

# PLURALISM IN EMERGENCIES: MOVEMENT, SPACE, AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE



DECEMBER 6-7, 2017  
COLUMBIA GLOBAL CENTERS | AMMAN



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# SUMMARY

“Pluralism in Emergenc(i)es” explores pluralism as it emerges in response to contemporary global crises. “Pluralism” is commonly understood as the recognition and affirmation of diversity within a governing body or set of institutional arrangements. Drawing on the resources of Columbia’s Global Center in Amman, this conference examines the historical, social, and religious underpinnings of the so-called migrant and refugee crisis in order to position this moment as a state of emergence, rather than a state of emergency. Thinking of pluralism as a technology of power that helps to organize people and their interactions, and often articulated with special attention to religious difference, this conference addresses how pluralism becomes activated in emergency situations and is utilized in different ways and towards different ends.

The two-day conference in Amman brings together local experts, students and activists with regional specialists and practitioners from academia, civil society and the NGO sector, to present and discuss the impact of global migration on housing and urban development, collective memory and identity, and religious pluralism in the face of rapidly changing and increasingly precarious lived realities.

This conference series is co-sponsored by the Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life (IRCPL) at Columbia University, Columbia Global Centers, the Center for Religion, Conflict and the Public Domain at the University of Groningen, and the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS) at the University of Oslo.

# PROGRAM SCHEDULE

**WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 6, 2017**

**9:45 AM** Registration

**10:00 AM** Welcoming remarks

**10:15 AM Panel 1: Emerging Spaces and Settlements**

Moderator: Audi George Bajalia

Ayham Dalal, *Refugee Camps and the Politics of Dwelling: Narrating Encampments of Refugees from Syria in Jordan between 2011 and 2014*

Tahir Zaman, "You won't find no religion here": Locating the sacred in Athens' 'refugee squats'

Stefano Fogliata, *Rethinking Urban Interactions from the Margins: Palestinians and Syrians between Refugee Camps and the Cities*

**11:45 AM** Coffee Break

**12:00 PM Panel 2: Religion and Refugees: Conversations from the Field**

Moderator: K. Soraya Batmanghelichi

Connie Carøe Christiansen, *Gender relations among neighbors: A study of humanitarian practices addressing Syrian refugees in Lebanon*

Erin Wilson and Vivienne Matthies-Boon, 'A Crisis of God?': Rethinking the Role of Religion, Spirituality and the Transcendent in Trauma Interventions amongst Syrian Refugees in Jordan

Jacqueline Parry and Osama Gharizi, *The Construction of National Identity during Crisis: The Case of Iraq's Disputed Territories*

Sofian Merabet, *The Aborted Pluralism for Gay Syrian Refugees in Beirut*

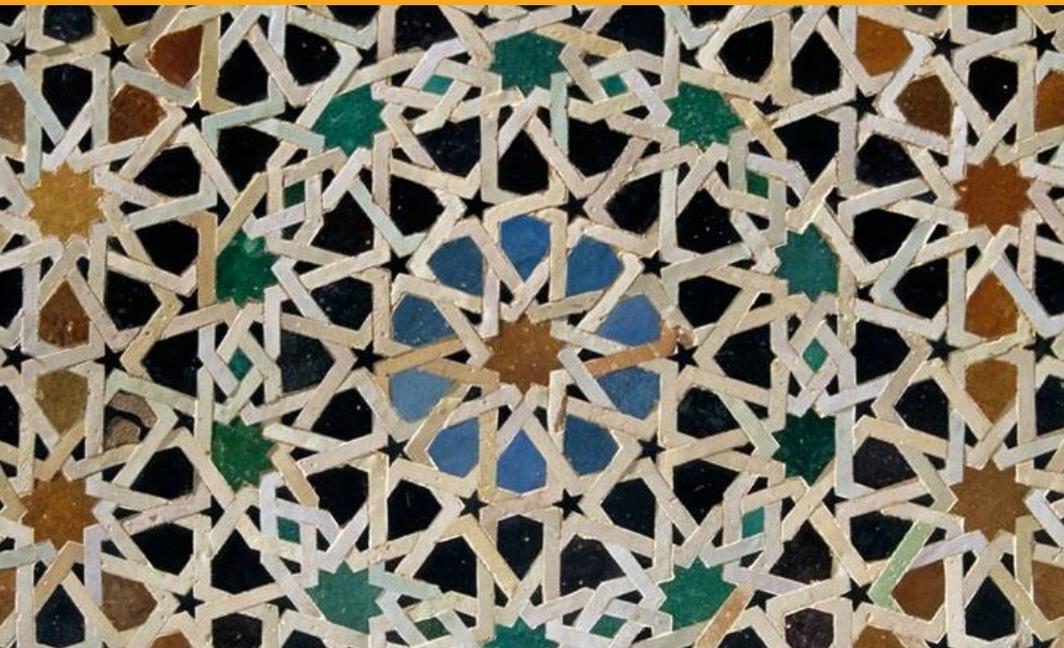
**1:45 PM** *Lunch*

**3:00 PM** **First Roundtable**

Moderator: Jawad Dukhgan

**4:00 PM** **Day One ends**

**7:30 PM** *Dinner at Karam Beirut*



# PROGRAM SCHEDULE

**THURSDAY DECEMBER 7, 2017**

**10:00 AM Panel 3: Collective Memory and Identity**

Moderator: Sofian Merabet

Daniel Corstange, *Sectarian Framing in the Syrian Civil War*

Hengameh Ziai, *Syrian Migrants in Sudan in Comparative Perspective: A Racial Non-crisis?*

Ayham Dalal, *From Shelters to Homes: On the Political Economy, Architecture and Culture of the Home-Making in Zaatari Camp*

**11:30 AM** *Coffee break*

**11:45 AM Panel 4: Conceptualizing and Comparing Pluralism in Emergencies**

Moderator: Sami Al-Daghistani

Diana Zeidan, *The Paradox of Chronic Emergency: Lessons from South Lebanon*

Seçil Dağtaş, *Rethinking Border Politics: Hospitality Across Religion and Gender in Turkey's Southern Borderlands*

Muhammad Zia-ul-haq, *Towards Advancing Religious Pluralism in Islamic Thoughts*

**1:15 PM** *Lunch*

**2:30 PM Second Roundtable**

Moderator: Lucine Taminian

**3:30 PM Day Two ends**

**7:30 PM *Dinner at Fakhreldin Restaurant***



# PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 6, 2017

## Panel 1: Emerging Spaces and Settlements

**Ayham Dalal, Technical University of Berlin.** Ayham Dalal is an architect and PhD student in the Department of International Urbanism and Design at Technische Universität Berlin. His primary research interests focus on encampment, squatting, and informality as modes of spatial negotiation and co-production. Taking refugee camps as a form of post-city urbanism, his research investigates the role of sovereignty, culture, and identity in the production of urban space and dwelling in Zaatari Camp (Jordan).

### ***Refugee Camps and the Politics of Dwelling: Narrating Encampments of Refugees from Syria in Jordan between 2011 and 2014***

Worldwide, the proliferation of refugee camps is drawing attention towards their diverse typologies. Focusing solely on 'biopolitics' to understand camps fails to realize the multiplicity of actors and reasons that influence their emergence and transformation (cf. Turner 2015; Oesch 2017). This paper looks at the different encampments that appeared in Jordan between 2011 and 2014. With the increasing influx, the state became more concerned with categorizing and isolating the 'illegal' refugees, in contrast to the increasing pressure on the host community to accommodate the new arrivals. This has produced smaller and diverse types of encampments, influenced by the multiplicity of actors on the ground. The decision to open Zaatari camp, followed by the massive influx of refugees not only led to its informality, but informed and influenced the planning of the other two camps. Both emphasizing disciplinary design, the Emirati-Jordanian camp presented an extraterritorial 'five-stars' camp, whereas Azraq a 'mass' housing project. While each of these spaces can be interrogated separately, this analysis

illustrates the relationships between them and the actors participating in their making. Such camps are no more isolated 'biopolitical' territories, but rather a spatial network of managing and distancing the 'undesirables' – a part of a global dispositive that is shaping our world today.

**Tahir Zaman, University of Sussex.** Dr. Tahir Zaman is a lecturer in Human Geography at the School of Global Studies in the University of Sussex. His broad research interests cover the intersections of displacement, humanitarianism, and social economy. His research also engages critically with the limits and opportunities of faith-based humanitarianism. Tahir has been working extensively with a leading conflict transformation NGO on peace-building with Syrian actors in diaspora.

***“You won’t find no religion here”: Locating the sacred in Athens’ ‘refugee squats’***

Popular memories of the migrant ‘other’ can be located in embedded religious narratives calling for a right of neighbourliness. Such narratives are not performed in institutionally recognised ‘sacred spaces’ but in everyday prosaic spaces. In articulating a right of neighbourliness, refugee and migrant others demand a right to the neighbourhood. In so doing, they interrogate both the poetics and politics of so-called sacred space. This reveals conviviality to be a fluid everyday strategy of encountering difference to help mitigate the possibility of conflict and bolster positive relations as migrants and refugees negotiate their new geography of exile. Based on ethnographic data gathered during two field visits during 2016 in Athens, Greece, this paper examines the autonomous housing arrangements organised for and by refugees and migrants as they transit through the city. It considers how migrant and refugee insistence on narratives and practices of

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neighbourliness is shaping and concomitantly being shaped by migrant rights' activism. The paper investigates how this hitherto hidden popular cultural memory forges new dynamics of encounter in neighbourhoods with a long internalised history of solidarity. It draws attention to contestation not only over understandings of neighbourliness and solidarity, but the sacred also.

**Stefano Fogliata, University of Bergamo.** Stefano Fogliata is a PhD candidate in Humanistic Intercultural Studies at the University of Bergamo and currently associated with the Institute for Migration Studies at the Lebanese American University. His research centers around refugee studies, with a regional specialization in the Middle East. He examines questions around borders and boundaries, individual disengagement, and youth and identity politics in the current experience of Palestinian and Syrian refugees in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings.

## ***Rethinking Urban Interactions from the Margins: Palestinians and Syrians between Refugee Camps and the Cities***

Despite being historically spatially contracted and socially constrained, Palestinian camps in Lebanon have turned once more into “transitional zones of emplacement” (Janmyr and Knudsen, 2016) for thousands of people recently fleeing the Syrian conflict. The plural subjectivities emerging within the camps highlight a further connection between spatial marginalization and precarious legal statuses. My paper investigates how refugees living in camps experience different scales of mobility and develop a wide range of practices that extends beyond the camp's boundaries (Dorai, 2010), exploring how imperceptible and hyper-mobile tactics of existence re-

elaborate Palestinian refugee camps into meaningful places of elusive contestation. Mainly hinged on an on-going fieldwork started in 2014, my research hinges on the interconnectivities evolving around the Palestinian Bourj el Barajneh camp and Hezbollah-controlled Beirut southern suburbs. By extensively investigating practices of mutual recognition and invisibility emerging between the “habitual” residents and Syria’s refugees, the paper focuses on how transnational discourses and outdoor practices effectively contest international gaps in protection, national securitization policies and arbitrary measures by local non-state actors. I argue that translocal informal networks transgressing urban boundaries contribute to rethinking the ambivalence of reified border spaces of exclusion (Agier, 2015) and consequently introduce new possibilities of reshaping the map of the city.

## **Panel 2: Religion and Refugees: Conversations from the Field**

**Connie Carøe Christiansen, Lebanese American University.**

Dr. Connie Carøe Christiansen is a visiting Associate Professor in Gender Studies at Lebanese-American University, Beirut where she manages a Carnegie-funded project, “Gender equality and Islamic family laws – a transnational movement”. She has published research on gender, migration and Islam in Denmark, Turkey, Morocco and Yemen.

### ***Gender relations among neighbors: A study of humanitarian practices addressing Syrian refugees in Lebanon***

The purpose of this paper is to study the perceptions of gender relations among Syrian refugees as presented by employees of selected local NGOs in Lebanon. These NGOs form part

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of a civil society undergoing change since the refugee crisis of the Syrian war, and now collaborating with Syrian NGOs, and engaging Syrian refugees in humanitarian projects. Their participation in humanitarian response occurs in Lebanon in several contexts, ranging from handicraft workshops to neighborhood committees, civil society activism and business initiation. Gender relations among Syrians are by these NGOs presented as more patriarchal and harmful for women, but they are contested by Syrian activists in Lebanon. Nevertheless they become a pre-text for the approach that refugee women are more vulnerable; not only due to the war, but also due to their relations to Syrian men. The paper forms part of a study which asks what consequences the engagement of Syrian refugees in humanitarian work may have for citizenship transformation– with particular urgency and value for women who are denied equal citizenship with men.

**Erin Wilson, University of Groningen and Vivienne Matthies-Boon, University of Amsterdam.** Dr. Erin K. Wilson is an Associate Professor of Politics and Religion at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Groningen. Her research is positioned at the intersection of religious studies and international relations, with particular interest in the impact of secular worldviews in areas of global justice, human rights, forced migration, development and gender, and the development of alternative theoretical frames beyond ‘religious’ and ‘secular’.

Dr. Vivienne Matthies-Boon is an Assistant Professor of International Relations of the Middle East and the Coordinator of the Zeytun Exchange Programme with the Middle East in the Department of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam. Underlying her political engagement and human rights

advocacy in the MENA region are questions related to issues of 'humanness', 'being', and 'suffering'. Her work has a particular focus on youth participation and is influenced by an aspiration for global justice.

***'A Crisis of God?': Rethinking the Role of Religion, Spirituality and the Transcendent in Trauma Interventions amongst Syrian Refugees in Jordan***

Scholars and practitioners are increasingly acknowledging the existence of a secular bias within humanitarianism. This awareness has resulted in efforts to increase faith-sensitivity and include faith-based programming and actors in humanitarian responses. These include the UNHCR's High Commissioner's Dialogue with faith leaders on protection, religious literacy training for staff and partnerships with local faith communities in response to displacement. In the case of psycho-social support (PSS) for those experiencing trauma and displacement, however, attention for religion and spirituality is still something of a taboo. It is here that secular assumptions about the nature of 'religion' become especially visible and influential. Religion is viewed as volatile and unpredictable, an element that can cause conflict and harm amongst displaced and traumatized communities and is thus avoided within group and community PSS initiatives. For many people who are currently experiencing displacement, their worldview is strongly embedded in religious and spiritual consciousness. They come from regions of the world where 'religion' permeates almost every aspect of human existence. When those assumptive worlds are disrupted or shattered as a result of the experience of trauma and displacement, there exists the possibility that rebuilding those worlds requires attention to religion and spirituality, that indeed not giving attention to these elements has the possibility of being harmful.

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Drawing on interviews with practitioners providing PSS to refugees in Jordan, this paper explores current perspectives on addressing spirituality in responses to the trauma of displacement. The paper argues that attention for spirituality can, should and is being incorporated into PSS approaches by non-government organisations working with displaced populations in Jordan. However, the introduction of spiritually-sensitive approaches requires care and attention to the dominant concerns of humanitarian actors highlighted above, and also sensitivity to the diverse ways in which people engage with, and experience spirituality in their everyday lives.

**Jacqueline Parry, American University of Iraq (Sulaimani) and Osama Gharizi, United States Institute of Peace.** Dr. Jacqueline Parry holds a PhD in international law from the Australian National University. She has conducted research related to migration and displacement, access to justice, post-conflict dynamics, governance and security studies. Since 2007, she has worked in a variety of programmatic and research roles for UNHCR, IOM and IRC, completing assignments in Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Malawi and Afghanistan. She currently holds the position of Research Director at the Institute of Regional and International Studies, American University of Iraq (Sulaimani).

Osama Gharizi is regional program manager for Middle East Programs at the United States Institute for Peace (USIP). He joined USIP as program officer for Learning and Evaluation in August 2013. He previously worked at the International Republican Institute (IRI) where he designed, managed and evaluated programs on governance, political party and civil society strengthening, and election observation. His time at IRI included directing survey research programs in Lebanon,

managing monitoring and evaluation efforts in Egypt and leading IRI's long-term election observation for the 2012 parliamentary elections in Georgia. He also worked on projects in Oman, Morocco and Jordan. Prior to IRI, Osama worked for Transparency International's chapter in Lebanon, the Lebanese Transparency Association. He holds a Master of International Affairs from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, with a concentration in economic and political development.

### ***The Construction of National Identity During Crisis: The Case of Iraq's Disputed Territories***

This paper explores how the conflict associated with ISIS has affected the concept of plurality in Iraq. Iraq has struggled with national identity since its modern founding, and competing visions have flourished amongst the country's diverse population. The post-2003 order saw communal pluralism rigidly defined: the interweaving of Iraqi identity with Shia religiosity, on the one hand; and the emergence of a strong Kurdish nationalism and separatism on the other. This dualism particularly affected communities living between Arab and Kurdish Iraq, in the swathe of land known as the disputed territories. Communities living in these disputed territories often find themselves caught between the competing nationalisms of central (Arab) and northern (Kurdish) Iraq. The crisis precipitated by ISIS reignited the territorial dispute between Arab and Kurdish Iraq and re-energized the issue of plurality. Displacement, emplacement, service provision, security and governance are utilized by those in power as well as those affected by the conflict to construct and deconstruct different understandings of plurality. This paper examines the material and immaterial modes through which pluralism takes shape in the disputed territories. What are the variations in how

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'pluralism' is understood, and how does it function in a time of crisis? We examine these issues via two case studies: the Yezidi-majority district of Sinjar, and the mixed Kurdish-Arab sub-district of Zummar.

**Sofian Merabet, UT Austin.** Dr. Sofian Merabet is a sociocultural anthropologist from the University of Texas, Austin whose expertise lies in the modern Middle East and the wider Muslim world, including Muslim immigrant communities in Europe and the Arab Diaspora in South America. His interdisciplinary research analyses the human geography of queer identity formations and the social production of queer space as constitutive features of wider class, religious, and gender relations.

## ***The Aborted Pluralism for Gay Syrian Refugees in Beirut***

This paper engages with the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon and, specifically, considers how queer-identified Syrians navigate an often-hostile environment in and around the Lebanese capital Beirut. Drawing on hospitality as a philosophical concept and on the sociological notion of the stranger, this paper focuses on discourses and aspirations these refugees express, in terms of language and bodily practices, in the face of what many experience as "hardened borders" within the social fabric of the host country. These discourses and aspirations frequently amount to practices that engender new forms of (im)mobility that, in turn, create zones of encounter for individuals with varying class, sectarian, and gender backgrounds. In addressing these emerging zones of encounter, the paper looks at what I would like to call the "aborted pluralism" for many gay Syrian refugees in Beirut and, therefore, what it actually means to be a gay Syrian refugee in Lebanon today. In so doing, it zooms in ethnographically on

the eastern Beiruti neighborhood of Borj Hammoud and reflects on its transformations over the past century, from an early settlement for survivors of the Armenian genocide to a place of residence for many domestic workers hailing from South(east) Asia and Eastern Africa. Today, it is one of the principal settings in Lebanon where pluralism in emergenc(i)es can best be assessed.



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THURSDAY DECEMBER 7, 2017

## Panel 3: Collective Memory and Identity

**Daniel Corstange, Columbia University.** Prof. Daniel Corstange is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. He has conducted extensive research in the Arab world on ethnic, sectarian, and religious politics. His current research focuses on public opinion and international intervention in the Syrian conflict.

### *Sectarian Framing in the Syrian Civil War*

How do civilians respond to civil war narratives? Do they react to ethnic frames more strongly than to alternatives? Governments and rebels battle for hearts and minds as well as strategic terrain, and winning the narrative war can shift legitimacy, popular support, and material resources to the sympathetically framed side. We examine the effect of one-sided and competing war discourses on ordinary people's understandings of the Syrian civil war -- a conflict with multiple narratives, but which has become more communal over time. We conduct a framing experiment with a representative sample of Syrian refugees in Lebanon in which we vary the narrative that describes the reasons for the conflict. We find that sectarian explanations, framed in isolation, strongly increase the importance government supporters place on fighting. When counter-framed against competing narratives, however, the rallying effect of sectarianism drops.

**Hengameh Ziai, Columbia University.** Henny Ziai is a PhD candidate in the department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies at Columbia University. Her research interests lie at the intersection of African and Middle Eastern Studies, with a particular interest in questions around political economy, the

anthropology of neoliberalism, colonialism, biopolitics and race in the context of modern Sudan.

### ***Syrian Migrants in Sudan in Comparative Perspective: A racial non-crisis?***

This paper explores the reception of Syrian migrants in Sudan— itself a state with a history of protracted conflict frequently articulated through politicised and dehistoricised identities (especially discourses around “Arab” versus “African” identities), and itself being one of the largest producers of refugees and internally displaced people. Sudan has been lauded recently in the media for its treatment of the 200,000 Syrians arriving since 2011. This paper places the reception of Syrian refugees in Sudan in comparative perspective with other migrant populations and contexts, seeking to bring to the fore both the questions of race in the hierarchisation of refugees, and to interrogate race as a governmental technology, producing fragmented regimes of legalities and illegalities. My approach to questions of race will be two-fold. The first part of the paper outlines the broader context in which Sudan has recently found itself entangled in a rapidly consolidating and racialised geopolitics of migration control. The second part considers Sudan as a destination country, focusing on the specific case of Syrian migrants in order to explore both the ostensible benefits of their reception in Sudan, as well as how their reception may have also intersected with prevailing discourses around race. This paper seeks to consider these paradoxical experiences as indicative of an emerging “pluralism” that is fragmenting and re-organizing migrant populations, while consolidating statist discourses. Moreover, this work highlights Sudan—itself often peripheralised in Middle Eastern studies—as not merely a producer of refugees but also, in the present context, an important destination state.

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**Ayham Dalal, Technical University of Berlin.** Ayham Dalal is an architect and PhD student in the Department of International Urbanism and Design at Technische Universität Berlin. His primary research interests focus on encampment, squatting, and informality as modes of spatial negotiation and co-production. Taking refugee camps as a form of post-city urbanism, his research investigates the role of sovereignty, culture, and identity in the production of urban space and dwelling in Zaatari Camp (Jordan).

## ***From Shelters to Homes: On the Political Economy, Architecture and Culture of the Home-Making in Zaatari Camp***

Refugee camps have been considered part of the post-city urbanism (Alsayyad and Roy 2006), where the 'home' represents the microcosm through which the urbanization of camps can be better understood (Sayigh 2006). Palestinian camps have witnessed a shift from shelter to habitat through different processes – usually affected by the hybrid and shifting sovereignties; yet, new camps are built with optimized shelters and prefabs. Taking the caravan (prefab) as the DNA of the built environment in a camp-city like Zaatari in Jordan, this paper examines the 'home-making' processes by focusing on the caravans themselves. While it traces down the political and economic connotations related to how they were introduced to the camp, and afterwards, dealt with inside the camp; it also looks at how caravans are being gathered, dismantled, and assembled to create 'homes'. Relying on several ethnographic fieldworks between 2014 and 2017; the researcher examines the architectural design of houses in the camp in relation to culture and socio-economic backgrounds. In contrast to the voices that claim refugees to re-built houses similar to those they came from, the paper argues that the production of homes

constitute a process of negotiation between culture, memory, identity and time, within the available resources.

#### **Panel 4: Conceptualizing and Comparing Pluralism in Emergencies**

**Diana Zeidan, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.** Diana Zeidan is a PhD candidate in Development Studies, affiliated with École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and the Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les Enjeux Sociaux (IRIS), in Paris. Her research agenda gives specific focus to the questions related to the deployment of development policies in post-war Lebanon and the “making of politics” through the aid system in Lebanon.

#### ***The Paradox of Chronic Emergency: Lessons from South Lebanon***

In Lebanon, the international humanitarian apparatus was redeployed in the wake of the influx of Syrian refugees, forcing local systems of care to redefine their welfare scheme and clientele, and coexist with international organisations whose presence is justified by a discourse on “emergency”. In this context, most programmes targeting Syrian refugees tend to focus on humanitarian aid on the one hand, while bolstering “community self-reliance” and “community resilience” on the other. These governance dynamics are experienced in south Lebanon against a backdrop of local discourse in support for Hezbollah, and growing criticism around refugees’ presence. The separation between the logics of inclusive ‘development’ and ‘emergency’ intervention models becomes more problematic when projected onto the south Lebanese space, where the 2006 war effects are still very present. Local care providers, especially municipalities and Hezbollah-affiliated

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organisations, are engaged in a political struggle over meaning, which consists in framing “emergency” activities along other development models, while trying to enroll various audiences in their respective interpretations. Based on qualitative fieldwork in Marjayoun, Hasbaya and Bint-Jbeil, this paper will argue that any conciliation strategy in South-Lebanon necessitates the (self) transformation of war victims into rights-holding political actors, and that international strategies to grant Syrian refugees access to aid may be entrenching, rather than reducing, their political voicelessness.

**Seçil Dağtaş, University of Waterloo.** Prof. Seçil Dağtaş is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Waterloo and a Residential Fellow at the Collegium de Lyon. Her research focuses on gender politics and the secular governance of religious diversity in Turkey. She is currently working on a monograph that examines Middle Eastern border politics with a focus on social relationships between Syrian refugees and minority communities in Turkey in absence of structured legal asylum mechanisms.

## ***Rethinking Border Politics: Hospitality Across Religion and Gender in Turkey’s Southern Borderlands***

Since the early days of the Syrian conflict in 2011, Turkey’s border province Hatay has provided a major destination for displaced people due to its geographical proximity to Syria, established cross-border networks, and Arabic speaking demographics. Currently, there are about 20,000 Syrians registered as refugees in five camps in Hatay, while an estimated 400,000 reside in its towns and villages. Based on extended fieldwork in Hatay’s administrative capital Antakya and its border town Altınözü, this paper examines everyday forms of religious kinship and hospitality that shape social

relations between these displaced groups and Turkey's religious minorities who live along the border—specifically the bilingual (Arabic-Turkish) Alawis, Jews, and Orthodox Christians—in the absence of structured asylum mechanisms. I first discuss how the legal categorizations of “minority” and “refugee” were produced in relation to particular conceptions of religious difference in the context of colonial relations and nation building in the Middle East. I then show how Syrian refugees and religious minorities in Hatay reconfigure their religious identities, socio-spatial belonging and political struggles at the root of their displacement through mundane encounters in the gendered domains of hospitality. I argue that these encounters transcend and unsettle the state-centric ideas of citizenship as bounded in space by the inviolability of naturalized borders. Ultimately, this paper provides an alternative account of border politics, one that approaches borders as spatiotemporal sites of negotiation not only between local communities and states, but also between people differentiated on the basis of their religion, gender, and citizenship.

**Muhammad Zia-ul-haq, International Islamic University, Islamabad.** Prof. Dr. Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq is the Director General of the Islamic Research Institute and Professor of Shariah & Islamic Law at International Islamic University, Islamabad, where he also serves as Dean of the Faculty of Shariah and Law and Chair of Department of Shariah. He also works as the editor of the reputed research journal *Fikr o Nazar*. He specializes in Islamic law and jurisprudence, human rights and international Islamic law, Muslim family laws, and interfaith relations.

***Towards Advancing Religious Pluralism in Islamic Thoughts***  
Modern theory of religious pluralism becomes more important

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after worldwide recognition of diversities of cultures, belief systems, and standards of morality. Among the dialogical attitudes such as exclusivism, inclusivism, parallelism and pluralism, pluralism is most appropriate for changing differences into diversity. Sound basis of religious pluralism in Islamic theology are elaborated and explained by many scholars. They derived that submission to God in the light of divine guidance is the core of the messages of all the prophets and messengers. Islam is not merely the religion preached by Muhammad; it was also the religion of all the true prophets of God. The significance of religious pluralism in Islam could be understood from the fact that it has identified itself with the historical revelation of Judaism and Christianity. Muslim's recognition of legitimate religions is extended to other religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Religious pluralism in Islam is based on the acknowledgement of others on the grounds such as universalism of revelation, 'humanism', and normative values. The theory of religious pluralism took practical shape in rulings of Shariah to regulate interfaith relations. Therefore the research, which is aimed at exploring further pluralistic dimensions of Islam with the use of social-legal and Islamic methodologies of research, argues that freedom of choice of faith is the basic ingredient of conversion therefore the conversion by force; coercion or interference is null and void. The research will proceed with a brief description of religious pluralism. The second part will discuss various approaches of interfaith relations in Islamic thought. The Islamic tradition on religious pluralism based on al-Qur'ān and Sūnah is explained in the third part of this study. The levels of religious pluralism in Islam have been identified in the fourth part of this study. Appropriate strategies of Muslims in interfaith interactions and their possible effective role in the plural world have been suggested in the conclusion.

# CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS

**Sami Al-Daghistani** recently obtained a double-PhD in Islamic studies (supervision at Leiden University, Columbia University, and WWU Münster). He is a Research Fellow at the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS) at the University of Oslo and a Research Scholar at IRCPL at Columbia University. His research and teaching focus on the intellectual history of Islam, Islamic economic thought, Islamization of knowledge, and Islamic legal discourse.

**Ahmad Al-Mousa** is the Program Manager at the Columbia Global Centers I Amman. He joined the Center in April 2015 and is responsible for identifying relevant scholarly projects with the aim to expand them regionally to address urgent current questions. Prior to joining the Center, Ahmad worked in Australian NGOs to improve processes employed around the social and economic inclusion of immigrants and humanitarian entrants. Ahmad earned his Ph.D. in Diversity and Knowledge Management from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 2009.

**Audi George Bajalia** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University. His research focuses on the forms of linguistic, economic, and political exchange to which border infrastructures give rise, particularly through waiting in the borderlands of northern Morocco. Parallel to this academic work, he works as a theatre and film director both in the US and Morocco.

**K. Soraya Batmanghelichi** is Associate Professor for the Study of Modern Iran in the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages at the University of Oslo, Norway. She is also Senior Research Scholar at IRCPL. Her research focuses on contemporary women's movements, sexuality, and gendered public space in Iran and the modern Middle East.

**Walid Hammam** is Associate Director at the Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life at Columbia University. He has a background in international affairs, and is interested in U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, international development, and public policy analysis. His professional background is in strategic planning and project development, and the design, management and evaluation of programs and research initiatives.

# CONFERENCE SPONSORS

## The Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life

The Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life supports academic research, teaching, and scholarship on the study of religion, culture, and social difference at Columbia University. In addition, it convenes academic conferences, public forums, and collaborative programming to support and extend academic and scholarly understanding of these topics, and to disseminate and distribute such new understandings to broader publics and communities.

The Institute actively supports scholarship, teaching and public programming across the Faculty of Arts and Sciences as well as in the University more broadly under the auspices and oversight of the Department of Religion.

<http://ircpl.org/>

## Columbia Global Centers | Amman

The Center in Amman, established in 2009, is one of the first in a network of eight Columbia Global Centers—a major initiative launched by Columbia University to expand its international presence. Other centers are located in Beijing, Mumbai, Paris, Istanbul, Nairobi, Santiago, Rio de Janeiro and Tunis. Columbia Global Centers promote and facilitate the collaborative and impactful engagement of the University's faculty, students, and alumni with the world to enhance understanding, address global challenges, and advance knowledge and its exchange.

The Amman Center provides a regional base for scholarly activities throughout the Middle East and strengthens the University's academic partnerships and programs.

<https://globalcenters.columbia.edu/amman>

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**The Centre for Religion, Conflict and Globalization engages in cutting-edge research, policy advice and analysis that seeks to develop alternative conceptual and practical approaches to understanding “religion” and its relationship with politics and society.**

**Our researchers explore religion’s entanglement with issues related to migration, gender and sexuality, development, human rights (especially Freedom of Religion or Belief), conflict resolution and peacebuilding across multiple geographical, cultural, political, economic and historical contexts.**

**Utilizing multidisciplinary approaches that draw on International Relations, sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, law, religious studies, theology and social and political science, our staff and fellows conduct theoretically innovative research and provide consultation and advice for policymakers at various different levels of government and for civil society organisations. The Centre hosts regular seminars and master classes from visiting scholars, workshops and policy meetings and provides analysis on current events through its blog, The Religion Factor.**

**<http://www.rug.nl/research/centre-for-religious-studies/religion-conflict-globalization>**

**Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS), University of Oslo**

**The IKOS department has broad expertise within the study of religion and culture and within language-based area studies, with a main focus on South Asia, East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.**

**<http://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/>**

