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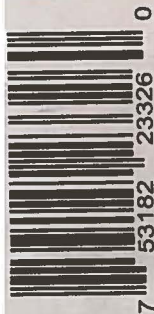
Townshippers' president blasts Trudeau p. 3

B.U. Professor teaches vital lessons

Victoria Vanier, Lennoxville

Roughly 35,000 Syrian refugees have come to Canada since our change in government in 2015, and thousands more are waiting to be processed, many already sponsored by Canadian individuals or organizations. Although these

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Stanstead **J**ournal

172st year of publication!

Established in 1845

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A complicated history



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conflict and the origins of the terrorist group ISIS.

"There is a lack of knowledge. The only information that gets out is that Assad (Bashar al-Assad) is bad, ISIS is bad, Russia is bad. And the Western allies will fix it. The other narrative is the threat of terrorism, that there are two opponents, the Western democracies and the Muslim terrorists. But it is much more complex," commented Dr. Glacier.

Of the roughly 4.8 million Syrian refugees who fled their country, most went to neighbouring countries despite the fact that those countries are without the infrastructure to support them. "Only about 10 % of those Syrians have tried to move on to Europe," said the professor. "Those Syrians are not terrorists. They are families, children in dire humanitarian need. In Syria there is no infrastructure, no water, food or health care. They had no choice but to flee. It is the worst humanitarian crisis."

That crisis has a history that we hear little about here in Canada. "The Syrian issue didn't begin in the Arab Spring of 2011, as many believe. It

is a good country; the Syrian people were well-educated. When Assad's father was the president, he actually did a lot for his country."

Dr. Glacier has extensive knowledge on the terrorist issue and provided me with more background information in about thirty minutes than I've gleaned from mainstream news sources in years, also directing me to the writings of experts in the field such as Dr. Stephen Zunes. She believes that we must work on the issue of radicalization, mentioning that even pure-blood Canadians can get radicalized as in the case of Quebecer Martin Rouleau. "It's not a question of being Syrian or from the Middle East that makes someone radical."

There is a terrorist issue, and they will use violence to be heard. To really solve terrorism, we must solve the issues of social justice. For example what happened in Iraq, and Guantanamo Bay, in the West and in North America these things weren't seen as problems, but on the other side of the world they see that when the West speaks of Human Rights, they're talking about Western rights."

Dr. Osire Glacier teaches courses in Islam, Women in Islam and Politics and Religion in the Middle East and North Africa at Bishop's University.

The professor also addressed the narrative presented by most media of the conflict being about the dark 'Middle Age' Muslims against a democratic West. "It's not Muslims against the West; it's geopolitics and proxy wars fought behind the scenes. Many Muslims are victims of terrorism, but it never gets the same attention as when it happens in Europe. Many Iraqis and Syrians have been killed by ISIS."

The history behind the violence in the Middle East goes back decades and there is much to learn, including about the role that Western governments have played in bringing war and suffering to that region, beginning with the days of colonialism. It's also important to note that none of these war-torn Middle East countries produce weapons; all of the weapons used in these wars and by the terrorist groups are provided by other countries such as Russia, France, Britain, the United States and Canada.

Just as Dr. Osier, with her Moroccan upbringing and Canadian education, can help Canadians understand some of the most urgent issues affecting people all over the world as well as in Canada, so will the new Syrian Canadians be able to help us understand the world from a different perspective. Let's hope that they and all refugees get the welcome they deserve.

Syrians, by their numbers, are just a drop in the bucket compared to the 4.8 million Syrians who have fled their country and over 6 million Syrians who are displaced within Syria, it seems important to, as Canadians, try to understand more fully the issues and the history surrounding the present conflicts in the Middle East.

One Townshippier who also wants her fellow Canadians to better understand the conflict in Syria is author and Bishop's University professor, Dr. Osire Glacier. In an interview with the Stanstead Journal, Dr. Glacier, who immigrated to Canada from Morocco before earning a PhD studying the problems in the Middle East and North Africa at McGill University, provided a bigger picture of the Syrian

began when the country of Qatar proposed to build a ten billion dollar, 1,500 kilometer long natural gas pipeline to go from Qatar through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria, to Turkey. That pipeline was a direct threat to Russia," commented Dr. Glacier. Known for having strong diplomatic ties with Russia, who was up until then supplying natural gas to Europe, Assad rejected the pipeline project in 2009, angering Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United States government. "So Saudi Arabia started training Jihadists to attack the Assad regime from outside." There was a concerted effort to destabilize the regime, but to destabilize is to encourage Islamism. "Then the Arab revolts in 2011 was the last straw. What started as the youth asking for rights ended up in a resurgence of Islamism. It became a proxy war, a war that has nothing to do with the people but a war fought by many countries in one country."

Although many but not all the experts on the Middle East seem to see the Syrian conflict as a "pipeline war", the sad truth remains that the country has been gutted and close to half a million Syrians have been killed. "Syria was once

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