



Conference

Research in a Time of Great Darkness

Genocide, War Crimes, and Political Violence

Baghdad, 4-6 February 2025

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About the Conference

The 2023 Al Aqsa Flood Operation changed the lives of people in the region in ways that we still cannot comprehend. The Zionist colonial genocide of Palestinians that ensued, with full US and European support, continues to shape the region and the world. It is a time perhaps only comparable to the 1948 Nakba – a time with which we must truly come to terms if our scholarship is to be of use in shaping the struggles of people in the region.

Even before this live-streamed Israeli genocide of Palestinians, the Arab world has experienced unimaginable violence over the past century. In Palestine, the ethnic cleansing and slow genocide through settler colonialism have been the norm since before 1948, and this process continues today – not anew, but as an intensification. In Sudan, too, what we witness today is not the first genocide, but a repetition of what has come before, fuelled by outside forces. And while these crimes weigh on us, people elsewhere in the region feel a boot on their neck, facing decades of colonial, authoritarian, and other political violence and its aftershocks. Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq are prime examples. Yet there is hardly a country in the region that is not experiencing crisis ecologies: an environment saturated with violent, intersecting political crises, as seen in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, or elsewhere. Where there appears to be no crisis, in some of the Arab Gulf countries for example, one must question both the role these states play in the crises of others, but also popular sentiments in relation to the cries of their suffering brothers and sisters elsewhere.

As darkness remains a fixture in the region – one which at present threatens to intensify – we are all faced with a challenge: what is our role as scholars amidst the violence? What are we to do, especially in a time of genocide?

This question is at the forefront of this conference "Research in a Time of Great Darkness: Genocide, War Crimes, and Political Violence" organized by the *Omran* Journal for Social Sciences, in cooperation with UNESCO Chair on Genocide Prevention Studies in the Islamic World at the University of Baghdad. As scholars, our lives are tied to research, and there is never a good time to do research in or on societies facing political violence. It is harder still to do so in a time of genocide, when the *longue durée* of research conflicts with the urgency of halting this crime of crimes. We see inaction on Palestine and silence plus inaction on Sudan. Even outside the Arab world darkness reigns in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, all of which turns our world upside down. In some ways, these genocides bring to the foreground what we already knew: that in the region we are compelled to perpetually rethink our knowledge systems. We have long needed to break free of the grip of colonialism – both material and epistemic – in order to develop new tools to resist the onslaught against our people. We have also needed to confront violence from within, in the form of authoritarianism, sectarianism, and military rule.

Therefore, the conference offers a space to hear from scholars grappling with the darkness of our world and questioning how to move forward and how to understand our times. The symposium therefore welcomes papers that aim, in different ways, to utilize scholarship in service of action to put a stop to the killing fields, and to challenge settler colonialism, authoritarianism, intercommunal strife, and other forms of political violence in the region.

How do people and communities navigate the current spaces of violence? How do they live in such times? What can be said about people's willingness to confront violence versus their resignation to live with it? How do they think about empire and colonialism in light of that empire's intensified violence? How might great power competition materialize in everyday life? The conference seeks to interrogate the overarching dynamics and experience of political violence that communities in the region experience today, through different thematic approaches and questions, including ethics of research; great power competition; forms of violence; lexicon of erasure; everyday life of political violence; infrastructures of violence; people's movements; and ethnography of armed resistance and militancy.

40 scholars and researchers from Iraq and Arab countries are participating in the conference. Following the conference, selected papers will be nominated for publication in a special issue of *Omran*.



Omran for Social Sciences

A quarterly, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the social sciences and published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (p-ISSN: 2305-2473, e-ISSN 2789-3286). First published in the summer of 2012, *Omran* is overseen by an academic editorial board composed of experts as well as an actively engaged board of international advisers. The name of the journal evokes Ibn Khaldun's concept of *ilm al Omran*, often viewed as a precursor to the social sciences. Born out of the perceived methodological and functional crises faced by the social sciences and humanities during an era of massive social transformations sweeping through the Arab region, Omran aims to establish for itself a distinct identity among prominent Arab journals and periodicals, as a journal/project aspiring to build new intellectual trends and schools of thought. It thus seeks to bring about a qualitative leap in its multidisciplinary field (encompassing anthropology, sociology, social history, political science, political economy, population sciences, environment, and development studies), espousing in this an integrated interdisciplinary approach. It views freedom as the guiding principle and ultimate goal of the social sciences, since freedom is the essence of thought, which is also the essence of humanity.

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UNESCO Chair on Genocide Prevention Studies in the Islamic World at the University of Baghdad

A pioneering academic platform for the study and research of confronting genocide and its consequences. The Chair is dedicated to fortifying societies against ideologies that incite violence and hatred, thereby paving the way for genocide and facilitating its recurrence. Furthermore, the Chair aims to develop early warning mechanisms for disasters and atrocities that threaten the stability of societies, most notably genocide, mass killing, and crimes against humanity. By establishing this Chair, the College of Arts at the University of Baghdad has filled a significant knowledge gap in the Arab and Islamic library, making Iraq a pioneer in this field at the Arab and Islamic levels. The Chair's primary focus is on the role of education in promoting the values of peace, tolerance, and dialogue to prevent genocide and eradicate a culture of violence. To achieve this goal, the Chair adopts a comprehensive educational approach that emphasizes universal human values, with a particular focus on equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary to build peaceful and tolerant societies. The Chair is working to develop a comprehensive national strategy for genocide prevention education, with a focus on designing curricula that are tailored to the specific needs of Iraqi society. The Chair actively engages in partnerships and collaborations with local and international educational and research institutions to exchange knowledge and innovations in this field.

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Timetable

Day 1: Tuesday, 4 February 2025

9:00-9:30	Registration
9:30-10:00	Opening Remarks Bahaa Ibrahim Insaf (President of the University of Baghdad) Ali Abdulameer Sajet (Dean of the College of Arts) Haider Saeed (Head of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Unit at the Arab Center) Mounir Saidani (Editor-in-Chief of <i>Omran</i>)
10:00-10:30	Salah Al Jabery: The Strategy of the UNESCO Chair on Genocide Prevention Studies in the Islamic World at the University of Baghdad
10:30-11:30	Keynote Lecture Mohammed Bamyeh: Knowledge in the End of Dark Times Chair: Mounir Saidani
11:30-11:45	Coffee Break
11:45-13:15	Panel One Genocide in Academia: Studying and Teaching Hassan Nazim: Genocide Studies in Arab Academia Khalid Hantoosh Sachit: Violence and Genocide in Sociology: An Analytical Study of Research at the University of Baghdad Saad Salloum: Why Should Genocide Be Taught in Iraqi Universities? Chair: Haider Saeed
13:15-13:30	Coffee Break

13:30-15:00	Panel Two Everyday Life and Resistance in the Context of Atrocities Leila Tayeb: Everyday Life and Alternative Politics in Post-Revolution Libya Omar Jabary Salamanca: Subterranean Returns: On Rival Geographies of the Underground Mustafa Afandy: The Militarized Daily: Everyday Life in Khartoum During the April 15 War Chair: Farida Jassim Dara
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* First-day panels will be held in Al-Hakim Hall at the University of Baghdad, Al-Jadriya.

Day 2: Wednesday, 5 February 2025

9:30-10:30	Lecture (Al-Hakim Hall) Abdelwahab El-Affendi (online): Genocide Denial: From Excommunicating Deniers to Punishing Witnesses Chair: Morad Diani	
10:30-10:45	Coffee Break	
10:45-12:00	Panel Three	
	(Al-Hakim Hall)	(Mahdi Hantoush Hall)
	Gaza: The Latest Version of Genocide Majd Abuamer: Daily and Seasonal Wars: Any Logic behind the Israeli Violence in Gaza? Yasser Derwiche Djazaerly: American Media and the Genocide in Gaza: Between Marginalization and Denial Chair: Tahar Saoud	The Legacy of Violence in Lebanon and Iraq Ilham Maki Hamadi: The Infrastructure of Violence in Iraq: Implications for State-Building and Social Cohesion Lamia Moghnieh: The Israeli Violence in Lebanon: The Psychological Landscape of War and Genocide Chair: Laura Sayah
12:00-12:15	Coffee Break	

12:15-13:30	Panel Four	
	(Al-Hakim Hall)	(Mahdi Hantoush Hall)
	Syria: Understanding Years of Violence Hani Awad & Nerouz Satik: Genocide, Imprisonment, and the Question of Legitimacy in Syria: A Study in Light of Comparative Experience Yasser Munif: The Geography of Violence in Aleppo Since 2011 Chair: Mahmood Al-Qaisy	Genocide and Political Violence in Iraq: State and Society Alan M. Noory: Complicities with the State in the Extermination of Their Own People: The "Knights" of Ali Al-Kimyawi as an Example Ali Taher Alhammood: Anthro-Sociology of the Political Identity of Armed Groups in Iraq Chair: Nada Al-Abadi
13:30-13:45	Coffee Break	
13:45-15:15	Round Table Academia in a Time of Genocide and Mass Violence (Al-Hakim Hall) Alan M. Noory, Haider Saeed, Sami Hermez, Salah Al Jabery, Lamia Moghnieh, Mounir Saidani Chair: Hani Awad	

Day 3: Thursday, 6 February 2025

9:30-10:30	Lecture (Al-Hakim Hall) Haidar Eid: Gaza Dehumanized Chair: Sami Hermez	
10:30-10:45	Coffee Break	
10:45-12:00	Panel Five	
	(Al-Hakim Hall)	(Mahdi Hantoush Hall)
	Gaza: Israeli Forms of Erasure Eman Bdaiwi: Israeli Necropolitics in Gaza: Practices of Death Engineering and Managing Corpses Maha Zeyadeh: From Siege to Urbicide: Israel's Vital Sovereignty over Gaza Chair: Ihsan Al-Haidari	Political violence and Its Intellectual Consequences Saker El Nour: Intersecting Times and Contemporary Crises in the Arab World Omar S. Dahi: The World Order from Palestine's Perspective Chair: Ibrahim Fraihat
12:00-12:15	Coffee Break	

	Panel Six	
	(Al-Hakim Hall)	(Mahdi Hantoush Hall)
	Research in Times of Crisis Jamil Mouawad: The Local Researcher and His Research Field in Times of Crisis Yousra Kadi: Navigating Ethical Dilemmas in Research Amidst Political Violence and Erasure Chair: Hassane Hjj	Women and Political Violence Sidi Mohamed El Hassani: Rape as a Weapon: A Socio-Anthropological Approach to Sexual Violence Against Women in the Context of War Suad Musa: Female Singers and al-Hakkamat: Sudanese Women and Political Violence Chair: Abbas Al-Qurayshi
12:15-13:30		
13:30-13:45	Concluding Remarks (Al-Hakim Hall) Sami Hermez (The editor of conference proceedings)	