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On encampment and gendered vulnerabilities: a critical analysis of the UK's vulnerable persons relocation scheme for Syrian refugees
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This paper offers a critical analysis of the UK's Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme for Syrian refugees, arguing that its focus on refugee camps is neither reflective of the realities of refugeehood for Syrians in the Middle East, nor in line with developments in UNHCR policy. In its substance and presentation, the scheme exploits gendered notions of vulnerability, allowing the UK to position itself as a defender of the helpless in camps, while simultaneously reinforcing its attempts to depict refugees and migrants in Europe as 'threatening', and to resist their resettlement in the UK.

Introduction
In September 2015, following months of the so-called 'migrant crisis' in Europe, the UK government announced that it would resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees over five years. Critics of the government's response decried the low number slated for resettlement and noted that its policy offered nothing to those, from Syria or elsewhere, who had recently arrived in Europe and were in need of asylum and protection (Amnesty International UK 2015; Wintour 2015). Much less commented upon, however, is the repeated emphasis that the UK will resettle refugees currently residing in *refugee camps* in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. While the initial announcement of the policy stated that refugees would be taken 'from the camps and elsewhere in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon' (Gov.uk 2015a), refugees living in camps have been given prominence in media discussions of the policy, in ministerial statements, and in David Cameron's September 2015 visit to Lebanon and Jordan (e.g. see Gov.uk 2015b; Sky News 2015; Wintour 2015).

This paper offers a critical analysis of the centrality of refugee camps in the UK government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation (VPR) scheme, arguing that the UK's preference for encampment is reflective neither of the situation of Syrian refugees in the Middle East nor of recent developments in UNHCR policy. Secondly, this paper examines how the government's policy exploits gendered notions of vulnerability and widespread depictions of refugees in camps as helpless objects of humanitarian compassion. The UK casts itself as a generous and benign protector of the victims of the war in Syria, thereby simultaneously reinforcing its efforts to depict refugees arriving in Europe as a threat against which the UK must defend itself.

Encampment and Syrian refugees in the Middle East
A clear majority of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey do not live in camps, but

in host communities.[4] In Turkey, over 70 per cent of registered refugees live outside of camps, and in Jordan the figure is higher than 80 per cent. In Lebanon, there are no formal camps run by UNHCR, despite the terminology regularly used by the media (e.g. BBC News 2015b; Watt 2015). Lebanon did allow, or was unable to prevent, the establishment of around 1,500 informal tented settlements (ITS), but fewer than 17 per cent of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon live in them (UNHCR 2015). While the UK focuses on the camps and ITS, Lebanon has won widespread praise from humanitarian and human rights groups for *not* building formal refugee camps (Frelick 2013; Loveless 2013). Lebanon's approach articulates with developments in UNHCR policy, which over the past two decades has seen a shift away from encampment, and towards a focus on out-of-camp solutions (see UNHCR 2013; Verdirame and Pobjoy 2013). As of 2014, it is now UNHCR policy 'to avoid the establishment of refugee camps, wherever possible' (UNHCR 2014: 6).

States, however, often continue to favour the use of refugee camps. Their motivations are diverse, and include furthering their policies of non-integration (Jaji 2012), ensuring that refugees are isolated and contained (Jacobsen 1996), shifting some of the costs and responsibilities for refugees onto international agencies (Seeley, 2013), and, as I have argued elsewhere in the case of Syrians in Jordan, separating refugees from the wider labour market (Turner 2015). As scholarly research has long demonstrated, refugee camps are not the neutral sites of humanitarianism that they are regularly portrayed to be. Refugee camps often lead to heightened levels of disease, sexual and gender-based violence, and radicalisation, and encampment fundamentally violates refugees' right to freedom of movement (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005).

In contrast to this humanitarian trend away from encampment, the UK has specifically called for funding for refugee camps to be increased, with David Cameron explicitly drawing a connection between conditions in refugee camps and migration to Europe (BBC News 2015b). The UK's focus on, and promotion of, refugee camps is not only anachronistic in policy terms, blind to the reality faced by a majority of Syrian refugees, but also troubling because of the rights violations that encampment involves. While David Cameron may be 'impressed' with the more formal and organised nature of Za'tari refugee camp (Watt 2015), this organisation facilitates not only the distribution of aid, but also the ability of governmental and humanitarian authorities to monitor and manage the refugee population. It has become almost impossible for refugees to attain permission to leave Za'tari, Syrians are regularly and increasingly being *refouled* from the camp to Syria, and Syrians are often transferred to Za'tari if they are found to be working without permission in Jordan (Achilli 2015).

Refugees, saviours, and gendered vulnerabilities
In contrast to its portrayals of refugees living in camps, the UK government has depicted those who have recently travelled to Europe as 'swarms' of 'marauding migrants' (BBC News 2015a; Perraudin 2015), from which the UK needs to defend its borders, and even its standard of living (BBC News 2015c). Its VPR scheme, however, utilises and perpetuates the long-standing image of refugees in camps as quintessentially vulnerable, helpless victims (Agier 2002; Harrell-Bond 1985; Harrell-Bond et al. 1992), thus allowing the UK to present

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[4] Unless states otherwise, all figures for refugee populations are taken from UNHCR's *Syria Regional Refugee Response Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal*. Available at: http://data.unhcr.org/ syrianrefugees/regional.php

itself as a selfless saviour of the vulnerable abroad, reflecting patterns of (neo-)colonial power relations well documented by scholarship (Abu-Lughod 2002).

This dynamic operates in distinctly gendered ways. The government has stressed that only the most needy will be eligible for resettlement in the UK, repeatedly emphasising that women and children will be central to its resettlement programme (e.g. see BBC News 2014; Casciani, 2015; Gov.uk 2015b). As Heather Johnson (2011) has argued, attempts to depoliticize, and generate support for, refugees often rely on the image of the refugee being racialised, victimized, and feminized. The 'heroic, political individual' has been replaced with 'a nameless flood of poverty-stricken women and children' (2011: 1016). It is perhaps not a coincidence that the photographs in the media of David Cameron's high-profile visit to an informal tented settlement in Lebanon prominently featured his visit to the tent of a woman with ten children to feed, often accompanied by a series of pictures of the Prime Minister surrounded by refugee schoolchildren (e.g. see BBC News 2015b; Cameron 2015; Watt 2015). In a rare admission that male refugees can also be vulnerable, Cameron has proposed that resettlement may be open to 'women who have been raped…[and] men who have suffered torture' (BBC News 2015b). Perhaps within this gendered framework it is imagined that Syrian women are not tortured, nor Syrian men raped, nor indeed that rape and torture may at times be indistinguishable (Human Rights Watch 2012).

The emphasis on, and depictions of, refugee women and children stands in stark contrast to the government's hostility to the refugees and migrants who have recently travelled to Europe, most of whom are male (see Foreign Affairs 2015). The government's response to these refugees and migrants, it is claimed here, is not unrelated to how they are gendered. As Maya Mikdashi has written in the context of Israel's 2014 bombing of Gaza: '[m]en are always already suspicious, the possibility for violence encased in human flesh' (Mikdashi 2014). In light of these intersections of age, gender, and (neo-)colonial power dynamics, the declaration that the UK might deport Syrian orphans once they reach 18 (see Gander 2015) becomes more comprehensible. It becomes apparent that the government wants vulnerable Syrian victims, not independent adults potentially seeking to establish a life in the UK.

Conclusion
The analysis provided here suggests that the UK's VPR scheme is deeply out of touch both with the realities of refugeehood for the majority of Syrians in the Middle East, and with UNHCR policy. The UK relies upon gendered notions of vulnerability, and (neo-)colonial power relations, to position the UK as the generous saviour of helpless victims of the Syrian war. The sharp distinctions drawn between refugees in camps and refugees in Europe is an attempt to separate and distinguish the objects of UK generosity in refugee camps, primarily women and children, from the primarily male refugees who have arrived in Europe and are deemed to threaten the continent's states and inhabitants. The UK's VPR scheme and its hostile reaction to the refugees and migrants within Europe are mutually reinforcing. They are two parts of one wholly inadequate response to the Syrian refugee crisis.

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