Hello everyone. I’m going to talk to you about the Humanitarian Research Lab which I launched in 2021 in the midst of the pandemic. But the focus on doing research which is relevant to humanitarian crisis situation.

And when I’m talking about humanitarian crisis, I’m talking about, you know the two big buckets. There’s natural disasters and then there is human disasters or or armed conflict. An armed conflict is my primary interest.
The main purpose of it is to support humanitarian organizations and policy makers who respond to humanitarian crisis. And we have two broad objectives for our lab. One is address the health needs of populations that are affected by humanitarian crisis and 2nd is to produce evidence for war, crime, accountability. The 2nd objective is being led by my colleague Nathaniel Raymond, who has been doing this work for the last some years and he's a lecturer at, in our department, some examples of the health of populations in humanitarian settings.
I had a long interest in HIV AIDS, and now I’m focusing on HIV AIDS in humanitarian setting. This work has been done in northeast Uganda, which has gone through years of conflict. We’ve also done some HIV AIDS research project among the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon, both men who have sex with men and those using drugs. The second project is verbal autopsy in northwest Syria. As some of you may know, according to The Who, about half of the deaths globally...
are not accurately registered.

Causes of death are not known, and this is particularly a problem in low middle income countries and in conflict zones.

We don’t know how many people are dying and of what causes.

And one of the tools that’s available to do that is verbal autopsy, which is something I learned relatively recently.

And we’re collaborating with our colleagues to document and register deaths in northwest Syria, which is a conflict zone.

And we’re planning to do
the same thing in Sudan, which is also going through a major conflict right now.

The other project is substance use and mental health to force migrants from the Middle East, North Africa region.

This is a project that we are doing in Jordan as well as in Connecticut. We are trying to understand to what extent substance use is kind of a coping strategy for refugees, forced migrants who are going through a lot of mental health issues.

Cancer care has come up multiple times.
As you may know, a lot of the refugees are stuck. They’re not just sort of staying short term in a country, they are there for years, decades. Some of them had been diagnosed with cancer before arriving in the transit location or got cancer in the new location. And they’re really been very limited attention paid to this issue. It’s not something that I had expertise in but has kept coming up. So I’m collaborating with some colleagues who do cancer care and treatment and we’re doing it right now.
And finally I've had a long term interest in ethics of conducting research with vulnerable population. And as you can imagine, if you're doing research, especially non sensitive topics like substance use among forced migrants, we want to make sure that the research we're doing is not harmful to them, that actually is helps them. And so we really need to be mindful of the ethical aspects of this kind of research. So these are some examples of health of populations in humanitarian setting.
The second project for our conflict research is collaboration with the State Department, which launched a Conflict Observatory project in May 2022, a few months after the war started in Ukraine. And basically what the State Department is asking us to do is to capture and analyze evidence of war crimes and other atrocities that are being perpetrated by Russia and Ukraine. So the way this project is being done is by analyzing open source data, including social media and other open source information as well as...
satellite imagery data to be able to
document these attacks on hospitals
and other civilian facilities.
So this is a project we’ve been
involved with since May 2022.
Then in April of this year, as you know,
the conflict started in Sudan.
So State Department wanted us
to continue that work in Sudan.
The State Department wanted us
to continue that work in Sudan.
These are examples of the reports
that our lab are putting out,
looking at attacks and damage
by Russian forces in Ukraine,
to crop storage in Ukraine,
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mass graves in Ukraine and now also in Sudan.
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I’ve highlighted these two reports
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because these two reports have
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gotten far more attention than
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other reports we’re putting out.
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This particular one is on forced deportation
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of Ukrainian children by Russia.
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And as you may have heard,
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the International Criminal Court
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referenced this report and indicted
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Putin for so-called war crimes.
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And this report on Sudan has also
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been used by State Department as part
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of the negotiation that’s happening,
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peace negotiation that’s happening in Sudan.
So those are sort of the broad aspects of my lab.