



University of  
Zurich <sup>UZH</sup>



Université Internationale de Rabat  
THE INNOVATIVE UNIVERSITY

معهد دراسات المرأة  
INSTITUTE OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

جامعة بيرزيت  
BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY

*Kick-Off workshop*

## Gender, Politics and Critique in the MENA: Towards a Critical History of Feminism, 1970s until Today

April 16<sup>th</sup> 2021

This kick-off workshop is a public presentation of a new research project conducted jointly by the University of Zurich, Switzerland, Birzeit University, Palestine and the International University of Rabat, Morocco, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. The project “Gender, Politics and Critique in the MENA: Towards a Critical History of Feminism, 1970s until Today” is conceived as a contribution to as well as a substantial enhancement of critical history writing on feminism in the Arabic-speaking MENA region. Building on ongoing conceptual debates for developing new perspectives on feminism in the region (Makdissi/Bayoumi/Sidawi 2014; Elsadda 2018), it proposes a shift in focus from the study of movements to the study of articulations of gender and feminism. Inspired by emerging post-2011 modes of engagement with feminism and gender, the project develops new avenues for capturing and interpreting the complexities of local forms of feminist critique and notions of gender beyond preconceived labels. Its main goal is to analyse non-dominant articulations of feminism and gender as situated transformational struggles (Hooks 1989) and as variously configured sites of entangled histories of political thought and gender critique across the region, tracing their distinct itineraries from the 1970s until today. The project does so by means of three systematically connected and complementary sub-projects located in Morocco, Egypt and Palestine, focusing on specific political dynamics resulting out of state-led Islamic reform (Morocco), militarist nationalism (Egypt) and the Post-Oslo state-building processes with ongoing military occupation (Palestine). Reaching back as far as the 1970s, this project aims at moving substantially beyond current historiographies of feminism and gender in the Arabic-speaking MENA. It furthermore aims at challenging hegemonic identitarian paradigms by a systematic exploration of the epistemological contours of specific cases of contemporary non-dominant feminist and gender critique, thereby generating novel insights for gender theory from a relational, historically-informed perspective.

**Conveners:** Bettina Dennerlein (University of Zurich); Sarah Farag (University of Zurich); Meriem El Haitami (Université Internationale de Rabat); Rema Hammami (Birzeit University); Lena Meari (Birzeit University); Amira Silmi (Birzeit University)



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## WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Please register via

[https://uzh.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcocOipqT4qHtZGBYyYn93JqUpUK\\_AsbFG4](https://uzh.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcocOipqT4qHtZGBYyYn93JqUpUK_AsbFG4)

*All times displayed are in Jerusalem time*

- 10.30-11.15 Welcome and Introduction
- 11.15-12.00 **Hala Kamal (Cairo University):** ‘Scholactivism’: Feminist Agency in Translation Praxis
- 12.00-12.15 *Break*
- 12.15-13.00 **Nadine Naber (University of Illinois):** Decolonizing Feminist Theory and Practice
- 13.00-13.45 **Fatima Sadiqi (Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah University, Fès):** Can ‘Secular Rights’ and ‘Religious Equality’ Cohabit in Post-Uprisings Moroccan Feminisms?
- 13.45-15.00 *Lunch Break*
- 15.00-15.45 **Lena Meari (Birzeit University) and Amira Silmi (Birzeit University):** Theoretical, Epistemological and Political Underpinnings of Emergent Palestinian Feminist Formations  
With an Input by **Islah Jad (Birzeit University)**
- 15.45-16.30 **Sarah Farag (University of Zurich):** Gender critique, alternative masculinities and nationalism in Egypt  
With an Input by **Hoda Elsadda (Cairo University)**
- 16.30-16.45 *Break*
- 16.45-17.30 **Meriem El Haitami (Université Internationale de Rabat) and Brittany Landorf (Emory University):** Articulations of Islamic Feminism in post-2003 Morocco: Narratives of Social Justice and the Prospect for Movement Building  
With an Input by **Fatima Sadiqi (Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah University, Fès)**
- 17.30-18.00 Closing discussion



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