

Presentation title:

## Criminalization of Asylum Seekers in Israel: Towards an agentic research perspective that opposes othering and estrangement

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At the start of the second millennium, asylum seekers (ASs) from Eritrea and South Sudan began arriving at Israel as well as other countries as a consequence of armed conflicts in their countries, involving executions, infringements of civil rights and highly unsafe living conditions. Israeli soldiers who would see them arriving at the border with Egypt, would drive them on army trucks to the heart of Tel Aviv, the main city in Israel. In their first months of stay in Israel, their civil status was not regulated. Later on, the state regulated it based on the Prevention of Infiltration Law (1954), originally designed to prevent Palestinian-Arab refugees from the 1948 war from returning to the country. The African ASs represent less than one-third of the undocumented immigrants in Israel who consist mainly of migrant workers, but their skin color highlights their alienness and they are thus prone to both official and unofficial criminalization. This paper deals with state violence directed at the African ASs through practices of criminalization and othering as applied by the Israeli justice system and as representative of the sociopolitical atmosphere towards undocumented migrants in Israel over during the past decade. The analysis presented demonstrates how the Israeli political system promotes policies that affect the ASs' living conditions and social rights and legitimizes common social constructions of ASs as dangerous and undesirable others. The discussion presents implications for an agentic human rights action-based model for further inquiry and practice that resist othering.