

# Diaspora studies

This newsletter provides you with information on diaspora studies.

## 1.1 Diaspora studies

The Greek term *diaspora* is used to refer to any people or ethnic population which has been forced or induced to leave their traditional homelands. Their dispersal throughout other parts of the world and the ensuing developments in their culture constitute the subjects of diaspora studies.

Most particularly, diaspora has been used for the historical movements after the dispersal of the ethnic Israelite population, dating back to the beginning of the 6th century BC, when the Jewish population was exiled from its homeland.

The twentieth century - what historian Eric Hobsbawm called the age of extremes - saw massive ethnic refugee crises, which resulted in the establishment of numerous diaspora communities.

With the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US, research and discussion on the role of diasporas gained momentum as the attackers themselves belonged to such communities.

Another issue of concern in the field of diaspora studies is the so-called brain drain associated with it. When the industrialized countries gave up their colonies in the middle of the last century, people immigrated from the former colonized countries to the wealthy industrialized nations. While some of the immigrants, most of whom hailed from Africa and Asia, left their home countries because of natural disasters, a large portion fled due to war. The quest for new career opportunities and sources of income were also catalysts. The wealthier and more educated the immigrants are, the easier it is usually for them to set foot in the industrialized countries. Diaspora researchers not only see this development as a negative brain drain, but also as an opportunity. Diaspora members usually provide their families with the financial income that the families cannot provide for themselves. When they return to their homelands they bring with them knowledge and expertise acquired in the host countries.

Diaspora members not only contribute to the development of their homelands economically. The work of intellectuals can be of vital importance for their home countries' societies in providing critical analysis, which distinguishes itself by coming from a distanced viewpoint. The Palestinian Mourid El-Barghouti is just one among many who play such a role.

Babajalscha Meili  
ISN Editor

## **1.2 Governmental organizations**

### **Scientific Diasporas: A New Approach to the Brain Drain**

This report was published by UNESCO in 1999. The authors point out that the migration of scientists and engineers between countries with different levels of development is an unsolved problem. The rise of intellectual, especially science and technology diaspora networks all over the developing world indicates a new trend to address the problem. The diaspora networks share the goal of using their expatriate experts, scientists and engineers for development at home. The author concludes that these are strong potential resources for cooperation between developing and industrialized countries.

### **Diasporas of Highly Skilled and Migration of Talent**

This website by the World Bank provides reports and information on events and the World Bank's projects on diasporas and the consequences of migration of highly skilled people.

### **The Role of Palestinian Diaspora Institutions in Mobilizing the International Community**

This report was published by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in 2004. This paper provides an overview of Palestinian diaspora institutions and their track record in mobilizing the international community. It also examines ways of strengthening the role that these institutions can play, including in the rehabilitation and development of the occupied Palestinian territory.

### **The Role of the Palestinian Diaspora in the Rehabilitation and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

This report was published by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in 2004. The author states that Palestinian diaspora groups do not play a significant role in the development and rehabilitation of the occupied Palestinian territory. Of the existing Palestinian diaspora groups, most are small in size and their membership tends to be very specific. For these reasons, these groups do not usually have any major funding and their activities focus on community building, advocacy and awareness-raising and cultural activities. The author assesses the question whether there can be a role for such diaspora groups in the development of Palestine and whether it is possible to identify characteristics, skills, and capabilities in which diaspora groups have a comparative advantage to other NGOs and the international community.

## **1.3 Research and academia**

### **Feasible Globalization**

This 2002 report by Daniel Rodrik, Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard University, US, proposes models on how to organize immigration from developing to industrialized countries so that it can be ensured that the homelands profit from the financial income and the expertise acquired by the immigrants.

### **Diasporas, Remittances, and Africa South of the Sahara: A Strategic Assessment**

This report was published by the South African Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria in 2005.

The author concludes that contemporary migrants are in touch with their homeland, to which they often remit money on a regular basis. They have an economic and political role to play in the countries of departure as well as arrival. In the homeland, they can contribute to development and democracy, especially in enclaves, island micro-states and war-torn countries which record disproportionate emigration flows. The author points out that often the governments of developing countries are not aware of the opportunities that these migrant communities offer. At the same time some African diasporas back armed struggles, terrorist groups, and criminal organizations in their homelands.

#### Diaspora Support for Insurgencies

This report was published by the US Rand Corporation in Santa Monica in 2001. It is a chapter of the book called Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements . The authors examine the proposition that diasporas - immigrant communities established in other countries - frequently support insurgencies in their homelands.

#### Dialogue Within the Islamic World: Asia, Africa, the Muslim Diaspora

This paper was presented in 2004 by Shireen M. Mazari, the Director of the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad, Pakistan. The author points out the need for a dialogue on the issues related to terrorism within the Muslim society, because extremists are threatening to usurp the intellectual and political space not only within Muslim states but also within the Muslim diaspora.

#### Using the Intellectual Diaspora to Reverse the Brain Drain: Some Useful Examples

This report was published by the UN's Economic Commission for Africa in 2001. The author proposes strategies to counteract the problems caused by brain drain in African countries. One of the proposed solutions is the creation of diaspora networks, with the explicit purpose of connecting the expatriates amongst themselves and with the country of origin.

#### Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa: The Gambian Experience

This report, published by the UN's Economic Commission for Africa in 2000, points out that a country's human capital constitutes its most important asset and resource in the push toward sustainable development. The author refers to countries such as Singapore, which has excelled both economically and socially as a result of heavy and sustained investment in their human resources. This is happened despite a limited natural resource endowment. The author concludes that the challenge for other developing countries, in particular those on the African continent, is the development and retention of these human resources for the purpose of development. This paper examines the situation in Gambia and proposes recommendations to counteract the loss caused by this brain drain.

#### South Asia Diaspora, by the University of California Berkeley Library, US

This website provides a bibliographic database, searchable by subject and region which lists books and articles on issues related to South Asian diasporas.

#### Irish Diaspora Studies, by the University of Bradford, UK

This website by the Irish Diaspora Studies Research Unit is not maintained any longer, but it still provides bibliographies and study guides in selected topics relevant to diaspora studies.

African Diaspora, by the Columbia University Libraries

This website provides an online biography of texts on African diaspora. Most of the listed texts are available online.

African Diaspora on the Internet, by Stanford University, US

This website provides links to journals, university departments, conferences and associations, reports, and articles, all of which are dedicated to African diaspora issues.

African Diaspora Studies, by Stanford University, US

This website provides links to the websites of African diaspora research departments and units at US universities.

#### **1.4 Non-governmental organizations**

Diaspora Knowledge Networks

This report was published by the International Committee for Social Science Information and Documentation in 2002. The authors of this report present arguments why members of diasporas are well prepared to help in consolidating the scientific and technical infrastructures of developing home countries.

Telugu Diaspora

Telugu diaspora consists of overseas Telugus, who identify with the language they speak, Telugu. The present Telugu diaspora communities have their origins mainly from the state of Andhra Pradesh in India and other parts of India. Over two million in strength, the Telugu diaspora is continuing to emerge across the continents. This website offers a platform for the Telugu diaspora and its motherland to document information on the history of Telugu diaspora, Telugu organizations and networks and any linkages between the Telugus overseas and Andhra Pradesh.

irishdiaspora.net

This website provides links to various resources on the Irish diaspora. The website replaces the formal website of the Irish Diaspora Research Unit at the University of Bradford, UK.

Global Diasporas

This website provides different resources material on diasporas worldwide, including news, articles, a bibliography, links, and information on organizations.