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Preface

This year, *PRAXIS: The Fletcher Journal of Human Security*, celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary. For its first two decades, *PRAXIS* published cutting-edge research in the field of international development. For the last five years, the journal has examined the most pressing global issues through the interdisciplinary lens of human security, including the realms of development, conflict resolution, human rights, and humanitarian aid. The paradigm of human security has solidified the links between these traditionally disconnected fields; and *PRAXIS* has been there every step of the way, publishing thought-provoking analyses from scholars and practitioners on everything from post-disaster aid response to the rights of refugees to combating gender-based violence.

In this twenty-fifth issue of *PRAXIS*, we focus on a local exploration of human security issues, grounding theoretical analyses in specific case studies. While it is important to think globally, we must never forget that issues such as food security, poverty, and violence are not conceptual. These problems are the everyday realities for many men, women, and children throughout the world. For this reason, our 2010 issue highlights the real on-the-ground circumstances within which people are doing their best to live with basic human dignity. In each article, our authors present local case studies with global implications, and highlight potential areas for response and reform.

In our first article, Stephen Allen explores recent developments in international law related to state self-defense against another state which is “harboring” militarized non-state actors. Allen lays out the state of international law before and following September 11, with a focus on how the parameters for self-defensive action have recently been broadened. Following this, he identifies the possible implications of this expansion on the international refugee regime. He poses the question: how can states fulfill their obligations to protect those fleeing violence or persecution, without risking the safety of their own citizens should these refugees employ violence in cross-border attacks against their home country? This analysis is grounded in a case study of Somali refugees seeking asylum in neighboring Kenya. Allen then offers recommendations on how both the human security of refugees and state security can be protected.

Our next article by Getaneh Gobezie presents a review of two different microfinance delivery models: the Group Guarantee Lending Model and Community Managed Loan Funds. Focusing specifically on the case of rural Ethiopia, Gobezie presents the strengths and weaknesses of each model and offers recommendations for implementation. The case study particularly highlights the implications of each model for delivering microfinance services to Ethiopian women, who the author argues would benefit most from small loan support.

Mallika Kaur presents a fascinating case from the Punjab region of India, where there are reports of startlingly high suicide rates among rural farmers. Kaur takes a

multifaceted approach to this case study, highlighting how the various factors of food security, internationally-led development, political marginalization, and suppressed militancy have led to the current debt crisis among farmers in the Punjab. The article draws attention to the particular vulnerabilities faced by women, children, and the elderly as a result of this crisis, before turning to a comprehensive set of recommendations for the Central and State governments.

Finally, in our last article of this section, Louisa Seferis makes the case for coordination and reform among the various actors responsible for spearheading the voluntary return process for internally displaced persons in Darfur. After introducing the volatile circumstances in the region and assessing the different ways in which IDPs are already attempting to return to their communities, Seferis lays out the challenges faced by humanitarian agencies trying to ensure that the return process is safe and effective. The article ends with recommendations directed at these agencies, focused on formalizing coordination and conforming to established standards in humanitarian aid.

In the second section, *Views from the Field*, we provide space for practitioners to reflect on the day-to-day work of addressing real-life human security issues. In the first piece, three graduate students provide insights into gender-related fieldwork in Africa. Much of it will be familiar to anyone who has worked “on-the-ground”—but with a focus on the particular rewards and challenges that come with trying to gauge and/or change embedded attitudes about gender. The second piece, written by two participants in the Ushahidi Haiti Project (UHP), presents a first-hand account of that innovative project from its inception. Again, the trials and tribulations of the authors may look familiar to those who have worked in the aftermath of disasters, but the UHP represents a new frontier in the technology of crisis mapping and response.

Finally, in an interview with Gerald Caplan, we explore the fast-growing field of genocide studies. This internationally-renowned expert reflects on human nature, the (non)responses of the international community, the role of activism, and key avenues for the future study of this horrific crime.

We would like to thank Peter Uvin, Academic Dean of The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and the Director of the Fletcher Institute for Human Security, for his guidance and support. We also thank all of our authors for their stimulating contributions to the 2010 issue of *PRAXIS*. Last, but certainly not least, we thank our team of dedicated editors and support staff for their enthusiasm and hard work, without which this journal would not be possible.

Laura Tashjian

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