

# Documentation and Human Rights

## Conceptualizing a Regional, Human Rights-oriented Documentation Network

ifa Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e. V.



Federal Republic of Germany  
Foreign Office



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Federal Republic of Germany  
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## Background and Rationale

For years, the very concept of human rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region—the Arab world—was synonymous with advocacy work. Because of that, the documentation efforts that accompanied such activities never went beyond simply highlighting specific human rights violations. The intent behind announcing and denouncing those violations was to invite widespread condemnation of horrific and/or unlawful actions. However, despite the steady increase in human rights violations, the documentation employed to catalog and report those abuses typically focused on individuals or small groups of offenders.

That observation is certainly not intended to demean the efforts made by human rights activists in the past or diminish the severity of the violations

they documented. Rather, this “commentary” seeks to highlight some of the new challenges being faced in a number of sensitive areas, including human rights. Those hindrances are associated directly with the transformation that enveloped the MENA region in December 2010, when a wave of transformation (referred to typically as the Arab Spring) washed over the Arab world.

Since those sweeping changes began, several political regimes have been overthrown, and many more transitions are likely to occur—peaceably or otherwise. Each time a regime has been toppled, however, its historical practices and the impact they had on society have come to light. The fact that these events were ultimately disclosed has placed countries of the region on the path to self-

examination and accountability, both from a moral and legal standpoint. In essence, these transformations have raised questions about what should be done with the weighty legacy imposed by decades of human rights violations. Those questions pertain as well to the abuses that occurred during each instance of national transformation. More specifically, while such injustices certainly yield still more victims, they also represent elements of the memories shared within each country and society involved.

The current "wave" of transformation is not the first the MENA region has experienced. Yet, regardless of the depth and drama involved, or even the timing of such massive changes, if they are to be effective, the motivation for those radical shifts must be found within each country and society involved. Based on that proviso, it becomes immediately understandable that the transformation, which changed the face of the Arab world following World War II, concerned itself largely with the legacy of "the past." Notably, that past was managed by applying scathing moral condemnation (from a quasi-religious perspective) and developing a reliance on the use of the guillotine.

Thus, these transformations (the preponderance of which paralleled the creation of the State of Israel) were characterized by the infiltration of each country's political realm by their organic military institutions. That sequence of events, then, helps explain the sharp rise of dictatorial governments throughout the region.

In contrast, the transformations occurring today cannot ignore the fact that since the end of World War II, the prevailing notion of human rights has become the criteria used to differentiate between what is "good" and what is "evil." Further, the concepts that provide the basis for human rights are constantly being expanded and applied to the formulation of national and international laws. Accordingly, claims that justice is being advanced along the accepted notion of human rights (each instance of which acknowledges a deficiency or insufficiency in state law) must be reviewed closely and assessed in terms of accountability. Therefore, when human rights are referred to as the overriding vision for the future rather than just another implement in an activist's toolbox, it becomes easy to recognize that documentation indeed plays a central role in human rights.

## On the Partnership between UMAM Documentation and Research (D&R) And the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC)

The partnership between UMAM D&R and the ICSC originated in early 2012 when Monika Borgmann (UMAM D&R) participated in the ICSC's regional meeting held in Casablanca, Morocco. During that conference, Borgmann gave a presentation that focused on UMAM's experiences and endeavors in creating virtual sites of memory, conscience and consciousness. The presentation included a brief summary of the Lebanese approach to dealing with the legacy and memory of violence, and it described the various documentation initiatives UMAM had advanced to that point in time. Those actions included physically collecting, cataloging and preserving documents, documenting Lebanon's past via artistic projects and fielding interactive documentation portals, such as its online "Memory At Work" database.

Borgmann's presentation prompted a deeper discussion between the two organizations about working cooperatively. Those exchanges led to an agreement to organize a weeklong, Beirut-based workshop intended to follow

up on the Casablanca conference. The objectives of that seminar were to: (1) train a prescribed number of activists in human rights documentation, (2) explore the possibility of expanding the ICSC MENA network (the idea for which was discussed in Casablanca) and (3) introduce trainees to the "Lebanese model" and the work being done by UMAM D&R.

To a large extent, the intent behind UMAM's decision to broaden its partnership base was the organization's belief that despite the many shortcomings in the Lebanese model's ability to deal with the country's past, people throughout the MENA region are today asking the same general question posed by the Lebanese in the early 1990s: where do we go from here? From a more strategic perspective, however, UMAM understands that the revolution that has engulfed the Arab world—despite the heinous violence that accompanies those changes—presents it with a very unique opportunity. Specifically, the chance now exists to replace the *Blut und Boden*-inspired ideology, which has characterized relationships

within the Arab world since the post-World War II period of transformation, with a common set of values. Rather than perpetuating a reliance on condemnation, subjugation

and execution, the time is ripe to institute a respect for human dignity, an assurance of individual and civil liberties and the abiding prevalence of human rights.

## **The Workshop: Three Paths to one Destination**

Although the Beirut workshop was originally scheduled for October 2012, a series of security "events" in Lebanon—which proved yet again that the legacy of the past can inhibit a society from embracing stability and peace—forced UMAM D&R and the ICSC to delay the symposium until early November when tensions had subsided. Finally, however, the organizers, participants, observers and honored guests were able to conduct the workshop, the title of which was "Documentation and Human Rights: Conceptualizing a Regional, Human Rights-oriented Documentation Network."

During the first three days, a seminar led by international archiving expert and UMAM D&R Consultative Council member Trudy Peterson addressed the general history of archiving, the use of documentation as a human rights tool, the essentials of human rights documentation and the ethics of documentation. The final two days were dedicated to

introducing the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and presenting several initiatives supported fully or in part by the coalition. The outcome of that second part of the workshop was general agreement on constituting the coalition's MENA network and consensus on devising and seeking funding for common projects. Of note, UMAM D&R was responsible for both identifying regional partners and providing the logistical organization for the symposium.

Ultimately, conference participants came from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. Observers and workshop guests were from Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cyprus. Funding for the event was made possible by generous assistance from Germany's Institute for Foreign Relations (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa)).



In addition to the central themes of the Beirut conference, UMAM D&R organized a variety of activities intended to provide participants with practical insight into building collective memory and achieving transitional justice. More specifically, these associated activities (which included film screenings, site

visits to areas of previous conflict, open discussions with former fighters and a political-academic debate) were organized to introduce attendees to the multifaceted aspects of Lebanon's collective memory. The pictures below give clearer insight into the range of those activities.

## Next Step

As intended, workshop participants collaborated to draft a series of general recommendations. These included strengthening communications (among the participants) to improve the sharing of information and expertise, and working together on specific projects, such as UMAM D&R coordinating efforts to establish the MENA network and seeking funding for a follow-on meeting. Above all, however, the most important lesson learned from the Beirut workshop was the urgent requirement to create a

MENA network that understands the serious and immediate need to infuse the Arab world with an appreciation for human rights. The necessity of that requirement must match the urgencies associated with the "new era" into which the Arab world is being propelled. The network should develop and have the ability to lend expertise in efforts to guide the Arab world from pre- to post-transformation reality. Finally, the network should have the wherewithal to advance documentation from mere fact-finding to the age of memory management.



The finale to the weeklong meeting: Elizabeth Silkes (ICSC) and Monika Borgmann (UMAM D&R) distribute Certificates of Participation to the participants. In addition, each participant was offered a copy of "Missing," which was published by UMAM D&R in 2010.

مسكُ الختام، توزيع شهادات مشاركة على ضيوف مؤتمر بيروت «التوثيق وحقوق الإنسان – في سبيل شبكة إقليمية تضع التوثيق في خدمة حقوق الإنسان». فضلاً عن الشهادة، قُدمت لكل مشارك ومشاركة نسخة من كتاب «... ولم يعودوا» الذي نشرته أمم للتوثيق والأبحاث في ٢٠١٠.

#### The Lebanese model through the experiences of A. Chaffari and Z. Saab



Assaad Chaffari held several key positions in the Lebanese Forces militia during the civil war, primarily in its intelligence apparatus. In 2000, he became the first influential veteran of that war to extend a public apology to the Lebanese and particularly to his victims. Similarly, Ziad Saab played significant roles within the Lebanese Communist party militia. Chaffari and Saab began working together several years ago to advocate self-criticism among those who fought in the Lebanese Civil War.

Following brief presentations by Chaffari and Saab given at Mouvement Social (Badaro, Beirut), an intense question and answer session took place.



«النموذج اللبناني» من خلال تجربتي أسعد شفتري وزيايد صعب خلال سنوات «الحرب» تقلد أسعد شفتري عدداً من المناصب المركزية في إطار ميليشيا «القوات اللبنانية». وإن يُذكر شفتري اليوم، فليس لما أبله بحكم تلك المناصب، وإنما لما كان من تجرؤه في عام ٢٠٠٠ على نشر اعتذار علني من اللبنانيين عامة، ومن ضحاياه منهم خاصة، على ما ارتكبه يده. أما زيايد صعب، ف«مقاتل سابق» أيضاً، تقلد عدداً من المسؤوليات في إطار ميليشيا الحزب الشيوعي اللبناني. شفتري وصعب يعملان معاً، منذ سنوات، على نشر فكرة «النقد الذاتي» في صفوف المقاتلين السابقين.

استضافت هذا اللقاء مكاتب «الحركة الاجتماعية»، (بدارو)، وبعد مداخلتين، الأولى لشفتري والثانية لصعب، دار نقاش، انفعالي أحياناً، بينهما وبين المشاركين والمشاركات.



### Lessons learned from the Moroccan experience

Mohamad el-Kamlich, a conference participant, gives a presentation on the Moroccan case. In his briefing, el-Kamlich mentioned the efforts being taken by civil society activists to convert some of the former regime's detention facilities into sites of conscience.

### دروس مستفادة من التجربة المغربية

محمد الخمليشي، متحدثاً عن التجربة المغربية وعن محاولات المجتمع المدني المغربي تحويل بعض معالم القمع خلال «العهد السابق» إلى مواقع ضمير وذاكرة.

### Transitional Justice and the Arab Spring – Perspectives and Challenges



Participants in the "Documentation and Human Rights" workshop listen to the views of Ahmad Karoud, former officer of Amnesty International and Tunisian human rights activist and Lebanese MP Ghassan Moukhyaber. This roundtable discussion, the subject of which was "Transitional Justice and the Arab Spring – Perspectives and Challenges," was held at the American university of Beirut and was chaired by AUB professor Sari Hanafi.

### العدالة الانتقالية والربيع العربي – أبعاد وتحديات

في الخامس من تشرين الثاني ٢٠١٢، استضافت إحدى قاعات الجامعة الأميركية ببيروت ندوة بتوقيع أمم للتوثيق والأبحاث ومؤسسة عصام فارس للسياسات العامة والشؤون الدولية، تحت عنوان «العدالة الانتقالية والربيع العربي – أبعاد وتحديات». تحدث خلال هذه الندوة كل من المدير الإقليمي السابق لمنظمة العفو الدولية الأستاذ أحمد كرعود، والنائب في البرلمان اللبناني غسان مخيبر، وأدار النقاش الذي شارك فيه ضيوف المؤتمر الأستاذ ساري حنفي.



### Lessons learned from the Bangladeshi experience

Mofidul Hoque, a Bangladesh partner of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, describes a site of conscience in a presentation about the Liberation War Museum.

### دروس مستفادة من التجربة البنغلاديشية

مفضول حق، من شركاء التحالف الدولي لمواقع الضمير والذاكرة في بنغلادش، متحدثاً عن «متحف حرب التحرير» كنموذج على موقع للضمير والذاكرة.





Lokman Slim gives the workshop's keynote speech, "Conceptualizing a Regional, Human Rights-oriented Documentation Network."

لقمان سليم مفتحاً المؤتمر.

#### Visiting UMAM D&R offices/The Hangar



Lokman Slim describes the various components of UMAM D&R's online "Memory At Work" database in a presentation held in the organization's multi-use facility, The Hangar.

في الهنغار، لقمان سليم معرّفاً بالموقع الالكتروني «ديوان الذاكرة اللبنانية» وأقسامه.

#### في زيارة أمم للتوثيق والأبحاث/الهنغار



Monika Borgmann describes to a group of workshop participants the methodology UMAM D&R uses to catalog its audiovisual archives.

مونيك بورغمان، شارحةً لمجموعة من المشاركين والمشاركات منهج أمم للتوثيق والأبحاث في تصنيف ما في خزانتها من وثائق سمعية بصرية.



Participants visit the offices of UMAM D&R.

ضيوف المؤتمر خلال زيارتهم مكاتب أمم للتوثيق والأبحاث.



Workshop participants watch the documentary "Massaker." The film screening was held in The Hangar as part of the "Documentation and Human Rights" conference held in Beirut.

في الهنغار، خلال عرض الوثائقي «مقاتل».



Several pictures of Trudy Peterson during the three-day seminar.

Ms. Peterson is a Certified Archivist, past president of the Society of American Archivists and CITRA (the international roundtable on archives), a former acting archivist of the United States and the chair of the Human Rights Working Group within the International Council on Archives. She is also a founding member of the UMAM D&R Consultative Council.



السيدة ترودي بيترسون، خلال الحلقة الدراسية التي افتتح بها المؤتمر ودامت ثلاثة أيام. ومما يذكر أن السيدة بيترسون، علاوة على كونها مؤتفة محلّفة، والرئيسة السابقة لجمعية الموثقين الأميركيين، وعضواً مؤسساً في المجلس الاستشاري لجمعية أمم للتوثيق والأبحاث، صاحبة مساهمات في العديد من لجان تقضي الحقيقة حول العالم.



Ali Abou Dehn, head of the Association of Former Lebanese Political Detainees in Syria, explains the general organization of Syria's Tadmor Prison to Elizabeth Silkes (ICSC) and Mofidul Hoque (Bangladesh). Replicas of several prison cells were erected in The Hangar for the live performance of "The German Chair."

في الهنغار، علي أبو دهن، رئيس جمعية المعتقلين اللبنانيين السياسيين في سوريا، يشرح لإليزابيث سيلكس (التحالف الدولي) ومفضل حق (بنغلادش) نظام الزنانات الانفرادية في سجن تدمر. يذكر أن نماذج من هذه الزناتين قد تم بناؤها في الهنغار خلال التدريبات على «الكرسي الألماني». و«الكرسي الألماني» مشروع مشترك بين جمعية المعتقلين وأمم، هو عبارة عن عرض حي يقدمه عدد من أعضاء الجمعية ويسترجعون فيه يوميات الاعتقال في السجن السوري.



Mustafa Chamseddine, a former Lebanese prisoner in Syria, explains to a workshop participant how pieces of inner tube were used in Syrian prisons to blindfold prisoners. The participant experiences the makeshift blindfold firsthand.

السجين المحرّر مصطفى شمس الدين يشرح لأحد المشاركين تقنية تعمية الرؤبة في السجن السوري بوساطة قطعة من الكاوتشوك مستلة من إطار داخلي. المشارك نفسه يختبر بنفسه تقنية التعمية هذه.



Raymond Bouban, a former Lebanese detainee in Syrian prisons, shows workshop participants a replica of a soccer ball created by prisoners using

pieces of fabric. A collection of objects recreated by members of the Association of Former Lebanese Political Detainees in Syria appears in the background. The overall effort was the result of an advocacy/partnership between the Association and UMAM D&R.

السجين المحرّر ريمون بوبان يعرض لعدد من المشاركين نموذجاً عن كرة قدم مصنوعة من قماش الجينز. هذه الكرة، كما مجموعة الأغراض والأدوات الماثلة في خلفية الصورة، هي نماذج من أغراض وأدوات كان السجناء يقومون بتصنيعها خلال اعتقالهم، وقد أعاد أعضاء في جمعية المعتقلين اللبنانيين السياسيين تصنيع هذه النماذج للتعريف بقضيتهم في إطار حملات المناصرة التي نظمتها الجمعية بالتعاون مع أمم للتوثيق والأبحاث.



Several photographs of the group's live performance, which was held in The Hangar.

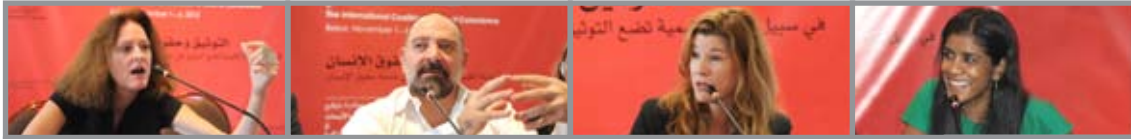
مجموعة لقطات من عرض «الكرسي الألماني» الذي قدّمه أعضاء من جمعية المعتقلين اللبنانيين السياسيين في سوريا على نية المؤتمرين.



Workshop participants discussing the live performance with former detainees.

المشاركون في حوار مع «الممثلين».





The second part of the Beirut Documentation and Human Rights conference included a detailed presentation on the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. The ICSC team was comprised of Elizabeth Silkes, Eresh Naidu and Sarah Edkins.

صورة عامة لافتتاح القسم الثاني من المؤتمر الذي حُصِّصَ للتعريف بالتحالف الدولي لمواقع الضمير والذاكرة. مثل التحالف في هذا المؤتمر كل من السيدات إليزابيث سيلكس وإريشنة نايدو وسارة إدكنز.

Clockwise from bottom left:

**Ahmad Karoud** (Tunisia), **Sarah Edkins** (USA/ICSC), **Matthew Holliday** (International Commission on Missing Persons), **Mofidul Hoque** (Bangladesh), **Moussa Bourfeis** (Algeria), **Col. Khaled Kanaan** (Lebanon/LAF), **Karim Abdel Salam** (Tunisia), **Hend Khechine** (Tunisia), **Haidar Saeed** (Iraq), **Abdou el-Bermawy** (Egypt), **Fadwa Hodali** (Palestine), **Meriam Abou Edris** (Bahrain), **Amjad Samhan** (Palestine), **Ahmad Mshikhs** (KSA), **Monika Borgmann** (Lebanon/Umam D&R), **Lokman Slim** (Lebanon/ Umam D&R), **Elizabeth Silkes** (USA/ICSC), **Ereshene Naidu** (USA/ICSC), **Elias Ezzein** (Tunisia), **Fatna Albouih** (Morocco), **El Tahra Hamad Majzoub** (Sudan), **Kelly Stedem** (Lebanon/Hayya Bina), **Anne Message** (ICTJ), **Antonis Hadjikyriacou** (Cyprus), **Murad al-Gharati** (Yemen), **Youmn Abou Elhesn** (Syria), **Fouad Falih al-Hassan** (Iraq), **Eva Abou Halawi** (Jordan), **Fatima Ghandour** (Libya), **Emad Mubarak** (Egypt), **Mohamed El Khamlich** (Morocco), **Ahmad Mroue** and **Loyal Assaad** (Lebanon/Umam D&R).

من اليمين إلى اليسار:

ليال أسعد وأحمد مروة (لبنان/أمم للتوثيق والأبحاث)، محمد الخمليشي (المغرب)، عماد مبارك (مصر)، فاطمة غندور (ليبيا)، إيفا أبو حلاوي (الأردن)، فؤاد فليح حسن (العراق)، يمن أبو الحسن (سوريا)، مراد الغاراتي (اليمن)، أنطونيس حاجي كريكو (قبرص)، آن ميساجي (المركز الدولي للعدالة الانتقالية)، كيلي ستيدام (لبنان/هيا بنا)، الطاهرة حمد مجذوب (السودان)، فاطنة البيه (المغرب)، الياس الزين (تونس)، إريشنة نايدو (الولايات المتحدة الأميركية/التحالف الدولي لمواقع الضمير والذاكرة)، إليزابيث سيلكس (الولايات المتحدة الأميركية/التحالف)، لقمان سليم (لبنان/أمم)، مونيكا بورغمان (لبنان/أمم)، أحمد المشيخص (المملكة العربية السعودية)، أمجد سمحان (فلسطين)، مريم أبو إدريس (البحرين)، فدوى هودالي (فلسطين)، عبده البرماوي (مصر)، حيدر سعيد (العراق)، هند الخشين (تونس)، كريم عبد السلام (تونس)، العقيد خالد كنعان (لبنان/الجيش اللبناني)، موسى بو ريفيس (الجزائر)، مفضل حق (بنغلادش)، ماتيو هوليداي (اللجنة الدولية للمفقودين)، سارة إدكنز (الولايات المتحدة الأميركية/التحالف)، أحمد كرعود (تونس).



The finale to the weeklong meeting: Elizabeth Silkes (ICSC) and Monika Borgmann (UMAM D&R) distribute Certificates of Participation to the participants. In addition, each participant was offered a copy of "Missing," which was published by UMAM D&R in 2010.

مسك الختام، توزيع شهادات مشاركة على ضيوف مؤتمر بيروت «التوثيق وحقوق الإنسان – في سبيل شبكة إقليمية تضع التوثيق في خدمة حقوق الإنسان». فضلاً عن الشهادة، قُدمت لكل مشارك ومشاركة نسخة من كتاب «... ولم يعودوا» الذي نشرته أُمم للتوثيق والأبحاث في ٢٠١٠.



### Visiting the Shouf and Deir al-Moukhalles

Workshop participants traveled to Mount Lebanon, the site of many bloody encounters between the Lebanese Druze and Christian factions during the civil war. They also visited the historic Greek Catholic Monastery of the Holy Savior (circa 1711) located in the village of Joun. While there, Father Abdo Raad, a senior Greek Catholic priest, offered the participants some of his progressive ideas regarding the complicated relationship between the Lebanese and their collective memory. He also described several strategies intended to help the Lebanese overcome their deeply held hatred.

#### في زيارة الشوف ودير المخلص

كان الشروع بإنشاء دير المخلص في عام ١٧١١، وهو يقع في قرية جون، في القلب من منطقة الشوف، (جبل لبنان)، التي شهدت بعضاً من أعنف فصول «الحرب الأهلية». علاوة على زيارة مختلف أقسام الدير، استقبل الأب عبدو رعد، النائب العام للرهبانية المخلصية، المشاركين في المؤتمر وأدهشهم بنظرة المتقدمة إلى دور الدينيين في حل النزاعات وصناعة السلام.