



HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS: THE GROWTH OF A DIASPORA MOVEMENT

Public Talk & Photo Exhibition
6:00-7:30PM, Friday 21 September,
Parramatta South Campus EZ.G.22 (Female Orphan School)

Syria's civil war commenced in March 2011 and continues to ravage the country. Over 5.6 million Syrians are now refugees, while over 6 million men, women and children are internally displaced. Millions remain in hard-to-reach and besieged areas, often relying on humanitarian support from Syrian diaspora organisations, which are estimated to provide 75% of the aid reaching the country. This seminar discusses the role of local and international diasporas in responding to this conflict, and asks what more Australia can do to respond to the humanitarian need of refugees from Syria.

Speakers: Fadi Al-Dairi, (Hand in Hand for Syria), **Rnita Dacho** (Refugee Council of Australia), **Graham Thom** (Amnesty International)

Fadi Al-Dairi is British with Syrian roots. He formerly worked with one of the largest utility companies in Europe before finding himself inspired to co-found a non-government organisation—*Hand in Hand for Syria*—when his home country became affected by conflict. Hand in Hand for Syria is now one of the leading diaspora agencies delivering aid inside Syria, with over 500 employees in several sites. Fadi is in Australia as a guest of *Diaspora Action Australia* and will be a keynote speaker at their upcoming conference.

Rnita Dacho was born in Syria and came to Australia as a refugee 3 years ago. She is the Administration and Fundraising Officer at *Refugee Council of Australia* (RCOA), the national umbrella body for refugees and the organisations and individuals who support them. Rnita coordinates fundraising efforts on behalf of the 180 different migrant support organisations in Australia that comprise the RCOA, the peak body that advocates on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers.

Dr Graham Thom is *Amnesty International's* Refugee Spokesperson, and Amnesty International Australia's Refugee Coordinator since 2000. He works on behalf of individual asylum seekers as well as on broader human rights issues relating to refugees. Dr Thom holds a PhD from University of Sydney for his thesis on post-war migration. He has visited immigration detention centres around Australia, interviewing detainees and staff, and is a regular media commentator on Australia's treatment of refugees.

Opening comments and closing remarks: **Dr Nichole Georgeou**, Director, Humanitarian and Development Research Initiative (HADRI). Discussion facilitated by **Dr Melissa Phillips**, Adjunct Research Fellow, HADRI.

