

October 16, 2007

**CALL FOR PAPERS:**

*Refugees and the Insecure Nation: Managing Forced Migration in Canada*

Toronto, June 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**EXTENDED DEADLINE: March 7, 2008**

**The Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (CARFMS) is pleased to announce its inaugural conference!** The conference will be hosted by the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University in Toronto. It will bring together researchers, academics, graduate students, NGOs and government representatives from across Canada to promote exchange and discussion on various aspects of forced migration and the field of study itself. The theme of security will allow participants to reflect on the actors that produce security measures and intend to benefit from them, i.e. states and host societies, as well as those against whom these measures are targeted, i.e. refugees wishing to enter Canada and those located overseas. Security measures reflect not only the interests of the host society, but also reveal its weaknesses, fears and insecurities. National security discourse reinforces an ‘us - them’ dichotomy and locates the issue of equality within a world of pre-defined insiders and outsiders. This discourse also draws attention to what is often overlooked – the vulnerability of refugees and the importance and complexities of *human* security.

One of the deepest ironies of contemporary regimes of migration control is that programmes developed to promote national and international security have produced negative impacts on the security of migrants themselves. Examples are readily available: laws developed to penalize human traffickers are being implemented against church workers; laws developed in response to terrorism have an unequal application to citizens and migrants; visa policies and safe third country agreements condemn migrants and refugees without papers to a reliance on a dangerous underworld; overbroad laws are tempered by discretionary exemptions. The conference will examine the measures that have been taken in the name of national security and the negative consequences these have had for refugees. These consequences are diverse and will be examined along the three following themes:

**i. Refugees and rights in Canada:** This theme will focus on the intertwining of law and security discourse, as well as the impact of the latter on the application and interpretation of law. Security and immigration control measures presently take various forms: visa requirements, safe-third country agreements, anti-trafficking provisions, security certificates, investigative powers, etc. Some of these procedures have been adopted not only for the safety of the nation, but also in the name of protecting refugees. However, their effect is often far removed from providing human security to refugees. For example, the Canada – U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement purports to regularize the flow of asylum-seekers and ensure better access to protection - but concerns have been raised about the safety of refugees who now enter Canada illegally from the U.S. in order to avoid application of the Agreement. More

recently, anti-smuggling provisions have been utilized against a US human rights worker Janet Hinshaw-Thomas who was helping a group of Haitians to enter Canada.

**ii) Canadian settlement and integration: experiences and policy-making:** This theme will examine the effects of state security measures on the experiences of refugees who wish to settle in Canada, as well as the difficulties and dilemmas of policy-makers in developing admission and settlement policies. Security discourse often creates divisions and suspicions within society and this has resulted in certain populations experiencing difficulties in admission to as well as settlement in Canada. As well, security measures that lead to prolonged detention, non-granting of permanent residence, and intrusive investigations have had profound health and psychological impacts on migrants. The current Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) legislation was implemented in 2002. In recent years, the emphasis on tightening border security, particularly since the terrorist strikes in the U.S. on 9/11 has made it more difficult for refugees fleeing persecution to enter Canada. In addition, our acceptance rates of refugee claimants through the refugee determination system have been falling steadily. Policy makers are under pressure to balance humanitarian aid and public security in a policy context that exists in the shadows of racism and discrimination based on perceived differences.

**iii) The international impact of Canadian refugee policy:** This theme addresses the impact of Canada's security policies on forced migrants internationally, including not only the impact Canada has on the international refugee situation, but also the impact other states' and organizations' responses to refugee situations have on our policy-formation. The humanitarian impulses that underpin national and international laws and programmes are being constrained and compromised by the rush to place national security at centre stage. We need to examine the impact of security concerns on the Canadian selection of refugees overseas and the impact of these policies on so-called 'warehoused refugees'. What is the relationship between Canadian refugee policy and the 8.8 million refugees who have been located in long-term refugee situations for 5 years or more? Refugees cannot become self-reliant without the right to do so (Smith 2004:52). What impact, if any, can Canada have on the 21 million internally displaced persons in the world, in places such as Sudan, Somalia, Colombia, Iraq, etc?

## **SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS**

Individuals wishing to participate in the conference must submit:

1. a 250-word abstract of your paper/panel
2. a personal biographic note of no more than 5 lines.

The deadline for submission is **March 7, 2008**. Submissions should be sent to Michele Millard at [mmillard@yorku.ca](mailto:mmillard@yorku.ca).

The conference welcomes submissions of both individual paper presentations and proposals for panels.

For further information please contact Michele Millard: [mmillard@yorku.ca](mailto:mmillard@yorku.ca).