2017

Review of Aid in Danger: The Perils and Promise of Humanitarianism. By Larissa Fast. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. 326 pages.

Meltem Ince Yeilmez PhD
Yasar University, meltem.ince@yasar.edu.tr

Larissa Fast: *Aid in Danger: The Perils and Promise of Humanitarianism.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

Reviewed by: Meltem Ince Yenilmez
Yasar University

   Although humanitarian operations have become more prominent and professional in the context of risky circumstances, a question that still comes to mind, is whether and how aid workers may avoid the increase in violence against them, through personal behaviors or prevention and response strategies, or how they may decrease the impact of attacks? With *Aid in Danger: The Perils and Promise of Humanitarianism,* author Larissa Fast aims to analyze the internal vulnerability, external traits, the violence and attacks experienced by humanitarians, aid workers, and organizations. This is deftly demonstrated through the testimonies and paradigms of aid workers who are subjected to violence, attacks, killing, and kidnapping while rescuing and helping others and providing aid. The book is the result of more than 10 years of field research and contributes to the literature by exploring the rhetorical constructions from a multidisciplinary perspective that underlines the possible causes of violence and provides strategies to protect aid workers in their dangerous work.

   It becomes obvious throughout the text that humanitarianism transcends as a discourse the many other obstacles and challenges that aid workers and organizations experience. The book's analytical framework conflates practical challenges of providing assistance through the humanitarian system by offering a new pathway for reforming the aid system. For sure, the rise in global terror, the context of conceptualization, the degree of protection, and minimizing the safety and security incidents are undoubtedly the primary axioms of mechanisms of violence against aid workers. The integration between civilians, community, the NGOs, and the government should ultimately be developed to overcome the conflict dynamics.

   In *Aid in Danger*, Fast takes every approach in this important critique. Drawing on her personal experiences on the focus group participant in the field research—including interviews with aid workers, colleagues, researchers, government officials, NGO workers, consultants, executive directors, security advisers, and aid agencies—she proposes to capture the internal and external causes to humanitarian aid, the causes of violence, and the contingency of reforming the current system with more flawless humanitarian values at multiple levels.

   From the book's opening pages, Fast makes it clear that the legal and political contexts of managing security for aid workers are inseparable, given the existing war zones. Understanding the effects of threats on the work of humanitarians is abundantly important. As a piece of politics-and-principles analysis, this book neatly provides insightful approaches on the effects of NGOs and aid agencies. Such a book ensures recognition of politicization and securitization of aid as well as professionalization of security. The author integrates many key instruments and observations. Framing the analysis in this context is fundamental in order to evaluate the deterrence strategies and protection. This discourse analysis, therefore, has a particular advantage over previous studies by providing clearer explanations about the characteristics of aid workers, their obstacles, the unprivileged and downtrodden, and responses within the system. The author calls for an awareness of the political and social contexts. Author Fast challenges humanitarians to contact the aid agencies and NGOs, to guide decision makers, and to promote long-term peace building in order to stop the attacks, violence, and danger on aid workers.

1

Overall, this important book should be read by anyone who is engaging with sociology, humanity, human rights, global terror, politics, human geography, and research in aid. The book is important not only for its well-researched analysis and assumptions, it also contributes to the growing literature with conversational style, thoughtful critiques, and case-specific texts. This book is a must-read among human-based research, which is unique in its area with qualitative interviews and approaches. Therefore, Fast's *Aid in Danger* appeals to a wider audience, giving readers a more in-depth picture of the debates, system, and the need for a modern humanitarian definition. All in all, the book is ground-breaking in its excellent coverage of the critical discussions about aid workers and its predictions and assumptions about the future. It is hoped that interesting arguments will be put forth in the future to ensure new insights into the perils of humanitarianism.

Corresponding Author:
Meltem Ince Yenilmez
Yasar University
meltem.ince@yasar.edu.tr

2