

SCHOOL SEMINAR

Violence Against Refugee Women: A North African Case Study

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African Studies)

Unlike “generic” refugee camps which are frequently characterised as militarised and criminalised spaces where political and power structures reinforce and strengthen patriarchal tendencies of the community, the protracted Sahrawi refugee camps in South-Western Algeria have consistently been represented as unique spaces which are characterised by gender equality and are free from violence against women. In this seminar I will explore the nature and implications of these mainstream depictions, arguing that, by equating these camps with spaces of peace and gender equality, this representational system has in effect rendered it impossible to recognise or address the realities and impacts of violence against refugee women within the camps. Hence, although instances of sexual abuse committed outside of the camps by “the enemy” have been publicly invoked and politically mobilised by the Sahrawi’s sole political representatives (the Polisario Front), the violence experienced by women inside of the camps has been systematically silenced, erased or concealed from international view to protect this idealised vision of the camps. In addition to highlighting the hidden realities of physical, psychological and sexual violence within the Sahrawi refugee camps, throughout the seminar I will suggest that this representational system is itself a form of structural violence with serious implications for Sahrawi women’s wellbeing: as such, I refer to this as a process of the repress-entation of refugee women.

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@ 12.30pm, Room S0.98, School of Health and Social Studies,
Social Studies Building, University of Warwick

To book a place, please contact Jas Bains at j.k.bains@warwick.ac.uk