



Beyond Secularism and Islamism - Perspectives for the Arab World January 27th 2014

With the upheavals in the Arab world tensions have been growing between 'secular' and 'Islamic' conceptions of society. Both in political confrontations in Tunisia as well as with the recent military coup in Egypt or the war in Syria an unbridgeable separation between Islamic and as secular defined notions and ideas seems to have burned in. Under conditions of extreme poverty, war, and ongoing interventions an existing pluralism of societal designs seems to be obviously no longer negotiable. Basic ideas – be it 'secular' or be it 'Islamic'- are subject to a logic of confrontation and are being used as an important weapon in political debates. Can there still be such a thing as 'Beyond Secularism and Islamism' and how could that look like?

The event marks the completion of our project [Dialoguing Across the Religious/Secular Divide](#) which has been carried out jointly between VIDC and the Institute for Women's Studies at Birzeit University in Palestine. Among other things, a discussion forum for students and teachers was established to open a space beyond current logics of confrontation in order to critically analyze both secular and Islamic society and state models. After all, thinking beyond secularism and Islamism includes both a critical analysis of existing ideas as well as reflecting on what we actually mean when we speak of 'secular' or 'Islamic'.

Location: Diplomatic Academy, Festsaal Favoritenstraße 15a, 1040 Vienna



**diplomatische
akademie wien**
Vienna School of International Studies
École des Hautes Études Internationales de Vienne

Österreichische
Entwicklungszusammenarbeit

Program

05.00 - 05.15 pm Welcome

Magda Seewald | VIDC

05.15 - 06.30 pm Critical Student Perspectives

The Problematic Relationship between Religion and State Policy in Contemporary Egypt

Sawsan Kanan | Graduate at the Institute of Women's Studies, Birzeit University, Palestine

Mainstream Liberal/Secular Approaches to Tackling Gender-Based Violence in Palestine: Why Have These Failed?

Hanan Kaoud | Graduate at the Institute of Women's Studies, Birzeit University, Palestine

Chair: Klaudia Rottenschlager | PhD Candidate at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna

06.30 - 07.00 pm Break

07.00 – 09.00 pm Beyond Secularism and Islamism

Fragmentation of the Secular

Wael Hallaq | Professor at the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies, Columbia University, New York

Secularism and Islamism: What Future? (The Case of Women's Movements in the West Bank and Gaza)

Islah Jad | Associate Professor at the Institute of Women's Studies, Birzeit University, Palestine

Chair: Helmut Krieger | Department of Development Studies at the University of Vienna

Conference Languages: English and German with simultaneous interpretation

Registration: seewald@vidc.org

Speakers

Wael Hallaq Wael B. Hallaq is a scholar of Islamic law and Islamic intellectual history. His teaching and research deal with the problematic epistemic ruptures generated by the onset of modernity and the socio-politico-historical forces subsumed by it; with the intellectual history of Orientalism and the repercussions of Orientalist paradigms in later scholarship and in Islamic legal studies as a whole. His publications include *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (2009), *Shari'a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (2009) und *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (2013).

Islah Jad is a lecturer on gender issues and politics at the Women's Studies Institute and Cultural Studies Department of Birzeit University in the West Bank. She is a founding

member of its women's studies program and serviced as its director till 2013. Her main research areas are the role of women in politics, Palestinian women and the relationships among them, Islam, and NGOs. Dr. Jad is also a consultant on gender issues to the United Nations Development Programme and is co-author of the UN's Arab Development Report on Women's Empowerment and author of *Palestinian Female Headed Households* (2002), *Women at the Crossroads: The Palestinian Women's Movement between Nationalism, Secularism and Islamism* (2008, 2nd edition 2013).

Sawsan Kanan is a gender expert at TAM (Women Media and Development Association) for PCID (Palestinian Community Infrastructure Development) in Ramallah. She received her Master in Gender and Development Studies in Sommer 2013 at Birzeit University.

Hanan Kaoud is Director for Development, Communication and Outreach at MIFTAH (The Palestinian Initiative for Promoting Global Dialogue and Democracy) in Ramallah since October 2013. From 2005 to 2013 she worked in different positions at UNDP (United Nations Development Program) in Jerusalem and Ramallah. Hanan Kaoud received her Master in Gender and Development Studies in July 2013 at Birzeit University.

Helmut Krieger is a social scientist at the Institute of International Development at the University of Vienna. Currently he is engaged in a university cooperation project with the Centre for Development Studies at Birzeit University in the West Bank (cds-je.univie.ac.at/en/home.html), funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation. His main research areas are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, movement of political Islam in the Arab world, critical state theory and postcolonial theory. His most recent publication is: *Investitionen in den Konflikt. Die politische Ökonomie palästinensischer Staatsformierung* (2013).

Kludia Rottenschlager is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna and a member of the research cluster *Conflict and Development* as well as an assistant in the APPEAR-Project *Conflict, Participation, and Development in Palestine*. Her dissertation project focuses on intersectional perspectives of collective identity constructions of young Palestinians. Her most recent publication is: *Frauenbewegungen in Palästina: Ein Wissenstransfer jenseits eurozentrischer Repräsentationen*, in: *Frauensolidarität*, No 123/2013, page 14-15 (together with Katrin Gleirscher, Katrin Oberdorfer and Daniela Pertl).

Magda Seewald is a project officer at VIDC. Her main work areas are Gender, Gender and armed conflict with a regional focus on the Middle East. She graduated in Political Science at University of Vienna. Among her last publications are: *Durstig nach Gerechtigkeit – Wasserkrise in Gaza*, in: *Frauensolidarität*, No 124/2013 page 20-21, *Im Schatten der Siedlungen - Vom Alltag palästinensischer Frauen*, in: *Frauensolidarität*, No. 119/2012, page 18-19.