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POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF DISPLACEMENT IN POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION: A HUMAN SECURITY PERSPECTIVE

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SUMMARY

Forced displacement is generally examined as a humanitarian, social, and economic consequence of armed conflict. However, displacement also produces important political consequences that may persist long after active hostilities have ended. Internally displaced persons remain citizens of their states, yet displacement may weaken their access to political institutions, electoral processes, public decision-making, and meaningful representation. Drawing on the human security approach, this article examines the political consequences of internal displacement in post-conflict environments. It focuses specifically on political participation, electoral rights, representation, state legitimacy, institutional trust, and the involvement of displaced populations in reconstruction and peacebuilding. The article argues that successful post-conflict reconstruction cannot be limited to the restoration of physical infrastructure or state institutions. Political inclusion is therefore an important component of human security and sustainable post-conflict reconstruction.

Keywords: *human security, internally displaced persons, political security, post-conflict reconstruction, political participation, state legitimacy, peacebuilding.*

Armed conflicts frequently result in large-scale forced displacement. People may be forced to leave their homes because of violence, insecurity, destruction of property, persecution, or military operations. Those who remain within the internationally recognized borders of their own country are generally classified as internally displaced persons. Unlike refugees, internally displaced persons do not cross an international border and therefore remain under the jurisdiction of their own state. Nevertheless, displacement can fundamentally alter their relationship with political institutions and affect their ability to exercise the rights associated with citizenship.

Displacement is commonly discussed as a humanitarian problem involving shelter, food, healthcare, employment, and physical protection. These issues are essential, but displacement also creates important political consequences. Internally displaced persons may face difficulties in voting, registering in new places of residence, obtaining identity documents, accessing public institutions, participating in local decision-making, or influencing policies concerning their return and reintegration [5].

The concept of human security provides an appropriate framework for examining these political effects. Human security shifts attention away from an exclusively state-centred understanding of security and toward the protection of individuals, their rights, dignity, and ability to participate in public life. Within this framework, political security refers to protection from political repression, discrimination, exclusion, and restrictions on political participation. This perspective is particularly relevant to post-conflict reconstruction. Reconstruction involves more than rebuilding roads, schools, housing, or administrative buildings. It also requires restoring institutions, rebuilding public trust, strengthening the rule of law, and creating mechanisms through which citizens can participate in decisions concerning their future. For displaced populations, these political dimensions are especially important because decisions taken during reconstruction can directly affect return, resettlement, property restitution, political representation, and access to local institutions.

Internal displacement can weaken the political position of citizens even though their formal citizenship remains unchanged. Displaced persons may become separated from their electoral constituencies, municipal authorities, local political representatives, and administrative institutions. In some cases, electoral systems are not sufficiently flexible to accommodate populations that have been forcibly relocated.

Research demonstrates that internally displaced persons may encounter barriers related to voter registration, residence requirements, documentation, access to polling stations, inadequate information, and administrative restrictions [7,p.32]. These ob-

stacles illustrate an important distinction between formal political rights and the ability to exercise those rights in practice.

A citizen may legally retain the right to vote while being unable to participate effectively because administrative or geographical barriers make voting difficult. Political security therefore requires more than the formal recognition of citizenship. It requires practical access to political processes. Political participation is also broader than electoral participation. Displaced persons may wish to influence reconstruction policies, housing programmes, return strategies, property restitution mechanisms, local development policies, and decisions regarding compensation. Meaningful participation requires displaced populations to have genuine opportunities to shape these policies rather than merely being informed after decisions have already been made [2, p.7].

Recent academic work has also stressed that participation should be assessed from the perspective of displaced populations themselves. Formal consultation does not necessarily mean that displaced persons possess real influence over decision-making [3].

From a human security perspective, political participation should therefore be understood as both a political right and an instrument through which displaced populations can protect their broader interests. One of the most important political consequences of displacement is political marginalization. When individuals are forced to leave their communities, they may lose direct access to local political structures and representatives. Electoral systems based on permanent residence can make this problem more serious, particularly when displaced citizens cannot easily update their registration or participate in elections from another region. Studies of internal displacement in the OSCE region have shown that residency requirements, inaccessible electoral procedures, weak registration systems, and insufficient institutional arrangements can prevent displaced citizens from participating in elections on an equal basis [5,p.36-38].

These challenges can become more serious when displacement becomes protracted. Temporary political and administrative arrangements may gradually develop into long-term exclusion if displaced populations remain outside ordinary political processes for many years. In this situation, internally displaced persons may retain citizenship in a legal sense but become less represented politically. Research on Ukraine provides an important example. Internal displacement resulting from military conflict created difficulties for political participation because electoral procedures were closely connected to residence and territorial registration [7].

Political representation is another major challenge. Displaced populations should not be viewed as politically homogeneous groups. They may differ according to region, ethnicity, language, gender, socioeconomic status, age, political preferences, and experiences of conflict.

As a result, a single representative or advisory body cannot necessarily reflect all displaced communities. Meaningful political participation requires diverse forms of representation and consultation. Recent research emphasizes that meaningful participation should be evaluated according to whether displaced persons can actually influence the policies and decisions that affect their lives [3]. Consultation without influence may result only in symbolic participation.

This problem becomes particularly significant during post-conflict reconstruction. Governments must make difficult decisions concerning the distribution of reconstruction funds, the prioritization of regions, property claims, infrastructure development, return policies, and the organization of local government. Such decisions are political because they determine access to resources and influence local power structures. For example, communities that receive reconstruction assistance earlier than others may be perceived as politically privileged. Return policies may also affect demographic patterns and political representation.

Similarly, property restitution can become politically sensitive when competing groups claim the same land or housing. Political exclusion may therefore undermine reconstruction even where significant physical rebuilding has already occurred. Post-conflict reconstruction must consequently address political relationships between displaced citizens, receiving communities, and state institutions rather than focusing only on material recovery.

Displacement can also affect relations between citizens and the state. Post-conflict governments face the challenge of rebuilding not only infrastructure but also political legitimacy and trust in public institutions. State legitimacy depends partly on whether citizens believe that institutions act fairly, protect rights, and provide meaningful opportunities for political participation. Displaced populations may already have experienced state failure, insecurity, violence, or loss of property during conflict. Their experiences after displacement can therefore

shape their broader perceptions of government institutions. If displaced citizens encounter complicated administrative procedures, unequal access to public institutions, restrictions on political participation, or limited opportunities to influence reconstruction policies, trust in government may decline. By contrast, political inclusion may strengthen the relationship between displaced populations and public authorities. When internally displaced persons participate in local governance and reconstruction planning, institutions may be perceived as more responsive and legitimate. Research on eastern Ukraine illustrates the importance of this relationship. Local governance structures and interactions between displaced communities and local authorities can contribute to new forms of political engagement and influence the development of relations between citizens and institutions [6].

Local governance is particularly important because many practical decisions affecting displaced populations are implemented at municipal or regional level. Housing allocation, documentation, land management, local infrastructure, and community development frequently depend on local authorities. Political inclusion therefore requires mechanisms at both national and local levels. Advisory councils, consultation mechanisms, local representative structures, and civil society organizations can provide platforms through which displaced populations communicate with public authorities. However, the existence of such bodies is not sufficient in itself. They must possess genuine opportunities to influence public policy. Advisory bodies that exist only formally may produce procedural participation without substantive political influence. Research on political participation among internally displaced persons also suggests that inclusion has important social and political consequences. Participation can reduce exclusion and strengthen the capacity of displaced populations to engage with public institutions [2].

Institutional trust is also closely connected to transparency. Reconstruction involves substantial financial resources and politically sensitive decisions about housing, land, infrastructure, compensation, and public services. If these processes are perceived as politically biased or insufficiently transparent, tensions may increase. Political security therefore depends on institutions that are accessible, accountable, transparent, and responsive to displaced citizens. The political consequences of displacement become particularly visible when governments seek long-term solutions. Displaced persons may face three broad possibilities: return to their areas of origin, local integration in the communities where they currently live, or settlement in another part of the country. These options are not purely humanitarian or administrative. They have significant political implications.

Governments may prioritize return to areas of origin because of territorial, demographic, economic, symbolic, or political considerations. Displaced populations, however, may not necessarily share those preferences. Some individuals may wish to remain in communities where they have lived for many years. This difference can create tension between government reconstruction strategies and individual preferences. Research on Iraq demonstrates that government policies concerning camp closures and return can directly influence the choices available to displaced populations and shape whether return is genuinely voluntary [4].

From a human security perspective, displaced persons should possess meaningful political agency in decisions about their future. Return should not simply be treated as a government objective. Individuals must have access to information, legal protection, representation, and mechanisms through which they can express their preferences. The political participation of displaced populations is also closely connected to peacebuilding. Post-conflict societies often continue to experience unresolved disputes concerning territory, identity, property, political power, and historical injustice. Displaced populations may remain directly affected by these disputes. If they are excluded from political processes, grievances may continue even after active conflict has ended. Inclusive political participation can instead provide institutional channels through which demands, disagreements, and competing interests are addressed peacefully. Participation in durable solutions is therefore increasingly understood as an important element of political and legal protection. Research in international human rights law emphasizes that internally displaced persons should be included in decisions concerning durable solutions and that participation is central to the legitimacy of those processes [1].

Political integration should therefore be viewed as part of post-conflict peacebuilding rather than only as an administrative component of displacement management. Post-conflict governments should ensure that electoral and administrative systems do not exclude displaced citizens. Residency requirements,

voter registration procedures, and identification requirements should be reviewed where they create unnecessary barriers to political participation. Registration procedures should also be flexible enough to accommodate displaced populations. Mechanisms for replacing lost identity documents should be accessible and efficient. Governments should establish meaningful consultation and representation mechanisms at both national and local levels. Internally displaced persons should be able to participate in decisions concerning reconstruction, return, resettlement, compensation, property restitution, and local development. Participation should also reflect the diversity of displaced populations. Women, young people, minority groups, persons with disabilities, and individuals holding different views on return or integration should have opportunities to participate. Transparency is equally important. Reconstruction priorities, eligibility criteria, resource allocation, property restitution procedures, and compensation mechanisms should be clearly communicated to reduce perceptions of political favoritism. Local authorities should be actively involved because many displacement-related political challenges are experienced at municipal level. Finally, international actors supporting reconstruction should evaluate political inclusion alongside physical and economic recovery. Indicators of success should therefore include political participation, representation, access to institutions, documentation, institutional trust, and access to justice. Forced displacement produces important political consequences that may persist long after armed violence has ended. Internally displaced persons may experience reduced electoral participation, weak political representation, limited access to public institutions, and insufficient involvement in decisions concerning reconstruction and return. These problems demonstrate why displacement should be analysed from a human security perspective. Political security is not achieved simply because violence has stopped. It also depends on whether citizens can exercise political rights, participate in public affairs, access institutions, and influence decisions that affect their future. Post-conflict reconstruction should therefore extend beyond physical rebuilding. It must also rebuild political relationships between citizens and the state. When displaced populations are politically included, reconstruction may strengthen institutional trust, political participation, state legitimacy, and sustainable peace. When they remain excluded, political insecurity may continue even after physical reconstruction has begun. The successful resolution of displacement therefore requires more than return or resettlement. It requires the restoration of political agency and meaningful participation. From a human security perspective, the political inclusion of displaced populations should be treated as an essential component of sustainable post-conflict reconstruction.

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ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ ВЫНУЖДЕННОГО ПЕРЕМЕЩЕНИЯ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ПОСТКОНФЛИКТНОГО ВОССТАНОВЛЕНИЯ: ПЕРСПЕКТИВА ЧЕЛОВЕЧЕСКОЙ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ

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РЕЗЮМЕ

В данной статье рассматриваются вопросы политической безопасности внутренне перемещённых лиц в постконфликтный период и их возможности участия в процессах восстановления с точки зрения концепции безопасности человека. Анализируется влияние внутреннего перемещения на политическое участие, избирательные права, представительство, доступ к государственным институтам, институциональное доверие и легитимность государства. Особое внимание уделяется значению участия перемещённых лиц в постконфликтном восстановлении, возвращении, реинтеграции и миростроительстве. На основе академических исследований обосновывается, что сохранение формального гражданского статуса внутренне перемещённых лиц не обеспечивает автоматически их равного и эффективного доступа к политическим правам.. В статье также подчёркивается, что постконфликтное восстановление не должно ограничиваться восстановлением физической инфраструктуры, а должно включать восстановление политической субъектности, представительства и отношений между перемещёнными лицами и государством. В заключение делается вывод о том, что политическая инклюзивность является важным условием безопасности человека и устойчивого мира.

Ключевые слова: *безопасность человека, внутренне перемещённые лица, политическая безопасность, постконфликтное восстановление, политическое участие, легитимность государства, миростроительство.*

POSTMÜNAQİŞƏ BƏRPASI PROSESİNDƏ MƏCBURİ KÖÇKÜNLÜYÜN SİYASİ NƏTİCƏLƏRİ: INSAN TƏHLÜKƏSİZLİYİ PERSPEKTİVİ

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XÜLASƏ

Bu məqalədə postmünaqişə dövründə məcburi köçkünlərin siyasi təhlükəsizliyi və onların yenidənqurma proseslərində iştirak imkanları insan təhlükəsizliyi perspektivindən təhlil olunur. Məqalədə məcburi köçkünlərin siyasi iştirak, seçki hüquqları, təmsilçilik, dövlət institutlarına çıxış, institusional etimad və dövlət legitimliyi üzərində yaratdığı təsirlər araşdırılır. Eyni zamanda, məcburi köçkünlərin postmünaqişə yenidənqurması, qayıdış, reinteqrasiya və sülh quruculuğu proseslərində iştirakının əhəmiyyəti vurğulanır. Akademik tədqiqatlara əsaslanaraq göstərilir ki, məcburi köçkünlərin formal vətəndaşlıq statusunun qorunması onların siyasi hüquqlardan bərabər və effektiv şəkildə istifadə etməsini avtomatik təmin etmir. Məqalədə həmçinin postmünaqişə yenidənqurmasının yalnız fiziki infrastrukturun bərpası ilə məhdudlaşmamalı, eyni zamanda məcburi köçkünlərin siyasi subyektliyinin, təmsilçiliyinin və dövlətlə münasibətlərinin bərpasını da əhatə etməli olduğu əsaslandırılır. Sonda siyasi inklüzivliyin insan təhlükəsizliyi və davamlı sülh üçün mühüm şərtlərdən biri olduğu qənaətinə gəlinir.

Açar sözlər: *insan təhlükəsizliyi, məcburi köçkünlər, siyasi təhlükəsizlik, postmünaqişə yenidənqurması, siyasi iştirak, dövlət legitimliyi, sülh quruculuğu.*

Rəyçi: Tarix elmləri doktoru, professor
Ağalar Abbasbəyli

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