

Milk and Urine*: Intentional Humiliation as a part of Humanitarian Assistance

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I graduated in Sociology at the University of Rome "La Sapienza" and spent the successive year in Tanzania working with different local NGOs. I completed my MA in Human Rights at the University of Essex in UK where I am currently doing my Ph.D. research entitled *Invisible Victims of Human Rights Crusades: Collateral Damage or the New 'Wretched of the Earth'?*"

Partly through my personal and work experience in various parts of the world and partly through my academic research, I have intuited the importance of humiliation in all scales of human relationships. However, I was not able to find a solid theoretical framework for my thoughts and observations until I came across Humiliation Theory developed by Dr. Lindner.

My perception of humiliation and its devastating potential has widened during the course of my doctoral research. For various reasons, many of which probably subconscious, I have chosen to explore the world of the victims of military humanitarian interventions. My study case is Somalia. The initial hypothesis is that military humanitarian interventions provoke human victims and that such victims are peculiarly powerless due to: a) difficulty to identify the perpetrator; b) frustration generated by association of the perpetrator with morality of human rights; c) impossibility of complaint since human rights are 'the last resort'; d) socio-political invisibility since the victims are often regarded as inevitable 'collateral effects' of the humanitarian intervention.

I have recently completed field research in Kenya where I was interviewing and observing Somali community in Nairobi and in Dadaab Refugee Camps. The findings not only confirm my initial hypothesis but go shockingly beyond my imagination of negative effects of military humanitarian intervention. The special emphasis is actually on humiliation, on its various forms and levels.

I will be very happy to share some of these finding with all of you on the occasion of our meeting in Berlin. In particular, the Round Table 2 "Assistance and Humiliation" will certainly offer a possibility to discuss multiple connections between assistance and humiliation, both those subtle and unintentional and those deliberate and calculated.

* This bizarre title is in reality both symbolical and literal: during military humanitarian intervention in Somalia, UN soldiers were deliberately humiliating Somali people by mixing milk (symbol of assistance to the weak) with urine (symbol of uncleanness) and distributing the blend to starving people.