

Violence, Civil War, and Female Forced Displacement: The Return to Chios

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Introduction

By the end of 2019, there were 79.5 million forcibly displaced individuals worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations.¹ Armed conflict usually exacerbates inequalities, including gender-based ones, although the effects vary depending on the particular context. Women and men experience conflict, displacement, and post-conflict settings differently because of the culturally determined gender division of roles and responsibilities. This culturally determined division plays a crucial role in establishing each gender's needs, vulnerabilities, and opportunities. On the one hand, displaced women tend to be at greater risk of deprivation, insecurity, and abuse and are likely to face many forms of violence, extortion, and exploitation, including sexual and gender-based violence. On the other hand, refugee women are not disempowered, passive victims. The impact of forced displacement on women is complex and multifaceted. Forced displacement can give female refugees the opportunity to assume different gender roles, since refugees renegotiate and redefine gender relations while in camps and settlements.

This article aims to highlight the gender dimensions of forced displacement by narrating a story of past forced displacement: the story of the Greek women who were forcibly displaced in concentration camps on islands during the Greek Civil War and the post-war era (1947–1953). At the end of the armed conflict, in 1949, almost five thousand women, some with their children, were sent to a concentration camp, which had been established specifically for women on the island of Trikeri. The exile camp circuit started with exile to the island of Chios, then Trikeri, followed by Makronisos, ending once again in Trikeri. This is an irrational story of extreme deprivation and constant physical and psychological pain, but it is also a story of resistance and

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1 See <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics/>

women's empowerment. The camps on Greek islands where exiled women lived in the 1940s and the 1950s, and which have today been transformed into hot spots – refugee camps – constitute a common thread that links past and present female forced displacement. In these camps, women in the past and in the present live in closed-off or isolated locations under special rules that are distinct from the country's main system of rights and punishments. They live, they suffer, and they resist on the periphery of the established order.

Internal Forced Displacement in Greece

Internal forced displacement in Greece started during the Metaxas dictatorship, a typical interwar authoritarian regime that lasted from 1936 to 1940. However, it was during the Greek Civil War (1946–1949), the last event of the Second World War and a link to the Cold War, that internal forced displacement reached its climax. The creation of concentration camps on Greek islands constitutes a significant and unique feature of twentieth-century Europe, as they were the only camps opened after the end of the Second World War in liberated Western Europe, just a few years after stories about the horror of Auschwitz became widely known. In contrast to other European countries, where Nazi collaborators were detained in internment camps – for instance, in France – in Greece, it was left-wing Resistance fighters who were detained, abused, and tortured in internment camps during the Civil War. Left-wing individuals continued to be exiled in camps long after the war ended, throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, and again during the military dictatorship of the Colonels (1967–1974).

Idyllic and not so idyllic barren islands, which today are tourist attractions, were part of a topography of exile and terror. About 50,000 people were interned in prisons or camps and banished to islands between 1947 and 1949.² Public security committees, rather than courts, made the decision to deport political exiles to islands, a penalty that was officially called “administrative banishment”. The government established mass internment camps on the inhabited islands of Makronisos, Giaros, and Trikeri – the latter for female political exiles – to punish and rehabilitate its internal enemies. Makronisos was used to detain soldiers and officers who had not been convicted of any offence whatsoever, but who were interned for “rehabilitation through enlightenment and education” – a latter-day secular Inquisition. “Rehabilitation”, as defined by the state language and propaganda of the time, meant the transformation of leftist prisoners into nationalist and loyal citizens.

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2 Polymeris Voglis, “Political Prisoners in the Greek Civil War 1945-1950: Greece in Comparative Perspective”, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 37/4 (2002), p. 529.



In all camps, as illustrated in many exiles' memoirs, prisoners were subject to torture, solitary confinement, propaganda, hard labour, and wretched living conditions and mass killings were carried out in order to pressure exiles into signing statements of repentance to renounce their ideological beliefs.

Resistance and Civil War: Female Empowerment (1941-1949)

The Second World War and the Axis Occupation (1941–1944) changed Greek society profoundly. The extraordinary conditions created by the Occupation radicalized a large segment of the destitute population and gave the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) the opportunity to lead one of the most massive resistance movements in occupied Europe. During the Occupation, more than one third of Greek women participated in the political, cultural, and military organizations of the Resistance, even though they had no political rights. The war facilitated the massive entrance of women into the public sphere for the first time because it blurred the boundaries between the public and the private, challenging the traditional family values of Greek society.

Indicatively enough, women's presence in mass demonstrations in 1943 was impressive. Although the gender division was clearly reproduced in the resistance movement, the war gave women the opportunity to act as historical subjects and gain self-respect and self-confidence through their resistance activities. In the Resistance, the ideology of the patriarchal family was breached, the role of the family and the control of men over women were weakened, and women undertook traditionally male tasks; there was considerably more gender equality than before. Ultimately, the resistance movement proclaimed its support for women's rights and empowered women to vote for the first time in Greek history in local elections, as well as in the general elections for its parliament, the National Council in Free Greece, and encouraged them to stand up for their rights and freedoms.

The advent of the civil conflict marked a shift in the gendered division of military labour, as the female soldier of the earlier Resistance period gave way to the fully integrated female combatant. During the Greek Civil War, women constituted half of the Democratic Army of Greece, dominated by the Communist Party; thirty percent of its fighters and seventy percent of its personnel in support services were women. As polarization intensified, these women were either lauded as heroes within the rhetoric of partisan men and women or derided in the mainstream press, whose more extreme elements sought to dehumanize

partisan women and portray them as national traitors and ruthless hyenas. The Right accused left-wing women of being dishonourable and called them prostitutes because, rather than focusing solely on their families, their main focus was on political issues. For the first time in Greek history, women were executed. Women also began to be arrested, sentenced, and transported to island detention camps on the grounds that they were “dangerous for public order”. Not all of the women sent into exile had participated in the resistance movement or in the Civil War; there were also female relatives – mothers, grandmothers, aunts, daughters, and sisters – of men who were politically engaged on the Left, based on an alleged “collective family responsibility”, a sort of “political DNA”. At the end of the armed conflict, thousands of women, along with their children, were sent to the concentration camp established specifically for women on the island of Trikeri. Women were exiled first to Chios, then to Trikeri and Makronisos, sometimes moving to Ikaria and, later, to the island of Ai Stratis, where many were sent after the closure of the Trikeri camp in 1953.

The case of the Trikeri camp (1949-1953)

Trikeri is a tiny island in the Pagasetic Gulf in the north of Greece, isolated and inaccessible due to its geographical position – an excellent site for the establishment of a concentration camp. From 1949 to 1953, nearly 5,000 women were exiled to this deserted island. When the women, many carrying babies, landed on Trikeri, they were pleasantly surprised by the stunning views and the green landscape. Nevertheless, they quickly realized that they would be living in conditions of extreme deprivation and constant physical and psychological pain. The exiles in Trikeri faced extreme hardship, ranging from the lack of water and medical treatment to malnutrition and forced labour, all while subject to military discipline and constant pressure to sign statements of repentance.

The irrational camp regulations imposed unnecessary hardships on them, such as by requiring them to carry all the food supplies and building materials from the port to their tents. They were forced to make circles around the island, rather than being allowed to take the most direct route, and had to carry all the provisions themselves – firewood, cement, and bricks and mortar for 5,000 women – going uphill. «We hadn't the courage to see the nature of April, nor the enchanting sea that we longed for. Because our heads were bent towards the earth and our minds were on how to climb uphill without stumbling on the rocks. Since then, the women called it 'Calvary'. [...] Nor did we have the freedom to wash



ourselves in the sea, because we felt the eyes of the guards everywhere.»³ The most exhausting and needless chore was to carry sand, pebbles, and seawater to make an enormous crown on a slope so it could be seen by passing ships.

Although there was room for them to be housed in the facilities of the monastery, where the administrative personnel were located, their oppressors obliged them to stay in worn-out tents: «Our life in Trikeri was horrible. We stayed outside in tents. In the summer, we suffered from the heat. And, of course, there were terrible flies. It was terribly hot, and the canvas absorbed the heat, and we couldn't do much about it. When the first rains started [...] and they blew away our tents, we were forced to request that they let us rebuild our tents up on the hill, close to the monastery, where it was more sheltered from the wind. So, we did that, and they came a couple of times and destroyed these tents, forcing us to rebuild them again each time. And they beat us around, and made us sleep in the mud, even with the children, to force us to give in and sign statements.»⁴

The abduction of their children was another tactic used to press them to sign. Children were considered national property, and the role of the nation in their upbringing was therefore vital to save them: «Your children belong to Greece. Anyone who wants her child must first become Greek.»⁵ The presence of the children was a source of both comfort and torture for their mothers. The Red Cross did not recognize the children as prisoners, so there were no food supplies for them. The growing number of children – 224 in total – were fed with food provided by their mothers. The women always made sure to take food for the children from the large cauldron of the breadline, keeping this a secret from the administration, thus reducing their own portions. Women gave birth in the camp and watched their children fall ill or die: «In September 1949, a woman gave birth to twins on the ground. One baby died after two days and the other was christened Eleftheria, which means freedom in Greek. She, too, died a week later.»⁶ Because soap and water were so scarce and expensive, the children were soiled, tattered, and pale, «shadows like child ghosts. For these children, above all, some mothers made a statement and left the cursed island.»⁷

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3 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon. Xios, Trikeri, Makronisos, Ai Stratis 1948-1954* [Women's camps], Athens: Alfeios, 2006, pp. 156-157, 160.

4 Janet Hart, *New voices in the nation. Women and the Greek Resistance, 1941-1964*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996, p. 262.

5 Ourania Staveri, *To martiriko trigono ton exoriston gynaikon. Xios-Trikeri-Makronisi* [The torturing triangle of the exiled women. Xios-Trikeri-Makronisi], Athens: Paraskinio, 2006, pp. 100-101.

6 Marigoula Mastroleon-Zerva, *Exoristes. Xios, Trikeri, Makronisi* [Exiles. Xios, Trikeri, Makronisi], Athens: Sixroni Epoxi, 1986, pp. 70.

7 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, p. 154.

Diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, typhus, dysentery, and scabies frequently ripped through the camp, while healthcare for the women and children was non-existent: «Paraskevi, a young exiled woman, as soon as she arrived in Trikeri, after the sufferings, she started to grow pale and melt. Later, she bled continuously in her tent in front of the terrified women. Shortly, exhausted as she was, and desperate, she signed a statement of repentance and left on a stretcher. Did she live? [...] Vagelitsa, a small 18-year-old village girl, died of tuberculosis a few days after she arrived at the camp. She was buried there as an animal, but I must not forget her.»⁸ During these terrible outbreaks of disease, the administration did not provide any rice, sugar, lemons, or even medicine. The camp doctor kept the medicines provided by the Red Cross and sold them to the exiles at a high price.

A starvation diet was imposed, with insufficient food rations; they normally ate beans and chickpeas with a slice of bread. But the women found ways of surviving: «Fortunately for us, there were a lot of olive trees around there and we would gather them and soak them in sea-water brine [...] Also, there were wild mushrooms growing around the bases of the olive trees and we would pick those. I would say to the children, ‘Come on, you are going to eat liver’. And those few olives and mushrooms helped us get through the hunger.»⁹ The lack of water was also stated to be a major problem. The men who were exiled to Trikeri before it was transformed into a female camp had constructed four wells. However, only one worked, and the water was very muddy. The women had to rise very early, form never-ending queues, and wait for hours to have some water for their daily needs, in addition to queuing in long breadlines under the military system. They described their daily lives as a constant queue: «We got up secretly before dawn to go to the wells in the hope that we would be the first ones. And yet again, under the trees, we found women awake, pale and wild, waiting for the water.»¹⁰ After 8 p.m., they were not permitted to have any light in their tents and all movement was strictly prohibited.

Physical abuse in the form of beatings or even attempted rape was also present: «There was a lot of torture, with threats and all, that you’re all going to die now, we’re going to cut off your food and make you eat snakes, etc.»¹¹ «They were looking for a reason to hit us, to assault us with unspeakable curses, and finally to lock us up, starved, in the dungeon in the monastery.»¹² However, it was the national and religious indoctrination, censorship, and

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8 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, p. 153.

9 Virgo Vasileiou, *Ena klonari anthismeno reiki* [One blooming branch of ericea], Athens: Themelio, 1999, pp. 55-56.

10 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, p. 163.

11 Hart, *New voices*, pp. 263.

12 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, p. 160.

isolation that have been described as the most painful aspects of their experiences. After the defeat of the Democratic Army in 1949, they received visits from “repentees” from the Makronisos camp who had been transformed through torture into tormentors. Nevertheless, many of the forcibly displaced women, relatives of persecuted dissidents, refused to sign statements of repentance – not due to communist ideological convictions, but because they considered it to be a betrayal of their own family members.

Additionally, the guards – besides censoring the letters they sent to their families – frequently kept or even burnt the letters that their families sent them as a punishment: «And then we saw the fires burning our letters. Thousands of letters, cards and books were burned last night.»¹³ The guards read the letters the women received, and when news arrived about the death of a family member, they would save these letters for last, reading them in front of the poor mother, sister, or wife. In the letters that they were allowed to send to their families once a week, they could only write that they were well due to censorship. In their photographic testimony – pictures they took of themselves to send to relatives – the women are smiling, giving a misleading sense of happiness in order to reassure their families that they are well. Newspapers were banned in the camp, but «from time to time and in a thousand ways, we came across a newspaper that circulated secretly in our tents. [...] The books they sent us were kept in censorship for months and they avoided giving us schoolbooks and foreign language books so that we would not take any lessons.»¹⁴

Despite all these hardships, women in Trikeri managed to form a collectivity and a society devoid of men. Within the confines of a concentration camp, a social organization was created and all tasks – both those traditionally considered men’s work and those seen as women’s – were undertaken by women. Everyday life was organized by means of an elaborate committee structure: «Trikeri became a hive of work and education, a peculiar nunnery, unique in the world.»¹⁵ The women formed committees for the unloading and carrying of supplies, retrieving water from wells, carpentry, cleaning, cooking, food distribution, classes, recreation, and childcare, disencumbering the elderly women and the children. «Here was the shoe store where Kalliroi made sandals and patched shoes. Below, the Pontic Greeks made mattresses, quilts, and pillows. Next to them, Foto made tables and beds for the children. The tinsmiths made gas cans from cans. On the left was Evangelia, who remade Red Cross clothes. To the right was Katerina’s studio.»¹⁶ In their “free time”

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13 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, pp. 193.

14 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, pp. 164.

15 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, p. 321.

16 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, pp. 322.

they did crafts, knitting, and embroidery, and even volleyball, basketball, and pantomime: «We cut the olive wood and made spoons and other small tools. We embroidered with shells and made various ornaments, necklaces, and toys for the children.»¹⁷

In the camp, in addition to the children, there were 230 illiterate women, 380 who only knew how to write their names, and 52 teachers, among them the prominent education-
alist and prewar feminist Rosa Imvrioti and the famous professor, educationalist, and art
historian Liza Kotou. Secret classes were held daily all over the camp, while Imvrioti gave
lectures on fine arts, history, folklore, and hygiene. The teachers prepared high school age
girls for university. «Those middle-aged women who had never had the chance to see or
hear a teacher, they learnt their first letters here. And those who wanted to learn a foreign
language, they succeeded here in the camp. There were teachers to teach you accounting,
shorthand, drawing, cutting, sewing, whatever job you wanted to make your living tomor-
row.»¹⁸ They taught classes for the children and also managed to build a day nursery, where
they entertained children while their mothers were busy with chores. There the children
did exercise, played, sung, and learnt to write in the sand: «There were 182 children in the
day nursery. One Sunday, we all happily went up to the plateau where they would perform
theatre. There was great emotion. They performed Little Red Riding Hood for us. [...] How
hard it was to do all this, and how difficult it was to discipline those little savages!»¹⁹

Various measures of resistance were collectively agreed upon and used for mutual en-
couragement. These included lessons, plays, and singing: «There I learnt dances from all parts
of Greece, and songs from all over. We would teach each other our native songs and dances.
I danced, I was in plays, I joked my way through.»²⁰ When the women were caught singing or
doing other forbidden activities, they paid for it with beatings or solitary confinement. The
youngest women tried to cheer up the rest of the camp with their energy: «For the very old
women, we would go stand outside their tents, where they sat down speechless, and sing to
them. This was our help, no greater than that which they were giving us with their courage
and patience when they heard that one of their children was dead.»²¹ When “repentees” came
to indoctrinate them, the women started to murmur, making the guards furious. «And the
whole camp, then, with their mouths closed, they started to hum, ‘Mmm-mmm-mmm...

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17 Vasileiou, *Ena klonari*, pp. 95.

18 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, pp. 175-176.

19 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, pp. 169, 177.

20 Eleni Lefka, *Gynaikes stin exoria* [Women in exile], 1964, p. 30.

21 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, p. 170.

mmm-mmm', like that. And you can imagine hearing twelve hundred women doing that.»²² Despite all the penury, on New Year's Eve 1950, the women found the courage to celebrate Santa Claus. They dressed a girl in white and red and put a bag full of old letters on her back, and she walked around the tents, breaking the terror and sadness.

The women adopted strategies of resistance which differed significantly from those of men, such as colour – their dresses were a river of colours. There was a tacit agreement not to wear black clothes, even though almost every woman in the camp could have done so on the grounds of mourning. Every day, they received news of executions: «Many women in mourning wanted to withdraw to remember their beloved dead unceasingly. They were melancholy, they wanted to commit suicide, that's why we never left them alone.»²³ Cleaning their bodies, their clothes, and taking care of their appearance was another strategy of survival and resistance. The women said farewell to those sentenced to death by «giving them a souvenir or some money and washing and combing their hair so that they would depart beautiful and optimistic».²⁴ The women did not listen to anyone – only to the supreme voice of self-preservation and solidarity. Those who survived these difficult times later stated that their resistance activities provided a clear motivation to survive: «The life of each of us became the life of all.»²⁵

According to their own accounts, when the women returned to their homes, they missed the communal life, the collectivity. For some, the environment was very hostile: «We were like lepers. Nobody was talking to me. I did not have a job. I was hungry. Do you understand? And then I felt the greatest misery of my life. Because outside [in exile] we were suffering, they beat us, but we could talk to each other. There I was alone.»²⁶ Years after the camp had been phased out, seven surviving notebooks, written by exiled women in Trikeri and buried under an olive tree, surfaced. The Association of Women Political Exiles published the notebooks, and they began to hold annual meetings at Trikeri to share memories together. In 1991, the Association of Women Political Exiles sought permission from religious authorities to place an honorary plaque in the monastery on the island of Trikeri. However, the bishop proclaimed that it was time to forgive past discord, in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past in the future. Finally, in 2017, the Federation of the Greek Women placed the honorary plaque in the monastery.

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22 Natalia Apostolopoulou, *Grothia sto skotadi* [Fist in the dark], Athens: Sixroni Epoxi, 1984, pp. 13-14, Lefka, *Gynaikes stin exoria*, p. 37.

23 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, p. 168.

24 Association of Women Political Exiles, *Stratopeda Ginaikon*, p. 173.

25 Eirini Papadimitriou-Maroudi, *Gynaikes stin eksoria* [Women at exile], Athens: Kedros, 1979, p. 159.

26 Margarita Kotsaki, *Mia zoi gemati agones* [A life full of struggles], Athens, Sixroni Epoxi, 1987, p. 89.

Female Forced Displacement: Challenging or Reinforcing Traditional Gender Roles?

War and displacement gave women the opportunity to assume different gender roles, even if only for a short period of time. The camps, centres of detention, brought women from different backgrounds into contact with one another; gave them the opportunity to be educated, since lessons took place in a variety of places at these camps, which also functioned as “educational institutions”; and, in general, sparked their potential for mobilization. The Greek woman, before her participation in the war «was neglected, an inferior gender in relation to men, persuaded that she was destined only for the household, the closed life, that she had no rights».²⁷ On contrary, women’s wartime experience and active role provided grounds for claims to equality and emancipation.

The emancipation experienced by Greek women from 1941 to 1949 was short-lived, as it was interrupted by post-war right-wing government policies and philosophies. Women’s massive participation in the Resistance did not win them political rights immediately after the war, as was the case in Italy and France.²⁸ The League of Women’s Rights, a liberal feminist association, active since the 1920s; the Panhellenic Union of Women, founded in 1945 by communist women and supporters; and the Panhellenic Foundation of Women, established in 1946, all demanded the right to vote for women. Nevertheless, the Civil War sharpened and politicized women’s associations and the question of the women’s vote. In this context, some associations, such as the Union of Greek Women Scientists, believed that women should not be given the right to vote immediately, for reasons of high national interest. The dominant state ideology, *ethnikofrosini*, meant the defence of the nation, but also the defence of traditional Greek values. Those who believed in *ethnikofrosini* thought that women’s suffrage would mean women’s votes for the Left and, most importantly, would dissolve the unity of the family. For women, this ideology meant a return to domestic tasks and submission to the rules of the patriarchal family.

During the post-war era, women were demobilized as part of the return to exclusionary politics and traditional gender relations. This effort to push them back into their traditional roles was carried out not only through propaganda, but also through raw violence. In this political climate of constant persecution, women’s struggle for the vote ceased to be a priority because their main concern was stopping right-wing violence. At the end of 1947,

27 Kotsaki, *Mia zoi gemati agones*, p. 40

28 On contrary, men had had the right to vote since the establishment of the Greek state in 1864.

all communist-influenced women's associations were dissolved as followers of the Communist Party, which was outlawed. Despite pressure from the United Nations and the Women's Committee, the victorious first post-war government did not grant women the right to vote. Right-wing women's associations exerted pressure for the right to vote by exploiting the power of male family members, while at the same time stressing that a woman's place was in the home. These women did not reject "everything Greek and everything womanly", as the left-wing women who were exiled or imprisoned did. In the local council elections of 1951, women exercised the right to vote, but with major restrictions. Women were not eligible to be elected as mayors or council presidents and they could not vote if they were under 25. Finally, in the general elections of 1956, Greek women voted on equal terms with men. The majority of women voted conservative.²⁹

At the same time, women had to assume their traditional gender roles not only due to persecution, but also due to the "medieval perceptions" about women of their comrades, male communists. Communist leadership had aimed to mobilize women without challenging social consensus and gender hierarchies; thus, the Communist Party adopted rather conservative rhetoric on gender relations. This position emerged partly out of self-preservation, but also due to the party's structural conservative tendencies. For these women, emancipated and empowered during the Resistance and the Civil War, it was tragic to realize that, after the movement was defeated, comrades once again became masters. They had to abandon their previously active, engaged roles and re-assume traditional gender roles and power hierarchies linked to the patriarchal societal setting. An extreme patriarchal regime was once again in place, based on ascribed gender-specific social roles which relegated women to the private sphere as a means of ensuring family structure, continuity, and stability.

Recent research takes into account violations of women's human rights during conflict and in peacetime, both as a result of their active participation and political activism and as wives and mothers, thus gradually incorporating the experiences of displaced and refugee women. While there is a general consensus in the academic literature on the vulnerabilities faced by women in forced displacement, less is known about the opportunities they may have and the long-term impact. The impact of armed conflict on women is not always negative. For some women, it allows for greater mobility and gives them the opportunity to assume new roles, which may be an empowering experience. Thus, forced displacement may lead to women's empowerment as refugees from mainly patriarchal and male-dominated

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29 Tasoula Vervenioti, "Makronisi: martyria kai martiries gynaikon" [Makronisi: Martyrdom and testimonies of women], in: *Istoriko topio kai Istoriki Mnimi. To paradeigma tis Makronisou* [Historical landscape and Historical Memory. The example of Makronisos], Athens: Filistor, 2000, pp. 113-118.

societies renegotiate and redefine gender relations while in camps and settlements. On the other hand, other studies have pointed out that this empowerment can lead to increased tensions in gender relations, especially when men find it difficult to cope with their reduced ability to act as the main leader, provider, and protector in the family. Naturally, there are many other factors that have an impact on how women and men experience forced displacement, including class, age, race, ethnicity, and rural/urban differences, as well as wider political and socio-economic issues. In any case, displaced people must be seen as individuals with different identities and roles and their agency must be acknowledged, rather than considering them passive victims.