



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

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

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## CONTENT

<b>Call for Papers &amp; Conferences</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Transnational objects, activist solidarities, feminist analytics .....	4
2018 Research Development Group for early-career scholars from the MENA.....	7
Political Islam, Capitalism, and Resistance.....	8
<b>Talks &amp; Other Events</b> .....	<b>9</b>
No Exit: Arab Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre and Decolonization .....	9
Love in Times of Revolution .....	10
How to Understand Popular Uprisings and what Remains of the Arab Revolutions? .....	10
Egypt as Effigy: Predatory Power, Hijacked History, and the Devolution of Revolution .....	10
Nationalism, Sectarianism, and Ethno-Religious Mobilisation in the Middle East .....	11
Law & Revolution: Legitimacy and Constitutionalism After the Arab Spring.....	11
Women’s movement from late 19th century until 1930s in Istanbul.....	11
Understanding Political Islam: In Search of the Islamist Other, 1973-2013 .....	11
Kurdish Women Fighters: A Path Out of Patriarchy? .....	12
Philippine Migration to the Middle East and Migrant International Activism .....	12
<b>Journal Articles &amp; other Academic Publications</b> .....	<b>13</b>
The struggles of precarious youth in Tunisia: the case of the Kerkennah movement.....	13
Bringing in the South: towards a global paradigm for social movement studies .....	13
Emotive acts of citizenship, social change and knowledge production in Lebanon .....	14
A Palestinian Uprising: Is it Possible or is it Too Late? .....	14
Is There A Youth Politics? .....	15
It’s Time to Talk about Youth in the Middle East as “The Precariat” .....	15
In absence of a Hero Figure and an Ideology: Understanding new political Imaginaries and Practices among revolutionary Youth in Egypt .....	15
The Sportive Origin of Revolution: Youth Movements and Generational Conflicts in Late Colonial Algeria.....	16
Trauma as counter-revolutionary colonisation: Narratives from (post)revolutionary Egypt .....	16
Justice and/or Development - The Rif Protest Movement and the Neoliberal Promise .....	17
The Thorns that Exist and Resist - Black-Palestine Solidarity in the Twenty-First Century.....	17
<b>News Pieces &amp; Commentary</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Protests in Iran could spell trouble for the Middle East at large .....	18
Iran protests: A turning point? .....	18
Iranian Protests and the Working Class .....	19

Iran blocks Instagram, Telegram after protests .....	19
[BDS:] Lorde set an example for young celebrities to follow .....	19
Why are people protesting in Iran?.....	20
Trump's Jerusalem move reignites Palestinian cause .....	20
US Jerusalem move: Fury spreads from Jakarta to Rabat .....	20
Tense scenes as unrest over US Jerusalem move continues .....	21
Palestinians clash with police at US embassy in Lebanon.....	21
<b>Positions and Opportunities .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Intermediaries in Contemporary Syria .....	22
Fellowships for Threatened Scholars .....	23
PhD positions: The Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies .....	24

# CALL FOR PAPERS & CONFERENCES

## **Transnational objects, activist solidarities, feminist analytics**

December 5-7, 2018, University of Ottawa

Deadline: 1 March 2018

This interdisciplinary symposium invites scholars of transnational movements, organizations, networks, campaigns, mobilizations, assemblages and other cross-border activist phenomena to consider: (1) how to more adequately conceptualize, analyze, and theorize such complex transnational objects, including in ways that (2) advance the theory and practice of emancipatory solidarities in the current period and (3) critically consider the contributions of transnational/intersectional feminist analytics to such an undertaking.

We invite theoretically-informed, empirically-grounded studies from researchers working from a range of perspectives on transnational activist objects, who are curious to consider how their subject matter might fruitfully engage feminist concerns. A peer-reviewed edited collection is planned.

Background:

Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, our five-year collaborative research project on solidarity-building in transnational feminist organizing sought to document and analyze the histories and political dynamics, practices and discourses of solidarity-building around the issue of food sovereignty in the World March of Women; to develop and apply an original, feminist and geographical analytic for studying processes of solidarity-building in transnational organizing; and to make an original contribution to feminist debates about solidarity-building across difference and non-traditional alliances in a context of transnational connectivity. This research benefited from the collaboration of the transnational feminist network the World March of Women (WMW).

We invite researchers working on similar transnational objects to engage one or more of the following thematic areas, which are cross-cutting and open-ended in nature, in a manner that, at a minimum, avoids gender blindness. The questions under each theme have arisen in our research and are meant to be suggestive.

Conceptual and methodological issues in the study of transnational objects

How can we speak of and study such complex and mutable transnational objects of analysis in terms that respect the diversity of actors involved, their differences; their multi-scales positioning; their power relationships while, at the same time, taking seriously the fact that these transnational entities do have a global existence?

Do transnational collaborative or interdisciplinary research approaches provide more promising strategies or methodologies?

What are the relevant units/categories of analysis when studying the dynamics of transnational activist objects?

What are the methodological and epistemological difficulties in studying transnational activist objects in place- and scale-sensitive ways across world regions?

#### Geographic perspectives in the study of transnational objects

What are the potentials and problems in deploying geographical analytics of place and scale in conceptualizing and analyzing transnational activist objects?

How do such geographical perspectives help us analyze geographies of power and difference in transnational activist objects?

What is the interplay between place, scale, and territory in the constitution of transnational assemblages, such as those engaging issues pertaining to the environment (eg. food sovereignty, extractivism or climate change)?

#### Power and the political in the study of transnational objects

How does a politics of the popular, commitments to popular sovereignty and popular democracy, and strategies for counter-hegemony condition transnational solidarities? Further, how do politics of the popular intersect with (various conceptions of) nation? With the politicisation of gender, ethnic, racial, religious, Indigenous or other forms of difference?

How do the political projects (variable around place and scale, but also transnational in nature) of these transnational activist objects intersect with colonial histories, coloniality as a present condition, and colonial difference? How do they relate to decolonial projects, for example of Indigenous and Afro-descendent populations in the Americas?

How do transnational activist objects address questions of hierarchy and power differentials within?

How are subalternized populations present, represented, active?

How might transnational activist objects be differentiated or characterised ideologically? How do pre-existing localized political cultures (or ideologies) impact how transnationalization is undertaken, by whom and with whom?

#### Solidarity-building and movement-building in transnational objects

How is solidarity understood and practiced in transnational networks and in relation to a variety of struggles?

Can processes of solidarity-building be analyzed as instrumental strategies reflecting the actors' understandings of the purposes of such solidarities in specific contexts? Of the power systems they are trying to change?

What is the relationship of solidarity-building to broader projects of movement-building or of building counter-hegemonies?

#### Intersectional feminism as politics and analytic of transnational activist objects;

What does a transnational/intersectional feminist analytic bring to the study of the transnational activist objects? How do transnational/intersectional feminist perspectives inform or challenge any of the preceding lines of inquiry?

What accounts for the persistent ghettoization of feminist concerns and approaches from social movement studies across the disciplines?

What new feminisms are apparent in contemporary transnational activist objects? What is their relation to transnational/intersectional feminism? How are they being taken up by scholars?

What is the status of women's survival struggles (e.g., around food sovereignty, extractivism, or climate change)? (How) Are these taken up at transnational scales of organizing?

How to apply:

By March 1, 2018, submit a C.V and proposed title and abstract (300 words), in which you outline the theme or problematic to be addressed and specify the transnational object that is your empirical reference point. Your abstract should clearly establish how it responds to this call for papers. To submit and for all other inquiries: [elsabeaulieu@gmail.com](mailto:elsabeaulieu@gmail.com)

Details for participants:

Symposium papers due: October 15, 2018.

Two nights accommodation and all meals during the symposium will be provided. Some travel subsidies may be available.

All symposium papers will be considered for inclusion in a peer-reviewed edited collection.

Submissions should not be already published or under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Acceptance for the symposium is not a guarantee of publication.

First draft of book chapters due: April 1, 2019.

Organized by:

Dominique Masson, Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies, University of Ottawa

Janet Conway, Department of Sociology, Brock University

Pascale Dufour, Department of Political Science, Université de Montréal

Elsa Beaulieu-Bastien, Project Co-ordinator

*More information* [here](#)

[\*\*Back to top\*\*](#)

## **2018 Research Development Group for early-career scholars from the MENA**

Deadline: 11 March 2018

The American Political Science Association (APSA) is pleased to announce a Call for Applications from early-career scholars based in the MENA region who are interested in attending the 2018 APSA Annual Meeting as part of a Research Development Group. Organized in partnership with the Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS), the Research Development Group will be a unique opportunity to advance current research towards publication, participate in the APSA annual meeting, and develop scholarly networks with colleagues.

The 2018 APSA Annual Meeting will take place in Boston, MA (USA) from August 30 to September 2, 2018. Prior to the start of the annual meeting (on August 29), group participants will attend a 1-day seminar to discuss and receive critical feedback on an article-length manuscript in progress. Papers will be circulated in advance of the seminar to allow time for thorough reading by all participants and facilitators. In addition to focused discussions on each paper, the seminar will address strategies and advice for publishing in peer-reviewed international journals. Over the next several days, participants will be expected to attend panels of interest and enjoy the Annual Meeting program. APSA and POMEPS will assist participants in developing personalized schedules to promote linkages with different organized sections, related groups, and other scholars.

Participation in the Research Development Group is open to early-career scholars who are currently based in the MENA region (those whose primary institutional affiliation is in the US or Europe are not eligible for this program). Up to six applicants will be selected. Participants will receive an APSA Travel Grant of up to \$1,000 to support eligible travel and accommodation expenses.

Applicants must be working on an article-length research project that is at a stage of development which would benefit from intense discussion and critique. All topics within political science research will be considered. The manuscript should be intended for publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal (drafts which are intended for dissertation chapters or white papers will not be accepted). Research should not be part of a co-authored project, nor should it be an excerpt from an already completed work.

Applications must be in English and include:

- The completed online Application Form.
- A detailed, recent Curriculum Vitae/resume.
- The 5,000-8,000 word (including abstract, not including references) research manuscript that will be brought to the seminar for discussion.
- A list of 3-5 senior scholars you would like to have discuss your paper

The deadline to submit an application for the Research Development Group is Sunday, March 11, 2018. Selected applicants will be notified of their invitation the following week. Subsequently, the deadline to apply for a Travel Grant will be in April.

For more information, contact [amorsy@apsanet.org](mailto:amorsy@apsanet.org). Program information and a web link to the online Application Form can be found at: <https://apsa.wufoo.com/forms/2018-mena-research-development-group/>.

More information [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## **Political Islam, Capitalism, and Resistance**

Call for Papers/Panels/Roundtables for EISA PEC 2018 Section (S36)

Deadline: 1 February 2018

Although the Islamic world is undoubtedly articulated in the capitalist mode of production today, they have long been considered as incompatible and controversial to each other. Even today, the lack of liberal principles in political Islamic movements was thought to be derived from Islam's own disharmony with capitalism. Perhaps, the image of political Islam in the West is not only shaped by capitalism's own crisis today but also it was determined by the Weberian notion of patrimonialism which is thought to be the origins pre-capitalist mode of production in the non-West.

The aim of this section is to analyse whether or not the Eurocentric understanding of capitalist development has an impact on the perception of political Islam today. If capitalism has taken an alternative route in the Islamic world, is there actually an Islamic capitalism? Or to what extent is capitalism Islamic in the Islamic world? If there is an Islamic capitalism, will there be an Islamic alternative to post-capitalism as well? What are the alternatives to global capitalism within the Islamic world? What are the possibilities for progressive and radical alter-movements against the Islamic capitalism? This section will not only focus on the Islamic capitalisms and Islamic anti-capitalist movements in specific countries, but it will also endeavour to cover the theoretical debates around Islamic capitalism and anti-capitalism.

This section seeks contributions to the cross-disciplinary analysis of political Islam, capitalism, and resistance from a variety of backgrounds and from both established and emerging scholars in order to develop a critical and non-Eurocentric understanding on capitalist development. Contributions can focus on, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Theoretical and Conceptual Issues Around Political Islam and Neoliberalism
- Contemporary Islamic Thought and its Discontents
- Case Studies: Political Islam, Capitalism and Resistance in Specific Countries
- Sociology of Islam
- Secularism and Modernity
- Postcolonial Theory / Decolonising Islam
- Political Economy of Political Islam
- Critical IR/IPE and Political Islam
- Arab Uprising
- Occupy Movements in the Middle East



- Islamophobia
- Anti-capitalist Muslims
- Muslim Brotherhood

All paper, panel and roundtable proposals have to be submitted **through** the conference website. 12<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Conference on International Relations will take place from 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> September 2018 in Prague, Czech Republic. The conference is organised by the European International Studies Association in cooperation with the Central and Eastern European International Studies Association.

Abstracts are to be submitted electronically via the online submission system by the abstract submission deadline: 1 February 2018. Abstracts received via fax, e-mail or received after the deadline will not be accepted and therefore will not be considered for the programme or publication. Submitters may submit up to two abstracts (papers or panel/round-tables). Submitters may select between the individual paper submission and the panel/round-table submission.

More information [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## TALKS & OTHER EVENTS

### **No Exit: Arab Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre and Decolonization**

10 January 2018, 5 pm

Venue: Forum Transregionale Studien, Wallotstr. 14, 14193 Berlin, Germany

Speaker: Yoav Di-Capua

It is a curious and relatively little-known fact that for two decades—from the end of World War II until the late 1960s—existentialism’s most fertile ground outside of Europe was in the Middle East, and Jean-Paul Sartre was the Arab intelligentsia’s uncontested champion. In the Arab world, neither before nor since has another Western intellectual been so widely translated, debated, and celebrated. By closely following the remarkable career of Arab existentialism, Yoav Di-Capua reconstructs the cosmopolitan milieu of the generation that tried to articulate a political and philosophical vision for an egalitarian postcolonial world. He tells this story through the use of new Arabic and Hebrew archives, including unpublished diaries and interviews. Tragically, the warm and hopeful relationships forged between Arab intellectuals, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and others ended when, on the eve of the 1967 war, Sartre failed to embrace the Palestinian cause. Today, when the prospect of global ethical engagement seems to be slipping ever farther out of reach, *No Exit* provides a timely, humanistic account of the intellectual hopes, struggles, and victories that

shaped the Arab experience of decolonization and a delightfully wide-ranging excavation of existentialism's non-Western history. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## **Love in Times of Revolution**

18 January 2018, 8 pm

Venue: Werkstatt der Kulturen, Wissmannstr. 32, 12049 Berlin

Film: Happily Ever After, Screening and Discussion in cooperation with Mayadin Al-Tahrir e.V.

Speakers: Nada Riyadh and Ayman El Amir

In the midst of the chaos of Egypt's Arab Spring, filmmaker Nada Riyadh falls in love with Ayman. The initial euphoria makes way for doubt, anxiety and blame – a metaphor for the disappointing trajectory of events in Egypt. When Ayman decides to leave the country because of the deteriorating social and political conditions, she does everything she can to convince him to stay. The escalating tension puts her own commitment to remain in the country to the test. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## **How to Understand Popular Uprisings and what Remains of the Arab Revolutions?**

24 January 2018, 5 pm

Venue: Forum Transregionale Studien, Wallotstr. 14, 14193 Berlin, Germany

Speakers: Alia Mossallam, Yassin Al-Hajj Saleh

*More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## **Egypt as Effigy: Predatory Power, Hijacked History, and the Devolution of Revolution**

24 January 2018, 18:30 – 20:00

Venue: LSE, Wolfson Theatre, New Academic Building, 54 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London

Speaker: Adel Iskandar, Simon Fraser University

Seven years since the popular uprising that shook Egypt, the relationships between state, society, social movements and corporate power have been reconfigured, perhaps even disfigured. On the eve of the anniversary of the January 25 revolution, Adel Iskandar reflects on these changes and asks how they have affected our understanding of social, cultural and political life in the country. He argues that Egypt today is a replica of various historic Egypts, each manifesting as an effigy built for either public scrutiny or glorification. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## **Nationalism, Sectarianism, and Ethno-Religious Mobilisation in the Middle East**

26 January 2018 - 5:00pm

Venue: Investcorp Auditorium, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, UK

Speaker(s): Max Weiss (Princeton)

*More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## **Law & Revolution: Legitimacy and Constitutionalism After the Arab Spring**

30 January 2018, 18:00-20:00

Venue: Nash Lecture Theatre (K2.31), King's College, London

Speaker: Dr. Nimer Sultany

*More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## **Women's movement from late 19th century until 1930s in Istanbul**

31 January 2018 - 2:00pm

Venue: Board Room, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, UK

Speaker(s): Elife Bicer-Deveci (St Antony's)

*More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## **Understanding Political Islam: In Search of the Islamist Other, 1973-2013**

2 February 2018 - 5:00pm

Venue: Investcorp Auditorium, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, UK

Speaker(s): Francois Burgat (Aix Marseille University)

*More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## **Kurdish Women Fighters: A Path Out of Patriarchy?**

7 February 2018, 18:00 – 19:30

Venue: LSE, Room 9.04, 9th Floor, Tower 1, 1 Clement's Inn, London WC2A 2AZ

Speaker: Güneş Murat Tezcür, University of Central Florida

Over the last three decades, tens of thousands of women have joined the ranks of the PKK and its affiliated organisations. What factors explain their violent mobilisation despite life-threatening risks? Building on a unique dataset of more than 9,000 militant bios and in-depth interviews with the families of militants, Güneş Murat Tezcür argues that gender inequality directly influences women's decisions to take up arms, believing that doing so provides them with a path out of patriarchal gender relations. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## **Philippine Migration to the Middle East and Migrant International Activism**

6 March 2018, 18:30 – 20:00 GMT

Venue: LSE, Room 9.04, 9th Floor, Tower 2, Mobil Court, London WC2A 2AZ

Speaker: Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, University of California, Davis

This seminar forms part of the Social Movements and Popular Mobilisation in the MENA Research Network. Robyn Magalit Rodriguez examines Filipino migrants' international activism, focusing on their participation in the International Migrants Alliance (IMA), an alliance of 120 grassroots migrant organizations from more than 30 countries. She looks at how, through the IMA, migrant activists have been able to draw attention to issues facing Filipino migrants in the Middle East, shape international laws protecting them, and challenge dominant state and civil society narratives around temporary labour migration regimes, instead treating them as a form of “modern-day slavery.” *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

## **JOURNAL ARTICLES & OTHER ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS**

### **The struggles of precarious youth in Tunisia: the case of the Kerkennah movement**

Lorenzo Feltrin

Review of African Political Economy, Published online: 20 Dec 2017

This article analyses the origins and the dynamics of the social movement against the energy corporation Petrofac that took place in the Tunisian archipelago of Kerkennah between 2011 and 2016. The Kerkennah movement is seen as part of a broader cycle of mobilisations for social justice that started in 2008 and continues to the present day. The main subjects of these mobilisations are young people lacking sources of regular income and their core demands are secure employment and local development. It is argued that communal solidarities were key in compensating for the lack of occupational cohesion among the protesters.

[Back to top](#)

### **Bringing in the South: towards a global paradigm for social movement studies**

Simin Fadaee

Interface, Volume 9 (2): 45 - 60

In this paper I argue for the systematic inclusion of Southern social movements in social movement theory, and I provide a framework comprised of four characteristics. This framework could serve as a starting point for research that accounts for the specificities of social movements in the global South while at the same time acknowledging their heterogeneity in diverse local contexts. The characteristics are not exhaustive, but most Southern movements exhibit one or a number of these characteristics and when taken together they could serve as the basis for decentering Northern movements and establishing a paradigm of social movements that is truly global. First, many Southern movements have emerged in the context of colonialism and post - colonialism which influenced the emergence, and continuity of particular forms of mobilizations. Second, social movements in the South emerge in contexts characterized by a variety of political structures and regime types. Third, in many mobilizations of the South , the continuous redefinition of the state - civil society relations influences the potentials for emergence and expansion of social movements. Finally, social movements in the South can be understood with regard to multiple forms of intersection in that there is usually an implicit connection between most social movements and democratisation processes (e.g. women's right movement, labour movement, environmental movement) , between identity and material issues and formal and informal forms of politics.

[Back to top](#)

## **Emotive acts of citizenship, social change and knowledge production in Lebanon**

Dina Kiwan

Interface, Volume 9 (2): 114-142

This article examines the ways in which people protest and who protests in Beirut, Lebanon through the study of the 'trash protests' in 2015. It aims to problematize the assumed universalism of the West's theories of citizenship, personhood and social movements, through contextualized critical reflections of experiences beyond the familiar cases in North America and Western Europe that dominate knowledge production. In addition, it critiques the politically orientalist assumptions of the citizen in the Global South as incapable of constituting themselves politically and transcending primordial ties. It notes that this conception is predicated on notions that citizenship is a rational contractual relationship with the state, as opposed to an emotive one. Whilst there is a developing literature that recognizes the role of emotions in social movements (Jasper, 2011), this has largely focused on the role of emotion in political mobilization. Rather, I use interviews collected in 2016 with a range of protesters (members of NGOs, trash protest movements, artists, film-makers and other 'activist' members of the public) to study knowledge production, via the performative and emotive acts in Beirut's trash protests. These show that the dichotomies of rationality and emotionality collapse when there is a recognition that emotions are social, political and cultural practices (Ahmed, 2014).

[Back to top](#)

## **A Palestinian Uprising: Is it Possible or is it Too Late?**

Ghada Ageel

Sociology of Islam, Volume 2, Issue 3-4, pages 283 – 309

Four years ago, the Arab Awakening started out auspiciously. It caught many by surprise to say the least and its inception, strength and energy have continued to shock numerous commentators. While some observers noted that this powerful process had bypassed Palestine, others have offered a completely different view, arguing that the current situation is ripe for Palestine's enactment of the Arab Awakening. This article examines the validity of arguing the possibility or the impossibility of a Palestinian Arab Spring-style uprising. Has the spring really bypassed Palestine? Does Palestine exhibit the circumstances and capacities whose presence in other Arab countries seemed to be prerequisites for uprising? Moreover, if developments and initiatives adopted by the collective are of any indicator and Palestinians opt for a mass populist non-violent uprising, then what goals, tools and tactics would the coming Intifada adopt? While attempting to place Palestine within a broader contextual analysis of the Arab Spring, the article seeks answers to these questions and argues that nonviolent resistance is emerging as the most potent means for reforming the Palestinian house and also for defying the occupation and exposing its crimes. The article presents a framework for the description and then provides recommendations.

[Back to top](#)

## **Is There A Youth Politics?**

Asef Bayat

Middle East - Topics and Arguments, Vol 9 (2017): Youth

What is the nature of 'youth politics', if any? This article proposes an analytical lens which may help us consider 'youth' as a useful category, and 'youth politics' in terms of the conflicts and negotiations over claiming or defending youthfulness. Understood in this fashion, youth politics is mediated by the position of the young in class, gender, racial, sexual and other involved social structures. It concludes that the political outlook of a young person may be shaped not just by the exclusive preoccupation with 'youthfulness', but also by his/her position in society as citizen, poor, female, or a member of a sexual minority.

[Back to top](#)

## **It's Time to Talk about Youth in the Middle East as “The Precariat”**

Linda Herrera

Middle East - Topics and Arguments, Vol 9 (2017): Youth

In 2011, the year of the Arab uprisings, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* by Guy Standing hit the bookstands. The concept precariat describes the condition of life and labour among educated urbanized youth in the twenty-first century more lucidly and persuasively than the key policy literature on the region, as exemplified in *The Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*. This paper argues that any meaningful conceptualization of youth in North Africa and West Asia going forward should incorporate the notion of precariat and the condition of precariousness.

[Back to top](#)

## **In absence of a Hero Figure and an Ideology: Understanding new political Imaginaries and Practices among revolutionary Youth in Egypt**

Dina El-Sharnouby

Middle East - Topics and Arguments, Vol 9 (2017): Youth

One of the challenges in analyzing youth who participated in the recent Arab uprisings relates to explaining and understanding their revolutionary practices. Adopting a leaderless and cross-

ideological form of mobilization, youth during the eighteen days of the Egyptian uprising managed to practice inclusion by uniting a diverse group of Egyptians. After toppling Mubarak, the revolutionary youth, however, did not present themselves as aiming to seize power, a defining feature of revolutions at least until the 1970s. To understand the meaning of these new cross-ideological and leaderless forms of mobilization, I suggest understanding youth within their time and space. Drawing on Alain Badiou and his conception of the intervallic period and the rebirth of history through the Arab revolts, this article highlights important differences among this generation in their conception of doing politics. More specifically, this paper focuses on the changed meaning of the hero figure, highlighting the importance of inclusionary politics. It will suggest that since the 2011 revolutionary event, a shift away from traditional politics based on a leader and an ideology is being contested for a more inclusionary politics as desired by the younger generation in Egypt.

[Back to top](#)

## **The Sportive Origin of Revolution: Youth Movements and Generational Conflicts in Late Colonial Algeria**

Jakob Kraus

Middle East - Topics and Arguments, Vol 9 (2017): Youth

Starting in the 1920s and 30s, youth came to be seen, in colonial Algeria as elsewhere in the Arab world, as a social category that educators, academics and politicians had to deal with in one way or another. Modernizers and many young men and women established a host of youth movements from the 1920s onwards: cultural circles and student associations, sports teams and scout troops as well as youth wings of political parties. In this contribution I examine such youth movements and the generational conflicts they brought with them in French Algeria from around 1930 until the achievement of independence in 1962. Based on theories by Johan Huizinga and José Ortega y Gasset about the generative potential of generational communities centered around play, I will demonstrate the importance of allegedly non-political youth groups for the social and political transformations in late colonial Algeria.

[Back to top](#)

## **Trauma as counter-revolutionary colonisation: Narratives from (post)revolutionary Egypt**

Vivienne Matthies-Boon, Naomi Head

Journal of International Political Theory, First Published December 21, 2017

We argue that multiple levels of trauma were present in Egypt before, during and after the 2011 revolution. Individual, social and political trauma constitute a triangle of traumatisation which was strategically employed by the Egyptian counter-revolutionary forces – primarily the army and the



leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood – to maintain their political and economic power over and above the social, economic and political interests of others. Through the destruction of physical bodies, the fragmentation and polarisation of social relations and the violent closure of the newly emerged political public sphere, these actors actively repressed the potential for creative and revolutionary transformation. To better understand this multi-layered notion of trauma, we turn to Habermas’ ‘colonisation of the lifeworld’ thesis which offers a critical lens through which to examine the wider political and economic structures and context in which trauma occurred as well as its effects on the personal, social and political realms. In doing so, we develop a novel conception of trauma that acknowledges individual, social and political dimensions. We apply this conceptual framing to empirical narratives of trauma in Egypt’s pre- and post-revolutionary phases, thus both developing a non-Western application of Habermas’ framework and revealing ethnographic accounts of the revolution by activists in Cairo.

[Back to top](#)

## **Justice and/or Development - The Rif Protest Movement and the Neoliberal Promise**

Emilio Spadola

MERIP online, December 24, 2017

What began in late October 2016 with protests over the horrific death of Mohcine Fikri, a fish seller in the northern city of Al Hoceima, escalated in 2017 into a broad social protest movement with participants in all of Morocco’s major cities. The Hirak al-Rif movement, so named for Al Hoceima’s mountainous and coastal Rif province, draws symbolism and strength from the region’s painful history of state violence, deprivation and insult. Yet the problems the Hirak identifies—pervasive feelings of indignity and injustice, rampant corruption and security abuses—also resonate nationally.

[Back to top](#)

## **The Thorns that Exist and Resist - Black-Palestine Solidarity in the Twenty-First Century**

Andy Clarno

MER282

On August 12, 2017, more than 1,200 people gathered in Chicago to bid farewell to Rasmea Odeh, a Palestinian-American community organizer facing deportation due to US government efforts to repress struggles for social justice and support for Palestinian freedom. At the gathering, Angela Davis honored Rasmea’s lifelong commitment to revolutionary struggles against racism, Zionism and imperialism. A week later, Kristian Davis Bailey, a Detroit-based activist with the Black4Palestine network, stood outside Rasmea’s sentencing hearing with banners that declared: “From Assata to Rasmea, We Fight for Freedom/Hurriya.” These moments highlight the black-Palestine unity that

Rasmea celebrated in her final statement to the court, quoted above. For decades, Rasmea and the Arab American Action Network have worked closely with black liberation movements, including the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. Building on these and other historical connections, movements for black and Palestinian liberation have intensified the bonds of solidarity in the last three years.

[Back to top](#)

## NEWS PIECES & COMMENTARY

### **Protests in Iran could spell trouble for the Middle East at large**

Josepha Ivanka Wessels  
The Conversation, 2 January 2018

Roiling more than a dozen major cities, young Iranians are protesting against the country's government. They appear to be particularly angered by the country's funding of wars in Arab countries, such as Yemen and Syria, as Iranian citizens slide towards poverty. In the city of Kerman, demonstrators chanted that the "People are living like beggars, the Leader is behaving like a God", and in Khuzestan, protesters reportedly called out "death to Khamenei", Iran's supreme leader. Something profound is happening – and it could have major implications for the Middle East as a whole. On the face of it, this is reminiscent of the huge protests that followed the 2009 election, known as the Green Movement or Green Revolution. But these latest protests are all round very unlike the Green Movement in their implications, their size, and their demographics. In 2009, protesters mainly came from a young and educated middle class; this time, the protests started in the north-western city of Mashad, traditionally a religiously conservative place, and those taking to the streets come from a far wider variety of backgrounds. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

### **Iran protests: A turning point?**

Oaklandsocialist, 1 January 2018

Are the protests in Iran a turning point in the global class struggle? They started on Thursday in Iran's second largest city, Mashhad around the issues of high prices and unemployment. The very next day they had spread throughout the country, including to Tehran. There is actually some suspicion that the "hard liner" supporters of Ali Khamenei were behind these original protests in order to embarrass President Rouhani over the deal he made with Obama. If so the whole thing certainly backfired, since

within 24 hours the issue had moved to include protests against the clericals and against the Revolutionary Guard. There were also several instances of crowds trying to invade government buildings, possibly to get documents showing government corruption. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

## **Iranian Protests and the Working Class**

Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj  
Lobe Log, 1 January 2018

With the new wave of protests sweeping Iran, it seems that the country's forgotten men and women may be mobilizing to ensure their voices are heard in Iran and around the world. There is a growing consensus that the protests are comprised primarily of members of the working class, who are most vulnerable to chronic unemployment and a rises in the cost of living. The idea that these are working class protests has explanatory power. First, if the protests are indeed a working-class mobilization, then they are less surprising, and can be seen as akin to the regular "bread riots" that took place during Ahmadinejad's second term, when Iran's economy suffered its sharpest contractions.

*Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

## **Iran blocks Instagram, Telegram after protests**

Al-Jazeera English, 31 December 2017

Iran has restricted access to the Instagram and Telegram social media apps as a security measure during rare anti-government protests, according to state TV. Irib News quoted anonymous sources as saying on Sunday that social media in the country would be temporarily limited, as the government warned protesters they would pay a price if days of unrest continued. "With a decision by the Supreme National Security Council, activities of Telegram and Instagram are temporarily limited," the Irib News report said, without elaborating. Facebook, which owns Instagram, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

## **[BDS:] Lorde set an example for young celebrities to follow**

Hind Awwad  
Al-Jazeera English, 30 December 2017

In the growing tide of support for the cultural boycott of Israel, New Zealand music star Lorde's decision to cancel her Tel Aviv concert is precedent-setting in many ways. Lorde cancelled the Israeli leg of her 2018 world tour only days after it was announced. With commendable modesty and

openness to engage moral questions of our times, she welcomed appeals from her fans who are active in challenging Israel's oppression of Palestinians through Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). Exhibiting the political maturity of a truly "informed young citizen", she recognised why the overwhelming majority of Palestinians, including artists, have called on international cultural figures not to entertain apartheid Israel, and she acted on her conscience to make the "right call." *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

## **Why are people protesting in Iran?**

Al-Jazeera English, 30 December 2017

Tensions are high in Iran as hundreds of people protest in multiple cities against the government's economic policies. About 300 people protested in Kermanshah, a city in western Iran, on Friday, according to the semi-state news agency Fars. Police there used water cannon and tear gas to disperse demonstrators. Protests also broke out in the capital, Tehran, according to social media. The demonstrations are said to be the biggest display of public dissent since pro-reform rallies swept the country in 2009. US President Donald Trump has warned Iran's government to respect the people's right to protest. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

## **Trump's Jerusalem move reignites Palestinian cause**

Saba Aziz

Al-Jazeera English, 13 December 2017

US President Donald Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move the US embassy to the city from Tel Aviv has reignited the Palestinian cause, according to analysts. Breaking with years of US policy, Trump announced the move on December 6, drawing international condemnation and sparking a wave of heated protests around the world. No country currently has its embassy in Jerusalem. The status of Jerusalem has long remained a sensitive topic and one of the core issues in the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Trump's decision has "touched the nerve of the Arab people and the backbone of the international law", said Salman Abu Sitta, chairman of the Popular Conference of Palestinians Abroad. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

## **US Jerusalem move: Fury spreads from Jakarta to Rabat**

Al-Jazeera English, 11 December 2017

A wave of anger against a US decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital has spread from Asia, through the Middle East, to North Africa, with tens of thousands of people taking to the streets to denounce the controversial move. Protesters filled central avenues and squares in a number of major international cities on Sunday, waving the flag of Palestine and shouting slogans to express their solidarity with the Palestinians, who see East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state. US President Donald Trump's announcement on Wednesday drew near-universal condemnation from world leaders and inflamed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with violence flaring up in the occupied Palestinian territories for a fifth day. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

## **Tense scenes as unrest over US Jerusalem move continues**

Al-Jazeera English, 10 December 2017

Protests have broken out for a fourth day across the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip following a US decision to declare Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The demonstrations on Saturday came as Palestinian leaders were to meet in Ramallah to firm up a response to US President Donald Trump's controversial move. In East Jerusalem, Israeli forces fired stun grenades and tear gas as they charged - some on horseback - through a crowd of at least 100 peaceful demonstrators in Salah Eddin, one of the city's busiest shopping streets. At least 13 Palestinians were detained and 12 injured as Israeli troops pushed and beat demonstrators at the scene. Among those held was Jihad Abu Zneid, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

## **Palestinians clash with police at US embassy in Lebanon**

Al-Jazeera English, 10 December 2017

Lebanese security forces fired tear gas at protesters near the US Embassy in Lebanon during a demonstration against President Donald Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Protesters threw stones at security forces who had barricaded the main road leading to the US embassy in the Awkar area, north of Beirut, on Sunday. Al Jazeera's Zeina Khodr, reporting from Awkar, said several hundred Palestinians clashed with the security forces. "There is a lot of anger here. What they're chanting is 'Palestine forgive us, they closed the door on us', clearly in reference to Arab leaders," Khodr said. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

# POSITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Intermediaries in Contemporary Syria

*FES Research and Capacity Building Project, Feb-Dec 2018*

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is announcing a research and capacity building initiative entitled “Intermediaries in contemporary Syria”. The initiative aims to strengthen the research skills of promising young Syrian researchers and to develop knowledge about the relations between local communities and supra-local powers.

The intermediaries linking local communities to outside authorities are central to how political power is distributed and used in contemporary Syria. These local intermediaries have, historically, been leaders of important families in a town or neighborhood, but they have evolved during the revolution and ensuing civil war, and today include opposition activists, local youths organizing militias, and warlords who have emerged out of prolonged armed conflict, among others. The outside authorities the intermediaries link to include government agencies, opposition bodies, rebel forces, the Syrian Democratic Forces, and Islamist groups. These typically informal relationships are frequently referred to by authors working on contemporary Syria, but are rarely given the in-depth attention needed to fully understand them. This project seeks to uncover, understand and theorize these local relations in several regions of Syria, from 2000 until the present.

FES aims to involve up to six Junior Researchers in the project. Selected participants will each produce a report based upon their own original research, being trained and guided by experienced think tank researchers and academics. The initiative represents an unprecedented opportunity for motivated, young researchers to receive systematic instruction from field-leading experts, as well as extensive mentoring and guidance through the research and writing process.

Participants will receive a stipend to support their research work and writing throughout the year. Transport and accommodation expenses for participants travelling from outside of Beirut to attend the workshops will be covered by FES. Selected candidates will be asked to sign a Terms of References agreement with FES, outlining their tasks in and commitment to the project.

### ***Project structure and details***

Late-February 2018: Kick-off of project with three-day workshop in Beirut on basic social research skills, research methodology and how to develop a research plan. Each Junior Researcher’s individual topic and research plan will be jointly developed and formulated at the workshop.

March-May 2018: Junior Researchers gather data and conduct interviews, being in close and regular contact with the project’s supervisors.

June 2018: Junior Researchers present and discuss initial research results at second three-day workshop in Beirut, and attend sessions on writing skills. Discussions will focus on how to turn field research into a finished report.

July-August 2018: Junior Researchers finalize first draft of their reports.

September-December 2018: Review and revision of reports.

January-March 2019: Publication of all reports by FES (in Arabic and English) as part of a volume on intermediaries in Syria.

### ***Eligibility and selection criteria***

The primary selection criteria are participants' ability to produce high quality research (evidenced by prior research experience, knowledge of a locality, networks of contacts, etc.), their interest in the research topic, as well as in research more generally.

In addition, applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements:

have Syrian nationality or have spent a significant part of their youth in Syria;

be under 35 years old;

have basic English skills, including the ability to understand workshop presentations and read feedback on written work, not advanced spoken or written English skills (researchers can compose their reports in either English or Arabic);

be able to travel to Beirut for each of the three-day workshops (in late February and mid-June 2018).

### ***Application documents and procedure***

To apply as a Junior Researcher in the project, please prepare a single document with your personal information as well as answers to all of the questions below:

*Personal information:* full name, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address, date of birth, highest educational certificate obtained (ex. high school, BA, MA, PhD), institute/university at which it was obtained, year, subject.

*Application questions:*

Describe your qualifications and experience in a narrative of 200 or fewer words—this should include educational background and professional experience, and can include anything else you deem relevant to the project.

How does your experience fit with the research project? (100 words maximum)

Why are you interested in the project theme? (200 words maximum)

Why are you interested in the training program? (200 words maximum)

*More information and application [here](#)*

[\*\*\*Back to top\*\*\*](#)

## **Fellowships for Threatened Scholars**

Deadline: 15 January 2018

The Institute of International Education Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF) announces a January 15th deadline for its next round of applications from scholars facing threats to their lives or careers. Fellowships support temporary academic positions at colleges, universities, and other research institutions anywhere in the world where the scholars can continue their academic work in safety.

IIE-SRF formalizes IIE's unwavering commitment to preserve the lives, voices, and ideas of scholars around the globe. Since the program's founding in 2002, it has awarded fellowships to 737 scholars

from 58 countries, arranging visiting academic positions at over 375 partner institutions in 43 countries.

Who can apply:

Professors, researchers, and public intellectuals from any country, field, or discipline may apply. Please refer eligible candidates and forward this announcement to any academic colleagues who may be interested.

Qualifying applicants are currently facing or have recently fled from direct and immediate threats. Preference is given to scholars with a Ph.D. or other terminal degree in their field, and who have extensive teaching or research experience at an institution of higher learning.

Women and scholars from under-represented groups are strongly encouraged to apply.

*Students or professionals seeking funding to pursue academic studies or training are not eligible.*

Because of high demand for IIE-SRF assistance, the program is not able to grant fellowship support to all applicants who meet the minimum eligibility requirements.

IIE-SRF fellowships support visiting academic positions for up to one calendar year. Awards are issued for up to US\$25,000, plus individual health insurance coverage and eligible relocation benefits.

Fellowships are disbursed through partnering universities, colleges, or research institutes that provide a safe haven for IIE-SRF fellows to continue their academic work in safety. In most cases, hosting institutions match the IIE-SRF fellowship award by providing salary/stipend support, housing, and/or other assistance that would make the scholar's appointment comparable to other visiting academic positions.

For consideration in February 2018, application materials must be submitted by January 15, 2018.

Please note that IIE-SRF fellowships are awarded quarterly. Applications are accepted at any time and can also be considered on an emergency basis.

*More information and application [here](#)*

[\*\*Back to top\*\*](#)

## **PhD positions: The Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies**

Deadline: 31 January 2018

The Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies will admit up to ten PhD students to its doctoral programme, which is to begin on 1 October 2018. The Graduate School is a joint project of Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, and Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, which brings together scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and area studies.



The Graduate School investigates the plurality, changeability, and global connectedness of Muslim cultures and societies. Applications with a focus on strategies of negotiating diversity, difference, and distinction, both among Muslims and between Muslims and non-Muslims are especially encouraged. Successful applicants will have a master's degree in one of the disciplines represented at the Graduate School (Arabic Studies, Central Asian Studies, History, History of Islamic Art, Human Geography, Islamic Studies, Political Science, Semitic Studies, Social and Cultural Anthropology, South and Southeast Asian Studies, Southeast European History), with a ranking, where applicable, of above average. Our language of instruction and communication is English.

The application package includes the following documents:

- Completed and signed application form;
- Outline of the dissertation project (up to 6 pages, with a brief summary);
- Curriculum vitae;
- Certified copies of degrees received;
- Proof of proficiency in English (native speakers of English or applicants who have graduated from an English-speaking university in a country with English as an official language are exempt from this verification);
- Evidence of proficiency in the language(s) relevant to the dissertation project;
- Two letters of recommendation must be emailed by the applicant's referees directly to BGSMCS as signed electronic letters.

Three scholarships for candidates in history and cultural studies will be funded by Gerda Henkel Stiftung. Two further positions for PhD students with Chinese citizenship are available through the cooperation of the Chinese Scholarship Council and Freie Universität Berlin's Beijing Office (FU-CSC PhD Scholarship). Funding for more scholarships is currently pending approval. Candidates with a fellowship or grant by a third party are also encouraged to apply. If admitted, they will be full members of the Graduate School with access to all services offered by the School's administration and the Dahlem Research School. All doctoral researchers admitted to the Graduate School will receive a travel allowance. Their first supervisors must be Principal Investigators at the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies.

Applications will be reviewed by the School's Admissions and Grants Committee, and interviews will be scheduled in early May 2018.

The complete application package must be submitted, compiled into one PDF file, to [application@bgsmscs.fu-berlin.de](mailto:application@bgsmscs.fu-berlin.de) by 31 January 2018, 12pm Central European Time. The Admissions and Grants committee will not consider incomplete applications. For further information, please refer to our Guidelines for Application to the PhD Programme or send us an Email to [application@bgsmscs.fu-berlin.de](mailto:application@bgsmscs.fu-berlin.de). No legal entitlement shall be constituted by applying to the programme. Reasons for rejections will not be disclosed.

*More information and application [here](#)*

**[Back to top](#)**