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Untold Stories

Gender-sensitive readings of the Syrian
Uprising

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Preface

Omar Imady

In this new issue of *Syria Studies*, entitled “Untold Stories – Gender-sensitive readings of the Syrian Uprising,” we are pleased to share two samples of a new and promising approach to analysing and interpreting the narrative of war. It is an approach that is not only pre-occupied with the human dimension of political conflict, but also one that seeks to shed light on the gender-specific nuances that permeate such dynamics. Indeed, it is now widely accepted that ideas of masculinity have had a significant impact on the way in which politics is understood and analysed, often skewing our perspective of what exactly is taking place. When applied to the realm of Syria studies, employing a more gender-sensitive approach can help us capture the stories that are often untold, or brushed aside; stories of women and men attempting to assert their identity in a political context that is often adamant at denying them this right.

In “Coercive Control in Conflict: Implications for Syria,” Joanne Hopkins explores how the concept of coercive control can be used to help us understand the continuum of violence experienced by men and women in the Syrian conflict. Hopkins moves beyond what most similar studies focus on, “... the use of physical violence by the state ...” and “... the state's systematic use of torture, imprisonment and rape ...” and focuses instead on the “... need to understand the way that the state and other actors have employed a strategy of creating an atmosphere of fear alongside the physical acts of violence.”

In “Framing Disaster, Performativity & Desire in the Writings of Syrians in Diaspora,” Nusaiba Joan Imady examines the ways in which “... Syrians in diaspora have explored and redefined meaning in tradition and culture, specifically in relation to sexual violence, Syrian identity, and the validity of queer desire.” She seeks to capture the responses that are in danger of being lost in this now almost eight-year conflict, responses that collectively constitute a narrative that explains how people ‘surpass’ destruction of this magnitude and provides significant insights on the type of Syria that will eventually emerge from this ongoing tragedy.