



Call for Papers

Politicised Sexualities, Marginalised Histories

**A Conference on Sexuality in Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA)
25th March 2017, Centre for Gender Studies, SOAS University of London**

Sexuality is routinely used in political debates as a way to serve political agendas, deployed to mark differences between 'us' and 'them'. This has become particularly evident in recent years with LGBTQI and women's rights increasingly serving as markers of 'modernity' and 'democracy', feeding into border management regimes in the Global North. While the simultaneous supposed lack of such gendered and sexual rights in the Global South has become a signifier of 'backwardness,' 'intolerance' and oppression, figuring as a key marker in development and human rights discourse.

Narratives of sexuality and gendered rights in the SWANA region (Southwest Asia and North Africa) have become central to debates around Islamism, and are continually used to judge the success of the so-called revolutions, as well as central to analyses of 'Muslim terrorism' and the 'refugee crisis'. Streams of images of men who have sex with men being thrown off rooftops by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham) fighters, the commonly narrated Islamic motivations behind the Orlando gay nightclub shooting, and mass media focus on the allegedly 'gay' terrorist who participated in the 2016 Paris attacks, collectively remind us that sexuality and sexual identity categories are taken as central to contemporary analyses of violence. This shifts the attention to the SWANA as a hotspot producing violence towards those 'marginalised,' such as women and LGBTQI people, and towards the Global North, overlooking the conditions of structural racism, homophobia and heteronormativity in the Global North. This calls attention to the need for a transnational lens to address issues around gender and sexuality. The conference will address problems and challenges in relation to sexual rights in the SWANA region in particular, and the Global South in general, through scrutinising sexual identity politics and the historical development of sexual rights discourses.

Often evacuated out of these debates are the histories of colonialism and imperialism that have been central in creating the conditions of oppression, dictatorships, marginalisation of different ethnic and religious minorities, such as Amazigh, Kurds and Christians, and more recently Islamisation in the region. This makes it necessary to address the effects and residues of colonisation on the creation of certain sexual and gender identities, through the imposition of penal codes criminalising non-hetero-normative sexual practices.

This one-day conference hopes to re-centre these histories and presents, exploring the transnational and trans-historical politics of sexual identity in the SWANA region. In an attempt to subvert the omnipresent narratives about LGBTQI people and marginalised groups from the SWANA seeking 'safe havens' in the Global North, we invite papers that address the following themes:

- Sexual identity and minority politics, and the intersection between racial and ethnic identities and sexuality in the region, including the problems around terminologies used to describe sexualities.
- Imperialism, colonialism and development, and their impact on non-heteronormative sexual practices.
- Displacement, diaspora and mobilisation, and the role they play in relation to discourses around sexuality and gender.
- Extremist violence, securitisation and the instrumentalisation of sexual identities.
- Faith, religion, and secularism in the SWANA region and how they influence perceptions of and attitudes towards sexuality.

Submission

We invite contributors to submit abstracts of no more than 300 words by January 29th 2017. Please send your abstract and your short biography to info@ctdc.org. When submitting your abstract please point to which of the abovementioned themes your paper falls.

Following the conference we hope to publish a selection of conference papers in an edited volume.

Conference Details

This conference is being collaboratively organised by the Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration- CTDC and the Centre for Gender Studies at SOAS.