

# Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

It's really my pleasure today to introduce Wendy Pearlman, although she hardly needs an introduction, but it's lovely to have her here with us. We've grabbed this opportunity, she's on a year sabbatical and I don't know if you were coming to Oxford, but she's certainly going to be in London for a week. So we grab this opportunity to invite her here.

00:00:20 Speaker 1

And I must say that don't bookshop has very kindly also brought copies of her book. So there is an opportunity later on.

00:00:23

Hmm.

00:00:29 Speaker 1

To have an autograph copy of her 6th book, Let Me just give you a couple of details from her. Very impressive CV. Wendy is currently the Jane Long Professor of Arts and Sciences and professor of political science at Northwestern University. I thought she was an anthropologist.

00:00:49 Speaker 1

As political science, she's also Co editor in chief of the journal Perspectives on politics. She's a renowned scholar of Middle Eastern politics, social movements, conflict processes, and forced migration. She's also the author of six books, more than 40 journal articles.

00:00:56

Please.

00:01:09 Speaker 1

And in her CV, this is quite interesting. Of course, she earned her PhD from Harvard, her MBA from Georgetown University, and her VA from Brown University. So all I'm going to say, rather EV universities in in the states.

00:01:19

Look.

00:01:24 Speaker 2

It's not Oxford, but.

00:01:28 Speaker 1

So I've I've won these six books. She's going to be focusing on somewhat on her third book, but mainly on her 6th book. So just to run through some of these, the first book was occupied voices, stories of three.

00:01:41

Yes.

00:01:42 Speaker 1

Life for the second Intifada.

00:01:44 Speaker 1

The second was violence, non violence and the Palestinian national movement. So you can see where her interests were. Her third book, which I think is the one that really caught the attention of, of scholars interested in Syria and the the tragedy that started in well actually 54 years ago.

00:01:50

MHM.

00:02:05 Speaker 1

Just in 2011, was we crossed a bridge and it trembled voices from Syria. This was base.

00:02:12 Speaker 1

On very large number of interviews that she conducted between about 2012 and 2016, but you can correct me about 300 interviews with Syrians in Jordan, in Turkey, in Lebanon, in the UAE, in Denmark, Sweden, Germany and in the United States. All skip book, 4:00 and 5:00.

00:02:33 Speaker 1

Her 6th book, which will really be, I think again it's amazing, is called the home. I worked to make.

00:02:43 Speaker 1

Voices from the New Syrian diaspora, so this now included another 200 interviews. It's a collection of interviews with displaced Syrians exploring their stories and reflections on the.

00:02:54 Speaker 1

Meaning of home.

00:02:56 Speaker 1

It's. This is the book that she'll focus on tonight. As I said earlier, I just want to say a little bit about this, this book.

00:03:02 Speaker 1

Is particularly powerful.

00:03:05 Speaker 1

In that it gives you a vivid understanding of what it is like to be stateless.

00:03:14 Speaker 1

To be in limbo.

00:03:17 Speaker 1

And yet to have agency to be able to make decisions and to create something that has a future, this you get very, very strongly, I think from from that particular book. But I'll leave it up to you what you get from from this book is the personal testimonies that offer a human lens.

00:03:37 Speaker 1

On, as I said, what it means to be.

00:03:41 Speaker 1

Displaced or refugee? And how making home is really one of the fundamental principles of life.

00:03:50 Speaker 1

So this book in particular, but I think her third book as well shows very clearly also the broader lessons about migration, about belonging, about agency and the search for dignity. So I'm going to turn it over to Wendy.

00:04:05 Speaker 1

I think we'll.

00:04:07 Speaker 1

Give you as much time as we need and.

00:04:09 Speaker 1

Then we'll enter into a Q&A.

00:04:12 Speaker 1

Thank you so much.

00:04:17 Speaker 2

Thank you for the.

00:04:19 Speaker 2

Warm and generous introduction and that was very kind.

00:04:24 Speaker 2

About the book, and thank you all for for being here. I'd like to begin by asking each of you to take a few seconds to think of your own answer to the question what is home?

00:04:38 Speaker 2

What is home to you?

00:04:41 Speaker 2

You might immediately know your answer, or you might.

00:04:44 Speaker 2

Struggle a bit.

00:04:46 Speaker 2

Your answer might name one home or several homes or maybe no home at all.

00:04:55 Speaker 2

But I'm guessing that for nearly everyone, the question resonates in some way. It means something to you. And that's because home is a universal human experience. It's a theme across literature, film, music, and everyday speech, because the idea of home strikes at the core.

00:05:16 Speaker 2

Of what it.

00:05:16 Speaker 2

Means to exist as a person in the.

00:05:20 Speaker 2

Today I'd like to talk to you about how those forced to flee home as refugees have special wisdom on the meaning.

00:05:29 Speaker 2

This at least is what I've come to learn in the process of conducting a whole lot of interviews as Don said something like more than 500 interviews with Syrians refugees migrants and asylum seekers across 5 continents over the past 13 years I began this project in 2012 with a desire to understand.

00:05:51 Speaker 2

Syrians experiences of what became known as the Arab Spring.

00:05:55 Speaker 2

As it was dangerous to do research inside Syria or I was too afraid to do this type of research inside Syria I began interviewing Syrians who had fled as refugees so here I have to go back to the refugee study centre that I didn't begin really very interested in refugees I was interested in accessing Syrian stories and the safest easiest way to do that.

00:06:15 Speaker 2

Was to talk to Syrians who had left the country many thinking it would be quite temporary?

00:06:20 Speaker 2

As was mentioned in 2017 I used the interviews that I had gathered to date to write this book there in the corner we crossed a bridge and it.

00:06:28 Speaker 2

Double the book is a curation of excerpts from the interviews I conducted that aim to chronicle and explain the Syrian uprising in war.

00:06:38 Speaker 2

That book concludes with the exodus of millions of refugees.

00:06:43 Speaker 2

But the Syrian story did not end there.

00:06:46 Speaker 2

So my new book which is something is a follow up to the to the book is another tapestry of testimonials and personal narratives gathered from these interviews edited and and and rearranged.

00:06:58 Speaker 2

And this book begins with stories of fleeing Syria and then follows refugees journeys around the world as they reflect on losing home searching for home finding home not finding home and rethinking the meaning of home.

00:07:16 Speaker 2

Itself along the way.

00:07:18 Speaker 2

In this presentation I'd like to share some.

00:07:20 Speaker 2

Of these voices.

00:07:22 Speaker 2

With the aim of sustaining attention to Syria and exploring what refugees can tell all of.

00:07:27 Speaker 2

Us about how to find belonging.

00:07:29

In the world.

00:07:31 Speaker 2

And I'll begin with a brief recap of serious political contacts which might be quite reviewed for many of you who know this well but useful for some of you who might might not.

00:07:43 Speaker 2

In 1970 after decades of coups and instability Hafez al-Assad seized power in Syria.

00:07:50 Speaker 2

And established a strong authoritarian regime.

00:07:53 Speaker 2

Upon his death his son Bashar inherited the presidency.

00:07:58 Speaker 2

The stories that I've collected over the years emphasise how repression and threat of repression became part of Syrians everyday lives.

00:08:08 Speaker 2

How a single ruling political party?

00:08:11 Speaker 2

In omnipresent security apparatus and pervasive network of covert informants all combined to police society and encourage society to police itself.

00:08:24 Speaker 2

For many people a system built on corruption and fear was deeply degrading still parents raised children on the saying hush the walls have ears.

00:08:36 Speaker 2

Generations didn't allow themselves to imagine that things could be different.

00:08:42 Speaker 2

Until 2:00 1011 when uprisings diffused across the Middle East in Syria a few transitive demonstrations got off the ground spread over space were sustained over time and launched a national revolt.

00:08:58 Speaker 2

People said that they broke the barrier of fear.

00:09:02 Speaker 2

I've asked hundreds of Syrians to describe what it felt like to protest for the first time what people most typically said was lads lusive it's simply indescribable you can't put into words.

00:09:14 Speaker 2

I would always say I'm writing.

00:09:16 Speaker 2

A book.

00:09:16 Speaker 2

And working words you try to describe it and people would say things like.

00:09:21 Speaker 1

It was the.

00:09:22 Speaker 2

First time I breathe the first time I felt.

00:09:25 Speaker 2

Like a human.

00:09:26 Speaker 2

One man said it was better than my wedding day.

00:09:30 Speaker 2

And when my wife heard that.

00:09:31 Speaker 2

She refused to speak to me.

00:09:34 Speaker 2

Another woman described shouting in a demonstration as the first time she ever heard her.

00:09:40 Speaker 2

Own voice.

00:09:43 Speaker 2

The uprising remained overwhelmingly nonviolent for months the regime responded with various forms of violence to crush dissent from bullets to missiles to house raids to mass momentary imprisonment torture.

00:09:57 Speaker 2

The opposition eventually took up arms.

00:10:00 Speaker 2

And took over large.

00:10:02 Speaker 2

Swaths of the country forcing the regime to withdraw from different areas that then fell under rebel control.

00:10:09 Speaker 2

The regime escalated its military assaults to aerial bombardments chemical weapons starvation and siege siege starvation and surrender sieges of these civilian areas to try to take them back from rebel control.

00:10:25 Speaker 2

Other state and non state actors increase their involvements following their own ideologies agendas and interests.



00:10:34 Speaker 2

Intensifying to this fragmented map we see it 2016 slice of the map.

00:10:40 Speaker 2

And a brutal.

00:10:41 Speaker 2

Multi sided war which killed over half 1,000,000 people and.

00:10:45 Speaker 2

Left the country in ruins.

00:10:48 Speaker 2

Still over the years Assad managed to reconsolidate territorial political control and although economic and humanitarian crises continue to worsen year after year many came to view Syria as a frozen conflict.

00:11:04 Speaker 2

And other countries increasingly moved to normalise relations with the regime and welcome it back into the community of nations.

00:11:14 Speaker 2

That was the context of war.

00:11:17 Speaker 2

Of destruction of suffering in which some 14,000,000 Syrians were forced to flee their homes this is a map as of.

00:11:25 Speaker 2

2018-2019 which.

00:11:28 Speaker 2

Gives you some sense of this this distribution with approximately.

00:11:33 Speaker 2

Some 7,000,000 Syrians internally displaced.

00:11:37 Speaker 2

Some 5,000,000 who became refugees in the Middle East with the largest number in Turkey followed by Lebanon Jordan.

00:11:45 Speaker 2

Some 1.5 1,000,000 Syrians obtaining asylum or being in the process of obtaining asylum or citizenship or residency across Europe.

00:11:55 Speaker 2

Leaving almost half 1,000,000 scattered elsewhere around the world.

00:12:01 Speaker 2

Mass displacement brought many of the people I talked to to increasingly think about the question of home and belonging and that inspired me to think a lot about belonging as well.

00:12:15 Speaker 2

And home.

00:12:16 Speaker 2

Why home?

00:12:19 Speaker 2

Public interest in wars is typically strongest during their outset or perhaps in some of their most particularly horrific peaks.

00:12:28 Speaker 2

But then interest often.

00:12:30 Speaker 2

Wanes people look away things drop out of the headlines.

00:12:34 Speaker 2

Interest moves on.

00:12:37 Speaker 2

But as military battles decline as they did in Syria during that frozen.

00:12:41 Speaker 2

Phase.

00:12:43 Speaker 2

New battles become palpable for those who survive.

00:12:47 Speaker 2

Like the need to make sense of it all.

00:12:51 Speaker 2

To extract meaning from loss.

00:12:54 Speaker 2

And find oneself a mixed shattered world.

00:12:58 Speaker 2

In other words to find home.

00:13:02 Speaker 2

Thinking about home offers.

00:13:03 Speaker 2

A unique window into meaning making.

00:13:07 Speaker 2

I spent several years asking Syrians as I asked.

00:13:10 Speaker 2

You all what does home mean to you.

00:13:14 Speaker 2

Because this was a way of asking after so much loss.

00:13:18 Speaker 2

Who have you become?

00:13:21 Speaker 2

What is it that you need?

00:13:22 Speaker 2

To find peace in the world.

00:13:24 Speaker 2

What is it that you need to own?

00:13:27 Speaker 2

The world.

00:13:29 Speaker 2

I wanted to write a book to share their answers but I had another motive as well in focusing.

00:13:36 Speaker 2

And that was to think about how to create some sort of common ground for dialogue and mutual understanding between those who do and do not have a migration background between those who have survived war and those who perhaps cannot even imagine what it is to live for.

00:13:55 Speaker 2

That is a common ground that did not treat Syrian refugees like some sort of exotic or unfortunate other but as thought partners and contemplating through shared human concerns.

00:14:08

Like home.

00:14:10 Speaker 2

Because such a common ground.

00:14:12 Speaker 2

Can allow non refugees?

00:14:13

Right.

00:14:15 Speaker 2

To learn about the experience of being displaced but even more so to learn from displaced peoples about this universal concern that touches every human being.

00:14:28 Speaker 2

And one of the things that I think refugee stories about home can teach the world is how home is a convergence of elements such as security love.

00:14:40

Place.

00:14:41 Speaker 2

Fulfillments this is what we think about and think of home as being a a multi dimensional sort of concept all of these different elements.

00:14:50 Speaker 2

These elements can fuse together and converge for those who are.

00:14:56 Speaker 2

Rooted or anchored.

00:14:58 Speaker 2

And here I think that the cultural geographer yifu tuan who defines rootedness.

00:15:04 Speaker 2

As being quote unreflectively secure.

00:15:08 Speaker 2

And comfortable in a particular locality.

00:15:12 Speaker 2

For tuan when you are completely at home you don't have to ask whether or not you're at home you don't even have to think about it you don't have to reflect upon it you simply are.

00:15:26 Speaker 2

Refugees however typically don't have the luxury of being unreflective about home.

00:15:35 Speaker 2

In the Syrian case until 3:00 months ago most refugees could no longer go.

00:15:40 Speaker 2

Back to the.

00:15:41 Speaker 2

Towns and villages that they called home.

00:15:45 Speaker 2

They found themselves forced to build new lives and new livelihoods in places where they before maybe never even dreamed of stepping foot.

00:15:54 Speaker 2

So they were compelled.

00:15:56 Speaker 2

To think about home whether they wanted to or not.

00:16:01 Speaker 2

And this is part I think of what made their perspectives and makes their perspectives on.

00:16:06 Speaker 2

Home so valuable.

00:16:08 Speaker 2

This displacement generates the kind of uncommon wisdom about home.

00:16:14 Speaker 2

The violent dislodging of persons from their established moorings.

00:16:19 Speaker 2

And their hard.

00:16:20 Speaker 2

Work to build themselves anew can simply reveal truths about home and belonging that are obscured in more settled circumstances.

00:16:30 Speaker 2

And among the things that their stories in really deep thinking about home can reveal is what happens when these various elements constituting home disconnect or perhaps never existed.

00:16:42 Speaker 2

In full in the.

00:16:45 Speaker 2

For example the human desire for security.

00:16:49 Speaker 2

And for love.

00:16:50 Speaker 2

Might go in different directions when people leave a place due to profound danger.

00:16:57 Speaker 2

While their family and friends remain there.

00:17:01 Speaker 2

Or the longing for special.

00:17:02 Speaker 2

Attachment to place.

00:17:04 Speaker 2

And for personal fulfilment can disconnect when one yearns for the habitual comfort of a native land but that land puts a ceiling on personal to autonomy aspiration and achievement.

00:17:19 Speaker 2

Under these types of circumstances people face difficult choices.

00:17:24 Speaker 2

About what they need and want most.

00:17:27 Speaker 2

In a home.

00:17:28 Speaker 2

All of which can bring these constituent elements into sharper relief helping us to see them in maybe ways we don't normally see them.

00:17:36 Speaker 2

And appreciate their varied meanings.

00:17:40 Speaker 2

In other words contacts of forced migration.

00:17:44 Speaker 2

In context of forced migration home can entail discovery.

00:17:49 Speaker 2

Who one is?

00:17:51 Speaker 2

Discovering how one finds peace.

00:17:54 Speaker 2

What matters most?

00:17:56 Speaker 2

And what one can simply do without.

00:17:58 Speaker 2

When forced to do without it?

00:18:00 Speaker 2

It's a kind of awareness that does not come without adversity soul searching even pain.

00:18:08 Speaker 2

In some home takes work.

00:18:11 Speaker 2

And when people arrive at something that they feel is home it's a feeling and a home that they worked to make and that's the source of that.

00:18:19 Speaker 2

The title of.

00:18:19 Speaker 2

The book as well as being aligned from one of the the interviews.

00:18:24 Speaker 2

This understanding of home as work as struggle as achievements exposes the hollowness of discourses that portray refugees as powerless victims.

00:18:34 Speaker 2

Or accuse them of exploiting tax funded services in host states.

00:18:40 Speaker 2

No less it lays bare the problem of tokenizing the successes of migrant doctors entrepreneurs star pupils.

00:18:48 Speaker 2

Who defy the?

00:18:49 Speaker 2

Odds to earn great at.

00:18:52 Speaker 2

Rather it insists that simply developing a feeling of home is itself a feat that defies the odds.

00:19:00 Speaker 2



Seeing home in this light encourages us to appreciate all the work that refugees migrants and asylum seekers do to create rootedness and belonging.

00:19:10 Speaker 2

To have empathy for those who.

00:19:11 Speaker 2

Are still searching for home?

00:19:14 Speaker 2

And to learn from what they have to say.

00:19:18 Speaker 2

With this being kind of the framework for the book I'd now like to share some voices from the book there are 38 speakers all have strikingly varied answers to the question.

00:19:29 Speaker 2

What is home?

00:19:30 Speaker 2

And to give you a taste I'd like to share share 4 voices and here it will be a reminder that all of these voices were recorded prior to the fall of the Assad regime.

00:19:40 Speaker 2

At a time when most of the people I talked to did not imagine that that was even possible so it captures some of the heaviness of the challenge of reconciling.

00:19:50 Speaker 2

With the past.

00:19:51 Speaker 2

Of trying to move forward at that time of.

00:19:56 Speaker 2

Really kind of political hopelessness and also encourages us to think about what it means for the the current moment and I'll wrap up with some questions.

00:20:05 Speaker 2

On that afterwards.

00:20:07 Speaker 2

So the first voice I'd like to share is from a young woman named unsafe in France she thinks about home primarily as security.

00:20:16 Speaker 2

And freedom from fear.

00:20:19 Speaker 2

And for her that experience of security and end to fear is deeply embedded in Syria 's political context of authoritarianism.

00:20:29 Speaker 2

So she reminds us.

00:20:31 Speaker 2

In thinking about how that political context shapes her.

00:20:34 Speaker 2

Sense of home.

00:20:36 Speaker 2

About how conversations about homemaking and displacement contexts are incomplete if they don't attend to these pre displacement experiences her life and thinking of homemaking doesn't begin when she crosses an international order.

00:20:51 Speaker 2

It's embedded in the past and we have to appreciate that think about what migrants and refugees carry carry with them so for our staff.

00:21:00 Speaker 2

Sports she said.

00:21:02 Speaker 2

Home is identity.

00:21:05 Speaker 2

Home is when you close your door.

00:21:07 Speaker 2

And feel warm.

00:21:09 Speaker 2

Home is where you're not frightened for your own life or the lives of your loved ones.

00:21:15 Speaker 2

Where you're not afraid of the future?

00:21:19 Speaker 2

I didn't have that feeling in Syria.

00:21:22 Speaker 2

After what happened in Syria feels like a mirror was broken.

00:21:27 Speaker 2

You can try to glue the pieces back together.

00:21:30 Speaker 2

But you'll never bring it.

00:21:31 Speaker 2

Back to what it.

00:21:32 Speaker 2

Was before?

00:21:35 Speaker 2

I'm proud of being Syrian.

00:21:37 Speaker 2

We're a very multicultural society we have amazing food and a beautiful Arabic dialect.

00:21:44 Speaker 2

But we don't have a homeland.

00:21:48 Speaker 2

I'm proud of being a Syrian who lived every detail.

00:21:50 Speaker 2

Of this revolution.

00:21:52 Speaker 2

I look at my little brother who is now French more than he is Syrian.

00:21:57 Speaker 2

He doesn't know anything about Syria.

00:22:00 Speaker 2

I want him to know that people in his country did something his story.

00:22:06 Speaker 2

She continues.

00:22:08 Speaker 2

Many Syrians say that life before the revolution.

00:22:08

Yeah.

00:22:10 Speaker 2

Wasn't that horrible.

00:22:12 Speaker 2

We were living they say.

00:22:15 Speaker 2

Also succeeded in making people satisfied with the least of things.

00:22:20 Speaker 2

Your biggest dream was.

00:22:21 Speaker 2

To get food on the table.

00:22:24 Speaker 2

I felt like we never.

00:22:24 Speaker 2

Saw the sky in Syria.

00:22:26 Speaker 2

Because we couldn't look up.

00:22:30 Speaker 2

It's not your home when you as a population are controlled by a tiny.

00:22:36 Speaker 2

Group in power.

00:22:38 Speaker 2

It's their home not ours.

00:22:41 Speaker 2

It wasn't Syrians Syrian it was always Assad 's Syrian.

00:22:47 Speaker 2

At school we had big signs saying that slogan.

00:22:50 Speaker 2

And we were raised on it.

00:22:52 Speaker 2

We try to regain our home.

00:22:55 Speaker 2

We held this mirror with a reflection of home and it got shattered in 1,000,000.

00:23:00 Speaker 2

Only in the pieces.

00:23:02 Speaker 2

We got shattered ourselves.

00:23:04 Speaker 2

All of us.

00:23:06 Speaker 2

Now is the time for us to reconstruct our lives and reconstruct them well I'm no longer afraid of my life being destroyed.

00:23:15 Speaker 2

I'm not afraid of anything.

00:23:18 Speaker 2

Except maybe that they'll force us to leave.

00:23:21 Speaker 2

There's something in me that's not secure.

00:23:25 Speaker 2

Maybe every refugee or migrant has that feeling deep inside.

00:23:31 Speaker 2

So you can see in soft words that home for her is deeply tied to a political cause a search for for security and freedom that's that's deeply political and the revolution that she carries with her even as she thinks about what it means to make a home in France.

00:23:50 Speaker 2

The next voice is from Hannity who I interviewed in Chicago my hometown you'll see that Hannity has a very strong attachment to his hometown.

00:23:59 Speaker 2

In Syria so.

00:24:00 Speaker 2

Strong sense of nostalgia of affection for that home he thinks through what it is that makes a place of origin a home and what it means for homemaking when you think you can't go back.

00:24:15 Speaker 2

Here are handy.

00:24:19 Speaker 2

When you're inside the conflict?

00:24:21 Speaker 2

Or you're escaping you think only of survival.

00:24:26 Speaker 2

It's fight or flight.

00:24:28 Speaker 2

Your brain says throw this.

00:24:30 Speaker 2

To the back of your mind.

00:24:33 Speaker 2

Then when you.

00:24:33 Speaker 2

Settled somewhere it comes back to you.

00:24:37 Speaker 2

Sometimes it comes back heavily.

00:24:40 Speaker 2

Sometimes slowly.

00:24:44 Speaker 2

I think guilt is part of life for everybody who survived.

00:24:49 Speaker 2

Even if they don't recognise it yet.

00:24:52 Speaker 2

We will always feel like.

00:24:54 Speaker 2

I could have done something differently.

00:24:56 Speaker 2

Or I could have helped this one person but.

00:25:01 Speaker 2

Then you try to trace.

00:25:02 Speaker 2

That person again.

00:25:04 Speaker 2

And you can't find him.

00:25:07 Speaker 2

Guilt makes you doubt things.

00:25:09 Speaker 2

Doubt yourself.

00:25:11 Speaker 2

You wonder why did we do any of this.

00:25:14 Speaker 2

We lost so much and for nothing.

00:25:17 Speaker 2

The whole conflict started for a reason.

00:25:20 Speaker 2

And we came out.

00:25:22 Speaker 2

Empty handed.

00:25:25 Speaker 2

That is what they don't understand in the countries where Syrians went they think that when you arrive somewhere you should just switch your mode completely like speak German within 6 months become very open.

00:25:38 Speaker 2

Talk to people.

00:25:41 Speaker 2

But people left an entire life behind them.

00:25:44 Speaker 2

Most host countries don't want to hear this.

00:25:48 Speaker 2

They're like you're safe now why are you being so negative.

00:25:53 Speaker 2

You should be happy.

00:25:55 Speaker 2

Yes of course I should be happy.

00:25:58 Speaker 2

I am happy.

00:26:00 Speaker 2

But I'm also guilty and sad.



00:26:04 Speaker 2

All of this challenges you it challenges your religion your beliefs everything.

00:26:10 Speaker 2

Some people survive that challenge and succeed.

00:26:14 Speaker 2

Some.

00:26:15 Speaker 2

Do not?

00:26:18 Speaker 2

They say home is where the heart is.

00:26:21 Speaker 2

I don't believe that.

00:26:22 Speaker 2

Maybe for some people the 2 go together.

00:26:26 Speaker 2

But they don't necessarily.

00:26:28 Speaker 2

My heart is with my wife and my kid.

00:26:31 Speaker 2

My wife is from here.

00:26:33 Speaker 2

My daughter was born here.

00:26:35 Speaker 1

I love them.

00:26:37 Speaker 2

They're the best thing.

00:26:38 Speaker 2

That ever happened to me.

00:26:40 Speaker 2

But does that mean it's home.

00:26:43 Speaker 2

It could mean home in the future.

00:26:45 Speaker 2

But it doesn't.

00:26:47 Speaker 2

You can't just decide overnight.

00:26:49 Speaker 2

I'm going to make it feel like home.

00:26:52 Speaker 2

Home is the details that you don't think about until.

00:26:55 Speaker 2

You lose them.

00:26:57 Speaker 2

The details that I lived with my whole life.

00:27:00 Speaker 2

My elementary school.

00:27:02 Speaker 2

My high.

00:27:03 Speaker 2

School.

00:27:04 Speaker 2

My seat in the library and college.

00:27:07 Speaker 2

The store on the corner where the guy gives me something and I pay him tomorrow.

00:27:12 Speaker 2

Because he knows who I am.

00:27:16 Speaker 2

All of these details.

00:27:18 Speaker 2

This is what makes.

00:27:19 Speaker 2

It feel like home.

00:27:21 Speaker 2

They happened because of everything around them.

00:27:24

Because of.

00:27:24 Speaker 2

The community we lived in.

00:27:27 Speaker 2

These details you can't create them.

00:27:30 Speaker 2

It's like if you went out and.

00:27:32 Speaker 2

Said I want to fall in love.

00:27:35 Speaker 2

It's never going to happen it happens by itself.

00:27:39 Speaker 2

Home happens like that.

00:27:42 Speaker 2

Suddenly you have that feeling.

00:27:44 Speaker 2

I'm.

00:27:45

Here.

00:27:47 Speaker 2

But I try to find something that.

00:27:49 Speaker 2

I can relate to.

00:27:51 Speaker 2

Back home I went to the river here I go to the lake OK Lake Michigan is not the Euphrates.

00:28:00 Speaker 2

It's a body of water.

00:28:02 Speaker 2

So I run by the lake.

00:28:03 Speaker 2

It means something to me.

00:28:06 Speaker 2

If we barbecue every day in the?

00:28:08 Speaker 2

Summer we'll make memories too.

00:28:13 Speaker 2

So the second voice gives us a different perspective politics is still the backdrop to Hannah 's experience but it's also deeply rooted instead in his sense of his hometown and all of his childhood memories and from that he derives an entire theory of home as being this accumulation of memories that gather and gather until they.

00:28:33 Speaker 2

Crystallise into a kind of attachment that's hard to replicate but perhaps could be also replicated in another place if memories accumulate accumulate there too.

00:28:47 Speaker 2

The next voice media has again.

00:28:49 Speaker 2

A different perspective on home.

00:28:51 Speaker 2

For media home is not territorialized or geographical at all so unlike honey it's not linked to a specific place instead for her it's any set of circumstances in any place that allows.

00:29:04 Speaker 2

You to grow and flourish and.

00:29:07 Speaker 2

Thrived as a human being.

00:29:10 Speaker 2

The context for her narrative is that she living in Istanbul Turkey works for a Syrian run organisation that did activities and ran services in rebel controlled northwest Syria and the first time that she can travel with her NGO 's over the border from Turkey to Syria and step foot on Syrian soil again.

00:29:29 Speaker 2

The first time after she was forced.

00:29:32 Speaker 2

She asks herself.

00:29:34 Speaker 2

Well I feel like.

00:29:35 Speaker 2

I'm going to.

00:29:35 Speaker 2

Home stepping foot in Syria again and this is what she when she discovers she begins describing some of the the feel of the camps for the internally displaced and in Idlib problems at that time and reflects on the home making processes but she saw there so here's media she said.

00:29:54 Speaker 2

On the outside the tents are all the same.

00:29:58 Speaker 2

But from the inside you see each persons personality.

00:30:03 Speaker 2

Older people don't put effort into making their tents look like a home because they don't believe they should be living there in the first place.

00:30:13 Speaker 2

They keep saying I'm just waiting for the day we return.

00:30:17

Home.

00:30:19 Speaker 2

But there's a new generation that.

00:30:22 Speaker 1

In this case.

00:30:24 Speaker 2

They've never spent time inside.

00:30:26 Speaker 2

4 walls and a ceiling.

00:30:29 Speaker 2

They don't know their families former home.

00:30:32 Speaker 2

It's all distant.

00:30:35 Speaker 2

One time I was 3 young women.

00:30:38 Speaker 2

I was like the prize of the day they were so excited for me to see their tents.

00:30:43 Speaker 2

I want to show you my tents no I want to show you my tents.

00:30:48 Speaker 2

I went inside.

00:30:50 Speaker 2

One was getting married the following week and she drawn her and her fiancée 's initials on the wall of the tent with buttons and beads.

00:30:59 Speaker 2

She said I gave it my own touch.

00:31:02 Speaker 2

So it wouldn't be ordinary.

00:31:04 Speaker 2

I made it feel.

00:31:06 Speaker 2

Like home.

00:31:07 Speaker 2

And now it's ours.

00:31:11 Speaker 2

Our organisation does activities to make the.

00:31:13 Speaker 2

Kids feel happy.

00:31:15 Speaker 2

Once we started playing.

00:31:16 Speaker 2

Some songs so they would dance and have fun.

00:31:20 Speaker 2

When we were starting to?

00:31:21 Speaker 2

Pack up this little girl ran and jumped onto the speaker holding it with her hands and feet.

00:31:27 Speaker 2

She said please don't take it away.

00:31:29 Speaker 2

We don't have any other sounds here.

00:31:33 Speaker 2

She'd heard something new.

00:31:34 Speaker 2

In her mind started to work.

00:31:37 Speaker 2

Their children and their minds are craving development.

00:31:41 Speaker 2

But in such an environment they can't develop.

00:31:46 Speaker 2

This strengthened my theory of hold.

00:31:50 Speaker 2

Home is about growing into a bigger person.

00:31:54 Speaker 2

Whom is finding what a place can give you.

00:31:56 Speaker 2

That can help you grow.

00:31:59 Speaker 2

When people feel that they have no more opportunities to grow they want to go back to what they grew with in the past?

00:32:07 Speaker 2

That's why a lot of the older people say.

00:32:10 Speaker 2

I miss my home I miss my things.

00:32:13 Speaker 2

They don't have a.

00:32:14 Speaker 2

New goal or.



00:32:15 Speaker 2

A future me.

00:32:16 Speaker 2

They want to become.

00:32:18 Speaker 2

So they remain attached to their old homes.

00:32:23 Speaker 2

The first time I went to.

00:32:24 Speaker 2

Syria I thought OK.

00:32:27 Speaker 2

I'm home now I should feel at home.

00:32:31 Speaker 2

But I asked myself if I could stay.

00:32:34 Speaker 2

And I couldn't.

00:32:36 Speaker 2

In that harsh.

00:32:36 Speaker 2

Environment only the brave ones succeed to grow.

00:32:41 Speaker 2

They have dreams and will do whatever they can to keep making themselves grow bigger.

00:32:52 Speaker 2

So in media 's voice he introduces some new factors how age and stage of the life cycle shapes peoples homemaking practises and processes whether they see home as something behind them or something they can still achieve she also talks about the the harshness of material conditions perhaps helping us to think about certain material.

00:33:12 Speaker 2

Needs for.

00:33:14 Speaker 2

Shelter for food for basics are not now met it's hard even to to think about belonging as a more abstract sort of attachment I think about media is narrative a lot because her comments speaking about several years ago echo some things I'm hearing from Syrians now who are visiting Syria for the first time.

00:33:35 Speaker 2

And many many years or perhaps thinking about going back and also asking themselves can they survive under the incredibly harsh conditions of of the economic ruin of Syria today.

00:33:48 Speaker 2

Can they grow?

00:33:49 Speaker 2

Bigger there or or not.

00:33:53 Speaker 2

The 4th and final voice is from Noor in in Denmark.

00:33:58 Speaker 2

Nor again has a different view of home she flees from Syria to Turkey and then from Turkey eventually has the opportunity to be a student in Denmark and that's what takes her there each place challenges her in a different way in those ways transform her sense of self and also her sense of hope.

00:34:18 Speaker 2

Inspiring her to ultimately this multi dimensional sense of home for more home is in the present but it's also connected.

00:34:27 Speaker 2

To her past.

00:34:29 Speaker 2

It's inside.

00:34:30 Speaker 2

Herself but she also prays for loving social relationships to embed embed home in a kind of unconditional love.

00:34:40 Speaker 2

And ultimately home is the meaning that she derives from this whole journey that she's lived in how she makes sense of it and how it enriches her life.

00:34:49 Speaker 2

She begins her narrative.

00:34:51 Speaker 2

Remembering home back in Syria when it was a much simpler question perhaps she was also unreflectively secure at that point didn't have to think much about home before it got unsettled and she arrived at the wisdom that you will see.

00:35:06 Speaker 2

So here on yours.

00:35:07 Speaker 2

She said when I was growing up everything made sense I had Syria I had home my religion my family the way I dressed it all fit together.

00:35:21 Speaker 2

Then suddenly I was outside my home.

00:35:24 Speaker 2

In Turkey.

00:35:26 Speaker 2

The secular environment questioned my beliefs my role in life.

00:35:31 Speaker 2

My sense of belonging.

00:35:33 Speaker 2

It questioned all of my identities at the same time.

00:35:38 Speaker 2

It was scary if you're not that person.

00:35:42 Speaker 2

Then who are you.

00:35:43 Speaker 2

I slowly started to build my own identity.

00:35:47 Speaker 2

My ideas changed.

00:35:49 Speaker 2

I kept reading searching and working on how I.

00:35:52 Speaker 2

Perceived myself and the world around me.

00:35:55 Speaker 2

I moved to Denmark.

00:35:57 Speaker 2

At first I always felt unsettled.

00:36:00 Speaker 2

My idea of home was still.

00:36:01 Speaker 2

Wherever my mom was.

00:36:04 Speaker 2

Now I realise that home has become my own company.

00:36:09 Speaker 2

It's myself home is literally me my own body wherever I go I can manage to make it feel like home.

00:36:19 Speaker 2

My room now also feels like home.

00:36:22 Speaker 2

I found this carpet which is like the kind we used to have I like to walk barefoot.

00:36:27 Speaker 2

Because it brings back memories of grandma's house.

00:36:32 Speaker 2

But I wouldn't call it home yet.

00:36:35 Speaker 2

I think home is somewhere where I won't be alone.

00:36:39 Speaker 2

Home is where.

00:36:39 Speaker 2

People love you for who you are and don't put rules or conditions on loving you.

00:36:45 Speaker 2

It's where you can be your authentic self.

00:36:48 Speaker 2

With no propaganda no pressure and no judgement.

00:36:53 Speaker 2

Having a loving environment is what makes the space home.

00:36:57 Speaker 2

So home is where.

00:36:58 Speaker 2

I can be myself like I.

00:37:00 Speaker 2

And now.

00:37:01 Speaker 2

But with people I love.

00:37:04 Speaker 2

I imagine my life as a puzzle.

00:37:06 Speaker 2

During my life in Syria I had the corner pieces.

00:37:10 Speaker 2

The frame was stable but missing a lot.

00:37:14 Speaker 2

Moving to Turkey I filled in some pieces.

00:37:17 Speaker 2

Being in Denmark I found the main part.

00:37:20 Speaker 2

The frame is a constant reminder of where I come from and who I am.

00:37:26 Speaker 2

Now the picture is becoming clearer calmer.

00:37:30 Speaker 2

Have the main pieces figured out?

00:37:34 Speaker 2

The puzzle will always be missing something.

00:37:38 Speaker 2

Sometimes you put a piece in and then you realise it's in the wrong place.

00:37:43 Speaker 2

The beautiful thing.

00:37:44 Speaker 2

Is that in the end the journey makes sense?

00:37:49 Speaker 2

Ignores words here I think reflects those and a lot of the people in the book who are describing their journey it makes sense because they've worked so hard to extract sense and meaning from it to see the logic of it to extract meaning to take that away and that's part of that that gives them wisdom on themselves and the larger question.

00:38:10

No.

00:38:11 Speaker 2

So what does all this mean for Syria today this is something I think I'm still thinking through with the rapid pace of news every day but here are just some preliminary thoughts about the current moment in a moment of political transition.

00:38:26 Speaker 2

First I hope that this approach to thinking about Syria with an emphasis on personal narratives human stories Syrian voices can help illustrate and emphasise the human dimension of politics.

00:38:39 Speaker 2

In the past 3 months many conversations on Syria have focused on regional and international geopolitics different States and their interests and their interventions.

00:38:50 Speaker 2

Or on the elite level of politics such as the current authorities in Damascus the group hayat Tahrir al sham its ideologies its interests its organisational culture or the interim president of ahman asharah specifically and all of these elite level elements of politics are clearly vital to shape Syria 's future.

00:39:10 Speaker 2

But today I've tried to emphasise the human story.

00:39:14 Speaker 2

Of Syria which is for decades millions of people lived under a state that denied their humanity.

00:39:21 Speaker 2

Now they have historic opportunity to create a political system founded on human dignity.

00:39:27 Speaker 2

I think we should listen to them as they articulate their own priorities of what they want and what they need without assuming from the outside what those priorities are and follow their lead in addressing what they want and need for their country and as they figure it.

00:39:42 Speaker 2

Out for themselves.

00:39:45 Speaker 2

And just as we can focus on the human dimension of politics I think these voices help us appreciate the political dimensions of home sometimes home can be seen as a very domestic intimate sort of concept but it has politics as well some of these voices have Fantasia.

00:40:03 Speaker 2

One of the most widespread refrains in anti refugee anti migrant rhetoric is that refugees and migrants should simply go home.

00:40:13 Speaker 2

But not everyone sees the country left behind.

00:40:16

As a whole.

00:40:18 Speaker 2

As the voices I share today described many displaced Syrians I spoke with over the years thought of Syria with cherished memories of childhood innocence.

00:40:28 Speaker 2

Familial wholeness.

00:40:30 Speaker 2

Cultural familiarity.

00:40:33 Speaker 2

And as hanny says communities where no one was a stranger.

00:40:37 Speaker 2

But they also often expressed unblinking realism about injustice and violence in the ways that their homeland did not fulfil the promise of home due to political oppression.

00:40:50 Speaker 2

These prior experiences were frames of reference that they carried into homemaking and exile.

00:40:56 Speaker 2

Whether what they sought was a replacement for what they lost.

00:41:00 Speaker 2

Or perhaps the forging.

00:41:01 Speaker 2

Of what they felt like they never really.

00:41:03 Speaker 2

Had in the first place.



00:41:06 Speaker 2

And this also has implications.

00:41:07 Speaker 2

For the current moment.

00:41:09 Speaker 2

For many Syrians as esaf said.

00:41:14 Speaker 2

The fall of the Assad regime is a chance to reclaim Syria as a home for its people or to transform the country from Assad Syria Syrians Syria Syrians.

00:41:26 Speaker 2

Home and home.

00:41:28 Speaker 2

The horrific violence of the past week shows that this is this is not necessarily an easy task the road ahead still has many challenges and obstacles it reminds us of the political conditions necessary for homemaking.

00:41:42 Speaker 2

In their fullest sense.

00:41:45 Speaker 2

What does this?

00:41:45 Speaker 2

Mean for a major topic today refugee return.

00:41:50 Speaker 2

First it encourages conversations on Syrian refugees not simply to fixate on the question of return.

00:41:59 Speaker 2

Many displaced Syrians tell me that locals in various countries where they live keep asking them will you go back will you go back will you go back and that question just like the question where are you from can be really hard to hear.

00:42:16 Speaker 2

All the time.

00:42:17 Speaker 2

Because it constantly communicates you don't belong here you belong there that's the natural place for you to be where you're going back to where it's naturally.

00:42:28 Speaker 2

Meant for you to be.

00:42:29 Speaker 2

So that's my first thought on the question of refugee return to remember that.

00:42:34 Speaker 2

Asking about it itself.

00:42:36 Speaker 2

Can do harm?

00:42:37 Speaker 2

Whether that question.

00:42:39 Speaker 2

Opposed to a person of refugee background directly or whether that question is centred in political and public discourse so that it becomes part of the rhetoric that we should have care.

00:42:50 Speaker 2

In posing the question.

00:42:53 Speaker 2

In addition I think that return is much too narrow an angle to understand what Assad 's fall means to displace Syrians around the world.

00:43:03 Speaker 2

In my discussions with Syrians in the Middle East and Europe and elsewhere many emphasise that Syria 's liberation is transformative for them personally whether or not they have any intention of returning permanently to.

00:43:17 Speaker 2

Live in Syria.

00:43:20 Speaker 2

And that's in part because many have lived for years or a decade or more with a sense of existential insecurity.

00:43:28 Speaker 2

A fear that at.

00:43:29 Speaker 2

Anytime they might get kicked out of the countries where they live and have nowhere else to go.

00:43:35 Speaker 2

So you can imagine how difficult it is to build a sense.

00:43:38 Speaker 2

Of home and.

00:43:38 Speaker 2

You're not sure.

00:43:39 Speaker 2

Where you can live?

00:43:41 Speaker 2

And many have now said that the fall of the regime has created some sense of relief from that profound fear if all else fails there is some place to go back to a country that will take them in and that can open New Horizons for homemaking even in exile being relieved.

00:44:01 Speaker 2

And that sort of set sort of dread.

00:44:05 Speaker 2

So when thinking about what home means to displace Syrians after Assad 's fall I think we need to think beyond.

00:44:10 Speaker 2

Just the question of return or not return.

00:44:13 Speaker 2

But rather what does this mean for how people live their lives wherever they find themselves.

00:44:19 Speaker 2

But what about return itself.

00:44:22 Speaker 2

As the one High Commissioner for refugees emphasises refugee returns should be safe voluntary dignified.

00:44:29 Speaker 2

Also must ask to what would Syrians be returning.

00:44:33 Speaker 2

Likely not home as they once knew it.

00:44:37 Speaker 2

For many their own houses and maybe entire towns and villages have been flattened or looted or no longer exist the family friends and neighbours who once made that place home might no longer be there because they also are scattered.

00:44:53 Speaker 2

All over the world.

00:44:55 Speaker 2

What is there to find in Syria if not those houses and those people extreme poverty more than 90% of people living below the poverty line?

00:45:06 Speaker 2

Vast infrastructural collapse with just a few hours of electricity and water a day when people struggling to keep warm in winter.

00:45:15 Speaker 2

And as hundreds of deaths in the past days.

00:45:18 Speaker 2

Show a grave.

00:45:20 Speaker 2

Lack of physical insecurity because a society brutalised by 54 years of dictatorship and 14 years of merciless war does not become stable democracy.

00:45:33 Speaker 2

All of this.

00:45:34 Speaker 2

Means that Syria needs time to get back on its feet every Syrian individual needs time to see where the.

00:45:42 Speaker 2

Country is headed.

00:45:44 Speaker 2

To be able to visit Syria discover what it's like start participating in its recovery and reconstruction without jeopardising.

00:45:53 Speaker 2

Their temporary protection or residency rights elsewhere in the.

00:45:57

World.

00:45:58 Speaker 2

And without having to rush into a decision a life changing decision about moving or not.

00:46:05 Speaker 2

And as some people return and many people perhaps do not return I hope our lives will understanding displacement from Syria shifts from that of refugee crisis or migration crisis to diaspora.

00:46:20 Speaker 2

The years to come might see generations of Syrian Turks Syrian Germans etc.

00:46:26 Speaker 2

People who identify with Syria even as they make their lives and communities and livelihoods elsewhere.

00:46:33 Speaker 2

Their transnational ties.

00:46:36 Speaker 2

To 2 or more countries are an asset it strengthens the resources skills and relationships that people bring to help making Syria peaceful prosperous inclusive representative country.

00:46:51 Speaker 2

Just as those connections.

00:46:52 Speaker 2

Can also enrich all of the countries around the globe in which Syrians have settled?

00:46:59 Speaker 2

Thank you very much.

00:47:07 Speaker 1

OK I'm going to take chairs prerogative and and ask you a question or perhaps ask you to expand a little bit more when I read through the stories.

00:47:17 Speaker 1

What was really clear to me was the transnational family ties families individuals had ties with brothers sisters uncles throughout Europe into North America and elsewhere and somehow as I was reading I saw that those ties were part?

00:47:26

Mm-hmm.

00:47:34 Speaker 1

Of making home.

00:47:35 Speaker 1

And I wonder if you would elaborate on.

00:47:37 Speaker 1

That a little bit.

00:47:37 Speaker 1

Because it didn't come across so much from the full.

00:47:39

Apps that you.

00:47:41 Speaker 2

Yeah thank you I mean I remember one woman wants to put it to me as I don't feel exiled from Syria as much as I feel exile from my family because I have a brother in the gulf and I'm in Germany and my parents are still in Turkey and so forth and I&I and there's well many people would say to me you know we were once a society in which.

00:48:01 Speaker 2

Extended family were very close by maybe lived in the same neighbourhood certainly in the same city where people would come by without an appointment not even knock on the door just walk in the walk in the door but there was always family coming in and out and family gathered regularly.

00:48:15 Speaker 2

And and to go from that situation that being the reality of what home was always connected to family to a situation where your family scattered across continents and because of people 's different legal residencies and ability to travel you may or may not be able to see your family at all some someone might have gotten German citizenship and be able to travel.

00:48:35 Speaker 2

Others might not.

00:48:37 Speaker 2

And many series I talked to over the years said one of their chief reasons of wanting to obtain citizenship in a country and have a passport like a European passport was primarily to be able to travel and visit their family in another place so between the way things people got scattered often in ways that were quite haphazard and random and unpredictable.

00:48:57 Speaker 2

And the barriers to being travel.

00:49:02 Speaker 2

There became a homemaking practise over WhatsApp family groups and there's a an interview in the in the book in which a woman talks about there's a new phenomenon that we have called zoom weddings or you know and things of that sort so a lot of of of of ties become.

00:49:21 Speaker 2

Become virtual become remote become connected by different types of media.

00:49:26 Speaker 2

And many people again whether they want to or not compelled to live lives that are much more individualised than perhaps they ever ever imagined because they may have lived far from from their their loved ones which has to change transform a sense of home home in which it was deeply embedded in.

00:49:45 Speaker 2

In physical proximity to family and continual visits both the temp both the time and the space of having family all around to to being far far from family.

00:49:57 Speaker 1

Wendy thank you thank you very much.

00:49:58 Speaker 2

Thank.