



SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND POPULAR MOBILISATION IN THE MENA

Digest of Current Publications and Events

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

16.02.2018

CONTENT

Call for Papers & Conferences	4
Academic Research on Conflict and Contention (ARCC) Workshop	4
Diaspora Dilemmas: Political Participation in Contested Environments	5
Talks & Other Events	7
Social Movements and Popular Mobilization in the Middle East and North Africa Podcast	7
Women and the Struggle for Democracy in Iran.....	7
Law and Revolution: Legitimacy and Constitutionalism After the Arab Spring	7
Revolutionary Social Contracts and Long-Term Legacies: Comparing Former and Current Revolutionaries in Dhufar and Western Sahara	7
Palestinian Citizens of Israel: Power, Resistance and the Struggle for Space	8
Philippine Migration to the Middle East and Migrant International Activism	8
Centre for Palestine Studies Annual Lecture: The Nakba in the Present.....	9
Yemen: War, Politics, and Human Tragedy	9
Revolution without Revolutionaries: A book discussion with Asef Bayat.....	10
Recent & Forthcoming Books	10
Empire of Guns: The Violent Making of the Industrial Revolution	10
Civil War in Syria - Mobilization and Competing Social Orders.....	11
The H-Word - The Peripeteia of Hegemony	11
Industrial Sexuality: Gender, Urbanization, and Social Transformation in Egypt	12
Journal Articles & other Academic Publications	12
The Story Behind the Rise of Turkey’s Ulema	12
Yemen Dispatch.....	13
Thinking Sociologically about Religion and Violence: The Case of ISIS	13
A “Blue” Generation and Protests in Iran.....	14
The Political (or Social) Economy of Sectarianism in Lebanon.....	14
News Pieces & Commentary	15
Bahraini Dissidents Face Loss of Citizenship, Forced Exile	15
Decades-long battle continues, as Susiya braces for more Israeli demolitions	15
In Saudi Arabia, Shiites Struggle for Basic Rights	16
Without meaningful change Sudan will descend into chaos	16
Clashes mark anniversary of Bahrain's 2011 uprising	16
Jordan's economic crisis threatens political stability	17
'Legitimate, non-violent': Norwegian MP nominates BDS for Nobel Peace Prize	17

“From the revolution, we learned to be united”: leaving politics behind. An interview with Mahienour el-Massry	18
The women fighting for Syria's vanished	18
Israel kills Palestinian after month-long manhunt	18
Tunisia: selective feminism and the marginalization of women’s struggles.....	19
Free in name only - Lessons from the unrest in Tunisia.....	19
Tunisians oppose the IMF	20
Jordan’s Fragile Stability Could Be Shattered by Foundering Economy, Spillover of Regional Unrest	20
Protests rock Tunisia - A winter of discontent	20
The spark that turned into a wildfire - Protests in Iran.....	21
Arab anger: Governments and Protesters Walk a Fine Line	21
Qatar's art of resistance: 'We do not attack or hurt, it's not in our culture'	22
Tracing Global Solidarities: Radwa Ashour’s “The Journey” and Histories of a World Revolution...	22
[Egypt:] On Warraq Island, popular democracy defies secret state plans.....	23
210 Zamalek Club fans start hunger strike in Alexandria prison.....	23
Petitions and Calls for Solidarity	24
First Freedom Flotilla literary contest: “Keys to the Future of Palestine”	24

CALL FOR PAPERS & CONFERENCES

Academic Research on Conflict and Contention (ARCC) Workshop

4–8 June 2018, London and West Sussex, United Kingdom

Deadline: 2 March 2018

Co-Convenors: Milli Lake (LSE); Sarah Parkinson (JHU)

ARCC invites applications for a week-long workshop on conducting field research in volatile and violence-affected research environments from the 4–8 June, 2018.

Scholars from the London School of Economics and Johns Hopkins University will convene the workshop, with participation from leading scholars in the field of conflict research. The workshop is developed in close partnership with International Location Safety (ILS), leaders in the field of safety and security training for the academic and humanitarian aid sectors.

The workshop will prepare students to conduct rigorous, academic research in contexts of conflict and contention, in addition to facilitating the development of professional support networks that include faculty and peers engaged in similar work.

Conventional academic training in the social sciences often leaves students under-prepared for research in violence-affected political spaces. Shifting political conditions can leave researchers ill-equipped to navigate the complex realities they encounter on the ground. As a result, researchers can inadvertently subject themselves, their interlocutors, and the communities in which they work to various harms.

The ARCC program is grounded in the philosophy that the environments in which researchers operate provide crucial context for careful research design and sound data analysis. Moreover, given that fieldwork in contexts of conflict and contention can pose risks to scholars and their interlocutors, understanding – and preparing for – adverse events is integral to honouring the principle of “do no harm.”

This workshop thus links practical skills training geared towards the ethical, methodological, and logistical challenges researchers may encounter when they are working in highly insecure environments with the methodological considerations of rigorous social science research design. The course’s safety and security component incorporates practical simulations to provide hands-on instruction in emergency first aid, risk assessment, situational awareness, context analysis, weapons and blast awareness, and data protection. The course also provides instruction in social science field methods tailored to conflict contexts, with a heavy emphasis on the ethical, empirical, and logistical dimensions of qualitative and quantitative data collection.

Who is it for?

The ARCC Program is targeted primarily towards PhD students in comparative politics, conflict studies or international relations who are preparing to embark on research in volatile, conflict-affected, or otherwise challenging field sites. However, applications from scholars at all career stages and from all subfields will be considered.

Cost and how to apply

The total cost of the week-long residential workshop is £1800, but full and half scholarships are available to support outstanding doctoral students.

Application materials should be submitted by email to arccprogram2018@gmail.com no later than 5pm EST on Friday, 2 March 2018.

Required application materials:

- A cover letter that briefly summarises your academic background and your planned fieldwork, as well as detailing whether:
 - Your academic department will cover the cost of your participation;
 - You have other funds (eg summer support, independent grant/fellowship money) available to cover costs;
 - You are requesting a partial scholarship to facilitate your attendance;
 - You are requesting a full scholarship to facilitate your participation;
 - You will be unable to attend without a full scholarship to cover your costs.
- A 500-word summary of your proposed research project and how the course would benefit you;
- An academic CV that details any past fieldwork, relevant non-academic experience, prior field methods training, and/or language skills; and
- For doctoral students, a letter of support from your faculty supervisor.

More information [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Diaspora Dilemmas: Political Participation in Contested Environments

13 April 2018, King's College London

Deadline: 15 March 2018

This workshop is organized with the assistance of the Leverhulme Foundation Research Grant, to take place at King's College London, on April 13, 2018, with the convenors: Dr Gillian Kennedy, Leverhulme Research Fellow at the Department of Middle Eastern Studies, King's College London, and Dr Branislav Radeljic, Reader in International Relations at the Department of Social Sciences and Social Work, University of East London.

Diasporas are one of the most prominent manifestations of increased globalization, with migration flows from conflict ridden countries forming much of the basis of new migrant communities in the West. With this, the impact of diasporas as political actors participating in host countries is changing the nature of immigrant politicisation, alongside transnational political engagement with home countries also seen increasingly as a feature of post-conflict political contestation. Diaspora

communities through the use of social media are more deeply connected to their home countries than previous generations, seeking both to challenge existing state structures in their home nations via political protest in their host country. Understanding the changing methods and ideas affecting collective diaspora participation is imperative to the scholarly field of international relations as the lines between the nation-state and transnational identity have become blurred in recent decades, therefore this topic is of significant public policy concern for both scholars and non-academic practitioners.

The aim of this workshop has multiple scholarly objectives: firstly, to examine the comparative dimension of diaspora political participation across a range of post-conflict scenarios from Asia to the Balkans and the Middle East, with a focus on examining voting patterns and electoral participation; secondly, to analyse diasporas' effectiveness as a political actor on the supranational stage; and finally, to seek answers for the political integration of diaspora communities on host state politics and consequential interstate relations.

Some of the questions this workshop would like to address are:

Why do some diaspora communities unify in the face of conflict while others fragment?

Why do diaspora communities engage with supranational institutions such as the International Criminal Court and the European Court of Justice, instead of seeking redress from national sovereigns?

How do diaspora groups participate in politics in their home states' transnationally and what are their objectives?

Can diasporas affect foreign policy prescriptions in host countries towards home states and how does this affect inter-state relations?

We are looking for papers from various regions and are open to scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds alongside non-academic practitioners from diverse professional backgrounds. The workshop is open to postgraduate research students working in a relevant research capacity. The workshop will take place over 1 day with participants expected to discuss their papers in detail with other participants.

Please submit a paper abstract of 250 words and a short biography to gillian.kennedy@kcl.ac.uk and B.Radeljic@uel.ac.uk by March 15, 2018.

More information [here](#)

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

TALKS & OTHER EVENTS

Social Movements and Popular Mobilization in the Middle East and North Africa Podcast

The event series of the SMPM MENA research network is now available as a podcast playlist. If you missed one of our events, have a listen! Here's the playlist on [SoundCloud](#) or on [iTunes](#).

[Back to top](#)

Women and the Struggle for Democracy in Iran

21 February 2018 - 2:00pm

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

Speaker: Mariam Memarsadeghi (Tavaana)

More information [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Law and Revolution: Legitimacy and Constitutionalism After the Arab Spring

21 February 2018, 6:00 PM

Venue: Paul Webley Wing (Senate House), Wolfson Theatre, SOAS, London, UK

Speaker: Nimer Sultany

Book Launch for Law and Revolution: Legitimacy and Constitutionalism After the Arab Spring (Oxford University Press 2017) by Nimer Sultany

More information [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Revolutionary Social Contracts and Long-Term Legacies: Comparing Former and Current Revolutionaries in Dhufar and Western Sahara

27 February 2018 6:00-8:00pm

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

Speaker: Dr Alice Wilson, University of Sussex

Revolutions attempt to forge new social, political and economic relations including new social contracts. Whilst many studies examine the outcomes of such projects in the years immediately after revolutionaries capture state power, we know less about the lasting legacies of revolutionary social contracts in other circumstances, such as defeated revolutions and revolutions which only partially

capture state power. This paper examines how revolutionary social contracts create long-term legacies in challenging political conditions of military defeat and protracted exile. Former, now defeated, revolutionaries in Dhufar, southern Oman, and current exiled revolutionaries from Western Sahara, each sought in early activism to promote new social contracts based on social egalitarianism and weakened tribal authority. Ethnographic fieldwork with both groups reveals long-term legacies of these revolutionary social contracts. In Dhufar, some defeated veterans and family members use kinship practices and everyday socialising to reproduce revolutionary values of social egalitarianism; these findings suggest how there can be an “afterlife” of revolution even after military defeat. For exiled Sahrawi revolutionaries, over time tribes have re-emerged in often contested roles; while Sahrawis’ revolutionary social contract has modified over time to allow greater public recognition for tribes, a revolutionary moral contract has nevertheless proved enduring. Both cases underscore the long-term legacies in diverse political settings of revolutionary social contracts - effects yet to be seen for the more recent revolutions of the Arab Spring. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Palestinian Citizens of Israel: Power, Resistance and the Struggle for Space

27 February 2018, 5:45 PM

Venue: SOAS, Russell Square: College Buildings, Khalili Lecture Theatre, London, UK

Speaker: Sharri Plonski, SOAS

This lecture by Sharri Plonski marks the publication of her book, [Palestinian Citizens of Israel: Power, Resistance and the Struggle for Space](#) (I.B. Tauris, 2018). Palestinian Citizens of Israel is an investigation into the Palestinian communities living inside the Jewish state, and their attempts to disrupt, resist and reshape the physical and symbolic borders that discipline their lives. Through extensive fieldwork and over a hundred interviews, Sharri Plonski conducts a comparative analysis of three contemporary cases, in which Palestinian citizens struggle for land and space in Israel: a popular struggle for housing rights in Jaffa; resistance to Jewish settlement interventions (and the policies that under-write them) in the central Galilee; and the campaign to recognise Bedouin land rights in the Naqab desert. Engaging with critical theories of space, borders and resistance, her research explores that which is both ‘ordinary and extraordinary’ about Palestinian-citizen resistance in Israel, through the different spaces it navigates and transforms. Plonski’s examination of Palestinian activism and transgression offers valuable insight into the structures and reaches of power within the Israeli state, but also its limits. *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](#)

Centre for Palestine Studies Annual Lecture: The Nakba in the Present

8 March 2018, 6:30 PM

Venue: Brunei Gallery, Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS, London, UK

Speaker: Elias Khoury

In this year 2018 marked by two competing 70th anniversaries – that of the creation of the state of Israel and that of the Palestinian Nakba – the CPS Annual Lecture will be delivered by Lebanese writer, novelist, university professor and prominent public intellectual Elias Khoury.

In his lecture, Elias Khoury will discuss the following themes:

- 1) The Nakba as ethnic cleansing, and how it has been depicted in Israeli and Palestinian Literatures;
- 2) The Nakba as a settler-colonial process that is still ongoing;
- 3) The error in comparing the Nakba to the Holocaust, and Edward Said's concept of 'the victims of the victims';
- 4) The Nakba as an open book.

Elias Khoury has published 13 novels, translated into 15 languages. He has taught in several universities, including Columbia University and New York University (NYU), and is the editor of the Arabic equivalent of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*. His novel *Bab Al Shams (Gate of the Sun)* was praised by Edward Said and made into a film. In The Guardian, Maya Jaggi commented: 'a character dreams of writing a "book without a beginning or end... an epic of the Palestinian people" ... Khoury's monumental novel is in a sense that groundbreaking book'. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Yemen: War, Politics, and Human Tragedy

10 March 2018, 10:00 – 16:00

Venue: The Cordoba Foundation, London WC2N 5DU, United Kingdom

Speakers: tba

Yemenis arose in the 2011 Arab Spring in a revolt against the regime. Since 2014, the ongoing political strife has erupted into a full-blown humanitarian catastrophe, claiming hundreds of thousands of civilians due to armed violence, starvation, and the worst outbreak of cholera in history, affecting millions, including 600,000 children. Through the commentary and analysis of experts and academics, The Cordoba Foundation attempts to shed light on one of the most tragic conflicts that has far-reaching implications beyond the Middle East. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Revolution without Revolutionaries: A book discussion with Asef Bayat

19 March 2018, 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

Venue: Elliott School for International Affairs, Linder Family Commons, Room 602, Washington DC

Speaker: Asef Bayat

Asef Bayat will discuss his new book, *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring*, (Stanford University Press, 2017) with POMEPS on Monday, March 19, 2018 at the Elliott School for International Affairs, Linder Family Commons, Room 602. Setting the 2011 uprisings side by side with the revolutions of the 1970s, particularly the Iranian Revolution, this book reveals a profound global shift in the nature of protest: as acceptance of neoliberal policy has spread, radical revolutionary impulses have diminished. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

RECENT & FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Empire of Guns: The Violent Making of the Industrial Revolution

Priya Satia

Penguin Random House - 2018

We have long understood the Industrial Revolution as a triumphant story of innovation and technology. *Empire of Guns*, a rich and ambitious new book by award-winning historian Priya Satia, upends this conventional wisdom by placing war and Britain's prosperous gun trade at the heart of the Industrial Revolution and the state's imperial expansion. Satia brings to life this bustling industrial society with the story of a scandal: Samuel Galton of Birmingham, one of Britain's most prominent gunmakers, has been condemned by his fellow Quakers, who argue that his profession violates the society's pacifist principles. In his fervent self-defense, Galton argues that the state's heavy reliance on industry for all of its war needs means that every member of the British industrial economy is implicated in Britain's near-constant state of war. *Empire of Guns* uses the story of Galton and the

gun trade, from Birmingham to the outermost edges of the British empire, to illuminate the nation's emergence as a global superpower, the roots of the state's role in economic development, and the origins of our era's debates about gun control and the "military-industrial complex" — that thorny partnership of government, the economy, and the military. Through Satia's eyes, we acquire a radically new understanding of this critical historical moment and all that followed from it. Sweeping in its scope and entirely original in its approach, *Empire of Guns* is a masterful new work of history — a rigorous historical argument with a human story at its heart.

[Back to top](#)

Civil War in Syria - Mobilization and Competing Social Orders

Adam Baczko, Gilles Dorronsoro, and Arthur Quesnay
Cambridge University Press - 2017

In 2011, hundreds of thousands of Syrians marched peacefully to demand democratic reforms. Within months, repression forced them to take arms and set up their own institutions. Two years later, the inclusive nature of the opposition had collapsed, and the PKK and radical jihadist groups rose to prominence. In just a few years, Syria turned into a full-scale civil war involving major regional and world powers. How has the war affected Syrian society? How does the fragmentation of Syria transform social and sectarian hierarchies? How does the war economy work in a country divided between the regime, the insurgency, the PKK and the Islamic State? Written by authors who have previously worked on the Iraqi, Afghan, Kurd, Libyan and Congolese armed conflicts, it includes extensive interviews and direct observations. A unique book, which combines rare field experience of the Syrian conflict with new theoretical insights on the dynamics of civil wars

[Back to top](#)

The H-Word - The Peripeteia of Hegemony

Perry Anderson
Verso – 2017

Few terms are so widely used in the literature of international relations and political science, with so little agreement about their exact meaning, as hegemony. In the first full historical study of its fortunes as a concept, Perry Anderson traces its emergence in Ancient Greece and its rediscovery during the upheavals of 1848–1849 in Germany. He then follows its checkered career in revolutionary Russia, fascist Italy, Cold War America, Gaullist France, Thatcher's Britain, post-colonial India, feudal Japan, Maoist China, eventually arriving at the world of Merkel and May, Bush and Obama. The result is a surprising and fascinating expedition into global intellectual history, ending with reflections on the contemporary political landscape.

[Back to top](#)

Industrial Sexuality: Gender, Urbanization, and Social Transformation in Egypt

Hanan Hammad

University of Texas Press - 2016

Hanan Hammad's *Industrial Sexuality: Gender, Urbanization, and Social Transformation in Egypt* is wondrous scholarship: imaginative in its use of historical sources, textured in its presentation of these sources, sensitive in its conjugating the empirical and theoretical materials, deeply grounded in theoretical debates about work, gender, and sexuality. At the same time, it is lucidly written and immensely readable. The discussion of the ways in which men and women lived, loved, worked, had sex, and struggled politically in Mahallat al-Kubra in Egypt is informed by thoughtful and imaginative scholarship that takes seriously questions of class, gender, and sexuality. But the work is also shaped by a deep knowledge of the context of these workers' daily practices and extraordinary contestations.

[Back to top](#)

JOURNAL ARTICLES & OTHER ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

The Story Behind the Rise of Turkey's Ulema

Ceren Lord

MERIP, 4 February 2018

At the heart of the controversy over Islamization in Turkey has been the accelerated rise and visibility of the Islamic scholars or clergy known as the *ulema*. Despite the ostensibly secular nature of the republic, the majority of Turkey's *ulema* are employed by the state's Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*). The directorate is the country's chief Islamic authority and holds a legal monopoly on Muslim religious life and activity. Indeed, a spate of legislation in recent years has significantly expanded the *Diyanet*'s influence over all spheres of life, from education to family relations, and from psychological support at hospitals to the provision of religious services for refugees and during national crises. Conventional wisdom has tended to interpret these developments as the instrumentalization of the *Diyanet* by the Islamist Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AKP) for political purposes. In the same vein, prior to AKP rule the *Diyanet* was considered as a tool of the ostensibly secular and "Kemalist" state. Certainly, most political authorities and other state actors (such as the military) have sought to influence and assert

control over the *Diyanet* in pursuit of differing political agendas. And the unprecedented expansion of the *Diyanet* in the AKP era is also a function of the government's push for Islamization. There is, however, another side to the story of the *Diyanet*'s expansion: its own agency. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Yemen Dispatch

Stacey Philbrick Yadav
MERIP, 30 January 2018

The eruption of fighting by rival factions in Yemen's southern city of Aden on January 28 provides distressing additional evidence that Yemen's war is best understood as a series of mini-wars reflecting the intersection of diverse domestic drivers of conflict and Gulf regional fragmentation. Eyes are turned to Aden and the conflict between the government of displaced President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, on the one hand, and the UAE-backed secessionist Southern Transitional Council on the other, which the government has accused of staging a coup. At the same time, there are at least six distinct zones of conflict around the country, each with its own antagonists and external patrons. Linked in fluid and non-linear ways, actors in one arena of conflict are aware of (and may seek to shape) dynamics in others, and none can be ignored. Even before the most recent escalation in Aden, the December 5, 2017 killing of former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh by domestic rivals marked a dramatic change in Yemen's political environment, shaking up a war that had settled into a military and diplomatic stalemate. But this development—along with the at least partial disintegration of the Houthi-Saleh alliance that immediately preceded it—is dwarfed by the rapid escalation of humanitarian catastrophe wrought by the hermetic closure of the country on November 5, 2017. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Thinking Sociologically about Religion and Violence: The Case of ISIS

Mark Juergensmeyer
Sociology of Religion, srx055, 30 January 2018

How do we make sense of a movement like the Islamic State, where violence and religion seem to be inextricably intertwined? Though observers sometimes accuse religion as causing the problem, and other observers think that such movements have nothing to do with it, my approach is to focus on what some scholars have called the culture of violence: the analysis of worldviews. The sociological task is to understand these worldviews in social context, to determine the social and political factors that have shaped communities that embrace distinctive worldviews. This essay focuses on the social and political development of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, explores the notion of worldview analysis in general and as applied to this movement, and determines that there are at least three different

kinds of worldviews related to groups of followers who may survive, in different ways, the eventual collapse of the territorial control of the movement.

[Back to top](#)

A “Blue” Generation and Protests in Iran

Aghil Daghighaleh , Zakia Salime
MERIP, 22 January 2018

On Friday, December 29, 2017, a protest suddenly broke out in the shrine city of Mashhad, one of Iran’s major urban centers located in the northeast of the country. Although evidence indicates that the protests were prompted by hardliners in order to undermine President Hassan Rouhani, they rapidly spread across the country and spun out of any one faction’s control. Most international mainstream media were quick to point out that these were the largest and most significant Iranian protests since the Green Movement, the youth-driven protests that emerged after the contested 2009 presidential election. The Green Movement, which was hailed as a new social movement harnessing widespread political dissatisfaction, was violently suppressed by hardliners working in tandem with formal and informal security forces. For the past two decades, Iran’s internal politics have been dominated by rivalry between hardliners (who control Iran’s non-elected political institutions and insist on the priority of religious authority) and reformists (who have won elections on platforms of democratic reform and accountability but have struggled to implement their policies). *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

The Political (or Social) Economy of Sectarianism in Lebanon

Rima Majed
Middle East Institute, 7 November 2017

If one were to walk through the streets of Beirut randomly asking passersby about their attitudes towards “sectarianism,” the responses would contain words or expressions with overwhelmingly negative connotations. Indeed, respondents would likely ascribe most of the country’s ills to sectarianism, conveying the sense that it is a *force majeure* — Lebanon’s irreversible and unavoidable fate. At the official level, the Lebanese constitution calls for abolishing political sectarianism. The speeches of political leaders — ironically, many of whom are sectarian entrepreneurs — are frequently laden with similar calls. Warnings of the threat posed by sectarianism are also common in the charters and manifestos of most political parties, including Hezbollah’s new political manifesto, issued in 2009. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

NEWS PIECES & COMMENTARY

Bahraini Dissidents Face Loss of Citizenship, Forced Exile

Fanack, 16 February 2018

Eight people were deported on 30 January and 1 February 2018 from Bahrain to Iraq's southern Shiite city of Najaf. They had been stripped of their nationality in 2012, along with 23 other Bahraini activists and human rights lawyers on charges of damaging national security. Citizenship revocation and forced exile are the main tools the authorities use to prevent peaceful protest. Revoking the citizenship of a Bahraini, even if he or she does not have dual citizenship, was made possible in 2012, after protests broke out against the authorities a year earlier. The decision was made to amend the citizenship law to authorize the revocation for individuals who engage in acts deemed 'disloyal' to the state. In July 2013, anti-terrorism laws were also amended to include provisions for the revocation of an individual's nationality. These changes came after the king accepted recommendations from the National Assembly, including limiting the recognition of human rights in the country, more extreme sentencing requirements for individuals convicted under the anti-terrorism laws and the banning of protests. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Decades-long battle continues, as Susiya braces for more Israeli demolitions

Yumna Patel

Middle East Eye, 16 February 2018

For the Palestinian villagers of Susiya, a small herding community of around 350 people tucked into the south Hebron hills, daily existence is marred by the unsettling reality that at any moment, their entire livelihood might be bulldozed to the ground. "Every day we wait; we wait for the Israeli bulldozers to come," Jihad Nawajaa, 49, and head of the local village council, told Middle East Eye, as he sat outside a tent in the centre of the village, which is composed of dozens of tents and agriculture structures sprawled across an area of around 500 dunums (50 hectares). "Can you imagine the psychological effects this has on the people, on the children, who are always wondering when the next demolition order or settler attack will come?" *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

In Saudi Arabia, Shiites Struggle for Basic Rights

Fanack, 14 February 2018

Saudi Arabia has marginalized and persecuted its Shiite population since the country's creation in 1932. The latest crisis took place during the summer of 2017, when Saudi security forces devastated the city of Awamiya in the predominantly Shiite eastern province of Qatif. The BBC's Sally Nabil, who was granted rare access to the area, described the city as a conflict zone, which mirrored images of destruction in Mosul (Iraq) and Aleppo (Syria). The seeds to the conflict were sown in 2016, when Saudi authorities announced plans to demolish Musawara, Awamiya's old quarter, and build a shopping mall in its place. The following year, on 10 May 2017, government security forces accompanied bulldozers to Musawara but were met with resistance from unknown gunmen. Clashes soon erupted into all-out fighting. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Without meaningful change Sudan will descend into chaos

Ahmed H Adam

Al-Jazeera, 14 February 2018

Sudan's political crisis has reached its worst since the coup led by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in June 1989. The collapsing economy, ongoing armed conflicts between the regime and armed movements in the Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, endemic corruption, and the power struggle within the regime have pushed the country towards a tipping point. Coupled with current popular protests over the 2018 austerity budget that are gathering momentum across Sudan, these factors create the conditions that will result in one of two scenarios in Sudan: either swift and meaningful change, or descent into chaos and disintegration. Without meaningful domestic, regional and international efforts to facilitate a credible, all-inclusive conference that leads to a fresh political transition, Sudan will be reduced to the latter. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Clashes mark anniversary of Bahrain's 2011 uprising

Ted Regencia

Al-Jazeera, 14 February 2018

Bahrain's security forces have clashed with protesters marking the seventh anniversary of the February 14 uprising. Police reportedly fired tear gas and live ammunition at the demonstrators on Wednesday, but the number of casualties is unclear, Saeed al-Shehabi, leader of Bahrain Freedom Movement, told Al Jazeera. Shehabi said protests have been reported on Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning in at least five neighbourhoods, mostly outside of the capital Manama,

including in Diraz, Sitra and Huwaidrat. "Protests will continue throughout the day today," the UK-based activist said. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Jordan's economic crisis threatens political stability

Ali Younes

Al-Jazeera, 14 February 2018

Angry at the decision to increase food prices last month, restive Jordanians are demanding the government's resignation and the dissolution of parliament. Last month, the government implemented a tax rise of between 50-100 percent on key food staples such as bread, in order to decrease its \$700m budget deficit. Jordan's debt has now reached \$40bn and its debt-to-gross-domestic-product ratio has reached a record 95 percent, up from 71 percent in 2011. The economic crunch that squeezes the country will be particularly acute this year, after Jordan's Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) allies - Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Kuwait - did not renew a five-year financial assistance programme with Amman worth \$3.6bn that ended in 2017. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

'Legitimate, non-violent': Norwegian MP nominates BDS for Nobel Peace Prize

Ali Harb

Middle East Eye, 9 February 2018

As the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement faces a series of institutional attacks to outlaw it, one Norwegian lawmaker has nominated the campaign for a Nobel Peace Prize. In a video interview with Middle East Eye, Parliament Member Bjornar Moxnes dismissed charges of anti-Semitism, saying that his nomination is aimed at the Israeli government, not the Jewish people. "The BDS movement is a legitimate, peaceful, non-violent movement trying to push the Israeli government to abide by international law, and trying to struggle for a peaceful solution in Palestine and in the Middle East," he said. Moxnes said the Red Party, which he leads, works to achieve social justice in Norway and internationally. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

“From the revolution, we learned to be united”: leaving politics behind. An interview with Mahienour el-Massry

Mahienour el-Massry and Giuseppe Acconcia

8 February 2018, openDemocracy

On the occasion of the anniversary of the eighteen days' occupation of Tahrir Square, beginning 25 January 2011, Mahienour el-Massry, lawyer and Revolutionary Socialist activist in interview. One of the best moments that ever happened to the Egyptian people. It was an uprising against the injustices of the Mubarak regime and especially against the police state of that time. Over the years, the lack of political space, and the inclusion of public space in formal politics, resulted in an apolitical environment in Egyptian society. People preached the idea of revolution but no one thought that it would actually happen during their lifetime. This is why, after the revolution when the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) assumed power, most of the initiatives by revolutionaries failed. The first elected president, who was from the Muslim Brotherhood, the only organized political group, did not win with a great majority. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

The women fighting for Syria's vanished

Anton Mukhamedov

Al-Jumhuriya, 7 February 2018

Al-Jumhuriya speaks to three women from the Families for Freedom movement about their campaign to free Syria's 200,000-plus missing detainees; a campaign they say makes the Assad regime "really angry." As well as the dead in Syria (numbering at least 500,000) and the displaced (more than 10 million), there are the disappeared. While no official data exist, credible estimates run to over 200,000 unaccounted-for detainees and abductees. Some, like the Douma Four, were vanished by armed opposition groups; others by ISIS' jihadists. The vast majority, however, were taken into the Assad regime's extensive network of lockups and dungeons, where torture, starvation, and execution are meted out as a matter of policy. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Israel kills Palestinian after month-long manhunt

Linah Alsaafin

Al-Jazeera, 6 February 2018

After a manhunt that lasted almost a month, Israeli forces have announced that they assassinated a Palestinian man suspected of being behind the killing of a Jewish settler last month. Ahmad Jarrar, 22, went into hiding after Raziel Shevah was killed in a drive-by shooting near an illegal settlement in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus on January 9. Before dawn on Tuesday, Jarrar was found by

Israeli forces, which included the Shabak intelligence and elite units, in the village of Yamoun, some nine kilometres from his hometown of Jenin. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Tunisia: selective feminism and the marginalization of women's struggles

Safa Belghith

5 February 2018, openDemocracy

#NoWomanNoFly was the hashtag that concluded 2017 in Tunisia; a year that witnessed historical women's rights reforms. The Tunisian Parliament approved a landmark law on violence against women which, unprecedentedly, included progressive provisions on domestic violence and marital rape. The president ordered the abolishment of a decades-long ban on Tunisian women marrying non-Muslim men, and called for equal inheritance laws. All of these reforms and legislations, specifically lifting the restrictions on women's marriage to non-Muslims, consolidated Tunisia's position as the leading Arab Muslim country on women's rights and gender equality. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Free in name only - Lessons from the unrest in Tunisia

Ismael Dbara

31 January 2018, Qantra

In the winter month of January, scenes of protest and violence are nothing unusual in Tunisia. The North African country has seen events like these many times in the past, even before the 2011 revolution against Ben Ali's regime. January protests took place when tensions emerged between the Tunisian trade union congress, the "Union Generale Tunisienne du Travail" (UGTT) and the government of the late Habib Bourguiba in 1978, during the bread riots of 1984, the events in Gafsa in 2008 and the fall of Ben Ali's regime in 2011. In the years following the revolution, January has continued to be a "month of rage". But although it looks as though the protests are a direct reaction to the budget law, it is becoming clear that January 2018 must be viewed in a special light. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Tunisians oppose the IMF

Ines Mahmoud

24 January 2018, openDemocracy

For the past three weeks the streets of Tunisia have been echoing screams for freedom, dignity and justice. These same calls led to the overthrow of Ben Ali's dictatorship seven years ago. Fed up with newly imposed austerity measures, the people are taking their anger to the streets to send a clear message to the government. A big national protest is now being organised for January 26. The Tunisian working class' fight against poverty, corruption and unemployment is ever more present. A new campaign under the slogan of "Fech nsteneu?" (what are we waiting for?) is going viral against the neoliberal governments' policies. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Jordan's Fragile Stability Could Be Shattered by Foundering Economy, Spillover of Regional Unrest

Fanack, 24 January 2018

Amid the turmoil engulfing many parts of the Middle East, Jordan's leaders like to portray their country as a beacon of calm and stability. On his website, King Abdullah II describes Jordan as 'a quiet house in a troubled neighbourhood'. And in some senses that is true, certainly when compared to Iraq and Syria. Jordan occupies a middle tier in global rankings of peace and stability. In the 2017 Fragile States Index, compiled by the American think tank Fund for Peace, Jordan has a score of 78.7 out of 100, putting it on an 'elevated warning' level and placing it between Colombia and India. It came in 95th in the Institute for Economics and Peace's Global Peace Index, ranking seventh in the Middle East. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Protests rock Tunisia - A winter of discontent

Houda Mzioudet

16 January 2018, Qantra

Despite general frustration over economic hardships and the unfulfilled promises of the Arab Spring's only success story, the revolutionary momentum that gripped Tunisia in 2011 has not waned seven years later. Tunisians seem intent on preserving the spirit of the revolution: bread, freedom and national dignity. Seven years since the ousting of former strongman Ben Ali, January has become the hottest month of the year in terms of angry social protests, the barometer that Tunisians, faced with the ominous challenge of a faltering economy, are using to test their young democracy. Young members of the newly-formed *Fech Nestanneu* Tunisian civil society campaign gathered on 7

January 2018 in Avenue Bourguiba, symbolic of the Tunisian social protest movements that have been rocking the Arab Spring poster child's turbulent days since 2011. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

The spark that turned into a wildfire - Protests in Iran

Ali Fathollah-Nejad

09. January 2018, Qantra

The causes of the uprising that has been rocking the Islamic Republic of Iran for over a week now are unsurprisingly both structural and contingent. Initially kicked off by the economically dispossessed youth and joined by lower sections of the middle class, students and also some pensioners, it has reached an unprecedented geographical scope with protests spanning 70 mainly smaller cities and towns in all four corners of the country. According to the authorities, 42,000 people, 90 per cent of whom are under the age of 25, have taken part, while the real number may be higher. They have been met by myriad methods of repression by the state's security apparatus, leaving over 20 people dead (again merely an official figure), 1,000 jailed and an uncounted number injured. Besides the structural factors that have been an almost constant feature of the Islamic Republic's rule, the past months and weeks have added a new level of discontent with the regime as a whole, which led me to speculate that the recent waves of protests "may only be a forerunner of more to come". *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Arab anger: Governments and Protesters Walk a Fine Line

James M. Dorsey

13 December 2017, mpcjournal

A little noticed subtext to furious protests across the Middle East and North Africa against US President Donald J. Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is simmering anger at Arab governments. The subtext demarcates a delicate balance between Arab youth frustrated with governments that are seemingly unwilling and unable to stand up for Arab rights and Arab leaders whose survival instincts persuade them to maintain failed policies. The anger is driven by a continued display of Arab inability to reverse Israeli occupation of territories occupied during the 1967 Middle East war, a readiness to overtly or covertly cooperate with Israel in the absence of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, and, even worse, reports that Gulf states were willing to support a US peace plan that failed to meet minimal Palestinian demands for an independent state. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Qatar's art of resistance: 'We do not attack or hurt, it's not in our culture'

Quentin Müller

Middle East Eye, 29 November 2017

It is hard to miss the famous portrait of Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, entitled *Glorious Tamim*, displayed on the facade of important buildings, five-star hotels and the latest sports cars on the streets of the country's capital Doha - the image is so popular, it even adorns T-shirts and flags. Ahmed bin Majed al-Maadheed, the Qatari artist who drew the portrait, found it difficult to exhibit and sell his artwork before *Glorious Tamim* turned him into a national star overnight.

Continue reading [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Tracing Global Solidarities: Radwa Ashour's "The Journey" and Histories of a World Revolution

Dina Fergani

21 November 2017, Muftah

In February 2017, African-American football player Michael Bennett decided not to participate in an all-expenses paid propaganda initiative for NFL (National Football League) players, sponsored by the Israeli government. In an interview with Democracy Now, Bennett explained his decision: "I decided not to go because, you know, doing my research on Palestine and Israel and all the things that we're going on, I've seen so many similarities between the Black Lives movement and the Palestinian movement." Bennett added that his decision was inspired by one of his heroes, the late boxer Muhammad Ali, who was a champion of Palestinian rights. The invocation of African-American-Palestinian solidarity brings to mind an era of togetherness between African-Americans and the Global South that happened in the immediate post-World War II context, which was then undermined in the 1970s by crippling economic "reforms" imposed on the developing world by international monetary institutions. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

[Egypt:] On Warraq Island, popular democracy defies secret state plans

Heba Afify

19 November 2017, Mada Masr

Since declaring its intention to vacate Nile islands, the state's strategy regarding Warraq Island has gone through several stages: from the use of violence, to negotiation, to legal persecution. In a televised June conference, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi gave orders to prioritize vacating Nile islands as part of a wide-scale state land retrieval campaign, alluding to Warraq Island in particular. It was an allusion that came to a head when security forces descended on the island in July, sparking clashes with residents. The only constant in the state's approach since June has been secrecy. Despite its attempts to vacate parts of the island, the residents still don't know what the state's announced "development plan" for their island entails and what its effect would be on their lives. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

210 Zamalek Club fans start hunger strike in Alexandria prison

26 October 2017, Mada Masr

Two hundred and ten Ultras White Knights members started a hunger strike on Thursday, one day after a military court renewed their detention for one month. They have subsequently faced abuses from prison security guards, lawyer Mohamed Hafez told Mada Masr. The detained football fans are being held in Alexandria's Hadra Prison among other Ultras members. Security guards have beaten them and cut their hair after they refused to eat food provided by the prison or their families, according to Hafez. The lawyer told Mada Masr that Hadra's security guards have threatened to transfer the detainees, some of whom have sustained injuries, to cells where the rest of prisoners are being held. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

PETITIONS AND CALLS FOR SOLIDARITY

First Freedom Flotilla literary contest: “Keys to the Future of Palestine”

Deadline: 1 March 2018

The Freedom Flotilla Coalition calls for the first international literary contest of short stories and poems related to Palestine, for the right of return and for a decent future of the Palestinian people. In particular, we are interested in stories and poems that highlight the plight of Palestinians living in Gaza, the world’s largest open air prison, and the need to end the illegal and inhumane Israeli blockade. There will be one winner selected from each participating language. Conditions: Any person who wishes can participate in the contest regardless of their nationality or residence. Each author can only present one short story or poem.

The short stories or poems should meet the following conditions:

- Not having been published before anywhere, including on the internet.
 - Not having received any prize in any other contest.
 - One original copy of each story or poem will be submitted. This will be written using the Arial font (12 pt. Size) with normal margins (2.5 cm top and bottom of page and 3 left and right) as in Word default settings. The length of the story or poem will not exceed five (5) pages.
 - The spacing between lines should be 1.5
 - The short stories or poems in English should be sent by email to this address <mediawbg@gmail.com> clearly indicating in the subject: LITERARY CONTEST. The story or poem should be attached in a file named with the title of the text and another file containing only the following information: Title, author’s full name and nationality, author’s address, telephone number and email. The subject should be “Keys to the Future of Palestine” (and related to Palestine, the Nakba, refugees, expulsion, loss of property, etc.) written in either English or Spanish.
- Final date for submission of short stories is midnight on March 1, 2018.

The jury for each language will be composed of persons related to the literary and cultural world. Their decision will be final. No jury member can participate in this contest.

The jury for each language will decide on a winner and a runner up. Winning entries will be announced in the media, published on the FFC websites and other noteworthy places, and will be translated into various languages. Runners up and special mentions will be published on our different campaigns’ language-specific websites. The decisions will be communicated to the selected authors by email or phone call.

The jury’s decisions will be announced on Land Day, March 30, 2018.

Authors retain copyright of the text they submit but cede to the FFC and its member campaigns the right to publish their texts, online and in any other medium, without charge.

Participation in the contest means acceptance of all and each of its conditions and the commitment to comply by them. The interpretation of these conditions as well as any other question related to the contest, will be decided by the jury.

This literary contest is part of the preparation for the Freedom Flotilla's plans to sail again in 2018, for Freedom of Movement and a Decent Future for Palestine.

Continue reading [here](#)

[Back to top](#)