

ISSUE 4 VOLUME 3

fenjan

SPRING 2023

Editorial Board



Editor-in-Chief
Laila Shaddid '23

Mangaging Editor
Bruce Shen '24

Editors

Ahmed Abdelhamid '23
Ahmed '25

Cole McCann-Phillips '23
Nadia Mokhallati '23

Eee Yildirim '23
Zaid Tabaza '24

Contributing Writers

Ben Winer '23

Dana Al-Halawani '25

Gaden James '23

Lauren Mehrara '26

Lina Ch'25

Mahaa A'25

Mgd Ayyad '25

Matteo Ak'24

Mo Forouta '25

Mohammad Abu'24

Sahya Dhar Malhotra '24

Media Editors

Iman Syed '23

Lauren Mehrara '26

Design Team

Abdel Hubbi '24

Yasmine Mezoury '24

Alice Feng '25

Copy Editors

Anka Prakash '23

Lina Ch'25

Founded in 2020,

Fenjan is the University of Pennsylvania's premiere journal on the Middle East. Through non-partisan, quarterly issues, *Fenjan* is dedicated to increasing empathy for and understanding of the Middle East among the Penn community. Our written and visual work covers countries commonly recognized as part of the MENA region. We welcome people of every cultural identifier

Thanks
Special thanks to the Middle East Center at Penn for making this publication possible with their

Contact Us
upennfenjan@gmail.com

Discover More
www.fenjanupenn.com

@upennfenjan

Fenjan: The Middle East Journal

@upennfenjan

Cover art and design by Abdel Hubbi

The views expressed in each individual piece are independent of Fenjan and do not necessarily represent the views of the editorial board or the University of Pennsylvania.

fenjan

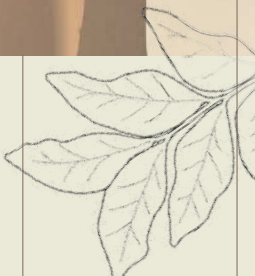
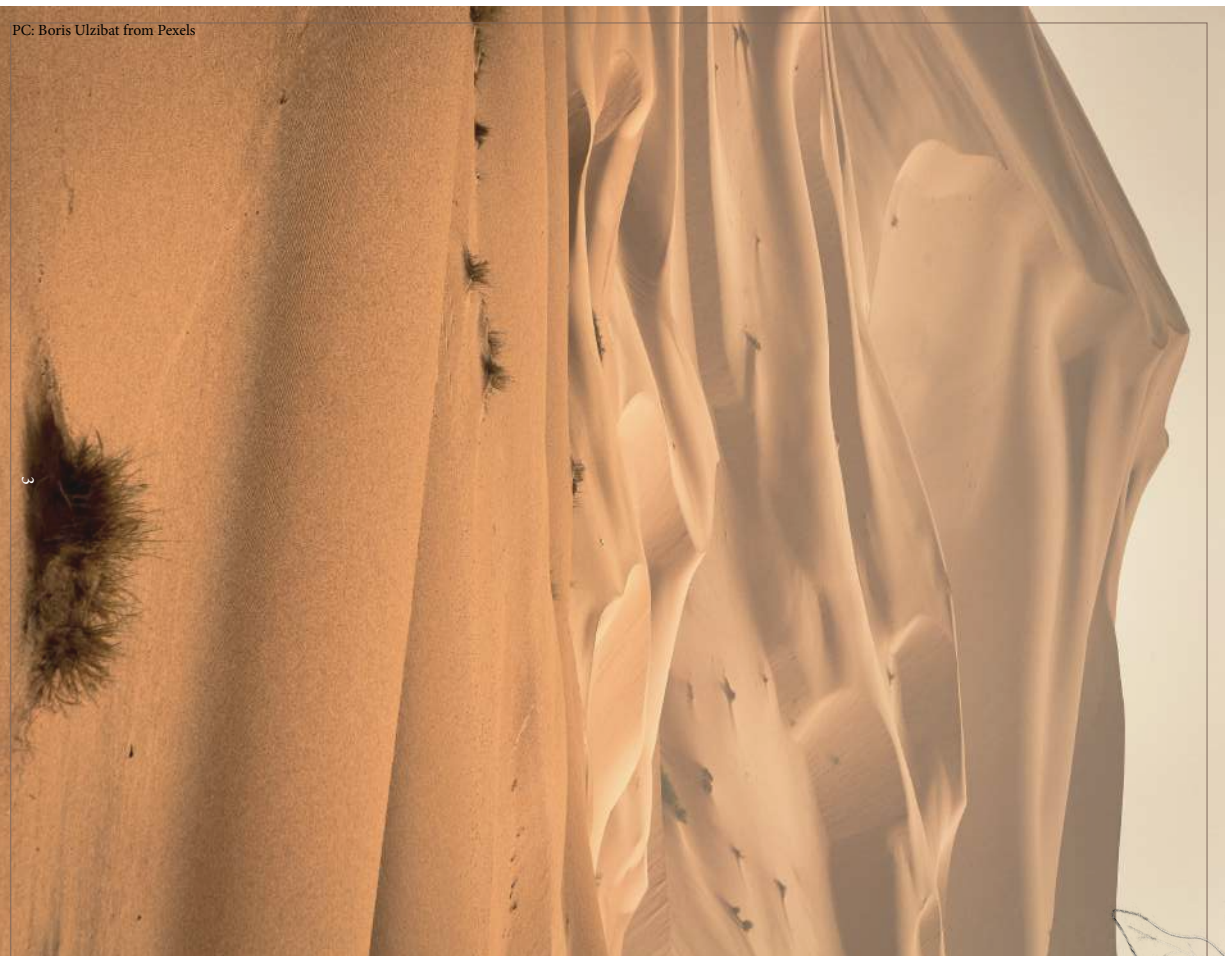


Table of Contents

05	Orientalist Double Standards: A Critique of Western Reporting on the Qatar World Cup
07	Algebra and Algorithms: Restoring Attribution to al-Khwarizmi for his Mathematical Discoveries
11	Politics With A Side of Coffee: A Look Into Women-Only Cafés
13	Two Struggles, One Spirit
17	A War of Words: The Ongoing Battle for the Gulf's Name
19	The Aftermath of the Arab Spring From Egypt to Bangladesh
23	The Blessings of Sephardic Mourning Rituals
25	The Occupied Working With The Occupiers: The Sacrifices We Make
27	A Double-Edged Sword in the Arab World's Cultural and Linguistic Landscape: Arabizi

Orientalist Double Standards: A Critique of Western Reporting on the Qatar World Cup

Majid Ayyad

For the first time in its history, the FIFA World Cup took place in an Arab country. Over three million spectators from all over the world gathered in Qatar and were afforded the chance to experience the Arabian Gulf's culture for the first time.¹ In other words, Qatar was given an opportunity to address the differences between how Arabs are portrayed in Western media and their true lifestyles. That being said, the lack of cultural sensitivity shown towards Qatar's culture has raised concerns about double standards in the way Arab countries are represented in popular media.

The excessive criticism that Qatar received during the World Cup raises the question of whether this criticism is motivated by genuine human rights concerns or instead, closed-mindedness and white supremacy. In particular, Qatar was accused of overcontrolling the fans' actions by banning beer in the stadiums and only permitting alcohol in private settings.² On the other hand, the media was not concerned in the slightest when France banned beer after the European Football Championship in 2016, which caused clashes between fans and left 50 people injured.³ Both actions were the same: banning

alcohol in the stadiums. The former was justified by the country's compliance with its religious rules and cultural norms, while the latter was driven by the need to stop violence; however, Qatar was the only country facing unwarranted criticism.

Another example of the media's double standards can be seen when Lionel Messi wore a bishit, a traditional men's cloak popular in the Arab world, typically worn by royalty.⁴ The emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, gifted Messi



a bishit just before Messi lifted the trophy. Afterwards, Western media exploded with racist comments. For example, Mark Ogden, a senior ESPN journalist, tweeted: "All the pics are ruined by somebody making him wear a cape that looks like he's about to have a haircut."

In his sarcastic comment, the American journalist clearly insulted the country's culture by demeaning Qatar's traditional attire.⁴ In contrast, one would be hard-pressed to find similar backlash against the act of gifting traditional clothes in a non-Arab country: during the 1970 World Cup held in Mexico, a sombrero was put on Pelé's head after Brazil won the World Cup. Furthermore, foreign athletes put on olive wreaths during the 2004 Athens Olympics as

homage to the ancient Greek tradition.⁵ The Western media played an important role in painting a misleading image of Qatar. A widespread myth about Qatar is the alleged high fatalities among migrant workers since the country won the bid for the World Cup. The Guardian, for example, emphasized that 6,500 immigrants from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka died between 2011 and 2020.⁶ Such reports overlooked the fact that the death number was proportionate to the size of the workforce; however, Craig LaMay, former acting dean at the Northwestern University campus in Qatar, noted that given the country's population of 1.4 million migrant workers, 6,500 deaths over 10 years roughly corresponds to the mortality rate of young men in Germany.⁷ While Qatar certainly deserves scrutiny over its harsh labor laws, which have been somewhat relaxed in recent years, the mainstream media fails to do

the emirate justice by misrepresenting the severity of the migrant workers' death toll. These unedifying reports about Qatar highlight the intellectual laziness of Western journalists. It is one thing to boycott countries violating human rights and press the government to change draconian laws, but it is another to pursue a single story about Qatar's irreducible evil and degrade its cultural practices with a heavy splash of Orientalism. Hosting the World Cup in Qatar granted football fans, and the rest of the world, a glimpse into the Middle East. Instead, the potent force of Orientalism fueled Western spectators' anxiety about an unknown Middle East into an irrational fear about the many vices of an authoritarian Qatar, despite its rich culture and progress in liberalization.

When the next sports competition is hosted in the Middle East, Western journalists should learn to decolonize their writing.

Algebra and Algorithms:

Restoring Attribution to al-Khwarizmi for his Mathematical Discoveries

About: Raji

In the candlelit quarters of his library, al-Khwarizmi lays his stylus alongside the dust board which bears his latest discovery. A compulsory checking of the numerals outlined between piles of dust raises his heartbeat up into his ears. Realizing he has proven a method for solving any and all quadratic equations, he fretfully searches for his bamboo pen and papyrus to begin copying over what only he and his contemporaries in the House know will change the world—a world that would uphold these ideas for centuries with little credit given to the mind which conceived them.

He stumbles upon his pen, only to hear the *Azhan* (Islamic call to prayer) echoing throughout the halls. He decidedly defers his transcription and begins walking toward the sound of success. Stopping at the final bookshelf before the door, his finger delicately pulls out a copy of the

Qur'an by its binding, decorated with divergently complex, yet soothingly uniform geometric patterns. In pursuit of divine approval for his discovery, he flips to the 58th chapter, glides his finger to the 11th verse, and recites in a breathy, accented Arabic tongue: "Allah will elevate those of you who are faithful, and raise those gifted with knowledge in rank. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do."²¹

The House of Wisdom

The remarkable work of al-Khwarizmi was not solely a consequence of his genius, but a product of the institutional investment in his mind. In the late ninth century, nearly half a millennium before the Renaissance, a scholarly movement was burgeoning from a city which today is known far more for its bombshells than its books: Baghdad. At the epicenter of the Muslim

world, bookended by the Atlantic and the Indus, sat the House of Wisdom, translated literally from the Arabic *Bayt al-Hikmah*. It was an academic institution to which, at the time, parallels could not be drawn from contemporary civilizations, and today, can only be drawn from the world's most esteemed universities. The House was founded by Caliph al-Ma'mun, who was considered one of the most scientifically geared rulers of the fledgling *Ummah* (Muslim world), having memorized the entire *Qur'an* at an early age and studied under the greatest scholars of his time.²² During his reign, al-Ma'mun was dually presented with an opportunity and a conundrum: he had access to the greatest thinkers of the vast, culturally disparate lands under his rule and their aggregated scholastic coporia; and yet, few scholars could benefit from each other's work due to the language barriers innate to a society



united by its multirethnic religion.

A translation movement ensued thereafter to address this knowledge bottleneck. Arabic, being the language of the *Qur'an* and thus the Muslim world's de facto lingua franca, was designated as the target language for the books that would populate the House library's towering stacks.² Ancient texts in languages including Greek, Syriac, and Persian in disciplines such as medicine, mathematics, and astronomy were translated into Arabic for direct access by appointed scholars of the House.³ Al-Mā'mūn's vision of a utopian empire that was built upon a pursuit of knowledge was underscored by his lavish patronage. It is even said that he offered a book's weight in gold to the scholar who translated it into Arabic.⁴

What was intended only as a consolidation of preexisting discoveries later served as a crucial bridge of human knowledge. Many of the ancient Greek works upon which European discoveries were based came from their Arabic translations.⁵ And while it is forgivable of the West that the Muslim translations of ancient texts were stripped of their preservative context in favor of their content, their cursory accreditation of novel Muslim discovery is less so. Indeed, one would be remiss to not acknowledge the scholastic contributions that

were natively incubated within the walls of the House, most of which were pragmatically oriented insofar as the implementation of Islamic daily affairs required.

Systematic computational methods for the Islamic calculation of inheritance, water-powered clocks to determine prayer times, and geographical plotting that allowed for mosques to be constructed facing the *Ka'bah* from hundreds of miles away are just a few examples.⁶ The House went on to host countless scholars and facilitate diverse findings for the next half-millennium, but it was one of al-Mā'mūn's first recruits whose impact far exceeded that of the rest: al-Khwarizmi.

The Persian Polymath

Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi was a Persian polymath born around 790 AD. Often referred to by the epithet denoting his origins in the Khwarazm region (spanning present-day Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan), al-Khwarizmi holds discoveries in the fields of geology, astronomy, and, most notably, mathematics. Just as al-Khwarizmi's scientific aptitude led to his conscription to Baghdad, the groundbreaking work he conducted during his early years at the House led to his appointment by al-Mā'mūn to the high-ranking positions of prin-

cipal astronomer and head of the library.⁵

Al-Khwarizmi is widely considered the "father of algebra" due to the novelty and utility of his contributions in the seminal treatise, *The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing*.⁶ This mathematical work stemmed from al-Mā'mūn's request for a systematic method of handling complex monetary exchange within his court, such as trade and inheritance, that would abide by Islamic financial law. Al-Khwarizmi took on the challenge with zeal, drawing from translated Greek and Indian works available in his library, and systemizing a method that used techniques of restoration and balancing to solve algebraic equations of the sort? *Al-Jabr*, appearing in the title of his text, is the Arabic word for *restoration* that al-Khwarizmi invokes in his proposed method. Its Latinization, *algebra*, following the region's subsequent dissemination through Europe, gave us the field of algebra that remains a cornerstone of the study of mathematics today.⁶

Perhaps a more ubiquitous contribution by al-Khwarizmi is his introduction of Hindu-Arabic numerals to Europe. In his written works, *Book of Indian Calculation* and *Book of Addition and Subtraction in Indian Arithmetic*, al-Khwarizmi outlined a system-

atic usage of Indian computation and arithmetic that outperformed the Roman numerals historically used in Europe. Al-Khwarizmi did not just serve as an ambassador of this Indian method of arithmetic, he improved upon it too, introducing the concept of zero—a discovery which provided the impetus for decimal number representation and their facilitated computation.⁷ Latin translations of al-Khwarizmi's work on computation were disseminated throughout Europe a few centuries after their publishing. His system, which followed strictly defined rules and required only a pen and a sheet of paper, came to replace prevalent abacus-based methods in both the Muslim world and Europe. The omnipresence of al-Khwarizmi's work can be uncovered by a closer look at the name for the class of computational methods he defined: algorithm—rooted in the Latinized form of his name, *algorismi*.⁸ It would be a stretch to consider this etymological nuance a sufficient accreditation to al-Khwarizmi though, as his name is effectively undiscernible from the term that bears it. Thus, an auxiliary mention of *al-Khwarizmi*,

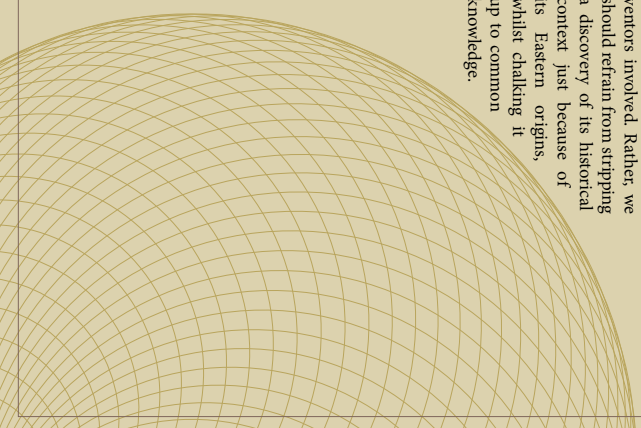
the mathematician, should necessarily be paired with *algorismi*, his contribution.

Restoring At

For the profound influence al-Khwarizmi had on mathematics during the Golden Age of Islam, the Renaissance, and his present-day impact on every secondary school mathematics class, why can we only learn of his name from a book on ancient Islamic history? Make no mistake, Western educational institutions do deem the inventor of a scientific technique worthy of mention alongside their discovery. When physics students learn about the three laws of motion that guide our understanding of objects in space, we cannot decouple the concept from the name of its English originator, Isaac Newton. When Calculus students are adding the areas of rectangles drawn under a curve to approximate its definite integral, they are not computing just any sum, but a *Riemann sum*, named after German mathematician Bernhard Riemann. When middle school geometry students are solving for the hypotenuse of a right triangle, they

apply the *Pythagorean theorem*, named after the Greek philosopher Pythagoras.

Why, then, are algebra students blindly fed the *completing the square* method of solving quadratic equations without mentioning the name of the Persian mathematician who proved it over twelve hundred years ago in a Baghdad that—unlike today—was gazed upon by the world with reverence? Academic accreditation is apparently quite selective, with a skew toward Western discovery. This is not to suggest that every discovery must credit all previous inventors involved. Rather, we should refrain from stripping a discovery of its historical context just because of its Eastern origins, whilst chalking it up to common knowledge.



Politics With A Side Of Coffee:

A Look Into Women-Only Cafés

Layla Sayed

Throughout history, coffee shops and cafes were perceived as unifying centers for people of various cultures and backgrounds. From its origins in the Arab world to its global popularity today, coffee has been a staple for social gatherings and a symbol of hospitality. The diary entries of Wasif Jawharyyeh, a Palestinian composer and oud player from the early 1900s, reveal the enduring appeal of coffee shops as social hubs. He writes, "I would start my day at the Ma'aref Café with friends drinking the aghlieth until 10 or 11 in the morning when Abu Darwish would arrive and order his first smoke, then his second, then his third."¹ The sentiments in Jawharyyeh's diary entry remain common today, reflecting the enduring role of coffee shops in the Arab world throughout different periods of history.

While many may consider coffee shops to be settings of social unification, a closer look at their history reveals otherwise. Coffee shops may have served as a gathering place for many to meet, but they were also sites

of exclusion. Before exploring these complexities, an examination of the history of coffee is crucial to understanding how we got to where we are today. Coffee cultivation and trade began in the Arabian Peninsula, where many thought that it would keep the congregation focused during religious prayers.² As coffee spread across the Arab world, it became a staple for home gatherings—an offer of coffee symbolized a display of hospitality. As this drink grew in popularity, so did coffee houses, which became centers of modernity. In Wasif Jawharyyeh's diary, he recounts how cafes were home to the phonograph and cinematograph, a newly introduced form of entertainment. Coffeshop visits soon transformed into a commonly undertaken leisure activity. People would perform shows and Jawharyyeh himself would play his oud to audiences as they sipped their coffee and smoked.³

However, coffee shops did not just entertain. With coffee often being affordable, it prompted many to engage in communication, playing a role in bringing about progress and change. In Egypt, the café "Al Looeh" became the headquarters of the nationalist party of Mustafa Kamal, the founder of modern Turkey.⁴ This gathering of people posed a threat to those in power. Many sultans and kings would often prohibit coffee drinking and cafes, as they were popular places for people to gather and potentially discuss dissenting ideas. An example of this is Sultan Murad IV, who issued a decree in 1633 that made the consumption of coffee a capital offense.⁴ This was due to the fact that the Janissaries, who were viewed as a potentially rebellious group by the ruling authorities, often gathered in coffeehouses. Cafes became hosts for progress, and this continues to be reflected in modern media. In the 2022 Egyptian film *Kira and El Gin*, a coffee shop serves as the rebellion headquarters for those planning to overthrow British occupation.

Cafes gave rise to social movements. However, despite accepting patrons from diverse

economic backgrounds, their doors for a long time remained closed for a forgotten portion of the population: women. Although coffee culture extended to women, the cafes did not. This became a problem, since coffee shops were where political discussions took place and public issues were addressed—being within their doors was crucial to being heard. In other words, by making cafes male-dominated spaces, this ensured that women were left out of the public sphere. The enduring impact of women's exclusion from cafes is still visible today in the prevalent image of Arab coffee shops where tables are often crowded with men smoking hookah and sipping on tea and coffee. In many ways, the exclusion of women from these shops is just as much about limiting their mobility in the streets as it is about limiting their ideas. When you are not heard, you are not seen, and every law and rule in society will reflect this.

This has left many women in a difficult position, and for some, led to the movement of women-only cafes that have opened across the Arab world. Sabaya cafe in Jordan is one of them; on the cafes front door, a sign states that men are not welcome. When describing her experiences, Hanin Majali, the cafe's owner, says "The most important thing for me is that they feel at home and my dream is that Sabaya will become a meeting point for women from all walks of life."⁵ Other owners of women-only cafes have stated

that their shops are places where "professional women can relax without the societal pressures that come when men are present."⁶

However, not everyone would agree that women-only cafes are the future for women's involvement in public issues and integration into Arab societies. Some believe that, rather than creating a space only for women or for men, spaces that integrate people regardless of gender are needed. Nabit Fenjan, a cafe in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia is a women-only cafe that attempted to create a mixed gender space. However, the government refused to grant it the license on the grounds that women could not serve male customers.

This apparent loss was seen as a win for many women, as women-only spaces, according to some, are where women can mingle freely. In one case, a mall in Saudi Arabia referred to as the "Ladies Kingdom" opened its women-only space to men.

The result was a plunge in business. "No one even comes to the cafes anymore," complained one worker. The main concern of the women who used to frequent this place was men seeking to "pick up women."⁷ The concept of mixed spaces, for many, is happening too fast and is not allowing engrained culture to catch up. The entrenched image of men dominating coffee shops and the patriarchal society they are able to comfortably reside in have made it difficult for progress to occur.

While women-only cafes

may not reflect the progressive image many would hope to find, they are important spaces for Arab women. Given the patriarchal nature of Arab societies, many women may feel uncomfortable or even threatened in mixed-gender spaces, particularly in the presence of men who they may not know or trust. Women-only cafes offer a place where they can congregate and socialize without fear of harassment or unwanted attention. That could not be said in Wasif Jawharyyeh's time. Of course, this is not to downplay the importance of mixed spaces. Creating more opportunities for different groups to interact and learn from one another is a key step toward building more inclusive and diverse societies.

However, this should not be done at the expense of women's feelings of safety and security. The emergence of women-only cafes is a significant sign of progress for women in the Arab world. These cafes provide a safe space for women to gather, exchange ideas, and engage in political discussions—activities that for centuries only men could enjoy. Therefore, these spaces can be a source of empowerment to many Arab women and help amplify their voices in political and social dialogues, facilitating the introduction of more gender-inclusive laws. Hopefully, someday soon they can do so freely even outside the sanctuary of women-only cafes.



Two Struggles, One Spirit

Eliys Sabet

As the world watches the ongoing political and social upheaval in Iran, one organization in Philadelphia is taking a stand for human rights in the country. With a focus on providing support for Iranians and their underrepresented allies—both in Iran and the diaspora—Philly Iran is working tirelessly to bring attention to the challenges facing those who seek freedom, justice, and equality. To date, Philly Iran has been a driving force in campaign for human rights in the Philadelphia area, via protests and community-oriented events.¹

When searching for what exactly has given rise to the collection of “Women, Life, Freedom” protests in Iran today, one needs not look very far. In November 2022, over a thousand university students, many of whom were women, planned to attend anti-regime pro-

tests—only to come down with a mystery sickness, which they collectively agreed was a deliberate campaign by the regime to suppress dissent.² Then, in March 2023, nearly 1,000 young women across various schools were collectively gassed with a chemical agent while attending parent culprit, the accident was thought by many in Iran to be an act of retaliation by the Iranian government against its own people for the massive wave of protests that erupted after Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old arrested for not wearing a hijab, died in police custody. The widespread participation of women in the ranks of these protesters was believed to be a particularly motivating factor behind the gassing.

It is critical to note that Amini’s tragic death is only another link in a long chain of oppression that have triggered protests and their subsequent quelling at the behest of Islamic Republic figureheads. Fueled by anger, Iranian women are boldly breaking social norms and the law by removing their chadors, cutting their hair openly, and dancing on social media for the entire country to see.³ They have the support of all kinds of people behind them, from the young to the old, from those in the cities to those in the countryside, from Tehran to Baluchistan. Women are at the forefront.

What we are witnessing in Iran today is certainly not a novel development; women have often been the vanguards of defiant resistance movements in Iran.⁴ It was women who fervently fought for the formation of the Iranian parliament during the constitutional transition over a century ago, and it was women who were alongside men during the Revolution of 1979. And yet

today, they are not alone within the confines of their borders as they propagate this zealous spirit of resistance. Halfway across the globe, women here in America are also calling for solidarity with Iranian women. In order to shed more light on their work, I had the wonderful opportunity to speak with Mahsa Karimi, a PhD student at Drexel University and an active member of Philly Iran.

* * *

ES: What has Philly Iran done here in Philly and what accomplishment are you most proud of?

MK: We've been able to establish a vast network and cast a wide net. We have a whole network of people ... I might have a friend who is organizing Iranian minority artists here in Philly for a music performance, and someone else in the group may have something similar but on a smaller scale. Through having everyone engage in the community in some capacity, we can connect these smaller blips of resistance to pool together and make a thousand voices ... into one loud voice for change. We've been able to make a mark here in a major U.S. city and it's not like we are going to leave any time soon.

ES: I also have another, I

suppose, more personal question that has to do with your own outlook. I myself am an Afghan-American student so I've often had to contend with feeling like it is difficult, if not hear impossible, to have any lasting impact on that which occurs in my homeland, being constrained by the limits of being in the diaspora. It is as if I can do nothing except post photos or videos to my limited audience. So to that point, what would you say to someone who has to contend with feeling as though sometimes the work they do here has a marginal impact across the globe?

MK: If someone like me is here, I would say don't be scared of taking on the responsibilities. From my personal perspective, for those like me here, we are all PhD students, and we are non-resident aliens. We feel like we are walking along a very narrow edge, and then taking a little bit of responsibility is scary, but I would say to take it ... taking that responsibility helps you to avoid that feeling of sitting around being the only thing you can do. And still, to spread that awareness, that is the spark that can prompt direct resistance back home, because people in Iran are constantly asking me if people here in America are talking about them and if they even know what is still going on. So, that sharing of what is going

on, even if it feels like it is nothing to us here, means so much more to those actually dealing with the situation in the present. You're going to cry. You're going to feel depressed—but do something. Go to communities that have the collective power ... and then it will make you feel stronger in spirit. You'll see that other people are feeling the exact same way.

ES: I completely agree, in that you don't want to be stuck in an echo chamber of your own brain, [where you are] just bouncing off thoughts left and right of "I can't do anything, I can't do anything, my family's back home and I'm here, hopeless."

MK: Yes, every sound, every voice matters. Every hand matters. We cannot do it alone. A revolution would not happen or outside, we can still do something ... we matter, our voice matters, our health matters. So don't sit there and then just expect something to happen. It's not going to happen without every single [person].

ES: What can Penn students or ... other college students in the Philly area do to help make a lasting difference?

MK: Just show up, and if you have any skills, [activist organizations are] more than glad to have your help. As I told you,

[change is] not going to happen with just a single person ... So be part of any groups that you like and that make you feel comfortable to be part of; then be part of this movement. Nothing is easy.

ES: If the installation of a secular government does occur sometime in the future, what should people do to ensure that the marginalization of women and minorities does not persist?

MK: That process actually needs to start even before the establishment of a secular government, and we've taken the first steps to it as a society. Everything should be rooted in the people's choices. Every single thing needs voting, not ... unilateral decision making. Laws of the country should be [subject to] voting. That's the only way [to] make sure that everything would be of acceptable standard for minorities, no matter if you're a sexual minority or religious minority. I also think that back home in Iran, it ... [needs to] be ingrained in education and [we need to teach] people the value of an institution that is not highly-centralized, ... certainly more so leaning towards secularism.

... and if we have a secular democratic country installed [in Iran], I'm sure that lots of people who got educated here and lived here, who worked here under a secular democracy, would all go back there and help them ... I'm sure that [educated Iranians in America are] going to go back [to Iran], if one day the revolution succeeds, [to] help build a new structure of democratic secularism that ensures rights for any and all minorities from the ground-up.

ES: What do you think is most critical for Americans or those who don't know much about the current situation [in Iran] to understand?

MK: Free news isn't necessarily true news, so I would ask Americans to just read a little bit more. Do not just trust the television and whatever the media is feeding your brain. Go and search for that news to find something which is really truthful, and try to listen to different perspectives to build your own ideas. Do not just have one perspective.

* * *

ES: What about here in the diaspora?

MK: We would still hold down by systematic repression, and listen to the needs of those across the world to serve as their voice here in the West

ation of Iranians. The Islamic Republic's totalitarian regime may have power that rests in batons and tear gas, but groups like Philly Iran here in the United States, as well as those organizing protests abroad, have the power of the people's solidarity, which inspires others to act. Without question, it is incumbent on the youth of our generation, who are the far-reaching branches stemming from the roots of our homelands abroad, to raise awareness so that we can put pressure on authoritarian regimes to improve their human rights records—and hopefully evict them entirely. We can amplify the voices of human rights activists with whatever platforms we have to bring about change for the betterment of those fighting to live.

While change most certainly will not happen overnight, Iranian women and men in their homeland and in the diaspora can taste the sweetness of freedom on the horizon. Until then, the work of Mahsa and people like her will serve to push that dream into reality for all Iranians, most principally the women who are fighting for freedom.



A War of Words:

The Ongoing Battle for the Gulf's Name

Sayed Husain Aldlawi



On January 11, 2023, Iran summoned the Iraqi ambassador to express its discontent with a recent event in the region: The 25th Arabian Gulf Cup. The Gulf Cup is a biennial soccer competition held among the Gulf Cooperation Council states, Iraq, and Yemen – in other words, all countries around the Gulf except Iran. Despite other long-standing conflicts between Iran and its Arab neighboring states, Iran expressed its clear opposition to the situation simply for including the “Arabian Gulf” tag in the name of the soccer tournament.¹

Despite the heated nature of the ongoing debate, it is relatively recent in origin. As far as the records go—Greek geographers in this case—the term “Persian Gulf” had always been the undisputed name for the body of water between the Arabian and Persian peninsulas. Following the Greek classification of the region, the Persian geographers and later the Europeans kept the tradition and associated the “Persian Gulf” with the body of water, hence creating consensus

and strong historical evidence for continuing the use of the “Persian Gulf.”²

However, in the 1950s, the consensus began to fade away with Sir Charles Belgrave, the British advisor to the ruler of Bahrain, being the first Westerner to suggest the term the “Arabian Gulf.” Although Belgrave’s suggestion was shut down by the British government and sent to the archives, it was the beginning of what became one of the most contentious modern debates between Iran and the Arab states. Bolstered by the rise of Arab nationalism in the 1960s, other Arab countries began to adopt the “Arabian Gulf” in support of the Gulf’s Arab states.³

rebranding the highest soccer league as the “Persian Gulf Pro League” and even threatening airline bans over “Arabian Gulf” tags.⁴

Although cultural differences may have played a role, the naming dispute is primarily fueled by politics, both foreign and domestic. In the late 19th century, the British established a series of protectorates and signed treaties with local rulers in the Gulf due to its strategic location along the trade routes between Europe and the Indian subcontinent, which was then a British colony. The discovery of oil in the region in the early 20th century further cemented British interest in the area. After the second world war, declining British influence forced the Americans to step in and provide security for the Gulf states. In the 1970s, the U.S. established military bases in the region, including the Fifth Fleet, a strategically important naval base in Bahrain, which sits on the Arabian Gulf.

As a result, both Britain and

the U.S. were heavily involved in the naming dispute. The first attempt to change the name occurred after the British attacked Kharg Island in 1837, which led to an official warning from the Qajar Dynasty, the dynasty that governed the region known as Iran today.⁵ In response, Britain attempted to rename the Gulf as the “Britain Sea,” but the name failed to gain traction. After the nationalization of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and after the time of the Greeks, the severance of diplomatic ties between London and Tehran, the British retaliated by introducing the term “Arabian Gulf.” Concurrently, Arab countries inspired by Arab nationalism dropped the “Persian Gulf” and adopted the new label “Arabian Gulf” as part of their offense against Iran, especially after Iran’s support of Israel in the Arab-Israeli War. Once the U.S., an ally of the Shah of Iran, took over the security responsibility in the region, it adopted the term “Persian Gulf” alongside the rest of the Western diplomatic community. However, after the Iranian Revolution pitted the U.S. against the new Islamic regime, the U.S. government was split over which name to use. While some American agencies, including the US Board on Geographic Names, continued using “Persian Gulf” others, such as the US Navy, adopted the term

“Arabian Gulf” so as not to antagonize their Arab allies in the region.⁶

While it is true that the term “Persian Gulf” was the first to be introduced and widely used among geographers, Arab states maintain that they have the right to change the name to reflect the changing political and cultural influences. One of their arguments is that the Persian Empire, which the Gulf was named after at the time of the Greeks, no longer exists. Furthermore, the fact that six Arabic-speaking countries—Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE—surround the Gulf, compared to Iran being the only Persian country, lends support to the argument that Arab states have the right to change the name.

The naming dispute has created headaches for diplomats and journalists around the world. On the one hand, there is a consensus among intergovernmental organizations to continue using “Persian Gulf” on maps and in official documents. To name a few, the United Nations, the International Hydrographic Organization, the European Union, and NATO all adopted the “Persian Gulf” name. On the other hand, some organizations have attempted to remain neutral in the dispute by simply referring to the body of water as “the Gulf” such as the *New York Times*—which does not have an official position but rather alter-

nates between the two names⁷—and *The Economist*.⁸ However, Iran still rejects a neutral position and argues that taking a neutral stance means abandoning the rightful, historical name.

Throughout the dispute era, many solutions were alluded to such as simply the “Gulf” by the Arabs or the “Islamic Gulf” by others. Could there be any solution in the near future, given that Iran is standing firm and the Arabs will not submit either? Considering the sensitive nature of the two names—both of which hint towards an ethnic group—and their correlation with the power dynamics in the region, neither side would submit to the other’s demands and agree to their official name in the foreseeable future. As relations warm in the region thanks to a peace deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the powder keg of names will likely stabilize for the moment, only to be reignited by another spark in the future. This time, the inclusion of the term “Arabian Gulf” in the name of the 25th Gulf Cup was the spark that renewed debates and disputes in the region, underscoring the persistent complexities that continue to impact diplomatic relations. That being said, the Kuwaiti ambassador should perhaps expect a call from his Iranian counterpart regarding the name when his country hosts the 26th “Arabian Gulf Cup” in December 2024.

The Aftermath of the Arab Spring From Egypt to Bangladesh

Johnaer Jilani

The Arab Spring of 2011 was a pivotal moment that shook the foundations of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The Egyptian Revolution, in particular, was a seismic event that marked a turning point in the region's political landscape, with the overthrow of then-president Hosni Mubarak leading to a wave of political upheaval from the Maghreb to Bengal.¹ However, the aftermath of the revolution was marred by a relentless wave of political suppression aimed at silencing moderate Islamist movements and leaders who sought to bring about change.² This repression of moderate Islamist groups and individuals by autocratic regimes poses a serious threat to the stability and security of nations, as it undermines the prospects for peace and fuels extremism. The West's Islamophobia, which brands "brown" communities as "terrorists," as well as the Muslim world's tendency to associate "terrorism" with anything Islamic, demonstrates the impact of colonialism on the politics of postcolonial states. This parallelism reflects the way these two worlds perceive Islam and Muslims. Those who truly consider themselves social reformers and progressive thinkers should take a hard look at the dawn of the Arab Spring and consider what went wrong, and how to protect the voices of the oppressed in the future. As we approach the 10th anniversary of the Egyptian coup d'état, it is more important than ever to re-examine this history and understand the underlying forces that shape the current political landscape of the Arab world.

To understand the rise of Islamism, or political Islamic activism, in South Asia and the Middle East, it is important to consider the historical context of both regions during the colonial years of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Under British rule, South Asia and the Middle East were melting pots of various cultures and religions, with the Muslim population being a significant minority in the Indian subcontinent.³ The marginaliza-

tion of Muslim communities by the British spurred anti-colonial Muslim nationalism.^{3,4} In South Asia, Islamist organizations such as Jamaat-e-Islami have faced systematic repression and political imprisonment well into the modern era, as a means of neutralizing their influence.³ Similarly, in Egypt, the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent colonization by the British led to the formation of political parties that sought to expel foreign presence.⁴ The Muslim Brotherhood, the most prominent opposition group in contemporary Egypt, has also faced repression and political imprisonment throughout its existence. Despite these efforts, both organizations have remained resilient, continuing to fight for a freer and more representative society.

The groups in question have been bound together since the inception of their existence. Hassan al-Banna, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, was a major influence on the intellectual development of Abul Ala Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami. Maududi was inspired by al-Banna's ideas on the integration of Islam in all aspects of society and the need for an Islamic revival.

Both organizations are also known for providing social services such as free clinics, hospitals, and schools as a means of so-

cial welfare.⁵ This organizational model became popular among scholars and went on to influence political leaders of other countries like Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Maududi went on to develop his ideas on the role of Islam in society, which he outlined in his numerous writings and speeches.⁶ Specifically, his activism had a significant impact on the development of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, as he called for the establishment of a just society based on Islamic principles. He argued that the implementation of Islamic law was necessary for the preservation of justice and the promotion of welfare in the country, and those ideas continue to shape the political and cultural landscape of South Asia to this day.⁷

Jamaat-e-Islami in particular played a crucial role in unifying the relationship between East and West Pakistan. East Pakistan, which was geographically separated from West Pakistan, had a majority Bengali population and its own distinct language, culture, and history. However, West Pakistan dominated the political and economic power in the country, which led to feelings of neglect and discrimination among East Pakistanis. The Bengali language and their struggle for power in Bengal.⁸ In 1958, Jamaat-e-Islami became highly critical of the Pakistani government, largely in response to the policies of Ayub Khan, the country's second president. Khan was known for favoring the military and the elite while suppressing political opposition and civil liberties, which Jamaat-e-Islami believed went against the principles of justice claimed by the "Islamic Republic."⁹ During the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, Jamaat-e-Islami opposed independence for East Pakistan on the grounds of Muslim unity and the fear of a violent war, as well as India's full support and funding of the separation, which he believed would lead to a neo-colonial relationship between India and Bangladesh.¹¹ Namely, if India were to provide substantial support to Bangladesh, it could potentially exert significant influence over the new state's policies, such as trade agreements and deployment of military or economic aid; this has in fact been the case since independence.¹² Despite their unwavering support and significant contributions to the nation since its birth, Jamaat-e-Islami has been targeted by a ruthless political crackdown, fueled by unsubstantiated accu-

sations made by Hindutva India of war crimes committed during the Liberation War. This is a relentless pursuit aimed to silence any intersection of justice and activism, threatening the very essence of the organization's existence.

After Bangladesh gained independence in 1971, its government targeted Jamnat-e-Islami as a political opponent, much like the Egyptian government's targeting of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Jamnat-e-Islami leadership was arrested and the party was banned.¹² Likewise, in the 1950s in Egypt, Gamal Abdel-Nasser, the second President of Egypt who was known for his nationalist policies, took power and initially maintained a cordial relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood. However, as time passed, he perceived them as a threat to his autocratic rule and banned all political parties, cracking down on individuals he deemed political dissidents.¹³ Zainab Al Ghazali, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, shared her experiences of this period in her memoir, *Ayam min Hayati* ("Days of my Life"). In her book, she exposed the harsh crackdown on the Brotherhood and other groups, including the arrest of the Brotherhood's leadership, as well as Sayyid Qutb, a close associate of Abdel-Nasser.¹⁴ Zainab was also arrested in 1965 and exposed the violence and brutality she and other activists faced in prison.¹⁵ She characterized the crackdown as targeting "anything

Islamic," which challenged Abdel-Nasser's secularist-nationalist ideology.¹⁶

However, the crackdown achieved the opposite effect, instead galvanizing the members of the Brotherhood over time. In 2011, the Arab Spring—a series of pro-democracy uprisings supported by the Brotherhood—swept across the Arab world and had far-reaching consequences. In Egypt, it led to the election of Mohamed Morsi—a Muslim Brotherhood candidate—as President in 2012. However, his tenure was short-lived, as he was removed from office through a Western-backed military coup in 2013.¹⁵

From 6,000 kilometers away, Sheth Hasina, the current Prime Minister of Bangladesh and the daughter of the founding leader of Bangladesh, began taking notice of the revolutions in the Arab world and initiated her own crackdown to prevent a rebellion in her hands. This crackdown in Bangladesh primarily targeted Islamic groups, just like in Egypt, where "anything Islamic" was seen as a threat to Hasina's rule. She sought to use her party to start a smear campaign during the general elections and pledged to try war criminals, which coincidentally included leadership from the opposition coalition. This was enacted through the Parliament's amending of the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act of 1973 to try 195 war criminals from the 1971 War. This act was previously not executed due

to the Delhi Agreement, a tripartite agreement signed to officially end the Bangladesh Liberation War and facilitate the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war from India.¹⁶ The original list did not include any leadership from Bangladesh Jamnat-e-Islami, but an "updated" list in 2013 did. The trials resulted in several convictions and sentences, including life imprisonment and the death penalty, such as the hanging of 73-year-old Motiur Rahman Nizami (the leader of Bangladeshi Jamnat-e-Islami from 2000 until his execution).

The 2013 International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in Bangladesh faced significant criticism both domestically and internationally. The trials were proved to have been politically motivated, with a lack of due process and fair trial.¹⁷ The verdicts were based on circumstantial evidence, and the prosecution relied heavily on hearsay, which was rejected in other fair trial jurisdictions.¹⁸ The corruption in the trials was exemplified by the infamous Skype scandal, in which one of the judges was caught having private conversations with a prosecution witness through the online platform about critical information regarding the case.⁹

Following the trial and during Nizami's time in jail awaiting his death sentence, he was reported to have been heavily mistreated, including being denied access to proper medical care and being held in inhumane conditions.¹⁹ Around the same

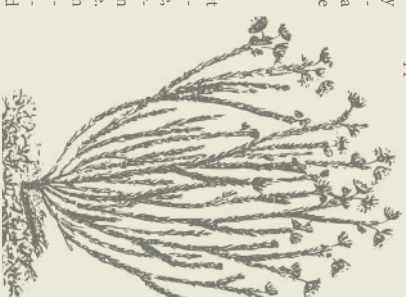
time in Egypt, Mohamed Morsi was arrested and placed in prison, where he would die on June 17, 2019.²⁰ Despite being shuttled between court cases and not being found guilty of any charges, Morsi maintained his position as the constitutionally legitimate and democratically elected President of Egypt.²¹ Throughout his imprisonment, he also reported being denied medical treatment, visits from his family, and access to legal representation. International observers believe that these conditions contributed to his death.²²

The repression by political authorities extended beyond opposition leaders to also target the general population. Targeted activities ranged from committed membership and local leadership in political groups to mere sympathizers and protestors against the regime. For example, one committed Brotherhood member who was arrested in 2013 after the Rabaa massacre—in which over a thousand people were killed by Egyptian security forces—detailed how he was targeted by security forces on false charges. He explained that he was charged with handling explosives during protests, with no evidence presented to him, to which his reaction was a sarcastic retort: "Do you think if I was handling explosives any of you would be here today?" In Bangladesh, Human Rights Watch reported similar incidents of government authorities using "arbitrary arrests, detentions, and enforced disappearances" against opposition party supporters, including Jamnat-e-Islami members.²³ The Bangladesh Rifles massacre, during which 74 people were killed, has been widely criticized as politically motivated, with many of the victims being supporters of Jamnat-e-Islami and its student wing.²⁴ Additionally, journalists who have reported critically on the government's actions have been targeted, with some being arrested or disappearing.²⁵

These stories of activists in both Egypt and Bangladesh provide insight into the brutal military policing by authoritarian regimes, which learned these techniques of violence and suppression from their colonial predecessors. In British-occupied Egypt and British India, those who rebelled against colonial rule were often subjected to brutal treatment in prisons. This included the use of torture, solitary confinement, forced labor, physical abuse, and starvation.²⁶ Over a century later, similar tactics were used in 2013 by both countries' governments, with little being done to hold them accountable.

To this day, many autocratic regimes continue to target pro-democracy groups and individuals who oppose their rule, owing to their domestic popularity and potential to establish an alternative system of governance. While the legal spaces of each country had enabled limited activism in the past, the level of brutality and repression has reached an extreme high since the Arab Spring. Thus, the disproportionate crackdown on moderate and democratic parties by militaristic regimes is a threat to the stability and security of these nations and will only fuel extremism in the long run. By targeting moderate groups, these regimes risk pushing citizens towards more violent and radical organizations, ultimately undermining the prospects for peace and stability in the region.

The disparate and unjust treatment of activists in these countries serves as a reminder of the long-term effects of oppressive regimes, as well as the continued struggle of those seeking freedom and justice in the Arab world and beyond. Through the torture and criminal conditions of these prisoners and martyrs, the movement lives on in the hearts of those who stay loyal to the oppressed.



The Blessings of Sephardic Mourning Rituals

Lauren Mehrara

My grandfather, David Mehrara, died this past January, surrounded by his children, grandchildren, and loving wife, my grandmother Jia. On the day he passed, I'd never felt closer to my family as we sat squished together on my grandmother's tiny couch, pouring over photo albums from every decade of my grandfather's life. In those moments, I hadn't realized the outpouring of love and feelings of strength that my family would soon derive from gatherings and traditions predicated by our Sephardic/Jewish faith. Having never previously mourned someone according to the traditional stipulations of Sephardic grieving rituals, I was in awe of the tactfulness of every event we held that week at the synagogue, graveyard, and in my grandmother's home. I would like to explain the history behind four traditions that stood out to me as particularly meaningful: the inclusion of flowers at a funeral, the burial performed by family members and friends of the deceased, multiple nights of *Shiva* at the fam-

ily home, and lastly, a memorial service at the end of the week of mourning.

For context, there are two main subcultures within Judaism: Sephardic Jews are largely descended from Spain, North Africa, Portugal, and the Middle East, while Ashkenazi Jews are descended from Germany and Eastern Europe. As a result of their geographical differences, Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews have different cultures and traditions: Sephardic grieving rituals, for example, vary greatly from the more prominent traditions of Ashkenazi.

During the burial, loved ones are invited to toss dirt upon the casket and bury the deceased themselves.¹ While performing this act, one is not supposed to hand off the shovel, but instead gently lay it down for the following person to pick up. This tradition is meaningful, as it allows mourners to exhaust and experience some tangible pains of their grief, while performing what is considered to be one of the

biggest *mitzvot*—or good deeds—in Judaism: burying the dead.² Since the dead are incapable of paying back or rewarding those who perform their burial, it is an act of pure honor and respect. It is one of the few times in an individual's life that they perform an act for another person without an expectation of reciprocity.

Another Sephardic tradition performed at the burial of a loved one is called *Kriah*, meaning the tearing of one's garment over their heart.³ Per tradition, the immediate family members are meant to wear this same garment for the seven days of *Shiva* as a visible manifestation of their grief. As they tear the clothing, the mourners recite the following blessing: "Blessed are You, Adonai Our God, Ruler of the Universe, the True Judge." In doing so, their heart and pain is exposed to the world for the first week after burying their loved one.

While the majority of Jewish funerals partake in the tradition of *Shiva*, where loved ones gather and eat at the family home of the

deceased for the week after the funeral, a uniquely Iranian tradition is the hosting of a rabbinical study session called *Tarhithin*.

The purpose of this session is to provide family members with a biblical form of counseling, as a Rabbi gathers the immediate family and delivers a eulogy of their loved one with the teachings of the Torah reading for that week.⁴ This session is designed to comfort the family with the memory of their loved one, while also explaining, according to the Jewish tradition and the Torah's teachings, how they can continue to live their life and honor the dead. During my family's session of *Tarhithin*, as my cousins, aunts and uncles, and grandmother gathered, we were instructed to live our lives with the memory of my grandfather at the forefront of our minds, though not overshadowing joyous occasions with our grief. Since my relatives and I are at varying stages of life and scattered across the country, it was calming to be given the same

advice on how to move forward after losing my grandfather, who had been the one guiding us for so long.

After *Tarhithin*, guests arrive and share a meal with the mourners, often telling stories of their time with the person who passed. During this part of the *Shiva*, generations of individuals shed their differences and embrace the comfort of the timing of the *Shiva* conducive to healing, but does not force the mourners to return to regular life immediately following the funeral. In this way, they are granted a home supportive neighbors and family for the seven days after the funeral.

In celebrating the life of my grandfather while also experiencing grief, I began to understand the value of religious mourning traditions. As a relatively new observant household, my family was given a purpose by the traditions of our faith. During a time when we felt as though there

was no plan, our ancestral rituals guided us. By practicing these rituals and embracing the many individuals who showed up to express their love for my grandfather, we found purpose through the sadness of our loss. As such, I am grateful for the religiosity

The Occupied Working With The Occupiers

The Sacrifices We Make *anonymously submitted*

In Gaza, the parents of children receiving cancer treatment abroad are denied travel permits to accompany them. Thousands of Palestinians have not had the privilege to visit their capital and the holy sites that lie within it, from the Aqsa Mosque to the Nativity Church, even if it is only a half-hour drive away. Few Palestinians have had the opportunity to leave the country in pursuit of higher education, and

even fewer have had the chance to return home after decades of displacement.

The violent and systemic occupation of Palestine's land, water, and air is affecting Palestinians in every aspect of their lives, leaving them vulnerable to poverty, hunger, and basic human rights violations. Palestine ranks number four in the world for the highest unemployment rate at a staggering 25.9%. This

economic condition is a result of Israel's meticulous restriction of all Palestinian exports and imports, limitation of humanitarian aid that enters the country, and prohibition of entrepreneurship and investments within the country. Furthermore, the occupation keeps Palestinians undereducated and thus unemployed by forcibly shutting down or violently raiding schools and universities to retaliate against

political resistance. This creates younger generations of illiterate Palestinians who are confined to more laborious, less skilled work, thereby creating the perfect conditions for cheap manual labor within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Consequently, the monthly income of Palestinians in Gaza is only an average of 682 Israeli New Shekel (ILS) (~207 USD), and an average of 1,062 ILS (~323 USD) for Palestinians in the West Bank.¹ This is not nearly enough to live comfortably while supporting a family of four in Palestine, where the estimated monthly costs are \$2,287.4 (\$8,235.6 ILS), not including rent.²

Under these uninhabitable economic conditions, Palestinians commonly resort to one of two options: leave Palestine in hopes of achieving better employment or work in the higher-paying occupied Palestinian territories (OPT), the

invaded Palestinian lands that permanently displaced around 1.8 million Palestinians total since 1948.³ In contrast to the low average monthly salary in the West Bank, manual work in OPT reaps an average monthly income of about 5,500 - 6,000 ILS (~1,530 - 1,670 USD).⁴ To work in the OPT, approximately 110,000 Palestinian laborers pay about 2,500 ILS (~\$700 USD) each for Israeli work permits—a little piece of paper wrapped in a protective plastic that the Israeli government has mandated for Palestinians to obtain to legally work in OPT.⁵ The Israeli government has forced Palestinians to obtain a variety of

invasion and legal limitation of movement was a technique used in the apartheid of South Africa and serves as a continuous reminder of the infringement of Palestinian freedom and mobility within their land.⁶

Up until just the beginning of 2021, Palestinians could only obtain work permits directly from their Israeli employers. This rule meant that Palestinians could not negotiate to change employers, even after workplace or human rights violations. This complete dependence on Israeli employers for employment gives the employers full freedom to do with their employees as they wish, with no legal consequences. The social protection system of workers in the OPT, regulated by the International Labour Organization, fails to effectively provide income security, healthcare, unemployment and maternity insurance, and standard labor rights for Palestinian





This is the sacrifice you make to survive.

workers.⁷ In pursuing work in OPT, Palestinians are under no protection as laborers, whether that be compensation for physical injury in work, paid sick leave, employment protection, or freedom to quit or change jobs. Additionally, Palestinian workers can be revoked of their working rights if they cannot pay the continuously increasing permit price due to the rising occurrence of “permit trading,” a trade that was worth \$122 million U.S. (~\$34 million USD) as of 2018, in which illegal permits are bought for the highest bid price. Other Palestinian workers are permitted to be revoked—without reimbursement of the money paid to obtain them—as

collective punishment of their villages for when some form of violent resistance occurs after the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) raided their neighborhoods.

There is no right or wrong in the opinions concerning Palestinians working in occupied 1948 Palestinian land. There is only a question of survival and what one is willing to do to ensure the well-being of one’s family.

“What else do we have to do?” asked a Palestinian I interviewed. “If you work in Palestine, how will you be able to raise your family?”

Palestinians are calling for the Palestinian Authority, the body that governs the OPT, to

better regulate the working standards and protections of laborers within the OPT, by ensuring more stable wages, health insurance advantages, and more. However, there is so little the government can do under the choking grasp of the occupation.

Palestinians also understand, as stated by the interviewee, that there is a great distinction between Palestinians that work in the OPT and work with the Israeli government.

“They don’t enjoy what they’re doing, of course, but it’s better to keep Palestinians employed than starved, even if you are building settlements on land you know is yours,” the interviewee lamented.



A Double-Edged World in the Arab Linguistic Landscape: Arabi

Layla Al Ansari

Noor
halla Zabeedti mrooz el m63m b3d
el event of before? 6:30 PM

Aldana
la2 ma2'9n bagdr elyoum 6:30 PM

Noor
laysh 3sa ma sharr is something
up? 6:31 PM

Aldana
la abden lat7ateen el7mdellah ana
b5ai' bas k3bana a bit but ba7awli
come 6:31 PM

To the average person reading this, the conversation above with numbers thrown in the middle of sentences may seem like nonsense. However, to fluent Arabizi speakers like myself, this is merely a glimpse of our typical conversations.

The conversation between my friends Noor and Aldana in our group chat is merely one example of how Arabizi is being used in our day-to-day conversations. Whether it's through text messages, emails, or other social media platforms, our reliance on this new form of communication is ever so prevalent. But what does that mean for us, our culture, and our language?

Before delving any further, I must explain what Arabizi is and what the numbers denote. Arabizi is a form of written Arabic that uses Latin letters and numbers to represent Arabic sounds that do not exist in English. For example, the number 3 represents the Arabic letter "ayn" (ع) and the number 6 represents the Arabic letter

"tah" (ط). This writing system is often used in text messages, emails, and other forms of digital communication among Arabic speakers, especially young people. The numbers used in Arabizi are as follows:

٢ = 2
٣ = 3
٤ = 3'
٥ = 8
٦ = 9'
٧ = 9
٨ = 6
٩ = 6'

Arabizi has its roots in the Arabic chat rooms and online forums from the late 1990s and early 2000s. At the time, Arabic speakers communicated online primarily in Modern Standard Arabic, the formal version of the language. However, this posed a challenge as many people were more comfortable with their lo-

cal dialects, which differ significantly from Modern Standard Arabic.¹ Additionally, many Arabic speakers found it difficult to type in Arabic using the standard QWERTY (Latin-based alphabet) keyboard. In this context, Arabizi emerged as a popular alternative to Modern Standard Arabic in the digital space, with several advantages. One benefit of using Arabizi is that it facilitates communication among Arabic speakers by incorporating elements of various Arabic dialects, making it easier for speakers of different dialects to understand each other. It is also a faster and more convenient means of writing and sending messages, thanks to its use of abbreviations and numerals.

bizi serves not only as a language form but also as a means of asserting their hybrid identity that transcends the binary of "Arab" and "American." It is a form of self-expression that is both familiar and reliable to their peers in both cultures. Therefore, Arabizi can act as a bridge between cultures, allowing Arab Americans to maintain their cultural roots

while finding a way to communicate effectively with both communities. Young people in the Arab World, too, use Arabizi to assert their cultural identity as a generation that is both tech-savvy and multilingual – as well as a rising cultural force that challenges traditional norms and conventions. In particular, young Arab musicians and poets have incorporated Arabizi into their work to reflect their experiential

and comment on contemporary society. For example, rather than choosing between English and Arabic, Lebanese poet Zeina Hashem uses Arabizi in her poems about exile and displacement, her language choice reflecting both her trilingual upbringing and her sense of feeling stranded between different cultures.²

Moreover, Arabizi has been a powerful tool for political expression in authoritarian countries. For example, during the Arab Spring, Arabizi played a significant role in mobilizing protesters on social media owing to its ability to connect activists speaking various dialects. In countries where the government heavily monitors online activities, Arabizi was an effective means of evading censorship and expressing

opinions that might otherwise have been silenced. By using Arabizi, individuals could communicate in a way that is not easily detected by authorities who are monitoring online channels for content that it deems inappropriate or subversive.

Despite its benefits, Arabizi has drawn considerable criticism from those concerned about traditional Arabic identity. This is because Arabizi is a simplified and informal form of Arabic that lacks the formal rules and grammar of standard Arabic. In classrooms, students used to speaking Arabic may find it hard to transition back to formal Arabic, which is the preferred language in academic and professional settings. Arabizi also threatens to exclude older people who do not speak fluent English or use the internet

from the conversation. All these lead to the argument that Arabizi dilutes the Arab identity and undermines social cohesion.

Moreover, the normalization of Arabizi raises the uncomfortable question of whether Western cultural norms are displacing native ones. Take the adoption of Arabizi by Western expatriates in the Arab world. Because many expatriates in the region speak English as their first language, Arabizi allows them to communicate with Arabic speakers who might not be fluent in English. For example, in Gulf countries, Arabizi has become increasingly popular in recent years due to the rapid economic development and the influx of expatriates. As English became a necessity for career advancement and social mobility, Arabizi emerged as a

convenient tool for communication between Arabic speakers and expatriates. While Arabizi undeniably helps break down the linguistic and cultural barriers between locals and expatriates in the Arab world, the dominance of Western elites and their way of speaking in Gulf countries is criticized by some as a symptom of intellectual colonization. The unequal interaction between Arabic and English underscores the role of politics and globalization in shaping the linguistic landscape of the Arab World.³

With all the positives and negatives associated with Arabizi, one must take a balanced approach and view it with a grain of salt. While some argue that this novel method of communication will hinder the preservation of the Arabic language and Arab identity,

others see it as a platform to accurately express themselves. Ultimately, the perception of Arabizi depends on the individual, and it is important to consider both the advantages and disadvantages associated with this language form. And while the conversation between Noor and Aldana may seem like nonsense to some, it is a language that reflects the complex and dynamic cultural landscape of the Arabic-speaking world. Ultimately, it is up to us to weigh its potential benefits and drawbacks while preserving our cultural heritage and promoting inclusivity and cultural exchange.



Works Cited



Orientalist Double Stan Wafafah Soniy Cérés / Fitique

Politics With A Side Of Coffee: A Look Into

1. Taroni Selim, "Jauislem's Institution Modernity: The Times and

17. Human Rights Watch. (2013). Bangladesh: Fair trial concerns in

1. One Month on: 5 Billion Engaged with the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. www.fifa.com/tour/rames/one-month-on-5-billion-engaged-with-the-fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022-tm.
2. Romsy, George. "How Qatar Ended up Hosting the World Cup 2022?" www.cablenews.net/worldcup-2022/.
3. Rob & Burnett. "France: Now Planni".
4. Twitter. "Deleted Tweets and SportsWashing: Messi's Downing of Blsn Sports Henry, Middle East Eye, 19 Dec. 2022. <https://twitter.com/medialib/status/1618363919>.
5. Uddin Royhan. "Algebra and Algorithms: Restoring Attribution Mathematical Discoveries".
6. Ganzz, S. "The Sources of Al-Khwarizmi's Algebra".
7. Roston, Frederic. "The Algebra of".
8. Glick Thomas F, et al. "Mathematical Medieval Science, Technology and Medicine (2008). An Encyclopedia. Routledge, 2017.

1. Mustafa Khattab et al. "The Message of the Final Revelation: Book 2".
2. Al-Khateeb, Firras. "Lost Islamic".
3. Lyda W. "The House of".
4. Al-Khateeb, Firras. "The House of".
5. Maher, Philip. "From Al-Jabr to".
6. Ganzz, S. "The Sources of Al-Khwarizmi's Algebra".
7. Roston, Frederic. "The Algebra of".
8. Glick Thomas F, et al. "Mathematical Medieval Science, Technology and Medicine (2008). An Encyclopedia. Routledge, 2017.

1. Motaamed, Maziar. "Arabian Gulf Sparks Anger in Iran".
2. Sparks Anger in Iran. Al Jazeera. 11 Jan. 2023. [https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/11/iran-summons-iraq-envoys-over-news/](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/11/iran-summons-iraq-envoys-over-news/2023/1/11/iran-summons-iraq-envoys-over-news/)
3. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
4. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
5. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
6. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
7. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
8. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
9. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
10. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
11. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
12. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
13. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
14. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
15. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
16. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
17. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
18. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
19. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
20. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
21. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
22. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
23. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
24. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
25. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
26. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
27. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
28. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
29. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
30. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
31. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
32. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
33. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
34. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
35. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
36. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
37. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
38. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
39. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
40. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
41. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
42. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
43. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
44. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
45. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
46. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
47. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
48. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
49. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
50. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
51. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
52. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
53. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
54. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
55. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
56. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
57. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
58. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
59. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
60. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
61. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
62. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
63. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
64. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
65. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
66. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
67. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
68. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
69. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
70. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
71. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
72. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
73. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
74. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
75. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
76. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
77. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
78. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
79. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
80. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
81. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
82. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
83. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
84. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
85. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
86. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
87. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
88. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
89. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
90. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
91. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
92. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
93. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
94. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
95. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
96. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
97. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
98. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
99. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".
100. "The Arab Spring: A Political History".

“

I am tired of
knocking on
the doors
of empires...
I'm tired of
metaphors
a b o u t p e a c e

Zeina Hashem Beck

fenjan