

# THREE EMERGENT MIGRATIONS: AN EPOCHAL CHANGE

**Saskia Sassen**

- *Examining recent migrant flows offers a window into the larger dynamics that catapult people into migrating*

## ABSTRACT

*New types of migratory flows are emerging, and they should not be confused with long-established ones. Examining migrant flows at their outset allows us to better understand the complex dynamics behind them. They tell us something about a larger mix of conditions that will only continue to grow, from new types of war and violence to massive losses of habitat. They invite us to recognise these larger structural conditions rather than just the existence of these flows themselves. Here Saskia Sassen analyses three new, and each very different, migrant flows, specifically: (1) unaccompanied minors from Central America that head to the United States of America; (2) the surge in Rohingyas, a muslim minority fleeing from Myanmar; and (3) the migration towards Europe originating mostly in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and several African countries, notably Eritrea and Somalia.*

*While often it is households that play the crucial role in producing an economic calculus that allocates particular family members to the migration option, Sassen notes that these flows are different. They emerge from sharply delineated conditions operating, respectively, at the city level, at the regional level, and at a global geopolitical level.*

## KEYWORDS

Unaccompanied children | Persecuted muslims | War | Urban violence | Plantations | Loss of habitat

A key assumption organising my work on migrations is that they happen inside systems, even when generated by external forces.<sup>1</sup> In the case of the United States of America (U.S.), this can be seen in some of the migrations that followed its military operations – developed in the Pentagon, the U.S. Department of State and the White House. For instance, the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic after the election of the socialist Bosch, built the bridges with the U.S. that led to a whole new migration of mostly middle class Dominicans to the East Coast of the U.S.<sup>2</sup> Further, that migrations happen inside systems also helps explain why they start at some point, even when a household or a community has long been poor. Most major migrations of the last two centuries, and often even earlier, can be shown to start at some point – they have beginnings, they are not simply there from the start.

Here I focus on three flows that can be seen as a particular set of new migrations that emerged over the last two years.<sup>3</sup> New migrations are often far smaller than ongoing older migrations, but catching them at the beginning offers a window into larger dynamics that catapult people into migrating. Emergent migrations have long been of interest to me: this is the migrant as indicator of a history in the making. Once a flow is marked by chain migration, it takes far less to explain that flow. My focus is mostly on that larger context within which a new flow takes off.<sup>4</sup>

Here I examine three emergent flows. Each is easily seen as part of older ongoing flows. My focus is on the specifics of each of these new flows. One is the sharp increase in the migration of unaccompanied minors from Central America – specifically, from Honduras, Salvador and Guatemala. The second is the surge in Rohingyas, a muslim minority fleeing from Myanmar where it has long lived and coexisted peacefully with the mostly Buddhist population until a few years ago. The third is the migration towards Europe originating mostly in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and several African countries, notably Eritrea and Somalia. These are three very different types of flows, and the third one, in turn, contains multiple diverse flows. Yet each points to a larger context of origin marked by mostly extreme conditions that can be outlined, or at least made visible because it is not simply part of a chain migration where households may play the crucial role producing an economic calculus that allocates particular family members to the migration option.

These three new flows can be described as emerging from situations larger than the internal logics of households. They emerge from sharply delineated conditions operating, respectively, at the city level, at the regional level, and at a global geopolitical level. Let me add promptly that the city and regional levels are frequently embedded in a larger set of dynamics, but in the cases focused on here, there is also an immediate direct effect at these sub-national levels.

Extreme violence is one key condition explaining these migrations. But so are thirty years of international development policies that have left much land dead (due to mining, land grabs, plantation agriculture) and expelled whole communities from their habitats. Moving to the slums of large cities has increasingly become the last option, and for those who can afford it, migration. This multi-decade history of destructions and expulsions has reached extreme levels made visible in vast stretches of land and water bodies that are now dead. At least some of the localised wars

and conflicts arise from these destructions, in a sort of fight for habitat. And climate change further reduces livable ground. These are all issues I develop at length in *Expulsions*.<sup>5</sup>

In what follows I focus on key features of a variety of emergent flows, each marked by extreme conditions.<sup>6</sup> While emergent, these conditions could eventually become overwhelming – to existing immigration and refugee policy systems, to receiving areas, and to the men, women and children who constitute these flows.

## 1 • When Minors go Solo: Central America

Central America is one of the key regions where the flight of unaccompanied minors rose sharply over the last two years.<sup>7</sup> One major factor behind this flight of minors is the rapidly escalating urban violence of the last few years. In my reading, this urban violence is in good part due to the destruction of small holder rural economies due to land grabs to develop plantations, mining, and loss of life of the land itself due to the latter. Escaping to the cities was the only option for more and more rural people, but the cities themselves had little development generating jobs. Other major emigration hotspots, notably South East Asia and those arriving from Africa and Asia via the Mediterranean region consist largely of men, even as the shares of women and children are growing. While Central America has long been an emigration region, for both political and economic reasons, this flow of unaccompanied children is new. They are driven by extreme fear because of the extreme urban violence that has erupted over the last few years.

The available data show that an estimated 63,000 unaccompanied minors, most from Central America, crossed the southern border of the U.S. between 1 October 2013 and 31 July 2014, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.<sup>8</sup> This is nearly twice the number of child migrants who came during the same period the previous year. The estimate is that by the end of 2014, up to 90,000 unaccompanied children had crossed the border with the U.S.;<sup>9</sup> there is no count for those who may have died on this long trip or given up and stayed somewhere in Mexico, or were kidnapped to work in plantations or mines. In 2015 there was a fall in U.S. crossings as the U.S. government asked the Mexican government to control its southern border. But in the first few months of 2016 the numbers for unaccompanied minors crossing the U.S. border jumped sharply once again.

Gang and police violence are the main factors pushing youth out, according to statements by the children themselves, by researchers, social workers and other professionals in this field, and by government experts.<sup>10</sup> In 2014, 98 per cent of unaccompanied minors arriving at the border were from Honduras (28 per cent), Mexico (25 per cent), Guatemala (24 per cent), and El Salvador (21 per cent). This breakdown represents a significant shift: prior to 2012, more than 75 per cent of unaccompanied children were from Mexico.<sup>11</sup> In 2015, 35 per cent of unaccompanied minors arriving at the border were from Guatemala, 28 per cent from Mexico, 24 per cent from El Salvador, and 14 per cent from Honduras.<sup>12</sup>

Salvadoran and Honduran children come from some of the most violent regions in the world. They fear that violence more than the well-known risks of moving alone across Mexico and the U.S. border deserts. According to data collected by the Pew Research Center, San Pedro Sula in Honduras was the world's murder capital in 2013, with a homicide rate of 187 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2013, driven by a surge in gang and drug trafficking violence.<sup>13</sup> Honduras's nation-wide murder rate was 90 per 100,000 in 2012, the highest in the world.<sup>14</sup> In 2011, El Salvador was not far behind, at 70, ranking it then second in terms of homicides in Latin America.<sup>15</sup> Even with a significant drop in the murder rate from 70 in 2011 to 41 in 2012, El Salvador is only surpassed by Honduras, Venezuela and Belize in the entire world. Further, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador are among the poorest nations in Latin America with 30 per cent, 26 per cent, and 17 per cent of their people living on less than \$2 a day, according to the World Bank.<sup>16</sup>

This combination of elements contributes to explain high emigration among both children and adults. Most extreme is Salvador, with up to 18 per cent of the population leaving, which is twice as high as in Honduras and Guatemala. Except for very small countries such as Trinidad Tobago, so-called "emigration countries" rarely reach these levels. Central American migrations are rather well documented by researchers and the press. This is partly so because the migrations from south of the U.S. border have been going on for a very long time.

Smugglers prey on potential migrants, young and old. They are after business, and the proliferation of smuggling gangs has raised competition for the trade, so they paint a far rosier picture than Obama's immigration policy offers. They often tell minors that once they are there, as minors they will be processed to become citizens or regular immigrants, which is incorrect. Their misrepresentations have evidently contributed to the surge in emigration of minors - and even adults. This is new. Mostly, in the past, smugglers (often referred to as "coyotes") doing their trade crossing the U.S. border were not quite so business-like: they were hired for a given function at a given price and that was that.

The sudden high numbers, the lack of facilities to accommodate minors in a system geared to adults, and strong anti-immigration sentiment may have contributed to a major change in U.S. policy. The change led to a drastic fall of 60 per cent in the numbers of *apprehended* unaccompanied minors in September 2014 compared to a year earlier.<sup>17</sup> But in fact the number of departures from Central America may not have fallen much, if at all. What has changed are the rules of the game. Under pressure from the U.S., Mexico has begun arresting and deporting tens of thousands of Central Americans long before they reach the U.S. border. What has changed for these migrants is the treatment they are getting at Mexico's southern border: it is even more brutal than before. When we just examine departures, as distinct from entries into the U.S., the partial evidence signals that departures may still be high though they may eventually decline.

Here are the numbers. Between October 2014 and April 2015, Mexico detained 92,889 Central American migrants. During the same period, the U.S. detained 70,226

non-Mexican migrants, mostly from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. But it had detained 159,103 non-Mexican migrants in the same period a year earlier, which was more than triple the number detained by Mexico before the new policy.<sup>18</sup> Data from Mexico's National Immigration Institute show that 51,565 "migrants" from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador were deported between January and April 2015 from Mexico's southern border back home, up from 28,736 during that period in 2014; deportation of Guatemalans rose 124 per cent, followed by Salvadorans at 79 per cent and Hondurans at 40 per cent.<sup>19</sup>

Active detention efforts by Mexico's guards at its southern frontier can be brutal. In an interview with the New York Times, Ruben Figueroa of the Mesoamerican Migrant Movement,<sup>20</sup> a migrant advocacy organisation, finds that this strong persecution by federal authorities has resulted in accidents where migrant minors have died and been injured in clashes between human smugglers and police. It has also led to imprisonment, to deaths, and to these unaccompanied children disappearing - some wind up in reasonable places such as church shelters or are taken in by generous households. Others are languishing as street kids. Yet others have disappeared without a trace. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has recently expressed its "concern over stepped-up actions reportedly being taken against migrant persons" that were put in place after Mexico initiated its Southern Border Plan last year under pressure from the U.S.<sup>21</sup>

The southern border of Mexico has become the terrifying Mediterranean for these Central American unaccompanied children (and also adults). They wind up in jail, they get beaten, they lose limbs, they die. But some, as seems to be the case in all these migrations, get through. U.S. data shows that as of June 2015, unaccompanied children keep arriving, even if in much smaller numbers; some enter undetected and uncounted.<sup>22</sup> It all suggests that the violence back home keeps being a reason to leave, and not even the long train ride on what is known as *La Bestia* ("The Beast") or the Mexican police are a full deterrent.

## 2 • South East Asia's Refugee-Seekers - The Andaman Sea

We are witnessing the shaping of a new extreme phase in South East Asia, a region that has long seen slavery and the smuggling of desperate refugees. The massive post-Vietnam war refugee flows have mostly sorted themselves out - in good and bad ways. This new emergent crisis arises out of a different mix of conditions; it is not a continuation of that earlier crisis.

Two very recent facts signal alarming developments. One concerns several small Muslim communities escaping evictions from their land and persecution for their being muslim. Most visible is the case of the Rohingya, whom the government makes a point of calling Bengali, signaling they should "return" to Bangladesh, "where they belong" even though they have been in Myanmar for many centuries.<sup>23</sup>

Here I focus mostly on the Rohingya. There are about 1.1 million living in Myanmar: they are not recognised as citizens. According to U.S. Department of State, at least 160,000 have been evacuated to neighboring countries since 2012.<sup>24</sup>

This active persecution coincides with Myanmar's opening and re-incorporation into the community of states. In some limited sense, it is becoming a more open society, as has been widely reported in the media. But the long term mistrust of the Rohingya, an old Muslim minority that has been part of Myanmar for centuries, has turned brutal.

In my reading of the facts, this somewhat sudden open anger at the Rohingya is at least in part connected to the massive land grabs for mining and agriculture. The country's opening and its enabling of foreign investors coincides with a somewhat sudden vicious persecution of the Rohingya by a particular group of Buddhist monks. That it is these particular Buddhist monks who have led this assault and, further, led them to rewrite some parts of the Buddhist doctrine so as to justify the expulsion of the Rohingyas from their land, and even the killing of Muslims, does point to a larger vested economic interests that are likely to go well beyond these monks.

Could this signal a deeper unsettlement? That Buddhists should become brutal persecutors of a small, peaceful Muslim minority may be only one of several other indicators pointing to a struggle for land. Could this violence signal something about the loss of habitat? There is considerable evidence in various areas of South East Asia about significant evictions of small farmers from their land to make way for mining, plantations, and office buildings.<sup>25</sup> Foreign firms have been among the major investors since Myanmar opened its economy to foreign investment. Indeed, freed opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, has lost considerable support among the rural population precisely because she has not contested these land grabs (at least publicly) or openly supported the local movements against land-grabs.

One key first public reckoning came through press-reporting in the summer of 2015 about an estimated 7,000 people in dozens of overloaded vessels floating aimlessly for up to two months in the vast Andaman Sea.<sup>26</sup> This sea is bordered on the east by Myanmar and Thailand, and on the south, by Malaysia and Indonesia. These, and perhaps other, regional governments were aware of this surge in fleeing people but had made it clear they were going to push them back to sea if they dared to land. It was the press that sounded the alert about these ships with their human cargo piled up over each other, with no access to water or food. When the facts went public, Indonesia, mostly, took in about half of that estimated population, forced by the global uproar as the horrifying details went viral. The struggle to get countries to accept them was not easy. Their rescue added even more information about the horrific conditions. And that rescue still left an estimated 3,000 floating in that vast ocean in precarious vessels.<sup>27</sup>

These 7,000 are but one component of a desperate search for bare life on the part of a rapidly growing number of men, women and children. Even as those ships were brought to land, other ships crammed with Rohingya and Bangladeshis, were “found off Malaysia's

coast Wednesday', an activist and an official said, as the international community called on Southeast Asian governments to open their borders and step up search-and-rescue efforts. Thousands of migrants are believed to be stranded at sea.<sup>28</sup> Malaysia turned back at least one boat that Wednesday, loaded with 800 plus people; yet another aimless floating human cargo in the Andaman Sea.

Under pressure from international bodies, Southeast Asian nations agreed on 29 May 2015, at a meeting in Bangkok to set up an anti-trafficking task force and to intensify search and rescue efforts to help vulnerable "boat people" stranded in the region's seas.<sup>29</sup> This was a first.

### 3 • Europe: At the Intersection of Eastern and Southern Flows

Europe has emerged as the destination of a broad range of new refugee flows. The Mediterranean has long been and continues to be a key route for long-established migrant and refugee flows. Here I only focus on a set of new flows that took off in 2014 and need to be distinguished from the ongoing older flows of, mostly, migrants. The Mediterranean, especially on its eastern side, is now the site where refugees, smugglers, and the European Union (E.U.) each deploy their own specific logics and together have produced a massive multifaceted crisis. One facet was the sudden surge in the numbers of refugees in late 2014, a possibility not foreseen by the pertinent E.U. authorities given that the wars they were escaping had been going on for several years. A second one was that the crisis became a business opportunity for smugglers that would expand over the ensuing year to reach an estimated \$2 billion in income by mid-2015, which is now estimated to have grown to \$5 billion.<sup>30</sup> One feeder was that the smugglers benefitted from keeping the flows going, persuading their potential clients/victims, that everything would be fine once they reached Europe. A third was the major crisis in Italy and, especially, Greece, two countries already burdened by their struggling economies, with Greece the destination for over a million refuge-seekers by early 2016 who had to be sheltered, fed, and processed.

And yet, the facts on the ground in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea, and others, were all familiar. If anything, the surprise should have been that the surge in refugees did not happen sooner. The UNHCR, among others had been recording the escalating numbers of the internally displaced and of refugees.<sup>31</sup> The conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria were not going to end anytime soon. Nor will those in Somalia or in South Sudan, each with their specific character. The brutality of these conflicts, with their full disregard for international humanitarian law, indicated that sooner or later people would start fleeing the violence.<sup>32</sup>

For three decades Afghanistan has produced the greatest number of refugees, according to the UNHCR: It has 2.7 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate.<sup>33</sup> Now in the past year Syria has taken its place, and one new refugee in four worldwide in 2015 is now a Syrian. Syria is an extreme case. According to UNHCR, 7.7 million Syrians had left the country by September 2015, but those numbers keep growing.<sup>34</sup> Iraq has 3.4 million recognised

refugees.<sup>35</sup> Its situation deteriorated further when much territory, including its second city, Mosul, was conquered by Isis, adding to the disastrous effects and religious divisions that became extreme with the west's invasion of the country in 2003.<sup>36</sup> More than 1.2 million Pakistanis have been displaced by insurgencies in north-west Pakistan, according to the UN;<sup>37</sup> further, Pakistan has seen acute terrorist violence for many years and which continues.<sup>38</sup> Somalia remains the third largest refugee producing country at 1.1 million refugees.<sup>39</sup>

The humanitarian crisis is escalating and spreading. According to Human Rights Watch, over the last two years about 25 million people were driven from their homes, including almost 12 million Syrians, 4.2 million Iraqis, 3.6 million Afghans, 2.2 million Somalis, and almost half a million Eritreans.<sup>40</sup> Further, UNHCR has found that there are also far more unaccompanied children in the recent flows into Europe than were expected. To these flows we need to add the half million waiting in northern Libya, at any given time in the last two years, for ships to take them across the Mediterranean. According to UNHCR,<sup>41</sup> the number of global refugees is now over 60 million, with some tentative estimates reaching 80 million by early 2016. This is the largest ever since the humanitarian system was put into place. Left out of this count are many of the internally displaced and the growing number of undeclared or not yet counted refugees; this might be the case with some of those crossing the Mediterranean.

There are multiple histories at work in the flows to Europe. And yet, seen together there is a distinct logic that emerges: expulsion. And if anything this logic of expulsion is expanding. The civil war in Yemen that started in 2015, the resuming of the Turkish-Kurdish civil war in July 2015 (a war that has killed 40,000 people since 1984), and the rise of Boko Haram, the Islamist extremist group fighting a brutal war in northern Nigeria and Chad.<sup>42</sup> Significant is also the collapse of the political and economic order in Libya, which has produced a massive security vacuum. And land-grabbing in Sub-Saharan Africa is generating a whole new politics of food,<sup>43</sup> with the numbers of the disadvantaged growing rapidly. These trends are enormous challenges to the international and to the European system.

#### 4 • Conclusion: In search of survival

The flows I have described are mostly refugee flows even if not formally recognised by the international system. They are to be distinguished from the 250 million plus regular immigrants in the world today, who are mostly modest middle class and, increasingly, high level professionals functioning in the global economy. Today's immigrants are not the poorest in their countries of origin. Nor are they generated by the extreme push factors feeding the three sets of flows described here. And these refugees, in turn, are also not usually the poorest in their countries, even if leaving their home countries leaves them without any resources; many have advanced educations and started out with resources.

These new refugees are one component of a larger population of displaced people whose numbers are approaching 80 million. They stand out by their sudden surging numbers and

by the extreme conditions in the areas where they originate. Extreme war zones, such as Syria and Iraq, and extreme destruction of local economies, are two key factors explaining this surge. Climate change is likely to have extreme effects in some of these regions due to what might be described as development malpractice – such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank policies of the 1980s and 1990s that had disastrous consequences for so many of the local economies and societies in the Global South. It all amounts to a massive loss of habitat, and migrations will be one mode of survival.

## NOTES

---

1 • See Saskia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

2 • This is the migration that takes off after the invasion by President Reagan of the Dominican Republic after the election of a social democrat (Bosch) to the presidency. It is completely unrelated to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century of activists from the printer union who left the Dominican Republic for the U.S. to escape persecution from their own government.

3 • For a fully developed argument and empirical documentation please see the author's "A Massive Loss of Habitat: New Drivers for Migration," *Sociology of Development*, forthcoming; Sassen, *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press/Belknap, 2014); and Sassen, "A Savage Sorting of Winners and Losers: Contemporary Versions of Primitive Accumulation," *Globalizations* 7, nos. 1-2 (Mar.-Jun. 2010): 23-50.

4 • See Sassen, *The Mobility*, 1988; Sassen, *Guests and Aliens* (New York: New Press, 1999); Sassen, *Expulsions*, 2014.

5 • See Sassen, *Expulsions*, 2014, chapters 1 and 2.

6 • See footnote 3 for sources of data and details.

7 • Let me note also that the number of apprehensions of Mexican nationals decreased by 18 per cent from FY 2014 to FY 2015, according to stats from the Department of Homeland Security found here ("Department Is Better Targeting

Its Enforcement Efforts To Prioritize Convicted Criminals And Threats To Public Safety, Border Security, And National Security," US Department of Department of Homeland Security, Dec. 22, 2015, accessed May 30, 2016, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2015/12/22/dhs-releases-end-fiscal-year-2015-statistics>), under sub-heading U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Enforcement Efforts at and between Ports of Entry.

8 • Danielle Renwick, "The U.S. Child Migrant Influx." CFR Backgrounder, Council on Foreign Relations, Sept. 1, 2014, accessed May 21, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/immigration/us-child-migrant-influx/p33380>.

9 • Diana Villiers Negroponte, "The Surge in Unaccompanied Children from Central America: A Humanitarian Crisis at Our Border." Brookings, July 2, 2014, accessed May 21, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/07/02-unaccompanied-children-central-america-negroponte>.

10 • See, e.g., Spencer Ackerman, Tom Dart, Daniel Hernandez, and David Smith, "Immigration Activists Condemn US Deportation Asylum Seekers." Guardian, January 4, 2016, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jan/04/immigration-activists-condemn-deportations-asylum-central-america>; Jonathan Hiskey, Mary Malone, and Diana Orces,

"Violence and Migration in Central America." AmericasBarometer Insights Series, 2014, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/IO901en.pdf>; Jana Sladkova, "Stratification of Undocumented Migrant Journeys: Honduran Case." International Migration, December 22, 2013, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/imig.12141/abstract;jsessionid=76BDEB06E3621C872631C5929E6CE4A9.f04t02>; Elisa Wiener Bravo, *The Concentration of Land Ownership in Latin America: An Approach to Current Problems* (Rome: International Land Coalition, 2011); and Edilma L. Yearwood, "Let Us Respect the Children: The Plight of Unaccompanied Youth," *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* 27, no. 4 (2014): 205-6.

11 • See Muzaffar Chishti and Faye Hipsman, "Dramatic Surge in the Arrival of Unaccompanied Children Has Deep Roots and No Simple Solutions." Migration Policy Institute, Policy Beat, June 13, 2014, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/dramatic-surge-arrival-unaccompanied-children-has-deep-roots-and-no-simple-solutions>.

12 • "Southwest Border Unaccompanied Alien Children Statistics FY 2016," U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2016, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children/fy-2016>.

13 • "UNODC Homicide Statistics 2013," UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global Study on Homicide, 2013, accessed January 13, 2016, <https://www.unodc.org/gsh/en/data.html>.

14 • "Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 People)," World Bank, 2015, accessed January 10, 2016, [http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?order=wbapi\\_data\\_value\\_2013+wbapi\\_data\\_value+wbapi\\_data\\_value-last&sort=desc](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?order=wbapi_data_value_2013+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=desc).

15 • "UNODC Homicide Statistics 2013," UNODC, 2013.

16 • "Latin America and Caribbean," World Bank, 2015, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/region/LAC>.

17 • Elise Foley, "Mexico is Now Detaining More Central Americans than the U.S." Huffington Post, June 12, 2015, accessed May 9, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/12/mexico-deporting-central-america\\_n\\_7571174.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/12/mexico-deporting-central-america_n_7571174.html); Secretaría de Gobernación, Instituto Nacional de Migración, n.d., accessed May 30, 2016, <http://www.gob.mx/inm>; and "Mexico Now Detains More Central American Migrants Than The United States," WOLA Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas, June 11, 2015, accessed May 30, 2016, [http://www.wola.org/news/mexico\\_now\\_detains\\_more\\_central\\_american\\_migrants\\_than\\_the\\_united\\_states](http://www.wola.org/news/mexico_now_detains_more_central_american_migrants_than_the_united_states).

18 • Foley, "Mexico is Now Detaining...," 2015.

19 • See also data from Mexico's National Immigration Institute aggregated by diverse media outlets (e.g. Associated Press Mexico, "Deportation In Mexico Up 79 Per Cent In First Four Months of 2015." Guardian, June 11, 2015, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/11/deportations-mexico-central-america>; "Fuerte Incremento de Las Deportaciones Desde México," Univision, Jun. 11, 2015, accessed May 30, 2016, <http://www.univision.com/noticias/noticias-de-mexico/fuerte-incremento-de-las-deportaciones-desde-mexico>.

20 • Randal C. Archibold, "On Southern Border, Mexico Faces a Crisis of Its Own." The New York Times, July 20, 2014, accessed January 10, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/20/world/americas/on-southern-border-mexico-faces-crisis-of-its-own.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/20/world/americas/on-southern-border-mexico-faces-crisis-of-its-own.html?_r=0).

21 • "IACHR Expresses Concern over Mexico's Southern Border Plan," Organization of American States, June 10, 2015, accessed May 20, 2016, [http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media\\_center/PReleases/2015/065.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2015/065.asp).

22 • WOLA, "Mexico Now Detains...," June 11, 2015.

23 • Eleanor Albert, "The Rohingya Migrant Crisis." CFR Backgrounders, Council on Foreign Relations, June 17, 2015, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/burmamyanmar/rohingya-migrant-crisis/p36651>;

- and Summer Borwick, Mark Brough, Robert D. Schweitzer, Jane Shakespeare-Finch, and Lyn Vromans, "Well-being of Refugees from Burma: A Salutogenic Perspective," *International Migration* 51, no. 5 (2013): 92-105.
- 24 • "Atrocities Prevention Report," U.S. Department of State, March 17, 2016, accessed May 30, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/254807.htm>.
- 25 • See generally "Southeast Asia Migrant Crisis," *The Citizen*, May 29, 2015, accessed January 11, 2016, [http://citizen.co.za/afp\\_feed\\_article/myanmar-bangladesh-to-address-root-causes-of-migrant-crisis/](http://citizen.co.za/afp_feed_article/myanmar-bangladesh-to-address-root-causes-of-migrant-crisis/); Vanessa Gorra and Roel R. Ravanera, *Commercial Pressures on Land in Asia: An Overview* (Rome: International Land Coalition, 2011); and Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), 2015, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>.
- 26 • Joe Cochrine, "Indonesia and Malaysia Agree to Care for Stranded Migrants." *The New York Times*, May 20, 2015, accessed May 21, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32822508>.
- 27 • Scott Neuman, "Malaysia Orders Navy, Coast Guard to Rescue Rohingyas at Sea." *NPR*, May 21, 2015, accessed May 21, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/05/21/408457733/malaysia-orders-navy-coast-guard-to-rescue-rohingyas-at-sea>.
- 28 • "Another Boat Found At Sea As Rohingya Refugee Crisis Deepens," *Chicago Tribune*, May 13, 2015, accessed May 30, 2016, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-rohingya-refugees-20150513-story.html>.
- 29 • Called The Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean, it brought together 17 countries from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and elsewhere in Asia, along with the United States, Switzerland and international bodies such as the UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency, and the IOM.
- 30 • Rick Gladstone, "Smugglers Made at Least \$5 Billion Last Year in Europe Migrant Crisis." *The New York Times*, May 17, 2016, accessed May 30, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/18/world/europe/migrants-refugees-smugglers.html>.
- 31 • "World at War: UNHCR Global Trends 2014 – Forced Displacement in 2014," UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2015, accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/556725e69.html>.
- 32 • See, e.g., James Hampshire, "Europe's Migration Crisis," *Political Insight* 6, no. 3 (2015):8-11; IDMC, 2015; Ibrahim Sirkeci, Deniz Eroglu Utku, and Pinar Yazgan, "Syrian Crisis and Migration," *Migration Letters* 12, no. 3 (2015): 181-92.
- 33 • "World at War," UNHCR, 2015. According to the Afghan government, 80 per cent of the country is not safe. That is because extremist groups such as the Taliban and Islamic State's local affiliate are waging insurgencies in many provinces.
- 34 • According to a report by the Washington Post (Karam Alhamad, Vera Mironova, and Sam Whitt, "In Two Charts, This Is What Refugees Say about Why They're Leaving Syria Now." *Washington Post*, Sept. 28, 2015, accessed January 11, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/09/28/in-two-charts-this-is-what-refugees-say-about-why-they-are-leaving-syria-now/>), among those who left, 57 per cent of ordinary civilians say that they left because it is simply too dangerous to stay. Others give more elaborate versions of the same reason. Some left because the Assad government occupied their towns (43 per cent) or destroyed their homes (32 per cent) or because they were threatened with violence if they did not leave (35 per cent). Many left at the urging of family (48 per cent) and friends (38 per cent) or following the lead from their neighbors (32 per cent). Others point to the increasingly high costs of finding even basic access to food and other necessities (32 per cent) and left once they finally ran out of money (16 per cent).
- 35 • See, e.g., Patrick Kingsley, "Refugee Crisis: Apart from Syrians, Who Is Traveling to Europe?" *Guardian*, September 10, 2015, accessed January 11, 2016,

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/10/refugee-crisis-apart-from-syrians-who-else-is-travelling-to-europe>.

36 • Patrick Cockburn, "Refugee Crisis: Where Are All These People Coming from and Why?" Independent, September 7, 2015, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/refugee-crisis-where-are-all-these-people-coming-from-and-why-10490425.html>.

37 • "2015 UNHCR Country Operations Profile-Pakistan," UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2015, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e487016.html>.

38 • See "Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan, 2003-2016," South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2016, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm>.

39 • "World at War," UNHCR, 2015.

40 • "Why do People Risk Their Lives to Cross the Mediterranean?," Human Rights Watch, July 28, 2015, accessed May 21, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/28/why-do-people-risk-their-lives-cross-mediterranean>. Eritrea is somewhat different (e.g. "Despite Border Crackdown in Ethiopia, Migrants Still Risk Lives to Leave," Guardian, August 25, 2015, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/aug/25/despite-border-crackdown-ethiopia-migrants-risk-lives>; Patrick Kingsley, "It's Not at War, but Up to 3% of Its People Have Fled. What Is Going On in Eritrea?" Guardian, July 22, 2015, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/22/eritrea-migrants-child-soldier-fled-what-is-going>; and Vittorio Longhi, "Refugees: Ask the EU to Stop Funding the Eritrean Dictatorship!" Change.org, 2014, accessed January 9, 2016,

<https://www.change.org/p/free-eritrea-support-democracy-prevent-the-exodus-and-further-deaths-at-sea>). The 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia remains an issue even though the war ended with the Algiers Accord in 2001. Ethiopia does not recognise the border demarcated under the agreement, and Eritrea considers some territory that remains under Ethiopian control as illegally occupied. The state has used this disagreement with Ethiopia to justify the mass conscription of its citizens, often lasting a lifetime. It is this that has pushed almost a million Eritreans to leave the country (See e.g. Zachary Laub, "Authoritarianism in Eritrea and the Migrant Crisis." CFR Backgrounder, Council on Foreign Relations, November 11, 2015, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/eritrea/authoritarianism-eritrea-migrant-crisis/p37239>; and more generally, "2015 UNHCR Subregional Operations Profile-East and Horn of Africa," UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2015, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e4838e6.html>).

41 • "Facts and Figures about Refugees," UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2015, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.ie/about-unhcr/facts-and-figures-about-refugees>.

42 • "Southeast Asia Migrant Crisis," The Citizen, 2015; Monica Mark, "Boko Haram's 'Deadliest Massacre': 2,000 Feared Dead in Nigeria." Guardian, January 10, 2015, accessed January 13, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/09/boko-haram-deadliest-massacre-baga-nigeria>.

43 • See e.g. Ruth Hall, "Land Grabbing in Africa and the New Politics of Food." Future Agricultures, Policy Brief 41, June, 2011, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.future-agricultures.org/publications/research-and-analysis/1427-land-grabbing-in-africa-and-the-new-politics-of-food/file>; and Sassen, *Expulsions*, 2014, chapter 2.

**SASKIA SASSEN** – *Netherlands*

Saskia Sassen is the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology and for many years chaired The Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University. Her recent books are *Expulsions* (Harvard University Press/Belknap 2014), *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton University Press 2008), *A Sociology of Globalization* (W.W. Norton 2007), and the 4th fully updated edition of *Cities in a World Economy* (Sage 2011). Her books are translated into over twenty languages. She is currently working on *Ungoverned Territories?* (Under contract with Harvard University Press). Her comments have appeared in *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *Newsweek International*, *OpenDemocracy*, *Vanguardia*, *Clarín*, *the Financial Times*, among others. She is the recipient of multiple honorary doctorates and other honours.

email: [sjs2@columbia.edu](mailto:sjs2@columbia.edu)

Received in April 2016.  
Original in English.



"This journal is published under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License"