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Workshop 2

***Policing and Incarceration in the Middle East and North Africa:
Theoretical and Empirical Investigations***

directed by

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Workshop abstract

The emergence of the modern nation-state in the Middle East –as elsewhere– has been accompanied with a concentration of coercive power within the body of the state. When deployed by its military, the states' monopoly over the use of political violence has been extensively analysed in the Middle East. But although the region has encompassed numerous “mukhabirat states,” extensive and varied policing and carceral regimes, and widespread use of torture and spectacular punishments, and although the region's prisons and policing practices are regularly highlighted and criticised by human rights organisations, the literature systematically examining the emergence of internal coercive institutions within the Middle East has been surprisingly sparse.

We seek to extend the burgeoning and exciting debates about policing and incarceration to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This workshop will provide a forum in which we can comparatively discuss the historic appearance and transformations of such regimes in the context of emergence of states and their consolidation. Through historical, political, sociological or ethnographic examination of the MENA's carceral and policing regimes, we hope to elucidate the relationship between complex and interconnected sites for the production of the state's sovereign power and the forms of coercive institutions it generates. These dimensions include: the constitution of criminality (especially including criminalisation of political dissent); the use of punishment to police, discipline and shape societies; the relationship between a state's national, religious, ethnic, or social cleavages and the

internal utilisation of political violence; prisoners' resistance to or collaboration with their gaolers; public responses to policing and carceral discipline; and the impact of policing/carceral regimes on social identities, political mobilisation, and dissent.

Workshop description

Long-standing debates surrounding policing and incarceration have been re-ignited by more recent events at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq on the one hand and the building of the separation wall in Israel/Palestine which many claim accelerates the emergence of a Ghetto-like carceral state in the occupied Palestinian territories (on ghettoisation of these areas see Ron 2003). While these issues have been examined in diverse scholarly literatures—for example, in radical criminology, critical legal studies, critical geography, social movement theory, and especially Foucaultian-inspired analyses of discipline, repression, and dissent—few of these insights have been systematically explored through ethnographic research on the repressive practices of Middle Eastern states. We hope to begin a conversation about the state's coercive power, policing, incarceration which can illuminate not only the historical emergence of carceral and policing regimes in the MENA region, but also to allow us to categorise different forms of policing and incarceration, the effect of such important factors as gender or spatiality on carceral/policing regimes, and the use of torture and spectacular punishments.

We hope that this forum will allow us to explore these two important and interconnected sets of themes: on the one hand, the socio-historical emergence of policing and carceral regimes in the MENA region and their relationship with the power and legitimacy of the state, and on the other hand, the impact of these policing and carceral regimes on the public and their resistances against and collaboration with these coercive institutions. Hence, the puzzles we hope panel participants will address the following categories:

- What do different forms of political incarceration reveal about formations of power and violence in a particular society?
- In what social and political context have different forms of political incarceration emerged?
- As a state's sovereign apparatus is strengthened or are conversely weakened or dismantled, how are forms of punishment and incarceration transformed?
- What functions have political incarceration served throughout the region's modern history and how have discourses about political incarceration furthered these functions and been shaped by them?
- What is the role of spectacular punishments, torture, and the usage of technologies of pain in constitution of political power?
- What is the role of territorial control—or conversely, extraterritoriality—in political incarceration?

Just as important is the study of the effect of carceral power on the prisoners themselves. What effect does incarceration and torture have on the prisoners' conception of the self? What spaces of accommodation or resistance emerge in response to different forms of political incarceration, and what are the basic modes and methods of survival? How do citizenship and/or appeal to international human rights mitigate the effects of political incarceration? Finally, under what circumstances does

political incarceration serve as a rite of passage (Peteet 1994), source of legitimacy and respect, or badge of honour for former political detainees?

A growing body of literature in a variety of disciplines interrogate penal discipline, punishment, and more specifically political prisons the policing of dissent (Abrahamian 1999, Buntman 2003, de la Porta and Reiter 1998, Feldman 1991, Lynch and Michalowski 2000, Rejali 1994, and Zinoman 2001 are some outstanding examples; see Rhodes 2001 for a more comprehensive overview of prisons literature), and a relatively new journal, *Punishment and Society*, engages the interrelations between crime, punishment, and socio-political power. Furthermore, the study of American and European crime and punishment continues to be an exponentially growing domain of study, where a range of different debates attest to the depth and breadth of the study of policing and punishment (e.g. Pisciotta 1994; Rhodes 1998; Spierenburg 1991). These studies transcend criminological concerns and increasingly investigate the historical and social context of emergence of the state's coercive bodies. They sometimes interrogate the field itself, critically examine its assumptions and conclusions, and attempt to contextualise it within a larger social and political narrative (for the latter see especially the work of Loic Wacquant).

Both within and beyond the borders of United States, examination of political incarceration has become increasingly more urgent since the US 'war on terror' has resulted in carceral practices that contravene international treaties and norms (see Danner 2004; Hooks 2005; McClintock 2004). Reports produced by various human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch, dealing specifically with policing and prison issues, provide a rich seam of primary data about these coercive methods. A bibliography of memoirs and literary treatments of the experience of political prisoners would easily run to tens of pages and would include such illustrious names as Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Vaclav Havel, Franz Kafka, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Nawwal al-Saadawi, Tahar ben Jalloun and Breyten Breytenbach just to name a few (see Davies 1990 and Harlow 1992 for a critical reading of prison writings).

Theoretical examinations of incarceration always have to contend with Michel Foucault's seminal work (1978), *Discipline and Punish*, which argues that with the advent of modernity, sovereign power with its need for spectacular punishments gave way to disciplinary power which works through the routinisation of control over quotidian manners, bodies, and behaviours. What Foucault's work does uniquely well is to establish the relationship between state power and forms of incarceration, and elucidate the mechanisms through which a particular variety of state power results in the emergence of specific punitive measures in prisons. However, the fact that modernity has not necessarily put an end to spectacular punishments and tortures brings Foucault's conclusions into question. Alongside Foucault's works, other scholars have examined the ways in which the architecture of prisons, the modes of managements of inmates, and punitive technologies therein –e.g. solitary confinement– come to affect the prisoners' inner lives (Rothman 1990 [1971]; Ignatieff 1978). The study of torture in prisons has given rise to a separate –if related– body of literature (Maran 1989; Rejali 1994; Scarry 1984; Huggins et al 2002). The varieties of discourses –focusing on 'reform,' 'justice' or 'punishment'– used to justify carceral power have been subjected to examination and critique (Ignatieff 1978; Howe 1994). The influence of prisons on the identities and sense of selfhood of inmates have been interrogated in texts examining prison memoirs, and in ethnographies and oral histories of prisoner resistances (Abrahamian 1999; Feldman 1991; Buntman 2003).

Following these themes and expanding them, the workshop will investigate the following areas as they occur in the MENA region, and which are of particular concern when considering policing and incarceration. The list, however, is by no means exhaustive:

- The historical emergence and/or transformation of different policing or carceral regimes;
- Critical examination of categories and forms of incarceration or policing;
- Imperial incarcerations;
- Torture;
- Spectacular punishments;
- Spatial dimensions of policing or incarceration;
- The role of surveillance and informants in policing or incarceration;
- Routinised policing and incarceration;
- Carceral states;
- Mukhabirat states;
- Resistance and collaboration within prisons;
- Communities within prisons;
- Relationship between gender and policing/incarceration;
- The role of policing/incarceration in the constitution/transformation of states;
- The role of policing/incarceration in the constitution/transformation of societies or communities.

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Workshop contribution

The workshop will bring together a set of papers that can be published jointly around the themes discussed above. We hope to begin a conversation about policing and incarceration in the MENA region that will bring together a variety of works, and as such foresee future collaboration between workshop participants in other forums. Ideally, we would like to see the papers published in an edited volume, and will continue our discussions after the workshop to ensure such a conclusion.

Workshop participants

We hope to bring together active scholars who can significantly contribute to a critical understanding of policing and incarceration in the MENA region. As such, the workshop will seek three broad groups of contributions: papers examining the historical emergence of modern policing and regimes of incarceration in the Middle East and North Africa, theoretical reflections on transformations in such regimes in MENA, and empirical/comparative examinations of concrete case studies examining policing and incarceration in the MENA region. We hope that the cross-disciplinary nature of the workshop will allow for cross-fertilisation of ideas and approaches.

Symbolic and Instrumental Uses of al-Ansar Mass Detention Camp in Lebanon

Laleh Khalili

Utilising interviews with former prisoners, reports of human rights organisations, memoirs (Husayn 1984; Junaydi 1984; Ta'amari 1994), and archival materials, this paper examines the functions al-Ansar mass detention camp (1982-198) served in consolidating Israeli military control over southern Lebanon and the creation of a security state there. It will also examine the paradoxical consequences of the Israeli carceral regime which generated local Lebanese ill will and ultimately resistance.

Since the British invention of mass detention (or concentration) camps in the Boer War (Anrendt 1968), this form of incarceration has been used by militaries engaged in counter-insurgencies and by states trying to cleanse large territories of hostile populations. The al-Ansar mass detention camp was first established by Israel in southern Lebanon in 1982, was comprised of scores of large tents surrounded by barbed wire and watch-towers, had atrocious conditions of living, and for a long time was outside the purview of the ICRC. Like its predecessors (e.g. in Italy, Walston 1997), Israel's most openly stated reason for the use of mass detention camps was the incarceration of political actors deemed dangerous to Israel. Al-Ansar acted as a way-station in the process of interrogation, torture, and more institutionalised incarceration of insubordinate political actors, and especially Palestinians. Furthermore, to populate al-Ansar, the Israeli military used a dragnet which captured large numbers of non-combatants (including numerous Lebanese), thus serving the instrumental needs of Israel further by disrupting civilian support for dissidents, insurgents, and 'undesirables' (Hamilton 1997). Al-Ansar (Tucker 1982) and al-Ansariyya (Sayigh 1985), its women's version, were used to detain women and children as hostages in order to further the aims of the state in pacifying possible Palestinian armed resistance (for Boer War parallels see Krebs 1992). Finally, al-Ansar like other mass detention camps was an initially effective mechanism of coercion, not only because of its instrumental efficiency as a counter-insurgency tactic (it cleared out southern Lebanon of any Palestinian men between the ages of 16 and 50 [Tucker 1982]), but also because its symbolic power was bolstered by the mass terror it generated (Sayigh 1985).

Ultimately, I argue that although al-Ansar technologies of mass detention have served as models for subsequent reincarnations in Israel/Palestine (al-Ansar II in Gaza and al-Ansar III in Negev) and in US-occupied Iraq, precisely because it indiscriminately and arbitrarily incarcerated thousands, and because of its extraterritoriality, its effectiveness as a method of consolidation of Israeli military authority failed, as it generated both internal mobilisation by the prisoners (Ta'amari 1994), and external institutionalisation of resistance by the Lebanese. This paper will explore the internal contradictions of a carceral regime which contains—more than another form of incarceration—the seeds of its own ruin.

Disciplining Dissent: Toward a Legal Geography of Policing

Jillian Schwedler

Studies of protests and policing, and the politics of public space in general, have largely been neglected in the study of contentious politics. Political protesters of course encounter various policing agencies in the course of their demonstrations, and these clashes are frequently recounted in various media, police reports, and the narratives of protesters themselves. However, this focus on policing almost exclusively in the context of actual protest activities neglects the critical roles of law and space (and the interaction between the two) in terms of structuring widely divergent policing regimes in neighborhoods known for large-scale, if relatively infrequent, political demonstrations.

This paper draws on substantial original field work conducted in 2002 and 2006 to explore policing regimes in two neighborhoods in Amman, Jordan. Rabia is an upper-class neighborhood in the western part of the city, where posh villas line the grid-like streets on a hill. At the bottom of the hill is a mosque known as the staging area for large crowds intent on marching up the hill to the site of the Israel embassy. On the eastern edge of Amman, by comparison, is the poverty-ridden Widat Palestinian refugee camp--Amman's largest--which is also the site of periodic mass demonstrations in its narrow streets and open squares. This paper will compare the policing practices of these two neighborhoods, focusing not on the activities during and immediately after demonstrations but instead on the routine policing practices of two diverse locales. In an attempt to understand the extraordinary variation in policing practices, we will apply insights from critical legal theory as well as the politics of space to provide a far richer understanding than is typically reached in the mainstream literature on protest and policing. This paper thus aims to contribute new theoretical insights as well as considerable empirical material on a topic that remains entirely unexamined in Jordan.