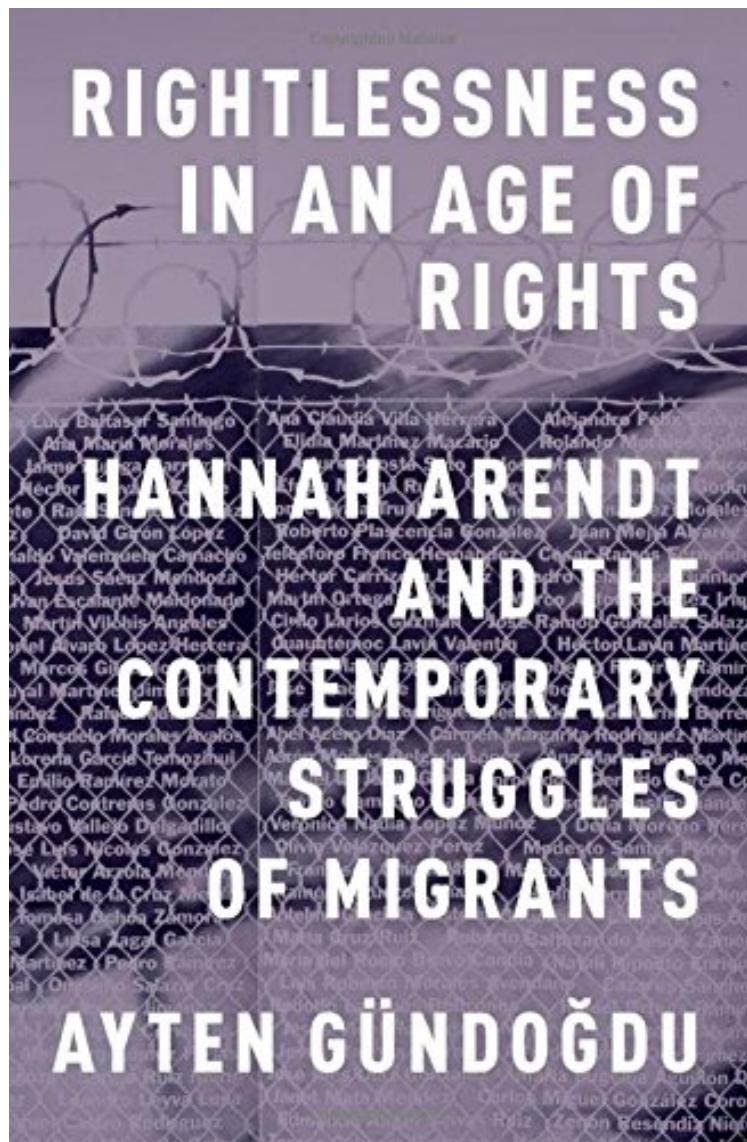


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Rightlessness in an Age of Rights: Hannah Arendt and the Contemporary Struggles of Migrants

Ayten Gndogdu

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Rightlessness in an Age of Rights: Hannah Arendt and the Contemporary Struggles of Migrants:

There have been remarkable developments in the field of human rights in the past few decades. Still, millions of asylum-seekers, refugees, and undocumented immigrants continue to find it challenging to access human rights. In this book, Ayten Gndogdu builds on Hannah Arendt's analysis of statelessness and argues that these challenges reveal the perplexities of human rights. Human rights promise equal personhood regardless of citizenship status, yet their existing formulations are tied to the principle of territorial sovereignty. This situation leaves various categories of migrants in a condition of "rightlessness," with a very precarious legal, political, and human standing. Gndogdu examines this problem in the context of immigration detention, deportation, and refugee camps. Critical of the existing system of human rights without seeing it as a dead end, she argues for the need to pay closer attention to the political practices of migrants who challenge their condition of rightlessness and propose new understandings of human rights. What arises from this critical reflection on human rights is also a novel reading of Arendt, one that offers refreshing insights into various dimensions of her political thought, including her account of the human condition, "the social question," and "the right to have rights." *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights* is a valuable addition to the literature on Hannah Arendt and a vital way of rethinking human rights as they relate to contemporary issues of immigration.

"In her bold and erudite book on human rights, Ayten Gndogdu has achieved two results: a critical reading of Hannah Arendt, using her 'perplexities' to reveal her thought about statelessness and the right to have rights, and a deconstruction of paradoxes affecting 'universal rights' in our post-totalitarian age, as illustrated by the situation of migrants. The 'undecided struggle' that she describes is grim, but also an eloquent plea for the capacity of victims to become agents of their own history." --tienne Balibar, author of *Equaliberty* "Ayten Gndogdu knows she cannot rest content with asking what Hannah Arendt would say about human rights now, which have risen and transformed so substantially over the past half-century. In this marvelous book, Gndogdu reinterprets Arendt's critique, and revises it where necessary, in order to vindicate a promising new approach for the field. Rejecting their deployment as a rhetoric of compassionate aid or even military intervention, Gndogdu shows a truly political vision of human rights will engage the social realm and prompt the reinvention of claims and movements beyond their contemporary limitations. The result is an exemplary lesson in how to connect past thinking with present realities." --Samuel Moyn, Harvard University "Bristling with insights into the plight of migrants in today's global economy, Gndogdu's book offers a creative rereading of Hannah Arendt's controversial critique of human rights. She perceptively grasps that the key insight in Arendt's difficult notion of a 'right to have rights' is not to ground rights in a normative foundation but to reanimate them as quotidian political practices of founding. In this way, Gndogdu offers a fresh response to the tenacious problems of rightlessness which at once includes and goes well beyond juridical appeals to the sovereign state." --Linda Zerilli, University of Chicago "In this provocative work, Gndogdu begins from Arendt's observation that stateless persons cannot exercise human rights that should be universal when they do not possess citizenship rights. Essential. General readers, upper-division undergraduate students, graduate students, and research faculty." --Choice "Rightlessness in an Age of Rights is both a rich engagement with the current debates about Arendtian philosophy, and a fascinating attempt to theoretically grasp instances of migrant protests, court decisions on migrant rights, and struggles for the "right to have rights." ... For readers interested both in Arendt's work and in issues of migration and refugees, this book is a jewel." -- International Journal of Constitutional Law "Sure-handedly combining theoretical analysis, textual interpretation, and attention to the realities of border checkpoints, detention centers, refugee camps, and courtrooms, Gndogdu manages the difficult feat of throwing light on the world while (and by) saying something surprising and persuasive about Arendt's political thought." - Patchen Markell, of Politics "Ayten Gndogdu provides an impressive re-reading of the vast output of Hannah Arendt. ... She not only re-interprets the meaning of the well-known and much-debated Arendtian expression 'a right to have rights,' but illustrates what rightlessness looks like today, for instance in relation to asylum procedures, detention and deportation. ... Gndogdu's contribution is a reinforced quest for a global community within which people can take part, speak, and act as equal human beings, irrespective of nationality or citizenship." -Theoria About the Author Ayten Gndogdu is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Barnard College-Columbia University.