



Diaspora Mobilization for Transitional Justice in the Absence of Transition: The Case of Syria

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Transitional justice (TJ) is most often treated as a concept that 'deals with the past' and, consequently, focuses on retrospective attempts at dealing with injustices. Therefore, less attention has been afforded to the study of why explicitly TJ demands and claims are pursued by non-state actors during conflict – especially under circumstances where there is ostensibly no visible transition occurring and mechanisms of justice seem remote. Why do diasporas continue to promote TJ when it seems unlikely that they will succeed? In this paper, we use reports from and qualitative interview data with diaspora actors and transnational activists with which they work to explore the underlying motivations for why the Syrian diaspora mobilize for TJ. What we find is that, despite unfavorable circumstances, the Syrian diaspora are persistent in their TJ claims for three reasons. First, they have a sense of moral obligation to do so. Second, framing claims in terms of TJ, human rights and international law is perceived as the best strategy to transform Syrian society. Third, TJ discourse is an avenue through which diaspora organizations seek to secure institutional survival.

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