

Humanitarian security in Jordan's Azraq Camp

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Abstract

Azraq, a new camp for Syrian refugees in the Jordanian desert, presents an unprecedented integration of humanitarian service delivery and harsh security measures. I argue that Azraq's 'innovative' order can only be explained in reference to three security claims that international refugee aid answers to: the claim to secure Syrian refugees, the claim to secure the Jordanian state and the claim to secure aid workers. Implementing these claims entails contradictory practices, which should create dilemmas for humanitarian aid, yet in Azraq these practices merge with each other. This merging (or integration) is aided by the humanitarian sector's eager embrace of hi-tech solutions, especially digital data management. The article contributes to the growing debate about how security is articulated in the humanitarian arena by placing this debate's key findings into conversation within a richly researched study of Azraq's 'material assemblage' (Hilhorst and Jansen, 2010; Meiches, 2015). Further, the article emphasizes the importance of the under-researched area of aid organizations' own security management.

Keywords

Camps, humanitarianism, international security, securitization

Introduction

This article contributes to the growing debate about how security is articulated in the humanitarian arena (Hilhorst and Jansen, 2010). It places the debate's key arguments into conversation within one particular case: Azraq Camp in Jordan, which was opened in 2014 for Syrian refugees. Azraq here serves as an example to illuminate one instance of what Eyal Weizman has termed the 'humanitarian present', together with the security practices that shape that present (Weizman and Manfredi, 2013; Weizman, 2012).¹

My central argument is that Azraq's order can only be explained in reference to three security claims that international humanitarian refugee aid answers to: the claim to secure Syrian refugees, the claim to secure the Jordanian state and the claim to secure aid workers. These three claims contradict each other: state security strives towards reducing refugees' rights, and aid worker security requires that refugees be treated with suspicion and from a distance. Both these demands

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challenge the humanitarian narrative about refugees, which emphasizes their vulnerability, human rights and innocence. I argue that Azraq's order manages – barely – to integrate these contradictory claims in a way that allows humanitarian aid to continue, despite the highly visible tensions that the three competing claims create for humanitarian principles. The article examines several items and processes that exist in the camp, to investigate how precisely its 'material assemblage' achieves the layering of refugee, state and aid worker security into a single order (Meiches, 2015).

The aid sector's eager embrace of digital technology eases the integration of the three security claims. Azraq Camp's innovative camp management combines different instances of 'Big Data' technology. By tracing how digital technologies' potential for efficacy, which the aid sector celebrates, also contains possibilities for more nuanced surveillance and manipulation, this article throws scepticism on the aid sector's ability to manage its 'digital revolution' in a way that ensures that these technologies do not contribute to greater exclusion of impoverished populations. In Jordan, the aid sector has introduced several digital technologies that have become tools to help the Jordanian government mark the Syrian refugee population as distinct.

To present my case, I rely first on the idea that humanitarian aid layers the 'care and control' of populations (Pallister-Wilkins, 2014) and second on the insight that a growing securitization of poverty has heightened the tension between considering the poor as being 'at risk' and simultaneously seeing them as 'a risk' (Aradau, 2004). As an original extension of these concepts, I emphasize the growing importance and professionalization of the aid industry's internal security management: the strategies developed to protect aid workers themselves. Particularly in the Middle East, increasingly deadly attacks against aid workers have sharpened the contradiction between caring for populations and fearing them at the same time.

The article builds on research that I have conducted on the Iraqi and Syrian refugee crises since 2005, and on the results of my current research project – the security management strategies of aid organizations worldwide. For this latter project, in 2015 I conducted field research in Jordan's newly built Azraq and Zaatari refugee camps. Access to Azraq is highly circumscribed and very little research has been conducted on the camp.

The academic debates about security and humanitarianism are summarized in the first part of this article. The second part argues that international refugee aid, at least its hegemonic version under the auspices of the UN refugee agency the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), aims to secure three objects: refugee populations, states and humanitarian workers themselves. The third part analyses Azraq Camp within this theoretical framework, to argue that the camp's existence, design and order can be explained in reference to these three different security aims.

'Armed love': Humanitarianism and security

A 'single order of violence' embraces the soldier and the humanitarian, argues Eyal Weizman (2012: 3), the architect-theorist who has demonstrated the use of humanitarian logic in one of the world's most enduring conflict zones, the Gaza Strip. This single order is one in which 'the moderation of violence is part of the logic of violence', and where humanitarian practice effects a mitigation of the suffering caused by military force (Weizman, 2012: 3). Here, humanitarianism may unwittingly, or at least against its own ambitions, become a vehicle for the proliferation of constrained and managed violence, and prefers an optimized present over the search for justice through political process (Weizman and Manfredi, 2013: 170–171). In her analysis of humanitarian immigration policies in France, Miriam Ticktin (2011: 5) takes this argument further, to demonstrate how humanitarian care can be accompanied by violent measures that 'ultimately work to reinforce an oppressive order'. Referring to the resulting politics as a form of 'armed love', Ticktin uses the

example of undocumented migrant women to show how easily their identity can shift from ‘endangered to dangerous, from innocent to delinquent’ (Ticktin, 2011: 5). To maintain its own logic, humanitarian work has to ensure that its subjects remain within the identity of innocent victim, and that those who do not conform to this identity remain outside of humanitarian care. Indeed, the depoliticized construction by humanitarian agencies of their aid ‘beneficiaries’ is one of the most widely criticized aspects of humanitarian aid (Green et al., 2015).

Humanitarian action’s physical and conceptual proximity to situations of violent social breakdown is mirrored, argues Michel Agier (2010), by a functional connection between humanitarian care and military/police control. From this connection emerges a form of governance that limits the rights and mobility of people living in humanitarian-controlled space. Agier has demonstrated such governance convincingly for a range of humanitarian camps in Africa; other scholars have documented situations of humanitarian care-and-control within European border control systems (Pallister-Wilkins, 2014), informal refugee camps in France (Fassin, 2011; Ticktin, 2011) and asylum processes in Canada and the European Union (Fassin and D’halluin, 2005; Nyers, 2006). In his study of a semi-formal migrants’ camp in France, for example, Didier Fassin (2011) demonstrates that the camp serves simultaneously as a space of humanitarian compassion and as one of police repression. Migrants oscillate between the care provided by workers of the International Red Cross and the control of French security forces, who may or may not make use of their ability to arrest and deport.

Opened in 2014, Azraq Camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan is an exemplary situation of violence constrained by humanitarian logic. Claudia Aradau’s (2004) investigations of how precisely humanitarian practice solves the tension between politics of pity and risk are especially helpful for understanding Azraq’s particular order. Aradau argues that a politics of pity can only be applied to populations that are deemed non-dangerous and risk-free, because charity can only be unproblematically given to the innocent and thus deserving. Yet how precisely do humanitarians balance the aim of protecting the vulnerable – who are understood simultaneously as being ‘at risk’ and ‘a risk’ – with the need to control them (Aradau, 2004: 269)? Aradau shows how humanitarian discourse can be layered with a security rationale in which ‘security and humanitarianism are not incompatible, but in fact feed off each other’ (Aradau, 2004: 252). This layering suggests and creates a situation in which humanitarian intervention aims to preempt any perceived ‘risky’ behaviour among its beneficiary population.

Considering humanitarian thought and practice as a ‘distinct sector of security with its own logic of threat and vulnerabilities’ (Watson, 2011: 11) opens the analysis of humanitarian politics to the field of critical security studies. Although originally conceived of as a state-centred model of thought, critical security has been used to understand the securitization practices of non-state actors, including, if surprisingly rarely, humanitarian organizations. Watson points out that the field of international humanitarianism privileges actors of the global elite to define human insecurity and to marshal emergency measures to address situations thus identified. From a securitization perspective, this argument highlights the sharply unequal abilities of the providers of humanitarian care and its recipients, not just determine what would be required to ensure the latter’s adequate survival. Similarly unequal are the two sides’ abilities to influence what emerges into the realm of possibility of humanitarian provision – that is, to determine the ‘structured field’ of humanitarian security (Watson, 2011: 12).

In an age of growing attacks against aid workers, humanitarian organizations increasingly focus on securing themselves – a development that requires the securitization of aid-receiving populations, from whom risks may emanate (Fast, 2010; Humanitarian Outcomes, 2015; Humanitarian Practice Network, 2010). Security-related innovations such as hiring security managers, running systematized risk-assessment procedures and protection measures strain aid organizations’

budgets, and donors are increasingly called upon to finance security within humanitarian aid. The massive expansion of humanitarian self-security over the past ten years shows how ‘at-risk’ populations are today systematically considered ‘a risk’ to aid providers themselves (Davis, 2015; Fast, 2014; Other Solutions, 2014). Vaughn (2009) argues that as aid organizations have no legitimacy to exist outside of their provision of security to the populations under their care, they have to convince their audiences that a threat against them directly threatens the survival of aid recipients. Thus, to make their own security more urgent, aid organizations need to associate their own survival with that of their referent object – aid beneficiaries – whose insecurity they are, at the same time, privileged to define. Here, Vaughn’s argument highlights the circular logic of humanitarian securitization and stresses once again the remarkable discrepancy between the power of aid organizations to ‘speak security’ in the name of their constituency and the latter’s silence. Recipient populations serve simultaneously as a risk factor from which a threat to humanitarian survival emanates, justifying exceptional self-securitizing measures, and as a site of vulnerability, justifying exceptional interventions of care and protection.

Several authors have noted the deep connection between the evolution of technology and that of humanitarian security practices. Weizman focuses, *inter alia*, on advanced technologies of calculation and nutrition that are used by humanitarians to determine the minimal threshold of calories or electricity required to ensure a population’s survival. He argues that the entire value and shape of life under humanitarianism depends on such a ‘system of calculations that measure life and death’ (Weizman and Manfredi, 2013: 169). Ilana Feldman, on the other hand, draws attention to the way in which ‘mechanisms of an aid regime’, such as bureaucratic categories, material artefacts and application of legal knowledge, influence people’s security by determining access to territory and access to aid. She highlights the ever-changing nature of humanitarian technologies, arguing that ‘key to understand is that humanitarianism over the long term is not the same humanitarianism all the time’ (Feldman, 2012: 160).

Azraq Camp forms part of an ongoing, rapid expansion of humanitarian refugee aid in the Middle East, a result of two successive refugee crises in the past decade (first the mass displacement of Iraqis since 2005 and then, since 2012, that of Syrians). The fact that Syria and its neighbouring states are middle-income countries with a significant technological infrastructure has aided the introduction of a raft of new technological adaptations within the burgeoning aid sector. Innovations that occurred during the Iraqi refugee crisis, such as mobile phone communication with aid recipients, cash distributions via ATM cards and the use of IT databases, have today become standard. The Syria response has introduced the use of iris scanners to register refugees, geographic information system analysis to map refugee communities and the ‘crunching’ of large databases collected via mass surveying. Azraq Camp combines a number of these technological innovations into an unprecedentedly comprehensive population management system.

The three security claims of international refugee aid

The existence and shape of Azraq Camp can be explained in reference to three security claims: the claim to secure Syrian refugees, the claim to secure the Jordanian state and the claim to secure aid workers themselves. The following paragraphs explain how and why international refugee aid incorporates these three claims.

First, international refugee aid aims to ensure the security of refugees. In the humanitarian sector, the professional term for refugee security is ‘protection’. Protection is the core mandate of the UN refugee agency UNHCR, enshrined in international law. The UNHCR leads the conceptual and material development of protection, and all significant refugee non-governmental organizations

(NGOs) (who also receive large budgets via the UNHCR) follow UNHCR's protection concept. (In 2013, the UNHCR's global budget stood at US\$5.3 billion.)

While 'protection' is the overall aim of refugee aid, it also forms a specialized subsector in the sense that UNHCR operations always include a separate protection department, along with specialized protection officers and programmes. But what does the 'protection' of refugees actually consist of? According to UNHCR documents, it means ensuring the 'basic rights' of displaced persons in their country of asylum, which, as a bare minimum, translates into preventing them from being forcibly returned to places where they would face persecution (UNHCR, 2014a). However, the definition of 'basic rights' has expanded to include a vast amount of topics beyond deportation and freedom from persecution. For example, the UNHCR *Agenda for Protection*, an ambitious, international declaration to improve refugee protection worldwide launched in 2002, states:

Another of the Programme's goals, addressing security-related concerns more effectively, focuses on the myriad security problems confronting refugees. The breakdown in social and cultural systems, the separation from or loss of family members and community, and the impunity with which perpetrators of crimes against refugees act, render refugees, and particularly refugee women and children, vulnerable to abuse. (UNHCR, 2003: 14)

To answer the complex security problems faced by refugees, the *Agenda for Protection* suggests a wide array of social interventions, ranging from educational courses for children and youth, through measures preventing aid dependency and improving ownership, to conflict reduction between different groups of refugees. Today, in other words, it can be said that protection of refugees covers the entire field of humanitarian and development projects, including the provision of shelter and basic goods along with complex interventions dealing with such issues as the rehabilitation of child soldiers or the healing process of traumatized women. Refugee security not only means ensuring the very basic survival of refugees, but also includes the aspiration to make refugees' day-to-day lives as pleasant and 'normal' as aid budgets and contextual constraints allow. An awareness of the importance of time and temporality also shapes the humanitarian provision of protection: educational and training programmes aim to prepare refugees for the 'day after' of their humanitarian present, when they are expected to rejoin the workforce or re-enter regular schools.

Second, international refugee aid aims to ensure the security of migrant-sending and host states. International refugee law does not only focus on the protection of refugees. It also upholds and prioritizes the right of states to secure their borders and populations against human mobility, of which refugees form only one specific part. UNHCR discourse here reproduces the hegemonic assumption that large-scale, spontaneous movements of people present a risk to the national and international security of states, as well as the obligation of states to protect themselves against this risk. For example, the UNHCR's above-mentioned *Agenda for Protection* admonishes states to ensure the 'speedy return of asylum-seekers found not to be in need of international protection' and to readily accept back their own nationals when they are returned to them as rejected asylum-seekers (UNHCR, 2003: 51). The document upholds the right of states to imprison migrants, while urging them to find alternatives, and requests that states 'in principle' abstain from detaining children (UNHCR, 2003: 38). Also, the UNHCR offers guidance to governments faced with so-called mixed migration movements, in which 'genuine' refugees move alongside those that UNHCR euphemistically refers to as 'without international protection needs' – that is, individuals who do not fall under the narrow refugee definition comprised within the Geneva Refugee Declaration. For example, in a 2007 'Ten Point Plan' the UNHCR proposes detailed measures to support states in Eastern Europe to, inter alia, distinguish carefully between different types of migrants, in order to ensure both the protection of asylum-seekers and the return of those persons deemed 'not to be in need of

international protection'. Thus the UNHCR documents and practice frequently highlight the tension between providing protection to refugees and respecting, indeed aiding, states' border and population control measures. Here it can be argued that Michael Barnett's (2001) observation that during the 1990s the UNHCR changed into an organization 'with a sovereign face' arguably falls short: as has been documented repeatedly, and as can be easily read from the UNHCR's founding statutes, state security has always played a central role in the discursive and material limiting of the simultaneously desired protection of refugees.

Third, international refugee aid aims to secure aid workers. While targeted and coincidental attacks against aid workers have occurred since the earliest instances of humanitarian aid (Fast, 2014), the last 15 years have seen a sharp rise in attention to the problem of securing aid workers. A growing professionalization of humanitarian security management has led to a proliferation of handbooks, guidelines and specialized think-tanks, as well as security-related jobs at aid organizations (Davis, 2015; European Community Humanitarian Aid Office [ECHO], 2004; European Interagency Security Forum, 2014; Hodgson, 2014; Humanitarian Practice Network, 2010; Van Brabant, 2009). Little research has been conducted on the reasons behind this expansion of self-security in the aid world. Existing analyses highlight a growing determination among humanitarian organizations to 'stay and deliver' in even the most dangerous circumstances. Other factors include an end to the UN's previously central role in negotiating humanitarian access during conflicts, as well as growing attention by NGOs to the risk of being sued by employees kidnapped or injured on the job (Collinson and Duffield, 2013; Duffield, 2001; Egeland et al., 2011).

Humanitarian security standards are strongly shaped by risk management concepts borrowed from the corporate sector. Here, risk and vulnerability scores are determined via matrixes in which actors, types of incidents and their effects on operations are allocated numerical probabilities, or in which the centrality/urgency of programmes is scored against the risk that they entail (Davis, 2015; Other Solutions, 2014). A second important development is the standardized use of so-called remote management operations, in which expatriate staff maintain overall control of programmes from a metropolitan hub, while national staff carry out the actual aid delivery in the danger zones. Evidently, remote management has confronted aid organizations with a raft of ethical and practical challenges, many of which remain unanswered (Collinson and Duffield, 2013).

These three security claims – addressing refugees, states and aid workers – require, according to dominant political thought, contradictory actions. Protecting refugees requires states to weaken the boundaries they draw around their territories and populations. Protecting states requires precisely the opposite. Protecting aid workers requires their suspicious gaze on people they are simultaneously supposed to regard with solidarity and compassion (Pallister-Wilkins, 2014). It also requires distance from and fear of host societies. In addition, however, standard humanitarian thought considers aid worker security dependent on distancing aid provision from state interests, particularly state security interests – first, because these security interests threatened aid recipients or were the root causes of poverty and violence in the first place; and second, because aid providers understood that remaining and being seen as independent of state authorities protected them from becoming embroiled in conflict and thus served as an important security strategy.

In contradiction to this last, historically fundamental point of humanitarian security, aid agencies in the Middle East are increasingly relying on the services of state security apparatuses to protect them from aid-recipient populations perceived as dangerous. State apparatuses indeed shield aid workers from certain threats and ensure smooth aid deliveries. However, they simultaneously menace the human rights of the poor and displaced. Also, for aid workers to rely on locally feared state security services for protection erodes even further their perception as independent actors who stand in solidarity with the oppressed. Thus, it also erodes any remaining respect for – and thus security that may be derived from – this status.

In other attempts to address the dilemmas arising from the conflicting security claims, aid organizations and donors have embraced one solution with particular gusto: the application of high and increasingly digital technology. The aid sector has swallowed whole technology's promise of ever more precise and efficient aid deliveries, and of ever more detailed and intimate data about aid recipients. In a fundamental error – and in a return to the most primitive positivism that 'Big Data' analyses herald in general – these data are mistaken for *knowledge* about aid recipients (see e.g. the work of the NGO Reach Initiative, 2016). This error allows aid workers who, for security reasons, hardly leave their desks anymore to feel actual familiarity with the social contexts of their operating environments. Thus, a further consequence of the growing worry about aid worker security is not just the growing trend towards bunkerization (Duffield, 2012; Smirl, 2015), but also the application of technologies that create impressions of proximity with aid recipients. In this combination, the deep shift in social relations between aid providers and recipients that the latter's securitization entails remains hidden from view, which allows the humanitarian project to proceed as if nothing has changed. Azraq Camp in Jordan provides a salient example of these developments.

'Welcome to Azraq': Syrian refugees in Jordan

Large-scale arrivals of Syrian refugees to Jordan began in 2012, and the majority sought dwellings on the housing market or in makeshift settlements on the edges of towns and villages. In 2012, however, the Jordanian government agreed to the opening of the region's first, official camp for Syrians: Zaatari Camp, which was built under relatively chaotic circumstances in July of that year. When Zaatari became overcrowded with over 80,000 inhabitants, in 2013 plans were made for a second camp: Azraq. The latter, which was eventually opened in April 2014, is situated in a remote desert area, 120 km northeast of Jordan's capital, Amman, and around 20 km from the nearest town (UNHCR, 2014c). Built for a population of 120,000, it currently houses around 30,000 Syrian refugees.²

The building of camps for Syrians presented a significant change in Jordan's refugee politics. No camps had been opened for Iraqi refugees during the Iraqi displacement crisis of 2005–2010, during which over 500,000 Iraqis arrived in Jordan (Chatelard et al., 2009). Unlike Jordan's Palestinian camps of the late 1960s, which are located close to existing population hubs and have today integrated into the urban sprawl, the new humanitarian camps for Syrians are built in remote locations and served by a separately built infrastructure, isolating them wholly from other urban sites.

Since 2014, Syrians in Jordan have faced growing restrictions on their freedom of movement: those already in camps are increasingly less able to leave, and those living outside of camps are increasingly less able to access aid, as the Jordanian government restricts agencies from delivering to non-camp refugees, who are thus pressured to move into a camp (Black, 2014). Jordan has almost completely closed its borders to Syrians, but those who do manage to arrive are registered and directly transported to Azraq. In some instances, Jordanian security forces have broken up unofficial settlements and forcibly deported Syrians to Azraq (Debaja, 2014; interviews with aid workers in Azraq Camp, 2015).

The Jordanian government's increasingly restrictive entry policy towards Syrians began during Azraq's development phase, in 2013. As a result, pressure to open the new camp reduced. Azraq's planners found themselves in the unusual situation of having time – most often, refugee camps are built in a rush – as well as a relatively large budget to build the new camp (Montgomery and Leigh, 2014), and Azraq thus became 'one of the best planned refugee camps in the world' (*Daily Star*, 2013). As planners also shaped the new camp according to 'lessons learned' from Zaatari, which

was at the time perceived as chaotic and insecure, Azraq presents a particularly relevant case for studying what contemporary humanitarian thinking and practice considers an ‘ideal’ refugee camp.

To research Azraq over a period of 18 months, I relied on three methods: first, a study of a large cache of documents on the building and running of the camp, available from the Inter-Agency Information-Sharing Portal, where aid organizations share data relating to the Syria refugee crisis (UNHCR, 2016). These documents included protocols from camp management meetings or discussions by specialized cluster groups, such as the shelter or water clusters. The portal also offers detailed maps of the camp, architectural drawings and population analyses, such as health statistics, and social analyses. Second, I conducted around 15 loosely structured interviews with persons working in the camp, such as expatriate managers and Jordanian security personnel (both individuals working for aid organizations and others in public employment – e.g. police officers). The third method consisted of observations around and inside the camp, conducted during two visits to Azraq in March and September 2015. The limited amount of time spent in situ was due to the Jordanian interior ministry’s highly restrictive policy regarding access to Azraq. Visitor permits for Azraq are only provided for a few days at a time, and a permit-holder may still be denied entry to the camp at the gate, as happened to a colleague in March 2016. During my stays, I observed activities at different sites of the vastly spread-out camp. However, I also quickly understood, especially after a few informal conversations with camp residents, that – to paraphrase Allen Feldman (1991: 12) – Azraq created a culture of political surveillance, in which participant observation became ‘at best an absurdity’ and ‘at least a form of complicity with those who surveil’. I therefore accepted, with little regret, the limited observation time as a research result in itself.

Azraq is run jointly by the UNHCR and the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD), a new branch of the Jordanian interior ministry created to handle the refugee response. The camp’s isolated setting alone is an overwhelmingly powerful effect of exclusion. Azraq’s environment is dry, stony, yellow desert with wide, empty horizons and no signs of a neighbouring civilian habitation. The most proximate sign of human activity, visible from most areas inside the camp, is a large, US-operated radar station. The regular passing of fighter jets, which depart from a nearby air base to attack positions in Iraq and Syria, contributes to a thoroughly militarized landscape.³ The camp is surrounded partially by barbed wire and partially by a low earth mound. All entrance gates are heavily fortified with barriers, checkpoints and armoured vehicles of the Jordanian military police. Only the registered cars of aid organizations are allowed entry, which means that camp residents have no choice but to move around the 15 square kilometres of the camp on foot.

The camp’s different areas (e.g. residential areas, school compounds, the supermarket) are built several miles apart from each other, leaving vast, empty spaces between them. They are connected by new tarmac roads, but only the Jordanian security forces and humanitarian providers are allowed to drive vehicles, while camp residents have to walk. The architecture and design of the camp is dominated by thousands of white metal containers, which are clustered to form camp dwellers’ housing, schools, hospitals and so forth. Occasional footpaths, trodden through the sharp rubble to create a more direct route for pedestrians, are the only sign of human activity that has not been prefabricated and standardized. Refugee ‘villages’ consist of identical white steel-sheet huts, which are neatly spaced out in identical rows. As no trade with the outside world is allowed and independent activity by refugees is discouraged, hardly any modifications have been made to the huts, unlike in Zaatari, where a bustling industry of ‘home improvements’ has developed. The overall effect of this architecture is one of monotonous desolation, heightened by the absence of any expression of individuality, or human behaviour, aside from walking or carrying purchases to and fro.

In order to administer Azraq, humanitarian agencies have combined several technologies into a sophisticated system of population management that is unprecedented for refugee camp management. The UNHCR uses OpenStreetMap (wiki software) to update changes to the camp infrastructure in

real time.⁴ This map feeds into the camp's registration database, which can thus automatically identify the location of empty shelters, as well as who is living next to them. Each shelter has an individual address, which is designed to allow the UNHCR to keep track of the location of refugees.⁵

Upon registration in the camp, adults receive a chip card that is topped up with virtual money on a regular basis and with which food can be purchased in the camp supermarket. The chip card has a barcode and is linked to the camp database: each time a resident receives a humanitarian service, an aid worker swipes the barcode, which feeds information into the file of the card's owner. In this way, humanitarian agencies collect a vast array of population statistics that cover the most intimate details regarding the behaviour of aid recipients. The following quote, taken from a report that describes a similar system applied in Jordan by the Norwegian Refugee Council, illustrates the type of information gathered:

Alongside reliable voucher verification, the most important feature of a CodeREADr-based system is the richness of live data it produces.... We ask, for example whether the shopper is male or female, and we ask what category of item they are buying.... If voucher codes are associated with UNHCR-issued IDs at the time of distribution, which they are in Jordan, the result is a wealth of disaggregated data with which access and protection issues for vulnerable groups can be identified.... In a round of vouchers distributed in place of sanitary napkins, for example, only 6% of female shoppers spent their vouchers on the napkins with the rest on other hygiene items and food. This was a concerning finding (although usage, not receipt, is the desired end) which could prompt agencies engaged in hygiene promotion to look again at their understanding of peoples' needs, preferences and how they choose to get the items they want. (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2015: 5)

Humanitarian agencies are eagerly embracing 'Big Data' as a way of minimizing distribution costs and staff time. However, their justification that digital humanitarianism gives aid recipients more 'choice' and 'independence' rings hollow: in a thoroughly surveilled and controlled environment such as Azraq, greater 'freedom' to consume in a more individualized way can hardly be considered an enhancement of personal dignity. Forced to live on humanitarian handouts, the residents of Azraq Camp have, in fact, no choice but to give up information about their daily life habits and preferences (Privacy International, 2015). In fact, the extremely curtailed and oppressed subjectivity of Azraq's population raises the question: How can this camp continue as an instance of humanitarianism at all? I argue that humanitarianism's ability to integrate the three different and competing security (c)aims discussed above provides one answer.

Aid workers narrate Azraq's design as an enhancement of life quality for refugees and thus as improved protection. In this narrative, for example, the idea of setting up Azraq's metal huts in groups of six, which together form a larger cluster referred to as a 'village', is intended to provide refugees with a better community life: 'The organization of the caravans into rows and villages ... provides a much-needed sense of community and structure for the refugees living in the camp', states an article published by the international aid organization Mercy Corps (2014). The system of individual addresses for each hut supports the aim of allocating adjacent shelters to family members or to people from the same town back in Syria: an improvement of community life in the camp. Yet for this address system to work, refugees have to be prevented from moving the metal huts around, as frequently happened in the Zaatari camp. In Azraq, huts are firmly anchored into the ground, which ensures that the predesigned 'village' formation stays in place.

In this refugee-focused narrative, the vast distances between camp locations, which force inhabitants to cross large spaces on foot, result from a decentralized and thus improved service-provision directly in the villages. Decentralization is a key logic behind Azraq's architecture: water and toilets are provided at cluster or village level; the shopping-voucher system eliminates the need for

mass distribution events; and, for the distribution of all other items, the individualized files that register what each inhabitant has received or still requires also allow a nearly one-to-one dissemination of supplies. According to aid workers, these innovations all serve to enhance refugee dignity, as well as providing more space and choice per inhabitant. An article in the *New York Times* describes this idea:

The concept of the Azraq camp, which received more than 2,000 refugees in its first week, is that each 'village' cluster will have easier access to services and will include people who already know one another or come from the same towns in Syria. There is also room to build more shelters next to existing ones, so that new refugees can move in next to extended family members. 'We are trying to build a sense of community and ownership,' Ms. Castel-Hollingsworth said. 'What is important to remember is that if the refugees can coexist here, they can coexist when they go back, and we are trying to foster this.' (Sweis, 2014)

During a visit to Azraq, I met and interviewed one of the UNHCR's field security advisers, who offered a different narrative of the camp's architecture and design. In his view, Azraq was from the get-go designed to offer a better way of controlling a potentially unruly population, both within and outside the camp. The experience of Zaatari Camp – which during the first year of its existence had seen regular violent riots, including attacks on Jordanian security personnel – served as a lesson learned. The proximity of Zaatari Camp to the nearby town of Zaatari had created problems, explained the officer, as disgruntled locals, seeking employment in the camp, clashed with the police. 'Perhaps you noticed that the location of Azraq is one of the good things here', he stated. 'We are 35 kilometres from the nearest towns on both sides, so there is no direct contact between the refugees and the locals' (interview, UN field security adviser, 2015).

According to this security-focused narrative, the division of Azraq's huts into fixed clusters was a preemptive measure that would allow security forces rapid access in the event of a riot. 'Each village is divided into blocks, and each block can be quickly isolated by the police', explained the officer, who had previously served in the Jordanian army. 'This has helped us, and we have not had any security incidents since 2014.' In Zaatari, he reported, the narrow roads had created a 'trap' for security personnel. Azraq's vastness served as another risk-mitigation device: 'Here, we built the base camp [where aid agencies' offices are located] at 8 kilometres from the nearest village – so if the refugees start a demonstration, they will need one and a half hours walking to get to the base camp!' (interview, UN field security adviser, 2015).

The officer described several organizational innovations that improved security at Azraq. A close exchange between the Jordanian police and humanitarian security personnel had marked Azraq from the beginning, but the creation of a special 'community police service', which had developed in Zaatari under the auspices of a British NGO, was one of the most important changes. While the regular police operated a single station, placed in a strategic, elevated spot at the centre of the camp, the community police were stationed within the 'villages' and patrolled on foot. The community police officers received training on how to interact peacefully with camp residents in the UK and Jordan. Regular meetings between security personnel and camp inhabitants were held with the aim of defusing tensions peacefully via constructive engagement. 'Here, we refuse to call them [the refugee interlocutors] "leaders" and call them "representatives" instead', the officer said, adding that 'now they are thinking of changing the name to "community member" to make it less official' (interview, UN field security adviser, 2015).

At the rhetorical level, the refugee-focused and security-focused narratives about the purpose and logic of Azraq's layout and planning purpose remained distinct and mutually exclusive. However, many of the items and processes that shaped life in Azraq demonstrated how these two

narratives could merge when turned into practice. One of the most jarring examples of this was a welcome flyer that was handed to newly arrived camp residents. The title page of the flyer, which consisted of a single A4 sheet folded in half, depicts one of the primitive huts that awaits new arrivals as their new 'home'. Despite this disconcerting prospect, the photo's headline optimistically reads 'Welcome to AZRAQ CAMP "Jordan"', and the subsequent text assures the reader that

UNHCR and all the partners in the camp are here to assist you. All services, including security and protection, health, medical care, water, food, children's activities, education and community services are free of charge.... All staff are trained to answer your questions about service in the camp, as well as on your rights and responsibilities. (UNHCR, 2014b)

On the reverse side, the flyer provides instructions about how to use the hut correctly and kindly requests inhabitants 'to please turn in the keys to your shelter to UNHCR before leaving the camp'. The flyer's inside fold contains a map of the camp and a map of one of the villages. A colourful, playful design pinpoints such places as a 'Women and Girls Centre', 'Adolescent Friendly Space' or 'Informal Education', each identifiable by their own cute logo. More sombrely, the map also indicates the location of a mosque, a police station and, at the far end of the camp, a cemetery – identified by a black-and-white tombstone logo (UNHCR, 2014b).

A second welcome flyer explains that Azraq Camp 'has been set up thanks to the hospitality of the Jordanian government' (UNHCR and Syrian Refugees Affairs Directorate, 2014). No mention is made of refugees' international rights, which, of course, also underpin the existence of the camp. Underneath the bold headline 'Being Safe in the Camp', another banner proclaims 'SRAD [Jordanian Police] Is, Together with You, Responsible for Your Security in the Camp', shortly followed by 'The Consequences for Leaving the Camp Without Official Authorisation from SRAD Are Severe'.

What is happening in these flyers? I argue that their communication provides a strong example of how contemporary humanitarianism integrates the three security claims discussed above. Via this integration, humanitarian actors can literally paper over the stark contradictions that these claims entail and cling to a discursive and fictitious reality that humanitarian principles are adhered to, while the material conditions of 'real existing' humanitarianism have little to do with these principles. The flyer's emphasis on the humanitarian delivery of services and goods, the cute design and the optimistic language ignore that the 'free' services are in fact being delivered to an incarcerated population. Accentuating the Jordanian government's generosity veils the coercion and violence through which the government has forced refugees into the camp in the first place. Yet only a few lines below, this same violence reappears in naked threats against anyone who should defy the authority of camp administrators.

The innovative design of Azraq's metal huts, officially called 'T-Shelters', similarly combines conflicting security claims. Shortly after the Jordanian government designated a territory for the building of Azraq, tests found that tents could not prevail in brave the harsh desert weather conditions, which included winds of up to 70 km per hour. The UNHCR founded a 'Shelter Focus Group', in which several aid organizations debated possible alternatives, together with architects and building companies. At one point, the group sought input from several Syrian residents living in Zaatari Camp (UN-HABITAT et al., 2014; UNHCR, 2013a). Again, Zaatari provided important lessons learned. In Zaatari, the original tents had been replaced by container homes, but this had resulted in problems. Camp residents soon began moving and trading containers, which laid waste to the camp administration's plans and impeded a good overview of the camp population (UNHCR, 2013b). Administrators feared that the autonomous governance structures emerging in Zaatari, exemplified by the 'caravan chaos', would promote mafia-like organizations (Sullivan and Tobin,

2014). Azraq's Shelter Focus Group aimed to avoid all these complications. The eventual result was the T-Shelter, a metal hut built from insulated metal sheets, with a single, small glass window and a gabled roof. The T-Shelter offers basic protection against extreme temperature and sufficient space for a family of six, calculated according to the so-called Sphere Standards set out in a well-known humanitarian rulebook (Sphere Project, 2011). The T-Shelter can be locked, thus offering a degree of privacy, and can be improved through movable inner walls. Initially, a plan was made to include a small porch, with the aim of allowing pious women the possibility of opening the entrance door without being seen from outside. This plan was abandoned owing to concerns over cost, but it illustrates how the planners of the T-Shelter very much had the 'protection needs' of various 'vulnerable groups' in mind.

On the other hand, the security concerns of both the Jordanian state and humanitarian workers were addressed via the optimized village/cluster grid described above. Here, the possible desire of refugees to move the shelters, which was considered a security risk, was preempted via a predetermined community structure, combined with a prohibition on moving the T-Shelters and a design that made it technically impossible to do so (Care International, 2014; Beaumont, 2014). Thus, the village/cluster grid combines administrators' wishes to retain sovereign knowledge and control over the camp with their desire to improve the protection space given to refugees – 'care' in the form of an optimized, expensive shelter and 'control' in the form of firmly mounted huts. While the possibility for autonomous action on the part of the refugees was minimized, in exchange they received 'improved' housing and service provision.

Conclusion

What can the example of Azraq tell us regarding the debate about how security is articulated in the humanitarian arena? The camp shows that tensions arise when aid providers simultaneously treat aid recipients both as vulnerable *and* as dangerous. The reason why aid providers may do this is that humanitarian aid needs to answer three contradictory security claims: the claim to protect refugees, the security claims of states and the claim to protect aid workers themselves. The stark growth of the last claim in recent years – that is, the increasing worry about aid workers' security – has sharpened existing dilemmas facing aid organizations who must care for people they simultaneously consider to be 'at risk' and 'a risk'.

What Azraq shows, surprisingly, is that the sharpening of the 'at risk' and 'a risk' dilemma into indeed grotesque proportions does not pose a significant problem for an ever-expanding global humanitarian project. This is because the central consequence of the contradictions between the three conflicting security claims has been a smooth integration of state security and humanitarian technologies. Azraq, a thoroughly militarized environment nevertheless defined as a humanitarian space, is a particularly stark and violent example of this, but there are many more that urgently require further scholarly attention, especially in the Middle East. Future research should focus on both the material and discursive practices through which the collusion between humanitarian care and authoritarian control becomes possible, and on the internal characteristics of the real existing aid sector that make it possible for aid workers to function without becoming personally overwhelmed by the violent paradox they are helping to enforce. The lack of controversy around this unfolding integration of state security and humanitarianism remains astounding and unexplained.

For further examples, one needs to look no further than Azraq. Since the time of my research, the closure of Jordan's borders has resulted in tens of thousands of Syrians setting up camp just north of the frontier. In early 2016, the Jordanian government eventually agreed to gradually transfer these people to Azraq, but only to a separate, locked-off area governed under a distinct, very severe security policy – ending any pretence that the camp is anything other than a prison facility.

Jordanian authorities have justified this demand in terms of a particular concern about the potential violence of the populations stuck at the border. The UNHCR and the NGOs active in Azraq have silently acquiesced, explaining the situation as a necessary ‘compromise’ (Sanchez, 2016). In Jordan, aid providers also immediately accepted other restrictions that are clearly designed to gradually force more of the majority of Syrians living in Jordanian towns and cities into camps. These include ending the renewal of the identity cards of Syrians living outside camps, upon which the provision of aid depends. In another example from my research, an aid worker/security manager in northern Iraq described how aid organizations accepted that registration with the Kurdish authorities required that they hire one or two people selected by the Kurdish intelligence service. ‘The principle of acceptance has changed’, he stated. ‘It used to mean acceptance by all stakeholders; now it means acceptance by state authorities’ (interview, Senior Security Manager, INSO, 2014).

This integration, or layering, of state security and aid means a conflation of two of the conflicting security claims: state and aid worker security. The third claim, the security of aid recipients, falls by the wayside. While falling into step with state security does indeed allow aid providers to continue their deliveries without other forms of interference (e.g. from criminals or disgruntled recipients) and relieves them from complex access negotiations, it also undermines their standing as independent and neutral actors. It is from this standing that aid organizations are supposed to draw much of their security in the first place. Cooperation with widely feared state authorities may thus become a self-re-enforcing dynamic, in which aid organizations end up more frequently being attacked because they are considered, rightly, as part of an oppressive governance apparatus.

As the terrain and populations managed by aid providers grow, understanding the shifting political rationale(s) that makes this expansion possible has become an urgent task for researchers. I argue that careful attention to the discursive and material practices that allow aid providers to smooth over the contradictions between humanitarian and state security practices is of central importance. This is because these contradictions *should* or at least *could* function as a barrier between humanitarian care and authoritarian control – but in fact do not.

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Notes

1. Weizman's term ‘humanitarian present’ describes what has been identified by several analysts of humanitarianism as a period in world politics, developing since the 1960s, in which a moral economy based on saving lives – rather than transforming political relations – has become the dominant rationale of progressive thinkers and activists.
2. Reflecting common usage, this article uses ‘Azraq’ as a shorthand to describe the newly built refugee camp. In fact, ‘Azraq’ – which means ‘blue’ in Arabic – is the name of the town that is closest to the camp. Up until the 1990s, the region was known for its vast and beautiful wetland preserve, created mainly through run-off from the Druze Mountains to the north and home to a large population of birds and fish. The destruction of this oasis, which was drained to serve Amman's growing need for water, is considered one of the greatest environmental catastrophes in the Middle East.
3. Observations during visits to Azraq Camp on 15 March 2015 and 9 September 2015.

4. See https://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/Refugee_Camp_Mapping (accessed 7 November 2016); Azraq's map can be found at <http://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=15/31.9064/36.5776> (accessed 7 November 2016).
5. One note of caution is in order: while all these systems raise the claim to being comprehensive, they depend on how effective their human operators feed them with data. This means that in actual day-to-day operations, they will include failure and incompleteness.

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