

JOURNAL OF MIDDLE EASTERN POLITICS AND POLICY

A HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL STUDENT PUBLICATION



GENDER, IDENTITY, AND MINORITY RIGHTS

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Mary Hazboun. I Wish I Was a Bird.
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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Camilla Gray
and
Josephine
Koury

We are pleased to present the tenth edition of the Harvard Kennedy School Journal of Middle Eastern Politics and Policy (JMEPP). JMEPP seeks to provide advanced analyses on issues of policy relevant to the Middle East and North Africa. The theme of the 2023 Spring edition – Gender, Identity, and Minority Rights – was conceived following the tragic death of Mahsa Jina Amini, an incident that ignited widespread protests throughout Iran, rallying under the powerful motto of "Women, Life, Freedom."

As our team curated the interviews, book reviews, and articles found within this report, we sought to visually illustrate the theme of the issue. This led us to Chicago-based Palestinian artist, Mary Hazboun, whose body of work, "The Art of Weeping" explores the process of grief and the somatic healing of bodies through drawing. Hazboun articulates that her work "highlights the nuanced traumas of women and their resistance against different forms of oppression manifested in the military-industrial complex, patriarchal societies, and forced migrations." Her piece, "I Wish I Was a Bird" can be found on the cover of this edition and are thankful to Mary Hazboun for loaning us this work.

Our team worked hard to include a variety of writing mediums in this edition, including interviews, book reviews, and analyses from across the region. Ambassador Edward Djerejian begins by addressing the evolving dynamics of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations from the 1990s to the present. He underscores the necessity of astute, strategic thinking in the United States' foreign policy vis-à-vis the Middle East, outlines the challenges brought forth by the incumbent Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority, and presents insight on the persistent crises in Lebanon. He particularly stresses the salience of constitutional reforms and the cessation of sectarian politics. Lex Takkenberg, senior advisor with the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD), expounds on the contin-

uous displacement and maltreatment of Palestinians, terming the predicament as an enduring Nakba. He critiques the inability of international law to administer justice in Palestine, citing the geopolitical interests of Western nations as a significant impediment, advocating for more novel approaches to actualize justice through international solidarity movements, legal channels, and internal transformation within Israel. Meanwhile, Youssef Chahed, the Tunisian Prime Minister, discusses the geopolitical importance of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in light of the Ukrainian conflict. He addresses the increasing influence of China and Russia in the MENA sphere, the shifting alliances, and their potential impacts on regional stability, security, and identity.

In a book review, Zara Lal appraises Maya Mikdashi's "Sextarianism: Sovereignty, Secularism, and the State in Lebanon," emphasizing the piece's investigation into the confluence of sex, sexuality, and sect in shaping legal and bureaucratic systems in Lebanon. This interplay influences aspects of citizenship, inheritance, marriage, and identity. Lal notes Mikdashi's adept portrayal of the intimate association between state secularism, evangelical secularism, and sectarian governmental categories, accomplished through a blend of anecdotal, archival, ethnographic, and historical narratives.. Nicole Plante offers us a critique of J. Andrew Bush's book, "Between Muslims: Religious Difference in Iraqi Kurdistan," based on a three-year ethnographic study. She explicates how some Muslims in Iraqi Kurdistan diverge from traditional piety, yet sustain their Islamic orientation through everyday relationships, evidenced by individual experiences and poetry. Contributors Pouya Alimaghani and Ciara Moezidis observe how the Iranian protests under the banner "women, life, freedom" have galvanized a variety of marginalized groups, including Baha'is, Kurds, Baloch, and the LGBTQ+ community, each expressing their unique grievances against the government.

Yossef Ben-Meir articulates the role of interfaith collaboration and sustainable development initiatives in Morocco, paying particular attention to the High Atlas Foundation's efforts to establish tree nurseries on Moroccan Jewish community-owned land near tzaddikim burial sites.

Pasqualina Eckerström examines how Iranian black metal artists, despite facing persecution from the Islamic Republic, use their music to preserve and celebrate their ancient Zoroastrian and pre-Islamic heritage, defy oppressive social norms, and express their resistance to the regime's attempts to control and eradicate these cultural narratives. In a subsequent analysis, Tal Eitan examines the challenges of citizenship education in East Jerusalem. Eitan discusses the unique legal status of Palestinian residents as non-citizens and the ways in which this creates gaps in academic scholarship. The lack of political equality, Eitan argues, culminates in textbooks that neglect Palestinian identity and complicate history curriculum teaching.

Anniesa Hussain and Dana Kamour go on to assert that women's rights have garnered increased recognition as human rights thanks to the lobbying efforts of transnational feminist networks like Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLURL). As put forth by Hussain and Kamour, such efforts have led to the integration of gender equality into global discourse and a concerted fight against discriminatory practices. Lottie Kissick-Jones' research dissects the multiple forms of settler colonial violence in Israel, focusing on the interaction between physical violence against Palestinian homes, indirect forms of violence impacting male bodies and gender roles, and inter-communal violence. This investigation reveals the disruption of Palestinian masculinity and its subsequent implications for social support systems and identity within a settler colonial context. In an article by Mathew Jones, Jones illuminates how LGBTQ+ civil society organizations in North Africa, particularly in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, confront diverse levels of government restrictions. Jones provides a comparative analysis, highlighting Tunisia's legal recognition, Algeria's clandestine operations, and Morocco's outright denial of association sta-

tus. To Jones, this emphasizes the challenges and resilience of LGBTQ+ activism in the region. Sumaya Malas takes a critical view at the life and impact of Sheikha Munira Al-Qubaysi, a key figure in an Islamic revivalist movement in authoritarian Syria. Malas underscores Al-Qubaysi's pioneering work in women's empowerment, the establishment of female religious authority, and the shaping of Syrian society through religious education. Sima Samar and Samridhi Vij propose a multifaceted international strategy to confront Afghanistan's humanitarian and human rights crises in the aftermath of the Taliban takeover. They underline the necessity for targeted sanctions on Taliban leadership, sustainable aid distribution prioritizing women and vulnerable groups, grassroots activism, and accountability for human rights violations. They also advocate for leveraging digital technologies and local resources to ensure aid directly supports Afghans without inadvertently strengthening the Taliban. Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda, renowned for his initiatives in supporting displaced people and promoting interfaith dialogue in Iraq, narrates the historical and contemporary struggles of Christians in Iraq, inclusive of instances of violence, discrimination, and inadequate representation. Concurrently, he emphasizes the Church's integral role in fostering a resilient community through education, healthcare, and advocacy. Lastly, to comprehend the influence of Muqtada al-Sadr, an Iraqi Shi'a cleric and political leader, Ryan Zoellner analyzes al-Sadr's legitimacy through the lens of traditional, legal, and charismatic authority, providing a nuanced understanding of his standing within the complex socio-political dynamics of Iraq.

INTERVIEW WITH AMBASSADOR EDWARD DJERJIAN

Christian Allard and Nick Vargish

Ambassador Edward Djerejian has served as an important thought leader for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. Both as Ambassador to Syria and Israel and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs in the 1990s, Ambassador Djerejian was a vital participant in the Arab-Israeli peace process and was also deeply involved with the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. He also presented a coherent vision of how the U.S. should balance the goals of democracy in the Middle East by proclaiming in his Meridian House speech in 1992 that America would not be for “one vote, one person, one time.” This winter, as a Senior Fellow at HKS Belfer Center’s MEI, Ambassador Djerejian sat down with JMEPP editors Nick Vargish and Christian Allard to discuss pressing issues in the Arab World and the prospects for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Christian Allard: You served at high levels of the US Government in the 1990s when it truly felt like peace was a possibility in the Middle East. How has the negotiation situation changed between the Israelis and Palestinians since that time?

Ambassador Edward Djerejian: It has changed a great deal. The last serious round of negotiations took place during the Obama Administration under Secretary John Kerry in 2014, and they didn’t result in an agreement. My time as Assistant Secretary of State in the Bush 41 Administration, I think, was one of the high points where there was meaningful progress in the negotiating scenario resulting in the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991. It took very strong American leadership to get there.

Remember during that period we had the fall of the Berlin Wall and the United States emerged as the preeminent global power. We had a great deal of influence and we had smart people who were thinking strategically about how best to leverage

that influence to meet our foreign policy goals. President Bush and Secretary Baker didn’t waste the large Desert Storm coalition of countries they brought together to reverse Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait and used it after Saddam’s defeat in Kuwait to produce international support for a major initiative on Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. It was that strategic thinking that led to the Madrid Peace Conference, to face-to-face negotiations between Israel and Arab states, to creating the “land-for-peace” framework that is a roadmap for comprehensive peace between Israelis and its Arab neighbors.

When it comes to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, I think a major flaw in our current approach is that, in many ways— and whether intentional or not— and despite official rhetorical statements, we are buying into the status quo which has become quite volatile as you can see in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories today.

We need to adopt a strategic approach to the whole Middle East region and start connecting the dots. We can take a lesson from an earlier US Administration in this respect. Take, for example, the Office of Policy Planning in the State Department after WWII. This was an office first led by George Kennan—one of the great strategic thinkers of our time (the author of containment and the famous “long telegram”). At that time individuals like George Marshall and Dean Acheson were clear in their intention to separate the strategic and operational aspects of foreign policy. They created a foreign policy formulation framework whereby officials could step back and look at the big picture and not have to engage in day-to-day crisis management. If you look at the Office of Policy Planning in the State Department today, you can clearly see there has been mission creep between the operational and strategic wings in Foggy Bottom. Over the years, I have seen the office move away from its original

mandate to become more involved in operations. That is one aspect of the problem—we just aren't thinking strategically and that applies to both Democratic and Republican Administrations.

Nick Vargish: Well, let me ask you this: how would you describe the Biden Administration's current approach to the Middle East—and how successful of a strategy has it been?

Ambassador Edward Djerejian: Well first, let me say this, the Biden administration is not withdrawing from the Middle East. This seems to be the popular trope but when you look at where our military bases and positioning in the greater Middle East is, we have a very major military presence in the Middle East. So, to me, the claim that the US is withdrawing from the Middle East, doesn't sound correct.

The Biden Administration is prioritizing, just like the Obama administration, Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. At the same time, energy and food security is also being prioritized given the war in Ukraine. Despite our enhanced energy security because of the US shale industry, energy is a global commodity and price fluctuations affect American energy prices as well. The importance of the Middle East in energy is a factor which highlights why the US cannot and will not withdraw from the Middle East. Moreover, we have geopolitical considerations in terms of our relationships with countries such as Egypt, Israel, and Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf countries as well as dealing with Iran. So, it's not a question of withdrawal. This is underscored by China's brokering the resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The political landscape is shifting. I would hope to see an administration, be it Democratic or Republican, connect all these dots of crisis management and resolution, energy security, the role of Islamist parties in the Middle East, human rights, and environmental issues. We're not connecting the dots in the Middle East in a holistic way that the pieces fit together in our approach. Once we do that, we can make more intelligent decisions on where and how to get engaged in specific areas.

Christian Allard: There has been this idea that has gained some traction where there might

be a silver lining in the return of the Likud party to power on the premise that only the most hardliners have the political legitimacy to make a deal with the Palestinians. Is this a realistic interpretation of Israeli politics or is the hard right turn of Netanyahu's coalition inherently unfavorable for the Palestinians?

Ambassador Edward Djerejian: The problem with this coalition is that while it is a Likud led government, it is in a coalition with right wing, extremist, Israeli factions, that do not support the land for peace formula or a two-state solution. These factions advocate in religious terms that Judea and Samaria is the biblical land of Israel and that Israel has a right to these territories, that the settlement enterprise has to be expanded and actually reinforced, which cuts down further the territory of any future Palestinian state. That undermines the hope that Netanyahu could work for a viable settlement. Netanyahu has recently stated his formula of "peace for peace." I didn't hear land for peace. He is in many ways captive to the very hardline views of the religious parties in his coalition. That will seriously inhibit anything he can do, even if he wanted to, which is a major question for peace in my eyes. Netanyahu keeps saying that he has his "hands on the wheel" when it comes to managing this new political coalition, but I don't think he has his foot on the brakes.

The situation in Israel is dire. Israel is an open democracy but is being torn apart as we can see with these massive demonstrations against what this coalition wants to do on the rule of law and how they are trying to undermine the role of the Supreme Court in Israel and Israel's democracy in terms of checks and balances. These demonstrators are also connecting the crisis to the Palestinian issue. This new Israeli Government is working against any real progress with the Palestinians. The other side of the equation is the weakness of the Palestinian Authority. It is facing a number of issues. They haven't had an election in 15 years and, therefore, there is a gap between the leadership and what the Palestinian polity thinks. And, unfortunately, there is systemic corruption. There's also the division between Hamas and Fatah as well as Palestinian Islamic Jihad. This is not very conducive toward working toward peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Christian Allard: From the Palestinian perspective, who are their international allies and advocates? Some of their traditional ones, Jordan, Egypt, they've long made peace with Israel. The Gulf seems to be prioritizing security and commerce over the Palestinian issue. Does this lack of an overt ally relegate them to being a second or a third order priority in the region?

Ambassador Edward Djerejian: The Palestinian cause is still an important factor in Arab politics and the "Arab Street" despite the ups and downs of effective support by individual Arab states. The Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 initiated by Saudi Arabia is still an important landmark despite the Abraham Accords. The Abraham Accords are transactional agreements between Israel, UAE, Bahrain and Morocco. Note that Saudi Arabia has not joined these accords. Let's see if some of these Arab states translate their relationship with Israel into real support for the Palestinians and an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. The ball is in their court.

The Palestinians get support in monetary terms from the Gulf states which has continued. And they get support for their cause internationally. If you look at the United Nations, there is an overwhelming majority of states that support Palestine. Thus, they do definitely have political support. But they must get their own house in order to be more effective. That's one very important factor, and then they need to provide a coherent strategy that outsiders could support. Right now, it's ambiguous.

Nick Vargish: I'd like to end on a bit of a different note and talk about the ongoing crises (plural) occurring in Lebanon right now. Lebanon is currently experiencing multiple catastrophes simultaneously. Beyond the massive liquidity crisis, we now have a currency crisis resulting from the Lebanese pound becoming unpegged from the US dollar. Even over the course of the last five years, Lebanon has really degraded in a serious way, both politically and economically. What do you believe it would take to get Lebanon out of this quagmire?

Ambassador Edward Djerejian: I started my career in Lebanon as a young diplomat in 1965. Back then, Beirut was a beautiful city—it was the political, cultural, financial and espionage center of the Arab world. There was a sizable middle class. But that image of Lebanon and Beirut was, in many ways, a fantasy. I remember we once sent a telegram back to Washington saying that "if you scratch the seemingly pristine backhand of Lebanon, you will find a very feudal society that has the potential to eat away at the country's stability and national interests." That proved to be correct many times over when the Civil War began in 1975.

What we're seeing now is a freefall. And the cause of this freefall can be blamed on institutional rot. Can you imagine that someone like Nabih Berri is still the Speaker of Parliament? He was there when I was in Lebanon in the 1960s! The systematic corruption present in public institutions is harrowing. The way they've siphoned off money and funneled it to the favored, wealthier classes is criminal.

A major problem is that not one of the sectarian factions and their leaders want to give up power. The elephant in the room is Hezbollah which is the only other group in Lebanon that is allowed to bear arms and have its own militia according to the Taif Agreements in 1989. The right to bear arms should be the monopoly of the Lebanese Armed Forces alone. Elections for a new parliament and the election of a new president are essential first steps to initiate constitutional reforms that will end the sectarian nature of Lebanese politics.

Christian is a second-year MPP candidate at Harvard Kennedy School with a focus in International and Global Affairs. His research is centered around security issues in the Gulf and Levant and before commencing graduate school, he was an infantry officer in the U.S. Army.

Nick is a second-year MPP candidate at the Harvard Kennedy School. He is interested in US foreign policy in the Middle East, with a particular focus on the changing American interests and relationships in the Levant and Gulf. Before graduate school, Nick was a foreign policy staffer on Capitol Hill.

INTERVIEW WITH LEX TAKKENBERG

Elom Tettey-Tamaklo

Lex Takkenberg is currently a Senior Advisor with Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) and a non-resident Professor at the Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs, Fordham University. He worked with UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, from 1989 until late 2019, most recently as the first Chief of its Ethics Office. Prior to that, Lex held a range of other positions with UNRWA, including as General Counsel, (agency-wide) Director of Operations, and (Deputy) Field Director in Gaza and Syria.

*A law graduate from the University of Amsterdam, Lex obtained a Doctorate in International Law from the University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands, after having successfully defended my doctoral dissertation entitled *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*.*

When the Russo-Ukrainian war broke out in February 2022, the world was horrified as we watched, in real-time, Russia violate international legal instruments¹ and invade Ukrainian sovereign territory. As Russian armored vehicles rolled into Ukraine, and cities were shelled, Russia initiated a war that has left thousands dead and hundreds of thousands more displaced.² In the midst of such horror, humanity showed the best of itself as allied countries, international relief organizations, NGOs, and individuals quickly responded to the crisis by providing asylum for the ballooning number of refugees the war had created. Under the 1951 Refugee Convention,³ refugees everywhere are guaranteed rights and protections, which include the right of non-refoulement, the right not to be punished for entering into another territory legally, and the basic rights to education, housing, and public relief, amongst others, which to a large extent has been upheld for Ukrainian refugees, including the provision of temporary protection status⁴ across the European Union.

Whilst the herculean efforts at ameliorating the Ukrainian refugee crisis and providing aid to

the displaced are laudable, it raises the question about the status of other refugee situations globally. The ongoing Palestinian refugee question is the most protracted refugee situation in modern history and, as such, deserving of attention. In this interview, I speak to Lex Takkenberg – the first Chief of Ethics for UNRWA and the leading expert on international law, and the question of Palestine about the current status of Palestinian refugees.

Whilst popular discourse discusses the Nakba⁵ of 1948 as a one-time event, many Palestinians frame it as an ongoing, ever-present situation. How do we contextualize the current refugee situation in light of the ongoing Nakba?

Indeed the Nakba was not a one-off situation. It was the first step in the settler colonial occupation of historic Palestine through which established a new Jewish state and, in the process, ethnically cleansed and displaced about 750,000 Palestinians. In 1967, there was renewed upheaval when Palestinian refugees from the Nakba were displaced for a second time in what was known as the Naksa⁶, which translates as setback in Arabic. This represented a second wave of Israeli military occupation – an increasingly clear indication that this was not a temporary endeavor but a more permanent situation as the expansionist policies of settlement building in the West Bank and Gaza kept increasing. Palestinians who were engaged in armed resistance against the Israeli have been subjected to deportation, and forcibly expelled from the West Bank to Jordan or to the Gaza Strip. The continued settlement building and expansion policy embedded within the framework of the Israeli state has continued up until today.

Are there any contemporary case studies you can point to that highlight the phenomenon of the ongoing Nakba?

Following the settler colonial framework of the Israeli state, one site of ongoing home displace-

ment is East Jerusalem, where there is an attempt to uproot Palestinians. The story of Sheikh Jarrah⁷ is a quintessential example of this dynamic of displacing Palestinians from historic Palestine, and replacing them with Jewish settlers. Not surprisingly, this strategy has been used for decades but has been more recently described explicitly in the basic principles⁸ of the new Israeli government when they claim that “the Jewish people have an exclusive and inalienable right to all parts of the land of Israel.” It is also noteworthy that members of the new government are calling for another Nakba⁹, citing an unfinished job in 1948 and 1967. This is the ongoing Nakba.

Recent years have seen a renewed interest in the legal dimension of the question of Palestine. The ICC (International Criminal Court) has called for a probe into the situation, and a special advisory opinion has been requested from the International Court of Justice (ICJ). How effective are these international legal structures in serving justice in Palestine?

The question of international law and Palestine is an interesting one. Ardi Imseis, in his text, *On the Origins of Palestine’s International Legal Subalternity*¹⁰ explores the contours of law specifically focused on UN Resolution 181 (II)¹¹ and questions the objectivity of law in relation to the question of Palestine. There have been many moments, especially after the partition resolution – UN Resolution 181 (II) where the UN has tried to do justice with respect to the question of Palestine. Key amongst these efforts was the appointment of Count Folke Bernadotte – Swedish nobleman, vice president of the Swedish Red Cross, and expert on international law, as the United Nations Mediator in Palestine. Bernadotte’s, *inter alia* supported the right of return for Palestinian refugees calling for the right of return of Arab refugees “at the earliest possible date” and “their reparation, resettlement, and economic and social rehabilitation, and payment of adequate compensation for the property of those choosing not to return should be supervised and assisted by the United Nations Conciliation Commission.” Shortly after his recommendation, he was murdered by Lehi - a Zionist paramilitary group – an explicit indication of the public willingness

to engage in any dialogues around Palestinian justice. Another attempt of the United Nations in employing legal instruments in speaking to the question of Palestine was Resolution 194¹² which guaranteed the right of return to Palestinian refugees – a right which, unfortunately, was never realized. This resolution called for the creation of a conciliation commission which was made up of the US, France, and Turkey, however, the US soon discovered that Israel will not honor the right of return. Therefore, UNRWA was created in response to this situation to effectively support refugees by facilitating local integration and resettlement. Hence, in effect, the UN’s strategy for seeking justice in Palestine was shaped by the major geopolitical interests of the Western nations.

The question of refugees, when discussed generally, is through the framework of a rights-based approach. However, the question of Palestinian refugees seems to be a politically charged one even with seemingly straightforward resolutions like Resolution 2334¹³ on the prohibition of settlements. Have we gotten to the point where the international legal instruments that provide protections for Palestinian refugees have become defunct, or are we still able to realize justice for Palestinian refugees through these instruments?

In our open letter¹⁴ addressed to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, we make the case about going back to the drawing board with regard to the question of Palestine and international law. With this in mind, it is important to consider the history of the two-state solution born from the Oslo Accords, which stipulated a two-state paradigm with Palestinians under pressure to establish a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza representing only 22% of historic Palestine whilst Israel getting the remaining 78%. The current Israeli government has openly talked about seizing more Palestinian land defending this by asserting that there are about 25 Arab states Palestinians could relocate to.

Another reason that the Palestinian refugee question is seen through a political lens as opposed to a rights-based framework is because of

the collective guilt of Western nations over the Holocaust. Therefore, although the world was in a period of decolonization and welcoming liberation movements, many Western countries did not raise any objections to the establishment of the state of Israel and supported the formation of a new settler colony in Palestine in 1948. Whilst Palestinian intellectuals have called this settler colonialism since the beginning, daring to criticize Israeli policies and naming the crime of apartheid according to the international legal definition is one that is violently opposed by Israel and its allies. Without a genuine consideration of international law and how it speaks to the question of Palestine, the fate of Palestinians would be left to the mercy of political wranglings.

With Israel's expulsion from the African Union, amongst other shows of global popular support for the Palestinian cause, it seems like the tide is turning. Can you speak to some of the demands of your letter in addition to the changing tide of Palestinian solidarity?

We are at a pivotal moment, in fact, a turning point! It is hard to predict how quickly things will go. In 1992 in South Africa, it was difficult to predict that two years later, the Apartheid regime would fall. Similarly, we are in a time of profound change. We are not stuck!

Regarding the asks in our letter, they are big asks but definitely possible! One of the main things that we ask for is for the Secretary-General to take the lead in re-establishing the importance of international law and the role of the UN on the global scene. The question of Palestine cannot be left to a flawed negotiating process that is based on a false equivalency between the occupier and the occupied, the oppressor and the oppressed, and the colonizer and the colonized. There are two areas we see potential change emanating from:

International solidarity movements against apartheid are getting stronger, especially after Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have acknowledged that the situation in Israel-Palestine amounts to apartheid. Similar

to what happened in South Africa, this is going to have a profound impact on the business community. I can see predict that what the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement has advocated for over a decade will become more mainstream and will prompt business leaders – who typically move faster than Western politicians who are too worried to be branded as Anti-Semitic, to act. Another area you notice this solidarity is in popular culture. For example, Netflix engages with Palestinian content¹⁵ because they have realized that people want to see and hear Palestinian stories. Even FIFA, during the last world cup, has allowed huge shows of Palestinian solidarity in the stadia. Another aspect of international solidarity is the appeal to international legal mechanisms such as ICJ, ICC, and International Commission of Inquiry, amongst others, to hold Israel to account and also put pressure on states to be more critical.

The other process which is much faster, in my opinion, is the internal collapse of the nation-state, which we are currently witnessing in real time. This has been precipitated by this new extreme right-wing government's attempts at paralyzing the courts and attempting to turn Israel into a state managed by the ruling elite with no checks and balances, with the hopes of creating an exclusively Jewish Israel. This is a situation that is becoming so extreme that the world has to take notice of it, evidenced by the uneasiness in local and international Jewish organizations, the US Congress from both sides of the aisle, and even the US President.¹⁶ This instability is encouraging internal divestments of Israel by Israelis, who are worried that the situation might spiral out of control. We are at a time of profound transition, which would reinforce a new political direction of ending apartheid. Ending apartheid in South Africa looked like doing away with all forms of institutionalized discrimination, supremacy, and discrimination, and ending apartheid in Israel means Israel cannot be a Jewish Zionist state.

Elom is a first-year Master of Theological Studies student at Harvard Divinity School with a focus on religion, ethics, and politics. His interests lie at the intersection of public theology and

international law, specifically in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Most recently, Elom lived and worked with UNRWA in Amman, Jordan, and hopes to continue working in the international legal space.

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INTERVIEW WITH DR. YOUSSEF CHAHED

Ryan Zoellner

Dr. Youssef Chahed served as Prime Minister of Tunisia from August 2016 to February 2020. He is both the youngest head of government in Tunisia's history and the longest-serving since the country's democratic transition in 2011. During his tenure, Dr. Chahed made significant advancements in the fight against terrorism, launched an anti-corruption campaign, and navigated severe economic challenges. Prior to becoming Prime Minister, Dr. Chahed served as Secretary of State for Fisheries and Minister of Local Affairs.

Currently, Dr. Chahed is a Senior Fellow with the Middle East Initiative (MEI) at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. He was in residence at the Kennedy School for the 2022-2023 academic year. During his fellowship, Chahed has focused on economic, security, and other policy challenges facing the Middle East and North, particularly with respect to shifting global alliances. Dr. Chahed holds a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the Institut National Agronomique Paris-Grignon and taught agricultural economics at the Higher Institute of Agriculture in France.

The European Union

Since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it seems we are constantly hearing about shifting priorities and alliances within the EU, particularly with respect to states of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Food, oil, and security guarantees come first to mind. In your view, has the MENA's strategic significance grown greatly since the start of the Ukraine war? What effects has the conflict had on the region? Does this herald a new era in relations between the EU and the MENA?

Without a doubt, after February 24th, 2022, the MENA region has been under much more attention. We must keep in mind that, before the conflict in Ukraine, Western powers had placed China and Russia higher on their agenda than the MENA as part of a new global strategy. But the

conflict in Ukraine has once again put the MENA area in the spotlight on a global scale. The war in Ukraine gave a more strategic role to oil and gas exporting MENA countries such as KSA, Algeria, and the UAE.

However, for others, it created food insecurity and greater internal instability, given the impact of the war on food commodities like wheat, and oil prices. Many countries in the region—Morocco, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Sudan, and Lebanon—are particularly exposed in this way. For these nations, the social and economic difficulties that COVID-19 had already aggravated were made worse by supply chain disruptions, shortages of basic commodities, and the rising inflation that followed the war in Ukraine. The cost of budgetary subsidies in these countries increased significantly as a result of the increase in food and oil prices, widening their deficits and making them more vulnerable to debt distress. This partly explains why it has been difficult for several nations, including Tunisia, Lebanon, and Egypt, to reach financial agreements with the IMF. The EU notably tried to step in to help various MENA countries by offering loans and specialized programs to secure wheat in order to prevent instability.

For MENA oil and gas producers, the conflict in Ukraine also creates strain. These countries had diverse responses to the West's demand to enhance oil and gas production. While some nations resisted the pressure, others signed new agreements to help mainly EU member states in diversifying their energy sources. The EU's rising interest in the Gulf region, for the sake of replacing Russian oil and gas, provided an opportunity for Gulf countries to better balance their relationships with the West and the US.

Finally, the conflict in Ukraine confirmed that the region remains strategically important and that it cannot fall to the wayside on the global agenda. It demonstrated once more that we cannot think of the MENA as a single region because

effects of a global conflict vary depending on the characteristics of each nation. Having said that, I do not believe that this marks the start of a new era of cooperation between the EU and MENA countries. Rather, I believe that it marks a shift in focus for the upcoming time, with less focus being placed on political and development issues, and more on the diversification of the energy supply and regional stability in order to prevent insecurity and waves of mass immigration.

China

Over the past decade, China has become a major player in the MENA region at a time when longstanding US dominance over the region appeared to be gradually diminishing. What is the future of China in the Middle East? How does this relate to the standing of the United States? Where does this desire for new alliances come from?

Alliances between the MENA and the West have historically been used to provide the region with diplomatic or military support against external threats as well as, very frequently, a response to internal threats. Over time, there has been a progressive erosion of confidence and a sense that these alliances are no longer serving their intended purpose. With growing security problems in the area and the US's relative withdrawal as the region's most significant military power, several states in the MENA region have naturally become more concerned about security and stability. For example, the numerous attacks by the Houthis and others on Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the early months of 2019 marked, in my opinion, a turning point in how the Gulf views its historical alliances. We saw this realignment play out in Xi's Riyadh summit this winter.

More generally, I believe that the gap between the West and the MENA has grown since the Arab Spring, due to the instability that period created. Further, the COVID problem highlighted unequal access to vaccinations between poor and wealthy nations, and the way the economic crisis was handled all contributed to a decline of trust in the Western system. Thus, it may be said that the desire to think or develop new alliances is a

direct consequence or a reaction to a perception of less efficient traditional alliances in the Middle East. The relative reduction of US presence in the region that began in the middle of the previous decade then made space for other nations—particularly China—and the potential for numerous new alliances. Countries can now maintain multiple alliances in the East and the West depending on their mutual interests, which was previously impossible.

The relative erosion of Western influence in the MENA region and China's growing role, in my opinion, will not, however, result in the formal establishment of a new order. Even while we might anticipate greater Chinese economic influence, MENA relations and interests with the West continue to be strong after so many years, despite many disappointments. The US continues to play a big role in the MENA region and has significant investments there. Particularly relevant to this is its heavy military presence. No new security alliance, in my opinion, could take the place of existing ones, and I find it hard to believe that anyone in the area would be interested in doing so, especially in light of the rising risks in the neighborhood.

Russia

Is Russia's influence in this region, in your opinion, temporary, or do you think it will remain? What contribution could Russia make to the trends we've already covered? What potential effects could the war in Ukraine have on Russia's power and ability to intervene in the MENA region?

Although it played a role in Syria and in Libya, I don't think Russia will displace or replace the US and the West as key actors in the MENA area. Once more, the relative waning of Western dominance and influence over the past ten years has paved the path for an increase in relationships, alliances, and regional powers—including with Russia. Russia's involvement in Libya is the best illustration. Between 2016 and 2020, the international reaction to the Libyan crisis was poorly planned and coordinated. American and European positions were inconsistent, and UN dele-

gates offered inadequate assistance. Even if there is less Russian interest and influence in Libya following the war in Ukraine, this allowed for more Russian presence in the region and the deployment of the Wagner militias in Libya and in several African countries.

Regarding the future, I believe that alliances in the MENA region will continue to shift and adjust to various parameters (depending also on where we are in the region), but the main driver will continue to be security and stability. Also, food security will be an incentive for alliances and a crucial parameter for many MENA countries. So once more, these nations will continue to be interested in alliances that offer a strong, long-term, and clear security commitment for the area with a better impact on internal and external security, as well as support in economic success. Because no alternative could “give” the region that, despite the new circumstances, I do not anticipate a significant change in economic and security ties in the area. This does not suggest that the existing relationships with the West can stay as they are, but it does underline the need for improvements, new ideas, and a better mutual understanding when shaping these partnerships.

The theme of our issue for JMEPP this year is identity in the Middle East. Clearly, Russian and Chinese influence is expanding in MENA. How do you think those identities are being received by people in the region? Do you see a crisis of identity between democratic and authoritarian types in the Arab World?

China is seen by many people in the MENA countries as a friendly nation--neutral and apolitical. It has no colonial history and has succeeded in developing a strong economy thanks to what is perceived as good governance. Chinese diplomacy is deftly exploiting this through robust and extensive financial support to MENA and African countries. For Russia, there is also certainly a sympathy in the Arab street, but I believe that is more a way of challenging the western paradigm than a true adherence.

Considering a potential identity crisis between democratic and authoritarian political ideologies in the Arab World, we must acknowledge that many people in the Arab world now hold

the opinion that democracy is not the ideal form of government and can't solve the region's problems. Many think that their nation simply needs a strong leader who can fix the economy, and this belief is probably not unique to the Arab world. They are more concerned with an efficient government than they are with its particular structure.

This is a consequence of the deterioration of the social and economic situation in many MENA countries after COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine, but also to the democratization process initiated by the Arab Spring. This process has created more instability and more social division among countries that were historically at the center of the Arab world (Egypt and Syria for example) and did not provide economic prosperity and better social justice. Also, in the region, we have countries that have promoted models of good governance that deliver prosperity and welfare, and can be attractive for other countries. Nonetheless, even if certain people are skeptical of the merits of the democratic system, this does not imply that they prefer authoritarian governments; rather, it emphasizes the need to build a democracy that delivers first security, economic prosperity, and general welfare.

Ryan is a second-year Master of Theological Studies candidate at Harvard Divinity School concentrating in Islamic Studies. His research has focused on political Islam in Iraq and the Levant, and the role of religious actors in consociational design and conflict management. Ryan gained firsthand insight into the political dynamics of Iraq while working on the staff of Prime Minister Masrour Barzani of the Kurdistan Regional Government. He currently serves as a research assistant at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Affairs and the Kennedy School's Middle East Initiative. Ryan graduated from Colgate University in 2020 with honors in Political Science and Philosophy of Religion.

MAYA MIKADASHI, SEXTARIANISM: SOVEREIGNTY, SECULARISM, AND THE STATE IN LEBANON

Zara Lal

In *Sextarianism: Sovereignty, Secularism, and the State in Lebanon*, Maya Mikdashi interrogates and redefines the core of the intersecting categories through which “lies ... became bureaucracy” (15). The text opens with such a lie, told by a woman named Samera who was married in the Ottoman Empire, but, while living separately from her husband, claimed to be unmarried on the 1932 census conducted under the French mandate to escape her marriage. While this lie allowed her to escape her husband, it also led to a multitude of competing sets of documents, which implicated her son’s ability to receive his inheritance – even his existence was a legally contested question. This phenomenon represents what Mikdashi terms “sextarianism,” “how sex, sexuality, and sect structure legal bureaucratic systems” and shape the performance of citizenship and statecraft (2). Mikdashi’s conceptualization and theorization of the relationship between sex, sect, and the conditioning of state power is in dialogue with Joan Scott, Saba Mahmood, Carole Pateman, Audra Simpson, Hussein Ali Agrama, Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, Suad Joseph and Talal Asad’s contributions on secularity, sexual difference and the structures of state power. In *Sextarianism*, Mikdashi skillfully brings to light the relationship between state secularism and “evangelical secularism” in the stories of the Sameras appear throughout the chapters of *Sextarianism*, and particularly how they come into play in the construction of the private sphere through personal status law, and the ways personal status laws reproduce capital and wealth. As Mikdashi argues, all personal status laws, in states where political power is organized through sectarian governmental categories, are essentially “laws of sexual difference” (25), which produce and manage heterosexuality, and intertwine it with sectarian forms of control. In effect, the sextarian approach reveals how the concept of “sect” is structurally reproduced in the constitution of state power.

The first chapter lays out the basic relationship between sectarian and sexual difference in the construction of Lebanese citizenship and the Lebanese state as evident in the Lebanese legal system, the history behind this system, how women are constructed as citizens, the limitations on their rights, and their inability to pass down citizenship. As Mikdashi argues, sect and citizenship are both paternally inherited, biopolitical categories that maintain a particular demographic balance. Sextarianism is a securitization thus, which shapes not only the extent to which women are citizens, but also the rights of refugee and stateless men in Lebanon – particularly refugees from Palestine – and how civil, criminal, and national-law laws differentiate across these lines.

In the second chapter, Mikdashi discusses her research process, and her experiences and interactions while conducting ethnographic and archival research. She focuses on two files held in the Cassation Court archive – one on a family’s inheritance claims during the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, damaged when the Cassation Court archives were burned during the civil war, and another on an infamous war criminal turned politician, Samir Geagea. Through these cases, Mikdashi highlights how the geopolitical context – especially where histories of war and occupation mean archives are under attack – shape silences in the archive, the stories they cannot tell and how sectarianism operates as a technology of curation, a force in both the telling of the past and the future. Mired in this context, the unique mix of perspectives and sources from which her methodology derives is both a product of and a response to the ways narratives are intentionally fractured to conceal histories of state violence, and how lived experiences of violence hold insight lost in the archive.

The ethnographic and archival narratives analyzed by Mikdashi in the third chapter center around religious conversion, and how the bureaucratization of sectarianism makes religious difference a tool of governance. Sextarian at its core, state regulation of sectarian affiliation controls marriage, divorce, inheritance, and custody, as well as the place of religion in state and society. Particularly powerful is Mikdashi's analysis of what bureaucracy does in this process, and how it depersonalizes, creates a fiction of unbiased meritocracy that mediates between minorities and majorities, turns religious identity into a government category, and thus rearranges populations to create new procedures and new categories. By teasing out the bureaucratic difficulties endured by the individuals discussed here, one attempting to secure a divorce, another to remove personal status altogether from governmental records to be seen as a secular citizen, show how these categories intersect with sexual difference and function in the logic of state power.

Evangelical secularism – as partially a response to the spiraling bureaucracy produced by sextarianism – is explored more fully in the fourth chapter and contextualized as an effort to create a legal and moral culture of secularism. Mikdashi focuses on efforts undertaken between 2009-2010 to pass an optional civil marriage law and/or secular personal status law, to remove religious and sectarian identification from individual census documents, and the *Laique Pride* march. In her discussion of these campaigns, Mikdashi shows the legal complications that activists suffered and the larger personal status debates that emerged in this context, which reveal how deeply religion as a governmental category had become mired in bureaucracy: those who had removed their personal status were now “outside the law” and essentially given up most of their basic rights. The narratives in this section are particularly interesting because they illustrate the notion that a culture of secularity needed to be created, and that people needed to be made “ready” for it. This speaks not only to existing narratives linked to nationalism, but also, as Mikdashi shows, to a particular temporal attitude towards secularity, and the fact that even though political sectarianism has consistently been articulated as temporary, and secularity a verbalized goal of an undefined future, bureaucracy is constructed and maintained so such a future never comes to pass.

The fifth chapter delves into the Lebanese state's criminalization of homosexuality, queer identity, and attitudes towards marriage and virginity, and thus exposing the non-heteronormative side of the state's regulation of sectarian difference through sexual difference. Mikdashi discusses in detail the logic of hymen and anal exams, how they are sextarian in nature, and a critical performance of state power, revealing an epidermal security state, premised on torture as a mechanism of characterizing deviance and shaping public morality and public order. The accounts that Mikdashi draws upon in this section show how queer and straight sexualities – and their securitization – are constructed in relation to each other, by intervening violently, legally, and bureaucratically. Defining violence in these interventionist terms, to produce and police the body, thus, is linked to the sovereignty of the nation-state. The deployment of these epidermal logics to quell the 2019 uprisings is discussed further in the epilogue, and Mikdashi speaks to how the uprisings represent another attempt to save the state from itself and its violent logic of bureaucratic sextarianism.

Mikdashi's *Sextarianism* thus neatly and brilliantly elucidates the complex interlinkages between logics of sectarian and sexual difference, underlying how state power and state violence is conceptualized and deployed. Creative, resourceful, and refreshing methodologically, Mikdashi skillfully synthesizes a range of anecdotal, archival, ethnographic, and historical, and legal accounts – the ongoing life worlds of multiple Sameras – to deliver a text that analyzes both manifestations of and reactions to state power. Rigorous and insightful, Mikdashi's analysis reveals how the current bureaucracy is a biopolitical tool of governance that compounds and expands to continue the underlying materializing, making, and remaking of citizens inherited from colonial pasts through sextarian logics.

Zara Lal is a second-year AM candidate at Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. Her research focuses on the Cold War history of petro-modernity, corporations, authoritarianism, security structures, and the legacy of colonialism. Zara is also interested in the socio-sexual scripting of gender, citizenship, and nationalism, and the structure of postcolonial nation-states as read through legal, cultural, and literary insights.

J. ANDREW BUSH, BETWEEN MUSLIMS: RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE IN IRAQI KURDISTAN

Nicole Plante

Between Muslims: Religious Difference in Iraqi Kurdistan is an ethnography written by Andrew Bush. It is based on three years of ethnographic and archival research in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Pulling from this research, the book argues that many Muslims choose to turn away from piety, but in doing so, they do not turn away from Islam in general nor from other pious Muslims. Instead, they find other ways of orienting themselves to Islam. It is these different orientations that the author explores through the lens of ordinary life and experiences. Ultimately, *Between Muslims* is an approachable and thorough account of the experiences of Iraqi Kurds that speaks to important issues in the study of Islam and the Middle East.

The book includes an introduction, five core content chapters, and an epilogue addressed to readers. The introduction begins with Bush laying out his three central claims of the book. He argues that many Muslims turn away from piety but remain Muslim and that one way to explore their relationship with Islam is through their relationships. He then provides a brief background and context for his work. He first explains what he means by turning away from piety and different orientations to Islam. From there, he describes how his book will contribute to larger discussions by exploring a different kind of religious orientation and how religious orientation is present in everyday life. Following this, Bush discusses his choice of using ordinary relationships. He then discusses Iraqi Kurdistan, the Kurdish people, and Islamic traditions to provide context for his work. The introduction provides a thorough background for the book and addresses various counterarguments. In doing so, the introduction gives readers an understanding of where the book is grounded theoretically and how it will contribute to current scholarship in meaningful ways.

From there, Bush moves into his five core content chapters. Each of the content chapters is divided between ethnographic accounts focused on individual interlocutors and analysis of poetry and religious discourse. Chapter One is focused on Pexshan, an older Kurdish woman. In this chapter, Bush explores Pexshan's orientation to Islam while discussing Talal Asad's notion of Islam as a "discursive tradition." He does this by examining her relationship with Islamic texts and piety through relationships with others and her experience during Ramadan. The chapter transitions to the next by introducing poetry as a valuable tool for exploring orientations to Islam.

In Chapter Two, Bush turns to focus on poetry, specifically Kurdish poetry. The chapter provides a historical overview of Kurdish poetry and focuses on the relationship between the lover and beloved that is often present in poems. Here Bush focuses on the beloved and how they were often depicted as kafirs or nonbelievers in early nineteenth-century poetry. Bush then goes on to explain how poetry has changed in Kurdistan alongside political circumstances. This chapter provides essential historical context as well as an interesting comparison between differences among different religions and differences among Muslims.

Chapter three shifts back to focusing on one of Bush's interlocutors, Newzad, and connects this to the previous chapter by building on the discussion of religious difference. He builds on this by looking at how ordinary relationships are impacted by religious differences among Muslims as well as between Muslims and Christians. Bush does this by exploring Newzad's ordinary relationships with his wife and brother-in-law. In this chapter, Bush also highlights poetry and refers back to the concept of the beloved. He does so as Newzad himself explores poetry to make

sense of his own experience with piety and religious difference.

In Chapter Four, Bush discusses Islamic political parties and Islamism in Kurdistan by focusing on Mela Krekar. In particular, Bush examines sermons and interviews with Krekar to show how he calls his followers to focus on their ordinary relationships as they turn towards Islamism. Bush also focuses on Krekar's focus on Islam in the family, which transitions to his next chapter. In the final content chapter of the book, Bush explores turning away from piety within the context of the family. This chapter explores what happens when different orientations of Islam are present in one household. In particular, it focuses on the experiences of the father, Shadman, who is not pious, while the rest of his family is. This chapter contributes to the overall book by providing a view of how one non-pious Muslim navigates ordinary relationships every day with Muslims who orient themselves differently to Islam. Finally, in the book's epilogue, Bush addresses the reader directly. He implores readers to explore their own everyday experiences and ordinary relationships to find connections between themselves and the interlocutors in the book.

Overall, the strength of this book lies in the way it approaches important topics in an accessible manner. For example, the book explores Muslims who actively turn away from piety. In doing so, this book addresses an often-overlooked group of Muslims, those that are non-pious. It provides interesting insight into religion without focusing on devout and pious practitioners. This exploration allows this book to make important contributions to the study of piety and religion by moving beyond religious people as only pious people.

Another strength is the way it examines the experience of these Muslims through ordinary encounters and daily life. This provides a unique lens to explore religious experience and again moves beyond the typical exploration of religion through typical religious practices. It also makes the book relatable and relational with the readers, which seems to be something Andrew Bush is attempting to do, as he discusses in the epilogue. The use of both encounters with interlocutors and poetry as evidence is another strength of the

book. It allows readers to understand the claims Bush makes through two different mediums. It also makes the book more approachable because readers can relate to and understand it through interlocutors or poetry. Further, it contributes to the growing field of scholarship that explores the relationship between poetry, religion, and piety.

Lastly, an additional strength of this book is how it contributes to the literature on Iraqi Kurdistan. Much of the current literature on Iraqi Kurdistan focuses on politics and nationalism and neglects the individual experience, particularly the individual experience with religion. In contrast, this book adds to this by looking at ordinary Iraqi Kurds' lives and focusing on religion instead of politics.

The book has some things that could be improved. One weakness is that although Bush provides some background throughout the book and it is very approachable, readers are likely unable to fully understand the book without some background knowledge. Another weakness that Bush does briefly address is that there are very few voices highlighted in the book, which may limit the conclusions that can be drawn. Lastly, Bush uses the lens of ordinary relationships to make his argument, but the book does not fully explain the theorization of the concept of ordinary relationships. This can make it hard for readers to fully understand why this is a helpful lens and why Bush chose it.

Despite these weaknesses, this book is an excellent choice for various audiences. People interested in ethnography, the Middle East, religion, piety, and poetry find this book engaging and informative. Overall, the book provides essential insight into Islam and particular different non-pious orientations to Islam in a very approachable and engaging way.

Nicole Plante is a current master's student in Harvard's Middle Eastern Studies Program. At Harvard, her focus has primarily been on human rights, migration, and Israel-Palestine. She is currently writing a thesis on the role of memory for Palestinians. Following graduation from Harvard, Nicole plans to attend law school and study international human rights law.

IRAN AND ITS DISCONTENTS: REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN 2022

Pouya
Alimaghani
and Ciara
Moezidis

On September 16, 2022, the death of Mahsa Jina Amini ignited protests across Iran under the banner of “woman, life, freedom.” Initially, Amini was arrested for violating the mandatory dress code in which women are legally required to cover their hair. She died in government custody, leading her family and countless Iranians to allege that she was beaten.

What became known as the “hijab protests” quickly morphed to encompass wider social and political demands, including calls for the wholesale overthrow of the system that routinely intrudes into the daily lives of Iranians. For months after her death, segments of Iranian society leveled ideological attacks against the government to delegitimize Iran’s polity as a whole. That is, they did not merely demand that the perpetrators of Amini’s death be brought to justice, but held the entire system responsible. Activists have been met with government repression, including internet blackouts, a dragnet that has ensnared approximately 20,000 people, and the death of 522 people, of whom 70 were children. An additional 110 face execution. 61 security personnel have also been killed in clashes with protesters. Despite the crackdown, protesters have demonstrated such totalizing opposition in numerous ways, most notably by wielding the hijab—the Islamic veil—in counterintuitive ways that subverted the state.

The Hijab as an Object of Contestation

The hijab has long been a topic of political contestation in modern Iran. During the rule of Reza Shah (r. 1921-41), the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty outlawed women from wearing the hijab in public. Reza Shah saw Mustafa Kemal in neighboring Türkiye as his model, and Kemal sought to modernize Türkiye through a Western mode

of modernization. Among many other undertakings, enforcing Western-style dress codes on men and women was an integral part of his vision for the emerging republic. While maintaining the royalist system, Reza Shah nonetheless pursued many such Kemalist reforms. His son, Mohammad Reza, followed in his father’s footsteps but lacked his father’s strong will. Whereas his father was a towering military figure and statesman, the son ascended the Peacock Throne with the permission of the Allied Powers after they dethroned the elder Pahlavi, occupied Iran, and used the country as a conduit of Western arms and supplies to buttress the Soviet war effort after the Nazi invasion in 1941. Tellingly, when the leadership of the Allied Powers, Frank D. Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, and Winston Churchill, met in Iran for the Tehran Conference to discuss wartime strategy in 1943, the 24-year-old Shah was not invited.

Young and inexperienced, he sought to placate various interest groups in the country to establish his authority. For instance, he removed his father’s prohibition on the hijab to garner favor with the clerical establishment, which had reeled under the heavy boot of his father’s rule. The Shah’s grip on power was not as absolute as his father’s, and a nationalist leader in the form of Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq emerged in the 1950s to nationalize Iran’s oil industry in order to gain sovereignty over the country’s political, economic, and natural resources, which was to the detriment of the foremost imperial power subjugating the country, Great Britain. After more than two years of international crisis, the British, alongside the American CIA—which used the US embassy in Tehran as a base of operations—overthrew Iran’s democratically-elected government and installed the Shah as the autocratic head of state. That the CIA had to establish the SAVAK,

the Shah's notorious secret police, and train its personnel in Nazi torture techniques, illustrates the lack of legitimacy from which he suffered after the coup; Iranians knew that the Shah had reached the pinnacle of power, not by popular mandate but a foreign conspiracy, and he needed a fearsome secret police to protect his throne from his own people.

The backlash against the secular Shah evolved over the next two and half decades to take on an Islamist mode of opposition. Many women began wearing the hijab out of piety and in opposition to the head of state that was seen as a puppet of Western interests. Many donned the hijab to express their solidarity with the leader of the opposition, Ayatollah Khomeini, a revolutionary Islamist cleric. In other words, such activist women wore their politics on their sleeves in the run-up to the 1978-79 Islamic Revolution that toppled the Shah and ushered in the modern world's first Islamic theocracy. Incidentally, that many such women voluntarily garbed the veil in support of the revolution made it easier for Khomeini to eventually mandate the veil for all Iranian women—regardless of their religion or piety. The male-dominated state aspired to foster an alternative form of modernity—one that was Islamically authentic—and sought to rebuild the country more along moral lines that contrasted with the decadence of the Shah. It is important to note that while the hijab is an attire specific to a woman's body and their modesty, powerful men before and after the revolution decided as a matter of politics whether women must abandon or wear it.

The mandating of the hijab after the 1979 revolution resulted in various realities. For some, requiring girls and women to wear the hijab meant access to upward mobility. Whereas before, conservative families viewed schools as godless dens of vice in which daughters' attendance could potentially result in a violation of the family's honor, the Islamization of the education system, which included teachers and pupils of the same sex being paired together in classrooms and the requirement that girls and women must veil, enabled such families to send their girls to school to obtain an education. Such expanded access

to girls and women from more conservative families dramatically increased female literacy. This had unintended consequences as many such educated women gained greater access to a globally connected world, raising their political consciousness and expectations as well as enabling them to see the root causes of many of the country's social and political ills. For families who did not have to contend with such religious roadblocks and already had access to education before the revolution, the imposition of the hijab was onerous.

It was also burdensome to many raised under the authority of the Islamic Republic to be told what to wear, with whom to interact, what career paths were possible and impossible, which car to use in the metro, and much more. These gender-specific limitations intertwined with political controls, such as how unelected clerical bodies within the polity strangle and control its increasingly powerless elected institutions. Consequently, many women objected to these controls by making the mandating of the hijab the symbol of the state's intrusion and political stranglehold that made changing the system from within virtually impossible. In the decades since wearing the hijab became a matter of law, increasing numbers of women have registered their disdain for the system through the "politics of presence," not necessarily protesting outright, which is a risk in Iran's repressive political climate, but by registering their opposition seemingly passively through their appearances, from how much hair they show to the colorfulness of their head coverings. In 2022, when Amini died in government custody after being arrested for "improperly" wearing the hijab, the bottled-up animosity of many women exploded onto the streets.

Many activist women and girls outright used their mandated attire in public displays of resistance against the state that enforced such draconian dress codes. If the hijab had become "the emblem of the Islamic Republic" and its authority over half its citizens, then activists re-purposed that "emblem" to attack the governing system. Specifically, they attended protests with their hair intentionally uncovered or took off their veils and waved them over their heads as if

their removed veils had been transformed into flags of liberation not to be worn as required by the government but to be raised in defiance of the authorities. More to the point, many took turns throwing their veils in spontaneous street bonfires as onlookers cheered. In doing so, they were not necessarily burning their headscarves as a matter of refuting their faith—though some may have done so to express that very sentiment as well—but as a matter of putting to flames the government’s authority not just over their lives and bodies, but over the entire country. In sum, if donning the hijab outwardly displayed many women’s support for the Islamic Revolution as it unfolded in 1978-79, then women burning the hijab displayed one’s support for the growing resistance, especially female resistance, to the state in 2022.

Given journalism in Iran is heavily restricted, the global community and international media relied on citizen journalism to document and film events as they transpired on the ground in real-time. Such videos and photos demonstrate mundane everyday undertakings imbued with revolutionary defiance, such as non-familial men and women violating the state’s Islamic laws by being together in public, a young woman, Donya Rad, who enjoyed a meal in a coffee house while her head was intentionally uncovered, or dancing and embracing in the streets—all of which are illegal under the Islamic Republic, and elementary school girls subversively removing photos of the state’s founder and his successor, Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei, off the classroom walls. Videos have also emerged of Iranian youth walking beyond clergymen and knocking off the turbans from their heads to both humiliate the clergy to dissent against clerical rule and potentially register their opposition to clerical-led Islam.

Women and Revolution in Modern Iran

For many outside observers, women being at the forefront of resistance to the Iranian government comes as a surprise. The Orientalist trope is that women in Muslim-majority countries are servile, secluded, quiet, oppressed, and objects of desire. Protesting the mandatory hijab, then, is often seen through this prism—women breaking the shackles of the Islamic faith by seeking a

Western mode of freedom rooted in secularism. Interpreting the protests to affirm Islamophobia, as one observer put it, can also have dangerous consequences:

“Sometimes people and government officials in the West can easily use the scenes of women burning hijabs to feed their Islamophobia and sense of civilizational superiority over the Middle East as well as to find justification for devastating Western policies in the region, past and present, which include hijab bans in other so-called democracies like the European Union and/or India.”

A closer look at modern Iranian history dispels the Orientalist trope. Indeed, women have long played a salient role in both modern Iranian history and the wider Islamic history. For instance, the first to profess belief in Muhammad’s message was a powerful merchant woman, Khadijah. The first martyr who was tortured to death for not recanting belief in Islam was a woman named Sumayyah.

In terms of modern Iranian history, pious and secular Muslim and non-Muslim Iranian women have long been central agents of history-making. In the 19th century, Qurrat al-Ayn was a seminal figure in the Babi revolts. In the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11, women donated jewelry, often their only tangible assets, to help create a national bank to stave off imperialist intervention. In the 1970s, women guerrillas took up arms and died fighting against monarchical despotism. In 2009, the Green Uprising—the largest anti-state upheaval in Iran since 1979—had not a poster boy but a young woman, Neda Agha Soltan, whose violent death was captured on film and relayed around the world to become the most televised death in history. In sum, Iranian women have long been an integral part of social movement activity in Iran, and the hijab with all its elasticity in terms of meaning and uses—as a symbol for revolution, liberation, access, modesty, morality, as well as control and oppression—has been an important component of the story of women’s struggles in Iran.

“Woman Life Freedom” - A Revolutionary Movement

While women have long been integral to revolutionary activity in Iran, women being at the forefront makes this uprising unique. Just as previous moments of contentious politics demonstrate, a closer look underscores other social fissures in Iranian society. For instance, the 2009 Green Movement was initially about election fraud, yet many used the cover of the post-election turmoil to come out against the state because of their own grievances that transcended the election. Likewise, from 2022 onward, many Iranians have used the cover and the space provided by protesting compulsory hijab to gather and air their particular grievances against the government.

For a more panoramic lens of the grievances that coupled with the anger over the mandatory hijab to swell and sustain the protests, a song emerged as the anthem of the protests to enumerate a list of grievances. Iranians tweeted various reasons for supporting the uprising using the hashtag “baraye,” or “for.” Shervin Hajipour, a then-relatively unknown pop singer in Iran, turned some of the tweets into lyrics for his song, “Baraye,” which he recorded at home and uploaded online. The song went viral as many Iranians felt that it effectively captured their mood not only because they were the writers of the lyrics but also because of the melancholic yet impassioned way Hajipour voiced their lyrics. The tweets-turned-lyrics constitute the unofficial rallying cries of the protesters:

For dancing in the streets
 For the fear when kissing
 For my sister, your sister, our sisters
 For changing the rotten minds
 For the shame of poverty
 For yearning for an ordinary life
 For the dumpster diving boy and his dreams
 For this planned economy
 For this polluted air
 For Valiasr street and its tired dying trees
 For Piruz [a cheetah] that may go extinct
 For innocent illegal dogs
 For the incessant crying
 For the scene of repeating this moment
 For the smiling faces
 For the students, for future
 For this forced paradise
 For the imprisoned intellectual elite

For the discriminated Afghan children
 For each and every one of all of those “for”s
 For all these empty slogans
 For the houses in rubble, collapsing like a house of cards
 For the feeling of peace
 For the sun after these long nights
 For anxiety and insomnia pills
 For men, homeland, and prosperity
 For the girl who wished to be a boy
 For woman, life, freedom
 For freedom
 For freedom
 For freedom

Grievances indeed ranged from basic social and environmental issues to political and economic ones. The social issues entailed the prohibition of dancing on the streets and public displays of affection between unmarried and unrelated couples, the hardships LGBTQ+ people face, and the yearning for a normal life devoid of war, nuclear saber rattling, and the constant state of emergency resulting for acrimonious relations between Iran and the world’s foremost superpower, the United States. The economic issues encompass increasing poverty, lack of future prospects, and economic mismanagement. Political issues, inter alia, expressly invoked the imprisoning of intellectuals. Dying trees, pollution—especially in Tehran—abuse of dogs, which many consider impure in Islam, and the potential extinction of the Asiatic cheetah bring to the fore some of the environmental and animal rights issues that concern many Iranians. It is important to note that many of these grievances are rooted in the government’s failures, but unilateral US sanctions on Iran doubtless exacerbated such shortcomings. Above all, the song begins and ends with girls, women, and freedom. Iranian women were the catalyst of these protests, but other aggrieved segments of Iranian society quickly entered their fray both in solidarity with Iranian women as well as because of their unique grievances.

Uplifting Marginalized Voices Within “Woman, Life, Freedom”

The protest movement has been intersectional, bringing to the fore the calls that women, ethnic, religious, and sexual and gender minorities be treated as equals in a more equitable Iran. Unlike

the Pahlavi shahs that prioritized a racialized system of rule—the Shah at the apex of power was “The Light of the Aryans”—the Islamic Republican system, in theory, has supplanted the racial system in favor of a religious one in which primacy is given to Shi’ite Muslims, but the state recognizes Sunni Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians as “People of Book” and are allocated seats in the parliament. Bahá’ís are excluded from the system. One of the most heterogeneous countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, Iran is home to Persians—the majority—and such minorities as Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, Lors, Armenians, and more, with many minorities criticizing the state for systematic discrimination.

Baha'is

A monotheistic religion founded in Iran in the mid-19th century, the Baha’i Faith is the largest religious minority in Iran and suffers the most persecution. While the Islamic Republic recognizes Islam’s preceding monotheistic faiths in its constitution, the Islamic clergy and the Islamic Republic view Baha’is as heretics. As such, marriage—a religious matter—is not recognized by the state when it comes to Baha’i unions. Furthermore, Baha’is identified as such are prohibited from obtaining a higher education.

Prior to Amini’s death, between July and September, there were over 200 cases of Baha’i persecution, from unlawful arrests to house demolitions, yet it is unclear if Baha’is have been involved in the protests. The Baha’i community in Iran has often been scapegoated in times of turmoil even though, based on their principles, they are not supposed to take part in any partisan activity in any country. That the two core tenets of the Baha’i Faith are “non-interference in [partisan] politics” and “absolute obedience to the government” may explain why some Baha’is may not be involved in the “hijab protests”—at least not in an obvious manner.

While there is no clear link between Baha’is and the protests, they witnessed a spike in their persecution for the latter half of 2022. The Iranian state routinely sees its domestic challengers as agents of foreign conspiracy. That Baha’is have long been accused and imprisoned for allegedly

spying for foreign powers may explain why the government intensified its repression of Baha’is as part of its wider crackdown against the protest movement.

Kurds

Iranian Kurds predominate or have sizable communities in six of Iran’s 31 provinces in the northwest: Kordestan, Kermanshah, West Azerbaijan, Hamadan, Ilam, and Lorestan. Kurdish identity has been particularly salient in this movement. Discussions of the erasure of Kurdish identity rose to the forefront in regard to the lack of recognition for the movement’s slogan of “woman, life, freedom” being a Kurdish slogan (“jin, jiyán, azadî” originating in the 1980s). Furthermore, Amini’s identity as a Kurdish woman has been a central part of the conversation around a future Iran that views Kurds and other ethnic groups as equals not just in theory but in practice, especially as it relates to autonomy and being free to run their schools in their native languages. While Amini’s death had more to do with her gender and attire than her Kurdish heritage, Iranian Kurds in her hometown of Saqqez intertwined their anger at having one of their own murdered by the state with long-simmering disdain for the central government. That Mohammad Mehdi Karami, a Kurdish Iranian, was executed for his involvement in the protests under charges of “war against God” and “corruption on earth through crimes against internal security” exemplifies the wider crackdown on restive Kurdish Iranians throughout the protests. The Iranian state, both before and especially after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, has steadfastly opposed Kurdish autonomy—an opposition that erupted into a full-scale military confrontation between Kurdish rebels and the emerging Islamist state shortly after the revolution. That the Kurds were routed in the rebellion that led to the deaths of as many as 10,000 has since imbued many within the Iranian Kurdish community with a smoldering hatred of the Iranian government. Thus, the customary 40th day of mourning marking Amini’s death resulted in another moment of the protest movement’s intensification when approximately 10,000 mourners-turned-marchers from the predominantly Kurdish city of Saqqez came out against the state.

The Baloch

Predominating in the country's periphery in the southeast, the Baloch minority is an ethno-religious group that follows Sunni Islam—the minority in sect in Iran—and has long accused the Islamic Republic of discrimination. Due to neglect and minimal integration by the central government, the Baloch people have faced poor socioeconomic conditions fueling greater tension between the state and the minority community.

Many Fridays after Amini's death were moments of intensification when the Baloch harnessed the organizing capacity of Friday prayers to gather in the Grand Makki Mosque of Zahedan, the largest Sunni mosque in Iran. After prayers, they would emerge to protest the state. Things came to a head on Friday, September 30, when mosque-goers-turned-protesters intertwined their solidarity with the Mahsa Amini demonstrations with their anger over the rape of a 15-year-old Baloch girl at the hands of the local police commander to spark a showdown with security forces. While the details of what happened are disputed, the end result was a staggering death toll of roughly 100 Baloch—the single largest loss of life since the protests began. Consequently, continued Friday Mahsa Amini protests in Zahedan have taken on calls for justice and accountability for what came to be known as “Black Friday.”

LGBTQ+ Community

Beyond the everyday social stigma and intolerance, much of the LGBTQ+ community has faced harassment, violence, and in some cases, death at the hands of the Islamic Republic. Iranian law criminalizes all sexual relations outside of legal marriage, and same-sex unions are prohibited, and relations can be punishable by death. The Iranian state and clergy's outlook vis-a-vis the LGBTQ+ community can be encapsulated by the rhetoric of Iranian presidents. Former President Mohammad Khatami spoke at Harvard Kennedy School in 2006, stating that the death penalty is an appropriate response to “acts of homosexuality.” A year later, then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told a Columbia University audience, “In Iran, we don't have homosexuals like in your country...we do not have this phenomenon. I don't know who has told you we have that.” Counterintuitively, the government

made Iran a hub for sexual reassignment surgery to ensure that “homosexuals” could transition to “heterosexuals.” The legality and subsidizing of transitioning as a solution to the “problem” of “homosexuality” is yet another example of the discrimination and erasure of the “phenomenon” of the broader queer community.

LGBTQ+ inclusion has been another intersectional element of the “woman, life, freedom” movement—as voiced in Hajipour's song when he uttered, “For the girl who wished to be a boy.” Moreover, weeks before Amini's death, numerous advocacy organizations brought attention to the case of Zahra (Sareh) Sedighi-Hamadani and Elham Choubdar, who were charged with “corruption on earth”—the same charge leveled at many detained activists in the “hijab protests”—and sentenced to death. Their alleged crimes were “related to the women's real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity” as well as Sedighi-Hamadani's “peaceful LGBTI rights activism” and “promoting homosexuality.” These highly-publicized cases, among others, underscored the LGBTQ+ struggle for rights early on in the movement.

Conclusion: History as Prologue

From the Tobacco Revolt of 1890-92 to the 1978-79 Islamic Revolution, most revolutionary movements in Iran sought economic and political sovereignty with the wider goal of obtaining Iran's independence—first from Czarist Russia and the British Empire in the early 20th century and then the US after 1953 overthrow of Mossadeq's democratically-elected government. In the Islamic Revolution, Iranians rallied under the banner of “Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic,” achieving independence and establishing an Islamic Republic. It has grown increasingly clear to generations of Iranians that after more than four decades of the Islamic Republic, freedom has yet to be achieved. More to the point, many believe that the Islamic Republic is the barrier that must be surmounted to obtain that very freedom. As such, from the free speech protests of 2003 and Green Uprisings in 2009 to the protests in late 2017 into early 2018 and the deadly November 2019 revolt, both of which were sparked by economic grievances but quickly morphed into anti-government uprisings, Iranians continue to pass the baton of struggle to the next generation

seeking freedom. That girls, women, and ethnic and religious minorities are now at the forefront of the struggle should come as no surprise—the marginalized often become incubators of revolution.

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Ciara Moezidis is a dual master's candidate at Harvard Divinity School and The Fletcher School, Tufts University, where she focuses on human rights violations in the MENA region, particularly issues of ethnoreligious persecution and apartheid. She has held internships on Capitol Hill, at the Project on Middle East Democracy, and with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief. She is passionate about bringing a more human-rights-centered and religiously-literate approach to U.S. foreign policy.

Endnotes

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PARTICIPATORY INTERFAITH DIALOGUE: THE KEYS TO ADDRESSING PEOPLE'S NEEDS IN MOROCCO

Yossef
Ben-Meir

Twenty-nine years ago, I was a Peace Corps Volunteer living in a mountainous High Atlas village called Amsouzerte, near the southern side of Morocco's Toubkal National Park. Back then, the journey from the village to the nearest city center took almost 20 hours along unpaved roads and mountain passes. At the foot of a mountainside, fifty kilometers from Amsouzerte, I would sometimes catch sight of an old, white mausoleum that seemed misplaced among the earth-brick homes characteristic of rural Moroccan landscapes.

Looking upon this eroding mountain area, I could envision huge swaths of terraces constructed above the mausoleum for the local Muslim community to build tree nurseries and derive generational benefits. Tree nurseries are very valuable for Moroccan farming communities because 70 percent of agricultural land in the country generates only 10-15 percent of agricultural revenue. Fruit tree cultivation allows farming families to transition from less lucrative barley and corn crops and generate higher income.

Later, I learned that the mausoleum is a sacred tomb of a Hebrew saint (tzaddik, or 'righteous one') named David-Ou-Moshe, one of over 600 tzaddikim (Muslim, Jewish, and Christian) buried throughout Morocco. I realized the land around these burials could be leveraged for future tree nurseries, potentially generating tens of millions of saplings annually.

How did I know that the people desired trees? As a Peace Corps Volunteer, we were trained to listen to them. Thus, this project and the work of the organization I co-founded in 2000, the High Atlas Foundation, are based on Moroccan communities' determination and development perspective.

Small-land holders often cannot designate the

necessary nursery plot resources over the two years required for fruit tree seeds to mature; they must harvest every season from every available square meter to maintain their livelihoods. Thus, the question that arose then and remains prevalent for rural communities is where do we acquire the land for nurseries to maximize our planting yields?

On behalf of the farming families, I approached the Moroccan Jewish community to request land leases for building tree nurseries. They agreed, but the project still needed funding. However, many years passed, and the originally intended location remained undone, despite launching a successful pilot nursery at Akrich in the Al Haouz province near Marrakech at the burial site of the tzaddik Raphael Hacoheh.

Community nurseries jumpstart a new development path toward economic and environmental sustainability. The Akrich tree nursery (financially assisted by Ecosia and FENELEC), for example, led to Imagine empowerment workshops and the nearby Achbarou Women's Carpet-Making Cooperative; a paved road now being built between the nursery/cemetery and the Cooperative, allowing visitors to easily to both sites; and a clean drinking water system in Achbarou village (funded by Yves Saint Laurent Fashion). It, therefore, is incumbent that agencies partner with these communities as land contributors to catalyze human development projects beyond the agricultural sector.

In recent years, the global community has been harshly reminded that much of the world does not reflect Morocco's inspiring faith and cultural solidarity model. The killers at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019, an AME church in South Carolina in 2015, and the Or L'Simcha Congregation (Tree of Life) synagogue

in Pittsburgh in 2018 were each warmly greeted with “Salaam” and “Welcome” and “Shalom. The potential nursery near Amsouzerte (and the success of the Akrich project) would juxtapose these devastating events, instead epitomizing the hopeful reality of interfaith solidarity in Morocco. Thus, in my role as President of the High Atlas Foundation, I decided to pen a brief letter to His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco:

“We write, moved by a troubling time, and in complete belief that Morocco can redirect humanity’s course like no other nation by its ability to simultaneously affirm multicultural unity and alleviate people’s burden. This one project can catalyze to achieve all of this.”

I hand-delivered the letter to the Royal Palace in Rabat. Within the month, the Ouarzazate Governor called to meet and discuss the implementation of this tree nursery with the Regional Directors of all relevant public agencies and our organization. For twenty-five years, I had held fast to the dream of this nursery; its construction began two months following our appeal to the King, with two-thirds of the funding supplied by Morocco’s National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD), a donor strategy first broached in 2006.

In addition to the Moroccan Jewish Community, the High Atlas Foundation also receives public land in-kind from Morocco’s National Agency for Water and Forests, enabling the planting of 4 million trees from 2003 until today. The first million trees took 14 years to plant. In 2023 alone, HAF is transplanting 1.7 million trees from 15 nurseries to benefit 10,000 farming families in 160 municipalities and building four new nurseries.

Two of these new nurseries are on land from the Moroccan Jewish community (50 percent funded by NIHD), next to the burial sites of the tzaddikim Rabbi Moul Almay in Sidi Rahal outside of Casablanca and Rabbi Haroon Abou Hassira in Telouet of the Ouarzazate province. The name given to the interfaith organic fruit tree initiative by the Governor of the Al Haouz Province, Younès Al Bathaoui, is House of Life, denoting the traditional title for a Jewish cemetery.

We are also monitoring tree growth for carbon

offsets with the University of Virginia (International Studies), Robert Bosch College (a United World College), Credit du Maroc, and Berge Bulk Blue Solutions, among the purchasers. This program charts a new carbon offset verification standard, integrating multiple existing methodologies to launch community initiatives through participatory development and empowerment workshops, particularly with women. Moreover, this strategy utilizes local, organic, and endemic seed varieties, incorporates renewable energy in the form of solar water pump systems at nurseries, reinvests offset revenue in new community projects within the regions that generated the credits, and concentrates tree planting with family farmers who are small landholders all while facilitating interfaith collaboration to alleviate rural poverty.

Morocco’s policies encourage intercultural dialogue and communication for human development. Different faith communities in Morocco are brought together to share their historical narratives, which can lead to improved livelihoods and health through a participatory development approach by leveraging underutilized capacities. However, these necessary experiences to empower and promote sustainable growth are too infrequent to impact social transformation. House of Life cements the continuity of interfaith collaboration, which is key for achieving scale and social change, by providing needed trees and support for new community projects.

On the one hand, while multicultural memory and consciousness in the country create opportunities, combining these factors has yet to reach the level of self-reliant development and a circular economy that the people urgently need. Through the USAID Dakira (or “Memory” in English) program, civil society organizations and public administrations seek to redress the lack of such participatory community dialogues in which people discuss the past and the future together and create a shared vision forward.

The most significant challenge for participatory planning is the need for more training on community dialogue facilitation to empower all voices and express all priorities. While manifold methods and activities can be used to explore personal and collective identity and create plans

for the future, most people, including Moroccans, have never experienced these approaches and are, therefore, unable to initiate and steward the process.

Interfaith dialogue - the opportunity to voice our histories - can deepen understanding and provide reconciliation between historically antagonistic groups if sought. When this process is maintained and integrated with supporting projects, defined and managed by the people, it can become a basis for achieving sustainable and prosperous societies.

In Morocco, interfaith connections are convivial when they occur but demand total energy and commitment to organize. Taking this Moroccan approach to succeed across religious differences, we could inspire other nations of Africa, the Islamic World, and the Middle East.

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RESISTANCE AND COUNTER-MEMORIES IN PERSIAN BLACK METAL

Pasqualina
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Sina Winter, a pioneer of Iranian black metal, was forced to leave Iran because of his music. As the leader of the band, From the Vastland, Sina has produced music celebrating the pre-Islamic heritage of Iran and Zoroastrian tales. After performing at the Inferno Music Festival in Oslo in 2013 and appearing in the documentary *Blackhearts* (2017), he was forced to relocate. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) targeted him because of his media exposure and several artists continue to be persecuted due to their music. In the West, black metal bands tend to be influenced by ancient legends and traditions, whereas in religiously authoritarian countries, such practices are often harshly punished. In Iran, black metal is generally considered to be blasphemous. In addition, the lyrical content featured in Sina's work is controversial, as he celebrates a heritage that the Islamic Republic wishes to eradicate from collective consciousness. This paper presents some results of my most recent studies looking at how black metal artists in Iran use their art to preserve ancient heritage and defy social norms.

Silence on the Surface: a Ban on Music and Reliance on Technology.

In the years before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the Iranian art scene was flourishing, this was promoted by the monarchical regime that sought to modernize and westernize the country. The music scene at the time was thriving, mainly featuring domestic pop stars who composed tunes based on Western models. In the wake of the revolution, the first supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini condemned all institutions that were at odds with Islamic values and beliefs. Not only was music associated with colonial cultural practices, but it was also understood as a manifestation of evil. To Khomeini, music was “no different from opium,” a drug that induced incoherence. Sever-

al restrictions were imposed after the revolution, including prohibiting public concerts, censoring lyrics, and requesting musicians to undergo administrative processes to release albums. Women were prohibited from singing, and music schools were closed. Music stores were vandalized, and instruments were destroyed. Only in 1989, Khomeini released a fatwa permitting the purchase and sale of musical instruments. In the past few decades, depending on who was in power, some music and concerts have been permitted, but only if they did not feature sensual rhythms or women's voices. This ban on entertainment resulted in a rift between the ruling class and Iranians who remained attached to their pre-Islamic culture. However, Iranians have always been one step ahead of the authorities, despite efforts to keep citizens isolated from international popular culture. Music was smuggled from abroad and sold illegally. Teens exchanged cassettes first and CDs later in schools. In the 1990s, illegal satellites became increasingly popular in Iran, posing an existential threat to the government which it was unprepared to confront. Only after satellite dishes appeared on most rooftops in Tehran did conservatives begin to discuss this new technology, branding it as a cultural invasion. These satellites not only supported Western pop music in reentering Iranian households, but rock and heavy metal as well. Moreover, what was once just a song, now became a music video. Behind the music, which their authorities called devilish, teenagers began to see musicians simply enjoying their instruments. After this, the internet continued to aid the metal community.

Given the prevailing circumstances, it's hard to imagine the Iranian government endorsing internet usage as an avenue for scientific and technological progress in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War. Nevertheless, it wasn't until 2003 that the Iranian authorities initiated a methodical ap-

proach to censoring the web, blocking sites, and filtering online content. This was undertaken to prevent the corruption of its people and restrict a tool through which the West could invade Iran. Since Iranians' lives are restricted, they learn at an early age to use proxy servers and virtual private networks (VPNs). In Iran, overcoming the internet restrictions signifies a political act, as Wulf suggests "it prepares and enables counter-appropriation moves when political conflicts are fought out on the internet and elsewhere." It can be perceived as an ongoing protest. As a result, social media pages and websites are now considered spaces of liberation, and if one is shut down, a new one is immediately created in its place. On the web, musicians, such as metal artists and their fans have found a space to create community, learn from one another, spread original music, and garner followers.

Basement Screams: Grassroots Resistance

In Iran, heavy metal bands began playing cover songs as early as the 1980s. Only at the end of the 1990s did metal bands begin writing their own music, incorporating a Persian scale and ethnic instrumentation, and Persian history into their music. As previously explained, musicians need to ask officials for permission to perform or publish their music, yet, in the conversations with heavy metal artists from Iran I've collected over the past three years, the majority have stated they prefer to perform illegally as it constitutes a political act in and of itself. Practically speaking, this means performances are small private gatherings outside of the city center, which typically take place in basements or houses. They are open to everyone, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. It is not only metalheads who host parties in basements. Far from being a phenomenon limited to the metal underground world, each subculture organizes these illegal gatherings as a collective ritual that foster a sense of belonging and belongingness. In a country without clubs, young Iranians would meet in secret to dance, drink, and socialize. Having started immediately after the revolution, it has proven impossible to stop these underground events, as metalheads are resilient and would rather risk arrest than give in to censorship.

Heavy metal is very popular among young Iranians, especially the extreme kind, such as black metal. My participants state that the most aggressive genre of metal is popular because their life is extreme. Approximately 130 bands are known to be active, however, based on my experience, I would be willing to say that there are many more, but due to their danger, many are not active. Ideologically, the vast majority of these bands promote anti-organized religious sentiment and ethnic paganism. This is a crucial point since the Islamic Republic systematically tries to eliminate everything that opposes Islam.

Forbidden Heritage

Iranian history has been thoroughly rewritten by the Islamic government since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) in 1979. Khomeini referred to pre-Islamic Iran as "under the rule of tyranny, without any trace of law or popular government" until God saved the Country through the Prophet. To him, the epic tales were insulting and as such, they were initially banned. It is reported that some Persian mythology has been incorporated into the school curriculum over the years, but not with sufficient emphasis. The hatred Khomeini felt for Persian epic tales was also a reaction against the Pahlavi kings who ruled Iran from 1925 until 1979 and emphasized Iran's pre-Islamic past as the ultimate source of Persian culture.

The main attack has been aimed at *The Shahnameh* or *The Book of Kings*, a long epic poem written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi in the early 11th Century. *The Shahnameh* is regarded as a masterpiece and is at the very foundation of Iranian nationalism, despite the regime initially banning it from schools, and the State-owned media portraying its heroes as corrupt. It is also important to the contemporary adherents of Zoroastrianism, who traditionally have considered it a work of history. The epic tale has become the ultimate expression of cultural identity for a young generation who does not align itself with the Islamic Regime, especially those belonging to Zoroastrianism or who are now embracing it as a form of resistance. Many reports show that the Islamic Republic is worried about the growing fascination with Zoroastrianism. According to the constitution, Zoroastrians,

Jews, and Christians are the only recognized religious minorities. "Within the limits of the law" they have permission to perform religious rites and ceremonies and to form religious societies. However, Zoroastrians have faced increased restrictions. They have suffered mass arrests and lengthy prison sentences. Since 2016, the authorities have blocked the unofficial annual holiday that honors the tomb of Cyrus the Great (ca. 600–530 B.C.E.), the founder of the first Persian Empire and devout Zoroastrian. Thousands of people gathered chanting "Iran is our country; Cyrus is our father." Far from equality of rights, its followers have no right to organize events or to share their religion through radio or television. Historically, artists have been in tune with society. In response to the Islamic country's efforts to erase their traditions, artists have used their talent to advocate for their heritage; it is important to remember that resistance in Iran is not a contemporary phenomenon. The media has finally acknowledged the ongoing protests, but Persia has resisted Islam since 633AD when Muslims conquered the country.

Black Metal as Counter Memories

Black metal music originated in the West in the 1980s and has traditionally been associated with blasphemy and anti-Christianity. Black metal bands in Iran, echoing their Western counterpart, often engage with ancient themes. As the authorities consider these topics controversial and blasphemous, black metal is one of the most dangerous music genres to play in Iran. Yet, musicians note that ancient tales like Zoroastrian are not just religious stories. To them, it's history and evidence of roots the government yearns for Iranians to forget.

Sina, leader of the band from the Vastland is one of the Iranian black metal artists who uses his music as a counter-memory and has paid the price for it. He had to relocate after performing in 2013 at Inferno Music Festival in Oslo and participating in the documentary *Blackhearts* (2017). The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps targeted Sina because he gained attention from the media. The purpose of Sina's music is to spread the ancient legends contained in the *Shahnameh* and to educate young people about

rich Persian culture. His discography features concept albums that are meant to celebrate not only the Persians' rich heritage but also Zoroastrian traditions. For instance, his album, *The Haft Khan*, as Sina explains tells the story of Rostam, the most beloved Persian hero. He sets off to free King Kay Kavus from the demons. On the way, he undergoes seven tests. These are known as the seven heroic trials. To Sina, these stories are valuable to inspire self-determination as "In Islam, there is one way. While our ancient gods are gray, very human. They are good or bad depending on the situation. Our stories have a lot of humanity. It is about your inner struggle and how to be a good person." Sina's ideology does not only translate into epic tales but also into his love for Zoroastrian traditions. As an example, he described the song called "The Cadavers Tower" from the album *Daevayasna*, released by Satanath Records in 2018:

"As the concept of the band is Persian Mythology and the history of the land before Islam, all my lyrics are also about that era and this song is a very good example of how I use the history from that time. this song is about the burial ritual of the dead body in ancient Iran, specifically in Zoroastrianism, and the beliefs behind it which are completely different than how it is in Islam and almost all the other modern religions. There you could see how easily and strongly Iranians were connected to nature, not only when it comes to their gods and demons which are all about the natural elements, but also about the way they were living their everyday life, and even the beliefs about life after death and the so-called other side, which of course is not accepted in Islam or better to say it's completely against the beliefs in Islam. So, you would imagine why the conservative regime of Iran is against the pre-Islamic era and do whatever to remove that part from the country's history [sic]"

Sina's ideology is overt not only in his lyrics but his aesthetic. He wears the Faravahar, one of the best-known ancient symbols of Zoroastrianism. While one could presume this is only a necklace, Sina explains:

"Almost everyone in Iran today sees this symbol as a way to express opposition to the government.

It's against the religion somehow. While they try to promote Islam and everything related to it, we use this symbol to say it's not our religion."

There is a parallel between this and the Mjolnir, which is worn by many musicians in the west belonging to various subgenres such as black metal, folk metal, and Viking metal, who similarly use their music and pre-Christian symbols to narrate the pagan tradition. Yet, these bands do not face persecution. Their resistance is mostly symbolic, while in Iran as Sina explains "In a country like Iran, everything is automatically political. I write about ancient Persia before Islam and Zoroastrian tales. It is seen as oppositional to Islam. That is my intention, of course, but regardless of my intentions, that is how the authorities perceive it". As previously explained, Zoroastrians today are at risk with their platforms reduced these tales might risk being forgotten. Sina believes that the government acts like heritage does not exist; "you cannot cancel our identity! Even if they have tried to limit the books, young people can learn about them on the internet. Since people don't want this regime, this is a symbol to show your anger and you know, that you are not supporting this regime."

Sina is not alone, not in his use of Zoroastrian tales as a tool of resistance, or sadly in being persecuted. This was the case with the death metal band Arsames who was sentenced to fifteen years in prison in 2020 for "playing satanic music" and writing lyrics inspired by Persian history and mythology. After being sentenced they posted on their YouTube page:

"Is it a crime that we are playing metal music!?" they begin. "Is it [a] crime that we are talking about Persian history?! Is it a crime that you think we are into Satanism when we have songs about Cyrus the Great and monotheism!?! And is it a crime that we love music and our country?!"

Although they do not consider this to be a crime, bands such as From the Vastland and Arsames are aware that their music represents overt resistance to the regime, and as such can lead to persecution.

Conclusion

Following the Islamic revolution of 1979, the Islamic Republic began systematically banning traditions related to the pre-Islamic heritage. As Zoroastrianism is closely associated with these traditions, also this religion was affected, despite being protected on paper. In reality, the protections offered by the Islamic Republic's constitution have been effectively insincere. Thus, it comes without a surprise that artists use the pre-Islamic era as a political tool, including Zoroastrianism which while being a religion represents to artist history and is a powerful anti-Islamic instrument. In this sense, art serves as a counter-memory. For Foucault, counter-memories are memories that are not allowed into history because they are capable of destabilizing official narratives. Resistance through counter-memories has been often implemented by using various strategies, such as music, dance, and cinema. Iranian black metal acts as a double attack on the Islamic Republic and its limitations on freedom of expression and religion; one, it is illegal and considered blasphemous, and two, it passes on an ancient heritage that the regime wishes to lock into oblivion.

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TOWARDS A STUDY OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AMONG NON-CITIZENS: THE CASE OF PALESTINIANS IN EAST JERUSALEM

Tal Eitan

The city of Jerusalem, Israel's capital, is located at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is unique in that it is both the largest Jewish and Arab city in Israel and the only one where the inferiority of the Palestinian population over the Jewish population is enshrined in law, since East Jerusalemites are not Israeli citizens but its 'permanent residents.' The non-citizen status of East Jerusalem's Palestinians has caused integrative problems for both the Israeli state authorities and the Palestinians. Following over five decades of systemic neglect, the Israeli government passed a decision (Government Decision 3790) committing substantial resources to the socio-economic amelioration of the inhabitants of East Jerusalem, with the goal of narrowing existing gaps between its 330,000 Palestinian residents and the nearly 600,000 residents of Jerusalem's well-funded, predominantly Jewish western half. More than 20 percent of this budget was directed towards educational projects, expressing an understanding at the national level that education is an effective way for creating social mobility.

Consequently, after nearly 55 years, the Israeli education system is replacing the tawjihi educational system, which was originally introduced by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. For the 2022 school year, approximately 20 percent of East Jerusalem's students attended schools that adhered to the Israeli curriculum, a number which is increasing every year. The main reasons for this change are, on the one hand, the aspirations of some of East Jerusalem's Palestinians to integrate into Israeli academia, a process that requires an Israeli matriculation certificate and a high level of proficiency in Hebrew, and, on the other, the Israeli government's desire to strengthen its sov-

ereignty over East Jerusalem. This is a long-term, difficult, and complex process that presents both the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Palestinian community with a set of pedagogical, national, and personal dilemmas.

One of the main dilemmas touches upon the issue of citizenship education. How should citizenship be taught to non-citizens? In this short essay, I will discuss the case of citizenship education in East Jerusalem. My main claim is that the distinctive characteristics of East Jerusalem, both as a geographical and political space, constitute a gap in scholarship that calls for further research. I firmly believe that this research is crucial, as it addresses a significant gap in the existing literature on citizenship education in East Jerusalem. However, my interest in this subject extends beyond mere theoretical curiosity. I recognize the transformative power of education in liberating the mind and fostering a more just and equitable society. By providing new insights and perspectives, this paper contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the issue, with significant implications not only for research, but also for policy and practice.

Citizenship Education: A Brief Theoretical Overview

In the past, citizenship education was used to suppress cultural differences and achieve social uniformity. The approach to citizenship education in the United States historically aimed to shape students into a perceived ideal of a "good citizen," which was often framed around a mythical Anglo-Saxon Protestant model. Up until the 1990s, Israeli citizenship education focused on implementing the "melting pot" policy, which

aimed to assimilate Jewish immigrants from diverse countries and cultures into a single, uniform culture.

Nowadays, most democratic nation-states are characterized by cultural, sociological, religious, and ethnic diversity. While it is important for individuals to be able to express and maintain their cultural identity both in private and public settings, it is equally vital for the state to cultivate a sense of solidarity and promote a normative framework that transcends individual group boundaries. According to Banks, civic education should aim to strike a balance between diversity and unity.

Ho and Barton emphasize the importance of formal curricula in systematically preparing students to critically engage in civil society as they work toward social justice. This preparation includes providing students with the knowledge necessary for evaluating the work of such organizations, as well as experience in the sorts of collaborative deliberation that takes place in such organizations. Bickmore suggests that citizenship education should not only seek to impart knowledge and information to students, but also encourage them to be active enquirers and critical thinkers about past and present events.

Citizenship Education in A Global, Changing World

Up to this point, I have tried to provide a basis for comprehending the concept of citizenship education. Let us challenge this framework, however. For several decades now, political fracturing and economic inequalities between states have led to waves of migration that have in turn changed political space beyond recognition. These trends indicate that the Gordian Knot between territory, citizenship, and rights is unraveling. According to scholars and educators, citizenship education has traditionally been situated within a national context and shaped by common socio-political circumstances at the national level. Accordingly, the values, skills, and positions that citizenship programs aspired to nurture were traditionally set considering a (future) social vision that now seems near obsolete. Concurrently, the validity of traditional conceptions of citizenship education

has been slowly eroding. A new perspective is required for questions of citizenship education in today's day and age, as states are now home to not only citizens, but a wide array of residents with different legal statuses. How can these challenges be addressed practically within the theoretical understanding presented above? A framework that can provide a potential direction for our discussion is refugee education which I elaborate on below in some detail.

Refugee Education

Dryden-Peterson examines the significant obstacles that arise when integrating non-citizens into national education systems, particularly in the context of refugees. She begins by examining the dilemma of nation-state-centric curriculums that ignore refugees' culture, perspectives, and history. She then examines the marginalization of refugees within national education systems, as well as the implications of this marginalization for refugees' ability to participate in civic life. She emphasizes that "including refugees in national education is a critical foundation for addressing inequalities in access to school, yet it exacerbates other inequalities in terms of what and how children learn, and how they harness resources and opportunities as civic actors."

It is of significant importance to acknowledge that the education of refugees serves a purpose beyond the mere preparation of young individuals for integration into a host country's society. Rather, it seeks to establish the groundwork for the students' eventual repatriation, cultivate their distinctive identity, and furnish them with the knowledge and skills required to aid in the reconstruction of their homeland. In other words, citizenship education in refugee settings prepares students to become citizens elsewhere. Furthermore, it is often the case that refugees have little say in the curricula that is imposed upon them. In response, informal learning spaces are created within many refugee communities by educators and family members. In these spaces, refugees may resist the national curricula because they do not find themselves adequately represented within them.

As outlined above, the question of how citizen-

ship is taught to non-citizens poses considerable challenges to educators, both theoretically and practically. The particular characteristics of East Jerusalem and the anomalous legal status of its Palestinian residents create a unique case for scholars, one which, I believe, highlights a lacuna in the scholarship and calls for future research. The subsequent paragraphs illustrate how East Jerusalem presents a distinctive setting for conducting research and implementing educational practices of citizenship education.

1. Palestinian's Legal Status in East Jerusalem and Its Native Nature

The residents of East Jerusalem did not come under Israeli control as a result of displacement or immigration, but rather had political sovereignty and cultural reform thrust upon them with the Israeli occupation of the eastern half of Jerusalem during the Six Day War in 1967. The exigencies of military occupation and de facto annexation set East Jerusalem's Palestinians apart from refugees or displaced peoples, who are expected to adopt the values and ethos of host states they willingly or involuntarily migrated to. Moreover, following Jordan's renunciation of its claims to the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1988, the majority of East Jerusalem's residents were left without Jordanian citizenship, or indeed any citizenship at all; unlike most immigrant/refugee groups, East Jerusalem's Palestinians are not citizens of any country. That also means that they have nowhere to go back to; they are physically at home (Israel/Palestine) but politically in exile and stateless.

2. The Absence of Political Equality as a Deliberate, Continuous Situation

The Palestinian inhabitants of East Jerusalem have found themselves in a state of limbo since the War of 1967. While the Israeli government has endeavored to incorporate them into the political system by annexing the area and conferring permanent residency status, they have been simultaneously marginalized by being denied political rights. The lack of political equality translates to diminished political participation. With a few exceptions on the right and left, Israeli politicians have not promoted the political participation of East Jerusalem's Palestinian res-

idents and East Jerusalem Palestinians, for their part, have shown little interest in participating in Israeli politics. Despite being eligible to vote in municipal elections, a minuscule proportion of Palestinians residing in East Jerusalem opt to exercise this right. As evidenced by the 2018 municipal election, where less than 1.5% of Palestinians voted, it is apparent that their political participation is exceedingly low. It is almost unnecessary to mention that this community has no political representation on the city council.

The rationale for boycotting municipal elections varies, but the vast majority of Palestinian Jerusalemites agree that the costs of electoral participation in an institution that is part and parcel of a deepening Israeli occupation – including a sense of national betrayal and likely social sanctions from fellow Palestinians – far exceed its limited potential advantages. In any case, the lack of political equality in Jerusalem should be considered from two different perspectives: the resistance of the Israeli sovereign to grant the Palestinians full civil equality and the initial reluctance of the Palestinians to integrate into any political order in which the Jews are the sovereigns.

3. The Ongoing Israeli – Palestinian Conflict

The third distinguishing feature of the East Jerusalem scenario is the ongoing national conflict between Israeli and Palestinians. This struggle poses a significant challenge for educators and policymakers dealing with citizenship education in East Jerusalem, where the educational sphere is a fiercely contested political battleground in which both Israel and Palestine have a vested interest in cultural supremacy. Israel's five-year plan (Government Decision 3790) is viewed as a threat to the Palestinian Authority's (PA) control and influence in East Jerusalem. Additionally, the PA fears that the increasing prevalence of Israeli curriculum in East Jerusalem schools will further widen the gap between East Jerusalem residents and the rest of Palestinian society.

Civic Education in East Jerusalem

What does citizenship education look like when political equality is denied? Students in East Jerusalem schools who adhere to the Israeli curric-

ula are assigned the same citizenship textbook—ironically titled, *To be Citizens in Israel*—as Jewish students in West Jerusalem, despite their diametrically opposite civil statuses. The status of East Jerusalem’s residents is not discussed anywhere in the textbook, nor is the anomaly so much as mentioned. In fact, the Israeli citizenship textbook is being used as a powerful tool to tie future employees to Israel’s labor market and detach Palestinians from their culture and national values. Unsurprisingly, the East Jerusalem community is strongly opposed to the use of this textbook.

A letter sent to the Director of Education at the Municipality of Jerusalem by the parents’ committee of Tzur Baher (May, 2020), a Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem, expressed their feelings of anger. In the letter, they claimed: “The significance is that this book didn’t mention the status of East Jerusalem’s residents and didn’t recognize their presence in any way, something which denies their rights and creates a situation of permanent conflict with the Jerusalem Municipality.” In addition, they came out in opposition to the Jewish-Zionist ethos that dictates the content of the textbook and denies a place to the Palestinian narrative: “With regards to parents and pupils, history teaches exactly the opposite, since the Palestinians populated this land and were the majority before the establishment of the State of Israel and the French and British colonialism. After the Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot Agreement, they were the ones who allowed and supported the Jews emigrating from Europe to Palestine after World War II.”

Putting the historical disagreements aside, the case of this textbook is a vivid example of both the extent of the absurdity of the situation and the unwillingness of the state to shape citizenry in the full sense of the word. Textbooks reflect the knowledge considered legitimate by those in power at any given time and their focus on the creation of well-informed citizens. Palestinian students not only face exclusion from the imposed curricula but also have their identity erased, given the inherent conflict with the dominant Jewish identity.

Moreover, when it comes to pedagogical questions, one must ask the following question:

where does power reside? What political purposes does this power serve? In East Jerusalem, Israel exercises complete control over the curriculum, and therefore aspects of Palestinian identity that threaten or contradict the Israeli narrative are excluded from it. In her work, Hooks distinguished between “education as the practice of freedom” and education that serves to reinforce domination. This concept provides a useful framework for understanding Israel’s desire to exert control over Palestinian curricula and its reluctance to provide effective citizenship education. It begs the question: what governing body would willingly provide its subjects with the tools to challenge its rule?

In this setting, the concept of citizenship education holds little meaning. In the absence of the ability to resist the political order, the relationship between classroom instruction (of civic values and practices) and community-based experience is severely impaired. With Israeli control over the curriculum and the extreme limitation of political opposition on the one hand, and in the absence of the possibility of full political integration (i.e., becoming an Israeli citizen) on the other, is it even possible to provide an effective citizenship education in East Jerusalem? What is the point of citizenship education (as political education) when the avenues for political resistance are limited? In essence, can citizenship education in East Jerusalem exist without being a form of re-education?

Civic Education in Post-Colonial Societies

An investigation of the matter through the lens of post-colonial societies bears some merit. It is not about taking a side in the question of whether the State of Israel is the rotten fruit of a colonial project, but rather arguing that East Jerusalem, as an area under Israeli control, contains elements that exist in countries that were ruled by Western colonizers (such as military rule, shared life between native and immigrant populations from the West, lack of political representation of the indigenous group, and more). This, to me, justifies an examination of civic education through the lens of education systems in post-colonial societies. I believe the post-colonial framework can serve as a useful tool in two regards: first, it can aid in examining the conceptualization and delivery of citizenship (and civic) education. Secondly, it can shed light

on the exceptionalism of East Jerusalem. In her article, "History Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa," Teeger examines the challenges faced by South Africa in teaching a truthful and unbiased history curriculum (a central component of civic education) in the aftermath of apartheid. The author tries to explore the complexities of teaching a history curriculum that reflects the diverse experiences and perspectives of South African communities. Teeger points out that teaching history in post-apartheid South Africa is complicated by the need to reconcile the country's painful past with the goal of promoting national unity and social cohesion. In a different article, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Teeger show that commemoration is used in South Africa as a tool for political legitimation, with different groups seeking to claim ownership of the narrative of the past.

The challenges that Vinitzky-Seroussi and Teeger present are challenges that exist in the Jerusalem area, including groups' diverse experiences and narrative struggles. It is important to note that when they speak of different groups seeking ownership of the narrative, they argue this based on two assumptions that do not exist in East Jerusalem: the first is that the socio-political relations between the groups are equal in power (or close to equal, or at least there is a formal aspiration that power relations will be equal) and that the groups play by the same (political) rules. The second assumption is that the debate is about shaping the memory of the events that happened in the past and are shaping the country's present.

Neither of these assumptions exists in Jerusalem. Firstly, the political power of East Jerusalem residents is restricted, as they possess a lower legal status compared to their Jewish counterparts. In the absence of political equality and given the fact that they have no political representation in the municipality of Jerusalem, Palestinian residents of the eastern part of the city are at a disadvantage in the struggle over the historical narrative that their children will be taught. Secondly, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to shape the daily reality in East Jerusalem. History is still happening. The unstable, volatile reality in East Jerusalem makes it almost impossible to come to terms with the past and incorporate it into an agreed-upon curriculum.

A final note before we conclude. Jerusalem is also my hometown. Prior to my graduate studies at Harvard Graduate School of Education, I was the director of Albashair— a program for excellence that trained outstanding Palestinian youth from East Jerusalem. My work in East Jerusalem brought me face-to-face, on a daily basis, with the difficult implications of Israeli rule in East Jerusalem in general and with the absence of effective citizenship education in particular. The young Palestinians I have met regularly, cognizant of their exclusion from the political centers of influence and their subsequent inability to influence public discourse, run the gamut of emotions, ranging from anger, to alienation, to political apathy. In one way or another, each of these constitutes a threat to the future of Jerusalem as a city of two peoples and the future possibility of coexistence between Jews and Palestinians there.

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WOMEN'S RIGHTS AS HUMAN RIGHTS: THE HISTORY OF THE TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST ORGANIZATION - WOMEN LIVING UNDER MUSLIM LAWS

Anniesa
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Over the last 28 years, the language of women's rights has become entwined with human rights and constitutional rights discourse, particularly in the Global North. The slogan, "women's rights are human rights," was publicly adopted into the document in the aftermath of Hilary Clinton's renowned speech in September 1995. It was here, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, that 89 governments finally conceded that any law discriminating against women directly violated their freedoms and right to equality.

While this slogan gained unprecedented attention at the Beijing Conference, the notion itself was birthed much earlier. Throughout three successive conferences, held in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, and Nairobi in 1985, women's groups called for a legal framework to uphold gender equality. These women hailed from diverse ethnicities and nationalities, gathering to bring attention to the various ways in which gender-based violence and discriminatory practices were affecting their lives, such as sexual abuse and marital and child custody discrimination.

The transnational feminist network Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) was officially formed in 1984 with the aim of promoting human rights, gender justice, and equality for those women whose lives are shaped, conditioned, or governed by patriarchal and/or authoritarian interpretations of Islam. WLUML played an increasingly front-line role in international conferences from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. At the Beijing conference, for example, WLUML formed part of the influential civil society, and Farida Shaheed, one of WLUML's founding

members and sociologist by profession, was also present as a representative for the government of Pakistan.

The network was founded by eight other women from diverse Muslim backgrounds, including women from Algeria, Tanzania, Iran, and Mauritius. Their initial collaboration had begun earlier, in 1982, as a solidarity action committee that centered on unity between, and for, women from Muslim contexts whose human rights were not recognized because of their gender. The women had initially come together in response to four cases where women were denied their rights by laws justified under the name of Islam. The first case concerned the imprisonment without trial of three Algerian women who criticized the proposed 'Islamic' Family Code, which significantly curtailed the rights of women within marriage. The second case concerned one woman challenging the constitutionality of the Muslim Personal Status laws related to divorce in India. The third advocated against the sentencing to death of a domestic worker in Abu Dhabi after being sexually attacked by her employer. And the final case supported the demands of the 'Mothers of Algeria' seeking custody of their children. These cases, and the success of the solidarity committee in preventing injustices, inspired Algerian sociologist Marieme Hélie-Lucas with the idea to form WLUML. She saw clearly how bringing together women from different Muslim backgrounds had the potential to effect powerful change.

The WLUML network became a coordinated response to counter the spread of politicized Islam that often threatened women's autonomy in

many Muslim countries. For example, following the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, Pakistan adopted similar laws restricting women's dress in public, and throughout the 1980s, there were coordinated attempts to standardize Muslim family laws. The women who founded WLUMML intended to cultivate reciprocal relationships between women from Muslim contexts by prioritizing in-person exchanges where participants shared their experiences and country-specific developments regarding such laws. This facilitated the sharing of knowledge that was necessary to challenge discriminatory laws and strengthen the agency of women who were often represented as passive victims.

Pioneering Feminism from the East

Women from both the Global North and Global South were present and active participants in international conferences between 1975 and 1995. However, the concept of feminism was still largely dominated by Western perceptions and attitudes towards women of Muslim and Eastern identities, often regarding them as submissive, dependent, or the victims of despotic patriarchs. Such beliefs were even held by many Western feminists, who, though well-intentioned, also often thought of women in Muslim contexts as helpless victims without a voice.

Factions of Western feminist movements were unaware of the extent to which local, front-line women activists and groups actively campaigned for their rights in various liberation struggles - whether fighting to overthrow discriminatory family laws in Algeria or carving out feminist identities in countries such as Pakistan and India. WLUMML's first wave of activism (1982 -1991) was influenced by the sudden and tumultuous anti-women reforms across the Middle East and Asia, particularly in countries such as Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Algeria.

From the late 1970s, women's rights were violated through a series of systematic policies across these countries, such as the rise of Hudud laws, imposition of compulsory Mahram (where a woman is instructed to be chaperoned by a male relative),

and enforced hijab and niqab. Against this backdrop, WLUMML navigated the early stages of their advocacy through four key pillars: peacebuilding and resisting the impact of militarization, preserving multiple identities for women through exposing fundamentalisms, widening the debate on women's bodily autonomy, and promoting and protecting women's equality under laws.

While these pillars provided the basis from which WLUMML operated, what was arguably more fundamental was the direct, cross-cultural exchanges amongst network members. In 1988, WLUMML received a grant as part of the United Nations Women and Development Decade programme and brought 30 women from countries such as Sudan, Algeria, and Indonesia to a village house in Aramon, France. It was from here that Marieme Helie-Lucas initiated a series of cross-cultural experiences. Haleh Afshar, Professor of Economics and Gender Studies at York University, and Riffat Hassan, Islamic feminist scholar of the Qur'an, mediated this session. It was decided that 18 out of the 30 women would spend three months in foreign countries, observing local and varying interpretations of Islam, which shaped the extent to which women were valued and regarded.

This initial experiment inspired a ten-year research program amongst WLUMML members, who not only collected evidence and research on women's related issues in more than twenty countries, but also encouraged their network to build more women's groups at a grassroots level. Essentially, these efforts paved the way to help elevate local women's consciousness about their diverse yet similar experiences. This simple act of going into the field to learn directly from women whose lives were shaped and affected by Muslim laws - and leveraging their respective languages to publish their testimonies - was the fundamental difference between networks such as WLUMML and certain other Western feminist groups.

Regional Activism with a Transnational Approach

In bringing local women's testimonies to the wider women's movement, WLUMML helped to insert the experiences, struggles, and concerns of women from Muslim contexts into international dialogues on women's rights as human rights. Through gathering varied first-hand experiences from women in local languages, WLUMML made a clear move to help decolonize and decentralize the domineering Western feminist narrative and work towards greater transnationalism. This was necessary, given that global feminist literature tended to be heavily imbued with colonialist messaging - even to date - even though feminism didn't solely emerge from the West.

In fact, many women scholars from Muslim contexts have written extensively on feminist issues and experiences, some of which date back to the eighth Century. Nouria Ali-Tani, a researcher in the transformation of international politics from a feminist perspective, references some examples of 20th Century Eastern feminist literature, including *Sultana's Dream* (1905), revolutionary reflections on a feminist utopia by Indian activist Rokeya Sakhawat Hosain, and *The Harem Years* (1987), a biographical account of the restrictive world of upper-class women in Egypt, by Huda Shaarawi, pioneer of feminism in Egypt.

Such literature has played a significant role in shaping WLUMML's transnational efforts and grassroots work. For instance, *Sultana's Dream* is a feminist utopian novel in which Sultana dreams of a city of women where men carry out household chores typically deemed as "women's work." WLUMML employed the book in two ways: firstly, as a consciousness-raising tool, and then to teach factions of women within their network to read in English. Perhaps the most prominent example of feminist literature used by WLUMML to equip and educate women activists is *Great Ancestors: Women Asserting Rights in Muslim Contexts*. This publication, jointly produced by Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre and WLUMML, worked to profile and pay homage to those women who defied and changed the contours of women's lives in Muslim contexts from the 8th to mid-20th Century.

However, WLUMML's transnational approach extended beyond decolonizing the narrative via publications. Charlotte Bunch, the founder of

the Center for Women's Global Leadership and Professor of Women's & Gender Studies at Rutgers University, was particularly instrumental in conceptualizing Violence Against Women (VAW) since the 1970s and the World Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1981 when the term was formally adopted. Prior to this conference, Violence Against Women had been typically segmented into specificities such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), sexual violence, and bride killings. Bunch's worked to consolidate these anti-women and anti-girl ordeals across the world into a unifying movement that helped to strengthen WLUMML's transnational activism.

Since its inception, efforts to stop violence against women, whether on legal, religious, or cultural grounds, whether in the public or private sphere, have been at the heart of WLUMML's advocacy and research. WLUMML joined the Transnational Working Groups in 1985 and focused on raising public awareness of violence against women in international spaces. For example, WLUMML collected around a thousand affidavits throughout the early 1990s directly from Bangladeshi women who suffered rape by factions of the Pakistani army during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. It is estimated that up to 400,000 Bangladeshi women were raped as a weapon of war.

WLUMML presented these affidavits at the Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 after undergoing a robust legal process as per the Tribunal's policy. Moreover, WLUMML joined forces with other organizations, such as the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), which under the leadership of Charlotte Bunch, facilitated a day-long conference where 33 women from 25 countries presented accounts of violence against women. These testimonies detailed violations of women's rights in conflict, the domestic sphere, societal, legal, and economic discriminations, and perceptions of women's bodily rights. This Global Tribunal was the first of five international tribunals organized by CWGL, designed to gain global recognition that women's rights are human rights on a UN platform.

Tireless years of activism and advocacy from women's networks such as WLUMML resulted in a historic win for feminism in 1993. During the

World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, women's rights were formally recognized as synonymous with human rights through the Vienna Declaration on 25th June 1993. Following this, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW) in December of the same year.

Many young women and girls today perceive women's rights as having always been a guaranteed and natural right. While it is now for so many women, the lack of regard for women as equal beings in both the private and public sphere, particularly during the 1970s onwards, provided the very inspiration behind WLUML's inception. Reactionary women groups braved severe struggles and opposition - often at personal cost to their lives and mental health - throughout the past few decades of fighting to conceptualize and consistently uphold women's rights as human rights. Yet the battle wages on. Women's rights continue to be in flux in many Islamic countries, as conservative governments, communities, and rigid patriarchal structures both in public and private continue to relegate the value of women and girls.

Today, we are witnessing the progress and gains made in the name of women's rights be rolled back - whether in Afghanistan, which is in its second year of Taliban rule, or in Turkey, where the government pulled out of the Istanbul Convention. The rise of violence against women and violations of their human rights are all clear indications that women groups around the world need to come together now, as they have done in decades gone by, to protect the legacy and labor of former women activists, groups, and movements.

WLUML's contributions over the past four decades entailed actively mobilizing women groups at every level - grassroots, national, regional, and international - and helped work towards a transnational feminist network. WLUML's unique contribution primarily lies in closing the feminist gap. At the time of its inception, women's narratives and imaginations of their experiences and activism were predominantly dominated by Western feminist groups. In cultivating this transnational approach to women's rights,

WLUML carved out new spaces and opportunities in feminist imaginations, perspectives, and approaches for women from Muslim contexts.

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(UN)MAKING MASCULINITIES: TRACING HOW MEN'S RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE IMPACT THE HOME IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK

Lottie
Kissick-Jones

The methods of indigenous 'elimination' implemented by settler colonial Israel are more complex than the physical eviction of Palestinians from their homes, though this indeed remains crucial. Through my primary research in the occupied West Bank, it has been evident that structural and direct violence against cities, communities, and families is systematically implemented and nurtured with the objective of breaking down social support systems and challenging normative gender roles to create unlivable conditions for Palestinians. The performance of Palestinian masculinity offers a crucial target for gendered modes of Israel's colonial violence.

I propose that the home is closely interlinked to identity formations, such as gender, which makes it a pertinent sphere for studying a settler colonial agenda that is constructed upon the eradication of both Palestinian identity and space. My research confronts three levels of interaction with the occupation: physical violence against the home, indirect forms of violence that permeate into the home through the bodies of men, and, finally, inter-communal violence. These categories of violence collectively challenge the ability of Palestinian men to uphold normative patriarchal roles constructed within cultural and religious frameworks, such as the 'protector' and 'provider.' In the case of male family members failing to protect their friends and family, particularly within the space of the home, there is a breakdown of important forms of social power, and an environment of shame is cultivated – a 'social death.' Therefore, my research has revealed that men are forced to choose between two dominant languages in these instances: 1) violence and 2) self-isolation. Both responses hold the ability to break down local mechanisms of support and

solidarity. This article will target one level of violence – physical violence enacted against Palestinian homes – and how such violence nurtures the breakdown of Palestinian masculinity, particularly Palestinian men's role as 'protectors.' Such a study offers an entrance to wider considerations of gender performances within this settler colonial context.

Methodology

My study is grounded in first-hand narratives and observations of Palestinians inhabiting the occupied West Bank. For three months, I resided in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Al-Khalil (Hebron), Nablus, and Jenin to conduct this ethnographic research. It is important to note that my Palestinian heritage is concealed by my British passport and white-conforming body, therefore, I held the privilege to navigate the land and interact with soldiers as though this aspect of my identity did not exist. I interviewed predominantly men to expand the space for first-hand male accounts of violence and trauma, in a setting that is commonly closed off to such due to culturally prescribed masculine ideals of resilience and strength. Prior to my interviews, I was advised by another researcher that the men interviewed would shape their responses in a manner to impress me as a cis woman—a 'social desirability bias.' In reality, I was struck by the vulnerability that these men demonstrated. Possibly, in the presence of a woman from an external culture, the male participants felt they had the opportunity to explore memories and emotions that had been previously denied due to social pressures.

Palestinian Masculinities

MacKenzie and Foster define 'thwarted masculinity' as a gender category that has emerged due to structural and direct occupational violence threatening traditional gender roles. To reclaim desired forms of masculinity, men are shown to express patriarchal attitudes and resort to violent actions. Such behavior supports a narrative of backwardness and terror surrounding Palestinian men, feeding into the occupation's security discourse, and legitimizing further mechanisms of violence and control. The settler colonial agenda continues to be 'legitimized' by these 'tropes of violent hypermasculinity that characterize ongoing Western Orientalist discourse.' Through such logic, Israeli violence cannot be understood and contested without confronting the gender constructions that facilitate such racism and imperialism.

Findings from my research suggest that Palestinian masculinity continues to be centered around the roles of 'provider' and 'protector' within the direct family and wider community. Local conflict resolution systems enhance this further by being reliant on men who have endured violence, such as imprisonment or torture. Through this, Palestinian male bodies are considered to provide an important link between violence inside and outside of domestic spaces. As Mitchell defines it, the family is the key arena of the patriarchy. Despite developments in the younger generations sharing duties inside and outside the home, the overall responsibility continues to lie on the Palestinian man. This is not always limited to the father of the family; I stayed with a family in Al-Khalil where the eldest son had a successful job, and his role as the economic provider ultimately altered the dynamics in the family space. I witnessed the rest of the family waiting on him in the same manner other families would the father, bringing him shisha, cooking him his favorite food, demonstrating the value of providing economically for the family.

When Palestinian families live without formal political representation, the family becomes a key protector and form of social authority. Through the zoning of land and corruption of the Palestinian Authority (PA), structures of protection

continue to be manipulated and dismantled to encourage lawlessness and ensure that the Palestinian population remains vulnerable to both the external enemy and internally constructed 'enemy.' Many of the fathers I interviewed detailed their personal methods of protecting the family and the safety of the home. Such efforts included banning the discussion of politics in this space and keeping their children inside when not at school to avoid involvement with resistance. However, after discussing these efforts, every interviewee reluctantly revealed their futility, as the occupation is a powerful force in the economic, political, and material construction of the home. Interestingly, I asked my interview participants what defines a Palestinian man, and the most referenced answers across all locations included: protecting the family (18), hiding their feelings, or remaining emotionally strong (8), and thinking about the future on behalf of their family (7). This is supportive of my theory that Palestinian hegemonic masculinity is claimed through performances of the 'protector' and 'provider.'

The intrinsic link between the self-worth of men and their role in the family was emphasized to me in an interview with a 28-year-old male psychologist based in Ramallah, who uses art therapy to address trauma. It was particularly interesting to hear about the group therapy that he held for Palestinian men, especially as other organizations noted that men refused to use their services. The psychologist explained to me that when he asked, 'Who are you?' 'Where do you want to go in life?,' the men would respond through narratives of their family members. For example, one father responded about how his son attends university, and he hopes for him to travel abroad; the psychologist would point this deflection out and then ask them to connect their personal emotion. We discussed why this was a common response from men, in comparison to women who more openly referred to themselves. Firstly, the ongoing stigma associated with men's mental health was noted as one of the largest factors. We also identified fatherhood as one of the most important aspects of a man's self-worth. As the head of the family, fathers are 'bestowed with an immense amount of respect and gender status in Palestinian society.' This is particularly important in the context of an occupation where

national identity and masculinity go hand-in-hand. To be a father, therefore, is to ensure the continuation of the Palestinian lineage; as 'the mother was responsible for the reproduction of Palestinians until 1947, the rape [of the land as mother] disqualified her from this role. It is now fathers [i.e., paternity] who reproduce the nation.' Therefore, there is a tremendous psychological impact when men cannot fulfil this role. This was evident during my research as men often introduced themselves to me through their positionality as a father, showing photos of their children and expressing pride in their achievements. When asked about the impact of the occupation on their lives, the most dominant response was associated with 'failed fatherhood' and the humiliation they experienced of being unable to protect themselves and their family. Thus, the value of fatherhood holds the capacity to diminish men's individuality.

The notion of honor, translated in Arabic as 'sharaf,' is an imperative concept to understanding gender performances in Palestinian society; particularly in rural areas and traditional communities, such as Al-Khalil, sharaf is shown to greatly influence social behavior. Lang defines sharaf as 'the sum of all moral virtues that gives a man a right to higher social status.' This is dependent on the morality of the individual but is also intertwined with family honor, particularly the modesty of women. By understanding the politics of honor, the occupation can target a system of domination that maintains the familial unit. This was highlighted to me during an interview with a 59-year-old woman from a neighboring village; she explained how 'drones are sent up on our life...as an Arab Muslim community, we must be covered. If I sit outside my home without my hijab, the drone can see my hair and face.' In this instance, surveillance mechanisms not only violate the boundaries of the home but also that of a Muslim woman's honor. This was emphasized further by a 30-year-old man based in Aida Camp, Bethlehem:

'The occupational forces know the background and characteristics of the Palestinian man and use this to humiliate them. They take pictures of his family when they threaten to demolish the house.'

As a patriarchal concept, men take responsibility

for the preservation of honor, and when these boundaries are breached, it is seen to be a failure on their part.

Gendering Home

The connection between the space of the home and performances of gender was revealed to be integral in my fieldwork. As Harker states, 'home is the space where one is with their family, where they can receive friends and relatives and visit them in turn, and if they want to start a family, they'll need to make a home first.' Most of the homes that I visited had multiple floors inhabited by both immediate and extended family. These spaces are passed between generations, and when their child marries, many parents will invest in expanding the home for them to live with their new family. To violate this space, imbued with cultural significance and identity, is to destroy the dignity and honor of the bodies inhabiting it. Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Ihmoud define 'the ongoing militarization, invasion, and destruction of the Palestinian home space as a central aspect of the Zionist project's erasure of Palestinian history and memory, but also the dislocation of Palestinian familial and communal life.' Spatial power has undeniably been utilized by the occupation as a means of reshaping the bodies, identities, and relations of those that reside within to, ultimately, dismantle resistance and state building efforts. Herzl, or the 'ideological creator' of 'Israel,' states in his manifesto, 'If I wish to substitute a new building for an old one, I must demolish before I construct.' Therefore, in the case of the occupied today's post-second intifada era West Bank, there is a great deal to learn from the localized material spaces of the home, due to their significance as a site for national struggle and the (un)making of relations.

Home and Less

'I want a house built of metal'

were the words of a young boy whose newly built home in Bethlehem had been demolished by three Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) tank grenades. The occupation impacts performances of masculinity through violence against the home, a space that should embody strength and solidarity. Nowhere can the home be removed

from violence and insecurity, as 'the house is at best a fragile, tenuous space in which to be when all other spaces have been refused.' However, the precariousness of the home takes on a unique specificity when considered in the occupied West Bank, where it stands as a fundamental target and tool of settler colonial violence. Weizman argues that space is not merely the 'background' of Israeli state projects but rather 'the medium that each of their actions seeks to challenge, transform, or appropriate.' As another Palestinian home is destroyed, another Palestinian family is replaced by settlers, another house is raided during the night, the walls of the home are transformed into a technology of governmentality, a set of borders that separate freedom from imprisonment. Through direct violence against the home, such as home raids and settlement expansion, I found the performance of the masculine 'protector' to be rendered insecure.

Despite the division of the West Bank under the 1995 Oslo Accords between the PA and occupation, the reality is 'the PA has become a sort of sub-contractor for Israel and has, thus, served in part to mask the reality of an Israeli military occupation (who holds) full security control and total domination over land and all other resources.' This demonstrates the permeability of Palestinian homes residing in Areas A, B, and C to such colonial power. As the only main city with Israeli settlements within, Al-Khalil has a further level of spatial control, the two areas H1 and H2. Responsibility for security and civil matters in H1 is under the PA, whilst H2 is divided by Israel controlling security and the PA civilian matters; however, the level of interaction with the occupation remains very high in both areas. These two defining features of the location blur the boundaries between the private and public to ensure the infiltration of colonial violence. As one father working for the International Committee of the Red Cross described, 'In Hebron, the problem is the presence of Israeli settlers in the heart of the city as a burning motive to keep the area boiling. You have extreme settlers, which matters a lot.' Thus, I will be applying the term ideological settler to reference religious fundamentalist settlers who pursue the expansion of Israeli rule through the violent expulsion of Palestinians. Al-Khalil, both in the towns and rural districts, is considered the most

conservative area of the occupied West Bank. There continues to be a strong emphasis on the Muslim faith and traditional ideas of the family, as my research revealed, with the men of the family responsible for the protection of their family's honor. The 23-year-old journalist from Al-Khalil, when asked about his responsibility as a brother, told me that he would kill a man immediately if he ever looked at his sister in the wrong way. Although not unique to the Palestinian context, this reaction demonstrates the powerful role of honor within a Palestinian normative model of family and gender relations that centers responsibility around the man. Therefore, this location stands as a target for the breakdown of such Palestinian traditions and customs, particularly through violence against the Palestinian home by the IOF and ideological settlers. This exhibits how, as the journalist summarized, 'the occupation and the home in Hebron are impossible to separate.' This entanglement causes a 'social death' that expands outside of the household into the wider family and community.

Home Raids

In home raids, the home is reconstituted from a space of safety into a space of warfare, especially in H2 areas due to the lack of security for Palestinians. Din defines how home raids encompass four forms: house search, arrest of a family member, mapping physical features of houses and the identity of its occupants, as well as house seizures to serve operational needs. The occupation has completed three-dimensional models of the entire West Bank, providing intimate details of family homes, including the layout of rooms. Therefore, even after a raid is completed, the privacy of the home cannot be restored. Families are placed in a precarious state of waiting for their spaces to be infiltrated, especially as raids are known to occur predominantly during the night, which heightens the fear and vulnerability associated. The psychological impact of this exposure to violence has been found to cause PTSD and anxiety. One 22-year-old woman from Al-Khalil described how 'we (would) wake up when we are sleeping and look above and see a soldier,' which led to her having sleep insomnia and nightmares. The military law operating in the West Bank ensures that the IOF does not require a warrant to invade the private domain, with more than 200 arbitrary

raids occurring every month. Often, these house seizures would involve the IOF claiming the roof to observe the actions of others, appropriating the home as a spatial weapon of violence against the family's neighbors, and dismantling ideas of communal trust. A 21-year-old male student from Nablus explained to me, 'If people know someone is a spy, he will be killed by the community, and his whole family will be impacted.' Therefore, the same violation can both undermine the performance of the man as 'protector' of the home, but also the broader social ties that are dependent on trust and honor.

Shame and self-hatred are shown to be ignited when men cannot protect the boundaries of the home and the bodies residing within. I interviewed a 31-year-old radio presenter about his experience living in H2 with his three children, the youngest son being 10 months, who explained, 'I lost my understanding of someone as strong and the protector after I was beaten in front of my children by the soldiers. If I cannot protect them, how can I be a man?' As Sartre theorizes, the gaze of others can alienate and shame, which the occupation weaponizes by intentionally highlighting fathers' vulnerabilities in front of their children. Since the performance of fatherhood is rooted in notions of strength and authority, forced vulnerability is thus inherently damaging to a father's self-worth and maintenance of familial dynamics. The father from Al-Khalil explained how he does not 'hold the power to decide to live again in this area' after a similar experience:

'Every single father in a Palestinian family from occupation feels he cannot do anything. When they raid a Palestinian home, they put all members in the same room, and the children and wife are meant to look to the man, the biggest man of the family, so you must protect them, but he feels he cannot do anything.'

This loss of agency by forcing family members together into one room, often along with neighboring families, rebuilds the home into a stigmatized space. The father of three went on to speak about his inability to socialize with the neighbors with whom he had been imprisoned due to 'the shame I hold inside me,' choosing to isolate himself from his community. As aforementioned,

'sharif' functions as a powerful mechanism of control over men by both their own communities and the occupation. With the expression of emotion continuing to be stigmatized for Palestinian men, there is not sufficient space to process and recover from such experiences. This was emphasized when the interviewee admitted he had not spoken about this experience or that of his brother's murder that occurred three months ago by an IOF soldier. He viewed this interview as an opportunity to navigate these feelings, a method for processing trauma: 'I must talk with you. It is important to talk with you because for three months I did not speak about it at all. Maybe this can make me rest and feel more comfortable.' In recent years, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) has been strengthened in post-conflict spaces (for example, IJR). However, for the occupied West Bank, which faces ongoing trauma, the Ministry of Health continues to prioritize 'physical life-saving activities...besides the struggle to access MHPSS services, stigma and shame prevent many from seeking aid, particularly men, who associate demolitions and settler violence with an inability to protect their families.' Therefore, the diminishing of trust and cooperation, within a context where MHPSS is already weak and stigmatized, has a destabilizing long-term impact. This prompted me to consider the 'colonized mind,' as many male interviewees, after narrating experiences of 'domicide' and trauma, were unable to define life outside of the occupation's boundaries. Startlingly, the most common response to planning the future for their wife and/or children was the inability to do so, though all interviewees noted it as one of their responsibilities. Jabr observes how the capacity to trust and grow socially is restricted by humiliation. Ultimately, methods of disempowerment, such as domicile, hold the potential to socially eliminate an oppressed group.

As Parekh describes, 'a society based on humiliation uses all means at its disposal to keep the humiliated groups in conditions of poverty, squalor, long working hours, ill health, political isolation, and social marginalization.' This is distressingly materialized by the radio presenter who expressed the humiliation he experienced after having to defecate in front of his family and neighbors, something that can subvert and deconstitute one's social being. My observations of

Palestinian men demonstrated that masculinity is largely claimed through notions of self-control and agency over the body through both physical and emotional discipline, particularly poignant given frequent comparisons of the Palestinian land to the body. A 70-year-old male interviewee originally from Dheisha Camp spent 25 years in Israeli prison; he described the chronic stomach problems that he developed from sharing a toilet with 49 other men, 'there is a lot of violence inside the jail, and I did not go to the toilet for 12 days.' When he left prison, this pain functioned as a reminder of these past experiences of violence and vulnerability, alongside the mental pain, he noted. This is seen across all the geographies in the occupied West Bank. One 22-year-old interviewee from Bait Sahour had discovered that his newly married cousin had been beaten by her husband during their honeymoon. This had ignited a feud between their families, so he had been called upon to 'deal with the situation.' He told me, 'When I find him, I will hit him in the face once, maybe twice, but that is it as I have to have control.' This illuminates how mastery over body and space is likely crucial to claiming honorable masculinity.

Settler Expansion

The home should provide 'safety, harmony, and love,' a father of three children from Al-Khalil lamented to me. The occupation, rather, restructures this space into a prison, a military base, a graveyard. As Baxter argues, the home has been increasingly used as a space of refuge from danger and humiliation which the occupation encroaches upon. Outside of demolitions, the expansion of settlements applies other forms of violence to render Palestinian homes uninhabitable and force families to evacuate their spaces. Homes close to the settlements in Al-Khalil, for example, are continuously threatened by violence from ideological settlers, without any legal consequences. As a means of intimidation, ideological settlers throw stones through the windows, shout verbal abuse, and often physically attack Palestinians as they leave their homes. This occurs regularly for homes that overlook Al-Shuhada Street, a major road in the Old City that has remained blocked off from Palestinians since 1994 after 29 Palestinians were murdered by ideological settler Baruch Goldstein. For protection, many Palestinians place bars on the windows of their homes, forming a self-impris-

onment. Through the discourse of security, the occupation has legitimized a further act of apartheid and left Palestinians vulnerable to attacks.

Mbembe argues that 'the settlement project in Palestine sought the fragmentation of Palestinian society and geography, to take control over its territories and expel its inhabitants.' One interview with an internationally renowned activist in Al-Khalil brought Mbembe's work to life. The home in which we conducted the interview was one of the last Palestinian-owned homes in the settlement and was under constant threat of occupation by ideological settlers. The interviewee proudly explained how he contacted the Palestinian owner, who had been too afraid to resist the settlers and offered to pay him the rent to stay in the house and resist the occupation himself. Despite the power of his resistance by inhabiting this home, this ignited violence, including loss of familial and social relationships, legal prosecution, and the construction of an uninhabitable area. The activist explained how:

'Here, you do not have access to maintenance, ambulance, friends do not come to visit because it is a closed military zone. You are living in a ghost town and jail at the same time. I am living in a big prison here without protection or food. All aspects of your life are controlled and affected by the mood of Israeli settlers.'

Through a 'closed military zone,' the occupation attempts to create unliveable conditions, isolated from support systems and social relations, to drive Palestinians out of their homes. It only took one hour for this to be brought to life as two soldiers infiltrated the home, demanding that we switch off the Arabic music playing. The soldiers and activist shouted at one another until one of the soldiers raised his gun and threatened to kill him. This contest via noise brought to mind my interviewees' description of masculinity, many of whom referenced a 'using a loud, harsh voice.' He explained to me that he had not seen his son for months, who had moved away with his wife because of the danger of living in this home. In this case, the activist chose to protect his family and Palestinian land through self-detachment. This is particularly pertinent considering the traditional Muslim culture in Al-Khalil, which situates the family as the central social unit. There is an interesting dichotomy at play; by embodying the role of the 'protector,' his role as a father is dis-

assembled. Through continuous pressure on the home through both physical and psychological violence, the social, economic, and political connections of the Palestinians residing within are weakened. Ultimately, men cannot protect both the home as a physical space and the family: the occupation forces a decision.

Conclusion

This paper has established the dominant performance of Palestinian masculinity to be reliant on the roles of the 'protector' and 'provider.' In instances of direct violence against the home, men's ability to perform these roles is threatened, and consequently, the social fabric of the family is often damaged. Palestinian men largely attempt to reclaim gendered power through two primary strategies: 1) responsive violence and 2) self-isolation. In instances of physical violence against the home where men are faced with humiliation and the inability to protect family honor, a response of silence and self-isolation is often chosen. Subsequently, these men become isolated from the support systems that work to sustain life under the occupation and are unable to contribute to such systems themselves – what I call a 'social death.' Societal expectations of strength and stoicism place pressure on men to resist their feelings or deter them from seeking MHPSS support, preventing trauma recovery. The psychosocial impact of violence is exacerbated and breaks down men's ability to protect the sphere of the Home and permits more violence to enter. This paper has identified not only how settler colonialism targets the Home but also how subsequent gender responses by men may further damage familial and communal relations. The gendered expectations placed upon men as the 'protector' and 'provider' amplify the violence of the occupation by preventing access to avenues of both solidarity and healing.

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FIGHTING TO EXIST: LGBTQ ORGANIZATIONS IN THE MAGHREB

Matthew R. Jones

The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar brought renewed attention and increased dialogue to LGBTQ rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). While much of the Western world has either provided legal protections for the community or, at the very least, decriminalized same-sex relations, this is not the case in most of the Islamic world. The region hosts most of the world's restrictions concerning same-sex relations and gender expression. In the MENA, only Israel, Jordan, Turkey, and Bahrain have decriminalized same-sex relations. Despite no legal restrictions in these states, discrimination is still prevalent. Additionally, out of the eleven states that maintain the death penalty that could be applied to same-sex relations, five are in the MENA region. The remainder of MENA states impose sentences ranging from six months to life imprisonment. Naturally, the primary goal of the LGBTQ civil society organizations in the region is to address the criminal status of same-sex relations.

The following article addresses various LGBTQ civil society organizations in North Africa. The groups examined are not exhaustive of the activism in the region. Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco are essential cases used to examine the dynamics of LGBTQ activist groups. Each of the three states possesses some similarities, such as geographical location, majority Arab Muslim populations, and French colonial histories. Likewise, the punishments for committing same-sex acts are comparable. In Tunisia, convictions can result in a maximum sentence of three years. The same punishment is held in Morocco with an additional fine of up to 1000 Moroccan Dirham (approximately 100 USD). Algeria maintains a slightly less severe punishment with a maximum of two years imprisonment. The leading distinction between each state is the restrictions placed upon groups by their respective governments.

In Tunisia, civil society organizations have been placed under increased pressure by government authorities. Even though harassment against these organizations is widespread, leading to many groups operating under the radar, they are legally allowed to exist. This has not always been the case, as before the 2011 Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, LGBTQ activism was nearly nonexistent. LGBTQ activism witnessed a turning point during the Revolution. Some organizations, such as Damj, were reported to have been notable in driving campaigns and demonstrations to maintain the revolution. Damj is still operating as one of the oldest and more prominent groups in Tunisia. The organization works closely with individuals needing legal assistance by providing aid and connections to lawyers.

Following the ouster of former President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, other organizations began to emerge alongside Damj. The Association Shams is another highly influential LGBTQ group that is known for its work in securing legal protections for LGBTQ organizations in general. In 2015, the association status of Shams was temporarily denied by the state to which the group addressed their grievances to the Tunisian Court of Cassation. In a 2016 ruling, the Court recognized that the Tunisian Constitution of 2014 protected the organization from being dismantled. Interestingly, the founder of the Association Shams, Mounir Baatour, became the first openly gay person to publicly announce their intentions to run the presidency in Tunisia. Another prominent organization is Chouf, a feminist advocacy group that promotes the rights and protections of LGBTQ women. Chouf works closely with other organizations, such as Damj. Since the Tunisian Courts have guaranteed the freedom of association for LGBTQ organizations through the legal battle headed by Shams, the environment in which these organizations work allow for more

flexibility in both their advocacy work and their cooperation efforts.

The activist environment in Morocco is largely different from that in Tunisia. Because the Moroccan state can deny organizations association status at will, there have been considerable difficulties for these groups to legally organize. In 2004, KifKif was the first LGBTQ group to form in Morocco. The organization attempted to legally register with the state several times but was denied association status on each attempt. Finally, in 2008, KifKif relocated its operations to Spain. The organization, of course, maintains its focus on the LGBTQ community living within Morocco. The first magazine that focused on LGBTQ issues in Morocco, *Milthy*, was produced by KifKif. Recently, KifKif has changed direction as the magazine *Milthy* is out of print, and the group now primarily focuses on assisting LGBTQ individuals that wish to emigrate or obtain refugee status in Spain. KifKif also works closely with other advocacy organizations and transnational groups. One issue concerning activism noted by KifKif is that many of the groups in Morocco have different agendas and viewpoints on how to address grievances. Due to these differences, cooperation among these organizations have been minimal.

Established in 2009, the *Mouvement alternative pour les libertes individuelles (MALI)* advocates for secularism and democracy in Morocco with a focus on feminist ideologies. However, MALI is not solely a feminist organization, and the group strongly advocates for LGBTQ rights as well. Other notable feminist organizations with ties to LGBTQ rights are *L'Union Feministe Libre (UFL)* and *Nassawiyat*. UFL was able to obtain legal status in 2018. While legally organizing has been difficult for most LGBTQ groups, UFL was able to acquire legality since its primary purpose is to advance women's rights. *Nassawiyat* is similar to the Tunisian organization *Chouf*, whose primary function is to advocate for LBTQ women. Lastly, the association *Akaliyat* also well-known for founding a popular LGBTQ magazine for the region. *Akaliyat* has more recently initiated a project directed toward the medical commu-

nity create a network of LGBTQ-friendly doctors to promote safety and comfort for those needing medical care.

Out of the three Maghrebi states, Algeria is the most restrictive as it pertains to civil society organizations. The law effectively bans any associations whose agenda goes against “public morality,” which includes LGBTQ activism. Because of this, most organizations work clandestinely. However, unlike in Morocco, other human rights organizations rarely work with LGBTQ groups due to the legal risks involved or their unwillingness to see LGBTQ rights as a critical area of human rights. The *Alouen* association is one of the more prominent groups in Algeria. They currently advocate for LGBTQ rights as well as place emphasis on HIV aids education and protection. Furthermore, *Alouen* created Algeria's first LGBT magazine, *El Shad*. *Abu Nawas*, an organization founded in 2007, established a national LGBTQIA day, recognized by the community and their allies on the 10th of October. In 2010, the founder of *Abu Nawas*, *Yahia Zaidi*, proceeded to become a co-founder of *MantiQitna*. This transnational advocacy network works to organize other groups to advance LGBTQ rights throughout the MENA region. *MantiQitna* and the *Alouen* association have notably addressed their grievances to the United Nations Human Rights Council. The promotion of cooperation among LGBTQ groups sets Algerian organizations apart from those in Morocco. In this highly restrictive environment, organization leaders recognize that cooperation is necessary for their success.

It is undeniable that the LGBTQ community in the MENA region is in crisis. Finding a solution to mitigate their plights is difficult and civil society organizations are a necessary force that may direct change. While Tunisia has the potential to make great strides, the Algerian and Moroccan governments' restrictive laws on civil society have dampened the ability of LGBTQ associations to operate. One solution is to focus on international organizations that can assist domestic groups from outside with minimal government control. Awareness must be given to not only the discrim-

inatory practices against the LGBTQ community, but also the inability of organizations to even exist without legal punishment or abuse by other citizens and authorities. We cannot take the work of these domestic organizations for granted. While they fight for the rights of their members, they are also fighting for their own survival.

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SHEIKHA MUNIRA AL-QUBAYSI: MANAGING A FEMINIST ISLAMIC REVIVALIST MOVEMENT IN AUTHORITARIAN SYRIA

Sumaya Malas

Sheikha Munira Qubaysi is not a household name when it comes to recalling influential people in the Middle East. However, her recent passing shook the region to its core since her prominence was both seen and felt throughout modern Syria as she has led at least two generations of Muslim women in an Islamic revivalist movement. The followers of her movement are often referred to as al-Qubaysiyyat.¹ Qubaysi conceived of this group in 1960s Syria as the country was recovering from the colonial period and re-imagining national identity away from the increasingly failing ideology of secular-nationalism. She found that the failures of the state towards the population, especially women, were due to a lack of spiritual grounding—a vacuum she aimed to fill. As Islam was regaining ground as a driving ideological force in the region, Qubaysi filled this aching void with a unique form of Islamic revivalism—one that centered around female scholarship and independence from the male religious establishment. Sheikha Munira and her movement's continued success and ascendance in Syrian society has not only shaped generations of women amounting to over one hundred thousand followers,² but it has also established a precedent for female religious scholarship in the greater Middle East. Although Qubaysi began as an anti-colonial Islamic revivalist focused on religious purity and female empowerment, her thought leadership has given her legitimacy within the nation-state and allowed her to safely navigate the secular Ba'athist and Alawite regime. Qubaysi's movement may seem inconsequential because of its apolitical nature, however its large national, social, and cultural impact has led to the unprecedented creation of a modern movement founded on female religious authority that continues to shape Syrian society today.

Despite the significant impact Qubaysi has had on Syrian women for over the last 50 years, she remains elusive from the public eye. Qubaysi has been meticulous, organized, and comprehensive in her movement building—establishing schools, spearheading the publishing of female Islamic scholarship, and organizing several business ventures and social service programs to ensure the independence and legitimacy of her movement and followers in the nation-state. Her creation of a rigid hierarchy that delineates women of greater Islamic knowledge and agents of da'wa (calling people to Islam) from those who are still students has a physical manifestation in the state of modesty of the woman and the color of her hijab indicated from black to navy to blue to white in descending order of rank.

Qubaysi's coalition building, operations, and negotiations with the regime tend to stay underground for fear of political retribution throughout the years. She sought to manage the organization as one for female empowerment among male dominated religious thought leadership, creating a public space for female religious authority while also balancing against the rise of political Islam and the growing tensions between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. Qubaysi's ascendance amid this balancing act has become highly revered, her character and leadership often compared to the ultimate model exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad.

The Making of a Movement

Qubaysi was born in 1933 to a conservative upper-class family of ten children in Damascus. Her upper-class upbringing in a family of wealthy merchants gave her a very comfortable and privileged lifestyle early on in her life that she later

used to gain access to other wealthy Damascene homes. Despite Qubaysi being one of four girls, her family prioritized learning and science at an early age for both male and female children. Surprisingly, her father sent Qubaysi to a government school instead of a religious school at a time when many in the conservative upper-class refused to send their male children, let alone females. During the colonial period, the fundamental civic order dictated mediated hierarchies of power between the secular French system and the religious establishment as well as the overarching dominance of men.³ However, Qubaysi's circumstances gave her exposure outside of the private sphere traditional to women of the upper-class in Syria at the time. Witnessing the ineffective forms of progress imposed by Western imperialism on the Syrian population and the inability of the religious authorities to preserve a sense of identity greatly mobilized Sheikha Munira from an early age. The constant clash of identities within Syrian society during the mandate period between French sympathizers, secular-nationalists, and the religious elite created a fundamental attitude within Qubaysi to establish a community that will direct people to live well and prosper according to a pure form of Islamic tradition.

Shaykh Ahmad Kaftaru, the late Grand Mufti of Syria, motivated her passion for Islamic revivalism in Syria and assisted her with that mission by ensuring she got a comprehensive Islamic education.⁴ Many male students became jealous of her since she was able to infiltrate the traditionally male religious elite structure as a woman and was treated with remarkable distinction by Shaykh Ahmad Kaftaru. Rather, she sought to only derive from female religious authority and construct a hierarchy enabling women to rely on other women and not men- starting with herself. After the Ba'athist coup in 1963 and during the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, Qubaysi moved away from being a student to a teacher and leader, using the knowledge she gained from the most learned male scholars of Damascus to educate other women. She began her formal preaching or da'wa away from traditionally male dominated religious spaces to initiate her own movement, jama'at al-anisat. Because of Qubaysi's family name, reputation, and wealth, as well as her previous access and prestige in the male religious establishment, she was able to gain access into the

homes of other wealthy Damascene families of esteem, lineage, authority, and money.

The 1980s brought a tense period of conflict between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood leading to the massacre of hundreds of thousands and the jailing and repression of many more. Hafiz eventually allowed an Islamic revitalization within Sunni civil society after the defeat of the Muslim Brotherhood, the regime's greatest opposition, and their banishment from Syria. The regime began condoning a "palpable religious revivalism... despite the fact that the regime's system of authoritarian rule is supposedly secular and bans the politicization of religion."⁵ They strategically allowed re-Islamization to occur outside of the Muslim Brotherhood context as long as it fit with the government's political agenda of regime maintenance.⁶ Qubaysi and her movement were not necessarily welcomed with open arms by the regime, but this change in policy did allow the group a degree of social capital to be able to negotiate their presence within the society and nation-state. Qubaysi asserted their Islamic group's purpose to be strictly apolitical and were gradually allowed to teach within schools and mosques through their network of anisat across Damascus.⁷ Through Sheikha Munira's leadership, the regime allowed the Qubaysiyyat "ascendance and increasing authority in Syrian society" because of their apolitical nature and goal of Islamic revival and female empowerment, as well as their internal structure consisting of all women which presented as non-threatening.⁸ As the Assad regime began to "co-opt and later accommodate and empower, the apolitical Islamic organizations that remained... a number of these Islamic populist Sufi groups have become prominent parts of the Syrian social landscape."⁹

Qubaysi was keenly aware of the Syrian political climate, but she did find the value in negotiating with the regime to assert some activities in the public space. Before the 2011 Arab Spring, she managed to keep the group away from overt displays of political engagement and allegiance to or condemnation of the government regime.¹⁰ Her insistence at maintaining a neutral religious movement that is not vested in governmental politics did not protect them completely in the context of a repressive regime. However, by the mid-2000s Qubaysi shifted from operating mostly underground with most of their teaching activ-

ities conducted in secrecy and in the privacy of individual home, to establishing private schools and conducting halaqat in mosques around Damascus.¹¹ She was also the driving force behind the relaxing the restrictions around wearing hijab under the Bashar regime.¹² Because of Sheikha Munira's political savvy, her efforts at establishing social legitimacy of her movement while maintaining its apolitical mission allowed her legal permission to host classes and meetings in mosques since 2006.¹³ The regime granting limited permission to move their preaching and teaching from secret circles to public venues, mosques, and school was in the government's best interest. Both parties were aware that if the Qubaysiyyat were to preach in public, they could be more easily monitored, and therefore less threatening than when preaching in secrecy. Qubaysi's focus was to change the fabric of Syrian society through religious education and practice, not to have any political voice, and that has served her well as operations have normalized since the regime has solidified its power again.

A Global Movement Around a Central Figure

Until today Qubaysi's influence is estimated to have reached several hundred thousand adherents within Syria and her movement's presence is confirmed in at least twelve other countries.¹⁴ Their publications include writings for the general public on religious topics of popular concern as well as multi-volume scholarly commentaries on every discipline and branch in Islam which have reached an audience of millions in the Middle East and beyond.¹⁵ They also have near exclusive control over the country's youth Quranic memorization program conducted in a majority of mosques throughout Damascus.¹⁶ This large scale impact can also be seen in the social fabric of the nation-state itself. At a time when Syrian society had a crisis of identity and consciousness in the post-colonial era and in the middle of a repressive secularist regime, many turned to Islamic revivalism as a new social order to apply to the chaos.

Sheikha Munira was a product of her circumstances as she navigated what she perceived to be the moral abyss Syrian women were subjected to and wanted to not only aid them with the tools to reach up and away from that empty way of life, but to also uplift them by providing au-

thority to their voices and legitimacy to their names. Although her vision is clearly derived from her journey, the degree of following and loyalty she earned can only be attributed to who she is personally to her hundreds of thousands of followers, even when she has only met a handful. She established a meticulously and strategically defined organization that can be sustained for generations to come and survive long after she has passed. Yet mourning her has been deeply felt as she was many women's savior who gave them a purpose in life and a moral high ground to embrace in their public and private lives.

Sumaya Malas is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania in Political Science with a focus on post-conflict reconstruction, great power politics, and identity in the Middle East and North Africa. She recently received her master's degree at Harvard University in Middle Eastern Studies. Previously, Sumaya was a 2019 Herbert Scoville Jr. Peace Fellow working on nuclear policy, international security, and arms control. In addition to working at the United Nations Population Fund in New York City and as a field translator in Al-Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, Sumaya has traveled to Sri Lanka, Syria, Lebanon, and Jerusalem to understand conflict-resolution and peace-building efforts. She also received her undergraduate degrees from Michigan State University in International Relations, Comparative Cultures and Politics, Arabic and a minor in Muslim Studies.

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AIDING AFGHANS WITHOUT AIDING TALIBAN

Sima Samar
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Authors' Note: Human rights in Afghanistan, especially those of women and minorities, have been grossly violated since the Taliban takeover of the country. The international community has responded by pulling troops and aid, which has contributed to severe and inextricable humanitarian and human rights crises. While some international sanctions on the Taliban have been imposed, the sanctions need to be strengthened and structured to impact the Taliban leadership rather than ordinary Afghans. There is a need to rethink the strategy towards Afghanistan. The paper aims to highlight mechanisms that can be leveraged to provide the much-needed aid to Afghan citizens while holding the Taliban to international human rights and humanitarian laws and standards.

Afghanistan is currently at the center of one of the world's worst humanitarian and human rights crises. While food insecurity and natural disasters have increased the need for aid in the country more than ever, Afghanistan's economy, which had been 75% dependent on foreign assistance, has been devastated by the U.S. and the international community's withdrawal.

The political crisis in Afghanistan has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. The ability of humanitarian organizations to distribute aid has been undermined by the Taliban's restrictions on women. The Taliban's policies, particularly restrictions on women's work, women's mobility, and participation in the economy, have increased poverty to the highest levels. Further, the Taliban's restrictions on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) employment of women have reduced aid delivery. International organizations are reluctant to deliver aid in fear of strengthening the Taliban and endorsing fundamentalist practices that deprive women of their rights and livelihoods.

A three-pronged strategy towards Afghanistan is needed, that should include aid, activism, and accountability. Providing material and monetary aid to the U.N. along with international and local NGOs would help address the needs of the people of Afghanistan who are struggling with widespread malnutrition and low-quality healthcare. Any aid must be distributed equitably, especially to female-headed households, and women must be involved in planning, distribution, and monitoring of the aid. Activism would enable broader changes in the polity of the country and help Afghans, especially women and minorities, regain basic rights that are important to lead dignified and lives secure from violence and poverty. Organized and systematic grassroots activism can help raise awareness of socio-political issues and mobilize communities, particularly women, to demand change. However, it is critical to build practices that provide aid and cultivate activism in a manner that is sustainable and reaches the most vulnerable, especially female-headed households. Finally, holding the Taliban accountable on international forums for their human rights violations will be critical to compel them to end the reign of terror against women and minorities.

With respect to aid, foreign assistance targeting healthcare and nutrition should be prioritized and distributed equitably. This assistance must include access to reproductive healthcare, including contraception, which will help reduce poverty and discrimination against women and girls. Women should be involved in developing humanitarian relief policies, distributing aid, and monitoring relief programs as well as receiving aid. Organizations should aim to limit monetary aid to only worker salaries and prioritize providing increased material aid in the form of food, grain, medicines, etc. This will reduce the leakages of monetary funds to the Taliban, which can

be otherwise used by them to strengthen their regime. Increasing engagement with civil society organizations that work on human rights, democracy, and development will help support Afghan communities without directly funding the Taliban. These organizations can help to build resilience and promote social and political change from the ground up.

Efforts should be made to ensure that this aid reaches the most vulnerable populations directly and equitably. To prevent the monopolization of any assistance by certain privileged sections of society, a robust monitoring process will be required. As opposed to providing monetary funding which can be easily misappropriated by the Taliban, medicines should be delivered directly to the hospitals and food to the people.

Further, it would be important to ensure that the impact of any assistance is sustainable beyond the period of the intervention. Aid programs should focus on building the capacity of local institutions and communities to manage and sustain development initiatives such as supporting education and training programs, empowering civil society organizations, and investing in local infrastructure. Hence, international organizations should also utilize this opportunity to help Afghans cultivate new skills that will enable them to access sustained impact or livelihood even after such organizations stop aid. Such programs that focus on 'skills for aid' will be of value to the women as they can develop vocational skills such as sewing etc., and achieve financial independence, which would help further their agency. While the Taliban continues to threaten the security of women in the public sphere, ensuring that women continue working, even if at home, would be an important first step towards women's emancipation. Many women currently are providing significant support inside the country by working for Afghan and international organizations. These women are resisting the Taliban rule in the delivery of aid to the most vulnerable, especially women-headed households. Stronger sanctions on the Taliban and their allies are needed to support such women so that they can continue their essential work.

Donors should also provide support to U.N. or local and international NGOs that operate in Pakistan, Iran and Tajikistan to support Afghan refugees. While structuring aid to Afghan refugees, donor organizations should also prioritize meeting their basic needs, including food, shelter, and healthcare. Focusing on promoting education and livelihood opportunities will help achieve long-term self-reliance and stability for refugees. All programming should be developed with a focus on women, female headed households and other marginalized groups to ensure that aid is distributed equitably and includes reproductive health care and contraception. Finally, working towards social integration of refugees and host communities will be key to promoting social cohesion and reducing tensions.

Another important resource that the international community should be utilizing is the educated men and women on-ground who have received an education during U.S. presence in Afghanistan and are well equipped to lead local initiatives. The power of collective action should be leveraged to ensure greater rights for the Afghan citizens, especially women and girls. Community-based learning initiatives can help children gain access to relevant education from the safety of their homes. Such learning initiatives have been implemented in different parts of the world through educated youth and can be adapted to the context of Afghanistan. Educated adults in the community can be trained on simple learning activities that they can conduct with small groups of children in their immediate neighborhoods or home. A growing body of research finds such community education programs useful and impactful in improving the learning outcomes of children. It is important to target both boys and girls; while girls have completely lost access to education, boys are currently studying predominantly religious texts and the Taliban ideology in school. Equipping young children with the concepts of human rights as well as math and science will be key for the future development of the country.

To this end, internet availability and access to digital media should be leveraged to understand the local situation, mobilize the youth, organize

awareness campaigns, and implement learning initiatives. Despite its best efforts, the Taliban has not been able to entirely squash dissent and debate on social media regarding its treatment of women and minorities. With nine million internet users in Afghanistan, social media is an important mechanism to organize collective dissent against the Taliban. Further, with traditional media outlets facing censorship and other restrictions, digital media can be utilized to spread greater awareness, provide information on human rights, and fight misinformation. Moreover, online educational opportunities are especially crucial to provide a lifeline for women and girls who have been closed out of schools and universities by the Taliban.

Given the status of girls and women in the country, in all international programs gender should be a key focus and aid should be earmarked for women rights' groups to spread awareness to advocate for equality. Taliban recently banned women from working in foreign and domestic NGOs, thereby restricting them from serving other women in need. Organizations should also try to negotiate for the inclusion of women in the workforce at the provincial and village levels.

It is important to also construct the relief response for the Afghans without legitimizing the Taliban. Economic and diplomatic pressure on the Taliban must be increased. Sanctions should be targeted at Taliban leadership. Visa restrictions that impact the Taliban should be adopted and enforced, but this should not impact ordinary people's movement across borders. Further, freezing assets is a precision guided weapon that can zero in on government officials and their supporting elites without causing extensive collateral damage to the largely innocent civilian population. While diplomatic dialogue with the Taliban is important to negotiate such policies, it will be important to not acknowledge the legitimacy of their rule and the validity of their suppressive laws. A united global community should stress that the Taliban should be held accountable to its obligations under international human-rights law. The international community should engage with the Taliban on a conditional basis, meaning that engagement should be dependent on the Taliban's adherence to certain

standards or commitments, such as upholding human rights or allowing women to participate in political life. Further, any foreign delegation that meets with the Taliban should have representation of women to indicate that the international community stands strongly against the exclusion of women from the public space.

Finally, the international community should try to hold the Afghan leadership responsible for their violation of several international human rights treaties and conventions that Afghanistan had earlier ratified. Suppression of political rights of Afghans and widespread oppression by the Taliban is in violation of treaties such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). These treaties, once ratified, hold a country accountable irrespective of changes in governmental power. The two principal international courts are International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Criminal Court (ICC). With respect to the ICJ, Afghanistan is a member state of the United Nations (UN) and therefore has consented to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). However, ICJ mostly deals with disputes between states. In the case of the ICC, Afghanistan is not a state party to the Rome Statute, which means that the ICC does not have automatic jurisdiction over crimes committed in Afghanistan. However, the ICC can investigate and prosecute crimes in Afghanistan if the UN Security Council refers the situation to the court. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has an ongoing investigation into crimes committed in Afghanistan since May 2003, which potentially includes crimes committed by the Taliban. However, the international councils and courts should aim to hold Taliban specifically responsible for violating multiple treaties and violating human rights, especially the rights of women and minorities, since they seized power in 2021. This will require concerted and coordinated efforts by the United Nations, the international community, human rights organizations, and Afghan civil society groups.

In conclusion, providing aid to Afghans without aiding the Taliban requires a multifaceted approach that considers the political, social, and economic complexities of the situation on

the ground. The human rights and humanitarian crises are inextricable. It is crucial for the international community to prioritize the needs and voices of the Afghan people, particularly the most vulnerable groups such as women, children, and minorities, in their aid efforts. This can be achieved by working closely with the U.N. and trusted local organizations and community leaders, leveraging digital technologies to promote awareness, and implementing rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to minimize the risk of aid diversion and ensure its equitable distribution. Further, strong sanctions against the Taliban will help build pressure on the leadership. Ultimately, the goal should be to support the Afghan people, especially women, in their quest for dignity, freedom, independence, and human rights, while minimizing the risk of providing legitimacy and resources to the Taliban. As the world faces one of the most complex humanitarian and human rights situations, it will be important to not ignore Afghanistan even if the solutions are complicated and difficult to achieve.

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TORMENTED IN OUR LAND: THE REALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EXISTENCE IN IRAQ

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Warda

The goal of this article is to shed light on the reality of Christian lives in Iraq today—the torments we have lived through, but also the hope for our role in building a better future. Christians have been indigenous to this land for more than 1,800 years, yet in the last fifty, our numbers have dwindled. Many Christians have stories of losing their job or being passed up on a promotion because of their faith; others even have stories of watching their homes and businesses being taken away by force. These experiences have caused hundreds of thousands to make the agonized decision to leave their hometowns in search of a safer environment for themselves and their children. This is also not the first time Iraqi Christians have been faced with such decisions; the last two generations have experienced three major displacements in less than a century.

The Chaldean and Assyrian Churches belong to the same root, which is the old Church of the East. This church, historically established by St. Thomas, possesses a great treasure of spiritual, theological, and liturgical traditions in the Aramaic language. For centuries, this church remained unknown in the West. In the past 200 years, thanks to discoveries, additions, and studies, it was revealed again in all its richness. Today, a branch of the Church of the East in union with Rome is known as the Chaldean Church. It has learned much from hardships and setbacks during the centuries under the Persian, Arab, Mongol, and Ottoman empires all the way to the foundation of the Iraqi state in 1921.

In the modern era, Christians have played an important role in shaping the society of the new state; they built schools, published books, and founded youth organizations, churches, and monasteries. They supported the new state and were respected as a significant minority—20% of the population—at the beginning of the century.

However, this community has since been buffeted by several waves of trials. Under Baathist control, Christians lived in a political climate that forced them to remain silent, without posing a challenge to the ruling authority. Like every Iraqi citizen, Christians knew they were being continuously watched by the government's intelligence services. The clergy knew the government authorities employed multiple informants, including inside the church, and wrote reports on their activities and ideas. In my experience, some clerics were even forced to inform on parishioners suspected of foreign entanglements.

Through this period, it was almost impossible for the church to carry out its cultural activities; its schools were nationalized, and its buildings confiscated. Its financial affairs were made solely dependent on donations by faithful parishioners. Postsecondary opportunities for Christian students were limited to scientific institutions where degrees were less subject to government interference but narrow in scope. As they tried to participate in their community—run small factories, social clubs, or hospitals—Christians were constantly under government scrutiny. Nevertheless, they found ways to contribute to medicine, arts, media, and economics. Some even chose to work in administrative positions and gained officials' respect for their competence, professionalism, and sincerity in work, despite not being party members.

In the 1980s, military mobilization of youth during the war with Iran, blowback from the failed invasion of Kuwait, and economic sanctions suffocated Iraq. In this environment of exhaustion and discontent, the status of Christians deteriorated sharply through the 1990s. After losing the First Gulf War, Saddam Hussein struggled to retain Arab allies and undertook a social Islamification campaign to regain some legitima-

cy among the majority population. For Christians, this meant closing restaurants and tourist locations under their ownership. Increasingly alarmed, many chose to emigrate. In the United States alone, the number of Iraqi Christians increased by 70,000 from 1980 to 2007. Today some 500,000 Chaldeans call the U.S. home and another 60,000 live in Australia.

In 2003, significant political changes took place after the invasion of Iraq and the dissolution of the Baathist state. Like all Iraqis, Christians hoped for a prosperous and stable future. However, the chaos, instability, and internal conflicts which followed the fall of Saddam's government led to greater suffering and increased hostility. After 2004, several subsequent governments came and went but were unable to establish rule of law or policies to drive psychological and social stability in the country. Christians were eager to participate in the life of the new nation and assist in its foundation but continued to suffer at the hands of an overwhelmed and at times hostile state.

I watched as actors loyal to these governments became sectarians embroiled in armed militias operating with little interest in national unity. This situation further weakened the government's authority. Social chaos followed institutional decline. Crime increased, administrative corruption spread, educational institutions deteriorated, and panic prevailed when members of society lost confidence in one another. During this period, Christians, especially those living in cities—Mosul, Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Basra—suffered the largest share of negative consequences, subject to some of the most brazen rights violations due to their religious identity.

Between 2003 and 2014, I witnessed 77 separate bombings of churches, shrines, and religious buildings, part of 114 total incidents of violence in the same time period. It began with the kidnapping and death of a Christian translator in July 2003, the first of many. August 1, 2004 was the first set of bombings, which affected six churches in two cities. An estimated 1,200 Christians, including a bishop and priests, were killed, and twice as many were kidnapped between the fall of Saddam and 2014. Since the rise of ISIS in 2014, the wounds of Iraq's Christians have only deepened. Many were forced to leave the country

as Mosul fell to the marauding bandits, followed by the Nineveh Plain. In 2003, more than 1.5 million Christians called Iraq home; now, less than 200,000 reside in their homeland, according to official government statistics. During this period of lawlessness, organized criminals saw an opportunity to seize Christian properties and steal ownership documents. Government officials were aware of such crimes and established several investigative committees, yet the criminals were never prosecuted, nor were the properties returned to the rightful owners.

Although the majority of ISIS has been eradicated, its ideology continues to affect Iraq's social and political fabric. The Iraqi Christian lives in a state of declining faith in the homeland. He repeats with agony, "there is no future for us in this country," and takes any opportunity to emigrate. The U.S. twice declared the acts perpetrated against Christians a genocide but to no avail. Neither Secretary of State John Kerry's designation in 2016 nor H.R. 390 signed by President Donald Trump in 2018, turned serious international support in favor of Iraq's Christians. The Christian exodus from Iraq continues—the vast majority now live in the diaspora, facilitating the emigration process for those who remain behind. In summation, the challenges Christians in Iraq face today are as follows:

1. **Second-Class Citizenship:** The state's acceptance of sectarian Islamic law limits democracy and social freedom for minority groups. Often, non-Muslims are made second-class citizens in terms of legal and political representation. This situation will continue as long as religious and political parties derive their ideology from Sharia' and it remains the law of the land.
2. **Sectarianism:** Iraq lacks a culture of national identity, instead operating by loyalty to a religious sect which actually eliminates the reality of diversity in Iraqi life. This is exemplified by the declining numbers of Christians, Yazidis, and Sabeans who leave Iraq in order to thwart religious violence and discrimination.
3. **Tolerance, instead of coexistence:** Pope Francis' visit in 2021 was an opportunity to showcase the history of Iraqi Christians, build inter-faith relations, and foster a culture of peaceful coexistence. Sadly, these hopes were overcome by

the many crises that Iraq has experienced since. Instead of coexisting together, we are hesitantly tolerated.

4. Demographic disadvantage: Christians have become a numerical minority that can exercise minimal influence in a political system that allocates power according to demography. Additionally, rampant administrative and financial corruption in the country strongarms many qualified professionals from their jobs in government ministries.

5. Political Credibility: Existing political leaders are confident that Christians do not pose a threat, cannot provoke any response affecting the political scene, and lack the ability to mobilize the international community to defend their cause.

6. Lack of Political Leadership: Christians lack leaders capable of defending their rights, and the political community is deeply divided. Christian political parties have performed poorly due to their cooperation with mainstream politicians' pursuit of narrow interests. Christians have received many empty and unrealistic promises from influential politicians; issues like revoked property rights are discussed but never addressed.

7. Lack of job opportunities: The complete control of labor markets by corrupt political parties means qualified Christians struggle to find job opportunities for sectarian reasons.

8. Distance from the International Church: Iraq's Christians are awaiting a unified defense from the international Church. With an emphasis on the role the Church has played in providing moral and material support in the past, Iraq's Christians must carry their issues to international forums.

The Way Forward

How can the Church be part of the solution for Iraq? How can it maintain a directive role in rebuilding a nation to secure the rights of all citizens? How can the Church simultaneously defend its own identity yet be a voice for the dignity of all?

Finding solutions to the issues above indeed falls on the shoulders of the state, government, and ruling parties. However, the Church cannot remain ignorant to the hardships endured by its people. Indeed, it must take steps to strengthen the relationship between Christians and their homeland and to keep the flame of faith alive. Believers turn to the Church for spiritual advice and material assistance such as medical treatments, financial assistance, job support, and help during crises in daily dealings. Many also turn to the Church for institutional support against corrupt businesses and state entities. The Church can contribute solutions and strengthen its role by capitalizing on areas where it currently finds success.

For example, Iraqis already have high confidence in the Church's educational and health institutions. I believe the Church must build on this confidence, continue to expand on these projects, and send a message of mutual respect to all citizens. At present, Christian churches maintain seventeen schools across Iraq, ranging from kindergarten to university. In addition, Christians have established three public, non-sectarian hospitals with a reputation for providing efficient, professional, and transparent services. Such institutions also provide job opportunities in their communities; in the Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil, for example, we have secured 570 jobs for our young population since 2010. Church institutions can provide opportunities and create hope for citizens seeking roles in a country where corruption is decaying faith in the administrative state. We must continue to do so.

Of course, I am well aware of the challenges facing this mission. Finding the necessary financial support, navigating complex aid bureaucracies, and securing buy-in from local actors are constant hurdles. However, in spite of all these challenges, I maintain that educating future generations is the surest way to preserve Christian heritage and secure a more stable coexistence in Iraq. We survived persecution in the first centuries of the Church. Again, we struggled through massacres of the 20th Century. Today, we overcame ISIS and yet another attempt to uproot our heritage from the land. By God's grace, our educational and humanitarian institutions will continue to grow and establish a future in Iraq

for Muslims and Christians working in collaboration, not confrontation. Through education, our people can have an effective and influential presence and present to the world their long experience in the field of interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

His Excellency Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda, C.Ss.R, is Archbishop of the Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil, Iraq, where since 2010, he has preached hope and peace for the people of Iraq. When ISIS caused the displacement of millions in 2014, the Archdiocese welcomed 75,000 internally displaced people (IDPs), providing medical care, housing, education, and resettlement opportunities. Shortly after, Archbishop Warda opened the Catholic University in Erbil, which welcomes students of all faiths. He also founded Maryamana Hospital, among other humanitarian initiatives. He continues to advocate worldwide for the needs of Iraqi Christians and to spread a message of hope for the Chaldean people. Archbishop Warda visited Harvard University in November 2022 and presented on the importance of interreligious dialogue for successful conflict resolution in the Middle East.

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THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING: MUQTADA AL-SADR'S LEGITIMATION IN THE IRAQI SHI'A FIELD

Ryan
Zoellner

On July 27, 2022, Iraq's sclerotic government formation process finally broke. After ten months of failed negotiations to form a cabinet—the longest stalemate since 2003—protestors infiltrated Baghdad's Green Zone, making themselves at home in the offices of parliament. Their objective was to disrupt the nomination of a rival parliamentarian, Mohammad Shia' al-Sudani, to the Premiership, and while ultimately unsuccessful, this was done with optical gusto. Having made their point, the intruders were told by their leadership to “go home and pray,” only to return for a longer stint three days later. On both occasions, the occupants came with signs bearing the image of Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

Often described as “Iraq's Kingmaker,” Muqtada al-Sadr exercises an authority over a large swath of Iraq's Shi'a population that seemingly transcends Iraqi political institutions and even the transnational Shi'a religious establishment. As a cleric and political leader, Sadr controls formal institutions including religious endowments, tithing networks, schools, political offices, and a militia. However, as events of the summer made clear, Sadr's most potent means of exercising power is the mobilization of his followers, a force that can be leveraged with or without formal integration into the political order.

Given this influence, Western media and analysts have scrambled to ask, “Who is Muqtada al-Sadr?” Current profiles of Sadr are often as two-dimensional as they were during his first emergence in the 2003 invasion. Sadr is presented in binaries; he is anti-Iranian or anti-American, an insurgent leader or a revolutionary, a holy man or a demagogue. This paper aims to furnish a more robust answer to the question by drawing upon Max Weber's typology of authority. It will give an account of Sadr's legitimacy in the Iraqi Shi'a religious field with respect to his traditional, legal, and charismatic authority.

Typology of Authority

To understand Sadr's position in today's Iraq, we need a historical, structural account of his influence over time. Weber's typology of authority is a useful framework for this enterprise. Weber defines authority as “the probability that certain specific commands will be obeyed by a given group of persons [implying]...a minimum of voluntary compliance that is, an interest in obedience.” The belief in such authority among its adherents must therefore find its basis in some superordinate source of legitimacy. In the Weberian model, there are three primary means for the legitimation of a dominant authority:

- 1.) Traditional authority - drawn from the long-standing beliefs, practices, and hierarchies of a given society and owed to the person or persons exercising authority within them.
- 2.) Legal authority - rooted in the legitimacy of a society's legal apparatus and the right of its representatives to enforce it.
- 3.) Charismatic authority - rests upon “devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative pattern or order revealed or ordained by him.”

A dominant figure of authority may draw legitimacy from a confluence of these factors, and in a case such as Sadr's, the movement between them can become essential in establishing a dynamic and durable model of legitimacy.

The Third Sadr: Hereditary and Religious Authority

Muqtada al-Sadr's access to traditional authority began at birth and is essential in understanding his role today. The legacy and martyrdom of his father, Sadiq al-Sadr, and his father-in-law and cousin once removed, Baqir al-Sadr, endowed

Muqtada with a loyal following, an experienced group of advisors, and a robust patronage network from an early age. It was from this position that Muqtada was able to capture such popular and political purchase in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion.

What is now referred to as the Sadrist Movement began its infancy in the early 1960s under Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. A child of the clerical aristocracy of Baghdad, Baqir al-Sadr studied in the elite hawza (“seminary”) system of Qom, Iran, rising to the level of Grand Ayatollah in the 1950s. At the time, Iraq’s Shi’a were entirely without political identity—religious views of “quietism” or political disavowal are traditionally a norm among Shi’a clerics, and the Sunni Ba’athist state was all too happy to institutionalize this silence. However, given the growing appeal of communism in Baghdad, members of the marjaiyya (“clerical class”) of Iraq began to organize an underground countermovement known as the Islamic Dawa Party. Baqir al-Sadr quietly became its leader.

While the “First Sadr” was initially a political quietist, his ideas on government and economics earned him a reputation as a radical among the marjaiyya. In the 1970s, Baqir was passed up as Grand Ayatollah of Iraq owing to his involvement in Dawa—an event that would set the tone for a distinctly anti-elite theme across the Sadr family. Subsequently, Baqir began to model a “proto-activism,” becoming more vocal in his opposition to the Ba’ath regime and a supporter of Ayatollah Ali Khomeini during the latter’s exile in Iraq. In 1980, Baqir’s open defiance of the regime resulted in his execution at the hands of the Ba’ath—an event still recalled in Sadrist passion plays today. Baqir’s martyrdom and legacy paved the way for the “Second Sadr,” Sayyid Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq al-Sadr. Like his cousin, Sadiq al-Sadr was of a significant religious pedigree but largely shut out from the highest posts of the hawza. In the fallout from Baqir’s assassination, Sadiq competed for religious succession to Baqir’s muqalladin (“community of emulators”) with Grand Ayatollahs Kazem Hussain al-Haeri and Ali al-Sistani, both rival quietists well-connected in Qom. Through the 1980s, worsening conditions under the Saddam regime and the or-

thodox clergy’s reluctance to take political action drove many disaffected Shi’a toward the Sadrists. In a dramatic miscalculation, Saddam appointed Sadr Grand Maraja of Iraq, an opportunity which Sadiq seized to legitimize himself and weaken his religious rivals. Emboldened by the growth of his following, he became increasingly critical of the Ba’ath regime and more radical in his calls for social Islamicization. Sadiq’s defiance continued as economic and political conditions worsened, and in 1999, Sadiq al-Sadr and his two sons were assassinated by Baathist agents, leaving the young Muqtada sole representative of the family.

At the time the Sadr legacy had fallen to Muqtada, he was a seminary student in Najaf, who was kept on strict house arrest until the fall of the regime. Even today, Muqtada’s academic credentials are highly debated—having completed the “dissertation phase” of his clerical training but never advancing. Muqtada claims the title “Hujjatu al-Islam wal-Muslamin,” a rank just below that of Ayatollah. To opponents in the hawza, this lack of qualification signifies immaturity and academic ineptitude. To the loyal body of Sadrist followers, the lack of formal credentialing reinforces his family’s anti-elitist appeal.

Muqtada quickly adopted strategies to visually recall his martyred predecessors—emulating his father’s manner of speaking, using his walking stick, and even appearing in the same model of car in which his father was assassinated. Muqtada and his followers are often seen wearing white shrouds, traditional attire for a funeral in Shi’ism, but worn by Sadiq in the months before his death, signifying his acceptance of martyrdom. Solidifying this mix of inherited and religious legitimacy, Ayatollah al-Haeri—who had been appointed Sadiq’s successor though exiled in Iran—instructed his followers in Iraq to join Muqtada, despite his lack of qualification and ideological divergences. Muqtada was thereby positioned to become the representative for Iraqi Shi’a loyal to his family and dissatisfied by the political inactivity of the quietist hawza, now represented by Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani.

Muqtada’s traditional authority is, therefore, a religious and hereditary entanglement. While his family’s theological brand was defined by their

rebuffs from the Shi'a establishment, they have also benefited from pragmatic alliances both with traditional religious authority and, at times, even the political establishment. The practice and ideology of the Sadrist movement are defined in contrast to the orthodoxy of the hawza, yet its appeals remain deeply rooted in the messianic and millenarian aspects of Shi'a theology. The legacy of martyrdom, sacrifice, and class struggle, which the Sadr name now represents, is frequently framed within narratives found across the Shi'a mainstream. Muqtada al-Sadr's deliberate activation of these themes was and remains essential in solidifying his authority in the Shi'a religious field.

“Controlled Instability” as Political Legitimation

Shi'a views of law and legal authority do not easily map onto Weberian ideas of the modern nation-state. Traditionally, Shi'a jurisprudence lends itself toward local-level, charismatic administration in which a region's marja and his staff dispense a more personalist, context-dependent system of justice. This is why competition for muqalladin is often perceived as having such high stakes. When Muqtada inherited his family's following in southern Iraq, this had both spiritual and practical administrative implications. Especially as federal services all but disappeared in the post-invasion period, the ability to dispense law, provide social services, and defend the community fell on religious institutions such as Sadr's. As the broader Iraqi political landscape became increasingly violent, the assembly of a militia under the control of such a leader became indispensable.

Initially, Iraq's Shi'a were pleased with the Coalition's intervention to remove their oppressor and enthused by a future in the country's politics. Muqtada and his allies led peaceful protests and celebrations during this period. When it became clear that the Sadrists would not be included in the reconstruction government, Sadr's rhetoric shifted toward support for revolutionary jihad against the infidel invaders. In May of 2003, Muqtada became the first and only Shi'a leader to openly declare the occupation illegitimate and announced the creation of his own parallel government run from the holy city of Kufa. To support this effort, he began to form his

own paramilitary, Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM or “The Mahdi Army”).

While Sadr's own offices remained situated in Kufa, his administratively autonomous base of Sadr City became essential in establishing this legal authority. Throughout the 1990s, Iraq's impoverished Shi'a packed into the slums of south Baghdad in what was then named “Saddam City.” Given his social and religious profile, Sadiq al-Sadr built an especially strong grassroots network there. When the regime was toppled, all references to Saddam were replaced by the Sadrists. Demonstrating their administrative capacity, the Sadrists managed sub-state ministries ranging from courts to sanitation to defense within Sadr City. Simultaneously, however, the Mahdi Army had become involved in attacks against both coalition forces and rival Shi'a elements, culminating in open conflict in the spring of 2004.

By this point, Sadr's movement had become entirely estranged from the Shi'a mainstream. On the religious level, Sadr challenged the authority of Ayatollah Sistani as Grand Marja of Iraq; on the political level, the Sadrists rejected participation in the constitutional process and rebuffed attempts to bring Dawa into the political fold. Throughout 2004, these motives took on a violent military dimension, as Sadr's forces unsuccessfully attempted to wrest control of Najaf from Sistani and the Coalition. The resultant stand-off between JAM and Coalition Forces in the walls of the Imam Ali Mausoleum resulted in hundreds of deaths and the near destruction of one of Shi'a Islam's holiest sites. The events of the summer turned many Shi'a against the Sadrists, as JAM appeared to be spiraling out of Sadr's control.

However, what seemed to be the end of Muqtada's short campaign for legal authority actually demonstrated the remarkable flexibility of his movement. After defeat in Najaf, the Mahdi Army broke into entities controlled by Sadr, disillusioned advisors of his father, and criminal enterprises. In order to preserve his political future, Sadr publicly denounced those operating beyond his oversight. He then re-formed his own more controlled fighting force and styled his movement into a political participant. From this point, “controlled instability” became the paradigm for Sadrist legal legitimacy. In this

framework, his once informal, violently legitimated authority in Sadr City would now be fortified with actual electoral gains. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, Sadrist candidates won 25 seats in the body and key cabinet positions, which could crucially boost employment among constituents. Moral legitimacy lost among the base during the Battle of Najaf had been, by and large, regained by the transition and its spoils; Sadr even attempted to mend his rift with the hawza and bolster his clerical credibility by publicly aligning his positions with Sistani.

Yet, while the Sadrists intended to remain participants in the formal political process, incentives for destabilization within that process never entirely subsided. In the continuously unstable environment of Iraq, “controlled instability” proved the most advantageous strategy. The Sadrists have routinely gained formal political purchase while maintaining their credibility as a destabilizing force. In the period of sectarian civil war following Sunni attacks on the Shi’a al-Askari Shrine, for example, what remained of the JAM was once again drawn into the fray. As the axis of conflict had shifted from inter-Shi’a rivalry to cross-confessional warfare, violence on behalf of the JAM—whether sanctioned by Sadr or not—could only strengthen his support among the base and demonstrate the credibility of its threat to political rivals.

Further, the conflict provided a new opportunity to widen the base of support by opening offices and offering protection to isolated Shi’a communities in dispute. In this way, the Sadrists gained legitimacy by destabilizing the institutions they had previously contested. When these same incentives no longer existed, Muqtada once again divested from the JAM, eventually moving to rebrand the group Sarayha al-Salam or “Peace Brigades,” which remains its name at present. In the modern period, the Sadrist political identity rests between these two poles: maintaining both the appearance of a legitimate political participant and the credibility of a destabilizing counterforce. Added to this continued coercive capacity, Muqtada Sadr retains the ability to draw massive protests from the Shi’a street nearly at will—perhaps the most significant characteristic of his figure today.

Following a brief withdrawal in 2007, Sadrist candidates have won seats in every Iraqi government since reconstruction—between 2014 and 2018, support for the Sadrist parliamentary coalition doubled from 7-14%. Sadr’s attempts to style himself into a protest figure have yielded a number of coalitions with leftist and revolutionary parties. Despite maintaining significant levers of power within the state, Sadr’s political presence is augmented by his use of mass mobilization and a more controlled militia presence. By destabilizing the institutions in which he operates at strategic moments, Sadr exercises a wider range of coercive authority than his opponents. This is sustained by his ability to call upon mass demonstrations and unrest.

Sadr’s influence over the southern districts of Baghdad remains nearly intractable, and due to his pragmatism in cooperating with wider protest movements against the muhasasa (quota system in government) and federal ineffectiveness, this authority has expanded. In the October 2021 parliamentary elections, the Sadrist bloc won a plurality of seats and the right to form a government. However, in order to preserve this image, Sadr is careful not to associate himself too closely with the political establishment. To the extent that this has been successful, the Sadrist political movement remains a revolutionary one where too entrenched a Sadrist elite would create diminishing returns. Therefore, Sadr’s legal authority remains tied to his identity as a revolutionary and his ability to retain a “controlled instability” in which his movement can successfully operate.

Man of the Base, Sadr’s Charismatic Legitimacy

Muqtada al-Sadr has solidified many of his structural advantages by cultivating a deep charismatic authority among his followers. While his initial successes may have depended upon his inherited sources of legitimacy, today, Muqtada has staked out an identity and cult of personality which intangibly reinforces these gains through what Weber terms the “Routinization of Charisma,” or the interoperability between one source of legitimation and another. It is beyond doubt that Muqtada’s personal ability to mobilize mass support acts as his greatest asset in the modern context; this charisma and control over the base emanates

from sources both sacred and profane.

In politics, Sadr is seen as having the personal fortitude to stand up to Western imposition. Rhetorically, this has tended to veer into a more generic anti-Westernism, but the fact that Sadr was the first and only Iraqi religious leader to publicly denounce the occupation remains significant. To the rank-and-file Shi'a of Iraq, Muqtada was able to present himself as an independent Iraqi leader fighting against the country's foreign occupation. The fact that Muqtada remained in Iraq through even the darkest days of the civil war—unlike nearly every other Shi'a politician including Hakim, Khoei, Sistani, and Maliki—significantly bolstered these bona fides. Of course, this legitimating discourse also overlaps neatly with the religious case of the Sadr as an Arabic-speaking clergy for Iraq, contrasted with the hawza of Iran.

Materially, Sadr's influence is felt throughout the streets of his constituency. While conditions remain bleak in Iraq's Shi'a south, the Sadrists have elevated many of the Shi'a lower class into government positions, maintained and improved public works through the worst of the war, and brought new attention to the urban poor. Further, Sadr has never held political office himself. Instead, he has chosen to appoint and horse-trade countless politicians into positions across local and national government. Accordingly, there is a substantial network of Sadr beneficiaries who owe their position and influence to him alone. Sadr has had some hand in selecting almost every Primer in the history of constitutional Iraq. In addition to keeping his image clean of the dirty work of politics, Sadr's means of exercising power ensures his network remains aware of their loyalty to him.

On the theological level, Muqtada's elevation to religious leadership—giving Friday sermons and administering a qoms network—is owed in part to a theological novelty introduced by his father. In orthodox Shi'ism, the most learned cleric takes the role of the marja, whom believers are expected to emulate. When a marja dies, the next most qualified scholar replaces him. Sadr's innovation was to suggest that non-emulative leadership was possible in the absence of a most qualified candidate. Given that Sadiq's appointed successor was exiled in Iran at the time of succession, the Sadrists came to argue that Muqta-

da's political and social leadership made him best suited to take the position instead. These personal qualities, when attached to the theology of the movement's intellectual leader, make a strong case for Muqtada's leadership.

Finally, on the esoteric religious level, Muqtada and the Sadr family claim a unique personal relationship with the Hidden Imam, or the occulted eschatological figure of Twelver Shi'ism. In Shi'a discourse, this would imply a mystical access to unmediated religious enlightenment, unheard of even among the elite of the hawza. Sadr speaks only vaguely on this topic, but in the Shi'a religious field, such a relationship would confer a singular religious status. To the Sadr base in Iraq, this is especially noteworthy as the Sadr would be among only a handful of Arab clerics to claim such an honor; the highest esoterics of Shi'ism are almost always Persian. While this is not offered so much to trump the hawza per se, it does provide a personal legitimation which, for many Shi'a, would have the potential to supersede other defects.

Conclusion

Sadrist leadership has been conclusively hallowed out at least twice in its history, yet the complex ecosystem of religious, familial, social, and political bonds endures under the same name. If it was not already clear, the events of this summer demonstrated that the Iraqi republic will not go forward without the consent of Muqtada al-Sadr.

Superordinate structures of authority are key in explaining the rise and renewal of the mercurial cleric. However, Muqtada's own legitimacy seems durable beyond the purview of formal institutions both religious and political. His strength comes from his base, and in its current configuration, rejection by the hawza or dismissal from parliament can only reinforce his appeal. While Sadr's personal history, and perhaps the initial sources of his legitimacy, were dependent upon his standing relative to established institutions, his current position has developed a matrix of authority dynamic to the point of transcending any one source of legitimation. His movement between traditional, political, and charismatic authority will be formidable for years to come. There can be little question that the most funda-

mental source of Muqtada's influence is the mass of those who follow him. Yet the Sadrist dependency on the base also belies an essential vulnerability. The biggest threat to Muqtada al-Sadr is a loss of moral legitimacy—a strictly religious matter—which has conferred this power upon him in the first place. Sadr himself knows this best of all. Fierce protection over this most coveted and intangible authority will have the greatest potential to drive his behavior in ever more unpredictable directions. In sum, his greatest strength is also the source of his greatest weakness—policymakers must keep this in mind as we continue to ask, “Who is Muqtada al-Sadr?”

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