Call for Papers for the Conference

Law and Society in Saudi Arabia

19-21 June 2024

Legislation, jurisprudence, and legal mobilization have undergone epochal alterations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Historically, Saudi law has been identified predominantly with uncodified Islamic law, although legal realities on the ground have been much more complex but often little understood. With the publication of court judgments and the introduction of specialized courts, King 'Abdallah initiated a process of legal transformation which has gained momentum since King Salman ascended the throne in 2015. One of the most recent developments is the codification of Islamic law, which many regard as a pivotal moment in the evolution of law in Saudi Arabia. How does this intersect with, impact on, and influence earlier understandings of law and legality? In this conference, we would like to take stock and reflect on the radical changes that law and society have undergone in recent years and in historic perspective.

The two-day conference addresses the role of the law in Saudi society both in the past and the present. We adopt a broad understanding of law, one encompassing both Islamic normativity as well as state-issued codes. This includes the law as it is conceptualized and applied by state institutions and legal professionals (religious scholars, lawyers, judges). It also encompasses the various ways in which people interact with the law and legal institutions in their everyday lives and how they express themselves through legal language. We believe that a better understanding of these practices can provide us with important insights into past and ongoing processes of social and political transformation in the kingdom.

With this "law and society" approach, we seek to bridge the gap between the study of social, political, and historical phenomena on the one hand, and research on the Saudi legal system on the other hand. In other words, we seek to discuss law in its social context from various perspectives: How is law socially and historically constructed in Saudi Arabia? How does law impact Saudi culture and politics? How are inequalities reinforced through differential access to and familiarity with legal procedures and institutions?

The conference aims to bring together different disciplinary perspectives. We especially welcome contributions from the fields of law, sociology/anthropology, political science, history, Islamic/Middle Eastern studies, and gender studies.

We are particularly, but not exclusively, interested in the following topics:

- **Law in history:** law and state-building; constitutional movement; historical case studies,
- **Law and equality:** courts, litigation, and access to justice; legal mobilization; human rights,
- **Law and Islam:** morality, public decency, and Islamic law; waqf; finance and banking; fatwas and legal language,
- **Law and gender:** divorce and custody; women's rights and mobilization; domestic violence, sexual harassment,
- **Law and governance:** constitution/the Basic Law of Governance; citizenship/nationality; laws affecting associations and civil society; law-making and state institutions,
- **Law in action:** legal language and its use in society; navigating the law: lawyers and legal procedures, digital technology and the law; the experience of courts; the effects of globalization on the law.

Paper Submission: Please send the title and an abstract of your proposed paper (up to 300 words) as well as a short CV as a PDF document by **15 May 2023** to Conference.Law.Society.KSA@gmail.com. For questions and queries, please contact nora.derbal@mail.huji.ac.il. Authors of selected abstracts will be notified by 15 June 2023.

Organization: The conference *Law and Society in Saudi Arabia* is being organized by Nora Derbal (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Ulrike Freitag (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient Berlin), and Dominik Krell (Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law/University of Oxford). The conference will take place in Berlin at Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient on 19-21 June 2024. The conference language is English.

Publication Plans: The conference papers will be published as an edited volume. We expect participants to submit a 7,500-word contribution in advance of the conference (preliminary deadline: 1 May 2024). The contributions should be based on original research and must be unpublished work.

Funding: We are seeking funding to cover some of the costs of the conference. Participants are, however, invited to use their own travel funds wherever possible.