



SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND POPULAR MOBILISATION IN THE MENA

Digest of Current Publications and Events

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CALL FOR PAPERS & CONFERENCES

Contributions for an Edited Book on “Egypt in Focus: Creativity in Adversarial Contexts”

Deadline: August 1st, 2019

Guest Editors:

Nevine El Nossery (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Shereen Abouelnaga (Cairo University)

The current socio-political situation in Egypt raises fundamental questions about the state of the arts and the future of literature and culture in the country. While the first years after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution witnessed the emergence and flourishing of new literary and artistic expressions (auto-fictional blogs, music festivals, protest songs, slam poetry, documentaries, photographs, TV talk shows, graphic novels and comics), today, culture and cultural production are facing an unprecedented enforced silence. And where that silence is pierced through, a striking sense of disillusionment and uncertainty marks the sensibilities of significant aesthetic creativity. This special volume examines the complex paradoxical predicament of a seemingly irrepressible expressive context under the thralls of an imposed gloomy hush. It also addresses how individuals and institutions navigate the inflicted muteness through different strategies. For artists, writers, and intellectuals, the revolution is an unfinished ongoing project that still fuels their art and praxis. Submissions are invited on topics that include but are not limited to:

- The rise or sharp growth of certain expressive genres (the dystopian novel and its varieties, popular/colloquial poetry, short films, testimonials and documentary works)
- New modes of self-expression and subjectivity.
- The conspicuous surge in creative writing courses (and the economics of access to them).
- Publishing, circulation, and censorship.
- Social media and agency.
- The literary text: a site of social activism or individual expression?
- The rise of the individual in the contemporary Egyptian novel.
- The city: a friend or foe?
- Women reading history and oral history.
- Women's poetry and the image of the Father.
- The discourse of State-run media: whitewashing or pink-washing?
- Governmental sponsorship of cultural activities.
- Transnational circulation of translation and international recognition vs. national obscurantism.
- Literary scholarship and journalistic commentary after the Revolution.

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Social Protests and Biographical Implications, International Sociological Association, Forum of Sociology

July 14-18, 2020

Porto Alegre, Brazil

Deadline: September 9th, 2019

In the last decade, countries in the Global North as well as the Global South have witnessed protests that are not rooted in organised movements but have fostered political changes in radical ways. These include the #RejectSerzh demonstrations in 2018 exposing corruption of the back-then Armenian government or the uprising in 2010/11 in Tunisia that inspired the so-called Arab Spring in the Mashriq and Maghrib. Yet, some also faded time or were instrumentalized by the remaining governments like the 2013 Gezi protests in Turkey. Meanwhile, European countries have hosted populist or far-right demonstrations with similar patterns. Furthermore, women marches objected the populist government's abortion bill in Poland, problematised Femicides in Argentina and stood for lifting of the temple ban in India. The year 2018 has seen a rise in demonstrations with social demands, such as les gilets jaunes or the youth strikes on climate change leading to a global collectivization of pupils. In all these examples, people of various biographical and social backgrounds stand up together and protest for change. Such protests are influenced by individual life stories and can also have unforeseen impacts on an individual's biography.

In terms of biographical perspectives, the panel aims to discuss the role of identity building processes, collectivity perceptions and motivations in organising and partaking in protests. The session regards the above mentioned and further demonstrations as social spaces of collectivization and processes formed by the participants themselves. It questions the impacts of participation and collective understanding on the biographical project.

More information [here](#)

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The question of *agency* in African Studies

International Doctoral Workshop, University of Naples "l'Orientale" Scuola di Procida per l'Alta Formazione – Conservatorio delle Orfane Procida (Naples)

3-5 October 2019

Deadline: May 12th, 2019

Agency is generally defined as the ability to act according to one's own desired goals. In this sense, agency is more than pure observable action as it also implies the meaning, motivation and purpose that people bring to their activities. Social sciences have long debated the relationship between human agency and social structures. Stances range from the neo-liberal view, according to which free and independent actors act for the greatest individual benefit, to a more deterministic one arguing that agency should be conceived as embedded

within society, and constrained by the culture, society, politics and economy of the day or, in other words, by the surrounding power structure.

Beyond the agency-structure divide, the 'agency debate' has also involved a variety of other issues: the definition of transformative agency or the identification of the social group better placed to be the engine of change or, in other words, to 'make history' ranging from elitist or statist views to the bottom-up approaches of subaltern studies, passing by the 'modernising role' attributed to the middle class or the vanguard role of the industrial proletariat.

In Africa, since the start of the decolonisation processes in the 1950s, intellectuals have been concerned with the necessity to conceptualise political agency and the contribution of Africans to history, along with their struggles to achieve emancipation. The debate on agency has been recently revamped on the political and intellectual agendas of the African continent, following the mass popular upsurge in North Africa, despite - or maybe because - of the counter-revolutions or of the (perceived?) failure to significantly transform their respective political systems.

The International Doctoral Workshop The question of agency in African Studies aims at tackling the 'agency debate' through different disciplinary approaches in social sciences and humanities. In particular, we aim at investigating three sets of interrelated questions: What is transformative agency? Who are the transformative agents? How do they act?

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5th Annual European Symposium on Turkey: The Concept of Culture and its Politicization in Turkey and the Diaspora

November 29-30, 2019

Deadline for submissions: June 12, 2019

Even though in its core the emergence of 'Modern Turkey' could be considered a cultural revolution, some discourses on culture as well as fundamental transformations in the field of culture can arguably be traced back to the late Ottoman period. This symposium inquires the ways in which the concept of culture and the idea of its homogeneity featured in late Ottoman and Turkish discourses. It seeks to unearth the methods culture was and is used as a tool for implementing and legitimizing a political project. Yet, the imposition of, for example, the humanist cultural project in the 1930s and 40s never was all-encompassing nor uncontested by members of the multiethnic and -religious society. Even in today's Turkey in which the implementation of a new political regime has had massive repercussions for the functioning of institutions and the relationship between state and

society, the state still failed to gain an all-inclusive control in cultural realm and “pockets of resistance” continue to exist.

Culture is understood as a highly contested resource, yet, something which is continuously in process and hence not fixed. Culture serves as the field for affirming hegemonic discourse but also as a space to create and perform resistance strategies. For that, culture is not an exclusive term which only applies to high culture, it also includes all sorts of mundane and everyday practices, performances and expressions.

The meeting will investigate and discuss the various forms of “cultural engineering” through history, the different discourses on culture and the numerous practices of articulating, performing and producing culture as well as cultural identities/resources – be it in line with or against the cultural policy of the state. Turkey’s official cultural policies aimed at Turkish citizens living abroad will also be a focus of the symposium.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- Literature, Theatre, Cinema, Visual Arts, Music
- Emerging “traditional” arts and the folklorization of tradition
- Culture and civil society
- Minority cultures / Minoritization of cultures
- Subcultures
- Culture and heritage
- Dichotomies between nature/culture, urban/provincial cultures, high/low culture
- Culture and memory
- Culture and politics / Culturalization of politics
- Transnational cultures
- Gender and culture

We welcome contributions from all disciplines of the humanities and social sciences (both quantitative and qualitative) and encourage interdisciplinary and comparative work in collaborative form.

Abstract submission:

Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words along with a brief academic CV. Abstracts should include a research question and information about data/empirical material, methodology and expected/preliminary findings. Selected papers will be published in a special issue of a peer reviewed journal.

The language of the symposium is English.

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International Forum: "Today's Islamic Feminisms: National and Transnational Perspectives"

Fez (Morocco), 7-9 June 2019

Modern Islamic feminisms seek equality in Muslim family laws and revisit the fiqh-based background of these laws from within Islam. National, transnational, individual-base, and network-based, these feminisms constitute a genuine social movement and have resulted in knowledge-production and policy-based analyses. The Forum will reflect on today's overall status of Islamic feminism.

For more information: carolinausa.keyt82@gmail.com

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Call for Papers: Post-sectarian politics? The transformation of sectarian political identities in the Middle East

University of Cambridge, January 24th, 2020

Deadline for abstracts: July 15th, 2019

The struggle to render legible episodes of violence and political crises in the Middle East over recent years has enlarged interest in the Sunni-Shi'a divide and the politics of sectarianism. Scholars have made important contributions to the critique of mainstream sectarianism by challenging essentialist characterizations of Muslims, drawing attention to the contingency of sectarian identities and deliberately scrutinizing specific ethno-religious identities rather than uniformly apply the sectarian lens. That the sectarian paradigm obscures complex local dynamics has gained traction, but there remains little understanding of the drivers and types of resistance to sectarianization that materialize at the grassroots level and within state politics. Specifically, how do diverse actors challenge sectarian politics and attending assumptions through everyday interactions, civil society and party politics? To what extent do sectarian narratives, rituals and symbols evolve, adapt and become re-appropriated during the process? Does post-sectarianism offer a way out of the 'intractability' of today's political gridlock and violence?

It may be premature to sound the death knell on sectarian politics, but it is important to think seriously about how ideas about identity, nationhood, territorial space and solidarity are being recast in the Middle East, particularly in light of post-ISIS shifting landscapes and political discourses. Even as we begin to think about post-sectarian politics, it seems likely that rather than evaporate completely, sectarian identities take on new meanings, modes of expression and political salience. One alternative explanatory framework to (re)enter the political imagination has centred on nationalism, with terms such as Muslim or Sunni Islamic nationalism emerging to rationalize the political system in Turkey, the struggle for 'post-sectarian' nationalism in Iraq or Shi'a nationalism in Iran—such national iterations each pose a distinct relationship to sectarianism. There are also signs that Islamist parties that politicize sectarian orthodoxy are being challenged by secular or 'other' conservative parties tired of the corrosive misuse of Islam and piety. In what ways do such dynamics

constitute resistance to sectarian mobilisation or, alternatively, serve as a different form of hybrid religio-political validation?

The objective of this workshop is to bring together scholars and specialists to offer comparative perspectives on the evolution of sectarian politics, including modes of resistance and re-signification in the Middle East and, through comparative analysis, in other parts of the Muslim world. We aim to produce a special journal issue of scholarly research developed from papers presented at the workshop as well as a short podcast series.

Specifically,

- What hybrid and fluid forms does resistance to sectarian elite politics take? What kinds of political vernacular, politics of visibility and symbolism are adopted? And what are the ideological repercussions of a more non-sectarian role for religion in politics?
- How do variants of nationalism interact with processes of 'sectarianization'?
- In what ways is resistance to sectarianism a response to mass violence? Do such responses re-enact or validate violence in different ways?
- Is sectarianism giving way to cross-sect alliances and compromise in some contexts and what does this imply for reimagined national or transnational identities?
- To what extent does or can post-sectarianism serve as a democratic movement?
- How can we approach the gender dimension of resistance to hegemonic sectarian narratives?
- In what ways do post-sectarian actors construct discourses that draw upon victimhood and alienation or alternatively, power and the divine?
- How can we better understand actors who earnestly adhere to a sectarian self-identity and sense of religious belonging?
- Are forms of resistance and alternative allegiances largely a product of state-based shifts or are there also cross-border forces at play?

Organizing committee:

Dr Glen Rangwala, University of Cambridge
Dr. Bassel F. Salloukh, Lebanese American University, Beirut
Dr Thomas Brandt Fibiger, Aarhus University
Dr Toby Matthiessen, University of Oxford
Dr Elizabeth Monier, University of Cambridge
Dr Burcu Özçelik, University of Cambridge

Abstracts should not exceed 300 words. Please also include a short biography, including institutional affiliation, main publications, and the name and email address of one academic referee.

More information [here](#)

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TALKS & OTHER EVENTS

Approaching Creative Expression after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution: Challenges and Possibilities for Current Scholarship

Symposium and Working Group on Saturday 8 June

8 June 2019 - 10.30 a.m. - 8 June 2019 - 6.00 p.m.

New Seminar Room, St John's College, Oxford

Accounts of Egyptian creative expression written during and immediately after the 2011 revolution primarily captured the profound senses of euphoria, optimism, awe, and novelty that marked this particular extraordinary moment. As these positive sentiments quickly turned into political exhaustion and depression, the need to situate emerging creative expression not only in a current revolutionary moment but also in relation to broader historical, cultural, and global conditions became more pressing. The emotional intensity of the last decade and the rapidity of its changing realities pose particular challenges for scholarship of/on the present, however. To give only a few examples, Egyptian artists today may be uninterested in discussing politics or the events of the last decade, and many have left Egypt. Some artists and scholars contend that the insistence to analyse contemporary Arab art in relation to the “revolutionary” or “resistant” is a foreign (especially Western) framework imposed from outside, amounting to a “neoliberal orientalism” (Elnozahy 2018; El Zein 2016). There has likewise been some debate as to whether the revolution even began in 2011 or if it has indeed ended, with some preferring to situate it in a larger history of revolt dating back to the 19th century that is still ongoing (Fahmy 2015). Complicating the matter further are particular methodological issues. There remains a dearth of Arabic-language analysis of the contemporary creative arts, and especially those produced and disseminated outside state and other official channels, resulting in part from what Khaled Fahmy has called Egypt’s “crisis in the humanities” (2017). Scholarship is thus often dominated by that produced in/through the Western academy and not by those entrenched in the daily realities of its production and dissemination, which poses certain methodological and analytical limitations (El Khouni, Guessoumi, and Omri 2016).

In sum, forthcoming publications face particular challenges in approaching the contemporary creative arts. The events of the last decade likewise renew questions regarding the role of scholarship in highly politicized environments, and of the Western academy in limiting the discourse to certain types of analysis, methodologies, and critique. This symposium broadly asks: How can scholars best approach contemporary creative expression in Egypt in light of these issues, and especially now that some of the previous utopian “dust” of the Egyptian revolution has settled?

This one-day interdisciplinary symposium serves as a starting point for a sustained working group that fosters critical discussion on approaching creative expression in contemporary Egypt. It includes scholars from a variety of disciplines who are currently working on substantial (book-length) publications that focus on creative expression in Egypt during the last decade. It seeks to foster long-term engagement through: (1) forming a network for exchanging publication drafts and sharing resources/sources, and (2) serving as a starting point for a larger multi-day event to be held at Oxford

in 2020 that facilitates dialogue and collaboration among scholars, artists, activists, and cultural organizers working in the region.

The event is free and open to the public. Lunch and coffee/refreshments will be served.

Speakers

Dr. Mona Abaza, American University in Cairo

Dr. Yakein Abdelmagid, University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Walter Armbrust, University of Oxford

Dr. Nesreen Hussein, Middlesex University

Dr. Yasmin Moll, University of Michigan

Dr. Laudan Nooshin, City, University of London

Dr. Mohamed-Salah Omri, University of Oxford

Dr. Nicola Pratt, University of Warwick

Dr. Dina Rezk, University of Reading

Dr. Ali Souleman, University of Oxford

Dr. Darci Sprengel, University of Oxford

More information [here](#)

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Lebanon, Syria and Palestine: Colonial Histories between a Durable Presence and Present

Lecture Room A, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, NIG
Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Vienna, 20 May 2019, 5 - 7 pm

The panel discussion engages with questions on how and why colonial histories matter in the Middle East (hereafter 'West Asia') today? Posed by anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler, these questions serve as a call for finding alternative analytical and methodological concepts to capture the durable colonial marks that exist in our presence/present. Following Stoler's critique of scholars who

romanticise traces of this violent past, the panel will present new research and tools of investigation that engage deep colonial fault lines in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine today.

Speakers:

Helene Kazan, Vera List Center Fellow on Art and Politics, New School, New York

Adriana Qubaia-Ova, Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Gender Studies, Central European University

Mette Edith Lundsryd Stendevad Ph.D. interdisciplinary candidate in Sociology and History at the School of Media, Communication and Sociology, University of Leicester

Concept and Moderation:

Klaudia Rottenschlager (Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna),

Noura Salah Adeen (Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences)

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RECENT & FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Enlightenment on the Eve of Revolution: The Egyptian and Syrian Debates

Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab

Columbia University Press, May 2019

During the two decades that preceded the 2011 revolutions in Egypt and Syria, animated debates took place in Cairo and Damascus on political and social goals for the future. Egyptian and Syrian intellectuals argued over the meaning of *tanwir*, Arabic for “enlightenment,” and its significance for contemporary politics. They took up questions of human dignity, liberty, reason, tolerance, civil society, democracy, and violence. In *Enlightenment on the Eve of Revolution*, Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab offers a groundbreaking analysis of the *tanwir* debates and their import for the 2011 uprisings.

Kassab locates these debates in their local context as well as in broader contemporary political and intellectual Arab history. She argues that the enlightenment they advocated was a form of political humanism that demanded the right of free and public use of reason. By calling for the restoration of human dignity and seeking a moral compass in the wake of the destruction wrought by brutal regimes, they understood *tanwir* as a humanist ideal. Kassab connects their debates to the Arab uprisings, arguing that their demands bear a striking resemblance to what was voiced on the streets of Egypt and Syria in 2011. *Enlightenment on the Eve of Revolution* is the first book to document

these debates for the Anglophone audience and to analyze their importance for contemporary Egyptian and Syrian intellectual life and politics.

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JOURNAL ARTICLES & OTHER ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

Gaza 2014 and Mizrahi Feminism

Smadar Lavie

Political and Legal Anthropology Review, 2019

What is the relationship between Mizrahi feminism and Israeli ultranationalism? What is the relevance of gender justice activism to Operation Protective Edge (the 2014 Gaza War) and Israel's foreign policy? Mizrahi protests dissipate and disappear when the Israel-Palestine conflict dominates the headlines. This essay connects intra-Jewish racial and gendered dynamics to the 2014 Gaza War. It tracks sequences that began with social protest and ended with elections that bolstered Israel's political right wing. In between came bloodletting between the Israeli Defense Forces, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel's neighboring Arab states. The 2014 Gaza War was a watershed not only for the Israel-Palestine conflict; under the smokescreen of war, Israel accelerated neoliberal economic reforms. The first victims of this restructuring were Mizrahi single mothers. Palestinians, however, would pay the highest price for Israel's Mizrahi-Ashkenazi rift. [Israel-Palestine, Gaza, Mizrahi feminism, neoliberalism, social movements]

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Challenging Reified Masculinities: Men as Survivors of Politically Motivated Sexual Assault in Egypt

Mariz Tadros

Journal of Middle East Women's Studies (2016) 12 (3): 323-342.

This article examines incidents of politically motivated sexual violence against men in protest spaces at a distinct juncture in Egypt's history, after the downfall of President Hosni Mubarak (2011–13). The article examines the reified conceptions of masculinities in relation to gender-based violence that contribute to the omission of men's experiences of sexual assault in protest spaces. An analysis of such reifications, their dynamics, and implications is critically important for two subfields: the study of masculinities in the Middle East and the study of men and gender-based violence on conflict. The article draws on empirical data comprising twelve in-depth life histories with men who belong to vigilante groups that sought to rescue women from sexual assault in protest spaces and interviews with women and men who were sexually assaulted during protests. This is corroborated with primary data made available through the work of psychologists and secondary literature.

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Precarious Teachers Strike for Public Education in Morocco

Zakia Salime

May 2nd, 2019

MERIP

Over the past three years, striking and demonstrating teachers have mobilized against their new precarious status as contract-labor under government privatization reforms implemented in 2016. The teachers' struggle is bound up in the broader fight by Moroccan unions against the government's neoliberal reforms targeting the public sector as a whole. Whether these protests will renew the momentum of the 2011 February 20 movement will depend upon the government's response and the ability of the protesters to sustain and broaden the scope of their mobilization.

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PETITIONS

Letter to Israel Studies Journal: Concerns regarding the "Word Crimes" special issue

To the editorial board of the Israel Studies Journal: Israel Studies is a much respected scholarly journal which is affiliated to and sponsored by the Association for Israel Studies (AIS). Since its establishment in 1996, Israel Studies has published numerous important contributions from hundreds of scholars. The journal has done much to advance knowledge, understanding, and discussion of contemporary Israel. It has long established its reputation for publishing excellent scholarship in the field. For this reason, we were dismayed by the journal's last special issue (volume 24, no. 2), which fell far short of standards expected of academic journals. As scholars involved in Israel Studies through teaching, research, and professional affiliation, we are writing to voice our concerns about this issue, which we believe has done serious damage to the reputation of the journal, and could reflect badly on the field.

Sign the petition [here](#) and see signatories [here](#).

NEWS PIECES & COMMENTARY

CIA warns Khashoggi associates about threats from Saudi Arabia

Al Jazeera

May 9th, 2019

The [CIA](#) and foreign security services have warned friends and colleagues of slain Saudi journalist [Jamal Khashoggi](#) that their continuation of pro-democracy work has made them targets of potential retaliation from [Saudi Arabia](#).

Democracy advocates Iyad el-Baghdadi in Oslo, Norway, Omar Abdulaziz of Montreal, Canada, and a person in the [United States](#) who asked not to be named were working closely with Khashoggi on politically sensitive media and [human rights](#) projects at the time of his killing, US publication TIME [reported](#) on Thursday.

The three advocates have received security briefings in recent weeks, warning them of a possible threat from Saudi Arabia, the report said.

El-Baghdadi - a Palestinian human rights campaigner and writer who won prominence during the 2011 [Arab uprisings](#) and has written critically of Saudi Crown Prince [Mohammed bin Salman](#) (MBS) - said Norwegian security services took him to a secure location on April 25 and told him of the possible threat.

"Once I was there and settled down, they told me that ... they have received a tip from a partner intelligence agency indicating that I've been the target of a threat," he told Reuters News Agency.

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Life returns to normal in Gaza, but wounds are still open

Maram Humaid

Al Jazeera

May 9th, 2019

Gaza City – Normal life has trickled back onto Gaza's streets after a three-day escalation in the besieged enclave last week that saw at least 25 Palestinians and four Israelis killed.

Following a ceasefire agreement between Gaza and Israel, stores have reopened, students have headed back to schools, and people have resumed work.

The truce, mediated by Egypt and the United Nations, went into effect early on Monday morning after Israel pounded the Gaza Strip with air raids, artillery and gunboat shooting as armed factions in Gaza fired hundreds of rockets at towns and settlements in southern Israel.

Yet, while a shaky calm has returned to Gaza, those who lost loved ones in the recent Israeli air raids are in mourning, their lives changed forever. Several members of three families, including a pregnant woman, were killed during the escalation.

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Back to square one: Voters remain bitterly divided over re-run of Istanbul vote

By Omer Faruk Gorcin
Middle East Eye
May 9th, 2019

Turkey has found itself in an election race again, after the Supreme Election Board (YSK) cancelled the results of the 31 March mayoral vote in Istanbul, the country's most populated city.

The same candidates will compete in the re-run on 23 June, but the new vote will be held in a markedly different atmosphere.

The newest face of Turkey's oldest political party, Republican People's Party (CHP) candidate Ekrem Imamoglu, will again take on Binali Yildirim, a former prime minister and ex-speaker of parliament, who was also one of the founders of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

More than 8.8 million out of 10.6 million eligible voters took part in the Istanbul election, and despite 8.5 million valid votes, the difference between the two candidates, after several appeals by the AKP, was just 13,000 votes.

In its ruling on Monday, the Supreme Election Board cited irregularities in the appointment of polling station officials for its decision to re-run the vote.

The AKP said the fact that individuals who were not public servants had been appointed to the polling stations amounted to organised crime.

As President Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged AKP party members to redouble their efforts in the new campaign, irate Imamoglu supporters held protests in Istanbul for three consecutive nights.

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'I was free, even though I was in prison' Hesham Gaafar: A journalist's story of detention

Mada Masr

May 5th, 2019

On March 26, after over 42 months in remand detention, journalist and researcher Hesham Gaafar was finally released from prison.

He spent nearly three and a half years behind bars without ever being convicted of a crime. His story is just one among many in Egypt, which has become the third worst jailer of journalists in the world, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. Yet, even by Egyptian standards, the conditions of his imprisonment were particularly grueling.

For the duration of his detention, he was held in solitary confinement and not allowed visitors. Prison authorities long refused him medical care for dysplasia in his optic nerve and he nearly lost his eyesight; he also developed a malignant tumor in his prostate. His health continued to deteriorate as he remained in prison well beyond the two-year limit for remand detention under Egypt's Penal Code.

The harsh circumstances of Gaafar's case prompted the Arab Network for Human Rights to file a complaint accusing the State Security Prosecution's attorney general of unlawful detention and attempted murder.

Yet, Gaafar says his spirit was never broken. "Freedom is subjective, something independent of your actual circumstances," Gaafar tells Mada Masr. "If you feel free, even while you are confined in prison, then you are free. The chains that bind you are not just physical. In fact, physical chains are easier to break than self-imposed ones. As long as you feel free, then you are free."

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POSITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Call for Submissions: Syrian Studies Association Prizes for Outstanding Book and Article on Syria

Deadline: July 15th, 2019

In order to promote and highlight excellence in research, the Syrian Studies Association awards annual prizes for the best writing on Bilad al-Sham until 1918 and on Syria in the period following.

In 2019, the SSA seeks submissions for the most outstanding book published between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019, and the most outstanding article or book chapter published between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019.

In order to be considered for the prize, candidates must join the association. Information about the Syrian Studies Association is available at the following website: <http://www.ou.edu/ssa/index.html>

Submissions in languages other than English are welcomed.

Articles should be sent electronically. Books can be sent either electronically or in hard copy.

The deadline for submissions is July 15, 2019. All submissions should be sent to Paul M. Cobb, Chair of the Prize Committee, at the following address: pmcobb AT upenn.edu

Winners will be announced at the SSA annual meeting held in conjunction with the Middle East Studies Association in November 2019. Inquiries should be directed to Paul M. Cobb.

More information and application [here](#)

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Six Postdoctoral and One PhD Positions, Project: “Thinking through Translocal Entanglements: Perspectives from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East” (2020-2024) at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin

Deadline: June 2nd, 2019

Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin, Germany, is a publicly-funded research centre for interdisciplinary research on the history, societies and cultures of Asia, Africa and the Middle East and their interconnections among one another and with Europe. The centre currently employs about 30 research fellows, the majority of them historians, scholars of Islam, and anthropologists, from a variety of countries.

Within its new research programme „Thinking through Translocal Entanglements: Perspectives from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East” (2020-2024), ZMO announces the opening of six research positions for PhD holders who will be expected to reside in Berlin. They should situate their work within the up-coming research programme of ZMO (<https://www.zmo.de/forschung/ResearchProgramme2020-24.pdf>) and be prepared to pursue individual projects in addition to contributing actively to the overall programme of the Centre. Typical projects are to last between three and a maximum of five years.

In addition to the disciplines already represented at ZMO, we encourage specialists from Political Science, Sociology, Cultural Geography, and Economic History/Economic Anthropology to apply.

We are also seeking to employ one PhD candidate on a part-time basis (65%). The position will be tenable for four years subject to satisfactory progress in the first year. Candidates should indicate their envisaged advisor at a German university (preferably Berlin and surroundings). Candidates who are neither native German nor English speakers will need to provide proof of proficiency in English (usually TOEFL 100 or IELTS 7,0, or an equivalent test).

Applications including a CV, copies of relevant degrees and a project outline (max. 5 pages) in which the connection to the research programme and one particular research unit as well as possible engagement with knowledge transfer is specified should be sent by 2 June to Dr. Silke Nagel, zmo@zmo.de. Remuneration will be according to Tarif des öffentlichen Dienstes (TvöD), grade 13 (<http://oeffentlicher-dienst.info/tvoed/bund/>).

For further information on ZMO and its programme see www.zmo.de or contact Dr. Nagel at zmo@zmo.de.

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University Lectureship International Relations

Deadline: May 12th, 2019

The Faculty of Humanities, Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) and MA Program International Relations

Key responsibilities

Teaching BA- and MA-level courses related to world politics and political economy with a focus on the Middle East or Asia in the MA program International Relations (Leiden), but also in the BA programs Middle East Studies (Leiden) or International Studies (The Hague);

Supervising theses in the MA program International Relations and the BA programs.

Selection criteria

A doctorate in International Relations with a focus on the Middle East or Asia;

Experience in teaching undergraduate and graduate students, and supervising theses, including the ability to integrate an Area Studies/Humanities approach to IR;

Knowledge of Arabic or other relevant languages;

Proficiency in English.

More information and application [here](#)

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PhD Studentship in the Project “Creating an Alternative Umma: Clerical Authority and Religio-Political Mobilisation in Transnational Twelver Shiism”, University of Birmingham

Deadline: June 3rd, 2019

This interdisciplinary project investigates the transformation of Shii Islam in the Middle East and Europe since the 1950s. The PhD student will work on the use of new media such as global satellite channels, based in the Middle East and in Europe, to articulate Shii communal identities in the public arena since 2003. Fluency in Arabic is required and a background in the relevant field of research with knowledge of Persian desirable.

More information and application [here](#)

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