee governance.

The workshop will address the following questions: How have varying processes of political, economic, and social contestation in North Africa and the Levant affected human mobility? To what extent have events transformed or impacted the institutional behaviour and responses of international organisations and civil society groups working in the field of migration and refugee protection? How have publics and governments in North Africa and the Levant positioned or repositioned themselves in relation to issues of asylum and migration?

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