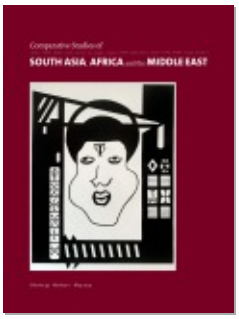
# Waste of Time Is Worse Than Death: (Daya‘ al-waqt ashadd min al-mawt)



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# Waste of Time Is Worse Than Death

## (*Daya' al-waqt ashadd min al-mawt*)

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### God and Waiting in Protracted Displacement

On a warm summer evening in late August 2021, I sat on a bus with Mahmoud, a Syrian asylum seeker volunteering for a Syrian association supporting less fortunate Syrian families in Jordan. After an aid-assessment visit to one of these families in Sahab, southeast of Amman, we were heading back to the city center. As the bus moved from al-Wiḥdat, an old Palestinian refugee camp, to Wasaṭ al-balad, I saw the words "*daya' al-waqt ashadd min al-mawt*" (waste of time is worse than death) written in red spray paint on a brick wall surrounding a cemetery (see fig. 1). I asked Mahmoud about its meaning, and he told me it was no coincidence that the expression was written there. *Dayā' al-waqt*, he explained, meant wasting your time on distractions (*mulhiyat*)—things that will neither benefit you nor others in the afterlife. Taking his volunteering as an example, he explained that in it there is good (*fiyh 'amal kheyr*). In contrast, doing nothing all the time, learning nothing, not benefiting anyone other than himself, according to him, was waste of time and would not benefit his gatherings of good deeds for the hereafter (*rasid bi-l-akhirah*).

Mahmoud was one of the first Syrians I encountered upon beginning my fieldwork. I initially followed him on his weekly volunteering missions in Amman, visiting Syrian families and evaluating their needs for humanitarian assistance. As we got to know one other, I also learned about his living situation in Jordan. Eventually, I also became involved in his process of leaving Jordan. Having just begun fieldwork, I did not pay much attention to Mahmoud's explanation of waste of time that evening. It was not until months later that I would return to my notes, looking for that conversation. The longer I was in the field, engaging with Syrians all over Jordan—in the city, on its peripheries, and in its camps—the more I was reminded of that brick wall image, and Mahmoud's words appeared more and more significant for examining some of the questions I was grappling with. In this article, I take the words written on that cemetery wall, *daya' al-waqt ashadd min al-mawt*, and Mahmoud's commentary on them as a point of departure to explore how experiences of time and waiting are shaped by theological imaginations among Syrian Sunni Muslims living as asylum seekers in Jordan.

Time has often been conceptualized as an exercise of power and control,[1] generating a "temporal dispossession"[2] that makes waiting a specific experience of time.[3] In contexts of protracted displacement, as noted by Cathrine Brun and Ilana Feldman,[4] it generates a temporality experienced as if "life is on hold"[5] among multiple futures where imagination cannot easily transform into reality.[6] For Syrians who fled to Jordan following the revolution in 2011, the experience of foreclosed futures has slowly turned into a rather chronic, normal characteristic of everyday life.[7] They still live under the same precarious legal status that continuously transforms initial vulnerabilities into new ones.[8] At the same time, other emerging crises in the world direct humanitarian care and political attention away from Syrians' extended life conditions, making the question of time increasingly urgent.


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Figure 1. "Waste of time is worse than death." Photo by the author.

Recent anthropological studies have given much attention to what it means to live with undetermined waiting in contexts of migration and protracted displacement. In her ethnography on the bureaucratic machinery in Azraq camp in Jordan, Melissa Gatter attends to residents' reflections on waiting when imposed by a temporary humanitarian system. She suggests that waiting in the camp, although potentially productive, "in all its layers, is an act of compliance."[9] Engaging with Palestinian irregular migrants and activists in a Palestinian tented camp in Oslo in 2011–12, Bendixsen and Eriksen explore how waiting can be transformed into resistance, converting "empty and meaningless time to an 'active waiting time'" through political mobilization.[10] Bittel and Monsutti likewise address how "waiting games"—located in a temporality "separate from the routine of life"—offer a space for young Afghan men in Greece to express agency.[11] Like most anthropological engagement with people in precarious living conditions, these studies reveal a dilemma of representation between attending to human resistance on the one hand or compliance on the other. In contexts of displacement, such dilemmas underline the difficulty of writing about refugees' and migrants' suffering produced by the material powers of the world "without reducing them merely to waiters who only wait for the helping hands of the Global North."[12] Shahram Khosravi suggests that one way out of this dilemma is paying attention to how waiting is shaped by people's histories, religions, and economies and how it is conceptualized in their languages.[13]

To that end, I follow Amira Mittermaier's call for a move beyond the human horizon toward an ethnography of God. In this article, I explore how time—and the waste of it—is conceptualized through my interlocutors' relationship with God. A few others have done this. Paolo Gaibazzi, for instance, examines how Gambian youth make sense of (im)mobility through "God's time."[14] Addressing religious imagination as a central aspect of migration, he shows the significance of (im) proper *timing* "established by divine will"[15] in forming positionalities around agency and predestination in relation to the morality and temporality of emigration. Similarly, Stefania Pandolfo attends to how Moroccan youth grapple with the complex ethical implications of migration, and how it becomes understood either as a

rebellion *against* God or as a moral struggle *with* God.[16] Laura Menin brings ethnographic attention to human-divine relationality by following a young Moroccan woman's encounters with the divine and its guidance in her ultimate decision *not* to migrate.[17]

Taking "God as a decentering device,"[18] this article likewise contributes to the undoing of an anthropocentric worldview. Beyond recognizing the importance of God and religion in the lives of my interlocutors, it does so by tracing when and how God is important for them.[19] Yet in engaging with understandings of waste of time, and whether and how it is worse than death, this article does not address Syrians' ethical sense-makings around (nor the right timing of) migration. Rather, considering that they are living their everyday life with the understanding that they *will* somehow eventually leave Jordan—in life or in death—I pay close attention to God's role in their conceptualizations of time and what it means (not) to waste it before departure.

Addressing the phrase *daya' al-waqt ashadd min al-mawt* as an incitement to understand how protracted temporariness is conceptualized in both worldly and otherworldly terms (and the connections between them) offers a way to unsettle understandings of waiting as "wasted time" without simply resorting to secular narratives of human-centered modes of agency in which humans are "unaided by gods or spirits."[20] An ethnography of the monotheist God, however, is quite different from attending to spirits, polytheistic gods, or other nonhumans.[21] As Samuli Schielke reminds us, the God in the Quran does not share power, and "His 'procedures' are invisible and beyond human knowledge."[22] When Mittermaier calls for taking God as a decentering device, however, she does not propose an examination of God's all-knowing perspective but rather an ethnographic "move to transcendence."[23] That is, she calls for embracing not-knowing in our anthropological writings rather than aiming for closed, stable analytical accounts. Attending to the presence of God in migratory contexts can in this sense offer a way to rethink waiting beyond bare "migranthood."[24]

This article is separated into three areas of analysis. As a point of departure, it attends to the temporal inequalities that are generated in and through the humanitarian protracted context in Jordan, which my interlocutors say "kills" their time. The Arabic word *sa'y* (strive), an endeavor accompanied by divine guidance that will lead to *faraj* (the release, end) and change of current hardships in the present, constitutes the core of this exploration, addressing how they navigate such "time killers." My interlocutors inhabit a world in which waste of time in this life (*al-hayah al-dunyawiyah*) in many ways conditions the afterlife (*al-akhirah*), which further invites us to address how permanent conditions of displacement are conceptualized in relation to the temporariness of life. Subsequently, I turn to the notion of death as the ultimate reminder of waste of time in this life and its consequences for the afterlife. In doing so, I address how death orients not only people's everyday engagements with time but also their conceptualizations of it. Tracing how these eschatological imaginations guide their understandings of divine agency in this world, in the last section I attend to how one of my interlocutors' *sa'y* to leave Jordan for Europe is ultimately realized with God's support. Examining the connections between temporal inequalities created by the material powers of this world, the ways they are conceptualized along both life and death, and the role of God in such conceptualizations, this article situates "waste of time" beyond registers of the modern capitalist world where "time is money" and in which "waiting is seen unambiguously as wasted time to be avoided if possible."[25] As such, this article provides an analytical space that extends beyond our secular horizons and allows for rethinking anthropological understandings of time in protracted displacement.

## Time Killers

"Wasn't that what we were talking about yesterday?" Um Ahmed said laughingly to Abu Ahmed when I asked them about the expression *daya' al-waqt ashadd min al-mawt*. "That the time passes by for nothing?" It was early afternoon, and Um Ahmed and I sat on a colorful mattress on the floor in the small living room in their apartment on the outskirts of al-Hussein Camp, Amman. Abu Ahmed sat on the sofa, and we were all having coffee. The low sound from the TV hanging close to the right corner on the newly painted white wall was heard in the background. Other than that, it was silent. Ahmed and his brother had gone out to get us some *mu'ajjanat*, and Haneen had moved out two weeks ago to live with her husband, leaving behind the feeling of an empty house. "It means that you do nothing beneficial neither for this life nor for the afterlife," Um Ahmed said. Abu Ahmed added another expression: "*'imla' waqtak bi-l-istighfar*" (fill your time with God's forgiveness). He explained that it is written in the entry hall of the mosque located in their neighborhood, and he said it has the same meaning. Waste of time means that you are not begging for God's forgiveness (*ma istaghfar rabboh*), he said. Bringing us back to my initial question, Um Ahmed said, "What is worse than death? The time you wasted."

When I first got acquainted with Um Ahmed in 2017, she, her husband, their three sons and their youngest daughter, Haneen, had finished all the bureaucratic procedures for third-country resettlement to America. With Trump's Muslim travel ban that same year, however, their resettlement case was paused until further notice. Sitting in their living room that afternoon five years later, they still had not heard anything about their case. Although Haneen had gotten engaged two years prior, Um and Abu Ahmed postponed the wedding for a long time, worried that she would get married and be separated from their United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) asylum-seeker certificate and would thus not be eligible to go with them once the resettlement procedure resumed. Tired of pausing life *here* for a fading promise of life *there*, however, in May 2022 they finally arranged for Haneen's wedding. "*Khalas*, you think that there is something new later, but you have to realize that this is life, there is nothing else," Um Ahmed said to me when they decided to arrange the wedding. Now Haneen had left the house, and soon her name would get removed from their asylum-seeker certificate as well.

For Syrians in Jordan, time and the waste of it is in many ways entangled with the three official "sustainable solutions" offered for refugees.[26] Some wait for the precarious legal conditions to allow for further participation in Jordan's society, some for the possibility of return to Syria, and others for third-country resettlement. These life conditions hold true for millions of people who have sought refuge in Jordan but also elsewhere around the globe. Jordan's long history as a refugee host began with the creation of the Israeli state in Palestine in 1948, and it continued with the expulsion of Palestinians following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967.[27] Iraqi refugees entered the country in 1979 during the Iraq/Iran war, in the early 1990s during the Gulf War, and in 2003 following the US invasion of Iraq.[28] When the Syrian revolution started in 2011, Jordan again became a "refugee haven."[29] Although Jordan has long been marked a "humanitarian hub"[30] of the Middle East, the nation is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and domestic law on the treatment of asylum seekers or refugees is "virtually nonexistent."[31] In the absence of any possibility of attaining asylum in Jordan, Syrians (and other refugees) have been left with the UNHCR as the only body to which they can appeal for other durable solutions[32]—solutions that after more than a decade of undetermined waiting have come to resemble unrealized promises. In day-to-day life, waiting for such promises involves waiting for a call from the UNHCR confirming the refugee's eligibility for resettlement. If determined eligible, the refugee must wait more for resettlement interview appointments—always more than one. After going through all the necessary interviews, people then wait for the outcome, which—as was the case for Um and Abu Ahmed—often takes years. With the passing of time such waiting becomes increasingly distant, and the question of waste of time more pressing.

> *Mahmoud*: The problem is that anything one wants to do in life, one starts to delay it. Like, I want to buy this thing for me, or I want to get better at this, I want to do whatever it may be, but I say: Why should I do it [now]? No no, I might travel. So, I start delaying, delaying, everything in my life, literally anything until after I travel.
>
> *Hanna*: So, this is how you are wasting your time?
>
> *Mahmoud*: I am killing the days [*ana 'am bamawwit al-ayam*], I am killing the days that I have until I travel.

Mahmoud, a man in his early twenties, arrived in Jordan as a teenager and had never really thought about traveling until after he graduated from university. The Jordanian labor regulations for Syrians did not allow him to work in his profession; thus, his incentive for leaving Jordan was the impossibility of having a "self-directed future"[33] there, which he asserted was true not only for Syrians but also for Jordanians. In the wait for travel, however, Mahmoud felt that he had started delaying life *here* for a possible future *there*, which he describes as "killing the days," an issue likewise faced by Um and Abu Ahmed. "We have been in Jordan for eleven years and what have we done? This is waste of time," Abu Ahmed said that afternoon as we were sipping coffee. "You have to work," Um Ahmed continued, telling me that work is part of jihad. I asked, "What should Syrians do then, if the conditions in Jordan do not allow them to work?" "The benefit is from the talk [*al-fa'ida min al-haki*]," Um Ahmed explained. When I asked what she meant, she said, "to mention God," for the afterlife. "The most important thing, that is not waste of time, is the prayer," Abu Ahmed added.

Like *al-haki*, work is understood beyond capitalist registers as required in this life, to garner benefit for the afterlife. However, the restricted working conditions for Syrians in Jordan make it difficult to realize such a religious requirement, which causes many Syrians to become concerned about time and the waste of it. These concerns are only triggered further by

third-country resettlement delays. The Trump administration's pause of all UNHCR resettlement dossiers for Syrians in Jordan in 2017 marked the beginning of gradual humanitarian and governmental abandonment. In spite of promises that resettlement procedures would resume after Biden took office, the COVID-19 pandemic generated further travel delays. The Taliban seizure of Afghanistan's government in August 2021 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 further directed humanitarian care and political attention away from Syrians' extended life conditions in Jordan.

> *Omar*: Get attached to [the idea of] traveling, no. It's wrong to get attached. . . . I had just graduated, and here there are no opportunities to work . . . so the attachment [to the idea of traveling] intensified with the disappointment in reality and life. . . . So I got attached to traveling, without thinking. And the travel got delayed, delayed, delayed. . . . You have to be realistic with some things in life. When I got attached to America, I was not realistic, really, and life does not pity naïve people [*nas wardiyin*].

Like Um Ahmed's family, Omar's family is also waiting for resettlement. Having finished all the procedures of interviews, security checks, and medical checks, they were only waiting for the travel date to be decided when the Trump administration took office in 2017. When I first got acquainted with the family in the fall of 2021, their case was still in process. Omar, a young, single man determined to finish his engineering studies in Syria despite the circumstances, did not follow his family directly to Jordan. However, when conditions no longer allowed him to stay, he went to Lebanon before eventually joining them. In Jordan he was granted the opportunity to study engineering again. Like Mahmoud, it was after graduation that Omar first experienced his life conditions as being determined by forces outside his direct control. As he recalls it, it was in that nonnavigable situation[34] of uncertain future horizons that he became so attached to the idea of traveling. In the realization that resettlement would not happen for a long time, he made other attempts to leave Jordan that, for a variety of reasons, failed. Because I used to make regular visits to his family's home, Omar and I never really discussed these matters alone. After he agreed to participate in an interview with me about waste of time, we met one afternoon in May 2022 at a café of his choice in downtown Amman. Narrating his story, he admitted that there had been a moment in which he could not understand God or what God wanted him to do: "I doubted God [*kafart billah*]. I told him, what do you want from me? Why are you punishing me [*yukhalifni*]? Please make me understand! You created peace and war, but what does it have to do with me?"[35] When conceptualizing displacement, Ramsay talks about a dispossessed future, a temporality in which people's everyday state of navigation toward self-determined futures is conditioned by power relations, a state not unique to migrants and refugees.[36] Sarah Philipson Isaac likewise addresses how "temporal governance"—the temporal exercise of power—dispossesses people of their time in the context of the Swedish asylum process.[37]

> *Nada*: It is not that we are wasting our time; our time is dying.
>
> *Sara*: And we are not the ones killing it [*w mu nehna yilli nmawwitoh*]. Our circumstances are killing the time. What do Syrians do here? They wake up, they go to work, they work thirteen or twelve hours at least, they take their salary and go home. They spend the whole day at work, they go home, they eat, and they sleep. They wake up the next morning to do exactly the same thing. When will they live? When will they learn, study, attend a course, a workshop? When will they start a family? It's beyond their control [*mu bi-'idhun*]. And if they didn't work, if they didn't bring 300 dinar per month for twelve hours a day, how should they live? People have families to take care of. So, this is how time is dying while you haven't done anything.

The way that bureaucratic regimes, asylum systems, and humanitarian bureaucratic structures dispossess or "kill" time[38]—not in the English idiomatic meaning of "doing something while waiting," but in the Arabic lexical meaning of "causing death or letting something perish"—is repeatedly highlighted in the way my interlocutors talk about their everyday lives. Unlike Mahmoud, for Nada, a middle school teacher, and Sara, a journalist, the question is less about whether they themselves are killing their days but rather about such temporal dispossession, making time a measure of inequality, in light of the difficult working conditions for Syrians. Recent anthropological interest in how people make sense of temporal inequalities has resulted in enriched understandings of how people make waiting time meaningful. The relationship between enforced and imposed perpetual modes of waiting and patient endurance, *'intizar* and *sabr* in Arabic, has in this sense become one way to address how people occupy their temporal present. Khosravi, for instance, states that in Shiite theology, where "the time we live in is called the era of waiting: waiting for redemption," *sabori* (the

Persian word for endurance and patience) involves the virtue of enduring in pain.[39] *Sabari* (endurance and patience in Wolof) is for Gaibazzi's interlocutors an antidote to haste.[40] Upon engaging in a theological dispute between two interlocutors about migration—referred to in Morocco as *al-harq*, the burning—Pandolfo shows how both patience and impatience can be conceptualized as moral struggles before God.[41] Bittel and Monsutti likewise recognize a "morality of effort" as inherent to their interlocutors' understandings of endurance.[42] In many of these writings, the religious and moral virtue of *ṣabr* serves as an analytical lens to better understand people's experiences of the temporal inequalities created by material powers of the world. While human agency and resistance remain at the center of these studies, conversations with my interlocutors suggest that *sabr* is not only about what humans do or don't do "before God," but also about how their doings are related to the doings of God Himself.

In our conversation that afternoon in downtown Amman, recalling the resettlement delays and the failed attempts to leave Jordan as a moment of despair, Omar admitted that questioning God had not been right: "I admit it is wrong, because I got attached to something uncertain [*mubham*]. But I asked this in a situation of frustration [*ihbaṭ*], you see?" Reflecting on his process of coming to terms with the fact that leaving Jordan seemed farther away in the future than what he had expected, Omar had to ask God what this was all about in order to realize that *sa'y* was his only responsibility, and the rest was up to God.

> *O*: I am trying to travel. Have I traveled yet? No. What is required from me? To continue trying. Just. *Just.* The result? It is not my mission [*muhimmati*], not my duty [*wajibi*], or anyone's duty in the end. Strive. Just. *Just.*
>
> *H*: So, if one is striving, one is not wasting time?
>
> *O*: Now we return to [the question of] time. How should I believe in the presence of God? And this is something else, this is bigger [than time]. He [God] said, strive. *Just.* He never said that you will get this. He said your mission is to strive. He never told you to lay out the results [*ursum al-nata'ij*]. He did not say that, it was me who said that, I am the ignorant one.

In conversations about resettlement cases or living conditions in Jordan, God was usually evoked by my interlocutors in short commentaries or invocations (*du'at*). Yet God and religion were, for most of them, also central in everyday talk, not only as commentaries to my questions but also as topics of conversation. It was not that mentioning God was always and without question "an act of faith that (would) be heard and rewarded by God."[43] Sometimes, it might as well have been a "conventional linguistic performance" as part of the everyday mode of communication in which God emerges—in Jordan and elsewhere in the region—as a constitutive third party in communication and interaction among humans. These things always depend who said it, when, and in what context.[44] Yet, God and religion mattered for many people whom I met, not only in commentaries to my questions but also as a topic of conversation. As someone inhabiting a world different from theirs, they were often enthusiastic about telling me their points of view on things from a theological perspective. When talking about the meaning of *daya' al-waqt ashadd min al-mawt*, all of my interlocutors brought the Arabic verb *yas'a* (strive) and how it is related to *faraj*, ease or change granted by the divine, to the center of reflection—demonstrating a divine immanence in Syrians' conceptualizations of time and the waste of it in protracted waithood. Omar's realization that *sa'y* is the only human responsibility is only one testimony to that. In this sense, paying attention to God in relation to *killed time*—whether as temporal dispossession exercised by governments or humanitarian organizations, or delays generated by Syrians themselves—helps us go beyond the secular underpinnings of our analytical anthropological frameworks that "seal off the visible, material, and worldly from the invisible, immaterial, and other-worldly."[45] Instead, it invites us to address how connections between the material and the immaterial, transcendent worlds shape configurations of time and waiting in this life. Accordingly, in what follows, I turn to human *sa'y* and how it is related to divine granting of *faraj*.

## No *Faraj* without *Sa'y*

> *S*: *Al-faraj* means when you live in a place where there is space, that you reach a spaciousness [*tatla'i 'ala ittisa'*] where you have choices, variation in your life, you go from here, to here, to here, not like when you are living in a small circle, trapped in it. The circle is bigger, you can easily move in it, you are happy and comfortable. This is *al-faraj*.

I met Nada through a volunteering experience in Amman 2017, and through her I met Sara one year later. Both of them arrived in Jordan between 2012 and 2013. When we met again in 2021, I asked them

for updates on their lives, and they replied "*'ala hattet 'idek*." It was not the first time someone had used that expression to describe the unchanged life conditions in Jordan—everything had stayed the same since the last time I had seen them. For them, *faraj* meant the change of their living conditions. "It could be that they permit us to work," Sara explained. "Or give us rights, or that it happens for us that we can travel [*tanfarij 'aleyna nsafir*]. If the conditions change here [in Jordan], that is also *faraj*." Similar to Sara and Nada's understanding, the Arabic lexical meaning of *faraj* is freedom from grief or sorrow, release from suffering, ease, or a happy ending. Throughout fieldwork the word *faraj* has appeared frequently both among refugees and in encounters between humanitarian workers and refugees, as invocations of God (*du'a'*) for a near or far future *better* than the present: *yafrij Allah—Allah yafrij 'aleykum—Allah yafrij 'aleyna*. To wait for *al-faraj* can partly be read in accordance with Hage's notion of "waiting out" rather than waiting *for* something, as waiting "for something undesirable that has come . . . to end or to go."[46] However, waiting for *al-faraj* is not only about the end or disappearance of something undesirable in the present. It is a future-oriented understanding of *change for the better* of something undesirable in the present. Regardless of what kind of religiosity Muslims—Syrians or others—practice in Jordan, beyond settings of protracted displacement, *faraj* talk also appears in daily life. As an invocation for divine granting of ease, *faraj* relates to larger, more distant future changes as well as changes in smaller, everyday instances. For my interlocutors, such change will not come from human endeavor alone.

> *Tariq*: *Al-faraj* is the hope that God will find a solution, allow [*ya'than*]. . . . We have the belief that God hasn't yet allowed; he does not see it suitable yet, to pave the way [*yuyassir*] for matters in Syria to be solved. . . . Like, to allow *al-faraj*, so that these matters get solved and go back to how it was. *Not* to how it was, it will certainly not go back to how it was. We believe that everything will be better than before. This is to allow *al-faraj*.

When Tariq first arrived in Jordan in 2015, he came to Zaatari, the country's largest Syrian refugee camp. As many other Syrians had done, he left the camp to live without authorization in Amman. Due to personal inconveniences, he was later brought to register in Azraq camp, a place where possibilities to move in and out are more regulated than in Zaatari. Luckily, Tariq was eventually accepted to study Arabic literature at a university in Amman, so he moved out of the camp again, only to come back each month to apply for monthly permission to leave. I got acquainted with Tariq in 2017, during his study years in Amman. In spring 2022, I visited him in Azraq camp, to which he had recently returned. I met him at one of the camp's community centers on a hot afternoon in May to discuss *ḍaya' al-waqt*. We found a place to talk at the center's outdoor sports area, away from the sun and the crowds. Tariq told me that after graduating he had found himself in an experience resembling that of Mahmoud and Omar, as described previously. He wished to work as an Arabic teacher, but with the impossibility of doing that in Amman, he eventually decided to return voluntarily to Azraq camp, applying for positions with the schools run by humanitarian organizations. Tariq said, "When I returned to the camp my purpose was to find work. So what did I do? I had a leather bag, and in that bag I put all my certificates and papers, and I went to the organizations one by one." Telling me how these efforts had finally resulted in his employment in one of the camp's nongovernmental organization (NGO) schools, Tariq remarked "*hātha yu'tabar sa'y* [This is to strive]." He explained—just like others—how *sa'y*, signifying human aspiration, endeavor, pursuing, or chasing something, or taking certain steps in a matter was a religious requirement for God's granting of *faraj*. For Nada, strive was about making a purposeful move.

> *N*: *Is'a*, it means to make a move, like my brother, he was striving to travel, through gathering money, learning the language in order to travel, it means doing the work to reach a goal. We always say . . . *is'a ya 'abdi, w ana as'a ma'k*. Like you do what you intend to, and I [God] will walk with you. I should not just stay where I am, no, I have to take the first step for things to happen. . . . Don't sit and "*ya rabb', 'ya rabb', 'ya rabb*'" [please God], no, you must strive, *tas'y*.

Like Nada, when Tariq told me about his *sa'y* to find work, he also brought the expression *is'a ya 'abdi, w ana as'a ma'k* (strive my servant, and I strive with you)[47] into the conversation. Signifying a relationship between divine predestination and human action as highlighted by Gaibazzi[48] and Menin,[49] he explained that "God will not release you [from hardships] just like that. You need to strive, to work for God to pave the way for you [*rabb al-'alamin ma rah yafraj 'aleyk hek, enta biddak tas'a, tashtaghil la-hatta Allah yuyassirlak*]." While denoting human participation and responsibility in destiny in all aspects of life, the relationship between *sa'y* and *faraj* also invites further thought about waiting in migratory and humanitarian contexts. While much scholarly engagement with the concepts of *'intizar* and *sabr*[50]

addresses how the relationship between them revolves around an inner self-determination, making waiting "a state of consciousness,"[51] the verb *yas'a* quite differently implies doing, striving, moving. Turning to my interlocutors' understanding of *yas'a* and their conviction that doing so will, with God's help, lead to *faraj* allows for expanding on understandings of *'intizar* and *sabr* and the role of divine power in these concepts.

The conversations with my interlocutors about waste of time unfolded not around the proper time of migration as explored by Gaibazzi[52] and Pandolfo[53] but rather around the role of God in human endeavors in conditions of waiting. How do they wait not for but *with* God's time? Human *sa'y* and its connection to divine granting of *faraj* signifies God's time on the one hand through the perception that time itself is granted by God, and on the other through the human responsibility to take care of that time in order for God to provide. Adding to theological understandings of the virtue of endurance as opposed to emotional surge and unrest, in taking care of their time, *sa'y* is, for my interlocutors, not only a virtue on its own but a fundamental part of *sabr*. In this sense, attending to protracted displacement as a context that not only calls for *sabr* and *'intizar* but also for *sa'y* and *faraj* allows for attending to the agency, rather than the seeming nonintervention, of God. For while *sabr* involves enduring suffering and the virtue before God in doing so, *sa'y* implies striving to be released from suffering and the promise of God's company and help if doing so. That is, it implies the power of divine release from limitations if humans do their part. Paying attention to how Syrians wait *with* God's time is thus a way to explore a space that, in this context of protracted waiting, makes it possible to navigate beyond humanitarian and governmental constraints. Asking not what people do with waiting time but how people wait *with* God's time ultimately demands that we explore the relationship between time in this life and time in the afterlife. In the following section, I examine how my interlocutors' eschatological imaginations shape their understandings of "God's time."

**Death: A Reminder of God's Time**

Sahab Islamic Cemetery is located about thirty minutes southeast of central Amman (see fig. 2). It is the largest cemetery in Amman, and it hosts not only Jordanian citizens and residents but also Syrian asylum seekers who, before passing away, lived in Azraq refugee camp. An NGO manager told me that when the camp opened in 2014, they initially planned to build a cemetery within it, but the idea was rejected by the Jordanian government on the basis that cemeteries are everlasting, as opposed to Syrian refugees' stays in the camp. In this light, it was decided that those who passed away in the camp would be buried outside the camp, in Sahab Islamic Cemetery. A transitory place, Azraq camp was created for people whose stay is temporal. Yet, with death, through the burying of their bodies, people's stay becomes permanent; hence the need to host them elsewhere. The importance for the Jordanian government of having Syrians' bodies buried outside Azraq camp invites questions about the permanent conditions of temporariness in displacement. However, discussing the meaning of "waste of time is worse than death" with Syrians who spend years of their lives in these conditions moves attention beyond the permanence of displacement to the temporariness of life, which brings me back to that brick wall image in August 2021 and Mahmoud's commentary upon it.

*H:* You told me that it [waste of time is worse than death] is not just written here randomly?

*M:* It is written here because it is a cemetery. When one passes by, they will think that their final destination will be here [*nihayato rah tkun hun*]. That I will come to this grave. So I will not stay for long in this world. Regardless of how long I stay here, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years, a hundred years, in the end I will die. So I will remember.

*H:* That I don't want to waste time?

*M:* Exactly.

Symbolizing at once permanence (of the refugees' stay) and temporariness (of life), the cemetery brings attention to death, its relation to time and the waste of it. One configuration through which Pandolfo's interlocutors shape their ethical horizons around migration is the "remembrance of death" (*dhikr al-mawt*). To cause or pursue one's own cause of death, "improper death" as one of them notes, is for some the ultimate rebellion against God and can thus serve as an incentive not to embark on dangerous migratory journeys.[54] Yet, for my interlocutors, killing their own time, pursuing or causing one's own death to time, is likewise against the will of God. In a discussion with Tariq of what it means to waste time, he said, "Time for us is a blessing from God. And on the Judgment Day the Muslim will be held accountable if he wasted it. Wasted it in the meaning that he didn't invest it for something beneficial [*munfa'a*], neither for this life nor for the afterlife." Bringing two verses from Surah Al-Fajar into the conversation, he explained that it is first on Judgment Day


Figure 2. Sahab Islamic Cemetery. Photo by the author.

that the neglectful person (*al-shakhs al-muqassir*) will be assured (*yata'akkad*) that the real life is after death and will at that moment first regret that he wasted his time in this life.

> وَجِيءَ يَومَئِذٍ بِجَهَنَّمَ يَومَئِذٍ يَتَذَكَّرُ الإِنسانُ وَأَنّىٰ لَهُ الذِّكرىٰ [٢٣]
>
> (And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell—that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance? [23])
>
> يَقولُ يا لَيتَني قَدَّمتُ لِحَياتي [٢٤]
>
> (He will say, "Oh, I wish I had sent ahead [some good] for my life." [24])

Continuing these discussions a few months later, Tariq sent me a hadith reflecting on how, on the Day of Resurrection, God will hold Muslims accountable for their time.

> لا تزولُ قدَما عبدٍ يومَ القيامةِ حتَّى يُسألَ عن عمرِهِ فيما أفناهُ، وعن عِلمِهِ فيمَ فعلَ، وعن مالِهِ من أينَ اكتسبَهُ وفيمَ أنفقَهُ، وعن جسمِهِ فيمَ أبلاهُ.
>
> (Man's feet will not move on the Day of Resurrection before he is asked about his life, how did he consume it, his knowledge, what did he do with it, his wealth, how did he earn it and how did he dispose of it, and about his body, how did he wear it out.[55])

The way Tariq connects waste of time in this life with the afterlife suggests that beyond configuring life along the "remembrance of death," remembering these configurations *after* death likewise orients people's doings in this life. Yet, other than shaping people's life configurations, death—whether as a continuous reminder in this life or a moment of remembrance in the afterlife—also invites us to explore conceptualizations of time itself. While Tariq explains that this life, granted by God, *is* time (*al-'omr huwa al-waqt*), he simultaneously stresses that the *real* life is the afterlife. As such, his understanding suggests that the obligation not to waste time transcends this world. As my interlocutors continuously describe, although their everyday doings—*al-haki*, work, good deeds—happen in this life, they are ultimately of benefit for the afterlife. In this sense, while human *sa'y* is about not wasting time *in* this world, it is an endeavor not solely oriented *toward* this world.

Taking God as a decentering device is precisely about addressing my interlocutors' understandings

of time in relation to the afterlife as an ethnographic query, even if our secular horizon limits the analytical ability to fully grapple with their meanings.[56] Embracing not-knowing in this query, there is an analytical value in not jumping too fast to conceptualizations of "the afterlife" as simply "*after* this life" in a diachronic mode of understanding the relationship between this world and the other world. Beyond suggesting a clear divide between the Divine and creation,[57] such a mode of understanding similarly seals off the immaterial from secular, materialistic ethics of time. According to theologian Christian Lange, it is "often misleading to speak about the Islamic otherworld in terms of a 'hereafter,' an 'afterlife,' an 'afterworld,' or a 'world to come.' Notions about what happens after death and resurrection of course do exist in Islam, but equally strong, perhaps even stronger, is a sense that the otherworld is in a continuous and intimate conversation with the world of the here-and-now."[58] Attending to the way my interlocutors navigate *and* conceptualize time in this world in relation to the immanence of God suggests, in accordance with Lange, precisely that their anticipations of judgment in the afterlife are not necessarily oriented toward death as "the last thing" but rather as "the ultimate thing." This synchronic understanding of time indicates a relationship with the hereafter that is not "over there far away, but with that which is (almost) here, that which most matters now."[59]

In Azraq camp where Tariq lives, the time that matters here and now, and questions of how not to waste it, unfold around forms of waiting. In the small, everyday instances, it may involve the wait for the nine hours of electricity to be turned on every morning; for the neighbors to finish filling up the water containers so that they can fill up theirs; the wait in queues for documentation requests, renewals, or changes; the wait for different sorts of distributions—clothes, gas, cash assistance; the wait at any of the camp's NGO spaces to file complaints, ask questions, or request support in one way or another. Yet, like Syrians all over Jordan, residents of Azraq camp also wait for things more distant in the future. Some may wait for the possibility to leave the camp; some wait for a return to Syria; some for third-country resettlement. Unlike many others, Tariq is not waiting for third-country resettlement. For him, the ultimate *faraj* is in return to Syria. Being patient for that to happen, however, does not mean wasting time in the interim. "To sit and eat and drink and sleep is not patience [*sabr*]," Tariq said. "Patience is to strive [*yas'a*]. You cannot just sit in the camp; there must be something to strive [*yas'a*] for." When I asked Tariq about the meaning of *sa'y* for someone who lives in Azraq camp, he mentioned a friend who had just left the camp to migrate to Europe via Belarus. "My friend who traveled yesterday, that is *sa'y*." In the camp, he explained, the most important thing is to give something to your family, to work. And those who cannot find work there need to look for it outside. Or, he added, it is about making a fundamental change, and for a fundamental change, travel is the only choice. While for Tariq such fundamental change is return to Syria, he grapples with the idea that travel might be the only choice for now, explaining that in the end, "waiting *there* is better than waiting *here*." Yet, for many, waiting *there* is a possibility that with the passing of time has become increasingly unlikely to happen. This does not mean, however, that those who wait *here* do not strive. Indeed, in the absence of possibilities for *faraj* in the sense of a grand, fundamental change, as demonstrated in this article, in taking care of God's time, *sa'y* is also part of the smaller, everyday doings.

For some however, *sa'y* is precisely about that fundamental change, which brings me to Ayoub, a Syrian man in his twenties who was an acquaintance of Tariq's and mine. For Ayoub, *sabr* is not solely a virtue but could also become an excuse not to act in protracted, unchanging conditions. Staying in Jordan and "doing nothing" was for him a self-caused form of "slow death," as he termed it, in which the risks, rather than the possibilities, hampered one's will and actions toward change. In contrast, *sa'y* was a religious requirement for him as a Muslim. When I mentioned Ayoub's journey to Tariq in our conversation, he insisted that its success was the result of Ayoub's *sa'y* and the granting of God, "*sa'y minnoh w yasar min rabb al-'alamin*," remarking that "if God hadn't paved the way for him, maybe he wouldn't have arrived." Following Ayoub's striving from Jordan to Europe, in the final section I examine how God's agency materializes into something tangible when addressed through human mobilization.

## A Temporal Shortcut, *ikhtisar al-waqt*: Skipping Passport Queues

> *Ayoub*: In my view it was not me who arrived, it was Allah who made me arrive [*wassalni*], for sure [*qat'an*]. I cannot say that I am strong and I . . . like, for me, I consider myself nothing, but there were things that were very, very, facilitated [*muyassarah*], beyond all limits [*la-ab'ad*

*al-hudud*], like, to the extent that it was the Belarusian army itself who brought us to Poland, the Belarusian army itself, can you imagine? Like, I cannot speak Russian or . . . so how would they know? I don't know, so these things . . . they become greater than your thoughts, that you are thinking "I want to go to Belarus" but you don't know what will be there or how things will go, how things will happen, so there are things that are arranged and facilitated. . . . Certainly. For me as a Muslim I consider this faith and facilitation [*iman w taysir*] and one must be convinced that God is the one who helps.

In the beginning of September, the topic of the so-called Belarus-European border crisis—in which Belarus, in response to EU sanctions, started granting migrants tourist visas, facilitating unauthorized entry into Europe—spread in Jordan.[60] That Syrians (and other asylum seekers) could apply for visas appeared everywhere—in tourist offices' social media advertisements, news media, and everyday conversations among Jordanians and Syrians. However, although many Syrians wished to seize the opportunity, most lacked a valid Syrian passport, which was required for visa applications. I was conducting fieldwork in informal tented settlements in southern rural regions outside Amman at the time, so I passed the Syrian embassy by car in the early morning every day and was always met with the same scene: an endless queue of people standing in lines or in small groups, sitting on the sidewalk in front of the embassy or under the shade of the planted trees beside it, hiding from the burning sun, documents (or plastic bags containing documents) in their hands, waiting their turn to reach the small window. The queues also constituted a central topic in conversations. Many told me about having waited several hours to reach that little window to get an appointment, only to be told to come back the next morning for second and third attempts. In fact, in the fall of 2021, the demand for Syrian passports was so high that the Syrian embassy ran out of both ink and paper to issue passports,[61] generating delays and more waiting beyond the physical passport queues. Many told me about the lack of paper and ink and that it would take at least a hundred days to get a passport, leaving many people uncertain whether the effort was worth it. Ayoub, however, had already renewed his passport many times in purposeful preparation for an opportunity like Belarus.

*A:* Through my experience in Jordan, it was clear for me, I had planted this idea in my head, that I will definitely not stay in this country. . . . So I renewed my passport four times. Every time I renewed it, it stayed valid for one or two years. Every time it ceased to be valid, I went and renewed it [again].

*H:* Why? What were you thinking when you did that?

*A:* I was waiting for an opportunity. Even if I wouldn't go to Europe, I would have gone somewhere else.

I met Ayoub for the first time in 2016. At the time he had only recently arrived in Jordan but was nevertheless certain that his stay there would not be long. Seven months after Ayoub arrived in Europe, when I asked him about *daya' al-waqt ashadd min al-mawt* in May 2022, we quickly entered the topic of his journey through Belarus. He told me that in contrast to others, he had been striving for an opportunity like this for a long time, and in the fall of 2021 his preparations finally brought results.

*A:* There is a difference. The people who didn't manage to get a passport for Belarus in time were living day by day. Like, they wanted to travel but not *now*. Me, I had this idea in my mind every day. Every day when I came back home, I was thinking, "When will I travel?" Every day. I was telling myself, I have to travel, I have to travel, I have to leave. . . . So this is the difference, that I didn't erase the idea from my mind. I kept thinking about it. Do you remember when I told you that my biggest problem is to leave from the airport to Belarus, and you told me that your problem was that you were worried about the [way through the] forest? [laughter] And I told you "no!" This is the thing: I had decided in my mind, so I was not afraid of anything, *khalas*. What you considered easy [traveling from the airport in Jordan], I considered difficult. I was in such a hurry that I just wanted to leave, to fly, and arrive at the forest, see what it was and just be done with it [*bakulha kullha*].

To not kill or waste time, for Ayoub, implied reducing the time (*yakhtasir al-waqt*) by finding a temporal shortcut. Renewing his passport every other year in preparation for a future opportunity was such a shortcut. Khosravi suggests that while waiting is usually associated with "lack of mobility in time and space," it "does not mean lack of mobilization," but it can also be "a state of wakefulness engaged with potentialities for a different future."[62] Ayoub's *sa'y*—long before any possibilities of leaving Jordan were within his reach—is testimony to such wakefulness, and it served him well once Belarus opened up in 2021. Instead of joining the endless passport queues outside the Syrian embassy in Amman, he went directly with his recently renewed passport to a tourist office and applied for a visa.

Ayoub's notion of "reducing time" can be understood as "time-tricking"—the sense that humans can "outmaneuver, overcome, or manipulate time."[63] While such understandings are more closely related to human modes of agency "particularly characteristic of secular ethics"[64] of time, Ayoub's journey allows for exploring how this wakefulness is related to the agency of God. Although he was refused on his first attempt, he tried a second time, and his visa application was finally successful. He was not alone in his endeavor but accompanied by divine guidance.

> *A:* We pray a prayer called *salat al-istikharah*. . . . You pray, if the matters are going in the right direction and as you were thinking, *khalas*, it means that this is good. But if you feel that matters are starting to go wrong, or not working out, it means that you should not continue with it and that it is not good for you. I prayed *salat al-istikharah* when I left my passport at the tourist office. Even though I got refused at the first office, I went to another office. This is the difference, this is what it means when someone is striving, *yas'a*. That I didn't stick with the [first] office, I went to another office. Like, I wanted it [the visa], I was determined to do something and prayed on it, and I had a belief that I will travel, I was convinced by this. And I did leave, I did travel.

When I asked Ayoub about the meaning, or sign, of the refusal at the first office, he protested, saying "I don't think about it from that perspective at all." He continued, explaining that the first refusal came around half past ten in the evening. When they called him, he went that same evening to take back his passport and the money, only to go to another office right away the next morning.

> *A:* The time difference was just about eight hours [between the refusal from the first office and the attempt at the second office]. At this point, I was not thinking that it might or might not work out. I went right away to the office. It was the twenty-first of September, and this date [laughs] is a memory for almost three, four hundred persons at this office. Why? Because everyone who left their passport at this office after one o'clock in the afternoon got refused. Everyone who left their passport at this office at seven o'clock in the morning, got the visa. And my name was among those who came in the morning.

Explaining that the signs from *salat al-istikharah* are related to how the person perceives God's guidance, he gave me an example of a friend who also got refused on the first attempt and did not make a second attempt. His friend did not travel in the end, but Ayoub did. For him the first refusal was not a divine sign or a manifestation intended to direct him away from his plans.[65] "One has to stop when one sees that all the possibilities are closed, and I didn't see *all* the possibilities closed; I only saw *one* thing closed." he said. He continued, explaining that the presence of thousands of tourist offices in Amman, making the probability of refusal very small, was for him a bigger sign that he should continue trying rather than giving up. He traveled the day after the visa arrived. Although he could have stayed a few days to say goodbye to a lot of people, he asserted that *that* would have been waste of time, pointing to the shortage of time in relation to the border pushbacks and reminding me that he was among the last groups of people who managed to reach Europe via Belarus.

Ayoub's journey demonstrates how "the power of God emerges as something tangible when it is addressed, anticipated and enacted"[66] in human mobilization. As such, it also highlights how paying attention to the relationship between human *sa'y* and divine *faraj* allows for expanding understandings of *'intizar* and *sabr*. *Sa'y*, unlike *sabr*, is not an act of waiting or enduring but about a wakefulness, about doing and making purposeful moves in life. Accordingly, *faraj* does not signify a state or condition of waiting (whether in hope or anticipation) but rather the moment of divine release *from* such condition. The difference between *sa'y* and *sabr* thus becomes visible in Ayoub's understanding of *ikhtisar al-waqt* as opposed to *daya' al-waqt*. Yet, this is not a claim that *sabr* implies waste of time. Rather it suggests that *sa'y* is part of *sabr* and invites us to make the connection between what people do in times of waiting (*sabr*) and how people mobilize God's time (*sa'y*).

## Conclusion: Strive My Servant, and I Strive with You

I was closely involved in Ayoub's preparation for his journey in Jordan, and I followed him to the tourist office on the October evening in 2021 when he received his passport stamped with the Belarusian visa. That same evening, we said goodbye only a few hours before he left for the Queen Alia airport in Amman to travel to Belarus. About a week later he sent me a GPS location on Whatsapp. He had, with the help of God, arrived in Europe. Since that day, his journey has appeared in pieces throughout many of our conversations. Some of them have been recorded for the purpose of research; others have been recollected spontaneously in other exchanges. In February 2023, more than a year after Ayoub's arrival in Europe, we again talked about his journey. Discussing the meaning of death in relation to waste of time, I asked him if he ever thought about

death during his days in the Polish forests. Although he had recalled some of these moments before, it seemed like time itself had made it possible for him to reflect on things that had been difficult to express earlier.

> *A:* Day after day, everything got *much* harder. Like, we were saying that "if only [*ya ret*] it was yesterday, because today was so hard." Honestly, the moment I really saw death was . . . it was really, really, cold. . . . I was wearing a face mask, and the weather was fifteen degrees below zero, and I remember falling asleep, like, I slept for an hour. . . . When I woke up, the face mask had frozen, my eyelashes had frozen, my eyebrows had frozen. Waking up, I felt that I had been dying that hour. I didn't know why I had fallen asleep, and if I had slept longer I would have remained frozen like that. . . . I would have become frozen from the cold and died, because my clothes were all full of water. My body was all water, all of us were all water, and on top of that it was fifteen degrees below zero, and in the forest. Sounds you hear for the first time. . . . You feel like you are in a world that is not yours. . . . And even if you are in the world, no one in the outside world knows where you are, can help you, or knows anything about you. . . . So, at that time, with whom do you keep connected? My only connection was with God. . . . I was disconnected from everything, but I had faith that the only one who can take me out from this situation is God. . . . These things are felt more than they are told.

In this article, I have explored how Syrian Sunni Muslims' experiences of time in protracted displacement are shaped by their lived theologies. Although we as anthropologists in contexts of protracted displacement often encounter interlocutors who are believers, faith and the role it plays in their lives are rarely given much analytical attention. Instead, human modes of agency and resistance are most often placed at the center of analysis. Inspired by Amira Mittermaier's cue of taking God as a decentering device, this article moves beyond the human horizon. The phrase *daya' al-waqt ashadd min al-mawt*—waste of time is worse than death—has in this sense served as an incitement to examine how time is experienced and conceptualized beyond the material powers of this world.

Separated into three areas of exploration, the article first addressed how the humanitarian protracted context in Jordan generates temporal inequalities that continuously "kill" people's time. Attending to how my interlocutors conceptualize human *sa'y* and the way it is related to divine granting of *faraj* allowed for tracing how the presence of God helps them configure life in and around such everyday "time killers." The way such configurations manifested around the perception that time itself is granted by God suggests that the obligation not to waste time transcends this world. As such, these configurations allowed for expanding on understandings of *'intizar* and *sabr*, highlighting the significance in the concepts not only of humans' doings "before God" but also of the doings of God Himself. The understanding that time itself is granted by God suggests a synchronic relationship between this life and the afterlife, which ultimately raises the question of death. In the second part of the article, I turned to how the eschatological imaginations of the people I engaged with shape how they navigate *and* conceptualize time. Following how they orient their everyday doings *in* this world but at the same time *toward* the other world gives analytical space to welcome the immaterial and otherworldly into secular, materialistic understandings of time. The last part of the article used this mode of analysis to follow Ayoub's *sa'y* in leaving Jordan via Belarus and to explore how God's agency materializes into something tangible in human mobilization.

The three areas of analysis in this article become threaded together in the way that they adopt an attentiveness to registering God as mattering when God matters for our interlocutors.[67] That is, they take God seriously by paying attention "to how religious subjects themselves do so."[68] The way God's power manifests in my interlocutors' lives highlights the importance of such analytical attentiveness to better capture the lived realities of the people anthropologists often try to understand.[69] In this sense, moving beyond the human horizon does more than transcend our secular horizons and urge us to rethink anthropological conceptualizations of time and waiting in displacement; it also offers the possibility of making time an analytical site for exploring lived theologies among asylum seekers.

Mahmoud, with whom I first saw the words *daya' al-waqt ashadd min al-mawt* painted in red on that brick graveyard wall in August 2021, found his own temporal shortcut leading him to Europe. Although Ayoub and Mahmoud did not know each other, they ended up in the same country only a few months apart. And although they would encounter other forms of waiting in Europe, they both emphasized how their safe arrival was a result of their striving (*sa'y*)—a result that had certainly not come from them alone, but in God's company. *Is'a ya 'abdi, w ana as'a ma'k*—Strive my servant, and I strive with you.

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## Notes

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

1. Gatter, *Time and Power*, 102.

2. Philipson Isaac, "Temporal Dispossession."

3. Auyero, "Patients of the State."

4. Brun, "There Is No Future in Humanitarianism"; Feldman, "Humanitarian Care and the Ends of Life."

5. Bendixsen and Eriksen, "Time and the Other."

6. Dunn, "Humanitarianism."

7. Ramsay, "Time and the Other in Crisis."

8. Achilli, "Syrian Refugees in Jordan"; Lenner and Turner, "Making Refugees Work?"; Sözer, "Humanitarianism with a Neo-Liberal Face"; Turner, "Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees."

9. Gatter, *Time and Power*, 102.

10. Bendixsen and Eriksen, "Time and the Other," 90.

11. Bittel and Monsutti, "Waiting Games," 4.

12. Khosravi, "Waiting, a State of Consciousness," 205.

13. Khosravi, "Waiting, a State of Consciousness."

14. Gaibazzi, "'God's Time Is the Best.'"

15. Gaibazzi, "'God's Time Is the Best,'" 122.

16. Pandolfo, "'The Burning.'"

17. Menin, "'Destiny Is Written by God.'"

18. Mittermaier, "Beyond the Human Horizon," 22.

19. Moll, "Television Is Not Radio."

20. Bear, "Time as Technique," 496.

21. Mittermaier, "Beyond the Human Horizon."

22. Schielke, "The Power of God," 10.

23. Mittermaier, "Beyond the Human Horizon," 30.

24. Khosravi, "Waiting, a State of Consciousness," 205.

25. Bendixsen and Eriksen, "Time and the Other," 89.

26. Içduygu and Nimer, "The Politics of Return."

27. Massad, *Colonial Effects*; Stevens, "Legal Status."

28. El Dardiry, "'People Eat People'"; Kelberer, "Negotiating Crisis."

29. Chatelard, "Jordan: A Refugee Haven."

30. Brun, "There Is No Future in Humanitarianism."

31. Stevens, "Legal Status, Labelling, and Protection."

32. UNHCR and Government of Jordan, "Memorandum of Understanding."

33. Ramsay, "Time and the Other in Crisis," 388.

34. Ramsay, "Time and the Other in Crisis."

35. Although Omar used the word *kafart*, which has a stronger implication in Arabic, in the context of the conversation it was a way for him to express a short moment of complete despair rather than indicating losing faith.

36. Ramsay, "Time and the Other in Crisis."

37. Philipson Isaac, "Temporal Dispossession through Migration Bureaucracy."

38. Auyero, "Patients of the State"; Bendixsen and Eriksen, "Time and the Other"; Nakueira, "Governing through Paperwork"; Philipson Isaac, "Temporal Dispossession through Migration Bureaucracy."

39. Khosravi, *Precarious Lives*, 79.

40. Gaibazzi, "'God's Time Is the Best.'"

41. Pandolfo, "'The Burning.'"

42. Bittel and Monsutti, "Waiting Games," 14.

43. Schielke, "The Power of God," 6.

44. Schielke, "The Power of God," 6.

45. Mittermaier, "Beyond the Human Horizon," 22.

46. Hage, "Waiting Out the Crisis," 102.

47. Although strongly connected to the actions and statements of the Prophet Mohammad, this expression is not a hadith. According to a description at islamweb.net, the literal meaning that "God will strive *with* the servant" does not imply an equal relationship between humans and God. Instead, it emphasizes the hierarchical human-divine relationship that Samuli Schielke likewise underlines in his conceptualization of God's power (Schielke, "The Power of God"). Rather than "striving with," the expression implies that God will facilitate (*yuyassir*), help (*yu'in*), and bring success (*yuwwafiq*) to those who strive. I consulted the original Arabic version of this discussion; see Islamweb, أسع يا عبدي لا يثبت حديثاً, last modified 2002, https://www.islamweb.net/ar/fatwa/15347/أسع-يا-عبدي-لا-يثبت-حديثاً; and Islamweb, حكم عبارة اسعَ يا عبدي وأنا أسعى معك, last modified 2014, https://www.islamweb.net/ar/fatwa/260626/حكم-عبارة-اسعَ-يا-عبدي-وأنا-أسعى-معك.

48. Gaibazzi, "'God's Time Is the Best.'"

49. Menin, "'Destiny Is Written by God.'"

50. Bittel and Monsutti, "Waiting Games"; Gaibazzi, "'God's Time Is the Best'"; Pandolfo, "'The Burning'"; Khosravi, *Precarious Lives*.

51. Khosravi, "Waiting, a State of Consciousness," 205.

52. Gaibazzi, "'God's Time Is the Best.'"

53. Pandolfo, "'The Burning.'"

54. Pandolfo, "'The Burning.'"

55. Tariq sent me the hadith in Arabic. The English translation of the hadith is from the Riyad as-Salihin selection at sunnah.com, "*kitāb*

*al-muqaddimāt*" (The Book of Miscellany), 407. See Sunnah, "*Riyad as-Salihin, Hadith 407*," accessed November 2, 2024, https://sunnah.com/riyadussalihin:407.

56. Mittermaier, "Beyond the Human Horizon."

57. Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions*, 11.

58. Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions*, 11.

59. Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions*, 12.

60. Adams, "How Belarus Is Helping 'Tourists' Break into the EU"; Walsh, "Belarus Floods the European Union with Migrants."

61. RT Arabic, "ناشط سوري يوضح أسباب 'أزمة الورق' وتأخر إصدار وتجديد الجوازات في سوريا."

62. Khosravi, "Waiting, a State of Consciousness," 206.

63. Bear, "Time as Technique," 496.

64. Bear, "Time as Technique," 496.

65. Menin, "'Destiny Is Written by God,'" 523.

66. Schielke, "The Power of God," 10.

67. Mittermaier, "Beyond the Human Horizon."

68. Moll, "Television Is Not Radio," 258.

69. Schielke, "The Power of God."

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