

"Governing Ethnic Diversity in an Era of Transformation: The Middle East in Comparative Perspective"

Workshop Summary

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10-12 December, 2012

The workshop was co-organized by Assaf David (Hebrew U.) and Oded Haklai (Queen's University). Sponsored by the Halbert Centre for Canadian Studies at the Hebrew University, the workshop took place at the Centre itself. Additional funding was provided by the Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace. Five scholars from Canadian universities and eleven scholars from Israeli universities participated, including graduate students and scholars at early career stages (for list of participants and institutional affiliation, see appendix 1).

The first two days of the workshop were dedicated to intensive meetings, paper presentations, and discussion of the main theme of the workshop. The third morning and early afternoon were dedicated to a tour for the Canadian scholars to sites of primordial national attachment along the shores of the Dead Sea (Qumran and Masada). The response to the tour was uniformly favourable.

The presenters were asked to deal with the following questions:

1. What kind of institutional arrangements of minority rights, protection, and accommodation currently exist, or existed before the upheavals of recent years, in the Middle East?
2. What changes are we observing and should expect as a result of regime transitions in the region?
3. What policy lessons can be learned from other regions of the world that have experienced comparable transitions in the past two decades (for example, C.E. Europe and S.E. Asia)?

Sessions were organized on the basis of (1) regional lines (e.g. North Africa), and (2) comparative value (e.g. inter-group relations in weak states, or comparative lessons from other democratizing regions). The presentations focused on work in progress by the presenters, all of whom work on these questions in different countries (or group of countries). Discussions and interaction continued well beyond the formally designated time into the lunch and dinner hours.

Workshop participants uniformly agreed that the workshop was successful in achieving its main objectives. It brought together scholars from different disciplines (including political science, international relations, history, and area studies) who work on similar issues of inter-communal relations in different countries and enabled them to advance their knowledge not only about other societies facing similar questions, but more significantly to draw general lessons that are relevant to their

cases. The comparative value of the workshop was essential and cannot be underestimated. The consensus was that basic questions were comprehensively addressed and generated meaningful insights. Several participants of the workshop from Canada and Israel have now begun to discuss future direction for further collaborative work.

Workshop presenters and institutional affiliation

Participants from Canada:

Jacques Bertrand (University of Toronto)

Ceren Belge (Concordia University)

Zsuzsa Csergo (Queen's University)

Oded Haklai (Queen's University)

Philippe Roseberry (Queen's University)

Participants from Israel:

Assaf David (Hebrew University)

Noga Efrati (Hebrew University)

Aziz Haidar (Hebrew University)

Gallia Lindenstrauss (INSS and Hebrew University)

Meir Litvak (Tel Aviv University)

Moshe Maoz (Hebrew University)

Bruce Maddy-Weitzmann (Tel Aviv University)

Omri Nir (Hebrew University and Ben Gurion University)

Liora Norwich (Hebrew University)

Asher Susser (Tel Aviv University)

Bosmat Yefet-Avshalom (Ariel University Center)