

## Paper presented at Conference on Relationships between Diasporas and their 'Homelands'

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How are diasporas involved in transitional justice and reconciliation? How could their engagement in such processes benefit diaspora and 'homeland' populations? [Huma Haider \(/staff/profiles/government-society/haider-huma.aspx\)](http://staff/profiles/government-society/haider-huma.aspx) recently presented on these issues in Beirut.

The Conference on 'Relationships between Diasporas and Their "Homelands" and Their Impact on the State, National Identities, and Peace & Conflict' (03-05 February 2012) took place at the Lebanese American University in Beirut, Lebanon. Haider's paper, 'Transnational Transitional Justice and Reconciliation: The Participation of Conflict-generated Diaspora in Addressing the Legacy of Mass Violence', offers a preliminary exploration of the role that diaspora communities can play in transitional justice and processes of reconciliation. The aim is to consider the potential for tapping into diaspora communities and the possible benefits this could have on diasporas themselves and on peacebuilding processes in the 'homeland'.

In the aftermath of mass violence and abuse, addressing societal divisions is often one of the most challenging yet necessary aspects of recovery. Attention, however, has primarily been placed on those remaining in the homeland and on returnees. There is little attention to the relationships among conflict-generated diaspora that remain in their host country. There has also been limited consideration of the participation of the diaspora in transitional justice and reconciliation processes, aimed to address the legacy of mass violence.

The paper outlines potential benefits to involving diasporas in transitional justice. Transitional justice mechanisms include criminal trials, truth commissions, memorials and reparations. Reconciliation activities include dialogue initiatives, media activities and development of civil society. Benefits of diaspora engagement include greater diversity of perspectives; more comprehensive truth gathering; greater international awareness; and the potential for addressing societal divisions within diaspora communities. Diaspora involvement in reconciliation-oriented activities also has the potential to improve societal relations.

The most comprehensive effort to date to involve diasporas in all aspects of a transitional justice mechanism is the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (LTRC). The LTRC held public hearings in cities overseas with a strong Liberian diaspora presence and took statements from members of the diaspora. The commission report documented residual hostilities and tensions present in many diaspora communities and the need for community reconciliation initiatives to be implemented among the diaspora.

The paper also discusses the influence of hostland policies on diaspora attitudes and participation in 'homeland' activities. Immigration policies and the degree of integration that diasporas are able to achieve can affect their willingness and ability to engage with their country of origin. In some contexts, high level of integration of diasporas in the hostland can encourage reconciliatory views, which can be beneficial to draw upon to encourage peaceful relations in the homeland.

The conference paper can be downloaded at: <http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/1588/> (<http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/1588/>)

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