4. The Arabs of Berlin face generations laden with guilt and trauma

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Introduction

Driven out of their countries of origin by the political and security situation in the Arab region, growing numbers of Arabs started arriving in Berlin about a decade ago. Yet, there are concerns about the authenticity of their integration into German society. The growing number of new arrivals in the past few years fleeing war, oppression, injustice, arbitrary arrest, interrogation, insecurity, and poverty shocked German society, especially the capital Berlin, where many of them settled. This reopened old wounds and reawakened German collective trauma related to immigration and associated with others, i.e., those with different features, colors, languages, and cultures.

How did Berlin receive the Arab newcomers? How did they add to a city that is cold for more than six months a year? How can Arabs adapt and integrate into a new society with decades-old traditions?

Arabs in Berlin

> "Berlin is where the newly-arrived Arab suddenly (but not always) recognizes that the frightful habit of glancing over the shoulder – painfully inherited from back home – gradually recedes. All the while, a new dawn slowly sets in among the meeting of peers in this new city: As such, Berlin is not just a city. It is a political laboratory that enforces a new type of beginning, one that turns heads in the direction of matters greater than the individual; and it generates a realization that the grey blur that nauseatingly blankets the future can actually be broken up." (Ali 2019)

1 Translated from Arabic by Samira Jabaly.

Sociologist Amro Ali describes the city's relationship with the Arabs who arrived there after revolutions in their countries failed them. He explains:

> "Following the 2011 Arab uprising and its innumerable tragic outcomes, Berlin was strategically and politically ripe to emerge as an exile capital. For some time now, there has been a growing and conscious Arab intellectual community, the political dimensions of which to fully crystalize is what I wish to further explore." (Ali 2019)

Several reasons made Germany an attractive destination for Arab refugees. The first is that in the Arab psyche, Germany is associated, not with colonization, but with its unconditional support for Israel that stems out of its guilt towards Jews, and lack of differentiation between antisemitism and anti-Zionism (Awad & Abdelazim 2019). Second, after it emerged from the rubble of the racist and barbaric Nazi regime, Germany managed to reinvent itself as a superpower. Finally, Germany decided to open its doors and welcome refugees, especially those from Syria during the Merkel era.

The Arabs now living in Berlin come from different backgrounds and social classes. Some of them were among the elites in their countries, professionals in fields like medicine, research, journalism, trade, activism, civil society, academia, and theatre, while others work in the crafts and trades. Together they provide a solid foundation for the diaspora society in a multi-cultural city open to change and new ideas.

There are no statistics available about the exact number of Arabs living in Germany or Berlin. The available information pertains to immigrants and foreigners in general, or to Syrians only, who over the past 10 years have become the largest immigrant community in the country, and in Berlin in particular. The exact numbers can actually be inferred from other statistics, such as the number of students or credential attestations.

For example, in the German Academic Exchange Service's (DAAD's) annual report of 2018, Syrian students came in sixth among foreign students, with 8600 Syrian students in German universities, and a growth of 228 percent between 2015–2018, becoming the biggest population of Arab students in Germany. According to the German Federal Statistical Office, as cited in Al-Araby (2019), there was an increase of 20 percent in the number of foreign degrees attested for employment purposes (in the fields of medicine, nursing, pedagogy, engineering, and technical services) in 2018 compared to 2017. The number of degrees completed in 2018 was 36,000 certificates, 4800 of which were for Syrians, followed by South Americans and Africans. 61 percent of these degrees were in the health and medical fields, while the number of vocational degrees increased by 72 percent compared to 2017. These newcomers added a new atmosphere to the city, especially in the cultural and

art scene. First Arabic bookstores were opened: Khan al-Janub [2] in 2018 and *Der Divan* was established with Qatari support in 2017. The British website *Middle East Eye* named Berlin the Arabs' business and cultural capital in Europe (Unicomb 2021). New markets boomed, rich immigrant families opened new businesses in Berlin and Arab journalism thrived in the city: Arab Berlin launched in 2015 and Radio Arabica in 2019 to mention a few.[3] Contrary to what is expected from a country with a sad and cruel history of dealing with differences, the presence of Arabs in Berlin became quite normal.

In an interview in 2021 with the Iraqi poet, Nada al-Khawwam, who lives in Berlin she said: "With no sea or warm hearts, this city cannot be trusted," She adds:

> "My experience in Berlin is different from any other. Even after three years of getting to know the city and living in it, I am still a stranger to it. These years would have been unbearable if it was not for the Arab-speaking communities that transformed the city with oriental charm, especially Sonnenallee, now known as the Arabs' street. There you can hear Fayrouz and Rahbani music every morning mixed with coffee brewed over hot sand. The various Arabic dialects tickle your ears; there's the smell of bread and delicious Arabic sweets; the company of friends you meet on a sidewalk in Berlin; we share the exile experience, a cup of cardamom tea, the concerns of the east and the details of the city. All of this breathes life back into the lifeless body. Often, the simple details relieve the burden of exile."

For the Arabs today, Berlin might resemble what New York used to be for Jewish intellectuals who fled Europe in the late thirties of the last century, and what Paris used to be for Latin American intellectuals, who fled their country's dictatorships in the 1970s and 1980s. Arabs found in Berlin a refuge from political crises, from revolutions, wars, and vile oppression. According to Amro Ali, the city became a magnet and a haven for exiled intellectuals. He believes that "to coherently embark upon a regenerated starting point in this long journey of political redemption, a 'we' is required: This feeds from new political ideas, collective practices, and compelling narratives that are currently re-constructed and brought to life…" In this way, he believes, Berlin allows space to unleash Arab intellectual and creative capacities seeing its present separate from its past and future. According to Ali, exile might pursue the present as a means to escape the trauma and the numbness it induces.

So, to what extent can this Arab generation 'dream', laden with multiple traumas of imprisonment, enforced disappearance, detainment, torture, destruction,

2 Editor's note: Chapter 15 in this book is written by Khan al-Janub's founder and owner Fadi Abdelnour.

3 Editors' note: Amal Berlin! is featured in this book. See Chapter 3 by Abdolrahman Omaren and Julia Gerlach.

and annihilation (Hein 2021, Graham-Morrison 2020), in a European city laden with its own Nazi history? To what extent can they dream of integrating and transcending pain and suffering? And on the other hand, can the city and its society transcend a past immersed in Nazism, death, and desperation, and become a home for the newcomers?

As the political scientist Vivienne Matthies-Boon analyses, protesters and political activists in Egypt in 2011 lived through profound collective experiences in their fight for human dignity, the elimination of violence in the state, judiciary, and police, and a more equitable social and economic system. These experiences had a far-reaching social and political impact. In fact, the demonstrators' plight did not come without a personal and emotional cost, as they faced oppressive state tactics, police violence (utilizing torture, rape, and humiliation) and increased economic chaos and social polarization (Matthies-Boon 2014).

Exile, as described by Edward Said, the Palestinian intellectual, is more than just a non-voluntary expulsion, it is an act of uprooting and ejection into an exodus of a specific intellectual, social, and psychological nature and with certain sensitivities and positions. Words like depression, anxiety, fear, alienation, insecurity, and sarcasm become familiar when talking about exile (Said, 1993).

History of Arabs in Germany

It is important to clarify that the term Arabs, used to describe all people coming from West-South Asia and North Africa, is prejudiced and even condescending. This generalization obliterates the other ethnicities that live in the region, like the Amazighs, Berbers, Armenians, Kurds, Nubians, and other minorities. Yet we will use this term here because it conveys how the West sees us as 'one' (the Arabs). Western perception do not distinguish between the different origins and ethnicities, and at times, it even wrongly assumes that all people coming from that region are Muslim. There is a rich diversity in identities, religions, languages, and ethnic origins of people living or coming from the Middle East and Northern Africa. In 'Out of Place,', Edward Said (1999) in which he identified himself as a Palestinian, Arab, Christian, American with two cultures; American and Arab, and one that exists out of the place identified and stereotyped by others. Said says:

> "I was never able to grasp all these complications and entanglements. Why wasn't my mother a simple English woman? I lived with these contradictions my whole life, and I always wished that I was only an Arab, or only European or American, Orthodox Christian, Muslim or pure Egyptian etc." (Said 1999, pp. 56).

Minorities in the Arab region, like Amazighs, Armenians, Kurds, Nubians, Christians, Yezidis, and Baha'is living amidst a Muslim majority, are struggling with the

authorities, demanding that their existence, identities, languages, cultures and religions are recognized under the umbrella of the Arab Muslim majority (Abwalnaja 2014).

Arabs' relationship with Berlin goes back to 956, when the first Arab arrived in Berlin coming from Spain and stayed there for a while. According to history books, Ibrahim Bin Yacoub, the messenger of al Hakam II, Caliphate of Andalusia, delivered a letter to King Otto I, King of Germany, and the Holy Roman Emperor, proposing to strengthen relationships between them. Upon his return, Bin Yacoub painted to the Caliphate a picture of Germany, which was so far unknown to Arabs (Salama 2016). The development of these relationships was documented when Abbas Basha I, (Salama 2016; Abu Latifa 2019) within his efforts to modernize Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, sent the first group of Egyptian medicine students in 1849 – 1850 to Munich university to study medicine (Heyworth-Dunne 1939).

The Weimar Republic (1918 – 1933) was a golden era for Arab political refugees who were allowed to engage in political work. Hotel Esplanade in Berlin hosted the first Arab National Congress in 1916, in which the committees for the liberation of Tunisia and Algeria from French colonialism were founded (Abu Latifa 2019). Afterwards, several Arab political, cultural, and artistic movements became active in Berlin, and consequently several Arab-German associations were established. These were allowed to publish newspapers and bulletins that covered news of political tensions in the Arab countries, especially Egypt under British occupation. Some newspapers in Berlin even assigned columns to fugitive politicians to promote their ideas and views.

The Arabs, also, played an economic role in Berlin. Abu Latifa (2019) cites records of Arab businessmen who arrived in Berlin at the end of the 19th century. For example, Abd il Aziz Shaweesh (1876–1929) started as a cigarette vendor and eventually owned his import-export business. Rahmeen Saleem achieved great success in selling agricultural machinery in Germany. In 1922 he opened several branches in Germany and Baghdad. The most successful, however, was the Palestinian businessman George Hoori (1891 – 1965) who came to Berlin after WWI and worked in import/export business and monopolized the importation of Jaffa oranges to Germany. Assaf Al Kareem Siba'ii from Beirut also achieved a lot of success in 1933 working as a real estate agent (Salama 2016).

The generation of WWII probably still remembers the voice of Younis al Bahri, the broadcaster that started every morning with "Here is the Arab neighborhood in Berlin" over the Nazi Arabic radio that was established to promote Nazi propaganda in Arabic. The station was run by Taqi al Deen al Hilali, a Tunisian who moved to Germany to complete his doctoral dissertation in 1940. There he became close to Hitler and managed his Arabic-speaking radio service in the context of Germany's support to the Arab people against the European imperialists who were at war

with Germany. The station's programs were a mixture of war reports, segment on history and literature, recitation of the Holy Quran and musical segments, but most importantly anti-British propaganda (Maskeen 2021).

The Arabs' relationship with Berlin is not recent, for throughout history war and unrest drove people to seek refuge in safer places. When Berlin became safer in the early 1960s, Germany invited thousands of Moroccans to come as "guest workers" and help in the post-war reconstruction efforts, as it was extended to workers from Turkey and Vietnam (Deutsche Welle 2013). The 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the arrival of thousands of Lebanese and Palestinian refugees who fled the war in Lebanon. Chronologically, they became the base for the Berliner Arab community (Qantara 2018). Yet, there are no official statistics about the number of Arabs who settled in Berlin throughout the different immigration waves.

The newcomers

In September 2021, several men and women of Arab origin were elected to the German Parliament. Among them were businessmen and women of Egyptian, Moroccan, Iraqi, Yemeni, and Syrian origins who won the votes of citizens of non-German origin (Muslim and Middle Eastern origins) as well as those of German origin who believed in the candidates' platforms/political parties and the importance of ethnic and cultural diversity and the rejection of xenophobia in order to guarantee the security and safety of non-Germans, facilitate their lives, and fight discrimination.

It was the first time this number of candidates of Arab origin, the second and third generation of immigrants and refugees, were elected to Parliament. This event marked the beginning of a new phase in German history, where these communities changed from mere spectators in the political scene to policymakers by nominating German candidates (of Arab and Middle Eastern origin) able to win the constituents' votes.

In Germany, right-wing political parties and associated media outlets promote a stereotypical image of Arabs and Turks. They mainly focus on the crimes committed by Arab and Turkish individuals and portray those as the norm in these communities. The term "Arab family clans" was coined to refer to Arab (and Turkish) families who allegedly formed clans in Berlin and have exceptional influence in the neighborhoods they live and work in (Abu Muailiq 2016). These families are accused of involvement in illegal activities like trafficking drugs, prostitution, armed robbery, and tax evasion. In 2018, German politicians demanded taking stricter measures against these so-called Arab clans. Politicians also demanded the allocation of more resources in the police forces and judiciary and requested improved investigations. Stephan Harbarth, at the time a CDU member of the German Bundestag, called "for

the employment of discreet tapping and surveillance methods, because these clans were isolated from society" (Deutsche Welle 2018).

Sonnenallee, informally known as the Arabs' Street in Berlin, bears witness to the history of Arab presence in the city. Previously the street was known as 'Little Beirut', named after the Lebanese shops and cafes that filled the street with their smoke and old Arabic songs (Al-Habbal 2007, see Miriam Stock in this volume). In 2015, when refugees, mostly from Syria, started to flow into the city, the street turned into one of the most vibrant streets in Berlin. Visitors cannot but notice the shop signs written in both Arabic and German – and often not even in correct German. Shisha cafes and Syrian sweets can be found along Sonnenallee and the surrounding streets, in addition to restaurants selling Arab food.

Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision in 2015 to admit more than 1 million refugees, over 80 percent of which were Syrians, revived discussions about integration-related challenges, started dialogues, and mobilized campaigns for and against the decision in the German political scene. This, as expected, incited anti-immigrant sentiments that contributed to the rise of right-wing politics, especially the Alternative for Germany party which came in third in the 2017 elections.

Once again, Berlin found itself face to face with trauma, as hundreds of thousands of immigrants started to come to Germany, especially Berlin, seeking refuge from the war, unrest, and totalitarianism that was wrecking their countries, mainly Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Afghanistan. German society found itself experiencing fear and anxiety for reasons unclear to it.

Events like the Nazi regime, the war and its aftermath, and the country's division into East and West Germany had resulted in the expulsion and removal of thousands of people from Berlin. Some of them returned after a while, while others remained in exile until their death. This history has remained problematic despite the intended transparency in dealing with it.

This awkward relationship with both immigration and exile became clear when Berlin – and other German cities – came face to face with the new refugees, or what was called at the time "the immigration wave."[4] The city was surprised to see that it was turning from a city that refugees fled from into a destination for refugees. Here, Germans had to face reality – a history that had been left undealt with for decades. But as Martin Bayly, a sociologist at the London School of Economics, has

4 Book editors' note: using the word "immigration wave" is used here verbatim. It reproduces a negatively connotated threat theme that constructs migrants as threatening force of nature. Similar terms include swarms or flood or crisis. UN Refugee Agency UNHCR as well as human rights NGOs criticize this language in politics and media. See the press release here: https://www.unhcr.org/56bb369c9.pdf. For helpful materials in German see: https://mediendienst-integration.de/ and www.glossar.neuemedienmacher.de.

said, "Forgetting the past may affect our ability to prepare for future crises."(BBC 2021).

The decades-old discussion over whether Berlin was or was not a city of refuge has become irrelevant during the most recent so-called 'immigration wave,' as it has become clear that Berlin is de facto a destination for refugees; the new reality.

The German government at the time displayed a high level of commitment toward refugees. According to media reports, the state of Berlin agreed in 2018 to allocate 1 billion euros to support refugees. These were spent on accommodation as well as German language and integration courses, in addition to financial support for job seekers. According to *Berliner Morgen Post*, the number of people who benefitted from these forms of support was around 45,000, the majority of which were refugees arriving in Germany in 2015 and 2016 (Deutsche Welle 2018). These allocations made up 3 percent of the state's total budget. In addition to accommodation expenses, 60 million euros were allocated annually to integrate refugees. Additional financial support was allocated for social and cultural projects and vocational training. Furthermore, a special budget item of 14.5 million euros was allocated to address the needs of the large number of unaccompanied underage refugees in Berlin.

According to Andreas Germershausen, commissioner of the Senate for Integration and Migration in 2018, "Germany has learned from the mistakes of the past," as the "policies are more focused now on integration. This work is based on the law that was legislated in 2005, which encourages providing courses on German language, history, and culture." (Qanatara 2018; Al-Hawwas 2021).

Germershausen believes that failing to provide comfortable conditions for the newcomers is critical. "If we made it difficult for the immigrants to join the labor market, we would be choosing to hold dynamite in our hands, and this would mean that we have not learned from the mistakes of the past." (ibid.) The number of Arabs in Germany in 2016 was 800,000 and some claim that they are living in parallel societies and refusing to integrate with their German neighbors.

If given the choice, many immigrants would choose Berlin because it provides plenty of jobs and living costs are relatively lower than other European cities. In addition, there are government programs that facilitate integration and help immigrants to enter the labor market.[5] Another factor is Germany's need for laborers, as it already suffers from a deficiency of hundreds of thousands of workers every year. Additionally, the ethnic and cultural diversity of Berlin adds to its attraction. According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF) as cited in media reports, the numbers of Arab refugees in Germany continue to rise. The number of first-time asylum seekers reached 100,278 between the beginning of 2021 and the end of September of the same year. Most of the asylum seekers were from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. (Deutsche Welle 2021)

5 Book Editors' note: see Chapter 9 by Hashem Al-Ghaili in this volume.

Reconciling with the past

Hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees moved to Berlin during the past few years. This presented a challenge to the city and its ability to accommodate the newcomers and the residents' ability to embrace them given the historical complex of dealing with immigration and the mass trauma of war, rifts, and authoritarianism, in addition to the legacy the Nazi regime left in the social structure and its traces that can still be seen today.

On the 80th anniversary of the first Nazi deportation of Jews to the Jewish ghetto in Lodz in Poland on October 18, 1941, German President Frank Walter Steinmeier admitted that the Nazi crimes are a historical burden that Germans continue to bear (Deutsche Welle 2021). He said, "We Germans still bear a share of the guilt that perpetrators, accomplices, and supporters of the systematic murder of Europe's Jews heaped upon themselves." He added: "To this day we feel ashamed that fellow citizens were taken from the heart of society, harassed, deprived of their rights, expropriated – and finally dispatched on a journey to their death." In an interesting gesture, the German President added: "The unsettling thing is that it all happened in broad daylight. The crimes were committed in front of everyone. The segregation and deportation happened in the heart of German daily life, and this is a terrifying fact."

Yes, it all happened in broad daylight in front of everyone. The whole society witnessed the oppression, discrimination, repression, and killing committed in the form of systematic genocide against minorities, mainly Jews. However, the privileges enjoyed by those social groups on good terms with the regime prevented the interventions to stop the massive violations. Also, the fear and intimidation the Nazis planted contributed to their refrainment from interfering.

Social sciences have two opposing viewpoints on this point. Thomas Hobbes believes that people perceive "the other" as dangerous, selfish, and unworthy of trust, which explains why they are treated with caution and doubt, and assume that all that stands between us, and violent chaos is a strong state and stern leadership (Hobbes 1968). On the other hand, the Dutch historian, Rutger Bregman, argues in his book "Humankind", "When cities were bombed, the most interesting observation was the high level of cooperation and vigorousness shown by the affected communities." (Bregman 2020) Historian Bregman believes that the life of our ancestors in prehistoric times and tribal societies was not as horrific as we often imagine. These societies were actually self-organized and peaceful to a great extent. Yet, when social hierarchies, military regimes, and permanent rulers emerged, violence and inequality emerged with them. Human history does not lack stories about families who harbored neighbors and friends, took children to safety, or provided assistance. But since so few of them are considered acts of heroism celebrated by authors and film-

makers in artistic and literary works to ensure they are remembered and passed on to future generations.

Berlin, having suffered under the Nazi authoritarian regime and affected by the desolation, killing, displacement, uprooting, war, and destruction during that era, had to face the same history after 70 years. But this time it was on the other side of history; this time it was the safe, stable, supportive destination for the expelled, the exiled, and those escaping war and dictatorship.

The Nazi regime, in only six years (1933–1939), managed to introduce major social, economic and community changes that targeted minorities like non-Caucasians, non-Christians, ethnic minorities like Europe's Roma, communists, and followers of other political beliefs, the sick and impaired, especially those with disabilities and genetic disorders, homosexuals, and transgender individuals. But most of all, it targeted Jews. Nazi thought became prevalent in society during these six years, and for several reasons, the regime succeeded in recruiting many Germans into its ranks – driven mainly by fear and herd behavior (defined in psychology as the behavior of individuals within a group acting collectively without much planning or thinking), but also attracted by the privileges and advantages the Nazi regime offered them.

What is noticeable about the prevalent thought at the time, is that it not only degraded the humanity of many groups in society and, with time, turned their existence itself into a crime; it even dehumanized their pain and suffering. German President Steinmeier referred to this in his above-mentioned speech: "These atrocities happened in front of everyone, in front of society, neighbors, security officers, military personnel, health care workers, academics and others in society."

Social Trauma

This was the beginning of a prevailing collective 'trauma' induced by war, displacement, and then the return migration of Germans who lived in neighboring countries, banished to retaliate against Nazi encroachment and the gruesome atrocities and crimes Nazis had committed there.

Nazi behavior was normalized and incorporated into a lifestyle that reflected the new regime. This was evident in the strict, controversial approach it introduced for raising children, as elaborated in *The German Mother and her First Child*, by Dr. Johanna Haarer, in 1934. The book's recommendations were incorporated into a training program for the Reich's mothers that was designed to inculcate proper child-rearing principles in all German women. The book was accorded a nearly biblical status in nursery schools and childcare centers. Haarer urged mothers to ignore the emotional needs of young children so as to raise strong soldiers and believers in Nazi teachings. She recommended that physical and emotional

communication with children be kept to a minimum, even when carrying a child (Haarer 1943; Kratzer 2019).

The impact of war trauma can linger in societies for years. David Trickey, psychologist and representative of the UK Trauma Council, says: "When the way you see yourself, the way you see the world, and the way you see other people are shocked and overturned by an event – and a gap arises between your 'orienting systems' and that event simple stress cascades into trauma, often mediated through sustained and severe feelings of helplessness." (BBC 2021) Facing the impact of the trauma may require a person to revisit their beliefs and self-perception.

For two decades after the war, Germans were preoccupied with reconstruction efforts, restoring social relations, and reinstating normal activities like production, education, and agriculture. In addition to all of that, Jews were busy searching for their loved ones and trying to process and understand the atrocities that had been committed against them. They were occupied with documenting all the stories, property, and documents they could find in an effort to restore memory.

People who had survived the Nazis and the war, and the children who were born immediately after the war and the defeat of the Nazis, did not realize that they were unintentionally passing their trauma, fears, shocks, and horrifying experiences to the next generations.

Collective trauma – as defined by psychologists – happens when a large number of people experience a psychological shock as a result of an event or a series of events that occur at the same time; especially crises in which many lose their loved ones. Furthermore, people who found themselves in situations where they had to decide who lives and who dies, experienced an unprecedented moral dilemma that added to their trauma.

War is considered a cause for a collective trauma (Petbender 2017), because it impacts everyone, including those who did not take part in the battles and those who did not even know people who took part in the battles: They have been consumed with the fear of hunger, arrest, the oppressive police state, death or injury in the war, inhospitable shelters, even if they did not actually experience these shocking conditions. Horrifying stories may also instigate the same pressures and feelings that cause trauma among persons who did not experience the war.

The German psychologist, Kora Kebacca, holds the child-rearing methods that were applied in the Nazi time responsible for some psychological problems that the so-called 'war grandchildren" (Kriegsenkel, a term coined by Sabine Bode 2014) suffer from, although they have never experienced a war themselves. Kebacca calls Haarer's book *The German Mother and her First Child* and the emotionless child-rearing methods it promotes "dangerous." (Lichtenberger & Al-Mikhlafi 2013). The ramifications of trauma are both psychological and social – on a large scale. When people experience a traumatizing event, it affects their relationships, connection with the social systems, and role as citizens. Psychological traumas have social,

economic, and political ramifications, and the response needed is not limited to psychological therapy. According to Metin Basoglu, a founder of the trauma studies faculty at King's College London,

> "Addressing collective trauma will also take more than psychiatry [...]. The scale of the problem means that meaning-making tools should be delivered through media channels: in writing, in booklets and videos, kids' channels, TV channels, newspapers, all avenues and channels of information, and the internet." (BBC 2021).

Berlin, like other German cities, attempts to transparently deal and reconcile with its history. Like other German and European cities, it built monuments commemorating the victims of war and Nazism. It also has several museums that serve this purpose, most importantly the Holocaust Museum, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and the Topography of Terror Documentation Center. The city is also preparing for the opening of the Exile Museum in 2025, which is planned to document stories of exile, be they historical ones that focus on the exodus of the Jews, or contemporary ones that focus on the new refugees including Arabs. In addition, the brass plates, so-called *Stolpersteine*, affixed in front of buildings in residential neighborhoods, catch the eye. These plates commemorate the stories of Jews dragged to their miserable fate in concentration camps. The plates bear the name of the person who used to live in that address, their date of birth, and the fate that befell them.

Pain, trauma, and depression caused by these events were often the topic of literary and drama works, plays, films, and even of intellectual and academic works and papers written in the past decade. Yet, these topics were only discussed among the elites, intellectual circles, academics, writers, artists, playwrights, and directors, while the rest of traumatized society never dealt with the shock and pain they had endured, and consequently never recovered.

These official and community efforts, like telling the stories of the victims, allocating special holidays in remembrance of them, building monuments, and acknowledging the loss, suffering, and trauma contribute to the commemoration of victims in the wider context. But do these efforts of commemoration actually contribute to the recovery from collective trauma?

> "Masses can endure traumas and overcome them unless the traumatizing event is related to the identity of the society. Collective traumas can reshape society's perception of itself and the world" (BBC 2021).

Collective trauma is a catastrophic event that ruptures the social fabric. It starts with a collective shock, then turns into collective memory and then culminates into a structuring framework that allows groups to redefine themselves and their future direction. Psychologist Hirschberger argues that there are differences between the victims and perpetrators, and accordingly the meaning changes in common stories

and behavioral attitudes, shared rituals, traditions, regulations, social spaces, common fate, and relationship with the 'other'. (Hirschberger 2018)

Collective traumas can have a lingering impact if they are not dealt with. When people fail to face their trauma and discuss it, unhealed scars become permeant in society. Consequently, when faced with relevant stimulants, they risk reawakening feelings of anger and hostility. In other times, they resort to passivism and carelessness to avoid experiencing these stimulants altogether. At the collective level, this means that violence and anger linger on, then followed by withdrawal (BBC 2021). This may explain why Germans were very cautious when they learned that thousands or dozens of thousands of refugees were crossing the oceans and mountains to arrive at their borders. This sudden change led some to sympathize and volunteer to offer help, while for others, the xenophobic Nazi legacy resurfaced and manifested in hate speech targeting Arab foreigners. In addition to the response of society, there were also humanitarian efforts that responded to the needs of refugees and provided the necessary means for a dignified life.

Challenges facing the Arabs of Berlin

The stereotypical images intentionally promoted by German right-wing parties and associated media outlets equally target Arab newcomers and those who had arrived five decades earlier. Stereotypes usually emphasize traits like ignorance, polygamy, big families, and lack of proper care in raising children. Arabs are associated with terrorism and extremism, which contributes to preconceptions, prejudices, and different forms of Islamophobia.

Racism has soared in the past years, with dozens of people with migrant backgrounds falling victim to racist and violent attacks. One of the latest was the attack in Hanau (BBC 2020). As criticized by Amnesty International, German authorities have been accused of failing to address hate crimes, including attacks on shelters designated for asylum seekers. Amnesty emphasized the urgency of providing protection and launching independent investigations about possible biases inside law enforcement forces in the country (Amnesty 2016). In line with that, in Berlin in 2019, residents woke up one April morning to find posters hung across streets, metro stations, and buses bearing the Syrian flag and a hand raising the victory sign and a slogan: "Go back home, the war is over, Syria needs you."(Abwab 2019). Another poster said: "With the fall of the last ISIS stronghold, Syria will need young men and women to help in the postwar reconstruction efforts." As confirmed by German Intelligence later, the campaign was organized by the "Identity Movement," a nationalistic white supremacist movement active in Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. The movement is considered "suspicious." Some of its members

have been linked to right-wing parties, with some well-known activists being former members of such parties. (Deutsche Welle 2019).

The Federal Anti-discrimination Agency, established in 2006 to provide advice to those who face discrimination because of their ethnic origins, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or age, posts figures on their homepage that prove that racism has visibly increased. The annual report for 2019 states that the number of registered discrimination cases in Germany increased by 10 percent (Posen 2020).

Berlin, as a city with a multi-ethnic population, promotes a culture of openness and tolerance and encourages foreigners to seek help and assistance through its official channels and websites. The General Act on Equal Treatment bans and prevents all forms of discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origins, sex, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation. Germany introduced necessary laws and procedures needed for processing refugees and asylum-seeking operations. Germany recognized the refugee's right to seek asylum and developed a complicated, bureaucratic, multi-phased process each individual must go through to be deemed a "good person" in the eyes of the German state and prove that they intend to serve the country well rather than becoming a burden to it. By opening its doors to refugees in 2015, Germany emerged as a protector of human rights; a country that introduced relatively advanced immigration laws, and one where refugees can live without fearing uncertainty and poverty compared with other countries in Europe or other continents. However, Germany failed to embrace the refugees and relate to them. Also, the tardy way discrimination incidents were handled indicates that society is still traumatized and has not dealt with the past.

So, can we say that Germany does not have a problem with the newcomers? It does. Problematic issues include the rise of right-wing politics, the increasing number of incidents connected to racism, and the bureaucratic way the country deals with the asylum-seeking process and attempts to elude the accompanying responsibilities. In addition, the failure to understand the uncertainty, loss, and fear associated with the asylum-seeking process and the bitter feeling of alienation refugees feel, is an issue. Newcomers are expected to overcome all physical and mental ordeals, to innovate, and to succeed in a new country – which many of them have actually managed to do. But this does not mean that all the majority needs is to get German identification papers as travel documents; they need a society that embraces them and helps them overcome their pain.

In an article published in the independent Arab online medium Raseef22, Fadi Abdelnour, Palestinian publisher, graphic designer, and one of the founders of Khan al-Janub, describes encounters with German cultural and institutional racism as "indirect racism enveloped with sympathy and eagerness to help." He adds: "For example, you can easily get funding to make a film about ISIS or war in Syria, but it is not easy at all to secure funding to make a film about social drama in Algeria, for exam-

ple." (Yousif 2021). In the same article, the Syrian theater director, Anis Hamdoon, explains:

> "It is clear to all those working in German cultural circles that non-German cultural organizations (and here I am talking about Syrians), are confined to topics of war and destruction. We are treated as if we only know one thing, war [...] and I believe this comes out of ignorance and arrogance" (Yousif 2021).

Arabs experience how German society tends to essentialize them and puts them in boxes they are not allowed to escape from. Journalists coming from the Gulf countries are expected to write about Gulf issues; Arab women are expected to talk about women's issues; while artists are expected to talk about the turmoil in their countries, the war, and the revolution – otherwise they have no place in the cultural and arts scene. Arabs face incidents of discrimination and racism on a daily basis in white European society, as practices of racial profiling show (Knight 2020). It is enough to stand in the central station and watch policemen selectively approach people of color, specifically men, to ask for their IDs, and search them. Other acts of harassment against minorities are also common: verbal or physical discrimination by civilians also takes place. Not all such instances are reported to the police or the Federal Anti-discrimination Agency, many are only discussed among friends, dismissed altogether, or not even considered to be discrimination (Fida 2021).

The Syrian journalist and women rights activist, Yasmeen Marei, who moved to Berlin in 2016 says:

> "I found myself, just like thousands of foreigners, confronting a serious issue that touches the details of our daily life, shapes it, and defines our paths: 'integration'. I thought extensively about the term that has become associated with fear and inferiority, most importantly the fear of losing distinctive features like habits and traditions, and anything related to culture and lifestyle" (Saeed 2021).

How to move forward?

The question here is: How can a city that has suffered so much from exile, desperation, war, and discrimination deal with the notion of refugees today? It is not easy to be a refugee or a migrant in a country that has an unfortunate history that features displacement, alienation, and exile, and one that still has in its subconscious transgenerational unhealed wounds. This society never got rid of its heavy legacy of guilt and shame. The city may be full of monuments commemorating victims of the holocaust, displacement, and exile; but the memory of the city is laden with misery and an even heavier burden as incidents of the past were swept under the carpet. Feelings of frustration, guilt, and anxiety resurfaced when refugee newcomers came

from different places, reawakening a post-traumatic disorder that emerges whenever they feel threatened, anxious, or scared, even if they are in their comfort zone.

There are many ways to bridge the gap between hosts and guests. Art is one possible way; it is a tool the newcomers can use to introduce themselves to the hosting community. As journalism tries to fulfill its role by introducing the newcomers and the baggage they bring with them, integration being pushed by the state will remain lacking and one-sided. Arab and foreigner integration in German society has to be met with efforts from the German side to learn how to accept the new people with their cultures, religions, habits, and traditions.

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