

Humanitarian Congress Vienna 2015
Title: Humanitarian Aid under Fire

University of Vienna, March 6th 2015

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Participants: Proposed – Contacted – Confirmed

Under the auspices of: **Heinz Fischer, Federal President of the Republic of Austria**

Opening remarks: **Annelies Vilim, Director, Global Responsibility, Austrian Platform for Development and Humanitarian Aid**

Welcoming note: Rudolf Hundstorfer, Austrian Minister for Social Affairs

Welcoming note: **Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal, Director General, Department for Development Cooperation, Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs**

Opening speech: **‘Access to victims of violence - Humanitarian aid under fire’**

Kyung-Wha Kang	Deputy Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations	female
Replacement		

Module 1 - 9:15 a.m. Celebration Hall:

Humanitarian aid in between international politics

Abstract:

Today’s ongoing transformations in the political, economic, social and environmental sphere pose huge challenges to people in need. The number and severity of disasters, armed conflict and violence has increased. Complex emergencies - the coincidence of multiple conflicts, political crisis, and disasters - are no longer the exception.

The pressure on people already affected by complex emergencies is intensified by global trends such as climate change, rapid urbanisation and demographic changes, to name but a few. These factors hit poor people and societies hardest. 1.5 billion Human beings live in areas affected by conflict and/or in a situation with dysfunctional state institutions, poor governance, and states being unable or unwilling to provide basic services and security to its people. NGOs are witnessing on daily basis what the consequences of this insecurity meant for people in need of life saving activities. Healthcare can be suspended, withdrawn or rendered impossible by violent events. Wounded and sick people can be denied effective healthcare when hospitals are damaged by explosive weapons or forcibly entered by fighters, when ambulances are hijacked and when healthcare personnel are threatened, kidnapped, injured or killed.

The huge short- and midterm needs of affected populations are met by an increasing amount of humanitarian assistance channelled through the international community and humanitarian organisations. What are the implications for the delivery of humanitarian aid in the international order? How does humanitarian aid, humanitarian intervention and

human rights interlink with each other? Is it that state sovereignty comes first, potential instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid next, and people are often left alone at the end? What can be done? Is there a way out?

Moderator & Master of Ceremony

Ulrike von Pilar	MSF Germany	female
Replacement		

Panel members:

Kyung-Wha Kang	Deputy Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations	female
Yves Daccord	Director general, International Committee of the Red Cross	male
Wolfgang Petritsch	Former UN High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Diplomat	male
Daniel Cohn-Bendit	German Politician	male

Module 2 - 11 a.m. Celebration Hall:

Access: humanitarian space - life and work in war

Abstract:

The principle that civilians have to be protected in armed conflicts and war and have a right to humanitarian assistance lies at the core of humanitarian action. Although embedded in the Geneva Conventions, in practice this principle is often violated: civilians, as well as aid workers, are often targeted; and humanitarian organizations are too often prevented from reaching people in desperate need of aid. Humanitarian practitioners thus often claim that the so called humanitarian space has been shrinking. The term “humanitarian space” is used slightly differently by different actors. There are however three main criteria against which to assess this common claim: respect for the provisions of the International Humanitarian Law, the relative safety of humanitarian workers and the degree of access to populations at risk. On the basis of CAR (Central African Republic) the panel will discuss to what extent the claim that humanitarian space has been shrinking is supported by evidence; Is CAR heading towards a genocide like Ruanda in 1994 and are thus options to protect civilians possibly being even more undermined in the future?

Keynote Speech:

Dieudonne Nzapalainga	Bishop, Central African Republic	male
Moumar Kobine Layama	Imam, Central African Republic	male

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Cornelia Vospernik	Journalist, ORF	female
Replacement		

Panel members:

Dieudonne Nzapalainga	Bishop, Central African Republic	male
Moumar Kobine Layama	Imam, Central African Republic	male
Kathrin Schick	Voice, board member	female
Karoline Kleijer	Emergency Coordinator, MSF	female

Module 3 - 11 a.m. Senate Hall:

Social media: heaven or hell?

Abstract:

The impact of social media on a global information flow and society's opinion making processes has increased drastically within the last decade.

From tweets in Egypt to blogs in Syria and Facebook campaigns in Sudan, the world recognized the impact "civil journalists" create through sharing their reality within seconds. For the humanitarian world, social media made it possible to hear the voices of disaster affected people, even if the area of those people is not accessible. Innovative methods, like transferring messages from platforms like Twitter into people's phones has positive impacts, but simultaneously also bears negative risks.

Do social media revolution humanitarian assistance? How to deal with negative effects, like data overflow and protection of the users? Heaven or Hell?

Keynote Speech:

Ingrid Brodnig	Journalist, social media, Falter	female
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Corinna Milborn	Journalist, political scientist	female
Replacement		

Panel members:

Ingrid Brodnig	Journalist, social media, Falter	female
Timo Lüge	Journalist, aid worker	male

Thomas Seifert	Journalist	male
Mahmoud Shabeeb	Blogger, social media activist	male

Module 4 - 1:30 p.m. Celebration Hall:

What's app: Innovation and new technologies improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action - Myth or fact?

Abstract:

'Innovation' and 'new technologies' are some of the buzzwords floating around when it comes to the debate of how effective humanitarian aid activities nowadays are, or, when you listen more closely, should be, at least from the view of scientists and producers, as most of the NGOs are only beginning to explore what's technically possible, when using the latest products available on the market.

The profound impact of technological innovations on humanitarian action over the past decades is beyond question, if you just think of the communication means available in the field now and then. The question is more in the direction of the adequacy between field needs, added value of the application and the concerned expenditures. It's always difficult to justify large budgets for R&D projects when the outcome does not relate with the desired results. But this is crucial for humanitarian aid actors spending donor money, which has been initially donated to enable the NGOs to save human lives, on research projects.

The responsible use of technology offers concrete ways to make humanitarian assistance more effective and accountable and can, in turn, directly reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience. But how are humanitarians able to employ state of the art technology in new and creative ways, and what risks and opportunities may emerge as a result of technological innovations?

Keynote Speech:

Paul Conneally	International Telecommunication Union, Head of communication; journalist, former aid worker	male
Replacement		

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Julia Herböck	Journalist, Standard	female
Replacement		

Panel members:

Paul Conneally	International Telecommunication Union, Head of communication; journalist, former aid worker	male
Arek Kwasny	3 D virtual reality software programmer, e-learning expert	male
Robbert Mica	Outernet Inc, Entrepreneur	male

Peter Hulsroj	European Space and Policy Centre, Director	male
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Module 5 - 1.30 p.m. Senate Hall

Lampedusa – European responsibility at stake

Abstract:

Tens of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers escaping from war and conflicts have been arriving over the last years to European shores. Although Italy is a major gateway for those who cross the Mediterranean, arriving from Syria, Libya and the Horn of Africa, often in overcrowded boats and at the risk of their lives, this is a European Union issue rather than solely an Italian one. The Italian borders are the borders of Europe in this context, and according to agreements signed by all European Union countries, people have the right to arrive safely and be received in an atmosphere where they feel safe. The appalling reality is that unacceptable numbers of people are dying in the most distressing way as they seek a better life for their families.

This situation calls for urgent action: All European Governments need to grant in line with the relevant international law and national legislation to migrants appropriate international protection and to ensure their access to urgent humanitarian services, such as health care, shelter or assistance to make contact with their families. Europe needs to strengthen its joint responsibility to ensure adequate safeguards to protect migrants. Is there an indication it will do so? Is the European responsibility when it comes to the protection of most vulnerable people at stake?

Keynote Speech:

Giuseppina Maria Nicolini	Mayor of Lampedusa	female
Replacement		

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Erhard Busek	Politician	male
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Panel members:

Giuseppina Maria Nicolini	Mayor of Lampedusa	female
Tareke Brhane	Spokesperson of the '3rd of October committee', Italy; former Eritrean refugee, humanitarian worker with Save the Children	male
Michel Reimon	Member of the European Parliament	male
Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger	Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, Consular Section	female

Module 6 - 3.30 - 5:00 p.m. Celebration Hall:

Does humanitarian aid prolong war?

Abstract:

Both, the humanitarian space as well as humanitarian aid itself, have become increasingly threatened over the past decade. Still those attacks or threats towards humanitarian aid constitute just one aspect of the interface between NGOs' activities and armed conflict. The aid-conflict interaction is a two-way process and is not limited to effects of conflict on humanitarian aid.

Recent year's research shows that any project set in a conflict-prone region will inevitably have an impact on the peace and conflict environment - positive or negative, direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional. In the midst of conflict, humanitarian aid projects become part of the context and therefore have political, economic and social effects.

The nature of negative impact may be sought in the legitimising or de-legitimising effects a project may have on parties to the conflict. Or taking a more tangible example: All humanitarian aid interventions involve the transfer of resources. If diverted by warring parties, these resources can aggravate or prolong an armed conflict. Research also shows that the interactions between aid and conflict are rarely simple, usually complex and context-specific. And what has to be considered: Compared to other actors, NGOs and their activities have limited potential to influence the dynamics of a conflict. The panel will shed light on the different aspects and causes of potential negative effects of humanitarian aid on armed conflict. Central to the discussion will be questions: how to avoid or anticipate negative effects?"

Keynote Speech:

Hugo Slim	Associate Director, Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict (ELAC)	male
Replacement		

Moderator & Master of Ceremony

Susanne Scholl	Journalist	female
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Panel members:

Hugo Slim	Associate Director, Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict (ELAC)	male
Suzanna Tkalec	Humanitarian Director and a member of the Senior Management Team of Caritas Internationalis	female
Bertrand Taithe	Professor University of Manchester	male
Joanne Liu	International President, MSF	female

Module 7 - 3.30 - 5:00 p.m. Senate Hall: Keynote speech: Violence in the Middle East - no space for humanitarians?

European geopolitics in the 20th century in the wider Middle East region contributed to a lot of overall instability: parts of the Middle East were to be carved up, which would require artificial borders and the support of leaders that could be bought and influenced by external powers. This provided a useful check against possible popular uprising and helps ensure foreign interests are safeguarded and local elites profit, while the people of the region end up suffering and losing out.

In the 21st century we see similar patterns: many of the countries in the Middle East have lived through periods of political instability, conflict and full-fledged wars as now in Syria, and Iraq. Violence and sabotage hinder the revival of shattered economies; corruption and smuggling have crippled exports; radical armed fractions terrorize civilians; hundreds of thousands have fled as the provision of basic services and security for huge parts of the population is unaddressed by fragile governments, and regional conflicts have a high risk of spill over.

The Middle East remains one of the world’s political and humanitarian hotspots. The recent scale of displacement, as a result of the Syrian crisis has also a tremendous impact on the region, and specifically on Iraq. In 2014 Syria’s neighbouring countries and particular Iraq’s Kurdistan Region have seen a continuous influx of Syrian refugees, and millions of IDP’s are on the run in their own countries. The humanitarian consequences of a protracted displacement, as well as the on-going violence and instability in Syria and the region, are resulting in a major humanitarian catastrophe. What does this political failure imply if the basic means of a decent human existence, which acknowledges the distinctive culture, history, basic rights and entitlements, are denied to hundreds of thousands of people affected by instability and conflict? Where is a way out? Where to start with? Is there any hope?

Keynote Speech:

Karin Kneissl		female
Replacement		

Moderator & Master of Ceremony

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Panel members:

Karin Kneissl	Journalist, lecturer, analyst	female
Matthias Schmale	UN Relief and Work Agency	male
Michael Bates		male
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