



# **SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND POPULAR MOBILISATION IN THE MENA**

## **Digest of Current Publications and Events**

Editor: Jann Boeddeling ([j.boeddeling@lse.ac.uk](mailto:j.boeddeling@lse.ac.uk))

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## FEATURED PUBLICATION

### **Social movements and the question of organisation: Egypt and everywhere**

Abdelrahman, Maha (2015) *Social movements and the question of organisation: Egypt and everywhere*. LSE Middle East Centre paper series , 8. Middle East Centre, LSE, London, UK.

Download [here](#)

This paper considers the nature of activism and revolutionary process in the 21st century by examining some of the dilemmas involved in the case of Egypt. It argues that the characteristics of horizontal networks of activism, especially the absence of centralised organisational structures, although well suited to the phase of mass protests in the lead-up to the ousting of Mubarak, can pose a challenge to the prospects of long-term revolutionary projects.

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## CALL FOR PAPERS & CONFERENCES

### **Conference: The Gaza Strip: History, Future and New Directions for Research**

**Saturday 31 October 2015**

**Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS, University of London**

**Russell Square WC1H 0XG**

It has been almost eight years since Israel's military blockade of the Gaza Strip began in mid-2007. During this time, repeated aerial and ground invasions have killed thousands of Palestinians – including over 2100 people in the latest onslaught of July/August 2014. These assaults, and the ongoing closure of the Strip, have generated a humanitarian disaster on a scale unprecedented since Israel's occupation began in 1967. Nonetheless, despite these enormous difficulties, Gaza remains an inseparable and integral part of future trajectories in Palestine.

In this context, the SOAS Centre for Palestine Studies will be holding a one-day conference on Saturday 31 October, which aims to address various aspects of academic research related to the Gaza Strip. For the full-programme [click here](#).

The conference will be followed by a free public evening event on ***Gaza: Strangulation and Resilience*** (more details to follow).

**\*\*The rates given here replace those previously advertised\*\***

Admission: Special Student rate of £25. For full price admission book by Friday 16 October for the

early-bird rate of £30 (from 17 October prices will increase to £40). To register please visit the [SOAS Online Store](#).

Organised by: Centre for Palestine Studies, LMEI.

Information: E [lh2@soas.ac.uk](mailto:lh2@soas.ac.uk)

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## TALKS & OTHER EVENTS

### **Talk: Between Hegemony and Resistance: towards a moral economy of the Tunisian Revolution**

**Date: Tuesday 20 October 2015**

Time: 17.15-19.15

Speaker: Professor Sami Zemni, Middle East and North Africa Research Group

Location: Room 9.04, Tower 2, Clement's Inn, LSE

Attendance: This is a registration only event. Please register using the [online booking system](#).

This event forms part of the Social Movements and Popular Mobilisation in the MENA event series.

In this seminar, Sami Zemni presents his paper, co-written with Habib Ayeb, titled: *Between Hegemony and Resistance: towards a moral economy of the Tunisian Revolution*.

The revolutionary upheavals in Tunisia and across the MENA which began in 2011 have fundamentally challenged the frameworks traditionally used to define and interpret Arab political life, namely 'authoritarian resilience' and/or 'democratization studies'. The paper uses a 'moral economy' approach in order to understand the massive mobilizations that led to Ben Ali's disappearance, and to make sense of the nature of political change in the post-Ben Ali era.

More information [here](#)

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### **Talk: Egyptian Liberals and their Anti-Democratic Deceptions**

**21 October 2015, at 5 pm**

at the Forum Transregionale Studien Berlin (Wallotstr. 14, 14193 Berlin).

Speaker: **Amr Hamzawy** (Cairo / Freie Universität Berlin)

Chair: Georges Khalil (Forum Transregionale Studien)

Over the past two years, liberal ideas in Egypt have been at a crossroads. Since July 3, 2013 countless "secular" political parties and movements have stood under their liberal banners in support of a military intervention into politics. Egyptian liberals have been engaged in propagating anti-democratic deceptions that have enabled the new military autocracy to tighten its grip over state institutions, society, and citizens. The idea of sequentialism, the notion of a unilaterally defined set of national necessities, and the subordination of society and citizens to the state are among the liberal made grand deceptions, which have made it possible for Egypt's new savior and his ruling

establishment to contain popular demands for a democratic order defined by the rule of law, rotation of power, civic peace, and safeguards human rights and freedoms. We would kindly ask you to leave a note at [eume@trafo-berlin.de](mailto:eume@trafo-berlin.de) whether you will be able to attend.

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## **Talk: Kuwait's Urban Alternative: Youth Activism and Rights to the City**

**Date: 22 October, 2015, 5 pm**

Zentrum Moderner Orient

Kirchweg 33 14129 Berlin

Speaker: Dr. Farah Al-Nakib (American University of Kuwait)

This talk analyses newly emerging youth-led approaches to urbanization in Kuwait, a city-state where – as elsewhere in the Arab Gulf – city planning and construction since the discovery of oil in 1946 have been entirely top-down processes. Throughout the first six decades of oil urbanization, state planning authorities focused more on building a spectacle of Kuwait's modernity and progress than on meeting the requirements of the city's inhabitants. Through suburbanization, socio-spatial segregation, privatization, and functional zoning, Kuwait's inhabitants lost what Henri Lefebvre describes as a "right to the city": a right to centrality and a vibrant urban life, and a right to shape and use the spaces of their city to meet their own needs and desires. Since around 2005, however, various youth-led groups in Kuwait – from entrepreneurs and architects to civil society actors and political protestors – have been pushing for a restoration of such rights to the city in various, largely unconscious, ways. By focusing on a few current examples of such bottom-up movements, and contrasting them with simultaneous state-led projects, this talk examines the impact of these youth groups on city development, and how they are slowly changing Kuwait's planning paradigm for the first time in over sixty years. More information [here](#)

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## **Talk: The Other Saudis: Shiism, dissent and sectarianism**

**Date: Wednesday 28 October 2015**

Time: 18.00 -19.30

Speaker: Dr Toby Matthiesen, University of Cambridge

Location: Room 1.04, New Academic Building, LSE

Toby Matthiesen launches his new book titled [\*The Other Saudis: Shiism, dissent and sectarianism\*](#) in which he traces the politics of the Shia in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia from the nineteenth century until the present day. The book outlines the difficult experiences of being Shia in a Wahhabi state, and casts new light on how the Shia have mobilised politically to change their position. The book is based on little-known Arabic sources, extensive fieldwork in Saudi Arabia and interviews with

key activists. Of immense geopolitical importance, the oil-rich Eastern Province is a crucial but little known factor in regional politics and Gulf security. More information [here](#)

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## **Film Festival: Rulers and the Ruled: Power in a Changing Arab World**

BBC Arabic Festival: Films & Documentaries from a Changing Arab World  
**30/10 - 02/11/2015**

The BBC Arabic Festival will present a bold and diverse range of short films and documentaries from across the Middle East, by Arab and non-Arab, experienced and first-time filmmakers. This year's theme, 'Rulers and the Ruled: Power in a Changing Arab World' explores the struggles for power that continue to shake the region. Each film will be followed by discussions with the filmmakers themselves. Check [bbc.com/arabic/festival](http://bbc.com/arabic/festival) for programme details. More information [here](#)

Register for free tickets: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/showsandtours/shows/bbc\\_arabic\\_festival\\_2015](http://www.bbc.co.uk/showsandtours/shows/bbc_arabic_festival_2015)

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## **Panel Discussion: Revolutionary Egypt: Four Years On**

**17 November 2015, 5:30 PM**

Reem Abou-El-Fadl (SOAS), Charles Tripp (SOAS), Miriyam Aouragh (Westminster), Adam Hanieh (SOAS), Nicola Pratt (Warwick) and Kerem Oktem (Graz)

Russell Square: College Buildings **Room:** Khalili Lecture Theatre

Panel discussion to mark the launch of the 2015 edited volume *Revolutionary Egypt: Connecting Domestic and International Struggles*, (Routledge) taking stock and looking forward, four years since the outbreak of the January 2011 revolution (advertised in the previous Digest).

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## **RECENT & FORTHCOMING BOOKS**

### **Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protest in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria**

Amina Elbendary

2016 (January) – The American University in Cairo Press

During the fifteenth century, the Mamluk sultanate that had ruled Egypt and Syria since 1249-50 faced a series of sustained economic and political challenges to its rule, from the effects of recurrent plagues to changes in international trade routes. Both these challenges and the policies and

behaviors of rulers and subjects in response to them left profound impressions on Mamluk state and society, precipitating a degree of social mobility and resulting in new forms of cultural expression. These transformations were also reflected in the frequent reports of protests during this period, and led to a greater diffusion of power and the opening up of spaces for political participation by Mamluk subjects and negotiations of power between ruler and ruled. Rather than tell the story of this tumultuous century solely from the point of view of the Mamluk dynasty, *Crowds and Sultans* places the protests within the framework of long-term transformations, arguing for a more nuanced and comprehensive narrative of Mamluk state and society in late medieval Egypt and Syria. Reports of urban protest and the ways in which alliances between different groups in Mamluk society were forged allow us glimpses into how some medieval Arab societies negotiated power, showing that rather than stoically endure autocratic governments, populations often resisted and renegotiated their positions in response to threats to their interests. This rich and thought-provoking study will appeal to specialists in Mamluk history, Islamic studies, and Arab history, as well as to students and scholars of Middle East politics and government and modern history.

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## **Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East**

John Chalcraft

2016 (March) – Cambridge University Press

The waves of protest ignited by the self-immolation of Muhammad Bouazizi in Tunisia in late 2010 highlighted for an international audience the importance of contentious politics in the Middle East and North Africa. John Chalcraft's ground-breaking account of popular protest emphasizes the revolutionary modern history of the entire region. Challenging top-down views of Middle Eastern politics, he looks at how commoners, subjects and citizens have long mobilised in defiance of authorities. Chalcraft takes examples from a wide variety of protest movements from Morocco to Iran. He forges a new narrative of change over time, creating a truly comparative framework rooted in the dynamics of hegemonic contestation. Beginning with movements under the Ottomans, which challenged corruption and oppression under the banners of religion, justice, rights and custom, this book goes on to discuss the impact of constitutional movements, armed struggles, nationalism and independence, revolution and Islamism. A work of unprecedented range and depth, this volume will be welcomed by undergraduates and graduates studying protest in the region and beyond.

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## **Women's Movements in Post-"Arab Spring" North Africa**

Edited by Fatima Sadiqi

2016 (March) - Palgrave Macmillan

Unexpected and transformative revolutions broke off in North Africa and quickly spread to the Middle East and the rest of the world in 2010 and 2011. Spontaneous, leaderless, youth-driven, and backed by social media, these revolutions called for *karamah* (dignity) and democracy. Centering on women's movements before, during, and after the revolutions, *Women's Movements in Post-"Arab*

*Spring" North Africa* highlights the broader sources of authority that affected the emergence of new feminist actors and agents and their impact on the sociopolitical landscapes of the region. Until recently, studies of North African women's movements have focused on aspects of women's achievements one at a time. By providing a comparative analysis, this book is the first to shed light not only on the role that these superstructures play in shaping women's experiences in North Africa, but also on the rich variety of women's responses to authority and their potential contributions to African and global feminist thought. From the pre-history of the revolutions to their aftermath, the far-reaching historical and national scope of this collection expands the study of women's movements in North Africa beyond national borders, while still paying close attention to local characteristics.

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2. Women and the Arab Spring: A Transnational, Feminist Revolution; miriam cooke
3. Creative Disobedience: Feminism, Islam, and Revolution in Egypt; Margot Badran
4. Gendering the Egyptian Revolution; Dina Wahba
5. The Lipstick on the Edge of the Well: Mauritanian Women and Political Power (1960 - 2014); Céline Lesourd

##### PART II: SPECIFIC COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

6. About North African Women's Rights After the Arab Spring; Moha Ennaji
7. Women's Rights and Equality: Egyptian Constitutional Law; Ellen McLearney
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9. Women, Art, and Revolution in the Streets of Egypt; Nevine El Nossery
10. Notes on Sudanese Women's Activism, Movements, and Leadership; Sondra Hale
11. Revolutionary Nuns or Totalitarian Pawns: Evaluating Libyan State Feminism After Mu'ammar al-Gaddafi; Amanda Rogers
12. Tunisian Women's Literature and the Critique of Authority: Sources, Contexts, and the Tunisian 'Arab Spring"; Lilia Labidi
13. Engendering Tunisia's Democratic Transition: What Challenges Are Facing Women?; Nabila Hamza
14. Women and Leadership in the Post-Arab Spring: The Case of Tunisia; Khadija Arfaoui
15. The Algerian Woman Issue: Struggles, Islamic Violence, and Cooptation; Rachid Tlemçani
16. Moroccan Women in Limbo: On Liminal Citizenship and the Quest for Equality; Soumia Boutkhil
17. Moroccan Women's Cultural Rights: A Psycho-Social Perspective on Cultural Paradoxes; Rachida Kerkech
18. Women's Economic Empowerment in Morocco: The Case of Social Entrepreneurship; Manal Elattir, Yamina El Kirat El Allame, and Youness Tihm
19. Reflections on the 20-February Movement: Hope Renewed, Hope Frustrated for Women; Abdellatif Zaki

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## OTHER PUBLICATIONS

### **Maspero — the absence of justice**

By Mina Thabet

Mada Masr, 2015-10-09

On October 9, 2011, I witnessed the Egyptian military brutally murder dozens of Coptic Christians, using excessive force against peaceful protesters near the state television building Maspero. No one has been held accountable, although a military court sentenced three soldiers to between two and three years imprisonment on charges of “involuntary manslaughter.” It has been four years now since the Maspero massacre, and justice has yet to be served.

<http://www.madamasr.com/opinion/maspero-%E2%80%94-absence-justice>

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### **The Ongoing, Steady Gains of Morocco's Islamist Party**

by [Dörthe Engelcke](#)

Jadaliyya, Sep 29 2015

Moroccans took to the polls on 4 September to vote in the first local elections since 2009. A total of about one hundred forty thousand candidates competed for around thirty-two thousand seats. These local elections were the first to take place after the new constitution in 2011, which the monarch effectively used as a way to steal the 20 February Movement’s thunder and calm the protests by seemingly giving in to some of the protestors’ demands. The new constitution and the subsequent law of regionalization gives more power to regional councils, and also aims to give Morocco’s twelve regions more prerogatives. <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/22789/the-ongoing-steady-gains-of-moroccos-islamist-part>

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### **Beirut Revolt: What Is to be Done?**

By [Nadia Bou Ali](#)

Jadaliyya, Aug 29 2015

What we have witnessed over the past two days on the streets of Beirut is both exhilarating and potentially debilitating for the current social struggle against neo-liberal capitalism in Lebanon. An uprising is indeed called for in the face of a rampant neo-liberal state that has a remarkably resilient ideological apparatus supported by a highly militarized security force. This uprising is to be affirmed, supported, and pushed to reach its radical potentials. The main challenge facing the protestors is to rid themselves from the populist claims that appear tightly wedded to a staunch Lebanese nationalism that has been remarkably present across the spectrum of protest. The celebratory

orations of the Lebanese anthem and calls for sectarian unity, Muslim and Christian, is a form of jouissance that must be countered by substantive demands for social justice, the abolishment of class inequalities, and the reclaiming of the commons and all other public services that have been systematically destroyed and privatized over the past decades.

[http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/22505/beirut-revolt\\_what-is-to-be-done](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/22505/beirut-revolt_what-is-to-be-done)

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## **Jadaliyya Palestine Media Roundup (October 8 – 14)**

To help you keep abreast with recent developments in the region, Jadaliyya produces media summaries. By way of example and because of the spiralling of recent events, here is the link to the latest news roundup on Palestine:

<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/22937/palestine-media-roundup-%28october-8-14%29>

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## **POSITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Doctoral Programme - The Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies**

The Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies, Freie Universität Berlin, will admit up to fifteen PhD students to its doctoral program, which is to begin on 1 October 2016.

To structure research and provide a suitable framework for faculty and students, the Graduate School is organised into five research areas:

*Plural Traditions* and *Travelling Traditions* focus on the construction and deconstruction of concepts, practices, and institutions resulting from interaction and communication or encounters and entanglements. *Rethinking Social Order* and *Governance Contested* investigate interactions, conflicts, and entanglements in the fields of society, law, and politics. *Sacred Topographies* attempts to illustrate all of these processes, drawing upon an especially rich field of investigation that cuts across subjects and disciplines.

Up to ten of these candidates will receive a graduate school grant; the other candidates will be supported in their search for funding.

The application **deadline is 15 November 2015**.

More information [here](#)

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