

## **FOCUS: REFUGEES' EXPERIENCES**

### **Underage Syrian Refugee Girls at an Impasse**

*Rachid ACIM*

**Abstract.** In an article published in the *Atlantic* on 3 June 2015, Alan Taylor wrote that millions of people are migrating because they are “escaping regions plagued by warfare, instability, disasters, poverty, or systemic persecution”, and he added that multiple crises worldwide are driving the record migrations, which include Africans and Middle Easterners entering Europe, Rohingya Muslims fleeing Burma, Central Americans travelling to the U.S., Yemen, Burundi, Somalia, Iraq, and more – all undertaking risky journeys to find better lives. This forced migration is inclusive of Syrian refugees, who are seemingly scattered in diasporic communities in many parts of the world, due to their massive exodus from the civil war that plagued their country. This paper purports to investigate the exploitation of Syrian children, the early marriage, rape and divorce of Syrian girls, whose nightmarish stories unequivocally troubled the journalists in the newsrooms and the layman in the public space. News media, British and American, constitute the mainstay of this enquiry in as much as they invariably shed light on the Syrian crisis and the psychological traumas of Syrian children.

**Keywords:** *Syrian Teenagers; Traumas; British and American Media; Narratives; Positive Discourse Analysis*

### **Introduction**

Ever since their appearance media in general, and in particular print media, like magazines, books and newspapers, have focussed on a wide range of topics in different historical contexts, be they political, social, economic, and religious. The coverage of wars, armed conflicts, for example, along with migration and refugee movements, took the lion’s share in the media landscape. Though the media might be biased in its representation of reality because it neither duplicates the world of phenomena as it is, nor reflects human reality by ‘holding a mirror up to society’

(Russel, 2006, p. 188), it presumably propels people to think of and ponder upon certain events that troubled them for so many years. Mishra and Tiwari (2016) maintain that

“The role of media has become very important in shaping present day society. Media is part of life, all around, from the shows one watches on television or the music one hears on the radio, to the books, magazines and newspapers one reads. It educates people about the current issues and it influences public opinion. The general public relies on media to know about happenings in society. Media is often considered as the fourth pillar of the society and the democratic medium of information” (p. 142).

As well as sociologists, discourse analysts and stylisticians, have traditionally emphasized the enormous power of the media in determining how news are produced and received. Back to the 1960s -1970s, the primary focus was on the power of the media (that is, those institutions, organizations and individuals with the power to control the means of text and image production) to ‘manufacture news by means of selection, narrative, ideological interpretation, agenda-setting and so on (qtd in Jonathan and Flam, 2015, p. 90). The media, namely newspapers and magazines, in electronic and in print format, “became important for communicating information” (Kipphan, 2001, p. 6). It performs a myriad of additional functions, which range from education and information to entertainment. Ryan and Conover (2004) opine that the “newspaper is a marvellous compendium of our collective daily lives. It provides information from every corner of the globe, and news from just around the corner – on just about any subject you can imagine: politics, war, sports, business, arts, editorials, advertising, entertainment, weather, and comics” (p. 516).

Newspapers are, therefore, instrumental in bringing up unity among the masses and are, in so far as Mishra and Tiwari (2016, p. 142) are concerned, “the backbone of the nation”. In nation states such as the United States of America and Britain, newspapers are the sine qua non for freedom. Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) strongly supported press freedom when he called for the press reforms and balanced reporting. “Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government”, Jefferson once wrote, “I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter” (Detrani, 2011, p. 154).

In a similar vein, Williams (2010) noted that “[N]ewspapers have always played an important role in the lives of British people” (p. 1). Many British

newspapers such as the *Sun*, *Independent*, *Mail*, *Guardian*, *Telegraph* and *Star*, are purchased and widely read per capita than in any other European country. It is not accidental then that American and British newspapers have allotted a large space to the coverage of news about human concerns and problems like poverty, family conflict, religious strife, racial prejudice, and perhaps most importantly, forced migration and refugee crises worldwide. The latter problems, it ought to go without saying, have not only roused the curiosity of the journalists in the newsrooms but they have also provoked the actors of the political scene. Bulcha (1987), in this respect, claims that

“Refugees are one of the major problems facing the international community today. The causes of refugeeism are complex and people flee their countries for a wide variety of reasons. Persecution, for racial, political, or religious reasons, war, famine and starvation, or fear of these phenomena, cause major exoduses which we know are taking place in the world today” (p. 19).

The aims of this paper are twofold: it seeks to examine, on the one hand, the psychological traumas to which Syrian children are exposed along their exodus to other destinations like Jordan and Lebanon, and it showcases the subjugation and the commodification of underage Syrian refugee girls, who are either raped or forced to marriage, on the other. The paper pins down narratives of forced marriage, rape and sexualized violence as concerns minor Syrian refugee girls. International media, British and American, serve as the primary grounding for the present enquiry because they repeatedly shed light on refugee crises in different areas of the globe.

### **Methodological framework**

At the crux of this paper lies also the Positive Discourse Analysis (and henceforth PDA) methodological framework, which very often, involves the examination of one or a huge number of texts, with the intention of diagnosing and unravelling certain positive aspects of text and talk such as themes and social change. Discourse analysts have to excavate the good workings of discourse because not all discourses are ideological and political.

If discourse analysts are serious about wanting to use their work to enact social change, then they will have to broaden their coverage to include discourse of this kind – discourse that inspires, encourages, heartens; discourse we like, that

cheers us along. We need, in other words, more positive discourse analysis (PDA) alongside our critique; and this means dealing with texts we admire, alongside those we disliked and try to expose (Martin, 1999, pp. 196-7).

In psychology, trauma has been defined as “A kind of wound. When we call an event traumatic, we are borrowing the word from the Greek where it refers to a piercing of the skin, a breaking of the bodily envelope. In physical medicine, it denotes damage to tissue” (Garland, 1998, p. 1).

Since 1990s, in many Western host states, trauma has tended to become synonymous with the experience of refugees, seen as victims disordered by war and violence (Eastmond, 2014, p. 24). Doherty (2007, p. 182) holds that traumatic experiences associated with the war in Bosnia (1992-1995), for example, impacted badly on the lives of many Bosnian refugees and displaced people. Approximately 25% of Bosnians were forced to leave their homes and resettle in other areas of Bosnia or abroad. Also, during the Vietnam War (1956-1975), which was the most detrimental event in the history of the late twentieth century – a war that instigated several casualties in Southeast Asia, many Vietnamese refugees were coerced to carry with them a trauma history (Huynh and Roysircar, 2006, p. 341).

Arguably, refugees fleeing wars and armed conflicts, are more likely to have high trauma exposure and an elevated rate of stress and chronic depression. In addition to dealing with their past histories, they need to confront various hurdles when they transition into an exotic culture different from theirs. Harding (2011, p. 97) posits that in Syria refugees reported “a high exposure to distressing and traumatic events”. In turn, Kellermann (2009, p. viii) has claimed that the Holocaust contaminated those who were exposed to it. War and trauma are, according to Hunt (2010, pp. xi-x), “unfortunately closely interlinked. Many people who experience war are traumatized by its effects (though many more are not”. Within contemporary trauma studies, it is believed that the field of trauma is vast; hence, it should not be considered as an isolated phenomenon (Pellicer-Ortin, 2011, p. 37), since it is closely linked to the ethical turn in media that took place decades ago. Media and trauma studies are both interested in and centrally concerned with the afflictions of the individual.

The articles that are selected to address the underlying grievances of Syrian underage refugee girls, most of which cover the refugee crisis and predicament, have been retrieved from news media and quality papers such as *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Atlantic*.

These media genres, albeit varying in degree of readership and influence, “hold a longstanding and important place in world politics” (Dagnes, 2010, p. 1). Through processes of framing and agenda-setting, these news outlets do “affect how people think about political [as well as human] issues” (Arceneaux and Johnson, 2013, p. 147); they likewise “indicate the interests of the time by the priority they give to news events” (Prucha, 1994, p. 73). They are viewed as the guardians of democracy and crucial in their role “as a watchdog of their governments” (Mabee, 2013, p. 117).

Beyond their immediate goals of attempting to please their audiences and making money, they have other functions that are equally and vitally important for society, “especially in relation to social order, and social change” (McQuail, 2003, p. 119). Whereas, *The Atlantic* is a U.S.-based American news publication that focuses on literary and cultural commentary, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are two American dailies, which concentrate constantly and consistently on social ills and injustice at a broader scope. As for *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, they are British daily newspapers, which have a say in the international refugee crisis, migration issues and military clashes. The non-random news stories documented here below from these media publications are cut into several pieces, carefully examined and analyzed in terms of the psychological traumas that befell on Syrian minor refugee girls.

Drawing on PDA to media, which suggests that “positive readings of texts are possible and that not all discourses are damaging or negative” (Baker and Ellece, 2011, p. 94), the paper projects into the foreground the Syrian underage refugee girls’ narratives of emotional trauma. PDA focuses on what texts ‘do well’ and ‘get right’. Predicated on this basic supposition, the paper holds that media discourse unveils the dark facets of human communities and it places much emphasis “on hope and change” (Flowerdew, 2013, p. 189); and though it can be critical as it seeks to track, unearth and unmask things that escape human attention, PDA incorporates not only deconstruction but construction as well (ibid.). In the words of Waugh et al (2016, p. 95), PDA thus functions as an alternative to CDA critique of discourse and addresses the need for “a community, taking into account how people get together and make room for themselves in the world. It gives much importance to “liberation, agency, and justice instead of domination and oppression” (Philips, 2014, p. 235).

## **Syrian underage refugee girls at an impasse**

There is no denying that all the media genres in question have covered the Syrian crisis and its repercussions at a local and a global level; relatively, they have provided a succinct documentation of the geopolitical and socioeconomic impasse of Syrian underage refugee girls. The production and circulation of iconic images, news stories, letters to editors, and caricatures about them lay bare the day-to-day anguish and ordeals these vulnerable social group had to pass through in different zones; in fact, several cases of rape, sexual harassment and sexualized violence are covered and reported on in the lives of these displaced teenagers. At different checkpoints from their journeys, they have fallen victims to traffickers, misogynists, and perpetrators of all kinds of crimes. They share one narrative cloaked with a psychological panic, exploitative abuse and deprivation because of the civil war that swept their homeland.

Very often, the sexually assaulted underage girls are forced to marry other relatives of the family like cousins or some members of the community, with the aim of “saving their honour”. This cultural norm permeates the Syrian society, which, like most conservative Arab tribes, does not tolerate rape, sexual behaviour outside the formal institution of marriage. No wonder then that if a female is raped or sexually assaulted, she might be killed by her family, or she might kill herself to save the family’s public self-image. In Jordanian refugee camps, marrying off these girls at a very younger age is viewed as a necessity for these traumatized refugees – an obligation to shun rape, sexual harassment and dishonour from the family; therefore, forced marriage is increasingly becoming a sort of financial investment to Syrian families with little or no income.

As young as thirteen or less, these girls were obliged to marry men ten, even twenty years their senior (Enloe, 2017, p. 26); because of this, they had to drop out of school and be prepared for shouldering the burdens of the house. Many of them are asked to associate themselves with male partners they have never seen or known before. Rahaf Youssef, for example, suddenly found herself a bride to her cousin in the Zaatari refugee camp. Though this form of marriage seemed to be blessed by the two families of the bride and groom, it showcases the risks to which the underage refugee girls are moving into. Indeed, early and forced marriage is a dangerous affair because in such a marriage, all suffer, the couple, the family and the whole society.

Generally, this marriage is a violation of the minor girls' liberty and security rights; it is outrageous and degrading to them. Mertus and Flowers (2008, p. 94) have argued that the marriage in question "almost always ends girls' education and leads to early maternity". Commenting on such early and forced marriage, *The New York Times* provides ample narrative accounts of Syrian underage refugee girls to underscore their unspeakable misfortunes in such a family gamble.

"The bride-to-be was so young and shy, she spent her engagement party cloaked in a hooded robe that swallowed her slim figure but could not quite hide the ruffled pink dress her fiancé's family had rented for her. As the Syrian women celebrating her coming wedding to an 18-year-cousin chattered around her in the Zaatari refugee camp, she squirreled herself in a corner, percking up only when a photo or message from a friend popped up on her cellphone. The girl, Rahaf Yousef, is 13" (*The New York Times*. September 13, 2014).

The families of the minor Syrian brides surmise that early marriage can protect their progeny against sexualized violence, child labor and abuse. This marriage, however, turns a catastrophe because of generation gap and the disqualification of the underage girls to it. Yasmeen Ritaj's story is also telling since it unravels the wretchedness and tribulation of the Syrian girls even within the confines of marriage. They are frustrated so long as marriage, which is expected to be more of an economic and emotional benefit to them, is another domestic war they are to bear and endure away from their homes; the husbands, who are supposed to impart love, affection and security to them, routinely misbehaved like chauvinist pigs keen on the use of violence against their young traumatized wives. Marriage becomes for them like a hellish penal institution, to which they are confined and into which experiences of disappointment and trauma exacerbated.

"Another teenager, Yasmeen Ritaj, 16, described a similar experience, of initially being wooed, but then being beaten by her new husband. "I imagined it would be paradise," she said, "but the first time he beat me, I knew there was no future and that this was hell." A month after the wedding, she became pregnant and then returned to her family after just eight months of marriage, before her daughter was born" (*The New York Times*. September 13, 2014).

To console each other, the Syrian refugee minor girls, gather together in the refugee camps yielding to narratives of distress and intense melancholy. While some of them were sexually victimized, innumerable others were kidnapped and capitalized on as brides and spouses as mentioned before. Their impoverishment, displacement, and starvation, have all brought about their desperation and

hopelessness. On the grounds of sectarian and political divides, Syria appears to present a grim example of the fate of many children who suffer physical and emotional trauma from violence and displacement (Blanton and Kegley, 2014, p. 448). Unless they are confined to the camps, the female teenagers are sexually harassed, raped or forced to marriage.

The story of Maya, which is somewhat identical to that of Yasmine Ritaj, albeit the two differ quite markedly in motivations and consequences, is a reiteration of the fiasco of the marriage enterprise seeking to subsume underage girls into it even with the parents' consent. It might be fair to say that this marriage can protect the girls from loss and harassment, but is not the same marriage that enshrines psychological troubles and emotional traumas into these same girls?

In so far as Maya is concerned, Syrian refugee families sell their daughters to survive, but they kill the same daughters owing to the brutality and barbarity of the aged Arab grooms. In her words, this marriage is just for money and motivated by the family's greediness for a better life; it is not carved by love, nor is it sculptured by reciprocity and spontaneity of feelings and emotions. *The Atlantic*, elaborating on the psychological traumas of these underage girls on account of forced marriage, highlights, either directly or obliquely, that it is the girls' right to choose whomever they want for marriage at a fair age. Certainly, Maya speaks on behalf of all Syrian teenagers, who starved to death and took shelter in marriage to safeguard themselves and back up their families, yet they are, in some measure, apprehensive lest this marriage would yield bad ramifications on their lives.

"When we left Syria, we slept in the street, all of us...we had nothing to eat", says Maya, one of the younger girls. "We ate hunger." At 14, Maya is the most striking of the group, with unusual light blue eyes in a round face. She says she's just been engaged to a wealthy Lebanese man from the town, but she's dreading the union because her future husband is 45 years old. I'm marrying him so things will be better," Maya says. "I don't want to get married; I don't want to have children. I'm only doing this for security. Isn't it shameful that I'm 14 years old and I have to marry a 45 year-old man? I don't love him, she says, starting to cry. "I can't even look him in the face" (*The Atlantic*. May 28, 2013).

The practice of early and forced marriage, undoubtedly, have mushroomed along history, especially during times of war and military clashes. Access to education, health care and leisure activities have been denied to refugees because "they are lumped within the aliens category" (Orchard, 2014, p. 83). They are placed into second-class status and considered as "unwelcome guests". They do

not study like other children. They do not play and have fun like their peers in the world as they have been overcome by, staggering degrees of isolation, insecurity and anxiety. In some places, they are deprived of supplies of clean water, good nutrition, healthy accommodation, as well as sanitation facilities. In others, they do not have a safe environment for living and survival. According to Balouziyeh (2016), “A significant portion of them have been physically wounded. Many have witnessed bombings, killings and other atrocities that can leave them psychologically wounded. Others have personally experienced egregious crimes of war, forever compromising their innocence. Anxiety, depression and difficulty in trusting others typically haunt these children long after they flee from Syria” (p. 45).

The story of Linda, who made her way from Damascus to Baltimore is another reminder of the double pain, or say the inflaming discomfort sustained by some Syrian mothers, whose agony and whose hardships correspond to many Syrian mothers scattered inside and outside Syria. Their lives, to use Ensor and Goździak’s (2016, p. 2) terminology, have been “reshaped in diverse and significant ways by their experiences of violence and uprootedness”. Though education for her daughters had been her major concern, she would pull them out to protect them from the oppressive machines of the civil war. *The Washington Post* alerts the international community to the sinister situation of Syrian children due to the anarchic structure and imbalance of the fights.

“One day, my 7-old came home petrified about something she had seen. She told me the soldiers had pulled random students and people from the street and lined them up on their hands and knees, in two rows, in front of the tanks. They were not allowed to move. The soldiers in the tanks threatened to run them over and taunted those who were watching. Before, I tried to ease my daughters’ fear by telling them that things would get better. Now I could no longer say this. After that day, I stopped sending my daughters to school” (*The Washington Post*. December 4, 2015).

The confiscation of the right to education and security might be conducive to illiteracy and crime. The sonorous words of this refugee mother, which were reported verbatim, are alarming because they incorporate the hoped-for comfortable life the Syrian teenagers awaited, but to no avail. Their hope for a better future is destroyed and their expectations have been thwarted as “many lost parents or their loved ones, suffered injuries, missed years of schooling, and witnessed killing and brutality (Alayarian, 2017, p. 123). In Syria, Jordan and

Lebanon, the lives of this vulnerable demographic group is laden with daily struggles and uncertainty. Obviously, these children are more likely to be kidnapped, abused and forced into prostitution. This occurs mainly because their parents are themselves powerless and helpless as they undergo a wide range of troubles ranging between racism and anti-refugee sentiments.

“My 13-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter look around and see people their age going to school and they feel left behind”, Mrs. Shinwan said. “I fled for their safety, but now they are restless and angry”, she said. “They are telling me they are wasting their education and their future. They want to go back to school in Syria” (The *New York Times*. October 6, 2013).

Outside Syria, needless to say, horrific stories and tragedies go unnoticed in news media. Of course not all media outlets examined or unexamined in this paper have access to the psychological traumas and sexual violence that swept Syrian underage girls. Those who have fled Syria have reported crimes of sexual violence and sexual torture against family members -- perpetrated by both rebel groups and Syrian armed forces -- to create a fear of “reprisal and social stigmatization” (Davies, 2017, p. 96).

At Dunkirk refugee camp in northern France, for instance, minor girls cannot walk easily to toilets not because the toilets’ locks dysfunction but primarily because sex traffickers predate over them days and nights. This adds to the psychological perturbation and paranoia of the minor girls, all of whom were at the mercy of the sex predators. While minor children were viewed as “little steaks”, their mothers were viewed as an easy “prey” for lustful men. *The Guardian* has focalized the sexual war targeting Syrian women and their children in refugee camps, wherein the guardians of human dignity and rights, are themselves, each in its own way, violators of them.

“You see women in a male environment with men that are disconnected from reality, so there are serious incidents such as rape. Women, children, young teens, male and female”. The worker referred to the children as being like ‘little steaks’ because they were considered so appetising and vulnerable to traffickers, of whom dozens are resident on site. One woman travelling by herself said that unaccompanied individuals were viewed as prey: ‘All men see that I’m alone, and it’s the same for the children. Men see me and they want to rape me’” (The *Guardian*. February 12, 2017).

Sexual harassment, violence and rape are common and systematic at checkpoints, refugee camps and at crossings. The route to Europe or elsewhere is

supposedly controlled by traffickers and smugglers who trade on desperate people asking for asylum or hankering after more opportunities and a rosy life. Like all migrants, Syrian refugee girls suffer “toxic stress”, which impacts on their mental and physical health; nevertheless, they struggle daily to recover from their physical and psychological trauma. The story of the 7-year old Razan reveals and unveils the perplexity and persecution complex of some Syrian girls who fear kidnapping, crying and fighting. They suddenly displayed a longing for a sense of solitude because they did not find in their communities the haven they battled for. Before the erupting of the civil war, Razan lived peacefully with her family, yet her life would become upside-down when she lost her father. *The Independent* casts some light on the virulent reverberations of the war on the lives of this underage refugee girl:

“After seeing his corpse at the mosque, Razan stopped speaking and became very withdrawn. Her family fled their home following bombardment, only to be displaced more ten times in the same city (...). [S]he showed signs of trauma, becoming terrified of blood and panicking when she saw people crying. Then after losing her mother and sister, Razan became aggressive towards her eldest sister who was caring for her, started bed-wetting, hallucinating and began to have trouble differentiating between fact and fiction” (*Independent*. March 12, 2017).

While thousands of underage girls preferred silence because of oppression, few spoke about their emotional traumas and harrowing tragedies at home and outside of it. Bana al-Abed (7-year-old) has managed to capture world’s attention by appealing to the new U.S.-president, Donald Trump, “to do something for the children of Syria”. She is by no means the epitome of grit, self-confidence and defiance. That she addressed Donald Trump directly connotes that she becomes not only an icon of change in her social milieu but the harbinger of peace and children’s right in the world over.

“In a letter written to President Trump several days before his inauguration, Bana – currently living in Turkey after her family escaped Aleppo in December – requests Trump’s help and promises her friendship in return. ‘Can you please save the children of Syria?’ the letter states, according to NBC News. “You must do something for the children of Syria because they are like your children and deserve peace like you.” If you promise me you will do something for the children of Syria, I am already your new friend”, the letter adds” (*The Washington Post*. January 25, 2017).

Bana has become “the Anne Frank of the Syrian civil war”. Whereas, the

first is pigeonholed as a Jewish victim of the Holocaust, the second is projected as a Muslim victim of the continuing genocides that took over Syria. The two girls seem to survive the same narrative of trauma, persecution, as well as rejection. In the eyes of *The Washington Post*, Anne Frank is also every Syrian girl that pleaded for asylum but was not accepted because of her religious and cultural background. In the discourse of human and children's rights, both Anne Frank and Bana al-Abed come to play a central role, knowingly or unknowingly, by advocating children's protection against butchery, injustice and ethnic cleansing. These children suffered the trauma of loss and displacement experienced by their parents "just as the children of Holocaust survivors suffered from their parents' trauma" (Bickerton, 2012, p. 213). They cannot forget easily their homes simply because they have a collective identity and a similar (his)story that move them back and forth.

Unlike Bana al-Abed, other Syrian children, females or otherwise, are not well-equipped with this will and strong determination to talk bravely and speak out openly of their aching grievances and traumatic frustrations. Indeed, most of them have been silenced and oppressed as their mothers for a long time within their patriarchal society. With such history of oppression and exploitation, these female subjects looked weary, miserable and incapable of change. The civil war added to their injury and trauma, displacing them, threatening their being, and throwing them into oblivion. In fact, the same war contributed to the rise of the ISIS or the Islamic State in the Levant (Lutz and Lutz, 2017, p. 68), bringing Syria up to the dark ages.

At most, these narratives documented above, which could be accurate as well as inaccurate, provides one dimension of the collective traumatized memory of Syrian underage girls, whose lives were torn apart by war, sexual violence, marriage and refugeeism. By covering such heartbreaking stories and experiences of pain, visiting and reporting on scenes of violence and abuse in refugee camps, the reporters in the British and American news media, can themselves "suffer trauma" (Simpson and Coté, 2006, p. 37). They do feel the pain of others and try their best to ease them by writing about them and making them heard by a wide public. In the calamity that struck Syria and Syrian underage refugee girls, journalists and reporters get absorbed in joint work with humanitarians and voluntary workers to protect the rights of individuals and they experience, what Figley (1995, p. xiv) has termed "compassion fatigue". These are the people, who are overcome by traumatic stress and psychological burdens their emotions oblige

them to carry because of the nature of their noble work; so research should now excavate the trauma symptoms of journalists and media reporters.

## Conclusion

In nutshell, there are numerous challenges when it comes to mapping out the stories and narratives of marriage, sexual violence and the emotional traumas of Syrian underage refugee girls. The first challenge that might crop up relates to their credibility since, as argued previously, the news media tend to overstate, exaggerate and magnify them to their readership; indeed, it is quite arduous to confirm or disconfirm them. The second challenge relates to the representativeness of these accounts since not all Syrian underage refugee girls underwent such misfortunes along their trajectory to other whereabouts. It is true that several countries have expressed solidarity and hospitality for the uprooted Syrian refugees, but many others have rejected them for political and security reasons: they are not accepted, nor are they welcomed, for the simple reason that they are different others, who hardly fit in the Western context of modernity and civilization. One by-product of such rejection is the very revealing traumatic story and collective narrative of Syrian underage girls resonating along this paper.

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