

Fabio Perocco (ed.), *Migration and Torture in Today's World*
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At a particularly delicate historical juncture, namely, the post-pandemic one, where the topic of migration is regaining importance on different socio-political-economic levels, *Migration and Torture in Today's World* brings to the center of research interest a concept inextricably linked to the migration phenomenon: torture. Through an analysis of torture in its broadest sense, including the inhuman and degrading treatment of migrants, this volume edited by Fabio Perocco—which follows the volume *Torture and Migration* (2019, Edizioni Ca' Foscari)—compiles twelve contributions (including a rich introduction to the volume by Perocco himself) of heterogeneous content focusing on different perspectives on the correlation between migration and torture. Each author contributes through multi- and inter-disciplinary works to create a multidimensional analysis of the phenomenon, helping the reader to deconstruct the complexity of the different scientific approaches toward a common interpretative strand and a homogeneous reconstruction of the migration-torture theme.

Through a strong ethnographic lens, *Migration and Torture in Today's World* makes use of a ground approach and analysis, giving space to empirical field experiences by the authors themselves, thus providing depth and nuances to the already complex topic treated. This is one of the major strengths of the volume, which in its heterogeneity of time, space, and contexts, allows for a study that is not solely academic and is capable of defining (and redefining) a complex and technical narrative combined with events of strong human and contemporary social impact. The alternation of a solid scientific and technical component (legal, sociological, historical) with ethnographic analysis gives great insight into the book.

By researching and analyzing torture and the inhuman and degrading treatment of migrants worldwide, the different contributions show how the phenomenon is not localized only in particular areas of the planet but presents global characteristics, experienced diachronically throughout the entire migration experience. In the course of his or her migratory journey, the migrant no longer distinguishes clearly the physical and symbolic differences (barriers) of the country of departure, transit, and arrival, undergoing instead a reconfiguration of the migratory experience in an amalgam of production and reproduction of forms of (extreme) state and, often indirectly, supranational structural violence.

In the course of the analysis of the intimate relationship between torture and the migration phenomenon (to which Iside Gjergji adds racism into the equation), the book, in all its contributions, emphasizes the role of different institutional actors present at different times, places, and levels, as the primary producers of torture and reproduction of the systemic dynamics of violence and racism. The connection between economic, institutional violence, migration policies, and the needs of the (inter-)national labor market is then highlighted, featuring how these

components are constantly intertwined. Hence, as in the various quotations from Hannah Arendt in the different contributions, evil (in this case, torture) is presented in everyday interactions and socio-economic relations in a process of perpetual institutional normalization.

This volume does not present a clear thematic division but instead leads the reader along a preparatory path to understanding the phenomenon and gradually broadening the perspective of analysis. Perocco's first chapter, despite its clear intentions as an introduction to the book, carries on a legacy from the previous volume (2019), clarifying from the outset the themes present in the subsequent contributions and deepening the link between torture, migration policies, and institutional racism. This chapter highlights the social dimension of torture and inhuman treatment of migrants, especially in its link with economic-productive dynamics and the market, and, therefore, in the creation of inequalities and socio-economic hierarchies. This first chapter continues by accompanying the reader toward a conceptualization of the relationship between migration and torture, bringing emblematic examples (Libya, the Balkans, the Mexico–United States border), but also of forms of resistance, legal (mainly international law) and social movements (especially of grassroots classes, historically fighting for a wide range of rights), creating the basis for the progressive analytical path set in the book.

Subsequent contributions create an epistemological structure that starts from a more theoretical approach to the topic (see Gjergji's chapter, with an extensive discussion of the relationship between racism and torture, and Alessandra Algostino's chapter that provides an interesting discussion of International Agreements toward the middle of the volume), a "journey" toward a greater historical, geographical, legal and social awareness of the phenomenon. None of them lacks the historical contextualization necessary to understand the details and causal mechanisms leading to the contemporary *status quo*. Nor are references to different analytical categories absent from the various contributions, such as the political economy (again, see Gjergji's chapter), different theoretical approaches such as "torturing environments" (see the chapter by Pau Pérez-Sales, Andrea Galán-Santamarina, and Julia Manek), the transformation from securitization to weaponization processes through the rhetoric of "hybrid warfare" (see Eleni Takou's chapter), the "weaponization" of public health laws (especially with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Trump administration's controversial Title 42, see chapter by Alexander Aviña), up to a psychopathological approach about the different traumas, and re-traumatization, that migration, and related torture, can manifest through "post-migration living difficulties" (PMLD, see the chapter by Massimiliano Aragona, Salvatore Geraci, and Marco Mazzetti). No less important is the issue of the externalization of borders, from the best-known Libyan case to that of the "Balkan Route" and the Mexico–United States border (see again the chapter by Perocco and the chapter by Algostino).

Most of the areas of the world relevant to the migration-torture issue have been described and analyzed in the various contributions, such as the well-known border

areas between the US and Mexico, the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla and the Canary Islands in Spain, the Bosnian–Croatian border, the region of Evros in Greece, the Mediterranean Sea, and the southern Israeli border with its hyper-technological “smart fences” (see chapters by Aviña; Olga Jubany and Alèxia Rué; Karolína Augustová; Takou; Algostino; Diego Alberto Biancolin). The relative pushbacks, state migration policies, and the more insidious policies of supranational institutions (primarily the EU), often through international soft law agreements in para-institutional contexts that remove the responsibility to individual member states (e.g., the 2016 *EU–Turkey Statement*), are explored.

Nouria Ouali brings all this to a more direct, lived, cruelly real dimension in the heart of democratic, progressive, and tolerant Europe, which, in the course of the book, is re-analyzed and re-considered through practices, actions, fortifications at the borders and within national territories (e.g., with detention centers), ending with the ultimate act of “purification” of the “sacred” European space, namely the expulsion of the migrant. In the chapter by Pérez-Sales, Galán-Santamarina, and Manek, it is interesting to discover the concept of the “measurement” of torture (with specific reference to torturing environments) and to understand how it can become a quantitative object of measurement while maintaining an objective solidity.

The volume concludes with two contributions that seem somewhat detached from the progressive logic achieved so far. Muhammad Ridwan Mostafa’s contribution takes the themes of the volume on new tracks with the case of the Rohingya, shedding light on this internationally controversial issue, not excluding, among other things, the geopolitical and economic connection of the case. The final contribution by Aragona, Geraci, and Mazzetti concludes with a once again technical imprint, bringing the complex and highly specialized theme of psychopathological problems related to migration (and in particular on “forced migrants”).

One shortcoming of the book, if it can be defined as such, is the difficulty in finding a certain homogeneity in the path that the reader has to follow from the beginning to the end of all the contributions that make up the volume. The risk is finding oneself lost in myriad places, times, and contexts that, no matter how clear the leitmotif is, force the reader to leap from one context to another almost abruptly. There is, in fact, no lack of definition of this path. However, it requires the reader to make an additional effort to structure the content spatially to overcome this “impression” of partial disconnection between the parts. This, however, is at odds with what the volume manages to instill in the reader: the desire to further expand the analytical areas (geographical, thematic, and disciplinary) already covered, suggestive of the great possibilities the volume offers after reading it.

To sum things up, *Migration and Torture in Today’s World* represents the continuation of a journey begun with the 2019 volume toward creating a greater scholarly awareness of the close correlation between the phenomenon of migration and torture (as well as racism) across different experiences, disciplines, and contexts worldwide. It is rich and extensively structured, creating interest in the analytical

heterogeneity and contexts analyzed, thus instilling in the reader the need for further insights into issues of crucial importance in contemporary times and still in a state of work in progress in the scientific literature.

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